



MEI Bulletin

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MEI Focuses on Education

Education is the theme of this edition of the *Bulletin*. It was also the motivation behind our conference in March on Libya, a country not well known in the West except for its past as a 'rogue' state. The one-day session, "Libya, Africa and the West," explored Libya's role in the African continent as well as its sometimes contentious relations with the West and the US in particular. Working with Libya's Green Book Center, we were able to bring several top Libyan scholars and officials to talk about current policies and reforms back home: Khalid Bazelya of the Green Book Center; Ibrahim Aboukhazam, Rector of Nasser University;

Libya's foreign policies, but the audience also posed questions about Libya's internal reforms, its lingering human rights challenges and the standoff over compensation for victims of the Pan Am 103 bombing.

Continuing our effort to make MEI's website the go-to information portal on the Middle East, we published a special edition of *Viewpoints* in May to coincide with Israel's 60th anniversary, entitled "Israel: Growing Pains at 60." This mega-collection of essays by 29 leading Israel experts provides thoughtful and provocative views of the country's social and political development since 1948. The collection in-



A school for girls in Afghanistan and Egyptian students learning at a computer. (Photos: USAID)

Mahmoud Gebrel, Secretary General of Libya's Planning Council and others. They were joined by leading American experts on Libya, including Daniel Yergin, Chairman of Cambridge Energy Research Associates; historian Ronald Bruce St John; Herman Cohen, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and Charles Cecil, former US Chargé d'Affairs in Libya.

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman gave the luncheon keynote address in which he outlined areas ripe for progress in the evolving US relationship with Libya. The panel discussions focused on

cludes maps, statistics and a bibliography of more than 1,200 books and articles focused on Israel and the Israeli-Arab conflict. A powerful resource tool for students and scholars alike! This special *Viewpoints* — spearheaded by MEJ Book Review Editor John Calabrese — will serve as a model for future editions that highlight other historic events and cultural developments of the region. In another website innovation, Librarian Simon Braune launched MEI's very first 'virtual' librarian chat service, which opens up online access to our valuable library.

The latest news from our Department of Languages and Regional Studies is a new contract with the

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United States Institute of Peace to train members of their staff in the Arabic language. The department is also busy preparing for ACCET re-accreditation.

MEI Adjunct Scholars also have been active during the first quarter of 2008. Requests for speaking engagements took them to Sarasota, Raleigh, Seattle, Los Angeles, Cedar Rapids, Boulder and Detroit to speak to more than 2,600 individuals at universities and World Affairs Councils. Many of these events were covered by local media and received attention on blogs and other outlets.

In the last *Bulletin* I mentioned an upcoming trip we organized for six college presidents to the UAE. The trip was a great success and provided the educators with a first-hand look at the concentrated efforts by Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai to invest in people power through high-quality educational facilities, research and service centers. The six participants — from Hamilton, Colgate, Adrian, University of Northern Iowa, Valparaiso and Wittenberg — now are developing sustainable programs to expand their contacts with the region through student and teacher exchanges and other projects. You'll find a brief summary of the trip in the *Bulletin*.

I had my own opportunity to see firsthand the many educational and economic advances in the Gulf on a recent trip to Qatar, the UAE and Bahrain. There is no better way to understand what globalization is all about than to gaze from a window on the 33rd floor of the Dubai Investment and Finance Corporation at the expanse of skyscraper development — each new building more architecturally stunning than the last.

But it's educated, dynamic, entrepreneurial people who are essential ingredients to running a global marketplace. All of the Gulf States are investing heavily in human capital. It is gratifying to see that most have chosen the Western, and specifically American, model of higher education.

This edition of the *Bulletin* looks at different aspects of education in the region. MEI Adjunct Scholar Andrea Rugh leads the discussion with an essay on the challenges Arab governments face in trying to improve the overall quality of education and to provide more learning opportunities for girls. Rugh points out that, because quality has meant many things to many people, it has been difficult to know exactly how to improve programs. But she singles out over-blown bureaucracies as a significant hurdle to upgrading learning methods in the region's public schools. *MEJ* Editor Michael Dunn's interview with author Eleanor

Doumato about her book, *Teaching Islam*, looks at textbooks in Saudi Arabia and intellectual production in the Middle East. Also, SQCC Director Elizabeth McKune interviews Dr. Madiha al-Shaibani, Secretary General of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science on the achievements and goals of education in the Sultanate.

—Wendy Chamberlin



A school in the Wad Sjerofe refugee camp in Sudan. (Photo: UN Photo/Fred Noy)

IN MEMORIAM

Ambassador Lucius ("Luke") Battle, former President of the Middle East Institute from 1973 to 1975 and 1986 to 1990, died on May 13 at the age of 89 in his Washington home. He joined the Foreign Service in 1946 and led a distinguished career as a diplomat. He worked as a special assistant and executive secretary to two Secretaries of State, Dean Acheson and Dean Rusk, and served as Ambassador to Egypt (1964-67), Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (1967-68) and Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Culture (1962-4).

He is survived by four children and eight grandchildren. MEI mourns the loss of Luke Battle and remains grateful for his innumerable contributions to the Institute.

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Girls' Education in the Arab World

In 2000, the Education for All (EFA) Conference in Dakar and the Millennium Declaration called for eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education worldwide by 2005 and creating full gender equality by 2015. The aim was girls' equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. According to UNICEF data, over the last 20 years the Middle East and North Africa have shown the greatest annual rate of increase in girls' academic participation in the world. Over the last ten years, girls have outperformed boys in almost every academic area in the Arab world and net enrollments of boys and girls compare favorably with world averages. Once enrolled, the girls do as well if not better than boys and their repetition rates are lower. On average, 90% of the boys and girls entering primary school reach grade five. By secondary school, girls' enrollments in three-quarters of Arab countries are equal to or higher than boys' enrollments. By the tertiary levels, females exceed males in more than half the countries. These impressive gains came about through Arab governments' efforts to expand opportunities and through strong parental demand to educate all their children.

Room for improvement. The limited areas where girls and boys remain out of school — only two-thirds of the age group is enrolled — can be readily identified and targeted for additional resources. The poorest overall country performers are Yemen, Iraq and Egypt, but other countries also have pockets of lower enrollments. The main disparities exist between urban and rural and wealthy and poorer children. Other constraints for both sexes include the lack of nearby schools, overcrowding, costs (especially in Egypt with its informal “private tutoring” system), “traditional” values, instability (especially in Sudan and Iraq) and the need in rural areas for children's labor. The special problems of girls include their conflicting household duties, distance to school, the inability of poor families to support schooling for all children, sub-standard infrastructure, including a lack of latrines and early marriage. However, at least one study in Egypt shows that few girls drop out of school to marry but rather marry after they drop out. Egyptian parents tend to let their children continue in school if they do well academically even if they are subject to some hardship, but withdraw them if they fail exams.



The effects of quality on girls' participation. One major factor affecting girls' participation — the poor quality of academic programs — was not recognized until recently because it was not specific to girls. Although quality also affects boys, it may have affected girls more if parents were unwilling to expend the extra effort — in costs and lost labor opportunities — to keep them in school.

An Iraqi girl reads her textbook at a school in Saqlawiyah, Iraq in 2008. (Photo: Department of Defense)

What are the problems of program quality? It has been difficult to know exactly how to improve programs because quality has meant many things to many people. The preoccupation in the Arab world with enrollments over recent decades has inadvertently led to a decline in quality as less qualified teachers entered the system, instructional materials remained inadequate and facilities became overcrowded. The problems of quality are well known. They include rote teaching/learning approaches, the lack of critical thinking skills, poorly trained and paid teachers and a civil service with few incentives to perform well but where it is difficult to fire those who don't.

The most important problem, however, is over-blown bureaucracies unable to coordinate an effective process for achieving the learning goals most Arab governments set for themselves. Instructional materials do not systematically address learning objectives. Teacher training focuses on methods rather than the range of skills teachers need, including content knowledge. Exams test students' memory knowledge rather than academic competency. Results fail to provide the kinds of information that allow educators to improve student learning and support teachers. Foreign consultants often exacerbate the problem by promoting approaches like child-centered learning that may be successful in their own countries, but are not readily adapted to the conditions in classrooms or the way students and teachers are used to relating to one another. The lack of a robust research and development capacity results in a failure to test the impact of innovations on student learning on a

small scale before projects are fully implemented. Finally, the absence of external evaluations removes an incentive to improve and develop a quality academic program. Ministries in a number of countries have begun to address these issues, but much needs to be accomplished before an effectively functioning program exists.

A major consequence of these failures is that graduates of state secondary schools are not well prepared for further university study or the job market. As a result, foreign and local private schools have sprung up to serve families that can afford better quality programs — from nursery school to the end of the secondary level. These schools teach the all-important foreign language skills necessary to obtain good jobs and prepare students for the International Baccalaureate degree that qualifies students for better universities within their countries or abroad. The UNDP's Arab Human Resources Development Report has stressed that in the decades ahead, Arab education reforms need to focus on quality. If this is the case, better quality programs may provide that last, important incentive for girls (as well as boys) who would not otherwise attend school to persist to the end of basic education.

— Dr. Andrea Rugh is an Adjunct Scholar with MEI and worked on needs assessment and evaluation teams in the region for more than 20 years.

MEI Educational Outreach Trip to the United Arab Emirates

In March, the Middle East Institute led a delegation of six American university presidents and provosts to the United Arab Emirates. What better way for MEI to accomplish its mission of promoting knowledge and strengthening understanding than by taking American opinion leaders directly to the region?

The primary goal of the trip was to encourage American universities to enhance their Middle East studies programs and collaborate directly with educational institutions in the region. Traveling with MEI were: President Jeffrey Docking of Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan; President Mark Erickson of Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio; Provost Jim Lubker of the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa; Provost Lyle Roelofs of Colgate University in Hamilton, New York; Dr. David Rowland of Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana and President Joan Hinde Stewart of Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. Leading the group from MEI were Adjunct Scholar Allen Keiswetter and Deputy Director of Communications Stephanie Swierczek Richardson.

Over the course of the four-day trip, the group met with representatives of schools and ministries in the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. They learned about the zeal of the UAE government to reform (and reform quickly) and about the Emirati mindset that once something is deemed to be worthwhile, it is executed without hesitation. Meetings covered a range of topics, with most geared toward education but some offering a broader picture of the UAE. Those led by the Dubai Cultural Council, the international non-profit organization Dubai Cares and Dubai Health Care City were interesting and helped put educational reform in the context of other growth and development taking place in the country. It's hard to overstate how impressive the rate of development in the UAE is. For example, Dubai was bare desert just 25 years ago but now holds one-quarter of the world's construction cranes, not to mention its tallest building, Burj Dubai.



Burj Dubai, the world's tallest building. (All photos: S. Richardson)

One meeting in particular began as an introduction to yet another impressive initiative, but unexpectedly became highly relevant to the participants' educational mission. The meeting was with a representative of the Masdar Initiative, Abu Dhabi's effort to become the global leader in the research and development of alternative energy. It turns out that Masdar is in fact launching a graduate degree program, the first of its kind in the region. The delegation was very interested in finding synergies between this program and their own.

The first entirely education-related meeting was with Dr. Abdulla Karam and his staff at the Knowledge and

Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai's Knowledge Village. The KHDA is aggressively pursuing its goal of overhauling every aspect of the educational system in Dubai from infancy through college. The Knowledge Village and the adjoining Academic City are educational Free Zones, meaning they are open to 100% foreign ownership and are tax-free. Universities from all around the world have opened offices there and begun teaching classes, although their operations vary widely. Some are fully active branch campuses, while others seem to be little more than storefronts.



The administration building of American University Sharjah.

Some of the most interesting meetings for the group were with the leadership of some of the UAE's premier universities. The Chancellor at American University Sharjah (which shares a name and historical affiliation with American University in Washington, DC but is in fact an independent institution) discussed the complexities of running a Western-style university in a non-Western society. The Dean of the General Studies program also talked about the challenges of implementing a classical liberal arts education in the UAE. This is due both to cultural constraints and a common belief in the country that while a broad-based education to train students in critical thinking is needed, an immediate need for engineers, IT professionals, architects and other technical professions overshadows that larger goal. These workforce needs are no small matter; thanks to its rapid rate of development, the UAE

faces chronic and dramatic workforce shortages that are only projected to worsen if the number of skilled graduates does not rapidly increase.

During their time visiting AUS, the delegation was privately received by His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad bin Sultan al-Qasimi, the hereditary ruler of Sharjah. By personally funding and overseeing the establishment and day-to-day operations of AUS, His Highness has demonstrated his commitment to turning Sharjah into the cultural and educational center of the United Arab Emirates — as Abu Dhabi is the government center and Dubai the financial center. The delegation was treated to a reception, banquet and personal tour of the royal palace with Sheikh al-Qasimi as their guide.



The delegation touring the Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

In contrast to the fully co-educational, Western-style American University Sharjah, the group next toured Zayed University in Abu Dhabi. Named for the founder of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan, the university devotes itself to the education of young Emirati women. While students at AUS were predominantly seen going to class in jeans and T-shirts and came from countries around the world, the women of Zayed are strictly Emirati and wear the traditional black veil and abaya around campus. Of course, some women are more strict than others in how covered they are. The students at Zayed earn degrees in a variety of fields including education, communication and technology. It is interesting to note that Emirati women outnumber men in universities by four to one and are entering the workforce in ever-increasing numbers.



Zayed University students with Hamilton College President Joan Hinde Stewart.

HE Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, the Minister of Higher Education for the whole of the UAE and President of Zayed University (among other titles), met with the group in the majlis room of his residence later that evening to encourage the delegates to build strong ties to the educational institutions of his country. Like so many members of the royal family and the government of the UAE, His Excellency was educated in the West, and he expressed his belief in the strong advantages of that system.

The Ministries of Education and Higher Education are federal organizations and as such work with the existing ministries in the emirates. However, several of the smaller emirates have not yet established ministries. This is at least in part due to a constitutional arrangement in which the larger and wealthier emirates agreed to help support the smaller emirates that lacked the natural resources of their neighbors. The situation is certainly more complex than this, but members of the ministries indicated that this was one roadblock currently being addressed.

The pace of development in every aspect of life in the United Arab Emirates is breathtaking, even for Americans who are used to a certain upbeat tempo to the daily grind. There is a pervasive attitude that their current resources (oil and natural gas) will not last indefinitely, so they must build their infrastructure while they are able — and they are certainly not wasting any time. The field of education is one of the biggest benefactors of this national energy, and by seeing it firsthand this group of American educators is investigating ways they might support the task by building closer, stronger ties to the educational institutions of the United Arab Emirates.

— Stephanie Swierczek Richardson

Meet the Scholars: Wayne White

Wayne White served as Deputy Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia (NESA) and was Senior Regional Analyst from 2002–2005. He was a principal Iraq analyst during that time and head of INR/NESA's Iraq team. He previously served as Chief of INR's Maghreb, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq divisions. He has held various positions at INR/NESA, including deputy chief of the Arab-Israeli division and head of NESA's Lebanon crisis team. White joined MEI as an Adjunct Scholar in 2005.

What first piqued your interest in the Middle East and made you want to study it?

It was an accident. I wanted a course in European diplomatic history while at Penn State, but it was full. I was urged to take Advanced Modern Middle East History with Art Goldschmidt. I hadn't even taken the introductory course and I wasn't actually interested in the modern Middle East (ancient Middle East, yes; modern, no). But I was told I would like the course and that it would broaden my horizons. So I took it, and I was hooked. By the end of the course, Dr. Goldschmidt even asked if I would be interested in a career in Middle East studies.

Did you immediately decide that the Foreign Service was how you wanted to use your skills? Were you first sent to the Middle East?

The Foreign Service was an option. Professors were pressing me very heavily to go for a Ph.D. But even be-

fore passing the Foreign Service exam, I really didn't want to do so. I wanted to make history, not study it. So I contented myself with a Masters degree.

Back in those days, new FSOs got the worst possible assignments. I was offered Phnom Penh in 1974 amidst desperate fighting just outside the city, as well as an administrative post in Brussels. The other offer, which I ultimately chose, was Niger, a largely Saharan and Muslim country — not part of the core Middle East but sharing some of its characteristics. I had broad responsibilities and was in the Muslim world. It turned out to be valuable in understanding many sub-Saharan African issues and the problems of some of the poorer Muslim states within or beyond the core Middle East.



Wayne White

After Niger, I was sent to Haiti. I spent a shorter tour in Haiti because a cable came in urgently requesting peacekeepers for the Sinai Field Mission. I volunteered, and they grabbed me very quickly. So, I finally secured my return to the Middle East and zoomed off to Cairo, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and the Sinai.

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How long were you in the Sinai?

Just under a year, often living with Israeli and Egyptian military personnel as an observer — really fasci-

nating. The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) needed to pull me from the Sinai a few weeks early to fill a gap. At first, I became the editor of the *Arab-Israeli Situation Report* (or *Sitrep*). Amusingly, Iraq, despite all its potential, was such a fairly minor player in Middle East politics in 1979 that the editor of the *Sitrep* also covered Iraq as a sideline. Iraq had been so radical, isolating itself on so many issues, that despite its oil and great history, in a way it was a sort of backwater. That would end abruptly with the Iran-Iraq War.

A year or two ago, everyone was talking about civil war in Iraq. Is that still an imminent possibility even though the surge seems to have calmed some of the civil unrest?

It is not imminent, but certainly still a threat. The deal the US military cut with largely anti-government elements of the so-called Sunni Arab "Awakening" Council (now "Concerned Local Citizens" or "CLCs") allowed Sunni Arabs to arm and organize on a broad scale. These groups have grown to almost 100,000-member large cadres. So if there is civil war, instead of the Shi'a and Kurds facing a small number of ill-organized insurgents, they would face what Prime Minister Maliki called last year a Sunni Arab militia.

Many in the CLCs now want to become part of the political mainstream, especially with al-Qa'ida in Iraq driven out of so many areas. Maliki, however, under pressure from Shi'a supporters, is dragging his feet in bringing them into the security forces. They are getting angry, frustrated and some are walking off the job. As General Petraeus has said, with the political process lagging so far behind progress on the ground, what we have attained is fragile and not irreversible. One perceptual problem we have concerns the so-called success of the surge. Perhaps 80% of the success is not actually related to the surge, which was mostly aimed at stabilizing Baghdad. Outside Baghdad, the vast majority of our success relates to the deal we cut with various Sunni Arab tribal and insurgent elements across four governorates. The situation was so bad at the time of the surge, it was felt that even stabilizing Baghdad would be a problem with only 29,000 troops. And most all of these troops were kept in the greater Baghdad area.

What do you recommend as the next step following the surge?

We must not succumb to tunnel vision on Iraq. We need to listen to the concerns of senior military officers about the need for withdrawals from Iraq to re-

pair our very badly worn ground forces to face other global contingencies. We also must realize that the US economy — down to the average American — is going to begin playing into the Iraq equation far more robustly as time goes on. I don't think we are going to be digging out of this economic crisis anytime soon.

Between quelling the violence and fostering political reconciliation, the US also is attempting to build civil society and infrastructure so Iraq can function on its own. Have we been trying to rebuild their educational system?

It's really the job of the Iraqi government to do this. Our involvement largely has been limited to restoring school infrastructure. The increased safety provided by successes against al-Qa'ida in Iraq by CLCs and our troops has allowed hundreds of thousands of students who had been home hiding during the horrendous violence of 2006 and early 2007 to return to school.

One problem, however, is that especially in the Baghdad area, many people who are now refugees — in Syria, Jordan, even inside Iraq — are the very people needed on a variety of fronts to help restore some measure of normalcy. Middle and upper class Baghdadis who were secular and intermarried were school administrators, teachers, professors, doctors, engineers, etc. Violence impacted the quality of education in part because many first-rate academics have left.

The current US administration's policy toward Iran seems to be not to talk or deal with Iran directly. Is that tenable? Will it produce results?

No. A major problem with the talks we have had is that they are one-dimensional: nothing but Iraq. They consist of Ryan Crocker accusing the Iranians of various activities like gun running and training so-called "special groups." The Iranian side denies everything while continuing to do much of what it has been accused of. This sort of dialogue gets us nowhere. We need a more creative dialogue with Iran that brings in other issues and explores what we could give or trade them for improved behavior.

People who advocate taking military action against Iran because of concerns on the nuclear front have to consider the crisis in the Persian Gulf that would result from such action. The cure could be worse than the disease.

Practically all the problems fundamental to what we are facing in Iraq are inherently Iraqi. Iran is just one outside player with some influence. The administra-

tion doesn't want to hear that because it wants to put the focus on Iran, but that's the bottom line. In the broader Iraqi picture, the Iranians can only be a major irritant, not a main driver.

With presidential elections pending in both countries, is there a chance that dialogue will improve or that there might be room for a breakthrough?

I think dialogue could improve if the next administration was more creative; I'm not sure about John McCain. He might continue the current one-dimensional and confrontational approach. Even under the best of circumstances, however, it would be difficult to give the Iranians some of what they want in exchange for improved behavior. There is a latticework of US sanctions, US legislation, US lawsuits and UN resolutions that do not provide a lot of room to maneuver on issues like lifting sanctions.

Back in the 1990s, the Clinton Administration tried to generate dialogue with Iran after the election of Muhammad Khatami, and that administration ran into all kinds of roadblocks from just the Congress. And the Iranians were far less helpful than had been hoped. The Iranians are unsympathetic regarding the complaints and grievances of the US side. They still cannot understand how upset Americans remain over the hostage crisis, the bombings in Beirut of our embassy and Marines, etc. The Iranian side has to admit that our grievances also are important, not imaginary. Then perhaps it will be easier for the US to address Iran's grievances.

It doesn't seem like you have much of a problem staying involved now that you are out of government and live outside DC. Do you find it more challenging to stay in the loop?

It is harder, especially no longer having access to classified information. I knew, however, that it would not be as problematic as some people might think because during my last two years in government, as head of INR's Iraq team, I found I could get about 90% of the fundamentals of what we needed from various open sources — embedded correspondents, news agencies, high-end blogs, etc. The basics related to Iran and Iraq, for example, are fairly clear. Yet, I knew there would be some sensitive streams of intelligence I would regret losing.

Quite often when I am mentoring students or speaking publicly — even in the course of my yearly seminars on Iraq for award-winning new ROTC lieutenants — I tell people that they can get vast amounts of information from public sources. They can tap into newspaper websites, the Middle East Institute site, and the like. I also give them the names of newspapers like the *LA Times*, who are doing first-class reporting on Iraq. Much of what they need is out there. One just needs to know where to look.

-Adam Shaffer

**What are you doing this summer?
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MEJ Author Eleanor Doumato on Textbooks and Education in the Middle East

In the review of the book you co-edited, *Teaching Islam*, it was noted that the editors argued that in the textbooks examined in the book, “what it means to be Muslim” could differ “dramatically” depending on the national context. Can you give us some specific examples of these differences?

To begin with two extremes on the defining-Islam scale, in the world of textbooks, Islam is shown to complement the official secularism of the Turkish state while also validating the Iranian state of the religious jurist-prudent. In the Turkish textbooks, according to Ozlem Altan's study, Islam is functionalized so that religion courses may be equated with other subjects that help 'students acquire necessary knowledge,' and Islamic values and rituals are made compatible with Atatürk's secularism: ablution keeps us clean; daily prayers teach us discipline; fasting is good for one's health; Islamic rules calling for obedience and the rights of family members are templates for productive citizenship, with factory workers coming to work on time, civil servants being loyal and honest and fathers being good providers for their families; jihad lends moral authority to the state for military conscription.

Iranian schoolchildren, according to Golnar Mehran's study, are taught that obeying the current political/religious leadership is “obeying God, the Prophet and the Imams,” because the ayatollahs walk in the footsteps of the Imams. Islamic rule is the prerequisite for implementing Islam in society, and living in the state of the jurist-prudent is essential to being Muslim. Military service is thus a religious duty because defending the Islamic Republic defends Islam as a way of life. Daily prayers and rituals venerating the Imams are enacted in public schools, where a “Bureau of Fostering Affairs” takes students on field trips to shrines of the Imams and ayatollahs, evaluates the religiosity and moral character of each student, and passes judgment on whether a student may graduate and attend university.



Students in Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province on the first day of class. (Photo: Department of Defense)

Islam is represented as way of life in most of the textbooks. In the Jordanian, Egyptian, Iranian, Saudi and Syrian textbooks, Islam is a set of rules requiring or forbidding specific actions: when and how to pray; how to treat one's neighbor, wife, parents and children; how to dress; relate to the opposite sex; practice hygiene and engage in jihad. Obedience is key. Islam's rules must be followed so that Muslim society will be strong and able to withstand assaults from the outside. The kind of society envisioned in textbooks, as Betty Anderson observes in her study of the Jordanian textbooks, may be likened to a “Stepford Civilization,” or in Mehran's words in reference to Iran, “a world in black and white.” In all of these textbooks, Muslims always are under assault and have been historically, and therefore obedient Muslims always must be ready to defend Islam and Muslims everywhere.

Yet in Oman's textbooks, according to Mandana Limbert's study, Islam is simply civic goodness: to be pious is to perform good acts such as showing compassion, kindness, neighborliness and helping the poor. At the high school level, however, the textbooks introduce students to the principle of showing loyalty and bearing enmity toward non-Muslim Others, a concept which has a prominent role in the Saudi textbooks. In the Iranian textbooks, especially at the elementary level, children are taught that Islam is a religion of kindness and compassion; that one should be responsible to others and to God, be just and fair and preserve the environment. Kuwait's textbooks incorporate similar values, and also encourage an historically un-Islamic message that man has the free will to make moral choices. The Kuwaiti books also challenge students to think about contemporary issues such as women wanting both a career and marriage, and the intervention of the United States to free Kuwait from Saddam.

Saudi Arabia also teaches civic goodness, but not in its religion curriculum. Its civics textbooks, taught only to boys from elementary grades through high school, encourage a work ethic and public responsibility, such as keeping public spaces clean and helping the less fortunate. The civics books also encourage boys to help at home with domestic chores that society considers women's work. A tenth grade civics book offers a lesson on

inter-communal harmony that is incompatible with the nature of Islam as taught in the religion curriculum. Referring to the importance of good relations between countries in the Islamic world and all other countries, the textbook says that “the world today has become a single village,” and “peace,” therefore, “is the foundation of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.”

In an article you wrote for *The Middle East Journal* in Spring 2003, “Manning the Barricades: Islam According to Saudi Arabia’s School Texts,” you argued that while Saudi texts and curricula are not as politically inciteful as some critics have claimed, they do offer a rather monochromatic view of the various interpretations of Islam, virtually ignoring Shi’ite perspectives, Sufism, etc. Do you think this problem extends to other countries, particularly those with substantial Shi’a minorities (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait) or Shi’a majorities under Sunni control (Bahrain, formerly Iraq) or those with substantial Christian minorities such as Egypt?



Egyptian students reading from their textbooks. (Photo: USAID)

One aspect of state policy reflected in all the religion textbooks is the goal of engendering in students a sense of common identity fused with nationalism. The vehicle adopted for this purpose is a generic Sunni Islam, (except in the case of Shi’ite Iran) that aspires to homogenize each country’s population despite the presence of significant differences in religious affiliation. The Saudi textbooks are unique in that they not only present students with a single, generic Sunni Islam, but actually point out Shi’i, Sufi and other heterodox ritual practices in order to repudiate them, labeling those who practice the proscribed rituals as apostates. In all other religion textbooks, non-Sunnis and others belonging to sectarian or minority religions are not disparaged but are simply ignored, and in almost no case is the history or theology of any minority or sectarian religion discussed. The exception is the Egyptian religion curriculum, which, according to the study done by Jim Toronto and Muhammad Eissa, ignores Muslim sectarian differences but at the same time attempts to promote tolerance as an Islamic virtue and incorporates chapters promoting good will between Egypt’s Coptic Christians and their Muslim neighbors.

Turkish textbooks avoid references to divisions in Islam that would call into question the status of minorities, including the Alevi who are ethnic Turks adhering to a branch of Shi’ism and constituting some 20% of Turkey’s population. At the same time, according to Altan’s study, the texts attempt to bind Turkishness with Islam, avoiding reference to its Middle Eastern historical and geographical context, using only illustrations of Turkish mosques and shrines and identifying prominent Muslim scholars as Turkish. Atatürk, who figures prominently in the religion curriculum, is likened to the prophet Muhammad as a reformer, and Turks are represented as saviors of an Islam which was in decay until the Turkish nation became Muslim. While the effect is to further exclude non-Turkish citizens of Turkey, such as the Kurds, the texts also stress the compatibility between Islam and secularism, as Altan writes: “Islam promotes free will, protects the freedom of conscience of non-Muslims, and does not have a priesthood like Christianity that could exercise restrictions on the state, sciences and arts in the name of religion.” Because Islam promotes secularism, Islam “guarantees freedom of belief and rationality in dealing with daily affairs,” and in Islam, religion is private.

Oman has a population that is roughly half Sunni and half Ibadi Muslim, but its religion texts never mention Ibadism, nor does it explain its tenets, even though Oman’s ruling family is Ibadi. Despite the absence of Baha’ism, Zoroastrianism and Armenian Christianity from the Iranian curriculum and its focus on sacralizing the state through Shi’ite identity, in middle school Iranian students learn about Sunnis and how they differ from Shi’ites on the question of succession to the Prophet and on some aspects of jurisprudence. The texts, however, contain nothing derogatory about Sunnis or Sunnism, and instead say that both Sunnis and Shi’ites are Muslims with a single religion and holy book and are united in brotherhood.

The authors of the papers for *Teaching Islam* were not asked to address the question of outcomes for the education ministries’ homogenization-through-religion project. However, conclusions drawn by some of the authors through a limited number of interviews with students suggest that the observation made some 20 years ago by Dale Eickelman regarding the propagation of a generic Islam in Oman holds true across the geographic

board today: far from undermining sectarian affiliations, their exclusion from Islamic studies has instead produced a heightened interest in learning about sectarian religions and also has encouraged identifying with them. (Dale F. Eickelman “National Identity and Religious Discourse in Contemporary Oman,” *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 [1989], pp. 1-20.)

Much of the debate about Arab curricula in the West has centered around political content and Islamist ideologies, but another question might be whether the nature of traditional curricula in some ways encourages the general paucity of intellectual output in the region — like the famous Arab Human Development Report finding that the total number of books published annually across the Arab world is less than the total of some individual European countries, and that translations into and out of Arabic are even rarer. In your opinion, is this a function of excessive state supervision of publishing or is it somehow a function of the educational system?

I would begin with the observation that the subject of religion in general is not particularly conducive to intellectual inquiry when packaged as a set of incontestable truths without reference to doctrinal diversity, historical development or theological argument. In Middle Eastern religion textbooks, intellectual inquiry is not merely avoided but actively discouraged. When questions are posed, for example, it is not to encourage students to weigh alternatives to moral dilemmas but to prompt students to repeat pre-packaged answers. On the other hand, religion classes occupy only a small portion of students’ study time in every country except Saudi Arabia and Iran, and in some cases such as Syria, Egypt and Turkey, students tend not to take religion courses seriously because grades are either not counted toward the GPA or passing grades for religion courses are automatic.

However, the manner of instruction, based on memorization and testing to the letter of the text, coupled with an absence of independent research and writing assignments, reflects the nature of education throughout Middle Eastern public school curricula. Furthermore, the production of history and literature textbooks is closely tied to the same state-building agendas that inform religion curricula, so that all subject matter is narrowly drawn and represented as linear fact so as to be compatible with the dominant narrative. According to Altem, Turkish students, for example, do not study history prior to the 1940s, while internal conflicts are mentioned with cursory and simplistic explanations such as a fight of the enlightened state against bigoted groups deceived by their leaders.



Iraqi schoolgirls in Baghdad in 2003.
(Photo: USAID)

In some countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular, teachers who would open students’ minds to alternative viewpoints do so at their peril. In Saudi Arabia, for example, in 2005 a high school chemistry teacher was sentenced to more than three years in prison, with lashes, charged with “trying to sow doubt in a student’s creed.” In a discussion about Christianity, Judaism and the dangers of terrorism after the 2003 bomb attacks on civilians in Riyadh, the teacher had encouraged his students to think about how to resolve differences of meaning between the text of the Qur’an and the Hadith. The previous year, a teacher of Arabic literature received a similar sentence after being found guilty of endorsing un-Islamic sexual, social and religious practices because he had discussed varying concepts of love in the poetry he was presenting to his students. Religion teachers at his school interpreted the discussion to constitute apostasy.

That vested interests and state agendas intrude on educational systems and impede intellectual development is a fact not lost on Middle Eastern political leaders. Recognition of the difficulties of disentangling their educational systems from these constraints drives Gulf monarchs (in the UAE and Qatar in particular) to establish foreign-run universities in their countries. King ‘Abdallah’s \$12.5 billion investment in a university for science and technology is but the latest example. The campus, very far from Riyadh and run by ARAMCO, rather than the Ministry of Education, is to be co-educational, immune to intervention by religious or education bureaucracies and open to all religious and ethnic groups. Its faculty and graduate students, who will all be foreigners at the beginning, are expected to have the same open access to information and international cooperation as

they would have in any university in a Western democracy.

The KAUST project, in that it must proceed within an enclosed community, be staffed by outsiders and insulated from the mores of the local society as well as from the reach of government bureaucracies, speaks to the enormity of the challenges to lifting the Arab world out of its intellectual deficit through education. However, it would be an oversimplification to single out the role of public education as the reason for the paucity of intellectual output in Middle Eastern countries: Low intellectual output goes hand-in-hand with the “freedom deficit” that is endemic to the whole region. States treat information as a commodity over which those in power have a proprietary interest, with unfortunate outcomes known to all. The recent experiences of newspaper publishers and reporters, bloggers, creative writers, political activists, democracy advocates and philosophers of religion, not to mention teachers and professors, whether maligned by religious spokespersons or state authorities, serve as an example to others who would raise the bar on creativity and innovative thinking.

— Michael Collins Dunn

The Middle East Journal

The Summer 2008 issue of *The Middle East Journal* has a real mix of articles on a wide variety of subjects, from a revisit of the Iranian “countercoup” of 1953 to the demonstrations in southern Yemen, which are still ongoing, as well as looks at Caspian oil, Jordanian Christians and the ideology of two key Lebanese thinkers. The articles are:

- **Paul A. Williams and Ali Tekin, "The Iraq War, Turkey, and Renewed Caspian Energy Prospects."** When the invasion of Iraq first occurred there were some who thought that an opening up of Iraq's huge oil reserves would decrease the prospects for Caspian oil. The authors examine all the inter-relationships between the Iraq War and Caspian oil developments, including evolving American and Turkish perceptions, and conclude that the Iraq War actually has bolstered the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project. The authors are both at Bilkent University in Ankara.
- **Stephen Day, "Updating the Question of Yemeni National Unity: Could Lingering Regional Divisions Bring Down the Regime?"** Stephen Day of Stetson University analyzes the importance of the widespread demonstrations in recent months in Yemen, especially those in the south.
- **K. Luisa Gandolfo, "The Political and Social Identities of the Palestinian Christian Community in Jordan."** An examination of the history, attitudes and current status of those Jordanian Christians of Palestinian origin. A good study of a key minority. Gandolfo is at the University of Exeter.
- **Fariborz Mokhtari, "Iran's 1953 Coup Revisited: Internal Dynamics versus External Intrigue."** Mokhtari revisits the 1953 coup against Mossadeq and argues that, despite the important role of the US and Britain, the conventional wisdom that external intervention overthrew an indigenous democratic movement is oversimplified and misunderstands the internal dynamics that were at work.
- **Rola el-Husseini, "Resistance, Jihad, and Martyrdom in Contemporary Lebanese Shi'a Discourse."** An analysis of the thought of two key Lebanese Shi'a figures, Muhammad Fadlallah and Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, on the subjects noted, and their influence on the evolution of Hizbullah.
- **Book Review Article by David Thomas on interfaith issues and dialogue.** A review of several recent books on interfaith dialogue in the Middle East and elsewhere. Thomas is at the University of Birmingham.

Dr. George Attiyeh, a longtime member of the *Journal's* Board of Advisory Editors and its sole surviving Member Emeritus, died April 21st at the age of 84. He was the longtime head of the Near East Division at the Library of Congress. Dr. Mary-Jane Deeb, currently the Head of the Africa and Middle East Division of the Library of Congress, is also a former Editor of the *Journal*. More on Dr. Attiyeh's career may be found in the Library's column for this issue.

— Michael Collins Dunn

Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center Interviews Omani Education Official

Dr. Madiha Shabani, Secretary General of the Oman Nation Commission for Education, Culture and Science granted this interview on April 25, 2008 in Washington, DC.

Can you tell us about the history of education in the modern Sultanate of Oman?

This is quite interesting, because I think it is a success story when you talk about the history of education in Oman. In 1970, when His Majesty the Sultan ascended to the throne, we had three schools with only a little over 900 boys in attendance. Today, we have over 1,050 schools at the basic and post-basic (secondary) levels. So there has been tremendous growth. A number of international reports, especially the World Bank's, describe Oman's progress in education as unprecedented. So we are very pleased and proud of these accomplishments.

Regarding planning for education, when His Majesty first came to power, the focus was on the quantitative expansion of schools and infrastructure. There is his famous saying: "We will educate our people even if it's under the shades of trees." So, I think most of us, my generation, are the fruits of this modern Omani renaissance. And some of us were taught in schools housed in portacabins or tents. At the time, it was important that education spread. That was the government's number one priority. We were not only focused in the capital or urban areas. We spread education all over Oman — even to remote regions.

We started with opening schools, what the World Bank calls the "engineering aspect" of education, which included adopting a curriculum and providing the qualified teaching staff. At that time we didn't have experts to prepare a curriculum, so we started using curricula from neighboring countries. Many teachers were expatriates, and many resources went into recruiting them and building the infrastructure; with time, teacher training colleges started preparing local Omani teachers. Today we have over 40,000 Omani teachers and we continue to direct our resources to professional development programs for teachers. We started by requiring only minimal qualifications for Omanis to teach and many of them received teaching diplomas. But now we have established colleges of education. Teachers attend these colleges where they offer Bachelors and Masters degrees equivalent to international standards.



Dr. Madiha Ahmed al-Shaibani

So I would characterize the period from the 1970s to the mid-1990s as a period of quantitative expansion aimed at spreading the umbrella of education across the nation. The emphasis was on building schools and giving everyone an appropriate education. We raised the enrollment rates and the indicators show that, especially at the basic and post-basic levels. Part of our philosophy was to combat illiteracy.¹ We had a very low literacy rate in general, but over the years it has gone up tremendously. There are indicators that illustrate this.

After 1995, based on the Vision for Oman's Economy — Oman 2020 — and emanating from several international conferences, we realized that if we were to compete in the global economy and if we were to move towards a knowledge-based economy, we would have to reform our educational system. This started in the mid-1990s, where we began planning for comprehensive educational reforms, and started implementing them around 1998/99.

This involved changing the structure and instructional methods. We moved from a system which served us well in the 1970s, a system which we called general education, where students went from grade one to grade 12, to the current newly-reformed Basic Education system. The current Basic Education system consists of two cycles. The first cycle is grades one to four; the second cycle is grades five to ten. And then we have what we call the post-basic system, for grades 11-12. The current academic year, 2008, is the first year of implementing the post-basic education system.

1. Over the last 35 years, the adult illiteracy rate in Oman has been reduced by 40%, in particular for women (60%).
From Access to Success: Education in the Sultanate of Oman, 1970-2005 (Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education).

What distinguishes the two systems? In post-basic, the curriculum was reformed; the focus is now more on analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. We've also introduced life skills as a mandatory course for all students.

What do you mean by life skills?

Life skills are skills that students need in everyday life. They usually are not explicitly addressed in the curriculum. These skills can include cooperative learning (working in groups), team building and job searching skills such as creating a CV or preparing for an interview. In addition, we focus on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Rather than having libraries, our schools are equipped with learning resource centers where students have Internet access. The biggest change is a paradigm shift from what was traditionally learning focused largely on lecturing, memorization and retention to a model where the teacher is the facilitator. We equip our students with skills and enable them do the work on their own. If you walk into the newly-reformed school system today, you see a lot of cooperative learning. You also will observe a lot of ICT use for learning and research. Our reforms have covered grades one to ten, and this year they have been introduced to post-basic education.

In post-basic education, we have given students more flexibility in terms of selecting subjects. They all have to take at least one core course in science, English, Arabic and math. But there is more latitude for them to choose subjects more relevant to them and the labor market, like computer graphics. In addition as part of the core requirements they have to take research methodology, life skills and receive career guidance services. This is where we are in a nutshell. In general, we believe our educational outcomes should meet the needs of the labor market and enable our students to compete globally — while retaining our Omani identity. That's very important, retaining our Omani identity. That is one of the reasons that social studies is still taught as a core subject as well as Islamic studies.

When His Majesty came to power, was education opened to women?

For us as women, I think this was the biggest transformation that took place when His Majesty ascended the throne. From the very beginning of his reign, women were encouraged to go to school. From day one, he addressed the issue of gender equality. Women were allowed to attend school from the very beginning.

Can you talk about co-education in Oman?

The way we have worked it out with our reforms, we have co-education from grades one to four. From five to ten onwards and grades 11 and 12, there are separate schools. The reason we do that is that it is more culturally acceptable to have separate schools for girls and boys. It serves another purpose as well, because families are less reluctant to send the girls to school if they know they are in single gender schools. However, the choice is there for private schools. Private schools are mixed gender schools, and a lot of parents, especially in the urban areas, send their children to private schools.

Are some public schools judged better than others, as is the case in the US?

Oman is totally different from the US in this respect. All schools in Oman are funded equally by the state. For example, if you plan to allocate 100 computers to secondary schools, all will receive them, except those schools that don't need them. You don't find differences in funding among the schools. I was in a remote central area of Oman, which had a migratory population. One of the most distinguishing features on the landscape was a school, right in the middle of the region. So even in the remote areas, you will always find a well-equipped school.

The Ministry of Education's policy now is to move toward decentralizing schools but also holding schools more accountable. So we have introduced a system that has been around about five years, a school performance development system to assess school administration, teaching and learning. In the future, we hope to link that with national testing. This will enable us to help schools which may not be performing particularly well.

You talked about Islam as being part of the curriculum. There have been stories that certain Arab countries included some questionable wording in their curricula about the West. Does this in any way apply to Oman?

No, not at all. Oman is unique. If you read our philosophy of education, we want our citizens to be grounded

in the local culture and to think globally as well. We want to instill in our students values of tolerance and understanding of other cultures. We've recently worked on an initiative called Connecting Cultures. A British teacher at a private British School in Muscat initiated it in Oman. The idea was to bring Omani students and European students in close contact — face to face on short trips where they focus on discussing and exchanging ideas and cultures. The Ministry of Education and His Excellency Yahya bin Saud al-Sulaimi, the Minister of Education, automatically supported this idea of establishing strong links with other cultures to foster dialogue among cultures. Intercultural dialogue is a primary concern of His Majesty, who announced on a number of occasions that it is important to establish strong links with other cultures. This concept is not new in Oman. Historically, Oman played a vital role in spreading Arab and Omani culture to many European, African and Asian countries. It is an excellent initiative that is also supported by UNESCO.

In the most recent expedition Oman had students from Germany, Holland, France, Qatar, Jordan, Spain, Austria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq. The participants were taken to Jabal Akhdar and Jabal Shams in the Dakhiliya region where students interacted through a number of exercises designed to facilitate intercultural dialogue and correct stereotypes that European students might have about our part of the world and stereotypes that our students might have about their European counterparts. After five days of camping, the students held a press conference under the auspices of Her Excellency the Undersecretary for Education and Curriculum. The ceremony also was attended by several ambassadors of European countries, students and partners from the private sector. The students openly discussed how their participation in the expedition helped them change their misconceptions about other cultures and provided them with a better understanding of those cultures.

Are there other aspects of the Omani educational system that you'd like people to know about?

With our move towards emphasizing quality and trying to link our efforts with the global markets, we recently have participated in the global test for math and science — Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). We are hoping to move towards participating in more international tests. These tests give you indicators in terms of how your educational system is performing. We are on a quest for quality in our education, and we need indicators like that. Another initiative that's being implemented this year, based on His Majesty's directives, is an emphasis on the study of science. We realize that in our part of the world, and in other parts of the world, students are not moving toward science specializations. We tend to be more oriented towards the humanities and the social sciences. We are trying to invigorate a culture of science, because that is where the market is — the science and engineering fields. One of the biggest projects which we are undertaking this year is introducing a cognitive competition for math, science and environmental geography. This is done through a combination of testing and science projects. The projects are something like science fairs in the US. The idea is to enhance the culture of science in our schools, where students are engaged in projects that require analytical thinking and the use of scientific methods. We hope that in the future, our kids will be able to compete internationally in science fairs.

— Elizabeth McKune

SQCC 2008 Summer Institute on Oman and the Gulf

SQCC's Summer Institute on Oman and the Gulf is an extraordinary opportunity undergraduate and graduate students to expand their knowledge of this critical region. (Non-student applications will be considered as well.) The Institute is a series of lectures featuring regional experts in the fields of history, economics, culture and journalism from across the globe. These lectures will be held primarily in the evening from June 10-July 29 at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Rome Building, 1619 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. At no cost, participants can obtain a comprehensive understanding of the peoples and cultures of Oman and neighboring countries. For more information, including a list of speakers and lecture topics, please visit <http://www.sqcc.org/events/events.htm>.

To secure a spot for the Summer Institute, send an email to Chad Hope, SQCC Program Officer, at chope@sqcc.org no later than Friday, June 6. Please include your university, year of graduation, major academic concentration and a copy of your resume. Registration will be handled in the order received. Your registration will be confirmed by email. Late registration will be considered based on availability. For further information, please contact SQCC Program Officer Chad Hope at chope@sqcc.org or by calling (202) 261-1690.

“Libya, Africa and the West” Conference

Below are scenes from MEI’s special conference on “Libya, Africa and the West,” held on March 31. Transcripts and podcasts of all of the conference’s speakers and panels can be found on the MEI website at <http://www.mideasti.org/conference/libya-africa-west>.



Conference participants discuss the proceedings. (Photos © Suzanne Mazer)



MEI Adjunct Scholar Ambassador David Mack with Miloud Mehadabi, Director of International Affairs, Green Book Centre.



TV cameras and a packed house follow a panel during the conference.



Participants in the “Libya’s Economy and African Development” panel.



Jeffrey Feltman, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, gives the luncheon keynote address.



Ali Richi, Deputy Secretary General of Foreign Liaisons and International Cooperation, who is in charge of Migration, speaks to the conference audience.

The George Camp Keiser Library

The George Camp Keiser Library encourages readers to use its new Virtual Reference Librarian feature. Users may ask the MEI Librarian questions via real-time chat during regular library hours. Please visit <http://www.mideasti.org/library/chat> to try out these exciting new features.

A new Library Resource Guide on Gulf Security Issues, authored by fall interns Amy Doherty and Albert Shaheen, is also available online at <http://www.mideasti.org/library/research-guide-series>. The Library is pleased to announce its new virtual showcase for library acquisitions available on our webpage: <http://www.mideasti.org/library> and also at the following URL: <http://www.librarything.com/catalog.php?view=MiddleEastInstitute>.

The following is a sample of recent library acquisitions:

Books marked by an asterisk (*) have been reviewed in the Spring 2008 edition of *The Middle East Journal*.

The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf / James Onley (2007)

Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East / Ussama Samir Makdisi (2008)

Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization / Jason Brownlee (2007)

Biographical Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East & North Africa, Vol. 1 and 2 / Michael R. Fischbach (2008)

Critical Encounters: Essays on Persian Literature and Culture in Honor of Peter J. Chelkowski / Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami and M.R. Ghanoonparvar, eds. (2007)

Culture Smart! UAE: A Quick Guide to Customs and Etiquette / John Walsh (2008)

Deception: Pakistan, the United States, and the Secret Trade in Nuclear Weapons / Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark (2007)

Dubai & Co.: Global Strategies for Doing Business in the Gulf States / Aamir A. Rehman (2008)

The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State / Noah Feldman

(2008)

From Qajar to Pahlavi: Iran, 1919-1930 / Mohammad Gholi Majd (2008)

Historical Dictionary of the Gulf Arab States, 2nd Edition / Malcolm C. Peck (2008)

The Historical Muhammad / Irving M. Zeitlan (2007)*

A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present / Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot (2007)

An Invitation to Laughter: A Lebanese Anthropologist in the Arab World / Fuad I. Khuri, Sonia Jalbout Khuri, ed. (2007)*

The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish problem in Iraq and Turkey / Michael Gunter (2008)

Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century / Marc Sageman (2008)

The Libyan Paradox / Luis Martinez (2007)

The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World / Mohammed Ayoub (2008)*

Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam after Iraq / Michael Scheuer (2008)

The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace / Aaron Miller (2008)

Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects / Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds. (2008)

The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings on Politics, Religion, and Society / Sayyid Qutb, Albert Bergesen, ed. (2008)

Tuhfah yi-Abbasi: The Golden Chain of Sufism in Shi'ite Islam / Mohammad Ali Sabzvaari (2008)

Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think / John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed (2008)

Selected Books on Education in the Middle East

Al-Azhar: A Millenium of Muslim Learning / Bayard Dodge (1974)

Professor Dodge details the thousand plus year his-

tory of Cairo's Al-Azhar, arguably the most influential and famous learning institution in Islamic civilization. Appendices include enrollment statistics, curricula, textbooks used, the physical layout of the mosque and a list of rectors from the 17th to the mid-20th century. Published by the Middle East Institute.

Basic Education in Rural Pakistan: A Comparative Institutional Analysis of Government, Private and NGO Schools / Shahrukh Rafi Khan (2005)

Khan analyzes government, private and NGO-run schools in rural Pakistan. His studies found that government-run schools were the least effective. Khan argues that the 'mass communications' strategy employed in Pakistani schools needs to undergo massive reformation. Appendices include questionnaires used in the author's research.

Education and the Arab World: Challenges of the Next Millennium / The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (1999)

This work includes 14 essays, authored by Western and Middle Eastern scholars, that explore the challenges faced by educational institutions in the GCC and the greater Arab world. Comparative studies with non-Arab school systems are also examined.

Islam and Education: Myths and Truths / Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh, eds. (2007)

This book is composed of ten articles that deal with the importance of education in Islamic civilization in medieval and modern times.

Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable / Dale Eickelman (1985)

In this seminal study, Eickelman, a leading anthropologist of the Muslim world, provides a detailed social biography of the education of a Moroccan *qadi* (judge). Includes photographs, charts, maps and a glossary.

The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey / Sam Kaplan (2006)

The author conducts an ethnographic survey of the school system in Yayla, a small town in southwestern Turkey. He also includes a general historical survey of Turkey's educational system from late Ottoman times until the present.

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace and Build Nations ... One School at a Time / Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin (2006)

The captivating story of how Greg Mortenson, a US Army medic and mountaineer, founded 55 schools for girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan from 1993-2006. Includes photographs.

Books in Brief: *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, edited by George N. Attiyeh

A book is obviously not simply a physical thing. It is a living entity. People's lives are definitely influenced by this old and basic vehicle of communication. Our planet's civilizations and cultures, one may safely state, did not begin to flourish and expand until the book was invented. Books have become so general and extensive that we need not emphasize what is manifestly plain.

— Dr. George N. Attiyeh

The above statement not only summarizes the theme of *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), it also encapsulates much of the motivation behind the life and career of its author, Dr. George N. Attiyeh who passed away on April 21, 2008 at the age of 84. Born as the eldest of ten children to an Orthodox Christian family in 1923 in Amyun, Lebanon, he exemplified the life of a scholar. Dr. Attiyeh was trained as a historian and completed his Ph.D. at the American University in Beirut in 1950. He continued his studies at the University of Chicago, earning a second Ph.D. from the department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations four years later. He accepted an offer to teach at the University of Puerto Rico in 1954. In 1967 Dr. Attiyeh became the head of the Near East Division at the Library of Congress. During his more than 25 years of tenure there, the division's collection grew by over 200,000 volumes. He remained active in other aspects of Middle Eastern scholarship as well. He was a member of the Board of Advisory Editors for *The Middle East Journal*, a prolific author, an active participant of the Middle East Studies Association and a founding member of the Middle East Librarians Association.

In many ways *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* is the capstone of Dr. Attiyeh's career. The 14 essays in the book were presented at a conference organized by Attiyeh in November 1990. The contributions include works from among the most renowned scholars in Islamic studies.

Articles of note include Seyyed Hossein Nasr's chapter, "Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education," where the famous scholar of Islamic philosophy explores the dissemination of written knowledge in cultures that traditionally prized oral communication. Noted Scholar Franz Rosenthal's "Of Making Many Books There is No End': The Classical Muslim View" discusses the ubiquity of books in medieval Islamic civilization. Finally in "The Book of Life - Metaphors Connected with the Book in Islamic Literatures," Annemarie Schimmel, the late doyenne of Sufi scholarship, discusses the portrayal of books and libraries in the works of Sufi poets.

George Attiyeh's contribution, "The Book in the Modern Arab World: The Cases of Lebanon and Egypt," describes the historical development of printed books in Lebanon and Egypt, two areas in the Arab world where printing first took root and that remain the most important centers of publication in the region. Attiyeh notes that due to religious orthodoxy it was not until the 18th century that the first well established Arabic printing press appeared

in the region, even through printed Arabic texts had been published in Italy some two centuries earlier. He argues that printing culture became more dominant in Lebanon and Egypt due to three factors: both regions enjoyed greater autonomy from the Ottoman Empire; there was greater interaction with Western Europe and there existed large native Christian populations whose religious leaders were more tolerant to the use of printed books. Printing in the Middle East was further bolstered in the late 19th century with rigorous publications of Arabic books by American missionary groups.

Dr. Attiyeh ends his article by noting the many problems books and print culture continue to face in the modern Arab world. He suggests that religious orthodoxy still likely poses the greatest threat to the publication of new books as there remains an implicit, and at times explicit, threat of censorship of works that may be considered critical of Islam.

— Simon Braune

Beyond the Beltway

Developments in the region kept MEI Scholars busy this spring. From elections and renewed violence to stalemates and political deadlock, our scholars were occupied analyzing a wide array of events in the Middle East. In the first three months of 2008, our Scholars were cited in more than 450 publications, with a total potential audience of 50 million people!

MEI in the News

Progress in Iraq was back in the news as General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker again testified on Capitol Hill. In the weeks leading up to the testimony, Adjunct Scholar **Wayne White** was quoted in several news articles about the situation on the ground in Iraq. He was cited in *USA Today*, *The Kiplinger Letter*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* about Iraqi political progress, the battle for northern Iraq and the pause of American troop drawbacks. Adjunct Scholar **David Mack** was quoted about the influence of Iran in Iraqi affairs and appeared on the CBC, where he discussed fighting in Basra. Also offering analysis were Adjunct Scholars **David Newton** (AP Radio and CBS Radio Los Angeles) and **Mishkat Al Moumin** (BBC World News Today).

Several MEI scholars were called on to analyze the parliamentary elections in Pakistan. Adjunct Scholar **Syed Farooq Hasnat** immediately commented about the election results, while MEI President **Wendy Chamberlin** spoke to NPR, Voice of America and the Associated Press, where she gave an optimistic outlook of the elections. In the aftermath of the elections, Scholar-in-Residence **Marvin Weinbaum** spoke to the media several times about the changes occurring in Pakistan, including US relations with the new government, minority rights and the release of sacked judges. Analysis he gave to the Associated Press on Afghan President Hamid Karzai's plans for a reelection campaign was run in eight major papers including *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

MEI Adjunct Scholars appeared in the media on a multitude of other issues. David Mack was interviewed on NPR about economic development in the Gulf and was quoted in a *New York Times* article regarding sovereign wealth funds in Abu Dhabi. *The Washington Post* cited **Edward S. Walker** and **Paul Scham** about Ryan Crocker's plans to leave Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, respectively. **Abdallah Schleifer** was mentioned in *U.S. News & World Report* in a piece about the Grand Mufti of Egypt, while analysis given to the *LA Times* by **Graeme Bannerman** on the 1983 US Embassy bombings was rerun in several papers. MEI itself made headlines globally with its "Libya, Africa and the West" conference held in March. The conference was

mentioned in the media in Libya, South Africa, Iran, Kuwait and the US.

Around Town

Several MEI scholars gave lectures to members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at American University, where they discussed issues ranging from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Pakistan to political developments in Lebanon and Iran. **Allen Keiswetter**, Graeme Bannerman, **Alex Vatanka**, **Thomas Lippman**, **Arthur Hughes**, **Andrea Rugh**, **William Rugh** and Marvin Weinbaum all participated in the weekly lecture series.

Edward S. Walker addressed the State Department on the Palestinian Authority, while at the Brookings Institution David Newton made Middle East policy recommendations for a new administration. Adjunct Scholar **Herman Franssen** participated in a Congressional Luncheon and Briefing event on energy interdependence and independence. Marvin Weinbaum also guest lectured at several capstone courses at George Washington University.

Beyond the Beltway

Invited by the Stanley Foundation, Wendy Chamberlin spoke at the Iowa City Public Library about America's role in the future of the Middle East. In April, she was the keynote speaker at the 60th Annual World Affairs Council at the University of Colorado, addressing over 2,000 people on the need of the US to reshape relations with the Middle East and the larger Muslim world. Later that month, she toured the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, and spoke in Doha at the World Economic Forum. She was also invited to participate in the prestigious Trilateral Commission meeting in Washington. **Peter Bechtold** met with several think tanks in Sudan, where he focused his attention on the violence in Darfur.

Marvin Weinbaum lectured at Selfridge National Air Guard Base in Detroit on Pakistan and counter-terrorism. Wayne White met with students at Penn State University to discuss the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran, and discussed Iran at a conference at Columbia University. Alex Vatanka also spoke about Iran in a lecture at Princeton University and before members of the US Air Force in Florida. Adjunct Scholar **Roby Barrett** talked to that same group, giving an overview of the current situation in the region.

— Adam Shaffer

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