



The War on Terror as a Political Issue

Dan Yankelovich

April 2004

Center for National Policy

Organization

Part I: Relations with Other Nations

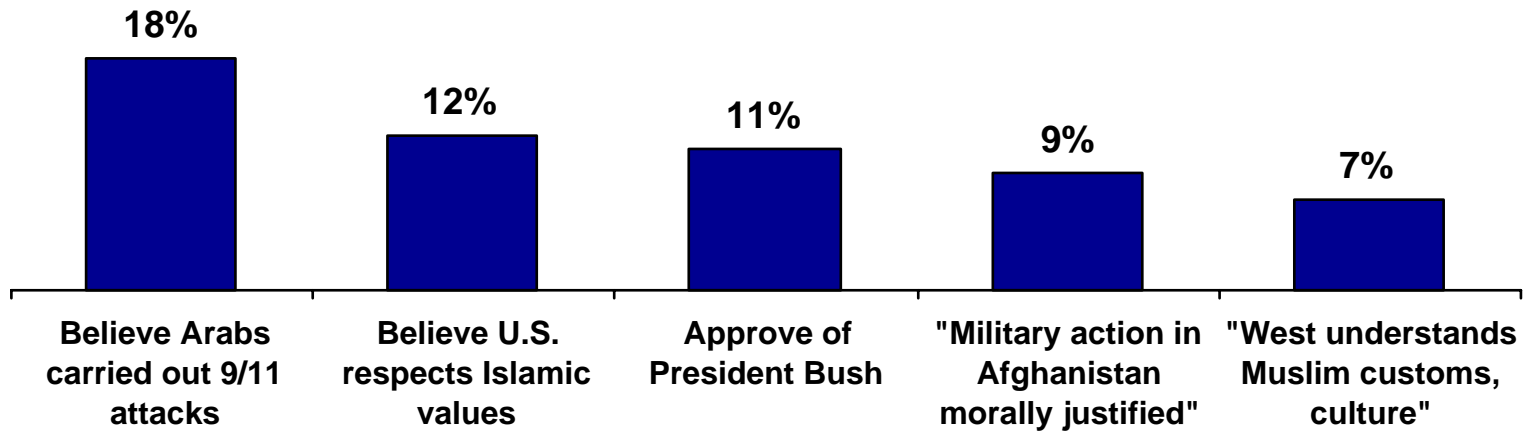
- With the Muslim world
- With our allies

Part II: A Better Way



Relations with the Muslim World

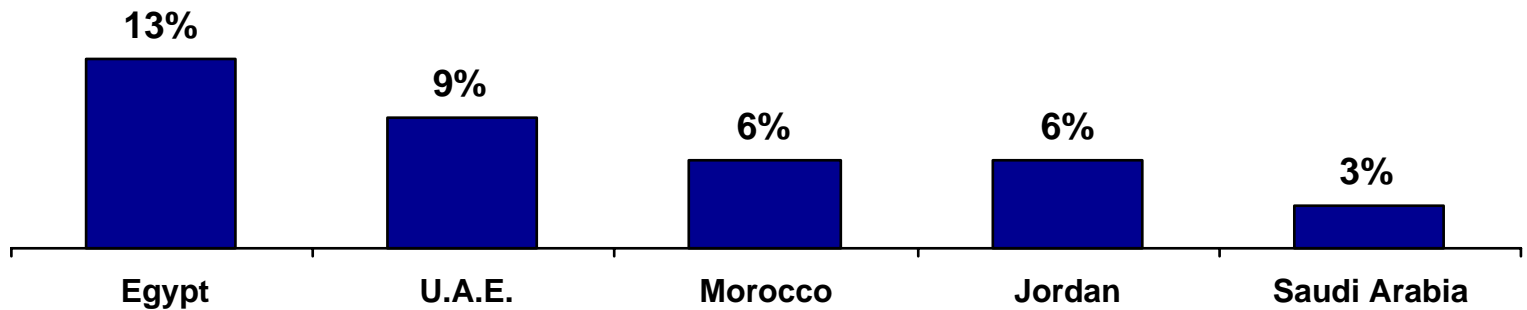
Extremely low levels of trust



Gallup - Muslim Country Poll

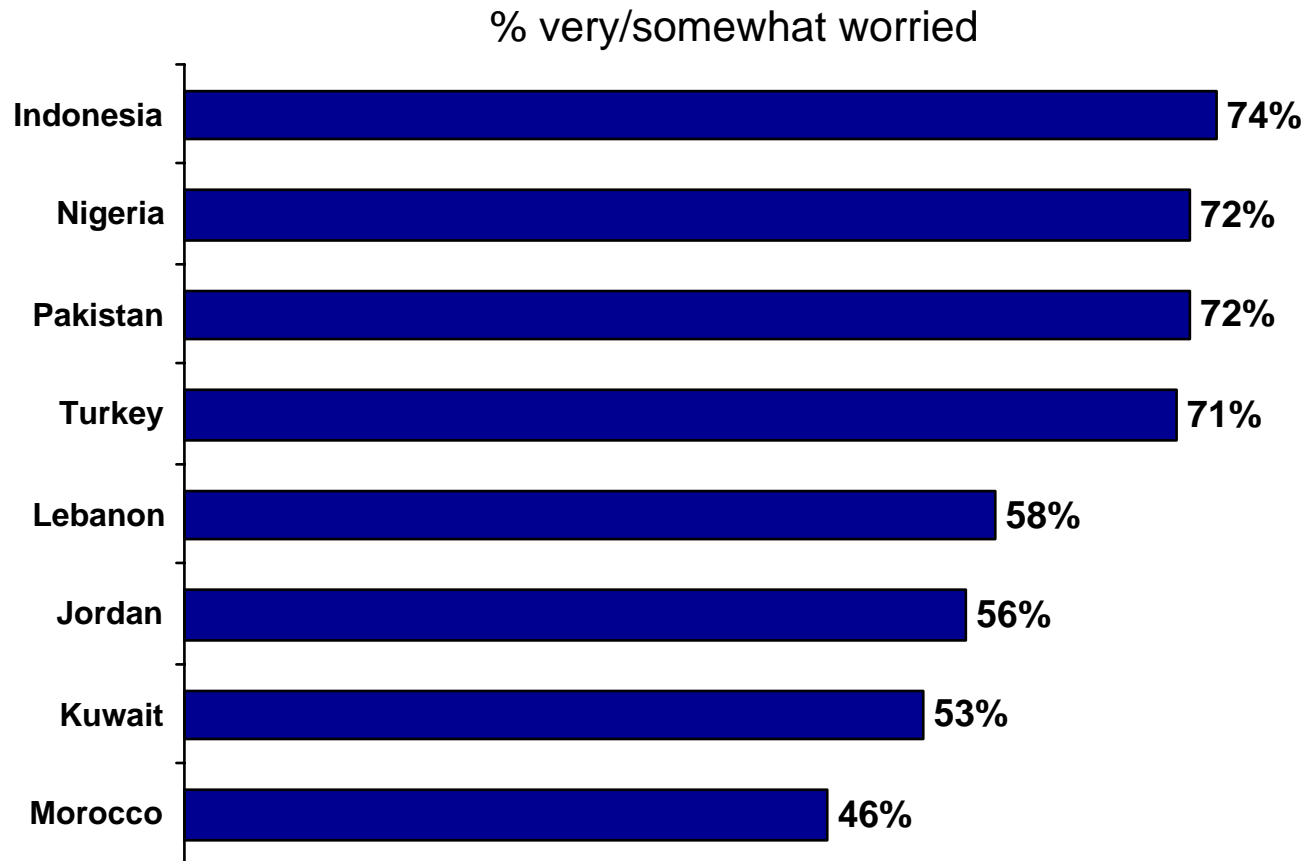
Iraq invasion deepened animosity in Arab countries

% holding favorable opinion of U.S.

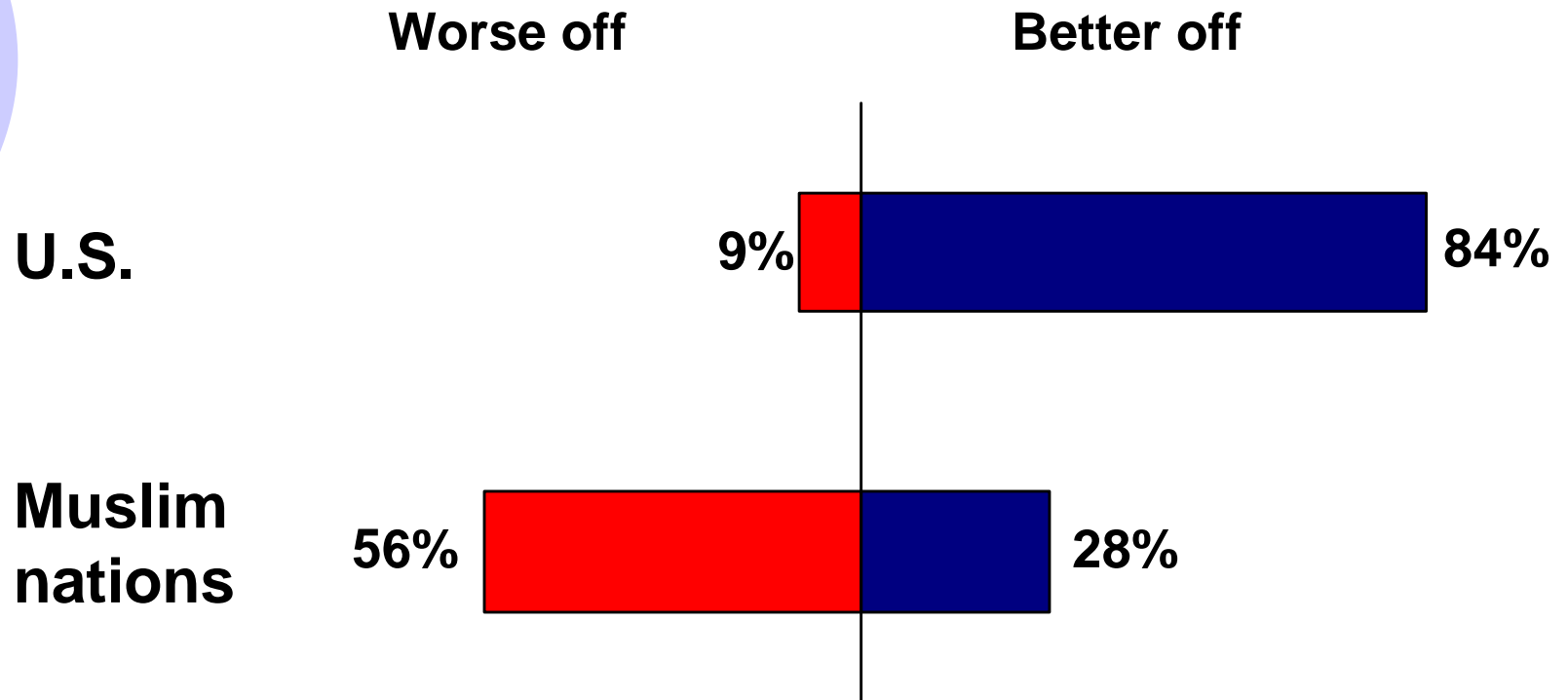


Zogby

Majorities in 7 out of 8 Muslim countries worry about a military threat from the U.S.



Muslim majorities believe Iraqis will be worse off post-Hussein



SUMMARY:

Muslim anti-Americanism threatens our nation's safety

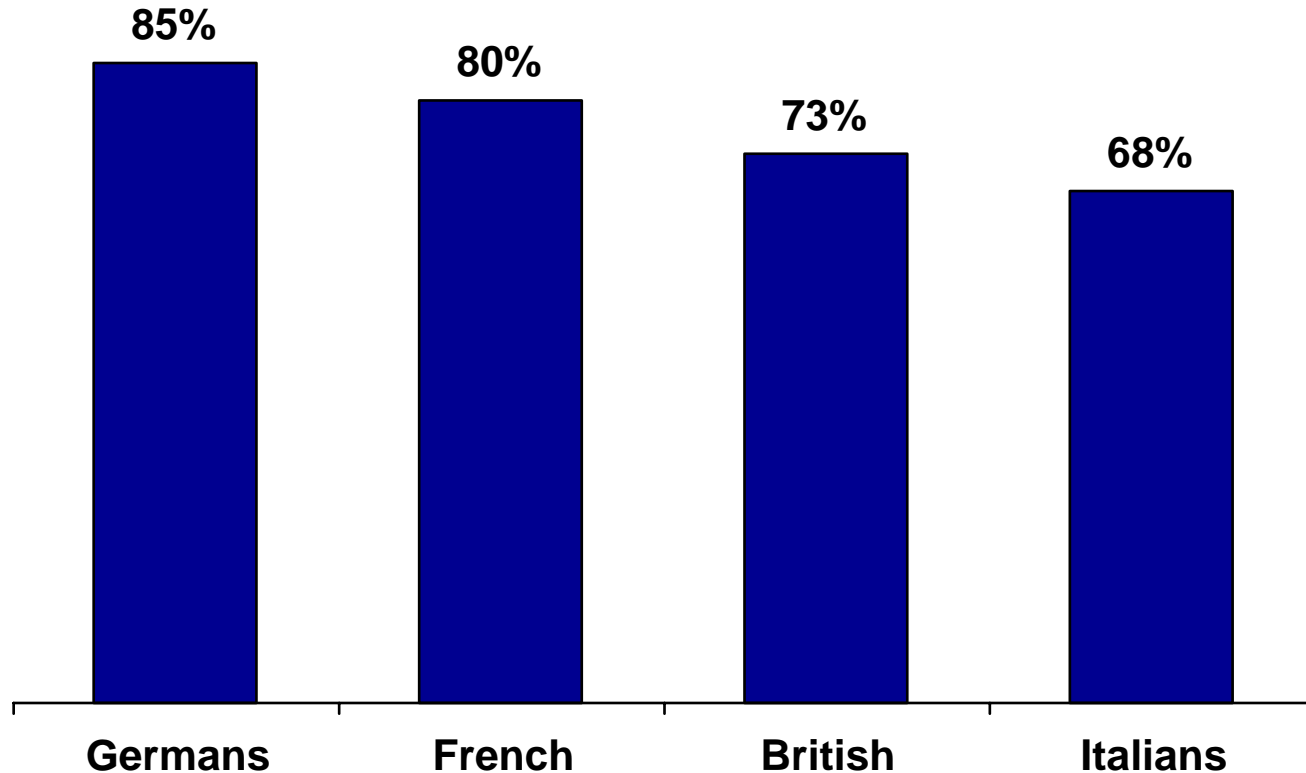
- Mistrust of U.S. not confined to extremists
- Creates a climate that makes recruitment of terrorists fatally easy
- Makes it easy to channel frustration onto the U.S.
- Supports extremist religious clerics in their *jihad* against us
- Use of military force exacerbates Muslim resentment of the U.S.
- Makes the U.S. seem anti-Muslim -- in a world with 57 Muslim nations and 1.3 billion Muslims



Attitudes of Traditional Allies Towards U.S. Policy

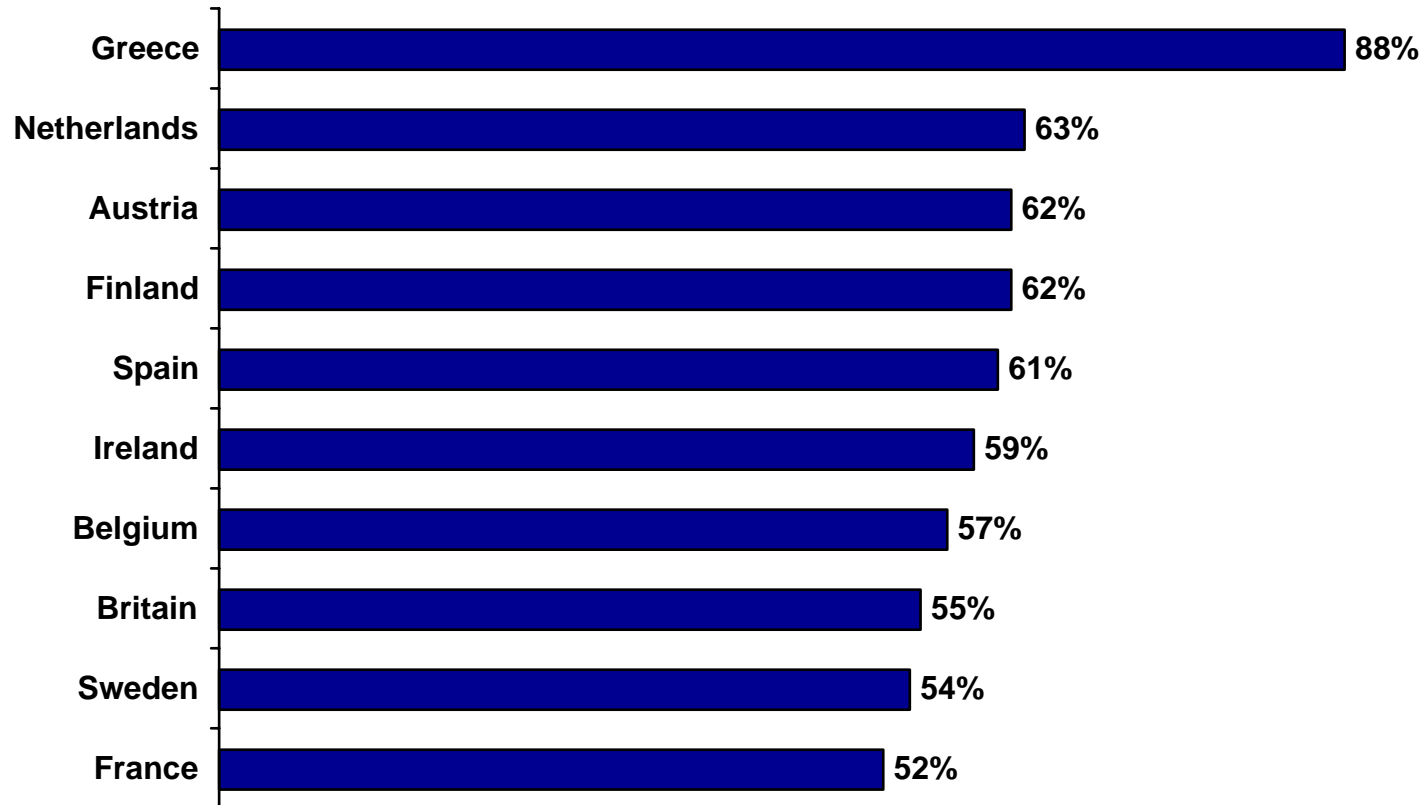
Post 9/11 perception:

The U.S. is acting solely in its own interest, without regard for its allies



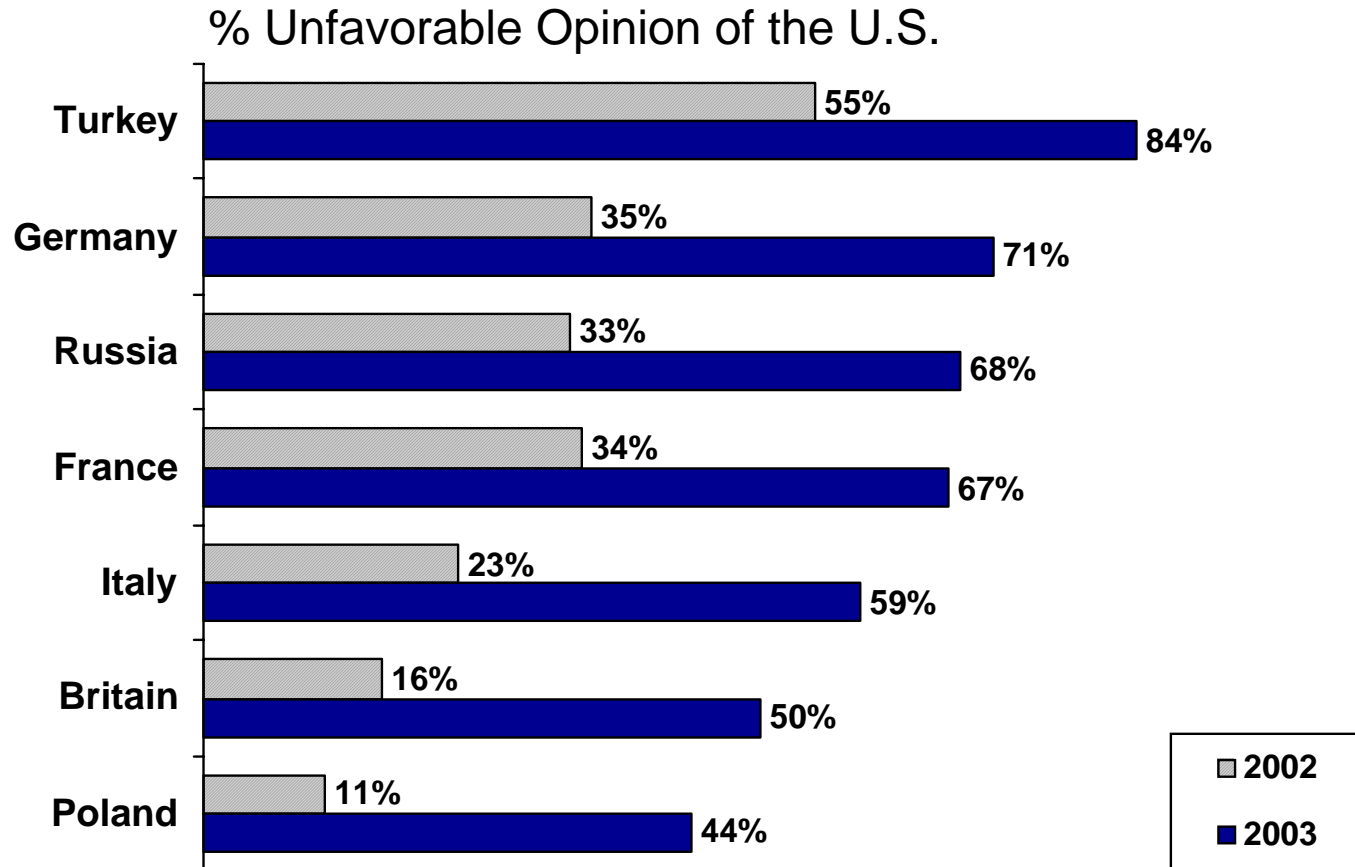
Pew (for the Council on Foreign Relations)

Majorities in most Western European countries consider the U.S. a threat to world peace



Germany and Italy fell slightly below the 50% mark

Anti-Americanism has increased rapidly in Europe



Pew Global Attitudes Project

SUMMARY:

The massive loss of goodwill among our European allies has negative consequences:

- Rightly or wrongly, much of the world sees U.S. military initiatives as lacking legitimacy
 - Allies advised against our actions in Iraq
 - Failure to find WMD has greatly weakened our credibility
- Other nations are less willing to share the costs of multi-national initiatives - in people or money
- We can no longer count on our traditional allies to help dispel the poisonous anti-Americanism in the Muslim world

Research Conclusions:

“The war [in Iraq] has widened the rift between Americans and Western Europeans, further inflamed the Muslim world, softened support for the war on terror, and significantly weakened global public support for the pillars of the post-World War II era -- the UN and the North Atlantic Alliance.”

– *The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2003 Survey Report*, based on a survey of 16,000 people in 20 countries

Part II – A Better Way

A Clear Goal, A Sharply Focused Policy, Better Public Understanding

- ***The goal:*** Prevent Al Qaeda (and related terrorist groups) from launching new 9/11-type attacks
- ***The policy:*** Destroy Al Qaeda and stop it from winning new recruits
- ***The voters:*** Communicate the goal and the policy to the public in a clear and compelling way

Policy toward Iraq

- We cannot abandon Iraq to chaos and instability
- UN, European and Arab cooperation can prevent Iraq from becoming a “black hole” for U.S. money and troops
- The costs are:
 - a) Yielding some power and influence in Iraq, and
 - b) Taking a longer time to foster democracy there
- If we are serious about our national security, these costs are acceptable

Four policies to stop terrorist recruitment

- Ratchet up the use of force against Al Qaeda
 - Strengthen Pakistan's leadership
 - Stop Saudi support for anti-Americanism
 - Give Muslim moderates an incentive to turn against the militants

I: Ratchet up the use of force against Al Qaeda

- Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt and Indonesia are the main sources of new terrorist recruits
- All have powerful Islamic Fundamentalist movements they do not control
- Destruction of Al Qaeda cells in these nations should be our top military and intelligence priority
- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia hold the key to success

II: Strengthen Pakistan's government

- General Musharraf has allied Pakistan with the West
- He is in grave danger of assassination
- Pakistan harbors large numbers of Al Qaeda
- Musharraf needs massive U.S. support to survive and to crack down on Al Qaeda's supporters
- We should assist Pakistan and India in their efforts to establish peaceful relations with one another

III. Stop Saudi support for anti-Americanism

It is intolerable for the Saudis to recycle our petro-dollars to support hate-America schools and mosques throughout the Muslim world

- Saudi Arabia is still the major source of terrorist money and recruits
- Anti-Americanism is more widespread in Saudi Arabia than in any other Muslim nation
- Because of oil, we have turned a blind eye to Saudi appeasement of extremism – and we are now paying the price
- We will need the help of some of our Muslim allies – e.g. Turkey, Egypt, Jordan – to pressure the Saudis to cut their ties with Wahhabi extremists, the main source of terrorist ideology

IV: Give Muslim moderates an incentive to turn against the militants

- Offer stronger support to the Palestinians
- Involve Arab nations in the Iraqi peace process
- Strengthen American political support for moderate Islamist democracies, as in Turkey
- Cooperate with Muslim moderates to find constructive outlets for their frustrated youth (training, education, etc.)
- Initiate dialogues with religious Muslim moderates to demonstrate that our values are compatible with the teachings of Islam
- Build bridges to moderate Muslims to support their efforts to build prosperous societies reflecting their own values
- Present a new vision of America to the Muslim world by positioning U.S. foreign policy on the side of justice, not injustice



Communicating with the Public

Average Americans have a limited context for judging alternative strategies

Focus groups show that for average Americans:

- Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are their only points of reference for the Islamic world
- Their image of other Muslim countries is vague at best
- They have trouble visualizing moderate or middle class Muslims and how to reach them
- They believe we are hated more for what we are than for our policies
- They support American friendship and generosity to Muslim nations but are skeptical about results
- They are fatalistic about anti-Americanism and badly underestimate its dangers to our national security

Focus groups also reveal these concerns:

- Our nation's safety is our top priority
- But voters are deeply worried about the dollars we are spending in Iraq and the loss of lives
- Doubts are rising about transforming Iraq into a peaceful democracy in the foreseeable future

To engage the public, focus on
one primary goal:



***Nothing will contribute more
to our nation's safety***

Explain why this goal is the key to our future safety

- Al Qaeda, with its 30-40 affiliates, is the one terrorist group with the skills and experience to threaten us seriously
- Its leader – Osama bin Laden – is a hero in many parts of the Muslim world
- Military occupation of Iraq is stimulating Al Qaeda recruitment
- We have weakened Al Qaeda, but it is rebuilding its strength through new recruits
- If we stop the flow of new recruits, we can prevent major terror attacks like 9/11
- To do so, we need the help of Muslim moderates
- To get this help, we need policies to give them a positive incentive to turn against their extremists

Give the public a context for understanding

- Like our long struggle against the Soviet Union, the war on terror is both a ***military war*** and a ***war of ideas***
- We know how to fight the ***military war***; we haven't yet learned how to fight the ***war of ideas***
- Our opponent in the war of ideas is not a government; it is a radical ***religious/political Islamist movement***

Context for understanding (cont.)

- Three factions are competing against one another in the Muslim world
 - The ***secularists*** who endorse the values of the West are the smallest and least influential
 - The ***hate-America Islamic Fundamentalists*** are the most militant and totalitarian
 - The ***moderates*** who prefer Islamist culture to that of the West are the largest

Context for understanding (cont.)

- Our military policies are alienating the moderates, making it easier to recruit new terrorists
- Moderates have a legitimate vision-- to build just, peaceful, free and prosperous Islamist societies.
- If they help us stop the terrorists, we should help them achieve their vision
- The key battleground is not Iraq; it is Pakistan and Saudi Arabia where support for Al Qaeda is most dangerous for the United States

SUMMARY:

An immediate goal and a long-term goal

- The immediate goal:
 - » **Stop the recruitment of new terrorists**
- The long term goal:
 - » **Win the war of ideas by demonstrating to moderate Muslims that the U.S. is on the side of justice, not injustice**