



Middle East & Africa Business Intelligence

www.ishtirak.org

About Us:

Founded in 2002, Ishtirak is a Middle East and Islamic Africa-focused consultancy offering political-risk, market research and community-engagement solutions to private and public sector clients, through direct consulting and subscription-based analysis. Work to date has focused on key countries within the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen), Iran, North Africa (Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt), West Africa and The Horn.

Quality business intelligence is predicated on a deep understanding of the political and social dynamics of a given country, as well as the region of which it is a part. Principals are multi-lingual country and subject experts, with prior careers as Middle East policy analysts, journalists, academics and diplomats.

Increasingly, active regional social and environmental engagements are key to winning projects and building lasting commercial relationships. Ishtirak's second practice area is the design and implementation of high-impact, sustainable community projects that generate further insight into local conditions, while helping our clients build lasting, local brand equity.

Many of our engagements involve the use of technology, particularly highly interactive custom databases and/or social networking applications.

Ishtirak offers its clients five complementary services:

- 1.) **Market Research and Risk Analysis**
- 2.) **Design and Implementation of Corporate-Sponsored Community Projects, supported by VisibleHand™**
- 3.) **Translation**
- 4.) **Networking, Strategy and Fundraising**
- 5.) **Fixed and Tailor-Made Information Products, Flashpoints®**

Market Research & Risk Analysis

Ishtirak works with companies, foundations and governments to provide business and operation-critical intelligence. We have produced everything from custom studies on specific regional industries and countries, to headquarters siting studies and entry strategies. Principals are frequently called upon to give expert testimony for a variety of government and private sector entities.

Example: Global Consumer Products Conglomerate

Alarmed by proliferating blog entries claiming its products were “incompatible with Islamic dietary proscriptions”, a major American consumer foods company hired Ishtirak to answer questions regarding the *halal* (religiously encouraged and permitted) or *masbooh* (doubtful) status of products marketed in the United States. Would the use of certain enzymes, for example, present issues for Muslim-American consumers? If so, what could be done about it, and how could the company accurately respond to questions in the interim? Ishtirak produced a quick strategy recommendation, and supported findings with case studies and interviews with leading Islamic scholars and Halal Food industry experts in the United States, U.K., Egypt and Malaysia.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Visible Hand™

Ishtirak has assisted a number of companies with the design and implementation of development initiatives tied to core corporate values and the actual needs of communities. Ishtirak’s development consulting work is supported by implementation of **Visible Hand™ project management software**, which clients have used to build thematic consistency among social and environmental initiatives across multiple business units, facilitate partnerships with local companies and NGOs, and report company social investments in a format consistent with existing sustainability reporting frameworks, such as GRI.

Example: Global Transportation & Logistics Company

Ishtirak worked with a Fortune 100 company to implement a custom version of Visible Hand™, which currently tracks more than 200 community and environment projects worldwide.

Translation

Ishtirak’s Translation Unit is capable of processing a wide range of documents in major Middle Eastern and African languages, including Arabic, Farsi, French and Hebrew. Ishtirak has translated several hundred thousand words’ worth of business and legal documents, detailed brochures and advertising and chat content. We pride ourselves on the ability to deal accurately with complicated, dialect-rich material and quick turn-around.

Example: Fortune 100 IT Company

A major international technology firm hired Ishtirak to translate and correct more than 50,000 short passages in five Arabic dialects, as part of an effort to 'train' proprietary Arabic-English-Arabic translation software.

Networking, Strategy and Fundraising

A major need in international development is disseminating project information widely and transparently, across stakeholders. Ishtirak (and its predecessor, Visible Hand) has assisted with networking, fundraising and strategy for a number of organizations, including the Mauritius Wildlife Preservation Foundation, American Institute for Maghrib Studies, the Saharan Studies Association and Meedan.

Example: Middle East Women-focused NGO

A prominent regional NGO hired Ishtirak to provide strategic advisory services and to design a major new program initiative around training, support services, and microcredit/insurance to victims of domestic violence across the Middle East. The Ishtirak team worked closely with the client’s staff in Cairo and

Amman to design a programmatic approach, helped identify potential sponsors, and then co-authored proposals to several large foundation partners.

Information Products: Flashpoints™

Ishtirak produces standardized and custom email briefings (Flashpoints™) on topics of particular interest to the international business and policy community. These 2-4 page summaries are based on local language sources (print, newspaper, internet and television), in-person interviews and custom research.

1. **Libya Monitor:** Key developments in the Libyan economic and political environment.
2. **Sahara Monitor:** Economic and political trends in the greater Sahara region, covering Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.
3. **Iranian Free & Special Economic Zone News:** Looks at developments within Iran's Special Economic and Free Trade Zones, and includes detailed information on new investments, regional trade, and the effect of international sanctions.
4. **Horn of Africa Security:** including information on trends in regional piracy, Piracy Task Force, regional political and economic developments affecting relationships between Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti.
5. **Gulf Educational Projects:** Updates and analysis on the status of a range of Gulf-based educational initiatives.
6. **Saudi Arabia Economic Cities:** Reports on latest developments within the Saudi Economic Cities, as well as KAUST.

We prepare custom Flashpoints on demand, as well as searches and translations of relevant pieces appearing in the Arabic, Farsi and French press.

Publications & Media

Ishtirak staff and consultants are the authors of books, articles and OpEds in publications on Middle East politics, economics and culture. Ishtirak staff have appeared, written for or been quoted by media including: *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The New York Times*, *The National Journal*, *Time Magazine*, *The Financial Times*, *Newsweek*, *the Wall Street Journal*, and *The Boston Globe*. For a full list of citations, see www.ishtirak.org

Principals:

Dr. David Gutelius, Co-Founder

Dr. Gutelius is a specialist in the economics of the Middle East and Africa, and a Consulting Senior Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab's National Security Analysis Department, where he works with a number of U.S. Government clients on strategic topics related to the Middle East and Africa. While at SRI International, Gutelius led teams of senior analysts looking at a variety of technology, policy, and development issues in the region. Gutelius is the author of a number articles and opinion pieces addressing a variety of topics, from US foreign policy to corporate governance and development in the Islamic world and new trends in social media. Previously a Visiting Professor at Stanford University. Dr. Gutelius holds Ph.D. and M.A. degrees in Economic History from Johns Hopkins and a B.A., with honors, in History and International Relations from Principia College. He speaks Hassaniyya, Darija, Arabic and French.

Dr. Ethan Chorin, Co-Founder

An economist and former diplomat, Ethan Chorin is an expert in the economies and politics of the Middle East and East Africa, and a research fellow at the Dubai School of Government. He served from 2004-2008 as a Foreign Service Officer, posted to Libya, Washington, and the United Arab Emirates. From 2007-2008, he was a contributor, then member of the Obama Campaign's Middle East Policy Group. He holds a Ph.D. in Agriculture and Resource Economics from U.C. Berkeley, an M.A. in International Policy Studies from Stanford and an undergraduate degree with distinction in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from Yale. Among other grants, he has been recipient of regional Fulbright (Jordan) and Fulbright-Hays (Yemen), and a Jean Monnet Fellowship to France's Ecole polytechnique. Chorin is the author of *Translating Libya* (Saqi Press) as well as numerous OpEds and policy pieces for publications such as *The Financial Times*, *The Middle East in London*, *Words Without Borders* and *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*. Chorin speaks Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew and French.

Dr. Dirk Vandewalle

Diederik Vandewalle is Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College, former chair of its Asian and Middle Eastern Studies program, and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Amos Tuck School of Business where he teaches a course on business practice in the Arab Gulf countries. His teaching and research focuses on the politics of development in North Africa and the Arab Gulf countries, and on strategies of economic adaptation, business development, and economic liberalization programs in the Middle East. He is the author of "Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-building" (Cornell University Press), "A History of Modern Libya" (Cambridge University Press) and the editor of two volumes on Libya and North Africa. He has received, among a large number of awards, two regional Fulbright grants for the Middle East and South Asia, and a Social Science Research Council grant. He has been a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Institute for International Development and at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He currently works on a manuscript on the economic development and regional and global emergence of the Arab Gulf countries, where he spent the 2005-2006 academic year on his most recent Fulbright Grant. He travels and consults extensively on an array of projects throughout the Arab Gulf and North Africa.

Will Ward, Associate

Will Ward is a writer and analyst focusing on Iran and the Gulf States. From 2007-2009, Mr. Ward was Managing Editor of Arab Media & Society, an online journal focusing on the political and social impact of media in the region. Mr. Ward holds an M.Phil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from St. Antony's College, Oxford and a B.A. in History and Near Eastern Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Ward has written for a number of publications, including *Oxford Analytica*, *ISN Security Watch*, and *The National*. Mr. Ward speaks Arabic and Persian.

Spencer Witte, Associate

Spencer Witte is a policy analyst and researcher, focused on the Levant and Gulf States. Prior to joining Ishtirak, Mr. Witte was a freelance journalist, reporting from Beirut during the 2006 Lebanon-Israel War. Mr. Witte holds an M.Phil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from St. Antony's College, Oxford, and a B.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, where he lettered on the university baseball team. Spencer's writing has appeared in the *Journal of International Higher Education*, *Jane's Defense Weekly/Islamic Affairs Analyst* and the *Observatory on Borderless Higher Education*. Mr. Witte speaks Arabic.

Mahmoud Hassan Yacoub, Associate

Mahmoud Hassan is head of Ishtirak's translation unit, coordinating the work of six professional translators, as well as Ishtirak principals. A graduate of Cairo's prestigious Al Azhar University in Arabic and its Dialects, Mr. Hassan has taught Arabic to non-Arabic speakers at the Eton Institute, Dubai's best-known school for training in foreign languages, the Continental British School in Cairo and the Al Zohur Social Club. Mr. Yacoub is currently working on a coursebook in Arabic for non-native speakers.

For more information, please contact us at info@ishtirak.org.