

“Unmanned Warfare” in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia: Drone strikes poll shows mass disapproval

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A poll released this week by the US-based Pew Research Center examining international attitudes towards the US included a specific question about US drone strikes. Asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the United States conducting missile strikes from pilotless aircraft called drones to target extremists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia?” the vast majority of respondents in twenty countries expressed clear disapproval (see table below).

		Q59b Do you approve or disapprove of the United States conducting missile strikes from pilotless aircraft called drones to target extremists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia?			
		Approve	Disapprove	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2012	62	28	10	100
Britain	Spring, 2012	44	47	9	100
France	Spring, 2012	37	63	0	100
Germany	Spring, 2012	38	59	3	100
Spain	Spring, 2012	21	76	3	100
Italy	Spring, 2012	31	55	14	100
Greece	Spring, 2012	5	90	5	100
Poland	Spring, 2012	38	51	11	100
Czech Republic	Spring, 2012	30	62	8	100
Russia	Spring, 2012	17	68	15	100
Turkey	Spring, 2012	9	81	10	100
Egypt	Spring, 2012	6	89	5	100
Jordan	Spring, 2012	6	85	9	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2012	24	69	8	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2012	12	72	15	100
China	Spring, 2012	25	55	20	100
India	Spring, 2012	32	21	47	100
Japan	Spring, 2012	21	75	4	100
Brazil	Spring, 2012	19	76	5	100
Mexico	Spring, 2012	24	73	3	100

Only three of the twenty countries surveyed did not disapprove of the strikes by a clear majority: India, Britain and the US itself. However there was hardly clear support in India where only 32% actually approved the strikes with almost half of respondents (47%) not answering the question, while the majority of those who expressed an opinion in the UK, also disapproved (47% disapprove vs. 44% approve). As [Gabriel Carlyle writes over at the Peace News Blog](#), its important for anti-drone campaigners in the UK “to bump Britain’s

“disapproval” rates up to those of Germany, France, Spain and others”

Wide Gender Divide on Drone Strikes

% Approve of U.S. drone strikes

	Male %	Female %	Gap
Germany	54	24	-30
Britain	57	30	-27
Czech Rep.	44	17	-27
U.S.	74	51	-23
Japan	32	11	-21
France	46	28	-18
Spain	29	14	-15
Italy	39	25	-14
Brazil	26	12	-14
Poland	44	32	-12

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q59b.

An important aspect of this poll, which received bare mention in mainstream press coverage, is the gender gap. As the analysis by the Pew Center itself states:

“There are [large] differences between men and women on this question throughout much of Europe, as well as in the U.S., Japan, and Brazil. In Germany, 54% of men support the strikes, compared with just 24% of women. Fully 57% of British men approve of using drones, but only 30% of women agree. Double-digit gender gaps are found in 10 nations, including a gap of 23 percentage points in the U.S.”

With regard to US support, as [Micah Zenko](#) has pointed out, US support for drone strikes seems to have fallen from [83% in February](#) to 62% in April. I suspect that the growing opposition to civil drones flying in US airspace will ‘leak’ across and mean that US support for use of armed drones overseas may well continue to fall further.

For example, this week [US Senator Rand Paul introduced a bill mandating that a warrant be sought from the courts before a drone is used for law enforcement purposes](#). Almost at the same time [a group of twenty-six Republican and Democratic congressmen](#) have written to President Obama demanding that he explain the legal justification for so-called ‘signature strikes’ arguing that such drone strikes generate “powerful and enduring anti-American sentiment” which could lead to further attacks on the US and US civilians.

US support for use of drones may drop even further when the US public realises that other, ‘non-approved’ nations can also use drones. While it is not yet reached the news headlines, there continues to be persistent rumours that the Syrian regime are using a drone to target artillery strikes in Homs (see [this BBC article](#) for example).

Ken McDonald, Chair of the human rights organisation Reprieve, wrote an interesting piece for the Times this week connecting the slaughter of innocents in Syria and Waziristan – all justified in the name of ‘security’ ([pdf](#)). The minority who support targeted killing by drone strikes seem to do so in the mistaken belief that by ‘taking out the bad guys’ we can increase security for all. The stark reality is just the opposite – and the sooner we win this argument, the sooner support for targeted killing and drone strikes will disappear

altogether.

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