



Global Views on Relations Between Islam and the West

LATIN AMERICA BACKGROUNDER

Argentina: More Argentines believe that Muslim and Western cultures can find common ground than feel that violent conflict between the two is inevitable. Forty-six percent in Argentina believe it is possible to find common ground, while just 29 percent take the opposing viewpoint that conflict is unavoidable. A significant majority (58%) sees the tensions between Islam and the West as the result of conflicts over “political power and interests.” Very few (18%) attribute these tensions to “differences of religion and culture.” Asked to identify whether fundamental differences between Islam and the West or intolerance by specific minority groups has given rise to tensions between the two cultures, just 26 percent select fundamental differences. Forty-four percent assigns responsibility to intolerant minorities, including 37 percent who blame minorities “on both sides.”

Brazil: A large number of Brazilians feel that Muslim and Western cultures are capable of finding common ground. A majority (60%) believes that reaching this understanding is possible, nearly twice as many as those who feel that “violent conflict is inevitable” (31%). However, Brazilians are less confident about the source of tensions between Islam and the West. While a plurality (42%) sees these tensions as the product of “conflict about political power and interests,” 28 percent hold religious and cultural differences responsible. Brazilians appear even more conflicted when asked to choose whether fundamental differences between Islam and the West or intolerance by minority groups are the primary cause of global tensions. Respondents are divided about this: 39 percent select intolerant minorities (including 32 percent who choose intolerant minorities on both sides), while 36 percent name “fundamental differences between the two cultures.”

Chile: Chileans tend to reject the idea that Muslim and Western cultures face inevitable violent conflict and instead believe that they can find common ground. A plurality (45%) believes that common ground is attainable, while just 30 percent see violent conflict between the two cultures as inescapable. Nearly half (49%) of Chileans believe that global tensions between Islam and the West arise from conflicts over political power and interests. Fewer than three in ten (28%) in Chile attribute these tensions to “differences of religion and culture” between the two. Similarly, Chileans see intolerant minorities as the primary cause of global tensions between Islam and the West: 41 percent say these minorities are responsible, including 29 percent who blame minorities “on both sides.” Again, only 30 percent feel that fundamental differences between Islam and the West are the source of these global tensions.

Mexico: Most Mexicans feel that common ground can be established between Muslim and Western cultures. A large majority (69%) believes that the two can find common

ground. Just one in ten (11%) says that violent conflict is inevitable. Mexicans are similarly certain that tensions between the two cultures result from conflicts over political power and interests, not inherent religious and cultural differences. Seventy-two percent take the view that political and power-driven conflicts are the primary source of these tensions, while just 14 percent believe they stem from differences in religion and culture. Furthermore, an equally large majority (73%) of Mexicans sees the intolerance of minority groups as a source of tension between Islam and the West, including two-thirds (67%) who blame minorities on both sides. Just 12 percent blame such tensions on “fundamental differences.”

For more information on this poll, please see the Questionnaire/Methodology:
http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan07/BBC_USRole_Jan07_quaire.pdf