

Chatham House Report

Xenia Dormandy with Joshua Webb

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# Elite Perceptions of the United States in Europe and Asia



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The Royal Institute of  
International Affairs

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May 2014

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Charity Registration No. 208223

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ISBN 978 1 78413 019 0

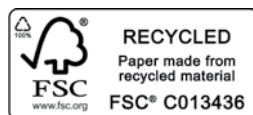
A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Cover image © iStock

Typeset by Soapbox, [www.soapbox.co.uk](http://www.soapbox.co.uk)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Latimer Trend and Co Ltd

The material selected for the printing of this report is manufactured from 100% genuine de-inked post-consumer waste by an ISO 14001 certified mill and is Process Chlorine Free.



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# Acknowledgments

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The research and organization of this report benefited greatly from the assistance of the following people: Brian Andrews, Nazeema Begum-Ali, Kurt Campbell, Jessica Eilers, James Goldgeier, Vishal Jalota, Rory Kinane, Marion Koob, Stephanie Popp and the participants of the Perceptions Roundtable held at Chatham House on 15 October 2013, as well as more than 50 anonymous contributors of essays. We are grateful also to a number of colleagues who helped to review and comment on this report, including Tsuneo Watanabe, Josh Raisher and Bruce Stokes.

The views expressed in this report represent the opinions of individual authors and not necessarily those of Chatham House.

This report was generously supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, whose funding is gratefully acknowledged.

# Executive Summary

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There is a plethora of public polling on views about the United States. But these studies miss three important questions:

- What are the views of the influential elites with whom the US works?
- How are these views formed?
- How do elite views compare with public opinion?

This report addresses these questions. Over the course of several months in the summer of 2013, essays of approximately 1,000 words were gathered from elites in four sectors (public, private, academia/think-tanks, and the media) in 13 countries in Europe and Asia (France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Burma, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Pakistan). Contributors were asked to answer the first two questions, in their own words and according to their personal experiences. The responses (53 essays) offer interesting conclusions from which a number of policy recommendations for American policy-makers can be drawn. Many of these could also be considered by other countries as they explore how they are viewed internationally.

## Major findings and policy prescriptions

- Across the board, elites view US business, and in particular entrepreneurs and innovators, in a more positive light than they do the American government. Given this, it would be advantageous to the United States for its government, wherever possible, to support the ability of these non-state actors to advance US values and expand people-to-people links. To a lesser degree other non-state actors, including the media and academia, are also well respected.
- Particularly for European elites, the most powerful levers affecting views of the United States are visits to the country and interactions with Americans. This may also be true for Asian elites, but with fewer respondents the result is less robust. This has significant implications for US visa policy, particularly towards those countries with which Washington has sensitive relations.
- While foreign policy has long been considered an extension of domestic policy, for Europeans it appears that the opposite is equally true: domestic policy is also foreign policy. When seen from abroad, domestic decisions on issues such as gun control, gay rights, abortion, poverty and inequality create dissonance with American calls for freedom, openness and cessation of violence. It can lead to charges of US hypocrisy.
- Europeans attend to the totality of US actions across the globe, while Asians tend to prioritize America's Asia policy. This highlights the complexity of US policy-making towards Europeans, but also provides the United States more entry points for influencing European views. The more narrow perspective of Asian elites heightens the impact and resonance of any specific US policy towards the region, making nuances much harder to manage.
- The figure that resonates most powerfully in Asia (and to a lesser degree, Europe) is the US president (the secretaries of state and defense were also noted but to a significantly lesser degree). Therefore, if US policy announcements are to register and have the greatest impact in these regions, they must come from the president. The only national elites that recognized the role of Congress were those associated with strong lobbying groups in the United States, such as Greece, Turkey, India and Pakistan.
- America's tripartite system of government is badly understood. Thus, when policies are announced but not implemented (e.g. shutting down Guantánamo) foreigners tend to think of the US political system as broken or dysfunctional, to accuse the president and his administration of backtracking or lying, or to think the United States weak. Explaining the US system with more clarity (without excusing its shortcomings) could mitigate many of these misunderstandings.
- Asians value America's hard power; Europeans focus on America's soft power. Values are all-important in Europe and, unfortunately, in the eyes of most of its elites, the United States has appeared increasingly willing to forgo the values it has long promoted. Foreign observers no longer give the US government the benefit of the doubt, believing that America is at least trying to do 'the right thing'. Unless the United States is able to reverse this slide, it might find that when it wants to lead, Europeans will be reluctant to follow. In contrast, Asians value America's military strength more and are much more wary of American values (or, as they put it, ideology).
- There exists great uncertainty among elites regarding America's future European and Asian policies. This is leading to a perception of America as unpredictable or, in the case of its allies, potentially unreliable. While defining such a strategy or doctrine faces real challenges and could be seen to restrict US action, providing some guidelines or broad vision for America's global role might do much to mitigate some of the uncertainty and provide more security and reassurance to its partners. America's allies will watch to ensure the rhetoric is followed through in action, both internationally and domestically.

# 1. Introduction

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Given a changing global environment and developing capabilities and priorities, the United States is currently re-evaluating its role in the world, adjusting its foreign policy in many areas, not least in Europe and Asia. The Asia ‘pivot’, announced by President Barack Obama in November 2011, has suggested a clear refocus on the region, building new relationships, and realigning assets and priorities from New Delhi to Beijing. At the same time, to many in Europe it has also suggested a fresh look at transatlantic relations. Managing these realignments will require US policy-makers to have a keen awareness of perceptions of the United States in these two regions and beyond. In other words, if the United States wants to achieve its goals in Europe and Asia, it must be aware that the success of its policies hinges not only on their substantive merit, but to a great extent on the way the United States and its policies are *perceived* abroad. The impact of perceptions is more intangible, and therefore more difficult to measure. However, where different cultures meet, nuances matter. Just as foreign aid will not achieve its goals if perceived as tutelage, leadership is unlikely to succeed if seen as being patronizing.

The importance of perceptions is not a new idea. Over the past two decades, a number of international pollsters have conducted public opinion polls on perceptions of the United States abroad, such as Pew Research’s ‘Global Attitudes Project’, Gallup’s ‘US Leadership’ polls, or the German Marshall Fund’s ‘Transatlantic Trends’, to name but a few. Typically, these polls distribute questionnaires to a representative sample drawn from the general public of a certain country or region. However, while suited for general analysis and comparison, these quantitative studies rarely give in-depth insights into the sentiments and their underlying drivers prevailing in a given country. Moreover, they seldom allow for cross-comparisons between public and elite opinions, or between different sectors of society.

The present study complements these polls by taking a different approach. For this project, members of the elites from four sectors (public, private, think-tanks/academia and media) in 13 countries in Asia and Europe were asked to write an anonymous essay of approximately 1,000 words delineating their *personal* perceptions of the United States as well as how these were formed.<sup>1</sup> In order to clarify and test the results obtained from the essays, a roundtable with select European participants was held at Chatham House in October 2013.<sup>2</sup>

This report addresses the three following issues.

- First, it seeks to explore ‘personal’ elite perceptions in the countries surveyed. Since the response rate varied from country to country, the number of essays collected was not large enough to be representative. However, building on Chatham House’s networks, and providing elites with an anonymous platform to share concerns that they may be unable to voice elsewhere, this report presents a unique collection of data.
- Second, this report focuses on how these views are generated. What US factors – policy, the president, culture, values, history, the military, business – are most influential in affecting the perceptions of elites?
- Third, this report seeks to compare elite and public opinions. Do elites and publics share the same concerns? What are the implications of their different views for US policy-making?

The conclusions concerning these three issues have a number of implications for the US government (although in many cases they are applicable to other governments as well), leading to some policy prescriptions for Washington to consider as it engages with these two regions and their constituent states.

Why are perceptions so important in foreign policy? They may or may not reflect reality. However, political influence depends on (subjective) perceptions as well as on (objective) reality. On the one hand, positive perceptions may enhance a country’s soft power by generating trust, openness and mutual goodwill; while on the other, negative perceptions may decrease influence or generate resentment. Either way, the key to successful policies lies in a better understanding of potential differences between self-perceptions and perceptions of the self by others. Only if areas of dissonance are identified and understood can potential gaps be closed and policies adjusted accordingly. In the words of Albert Einstein, ‘Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.’

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<sup>1</sup> In Asia, these were Burma (Myanmar), China, Japan, India, Indonesia and Pakistan; in Europe, France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Given the diversity of opinion in Asia, it was deemed that a roundtable bringing together representatives from the six Asian nations would not bring greater clarity. However, views were taken in one-on-one discussions in Asia.



## 2. Background

### Why are perceptions important?

The debate on American decline has periodically resurfaced since the late 1980s.<sup>3</sup> However, while the pendulum has long swung back and forth between proponents and adversaries of the declinist theory, a consensus seems to have emerged recently that the United States is following a path towards relative, if not absolute, decline. Former proponents of a continued status of the United States as ‘first among equals’ have now begun to express doubts on the trajectory of American power in the 21st century.<sup>4</sup>

The perception that the United States is on relative decline has profound implications for its ability to project its power. During the Cold War, deterrence was founded on the credibility of America’s ability to project its military power on a global scale. In the 21st century, the potential repercussions of US decline may have changed, but the same logic applies: regardless of whether it is founded in myth or fact, the mere perception of a diminished America may prompt adversaries and negotiating partners to test its limits (as many would argue is currently happening with Russia and China).

Many perceptions of US decline are driven by economic factors: America’s economic power is indeed declining relative to the rest of the world. China is projected to surpass the United States in GDP (in PPP terms) between 2016 and 2018, and approximately a decade later in real terms.<sup>5</sup> But, while attention is often fixated on this number, in GDP-per-capita terms China is far from catching up with the United States, with no forecasts available of when this might be the case in the foreseeable future. At the same time, predictions of China’s economic strength often presume that it will grow without interruption, a feat which few, if any, rising economies were able to accomplish in the past.

However, the recent declinist thesis is not based on economic and military power alone. Some express uneasiness with regard to Washington’s capacity to project soft power. Just as paper money cannot function without trust in government, diplomacy requires parties to

understand each other’s intentions as well as capabilities. In the past, the United States often profited from a belief that, even where it went astray, be it in Vietnam or Afghanistan (with its support of the *mujahideen* in the 1980s), it would do so for the ‘right’ reasons. However, in recent years this interpretation has increasingly come to be questioned. Following the George W. Bush administration’s military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Obama administration’s heavy use of drone strikes and expansion of mass surveillance programmes, both US and international commentators have begun to question the motives (and criticize the perceived hypocrisy) underlying US foreign policy. With American policies decreasingly subject to the presumption of innocence, Washington may find that even where it is willing to lead, it may be difficult to find followers.<sup>6</sup>

### US foreign policy objectives in Asia and Europe

As a consequence of domestic and international developments, the first decade and a half of the 21st century have brought adjustments of US foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> Facing a number of domestic realities from increased partisanship and budgetary constraints to Americans’ weariness of foreign adventurism, President Obama has called for ‘nation-building at home’.<sup>8</sup> In international affairs, the focus continues shifting from the Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific (the initial transition started some decades ago). Whereas the latter could be characterized as a region mixing rapid economic growth with security uncertainty, Europe continues facing a slow economic recovery combined with disagreement over the future of the European Union. These dynamics will undoubtedly shape US foreign policy for the foreseeable future. Whereas President Obama is seeking to transform the transatlantic relationship towards one of more equal burden-sharing in security matters and increasing economic cooperation, the United States has expanded its engagement in the Asia-Pacific region with a view to ensuring stability there by further developing new and existing partnerships.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Cox, ‘Whatever Happened to American Decline?’, *New Political Economy*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Michael Cox, ‘Is America in Decline – Again?’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, Issue 4, (July 2007); Roger Altman and Richard Haass, ‘American Profligacy and American Power’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010); Edward Luce, *Time to Start Thinking* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Simon Rabinovitch, ‘China forecast to overtake US by 2016’, *The Financial Times*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0a3f5794-92b3-11e2-9593-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2uZdVxm1D>; ‘Catching the Eagle’, *The Economist*, 20 November 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/11/chinese-and-american-gdp-forecasts>; Amy He, ‘Chinese economy to overtake US later than thought’, *China Daily USA*, 30 November 2013, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/us/2013-12/30/content\\_17206093.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/us/2013-12/30/content_17206093.htm).

<sup>6</sup> For a more elaborate version of this argument, see Barry Buzan, ‘A leader without followers? The United States in world politics after Bush’, *International Politics*, (2008), Vol. 45, No. 5, pp. 55470.

<sup>7</sup> For two recent analyses of the changing US interests in Europe and Asia respectively, see Kurt Campbell and Brian Andrews, ‘Explaining the US “Pivot” to Asia’, Chatham House Programme Paper, August 2013, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/194019>; James Goldgeier, ‘It’s Time for Europe to Look after its Own Backyard’, *The World Today*, Vol. 69, No. 8/9 (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Barack Obama, ‘Weekly Address’, 22 June 2011, <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2011/06/22/251837/obama-nation-building-here-at-home/>.

## Asia policy

In Asia, the emergence of India and China as global economic and political powers continues to make headlines. But perhaps of equal importance is the fact that the region's economic dynamism is no longer limited to them and the so-called 'Asian Tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan). Since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, much of Southeast Asia, from the Mekong Delta to Indonesia and the Philippines, has seen annual growth rates of 6–8%.<sup>9</sup> Together, these trends appear to be heralding Asia's coming-of-age as the world's economic powerhouse, with the potential of opening for the United States 'unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology'.<sup>10</sup> However, Asia's growing importance has been accompanied by recurring tensions, arising from geopolitics as much as unresolved historical disputes, demonstrating the volatility of the region. Acknowledging in 2011 that the Asia-Pacific had become a 'key driver of global politics' in which 'maintaining peace and security [...] is increasingly crucial to global progress', the Obama administration announced a new strategy that has since come to be known as the Asia 'pivot' or rebalancing.<sup>11</sup>

**America continues to pursue a nuanced and multipronged strategy in Asia that includes strengthening and expanding its alliances with friends while managing a changing relationship with China. A careful balance is needed to achieve these two objectives.**

As then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointed out, the pivot rests on 'forward-deployed diplomacy' (i.e. an increase in diplomatic capacities and the readiness to react to unforeseen developments), as well as on six 'key lines of action'. These are:

- strengthening bilateral security alliances;
- deepening American relationships with emerging powers, including China;
- engaging with regional multilateral institutions;
- expanding trade and investment;
- forging a broad-based military presence; and
- advancing democracy and human rights.

America continues to pursue a nuanced and multipronged strategy in Asia that includes strengthening and expanding its alliances with friends while managing a changing relationship with China. A careful balance is needed to achieve these two objectives. US alliances old (Japan, South Korea) and new (Vietnam) have been a top priority for the Obama administration.<sup>12</sup> In December, pointing out that US–Korean trade had increased by 65% since 2000, Vice-president Joe Biden referred to the US–Korean alliance as a 'lynchpin for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific'.<sup>13</sup> Although the Sino-Japanese relationship may be riddled with extraordinary complexity, it illustrates the fact that the United States may need to actively seek ways to harmonize its commitment to existing allies with its desire to strengthen relationships with emerging economies. One way to do so may be to increasingly engage with the region's multilateral institutions.<sup>14</sup> Since 2011, the Obama administration has strengthened its ties with a number of such institutions, from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in particular. On the other hand, by increasing its military capacities in the region, the United States intends to maintain its active and engaged position there, enabling it to secure access to the region's dynamic economies as well as to balance potential Chinese ambitions for regional hegemony.

## Europe policy

Europe is only slowly recovering from a severe economic crisis and is as yet unable to answer increasingly urgent questions regarding its future. In contrast to Asia, it therefore seems to be retreating from the centre stage of US foreign policy. From the US perspective, Europe today is an 'opportunity' rather than a challenge. Consequently, over the past two years Washington has urged European countries to increase their own capacities rather than relying on the United States as a security guarantor.<sup>15</sup> President Obama is not the first president who has tried to steer the United States away from Europe towards the Asia-Pacific. Similar attempts date back to the Reagan years at least, but were often thwarted by unforeseeable events, requiring continued attention to Europe (such as the disintegration of Yugoslavia during the 1990s or the events in Ukraine today) or leading the United States

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 'Data: GDP Growth (annual %)', as of 19 March 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.

<sup>10</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'America's Pacific Century, Secretary of State', *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas\\_pacific\\_century](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell and Andrews, 'Explaining the US "Pivot" to Asia'.

<sup>13</sup> Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., 'Biden: U.S.–South Korea Alliance Key to Regional Security', *American Forces Press Service*, 6 December 2013, [www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=121294](http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=121294).

<sup>14</sup> See the Chatham House US Programme Report *Asia-Pacific Security: A Changing Role for the United States* for more information.

<sup>15</sup> United States Mission to NATO, 'Secretary Gates – The Future of NATO', 10 June 2011, [http://nato.usmission.gov/mission/speeches/gates\\_qa\\_sda.html](http://nato.usmission.gov/mission/speeches/gates_qa_sda.html).

astray into other regions (such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq).<sup>16</sup> However, beyond Washington's decreasing willingness to provide for security in Europe, the viability of the Asian pivot depends directly on conditions in Europe. Given America's persistent desire and need for stability in the Middle East and North Africa, an effective EU, willing and able to ensure order in its immediate neighbourhood, may be key to the viability of American plans to rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>17</sup>

It is safe to say that the United States shares more values with Europe than with any other region in the world. Given the history and present state of US–European cooperation in virtually every policy area, Europe is no longer seen as requiring the attention and commitment that it received over the past century. To President George Washington, Europe resembled a problem; to President Woodrow Wilson it was a challenge. Today, the occasional recurrence of the isolationism-internationalism debate cannot conceal the fact that the transatlantic relationship has evolved into a tremendous opportunity for the United States. In 2011, the EU purchased 11% of its goods imports and 29% of its private service imports from the United States. Likewise, EU countries hold more than 60% of the foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in the United States.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, in recent years US foreign policy towards Europe has tended to focus on economic cooperation. Currently the most important diplomatic initiative towards Europe has been the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), negotiations for which are under way and which experts expect will '[promote] economic growth and [support] millions of jobs in both economies'.<sup>19</sup> The transatlantic partnership goes far beyond economic matters, however. In both Afghanistan and Libya, NATO provided a common platform for military operations, while the EU has launched a number of operations in support of the US-led War on Terror. Taken as a whole, the depth and breadth of transatlantic cooperation demonstrate the extent to which relations have been transformed into an opportunity for mutual benefits.

### Perceptions vs. misperceptions

In Europe as in Asia, the United States is likely to achieve its foreign policy objectives only if it succeeds in clearly communicating the intentions underlying its foreign policy. In Europe, cooperation has been based on shared values – or rather the mutual perception thereof. Following the 2013 revelations of mass surveillance by the National Security Agency, some European politicians demanded a temporary suspension of the TTIP negotiations, demonstrating both the volatility and the importance of perceptions.<sup>20</sup> What policy-makers in the United States perceived as an issue of national security, to Europeans signified an unjustified violation of privacy.<sup>21</sup> States prefer to trade with states they trust. Although the TTIP talks are unlikely to be derailed solely because of the surveillance scandal, the NSA revelations served to demonstrate the potential adverse consequences of perception gaps.

But even where common values remain relatively unaffected, misperceptions bear the potential of adverse side effects. In the wake of the pivot, some Europeans have been 'inclined to interpret the policy shift as an implied comment on Europe's declining relevance and hence an insult'.<sup>22</sup> The rebalancing has caused even more concern in Asia itself. Although two of the most important goals were to 'modernize and strengthen US alliances' and to 'develop and strengthen ties with emerging partners', the message received across the Asia-Pacific was one of uncertainty.<sup>23</sup> Many in China felt that the rebalancing was directed against China in order to prevent it from overtaking the United States as the Pacific hegemon.<sup>24</sup> The same argument concerned many American allies, who worried that this would raise tensions between their two powerful partners and thus problems for those in between.

The United States needs to remember that its own perceptions are relative. Shifting the focus of the world's largest economy and military from the Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific is an enormous task. Forging a new partnership with Europe, and achieving its objectives in Asia, will require the United States to align its self-perceptions with those of others abroad.

<sup>16</sup> Goldgeier, 'It's Time for Europe to Look after its Own Backyard', p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> US Department of State, 'The United States and the European Union, Building on Our Economic and Strategic Partnership', 24 June 2013, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/211356.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/211356.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie e.V [Federation of German Industries], 'Final Report: High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth', 11 February 2013, [www.bdi.eu/download\\_content/GlobalisierungMaerkteUndHandel/Abschlussbericht\\_HLWG\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.bdi.eu/download_content/GlobalisierungMaerkteUndHandel/Abschlussbericht_HLWG_REPORT.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> 'Hollande: Bugging allegations threaten EU–US trade pact', BBC News, 1 July 2013, [www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23125451](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23125451); 'NSA Revelations: Merkel Rival Calls for Suspension of Trade Talks', *Der Spiegel*, 26 August 2013, [www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-challenger-says-free-trade-talks-with-us-should-be-frozen-a-918649.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-challenger-says-free-trade-talks-with-us-should-be-frozen-a-918649.html).

<sup>21</sup> As Bruce Stokes points out, 'when asked to balance security worries against privacy concerns, Americans opt for security'. Bruce Stokes, 'NSA Spying: A Threat to US Interests?', *Yale Global Online*, 5 December 2013, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/nsa-spying-threat-us-interests>.

<sup>22</sup> Gideon Rachman, 'The U.S. Pivot to Asia – Should Europeans Worry?', *Centre for European Policy Analysis*, 2 April 2012, [www.cepa.org/content/us-pivot-asia-%E2%80%93-should-europeans-worry](http://www.cepa.org/content/us-pivot-asia-%E2%80%93-should-europeans-worry).

<sup>23</sup> US Department of State, 'The East Asia–Pacific Rebalance: Expanding U.S. Engagement', 13 December 2013, [www.state.gov/documents/organization/218988.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/218988.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Michael D. Swaine, 'Chinese Leadership and Elite Responses to the U.S. Pacific Pivot', *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 38 (2012).

## International polls of the general public

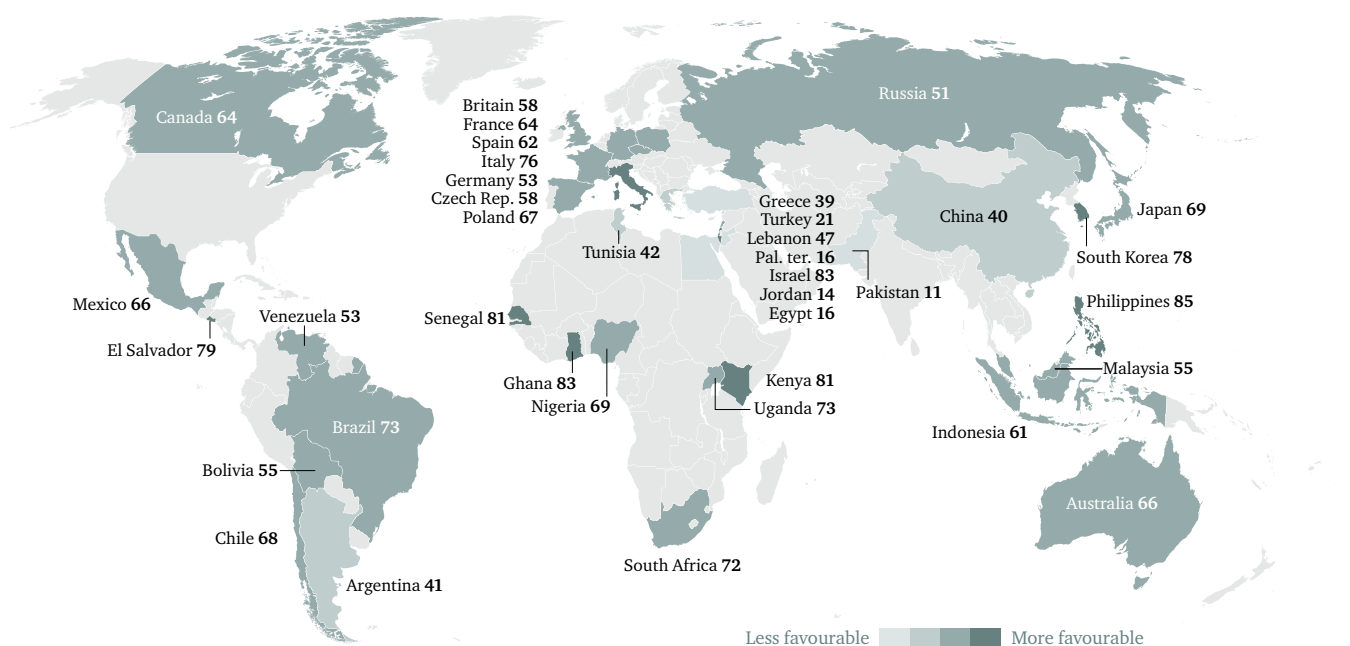
A number of polls have surveyed perceptions of the United States abroad, including ‘Transatlantic Trends’ (German Marshall Fund), ‘Global Attitudes’ (Pew Research), and ‘Global Views of US Leadership’ (Gallup). What these reveal first and foremost is the fact that the United States remains popular in much of the world. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which surveyed 39 countries covering all world regions, a median of 63% of all participants held favourable views of the United States.<sup>25</sup> These results are largely compatible with those of the 2013 Transatlantic Trends survey, which found that 70% of all EU respondents held favourable views of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Sympathy for the United States is not restricted to its allies. In a recent survey by YouGov, asking Chinese internet users which country they admired most, the United States came first.<sup>27</sup> Less surprising, support remains highest in Europe, with 70% of respondents continuing to hold favourable

views of the United States.<sup>28</sup> Turkey is the exception, with 64% expressing unfavourable views (57% in 2012).<sup>29</sup>

However, by and large Europeans continue to look for guidance from the other side of the Atlantic, with more than half of all respondents (55%) saying that it is desirable that the United States exerts strong leadership in world affairs.<sup>30</sup> According to Pew, America’s reputation for respecting individual liberty remains the ‘strong suit of [its] image’, earning it recognition even in countries where opposition to US foreign policy is widespread.<sup>31</sup> However, all major surveys point to staunch opposition to drone strikes. Apart from the United States, only France, the United Kingdom, Israel and Kenya show varying degrees of support. In 12 of the 39 countries surveyed by Pew, more than 80% of respondents opposed the use of drones.<sup>32</sup> Transatlantic Trends likewise found that, while US respondents were strongly in favour of drone strikes, European and Turkish respondents opposed them (except to a much lesser degree the United Kingdom and France).<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 1: International image of the United States – percentage who have favourable view of the US**



Source: Pew Research Center (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/global-image-of-the-united-states-and-china/>).

<sup>25</sup> Pew Research Center, ‘America’s Global Image Remains More Positive than China’s’, 18 July 2013, [www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/).

<sup>26</sup> The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMFUS), ‘Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013’, <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2013/09/TT-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Moore, ‘Infographic: China’s positive view of the US’, *YouGov*, 25 November 2013, <https://today.yougov.com/news/2013/11/25/infographics-chinese/>.

<sup>28</sup> GMFUS, ‘Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013’.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Pew Global Research Center, ‘America’s Global Image Remains More Positive than China’s’.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> GMFUS, ‘Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013’.



A second trend that emerges is the nexus between America's image in the world and that of its leader. On taking office in 2009, President Obama appeared to be the most popular incumbent politician worldwide. At the time, eight out of ten respondents in Britain, and nine out of ten in France and Germany, said that they trusted Obama to do 'the right thing' in international affairs.<sup>34</sup>

Even beyond Europe, Pew finds that 'America's improved image is coincident with Barack Obama assuming the presidency in 2009.'<sup>35</sup> Recently, however, the president's popularity has been on the decline. By 2013, amid continued unrest in the Middle East, Obama's global approval ratings had fallen by double-digit numbers virtually around the world.<sup>36</sup> In China, confidence in the American president was half (31%) of what it had been in 2009 (62%).<sup>37</sup>

Overall, America's role in the world remains a contentious issue. According to Pew's Global Attitudes Project, although the United States is 'widely viewed as acting unilaterally in international affairs', it is not generally seen as an enemy.<sup>38</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to interpret these numbers as tacit assent to the notion that the United States tends to act in the international community's interest. In a global

survey jointly published by WIN and Gallup International in December 2013, a plurality (24%) of respondents answered that of all countries, the United States posed the greatest threat to world peace, followed by Pakistan (8%) and China (6%). Interestingly, even respondents in the United Kingdom found the United States most threatening, along with Iran (both 15%). Fear of the United States was most prominent in Russia, where 54% of respondents saw it as the greatest threat to world peace, followed by China (49%) and Bosnia (49%). Although this 'fear' may be influenced by anti-Americanism in these countries, pluralities in Europe and Asia ranked the United States as the greatest threat to world peace as well.<sup>39</sup>

## Europe

In Europe, public opinion of the United States went into sharp decline following the Bush administration's decision to attack Iraq. For the years 2003–08, attitudes towards Washington improved minimally from time to time, but by and large continued to deteriorate. This trend was reversed with the election of Obama in 2008, causing significant improvements in European public opinion of the United States. However, whether out of disappointment

**Table 1: Confidence in Obama and approval of his foreign policy**

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
Trust in...	Obama <sup>1</sup>	FP <sup>2</sup>	Obama <sup>1</sup>	FP <sup>2</sup>	Obama <sup>1</sup>	FP <sup>2</sup>	Obama <sup>1</sup>	FP <sup>2</sup>	Obama <sup>1</sup>	FP <sup>2</sup>
<i>Europe</i>										
Britain	86	75	84	64	75		80	63	72	61
France	91	93	87	84	84		86	78	83	81
Germany	93	92	90	88	88		87	83	88	88
Greece							30	26	35	37
Poland	62	67	60	64	52		50	50	49	54
Turkey	33	34	23	17	12		24	20	29	20
<i>Asia</i>										
China	62	57	52	44	44		38	27	31	23
Indonesia	71	65	67	65	62				53	41
Japan	85	77	76	72	81		74	58	70	62
Pakistan	13	12	8	9	8		7	8	10	4

<sup>1</sup> % Confidence in Obama to do right thing regarding world affairs.

<sup>2</sup> % Approval of Obama's foreign policies.

Source: Pew Global Attitudes, 2009–13.

<sup>34</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's'.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Although the NSA leaks and the government shutdown occurred after the most recent polling, it is highly likely that both events will have sustained the trend of decreasing international approval of President Obama.

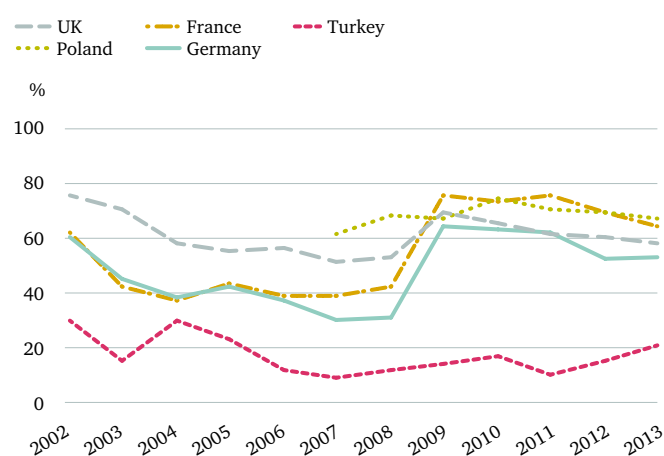
<sup>37</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's'.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> WIN/GALLUP International, 'WIN/Gallup International's annual global End of Year survey shows a brighter outlook for 2014: European version', 30 December 2013, [www.wingia.com/web/files/richeditor/filemanager/291213\\_EOY\\_release\\_2013\\_Western\\_Europe\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.wingia.com/web/files/richeditor/filemanager/291213_EOY_release_2013_Western_Europe_-_final.pdf); and 'WIN/Gallup International's annual global End of Year survey shows a brighter outlook for 2014: Asia and Australasia version', 30 December 2013, [www.wingia.com/web/files/richeditor/filemanager/291213\\_EOY\\_release\\_2013\\_Asia\\_and\\_Australasia\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.wingia.com/web/files/richeditor/filemanager/291213_EOY_release_2013_Asia_and_Australasia_-_final.pdf).

with President Obama or simply owing to a retreating wave of sympathy, attitudes towards the United States began deteriorating again from 2009. The United Kingdom remained relatively unaffected by these trends throughout the past decade. The Iraq war did not appear to tarnish America's popularity in the United Kingdom, nor did President Obama's election boost public opinion towards the United States. However, although favourable opinion of the United States has declined since 2009, attitudes remain far more positive than during the Bush presidency.

**Figure 2: Europe: favourable opinion of the US**



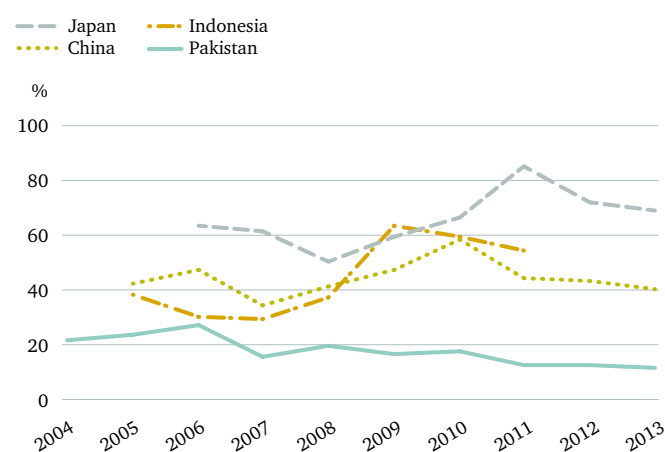
Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2002–2013 (no data available on Sweden, except 2007: 47%, no data available on Greece, except 2012: 35 and 2013: 39).

## Asia

As in Europe since 2003, Asian opinion of the United States has declined since approximately 2006. In another parallel to their European counterparts, Asians' views of America improved significantly with the election of President

Obama. Perhaps in response to unfulfilled expectations of Obama's presidency, attitudes towards Washington began to deteriorate again from 2009. Pakistan provides an exception among Asian countries, with opinion of the United States consistently low. The 2011 killing of Osama bin Laden, though condemned by most Pakistanis, has not led to changes in their opinions of the United States; they were low and remained low. In some countries, such as Japan and Indonesia, despite a recent phase of decline, the US is more popular today than it was for much of the century's first decade. Chinese opinion of the United States has fluctuated a little in recent years before starting to decline in 2010 when tensions with China's neighbours rose and the United States took a more assertive rhetorical (and at times active) stance. The US 'pivot' to Asia, announced in late 2011, does not appear to have had a significant impact on public views towards the United States.

**Figure 3: Asia: favourable opinion of the US**



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2002–2013 (no data available on Burma/Myanmar, no data available for India, except 2011: 41 and 2012: 41).

# 3. How Elites View the United States

## Europe

While there were some common themes regarding the United States across Europe in the elite opinions sought for this report, there was also much diversity. In some areas there appears to be a ‘new’ Europe/‘old’ Europe division, which in large part seems to stem from a historical memory of the United States and the role it played during the Second World War and the Cold War. The following themes are those that resonate most in the elite European essays.

### Historical moral leadership

What was vividly apparent in many of the elite essays, regardless of sector or nationality, was the strong sense of America’s historical ‘moral leadership’. A number of authors referred to America as a ‘shining city on a hill’. The memory of American leadership during and after the Second World War was strong; the Marshall Plan that was put in place to facilitate Europe’s recovery following the war was repeatedly invoked. These events combined with a strong sense from many authors that the United States and the ideals it represents were something to cherish and to aspire to. One indication of this sentiment is the fact that to many people on both sides of the Atlantic, NATO’s importance stems primarily from its character as an alliance of democratic states, rather than from facilitation of burden-sharing or protection from threats.<sup>40</sup> More broadly, to Europeans (and Asians), America continues to be a place that people want to visit, and where they would like to live and study.

“America was the world power that protected Europe from Hitler and Stalin and helped my country, Greece, to reconstruct after World War II, and to defeat the communist aggression through the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine. It was the country that my mother promised to take me to fix my front tooth, which had been broken by a German soldier’s boot in the last months of the Nazi occupation.”  
Private sector, Greece

This belief in an altruistic America during the early and mid-20th century was contrasted with disappointment with it today. There was a clear sense that since 11 September 2001 America had lost its way. Examples of this more recent behaviour referred to America’s perceived foreign policy mistakes under presidents Bush and Obama (e.g. Guantánamo, Afghanistan and Iraq) but also often mentioned domestic US policy (e.g. gun rights, attitudes towards immigration and healthcare). In European eyes, America’s internal policy decisions, ranging from the debate on abortion and gay rights to the pervasive acceptance of

guns on the streets and, for some, the continued application of the death penalty, were indications of America’s loss of moral legitimacy.

A second element perceived as indicative of America’s loss of its moral compass concerned not just what it was doing but also the manner in which it acted. The perceived unilateralism of the Bush years was strongly condemned.

“Under Obama, the US is less inclined to use its hard power, withdrawing its troops from conflict theaters and refraining from involvement in new conflicts. He is pursuing a more multilateralist approach, preferring to operate on the basis of realpolitik, reaching out to friends and adversaries alike.”  
Public sector, Turkey

The bottom line for many of these elites was that they liked the idea of America and the memory of what they associated the country with historically, but compared with present-day realities this idea was increasingly turning into a legacy of the past. At the same time, of those who noted this passing, many expressed a profound sense of regret for what had been lost but also much hope that the America of their memories could and would again return.

“An exasperated American friend fed up with the often facile criticism, exclaimed ‘you will miss us once we’re not there anymore!’ Which left me silenced for a moment until I spontaneously quipped ‘we miss you already!’”  
Public sector, Germany

“We would love to love America again.”  
Public sector, Germany

This sense of legacy was most notable in the Polish, British and German contributions, but it was also noted in some of the Turkish, French and Swedish ones. The memories and the connections, in particular among the British comments, reflected a set of common ‘values’ or a strength of American ‘values’ that appeared to be diminishing and reflected in a sense of America’s decline. These perceptions cut across all the sectors explored.

### American values

Despite the perceived demise of American values, their potency was still very vivid in a number of the elite essays. This was, perhaps predictably, particularly strong among the British contributors, many of whom felt that there was a ‘reflexive pro-Americanism’, which was, in the words of one commentator, ‘based on a complex mixture of sentiment, history, cultural affinity (a shared language is crucial) and hard-headed self-interest’.<sup>41</sup> But the strength and importance of American values were also identified by Swedes and Turks.

<sup>40</sup> GMFUS, ‘Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013’.

<sup>41</sup> Commentary from a media elite contributor in the United Kingdom.

“For years the US successfully portrayed itself as a beacon of freedom and justice [...] Unfortunately nowadays the emperor increasingly appears naked.

Think-tank/Academia, Greece

There was an automatic assumption that American and European values were synonymous. However, what was not explored in this study is whether the values are truly aligned or whether some of this disappointment from the European side might be to do with perhaps a divergence of values or priorities, such as security vs privacy, or stability vs liberty and freedom. (At the public level, results from the Transatlantic Trends survey in 2013 showed that there does appear to be a greater divergence between Eastern and Western Europe – with the former prioritizing security over liberty, for example – than between Europeans and Americans. On issues of privacy, there was a clear divide, however, between Europeans and Americans.)<sup>42</sup>

### The dichotomy of American words and deeds both foreign and domestic

The European elite essays identified what many perceived as the dichotomy of the United States, leading to a ‘love-hate’ relationship.

“A grossly simplified yet illustrative interpretation of Swedes’ perception of America might be: It’s the country we love to hate.

Private sector, Sweden

“We admire the US and yet we resent it. A British view of American power would say that it is vital to keep order in a disordered world, and then add in the next breath that the US is overmighty and clumsy in carrying out the task.

Media, UK

Elites not only identified the dichotomy (or, in the words of some, hypocrisy) in America’s foreign policy but also displayed a surprising level of attention to its domestic policies. For example, one issue that resonated with many was the perceived high levels of inequality that pervade parts of the United States. Some questioned how it was possible that one of the wealthiest countries in the world could accept such high levels of poverty in its midst.

“What puzzles many citizens and analysts is how a country where inequalities and poverty [are] so widespread, where the death penalty is still in use in many States (and where the right to abortion still debated), which let its soldiers loose in Abu Ghraib, allegedly had a policy of ‘renditions’ of prisoners to unsavoury regimes and has still not closed Guantánamo can present itself as the best example of modern liberal democracy in the world.

Think-tank/Academia, France

Inequality was identified as another sign of the loss of America’s moral leadership. This awareness of imbalances is likely to have been particularly stark during the period of this study, given not just the centrality of the inequality debate in the 2012 presidential elections, but also the spread of the Occupy movement beyond the United States into Europe and elsewhere at this time, and the broader perception of inequality that has risen in Europe since the global financial crisis. It is possible, therefore, that this sentiment would have been less powerful only a few years ago.

Other domestic issues that resonated strongly with elites across Europe ranged from abortion rights to the death penalty, gun rights, and rights for gays and lesbians. In most cases the views of Europeans tend towards a more liberal viewpoint than in the United States (although this is arguably changing as American demographics change).

This sense was pervasive across all the sectors surveyed, except the private sector. It appears that elite corporate leaders pay less attention to these issues with regard to the United States than those in other sectors. The only countries in Europe for which this dichotomy was not identified in any significant manner were Poland and Turkey.

In 2013, for the first time, a majority of Americans polled believed that their children were going to have a lower standard of living than they had.<sup>43</sup> Within the United States there appears to be a diminishing sense of the ongoing viability of the American Dream; the findings here suggest that this perception is also apparent in Europe.

### Fear of diminishing American influence

Elites in the Western European countries (the United Kingdom, Germany and France) suggested some fear that the United States was withdrawing from leadership of the world order or that, at a minimum, its influence was lessening.

“The US is seen by the elites and the broad public as the ultimate source of our security, even more than NATO as NATO without the US’s commitment and capabilities could, we fear, show itself to be more a political than a military pact. We feel that we need the US leadership and engagement – in the past, today and we will need it in the future.

Media, Poland

“The perception is of an America, if not withdrawing from the world, certainly taking two steps back.

Former public sector, UK

<sup>42</sup> While Europeans are pro-democracy, it is in Eastern Europe (specifically Romania, Slovakia and Poland) that stability is favoured over democracy. See GMFUS, ‘Transatlantic Trends 2013, Topline Data’, July 2013, <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2013/09/TT-TOPLINE-DATA.pdf>.

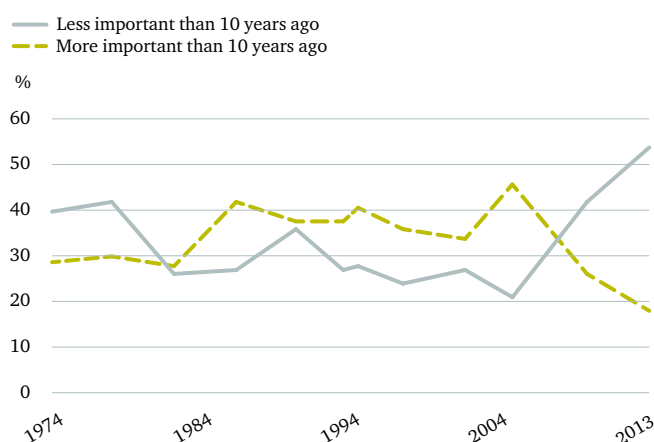
<sup>43</sup> Pew Global Research Center, ‘Global Attitudes Project’, 2013, Ch. 3, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/05/23/chapter-3-inequality-and-economic-mobility/>.



There was a belief that the United States might be entering a more inward-looking phase (as happened following a number of other more active military periods such as the Vietnam war and the 1993 Somalia intervention). America's recent rhetoric is supported by its actions (such as in Syria, Libya and Mali) and it is these actions that were largely identified as indicating a change of US position and attitude. It is telling, therefore, that perceptions of American power fell to a 40-year low in 2013.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 4: Views of US global power**

*US role today as world leader is ...*



Source: Pew Research Center, America's Place in the World 2013.

Interviews and the final roundtable reinforced this concern, with many questioning whether this perceived navel-gazing was a transitory phenomenon, perhaps related to Obama's presidency, or whether it was a broader and longer-lasting trend. The rhetoric from some in the Republican Party (such as Senator Rand Paul) suggests the latter.

Anxiety over America's changing role triggered some interesting responses. For example, Polish contributors expressed the sentiment, 'we don't need you; we have Europe'. Likewise Turkish elites shared a sense that Turkey could turn its back on the United States, and in lieu embrace Europe. On this point, it appears that Turkish elites are backed by public opinion, with a plurality among Turks (40%) feeling that their side of the transatlantic partnership should take a more independent approach.<sup>45</sup> However, this sentiment may be a reaction to perceived rejection by the United States rather than indicating a sincere belief in Europe being an equally strong alternative.

Reinforcing this sense of possible American lassitude has been the US 'pivot' to Asia. This was particularly identified in the Swedish elite editorials. The 'pivot' has led many

Europeans to ask whether the rebalance implies American disengagement from Europe. The Obama administration's attempts to alleviate these concerns appear to be finally finding some traction, although further clarification would probably be helpful (particularly in the context of budgetary changes).

Concern over American withdrawal comes at a time when many countries in Europe, still recovering from the 2008 recession, are finding their resources increasingly limited. But the sense of loss evoked by the scenario of an inward-looking America seems to go beyond the mere question of resource constraints, and touches upon Europeans' desire for a value-driven partner in the United States; a partner with whom much has been achieved over recent decades and without whose leadership much more would have been left undone. Interviews undertaken around this period suggest that some concern lies around the need to update many of the global governance structures, rules and regulations in order to reflect more recent needs and the emergence of new actors. The feeling that a strong and engaged United States is necessary to lead this process is accompanied by severe doubts over whether it will step up to drive this agenda forward. In the absence of any meaningful initiatives from Europe, there are few who believe that, without US leadership, it will happen at all.

“ I might equally be called as someone who is increasingly discouraged by the *insensitivity* that the United States administers its global heavyweight status, from that of a smart power to increasingly that of an elephant in a china shop. This is accompanied by an apprehension in the future of the international system and the values that will characterize such future in the event of US' weakening leadership and anchor status.

Think-tank/Academia, Turkey

### American decline debate

As mentioned earlier, there has long been a debate raging over whether the United States is in decline or not. Despite current high levels of attention on this topic, there were few references in the European editorials that supported the idea. While many (particularly in Poland and the United Kingdom) noted that the rhetoric of decline had returned, most commentators merely acknowledged the ongoing debate, often declaring it overrated.

“ American 'decline-ism' is likely seriously overstated.

Private sector, UK

<sup>44</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips, America's Place in the World 2013', <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/>.

<sup>45</sup> The same sentiment prevailed among pluralities of Americans (33%) and Europeans (42%). GMFUS, 'Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2013'.

While it would therefore appear that the sense of US decline might have diminished somewhat in recent months, it should be noted that these essays were written before the 16-day government shutdown that took place in October 2013. Interviews and discussions conducted since that time indicate that the rhetoric of US decline is back in force. As will be seen below, the declinist case remains much more prevalent among Asian elites.

### American entrepreneurship and innovation

Moving beyond the salience of American ideals and values, great attention was also paid to the enormous innovation and entrepreneurship that pervade the United States. Its creativity and its energy were highlighted.

“The American direct and pragmatic approach to doing business impresses me as much as the entrepreneurial spirit across the organization.

Private sector, Germany

There was significant admiration for these characteristics of American life and business, and they were identified as signs of the country's continued leadership and power. From the German perspective, they explain America's ability to constantly 'renew' itself, another sign of its continued primacy.

Identification of these strengths was not limited to the private sector, but ranged across all sectors and countries. It was shared not just by those directly in contact with American entrepreneurs or innovative technology, but rather indicative of a broader perception of America's exceptional talent in reinventing itself, even beyond business. The strength and pervasiveness of American technology companies from Apple to Google, Facebook and Twitter, some of the biggest global companies by net worth, perhaps indicate the reality behind this perception.

While greatest attention was paid to entrepreneurship, some emphasis was also put on the strength of America's economy and broader business sector. It is possible that this attention was a result of timing; when these elite essays were drafted, the US GDP growth rates were rebounding, leading to a strong sense of optimism in the United States, while rates in Europe continued to drag.

### The American political system

The American political system of three parts – the administration, Congress and the judiciary – is poorly understood by many elite Europeans.<sup>46</sup> Many authors noted that the lack of appreciation for the intricacy of the US

political system by their contemporaries would continue to be a challenge for the United States to overcome. The complexity of a government in which the president does not have the power to move forward certain policies (e.g. to close Guantánamo, set the budget ceiling or control education) is not well grasped. As a result, the president and the administration are perceived to be ineffectual, dishonest about their actions, or complicit in policies they have not initiated.

The other principal element that many Europeans noted about the US political system is its growing dysfunctionality and political polarization.

“There is a growing feeling even among ordinary Swedes that political chaos is becoming the normal state of US policy driven by [a] new level of partisanship in Congress.

Media, Sweden

This goes beyond the partisanship that is present during the election period. While the essays were written prior to the government shutdown, the mounting tension and the broader partisan rhetoric were highlighted. The system of checks and balances inherent in the US constitution is not well understood in Europe, which may result from the fact that most European political systems – even those with coalition governments – face very different challenges and complexities. For many Europeans the result is a belief that the US system may be broken (rather than merely dysfunctional).

### American foreign policy

Inevitably, a number of the elite contributions referenced elements of US foreign policy as having a fundamental impact on their perceptions of the United States. Predictably, these were often specific to the countries in question. However, some resonated more than others. US policies towards Afghanistan and Iraq over the past decade were identified across the board and without exception as mistakes, in particular with regard to how they were implemented.

“Especially, the repercussions of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars tainted the favourable public opinion of the United States in Turkey and revealed the limits of the American hard power.

Think-tank/Academia, Turkey

A number of the Turkish contributors suggested that US policy towards their country (and more broadly) was excessively focused on Islam and driven by a desire to promote 'moderate Islam' or was perceived to be 'Islamophobic'. It was through this lens that the United States approached the broader region and its relationships and priorities therein. Thus Turkey itself was also seen

<sup>46</sup> The lack of any mention of the federal-state divide suggests that this too is little understood.

with this in mind. It was one of the few countries in Europe where contributors referred to American military power and prestige (although all referred more generally to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan).

The German elite commentaries referenced the NSA revelations far more than those from other countries, a topic which clearly resonated with the public as well. This stems, no doubt, from the history of the Second World War and the memory of the Gestapo and Stasi.

“ Historical experience – the Gestapo, the Stasi – makes Germans particularly sensitive to such electronic infringements of our privacy.

Think-tank/Academia, Germany

To the Polish elites, America's visa policy triggered a strong sense of 'betrayal' following its support in Iraq and Afghanistan. Above and beyond, many expressed a sense that the United States was prioritizing the Obama administration's 'reset' with Russia. Taken together, these sentiments culminated in a view that the administration has failed to honour American promises.

The Greek contributions referenced America's lack of support during the country's economic troubles and also with regard to its policy towards the Greek-Turkish tensions. Moreover, many feel a lingering resentment towards the United States for its support of the military junta that held power in Greece in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Turkish contributors also suggested that, at least at the level of the general public, the United States was often perceived as omnipotent and pulling the strings behind the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. They largely noted that these sentiments, however irrational, were real and sometimes even encouraged or steered by the Turkish government.

“ Any domestic development that most Turks perceived to be against the political movement they support is easily treated to have a US component.

Think-tank/Academia, Turkey

That the United States has ultimate control over a situation or a government and therefore bears responsibility when events do not go as planned is a view that is sometimes expressed in a number of other countries and situations as well. Most recently this was witnessed in Egypt where the then US ambassador was accused by both the government and the opposition forces of pulling the strings of the other, and being responsible for various other injustices.

## Asia

There were fewer responses from Asian elite authors approached, so the results are less robust than those from Europe.

### American values and ideology

While a number of Asian elites – particularly in Burma, China and India – referred to American values, they did not show the same positive attitudes expressed by the Europeans (with the exception of American business values, which were considered in a favourable light). References in Asia to US values made far less mention of any perceived decline of moral legitimacy and the contrast between historical perceptions of US values and those of today was less pronounced. In Burma, on the other hand, there were frequent mentions of America as a 'beacon and crusader of democracy and freedom in the world' (albeit one that may be diminishing or that is less relevant in today's world) and views that the United States would 'uphold international norms, principles and rules'. There were references in the Burmese, Indian and Chinese editorials to the 'US dream' and, as with some of the European ones, America as a 'city on a hill'. One of the Indian elite editorials noted in particular that the Indian middle class looked up to the way of life in the United States.

“ Most of us want to dream an American dream and if possible migrate to the US to realize this dream.

Civil Society, Burma

At the same time, while there was far less emphasis on this, there were a number of references to a need for the United States to be more open and liberal; values that respondents hoped would be reflected in US policy.

A number of the Asian elites also noted that the United States had a very strong 'ideology', while one Chinese editorial suggested that the Chinese views of the United States are on the other hand, 'free of ideology'. (One should note that from the US perspective the opposite view is regularly taken.) In the words of a Japanese academic, the United States is 'a country characterized by power and ideology.' This perception has been created, according to this contributor, by America's history. It is hard however, to evaluate how these elites are defining ideology. In the Chinese case, it is probably used in contrast to the more well-defined state communist ideology. In the Japanese case, it appears to be based on the strong perceived religious fundamentals in the United States that the author believes define it.

### The American military and other sources of power

The US military was the focus of far greater attention in Asia than in Europe. America's military leadership and power was noted often by contributors from potential adversaries to the United States and allies (from China to Japan and Pakistan to India). While a number of other factors resonate in Asia, America's military capabilities are particularly potent. This is probably due, in large part, to the ongoing insecurity in the region, particularly in recent years, and the dependence (in some cases, through formal

alliances) of many of these countries on the United States for their security. Some reference was made, however, to the overuse of America's military to the detriment of other tools of US power, such as diplomacy and intelligence.<sup>47</sup> As with the European elites, there were many references to Iraq and Afghanistan, although the focus here seemed to be more on a military failure on the part of the United States rather than a moral one.

As in Europe, various aspects of America's economy and economic power were also highlighted positively. While Asia continues to experience strong economic growth, elite authors there also noted America's economy, its trade and investment as sources of its strength and power in the region (although Pakistani ones also noted America's high debt). And, as in Europe, a number of essays from Burma and China noted the strength of America's culture of innovation.

Soft power was also identified by a number of elites, including, for example, as embodied by America's academic establishments.

### American decline

The American declinist argument is far stronger in Asia (across most of the countries we studied) than it is in Europe. The Chinese elite contributions noted it in comparison with China's rising power, although expressing awareness that it would still take some time for China to surpass the United States (Pew polling shows that many in Asia and the United States think China's economy is already larger than that of the United States and, in response to a broader question of whether China will one day replace the United States as both an economic and strategic superpower, that publics are even more convinced of the US decline).<sup>48</sup> Others, however, noted American decline as a phenomenon independent of China's rise.

In many cases, perhaps associated with this sense of US decline, was a perception that America was becoming less reliable as an ally or, in the case of Pakistan, that the United States had let the country down and/or abandoned it.

“Pakistanis feel rightly or wrongly that the US let them down in the 1971 war with India, never supported them on Kashmir and left Afghanistan abruptly after the [former] Soviet Union withdrew.

Public sector, Pakistan

### Other issues

In line with some of the European elite voices, a number of the Asian elites perceived the United States as hypocritical. However, unlike in Europe, the focus was predominantly on America's foreign policy (there was very little attention in Asia to its domestic policy). Some noted that America was also overbearing.

“Diplomatically, the US has given a strong impression of over-confidence or even some kind of arrogance. In numerous talks, Washington had often emphasized its policy priorities rather than its counterparts' interest. Aside from aggressively defending its national interests, the US needs to act as a responsible player in the global community.

Media, China

This rhetoric is particularly interesting given the US efforts to urge China to be, in the words of then Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, 'a responsible stakeholder in [the international] system'.<sup>49</sup> Clearly, from the Chinese perspective, the responsibilities are reversed and the pressure hypocritical.

Like the Turkish contributors, those in Asia referred to America's power and influence over others. For example, one of the Burmese contributions noted how the United States had ultimate power to make Aung San Suu Kyi do its bidding. A similar sentiment was expressed about Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

“People have started to wonder what kind of game she [Aung Sung Suu Kyi] was told to play by President Obama.

Public sector, Myanmar

“When it comes to how influential the United States is in Japan, there is little doubt that it has a strong influence on Japan: its international relations, domestic economic and social issues, and even domestic politics. Thus the US leadership has suggested that the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe should streamline its relations with China and the Republic of Korea. This the government has certainly heeded.

Think-tank/Academia, Japan

<sup>47</sup> For more analysis on the perspectives of America's Asia-Pacific partners towards their security and the role of the United States, see *Asia-Pacific Security: A Changing Role for the United States* (Chatham House Report, April 2014).

<sup>48</sup> In 2011, 26% of Chinese thought that China was world's leading economic power, compared with 50% who thought that the United States was leading. More strikingly, in the United States, 38% saw their country as the world's economic leader compared with 43% who named China. Pew Global Research Center, 'China Seen Overtaking U.S. as Global Superpower'.

<sup>49</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, 'Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?', US State Department, 21 September 2005, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>.



## 4. How These Views Were Formed

As with the question of how people see the United States, there was much commonality of views with regard to what drives these perceptions. Many of the more important factors or levers of influence were similar across Europe and Asia.

### Personal experience

The most often noted factor among Europeans that affected how elites saw the United States was personal experience.

“ I spent eight years (1993–2001) in the US [...] at a time of growing prosperity (economic growth, full employment, balanced budget), lively political life (the Clinton years, welfare reform) and fascinating technological innovation (the internet revolution). I was amazed by the creativity, the energy and the openness of the American people. I was impressed by their media. I admired the way the politicians, the press, the Supreme Court and the people confronted head on tough issues like immigration, affirmative action, gender inequality, on which European societies are so tepid. Media, France

“ When I arrived in the country early in 2002, it was traumatised by 9/11 and responding with two military excursions into Afghanistan and Iraq. My perception of the country has been informed by these and other crises: Hurricane Katrina, super-storm Sandy and the 2008 credit crunch, and by the iconic election of an African-American president. I have also visited some 25 states, experiencing the everyday life of the people the length and breadth of the country. Public sector, UK

Most important was time spent in the United States, whether working, studying or visiting. More broadly influential was contact with Americans through the private sector or other areas such as politics or science. By contrast, this was rarely mentioned by Asians, with the notable exception of one Japanese author. This is particularly surprising in countries such as Pakistan, where the State Department visitors programme is strong and highly rated as influencing local views on the United States.

For those Europeans who have made repeated trips to the United States, there was also a strong sense of disparity between current and earlier trips. As with the sense of America as a historical moral leader, many held fond memories of the America that was, over the one that is today; today's experiences are not as positive as those in their memories.

“ In 1988 I went there [the US] for a conference as a student with an indefinite-length, multiple-visit visa. Nowadays, on each US visit, after hour-long queuing, I get photographed and fingerprinted with my biometric data enjoying an indefinite stay on a federal IT system. Think-tank/Academia, Greece

One of the formative elements of personal experience is the openness and acceptance that many of our contributors experienced in the United States and the warm-hearted welcome they felt they received from Americans. A strong sense that America would embrace diversity and other cultures, and America as a safe haven for outsiders, strengthened in part by its immigrant makeup, are sentiments are no longer felt so strongly.

“ Integration in both schools seemed easy, I felt the power of the big melting pot, which America had become for so many new arrivals.<sup>50</sup> Private sector, Germany

### Policy

Unsurprisingly policy has a strong role to play in affecting elites' views of the United States, particularly where that policy made a particularly direct or personal impact. For example, for many in Europe, US actions in the Second World War, the Marshall Plan and US support during the Cold War resonate deeply and have firmly placed the United States in people's hearts and minds. This is particularly true for those who experienced the US participation most personally or who have continued to maintain strong and diverse links, such as those in the United Kingdom, Poland and Turkey. Countries such as Sweden, for which the US role is more distant and intangible, are more attentive to current American policy.

While past policy is hugely powerful and creates a strong positive pull, more recent policy is well noted and often rather less positive (some of this could be due to the phenomenon in which things look better from a distance). Attention in Europe was, perhaps surprisingly, often focused more on global policy or policy towards another region (e.g. Iraq) rather than on local or regional policy.

There were exceptions to this, however. In Greece, much attention was paid to America's inadequate role in tackling its recent economic problems. In Poland, attention was local; while America's stand against communism was viewed with much sympathy, its more recent policies have been a great disappointment, with regard to US–Russian relations and to visas. Contributors from Poland as well as Sweden explicitly noted that it was not just the US foreign policy that counted, but also the instruments with which it was pursued (i.e. use of the military). Finally, Turkish contributors also emphasized in many cases the role that policy towards their country and more broadly Islam, today and historically, played in their decision-making *vis-à-vis* the United States.

<sup>50</sup> The author of the essay attended a public as well as a private school in New York as a child.

This attention to US global policy in Europe aligns also with the focus on America's domestic policy. As noted earlier, the dissonance in many cases over how Europeans see US domestic policy choices versus the perception of a fair, equitable and altruistic America was stark and indicated quite clearly how much attention is paid overseas to the internal politics of the United States.

In Asia, current policy was enormously influential in how elite perceptions of the United States were formed, while historical policy was rarely mentioned. Whereas in Europe (particularly Western Europe) attention was paid to America's global and domestic policy, in Asia the focus was more on the local and regional policy or, in the case of China and Pakistan, bilateral policy towards the country in question. In India, the area of interest was specific to US economic policy. This more narrow focus in Asia suggests that the United States might be able to target its policy more directly there than in Europe.

### Culture and media

Many contributors noted the power of American culture to affect how they and their peers saw the United States. American movies, television programmes and news media, along with American literature, were all noted repeatedly as important drivers of perceptions of the United States.

“The ‘good’ superpower carried a mystique, a glittering attraction for us the youngsters, through the films, the music, the universities, the skyscrapers, the cars, the t-shirts and blue jeans, the electric and electronic gadgets, the landscapes and of course the US dollars.

Former public sector, Greece

“The interest of Turkish youth in the internet, English language, Hollywood and the American movie industry has been enhancing the cultural intimacy between the two countries' youth. Besides, in many US universities, Turkish students are receiving both information and experience through their education, getting familiar with American culture and passing their knowledge and experience to our country. Undeniably, all these are cultural and social facts that make the two countries closer than ever before.

Public sector, Turkey

American academia, in particular its universities, garnered many mentions. Authors noted that in many cases they were educated in the United States and/or that they wanted their children (and their children wanted) to be educated in the United States. One author from Poland noted that this trend is changing in favour of European universities, however. This could in part reflect the visa changes that have taken place in the United States following the events of 11 September 2001 that have made

it harder for foreigners to get education visas or visas to stay on in the United States after they have finished their degrees.

**The powerful technological advantage that the United States has and its export of these new technologies were a potent element of how Europeans in many cases saw the United States and its ongoing strength.**

The US media received mixed reviews as a driver of perceptions on the United States. So too did the European media. A number of factors could explain this phenomenon. It is possible that the common perception in the United States that the media are increasingly partisan has started to spread to Europe and Asia also. This trend might further be explained by the decreasing readership that most mainstream media are experiencing around the world and by the fact that US media outlets have, in recent years, cut many of their international bureaus and staffing, resulting in a more US-centric coverage and analysis. Finally, the proliferation of communications channels globally will, no doubt, also be affecting the impact of the US media.

A number of contributors raised other cultural factors as playing a role, particularly for the younger generation. Sport and clothes played a stronger role for this age group.

### Economics and business

As noted, a number of authors identified American business and economic policies as having a strong role in driving perceptions. The powerful technological advantage that the United States has and its export of these new technologies were a potent element of how Europeans in many cases saw the United States and its ongoing strength. The continued presence of American technology companies (e.g. Apple, Twitter, Facebook etc.) among the top global companies by value, and their regular appearance in the media, are likely to support this trend.

Equally, the US economy and businesses played an influential role in parts of Asia, particularly in India, China and Pakistan. However, this does not appear to be the case in Japan, at least according to the essays. This might be due to the low degree of US investment in the country, the dependence of the Japanese economy on China, its current domestic focus on Prime Minister Abe's 'three arrows', and the strength of many Japanese companies, particularly in the technology sector.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Prime Minister Abe's 'three arrows' describe his economic reform policy including: a) aggressive monetary easing; b) expansionary fiscal policy; and c) reforms to promote private investment.

Likewise, American businesses played a strong role in influencing European and Asian views of the United States, whether it was the success and pervasiveness of American business internationally or the fact that many elites worked for US businesses or regularly came into contact with them. US foreign investment in a country is also a powerful driver (particularly in Greece).

### The president and cabinet

The only individual or institutional actor that was regularly noted in Europe and Asia was the US president.

“ [The] president of the US plays an important role as a determinant of pro/anti American attitudes [...] Intervention in Iraq and the Islamophobic rhetoric of George W. Bush negatively affected people's perceptions and Barack Hussein Obama was very popular once he was elected president.

Private sector, Turkey

President Obama and the values he represents were identified as an important factor in many of the essays.

In some cases (particularly Turkey and Poland) his rhetoric was viewed negatively along with his policy choices, or his inability or unwillingness to implement those choices, not least when the two were seen to diverge. A number of the editorials noted specifically that only the president had resonance in their countries.

Beyond the president, a few of the elite essays made reference to the secretary of state as also having impact, but otherwise, except in Asia (where the secretary of defense was mentioned once or twice), no other member of the cabinet gained a mention.

Few of the elite contributions attributed a significant role to other parts of government. Where they were noted, it was often in the context of lobbying groups and diasporas, and their influence on Congress and on policy-making. This was particularly true in Turkey, Greece, India and Pakistan, where lobbying groups tend to have significant influence on American policy through both the administration and Congress. Only in Turkey were senators noted as being important.

## 5. Elite vs Public Opinion

Bearing in mind that the size of the elite sample is not sufficient to be fully representative, comparing the qualitative data obtained from participants with the results of international public opinion polls provides some valuable insights. While there are certain areas of overlap, evidence suggests that there are significant divides in the countries surveyed in this report between elite and public perceptions of the United States.

### Europe

Contrary to the relatively unanimous sentiment expressed by European elites that recent US policy was generally disapproved of, polling data show that European publics are rather heterogeneous in their approval of Washington and its policies. In July 2013, around the time when the first essays were commissioned, approval rates of US foreign policy were above 80% in France and Germany, with the United Kingdom (61%) and Poland (54%) coming next.<sup>52</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, 43% of Greeks disapproved of America's policies in the world, surpassed by 61% of Turks who were of the same opinion, perhaps reflecting the more local attention to policy in these two countries. (Turkish public views of the United States began to decline in the wake of the Iraq war and never really recovered, suggesting that this policy in particular plays a potentially significant role in Turkish public attitudes.) As was the case with the respective elites, European publics were overwhelmingly against the use of drone strikes. Except for Sweden, for which no data were available, majorities in every European country surveyed, ranging from 51% in Turkey to 89% in Greece, disapproved of US drone strikes.<sup>53</sup>

As the elite essays from Germany made clear, the NSA affair, and the alleged surveillance of Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone, had severe implications on Germans' trust in the United States. When asked in November 2013, only 35% of Germans claimed to trust the United States, ranking it closer to Russia (trusted by 20%) than France (80%).<sup>54</sup> Approval for President Obama also declined (from 88% in April 2010 to 75% in September 2012). While there are indications that Germans reacted more strongly to the NSA affair than did citizens of other European countries, it should be noted that only four months earlier, according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, Germany had been the country with the highest approval of President Obama worldwide. Moreover, recent data (February 2014) suggest that the damage could last a while.<sup>55</sup>

There are splits between the views on America, America's foreign policy and on President Obama (see Table 1 on page 6). For instance, following his election in 2009, the president was more popular among both Europeans and Asians than the United States or US foreign policy. Expectations were extraordinarily high and inevitably were to be unmet (for example, the 2009 Pew survey found that Europeans expected Obama to solve climate change and bring peace to the Middle East). These attitudes have changed over the course of his presidency. In 2013, more Europeans, with the exceptions of Greeks and Turks, approved of Obama than of the United States as such. However, in Asia, approval rates for Obama fell behind those of the United States. At the same time, in China and Indonesia, America remained more popular than its foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> These disparities support the qualitative data expressed by elites who very much saw the distinctions between the role played by the president and that of American policy.

### When asked whether the 'spread of American values and customs' in their country was good or bad, majorities in all European countries expressed their disapproval.

Perceptions of American unilateralism appear to be as prevalent among European publics as is the case with the corresponding elites. When asked to what extent Washington took the interests of others into consideration, three out of four respondents in public surveys in Greece and Turkey answered 'not too much' or 'not at all'. In Germany, the results were spread more evenly, while majorities in France (65%), Britain (57%) and Poland (61%) perceived the United States as considerate.<sup>57</sup>

The most striking disagreement between European publics and elites concerned perceptions of American values. Whereas elites frequently admired American values and explicitly regretted what they perceived as their declining importance, public opinion was much more sceptical. When asked whether the 'spread of American values and customs' in their country was good or bad, majorities in all European countries expressed their disapproval. Poland was least apprehensive of American ideas and customs, with 53% of respondents opposing their spread. In France and Germany, whose elites appeared to regret the perceived

<sup>52</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'Global Attitudes Project, 2013', Ch. 2, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-2-global-opinion-of-barack-obama/>.

<sup>53</sup> Pew Research Center, 'Global Attitudes Project, 2013', Ch. 1, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-1-attitudes-toward-the-united-states/>.

<sup>54</sup> ARD-Deutschlandtrend, November 2013, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend2098.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> By February, the record-low November ratings had improved to 39%. ARD-DeutschlandTrend, 6 February 2014, <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/crbilderstrecke534.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Pew Global Attitudes 2009–13. For favourability towards the United States, see Pew 'Global Attitudes Project 2013', Indicator 1. <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/> (data available for 2002–13). For data on confidence in Obama, see *ibid.*, Indicator 6, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/6/>.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Indicator 4, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/4/>.



decline of American values the most, 71% and 66% of the respective populations viewed the spread of American ideas as 'bad'. Even in Britain, where elites lamented the demise of the 'special relationship' with the United States, 61% of the population opposed the spread of American ideas, compared with 32% in favour.<sup>58</sup>

In other areas, the gap between elite and public opinion was less pronounced. In accordance with the perception, pervasive among European elites, that the American political system was broken, many Europeans expressed a dislike of 'American ideas on democracy'. Opinion was divided on this question, however, with pluralities approving of the latter in Britain (45%) and Poland (47%), and majorities in France, Germany, Turkey, and Greece disapproving of Washington-style democracy.<sup>59</sup> A similar picture emerges with regard to 'American ways of doing business'. Whereas elites generally applauded America's capacity for technological innovations and self-renewal in Europe, there was a split among the general publics; whereas the Polish and British ones were more inclined towards American business, clear majorities in Germany (65%), France (62%), Greece (61%), and Turkey (74%) claimed they disliked the latter.<sup>60</sup> This attitude did not extend to technological innovation, however. As was the case with most elites, majorities in all European countries surveyed expressed admiration for American technological advances, Turkey once more proving the exception to the rule.<sup>61</sup>

## Asia

As with the case of Europe, there were areas of agreement and disagreement between Asian publics and elites. Not surprisingly, the United States is most popular among its Asian allies, such as Japan and South Korea. However, whereas the elites and publics throughout the rest of the Asia-Pacific have mixed views of it, there is little indication of ideological anti-Americanism, with Pakistan perhaps being the exception to the rule.

Among Chinese and Indian elites, American values were viewed with a degree of scepticism. Interestingly, whereas Indians by and large agreed with their elites,

there was substantial support for American ideas and customs among the Chinese public, as well as for American business customs. Moreover, 52% of Chinese public respondents expressed a positive attitude towards American democracy.<sup>62</sup> There was little difference between Japan's population and its elites, both of which showed an overall positive appraisal of American values. While a majority of Japanese welcomed American democracy, American business customs evoked a mixed response from the public and the elites, finding significant support (41%) but even more opposition (50%). American business customs were controversial in China and India as well, although they tended to be more popular among elites than the public.<sup>63</sup> The mixed response of Asian publics regarding American values and the positive evaluation of American democracy suggest that the Asian public sees the United States as less ideologically driven than do their elites.

Asian publics also appear to be less convinced about the 'American decline' theory than Asian elites. Whereas several Asian editorials entertained the notion that decline was occurring, public opinion was less inclined to believe this to be the case. In 2013, only 24% of those polled in Japan believed that China had surpassed, or would surpass, the United States as the world's leading superpower (this is probably in part due to Japan's more pessimistic view of China's economy, given its aging population and widening inequality gap). In Indonesia, the notion of China surpassing the United States had gained traction in recent years, but was believed to be no more than 39%. In fact, China's public itself was less confident about Beijing's trajectory than the public of France, with 66% of the former believing that China would eventually supersede the United States as the world's main superpower, compared with 70% in France.<sup>64</sup>

Simultaneously, the sentiment expressed in some of the essays that America had become less reliable as an ally was present among publics as well. Asked to what degree America considered others' interests, only 38% of Japanese respondents said 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal', as opposed to 59% responding 'not too much' or 'not at all'. In Pakistan, only 13% thought that America took account of their country's interests, confirming Pakistani elites' perceptions that America had abandoned them.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'Pew Global Attitudes Project 2012', Indicator 42, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/42/survey/14/>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., Indicator 43, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/43/survey/14/>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Indicator 44, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/44/survey/14/>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Indicator 46, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/46/survey/14/>. No data available on Sweden.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Indicator 43.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Indicator 44.

<sup>64</sup> Pew Global Research Center, 'Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2013', Ch. 4, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-4-global-balance-of-power/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Ch. 1, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-1-attitudes-toward-the-united-states/>.

## 6. Lessons for the US Government

There is no one view within the United States on what role it should play internationally. It is therefore unsurprising that there should be a variety of views on how foreign elites and publics across Europe and Asia see the country. The economic, demographic and political transitions taking place there will only add to the confusion and the multiplicity of messages being sent out.

While Americans work to establish some consensus on a way forward – whether isolationist, interventionist or something in between – they also need to understand the implications of how the rest of the world sees them and what that means for the efficacy and impact of American policy. The findings of this study lead to a number of implications, which are considered below.

### Hope for a return to a strong America

While it is interesting to note the attention that the European elites paid to America's historical moral leadership, it is perhaps more important to note their desire to see it return to its position as a leader and 'shining star' to which they and others can aspire. European elites want American moral leadership. They want a partner in which they and their populations can believe. Thus, despite the perception that it is increasingly ignoring its historical values, there is still much underlying support for a strong America. The United States would find many supporters, should it decide to reclaim moral leadership.

The pervasiveness of communications raises the question whether it is still possible to retain the kind of mystique that used to surround American presidents such as Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, whose images at the time supported Europeans' ideas of American morality. Given today's hyper-critical global media scrutinizing the president's every step and action, it may no longer be possible to return to a 'golden age' of American presidents.

The desire by European elites for US moral leadership also carries over into supporting American leadership in promoting the broader public good. The focus here was not on military assets (although other studies, interviews and polling suggest that this too is important to Europe) but broader activities (and again moral leadership) to support global governing institutions and leadership.

In Asia, the implications of the study are quite different. Asians appear to seek a different type of leadership from the United States. While the emphasis on the moral high ground

resonates in Europe, American values are often perceived as ideology, and through a largely negative lens, in Asia. The latter's elites, whether in countries allied to the United States or not, do not perceive American ideology (as they define it) as something to aspire to.

On the other hand, Asian elites (both in allied countries and in potential adversaries) tend to focus on America's military capabilities; American hard power seems to have greater value in Asia than does soft power (this is not necessarily true for other non-US powers). This would support the decision in 2012 by then Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to focus military assets on the Asia-Pacific region rather than on the Atlantic.<sup>66</sup> Quite apart from the strategic importance of the former with respect to security challenges, this approach also plays to each region's desire for a different type of US leadership.

### American reliability

Despite extensive attempts by the Obama administration to bring clarity to its policies, particularly the rebalancing towards Asia, Europeans and Asians noted the unpredictability or perceived unreliability of the United States. It is clear, however, that there are continued misunderstandings in Asia and Europe. There is a perceived divergence in public remarks by US leaders: on the one hand emphasis by senior members of the administration of steadfast support for their Asian friends; on the other a sense of ambiguity when speaking about specific actions. This perceived discrepancy was highlighted, for example, when then Secretary of State Clinton talked about the Scarborough Shoal in May 2012, or when Secretary Kerry talked about the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in April 2013.<sup>67</sup> In both cases the US position was ambiguous and seen by its allies as not sufficiently supportive of their stance against perceived Chinese encroachment.

This disparity is not restricted to American rhetoric; to some elites there also appears to exist a disparity between words and action. Despite assurances that the United States is not 'pivoting away from Europe', its withdrawal of several battalions and the priority that it appears to be placing on the trade agreement with Asia (the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP) above that with Europe (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP) send a different message. Such uncertainty is causing consternation in both regions and will potentially cause America's allies and partners to hedge against possible US backtracking.

<sup>66</sup> US Department of Defense, 'Panetta Describes U.S. Shift in Asia-Pacific', 1 June 2012, [www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116591](http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116591).

<sup>67</sup> 'US neutral in Scarborough standoff but will help upgrade Philippine Navy', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2 May 2012, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/35459/us-neutral-in-scarborough-standoff-but-will-help-upgrade-philippine-navy>; Jim Garamone, 'Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida after their Meeting', *American Forces Press Service*, 18 January 2013, [www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm); and 'Kerry spells out policy on Senkaku Islands', *United Press International*, 15 April 2013, [www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2013/04/15/Kerry-spells-out-policy-on-Senkaku-Islands/UPI-20751366006285/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2013/04/15/Kerry-spells-out-policy-on-Senkaku-Islands/UPI-20751366006285/).

## Fuzzy communication

The results from Europe make clear that any attempts to have a separate domestic and foreign communications strategy are futile. The internet and the proliferation of news channels, bloggers and other media outlets have ensured that information that previously would have reached a domestic audience only are now heard and reproduced around the world. Clearly, information can not only be accessed internationally (and in real time), but is also highly influential, as demonstrated by the continued interest in American affairs in Europe.

## Domestic policy is foreign policy

It has long been understood that foreign policy is domestic policy but, at least *vis-à-vis* Europeans, the opposite now appears true as well: domestic policy is foreign policy. Despite the institutional separation of domestic and foreign policy departments, US policy-makers need to understand that there is now little distinction in policy terms. It is entirely plausible today for actions of the Department for Health and Human Services to have a real and tangible impact on the work of the State Department. No longer can an administration hold one set of values (and take one set of actions) for a domestic audience and another for a foreign one. It is likely that a foreign audience, in particular a European one, will be less willing to accept such feats of political acrobatics.

## New non-state actors

Historically, people have tended to think of foreign policy from the perspective of the state: the role of the military, diplomats, foreign assistance etc. However, it is clear that in Europe and Asia other actors have become significant actors in influencing how the United States is perceived. In particular, the focus appears to be on the role of the private sector, as well as, to a lesser degree, academia.

Further, given the positive view that international elites appear to have regarding the American private sector (in particular entrepreneurs and technology companies), there is a strong argument to be made for government actions that would promote their prominence and support their outreach (from direct promotion to providing supporting regulations or opening up investment). Paradoxically, while academia was rated quite highly in Europe, it was less appreciated in Asia, despite the significant number of Asian students in the United States.

Media and culture did not seem to gain the same attention as the private sector, particularly in Asia. This goes against

much of the accepted wisdom regarding the power of Hollywood and of news outlets such as the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*.

From the perspective of the US government (or, in fact, any government) this poses various challenges. The democratic state by its very nature has but marginal control over non-state actors (e.g. through sanctions and other laws and regulations). Thus it is hard, if not impossible, to direct them towards a specific goal. Even if such authority could be built, it is possible that in so doing the perceived legitimacy and therefore power of these actors would be diminished. Thus while it is important to recognize the role of these actors, including in the policy process is difficult.

## Misunderstandings of American governance

American governance structures are badly understood abroad. The tripartite character of government, including checks and balances between the administration, Congress and the judiciary, appears to be largely unknown, even among policy-making elites. So too is the power of non-elected individuals from lobbyists to the wealthy. Equally, the division of responsibilities between the federal government and the states is hardly talked of at all.

**If negotiating partners cannot rely on the United States fulfilling its promises, then it will stop trusting and working with it. Under these circumstances it is hard to see how countries will still follow the United States.**

The repercussions of this can be quite significant. The often slow and incremental process of policy-making in the United States was deliberately built into the system, but from the outside is often perceived as dysfunctionality. The current political partisanship, with its capacity even to bring government to a halt (as seen in October 2013), while worse than ever before, is in many respects a byproduct of America's politics, and should be seen as a manifestation of current challenges rather than as implying a broken system. However, foreign audiences do not see it this way. They interpret inaction as evidence that the US system is fundamentally broken and/or that the president is unable or unwilling to carry through his promises. This adds to the sense of a waning or unreliable America and thus of an America facing a loss of power.

This plays out particularly strongly in negotiations on issues such as trade. If negotiating partners cannot rely on the United States fulfilling its promises, then they will stop trusting and working with it (this may well play out in

the coming months with regard to the TPP and the TTIP). Under these circumstances it is hard to see how countries will still follow the United States.

## Hard vs soft power

In Europe, attention appears to be focused on American soft power, while in Asia it is focused more on hard military power. Leadership in Europe is centred on the idea of American values, while that in Asia is directed towards American (military) strength. This is probably in large part related to both the strong alignment of values between the United States and Europe and the greater perception of traditional security threats in Asia (notwithstanding Russia's recent actions in Ukraine). However, it does have implications for the application of US assets in different regions; implications that are reinforced by the nature of the security interests, challenges and opportunities that the United States faces in the two arenas.

This values vs military strength balance could also play out with regard to how views of the United States are formed. Europeans rate highly the importance of visiting the United States or working with or knowing Americans or US companies. Such people-to-people exchanges have a huge impact on how elite Europeans view America. In Asia, this dynamic seems to be far less powerful. It is not clear whether this is due to the far greater extent of exchanges between Europeans and Americans or whether there is a concrete difference in the importance that Europeans and Asians place on personal relationships.<sup>68</sup> An argument could be made that providing more access for Asians to the United States could positively impact attitudes towards that country.

## American decline is not irreversible

Perceptions of US decline are not fixed. Europeans see the declinist argument as overrated, while Asians, perhaps because of their proximity to China and their greater focus on hard power, find it more tangible. European attitudes towards decline could be partially related to the importance accorded to American values. Consequently, then, Asian attitudes could be the result of a focus in Asia on hard power; in this respect, relative to other countries in the region, that of the US is declining. Such perceptions of decline can have significant implications for the influence and leverage of the United States on its allies and friends as well as its adversaries.

## People have long memories

America often prides itself on its ability to move on, to innovate and to change, and others recognize and value these characteristics. Where it serves their interests, the United States and its citizens quickly get over conflicts to work with their former adversaries (e.g. Germany after the Second World War and Vietnam after the Vietnam war). But it appears that others in Europe and Asia have far longer memories. This can be either a positive or a negative factor, depending on America's historical reputation in a given country. From a policy perspective, however, American policy-makers need to understand that views are slow to change and memories are long; other countries are not so ready to forgive and forget, nor to put current interests over historical memories.

<sup>68</sup> Given cultural sensitivities in Asia, it seems likely that the differences noted between Europeans and Asians regarding the power of personal relationships are more to do with access than anything else.

# 7. Policy Recommendations

Notwithstanding the limited sample size of this study, particularly in Asia, some initial policy prescriptions can be drawn from the results.

## 1. Engage new actors

Non-state actors clearly have a strong influence on international views of the United States. This is particularly the case with the private sector, notably technology companies and entrepreneurs, given the positive regard in which many elites hold them. A balance needs to be reached between cooperating more closely with these actors and maintaining the distance that ensures they continue to be seen as independent (which is one aspect of their legitimacy).

Some challenges and opportunities (such as cybersecurity) lend themselves to, or demand, working more closely with non-state actors. As Hillary Clinton noted in October 2013, 'We are never going to deal with the problems of cyber security unless there is a partnership between business and government.'<sup>69</sup> What is clear from the results of this study, however, is that government agencies need to find ways to deliberate more effectively and strategically about the exact role such organizations (whether media, business, NGO, academic or other) or particular individuals may play, as well as to understand where non-state actors can have more influence than a state actor.

While collaboration has dangers, this suggests that, to the extent possible, the government should enhance policies that support engagement by US non-state actors abroad. This could range from expanding trade agreements to implementing new visa rules or achieving common regulatory standards that support investment. These actions need to be prioritized.

## 2. Open visa rules

Following the events of 11 September 2001, US visa regulations became more restrictive. While such strictures have, over the past decade, started to relax again, it remains difficult and/or time-consuming for many visitors to come to the United States, particularly from those countries with which it has troubled relationships or where it has concerns over visa and passport procedures. However, particularly in the first case, it is precisely citizens from these countries who need to be encouraged to visit the United States. As the results in Europe made clear, such visits are one of the strongest positive drivers of foreign elite perceptions of the United States. Finding ways to relax or facilitate access is thus a vital part of changing attitudes towards America.

State Department programmes that facilitate such travel have long been considered among the most successful.

## 3. For Europe, recognize the overlap of domestic and foreign policy messaging

In Europe, attention to US policy encompasses the realm of both foreign and domestic policy. There is little distinction between domestic, local, regional or global policy: all are watched and assessed. This needs to be reflected in the approaches and messages that the United States sends. There is a complex and nuanced understanding in Europe of the United States and so changing views will require a comprehensive programme of action.

It is important to note here that the convergence of domestic and foreign policy is only apparent to European elites. This is not the case in Asia (at least according to our results).

## 4. Focus on local policy in Asia and global policy in Europe

In Asia, attention is on local or regional policy. While much focus has been put, for example, on the effect that resolving the Middle East peace process might have in the Islamic world, this study's results suggest that elites in Asia are far less concerned with these broader issues than with local policy, such as resolving India–Pakistan tensions. This potentially reduces the complexity of decision-making with regard to policy in this region.

On the other hand, in Europe policy attention is global (perhaps in part owing to the more global nature of European interests). This significantly expands the complexity of policy-making but at the same time potentially raises the number of levers the United States has at its disposal to affect perceptions. It does mean, however, that European attitudes are far more nuanced and liable to react to small changes in US policy around the world. Thus the repercussions of certain policy decisions can cause a significant change among European elites.

## 5. The messenger matters

The messenger matters, particularly in Asia. If the US government wants a policy or statement to resonate in Asia, it needs to be announced by the president. Far less attention is paid to other leading cabinet members (the secretary of defense and secretary of state are the only other relevant actors, although of far less importance). And policy needs to be backed up all through the chain from assistant secretary to secretary of state and the White House. If further evidence were needed to support

<sup>69</sup> Hillary Clinton, 'Chatham House Prize: In Conversation with Hillary Rodham Clinton', 11 October 2013, Chatham House, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Chatham%20House/111013ClintonFull.pdf>.



this conclusion, the significant negative Asian response to President Obama's absence at the 2013 APEC meeting should be sufficient.<sup>70</sup> Thus, depending on the importance of a given message, it is vital to devise a clearly defined communications strategy, including attention to the question of who will be the messenger.

In those cases with particular political resonance in the US (e.g. Turkey, Greece, India and Pakistan), attention is also paid to lobbyists and the diaspora. While this does not necessarily indicate an understanding of the distinctions between Congress and the administration, it is worth noting that some members of Congress are watched and listened to internationally on specific issues. This can, of course, be both a help and a hindrance.

## 6. Explain the tripartite government structure

Given the current low level of understanding of the three parts of the US governance structure, it is perhaps unsurprising that when the president does not follow through on a pledge, many foreign elites interpret this as indicative of an unreliable America and one that cannot be trusted. This has significant implications for trust in the United States and a belief that its promises will not be kept. Its ability to bring friends and allies on side, or deter adversaries from taking actions against its interests, will be directly related to the credibility of the president's word.

This lack of understanding therefore needs to be resolved. It is vital that the US administration, government entities and others more clearly lay out how the three parts of the US governance structure work together and the limitations inherent in it. Increased clarity in this area could have significant repercussions in a number of policy areas, including trade negotiations and other bilateral deals, as well as broader multilateral or plurilateral agreements.<sup>71</sup>

## 7. Reinforce American values

The perception that the United States lives by a higher moral code is swiftly diminishing, brought down by many years of perceived disparity between words and deeds, or between what the United States does internationally and what it does domestically. However, particularly in Europe, the importance of those values and the role they play in reinforcing American leadership is great. In Asia, more care needs to be taken as 'Western values' are often contrasted with 'Asian values' and considered to be foreign, 'imperial' attitudes.

As noted earlier, the United States needs to bridge the perceived divide between its foreign and domestic policy. The link between them is strong in Europe and policy-makers need to understand the consequences of action in one area for the other.

The dissonance that many elites in Europe (and perhaps elsewhere) feel between US rhetoric and actions is resulting in a dip in the desire for American leadership. A loss of American leadership will inevitably lead to a loss in American power. Thus, it is vital that the link between America's words and its deeds are brought closer together.

**The dissonance that many elites in Europe feel between US rhetoric and actions is resulting in a dip in the desire for American leadership. A loss of American leadership will inevitably lead to a loss in American power.**

Finally, while President Bush's focus on democracy promotion was sometimes ridiculed, the focus on regaining lost ground regarding moral leadership is an important one. The United States needs to put Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo behind it and to be seen again to condemn publicly torture and to return to the moral high ground. Given political resistance, this will be tough to do in the case of Guantánamo. However, this issue resonates internationally as a broken promise and resolving it would do much to improve America's reputation abroad.

## 8. Hard power in Asia, soft power in Europe

Asian elites focus on America's hard power while Europeans crave America's soft power. This provides an opportunity to focus the two forms of leverage in different directions. This also supports the challenges faced by the United States, with a greater focus on security in Asia while Europe continues to be a region of potential opportunity.

America's military policy appears to be reflecting this split already, as the division of America's military might moves towards a 60:40 split from the current 50:50 division towards the Pacific and Atlantic respectively. This policy may be reinforced by broader policy-making (i.e. diplomatic and economic) as well as rhetoric. However, following Russia's actions in Crimea, there might be more sensitivity

<sup>70</sup> For a Chinese view, see 'Obama's absence a loss for APEC economics: Chinese business community', Xinhua, 7 October 2013, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-10/07/c\\_132777224.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-10/07/c_132777224.htm); and Martin Khor, 'Obama's absence intensely felt at APEC summit', *InDepthNews*, 17 October 2013, [www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1836-obamas-absence-intensely-felt-at-apec-summit](http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1836-obamas-absence-intensely-felt-at-apec-summit).

<sup>71</sup> For example, many in Asia did not focus on how the administration's inability to get Congress to approve trade promotion authority was going to affect the course of the negotiations on the TPP.

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in Washington to downsizing its forces in Europe too much. This would support the argument that European ‘distractions’ often prevent the United States from turning to the Pacific.<sup>72</sup>

### 9. Explain the Obama doctrine

The president and his senior foreign policy staff need to explain more clearly to the international community America’s broad foreign policy strategy and doctrine. There is enormous uncertainty about what it is trying to do internationally and how it is likely to act. And this uncertainty

is leading to confusion, a lack of confidence and tension between the United States and some of its allies and friends.

While it is clearly not the case that the president can guarantee future American policy choices with any specificity, nor set one policy that would meet all situations, providing some broad guidelines that would minimize this uncertainty would be a positive step forward. Understanding when and how the United States might act, or what factors will enter into its decision-making process, could alleviate some of these concerns.

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<sup>72</sup> Goldgeier, ‘It’s Time for Europe to Look after its Own Backyard’.

## 8. Conclusion

It is common to hear the view expressed that ‘perception is reality’. This study explores the perceptions of elites in Europe and Asia and draws some clear conclusions that can inform American policy-makers as they rethink the country’s global role. How the United States is viewed has significant implications for its ability to influence others overseas. And improving its understanding of these perceptions and how they are formed can provide clues as to how better to engage its power to be more effective.

What is clear from the results of this study is that there is no universal interpretation of the United States. Nor, it appears, is there a universal view of what others want from the United States. This mirrors the reality that there is no one view in the United States as to what it should be or how it should act internationally. The perceptions of the United States are often quite different, depending on whether they are from inside or outside the country. Given this diversity, there is no one ‘right answer’ for the United States. However, what is clear from the results here is that there are some common understandings and perceptions across particular regions. These varying perceptions can be utilized if understood. At a minimum, understanding them can help to explain and predict why nations sometimes react in the way that they do.

For policy-makers what is perhaps most important to remember is that it is often not the policy towards a particular country that is the most potent or powerful cause of its views towards the United States. Elites will often consider US policy more broadly towards the region or even globally; and elites from Europe appear to be almost equally focused on US domestic policy. But policy itself appears to be only one of many factors affecting perceptions; the president, culture, how policy is implemented, history and businesses all have significant roles to play. This provides more space for manoeuvre for the United States, but raises the complexity significantly.

It is also worth noting that sometimes just explaining better how the system of government of the United States works and why, and how this affects what it does, could go a long way to alleviating some of the tensions and misunderstandings that arise.

Finally, today’s American policy-makers are building on a strong base. Memories of the United States and its role are robust and largely positive. These underlying sentiments are powerful. Particularly in Europe there remains a strong hope that the value-driven America of people’s memories will return; there is a desire for American leadership again. The United States should work hard to ensure that this hope is not lost and American leadership is not relinquished – it might be difficult to restore it.



# Appendix: Country and Sector Views

## Key points of country views

	Elite perceptions of the United States	How elite perceptions are formed
<b>Europe</b>		
France	<p>The ‘hypocrisy’ of the United States in cases such as Abu Ghraib and its domestic inequalities distress the elite.</p> <p>It is, on the other hand, impressed by the United States’ economic and business strength and its creativity.</p>	<p>Views of the United States are inspired primarily by personal experience as well as that of friends.</p> <p>American culture, particularly Hollywood and media, influences the assessment.</p> <p>The elite, moreover, feels a lingering gratitude towards the United States, which is rooted in the Cold War legacy.</p>
Germany	<p>As a result of the Abu Ghraib case, NSA data mining and post-9/11 developments, the elite has started to question the United States’ legitimacy.</p> <p>The United States is increasingly perceived as inward-looking and bogged down in domestic political gridlock.</p> <p>The elite continues to admire the United States for its ability to ‘renew’ itself, including its ability to be self-critical and entrepreneurial.</p>	<p>Personal interaction, time spent living in the United States and the historical legacy have been particularly influential in shaping perceptions.</p> <p>The US president and US culture, moreover, have a day-to-day impact on perceptions.</p>
Greece	<p>Perceptions of the United States are positively influenced by its entrepreneurial abilities.</p> <p>The negative historical legacy of the American support for the Greek military dictatorship continues to affect Greek analysis.</p> <p>Current US foreign policies, such as the perceived lack of support during the economic crisis, the United States’ position on the Cyprus dispute and its broader Middle Eastern policy, negatively impact opinions.</p> <p>Attention is paid, moreover, to US domestic policies such as gun laws, prison conditions, Guantánamo and the use of drones. These appear to conflict with US intellectual life.</p>	<p>Past American policies towards Greece and the region continue to shape perceptions and are reinforced by Washington’s current foreign policy.</p> <p>The elite further draws on the experiences of compatriots living in the United States when formulating its opinions.</p> <p>American culture and business, particularly investment, are strong positive influences.</p>
Poland	<p>Assessment of the United States has increasingly been negative. There is a sense of ‘betrayal’ and ‘disappointment’ stemming from the perceived lack of US appreciation for Poland’s support in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the light of Polish sacrifice in these conflicts, the United States’ restrictive visa policy has become a sticking point. As a result, the EU has to some extent replaced the United States as the ‘dream’ destination.</p>	<p>Past and current policies significantly affect perceptions of the United States.</p> <p>Particularly among the younger generation, culture, sport, education and technology have become an influencing factor.</p> <p>The US president plays some role in inspiring views.</p>
Sweden	<p>US power is perceived to be declining owing to foreign policy failures (Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan) and to domestic challenges (failure of social safety net, political dysfunction, inequality).</p> <p>Much attention is paid to the Asia pivot.</p> <p>The US is increasingly perceived as erratic, which makes it more difficult for the elite to support the United States today.</p> <p>Common values, however, continue to cement the relationship.</p>	<p>When assessing the United States, the elite focuses in particular on current, rather than past, US foreign policy.</p> <p>Media, culture and American acquaintances further contribute to the articulation of views.</p>
Turkey	<p>US values, particularly its openness, exert a strong pull. US foreign policy developments have, however, given rise to a sense that these values are declining.</p> <p>Negative perceptions of the United States tend to be rooted in Washington’s Middle Eastern policy and its approach to Islam.</p> <p>There is a sense that the United States is omnipotent and pulling the strings in Turkey. Even though the elite recognizes the irrationality behind this reasoning, it often views the United States as responsible for negative developments in the region.</p>	<p>Recent US policy decisions have a strong effect on the elite, while the youth are more influenced by culture and their personal experience from studying in the United States.</p> <p>The US media, the president and to some extent other senior foreign policy officials in the administration and Congress shape perceptions.</p> <p>Greek, Jewish and Armenian diasporas and lobbies in the United States and their perceived influence on US decision-making are creating a negative perception.</p> <p>Strong steers further originate from Turkish media and political leaders.</p>
UK	<p>There are perceived to be major policy dichotomies in the United States regarding domestic (e.g. poverty, inequality, fundamentalism) as well as foreign (e.g. Guantánamo, Iraq) policies, and challenges in the political sphere (e.g., gridlock and polarization as well as the pervasive role of money in politics).</p> <p>There is a sense of US decline, which, however, is estimated to be overstated.</p> <p>While the elite admires US economic strength and entrepreneurship, it also sees an egotistical and arrogant America. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom continues to be reflexively pro-American, primarily as a result of the two countries’ historical connection.</p>	<p>Analysis is strongly influenced by US policies and how they are implemented. The American political scene, in general, is closely watched. Thus the president and other high-profile members of the administration influence perceptions.</p> <p>American culture, particularly television, films and literature, shape views.</p> <p>The sense of shared values and identity, moreover, is a strong factor underpinning assessment. Historical legacy continues to play a role, although one of diminishing importance.</p>

	Elite perceptions of the United States	How elite perceptions are formed
<b>Asia</b>		
Burma	<p>The United States has represented a beacon of freedom and democracy, but this era is drawing to a close.</p> <p>The elite has high expectations of the United States and believes that it has good intentions; it also perceives some US policies as hypocritical, however.</p>	The image of the United States is largely shaped by its policies as well as the US president.
China	<p>The United States is viewed as the world leader, which has started to embark on a path of decline.</p> <p>There is a strong emphasis on the strength of the US economy, its innovation and its values.</p> <p>The US military continues to inspire awe, although it is believed that it should be used in a more responsible manner.</p> <p>A strong sense of competition permeates the Chinese narrative.</p>	<p>US policy towards China and the broader region as well as its implementation play an important role in determining perceptions.</p> <p>US business is influential in shaping attitudes.</p>
India	The middle class looks up to the United States and continues to believe in the 'dream'. But the political community is more sceptical.	<p>Opinions are strongly influenced by interpersonal contacts as well as the Indian diaspora living in the United States.</p> <p>The power of American businesses, trade and investment is an influential factor.</p> <p>The US government plays a lesser role in affecting Indian perceptions.</p>
Indonesia	The elite looks to the United States as a military and security force in Asia, particularly as a counterweight to China.	US security policy and to a lesser extent the president and senior officials are significant in affecting views.
Japan	<p>The image of the United States as a guarantor of security is paramount. Memories of a 'shiny, modern' America linger on, but thoughts of its decline and perhaps unreliability are increasing.</p> <p>There is a strong sense that the United States is driven by ideology but this is being questioned.</p>	<p>US policies, particularly security policy, and senior US officials are highly relevant in affecting Japanese perceptions.</p> <p>Personal experiences, moreover, influence how the US is viewed.</p>
Pakistan	<p>A limited number of elite members, mostly educated professionals, view the United States in a positive light. People with a religious, business, security or media background, however, hold a negative opinion of the United States because of its perceived anti-Muslim stand.</p> <p>Pakistanis tend to view the United States as being driven predominantly by self-interest. As a result, there is a sense of betrayal.</p> <p>The United States is perceived as excessively interventionist and as relying heavily on the military instead of intelligence and diplomacy.</p>	<p>US policies, politics, political groups (e.g. lobbyists, the president and Congress) and American business contribute to the formulation of views.</p> <p>Perceptions are formed by the media and military rather than the government.</p>

## Key points of sector views

Sector	Elite perceptions of the United States	How elite perceptions are formed
<b>Europe</b>		
Academia/ Think-tank	<p>Strong sense of the dichotomy between the values the United States espouses and its domestic and international actions.</p> <p>The United States is believed to be in moral and political decline, and its behaviour is considered insensitive. Consequently, its power is seen as waning.</p> <p>The United States, however, continues to be viewed positively for its ability to innovate as well as its creativity technology and business.</p> <p>There is a love-hate relationship with the United States.</p>	<p>Western European perceptions are based primarily on travel and living experiences in the United States.</p> <p>In Eastern Europe, opinions are shaped more by US policies and policy choices.</p> <p>President Obama as well as culture, technology and business are generally influential factors.</p>
Private sector	Historically, perceptions of US values were positive. These high opinions are now falling, however. The United States continues to be appreciated for its social resilience, diversity and economic abilities, but American policies make it hard to support the United States (particular focus in Poland). It is believed to be declining without knowing it yet.	Several factors influence perceptions, ranging from American culture, foreign policy and media to interaction with American companies and individuals, and American history. American officials, in contrast, were rarely mentioned.

## Elite Perceptions of the United States in Europe and Asia

### Appendix: Country and Sector Views

Sector	Elite perceptions of the United States	How elite perceptions are formed
Public sector	<p>There is much focus on the dichotomy of the United States (strength, yet also weakness in terms of inequality and political partisanship), and a sense that America was strong once but that it is diminishing now.</p> <p>US business, entrepreneurship and markets continue to garner positive reviews. Regarding adherence to its values, positive feelings towards the United States are diminishing.</p>	<p>Much attention is paid to past and current US policies, as well as how they are implemented today.</p> <p>The president, political parties and Congress as well as culture are also important (particularly in Turkey and the United Kingdom).</p>
Media	<p>The weaknesses of American domestic policies and politics – particularly disappointment with the political dysfunction, gun policy and attitudes towards abortion – have a particular impact.</p> <p>America's foreign policy – NSA, Guantánamo, Iraq and Syria – have likewise created a sense of American decline.</p> <p>The remnants of pro-Americanism largely stem from historical links and memories, American vibrancy, entrepreneurship and philanthropy.</p>	<p>Most views were generated by US culture and media, but the president and personal experience also play a strong role.</p> <p>Few references were made to policy (except in Poland). The British media are also focused on historical links.</p>
<b>Asia</b>		
Academia/ Think-tank	<p>American values and ideology are viewed as something to aspire to. The United States continues to be viewed as a 'city on a hill'. There is, however, also increasing uncertainty about what the future holds, about America's intentions and about its possible hypocrisy. In this regard, there is a certain sense of American decline.</p>	<p>There seems to be a focus on American policy in the region when formulating opinions. Some also identify people-to-people exchanges and personal experience.</p> <p>In Indonesia and Japan, the president and senior officials play an important role.</p>
Private sector	No identifiable common themes	No identifiable common themes
Public sector	No identifiable common themes	No identifiable common themes
Media	No identifiable common themes	No identifiable common themes

### The Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation ([www.SNF.org](http://www.SNF.org)) is one of the world's leading international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and medicine, and social welfare. The Foundation funds organizations and projects that exhibit strong leadership and sound management and are expected to achieve a broad, lasting and positive social impact. The Foundation also seeks actively to support projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as effective means for serving public welfare.

From 1996 until today, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation has approved grant commitments of \$1.39 billion/€1.06 billion, through 2,604 grants to nonprofit organizations in 110 nations around the world. Excluding the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), the Foundation's funding is equally divided between grants in Greece and international ones.

The Foundation, concerned with the continuing socio-economic crisis in Greece, announced in January 2012 a grant initiative of additional \$130 million (€100 million) over three years to help ease the adverse effects of the deepening crisis. Since then, and

as part of the initiative, the SNF has committed grants totaling \$100 million (€77.2 million) in support of numerous not-for-profit organizations around the country.

In October 2013, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation announced a new long-term initiative, Recharging the Youth, to help create new opportunities for Greece's younger generations. The Foundation is committing €100,000,000 to help the future prospects of young people, who are severely impacted by critically high unemployment rates, currently exceeding 60%.

The Foundation's largest single gift (\$796 million/€566 million) is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in Athens. Construction works at the site have already begun. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation firmly believes that the project is of national importance, even more so under the current socio-economic conditions. It remains a testament and a commitment to the country's future, at a critical historical juncture. It is also an engine of short- to mid-term economic stimulus, which is essential under the current circumstances.

#### About the US Programme

The US Programme at Chatham House (London, UK), provides analysis on the changing role of the US in the world. Building on the independent, international reputation of Chatham House, the programme provides a unique external perspective on the US. The programme aims to:

- develop a contextual understanding of the transformations taking place within the US and internationally, to analyse how they affect US foreign policy;
- offer predictions on America's likely future international direction;
- influence responses from allies and others towards the US;
- highlight to American policy-makers the intended, and unintended, impact of their policies overseas.

The programme comprises both in-house staff and an international network of Associate Fellows who together provide in-depth expertise in both geographical and thematic areas.

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