



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week Congress wrapped up its summer work before adjourning for the long August recess, with the House and Senate both scheduled to reconvene on September 8. In its final week before the recess, both the House and Senate were busy with Committee Hearings on Lebanon, al-Qaeda, and the future of U.S. foreign policy. Meanwhile, in Turkey, most observers were surprised by the ruling of the Turkish Constitutional Court to suspend some government funding for the ruling AK Party, but not to ban the party from politics as had been widely expected. This week, look for Washington to slow down, with the Presidential campaign driving debates on the Middle East, particularly Iraq.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out POMED's blog, [the POMED Wire](#).

## The Weekly Wire

August 4, 2007

### *Legislation*

On Tuesday (7/29) Senate Bill [S.3263](#), which would authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to promote an enhanced strategic partnership with Pakistan and its people, was ordered to be reported without amendment. The Bill had been introduced by **Sen. Joseph Biden** (D-DE) on 7/15/08.

On Wednesday (7/30) House Resolution [H.RES.1008](#), which would condemn the persecution of Baha'is in Iran, was debated, Yeas and Nays were demanded and ordered, and the Chair announced that further proceedings on the motion would be postponed. The Resolution was introduced by **Rep. Mark Kirk** (R-IL) on 2/28/2008.

## *Committee Hearings*

On Tuesday (7/29) the **Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia** of the **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled, "[Update on the Situation in Lebanon.](#)" The only witness was [the Honorable Jeffrey Feltman](#), Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. Chairman [Gary L. Ackerman](#) (D-NY) delivered opening remarks. For POMED's notes on the hearing, [click here](#).

On Wednesday (7/30) the **Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment** of the **House Committee on Homeland Security** held a hearing entitled, "[Reassessing the Threat: the Future of Al Qaeda and Its Implications for Homeland Security.](#)" Witnesses included [Peter Bergen](#), Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation and [Lawrence Wright](#), Fellow at the NYU Center on Law and Security. [Chairmen Bennie Thompson](#) (D-MS) and [Rep. Jane Harman](#) (D-CA) delivered prepared statements.

On Thursday (7/31) the full **Senate Foreign Relations Committee** held a hearing entitled, "[Defining the Military's Role Toward Foreign Policy.](#)" Witnesses included the **Honorable John D. Negroponte**, Deputy Secretary of the Department of State, the **Honorable Eric S. Edelman**, Undersecretary of Policy at the Department of Defense, **Dr. George Rupp**, CEO and President of the International Rescue Committee, **Dr. Reuben E. Brigety, II**, Director of Sustainable Security at the Center for American Progress, **Mary Locke**, Former Senior Professional Staff on the Committee on Foreign Relations, and **Robert M. Perito**, Senior Program Officer at the Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations at the United States Institute of Peace.

On Thursday (7/31) the **Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade** of the **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled, "[Foreign Aid and the Fight Against Terrorism and Proliferation: Leveraging Foreign Aid to Achieve U.S. Policy Goals.](#)" Witnesses included the [Honorable Dell L. Dailey](#), Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State, [Patricia McNerney](#), Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation of the U.S. Department of State, [Steven Emerson](#), Executive Director of The Investigative Project on Terrorism, and [Douglas Farah](#), Senior Investigator of the Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation and Senior Fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center.

On Thursday (7/31) the **Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee** of the **House Committee on Armed Services** held a hearing entitled, "[A New U.S. Grand Strategy \(Part 2\).](#)" Witnesses included Admiral [Dennis C. Blair](#), USN (Ret.) and John M. Shalikashvili Chair of the National Bureau of Asian Research, [Ambassador Robert Hunter](#), Senior Advisor of the RAND Corporation and former U.S. Ambassador to NATO (1993-98), [Major General Robert H. Scales Jr.](#), USA (Ret.) and President of COLGEN, LP and Former Commandant at the Army War College, and [Dr. Philip D. Zelikow](#), White Burkett Miller Professor of History at the University of Virginia and Former Counselor at the Department of State. Subcommittee Chairman [Vic Snyder](#) (D-AK) delivered an opening statement.

## *In Washington*

**Strained Relationship with Pakistan?** Pakistan's new civilian prime minister **Yousaf Raza Gilani** [visited Washington last week](#), as many called for the renewal of both America's [commitment to consolidating Pakistani democracy](#), and Pakistan's commitment to fighting extremists along the border with Afghanistan. To that end, **Senators Joseph Biden** and **Richard Lugar** have [introduced legislation](#) that would provide long-term increases in economic assistance to Pakistan and tighter monitoring of American military assistance. However last week also saw U.S. intelligence officials accuse Pakistan's military intelligence of providing ["logistical support" to militants who bombed the Indian embassy](#) in Afghanistan last month, raising concerns about Pakistan's ties to Taliban-allied groups.

**The Status of Democracy Promotion:** Two hot topics for debate last week were **Kenneth Pollack's** [recently published](#) book *A Path Out Of The Desert*, in which Pollack recommends that the U.S. promote [a long-term economic and political reform to address those underlying problems that generate instability and terrorism of the region](#), as well as **Tamara Cofman Wittes'** new book, *Freedom's Unsteady March*. Some argued that [genuine democratic reform](#) is [certain to empower "populist anti-American Arab-Hugo Chavezes"](#) and challenged the belief that [democracy is a "universal cure-all."](#) Meanwhile, others examined the rise of a [rivaling autocratic model](#), a [League of Democracies](#), [the challenges and opportunities that a new President will face](#), and [the work of various NGOs in promoting democracy](#).

**Young Middle Eastern Reformers:** Last week, the **Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)** [hosted a discussion](#) with the Middle East Institute (MEI) and Americans for an Informed Democracy (AID) with representatives from three conferences sponsored this spring by POMED and AID, in which young Middle Eastern and American leaders developed and ratified policy recommendations on how to improve America's impact on Middle East reform.

**Timetables:** This week, the [debate](#) over a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq continued. Some suggested that any withdrawal should be [set by commanders in the field](#), while others explored [Iraqi public opinion](#) on the matter and the [international legal ramifications associated with an extension of the U.N. mandate](#). **Henry Kissinger** weighed in on the debate, [strongly opposing a timetable for withdrawal](#), while **Former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi** [advocated for any timetable to be tied to conditions based on political progress](#).

**Neutralizing the Iranian Threat:** After Moscow and Beijing [denied Tehran membership](#) to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, some suggested that there are [limits to which China and Russia are prepared to shield Iran from Western pressure](#). Some argued that Iran ["is a political explosion ready to happen,"](#) while others derided Bush's rejection of "all things international" [as preventing the U.S. from now using the international community to neutralize the Iranian nuclear threat](#).

**Lebanon after Doha:** This week [many](#) re-examined [U.S. policy](#) toward Lebanon and Hizbullah, especially in light of [the recent Doha Agreement](#), while others

welcomed the election of **President Suleiman** and the formation of a new cabinet under **Prime Minister Siniora** as [a step toward progress](#).

*Also Worth Reading:*

This quarter's edition of *The Journal of Democracy* by the National Endowment for Democracy, which focuses on "[Islamist Parties and Democracy](#)," including an [article](#) by **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, in which she argues against the "usual division of Islamists into 'moderate' and 'extremist' categories." Instead, she advocates for a more sophisticated understanding of the differences between various Islamists organizations, while setting forth new criteria that the U.S. should consider in forming its policy toward particular Islamist political parties.

### *In the Middle East*

**AKP Party Survives:** This week, many [were relieved](#) when Turkey's highest court decided not to ban the AKP party as unconstitutional, as many had [feared](#) that a ban would trigger [political instability](#). The decision was upheld by many as a [positive signal to moderate Islamists](#), as a renewed [opportunity for Turkey to seek membership in the E.U.](#), as a [reflection of a groundbreaking ideological shift](#), and as a [decisive victory for Turkey's democracy](#) and [growing economy](#). The decision, by [a vote of 6 to 5](#), deprives party of half its state funding and serves as "[a serious warning](#)" to not overstep into the [religious sphere](#). While other parties have been banned previously, this marked the first time a case had been brought against [a ruling party with such an extensive power base](#).

**Free Speech and Human Rights:** An Egyptian court on Saturday [sentenced](#) exiled democracy and human rights activist **Saad Eddin Ibrahim** to two years in prison for "tarnishing Egypt's reputation." This follows last week's [arrest of 14 Facebook activists](#), many expressed concern over [Egypt's draft legislation](#) that [could be used](#) as a [pretext to crack down on journalists and political opponents](#). Meanwhile, Egypt [banned a book](#) about Egyptian politics and society entitled "[Inside Egypt: The Land of the Pharaohs on the Brink of a Revolution](#)," by British journalist **John R. Bradley**. Following **Rep. Betty McCollum's** (D-MN) [trip to Tunisia](#), some derided her failure to acknowledge the country's appalling [human rights record](#).

**Islamists and Democracy:** This week renewed discussion over the role of [Islamist democratic parties](#). Some discussed [the hurdles Islamist groups must overcome before they should be allowed to participate in the political system](#), while others [questioned whether Islamist participation is merely a strategically calculated way to consolidate power](#). In regard to Moroccan politics, some [discussed](#) the Islamist PJD party's balancing act between being politically acceptable to the monarchy and not alienating its religiously-oriented constituency.

**Regional Changes and Tensions:** Last week, some examined the [overlapping ideologies and identities at play](#) in the region, as well as the powerful impact of [large-scale demographic, social, and economic changes](#). Some argued that the Taliban's successful media campaign has resulted in a [weakening of Afghani public support for nation-building](#). In Kuwait, last week saw [several days of strikes and](#)

[unrest by workers](#) seeking better labor conditions and higher pay to keep up with growing inflation. [The unrest took a violent turn](#), but negotiations will proceed in an attempt to tamp down any further tension.

**Syria's Diplomatic Moves:** This week, many [debated the prospects for a peace agreement between Syria and Israel](#), especially in light of [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's announcement that he will resign in September](#). Some argued that Syria's recent diplomatic moves [signal](#) that the country will [curtail its relationship with Iran](#), while others view [Syria's alliance with Iran as secure](#).

**Measuring Progress in Iraq?** As [attempts to come to a compromise on provincial elections failed](#), many argued there is no resolution in sight for Iraq's [ethnic rivalries](#), and warned that [Iraq may be poised to explode](#). Ethnic tensions can also be seen in the [limited integration of the Sunni Sons of Iraq](#) into the predominately Kurdish and Shiite Iraqi Security forces. This week [many commentators weighed in on the Surge](#) and debated [whether it should be credited for Iraq's recent stability](#). Some argued that [the Surge failed to bring about political compromise, as promised](#), while others suggested that the Surge was [only one of many factors](#) that contributed to the relative stability. Meanwhile, some [explained the stability by looking to other events](#) (i.e. paying groups to fight jihadis, negotiating with Muqtada al-Sadr, and the ethnic cleansing of Sunnis), while others warned that the Surge [could ultimately breed larger problems later on](#).

*Also Worth Reading:*

Last week, the International Republican Institute released the [full findings](#) from its recent [Pakistan Public Opinion Poll](#). The survey revealed [public opinion](#) toward Pakistan's new coalition government, the threat of extremists, and tactics in the War on Terror. For example, 71% of respondents believe that the new Pakistani government should engage in political dialogue with extremists, while 61% believe the best way to combat extremists is with education and economic development.