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# **Why Do *They* *Hate* *Us?***

**by**

**John Zogby**



**John Zogby** is president/CEO of Zogby International, a worldwide polling organization.

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## About This Issue

The following is from an essay that appeared on July 11, 2003 in the Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle:

"Why do they hate us so much?" we ask, rhetorically of course, whenever there's an Arab bombing of an American interest somewhere.

I suggest one of the reasons is the sleazier side of our Middle East policy. In the dozen years between our conflicts with the Iraqi military, we continuously waged war on their civilian population with our own "weapons of mass destruction."

In a 1979 protocol to the Geneva Convention relating to the "protection of victims of armed conflicts," Article 54 states: "It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population such as food stuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population...whatever the motive."

As reported in *The Progressive*, in January 1991, at the beginning of the first Persian Gulf War, the United States and its allies bombed dams, sewage treatment plants and power plants throughout Iraq. Military targets? Hardly.

A declassified document from our Defense Intelligence Agency titled "Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities" indicates that our government knew very well the consequences: "Failure to secure (water treatment) supplies will result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population...Unless the water is purified with chlorine, such diseases as cholera, hepatitis and typhoid could occur," the report said. Noted later in the same document: The "importation of chlorine has been embargoed by

sanctions."

This and subsequent D.I.A. documents from 1991 chronicle the prediction and emergence of a wide variety of "postwar leverage" elements: "Effects of Bombing on Disease Occurrence in Baghdad"; "Disease Outbreak in Iraq"; "Status of Disease in Refugee Camps"; and "Health Conditions in Iraq."

Did this ghastly plan work? It sure did.

According to U.N. reports, 70 percent of all Iraqi women and more than 30 percent of all children now suffer from anemia. By 1997, 1.2 million Iraqis had died since the first Gulf War as a result of "postwar leverage" and the accompanying sanctions. These included 750,000 children younger than 5.

Instead of using germ warfare, a much more politically correct solution was to destroy Iraq's clean water system. Weapons of mass destruction? You decide. I fail to see any moral or ethical distinction between the two.

The deaths of innocent people as a tool to advance a political agenda is a tactic our government shares with the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorists, except that they killed 3,000 people in one day while our government took 400 times that many lives over the previous decade. Why do they hate us so much? Why indeed.

The writer is Joseph Norton, a production manager, who lives in Phelps, New York.

The Bush administration suggests that the reason "they" hate us is because "they" envy our values. We invited John Zogby to test this assumption. Zogby is an acclaimed pollster who counts among his clients: Reuters News Agency, NBC News, MSNBC, Fox News, the New York Post, Gannett News Service, and others major newspapers. Mr. Norton, it turns out, may be closer to the truth than President Bush..

Our latest book and video selections are on pages 14-16.

**John F. Mahoney**  
**Executive Director**

## “If They Didn’t Hate Us Then...”

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Americans became painfully aware of the gap in understanding between our world and much of the Arab and Muslim world. Front page headlines and newsmagazine cover stories asked “why do they hate us?” Pundits and scholars across the ideological spectrum offered answers that ranged from the serious to the silly. Some suggested that the behavior of the attackers was not aberrant, but characteristic of Islam and its followers. They suggested that the West and Islam are not only different, but are inevitably headed toward a clash. Others suggested that “they” hate our democratic values, our superpower status, our wealth, and our people. Still others noted that it was our policy of unquestioning support for Israel, our denial of Palestinian rights, and our collaboration with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East that was behind “their” alienation from “us.”

At the same time, it was striking to see that a similar discussion was taking place in the Middle East. While U.S.-based think tanks have plotted strategies to improve communications with the people of the Middle East, their counterparts in the Arab and Muslim worlds have been engaged in identical discussions designed to enhance U.S. understanding of the Arabs and the religion of Islam.

In all of this, however, little effort had been made to conduct the kind of opinion research that is done in the United States and the West in an effort to probe more deeply into the perceptions and worldview of the Arabs and Muslim people. Some polls, some good and some bad, have been taken. Some polling in Lebanon – conducted by Zogby International partner Information International of Beirut in October and November – revealed some disturbing currents in that nation. Though limited in scope and focused on one country, that poll demonstrated a deep alienation from and lack of empathy with the United States. A massive multi-country poll by the Gallup organization in early 2002 found much the same.

It was in this context that Zogby International launched its own poll of ten countries from March 4 through April 3, 2002. Our objectives were simple:

- To determine how adults in Arab and Muslim/non-Arab countries feel about specific items relative to the American people and culture.

- To ascertain whether or not these adults differentiate between their feelings toward the American people and culture on one side, and American policy in the Middle East region on the other.

In short, we sought to discover what “they” really do think of the United States and the various manifestations of America that impact their lives.

Our methodology was simple. We conducted face-to-face interviews in five Arab nations – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted in three non-Arab Muslim nations – Pakistan, Iran, and Indonesia.

To establish a proper context for our results, we also conducted face-to-face interviews in France and Venezuela.

We have, over the years, developed a unique expertise polling in several Middle Eastern countries. We have polled on the television habits of residents of five Arab countries; attitudes toward the economy and a variety of social and political issues in some of these same countries; on the future of information technology in the region; and on detailed voting behavior in the elections in Iran and Israel.

Building on this experience, this Spring 2002 poll was specifically designed to learn about attitudes towards “Americans” – not “America” in general, but on the many different ways that our country manifests itself in the world and interacts with its people.

If we grant the conventional wisdom, somewhat expressed by our colleagues at the Gallup organization, that “America” is viewed unfavorably, the question we sought to answer was what factors, if any, drive this unfavorable attitude.

We then followed with a series of other polls in the region:

- a survey of 3,800 Arabs in eight nations for the Arab Thought Foundation (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Israel) conducted in April 2002
- a March 2003 survey of 3,300 in six nations for the University of Maryland (Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, and Jordan)

- a survey of 600 Saudi Arab nationals conducted for the Arab American Institute in July 2003.

I believe it is useful to report the results chronologically to grasp the impact of issues and events as they actually unfolded. The conclusion from the entire series of the project is inescapable: Arabs and Muslims appeared to like various aspects of American life and culture. It was United States policy toward the Arab and Muslim world – most especially with US policy toward Palestine and the Palestinians – with which they had serious problems. Would those problems with policy have a serious negative impact on their views toward the US? The answer was clear: *yes*. Indeed, our 2003 polling shows a serious deterioration of Arab and Muslim views toward the US. No doubt, as we shall see, the war in Iraq has had an overall negative impact.

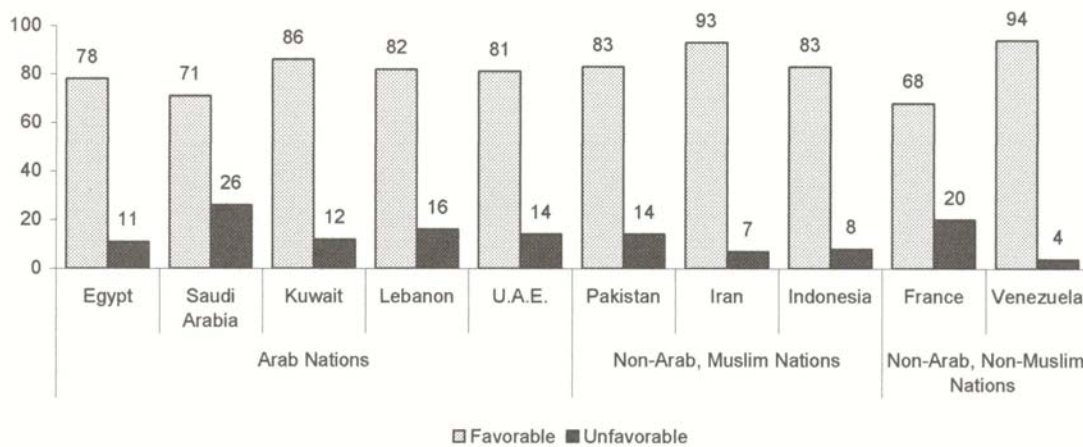
**Results of 2002 Polling**

Results in our March and April, 2002 polling varied because there was an additional and unplanned variable, which appears to have had an impact on our results, i.e., the sampling of some of the nations was completed before Israel made its heaviest incursion into the West Bank. It appears clear that this activity, along with the apparent blessing of the Bush administration, may have impacted not only how adults in these countries view American foreign policy, but also how they regard anything American.

Nonetheless, what emerged from our opinion study are the following general conclusions:

**American Science and Technology**

In all countries polled, strong majorities displayed high regard for American science and technology. In the five Arab countries covered by the poll, the favorable/unfavorable ratios ranged from Kuwait’s 86 to 12, to Saudi Arabia’s 71 to 26.



**American Freedom and Democracy**

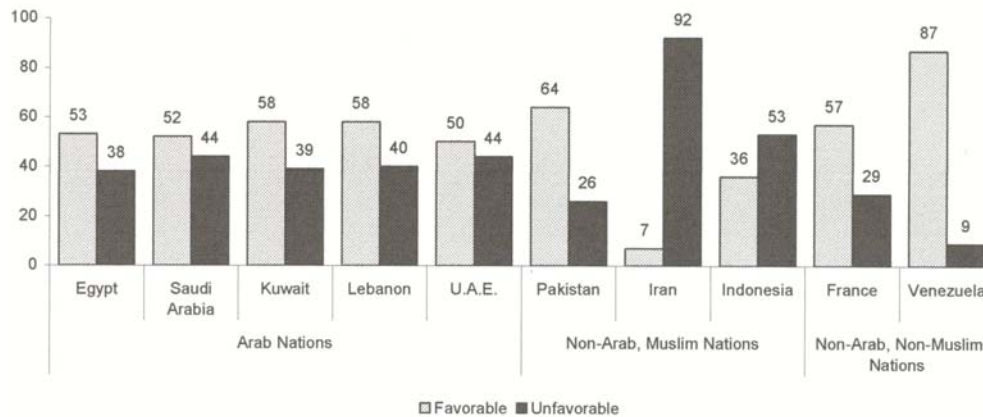
The reviews were mixed about American freedom and democracy. While majorities were favorable everywhere except Iran and Indonesia, there were substantial minorities in all places (except Venezuela, France, and Pakistan) who were not positive – Egypt (38%), Saudi Arabia (44%), Kuwait (39%), Lebanon (40%), UAE (44%), and Indonesia (53%).

In the five Arab countries covered in the poll, results were somewhat similar, ranging from Lebanon’s 58% to 40% favorable to unfavorable ratio to the U.A.E.’s 50% to 44% net favorable rating toward American freedom and democracy.

The non-Arab Muslim countries displayed significantly different attitudes, with Pakistan most favorably inclined toward American freedom and democracy (72% to 19%), while Indonesia recorded only a 36% to 53% rating. Iran, on the other hand, had an extremely negative attitude with only 7% of Iranians favorable and 92% recording unfavorable attitudes.

France’s attitudes were similar to the high end of the Arab countries (57 to 29), while Venezuela was most favorably inclined (87 to 9). Only in the Arab countries were age and Internet and satellite access factors in shaping attitudes. In most cases, these factors produced a 15% or greater impact in favorable ratings.

Only in Iran of all of the other five countries polled, did age and Internet access have a comparable impact.

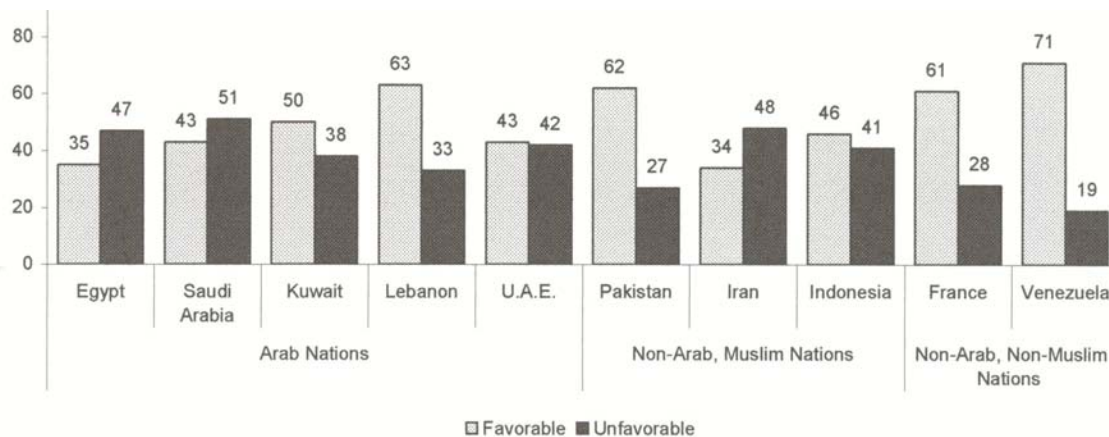


### The American People

While there were net negative feelings toward the American people in Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia (51% in Saudi Arabia, the only majority), majorities of Kuwaitis and Lebanese were favorable – including 63% of Kuwaiti nationals. No discernible age patterns can be seen, though interestingly, 35% of the youngest French have unfavorable views of the American people.

Arab attitudes toward the American people were mixed (somewhat paralleling U.S. attitudes toward the Arab people). They range from a high favorable rating in Lebanon (63 to 33) to a low rating in Egypt, with only 35% favorable and 47% unfavorable. The other countries were more evenly split.

The three non-Arab Muslim countries displayed wide variation in views toward the Americans. Pakistan had the most favorable attitude, 71%, while Iran had the lowest, 34%. Venezuela and France showed strong favorable attitudes toward Americans. Kuwaiti citizens were more favorably inclined than non-citizens; the opposite was true in the U.A.E. Age, along with Internet and satellite TV access, had a measurable impact in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

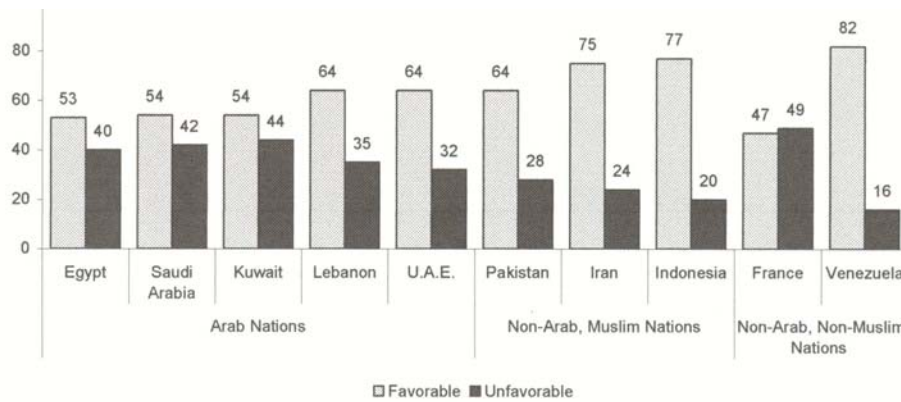


### The American Movies and Television

American movies and television were well received by majorities in all countries except France. The highest approval ratings were found in Venezuela, Indonesia and Iran, with UAE, Lebanon and Pakistan close behind.

Of the five Arab countries covered in the poll, two-thirds of those interviewed in Lebanon and the U.A.E. were favorably disposed to what is perhaps America’s leading export. Favorable majorities also existed in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Strong majorities in the three non-Arab Muslim countries were also favorably inclined toward American movies and television, with Indonesia and Iran showing the most favorable ratings. Of all of the countries covered in the poll, Venezuela displayed the highest rating of approval for American movies and television, 82%, while France had the lowest rating, 47%.

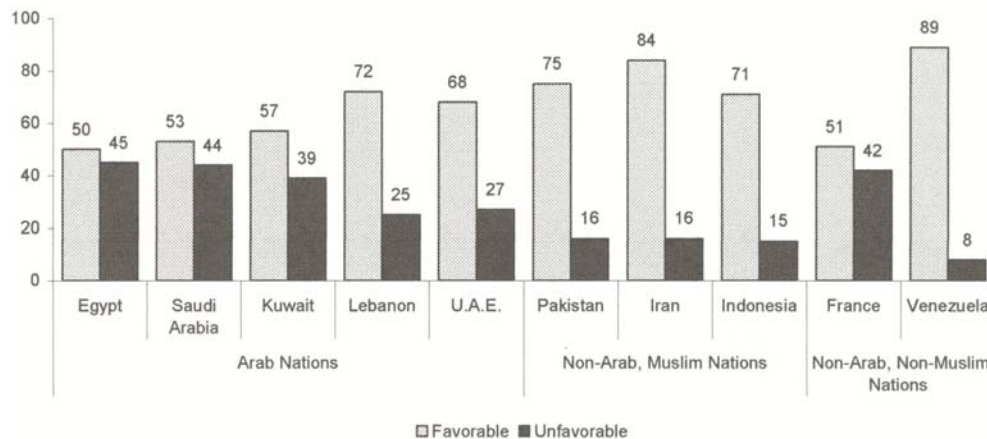
Age was a significant factor in the effort to measure attitudes toward American movies and television. Young people were substantially more favorably inclined toward those products in every country except Venezuela (because the favorable was so high, age had no impact). Internet and satellite access were also important factors in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, U.A.E. and Indonesia.



### The American-made Products

American-made products had a huge number of fans in the nations polled – majorities everywhere. Among the five Arab countries, Lebanon and U.A.E. were the most favorable. However, there were substantial minorities who were cool: in Egypt (45%), Saudi Arabia (44%), Kuwait (39%). In the three non-Arab Muslim countries, extraordinarily strong majorities were favorable toward American-made products. The same was true in Venezuela, while in France only a simple majority, 51%, was favorable toward American-made products.

As in other areas, age and Internet and satellite access were factors in determining favorability, but the impact was less. Only in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and France did these three factors make a measurable difference in attitudes.

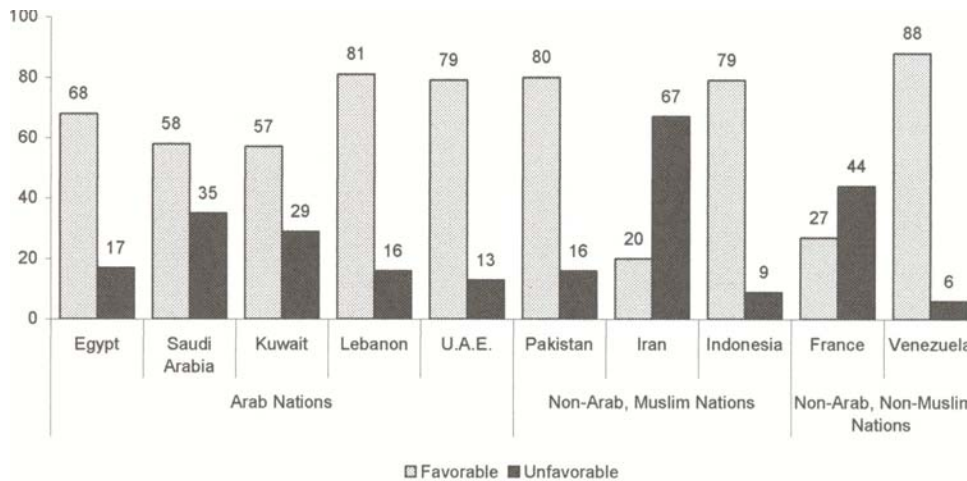


### American Education

American education received high grades in all countries except Iran and France. In every Arab country, the youngest polled were most enthusiastic about American education – though that was not the case in all of the non-Arab countries. Those with the highest percentages of Internet access were most positive everywhere except Iran and France.

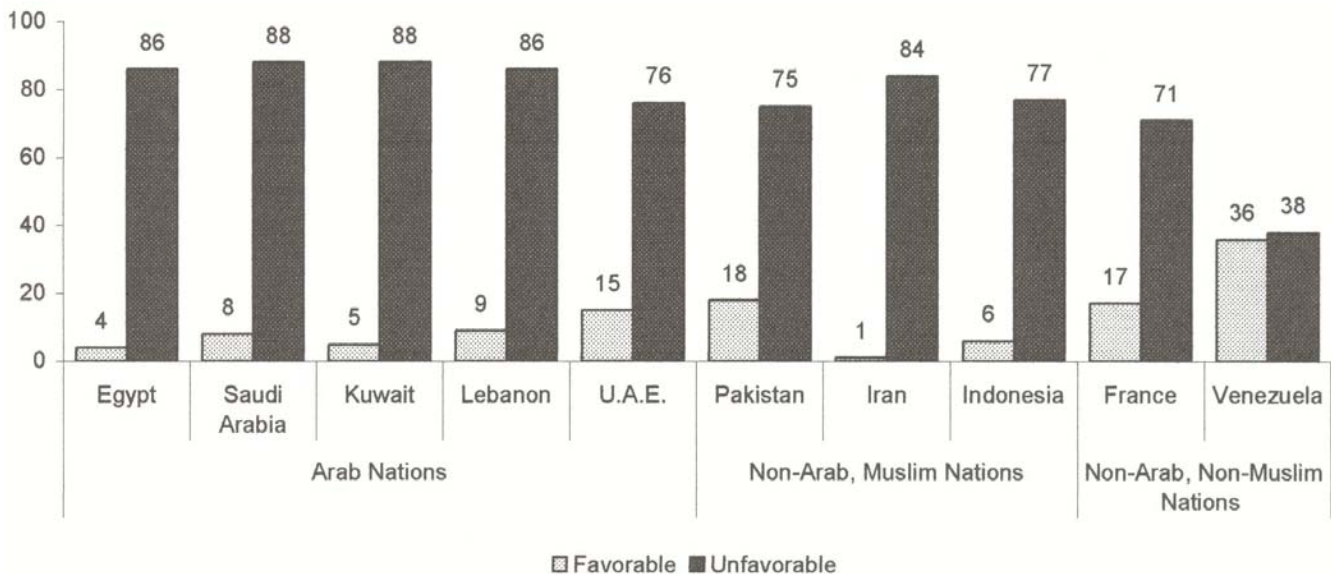
Strong majorities in all five Arab countries were favorable toward American education, ranging from highs in Lebanon and the U.A.E. (where 8 in 10 are favorable) to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, where the favorable-unfavorable ratings were almost 2 to 1. Pakistan and Indonesia were extremely favorable toward American education, as was Venezuela. Only Iran and France had negative attitudes (Iran 20 to 67, and France 27 to 44).

In Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, young people with access to the Internet and satellite TV were much more favorably inclined toward American education than older people with no access.



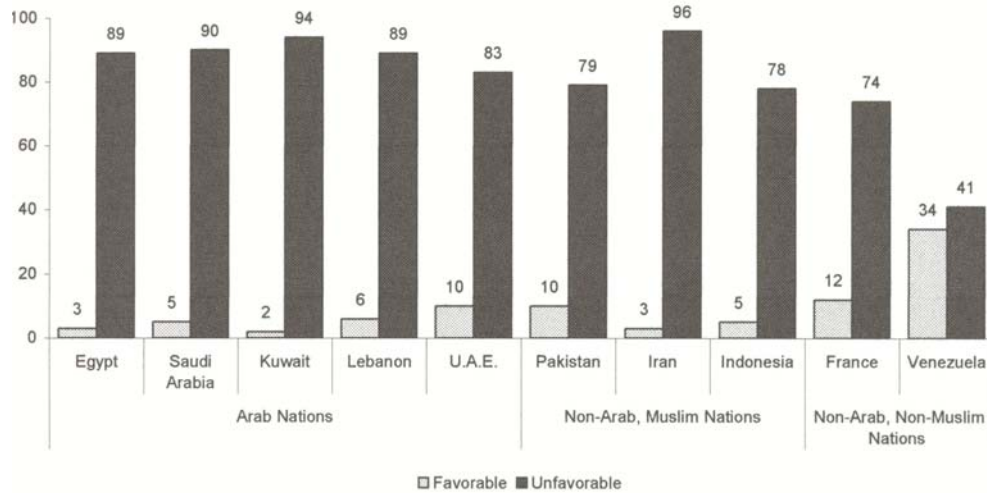
### U.S. Policy towards the Arab Nations

The U.S. was given single-digit favorable ratings on its dealings with the Arab nations by every Arab nation (except U.A.E. where it was 15%, driven mostly by the large numbers of non-UAE citizens included in the poll) and Pakistan (18%). Support was extremely low in Iran (1%), and Indonesia (6%), and only slightly better in Pakistan (18%), France (17%), and Venezuela (36%).



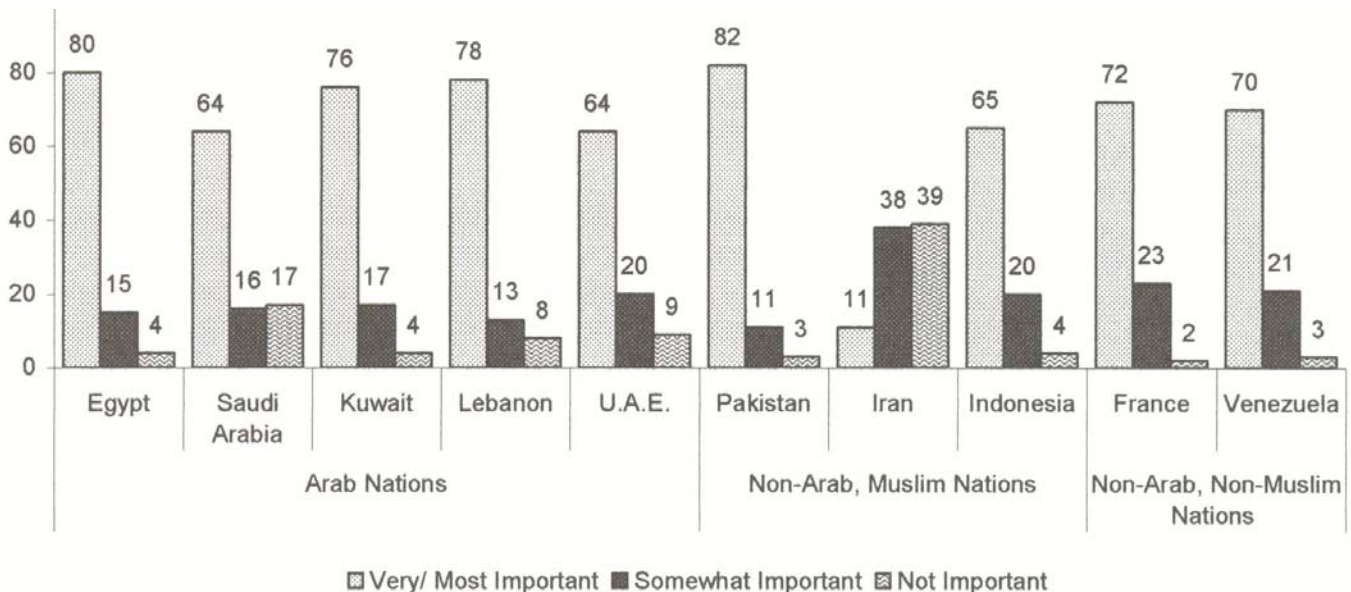
### U.S. Policy towards Palestinians

On U.S. policy toward the Palestinians, the numbers were even lower. Notably, the negative ratings were at least three in four everywhere but in Venezuela, and were about nine in ten in every Arab nations except the U.A.E., where it was closer to eight in ten.



### Importance of Palestinian Issue

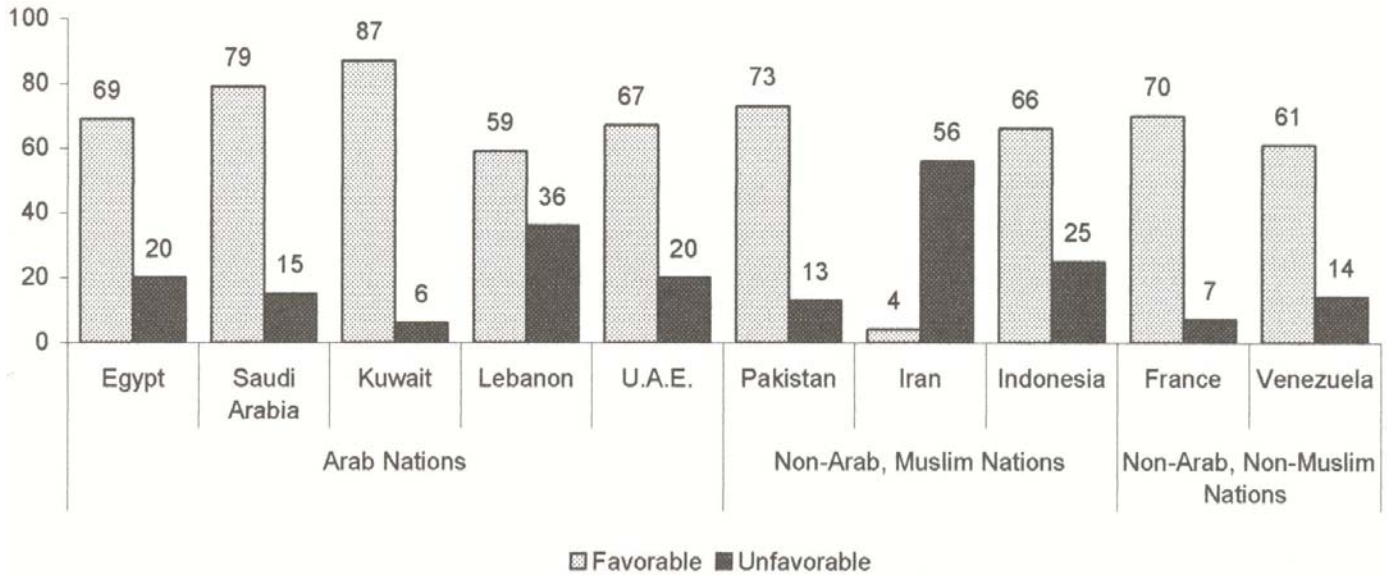
In every country but Iran, the “Palestinian issue” was viewed as “the most” or “a very important” issue facing the Arab world today. The range on this was from two in three in Saudi Arabia up to four in five in Lebanon and Egypt. In France and Venezuela, at least seven in ten called the Palestinian issue the “most” or “very” important issue facing the Arab World.





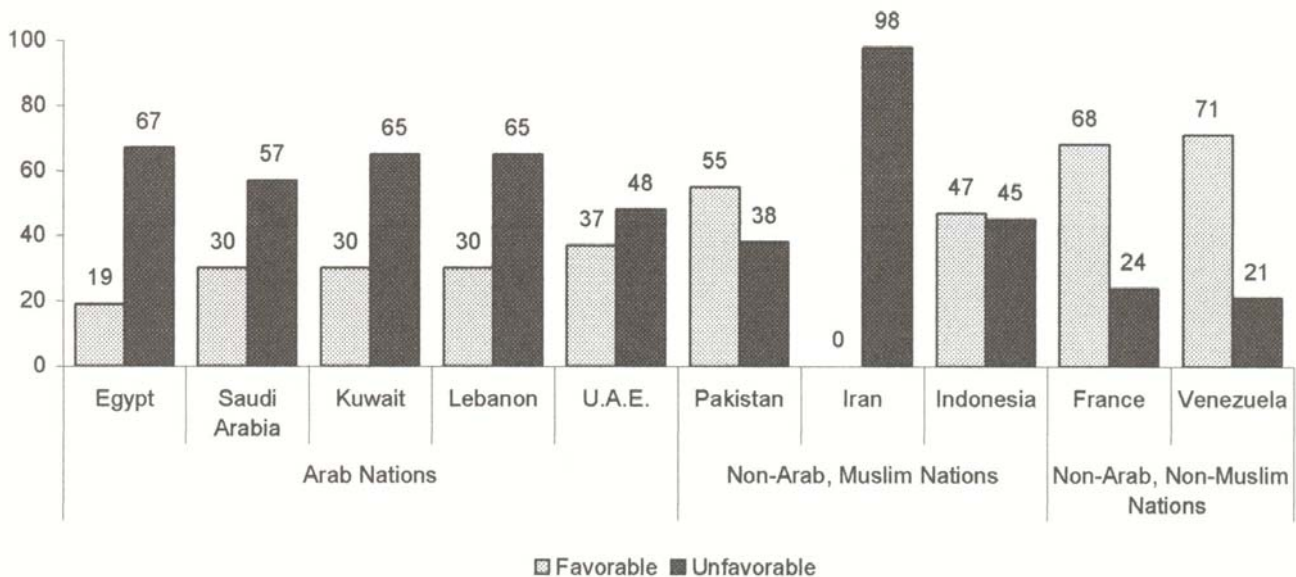
### If U.S. Applied Pressure to Ensure a Palestinian State

Those polled in every country except Iran would overwhelmingly react more favorably toward the U.S. if it “were to apply pressure to ensure the creation of an independent Palestinian state.” This included 69% in Egypt, 79% in Saudi Arabia, 87% in Kuwait (91% of Kuwaiti nationals), 59% in Lebanon, 67% in U.A.E. (76% of Emirati nationals), 73% in Pakistan, 70% in France, 61% in Venezuela, and 66% in Indonesia.



### Support for American-led Efforts to Fight Terrorism

If the United States is looking for support in the war against terrorism, it will find it hard to come by in the Arab street. There is no majority support in any of the Arab countries, and no support at all in Iran. The only majority support comes from Pakistan (59%), France (68% favorable, 24% unfavorable), and Venezuela (71% support, 21% unfavorable).



### March 2003 Polling: The Damage is Done

The first poll in 2003 was done from March 1-14, days before the bombing of Baghdad began. It included Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates. The rhetoric of war had led the news agenda in both the U.S. and the Arab world for months. It was easy to see how this and the subsequent war could negatively affect Arab and Muslim views of the U.S.

Our polling showed that a substantial number in most countries felt that the principal motive for the U.S. going to war was imperialism. The numbers were greater in Morocco (75%), Lebanon (47%), Jordan (46%), Saudi Arabia (35%), and Egypt (28%) than in war-friendly U.A.E. (12%). The overall average of 42% was striking.

One of the main stated motives for going to war was to bring more democracy to the Iraqi people. Only 5% of our sample agreed that the war would do that. Huge majorities in each country emphatically rejected that reason.

In every instance where we have comparative data from 2002, the numbers of those favorable toward America declined – even in Lebanon, from 72% to 57%, and in the U.A.E., from 68% to 64%. Declines were particularly steep in Saudi Arabia (53% to 24%) and Egypt (50% to 27%).

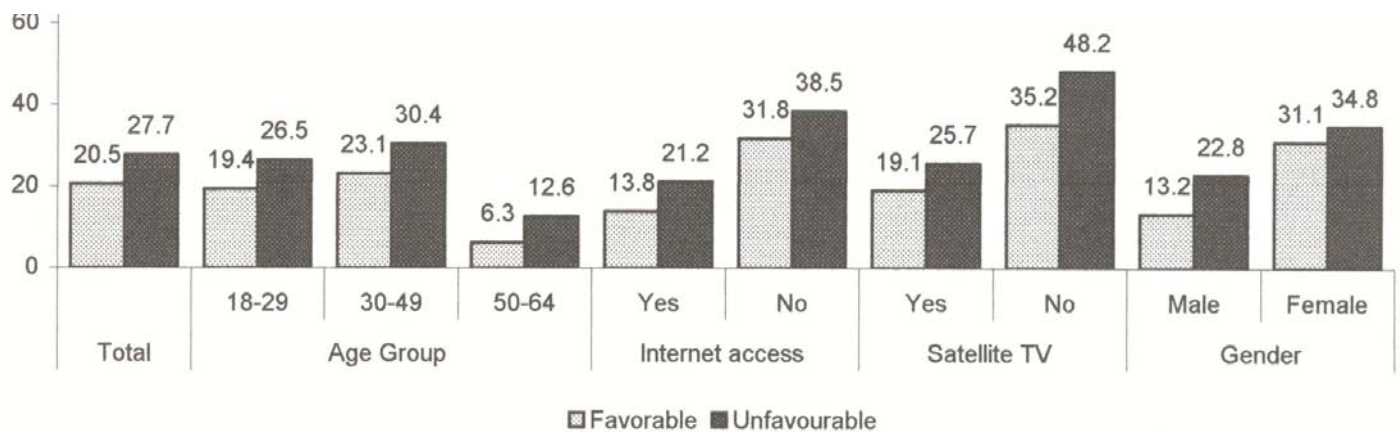
### July 2003 Polling: Saudi Arabia

Since the March 2003 multi-country polling, we have only been able to poll in Saudi Arabia, and similar questions were included in the following update. Polling in other countries is being planned now.

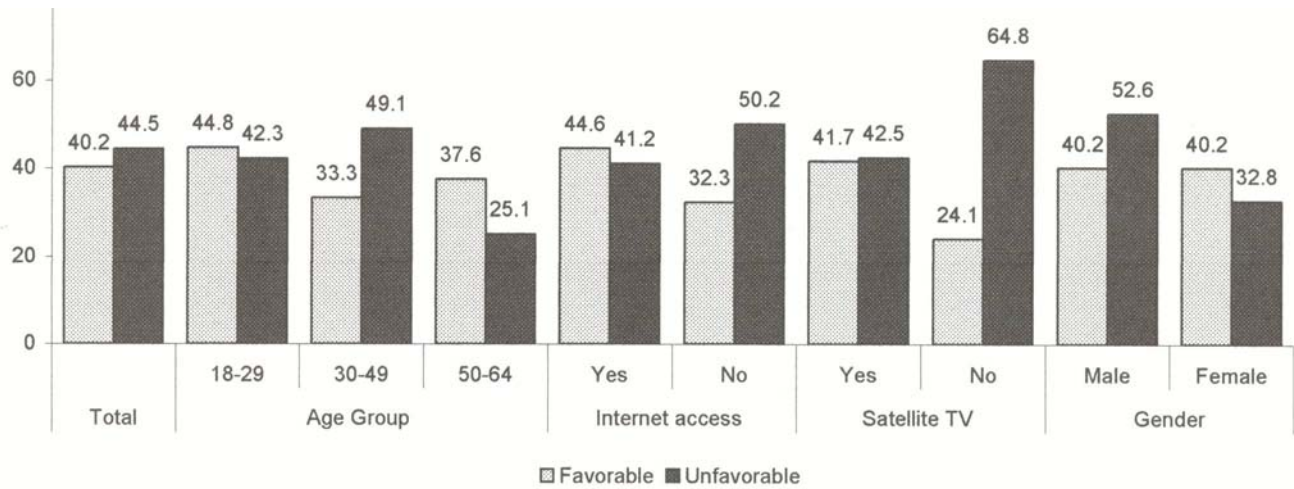
Saudi Arabia has been in the news quite a bit since September 11, 2001. While it has never enjoyed an overwhelmingly popular image in the U.S., the fact that 15 of the 19 9/11 terrorists were Saudis has caused speculation about the possible role of Saudi officials in the attacks. The draft report of the special committee set up to investigate the efficacy of U.S. intelligence agencies in anticipating the attacks left 28 pages blank as “highly classified,” an unstated number of which are said to be about the Saudi role. All of this has caused even more speculation about Saudi involvement, even though the Saudi government has requested the U.S. to declassify the sections, and even though it permitted the citizen reputedly named in the report to be questioned by U.S. investigators.

At one time, the Saudis had recorded a positive favorable rating in the U.S. of 45%, but the ratings are much more negative today. However it cuts both ways. As we see below, in every category tested in our July 2003 poll, Saudi attitudes toward the United States declined.

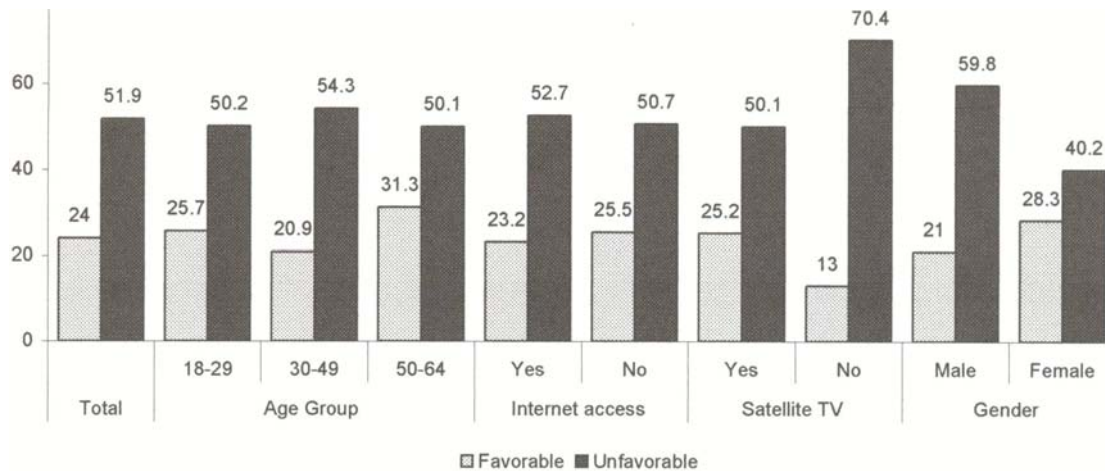
### Overall Impression of Saudis of American Science and Technology



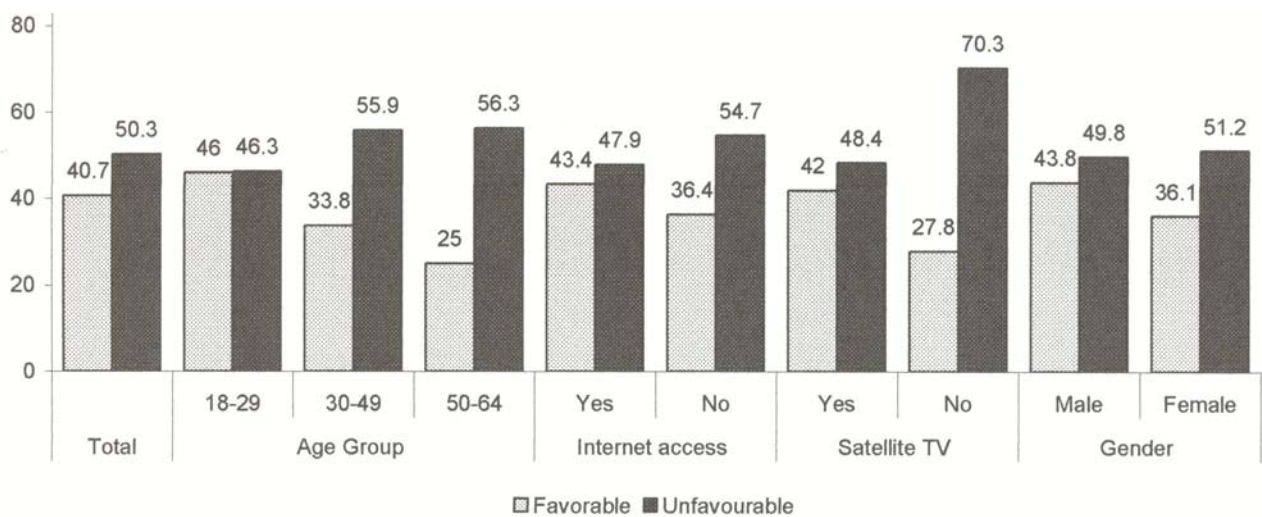
### Overall Saudi Impression of American Freedom and Democracy



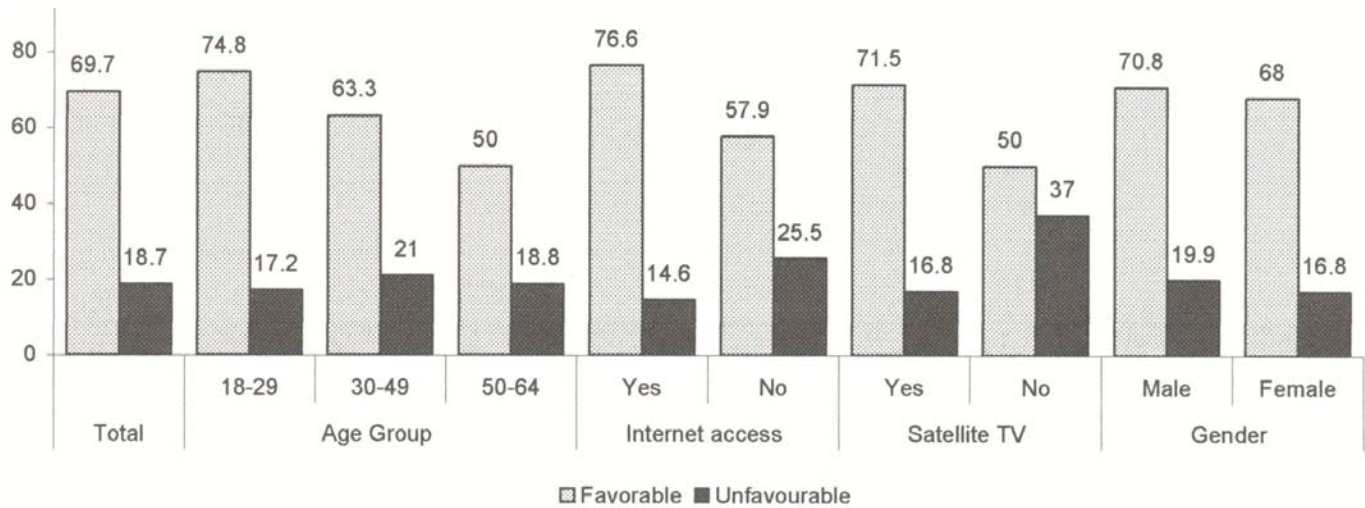
### Overall Saudi Impression of the American People



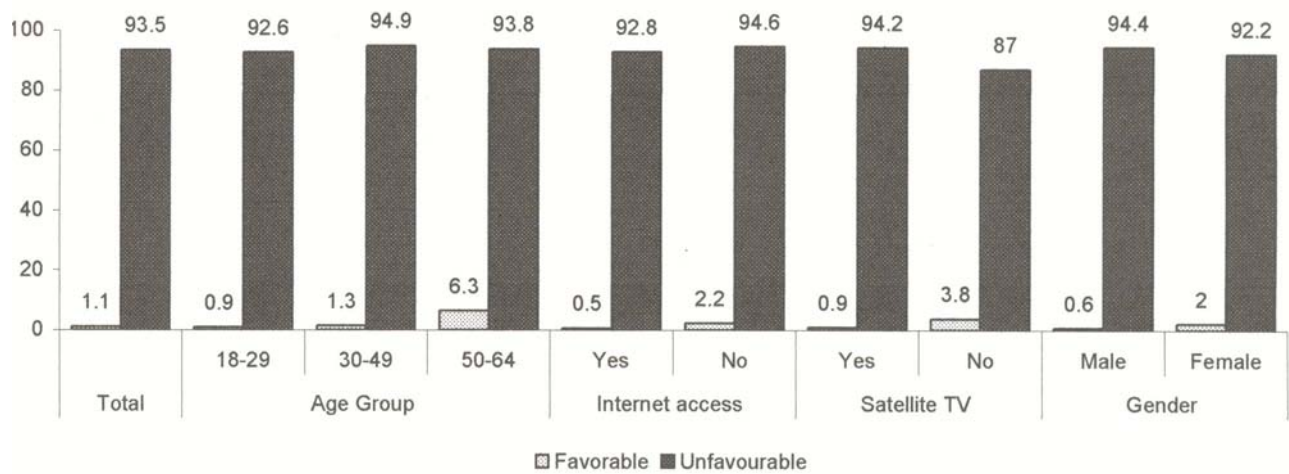
### Overall Saudi Impression of American Movies and Television



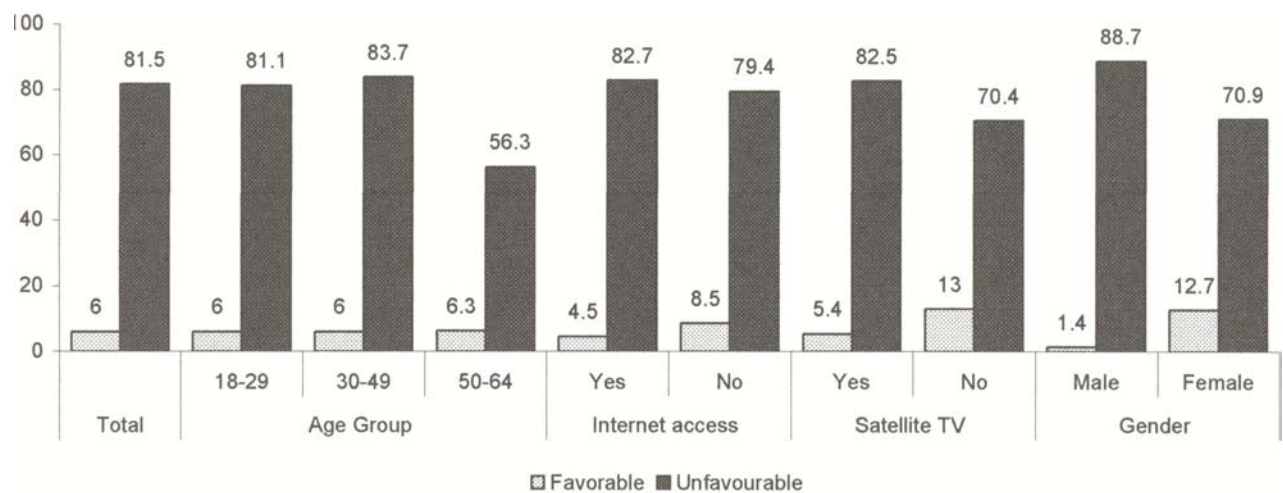
### Overall Saudi Impression of American Education



### Overall Saudi Impression of U.S. Government Policy toward the Palestinians



### Overall Saudi Impression of U.S. Government Policy toward Iraq



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## Conclusions

Only months after September 11, 2001, Arabs had fundamentally positive views of American culture and life. No clash of civilizations was evident at all. Indeed, Arabs and Muslims actually admired a number of aspects of America, including our freedom and democracy. Information can play a critical role in developing mutual understanding. When President Bush proffered in the first days after September 11 that "they hate us. They hate our freedoms," he was talking only about a minority – not, as our polling shows, much larger numbers of Arabs and Muslims.

Our polling has revealed there is a much greater basis for mutual understanding and a commonality of values. What has now become a cliché is that it is U.S. *policy*, not values and culture that many in this world (and not just Arabs and Muslims) resent. For those in the Middle East there is a singular importance to the issue of Palestine. Our polling shows that it is among the top three issues for at least 70% of Arabs surveyed in all countries, including Kuwaitis, who threw the Palestinians out in 1991. But what is remarkable is that it is not a political issue so much as a personal issue. It is self-identifying, emblematic, and defining for Arabs. It represents to Arabs – young and old, Shia and Sunni, rich and poor – the betrayal and humiliation that they have felt in the past century. In that sense, the Palestine issue is in the bloodstream of Arabs.

American policymakers, including those who would engage in public diplomacy, must understand the importance of Palestine for all Arabs as the *sine qua non* for sincere communications.

At the same time, our polling has been myth-shattering. Much has been written about the demographic explosion throughout the region. In Arab and Muslim countries, over half the populations are people under 25 years of age. That alone has suggested to scholars and pundits that this youth movement will become radicalized just as Baby Boomers did in the West during the 1960s. For those like Samuel Huntington, this demographic boom could only spell doom to relations with the West.

On the contrary, our survey research shows clearly that young people are most positively disposed toward the US and its culture. By far and away, they are more likely to admire and enjoy American movies and television, science and technology, music, and so on. They are about 15 points more likely to be favorable toward the American people. But they hate our policy.

Significantly, the polls show that there is a way to reach these young people: the Internet and satellite television. Contrary to other myths and misunderstanding, those young people in the Arab and Muslim world exposed to these tools are also more positively inclined toward America. These are great methods for establishing better understanding between American youth and Arab and Muslim youth.

But what will the message be? To date, US efforts at public diplomacy have been ham-handed. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the Bush Administration commissioned a former Madison Avenue executive, Charlotte Beers, to develop a message and wage a campaign to win the hearts and minds of Muslims and Arabs. Secretary Beers certainly had advertising credentials (she successfully branded and marketed Uncle Ben's rice) and the right disposition. Despite her sincere efforts, she failed miserably. What she did best – sophisticated television advertising and branding – was not what was needed. Her ads, which many Arab television networks refused to run, featured successful Muslims, like a female tri-athlete from Morocco and well-known Muslim Americans, all displaying values of tolerance, respect for others, etc. It was indeed an honest effort to communicate common values shared by both cultures.

But in this instance, the medium was not the message. Arabs bond with others through relationships and communal discussion. Americans were preaching, talking, arrogantly suggesting that it is the American way or the highway.

Any effort at bridging gaps between the West and the Arab and Muslim world will need to recognize that LISTENING IS MORE POWERFUL THAN TALKING, COMMUNICATING IS A TWO-WAY STREET.

The 2003 surveys reveal that serious damage has been done. But perhaps not irreparable damage. Arabs and Muslims may tell us today that they view the United States more negatively, but we are still in the eye of the storm, there is still suspicion on both sides. Hopefully the rhetoric on both sides will subside and meanwhile, the Bush Administration has at least launched a renewed effort at public diplomacy and has committed itself to achieving success with the roadmap to peace in the Arab-Israeli dispute.

One thing is certain however: things could not possibly get worse. We can only hope for, and work for, improved communications. □

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## Video-Cassettes (VHS)

- ▶ AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge the misconceptions most Americans have about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ AMEU, **All 36 volumes of The Link**, on 10 Compact Disks. Can be read with Acrobat Reader. **Special AMEU Price: \$25.00**
- ▶ DMZ, **People & the Land** (1997, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ Howard Film, **The Loss of Liberty** (2002, 53 minutes). Latest information on Israel's 1967 attack on USS Liberty. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- ▶ Longley, J., **Gaza Strip** (2001, 74 minutes). Riveting documentary on the horrific plight of the Palestinians in Gaza. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Frontiers of Dreams and Fears** (2002, 58 minutes). Focuses on two Palestinian girls growing up in refugee camps in Beirut and Bethlehem. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$43.95.**
- ▶ Moushabeck, M., **Anatolia: Lost Songs of Palestine** (2001, CD, 52 minutes). List: \$15.00; **AMEU: \$12.50.**
- ▶ Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses with historical commentary. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ Studio 52 Production, **Checkpoint: The Palestinians After Oslo** (1997, 58 minutes). Documents post-Oslo situation with off-beat humor and historical insights. **AMEU: \$25.00.**

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Place ✓ next to the book or video you are ordering and indicate quantity if ordering more than one. Make checks payable to AMEU.

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Total Price (includes USPS postage): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Telephone 212-870-2053, Fax 212-870-2050, or**

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 Room 245, 475 Riverside Drive  
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