

# Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World

LISA BLAYDES *Stanford University*

DREW A. LINZER *Emory University*

*The battle for public opinion in the Islamic world is an ongoing priority for U.S. diplomacy. The current debate over why many Muslims hold anti-American views revolves around whether they dislike fundamental aspects of American culture and government, or what Americans do in international affairs. We argue, instead, that Muslim anti-Americanism is predominantly a domestic, elite-led phenomenon that intensifies when there is greater competition between Islamist and secular-nationalist political factions within a country. Although more observant Muslims tend to be more anti-American, paradoxically the most anti-American countries are those in which Muslim populations are less religious overall, and thus more divided on the religious–secular issue dimension. We provide case study evidence consistent with this explanation, as well as a multilevel statistical analysis of public opinion data from nearly 13,000 Muslim respondents in 21 countries.*