



PROJECT
on **Middle East**
Democracy

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and the Institute for Middle East Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs present:

**A TIME OF TRANSITION:
U.S. IMPACT ON REFORM IN A
CHANGING MIDDLE EAST**

As Washington officials debate the future of U.S. policy in the Middle East, one of the principal issues with which they must grapple is change. Dynamics of reform in particular are changing. Youth are increasingly disengaged from traditional political parties, gravitating instead towards independent new organizations mobilized around particular issues or grievances. Islamists' political calculations have changed after observing very divergent experiences and reactions in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, and the West Bank & Gaza. Blogging and social networking websites like Facebook play an increasingly important role in political mobilization and protest. And while rising oil prices provide additional flexibility to oil producers, inflation threatens the standard of living in poorer states.

Governments, on the other hand, have refined their strategies of managed political reform. In some countries, emergency laws continue to stifle dissent; in others, such laws have been replaced with functionally similar "anti-terrorism" laws. Elections are carefully controlled, either through sweeping changes in electoral systems or targeted election-day intervention in particular constituencies. Journalists, bloggers, and independent political voices are targets of arrest or intimidation.

How are dynamics of reform in the Middle East changing, and what are the main drivers of that change? How have the last seven years shaped Middle Easterners' attitudes to American involvement in the region, to the word "democracy," and to democratic reform itself? What opportunities and challenges do these changes create for Middle Easterners dedicated to political reform? Following a time of transition in America's own domestic politics, how should the U.S. approach the region? Can the next administration play a positive role in supporting democratic reform in the Middle East, and if so, how?

Please join us for a discussion with:

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Founder, Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, Cairo

Marc Lynch, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, George Washington University; author, *Voices of the New Arab Public*

Moderated by **Andrew Albertson**, Executive Director, Project on Middle East Democracy

Monday, September 22, 2008
2:00-4:00 p.m.
Elliott Room 310, The Cloyd Heck Marvin Center
George Washington University
800 21st Street NW

Please RSVP by contacting: rsvp@pomed.org