



Public Opinion in Iran and America on Key International Issues

January 24, 2007

A WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll
conducted in partnership with
Search for Common Ground
and
Knowledge Networks

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The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is a joint program of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Center on Policy Attitudes. PIPA undertakes research on American attitudes in both the public and in the policymaking community toward a variety of international and foreign policy issues. It seeks to disseminate its findings to members of government, the press, and the public as well as academia.

WorldPublicOpinion.org is an online publication devoted to increasing understanding of public opinion in nations around the world and to elucidate the global patterns of world public opinion. It conducts its own studies of public opinion on international issues as well as analyzing and integrating polls from other organizations around the world. It is published by the staff of the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

Knowledge Networks is a polling, social science, and market research firm based in Menlo Park, California. Knowledge Networks uses a large-scale nationwide research panel which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and is subsequently provided Internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have Internet access).

Search for Common Ground (SCFG) has been working for ten years to improve relations between the United States and Iran. Founded in 1982, SCFG works to transform the way the world deals with conflict - away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. SCFG currently works in 17 countries with local partners to find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies' capacity to deal with conflicts constructively: to understand the differences and act on the commonalities.

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), at the University of Maryland's School for Public Policy, pursues policy-oriented scholarship on major issues facing the United States in the global arena. Using its research, forums, and publications, CISSM links the University and the policy community to improve communication between scholars and practitioners.

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The study was conducted in partnership with Search for Common Ground with support from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the United States Institute of Peace, the Carnegie Corporation (US polling only), and the Open Society Institute.

INTRODUCTION

For nearly three decades, the United States and Iran have lived in a state of substantial tension. Following the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of an Islamic state in 1979, the United States and Iran have experienced a series of crises and confrontations. Over the last few years these tensions have reached a new fever pitch, prompted by several factors.

Preeminent is the fact that Iran has developed and reportedly achieved the capacity to enrich uranium, which has moved it a step closer to being able to develop nuclear weapons. The UN Security Council has called for Iran to stop enriching uranium but Iran has refused, stressing that it has the right to do so as part of its nuclear energy program under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. The United States has sought to increase the pressure on Iran in a variety of ways. Some voices in the American political discourse have even called for the United States to consider using military force.

More broadly, since the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, the United States has been engaged in what is officially called the “global war on terrorism.” Many of the targets in this war have been in Muslim countries, stimulating both the outrage expressed by numerous Muslim leaders and the popular resentment documented in a number of public opinion polls. The idea that Islam and the West are locked in a fundamental clash of civilizations has gained adherents in many quarters, both in the West and the Muslim world. This broader sense of conflict has exacerbated tensions between the United States and Iran. The Islamic revolutionary ideology expressed by some Iranian leaders, which has historically made American leaders uneasy, has only grown worse since the relatively moderate President Mohammad Khatami was replaced by the much more ideological and confrontational Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Recent military conflicts, involving the United States and Iran, either directly or indirectly, have further aggravated tensions between the two nations. Most prominent is the US-led occupation of Iraq, where American leaders accuse Iran of stoking ethnic and sectarian conflict. Another is the recent conflict in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah—clients of the United States and Iran, respectively.

In the context of these tensions, it seemed particularly appropriate to try to bring the voice of the Iranian and American publics into the discourse. Often when government leaders are at loggerheads, giving publics on both sides a greater voice brings new perspectives, provides some insight into the motivations and perceptions on each side, and sometimes even reveals interesting opportunities for finding common ground.

WorldPublicOpinion.org and Search for Common Ground decided to collaborate on this project. WorldPublicOpinion.org has extensive experience polling in countries around the world. It has conducted numerous polls in Muslim countries and participated in some limited polling in Iran in the fall of 2005 as part of an international survey for the BBC World Service in conjunction with the international polling firm GlobeScan. Search for Common Ground has been working for decades to further understanding between countries whose governments are at odds with each other and has done substantial work to promote understanding between Iranians and Americans.

To this end, an extensive poll was conducted in Iran with a randomly selected sample of one thousand Iranian adults from rural as well as urban areas. Professional Iranian interviewers with an independent Iranian survey research firm conducted face-to-face interviews in Iranian homes. A corresponding set of polls was conducted in the United States with nationwide samples of approximately one thousand adult Americans.

In Iran, interviews were conducted in every province. Within each community randomly selected for sampling, households were chosen according to international survey methods that are standard for face-to-face interviewing. In some cases, a respondent did not want to be interviewed because the interviewer was of the opposite sex. Interviewers then offered to either reschedule the interview for a time when the male head of household would be present, or to have an interviewer of the same sex visit. (See the [questionnaire](#) for a more detailed discussion of the methodology.)

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with experts on Iran as well as the Iranian polling firm. The Iranian government had no involvement with the poll, though the Iranian polling firm did require that some questions be deleted as too politically sensitive.

This poll of Iranians is unprecedented. Polling regularly occurs in Iran and there have been occasional surveys that address a few of the questions relevant to the US-Iran relationship. But never has such an extensive, in-depth poll—134 substantive questions were asked—been done, at least in the public domain.

Naturally this raises numerous questions. Given the power of the Iranian state, one may even wonder whether the polling actually occurred or if the data was fabricated to serve some political end of the Iranian government.

For several reasons this seems quite unlikely.

First, to fabricate plausible data based on 1,000 interviews is not easy. There is an internal logic to such a dataset. A close examination of the data has not revealed any evidence suggesting it is not genuine. There have also been other surveys conducted in Iran by academic groups that found the data produced to be credible.

Second, there have been polls conducted by other organizations that have produced comparable data. For example, the current study replicated a poll question used in Iran by the World Values Survey, coordinated by the University of Michigan, and found very similar results. Further, a number of polls have been conducted by telephoning into Iran (telephone penetration in Iran is quite high). Examining the findings of questions that are similar to the questions asked in the present poll also revealed similar patterns of response.

Another concern is that respondents may not be answering honestly but giving the answer that they think they should give. This is always a concern in polling—including in liberal democracies—and provisions are made in questionnaire design to try to control for this possibility.

However, in the context of Iran, one may wonder if this factor could be amplified by concern that answers contrary to government policy might be reported to authorities.

This concern should be mitigated by several observations. First, for many questions it is not obvious what the government would prefer. Second, even when it might seem clear which response the government would prefer, there were significant numbers who gave the contrary response. Many of the responses given in this and other polls done in Iran are quite contrary to what the government would presumably prefer. For example significant numbers have said that Iran is not very democratic, does not respect the rights of its people and is having a negative influence in the world.

To find out more about American attitudes on these same issues WorldPublicOpinion.org also conducted a study of the American public. Most questions were asked in a Dec. 6-11 survey with a

nationwide sample of 1,004 Americans (margin of error +/-3.2-3.8% depending on whether the question was asked to the whole sample or a three-quarters sample). Another survey was conducted Nov. 21-29 with a nationwide sample 1,326 Americans (margin of error plus or minus 2.7-3.9% depending on whether the question was asked to the whole sample or whole sample.) Both polls were fielded by Knowledge Networks, using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Key findings of the study are:

ISLAM AND THE WEST

1. Clash of Civilizations?

Although Iranians show substantial concern about the conflict between Islamic and Western cultures, a majority rejects the idea that it is inevitable. Instead, a majority of Iranians believe that it is possible for the two cultures to find common ground. Iranians are divided about whether they should only emphasize strengthening ties with Muslim countries or put an equal effort into building better relations with the West. Americans share Iranian concerns about the conflict between Islamic and Western countries and lean toward believing that it is possible to find common ground. However, a substantially larger minority of Americans than Iranians believe that conflict is inevitable. 7

2. Militant Islamic Groups and Terrorism

Iranians, like Americans, are concerned about terrorism and reject Osama bin Laden overwhelmingly. Iranians are considerably less concerned than Americans about al Qaeda and other Islamist militant groups, however, and majorities have positive views of Hamas and Hezbollah. Iranians overwhelmingly reject attacks intentionally aimed at civilians, including those targeting Americans. Americans concur though the percentage of Iranians who reject such attacks is somewhat higher than the percentage of Americans who do so. A modest majority of Iranians, however, make an exception for some Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians. Americans do not make such an exception for Israeli attacks on Palestinians. 8

US-IRAN RELATIONS

3. Views of the United States

Very large majorities of Iranians have negative views of the United States overall, its influence in the world, its current government, its current president, and its culture. Views of the American people, however, are almost evenly divided. Large majorities perceive that US foreign policy is threatening and that US bases in the Middle East are destabilizing the region and threatening to Iran. Very few believe that the primary goal of ‘the war on terrorism’ is to protect the United States from terrorist attacks: most believe that it seeks to dominate the region to control its resources or to undermine the Muslim world. Few believe the United States is really committed to creating an independent Palestinian state. Modest majorities of Americans take contrary views: that US bases in the Middle East are stabilizing, that the goal of the US ‘war on terrorism’ is to protect itself from terrorist attacks, and that the United States is committed to creating an independent Palestinian state. Most Americans, however, agree that US bases in the region are threatening to Iran. 11

3. Views of Iran

A very large majority of Americans have an unfavorable view of the Iranian government and its influence in the world, though the intensity of their negative feeling is not as strong as that felt by Iranians toward the US government. A clear majority of Americans also have a negative view of the Iranian people, in contrast to the more divided views Iranians have of the American people. A growing majority of Iranians believe Iran is having a positive influence in the world. A very large majority of Iranians approve of Iran playing an active international role.....14

4. Improving US-Iranian Relations

A slight majority or a plurality of Iranians favor a variety of possible steps that have been proposed for improving US-Iranian relations. Large majorities of Americans support most of these steps. The steps include direct talks between governments on issues of mutual concern, more cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges, better access for journalists from both countries, increased trade and more tourism. Americans especially favor intergovernmental talks, though only a bare majority favors more tourism.15

THE NUCLEAR ISSUE

6. Iran’s Nuclear Energy Program

An overwhelming majority of Iranians believe that it is very important for Iran to have a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program. Majorities cite as key reasons for having such a capacity: securing Iran’s energy needs, enhancing Iran’s national technical competence, enhancing Iran’s great power status, preserving Iran’s rights to nuclear energy under the NPT, and preventing other countries from trying to economically and politically dominate Iran. Iranians express substantial concern about the potential for disruption in the supply of energy and enthusiastically support nuclear energy as a safe and important source of electricity. Americans have an even higher level of concern about possible disruptions in the energy supply, but resist the building of new nuclear power plants.....16

7. Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

A large majority of Iranians support Iran’s participation in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) which prohibits Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Only a small minority favors withdrawing from the NPT. Large majorities also support a Middle East nuclear free zone, and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons. However a large majority thinks that there are countries with secret nuclear weapons programs, and that in the future there will be more countries with nuclear weapons. Iranians are divided about whether at some point in the future Iran will decide to acquire nuclear weapons, with many expressing uncertainty. Americans concur with Iranians in their support for the NPT regime including the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and agree that there are countries secretly acquiring nuclear weapons. However, a very large majority of Americans believe that Iran will eventually acquire nuclear weapons.....18

8. Negotiations over Iran’s Nuclear Program

Iranians show strong resistance to negotiating away the ability to enrich uranium, rejecting as insignificant a wide array of possible incentives that could be provided by the United States and other countries. Americans showed a readiness to provide some incentives but not others. Iranians and Americans are divided about the likelihood of this dispute leading to a military conflict, but Americans are a bit more likely to believe that military conflict will occur. A majority of Americans would be willing to allow Iran to enrich uranium if Iran agrees to limit its uranium enrichment

programs to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy and to give UN inspectors full access to its nuclear facilities to ensure that such limits are respected..... 23

GLOBAL INTEGRATION AND DEMOCRACY

9. The United Nations System

A majority of Iranians and Americans have a positive view of the United Nations, would like the United Nations to have a significantly more powerful role in world affairs, believe that the use of military force is more legitimate when the UN approves of it, and believe that the UN should have the right to authorize military intervention to prevent severe human rights violations, such as genocide. As a general principle only a plurality of Iranians think their government should take into account the position of the majority of other countries when making key decisions, though a clear majority has a positive view of world public opinion. Americans are much more inclined to take into account the position of the majority of other countries, but only half have a positive view of world public opinion..... 25

10. Globalization

A large majority of Iranians believe that globalization is mostly good for Iran and have a positive view of global companies, but are divided about the cultural effects of globalization. Americans are similarly positive about globalization, but have more skeptical views of global companies and are much more positive about the cultural effects of globalization. At the same time, Iranians and Americans share a desire to maintain economic self-sufficiency..... 27

11. Identity: National, Religious, Global

A large majority of Iranians see their central identity in terms of their religion while one in four identify as a citizen of their country; very small minorities see their identity primarily as members of an ethnic group or as an individual. In sharp contrast, only a small minority of Americans identify themselves primarily in terms of their religion, while about half identify themselves primarily as citizens of the United States and nearly as many identify themselves primarily as individuals. Large majorities of both Iranians and Americans see themselves as citizens of the world as well as citizens of their country, but in both cases most identify more as citizens of their country..... 29

12. Democracy and Human Rights

Iranians and Americans overwhelmingly endorse the importance of living in a country that is governed by representatives elected by the people. Iranians and Americans both give their country good marks in terms of being democratically representative and respecting the rights of the individual..... 30

REGIONAL ISSUES

13. Iraq

A majority of Iranians believe that the current Iraqi government is the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people, have a fairly favorable view of Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, and think US troops should be withdrawn within six months. Americans lean toward not seeing the current Iraqi government as the legitimate representative, have an unfavorable view of Maliki, and think US troops should be withdrawn according to a timeline of two years or less. Both Iranians and

Americans see instability in Iraq as an important threat and believe that the war in Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks.31

14. Afghanistan

Iranians and Americans share a strongly negative view of the Taliban. Iranians lean toward believing that, since the overthrow of the Taliban, Iran’s security on its Afghan border has improved, but a majority believes that drug trafficking has gotten worse. Iranians express an extremely high level of concern about drug trafficking (considerably higher than Americans). A majority of Americans have a negative view of Pakistan’s President Musharraf, while Iranians lean negative, with many undecided.....33

15. Middle East

Iranians have positive views of the influence of Syria, the Palestinians, Hamas and Hezbollah, while Americans have quite negative views. A large majority of Iranians have a negative view of Israel’s influence in the world, while nearly half of Americans concur.34

16. Europe

Among Iranians a plurality has a positive view of Europe and would prefer for Europe to have more influence than the United States. They lean toward a positive view of France (but not Jacques Chirac), while a majority has a negative view of Britain (and Tony Blair). Among Americans a majority has a positive view of Europe and Britain (and Tony Blair), but tend to be negative toward France (and a majority has a negative view of Jacques Chirac). Iranians lean toward positive views of Russia, while Americans have a more negative view, with both growing more negative over the least year.....34

17. Asia

A plurality of Iranians does not see the rise of China as a threat. A majority of Americans do see it as a threat but few see it as critical. Majorities in both countries think that China’s economy will eventually grow to be as large as that of the United States; a majority of the Iranians see this as something positive, while a majority of Americans see it as equally positive and negative. Iranians and Americans share positive views of Japan and India. Americans are overwhelmingly negative toward North Korea, while Iranians do not have well- formed views.36

FINDINGS

ISLAM AND THE WEST

1. Clash of Civilizations?

Although Iranians show substantial concern about the conflict between Islamic and Western cultures, a majority rejects the idea that it is inevitable. Instead, a majority of Iranians believe that it is possible for the two cultures to find common ground. Iranians are divided about whether they should only emphasize strengthening ties with Muslim countries or put an equal effort into building better relations with the West. Americans share Iranian concerns about the conflict between Islamic and Western countries and lean toward believing that it is possible to find common ground. However, a substantially larger minority of Americans than Iranians believe that conflict is inevitable.

A majority of Iranians reject the idea that there is an inherent conflict between Islamic and Western cultures. Offered two arguments, only 24 percent of respondents agreed that “Islamic and Western religious and social traditions were incompatible with each other.” Fifty-four percent instead chose the statement, “Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground.” Another part of the sample responded to a simpler question: “Thinking about Muslim and Western cultures, do you think that violent conflict between them is inevitable, or that it is possible to find common ground?”

Relations Between West and Muslim World

Which position is closer to yours: a) Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other; or b) Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground.

Iranians

Conflict inevitable

24%

Possible to find common ground

54%

Americans

Conflict inevitable

36%

Possible to find common ground

56%

WPO 12/06

Only 25 percent saw conflict as inevitable, while 58 percent thought it would be possible to find common ground.

Iranians, nevertheless, are concerned that conflict between Islamic and Western countries could threaten Iran. Asked to assess the threat posed by this conflict eighty percent rated it as important including 63 percent who rated it as “critical” and another 17 percent as “important, but not critical” Only 12 percent said such conflict was “not an important threat at all.”

Iranians are divided about whether they should primarily emphasize strengthening ties with Muslim countries or put equal emphasis on building relations with the West. Very few would privilege ties with the West over ties with Muslim countries. Asked which was the more important goal, “to strengthen ties with Muslim countries, to strengthen ties with the West, or to do both equally,” the

largest percentage (46%) wanted to do both equally. Almost as many (44%), however, thought that strengthening ties with Muslim countries was more important. Only 4 percent gave priority to strengthening ties with the West.

Americans also tend to think it is possible to find common ground. Asked to choose between the two arguments—“Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible” or “Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground”—

about as many Americans as Iranians (56%) said it would be possible to find common ground. However, a somewhat larger percentage of Americans (36% compared with 24% of Iranians) endorsed the idea that Islamic and Western traditions were incompatible. When asked simply whether violent conflict was “inevitable” or whether “common ground” between the West and the Islamic world could be found, only half of Americans (50%) considered it possible to find common ground, while 47 percent said that conflict was inevitable. Thus, a substantially larger minority of Americans than Iranians assumed there could be violent conflict between the two cultures.

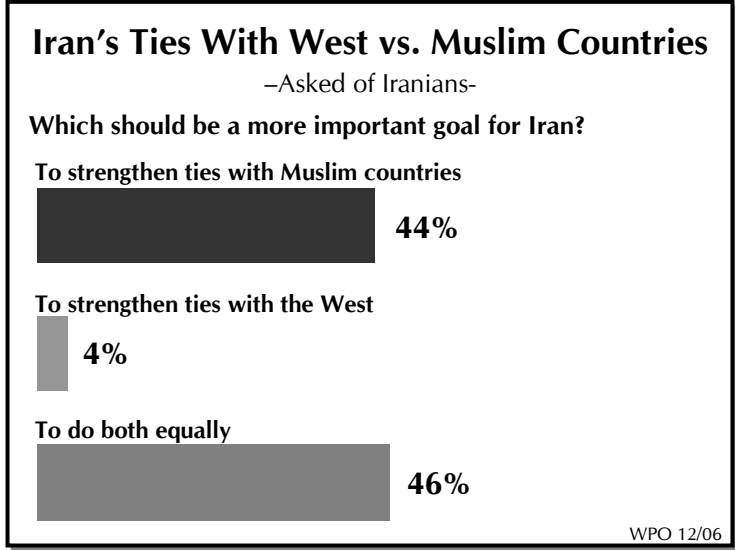
Americans share the concerns of Iranians that conflict between Islamic and Western countries would pose a threat to their country’s vital interests. Ninety percent of Americans saw such conflict as important including 52 percent who saw it as a critical threat. This is not quite as high as Iran where 63 percent saw it as critical threat.

2. Militant Islamic Groups and Terrorism

Iranians, like Americans, are concerned about terrorism and reject Osama bin Laden overwhelmingly. Iranians are considerably less concerned than Americans about al Qaeda and other Islamist militant groups, however, and majorities have positive views of Hamas and Hezbollah. Iranians overwhelmingly reject attacks intentionally aimed at civilians, including those targeting Americans. Americans concur though the percentage of Iranians who reject such attacks is somewhat higher than the percentage of Americans who do so. A modest majority of Iranians, however, make an exception for some Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians. Americans do not make such an exception for Israeli attacks on Palestinians.

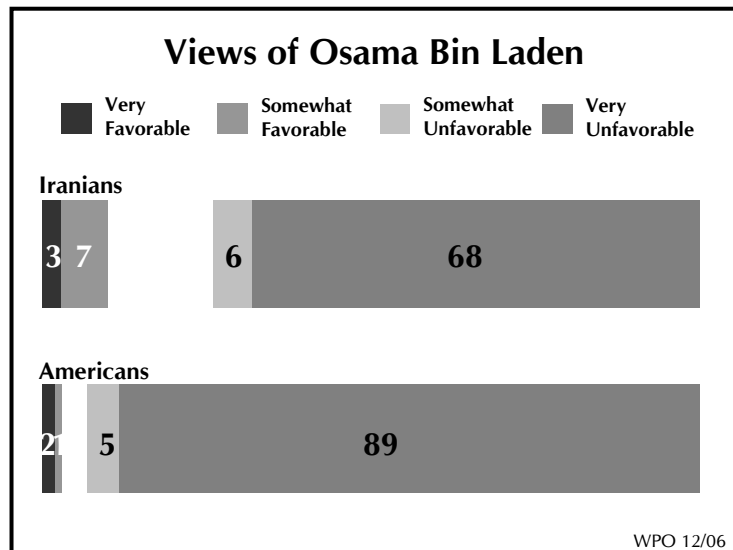
Iranians and Americans share concerns about international terrorism. Seven in ten Iranians viewed international terrorism as an important threat to Iran’s vital interests including 56 percent who saw it as a critical threat. Only 12 percent called it “not important.” Even more Iranians were concerned about terrorist attacks in their own country. Eighty-one percent called such attacks an important threat (66% critical). These results suggest that attacks inside Iran by small groups, such as Mujahedin-e-Khalq, have had some impact.

American and Iranian concerns about the threat of terrorism are comparable in intensity. Ninety-five percent of Americans saw terrorism as an important threat, including 68 percent who said it was a



critical threat. Only 4 percent did not see terrorism as a threat. Ninety-five percent also viewed “terrorist attacks in our country” as an important threat, including 68 percent who saw them as critical.

Both Iranians and Americans have strongly negative views of Osama bin Laden. Three out of four Iranians (74%) had an unfavorable attitude toward Osama bin Laden, including 68 percent very unfavorable. Only 10 percent saw him in a favorable light. Eighty-nine percent of Americans, unsurprisingly, had a very unfavorable opinion of bin Laden. Ninety-two percent of Americans said al Qaeda posed an important threat, including 59 percent who said it posed a critical one.



Iranians, like Americans (but less strongly), perceive al Qaeda and Islamist militant groups as threats. More than half of Iranians (53%) called al Qaeda an important threat, including a third (33%) who said it was critical. Twenty percent said al Qaeda was not a threat, and another 27 percent declined to answer. Similarly, 57 percent of Iranians viewed the threat from “Islamist sectarian militant groups” as important, including 36 percent who said it was critical. Fifteen percent said it was not an important threat at all.

That Americans consider Islamic militants to be a greater threat than do Iranians is not surprising given that al Qaeda attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and has threatened to do so again in the future. Al Qaeda was seen as an important threat by 92 percent of Americans and as critical by 59 percent. Islamic sectarian militant groups were also called an important threat by 92 percent of Americans and critical threat by 47 percent.

In sharp contrast to their views of al Qaeda, Iranians tend to evaluate Hamas and Hezbollah favorably. Fifty-six percent see Hamas as a “mainly positive influence” in the world and only 8 percent see the Palestinian group as a negative influence. (Another 14 percent said “it depends” or “neither,” while 23 percent declined to answer). They view Hezbollah even more favorably, with three in four (75%) calling the Shiite militants a positive influence, and only 6 percent labeling them a negative influence.

Americans, in contrast, have very negative views of both Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas was rated as a negative influence in the world by 77 percent of Americans and Hezbollah by 80 percent.

Attacks on Civilians

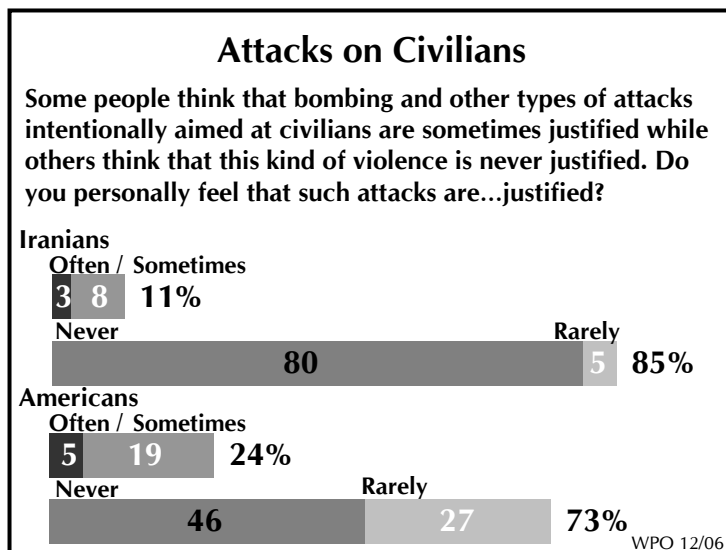
Both Iranians and Americans were asked an extensive series of questions about attacks on civilians. Taking these questions together, it appears that Iranians reject attacks on civilians more overwhelmingly than do Americans.

At the most general level, respondents were asked:

Some people think that bombing and other types of attacks intentionally aimed at civilians are sometimes justified while others think that this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that such attacks are often justified, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

A very large majority of Iranians (80%) took the strongest position that such attacks “are never justified,” and another 5 percent said they were rarely justified. Only 11 percent called them sometimes (8%) or often (3%) justified.

Americans largely concurred but at lower levels of intensity. Forty-six percent said that such attacks were never justified, while 27 percent said they were rarely justified. Twenty-four percent saw them as sometimes (19%) or often (5%) justified.



Iranians were also asked specifically about attacks on American and Iraqi civilians, with “sometimes” or “never” justified the only options given. Nine in ten Iranians (88%) said that “attacks against Iraqi civilians in Iraq” were never justified. Nearly as many (76 percent) said “attacks against American civilians living in the United States” were never justified (15% sometimes justified).

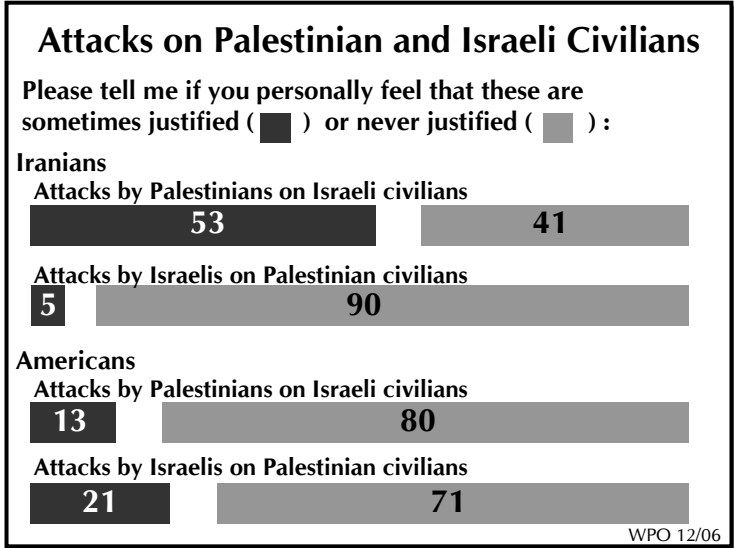
Respondents were then asked to think “in the context of war and other forms of military conflict” and to consider whether certain types of civilians could be a legitimate target. Overwhelming majorities of Iranians rejected as “never justified.” attacks on women and children (91%), the elderly (92%), and “wives and children of the military” (86%).

Americans largely agreed, though larger percentages in each case said such attacks were rarely justified. This was true for attacks on women and children (72% never, 15% rarely), the elderly (71% never, 16% rarely), and wives and children of the military (74% never, 12% rarely).

Three more questions dealt with targeting civilians employed by the government. Here again, Iranians were more unequivocal than Americans in their rejection of such attacks. This applied to attacks on government officials (Iranians 53% never justified, 11% rarely; Americans 24% never justified, 26% rarely), attacks on policemen (Iranians 49% never, 10% rarely; Americans 37% never, 29% rarely). In regard to attacks on intelligence agents, a 54 percent majority of Iranians thought targeting them could never (43%) or rarely (11%) be justified. Americans were divided about whether intelligence agents were legitimate targets. Forty-five percent thought such attacks were never (23%) or rarely (22%) justified while 48 percent said they were sometimes (33%) or often (15%) justified.

When Iranians judge violence in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, a modest majority makes an exception for some Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians. Asked whether such attacks were either “sometimes justified” or “never justified,” 53 percent of Iranians said they were sometimes justified, while 41 percent said “never.” But nine in ten (90%) said attacks by Israelis against Palestinians were never justified while only 5 percent said they sometimes were.

Americans are more even-handed regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is consistent with the many polls showing that Americans prefer the United States government not take sides in this dispute. Four in five (80%) of Americans said “attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians” were never justified (13% sometimes), while nearly as many (71%) said attacks by Israelis against Palestinian civilians were never justified (21% sometimes).



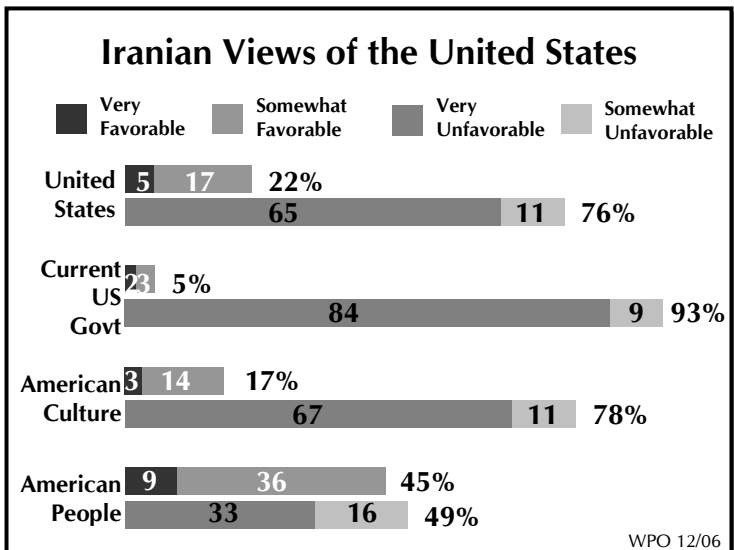
US-IRAN RELATIONS

3. Views of the United States

Very large majorities of Iranians have negative views of the United States overall, its current government, its current president, and its culture. Views of the American people, however, are almost evenly divided. Large majorities perceive that US foreign policy is threatening and that US bases in the Middle East are destabilizing the region and threatening to Iran. Very few believe that the primary goal of ‘the war on terrorism’ is to protect the United States from terrorist attacks: most believe that it seeks to dominate the region to control its resources or to undermine the Muslim world. Few believe the United States is really committed to creating an independent Palestinian state. Modest majorities of Americans take contrary views: that US bases in the Middle East are stabilizing, that the goal of the US ‘war on terrorism’ is to protect itself from terrorist attacks, and that the United States is committed to creating an independent Palestinian state. Most Americans, however, agree that US bases in the region are threatening to Iran.

The United States is regarded unfavorably by three out of four Iranians. Seventy-six percent said they had an unfavorable opinion of the United States (65 percent very). Twenty-two percent said they had a very (5%) or somewhat (17%) favorable opinion of the United States.

Views of the current US government are even more negative. Ninety-three percent of Iranians said they had an unfavorable opinion of the US government, including 84 percent very unfavorable. This is quite similar to the 92 percent with an



unfavorable opinion of President Bush (86% very).

These favorability ratings are somewhat more negative than responses to a question about US influence in the world asked in a December 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll. At that time, 65 percent said that the United States had a mainly negative influence in the world while 26 percent said the United States had a mainly positive influence. This suggests that Iranian views toward the United States have grown cooler over the last year—consistent with global trends in attitudes toward the United States.

Iranians’ negative views of the United States extend to American culture (at least when it is asked about in general terms). More than three in four Iranians (78%) expressed an unfavorable opinion of American culture, including 67 percent who said their view of it was very unfavorable.

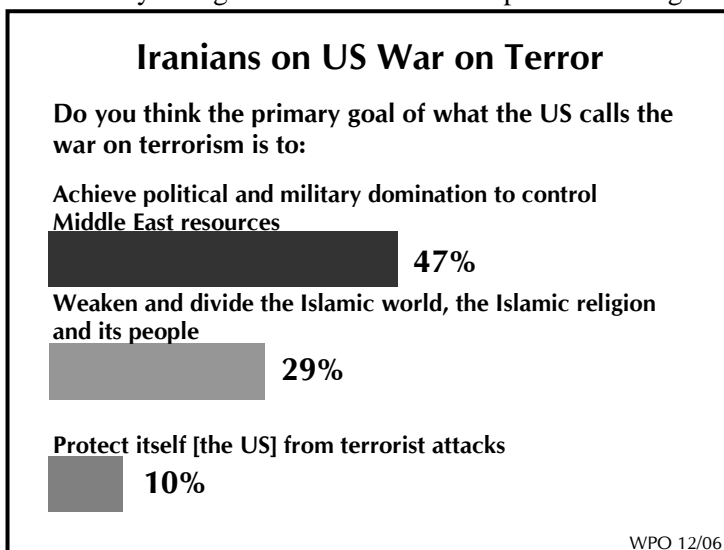
Views of the American people, however, are nearly evenly divided. Forty-nine percent had an unfavorable opinion of the American people (33% very, 16% somewhat). Forty-five percent had a favorable opinion (9% very, 36% somewhat).

Attitudes toward the United States and the American people improve with Iranians’ level of education. Among Iranians who had some college education, 34 percent had favorable views of the United States, 12 points more than the public as a whole, 26 percent had favorable views of American culture, 9 points more than the public as a whole, and 60 percent had favorable views of the American people, 15 points more than the public as a whole. Views of the current U.S. government, however, were not significantly different.

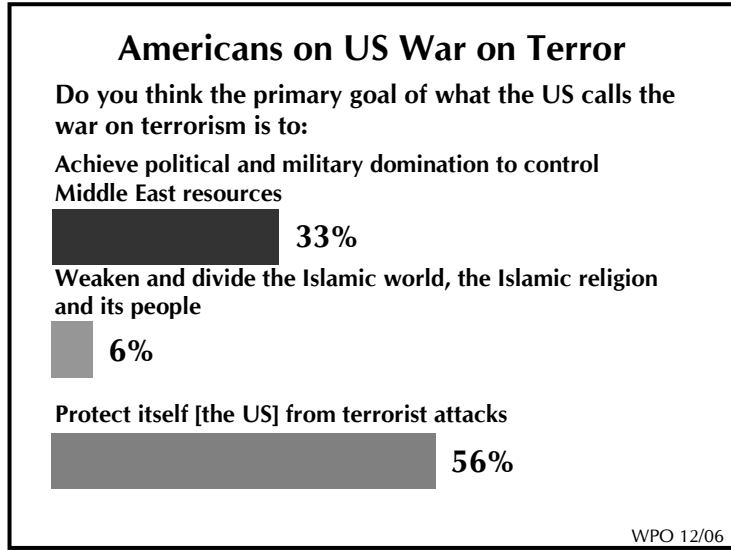
Iranians perceive the United States as a threat to Iran. Presented a list of possible threats, “US foreign policy” was seen as an important threat by 77 percent, including 59 percent who called it a critical threat. When asked, “How much, if at all, do you think US bases in the Middle East are a threat to Iran?” 83 percent replied that the bases threatened Iran to some degree, including 44 percent who called them a major threat, 29 percent some threat, and 10 percent a minor threat. Only 11 percent thought these bases did not threaten Iran.

Similarly, large majorities of Iranians think US bases in the Middle East are destabilizing the region and oppose them. In order to evoke a much longer time frame than that of the ongoing Iraq war, respondents were reminded that “for decades, the US has had military forces in long-term bases in the Middle East.” Then they were asked whether they thought these bases “have a positive or negative effect on stability in the region.” Four out of five (79%) said the bases’ effect is negative (59% very). Only 10 percent described the bases’ effect as positive. Even more (89%) said they opposed the presence of US bases in the Middle East (80% strongly).

Very few Iranians believe that the primary goal of the “the war on terrorism” is to protect the United States from terrorist attacks. Most believe that the United States’ goals are to dominate the region to control its resources or to undermine the



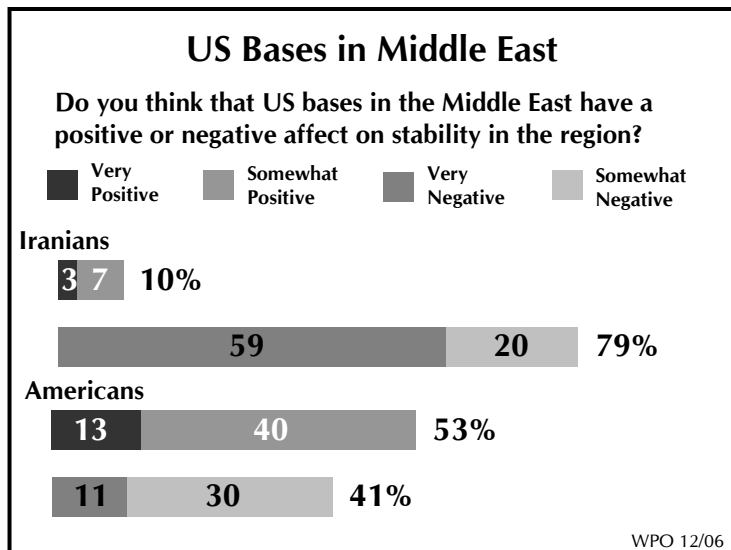
Muslim world. Respondents were asked what they thought was “the primary goal of what the US calls the war on terrorism” and given three options. One was “to protect the US from terrorist attacks”; a second was to “achieve political and military domination to control Middle East resources”; and a third was to “weaken and divide the Islamic world, the Islamic religion and its people.” A plurality of 47 percent thought the war on terrorism’s primary goal was to achieve domination in the region. A substantial minority of 29 percent, however, chose the “clash of civilizations” position, saying that the primary US goal was to weaken Islam. Only 10 percent thought the primary goal was self-defense.



Few believe the United States is really committed to “the goal of creating an independent and viable Palestinian state,” an objective formally declared by the US president in 2001. Only one in ten thought the United States was very (2%) or somewhat (9%) committed to an independent Palestine. Seventy-five percent said the United States was not very (13%) or not at all (62%) committed.

Not surprisingly Americans views are quite different from Iranian views in regard to an array of US policy actions in the Middle East. In most cases, however, these views are held by a relatively modest majority. A very large majority sees US bases in the region as threatening to Iran.

A modest majority of Americans believe that US bases in the Middle East are a stabilizing influence. Fifty-three percent saw them as having a very positive (13%) or somewhat positive (40%) effect on stability, while 41 percent saw them as having a very negative (11%) or somewhat negative (30%) effect. But when asked simply whether they favored or opposed the United States having Middle East bases, three out of five (60%) said they favored them, with 37 percent opposed.



A modest majority of Americans think the primary goal of the war on terror is to protect the United States from terrorist attacks. This majority (56%) is far from overwhelming, however. A third (33%) said the United States’ primary goal was to achieve domination over Middle East resources. Another 6 percent said its primary goal was to weaken Islam.

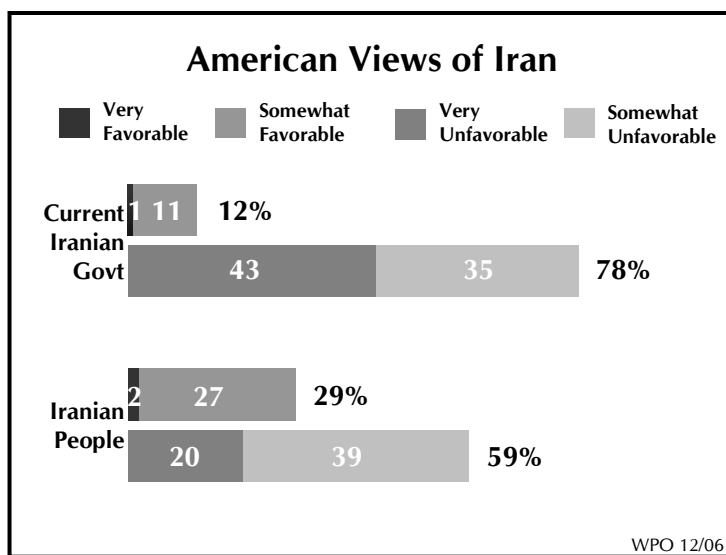
A 55 percent majority of Americans said the United States was committed to “the goal of creating an independent and viable Palestinian state,” though only 12 percent thought it was “very committed” to it. Thirty-seven percent saw the United States as not very (28%) or not at all (9%) committed.

Most Americans, however, agree with Iranians that US bases in the region are threatening to Iran. Eighty percent took this view with 14 percent saying they were a major threat to Iran, 36 percent saying they posed some threat and another 30 percent calling them a minor threat. The small minority who thought no threat was posed at all (14%) was similar in size to its Iranian opposite number (11%).

4. Views of Iran

A very large majority of Americans have an unfavorable view of the Iranian government and its influence in the world, though the intensity of their negative feeling is not as strong as that felt by Iranians toward the US government. A clear majority of Americans also have a negative view of the Iranian people, in contrast to the more divided views Iranians have of the American people. A growing majority of Iranians believe Iran is having a positive influence in the world. A very large majority of Iranians approve of Iran playing an active international role.

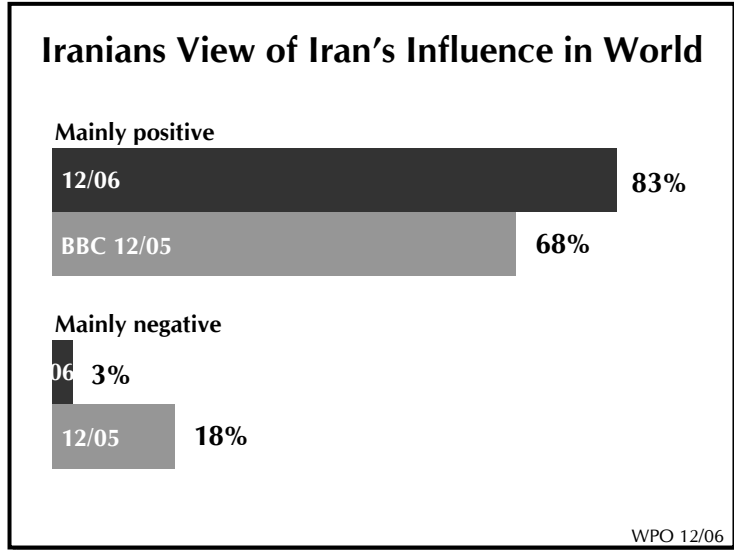
A very large majority of Americans have negative feelings toward Iran. When asked about Iran’s influence in the world, four in five Americans (80%) said it was mainly negative, while only 10 percent said mainly positive. Seventy-eight percent said they had an unfavorable view of the Iranian government, including 43 percent very unfavorable. While this may seem strong, twice as many Iranian respondents (84%) viewed the US government very unfavorably.



A clear majority of Americans also have a negative view of the Iranian people. Fifty-nine percent said they had an unfavorable opinion of the Iranian people (20% very), while only 29 percent said they had a favorable opinion. The American view of the Iranian people is harsher than the divided Iranian view of the American people: 49 percent of Iranians are unfavorable, while 45 percent are favorable.

In stark contrast to American views, Iranians express very positive views of Iran’s role in the world and support an expansive role for their country. More than four in five Iranians (83%) described Iran’s influence in the world as mainly positive, while only 3 percent called it negative. Asked, “Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stay out of world affairs?” an overwhelming 86 percent wanted Iran to take an active part; only 9 percent wanted it to stay out.

Positive views of Iran’s role in the world have also risen sharply over the last year. In December 2005, BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA found that 68 percent of Iranians called Iran’s influence in the world positive and 18 percent called it negative. Thus positive views have jumped 15 percentage points in one year. This suggests that the level of international attention Iran has received for its nuclear program and the success of Hezbollah in the war with Israel may be bolstering Iranians’ self-image.



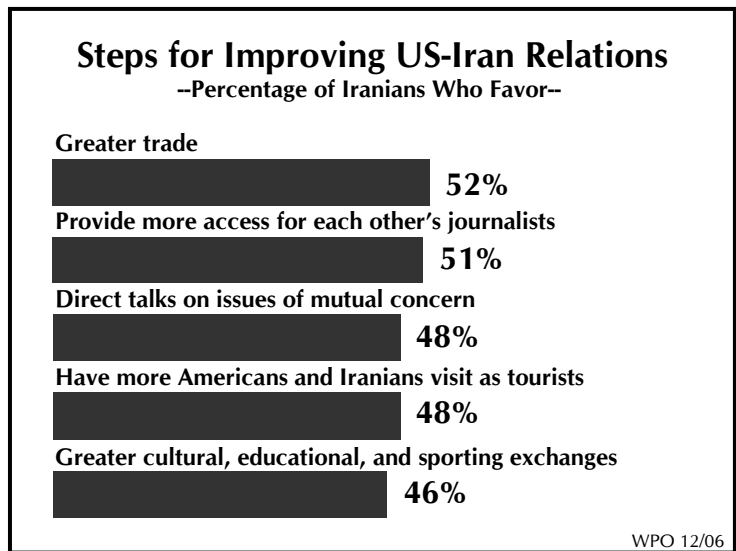
5. Improving US-Iranian Relations

A slight majority or a plurality of Iranians favor a variety of possible steps that have been proposed for improving US-Iranian relations. Large majorities of Americans support most of these steps. The steps include direct talks between governments on issues of mutual concern, more cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges, better access for journalists from both countries, increased trade and more tourism. Americans especially favor intergovernmental talks, though only a bare majority favors more tourism.

Modest majorities or pluralities of Iranians are supportive of a variety of steps that may improve ties between the United States and Iran. Presented a list of possible steps for strengthening relations, improvement of trade relations was the most favored and least opposed step with 52 percent favoring it and only 26 percent opposed. Nearly as many (51%) favored granting more access to journalists from both countries, though 39 percent were opposed.

While 48 percent of Iranians supported direct talks between the two governments on issues of mutual concern, 42 percent did not. Having greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges between the two countries garnered good support (46%) and was the second least opposed possible measure (opposed by 31%). Having more “Americans and Iranians visit each other’s countries as tourists” was viewed favorably by a plurality (48%) of Iranians, but opposed by nearly as many (44%).

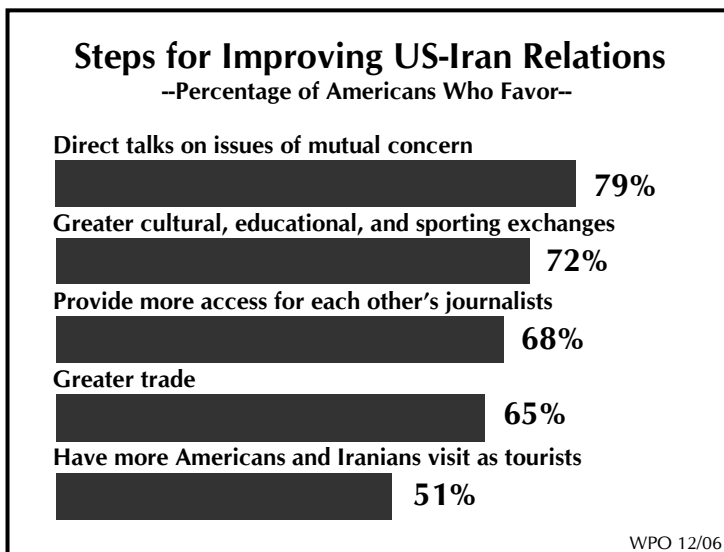
Iranians do not have a consensus over which measure out of the five provided is the best. After evaluating each approach separately respondents were asked which was best. Twenty percent said greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges; 20 percent said direct talks on issues of mutual concern; 19 percent said greater trade; 15 percent said providing more access to journalists;



and, 13 percent said allowing more Americans and Iranian visit each other’s country as tourists.

Iranians with some college education, however, tended to be more strongly in favor of all these measures. Fifty-six percent of college educated Iranians were in support of measures to enhance cultural, educational and sporting exchanges between the two countries (10 points higher than the public as a whole); 63 percent favored granting more access to each other’s journalists (12 points higher); 62 percent supported better trade relations (10 points higher); 59 percent liked the idea of direct talks on issues of mutual concern (11 points higher).

In sharp contrast to the muted enthusiasm of Iranians, large majorities of Americans are supportive of a wide array of steps that can be taken to improve US-Iranian relations. Four out of five (79%) Americans favored direct talks between the two governments, while only 14 percent were opposed. Sixty-five percent favored expansion of bilateral trade relations (27% opposed). Three in four (72%) strongly supported measures to enhance cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges between the two countries (21% oppose) and 68% would like to see more access



provided to each other’s journalists (24% oppose). Americans, however, tended to be relatively less supportive of the idea of having more Americans and Iranian visit each other’s country as tourists: only a bare majority (51%) viewed such a move as a favorable step while 41% oppose.

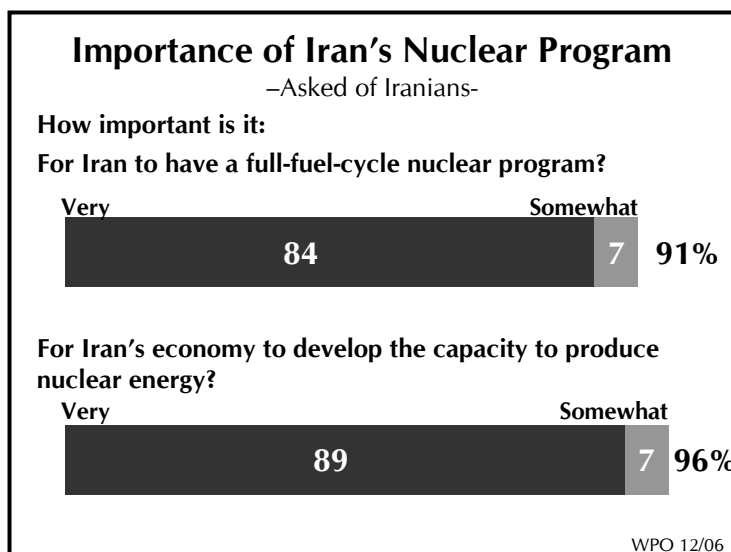
When asked to pick which step they think is the best, unlike Iranians, Americans reached a clear consensus. Sixty-four percent chose direct talks between the two governments as the single best idea. “To have greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges” was the second most favored step, viewed by 16 percent of Americans as the best.

THE NUCLEAR ISSUE

6. Iran’s Nuclear Energy Program

An overwhelming majority of Iranians believe that it is very important for Iran to have a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program. Majorities cite as key reasons for having such a capacity: securing Iran’s energy needs, enhancing Iran’s national technical competence, enhancing Iran’s great power status, preserving Iran’s rights to nuclear energy under the NPT, and preventing other countries from trying to economically and politically dominate Iran. Iranians express substantial concern about the potential for disruption in the supply of energy and enthusiastically support nuclear energy as a safe and important source of electricity. Americans have an even higher level of concern about possible disruptions in the energy supply, but resist the building of new nuclear power plants.

Iranians overwhelmingly believe that it is very important for Iran to have a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program, which requires them to have the capacity to enrich uranium. The term “full-fuel-cycle nuclear program” is widely used in the Iranian press to refer to a program that includes the controversial aspect of uranium enrichment. Nine out of ten respondents said it was important for Iran to have a full-fuel-cycle program, including a remarkably high 84 percent who said that it was very important and another 7 percent who viewed it as somewhat important. Only 4 percent said such a program was not important for Iran.



Respondents were also given a series of reasons for Iran to develop a “full-fuel-cycle nuclear program” and were asked whether this reason was the “the most important reason,” “an important reason, though not the most important,” “a minor reason,” or “not a reason at all.” In their enthusiasm, respondents largely ignored the instructions and every reason was labeled “the most important” by at least half of all respondents.

The most widely endorsed reason was that “this program secures Iran’s energy needs.” This was favored by 86 percent with 76 percent citing it as the most important reason why Iran should have a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program. Furthermore, 73 percent said that “this program will preserve Iran’s rights to nuclear energy under the Non-Proliferation Treaty” and 59 percent chose this as the most important reason.

Other questions also revealed this high level of motivation for addressing Iran’s energy needs through nuclear energy. A near-unanimous 96 percent said that it was important (89% very important) for “Iran’s economy to develop the capacity to produce nuclear energy.” Fifty-nine percent said they saw “disruption in energy supply” as either a critical (47%) or an important (12%) threat to Iran’s vital interests in the next ten years.

These findings suggest that Iranians feel that they cannot rely on their domestic supply of fossil fuels indefinitely. Indeed discussions of the limited period of time that Iran’s fossil fuel supply will last are prominent in the Iranian discourse.

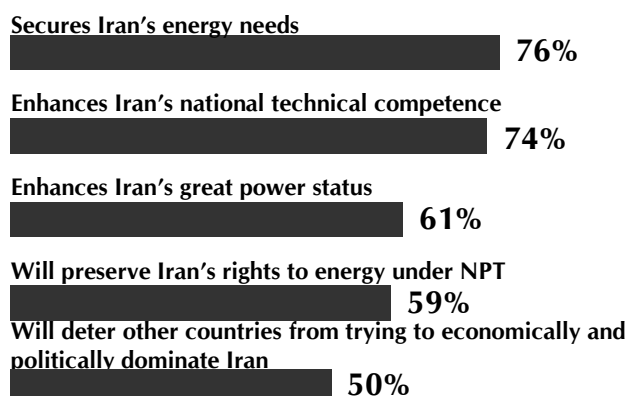
Iranians also show a low level of concern about the safety issues associated with nuclear energy. Eight out of ten said that “nuclear power is relatively safe and an important source of electricity, and interested countries should build new nuclear power plants.” Only about a quarter (24%) said that “the risk of terrorist acts involving radioactive materials or nuclear facilities is high,” while a plurality of 39 percent believed such a risk to be very low since nuclear facilities and radioactive materials are “securely protected.”

Americans share Iranians concern about energy supply, concur that nuclear energy does not pose a significant risk for terrorism, but are decidedly less enthusiastic about building new nuclear power plants. Even more strongly than Iranians, Americans see “distribution in energy supply” as a

significant threat to the vital interests of the United States: 94 percent believe that such a disruption would either be a critical (49%) or an important (45%) threat for the United States. Most Americans (56%) believe the risk of “terrorist acts involving radioactive materials and nuclear facilities” to be low, believing that such materials and facilities are “securely protected.” According to a 2005 GlobeScan poll, however, 40 percent of Americans agreed with Iranians that “nuclear power is relatively safe and ...interested countries should build new nuclear power plants” and 49 percent believed that new nuclear plants should not be built. Twenty-nine percent said, nonetheless, that current plants should continue to be used and 20 percent said that all nuclear power plants should be closed.

Reasons for Iranian Nuclear Program

--Percent Iranians Saying Top Reason--



WPO 12/06

Another very popular reason Iranians give for Iran's full-fuel-cycle nuclear program is its role in developing Iran's technical competence. Eighty-six percent endorsed the program because it “enhances Iran's national technical competence,” including 74 percent who said this was the most important reason.

Two widely endorsed reasons for Iran's nuclear program were of a more symbolic and geopolitical nature. Eighty-one percent chose as an important reason that the “program enhances Iran's great power status,” including 61 percent who said this was the most important reason. The lowest level of support, which still garnered a large majority, was: “the fact that Iran has a nuclear energy program will help deter other countries from trying to economically and politically dominate Iran.” Sixty-eight percent endorsed this reason and 50 percent cited it as the most important.

This raises the question of whether Iranians see a full-fuel-cycle capacity as providing benefits beyond nuclear energy. Arguably, having a full-fuel-cycle capacity is a sign of competence that adds to Iran's great power status and provides an independent source of energy that reduces Iranian vulnerability to outside pressure. It is likely, however, that Iranians also believe that this enhances Iran's deterrent capacity because Iran is closer to having the capacity to develop nuclear weapons. While most Iranians do not want Iran to develop nuclear weapons at this time (see below), it is quite possible that many Iranians also feel that being closer to a nuclear weapons capability enhances their great power status and their ability to deter other countries from seeking to dominate them on the assumption that they cannot acquire nuclear weapons.

7. Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

A large majority of Iranians support Iran's participation in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) which prohibits Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Only a small minority favors withdrawing from the NPT. Large majorities also support a Middle East nuclear free zone, and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons. However a large majority thinks that there are countries with secret nuclear weapons programs, and that in the future there will

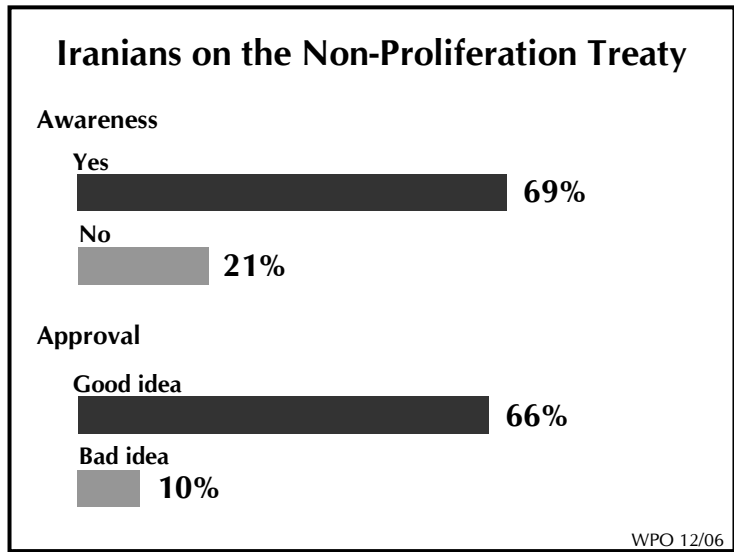
be more countries with nuclear weapons. Iranians are divided about whether at some point in the future Iran will decide to acquire nuclear weapons, with many expressing uncertainty. Americans concur with Iranians in their support for the NPT regime including the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and agree that there are countries secretly acquiring nuclear weapons. However, a very large majority of Americans believe that Iran will eventually acquire nuclear weapons.

Iranians express a high level of awareness of the fact that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) prohibits Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. A large majority, nonetheless, approves of Iran's participation in it. The topic of the NPT was raised with the following statement:

As you may know, Iran and most of the world's countries have signed a treaty called the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty or NPT. According to this treaty, the countries that have nuclear weapons have agreed to actively work together toward eliminating their nuclear weapons. The countries that do not have nuclear weapons, including Iran, have agreed not to try to acquire them.

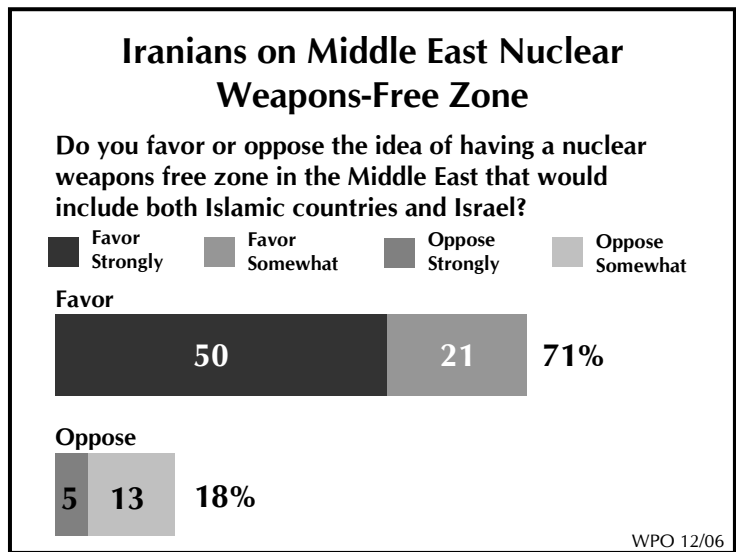
They were then asked whether they were aware that Iran had agreed to this limitation. Sixty-nine percent said they were and just 21 percent said they were not. More importantly, they were then asked whether they thought it was a good idea for Iran to be part of the treaty. Sixty-six percent said it was a good idea, while 10 percent said it was a bad idea (24% did not answer).

When asked whether Iran should withdraw from the NPT, only 15 percent said that it should, while 60 percent said it should not (25% did not answer).



Iranians also strongly believe in treaties that ban other weapons of mass destruction. A large majority of Iranians (68%) favored their government's participation in treaties that prohibit biological and chemical weapons, while just one in five opposed such participation.

Iranians also expressed support for the NPT goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons in a variety of other questions. A large majority of Iranians (68%) said they favored the NPT goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons and only 18% opposed such an objective. Seventy-one percent also favored (50%



strongly) “the idea of having a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East that would include both Islamic countries and Israel.” Just 18 percent said they were opposed.

Iranians also express support for the IAEA, the UN agency that monitors compliance with the NPT, despite the IAEA’s refusal to verify that Iran’s nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes and IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei’s statements criticizing Iranian behavior. Fifty-four percent expressed a mainly positive view of the IAEA and only 10 percent were mainly negative. Fifty percent said they had heard a lot (9%) or some (41%) about the IAEA, while another 27 percent said they had heard a little. Just 17% said they had heard nothing at all.

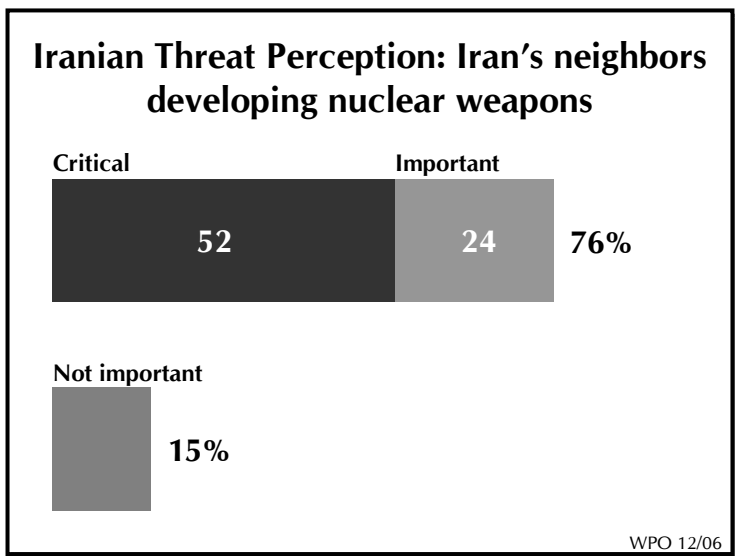
Similarly, a majority of Iranians support an active role for the United Nations in maintaining the NPT despite the fact that the UN Security Council has imposed a unique requirement on Iran to not enrich uranium, which many Iranians may perceive as discriminatory, and is considering sanctions. Nonetheless, 53 percent said they favored an active role for the United Nations in discouraging countries from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, a third (35%) said that the UN should not play such a role. This suggests that Iranians are basically supportive of the UN and the NPT regime even though they may also resent the fact that the UN Security Council is trying to prevent Iran from having a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program.

It should be noted that Iranians may not view the NPT as simply prohibiting it from acquiring nuclear weapons: it also affirms their right to produce nuclear energy. Article IV of the NPT states: “Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination [...]” As mentioned above, 73 percent of Iranians cited preserving “Iran’s rights to nuclear energy under the Non-Proliferation Treaty” as a key reason why Iran should have a full-fuel-cycle nuclear program.

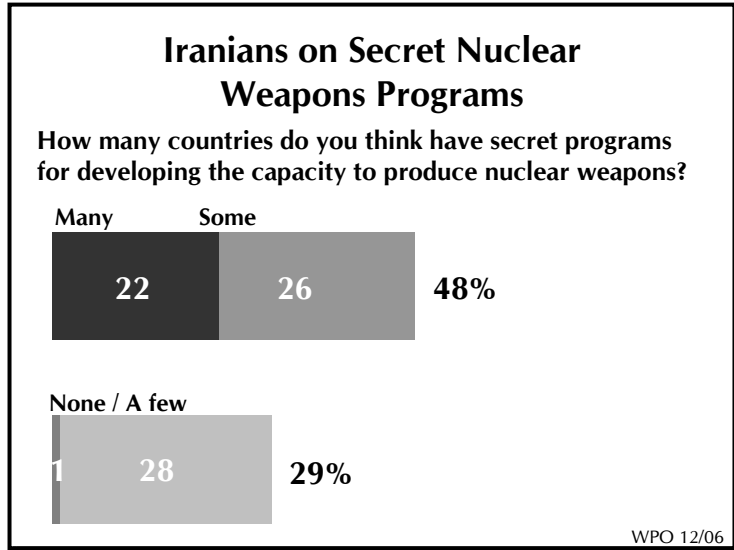
Support for the NPT may also derive from concerns that Iran’s neighbors may acquire nuclear weapons. Seventy-six percent of Iranians said the development of nuclear weapons by Iran’s neighbors would be a critical (52%) or important (24%) threat. Only 15 percent indicated that such a possibility would not worry them. Iranians may look at the NPT as means of discouraging neighboring countries from developing nuclear weapons.

At the same time, there are many reasons why Iranians may feel that they benefit from being a step closer to having the capability to produce nuclear weapons, even though they may never favor going beyond the use of nuclear technologies to produce energy

Iranians clearly perceive themselves to be in a somewhat threatening environment. As just mentioned, 76 percent expressed concern about the development of nuclear weapons by Iran’s neighbors. Seventy-two percent said they believed that Israel had already acquired nuclear weapons.



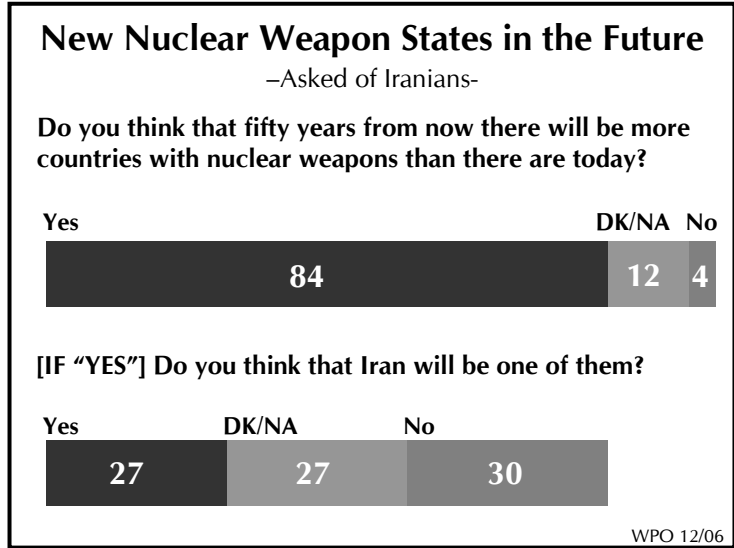
Most Iranians believe that there are countries that are secretly developing nuclear weapons. Asked, “How many countries do you think have secret programs for developing the capacity to produce nuclear weapons?” a mere 1 percent said none. Seventy-six percent said a few (28%), some (26%), or many (22%).



Furthermore, an overwhelming majority believes that in the future the number of nuclear weapon states will grow. They do not appear to have much hope that the existing nuclear weapons states will disarm as the NPT specifies. Only 6 percent of

Iranians said they believed that the United States was doing at least a somewhat good job to “actively work together toward eliminating nuclear weapons” as called for under the NPT, while 82 percent said the United States was not fulfilling this obligation. Such a perception may well engender doubts among Iranians about the power of the NPT to constrain other states from getting nuclear weapons.

More importantly, asked to think about the future, an overwhelming 84 percent said they thought that “fifty years from now there will be more countries with nuclear weapons than there are today.” Only 4 percent believed there would not be. Twelve percent did not answer.



In this context, it is easy to understand why some Iranians either believe or express uncertainty about whether Iran will eventually decide that it might need to acquire nuclear weapons. The 84 percent of respondents who said that they thought that fifty years from now

there would be more countries with nuclear weapons were also asked, “Do you think that Iran will be one of them?” Responses were divided three ways. Only 30 percent (of the full sample) said no. Twenty-seven percent said yes and the same percentage did not provide an answer (13% did not know, 14% did not answer).

It is also not hard to understand how Iranians may at the same time find it attractive for Iran to develop the capacity to enrich uranium, while also expressing a willingness to be constrained by the NPT from developing nuclear weapons. Besides the benefits for Iran’s nuclear energy program and the status that such a capacity confers, having the capacity to enrich uranium puts Iran in a better position should the NPT regime, contrary to most Iranians’ wishes, not only fail to fulfill its promise

to eliminate nuclear weapons but erode to the point where new states develop nuclear weapons, some of whom may at some point have Iran in their crosshairs.

Comparing American Perspectives

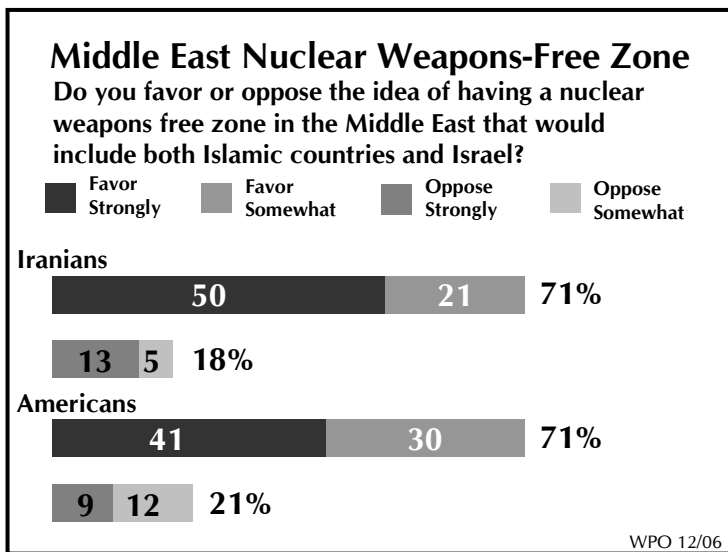
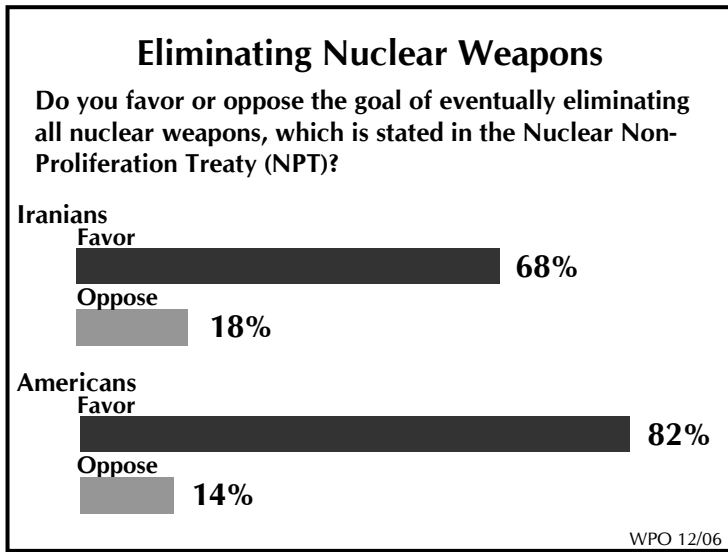
To a remarkable extent most Americans agree with most Iranians on nearly all the major questions related to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Americans, however, have much lower awareness of the NPT: only a bare majority of Americans (51%) said that they were aware of the fact that the United States is a member of the NPT and that it therefore has agreed to “actively work together [with other nuclear-weapon states] toward eliminating their nuclear weapons” (46% said they did not know). In contrast, 69 percent of the Iranians said they were aware of their country’s membership in the NPT and its obligations under the treaty to not acquire nuclear weapons.

Nonetheless, consistent with the Iranian view, given this information, a large majority of Americans (78%) said they thought it was a good idea for the United States to become a member of the treaty and believed (79%) that the United States should remain one. Like Iranians, Americans strongly favored (82%) elimination of all nuclear weapons. Only 14 percent of Americans opposed the goal of “eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons.”

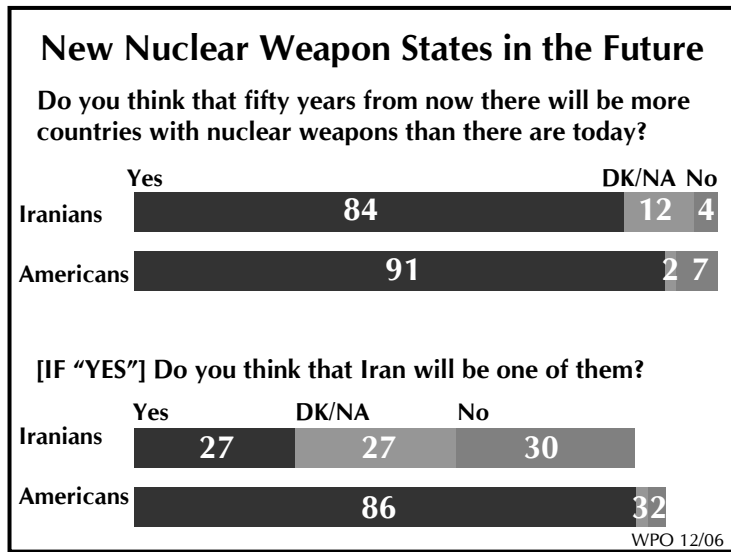
Americans overwhelmingly (94%) saw the spread of nuclear weapons as a threat to the United States, including 67 percent who saw it as a critical threat.

Again like Iranians, Americans (63%) tended to believe that Israel has nuclear weapons (30% think Israel does not). A smaller number of Americans (39%) said they believe Israel does have nuclear weapons and are concerned about it (as compared with 56%). However, an additional 25 percent of Americans (and an additional 17% of Iranians) said that Israel does not have nuclear weapons and would be concerned if it did. This means that a majority of Americans are concerned about the possibility of Israel having nuclear weapons.

In any case, large majorities of Americans and Iranians (71% of both) said they wanted to see a “nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East that would include both Islamic countries and Israel.”



Americans share the pessimism of Iranians about the future of the nonproliferation regime. Americans said almost unanimously (95%) that they thought at least a few countries have secret nuclear weapons programs and more than a third (36%) said that many countries have such programs. They also overwhelmingly (91%) said that in fifty years there would be more countries with nuclear weapons. But unlike Iranians (who express division and uncertainty about this issue), most Americans (86%) said that Iran would be one of the new nuclear states.



8. Negotiations over Iran's Nuclear Program

Iranians show strong resistance to negotiating away the ability to enrich uranium, rejecting as insignificant a wide array of possible incentives that could be provided by the United States and other countries. Americans showed a readiness to provide some incentives but not others. Iranians and Americans are divided about the likelihood of this dispute leading to a military conflict, but Americans are a bit more likely to believe that military conflict will occur. A majority of Americans would be willing to allow Iran to enrich uranium if Iran agrees to limit its uranium enrichment programs to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy and to give UN inspectors full access to its nuclear facilities to ensure that such limits are respected.

Iranians show strong resistance to negotiating away Iran's ability to enrich uranium even when offered a wide range of possible incentives. Iranian respondents were presented a series of incentives that might be offered in exchange for giving up its program. They were then asked how significant each incentive was. None of the incentives were seen as significant by a majority of Iranians.

The only incentive that majorities did not reject as insignificant was allowing Iran to join the WTO. Thirty-nine percent saw this as at least somewhat significant for Iran. Nevertheless, a plurality of Iranians (46%) said it was not significant, including 35 percent who said being allowed to join the WTO was "not at all significant."

All other incentives were dismissed as "not very" or "not at all significant" by a majority. These included: "US making an official commitment to not use military force against Iran" (66% dismissed), "repealing US legislation calling for regime change in Iran" (64%), "Europe committing to ensure Iranian access to enriched uranium" (62%), "lifting US economic sanctions against Iran" (59%), "unfreezing Iranian assets held by the US" (59%), and the United States "providing "spare parts for civilian aircraft"(57%). Even transferring "nuclear energy technology to Iran" did not attract much enthusiasm among Iranians (58% dismissed).

Americans showed mixed readiness to provide these incentives in exchange for Iran's agreement to give up its uranium enrichment program. Majorities expressed a willingness to allow Iran to join the WTO (54%) and provide spare parts for Iran's civilian aircraft (52%). A plurality (47%) would favor

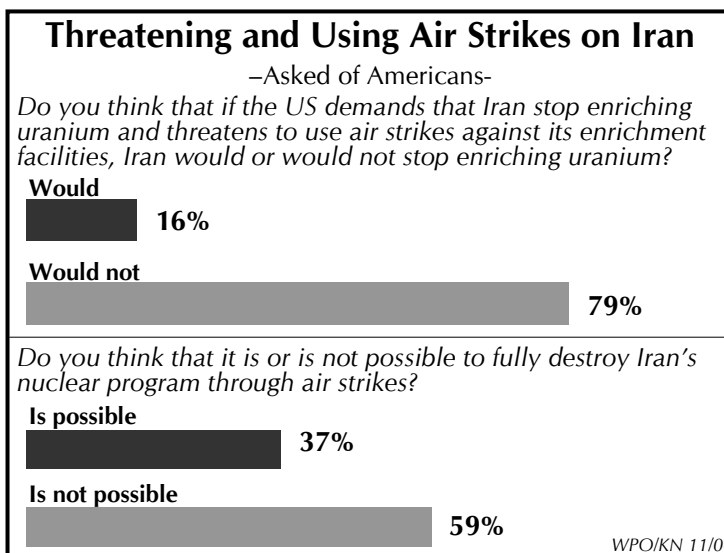
offering to end US economic sanctions (40% opposed). But Americans were divided on “repealing US legislation calling for regime change in Iran,” (44% favored, 43% opposed) and a plurality (50%) opposed “unfreezing Iranian assets held by the US” (39% favored). Majorities opposed transferring nuclear technology to Iran (79%), or having Europe commit to ensuring Iranian access to enriched uranium (73%), perhaps because they assumed this could help Iran develop weapons. A bare majority (51%) also opposed the “US making an official commitment to not use military force against Iran” (38% favored), perhaps because Americans could imagine scenarios—such as an attack on Israel—that might warrant the use of military force against Iran.

Iranians were divided in response to questions about the likelihood that the United States would take military action against their country. Half the sample was asked whether they believed “the US will take military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities in the next year or two.” Forty eight percent said it was somewhat (37%) or very likely (11%) while 45 percent said it was not at all (34%) or not very likely (11%). Asked whether they agreed or disagreed that “a military confrontation between Iran and the United States is likely to occur within the next ten years,” 28 percent agreed, 39 percent disagreed and 20 percent took a neutral position. Fourteen percent did not answer. Those who assumed that a US strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities was likely were not significantly more willing to look positively on the proposed incentives for Iran to give up its nuclear enrichment program.

Americans were only a bit more likely to believe that military force would be used. Forty nine percent thought it was likely that the United States would take military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities, including 13 percent who thought it was very likely. Forty-five percent thought it was not likely, including 9 percent who called this “not at all” likely. Forty-one percent agreed that a military confrontation was likely in the next ten years, 19 percent disagreed, and 35 percent were neutral.

Americans do not believe the threat of military force is likely to be effective. Asked, “Do you think that if the US demands that Iran stop enriching uranium and threatens to use air strikes against its enrichment facilities, Iran would or would not stop enriching uranium?” an overwhelming 79 percent said it would not (including 77% of Republicans and 85% of Democrats).

Americans also do not believe that air strikes would be effective. Respondents were presented both sides of the debate (see box) and asked whether they thought air strikes could destroy Iran’s nuclear program. Fifty-nine percent said that they could not. However, Republicans were evenly divided about this issue while 71 percent of Democrats said air strikes would not be effective.



A majority of Americans expressed support for a potential deal that would allow Iran to enrich uranium to a limited degree. The deal that was presented specified that Iran would only enrich to the very low levels necessary to produce nuclear power—not the high levels required to produce nuclear weapons—and only if UN inspectors were guaranteed full access to make sure that such limits were not exceeded. Respondents were also presented pro and con arguments (see box). Fifty-five percent of Americans thought negotiating such a deal was a good idea while 38 percent considered it a bad idea. Support was bipartisan, including 53 percent of Republicans and 62 percent of Democrats.

Negotiating with Iran Re: Uranium

As you may know, the US and other countries have demanded that Iran stop enriching uranium out of concern that this could lead to Iran gaining the ability to develop nuclear weapons. However, Iran has refused, insisting that it is only enriching uranium for its nuclear energy program, not to build nuclear weapons. Here is a proposal some people have offered for resolving this impasse. Iran should be able to enrich uranium, but only on two conditions:

- 1) Enrichment must be limited to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, while enrichment to higher levels needed for nuclear weapons would be forbidden.
- 2) Iran must fully cooperate with the UN inspectors, allowing full access to make inspections throughout the country, to make certain Iran is limiting its uranium enrichment to low levels.

Proponents of this idea say that this is a safe approach, because if Iran were to try to cheat, it would take them years to enrich uranium to the higher levels necessary for nuclear weapons, and with full access for UN inspectors they would be caught.

Critics of this idea say that Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because doing so would give them technical experience that would put them in a strong position if they later decide to violate the agreement and build nuclear weapons.

Do you think it is a good idea or not a good idea to make an agreement whereby Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium, provided that this is limited only to low levels and UN inspectors would have full access to make sure that enrichment remained at low levels?

Good idea

55%

Bad idea

38%

WPO/KN 11/06

GLOBAL INTEGRATION AND DEMOCRACY

9. The United Nations System

A majority of Iranians and Americans have a positive view of the United Nations, would like the United Nations to have a significantly more powerful role in world affairs, believe that the use of military force is more legitimate when the UN approves of it, and believe that the UN should have the right to authorize military intervention to prevent severe human rights violations, such as genocide. As a general principle only a plurality of Iranians think their government should take into account the position of the majority of other countries when making key decisions, though a clear majority has a positive view of world public opinion. Americans are much more inclined to take into account the position of the majority of other countries, but only half have a positive view of world public opinion.

Despite the tensions between Iran and the UN Security Council, Iranians tend to view the United Nations positively. Asked whether the United Nations is “having a mainly positive or mainly negative influence in the world,” 58 percent said “mainly positive,” with 24 percent saying mainly negative. This is down slightly from the fall of 2005 when a BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll found that 63 percent considered the UN’s influence to be mainly positive.

More significantly, Iranians would like the United Nations to play a larger role in the world, which implies that they also support the broader system of international law and institutions the United Nations was designed to promote. Asked about a number of possible future trends, 70 percent of

Iranians said they would see it as mainly positive if the United Nations were to become “significantly more powerful in world affairs.” Only fourteen percent of Iranians would view this as “mainly negative.”

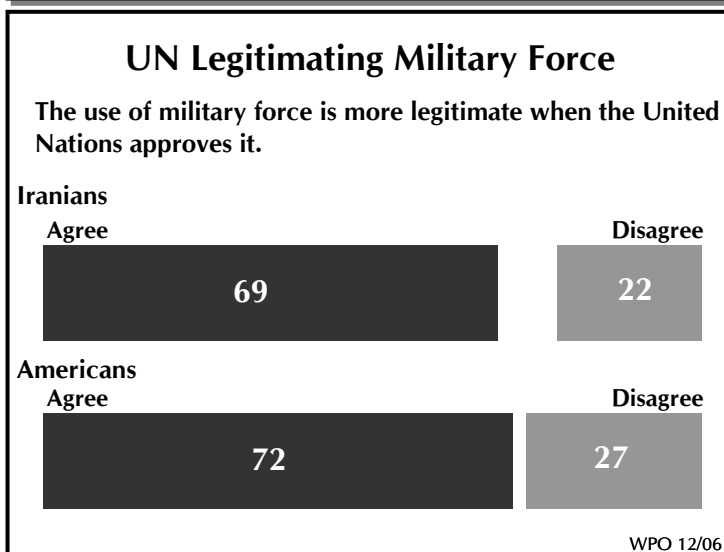
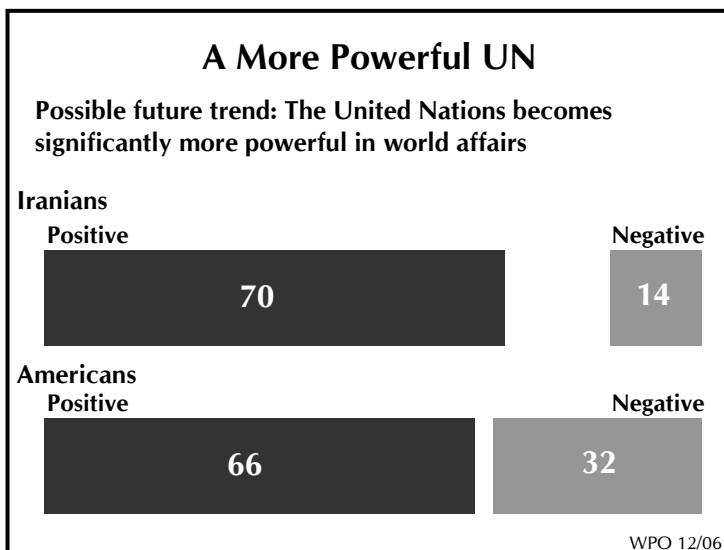
Iranians appear to perceive the United Nations as a key source of legitimacy in international affairs. Sixty-nine percent agreed (31% strongly) with the statement, “The use of military force is more legitimate when the United Nations approves it.”

Iranians also support the UN Security Council’s right to intervene in the internal affairs of states in certain extreme circumstances. Sixty-nine percent said that the UN Security Council should “have the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations, such as genocide.” Only 20 percent said it should not have this prerogative.

However, when asked specifically about UN intervention during the 1991 Gulf War, Iranians as a whole did not provide a clear answer. In response to the question, “Do you think the United Nations did the right thing or the wrong thing when it authorized the US and its allies to drive Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991?” 36 percent said the United Nations did the “right thing,” 26 percent said it did the “wrong thing,” and a high 39 percent did not answer.

The views of Americans about the United Nations are quite similar to those of Iranians. Sixty-four percent of Americans called the United Nations’ influence in the world “mainly positive.” Sixty-six percent believed the United Nations should become “significantly more powerful in world affairs.” Seventy-two percent agreed (26% strongly) that “the use of military force is more legitimate when the United Nations approves it.” A large 83 percent of Americans said the United Nations Security Council should “have the right to authorize the use of military force in order to prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide.”

In contrast, Americans are highly supportive of the United Nation’s authorization of military action after the invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Seventy-four percent of Americans said that the United Nations did the “right thing” when it authorized the United States and its allies to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, compared to 36 percent of Iranians.



Responding to World Opinion

Despite their strong support for the collective decision making inherent in the United Nations, Iranians show a more muted enthusiasm for the idea of being responsive to world opinion. Respondents were asked, “If a large majority of countries in the world have signed an agreement on how to address a major global issue and Iran is considering whether to sign, how much should Iran take into account the fact that a majority of countries have signed the agreement?” Only 50 percent of Iranians said the number of signatories should be taken into account “a lot” (16%) or “some” (36%). Forty-two percent said it should be considered “just a little” (11%) or “not at all” (31%). These responses may reflect the pressure that Iran is now under from other countries regarding its nuclear program.

Nonetheless, just as they have a positive view of the United Nations in principle, Iranians also express a positive view of world public opinion in principle. Asked whether “world public opinion” is having a “mainly positive or mainly negative influence in the world,” 58 percent of Iranians responded “mainly positive.” This is down from 2005 when 68 percent of Iranians responded positively to this question in a BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA survey. But the percentage of Iranian respondents who call the influence of world public opinion “mainly negative” has held steady: 22 percent in 2006 compared to 21 percent in 2005.

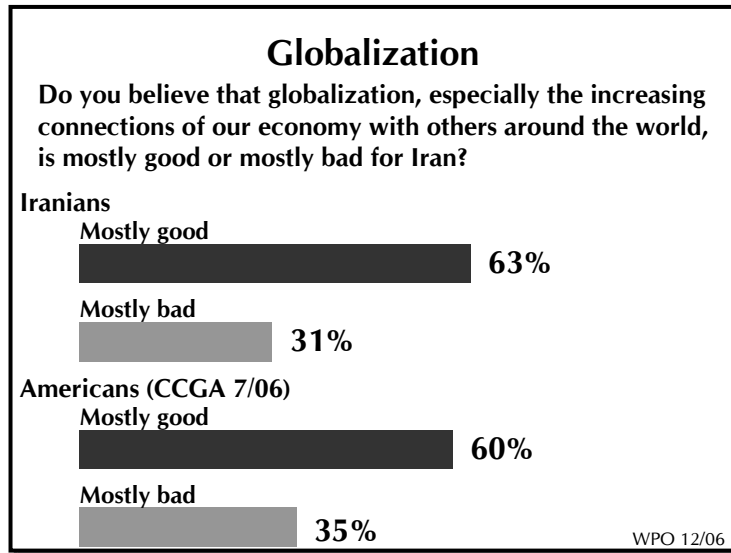
Americans’ attitudes vary significantly from Iranians’ on these two questions. Americans are much more responsive to a consensus of other countries. If a large majority of countries have signed an agreement, a large majority of Americans (68%) said the United States should take this into account “a lot” (31%) or “some” (37%). Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that their government should take this into account “just a little” (16%) or “not at all” (11%). In this scenario, American opinion is roughly fifteen points more positive than Iranian opinion.

But Americans have a less positive attitude about world public opinion, perhaps because of the negative views of the United States reported in recent global polls. Only a plurality of Americans polled (50%) said that world public opinion had a “mainly positive” influence on the world. This level of support represents a slight increase since 2005, when 46 percent of American respondents described the influence of world public opinion as “mainly positive.”

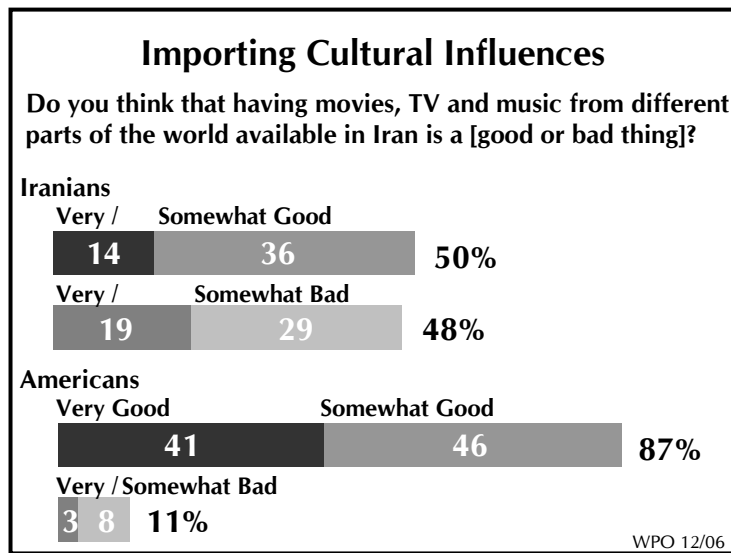
10. Globalization

A large majority of Iranians believe that globalization is mostly good for Iran and have a positive view of global companies, but are divided about the cultural effects of globalization. Americans are similarly positive about globalization, but have more skeptical views of global companies and are much more positive about the cultural effects of globalization. At the same time, Iranians and Americans share a desire to maintain economic self-sufficiency.

Consistent with their support for participation in the international system, a large majority of Iranians approve of globalization. Asked to evaluate “globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world,” 63 percent of Iranians said that it was “mostly good” for Iran. A majority of Iranians (58%) also said that “global companies” were having a “mainly positive” influence in the world, while 27% of respondents described this influence as “mainly negative.”



Iranians are divided about the impact of foreign cultural products on their country. Respondents were asked: “Do you think that having movies, TV and music from different parts of the world available in Iran is a very good thing, somewhat good, somewhat bad or a very bad thing for our country?” Fifty percent of Iranians said that having these products was either “a very good thing” or “somewhat good,” while 48% said having them was either a “very bad thing” or “somewhat bad”.



American views on the principle of globalization are similar to those of Iranians. Sixty percent of Americans believe that globalization is “mostly good” for the United States (Chicago Council July 2006).

Americans differ from Iranians, however, in their more skeptical view of global companies, and their more positive view of foreign cultural products. Only a plurality (49%) of American respondents said they believed that global companies were having a mainly positive influence in the world, while 40 percent felt this influence was mainly negative. Meanwhile, a high 87 percent of Americans said that “having movies, TV and music from different parts of the world available in the US” was very or somewhat good compared to only 50 percent of Iranian respondents.

Concurrent with their support for globalization, both Iranians and Americans express a desire for maintaining self-sufficiency. Asked whether it is more important to “to become more integrated with the global economy, because that is the only way for [their country] to prosper in the world today,” or to “become economically self-sufficient because [their country] should not be dependent on other countries” 66 percent of Iranians and 63 percent of Americans said that their country should be self-sufficient.

11. Identity: National, Religious, Global

A large majority of Iranians see their central identity in terms of their religion while one in four identify as a citizen of their country; very small minorities see their identity primarily as members of an ethnic group or as an individual. In sharp contrast, only a small minority of Americans identify themselves primarily in terms of their religion, while about half identify themselves primarily as citizens of the United States and nearly as many identify themselves primarily as individuals. Large majorities of both Iranians and Americans see themselves as citizens of the world as well as citizens of their country, but in both cases most identify more as citizens of their country.

Respondents were asked to choose whether they think of themselves as primarily a “citizen of Iran/America,” a “Muslim/member of my religion,” a “member of my ethnic group,” or “not so much in these ways but primarily as an individual.” A large majority of Iranians (62%) said they saw themselves primarily as a member of their religion. Just 27% of respondents considered themselves “primarily as a citizen of Iran.” Very few Iranians identified themselves “primarily as a member of my ethnic group” (4%), or “primarily as an individual” (4%).

These variations in Iranians’ identity correlate with attitudes about other issues. For example, among Iranians who identify themselves “primarily as a citizen of Iran” 58 percent said that “having movies, TV and music from different parts of the world available in Iran” is a good thing. Among Iranian respondents who identify themselves “primarily as a member of my religion” only 46 percent had this view. Those who identified with their religion were also more likely to have a positive view of Hamas and to put a higher priority on strengthening ties with the other Muslim countries over and above ties with the West.

In sharp contrast to Iranians, very few American respondents (6%) saw themselves in terms of their religion. A plurality of Americans (49%) thought of themselves “primarily as a citizen of the United States.” Forty-three percent preferred to see themselves “primarily as an individual,” a full 39 points higher than Iranian responses. Yet, like their Iranian counterparts, few American respondents (2%), identify

Identity of Iranians

Which of the following statements do you agree with most?
I think of myself...

Primarily as a citizen of Iran



Primarily as a member of my religion



Primarily as a member of my ethnic group



Not so much in these ways but primarily as an individual



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Identity of Americans

Which of the following statements do you agree with most?
I think of myself...

Primarily as a citizen of the United States



Primarily as a member of my religion



Primarily as a member of my ethnic group



Not so much in these ways but primarily as an individual



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themselves primarily as a member of their ethnic group.

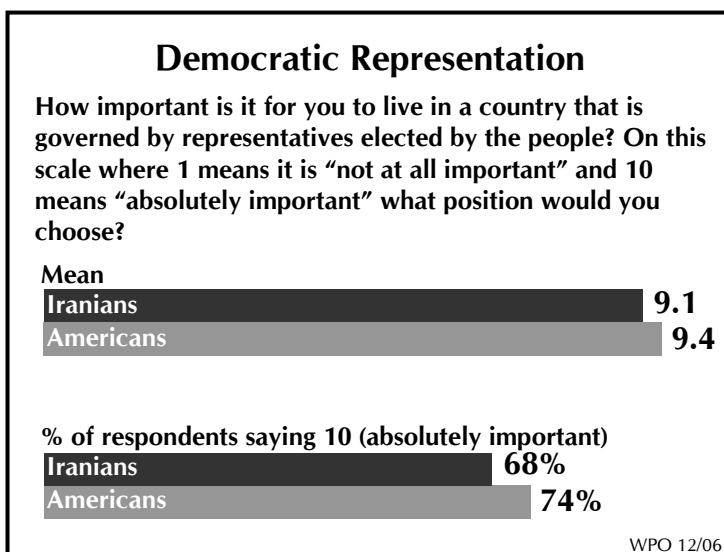
Both groups were also polled about whether they felt they had a global identity. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “I regard myself as a citizen of the world as well as a citizen of Iran/America.” Majorities of both publics agreed, though Iranians agreed in larger numbers: 82 percent of Iranians compared to 63 percent of Americans.

Those who agreed with the above statement were then asked whether they thought of themselves more as citizens of the world or their country. Only small percentages identified primarily as citizens of the world—slightly more Americans (16% of the full sample) than Iranians (12%).

12. Democracy and Human Rights

Iranians and Americans overwhelmingly endorse the importance of living in a country that is governed by representatives elected by the people. Iranians and Americans both give their country good marks in terms of being democratically representative and respecting the rights of the individual.

In order to gauge Iranian and American feelings towards democratic principles, respondents were asked: “How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed by representatives elected by the people?” They were told to answer on a scale where 1 means it is “not at all important” and 10 means “absolutely important.” On average, Iranian gave a response of 9.1; slightly lower than the average of 9.4 among Americans. A large majority of Americans (74%) and Iranians (68%) gave a score of 10.



Iranians give their country good marks both in terms of being democratically representative and respecting human rights. Respondents were asked to rate how much their country is “governed by representatives elected by the people on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 means “not at all” and 10 means “completely”). Iranians gave their country an average score of 6.9, with seven percent of Iranians giving their country a score of 3 or less, 27 percent a score between 4 and 6 and 61 percent a score of 7 or higher. Only 9 percent said that their country was “governed completely” by elected representatives.

Asked, how much respect there was for individual rights in their country, 70 percent of Iranians said there was a lot (21%) or some (49%), while 27 percent said either that there was not much (20%) or no respect at all (7%). This is largely unchanged from 2000 when the World Values Survey asked the same question and found that 66 percent rated respect for individual rights as a lot (17%) or some (49%) and 25 percent gave ratings of not much (18%) and none (7%).

Americans provided similar ratings. Assessing the degree of democratic representation in their country, Americans give the United States an average score of 7.3, with 7 percent giving their country

a score of 3 or less, 25 percent a score between 4 and 6, and 65 percent a score of 7 or higher. Twenty-two percent of Americans said their country was “governed completely” by elected representatives. On respecting individual rights, 64 percent said there was either a lot (18%) or some (46%) respect for human rights in their country, while 35 percent said there was not much (28%) or no respect at all (7%). This is down a bit from the 1999 World Values Survey when 73 percent said a lot (16%) or some (57%) and 26 percent said not much (22%) or none (4%).

Why do Iranians give their country similar ratings to the United States on democracy and individual rights? By most measures the United States is seen as more democratic and as having greater protections for individual rights. It should be noted that Iranians were not being asked to make a comparative evaluation but simply to rate their country on a 1-10 scale. What constitutes high and low for Iranians is derived from a baseline of expectations relative to their history and the norms of other countries in their region. Both in terms of their history and regional norms, Iran’s levels of democratic representation and protections of individual rights are relatively high.

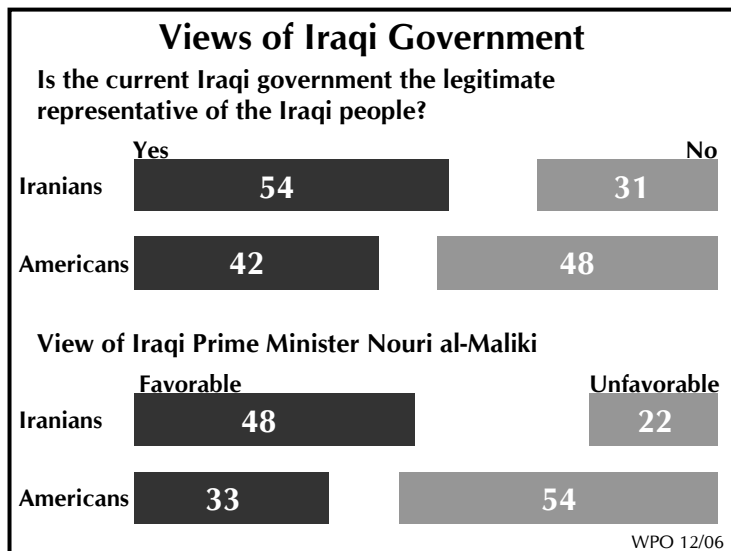
Of course, it is possible that Iranians are simply giving answers that they believe reflect their own government’s preferences. However, it should be noted that surveys of other countries, whose governments are generally considered authoritarian, have gotten quite different responses to this same question. World Values Surveys conducted between 1999 and 2003 included a number of countries that were at that time under authoritarian rule. In those countries, Algeria, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine, fewer than four in ten said there was a lot or some respect for human rights in their country.

REGIONAL ISSUES

13. Iraq

A majority of Iranians believe that the current Iraqi government is the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people, have a fairly favorable view of Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, and think US troops should be withdrawn within six months. Americans lean toward not seeing the current Iraqi government as the legitimate representative, have an unfavorable view of Maliki, and think US troops should be withdrawn according to a timeline of two years or less. Both Iranians and Americans see instability in Iraq as an important threat and believe that the war in Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

Iranians lean toward a fairly positive view of the new Iraqi government. A majority of Iranians (54%) said that they viewed the current Iraqi government as the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people, with just 31 percent saying it was not the legitimate representative. A plurality (48%) of Iranians also expressed a favorable view of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, while just 22 percent had an unfavorable view, though 30 percent chose not to express an opinion.



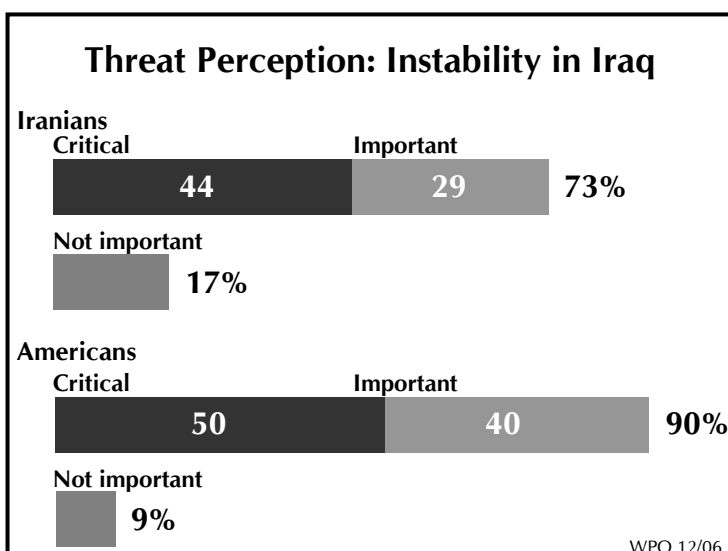
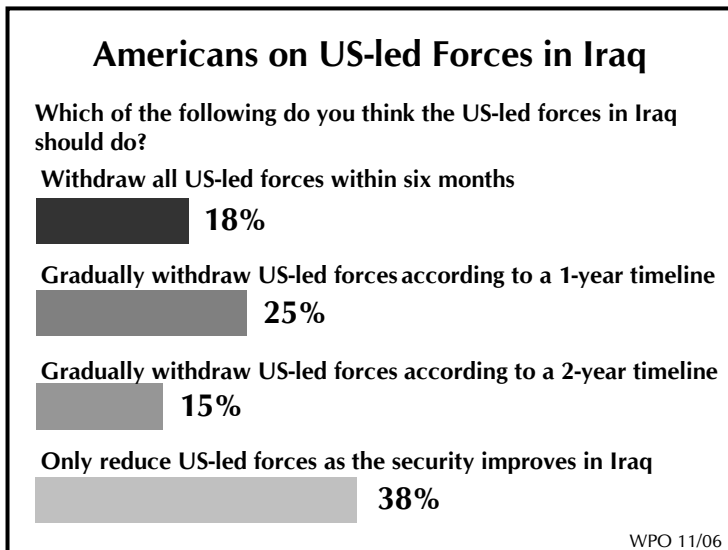
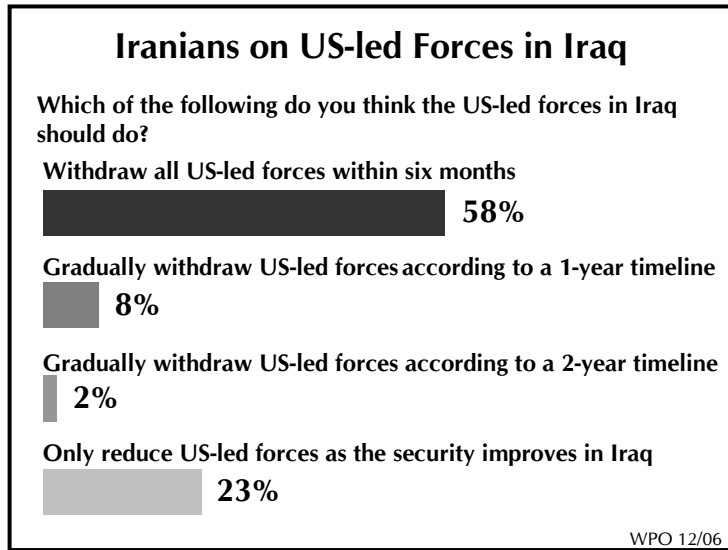
Iranians also have largely favorable views of influential Iraqi Shia leaders. A majority of Iranians (82%) said they had a favorable view of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (62% very). A somewhat smaller majority (58%) expressed a favorable view of Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr (28% very). However, it should be noted that Iranians appear to be less familiar with Muqtada al-Sadr, as 31 percent declined to offer an opinion about him, compared to 12 percent who did not evaluate Sistani.

Asked about what US-led forces in Iraq should do, Iranians feel that they should withdraw in the near future. Given four options for the timing of

the withdrawal of US-led forces in Iraq, a majority of Iranians (58%) said that the best option would be to “withdraw all US-led forces within six months”—the shortest time frame offered—8 percent said within a year, and 2 percent in two years. Just 23 percent said US-led forces should be withdrawn “only as the security situation improves.”

Americans’ views of the Iraqi government are quite a bit less positive than Iranians’. A plurality of 48 percent said that they did not see the current Iraqi government as the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people, while 42 percent said that they did. Correspondingly, 54 percent expressed a somewhat (37%) or very unfavorable view of Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki (17%).

Americans agree with Iranians that US-led forces should not be kept in Iraq on an open-ended basis, but favor a longer time frame for withdrawal. Only 38 percent said that US-led forces should remain in Iraq until the security situation improved, while 58 percent opted for a limited time frame, with 18 percent



preferring six months, 25 percent one year and 15 percent two years.

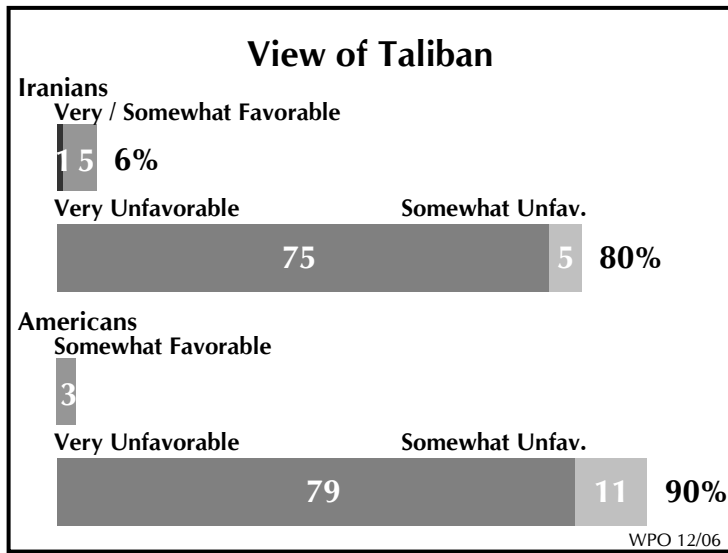
Despite differing views of the political situation in Iraq, Iranians and Americans have a shared concern about the threat posed by instability in Iraq. Seventy-three percent of Iranians said instability in Iraq could be a “critical” (44%) or “important” (29%) threat to their country in the next 10 years. Similarly, 90 percent of Americans saw instability in Iraq as a critical (50%) or important (40%) threat to their vital interests.

Furthermore, both Iranians and Americans agree that the war in Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world. Large majorities in Iran (75%) and the United States (60%) said that the war in Iraq had “increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world.” This is consistent with views on this issue from the fall of 2005 when BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll found that majorities of Iranians (77%) and Americans (55%) held this position.

14. Afghanistan

Iranians and Americans share a strongly negative view of the Taliban. Iranians lean toward believing that, since the overthrow of the Taliban, Iran’s security on its Afghan border has improved, but a majority believes that drug trafficking has gotten worse. Iranians express an extremely high level of concern about drug trafficking (considerably higher than Americans). A majority of Americans have a negative view of Pakistan’s President Musharraf, while Iranians lean negative, with many undecided.

Iranians and Americans have extremely negative views of the Taliban. Very large majorities in both Iran (80%) and the United States (90%) expressed an unfavorable view of the Taliban, with more than three in four respondents in both countries (75% Iran, 79% United States) saying they had a “very unfavorable” view.



Iranians lean toward believing that the overthrow of the Taliban has played to the benefit of Iran. A plurality of Iranians (42%) said that Iran’s security on its border with Afghanistan had gotten better, while just 20 percent said it had worsened.

Thirty-eight percent of Iranians said that security for the Shia in Afghanistan had also improved, while 24 percent said it had gotten worse.

However, Iranians tend to feel that the problem of drug trafficking in the region has worsened since the fall of the Taliban. Fifty-two percent said that drug trafficking had gotten worse while just 19 percent said it had gotten better (no change: 14%).

Iranians are highly concerned about drug trafficking in general. An overwhelming majority (85%) of Iranians rated drug trafficking as a “critical threat” to their country, getting the highest rating of all threats posed. In contrast, only 47 percent of Americans held this view, although an additional 44 percent of Americans saw drug trafficking as “an important, but not critical threat.”

Views of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf lean negative in Iran and more so in the US. A majority of Americans (53%) said they viewed Musharraf unfavorably, while only a plurality of Iranians (40%) did. Many Iranians were undecided about the Pakistani leader (36%).

15. Middle East

Iranians have positive views of the influence of Syria, the Palestinians, Hamas and Hezbollah, while Americans have quite negative views. A large majority of Iranians have a negative view of Israel's influence in the world, while nearly half of Americans concur.

Iranians and Americans have largely opposing views about the influence of a number of countries and actors in the Middle East, with Iranians having mostly positive views and Americans having chiefly negative ones.

Asked about the influence of Syria in the world, a majority of Iranians (61%) said it had a "mainly positive" influence, while a majority of Americans (71%) said "mainly negative." Similarly, a large majority of Iranians (73%) said the Palestinians' influence in the world was positive, while the exact same majority of Americans (73%) said it was mainly negative.

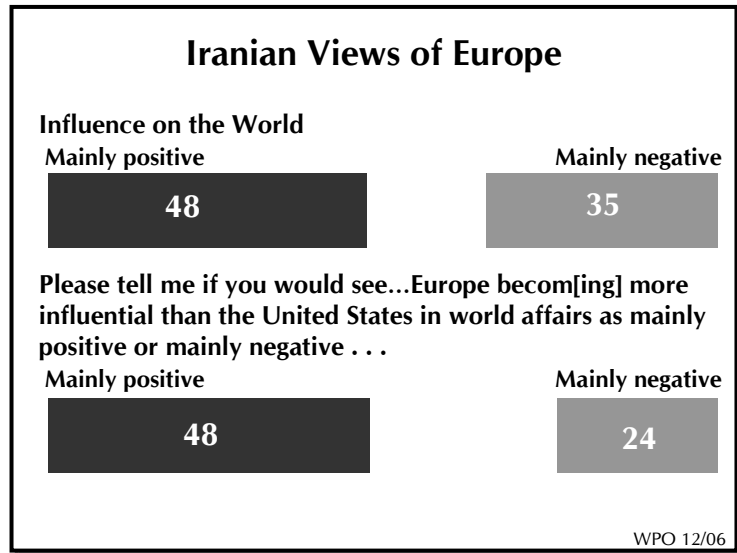
These divergent views extend to non-state actors in the Middle East. A majority of Iranians (56%) said the influence of Hamas was mainly positive, while 77 percent of Americans said its influence in the world was mainly negative. The contrast in views of Hezbollah, a Shiite organization, is even more striking: 75 percent of Iranians thought Hezbollah's influence in the world was mainly positive, while 80 percent of Americans believed it was mainly negative. Iranians also had a positive opinion of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. A large majority of Iranians (81%) had a favorable view of Nasrallah, including 53 percent very favorable.

The pattern of diametrically opposed Iranian and American evaluations of Middle Eastern actors is broken in the case of Israel. While an overwhelming majority of Iranians (83%) said they believed Israel had a mainly negative influence in the world, a plurality of Americans (48%) shared that view. Forty-four percent of Americans said Israel had a mainly positive influence.

16. Europe

Among Iranians a plurality has a positive view of Europe and would prefer for Europe to have more influence than the United States. They lean toward a positive view of France (but not Jacques Chirac), while a majority has a negative view of Britain (and Tony Blair). Among Americans a majority has a positive view of Europe and Britain (and Tony Blair), but tend to be negative toward France (and a majority has a negative view of Jacques Chirac). Iranians lean toward positive views of Russia, while Americans have a more negative view, with both growing more negative over the last year.

Iranians have somewhat positive views of Europe's influence in the world and seem to prefer that Europe have more influence than the United States. A plurality of Iranians (48%) said Europe had a mainly positive influence in the world, while just 35 percent saw it as having a mainly negative influence. (This is down slightly from the December 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll, when 53 percent said Europe's influence was mainly positive). When asked about the future possibility of "Europe becoming more influential than the United States in world affairs," a plurality (48%) also saw that as mainly positive; just 24 percent said it would be mainly negative.



Iranians also have somewhat positive views of France, but these feelings do not extend to French president Jacques Chirac. A plurality of Iranians (42%) said France had a mainly positive influence in the world (up from 35% in the December 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA). However, a significant majority of Iranians (63%) viewed French President Jacques Chirac unfavorably (48% very unfavorable).

Iranians' views of Britain and Britain's leaders are considerably more negative. A majority of Iranians (60%) sees Britain's influence in the world as mainly negative, though this result is slightly less negative than in the December 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll (66% mainly negative). A large majority (80%) also expressed a negative view of British Prime Minister Tony Blair (71% very).

Americans have generally quite positive views of Europe's influence in the world. Nearly three in four (74%) said they saw Europe as a mainly positive influence in the world. This is considerably more than one year ago, when a smaller majority of Americans (60%) saw Europe's influence as mainly positive (November 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA). However, when asked how they would feel about Europe becoming more influential than the United States in world affairs in the future, a majority of Americans (61%) said they would see it as mainly negative.

Americans also view Britain and British Prime Minister Tony Blair very positively. A large majority of Americans (82%) said they believed that Britain had a mainly positive influence in the world, an even greater percentage than in November 2005 (71% positive). Views of Prime Minister Blair were also positive: 72 percent had a favorable opinion of him (29% very).

American views of France are not as positive, but have recovered to the point where a plurality sees their influence as positive. Nearly half of Americans (47%) said France had a mainly positive influence in the world, up from 34 percent in the November 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll. In that survey a plurality (48%) saw France's influence as mainly negative. However, like Iranians, Americans tended to have (56%) an unfavorable view of Jacques Chirac.

A declining plurality of Iranians views Russia as having a positive influence. Currently 44 percent said Russia's influence in the world was mainly positive (35% negative), down from 50 percent in the December 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll.

Americans have also been growing more negative about Russia. A slight majority (52%) said they saw Russia as negative influence, while 36 percent said that it was positive. In the November 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll, a plurality (40%) saw Russia's influence as negative (34% positive).

17. Asia

A plurality of Iranians does not see the rise of China as a threat. A majority of Americans do see it as a threat but few see it as critical. Majorities in both countries think that China's economy will eventually grow to be as large as that of the United States; a majority of the Iranians see this as something positive, while a majority of Americans see it as equally positive and negative. Iranians and Americans share positive views of Japan and India. Americans are overwhelmingly negative toward North Korea, while Iranians do not have well-formed views.

Iranians tend to view China's rise more positively than Americans. Asked whether they considered "the development of China as a world power" a threat to the vital interest of their country in the next 10 years, nearly half (49%) of Iranians said that it was "not an important threat at all." A few saw it as an "important, but not critical threat" (19%) or a critical threat (15%). In contrast, only 12 percent of Americans dismissed China's rise as unimportant. A majority (55%) said it was an important threat, and one third (32%) viewed it as a critical threat.

Iranians and Americans have similar expectations about the magnitude of the growth of the Chinese economy, but differ as to whether that growth will have a positive or negative impact. Given two options, majorities of both Iranians (64%) and Americans (60%) said it was "more likely that China's economy will grow to be as large as the US economy," while significantly fewer believe that the "US economy will always stay larger than China's" (Iranians, 21%; Americans, 35%). However, a majority of Iranians (60%) said they believed it would be "mostly positive" if China's economy were to grow as big as the US economy, while a majority of Americans (54%) said such an increase in China's economic clout would be "equally positive and negative."

These findings are consistent with views of China's influence in the fall 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll. A majority of Iranians (66%) said at that time that China was having a mostly positive influence in the world, while a majority of Americans (53%) said that China's influence was mostly negative.

Unlike their opposing attitudes about China, Iranians and Americans share similar views about other Asian countries. Majorities of both Iranians (61%) and Americans (75%) said that Japan had a mainly positive influence in the world. Americans were significantly more positive than in the November 2005 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll when 66 percent said Japan's influence was positive.

Publics in both Iran and the United States also have largely positive views of India. A majority of Iranians (60%) said that India had a mainly positive influence in the world, down from the 71 percent in December 2005. American attitudes about India display the opposite trend. A majority of Americans (56%) said India had a mainly positive influence in the world, up from a bare plurality (39%) in November 2005.

Attitudes about North Korea are decidedly different in the two countries. Americans are overwhelmingly negative, while Iranian views do not appear to be well-formed. A large majority of Americans (81%) thought that North Korea had a mainly negative influence in the world, with just 11 percent calling its influence mainly positive. Iranians displayed considerable uncertainty in their attitudes about North Korea. More expressed positive views (32%) than negative ones (17%) but 52 percent did not have a clearly defined view, saying either “it depends/neither” or “neither” (26%) or declining to answer (26%).

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