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THE 2009 ARAB PUBLIC OPINION POLL:
A VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution.

I'm Martin Indyk, the Director of the Saban Center at Brookings.

We're delighted to have the opportunity again to present some very important and interesting polling data and analysis that comes from it.

Some of you will be aware that this has become an annual event, because Shibley Telhami, who is in charge of this polling, the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland, is also we're very proud to say a non-resident Senior Fellow in the Saban Center at Brookings.

And we have the privilege of having him present his polling results each year around this time.

I point out the importance of this annual event, because, as Shibley will explain to you, it gives him the ability through now I think six years of polling to look at trends and not just at a snapshot of opinion. And I think that makes his work far more valuable.

He's joined this morning by Jim Zogby. And, Jim, it's a pleasure to have you up here on the podium at Brookings -- who's probably very well-known to you as president of the Arab-American Institute, which serves as the political and policy research arm of the Arab-American community.

But Jim is up here also in his capacity as a senior advisor of Zogby and Associates -- is that the right name?

MR. ZOGBY: International.

MR. INDYK: Zogby International, and he has worked with Shibley on this poll, and Zogby International has also done the polling for Shibley in previous years.

But Jim also has some additional results that he's going to share with us that I think we'll all find very interesting, particularly today, when Prime Minister Netanyahu is still in Washington, having had his first meeting with President Obama, when President Mubarak is about to arrive, followed by President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; and then President Obama will travel to Egypt in the first week of June to give his much heralded address to the Muslim world.

It's particularly important in that context that we have an understanding of Arab public opinion, and that's exactly what we're going to be treated to today.

We've invited Professor Marc Lynch to open the discussion of these polling results, and we're very glad to have you here today, Marc, as well.

Marc is the Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the Elliot School of International Affairs here at George Washington University.

He's a specialist in issues of Arab media and public opinion, and the author of two books that deal with this -- *State Interest in Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* and *Voices of the*

New Arab Public that was published in 2006.

He's also Abu Aardvark, for those of you who don't know, the great blogger whose blog which now appears on [Foreign Policy.com](http://ForeignPolicy.com) is a must-read for anybody interested in the Middle East.

And I think you should -- if you haven't already paid a visit, you should check it out, because I think you'll find it interesting, lively, and enlightening.

So we've got a great panel for you this morning.

And without further adieu, I'm going to ask Shibley to brief us on his results.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks very much, Martin. And it's a pleasure for me to be here today and to present the 2009 Arab Public Opinion Poll.

Just before I start reviewing the results, I just want to put it in a little perspective. Martin started by saying we've been doing this every year.

This actually is the seventh year of repeating some of the same questions in the same six countries. We started doing that in 2002.

The project itself started well before 2002, actually in 2000 and 2001 prior to 9/11. It was really not driven by 9/11. It wasn't even driven by public opinion as such.

This was an analytical project that was trying -- the whole idea of it was to accumulate enough data over time to analyze the changing relationship between the media environment in the region, particularly satellite television and then the rise of the Internet, and their

impact on not only opinions of citizens in the world, but also notions of identity -- changing notions of identity.

And I had some theoretical propositions about that. I wrote about it in the late 1990s. And we thought that we really need to study this empirically.

We need to have some data. And it's not enough to just do it at a snapshot one year. We have to have a lot of data to study it over time.

So we started doing that every year. We have a base set of questions that we repeat every year, and then we have new ones that are topical that we add that are of interest to the policy community or analytically interesting.

What I present today is only a small part of what we get, because a lot of it, particularly media habits is extensive. And it's really used primarily so that we could do some statistical analyses and correlations over time.

My intent is to have at least 10 years so that we can have sustained analysis.

So it's very important to put this in perspective. This is not just a snapshot. Here's public opinion.

And particularly, for those of you who have known me prior to conducting this poll, I come from a more or less a realist perspective in international relations, which focuses on the states and distribution of power.

So this was intended to be a supplement, because of a

changing international environment that I use in my analysis. It isn't intended to say that states are no longer important, but rather to see how public opinion -- what role public opinion plays in these dynamics.

So this is important to understand when we're reviewing this data.

All of these polls, by the way, are conducted with Zogby International.

These are in the same six countries -- Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

They're all face-to-face interviews. No phoning.

The sample this year was over 4,000 -- 4,087. It varied from country to country. You can see in Egypt it was 853; in Jordan and Lebanon, it was 600 and so forth.

This was conducted in April and May. In fact, we rushed this out. You know, we haven't fully analyzed all the results. We have enough to present, because we wanted to have fresh results. The last results came in only last week.

And in addition to my questions, what Jim Zogby will present is another set of questions that they've asked separate from mine.

But they add some interesting information, particularly about attitudes toward the United States.

Let me start with the first category, the United States and the Middle East, and go to the issue that is of interest to a lot of people: How do people view the President of the United States, Barack Obama?

And the -- what we presented them was, you know, very

positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, very negative. And you can see, first of all, this is country by country, but overall, you have 11 percent being very positive; 34 percent somewhat positive; 28 percent neutral; six percent somewhat negative; and 18 percent very negative.

Now the reason you see two numbers here in 2009 -- with Egypt and without Egypt -- is the following: that when we do the averages, we, of course, apply weights according to population.

And, as you can imagine, Egypt has such a large population that on some issues is going to change the actual result. So it's very helpful to have, you know, the five countries alone, and the six countries with Egypt. And you can see sometimes there are differences.

In this case, there are a lot of differences, because in Egypt there are far more neutral views of Obama than in other countries.

What is striking, though, is when you look at the numbers, first of all, if you look at the five countries without Egypt, you have basically 60 percent of the Arab public polled having a positive view of the U.S. -- of President Obama.

Now if you look at the country by country distribution, and as I said Egypt has, by far, the largest neutral percentage, 41 percent, but what's striking here is really you have very few negatives in every country.

I mean, this is remarkable actually. When you look at the negatives, they're exceptionally low in every single country.

So this is in -- you know, if you put it in perspective of the last few years, where every single year, including this year, as you will see

later, where when we ask a question name the two leaders that you dislike most in the world -- an open question. They can name any leaders they want. The number one answer is George W. Bush.

And, by the way, he still is this year as well by a majority of the Arab public.

So the contrast is dramatic. And some of it is what we might call "thank God, it's not Bush."

But there is a question that we added just to test that a little bit, and that is about Hillary Clinton, about whom we had indications from 2008 that people had, you know, relatively -- certainly a better view of her than they had of the Republican candidates. We had some testing of that in 2008 during the campaign.

And you can see that she has far more negatives. Forty-five percent are at least somewhat negative, if you include Egypt and 49 percent at least somewhat negative. Twenty-four percent to 21 percent are neutral.

And you can see that there's a big difference between her numbers and President Obama's numbers, and that does suggest that there is something personal about Obama as well as this anti-Bush result, the same thing here country by country.

I should say, before I go into the broader attitude toward the U.S., we asked an early question about their impression of the first moves of the Obama administration, not specific questions. Jim Zogby has some very specific questions he's going to present later on.

But these are just general attitudes. After a few weeks of the

Obama administration, how would you describe your attitudes toward policy in the Middle East -- very hopeful, somewhat hopeful, you neither hopeful nor discouraged, very discouraged, somewhat discouraged.

Again, look, and even with Egypt where you had the most neutral, 51 percent are at least somewhat hopeful. And look at how few are discouraged. That is really remarkable. There is an openness. There's hopefulness. People are prepared to listen. They don't have a lot of negatives toward the president.

But it's a mistake, I think, to conclude from that that this translates into love of the President of the United States.

In fact, before I go to the next slide, I'm just going to stay with this for a minute.

I think if you look at the results here, even go back to the attitudes toward President Obama himself, the most striking thing as well is that there are very few very positive answers.

Most of the positive answer is somewhat positive. So you have 11 percent; 14 percent.

So this is not a love affair. This is we're interested. We think we like this guy. We're prepared to listen.

In fact, I do ask a question that I will review with you later about which leader in the world they admire most, an open question. They can name any person in the world that they admire most.

President Obama doesn't really emerge as one of the top leaders that they admire most. So this is not a love affair. This is not "they're in love with Obama." This is they're interested. He's changed

their mindset. They're listening. They're hopeful. They're not in love.

Now as you are looking to assess the Obama administration policy in the region, what issue is most central to your assessment?

Now these questions I gave them. So I gave them those -- Iraq, attitudes -- expressed attitudes toward Arab and Muslim world, Iran, democracy, Arab-Israeli conflict, human rights, war in Afghanistan-Pakistan, economic assistance.

If you look at these numbers, it's very interesting that Iraq and the Arab-Israeli issue are the leading issues.

And, in fact, with -- you'll see later on, Iraq is emerging as a bigger issue than it was year, because I think people want to see whether the president is following through or not.

But what's also interesting here is this is an Arab public opinion poll. This is not an Islamic public opinion poll. Keep that in mind. This is only in the Arab world.

And look at how many people are focused on the Afghanistan-Pakistan war. It is a remarkably low number of people who think this is one of the issues through which they are going to judge this administration.

You'd certainly get a different answer, I think, in Pakistan on this one and other parts. But very few people are highlighting that question.

And the second thing that's interesting here is that the expressed attitude toward the United States -- toward the Muslim world is important. It is -- it -- if there's, something called public diplomacy and

how you speak to the Muslim world, it appears to matter.

In fact, when I did a little cross tabulation analysis to see which segments of the public were more likely to have favorable views of the United States in this data, and particularly of the Obama administration, I found that those who said -- expressed attitudes toward the Muslim world mattered a lot had much more positive. They were responding to what the president said obviously.

Human rights it doesn't show up in a big way, but it's starting to show particularly in some countries. If you look at it country by country, it shows up in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates as an issue, and maybe that is, in part, a function of the closing Guantanamo and the focus on torture in the Obama administration.

Now all of this is early impressions of the Obama administration. This has not yet translated into significant change in their usual attitudes toward the United States.

And this is something that we have to keep in mind. This has impact, but so far it's only small impact, because people are still having a wait and see attitude.

So if you look at a question that we ask regularly -- expressed attitudes toward the U.S. -- favorable, unfavorable. Look at the numbers.

Obviously, by far, still more unfavorable than in the past -- as in the past.

But there is some slight but important change, which is that people who have very unfavorable views of the U.S. are fewer. Both with

Egypt and without Egypt, they are considerably fewer.

So there appears to be some early slight shift, but clearly the overall remains more unfavorable, substantially more unfavorable views of the United States.

How much confidence do you have in the U.S.? Really not significant change. I mean just pretty much the same.

Would you say that your attitudes toward the U.S. are based on policies and values? We get roughly the same result every year on this. The vast majority of people say policies, not values.

What two steps by the United States would improve your views of the United States most?

This is a repeat question. And we have a way, therefore, of assessing how these weights shift.

It isn't that there argued shifts here from last year, but there are some noticeable shifts, particularly in the elevation of the Iraqi issue and the withdrawal from the Arabian Peninsula issue. The rise in -- so I think in a way the public is watching to see whether or not the Obama administration is going to implement its stated withdrawal. That looks like it's being set up as a test for them, an early test for them.

Which two of the following factors do you believe are most important in driving American policy in the Middle East?

There really isn't much change here, you know. Protecting Israel and controlling oil and weakening in the Muslim world have been constantly the leaders, and they are now. Not much change yet in those kind of perceptions.

I want to -- well, I'll come back to it later.

Just on the issue of Iraq, we asked just a couple of questions. One of the questions that we repeat is are the Iraqi people better off or worse off than before the Iraq war?

And you can see here, you know, 2009 in comparison to 2008, there is a change. Still, the vast majority of people believe that the Iraqi people are worse off than they were, and another, you know, chunk believes that they are about the same. Very few people, if any, believe they're better off.

I mean, you know, and particularly with Egypt, when you -- a very small number.

But the number of people who think they are worse off is declining, and, you know, it's an important change. We don't know whether it's a trend yet. We'll see.

Which of the following is your biggest concern about the consequence of the war in Iraq?

By the way, this question we started asking just before the Iraq war to see what they were worried about and just to see why people were opposed to the Iraq war to begin with, and then we continued asking this question after.

And what we see is that divide is roughly the same. You know, people are worried about Iraq being divided, about the spread of instability, about the U.S. dominating Iraq. But the most important outcome of this poll, particularly from year one, was the extent to which the Iran issue was not appearing as one of the most important

consequences, because in the argument in the Arab political debate, particularly by leaders, before the Iraq war, right after the Iraq war, it was about Iranian empowerment if Iraq were to be at war or weakened as a state or collapse.

And consistently, we haven't seen that to be the case, and this year, you know, just a little bit more we see -- when we get to Iran in a minute -- Iran's numbers have worsened for Iran a bit.

But on this issue, it's still not a very important -- you know, these are within the margin of error, really, and for both 2009, 2008.

What do you believe would happen in Iraq if the United States withdrew its forces by the end of 2011 as planned, as the President announced.

Look at the confidence that the Iraqis are going to find a way to come together. That's actually rather remarkable, although you also have, particularly when you add Egypt, a slight increase in the number of people who think civil war will expand.

But, you know, roughly two-thirds believe that somehow the Iraqis are going to find a way to come together if the U.S. pulls out. They see the U.S. as part of the problem. And that continued to be the case.

On Iran, you know, on Iran, I think to put it in context, again, we know that there is a rhetorical war going on in the Arab world vis-à-vis Iran, particularly in some countries, especially in Egypt and Morocco; and I guess Hezbollah.

And it appears that that rhetorical war is having an impact, particularly in Morocco and Egypt. And we see that in a number of ways.

This question is a question we've asked the past few years, whether they think Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Last year, as you can see, more people believed that it was not. Only 39 percent believed Iraq [sic] was developing nuclear weapons. This year, a majority, 58 percent, believe Iran is actually developing nuclear weapons.

So their perception appears to be changing, although I have to say that in 2007, there were also more people who believed that Iran was developing nuclear weapons, not a majority, but a plurality.

And in 2008, it went down I think after our own National Intelligence Report that stated because the timing of the poll was right after our own National Intelligence Report that was -- suggested that Iran wasn't very close to a nuclear weapon.

There's international pressure on Iran to curtail its program. What is your opinion?

Well, two things that are obvious here. One is there's still a majority believe that Iran has the right to its nuclear program. Remember I say nuclear program. I don't say nuclear weapons, because Iran obviously doesn't say that it is developing nuclear weapons. It's an assumption, so we -- this is about do you believe that the international community should pressure them to stop "their nuclear program" or whether they have the right to it.

What you find here is a majority still opposes international pressure on Iran, and much of it has to do with the double standards argument vis-à-vis Israel and vis-à-vis singling out a Muslim country.

But it is also noticeable that there is a decline in the number of people from 2008 who think the -- and an increase in the number of people, by far, the number of people who think that Iran should be pressured.

It went from 22 percent to 40 percent. So the pressure is mounting, I think, and you can see that.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, which of the following is the likely outcome for the Middle East? Is the outcome more positive, more negative, or wouldn't matter?

Now if you look in 2008, more people said it would be more positive, 44 percent.

This year it's a complete reversal actually. More people think it would be more negative, 46 percent say it's more negative; 29 percent say it would be more positive.

Now, by the way, when you break these [sic] by country, and you'll see it in a couple of other questions, the change is dramatic in Egypt and Morocco. Those are the two countries where this is happening.

In places like Jordan, it's having less of an impact. But in places like Egypt and Morocco, it's having far more of an impact. And I think there's a rallying behind the flag because these governments have been able to portray this as a national interest issue, particularly the recent episode with Hezbollah. And you'll see that has had an impact on attitudes toward Hezbollah and Hasan Nasrallah in Egypt in particular.

The Arab-Israeli conflict. Looking at recent violence in Lebanon and Gaza, describe your attitude toward Israel's power.

Now I didn't only say Gaza, I said Lebanon and Gaza, because I wanted to repeat the same question from last year. We had the same identical question last year. And we wanted to see the change, so we repeated it.

But what's striking here is generally the exercise of Israel's power hasn't impressed them. You know, the few people who say Israel is now more powerful, is going to consolidate its power, you have 11 percent; 16 percent in 2008. You have a large number of people who say, well, it's not either powerful nor weak. It's the same -- in fact, 44 percent.

And then you have a large number who say it's weaker actually than it looks. And that number has risen from 2008, which you assume would be connected to Gaza.

But don't interpret this to mean they think that the Palestinians won the Gaza battle. You'll see from evidence that's coming it's actually surprising, you know, how you can have those conflicting interpretations of the Gaza war.

Which of the following statements is closer to your view -- we ask this every year -- prepared to accept a two-state solution based on the '67 border and think Arab states should do more to attain it. Prepared to accept a two-state solution, but think the Israelis will not accept it. Or in principle, I'm not basically prepared to accept a two-state solution.

And the -- you can see there isn't huge change. There's a bit of a change. Still, you've got overall roughly two-thirds of the Arab public and more than two-thirds who are in principle accepting of a two state.

This is not about the terms really. It's about the principle. But the number of those who are in principle not accepting has slightly risen, from 19 percent to 25 percent. But not a huge change.

I expected frankly to see a little bit more variation after the Gaza war, but there isn't much more variation.

What do you believe motivates Israeli policies in the region and American support for these?

We give them the three kind of contending arguments in the debate: basically, Israel lobby argument; American imperialism, with Israel being a tool of American imperialism argument; or an overlapping mutual interest.

And you can see anyway, in Egypt, when you add Egypt, the Israel lobby argument is stronger, but overall, it's really kind of interesting that the opinion is divided on this in the Arab world. A slight decrease in the number of people, particularly when you add Egypt, and number of people who think overlapping. If you look at it outside of Egypt, there really isn't change on that at all.

What do you believe is the likely outcome if the prospect of a two state solution in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict collapse [sic]?

Again, a significant majority, 60 percent, believe basically we would have intense conflict for years to come, and not much change from last year. It was 55 percent last year.

You can see that very few people think there will be one state. Some people think that the -- you know, the next answer is status quo would continue, but they don't think the issue would be resolved.

Which of the following statement is closest to your view about the prospects of lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians? It will happen in the next five years; it will never happen; it's inevitable, but it will take more time.

Still, if you look at the largest segment, half of the public, 51 percent, outside of Egypt believes that it will never happen. This is consistent with what we've seen in the past. People really don't believe it's going to happen. This has been the dilemma of peacemaking -- people in principle accepting of a two-state solution, but profoundly pessimistic about its prospects.

And even those who think it's going to happen or it's inevitable, they think it's not going to happen in the next five years.

When you observe the state of affairs in Gaza, which of the Palestinian parties do you believe is most responsible for it? This is specifically about responsibility for Gaza itself among Palestinians. I'm not bringing Israel in, because most people are going to say Israel first and foremost. So I just said among Palestinians.

And here you could see 47 percent equally responsible; 25 percent say the government appointed by President Mahmoud Abbas; 20 percent say Hamas.

If you take Egypt out of it, look at the results. Actually, the largest segment, a plurality, 39 percent, blame the government of President Mahmoud Abbas, and only 18 percent blame Hamas.

Remember this is outside the Palestinian territories. This is not a Gaza poll or a West Bank poll, and obviously, there is a difference. But that's true in Jordan as well.

In fact, Egypt was the hardest on Hamas, and even there they blamed the Palestinian Authority slightly more than Hamas.

In the current conflict among Palestinians, with whom do you sympathize with most. That's a general sympathy, not just about Gaza responsibility.

You get again the largest number, 49 percent, saying both to some extent. And then of those who favor one or the other, you see 22 percent sympathize with Hamas; only 12 percent sympathize with the Palestinian Authority.

And when you look outside of Egypt, the five countries outside of Egypt, that's even a bigger difference -- 33 percent sympathize with Hamas; 14 percent sympathize with the Palestinian Authority.

So it's pretty big. Again, I remind you this is not a Palestinian poll. This is an Arab poll outside the Palestinian areas. The numbers could be different there.

When you look at the recent war in Gaza and its outcome, who do you believe was the biggest winner?

Now look at this. I mean, there's no question that they think Israel is the winner of that war, even though they are not impressed by Israeli power.

And, by the way, this is quite different from what we found in the Lebanon war, when, in 2006, very few people said Israel won the war.

They said Hezbollah won the war or some said the Lebanese people won the war. But this is medically different. I mean, there are very few people who are saying Palestinians won the war.

And who is the biggest loser? Again, the Palestinian people are the biggest losers, not Hamas and Fatah so much. There is a, you know, a good number who say Israel, particularly outside of Egypt, but, by and large, you know, the Palestinian people seem to be the losers of this.

As you look at internal Palestinian political divisions, do you prefer a Palestinian national unity government, a Fatah government, or a Hamas government?

And look at this, particularly with Egypt. You know, three-quarters prefer a Palestinian national unity government; outside of Egypt, 61 percent.

But among those who don't prefer a Palestinian national unity government, more prefer a Hamas government than a government by the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas.

So you have particularly true outside of Egypt by a ratio of two to one.

But the clear preference is national unity government.

I'm going to go through very quickly of a couple of international dynamics that are important. And I want to say something about these international dynamics, because, again, in terms of what we do in public opinion polls, some of these you have to interpret because the question is not intended, particularly when I ask, you know, whom do you admire among world leaders, I don't really think that they necessarily know

much about them or they love them or they would like them to rule over them.

The reason I ask these international dynamic Russians is what I call to look for the prism through which they evaluate the world, the prism through which they interpret the world.

And so these give me indications as to their thinking, what direction. The choice of people is usually to fill in a gap in the way they see the world. And you will see that to be especially true this year when we evaluate world leaders.

Name two countries that you think pose the biggest threat to you.

Now that's an open question. They can name any country they want. And look at this.

By far, Israel and the U.S. still in 2009 and the United States of Barack Obama.

The only good news here is that that has declined from 2008. So the trend has been the same, which is people are listening. It's having some impact, but, so far, no dramatic shift.

Now there are two interesting things to note here, though. One is the numbers -- the number of people who identify Iran as a threat is increasing, particularly outside Egypt. Look at this -- from 11 percent last year to 20 percent this year.

So again, the Iran issue is having an impact. The critique and attacks on Iran are having an impact.

But the other thing that is puzzling -- and I haven't figured it out yet -- is that China, for the first time, emerges as a threat by a significant number of people, nine percent.

We haven't seen that in the past. We -- this is new. China actually has been improving on all levels -- people who preferred it as a superpower; people who might even envision living in China.

But in this particular case, this year there's a rise in the number of people who see China as a threat. That's interesting.

Name two countries where you think there is the most freedom and democracy for the people. This is, you know, just again if you look at it over time, not much change. Mostly Western countries.

France has generally been number one. It still is on this score. Germany does well. It's done better this year. In fact, you'll see in another question that we have Germany is increasing its stature in the Middle East, and that needs a little bit of thinking why that's happening.

Here's the question about leadership. As I told you before, this is a measure of what is it that they're thinking about when they're thinking about the world.

And this is an open question. I don't give them names. They can name anybody they want.

Now two things that are striking this year. One is that Hasan Nasrallah, who was the leader last year, particularly with Egypt, has significantly declined in popularity, in Egypt in particular, because you can see in Egypt he had -- when you look at 2008 with Egypt in 2008 without Egypt, you can see the difference. He was particularly popular in Egypt.

The attacks on him are having an impact. His overall popularity has gone down.

However, look at who is the biggest winner in all this: Hugo Chavez, who went from eight percent last year to 36 percent this year.

And I think this is -- when I say you have to look at is what's the prism through which they're making evaluation. They're obviously looking at -- they're angry with Israel; they're angry with the U.S. The Gaza war was a very big issue for them.

He took a position of cutting off relations with Israel. He's seen to be standing up to the U.S.

But they become uncomfortable with Hezbollah, because that's a national security issue, a national identity issue, particularly in Egypt. So they go to a safer person.

So this is the way you have to think about it. It tells you what it is that they're thinking about. They still are looking at the world largely through their anger with Israel and the U.S. primarily.

Those are the two that frame them. And the selection of individuals, by and large, goes in that direction.

Which two world leaders do you dislike most? It's interesting. People haven't forgotten about Sharon, either. He's -- I've forgotten he's still around. But he's still there, but you can see Bush is still least admired.

And I'm just going to go through very quickly just a couple of more things.

In a world where there's only superpower, which of the following countries would you prefer to be that superpower?

You can see no change for the U.S. Again, no impact so far of the Obama presidency on the U.S. It's still the same as last year.

Again, the most interesting development here is France is still number one as, again, has been the case. But Germany, Germany is rising in importance. And I think that requires a little bit of reflection.

I'm going to go through -- I don't want to cover a lot of -- some of the other issues, but I want to mention just two more to end.

One is --one on the economy. We know that's a big issue globally. It's not just a big issue for the United States -- and to see whether they're worse off and whether they're optimistic or not.

Obviously, you can see that overall most think that they're worse off, particularly with Egypt and then plurality outside of Egypt think they're worse off. Very few people are better off than before.

There's still hopefulness, concern, but also hopefulness divided on that. But I asked this question, in part, to link it up to their view of the American economic crisis, whether they can separate their anger with the U.S. from the consequences of a weakened America economically on them to see whether they think that a weak America economically would have a -- would have no impact on them, would have a better impact on them, or would affect them negatively.

And you can see that 63 percent think that a weakened America would actually -- a weak -- economically weakened America would actually affect them negatively.

The media. I have a lot of questions on the media, but I'm just going to review one to end this, just because it's a measure that we ask every year, which is actually on Al Jazeera. But let me just say something on the Internet.

The use of the Internet is dramatically increasing. It continues to increase, and I think now it's for the first time we have statistically significant numbers to be able to do some analysis.

In terms of satellite television, if you look at it with Egypt overall, there isn't a huge change from last year -- roughly the same viewership for Al Jazeera in the six countries, weighted.

But if you take Egypt out and you look at the five countries, Al Jazeera's numbers have [sic] diminished.

And that appears to be, for the most part, in two countries -- Morocco and a little bit in Saudi Arabia, but especially Morocco because, you know, more people are paying attention to Moroccan TV than in the past and that has altered the game.

Al Arabiya and MBC stayed roughly the same.

Just one last point on Nasrallah in talking about the leaders. His numbers obviously diminish aggregately. But they haven't changed much in places like Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, he's still -- he gets roughly nine, 10 percent. And in Jordan, he's still the most admired leader, getting over 20 percent of the public identifying him, of those polled, identifying him as the most admired leader.

So let me end with that, and then turn it to Jim Zogby.

(Applause)

MR. ZOGBY: Thank you very much, Shibley. I'm going to do a little bit of focus on four countries, drill down a bit, and look at how those four countries have reacted to the President.

The methodology is the same.

I would agree largely with Shibley's observations about change being real, but somewhat tentative.

Opinion of the United States, this was the overall number by those four countries, and the four that I chose were two important U.S. allies in the Gulf, with whom we are counting on for cooperation in dealing both with the peace process and also in relations to Iran; and also then the two other Arab countries that are borders -- bordering Israel that have peace agreements with Israel.

The numbers that you see there reflect significant change in UAE and Saudi Arabia. Actually, UAE becomes the first Arab country to have a net favorable, over 50 percent, for the United States.

You can see it more graphically here. These are unfavorable opinions of the United States -- a significant drop in the UAE, and a decline in all the others, and increase significant in UAE since 2008, and also but an uptick in all the other countries.

Change in opinion of the United States since Obama's election. Better. More than half in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A little over a quarter in Egypt and a quarter in Jordan. No change among majorities in both of those two countries.

But, as Shibley noted, we've been polling this question and polling on questions like this for many years now. This is the first time that better became a viable option.

For example, I -- you can't really see it very closely here -- I don't have a chart for it -- but the lavender is the same, and the red is worse. This is 2008. The black is better, and only in the UAE, 12 percent. The rest are almost non -- -in fact, they're not even factors.

So this is the first time that there's actually been an uptick, and it's happened in the first 100 days.

Obama's actions toward the Arab world. Again, more appreciated in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates; less so in Egypt and Jordan.

Opinion there has hardened in those two countries and will take more to shake up than in Saudi Arabia and UAE, but I caution that if you look inside the numbers in UAE and Saudi Arabia -- I think Shibley noted this, but I will emphasize it -- that the very favorables are but a quarter to a fifth in all of the various questions we asked when compared with the somewhat favorables.

It means an uptick. And upticks always are positive. That's what you want. But it also means that the uptick is soft, and what goes up and is soft can go down just as quickly. This is a tentative move in the right direction, but it's not yet solidified.

What we saw during the Bush years was that attitudes would worsen and harden as we went forward. Now they're softening, but they're not yet hardened as favorables.

What are the most positive actions taken by President Obama in Egypt, and here we're going to see some of the same things that you saw with Shibley. The withdrawal from Iraq and the closing of Guantanamo and the banning of torture are far and away the top issues.

The interview with Al Arabiya also had a positive impact and was noted by many; and also factoring in diplomats to Syria, the missions to Syria, and the appointment of Mitchell in Jordan a much harder sense -- 26 percent in Jordan saying there was nothing positive that happened in the first 100 days.

The appointment of Mitchell and the diplomats to Syria again factor in, but Iraq and Guantánamo and banning torture we lumped those together were the two most. Again, in Saudi Arabia, those two are the biggest. The highest rating in Saudi Arabia for the interview on Arabiya, but also the missions to Syria and the appointment of Mitchell.

UAE less concerned about the withdrawal from Iraq; much more focused on the interview with Arabiya and the closing of Guantanamo and banning of torture. But look at the numbers for the appointment of Mitchell and diplomats to Syria.

Now I will note that in the UAE, we interviewed 500 people. About 350 -- 349 of them are Emirati citizens. And 151 are non-Emirati, but Arabs.

We only interview Arabs in this annual survey.

What's interesting is that there's virtually no difference in attitudes. As I looked at the crosstabs, the non-Emirati Arabs are Lebanese, Egyptians, and Palestinians largely. We usually get a

difference in opinion where they, being exiles, are somewhat harder on some issues. Not at all. Virtually identical in points of view.

What's the greatest obstacle to peace? Again, the same as what Shibley has found: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, far and away, the most significant issue. Scant mention of Iran. With U.S. interference in the region as a general category being significant in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Perceptions. Now just look at Egypt. Perceptions of President Obama in Egypt. Can he bring positive change?

Egyptians are divided on the question. They're not divided on the question of whether or not he can be evenhanded. They don't feel they can.

And this also corresponds with a survey that I did in 2008 before the election, where, in Egypt, people said overwhelmingly it didn't matter who was president. Egypt and Jordan they said the same thing.

A sense of hardening of the attitudes and a souring of what had previously been there, a kind of optimism about America being self-correcting; people having given up, to some degree, in those two countries on that question.

Those Egyptians I remember an anecdote that I used an editor of a major newspaper in the country, when I asked him who he thought would win, I dare not tell you who I think will win or who I hope will win, because I'm tired of having my hopes raised by your country and then having my hopes dashed by your country.

And so there's going to take some time here to sort that out in Egypt and in Jordan, where, again, issues are divided on whether President Obama can bring change, but 19 percent saying no president in the United States can bring change, and a majority disagreed that he will be evenhanded.

Perceptions in Saudi Arabia. Very different. Seventy-four percent being inclined to believe that he can bring positive change. A healthy 59 percent disagreed that he can be evenhanded, but 33 percent saying that they think he will be.

In UAE very different. Strong majority saying he can bring positive change and 56 percent saying they believe he will be evenhanded.

Again, that number is even between the Emiratis and the non-Emirati citizen Arabs.

I did a separate group of Lebanon. Lebanon and I began saying back during the Cedar Revolution era, when the number of people were sort of sort of forgetting that Lebanon is a divided polity and thinking all Lebanese fought this way. I started calling it red state, blue state, writ large.

And I just want to look at some of those numbers here. Overall view of the United States -- look at the numbers among Shi'a and the numbers among Sunni, and Christians. And you get the same in almost everything.

Some higher, more favorable views of the post-Obama period. Can Obama bring change? The Christian and Sunni numbers are

two times and more higher. His actions toward the Arab world. Viewed negatively across the board, but much more higher -- much higher rather among Shi'a.

Greatest obstacle to peace, though. The Israeli-Palestinian issue is the most significant. But look at Iran numbers creeping up there with Sunni, who -- I'm sorry -- with Sunni and Christians who have a real sense of wariness about that issue.

And can he be evenhanded on Israeli-Palestinian? Again, disagreement there. And that's my brother's book. And I'll let it go.

Let me just give you a bottom line here. For purposes of comparison, I think it's useful to note the differences in the Gulf countries and the countries that neighbor Israel, and have, therefore, been most affected by the failure to achieve peace and the threat that results from that.

The uptick in favorable and the downturn in unfavorables is something we observed in all of them, most dramatic in the Gulf; less dramatic but still there in Egypt and Jordan. It is tentative, and I think we have to remember that it is tentative. It's only 100 days, and it can change.

The skepticism that is in Egypt and in Jordan is something worth noting. And, in fact, you know, one might say that if he'd gone to UAE, he gets a very -- the President gets a very favorable audience, but the place he needs to go is Egypt, because that's the place where he has to confront head-on a skeptical public that is wary and not yet convinced.

They have not yet bought the goods, and I think need to be won over.

I think that the most critical issue clearly is Israel-Palestine. Too many people think that no one in America can make a difference on that, no president. Too many still think that no president can be evenhanded.

It's important. Governments are deeply concerned about Iran, and it does reflect itself in some changes in public opinion. But in terms of priority issues in Arab public opinion, it's not a factor. It is not the factor of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The bottom line: a good start, but a long way to go. And I will end it there.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Shibley and Jim.

Now we're going to hear what Marc Lynch thinks of all of this.

MR. LYNCH: All right. I know people have a lot of questions for Jim and for Shibley, so I'll keep this relatively quick. I just want to make three basic points about these surveys, not with any numbers, but just to give a little bit of a sense of what I think we can and we cannot do with public opinion survey data.

The first thing that I point out is something which Shibley mentioned, as he began speaking, which is that it's really good that we're

beginning to have so many more public opinion surveys, that there simply more and more data that's out there.

They've been done regularly over the years, by Shibley, by a number of other organizations, and we now have -- we don't have to rely on single snapshots in the way that we used to.

That said, if you go back -- I don't know how many of you are like me -- during the run-up to the presidential election, checking Nate Silver's 538 dot com about 500 times a day. We don't have that kind of data in the Arab world at this point, nor do we have the level of sophistication that Nate and people like him brought to the analysis of public opinion data.

So I think we've come a long way, but there's still a lot more to do in terms of having the density, the depth, and the richness of data that we would need to do what mainstream political scientists do with public opinion data in advanced industrial democracies and the like.

So I would say that this is a call to do more and build on the foundations that we already have.

That said, we do have to be careful about bad data driving out good. I think that Shibley's data is very good. Gallup's data is very good. Pew's data is very good, but there's a lot of less -- Steve Cole's data is very good. I see him sitting in the audience here. So I'll have to mention him.

But there's also a lot of survey data coming out, which is not good, which is being done by commercial organizations which uses methodologies which we have to be very careful about.

So I think in our rush to aggregate data and have greater foundations for serious analysis, we have to be careful about throwing the bad data in with good, and that's just a general critique that I would put forward.

You have to use commonsense when you deal with this kind of survey data. These are blunt instruments, so if you see a change from 42 percent to 44 percent, don't get too worked up about it.

But at the same time, you don't want to nor large gaps and large variations. From 30 percent to 70 percent is a significant change, which should be taken seriously.

And consider the alternatives. For all of the methodological critiques of trying to do opinion survey research in authoritarian societies where it's not easy to get good samples and to have people avoid self-censorship, these are very real and very significant issues, you have to consider the alternatives: this data is better than listening to taxi drivers. It's better than listening to the English speaking guy in your hotel. It's better than listening to a self interested leader of a country who wants to spin you about what the opinion in that country is.

And it's a heck of a lot better than simply projecting our own views onto Arab publics and then looking for validation of those views.

So commonsense means triangulating, running these public opinion surveys against what you see in the media, against what you're hearing from people who are involved in policy, against opinion leaders, and using common sense.

I've heard the argument made that because there are methodological issues with these public opinion surveys that we should simply throw them out completely. And it reminds me of this notion, for instance, that I live in Montgomery County people with -- it's equivalent of saying, you know, there are some John McCain signs in Montgomery County. So the Montgomery County. So the idea that there's opinion surveys which show that Brock Obama is winning 70 to 30 in Montgomery County means we should ignore, because I see those John McCain signs.

And building a strategy upon that, most of us would agree, would be insane, because, and in fact, as a Democrat, were I a Democrat, I would encourage that, because that would mean throwing that money for the Republicans into their strategy, because Obama did, in fact, win 70 percent of the vote in Montgomery County, and you have done a bad strategic decisions to invest in your hopes that, in fact, the polls were skewed.

And I fear that often those who want to dismiss public opinion surveys are committing the same foul as he. They know Arabs who don't agree with these surveys, so they then project their own views onto that. And that's extremely dangerous. We shouldn't fool ourselves about this.

So the first general point is simply to say that these are not perfect instruments. We shouldn't fool ourselves that they are. But they're also a heck of lot better than the alternatives, and we should disregard them.

The second broad point very quickly is that you'll notice that Al Qaeda played very little role in the surveys. And I think this is important. I think that the strategic terrain in the Arab world today is shifting. I think Al Qaeda is really decreasing as a central focus, both of American strategy and of politics in the region.

The focus on Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah are serious challenges, but they're very different challenges from the challenge which was posed by Al Qaeda.

Now during, over the last few years, one of the major critiques of public opinion surveys was that, in a sense, they don't -- they're not favorable views of American foreign policy don't matter because we're dealing with Al Qaeda, and the challenge is violent extremism and radicals, who are not picked up by opinion surveys, because, frankly, any jihadist who picks up the phone, answers a pollster's questions and says, yes, I love bin Laden, and I'm planning to blow up your embassy will probably be removed in a Darwinian process.

And so, I think it was important, I think, during the period when Al Qaeda was the major focus of American -- of this global war on terror to not put too much emphasis on American foreign policy, because that really wasn't really the point.

But now that we're moving into a period when Al Qaeda is less relevant and in which we are trying to, we as Americans, are trying to build up support for whether -- how to engage with Iran, how to engage on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I would argue that mass attitudes have to matter more, and that the critiques that were leveled against this kind of

research over the last few years I think are of declining utility in the new strategic environment.

We're now dealing with a situation in which mass attitudes and political attitudes matter more than the jihadist narratives of a small group of radical extremists and that is, I believe, as it should be, and I think that from policy considerations, I think that we have to pay more attention now to these kinds of issues.

The last point that I would like to make is simply to highlight some of the most important findings which I saw in these surveys. Number one is, as they all mentioned, this notion that there is a window of hope, and a window of expectation that Obama can actually change American foreign policy, combined with great skepticism. Using my triangulation method this doesn't surprise me a bit. This is what we hear from everybody. It's what we see everywhere.

But I agree with what Jim said in his remarks. This window isn't going to stay open very long. And I think that on the first test of American credibility and sincerity, if Obama doesn't meet that test, then I think that window is going to crash closed very quickly.

And so I think that the Obama administration should be very well prepared for the inevitable first test, probably over settlements.

Number two, the evidence on Iran and attitudes towards Iran, I found fascinating. It suggests that one of the great questions that we have as political scientists trying to understand public opinion in the Arab world, we actually have some interesting evidence here -- media

framing, and the role of governments in trying to whip up anti-Iranian sentiment seems to be working.

There's considerable evidence in terms of the sequential reading of multiple public opinion surveys suggests that government action came first and now is driving public opinion, not a bottom-up, but a top-down process. That's interesting.

The third finding I found was about Hamas and Palestinian National Unity Government. The overwhelming support for a Palestinian National Unity Government doesn't surprise me, because, frankly, everything that I hear is that Arabs are deeply unsettled by Palestinian divisions because I think that they want to be unified behind the Palestinian cause and the Fatah-Hamas battles over the last few years have been profoundly disorienting.

So I find that finding more important than the just the Hamas-Fatah disagreement.

And with that, I think I will stop and allow you to ask your questions. Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Gentlemen, you need to put your microphones on.

(Applause)

MR. INDYK: Okay. We have a little bit less than 20 minutes for questions. So I'm going to forgo mine for the moment, reserving the right to come back to it.

But let's take one from the back, one from the middle, and one from the front.

We'll take three questions, gentlemen, and then have you respond so that we can get through as few.

So, at the back, David Pollack, just by chance, as it turns out, another pollster, by the way.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you. Thanks very much for a really fascinating presentation. I wanted to zero in on a couple of very particular questions, but the first one is about what is really the priority issue for Arab publics.

I think there was some evidence from the numbers rather surprising that it's actually Iraq, not the Israeli-Arab conflict. And I wanted to see what, you know, if you have further comments about how to explain that and whether that is actually an accurate assessment of what these numbers show.

Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Okay. One from the middle, over here, with the beard. The gentleman with the beard. No. There are too many. He's back there a bit. Too many beards.

MR. LOBE: Jim Lobe, Interpress Service. I was interested in some of these seven-year or eight-year find -- seven-year findings that was reflected in the Zogby poll on favorability toward the U.S.

It seems that in most countries, the United States has kind of recovered vis-à-vis 2002. But I wondered if you could comment on that, but also if Dr. Telhami could comment on any such lengthy findings over the past seven years, anything that really jumps out.

MR. INDYK: Okay. One at the front. Yes, please. Please identify yourself.

MR. RUBIN: Nissim Rubin from India. Sir, given the administration's focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan and the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the region, why was there no -- much more focus on that region in your poll? It's just a question.

MR. TELHAMI: Why -- we didn't hear.

MR. RUBIN: Why was there not much more focus on the (inaudible) Arab opinion vis-à-vis Afghanistan and Pakistan and American involvement there? Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Who wants to go first? Shibley?

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah. The first question, David Pollack's question about the importance. I think there's some truth to the proposition that the Iraq war has increased in value over the last couple of years. Actually, you know it -- I ask a question repeatedly for the past two years -- which one -- which one of the issues -- to name two issues that are most important in their assessment of American foreign policy. And the Arab-Israeli issue is usually number one.

It varies, but there's always been the case that withdrawal from Iraq and withdrawal from the Arabian Peninsula, which is another withdrawal option, that large numbers. And, in some countries, like Saudi Arabia, actually, in some years even prior to this one, they trumped the Arab-Israeli issue.

So I think the presence of American forces and the Iraq War clearly are important. But the Arab-Israeli issue continues to be important.

And there are a number of measures that we have to compare with last year.

The -- I think part of the Iraq war issue is that President Obama himself in one of his first major acts declared that we are going to pull out by 2011. And so they are -- in a way, he's setting that up as a test and people are reflecting that.

Now on attitudes over the years toward the U.S. particularly, there was -- in my own judgment when I look at -- particularly because I started doing a couple of polls, not the same questions, but similar questions prior to 9/11 and early after 9/11.

I think the Iraq war was the most important juncture in terms of shifting attitudes toward the U.S., not 9/11. And the Iraq war and then the declared war on terrorism, as we defined it.

We started seeing a shift away initially after the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 2000, we started seeing an elevation of Arab identity actually, not Islamic identity. We see the Islamic identity that I've been measuring somewhat linked to the rise in the war on terrorism.

We see -- and this year, by the way, with that declining, we see actually a rise again and Arab identity. I didn't show that, but there was a -- in fact, Arabs are -- I'm not saying that people change identities that frequently, because there are all these things. There are Arab-Muslim, and so it's not changing.

It's a question of where they place the weights. And the weights are shifting, and I see that changing.

The President of the United States as the most disliked leader in the world that was, you know, entirely a function of that period.

So I suspect that depending on obviously what happens in the next few months and years, we're going back essentially to the pre-9/11.

Remember the pre-9/11 era was not a wonderful era in Arab perceptions of the United States. It was a bit more nuanced but still people were more angry with American foreign policy than not.

It was the intensity issue, and it was the extent to which people thought the U.S. credible enough and they can work with the U.S.

That was more true in the late 1990s under the Clinton administration.

MR. ZOGBY: Just quickly on that. There's no question, Jim, that there's a bounce back. It is tentative. And I would echo what Marc noted.

Expectations in 2008 for this president were very high. And high expectations crashing down to earth can create a very dangerous scenario.

So I think that he does show measurable improvement in attitudes towards America. There is an expectation that he can make some change. Failing some of these early tests, he has disappointed yet in many other countries, but failing these tests early on could do some real harm here.

And I think that he may be a victim of very high expectations across the region.

He certainly follows, I mean, Shibley's thank God, it's not Bush. He does follow a very unpopular president in a very unpopular in era.

He can make change, but there are some dangers ahead.

MR. INDYK: Let me just follow up, Jim, on the first slides that you showed, which indicated again that withdrawal from Iraq and the closing of Guantanamo seemed to be far more important than the appointment of George Mitchell.

MR. ZOGBY: It wasn't just the closing of Guantanamo. It was the closing of Guantanamo and the banning of torture.

MR. INDYK: Banning of torture.

MR. ZOGBY: And in all the polls we did previously, there was always a category of treatment of Arabs and Muslims, which largely meant Guantanamo torture and the treatment of prisoners.

I mean, Abu Ghraib and -- let me just say that with regard to the President's decision to contest the photographs coming out, lots of debate among civil libertarians about that.

But if I'm going to Cairo in two weeks to give a speech, a major speech, I don't want those photos hanging over my head right now. I'm not responsible for them, but it will stir the pot and it will last for a full two weeks in the region.

So this had a huge impact -- and was designed -- what was designed to humiliate a few prisoners humiliated an entire people.

Therefore, those two -- closing of Guantanamo and banning of torture and all that that means -- a very significant decision on the part of the President, and I think we can't underestimate the importance of it.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Let's take another three questions. We'll start at the front and go back. Gary Mitchell.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report, no relation to the other fellow.

MR. INDYK: One of these days you're going to claim that you are a relation. When he gets a breakthrough.

MR. MITCHELL: In brief, what is the explanation for the hardening in Egypt and Jordan, A; B, is it, depending upon the answer to that, might that have influenced the decision by the Obama administration as to where to give the speech; and, C, is there anything that comes out of either piece of research that might inform the substance or the tone and tenor of his speech in Egypt.

MR. LYNCH: I'm going to let -- should we take the second part of that?

MR. ZOGBY: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. INDYK: Take them together, because we've got a lot of people who want to ask questions, and we'll never get through. Yes, please. The blue tie.

MR. LEFRANCKE: Hi. Thanks. Howard LeFranche, the Christian Science Monitor.

I was very interested -- sorry. I was very interested in Marc Lynch's analysis on Al Qaeda, but I was wondering if those who have

done the polls if you concur with that or he just didn't show up because the questions didn't ask about that. For example, in the past, did Osama bin Laden show up as a respected leader and doesn't anymore.

I mean, is there anything that suggested to you that that's right; that Al Qaeda is losing in favorability?

MR. INDYK: And down there. Yes, the lady in the (inaudible).

MS. AZIZ: Hi. Thank you very much for that insightful presentation. This is a question primarily for --

MR. INDYK: Could you identify yourself, please?

MS. AZIZ: Oh, Sahar Aziz from DHS. This is a question primarily for Professor Telhami.

The -- I was very fascinated with the decrease in support, assuming there was a support at some time, for Hamas and to some extent Hezbollah, particularly in Egypt. And the reason why I thought it was fascinating is that there are some analysts who believe that Hamas is an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Muslim Brotherhood has a significant presence in Egypt, albeit it within, at this political process.

So I'm just curious to know what you think the explanation is for this decrease in the support for Hamas and to some extent Hezbollah, notwithstanding that one represents the Shi'a Muslim and one represents the Sunni Muslims.

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah. Well, first of all, in terms of the hardening in Egypt and Jordan. I think -- it's an interpretation. It's not that we see a lot of evidence, although I think it's there on specific issues --

Gaza. I mean, those are two constituencies for whom Gaza is extremely important for obvious reasons. And I think the -- you know, the way people saw it -- and it's interesting. I was reflecting on this a little bit, because while Moroccan TV has increased with the government emphasis on national interest.

In Egypt actually, the Gaza war elevated the interest in Al-Jazeera it appears, because Al-Jazeera had the best coverage of Gaza, and Gaza is the backyard of Egypt. And I think that the story, while it's very complex for them, this issue of identity, in this troubled time. I think they were very frustrated with the Gaza war. I think the same thing you see in Jordan.

I don't know that it's hardening as much as it is remaining the same, not softening. I'm not sure that opinions actually hardened on Hamas in Egypt. They still, you know, they blame the Palestinian Authority more than they blame Hamas. It's the same distribution, but not as intense.

I think on this one, the government has obviously taken a position, which is that they're -- you know, they're getting support from Iran. You know, this is about Iran and the same thing with -- so that's having a bit of an impact, I think, in Egypt because of the rallying of -- behind the flag, a fact that I think is having some impact.

The question from Howard was -- I'm sorry, Howard, I've -- oh, yes. Al Qaeda. Yes.

It's a really important question. I think Jim has something to say on this, which is I never believed that Al Qaeda was driving the

conversation in the Arab and Muslim world anyway during the Bush administration. I think the Bush administration was driving the conversation.

So I don't think that it is Al Qaeda's importance is going up or going down. I think we gave it more weight than it deserved. I don't think there's considerable data on Al Qaeda that shows significant change. By the way, bin Laden is still popular and identified as a preferred leader by a significant number of people, roughly 10 percent.

So, but still, the vast majority of people that you ask -- why do you -- if there's any aspect of Al Qaeda that you admire, which aspect is it. The largest group says, in fact, that it's standing up to the U.S. And very few people say we embrace its agenda of a Taliban-like state.

So that's always been the case. This is not new. It was the case four years ago. I think that we elevated the role of Al Qaeda, and now we're understating it. And I think that's important, because it never was the central player in the Arab discourse. It should not have been.

MR. ZOGBY: We were always the central player. And Shibley's right. We made the group larger than its real role in the region was, but let us also not forget for a minute the way that publics in the Arab world ended up weighing on the scale -- us versus them, in this case, the "them" being Al Qaeda -- we would get in focus groups in many countries -- what they do is against religion, what they do is against the word of God. This -- these are abominable acts.

And then almost in the same sentence, but what else can people do? How else can people object?

A huge ambulance driven by frustration and a sense of powerlessness. And bin Laden played to that. And we reinforced that. And that comes through in the numbers.

The who's your -- the most popular leader, the sort of the, pardon my French, but the screw you factor still is big.

I mean, surprisingly, and now a very positive sign, you know Sheikh Mohammed, the two Sheikh Mohammeds in UAE being -- I mean, that's a very different metric being used there than some of the other characters that get mentioned.

But it's still important to see that the resentment factors there. The hardening easy to account for. I mean, when you had negative views of accumulating year after year after year, it begins to lock in place a certain attitude.

It reinforces the attitude. Any shaking up of that, which is what's taking place right now, begins to soften what we mean. And the question is, does the softening continue and make changes and begin to accumulate a hardening of positives on the other end, or do you get a sort of a bounce back going the other way.

Time will tell, but here's where we are right now is a beginning of some loosening up of some attitudes that occurred over the last-the last several years.

MR. INDYK: Marc, some final thoughts.

MR. LYNCH: Yes. A few quick things. On the Al Qaeda question, I think that Jim gets it exactly right. Al Qaeda's popularity, as measured in surveys and everywhere else, has always been based on its

ability to capture the mantle of what I would call general resistance.

You've got this generalized resistance to the west, to the United States.

And I think it's lost the ability to claim that mantle.

That's why I think Hamas, Hezbollah, even Iran are now positioning themselves in better position to capture that general mantle of resistance. And I think Al Qaeda -- that I think is the key area where they're losing

their ability to become kind of the avatar of that kind of resistance.

Steve Cole, who's left unfortunately, has a great finding and one of his surveys, where he asks a whole series of questions about do you support the following. And he found that 87 percent of Egyptians supported killing American troops in Iraq, because that's resistance.

And do you know how many supported killing American civilians in the United States? Eight percent.

That's the gap between general resistance in Al Qaeda's tactics. And I think that's been a very important sorting out which has taken place.

On the Iraq and Gitmo question, I think that those are exceptionally important, and I was actually surprised by the salience that Iraq had, especially because, as in the United States, in the Arab media Iraq, I think, has dropped in salience.

But I think that one way to think about this is that Iraq and Gitmo are kind of cleaning up operations; basically, it's cleaning up the mess and restoring things to some kind of status quo, at which point you

can then get to the actual issue at hand, which is the Arab-Israeli issue, which has always been the primary issue that the Arab publics care about. They've just been distracted by, you know, the, you know, so. That's the gaping chest wound, and now you've got a bandaged on the arm and a bandage on the leg, and now that we can finally get to the operation on the actual issues that matter the most.

MR. INDYK: Well, Jim, Shibley, and Marc, thank you all very much for a fascinating presentation and discussion. Ladies and gentlemen, you can find Shibley's presentation -- I don't know whether --

MR. ZOGBY: Mine is out there, too.

MR. INDYK: -- or Jim's is outside, but we'll have the results on the Brookings web site at the Saban Center.

MR. ZOGBY: Can I just make a shameless pitch for another poll we released yesterday on U.S. attitudes on Arab-Israeli issues? It was -- we did it at the New America Foundation. And it's available on her website. I think you'll find that interesting as well.

MR. INDYK: That was shameless. Thank you all very much.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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