

FOREWORD
by Vartan Gregorian
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“Knowledge is now so various, so extensive, so minute, that it is impossible for any man to know thoroughly more than one small branch.” That brief quote is one I find myself returning to time and again, not only because it is certainly rings true, but also because its relevance seems to defy the barriers of time—especially when one considers the fact that the words belong to Andrew Carnegie and that they were published in the year 1902.¹

More than a century later, the struggle to navigate the heights and depths of humanity’s accumulated knowledge is like trying to find pathways through a seemingly infinite library that adds more rooms every day—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, every minute, every second. The reason that we, as individuals and as members of societies and citizens of nations continue that struggle, of course, is the need to distill real wisdom from vast tracts of unaggregated facts and information. Often, we overlook those who can be among our most useful guides in this endeavor: scholars.

Throughout its nearly century-long history, Carnegie Corporation of New York has funded research and scholarship in support of the mandate that Andrew Carnegie gave this institution: to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. In the year 2000, we established the Carnegie Scholars Program as a direct outgrowth of this mission, with the goal of providing financial and intellectual support to scholars and thinkers who were addressing some of the most critical research questions of our time. Over its decade-long history, fellowships awarded by the program have provided up to \$100,000 in support over a two-year period. For the first five years of the program, we funded exemplary scholars and their work on a range of issues that covered the entire scope of the Corporation’s programs, including education, sub-Saharan Africa, democracy, and international peace and security.

Beginning in 2005, however, we decided to focus the program on one specific

¹ *The Empire of Business* by Andrew Carnegie (Doubleday, Page and Company, 1902).

area of vital importance: Islam. Our goal was to expand the range of scholarship in order to promote knowledge and understanding about Islam as a religion and about the cultures and communities of Muslim societies both in the United States and abroad. This was an important element in a comprehensive strategy aimed at increasing public knowledge about the diversity of thought and cultures that both arise from and comprise Islam and Muslim communities, including those in the U.S. Our decision was, in part, a response to an increased demand since September 11, 2001, by cultural institutions, think tanks, elected officials, policymakers and journalists for a richer, deeper understanding of Islam as a religion, about Islamic civilizations, and about Muslim states and societies. But it was also informed by a growing realization that there was—and continues to be—a disconnection between many of our public conversations about Islam, which are often troubling, and a true understanding of its history, development, and contributions to humankind. After all, Islam is a religion of diverse expressions and societies with more than 1.3 billion practitioners worldwide. In the U.S. alone, estimates are that the Muslim population ranges from 5-to-7 million. We must be able to better equip Americans to engage with various Muslim communities in our midst as well as those abroad.

As with our original cohort of scholars, Corporation fellowships in support of the study of Islam have been specifically awarded to those individuals who are dedicated to the concept of public scholarship, meaning that their work is intended not only for the pages of journals or the desks of their peers but for wide dissemination. Our interest has always been in helping to forge connections between excellent scholarship and the formation of public policy as well as to add energy and insight to our national conversations about Islam as well as to international dialogue about Islam and Muslim societies. The wide range of subjects and issues addressed by the 101 Carnegie Scholars who have engaged in Islam-related research and scholarship from 2004 to 2009 has produced a rich body of work that will continue to have an impact for years to come as the scholars carry on with analyzing their findings, publishing their work, and creating new linkages between individuals, disciplines, and institutions.

Today, it is even more critical than ever for all American citizens to make wise and informed decisions about our present actions and future directions if our exceptional nation, in this exceptional and unsettled age, is to thrive both domestically and on the world stage. In that connection, Carnegie Corporation of New York is pleased to publish this report on five years of scholarship on Islam. We expect that the work of these scholars of vision and purpose will do much to knit together the fabric of diversity that is the hallmark of our changing times.