

Conventional wisdom wrong about Arab journalists' anti-Americanism

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Research published in International Journal of Press/Politics

Since September 11, U.S. politicians have repeatedly reminded us that the journalists in the Arab world are biased against America and the West. Ground-breaking research published in the July 2008 issue of *International Journal of Press/Politics* published by SAGE shatters the myths, finding that much of the conventional wisdom about Arab journalists that has shaped U.S. public diplomacy toward the region lacks substance.

To provide a snapshot of journalists' attitudes and to create a benchmark for future studies, the researchers surveyed 601 mainstream professional Arab journalists with the goal of understanding how they view both their profession and the events they cover. The survey comes at a time when Arab media are deep in the throes of change. While still subject to censorship, Arab journalists have growing aspirations for independence fed by their access to more than 300 free-to-air Arab satellite channels and the rise of blogging on the internet.

The study, which was made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, along with the Howard R. March Foundation and the Center for Middle East and North African Studies at the University of Michigan, profiles Arab and Muslim journalists, exploring their beliefs, values, politics and religious world view. The data suggest there is a sizable bloc of Arab journalists who share the same values often espoused by the United States: political freedom, human rights, and at least some separation of church/mosque and state.

"In recent years, the Arab media emphatically have been framed by Washington as the enemy," write the authors in the article. "But the evidence indicates this may be a perception made in America, not necessarily the prevailing view from the Arab newsroom."

Source: SAGE Publications

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