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SPECIAL REPORT

ABOUT THE REPORT

A priority of the Religion and Peacemaking Initiative of the United States Institute of Peace has been to support Muslim efforts to reinterpret Islamic principles for the twenty-first century. The Initiative has organized workshops on Islamic perspectives on peace and violence, on Islam and democracy, and, most recently, on ijtihad (scriptural interpretation). This report describes Initiative-supported conferences in Nigeria and Iran to enable Muslim scholars to grapple with how faithful Muslims can respond to a range of contemporary issues. In Indonesia, a project yielded a peace-focused teaching tool based on Islamic principles.

This report summarizes the three projects and offers salient points raised by some of the conference participants. It was prepared by David Smock, director of the Religion and Peacemaking Initiative, based on papers by Radwan Masmudi, Asna Husin, and Abdulaziz Sachedina.

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David Smock

Applying Islamic Principles in the Twenty-first Century

Nigeria, Iran, and Indonesia

Summary

- Modern Muslim societies face the challenge of reapplying shari'ah (Islamic jurisprudence) and other traditional concepts in contexts that have changed markedly from those that existed during its original implementation.

- The relationship between shari'ah, justice, and sustainable plural democracy must be examined objectively.

- Instead of voicing alarmist condemnations of shari'ah, Westerners should pay close attention to the lively debate taking place within Muslim societies on law and morality.

- In northern Nigeria, shari'ah needs to be both modernized and made compatible with universal human rights, pluralism, and democracy while remaining genuinely Islamic.

- In Iran, a conference on Islam and democracy revealed agreement that unchecked state-controlled religiosity could lead to a dangerous and tyrannical system of governance. Participants took the compatibility of religion and democracy as a given, along with the recognition that religion in a Muslim country such as Iran cannot be eliminated from the public square.

- In Aceh, Indonesia, which has been plagued by prolonged violence and abuse of human rights, ulama (Islamic scholars) feel an urgent need to respond to the challenges of the global information age while also upholding the Prophet Mohammed's legacy. They have embraced a new peace education program for religious schools because they view peace as central to Islam.

Introduction

This report describes three projects that illustrate how Muslim scholars in three countries are addressing critical contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective.

In Nigeria, more than 300 Muslim scholars and clerics engaged in a critical examination of shari'ah as it is being adopted and modified in Nigeria's northern states. In Iran, Iranian scholars, clerics, and others convened to address the relationship between Islam and democracy in that country. In Indonesia, a team of scholars has written a manual based on Islamic sources for religious schools on the topics of peace/violence, democracy, rule of law, conflict resolution, human rights, and pluralism.

The debates among scholars and clerics in these three countries, as in other Muslim countries, on issues such as shari'ah and ijtihad (scriptural interpretation) are spirited. Resistance to reform and liberalism is particularly strong in Iran, but also in Nigeria. Those adhering to literal interpretations of the texts challenge those adopting a more rational/interpretive approach. "Text proof" versus "rational proof" approaches divide the ulama in Iran and Nigeria into traditionalist and rationalist camps, with the majority leaning toward the former.

The projects in Nigeria and in Iran were cosponsored by the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID), based in Washington, D.C. CSID arranged for scholars of Islam from the United States and elsewhere to make presentations at the two conferences. The Indonesian project was cosponsored by Nonviolence International.

This publication follows earlier Special Reports on related topics, including *Islamic Perspectives on Peace and Violence, Islam and Democracy,* and *Ijtihad: Reinterpreting Islamic Principles for the Twenty-first Century.*

Shari'ah, Justice, and Ijtihad in Nigeria

CSID, in collaboration with the Centre for Islamic Legal Studies in Zaria, Nigeria, and the London-based International Forum for Islamic Dialogue (IFID), organized a three-day conference in July 2004 titled "Implementation of the Shari'ah in a Democracy: The Nigerian Experience." The conference was funded by the United States Institute of Peace and the U.S. State Department. Three hundred Muslim scholars and leaders from inside and outside of Nigeria discussed how shari'ah can be interpreted through ijithad to meet changing needs and provide justice in Nigeria.

Radwan Masmoudi, president of CSID, explained that, like the Hebrew Bible, the Holy Qur'an contains commandments that Muslims must follow and apply in their daily lives. These commandments address not only purely religious issues such as praying and fasting, but also political, economic, and social matters such as inheritance, interest, and economic justice, as well as punishments for crimes such as theft, adultery, and drinking alcohol. These Qur'anic teachings are supplemented by the tradition of the Prophet Mohammed (sunnah) and by the long history of scholars' interpretations. Throughout history, Muslim jurists and scholars have had divergent opinions about many issues, and the process of ijtihad has been essential to adapting Islamic jurisprudence (shari'ah) to changing needs and realities.

The Tension between Fundamental and Liberal Interpretations of Shari'ah

Traditionalists believe legal punishments (hudud) prescribed in the Qur'an—such as for stealing and adultery—must be applied literally (e.g., cutting off the hand of the thief) in order to obey God's commandments, said Masmoudi. Modernists believe that this interpretation does not represent the spirit of the Qur'anic teaching and, more important, that shari'ah has always been subject to multiple interpretations in light of the ever-changing needs of society. To address the changing needs of their societies, Muslim jurists and

scholars have relied on a well-established process of innovation (ijtihad), which is based not only on the Qur'an and sunnah, but also on reason, deduction, and prioritization. Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, a renowned 12th-century scholar and theologian in Sunni Islam, presented this guidance about the overarching purpose of Shari'ah: "The purpose of the law (shari'ah) for human beings is fivefold: the preservation for them of their religion, soul, intellect, offspring, and property."

Shari'ah has become a very divisive issue in Nigeria. Simmering discontent among the various segments of Nigerian society has resulted in violent outbursts—sometimes appearing as religious fervor and other times dressed in ethnic prejudice—but all underscoring the country's imperfect federal structure. Twelve northern states, under pressure from their populations, recently adopted or reintroduced the criminal component of shari'ah. While this step has enjoyed broad public support from the Muslim populations in these states, Christians living there and in other parts of the country have felt threatened.

Masmoudi concludes that objective examination of the relationship between shari'ah, justice, and sustainable plural democracy is essential. The need to bring together scholars and experts on Islam, politics, governance, and democracy to assess how to accommodate and harmonize the assertion of Islamic law within a plural democratic setting led him to convene the conference.

The conference had the following objectives:

- Promote an interpretation of shari'ah that is modern and compatible with universal human rights, pluralism, and democracy, while remaining genuinely Islamic

- Discuss shari'ah's true meaning, its various forms, and its Islamic roots

- Encourage efforts at Islamic reformation (ijtihad) to solve the political, economic, and social problems of the Muslim world.

In addition, the conference discussed the broader subject of democracy and political pluralism, covering such topics as independence of the judiciary, women's participation, responsibility and freedom of the press, rights of minorities, good governance, freedom of worship, and social justice.

The Case of Amina Lawal

In Nigeria, the debate about shari'ah implementation reached a peak in 2002, when a shari'ah court sentenced a young woman, Amina Lawal, to death after she was convicted of adultery. The case generated great interest, and the court's decision met with international protest and condemnation.

Many Westerners saw death as an excessive punishment for an act that falls within the realm of private choice in most countries. Many Muslims also opposed the shari'ah court's ruling, and reputable Muslim scholars and jurists found many flaws in its judgment. The court did not, for instance, give sufficient attention to ensuring due process: among other issues, it accepted a forced confession the police took from the accused and it released the man, who denied having sexual relations with the woman, without any punishment. Although the decision was ultimately overturned by the court of appeals, the case generated fierce debate about the suitability of Islamic law in modern societies.

As Masmoudi points out, the challenge facing modern Muslim societies is how to reapply the principles of shari'ah in social, economic, and political contexts that are markedly different from those that existed during its original development. The question is debated in academic and intellectual circles in Muslim societies. But in the absence of an open political debate, little has been done to educate the public on these issues, or to determine the relevance of shari'ah to contemporary cultural and legal practices. In addition, there is a significant debate in academic and religious quarters about the historicity, and even the authenticity, of certain historical pronouncements of shari'ah laws. For example, some scholars contend that stoning and punishments for apostasy have no basis in the Qur'an, while other Muslim jurists claim that these interpretations of shari'ah were meant only for a particular time and place in Islamic history.

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Morality vs. Legality

Many Muslims scholars and jurists are profoundly concerned about the literal and uncritical application of ancient shari'ah rules, as well as the lack of clear delineation between the moral and the legal in Islamic law. Which parts of shari'ah are moral—and hence fall within the realm of education and voluntary compliance—and which parts are legal and therefore must be enforced by society? Also, there are intense debates on the issue of state intrusion into individual privacy and on the extent to which the state should be allowed to police individual morality. Questions also arise about due process and rules of evidence in shari'ah courts. To what extent can courts rely on circumstantial evidence to convict a person of a crime?

At the conference's opening session, chaired by Nigerian Chief Justice Muhammad Lawal Uwais, the governors of the northern states of Kano, Bauchi, and Zamfara delivered keynote addresses. Other attendees included several prominent judges from Islamic courts, academicians, and government officials.

In his address, the governor of Bauchi State posed several challenging questions:

- In the light of globalization, how do we determine the limits within which we will implement shari'ah so that non-Muslims are also accommodated?

- How do we evaluate the changes in shari'ah without losing our distinct identity as Muslims?

- Shari'ah does not only apply to the weak and the poor, while we turn a blind eye to the rich and powerful. How can we create a spiritual policeman or a spiritual judge?

Conference Presentations

Dr. Najah Kadhim of IFID observed that of the Qur'an's thousands of verses, only a handful deal with shari'ah, so there is considerable room for flexibility and interpretation. Professor Abdelaziz Sachedina of the University of Virginia reminded the audience that shari'ah was formulated in a transnational world and by a transnational people. Muslims have inherited a diverse tradition, which must be rethought if it is to work for the modern nation-state. "You and I have a responsibility as Muslims," he said, "to clarify what we mean by shari'ah."

Saudatu Mahdi presented a paper titled "Shari'ah and Women in Nigeria: The Expectations." Mahdi asserted that Nigerian women expect the Nigerian implementation process to draw from the broadest and most tolerant understanding of the Shari'ah's tenets. Moreover, she said, the entire Muslim world, as well as the world at large, is watching how Nigeria handles the implementation of shari'ah. Her presentation included both detailed recommendations, including the repeal or modification of specific laws, and a general discussion of women's rights in an Islamic state.

Does shari'ah as implemented meet the people's socioeconomic needs? This was the foremost question raised in Baffa Aliyu Umar's paper: chiefly, how shari'ah provides a basis for the social, political, and economic life of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Umar asserted that even the smallest of social programs, appropriately aimed at people's most pressing needs, improves the shari'ah system as a whole.

As the debate at the conference reveals, the scope of the contending perspectives is wide, particularly concerning how Islamic norms and heritage relate to modern society. Masmoudi asserts that the debate must continue, as openness and dialogue are the best guarantors that radical notions will not go unchallenged and that claims to exclusive authenticity by extreme voices will be addressed. Open debate and the freedom to put popular choices to the test of time (as long as they do not infringe on human rights and human dignity) have been crucial for the maturation of Western democracy. The maturation of Islamic democracy and law requires similar time and space, he said.

Recommendations

Many questions remained unanswered, underscoring the importance of organizing more international discussions of the variety of interpretations and the complexity of applying shari'ah in modern Muslim societies. The exchange between local and international Muslims scholars was particularly stimulating and should continue in follow-up meetings.

Western societies and policymakers, Masmoudi pointed out, should appreciate that Muslim societies and lawmakers have every right to reconcile their legal system with their moral values. Instead of voicing alarmist condemnations of shari'ah, Westerners should pay closer attention to the lively debate on law and morality within Muslim societies. While all human beings, regardless of nationality and religion, have the right to be critical of practices they deem immoral, inhumane, and degrading to human dignity, no culture or religion has the right to dismiss the capacity of another to develop its own moral and legal systems through an open process and dialogue.

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Reflections on Islam and Democracy in Iran

In recent years, attempts to engage Iran in a productive dialogue regarding developing a constitutional democracy have been thwarted by internal Iranian politics and external negativism, particularly from the United States. For almost a decade, a number of American foundations have led delegations to meet with Iranian religious leaders and other political activists to discuss political reform. Such meetings became possible after the election of reformist president Muhammad Khatami. However, none of these foundations was seen as empathetic to the Iranian political intricacies by the Iranians themselves. Most were regarded as American agents intrinsically opposed to Islam and anything Islamic.

The Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, with its mission to search for the compatibility between religion and democratic politics, took a special interest in the Iranian experiment. Then-chair of the CSID board Abdulaziz Sachedina was in Iran in the summer of 2002 when Radwan Masmoudi suggested that he submit a proposal to hold a conference at his alma mater, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM). The story of how this conference was planned and executed helps elucidate the complexities that surround debate about religious and political change in Iran.

The subject of democracy and religion has been controversial in the Islamic Republic of Iran since its establishment under the late Ayatollah Khomeini. The government has been divided on the exact nature of the Islamic state from its inception, dating to the 1978–79 constitutional debates. With the rise of anti-Americanism as a vehicle to keep the religious establishment in power, the Iranian academic establishment has become extremely sensitive about being seen as encouraging American interference in Iran's internal politics.

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Confronting the Obstacles

FUM welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with CSID and took precautions to avoid potential problems. FUM applied for official permission to hold the conference in Mashhad; the request was approved at the highest level in Tehran.

CSID was committed to including both proponents and opponents of constitutional democracy in Iran. It was relatively easy to enlist the participation of secularist-modernist academicians such as Dr. Abdol Karim Soroush and his group of Iranian thinkers. The critical task for CSID/FUM was to get the traditionalist ulama, who oppose democracy as a Western imperialist ploy, to participate. For that purpose, Dr. Hassan Jamshidi, who has excellent connections to the traditionalists, was appointed as a "shuttle diplomat" to get

as many members of the conservative ulama on board as possible. Thanks to his efforts, the conference was able to enlist well-known figures whose views were important to the debate about the role of clergy and Islam in a modern nation-state.

There was constant risk that the conference would be derailed at the last minute, mainly because it was to be the first of its kind in the country. Twice, parliamentary elections—resulting in hardliners' forming the majority—postponed the conference. They also served as a warning to CSID that antidemocratic forces connected with the religious establishment might pressure the university to cancel the event.

The final date of December 1–2, 2004, was mutually approved by CSID and FUM. During the last week of November, Dr. Ali Yousefi, the FUM-appointed conference director, informed Sachedina that Ansar-i Hizb Allah, an extremist group supporting clerical rule in Iran, had threatened to disrupt the proceedings. The university, in consultation with the government officials in Tehran, nevertheless decided to proceed with the conference.

As soon as the CSID delegation, made up of Masmoudi, Sachedina, and Antony Sullivan, arrived in Mashhad the morning of November 30, they learned that Ansar-i Hizb Allah had demanded that five prominent scholars, who formed the liberal group in support of democratic governance in Iran, be barred from participating. The group had also threatened the lives of these five scholars, including Soroush and Dr. Mohsin Kadivar, a liberal cleric.

The First Day of the Conference

CSID and FUM moved quickly to arrange for alternative programs in Mashhad and Tehran, where a number of key participants had been asked to stay until further instructions from the conference organizers. On December 1, the CSID delegation met with several faculty members in the Theology School and Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In the evening, some scholars who were already in Mashhad met for about three hours at FUM to present their views and discuss issues connected with democratization. The atmosphere was tense, but the discussions were open and critical of the role religion was playing in Iranian politics. The participants were unanimous in feeling that unchecked state religiosity could lead to a dangerous and tyrannical system of governance, as the events of the past few years had indicated.

In addition to Masmoudi and Sachedina, the Iranian group was led in discussion by Professor Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, a member of the clerical establishment; Professor Gholam Abbas Tavassoli, and Drs. Mohammad Reza Beheshti and Arjomand. They spoke about secularism and the problems posed by the fact that in modern democratic society, religion is privatized and its scope limited to spiritual and moral well-being. There were also interesting exchanges about critical conceptual clarity concerning the meaning and nature of democracy and its cultural relativity.

Dr. Beheshti's presentation raised important issues in the emerging intercultural dialogue among world religions. Peaceful coexistence among peoples of different religions depends on changing faith communities' attitude that they have exclusive control of the truth.

The unique aspect of this frank exchange among Iranian thinkers was the total absence of anti-American rhetoric. The entire discussion demonstrated sophisticated understanding of the issues related to developing democratic freedoms within the framework of a secular state that respects the wisdom of religion in both its internal and external policies.

The Second Day of the Conference

On December 2, the scholars who had been prevented from traveling to Mashhad met with twenty-five other participants at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Tehran to present their papers and discuss the compatibility of Islam and democracy in Iran. The Tehran meeting compensated for all that was lacking in the Mashhad meeting.

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The unique aspect of this frank exchange among Iranian thinkers was the total absence of anti-American rhetoric.

The atmosphere was relaxed and the participants contributed extremely well in terms of quality and transparency. The issue that dominated the afternoon was not whether religion and democracy are compatible. That was taken as a given, as was recognition that religion in a country like Iran cannot be eliminated from the public square.

Soroush argued that Muslim sensibilities are offended when liberal democracy tolerates or encourages immoral social behavior. Iranians must search for political democracy; they need an accountable government that creates laws for individual Iranians as citizens, not as believers.

Dr. Reza Eslami contended that no true reform could ignore the critical need to make the official religion more inclusive in order to guarantee the human rights of all citizens, regardless of their faith.

Dr. Forough Jahanbakhsh, the only woman participant in the session, underscored the paradigm shift in the Muslim modernist discourse on religion and democracy and the obstacles confronting the reformers advocating democratic governance for Iran.

Dr. Mohsen Kadivar spoke about various twentieth-century readings of the Islamic tradition. In some important ways, Kadivar took Mohammad Mojtahed Shabistari's relativism in the religious readings a step further by providing an alternative paradigm for democratic governance to become deeply ingrained in the Iranian political processes.

Dr. Ali Paya's model of democracy argued for an efficient political system responsive to the needs of modern citizens searching to implement the best in society. Islamic democracy can compare favorably with the best Western democracies if it represents the social, religious, political, economic, legal, educational, and human aspirations of Islamic societies. Yet Islamic democracy has to be based on a minimalist-rationalist reading of Islam.

Two of the papers submitted in writing that could not be presented in person—both by traditionalist scholars—deserve special mention. Ayatollah Mohamed Jannati questioned whether freedom and equality—the two pillars of human rights—are compatible with human nature and with "divine religions" in which human rights are based on natural law. He believes freedom is the sum of rights recognized for human beings, who are free to accept them. However, human freedom, having private and public dimensions, should not be exercised in a way that causes harm to others or threatens other people's moral values. In Islam, freedom is not absolute; it is delimited by the law that regulates mutual rights and duties to others.

Ayatollah Amid Zanjani's paper critically assessed the crisis over democracy in the Muslim world, which either totally rejects or conditionally accepts democratic governance. His prescription for democratic politics is to adopt a middle path: no people, including Iranians, should adopt alien systems of governance without ensuring their cultural and religious legitimacy.

In part because of the paucity of Iranian literature on religion and democracy, CSID is preparing these papers for publication in Iran. CSID is also planning a follow-up meeting in Iran in 2006.

Peace Education in Aceh, Indonesia

The Gate of Mecca

Aceh, on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra, was once known as the Gate of Mecca for its contribution to the development of Islamic spiritual scholarship and Indonesian-Malay civilization. Today, Aceh is still among Indonesia's most religiously conservative and observant provinces.

The ulama have been the principal initiators of religious, academic, and cultural life, giving them a special place within Acehnese society. While they continue to play a dominant role as the guardians of faith and values, the contemporary ulama are facing

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a serious challenge. They must respond to the fast-changing global information age on the one hand and uphold the Prophet's legacy on the other hand. The tension between these two expectations puts tremendous pressure on the ulama and on the headmasters of the madrassas (Islamic schools) or, as they are known in Indonesia, pesantrens (private Islamic boarding schools).

The Peace Education Program

To address this challenge, a team of Acehnese scholars, ulama, and educators, led by Asna Husin, organized the Peace Education Program, supervised by the leaders of the Consultative Council of Ulama of Aceh. The international partners for this program are Nonviolence International, the United States Institute of Peace, and the Canadian International Development Agency.

As one ulama put it, "Peace education is empowering our leadership." The ulama embrace this program because they view peace as inherent to Islam. Peace and security from that which negates human dignity are essential components of Islam, as the very name "Islam" (submission to the will of God) connotes. Promoting Islam and peace as well as maintaining security are central duties of every believer, and especially of the ulama. The ulama can claim to be "heirs of the prophets" only if they are equipped with knowledge and use it to benefit their communities. The ulama of Aceh seek to reinforce Islamic peace and promote communal good and justice.

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A Province in Conflict

As Husin explains, Aceh's prolonged conflicts, rooted in communal violence and severe human rights abuses, compel the ulama to seek methods of resolving violence and conflict. They recognize that most Acehnese look to them for moral and practical guidance in the context of communal bloodshed and the growing political and social isolation of the Acehnese within Indonesian society. This is not an easy task, since the ulama are caught between the struggle of Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to achieve independence for Aceh, lawless gangs, and various police and military forces, in addition to suffering the demoralizing effects of corrupt political leadership.

Finally, the tsunami of December 26, 2004, destroyed two-thirds of the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, sweeping away the coastal cities of Meulaboh and Calang and killing more than 245,000 inhabitants. The tragedy greatly intensified the challenges the ulama face and increased their awareness of their responsibilities.

The New Curriculum

The Peace Education Project, initiated in early 2003, is helping Aceh's ulama to address contemporary challenges and apply Islamic principles to contemporary realities. The project has had two phases: the creation of a peace education manual and its pilot implementation in selected pesantrens. By early 2005 the project had finished developing the peace manual, *Kurikulum Pendidikan Damai: Perspektif Ulama Aceh (Peace Education Curriculum: Perspective of the Ulama of Aceh)*. This 385-page training book, which presents peace education from an Islamic and Acehnese perspective, is being used both to train ulama and as a resource for teaching in Aceh's pesantrens. It promotes a positive, comprehensive peace, encompassing peaceful relations with God the Creator, with oneself, with one's fellow humans, and with the environment. The curriculum teaches communal peace in accordance with a positive Islamic approach, namely the absence of war and discrimination, as well as the necessity for justice. It emphasizes that peace is neither subjugation to inequitable situations nor a passive acceptance of injustice, discrimination and war.

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This curriculum, according to Husin, takes advantage of the power of play in education and actively engages learners with a "playing for learning" methodology. It incorporates various game strategies, humorous teaching stories, and classical wisdom, along with

drawings and illustrations. The "thinking for reviving" methodology is a cornerstone technique. This teaching/learning method is critical to ulama empowerment, because it permits the primordial values of Islam to be revitalized in a way that meets the challenges of contemporary global realities.

The manual is a product of serious research into the Islamic intellectual wellsprings, including the Qur'an, prophetic tradition, the history of Islam, and the work of the classical ulama and contemporary scholars—with the focus on peace, conflict, and violence. The study of non-Muslim sources is integral to the manual. It also incorporates Acehnese moral values and traditional wisdom, along with indigenous mechanisms for conflict management. In adopting such peace education principles as rights and responsibilities, this peace initiative is consistent with Islamic principles.

The manual covers a wide range of critical topics, including democracy, pluralism, human rights, conflict and neutralization of violence, emotion management, leadership, natural resources, and conflict resolution. That the project team has been able to address such important and potentially sensitive topics in a way that satisfies the ulama and also stretches their thinking is a credit to Husin and her team.

Husin indicates that it is still too early to assess the impact of the project. Nevertheless, the manual has generated awareness among the ulama of the need for new approaches to contemporary realities while still maintaining their religious pride and scholarship. Many educational leaders from the pesantrens/dayahs have expressed their willingness to implement the curriculum in their institutions, once their teachers are properly trained.

The ulama have demonstrated a strong sense of ownership of this manual, both because a number of them were members of the curriculum team that helped review the draft and because its content fully accords with Islamic values and principles. This does not imply that no controversial issues are raised, but such topics as gender are dealt with from a solid religious foundation. More important, this curriculum helps the ulama take responsibility and leadership at a time when Aceh stands in great need of such guidance. They thereby become worthy heirs of the prophets.

This manual has generated considerable interest both in other parts of Indonesia and in other Muslim countries. It is being translated into English and Arabic and will be disseminated for use in places that face similar challenges of interpreting Islamic principles to address rapidly changing global realities.

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Conclusion

Northern Nigeria, Iran, and Aceh are typically characterized as places gripped by rigid religious ideologies and practices. Northern Nigerian states have adopted very conservative versions of shari'ah. Iran is governed by conservative clerics. Some movements in Aceh agitate for more thoroughgoing Islamic forms of government. But the three projects described in this publication add another dimension to the picture:

- Nigerian jurists, scholars, and clerics are engaged in an ongoing dialogue among themselves, with the international Muslim community, and with Nigerian Christians about the appropriate scope of—and limitations on—shari'ah in northern Nigeria.

- Iranian clerics and scholars are grappling with the proper balance between Islam and democracy, as heard in the presentations at the CSID workshop and in other forums. Iran is still evolving, and liberal scholars and clerics, while sometimes silenced, speak out.

- The ulama in Aceh have enthusiastically supported a project to introduce peace studies in Achenese religious schools, emphasizing peace, democracy, and pluralism. The ulama have been supportive because the teaching materials are all based on Islamic texts.

Islam and the application of Islamic principles to modern realities are under active review and subject to intense debate.

In these projects in Nigeria, Iran, and Indonesia—as well as in Muslim communities worldwide—Islam and the application of Islamic principles to modern realities are under active review and subject to intense debate. This dialogue is also carried on internationally, as indicated by the involvement of Muslim scholars from the United States and other countries in the discussion of shari'ah in Nigeria and of Islam and democracy in Iran. The Institute has been pleased to be able to play a supportive role in these projects, as well as with comparable projects in other countries.

The Religion and Peacemaking Initiative of the United States Institute of Peace has published a number of recent books and reports to help promote the exchange of information and lessons learned among faith communities.

Recent Institute reports include:

- *Teaching about the Religious Other*, by David Smock (Special Report 143, July 2005)
- *Ijtihad: Reinterpreting Islamic Principles for the Twenty-first Century* (Special Report 125, August 2004)
- *What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*, by Renee Garfinkel (Special Report 123, July 2004)
- *Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine*, by Yehezkel Landau (Peaceworks 51, August 2003)
- *Islamist Politics in Iraq after Saddam Hussein*, by Graham E. Fuller (Special Report 108, August 2003)
- *Can Faith-Based NGOs Advance Interfaith Reconciliation? The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Special Report 103, March 2003)
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Recent books from USIP Press include:

- *Religious Perspectives on War: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Attitudes toward Force*, by David R. Smock (revised edition, 2002)
- *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, edited by David R. Smock (2002)
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