Islam and Politics

Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World

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Editors
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Preface

Stimson’s *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* project is devoted to enhancing the information and analysis available to US policymakers about emerging transnational security challenges in the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. The project draws on analysis by technical and subject experts, as well as by political and strategic thinkers.

The knowledge and analysis are developed by means of dialogue among experts from various disciplines and occupational backgrounds. Our work includes the organization of workshops in the regions, partnerships with regional institutions and individuals, interviews in the field, and research. We have sought the input of experts and practitioners who constitute new voices in the conversation with the US government. We have not shied away from perspectives that dissent from conventional wisdom, as long as they represent significant bodies of opinion in the countries of the regions.

In 2007, we organized our work by region and sought to arrive at an understanding of perspectives specific to each. This was reflected in our 2008 publication *Transnational Trends: Middle Eastern and Asian Views*. During 2008, we have engaged in dialogue and collaboration across all the regions and organized our work topically on themes as varied as the political economy of natural resources, climate change and river systems, maritime resources and security in the Indian Ocean, and the relationship between Islam and politics.

We have tried to integrate these varied inquiries by asking the following overarching questions:

- What are the key relationships among social, economic, environmental, technological, and political trends? How do these trends relate to traditional security concerns? What new sources of instability, crisis, or conflict are found in these, and with what consequences?

- How does the current public policy debate address the technical, governance, and cultural challenges of these specialized subject areas?

- How do political structures and cultural traditions constrain or facilitate effective responses?
• What are the current examples and future opportunities for transnational cooperation?
• What are the social, political, and security consequences of rapid change?

We have sought throughout to maintain a transnational perspective, to look at trends or threats that transcend national borders or are national in scope but recur in many societies in a region. In all our conversations, conferences, meetings, roundtables, and focus groups, we have sought to elicit the most candid possible discussion, and we have done so by explicitly placing all conversations off the record and not for attribution.

Each volume in the present series consists of essays on some of these questions by experts and thinkers from the regions covered, accompanied by one or more essays by Stimson scholars designed to synthesize and analyze our findings and describe the key trends that we have noted.

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