



Who Speaks For Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think

Ph.D. John L. Esposito, Dalia Mogahed

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Based on the largest study of its kind, this book is the first to present the fascinating findings of the Gallup Poll of the Muslim World. Coauthored by bestselling author and Georgetown University professor John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, Gallup's executive director of Muslim studies.

The horrific events of 9/11 dramatically intensified what many saw as an ongoing conflict between the U.S. and parts of the Muslim world. Extremism has grown exponentially as Muslims and non-Muslims alike continue to be victims of global terrorism. Terrorist attacks have occurred from Morocco to Indonesia and from Madrid to London, as U.S.-led wars rage in Iraq and Afghanistan. As of this writing, war and terrorism have already claimed more than 300,000 lives since 9/11; the vast majority have been civilians.

As we face savage actions in a world that seems ever more dangerous and out of control, we are confronted daily by analysis from terrorism experts and pundits who see the religion of Islam as responsible for global terrorism. At the same time, terrorist groups like al-Qaeda beam messages throughout the world that demonize the West as the enemy of Islam, responsible for all the ills of the Muslim world.

Amid the rhetoric of hate and growing violence, both anti-Americanism in the Muslim world and Islamophobia — discrimination against or hostility toward Islam or Muslims — have increased precipitously. In the aftermath of 9/11, President George W. Bush emphasized that America was waging war against global terrorism, not against Islam. However, the continued acts of a terrorist minority, coupled with statements by preachers of hate (Muslim and Christian) as well as anti-Muslim talk show hosts and political commentators have inflamed our emotions and distorted our views. The religion of Islam and the mainstream Muslim majority have been conflated with the beliefs and actions of an extremist minority. The result was reflected in a USA Today/Gallup poll, which found substantial minorities of Americans admitting to negative feelings or prejudice against Muslims and favoring heightened security measures with Muslims to help prevent terrorism. Nearly one-quarter of Americans, 22%, say they would not want a Muslim as a neighbor; fewer than half believe U.S. Muslims are loyal to the United States; and 44% say Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs.

Are the growing violence and negative perceptions on all sides only a prelude to an inevitable all-out war between the West and 1.3 billion Muslims?

The vital missing piece among the many voices weighing in on this question is the actual views of Muslim publics. With all that is at stake for U.S. and Muslim societies, indeed for the future of the world, the time has come to democratize the debate.

Who Speaks for Islam? Listening to the Voices of a Billion Muslims is about this silenced majority. It is the product of a mammoth Gallup research study over the last six years. Gallup conducted tens of thousands of face-to-face interviews with residents of more than 35 predominantly Muslim nations. Gallup's sample represents urban and rural, young and old, educated and illiterate, women and men. In total, we surveyed a sample representing over 90% of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, including Muslims in the West, making this the largest, most comprehensive study of contemporary Muslims ever.

The concept of this book is simple. After collecting vast amounts of data representing the views of the

world's Muslims, we asked the questions everyone wants answers to: What is at the root of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world? Who are the extremists? Is democracy a desired construct among Muslims, and if so, what might it look like? What do Muslim women really want? With questions in hand, we let the empirical evidence — the voices of a billion Muslims, not individual “experts” or “extremists,” dictate the answer.

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