

AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD EGYPT AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

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ATTITUDES ABOUT EGYPT

For most of the past two decades, American opinion of Egypt has been overwhelmingly favorable. In the 1990's attitudes were almost four to one favorable—with positive ratings in the 60% range. Today, however, only 36% of Americans have a favorable view of the country. And, in our most recent poll, almost one-half of Americans have a negative view of Egypt, a significant rise even since our January 2012 poll.

<i>Egypt: Favorable/Unfavorable</i>								
	1993	1996	1997	2000 ¹	2003 ²	2010	2012 ³	2013
Favorable	64	51	66	62	57	58	33	36
Unfavorable	13	14	15	16	20	29	34	48

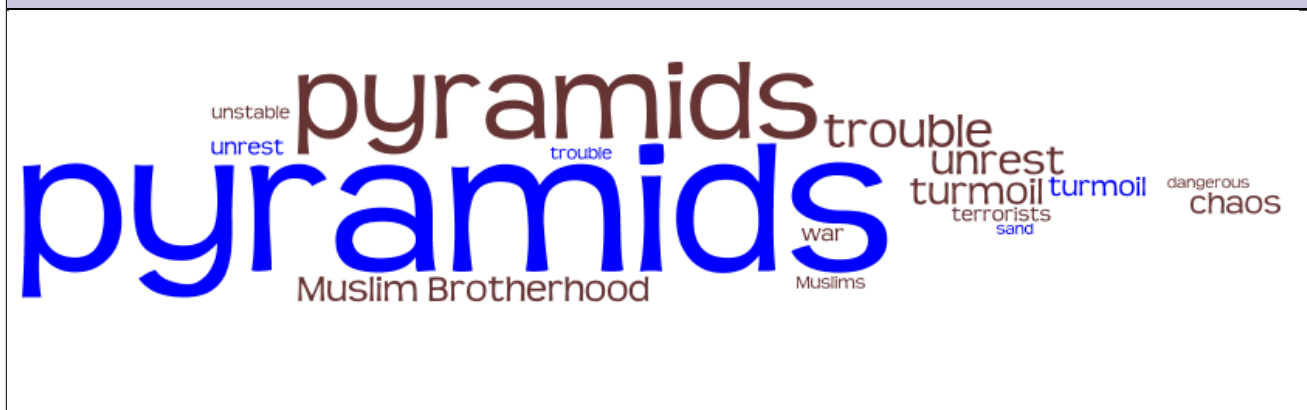
While modern Egypt has been known in the Arab World for its cinema, its comedy and music, and its political and intellectual leadership, the image of the country has never been established in the United States. A decade ago, when Egypt's favorable ratings were in the 60% range, the positive attitudes were soft. During this period, when we asked an open-ended question, like "what is the first thought that comes to mind when you hear Egypt?" the overwhelming majority of the responses recalled the pyramids, the Sphinx, and the other "glories of ancient Egypt." There was also a smattering of respondents who made reference to Sadat and/or Camp David. What was clear was that modern Egypt was not known and remained undefined for many Americans.

What our most recent poll demonstrates is that Egypt's image problem today is even more serious. At first, images of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators called to mind for many Americans their own civil rights movement or Eastern Europe's fall of the "Iron Curtain." One poll commissioned in 2011 by the University of Maryland showed Egypt's favorable ratings had climbed back up to 60%.⁴ But after two tumultuous years, all this has changed – as we have seen with just over one-third of Americans saying they have a favorable view of Egypt, and almost one-half saying they have unfavorable views.

This difficulty becomes even more pronounced after an examination of the responses to our open-ended question: "what is the first thought that comes to mind when you think of Egypt." In response, almost one-half of those who have favorable views of Egypt can only think of something related to its ancient history, giving responses like "pyramids," "the Sphinx," and "King Tut." Among those who have unfavorable views of Egypt, on the other hand, almost all of the top-of-mind responses focus on the current instability, using words like "dangerous," "chaos," "trouble," "a huge mess," "unrest," and "war."

What is the first thought that comes to mind when you think of Egypt?

The following word cloud represents the answers most often cited by those with favorable (words in blue) and unfavorable (words in brown) opinions of Egypt. Proportional size indicates frequency.



ARAB SPRING: HOPE OR DISAPPOINTMENT

When the Arab Spring began over two years ago, how hopeful were you that it would bring about positive change in societies and governance across the Arab World?

Hopeful	55
Unhopeful	21
Not sure	24

What best describes your attitudes today when you look at how the Arab Spring has played out in Egypt?

	Total	18-29	65+	Democrats	Republicans
I am still hopeful	14	18	9	20	9
Neither hopeful nor disappointed	16	20	11	18	16
I am disappointed	42	21	68	32	53
Not familiar/not sure	28	40	13	30	23

As Americans look back at how they felt when the Arab Spring first began, more than half now say they were “hopeful” that the Arab Spring would “bring about some positive change in societies and governance across the Arab World” (55%). But when asked to assess how they feel now, after seeing how the Arab Spring has unfolded in Egypt, only 14% of Americans say that they remain “hopeful,” while 42% say that they are “disappointed.” Disappointment is particularly strong among those over age 65 (68%) and Republicans (53%).

ELECTION OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

When we polled in January, 2012, only 4% of Americans saw the election of the Muslim Brotherhood party in Egypt as a positive development, with 19% saying that “we must respect the voters’ decision.” Another 26% of Americans saw the Muslim Brotherhood victory as a “set-back for Egypt.”

Today, still only a scant 4% say that the Muslim Brotherhood victory was a positive development, while the number of those who say “we must respect the results” of their democratic election has dropped to 15%. The number of Americans who now say that the Muslim Brotherhood victory was a “set-back for Egypt” has climbed to 38%.

It is significant to note that even among the subset of our respondents who have favorable attitudes toward Muslims, only 6% view the election of the Muslim Brotherhood as a positive development, while 34% feel it was a set-back for Egypt.

<i>What was your reaction to the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections in Egypt?</i>			
	2012	2013	
	Total	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
It was a positive development	4	4	6
It was a democratic election and we must respect the results	19	15	26
I was concerned that this was a set-back for Egypt	26	38	34
It made no difference because little will change in Egypt	12	15	14
Not sure	39	29	20

ATTITUDES ABOUT ARABS AND MUSLIMS

Little has changed in Americans’ perceptions of Arabs and Muslims overall from when we last polled on this issue in mid-2012, with about four in ten respondents having favorable views of Arabs and Muslims, while a slight plurality have unfavorable views of both groups.

<i>Arabs and Muslims: Favorable/Unfavorable</i>					
		2003 ⁵	2010 ⁶	2012 ⁷	2013
Arabs	Favorable	46	43	41	38
	Unfavorable	35	41	39	43
	Not Familiar	19	16	20	19
Muslims	Favorable	47	35	40	40
	Unfavorable	32	55	41	44
	Not Familiar	21	10	19	16

<i>Muslim Brotherhood: Favorable/Unfavorable</i>		
	Muslim Brotherhood	
	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
Favorable	13	30
Unfavorable	49	47
Not Familiar	28	23

The Muslim Brotherhood fares considerably worse than Arabs and Muslims, with only 13% of Americans holding favorable views and 49% holding unfavorable views. And once again, it is important to note that even among those Americans who have a favorable opinion of Muslims overall, the Brotherhood has a negative favorable/unfavorable ratio of 30%–47%.

When respondents were asked the “first thought that comes to mind when you think of the Muslim Brotherhood,” the most popular responses included words like “anti-American,” “dangerous,” “terrorists,” “fanatics,” and “extremists.”



EGYPTIAN PRESIDENTS MUBARAK AND MORSI

<i>Egyptian Presidents: Favorable/Unfavorable</i>		
	Morsi	Mubarak
Favorable	14	18
Unfavorable	51	50
Not familiar/not sure	35	32

Americans have a negative view of Egyptian President Morsi that is quite similar to their views of his predecessor former President Mubarak. Mubarak’s current favorable/unfavorable ratio is 18% to 50%, while Morsi’s is 14% to 51%. Back in

2002, when we asked Americans about their opinion of Mubarak, his favorable/unfavorable ratio was 20% to 17%, with 66% unfamiliar or unsure.⁸

<i>Under the leadership of [President Morsi/former President Mubarak] Egypt is [an ally or a friend of the U.S.; a country with whom we can do business, but neither an ally or a friend; an enemy]</i>				
	Morsi		Mubarak	
	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
A friend or an ally of the U.S.	11	18	29	39
A country with whom we can do business, but neither an ally or a friend	44	53	34	36
An enemy	14	8	7	6
Not familiar/not sure	32	22	30	19

But when Americans are asked how they describe Egypt’s relationship with the United States under Morsi only 11% describe Egypt as “a friend or ally,” while under Mubarak, 30% describe Egypt as “a friend or ally.” Looking at just the attitudes of that subset of Americans who have favorable views of Muslims does not move the needle significantly in Morsi’s favor; among these respondents, just 18% see a Morsi-led Egypt as a friend or ally, while more than half say the United States can do business with Egypt but that it is neither a friend nor an ally. Under the leadership of Mubarak, however, a plurality of those with favorable attitudes toward Muslims (39%) view Egypt as a friend or ally.

ATTITUDES ABOUT THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

<i>Do you agree or disagree that the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to democracy?</i>		
	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
Agree	15	27
Disagree	53	47
Not sure	33	26

Negative views toward the Muslim Brotherhood dominate when Americans are asked whether they view the group as democratic or not. Only 15% agree that the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to democracy, while 53% say it is not. Even among those Americans who have a favorable view of Muslims, skepticism about the Muslim Brotherhood prevails, with 27% agreeing and 47% disagreeing that the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to democracy.

<i>Do you believe the Muslim Brotherhood is anti-American or do you believe that our government can work with them?</i>			
	Total	Democrats	Republicans
They are anti-American and we cannot work with them.	33	17	51
Our government can engage with them if they are open to working with us.	36	48	27
Not sure	31	35	22

Attitudes are divided as to whether the Muslim Brotherhood is anti-American or if the U.S. government can work with them. One-third of Americans say “they are anti-American and we cannot work with them” (33%), while 36% say the

U.S. government “can engage with them if they are open to working with us.” There is a significant partisan divide on this issue with Republicans almost twice as likely to say that we cannot work with the Muslim Brotherhood (51% vs. 27% who say we can engage them), while Democrats are almost three times as likely to say we can engage with them (48% vs. 17% who say we cannot work with them).

<i>Do you agree or disagree with American military and civilian aid to Egypt with a Muslim Brotherhood-associated government in power?</i>		
	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
Agree	22	38
Disagree	47	39
Not sure	30	23

But when asked whether they support continuing U.S. military and civilian aid to Egypt under Muslim Brotherhood rule, Americans are clearly opposed, with just 22% in favor of a continuation of aid and 47% opposed to it. Even those who have favorable attitudes toward Muslims are divided on this issue with 38% in favor of U.S. aid and 39% opposed to it.

<i>Would you be more likely or less likely to visit Egypt as a tourist with the Muslim Brotherhood in the leadership of the government?</i>	
More likely	5
Less likely	32
If I had the chance, I would go regardless of who was in the leadership.	11
It doesn't matter to me; I won't be traveling there.	34
Not sure	19

One-third of American respondents say they are less likely to travel to Egypt as a tourist with the Muslim Brotherhood in the leadership of the government. An additional third say they would not travel to Egypt anyway, so it does not matter to them who leads the government. And 11% say that given the opportunity to travel to Egypt they would go regardless of who was in the leadership.

<i>How concerned are you about other Middle East governments being led by Muslim Brotherhood groups in their countries?</i>		
	Total	Favorable Toward Muslims
Very concerned	32	24
Somewhat concerned	31	38
Not concerned	11	18
Not sure	26	21

Almost two-thirds of Americans are concerned about other Middle East governments being led by Muslim Brotherhood groups (63%). The subset of respondents who hold favorable views of Muslims are equally concerned with this proposition, as 62% express concern about other governments in the Middle East being led by Muslim Brotherhood groups.

POLICY QUESTIONS

<i>Some groups in Egypt are protesting the direction being taken by their government. They say that it is pursuing policies that compromise the rights of minorities. In your opinion, what should the response of the U.S. government be?</i>					
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Favorable Toward Muslims	Favorable Toward Arabs
We should continue to support the government of Egypt. It was freely elected and is struggling to establish itself.	14	20	10	24	22
We should insist that rights be guaranteed for all citizens as a condition for any U.S. support.	51	44	59	54	61
Not sure	35	36	30	22	17

A majority of Americans believe that the U.S. government “should insist that rights be guaranteed for all citizens as a condition for any U.S. support” of Egypt (51%). Only 14% think that we should support Egypt’s elected government without this condition. There is bipartisan consensus on this issue, though Republicans are more adamant about conditioning U.S. support on Egyptian guarantees to protect minorities’ rights (59% vs. 44% of Democrats). Among the subsets of respondents who are favorable to Muslims and Arabs, majorities believe that U.S. support should be conditioned on the Egyptian government protecting minority rights (54% and 61%, respectively).

<i>Some Arab governments have taken steps to limit the activity of Muslim Brotherhood branches operating within their countries. Which of the following best describes your attitude as to what U.S. policy should be?</i>					
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Favorable Toward Muslims	Favorable Toward Arabs
We should support their decision. It is an internal matter for each government to deal with and we should not be involved.	54	52	57	49	52
We should defend the right of these groups to express themselves and to organize freely.	37	42	32	44	41
Not sure	8	7	10	7	7

A majority of Americans believe that the decisions of some Arab governments to limit Muslim Brotherhood activities in their countries are internal matters and the U.S. should not be involved (54%). This view is shared by Democrats (52%) and Republicans (57%), though a significant percentage of Democrats (42%) feel the U.S. “should defend the right of these groups to express themselves and to organize freely.” Those who hold favorable views of Muslims are somewhat split on this issue, with 49% saying it is an internal matter and 44% saying the U.S. should defend the rights of Muslim Brotherhood groups.

<i>Which of the following statements do you believe is the better goal for American foreign policy?</i>					
<i>Statement A: We should support governments, whether they are elected or not, if they work closely with us to promote regional stability and protect our interests.</i>					
<i>Statement B: We should only support democratically elected governments, even if those governments might pursue policies hostile to our interests.</i>					
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Favorable Toward Muslims	Favorable Toward Arabs
Statement A	72	68	74	74	73
Statement B	17	20	15	18	18
Not sure	11	12	11	9	10

About seven in ten Americans, regardless of political party, think that “we should support governments, whether they are elected or not, if they work closely with us to promote regional stability and protect our interests” (72% overall; 68% of Democrats; 74% of Republicans). This view is also shared by the subsets of respondents who view Muslims and Arabs favorably (74% and 73%, respectively). Only 17% of respondents overall feel that “we should only support democratically elected governments, even if those governments might pursue policies hostile to our interests.”

<i>Which of the following statements do you believe is the better goal for American foreign policy?</i>			
<i>Statement A: We should provide support for any government that is democratically elected, even if it is pursuing policies that compromise the rights of minorities in their countries.</i>			
<i>Statement B: As a condition for U.S. support, we should require that any government, whether it has been elected or not, pursue policies that protect the rights of all their citizens.</i>			
	Total	Democrats	Republicans
Statement A	10	10	8
Statement B	85	84	88
Not sure	6	6	5

Finally, there is broad agreement among Americans that U.S. support should be conditioned on the requirement that governments, whether democratically elected or not, protect the rights of all their citizens. This view is shared by 84% of Democrats and 88% of Republicans.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Zogby International, 2000, U.S. Attitudes Toward Arab Countries and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Abu Dhabi/AAI Poll. Sample size: 1,012 adults. Dec. 18-21, 2000.
- 2 Zogby International, 2003, Attitudes of US Voters Toward Saudi Arabia.
- 3 Arab American Institute, U.S. Attitudes Toward Egypt, 2012.
- 4 Anwar Sadat Chair, University of Maryland, and Program on International Policy Studies, 2011, The American Public and the Arab Awakening. Sample size: 802 American adults. April 1-5, 2011.
- 5 Zogby International, 2003, Attitudes of US Voters Toward Saudi Arabia.
- 6 Zogby International, 2010, American Views on Arab and Muslim Americans. Sample size: 2,100. September 24-27, 2010.
- 7 Arab American Institute, 2012, The American Divide: How We View Arabs and Muslims. Sample size: 1,052 likely American voters. August 15-16, 2012.
- 8 Zogby International, 2002, Attitudes of the American Public Toward the Recent Arab-Israeli Dispute. Sample size: 1,005 likely American voters. April 2-4, 2002.

METHODOLOGY

Telephone Poll: 02/28/2013 thru 03/11/2013 Online Poll: 02/27/2013

Zogby Analytics was commissioned by the Zogby Research Services to conduct a hybrid live operator telephone and on-line poll of 2,300 likely voters in the United States. The telephone poll sample was 800 likely voters in the United States. The online poll sample was 1,500 likely voters in the United States.

Telephone Samples are randomly drawn from landline and mobile telephone lists. Up to five calls are made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR's approved methodologies.

Using trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey one time.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, we use complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.

Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 2,300 is +/- 2.0 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.

Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset we can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative.

Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Total	2278
Democrats	869
Republicans	729
Independents	680
18-29	418
30-49	814
50-64	616
65 and over	352
White	1687
Hispanic	227
African American	295
Asian	31
Other race	31
Male	1067
Female	1204

