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Poll Finds Discord Between the Muslim and Western Worlds

By MEG BORTIN

PARIS, June 22 — Non-Muslim Westerners and Muslims around the world have widely different views of world events, and each group tends to view the other as violent, intolerant and lacking in respect for women, a new international survey of more than 14,000 people in 13 nations indicates.

In what the survey, part of the Pew Global Attitudes Project for 2006, called one of its most striking findings, majorities in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan and Turkey — Muslim countries with fairly strong ties to the United States — said, for example, that they did not believe that Arabs had carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

The findings illustrating the chasm in beliefs follow another year of violence and tension centered on that divide. In the last 12 months there have been terrorist bombings in London; riots in France by unemployed youths, many of them Muslim; a global uproar over Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad; and no letup in the war in Iraq.

This led majorities in the United States and in countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East to describe relations between Muslims and people in Western countries as generally bad, Pew found.

Over all, Muslims in the survey, including the large Islamic populations in Britain, France, Germany and Spain, broadly blamed the West for the bad relations, while Westerners tended to blame Muslims.

Muslims in the Middle East and Asia depicted Westerners as immoral and selfish, while Westerners saw Muslims as fanatical.

The results were not uniform, and delivered some surprises. Support for terrorism declined in some of the Muslim countries surveyed, dropping sharply in Jordan, where terrorist bombings killed more than 50 people in Amman in November.

Two-thirds of the French people surveyed expressed positive views of Muslims, and even larger majorities of French Muslims felt favorable toward Christians and Jews. Muslims surveyed in Europe were less inclined to see a "clash of civilizations" than were general publics in Europe or Muslims elsewhere.

Pew found sharp divergences regarding respect for women: non-Muslims in the West view Muslims as lacking respect, the survey indicated, while Muslims outside Europe say the same of Westerners.

In the West, where many see Islamic customs like mandatory veils for women and regulations barring them from working outside the home or driving as discriminatory, big majorities saw Muslims as not respectful of women.

In contrast, fewer than half of the Muslims asked in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey said they associated Westerners with respect for women. European Muslims surveyed were more likely to view Westerners as respectful of women, in some places by wide margins.

Pew, which interviewed Muslims in Europe as a group for the first time this year, said their views represented "a bridge" between the widely divergent views of other Europeans and of Muslims in Asia and the Middle East.

The overall results, said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, show that "even though relations are not good, there hasn't been a spike in outright hostility between the two groups over the past year."

Nonetheless, majorities in every country surveyed except Pakistan expressed pessimism about Muslim-Western relations, with Germany most strongly viewing the situation as bad (70 percent), followed by France (66 percent), Turkey (64 percent), Spain and Britain (61 percent), and Egypt (58 percent).

Pew surveyed 14,030 people from March 31 to May 14 in Britain, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the United States. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus two to four percentage points, except in Britain and Germany, where it was six points.

For analytical purposes, Muslims were oversampled in Britain, France, Germany and Spain, and the margin of sampling error for their responses is plus or minus five or six points. Interviews were conducted face to face, except in the United States, Britain, France and Germany, where they were done by phone. The poll was conducted nationwide except in India and Pakistan, where it mostly covered only urban areas.

In follow-up interviews in countries surveyed about the results, Muslims attributed poor relations with the West to a variety of causes. But many pointed to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as the main cause and accused the West of double standards on terrorism.

Pew asked respondents to give their opinions of Christians, Muslims and Jews, and it found anti-Jewish sentiment to be "overwhelming" in the Muslim countries surveyed. It reached 98 percent in Jordan and 97 percent in Egypt.

Majorities in the Muslim world, Pew said, also expressed the opinion that the victory of the militant group Hamas in Palestinian elections in January would "be helpful to a fair settlement between Israel and the Palestinians" — a view that was roundly rejected by non-Muslim publics.

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