
Cutting the Lifeline of Terror: What's Next After Iraq

**Presented by
Dan Yankelovich**

**To a meeting convened by
The Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Public Agenda**

July 14, 2004

Organization

Part I: Relations with Other Nations

- With the Muslim world
- With Europe

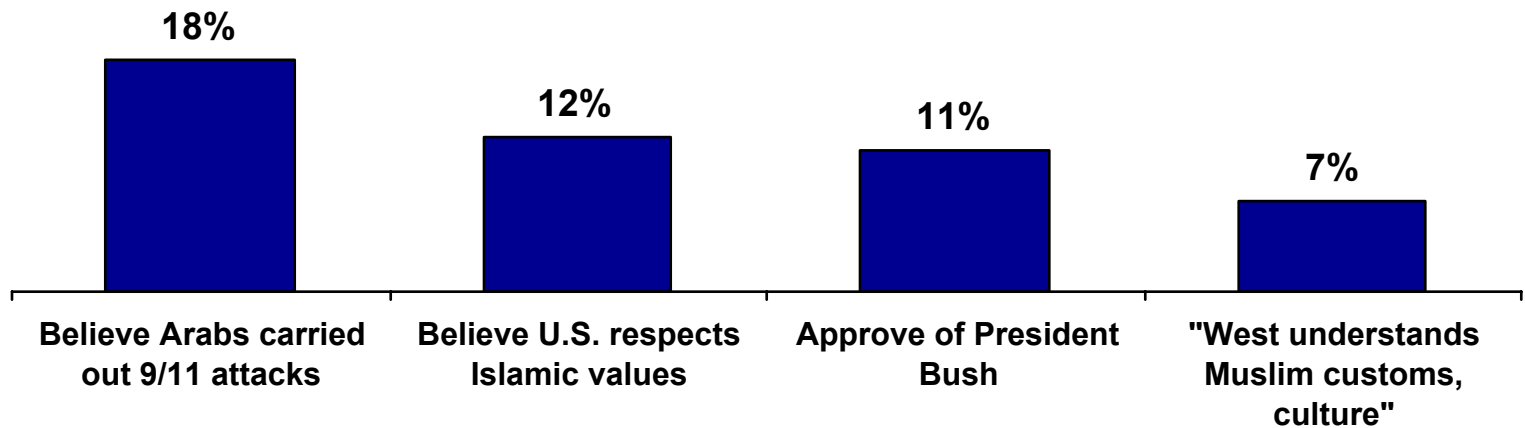
Part II: Here at Home

Part III: From Polarization to Common Ground



Relations with the Muslim World

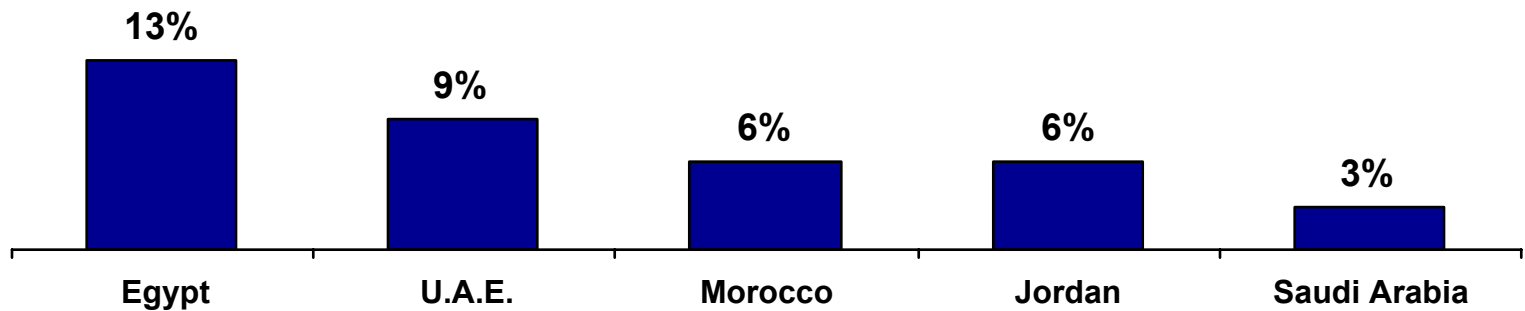
Extremely low levels of trust



Gallup - Muslim Country Poll

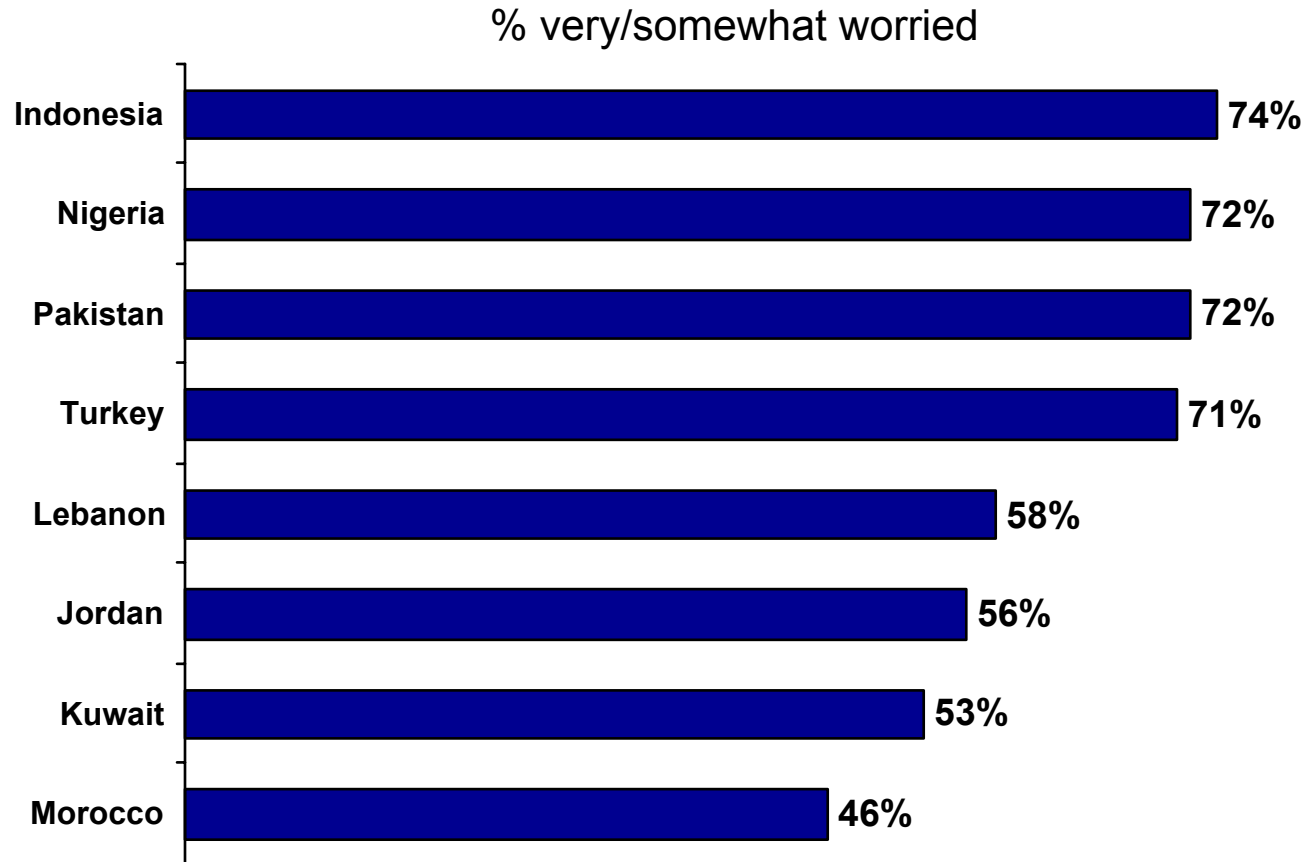
Iraq invasion deepened animosity in Arab countries

% holding favorable opinion of U.S.

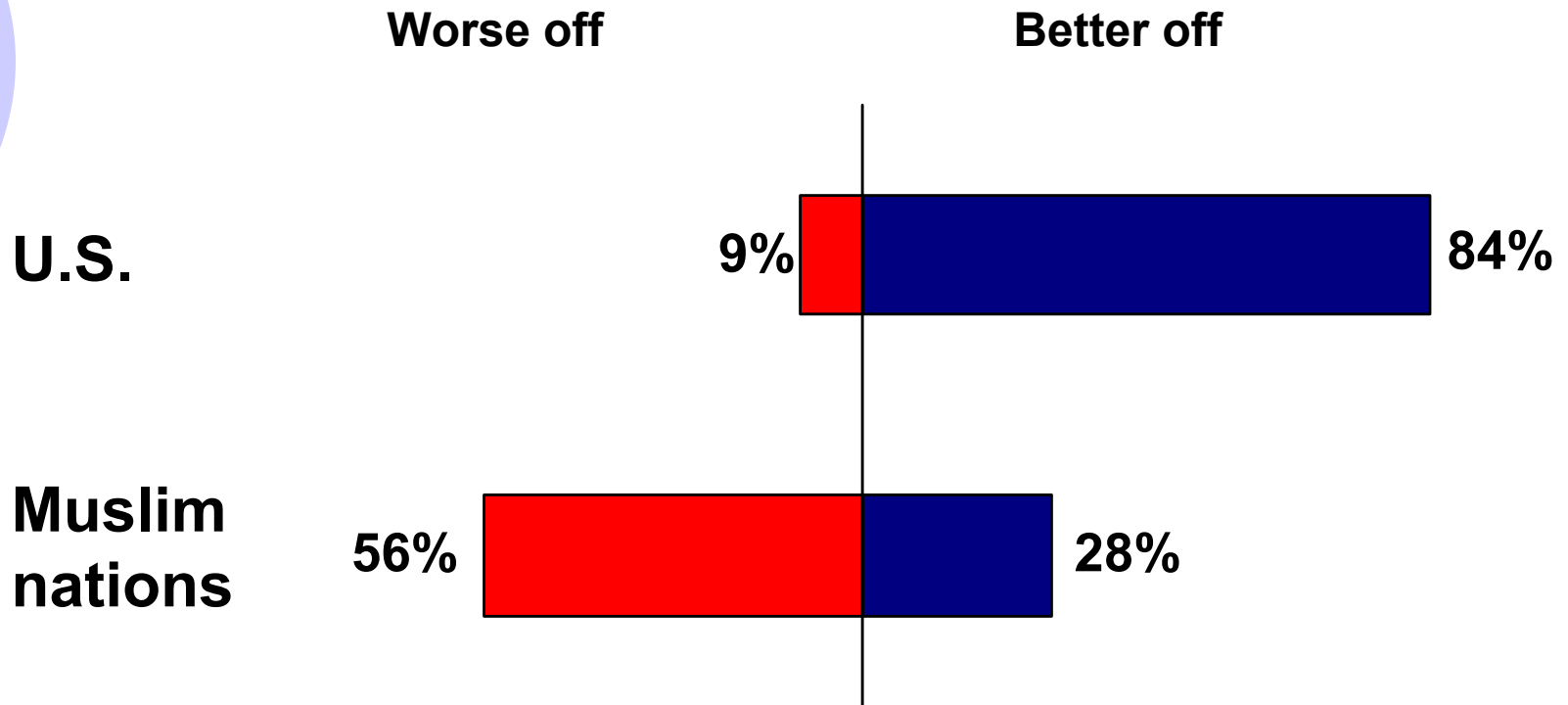


Zogby

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



Muslim majorities believe Iraqis will be worse off post-Hussein



SUMMARY:

Muslim anti-Americanism threatens our nation's safety

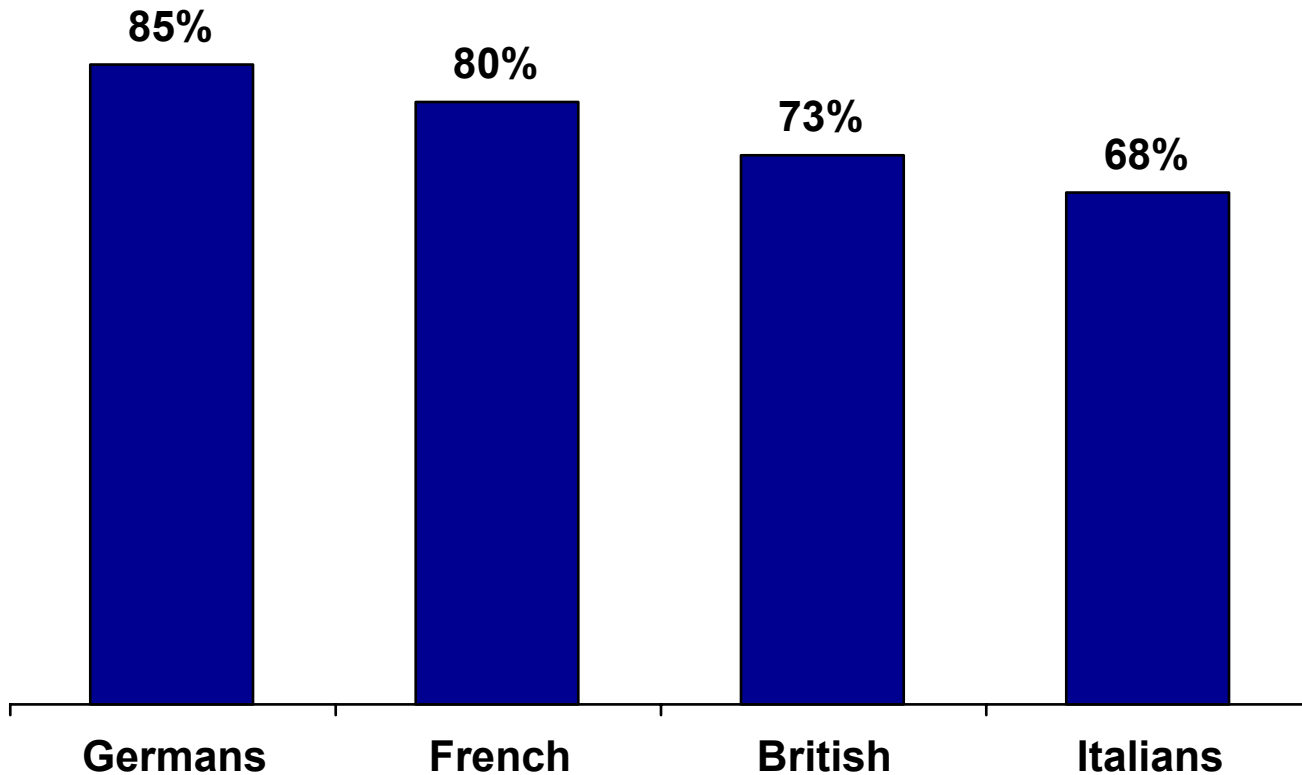
- Mistrust of U.S. not confined to extremists
- Creates a climate that makes recruitment of terrorists fatally easy
- Makes it easy to channel frustration onto the U.S.
- Supports extremist religious clerics in their *jihad* against us
- Use of military force exacerbates Muslim resentment
- Makes the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



Attitudes of Traditional Allies Towards U.S. Policy

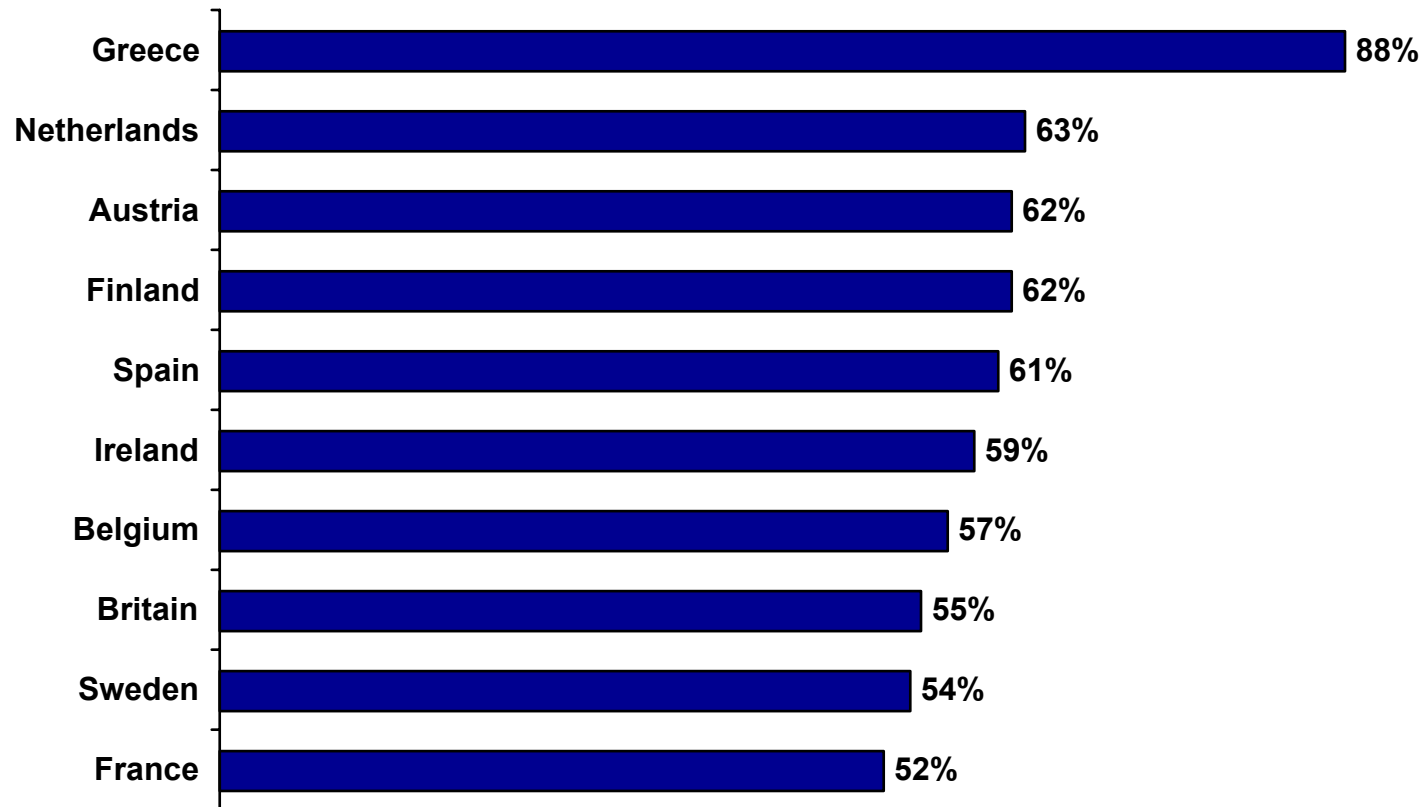
Post 9/11 perception:

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



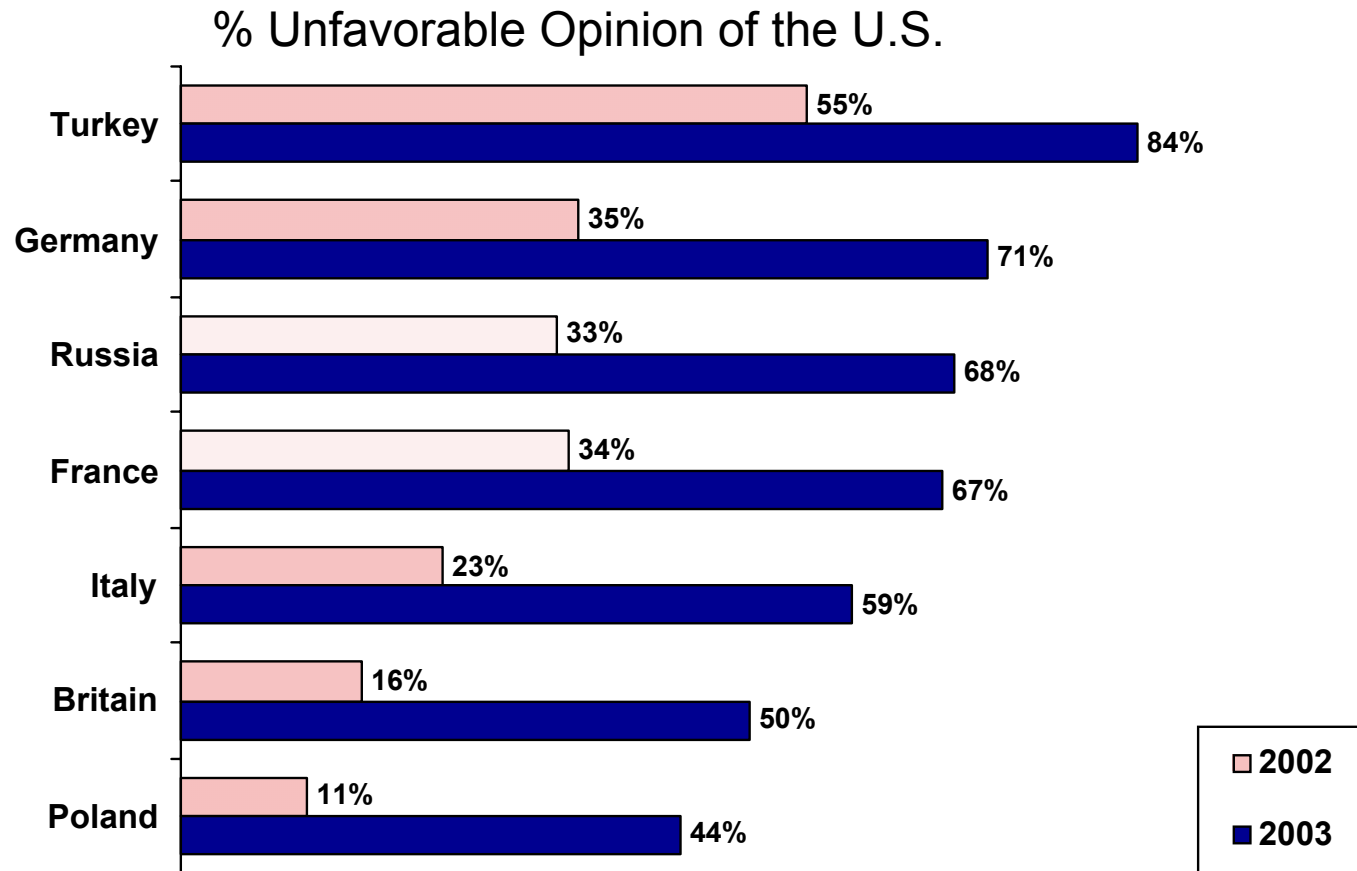
Pew (for the Council on Foreign Relations)

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



Germany and Italy fell slightly below the 50% mark

European anti-Americanism linked to the war in Iraq



Pew Global Attitudes Project

SUMMARY:

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

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

Research Conclusions:

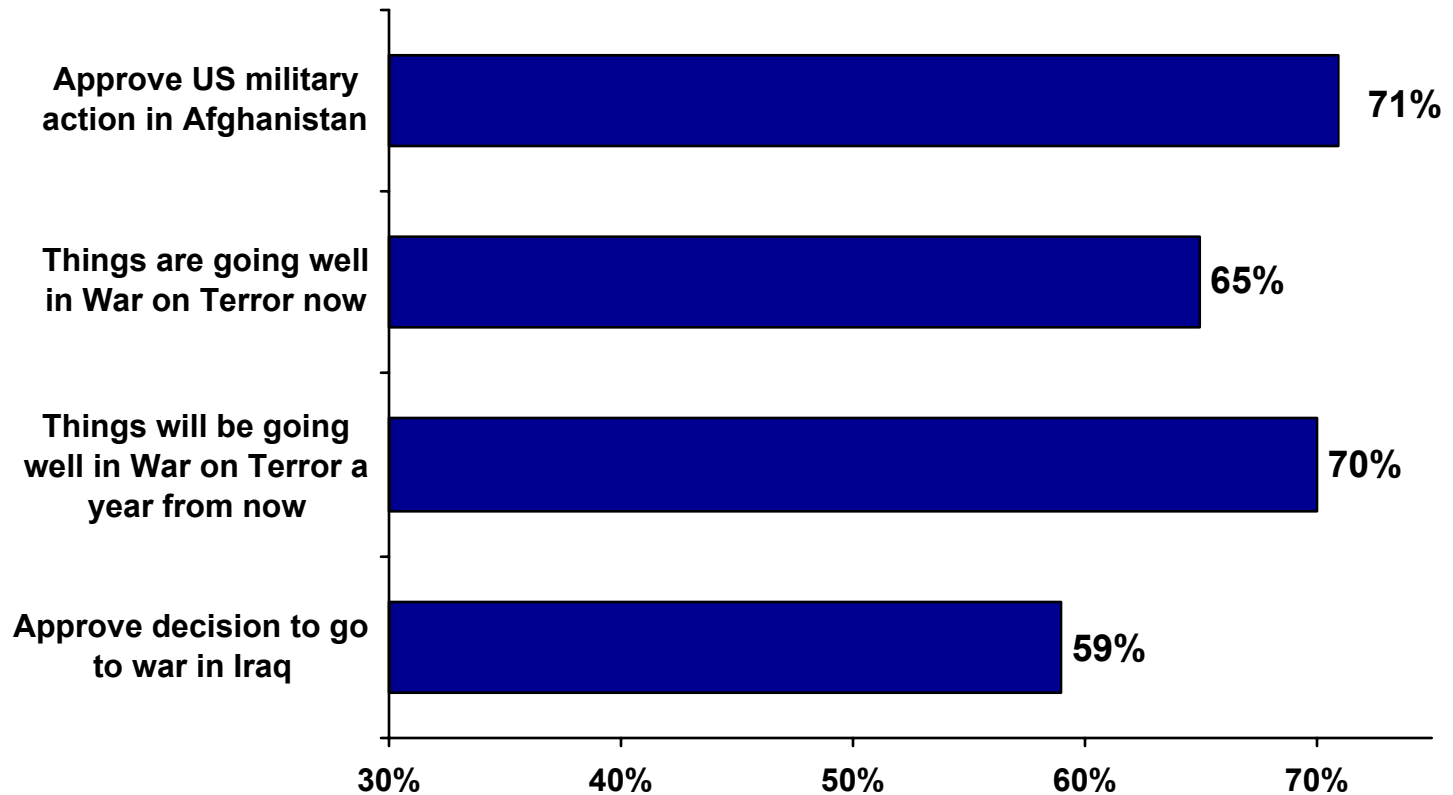
“The war [in Iraq] has widened the rift between Americans and Western Europeans, further inflamed the Muslim world, softened support for the war on terror, and significantly weakened global public support for the pillars of the post-World War II era – the UN and the North Atlantic Alliance.”

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



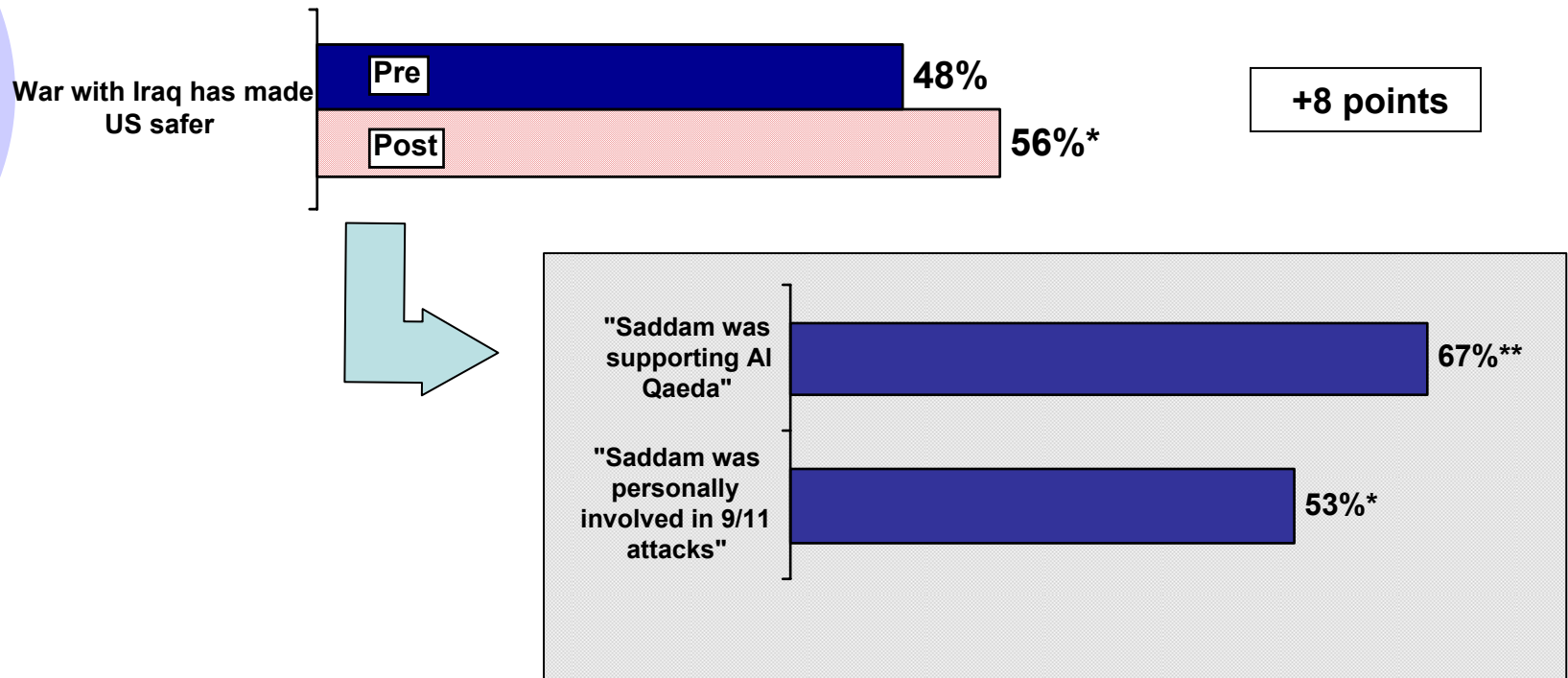
Part II - Here at Home

Before Saddam's capture, a majority approved direction of war on terror



CNN/USA Today/Gallup: December 7, 2003

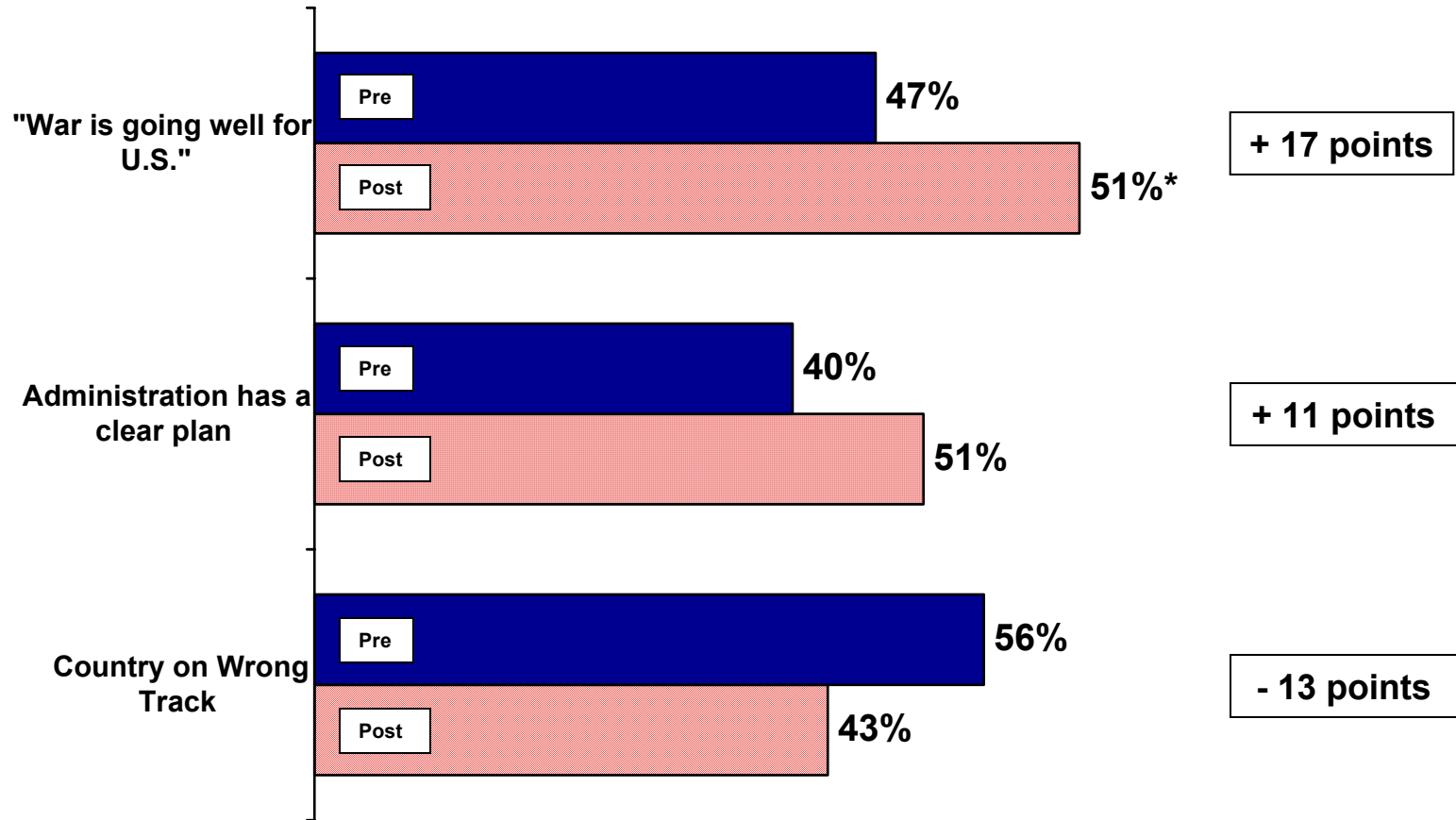
Saddam's capture raised public hopes, because the public linked him directly to 9/11



* Gallup

** PIPA/Knowledge Networks

Saddam's capture raised public hopes (cont'd)

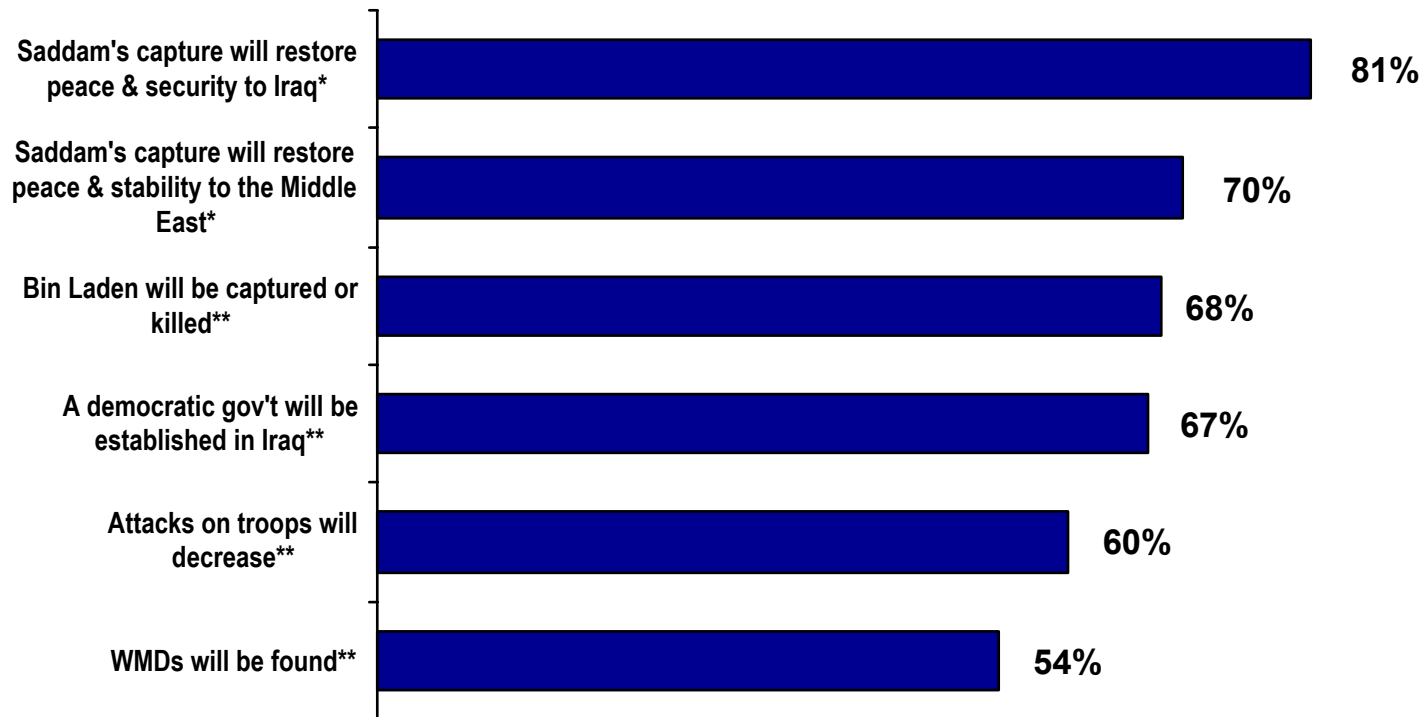


New York Times/CBS News: December 17, 2003

** Gallup: December 19, 2003*

Saddam's capture greatly elevated voter expectations

% somewhat/very confident:



* ABC/Washington Post: December 14, 2003

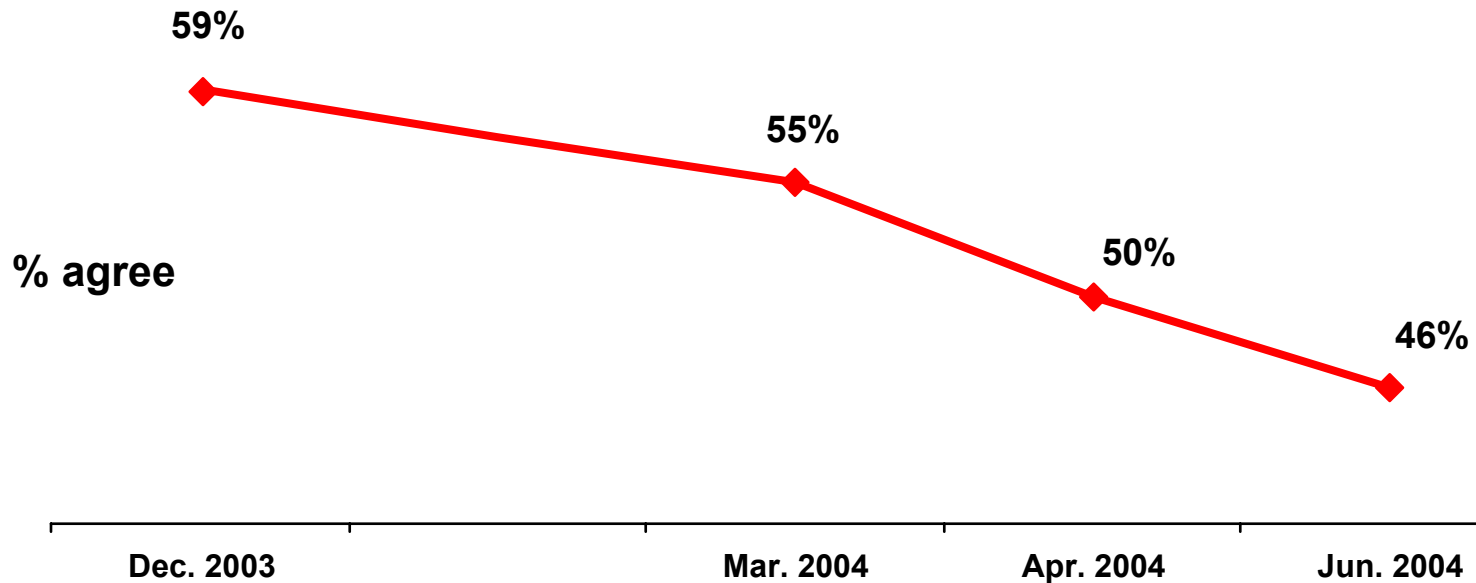
**Gallup: December 14, 2003



These expectations have now been dashed, damaging public support for the war in Iraq

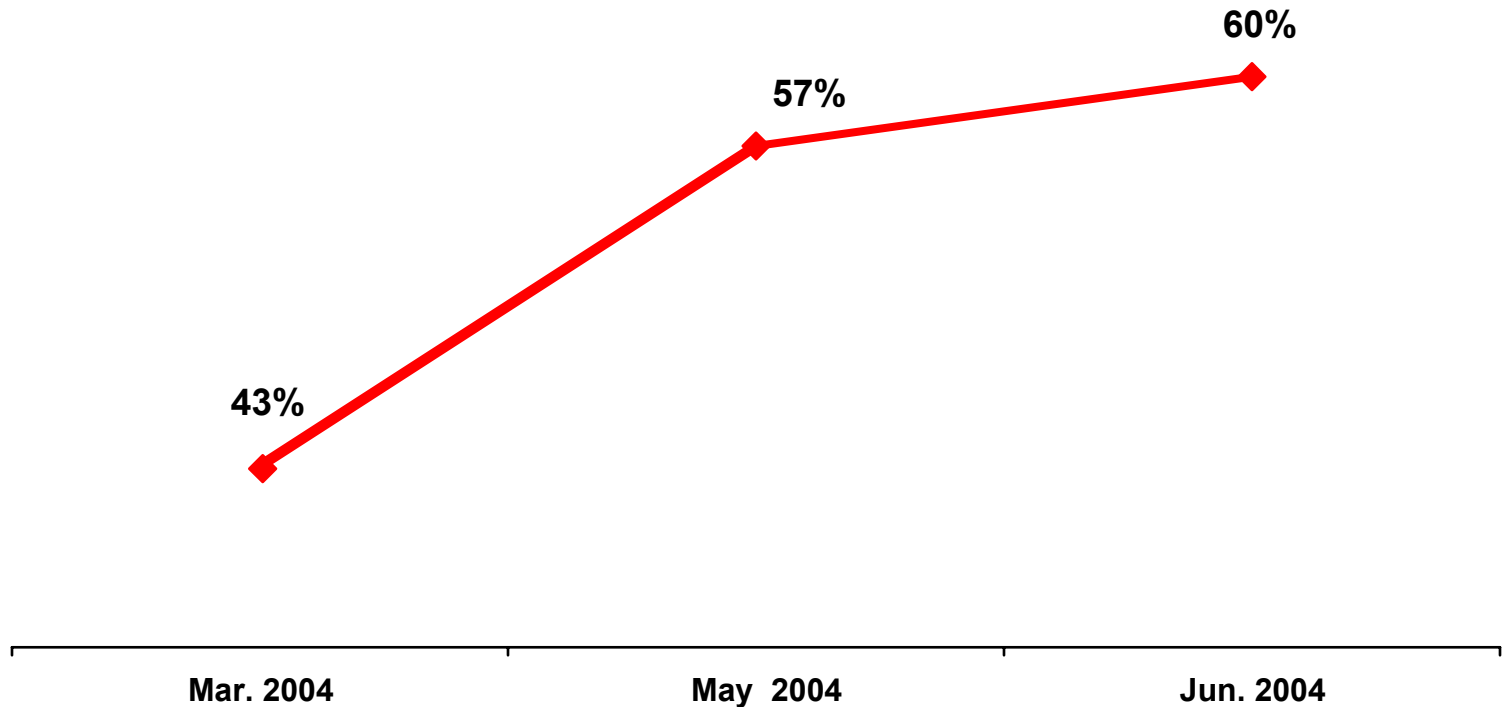
A majority no longer endorses the decision to go to war with Iraq

Going to war with Iraq was “worth it”:



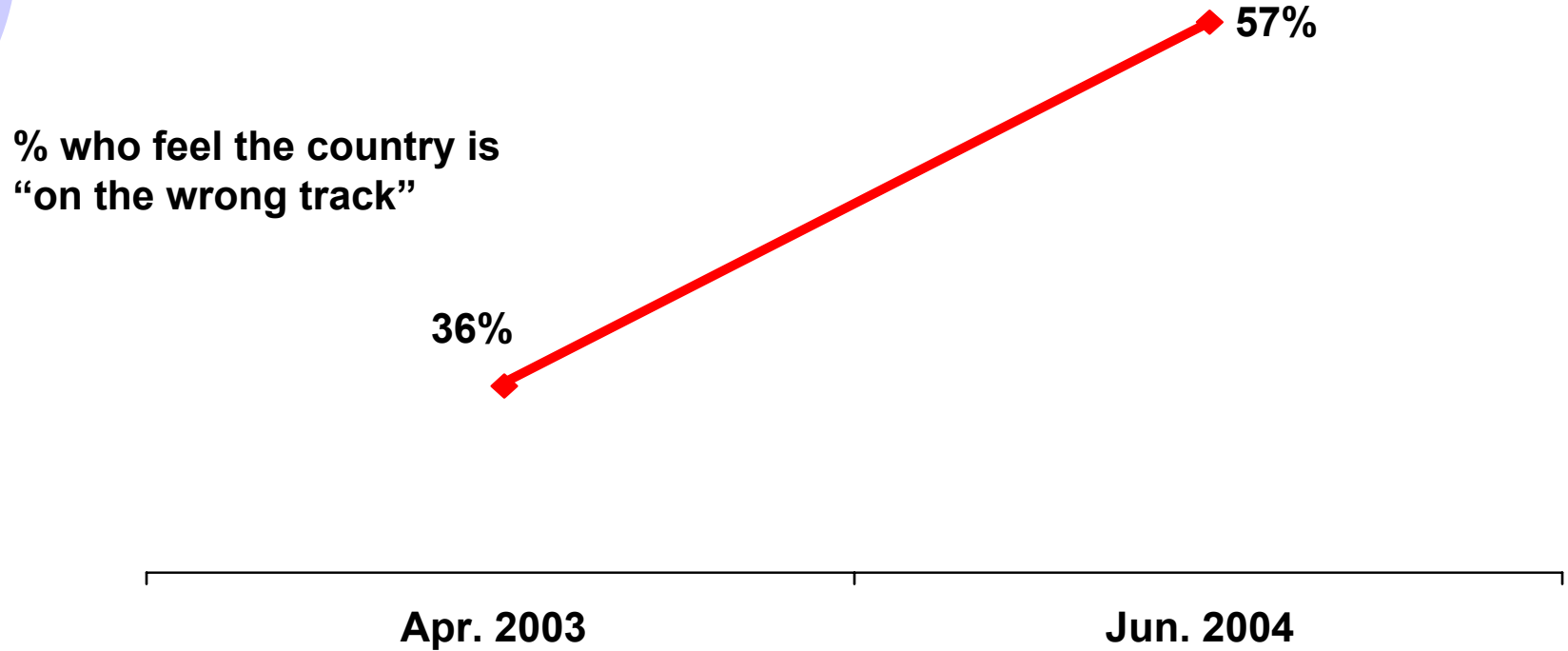
Gallup

There is a sharp rise in belief that the war is going badly



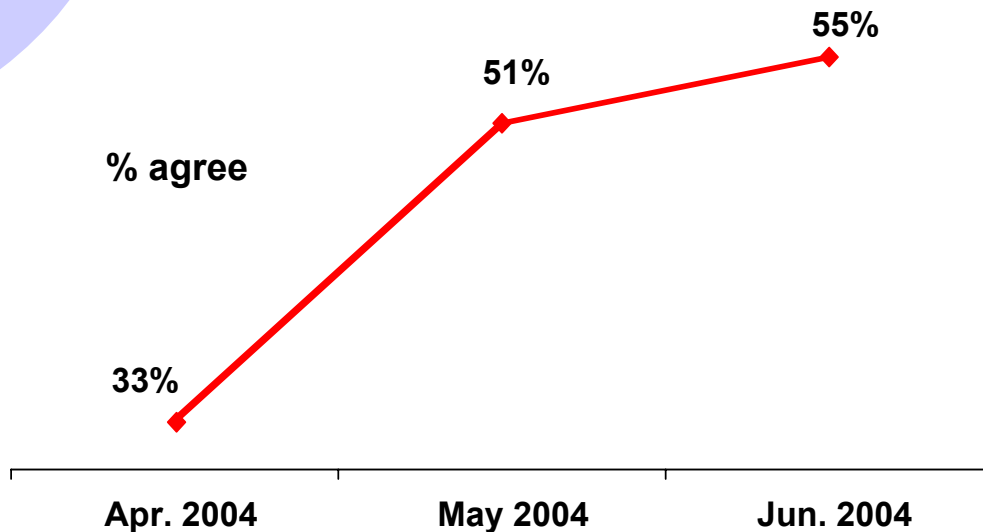
Gallup

A majority feels the country is on the wrong track

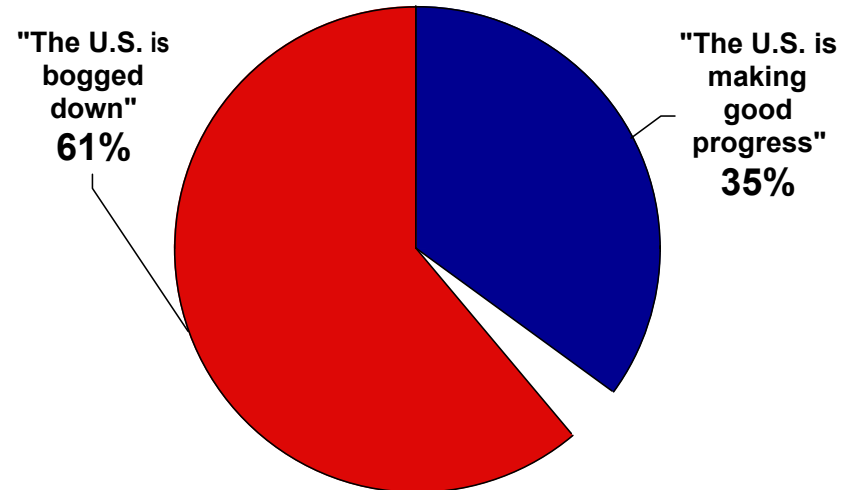


The public's fears have been aroused

"The war in Iraq has made the world less safe from terror"

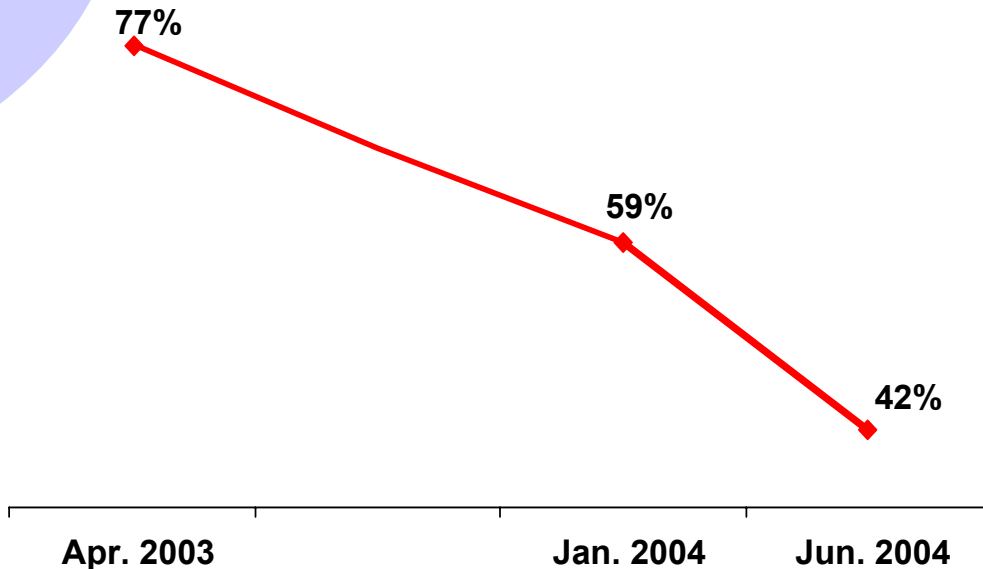


Are we bogged down in Iraq?

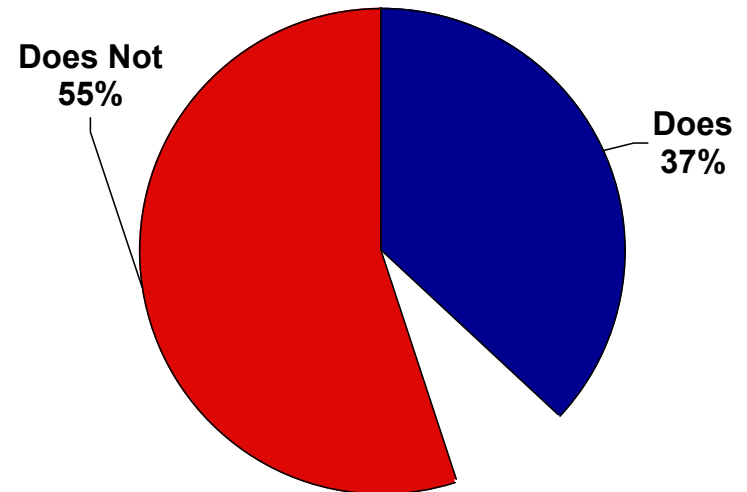


And there is a sharp drop in approval of how the war is being handled

Approve Bush handling of situation in Iraq



President has a clear plan for Iraq



SUMMARY: The majority mind-set

- After 9/11 we had to strike back against the terrorists
- Removing Saddam was the right thing to do
- Exaggerating the threat of WMDs was acceptable
- But we have now gotten bogged down in Iraq
- We have no plan that can win the war in Iraq
- We will have trouble imposing democracy on Iraq
- We don't know much about Islam and Islamic countries

Americans know that anti-Americanism exists, but they do not think anything can be done about it



Part III – From Polarization to Common Ground



The current Iraq-centered strategy has polarized the electorate

Shifting rationales have divided and confused the public

- e.g. Destroy Iraq's WMDs
- e.g. Prevent Iraq from supporting terrorists
(Iraq is the "central battleground" in the WOT)
- e.g. Remove a vicious dictator
- e.g. Bring democracy to Iraq
- e.g. Bring democracy to the greater Middle East

The Wolfowitz rationale has added to the confusion

This rationale for regime change was largely devised before 9/11

- Clinton deterrence weakened our credibility
- Deposing Saddam is key to stability in the region
- A democratic Iraq can be the linchpin of a new regional security strategy
- Occupying Iraq gives us leverage with:
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Iran
 - Syria
 - Israeli/Palestinian conflict
- The decisive use of force in Iraq (“shock and awe”) will dissuade others from attacking the U.S.

Even after 9/11, this rationale was not presented to the public but was important behind the scenes

20/20 hindsight critique

- Shifting rationales created both *mission creep* and *unrealistic public expectations*
- The surprise Iraqi insurgency undermined key parts of the Wolfowitz rationale
- Troop shortages undermined local security
- Public support is lacking for a long-term commitment to Iraqi democracy
- **Occupation of Iraq stimulated terrorist recruitment**
- **Policy undermined international good will**

Some pragmatic conclusions

- Our military occupation of Iraq has become counter-productive
 - It is radicalizing Muslim moderates
 - It is reinforcing our role as scapegoat
- We need to put Iraq behind us
- We need to stop Al Qaeda
- To do so, we need a smart political strategy as well as military force

Common ground for resolving the Iraqi conflict

- We cannot abandon Iraq to chaos and instability
- Sovereignty and internationalization can prevent Iraq from becoming a “black hole” for U.S. money and troops
- The costs to us are:
 - a) Yielding some power and influence in Iraq, and
 - b) Taking our chances on fostering democracy
- If we are serious about our national security, these costs are acceptable
- Both political parties are moving in this direction

Post-Iraq, one overriding goal will gain momentum:



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

Why this goal is key to our safety

- Al Qaeda and its affiliates have the skills, experience and commitment to harm us
- Osama bin Laden is a hero in many parts of the Muslim world
- The terrorists are building momentum through new recruits
- Stopping the flow of new recruits is our best hope for preventing more 9/11s

NEEDED:

A new level of public understanding

- Like our long struggle with Communism, the war on terror is a ***political struggle*** even more than a military war
- We know more about how to fight the ***military*** battle than the ***political*** one
- Our main opponent is not a government or nation; it is a ***religious/political movement*** spread through many Muslim nations

New level of understanding (cont.)

- Three factions are competing against one another in the Muslim world
 - The **secularists** who endorse the values of the West are the smallest and least influential (est. 5%)
 - The **hate-America Islamist fundamentalists** are the most militant and totalitarian (est. 10%)
 - The **moderates** who prefer Islamist culture to that of the West are the largest (est. 85%)
- The success of the hate-America jihadists (such as Al Qaeda) depends on their ability to win the support of the moderates to their cause

New level of understanding (cont.)

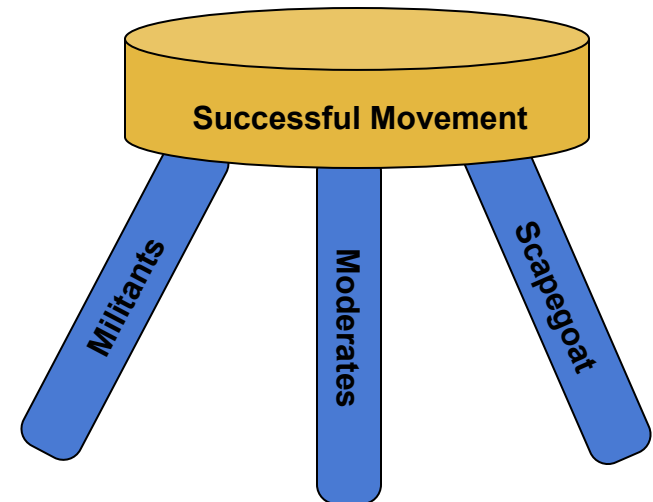
- The public believes that America is hated for what we *are*, not for what we *do*
- Hate-America jihadists say they hate us because we prop up autocratic governments and prevent the Muslim people from building just societies
- Both Al Qaeda and Muslim governments find it advantageous to distort U.S. policies
 - Al Qaeda gains recruits
 - Muslim governments distract attention from domestic problems

Result: the U.S. has become a big, fat scapegoat for every problem plaguing Muslim society

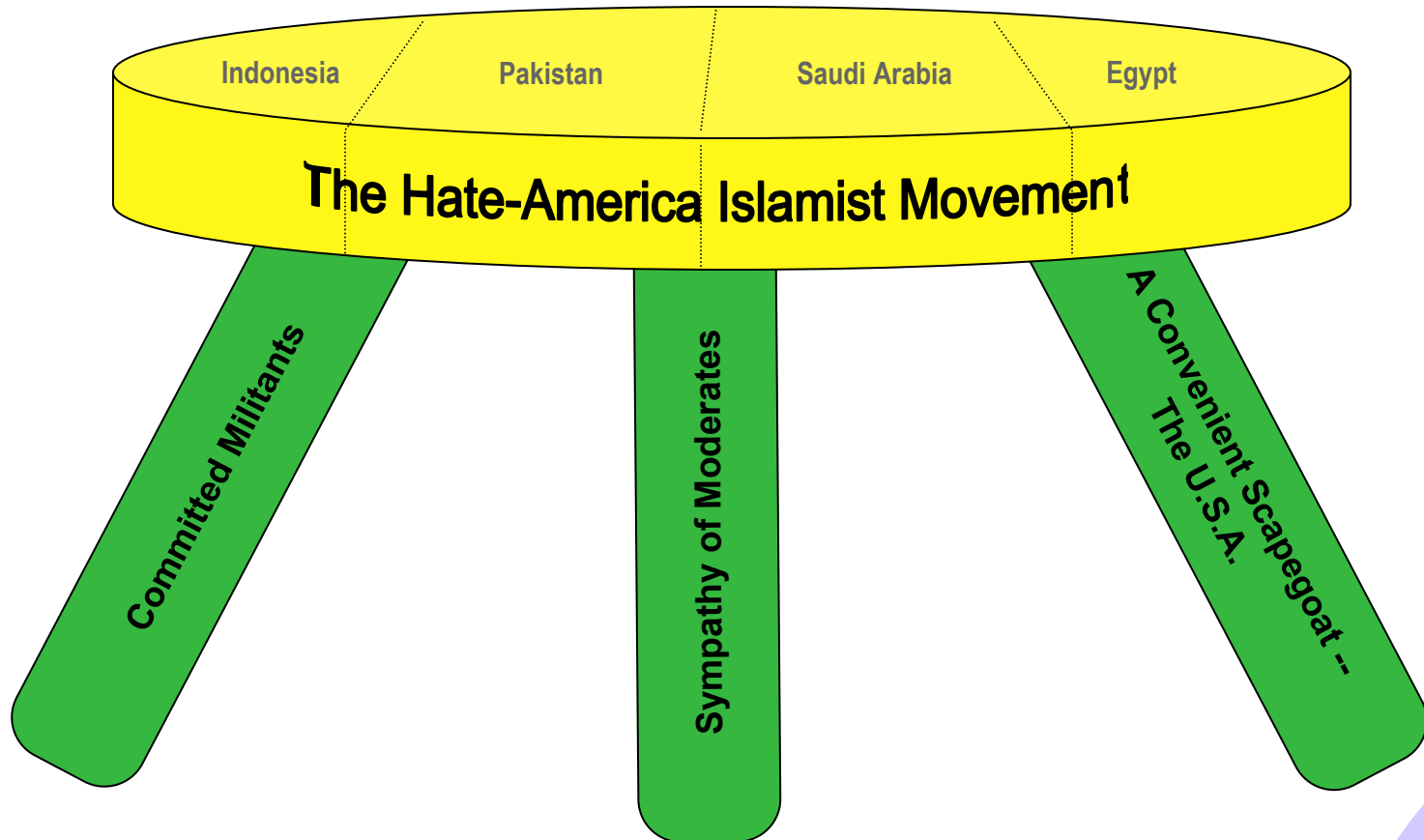
Rationale for strategies to counter political movements

Research demonstrates that successful political movements have three pillars of support:

- A small group of committed militants
- A large group of moderates who may disagree with the militants' tactics but feel their grievance is legitimate
- A convenient scapegoat



These are the three supports of the hate-America Islamist movement:



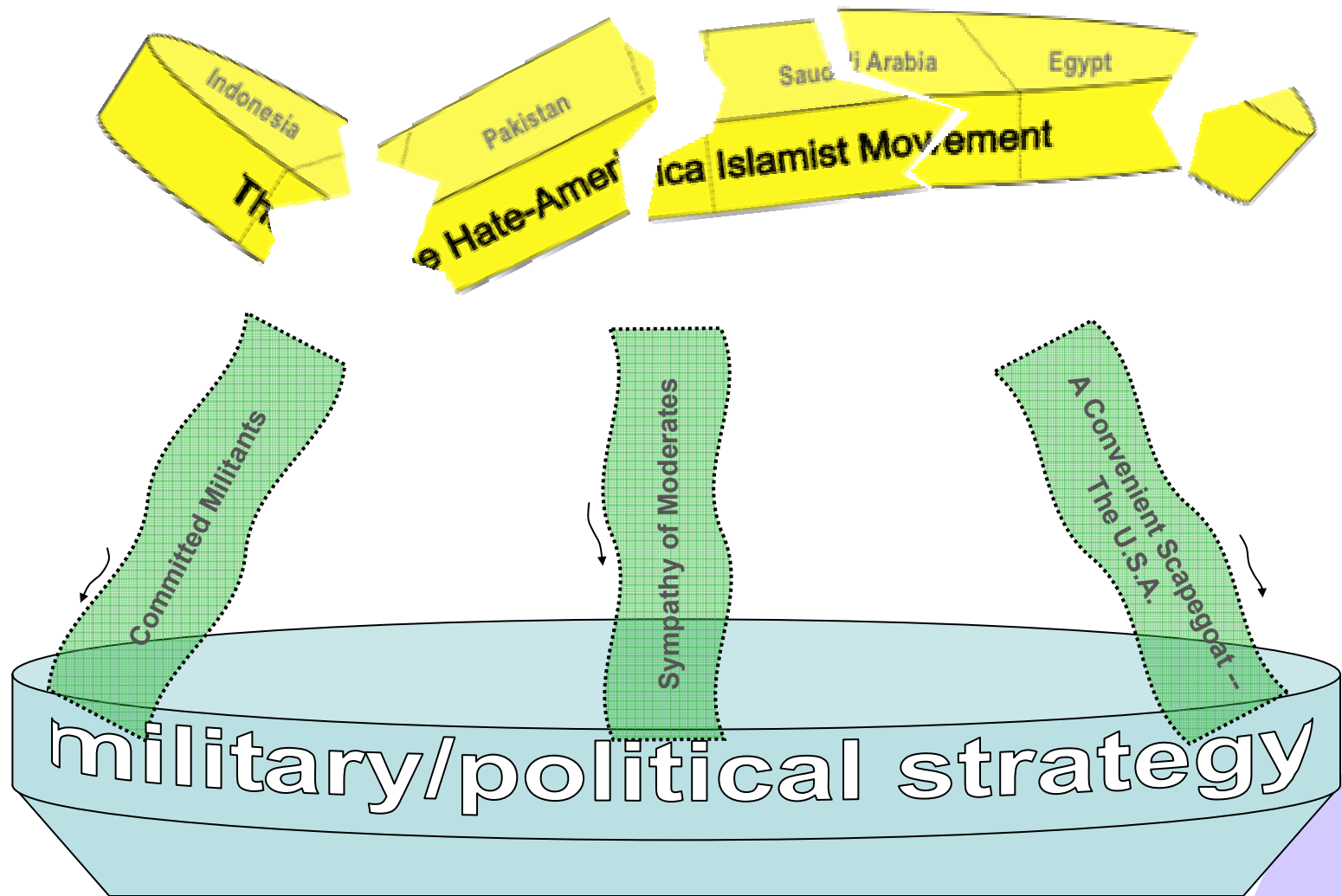
We need to integrate a military strategy with a political one

- We need a military/intelligence strategy to chop off the “militant” leg

AND

- An enlightened long-term political strategy to split the moderates from the jihadists and remove ourselves as scapegoat

The right military/political strategy will weaken the hate-America Islamist movement



The military/intelligence strategy

- Al Qaeda – the military arm of the hate-America movement – has cells in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia and other Muslim nations
- All these nations have powerful Islamic Fundamentalist movements they do not control
- Destruction of Al Qaeda-linked cells, in cooperation with host nations, should be our top military/intelligence priority

Key elements of a new political strategy include:

- More support for Pakistan
- Help Saudis weaken Wahhabi influence
- Build new bridges to Muslim moderates
- Develop customized policies for Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Indonesia and other Muslim nations

More support for Pakistan

- Pakistan is a key to success
- General Musharraf has allied Pakistan with the West
- He is in grave danger of assassination
- Pakistan harbors large numbers of Al Qaeda
- Musharraf needs massive U.S. support to crack down on Al Qaeda

Help Saudis weaken Wahhabi influence

- Until recently, we have turned a blind eye to Saudi appeasement of Wahhabi extremism
- Saudi Arabia's Wahhabis support hate-America schools and mosques throughout the Muslim world
- The main source of terrorist money and rabid anti-Americanism is the Wahhabi influence
- Keeping the Saudi government in power while loosening its bonds to Wahhabi extremists is a delicate balancing act

Building new ties to Muslim moderates

- Pay more attention to legitimate Palestinian grievances
- Involve Arab nations in the Iraqi peace process
- Strengthen American political support for moderate Islamist democracies, as in Turkey
- Acknowledge that moderates have a legitimate vision: to build just, peaceful, free and prosperous Islamist societies
- Develop a new mutual understanding: if moderates help to stop the terrorists, we can help them achieve their vision

Building new ties to Muslim moderates (cont.)

- Cooperate with Muslim moderates to find constructive outlets for their frustrated youth (training, education, etc.)
- Initiate dialogues with religious Muslim moderates to demonstrate that our values are compatible with the teachings of Islam
- Build bridges to moderate Muslims to support their efforts to build prosperous societies reflecting their own values
- Present a new vision of America to the Muslim world by positioning U.S. foreign policy on the side of justice for the Muslim world

SUMMARY:

An immediate goal and a long-term goal

- The long term goal:
 - » **Demonstrate to moderate Muslims that the U.S. is on the side of justice, not injustice**
- The immediate goal:
 - » **Slow or stop the recruitment of new terrorists**