Chapter Title: Introduction

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Book Author(s): Lowell H. Schwartz, Todd C. Helmus, Dalia Dassa Kaye and Nadia Oweidat
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Introduction

Many analysts have examined the media that violent extremists use to communicate their core messages. Far less research, however, has been devoted to creative works in the Islamic world. Large bodies of creative works, often unknown in the United States, can play an important role in countering the intellectual and ideological underpinnings of violent extremism.[1] Unfortunately, many of these works are not widely known or disseminated in the Arab world. The central research question of this study is disentangling the *why* behind this state of affairs. What factors prevent the broader production and dissemination of works offering constructive themes and messages that provoke critical thinking and debate and undermine extremist views?

Understanding why barriers exist begins with identifying obstacles to the broad dissemination of creative works in the Arab world, focusing in particular on printed material. Chapter Two reviews the major barriers that creative works face in gaining access to a broad audience across the Middle East, drawing extensively on interviews with writers, publishers, and academics that were conducted in the region and in Europe in the winter and spring of 2008. Chapter Three reviews the book and magazine programs organized by the U.S. and British governments during the Cold War. That chapter focuses on how Cold War policymakers approached many of the same organizational and policy challenges faced by decisionmakers today in the Middle East

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[1] The work of Cynthia P. Schneider at the Brookings Institution highlights the key role that cultural diplomacy can play in improving U.S.-Muslim relations. For further information, see Schneider and Nelson (2008).

context, despite obvious differences in the political and cultural situation. Chapter Four considers policy implications based on lessons from the Cold War experience as well as on the particular circumstances facing publishing in the Arab world today.