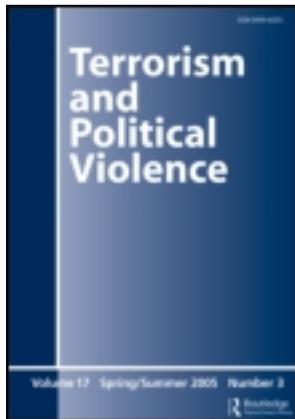


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### Tracking the War of Ideas: A Poll of Ottawa Muslims

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## Tracking the War of Ideas: A Poll of Ottawa Muslims

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*A 2008 poll of 430 Ottawa Muslims found predominantly negative views of the U.S. war on terrorism, including the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. This poll also assessed approval of Western powers (U.S., Canada, Israel, United Nations) and challengers of Western power (Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hizballah, government of Iran). Surprisingly, attitudes of Ottawa Muslims toward militant Muslim groups were unrelated to their attitudes toward Western governments. Discussion suggests that this pattern, if confirmed in other Muslim polls, would mean that the war of ideas against radical Islam must address not one target but two: favorable opinions of militants and unfavorable opinions of the U.S. Muslims who come to like the West more may not like Muslim militants any less.*

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In his celebrated 1993 paper, Samuel Huntington suggested that the world's future conflicts would likely occur around cultural faultlines in a "Clash of Civilizations."<sup>1</sup> In particular, Huntington predicted a growing conflict between Western and Islamic cultures that seemed to be confirmed by Al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the U.S. Whatever the virtues or failings of the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, it has at least moved attention beyond the perpetrators of violence to concerns about the broader base of sympathizers and supporters of violence.

Thus the "war on terrorism" declared by President George W. Bush included a "war of ideas" aimed at reaching out to a billion Muslims, worldwide, to discourage the kind of radical Islam that brings support and recruits to militant Muslim groups.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, President Barack Obama's June 2009 speech in Cairo has been cited by many as a new beginning in relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world, and an important contribution to the war of ideas. Western support for "Arab Spring" uprisings that began in December 2010 may also contribute to new relations between the Western countries and the Muslim world.

Empirically, the war of ideas has led to a growing literature of polling studies designed to assess both Western and Muslim views of jihadist militants who challenge the West.<sup>3</sup> Here we focus on Ottawa Muslims to provide a first indication of how the war of ideas is progressing in Canada, including views of the war on terrorism, attitudes toward Western countries and Muslim militant groups, and experience of political activism.

### **The War of Ideas: Muslim Views of Them and Us**

Until her resignation in December 2007, Karen Hughes was U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. In what might be seen as her valedictory, she published in September 2007 a *Washington Post* op-ed titled "Sinking in the Polls." Here she announced some good news and some new efforts to turn around bad news.<sup>4</sup>

The good news was that Al-Qaeda's poll numbers were down, including 90% disapproval of Al-Qaeda and bin Laden in Iraq and Afghanistan and 75% in Turkey saying that bin Laden did not represent Muslims. Unfortunately, Hughes could not say that U.S. poll numbers were up. "While it is good that many Muslims are recognizing that terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda are a common threat, many polls show that much remains to be done to improve foreign perceptions of the United States." Toward this end, Hughes described her efforts to raise America's public diplomacy programs in the Muslim world as "engaging young people constructively, through English-language teaching, educational exchanges, music and sports diplomacy."

In this op-ed are visible two aspects of the war of ideas in Muslim-majority countries: to lower approval of Al-Qaeda, bin Laden, and jihadist political violence, and to raise approval of the U.S. and other Western countries targeted by jihadists. Items tapping both aspects were included in our poll of Ottawa Muslims, which asked about approval for militant groups such as Hamas and Hizballah as well as about approval for Western powers such as Canada and the U.S.

## Reactions to the War on Terrorism

Polls targeting small minorities of a population are expensive. A population sample will identify mostly individuals who are not minority members, and the methods required to deal with this problem (see Methods section) are complex. In order to get as much information value as possible from our Ottawa poll, we included a variety of items relating to reactions to the war on terrorism.

One item of obvious interest was taken from the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims: *Do you think the U.S.-led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that?* The percentage of respondents who see the war on terrorism as insincere may be of considerable practical interest, especially when changes in this percentage can be tracked over time. Other items taken from the 2007 Pew poll of U.S. Muslims assessed views of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and personal experience of discrimination as Muslims (see Methods section).

Attitudes toward them and us, and reactions to the war on terrorism, can be analyzed in terms of individual differences. Correlations of demographic and opinion items can help understanding of why some individuals are favorable toward the war on terrorism whereas other individuals are unfavorable. Similarly, we will search for correlates of approval for Western countries and correlates of approval for militant groups that challenge Western ideas and Western power.

## Political Activism Among Ottawa Muslims

Finally, we included items to assess political activism among Ottawa Muslims. Political opinion and political action need not be closely related; indeed a large literature in psychology testifies to the often weak relation between attitude and behavior.<sup>5</sup> In particular, polls of U.K. and U.S. Muslims have found that 5–10% of respondents agree that suicide bombing of civilians is justified in defense of Islam, indicating that tens of thousands of U.K. and U.S. Muslims agree with this opinion whereas only hundreds have been indicted for terrorism.<sup>6</sup> This disjunction led us to be interested in the relation between political opinions and political actions for Ottawa Muslims.

Moskalenko and McCauley have distinguished between *activism* and *radicalism*, such that activism is legal and nonviolent political action whereas radicalism is illegal political action. Only some radical activity is violent, and terrorism is the extreme radicalism that targets civilians. Survey items assessing activist and radical intentions, as well as past activist and radical actions, have produced separate dimensions and psychometrically reliable scales in surveys of U.S. students, Ukrainian students, and a national panel survey of U.S. adults.<sup>7</sup>

The relation between activism and radicalism is an issue of considerable practical importance for security forces. In particular, there has been concern about political activism among Muslims in Western countries, especially for groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, whose goals are similar to Al-Qaeda goals although HuT does not itself support violence.<sup>8</sup> Some observers have gone so far as to suggest a “conveyor belt” from Muslim activism to jihadi radicalism,<sup>9</sup> a metaphor suggesting that extreme opinions bring individuals to activism, and frustrated activism then leads inexorably to radicalism.

Given the small size of the Muslim minority in Ottawa—estimated at 50,000 in a city with a population of over 800,000—and the sensitivity of polling on terrorism-related issues, we determined that it was not practical to include items

asking about radical actions or intentions in the Ottawa survey. We did include items about past activism, but without asking respondents to name the cause or group for which they advocated. Although our analysis cannot say anything about the relation of activism and radicalism, the inclusion of activism items permits at least an initial view of the relation between past activism and current political opinions of Ottawa Muslims.

In sum, our poll of Ottawa Muslims was designed to assess reactions to the war on terrorism, especially the competition between Western powers and Muslim militants, and to explore the relation between political opinion and political action.

## **Methods**

The 2008 Ottawa Radicalization Survey was conducted by COMPAS Research on behalf of Bryn Mawr College. Respondents constituted a representative sample of 502 residents of the City of Ottawa who were either Muslim or of Christian Arab origin. About 1,000 square miles, with a population of about a million people, Ottawa is the predominantly English-speaking, Ontario portion of Canada's national capital region. Telephone interviews were conducted from June through September 2008 in both English and French; the interview period was relatively long in order to avoid a barrage of calls that might sensitize the Muslim community in Ottawa. The full survey employed is available from the authors.

### ***Sample Frame***

The population of potential respondent households was constructed in stages. Statistics Canada dissemination areas (neighborhoods with fewer than 700 residents) were selected if they had a supra-normal incidence of households whose occupants, or their ancestors, were immigrants from countries with predominantly Muslim populations. Software programming was used to eliminate households with common Western European or Anglo-Saxon surnames. Two waves of human reviews were conducted to eliminate names of Eastern European derivation or others not normally used in predominantly Muslim countries. These sequential efforts yielded a dataset of 13,030 households with a far higher than normal likelihood of being of Muslim or Arab descent.

### ***Sampling***

All potential respondents were invited to participate in the survey interview, which was introduced as addressing some important questions about the public's satisfaction with democracy in Canada in an era of multiculturalism. Thus, respondents were invited to participate in interviews irrespective of ancestry.

After several introductory questions, respondents were qualified to continue the survey on the basis of religious and ethnic background. They were retained if they had been brought up as Muslim, even if they were not currently Muslim. They were also retained if they had been brought up as Christians and were of Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, or Palestinian origin. These qualifying questions were not asked at the very beginning of the interviews in order to avoid the contamination risk of artificially heightening respondents' religious and ancestral sensibilities by focusing on these themes at the outset. Up to 14 calls were made to each target household.

A total of 1,230 respondents were interviewed. Among these 1,230, 502 qualified for the questions at the core of the study as a result of having been brought up Muslims or being of Christian Arab origin. According to the formula approved by Statistics Canada and by the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, the overall survey response rate for all 1,230 respondents was 0.2.<sup>10</sup> This report focuses on the 430 respondents who described themselves as current Muslims. By convention, percentages based on 430 respondents are deemed accurate to within approximately four percentage points 19 times out of 20.

## Results

This section will review first the descriptive statistics for the Ottawa 2008 poll items, and then examine correlations that can test ideas about the origins of opinions relating to the war on terrorism.

Results not reported here compared South Asian, Arab, and Somali Muslims and found only few and scattered differences. Comparisons of respondents from different Muslim sects also found few differences. One might suppose, for example, that Shi'a Muslims would be more favorable than other Muslims toward Hizballah, a Shi'a militant group centered in Lebanon. In fact, the correlation between Shi'a (*yes* = 1, *no* = 0) and approval of Hizballah (omitting *don't know* and *refused*) was only 0.12 (not significantly different from zero for  $n = 264$ ). Recoding *don't know* and *refused* as 4 (*neutral*) on the approval scale (1 = *approve a lot*, 7 = *disapprove a lot*), the correlation between Shi'a and approval of Hizballah was .17 with  $n = 430$ .

Given that differences by origin and differences by sect were small and scattered, we present results here for all 430 Muslim respondents to the Ottawa 2008 poll.

### *Demographics and Religious Practice*

Table 1 shows that few Ottawa Muslims were born in Canada (4%), that three quarters are employed, and one quarter are homeowners. Our respondents were more likely Sunni than Shi'a (69% vs. 17%).

Table 1 also shows high levels of religious practice for Ottawa Muslims. About a third go to mosque at least weekly, and about half pray daily. Testing the limits of this religiosity is the item about participation in small religious study groups: only 6% report weekly participation in such groups.

### *Perceptions of the War on Terrorism and Experience of Discrimination*

Table 2 shows that three quarters of Ottawa Muslims are very positive about the way things are going in Canada. A minority (21%) think that the U.S. made the right decision in sending its military into Afghanistan, and fewer still (8%) think that the U.S. made the right decision in sending its military into Iraq. More generally, few (14%) see the U.S.-led war on terrorism as a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.

Table 2 also shows that only a minority report experiences of discrimination in the preceding twelve months: *people acted suspicious of you* (15%); *called offensive names* (14%); *singled out by law enforcement officers* (5%). It is worth noting that perceived discrimination by "people" tends to run higher than discrimination from

**Table 1.** Demographic and religion items (percentages) for Ottawa Muslims 2008

Trait	%
Male	56
Born in Canada	4
Married	65
Employed	74
Homeowner	26
Currently enrolled in college/university class	28
Sunni	69
Shi'ia	17
Family income < \$30,000/year	48
Family income \$100,000+ /year	8
Age	
18–24	14
25–34	21
35–49	39
50+	18
On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for prayer? (% once a week or more)	36
Concerning daily salah or prayer, do you, in general, pray all five salah daily, occasionally make salah, only make Eid prayers, or do you never pray? (% pray all five daily)	49
How often do you attend small religious study group meetings? (% once a week or more)	6

*Note:* Tabled percentages include *Don't Know* and *No Response*, except for family income.

law enforcement—a tribute to law enforcement training. Overall, however, about a quarter of Muslims report some experience of discrimination.

### ***Political Grievance and Political Activism***

Table 3 presents results from grievance and activism items. Together, *Don't Know* and *Refused* responses ranged from 2% to 11% for items in Table 3, except 25% for the item asking whether the government of Canada had ever helped a group or cause the respondent cared about.

The great majority of Ottawa Muslims report that the government of Canada has helped them personally (73% rating 4, 5, or 6 on a scale where 1 means not help and 6 means help a lot) or has helped a group or cause the respondent cares about (66% rating 4, 5, or 6). Few respondents report that the government of Canada has hurt them personally (9% rating 4–6 on “hurt” scale) or hurt a group or cause the respondent cares about (13% rating 4–6 on “hurt” scale).

Table 3 also shows the percentages of Ottawa Muslims reporting each of seven forms of political activity. Most commonly reported were money contributions to religious organizations (32%) or to organizations concerned with political or social issues (37%). Less frequently reported were joining a march, rally, or demonstration (22%), attending a meeting to talk about political or social concerns (25%), inviting someone to a meeting about political or social concerns (15%), and distributing

**Table 2.** Opinions of the war on terrorism and experience of discrimination for Ottawa Muslims 2008

Question	%
Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today? (% satisfied)	71
Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan? (% right decision)	21
Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq? (% right decision)	8
Do you think the U.S.-led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that? (% sincere)	14
<i>Now I am going to read a list of things that some Muslims and people of Middle Eastern descent in Canada have experienced. As I read each one, please tell me whether or not it has happened to you in the past twelve months.</i>	
Have people acted as if they are suspicious of you? (% yes)	15
Have you been called offensive names? (% yes)	14
Have you been singled out by law enforcement officers? (% yes)	5
And thinking more generally—NOT just about the past 12 months—have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in Canada? (% yes)	26

*Note:* Tabled percentages include *Don't Know* and *No Response*.

information or advertisements supporting a political or social interest group (13%). Only 5% reported continued support for an organization even if the organization sometimes breaks the law.

It is interesting to note the relatively high level of activism: setting aside the relatively easy behavior of donating money, 42% of Ottawa Muslims reported joining in at least one kind of legal political activism (joining rally, attending meeting, inviting someone, distributing information).

Excluding money donations and the more radical item of continuing support of an organization even if it sometimes breaks the law, the four activism items all correlated positively (ranging from .27 to .52, mean correlation .38, correlations not tabled). Responses to these four items were averaged (0 = *never*, 1 = *yes*) to produce an Activism Scale with mean 0.20 and *SD* of 0.29. Alpha reliability for the scale was .70. This scale is used in correlational analyses reported below.

### ***Attitudes Toward Western Powers and Muslim Militants***

*Approval of Countries and Organizations.* These twelve items were randomized for each respondent, but appear in Table 4 in order of the percentage approving the item target (where approval includes ratings of 5, 6, and 7 on a scale where 1 means strong disapproval and 7 means strong approval). Approval of the government of Canada is high (79%), and approval of the U.N. is moderate (45%). Other governments were not seen as favorably, with the governments of U.S., Russia, Iran, and Israel attracting only 18%, 14%, 13%, and 8% approval. Approval of Muslim Brotherhood, Hizballah, Hamas, IRA, Tamil Tigers, and Al-Qaeda ranged from

**Table 3.** Grievance and activism reports for Ottawa Muslims 2008

Question	% yes
Has the government of Canada done anything to help you personally or someone you care about? <sup>a</sup>	73
Has the government of Canada done anything to help a group or movement you care about? <sup>a</sup>	66
Has the government of Canada done anything to hurt you personally or someone you care about? <sup>a</sup>	9
Has the government of Canada done anything to hurt a group or movement you care about? <sup>a</sup>	13
<i>At this point I'm going to ask about your experience being involved in the community. Please tell me how often in Canada have you ever joined in each of the following community or political activities.</i>	
Have you ever given money to a religious organization?	32
Not counting a religious organization, have you ever given money to any other organization concerned with political or social issues?	37
Have you ever joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration?	22
Attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns?	25
Invited someone to attend a meeting about political or social concerns?	15
Distributed information or advertisements supporting a political or social interest group?	13
Continued supporting an organization that fights against oppression even if the organization sometimes breaks the law?	5

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of respondents giving 4, 5, or 6 ratings on scale from 1 *not help(hurt)* to 6 *help(hurt) a lot*.

Note: Tabled percentages include *Don't Know* and *No Response*.

19% to 2%. Not surprisingly, *Don't Know* rates were high for unfamiliar targets such as the IRA and Tamil Tigers.

*Attitude Structure.* Table 5 presents the intercorrelations of eight “approval” items that show two clusters of positive correlations. (*Don't Know* and *Refused* were coded at the neutral point of 4 on the 1 to 7 scale where 1 was strong disapproval and 7 was strong approval.) One cluster includes Western powers: the U.S. government, the Canadian government, the government of Israel, and the United Nations. The second cluster includes approval of groups often seen as challenges to Western ideas and Western power: Al-Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas, and the government of Iran.

The positive correlations within the two clusters are not surprising: respondents approving the U.S. government were more likely to approve the government of Israel, for instance. Similarly, respondents approving Hamas were more likely to approve Hizballah. More surprising, however, are the correlations between “Western” items and “Challenger” items: these correlations are all close to zero. For instance, it is NOT the case that individuals who approve the government of Israel are less likely to approve of Hamas. For Ottawa Muslims, it is possible to approve both Hamas and the government of Israel, or to disapprove both Hamas and the government of Israel.

Thus Table 5 indicates two independent dimensions of opinion: attitude toward Western powers and attitude toward challengers of Western powers. The Discussion

**Table 4.** Political attitudes of Ottawa Muslims 2008

Question	%
<i>Thinking generally, would you agree or disagree with the following statement:</i>	
All governments would be better if they were ruled under the Caliphate (% agree)	9 (38)
<i>Please tell me how you feel about each of the following countries and organizations, using a 7 point scale where 7 means approve a lot and 1, disapprove a lot, what score would you give?<sup>a</sup> (% approve)</i>	
Hizballah	12 (39)
Al-Qaeda	2 (26)
The government of Israel	8 (31)
The United Nations	45 (14)
Muslim Brotherhood	19 (51)
The government of the United States	18 (17)
The government of Russia	14 (42)
The government of Iran	13 (34)
Hamas	10 (42)
The IRA, the Irish Republican Army	7 (66)
Tamil Tigers	2 (66)
The government of Canada	79 (5)

<sup>a</sup>Tabled percentages combine responses of 5, 6, and 7 on 7-point disapproval-approval scale.

Note: Percentage *Don't Know* and *No Response* in parentheses.

section will draw out some of the implications of this result. To facilitate looking at the predictors of pro-Western and pro-Challenger attitudes, we averaged responses to the four Western attitude items to form a Western Approval Scale (mean 4.0,  $SD = 1.1$ ) and averaged responses to the four Challenger attitude items to form a Challenger Approval Scale (mean 2.9,  $SD = -1.2$ ). Alpha was for .62 for Western Approval, and .77 for Challenger Approval.

**Table 5.** Intercorrelations of attitudes toward Western powers and Challengers of Western power

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Hizballah							
2 Al-Qaeda	.36						
3 Government of Iran	.57	.32					
4 Hamas	.62	.36	.47				
5 Government of Israel	.05	.18	.13	.03			
6 United Nations	-.12	-.08	-.03	-.06	.20		
7 Government of U.S.	.01	.07	.07	-.04	.51	.30	
8 Government of Canada	-.06	-.14	-.03	-.04	.18	.30	.24

Note:  $N = 430$  for tabled correlations, *Don't Know* and *No Response* recoded 4 on 1-7 approval scale.

### ***Predicting Western Approval and Challenger Approval***

With  $n=430$ , correlations greater than .10 are significantly different from zero by two-tailed test with  $p < .05$ , and correlations greater than .13 are significantly different from zero with  $p < .01$ . Here we treat correlations less than .15 as substantively insignificant.

We began by examining demographic characteristics, including age, gender, family income, employment status, home ownership, enrollment in college or university, and born in Canada or not. None of these characteristics was correlated with either Western Approval or Challenger Approval. (Here and for other predictors, multiple regression analyses not reported in this paper produced betas that told the same story as the zero-order correlations reported.)

Turning to measures of religiosity, frequency of attending mosque was not correlated with Western Approval or Challenger Approval. Frequency of prayer and frequency of attending small religious study group meetings correlated .17 and .16 with Challenger Approval but were uncorrelated with Western Approval. These small correlations indicate a small tendency for those who prayed more and attended study groups more to give higher approval to Challenger groups. Belief that all governments would be better under the Caliphate was unrelated to either Western or Challenger Approval.

Our four direct measures of grievance were not correlated with Challenger Approval, but were correlated with Western Approval: Canadian government helped you personally  $r = .20$ , Canadian government helped group or cause you care about  $r = .22$ , Canadian government harmed you personally  $r = -.19$ , Canadian government harmed group or cause you care about  $r = -.28$ . General satisfaction with how things are going in Canada was similarly not related to Challenger Approval but related to Western Approval with  $r = .25$ .

Another kind of grievance measure assessed perceived discrimination. Our four measures of perceived discrimination were not correlated with Challenger Approval, but were correlated with Western Approval: last 12 months people acted suspicious of you  $r = .26$ , last 12 months called offensive names  $r = .18$ , last 12 months singled out by law enforcement  $r = .12$ , ever been victim of discrimination  $r = .26$ .

Similarly, opinions about the war on terrorism were not related to Challenger Approval but were correlated with Western Approval: U.S. right decision in Afghanistan  $r = .35$ , U.S. right decision in Iraq  $r = .38$ , U.S.-led war on terrorism sincere effort to reduce international terrorism  $r = .32$ .

Finally, the four-item Activism Scale was not related to Challenger Approval but correlated  $r = .24$  with Western Approval. There is some surprise value in finding that political activism is linked with more positive views of the Western powers, including Canada.

Overall, the correlational results show numerous substantial predictors of Western Approval, and the best predictors are opinions about the war on terrorism (U.S. right decision in Iraq the best single predictor,  $r = .38$ ). But we have only two weak predictors of Challenger Approval, both of which assess personal piety (prayer frequency and prayer group frequency). This pattern will be examined in the Discussion section.

### **Discussion**

As described in the Introduction, our poll of Ottawa Muslims was undertaken with two questions in mind. First, how do Ottawa Muslims see the war on terrorism,

especially the competition between Muslim militants and Western powers? Second, how is past political activism related to current political opinion?

### *Political Opinions of Ottawa Muslims*

Our predominantly Sunni respondents report high levels of religious practice, including half who pray daily and a third who attend mosque or prayer center weekly. Few respondents (4%) are born in Canada, about three quarters are employed, and about one quarter are homeowners. About half report family income of less than \$30,000 a year.

Nearly three quarters of Ottawa Muslims are generally satisfied with the way things are going in their country. This result is consistent with previous polls showing Canadians generally better satisfied with their government than U.S. citizens are.<sup>11</sup> Items asking about personal and group grievance confirm the positive outlook of Ottawa Muslims. About two thirds report that the government of Canada has done something to help them personally or a group they care about, whereas only about 10% report that the government of Canada has done something to hurt them personally or a group they care about.

Reports of discrimination are also few. Only small minorities (5–15%) of Ottawa Muslims report—in the last twelve months—people acting suspicious of them, being called offensive names, or being singled out by law enforcement officers. About a quarter report feeling that they have at some time been a victim of discrimination.

Less positive is the picture of Ottawa Muslims' opinions about the war on terrorism. Fewer than 20% believe that the U.S. made the right decision in using military force in Iraq and Afghanistan, or that the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.

As described in the Introduction, the Ottawa poll was designed to learn more about Ottawa Muslims' views of the competition of Western powers with Muslim militant groups. Whether a "Clash of Civilizations" or a "war of ideas," this competition led us to include items asking about approval-disapproval for Western targets including the United Nations and the governments of Canada, U.S., and Israel. In addition, we included items asking approval-disapproval of Hizballah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and the government of Iran.

For Ottawa Muslims, approval rates were high only for Canada (79%) and the U.N. (45%). Approval for the governments of Israel and U.S. were low (18% and 8%), and for Hizballah, Hamas, and the government of Iran also low (10-13%). Approval for Al-Qaeda was very low (2%), but it seems likely that some respondents wanted to avoid being linked with Al-Qaeda. Setting Al-Qaeda aside, it is worth noting that approval for Israel and the U.S. was similar to approval for Hizballah, Hamas, and the government of Iran.

### *Political Activism*

About a third of Ottawa Muslims reported giving money to a religious organization or an organization concerned with political or social issues. About a quarter reported attending a political meeting or joining a rally, and about 15% reported inviting someone to attend a meeting or distributing advertisements for a political group. We made a scale of the four items that went beyond donating money, and this scale appears in the correlational results discussed below.

Across all four of these items, 42% reported some history of political activism (having engaged in at least one of the four behaviors). By comparison, a nationwide U.S. internet panel (all Americans, not just Muslim Americans), with four items similar to, but not exactly the same as, the Ottawa items, found 49% reporting some history of activist behavior.<sup>12</sup> Our impression is that Ottawa Muslims, as a minority community, are reporting a surprisingly high level of political activity, but additional polling will be required to obtain comparative data for U.S. Muslims or Canadians living outside the national capitol.

### *Correlates of Attitudes Toward Western Powers and Muslim Militants*

As described in the Results section, we were surprised to find that approval of the government of Israel was unrelated to approval of Hizballah or Hamas. We had expected a substantial negative correlation, as those who approved of Israel's government would disapprove of Hizballah and Hamas. Instead we found that approval of one Western actor (U.S., Canada, Israel, or the U.N.) was correlated with approval of other Western actors, that approval of one Islamic militant actor (Hizballah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, or government of Iran) was correlated with approval of other militant actors, but that correlations of Western actors and militant actors were all close to zero.

In order to better understand this result, we conducted focus groups with Ottawa Muslims after the poll was completed. Comments from focus-group participants did offer some useful insights. First, the United States and Israel are respected as successful, functioning democracies. "Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, you know," explained one Palestinian respondent. There was also a healthy respect for Israel's conduct as implicitly legitimated by a democratic majority: "Israeli people," said another participant, "have a right to defend themselves. In their context they have their right to self-defence. They're standing up for their people. That's seen as admirable."

In addition, participants suggested that admiration for militant groups was related to disdain for Arab governments as corrupt and abusive. "Most people from the Middle East don't like our governments. That's why they like these [militant] groups speaking up." In short, for some Ottawa Muslims, positive views of militant groups may be more about approving their challenge to Muslim governments than about approving their challenge to Western governments. While it is tempting to see sympathy for Muslim militants growing out of hatred of the West, the logic of Muslim support for militants may be independent of views of Western governments.

An apparent difficulty for this interpretation is that approval of the government of Iran is positively correlated with approval of Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah. Isn't the government of Iran part of the status quo militants are challenging? Perhaps not. Unlike other Muslim governments, the government of Iran is widely known to support a militant group—Hizballah. The government of Iran is also countercultural in representing Shi'as against surrounding Sunni governments. Nevertheless we acknowledge that, without measures of approval for other Muslim governments, the idea that Muslims approve militant groups for their challenge to the status-quo in Muslim countries—this idea remains untested and tentative.

To further explore the two clusters of approval ratings, we created two scales: the Western Approval Scale averaged approval of the four Western actors, and the Challenger Approval Scale averaged approval of the four Muslim militant groups. Then we looked for correlates of these two Scales.

Not surprisingly, given their independence, the two scales had different predictors. Western Approval was best predicted by approval of the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, and by belief that the war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism (correlations in the .30's). Direct measures of grievance predicted lower Western Approval (negative correlations in the .20's, best correlation – .28 for belief that the Canadian government harmed a group or cause the respondent cared about). Measures of perceived discrimination also predicted lower Western Approval (correlations ranging from –.12 to –.26). Finally, the Activism Scale correlated positively (.24) with Western Approval.

In short, three different kinds of grievance were substantially associated with disapproval of the United Nations and the governments of Canada, the U.S., and Israel: disapproval of the war on terrorism and use of military force in Iraq and Afghanistan, belief that the Canadian government had harmed a group the respondent cares about, and personal experience of discrimination against Muslims in Canada. Notably, political grievances (disapproval of the war on terrorism, Canadian government hurt a group cared about) are better predictors of attitude toward Western powers than personal experience of discrimination. If supported in other polls of Muslims in Western countries, this pattern might suggest that reducing discrimination against Muslims in Western countries will bring limited success in the war of ideas so long as Western policies continue to be seen as victimizing Muslims.

Somewhat surprisingly, the political activism scale was positively related to Western Approval: Ottawa Muslims who report more political activity were more positive about Canada and the other Western actors. The Ottawa poll did not attempt to identify what political or social groups respondents were active in. Still, if supported in other polls of Muslims in Western countries, a positive link between political activism and approval of Western countries might suggest caution for security forces focusing on Muslim activist groups in order to block a “conveyor belt” to terrorism.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that political activism is a signal of faith in Western institutions.

Turning now to predictors of Challenger Approval, it is important to note that none of the predictors of Western Approval is a substantial or even a statistically significant predictor of Challenger Approval. Grievances against Western governments are related to attitude toward Western governments, but are not related to attitude toward Hizballah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and the government of Iran.

Unfortunately, the Ottawa poll did not include any items strongly correlated with approval for Challenger groups. Only two weak predictors were found: frequency of prayer and frequency of attending small religious study groups (correlations .17 and .16). This leaves a mystery for future research: what are the opinions or experiences associated with approval for militant Islamic groups?

The larger mystery in our results is that Ottawa Muslims' attitudes toward Western governments are unrelated to their attitudes toward Islamic militant groups. As this independence was not predicted, we must be tentative in trying to draw meaning from our surprise. Tentatively, then, we believe that Ottawa Muslims' failure to take sides is a generalization of a surprising result in social psychology, where both cross-cultural research and laboratory experiments have found that caring about one's ingroup is unrelated to hostility toward outgroups.<sup>14</sup> Those who care the most about their own group are not necessarily those feeling most hostility toward other groups. Similarly, Ottawa Muslims who are most approving of the Canadian government are not necessarily those most disapproving of militant Muslims.

A related possibility, already mentioned, is a kind of framing effect. Perhaps Muslim challenge groups are evaluated in relation to Muslim governments, rather than in relation to Western governments. Militants may be approved to the extent that they challenge Muslim governments disdained as authoritarian and unrepresentative, with less attention to militants' challenge to the West. Future research will be needed to test these and other possible explanations, as part of a larger effort to understand how individuals can avoid choosing sides in intergroup conflict.

### Implications for the War of Ideas

In 2009 Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered an evaluation of the U.S. war of ideas against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The military designation for the war of ideas is "Strategic Communication," and Mullen began by pointing to the fuzzy lines separating strategy, tactics, and operations in an asymmetric conflict. Then he moved on to his main point: "Our messages lack credibility because we have not invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven't always delivered on our promises."<sup>15</sup> He concludes: "To put it simply, we need to worry a lot less about *how* to communicate our actions and more about *what* our actions communicate."<sup>16</sup>

Recognizing that actions speak louder than words is certainly a constructive refutation of spin-doctor promises to turn negatives into positives through the magic of advertising. However, Mullen maintains continuity with the perspective offered by Hughes in 2007 in at least one significant way: he assumes that if Muslims like us better—trust us more—then we are making progress in the war of ideas.

Our results offer a different perspective. Ottawa Muslims more approving of the U.S. are not less approving of Al-Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas, or the government of Iran. Some Ottawa Muslims disapprove of the U.S. and its allies—and equally disapprove the Muslim groups that challenge the West. Other Ottawa Muslims approve of the U.S. and its allies—and equally approve of the militant groups that challenge the U.S. Knowing an individual's opinion of the U.S. tells us nothing about that individual's opinion of the groups that challenge the U.S.

A poll of 1,000 Jordanians conducted in early 2002 (data file downloadable from *Journal of Conflict Resolution* for a study by Tessler and Robbins) provides the beginning of a broader confirmation of our results.<sup>17</sup> Rated trust in U.S. President George W. Bush correlated .44 with trust in U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Trust in Al-Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden correlated .47 with trust in Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. But trust in President Bush and trust in Kofi Annan were uncorrelated with trust in Usama bin Laden (−.06, −.06) and uncorrelated with trust in Saddam Hussein (.08, .06). Thus, Jordanian Muslims in 2002 are like our Ottawa Muslims in 2008: attitudes toward Western actors are uncorrelated with attitudes toward those who challenge the West.

If this pattern of results turns out to be common across other populations of Muslims, the implication will be that the war of ideas has not one target, but two. In particular, if opinion of the U.S. is not the inverse—the "flipside"—of opinion of Al-Qaeda, then changing attitudes toward the U.S. is a goal that must be separated from the goal of changing attitudes toward Al-Qaeda, or Hamas, or Hizballah.

This differentiation of goals can be difficult to accept. In a schoolyard fight, it is easy to assume that our friends share our feelings toward our enemy, and that the enemy's friends share the enemy's hostility toward us. In interstate conflict, it is easy

to assume a similar symmetry and consistency: the bad guys and their allies lined up against our allies and us. But perhaps this kind of black-and-white division is less natural in cases of asymmetric conflict.

The U.S. government's response to 9/11 included a general claim—some might say threat—that whoever is not with us in the fight against terrorism is against us. At least for Ottawa Muslims, this communication has not been successful. Many Ottawa Muslims approve both the U.S. and its current challengers, and many others disapprove of both the U.S. and its challengers. This pattern might suggest a different response to terrorism, in which whoever is not against us is with us.

Most generally, our results suggest that the competition between Western governments and radical Muslim groups is not adequately represented as a “Clash of Civilizations.”<sup>18</sup> At least for Ottawa and Jordanian Muslims, there is no indication that Muslims feel compelled to choose sides. Future research might inquire how general this result may be in Muslim countries and in Muslim diasporas, and whether non-Muslim citizens of Western countries share the capacity to avoid black-and-white thinking.

## Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.

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3. Pew Global Attitudes Project, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* (2006), <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253> (accessed 24 October 2007).

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7. Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, “Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction between Activism and Radicalism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21 (2009): 239–260.

8. Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley, “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: Evaluating the Threat Posed by a Radical Islamic Group that Remains Nonviolent,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (2006): 315–334.

9. Zeyno Baran, “The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter It,” Testimony to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, July 10, 2008, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/354.pdf> (accessed 27 November 2009).

10. Response Rate =  $R/(U + IS + R)$ . R = In-scope responding units (i.e., Language qualified, available respondent at least 18 years of age); U = Unresolved (i.e., Busy, no

answer); and IS = In-scope non responding units (i.e., Respondent not available, refusal).  
 $RR = 1230 / (903 + 4134 + 1230) = 0.1962$ .

11. Michael Adams, *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Truth Triumph of Canadian Pluralism* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007).

12. Moskalenko and McCauley (see note 7 above).

13. Baran (see note 9 above).

14. Marilyn Brewer, "The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?," *Journal of Social Issues*, 55, no. 3 (1999): 429–444.

15. Mike Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 55, no. 4 (2009): 3, [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq\\_pages/editions/i55/1.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i55/1.pdf) (accessed 12 November 2009).

16. *Ibid.*, 4.

17. Mark Tessler and Michael D. Robbins, "What Leads Some Ordinary Arab Men and Women to Approve of Terrorist Acts Against the United States?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51, no. 2 (2007): 305–328.

18. Huntington (see note 1 above).