The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World
2010 U.S.-Islamic World Forum Papers

Transformative Partnerships in U.S.-Muslim World Relations: Empowering Networks for Community Development and Social Change

Convened and Authored by:
Peter Mandaville

Saban Center at Brookings
June 2010

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For the past seven years in Doha, Qatar, the annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum has served as the premier convening forum for key leaders from government, civil society, academia, business, religious communities and the media from the across the global Muslim community and the United States. Over the course of three days, these dynamic leaders gather for thoughtful discussion and transformative dialogue on issues of mutual importance.

This past year we witnessed a significant shift in the conversation between the United States and global Muslim communities. A new American president has set forth a more positive tone for engagement, holding out the promise of a new relationship between the U.S. and Muslim communities, as articulated in his historic remarks in Cairo last June. Throughout the Forum, we explored whether this altered discourse has transformed the relationship and how it has translated into substantive policy recommendations and programs. We also explored and debated key issues of importance to global Muslim communities. The gathering was all the more notable for the presence and participation of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Anwar Ibrahim, Saeb Erakat and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, among many others.

This year also saw a change in the structure of the Forum, with the addition of five working groups who met for numerous hours throughout the course of the three-day Forum. Led by a convener, these working groups focused on specific thematic issues with the goal of provoking thoughtful discussion and, where applicable, developing concrete recommendations. Our five working groups this year included: "The Role of Religious Leaders and Religious Communities in Diplomacy," "Democracy and Islamist Parties: Opportunities and Challenges," Empowering Networks for Community Development and Social Change," Scientific, Intellectual and Governance Cooperation on Emerging Environmental Challenges," and "New Media to Further Global Engagement."

We are pleased to be able to share with you the following paper which is a product of the rich workshop discussion which took place at the Forum. However, please note the opinions reflected in the paper and any recommendations contained herein are solely the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the participants of the working groups or The Brookings Institution.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the State of Qatar for their partnership and vision in convening the Forum in partnership with us. In particular, we thank the Emir of Qatar, HRH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, and the entire staff of the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support and dedication in organizing the Forum.

Sincerely,

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Transformative Partnerships in U.S.-Muslim World Relations: Empowering Networks for Community Development and Social Change

CONVENER

Peter Mandaville
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Muslim populations around the world consistently define their chief priorities and concerns in relation to issues such as development, justice, and economic security. This working group will bring together thought leaders, community organizers, and foundations from the United States and the Muslim world to identify areas of mutual interest and begin designing actionable programs that emphasize sustainable community development and social innovation. Seeking to harness the appetite for social transformation among young people in the United States and the Muslim world, the workshop will build a network of change leaders, allowing them to share their experiences and explore new collaborations. The workshop will have two main areas of focus: developing ways to foster greater involvement in community development, and exploring the transformative potential of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology to both address inequalities and support existing community networks. Concrete deliverables will include recommendations for specific programs and initiatives as well as a set of best practice guidelines for designing transformative social networks.

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Transformative Partnerships in U.S.-Muslim World Relations: Empowering Networks for Community Development and Social Change

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"We cannot build a stable, global economy when hundreds of millions of workers and families find themselves on the wrong side of globalization, cut off from markets and out of reach of modern technologies. We cannot rely on regional partners to help us stop conflicts and counter global criminal networks when those countries are struggling to stabilize and secure their own societies. And we cannot advance democracy and human rights when hunger and poverty threaten to undermine the good governance and rule of law needed to make those rights real."

—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "Development in the 21st Century," Washington DC, January 6, 2010

Introduction

For nearly a full decade now, issues relating to terrorism, security, and conflict have dominated U.S. relations with the Muslim world. On one level this discussion has simply reflected certain geopolitical realities such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (now extending to parts of Pakistan), ongoing conflict in the Arab world, and the challenge of Iran. Related to, but also transcending, these specific foreign policy challenges has been a renewed discussion of the relationship between Islam and the West. This debate has generally been configured in adversarial terms, with frequent allusions to clashing civilizations and the incompatibility of Islam with secularism and democracy. Since many Americans and Muslims either know very little about each other or harbor considerable misperception, such discussions have tended to sharpen antagonisms and feed the general climate of fear and apprehension that exists on both sides.

A wide range of initiatives have tried to bridge this perceived chasm in recent years, ranging from leadership summits—such as the Brookings U.S.-Islamic World Forum itself—to various public diplomacy and inter-religious dialogue initiatives. Much of this work, however, has been found wanting, with many Muslims complaining that the United States seems only to be interested in terrorism and its own security at the expense of Muslim victims of war and oppression. Even where the U.S. recognizes the plight of Muslims, as in Palestine, it is argued, they do little to help. For their part, Americans express frustration at what they perceive as unwillingness among Muslim leaders to criticize and act proactively against terrorists. Even where intercultural dialogue and strategic communication initiatives show promise, they often end up being held hostage to ongoing military conflicts and to political and economic conditions on the ground throughout the Muslim world.

Many in the Muslim world thus welcomed the election of Barack Obama in 2008 as a significant opportunity. After running for office on a platform that emphasized diplomacy and global engagement in U.S. foreign policy, the new president, speaking in Ankara in April 2009, declared that "America's relationship with the Muslim world cannot and will not be based on opposition to Al-Qaeda."[1] Two months later, in a major speech broadcast from the venerable halls of Cairo's famed Al-Azhar University, Obama announced that he was seeking

> "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one

[1] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President to the Turkish Parliament," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Ankara, Turkey, April 6, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament>.

based upon mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles—principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings."[2]

The issues Obama went on to discuss in the Cairo speech revealed that security concerns were, understandably, still prominent in the minds of U.S. policymakers. Terrorism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and nuclear weapons topped the roster, followed by democracy, religious freedom, and women's rights. Towards the very end of his remarks, the president turned to the theme of economic development and opportunity. Recognizing that globalization produces both winners and losers and promising a range of new programs relating to entrepreneurship and science/technology, Obama went on to assert that religion and tradition need not be at odds with the search for progress and economic development. In the months following the speech, critics raised many questions about whether the Obama administration was doing enough to fulfill the enormous expectations created in Cairo.[3] While it is still too early to pronounce on the progress of a vision barely a year old, its ambition is hardly in doubt.

This discussion paper on "Transformative Partnerships in U.S.-Muslim World Relations: Empowering Networks for Community Development and Social Change," based on conversations and deliberations at the 2010 U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, picks up where President Obama's speech ended, namely on the issue of economic and human development. It proceeds from the assumption that the creation of livelihood, opportunity, and positive social change is not only the most effective path towards progress on the other issues raised in Cairo—including security and democracy—but also holds the greatest promise of securing the shared values around which Obama's vision of U.S.-Muslim world relations was initially framed: justice, progress, tolerance, and dignity.

[2] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

[3] See e.g. Andrew Albertson, "Losing Cairo?" *Foreign Policy*, December 2009. While the Obama administration has taken concrete steps following the Cairo speech, such as appointing the first ever Special Representative to Muslim Communities at the State Department as well as making progress on a number of economic development and governance-related initiatives (such as the 2010 Entrepreneurship Summit in the State Department's Civil Society 2.0 project), critics have suggested that the potential impact of these programs is too meager.

Innovation, Social Change and Islam

Why an emphasis on community development & social change?

According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project's 2007 world survey, overwhelming numbers of people in key Muslim countries cite economic problems as their top personal concern.[4] In Muslim-majority countries unaffected by recent violence or oil-driven wealth, respondents see the two greatest dangers facing the world today to be the rich/poor gap and disease/HIV. The 2009 UN Human Development Report ranks most Muslim-majority countries—and all of the most populous Muslim nations—in the 'Low Human Development' category. These figures throw into sharp relief the dire need for a development-based approach to U.S.-Muslim world relations. Social opportunity and economic growth are desperately needed throughout much of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Demographic trends also do not bode well, with an enormous—and severely underemployed—youth bulge looming across these regions. Of the countries covered by the Kearney/Foreign Policy globalization index, the most populous Muslim nations rank near the very bottom of the scale, indicating that they are among the least integrated into world economic, political, and informational structures.

It would be disingenuous, however, to suggest that the developmental challenges of the Muslim world have gone unnoticed in the United States. Muslim regions have benefited from significant outflows of U.S. foreign assistance for decades, with certain countries, notably Egypt, ranking among the top aid recipients. Yet the economic challenges of the most populous Muslim nations are on a scale untouchable by foreign assistance alone—much of which suffers, in any case, from the usual limitations of development aid with regard to transparency and accountability. In recent years, new programs and development dollars spent by the United States in the Muslim world have also tended to carry a certain stigma in the eyes of many Muslims in that they have been seen as motivated, ultimately, by a desire to combat violent extremism rather than by a genuine concern with lives and livelihoods. Even when we move beyond the public sector, U.S. foreign direct investment flows in non-energy sectors are minimal. It is therefore not surprising that in its report *Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World*, the Leadership Group of the U.S.-Muslim Engagement Project highlighted the need to help catalyze job-creating growth in Muslim countries as one of its four central recommendations.[5]

[4] See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007*, Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2007. Percentage of national population indicating economic/financial problems as the most important issue facing them today: Morocco, 73%; Turkey, 70%; Lebanon 60%; Jordan, 68%, Egypt, 67%, Indonesia, 90%, Bangladesh, 89%, Malaysia, 75%, Pakistan, 63%.

[5] *Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World*. Report of the Leadership Group on U.S.-Muslim Engagement, U.S.-Muslim Engagement Project, 2008.

While sympathetic to the need for large-scale job growth and increased investment in large industries, this discussion paper—and the workshop from which it stems—will explore how a different strategy might better tackle some of the most enduring social and developmental problems found in the Muslim world. The perspective offered here might reasonably be described as a "grassroots" or "bottom-up" approach, but it is not premised on the idea that poverty and other social ills can be wholly eliminated by economic growth alone, much less a growth strategy focused on the "bottom of the pyramid."[6] Rather, the emphasis here is on developing innovative—and above all, *collaborative*—solutions to the problems that most hinder human development. In some cases the challenges in question may be best approached through entrepreneurial endeavors. For other issues and settings, non-profit solutions will be more appropriate. Given the U.S.-Islamic World Forum's focus on U.S.-Muslim world relations, our primary desire is to identify those areas where change-makers, community activists, and philanthropists in both the U.S. and the Muslim world have shared interests. We proceed from the firm belief that the best way to make progress on U.S. relations with the Muslim world lies in working together to achieve tangible and demonstrable results in solving problems of common concern.

In many Muslim-majority countries, state governments—the traditional source of basic services and policy solutions to major social ills—are either unable or unwilling to provide the leadership and resources necessary to bring about positive change. In such settings, it falls to civic-minded activists, thought leaders, and entrepreneurs to take the initiative in developing creative solutions to community problems. Our focus, therefore, needs to be on forms of innovation that help to create *social value*. This latter concept, central to the social change movement, refers to the idea of creating "benefits or reductions of costs for society—through efforts to address societal needs and problems—in ways that go beyond the private gains and general benefits of market activity."[7] In the realm of social entrepreneurship, where this notion is quite central, social value describes those positive impacts that can accrue from certain types of entrepreneurial activity whose value is not internal to the transaction or immediately felt in monetary terms. Several brief examples illustrate the point: in the late 1970s Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy developed a method for providing restorative eyesight surgery on a mass scale and at significantly reduced cost. While his patients were still charged a fee to receive the procedure, the social value that accrued from his franchised eye care system—enabling hundreds of thousands of people to see again and enter into productive labor—is the real story here. In Kenya, with support from the Acumen Fund, Ecotact provides affordable and reliable sanitation solutions for the urban poor that have the potential to significantly reduce outbreaks of water-born diseases. Or take the example of SEKEM, a network of biodynamic agriculture companies and a related social development foundation in Egypt. While profits from the Abouleish family's pioneering agricultural operation outside Cairo have funded a range of charitable activities, SEKEM is most remarkable for its success in demonstrating the viability of organic farming in highly arid environments and for prompting the Egyptian government to revise some of its policies relating to pesticide use and regulation—paving the way for the development of sustainable agriculture as a commercial sector in Egypt and other similarly arid environments.

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[6] For an example of this line of argument, see C.K. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing, 2004.

[7] James A. Phills, Jr., Kriss Deiglemeier & Dale T. Miller, "Rediscovering Social Innovation," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Fall 2008, pp. 34-43; for a discussion of the concept of social value, see Philip Auerswald, "Creating Social Value," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2009, pp. 51-55.

While all of the examples cited above represent instances of social entrepreneurship—that is, efforts to bring about social value through profit making activities—we should be equally interested in fostering partnerships and collaborations between nonprofit organizations and more traditional, grant-making philanthropies. A recent example of this can be seen in the increased coordination between Islamic charities and the efforts of a wide range of other philanthropic bodies, faith-based and otherwise, to eradicate malaria. Hunger, destitution, and epidemic disease represent problems whose urgency can only be matched with rapid inflows of humanitarian aid, particularly where natural disasters and conflict-driven population movements are concerned. Neither development aid nor social entrepreneurship is a panacea. Rather, these two approaches each have their place. As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put it in a recent speech on development, "aid chases need; investment chases opportunity."[8] Where aid most appropriately addresses humanitarian imperatives and can deliver relatively rapid transformation on a larger scale, social entrepreneurship perhaps has greater potential to foster fundamental structural change over the long term—and in some cases to eradicate the root causes of problems that have traditionally been tackled through aid-based solutions.

The wider context of our initiative here is about scaling up the role of civic activism and building social infrastructures that can facilitate the collective and collaborative efforts of non-governmental and citizen activist groups in the U.S. and Muslim societies. A commitment to social justice and the pursuit of equitable solutions to global problems is an agenda shared by many organizations, be they faith-based community development groups, transnational human rights networks, or sector-specific labor unions. The essential point here is that civil society should be the driving force behind the endeavors we envision. While there is certainly a role for the state in facilitating social innovation—through public-private partnerships, for example—our sense is that the foundation of transformative partnerships between the U.S. and the Muslim world must be built on relationships of trust and mutual interest that bind private individuals and organizations. Recent U.S. government initiatives have recognized this reality, and similar vision and approaches can be found in programs such as the State Department's Civil Society 2.0 project, the 2010 Presidential Entrepreneurship Summit in Washington DC, and the Office of the Special Representative to Muslim Communities' efforts to build networks of social change leaders in the U.S. and in Muslim societies. Secretary of State Clinton, in announcing the Civil Society 2.0 initiative, suggested that the efforts of civil society groups to foster social innovation and prosperity "pushes political institutions to be agile and responsive to the people they serve."[9] Social innovation experts agree. Iqbal Quadir, founder of the Legatum Center for Development and Entrepreneurship at MIT, has argued that traditional approaches to foreign aid often reinforce the status quo in terms of bad governance practices. He sees in the disruptive nature of entrepreneurial innovation the potential to force governments over time to become more transparent and accountable.[10]

Beyond an emphasis on civil society and community-based solutions, a hallmark feature of this work will be its collaborative nature. We need to move beyond an approach whereby engagement with the Muslim world means U.S. public funds directed towards the fulfillment of American foreign policy goals. Rather, as Stephen Grand and Kristin Lord

[8] Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks on Development in the 21st Century," January 6, 2010, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/134838.htm>.
[9] Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks at the Forum for the Future," Marrakech, Morocco, November 3, 2009.
[10] Iqbal Z. Quadir, "Foreign Aid and Bad Government: Helping entrepreneurs is the right approach." *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 2009, p. A11.

put it in an op-ed on rebuilding U.S.-Muslim world relations, "our country must also build a dense network of personal relationships and partnerships between Americans and Muslims globally."[11] Hady Amr makes a similar point in addressing what he sees as the opportunity presented by Obama era. "Jointness is key," he writes, and goes on to emphasize that initiatives need to be "jointly funded, jointly managed, and jointly implemented" so as to ensure the development of sustainable partnerships that transcend the lifespan of individual projects.[12] Our goal is hence the development of an initial framework for building relationships that can one day consolidate into an enduring infrastructure of partnership based on shared goals and a mutual desire among U.S. and Muslim activists, grassroots organizers, and philanthropists to facilitate positive social change.

What role for religion?

One area where it is crucially important to strike the proper balance is in thinking about the role of religion in building transformative U.S.-Muslim world partnerships. Too often we have operated at one of two extremes: either assuming that the Muslim world is primarily defined by, and best understood in reference to, Islam, or removing religion from the equation altogether and focusing exclusively on technical challenges. Of course neither of these approaches is appropriate. To view the Muslim world exclusively through the lens of Islam is to ignore the fact that, quite apart from their religious beliefs, Muslims globally represent input factors for per capita incomes, unemployment figures, infant mortality rates, and levels of primary education for girls. On the other hand, however, in thinking about how best to redress socioeconomic inequities or promote public health, we must not neglect the fact that peoples' faith is often fundamental to their visions of social justice and the good society.

The approach we advocate here therefore refuses to treat religion and social innovation as two separate worlds. We believe that the two can and must profitably coexist. Religious groups and institutions can make significant contributions to local community development initiatives. Likewise, on close examination, the principles that define the social vision of many development organizations are perfectly in tune with the ethics of peace, care, and justice that define religious worldviews. Indeed, in many instances religion and community development are so closely intertwined that we do not know where exactly one leaves off and the other picks up. The Society for Pesantren and Community Development (P3M) in Indonesia, for example, recognized and sought to leverage the role played by traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) in fostering local economic co-operatives throughout much of Java. In the case of SEKEM, the pioneering biodynamic farm in Egypt mentioned above, religion seemed to be tangential to the organization's mission. Only when one learns more about its founder, Ibrahim Abouleish, and the centrality of the Islamic worldview to his vision for sustainable development in Egypt—not to mention his engagement with local religious scholars (*ulama*) in building community support—does the integral role of religion in this initiative become clear. In thinking about a new approach to building transformative U.S.-Muslim world partnerships, our preference is hence for an approach that combines a wide range of stakeholders—some explicitly faith-based, some less so, others not at all—who share a common commitment to tacking collaboratively a set of mutually agreed upon human development challenges.

[11] Stephen R. Grand and Kristin M. Lord, "To Rebuild U.S.-Muslim World Relations, Obama Is Not Enough," *Huffington Post*, March 26, 2009.
[12] Hady Amr, "The Opportunity of the Obama Era: Can Civil Society Help Bridge Divides between the United States and a Diverse Muslim World?" Brookings Doha Center Analysis Papers, Number 1, November 2009.

A potential danger we face in advocating for such collaboration stems from the very use of the term "Muslim world." To invoke this concept is to take 1.5 billion people living across five continents and scores of highly diverse cultural, political, and economic settings, and collapse them under a religious label. If it is meant to refer to a unified global community whose primary identities and affiliations transcend national borders, the Muslim world does not exist. Perhaps this is why President Obama's speech in Cairo, while billed in the run up as his speech to the Muslim world, never once used that term. The concern here is that by singling out and identifying its desired interlocutors and partners as "Muslims," the United States sends a message that this particular religious group is somehow exceptional and deserving of a global strategy while other faith communities do not require such an approach. While it is indeed the case that many of the countries in which the United States faces its most intense strategic and security challenges today are Muslim-majority nations, it is important to be aware of what is at stake in foregrounding religion in the terminology by which we define those we seek to engage, and what kinds of constraints—as well as opportunities—it creates.

Building Transformative Partnerships

Drawing on several decades of experience in local community development across multiple regions and cultures, the collective expertise represented in our Doha workshop conversations produced a clear vision and set of principles for building transformative partnerships to advance U.S.-Muslim world relations. Some of these are broad strategies that can be applied to almost any setting, whereas others come closer to representing sector-specific recommendations that we see as crucial to building a global infrastructure to enable collaborative social change.

1. Building relationships on issues of shared interest or concern

Programs or activities that seek "improved relations" as an end in itself are rarely likely to succeed. By identifying and building collaborations around shared problems and goals, however, a base for developing sustainable relationships is created. In practical terms, this points to the need to complement communication-oriented forums (e.g. intercultural dialogues and conferences) with action or activity-oriented programs that emphasize joint collaboration on projects with tangible goals and outcomes. By making a concrete shared problem (e.g. lack of access to water) or goal (e.g. ten percent return on investment) the basis of a relationship, it becomes possible to focus on what can be achieved together rather than on cultural distances that need to be bridged.

An accomplished practitioner of this approach is the well-known Egyptian television personality and charity activist Amr Khaled. In 2007, for example, he organized a media campaign to raise awareness of the effects of drug abuse and the availability of rehabilitation services. One component of this initiative involved setting up rehabilitation centers in churches in Egypt, which were then staffed by a combination of parishioners and project volunteers—many of whom were Muslim. This created an environment of interreligious dialogue, but one built around a shared commitment to solving a problem in the community.[13]

2. The power of platforms

Many community development or social change programs proceed from a centralized model in which a single organization or a coalition of groups is responsible for identifying problems or needs, designing solutions, and then implementing them. In recent years, however, a different approach—driven by social media and information technology—has

[13] Yasmine Saleh, "Amr Khaled Takes on Drugs," *Daily News Egypt*, March 17, 2008, available at <http://www.dailystaregypt.com>, accessed June 16, 2010.

emerged. Here the emphasis is less on diagnosing problems and mandating solutions and more on empowering individuals and communities to articulate their own priorities and preferred strategies and then matching them with those who share their concerns and possess the capacity to help—be it in the form of financial or technical assistance. Participants are, in essence, provided with a "platform" that allows them to communicate and collaborate with relevant partners. This approach takes elements of the phenomenon commonly known as "crowd-sourcing" and deploys it towards community development goals. It asks communities to define and articulate their own needs, the kinds of solutions they would find relevant, and the kinds of partners with whom they would like to work.

One of the best known examples of a platform-based approach is the peer-to-peer microloan service called Kiva (www.kiva.org). Through this web-based platform, individual entrepreneurs from all over the world post their ideas and requests for loans on the Kiva site for individual lenders to browse and support. All matchmaking and transaction functions are handled through the Kiva interface. Amr Khaled has also been a pioneer in using platform technologies to encourage social change in the Middle East region. In 2005, he invited young people all over the Arab world to submit to him their dreams of how they would like their country to look in twenty years. He received 1.5 million submissions, which his team organized into 26 categories (e.g. job creation, enhancing the role of women in society) and then once again reached out using the Internet and satellite TV to solicit concrete ideas for projects and programs to advance these goals.[14]

3. Leverage existing local networks and repositories of social capital

Rather than creating new local partner organizations, governments and NGOs hoping to bring about positive, sustainable change in particular communities need to be more creative about developing working relationships with existing social networks and institutions. There is sometimes a temptation on the part of Western donors to look for in-country entities that conform to their assumptions about what NGOs are supposed to look like and which speak a familiar professional and cultural language. Sometimes, when these cannot be found, they are created *ad hominem* and therefore often fail to achieve legitimacy or local buy-in.

This problem speaks to the need to develop a greater comfort with transcending conventional categories and boundaries. For example, in many Muslim communities, the social networks around traditional religious figures (such as Sufi leaders) enjoy high levels of legitimacy and provide, beyond their religious function, the basis of community cohesion and solidarity. There is, hence, tremendous potential to pursue partnerships that leverage this social capital towards community development goals. Two examples here are illustrative. We have already cited above the example of the Indonesian Society for Pesantren and Development (P3M) that works through that country's network of traditional Islamic boarding schools to implement local development co-operatives and provide social services. In Senegal, the Mozdahir International Institute (www.mozdahir.org), organized around a local Shi'i community, has developed and implemented several eco-agriculture initiatives.

4. Cross-sector partnerships for job creation

Given the urgent need to create jobs for the estimated 20-25% of 15-24 year-olds in the Middle East who are out of work, it is vital that creative, cross-fertilizing partnerships be formed between relevant actors in the public, private, and non-governmental sector in order to better coordinate needs and

[14] See: <http://amrkhaled.net>.

capacities.[15] Training and capacity-building initiatives need to be keyed to those areas most likely to produce job growth given the needs of local employers and prospective investors, with linkage and feeder programs put in place to facilitate more systematic "training-to-employment" cycles. This undertaking requires the sustained commitment of diverse range of local, regional, and global stakeholders.

One innovative enterprise currently blazing a trail for this approach in the Middle East is Silatech (an adaptation of "your connection" in Arabic), an effort to coordinate a baseline analysis of employment needs that can, in turn, inform policymaking, with buy-in from significant partners in the corporate world and intergovernmental agencies. Silatech runs microfinance, business development and job creation programs, primarily in Qatar and Yemen (www.silatech.com).

5. Joint ventures between foundations and philanthropists in the U.S. and Muslim World

While many major philanthropic bodies in the U.S. and Muslim world share common priorities in goals around, for example, alleviation of human suffering, disease eradication, and public health, they have rarely joined forces or worked together to leverage comparative advantages. While there have been a few instances of this kind of collaboration in the United States—such as the anti-malaria partnership between Islamic Relief USA and the ONE Campaign—the most prominent private foundation and humanitarian agencies in both the U.S. and the Muslim world have tended to form partnerships with a relatively narrow range of actors. Such collaborations would not only serve as formidable force multipliers in terms of potential social impact, but would also carry enormous symbolic currency.

An important new organization working to develop and diversify traditions of giving in the Muslim world—as well as to build bridges across cultures through philanthropy—is the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (www.thewcmp.org). The Congress is building a global network of Muslim donors and social entrepreneurs to tackle endemic problems such as disease and hunger. For example, its Hasanah Fund connects the network of donors to wider charitable circles including ActionAid and relevant UN bodies. The Congress is also a leader in the movement to develop innovative new ways of channeling *zakat* (mandatory public welfare tithing) funds into community development and poverty eradication programs.

Moving beyond the U.S.-Muslim world dichotomy

Finally, while much of this discussion has been framed in terms of improving U.S. –Muslim world relations, one important goal of these partnerships should actually be to break down the idea that there are two distinct entities—characterized by essential differences—on either side of that hyphen. At one level this is about moving beyond relationships defined in terms of paternalism whereby the United States provides money and technical capacity to solve Muslim world problems. Rather, the approach advocated here would be about developing programs that recognize that many of the social problems that characterize urban settings in Pakistan and Egypt are also to be found in Chicago and Los Angeles. But moving beyond the U.S. – Muslim world dichotomy is also about recognizing that, with some 3-5 million Muslims, the United States is itself part of the Muslim world. Muslim Americans will, therefore, play a crucial role as leaders and bridge-builders in forming transformative partnerships.

[15] Navtej Dhillon and Tarik Yousef, *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009.

If the activities envisaged here have a long-term goal beyond the positive social change they enable, it should be to render the endeavor of improving U.S.-Muslim world relations irrelevant. In other words, we hope for a time when partnerships between governments, the private sector, NGOs, and philanthropies in the U.S. and Muslim world have become so well integrated and institutionalized that it makes little sense to speak of them as more than the best way to further common interests and tackle shared concerns.

Suggested further reading and resources

Ehaab Abdou, Amina Fahmy, Diana Greenwald, and Jane Nelson, *Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: Toward Sustainable Development for the Next Generation*, Washington DC: The Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution and the Dubai School of Government, 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2010/04_social_entrepreneurship/04_social_entrepreneurship.pdf.

Special Edition of the journal *Innovations: Technology | Globalization | Governance* for the 2008 World Economic Forum on the Middle East, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2008 [in Arabic], http://www.weforum.org/pdf/schwabfound/INNOVATIONS_World-Economic-Forum-Middle-East-2008_FINAL.pdf.

http://ashoka.org/mena & http://www.ashoka-arab.org/ashoka/

http://www.acumenfund.org/

About the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

The Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;

- A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;

- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Muslim world;

- An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cultural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;

- A Science and Technology Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the U.S. and Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;

- A Faith Leaders Initiative which brings together representatives of the major Abrahamic faiths from the United States and the Muslim world to discuss actionable programs for bridging the religious divide;

- A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution's original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation.

The Project Conveners are Martin Indyk, Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies; Kenneth Pollack, Senior Fellow and Director, Saban Center; Bruce Riedel, Senior Fellow in the Saban Center; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Shibley Telhami, Nonresident Senior Fellow and Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland; and Hady Amr, Director of the Brookings Doha Center.

About the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings

THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Vice President of Foreign Policy at Brookings was the founding Director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's Director. Within the Saban Center is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers. They include Bruce Riedel, a specialist on counterterrorism, who served as a senior advisor to four presidents on the Middle East and South Asia at the National Security Council and during a twenty-nine year career in the CIA; Suzanne Maloney, a former senior State Department official who focuses on Iran and economic development; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Hady Amr, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.

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