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## Obama-mania Sweeps Europe as New U.S. President Tops List of Most Popular World Leaders

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 6, 2009** – A new **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** survey conducted online by Harris Interactive finds President Barack Obama is the most popular political or religious leader in much of western Europe and the United States. When asked their opinion of 19 of the world's most famous and important leaders, far more people in the five largest European nations have a good impression of President Obama than of any other political or governmental leader. Only one person comes close to President Obama, the Dalai Lama, who is virtually tied for first place with Obama in France, Spain and Germany but trails him by eight points in Britain, five points in the United States and four points in Italy.

These are results of the survey conducted online among a total of 6,299 adults (aged 16-64) in France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and the United States and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy between January 8 and 19, 2009.

### Most Popular Leaders

On average, across all six countries, 80% of adults have a good opinion of Barack Obama and 77% have a good opinion of the Dalai Lama. Obama is most popular in France (where 88% have a good opinion of him), Italy (87%), and Germany (84%). The Dalai Lama's highest ratings are in France (86%), Italy (83%), Spain (83%), and Germany (83%). Both Obama's and the Dalai Lama's ratings are lower in Britain and the United States than in the four continental European countries.

Only two other leaders receive an average score of over 50% across in the six countries: the German Prime Minister Angela Merkel and the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (both are 53%). They are closely followed by Pope Benedict XVI (49%) and French President Nicholas Sarkozy (44%). The only leaders with average "good opinion" ratings of more than a third are Jose Luis Zapatero, the Spanish Prime Minister (39%), the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (36%), and U.S. Secretary-general Ban Ki-moon (35%).

It is striking that several European government leaders are less popular at home than they are in some other countries. For example, Blair enjoys the good opinion of only 32% of adults in Britain but of 69% in the United States, 61% in Italy and 59% in France. And Nicolas Sarkozy is popular with 63% of Italians and 62% of Spaniards but with only 39% of the French.

### The Least Popular Leaders

The leaders in the list of whom the fewest number of adults have a good opinion are Presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran (6% on average), Bashar al-Assad of Syria (9%), Hu Jintao of China (9%), Dimitri Medvedev of Russia (11%), Hugo Chavez of Venezuela (17%) and the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (17%). While there are some variations by country, these leaders come near the bottom of the list in all six countries.

**Most Influential Leaders**

This survey also asked the adults surveyed in the six countries how much influence these 19 leaders have at an international level. President Obama topped this list also. On average in the six countries, fully 83% think he is influential. He is followed by Vladimir Putin (69%), Nicholas Sarkozy (62%), Angela Merkel (60%), Pope Benedict (54%), and Gordon Brown (52%).

**Least Influential Leaders**

On average less than a third of all adults in these six countries think that the following are influential: Basha al-Assad (21%), President Luiz Lula de Silva of Brazil (22%), ex-president Fidel Castro of Cuba (25%) and Hugo Chavez (28%).

**So What?**

Some leaders are popular and are thought to be powerful: President Obama, of course, but also Angela Merkel. Others are neither popular nor seen to be powerful such as Bashar al-Assad, Fidel Castro and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Vladimir Putin, and to a lesser extent Hu Jintao, are seen as powerful by many people but come near the bottom of the popularity list.

Does all this matter? Recent history suggests it does. As President Bush's popularity ebbed away, it increased the pressure on the leaders of other democracies to distance themselves from him and from the policies of the United States. For as long as President Obama continues to be very popular abroad, it will have the opposite effect. European leaders will want to be seen as his close friend in the hope that some of his popularity will rub off on them.

**TABLE 1**  
**OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS**

"For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?"

*Percent saying "Very/Somewhat good"*

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | 70            | 88     | 87    | 82    | 84      | 71            | 80                          |
| The Dalai Lama                       | 62            | 86     | 83    | 83    | 83      | 66            | 77                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | 24            | 70     | 71    | 63    | 63      | 27            | 53                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | 32            | 59     | 61    | 46    | 49      | 69            | 53                          |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | 38            | 37     | 55    | 39    | 60      | 66            | 49                          |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | 31            | 39     | 63    | 62    | 42      | 29            | 44                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | 15            | 58     | 61    | 52    | 27      | 19            | 39                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | 32            | 40     | 43    | 36    | 29      | 35            | 36                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | 28            | 42     | 40    | 39    | 40      | 18            | 35                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | 13            | 39     | 46    | 46    | 40      | 13            | 33                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | 8             | 39     | 35    | 51    | 14      | 14            | 27                          |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | 11            | 6      | 39    | 20    | 13      | 19            | 18                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | 18            | 14     | 29    | 15    | 19      | 10            | 18                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | 11            | 35     | 23    | 11    | 11      | 13            | 17                          |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | 11            | 8      | 27    | 15    | 21      | 19            | 17                          |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | 6             | 8      | 15    | 12    | 11      | 11            | 11                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | 8             | 4      | 11    | 16    | 7       | 10            | 9                           |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | 5             | 7      | 12    | 13    | 7       | 7             | 9                           |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | 6             | 3      | 8     | 9     | 5       | 7             | 6                           |

TABLE 1A

**OPINIONS OF WORLD LEADERS – CHANGE FROM NOVEMBER**

“For each of the following people, please indicate whether you have a very good, somewhat good, somewhat poor or very poor opinion of that person?”

*Percent saying “Very/Somewhat good”*

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | N/A           | N/A    | N/A   | N/A   | N/A     | N/A           | N/A                         |
| The Dalai Lama                       | +1            | +7     | +3    | +13   | +6      | +6            | +5                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | -4            | -      | -2    | +4    | -       | -3            | -1                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | -5            | +7     | -4    | +7    | -1      | +4            | +2                          |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | -3            | -4     | -     | +5    | +1      | +11           | +1                          |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | -             | -1     | +3    | +9    | -6      | -7            | -1                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | -1            | +1     | -4    | +2    | -9      | -1            | -2                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | -1            | -1     | -6    | -6    | -5      | -7            | -4                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | -1            | -1     | -3    | -2    | +1      | -1            | -1                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | -3            | -1     | -6    | -3    | -6      | -7            | -4                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | -1            | +7     | -1    | +1    | -2      | -2            | -                           |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | -5            | -3     | -4    | -     | -1      | -1            | -2                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | -1            | +2     | +4    | -     | -2      | +2            | +1                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | +1            | +4     | +1    | -     | -3      | +4            | +1                          |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | -2            | -      | +3    | -     | -4      | +1            | -                           |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | -3            | +1     | +1    | -1    | -7      | +1            | -1                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | -2            | -3     | +1    | -     | -1      | -             | -1                          |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | -2            | -      | -3    | -1    | -2      | +1            | -1                          |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | -1            | -2     | +2    | -     | -3      | +2            | -1                          |

Note: Barack Obama replaces George W. Bush who was included in the November wave

**TABLE 2**  
**INFLUENCE OF WORLD LEADERS**

"For each of the following international personalities, how much influence do you think they have at an international level?"

*Percent Saying "A Great deal/Some influence"*

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | 74            | 88     | 86    | 83    | 85      | 79            | 83                          |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | 55            | 76     | 78    | 72    | 77      | 57            | 69                          |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | 44            | 71     | 75    | 80    | 65      | 37            | 62                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | 38            | 72     | 70    | 73    | 73      | 32            | 60                          |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | 41            | 40     | 69    | 62    | 46      | 66            | 54                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | 50            | 52     | 60    | 62    | 43      | 46            | 52                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | 30            | 44     | 54    | 59    | 44      | 56            | 48                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | 36            | 56     | 53    | 50    | 45      | 40            | 47                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | 32            | 50     | 56    | 51    | 49      | 28            | 44                          |
| The Dalai Lama                       | 32            | 46     | 52    | 49    | 37      | 39            | 43                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | 41            | 43     | 50    | 47    | 39      | 34            | 42                          |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | 31            | 40     | 44    | 40    | 50      | 37            | 40                          |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | 22            | 28     | 50    | 53    | 38      | 20            | 35                          |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | 25            | 33     | 46    | 36    | 26      | 37            | 34                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | 18            | 39     | 59    | 38    | 21      | 20            | 33                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | 15            | 34     | 31    | 37    | 13      | 35            | 28                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | 19            | 20     | 33    | 28    | 19      | 28            | 25                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | 10            | 25     | 27    | 38    | 13      | 18            | 22                          |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | 15            | 27     | 29    | 22    | 13      | 21            | 21                          |

TABLE 2A

## INFLUENCE OF WORLD LEADERS – CHANGE FROM NOVEMBER

“For each of the following international personalities, how much influence do you think they have at an international level?”

*Percent Saying “A Great deal/Some influence”*

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | N/A           | N/A    | N/A   | N/A   | N/A     | N/A           | N/A                         |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | +2            | +8     | +4    | +9    | +6      | +6            | +6                          |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | +3            | +10    | +4    | +2    | +4      | -1            | +4                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | -             | +6     | -2    | -4    | +3      | -2            | -                           |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | +8            | +10    | +2    | +9    | +5      | +14           | +8                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | -5            | +5     | -     | -3    | +1      | -1            | -1                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | -5            | +4     | -6    | -2    | -3      | +6            | -1                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | -7            | -2     | -5    | -6    | -7      | -7            | -5                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | -6            | +5     | -2    | -7    | -2      | -7            | -4                          |
| The Dalai Lama                       | +6            | +11    | +1    | +7    | +3      | +2            | +5                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | -             | +2     | -     | -5    | -2      | -2            | -2                          |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | -6            | -2     | -     | -5    | -3      | -2            | -3                          |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | -4            | -2     | -4    | -1    | +4      | -2            | -2                          |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | -1            | +6     | -     | +3    | +1      | -1            | +1                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | -3            | +3     | +2    | -     | -5      | -4            | -1                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | +1            | +10    | +3    | +4    | +2      | +3            | +4                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | +1            | +5     | +2    | +4    | +3      | +6            | +4                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | -5            | +8     | -     | +1    | -       | -             | +1                          |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | -4            | +6     | +4    | -     | +3      | -2            | +1                          |

Note: Barack Obama replaces George W. Bush who was included in the November wave

**TABLE 3**  
**POPULARITY/INFLUENCE INDEX**

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | 72            | 88     | 87    | 83    | 85      | 75            | 82                          |
| The Dalai Lama                       | 47            | 66     | 68    | 66    | 60      | 53            | 60                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | 31            | 71     | 71    | 68    | 68      | 30            | 57                          |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | 38            | 55     | 69    | 71    | 54      | 33            | 53                          |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | 40            | 39     | 62    | 51    | 53      | 66            | 52                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | 31            | 52     | 58    | 53    | 47      | 63            | 51                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | 41            | 46     | 52    | 49    | 36      | 41            | 44                          |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | 33            | 42     | 53    | 44    | 49      | 38            | 43                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | 23            | 45     | 51    | 49    | 45      | 21            | 39                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | 35            | 43     | 45    | 43    | 40      | 26            | 39                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | 17            | 49     | 60    | 45    | 24      | 20            | 36                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | 22            | 30     | 32    | 33    | 26      | 25            | 28                          |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | 17            | 17     | 45    | 37    | 26      | 20            | 27                          |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | 19            | 24     | 30    | 26    | 31      | 24            | 26                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | 9             | 32     | 31    | 45    | 14      | 16            | 25                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | 13            | 35     | 27    | 24    | 12      | 24            | 23                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | 19            | 17     | 31    | 22    | 19      | 19            | 22                          |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | 16            | 18     | 27    | 23    | 16      | 22            | 20                          |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | 10            | 17     | 21    | 18    | 10      | 14            | 15                          |

Note: This index combines the results of those who said "Very/Somewhat good in terms of opinion" (Table 1) and "A great deal/Some influence" in terms of influence (Table 2)

TABLE 3A

## POPULARITY/INFLUENCE INDEX – CHANGE FROM NOVEMBER

Base: All EU adults in five countries and U.S. adults

|                                      | Great Britain | France | Italy | Spain | Germany | United States | Average for all 6 countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------|
|                                      | %             | %      | %     | %     | %       | %             | %                           |
| Barack Obama (United States)         | N/A           | N/A    | N/A   | N/A   | N/A     | N/A           | N/A                         |
| The Dalai Lama                       | +3            | +9     | +2    | +10   | +4      | +4            | +6                          |
| Angela Merkel (Germany)              | -2            | +3     | -2    | -     | +1      | -2            | -                           |
| Nicolas Sarkozy (France)             | +2            | +4     | +3    | +5    | -1      | -4            | +2                          |
| Pope Benedict XVI                    | +3            | +3     | +1    | +7    | +3      | +12           | +5                          |
| Tony Blair (Great Britain)           | -5            | +6     | -5    | +3    | -2      | +5            | +1                          |
| Gordon Brown (Great Britain)         | -3            | +2     | -3    | -5    | -2      | -4            | -3                          |
| Vladimir Putin (Russia)              | -             | +4     | +4    | +5    | +1      | +3            | +2                          |
| Jose Manuel Barroso (European Union) | -4            | +2     | -4    | -5    | -4      | -7            | -3                          |
| Ban Ki-moon (United Nations)         | -             | +1     | -2    | -4    | -       | -2            | -1                          |
| Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (Spain) | -2            | +2     | -1    | +1    | -7      | -2            | -1                          |
| Hu Jintao (China)                    | -5            | -3     | -2    | -3    | -4      | -4            | -3                          |
| Silvio Berlusconi (Italy)            | -4            | -3     | -4    | -     | +2      | -1            | -2                          |
| Dmitri Medvedev (Russia)             | -4            | -1     | +1    | -3    | -5      | -1            | -2                          |
| Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Brazil)   | -3            | +7     | -1    | +1    | -1      | -1            | +1                          |
| Hugo Chavez (Venezuela)              | +1            | +7     | +2    | +2    | -1      | +3            | +3                          |
| Fidel Castro (Cuba)                  | -             | +3     | +3    | +2    | -       | +4            | +3                          |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)           | -1            | +2     | +1    | +2    | -1      | -             | -                           |
| Bashar al-Assad (Syria)              | -3            | +3     | +1    | -     | -       | -1            | -                           |

Note: This index combines the results of those who said “Very/Somewhat good in terms of opinion” (Table 1) and “A great deal/Some influence” in terms of influence (Table 2)

Note: Barack Obama replaces George W. Bush who was included in the November wave

## Methodology

This **Harris Interactive/France 24/International Herald Tribune** study was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,299 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,021), Germany (1,107), Great Britain (1,071), Spain (1,007) and the United States (1,066), and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (1,027) between 8 and 15 January 2009.

Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and

adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult populations of the respective countries. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls and of the British Polling Council.***

### **About Harris Interactive**

Harris Interactive is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

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