

U.S. Public Opinion about Arab States: Examining the Differences in National Images

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ABSTRACT

A foreign country's image among the U.S. public can be expected to have impact on U.S. foreign policy, as elected officials and their appointees in the foreign policy establishment view public opinion as one of the constraints on their choice of policy options. Despite the likely importance of U.S. public images of countries in shaping U.S. foreign policy, relatively little is known about the nature of those images and their origins. The paper begins with a conceptual overview of the literature on public images of foreign countries. The paper then examines findings from a unique set of polls conducted in the U.S. by the Gallup Organization that tracks the affective component of National Image of a variety of countries from around the world. Among these countries were six Arab countries and the Palestinian Authority. The analysis of the survey data was supplemented by a content analysis of the coverage of the Arab countries. The analysis suggests that a positive national image is dependent on an understanding of the complexity of the country's social fabric. Such an understanding is dependent on complex and complete media coverage.

A foreign country's image among the U.S. public can be expected to have impact on U.S. foreign policy, as elected officials and their appointees in the foreign policy establishment view public opinion as one of the constraints on their choice of policy options.

The negative image of Iraq in the years between the two Gulf wars, for example, no doubt made it easier for the U.S. leadership to decide to invade that country and overthrow Saddam Hussein in March of 2003 (Becker, McCutcheon and Vlad, 2006; Becker, 2007).

Similarly, the different assessments of Arab states by the American public following the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in September 11, 2001, seem likely to have influenced decisions by the administration of President George W. Bush as it formed bilateral relations during this crucial period of U.S. foreign policy. Certainly the Bush administration came under attack for its sympathetic stance toward Saudi Arabia following the attacks (Unger, 2004).

Despite the likely importance of U.S. public images of countries in shaping U.S. foreign policy, relatively little is known about the nature of those images and their origins. The literature that does exist suggests that U.S. public images of countries are shaped by cultural and religious links, the historical relationship of those countries with the U.S., and current geopolitics.

It seems reasonable, particularly if current political relationships are important, that the media would have some influence on U.S. public images of other countries. A public attentive to current events would be expected to develop different images of countries as events transpired on the international scene.

This paper begins with a conceptual overview of the literature on public images of foreign countries. Many different terms are used in the literature to refer to the basic idea that the citizens of a country have images of other, individual countries. We define these images—or the pictures that people have of another country—as a National Image. This National Image is made up of the beliefs individuals have about the characteristics and behaviors of another country and an assessment of those characteristics. We view National Image, in sum, as having both a cognitive and affective component.

The paper then examines findings from a unique set of polls conducted in the U.S. by the Gallup organization that track the affective component of National Image of a variety of countries from around the world. Among these countries were six Arab countries and the Palestinian Authority. Not all of these countries were included on each survey, though all were used on at least two. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority were on all seven surveys. By focusing on Arab states, we were able to standardize cultural and religious characteristics of the countries, and, to some extent, current geopolitical relationships involving the United States.

The surveys also contain a measure of attention to foreign news. This allowed us to examine differences among and changes in the National Images of the six countries and Palestinian Authority separately for those who attend to the media and those who do not. Standard demographic markers were used as additional explanatory variables. These analyses of the survey data were supplemented by a content analysis of the coverage of these countries during the period of analysis.

Public Images of Foreign Countries

Many terms are used in the literature to refer to the basic idea that the citizens of a country have images or stereotypes of other countries. Boulding (1969) referred to this as National Image, while Rokeach (1968) used the term Belief System, and Holsti (1969) spoke of a Public Image. For Buchanan and Cantril (1965), the appropriate term was National Stereotype, while Lebedenko (2004) spoke of a National Identity, or the image citizens have of their own country. Alexander, Levin and Henry (2005) were concerned with International Relations Image Theory, Abouchedid (2006) wrote about International Attitudes, and Inoue & Patterson (2007) spoke of International Perceptions. Brewer (2006) was concerned with National Frames.

Lippmann (1922) wrote that the way in which the world is imagined determines, at any particular moment, what people will do. Boulding (1969) argued that the National Image is basically a lie, or at least a perspective distortion of the truth. Some researchers, such as Buchanan and Cantril (1965), said that these images are the basis upon which people feel for or

against other nations, interpret their behavior as villainous or good, judge their actions and judge what they themselves as a nation should do in relation to others.

Smith (1973) defined the International Images as the images the people of one nation have of the people and governments of other nations. He said that the images the citizens of any nations hold about some other nations affect the options open to their own government in political economic and social relationships with those other nations.

Merskin (2004) stated that stereotypes are collections of traits or characteristics that present members of a group as being all the same. This signifying mental practice provides convenient shorthand in the identification of a particular group of people. Mowlana (1995) wrote that image may be defined as a combinatorial construct whose subject is itself a collection of images in the individual memory of various aspects or reality. It is the totality of attributes that a person recognizes or imagines. Images are, to varying degrees, interdependent on one another. The structure of one is inferred or predicted by that of another, and change in one produces imbalance and, therefore, change in the other.

Boulding (1969) argued that the images that are important in international systems are those that a nation has of itself and the images the nation has of other bodies in the system that constitute its international environment.

Image theorists suggested that ideas about other actors in world affairs are organized into group schemas, or images, with well-defined cognitive elements (Alexander, et al., 2005). These images are organized in a systematic way, comprised of cognitions and beliefs regarding the target nation's motives, leadership, and primary characteristics.

In sum, the National Image can be seen as the representations that people have in their minds about another country. It includes their beliefs about that country as well as the objective facts they have stored about that country. It is possible to distinguish this from the affective assessment of the country, though affect and cognitions should be linked.

Factors that affect National Images

Boulding (1969) argued that impressions of nationality are formed mostly in childhood and usually in the family. He said it would be wrong to think of these images as being easily manipulated. According to Boulding, the national image is essentially a historical image. The more aware a people is of its history, the stronger the national image of other countries is likely to be. In addition, the consciousness of important shared events and experiences is of great importance.

Buchanan and Cantril (1965) showed that the influence of historical events has shaped somewhat the stereotypes in the U.S. of Germans, Italians and especially the Japanese. Some researchers have emphasized the role of ideology in shaping the national image. For example, the most important factor in shaping the image of the Soviet Union in the western minds was communism in contrast with liberalism. In the late 1980s, for example, when Ronald Reagan identified the Soviet Union as the focus of evil in the modern world, he asked Americans to pray for the salvation of all those who live in totalitarian darkness and for their chance of knowing God (Merskin, 2004). Thus, after the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, most of the newly independent states faced with the challenges of defining a new identity and of positioning their image in the international arena (Lebedenko, 2004).

When there are good relationships between nations, the mutual images tend to be positive. For example, Guirguis (1988) concluded that the changes of political relations between Egypt and the U.S. affected the image of Egypt in the American media. During the 1960s, since the relations were negative, the image was negative. In the 1970s, as the relations became positive, the image became positive. Rabinovich (2004) found that the world events and changes in U.S. foreign relations have affected evaluations of countries around the world by the U.S. public.

Religion is considered to be one of the most important factors in shaping national images. For example, western Christian cultures perceived the Muslim world as a menace (Rodenson, 1987). Christians and Muslims presented a religious, intellectual and military challenge to each other (Zeid, 2001; Gerges, 2003).

The Role of Images in Foreign Policy

A number of classic studies has shown that the relationship between belief system, perceptions and decision making in foreign policy is a vital one. A decision maker acts based upon his or her image of the situation rather than upon objective reality. It has been demonstrated that the belief system, its structure and its content, play an integral role in the cognitive process (Holsti, 1969).

The relationship between national images and international conflict also is clear. Decision makers act upon their definitions of the situation, their own images and the images others have of the states. These images are in turn dependent upon the decision maker's belief system, and these may or may not be accurate representations of the reality. Thus it has been suggested that international conflict frequently is not between states but rather between distorted images of states (Holsti, 1969).

Boulding (1969) argued that the people who determine the policies and actions of nations do not respond to the objective facts of the situation, but to their image of the situation. Politicians act according to the way the world appears to them, not necessarily according to the way it is.

Two distinct national images are thus of importance, according to Boulding (1969). First is the image of the small group of powerful people who make the actual decisions that lead to war or peace, the making or breaking of treaties, invasions or withdrawals, the forming of alliances, and other aspects of international relations. The second is the image of the mass of ordinary people who are deeply affected by these decisions but who take no direct part in making them.

International relations scholars have examined the origins and consequences of the images that nation states hold of each other, particularly in the context of international conflict (Alexander, Levin & Henry, 2005). Image theory is a theory of strategic decision making that identifies the primary judgments guiding international images, or stereotypes, and the selection of international policies. Images or stereotypes of one nation stem from perceived relationships between nations and serve to justify a nation's desired reaction or treatment toward another

nation. An image of the other nation as the enemy arises to validate such a behavior inclination (Alexander et al., 2005).

Ayres (1997) found that image change and resolution are correlated. He studied three cases in reaching that conclusion: the Israeli-Egyptian conflict from 1973-1979; the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots from 1979-1983; and the Iraqi-Iranian war from 1982-1985. In the case of Egypt and Israel, where a resolution was reached, images did change, correlated with mediation efforts over time. In the other two cases, where no resolution was obtained, no image change occurred despite mediation efforts.

Some researchers argued that most of the conflicts between nations or between the people of the same nation are due to distorted images. The American civil war is a classic example in this regard. In addition to the objective reasons for this war, there were many distorted images and perceptions that strengthened it (Farrell & Smith, 1976). This also was the case with the tension between the United States and France in the 1960s (Hoffmann, 1968). Similarly, the negative image of Jews in Germany during Hitler's era was one basis for their being targeted (Miller, 1982). The conflict between the Oriental Islam and Western Christianity from the middle ages until today has been based on negative images (Said, 1979; Gerges, 2003).

Niebuhr (1967) and Schiller (1992) argued that not only are world politics based on images, but they also are based on myths, and myths help to justify the actions and the behaviors of those nations who use them.

The Media and Foreign Policy

The role of the media in shaping a national policy and attitudes toward other peoples and cultures is a subject that has generated a great deal of controversy. Ghareeb (1983), for example, examined the extent that imbalanced and biased news reporting, editorializing and drawing of cartoons encourage the people of one country to support political hostility against another group.

Many argue that political battles today are often won or lost first in the media. This continues to be true of the U.S. media coverage of the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and the American public perceptions of the politics of the Middle East (Karl, 1983).

Scholars have employed traditional and new theoretical approaches to explore the complex, dynamic relationship between the media and foreign policy making, each focusing on a particular function or effect. Recent attention has focused on what is termed the CNN Effect. This term is used to describe television coverage, primarily of humanitarian disasters, that forces policymakers to take actions they otherwise would not have taken, such as military intervention (Gilboa, 2003). This phenomenon means that the media determine the national interest and usurps policy making from elected and appointed officials. Politicians, officials, journalists and scholars have argued that the CNN effect caused the U.S. and western interventions in Northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) have used an agenda-setting framework to study the relationship between media coverage and images of foreign nations. Specifically, they argued that the more coverage a country receives in the media, the more likely it is that members of the public will view the country as "of vital importance to U.S. interests." They also argued that the direction of coverage should make a difference, with negative coverage producing negative evaluations and positive coverage producing positive evaluations. The researchers used data gathered by the Gallup organization in 1998 for the Chicago Council for Foreign Relations in which questions on 26 countries were included. The respondents evaluated the countries in terms of whether they were of "vital interest" to the U.S. and by using a "feeling thermometer" measuring positive or negative affect. The newscasts of ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN were analyzed for the nine and a half months prior to the Gallup survey. The coding was for frequency of mentions and valence. Wanta, Golan and Lee found that amount of mentions was correlated with the perception that the country was of vital interest to the U.S., and that the more negative coverage a country received, the more likely respondents were to think negatively about the nation. Positive coverage, however, was not correlated with a positive affective response on the part of respondents.

A special report by Media Tenor (2006) for the World Economic Forum showed that coverage of the Middle East, including Iraq, dominated the reporting of international news in four U.S. television networks from January 1, 2005, through March 31, 2006. That coverage by ABC,

CB S, Fox and NBC evening newscasts largely focused on Iraq. The other countries receiving coverage were Iran, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, in that order. That coverage was judged to be overwhelmingly negative. Warfare and politically motivated crime dominated the coverage. Politically motivated crime dominated coverage of Egypt, for example, and overall coverage was negative.

Methodology and Expectations

Because the literature suggests that historical background, religion and culture are likely to make a difference in how the U.S. population views countries of the world, we began by focusing on a single region with largely similar historical connections to the United States, namely the Middle East. It also is a part of the world that is of great importance to the U.S. for both economic and security reasons.

We searched the data base of the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut for surveys that mentioned the key countries in that region. From that search, we identified a series of polls conducted by the Gallup organization from 2000 to 2007 that included identical questions on a number of countries in the Middle East. From 2002 on, these polls were labeled by Gallup as Gallup Poll Social Series: World Affairs.

The 2000 survey was fielded in May, but in each of the subsequent years, the survey was fielded in February. The surveys were conducted by telephone with probability samples of adults 18 years old or older. Each contained the following question, which measures what we view as an affective component of National Image: "I'd like your overall opinion of some foreign countries. Is your overall opinion of (Country, rotated) very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?"

The surveys also included the following measure of exposure to news coverage of these countries: "In general, how closely do you follow news about foreign countries around the world, including relations between the United States and other countries—very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not at all?"

Included among the countries in all of the surveys were Egypt, Iraq, the Palestinian Authority and Saudi Arabia. Libya was included in five of the surveys, while Jordan and Syria were included in two.

The surveys showed variability in terms of the evaluations among the countries at each of the time period and variability in the evaluation of the countries across time. Figure 1 shows the variability. The survey in 2000 was dropped from this figure and subsequent analysis because it was conducted in May. The variability among countries and across time shown in Figure 1 became the focus of the analysis.

The actual data files were not stored at the Roper Center, but the Gallup organization made them available to us for analysis. The data files were standardized to create a parallel set of measures across time.

Because our expectation was that media coverage would play a role in explaining this variability in evaluations of the countries within and across time, we next turned our attention to records of that coverage. We selected the Associated Press full-text record in the academic version of LexisNexis as a way of examining what the media were reporting about the selected Arab countries during the month before the Gallup interviews, that is, January of each of the years of the surveys. We also included January of 2000 as a benchmark.

We decided to eliminate Iraq and the Palestinian Authority from the analysis. In the case of Iraq, the amount of coverage was extensive. The Palestinian Authority also produced much coverage, but, since the coverage is not necessarily of a state, we judged it to be different to suggest that exclusion was appropriate. To select stories, we used the country names as keywords.

Our goal was to determine if the media coverage in any way helped to explain the variability in the affective component of National Image as reflected in the Gallup polls. To that end, we used an inductive method of coding of the stories that we downloaded. A coder was asked to read the stories downloaded and categorize them in terms of a scheme dictated by the stories themselves. The coder began with Egypt and worked sequentially. But the coder was

instructed to begin the categorization anew each year. After classifying the Egyptian stories, the coder next followed the same procedure for Saudi Arabia, then Jordan, Libya and Syria.

After reading through these inductive categorizations, we imposed some consistency on them by reclassifying the stories, again inductively, into a scheme that could be applied across countries and across time.

Our general expectation was that variability in the media coverage would explain the variability in the affective component of National Image, both among countries at the same time point and across time.

Findings

Figure 1 shows that Egypt enjoyed the highest rating among the five Arab entities included in the Gallup list of countries. Iraq was rated the lowest. Earlier we showed that Iraq was viewed negatively across a range of measures in the 10 years after the 1991 Gulf War and usually was among the lowest of evaluated countries (Becker, 2006). Libya, also at that time in conflict with the U.S. over the downing of the Pan Am flight in Scotland, also was evaluated negatively.

Saudi Arabia also was evaluated favorably by just under half of the Gallup respondents in 2001. The gap between Egypt and Saudi Arabia—18%—is notable. Egypt, of course, is a major recipient of U.S. foreign aid, but Saudi Arabia is a major oil exporter to the U.S. and was a major ally with the U.S. in the 1991 Gulf War.

For the most part, respondents were able to answer the questions asking for an evaluation of these five entities. The percentage of “Don’t Know” responses was 12 for Egypt, 6 for Iraq, 15 for the Palestinian Authority, 7 for Saudi Arabia, and 13 for Libya. (See Appendix Table 1.)

The January 2002 Gallup reading of the National Image of these six states followed the September 11 attack on the U.S., and, for four of the five states, the favorability rating was lower in January of 2002 than it had been a year earlier. Egypt showed an 11 percentage point decline in favorability rating, while Saudi Arabia showed a 20 percentage point decline. Iraq and the

Palestinian Authority, with less room for negative movement, also showed declines in favorability rating. Only Libya showed an increase.

A simple explanation for the sharp drop in the favorability rating of Saudi Arabia is the fact that the 9-11 Commission Report identified 15 of the 19 hijackers as from that country (9/11 Commission, 2004). One was Egyptian, two were from the United Arab Emirates, and one was Lebanese, according to the Commission. Yet large segments of the general public have misunderstood this connection, blaming Saddam Hussein and Iraq instead for the attack (Becker, et al, 2006). A nationwide survey for Knight Ridder in January of 2003, for example, found that 21% of the respondents thought most of the "September 11th hijackers were Iraqi citizens," while 29% said at least some of them were, and only 17% said none of them were (Survey by Knight Ridder and Princeton Survey Research Associates, January 3-January 6, 2003). As recently as June of 2007, according to a national poll for Newsweek Poll (Survey by Newsweek and Princeton Survey Research Associates, June 18-19, 2007), only 43% of the population correctly named Saudi Arabia as the country from which "most of the 9/11 hijackers" came. And Egypt, from which only one of the hijackers originated, according to the Commission, also experienced a sharp drop. The national origins of the hijackers does not seem to be a convincing explanation of the declines shown in Figure 1.

From 2001 to 2007, Egypt's rating has improved, so that in 2007, it had recovered most of the loss since 2001. Saudi Arabia also showed improvements in its rating over the period, but it remained 12 percentage below its 2001 rating in 2007.

Figure 2 shows that, in the case of Egypt, those who reported paying very close attention to news about foreign countries and those who reported paying less attention to such news evaluated the country almost exactly the same. The decline in evaluation after 9-11 and recovery also have been very similar.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, however, those who paid very close attention to news about foreign countries initially had a higher favorable rating of the country in 2001 than did those who did not pay close attention. Across time, the two groups have shown largely similar declines and

recovery in their evaluation of Saudi Arabia. Little in Figure 2 suggests that the media had much of a role in explaining movement across time in these evaluations.

As noted, we dropped Iraq and the Palestinian Authority from the content analysis. The invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 shifted media attention to that country. Palestine is not yet a country, and coverage has always focused on the ongoing conflict over statehood for the Palestinian people.

Table 1 shows the simple count of stories for Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan and Syria during the 2000 through 2007 period. In January of 2000, Egypt had 57 stories on the Associated Press wire, while Saudi Arabia had only 9. Syria had 59 stories, and Libya and Jordan each had 18.

In 2001, coverage of most of the countries declined. Saudi Arabia is the sole exception, but the number of stories for Saudi Arabia was still much lower than the number of stories about Egypt. In fact, Egypt has more stories than any of the other countries across all the years after 2000, excepting in 2006, when Syria had a larger number of stories. That also was the year of the Israeli invasion of and war with Lebanon. Syria played a role in that conflict.

An examination of the coverage of Egypt shows that much of it focuses on Egypt's involvement in the peace process in the Middle East. The relations between Egypt and the United States and between Egypt and Israel are constant topics of the news coverage. Economic issues, including foreign companies getting contracts in Egypt, also are frequently presented in the news. There are several stories about human rights abuses. In 2000, 24 of the 57 stories dealt with this topic. (See Appendix Table 3.) Across time, however, these stories became less pronounced and were replaced by news about Egypt's role in the region, including the peace process and improved relations with the United States. Coverage of Egypt includes breaking news and news about sports, providing a fuller picture of Egyptian life than for other countries, it seems.

The business opportunities of foreign companies in Saudi Arabia are a topic that is covered by news about that country. Reports of convicted felons who were beheaded and of human rights abuses (such as discrimination against women, the harassing of minors who violate

dress codes and "inhuman" forms of punishment including flogging and stoning) also are included. The presence of U.S. military forces in the country (until after the 2003 invasion of the U.S. of Iraq) also received attention. The stories do report that Saudis are by far the largest group of terrorist suspects detained on by the U.S. at Guantanamo Bay. The coverage of Saudi Arabia also focuses on the importance of the country in the region, on international political and economic relations, and on anti-terrorism issues. In general, however, there is relatively less coverage of everyday life in Saudi Arabia. The country is largely closed to foreigners, and those who do visit have little access to the private lives of Saudis. That seems to be reflected in the coverage.

The volume of Lybia's coverage peaked in January of 2004, after Moammar Gadhafi accepted full nuclear inspections and compensations to each family of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing victims. Most of the coverage focused on Lybia's effort to reintegrate into the international community and to the United States' reactions to this process. Almost nothing other than foreign affairs is included in the Associated Press coverage.

The news coverage of Jordan focused on Jordan's efforts in the region to support the peace process, the country's good and extensive international relations, and particularly with the United States, and business opportunities for international companies in Jordan. Again, there is little coverage of sport or other aspects of Jordanian life.

The news coverage of Syria focused almost entirely on negative aspects, such as the failure to reach peace agreements with Israel, the intrusion in Lebanon's political situation, the unwillingness to tighten the porous frontier with Iraq, and restricted press freedom. When dealing with the U.S. administration's attitude toward Syria, words like "denounced," "blamed," and "rejected dialogue" were often used. Syrian coverage once again focused on the relations of that country with others. The lack of coverage of other aspects of the society is particularly striking. Not a single sports story appeared during the period, and little breaking news of any sort made its way onto the Associated Press wire.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this analysis of the media content is how limited it is. With the exception of Egypt, the coverage is largely one dimensional, focusing mostly on foreign

relations and, to a lesser extent, on economic issues. The coverage provides at least a suggestion as to why Egypt enjoys a more positive assessment in the U.S. It appears to be the country about which U.S. citizens can learn the most. In the case of the other countries, what the U.S. can learn is largely one dimensional focusing on the relations of that country with others.

In a final effort to understand the relationship between the content and the favorability ratings, we conducted a logistic regression in which the favorability ratings of Egypt and Saudi Arabia were analyzed across time. Here we used the media exposure variable as well as standard political and demographic markers. As Table 2 shows, the media variables are not particularly important in understanding the favorability evaluation of either Egypt or Saudi Arabia over time. It is true that, for Egypt, those who follow the news about foreign countries have a slightly more negative view of the country than those who do not, with other variables controlled. Democrats have a slightly more positive view than do Republicans. For the most part, however, Egypt's favorability rating is remarkably unrelated to the variables examined.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, the key predictor variable is gender, with men giving the country a more positive assessment than women. Democrats also are more critical than Republicans.

We included four other countries for which data were available across time for comparison: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. All are Muslim countries, but only Iraq is Arab. The predictive power of gender across them is striking. In three of the four cases, exposure to news about foreign countries makes a big difference. These are Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, all of which experiences dramatic change and dramatic news coverage during the period. In these cases, exposure to the news is associated with higher evaluations, controlling for other variables. Party affiliation also matters, with Democrats giving the countries lower favorability ratings than Republicans. The evaluation, in other words, seems to reflect the partisan nature of U.S. foreign policy regarding the three countries during the time period.

Conclusions

This paper began with a concern for and curiosity about the way in which the U.S. public views nations. We think U.S. public opinion about a country plays a role in shaping or, at least, constraining, foreign affairs. It is unlikely, we believe, that the U.S. could have invaded Iraq without the massive negative opinion in the U.S. about Iraq that built up, particularly after the first Gulf War in 1991 (Becker, 2007).

The research literature on public opinion about other nations is fragmented, with no consensus existing even on what the concept is. We settled on the term National Image, and we argued that such an image should contain both an affective and a cognitive component.

Our search of polling archives turned up a unique set of studies by the Gallup organization conducted from 2000 to 2007 that contained a measure of what we believe to be the affective component of National Image, namely a favorability rating of a host of countries.

We selected for analysis a small set of countries that are similar in terms of religion and, to a considerable degree, culture, since the research literature indicates that these are key factors that shape national image. That literature is largely silent on what we believe should be a key determinant of National Image, namely coverage of countries around the world in the U.S. media. We expected there to be variability in that coverage.

In fact, the National Image of the selected countries did vary both within and across time. Most notable was the variability between the images of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, two large countries that share a border and have both been key allies of the U.S. The former is a major recipient of U.S. foreign aid; the latter is a major supplier of oil for the U.S. and its allies. Both have supported U.S. peace initiatives in the Middle East. Both supported the U.S. counter-terrorism efforts after September 11, 2001. Neither has been a strong critic of U.S. policy following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Despite the similarities, Egypt has enjoyed a more favorable evaluation by the U.S. population than Saudi Arabia, the Gallup polls showed. Following the September 11 attack on the U.S., the images of both countries declined, though Saudi Arabia's image decreased more

dramatically. And Egypt's image has regained most of its lost ground, while Saudi Arabia's has not.

A simple explanation for the difference is that the U.S. public associated Saudi Arabia more with the terrorist attackers of September 11 than it did Egypt. While it isn't possible to rule that explanation out, data show that the U.S. public largely has misunderstood the identity of the hijackers. Certainly there never was any indication that the Saudi Arabian government itself was supportive of the attack on the U.S.

We selected small samples during the 2000 to 2007 period of news coverage of these two countries by the Associated Press, which supplies foreign news to the vast majority of U.S. media. Our goal was to try to understand the initial differences in evaluation of these two countries, as well as three others, Libya, Jordan and Syria. The analysis suggests that coverage of Egypt consistently has been more complex than coverage of the other selected Arab countries. The volume has been higher, as has the breadth. For the most part, coverage of all of the countries has focused on foreign affairs, or the relationship of the country with its neighbors. U.S. business interests also have come to the fore, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Only with Egypt, however, does the coverage include stories about the social life and fabric of the society. The suggestion is that a positive image is dependent on an understanding of the complexity of the society. Such an understanding is dependent on complex and complete media coverage.

The analysis of media content across time does not explain the shifts in public opinion following the September 11 terrorist attacks. The quicker recovery of Egypt, however, may result from the continued complexity of coverage.

Somewhat undercutting the explanation, however, is the finding that the measure of respondent attention to news about foreign countries does not explain the variability across time. The drop in support for Egypt and Saudi Arabia after the September 11 attacks was nearly the same for those who followed that type of news closely and those who did not. For Saudi Arabia, however, those with more exposure to news did have a higher evaluation of the country initially, and the difference generally held across time.

A logistic regression across time for Egypt and Saudi Arabia also showed that media exposure played little role in explaining variability in favorability ratings, once other factors were controlled. For Egypt, the relationship actually was slightly negative.

At the same time, media exposure did predict positively to evaluation of three countries that had become U.S. allies in the fight against terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This effect held after control for political and demographic factors. It suggests strongly that media exposure can play a role in the shaping of at least the affective component of National Image.

The study was exploratory, and the findings are extremely tentative. Only a small number of countries was examined. The measure of National Image was limited to a single item, which focused on affective response. The content analysis was restricted to a very small sample.

Despite the limitations, however, we believe the study's findings should be read as encouraging additional conceptual and empirical work on the antecedents of National Image and on its role in constraining and shaping U.S. foreign policy.

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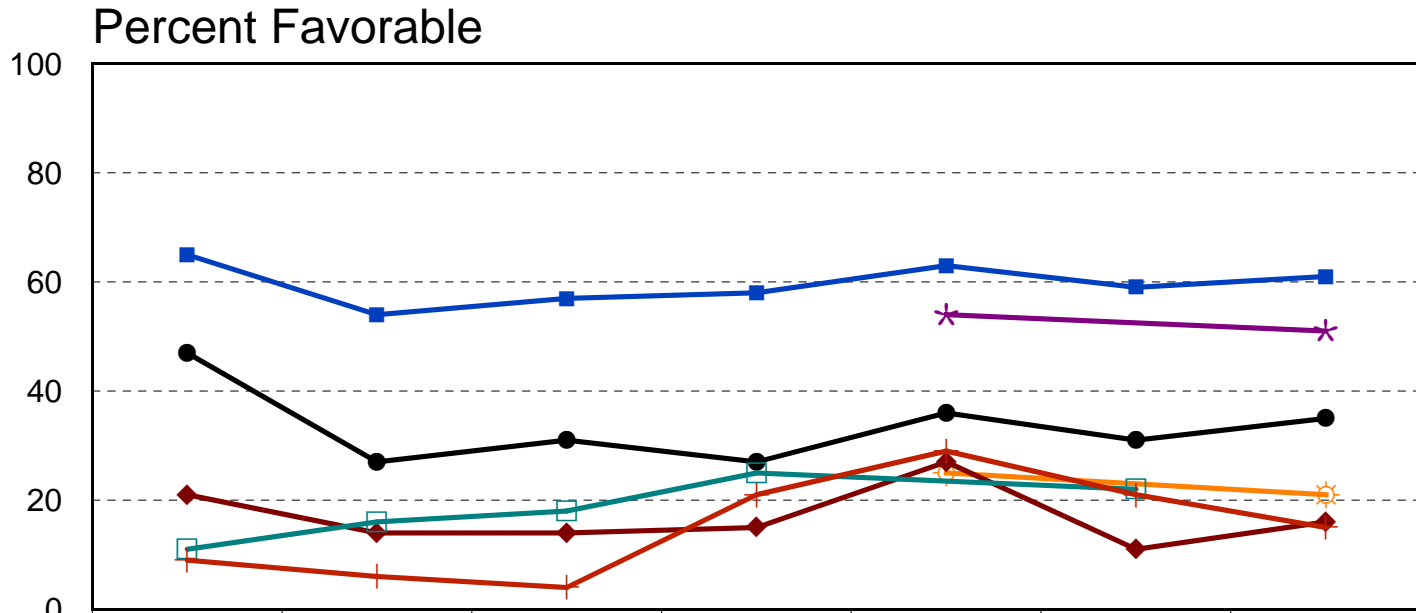
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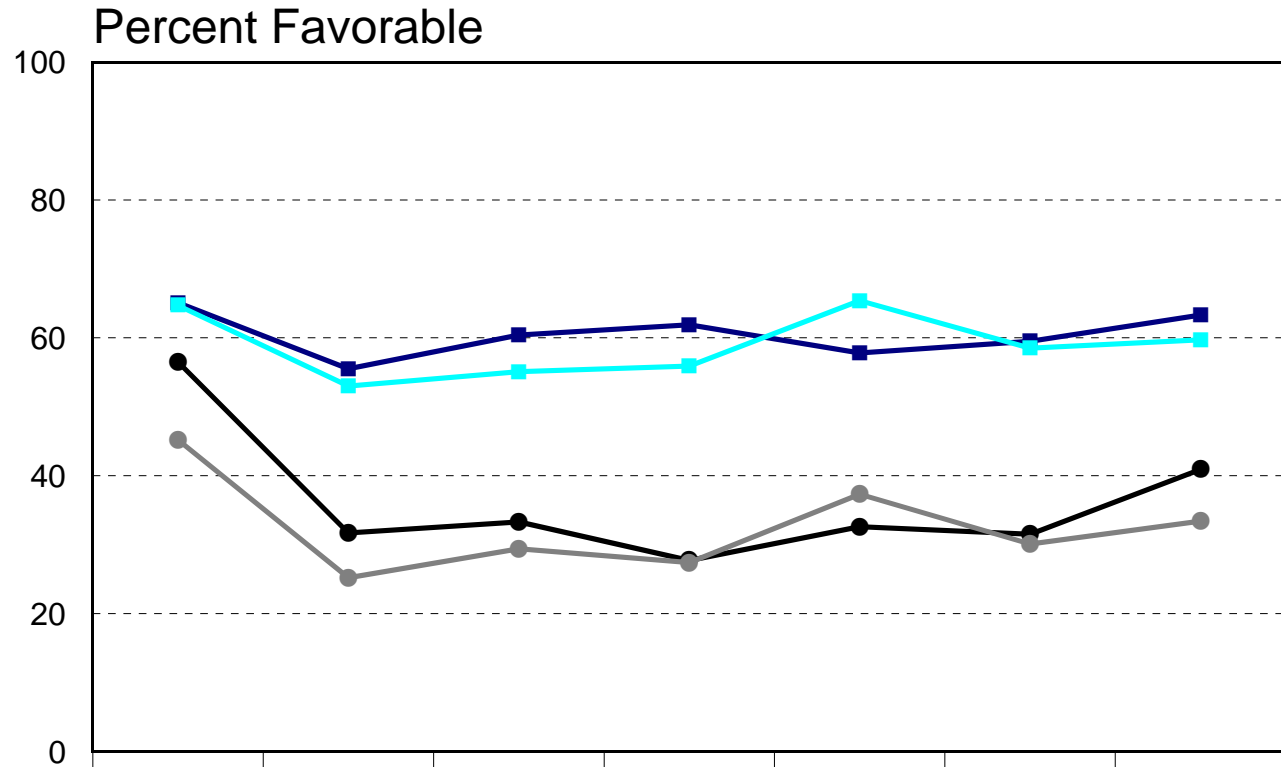
Figure 1. Evaluation of Arab Countries 2001-2007



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Egypt ■	65	54	57	58	63	59	61
Iraq +	9	6	4	21	29	21	15
Jordan *					54		51
Libya □	11	16	18	25		22	
Palestinian Authority ◆	21	14	14	15	27	11	16
Saudi Arabia ●	47	27	31	27	36	31	35
Syria ☀					25		21

Source: Gallup Organization

Figure 2. Evaluation of Egypt and Saudi Arabia by News Attention



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Egypt: Not very closely	64.7	53	55.1	55.9	65.4	58.5	59.7
Egypt: Very closely	65.1	55.5	60.4	61.9	57.8	59.5	63.3
Saudi Arabia: Not very closely	45.2	25.2	29.4	27.4	37.3	30.1	33.4
Saudi Arabia: Very closely	56.5	31.7	33.3	27.7	32.6	31.5	40.9

Source: Gallup Organization

Table 1. Number of Stories in Associated Press File in January of Each Year for Each Country

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Egypt	57	35	33	36	42	33	29	40
Saudi Arabia	9	16	29	15	18	12	16	19
Libya	18	9	12	9	37	5	8	7
Jordan	18	9	12	9	37	5	8	7
Syria	59	15	10	14	35	25	36	32

Table 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Favorability Ration Toward Six Nations						
Variable	Egypt	Saudi Arabia	Iraq	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Iran
Age	-0.007***	-0.001	-.006*	.014***	.006***	-.016***
Education	0.039	.046*	-0.011	.074***	0.024	-.118***
Church Attendance	0.030	.050*	0.013	0.005	-0.009	-0.036
Party Identification	.096**	-.107**	-.316***	-.270***	-.255***	-0.011
Political Views	0.015	0.041	-0.096	0.011	0.021	.130**
International News	-0.094*	-0.006	.328***	.592***	.280***	0.051
Gender	0.091	.456***	.321***	.684***	.374***	-.116*
Year of Survey	0.015	-0.009	.223***	-0.029	0.01	-.053*

Note: All variables have been recoded so that the higher value indicates a higher level of the particular variable (e.g., church attendance, party id [lo=rep, hi=dem], political views [lo=con, hi=lib], gender [men=hi]) The nation favorability coding has been dichotomized into favorable (1) and non-favorable (0).

p < .05; ** is p < .01; and *** is p < .005

Appendix Table 1. Evaluation of Arab Countries 2001-2007

Country	Reponse		Year							Total
			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
Libya	Unfavorable	N	372	686	631	632		579		2900
		%	75.6%	67.9%	63.0%	63.0%		57.7%		64.3%
	Favorable	N	54	159	182	255		223		873
		%	11.0%	15.7%	18.2%	25.4%		22.2%		19.4%
	DK/RF	N	66	166	189	116		201		738
		%	13.4%	16.4%	18.9%	11.6%		20.0%		16.4%
Total		N	492	1011	1002	1003		1003		4511
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%		100.0%
Jordan	Unfavorable	N					314		346	660
		%					31.2%		34.3%	32.7%
	Favorable	N					548		515	1063
		%					54.4%		51.0%	52.7%
	DK/RF	N					146		148	294
		%					14.5%		14.7%	14.6%
Total		N				1008		1009	2017	
		%				100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	
Syria	Unfavorable	N					606		669	1275
		%					60.1%		66.4%	63.2%
	Favorable	N					248		211	459
		%					24.6%		20.9%	22.8%
	DK/RF	N					154		128	282
		%					15.3%		12.7%	14.0%
Total		N				1008		1008	2016	
		%				100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	

Source: Gallup Organization

Appendix Table 2. Evaluation of Egypt and Saudi Arabia by News Attention

Country/Attention	Evaluation		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Egypt: Not very closely	Unfavorable	N	92	249	154	231	168	182	205	1281
		%	22.5%	33.2%	22.0%	32.0%	22.8%	24.9%	27.7%	26.8%
	Favorable	N	264	397	385	403	483	427	442	2801
		%	64.7%	53.0%	55.1%	55.9%	65.4%	58.5%	59.7%	58.5%
	DK/RF	N	52	103	160	87	87	121	93	703
		%	12.7%	13.8%	22.9%	12.1%	11.8%	16.6%	12.6%	14.7%
Total	N	408	749	699	721	738	730	740	4785	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Egypt: Very closely	Unfavorable	N	22	99	93	91	98	90	84	577
		%	25.6%	37.6%	30.7%	32.4%	36.3%	32.8%	31.1%	33.0%
	Favorable	N	56	146	183	174	156	163	171	1049
		%	65.1%	55.5%	60.4%	61.9%	57.8%	59.5%	63.3%	60.0%
	DK/RF	N	8	18	27	16	16	21	15	121
		%	9.3%	6.8%	8.9%	5.7%	5.9%	7.7%	5.6%	6.9%
Total	N	86	263	303	281	270	274	270	1747	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Saudi Arabia: Not very closely	Unfavorable	N	193	478	416	464	413	444	434	2842
		%	47.4%	63.8%	59.7%	64.4%	56.0%	60.8%	58.6%	59.4%
	Favorable	N	184	189	205	197	275	220	247	1517
		%	45.2%	25.2%	29.4%	27.4%	37.3%	30.1%	33.4%	31.7%
	DK/RF	N	30	82	76	59	50	66	59	422
		%	7.4%	10.9%	10.9%	8.2%	6.8%	9.0%	8.0%	8.8%
Total	N	407	749	697	720	738	730	740	4781	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Saudi Arabia: Very closely	Unfavorable	N	33	169	186	198	169	178	149	1082
		%	38.8%	64.5%	61.4%	70.2%	62.6%	65.2%	55.4%	62.0%
	Favorable	N	48	83	101	78	88	86	110	594
		%	56.5%	31.7%	33.3%	27.7%	32.6%	31.5%	40.9%	34.1%
	DK/RF	N	4	10	16	6	13	9	10	68
		%	4.7%	3.8%	5.3%	2.1%	4.8%	3.3%	3.7%	3.9%
Total	N	85	262	303	282	270	273	269	1744	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Gallup Organization

Appendix Table 3. Associated Press Stories January of Listed Year: Egypt

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Category	Subcategory								
Economy and Business	Country's Economic Situation	1	1	4	2	1			
	Opportunities for Foreign Companies	2	3	4		2	1		1
	Oil		1						
	Miscellaneous	7	3		2				
	Total	10	8	8	4	3	1		1
Human Rights	Religious Issues	18	3	1	4	3	1	4	3
	Women's Issues	1			2				
	Miscellaneous	5	2	1	5	1			7
	Total	24	5	2	11	4	1	4	10
Foreign Relations	General Foreign Policy		1						
	Political and Military Relations with U.S.	1	1				2		
	Regional Relations or Role in Region	9	12	8	9	13	11	17	14
	Attitude Toward War in Iraq				7		7		8
	Miscellaneous						3	3	
	Total	10	14	8	16	13	23	20	22
Country 's Role in Terrorism	Country's Role in Terrorism						1		
	Country's Role in Anti-Terrorism			6			2		1
	Miscellaneous				2				
	Total			6	2		3		1
Breaking News (earthquakes, stampedes, plane crashes, etc.)		4		2	1	12		2	3
	Total	4		2	1	12		2	3
Sports		6	7	3	1	8	3	1	1
	Total	6	7	3	1	8	3	1	1
Miscellaneous or Unclassified		3	1	4	1	2	2	2	2
	Total	3	1	4	1	2	2	2	2
Total		57	35	33	36	42	33	29	40

Appendix Table 4. Associated Press Stories January of Listed Year: Saudi Arabia

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Category	Subcategory								
Economy and Business	Country's Economic Situation					1			
	Opportunities for Foreign Companies		2			1			1
	Oil	1	1		1		1	1	1
	Miscellaneous			1		1	1		
	Total	1	3	1	1	3	2	1	2
Human Rights	Religious Issues								
	Women's Issues		2				1		1
	Miscellaneous	1	5				1		1
	Total	1	7				2		2
Foreign Relations	General Foreign Policy		1		1	1		4	1
	Political and Military Relations with U.S.		1	11	1		1	1	
	Regional Relations or Role in Region			8	1	5	2	4	6
	Attitude Toward War in Iraq		3		6	1			2
	Miscellaneous	1	1	2	1				1
	Total	1	6	21	10	7	3	9	10
Country 's Role in Terrorism	Country's Role in Terrorism	1		2		7	1		
	Country's Role in Anti-Terrorism	1		2	3	1			
	Miscellaneous								
	Total	2		4	3	8	1		
Breaking News (earthquakes, stampedes, plane crashes, etc.)							1	3	1
	Total						1	3	1
Sports				2	1			3	4
	Total			2	1			3	4
Miscellaneous or Unclassified		2		1			3		
	Total	2		1			3		
Total		9	16	29	15	18	12	16	19

Appendix Table 5. Associated Press Stories January of Listed Year: Libya

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Category	Subcategory								
Economy and Business	Country's Economic Situation								
	Opportunities for Foreign Companies								
	Oil			1					
	Miscellaneous								
	Total			1					
Human Rights	Religious Issues								
	Women's Issues								
	Miscellaneous								
	Total								
Foreign Relations	General Foreign Policy	8	6	2	6	27	3	4	2
	Political and Military Relations with U.S.	1		1		8			
	Regional Relations or Role in Region	1	1	6					1
	Attitude Toward War in Iraq				1				1
	Miscellaneous	3		1		1	1	2	3
	Total	13	7	10	7	36	4	6	7
Country 's Role in Terrorism	Country's Role in Terrorism				1				
	Country's Role in Anti-Terrorism								
	Miscellaneous								
	Total				1				
Breaking News (earthquakes, stampedes, plane crashes, etc.)		5							
	Total	5							
Sports			2			1	1	2	
	Total		2			1	1	2	
Miscellaneous or Unclassified				1	1				
	Total			1	1				
Total		18	9	12	9	37	5	8	7

Appendix Table 6. Associated Press Stories January of Listed Year: Jordan

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Category	Subcategory								
Economy and Business	Country's Economic Situation	3	7		1	3	1		1
	Opportunities for Foreign Companies	2	1	2		1	1		1
	Oil								
	Miscellaneous	1	2	1		1			
	Total	6	10	3	1	5	2		2
Human Rights	Religious Issues			1				1	
	Women's Issues								
	Miscellaneous			1					
	Total			2				1	
Foreign Relations	General Foreign Policy	2	3	1	1	1	2		1
	Political and Military Relations with U.S.		2		3		2	4	2
	Regional Relations or Role in Region	3	10	3	2	13	3	7	9
	Attitude Toward War in Iraq				11	2	15	1	9
	Miscellaneous								
Total	5	15	4	17	16	22	12	21	
Country 's Role in Terrorism	Country's Role in Terrorism								
	Country's Role in Anti-Terrorism				1	2	3	9	3
	Miscellaneous								
	Total				1	2	3	9	3
Breaking News (earthquakes, stampedes, plane crashes, etc.)				3					
	Total			3					
Sports			2			2	1	1	
	Total		2			2	1	1	
Miscellaneous or Unclassified				2	2	2	1	1	
	Total			2	2	2	1	1	
Total		18	9	12	9	37	5	8	7

Appendix Table 7. Associated Press Stories January of Listed Year: Syria

Year		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Category	Subcategory								
Economy and Business	Country's Economic Situation	2	3						
	Opportunities for Foreign Companies		2						
	Oil					1		1	
	Miscellaneous		1					2	
	Total	2	6			1		3	
Human Rights	Religious Issues								
	Women's Issues			1					
	Miscellaneous		1		1	2	1		1
	Total		1	1	1	2	1		1
Foreign Relations	General Foreign Policy	1	5	5		2			
	Political and Military Relations with U.S.		1	1		2			1
	Regional Relations or Role in Region	54	2	1	4	18	13	25	12
	Attitude Toward War in Iraq				7		11		15
	Miscellaneous					2			
	Total	55	8	7	11	24	24	25	28
Country 's Role in Terrorism	Country's Role in Terrorism			1				4	
	Country's Role in Anti-Terrorism			1		4			1
	Miscellaneous								
	Total			2		4		4	1
Breaking News (earthquakes, stampedes, plane crashes, etc.)						1		3	1
	Total					1		3	1
Sports									
	Total								
Miscellaneous or Unclassified		2			2	3		1	1
	Total	2			2	3		1	1
Total		59	15	10	14	35	25	36	32