



READINGS IN INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSES AND TRENDS (1)

Gallup Poll on the Muslim World

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Gallup Poll on the Muslim World
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The *Tabah Analytical Briefs series* aims to empower Tabah clientele – Shari’ah scholars and Muslim opinion leaders – with background information and critical analysis of contemporary events and debates. Each brief is a report of three to five pages, and concisely introduces a concept or topic relating to culture and socio-political change in the global community. The purpose of this series is to provide vital information that will assist scholars and policy makers in formulating a clear conception of the “Shared Public Space”, developing an informed discourse, and mediating the challenges facing the Muslim world today.

جميع الحقوق محفوظة. لا يسمح بإعادة إصدار هذا الكتاب أو أي جزء منه أو تخزينه في نطاق استعادة المعلومات أو نقله بأي شكل من الأشكال دون إذن خطي مسبق من الناشر.

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MUSLIM PERCEPTIONS OF THE WEST ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM CONVENTIONAL IMPRESSIONS

SUBJECT

Summary of a Gallup Poll on the Muslim world, carried out in 2006, and as part of a greater poll that was designed to identify the needs and desires of the world's population at large.¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five key points that Gallup identified as most significant:

1. Muslims do not see the West as monolithic; their views of the US & the UK are vastly different from their views of the rest of the Western World.
2. Despite wide-spread anger at US policy, only a very small minority support terrorism.
3. Profile of radicals is vastly different from conventional wisdom.
4. Percent who support terrorist tactics small and no greater in Muslim World than in US general population
5. Many Muslim women support Islamic religious principles (Shari'ah) as a source of legislation.

1. The summary review has been provided by the Research Division of the Tabah Foundation. The full Gallup study is publicly available at the following internet address:
http://media.gallup.com/worldpoll/pdf/gallup+muslim+studies_islam+and+west_2.1.07_final.pdf

ANALYSIS

1. *Muslims do not see the West as monolithic; their views of the US & the UK are vastly different from their views of the rest of the Western World.*

The poll indicated that the reason for Muslim opposition to the West is largely defined by their opposition to Western foreign policy in the region.

Beyond this, they admire the West for many of its achievements. When Muslims were asked what they admired most about the West (including, and often specifically, America), only 2% in Iran, 6% in Saudi Arabia; and 10% in Egypt said “nothing.” When Americans were asked the same question about the Muslim world, 32% of respondents said “nothing.” Muslims voiced a consistent theme that has appeared frequently in recent Gallup surveys – their desire for the West to “respect Islam” and stop interfering in the internal affairs of predominantly Muslim states.

2. *Despite wide-spread anger at US policy, only a very small minority support terrorism.*

The poll distinguished between “radicals” and “moderates”. “Radicals” were individuals who thought that 9/11 was “completely justified” and had an “unfavorable” or “very unfavorable” opinion of the United States. “Moderates” were the rest. “Radicals” accounted for only 7% of the entire population. In terms of being “narrow minded” (too conservative or extreme) in religion, the most frequently cited aspect of the Muslim world that Muslims themselves say they admire least is “narrow-minded fanaticism and violent extremism.”

3. *Profile of radicals is vastly different from conventional wisdom.*

The radicals and moderates roughly share the same amount of outward religious observance. On average, 94% of radicals and 90% of moderates believe religion is an important part of life, indicating that the religious

establishment in the Muslim world is still very relevant and needs to assert itself. More radicals (50%) than moderates (34%) believe that democracy is a good thing for the Muslim world. These are not theocratic movements moving towards self-imposed alienation or isolation from the wider world, or throwing themselves back in time.

They are fundamentally motivated by a belief that they do not have self-determination and they want to exercise that in a modern fashion; for all their ‘resistance’ against the West, they are deeply influenced by modernity, and not in an entirely critical manner.

4. *Percent who support terrorist tactics small and no greater in Muslim World than in U.S. general population*

This speaks for itself. Of course, this does not take precedence over the fact that the Muslim world should have higher moral standards than the US general population.

5. *Many Muslim women support Islamic religious principles (Shari‘ah) as a source of legislation*

This is the case at the moment owing to a belief among Muslims in general that the Shari‘ah is a source of empowerment for human beings for this life and the next. This impression will not continue if the Shari‘ah is abused to justify the disempowerment of human beings in the Muslim world, which has often happened.