

US 'War on Terror' Has Not Weakened al Qaeda, Says Global Poll

September 28, 2008

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



The US's 'war on terror' has failed to weaken its prime target al Qaeda, according to people in 22 out of 23 countries surveyed in a new poll for the BBC World Service.

Al Qaeda leaders Ayman al Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden (Photo: NCTC)

On average only 22 per cent believe that al Qaeda has been weakened, while three in five believe that it has either had no effect (29%) or made al Qaeda stronger (30%).

And while negative views of al Qaeda are most common in nearly all of the countries surveyed, this is not the case in Egypt and Pakistan - both pivotal nations in the conflict with al Qaeda.

In both of these countries far more have either mixed or positive feelings towards al Qaeda (Egypt 40% mixed and 20% positive, Pakistan 22% mixed and 19% positive) than have negative feelings (Egypt 35%, Pakistan 19%).

Asked who is winning "the conflict between al Qaeda and the United States", the predominant view of those polled is that neither the US nor al Qaeda is winning, with 15 countries holding this view. In three countries - Kenya, Nigeria and Turkey - the dominant view is that the US is winning. In no country does more than one in five - 21 per cent in Pakistan - believe that al Qaeda is winning. Views are divided in other countries.

On average across all 23 countries just 10 per cent think al Qaeda is winning, 22 per cent think the US is winning, and 47 per cent think neither side is winning.

Even in the United States only 34 per cent believe al Qaeda has been weakened. Fifty-nine per cent believe the 'war on terror' has either had no effect (26%) or has made al Qaeda stronger (33%). Meanwhile, 56 per cent believe neither side is winning the conflict; 31 per cent believe that the United States is winning; 8 per cent believe al Qaeda is winning.

On average 61 per cent of those in countries surveyed say their feelings about al Qaeda are negative, 8 per cent say they are positive and 18 per cent say they are mixed.

"Despite its overwhelming military power, America's war against al Qaeda is widely seen as having achieved nothing better than a stalemate and many believe that it has even strengthened al Qaeda," comments Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

GlobeScan Chairman Doug Miller added, "The fact that so many people in Egypt and Pakistan have mixed or even positive views of al Qaeda is yet another indicator that the US war on terror is not winning hearts and minds."

The results are drawn from a survey of 23,937 adult citizens across 23 countries conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. GlobeScan coordinated fieldwork between July 8 and September 12, 2008.

Participating Countries

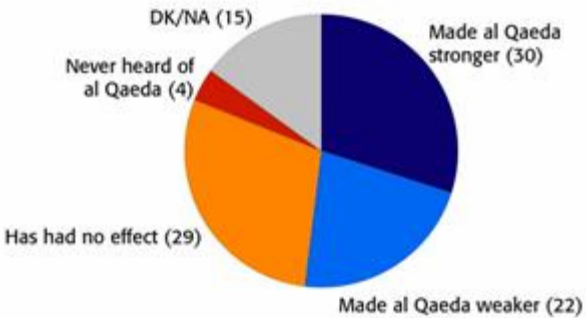


Details

Countries with the largest numbers perceiving that the US 'war on terror' has strengthened al Qaeda include some with whom the US has quite friendly relations--France (48%), Mexico (48%), Italy (43%), Australia (41%) and the UK (40%). Countries most prone to believe that al Qaeda has been weakened include Kenya (58%), Egypt (44%), and Nigeria (37%).

Effect of the "War on Terror" on al Qaeda

Average of 23 Countries, September 2008



Base: Representative sample of 23,000 adults in 23 countries

In fifteen countries the dominant view is that neither side is winning the conflict between al Qaeda and the United States. In three countries the dominant view is that the US is winning (Kenya 45%, Nigeria 34%, Turkey 38%). Pakistan is the country most inclined to think that al Qaeda is winning - 21 per cent hold this view; but a similar number (24%) believe that neither side is winning. In four countries (Egypt, Germany, India, and the Philippines) views are divided between those who believe that neither side is winning or that the US is winning.

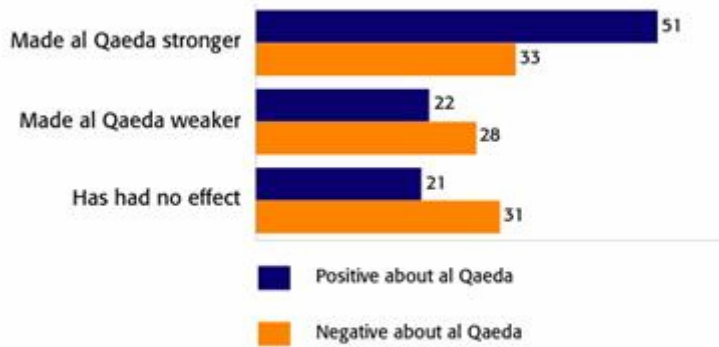
In fifteen countries a clear majority has a negative view of al Qaeda. In five more countries, negative views are the most common response but are held by less than half - China (48%), India (44%), Indonesia (35%), Nigeria (42%) and even the Philippines (42%) - a country that tends to have a distinctly pro-American orientation.

Nigeria actually has the largest number saying that they have positive feelings toward al Qaeda (25%). But a larger number (42%) say they have negative feelings and 12 per cent say their feelings are mixed.

Overall those with positive views of al Qaeda are more likely to say that the US war on terror had made al Qaeda stronger (51%) than are those with negative (33%), or mixed views (29%). But even those with negative views are more likely to say that it has made al Qaeda stronger (33%) than weaker (28%).

Effect of the "War on Terror" on al Qaeda

Average of 22 Countries*, Positive vs Negative about al Qaeda, September 2008



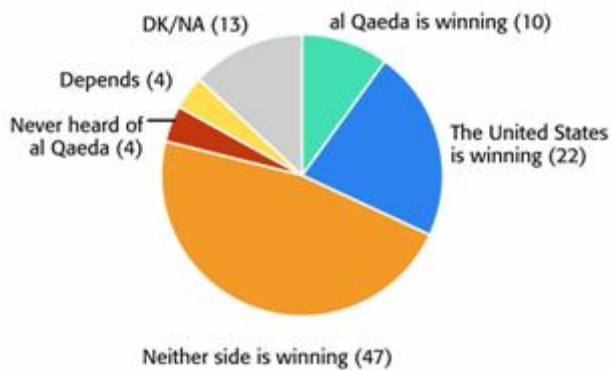
*UAE not included

Base: Representative sample of 22,000 adults in 22 countries

Among those with positive views of al Qaeda more believe that al Qaeda is winning (35%) than for those with negative or mixed views (both 9%), but among those with a positive view a majority thinks either that neither side is winning (31%) or the US is winning (22%). Majorities believe that neither side is winning among those with negative (54%) or mixed views (61%).

Winner in the Conflict between al Qaeda and the United States

Average of 23 Countries, September 2008



Base: Representative sample of 23,000 adults in 23 countries