

Muslims Believe US Seeks to Undermine Islam

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Majorities Want US Forces Out of Islamic Countries And Approve of Attacks on US Troops

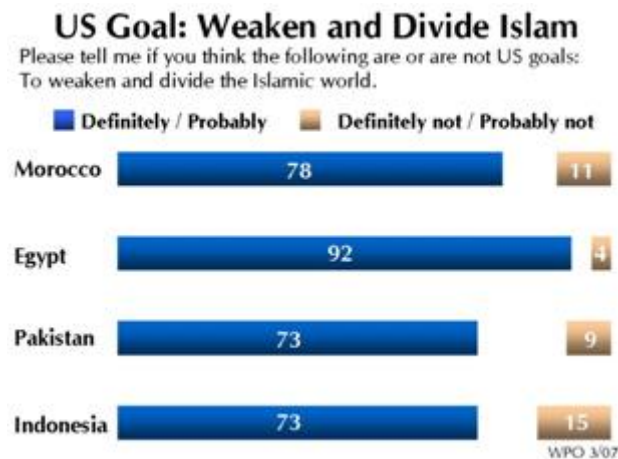
Large Majorities Agree With Many Goals of Al Qaeda But Oppose Attacks on Civilians

Most Support Enhancing Role of Islam in Their Society, But Also Favor Globalization and Democracy

[Full Report \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)

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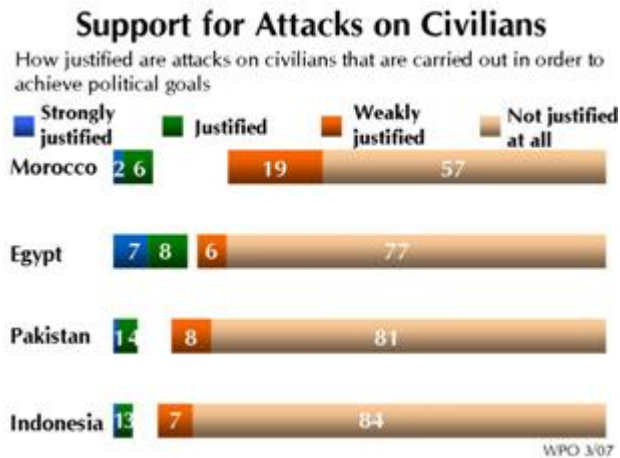
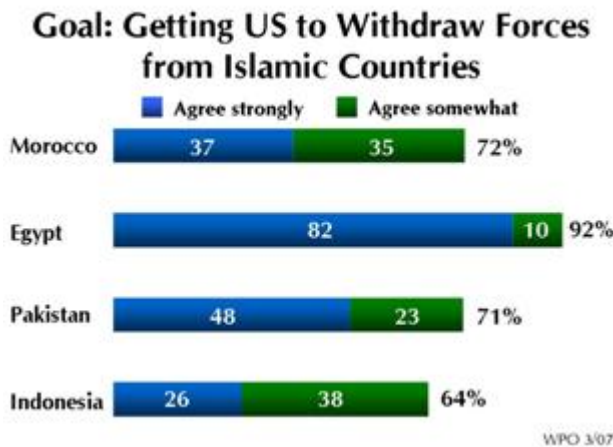
An in-depth poll of four major Muslim countries has found that in all of them large majorities believe that undermining Islam is a key goal of US foreign policy. Most want US military forces out of the Middle East and many approve of attacks on US troops there.

Most respondents have mixed feelings about al Qaeda. Large majorities agree with many of its goals, but believe that terrorist attacks on civilians are contrary to Islam.

There is strong support for enhancing the role of Islam in all of the countries polled, through such measures as the imposition of sharia (Islamic law). This does not mean that they want to isolate their societies from outside influences: Most view globalization positively and favor democracy and freedom of religion.

These findings are from surveys in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Indonesia conducted from December 2006 to February, 2007 by WorldPublicOpinion.org with support from the START Consortium at the University of Maryland.

Large majorities across all four countries believe the United States seeks to "weaken and divide the Islamic world." On average 79 percent say they perceive this as a US goal, ranging from 73 percent in Indonesia and Pakistan to 92 percent in Egypt. Equally large numbers perceive that the United States is trying to maintain "control over the oil resources of the Middle East" (average 79%). Strong majorities (average 64%) even believe it is a US goal to "spread Christianity in the region."



While US leaders may frame the conflict as a war on terrorism, people in the Islamic world clearly perceive the US as being at war with Islam," said Steven Kull, editor of WorldPublicOpinion.org.

Consistent with this concern, large majorities in all countries (average 74%) support the goal of getting the United States to "remove its bases and military forces from all Islamic countries," ranging from 64 percent in Indonesia to 92 percent in Egypt.

Substantial numbers also favor attacks on US troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in the Persian Gulf. Across the four countries polled approximately half support such attacks in each location, while three in ten are opposed. But there is substantial variation between countries: Support is strongest in Egypt, where at least eight in ten approve of attacking US troops in the region. A majority of Moroccans also support targeting US forces, whether stationed in the Persian Gulf (52%) or fighting in Iraq (68%). Pakistanis are divided about attacks on the American military--many do not answer or express mixed feelings--while Indonesians oppose them.

However, respondents roundly reject attacks on civilians. Asked about politically-motivated attacks on civilians, such as bombings or assassinations, majorities in all countries--usually overwhelming majorities--take the strongest position offered by saying such violence cannot be justified at all. More than three out of four Indonesians (84%), Pakistanis (81%), and Egyptians (77%) take this position, as well as 57 percent of Moroccans (an additional 19 percent of Moroccans say such attacks can only be "weakly justified").

Attitudes toward Al Qaeda are complex. On average, only three in ten view Osama bin Laden positively. Many respondents express mixed feelings about bin Laden and his followers and many others decline to answer.

There is strong disapproval of attacks by "groups that use violence against civilians, such as al Qaeda." Large majorities in Egypt (88%), Indonesia (65%) and Morocco (66%) agree that such groups "are violating the principles of Islam." Pakistanis are divided, however, with many not answering.

But there is also uncertainty about whether al Qaeda actually conducts such attacks. On average less than one in four believes al Qaeda was responsible for September 11th attacks. Pakistanis are the most skeptical--only 3 percent think al Qaeda did it. There is no consensus about who is responsible for the attacks on New York and Washington; the most common answer is "don't know."



Most significantly, large majorities approve of many of al Qaeda's principal goals. Large majorities in all countries (average 70 percent or higher) support such goals as: "stand up to Americans and affirm the dignity of the Islamic people," "push the US to remove its bases and its military forces from all Islamic countries," and "pressure the United States to not favor Israel."

Equally large majorities agree with goals that involve expanding the role of Islam in their society. On average, about three out of four agree with seeking to "require Islamic countries to impose a strict application of sharia," and to "keep Western values out of Islamic countries." Two-thirds would even like to "unify all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or caliphate."

But this does not appear to mean that the publics in these Muslim countries want to isolate themselves from the larger world. Asked how they feel about "the world becoming more connected through greater economic trade and faster communication," majorities in all countries say it is a good thing (average 75%). While wary of Western values, overall 67 percent agree that "a democratic political system" is a good way to govern their country and 82 percent agree that in their country "people of any religion should be free to worship according to their own beliefs."

The surveys were conducted between December 9, 2006 and February 15, 2007 using in-home interviews. In Morocco (1,000 interviews), Indonesia (1,141 interviews), and Pakistan (1,243 interviews) national probability samples were conducted covering both urban and rural areas. However, Pakistani findings reported here are based only upon urban respondents (611 interviews); rural respondents were unfamiliar with many of the issues in the survey. In Egypt, the sample (1,000 interviews) was an urban sample drawn probabilistically from seven governorates. Sample sizes of 1,000 - 1,141 have confidence intervals of +/- 3 percentage points; a sample size of 611 has a confidence interval of +/-4 percentage points.