



ISPU

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Institute for Social Policy and Understanding

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Internships available.
Contact us for details.

The ISPU Mission

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding is an independent and nonprofit organization committed to studying U.S. domestic and foreign policy and its impact on American society in general and its Muslim communities in particular. ISPU provides analysis, research, policy briefs and commentary which directly involve public policy through publications, conferences, media events, grants, training and research support. ISPU is established on the idea that every community must address, debate and contribute to the pressing issues facing our nation.

Message from the Outgoing Executive Director

During the past four years I have had the pleasure of serving as the Executive Director of ISPU. What started out as a few people in a metro Detroit basement has turned into a national institution dedicated to bringing an alternative voice to our country's policy debate.

The challenge of creating this organization has been tremendous and the toll on our personal and professional lives has been difficult. As a group, the full-time staff and Board of Directors of ISPU have made these sacrifices without batting an eye. We have helped support scholars who have put together



Dr Iltefat Hamzavi is the outgoing Executive Director of ISPU

work that has invigorated discussions about the role of a minority in shaping policy in the United States of America. To some that might come off as an abstract statement but those close to ISPU know that this work has touched the lives of many people of many different faiths.

Major publications and think tanks consistently reference ISPU's work, especially the Detroit Mosque Study. University students, police officers and more have learned about the data contained in this study. However, we also produced work on such diverse issues as poverty and homelessness, the environment, immigration, FEMA, foreign policy, biologically modified foods, and most recently a major conference on education.

At the end of the day ISPU is about people who want to help shape the fu-

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**Education Conference
a Success in Washington DC**

ISPU partnered with Georgetown University to host the Islamic Education in America conference in April of 2006. Over 20 papers were presented by leading scholars. The keynote address was given by visiting professor Anwar Ibrahim, the former deputy prime minister of Malaysia. The proceedings of the conference will be available shortly on our website and can be downloaded to an MP3 player. A special written report will also be available in the near future.

*Highlights
in this Issue*

- **New ISPU Executive Director Appointed**
- **Education Conference Held in Washington DC**
- **New Policy Briefs**
- **Analysis of Rand Report is Published**
- **Delaware Conference**
- **Summer Internships**

Analysis of Rand Corporation's Report on Islam

In 2004, the conservative Rand Corporation released a monograph, "Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, resources and Strategies" by Cheryl Bernard. This paper called for a program to actively influence Islamic reform into a direction favorable to US interests.

ISPU led an effort by numerous scholars to study the Rand report and offer an alternative vision of Islamic reform. In its new report, "**Blaming Islam: Examining the Religion Building Enterprise**," ISPU scholars warn against interfering with the ongoing process of internal debate and reform. Furthermore, they point out that the Rand report is overly fixated on radical Islam and fringe elements, ignoring the political context in which they have arisen.

United States, as an external political actor that is increasingly perceived by Muslims as biased and hypocritical, cannot positively affect political development by rendering support on the basis of artificial religious preferences. Rather, it must base its positions on intrinsic values and political principles. In actuality, RAND's recommendations are nothing but a recycling of the very old foreign policies that got us where we are today and that have led to the radicalization of the Middle East.

Synopsis of Recent Articles and Reports

The Crisis in Darfur: Community Building and Identity Politics

By Dr. John Voll

The number of dead and displaced in Darfur is staggering. The battles are reflecting the new nature of human group identities in the twenty-first century world of globalization and global connections. A shift away from the old nationalist vision of a unitary and homogeneous national identity is an essential part of a resolution to the conflicts in Darfur.

However, this shift has many implications. While it means that the central government cannot expect to impose a single identity on all parts of the country, it also means that local and regional groups cannot expect to frame their identities in old style terms of a separatist homogeneous local identity. At both the local and the national levels, people will need to recognize the pluralism of any identity.

The broad and unclearly defined labels of "Arabs" and

"Africans" provide a convenient set of identities for describing the conflict. However, neither identification label provides an operational basis for unity of action or community. It is clear that programs must be devised and implemented to help the people of Darfur cope with the dramatic ecological challenges facing the region.

Similarly, education and employment opportunities need to be developed for the youth in the region. Major programs for facilitating the return of internally displaced persons (IDP) and reconstruction must be established. Effectively meeting this challenge without resorting to simplistic explanations of "Arab" versus "African" is an essential dimension of creating long term solutions for Darfur's problems and conflicts.

Evolving Boundaries of Freedom of Speech and Press

By James Magee

The dilemma facing American policymakers is a conflict between the freedom to say what you want in public and liberalism's equality principle: that individuals and groups deserve dignity and public respect regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or some other trait or characteristic.

It has been insisted that the government may punish political advocacy made through "speech" only when facts show that the speech will incite illegal conduct.

It is arguable, that publishing the cartoons of Muhammad in the United States could be made a criminal offense if the publisher's purpose is shown to incite the kind of violence seen across the Muslim world.

Current constitutional doctrine supports the right to dissent and to voice even vulgar opinions, but constitutional history also suggests that whether written in absolutist language or scrolled in gold, the First Amendment is always subject to interpretation by politically appointed judges who face changing political

landscapes. Changing political climates and judicial personnel affect the meaning of freedom of speech as much as anything else. Adjustments are inevitable given the language of the First Amendment, changing judicial personnel and

new contexts such as the world after 9/11.

Putting Immigration Debate into Context

By James Hanley

The Senate is attempting to legalize illegal workers, while the House wants to turn them into felons. The only effective solution to the problem of illegal immigration is to increase Mexico's wealth, which can best be done by coupling economic reform in Mexico with a North American common market.

However, a common market with Mexico would not be a massive drain on the American economy. The resulting lower prices allow Americans to increase their standard of living by being able to purchase more goods, and the reduced business costs allow U.S. firms to invest -value enterprises, boosting overall economic growth.

The immediate problem is that Mexico is dramatically underdeveloped compared to the

United States. But the more fundamental problem is the cause of that underdevelopment, a cause common to all of Latin America – a lack of property rights. With property rights reform and full access to the U.S. market Mexico too could be transformed within a generation. A booming Mexican economy would create incentives for individuals to look for work nearer to home, leading to an end to the problem of illegal immigration from Mexico. The United States can make that happen, by inviting Mexico into a common market, with the proviso that they open up property ownership to all citizens.

Full reports of these and more reports can be found at our website at: www.ispu.us



Synopsis of Recent Articles and Reports

The Failed Intelligence Reorganization Needs Reorganizing

By Dr Fawaz Gerges

A second reorganization of our intelligence services is needed that will consolidate the multi-headed hydra that is the U.S. intelligence community.

Giving us more bureaucracy without much more coordination is the worst of all worlds and will decrease America's security rather than increase it. The new Director of National Intelligence (DNI) has become a new bureaucracy layered on top of the intelligence commu-

nity, a new agency on top of the fifteen or more previously existing agencies. The DNI requires over 1500 people just to coordinate the intelligence community below it. There has simply been a reshuffling of boxes on government organizational charts, which usually means an expansion of government

A re-reorganization should start by drastically slimming down the DNI office so that it can better its general performance, and produce more effective results.

Is Veneration of the Military Good for the Republic?

By Dr. Evan Eland

Most Americans go out of their way to praise the troops in Iraq, even if they are critical of the invasion or how the war is being conducted. This flattery is not good for our troops and our country.

This veneration can be attributed to our experiences in Vietnam where our soldiers were often blamed for the senseless war along with the government. Now, since our armed forces are volunteer based, there is a collective guilt from the thought that our troops are "dying for us". Criticism of the military is easily stifled.

Use of patriotic images and lucrative pay attracts impressionable young people to volunteer. Defense of our country is purposely confused with advancement of this administration's aggressive policy of policing the US global empire. The Department of Defense is now better described as the Department for Offense or at least, the Department for the Defense of Other Nations.

The focus on the volunteer

forces and their casualties has led many Americans to forget the casualties of the many Iraqi civilians who did not volunteer to be part of American foreign policy assertiveness.

The nation's founders realized that an excessive veneration of the military was not good for a republic. The American republic was supposed to be the antithesis of the militarized societies of 18th century Europe.

ISPU Welcomes Summer Interns

ISPU is pleased to welcome three new interns this summer. Atiya Husain is a student at the University of Michigan majoring in sociology, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Islamic studies, Emraan Khan is a student at Johns Hopkins University majoring in economics and political science, and Sara Munshi is a recent graduate of the University of Texas—Austin majoring in political communication.


How to Reform Immigration Laws

By Dr. Benjamin Powell

The Senate Judiciary committee passed a bi-partisan measure that would allow current illegals to stay in the U.S. and would open the way for more to migrate as guest-workers. Reform that forces these workers to leave the United States, permanently or temporarily, will disrupt our economy.

Bush wants to include a "guest-worker" program along with increased border security that would require U.S. businesses to demonstrate that no American workers are willing to take a job before a business can offer it to a temporary foreign worker.

A solution would include a large scale guest-worker program with low administrative burdens and job flexibility for migrants with a path to permanent residency. If it allows in enough workers the US economy could enhance and there would be a reduction in the flow of attempted illegal crossings.



"there is a collective guilt from the thought that our troops are 'dying for us'... and criticism is stifled"

Delaware Conference on US and Islamic World

ISPU sponsored a seminar, "State of US-Islamic World Relations" at the University of Delaware on 5/16/2006. Panelists included the conference chairperson Dr. Muqdetar Khan, Dr. Peter Singer, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, Dr. Stuart Kaufman, Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad and Dr. Mahmoud Monshipouri. It was widely agreed that the current state of relations is at an all time low.

Amongst the suggestions for improving US-Islamic relations included leveraging American strengths in business, arts and sciences to positively impact the Islamic world. The seminar was funded by the Tides Foundation in partnership with the University of Delaware's Department of Political Science.



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Packed hall greeted panelists at the US-Islamic Relations seminar.

Message from the Outgoing Executive Director

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ture without being held hostage to the past. We have solicited funds, supported scholars, organized conferences that no one thought were possible. We were paid only with the satisfaction of a job well done.

On a personal note I have to thank God for the opportunity of working with the people of ISPU. I cannot forget the endless hours, the numerous meetings and financial sacrifice. The people who will now run ISPU have my respect and appreciation. The people who helped found our group will hopefully leave a legacy that will outlast them.

Now the organization will turn to the leadership of Mazen Asbahi as Executive Director who brings the experience of a lawyer with an expertise in non-profit organizations. He will work hand in hand with our Administrative Director, Afshan Siddiqi. Farid Senzai and Zareena Grewal will continue to lead the research efforts and Afser Shariff will take over from Muzammil Ahmed as De-

velopment Director. I look forward to serving under Afser in the development committee and work to develop the role of the board of trustees.

As I leave my position as Executive Director my optimism in the ability of a small group to inspire change is strengthened. I will always be

thankful that I was present to watch the volunteers and staff turn this group into what it is today.

I do ask that our donors continue to support the organization and the ideas it represents. We cannot survive and grow

without you. The world of the future will value ideas much more than material objects. The investment you put into ISPU will produce a valuable commodity with a tangible return to you and your family in the future.

Thank you again for supporting your ISPU.



Contribute To ISPU

ISPU is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization and relies upon generous individuals and institutions to support its work. Our development staff can work with you to identify the most advantageous means to contribute to the Institute. Please consider making a bequest to ISPU in your wills. **Stock transfers, online donations and checkomatic deductions** are available for your convenience. For more information please contact the ISPU office or send an email.

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