

Posted on Sat, Jan. 15, 2005

## **Poll: Americans' attitudes warm toward China**

**BUT PUBLIC OPINIONS ARE VARIABLE, ANALYSTS SAY**

By Katherine Corcoran  
Mercury News

Americans' attitudes toward China have grown dramatically more favorable in the past 10 years, according to a new poll, and the country formerly viewed through Cold War lens is seen as a greater economic threat today than a military one.

Preliminary results of the survey, commissioned by the Committee of 100, a national organization of prominent people of Chinese descent, also show several contradictions: Americans blame China for taking U.S. jobs, but support doing business with the world's most populous nation and importing its goods.

Experts in U.S.-China relations say the poll reflects longstanding ambivalence by Americans toward China. Public opinion tends to swing with media reports.

While U.S.-Chinese relations were at an all-time low in spring 2001 after an encounter between the Chinese military and a U.S. spy plane, they improved dramatically after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. China became an ally in the war on terror and in dealing with North Korea over nuclear weapons.

"These conflicting images of China have been around for more than 200 years," said L. Ling-chi Wang, professor of Asian-American studies at the University of California-Berkeley. "Our popular opinions on China, such as the one taken by the Committee of 100, have nothing to do with what China does or does not do to us, but what our media and politicians are telling us about whether China is a good guy or a bad guy."

The poll was conducted by Zogby International among 203 people in leadership positions affecting public opinion, as well as 1,200 random Americans.

Nearly two-thirds have a very or somewhat favorable view of China, compared to 46 percent 10 years ago. An increasing number of Americans see the relationship between the two countries improving as China moves toward a market economy.

But the top concerns about China for Americans are human rights, followed by loss of American jobs, greater militarization and environmental issues.

Americans are split on whether human rights there have improved, and support tying China's trade status to human rights. Half of those polled consider China a very important ally.

Only 12 to 15 percent consider China a serious military threat, though more than 50 percent considered it a potential threat.

On the other hand, more than 60 percent considered China a serious and potential economic threat. And yet, 78 percent of opinion leaders and 63 percent of Americans say low-cost goods from China help the American economy -- including 63 percent of union households.

More than three-quarters say trade with China benefits the U.S. economy, but a majority is also concerned about the impact of economic and industrial growth in China on the environment.

Half of opinion leaders and a third of Americans consider Chinese immigration good, while more than 40 percent of each group said it has no impact. Only 3 percent of opinion leaders and 17 percent of Americans saw Chinese immigration as a threat.

The full report will be released in Washington, D.C., in April at the Committee of 100 annual conference.

Contact Katherine Corcoran at [kcorcoran@mercurynews.com](mailto:kcorcoran@mercurynews.com) or (408) 920-5330.