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THE DOG THAT DID NOT BARK:  
ANTI-AMERICANISM AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

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## Abstract

The financial crisis that erupted in September 2008 seemed to confirm all the worst stereotypes about the United States held abroad: that Americans are bold, greedy, and selfish to excess; that they are hypocrites, staunch defenders of the free market ready to bail out their own companies; and that the US has long been the architect and primary beneficiary of the global economic system. So the crisis had an enormous potential for deteriorating further the global image of the United States, already at an all-time high during the George W. Bush era. Yet anti-American sentiments did not surge worldwide as a result of the crisis, neither at the level of public opinion, nor at the level of actions and policy responses by foreign policy-makers. This paper explains why the dog did not bark and reawaken anti-Americanism in the process. The central argument is that this potential anti-Americanism has been mitigated by several factors, including the election of Obama, the new face of globalization, and the perception of the relative decline of US power coupled with the rise of China, which suggests that the “post-American” world may be accompanied by a “post-anti-American” world, at least in Europe.

Keywords: Anti-Americanism; China; financial crisis; globalization; Obama; United States.

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As the world's sole, uncontested superpower for so many years, the United States has long attracted resentment, distrust, and hatred. The US often gets blamed, rightly or wrongly, for all the world's ills and is fingerpointed as scheming culprit by many conspiracy theories, whether concerning the state of the economy, the degradation of the environment, or the existence of international conflicts. American foreign policy during the tenure of George W. Bush exacerbated this international tendency to blame the US and, as a result, global views of America severely deteriorated between 2002 and 2007, particularly among the US' European allies. They were slowly starting to improve when the financial crisis publicly hit with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in September 2008.

The financial crisis had the potential to worsen the global image of the US once again. Because it unequivocally originated in the US and in its particular brand of triumphant capitalism, the crisis could potentially undermine the very ideological foundations of American power. Indeed, the crisis feeds directly into some of the traditional anti-American arguments, whether it is about the US being dominating, greedy, or hypocritical, and thus could have logically increased anti-Americanism. Moreover, national politicians had an interest in stirring up anti-American sentiments at home in order to divert the blame for worsening domestic economic conditions.

Yet the crisis did not give rise to a spike in anti-American sentiments worldwide, neither at the level of public opinion, nor at the level of actions and policy responses by foreign policy-makers. Why didn't the crisis affect anti-Americanism? This paper explains the puzzle of why the dog did

not bark and reawaken anti-Americanism in the process. I argue that the surge in anti-Americanism that we should have expected as a result of the crisis did not happen because it has been mitigated by several factors, including the election of Obama, the new face of globalization, and the perceived decline in relative American power coupled with the rise of China, which suggests that the so-called “post-American” world may be accompanied by a “post-anti-American” world, at least in Europe.

The paper starts by considering why the financial crisis could be expected to affect anti-Americanism. Section Two explores evidence (and lack thereof) of anti-Americanism resulting from the crisis in public opinion and foreign policy-makers’ actions following the outbreak of the crisis. The third section analyzes three mitigating factors that explain why the world has not erupted in anti-American furor since September 2008.

### 1. The Financial Crisis’ Potential for Reigniting Anti-Americanism

Anti-Americanism is a fuzzy concept, used by many, agreed upon by few, often employed with ulterior political motives. To many in American media and politics, the definition of anti-Americanism is akin to Justice Potter Stewart’s famous definition of obscenity: “I know it when I see it.” Scholars who have grappled with the concept typically position themselves on the following continuum. At one end, those who see anti-Americanism as an ideology and a fundamental prejudice against the essence of the United States, something that can hardly be captured by the questions routinely asked in public opinion surveys –a pervasive distrust of what the US *is* (Markovits, 2007; Hollander, 2004; Revel, 2003). At the other end, those who see anti-Americanism as a critique of specific US policy actions, which can be observed through the ebb and flow of individuals’ attitudes towards the image of the US --a negative opinion against what the US *does* (Kohut & Stokes, 2006; Holsti, 2008).

Recent scholarship on anti-Americanism has attempted to bridge these polar views by emphasizing both the multidimensional nature of anti-Americanism and the need to consider that many of those who harbor anti-American sentiments find much to admire in the US as well (Chiozza, 2009; Guerlain, 2007; Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007; Meunier, 2007). The trick in defining and operationalizing anti-Americanism is to capture only those criticisms of the US that are systematic and essentialist, not those which are legitimate and rational. In this paper, I define anti-Americanism as an individual attitude of distrust towards what America is and does, which is usually grounded initially in reaction to specific US policies but then evolves and hardens into a generalized taint towards the US.

The financial crisis of 2008 seems like such a moment when existing anti-Americanism can resurface and when new anti-American sentiment can emerge. “Widespread opposition to U.S. foreign policy has largely driven the rise in negative views about the U.S. over the course of this decade, but it is clear that America’s role in the global economic downturn may also pose a new challenge to the country’s image,” wrote the Pew Global Attitudes Project in its 2008 survey on the image of the US in the world (Wike, 2008). Indeed, the financial crisis had the potential for triggering a new wave of anti-Americanism worldwide for at least two main reasons: because the crisis feeds into several of the underlying sources of anti-Americanism; and because foreign leaders may be tempted to blame emphatically the US for the crisis, thereby enticing some anti-Americanism domestically, in order to absolve themselves from the failings of their own economic policies. This leads to the formulation of three hypotheses for the conditions under which we could expect anti-Americanism to surge as a result of the financial crisis.

### The crisis as confirmation of anti-American stereotypes

In their thorough analysis of anti-Americanism, Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane argue that it is not a unidimensional phenomenon (Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007). Instead, they

distinguish between six types, or varieties, of anti-Americanism, each one with its own history, critical repertoire, and distinct behavioral and political implications: sovereignist/nationalist (concerned with the preeminence of the US); social/ideological (mainly a critique of American capitalism and American society); liberal (concerned about the US not upholding its own values and principles); radical Islamist (calling for violent action against the US as symbol of Western and Jewish oppression); elitist (offering a patronizing critique of American mass culture); and legacy (built upon resentment over the history of a country's relations with the US). The unfolding of the financial crisis fed right into the first three types simultaneously. As a result, it could be expected to trigger, reawaken or amplify anti-American sentiments.

#### The crisis as evidence of the perils of US domination

One traditional source of anti-Americanism is a sovereign-nationalist critique, focusing on the importance of not losing control over one's national sovereignty and destiny and denouncing the overbearing, arrogant role of the US in the world. As the world's biggest power, the US is bound to incite resentment --Josef Joffe has called this the "Mr. Big" syndrome (Joffe, 2001). The crisis could feel like vindication for all these years of American arrogance and domination, as depicted in September 2008 on the cover of the German weekly *Der Spiegel* which showed a Statue of Liberty with its torch out and the title "The Price of Arrogance: An economic crisis is changing the world" (Der Spiegel, 2008).

To those already inclined to harbor anti-American sentiments, the financial crisis was a reminder of how the economy has been an instrument of domination by the US and its companies and how much the US has imposed over time its economic model on other nations. First, by virtue of its size: the US is the world's largest economy, with about 26% of the world's GDP. Second, thanks to the dollar's unique status and privilege as the international reserve currency. Third, because of the reach of American investment in the rest of the world. Finally, through the United

States' privileged position in many of the international institutions that impact other countries' economies. Therefore, seeing the all powerful American economy crumble as a result of the crisis may feel like a revenge to those, especially in Latin America, who had been protesting the way in which the US had used the international economic institutions to forcefeed them the "Washington consensus" with its free-market, deregulation orthodoxy.

David Rothkopf, who served in the Clinton Administration, wrote shortly after the outbreak of the financial crisis that he expected anti-Americanism to be resurgent as a result of what the crisis revealed about American domination: "One can hear a refrain with eerie echoes of 9/11: that the United States "had it coming". Indeed, one of the factors that links 9/11, the war in Iraq and this financial crisis is a sense that all of them are tied to the world's changing view of America –a view that is growing darker. While the "blame America" justification for terror is as odious as it is indefensible, we deserve our full share of the blame for the market disaster. An important dimension of this new anti-Americanism relates to Washington's role as the architect, champion and primary beneficiary of a global system that was widely seen to benefit the few at the expense of the many." (Rothkopf, 2008)

In addition to American domination, the crisis which has quickly propagated from one country to the next reveals the interdependence of national economies and simultaneously the loss of national sovereignty in the era of globalization. One can debate the extent to which this interdependence has been forced upon other countries. The answer depends partly on whether public or private actors are mainly the ones which engaged in the replication of the US model – accepting the neo-liberal diktats of the IMF versus competing to purchase mortgage-backed securities for instance. But in both cases, the realization of this interdependence can reignite and amplify anti-American arguments of the type: "this is what happens when the US dominates the

world and we are no longer sovereign.” This could act as fuel and vindication for those harboring anti-American sentiments of a sovereignist nature.

### The crisis as evidence of a discredited ideology

A second type of anti-Americanism is the social/ideological variety, based on a denunciation of the free-market, laissez-faire ideology and the social injustices innate to that socio-economic model. Indeed, the loss of faith in the neo-liberal, capitalist orthodoxy preached and practiced in the US predates the public outbreak of the crisis in September 2008. An international survey conducted in early 2008 showed that although majorities in most countries continued then to support the free market system, that support had strongly eroded over the past two years, quite sharply in some countries such as Turkey, South Korea, Brazil, and Chile (PIPA-World Public Opinion, 2008). The crisis seemed to confirm this view that the capitalist system is inherently flawed.

In itself, losing faith in neo-liberal capitalism is not evidence of anti-Americanism. But this rejection of capitalism turns to anti-Americanism when the two are so intimately linked in rhetoric that a failure of one reverberates on the other and vice versa. Anti-Americanism in Western Europe has often taken this social/ideological form in recent years, fed by a belief that the European model (or models) of welfare capitalism is inherently superior to the American model of deregulation and free market principles. Indeed, in France, often considered in the US as the most virulent anti-American ally in Europe, the rise in anti-Americanism preceded the election of Bush (Kuisel, 2004). It reflected the strength of the anti-globalization movement in a country where denouncing globalization and equating it with Americanization had become a national pastime (Meunier, 2000). This social/ideological critique has also fed anti-Americanism in Latin America, where bashing the “Washington Consensus” and, in the same vein, bashing the US has enabled several leftist leaders to be elected, such as in Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador (Gjelten, 2008).



The revelations that have come out about the causes and circumstances of the financial crisis confirm some of the traditional stereotypes held abroad about American society, potentially leading to some vindication for those harboring anti-American sentiments of the social/ideological kind: that American society is based on greed and the maximization of profit, that it is individualistic and selfish, that it is dangerously bold and aggressive, and that it is not equitable (British Council, 2008). Because it revealed the limits of the free-market ideology, the financial crisis had the potential for discrediting the standard bearer of this ideology and, consequently, of increasing anti-Americanism.

#### The crisis as revelator of US hypocrisy

A third source of potential reawakening of anti-Americanism in response to the financial crisis is the one Katzenstein and Keohane have dubbed “liberal”: it is not the ideals supported by the US that are at the heart of this critique, but the fact that the US does not live up to its own ideals (Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007). In this view, American policies and actions are characterized by hypocrisy. For instance, the US is the world’s self-proclaimed defender of human rights, but it does not hesitate to practice torture. In the economic area, the US champions free trade in rhetoric and wants other countries to support free trade but does try to recourse to protection when needed.

The financial crisis provides ample opportunities to highlight that perceived hypocrisy. The rush to bailout undertaken during the Bush administration is such an example –a nationalization program with another name in a country where socialism is considered evil and the federal government does not play a central role in the management of the economy. Another example was the instinctive reaction by American lawmakers to include Buy American provisions in the stimulus legislation, a protectionist policy contrary to the free trade gospel preached by the US to the rest of the world. Similarly hypocritical was the policy to subsidize the auto industry attached to the bailout package, another clear example of a protectionist policy often decried by the US when

undertaken in another country. The crisis has revealed American excesses and negligence over the years, from Madoff to subprimes, during which the US has given economic lessons worldwide instead of starting to clean up at home. The crisis and the immediate response to the crisis have certainly provided ample ammunition to those denouncing the hypocritical streak of the US.

### Anti-Americanism as scapegoating for the crisis

The financial crisis also had the potential for reigniting anti-Americanism because some national governments or political parties may stir and exploit underlying anti-American sentiments in order to deflect the blame from their own policy failings. In countries where there is a preexisting baseline of anti-Americanism, anti-American popular perceptions can be manipulated in order to achieve certain domestic political objectives (McPherson, 2003; Meunier, 2010; Meunier, 2007).

One can expect cabinet ministers, for instance, to scapegoat and point an accusatory finger to the US so as to channel the blame for poor financial and economic conditions in their own countries away from themselves. This is how one can interpret some of the numerous comments fingerpointing the US made by then German Finance minister Peer Steinbrück, such as “The United States, and let me emphasize, the United States is solely to be blamed for the financial crisis. They are the cause for the crisis, and it is not Europe, and it is not the Federal Republic of Germany” (Kucharz, 2008) and “This isn’t being impolite or undiplomatic, it’s just the facts. The origin and center of gravity of the problem is clearly in the US” (Wall Street Journal, 2008). If one is to believe Reinhard Buetikofer, former leader of the Green party in Germany, this fingerpointing was designed not only to assess the real blame but also to absolve leaders from responsibility: “For a while, a large segment of the public considered all this as innocent German banks caught in an American mess... Only recently has the public started to understand how much we are involved, and how much of this has been our doing, too” (Webb, 2008).

Alternatively, it can be opposition parties that are denouncing the failures of US-led neoliberal capitalism and, simultaneously, the failures of their own government who followed blindly the US in its perilous adventures. For instance, in South Korea, opponents of the current government are “using the crisis to mobilize public support for their opposition to the new Korean government’s aggressive deregulation and free-trade policy. President Lee Myung Bak, who came to power in February, is currently pushing reforms, such as tax cuts, free trade agreements with major trading partners and privatization of state enterprises, as well as financial deregulation. The US-originated crisis means a bankruptcy verdict for President Lee’s neoliberalism,” said Park Seung Heup, spokesman for the opposition Democratic Labor Party, at the time. Park Young Sun, a lawmaker with the opposition Democratic Party, added: “President Lee blindly follows and copies the neoliberal economic system that has become history” (Newsweek, 2008).

This is not to say that laying the blame on the US is in itself evidence of anti-Americanism. After all, the crisis did objectively originate in the US. And Americans, more than anyone else, are the first ones to blame their own economic policies for the crisis (World Public Opinion, 2009). But the blaming and fingerpointing becomes anti-Americanism when the crisis is used as evidence of some kind of American essence and when stereotypes are deliberately conjured in order to rally support or delegitimize particular policies.

### Hypotheses about anti-Americanism and the financial crisis

One can therefore formulate three hypotheses about the conditions under which the financial crisis can be expected to affect anti-Americanism. First, the crisis will more likely enhance anti-Americanism in countries with a prior baseline of anti-Americanism and where this pre-existing reservoir of arguments has been mostly of the sovereigntist, social and liberal kind (by opposition to the radical, elitist, and legacy kind). Second, the crisis can be expected to enhance anti-Americanism in countries whose economy was most directly affected by the crisis. The salience

of the crisis can stir up emotional reactions and increase negative individual attitudes towards the US. Third, the crisis will more likely enhance anti-Americanism in countries that have experienced national elections in the year following the outbreak of the crisis. In order to be reelected, incumbents will try to fingerpoint and deflect the blame towards the US, and in order to be elected, challengers will associate the incumbents with the US.

## 2. Anti-Americanism and the Crisis in Opinion and Policy

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This section starts by highlighting which countries were most likely to see an increase in anti-American sentiments as a direct result of the financial crisis. Then it compares the hypotheses with the actual displays of anti-Americanism in public opinion and the policy responses of foreign leaders since September 2008. The bottom line is that anti-Americanism did not surge as a result of the crisis.

### Where a surge in anti-Americanism would be most likely

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Anti-Americanism is a difficult concept to operationalize. Scholars have defined anti-Americanism in a multitude of ways: as a disposition against US influence abroad (McPherson, 2003); as an irrational and obsessive prejudice (Hollander, 2004); as popular negative sentiments towards America (Chiozza, 2009); as an attitudinal continuum of opinion, distrust, and bias towards the American people and government over time (Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007; Datta, 2009). Most scholars agree, however, that analyzing opinion polls and, in particular, foreign publics' views of the United States over time provides a first approximate measure of anti-Americanism, though not an accurate measure of essentialist anti-Americanism (Markovits, 2007).

According to the measures of favorability of the US conducted over the past nine years by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the ten countries polled where favorable opinions of the US have been the lowest between 2002 and 2008 are Argentina, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Spain and Turkey (The Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2008). Although a more

refined analysis would be necessary, a cursory analysis based on previous findings by the Pew Global Attitudes Project surveys, the detailed analysis provided by Chiozza (Chiozza, 2009), and various in depth case-studies suggests that Argentina, China, France, Germany, and Spain are countries where the existing reservoir of anti-American arguments has been mostly of the sovereignist, social and liberal kind (by opposition to the radical Muslim and legacy kind). As hypothesized, this makes them most likely candidates to experience a surge in anti-Americanism as a result of the financial crisis.

The second hypothesis suggests that the countries most likely to see a surge in anti-Americanism as a result of the crisis are those that have been most directly affected by the crisis. The countries in central Europe, especially Hungary, came off badly, as did the Baltics. The Eurozone was at first spared the turbulence, but got embroiled quite late, once the recession started to bite. In Asia, South Korea and other open economies suffered the most acute crises, but then came roaring back in 2009. China and India suffered less, although the crisis was a revelator of how closely they were integrated into world financial system. This time, Latin America weathered the storm reasonably well (IMF, 2011). According to this hypothesis, the countries most likely to blame the US for the crisis and experience a surge in anti-Americanism are therefore mostly the European and to a lesser extent some Asian countries.

The third hypothesis links a surge in anti-Americanism with the approach of national elections, mostly as a result of calculated political strategy and manipulation. It suggests that the reservoir of existing anti-American sentiments is most likely to be exploited and steered by politicians in countries with imminent elections. According to the chronological list of elections in countries with a majority of public opinion thinking that the US has a mostly negative influence as provided in Table 1, it seems that the most likely countries to experience a surge in anti-Americanism are those with the elections following most immediately the financial crisis, where

one would expect the standing government to blame the current situation on the United States. These countries would be Argentina, Mexico, Indonesia, Germany, and Japan, as well as all 27 countries from the European Union. The further away an election takes place from the outbreak of the financial crisis, the more difficult it becomes for leaders to claim that they have nothing to do with the current economic conditions in their country.

Table 1: Anti-Americanism and national elections

When the predictions of all three hypotheses (type of anti-Americanism, recession, and elections) are combined, the countries most likely to experience a surge in anti-Americanism as a direct result of the financial crisis are the European countries.

#### Anti-Americanism in world public opinion since September 2008

And yet polls reflecting public opinion towards the US do not point to any surge in negativity during that period. To the contrary, all polls consistently indicate improved views of the US in the world, even in those countries identified earlier as most likely candidates for experiencing anti-Americanism as a result of the crisis.

Interestingly, according to the Pew Global Attitudes surveys presented in Table 2, in many countries opinions about the economy had already turned quite negative by spring 2008, before the September meltdown. In many places, the drop in assessments of the economy was larger from 2007 to 2008 than from 2008 to 2009. Yet at the same time surveys captured a minor improvement in US favorability ratings between 2007 and 2008, as if public opinion worldwide was already looking past the Bush administration and expecting positive changes in US foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, broad yearly surveys of public opinion are not enough to detect slight shifts in anti-American

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Richard Wike for this point.

bias and unfortunately very little polling has been conducted asking questions linking the crisis and the US.

Table 2: Is the United States playing a mainly positive role in the world?

In Germany, the finger was initially pointing directly at the US for the responsibility for the crisis. With respect to the financial crisis, 59% of Germans polled in October 2008 agreed that Germany was the victim of mistakes which have been predominately made in the US, while 36% disagreed (ARD-Deutschland Trend, Nov. 2008). To the question of which country is a trustworthy partner for Germany, only 54% of Germans polled in November 2008 answered the United States, a sharp drop from 67% the previous month (though up from the previous year) (ARD-Deutschland Trend, Dec. 2008). But the population inside the US also blames the US for the crisis –this does not make them anti-American. Moreover, after Germany's second-biggest commercial property lender, Hypo Real Estate, was threatened with collapse and the government was forced to bail out the company for around \$68 billion, German politicians and media stopped blaming and fingerprinting the US as they had done initially (Webb, 2008). Soon the German public expressed beliefs that Obama was even doing a better job in resolving the crisis than the German government. In April 2009, a German poll found that 80% of Germans trusted Obama the most to resolve the international financial and economic crisis, compared to 58% for Angela Merkel, 55% for the European Union, and 49% for the G20 (ARD-Deutschland Trend, 2009). By that time, 76% of Germans polled declared that the US was a trustworthy partner for Germany (vs. 54% in November 2008).

#### Absence of anti-Americanism in policy actions

The absence of a surge in negative public opinion against the US worldwide is not enough to conclude that no anti-Americanism resulted from the US financial crisis. Indeed, there often is a difference between the general public and the policy-making elites in their attitudes towards the

US, which can go both ways, so surveys may not capture the extent to which a country is anti-American in its actions. Yet the policy responses to the financial and economic crisis in many countries did not reflect anti-Americanism either.

Policies demonstrating anti-Americanism would be manifest in diminished support for international cooperation and coordination, as well as the adoption of free-riding behavior in response to the crisis. National governments can argue that if the blame for the crisis resides only with the US, then the policy response should be done only by the US. In Germany, for instance, the spokesperson of the CDU (Christian Democrats), Steffen Kampeter, claimed that the US' "financial gambling has damaged the whole world[...]; therefore the US should solve the problem itself" (Dams, 2008). But there is little evidence that any country decided not to cooperate with the US out of anti-Americanism. To the contrary, the crisis was immediately followed by attempts at coordination and demands for more future coordination, as evidenced by the sudden prominence taken by the G20.

To be sure, the G20 could also be interpreted as evidence of a weakened sense of trust in the US and its hegemonic abilities to do what is best for the system. Many citizens around the world did not trust the US was the most capable actor in dealing most effectively with the crisis. 61% of EU citizens polled in a 2009 Eurobarometer demanded more coordinated action at the EU level (Eurobarometer, 2009). In the spring of 2009, before the Eurozone underwent its own crisis, only 15% of Europeans polled responded that the US is the actor most capable of reacting efficiently to the consequences of the crisis, vs. 25% for the G8, 17% for the EU, and 14% for their own national government (Eurobarometer, 2009). The US lost, at least temporarily, its exemplariness.

One particular area in which the crisis could have been exploited to support an anti-American agenda is that of currency. The crisis offered the opportunity and legitimacy to question the hegemonic privilege of the dollar as the world's major reserve currency. Some European



politicians, especially French President Nicolas Sarkozy, argue that a multipolar world politically should also be multipolar monetarily (L'Expansion, 2009). Reforming the international monetary system has even become one of the central objectives of France's tenure at the helm of the G20 in 2011. But overall these calls for abrogating the exorbitant privilege of the dollar have remained limited and any ambitions to do so severely tampered by the crisis of the euro.

Overall, the verdict is that the policy responses to the crisis around the world have not been a clear display of anti-Americanism in action. So we are left with a puzzle. Why did the dog not bark? How to explain why anti-Americanism has not surged more in public opinion as a result of the financial crisis, especially in the countries predicted as most likely?

### 3. Factors Mitigating Anti-Americanism

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To be sure, some groups and individuals in many countries have taken a lot of satisfaction and Schadenfreude in the financial turmoil that embroiled the US in September 2008. But the majority of public opinion abroad has not been reveling in the misfortunes of the American economy the same way that it did about the perceived failures of American foreign policy over the past eight years. This section analyzes three mitigating factors explaining why the financial collapse of 2008 did not provoke an outburst of anti-American sentiment worldwide: the Obama effect, the globalization effect, and the decline of American power effect.

#### The Obama effect

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The anti-Americanism that was expected to result from the financial crisis has been mitigated by the world's adulation of Barack Obama. The crisis exploded in public view a few weeks before the 2008 presidential election which long seemed to be a disputed contest domestically but which foreign public opinion overwhelmingly hoped would result in Obama's victory. Maybe the crisis would have provoked a surge of anti-Americanism in the absence of the election, but the

timing and the absence of polling done on this specific question between the Lehman bankruptcy and the November election renders such conclusion impossible.

A multitude of polls conducted during the campaign all observed that world citizens massively preferred Obama to the republican candidate John McCain (Gallup, 2008; Glover, 2008; Wike, 2008). Surveys undertaken after the November election confirmed this widespread optimism worldwide and reservoir of goodwill about Obama's presidency (BBC World Service Poll, 2009; Transatlantic Trends, 2009). This was particularly true of some of the countries most likely to experience a surge in anti-Americanism as a result of the financial crisis, such as France, where 86% of those polled preferred to see Obama elected compared to 6% for McCain (Le Nouvel Observateur, 2008), and Germany, where in August 74% preferred Obama versus 11% for McCain (Angus Reid, 2008).

In addition to his personal qualities and characteristics, part of Obama's appeal abroad was the hope of a new direction in American foreign policy (BBC World Service PIPA GlobeScan, 2009). To be sure, US foreign policy continues to receive heavy criticism all around the world, but Obama himself still inspires confidence that he will do the right thing in international affairs (Kull, 2009; Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010). A 2009 poll of 20 nations, taken a few months after the outbreak of the financial crisis, found that Obama inspires more confidence than any other world leader: 61% express a lot or some confidence in Obama to do the right thing in world affairs, while no other leader has the confidence of more than an average of 40 percent across the publics polled (World Public Opinion-PIPA, 2009). Views of Obama were especially positive among Europeans including 92 percent of the British, 89 percent of the Germans, and 88 percent of the French (Kull, 2009). However, Obamania and anti-Americanism can coexist, and love for Obama and disdain for America can be compatible –some people may actually like Obama precisely because he seems so “un-American” (Hatlapa & Markovits, 2010).

The positive views of Obama have translated into positive views of the US as well. Favorability ratings of the US jumped dramatically in Western Europe. They also improved sharply in Russia, China, and Japan. Many other nations around the world now have highly positive views of the US including South Korea, Poland, India, and Brazil. The election of Obama also temporarily improved views of the US in the Arab world, though not by the same margins as in Western Europe and though the trend reversed quickly, especially after the perception that the hopes promised by Obama in his June 2009 Cairo speech would not be followed through (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010).

Finally, many people around the globe were hopeful about Obama's efforts to put the American economy and financial system back on track (BBC World Service Poll, 2009). According to a PIPA poll taken in early 2009, vast majorities in many countries believed that dealing with the financial crisis should be the first policy priority of the Obama administration: 93% in China, 83% in Germany, 78% in Italy, 77% in Japan, 74% in Spain and the UK, 60% in France (BBC World Service PIPA GlobeScan, 2009).

### The globalization effect

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A second factor mitigating the potential rise of anti-Americanism as a result of the financial crisis is the realization that the nature of globalization has changed. The perception now exists that globalization has put every developed country in the same boat, that it is perpetrated mostly by private actors and not government, and in this interdependent world blaming and shaming the US could actually hamper recovery.

It may seem counterintuitive to argue that globalization is a mitigating factor for anti-Americanism today when it has often been portrayed as a cause of anti-Americanism in the past. Indeed, anti-Americanism could be interpreted as a rejection of globalization and modernization as much as it is a rejection of the United States per se (Hollander, 2004). This brand of anti-

Americanism is based on the old anti-capitalist belief that multinational corporations try to extend their power and profits around the world, with the US leading the way, and in so doing destroy indigenous cultures and lead to poverty and exploitation. At the height of the anti-globalization movement at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization and Americanization were often intertwined in rhetoric and the US was portrayed as the main driver and beneficiary of globalization.

Surveys show that most people have been ambivalent towards globalization in the past decade. They like its main economic premises but also have concerns about its side-effects --such as growing inequalities, cultural threat, impact on the environment. Problematic for the US is that while many people tend to blame the US for what they do not like about globalization, few seem grateful to the US for what they do like. According to a 2008 Pew poll, absolute majorities in 32 out of 47 countries blame American policies for the increasing gap between the rich and the poor. Those surveyed overwhelmingly named the US as the world's worst polluter. The story is similar when it comes to culture, with absolute majorities in 37 out of 46 countries believing that American popular culture crowds out national cultures and has an overall negative impact on their traditions (Kohut & Wike, 2008).

The thesis that anti-American views among publics abroad can be explained primarily as a reaction to globalization has been criticized. Holsti, for instance, finds no systematic relationship between measures of globalization and measures of anti-American sentiment (Holsti, 2008). Instead, he argues that globalization works better to explain anti-American views among specific sectors of publics abroad rather than entire populations. Indeed, surveys confirm that foreign policy, not globalization, is the main source of anti-Americanism in the world. However, as Kohut and Wike argue, anxieties about globalization and the fact that people blame the US for the downsides of globalization have certainly contributed to the reputation problems faced by the US in the past decade.

Because it links globalization and American interests so profoundly, the financial crisis is a good test of the proposition that globalization causes anti-Americanism. The fact that the anti-globalization movement has not been revived by the crisis nor become more outspoken against the US confirms a trend observed in the past few years, namely that popular perceptions about the sources and the features of globalization have changed. Three new understandings have emerged in recent years. One, that the world is so interconnected that we are all now in the same boat. Second, that globalization is perpetrated by private actors and not so much by governments. And third, that the real driver and beneficiary of globalization is no longer the US but rather China.

The first realization, that everyone is now in the same boat with respect to globalization, alleviates the potential consequences of the financial crisis on anti-Americanism. To be sure, there is plenty of blame to be laid on the US for its responsibility in provoking the crisis. But the finger-pointing can only go so far in an interconnected world because the responsibility is shared since financial institutions in other countries voluntarily made themselves vulnerable to American financial practices and everyone has a vested interest in seeing the American financial system back on its feet. As French president Nicolas Sarkozy told an American audience, Schadenfreude was out of place: "When the economic crisis broke out and the American administration let Lehman Brothers fail, you have to understand that this was a disaster not only in the US but also in the entire world. Saying this is not laying blame but acknowledging a reality, that the world is totally interdependent. What you achieve here will be an achievement for the entire world. What you fail here will be a failure for the entire world. This creates a collective responsibility" (Sarkozy, 2010). Even China, according to *Newsweek*, did not welcome the news of America's financial demise with glee: "China's delight at beating the United States in the Olympic medal tally finds no gleeful echoes when it comes to Wall Street's financial crisis. The Chinese are not crowing over the US mortgage-induced meltdown; rather, they worry how it will affect them" (*Newsweek*, 2008).

The second realization is that globalization is a phenomenon driven mostly by private actors, not by states. The financial crisis was perpetrated by private, internationalized actors (though enabled by lax government regulation), and its first victims were American citizens. Therefore it is more difficult to assign the blame solely to the US government, unlike when it comes to foreign policy.

The third realization has even a clearer mitigating effect on anti-Americanism. Increasingly, it is China, and no longer the US, which is perceived as the main driver and beneficiary of globalization. The US has almost moved on from a position of culprit to a position of victim. If globalization is no longer equated with Americanization, then the crisis cannot serve as ammunition for those who oppose the US because they oppose globalization.

#### The Decline of the US effect

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A third factor mitigating the upsurge of anti-Americanism as a result of the financial crisis may be the increasingly shared perception that the international power of the US, bogged down militarily in Iraq and Afghanistan and now mired in debt, is truly in decline. For years, the overwhelming power of the US fueled anti-American sentiments. Now that there is some real evidence that the power of the US may indeed be waning, a central cause of anti-Americanism vanishes. Additionally, publics around the world who long called for counterweights to American power may become more cautious about being anti-American for fear of the alternative.

One argument often used to explain the declining support for the US and the sharp rise of anti-Americanism in Western Europe in the past ten years has been the end of the Cold War (Holsti, 2008). The Soviet threat acted as a glue for the Western alliance. With that threat gone, countries in the transatlantic alliance no longer needed to submit to unquestioned American leadership, and public and leaders became less reluctant to criticize the US. The end of the Cold War thus permitted latent anti-American sentiments to resurface (Holsti, 2008).

Moreover, the end of the Cold War also might have led to some “soft balancing” against the US on the part of Western Europeans (Datta, 2009). The US became so overwhelmingly dominant, what former French foreign minister Hubert Védérine referred to in the late 1990s as “hyperpower,” that other countries would restore some balance to the international system not by directly challenging US military preponderance, but by using “international institutions, economic statecraft and diplomatic arrangements to delay, frustrate and undermine US policies” (Pape, 2005). To some extent, this type of anti-Americanism was rooted in envy of American power and success.

While the talk was all about the hyperpower of the US ten years ago, today the talk is about its decline. American power was traditionally founded on military projection, strength of ideals, and economic might, but all three seem to be slowly crumbling. Countless publications have highlighted the decline of the US’ uncontested supremacy and the “rise of the rest” first in the international political system (Kupchan, 2002; Zakaria, 2008). Now this decline is happening in the economic sphere as well. The financial crisis has accelerated both perception and actuality of US decline, because of the blow to the prestige of the American economic image and the reality of US debt. And the decline of relative power in the financial sphere is spilling back into the geopolitical sphere, as the German magazine *Der Spiegel* commented in 2008: “The financial crisis has uncovered the world power’s true weakness. The more the highly indebted United States has to spend to stabilize its own economic system, the more trouble it has performing its self-imposed duties as the world’s policeman” (Der Spiegel, 2008).

In particular, the perception is increasingly shared around the world that the decline of American power is accompanied by a rise in the power of China (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2009). Analysts warn us that it is premature to declare the end of U.S. geopolitical preeminence and that it will take decades, if not centuries, for Chinese economic might to overcome that of the US (Pei, 2009). But for public opinion across the globe, this power shift

makes no doubt. The 2009 Pew Global Attitudes survey asked “Will China overtake the US?” While there is no country in which a majority says that China has already replaced the US as a superpower, many respondents in several countries, especially in Western Europe, believe that China will eventually do so. In France, 55% of those polled say that China has already replaced or will eventually replace the US as the world’s leading superpower; 51% in Germany; 48% in Spain; 49% in Britain (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2009).

In the economic sphere, the perception is now widely shared that China has already replaced the US as the world’s most powerful economy, even though this is a far cry from reality. According to the 2010 Pew survey, the median number of countries naming China as the leading economy in the world today has risen from 20% to 31%. Meanwhile, the percentage naming the U.S. has dropped from 50% to 43% (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010). According to Figure 1, among the world’s largest believers in the current leading economic power status of China are Germany (51%), Japan (50%), and France (47%) –all countries which were most likely to experience a surge in anti-Americanism as a result of the crisis as hypothesized earlier.

Figure 1: Who Is The Leading Economic Power Today?

This perception of rising Chinese power is accompanied by a decline in the favorable opinions of China. In 2008, the favorability ratings of China eroded substantially and reached a low point in many Western countries, especially in Europe, down to 14% favorable opinions in Japan, 26% in Germany, 28% in France, 31% in Spain and 47% in Britain (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010). These results are confirmed by a 2009 BBC poll which finds the countries most negative about China as being France (70%), Germany (69%), Italy (68%) and Spain (54%) (BBC World Service Poll, 2009).

Figure 2: Compared Favorability of the US and China in Six Countries 2005-2010



Figure 2 illustrates a notable finding, that the rise in positive global perceptions of the US has mirrored the rise in negative global perceptions of China in the past three years. Interestingly, the two trends started prior to the election of Obama and prior to the financial crisis (with the exception of Japan, whose citizens were negative about the influence of both countries in similar patterns). This dynamic is especially apparent in Western Europe, in countries where we might have expected a surge of anti-Americanism as a result of the financial crisis. It is quite likely that this increasing public fear about China's growing power acts to soften anti-Americanism in part because it is now China that is blamed for the downsides of globalization and because there is a perception that the rise to power of China cannot happen in a benign way.

Is there a causal link between rising worries about the rise of Chinese power and the taming of anti-Americanism in some of the world's most economically advanced countries? Are global views towards China and the US a zero-sum game? Zixiao Yang and David Zweig have explored whether there is a negative correlation between the global image of China and the global image of the US and argued that overtly anti-American individuals are most likely to express amicability towards China's rise. (Zixiao & Zweig, 2009). The reverse side of the argument may be at play here: rising negativity about the Chinese image may indeed be tampering anti-American proclivities. As a result, countries such as France and Germany, where the citizens in the past denounced the excessive power of the US and displayed what has been called "primal anti-Americanism", seem to be rethinking their anti-Americanism now that the decline of American power (in relative terms) is becoming a reality and now that the alternative (China) is become clearer by the day.

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#### 4. Conclusion

The financial crisis of 2008, whose origin was quite clearly American, could have led to a surge of anti-Americanism in many countries, especially those with antecedents of sovereignist, social, and liberal critiques, those which were directly affected by the crisis, and those with

impeding national elections. This did not happen, however, in part because of the world's Obamania, the new face of globalization, and the decline of American power. Indeed power comes with a price, and there might well be a trade-off between anti-Americanism and American weakness.

Two compounding factors explain the pattern observed in Europe. First, it may be that the crisis has forced the US to be more, well, European. Even before the financial crisis hit, President Obama himself was portrayed in the European media as a honorary European who was going to return Americans to their senses (that is, European senses) --even if nothing in his personal history suggests a particular affinity or familiarity towards Europe (Markovits & Weintraub, 2008; Hatlapa & Markovits, 2009). The crisis has forced the US to embark on certain policies, chief among them the bailout and its quasi nationalization of banks and key industries, which have made it more similar to other countries. Obama's policies and proposals, such as the health care reform, are seen as narrowing the gap between American capitalism and the European model, and therefore could reduce the ideological complaints behind anti-Americanism. Second, Europeans, at least those in the eurozone, subsequently experienced a crisis of their own for which the US could not be blamed directly and which featured even more clearly than before the new economic and financial prominence of China, which for some of the most indebted countries acted as a white knight.

We are not in a "post-American" world yet, but one can question whether, when it comes, it will be accompanied by a "post-anti-American" world. On the one hand, the rationale for an anti-American bias fostered by fear and resentment of American hegemonic power will wane as American power wanes. This will be more pronounced in some regions than others, depending on how deep anti-Americanism was before, how much the US is still perceived to be meddling in local affairs, and how exposed they have become to China. On the other hand, even though the financial crisis did not lead to a surge in the traditional types of anti-Americanism, it may have precipitated

the emergence of a new type characterized by contempt and pity for a weakened giant, which may eventually substitute the sovereigntist and elitist types.

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**Table 1: Anti-Americanism and national elections**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Elections</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents saying the US has mainly a negative influence</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents saying the US economy has a negative influence</b>
<b>European Union 27</b>	Elections to the European Parliament in May 2009		
<b>Argentina</b>	Parliamentary elections in June 2009	56	50
<b>Mexico</b>	Legislative elections July 2009	56	49
<b>Indonesia</b>	Presidential elections July (1 <sup>st</sup> ) and September (2 <sup>nd</sup> Round) 2009	55	
<b>Germany</b>	Parliamentary elections in September 2009	72	72
<b>Japan</b>	Parliamentary elections in September 2009		63
<b>Great Britain</b>	Parliamentary elections in June 2010	53	72
<b>Egypt</b>	Parliamentary elections November 2010	73	49
<b>Spain</b>	Parliamentary elections in March 2012	53	56
<b>France</b>	Parliamentary elections in June 2012	51	70
<b>Turkey</b>	Parliamentary elections November 2012	73	70

Source question 1: BBC World Service Poll Views of the US influence conducted Dec. 2007. Question asked: Please tell me if you think each of the following countries are having a mainly positive or mainly negative influence in the world: United States.

Source question 2: 24-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey released June 2008.

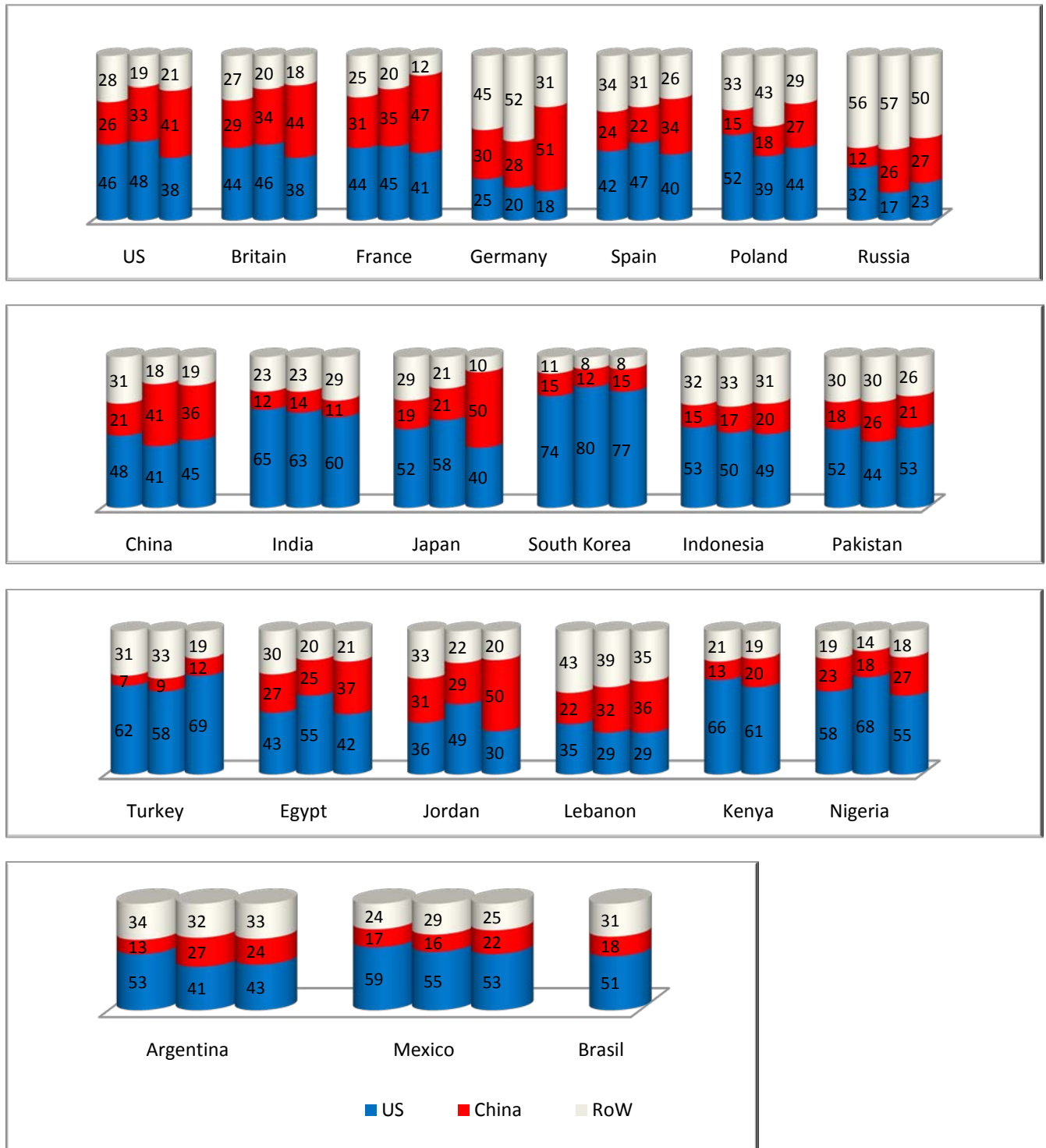
**Table 2: Is the United States playing a mainly positive role in the world?**

<b>Country</b>	<b>December 2007 Mainly positive</b>	<b>February 2009 Mainly positive</b>	<b>July 2009 Mainly positive</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	10	12	49
<b>UK</b>	35	41	58
<b>France</b>	32	36	52
<b>Germany</b>	20	18	44
<b>Italy</b>	39	55	-
<b>Russia</b>	19	7	15
<b>Turkey</b>	20	21	16
<b>Egypt</b>	16	40	15
<b>Kenya</b>	80	-	81
<b>Nigeria</b>	66	65	70
<b>Ghana</b>	65	76	-
<b>South Korea</b>	49	-	68
<b>India</b>	18	43	47
<b>Indonesia</b>	32	33	32
<b>China</b>	38	58	32
<b>Pakistan</b>	-	-	10

Source: worldpublicopinion.org, 2008 and 2009



**Figure 1: Who Is The Leading Economic Power Today?**



Source: (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010, p. Q25)

**Figure 2: Compared Favorability of the US and China in Six Countries 2005-2010**



Source: (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2010, p. Q7)