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CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[Fighting on Two Fronts: Secular Parties in the Arab World](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – May 2007

Without strong secular parties, political competition in the Arab world could be reduced to a dangerous head-on confrontation between Islamist parties and the incumbent governments. Yet secular parties—a broad term referring to organizations that do not embrace a political platform inspired by religious ideals—are clearly facing a crisis in the Arab world as they struggle for influence, relevance, and in some cases, survival.

[Iraq: The Da'wa Party's Eventful Past and Tentative Future](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – May 2007

Founded by Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr and inspired by his ideas of *wilayat al-ummah* (rule of the community), the Iraqi Da'wa party has evolved from an underground movement espousing Islamic revolution to a major player in an Iraqi democratic government. The party has undergone tectonic ideological shifts but still faces major challenges in mobilizing support if it hopes to remain relevant.

[Arab States: Five Myths About Western Political Party Aid](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – May 2007

Until recently Western assistance programs aimed at strengthening political parties were less present in the Arab world than in almost all other areas of the developing world. As part of the heightened U.S. and European interest in promoting Arab political reform, however, such programs are multiplying in the region

[The Cauldron May Bubble Over Again](#)

The Economist – 24 May 2007

FIGHTING raged this week between the Lebanese army and radical Islamists entrenched in a Palestinian refugee camp, leaving scores dead and hundreds wounded. Beginning on May 20th, the thud of explosions and clatter of machine-gun fire echoed into the hills above the Nahr al-Bared camp, near the northern city of Tripoli, as troops struggled to root out several hundred heavily armed fighters. By mid-week, many of the camp's 30,000 or so residents had fled during lulls in the shooting. But as edgy, exhausted army conscripts tightened their siege, and the militants inside declared a fight to the death, the battle looked set to continue.

[Neighbourly Mumbblings](#)

The Economist – 17 May 2007

IT SEEMS increasingly likely, after 28 years of formal silence (with just the occasional back-channel mutterings and whispers), that American and Iranian officials will sit down

together, if only to talk about Iraq. The two sides are expected to meet, perhaps only at ambassadorial level to begin with, on May 28th in Baghdad. However big the caveats, it will be a breakthrough. Each side is keen to assert it has not flip-flopped. Neither side is sure where such talks might lead.

[A General State of Disarray](#)

The Economist – 17 May 2007

ON MAY 12th the port mega-city of Karachi, a great and seething Asian bazaar, returned to the violence that has scarred its modern history. Around 40 people were killed and scores injured in two days of gun battles. Corpses were dragged from shot-up cars and displayed on the tarmac. Along Shahrah-e-Faisal, the main thoroughfare, shop-fronts were smashed and set ablaze. As the carnage spread, 15,000 police and paramilitary troops stood by, unwilling or unable to intervene.

[The Party is Over](#)

The Economist – 31 May 2007

THE nine judges of Thailand's Constitutional Tribunal took ten hours to outline in a marathon session, televised live on May 30th, the electoral-fraud cases against the country's two main political parties (and several small ones). They explained in elaborate detail why Thai Rak Thai (TRT), the largest, was being disbanded, whereas its main opponent, the Democrat party, was cleared of all charges. However, the elegance of their legal arguments may be lost on millions of Thais. They gave TRT sweeping election victories in 2001 and 2005 and probably still support the party and its leader, Thaksin Shinawatra. As voters may see it, the country's most popular party has been destroyed by a court set up by the military junta that seized power last year, claiming to be rescuing democracy.

[Israel Intensifies Attacks on Hamas](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 25 May 2007

As the two belligerent Palestinian factions - the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Fatah movement - negotiate to forge a truce in the Gaza Strip, Israel has vowed to continue attacks on Hamas. As *Jane's* went to press, an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire between the factions, declared on 21 May, had not put an end to the fighting, which to date has claimed the lives of some 100 Palestinians, but has brought about a decrease in internal clashes and in rocket fire on Israel

[New Iraq Troops for Buildup, Not Surge](#)

Space War – 30 May 2007

On May 8, 2007, the U.S. Department of Defense notified 35,000 soldiers that they would be sent to Iraq for the upcoming round of deployments. While such notifications are now commonplace, the fact that so many have been notified indicates that President

George W. Bush's "surge" of U.S. forces may not be so much of a short-lived surge, but rather an increase of troop strength that is intended to be sustained for some time.

DEFENCE BUDGET

[New Zealand Steps Up Defence Budget](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 24 May 2007

The New Zealand government has announced a Fiscal Year 2007-08 defence budget of NZD1.90 billion (USD1.38 billion). This represents an increase of 7.1 per cent over the allocated NZD1.78 billion for 2006-07 and translates to about one per cent of gross domestic product.

[GWOT Costs Push Up US DoD FY07 Spending](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 22 May 2007

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported on 18 May that US Department of Defence (DoD) spending on the Global War On Terror (GWOT) reached USD55.3 billion in the first five months of Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07). Also, the report said that full-year spending "may well exceed the amount reported for Fiscal Year 2006 [USD98.4 billion]".

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Is China a Military Threat or Another Paper Tiger](#)

Space War – 28 May 2007

How much of a threat is China's growing military to the security of the United States? China's investment in its military, from conventional weapons to cybersystems, along with its lack of openness regarding its intent, raises the possibility of a miscalculation that could spark a conflict with the United States, according to U.S. security policy experts.

[A New Defence Structure Critical for US Military Complex](#)

Space War – 17 May 2007

A leading think tank with the ear of the Pentagon says the U.S. Defense Department must embrace a new strategy for the future, one that recognizes the importance of stabilizing other governments. The Rand Corp. traces this new strategy to the U.S. policy set forth by President George W. Bush in his second inaugural address when he declared it to be the role of the United States to "end

tyranny. Rand endorses this policy as the "necessary response to conditions that can breed serious threats to the security of Americans worldwide." But it points out that pursuing those ends can cause profound challenges for the U.S. military.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[New Alloy Generates Hydrogen from Aluminium Alloy to Run Engines and Fuel Cells](#)

Space War – 23 May 2007

A Purdue University engineer has developed a method that uses an aluminum alloy to extract hydrogen from water for running fuel cells or internal combustion engines, and the technique could be used to replace gasoline. The method makes it unnecessary to store or transport hydrogen - two major challenges in creating a hydrogen economy, said Jerry Woodall, a distinguished professor of electrical and computer engineering at Purdue who invented the process.

[Laser Based Device Offers Alternative to Video Surveillance](#)

Space War – 23 May 2007

Surveillance systems take on a new look with a technology developed by researchers at the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The Laser-Based Item Monitoring System balances the need for high-resolution monitoring and personal safety with respect for confidentiality and personal privacy. This is especially important today with heightened emphasis on security and privacy and is possible because the system does not use video.

[S400 Missile Ready to Defend Moscow](#)

Space War – 23 May 2007

Washington (UPI) May 23, 2007 Russia's new state-of-the-art S-400 missile defense system will be operational around Moscow by the beginning of July. The commander of the Russian Air Force, three-star Col. Gen. Alexander Zelin, made the announcement Monday, RIA Novosti reported. RIA Novosti described the S-400 Triumf system, designated by NATO as the SA-21 Growler, as "a new air defense missile system developed by the Almaz Central Design Bureau as an upgrade of the S-300 family." "On July 1, one battalion of S-400 missile defense system will be put on combat duty to defend the airspace of Moscow and Central Russia," Zelin said.

ENERGY SECURITY

[New Nuclear Facilities Could Be in Your Backyard](#)

New Scientist – 24 May 2007

NOT many people want a nuclear power station in their backyard, but that's the prospect facing communities on both sides of the Atlantic as governments weigh up where to build a new wave of reactors. In the US, where more than 30 reactors are up for approval, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has already given the green light to sites in Clinton, Illinois, and Grand Gulf, Mississippi. Now a UK government report released on Wednesday alongside an energy policy paper is offering the first clues to where some of the 10 planned plants might be built. Existing sites at Hinkley Point in Somerset and Sizewell in Suffolk are best suited for the £1.2 billion reactors because of their good connections to the electricity grid, the report says. Bradwell in Essex and Dungeness in Kent are also possibilities.

[Inspired by Ancient Amazonians, A Plan to Convert Trash into Environmental Treasure](#)

Scientific American – 15 May 2007

When Desmond Radlein heard about Richard Branson and Al Gore's Virgin Earth Challenge, a contest in which the first person who can sequester one billion tons of carbon dioxide a year wins \$25 million, he got out his pencil and began figuring whether or not his company was up to the task. Radlein is on the board of directors at Dynamotive Energy Systems, an energy solutions provider based in Vancouver, British Columbia, that is one of several companies pioneering the use of pyrolysis, a process in which biomass is burned at a high temperature in the absence of oxygen. The process yields both a charcoal by-product that can be used as a fertilizer, and bio-oil, which is a mix of oxygenated hydrocarbons that can be used to generate heat or electricity.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Misunderstanding Iran](#)

Space War – 31 May 2007

Euphoria over the outcome of the talks between Washington and Tehran has given the die-hard proponents of conciliation with the Iranian mullahs a glimmer of hope. As illusory as they are, these expectations reveal a blurred understanding of the state of affairs in Iran and the essence of the Iranian mullahs' foreign and domestic policy.

[Rice Holds Line on Iran Nukes](#)

Times Magazine – 14 May 2007

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held the hard U.S. line against concessions to Iran over its nuclear program Thursday and renewed a conditional offer to talk to the clerical regime on any subject. Iran also refused to budge ahead of talks Thursday between Iran's chief international negotiator and the European Union's senior foreign policy official.