



PROJECT on Middle East Democracy

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Center for Strategic and International Studies

“Qur’anic Guide to Good Governance”

Thursday, October 09, 2008, 4th floor Conference Room

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) hosted a Caux roundtable discussion on Qur’anic Guidance for Good Governance with remarks by **Stephen Young**, Global Executive Director of the Caux round table, introduced by **Jerry Hyman**, Senior Adviser and President of the CSIS Hills Program on Governance.

In his discussions with Islamic scholars from the International Islamic University of Malaysia, Mr. Young found these Qur’anic concepts most relevant to principles of good governance:

1. God created **man as a viceregent (*khalifa*): the human being as a steward or an agent, in the Western legal sense.**
2. The act of creating humanity in the Qur’an uses similar imagery in Genesis: **the Judeo-Christian tradition is close to the Islamic tradition.**
3. **Everything we have**, our intellectual powers, our wealth, etc., **is a trust (*amana*)** from God: **similar to the arguments made by John Locke** in that, “people put power in the government as a trust.”

Hence, **there should be no opposition from the Muslim world to American style constitutionalism because there is a solid Qur’anic basis to it**, and essentially “American government is about agents or *khalifas*.”

Young concludes his talk with **some implications of this understanding of Qur’an on policy: 1) it calls into question the ‘Clash of Civilization’, 2) and the ‘War on Terror’** as conceived by the Bush administration **is fundamentally wrong at its core and therefore can never succeed.** The United States should encourage mobilization of “the people” in Muslim society, who can then overthrow the insurgents over time by “marginalizing extremists” more effectively.