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Insights and Analysis

Iraq: The Politics of Sunni Armed Groups

Muhammad Abu Rumman

Although there have been ideological and political struggles among armed Sunni factions in Iraq since the beginning of the occupation, they were kept quiet until recently. In early 2007, differences exploded into the open in the form of warring public statements between the “Islamic State of Iraq” (a coalition including al-Qaeda) and the “Islamic Army in Iraq,” exposing previously unacknowledged struggles.

As the two groups went at each other in the media, other Sunni groups began a complicated process of splintering and reformation. The 1920 Revolution Brigades split into two military factions, Fatah and Jihad, with Fatah later reclaiming the “1920 Revolution Brigades” name. Hamas-Iraq, which emerged as the first armed movement to build political and media institutions parallel to its military activities, joined forces with the Iraqi Resistance Islamic Front. In early May 2007, the Jihad and Reform Front formed, incorporating the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Mujahideen Army, and the Shari’a Committee of Ansar al-Sunna (which split from its mother organization, Ansar al-Sunna), with the Fatiheen Army joining later. Then in early September seven factions, including the 1920 Revolution Brigades and al-Rashideen Army, joined forces to establish the Jihad and Change Front.

This period of upheaval has left four main blocs in the Iraqi Sunni resistance:

- Jihadist Salafism, which is an extension of al-Qaeda. This bloc consists primarily of the Islamic State of Iraq and is close to Ansar al-Sunna as well.
- Nationalist Salafism, which observers believe toes the Saudi Salafi line and receives material and moral support from abroad. The groups in the Jihad and Reform Front belong to this bloc.
- The Islamic Brotherhood trend, mainly Hamas-Iraq and the Resistance Islamic Front. Observers believe it is associated with the Islamic Party, which participates in politics within the Iraqi Accord parliamentary bloc.
- The nationalist Islamist trend, including the Jihad and Change Front groups (such as the 1920 Revolution Brigades and al-Rashideen Army). This bloc is ideologically close to the Brotherhood trend and is considered an extension of the Association of Muslim Scholars, the leading group of Iraqi Sunni clerics.

While keeping the players straight is admittedly difficult, it is important to understand why Sunni groups are experiencing such turmoil. Two factors—U.S. discussion of withdrawal from Iraq and genuine ideological and political differences among Sunnis—can explain why this is happening now.

First, signs of U.S. military failure and the rising chorus of voices in Washington calling for withdrawal have changed the focus of Sunni insurgents. As militants sense that a U.S. withdrawal is approaching, defeating the occupation has lost primacy as a goal in favor of maneuvering to fill the power vacuum in the post-occupation stage. In this context, several

factors have fueled tensions among resistance factions. For example, the Islamic State of Iraq (al-Qaeda and its allies) has not only tried to spread its influence among the other factions but has also demanded that many faction members pledge allegiance to its emir, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. At the same time, Arab countries (particularly Jordan and Saudi Arabia) have begun to worry about who will fill the power vacuum after the U.S. withdraws. Such countries are concerned about preventing the dual threat of increasing Iranian influence and the rising power of al-Qaeda in western Iraq, the latter of which constitutes a clear and direct threat to their security.

Second, there are genuine ideological and political disagreements—mostly centering on questions of nationalism and religious ideology—among armed factions. The Islamic State of Iraq employs a universalist rhetoric, and is more concerned about defeating the U.S. occupation and waging a war of attrition than agreeing on the nature of a new Iraqi political system. These groups' close ties with al-Qaeda's central command give them a broad agenda, whereas the goal of other Sunni factions is essentially confined to a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

On political-religious ideology, the Islamic State of Iraq also adopts a more uncompromising rhetoric than the other factions on key questions such as attitudes towards the Shi'a. The Jihad and Reform Front also takes a hard-line position on the Shi'a, though less so than groups affiliated with al-Qaeda. The Jihad and Change Front groups, meanwhile, see their priority as defeating the U.S. occupation, although they do not conceal their concern about Iranian ambitions in Iraq. Regarding what should come after the U.S. withdrawal, the Jihad and Reform Front seeks to establish rule by *Shari'a* (Islamic law). For their part, the Jihad and Change Front groups say they would allow a popular consensus to determine democratically what type of political regime would prevail.

Political and military struggles among armed Sunni factions are likely to persist for some time. The outcome depends on many variables, but especially the relationship between al-Qaeda and other factions in the Sunni fold, as well as the relative military strength of various groups.

Muhammad Abu Rumman is a Jordanian scholar and writer. Paul Wulfsberg translated this article from Arabic.

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Morocco: The Elections Are Over; Let Voter Education Begin

Asmae Otmani

Morocco's September 7 legislative elections mark—with their 37 percent participation—the lowest voter turn-out in the nation's history. In such a situation, one might suppose that Morocco had mounted no significant voter awareness campaign, but this was not the case. Over the last few months, the Interior Ministry, along with local organizations, led a national campaign to mobilize voters, offering a professional blend of television, radio, print, and electronic media products. A traveling caravan facilitated registration, and 1.2 million Moroccans verified their registration through text-messaging; Moroccan rap artists produced civic-minded videos, and written Berber and colloquial Arabic sat next to formal Arabic and French in campaign materials. Although a few months ahead might seem a late start for such a program, basic information—final revisions in the electoral law, election logistics, registration requirements, and parties and platforms—was not ready until then.

Most observers attribute the low turnout not to late or inadequate voter awareness efforts, but to Moroccans' disillusionment with the political process and sense that their votes do not translate into meaningful change. An April 2007 Interior Ministry survey revealed that only 7 percent of respondents expressed interest in politics. The voter information/awareness campaign provided basic information and evoked civic responsibilities before the elections, but the lack of political connection and engagement will require more profound change. Even so, efforts to reach voters could do more; short-term voter information/awareness campaigns will only attain their real strength once they are complemented by long-term voter education policies.

At present, voter information/awareness is inaccurately referred to as voter education or even civic education, in part because some aspects of the short-term campaign touch on educational and civic activities. The Moroccan NGO 2007Daba (Daba means "now" in Moroccan Arabic) and other local NGOs took the torch from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which had led the voter information/awareness campaign in 2002 but played a strictly supporting role in 2007. In addition to this, 2007Daba managed to foster dialogue between citizens and parties, create civic dynamism, and garner institutional support. Yet, as its very name suggests, 2007Daba is a voter information/awareness effort tied to the current electoral cycle, and its many successes do not constitute a sustained education process.

Without a long-term education process, short-term voter information/awareness efforts are also confused with the concurrent election campaigns of partisan politics. As an online user put it, "They want our votes, and they forget about us after the elections." As with political parties, the voter information/awareness campaign appeared on the eve of elections

through a professional and expensive media blitz that addressed voters as important actors. Thus voters may extend their suspicion of politics to the voter information/awareness campaign.

To rally support, major political parties have been working to improve their image. They have enacted organizational reforms—both voluntary and compulsory (pursuant to the 2005 Political Parties Law)—and have become adept at articulating citizens' interests at election time. Without sustained voter education, however, citizens lack the knowledge and skills necessary to define their own interests, communicate those interests to their representatives and parties, and evaluate the responsiveness of representatives and parties.

As with the parties, the media redoubled efforts for the 2007 elections. A new High Authority of Audiovisual Communications monitored electoral communications and introduced a pre-campaign period to inform citizens about parties before they began their official campaigns. The result was forty-two television programs that featured nearly 600 guests from political parties. These accomplishments notwithstanding, fitting all media efforts to reach voters within a short period had adverse consequences. Under the pressure of an impending campaign, parties often put forward their senior men, rather than new, young, and female representatives (who were more likely to have benefited from strategic communications trainings and more capable of appealing to first-time voters), thereby casting doubt on parties' claims of internal democratization. Moreover, giving equally limited access to a seemingly limitless list of more than 30 parties, all overflowing with promises, may have exacerbated many voters' exhaustion regarding politics.

The 2007 elections demonstrated that developing long-term voter education should be a priority. It may not guarantee increased voter turnout; no single policy can do that. But in addition to strengthening voter information/awareness campaigns, voter education will expand the concept of citizenship beyond the occasional vote, creating a well-informed and more politically responsible citizenry. These citizens will certainly push parties to perform better, but they will also understand the limits parties face in dealing with the country's challenges. All forces—parties, local NGOs, the media, the Education and Interior Ministries, international organizations, and others—should combine efforts in a new and sustainable voter education policy. The next elections, with their voter information/awareness campaign, may not come for another five years, but the time for voter education is now.

Asmae Otmani is Arabic Web Editor at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She managed NDI's "Art of Voting" campaign during the 2002 elections in Morocco.

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Lebanon: Scenarios for the Presidential Election

Sarkis Naoum

The Lebanese parliament is due to elect a new president for a six-year term during the sixty-day period beginning September 25. As is often the case with Lebanon, numerous domestic and foreign factors complicate what should be a straightforward political process.

First of all there is a legal/constitutional dispute between the two major blocs, the Sunni/Druze/Christian alliance headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and the Shi'i/Christian bloc led by Hizballah. Siniora's bloc, currently holding a parliamentary majority, insists on continuing to govern despite the resignation of Shi'i ministers in November 2006. Hizballah and its allies claim that this violates the unwritten 1943 National Pact regulating relations among confessional groups, as well as the constitution. They insist on a consensus democracy in which all sects are represented in the parliament and the cabinet, regardless of the outcome of parliamentary elections.

The second domestic dispute is over the insistence of Hizballah, validated by its struggle against Israel, to maintain its state within the Lebanese state—and to try to take control of the Lebanese nation while pretending to preserve the roles of the other sects. To accomplish this, Hizballah relies on the Shi'i community (the most populous in Lebanon), its military strength, and its foreign relations, assets which the other sects cannot match. The Siniora bloc rejects Hizballah domination and is attempting to prevent it by—like Hizballah—relying on foreign support, and also by trying to convince Hizballah that it will succeed only in destroying Lebanon.

The major foreign factor is the sharp confrontation between Iran and Syria on the one hand, and the United States and most of the Arab and international community on the other. This confrontation has found ideal ground in Lebanon due to the presence of a Hizballah army representing the military, political, security, and sectarian interests of Iran; the presence of Syrian allies who will have no political future if Lebanon gains true independence; the existence of no less important factions that refuse to allow Lebanon to be dominated by Syria and Iran; and the determination of the United States and the international community to prevent such domination, even if they cannot gain victory for their own Lebanese allies.

None of these disputes will be resolved in the short time before the presidential election. Similar to what happened during

the civil war that began in 1975, the Lebanese factions have lost their independence and have become incapable of solving their own problems. At the moment each group is pleased with its foreign allies, but a time will come when they will recognize their incapacity and that their allies are taking advantage of them. Even then they will not be able to do anything, perhaps because by then Lebanon will have lost its justification for existence or the entire region will have begun to fragment.

In the current predicament, the Lebanese have five options. The first is for all parties to agree on a truce, rather than a solution, and then elect a president who will oversee this truce. His job would be to maintain the present situation with some improvements in living conditions, and perhaps to ward off the specter of greater strife. The second is to form a government of national unity, in which Hizballah and the opposition are an empowered minority, which would rule the nation temporarily if a compromise president cannot be agreed upon. The third would be to form a provisional government, perhaps headed by the military, to maintain security and prepare for the election of a new president. The fourth option is to elect for a two-year term a president who is acceptable to all parties (perhaps because he will be relatively weak and unable to rule) while waiting for an end to the confrontation to determine in what direction Lebanon is headed. The fifth possibility is to delay the presidential election with the agreement of all parties. The parliamentary majority could elect the president from within (although this is contrary to the constitution), or the current government could be allowed to exercise the powers of the president for a time. This would compel the Iranian and Syrian-supported opposition—particularly current President Lahoud—to form a new government, and perhaps to elect a new president. But it would also be a step on the path of partition, and could open the door to further conflict and perhaps civil war.

Which of these scenarios is likely? Unfortunately, the fourth and fifth scenarios are the most probable, although there is some hope for the third. However, we must not resign ourselves to this fate as there are more than two months before Lahoud's term ends, during which time anything could happen.

Sarkis Naoum is a Lebanese journalist. Kevin Burnham translated this article from Arabic.

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Oman: Shura Council Elections and Aspirations for Change

Rafiah al-Talei

On October 27, Omanis will elect representatives to their 85-member lower house of parliament, the Shura Council, for four year terms beginning in 2008. Some analysts consider the Council, established in 1991, to be the most advanced in the Gulf region apart from Kuwait's, and see it as part of a gradual move toward democracy and wider popular participation. For example, Oman enfranchised women as voters and candidates in 1994, well before Kuwait. But a closer look reveals that in the past sixteen years the Council has achieved little and failed to meet Omanis' aspirations. The Shura Council has remained advisory and has not evolved into a legislative body and partner to the government, as Omani officials often claim.

Article 29 of the Omani law regulating the appointed upper house (the 59-member State Council) and elected Shura Council specifies the powers of each body. The Shura Council's powers include reviewing legislation drafted by government ministries and passing them on to the State Council with recommendations, as well as submitting proposals for social and economic legislation. The Council may also provide feedback on government initiatives, propose development projects, and participate in raising citizens' awareness of the country's development goals and government efforts in that regard. Members may give opinions on subjects on which the Sultan seeks the Council's input, and look into matters related to public services and infrastructure.

Despite this variety of powers, many Omanis believe that in reality the Council's role has been limited to looking into public services. And even for this Council members do not receive credit, as government ministers constantly point out that development in public services and infrastructure is a result of the government's vision and plans rather than initiatives by Council members.

Some Council members are frustrated by the lack of appreciation from either the public or the government. Shura Council member Rahila bint Amir bin Sultan al-Riyami stated on several occasions that members do not receive due credit for their work, and asserted that the government actually does accept and consider suggestions and proposals of Council members. Media coverage of recent Council deliberations, however, revealed little government willingness to accept members' proposals and amendments to upcoming laws.

Another Council member, Hummoud al-Amri, said in a recent interview that a member nominates himself to be the voice of the citizens but does not hold all the keys to achieving their demands, and citizens need to realize that. He also noted that Council members themselves are doubtful of their ability to represent citizens and achieve their aspirations. Member Hamad al-Rawahi, also a Council member, said that he considered the slow and hesitant process of developing the Council's role as appropriate for Oman, considering its tribal and cultural characteristics.

Council member Zayed al-Rashidi said in a recent interview that there was little awareness of the Council's role due to the lack of an effective media awareness campaign. He pointed out that members receive no privileges to encourage them to seek office and yet continue to participate in the process. In fact the upcoming elections will see the largest number of candidates yet in Omani elections: 808 male and 25 female candidates vying for 85 seats. Why does the number of candidates increase every year, and what are the incentives that encourage candidacy? Rashidi says it is to complete the public services projects introduced in the previous term; citizens say it is for personal gain.

The Shura Council's president is appointed by the Sultan, another controversial aspect of the Council's operations. A new Council president was appointed in September 2007, the first change since the Council's establishment in 1991. The newly-appointed president is a state advisor and former Minister of Social Affairs and Labor.

Activist and former Shura member Taiba al-Maawli says that the Council's presidency is an obstacle to its development, and that the government should grant the Council political and financial independence. Having served two consecutive terms in 1994-1999, she argues that the Council has not only not gained power since then but has regressed. She says that the Council's role is not even truly consultative; the government refers proposed laws and projects to the Council merely to inform rather than to consult it. Al-Maawli is not optimistic about the upcoming term, because although the Shura Council has the right to express its views, those views are simply ignored. The Council is paralyzed, unable to legislate or hold anyone to account. Al-Maawli believes the Council will not have any role unless there are external pressures affecting economic interests.

Rafiah al-Talei is an Omani writer, journalist, and program director of the Gulf Citizenship Forum. Kevin Burnham translated this article from Arabic.

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Arabian Peninsula: The Importance of Electoral Administration

David Mikosz

Within the last few years, all of the countries on the Arabian Peninsula have held elections, whether local or national. While international trends and democracy promotion have played a part, internal political dynamics have motivated most elections. In Kuwait, for example, elections are propelled by an active parliamentary culture, whereas in other countries, monarchies have made limited concessions towards electoral inclusion to pre-empt broader reform. In all cases, elections are responding to a real popular demand for increased participation.

Citizens of Peninsula countries have shown enthusiasm—or lack thereof—for electoral processes depending on circumstances. In Qatar, the muted public reaction to the third extension of the current municipal Advisory Council until June 2008 (with a corresponding delay in any parliamentary elections until the end of 2008) might be interpreted as a lack of interest in elections. Yet in 1999, the first elections for the Advisory Council had a heavy voter turnout (between 75-85 percent), and 84 percent of the electorate turned out for the April 2003 constitutional referendum that created an elected parliament. By contrast, the turnout for the second Council elections in 2003 was only 30 percent. The dramatic drop in turnout from the first to second municipal elections—but active participation in the referendum—was likely due to the fact that the Council proved to have little actual power. In Bahrain, 90 percent of voters turned out for a 2001 referendum on the National Charter that seemed to augur broad political reforms. But after the 2002 Constitution disappointed those hopes, only 53 percent voted in parliamentary elections, boycotted by most opposition groups. Turnout then rose to 72 percent for the 2006 elections, in which several, but not all, opposition groups competed. When Peninsula voters feel that their votes will matter, they participate.

A key issue is whether voters view elections as being fairly administered by government bodies, even understanding that honest mistakes do happen. The extensive fraud exposed by a former civil servant with the Bahraini government in the “Bandargate” scandal, along with alleged fixing of specific races in the 2006 elections, has deprived the electoral process of credibility in the eyes of many Bahrainis. On the other hand, many view the administration of vigorously-competed elections in Kuwait as the most technically proficient in the Peninsula, despite the fact that they are run by a technical cadre within the Ministry of Interior.

In most of the world, independent nonpartisan commissions run the best elections, with the United States a notable exception needing correction. In the Peninsula, however, only Yemen has begun the process of building such a commission.

A neutral and trusted election administrator can facilitate discussions among participants in ways that government officials cannot. Opposition groups in the Arabian Peninsula often do not trust what they view as self-interested monarchies, while rulers have been reluctant to allow political parties for fear of losing control. Questions of citizenship, qualification, and who should be on the voter registry have also been contentious. In most parts of the world, an election commission provides a useful forum to deal with these questions, allowing discussions to occur in a less hostile manner and drawing on broader

experiences.

A nonpartisan election commission could also help deal with the complicated issue of the role of the military in elections. In Yemeni and Bahraini elections, soldiers seem to have been strategically deployed to vote in particular districts. In Qatar, the problem is that some 20 percent of the population that serves in the armed forces and police is disenfranchised, although the Ministry of Interior's military staff administers the elections. Qatari police and military officers are now hoping to be given the vote via a new election law currently being considered by the Advisory Council, but this seems unlikely to occur. Tensions in Kuwait are slightly different; members of the military in services connected directly to the royal family are eligible to vote, whereas those in regular services are not. While an independent nonpartisan election commission could not automatically resolve such issues, it could draw on established best practices and examples of how other commissions have addressed similar problems.

Rulers in the Arabian Peninsula maintain a broad array of tools to control political life, not the least of which are appointed chambers in their legislatures that balance out elected ones. But as demands for political participation grow gradually, popular elections increasingly are in a unique position to grant legitimacy. For such elections to enjoy credibility and draw significant voter participation, countries of the region need to move toward the creation of nonpartisan election administration bodies.

David Mikosz is Associate Director of the Center for Democracy and Election Management at the American University in Washington DC.

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Readers React

Regarding Ronald Bruce St. John's [article](#) (July 2007), it is important to emphasize that economic reform in a rentier state such as Libya depends primarily on the political leadership's will and commitment to introducing structural institutional changes, which will essentially redefine the country's social, economic, and political principles. In other words, economic reforms and privatization present sensitive political and economic challenges. They require establishing new structures and relationships with new goals and priorities, thereby affecting the interests of those who depend on the allocation mechanisms of the previous institutions.

The main predicament facing economic reform processes in a state-dominated economy such as Libya's is the lack of sufficient protection for property rights and other economic rights. Absent such protections, it becomes impossible to invest and to develop markets. Economic reform, therefore, means more than public sector privatization and elimination of state control. It must include broader institutional reform, including establishing competent legislative bodies that are capable of introducing property rights laws, executive authorities capable of implementing those laws, and independent courts to interpret and enforce the laws. Successful economic reform and privatization in Libya will require political will and commitment to change, establishing a high degree of transparency and accountability, new laws, and developing the capabilities of state institutions to regulate and direct the reform process.

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News and Views

Morocco: Nationalists Win Parliamentary Elections; Journalists on Trial

Morocco's nationalist Istiqlal party emerged as the single largest winner in the September 7 elections, which were marred by the lowest turnout ever recorded in Morocco. Turnout was estimated at 37 percent of registered voters, down from 52 percent in the 2002 elections, and included many invalid ballots. The Istiqlal party, part of the previous ruling coalition, won 52 seats (compared to 48 in 2002), ahead of the Islamist Justice and Development party (PJD) with 47 seats (compared to 42 in 2002). The Popular Movement and the National Rally of Independents won 43 and 38 seats respectively. The Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the dominant party in the previous ruling coalition, won only 36 (compared to 50 in 2002). Under Morocco's proportional representation system, it is extremely difficult for any party to win a majority. The

King is expected to appoint a new prime minister, who will lead negotiations with different parties to form a ruling coalition, soon.

The Islamist PJD cried foul after failing to win its projected 70 seats and accused opponents of buying votes. Observers from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), however, said the vote took place in an orderly and professional fashion with "isolated irregularities." NDI judged that only "significant change"—enhancing the power of elected representatives, increasing transparency of the electoral system, and improving accountability to the electorate—would persuade more Moroccans to participate in the political process. Click [here](#) for NDI's statement.

A Casablanca court adjourned the trial of newspaper editor Ahmed Benchemsi until November 7. The editor of the two weeklies *Nichane* and *Telquel* is being tried on the charge of "disrespecting the king." Benchemsi received a suspended prison sentence for libel in 2005 and could go to jail if convicted again.

Al-Watan al-An journalist Mustafa Hurmatallah was released from prison September 11, pending the outcome of his appeal against an eight-month prison sentence he received August 15 for publishing a leaked internal security memo.

Tunisia: Political Prisoners Released

Twenty-one political prisoners were released on July 24, Tunisia's national day. Those released include Muhammad Abou, a lawyer sentenced in 2005 to three-and-a-half years in prison for criticizing President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and conditions in Tunisian prisoners. Leaders of the banned Islamist al-Nahda movement who had been imprisoned since the 1990s were also released. While continuing to clamp down on critics, authorities have freed long-term political prisoners in batches since 2004, usually on the occasion of national holidays.

Egypt: Four Editors Convicted; Brotherhood Members Arrested

Four editors of independent newspapers—Ibrahim Eissa of *al-Dustur*, Wael al-Abrashy of *Sawt al-Umma*, Adel Hammouda of *al-Fajr*, and Abdel Halim Kandil of *al-Karama*—were convicted on September 13 of "publishing false information likely to disturb public order" after they criticized statements by President Mubarak and Gamal Mubarak about Hizballah. All four were sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of 20,000 Egyptian pounds (US \$3,540) each. They were released on bail pending an appeal. In a separate case, Eissa was charged on September 5 with a similar offense for publishing rumors that President Husni Mubarak was seriously ill. In that case Eissa faces up to four years in prison under articles 102 and 188 of the criminal code.

The latter charge against Eissa followed a tense period after President Mubarak failed to hold his usual summer talk with university students in Alexandria in August. *Al-Ahram* newspaper published an interview with the president on August 31 in which he implicitly accused the banned Muslim Brotherhood of spreading rumors of his illness. In a September 2 television interview, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak dismissed the rumors and called for those responsible to be punished. The government-controlled Supreme Council for the Press announced on September 3 that it had created two commissions formed of media experts and legal consultants to evaluate the scale of the rumors and decide what measures to take.

Egyptian police forces arrested 20 senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood on August 27, including political department chief Isam al-Aryan. They face accusations of belonging to a banned organization, possessing illegal documents, and holding a meeting to plan illicit activities. The group said the gathering in question was a routine meeting. Approximately 400 Brotherhood members are now detained, most of them without charge or trial, after a crackdown that began in December 2006.

Palestine: Electoral Law Amendments; Hamas Crackdown on Journalists

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced on September 2 changes in the election law that would favor his Fatah party against its rival Hamas. Hamas described the move as illegal, as Abbas made the change by decree rather than through the Palestinian Legislative Council, which is unable to meet because of the Fatah-Hamas rift and Israeli detention of many Hamas deputies. Under the new law, Palestinians will vote solely for party lists. In the 2006 elections, half the seats were chosen by national party lists and the other half by district; Hamas was particularly successful in districts. The decree also requires all electoral candidates to recognize the Fatah-dominated Palestine Liberation Organization as the "sole, legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people, a position rejected by Hamas.

Six journalists were arrested and detained for several hours on August 24 when Hamas security forces intervened to disperse a pro-Fatah demonstration in Gaza. Three days later, Hamas leaders announced their intention to implement a 1995 press law under which journalists may be imprisoned for six months and newspapers may be closed if they publish reports that "jeopardize national unity or incite crime, hatred, division, or sectarian dissension." On September 3, Hamas declared a plan to dissolve the Gaza branch of the Union of Palestinian Journalists, mostly supportive of Fatah, and create a government committee for the media.

Lebanon: Run-Up to Presidential Elections; Army in Control of Refugee Camp

Parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri called for a special session on September 25 to elect a new president. A successful vote requires a quorum of 86 members, two thirds of the 128-seat house. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's ruling coalition has 67 MPs, meaning that it must reach a compromise with the political opposition. Current pro-Syria President Emile Lahoud said August 30 that he would appoint an interim government headed by Lebanon's army chief if no agreement is reached by the time his term expires on November 23. The current "unconstitutional government" cannot remain in power if the election of a president is not possible," said Lahoud in reference to Siniora's cabinet, which the Hizballah-lead opposition has deserted.

Candidates who have declared their intention to run for president, a post reserved for a Maronite Christian, include Michel Aoun, Boutros Harb, Nasib Lahoud, and Robert Ghanim. The narrow win of a parliamentary candidate backed by Michel Aoun to replace assassinated anti-Syrian MP Pierre Gemayel in the Maronite al-Matn district in August reflected the bitter Christian divide between supporters of the parliamentary majority and followers of Aoun, a former acting president allied with Hizballah.

The Lebanese army took full control of Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon on September 2, where it had been battling militants from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Fatah al-Islam for over three months. The fighting has been Lebanon's worst internal violence since the 1975-1990 civil war, killing more than 300 people. Prime Minister Siniora pledged to rebuild the area and place it under the sole authority of the Lebanese state.

Jordan: Coming Legislative Elections; Municipal Election Results; Prisoners Abuse

Jordan's Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit announced that parliamentary elections will be held November 20. King Abdullah issued a decree on August 21 dissolving parliament, whose four-year term formally ended in April. Tribally-based politicians had urged the monarch to delay the elections for fear of Islamist takeover of the legislature. Paradoxically, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) has threatened a boycott because the current electoral law favors tribal constituencies over the largely-Palestinian populated cities, which are Islamist strongholds.

A cabinet reshuffle on September 1 brought in new finance, water, and health ministers ahead of November's legislative elections. Hamad al-Kassasbeh was appointed finance minister, replacing Ziad Faris who resigned after Bakhit ruled out his proposal to raise fuel prices. Muhammad al-Shatnami and Salah al-Mawajdeh replaced Zafer al-Alem and Saad Kharabsheh as ministers of water and health respectively. Al-Alem and Kharabsheh resigned July 29 after hundreds of people were hospitalized after drinking contaminated tap water in northern Jordan. Click [here](#) for a new cabinet list.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF) won two out of 965 seats in July 31 municipal elections, despite having withdrawn from the race. IAF secretary general Zaki Bani Irsheid dismissed the official numbers and called for the Jordanian monarch to cancel the election results. The Islamists withdrew their 25 candidates after polls opened, accusing the government of fraud and manipulation of votes cast by military personnel, who participated in the elections for the first time. Jordanian Prime Minister Bakhit dismissed the withdrawal as illegal, telling reporters that any pullout must come at least a day before the elections. Final results showed that more than 1.1 million Jordanians out of 1.9 registered voters cast ballots to elect 965 council members and mayors among 2,686 candidates in 94 municipalities. The vote was the first since a law was passed earlier this year granting women a 20 percent quota and reducing the voting age from 19 to 18. Twenty women candidates above those elected by quota won council seats and one woman won a mayorship.

A Human Rights Watch August 30 [statement](#) called for the government to take immediate steps to prevent and punish abuses in Jordanian jails. After visiting five Jordanian prisons in the last two weeks of August, the human rights organization reported on beatings and other serious abuses that often go unpunished.

Syria: Municipal Election Results; Political Prisoner Released

Syrians voted on August 26 and 27 to elect municipal council representatives in the country's fourteen governorates. Voting took place in 740 constituencies, with 32,058 candidates competing for a total of 9,687 seats. According to government sources, turnout increased from 38 per cent in 2003 to almost 50 per cent this year. Women won 319 seats, up from 294. The Nationalist Progressive Front, a coalition of the Baath party and nine other parties, which has ruled Syria since 1972, won the majority of seats, as they are automatically allotted 60 percent representation, with the remaining seats filled by independents. Syrian opposition groups, including the Damascus Declaration for Democracy, boycotted the elections.

Journalist and political activist Habib Saleh was released September 12 after 27 months in prison. Saleh was arrested in May 2005 and sentenced to three years in prison by a military court for "spreading mendacious information" in open letters to the Baath Party criticizing the regime, which he posted on various websites.

Saudi Arabia: Calls for Reform; Suspension of *al-Hayat*; Demonstrators Charged

Prince Talal Bin Abdulaziz al-Saud announced September 6 that he may abandon his plans to form a political party in exchange for greater political participation in the Kingdom. Prince Talal, brother of the Saudi monarch, had issued an unprecedented statement September 4 announcing his intention to form a political party that includes opposition figures. He spoke against what he called the monopolization of authority and corruption of a small group in the ruling al-Saud family. Senior members of the ruling family did not comment on the Prince's statements.

Prince Khalid Bin Sultan al-Saud, publisher of London-based *al-Hayat* newspaper and deputy defense minister, succeeded August 31 in reversing a ban on his newspaper by the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information. The ministry had banned the newspaper for four days beginning August 27 for publishing criticism of Saudi ministers and articles by controversial columnists.

Saudi writer, lawyer, and activist Abdullah al-Hamad is on trial in connection with a peaceful protest held in July by a group of women demanding the speedy trial of their relatives. Al-Hamad's initial hearing was held September 9, in which he was charged with inciting the women to protest and obstructing police work. Saudi Arabia forbids public demonstrations, although there is no explicit legal basis for such a prohibition.

Kuwait: First Female Minister Resigns; Blogger Arrested; TV Series Banned

Kuwaiti Health Minister Massouma al-Mubarak resigned on August 24 after a deadly fire broke out at a government hospital. Hours earlier, two Islamist MPs had submitted a motion to question al-Mubarak over the fire (which killed two patients and injured 19) as well as alleged financial abuses and deteriorating health services. In her resignation letter, al-Mubarak accepted political and moral responsibility for fire, but claimed that certain MPs had harassed her from the moment she took office "for reasons which are no secret to you," referring to the opposition of Sunni Islamist MPs to her appointment. Al-Mubarak, a member of the country's Shi'i minority, made history when she became Kuwait's first female minister in June 2005, a month after parliament passed a bill granting women political rights. In the past five years, six Kuwaiti ministers have resigned to avoid interpolation in parliament.

Bashar al-Sayegh, blogger and editor of the daily newspaper *al-Jareeda*, was arrested on August 18 by order of the general prosecutor's office for insulting the emir of Kuwait, a charge that carries a possible five-year prison sentence. The arrest was prompted by an anonymous comment posted on al-Sayegh's blog, Alomma.org, criticizing the emir's leadership abilities and frequent travels outside the country.

The Ministry of Information banned the broadcast of a television series on September 10 for reportedly criticizing Shi'i beliefs and practices. The ban came after after a Shi'i protest in Kuwait City and pressures from Shi'i and Sunni Islamist MPs.

United Arab Emirates: Website Closed, Administrator Sentenced to Prison

A Ras al-Khaima criminal court sentenced web writer Khalid el-Asly and forum administrator Muhammad al-Shouhi September 13 to five months in prison for defamation after they published an article criticizing discrimination and corruption in Ras al-Khaima's health department. An August 8 ruling had sentenced al-Shouhi to a year in prison, ordered him to pay 80,000 dirhams (approximately \$22,000) in fines and damages, and shut down the website. Two additional court cases against the two men are pending.

Yemen: Editor Abducted, Severely Beaten

Abdel Karim al-Khaiwani, former editor of the online newspaper *al-Shura*, was abducted and severely beaten by gunmen suspected of being part of the government's security forces on August 27. The gunmen reportedly threatened to kill al-Khaiwani and his family if he criticized Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh again, specifically mentioning an article he had written on the status of prisoners and conditions in the country's jails. Al-Khaiwani also faces terrorism charges brought by a state security court on July 4. He was arrested on June 20 and released on bail in late July.

Mauritania: Slavery Criminalized

Mauritania's national assembly adopted a law on August 8 criminalizing slavery for the first time. Slavery was abolished in Mauritania under an act passed in November 1981, but an implementation decree had yet to be enacted. Under the new law, people convicted of acts of slavery will risk between five and ten years in prison. Slavery in its original form has become rare in Mauritania but still exists, especially in the countryside. No official statistics on slavery exist.

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Upcoming Political Events

- Lebanon: Presidential Election, September 25, 2007.
- Oman: Shura Council Elections, October 27, 2007.
- Egypt: National Democratic Party Conference: November 2007 (date to be determined).
- Jordan: Legislative Elections, November 20, 2007.
- Algeria: Municipal Elections, November 29, 2007.
- Middle East Peace Conference, November 2007 (date and location to be determined).

Views from the Arab Media

Several commentaries discuss U.S. policy:

- Abdel Bari Atwan, editor of *al-Quds al-Arabi*, writes in a September 11 [editorial](#) that U.S. President George Bush managed to make Afghans and Iraqis nostalgic for their plight under former regimes as compared to their present situations.
- In a September 1 [article](#) in *Asharq al-Awsat*, Saudi writer Zin al-Abidine al-Rikabi warns that the post-9/11 U.S. strategy has transformed the war on terror into a global religious war against Islam and widened the gap between Muslims and Christians.
- The United States is trying to achieve a success at all costs in Lebanon and Palestine to make up for its failure in Afghanistan and Iraq, observes Israeli-Arab activist Azmi Bishara in an August 23 [article](#) in *al-Hayat*. He warns that the United States is pushing its allies toward extreme positions that risk provoking civil wars.

A September 10 [episode](#) of *al-Arabiya's* "Panorama" talk show discussed the Moroccan election results. Moroccan journalist Muhammad al-Ash'hab argued that low participation rates stemmed from young Moroccans' disillusionment with the performance of political parties in the previous parliament and their inability to bring about real improvements in the economy and employment. Political scientist Abdel Rahim Salimi said that political parties in Morocco are unable to present their political agenda and reach out to young voters outside major cities.

Al-Jazeera's "Akthar min Ra'i" (More than One Opinion) on August 31 hosted a [debate](#) on Islamists and reforming Arab political systems. Jordanian political analyst Yasser al-Zaatra said that Islamists can only participate in the political process within the limits set by Arab regimes, who continue to maintain control of power despite the façade of elections. Egyptian Islamist lawyer Muntasir al-Zayat emphasized Islamists' struggle for greater political freedoms and openness. Egyptian writer and journalist Youssri Hussein called on Islamists to denounce and apologize for their violent, anti-democratic past before speaking of democracy and freedom.

Iraq has been transformed into a lab for testing possible scenarios for the future of the region ever since it fell under U.S. control, according to Egyptian writer Muhammad al-Said Idriss in an August 18 [article](#) in UAE's *al-Khaleej*. He objects to Arab cooperation with the U.S. agenda and concludes that regional players are using Iraq to defend their own interests, with little regard to the plight of the Iraqi people.

In an August 3 [article](#) in *al-Safir*, Lebanese writer Sateh Nouredine compares the political crises in Iraq, where Sunni ministers withdrew from a government dominated by Shi'a, and Lebanon, where Shi'i ministers withdrew from a government dominated by Sunna. He contends that in both cases those withdrawing are asking for a larger slice of power, backed by foreign powers who can resolve these crises if they so desire.

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Read On

Recent publications on **Iraq** include:

- In "[Seven Months into the Surge : What Does it Mean for Iraqis ?](#)" Rend al-Rahim Francke assesses that security conditions in Baghdad are marginally improved but that international mediation will be required to help Iraqi

leaders move beyond narrow sectarian agendas and build a new national compact (United States Institute of Peace, Working Paper, September 10, 2007).

- The current debate over U.S. failures in Iraq must go beyond finger-pointing and consider where U.S. leaders, institutions, and policies have been at fault in order to avoid future debacles, contends James Dobbin in “[Who Lost Iraq?](#)” (*Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5, September/October 2007).
- In “[The Surge in Iraq Has Failed](#),” Jessica Tuchman Mathews argues that buying more time to continue the same strategy can achieve nothing, adding that the conflict in Iraq is not a war that can be won or lost, but an inevitable power struggle (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook, September 2007).
- In “The Spoils of Peace in Iraqi Kurdistan,” Denise Natali argues that transitions in post-war Iraqi Kurdistan and the changing nature of external aid have created complex political-economic interdependencies and new incentives for both cooperation and conflict with Baghdad (*Third World Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 6, September 2007, 1111-29).
- The United States should try to reduce sectarian strife in Iraqi, but should also start planning for the possibility that these efforts will not succeed, according to a Rand Corporation study (“[U.S. Policy Options for Iraq: A Reassessment](#),” August 2007).
- In the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion, Iraq’s Gulf neighbors have sought to protect their immediate security interests by cultivating cooperative relationships with the United States, concludes Jon Alterman in “[Iraq and the Gulf States: The Balance of Fear](#)” (United States Institute of Peace, Special Report no. 189, August 2007).
- Although the United States now has only uncertain, high-risk options in Iraq, there is still a tenuous case for strategic patience and for timing reductions in forces and aid to Iraqi progress rather than to assign arbitrary dates, asserts Anthony Cordesman in “[The Tenuous Case for Strategic Patience in Iraq: A Trip Report](#)” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 6, 2007).
- A recent report by Article 19 outlines the legal status of free speech in Iraq, current progress, and other areas of concern (“[Free Speech in Iraq: Recent Developments](#),” August 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- Al-Qa’ida in Iraq is only one part of a web of radical Islamist and nationalist extremist groups, according to Anthony Cordesman in “[Iraq’s Sunni Insurgents: Looking Beyond al-Qa’ida](#)” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 16, 2007).
- Curbing the informal sector in Iraq and meeting its job creation targets require a comprehensive economic reform program that focuses on incorporating the informal economy and restructuring domestic markets, argues Robert Looney in “[Iraq’s Informal Economy: Reflections of War, Sanctions, and Policy Failure](#)” (Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Paper no. 60, 2007). Click [here](#) for an Arabic summary.

Two new publications discuss **Morocco** :

- In “[The 2007 Moroccan Parliamentary Elections: Results and Implications](#),” Amr Hamzawy analyzes the results of the recent parliamentary elections in **Morocco** and causes of voter apathy (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Web Commentary, September 11, 2007).
- In “Changing Politics from Below? Women Parliamentarians in Morocco,” James Sater presents a critical analysis of **Moroccan** women’s empowerment. He contends that the regime incorporates ostensibly progressive methods while relying on informal mechanisms to prevent real political change (*Democratization*, vol. 14, no. 4, August 2007, 723-42).

New publications on **Palestine** include:

- Policies of the United States, the UN, the EU and Russia have contributed materially to a possibly irreversible failure of the Palestinian Authority, according to Yezid Sayegh in "Inducing a Failed State in Palestine" (*Survival*, vol. 49, no. 3, September 2007, 7-39).
- A recent International Crisis Group report argues that a new Fatah-Hamas power-sharing deal is a pre-requisite for sustainable peace and security in Palestine. Arab states and other third parties should mediate and monitor an agreement ("[After Gaza](#)," Middle East Report no. 68, August 2, 2007).
- According to Menachem Klein in " Hamas in Power," Hamas's Islamist ideology has not prevented it from taking political positions that contradict its fundamental creed (*Middle East Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3, Summer 2007).

New publications discuss **Lebanon**:

- Two recent reports by Human Rights Watch, "[Civilians under Assault: Hizbollah's Rocket Attacks on Israel in the 2006 War](#)," and "[Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War](#)" conclude that both Hizballah and Israel acted wrongfully by showing disregard for civilian lives. The reports call for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate reports of violations of the laws of war by all parties.
- Hizballah's rhetoric of Palestinian resistance as a religious absolute overshadows its more tolerant and pluralistic vocabulary within **Lebanon**, thus hindering the development of national unity, concludes Jacob Hoiglit in "Islamism, Pluralism and the Palestine Question: The Case of Hizbullah" (*British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, August 2007, 123-36).

Several recent publications address **reform-related developments in specific Arab countries**:

- Two recent reports by the Egyptian Organization of Human Rights (EOHR). "[Egypt Human Rights Report 2006](#)" (September 2007) and "[Torture in Egypt: Criminals Escaping Punishment](#)" (August 2007) document human rights violations in **Egypt** and evaluate recent legislative and judicial developments.
- An International Crisis Group report emphasizes the need for consistent and vigilant international engagement in **Sudan** in order to promote a democratic and inclusive government system that is a prerequisite for lasting peace ("[A Strategy for Comprehensive Peace in Sudan](#)," Africa Report no. 130, July 26, 2007).
- In "[Algeria's May 17, 2007 Parliamentary Elections or the Political Representation Crisis](#)," Mohammed Hachemaoui analyzes recent **Algerian** parliamentary elections, contending they represent little more than a voting process devoid of democracy (Arab Reform Initiative, Arab Reform Brief no. 16, July 17, 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- "[Taqrir al-hurriyat al-academia fi al-jami'at al-urdunia, ayar wa huzayran 2007](#)" (Report of Academic Freedoms in Jordanian Universities, May-June 2007), published by the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, documents abuses and limitations to academic freedoms in **Jordan's** universities.

Other new publications focus on **U.S. policy** in the Middle East:

- In "[Engaging Islamists and Promoting Democracy: A Preliminary Assessment](#)," Mona Yacoubian examines the experiences of U.S. democracy promoters at the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute working with Islamist parties in Morocco, Jordan, and Yemen (United States Institute of Peace Special Report no. 190, September 2007).
- Despite sweeping rhetoric, the Bush administration's actual commitment to democracy promotion was much less than is generally believed, concludes Thomas Carothers in "[U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush](#)." Democracy promotion must be "decontaminated" from association with the use of military force in order to regain

effectiveness (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2007).

- In “USAID, Population Control, and NGO-lead Democratization in **Egypt**: The Fate of the ICPD Programme of Action,” Laura Landolt contends that external pro-democracy interventions may actually obstruct democratization, as such activities are quickly abandoned when they conflict with more primary US policy goals (*Democratization*, vol. 14, no. 4, August 2007, 706-22).

Two new publications examine **Arab opinion about the United States**:

- The fall 2007 edition of *Arab Insight*, published by the World Security Institute, explores “Do We Hate America?” Arab scholars analyze the image of the United States and of Americans in Arab media and consciousness, and offer insights into anti-Americanism in the Arab world.
- Hostile Arab reactions to U.S. foreign policy and democracy promotion efforts stem mainly from the negative image of the United States permeating Arab intellectual circles, a product of U.S. policies and of the values and formative experiences of Arab intellectuals, contends Sami Baroudi in “Arab Intellectuals and the Bush Administration’s Campaign for Democracy.” (*Middle East Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3, Summer 2007).

Several new publications address **region-wide political developments**:

- In *Arab Media and Political Renewal*, edited by Naomi Sakr, a number of scholars discuss political change in the Arab world in light of media developments and the emergence of new means of public interaction (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
- In *Shari’a: Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context*, edited by Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel, contributors examine a range of issues relating to Islamic law, including modern Muslim discourses on justice, democracy, authority, and application of *Shari’a* in contemporary Muslim societies (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- Disappointment in the failure of democracy to spread rapidly in the Arab countries ignores real changes that are taking place—but not on any U.S. administration’s timetable, argue Nathan Brown and Amr Hamzawy in “**Arab Spring Fever**” (*The National Interest*, no. 91, September/October 2007).
- In “Engaging Primitive Democracy: Mideast Roots of Collective Governance,” Benjamin Isakhan argues that policy makers and opinion leaders can engage the ancient and democratic past of the Middle East to educate the public about the origins of democracy and refute the popular conception that it is a purely Western construct (*Middle East Policy*, vol. 14, no. 3, Fall 2007, 97-117).
- The August 2007 issue of *al-Mustaqbal al-‘arabi (Arab Future)*, published by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, includes analysis of the Hizballah-Israel confrontation, sectarianism in Arab political thought, and establishment of a knowledge society as a foundation for development. Click [here](#) for a table of contents in Arabic.
- The Summer 2007 issue of *al-Majalla al-‘arabiya lil-‘ulum al-siyasiya (Arab Journal of Political Science)*, published by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, includes a special report on constitutional and democratic reform in the Gulf countries and Yemen, as well as analysis of the geopolitics of Arab security, society and identity in Lebanon, and Arab-African cooperation. Click [here](#) for a table of contents in Arabic.
- The September issue of *Araa’ (Opinions)*, a magazine published by the Gulf Research Center, includes analysis of oil and the economic future of the Gulf and Iraq, challenges of the Arab media, and Gulf and Middle East security. A special report focuses on scientific research in Gulf countries. Click [here](#) for the September table of contents and selected articles in Arabic. The August issue covers U.S.-Gulf relations, U.S. involvement in the peace process, Gulf economic cooperation, and political parties in Yemen. It also includes a special report on the environment and

climate change, and another on the fuel crisis in Iraq. Click [here](#) for the August table of contents and selected articles in Arabic.

- In *al-Islah al-dusturi wal musharaka al-siyasiya fi mintaqat al-khaleej* (Constitutional Reform and Political Participation in the Gulf Region), Abdul-Hadi Khalaf and Giacomo Luciani argue that constitutional reforms in Gulf states, despite offering some progress in institution-building, have strengthened ruling parties' grip on power (Gulf Research Center, July 2007).
- “*Taqrir al-nesf al-awal min 2007 hawl al-hurriyat al-i'lamiya fi al-alam al-Arabi*” (Report on Media Freedoms in the Arab World for the First Half of 2007), published by the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, documents limitations on press freedoms and cases of assault on journalists in eighteen Arab countries.
- The Gulf Research Center's *Gulf Yearbook 2006-2007* highlights major political, social, economic, and security developments in the Gulf region and provides forecasts for the upcoming year. According to contributors, Gulf countries in 2007 are likely to witness a period of robust economic growth, continued political change, rising regional instability due to events in Iran and Iraq, and the unchallenged presence of the United States as the security guarantor.

Several new publications focus on **economic reform** in Arab countries:

- The August 2007 issue of *Energy Security*, published by the Gulf Research Center, includes analytical articles on energy and economic security challenges in the Gulf region.
- In “*Rethinking Economic Reform in Jordan: Confronting Socioeconomic Realities*,” Sufyan Alissa argues that the general public is skeptical about reforms in **Jordan** because previous efforts failed to address the major social and economic problems affecting citizens. Reform efforts also face severe resistance from elites who benefit from the status quo (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper no. 4, July 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- **Egypt** should keep up the pace of economic policy reform to attract more investment, concludes a recent report by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (*OECD Investment Policy Review of Egypt*, July 2007).
- The Summer 2007 issue of *Buhuth iqtisadiya 'arabiya (Arab Economic Research)*, published by the Beirut-based Center for Arab Unity Studies, includes analysis of Arab economies and economic cooperation, the concept of “human capital” in Egypt, and cooperation between Arab central banks. Click [here](#) for a table of contents in Arabic.
- The Summer 2007 issue of *Dirasat Istratijiya (Strategic Studies)*, published by the Bahrain Center for Studies and Research, includes a special report on the environment and economic development in the Gulf region and another on Islamic banking and finance. Click [here](#) for a table of contents in Arabic.

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