



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week was marked by the opening of the 111th Congress, with both the House and the Senate opening session on Tuesday. While debate surrounding domestic economic issues attracted the most attention, the new Congress also lost no time in addressing foreign affairs issues, with a number of bills introduced concerning Iraq, Iran, and the UAE, all overshadowed by the passage of bills in both the House and Senate concerning the ongoing crisis in Gaza. This week, events in Gaza will continue to dominate foreign policy debates in Washington, as **President Bush** completes his term in office and all eyes look to the new incoming Obama administration. Also, **Sen. Hillary Clinton** will appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee tomorrow morning in her confirmation hearing to become the next Secretary of State.

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

January 12, 2009

### *Legislation*

On Tuesday (1/6) **Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee** (D-TX) introduced H.R.66, a bill aiming to "recognize the extraordinary performance of the Armed Forces in achieving the military objectives of the United States in Iraq, to terminate the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), to require congressional reauthorization to continue deployment of the Armed Forces to Iraq."

On Wednesday (1/7) **Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee** (D-TX) introduced [H.Con.Res.6](#), expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of Iraq should not grant blanket amnesty to persons known to have attacked, killed, or wounded members of the United States Armed Forces in Iraq.

On Thursday (1/8), **Rep. Barbara Lee** (D-CA) introduced **H.R.335** [text not yet available], which aims to "ensure that any agreement with Iraq containing a security commitment or arrangement is concluded as a treaty or is approved by Congress." The bill mirrors [H.R.6846](#), introduced by Rep. Lee in September 2008 but not addressed by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

On Thursday (1/8), **Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee** (D-TX) introduced [H.Res.33](#), expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Iran's lack of protection for internationally recognized human rights creates poor conditions for religious freedom in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The bill expresses concern for the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in Iran including Christian, Baha'i, Sufi, and Turkmen Sunni populations, and calls on the U.S. and the UN Human Rights Council to press for the release of all religious prisoners in Iran. e

On Friday (1/9), the House passed in a [390-5](#) vote [H.Res.34](#), "Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process." The bill calls on the U.S. administration to "work actively to support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza , as soon as possible, that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure, including the capability to launch rockets and mortars against Israel, and thereby allowing for the long-term improvement of daily living conditions for the people of Gaza." It was introduced the previous day (Thursday, 1/8) by House **Speaker Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA). This is the House version of **S.Res.10**, passed the previous day in the Senate by unanimous consent. Last week also saw the introduction of another bill in the House condemning Hamas for attacks against Israel, [H.Res.37](#), introduced Friday by Rep. **Mike D. Rogers** (R-AL).

On Friday (1/9), **Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) introduced [H.Con.Res.16](#), a bill "recognizing the threat that the spread of radical Islamist terrorism and Iranian adventurism in Africa poses to the United States, our allies, and interests." The bill lists a variety of causes for concern on the African continent, including Iran's efforts to expand its influence in Africa, and calls for more joint, multilateral counterterrorism and security operations with U.S. allies in Africa.

On Friday (1/9), **Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) introduced **H.R.364** [text of bill not yet available], intended to restrict nuclear cooperation with the United Arab Emirates. The bill mirrors [H.R.7316](#), introduced by Rep. Ros-Lehtinen last month but not acted on by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### *Committee Hearings*

No relevant Congressional committee hearings last week.

### *In Washington*

**The Future of U.S.-Middle East Relations:** Many analysts this week [focused on](#) the [problems Barack Obama](#) will face upon taking over the Oval Office. One report stated that President-elect Obama is "prepared to abandon George Bush's [doctrine of isolating Hamas](#)" as advisors encourage low-level contact, while another urged Obama to "[advocate democracy as a path to peace](#)" in the form of a one-state solution. [Some analysts](#) encouraged the incoming administration to [continue to promote democracy](#), despite "the inconsistencies and setbacks of **George Bush's** Freedom Agenda." One commentator argued that an [improvement of relations with Iran](#) can positively affect U.S. relations with the greater Middle East, while another argued that talking to Tehran is important but when it comes to Israel and Palestine, [Damascus should be at the top of the list](#).

Debate arose over **Senator Biden's** last CODEL trip to Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; with some analysts calling into question in [what capacity he would be making the journey](#) while others defended his trip as [a smart use of the tools at his disposal](#) to help the Obama team govern from day one. On another note, an interesting perspective was offered on [how American citizens can promote public diplomacy](#) at home and abroad.

**Responses to Gaza:** There was much discussion of the current administration's reaction to the crisis in Gaza. One commentator [derided the American response as "invisible,"](#) while others argued the current policy is [increasingly harmful to Israel](#), and the [two-state solution](#) is most likely [dead](#). Conversely, [some identify with Israel's security concerns](#), citing that "America would never sit still if terrorists were lobbing missiles across our border into Texas or Montana," and another [responds to the argument over proportionality](#) by questioning, "can you imagine anyone in his right mind 67 years ago claiming that America was over-reacting to Pearl Harbor?"

#### *Also Worth Reading*

POMED has released [a new publication](#) entitled "Speaking Clearly: What Should President Obama Say to the Middle East?" It includes responses from a diverse group of twelve policy experts to the question, "At the outset of his administration, what would you advise President Obama to say to the people of the Middle East?" The same question will be examined at [an event](#) today co-sponsored by POMED and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Also, as the Bush administration draws to a close, POMED Research Director **Shadi Hamid** has an interesting piece on the [legacy of missed opportunities](#) in the region, citing the Iraq war and democracy "backlash" as reasons for the abandonment of a Middle East policy that originally showed some promise.

#### *In the Middle East*

**Gaza and Hamas:** There was an abundance of debate this week over the political failures and occasional successes of Hamas. One article offered an analysis [of Gaza's impact on the Arab world](#), pointing to Hamas' mounting popularity, while others discussed the tragedy of [lessons we have yet to learn](#) and the seeming paradox between Hamas' [long-term objectives and its short-term behavior](#). Some analysts explained Hamas' political behavior as seen through influence from [ideological rivals and internal factionalization](#) and [Israel's blockade of Gaza](#). Others addressed [the](#)

[multi-layered structure of Hamas](#) and its relevance to U.S. policy and [Fatah's evolving political calculations](#) in light of Hamas' current battle with Israel.

Some other wide-ranging topics regarding the crisis in Gaza included an [analysis of its effects on Jordan](#), calls for an [immediate](#) lift to the [media ban](#) on Gaza, a discussion drawing some parallels between [Gaza and the 2006 war in Lebanon](#), an assertion that the recently expired [truce between Hamas and Israel never really existed](#), and an argument [in favor of the three-state option](#).

**Shifting Dynamics in Turkey:** This week Turkish authorities [detained nearly 40 individuals](#), including retired generals and former government officials, as [part of an investigation](#) into a wide-ranging plot to overthrow the government. On another front, the government announced it will introduce new reforms [as part of a renewed focus](#) on EU accession. One analyst [reviewed the past year in Turkish politics](#), including the AKP closure case and the ruling party's ongoing attempt to straddle the line between traditional Turkish nationalism and religiosity. Meanwhile, another discussed how the Gaza crisis has provided Turkey with an opportunity to [bolster its diplomatic profile](#).

Regarding Turkey's Kurdish population, several reports note that conservative Kurds in Turkey represent one of the country's [most important electoral swing votes](#), pointing to the [strong inroads the AKP has made](#) in the predominately Kurdish southeast region, spelling trouble for the pro-Kurdish DTP. Meanwhile, another commentator sees the introduction of a 24-hour television station broadcasting in Kurdish as a ["turning point in \[Turkey's\] approach to the Kurdish question."](#)

**Crackdowns and Violence Ahead of Elections in Iran and Iraq:** Reports of [hardliners cracking down on reformists](#) in Iran are seen to be motivated by the June presidential elections and an effort to prevent **Mohammad Khatami** from winning the presidency. In Mosul, Iraq, [violence is mounting](#) between Sunni Arabs and Kurds ahead of the January 31 provincial elections.

**Bloggers and Freedom of Expression in Egypt and Morocco:** One article [highlighted the work of blogger Nora Younis](#), an Egyptian woman at the forefront of political activism, who speaks out against the poor status of democracy and human rights in Egypt. There was also a report on the [enduring limits on free expression](#) in Morocco, noting that despite some strides in freedom of speech under King Muhammad VI, open criticism of either the king or the regime remains forbidden.

#### *Also Worth Reading*

In the *National Interest*, **Michele Dunne** examined the [domestic political calculations informing Egyptian President Mubarak's priorities](#) as he confronts the crisis in Gaza. She focuses on the danger for Mubarak that his approach to Gaza will further incite his considerable domestic opposition, comparing the "toxic brew" of domestic and regional problems to those faced by Presidents Nasser and Sadat in the latter days of their Presidencies.

## *In Case You Missed It*

On Monday (1/5), the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution held a panel discussion entitled "Memo to the President: Renew Diplomacy in the Middle East." Issues covered included handling the current crisis in Gaza, the need for a more coherent policy toward political and economic reform in the region, engagement with Iran, maintaining stability in Iraq, and the importance of formulating policy that reflects long-term goals and a commitment to fostering democracy indigenously. Speakers included **Martin Indyk**, **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, **Shibley Telhami**, and **Kenneth Pollack**, all fellows at Brookings' Saban Center. The discussion was based on a [larger study](#) conducted by the Saban Center and the Council on Foreign Relations. For POMED's notes on the discussion, [click here](#).

On Tuesday (1/6), the American Enterprise Institute hosted a discussion on foreign aid reform as part of a larger event entitled "Development beyond Aid: Development Policy for a Changed World." The discussion focused on making aid more efficient through a massive reform of the current system. Some suggestions included condensing the many aid organizations into one cabinet agency, restructuring resource allocation, and outlining a clear relationship between development and security. Speakers were **Mauro De Lorenzo**, AEI; **Nicholas Eberstadt**, AEI; **Jonathan Greenblatt**, University of California, Los Angeles; and **Steven Radelet**, Center for Global Development. [Click here](#) for POMED's notes on the event.

On Thursday (1/8), the United States Institute of Peace held a large full-day conference entitled, "Passing the Baton: Foreign Policy Challenges and Opportunities Facing the New Administration." The conference featured fifteen panel discussions with a large and impressive list of speakers including **Madeline Albright**, **General David Petraeus**, **Anne-Marie Slaughter**, **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, **William Perry**, **Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer**, and many others. Topics for discussions addressed a variety of foreign policy issues and included "Security and Political Reform in the Middle East," "Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan: Identifying Priorities, Linkages, and Trade-offs," and "Confronting or Engaging Iran." [Click here](#) for POMED's notes on the conference.