

BBC World Service Poll Shows Iran's Nuclear Ambitions Cause Concern, But People Want a Negotiated Settlement

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[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)



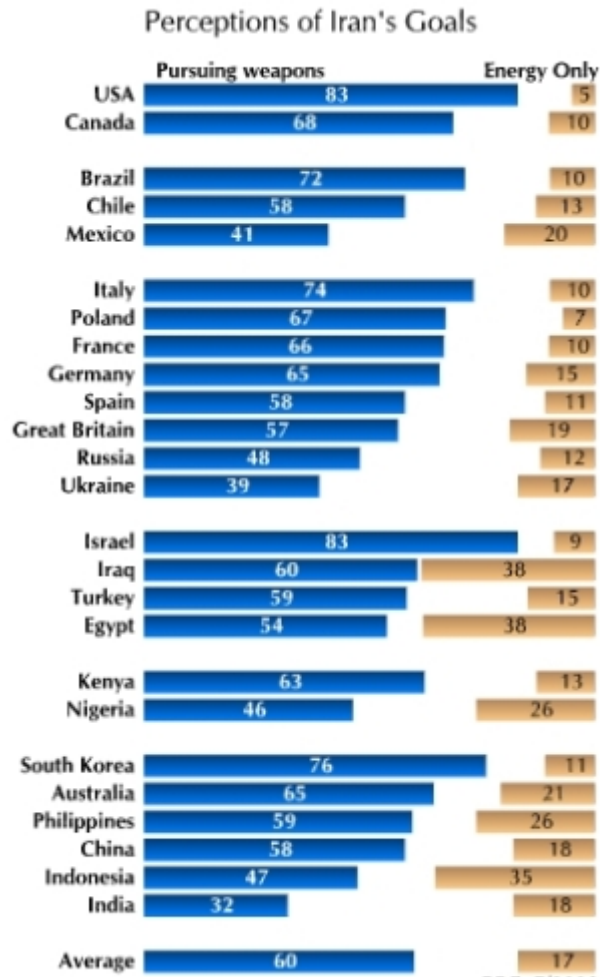
World opinion does not favor aggressive international measures to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, according to a new 25-nation opinion poll conducted for BBC World Service, including the USA, the UK and Iraq. The poll was conducted for the BBC by GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the United Nations General Assembly on September 19th, 2006 (UN Photo/Marco Castro)

The findings show that only one citizen in five (17%), across the 25 countries, believe that Iran is producing nuclear fuel strictly for energy needs, while 60 percent assume that Iran is also trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Asked what the international community should do if Iran continues to produce nuclear fuel, the most popular approach is using only diplomatic efforts (39%), while only 11 percent favor military strikes.

An average of 72 percent of those questioned said they would be very (43%) or somewhat concerned (29%) if Iran were to develop nuclear weapons.



BBC, 7/2006

The poll also revealed that 52 percent of people across all countries favor a new effort to have the UN seek to prevent additional countries from developing nuclear fuel, which can be enriched further for use in nuclear weapons. Only one in three (33%) favored preserving the existing system (based on the Non-Proliferation Treaty) that prohibits new countries from developing nuclear weapons but not from developing nuclear fuel.

The survey of 27,407 respondents across 25 countries was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with PIPA. GlobeScan coordinated fieldwork from May through July 2006 (prior to the recent conflict in Lebanon).

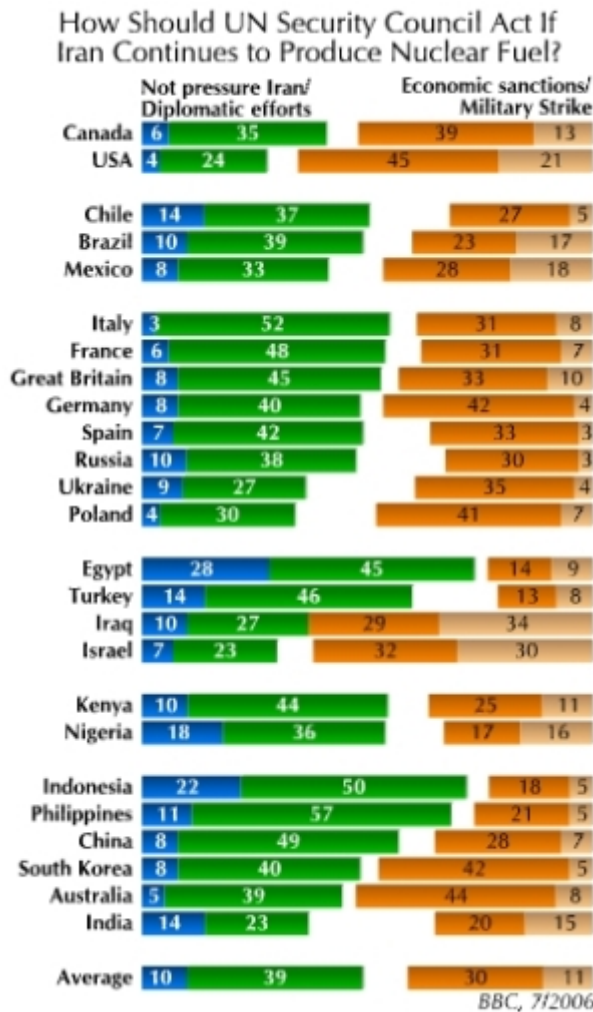
Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland comments, "Clearly world opinion rejects Iran's claim that it is simply trying to develop nuclear energy and is concerned that it will develop nuclear weapons. But at this point the world public does not favor addressing the problem through a confrontational approach."

GlobeScan President, Doug Miller, adds, "The poll reveals a world-wide mandate for stricter international controls on the production of nuclear fuels that could be used in weapons. At the same time, our Turkey and Egyptian findings suggest a sense of nuclear entitlement (for peaceful purposes) among have-not countries particularly in the Muslim world. Diplomats have their work cut out for themselves."

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

On average across the 25 countries polled, only 17 percent believe that "Iran is producing nuclear fuel strictly for energy needs," while 60 percent assume that "Iran is also trying to develop nuclear weapons." This view is held by a majority in 19 of the countries and is especially widespread among Americans (83%), South Koreans (76%), Italians (74%), and Brazilians (72%). In just three countries do more than one in three believe that Iran is only pursuing nuclear energy--Iraq (38%), Egypt (38%), and Indonesia (35%). But even among these countries, substantially more believe that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons--Iraq (60%), Egypt (54%), Indonesia (47%).

Majorities in every country polled also say they would be concerned "if Iran were to develop nuclear weapons." On average 72 percent say they would be concerned and just 17 percent say they would not. In only two countries do the number saying that they are not concerned rise above one in three--Indonesia (40%) and Iraq (34%).



However, overall only 43 percent say they are "very concerned" and in only nine countries does this represent a majority. These include the US (72%, very concerned), Great Britain (67%), Australia (67%), Italy (65%), Israel (64%), Canada (63%), Brazil (57%), Germany (57%), and Poland (52%).

Consistent with this lack of intensity in concern, even if Iran continues to produce nuclear fuel, very few people favor the UN Security Council authorizing "a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities." On average only 11 percent favor such strikes and in no country is this more than one in three. The highest levels of support were found in Iraq (34%), Israel (30%), and the US (21%).

Even the idea of imposing economic sanctions garners only modest support -- on average it is supported by 30%. The most popular approach is using "only diplomatic efforts" -- on average this is supported by 39%.

Combining the two assertive forms of dealing with Iran--military strikes and economic sanctions--in only five countries does a majority favor the UN Security Council authorizing either of these. These are the US (military strikes 21%, sanctions 45%), Iraq (military strikes 34%, sanctions 29%), Israel (military strikes 30%, sanctions 32%), Canada (military strikes 13%, sanctions 39%), and Australia (military strikes 8%, sanctions 44%). On average, 41 percent favor either of these assertive approaches.

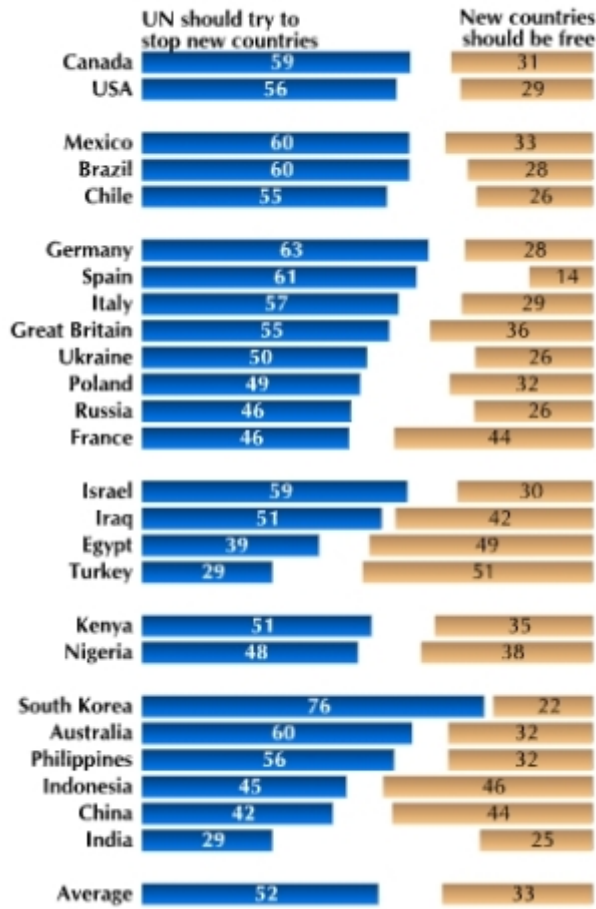
Overall a plurality (49%) favors a less assertive approach for dealing with Iran: either diplomatic efforts only (39%), or not pressuring Iran at all (10%). The largest majorities in favor of one of these gentler approaches are found in Muslim countries-- Egypt (73%), Indonesia (72%) and Turkey (60%)--as well as the Philippines (68%), China (57%), Italy (55%), Kenya (54%), and Nigeria (54%).

Especially notable is that in two of the three European countries taking the lead in dealing with Iran, majorities also oppose doing more than pursuing diplomatic approaches: France (54%) and Great Britain (53%). Germans are divided with 48% favoring no more than diplomatic approaches but 46% favoring economic sanctions (42%) or military strikes (4%).

Overall just 8 countries lean toward a more assertive approach, while 15 countries prefer to do no more than making diplomatic efforts, and two are divided.

Support for New UN Controls on Nuclear Fuel

Positions on New Countries Developing Nuclear Fuel



BBC, 7/2006 Before asking about Iran specifically, the poll

explored people's views on the development of nuclear fuel and found a consensus in favor of the United Nations taking the lead in trying to prevent additional countries from developing the capacity to produce nuclear fuel.

This represents a significant readiness to depart from the traditional arrangement codified in the Non-Proliferation Treaty that prohibits new countries from developing nuclear weapons but does not limit the development of nuclear energy which includes the development of nuclear fuel.

Presented two arguments on the question of nuclear fuel only two countries leaned toward endorsing the current structure described as follows: "All countries should be free to produce nuclear fuel under United Nations oversight, because they have the right to have nuclear energy and should not have to depend on other countries." This view was endorsed by 51% in Turkey and a plurality of 49% in Egypt.

Fully 20 countries endorsed an argument in favor of a new more restrictive structure: "Because nuclear fuel can be developed for use in nuclear weapons, the United Nations should try to stop countries from developing the capacity to produce nuclear fuel." On average 52% favored this position as compared to 33% in favor of the existing position.

The countries most supportive of a new approach were South Korea (76%), Germany (63%), Spain (61%), Mexico (60%), Australia (60%), and Brazil (60%). Americans also favored it (56%). However three major countries were evenly divided between the two positions--China, France, and Indonesia.

In total 27,407 citizens in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States were interviewed between 26 May and 6 July 2006. Polling was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In 7 of the 25 countries, the sample was limited to major urban areas. The margin of error per country ranges from +/-2.5 to 4 percent. For more details, please see the [Questionnaire/Methodology](#).