



Dear Friend,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week the House finally passed a compromise version of the Fiscal Year 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, providing funding for the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the Middle East, Israel's ceasefire with Hamas sparked debate and expanded discussions kicked off by the Israel-Syria talks and ramifications for the region. A possible Status of Forces Agreement for Iraq remained a hot topic in the policy community as well. This week, the Senate aims to pass the war supplemental appropriations bill before adjourning for the 4th of July recess, while the House Committee on Foreign Affairs will hold a midweek hearing on foreign assistance reform.

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

June 23, 2008

Legislation:

On Wednesday (6/18) Rep. **Edward Markey (D-MA)** introduced House resolution **H.R. 6298** (text not yet available) to restrict nuclear cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On Thursday (6/19) Rep. **Zach Wamp (R-TN)** introduced resolution [H.CON.RES.374](#) (text not available) supporting the spirit of peace and desire for unity displayed in the letter from 138 leading Muslim scholars, and in the Pope's response.

On Thursday (6/19), the House of Representatives passed [H.R.2642](#), the **Supplemental Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2008**. The bill approved \$161.8 billion in war funding by a vote of [268 to 155](#). Provisions included a prohibition on the use of military construction funds to establish permanent bases in Iraq and a requirement that State Department and USAID reconstruction aid be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraq government. The bill contains not only the requested supplemental funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2008, but also "bridge funds" for Fiscal Year 2009, to be made available October 1, 2008, in anticipation of the In addition to the war funding, the bill

also contains \$8.8 billion in foreign assistance (\$5.2 billion in FY08 and \$3.7 billion in FY09) for countries including Iraq, Jordan, and the West Bank.

Committee Hearings

No relevant committee hearings last week.

In Washington

Nation Building and Political Reform: [Everyone](#) seems to be [debating](#) the [role of the U.S. in promoting political reform](#) amid decreasing U.S. [influence](#) and Congressional support. Others question the efficacy of American [nation building skills](#), [the prudence of creating a military specializing in counterinsurgency](#), [Middle Eastern criticism of U.S. policies](#) and [the stigma of being pro-American in the region](#), and [mounting failures in Afghanistan](#). Some recommend moving toward a [policy](#) that [identifies regional players who can contribute pragmatic solutions whether they are moderate or not](#), as others [debate](#) whether [moderate Muslims](#) can be a [cure to regional ills](#). Others point to [tensions](#) caused by the increasing [Islamization throughout the Muslim World](#).

U.S. Leverage Against Iran? After weeks of arguing that the U.S. has little leverage against Iran [regarding their nuclear program](#), some [see the tables as turning](#). Others believe Bush continues to [squander diplomacy opportunities](#). **King Abdullah of Jordan** warns that a military reaction from the U.S. will only [embolden Iran and its proxies](#). Meanwhile, [Iran appears to be considering](#) the E.U.'s [proposal](#) of [economic, political, and security incentives](#) aimed to encourage Iran to give up its [uranium enrichment program](#). Some called for the U.S. to [impose additional sanctions on Iran](#), but others worried it will face resistance from the U.N. Security Council. **President Bush** and **British P.M. Gordon Brown** issued [a sharp warning to Iran](#), despite many [recommending](#) the use of [diplomacy](#) to secure international consensus. All the while, over in Tehran, [electric power outages continued](#).

Election 2008 and Middle East Reactions: **Joseph Nye**, the political scientist behind the now ubiquitous term "soft power" [endorsed](#) Barack Obama [this week](#), though [others](#) criticized [Obama's plan for Iraq](#). Strategists offer [insight as to how Obama will approach engagement](#) with Syria and Iran. Some in the Middle East are [optimistic](#) on the prospects of an [Obama presidency](#). Some Iraqis expressed hope for a [John McCain](#) victory in the fall, as the candidate delivered [harsh words](#) toward [certain authoritarian regimes](#). Some predicted that regardless of who wins the presidency, U.S. policy will not change drastically, neither for [better](#) nor [worse](#).

Also Worth Reading

In an op-ed for *The Hill*, **Senator Judd Gregg** (R-NH) [anticipates the future of funding for foreign operations](#), warning that the next President "will find his hands tied on foreign aid. Congressional support for international affairs spending is waning, and for the past several years Congress has failed to fully fund the president's request for this function." He concludes that the next administration "will be expected to do more abroad with fewer resources and less flexibility," and he urges the new President to work closely with Congress in articulating a sensible, long-term approach to budgeting and foreign policy.

In the Middle East

AK Party Banned? Discussion [heated up](#) surrounding the looming [court case](#) against Turkey's ruling party, [the Justice and Development Party](#) (AKP). Many see an [impending constitutional crisis](#), likely to damage Turkey's ability to join the E.U., [weaken](#) its relationship with the U.S., [strengthen anti-Western secularists](#), [punish Turkey's teetering economy](#), and [cause unrest among Kurds that could spill into northern Iraq](#). In light of Turkey's growing [role as a key regional mediator](#) in the [Middle East](#), many are [concerned](#) and call on the US to send the [right signals](#). Recent news that [Turkey and Iran have been sharing intelligence and coordinating military operations](#) against the PKK and its Iranian affiliates makes some [wonder what it means](#) for a key U.S. ally to be working so closely with Iran.

Israel-Syria Dialogue and Iran: A hot topic of debate this week was the potential [effects of the Syria-Israel talks](#) on Iran. As [Iran warns Syria not to compromise](#) their [alliance](#), some suggest [there isn't much that is holding Iran together](#) with [the emerging regional player](#). Others suggest the best way to quell Iran's hostile rhetoric toward Israel is to [arrange Iran's strategic interests in opposition to their ideological ones](#). This week the international community, including [Secretary of State Rice](#), welcomed [the appointment of Lebanon's new president, Michel Suleiman](#). Some see this as a [shift in U.S. policy](#).

Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA): [Debate](#) surrounding the [effects of a potential SOFA continues](#). Some suggested it will [destabilize Iraq](#), while others cited [Iraqi opposition](#) to the [agreement](#), including from the [Maliki government](#). However, in its meeting with Iran, Maliki [refused to shut off US-Iraq negotiations](#). Some fear that without a SOFA, [Iran stands to become Iraq's defender and strategic ally, rather than the U.S.](#) Meanwhile al-Sadr's movement will [not participate in Iraq's provincial elections](#), perhaps to avoid any [affiliation with the Maliki government](#).

Sectarian Violence in Egypt: Last week some expressed [concern](#) over [recent sectarian violence in Egypt](#) between [Muslims and Coptic Christians](#). Also, an Egyptian student was [detained for criticizing](#) Mubarak on a school exam.

Israel – Hamas Ceasefire: Last week [Israel announced](#) a ceasefire agreement [with Hamas](#), leaving many to [debate](#) whether it [weakens Iran's hand](#), [strengthens Hamas vis-à-vis Fatah](#), and/or benefits [Hamas more than Israel](#). Some [aren't hopeful for a lasting peace agreement](#), while others suggest the hardliners in Israel, Palestine, and American only [reinforce each other's extremism](#).

Also Worth Reading

In a fascinating new report entitled "[Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration](#)," **International Crisis Group** issues recommendations to both the Egyptian government and the Muslim Brotherhood. The report broadly concludes that "Ultimately, the Muslim Brothers are too powerful and too representative for there to be either stability or genuine democratization without finding a way to incorporate them. Their integration..[is] an essential step to a genuine opening of the political sphere that would also benefit secular opposition forces."