

# Muslim Diversity: its challenges to U.S. policy\*

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Carrollton/Carroll County League of Women Voters  
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<http://adel.cs.westga.edu/leagueofwomenvoters/>

\*By “Bruce Stockes”

# Diversity

- Muslim countries/cultures are heterogeneous
- Muslim countries/cultures are diverse
- Islam span the globe, fastest growing religion
- Most Muslims live outside the middle-east
- Arabs are a small fraction of Muslims
- Most Muslims find 9/11 to be a horrifying act, & do not see association to Islam
- Image of the US has been changing & worsening among Muslims...

# Image of US among Muslims

- Image of US is at a low point among Muslims in Arab/Middle eastern countries
  - Recent events:
    - War on Terror
    - Iraq War
  - Past events:
    - Support of Israel
    - Support of dictators (including Saddam Hussein)
- Image spreading to other Muslim (non-Arab) countries

# Shared-American Values

- There is evidence of support of American values:
  - Role of religion in life
  - Democracy
  - Freedom of press/speech
  - Free market
  - Rights of Women
- American policy must change
  - Take advantage of such commonality
  - Lead by example
  - Practice American values

# Anti-Americanism

- Growing anti-Americanism among Muslims
- Directed at American ideals and at Americans
  - Growing resentment in
    - Jordan (Israel's neighbor)
    - Egypt
    - Pakistan (war on terror)
    - Turkey (Iraq/Kurds)
    - Indonesia
    - Nigeria
- Allies views in Western Europe
  - England, Germany, France (US is viewed as most threatening to world peace)
- US is viewed as driven by self interest & less by ideals
  - Oil
  - Israel
- It is how we act...

# Muslim Women & Men

- These are not different than dynamics in western societies and the US...
- There is a gender gap
- 51% of Arab women are illiterate
- Agreement on the importance of family
- Muslim women view life and the future more positively than Muslim men
- Muslim women feel that they have made progress in their societies
- Muslim women & men feel that they have lost ground... due to recent turmoil & world events
- Muslim women & men feel positively about the future

# American Values & Culture

- Values to embrace for most of the world...
  - Democracy
  - Freedom
  - Business model
  - etc.
- For much of the Muslim world...
  - American culture is viewed with suspicions
  - Pop music, movies, etc.
  - Globalization for the purpose of domination

# Role of Religion

- Religion plays a large part of the life of a Muslim, not unlike in American life
- Muslims, as with most American, agree on the importance of God & morality
- Muslims believe in a single interpretation of the Koran, more so for unity than for fundamentalism
- Religious freedom and the right to practice
- Most Muslims want to implement Sharia, Islamic law, due to its fairness in regimes led by dictators, but not in countries where its implemented
- Muslim attitude toward the proper role of religion is separate from own religious beliefs

# Looking Forward

- What the future holds...
  - Muslim population is growing
  - Islam is spreading
  - Challenges of modernization & globalization
  - Challenges to deal with extremists views & groups
  - Future conflicts
- US Policy Implications...
  - Muslim world cannot be ignored or marginalized
  - Public diplomacy will serve to change the views and perhaps the minds & the hearts
  - US must see that the Arab-Israeli conflict as the start of any future success
  - Stop supporting dictators & be faithful to American values
  - Avoid cookie cutter policy & stereo-typical views of cultures & societies
  - Might does not make right...

# Challenges

- Understanding Islam
- Understanding the diversity of Muslim societies, cultures & people
- Understanding American values in practice
- Understanding the role of the US in the middle-east and Arab-Israeli conflict
- The road ahead...

Thank you...

Discussion...