



Global Views on Relations Between Islam and the West

AFRICA BACKGROUNDER

Kenya: Only a plurality (46%) of Kenyans believe Muslim and Western cultures can put aside their differences, while a significant number (35%) believe violent conflict between the two “is inevitable.” Kenyans are somewhat divided on the source of tensions between Islam and the West. Thirty-nine percent say tensions between the two groups arise mainly from “differences of religion and culture,” while 41 percent cite “conflicts about political power and interests.” Kenyan opinion is mixed about whether current Islam-West tensions should be attributed to fundamental differences between the two cultures or the attitudes of intolerant minorities. While a plurality (42%) says intolerant minorities are responsible, one-third (34%) chooses “fundamental differences between these two cultures.” Kenyans are more likely to identify “an intolerant Muslim majority” (20%) as the source of such tensions than minorities on “both sides” (14%) or a “Western minority” (8%).

Nigeria: A majority of Nigerians (53%) feel Muslim and Western cultures can find common ground, while 37 percent say violent conflict between the two is inevitable. Nigerian Muslims were more optimistic about this than Christians. Sixty-three percent of Nigerian Muslims say such agreement is possible and only 31 percent say violence is inevitable. Christian Nigerians, in contrast, were equally divided about the possibility of common ground or the inevitability of violence (43% each). A majority of Nigerians overall (56%), including majorities of both Muslims (59%) and Christians (51%), believes that tensions between Islam and the West arise more from “differences of religion and culture” than conflicts over political power and interests. In none of the other countries polled, did a majority chose cultural differences over political ones. Only one-third (33%) of all Nigerians believe tensions between Islam and the West arise out of conflicts over political power. Half (50%) of Nigerians feel that current global tensions between Islam and the West are caused more by “fundamental differences between these two cultures,” rather than by “intolerant minorities” on both sides (42%). Nigerian Muslims (55%) were more likely than their Christian counterparts (43%) to identify fundamental differences as the source of global tensions. More Nigerian Christians name “an intolerant Muslim minority” (23%) as the source of tensions, and more Muslims identify “an intolerant Western minority” (18%). Similar numbers of Christian (20%) and Muslim (18%) respondents, however, indicate that minorities “on both sides” are responsible for current global tensions.

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