

After Cairo:

From the Vision of the Cairo Speech to Active Support for Human Dignity

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POMED gratefully acknowledges the financial, logistical and substantive support to this project provided by the U.S. Institute of Peace. That said, the contents of this report do not reflect the views of the U.S. Institute of Peace, which does not take policy positions.

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Acknowledgments

This year's emerging leaders conference series was made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. We can't express enough our appreciation for RBF and the faith they have shown in us. Randa Slim, Ariadne Papagapitos, and Stephen Heintz were all wonderfully supportive as we prepared for the conferences. We also could not have succeeded in this effort without the partnership of the Muslim World Initiative of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Center for Democracy and Civil Society at Georgetown University. Daniel Brumberg lent his considerable expertise as we designed the conference format, and he participated in our conference in Cairo. Barak Hoffman played a central role in drafting this report and took part in our conference in Beirut.

We also owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our local partners. In Jordan, we were very pleased to partner with Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies. Nawaf Tell, Mohammad Al-Masri, and Nagham Al-Akkad worked diligently to ensure everything was a success. In Beirut, our partner was the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies and the extraordinary Rita Chammas, who cheerfully answered our every question and even several we hadn't yet thought of. In Cairo, we were excited to work with the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. The whole staff at CIHRS, including Bahey El Din Hassan, Moataz El Fegiery, Samar Ali, and Mohammad Tolba were simply incredible, putting in long hours in support of a complex effort even as they moved between offices. We simply could not have succeeded without the hard work and sound advice of these institutions.

Tuqa Nusairat deserves the largest share of the credit for the conferences. As POMED's Director for Dialogue Programs, she was the backbone of the conference series from start to finish, selecting every participant, monitoring every detail, and coordinating the efforts of some 20 individuals in six organizations and four countries.

Finally, the central players in this process, and the authors of the recommendations in this report, were our conference participants. We received 924 applications for the 90 available spots in our conferences, allowing us to select a diverse, all-star cast of discussants in each country. We were fortunate to meet these incredible individuals, to learn from them, and to engage with them in important conversations. We want to thank them from the bottom of our heart for sharing with us their enthusiasm and ideas.

Andrew Albertson
Executive Director
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Executive Summary

- The election of President Obama offers a genuine opportunity to repair the badly damaged image of the United States in the Middle East. In the first six months of his presidency, Middle Eastern publics held surprisingly positive views of Obama. Nevertheless, they remain skeptical of American policy.
- Engaging Middle Eastern youth will be critical to improving relations with the region. To solicit concrete recommendations on how the Obama administration can turn its ideas into substantive policies, we hosted a series of dialogues with young Arab and American leaders in Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon in the fall of 2009.
- Generally, the conference participants were more comfortable with active U.S. engagement to support democratic reforms under President Obama than they were under President Bush.
- The participants support the four human dignity themes President Obama raised in his Cairo speech in June 2009 and offer specific recommendations for how the U.S. can positively impact those goals:
 - *Democracy.* Participants call for greater U.S. attention to upcoming elections, including support for international observers and reforms of districting provisions and counter-terrorism laws.
 - *Religious Freedom.* Participants emphasize freedom of political participation by religious persons, freedom of religious debate and institutional life, and freedom of individual practice.
 - *Women's Rights.* Participants recommend the administration move beyond economic empowerment to include greater mechanisms for supporting women's social and political empowerment.
 - *Human Development.* Participants stress that addressing the political roots of economic stagnation, such as corruption, is fundamental to advancing human development in the region.
- Public opinion polling demonstrates broad support in majority Muslim countries for the human dignity goals President Obama raised in his Cairo speech. However, substantive actions will be needed in order to shift perceptions of American policy, and the administration has yet to follow through on the vision of the Cairo speech. Post-Cairo initiatives have been limited, largely symbolic, and slow to emerge.
- The opportunity to durably shift opinions of the U.S. is fading. The perception is mounting that President Obama has said the right words, but is unwilling or unable to offer substantive new policies to support the aspirations of people in the Middle East.

Introduction

The election of President Barack Obama provides a genuine opportunity to improve the image of the United States in the Middle East and the broader Muslim world. The president has made it clear he does not want to waste that chance. In his inaugural address, President Obama stated, “To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.” He reiterated this policy in his address in Cairo in June, 2009 calling for a “new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.” To the surprise of many, the president focused not only on issues of state security – countering radicalism, solving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, stopping nuclear proliferation – but also on issues of individual human dignity: democracy, religious freedom, the rights of women, and development. By highlighting these goals in Cairo, the president reiterated the theme that “our problems must be dealt with through partnership; progress must be shared.”

Middle Eastern youth, as a consequence of their enormous demographic importance, will play a central role in determining whether the president’s intended “new way forward” succeeds or fails. Two-thirds of all individuals in the Middle East are under 30. The ideas they form about U.S. policies and intentions in the region will play a major role in shaping America’s relationship with the Middle East for years to come. Survey data shows that many people, including youth, were initially optimistic regarding President Obama and his June 4th message, but have grown increasingly disheartened by the administration’s inability to translate the president’s extraordinary words into bold new actions. One chief complaint is U.S. inability to rein in Israeli settlement activity. However, another concern is that the U.S. remains indifferent to human development challenges in the region.

In October and November of 2009, we traveled to Amman, Beirut, and Cairo to listen to prominent under-35 civic leaders – together with groups of their American counterparts – to seek their recommendations for how the U.S. could follow through on the spirit of the President’s June 4th speech in Cairo. Our discussions focused on the four human dignity issues President Obama raised in Cairo: Democracy, Religious Freedom, Women’s Rights, and Development. Through a highly competitive application process, we selected a diverse group of outstanding leaders representing a range of views. Together, the three conferences developed 56 recommendations for the administration on ways it can translate the vision of the Cairo speech into constructive actions. In drawing up these recommendations, the conferences benefitted from both local participants, who offered nuanced descriptions of domestic political challenges and obstacles, and American participants, who brought a detailed knowledge of actual and potential American policies. In this report we present their recommendations precisely as they composed them. Later, we also discuss polling data related to the priorities President Obama announced in Cairo. For more information about the conference process, please see the appendix.

The recommendations resulting from our discussions offer at least two kinds of valuable information. First, they highlighted key priorities. While the conference participants had wide latitude to define their subject matter in whatever way they chose, they had to prioritize five specific recommendations on each topic. As a result, one way to view these recom-

mentations is as an enumeration of their top priorities for American engagement. Second, the recommendations often discuss new approaches to these priority issues. For example, the U.S. has long been engaged in political party assistance, but the conference participants worried that aid was not having the intended result of strengthening viable political parties. They thus include recommendations for how to conduct such work in majority Muslim countries, where American political ideologies do not necessarily line up with local parties and publics have a negative image of the United States.

Before turning to these recommendations, two broad observations merit attention. First, participants in these conferences demonstrated a greater interest in U.S. engagement in support of political reform goals than they had at POMED Emerging Leaders conferences in previous years. In prior conferences, participants focused more on American actions they believed impeded democratization, including the occupation of Iraq and regional counterterrorism policies, rather than on areas where new U.S. engagement was welcome. The change in U.S. administrations appears to have increased individuals' comfort level with American engagement. People are more comfortable with active U.S. support for political reform under President Obama than they were under President Bush.

Second, the participants' views are mirrored in important ways by public opinion polling, as we also show in this report. Although we targeted young leaders for these conferences, we did so because of their tendency to offer new and interesting ideas. And because we took pains to publicize the conferences widely and selected participants with an eye toward ensuring diversity along lines of geography, ideology, profession, and gender, the views of our Middle Eastern participants match up relatively well with those of their societies as a whole. Like most in the region, the participants strongly support the human dignity goals President Obama articulated in his Cairo speech. However, they do not believe U.S. policy consistently supports those goals. They initially had some hope that President Obama would bring about positive improvements in American policy, but they remain doubtful that U.S. policy can substantially change in a way that advances the human dignity goals they support. Their skepticism and positive image of Obama highlight that although they are willing to listen, articulating shared values will not suffice. In order to durably shift perceptions, the Obama administration will need to follow up its verbal support for these goals with substantive, new initiatives that consistently encourage human dignity over time. With that goal in mind, we present the following recommendations.

Democracy

"I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere."

President Barack Obama in Cairo, June 4, 2009.

The first topic of our discussions was Democracy. Democratic rights and freedoms enjoy deep, popular support in the Middle East. However, most believe that the U.S. does not support democracy consistently on principle, but only when it coincides with narrow American interests. The policies of the Bush administration, including the occupation of Iraq, often discussed as part of a region-wide effort to promote democracy, were deeply unpopular in the region. This did not have the effect of souring Middle Eastern publics on *democracy*, but it did sharply affect perceptions of American *promotion* of it. Frustration with American policies soared to all-time highs. With Middle Eastern publics holding more generally positive views of Obama, there also appears to be a greater comfort with active American engagement in the region. Polling shows that sustained efforts to consistently support democracy would be well-received.

So far, the Obama administration has been straightforward in its verbal support for democratic rights and values. However, it does not appear that political reform is a high priority in its diplomacy. As one example, the administration's new strategic dialogue with Egyptian officials does not deal with democracy and human rights. And although it championed a resolution supportive of freedom of expression in the UN Human Rights Council, together with the government of Egypt, that resolution appears to have had no impact on bilateral diplomacy with any country. Some have voiced concerns that, under this administration, the U.S. has opted to work only with non-governmental organizations that register and are approved by host governments, a provision that gives them the power to veto potential American partners. However, this may be part of a shift in responsibilities: some organizations formerly funded by USAID have now received grants from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). With regard to foreign assistance, the administration requested cuts in aid for democracy and governance in Egypt and Jordan. On the other hand, it requested large increases in funding for two important aid instruments: the MEPI and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently announced a \$5 million program to give technology-related grants to civic groups. With that one possible exception, no new initiatives have been launched related to democracy since the Cairo speech.

Participants were concerned that the Obama administration appeared to favor working closely with governments more, and civic groups less, than the previous administration.

They urged the administration to work more closely with a wide range of civil society organizations to support the development of democratic institutions and political processes. They cited direct aid to civic groups as one potential mechanism, but also offered other ideas. For example in Egypt, cognizant of the non-transparent nature of the new U.S.-Egypt Strategic Dialogue initiative, participants called on the U.S. to involve civil society, together with government officials, in a broad new dialogue about the importance of upcoming elections. Implicit in their recommendations is the idea that non-governmental leaders are natural partners of American policymakers intent on encouraging democratic reforms. They expect that any sincere effort to support democratization will include these proponents of reform alongside political leaders who have a vested interest in the status quo.

In sharp contrast to the oft-cited narrative in Washington, participants in all three countries were clear in their call for the U.S. to pay *greater* attention to upcoming elections. This may be tied to their greater comfort with U.S. engagement under President Obama than under President Bush. It may also have to do with the political calendar: important elections are on the horizon that may have long-term ramifications, particularly in Egypt. Participants discussed the problem of undeserved praise for superficial reforms and problematic elections, and called on Washington to take serious steps to remedy this. Consider, for example, the strongly-worded language from the Jordan conference: “Recognize only elections considered free and fair.” In all three countries, participants highlighted the importance of election monitors. In Egypt and Jordan, participants asked the U.S. to push for international monitors. This is consistent with recent polling in Egypt showing that 63% wanted international observers to monitor elections.¹ In Lebanon, participants asked the U.S. to support domestic monitors. In no case did participants support negatively conditioning aid, threatening aid cuts to non-reformers. However, in Jordan participants called for positive conditionality: offering greater aid if the country meets key benchmarks, including passage of a new electoral law that provides for more fair, representative districts.

Participants implicitly and explicitly encouraged the U.S. to support the construction of a fair playing field, rather than one tilted toward any particular side. This was particularly true in Lebanon, where participants found time after time that consensus could only be reached in recommendations aimed at strengthening the Lebanese state as a whole. This offers an important lesson for U.S. policymakers, who often fail to note that policies aimed at strengthening only liberals actually serve to divide constituencies for reform. In focusing on institutions and processes, participants highlighted the importance of reforms to create political space (anti-terrorism, press, civil society, and free assembly provisions), others that would deter fraud (election monitoring), and still others intended to make politics more responsive (a redistricting initiative). In one case, participants explicitly encouraged U.S. officials to reach out equally to all parties, a theme that was raised also under Religious Freedom.

In all three countries, participants highlighted the importance of civic education initiatives. They suggested that these be aimed at training voters to think critically and to participate fully, but also – in the case of Jordan and Lebanon – to understand elections in the context of a single national identity. However, participants took care to emphasize that this work should be executed through partnerships with local actors.

¹ WorldPublicOpinion.org, “Egyptian Public to Greet Obama With Suspicion,” June 3, 2009

Recommendations:

Amman

1. Condition U.S. assistance based on human rights and political development indicators. The National Agenda recommendations offer an important starting point for those indicators, including its recommendations for passage of an election law that would, *“Eliminate the current closed districts and other appropriations (quota) systems, and divide the Kingdom into electoral districts along demographic, geographic and social lines, ensuring fair representation of the country’s regions.”* The U.S. should take care not to bully the Jordanian parliament, but should **use aid in order to incentivize and support reforms** to the civil society law, the press and publications law, the public gatherings law, and the political parties law.
2. **Increase funding to mechanisms like MEPI that direct aid to civil society** organizations rather than steering money through official bilateral assistance.
3. Work to enhance aid effectiveness by strengthening **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure that funds are directed towards achieving the goals for which they were given. This will also enhance the credibility and legitimacy of local civil society organizations. The U.S. should also work to enhance coordination with European donors.
4. **Focus greater attention on elections.** Strongly encourage the government of Jordan to accept international election observers. Increase democracy aid for election-related activities, including training local monitors, voter education, and “get out the vote” activities. Recognize only elections considered free and fair.
5. Sponsor **voter education activities** aimed at strengthening national identity and civic education, reframing democracy as a means to build security for the country, and enhancing the credibility of election monitors.

Beirut

6. **Approach Lebanon with a balanced policy** that benefits the Lebanese society by encouraging peaceful political participation among different Lebanese communities, aiming to reach the common ground necessary to build a solid bilateral relationship and a brighter future.
7. Support the **state, its sovereignty, and the rule of law.**
8. Support civic education programs, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, **that promote active citizenship**, a culture of democracy, and national identity among the Lebanese population, focusing particular attention on two new incoming electoral demographics: 18 to 21-year olds and expatriates.
9. **Support local Lebanese electoral organizations** in their work, together with the Ministry of Interior, to encourage a good environment for free and fair elections. These include exchanging best practices and lessons learned, together with the EU, and supporting technical assistance efforts.

Cairo

10. **Prioritize the issue of elections in an open, coordinated and ongoing dialogue** at all levels of government and with the Egyptian people, with a special focus on the 2010 and 2011 parliamentary and presidential elections. Start this as soon as possible.
11. Support international, domestic, and independent **election monitoring** in Egypt.
12. Support, through training and financial assistance, civil society organizations working on issues of **civic awareness** at all levels in the Egyptian educational system, particularly to promote a culture of political participation and critical thinking skills.
13. Push for reform of **anti-terrorism laws** through diplomatic pressure on the Egyptian government and support for civil society organizations that are working to end emergency law, enhance freedom of expression, and shape the anti-terrorism law that is currently being debated. This will be important for creating political space in the lead-up to the upcoming elections.
14. **Engage with all elements of the Egyptian political spectrum**, including Islamists and other opposition groups.

Religious Freedom

“People in every country should be free to choose and live their faith based upon the persuasion of the mind, heart, and soul. This tolerance is essential for religion to thrive.”

President Barack Obama in Cairo, June 4, 2009.

The second human dignity goal President Obama raised in his Cairo speech, and the second topic of our discussions, was Religious Freedom. Public opinion polling has demonstrated that, contrary to popular views, the beliefs of people in majority Muslim states about the appropriate dividing lines between church and state are similar to those held by Americans. For most, religion is an important part of their daily lives; they believe that scripture should be a source of legislation, but they oppose the idea of religious authorities governing. Like Americans, they believe strongly in the importance of religious liberties including both freedom from government interference in, or discrimination on the basis of, the private practice of one’s faith as well as the freedom of religious persons to engage in public debates on the basis of their moral convictions. They are also concerned with the freedom of religious persons to publicly debate various interpretations of their faith. In repressive political environments, and particularly in societies where the state proclaims itself as a guardian over religious institutions, this latter freedom is especially salient.

In the context of this broad set of concerns, U.S. policy on religious freedom is often criticized for focusing narrowly on the freedom of religious minorities to practice their faith. Rather than supporting the emergence of broader protections and reforms, U.S. policy too often devolves into a focus on individual cases of persecution, particularly against Christians. The centerpiece of American policy on religious freedom is the annual country reports authored by the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) in the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), which catalogs abuses. This narrow focus is all the more unfortunate because, as the President highlighted in Cairo, the United States offers compelling lessons to societies still working to find a balance between deep religious convictions and pluralistic politics.

In our conferences, participants sharply objected to U.S. practice relating to religious freedom, but instead of calling for an end to the IRF office and its reports they argued that its mandate should be expanded to focus on a) freedom of political participation by religious persons and b) the freedom of independent religious debate and institutional life, in addition to c) the freedom of individual practice. They recommended additional reforms: assessments should make greater use of objective benchmarks, rather than regional comparisons, and should be completed independently from political channels.

Participants also urged American policymakers to gain a better understanding of Islam and political actors with a religious frame of reference. This relative lack of knowledge was a frequent point in their discussions, particularly in Jordan, where participants viewed the development of working political parties as a central priority. They called on Washington to accept moderate Islamists on an equal plane with other political groups, to make efforts to learn about the distinctions between Islamist groups, and to adjust democracy assistance programs to better fit the circumstances of Muslim-majority countries.

Participants supported a number of interfaith dialogue initiatives aimed at preventing conflicts and advancing democratic pluralism. This was particularly important to those in Lebanon. In Cairo, participants suggested an online platform for fostering dialogue between groups might be a compelling way to encourage tolerance.

Finally, participants had very interesting discussions on the question of, in American parlance, “Church and State.” In both Egypt and Jordan, participants were deeply concerned about the corrosive impact of authoritarian governments on religious institutions. Following sustained debate, they recommended that the U.S. work quietly to support the independence of those institutions. In Lebanon, participants cited the importance of making marriage licensing by the state independent of religion. These participants were explicitly not arguing for what they termed “forceful secularism” or the prohibition of religious frames of reference in political life. Rather, they called for American engagement to promote the independence of religious and state institutions.

Recommendations:

Amman

1. Ensure that the U.S. differentiates between Islamist movements and parties that espouse violence and those that do not. **Increase understanding of Islamist parties** and movements in the U.S. by facilitating visits from Islamist actors to the US to speak with policy makers and civil society leaders. U.S. diplomats, members of Congress, and governance programs should engage all political forces that do not employ violence, including Islamists and religious minorities, ensuring equal opportunities for all.
2. Continue publishing the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) religious freedom reports but address in those reports not only the ability to practice freely but also the **political participation of all persons regardless of religious beliefs**.
3. Establish **independent benchmarks** to assess the state of religious freedom and inclusion in each country, rather than focusing on intra-regional comparisons.
4. The U.S. government should seek to further the concept that a separation of religious and state institutions **does not equate to forceful secularism**. Instead, this separation creates a space to choose how to incorporate religion in one’s life and implies respect for diversity of beliefs. The U.S. should encourage dialogue among Arab political and religious leaders regarding the problematic tendency of authoritarian states to speak on behalf of religion.
5. Consider ways to **adjust party-strengthening programs** to better fit the context of Muslim-majority societies like Jordan. Funds could be channeled to a Jordanian NGO, selected through a competitive process, to host political party training. Having a training opportunity hosted by a Jordanian NGO would be more feasible politically for Islamist parties. The U.S. could also facilitate opportunities for Islamist political party leaders to go on study trips to meet and exchange lessons with other non-violent Islamist parties (e.g. AKP in Turkey).

Beirut

6. Promote **youth-to-youth exchanges** between the U.S. and Middle East to promote inter-faith dialogue.
7. Create an **interfaith council based in Beirut**, with representatives from Middle East and North African religious communities to engage with and discuss religious freedom and inclusion, and promote respect for religious sites.
8. Continue to support—through funding and technical assistance—civil society organizations that promote **inter-cultural dialogue and reconciliation**, facilitating a culture of understanding among different religious groups across the country.
9. The U.S. should work and provide expertise with the UN and EU to support Lebanon in its efforts to implement a system of **administrative de-centralization** that is suited to the Lebanese case and works to diminish religious tensions and sectarian clashes, rather than increasing such tensions.
10. Support civil society organizations that urge the Lebanese government to implement the legal status of **civil marriage** as an option for all Lebanese citizens.

Cairo

11. Avoid focusing on **particular religious minorities**; instead, treat the issue of religious freedom consistently and as a human rights issue. Establish consistent and comprehensive standards on violations or incidents against freedoms of religious expression. Separate the writing of the report from State Department political channels.
12. In an effort to **build political tolerance**, the U.S. should support forums for various political and civic organizations, including youth organizations—including those with religious frames of reference and secular groups—to participate with each other and exchange ideas, for example conferences, networks, and citizenship programs. **Online “Civil Society 2.0”** initiatives should be an important part of this effort.
13. Provide assistance and support for Egyptian NGOs working for the **independence of public religious education and public religious institutions**. Encourage through official bilateral discussions between the U.S. and Egypt the independence of religious institutions and their financial resources to protect against collusion between politics and religion. This encourages religious moderation, a necessary step to counter radicalization and terrorism.
14. The United States should avoid acceding to **efforts by Egyptian government leaders to use Islamist political action** to avoid addressing political reform issues.

The Rights of Women

“Our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons, and our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity – men and women – to reach their full potential.”

President Barack Obama in Cairo, June 4, 2009.

The third focus of the Cairo speech and of our conferences was Women’s Rights. As the President acknowledged, this is a controversial issue in the Middle East, where conservative politics have long accorded women a secondary role in public life. However, while political institutions may be slow to catch up, the basic principles of gender equality enjoy broad popular support. In recent multi-country polls in the Middle East, vast majorities said that men and women should enjoy equal rights, that governments should prevent gender discrimination, and that women should make their own choices for whom to vote. At the same time, there is a growing understanding in the region that investments in education for girls and women can pay dividends for broader indices of national development.

The United States has been active in its support for women’s rights in the Middle East, a point not lost on our conference participants. Among other programs, the last administration sponsored large-scale trainings for female candidates for political office. The Obama administration has made clear that support for women’s empowerment will be a key foreign policy priority globally. The U.S. recently appointed an Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues, Melanne Verwee. In his Cairo speech, President Obama announced support for literacy and microfinance initiatives aimed at empowering girls and young women in the Middle East. There are also reports that the administration seeks to launch a regional gender institute with a mandate to conduct research and award grants. These are important initiatives that enjoy significant support; however, what appears missing in the Obama administration’s approach is support for the political rights of women. Vocal support for women’s political rights may be controversial, but the administration can nonetheless support these goals through targeted aid programs and broad support for political rights and freedoms, regardless of gender. In the absence of significant political reforms, women in most Middle Eastern countries will remain dependent on corrupt political systems controlled almost entirely by men.

Our conference participants called for Washington to expand its focus on women’s rights. In the words of the Cairo participants, “U.S. programming related to women’s rights and empowerment should be broadened from its current focus on economic and microfinance initiatives to include mechanisms for supporting women’s social and political empowerment.” Participants offered a wide variety of recommendations for how the U.S. could partner with governments and societies to advance these goals, including through public education campaigns, trainings for female leaders, judicial reform, and police training.

In their discussions, participants noted successful U.S. efforts to train female candidates for office. They called for additional programs aimed at training women in the skills to engage successfully in public affairs – as voters, candidates, and elected officials. In some cases, participants called for initiatives and reforms that would improve the capacity of men and

women alike, arguing that the best way to support women's political empowerment was to expand the pool of resources available for all.

Participants focused significant attention on the importance of initiatives that continuously educate individuals – children and adults, men and women, civilians and public officials – about the rights of women. These include initiatives to educate children, citizens, and police about the rights of women. Participants also advocated training women to understand their own rights and to encourage them to engage effectively in public affairs. In addition, participants in Beirut recommended that the U.S. support the creation of new women's studies programs at universities.

Finally, two recommendations highlighted the value of shelters for women. In Lebanon and Egypt, participants called for the U.S. to support shelters that would offer refuge and legal advice to female victims of abuse.

Recommendations:

Amman

1. Fund effective local women's associations and non-governmental organizations. Target programs for funding that familiarize Jordanians and specifically women with their **rights and resources**.
2. USAID programs should work to **teach children about gender**, incorporating into curricula ideas of gender equality in all roles of society. USAID should assist with the establishment of a small number of new integrated public schools in Amman. Other opportunities for early teaching include children's media (TV) and programs like the CIVITAS program, which teach kids to analyze civic problems.
3. Push for further programming to educate women on both **campaigns and elections**, as well as how to be effective after winning **elected office**.
4. USAID should fund continuous **police training** and training for other local law enforcement officials on women's rights and protections to ensure more effective implementation of these laws.

Beirut

5. Support **partnerships between American and Lebanese NGOs** working on human rights for women and gender equality, with a particular focus on judicial reform, women's access to the legal system, training judges on women's rights, and raising awareness about civil law within religious communities.
6. The US should set an example at home and abroad. American companies and organizations working in Lebanon should implement **U.S. employment norms, customs, and benefits** related to gender equality— for all employees.
7. Help fund and sustain the establishment of **shelters and counseling** for women suffering from domestic violence, rape, forced marriage, and any other form of abuse.

8. The U.S. embassy in Lebanon should financially support the creation of **women's and gender studies programs** in American and non-American universities in Lebanon, including scholarships for students.
9. Support career counseling and capacity-building programs for women in Lebanon through initiatives such as financing **career centers** at universities to host workshops that enhance women's qualifications and women-oriented incentives in the workforce such as resume writing, networking, interviewing skills, and balancing family life and career.

Cairo

10. U.S. programming related to women's rights and empowerment **should be broadened from its current focus on economic and microfinance initiatives** to include mechanisms for supporting women's social and political empowerment. The U.S. should work to enhance these programs' effectiveness and coordination with local needs assessments, and should endeavor to follow the lead of independent Egyptian women's organizations.
11. Offer **training to encourage the greater participation of women in public affairs**, including trainings for female candidates, members of parliament, and voters in order to improve the quality of women's involvement. To sustain this kind of technical support, support organizations working to provide technical assistance to all parliamentarians, male and female. Parliamentary exchanges between American and Egyptian female lawmakers should also be encouraged.
12. Work quietly with local NGOs to build **abuse shelters that offer legal advice**, and provide legal fellowships for Egyptian and American law students, lawyers, and other professionals to provide support within these shelters on a pro bono basis.
13. Encourage a **reorientation of women's rights aid toward Upper Egypt** and the other provinces.
14. Help provide **opportunities for female students** to enroll in primary school through secondary schools and onwards. In addition, help to improve the quality of education for men and women.

Human Development

“And while America in the past has focused on oil and gas in this part of the world, we now seek a broader engagement.... Americans are ready to join with citizens and governments; community organizations, religious leaders, and businesses in Muslim communities around the world to help our people pursue a better life.”

President Barack Obama in Cairo, June 4, 2009.

The final topic of our conference discussions was Human Development. One of the foremost challenges facing the Middle East today is the need to create jobs for its growing young population. A 2003 World Bank study argued that the Middle East and North Africa would need to create 100 million jobs over the next 20 years to staunch existing unemployment and create opportunities for new entrants into the workforce.² Youth bulges, as witnessed in the region today, can be powerful drivers of economic growth because they increase the size of the pool of productive workers and lower rates of dependency. However, in the absence of economic opportunities, high numbers of educated, unemployed youth can also contribute to political instability. Middle Eastern governments have sometimes exacerbated these problems by creating large numbers of unproductive public sector jobs in efforts to stave off short-term frustrations or extend political patronage.

The Obama administration has shown the first signs of a robust new effort to support human development in the Middle East. Under the rubric of “broader engagement,” President Obama announced in Cairo that his administration would pursue initiatives to support education through exchange programs and new online initiatives, economic development by creating a corps of business volunteers and hosting an entrepreneurship summit, science and technology by appointing new science envoys and funding centers of scientific excellence, and health by launching a new initiative with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. These are exciting ideas focused on key priorities. They may not have a near-term impact on job creation, as administration officials have sometimes implied; for that, far-reaching policy adjustments are needed from regional governments. However, they can have an impact by pointing the way in positive directions, and influencing public perceptions about American intentions. Now the task for the administration will be to translate those ideas into actions.

The recommendations in this section were perhaps most interesting for the priorities they imply. As a first example, participants in all three countries highlighted corruption as a key concern under the heading of development. They believe that addressing the political roots of economic stagnation is central to advancing the development of individual citizens in the region. To address this problem, they recommended initiatives to increase the capacity of regulatory bodies and raise transparency by strengthening domestic media. They also

² *Unlocking the Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank, 2003.

suggested direct aid to sectors and municipalities that meet high standards of performance and transparency.

Participants also focused significant attention on youth employment. As discussed above, this represents a fundamental challenge for regional governments, and no one understands this better than young people. In Jordan, participants offered a long list of efforts to stimulate investment and entrepreneurship, as well as tailored exchange programs designed to develop future Jordanian entrepreneurs. In Egypt, they recommended targeted investment in green energy industries.

Many were also concerned with ensuring that economic development was conceived with broader social benefits in mind. In Lebanon and Egypt, participants called for steps to be taken to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach all sectors of society. In Egypt, participants made the further recommendation that long-term planning be encouraged through a cooperative process involving government officials together with civil society leaders.

Conference participants raised the issue of war and conflict as a significant barrier to regional development. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a major point of discussion, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, with participants raising concerns about its impact on various aspects of domestic political and economic development. Some noted that the conflict is used as an excuse for states to avoid opening up political space, while others agreed that a direct relationship exists between the resolution of the conflict and progress toward development. The ongoing conflict not only draws attention away from political reform questions, but also leads to an overemphasis on security that crowds out investments in human development. For many, the conflict increased their sense of distrust of Western efforts to promote development.

Participants also highlighted the issue of refugees as a key development priority. Palestinian and Iraqi refugees are a major issue in Lebanon and particularly in Jordan. Participants in both countries urged greater U.S. attention and financial support for addressing refugee-related issues. Participants discussed these issues with an eye toward supporting poverty reduction and human security for refugees, but also the long-term economic development of their societies as a whole. Particularly in Jordan, refugees are seen as a drain on public resources and the large Jordanian population of Palestinian origin is a source of social and political tension. This, in turn, has been used by the state to stifle equal representation and participation.

Recommendations:

Amman

1. Recognize the important relationship between the just resolution of the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict** and Jordanian development, while at the same time urging parallel progress toward political reform.
2. Energetically support Jordanian efforts to deal with the domestic **water** crisis through measures that meet environmental standards.
3. Increase funding to alleviate the burden of the **refugee** problem in Jordan, potentially through UN agencies.

4. Support programs that focus on increasing **youth employment**, including: foreign direct investment, microfinance, micro-entrepreneurship, small business development projects, and training programs targeting youth. The U.S. should also support study abroad programs that encourage Jordanians to return to their country to utilize their newly gained skills.
5. Address issues of **corruption** by increasing funding for training for regulatory bodies and supporting increased investigative capacity of domestic media to uncover corruption. Include local actors (civil society, tribal leaders, local governments) when allocating aid to ensure it targets the most pressing needs of Jordanian society.

Beirut

6. The U.S., with the cooperation of local NGOs and international organizations, should continue to support sustainable **economic development** to fight the growing disparity in income levels through rural, small and medium enterprise, and microfinance projects.
7. Support the Lebanese government's efforts in **security reform** by providing greater assistance to promote the internal security forces, the Ministry of Defense, and the army as institutions. Focus on training, strengthening, and equipping the ISF and LAF. The training should focus on internal security issues such as counterterrorism, crowd control, and emergency preparedness.
8. Promote a **bottom-up approach** to development by allowing local actors to contribute to project design of development programs. Direct U.S. aid toward municipalities in order to promote accountability within programs and elected officials, encourage people to hold the municipality responsible, and bypass traditional lines of patronage. Create a "checks and balance" system, together with the government of Lebanon, so that underperforming programs and municipalities can be held accountable.
9. More work is needed to address the **Palestinian refugee** problem in Lebanon. The U.S. should pressure UNRWA to improve its services, improve protection, and increase transparency. In addition, the U.S. should fund the rehabilitation of refugee camps, support UN resolutions, promote Lebanese recognition of social and economic rights of refugees in Lebanon, and promote the rule of law in Palestinian camps, including such measures as popular community elections and community policing.

Cairo

10. Channel U.S. aid to government agencies and sectors that meet a good governance standard of **transparency and accountability**.
11. The United States' economic aid programs and its approach to economic reform should **emphasize human development rather than merely economic growth** and should be assessed based on the impacts of economic reforms on people in all levels of society.
12. The U.S. government should encourage the Egyptian government to draft a **long-term strategic plan** for human and economic development, with benchmarks that take a rights-based approach, and to include civil society in the drafting process.
13. Promote a social campaign that aims to increase **public health**. This should focus on the slums, where low living standards tend to exacerbate pre-existing problems.

14. Focus on creating **jobs for youth** by working with local non-governmental partners to invest in and build solar and wind farms (as well as other sectors where Egypt has a comparative advantage), as these will provide construction and engineering jobs, diversify the job market, and supply additional sources of energy.
-

15. *Two versions of the following resolution were debated during the discussions of Human Development at the Beirut conference. Each was backed by many but neither received sufficient support (majority support from both Western and Middle Eastern participants). Pursuant to our commitment to participants, we include these for your reference:*

- a. *Support Lebanese territorial sovereignty. The international community, including the U.S., should work in support of the Lebanese government's efforts to secure its borders and stop the flow of weapons. Two issues should be pursued in tandem: the international community should insist on demilitarization of all illegal weaponry, while at the same time all diplomatic means, including conditioning aid, should be employed to urge Israel to respect UNSC Resolutions 425 and 1701, end the occupation of Southern Lebanon, and halt penetration of Lebanese airspace and violations of its telecommunications system and water resources.*
- b. *All Lebanese are aspiring for a sovereign, democratic, and peaceful Lebanon. In that regard, the United States should use all peaceful diplomatic means in conjunction with the international community and the United Nations to stop 1) external violations that threaten Lebanon's sovereignty and manipulation of its resources, that includes strongly implementing UN resolutions 1701 and 425, thus stopping Israel's violations and stopping foreign interference in Lebanese affairs; and 2) internal threats by encouraging and supporting the Lebanese government, disarming all groups with illegal weapons, and securing Lebanon's borders.*

Putting the Recommendations in Context

Are these recommendations representative of the Middle East? Is there support in the region for the “new way forward”? Public opinion data from the Middle East provide cautious optimism that the Obama administration can improve the badly battered image of the U.S. in the Middle East. A 2009 poll from the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development shows that on average of 45% of respondents in each country has a favorable view of President Obama.³ In some Middle Eastern countries, such as Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, majorities held positive views of Obama shortly after his election.⁴ Similarly, data from the Pew Global Attitudes project show 42% of respondents in Lebanon and 46% of respondents in Egypt have confidence that Obama “will do the right thing in world affairs.”⁵

Nevertheless, it is important to make clear that more favorable views of Obama are based on expectations of improvements in U.S. foreign policy. While Sadat Chair data show that 51% of respondents are hopeful that the Obama administration will implement positive changes in the region, 77% of respondents nevertheless believe the U.S. is a threat. In addition, Pew data show that only 15% of respondents in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon believe the U.S. has a positive influence in their country.

Following this relatively positive reaction in the Middle East to President Obama, polling data from majority Muslim countries demonstrate that the four human dignity areas

the president outlined in Cairo have broad support throughout the Muslim world. They also demonstrate the policies the Obama administration can implement to improve the image of the United States in the Muslim world. Polling data make four points in these areas. First, Muslims overwhelmingly support democracy and women’s rights. Troublingly, they do not believe the U.S. is serious about helping them achieve the former. Second, views on the role of religion in politics in majority Muslim countries in many ways are similar to those in the U.S. Third, while political institutions have in some cases been slow to catch up, publics show broad support for women’s rights and equality. Finally, significant U.S. help with economic development in the Middle East could greatly improve the image of the U.S. in the region.

Democracy

Support for democracy is high in majority Muslim countries. The Arab Barometer Survey of five countries shows that 63% think that Islam and democracy are compatible.⁶ Only 23% said they are not. The same poll shows that 86% of respondents think that democracy is the best form of government and 90% think it would be good for their country. Moreover, support for civil liberties is strong. In a Gallup poll of nine countries, 89% of respondents said that they would like to see freedom of speech in their country’s constitution.⁷ In addition, a World Public Opinion poll of seven countries found that

³ Sadat Chair countries are Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

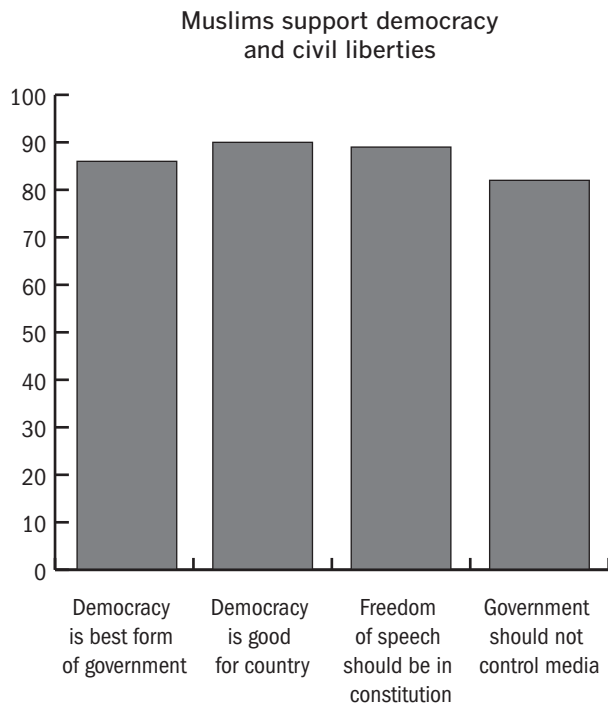
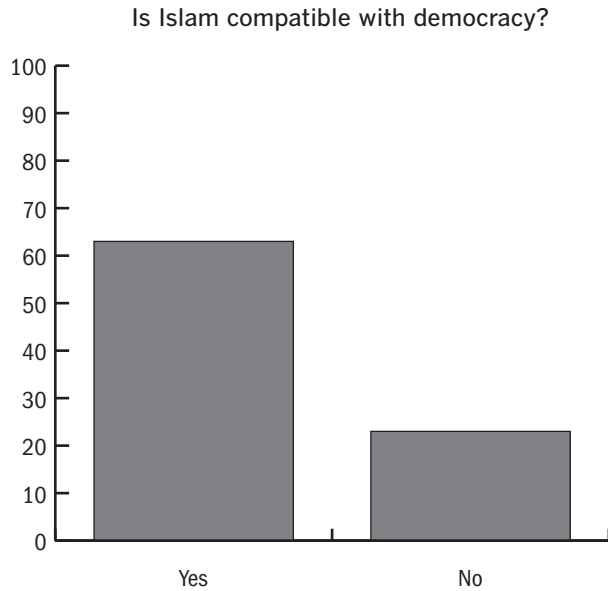
⁴ Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, 2009 (conducted April-May 2009).

⁵ Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2009.

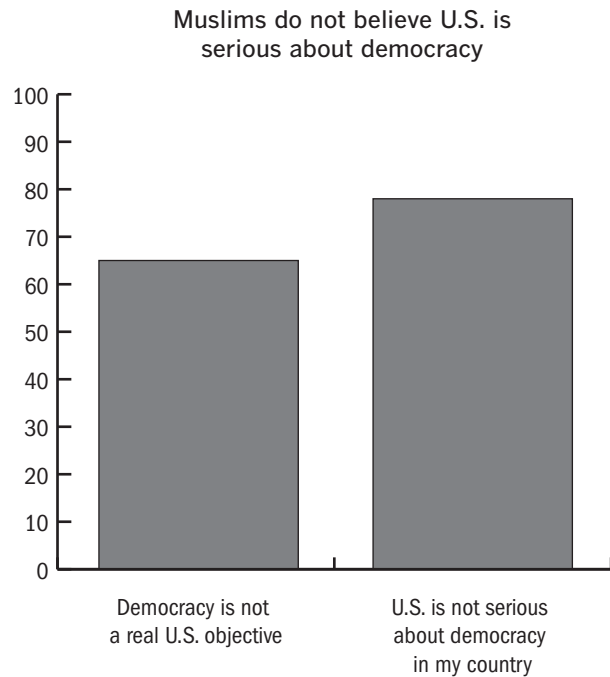
⁶ Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Palestine. Arab Barometer, 2006.

⁷ Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey. Gallup, 2006.

82% believe the government should not control the media.⁸



Data also make clear that individuals in the Middle East do not believe that the U.S. government is serious about fostering democracy. In a Sadat Chair for Peace and Development public opinion poll, 65% of respondents in six countries believe that democracy is not an important U.S. foreign policy objective.⁹ Similarly, a seven-country Gallup poll survey found that 78% of respondents did not agree that the U.S. is serious about establishing democracy in the Middle East.¹⁰



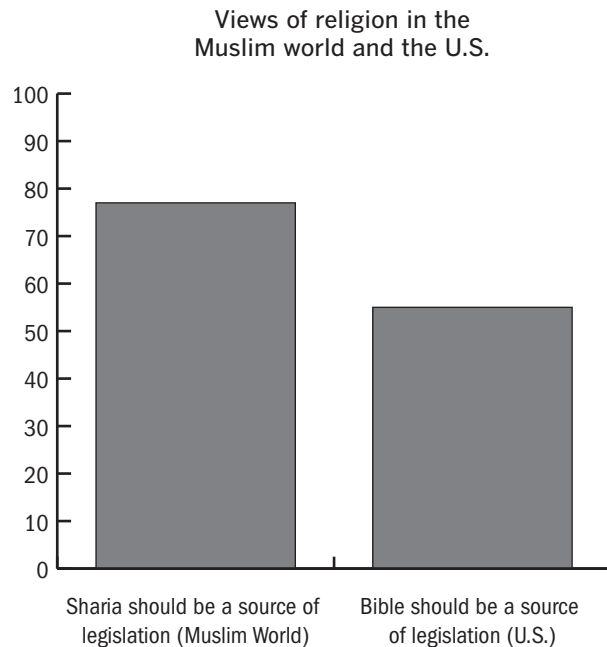
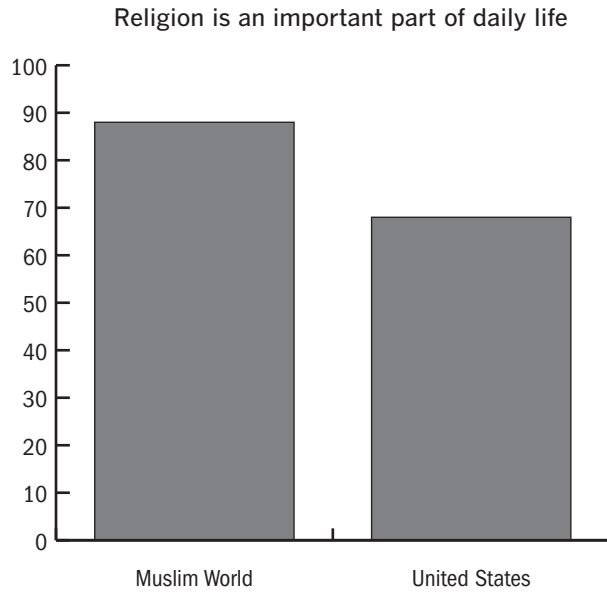
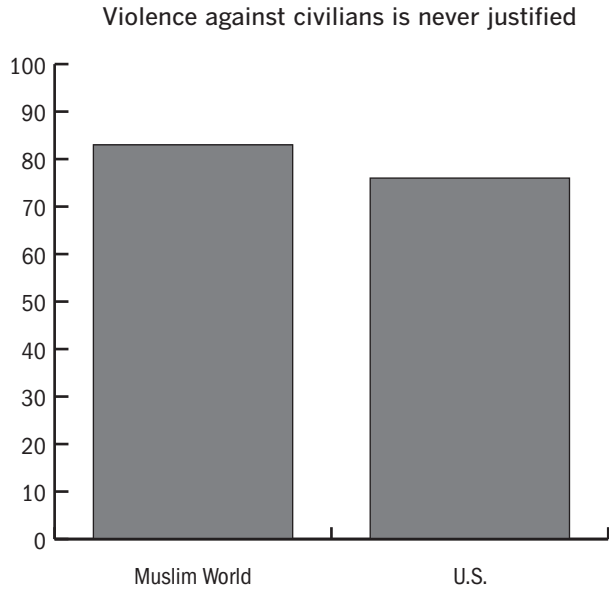
Finally, it is crucially important to point out that support for terrorism is very low in majority Muslim countries. In a nine-country Gallup poll in the Middle East, 83% of respondents said intentionally targeting and killing civilians is never justified while only 76% of U.S. respondents agreed with

⁸ Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, and Turkey. World Public Opinion, 2008.

⁹ Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, 2008.

¹⁰ Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia. Gallup, 2008.

this statement.¹¹ The Pew Global Public Attitudes Project also found miniscule support for terrorism in most Muslim countries. When asked whether terrorism is justified, just 4% of respondents in Turkey, 15% in Egypt, 12% in Jordanian, and 5% in Pakistan said yes.



Religious Freedom

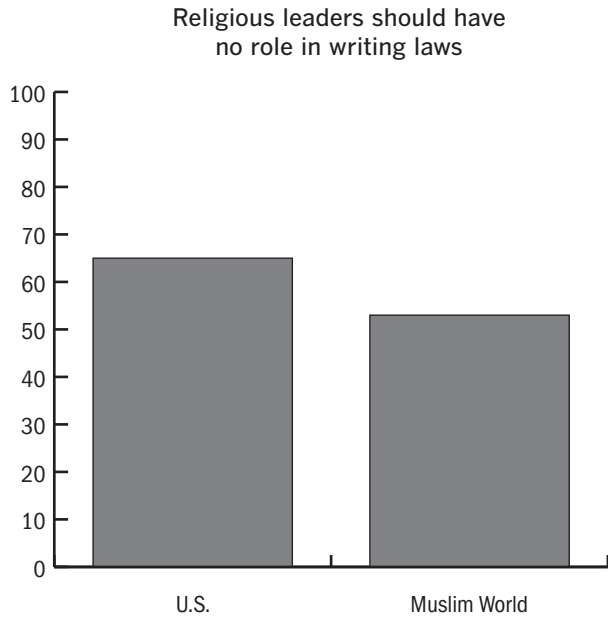
Surprisingly, views on religion in the Muslim world and in the U.S. share a number of similarities. Most Muslims, like most people in the United States, say that religion is an important part of their daily lives. In a Gallup poll, 88% of Muslims in 12 countries agreed with this question, while 68% did in the United States.¹² In addition, a Gallup poll of five countries found that 77% think Sharia – Islamic principals and rules – should inform legislation, while 56% of respondents in the U.S. said the bible should be a source of legislation.¹³

¹¹ Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yemen. Gallup 2009.

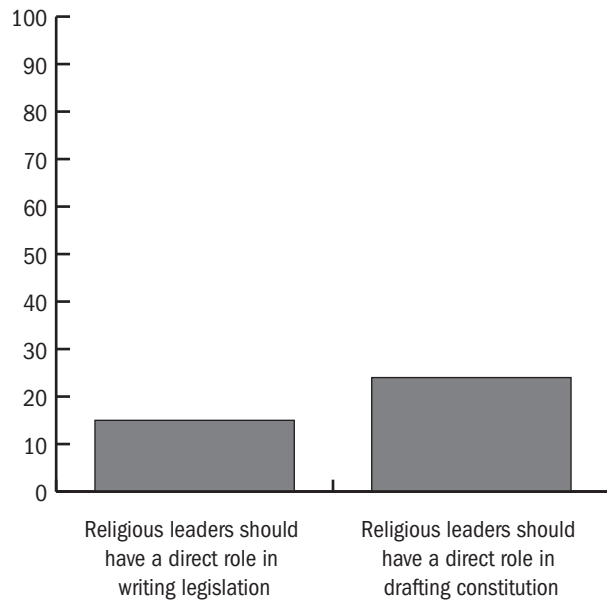
¹² Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE. Gallup 2006.

¹³ Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, and Turkey. Gallup 2007.

As in the U.S., however, a belief that religion should serve as a basis for legislation does not mean that Muslims want religious authorities to govern. In the Gallup poll just cited, 53% of respondents from majority Muslim countries said that religious authorities should have no role *at all* in writing legislation and 65% of respondents from the U.S. agreed with this statement. Support for theocracy is extremely low in the region as well. In the Gallup polls cited above, only 12% of Muslim respondents claim religious leaders should have a direct role in writing legislation and just 23% believe these authorities should have a direct role in writing their country's constitution.



Little support for theocracy in Muslim world



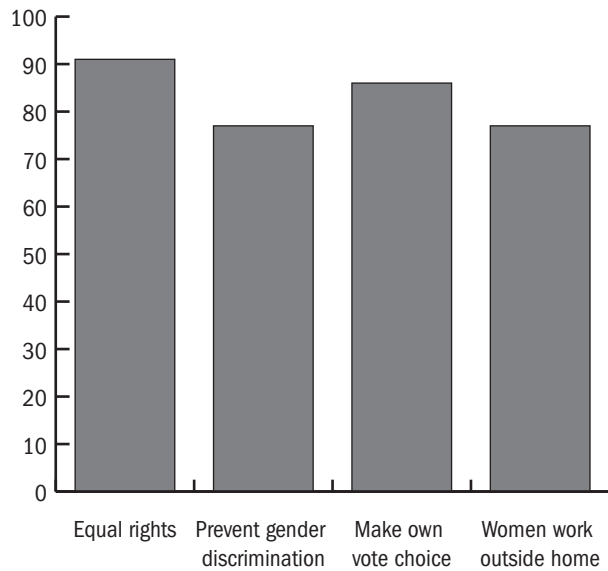
Women's Rights

Data from a diverse range of polling organizations and countries shows that support for women's equality is strong in the region. In a World Public Opinion poll of six majority Muslim countries, 91% of respondents agreed that men and women should have equal rights.¹⁴ Another World Public Opinion poll of the same countries found that 77% believe their government should prevent gender discrimination. Moreover, a Gallup poll of eight countries finds that 86% of respondents believe women should make their own choices for whom to vote.¹⁵ Finally, the Arab Barometer poll cited above found that 77% believe married women should be allowed to work outside the home.

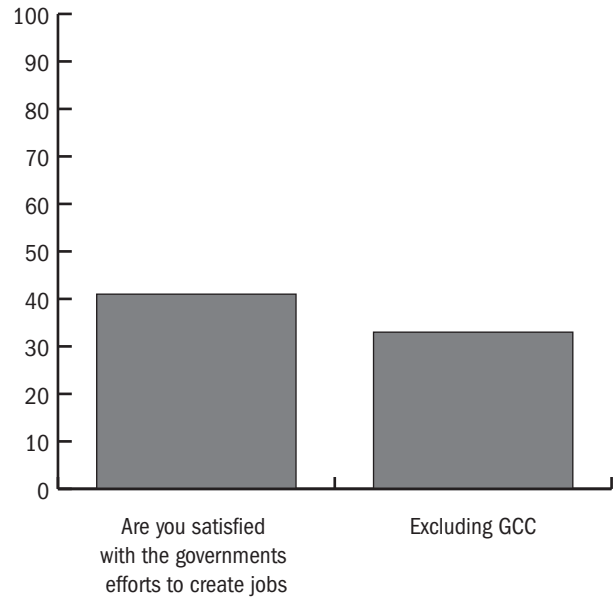
¹⁴ Azerbaijan, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Palestine, and Turkey. World Public Opinion 2008.

¹⁵ Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Gallup 2005.

Support for women's equality is high



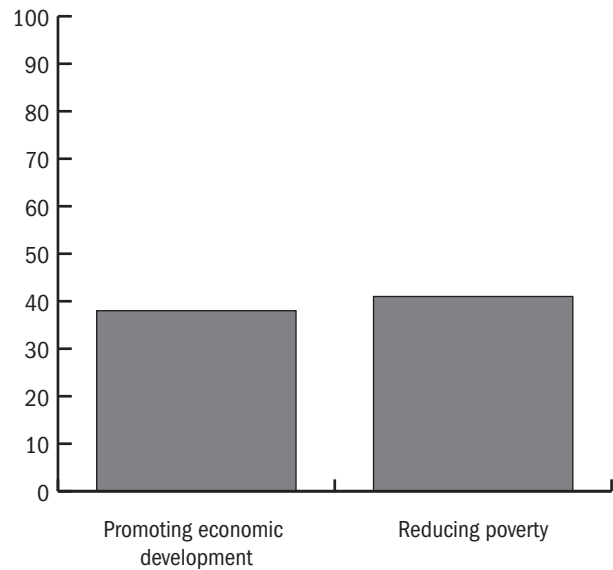
Satisfaction with the economy is low



Development

Finally, development is an important concern, especially among youth. In particular, they are very dissatisfied with their government's efforts to create jobs. In a poll among youth in 19 Muslim majority countries, only 41% were satisfied with their government's efforts in this area.¹⁶ Excluding the comparatively wealthy countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, only 33% were satisfied. Facilitating economic development in the region would greatly improve the image of the U.S. in the Middle East. In a Gallup poll of ten countries in the Middle East, 38% of respondents agreed that promoting economic development would very significantly improve their image of the U.S. and 41% claimed that reducing poverty would achieve this outcome.¹⁷

Actions that would very significantly improve image of the United States



¹⁶ Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somaliland, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen. Gallup 2009.

¹⁷ Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey. Gallup 2009.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Broad support exists in the Middle East for the human dignity goals President Obama raised in his speech in Cairo: democracy, religious freedom, women's rights, and economic development. However, agreement on policies does not mean that the administration has changed the image of the U.S. in a positive way in the Middle East. Far from it, as the region's enduring skepticism about American policy makes clear. The U.S. benefits from a president who has captured the attention and interest of youth in the Middle East. However, actions will be required to durably improve their image of the U.S. The Obama administration can take actions in three areas to secure this important objective:

- *Engage on democracy, religious freedom, and women's rights.* Like our conference participants, vast majorities in the Middle East want democracy, religious freedom, and women's political rights. They also harbor deep suspicions about the U.S. playing a constructive role in helping them achieve these goals. The administration would find broad approval if it appeared to demonstrate a sustained commitment to helping local actors realize these objectives. So far, the administration has launched new initiatives in the area of development, but not on these other goals raised in the president's speech in Cairo: democracy, religious freedom, and women's rights.
- *Refine economic development policy.* Substantive improvements in education, entrepreneurship, and science and technology are important and could have a strong positive impact on perceptions of the United States. However, such improvements are unlikely in the absence of serious efforts to tackle corruption and political decay. Too often, economic opportunity in Middle Eastern countries is concentrated among a very small number of politically well-connected individuals. Addressing this problem requires political reforms that distribute economic opportunity more broadly, such as those to control corruption, improve adherence to the rule of law, and increase government transparency.
- *Engage with civil society.* In an era of broadening American interests, the U.S. can no longer afford to engage only with state officials. The U.S. will succeed in supporting human development in the Middle East only to the extent that it actively consults with the region's people to examine their individual aspirations and concerns. Seeking ideas from civic stakeholders, including NGOs, academics, business leaders, labor unions, and religious groups are thus crucial to developing successful policies. Unfortunately, the Obama administration's foreign policy has been characterized more by closed-door meetings with government officials than outreach to civil society in its first year. "Broader engagement" remains a promising idea unfulfilled.

The Obama administration is relatively young. It also had the misfortune of inheriting a number of crises, including Afghanistan, a flailing economy, and Iranian nuclear ambitions. It is easy to understand why Washington has had difficulty in launching new initiatives in support of the goals the President raised in Cairo. Yet, while the administration may wish to delay actions in these areas, individuals in the Middle East, including youth, are unlikely to view the delay in the same context. Instead, what they will observe is two speeches by the President making promises with little to no follow-up. With each passing day, the opportunity is fading. The administration needs to act sooner rather than later if it wants the "new way forward" to succeed.

Appendix

The Process: The 2009 Emerging Leaders Conferences in Amman, Beirut, and Cairo

POMED's third annual Middle East conferences were sponsored in partnership with the Muslim World Initiative of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Center for Democracy and Civil Society at Georgetown University, and with generous funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In an effort to attract a diverse group of participants, the application was available online in both Arabic and English. The conferences attracted nearly 1,000 applicants. In addition to submitting an essay, applicants were asked to list their educational, professional, volunteer, and civic achievements and associations and were then evaluated based on several criteria including: educational background, professional experience, knowledge of local issues, geographic diversity, and knowledge of U.S. foreign policy. For each conference, 15 American and 15 Arab applicants were chosen, with a few Europeans participating as well.

Each conference began with a welcoming dinner where participants were introduced to one another and hosts gave opening remarks. Participants were briefed on the following days' agenda and given an overview of the conference goals and expectations.

The first day of each conference began with a keynote address from a prominent local or U.S. government official, such as the Minister for Political Development in Jordan or the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon in Beirut. For the conference in Egypt, we encountered difficulty in securing such a keynote speaker; Andrew Albertson from POMED and Moataz El Fegiery from CIHRS gave opening remarks. This was followed by a "Setting the Scene" panel discussion led by experts on U.S. policy towards the region as well as local experts versed in the challenges and opportunities facing the domestic reform process. These two opening sessions provided an opportunity for participants to discuss key political challenges, recent local reform efforts, and domestic obstacles to progress, prior to embarking on a discussion of the role of external actors.

The remainder of the two days centered on the four themes of the conference: Democracy, Religious Freedom, Women's Rights, and Human Development. A 90-minute roundtable discussion was held on each of these themes, and local and American experts began by providing brief opening remarks on each topic. Participants had a chance to contribute their own thoughts, experiences, questions, and answers during these roundtables, highlighting the major domestic challenges and opportunities to be addressed in the recommendations.

Following each roundtable discussion, participants were divided into small groups for 45 minutes and asked to formulate 3-5 specific recommendations for U.S. policy makers to address the challenges raised earlier. The small size of the groups provided a better opportunity for intimate debate and sharing of experiences and expertise that were reflected in the recommendations.

At the end of each day, the recommendations for each theme were collected, consolidated, and presented to the whole group for debate and voting. Themes were then discussed and debated, and participants narrowed the lists down to five recommendations for each theme through an organized process that allowed for amendments and a final vote. Most decisions were made by consensus. No recommendation was passed if it was not supported by majorities of both Arab and American participants. In some cases, participants could agree on only four recommendations for a given theme.

During the concluding dinner, participants were asked to elect one American and one Arab representative from each conference to visit Washington and discuss the groups' recommendations with U.S. policymakers.

Local Partners

Amman, Jordan

The Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) was established in 1984 as an academic unit of the University of Jordan concerned mainly with research in the fields of regional conflicts, international relations and security. With the initiation of the country's democratization process in 1989, the center expanded its scope of activities to include planning and research in such new fields as democracy, political pluralism, the economy and the environment. Over the past few years, CSS has organized numerous conferences, seminars and workshops, and has conducted several opinion polls aimed at providing researchers and decision-makers with valuable material and data. The Public Opinion Polling Unit at CSS aims to provide information about Jordanian society based on scientific survey research. Since its establishment in 1993 the unit has conducted surveys in Jordan and the region and established partnerships with many international organizations, including the World Values Survey Organization. The unit has two major ongoing projects. The first evaluates the state of democracy in Jordan and the second measures expectations and performance of successive Jordanian governments.

<http://css-jordan.org>

Beirut, Lebanon

The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), a non-partisan not for profit research center established in 1989, has an extensive record of work in public policy. Although research and publication are central to the center's objectives, advocacy, training, and cooperative efforts are also a large part of the work of LCPS. While LCPS focuses on Lebanon the center does work throughout the Middle East and North Africa region. LCPS is concerned with a variety of issues including governance, elections, social and economic development, judicial reforms, and media reform.

<http://lcps-lebanon.org/>

Cairo, Egypt

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) is an independent regional non-governmental organization founded in 1993. It aims at promoting respect for the principles of human rights and democracy, analyzing the difficulties facing the application of International Human Rights Law and disseminating human rights culture in the Arab region as well as engaging in dialogue between cultures in respect to the various International Human Rights treaties and Declarations. CIHRS seeks to attain this objective through developing, proposing and promoting policies, legislations and Constitutional amendments. CIHRS works on human rights advocacy in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms, research and human rights education -both for youth and ongoing professional development for Human Rights Defenders. CIHRS publishes an annual report on the state of human rights in the Arab world, which has become an important resource for activists across the region.

<http://www.cihrs.org/english/>

Conference Speakers

Amman, Jordan

H.E. Musa Al-Maaytah, Jordanian Minister of Political Development
Ahmed Obeidat, Former Jordanian Prime Minister
Marc Lynch, George Washington University
Fahd Al-Khitani, Al Arab Al Youm Newspaper
Mohammad Arsalan, former member of Jordanian Parliament
Mahjoub Zweiri, Center for Strategic Studies at Jordan University
Yaser Abu-Hilaleh, Al-Jazeera
Rohile Gharaibeh, Islamic Action Front
Samer Shehata, Georgetown University
Amneh Al-Zubi, Jordan Women's Union
Ambar Renova, International Republican Institute
Fayiz Suyyagh, Center for Strategic Studies at Jordan University

Beirut, Lebanon

H.E. Michele Sison, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon
Karam Karam, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies
Myriam Catusse, Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO)
Michael Miller, Head of Politics Department, European Commission, Lebanon
Joe Hall, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Ziad Abdel-Samad, Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)
Maha Yahya, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Fadi Abi Allam, Permanent Peace Movement (PPM)
Hanan Saab, Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB)
Nahawand Kadri Issa, Lebanese University
Emir Hareth Chehab, General Secretary, Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee
Mohammad Al Sammak, Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee

Cairo, Egypt

Essam Shiha, Member of High Board & Legal Advisor, Wafd Party
Hisham Kasem, Egyptian Publisher & Human Rights Activist
Hussien Abdel-Razek, Journalist & Member of High Board, Tagamoa Party
Wael Nawara, Vice President, Ghad Party
Amr Al-Shobaky, Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies
George Ishak, Kefaya Movement
Michele Dunne, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Nabil Abdel Fattah, Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies
Adel Gendy, Writer & Activist
Shamil Idriss, Soliya
Karema Kamal, Writer and journalist
Mozn Hassan, Nazra for Feminist Studies
Hassan Nafaa, Cairo University
Stephen Everhart, American University in Cairo

Conference Participants

Amman, Jordan

Sadam Abuazam	National Center for Human Rights* ¹⁸
Enas Ajouz	American Bar Association
Mohammad Al-Azraq	Global Voices/Soliya Program
Mohammad Al-Khawaldah	Marsad Al-Insan
Abdelrazzaq Almuhtaseb	Jordan Center for Civil Education
Benjamin Balint	Hudson Institute
Sarah Sunn Bush	Princeton University
Philip Chambers	Damascus University
Nilanj Desai	International Solutions Group
Aida Es-Said	University of Exeter
Alison Fahey	Binational Fulbright Commission
Obaida Fares	Arab Foundation for Development & Citizenship
Daniel Halper	Foreign Policy Initiative
Anne Hamilton	Binational Fulbright Commission
Rand Irshaidat	University of York
Israa Ismadi	Youth Center
Pablo Kapusta	Georgetown University
Hadeel Khasawneh	International Republican Institute
David Linfield	Binational Fulbright Commission
Esraa Mahadin	Karak Hayat Center for Civil Society Development
Enam Malkawi	Worldlearning
Ashraf Mansour	Bremen University
Ambar Renova	International Republican Institute
Jessica Rosenblum	Rabinowitz/Dorf Communications
Hiba Taher	Internews Network
Dima Toukan	Academy for Educational Development
Amer Tubeishat	SUNY Legislative Strengthening Program
Saeed Nizar Uri	American University

Beirut, Lebanon

Gaby Abou Rjeily	Lebanese Forces Party
Maytha Alhassen	University of Southern California
Raghda Allouche	University of Balamand
Bruno Atieh	Center for Global Peace
Iman Azzi	American University of Cairo
Rola Badran	Palestinian Human Rights Organization
Lauren Banko	School of Oriental and African Studies
Karim Bayoud	Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections
Cole Bockenfeld	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Nezar Chaaban	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

¹⁸ In some cases, affiliations denote volunteer activities because participants prefer not to disclose their private company employer.

Ahmad Chamssedine	Lebanese Association for Human Rights
Ghadir El-Alayli	Université Saint Joseph
Karim El Mufti	La Sagesse University / Saint-Joseph University
Hiva Feizi	University of Southern California
Gerlinde Gerber	Realite-EU
Clint Hougen	School of Advanced International Studies- JHU
Khaled Kabbara	Center for Middle-Eastern Strategic Studies
Julius Krein	Foreign Policy Initiative
Farah Mahesri	Chemomics International
Soha Menassa	Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities
Rowaida Mroue	Lebanese Youth for Difference Society (LYDS)
Sarkees Nahas	University of Southern California
Joanna Nassar	St. Joseph University
Bernadette Naoum	Chemomics International
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Smaranda Sandulescu	Westminster University
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