

# Afghanistan Has Failed to Make Canadians Feel Safer

*Survey says Western/Muslim conflict irreconcilable, contradicting fundamental idea of multiculturalism*

**National Post**

A majority of Canadians believes conflict between Western nations and the Muslim world is “irreconcilable,” according to a new national survey that revealed a strong strain of pessimism in the country leading up to the 10th anniversary commemorations of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the US.

The survey of 1,500 Canadians, conducted over three days in September for the Montreal-based Association for Canadian Studies (ACS), showed 56% of respondents see Western and Muslim societies locked in an unending ideological struggle, while about 33% – just one-third of the population – held out hope that the conflict will eventually be overcome.

Another 11% of those polled didn’t answer the question.

ACS executive director Jack Jedwab said the finding has “serious ramifications” for Canadian policies aimed at bridging divides between cultures, which are based on the premise that citizens believe significant progress in mending such religious and cultural conflicts is achievable.

The dark view expressed in the survey “contradicts a fundamental idea in multicultural democracies like ours, that conflicts between societies can be resolved through dialogue and negotiation,” said Jedwab. “This is also a key element in multiculturalism, where Canada is often seen elsewhere in the world as a model in conflict resolution.”

He adds: “If a majority of Canadians feel it is irreconcilable, what does this imply for the various projects and programs in place that aim to bridge gaps?”

The online survey, carried out Sept. 6 to 8 by the firm Leger Marketing, is considered accurate to

within 2.9 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

The results also confirm the findings of other recent surveys highlighting Canadians’ ongoing anxiety about the state of security in the post-9/11 world and their deep doubts about whether the long and bloody war in Afghanistan has done much to thwart the threat of terrorism.

In fact, 65% of respondents in the ACS survey said they don’t believe the world is safer from terrorists today than it was 10 years ago. And 70% of those surveyed said they don’t believe the war in Afghanistan has reduced the chances of terrorist attacks.

Jedwab said the “pessimistic feeling” about what the war has accomplished is likely linked to the “widespread hopelessness” about the prospects for ever resolving the deep-rooted, “ideological” conflict between Muslim and Western societies.

Many Canadians have come to believe “nothing will work” to end that conflict, said Jedwab, adding that this grim state of mind will require more scrutiny to fully understand and more carefully crafted public policies to rebuild a sense of optimism about the future of global relations.

The survey did offer one notable “ray of hope,” Jedwab suggested, pointing to a result showing that a slight majority of Canadians (52%) believe it would be wrong for airport security officials to do “extra checks” of “passengers who appear to be of Muslim background.”

While 39% of respondents were open to that kind of profiling, Jedwab interpreted the majority’s rejection of the practice as a sign that most Canadians realize such infringements “would make the purportedly irreconcilable conflict even deeper if the enshrined principles of our rights charters are to be disregarded.”