

The 'Arab Street'?

Public Opinion in the Arab World

by [David Pollock \(/experts/david-pollock\)](/experts/david-pollock)

Jan 1, 1993

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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David Pollock was the Bernstein Fellow at The Washington Institute from 2007 until his death in 2024, focusing on regional political dynamics and related issues.



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In the Middle East, the Gulf War shattered many stereotypes and preconceived notions, not least among them, about the so-called “Arab street.” Commentators regularly depict a mythologized and often demonized “Arab street”—an ominous urban mass that is sometimes depicted as intimidating regimes, sometimes as being held captive by them; and sometimes, oddly enough, as both. But Arab opinion is not uniform, rather it is diverse, and operates in dynamic interaction with Arab government policies; moreover, its very nature must not be assumed but measured.

Today, on the Arab-Israeli front, polls show that key Arab publics generally accept the current peace process. Not with much evident enthusiasm, but enough to enable their leaders to stay the course. Overall, Arab public opinion seems focused more on domestic than on foreign policy issues. Yet in the long run, Arab attitudes will be crucial to the possibility of lasting peace.

In this Policy Paper, David Pollock offers a serious analysis of Arab public opinion, arguing that it does indeed exist, can be measured despite the closed nature of most Arab countries, and, perhaps most significantly, that public opinion in various Arab countries does roughly correlate with those states’ respective policies.

- **38 pages**

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