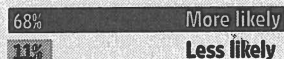


Party Preferences

Share of Egyptians who say they would vote for a party that:

Favors protecting jobs through state control of the economy



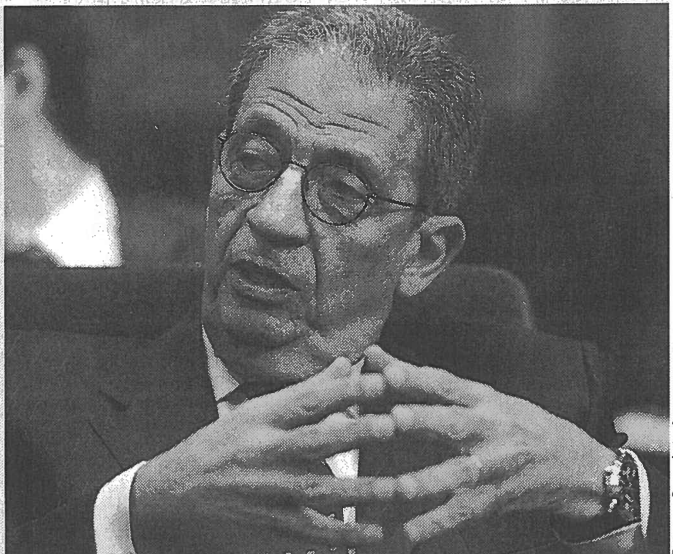
Opposes Iran and its nuclear weapons program



Favors keeping Egypt's peace with Israel



Source: International Peace Institute poll conducted March 9-20



Former Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, above, led the field of likely presidential candidates in a poll.

Egyptians Back Diplomat In Poll, Show Secular Bent

By JAY SOLOMON

Egypt's Former Foreign Minister Amr Moussa—a vocal critic of some U.S. foreign policy—leads the field among likely presidential candidates, with the secular Wafd Party emerging as the most popular political group, according to a poll by a United Nations-affiliated think tank.

The poll also concluded that most Egyptians don't seek any radical changes in their government's foreign relations, including with Israel, or its path of economic liberalization.

The poll, conducted by the New York-based International Peace Institute, found Egypt's largest Islamist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, ranks second among political parties.

The U.S. and its Middle East allies have tracked preparations for parliamentary elections, expected in September, due to fears that a strong Muslim Brotherhood showing could lead Cairo away from the pro-Western policies pursued by former President Hosni Mubarak.

The new poll indicates that there is less enthusiasm for an

Islamist government in Egypt than many analysts may have thought. While 38% said they had a favorable opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood, nearly 50% said they thought positively of the secular Wafd Party.

More than 60% of those polled wanted Egypt to honor its peace treaty with Israel, while ensuring the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

"Maintaining and advancing peace with Israel has far wider appeal than a rupture in relations," reads the report on the poll.

Pollsters surveyed by telephone 615 randomly chosen people from across Egypt. Of those, 80% said they had favorable impression of Mr. Moussa, compared with 10% for the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Badie. The group has said it won't field a candidate for the presidential election, for which a date has yet to be set.

Mohamed ElBaradei, whose Nobel Prize as head of the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog makes him perhaps best known in the West among likely candidates, garnered support from just 2% of

those polled. Wael Ghonim, the Google executive who played a central role in fomenting the uprising that drove Mr. Mubarak from power, also had 2%.

Egyptians also gave high ratings to the country's military and an amalgam of liberal organizations that drove the revolution against Mr. Mubarak.

Of those polled, 82% wanted Cairo to continue to pursue economic liberalization and an opening to foreign trade, though there was also a desire for the state to play a more central job in preserving jobs.

Mr. Moussa, 74 years old, supported Washington's drive to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and as secretary-general of the Arab League, he backed an initiative for member states to normalize relations with Israel.

But much of his populist appeal is tied to his criticism of Israel and opposition to the most recent Iraq war. An Egyptian pop song in 2000, at the end of his tenure as foreign minister, was titled "I Hate Israel, I Love Amr Moussa." It was a hit.

—Matt Bradley
contributed to this article.