REVISITING THE ARAB STREET
RESEARCH FROM WITHIN

Center for Strategic Studies
University of Jordan
Amman - Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

The heightened sense of conflict and mistrust commonly referred to as the "post 9/11 climate," necessitates the investigation and analysis of the current relationship between the West and the Arab world. Analysts and scholars in both the Western and Arab worlds are actively engaged in the examination of this changing and complex relationship. "Revisiting the Arab Street: Research from Within" -- undertaken by the Center for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan -- hopes to add to this body of inquiry by providing an up-to-date analysis of the beliefs and perceptions prevalent with the Arab public. Using public opinion surveys conducted in five Arab countries, the study presents a picture of the attitudes found on the Arab Street.

The study confirms that many Arabs perceive important differences between the cultures and societies of the Arab world and the West. It shows, also, that Arabs across the region hold more complex and nuanced views than may have been expected. Most significantly, the study identifies Arab reaction to Western, and most specifically US, foreign policy in the region as being the single most important factor influencing Arab opinions about the West.

Respondents in the study were asked to express their opinions on a variety of issues, and to specifically address their feelings with regard to the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Participants in the countries studied -- Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine -- were found not to perceive "the West" as a unified whole. Rather, they differentiate between countries, particularly with regard to politics. For example, the Arab public views France much more positively than it does either the United States or the United Kingdom, primarily because there is a more positive perception about French foreign policy in the Middle East.

Contrary to what some observers, particularly in the US, have suggested, Arabs do not uniformly see "the West" in entirely negative terms. Indeed, they have a high value for many of the attributes Western countries and societies. Arab public opinion does not view the tension between the Arab world and the West in either cultural or religious terms. Despite views frequently promulgated both inside and outside the region, Arabs do not see that there is an ongoing struggle between "Crusaders and Muslims" nor do they support the notion of a "Clash of Civilizations." Rather, they differentiate significantly between states, particularly with regard to politics.

This study finds that Arabs do not "hate" the US and UK for "who they are" or for the cultural values they hold. Negative sentiments are being fueled, rather, by "what they do" -- that is, for specific policies and the impact these policies have on the Arab world. Neither a cultural nor a religious gap is found to be the fundamental reason for tensions between the Arab world and the West. Rather, this study finds that the Arab public disagrees profoundly with the foreign policies of the US (and the UK when they are in agreement) and that this disagreement is at the root of anti-American, and, by extension, anti-Western, sentiments which permeate the region.

The *Center for Strategic Studies* (CSS) - University of Jordan conducted an empirical survey of Arab public perceptions toward the West.

The specific objectives of the study are:

> To profile Arab public perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the politics and societies of the West;

> To examine Arab perceptions of the culture and political attributes of their own societies;

> To present a substantive picture of Arab public opinion concerning Western foreign policy and to measure perceptions about bilateral relations with the West;

> To provide a concrete understanding of the wide gulf between Western and Arab definitions and perceptions of controversial issues such as terrorism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Iraq war;

> To explore the extent to which cultural differences and Western foreign policies are causing growing Arab hostility toward the West in general, and the USA in particular;

> To identify means of promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between Arab and Western societies.

This study also contributes to enriching the survey-based research on Arab-West relations by*:*

> Incorporating a wide-range of issues relevant to Arab-West relations within a single study;

> Providing a measurement of the Arab public's perceived and actual knowledge of the West;

> Evaluating Arab relations with the West in subjective and objective terms;

> Using multi-stage, stratified data from five Arab countries on the basis of four samples each;

> Including a comprehensive range of macro- to micro-level measurements;

> Contributing to the advancement of sophisticated data collection and analysis in the Arab world.

Specifically, this study aims to demystify the motives and rationales for the state of East-West

relations, while providing a baseline for further work.

Ultimately, the *Center for Strategic Studies* hopes to contribute to the development of a balanced, rational, and less impetuous analysis of relations between the Arab world and the West.

PARAMETERS

1) The Mashreq

CSS collaborated with other research centers to conduct this survey in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and the Palestinian Territories (known collectively as "the Mashreq"). These countries were chosen because the Arab-Israeli conflict has a direct impact upon them and, thus, their political orientation, especially in relationship to the West, is profoundly shaped by that conflict. All nations studied share a colonial history with France and Britain, and all are heavily affected by US policies in the region. Finally, they provide a sufficiently broad sample from which to draw conclusions.

2) Western Societies

The survey targeted attitudes regarding the US, the UK, and France for the purposes of assessing Arab perceptions of Western societies. The UK and France were colonial powers in the region, and the US has been the major force in the region since the end of World War II, most significantly with relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Gulf War, and the current occupation of Iraq. France, the US, and the UK also have taken a variety of foreign policy approaches toward the region. This approach will thus allow for examination of how cultural and political factors, particularly in the key area of foreign policy, affect Arab attitudes toward the West.

METHODOLOGY

1) samples

The surveys were conducted between March and June 2004 on four samples in each of the five Mashreq countries:

1. A representative *national* sample of 1200 respondents
2. A *university students* sample of 500 respondents
3. A *business* sample of 120 respondents
4. A *media* sample of 120 respondents

National samples in all of these countries were drawn using a multi-stage, self-weighted design representing all social strata, regions, rural and urban areas, gender, age, occupational and educational distribution in their respective societies.[1]

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[1] The national sample for Jordan included citizens of Palestinian origin as well as refugees. Refugee camps were not included in Syrian and Lebanese samples. In regard to religion, only Lebanon does not have an

2) Questionnaire

The research questionnaire included 150 questions, covering a wide range of issues from individual and social values to opinions about Western foreign policy. Specific items measured Arab knowledge, perceptions and attitudes toward Western societies, in parallel with their perceptions of their own societies. This juxtaposition allows us to draw out perceived points of similarities and differences between the two cultures. A second section of the questionnaire addressed the issues of the definition of terrorism, the influence of Arab satellite media, the role of *Shari'a* in legislation, the levels of openness toward interpretation of religion and reactions to Western foreign policy in the region. Respondents were also asked to evaluate the status of bilateral relations between their countries and the three Western countries -culturally, politically and economically. Finally, demographic variables provide grounds for cross-sectional analysis.

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overwhelming Muslim majority (approximately 50% of Lebanese are Christian). Consequently, we present survey data specifying Muslim and Christian respondents only for the case of Lebanon.

OUTLINE OF REPORT

SECTION 1. WHERE ARABS STAND explores Arab opinions toward the West.

      I. "ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WEST" examines Arab attitudes toward France, the US, and the UK generally and, more particularly, as destinations for work, study, medical care, or tourism. Age, education and exposure to the West are analyzed as determining factors in the formation of public attitudes.

      II. "ASSESSING ARAB-WEST BILATERAL RELATIONS" CONSIDERS PERCEPTIONS REGARDING bilateral cultural, economic and political relations with three Western countries -- the US, the UK, and France.

SECTION 2: 'US' AND THE 'OTHER' analyzes Arab perceptions of the West as juxtaposed to attitudes about their own culture.

      III. "PERCEPTIONS OF 'THE WEST' AND 'THE ARAB WORLD' " explores Arab knowledge of the West and attitudes about societal and individual values deemed as characteristic of the West and the Arab World.

      IV. "ISLAM IN THE ARAB WORLD" examines the perceived role for *Shari'a in* legislation. It also considers the degree to which Arab societies are "open" or "closed" to new interpretation of religion and sheds light on the importance that attitudes toward the role of *Shari'a* in legislation have in the formation of opinions about the West.

SECTION 3: ENGAGING THE WEST - PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN FOREIGN POLICIES

      V. **"WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY"** discusses Arab reactions to and perceptions about Western (and particularly US) foreign policy in the Middle East.

      VI. **"CRITICAL CONFLICTS"** details how Arabs perceive US foreign policies, especially with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq.

      VII. "RETHINKING TERRORISM" examines how the Arab definition of terrorism diverges from the standard concept of terrorism in the West.

SECTION 4: Conclusion

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The study draws seven main conclusions:

1) ***Arabs hold coherent notions of what constitutes the values of Western and Arab societies.*** They associate the West with values of individual liberty and accumulation of wealth, while they view their own societal values as placing emphasis upon religion and family.

2) ***Arab perceptions of Western values do not determine their attitudes toward Western foreign policies.*** They hold negative attitudes toward foreign policies of the US and Britain and positive attitudes toward those of France, but these attitudes are not related to any significant differences in the perceived societal values of the three countries.

3) ***Religion is not the basis of tensions between Arabs and the West.*** Contrary to widespread media representations, most Arabs do not view the West or the US, in particular, as following a policy driven by religious forces. The notion of a "Crusader War" is largely dismissed. At the same time, Arab attitudes toward a role for Shari'a in legislation and support for or against openness in *Ijtihad*, are not the driving force behind the formulation of their attitudes toward the West. In short, there is little empirical evidence for the portrayal of Arab-Western hostilities as a religious conflict.

4) ***The Arab world does not reject the professed goals of the West's foreign policies toward the Arab World.*** Indeed, there is great support for liberal democratic principles expressed by Western leaders. However, Arabs object to Western actions because the 'situation on the ground' is in contrast to the professed principles.

5) ***Arabs disagree fundamentally with US positions on issues such as the definition of terrorism, policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Iraqi war.*** They have little confidence in US-led efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict and they largely see the US-led war in Iraq as unjustified. In addition, many fundamentally disagree with the US definition of terrorism, often viewing the actions of groups the US identifies as "terrorist" to be legitimate responses to aggression or occupation.

6) ***Despite these disagreements and disillusionments, particularly with regard to the US, many Arabs desire stronger relations between their countries and the West.*** This is particularly true of cultural and economic relations, which are viewed as less potentially problematic than political relations. The study also finds that business and media elites are most likely to seek stronger bilateral ties between their countries and the West, even though they are most likely to openly express disagreement with US policies.

7) ***Arab dissatisfaction with US policies is unlikely to diminish in the absence of significant foreign policy changes.*** Foreign policy, as exemplified most significantly by the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iraq War, is at the basis of fundamental tensions with the West and with the US in particular. This finding is consistent across all countries studied and in all demographic groups. Negative sentiments are particularly strong among youth and non-elites, who disapprove of US policies, are skeptical of American intentions in the region,

and are most likely to reject strengthened bilateral ties. Given the demographic trends in the region, whereby 50% of the population is less than 25 years of age, there is little reason to believe that these attitudes will dissipate without changes in US foreign policy.

SECTION 1

WHERE ARABS STAND

I. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WEST

Arabs hold more nuanced attitudes toward the West than is often supposed. They differentiate between Western countries, and have a tendency to view France more positively than they view the US and the UK. Arabs also distinguish between attitudes held toward Western countries overall, and their value in specific areas. For instance, many Arabs prefer the US as a destination for undertaking various activities, even though they hold very negative feelings toward the country over all. Viewing the Arab world as uniformly hostile toward the West, locked into an inevitable culture clash, will lead policymakers to miss important opportunities for improving East-West relations. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem.

There are critical distinctions within Arab public perceptions of the West, based largely on status, age, and education. Business and media elites consistently hold more positive attitudes toward Western culture and society than do average citizens. In contrast, younger respondents and those with less education are more likely to judge the West harshly. In a region with a large and growing youthful population[2], underdeveloped educational facilities, and poor prospects for social mobility, anti-Westernism is unlikely to wither away.

Arabs hold negative attitudes toward the West as a whole, but they are nevertheless much more positive toward France than they are toward the United States or the United Kingdom. For example, only 25% of national sample respondents in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt[3] report feeling either "highly positive" or "moderately positive" toward the US and the UK as opposed to 57% who felt positively toward France. As shown in Figure I.1, the US fared the worst in the opinion of Arab world, with as many as 75% of Syrians perceiving the US as "not at all positive". An important exception emerges in Lebanon, where only 20% view the US negatively.

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[2] Youth make up the majority of the populations, with 50% of the population below the age of 23 in Egypt, 22 in Lebanon, 27 in Jordan, 21 in Syria and 17 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Population growth rates in 2000 stood at 2.0% in Egypt, 3.1% in Jordan, 1.4% in Lebanon, and 2.6% in Syria. United Nations Population Fund, http://www.unfpa.org/profile/compare.cfm.
[3] We were unable to obtain raw data for Syrian respondents. Thus, we used aggregate data for the Syrian samples. This meant, however, that we could not include Syria in analyses of pooled data.

Figure I.1. General Attitudes toward Western Countries, National Samples

80
75
70
70
63
60
58
60
55
55
54
50
40
37
30
26
22
20
20
17
10
6
3
0

France USA UK France USA UK France USA UK France USA UK France USA UK

Jordan   **Syria**   **Lebanon**   **Palestine**   **Egypt**

Highly positive
Moderately
A bit positive
Not positive at all
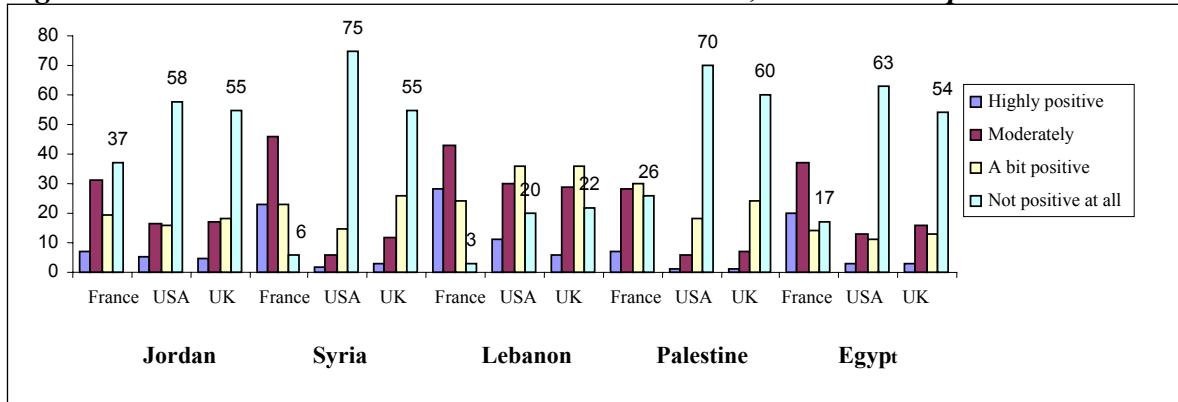
Similar results are revealed when respondents summarize their views on each of the three Western countries in a one-sentence statement. Respondents most frequently used positive statements when describing France. This was true of respondents in all five countries and four samples. In contrast, respondents more frequently described the US and the UK with negative statements, including such concepts as "racist", "aggressive", "undemocratic", "morally decadent", and "helps our enemy".

The survey population perceives the US most negatively. For example, 46% of the Jordanian national sample associated France with positive concepts such as "democracy," "tolerance," "moderation" and "the rule of law". In stark contrast, only 28% of this sample offered positive statements in conjunction with the US. Only Lebanon yielded a departure from this trend, with positive and negative views of the US almost evenly split. Moreover, the nature of criticism varies. Arabs most frequently described France as being "racist" or "religiously fanatic"[4] while they described US policies as being "imperialistic", "repressive", and "colonial".

Arabs also characterize the United Kingdom in negative terms. For example, 42% of the Jordanian national sample provided negative feedback about the UK, compared to 27% responding with positive impressions. The UK, like the US, is frequently cited as "repressive", "colonial", and "aggressive". In addition, another 12% of the Jordanians surveyed criticized the British for following policies which were simply an extension of the US agenda. Positive statements regarding the UK tended to praise such attributes as civilization, civility and material progress.

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[4] It is significant to mention that the *hijab* (veil) issue was under vigorous debate at the time our surveys were conducted (between March and June 2004). Demonstrations took place in Amman and letters of objection were written and sent to the French embassy, while the extensive media coverage took a distinctly anti-French tone. Over the same period, France's position on the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq was also a paramount topic of commentary and debate.

DESTINATION: THE WEST?

Despite their relatively negative assessments of these countries, Arabs view France, the UK and the US as desirable places to carry out certain personal and professional activities. To gauge the appeal of the West and then investigate discrepancies between this appeal and reported attitudes, respondents were asked to select *which, if any,* of the three Western countries they would prefer for each of the following activities:

1   University education (for respondent or member of family)

2   Immigration

3   Medical treatment

4   Work-related training

5   Work abroad

6   Purchase of imported goods

7   Tourism

8   Enjoyment of the arts

Their responses demonstrated that Arab attitudes toward the West - and particularly the US - as a place to do business are quite different than their general feelings toward these countries.

1) France Preferred: Tourism, the Arts, Education and Foreign Products

In many cases, Arab preferences for the West as a destination are consistent with their attitudes toward the West more generally:

Tourism and the Arts. France is the most popular destination for both tourism and enjoyment of the arts. Pooled data indicate that 54% of respondents chose France for tourism, compared to 14% choosing the US, 12% choosing the UK, and 17% indicating none of the three. Similarly, 41% of respondents preferred France as a place to enjoy the arts, compared to 18% choosing the US, 10% choosing the UK, and 26% choosing none of these states. In both cases, these preferences are consistent across the Mashreq, as shown in Figure I.2.

Education. As seen in figure I.2, Arabs also tend to find French education attractive. Lebanese, Egyptians and Syrians are all most likely to prefer pursuing education in France. Jordanians showed a preference for study in the US, while Palestinians choose to study in Great Britain. Importantly, however, 30% of Palestinians, 27% of Jordanians, and 38% of Egyptians stated that they would not choose to study in any of the countries in question.

Figure I.2. Percentage Preferring to Undertake Activity in Each Western Country, National Samples
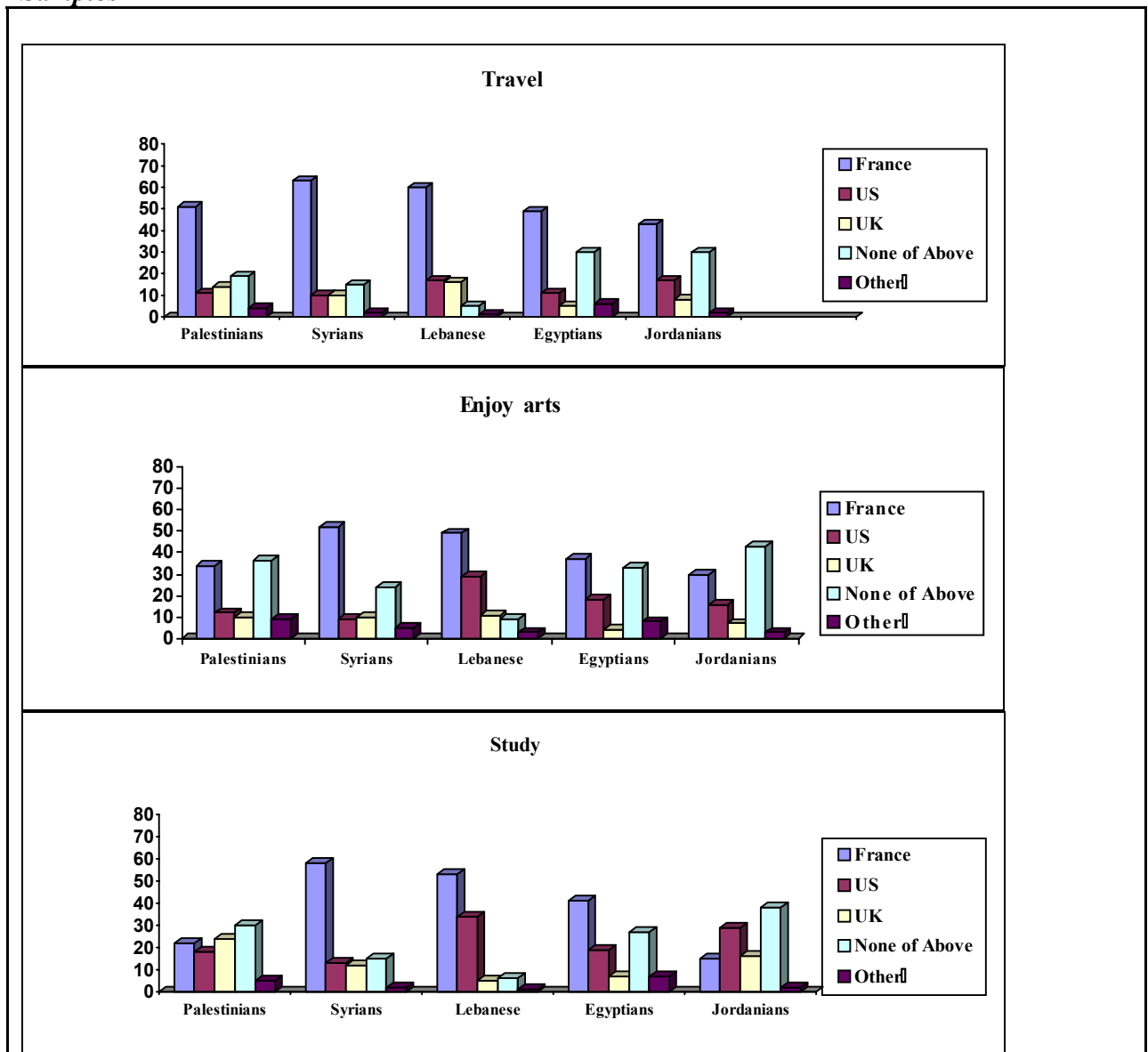
Purchasing Foreign Goods. Over one quarter of respondents also prefer not to purchase goods produced in Britain, France or the US. Of those who do prefer to purchase these goods, Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, and Egyptians tended to prefer goods produced in France. Only Jordanians chose goods produced in the US. (See Figure I.3.)

Figure I.3. Percentage Preferring to Purchase Goods Produced in Each Western Country, National Samples
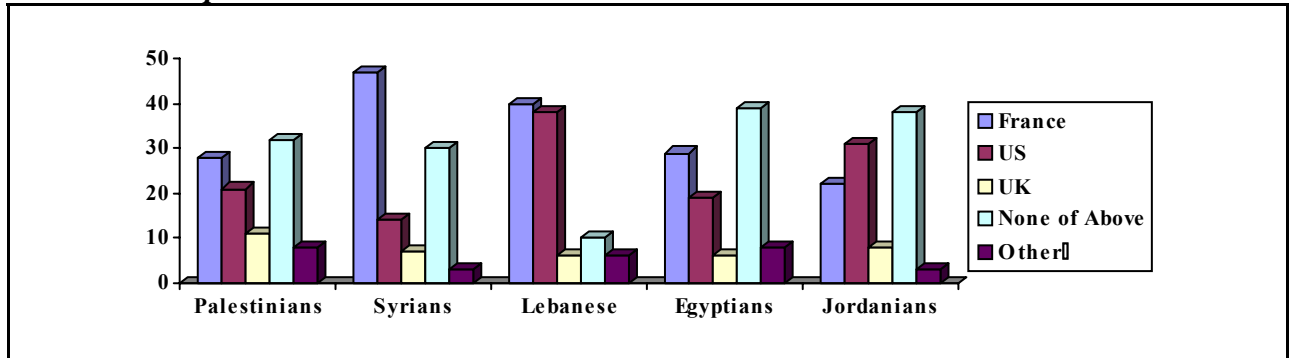
2) Reconsidering the US: Medical Treatment, Work Related Training, Immigration and Working Abroad

Generally negative attitudes expressed by those surveyed do not coincide with their preference toward the US, the UK and France as chosen destinations for specific purposes. Despite their high levels of dissatisfaction, Arabs recognize specific advantages to engagement with the West.

Work and Immigration. Many Arabs would prefer not to work in, or immigrate to, the West. Of those who did, Syrians and Egyptians tended to prefer France; Jordanians and Lebanese were more likely to choose the US. Palestinians, in contrast, tended to choose to immigrate to France but to work or receive work-related training in the US. Britain was not the most frequently chosen destination for immigration in any of the Mashreq countries. (See Figure I.4)

Figure I.4 Percentage Preferring to Undertake Each Activity in Western Country, National Samples
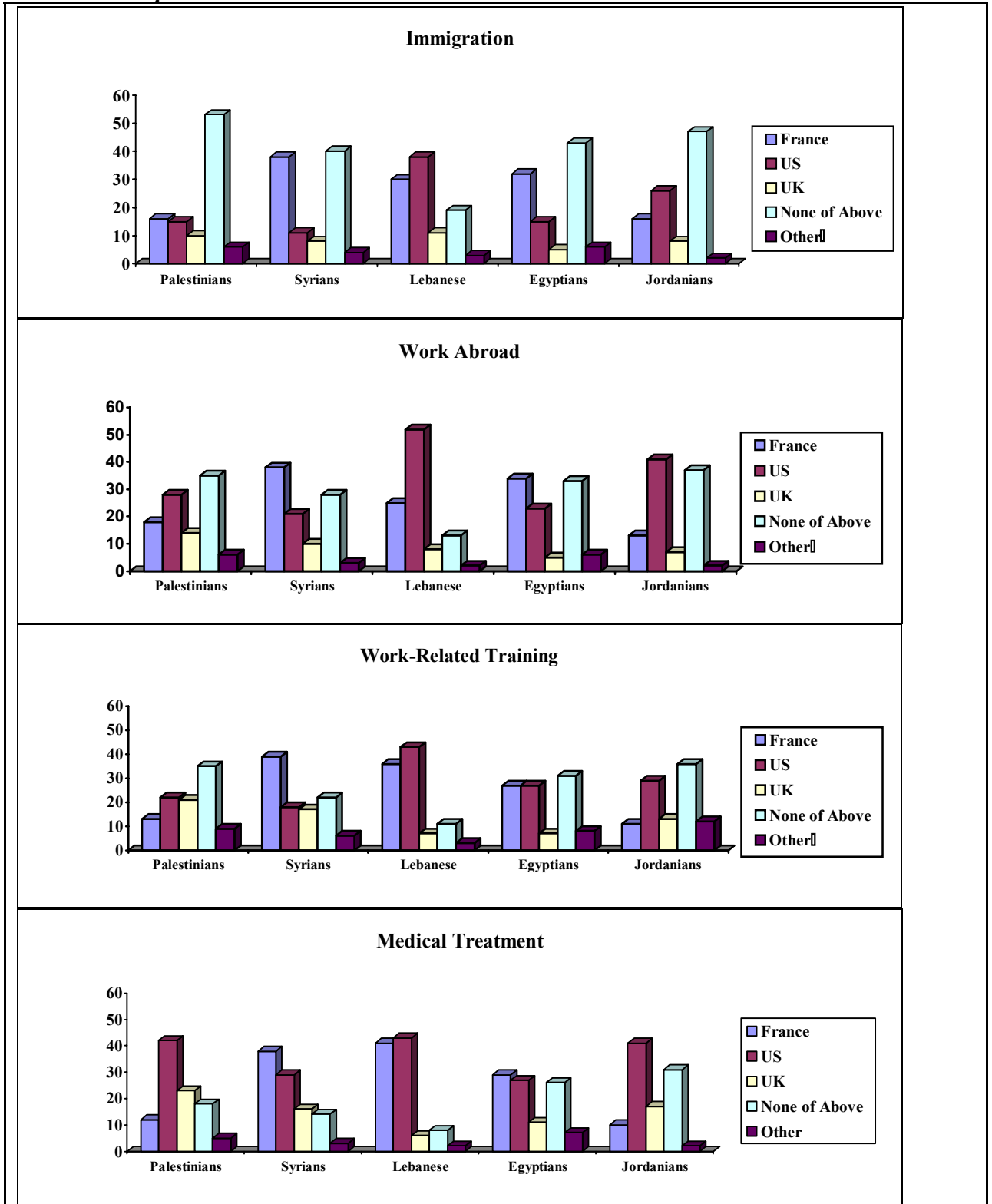
Medical Treatment. Both France and the US were also popular destinations for medical treatment. As seen in Figure I.4, Jordanians, Lebanese and Palestinians chose the US, while the Syrians and Egyptians prefer France.

In short, Arabs hold complex attitudes toward the West. They distinguish between France, the US, and the UK -- holding more positive assessments of France than either the UK or the US. Their views on each country also vary, depending on the specific question at hand. For instance, while the vast majority holds negative feelings toward the US, many nevertheless are willing to engage with the US for work, study, and medical care. Thus, while the survey reflected the growing tensions between the Arab world and the West, it does not support the caricature of an Arab public that fully and uniformly rejects the West.

SEEDS OF GROWING ANTI-WESTERNISM: AGE, EDUCATION, AND EXPOSURE

The large, and growing, youth population, the less educated, and those outside of elite circles hold the most hostile feelings toward the West. Thus, we can extrapolate a critical finding: absent major policy changes, the increasingly tense Arab-West relations are unlikely to improve. Given current demographic realities throughout the region, these populations - accompanied by their pent-up anger - show no likelihood of diminishing or withering away.

Age. Youth (ages 16-24) exhibit lower levels of positive attitudes toward the US, Britain and France than all other age groups. Youths are nearly split in their perceptions of France, but older generations diverge, with majorities declaring more positive attitudes toward the French. Lebanon is particularly interesting: Lebanese youth are least likely to feel positively toward France, but their older counterparts are among the most likely to view France favorably. Age appears even more related to attitudes toward the US and the UK. Regarding both countries, and across countries, younger respondents are about half as likely to view these countries positively. (See Figure I.5.)

Figure I.5. Favorable Attitudes toward Country by Age, National Samples

France

US

Britain
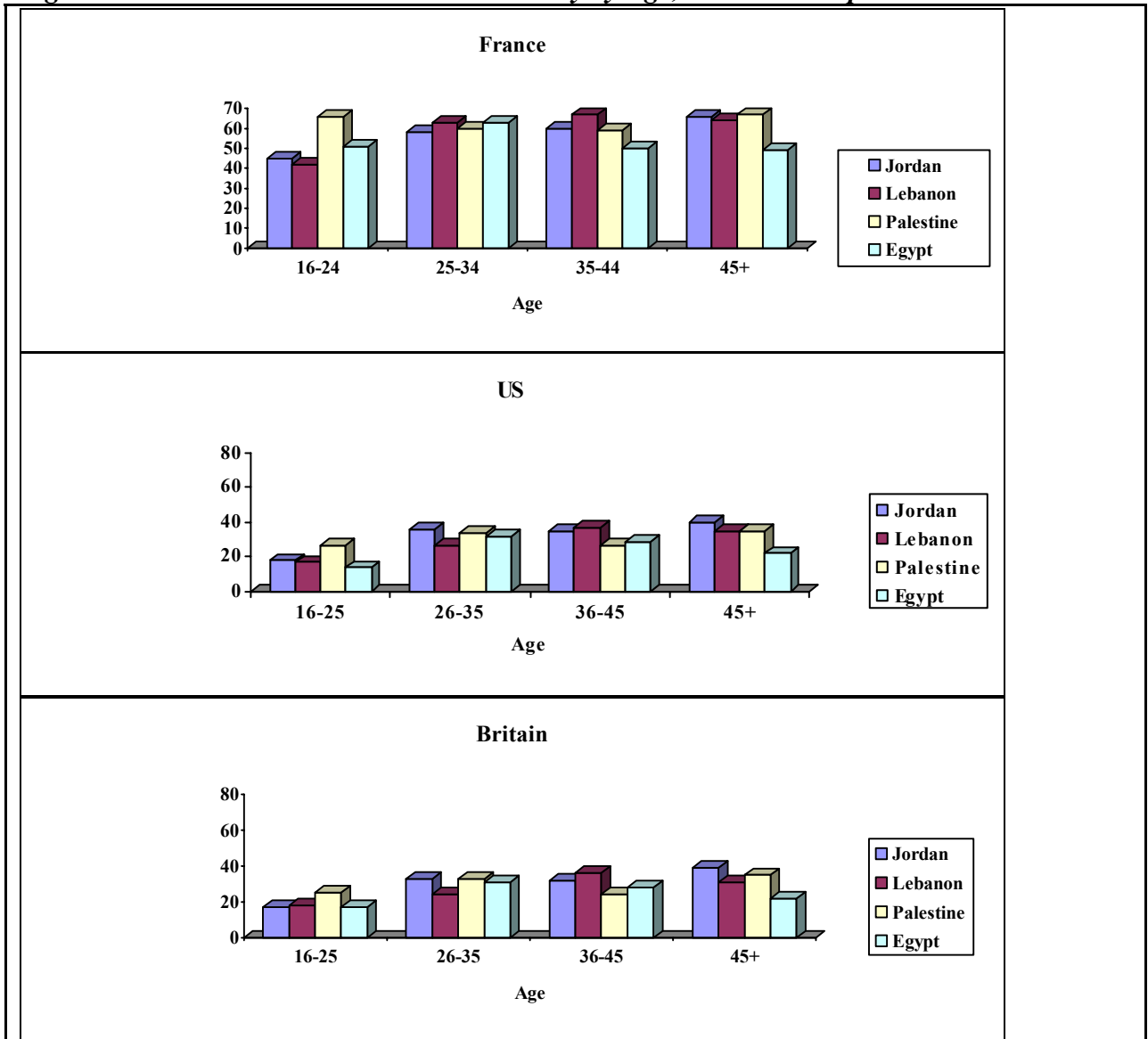
The relationship between age and attitude toward the West as a destination is more complex. Older respondents are more likely than youth to choose "none of the above" when asked in which country they would prefer to undertake specific tasks. For instance, only 18% of respondents aged 16-24 years preferred not studying in any of the three countries, compared to 28% of respondents more than 45 years old. Respondents expressing interest in studying in the US and Britain also declined in relation to age, dropping from 40% and 12%, respectively, of youth 16-24 years old down to 34% and 8%, respectively, of adults over 45 years old. At the same time, the percentage of respondents preferring not to work abroad in any of the three countries rose from 24% of the youngest age group to 35% of the older adults.

Education. The level of education respondents have achieved also affects Arab attitudes toward the West, although it is important to note that all educational levels had high degrees of negative

attitudes. Nonetheless, more highly educated respondents are more positive when asked to give general evaluations of Western countries. In the pooled data, positive evaluations toward France increased from 47% among low-educated respondents to 65% among the highly educated. The same pattern applies to both the US and Britain. Of respondents with low education, 83% reported negative attitudes toward the US and 84% held negative attitudes toward Britain. Of those with high levels of education, 75% and 73% held negative attitudes toward the US and Britain, respectively.

There are some interesting differences in the relationship between levels of education and attitudes toward the West across the Mashreq, as evident in Figure I.6. Most notably, Palestinian attitudes toward the US remained very low even among those with higher levels of education. Education also appears to have little effect on the attitudes about the US of Egyptian respondents. In contrast, education did have a significant impact on Jordanian attitudes toward the US: the higher the education, the more positive the attitudes held toward the US.

Figure I.6. Percentage of Respondents Expressing Positive Attitudes toward Country by Education, National Samples
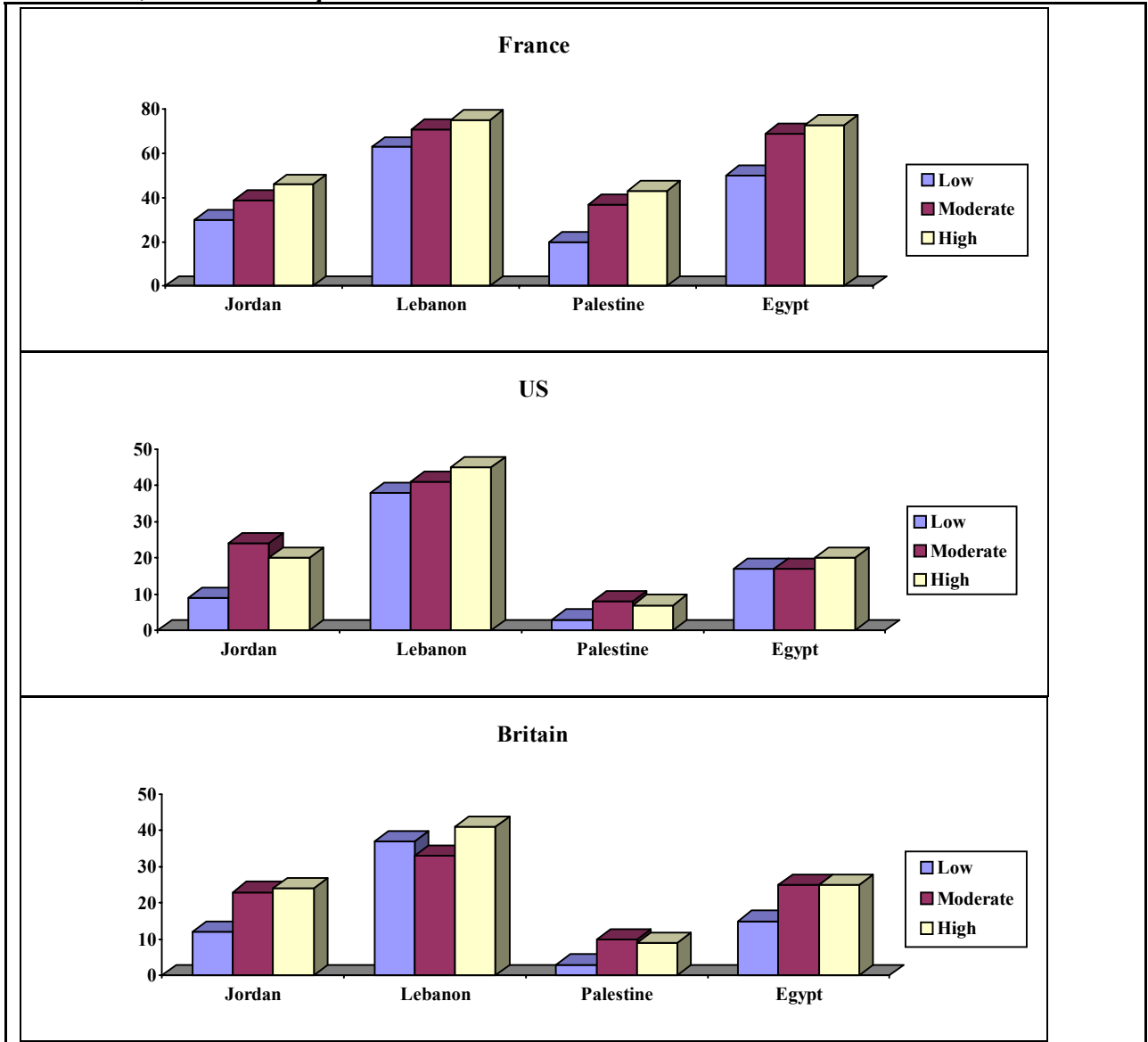
Business and Media Communities: Members of the business and media community also hold more positive attitudes toward the West than the respondents in the national sample. This was clearly evident in their one-sentence summaries of each Western country. As shown in Figure I.7, this relationship exists across the Mashreq and is consistent regarding all three Western countries. This partially corroborates earlier findings that education affects attitudes, as members in these communities are typically better educated than national samples. It also suggests that direct exposure to the West, through travel abroad, personal contact, access to Western media or use of the Internet, helps to mitigate negative attitudes.

Figure I.7. Percentage of Respondents Expressing Positive Attitudes toward Country, by
Sample
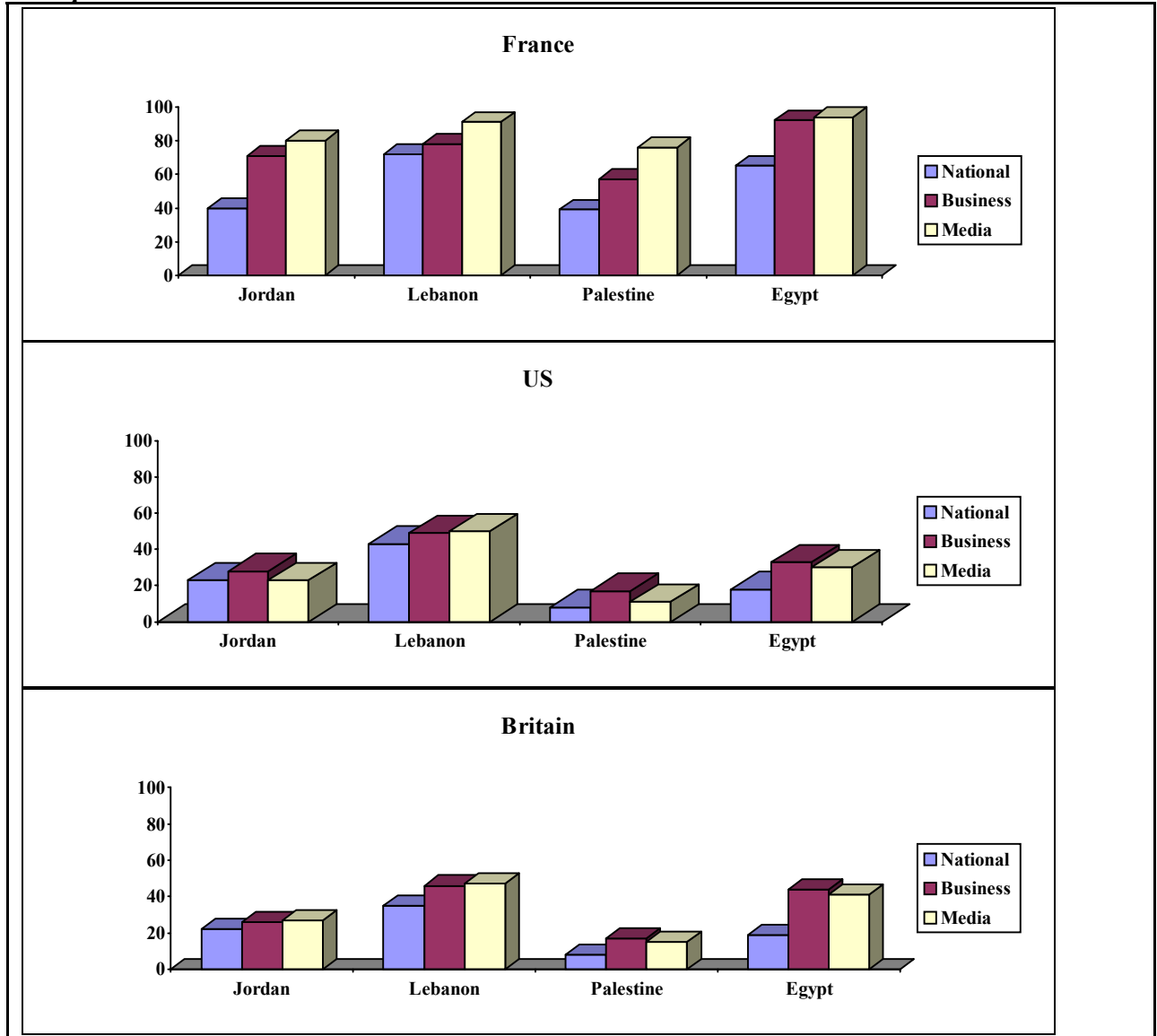
CONCLUSION

The survey confirms that Arabs are largely disenchanted with the West, but it also suggests a number of important refinements to conventional wisdom:

Arabs do not feel equally negatively toward all Western countries. Less than 50% of national samples expressed positive attitudes toward all of three countries. France consistently fared better than the US and the UK. As we shall see further, it is not simply "the West" that Arabs dislike.

Arab attitudes toward the West do not determine whether or not they choose France, the US,

or Britain as a place to pursue personal business, get medical care, educate themselves or their children, shop, or vacation. Arabs recognize particular strengths of individual Western countries, and they are willing to engage with them to benefit from their strengths, even if their general attitudes toward the country are negative. This is particularly notable with regard to the US, which respondents view as being equally as desirable as France for medical treatment, work-related training, immigration, and work.

The US and Britain have reason to acknowledge and be concerned about the ever-growing negativity felt toward them in the Middle East. Younger generations and those outside of elite business and media circles demonstrate greater and growing disgruntlement with these Western powers. Within this context, positive attitudes toward the US and the UK can be expected to continue to plummet unless major policy changes are implemented.

II. ASSESSING ARAB-WEST BILATERAL RELATIONS

Arabs hold more complex attitudes toward their respective countries' bilateral relations with France, the US, and the UK than is often supposed. Perceptions of existing relations vary significantly across states. Respondents in the five Mashreq countries viewed relations with France as good and most wanted to see these relations strengthened. In contrast, when asked to describe the state of the bilateral relations in question, Jordanians, Egyptians and Lebanese perceived their countries as having good relations with the US and the UK, but, notably, the majority does not want to see these relations strengthened. Palestinians and Syrians felt their countries already had poor relations with the US and Britain but, at the same time, expressed scarce interest in strengthening those bilateral relations.

Indeed, the study finds strong evidence that individual attitudes toward France, the US, and the UK influence the desire to strengthen bilateral relations with these states. Those surveyed sought stronger ties with the French, whom they generally view positively, even though the current bilateral relations with France are already perceived as strong. In contrast, they are less likely to seek stronger ties with the US, particularly political ties, regardless of whether or not current relations are deemed to already be close. Arabs in the Mashreq do not seek equally strong relations with the West, but rather prefer strong relations with those nations which are already viewed positively, which, in our survey, is France.

As we shall see later in this report, Arabs are particularly concerned about American intentions in the region, and this concern makes them leery of seeking stronger political relations with the US.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

Existing Relations. Arabs appear to have a clear understanding of existing bilateral relations. Most respondents in all five countries viewed relations with France as good, although as shown in *Figure II.1,* positive perceptions of bilateral relations with France were generally less prevalent among Palestinians and most widespread in Egypt. In contrast, while Jordanians, Egyptians, and the Lebanese described their countries' political relations with the US in positive terms, Syrians and Palestinians see them quite differently. Prevalence of this assessment plummeted from 87% of Jordanians viewing positive bilateral relations with the US to only 27% of Syrians.

Arabs view bilateral political relations with the United Kingdom very similarly to those with the US. Among the national samples, 84% of Jordanians, 70% of Egyptians, 56% of Lebanese, 42% of Syrians and 40% of Palestinians described their bilateral relations with the UK as somewhat good or very good. (See Figure II.1).

Figure II.1. Percentage Who View Political Relations between Their Governments and Western Nations as Good, National Samples
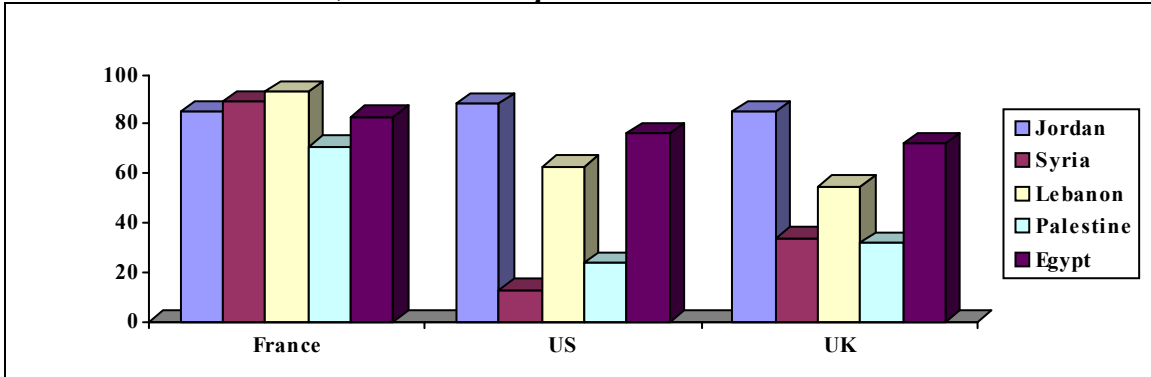
Strengthening Tie: The public's general attitudes toward each country conditions attitudes toward changing and deepening bilateral political relations. Thus, as shown in Figure II.1, the majority of respondents supported further strengthening ties with the French, even though they already viewed these relations as positive. In contrast, more than 50% of Syrians preferred either maintaining or further limiting relations with the US, even though almost 75% viewed Syrian-US relations as poor. It is not a perceived *need* for improved relations, but rather a general attitude toward these countries under consideration, that most influences enthusiasm for closer ties.

That it is attitudes toward each Western state, rather than the strength of current bilateral relations, which affects enthusiasm for further strengthening bilateral relations, is demonstrated by comparing attitudes toward France, the US, and the UK. Most respondents prefer to strengthen bilateral ties with the French, even though they generally describe these ties as currently strong. In contrast, many are more reluctant to strengthen ties with the US and the UK even when they do not see the current bilateral relations with these states as strong. Indeed, Lebanon is the only country in which a majority of the population favors stronger bilateral, political relations with the US. There, 59% of respondents favored increased political ties, as compared to 40% in Jordan, 30% in Syria, 38% in Palestine and 46% in Egypt. Britain fares somewhat better: Of national samples, 40% in Jordan, 39% in Syria, 57% in Lebanon, 42% in Palestine, and 46% in Egypt sought closer political ties. (See Figure II.2)

Figure II.2. Attitudes toward Changing Bilateral Political Relations, National Samples

Relations with France

Relations with the US

Relations with Britain
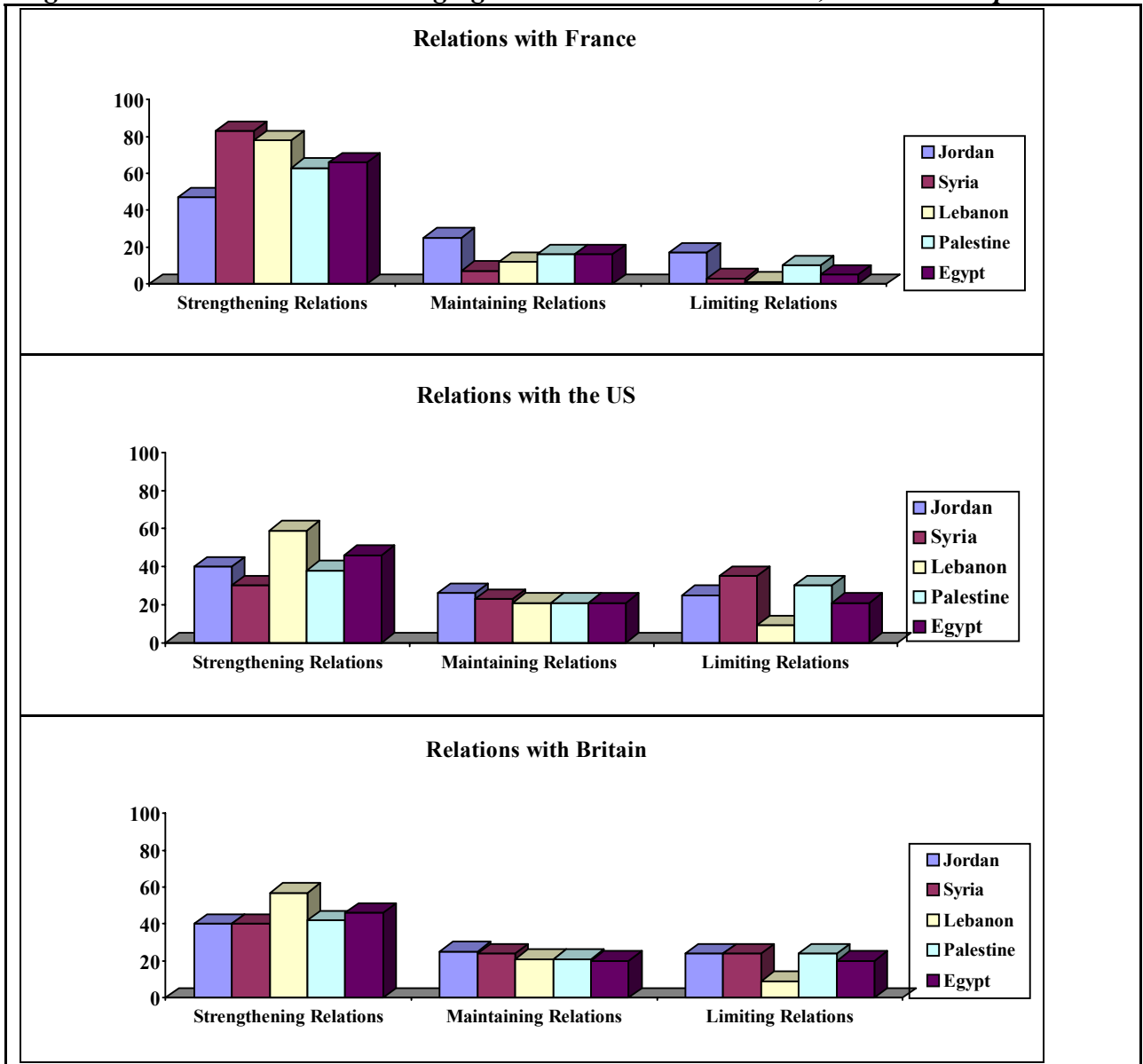
ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Existing Relations. Arab perceptions of economic relations mirror their attitudes about political ties. Most Arabs describe existing bilateral economic relations with France as good or very good: more than three-quarters of Jordanians, Lebanese, Syrians, and Egyptians viewed economic ties with France as positive, although only 53% of Palestinians held this view. Arabs are divided in their perceptions of bilateral economic ties between their own countries and the US. The majority of Egyptians, Jordanians, and Lebanese see these relations as somewhat or very good, while most Palestinians and Syrians see them as poor. Similarly, Egyptians, Jordanians, and Lebanese are likely to see economic ties with Britain as positive, in contrast to Syrians and

Palestinians. (See Figure II.3.)

Figure II.3. Percentage Who View Bilateral Economic Relations as Good, National Samples
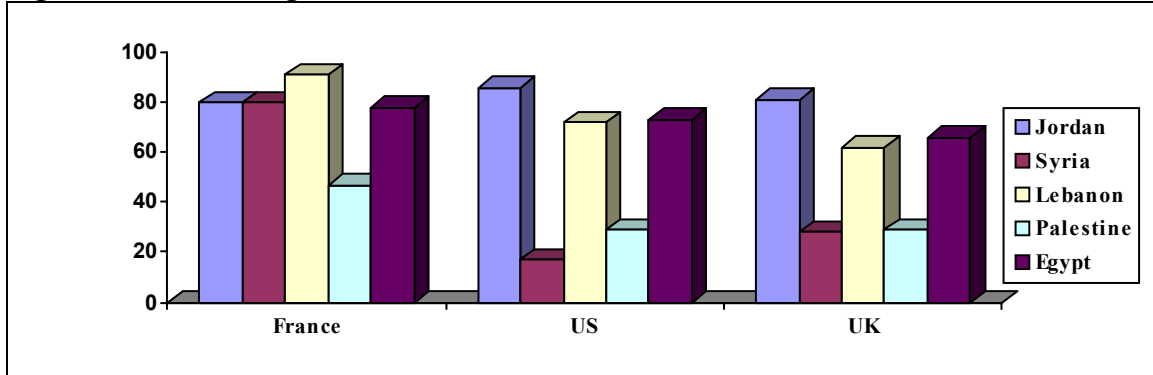
A similar pattern appears when respondents are asked to assess who benefits more from the economic relations. Majorities of national samples in the five countries believe that their own country is benefiting more than France from bilateral economic relations.[5] In contrast, Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians believe that the US derives more benefit from economic relations, with only Egyptians believing that Egypt benefits the most. Similarly, the majority of respondents in the national samples in Jordan, Syria, and Palestine believe that the UK gains most from their bilateral economic relations, while Lebanese and Egyptian national samples indicated the contrary.

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[5] These perceptions may not equate with the actual economic reality. A study of real, versus perceived, economic benefit coming to the nations surveyed from France (research outside the scope of this study) may not necessarily match the more positive perceptions the public holds about the value of their economic relationship with France.

Figure II.4. Attitudes Regarding Who Benefits More from Economic Relations, National Samples

Relations with France

Relations with Britain
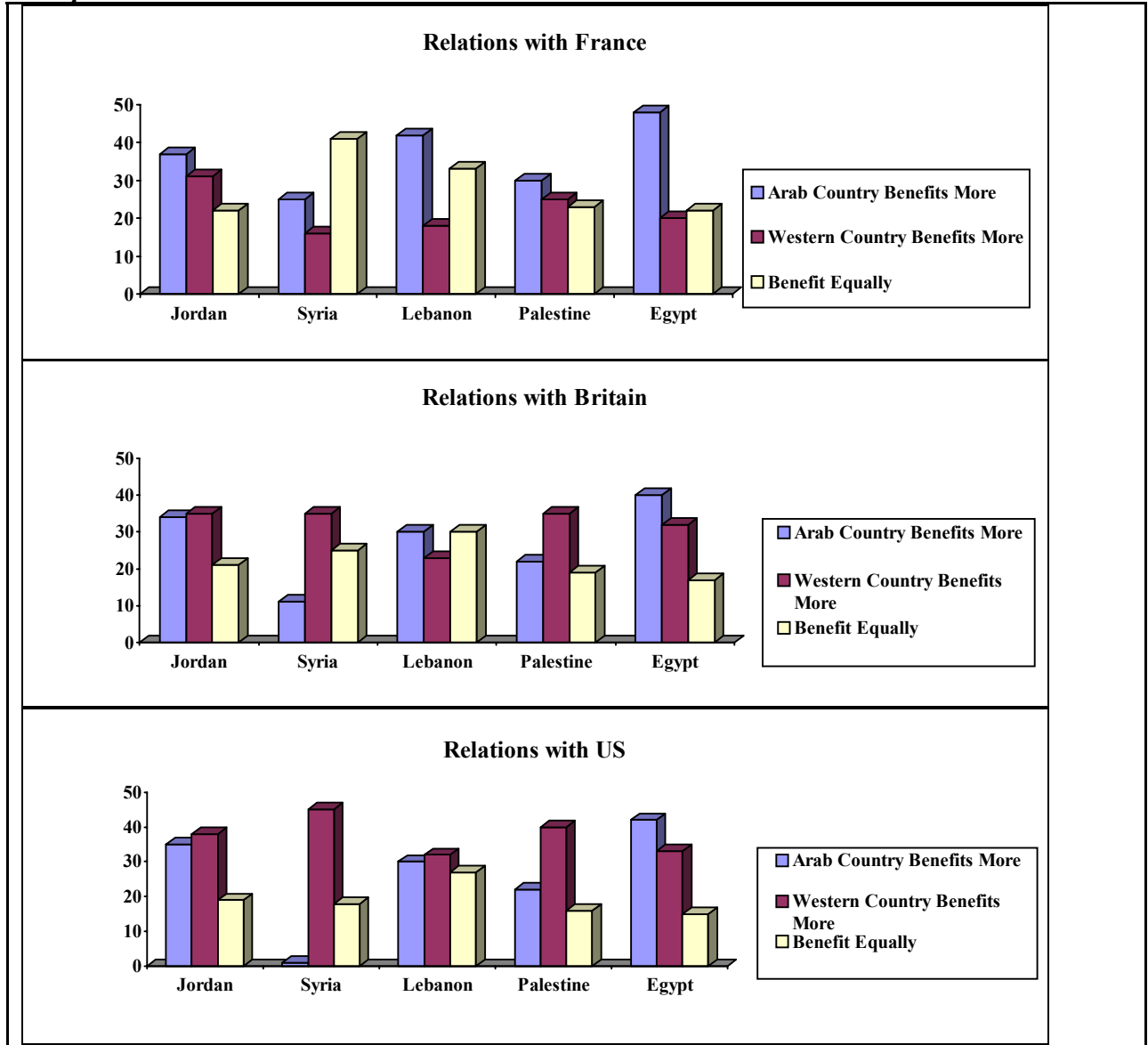
Relations with US

Strengthening Economic Relations. Attitudes toward changing economic relations with the West are largely consistent with assessments of who benefits in the relationships. France is seen as acting more equitably in bilateral ties, thus there is more support for strengthening relations. As shown in Figure II.5, in national samples, 56% of Jordanians, 81% of Syrians, 88% of Lebanese, 64% of Palestinians, and 70% of Egyptians want stronger economic relations with France.

On the contrary, many Arabs see the US as the "big winner" in economic relations, thus they show little enthusiasm for seeing ties strengthened. Syrian respondents are most disinterested, with only 32% of the national sample favoring closer ties. In Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt, only

about half of respondents in the national sample seek improved economic ties. It is notable that this lack of enthusiasm for strengthening of ties also shows up in statistics from Egypt, despite the fact that Egyptians expressed the belief Egypt was benefiting positively from its economic relations with the US. Only in Lebanon do a clear majority want stronger economic relations with the US, with two-thirds to three-quarters of respondents in all samples seeking increased ties.

A pattern similar as that for the US holds for the UK.

Figure II.5. Attitudes toward Changing Bilateral Economic Relations, National Samples
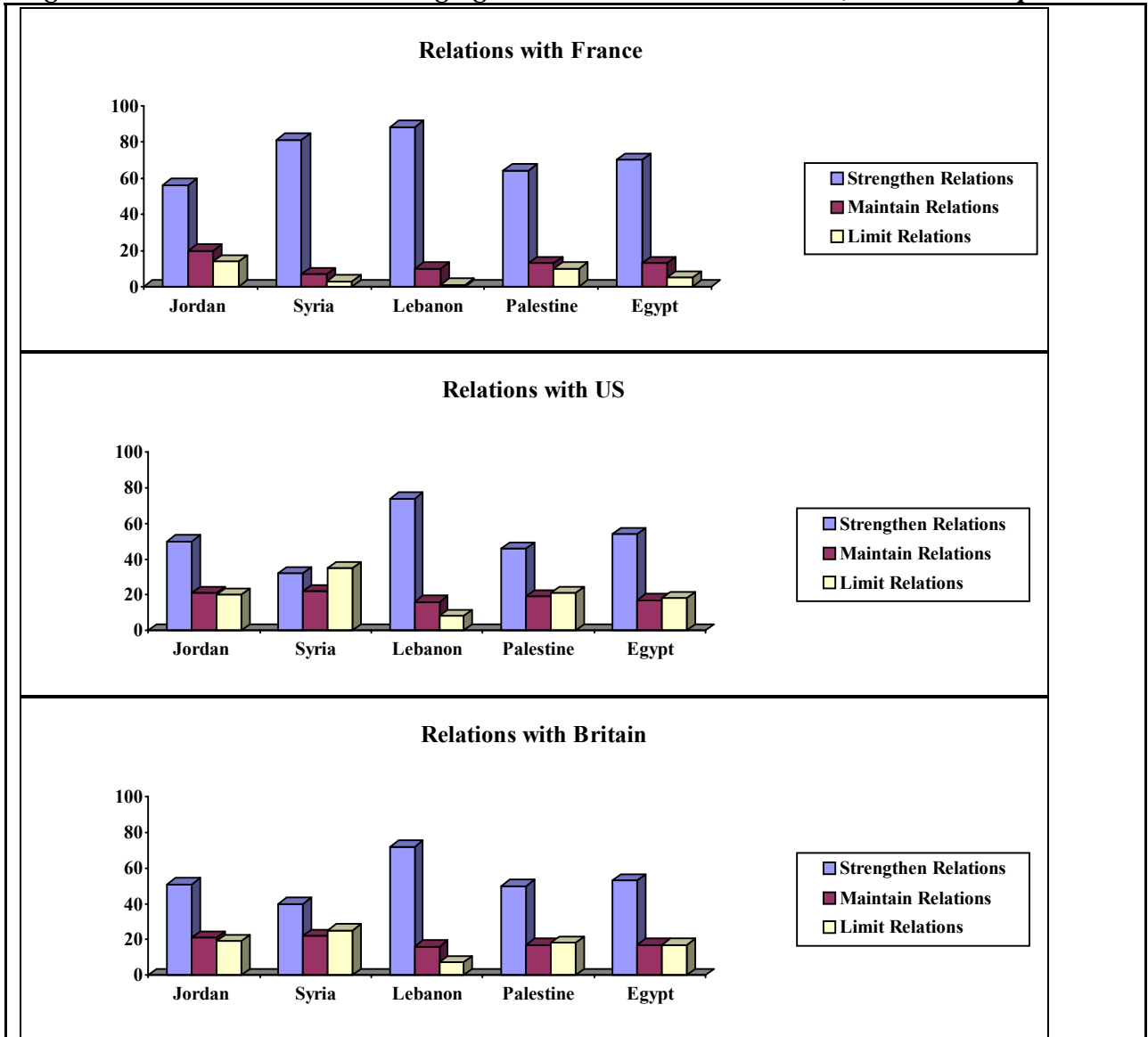
CULTURAL RELATIONS

Existing Cultural Relations Arab views toward the health of bilateral cultural relations mirror attitudes toward political or economic relations. As seen in Figure II.6, France is perceived most positively, with majorities in all five countries describing cultural relations as very or somewhat good. The Egyptians, Jordanians, and Lebanese also see themselves as having strong cultural ties with the US and the UK, while only a minority of Syrians and Palestinians perceived positive cultural relations with the US.

Figure II.6. Percentage Who View Bilateral Cultural Relations as Good, National Samples
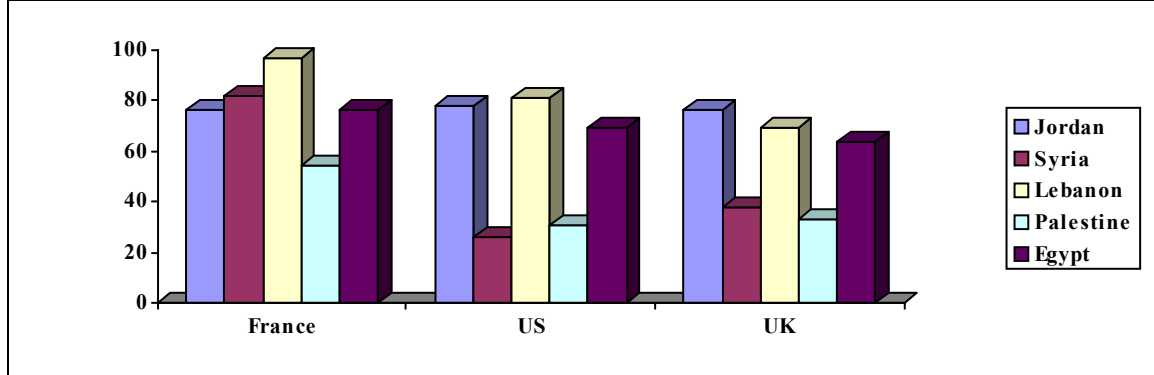
Strengthening Cultural Ties. Similarly, more Arabs prefer to see strengthened cultural relations with the French than with the Americans or the British. (See Figure IBID. below.) Majorities in all countries, and across samples, favored stronger bilateral ties with France. Jordanians and Palestinians were the least enthusiastic in this regard, but even there, 51% and 59%, respectively, sought closer relations. Again, as with economic relations, it appears that the more positive sentiments toward France stemming from political factors also influence attitudes toward cultural relations.

Attitudes toward stronger relations with the US are quite different. Only in Lebanon did a majority of national sample respondents favor closer cultural ties. Eighty-one percent of the Lebanese national sample stood in favor, compared to 46% in Jordan, 43% in Syria, 44% in Palestine and 50% in Egypt.

These attitudes are similar to those towards Britain, where 78% of Lebanese favored closer relations, compared to 46% in Jordan, 53% in Syria, 46% in Palestine and 50% in Egypt.

Figure II.7. Percentage That Prefer Strengthening Bilateral Cultural Relations, National Samples
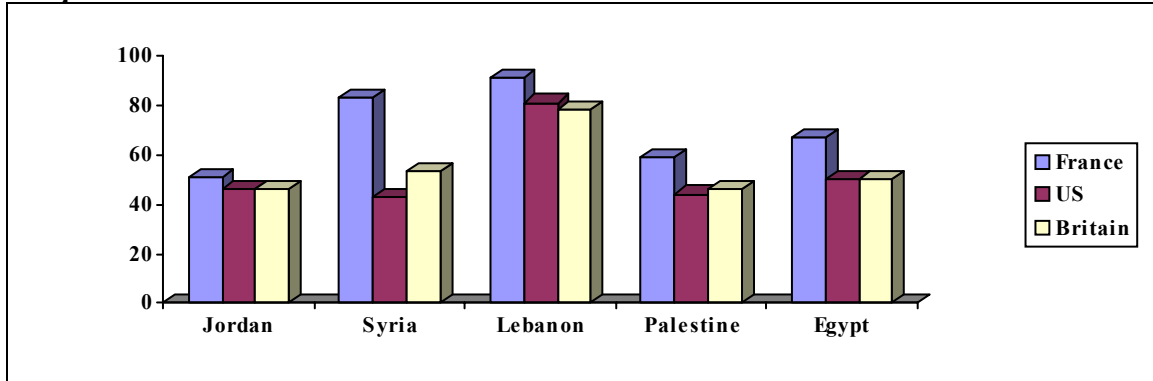
A GAP IN PERCEPTIONS: ELITE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD BILATERAL RELATIONS

There is an increasing gap between the attitudes of educated youth and the members of business and media communities concerning bilateral relations with the West. Business and media communities tend to perceive relations with the West as positive, advocating closer bilateral ties, whereas university students take quite an opposite view. They show greater distrust of the American and British intentions and do not seek stronger bilateral relations with these states.

Business and the Media: Does Exposure Breed Enthusiasm? Business and media elites often assess current relations as better than the national community does. In addition, they are even more likely to show stronger support for improved bilateral relations. This is particularly interesting since, as we shall see in Part III, these elites generally do not feel positively about US foreign policies. They are highly likely to criticize US foreign policies toward Iraq and Israel, and they are more frequently skeptical of US policy intentions. Nevertheless, it appears that greater contact with the West, which is most common among these groups, fosters greater support for closer ties, regardless of negative views concerning US and British policies.

We explore this phenomenon here by focusing on political relations, but similar patterns are found in relationship to cultural and economic relations as well. As shown in Figure II.8, media and business elites are more likely than their national counterparts to see increased ties as beneficial. This is consistently the case with regard to France and Britain, but not with the US.

Figure II.8. Percentage Who View Bilateral Political Relations as Good, by Sample

Relations with France

Relations with US

Relations with Britain
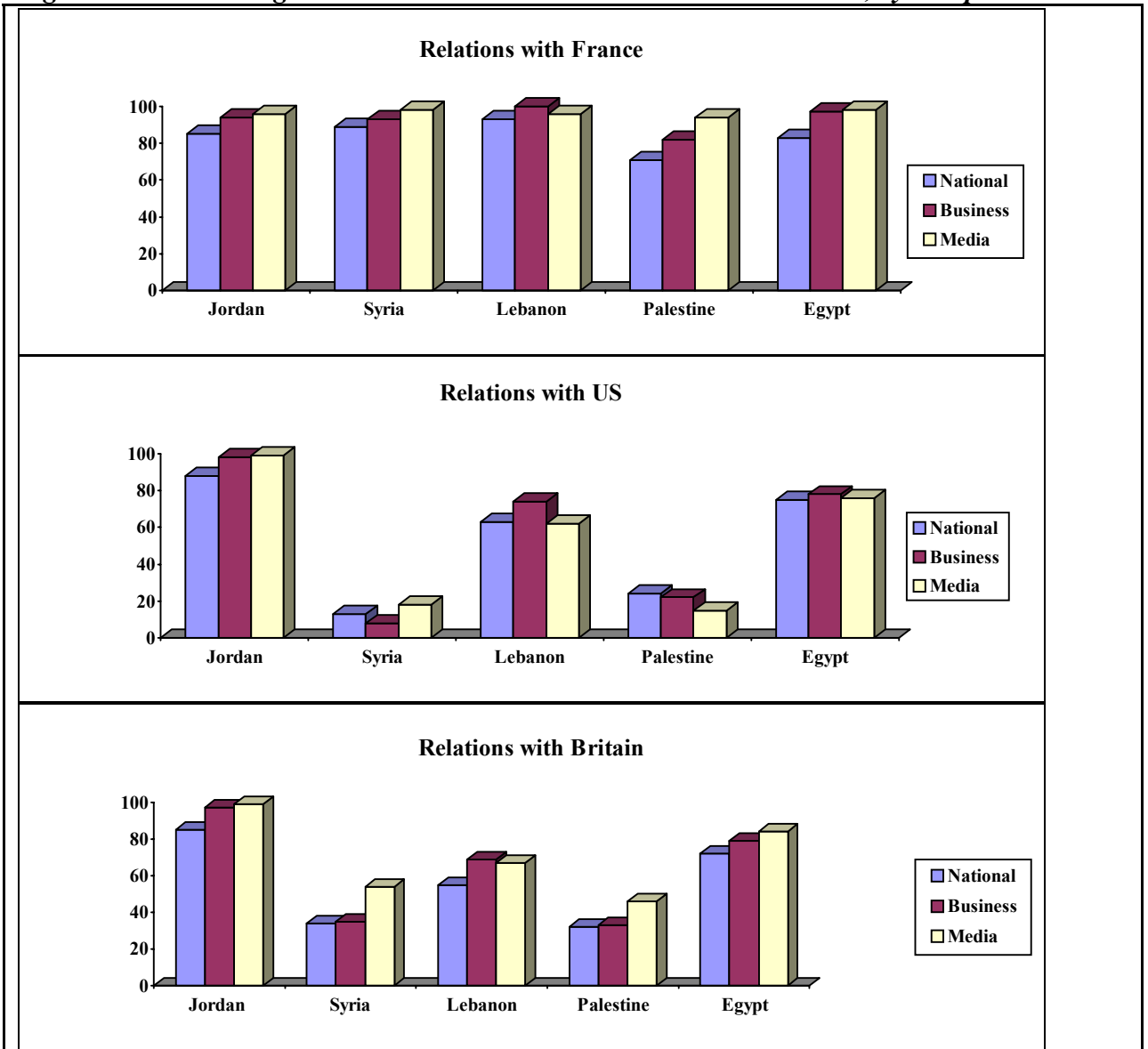
Respondents in business and media samples were more likely to seek improved political ties than are those in the national samples. We see this in Figure II.9 below. Even in Syria, where enthusiasm for stronger political ties is overall extremely low, members of the business and media communities are more likely to seek stronger relations than their compatriots.

Figure II.9. Attitudes toward Improving Bilateral Political Relations, by Sample

Relations with France

Relations with US

Relations with Britain
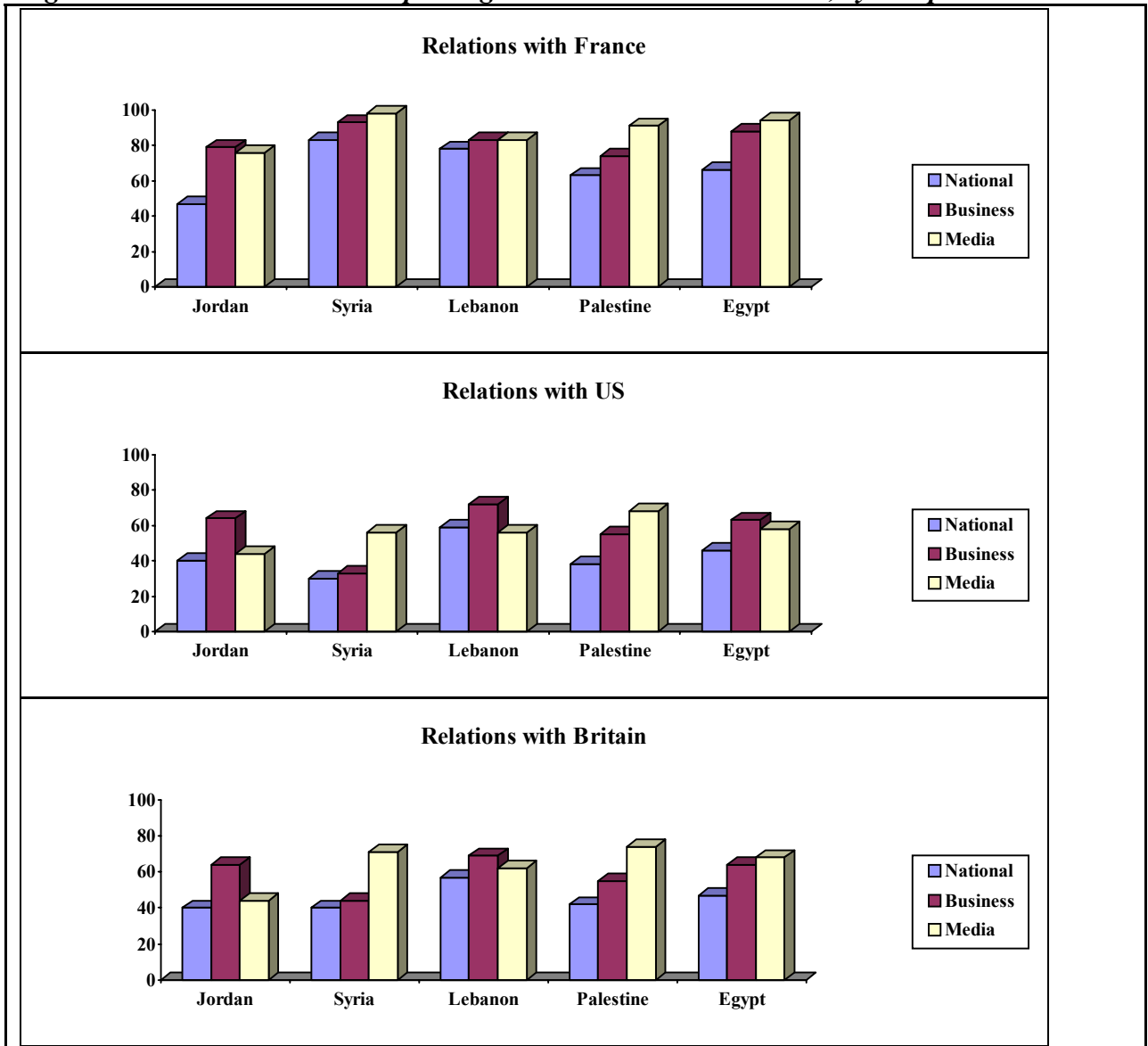
The data thus suggest that greater exposure to -- and frequently stronger personal ties with -- the West acts as a catalyst for desiring stronger political and economic relations.[6] This is particularly interesting because those in elite circles -- and specifically the media -- are among the most boisterous critics of US foreign policies. Yet, they differ significantly from the average citizen in how they believe Arab states should engage with the US. In this, there is a significant divergence between the views and attitudes of elite communities and those of the general populace.

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[6] Although this study does not explore the relationship explicitly, we assume that elites in business and media communities have often studied in the West, tend to travel there more frequently, have greater access to and interaction with Westerners, and are exposed to more Western media than non-elites.

Disenchanted Youth. Young people -- and particularly university students -- are much less enthusiastic toward the prospects of improving relations with the West. As shown in Figure II.10 below, their support for improved relations with the US and Britain often falls below even those of the national population. This is particularly true for Egyptian and Palestinian students. For example, only 20% of Palestinian university students seek stronger political ties with the US, as compared to 38% of the national respondents. Similarly, only 27% of Egyptian students want to see closer US-Egyptian relations, compared to 46% of the national sample.

This same pattern holds with regard to enhancing ties with Britain: 27% of Palestinian students seek closer Palestinian-British relations, compared to 42% of their national counterparts. In Egypt, 29% of students surveyed sought closer ties with the UK, as opposed to 46% of the national sample.

Figure II.10. Percentage of Respondents Supporting Closer Bilateral Political Ties
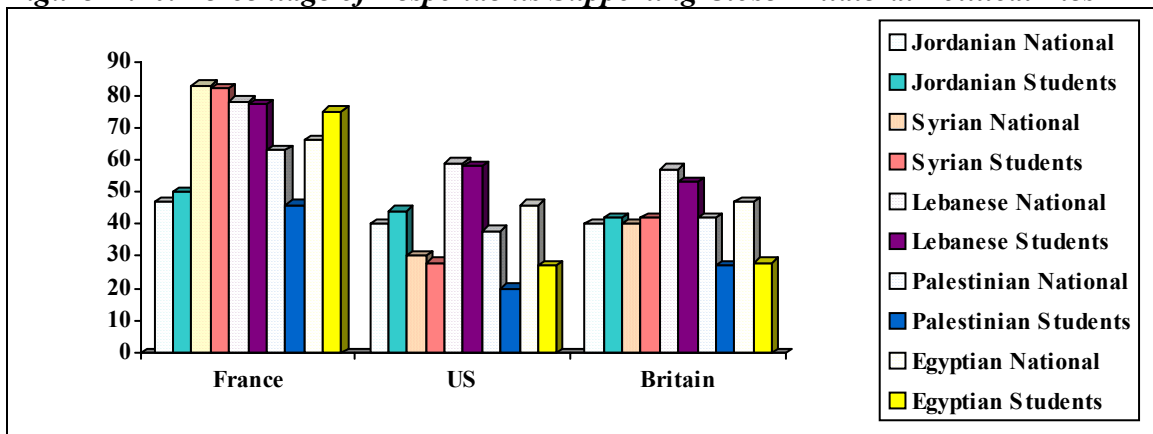
The data suggest that student reluctance to seek closer relations with the US and Britain stems from the prevalent belief that these countries are behaving in a negative manner toward the Arab world. When asked, for example, whether the US deals with other countries in the world with respect and dignity, 63% of Palestinian students and 74% of Egyptian students disagreed completely, in comparison with 53% and 59% of the national samples, respectively.

Students are also more likely to believe that the US exploits their country economically. For instance, when asked whether their country or the Western partner benefits more from economic ties, Palestinian and Egyptian students were much more likely than the national respondents to perceive the West as doing better. Specifically, 56% of Palestinian students and 53% of Egyptian students believed the US gained more from bilateral economic relations. This compared to 40% of Palestinians and 33% of Egyptians, generally.

Similarly, 50% of Palestinian students and 38% of Egyptian students believe Britain gains more, as opposed to only 35% of Palestinians and 32% of Egyptians in the national samples.

CONCLUSION

Arabs differentiate quite strongly between the status of current relationships and the desirability of forging stronger economic, cultural, and political relationships with France, the UK, and the US:

Arabs see France as a good partner almost without exception, while they do not see the US and Britain as such. This is particularly the case in Syria and Palestine.

Many Arabs desire stronger relations with the West on all three levels - political, economic, and cultural - despite their political frustration. This often exists even where the general perception is that the West derives a greater benefit from the relationship with the Mashreq countries than do these countries themselves.

Business and media elites view relations with the West somewhat more positively than the average citizen. They are more likely to perceive current relations as good, and they are almost always more likely to desire stronger relations.

University students generally feel less favorably than average citizens about strengthening bilateral relations. Palestinian and Egyptian university students displayed the most negative attitudes with regards to strengthening political, economic, and cultural relations between the US and the UK and their respective countries.

SECTION 2

'US' AND THE 'OTHER'

PERCEPTIONS OF "THE WEST" AND "THE ARAB WORLD"

Many analysts discuss deteriorating Arab-West relations in terms of "the West" vs. "the Arab World", referring to distinct spheres of civilization, culture, religion, political ideology, and state systems. Yet, what does "the West" mean to Arabs at a conceptual level? Similarly, can we speak of the Arab world as one distinct cultural entity? Most importantly, to what extent is a cultural gap between "the West" and "the Arab World" linked to the increasingly negative attitudes that Arabs have about the West?

This study finds that Arabs do see a significant gap between Western and Arab societies. They characterize the West and the Arab world in concrete and consistent terms, although their depictions of Western culture often differ from the ways in which Western citizens portray their own cultures.

Yet, cultural disparities between the West and the Arab world are not at the core of the current tensions. Arabs believe that Western societies hold many positive values. However, they often feel that Western policies do not reflect the values they profess. It is this inconsistency, rather than the values themselves, that is met with Arab disapproval. There is little evidence that Arabs perceive the West as a Crusader force, intent on destroying the Islamic world in a battle over religious beliefs. Indeed, people in the Arab world see the vast majority of Westerners and those in the US in particular, as not being strongly influenced by religious motives.

THE KNOWLEDGE GAP: PERCEIVED VS. ACTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE WEST

Arabs base their assessments of the West on a fairly thin knowledge of its cultures and societies. Indeed, less than half of respondents believe that they have a good understanding of culture and society in France, the US, and the UK. This figure is still much greater than the percentage of respondents who can actually demonstrate accurate knowledge. Younger respondents and those who are members of the business and media communities know more about Western societies, but educational level is not consistently and significantly related to cultural understanding.

Actual demonstrated knowledge was less than expressed in individual self-assessments. When respondents are asked to describe their knowledge of each Western society on a four-point scale, one-third and two-thirds of national samples reported "very good" or "considerable" knowledge of the US, Britain and France. (See Table III.1.)

Table III.1. Percentage of National Respondents Claiming Knowledge of Western Countries, National Samples

	Jordan		Syria		Lebanon		Palestine		Egypt	
	Much	*None*	*Much*	*None*	*Much*	*None*	*Much*	*None*	*Much*	*None*
France	30	27	41	21	59	8	27	26	35	30
US	43	22	42	22	54	9	35	20	44	25
UK	33	26	33	27	36	21	27	25	32	33

NOTE: "Much" refers to those who claim "considerable" or "very good" knowledge, and "None refers to those claiming "Hardly any" knowledge or stating "Don't Know". Remaining respondents, not listed in the table above, assessed themselves as having "A Little Knowledge".

However, when asked to name a single non-political figure from each state, less than one-third of most national samples could do so. Indeed, as Figure III.1 shows, the number of respondents who could not name even one non-political figure exceeded 60% in most cases. Table III.3 illustrates percentages in national samples able to name one, two, three, or no non-political figures.

Figure III.1. Percentage of National Sample Unable to Name One Non-Political Personality in the Western Country.
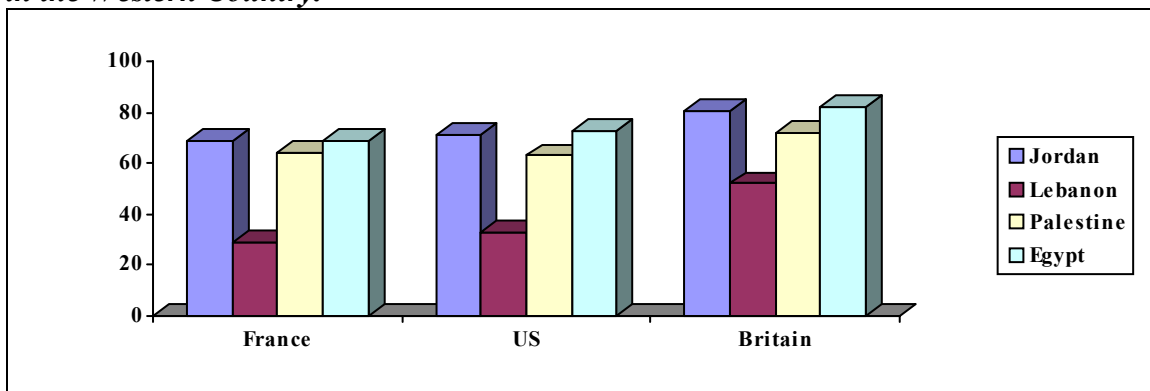
There are some important exceptions to the knowledge gap. Lebanese generally perceive themselves as having much greater knowledge about the West - and particularly of France and the US - than their neighbors, and, in fact, they are able to demonstrate more actual knowledge. Young people are also more likely to know Western cultural figures. As shown in Figure III.2, the percentage of respondents unable to name prominent personalities drops significantly among younger populations. This is particularly true regarding knowledge of France and the US.

Figure III.2. Percentage of Respondents Unable to Name a Single Cultural Personality by Age, National Samples
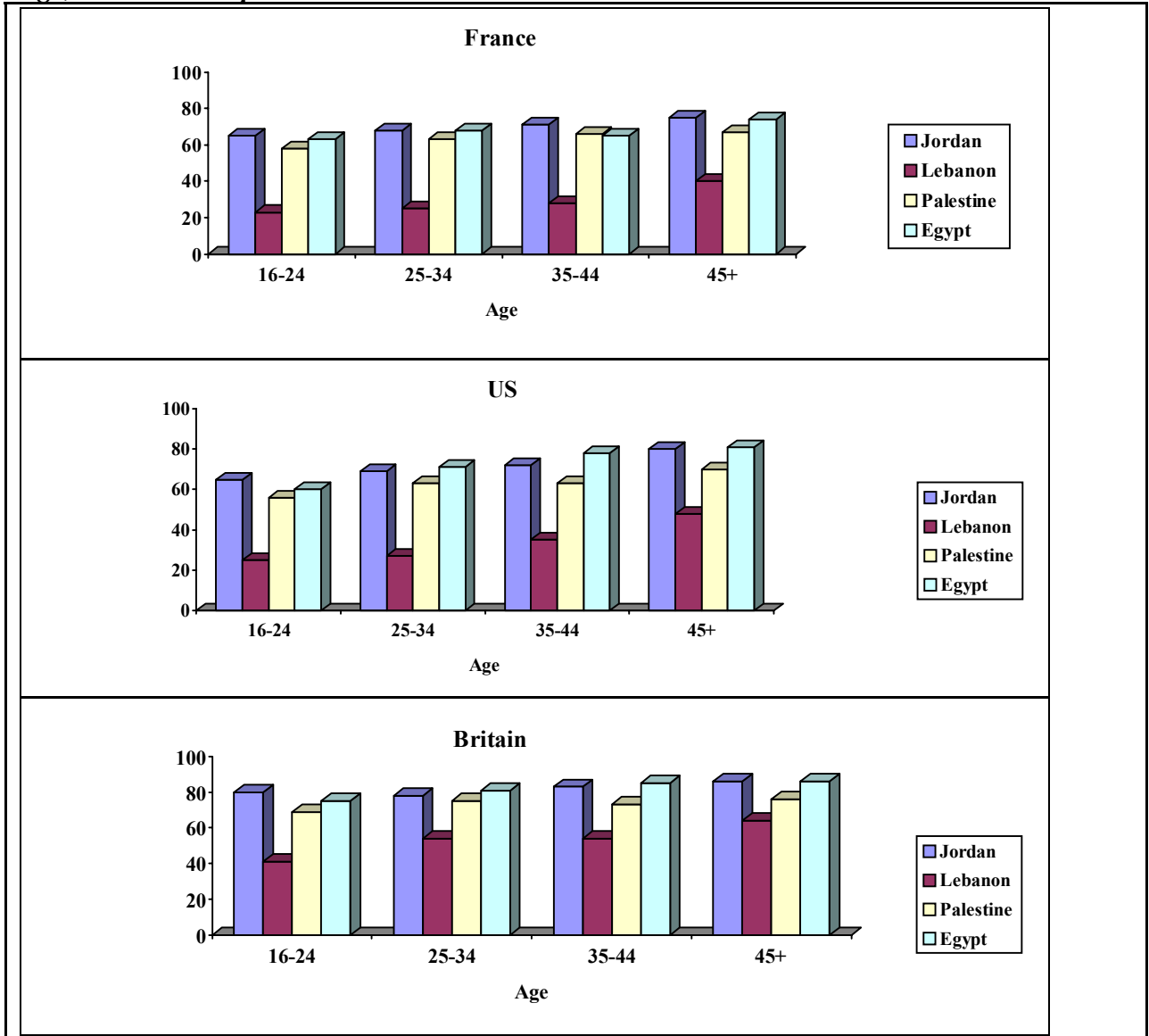
Members of the business and media communities, and to lesser extent university students, also demonstrate relatively greater knowledge of Western countries. This is clearly shown in Table III.2 below. Respondents in these samples report a greater understanding of the West, and they are also able to exhibit this knowledge. Media respondents consistently were more able to provide information on Western cultural figures.

Table III.2. Reported Knowledge of Western Cultures, by Sample

Knowledge of	Sample	Jordan Reported	Lebanon Reported	Palestine Reported	Egypt Reported
France	National	30	59	27	35
	University	41	67	40	51
	Business	69	71	44	84
	Media	83	94	66	92
US	National	43	54	35	44
	University	43	54	35	44
	Business	86	62	55	84
	Media	91	80	77	94
Britain	National	33	36	27	32
	University	49	42	40	47
	Business	80	45	43	82
	Media	83	63	68	93

NOTE: "Reported Knowledge" is the percentage of the sample claiming "Very good" or "considerable" knowledge of the country.

This suggests that, for the most part, impressions shape Arab attitudes toward the West at the cultural level more than detailed knowledge of Western societies. Given the tense political situation in the region for more than 50 years, with political news dominating front pages of newspapers and television screens, it is not surprising that space available for issues other than politics has been relatively limited. The data reflect this.

Table III.3 The percentage of respondents in national samples able to name cultural figures

National samples: able to name French cultural figures				
Country	**None**	**One**	**Two figures**	**Three figures**
Jordan	70	30	16	8
Egypt	69	31	19	10
Lebanon	29	71	55	36
Palestine	64	36	23	12
National samples: able to name American cultural figures				
Country	**None**	**One**	**Two figures**	**Three figures**
Jordan	71	29	19	11
Egypt	74	26	20	14
Lebanon	30	70	51	35
Palestine	63	38	27	15
National samples: able to name British cultural figures				
Country	**None**	**One**	**Two figures**	**Three figures**
Jordan	81	19	9	4
Egypt	82	18	11	5
Lebanon	52	48	27	15
Palestine	74	26	15	9

NOTE: Respondents were requested to name cultural figures. A small percentage named "cultural" figures who would more precisely be deemed political figures.

Regardless of the extent of knowledge about Western societies, citizens of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt maintain a fairly unified impression of both Western and Arab cultures. That is, when asked to evaluate the prevalence of *societal* and *individual* values in their own society and in all three of the Western societies, respondents present a consistent picture of their own cultures vis-à-vis a Western 'other.' As we will demonstrate later, these shared cultural perceptions stand in contrast to some important differences in views of the West at the political level in different Arab societies. Arabs perceive a cultural gap, but it is not this gap, real or perceived, that they feel underlies the current tensions.

Individual Values. Arabs perceive the individual values held in their societies to be strikingly different from those held in Western societies. These differences are clearly evident in Figure III.3, which summarizes how prevalent Arabs believe each value to be in their own and Western societies. Generally, Arabs see themselves as having good manners and as being more respectful of others than the French, the Americans, and the British. They see Westerners as generally more perseverant and determined, more responsible, and more frank in expressing their views, but as less generous, hospitable, and frugal than Arabs. Once again, they differentiate across Western societies to some extent, seeing the French as holding values more closely related to those of Arab societies.

Figure III.3. Respondents' Estimates of the Prevalence of Individual Values, on a 1-10 scale (1=not at all prevalent, 10 = prevalent), Pooled Data
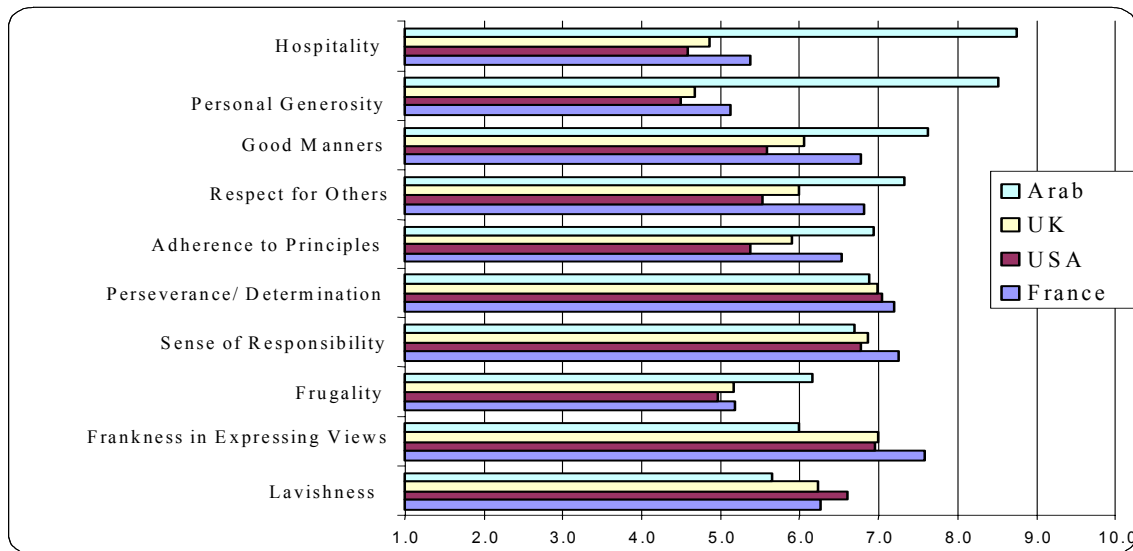
Societal Values. Arabs believe that their societal values stand in sharp contrast to those of the West. They generally associate Western societies with liberalism, individual liberty, democracy, and technological progress, but also with a higher proportion of social problems. In contrast, they see their societies as maintaining stronger values of tradition and family and as being less fraught with social problems.

When asked to assess the prevalence of a set of societal factors, respondents consistently

perceived Western societies as placing a high value on social liberty, gender equality, the environment, and the arts, while they see their own societies as having much greater pride in heritage than Western societies. There is also consensus that Western societies are highly technologically advanced, while less than 50% of respondents believe that Arab societies are technologically advanced. (See *Figure III.4* below.)

Figure III.4. Respondents' Estimates of the Prevalence of Societal Values, on a 1-10 scale (1=not at all prevalent, 10 = prevalent), Pooled Data
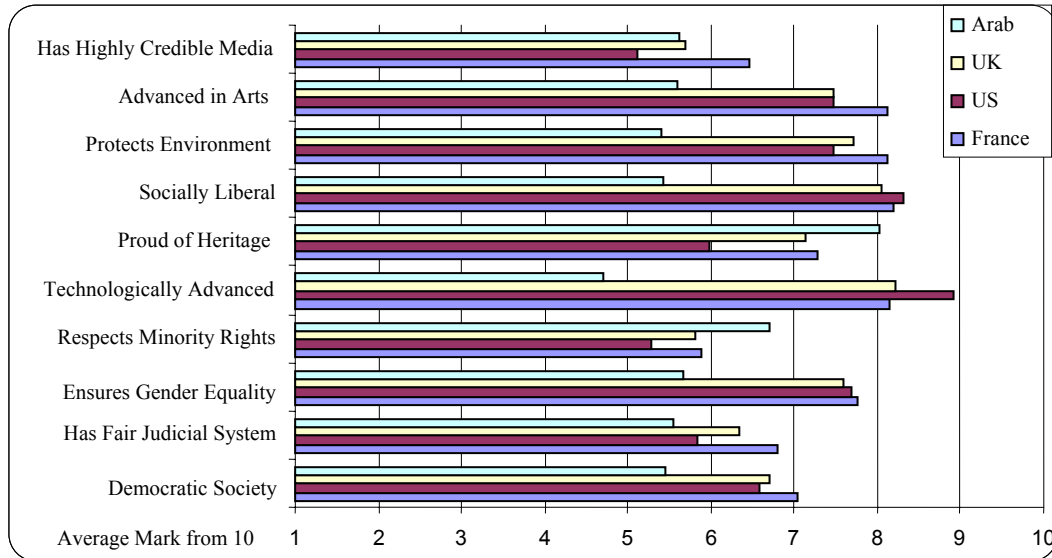
Arabs also believe that Western societies fail to respect minority rights. This perception is linked to a perception that the French, the Americans, and the British discriminate against Muslims. When asked whether or not Muslims enjoy the same rights as others in each country, the vast majority of respondents were skeptical. As shown in Figure III.5, 25-50% of respondents in most cases *completely disagree* that Muslims have the same rights in the West as their fellow citizens. In contrast, less than 18% across all national samples agreed that France treated Muslim citizens equally; less than 13% across national samples viewed Britain as providing equal treatment; and less than 12% across national samples largely agreed that the US treated Muslims and non-Muslims equally.

In respect to this specific question, France was viewed almost as critically as the US and the UK.

Figure III.5. Percentage of Respondents Who Completely Disagree that Muslims Enjoy Equal Rights in Western Country, National Samples
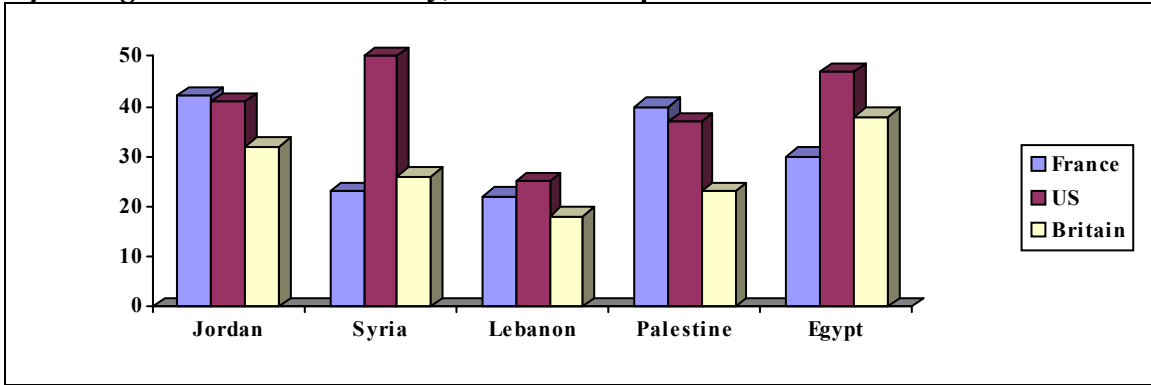
Finally, Arabs perceive Western society as more heavily plagued by social problems. This is evident in Figure III.6 below, which demonstrates the perceived prevalence of each social problem in Western and Arab societies. The major exception is administrative and financial corruption, which the respondents perceive as more prevalent in Arab societies than Western societies.

Arabs see religious fanaticism as a problem in their societies. Additionally noteworthy, nearly two-thirds of respondents across samples and countries believed religious fanaticism is a problem in both Western and Arab societies.

Figure III.6. Respondents' Estimates of the Prevalence of Social Ills, on a 1-10 scale (1=not at all prevalent, 10 = prevalent), Pooled Data
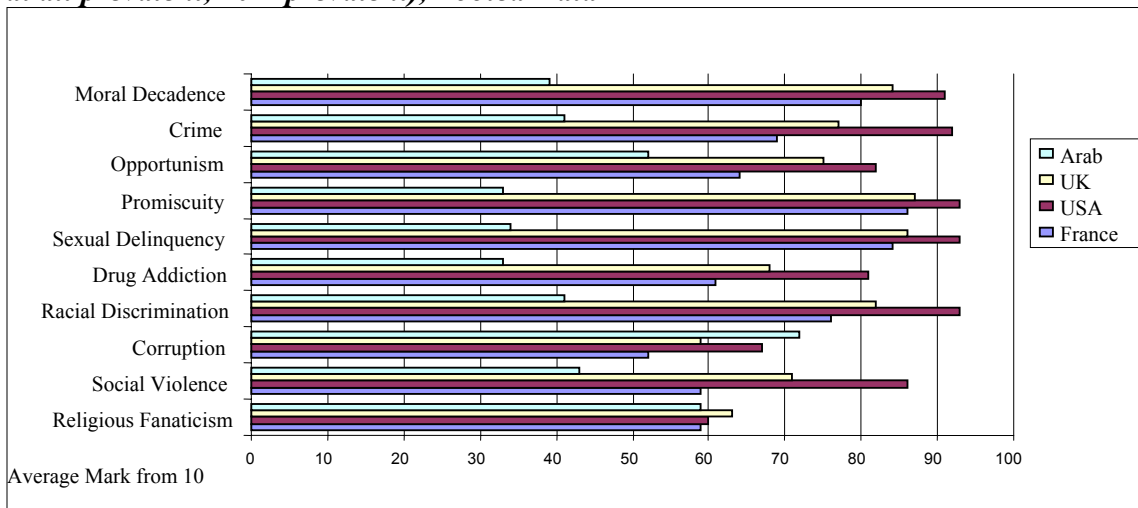
BACK TO THE CRUSADES?

Disentangling the perceptions of "the West" and the "Arab World" allows us to examine the extent to which Arab-West tensions should be characterized as a showdown between Islam and Christianity. The short answer is "no". The vast majority of Arabs does not see Westerners as

fundamentally motivated by Christianity, and indeed, do not see Westerners as particularly religiously motivated. At the same time, as we shall see in the next section, although there is significant support for a strong role for *Shari'a* in legislation in the Arab World, this is not the basis of hostility toward the West. However, there is considerable concern in the Mashreq that religious fanaticism is gaining strength in both the Arab world and the West. This perceived fanaticism, combined with the widespread discontent toward Western policies, should be a basis of concern.

Most Arabs do not consider religion to be among the most important values held in the three Western countries. Only 4.5% of respondents in the five Arab countries mentioned religion as the most important value to the British. This figure drops to 2.9% for the French and 1.8% for the US.

Importantly, Westerners perceive of themselves very differently than the Arabs do. According to the 2001 *World Values Survey*, 40% of respondents in France and Britain consider religion "very" or "rather" important to them, a figure which is significantly higher than the percentage of Arabs who hold this view about these countries. Moreover, 82% of American respondents in the same survey placed a very high value on religion. (See Figure III.7 below.)   As the figure shows, there is also a significant difference in Arab perceptions of family values in the West and Westerners' perceptions of themselves.

Figure III.7. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Religion and Family are Important (Very Important and Rather Important Combined.)
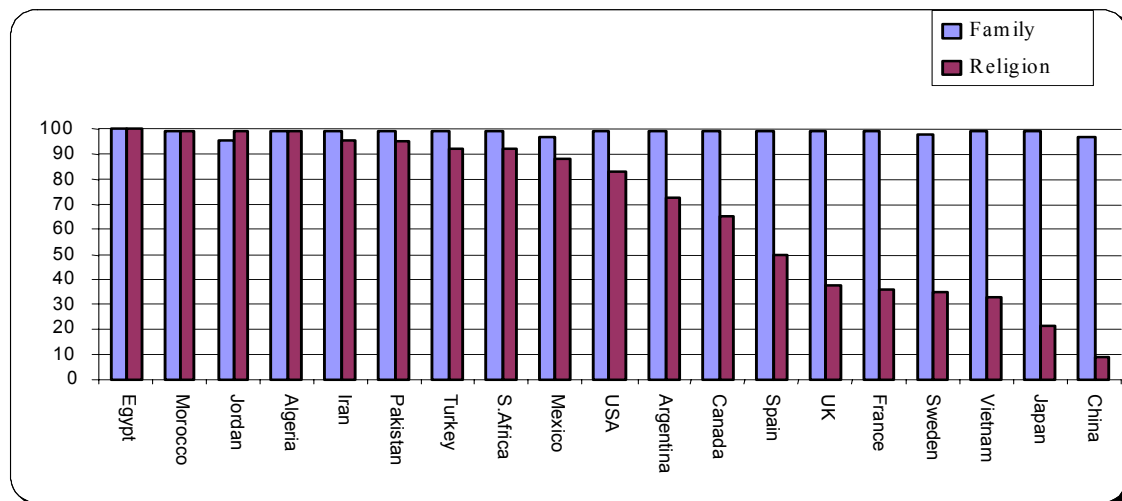
Source: World Values Survey and European Values Survey, Fourth Wave Data, 2001.

Arabs are not the only ones to hold low perceptions of American religiosity, but the gap between Arab perceptions of Americans and American perceptions of themselves is markedly greater. A recent BBC survey found that although the French tend to perceive Americans as religious, all other nationalities viewed Americans as less religious than Americans view themselves. In some cases, the differences are relatively minor: 70% of Americans view themselves as religious, while two-thirds of Australians and Canadians described Americans this way.   However, this figure drops to 10% of Jordanians who see Americans as valuing religion. (See *Figure III.8*

below.) When it comes to the importance of religion, there is an enormous gap between Arab perceptions of Americans and the way in which Americans view themselves. This offers credence to the finding that most Arabs do not perceive the majority of Westerners as motivated by desire to undertake a religious crusade.

Figure III.8. Perceptions of American Religiosity
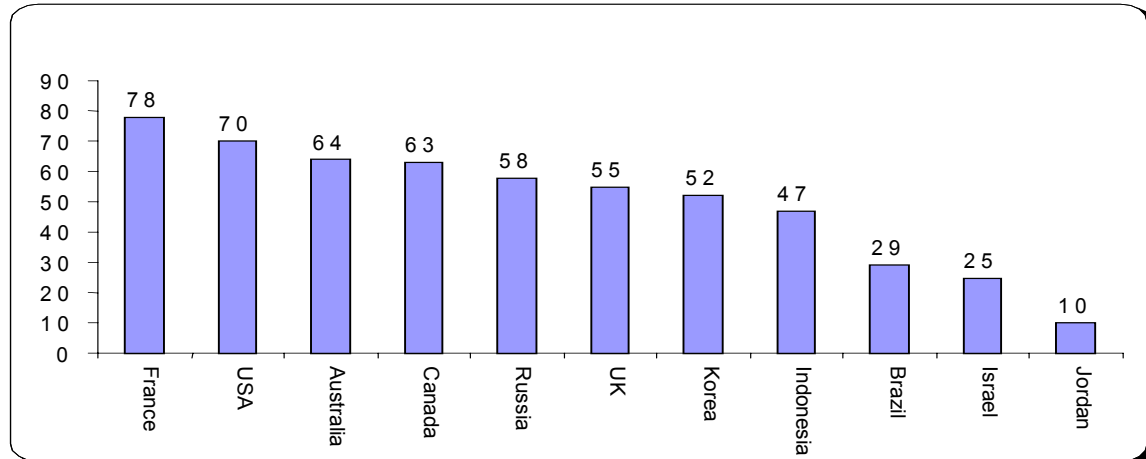
Source: BBC poll (conducted by ICM June 2003).

However, Arabs do fear religious fanaticism. Indeed, they fear it both in their own societies and in the West. Pooled results from national surveys find that nearly 60% of respondents see religious fanaticism as a problem in Western societies as well as in their own. It is one of the few social ills that they see consistently pervasive in both cultures. Arabs express the fear that that those on the religious fringes might fuel an even more serious Arab-West conflict.

AGE, HIGHER EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE REVISITED

There are important differences in the attitudes of Arabs regarding religion, based on age, education and the exposure gained by business and media communities. Generally, we find continued evidence that young people are more critical of Western societies than the rest of the national population. Business and media elites, and to a lesser extent university students, display more tempered views of both Western and Arab cultures. They are also more likely to be self-critical of flaws they perceive in Arab culture, and a bit less critical of Western cultures than the average respondent. Consequently, elites perceive a narrower gap between Western and Arab cultures than do their national counterparts.

Age. Age appears particularly salient when Arabs assess treatment of Muslim citizens within the Western world. Pooled data show that the percentage of respondents believing that Muslims are treated unfairly in these countries is highest in regards to the UK and lowest in regard to France. Age appears to have a significant effect on the perceptions of such treatment, particularly with relation to France. Only 13% of respondents aged 16-24 years believed that Muslims are treated unfairly in France, compared with almost half of respondents over 45 years old. (See Figure III.9.)

Figure III.9. Percentage Who Agree that Muslims in the Western Country Enjoy the Same Rights as Other Citizens by Age, Pooled Data
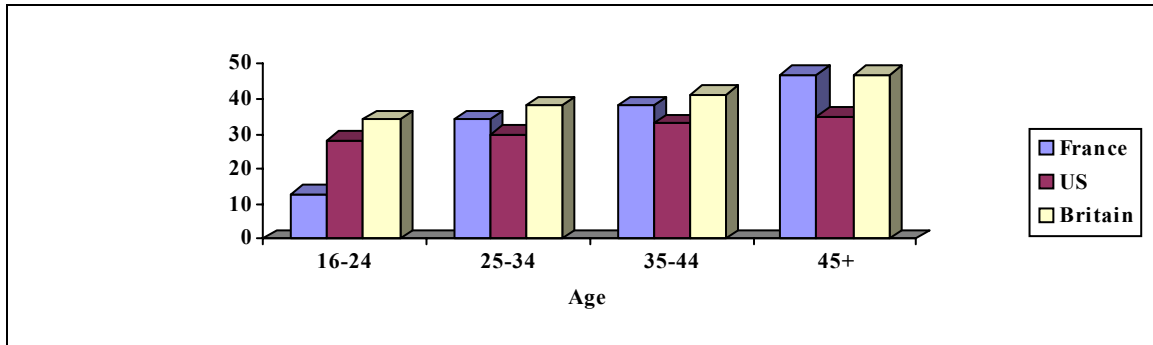
Higher Education and Exposure. Higher education and exposure moderates attitudes toward both Western and Arab societies. We saw previously that university students and elites in business and media communities demonstrated a greater knowledge of Western cultures. In addition, we find that these communities are also simultaneously more critical of certain aspects of Arab society and more forgiving toward the West.

These relationships are demonstrated in the Jordanian data. As shown in Figure III.10 below, respondents in the university, media and business samples thought positive social values to be less prevalent than their national counterparts. As shown in Figure III.11, they also thought that positive individual values were less widespread. At the same time, they view Western society to be less fraught with social problems than did respondents in the national sample, and they also see Jordanian society as suffering more from similar social problems. In short, they see less difference between societies of the West and the Arab world.

Figure III.10. Perceived Prevalence of Societal Values in Jordanian Society, by Sample
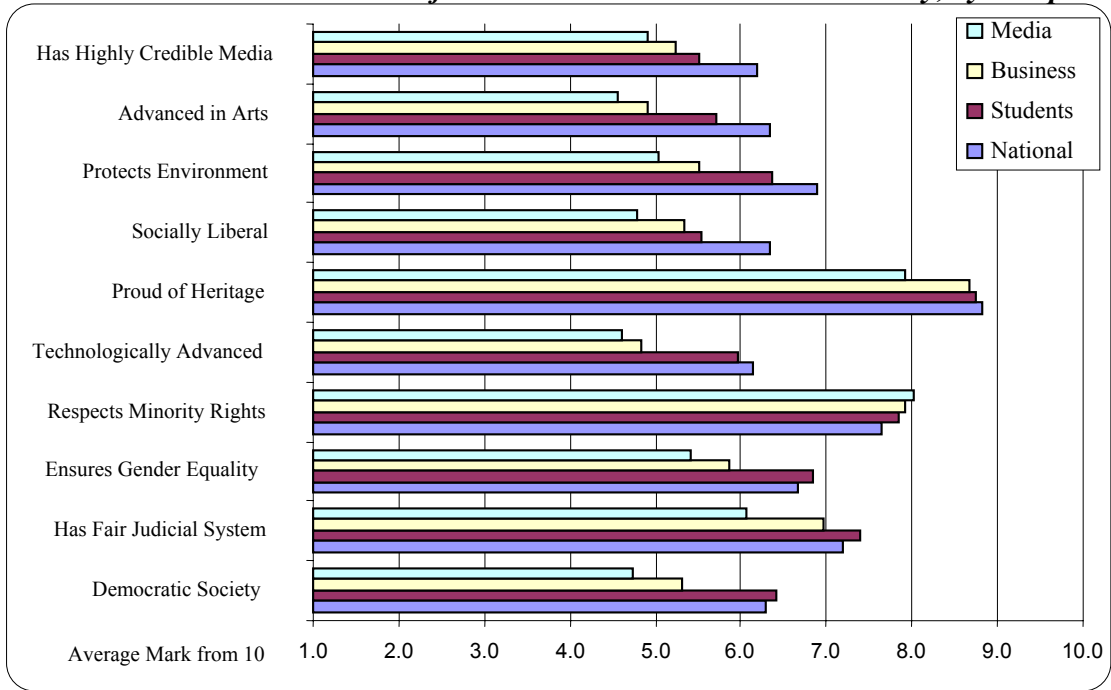
Figure III.11. Perceived Prevalence of Individual Values in Jordanian Society, by Sample
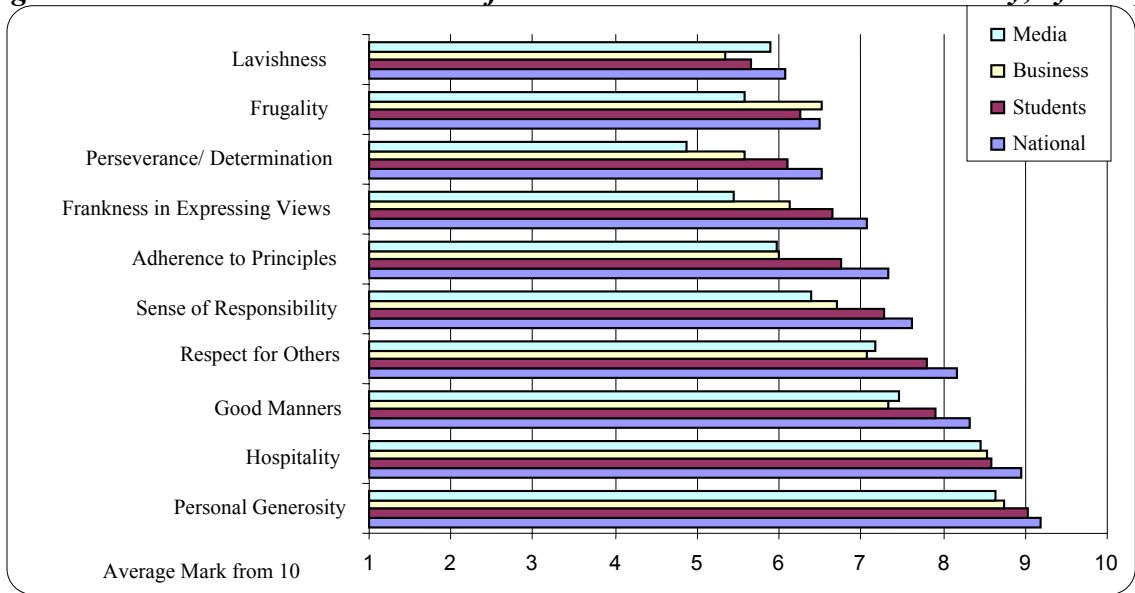
CONCLUSIONS

Arabs draw sharp distinctions between Western and Arab cultures. They have a well defined notion of Arab and Western cultures, defined by similarly perceived sets of societal and individual values. Yet, these perceptions do not explain the fundamental reasons for the escalating Arab-West conflict.

In sum:

Arab understanding of Western values, while consistent, is often not based on detailed knowledge. In most cases, more than half of national sample respondents claimed little or no knowledge of the West, and even fewer were able to demonstrate specific factual knowledge.

Arabs perceive Western social values as distinct from their own, but judge them neither wholly good nor entirely bad. For instance, Arabs almost universally perceive the West as placing little importance upon values of religion, family, and heritage, while Arabs see adherence to these values as more widely practiced in their own societies. At the same time, Arabs perceive the West as being more disposed to democratic values, individual liberty, aesthetic appreciation, and technological advancement.

Arabs see Western societies as lacking in individual values and plagued by social problems, but not driven by religious fervor. Arab perceptions of these individual values yield three important lessons:

O   Arabs see administrative and financial corruption as more prevalent in Arab than Western societies. This stands in contrast to the general Arab perception which sees their own societies as more rooted in individual moral values than Western societies. It also suggests the large extent to which Arabs respect Western democratic governance and is probably also a reflection of dissatisfaction with levels of corruption in their own countries.

O   Arabs believe that both Arab and Western societies face problems of religious fanaticism. They express concerns that a religiously-oriented conflict could emerge from the actions of fringe elements on both sides.

O   At the same time, the Arab public sees the Westerners as caring little about religion, thus suggesting that there is little fear among Arabs that the majority of Westerners are intent on undertaking an anti-Muslim Crusade against them.

Based on this data, it is suggested that the culture gap between the West and the Arab world is not the fundamental cause of Arab-West tensions. Arabs perceive French, American, and British societal values similarly, even though they hold different attitudes toward France than the do toward the US and the UK. Evidence does not support the view that because Arabs appreciate French values, but dislike those of the British and the Americans, they hold different opinions about these countries. Rather, negative attitudes toward the US and Britain are more closely tied to the disapproval of the foreign policies of these nations, particularly

when the reality of their professed policies is at odds with the reality as experienced on the ground.

IV.   ISLAM IN THE ARAB WORLD

In the post-9/11 debate, many have posited that "Islamic fundamentalism"-- perceived as a firm adherence to religious texts and tenets -- is fueling the Arab-West conflict. By examining attitudes toward the S*hari'a* (Islamic legislation/jurisdiction) and *Ijtihad* (interpretation in religion), we find that there is a degree of tolerance for various religious interpretations and a variety of opinions relating to the role of Shari'a in legislation and that most respondents are not closed to new ideas pertaining to the status of *Ijtihad.*

Before proceeding to the findings, an important methodological point must be stated. First, on this issue, to address statistical bias, we have separated out Christians in our presentation of findings in national samples in all countries except Syria. In Syria, respondents were not asked to identify their religious affiliation. Therefore, this section examines responses from respondents in Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon who identified themselves as Muslims, in addition to overall Syrian samples.

Second, judging support for fundamentalism has been conceptualized as apparent in attitudes toward the desired <u>role</u> of S*hari'a,* and <u>status</u> of *Ijtihad* (commonly qualified as "open" or "closed") in the public sphere. By using these criteria, it is possible to gain insight into the debate over the relationship between Islam and governance. If, for instance, the vast majority of respondents advocate S*hari'a* as the only source of legislation in their countries and argue that *Ijtihad* is closed, this may be indicative of the support for fundamentalism. More specifically, if all respondents support the opinion that S*hari'a* must be the only source of legislation, then it follows that there would be no tolerance for alternative or additional sources of legislation. Likewise, if we uncovered a universal view that *Ijtihad* is closed*,* that would indicate that there is less leeway for differing views regarding the interpretation of religion.

ASSESSING SUPPORT FOR FUNDAMENTALISM: *IJTIHAD* AND *SHARI'A*

Arabs demonstrate strong support for a flexible interpretation of Islam. They show considerable support for the *Ijtihad* to remain open. At the same time, however, they strongly advocate the S*hari'a* as *a,* and in many cases *the,* source of law.

Ijtihad. The majority of Muslim respondents in all five countries believe that interpretation in religion has not been closed. Two thirds of respondents in Lebanon and Syria and overwhelming majorities in Palestine, Egypt and Jordan indicated that interpretation in religion has not been closed and should remain open. Respondents subscribing to the view that interpretation in religion has been closed were very few: 8% in Syria, 3% in Lebanon, 6% in Palestine, 5% in Egypt and 5% in Jordan. (See *Figure IV.1*.)   Indeed, no more than 15% of respondents in any country believed that *Ijtihad* should be closed, which would indicate that there is not a strong impetus for adherence to fundamentalist views.

Figure IV.1. Muslim Respondents' Views on Ijtihad, National Samples
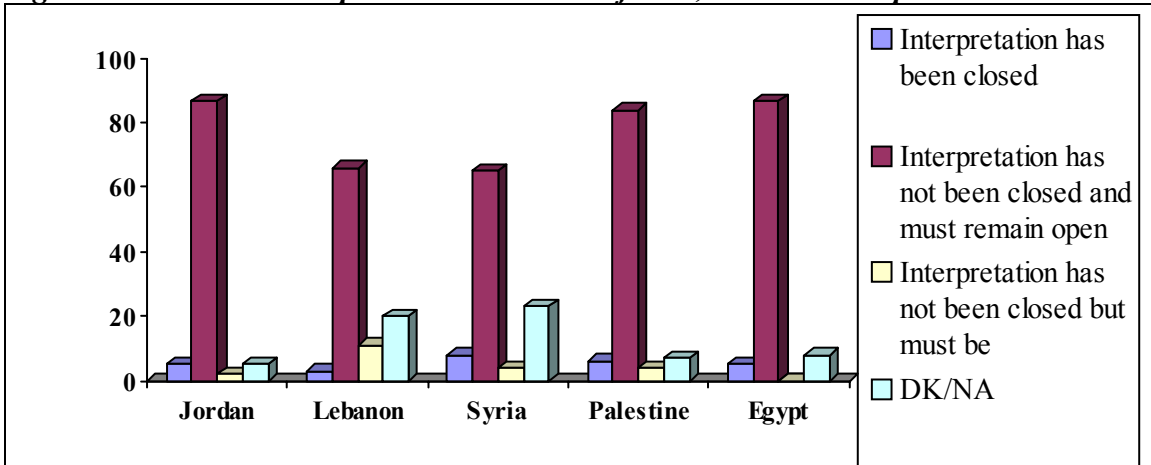
Shari'a. Muslim respondents support a flexible interpretation of Islam. Asked whether *Shari'a* should be *the only* source of legislation, *one of* the sources of legislation, or *not* be a source of legislation, most Muslims believed it should at least be *a* source of legislation. Support was particularly strong in Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt, where approximately two-thirds of Muslim respondents stated that the S*hari'a* must be the *only source* of legislation; while the remaining third believed that it must be "one of the sources of legislation". By comparison, in Lebanon and Syria, a majority (nearly two thirds in Lebanon and just over half in Syria) favored the view that S*hari'a* must be *one of* the sources of legislation. (See *Figure IV.2*.)

Figure IV.2. Muslim Respondents' Views on the Role of the Shari'a in their Country's Legislation, National Samples
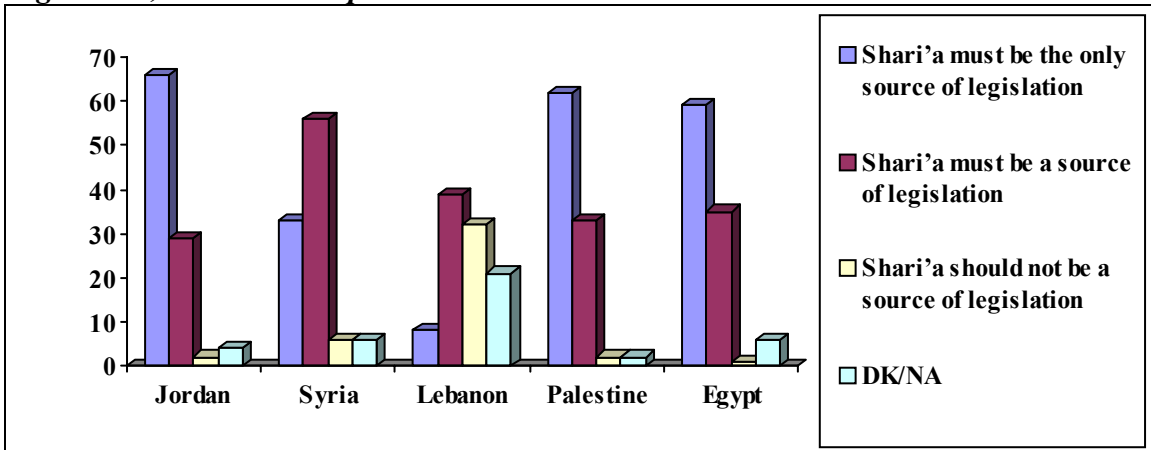
Explaining Attitudes toward the Shari'a. Elites in the business and media communities hold distinct attitudes toward the role of *Shari'a* in legislation. As shown in Figure IV.3, in Jordan, Palestine and Egypt, members of these communities are significantly less likely to believe that the *Shari'a* should be the sole source of legislation. For example, 68% of Jordanians in the national sample supported such a role, compared to only 28% of the Jordanian media elites.

Figure IV.3. Percentage of Respondents in Believing that Shari'a should be the sole source of legislation, by Sample.
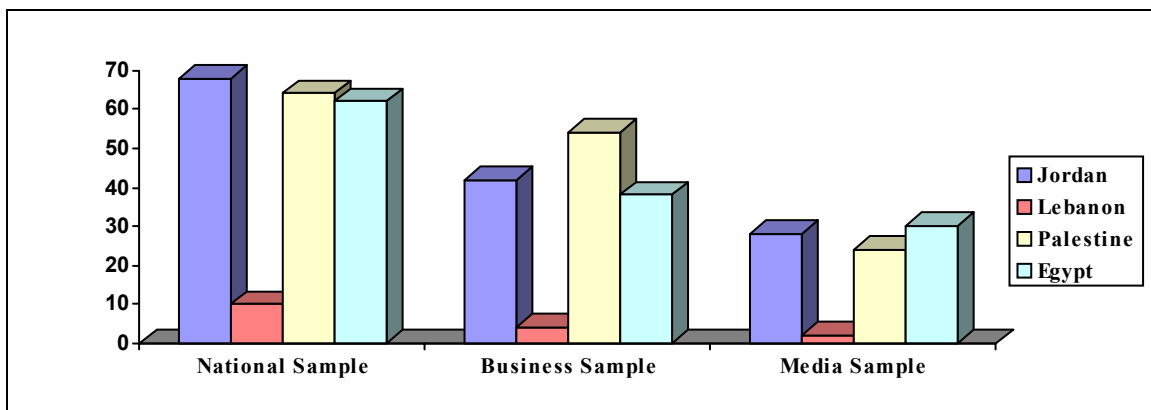
In contrast, neither education nor age seems to explain attitudes toward the role of the S*hari'a* in legislation. Pooled data from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt indicate that 58% of respondents with low education, 59% of those with moderate education, and 56% with higher education believe that S*hari'a* must be the *only* source of legislation in their countries. Similarly, the pooled data found that approximately 50% of respondents in all age groups wanted to see the S*hari'a* become the *only* source of legislation, another 36-40% across age groups wanted to see it as a source of legislation, and 10-13% preferred that the S*hari'a* not become a source of legislation.

SHARI'A AND THE ARAB-WEST CONFLICT

To what extent is such support for the role of *Shari'a* in legislation as a basis for the increasing Arab-West tensions? The findings suggest that it is not the essential driving force behind anti-Westernism.

There is, nonetheless, a relationship between the extent to which individuals prefer the S*hari'a* to be the basis of legislation and their attitudes toward the West: Those who believe that the S*hari'a* should be the only source of legislation are less likely to cite positive values in British, French and US societies. There is as well a positive relationship between views of "individual liberty" in Western societies and attitudes toward the role of S*hari'a* in legislation. The percentage of respondents who indicate that "individual liberty" is the most salient, and positive, characteristic of society in France, the UK, and the US increases among groups who prefer a less central role for *Shari'a* in legislation. For example, 55% of those who believe that the S*hari'a* must be the only source of legislation mentioned individual liberty as the most important value held by people in France. This compared to 60% of those expressing the view that *Shari'a must* be one of the sources of legislation and 70% of those who hold the view that S*hari'a* should not be a source of legislation.

Individuals advocating the S*hari'a* as the sole source of legislation are less likely to give

positive general assessments of the West. As seen in Figure IV.4, however, the strength of the relationship varies. There is little difference in attitudes toward France and expressed attitudes regarding the role of the S*hari'a*. Attitudes regarding the US, however, are more likely to be positive among those who prefer a lesser role for *Shari'a* in legislation. This is particularly true in Egypt. A similar relationship exists for attitudes toward the UK. A preference for a lesser role for *Shari'a* in legislation is also stronger in Jordanians and Egyptians who also express positive sentiments toward the West.

Figure IV.4. Percentage of National Sample having Favorable Attitudes toward Country by Beliefs on the Role of the Shari'a in National Legislation, National Samples
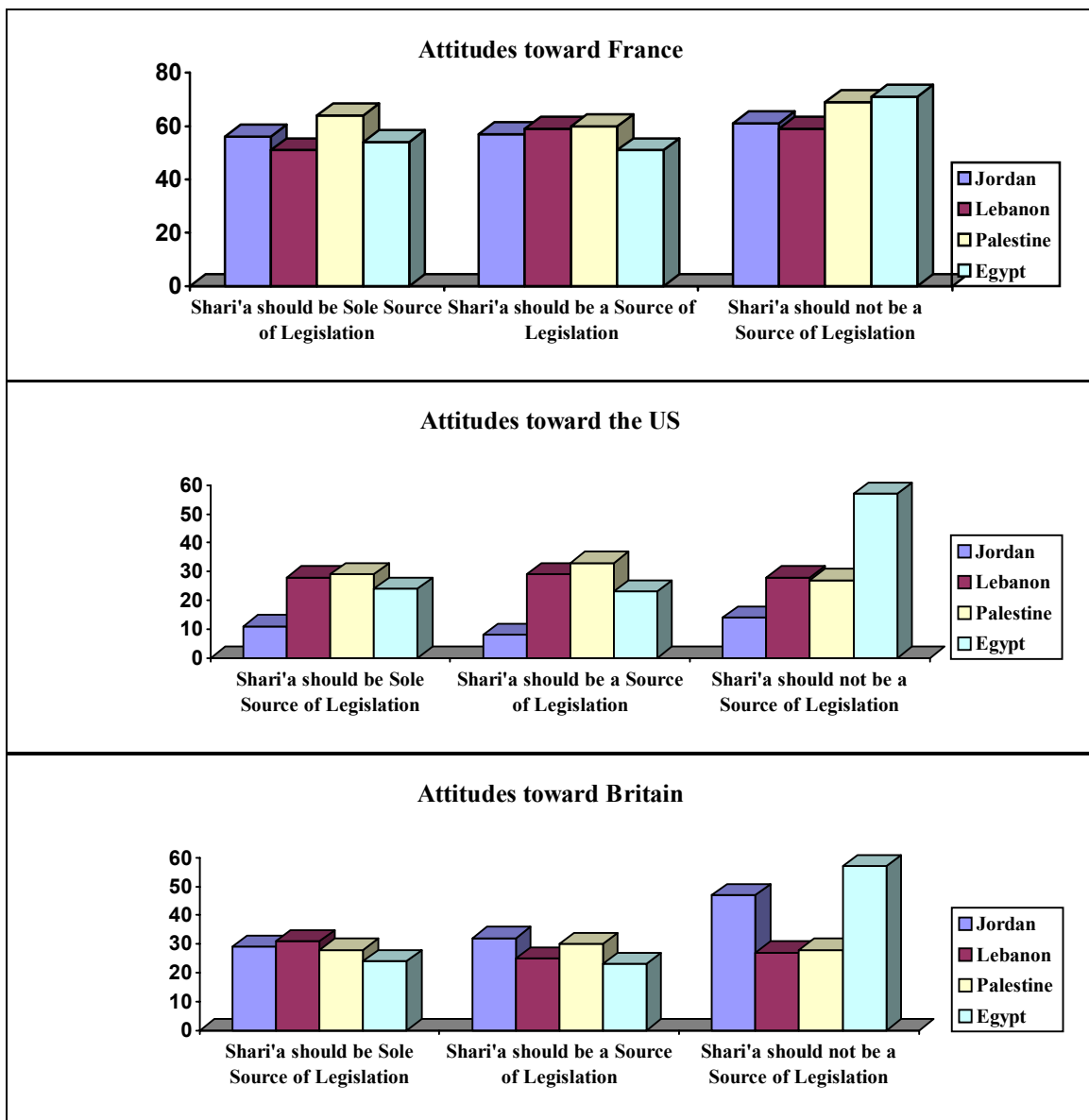
Such great variation in the relationship between views toward the S*hari'a* and attitudes toward the West provides evidence that opinions regarding the role of *Shari'a* in legislation are not the basis of the increasing tensions between the West and the Arab World. If it were, a consistent and strong relationship should appear, with those advocating the S*hari'a* as the basis of law also most likely to demonstrate hostility toward all Western states. This is not the case. Strong beliefs in the role of *Shari'a* in legislation do not necessarily dictate hostility or negativity toward the West.

Conclusion

Many commentators have assumed that dissatisfaction over American and British policies has been fueled by the growth of what are termed more "fundamentalist" religious tendencies. Yet, the study finds limited and inconclusive support for this view.

There is strong support for the role of Shari'a in legislation, particularly apparent in Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt. A majority of respondents in all samples believe that Shari'a should have a role in legislation.

Elites in business and media communities are less likely to want the Shari'a to be the sole basis of legislation. This relationship holds across all countries.

Most Arabs do not perceive Islam to be inflexible. Our study has shown that the vast majority of Muslims believes the door to *Ijtihad* is open and should remain so. This flexible view of Islam coincides with other studies that have shown a positive correlation between Islamic religiosity and support for democratic rule.[7]

Most importantly, there is little evidence that support for a role for Shari'a in legislation or the opinion that Ijtihad is closed drives anti-West feelings. In Jordan and Egypt, those preferring a less central role for *Shari'a* in legislation are also more likely to have positive attitudes toward the US and Britain. However, beliefs in the role of the S*hari'a* are not strongly related with attitudes toward France. Moreover, they do not seem to drive attitudes toward the US, the UK, or France in Lebanon or Palestine. In short, the data suggest that a causal relationship between support for the role of *Shari'a* in legislation and anti-Western feelings is weaker than many have assumed.

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[7] See Ronald Inglehart (ed.) *Islam, Gender, Culture, and Democracy: Findings from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey*, De Sitter Publications: Canada 2003. Also see Mark Tessler, "Do Islamic Orientations Influence Attitudes toward Democracy in the Arab World?" in Inglehart, pp 6-26. Also, on Muslims and democracy see Fares Braizat, "Muslims and Democracy: An Empirical Critique of Fukuyama's Culturalist Approach", in Inglehart (ed.), pp. 46-76.

SECTION 3
ENGAGING THE WEST:
PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN FOREIGN POLICIES

WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY

Post-9/11 debate has focused on two major factors for explaining the September 11th attacks. One has invoked the specter of a region out of control and "in crisis",[8] while another school of thought points to the anger felt by Arabs US policy in the region as the major problem. The findings of this study give credence to the latter theory. A comparison of attitudes toward French, American, and British foreign policies demonstrates that Arabs are reacting to what they perceive as objectionable foreign policies emanating from the US and, when they are the same, from the UK.

Arabs perceive a difference in the foreign policies of France and those of the US and the UK. They characterize France as treating countries with respect and dignity, promoting democracy and human rights, and not imposing its national will upon others. In contrast, the US and the UK are perceived as promoting their own interests, even in the extension of economic aid, as imposing their wills on other countries, and as violating human rights. Furthermore, the majority of Arabs believe that US foreign policy is unduly influenced by the "Zionist Lobby" which is seen as a driving force in US foreign policy in the region. This is consistent with the belief, discussed later in Chapter VI, that US foreign policies in the region are designed specifically to support Israel.

This study also assessed the so-called "Al Jazeera factor" -- that is, the theory that negative attitudes toward the West are a product of the coverage aired on Al-Jazeera and other popular Arab satellite channels. No evidence was found that the growth of satellite television broadcasts in the Arab world is having a direct influence upon perceptions of Western, and especially, US foreign policy. It is unquestionably true that the introduction of Arab satellite TV has changed the nature of news in the Arab world. It has broken the monopoly of the Western and Arab governmental media in the coverage and interpretation of the news. It has also led to a critical and almost continuous coverage of such sensitive topics as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq. Yet, discrepancies between the coverage and results in this survey suggest that access to Arab satellite stations is not a clear-cut determiner of attitudes toward Western policies.

ATTITUDES TOWARD WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY

Respondents clearly distinguish between foreign policies of Western states under examination, evaluating French foreign policy positively, and American and British foreign policies negatively. When asked the extent to which they believed statements listed in Table V.1 represent the French, the majority of respondents portrayed France as an altruistic neighbor, honestly interested in promoting the welfare of the Arab world. These results held across most samples, in all countries.

In stark contrast, when asked about the US and the UK, the vast majority of respondents expressed the opinion that that these countries are selfish and insincere in their foreign

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[8] Refers to a conflict torn region characterized by lack of democracy, unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment.

policies.   They believe the US in particular attempts to dominate other countries, violates human rights, and - rather than approaching other countries with respect and dignity - tries to impose its policies on the rest of the world. In marked contrast to statements made by US leaders proclaiming an interest in promoting democracy and freedom in the Arab World, Arabs see US leaders as self-interested and determined to impose American will on the Arab world without regard to the opinions of Arabs, Europeans, or even the American people themselves.

Table V.1. Attitudes toward the Western Foreign Policies, National Samples

Item	US	Britain	France
Deals with other countries in the world with respect and dignity	No	No*	Yes
Supports the practice of democracy in the world	No	No*	Yes
The foreign policy of (president/prime minister) enjoys the support of the majority of the citizens	No	No****	Yes
Dominates other countries by offering them aid	Yes	Yes	No**
Always tries to impose its foreign policy on other countries	Yes	Yes	No**
The (citizens of country) have been enjoying their rights and freedoms less since the events of 9/11	Yes	Yes*	No
Violates human rights in the world	Yes	Yes	No

* except Lebanon NS
** except Jordan and Palestine
*** Lebanon equal split
**** Jordan equal split

Interestingly, recent global studies indicate that Arabs are not alone in their perceptions. *Figure V.1* Arabs feel that they are in agreement with respondents from other regions whose responses, presented below, illustrate that the US is not universally regarded as a "force for good in the world". In contrast to American self-perceptions, the majority of individuals outside of Israel and the English-speaking world are skeptical of American intentions.

Figure V.1. Percentage Agree that "America is a Force for Good in the World"
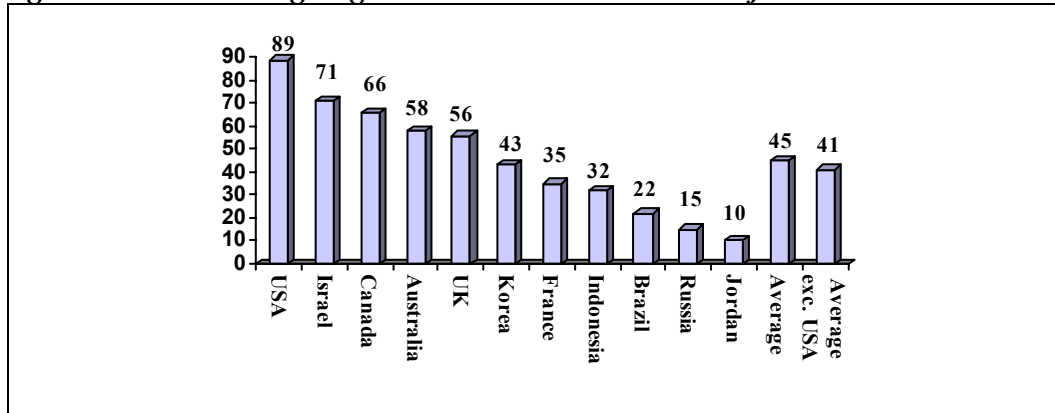
Source: BBC poll, June 2003

Business and Media Communities. Business and media communities are even more dubious about the stated goals of US foreign policy than the average citizen. As shown in Figure V.2, media and business communities are less likely than the average citizen to see US policies as motivated by concerns for democracy and human rights.

This may at first seem curious, given that these communities generally demonstrate more positive assessments of Western cultures and a greater willingness to seek stronger Arab-West relations. However, it illustrates a willingness to engage with the West *despite* its foreign policies. It can be suggested that it is not support for American and British foreign policies, but rather the recognition of other benefits to be gained by engagement with Western nations, that fosters enthusiasm for engagement in the business and media communities.

Figure V.2. Percentage of Respondents Agreeing with Statements about US Foreign Policy, by Sample

US Aims to Dominate Countries by Offering Aid

US Always Violates Human Rights in the World

US Supports the Practice of Democracy
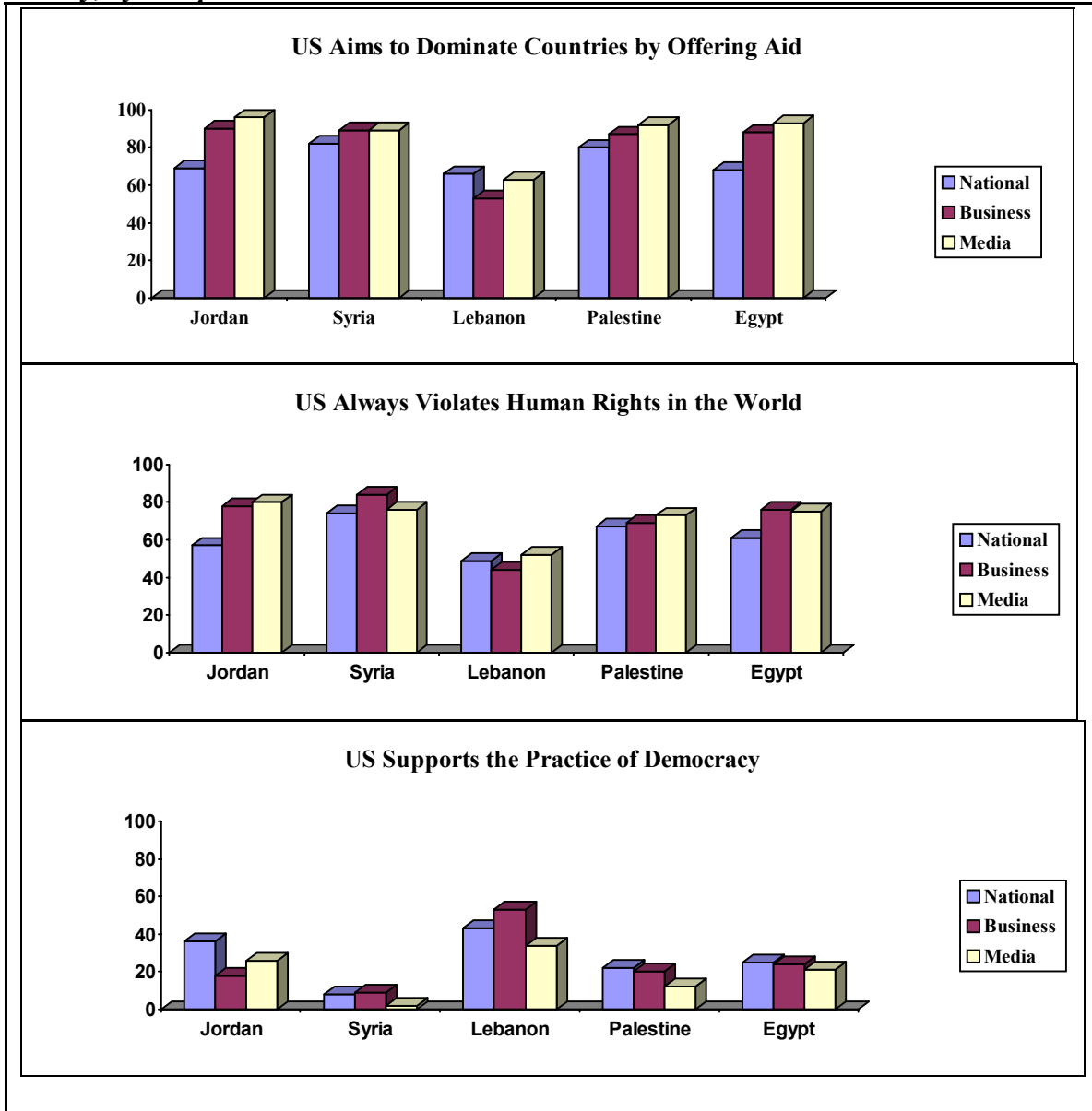
US FOREIGN POLICY: DRIVING FORCE

Despite feeling that Muslims suffer discrimination in the West, Arabs do not blame Western citizens for the foreign policies of their nation states. Arab respondents expressed doubt that foreign policies of Prime Minister Tony Blair and President George W. Bush enjoyed the support of their citizens.[9]   (See Figure V.2 above.)

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[9] It should be noted the survey was conducted before the November 2004 elections in the United States.

Arabs perceive that US foreign policy is largely driven by a "Zionist Lobby" - usually defined by them as an amorphous coalition of media, political and economic decision makers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who support the regional hegemony and political expansion of the State of Israel. (Note: No specific definition of the phrase "Zionist Lobby" was provided to the survey's respondents.) While Western commentators may dispute this perception and insist that no such interest group exists, there is no question that the majority of Arabs believe that people with a pro-Israeli philosophy wield an unassailable influence the halls of American power. Most respondents to the survey believe that this "Zionist Lobby" has more power in decision making than President Bush himself. The exception to this perception appeared in Egypt where respondents saw Bush as almost equally as powerful.

Respondents were asked to choose which of the following they perceived to be the most influential in shaping American foreign policy:

1 President George W. Bush

2 Secretary of State Colin Powell

3 The extreme religious Christian Right

4 The Pentagon

5 Congress

6 The Zionist Lobby

7 Big corporations

Results show that Arabs perceive President Bush's power in foreign policy making as relatively limited. Less than one-third of respondents, across samples and countries, believed that President Bush was the most important policy maker. (*See Table V.2.*) In contrast, as many as two-thirds of respondents picked the Zionist Lobby as being most influential. The Egyptian national sample displayed the greatest parity between those specifying President Bush as the most powerful policymaker and those choosing the Zionist Lobby: 34% specified the Zionist Lobby and 29% picked President Bush. In contrast, Syrian respondents overwhelmingly saw the Zionist Lobby as more powerful than President Bush, with 61% considering the Zionist Lobby as most powerful and only 14% choosing the American President.

Table V.2. Percentage Citing Actor as Most Influential Foreign Policy Maker, National Samples

Actor	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
President Bush	34	14	29	21	**34**
Secretary of State Colin Powell	3	1	2	4	6
The extreme religious right in the Bush Administration	4	8	7	10	3
Pentagon	1	1	2	5	3
Congress	7	4	4	7	7
Zionist Lobby	**39**	**61**	**44**	**43**	29
Big corporations	2	6	3	2	2

Revisiting the Media and Business Communities

Age, education, and enrollment in the university do not appear to greatly influence attitudes toward US foreign policy, but membership in the business and media communities does. Business and media elites are even less likely to see the President as influential, viewing instead the Zionist Lobby and extreme religious right as the key actors in foreign policy making today.

These results are evident below, particularly when compared with university (and similarly, national level) surveys. Members of the business and media communities single out the Zionist Lobby as the most powerful actor as much as two-thirds of the time. Among the media samples, Syrians showed the highest percentage, with 63% identifying the Zionist Lobby as the most influential actor. The media held a slightly different view, with only 39% of Jordanian media elites, 38% of the Lebanese, 42% of Palestinians and 28% of Egyptians citing the Lobby. (See *tables V.3, V.4, and V.5* below.)

The media sample, in turn, was more likely to view the religious right as a powerful foreign policy influence. Indeed, 44% of the Egyptian media sample chose the religious right as the most powerful actor, compared to only 28% choosing the Zionist Lobby and 5% picking the President. This stands in stark contrast to respondents in university and national samples, where no more than 10% in any sample saw the Christian right as a major force.

Table V.3. Percentage Citing Actor as Most Influential Foreign Policymaker in University Samples

Actor	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
President Bush	30	10	20	23	31
Secretary of State Colin Powell	4	1	4	4	6
The extreme religious right in the Bush Administration	5	7	3	5	8
Pentagon	2	3	4	4	4
Congress	6	8	8	3	6
Zionist Lobby	42	58	43	46	39
Big corporations	2	6	3	2	2

Table V.4. Percentage Citing Actor as Most Influential Foreign Policymaker in

Business Samples.

Actor	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
President Bush	2	4	25	13	10
Secretary of State Colin Powell	0	3	2	2	3
The extreme religious right in the Bush Administration	20	7	4	12	11
Pentagon	10	3	3	4	3
Congress	3	4	7	5	3
Zionist Lobby	57	67	53	57	58
Big corporations	5	8	4	5	7

Table V.5. Percentage Citing Actor as Most Influential Foreign Policymaker in Media Samples.

Actor	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
President Bush	5	2	18	10	5
Secretary of State Colin Powell	0	1	1	1	0
The extreme religious right in the Bush Administration	38	14	13	26	44
Pentagon	4	1	3	10	4
Congress	2	2	3	5	2
Zionist Lobby	39	63	37	42	28
Big corporations	12	14	13	4	13

RECONSIDERING THE "AL-JAZEERA FACTOR"

To what extent are US officials and other critics correct when they criticize Arabic satellite channels for driving opposition to Western foreign policies? Al-Jazeera and other satellite stations have, without doubt, changed the face of the Arab media, breaking the monopolies of Western and governmental media. Many have also noted, with much truth, that the Arabic stations have presented highly critical views of Western foreign policies -- particularly those pertaining to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to the war in Iraq. The question is, do these stations cause anti-Western sentiment, or merely reflect popular and already prevailing attitudes?

This study assesses what might be described as the " Al-Jazeera factor" -- that is, the theory that negative attitudes toward the US and Britain are a product of the coverage aired on Al-Jazeera and other popular Arab satellite channels. It finds, however, little evidence that the satellite stations are breeding grounds for anti-Western sentiments. Rather, it suggests that to blame the Arab media for fomenting anti-Western feelings only obscures the true cause of popular Arab discontent which is to be found in dissatisfaction with Western foreign policies.

Television is the most important source of information in the Arab countries, and satellite dish ownership is fairly widespread in the region. However, when one considers the pattern of anti-Westernism in light of data on satellite TV viewership, the theory underlying the impact of the "Al-Jazeera factor" is not upheld. For example, business

and media elites report different levels of reliance on television for political news, but we have seen above that they hold very similar attitudes on a range of issues. At the same time, university students, the national sample respondents, and business persons show similar viewing habits, and yet the attitudes of business elites often diverge sharply from those of university students and the national respondents.

Furthermore, the study does not find a strong correlation between satellite TV viewership and political attitudes across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. The Lebanese and Palestinians have some of the highest rates of satellite TV access, with 85% of Lebanese and 84% of Palestinians having satellite TV in their homes. This level of satellite TV viewership compares to 26% of Egyptians and 58% of Jordanians. Yet, the study has found that the attitudes of Egyptians and Jordanians toward the West is often more critical than that of Lebanese. In sum, there appears to be no strong correlation between satellite TV ownership and popular attitudes toward Western countries.

Figure V.3. Percentage for Whom Television is the Most Important Source of Political News, by Sample
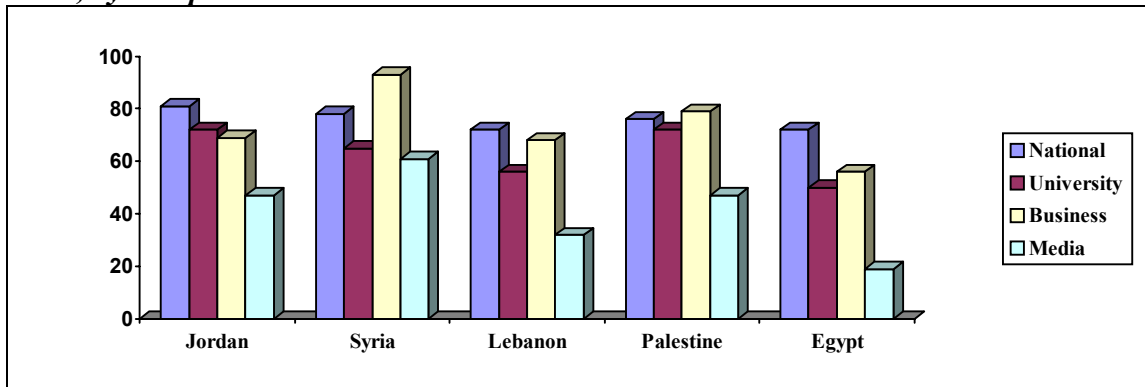
Finally, it is important to note that the public does not simply absorb the views expressed by the satellite stations. For instance, the Arab satellite stations have spent much airtime portraying the increasing tensions as a religious conflict, as exemplified by considerable coverage of Bin Laden's speeches and fatwas as the most obvious example. Despite this very religiously-oriented interpretation, we saw in Section IV that most of the public does not see the problem as religiously based. The public's perceptions are not simply reflections and regurgitations of the satellite stations' coverage.

In short, this study does not find compelling evidence that Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite channels dictate how Arabs think and feel. Rather, individuals glean information from a variety of sources and assess them in conjunction with their own values, beliefs, and interests to form attitudes. A number of findings throughout this report show that unfavorable attitudes toward the US foreign policy, for instance, are not produced by specific media coverage. Rather, Arabs evaluate and reject the policies based on their content and their impact.

CONCLUSION

It is not Western foreign policy in general, but rather US foreign policy in the region, along with British foreign policy where it intersects with American policy, that is problematic in the view of the Arab world.

> *Arabs generally approve of French foreign policy but view US and, to a slightly lesser extent British, foreign policy negatively.* This opinion is consistent across countries, samples, age groups, education levels and gender. No groups approve of, or trust, the underlying motives for, current US foreign policies.

> *The vast majority of Arabs believe that American and British citizens do not support the foreign policies of President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair, respectively.* The one exception at the time of this poll (March 2004) was found among university students.

> *Arab satellite television does not appear to produce anti-Westernism.* The majority of Arabs glean their information from television, but viewing habits do not have a notable correlation with attitudes toward Western states and their policies.

VI. CRITICAL CONFLICTS: US FOREIGN POLICIES TOWARD ISRAEL AND IRAQ

US foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iraqi war are the reasons for a serious credibility crisis with the Arab World. As we have seen earlier, Arabs have little faith that the US is interested in promoting peace and democracy in the region. Instead, they believe that the US is seeking to promote its own interests and those of Israel. This problem is particularly evident with regards to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current war in Iraq. Arabs doubt the sincerity underlying the professed American policy goals of a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the establishment of a democratic Iraq. Most Arabs believe that the US was unjustified in its occupation of Iraq and undertook the war with Iraq in order to establish control over oil resources and advance the cause of its Israeli ally. These policies -- much more than a cultural clash -- are the causal link to the general disgruntlement with the US.

THE US AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Arabs overwhelmingly state their dissatisfaction with the way in which the US has handled the Arab-Israeli conflict. When asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with how the US in particular has approached the more than five decades long Arab-Israeli conflict, only 1.4% of all respondents were "very satisfied," while 86% stated that they are "not satisfied at all." The strong dissatisfaction with US policies is consistent across countries and samples. (See *Table VI.1*.)

Table VI.1. Percentage Expressing Attitude toward US Foreign Policy, National Samples

	Satisfaction with US Handling of Arab-Israeli Conflict	Belief that the US is Serious about Implementing the Road Map	Belief that the Road Map represents a Just Solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict
Jordan	5	11	8
Syria	1	5	2
Lebanon	5	8	12
Palestine	1	4	6
Egypt	2	5	36

Moreover, Arabs have little faith that the US is serious about implementing policies that will lead to a just solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Similarly, the vast majority of respondents do not believe The Roadmap peace plan will lead to a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Even more importantly, about three quarters of all samples in the five countries believed that the US is not serious about implementing The Roadmap. The American approach to Palestine, and the widespread dissatisfaction that accompanies it, could explain why so many respondents identified the "Zionist Lobby" as the driving force of US foreign policy in the region.

Arabs overwhelmingly reject US policies with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even when age, education, and exposure to the West are taken into account, less than 20% of respondents - and usually far less than 10% -- demonstrate any positive perceptions of American handling of the crisis, its intentions toward the Arab parties involved in the conflict or the justness of the currently proposed solution. The only exception is found in Egypt, where one third of Egyptian business and national samples regard The Roadmap as a just and viable approach to achieving peace between Arabs and Israelis. However, this should not obscure the fact that the majority of respondents take a highly negative view of American policies relating to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

THE IRAQ WAR

Arabs are also highly dubious about the US-led war in Iraq. They see the war as neither legitimate nor justified. They also do not believe that the war will lead either to the establishment of democracy in Iraq or to a better standard of living for Iraqi citizens. Rather, the war is seen as an effort to shore up Israeli military security and provide a means of pillaging Iraqi resources.

The overwhelming majority of respondents in Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and a simple majority in Lebanon, believe that the use of power to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime was "not justified at all." Business and media elites are even more doubtful that the overthrow was legitimate: only 1% of business communities in Jordan, Palestine, and Syria perceived the invasion as justified. Business people in Lebanon and Egypt were slightly less skeptical, with 8% and 22%, respectively, viewing the ouster of Saddam as legitimate. (See Figures VI.1, VI.2.)

Figure VI.1. Respondents' Beliefs over Whether Force was Justified in Iraq, National Samples
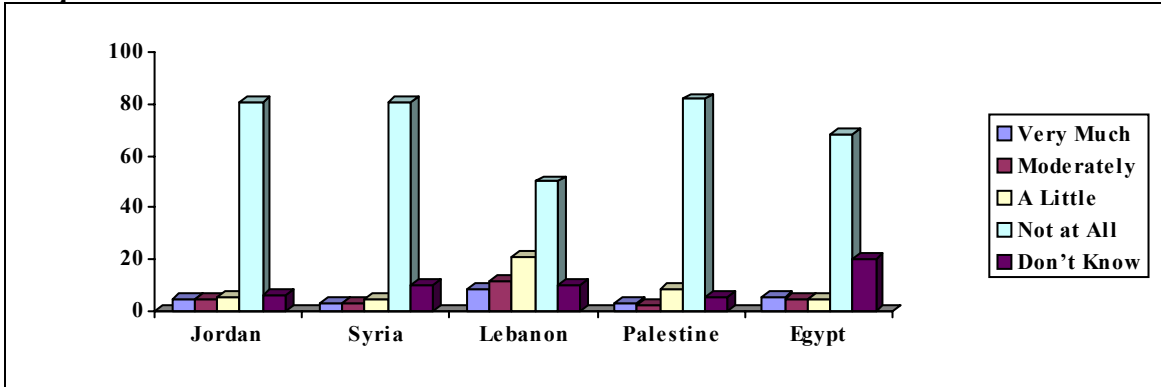
Figure VI.2 Percentage who Believe the Use of Force in Iraq was Not Justified at All, by Sample
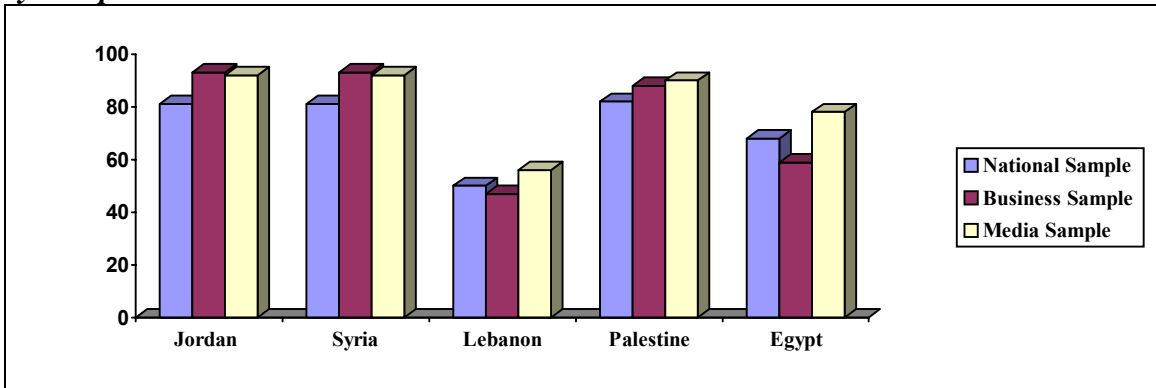
Arabs are highly pessimistic about the future of Iraq. More than two-thirds of respondents do not believe that the US-led coalition will turn Iraq into a model for democracy in the region. The younger generation is slightly less skeptical on this issue, with 64% of respondents aged 16-24 years expressing pessimism, as compared with approximately 70% of the older respondents. Consistent with earlier findings, Arabs are largely discontented with, and distrustful of, US intentions in Iraq. It remains to be seen whether the January 2005 elections in Iraq will change or modify these attitudes.

In addition, respondents do not believe that the US will provide the Iraqis with a better standard of living than they had under Saddam Hussein. Lebanese and Jordanian respondents were less skeptical than Syrians, Palestinians, and Egyptians on this point. To the contrary, the majority of Arabs believe that the coalition will pillage Iraqi resources. The only exception to this trend is found in Lebanon, where university students, business members, and the media were more doubtful of this contention.

Finally, without exception, there was a consensus that the war in Iraq will enhance the security of Israel.

Table VI.2. Pooled data: attitudes toward outcomes of US-led operations in Iraq

The US-led coalition in Iraq will…	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
Turn Iraq into a model for democracy in the region	No	No	No	No	No
Pillage (loot, drain) the resources of Iraq	Yes	Yes	No *	Yes	Yes
Provide Iraqis with a standard of living better than that under Saddam's regime	No	No	No	No	No
Enhance Israel's security	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*except national sample

CONCLUSION

When we examine Arabs attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iraqi war the conclusions are bleak:

Arabs uniformly and strongly oppose American foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.

o   They do not trust the intentions of the US in this conflict.
o   They do not approve of US policies toward the conflict.
o   The vast majority do not believe in the current proposal -- The Road Map -- is a just or workable solution.

Arabs uniformly and strongly oppose US policies toward Iraq.

o   They do not believe the forceful overthrow of Saddam Hussein was justified.
o   They do not believe the war will lead to a democratic Iraq or to an improved standard of living for Iraqis.
o   They do not believe that improving Iraqi lives was the US intention; rather, they see the US as intending to enhance Israel's security and control Iraqi resources.

VII. RETHINKING TERRORISM

Arabs demonstrate a considerably different understanding and definition of terrorism than that understood in the West. As we have shown, Arabs do not despise Western culture and societies; indeed, they admire Western liberal democratic practices and technological advancement, and many see the West as an attractive place to do personal business. However, they are leery of Western -- and particularly American -- intentions toward the Arab World. They see the US as using its might to dominate nations, running roughshod over the human rights of others. A powerful Zionist Lobby is believed to be the primary force behind US foreign policy, intent on maintaining -- indeed, expanding -- Israel's position in the region.

In this context, we find that most Arab views of terrorism do not coincide with those defined by the US State Department as "all premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets". Rather, they see such violence -- and the groups that perpetrate it -- as legitimate if they are part of a strategy to counter the policies of what they see as threatening powers - the US and Israel. Arabs are inclined to define terrorism more according to the motivations of the combatants rather than by the nature of the act.   Actions against Israel and the US, in particular, are frequently considered as legitimate resistance. Individuals who fear and distrust the West are most likely to perceive these actions as legitimate acts of resistance.

AN ACT OF TERROR

Arabs are likely to perceive as terrorism any act that Israelis and Americans commit against Arabs in Palestine and Iraq; they are also likely to view as legitimate action committed there against Israelis and Americans. Thus, when given a set of events and asked which constituted terrorism, the overwhelming majority of respondents labeled actions that Americans and Israelis commit against Arabs in Palestine and Iraq as terrorist acts.   More than 80% of respondents considered the first four items on the list in Table VII.1 to be terrorism.   In contrast, less than a quarter of respondents considered the last four acts on this list -- committed against Israelis and Americans -- to be terrorism.

There is considerable variation in the perceptions of other events.   Notably, however, the majority of respondents in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt defined the 9/11 attacks as a terrorist act. This compared to 35% of respondents in Jordan and 22% in Palestine.

Table VII.1. Percentage of National Sample Labeling Event as "Terrorist".

Event	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
Israeli killing of Palestinian civilians in West Bank and Gaza Strip	90	97	88	96	91
Bulldozing by Israel of agricultural land and crops in West Bank and Gaza Strip	88	96	83	94	90
US-led coalition operations in Iraq	86	94	64	89	87
Assassination by Israel of Palestinian political figures	84	93	80	94	87
Bombing of UN and Red Cross headquarters in Iraq	48	78	80	36	61
Bombing of housing compounds in Saudi Arabia	46	73	82	28	69
Bombing of hotel in Morocco	50	72	75	30	73
World Trade Center attacks 9/11	35	71	73	22	62
Attacks on Jewish synagogues in Turkey	21	54	59	13	44
Attacks on Israeli civilians inside Israel	24	22	55	17	33
Attacks on settlements in West Bank and Gaza Strip	17	16	42	3	17
Attacks on US coalition forces in Iraq	18	9	28	9	14
Attacks on Israeli military inside Israel	7	5	25	3	9
Hizballah operations against Israel	10	3	16	2	7

The majority of respondents also reject the killing of civilians (including women and children) of a state that has occupied Muslim lands. This is true across all samples and all cases. However, Palestinians, and particularly Palestinian students, demonstrate the lowest percentages of disapproval for killing civilians in this case. (See *Figure VII.1.*)

Figure VII.1. Percentage of Respondents Disapproving the Killing Civilians of a State that has Occupied Muslim Lands, by Sample
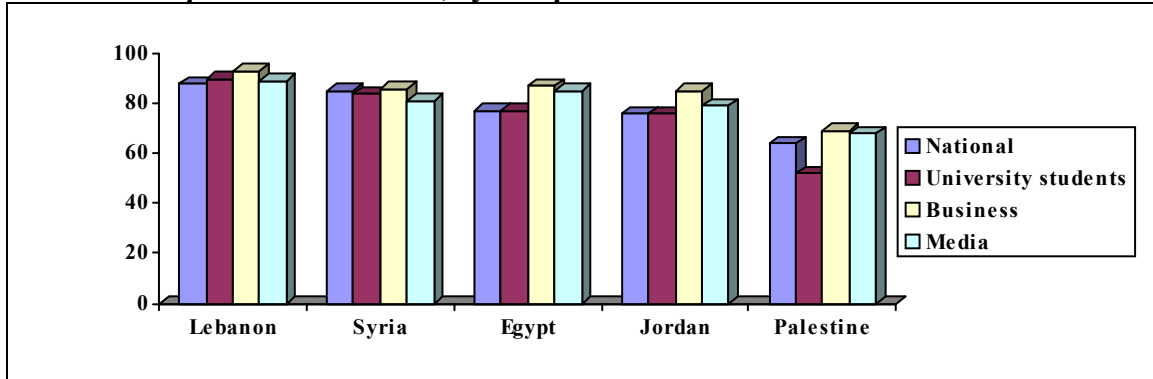
ORGANIZATIONS AS "TERRORIST"

Respondents demonstrated a similar definition of groups using such tactics. Where they view the tactics as part of the struggle against the US and Israel, they are more likely to view the groups perpetrating them as legitimate resistance organizations. When asked to label groups as "terrorist" or "legitimate", the great majority of respondents -- across samples and countries -- labeled the Islamic Jihad Movement, Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Hizballah as "legitimate resistance organizations". The exception was in Lebanon, where only around two-thirds of the national sample defined these groups as legitimate resistance organizations. This was true even of Hizballah, which 74% of Lebanese Christians and 99% of Lebanese Muslims saw as a legitimate resistance group. In general, assessments, however, were consistent with Arab assessments of the actions of the groups in question.

The status of Al-Qaeda remains more controversial, as do the opinions regarding the 9/11 attacks. Approximately two-thirds of the national samples in Jordan and Palestine viewed Al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization, and about 40% of Egyptians see it as such. This stands in stark contrast to respondents in Syria and Lebanon, where small minorities stated that Al-Qaeda is a legitimate resistance organization. Yet, significant percentages of respondents -- particularly in Lebanon and Syria -- displayed reticence about responding to this question, many answering "do not know" or "refuse to answer".[10]

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[10] One should be cautious in interpreting "don't know" and "refuse to answer" in this case.

Table VII.2. Percentage Indicating Group is a "Legitimate Resistance Organization",
National Samples

		Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
Islamic Jihad Movement	Resistance	87	95	62	59	82
	Terrorist	2	1	19	1	3
	Not heard of it	2	1	3	0	8
	Other (DK +NA)	10	3	16	4	7
HAMAS	Resistance	87	95	62	94	85
	Terrorist	2	1	19	1	3
	Not heard of it	1	1	1	0	6
	Other (DK +NA)	10	3	18	6	6
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades	Resistance	88	95	55	94	86
	Terrorist	2	1	19	1	2
	Not heard of it	1	2	4	0	6
	Other (DK +NA)	9	2	22	6	7
Hizballah	Resistance	84	96	75	92	80
	Terrorist	3	1	12	1	3
	Not heard of it	1	0	0	1	8
	Other (DK +NA)	12	3	13	6	8
Al Qaeda	Resistance	67	8	18	70	41
	Terrorist	11	40	54	7	31
	Not heard of it	3	4	1	2	8
	Other (DK +NA)	20	49	28	21	20
Armed Islamic Jama`a (Algeria)	Resistance	33	2	11	32	20
	Terrorist	24	54	47	17	34
	Not heard of it	17	21	14	16	30
	Other (DK +NA)	27	23	28	36	16

UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS: FIGHTING THE EMPIRE

Individual tendencies to perceive organizations and acts as "terrorist" or "legitimate" are largely consistent with general perceptions of the West. Members of demographic groups that are more likely to view the West negatively are also more likely to view these organizations and their activities as legitimate. That is, those who most fear and dislike the West -- particularly, who see US and British policies as self-interested and domineering -- are more likely to support these groups and their actions.

Age. Young people -- who tend to express greater hostility toward the West -- are more likely than older adults to view the organizations in question as "legitimate resistance" organizations. This is particularly notable with regard to Al-Qaeda and the Armed Islamic Jama'a in Algeria: Two-thirds of respondents aged 16-34 define Al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization, while only 51% of those 45 and older do. Similarly,

52% of respondents between the ages of 16 and 24 labeled the Armed Islamic Group as a terrorist organization, compared to 70% of those over 45 years old.

There were also significant differences in the perceptions of younger and older generations over the definition of specific events. As shown in *Table VII.3*, younger respondents were less likely to view the five most ambiguous events as terrorist attacks. Reactions to the remaining nine events show no significant differences by age.

Table VII.3. Percentage Labeling Events as Terrorist Attacks by Age, Pooled Data

Event	Age group 16-24	Age group 45+
World Trade Center attacks 9/11	56	72
Bombing of hotel in Morocco	77	87
Bombing of UN and Red Cross headquarters in Iraq	71	80
Bombing of housing compounds in Saudi Arabia	69	80
Attacks on Jewish synagogues in Turkey	38	58

Education.   Education also influences attitudes about what constitutes terrorism. Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to define Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hizballah, Al-Qaeda and the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria as terrorist organizations. The differences in perceptions are greatest for Al-Qaeda and Armed Islamic Group. (See Figure VII.2.)

There is also some evidence that education affects individual evaluations of specific events. For example, only 38% of those with low education perceived the attacks on Jewish synagogues in Turkey as terrorist attacks, while 43% of those with moderate or higher levels of education did. Similarly, only 15% of lesser-educated respondents perceived operations against US-led coalition forces in Iraq as terrorist attacks, while 20% of the more educated respondents did. In contrast, 98% of those with low education viewed military operations by US-led coalition forces in Iraq as terrorist acts, while only 92% of those with moderate and high education did.

Figure VII.2. Percentage of Respondents Viewing Group as Terrorist by Education, Pooled Data
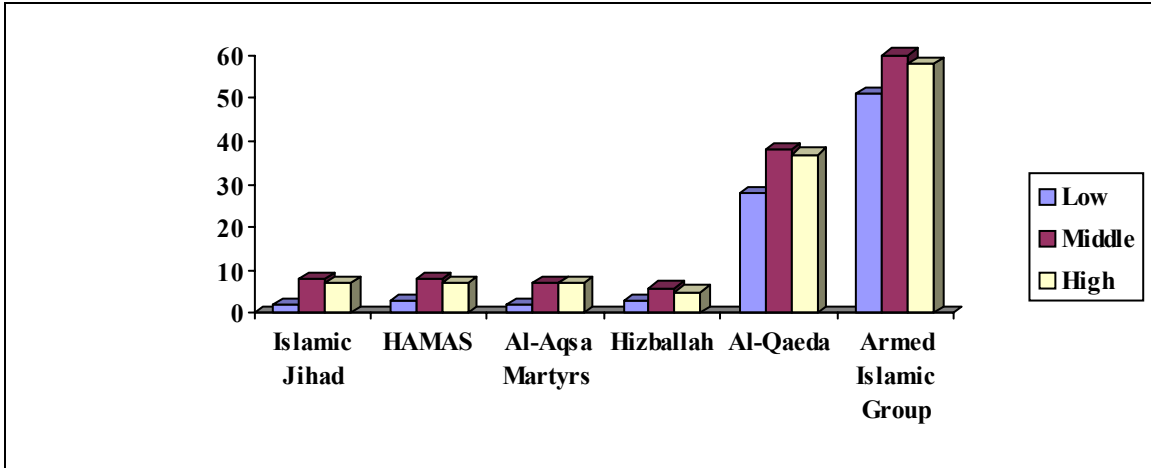
Media and Business Elites.

Members of business and media communities tend to view events differently than the average citizen. They are more likely to view controversial actions as terrorist attacks. This is demonstrated in Figure VII.3, below, in which a higher proportion of media and business elites viewed the bombing of the Moroccan hotel as a terrorist attack. Yet, they are also less likely to view attacks on Israeli or US occupying forces in Iraq as terrorist attacks. This is particularly true for media communities, and it is consistent with their critical attitudes about the basic intentions of US foreign policies.

Figure VII.3. Percentage of Respondents Viewing Event as a Terrorist Attack, by Sample
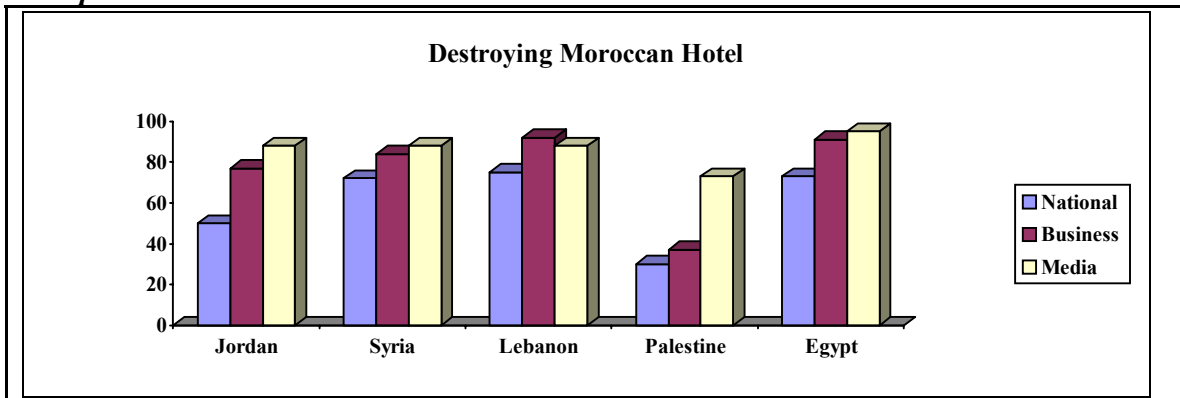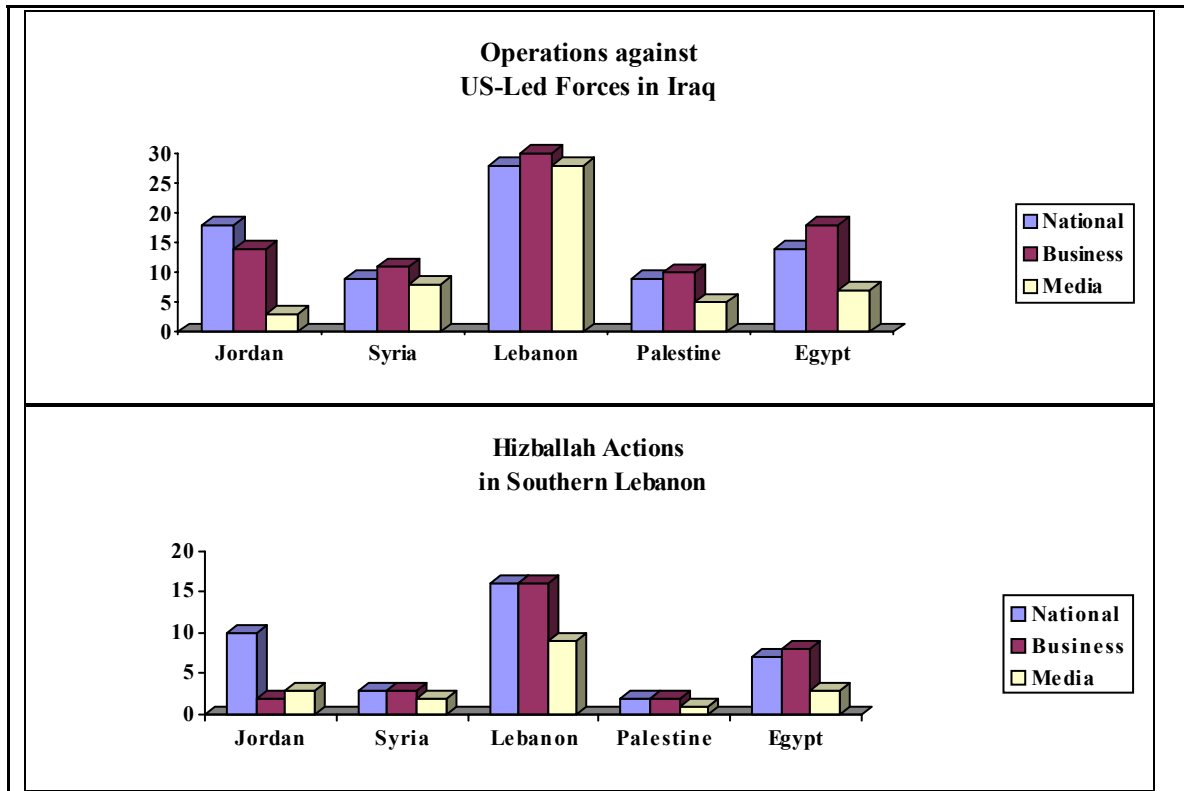
There is a higher tendency to define Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization among groups that are likely to have greater levels of education or access to information. This was particularly true in Jordan and Egypt, where media elites were more than twice as likely as the national sample respondents to view Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization. The only exception to this pattern is found in Lebanon, where nearly half of respondents, across samples, view Al-Qaeda as terrorist organization. (See Table VII.4.)

Table VII.4. Percentage of Respondents Viewing Al-Qa'eda as a Terrorist Organization, by Sample

	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Palestine	Egypt
National	11	40	54	7	31
Business	33	43	53	6	59
Media	48	61	58	22	61

Religion. Finally, religion affects attitudes towards organizations studied here, although it is clearly not the defining factor. Examining the Lebanese national sample data by religion, we find that only 44% of Muslims and 12% of Christian respondents defined al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization. Interestingly, both Christians and Muslims defined Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Hizballah as legitimate resistance organizations (see *Table VII.5* below). The fact that 74% of Lebanese Christians define Hizballah as a legitimate resistance organization demonstrates that political context, rather than religious affiliation, is the key to understanding attitudinal orientations of the public.

Table VII.5. Percentage of Christians and Muslims Defining Organization as "Legitimate Resistance", Lebanese National Sample

Organization	Muslims	Christians

Islamic Jihad	98	54
Hamas	98	57
Al-Aqsa Martyrs	98	53
Hizballah	99	74
Al-Qaeda	44	12
Armed Islamic Group	24	15

CONCLUSION

Arab frustrations with Israel, America, and the West are reflected in their perceptions of terrorism.

Generally, Arabs demonstrate a widespread belief that the actions undertaken by the organizations studied here are legitimate.

o The vast majority of respondents perceive Hamas, Islamic Jihad and All-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades as legitimate resistance organizations. This holds across all samples and all countries.

o The majority of Jordanians and Egyptians also view Al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization, although support for the organization falls in other countries. Support for Al-Qaeda in these countries should not be entirely ignored, however. Indeed, although only 8% of Syrians labeled it a legitimate organization, 49% choose not to answer the question.

o Only about one-third of Arabs believe that Armed Islamic Group (Algeria) is a legitimate organization. However, this opinion may have been tempered because more than 40% of respondents across the Mashreq did not know or were unfamiliar with the group.

Arabs view terrorism through the lens of foreign policy. They view acts against US and Israeli occupying forces as legitimate responses to aggression and view actions of these forces against Arabs as terrorism.

Majorities in these countries reject killing the civilians of an occupying country, but Palestinians - most notably Palestinian university students - show the least disapproval of such acts.

Attitudes toward Western foreign policies largely affect attitudes toward terrorism. Those groups that view Western, and particularly US, policies most negatively are most likely to view as legitimate the organizations and events that the West identifies as terrorist.

o Youth and the less educated are more likely to view organizations and events - including Al-Qaeda - as legitimate. This is consistent with young people's greater hostility toward Western policies. It can thus be predicted that in the future, youth - particularly if poorly educated and unexposed to other

information - may provide an important base of support for such organizations.

o Media and business communities demonstrate they are slightly more likely to view attacks on US and Israeli occupiers as legitimate, but they are also less likely to view controversial attacks (e.g., the bombing of the Moroccan hotel) as legitimate. They are also more likely to define individual groups as terrorist. This, too, is consistent with these communities' harsher judgments of US policies but generally more critical evaluation of both Western and Arab cultures.

o Christians are less likely to view these organizations and events as legitimate. The percentage of Lebanese Christians defining these organizations as legitimate resistance is significantly lower than for Lebanese Muslims, but both groups do define them as legitimate. This is evidence that tensions are grounded in politics, rather than in culture or religion.

SECTION 4. CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In general, the study confirms that Arabs perceive important differences between the cultures and societies of the Arab world and the West. Yet, cultural differences are not at the basis of current Arab-West tensions. Rather, the current conflict is based in deep-seated frustration with Western, and particularly American, foreign policies, and a growing distrust of America's underlying regional objectives. The Arab world sees the West, and the US in particular, as technologically admirable, morally corrupt, and, most importantly, politically incorrect.

The survey provides little evidence that the tensions between the Arab world and the US will soon disappear. Frustration with US foreign policy is widespread across the Mashreq, regardless of age, educational background and professional status. Youths and those with less education are the most likely to reject the West, and the US specifically, outright. They are skeptical of US intentions in the region, and do not believe that creating stronger ties with the West has benefit. Young people are also more likely to see Al-Qaeda's actions as legitimate acts of resistance. These youths -- and particularly those with low education and status -- provide an important potential base of support for such movements. Given demographic trends in the region, anti-Western and anti-American sentiments are likely to remain at a high level unless there are significant and demonstrable changes in US foreign policy.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WEST

The survey confirms the conventional wisdom that Arabs are largely disenchanted with the West, but it also suggests a number of important refinements. First, Arabs do not feel equally negatively toward all Western countries. Only about 50% of most national samples expressed positive attitudes toward all three countries, but France consistently fared better than the US and Britain. For example, only 25% of national sample respondents in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt report feeling either "highly positive" or "moderately positive" toward the US and the UK, in contrast to 57% who felt positively toward France. Similarly, 46% of the Jordanian national sample associated France with such positive concepts as "democracy," "tolerance," "moderation", and "the rule of law", while only 28% of this sample offered such positive statements about the US.

Arab attitudes toward the West do not wholly determine whether or not they choose France, the US, or the UK as a place to pursue personal business. Respondents recognize particular strengths of individual Western countries, and are willing to engage with the West in these areas. The US and France were considered as equally desirable destinations to pursue medical treatment, work-related training, immigration, and employment, even though survey respondents hold more favorable attitudes toward France in general.

In the final analysis, the US and the UK have reason to be concerned about the demographic and political trends in the region. The younger generation and individuals

outside of elite business and media circles demonstrate high levels of dissatisfaction with these Western powers. This is particularly true with regard to attitudes toward the US and the UK. For example, 15-20% of youth aged 16-24 years old have favorable attitudes toward the US, as compared with 35-40% of adults over 45 years old. As further example, while 30% of business and media elites in Egypt held positive attitudes about the US, only 18% of the general Egyptian population holds such views. Similar trends exist across other countries in the Mashreq relating to attitudes toward the British and, to a lesser extent, the French.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Attitudes toward the importance of bilateral economic, cultural, and political relations with each Western state are largely consistent with public attitudes toward these countries generally. Respondents in most countries surveyed perceived existing bilateral relations between their governments and the French as strong, and they supported maintaining or further strengthening relationships. In contrast, there is less public support for increased ties with the US, whether or not existing bilateral relations are considered to be strong. Majorities in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon tended to see bilateral cultural, economic and political relations with the US as good, while those in Syria and Palestine saw existing ties with the US as poor. The significant finding is that all respondents were less likely to support strengthening ties with the US than they were with France. Thus, it can be deduced that it is not the existing state of bilateral relations, but rather general attitude toward the country, that drives public interest in promoting stronger bilateral ties.

Arab interests in strengthening bilateral economic ties with the West are also consistent with their assessments of who benefits in the relationships. France is viewed as acting more equitably in bilateral relationships and thus is more likely to garner the approval of the public for strengthened relations. Thus, 56% of Jordanians, 81% of Syrians, 88% of Lebanese, 64% of Palestinians, and 70% of Egyptians express a desire for stronger economic relations with France. On the contrary, many see the US as benefiting in bilateral in economic relations, and are not in favor of seeing ties strengthened. Syrian respondents are the least enthusiastic, with only 32% of the national sample favoring closer ties with the US. Similarly, in Jordan, Palestine and Egypt, only about half of respondents in the national sample seek improved economic ties with the US. In contrast, the Lebanese want stronger economic relations with America, with two-thirds to three-quarters of respondents in all samples seek increased ties. A similar pattern holds for Britain.

Similarly, more Arabs prefer to strengthen cultural relations with the French than with the Americans or the British. Majorities in all countries, and across samples, favored stronger bilateral cultural ties with France. Jordanians and Palestinians were the least enthusiastic in this regard, but even there, 51% and 59%, respectively, sought closer relations. Attitudes toward stronger relations with the US are quite different. Only in Lebanon did a majority of national sample respondents favor closer ties. Eighty-one percent of the Lebanese national sample stood in favor, compared to 46% in Jordan, 43% in Syria, 44% in Palestine and 50% in Egypt. These attitudes are similar to those towards Britain, where

78% of Lebanese favored closer relations, compared to 46% in Jordan, 53% in Syria, 46% in Palestine and 50% in Egypt.

These trends are even more evident with regard to political relations. Arabs view US foreign policies negatively and distrust US intentions toward the region. The data suggests that they consequently do not support close bilateral political relations between their governments and the US. Indeed, Lebanon is the only country in which a majority of the population favors stronger bilateral, political relations with the US. There, 59% of respondents favored increased political ties, as compared to 40% in Jordan, 30% in Syria, 38% in Palestine and 46% in Egypt.

The UK fares somewhat better. Of national samples, 40% in Jordan, 39% in Syria, 57% in Lebanon, 42% in Palestine, and 46% in Egypt sought closer political ties with the UK.

ATTITUDES TOWARD WESTERN CULTURES AND SOCIETIES

The study does not find evidence that a clash of cultures explains deteriorating relations with the West, generally, or with the US, specifically. Citizens of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt have a well-defined notion of Arab and Western cultures, and they draw a sharp distinction between Western and Arab cultures. Yet, these distinctions are not the fundamental reason for escalating Arab-West tensions.

Before examining the distinctions between Arab and Western cultures and societies, it should be noted that the widespread understanding of Western cultures and societies is not entirely based on detailed knowledge. The study revealed important discrepancies between Arabs' self-assessed levels of knowledge and their actual knowledge of Western culture and society. When respondents are asked to describe their knowledge of each Western society on a four-point scale, one-third and two-thirds of national samples reported "very good" or "considerable" knowledge of the US, Britain and France. However, when asked to name a single non-political figure from each state, less than one-third of most national samples were able to do so.

Arabs nevertheless share a common agreement that Western social values are distinct from their own. For instance, the public almost universally believes that people in the West place little importance on values of religion, family and heritage.   In contrast, Arabs believe that these values are widely adhered to in their own societies. At the same time, Arabs in the Mashreq identified "individual liberty", "wealth", and "pursuit of knowledge" as the values most prevalent in the three Western countries.

In Arab minds, French, US, and British societies are lacking in individual values and plagued by social problems, but they are not entirely worse than Arab societies. For instance, Arabs see administrative and financial corruption as more prevalent in Arab than Western societies, which suggests that Arabs respect Western governance practices and are dissatisfied with corruption in their own countries.

Those surveyed believe that both Arab and Western societies face problems of religious

fanaticism. However, it is worth noting that there does not appear to be a widespread fear in Arab society that the West is intent on a "crusade" against Muslims. Indeed, respondents perceived citizens in the West as not being primarily motivated by religious beliefs. However, they do express the fear of the growth of religious extremism. Nearly two-thirds of respondents across samples and countries believed religious fanaticism is a problem in both Western and Arab societies.

The cultural gap between the West and the Arab world is not viewed as the fundamental cause of conflict. Arabs perceive French, American and British values similarly, even though they hold different attitudes toward France than toward the US and the UK. Thus, this study does not support the view that it is because Arabs appreciate French values, but dislike those of British and American societies, that they view these countries so differently. Rather, negative attitudes toward the US and Britain are closely tied to the foreign policies of these nations.

ISLAM IN THE ARAB WORLD

Given the high levels of opposition to US and British foreign policies, and the increased support for Islamism in the Middle East, it is not surprising that many commentators have deduced that antipathy toward the West is being fueled by growing what is referred to as Islamic fundamentalism, understood as firm adherence to religious texts and tenets, in the region. Yet, the study finds limited support for this view.

The study finds strong support for the *Shari'a* to play a role in legislation. Approximately two thirds of Jordanians, Palestinians and Egyptians believe that S*hari'a* must be the only source of legislation in their respective countries, with the remainder in these countries favoring the view that S*hari'a* must be one of the sources of legislation. At the same time, however, majorities in the Mashreq do not believe that interpretation in religion (*Ijtihad*) has been closed. Indeed, two-thirds of Syrians and Lebanese and greater numbers of Palestinians, Egyptians and Jordanians hold the view that interpretation should remain open. This suggests that Arab Muslims do not view Islam as a fixed set of ideas and beliefs, but rather see wide space for pluralism and debate. Islam as practiced in the Mashreq today remains home to a broad range of "non-fundamentalists", secularists, nationalists, and liberals.

Most importantly, there is little evidence that support for the role of *Shari'a* in legislation equates with anti-Western attitudes. In Jordan and Egypt, those who prefer a lesser role for *Shari'a* in legislation are likely to have more positive attitudes toward the US and Britain than their more religious counterparts. However, beliefs in the role of the S*hari'a* in legislation are not strongly correlated with attitudes toward France. Moreover, such beliefs do not seem to drive attitudes toward the US, Britain or France in Lebanon or Palestine. In short, the data suggest that the relationship between support for the role of *Shari'a* in legislation and the profession of anti -Western sentiments is weaker than has been assumed.

Western Foreign Policy

Arabs perceive a striking difference in the foreign policies of France and those of the US and Britain. They believe France treats other countries with respect and dignity, promotes democracy and human rights, and does not impose its will on others. The majority of Arabs in the Mashreq see the US and Britain in quite the opposite light. The Americans and the British are seen as involved in promoting their own interests, even in the extension of economic aid, as well as imposing their will on other countries, and violating precepts of human rights.

There is widespread perception throughout the region that a "Zionist Lobby" directs and influences American foreign policy more than other actors, including President George W. Bush himself. Less than one-third of respondents in all national samples saw President George W. Bush as the most important foreign policymaker. This compared to only 29% of Egyptians, but 39% of Jordanians, 43% of Palestinians, 44% of Lebanese and 61% of Syrians who saw the Zionist Lobby as the single most important foreign policy actor in the US. Business and media representatives -- again, understood to have greater exposure -- are even more likely to identify the Zionist Lobby as the most influential actor in drafting the foreign policy of the United States, although the media respondents also consider the American Christian Right as an equally important foreign policy factor.

At the same time, the vast majority of Arabs believe that American and British citizens do not support the foreign policies of President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair, respectively. The one exception at the time of this poll (March 2004) was found among university students. Whether the November 2004 US elections, in which President Bush was returned to office, will change this perception remains to be seen. The finding that Arabs perceive the Zionist Lobby -- rather than the American people or even the president -- as the most important foreign policy influence in the US is consistent with findings that most believe US foreign policies in Iraq and relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict are designed specifically to support Israel.

ARAB SATELLITE TELEVISION

Importantly, it does not appear that satellite television coverage is fueling the hostility toward US foreign policies. It is true that the introduction of Arab satellite TV has changed the nature of news in the Arab World. It has broken the monopoly of the Western and Arab governmental media over the coverage and interpretation of the news. It has also led to a critical and almost continuous coverage of such sensitive topics as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq. Yet, discrepancies between access to satellite TV coverage and attitudes expressed in this survey suggest that the broadcasts of Arab satellite stations in and of themselves do not determine attitudes toward Western policies.

For example, the study does not find a strong correlation between satellite viewership and attitudes across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. The Lebanese and Palestinians

have some of the highest rates of satellite ownership, with 85% of Lebanese and 84% of Palestinians having satellites in their homes. This compares to 26% of Egyptians and 58% of Jordanians. Yet, the study has found that the attitudes of Egyptians and Jordanians toward the West are often more critical than those of the Lebanese. Satellite TV ownership, and viewing the coverage transmitted on Arab satellite TV, does not seem to determine popular attitudes toward the UK, France and the US.

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REGION

It must be emphasized that United States foreign policy in the region, along with British foreign policy where it intersects with that of the US, is consistently seen to be the most significant factor in creating negative regional attitudes. This finding is consistent across the five Arab countries, as well as across all demographic factors.

The United States faces a serious credibility crisis most specifically with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is a virtual consensus across age groups in the five Arab countries that the United States has dealt with this problem in an unsatisfactory manner. Fully three quarters of those interviewed do not believe that the United States is serious about implementing The Roadmap, as launched in June of 2003. Nor do they see The Roadmap as a just solution to the conflict. While greater numbers of Egyptians are optimistic about The Roadmap, positive figures are low overall.

Arabs also view the US-led invasion of Iraq as unjustified. The overwhelming majority Jordanians, Syrians, Palestinians and Egyptians, and a simple majority in Lebanon viewed the invasion as "not justified at all". Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of respondents do not believe that the US-led coalition will turn Iraq into a model for democracy in the region or improve the lives of Iraqis.

TERRORISM

In this context, Arabs interpret many groups and actions that the West labels as "terrorist" as legitimate. An overwhelming majority in all countries viewed the Islamic Jihad Movement, Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Hizballah as "legitimate resistance organizations". Arabs tend to consider actions taken against US and Israeli occupying forces as legitimate and view the actions of these military forces against Arabs as terrorism.   When asked about specific acts that have been carried out in recent years, less than one-quarter of Mashreq Arabs defined acts committed against Israelis and Americans in Palestine and Iraq as terrorism. In contrast, strong majorities viewed activities conducted by Israelis and Americans against Arabs in Palestine and Iraq as terrorism.

There is less agreement about the nature of Al-Qaeda. Only in Egypt and Jordan did majorities views Al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization. In contrast, only 8% of Syrians labeled it a legitimate organization, but 49% of Syrian respondents did not answer the question. There is reason to believe that some of these Syrian respondents may see Al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance organization but are reticent to express that

view openly. Al-Qaeda operations also remain controversial. Majorities in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt consider them as terrorism, while only a third of Egyptians and approximately a fifth of Palestinians believe that Al-Qaeda operations are terrorist acts.

The case of Lebanon, with a population nearly evenly divided among Muslims and Christians, indicates that religious affiliation does not strictly inform perceptions of terrorism. While far more Lebanese Christians view Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization, the population is virtually unified in deeming Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and Hizballah as legitimate resistance organizations. The fact those three quarters of Lebanese Christians defines Hizballah as a legitimate resistance organization provides strong evidence that political context, rather than religious affiliation, is the key to understanding public opinion in the region.

Majorities in these countries reject killing the civilians of an occupying country, but Palestinians -- most notably Palestinian university students -- show the least disapproval of such acts.

YOUTH, EDUCATION AND ELITES: A CAUSE FOR CONTINUED CONCERN

Youth and non-elites tend to hold more negative views of the US in general, are skeptical of its intentions in the region, and are most likely to reject increased bilateral ties. Young people and the less educated are more likely to view organizations and events -- including Al-Qaeda -- as legitimate. Business and media elites are harsh critics of American foreign policy, but they also tend to judge the US more positively overall.

The younger generation and those outside of elite business and media circles demonstrate higher levers of dissatisfaction with the Western powers. For example, only 15-20% of youth aged 16-24 years old have favorable attitudes toward the US, as compared with 35-40% of adults over 45 years old. Positive attitudes of Egyptians about US increase from 18% of the national population to more than 30% of the business and media elites, and similar trends are found across other countries in the Mashreq. This holds true as well to attitudes toward the British and the French.

There is a wide gap between the attitudes of educated youth and the members of business and media communities concerning bilateral relations with the West. Despite their criticism of US foreign policy, business and media communities tend to perceive increasing relations with the West as positive, and they advocate even closer bilateral ties. University students take quite an opposite view. They show great distrust of the American and British intentions and do not seek stronger bilateral relations with either country.

There is little or no reason to believe that the problems facing Arab-West relations will dissipate any time soon. Given the current demographics of the Mashreq -- with burgeoning young populations and limited upward mobility -- relations are unlikely to improve in the absence of significant policy changes. This study suggests that improving cultural and social exchanges alone will not alleviate tensions.   The fundamental

conclusion of "Revisiting the Arab Street: Research from Within" is that foreign policy is at the heart of the fundamental disagreements between the West and the Arab World. Improving Arab-West relations vitally depends upon changing Western, especially US, foreign policy, particularly as it relates to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq.