

Most People Think Their Nation's Foreign Policy Is Morally No Better Than Average: Global Poll

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College Park, MD—The world is full of nationalistic people certain that their country is morally superior to others, right? Actually, a new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 21 nations around the world finds that people can be remarkably modest.

Asked to assess the morality of their nation's foreign policy, in 19 out of 21 nations the most common answer is that their nation is about average or below average.

In the United States, about half (49%) say the morality of US foreign policy is average with another 16 percent saying it is below average. Just 24 percent say it is above average.

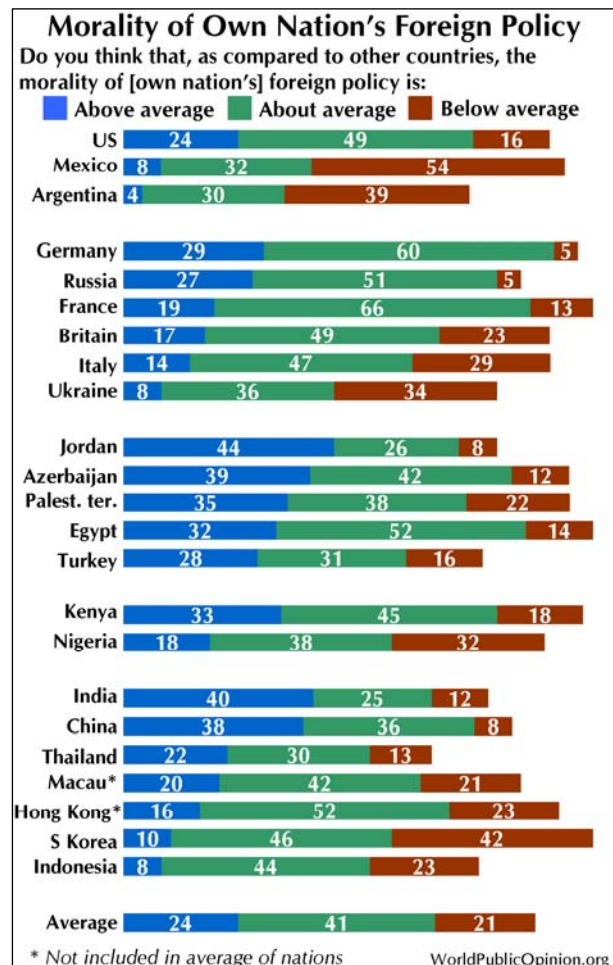
Among Russians, 51 percent say the morality of their foreign policy is average, while 5 percent say it is inferior. Twenty-seven percent say it is superior.

In China, a relatively large 38 percent say their foreign policy is morally superior, but more say that it is either average (36%) or below average (8%).

The British are the most skeptical among the major powers, with more saying their nation is below average (23%), than above average (17%), though most say it is average (49%).

France has the largest percentage of all nations polled saying that France is average (66%), while slightly more say it is above average (19%) than below average (13%).

Across all nations, the most common answer is that their nation's foreign policy is about average, with 41 percent



giving this response. The view that their nation is above average is only slightly higher than the view that it is below average—24 percent said it is above average while 21 percent said it is below average.

“People around the world may actually be more realistic than is often assumed,” comments Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative project of research centers around the world managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

The poll of 21618 respondents was conducted between July 15 and September 26, 2008 in 21 nations. Most of the world's largest nations were included—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia—as well as Argentina, Mexico, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kenya, Thailand, South Korea, and Ukraine. The nations polled represent 61 percent of the world population. Publics in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau were also polled. Margins of error range from approximately +/-2 to 4 percent. Not all questions were asked in all nations.

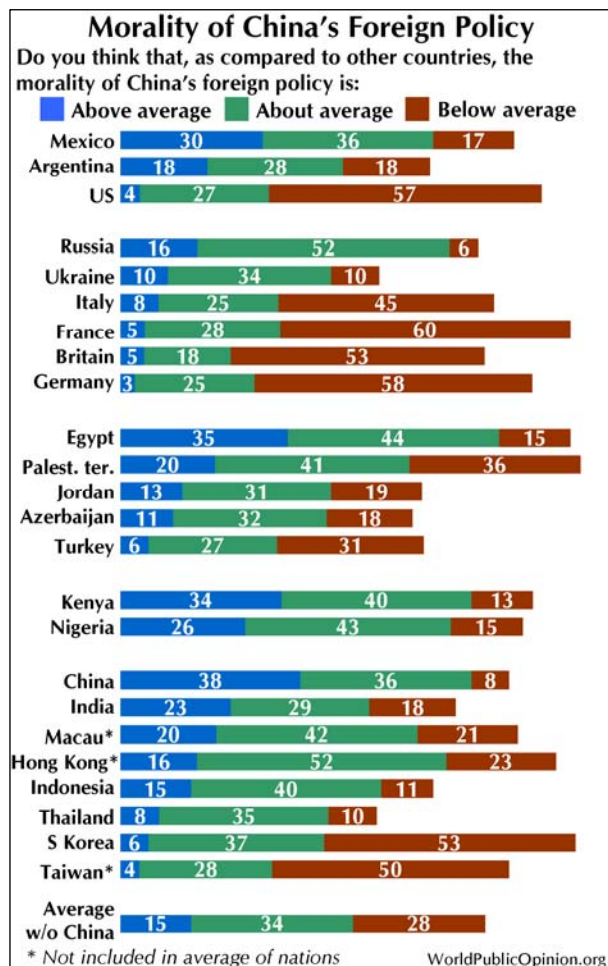
In just two nations do more people say that their nation is above average than say it is average or below average—but even here less than half are so self-confident. The highest number is found in Jordan, where 44 percent say that their nation is above average, while 26 percent say it is average and 8 percent below average. In India 40 percent give their nation above average ratings, while 25 percent give it average ratings and 12 percent below average.

On the other hand, two nations give their nation predominantly poor ratings. In Mexico 54 percent say the morality of their foreign policy is below average, as does a plurality of Argentines (39%).

Assessing Other Nations

Asked to assess the morality of other major nations, people around the world tend to feel that all of the major nations are about average.

The nation to get the most negative ratings is China, with six nations saying that its foreign policy is below average (France 60%, Germany 58%, US 57%,

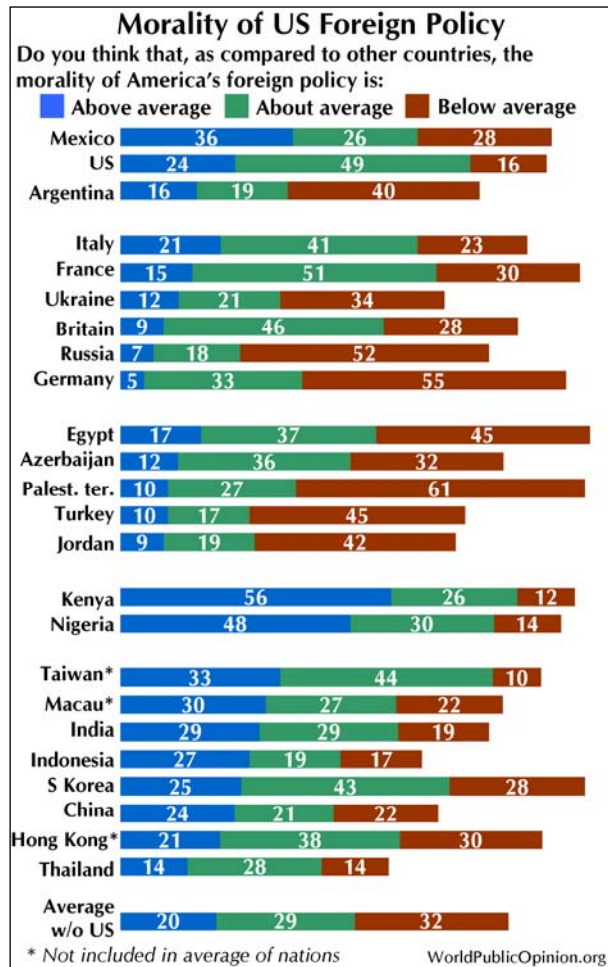


Great Britain 53%, South Korea 53% and Italy 45%). Overall 28 percent say China is below average, 15 percent above average, and 34 percent average.

Russia gets similar ratings. Five nations predominantly say Russia is below average (France 57%, US 51%, Britain 47%, Azerbaijan 45% and Germany 43%). Overall, Russia has the biggest spread between those who say it is below average (29%) and those who say it is above average (12%), while 32 percent say it is average.

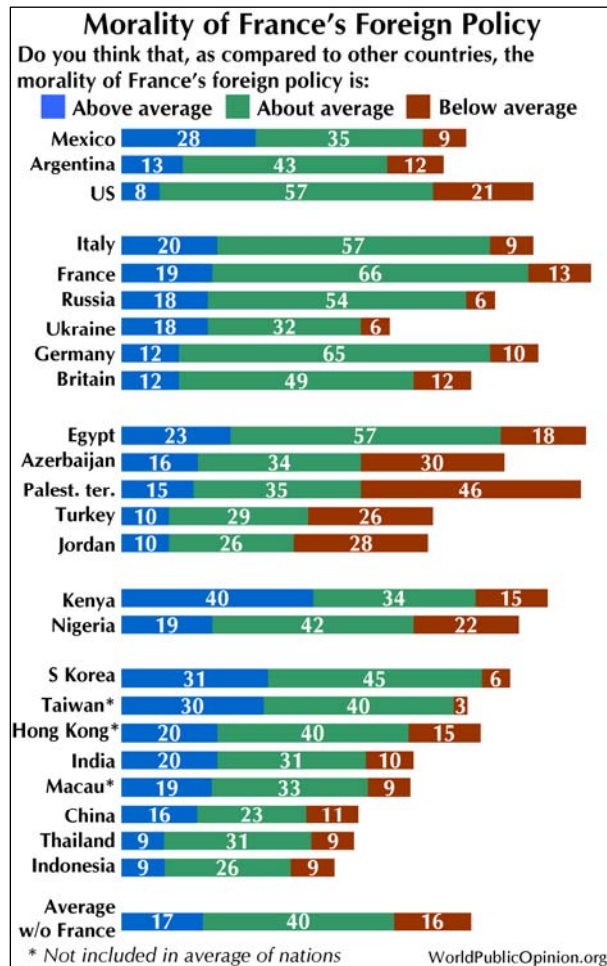
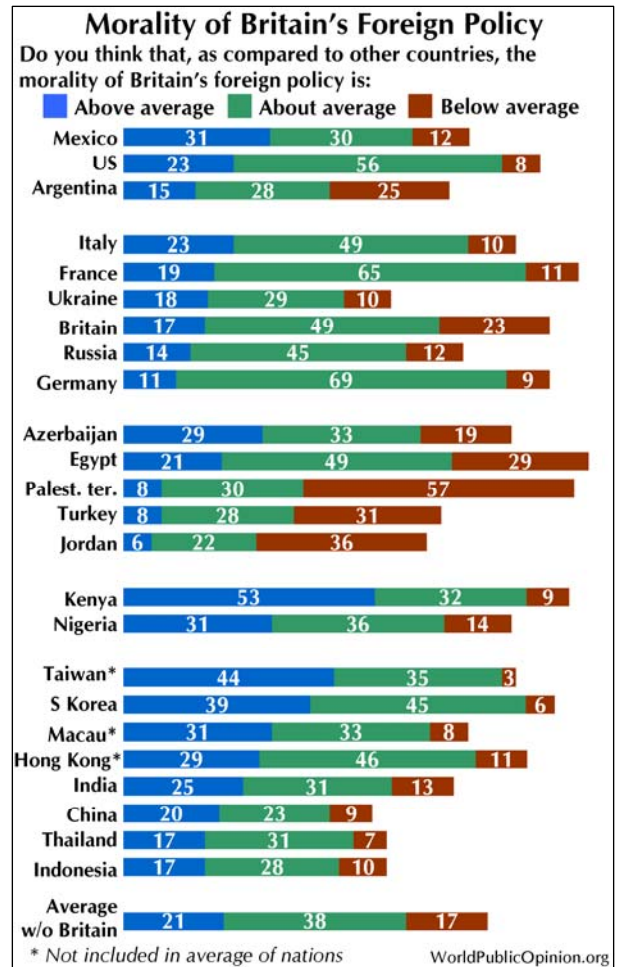
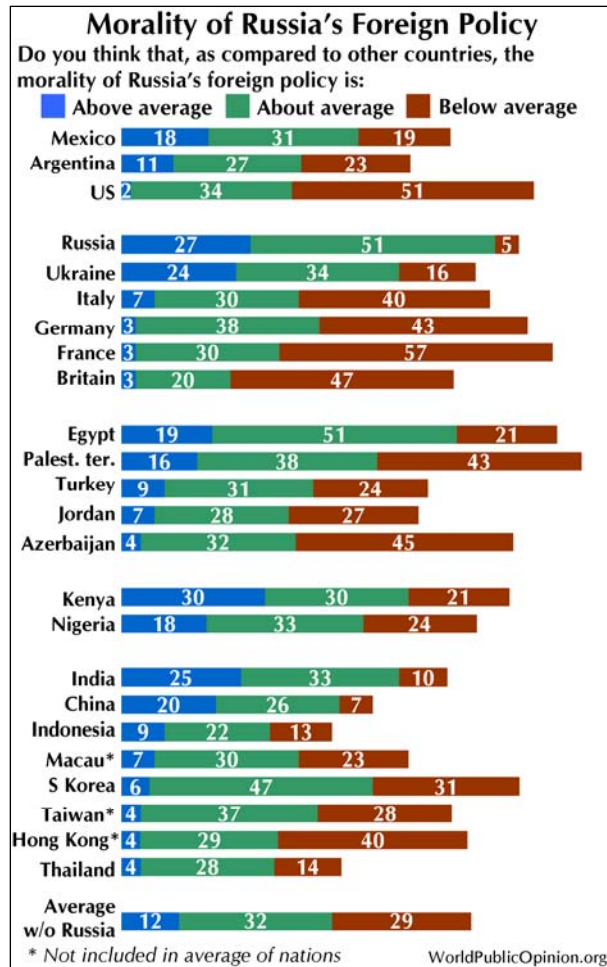
Views of America’s foreign policy are the most mixed. While five nations predominantly say it is below average (Palestinians 61%, Germans 55%, Russians 52%, Turks 45%, and Argentines 40%), two nations predominantly say it is above average (Kenya 56%, and Nigeria 48%). Overall, the US has the largest number worldwide saying it is below average (32%), but it also has one of the highest numbers saying it is above average (20%). Overall, 29 percent say it is about average.

The best ratings go to Britain. It is the only nation that overall has appreciably more people saying that it is above average (21%), than below average (17%), while 38 percent say it is average. Nearly all nations give it a predominantly average rating. The only exceptions are the Palestinians, where 57 percent say it is below average and Kenyans where 53% say it is above average. Taiwanese also give Britain a predominantly positive rating (44%).



Views of France are the most balanced. Overall, the number worldwide saying France’s foreign policy is above average (17%) is almost exactly the same as those saying that it is below average (16%), while 40 percent call it average. No nation predominantly says France is above average or below average.

Outside mainland China, views of the morality of China’s foreign policy vary among Chinese populations. Taiwan is quite critical with 50 percent saying it is below average. Hong Kong gives China fairly balanced ratings (23% below average, 16% above average, 52% average), as do the residents of Macau (21% below, 20% above, 42% average).



DETAILED RESULTS:

AMERICAS:

ARGENTINA

[Graciela Romer y Asociados](#)

Argentines are among the most critical of the morality of their own foreign policy, with a plurality calling it below average. Argentines give their most negative ratings about US foreign policy, while their attitudes are most positive about France.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 4% above average, 30% about average, 39% below average
- China: 18% above average, 28% average, 18% below average
- United States: 16% above average, 19% average, 40% below average
- Russia: 11% above average, 27% average, 23% below average
- France: 13% above average, 43% average, 12% below average
- Britain: 15% above average, 28% average, 25% below average

MEXICO

[Reforma](#)

Mexico is the only nation with a majority to negatively assess the morality of its foreign policy. Mexicans rate British and French foreign policy most positively, while they are more critical of the US (though their views are still relatively mixed).

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 8% above average, 32% average, 54% below average
- China: 30% above average, 36% average, 17% below average
- United States: 36% above average, 26% average, 28% below average
- Russia: 18% above average, 31% average, 19% below average
- France: 28% above average, 35% average, 9% below average
- Britain: 31% above average, 30% average, 12% below average

UNITED STATES

[Program on International Policy Attitudes](#) / [Knowledge Networks](#)

Like most other nations polled, Americans tend to rate the morality of their foreign policy as average. Americans give some of the most negative assessments of the Chinese and Russian foreign policies out of all nations polled, while they give their most positive evaluation to Britain.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 24% above average, 49% average, 16% below.
- China: 4% above average, 27% average, 57% below average
- Russia: 2% above average, 34% average, 51% below average
- France: 8% above average, 57% average, 21% below average
- Britain: 23% above average, 56% average, 8% below average

EUROPE:

FRANCE

[Efficiency 3](#)

The French are more confident than most other nations in the morality of their own foreign policy, with a majority calling it about or above average. The French give their most negative ratings to China's foreign policy, and are most positive about Britain.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 19% above average, 66% about average, 13% below average
- China: 5% above average, 28% average, 60% below average
- United States: 15% above average, 51% average, 30% below average
- Russia: 3% above average, 30% average, 57% below average
- Britain: 19% above average, 65% average, 11% below average

GERMANY

[Ri*Questa GmbH](#)

Germans are more positive about the morality of their own foreign policy than most other nations polled, with a large majority calling it above or about average. They give their

most critical ratings to Chinese and American foreign policy, and are less critical of Britain and France.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 29% above average, 60% about average, 5% below average
- China: 3% above average, 25% average, 58% below average
- United States: 5% above average, 33% average, 55% below average
- Russia: 3% above average, 38% average, 43% below average
- France: 12% above average, 65% average, 10% below average
- Britain: 11% above average, 69% average, 9% below average

GREAT BRITAIN

[Chatham House \(Royal Institute of International Affairs\)](#)

Like most other publics, the British are fairly modest about the morality of their own foreign policy, with a plurality calling it about average. Britain is among the Western nations with a majority showing widespread criticism for China's foreign policies, while Britons are most positive about France's foreign policies.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 17% above average, 49% about average, 23% below average
- China: 5% above average, 18% average, 53% below average
- United States: 9% above average, 46% average, 28% below average
- Russia: 3% above average, 20% average, 47% below average
- France: 12% above average, 49% average, 12% below average

ITALY

[Demoskopea](#)

Italians are fairly modest about the morality of their own foreign policy, with a plurality calling it about average. Italians give their lowest ratings to China and Russia, and their most positive to France.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 14% above average, 47% about average, 29% below above
- China: 8% above average, 25% average, 45% below average

- United States: 21% above average, 41% average, 23% below average
- Russia: 7% above average, 30% average, 40% below average
- France: 20% above average, 57% average, 9% below average
- Britain: 23% above average, 49% average, 10% below average

RUSSIA

[Levada Center](#)

Like other nations polled, Russia is somewhat modest about the morality of its own foreign policy, with a majority calling it about average. Russians are most critical of US foreign policy, while France and China receive Russian's most positive ratings.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 27% above average, 51% about average, 5% below average
- United States: 7% above average, 18% average, 52% below average
- China: 16% above average, 52% average, 6% below average
- France: 18% above average, 54% average, 6% below average
- Britain: 14% above average, 45% average, 12% below average

UKRAINE

[Kiev International Institute of Sociology](#)

Among European publics polled, Ukrainians are the least confident in the morality of their nation's foreign policy. They are most critical of US foreign policy, while they give their most positive ratings to Russia.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 8% above average, 36% about average, 34% below average
- China: 10% above average, 34% average, 10% below average
- United States: 12% above average, 21% average, 34% below average
- Russia: 24% above average, 34% average, 16% below average
- France: 18% above average, 32% average, 6% below average
- Britain: 18% above average, 29% average, 10% below average

MIDDLE EAST/EURASIA:

AZERBAIJAN

International Center for Social Research

Azerbaijanis are among the most supportive of the morality of their nation's foreign policy, with a large majority saying it is above or about average. They give their most negative ratings to Russia, and their most positive ratings to Britain.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 39% above average, 42% about average, 12% below average
- China: 11% above average, 32% average, 18% below average
- United States: 12% above average, 36% average, 32% below average
- Russia: 4% above average, 32% average, 45% below average
- France: 16% above average, 34% average, 30% below average
- Britain: 29% above average, 33% average, 19% below average

EGYPT

Attitude Market Research

Egyptians are somewhat confident in the morality of their own foreign policy, with more people ranking it above average than in most other nations polled and a majority calling it average. Egypt gives its highest ratings to France, while its lowest ratings go to US foreign policy.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 32% above average, 52% about average, 14% below average
- China: 35% above average, 44% average, 15% below average
- United States: 17% above average, 37% average, 45% below average
- Russia: 19% above average, 51% average, 21% below average
- France: 23% above average, 57% average, 18% below average
- Britain: 21% above average, 49% average, 29% below average

JORDAN

[Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan](#)

Jordan is among the nations most confident in the morality of its own foreign policy, with a plurality calling it above average. Jordanians rate US foreign policy most poorly and give their highest ratings to China.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 44% above average, 26% about average, 8% below average
- United States: 9% above average, 19% average, 42% below average
- China: 13% above average, 31% average, 19% below average
- Britain: 6% above average, 22% average, 36% below average
- Russia: 7% above average, 28% average, 27% below average
- France: 10% above average, 26% average, 28% below average

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

[Palestinian Center for Public Opinion](#)

Palestinians are somewhat modest about the morality of their own nation's foreign policy, although a larger number call it above average than in most nations. Palestinians give their most negative ratings to the US and Britain, and are most positive about China.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 35% above average, 38% about average, 22% below average
- China: 20% above average, 41% average, 36% below average
- United States: 10% above average, 27% average, 61% below average
- Russia: 16% above average, 38% average, 43% below average
- France: 15% above average, 35% average, 46% below average
- Britain: 8% above average, 30% average, 57% below average

TURKEY

[ARI Foundation](#) / [Infakto Research Workshop](#)

Turkey expresses relative modesty about the morality of its foreign policy, as do most nations polled. Turks are most critical of US foreign policy, while Russia and France earn somewhat more positive evaluations.

- Morality of their nation’s foreign policy: 28% above average, 31% about average, 16% below average
- China: 6% above average, 27% average, 31% below average
- United States: 10% above average, 17% average, 45% below average
- Russia: 9% above average, 31% average, 24% below average
- France: 10% above average, 29% average, 26% below average
- Britain: 8% above average, 28% average, 31% below average

AFRICA:

KENYA

[Research Path Associates Limited](#)

Kenyans are fairly modest about the morality of their own foreign. Kenya is the nation with the most positive views of US foreign policy, with a majority calling it above average, while its most negative ratings go to Russia.

- Morality of their nation’s foreign policy: 33% above average, 45% about average, 18% below average
- China: 34% above average, 40% average, 13% below average
- United States: 56% above average, 26% average, 12% below average
- Russia: 30% above average, 30% average, 21% below average
- France: 40% above average, 34% average, 15% below average
- Britain: 53% above average, 32% average, 9% below average

NIGERIA

Market Trends Research International

Nigerians’ attitudes about the morality of its foreign policy are relatively modest, with Nigerians most commonly saying their policy is about average. Nigerians express their most positive views about the morality of US foreign policy, while Russia receives their lowest ratings.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 18% above average, 38% about average, 32% below average
- China: 26% above average, 43% average, 15% below average
- United States: 48% above average, 30% average, 14% below average
- Russia: 18% above average, 33% average, 24% below average
- France: 19% above average, 42% average, 22% below average
- Britain: 31% above average, 36% average, 14% below average

ASIA/PACIFIC:

CHINA - Mainland

[Fudan Media and Public Opinion Research Center \(FMORC\), Fudan University](#)

Chinese express relatively modest views of the morality of their own foreign policy, although more call their foreign policy above average than in most nations polled. They express relatively mixed feelings about most nations, but are slightly more positive about Britain and Russia than the US or France.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 38% above average, 36% about average, 8% below average
- United States: 24% above average, 21% average, 22% below average
- Russia: 20% above average, 26% average, 7% below average
- France: 16% above average, 23% average, 11% below average
- Britain: 20% above average, 23% average, 9% below average

HONG KONG

[Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme](#)

Attitudes in Hong Kong toward China's foreign policy are somewhat modest, with a majority giving it an about average rating. They are most supportive of Britain's foreign policy and least supportive of Russia's foreign policy.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 16% above average, 52% about average, 23% below average
- United States: 21% above average, 38% average, 30% below average

- Britain: 29% above average, 46% average, 11% below average
- Russia: 4% above average, 29% average, 40% below average
- France: 20% above average, 40% average, 15% below average

INDIA

[Centre for Voting Opinion & Trends in Election Research \(CVoter\)](#)

Indians are among the most positive about the morality of their own foreign policy, with the plurality viewing it as above average. Indians have relatively similar attitudes towards other nations, with the US and Russia narrowly receiving the most positive ratings and France the least.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 40% above average, 25% about average, 12% below average
- United States: 29% above average, 29% average, 19% below average
- China: 23% above average, 29% average, 18% below average
- Britain: 25% above average, 31% average, 13% below average
- Russia: 25% above average, 33% average, 10% below average
- France: 20% above average, 31% average, 10% below average

INDONESIA

[Synovate](#)

Indonesians have a modest view of the morality of their nation's foreign policy, although appreciably more say it is below average than those who call it above average. Indonesians are most critical of Russia's foreign policy and most positive about US foreign policy, although many choose not express an evaluation.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 8% above average, 44% about average, 23% below average
- United States: 27% above average, 19% average, 17% below average
- China: 15% above average, 40% average, 11% below average
- Britain: 17% above average, 28% average, 10% below average

- Russia: 9% above average, 22% average, 13% below average
- France: 9% above average, 26% average, 9% below average

MACAU

[University of Macau](#)

The public in Macau expresses relatively modest views about the morality of China's foreign policy, with the most common evaluation being about average. They are most critical of Russia's foreign policy while they give their highest ratings to Britain.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 20% above average, 42% about average, 21% below average
- China: 20% above average, 42% average, 21% below average
- United States: 30% above average, 27% average, 22% below average
- Russia: 7% above average, 30% average, 23% below average
- France: 19% above average, 33% average, 9% below average
- Britain: 31% above average, 33% average, 8% below average

SOUTH KOREA

[East Asia Institute](#)

South Koreans take a predominantly average or below average view of their own nation's foreign policy, although they have the second-largest number (after Mexico) saying below average out of all nations polled. South Koreans rate Britain most positively on the morality of their foreign policy, while they are significantly more negative on China's foreign policy.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 10% above average, 46% about average, 42% below average
- China: 6% above average, 37% average, 53% below average
- United States: 25% above average, 43% average, 28% below average
- Russia: 6% above average, 47% average, 31% below average
- France: 31% above average, 45% average, 6% below average
- Britain: 39% above average, 45% average, 6% below average

TAIWAN

[TVBS](#)

Taiwanese rate their government's foreign policy as predominantly average, much like other publics polled. They give their most positive ratings to the morality of US foreign policy, while they unsurprisingly quite negative on China's foreign policy.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 19% above average, 48% about average, 25% below average
- China: 4% above average, 28% average, 50% below average
- United States: 33% above average, 44% average, 10% below average
- Russia: 4% above average, 37% average, 28% below average
- France: 30% above average, 40% average, 3% below average
- Britain: 44% above average, 35% average, 3% below average

THAILAND

[ABAC Poll Research Center, Assumption University](#)

Like most other publics polled, Thais see their nation's foreign policy largely as average, though the number taking this view is somewhat lower than the average of all nations. Thais give their most positive evaluations to Britain, while they are most critical of Russia's foreign policy.

- Morality of their nation's foreign policy: 22% above average, 30% about average, 13% below average
- China: 8% above average, 35% average, 10% below average
- United States: 14% above average, 28% average, 14% below average
- Russia: 4% above average, 28% average, 14% below average
- France: 9% above average, 31% average, 9% below average
- Britain: 17% above average, 31% average, 7% below average