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**How Failed Muslim Economies Lead to Terrorism
And What They Can Do About It**

“The emergence of stateless terrorism during the past decade as a major international threat, coupled with growing political instability in countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, suggest that a sharper focus on economic growth in the Middle East may be critical.” So says Steven Schlosstein, international strategist and president of Princeton-based SBS Associates, Inc. “If the underlying social conditions of poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment there cannot be eliminated, then the threat from the ‘supply side’ of Islamic terrorism may continue to grow unimpeded. Put another way, either the failed Muslim economies of the Arab world learn to create more jobs for their over-populated pool of undereducated and unemployed males, or they will continue to create more suicide martyrs, with violent and predictable consequences.”

In his upcoming book, *Endangered Species: Why Muslim Economies Fail -- Lessons for the Middle East from Asia's Dynamic Transformation* -- Schlosstein points out that nearly all recent discussion of the Middle East has focused primarily on three issues: 1) political stability, and the desire to see American-style “liberal democracy” transplanted throughout the region; 2) the religion of Islam, and how the fundamentalists have split from moderate, mainstream Islam to inspire a new generation of ruthless, faith-based terrorists; and 3) foreign affairs and the subservience to -- or hostility toward -- the arrogance of the United States as an Imperial superpower. “This tripartite preoccupation, with a ubiquitous mass media focus, has tended to ignore basic economic reality in the region,” Schlosstein asserts, “which itself has become a virtual ‘captive’ of the resource-rich Gulf nations, the dominance of American commerce, and the industrial world’s incessant thirst for oil.

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Economic development strategies that focus on exports of value-added manufactured goods, high-level services, or even advanced technology itself have all but been overlooked.”

The Islamic model, Schlosstein argues, is an intellectual bust -- a lethal combination of Holy Law, repressive government, tragic overpopulation, and immobilizing unemployment. “Islam has contributed little except explosive population growth, the destruction of the middle class, and growing numbers of illiterate or poorly-educated masses,” Schlosstein contends. In fact, the Persian Gulf countries suffer from deep economic, social, and political problems that require urgent attention.

Schlosstein believes the Arab world can find answers to these problems by looking to the East -- specifically, Tokyo and Beijing, or Singapore and Seoul -- rather than feeling victimized by the West. “I would argue that the high-performing economies of East Asia can supply more useful strategies for modernization *while protecting valuable historic traditions* than either the United States or Europe, given the widespread level of hostility that increasingly characterizes the Arab world’s relationship with the West,” Schlosstein says. He would like to see the Muslim countries of the Middle East sending teams of their best people to Asia where Japan can show them how to create viable public institutions, China can demonstrate how to maintain political control while turbocharging the economy, and Singapore can model incentives for population control.

The narrative, analysis, and anecdotal observations that form the heart of *Endangered Species: Why Muslim Economies Fail* are the product of more than 200 extensive background interviews conducted during multiple visits to the Middle East during 2003. Detailed discussions with senior government officials, politicians, leading intellectuals, business executives, and scholars provide varying perspectives. But Schlosstein also synthesizes the opinions and insights of countless ordinary people on the street -- taxi drivers, retail merchants, cops, soldiers, Muslim women, shoeshine boys, illegal immigrants, café proprietors, and students -- who contribute a wide spectrum of colorful views and add a strong texture to the rich mosaic of opinions expressed throughout.

Endangered Species: Why Muslim Economies Fail
Lessons for the Middle East from Asia’s Dynamic Transformation

by Steven Schlosstein

<http://www.schlosstein.net/>

Publisher: Stratford Books

ISBN: 0-962-7060-4-3

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