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WORLD POLITICS AND SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM WITHIN MUSLIM POPULATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES AND WESTERN EUROPE

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

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WORLD POLITICS AND SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM WITHIN MUSLIM POPULATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES AND WESTERN EUROPE

Focusing on the Muslim populations in five Muslim-majority countries and four Western European countries, we examine the levels of support for suicide bombings and other forms of violence. We found that support for terrorism among Muslims is present but the percentage of radicals is quite low. In both samples, support for terrorism is stronger among those who see democracy as a solely Western political system. This pattern of association is similar across the Western European countries, whereas the association varies considerably across the Muslim countries. The perceived economic dominance of the West is related to more support for terrorism among Muslims in Europe. In the Muslim countries, blaming the West for negative international relations is associated with greater support for terrorism. We suggest that improvement of the relationships between the West and the Muslim world can reduce support for terrorism and prevent radicalization within Muslim societies.

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The question of public support for terrorism has been increasingly addressed in empirical studies (e.g., Fair & Shepard, 2006; Haddad & Khashan, 2002; Kaltenthaler et al., 2010; Shafiq & Sinno, 2010). This is an important topic because there are at least two ways in which terrorist organizations can benefit from public support (Goodwin, 2006; Pape, 2005). First, since it is an extreme form of violence that typically causes civilian deaths, terrorism needs moral and political legitimization and terrorist leaders often appeal to the public for this legitimization (Kruglianski & Fishman, 2006). Second, terrorism by its nature is a tactic of insurgency, and terrorist organizations "require at least a passively supportive society in which to hide and from which to obtain the resources necessary for survival" (Tessler & Robbins, 2007, p. 305). Therefore, popular support for terrorism represents an important challenge for anti-terrorism efforts, and understanding the causes of favorable attitudes towards terrorism can assist in formulating anti-terrorist policies. For instance, Atran (2003) argues that tactics aimed at reducing the number of terrorist sympathizers is often more effective than the use of military force.

The present study aims to make a contribution to the existing empirical literature by focusing on Muslim populations' support for suicide bombings and other forms of violence against civilian targets for defending Islam from its enemies. The existing research indicates that the support of Muslims for terrorism is largely driven by beliefs and ideas rather than material interests (see Krueger & Maleckova, 2002; Wiktorowicz & Kaltenthaler, 2006). For example, religious beliefs and ideas about threats to Islam shape support for terrorism (Fair & Sheperd, 2006; Kaltenthaler et al., 2010). The present paper goes beyond this research by examining the role of beliefs about the economic and political relationships between the Muslim world and the West. We used the 2006 Pew survey to examine these issues among Muslim populations in both Muslim countries (Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Turkey) and in Western Europe (France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom). Hereinafter with the term "Muslim country" we refer to those countries in which the majority of the population professes Islam. We compare the perceptions and attitudes of Muslims in these two settings in order to understand whether these populations differ in their support for terrorism and its ideological correlates.

International Politics

Pape (2003) noted that one of the distinctive features of terrorism is that it is used by a weaker actor against a stronger one. Unequal distribution of power between groups may foster the use of terrorism, especially if the inequalities are seen as unjust. A theoretical framework

that emphasizes the role of inequalities and power differences in intergroup relations is social dominance theory (SDT; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDT argues that there is a general tendency for human societies to be structured in the form of group-based social hierarchies. This hierarchical structure means that "members of dominant groups enjoy a disproportionate share of positive social value, such as wealth, status, and power" (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999, p. 82). Within this framework, social conflicts are seen as attempts to change the existing group hierarchy.

Initially, SDT was applied to national contexts, but it also has been used to examine international conflicts. International relations can be seen as hierarchically structured because different states have unequal power and influence (Sidanius, Henry, Pratto, & Levin, 2004). Applying this framework to the contemporary situation in world politics, SDT scholars argue that the West, and especially the U.S.A, dominates international politics and that many other countries, including Muslim ones, are in a subordinated position (Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005). The findings of Gallup surveys show that this is also the way in which Muslims in most countries around the world tend to see current international relations (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). Furthermore, Esposito and Mogahed conclude that the perception of Western politics is the main factor in political radicalization of Muslims. They demonstrate, for example, that Muslims who showed support for the 9/11 attacks justified their view by referring to the U.S. global politics and the occupation of Muslim territories. Similarly, students in Beirut, Lebanon who explained the World Trade Center attack in terms of a fight against dominance were more likely to justify it (Sidanius et al., 2004; see also Levin, Henry, Pratto, & Sidanius, 2003). Hence, empirical results indicate that Muslims tend to show more support of Islamic terrorism when they believe that Western politics affect the Muslim world negatively. In addition, leaders of Islamic terrorist groups often focus on the politics of the West to explain and justify their actions. Osama bin Laden, for example, brought up the issue of international dominance and injustice in most of his messages to the Western public (Bin Laden, 2009a, 2009b).

Economic Dominance

Economic inequality and the relative lack of economic prosperity in the Muslim world can be perceived as a result of Western domination and thereby might foster support of terrorism. Research indicates that the lack of economic well-being is probably not related to terrorism or terrorism support (Krueger & Maleckova, 2002; Piazza, 2006). However, the perception of international economic relations might be important. In his "staircase to

terrorism" model, Moghaddam (2005) emphasizes the importance of group comparison and the perception of so-called "fraternal relative deprivation"; i.e., the perception that the standard of living of one's group is below the level of what could be expected. In addition, Atran (2004) argues that there is no intrinsic association between impoverishment and terrorism, but that the perceived lack of economic development and opportunities can increase the popularity of Jihadist ideas. And Victoroff (2005), in his overview of approaches to understanding terrorism, suggests that group deprivation can legitimize violence toward others. Muslims may perceive international economic relations as being unfair towards Muslim countries, and when they believe that Muslim countries are economically deprived due to Western policies, they might be more likely to support terrorism (H1).

Western Democracy

The "spread of democracy" policy promoted by the U.S. administration under President Bush and codified in the U.S. national security strategy (National Security Council, 2002) may be interpreted as an expansion of Western political practices and values. Muslims might perceive it as a sign of the Western tendency to dominate politically. In addition, democracy may be seen as incompatible with Islamic beliefs. For example, followers of the *Salafi* movement tend to see democracy as an un-Islamic form of government because it places man-made law above God's law. A study in Pakistan showed that those who are opposed to democracy tend to support terrorism more (Kaltenthaler et al., 2010). However, Esposito and Mogahed (2007) found that the majority of Muslims in the world are positive towards democracy and democratic freedoms more generally. Many of them tend to blame the U.S. and other Western countries for the lack of democracy in Muslim countries rather than for trying to export and impose democracy onto others. Most "mainstream" Muslims insist that democratic principles should be reconciled with Islamic practices and laws, and that the *shariah* should remain an important source of legislation. In other words, Muslim populations do not tend to oppose the general idea of democracy, but rather the secularism that goes with it. Thus, Muslims may perceive democracy as a threat to their religion when they see it as a Western ideology that is incompatible with Islamic traditions. In that case, democracy can be understood, for example, as a pretense to justify Western politics of dominance. Therefore, we expect that Muslims who oppose democracy *because* of its Western origins are more likely to support terrorism (H2).

Attributed Responsibility

Beck (2002) argues that perceptions of dominance among subordinated group members often lead to the view that there is (underlying) group conflict in which the dominant group is the "enemy" and the subordinate group is the "victim." Conflicts between unequal groups tend to be associated with the belief that the dominant side is to blame, especially among subordinate group members. Moghaddam (2005) emphasizes the role of this sort of "us-versus-them" thinking with its tendency to divide the world into "good" and "evil" as a factor in support for terrorism.

Leaders of terrorist organizations also evoke the idea of the Western world being responsible for the global conflict between Muslims and people in Western countries. They often argue that the Western world is to blame for the conflict, in which Muslims are the victims. Such a position is closely connected with the concept of "defensive Jihad," which involves the notion of a justified struggle and protection against external aggressors.

Attributions of responsibility for group conflicts are associated with perceptions of dominance, whereby the dominant party tends to be blamed and the dominated party has a justified reason to defend itself, even with extreme means (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). Therefore, we expect that Muslims who blame the Western world for the conflict between the Muslim world and the West will be more likely to support terrorism (H3).

Middle Eastern Conflict

The economic, military, and political situation in the Middle East might be interpreted as reflecting Western domination in international relations. If the U.S. is the only super-power in the world, Israel can be seen as the super-power of the Middle East. The economic contrast between Israel and Palestine is so visible that some Palestinians use terms like "apartheid" to characterize it (Bisharah, 2002). Israel is the leading military power in the region and controls Eastern Jerusalem with its Islamic holy places. In addition, Israel has many settlements in what Palestinians and Muslims call "occupied territories." It is also important that Islamists see Israel as part of a larger anti-Muslim alliance which in the famous *fatwa* of the World Islamic Front (1998) was referred to as a "coalition of Jews and Crusaders."

These issues make the Middle Eastern conflict an important focal point and symbol of the global relations between the Muslim world and the West. Marsella (2004) argues that most Muslims are dissatisfied with the current situation in the Middle East and perceive American support of Israel as disproportional. Abi-Hashem (2004, p. 82) states that the "unconditional and excessive support of Israel" by Western countries is an important source

of frustration among Muslims worldwide. The American-Israeli alliance is also addressed by terrorist leaders. For example, in his *Statement to the American People* Osama bin Laden emphasized that American support of Israel's occupation of Palestine was the most important cause of the 9/11 attacks (Bin Laden, 2009a).

Thus, Muslims may see Israel's hegemony in the Middle East and the support by Western countries, and the U.S. in particular, as a key symbol of the subordinate position of Muslims in the contemporary world. This may mean that those who sympathize with the Palestinians are more likely to support terrorism (H4).

Muslim and Non-Muslim Countries

We analyzed a cross-national dataset that includes populations in Muslim countries and Muslim immigrants living in Western Europe. One common denominator for many Muslims over the world is a sense of shared identity with Muslims who are seen as suffering from domination (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). This might mean that Muslims in different regions and countries have similar attitudes towards terrorist attacks in defense of Islam from its enemies. However, research has found clear differences between Muslim countries in both the level of support for suicide bombings and its causes, which makes it difficult to make generalizations about Muslim populations (e.g., Fair & Sheperd, 2006; Shafiq & Sinno, 2010).

We assume that Muslim immigrants in Western Europe might react differently to perceived international relations compared to people living in Muslim countries. For example, Muslim immigrants, being a minority in their countries of residence, might face more exclusion and discrimination by the native-born population. However, it also possible that contacts between Muslim immigrants and Western people help to overcome stereotypes and "us vs. them" thinking and attributing responsibilities for the conflict solely to the opposite side. The present study makes a distinction between Muslim countries and Western European countries in order to explore whether support for terrorism and its correlates differ between these two samples. Because we are interested in comparing the two settings, we focus on the average associations (fixed statistical effects) in both samples.

Method

Data and Sample

This study uses data from a 15-nation survey carried out in 2006 by the Pew Research Center as part of their *Pew Global Attitudes Project*. The data was collected using telephone

and face-to-face interviews with nationally representative samples. The margin of error is between 3% and 6% in different countries. In the survey, only people who live in one of five Muslim countries (Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Turkey) and Muslim immigrants in four Western European countries (France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom) were asked about their support of terrorism. Within these countries, only the respondents who self-identified as Muslims were selected for the analysis, forming a dataset of 6,678 respondents in nine countries ($N = 5,051$ in the five Muslim countries, and $N = 1,627$ in Western Europe).

The two samples involve the adult population (between 18 and 89 years old). The mean age is 36 years ($SD = 13.3$) in the Muslim countries and 34 years ($SD = 11.6$) in the European countries. Female respondents make up 50% of the respondents from the Muslim countries and 42% of the European sample. Regarding educational attainment, 12% of the respondents in the Muslim countries and 28% of the respondents in the European countries have a college or university education, whereas 45% of the respondents in the Muslim countries and only 14% in the European sample have a primary education or no formal education, $t(6678) = 25.0$, $p < .001$. On a 4-point scale, 82% of the respondents in the Muslim countries and 69% in the European countries indicate that they find their religion "very important," $t(6678) = 13.2$, $p < .001$. Thus, in comparison with the Muslim countries, the European sample is characterized by younger age, a larger proportion of male respondents, higher education, and a lower level of religiosity.

Measures

Using a four-point scale (1= often justified, 4 = never justified), support for terrorism was measured by the following question: "Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?" After recoding we obtained our dependent variable, *support for terrorism,* whereby a higher score indicates a higher level of support.

A measure of respondents' perception of economic dominance was obtained by combining two survey questions. The first one concerned economic deprivation in general: "All things considered, do you think that Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous than they are today, or don't you think so?" The respondents who agreed with this statement were additionally asked about the causes of this situation: "What is most

responsible for Muslim nations' lack of prosperity?" One answer category referred to the "policies of the U.S. and other Western nations," whereas the other category mentioned internal problems of the Muslim countries. We constructed a dichotomous variable, *perception of economic dominance,* which had the value 1 for those who think that Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous and consider U.S. and Western policies to be responsible for the lack of prosperity. The answers of respondents who either did not perceive deprivation or did not think the West is responsible were coded 0.

The belief about the Western nature of democracy was assessed by the question: "Some people in our country feel that democracy is a Western way of doing things that would not work here – others think that democracy is not just for the West and can work well here. Which comes closer to your opinion?" We created the variable *opposition to Western democracy* by coding 1 for the respondents who oppose democracy due to its Western origin and 0 for the others. It should be noted that this question was formulated differently for the respondents who live in Europe. They were asked whether democracy could work "in Muslim countries."

Attributed responsibility for the conflict between the Muslim world and the West was assessed using the combination of two survey questions. The first one asked about the nature of the relations: "Do you think that relations these days between Muslims around the world and people in Western countries such as the United States and Europe are generally good or generally bad?" The respondents who answered that relations are generally bad were additionally asked which side is responsible for this: "Who do you think is mostly to blame for this, Muslims or people in Western countries?" Using these items we constructed the variable *attributed Western responsibility,* which had the value 1 for those who considered the relations between Muslims and the West as bad and also think that Western people are to blame for that. Respondents who do not perceive the relations as being bad or do not find that the West is responsible for the bad relations received the value 0.

The attitude towards the Middle Eastern conflict was measured by the following question: "Now thinking about the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, which side do you sympathize with more, Israel or the Palestinians?" Using this item, we created a variable *sympathy with Palestinians* coded 1 for the respondents who sympathize more with Palestinians and 0 for the others. It should be noted that the formulation of the question and possible answers implies that people who chose Palestinians were more negative towards Israel.

Respondents' age, gender, education, and religiosity are used in the statistical analysis as controls variables. *Age* is reported in the survey in years. *Gender* is a dichotomous variable (1 = female, 0 = male). *Religiosity* is indicated by a four-point scale indicating the degree of importance that people attach to their religion. A higher value means higher importance of religion. In the dataset, education is represented by different categories in different countries. In order to have a comparable measure across countries we used three broad categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The first category (*primary*) consists of people with only primary education or no formal education. It was not possible to make a distinction between the respondents with no formal education and primary education because in some Western European countries (e.g., Germany) primary education is compulsory. Therefore, in Germany "no formal education" was not listed as a possible answer category. The second category (*secondary*) includes those with full or incomplete secondary education. The third category (*tertiary*) consists of respondents with college or university education, with or without a degree.

Results

Descriptive Findings

Table 1 shows the descriptive findings for the main variables and for the Muslim countries and European ones separately. In general, support for terrorism was low, with nearly 60% of respondents in the Muslim countries and more than 70% in the European countries stating that terrorism was "never justified." However, these percentages indicate that respectively around 40% and 30% of the Muslim respondents believed that suicide bombings and other forms of violence are sometimes justifiable to defend Islam. Support for terrorism was significantly higher in the Muslim countries than in Western Europe.

<Table 1 about here>

Only 25% of the respondents reject democracy as an appropriate political system for Muslim countries: this percentage was similar in the Muslim world and among Muslim immigrants in Western Europe. In addition, less than 30% of the participants think that U.S and Western policy is responsible for the lack of economic prosperity in Muslim countries, but significantly more people in the Muslim world are of this opinion than in Europe. Nearly four in five participants in Muslim countries sympathize with the Palestinians rather than with Israel, and in Europe this proportion is just below 70%. Almost 40% of the participants in Muslim countries see the Western world as being responsible for the bad relationships

between people in the West and Muslims. In the European sample this percentage is significantly lower, with around one in four people having this opinion.

In both contexts, sympathy with Palestinians and Western attributed responsibility are significantly associated (eta = .12, p < .05 for the Muslim countries, and eta = .15, p < .05 for Western Europe).

Support for Terrorism

We fitted two similar models in Mplus v. 4.2, one for the Muslim countries and one for the Western European ones. These regression models also included the individual-level control variables and the dichotomous variables for countries. Because the terrorism support measure was skewed, we recoded the *support for terrorism* score so that 0 indicates that terrorism is never justified and 1 that it is acceptable under certain conditions.

As shown in Table 2, the analysis for the Muslim countries showed that people who think that democracy, as a Western political system, does not fit Islamic societies are more likely to justify terrorist attacks (H2). In addition, the tendency to blame the West for the negative international relations with the Muslim world was associated with higher support for terrorism (H3). Perceived economic dominance and sympathy for Palestinians were not independently related to support for terrorism. Thus there was no support for H1 and H4.

For the control variables, the results reveal a negative effect of religiosity on the support of terrorism. This means that more devoted Muslims are *less* likely to justify violence. Education, age and gender are not significantly associated with support for terrorism. In addition, the country effects indicate that support for terrorism is significantly higher in Egypt and Jordan than in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

<Table 2 about here>

For the Western European countries, perceived economic dominance is significantly associated with support of terrorism (see Table 2; H1). Thus, in contrast to the Muslim countries, Muslim immigrants in Europe are more likely to support terrorism if they consider the U.S. and other Western powers responsible for the economic deprivation of Muslim nations. However, similar to the Muslim countries, European Muslim immigrants who consider Western democracy as inadequate for Islamic countries had higher support for terrorism (H2). Attributed Western responsibility and sympathy with Palestinians have no significant independent effects on support for terrorism (no support for H3 and H4).

Concerning the control variables, it turned out that there is a negative effect of age and of university education on support for terrorism. Thus, younger and less educated Muslim immigrants are more supportive of terrorism than older and more educated participants. The country effects indicate that Muslim immigrants in Germany are less likely to support terrorism than in the UK and in Spain. Muslim immigrants in France are more likely to support terrorism compared to the UK and Spain. Results for the model in which only control variables were used as predictors are represented in Table 3. It can be seen that they do not differ much from those in the full models.

<Table 3 about here>

Country Differences

Given that the data was collected in nine countries using sometimes dissimilar procedures, it is important to investigate whether the respondents within the Muslim countries and within the European countries have similar views. Therefore, we examined whether the coefficients vary within the two samples by means of multilevel analysis (Hox, 2010). As the number of countries was insufficient for multilevel modeling with random effects, we included as the second level the regions within the countries as defined in the dataset. In some countries these regions coincided with administrative divisions (e.g., Pakistan, Germany), whereas for other countries geographical regions were used (e.g., Jordan, France). Overall, 61 regions were included in the analysis.

For these analyses we used a series of multilevel logistic models in Stata v. 10.1 statistical package, and fitted multilevel logistic regressions using Laplacian approximation.[4] These analyses were performed for the Muslim countries and the Western European countries separately. The results for both models show that the mean (fixed) effects are very similar to the findings discussed above. In addition, almost all of the random effects (cross-regional variance) within the Western European sample were not significant. This means that the prediction of terrorism support among Muslim immigrants is similar across the Western European regions. This was not the case for the Muslim countries because the random effects (cross-regional variance) for this sample were both significant and substantial. In order to examine these differences further, we performed country-level analysis and the results are presented in Table 4. While fitting the country-level models for the Muslim sample, we omitted "sympathy with Palestinians" due to its extremely low variation in Egypt and in Jordan. In these countries nearly 100% of the respondents expressed sympathy with

Palestinians. The findings show that some factors have different effects in different Muslim countries and that these effects do not only differ in size but can also differ in direction. An example of the latter is that the negative relationship between perceived economic dominance and support of terrorism that is found in Turkey turns out to be positive in Pakistan. Thus, there is no pattern of associations between ideological beliefs and support of terrorism that is stable across the five Muslim countries. Factors that contribute to support of terrorism in one country are insignificant or even in the opposite direction in other countries.

<Table 4 about here>

Discussion

The present findings show that the support for terrorism to defend Islam from its enemies is low. However, around one in three Muslims finds that suicide bombings and other forms of violence are sometimes justifiable, and the support is higher in Muslim countries than among Muslim immigrants in Western Europe. In addition, some of the factors associated with Muslims' support for terrorism differ between countries in the Muslim world and in Western Europe. Furthermore, there are clear differences between the Muslim countries, whereas the pattern of associations is very similar for Muslim immigrants living in Western European societies. Thus, the findings for Muslim immigrants generalize across the Western European countries, but, similar to previous studies (e.g., Fair & Sheperd, 2006; Shafiq & Sinno, 2010), it turns out to be difficult to make generalizations about Muslims populations in the Muslim world. The reasons for this diversity within the Muslim world are not clear. It might have to do with the different ways in which the data were collected in the different countries or the representativeness of the samples. There might also be more substantive reasons. For example, the effect of perceived economic dominance of the West on support of terrorism was positive in Pakistan and negative in Turkey. This difference might have to do with the fact that the former country is economically much weaker than the latter one. The limited number of countries in our study does not allow a further test of these kinds of interpretations.

Although there are clear differences between the Muslim countries, it is possible to examine the average associations (fixed statistical effects). We compared the support for terrorism among Muslim respondents in the Muslim countries and in Western Europe, and we focused on beliefs about economic and political relationships between the Muslim world and the West. It is known that Muslims' support for terrorism is largely driven by ideas rather

than by material interests (Kaltenthaler et al., 2010), but to our knowledge research has not examined the role of perceptions of global politics.

It turned out that in the Muslim countries and also in Western Europe, the belief that Western democracy is not appropriate for the Muslim world was associated with higher support for terrorism. This is in line with research in Pakistan that has found that support for terrorism is related to opposition to democracy and this opposition is interpreted as an indicator of *Salafi* religious beliefs (Kaltenthaler et al., 2010). The current findings show that this association also exists among Western European immigrants and this might be related to sympathies for *Salafi* views (Roy, 2004). The finding contradicts other research that shows that anti-democratic tendencies do not play a main role in the development of anti-Western sentiments and the support of radical Islamist movements among the Muslim public (Atran, 2004; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). It should be noted, however, that opposition to Western democracy can be measured in different ways and that we focused on the perceived appropriateness of Western style democracy for Muslim countries.

Another similarity between the European respondents and those from the Muslim countries is that sympathy with the Palestinians was not independently associated with support for terrorism. One possible reason is that the sympathy for the Palestinians was very high and therefore did not vary much among respondents. For example, in countries like Egypt and Jordan, nearly 100% of the respondents were sympathetic towards the Palestinians. Furthermore, sympathy with Palestinians was associated with blaming the Western world for the negative relations between Muslims and people in the West. Muslims in Muslim countries and in Western Europe who opposed the U.S.-led war on terror were more likely to have sympathy with Palestinians. This supports the view that Muslim people around the world perceive Western politics towards the Middle East as unjust and disproportionately supportive of Israel (Abi-Hashem, 2004; Marsella, 2004). This positive association between attributed Western responsibility and support of terrorism might mean that the Middle Eastern conflict is indirectly related to the support of terrorism because it fuels the idea of the West being responsible for the negative international relations. However, this indirect effect is only possible for the Muslim population in Muslim countries, because in these countries greater attributed Western responsibility was related to greater support for terrorism. Attributed Western responsibility was not associated with support for terrorism in the European countries. In the latter countries, it was found that perceived economic dominance of the West was related to greater support for terrorism. This finding might reflect the fact that Muslim immigrants in Europe tend to maintain

economic ties with their countries of origin and continue to identify with the global Islamic community.

In Western Europe, younger and more highly educated Muslims supported terrorism less than older and lower educated respondents, whereas religiousness and gender were not associated with terrorism support. In contrast, in some Muslim countries (e.g., in Jordan), stronger religiousness was related to lower support for terrorism. This association seems counter-intuitive, but one possible reason is that we focused on the importance that people attach to their religion. We had no information on specific religious beliefs (e.g., *Salafi* movement) and on religious observance. It is likely that these indicators of religiosity are related to stronger support for terrorism (Kaltenhalter et al., 2010). An additional finding for the different Muslim countries is that in Egypt more educated respondents are more supportive of terrorism than the less educated.

In evaluating the findings, some limitations should be considered. For example, the data used in the present study is correlational and therefore the suggested relationships should be interpreted with care. Furthermore, the Pew surveys are among the few available today to examine support of terrorism among Muslim populations and these surveys have been used in other studies on support for terrorism (e.g., Fair & Sheperd, 2006), but there are data limitations. One is that the dataset used lacks information on, for example, type of schooling and religious upbringing (Krueger, 2007). Further, people might have responded strategically because an honest answer to such survey questions could make them vulnerable to persecution (Drakos & Gofas, 2006). It is also possible that Muslim people feel that they are expected to agree with questions about unequal international relations and Western dominance.

Conclusion

There is evidence that perceptions of international relations are associated with the support of Muslim publics for suicide bombings and other forms of violence to defend Islam. In Western Europe, belief in Western economic dominance is associated with greater support for terrorism. In Muslim countries, blaming the Western world for the negative relations between Muslims and the West is a factor in the support for terrorism. In both contexts, the belief that Western democracy does not work well in the Muslim world is related to greater support for terrorism. These findings suggest that improving Muslims' attitude towards the West and reducing public support for suicide bombings and other forms of violence to defend Islam requires that the relationships between the Western world and the Muslim world be improved. Economic integration, free and transparent trade, and cooperative international

politics might improve the opinion about the West by reducing the feeling of being dominated (see also Li & Schaub, 2004; McDonald, 2004). It also requires the continuing education of the public about the relevant factors and underlying processes of world politics so that more informed judgments can be made. It is also important to stress that the overall rates of support for terrorism among Muslims in the world are relatively low, indicating that the fear of "Islamic threat" is possibly exaggerated. Another important finding is that the patterns of associations are similar for the Western European countries in the Pew sample, but vary greatly between the Muslim countries. This suggests that interventions in Western European countries can be quite similar, whereas these must be highly tailored in the Muslim world by taking political, economic, religious and historical factors into account.

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Table 1

Frequencies and Mean-Comparison Tests for the Muslim Countries and the Western Europe

Variables	Muslim countries		Western Europe		$t(N)$[a]
	N	%	*N*	%	
Economic dominance					5.9*
Yes (1)	1,399	27.7	331	20.3	
No (0)	3,624	71.7	1,285	79.0	
Refused	28	0.6	11	0.7	
Western democracy					0.6
Yes (1)	1,296	25.7	406	25.0	
No (0)	3,713	73.5	1,213	74.6	
Refused	42	0.8	8	0.5	
Sympathy with Palestinians					7.7*
Yes (1)	3,970	78.6	1,119	68.8	
No (0)	1,061	21.0	488	30.0	
Refused	20	0.4	40	1.2	
Attributed Western responsibility					11.6*
Yes (1)	1,997	39.5	387	23.8	
No (0)	3,033	60.1	1,226	75.3	
Refused	21	0.4	14	0.9	
Support of terrorism					6.8*
Never justified	2,976	58.7	1,156	71.1	
Rarely justified	853	16.9	176	10.8	
Sometimes justified	720	14.3	163	10.0	
Often justified	247	4.9	70	4.3	
Don't know / refused	264	5.2	62	3.8	
Missing cases (listwise)[b]	423	8.4	126	7.7	
Valid cases (listwise)	4,628	91.6	1,501	92.3	
Total	5,051	100.0	1,627	100.0	

Source: Pew Global Attitudes survey, 2006

Note. $N = 6,678$.

[a] Two-group mean-comparison two-tailed t-test. [b] For all variables, including controls.

*$p < .05$.

Table 2

Estimates of Effects on Support of Terrorism in Muslim Countries and in Western Europe

Predictors	Muslim countries		Western Europe	
	Effect	SE	Effect	SE
Economic dominance	-0.040	0.066	0.713***	0.137
Western democracy	0.160*	0.068	0.281*	0.133
Sympathy with Palestinians	0.008	0.090	0.151	0.140
Attributed Western responsibility	0.426***	0.062	0.167	0.143
Religiosity	-0.113**	0.036	0.059	0.050
Education (Primary = ref.)				
Secondary	-0.012	0.072	-0.241	0.171
Tertiary	0.033	0.096	-0.459*	0.190
Age	-0.002	0.032	-0.384***	0.076
Gender (Female)	-0.098	0.061	0.105	0.125
Country				
Indonesia	-1.004***	0.102	n/a	n/a
Jordan	0.046	0.086	n/a	n/a
Pakistan	-0.978***	0.104	n/a	n/a
Turkey	-0.990***	0.104	n/a	n/a
France	n/a	n/a	0.352*	0.162
Germany	n/a	n/a	-0.719***	0.200
Spain	n/a	n/a	0.016	0.174
N		4,640		1,511

Note: Results provided are from the two path regression models. Estimation method is maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR).

Reference countries are Egypt for the sample of Muslim countries, and the UK for the European sample.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 3

Estimates of Effects on Support of Terrorism in the Five Muslim Countries

Predictors	Egypt	Indonesia	Jordan	Pakistan	Turkey
Economic dominance	0.227	0.054	-0.177	0.752***	-0.796***
	(0.135)	(0.162)	(0.129)	(0.177)	(0.186)
Western democracy	-0.021	0.351*	0.761***	0.059	-0.299
	(0.135)	(0.173)	(0.148)	(0.182)	(0.160)
Attributed Western	0.051	0.444**	0.863***	0.245	0.509**
responsibility	(0.125)	(0.153)	(0.124)	(0.173)	(0.160)
Religiosity	-0.040	-0.011	-0.236***	0.293	-0.096
	(0.069)	(0.234)	(0.060)	(0.352)	(0.070)
Education (Primary = ref.)					
Secondary	0.520**	-0.169	-0.400*	-0.161	0.071
	(0.151)	(0.177)	(0.155)	(0.160)	(0.190)
Tertiary	0.449*	-0.461	0.040	-0.119	-0.047
	(0.175)	(0.365)	(0.181)	(0.246)	(0.282)
Age	0.087	-0.139	0.103	-0.005	-0.138*
	(0.072)	(0.090)	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.078)
Gender (Female)	-0.266	-0.177	-0.101	0.150	-0.178
	(0.129)	(0.153)	(0.123)	(0.150)	(0.167)
N	903	891	962	1,080	817

Note: Results provided are from the path regression models. Estimation method is maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR).

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

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