



Fikra Forum's Top 104 Articles of 2017

Mar 13, 2018

Also available in

[العربية](#)



Brief Analysis

1- [How Should the New U.S. President Play the "Kurdish Card" in the Middle East?](#)

Frzand Sherko - January 10, 2017

Kurdish researcher Frzand Sherko argues that while the next U.S. administration may no longer want to play a direct role in the Middle East, they can still leverage the Kurds to positively impact the region and support US interests. As one of the few groups not embroiled in the deeply sectarian conflict engulfing the region, they are in a unique position to aid in the post-war era.

2- [NGO Law in Egypt](#)

Maged Atef- January 12, 2017

Writing from Egypt, BuzzFeed reporter Maged Atef explains how the most recent Egyptian law targeting NGOs may eliminate them altogether and cause irreparable damage to Egyptian society. While the government argues that these civil society groups aim to undermine the elected Egyptian government, their suppression will actually cause more harm than good.

3- [Twitter and the Saudi Campaign to Preserve Male Guardianship Over Women](#)

Kendall Bianchi- January 13, 2017

Kendall Bianchi takes a deep dive into the issue of male guardianship in Saudi Arabia as it has played out on Twitter. While Western discourse often highlights the more radical elements of the anti-guardianship movement, Bianchi argues that the issue is considerably more complicated than Western media would suggest.

4- [Can António Guterres Save the World?](#)

Hassan Mneimneh- January 19, 2017

Contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh analyzes the potential role of new United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Mneimneh writes that Guterres' unique background may be key to overcoming much of the world's declining faith in the UN.

5- [My Trip to America and My Burning Questions](#)

Mithal al-Alusi- January 23, 2017

Iraqi politician Mithal al-Alusi shares his personal thoughts on the future of a rapidly changing world in both the United States and his home country.

6- [Surviving the Transition in the Middle East](#)

Dlawaer Ala'Aldeen- January 24, 2017

Head of the Middle East Research Institute in Kurdistan Dlawaer Ala'Aldeen breaks down the changing geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. Global power dynamics, he argues, have ripple effects into the Middle East that empower regional and local actors.

7- [A How-To Guide for Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem](#)

Einat Wilf -January 30, 2017

Einat Wilf, the former member of the Israeli Knesset, lays out a straightforward plan for moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. If done correctly, the move could be an important step in clarifying and reasserting the U.S.-Israel relationship while also set parameters for further steps in the peace process.

8- [Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: Beyond the Outrage](#)

Hassan Mneimneh- January 30, 2017

Contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh, meanwhile, argues that it is vital for the Arab community to overcome its negativity towards such a move. If Palestinians and their Arab allies wish to continue their pursuit of statehood, accepting Jerusalem as Israel's capital is paramount.

9- [The Nineveh Plains and the Future of Minorities in Iraq](#)

Yousif Kalian-February 7, 2016

Next door to the south lie the Nineveh plains, where Washington Institute research assistant Yousif Kalian suggests that the best way to protect Christian and Yezidi minorities is to establish a semi-autonomous Christian province. Self-governance, he argues, is the only sure way to avoid further atrocities against minorities.

10- [Islamists in Kurdistan: Challenges and Aspirations](#)

Mohammed Abu Bakr-February 7, 2017

In response to a recent Fikra publication on Islamists in Iraqi Kurdistan, argues that the Kurdish Islamist parties have done a commendable job of operating within the parameters of democratic politics. According to the author, their shortcomings are not due entirely to their own failures but are rather symptoms of the larger Kurdish political sphere.

11- [Will the Lebanese President Be Assad's New Friend in Town?](#)

Fady al-Dahouk-February 10th, 2017

Writing from Beirut, journalist Fady al-Dahouk looks at the effect Lebanon's new president, Michel Aoun, will have on relations with Syria. As Dahouk explains, this is an issue influenced by Iran and the Gulf States nearly as much as by Lebanon itself.

12- [The Islamic State and al-Qaeda in Pakistan](#)

Farhan Zahid-February 14, 2017

Moving away from Israel all the way to Pakistan, counter-terrorism scholar Farhan Zahid provides a detailed and insightful breakdown of the Islamic State's growing reach into Pakistan. Though not discussed in the United States nearly as much as its branches in the Middle East, ISIS enjoys remarkable support and success in what has been typically considered al-Qaeda territory.

13- [The Case Against Moving the Embassy](#)

Mohammed Dajani- February 14, 2017

Responding to other posts, Palestinian founder of the reformist Wasatia Movement Mohammed Dajani argues against moving the American embassy in Israel to Tel Aviv. Doing so would only hamper the peace process, he argues, and cause unnecessary violence along the way.

14- [The Islamic State and al-Qaeda in Pakistan](#)

Farhan Zahid- February 14, 2017

Expanding upon his previous article, Farhan Zahid dives deeper into the complex issues relating to the Islamic State's following in Pakistan. While much of the group's strength comes from Iraq and Syria, their roots in Pakistan go much deeper than many realize.

15- [Saudi and Iranian Rapprochement in the Face of Russia and Turkey](#)

Baraa Sabri -February 14, 2017

Syrian writer Baraa Sabri writes to us from Erbil to discuss a potential warming of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While it may sound unlikely, recent events and complex, multifaceted regional alliances suggest that it is a serious possibility.

16- [To Kurdistan and Back: Iran's Forgotten Front](#)

David Pollock - February 28, 2017

Fikra Forum Director David Pollock discusses, based on recent travel, the oft-overlooked issue of the Kurdish-Iranian relationship. Iran wields a considerable amount of pressure over Kurdistan, in part through its ties to Baghdad. Iran also stands firmly against Kurdish independence. But the United States now has an excellent opportunity to push back.

17- [Iraq: In Need of a Force of Change](#)

Khalid Sulaiman-February 28, 2017

Iraqi Kurdish journalist Khalid Sulaiman warns that a recent spate of laws in Iraq serves only to further sectarianism. The Iraqi government, he argues, is not effectively representing the entire population, contorting Parliament into a corrupt, highly partisan tool.

18- [Turkey: Between Border Conflicts and Regional Expansion](#)

Sadek Ali Hassan-February 28, 2017

Another Iraqi journalist, Sadek Ali Hassan, writes on Turkey's political strategy in northern Iraq. Mosul is highly symbolic for Turkey's plans to return to regional dominance. But, he argues, this militaristic and self-serving approach spells trouble in the long term.

19- [The Internal Collapse Facing Lebanon's Shiites](#)

Hala Nasrallah- March 6, 2017

Writing from Lebanon, Hala Nasrallah reports that the Lebanese Shiite community is on the verge of a reckoning. The Lebanese government has failed to adequately provide for the economic and security needs of its citizens, resulting in high tension, low support, and growing instability.

20- [Al-Azhar and the President](#)

Maged Atef- March 6, 2017

In Egypt, the situation is reversed: as Maged Atef writes, the appearance of the conflict does not necessarily mean there is one. Despite public spats between Al-Azhar University and the President, as Atef explains, the relationship between the two is far too symbiotic and intertwined to fall out over minor disagreements.

21- [A Muslim Healer for Our Time](#)

John Kiser-March 7, 2017

Finally, John Kiser argues that the key to reconciliation between the West and Islamic groups in the Middle East actually lies in the past, with the model of Emir Abdelkader. The 19th century Algerian, Kiser claims, can serve as a model for devotion to a jihad that exemplifies both Christian and Muslim values.

22- [The Syrian Revolution: "Safe Zones" and Considerations for the Future](#)

Hassan Mneimneh- March 13, 2017

This week on Fikra Forum, Hassan Mneimneh takes stock of the Syrian war six years on. While there are some hard truths to reckon with, there are also steps the United States can take to help alleviate the suffering and work towards a resolution.

23- [Politicized Forces and the Issue of an Independent Kurdish State](#)

Hawre Hasan Hama-March 14, 2017

Kurdish professor and security expert Hawre Hasan Hama looks at the issue of security forces in an independent Kurdish state. Tensions between the KDP and the PUK could spell trouble --unless each is allowed to keep its own security force!

24- [From Cairo to Berlin: Why is ISIS Targeting Christians?](#)

Mohamed Soliman-March 20, 2017

From Iraq, Mohamed Soliman raises new alarms about the Islamic State and its Christian targets. Many factors have contributed to the escalation of Islamic State attacks on Christians, and unfortunately, Soliman does not see them subsiding anytime soon.

25- [Sisi and the Copts: Grim Prospects for a Troubled Relationship](#)

Rany Aziz- March 20, 2017

And Egyptian author Rany Aziz takes a closer look at how Coptic Christians in Egypt have also been targeted recently, and how the Egyptian government has responded. While the Copts and Sisi enjoyed a positive relationship for a few years, this has become increasingly strained in the wake of attacks and what many see as poor government responses.

26- [An Open Letter from a Young Saudi to Prince Mohammad bin Salman](#)

Abdulhameed Hakeem- March 21, 2017

Writing from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Abdulhameed Hakeem pens a remarkable open letter to Prince Mohammed bin Salman about the great challenges and opportunities ahead: the U.S., Wahhabism, Iran, and Israel. Hakeem urges the prince to confront Iran, rebrand Wahhabism, befriend Washington – and make peace with Israel.

27- [The View From Marrakesh: "Africans Against Islamic Extremism!"](#)

David Pollock- March 27, 2017

At last month's Marrakesh Security Forum, Fikra Forum director David Pollock reports, Morocco moved closer to its renewed African Union partners to tackle jihadi extremism. Notably, however, Morocco's North African Arab

neighbors were barely present.

28- [The African Economic Safari of Mohammed VI](#)

Mohamed Chtatou- March 27, 2017

Writing from Rabat, Mohamed Chtatou credits King Mohammed VI with this renewed focus on Africa. This return to Morocco's roots, as Chtatou sees it, will be a boon for it and for Africa's economic, cultural, and human development.

29- [U.S.-Algeria Cooperation in Transnational Counterterrorism](#)

Hakim Gherieb-March 27, 2017

From Algeria, Hakim Gherieb reviews its relationship with the United States on counterterrorism. Algeria's extensive experience has proven important to the West, and a renewed commitment by the United States to this relationship is key to counterterrorism – and the growth of Algeria as a nation.

30- [Algerian Opposition: Running in a Vicious Circle](#)

Yacine Boudhane- April 3, 2017

Writing from Algeria, Yacine Boudhane explains how the Algerian opposition is chiefly struggling against itself. Even without much real power, the political opposition has repeatedly failed to make changes that would enable it to do better -- whether in leadership, communications, or financial resources.

31- [Occupation, Not Apartheid](#)

Mohammed Dajani-April 7, 2017

Mohammed Dajani, the Palestinian founder of the reformist Islamic Wasatia Movement, explains why the assertion that Israel is an apartheid state is not accurate. There is an occupation, he argues, but the definition of apartheid does not apply to the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

32- [Back to Basics: The U.S.-Saudi Relationship in the Trump Era](#)

Nathan Field- April 7, 2017

After Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's recent visit to the United States, Nathan Field writes that there is a new era in U.S.-Saudi relations – or more accurately, a return to the old one. While the Obama administration's approach to the kingdom was decidedly distant, President Trump's friendly approach signals a return to normalcy.

33- [A Different Message to Prince Mohammad bin Salman from Another Young Saudi](#)

Adel bin Abed-April 17, 2017

In response to a previous article, Adel bin Abed writes that Saudi Arabia's future ought not to be determined by a few, but by many supported by their leaders. Participation is key to the kingdom's future.

34- [The Day After: What the United States Can Do](#)

Omar al-Nidawi- April 19, 2017

Iraq analyst Omar al-Nidawi considers the challenges that will face the United States and Iraq after the fall of ISIS. While it will not be an easy task, there are a few specific measures that would make the transition significantly smoother and much more peaceful.

35- [Regional Consequences of Trump's Travel Ban](#)

Mohamed Abdel-Aziz - 20 April 2017

Fikra Forum editor Mohamed Abdelaziz breaks down the reactions from the Middle East to the Trump administration's travel ban. Official responses ranged from strong opposition to de facto support through silence.

36- [The Dangers of the Institutionalization of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units](#)

Sardar Aziz- April 25, 2017

Kurdish political adviser Sardar Aziz warns that the integration of the Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Units, into the Iraqi army could spell serious trouble for national stability. While helpful now, in the long run, it will only contribute to sectarianism.

37- [Firing Up Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq](#)

Yerevan Saeed- April 26, 2017

Arab Gulf States Institute research associate Yerevan Saeed looks into the chatter about a possible referendum for Kurdish independence. A referendum is driven by Kurdish nationalism – and possible Iraqi support for independence – could lead to independence, but as Saeed explains, it may not be the best route.

38- [Will Saudi Women Get Equality?](#)

Salman al-Ansari- April 27, 2017

Saudi Political analyst Salman al-Ansari makes a forceful argument for gender rights in Saudi Arabia. Equality is necessary for the success of the country, and the freedom to drive, though only one of many necessary changes, would be a powerfully symbolic step forward.

39- [Political Tussles in Algeria on the Eve of Parliamentary Elections](#)

Farid Baghdad- May 2, 2017

The week of Algeria's elections, Farid Baghdad writes from there of the political impasse facing his country. Whether or not the parliamentary elections are significant, he explains, depends mostly on their results, as opposition parties have long struggled to gain any footing.

40- [Can Diversity in the Middle East Be Rescued?](#)

Hassan Mneimneh- May 5, 2017

Contributing Fikra editor Hassan Mneimneh asks whether the Middle East can once again become the diverse society it once was. With Egypt as a case study, he argues that the problem is not religion, as many believe, but rather education.

41- [From Qamishli to Qamishlo: A Trip to Rojava's New Capital](#)

Fabrice Balanche- May 8, 2017

Much more dramatic changes are afoot in northern Syria, as Fabrice Balanche writes after a rare trip to Qamishli. What was once a thriving city is now a hub for the Kurdish PYD, rife with sociopolitical tensions exacerbated by a sluggish economy.

42- [Building a "Joint Force" to Control Liberated Yazidi Towns](#)

Michael Knights and Hamdi Malik- June 7, 2017

Michael Knights and Hamdi Malik explore the tensions among those liberating Islamic State-held towns in Iraq. The most effective way to move forward, they argue, would be a "joint force" approach for Kurdish and Iraqi government armies.

43- [Iraqi Public Opinion Shows a New Bridge of Hope and an Old Valley of Concerns](#)

Munqith Dagher-June 7, 2017

Iraqi pollster Munqith Dagher shares his latest findings on public opinion in Iraq. Especially notable are the much higher Sunni Arab level of trust in the Iraqi government and security forces – but also the low level among Kurds.

44- [Arabs, Kurds, and Amazigh: The Quest for Nationalist Fulfillment, Old and New](#)

Hassan Mneimneh- June 7, 2017

Contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh looks at the state of nationalist movements in the region. While Arab nationalism is largely on its way out, he claims, Kurdish and Amazigh (Berber) nationalisms – once subsumed by Arab nationalism – are on the rise.

45- [Palestinian Public Are Tactical Moderates, But Strategic Militants: Where Does That Lead?](#)

David Pollock- June 15, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock analyzes a unique new survey in the West Bank and Gaza, which show some surprising results. Despite aggressive rhetoric by Palestinian leaders, the Palestinian people have more moderate tactical views.

46- [Assurances from Washington, Fears in Cairo](#)

Maged Atef-June 13, 2017

Writing from Egypt, Maged Atef discusses President Sisi's recent visit to Washington. While President Trump expressed more support for Sisi than the United States did in the past, the implications for human rights of further legitimizing Sisi's rule are deeply troubling.

47- [Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization in Egypt and Libya: Returnees and Foresight](#)

Sara Brzuszkiewicz- June 13, 2017

A problem Sisi still faces at home, however, is fighters returning from the Islamic State. As Sara Brzuszkiewicz explains, both Egypt and Libya have historical experiences with de-radicalization to draw on but must adapt to the present situation.

48- [Islam, Muslims, and Multiple Allegiances](#)

Salahaddin Bahaaddin-June 14, 2017

Among the challenges of de-radicalization is redefining Islam. As Salahaddin Bahaaddin, secretary-general of the Kurdistan Islamic Union, writes, one can be Islamist without being violent; indeed, these differences must be carefully drawn and understood.

49- [The Gulf Crisis: A Tragic Act of Self-Immolation](#)

Hassan Mneimneh-June 15, 2017

Finally, contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh weighs in on the ongoing crisis between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors. While Qatar certainly needs to correct its path, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates must also adhere to the standards they are putting forth. Despite its problems, the GCC is worth saving.

50- [The Surprising Opinions of Palestinians](#)

David Pollock - New York Daily News- June 7, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock reports that despite the current diplomatic impasse, just a third of Palestinians

today prefer escalated "resistance" over other, nonviolent options. But many see instability looming in the West Bank. U.S. policy, he argues, should preempt that prospect by first focusing on practical steps to improve conditions both there and in Gaza.

51- [The PKK in Sinjar at the Center of Many Conflicts](#)

Raed al-Hamid- July 5, 2017

Iraqi researcher Raed al-Hamid looks at the role of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in Iraq today. Taking advantage of tensions between the Yazidis and the Peshmerga, the PKK has established a new foothold in the region for itself – and Iran.

52- [The Kurdish Referendum and the Status of Kirkuk](#)

Nahwi Saeed-July 5, 2017

Nahwi Saeed explains the challenge of dealing with Kirkuk in the upcoming Kurdish referendum. Besides the seemingly intractable legal issue of the disputed territories, deciding what to do with Kirkuk now includes the added difficulty of preparing for post-ISIS Arab-Kurdish military conflict.

53- [The United States and Saudi Arabia Have More in Common Than Mere Interests](#)

Fahad Nazer- July 12, 2018

Saudi consultant Fahad Nazer argues that despite popular sentiment, the United States and Saudi Arabia are really not so different. A number of the kingdom's reforms, both political and religious, show that the country is further from the outdated perspective many apply to Saudi Arabia.

54- [America's Coming Role in Syria](#)

Youssef Sadaki- July 20, 2017

Syrian researcher Youssef Sadaki takes a look at how American political dynamics will affect the United States' role in Syria. While countering terrorism is certainly important, Sadaki emphasizes the necessity of outlining a strategy for what to do with the Syrian government, and how to manage politics in the country going forward.

55- [When Female Fighters Lead the Charge](#)

Hussain Zaidou- July 20, 2017

Journalist Hussain Zaidou writes about the important role women have played in the fight against the Islamic State. Zaidou argues that the value of the YPJ in the fight will translate into more opportunities for women after the fighting is over.

56- [Eliminating Radicalism in the Arab and Islamic World: Education before Prison and Court](#)

Khaled Sulaiman-July 25, 2017

Kurdish journalist Khaled Sulaiman argues that knowledge and education are some of the best weapons to eliminate radicalism in the Arab and Islamic world. To successfully use education to fight false information and radical ideology, however, educational curricula in schools will have to be changed from its current state.

57- [The United States and Saudi Arabia Do Not Share Values](#)

Amy Hawthorne and Christian Bischoff- July 27, 2017

Amy Hawthorne, Deputy Director for Research at the Project on Middle East Democracy, and Christian Bischoff, research intern, argue that contrary to others' claims there have not been any serious improvements on civil rights in Saudi Arabia. Changes that have been implemented are, in practice, ineffective and mostly for show.

58- [Sisi's Predicament](#)

Khaled Sulaiman- July 26, 2017

Egyptian journalist Maged Atef writes on the anger of Egyptian society in response to the transfer of the two disputed islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. However, Egyptians are divided on their feelings about Sisi generally, and as Atef explains, the president is more calculated in his decisions than some might think.

59- [East Jerusalem Palestinian Poll Shows Rising Nationalism As Tensions Grow](#)

David Pollock -August 8, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock reveals a surprising new find from polls conducted among Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Despite being generally more moderate than Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem's Palestinians have become increasingly nationalistic and would now prefer Palestinian citizenship over Israeli.

60- [Why Israel Should Listen to Jordan on the Temple Mount](#)

Abdullah Swalha- August 11, 2017

Abdullah Swalha, founder, and chairman of the Center of Israeli Studies in Amman, Jordan, calls for Israel to pay closer attention to Jordan's position and role in quelling conflicts like that at the Temple Mount recently. Both Jordan and Israel have a strong interest in ensuring peace and stability at the holy sites, and Jordan is a necessary ally in that goal.

61- [Foreign Fights Among the Hashd al-Shaabi](#)

Brandon Wallace- August 22, 2017

U.S. researcher Brandon Wallace examines the growing concern about foreign fighters in the ranks of the Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq. In addition to security concerns regarding fighters' return to their home countries, their presence in Iraq is a political challenge for Iraq, the United States, and Gulf allies.

62- [The Temple Mount: An Israeli Perspective](#)

Michael Herzog- August 24, 2017

Israeli Reserve General Michael Herzog responds to a recent article in Fikra Forum on the Temple Mount crisis. Israel, he argues, made a practical security decision in the face of a terrorist attack, particularly considering that Israel would ultimately receive criticism either way.

63- [Russia and Turkey in Syria](#)

Muthna al-Ubaidi- August 25, 2017

Iraqi researcher Muthna al-Ubaidi compares and contrasts the Russian and Turkish approaches to Syria. Despite the appearance of easing bilateral tensions, both Russia and Turkey are ultimately driven by separate goals, leaving little guarantee of continued rapprochement.

64- [Jerusalem Palestinian Poll Shows How Events Shift Attitudes Sharply. Pro and Con](#)

David Pollock- September 5, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock further analyzes findings of a recent poll conducted among East Jerusalem's Palestinians. In the space of just two years opinions have shifted surprisingly – mostly in a negative direction.

65- [Dealing with Hate Sermons](#)

Mohammed S. Dajani - September 5, 2017

Palestinian Professor Mohammed Dajani addresses the increasing number of extremist sermons by imams in both the Middle East and the West. The most effective way to counter such hate speech, Dajani argues, is by embracing the tradition of moderation and peace found throughout Islamic history.

66- [The Growing Power of Water in Syria](#)

Samuel Northrup-September 12, 2017

Washington Institute research assistant Samuel Northrup looks at how the Syrian government and opposition have strategically used water in the civil war. He argues that as water scarcity increases, water is increasingly becoming a tool of oppression and control against the Syrian people.

67- [How Qatar Seeks to Establish New Trade Routes](#)

Sigurd Neubauer- September 13, 2017

Sigurd Neubauer reports that while Qatar's economy has actually remained fairly strong through the crisis and successfully adapted its trade routes, for the time being, the biggest short-term concern is regarding Qatar Airways, which could be the canary in the coal mine for the Qatari economy as the crisis continues.

68- [What USAID Should Know of its History](#)

Mahmoud Farouk- September 13, 2017

Mahmoud Farouk, a program associate at the Project on Middle East Democracy, reflects on his own experiences with USAID in Egypt and cautions new USAID administrator Mark Green against business as usual in Egypt – instead, it must focus on democracy and its own public image.

69- [Pragmatic Options for Gaza](#)

Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib- September 14, 2017

Founder of Project Unified Assistance Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib emphasizes the need for stability and improved humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, and suggests that one useful way to move towards that is by reviving an airstrip that would operate under UN control and IDF approval. If properly managed, a neutral international presence could help lessen Hamas' influence.

70- [Qatar-Egypt Rivalry at Heart of UNESCO Election](#)

Joseph Hammond- September 15, 2017

American Media Institute reporter Joseph Hammond breaks down the latest theater of Middle East conflict, the upcoming election for UNESCO Director-General. Qatar and Egypt are both campaigning as much against each other as for themselves.

71- [New Jordan Poll Reveals Surprisingly Moderate Public Opinion](#)

David Pollock- September 19, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock discusses the results of a recent poll in Jordan that show its public's surprisingly moderate position on issues including counter-terrorism and relations with Israel.

72- [The Evolution of Women in the Islamic State](#)

Anne Jacobs- September 26, 2017

Anne Jacobs, a graduate student at Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs, traces the changing role of women in the Islamic State. As Jacobs explains, it is a more nuanced topic than often suggested by Western media reports.

73- [In Tunisia's War on Corruption, Local Government is on the Front Line](#)

Brian Braun and Eguiar Lizundia - October 2, 2017

As Brian Braun and Eguiar Lizundia of the International Republican Institute report, corruption remains a major issue in Tunisia years after the revolution. According to a recent study, corruption is rife at the local level – but this is also a key place to begin rooting it out.

74- [Unique Saudi Poll Shows Moderate Majority, But Sectarian Split](#)

David Pollock 10-03-2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock writes about the results from two recent polls, one conducted in Saudi Arabia and one in the United Arab Emirates. While both countries are divided nearly down the middle in their opinions on the Qatar boycott, they are much more decidedly opposed to Iranian influence in the region, although sectarian differences are stark.

75- [The Radical Change of the Tunisian Peaceful Revolution](#)

Ahmed Gaaloul - October 5, 2017

Ennahda leader Ahmed Gaaloul argues that the Islamist party's involvement in Tunisian government is further proof of that country's democratic success. The political tension Tunisians face today is not between Islamism and secularism, he claims, but between those who support democracy and change and those who do not.

76- [Tattoo Sectarianism](#)

Hala Nasrallah - October 5, 2017

Lebanese activist Hala Nasrallah looks at growing social divisions among Lebanese as evidenced by the rising popularity of religious tattoos. While Hezbollah has tried to present itself as representative of all Shia, class divisions among Lebanese Shia have only deepened.

77- [An Iranian Land Bridge is Not the End of the World](#)

Omal Al-Nidawi - October 16, 2017

Analyst Omar al Nidawi argues that the States must not allow Iran's attempts at a land bridge across the Middle East to drive its military policy. Doing so, he explains, would only dig the United States further into the quagmire.

78- [The Kurdish Challenge to U.S. Strategy in Iraq](#)

Zmkan Saleem - October 16, 2017

Writing from Sulaymaniyah, Zmkan Saleem cautions that despite ongoing complications, it is in the United States' best interest to continue support for Iraqi Kurds. Ultimately, this is the best chance the United States has at countering Iranian influence in Iraq and the region.

79- [Manich Msamha: Anti-Corruption is a Feminist Agenda](#)

Ikram Ben Said – October 18, 2017

Ikram Ben Said, the founder of Tunisian organization Aswat Nissa, explains that Tunisia's recent anti-corruption measure is as much a feminist issue as the recent marriage law. Tunisian feminists, who helped lead the charge in 2011, must continue fighting for equality across social, political, and economic lines to ensure the democratic transition continues.

80- [Dueling at the End of Times](#)

Hassan Mneimneh - October 18, 2017

Contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh takes a deep dive into the history of apocalyptic rhetoric mobilized by radical Sunni and Shia movements. The proper remedy, Mneimneh cautions, is not one of religious debate but rather of non-sectarian, tangible support.

81- [Can we Trust the Qatari Courts to Try Al Jazeera?](#)

Muhamed Sabry - October 19, 2017

Egyptian journalist Muhamed Sabry reviews new information regarding Mohamed Fahmy's suit against Al Jazeera, and looks into whether the requested move to try the case in Qatar has any chance of resulting in a fair trial.

82- [Positive Views On U.S. Policy Push, But Some Splits](#)

David Pollock- October 25, 2017

In the latest of a series of poll findings, Fikra Forum director David Pollock reveals that Kuwaiti society is among the most supportive of the United States in the region -- but only by a slim margin. Interestingly, though there is a sharp sectarian divide on some issues, the vast majority overall disapprove of Iran's regional activities.

83- [What Have the Amazigh Achieved in Algeria?](#)

Yacine Boudhane - October 27, 2017

Thirty-seven years after the "Berber Spring" uprising, Yacine Boudhane looks at the state of the Berber struggle in his home community of Algeria. Despite the government finally recognizing Amazigh as an official language, Boudhane argues, there is considerable work yet to be done.

84- [Hezbollah: Dreams of Expansion](#)

Maged Atef - November 2, 2017

Egyptian journalist Maged Atef brings a new analytical perspective to the Battle of Aarsal. Though overlooked in a much recent analysis, Hezbollah's approach is a deft continuation of the group's—and Iran's—trajectory toward solidifying control and influence in both Lebanon and Syria.

85- [Can Kurds Coexist with Arabs in Iraq?](#)

Biner Aziz - November 7, 2017

Writing from Erbil, Kurdish businessman and political consultant Biner Aziz asks whether Kurds and Arabs can peacefully coexist in a united Iraq. Since the referendum relations between the two groups have deteriorated considerably, but, Aziz argues, realism going forward is key for Kurdish survival.

86- [The Kurdish Security Dilemma, Explained](#)

Yervan Saeed – November 7, 2017

Also, from Kurdistan, research associate Yerevan Saeed looks to history for an explanation of Barzani's decision to hold the referendum. While some have questioned the former prime minister's reasoning, Saeed explains that one must understand the security situation in which Barzani came of age.

87- [Cairo and the Reconfiguration of the Palestinian Landscape](#)

Mohamed Soliman - November 8, 2017

From Cairo, Egyptian analyst Mohamed Soliman discusses Egypt's role in attempts at Palestinian political reconciliation and Cairo's relationship with Hamas. According to Soliman, Hamas is unlikely to accept a Cairo-influenced Palestinian future.

88- [Behind Lebanon's Continuing Crisis](#)

David Pollock - November 9, 2017

In his latest comprehensive poll of Lebanese society, Fikra Forum director David Pollock finds Lebanon deeply divided along religious and sectarian lines – particularly about Iran and Hezbollah. Sunnis are solidly against both; Shia in favor; Christians are split nearly down the middle. Interestingly, however, a majority in each group favors greater religious tolerance.

89- [Hezbollah and Iran in Syria](#)

Mounir al-Rabih - November 13, 2017

Writing from Lebanon, journalist Mounir al-Rabih explains Hezbollah's role in the Syrian war—a role driven by Iran. Despite Nasrallah's initial justifications for Hezbollah's involvement, Rabih shows how time has revealed its real purpose in the conflict.

90- [Iranian Military Doctrine](#)

Firas Elias - November 15, 2017

Iraqi professor Firas Elias, writing from Mosul, takes a deep dive into Iran's military doctrine. As Elias explains, this doctrine is based on religion, not merely political calculus.

91- [Reflections on the Radicalization of Young Moroccans](#)

Mohamed Chtatou - November 15, 2017

Writing from Rabat, Moroccan professor Mohamed Chtatou argues that despite sensationalist media reports, the onus of addressing the radicalization of young Moroccans in Europe falls not on Morocco, but on the European countries in which these people live.

92- [Sunnis and Shia in Bahrain: New Survey Shows Both Conflict and Consensus](#)

David Pollock - November 20, 2017

Fikra Forum director David Pollock reviews the results of a recent, one-of-a-kind poll in Bahrain. He shows that Sunnis and Shia in this small but important Gulf country are divided on Iran but more united on other tough issues.

93- [Saudi Arabia May Have Just Gifted Lebanon to Iran](#)

Hassan Menimneh - November 20, 2017

Contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh breaks down the odd resignation of Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri. In addition to an increased Iranian influence in Lebanon, Mneimneh warns of an irreparable break in relations between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

94- [Have We Forgotten the Women of Yemen?](#)

Nadia al-Sakkaf - November 27, 2017

As former Yemeni Minister of Information Nadia al-Sakkaf explains, women have been especially marginalized in Yemen as the war continues. Despite their activism and record of political achievement after 2011, Yemeni women have since been pushed aside.

95- [A Better Future for Syrian Kurdistan](#)

Hassan Saleh - November 29, 2017

Writing from Qamishli, Syria, Yekiti leader Hassan Saleh advocates for an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria modeled after that in Iraq. Throughout the war, he argues, Syrian Kurds have proven that they are more than capable of creating stable and peaceful self-government.

96- [The Tunisian Revolution and Its Youth: The Democratic Deficit](#)

Elyes Ezzine- 27 November 2017

Tunisian civil society advocate Elyes Ezzine calls for Tunisian youth to step back to the plate. While they were instrumental in Tunisia's democratic revolution, their lack of active involvement in politics leaves too much room for bad actors to gain power in the country.

97- [Whom Do Iraq's Turkmen Parties Serve?](#)

Muaffik Adil Omar- December 4, 2017

Writing from Iraqi Kurdistan, Muaffik Adil Omar explains the complex relationships between Iraq's Turkmen political parties and their various allegiances. Despite claiming to represent Turkmen interests, in practice, these parties are beholden to the interests of larger parties that protect their representation without providing meaningful political assistance.

98- [The Iranian Zeitgeist: Success in Arab Media](#)

Hassan Mneimneh - December 11, 2017

Fikra Forum contributing editor Hassan Mneimneh takes a deep dive into Iran's international public relations narrative. Despite its deeply sectarian motives and actions, Iran has managed to control the media discussion – if not coherently, then completely enough to prevent any other party from putting together a cohesive response.

99- [The Hard Reality of Civil Society in the Arab World](#)

Mohamed Abdelaziz – 11 December 2017

Fikra Forum Arabic editor Mohamed Aziz argues that in the unstable political environment of most Arab Countries today, there simply cannot be a strong civil society. As long as a regime feels threatened enough to begin a crackdown, it is impossible for authentic civil society organizations to effectively and safely operate.

100- [In Jerusalem, It's Time to Get Out the Vote](#)

Mohammed S. Dajani - December 14, 2017

In the wake of the Trump administration's announcement recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Palestinian, Israeli, Lebanese, and European contributors at Fikra Forum provide new perspectives on the issue. East Jerusalem Palestinian professor Mohammed Dajani and an Israeli colleague, former Jerusalem City Council member Meir Margalit, write that the most effective and powerful way forward for the city's Palestinian residents is to exercise their right to vote in municipal elections. Also writing from Jerusalem, Swedish expert Magnus Norell takes a deep dive into how this announcement fits with various proposed peace plans. Ultimately, he explains, the U.S. move is not the end of any peace plan—but negotiations must be undertaken carefully.

101- [Egypt's Unfinished Revolution: The Fight for Sexual Equality](#)

Rania Said Abdalla – December 15, 2017

Fikra Forum research assistant Rania Said Abdalla argues that the ideals of Egypt's 2011 revolution cannot be fully realized until LGBT+ rights are protected. As the recent crackdown on the LGBT+ community shows, it is not just the Egyptian government but also the media that bear responsibility for this persecution.

102- [Striking Deals with the Islamic State: A Fruitful Iranian Tactic](#)

Omar Alradad – December 20, 2017

Former Jordanian Brigadier General Omar Alradad looks at the transactional relationship between the Islamic State and Iran-sponsored Shia militia organizations. Despite their supposed rivalry, this has been a beneficial tactic for both groups and must be carefully monitored in order to improve counterterror strategies in the region.

103- [Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel...Why Wonder?](#)

Ramy Aziz – December 21, 2017

Ramy Aziz argues that Jerusalem has essentially always been the capital of Israel, but the embassy announcement allows Palestinians to re-enter fruitful discussions with the international community.

104- [To Save Syria, Assad Must Step Down](#)

Oula Alrifai – December 26, 2017

Syrian activist and student Oula Alrifai outlines the steps necessary to move Syria beyond conflict and towards a political system that represents and protects Syrian citizens. Key to achieving this, she explains, is an American-Russian partnership to remove Assad and avoid undue influence by Iran, which will further help mitigate the threat of terrorism in Syria and beyond. ❖



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