



Dear Friend,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week tensions escalated once more with Iran, as the Iranian government conducted missile tests, renewing debates over a possible U.S. or Israeli military strike against Iran, and over controversial U.S. programs for democracy in Iran. Elsewhere in the Middle East, concerns were raised over continued efforts to suppress Arab media, and many debated the potential consequences of the looming political crisis in Turkey. This week, the House and Senate Appropriations committees are both scheduled to mark up the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2009. The Senate markup is scheduled for Thursday, with the House subcommittee markup scheduled for Wednesday, but with some signs that it could be postponed.

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

July 14, 2008

### *Legislation:*

On Monday (7/7) Sen. **Max Baucus (D-MT)** introduced Senate resolution [S.3227](#), the **Iran Sanctions Act of 2008**. The bill would sanction Iran for its lack of nuclear cooperation by prohibiting all non-humanitarian related U.S.-Iranian trade, allowing the President to freeze the assets of Iranian government and military personnel, and penalizing U.S. parent companies if their foreign entities violate Iranian sanctions.

On Wednesday (7/9) Rep. **Maxine Waters (D-CA)** introduced House resolution [H.Res.1326](#) calling on the President to respect and honor Iraq's sovereignty by redeploying the U.S. military if asked to do so by the government of Iraq.

On Thursday (7/10) Rep. **Keith Ellison (D-MN)** introduced House resolution [H.Res.1329](#) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should accept the Iraqi government's stated goal of setting a timetable for withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Iraq.

On Thursday (7/10) Rep. **Michael McCaul (R-TX)** introduced House resolution [H.Res.1336](#) encouraging the United States Secretary of State to work with the government of Pakistan to secure the return to the United States of all American children being educated in madrassas in Pakistan.

### *Committee Hearings*

On Wednesday (7/9) the full **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled "[U.S. Policy Toward Iran.](#)" The only witness to testify was The Honorable [William J. Burns](#), Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department. Committee Chairman **Howard Berman (D-CA)** made an [opening statement](#). For POMED's complete notes on the hearing, [click here](#).

On Wednesday (7/9) the **Subcommittee on Europe** and the **Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia** of the **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled "[Europe and Israel: Strengthening the Partnership.](#)" Witnesses included [Rafael Bardaji](#), Director of International Policy at the FAES Foundation, [Nile Gardiner](#), Director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom at the Heritage Foundation, [Ian Lesser](#), Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and [Oded Eran](#), Director of the Institute for National Security Studies. Subcommittee Chairmen [Robert Wexler](#) (D-FL) and [Gary Ackerman](#) (D-NY) delivered opening statements.

On Wednesday (7/9) the full **House Armed Services Committee** held a hearing on efforts to develop and support the Iraqi Security Forces. Witnesses included Lieutenant General [James Dubik](#), Commander of the Multi National Security Transition Command in Iraq, and Christopher Straub, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle Eastern Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) delivered an [opening statement](#).

On Wednesday (7/9) the full **Senate Committee on Foreign Relations** held a hearing entitled "[Meeting the Iranian Challenge.](#)" The only witness to testify was The Honorable [William J. Burns](#), Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the State Department. Committee Chairman [Joseph Biden](#) (D-DE) and Ranking Member [Richard Lugar](#) (R-IN) delivered opening statements.

On Thursday (7/10), the **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs** held a hearing entitled "[The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter It.](#)" Witnesses included Maajid Nawaz, Director of the Quilliam Foundation, [Peter Mandaville](#), Associate Professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University, [Zeyno Baran](#), Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, [Fathali Moghaddam](#), Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University, and [Michael Leiter](#), Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. Committee Chairman [Joseph Lieberman](#) (I-CT) and Ranking Member [Susan Collins](#) (R-ME) delivered opening statements.

## *In Washington*

**Iranian Missile Testing:** Tensions increased last week after [Iran's Revolutionary Guard started missile exercises](#) and after a representative to [Ayatollah Khamenei](#) warned that Iran will respond to a U.S. attack by "[burning down \[U.S.\] vital interests](#) around the globe." The White House sharply responded, [urging Iran to "refrain from further missile tests](#)", and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice [warned](#) that the U.S. would defend its allies and interests. Meanwhile, the photograph showing four launched Iranian missiles was later revealed to have been "[apparently digitally altered](#)" by Iranian state media.

**How should the U.S. respond?** Last week questions were raised on the [likelihood](#) of a U.S. or Israeli [attack on Iran, when such an attack might occur](#) and its [possible consequences](#). [Some](#) suggested an urgent need for [a new American policy towards Iran](#) and argued that unflinching support for Israel only furthers Middle East [defiance](#) "anchored squarely in resistance to American-Israeli aggression." Others questioned why U.S. [exports to Iran have increased ten-fold](#) during the Bush administration, questioning the [sincerity of his tough rhetoric](#). Meanwhile, the programs funded by the State Department's Iran Democracy Fund were [criticized](#) as "shrouded in secrecy" and undermining true reform efforts in Iran, while the Broadcasting Board of Governors [responded](#) with corrections to some criticisms.

**U.S. policy in Pakistan:** This week, many discussed the connection between [U.S. policy mistakes](#) and [a weak civilian Pakistani government](#) with the growth of extremist groups along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. **Senator Robert Casey** decried the Bush administration's [failure to develop an effective strategy](#) in this regard. Others suggested [withdrawal from Iraq is essential](#) to fighting al-Qaeda along this border. Meanwhile, Britain is doubling its aid to Pakistan and shifting focus to [education in the FATA region, in an effort to address root causes of extremism](#).

**Political Impact of Timetables in Iraq:** Earlier this week, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki addressed the [inclusion of a timetable in a SOFA agreement](#) and others in Iraq's government [signaled](#) that they would [not accept any agreement without such an understanding](#). Shortly after, a [White House spokesman denied](#) that negotiations included a hard date for withdrawal. Some question that by demanding a timetable for U.S. withdrawal, [Maliki is co-opting one of the Sadrist's biggest issues](#), whether it represents [a significant break from the Bush administration](#), a mere [negotiating tactic](#), or the result of [pressure from both Iran and Sunni nationalists to loosen Iraq's reliance on America](#). Some suggested the U.S. [should agree to a timetable](#), while others take issue with other [suggested provisions](#).

**Election 2008:** This week, after Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki stated that Iraq is seeking a [timetable for eventual U.S. withdrawal](#), many [critiqued John McCain's position](#) on [Iraq](#) and his [response](#) to Maliki's statement. [Both candidates exchanged](#) remarks on [their policy approach toward Iran](#) after the country's missile test exercises. The [debate](#) reached back into tactics for [engagement](#) and [containment](#), as well as toward the terrorist status of Iran's Revolutionary Guard force. Meanwhile, some disputed the widely-held notion that the Arab/Muslim world is [hoping for an Obama victory](#), as they are "[almost unanimous in their skepticism of him](#)."

### *Also Worth Reading*

Be sure to check out [this piece](#) by **Marina Ottaway** in the Daily Star, in which she warns the next U.S. administration not to give up on efforts to support Middle East democracy. She surveys the challenges facing democratization in the region and compares U.S. and E.U. efforts to support democracy, concluding that "The key to greater success for both the EU and the US may well be a middle way that combines the low-key, long-term European approach with the greater sense of political need and opportunities that drove the Bush administration."

### *In the Middle East*

**Iran's Nuclear Ambition:** While the specifics have not been revealed, many initially called [Iran's response](#) to the [incentive package](#) offered by the [P5+1](#) last week "[positive](#)" and "[constructive](#)." However, many [questioned](#) Iran's [willingness to engage](#) and debated whether [Iran is ready to negotiate](#). Crude oil prices [lowered somewhat](#) following Iran's response.

**Turkey's Crisis and Prospects for European Union Membership:** As [Turkey's](#) highest court weighs whether to ban the AKP party as unconstitutional, [debates](#) resumed on its [possible impact](#) on Turkey's prospects for [European Union membership](#). Some argued that banning the AKP would be [disastrous to its democracy](#), while others debate whether the recent arrests of 23 secular nationalists in a coup attempt is ultimately in [Turkey's long-term interest](#) or [not](#). Many see Prime Minister Recep Erdogan's recent visit to Iraq, the first by [a Turkish leader](#) in 18 years, as a sign of warming between the countries. Sadly, this week also saw an attack on the [U.S. Consulate](#) in Istanbul leaving 3 Turkish police officers dead. Suspects have been taken under custody and some [suspect al-Qaeda](#) involvement.

**New Mediterranean Union:** With Sunday's summit in Paris, many are discussing what impact, if any, [this new launch](#) of the [Mediterranean Union](#) will have on Euro-Arab relations and Middle East politics. Some see the new union as an opportunity for Turkey [to bolster its leadership](#) in the Middle East, but others believe it signals an end to Turkey's hope to join the European Union.

**State of Arab Media:** Many are [concerned](#) about [draft legislation](#) aimed at governing [Egyptian media](#), especially in light of recent [increasing suppression](#) and a government many see as either [unfair or despotic](#). Meanwhile, Iran's parliament [Iran's voted to discuss a draft bill](#) that would make, "establishing websites and weblogs promoting corruption, prostitution and apostasy," [punishable by death](#). In related news, the release of an Iranian film depicting Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as a traitor and his killer as a martyr [has put strain](#) on an already tense relationship between Egypt and Iran. With regard to U.S. policy, some examined U.S. efforts [to use Iraqi media](#) to influence Iraqi attitudes towards the United States, while others questioned whether this would eventually [discredit the Iraqi media](#) or compromise its independence.

**Syria's Poker Face:** This week, some [described](#) Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as "an astute strategies, playing his cards quite well." Assad has been [engaging with European nations](#) while diverting attempts at isolation. This week, Assad accused the U.S. of having [neither the will nor the vision](#) necessary to lead peace talks. Israel and Syria have already outlined an agenda for direct talks, if and when they occur, with

Turkey [acting as moderator](#). Meanwhile, many suspect human rights abuses in the quelling of [a recent prison riot](#) in Syria's prison as well as numerous deaths and injuries.

**Various Tensions in Egypt:** This week, some discussed [fighting within Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party](#), the history of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), and the [effects of recent clashes](#) between Coptic Christians and Muslims.

*Also Worth Reading*

The latest issue of the online journal, Heartland: Eurasian Review of Geopolitics, addresses ["The Pakistani Boomerang,"](#) outlining the situation on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and features a dozen articles on the subject by various Western and Pakistani authors. **Barry Rubin** examines how modern Arab regimes neutralize democratic forces through repression and cooption, by revitalizing Arab nationalist ideology, and by painting reformers as the true enemy of the people. **Ariel Cohen** outlines the winners and losers of a recent National Intelligence Estimate report (Winners: China, Russia, Ahmedinejad. Losers: Bush, Cheney, U.S. credibility, Neo-Cons, Israel, and the Iranian people) and outlines the possible responses in U.S. foreign policy.