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Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future ISIM,

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Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future

In the aftermath of 'September 11', much commentary was directed at the alleged clash between Islam and the West. As a long-time ally of the United States and a figure-head of Islamic politics, Saudi Arabia was caught in the middle. As fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were of Saudi origin, and with accusations of Saudi co-responsibility for the direction radicalized Islam had taken, the royal family was placed in the awkward situation of being called to account for the behaviour of a few

Saudi citizens who were in fact simultaneously targeting the Al Saud themselves. Indeed, after 9/11 Saudi Arabia came to be seen, in some quarters, not so much as a victim but rather as a source of the problem. At the same time existing issues of concern relating to Saudi Arabia's economy, its 'social contract', and its place in the region and the world, were further highlighted.

Combining the roles of perhaps the world's key oil exporter, the guardian of the holiest places of Islam, and a crucial ally of the West in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia has acquired a high international profile involving inevitable tensions. Yet its internal affairs remain opaque to most outside observers. Moreover, the tensions between the Kingdom's roles at the regional and global levels in a changing international system intertwine with the dilemmas being faced at the domestic level. There is a need, therefore, to address these interlocking issues systematically, by drawing on the insights of a variety of Saudi and specialist outside observers. The workshop (and the associated book project) will

The workshop *Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future* will take place in Leiden and Amsterdam from 20 to 22 February 2004. It is organized by Paul Aarts (University of Amsterdam) and Gerd Nonneman (Lancaster University, UK). The project is sponsored by the ISIM, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lancaster University and benefits from close support by the European University Institute's Robert Schuman Centre (Prof. Giacomo Luciani).

attempt to do just that. This is particularly timely since many Saudis themselves—both among the leadership and elsewhere—are currently increasingly debating and acting on these questions.

The workshop (Leiden/Amsterdam, 20-22 February 2004) will bring together scholars and practitioners from Europe, the US and the Middle East—including Saudi Arabia. In two days of open discussions among commenta-

tors from a variety of perspectives, contemporary trends in Saudi politics, society, economy and international relations will be examined, exploring their roots as well as likely future developments. The focus will be at once domestic and international—seeing regional and global developments through the Saudi lens, while examining Saudi developments in the light of 'September 11', the Iraq crisis, and changing global politics. Emphatically not an exercise in either accusation or in justification, the multiplicity of perspectives and areas of expertise brought to bear on these questions should allow a balanced understanding to emerge of Saudi Arabia's dynamics, challenges, and responses.

More information can be obtained from Paul Aarts, Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Middle East Politics at the University of Amsterdam, p.w.h.aarts@uva.nl or Gerd Nonneman, Reader in International Relations and Middle East Politics at Lancaster University, g.nonneman@lancaster.ac.uk.

ISIM FELLOWSHIPS

The ISIM invites applications and research proposals for its various programmes. Applications from candidates in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cultural studies and political science will be considered. Applicants should be competent in academic English.

The ISIM fellowships and their respective application deadlines are as follows:

- **Ph.D. fellowships**
(1 March 2004 and 1 September 2004)
- **Post-doctoral fellowships**
(1 March 2004 and 1 September 2004)
- **Visiting fellowships**
(1 March 2004 and 1 September 2004)
- **Sabbatical fellowships**
(1 March 2004 and 1 September 2004)

For more information on the various fellowships and for application forms, please consult www.isim.nl.

ISIM EVENTS

ISIM and Felix Meritis Lecture and Debate Series, 2003–2004: The Multicultural City: Images and Structures.

The series aims to explore the irreducible variety of multiculturalism as if in a city walk. Main themes include building, living, and consuming, but also demonstrating, protesting, and debating.

Dates: 22 January, 19 February, 18 March, 22 April and 20 May 2004

Venue: Felix Meritis, Keizersgracht 324, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Workshop: The Islamic Community of Milli Görüş in Europe Today: Some Possible Avenues for Common Research

Organizers: Martin van Bruinessen (ISIM), Gerdien Jonker

Date: 9 January 2004

Venue: Leiden, The Netherlands

Conference: The Role of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Transformation of West Africa

African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) Conference and International Association for the History of Religions Regional Conference

Organizers: Elom Dovlo, Abdelkader Tayob (ISIM), Matthews A. Ojo

Date: 5-8 February 2004

Venue: Legon, Ghana

Workshop: Saudi Arabia between 9/11, the Iraq Crisis & the Future

Organizers: Paul Aarts, University of Amsterdam, Gerd Nonneman, Lancaster University

Sponsors: ISIM, the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the University of Lancaster (UK)

Date: 20-22 February 2004

Venue: Leiden / Amsterdam, The Netherlands

For more information on these and other ISIM Events please consult the ISIM website or contact the ISIM Secretariat:

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