CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Transcript

A Great Divide?
How Westerners and Muslims See Each Other

Thursday, July 21, 2011
Washington, D.C.

Welcome/Moderator:
Marwan Muasher
Vice President for Studies
The Carnegie Endowment

Speakers:
Andrew Kohut,
President,
Pew Research Center

Shuja Nawaz
Director,
South Asia Center, The Atlantic Council

Samer Shehata
Assistant Professor of Arab Politics,
Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University

Transcript by Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.

MARWAN MUASHER: OK. I guess we're ready to start. If you can please take your seats. Thank you very much for being here today. We're here to discuss, of course, a new Pew Research Center report on findings of attitudes of Western and Muslim publics towards each other. We are looking at this 10 years after 9/11 and want to look at how the relationship and attitudes have evolved in the 10 years that divide us from 9/11.

[00:00:43]

And we have with us a number of experts. I must first say that this event is cosponsored with the Pew Research Center, and we have with us the president of the Pew Research Center, Mr. Andy Kohut, who will be presenting the findings followed by experts from the region to discuss these findings and to have a discussion, also, with you.

Andrew Kohut is president and founder of the Pew Research Center. He has been formerly the president of the Gallup Organization and the founding director of surveys for the Times Mirror Center. He also received in 2005 the American Association of Public Opinion Research highest honor, the Award for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement.

To my immediate left, we have Mr. Shuja Nawaz, who is the director of the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center, who will be also commenting on the findings of the Pew survey. He has worked with numerous think tanks on projects dealing with Pakistan and the Middle East. He served as the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, worked for the World Health Organization, the World Bank and The New York Times and has most recently authored the book "Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within."

And to my immediate right is Dr. Samer Shehata, an assistant professor of Arab politics at Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. He has served as acting director of the Masters of Arts in the Arab Studies Program. He was also director of graduate studies at New York University's Center for Near East Studies and he is the editor of a forthcoming book, "Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change."

Mr. Kohut will present the findings for about 10 minutes. We will allow each of the panelists to have a 10-minute presentation or commentary on these findings and then open up to questions from the audience. So Andy, the floor is yours.

[00:03:00]

ANDREW KOHUT: Well, let me extend a thank you to you all for joining us. There's nothing better from a speaker's point of view than a hot and hungry audience. (Laughter.) There's a great disincentive to leave. It's very hot out there and you don't want to miss lunch. So I'm feeling very confident – (laughter) – that this is really going to be a good one. OK.

What I'd like to do is tell you, first tell you some things about what this survey showed and then show you a few pictures that illustrate the key findings. Five years ago, we undertook a survey to examine how Western and Muslim publics viewed each other. Our lede in the report was as follows: most Muslims and Westerners say that relationships are generally bad. Many in the West

see Muslims as fanatical, violent and as intolerant. Muslims in the Middle East and Asia see Westerners as selfish, immoral and greedy – as well as violent and fanatical.

The timing of that survey followed a year marked by riots over cartoon portrayals of Mohammad in Denmark, I believe, a major terrorist attack in Britain, not to mention continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Things over the past year have – in 2010, leading up to 2011 – haven't been nearly as fractious, at least from a Western point of view. We are winding down to one war.

But you know, the lead findings of our survey in 2011 are almost identical to what we found in 2005. They're unchanged with regard to stereotyping and with regard to basic attitudes. Muslim and Western publics continue to see relationships between them as not so good – in fact, bad – and both sides continue to hold the negative stereotypes that I described from our 2006 survey.

[00:05:08]

Obviously, given the permanence of these views over this period of time, I think we conclude that these are pretty – this is pretty much of an intense – an entrenched divide. But I'd love to hear how our panelists and commentators feel about that.

Let me start with one chart which shows you what we – who we questioned. In the Muslim nations, predominantly Muslim nations, were Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Indonesia and Pakistan. Those are our – the countries we typically go back to year in and year out in the Pew Global Attitudes Project. We also had a survey of Israeli Arabs. We oversampled them to get an adequate size.

In the West, most of the references are between attitudes of Americans, the Brits, French, Germans and the Spanish. But we also have a – included in the survey some – these questions were also asked of Russians and Israelis. And we make some references there.

Moving away from the chart for a while, let me just tell you a little bit about what the survey showed, then we can come back to the charts. Now, while there were a lot of similarities between our findings this year and '06, we did see one thing that is encouraging, and that is a modest thaw in attitudes in the U.S. and in Western Europe toward Muslims. Compared with 2006, a greater percentage of Western publics now see relationships as good, but the Muslims we polled were as inclined to say relationships are generally bad as they were five years ago.

And as in the past, Muslims express more unfavorable opinions about Westerners than Americans or Europeans express about Muslims. And that – there's a consistency to that across a number of questions.

[00:07:12]

Similarly, more Muslims associated negative characteristics with Westerners than was the case vice versa. In Jordan, Turkey, the Palestinian territories, Pakistan and Indonesia, supermajorities used at least three of the six negative terms to describe Americans and Western Europeans. In contrast, in the West, only in Spain did we find a majority using negative stereotyping with respect to Muslim people.

For the most part, Muslims and Westerners finger-point about the "why" to the problems, what's behind it and which side holds the higher ground on key issues. Muslims in the Middle East overwhelmingly blame – and Asia – overwhelmingly blame the West for bad relations. However, while Americans and Europeans tend to blame Muslims, there is more – you see a greater percentage of Europeans and Americans saying, well, the problem rests here. You don't see that in the Muslim countries.

[00:08:19]

Muslim – the Muslim publics in this survey, as they did five years ago, have an aggrieved view of the West. They blame Western policies for their own lack of prosperity. Fewer Americans or Western Europeans think that it's Western policies which are holding down the economies of the Muslim countries in which we polled in. They point to government corruption, lack of democracy, lack of education and, to some extent, to a lesser extent, Islamic fundamentalism.

Perhaps reflecting the Arab Spring this year, in several Muslim and Western nations, more than in '06, lack of prosperity was identified – lack of prosperity stemming from a lack of democracy rose in the current survey.

More broadly, what we found was that in four of six western nations, majorities say they have a positive view of Muslims. The exceptions are Germany, where only 45 percent have a favorable view, and Spain, where only 37 percent have a favorable view. Both of these numbers are a little bit better than they were five years ago. I might add that in Spain, views of Jews are not particularly positive either, and they haven't been for much of the course of the time we've been doing this polling.

Muslim views toward Christians vary considerably, given the mix of countries that we have here. Ninety-six percent of the Lebanese Muslims have a – express a positive view of Christians, and that's not surprising, given the Christian population there. Narrow majorities of Jordanians and Indonesians also give Christians a positive rating.

But not so in Egypt. Just 48 percent say – have a favorable view of Christians. And in Pakistan and Turkey, very few indeed – 16 (percent) and 6 percent, respectively, have a positive view of Christians.

Now, there is one point of consensus that comes out of this survey between Muslims and Westerners, and that is, they share concerns about Islamic extremism. Solid majorities across U.S. and Europe and Israel are concerned about this in their country and solid majorities in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey express the same worries.

[00:10:45]

I'll just add a few other findings and then show you some slides. A decade later, most Muslims in the nations we surveyed say they don't believe that a group of Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks. In fact, there's no – there's no Muslim public in this survey where even 30 percent of Arabs accept this notion that it was Arabs who carried out this attack.

This is, in my view, one of those "gee-whiz" findings. I remember when I first heard it, it was – came out of a Gallup survey conducted either in late 2001 or early 2002. And I thought, well, that would change. Well, it hasn't changed. The views that it – the attack was not carried out by Arabs persisted into our 2005 survey. And I think they're persisted in the Gallup surveys. And in point of fact, fewer of our respondents in 2011 took this view than did in 2005.

In the West, there's a widespread perception that Muslims living in the West do not want to assimilate. When we do surveys here in the United States among Muslims, that is hardly the truth. There's a great desire for assimilation, but it's not acknowledged by the broader American public. We'll be doing an update of those surveys – that survey pretty soon. I think you'll be interested in it.

There are competing views between Muslim publics and Western publics about how women are treated. Each culture says women are not respected in the other culture. But Westerners are more critical of Muslims than Muslims are of Westerners.

[00:12:35]

In that regard, there are significant gaps in the way Westerners and Muslims see women. Our polling in 2010, when we did this in considerable detail, showed that a considerable number of Muslims continue to think that men make better leaders than women. That's not the case in Western countries, where it's not, at least, expressed as the case in Western countries. And there's still less acceptance of women in the workplace in Muslim countries than there is in the West.

Those are some of the key findings. And let me just show you some of this, and maybe it'll bring it home a little bit better. Here is the percentage saying that Western – that relationships between the two peoples are bad. And as you can see, it declines by 15 points in Russia, from 53 to 38, and it's down in Britain, Germany, the U.S., marginally and in France and Spain.

It's down significantly in Indonesia. This is part of what I think is the Obama effect. Indonesians are much more positive about America and many things Western since Obama was elected. But you can see, there's not much change in Egypt, Jordan. And in fact, in Pakistan, not too surprisingly, given what our other surveys showed, there's a 20-point jump in the numbers saying that relationships are bad.

Who's to blame? In the West, it's mostly, Muslims are to blame, but significant numbers – 26 (percent), 29 percent in Britain and the U.S. and 27 percent even in Russia, say it's Western people. In the – in the Muslim countries, very little mention of Muslims to blame. It's mostly Western people and significant numbers volunteer, it's Jews.

[00:14:33]

Here are the characteristics that I mentioned when I started the talk. Sixty-eight percent of the Muslim respondents – this is the median average across a lot of countries – say that Muslim – Westerners are selfish, 66 percent, violent, greedy and immoral, arrogant, fanatical – wow – just 44 percent respectful of women and small percentages saying positive things such as honest, tolerant and generous.

Western views are negative with respect to violence and fanatical, but they're not nearly as negative as are the Muslim views. And in fact, I – you know, I could just leave it at that.

[00:15:21]

When you summarize these findings, you see that three or more negative mentions were the prevailing view in each of these Muslim countries. But except in Spain and to some extent Russia, this – there weren't a lot of negative – concentration of negative views in Western – in non-Muslim countries.

Why the lack of prosperity? Muslim publics, 53 percent on average say U.S. and Western policies; only 14 percent of the Western countries say that; government corruption, there's more agreement; lack of democracy, there's more consensus, and lack of education; and a third of Westerners say Islamic fundamentalism.

Here's the: Do you believe Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks? Again, this is the median – well, here's – these are the actual responses: in Jordan, just 22 percent, down from 39 percent in 2006; in Turkey, 16 percent, down from – 9 percent down from 16 percent then. And the numbers are very, very small; very few – very few say it was Arabs that carried out the 9/11 attacks. We've seen this before; Gallup has shown this and, in fact, I think it's pretty much a Gallup question.

So those are our key findings and what I think struck me as important and interesting.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you very much. I think if there is any one takeaway from all of this, it is that both the West and the region have a lot of work to do still, nine, 10 years after 9/11, to bridge the perception gap. Let me ask, then, Mr. Shuja Nawaz to comment on these findings and on particularly in areas in Southeast Asia and areas that – where you have a non-Arab Muslim majority in these areas and his views about these findings.

[00:17:28]

SHUJA NAWAZ: Thank you very much, Marwan, for inviting me here and thank you, Andy, for the presentation and for co-sponsoring this.

I'm a great fan of the Pew surveys, the reason being that give us a very steady trendline against which we can measure things over a long period of time. But I've also felt that there were areas where the surveys could go into some depth to help us understand the reasons behind the results, and so what I will try and do is raise some of these issues arising from this survey and then, if it's OK, pick up on a few points that Andy made about his commentary on the results. I think it may be worth having a discussion on those because some of the analysis that will emerge from these results is going to reverberate in our minds for the next five years when you plan the next survey of this kind, and it may be worth seeing how we measure things five years from now.

This is, I feel, an extremely important survey because it establishes these trends, the so-called permanence of views that Andy identified. But it's even more important to understand the reasons behind it because in many ways when you look at this survey and others, you discover that the value system, whether in the West or in the Muslim world, is more or less the same. What people want is

more or less the same. What they want for themselves and their families is more or less the same. And I'll come to some of those when we look at a few specific examples from this survey.

[00:19:27]

I also come to this from having lived much of my life in my native Pakistan and then most of my life in the West, in the United States in particular. And the one thing that I have learned is that there has been almost criminal neglect of education in this country in particular about the world outside our borders. The fact that geography is one of the weakest subjects in this country never ceases to amaze me because for a country of this size and this power and this global presence now, for people in the United States not to know where the rest of the world lives or who lives where is quite appalling.

I'm sure many of you saw the piece yesterday, at least I saw it, in *The Wall Street Journal*, the headline of which was, "Don't Know Much About Geography." And one of the results of the national geography test, which relates to our discussion today, was that less than half of eighth-graders in the United States that were surveyed or that had taken the test did not know that Islam originated in what is now Saudi Arabia.

Now, for a population that is so engaged in that part of the world not to have even the most basic knowledge about that part of the world is really – means that there's a gap and that we are ill-equipped not only to understand but to deal with people that live in that part of the world, and particularly at a time when we are sending our youth to live and to fight and to die in the Muslim world. It's not just one war, but three wars and maybe now a fourth in North Africa. So this, to my mind, is a very serious issue and that needs to be addressed.

The other big gap in the U.S. educational system that does need to be filled is a study of history. There is an appalling lack of attention to understanding historical trends, particularly dealing with anything other than the so-called Western world. So I know that in high schools, there is a book and a subject called "world history," but how that world is defined is extremely idiosyncratic and extremely narrow. And that is not the world with which the United States is engaged today or is going to be engaged tomorrow or for the rest of this century.

[00:22:27]

And I think the sooner we, in the United States, in the West, understand the need to fill those gaps, the better equipped we will be to become global citizens or to deal with people in other parts of the world and actually find out where they live, which part of the world: Are they in the northern hemisphere or the southern hemisphere?

Now, having said that, let me move to the survey, and I admire the survey for one very strong point, which is that it offers, unlike many other surveys, a two-way mirror. And this is extremely helpful when you analyze these trends because quite often a survey will just look at, say, the Muslim world or a particular part of the world and say, this is what they think, and it won't give you the other side of the mirror, this is how we think about them. And I think this provides that two-way mirror, which is extremely interesting and useful in analyzing the results and to deciding, particularly for policymakers, and what do we do with these results? Where do we go next?

It also, I think, in many ways recognizes the diversity among Muslim countries by the sample in which it is taken. And now, of course, if I were nitpicking, I would say that I would have probably brought in India into the survey because, next to Indonesia and Pakistan, the largest collection of Muslims in any part of the world is in India. And it is contiguous to Pakistan and Iran and the Muslim world and very much part of that economy and polity of the region, so that may be something to think about five years hence.

[00:24:23]

So the underlying point is that we must recognize that there is diversity in the Muslim world, and some of the results of the survey certainly point out to that. One of the points that Andy made about Indonesia, for instance, is interesting.

Indonesia is one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, if not the largest, but it also has other religions in its population, and what you described as the Obama effect is probably true for when we are looking at it from a Washington perspective. But I think the more telling effect was the tsunami effect because that was the first time that many Indonesians actually saw ordinary U.S. persons in uniform, not as a force of occupation, but as a force for peace and goodwill. Because when the U.S. suddenly unleashed its forces into Aceh province, which was the home of the insurgency in Indonesia, it completely transformed the landscape for the local population and certainly helped change their mindset to the extent that even now people remember the role of the United States. Not only that, but they – there is no resurgence of the insurgency. It had kind of died down as a result of what was done for the people of the region, and I think that is something to understand as we go forward.

[00:26:00]

In Pakistan, for instance, in 2005, when there was a devastating earthquake, the U.S. was the first to go in and brought in helicopters, Chinooks – angels of mercy they were called in Pakistan – from Afghanistan, from the war. The MASH units that were set up were treating people and, when the surveys were done following that, immediately U.S. popularity spiked in the country. But then because the U.S. was dealing with an autocratic ruler in Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, he did not want to be sidestepped in any way or overshadowed by this popularity of the U.S. He immediately ordered that the MASH units and the U.S. presence should be dismantled and removed so that things could go back under his control, and the U.S. obliged, and then the U.S. popularity faded.

But last year, when there were enormous floods in Pakistan, the one country that was first in with the largest amount of assistance to Pakistan was the United States. It's very unfortunate that the U.S. didn't make more of it in terms of informing the people of what they were doing, but there was again large-scale contact with ordinary Americans wearing uniform – uniforms, not carrying weapons, but dropping – instead of bombs – dropping bags of wheat and rice and other foodstuffs onto the population.

So it's the nature of the engagement that quite often colors these views. So what I would like to test is my hypothesis that one of the overwhelmingly negative stimuli for the people in many parts of the Muslim world is not the – their knowledge of or contact with or influence of the U.S. population. It is really a reaction to U.S. governmental policies and actions, which affect them or

which affect other parts of the Muslim world, which their opinion leaders then use in order to inform them and to rouse them or to get them together for whatever local purposes. And most politics being local, they will use this to the best of their ability to gain – to gain some advantage over others, and the U.S., being a very large target, provides instant gratification for these leaders. You know, it has offered any number of opportunities for criticism.

[00:28:57]

So the questions that I would like answers to is, is the U.S. backing autocratic rulers? And take a look at the historical examples, and then try and see if those are informing the decisions that people are making in these countries and informing their views that they're then sharing with your survey-takers. Is the U.S. fighting on their territory? Has it brought war and violence to them or their region? Is the U.S. seen as hegemonic in their region or in other parts of the world? If these are the kinds of views that are informing their opinion, then that offers a very useful guide for policymakers in the U.S. or in Europe or elsewhere as to what to do.

The other point, which is worth looking at, is not coming out of this survey, but again using an example from the Pew survey on Pakistan, which was released in April. I think it was April.

MR. KOHUT: It was after –

MR. NAWAZ: No, it was after – it was released after the Abbottabad raid.

[00:30:06]

MR. KOHUT: That's right. It was – (inaudible) – late –

MR. NAWAZ: Yes, yes, it was conducted in April, I think, and then updated –

MR. KOHUT: Right.

MR. NAWAZ: And that's a result that has been consistent in all the Pakistan surveys done by Pew. And that is that six out of 10, that is, 60 percent or more Pakistanis want improved relations with the United States.

So my question is, what can we do to find out the thinking behind that? Do they want improved relations with the people of the United States? What do they mean by improved? Do they want the U.S. to get out of their lives? Do they want the U.S. to enter their lives? Is it economic? Is it military? What is it?

[00:30:50]

This is against the backdrop of the fact that most Muslim populations – definitely the majority – have never had contact with Americans or the West or people from the West. And that's something we need to recognize. Their view comes either from their interlocutors – you know, who may be the local opinions leaders – or it comes from television or the movies. And we know how distorting that image can be, even those of us that live in the West.

So it may be worth looking at what is informing those views. And then, that applies to a very critical finding that I think Andy also highlighted, which is, what can be done on the view of extremism in the Muslim world?

So for instance, I'm just looking at two pairs: Pakistan and the U.S. Sixty-three percent of Pakistanis are very concerned – are concerned about extremism, Islamic extremism in their country. That should give us some pointers as to what their worries are. And 69 percent of U.S. respondents are concerned about the same issue. So you see a convergence. Maybe there's a – this is a point of leverage for decision makers and policymakers.

And then you look at the other two antagonists in the Middle East, Israel and Palestine. Seventy-eight percent of people in the Palestine territory are concerned about Islamic extremism. So that's certainly not the view that is – it is available to us in Washington, where there seem to be overwhelming support for Hamas or other groups that the West would classify as terrorist. So we need to understand why that is almost an exact mirror image of how many Israelis – 77 percent – see Islamic extremism as a concern for their country.

Again, my point is that this offers us a leverage, a point of convergence of views that needs to be examined if we are going to change not just the attitudes but our actions towards each other.

[00:33:15]

Another table that Andy referred to was the one about the concerns about Islamic extremism – what is it that concerns people? And that goes back to my opening comment. This really reflects the values that people hold. They don't like violence, they like democracy, so anything that restricts freedoms is anathema for them. And anything that hurts the economy is something that they are against. And all these things, they ascribe to Islamic extremism.

Again, this offers an opportunity to see how we can change the way they think and behave by agreeing with them on the fact that these are very important things for them.

Let me end by coming back to how these opinions are formed. In the Muslim world, as in other developing countries, there are – essentially, there is a class society. There is – much more so than in the United States. There is a sharp polarization in income levels and access to resources and access to travel and the world. So you have the privileged class – the upper class and the middle classes – that travels, that actually knows an American or meets an American or meets a Westerner. And then there's the rest of the population that has probably never seen one in real life, never sat down and talked to one, doesn't understand that he or she has the same values as themselves.

[00:34:57]

And so here is an opportunity to use this interlocutor, the group that is privileged, the middle class that travels, that's educated, that provides the economic and political leadership in many of these countries – to build a relationship with them.

And increasingly, the U.S. – and then now many other Western countries – are erecting enormous barriers to international travel. The visa system, which is – which treats everybody as guilty until proven innocent, is such a huge problem. It is – it's creating disaffection among the

groups that were once very favorable in their view of the West and friends of the U.S. Many of them – this is anecdotal information – tell me they don't want to travel to the U.S. If I organize a meeting, they want to meet somewhere in the Middle East or in Bangkok; they don't want to travel to the U.S.

I think we need to understand why. And one of the reasons is that the whole visa process is so cumbersome, prolonged, opaque and demeaning. And once they get the visa and when they come here, quite often, you know, the way they are treated is not the way they want to be treated.

And that's something that we need to recognize. And if there is a way to improve this people-to-people contact and remove the impediments to it, perhaps when you do the next survey, the trend lines will be different, particularly if we are not fighting three or four wars in the Muslim world at that time. Let me end on that. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you very much, Shuja. I think these were very perceptive comments and shed really some needed light on some of the reasons for the findings that we have seen. I'm sure there are a lot of questions and comments. But before we get to that, let me give the floor to Samer Shehata to also provide his own comments on these findings. Samer?

[00:37:03]

SAMER SHEHATA: Great. Thank you, Marwan. Thank you, Andy. Thanks to Pew and the Carnegie Endowment for inviting me. And thanks, Shuja for those comments, which I agree with largely and which make my job more difficult now because you said so much and provided so much insight.

I certainly consider the Pew Research Center and the information and polling that they do the gold standard, really, when it comes to public opinion polling, not just in the Middle East. And I use it – refer to it in my teaching and so on. So I'm very happy to be here despite some of the criticisms I'm about to make; please keep that in mind.

I think that, largely – I'm going to speak mostly about some of the findings and interpretation of the findings. I think that, largely, the findings were unfortunate but very understandable, as is usually the case with public opinion polling – in this case, particularly with regards to perceptions of Muslims and perceptions of Westerners – unfortunate but largely understandable, not unexpected except in a few cases. Andy mentioned one of them, certainly, which is the perception that Arabs did not orchestrate the September 11th attacks or did not carry them out.

I want to make six quick points, six quick-and-easy points and then one maybe complex, problematic, muddled and not thoroughly understood even by myself point about the polling. Maybe you can help me with that.

[00:38:49]

The first point is, why should we expect Muslim-Western tensions to wane, right, from 2006 to the present, or Muslims' assessment of the West to improve? I mean, if the assumption is that the primary drivers of opinion of the West, or of the U.S. in particular – and, of course, this is quite

an important difference, right, because I think perceptions of the French are probably different than perceptions of the United States, or I should say, the French government – if U.S. policy or Western policy more generally are the primary drivers, in addition to discourse, representation, images and, in some cases, legislation about Islam and Muslims, than why would we expect tensions to wane?

In the last few years since 2006, we've had, of course, the New York mosque controversy, which has been very well covered, at least in some of the Egyptian press that I follow; we've had the burning of the Quran scandal; we've had the Gaza war in 2008-2009 and the blockade of Gaza and the U.S. position with regard to that; we've had, of course, the Israeli government's continued settlement expansion and the perception that the United States has been either unwilling or unable to prevent that; we've had, of course, in a way, an escalation of the war in Afghanistan; we've had continued, possibly increased – I don't follow this daily – drone strikes that kill Afghan civilians and Pakistani civilians and, I would imagine, Yemeni civilians in some cases; we still have thousands of troops in Iraq, even though that number has been decreasing; and, of course, we had the Obama-is-a-Muslim issue over the last few years, as if, somehow, that was bad, right? And, of course, the discourse since September 11th of Islam as a problem, right – Islam is the reason for terrorism, Islam is the reason for the lack of democracy in the Middle East, Islam inherently linked to violence, Islam and the oppression of women – we've this discourse continuing.

[00:41:01]

So in some senses, I think there's no surprise that Muslim-Western tensions have not waned – that's the first point.

The second is this kind of rift between Muslims and the West, right – the poor relations. Who's to blame, right? I like that – blame. Interesting.

Well, I mean, I think we do a thought experiment and we come up with an understanding of the perceptions and, to some extent, the reality, right? We just ask ourselves, you know, how many Westerners have been killed by Muslims since 2001 or 2006? We've got, of course, you know, the abhorrent terrorist attacks on 9/11, we have the Madrid attacks, the London bombing, the Bali bombing, the Moscow bombings as well as others.

But then we ask, how many Muslims have been killed by Westerners, or at least the perception, right? The perception is what's important here. How many Muslims have been killed by Westerners since 2001 or 2006?

[00:41:57]

Well, clearly, this is a lopsided equation if we factor in Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistani civilians, Lebanese civilians as a result of the 2006 summer war, Palestinians and so on, if we ask ourselves how many Muslim countries invaded or occupied Western states since 2001 or 2006, right, and we compare that with how many Western countries have invaded or occupied Muslim states in this period, right – you know.

So there is to some extent some truth in the Muslim understanding of hostility toward them in the West. And in fact, I would argue that Muslims knew the results of the Pew poll before its release, in fact, regarding non-Muslim views of Muslims, right? That's the second point.

The third point – and this, I think, is somewhat interesting and somewhat unexpected. And this part, you know, is the a-ha or I-don't-fully-understand-this – which is what we want, I think, from polling data, to some extent. And that is that perceptions of American hostility have increased since 2006 in four of the five countries, right, in Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt and Jordan. And that is a little bit surprising, to some extent, right? We can explain it, I think, but it's not immediately intuitive. One would've thought that maybe things would've gotten better, that perceptions would've improved with Mr. Obama in the White House as opposed to – a Muslim in the White House as opposed to – as opposed to a Texan in the White House, right; with the drawdown of troops in Iraq; with a different discourse about Islam; with a rejection of the language of a "war on terrorism" even; and so on. But we haven't seen that improvement.

And of course, you know – I mean, the answer is, I think, to some extent, that after three years in office, as it were, many people are probably saying, what has changed, right? I mean, from the perspective of Massachusetts Avenue, we can say a lot has changed. But if you are an Egyptian in Al Minya, right, in Upper Egypt, or a Jordanian in Irbid, or let alone somebody in Waziristan and so on, you ask, what has changed?

[00:44:20]

And I think that the disappointment and the disillusionment that comes after the hope that something might maybe have improved as a result of the Obama election and so on – that might, to some extent, explain this increased hostility – maybe. But that's just a guess.

The fourth very small point is – and this is a small point, and it goes kind of beyond, in a way, the poll – is that in some ways, the U.S. in particular is less important in the Middle East – maybe not in Central Asia, but in the Middle East than it was – now than it was in 2006 with all that's happened in Tunisia, in Egypt, in Syria, in Yemen, even in Iraq, as it were, as a result of the drawdown. And I think that's, you know, something to keep in mind.

[00:45:12]

The fifth point is – and this is a positive point, something that's reassuring and, again, not terribly surprising; it reconfirms, I think, some of the polling that's been done, I think, by Pew and others earlier – is that there seems to be a correlation, a regular correlation between education and age and having less negative views of Muslims, right? We've seen this in the past; in fact I wrote something, you know, several years ago, based on a collection of polling data, and we saw this. And in fact we could possibly add – and I didn't see it in this poll – that exposure or contact, real-life interactions – if you know the Muslim down the street, right? – that also leads to less negative views of Muslims.

And in fact I would ask – the follow-up point to that is, what – is there a corresponding finding among Muslims, right? I mean, is it the case that people in Egypt and Jordan and Turkey and Pakistan and so on, if they are younger, if they are better educated, if they, you know, have taken a trip to Disneyland, that they have better attitudes or better, you know, perceptions of Westerners, whatever that might mean? I didn't find it in here; I don't know if that was asked. But I think that's interesting.

The sixth point – sixth very small point is, you know, this finding that more than two-thirds in Germany and Spain believe Muslims do not want to adopt quote, "national customs." Well, I mean, I don't think this is terribly surprising for a number of reasons. I mean, clearly there is a different understanding of nationality, of what it means to be a German, right, as opposed to an American, and there's a different model or mode of immigration in these countries, right? I mean, you know, I'm an American; I wasn't born here, but I played Little League baseball, and I'm an American. And I think that if I, you know, had been born in Egypt, but lived in Hamburg for the same amount of time that I lived in the United States, my relationship with the place and the perceptions of me would be significantly different. So that's, you know, not terribly surprising, in addition to the fact that the national customs in Germany are probably drinking large amounts of beer and eating lots of pork – (laughter) – but that's another issue.

[00:47:36]

The last point, and the most complicated point, and I'm – and I myself don't, you know, understand this – in addition to liking David Hasselhoff, right? – so – (laughter) – with the Germany. So the last point, you know, and again I apologize for not being clearer with the presentation of this point – I think it's a complicated point – it's an epistemological point about the polling, right? And I'm wondering if – and, you know, I'm wondering if – and this – I don't do polling; I do the exact opposite of polling; I do fieldwork and ethnography – but I'm wondering if the framing of the research itself influences the findings, right? Because the categories, to me, that are used are not clear – are not really kind of clear. You know, "Westerners" and "Muslims," right? I wonder if Shuja and I – what category do we fit in? Are we Westerners?

MR. KOHUT: That isn't the way we would phrase – we phrased the questions.

MR. SHEHATA: OK –

MR. KOHUT: You have to be aware of that.

MR. SHEHATA: OK, well, you know, so, you know, it's a – it's a comparing kind of a religious identity, seemingly regardless of location, with this other category, Western. And again, you know, I'm not so sure about this myself, so I'm just offering this up as questions for people to think about. How about, for example, Lebanese Christians or Coptic Christians in Egypt? What are their views on these subjects? How about Muslims in Michigan or Manchester, with regard to their views on these questions? Israeli Muslims are put in the category of Muslims and non-Westerners, whereas Israeli Jews seem to be in a different category, right? How about Israeli Christians?

[00:49:17]

If – in other words, if the response of Israeli Muslims and Israeli Christians were very similar to a number of the questions that were posed, that would tell us that religion isn't the significant factor, right, in determining kind of the outcome. And so on. I mean, you know, and another way of putting it is, you know, why is Israel classified as a Western country? Why is Russia a Western country? It's not terribly clear to me. What would the outcomes be if we asked Americans their views of Russians, right? Or the British their views of the French?

Another way – another way of putting it is – and, you know, this kind of a related, not exactly – or, you know, let alone the question of Muslims in France and Muslims in Britain, a significant part of the population in France, you know, how are they factored into this and does that complicate the categories to some extent?

And then, you know, one last point about the question of, you know, who is responsible for the lack of prosperity, right, and how the Muslims blame the West and so on. I would say, I would ask – it'd be really interesting to find out – if we asked the question to, you know, to people living in African countries, right? You know, what would their answers be if the question was, who's responsible for the lack of prosperity? Would it be as a result of, you know, colonialism and imperialism and so on, that they would be likely to answer that – a large percentage of them would kind of blame the West, as it were, for the lack of economic prosperity?

[00:50:59]

And in fact, I would argue that some of the events that we've seen in the last six or seven months in the Arab world – in Tunisia, in Egypt and Syria, the great Arab revolt, as it were – is an indication, in real terms, that people in the region are blaming their own leaders and their own governments for the plight that they are suffering and are taking matters in their own hands. So that, I think, would complicate things.

Just the last thing is I wonder if including, again, India – not only India, but China and Brazil also in this survey, would complicate matters significantly.

Anyway, I'll stop there. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you so much, Samer, for another very insightful presentation, and I think where you point out also the needs for some comparative analysis maybe among the groups themselves.

[00:51:54]

Before I open it up, I would like just to pose a question to all of us maybe, and the panelists are welcome to either to answer it now or after, you know, we open up the floor, which is the effect of the Arab uprisings, the possible effect of the Arab uprisings on these polls. I know the polls were conducted this spring, so I'm not sure how much we can take –

MR. KOHUT: Not much.

MR. MUASHER: Yeah, not much, I'm sure, although we have sort of seen some improvement in Westerners' attitudes towards Muslims, and I wonder – I just wonder whether that is partly due to the Arab uprisings. In other words, the question I want to answer, maybe to pose – maybe not for this survey, but for future surveys – is, have Arabs been sort of more humanized in Western eyes because of the Arab uprisings? Does the West now look at Arabs in a more human way, thinking that they're more like the rest of us as a result of the uprisings or is that not the case? I think that would be a very interesting sort of question to find out in future surveys that we conduct.

Let me open up –

[00:53:17]

MR. KOHUT: Excuse me, could I just address these questions?

MR. MUASHER: (Please ?), sure, please, please.

MR. KOHUT: I mean, there was a fair number of points made, and I think I need to – (inaudible) – some of them.

MR. MUASHER: You – you're absolutely right.

MR. KOHUT: OK, first of all, with regard to epistemology, which I haven't studied since I was at a Catholic university, actually. (Laughter.) The framing was different for different questions, and deliberately so, that Westerners were described as Americans and Western Europeans, but some of the questions took on religion itself. In Muslim countries we asked, how do you feel about Christians, how do you feel about Jews? And in Western countries we did these same things. So we have a way, I think, of teasing that out.

[00:54:02]

I think you're absolutely right about the difficulties in – there's a different view of nationality in these countries, and we see it when we interview American Muslims. It's quite different than the way Muslims in Germany and even Britain look at things.

We do know something about the effects of education and age. In the United States there are education and age correlations; in the Muslim world, we've been unable to unpack the numbers. We've tried very hard.

We do see, though, some impact on exposure. When you talk to people in the Middle East who have friends and neighbors here, it – or contacts here, it makes somewhat of a difference in attitudes toward America.

[00:54:51]

The other thing I would – point I would make is, with respect to your response, is I think you're absolutely right about why the – about raised – expectations being higher and then, initially with respect to Obama, then subsequently being dashed a bit. We saw Obama's numbers in the Muslim world as not great in 2009, but considerably lower in 2010 and in 2011, and expectations have been dashed. As to why – did we expect this? Yeah, we did expect it, but that's not a reason not to do the research. We do surveys to find out what is the robustness of these attitudes if we're not expecting change, and secondly we did, in point of fact, find some change. We did find change among Western attitudes. So that's that.

The points with – you know, I agree with an enormous amount of this; I'm just trying to address a couple of the things that I think need some clarification.

With respect to India, polling Muslims in India, it's not possible. We have great difficulties in doing surveys about Muslim issues among Muslims in India. The government doesn't like it; other organizations or polls done – polls done there have sometimes led to arrests over this issue. There are many places in the world where it's difficult to do surveys; surprisingly, India is one of them when you're surveying about Muslim issues.

[00:56:32]

As to the tsunami effect and the impact of aid with respect to – with respect to the earthquake in Pakistan, we did see what you described, not as dramatically as you described it. The trend in Pakistan – I mean, in Indonesia, with respect to rating the United States positively is, pre-Bush, 50 percent. The United States invades Iraq; in Indonesia, the numbers go to 15 percent. We come to the aid of the Indonesians in response to the tsunami; it goes to 35, and it stays there. It never gets quite back to 50 percent. But Obama gets elected, and it goes to 60 percent, even higher than it was prior to President Bush, which is not to say that your issues with respect to the insurgents here are not so, but talking about a broader public opinion. In Pakistan, we saw the same little bump up in response to coming to the Pakistani aid in that – those horrible storms and earthquakes.

I agree completely that understanding that Westerners and Muslims and people all around the world, irrespective place or religion, have a lot in common and understanding the bases of which that – of what – of their common beliefs really sheds a – can shed a lot of – a lot on this. And also the general view, which I think both of the discussants made, is a lot of this is not about – even while we're – people are responding about people, they're really responding to their perceptions of their governments and to the perceptions of their leadership as people. And so I think the – those were just a few brief comments that I wanted to make.

MR. NAWAZ: Could I just come in –

MR. MUASHER: Please.

[00:58:19]

MR. NAWAZ: – on two quick things? One – and this is based on the question that Samer raised to me on how I would be classified – so, did you classify the Western samples by religion also? And, if so, can we unpack those responses?

And the other one was a response to a question that Samer asked about pairings – attitude pairings, and I think – in that, Pew has done surveys where you pair U.S. views of France and vice versa. And I think those sometimes are very hard to find on your website –

MR. KOHUT: Oh, really?

MR. NAWAZ: – the data. So that may be a point to look at. But when I look at a lot of these numbers, I try and actually compare them to, you know, what do the French say about the U.S., and how does that compare with what Pakistanis say about the U.S.?

MR. KOHUT: No, that's all – that's all there, but – and –

MR. NAWAZ: Yeah? So it is there, and it's something that's quite useful.

MR. KOHUT: Good. Yeah.

MR. MUASHER: Samer, did you want to say anything?

All right. Let's open it up. We do have a full room, so I would please urge you to have a very short question and certainly to identify yourself before you ask a question. Please wait for the microphone so we can capture all of this on (the TV ?).

Yes. Yes, please.

[00:59:42]

Q: Hi, Emily Cadei with Congressional Quarterly. I was just curious if you could all discuss why you think American attitudes have improved – ever so slightly, but still improved – at the same time that, in the news headlines, you would assume that American attitudes have really turned quite negatively. When you hear all the mosque protests, you know, the Koran burning, that seems to be at odds with what we see in the news media coverage.

So I just would be interested to hear from Mr. Kohut and the rest of you why you think that jump up has occurred.

MR. MUASHER: OK. We'll go and take question in groups.

[01:00:15]

Yes, sir.

Q: Thank you.

Hi, my name's Tim Rivera (ph). I'm from the British Council here in Washington, D.C.

My question is, what do you think the (salience ?) would be? I don't see this data in the polling, but that doesn't mean it's not necessarily there. But do you see any salience – or is there any question about what Muslim perception – Muslims' perception from the Muslim world of sort of Western treatment of Muslims living in the West?

So what do Muslims in Pakistan think about the experience of Muslims in the United States or in the U.K. or in France or elsewhere?

And the other thing is, because all of this is about perceptions, which often means access to information and stories about others, where does the media – the role of the media fit into how these people perceive – how Muslims either perceive the West or West perceives Muslims?

Thank you.

[01:01:08]

MR. MUASHER: OK. Let's have a question from the back. Over there, yes.

Q: Daniel Serwer from Johns Hopkins SAIS.

This finding about 9/11 is terribly striking. Have you sat down and talked to people about what they do believe about 9/11? What lies behind this?

MR. MUASHER: One more question. Yes, sir, over there. You – sorry. That – OK, that – we'll get to you, that's fine, that's fine. (Laughter.) Sorry, go ahead, please.

Q: Sorry. Zach Smith, Al-Jazeera Arabic.

My question is on West – on Muslim perceptions of Western Europeans and of Americans. When the question is framed, do you find often that Muslims immediately associate Westerners with Americans? Or do they associate Westerners with the broader swath of countries that you identify? And if they do associate them with different countries, is there a difference in how Muslims perceive Western Europeans and how they perceive Americans? Thanks.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Let's try to answer this set of questions before we move to the second one. Andy, would you like to take the first go?

MR. KOHUT: As to why American attitudes have improved a bit, I think that even though there are still many issues out there, I think the fact that the war in Iraq has wound down is an important element in this. I think also Americans have become more accustomed to the state of affairs between America and Muslim countries and Muslim peoples.

As to Muslims living in the West, I think we've asked questions about people from your country living in the United States. And we – as I said earlier, we get a pretty positive response when there is connections to the U.S. – much more positive, to your point – than when the perceptions of the U.S. rely on views about government, views about our policies.

[01:03:35]

I think the role of the media in – both in the Middle East and in the United States with respect to respective issues is very, very powerful, very powerful. I don't know how to disentangle it. The numbers on Al-Jazeera and other networks are very, very high and getting – (chuckles) – a test and control sample is not an easy thing to do, but I think that what you do see is how much there's a common point of view across the Middle East about attitudes towards the United States and the West more generally.

And speaking about that, I think there are distinctions, and they're in our surveys and I can't rattle them off, in how people in the Middle East and other Muslim countries view individual countries – the United States versus Germany versus Britain. It's there; it's not huge but it's apparent.

Certainly, there's a – even though the image of the United States remains very low in the Muslim world, unlike the rest of the world in the Obama era, attitudes toward the United States are in many places a little bit better. And certainly, attitudes toward Obama are a lot better than they were toward President Bush.

MR. MUASHER: (Off mic.)

MR. SHEHATA: I mean, the only thing that I will say as a guess as to why, you know – is it U.S. attitudes or Western attitudes have improved towards Muslims? Anyway, one of them – is, in addition to what Andy said – I mean, the fact that there's been no major terrorist attack in the United States over the last few years, certainly, is an issue. I think the fact that the administration is no longer speaking in terms of the "war on terrorism." And in fact, there are no senior officials as there were in the previous years making statements about, you know, my god is real and their god is not real – you know, General Boykin, you'll remember. So I think that those are probably some of the reasons why U.S. attitudes have improved towards Muslims.

[01:05:54]

And then just one thing about the Al-Jazeera question. And I think that the question – you know, if – again, it gets to the difficulty of who's a Muslim, right? I mean, if you're – if the question is, you know, Muslim perceptions of Western Europeans versus Americans, who they think of, I think. And I think the answer is, you know, if it's a – it's a North African Muslim from Oran in Algeria, he's probably going to think of the French, right? And it's an Indonesian Muslim, he's probably thinking of the Dutch or who knows what, you know, so –

MR. MUASHER: Shuja.

MR. NAWAZ: I'm going to try and respond to Andy (sic) Serwer's question, what do people believe actually happened? It's very interesting. And I'm citing the examples of Pakistan, which I know best, I guess. The most frequently cited stories are those that have emerged out of the West by the conspiracy theorists in the West about what happened on 9/11. And these are often cited as proof positive that there was an Israeli plot or a CIA plot or the U.S. wanted to do this in order to precipitate an attack on the Muslim world.

And the problem that I encounter when I hear this from people in Pakistan is that there isn't anyone who is prepared to counter this, particularly when it comes from public figures who are purporting to be leaders of groups inside the country. And this is then picked up by the youth and is shared through the Internet and has taken on a life or its own, much more so than in the U.S. where there are countervailing sources of information and there is some debate and discussion about exactly what happened and what didn't happen on 9/11.

[01:07:57]

So that may not be a perfect answer but maybe something that could be followed up in a later survey.

On the news media coverage, I just want to add that I think the – particularly on the Quran burning, there was perhaps too much of a desire on the part of U.S. media to make that into a big issue, which kind of fed the issue and gave it life. Sometimes it helps to just ignore a person who is – who has a very limited circle and will not get the audience that you provide him when you give him the coverage. So that will be all I'd add to it.

MR. KOHUT: I just want to add one thing that I forgot to mention, and that is, while there are – we're speaking in general terms here with respect to Muslim – perceptions of Muslims and Muslim perceptions of Americans or Europeans – there are – there are significant differences that are really interesting and important to understand.

For example, in Lebanon, there's a huge gap in the way the Sunni and Shia regard the West. It wasn't always the case. The American image among Sunnis is markedly better than it was five or six years ago; the image among Shias have not – has not moved. Similarly, in Africa, where the United States is very well-regarded and has been consistently well-regarded, the Muslim minorities in many African countries don't have the same negative view of the United States that you see in the Middle East and in parts of Asia.

So it's – we're talking in generalities, but if you look deeply in what – into what we've done, there are plenty of signs, too, of reasons to expect that things can change and a fair amount of variation.

[01:09:52]

MR. NAWAZ: I forgot one point, Marwan, which I do want to make. This was referring to something that Andy said in his opening comments, and this may be correct, that there is a strong perception in the Muslim world that men make better political leaders.

But there's – there needs to be unpacking of this, particularly for South Asia, where two of the leading Muslim nations in South Asia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, have had female leaders. And it may be interesting to see why that's the case, why people who would be expected to consider men to be better leaders are prepared to elect female leaders. And one hypothesis may be that they want change and they want an opportunity for anyone who can change their lives and somebody that can speak for the disaffected people that are lacking a voice that gives them voice. So it's no different than anybody in the West or in Africa or in Australia.

[01:11:00]

MR. MUASHER: OK. Please.

Q: (Off mic.)

MR. MUASHER: Yes, please. Please. We're recording this, so it's –

Q: Hello, my name is Naseema Noor. I'm with Inter Press Service.

And I was actually a little – a little bit surprised also by the list of countries covered. I was wondering why there wasn't a Gulf – a Persian Gulf country. And in addition to that, I thought, as

Mr. Kohut mentioned, the over-representation of Palestinians might have swayed the data, not just because of Israeli Muslims and then the Palestinian territories being the same group, but also Jordan, where the majority of the population is Palestinian. And given, you know, the antagonism between Palestinians and Israelis and the fact Palestinians know that it is America supporting Israel, I think that might have swayed the data as well.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Please.

Q: My name is Ibrahim Hussein (sp). I live here, an Egyptian-American living here in Washington, D.C. I appreciate what your research center did; it was a great insight.

[01:12:09]

However, what the criteria for selecting the five or six Muslim countries – and I would've loved – along what you said, I'd love to see what attitudes they have in Iraq after having American presence for the last ten years, or Afghanistan. (Inaudible) – in these countries I would love to see or – and more important, I'd like to see the attitudes in Saudi Arabia, which is the source of many extreme views about Islam.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Some in the back. Yes, sir?

Here.

Q: Thank you. I'm Jim (sp), I'm a reporter from the Straits Times, a Singapore newspaper.

I was wondering whether the respondents were asked how they felt about where the relationship between the West and the Muslim world is going from here, particularly at this juncture where this is the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Is there any apprehension that the media frenzy surrounding the event is going to reopen a lot of old wounds and worsen relationships for the next one or two years? And if the question was actually not asked, I was wondering if the experts would care to give their take on where they see the relationship going. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: One more question. Yes, ma'am.

MR. KOHUT: That lady has the microphone already at the back.

MR. MUASHER: Sorry? Oh, she does. OK, fine. (Chuckles.)

[01:13:40]

Q: Sorry about that. Imadi Franklin (ph) with the Department of State.

I'm curious – so given that these perceptions of Westerners are based largely on Western leadership's actions and policies, do you believe that the U.S. government and the military in particular have a responsibility to its people to factor into each policy decision the ways in which that policy will affect perceptions of Westerners?

MR. MUASHER: OK. And we'll take the question from you, ma'am, and then we'll give a chance to the panelists. Please, here.

Q: Thank you. Carol Migdalovitz, formerly of the Congressional Research Service.

Before we make too much of the commonality with regard to views about extremism, I was wondering if you could tell us how you defined extremism in the poll.

MR. MUASHER: All right. Who wants to take the first shot?

MR. KOHUT: Let me – let me answer some – answer some of these technical questions.

We defined extremism by using that word translated into many, many languages as our definition of extremism.

[01:14:47]

As to the numbers being swayed by the inclusion of the Palestinians, we break out all of these countries to show how much variance there is. And then, when we make summaries – I'm going to take you back to your math classes – we don't use means, which would weight up extreme answers; we use medians, which will give you a more – an expression of central tendency, which is less subject to the intense variations across countries.

But there is a breakout – I mean, I just did a quick summary because we couldn't go through all of them – there's a breakout of all the responses from all of these countries.

[00:15:31]

As to criteria for selection countries, we have been unable to work in the Gulf with the freedom that we require, and it's just – we just can't do it. And Afghanistan and Iraq – I think Iraq's time is coming – but it's difficult to ask the kinds of questions that we're asking in countries that are war-torn and subject to all the pressures of war-torn countries. There are other survey organizations that do a wonderful job of surveying in Iraq and Afghanistan. ABC and BBC have a good partnership and they've done polling there I think it would be interesting for you to look at.

And I'm going to pass on all the other questions so I don't hog the microphone.

MR. NAWAZ: I'll just respond to the one question about – from the Straits Times on where is the relationship going. And I go back to something Andy said. I think as you find kinetic operations ceasing in Afghanistan, as you find a reduction of U.S. military presence in the Muslim world, you will probably find a waning of these views against the United States because, as I said in my opening comments, most of the people in the countries have never really had contact with the U.S. And this is the one way in which they have a contact. And it's not been a very positive way. And so that affects their views. And through the media, those are magnified, not only in the countries concerned but in the surrounding counties.

So I would see a diminishing of the hostility and the extreme views. Much more, also, after the Arab Spring and what may be a similar iteration of the Arab Spring in other Muslim countries

that have a large youth bulge. There will be much more of a focus on their own governance and their own leadership and a desire to change things from within. As I think many people in Egypt were saying, this is not about you, the U.S., this is about us in Tahrir. I think that's going to be the sentiment in most of the Muslim countries going forward in the next decade or so.

[01:18:02]

MR. SHEHATA: Sure. You know, the only question I think I can appropriately – or, you know, I can try to appropriately address is the question about the relationship between the Muslim world and the West and where is it going. And I agree completely with Shuja with regard to the possibility of diminishing negative views if troops are withdrawn from Iraq and the same thing happens in Afghanistan.

I would also say that I would be surprised if on September 11th the front pages of newspapers in Egypt and Jordan and so on were focused at all, really, on the anniversary, right? I mean, I think, obviously, there's much more interest and awareness of that passing and that date in this country and possibly in Western Europe, I think, than in parts of the Middle East. And I think I'll stop there. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: All right. Let's take one last set of question, please?

Q: Thanks. I'm Garrett Mitchell and I write The Mitchell Report. And I want to pose a question. I think it's probably one best asked of Andy, but I'm interested in other – in other perspectives on this. There are two findings in here, if I understand it correctly, that seem to provide some interesting territory to explore. The first of which, if I got it correct, Andy, is the notion that there is a, as you I think described it, a sort of fixed Arab point of view, Muslim point of view about the U.S. as being the source of its problems.

[01:20:00]

And then there is a, interestingly enough, a fixed – not quite as fixed, I gather – but something approximating a fixed point of view that both the Arab Muslim countries – the Muslim countries and the U.S. share, which is the extent to which Islamic extremism is a great threat. If those two summary statements are relatively accurate, it raises two questions for me. One is, is there a way for us to know, from this data or from some sort of thought experiments, whether the – whether there is greater concern about the U.S. than in those countries that are – like Palestine and Pakistan, et cetera, where there's great concern about Islamic extremism – is there a way to say anything about the relevance, the salience of the concern about the U.S. versus Islamic extremism?

And I think Samer was suggesting that maybe this – or it could have been Shuja, I'm not sure who was talking about this – could be something like a point of convergence and that if Pakistanis and Palestinians and United States – Americans, et cetera, have this common fear of Islamic extremism, is this – is this some basis upon which progress in some form or another can be – can be charted.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Over there?

Q: Hi, my name is Rada Maliki (ph). I'm a student in Georgetown Qatar and currently an intern at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. My question is about whether you have included at any point in your polls the perspective of American expatriates who have lived in the Middle East and in some of these countries in your polls about their perspective and how much they can possibly influence perspective of family members and what have you. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: OK. All right. Please?

[01:22:44]

Q: Hi, my name is Sarah Forman, also from the State Department. And I have a question about what Mr. Nawaz called the tsunami effect. And I heard you say that when governments themselves and when armies come in and offer aid it improves views of the West. I was wondering if that's also true when nongovernmental organizations provide aid, especially when it's – excuse me – funded by governments?

MR. MUASHER: OK, one last question. Yes, please.

Q: Hi, my name is Durriya Badani. I'm with the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at The Brookings Institution. And my question is really both for Shuja and for Samer, which is: I think for so long the primary lens by which the Muslim world has really viewed the U.S. has been through the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, just generally. And I would ask, now sort of as we're approaching eight years – almost nine years really, of the invasion of Iraq and of course with the war in Afghanistan, if your opinion would be, like, that that has now been the lens by which this relationship can be primarily viewed. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Start with you, Samer?

[01:24:03]

MR. SHEHATA: Sure. I'll answer the question. I'll make two points that aren't related to questions. I think they're important points. And one is very obvious and that is that, you know, the U.S. is the dominant power in the world. It is the unrivaled hegemon – at least today, might not be the case in 20 years from now or so – economically, politically, culturally and militarily. And of course there's going to be resistance, right, and some hostility towards that position that the U.S. occupies, especially if it intervenes in people's lives and countries and so on.

The second point isn't so obvious, and I think it really is worth thinking about. And it's something we haven't talked about today. And that is the NATO bombing of Libya. It is fascinating, fascinating to think that – and this might have changed in the last three weeks, but as of three weeks ago this was correct – we have a Western military operation against an Arab Muslim country, and as of three weeks ago there was not one – had not occurred one significant demonstration in the Arab world against that operation.

And in fact, you can find Libyan flags in Tahrir in Cairo. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the most influential Muslim scholars in the world, called for the assassination of Gadhafi, then responded to Gadhafi's allegations that the NATO bombing was a Western crusader effort and said, no, it is not, and so on. And I think this gets at the complexity, to some extent, of the situation and

perceptions. Here we have, you know, Western NATO intervention, yet we don't have hostility from the Arab world and Muslim world as a result of that because of the specific context of what's going on.

With regard to the last – to the question, just very briefly, no. I think still the primary lens through which Muslims generally view the United States, whether it's Indonesia or Malaysia and so on, is Palestine.

[01:26:23]

MR. KOHUT: I would add two other things. I think that it's what I call the 800-pound gorilla. But there are two other perceptions. One is the sincerity and legitimacy of U.S. antiterrorism efforts, which are doubted in just about every Muslim country. And secondly, troops in the Middle East – these are the things that are the fixed points in negative views toward the United States over – across the Muslim world and many – in the many surveys that we've seen.

Trying to address your point about the – I'll simplify it. What you're saying is are there some possibilities of common – of a common point of view when there is a common concern about Islamic extremism? Perhaps, but I'll give you one example of where that is absolutely not the case, and that is in Pakistan. Between 2008 and 2009 – is it (200)8 and (200)9 or (200)7 and (200)8?

MR. SHEHATA (?): It's (200)8 and (200)9.

MR. KOHUT: (200)8 and (200)9, the percentage of Pakistanis worried about extremism in their country, having a negative view of al-Qaida, having a negative view of the Taliban shot up – big differences. At the same time views of the United States stayed low if not became more intensively negative, because we had – while we had a common point of view on concern about extremism in dealing with al-Qaida and dealing with the Taliban, there was a point of view from – the Pakistani point of view is the United States is almost as much of a problem, given the way it is dealing with Pakistan and not respecting our legitimacy. So, yes, there are those opportunities, but they can – they can pass.

[01:28:23]

MR. NAWAZ: Let me pick up on that last point. I think one of the reasons, also, for that – not just the spike against extremism in Pakistan but the fact that the views on the U.S. remained negative in Pakistan was during the same period the U.S. was seen as continuing to support an autocratic ruler in Pakistan, whose sell-by date had expired in the minds of the people of Pakistan. And this is – this is again an issue that keeps coming up in the Muslim world.

So even after the U.S. departs from the scene with its troops, it'll be important for the U.S. to try and find a different way of dealing with the people of these countries rather than through surrogates who refuse to allow democracy to flourish, which also piggybacks on the point about Libya. That the people of Libya or the Muslim world or Africa or anywhere else all want a say in who rules them and how they are governed. And if the U.S. or Italy or Australia comes and invades the country in order to help them get rid of an autocratic ruler who is not allowing their voice to heard, then that's fine.

I think the tsunami effect question – it's the image. You normally associate the U.S. military equipment, aircraft, helicopters, uniforms with violence. It's just a more powerful image. Yes, NGOs played a huge role, but it's the fact that somebody in uniform is actually tending to you and helping you that can assist you in looking at the U.S. somewhat differently.

[01:30:19]

On Durriya's point, I would agree with Samer that generally I think the abiding issue that is across the Muslim world is still the Palestine-Israel question. And it is used by local politicians for whatever purposes and has a different coloration in each country. But the more recent conflicts – Afghanistan and Iraq and Yemen and maybe in the Horn of Africa and wherever else – are likely to continue to affect not just the immediate countries but the surroundings countries as we go forward.

MR. MUASHER: OK. Let me thank the panelist for an excellent presentation, ask you to – (applause) – and invite you to have a bite on your way out. Thank you so much for coming.

(END)