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Opinion Analysis

Office of Research

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Global Opinion Research

Arab World: Momentum from Cairo Speech Lost

Last summer saw a modest improvement in U.S. image among Arab publics. This improvement has now mostly vanished. Arabs continue to distrust Washington's intentions and feel threatened by U.S. policies in the Middle East. However, greater favorability toward President Obama compared to the United States writ large, and the attraction of American science and technology and education present opportunities to engage Arab publics.

According to a late-2009 Office of Opinion Research survey in eight Arab countries, the modest gains in U.S. image attributed to President Obama's June Cairo speech have been reversed, and overall public impressions of the United States are highly negative (Appendix Table 1).

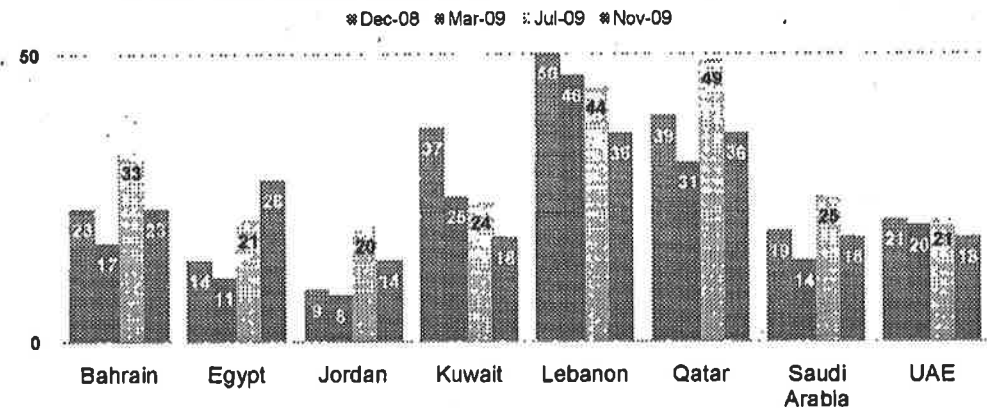
Confidence in the United States to deal responsibly with problems in the region registers at one-third or less. In most countries that saw an uptick after the President's Cairo address, confidence has nearly returned to early-2009 levels (Figure 1; Appendix Table 2). Only in Egypt has confidence in Washington increased since June—possibly a sustained positive reaction

to the visit. Kuwaiti and Lebanese confidence in the United States is on the decline.

Favorability toward the United States has followed a similar pattern. Roughly 20 percent or fewer in most countries express a favorable opinion of the United States. The exception is Lebanon, where attitudes vary sharply by religious confession. While most Lebanese Christians and Sunnis are favorable toward the United States, a majority of the country's Shia hold an unfavorable opinion (Appendix Table 3).

Poor Image Rooted in Policies, Intentions
 Negative views of the United States are due in part to the belief that Washington interferes in

Figure 1. U.S. Gains in Confidence from Cairo Speech Lost
 Q. How much confidence do you have in the United States to deal responsibly with problems in the region—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all? (% great deal/fair amount)



Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, 2008-2009

This report is based on representative surveys in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE commissioned by the Office of Opinion Research. In each country, 1,000 face-to-face interviews were conducted among adult nationals, age 18 and older, October 21 to November 12, 2009. The margin of error for each sample is +/-4%. See page 3 for additional details. M-8-10
 This publication summarizes and interprets recent polling data that does not reflect the views of the U.S. Government

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the affairs of other countries and that U.S. regional policies represent a threat to security in the Middle East (Appendix Tables 4 & 5). These widely shared sentiments, along with the prevailing perception that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict endangers regional security, are key drivers of the United States' overall poor standing.

In addition, large majorities in most of the countries surveyed continue to believe Washington does *not* promote peace and stability around the world, help poorer nations to develop, promote democracy worldwide, seek the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian state, or promote women's rights in the world. Equally consistent with earlier surveys, Arabs are closely divided on whether the United States treats their country with respect (Appendix Table 4).

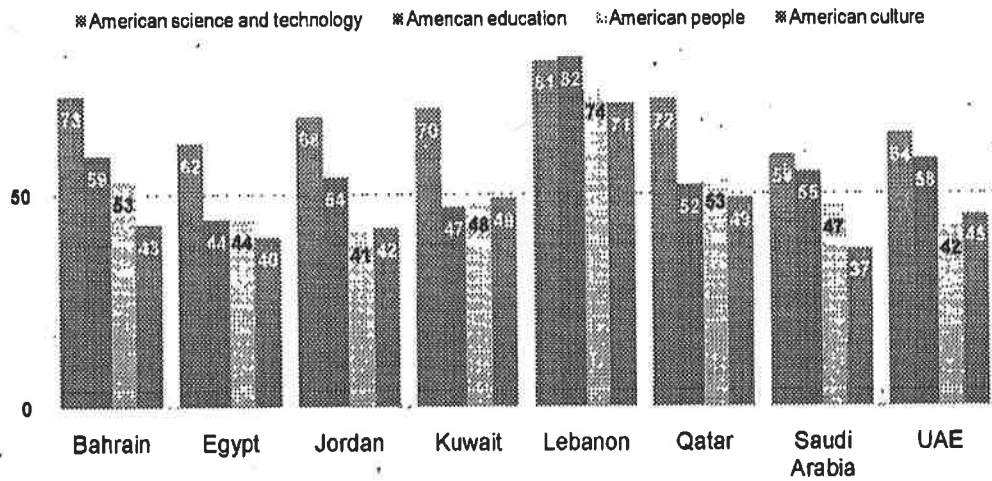
Opportunities for Engagement

Despite these predominately negative attitudes toward the United States, opportunities remain for making public diplomacy inroads in the region, as demonstrated by President Obama's Cairo speech last summer. In fact, Arab views of the President are generally more favorable than views of the United States (Appendix Table 6).

Arab publics are largely favorable toward American science and technology and American education. Views are more mixed on American culture and Americans (Figure 2; Appendix Table 7). Those who express positive opinions of these aspects of American society and of President Obama are most likely to hold an overall positive impression of the United States. Outreach efforts that draw on such strengths are likely to resonate with many among these Arab publics.

Figure 2. Arabs Favorable toward Aspects of American Society

Q. Please tell me whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the following aspects of American society. (% very/somewhat favorable)



Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009

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How The Polls Were Conducted

This report is based on surveys in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates commissioned by the Office of Opinion Research. In each country, face-to-face interviews were conducted by a reputable local research firm among a representative sample of 1,000 adult nationals, age 18 and older, from October 21 to November 12, 2009.

The questions were written by the Office of Opinion Research and translated by the local research firm that carried out the fieldwork.

The margin of error for each sample is approximately +/-4%. For additional information, please contact the analyst.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1. And, would you say your overall image of the United States is generally positive or negative? Is that somewhat or very? (%)

	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Very positive	3	3	5	5	8	4	2	6
Somewhat positive	10	13	10	10	27	17	16	11
Somewhat negative	35	34	39	39	25	34	31	37
Very negative	43	49	39	40	38	40	48	42
Don't know/No answer	10	2	6	7	3	5	4	4

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009

Appendix Table 2. How much confidence do you have in the United States to deal responsibly with problems in the region--a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all? (%)

	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
A great deal	6	5	5	8	10	13	3	6
A fair amount	17	23	9	10	26	23	15	12
Not very much	34	36	34	40	27	21	38	36
None at all	36	35	46	38	37	37	44	41
Don't know/No answer	8	1	6	4	--	7	1	5

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009

Appendix Table 3. Please tell me whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United States. (%)

	Dec-08		Mar-09		Jul-09		Nov-09	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Bahrain	23	77	16	80	27	73	14	82
Egypt	10	86	8	90	19	76	21	77
Jordan	10	87	7	88	18	81	12	85
Kuwait	40	60	29	67	27	73	15	81
Lebanon	57	43	51	49	52	48	44	55
Qatar	30	60	22	69	24	70	19	76
Saudi Arabia	22	73	15	83	19	77	10	89
UAE	23	73	21	71	30	63	17	82

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, 2008-2009

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Appendix Table 4. Please tell me to what extent do you think the United States treats our country with respect-- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all? And to what extent do you think the United States interferes in the affairs of other countries--a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all? [...]
 (% great deal/fair amount)

	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Interferes in the affairs of other nations	73	62	79	69	83	82	82	79
Treats our country with respect	40	49	41	46	29	45	40	45
Promotes women's rights around the world	34	36	29	45	56	40	29	35
Seeks the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian state	32	23	19	32	23	22	25	28
Promotes democracy around the world	31	27	31	39	44	31	29	37
Helps poorer nations to develop	26	30	22	29	44	32	31	25
Promotes peace and stability around the world	25	28	16	32	34	18	13	21

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Jun-Jul 2009

Appendix Table 5. For each of the following issues, please tell me whether you think it poses a very serious threat, a serious threat, a minor threat, or no threat at all to security in our region?
 [American policies in the region] (%)

	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
A very serious threat	45	41	45	45	50	37	42	47
A serious threat	37	42	37	33	25	45	42	36
A minor threat	6	9	7	8	10	9	9	5
No threat at all	8	7	9	11	15	6	6	9
Don't know/No answer	4	1	2	3	1	3	1	4

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009

Appendix Table 6. Please tell me whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of Barack Obama. (%)

	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Very favorable	8	14	7	15	7	11	10	7
Somewhat favorable	21	22	23	23	34	20	19	24
Somewhat unfavorable	34	33	36	30	27	45	40	34
Very unfavorable	29	30	29	28	31	20	28	31
Don't know/No answer	8	2	6	3	1	4	3	4

Source: Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009

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Appendix Table 7. And now please tell me whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the following aspects of American society. (%)

	American science and technology		American education		The American people		American culture	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Bahrain	73	24	59	37	53	40	43	50
Egypt	62	32	44	53	44	55	40	55
Jordan	68	29	54	10	41	54	42	55
Kuwait	70	24	47	46	48	50	49	46
Lebanon	81	19	82	17	74	26	71	29
Qatar	72	23	52	41	53	44	49	50
Saudi Arabia	59	41	55	42	47	53	37	61
UAE	64	31	58	38	42	53	45	54

Source. Office of Opinion Research surveys, Oct-Nov 2009