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Editorial

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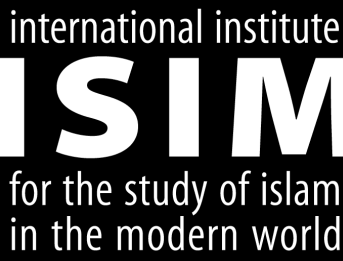
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The ISIM solicits your response to the ISIM Newsletter. If you wish to contribute to the ISIM Newsletter, style sheets may be obtained upon request from the ISIM Secretariat or on the ISIM website. In order to offer updated information on activities concerning the study of Islam and Muslim societies, along with news on vacancies, grants, and fellowships, the ISIM relies on its readers. The information will be made available on the ISIM website.

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The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the ensuing 'war against terrorism' constitute a dramatic turn in the recent post-colonial conflicts. It is perhaps insensitive, in particular with respect to those who have lost their lives or livelihood, relatives and loved-ones, to point to the fact that the impact of the 9/11 catastrophes can only partly be explained by the number of casualties or the magnitude of material destruction. Symbolic location and modern, high-tech skills have catapulted this latest tragic series of events into the public imagination. The attacks were unique in their cynical use of commercial aviation. The targets were not entirely new, but the images of the fatal impact of the two planes on the WTC constitute a veritable landmark in media coverage of violence. Juxtaposed to the images of destruction and despair in New York and Washington, the depiction of the hide-out of the likely mastermind(s) of the attacks strengthened the notion, all too common in the West, that Islam is a fossil of sorts, not having evolved since the Middle Ages. Bearded men in a ruined and barren land; the women veiled, the men armed, except when they pray – but even then the arms are within reach. The well-orchestrated video presentation by Usama bin Laden – the first sight of him following the events – seemed to play with these metaphors in its choice of location, language and dress. The themes of the cave, the call for a holy war and other religious invocations reinforced many in their conviction that this movement was indeed rooted in medieval religious hatred and obscurantism. Of course, the prime target audience of the video messages were not the 'unbelievers' of the West, but the world community of Muslims, the *umma*. Popular imaginaries of the Middle Ages in the Muslim world differ markedly from those in the West. For many in the Muslim world pre-modern times are equivalent to Muslim sovereignty, a time of cultural, religious and political assertion of the *umma*, later to be unjustly suppressed by colonial powers. A number of Western observers and politicians deduce from this favourable reading of the past that Muslims' present-day stances towards the West should be understood as being rooted in a frustration that is several centuries old; the loss of hegemony. Of course, this is an extremely comfortable position to take and dismisses the West from a serious reflection on the modern conditions on which anti-Western feelings feed: the marked and increasingly visible unequal distribution of material and political privileges. The fact that some elites, more than others, in the Muslim world share in the international comforts while at the same time they fervently protect their national privileges by undemocratic means, explains why many in the Muslim world consider their present-day governments as the continuation of colonial regimes. The way the 'war against terrorism' has evolved so far, with, for instance, continuing US bombardments within hearing distance of Kabul and Islamabad long after the Taliban defeat, with the rough treatment of the captured Al-Qa'ida militants excepting the one American from among them, confirm this view of a Western-dominated world in which only the happy few elsewhere have a stake. Very few, however, conclude from this that Muslims should rise in arms.

Some have opted for a hate-campaign that they call 'jihad'. One of the most perplexing features of this campaign is the ability to mobilize resources in the West. The radicals meet, preach, and prepare for their war in the West, in particular in the US – and attract youngsters from Arab families who have the means to send their sons to the West. It is not manifest that Afghanistan, as a space with facilities for militant volunteers during the last decade, constituted a vital asset for those who carried out the suicide attacks. Some, if not most, may have visited Al-Qa'ida strongholds, but the required instruction and preparation for the attacks were situated in Europe and, above all, the US. It is difficult to imagine, but the most deadly calls for holy war against the West were uttered in

meetings in towns in New Jersey, Kansas and Texas, where Muslim militants from the Middle East convened. This *frontier mysticism* builds upon modern currents directed not only against the West but, more importantly, against – in the words of Khomeyni, one of the main sources of inspiration for militants – '[...] the Islam of compromise and ignobility, the Islam of the pain-free comfort-seekers, [...] in one word the American Islam' (Tavakoli-Targhi, p. 13). These currents that, apparently, seek to exclude those who are not like-minded should be addressed in a serious manner, both in the West and the Muslim world.

Media coverage of the events, in particular of the 'war against terrorism', was highly unbalanced, which is common practice in cases of war and conflict. Most Western media allowed very limited space for critical voices, though towards the close of the year doubts about the course of events began to find room for critical reflection. To date, the majority of opinion makers assert that the war is not only appropriate but is also in just proportion to the carnage inflicted by the terrorists, albeit this view may crumble under pressure of the possible failure to establish a more solid political

structure in post-Taliban Afghanistan and the fiasco of capturing the Al-Qa'ida leadership, the prime goal of the war. Non-Western media, of course, demonstrate a more critical approach towards the inconsistencies in US policies, but are reluctant to address the sensitive issue of the social and political settings in the Muslim world in which Muslim militancy emerges (Hamzawy, p. 10). The role of Al-Jazeera as both an alternative Arab and international news channel and the angry reactions in the US to some of its coverage constituted the most remarkable development in the field of media politics (Ahmad Kamel, p. 20, and Naomi Sakr, p. 21).

This *ISIM Newsletter* opens with the reflections of a US citizen, Talal Asad, on the earlier phases of events and their potentially lasting detrimental effects. From a prison cell in Cairo, Saad Eddin Ibrahim (p. 11) comments on this latest post-colonial conflict, pointing out that people in the Middle East harbour legitimate grievances towards the West, but that true democrats are needed to settle the accounts. Responses to the events in various other countries, including Yemen (François Burgat, p. 17) and the UK (Jorgen Nielsen, p. 16), show the incredible diversity of reactions, not only in global terms but, as in the British case, also at the national level.

In order to come to a better and less-politicized understanding of the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that accompany globalization, many articles in this issue shed light on local effects of global developments, ranging from Muslim student activism in California (Nadine Naber, p. 19) to youth activism in urban Java (Yatun Sastramidjaja, p. 15); from migrant networks of financial transfers (Tall, p. 36) to the development of course materials for Muslims in German schools (Irka-Christin Mohr, p. 29).

Of special concern to the ISIM as an institution situated in the West is the Western reception of the events. The suicide attacks and the resulting war caused increased tension between non-Muslims and Muslim communities in various Western countries, igniting existing debates and disputes. Dominant voices urge Muslims to adapt to Western norms in a kind of 'package deal', however unclear and disputed some of these norms may be. Intellectuals, some of them Muslim, call for drastic reforms within Islam and convey the message that reforms should be initiated by Muslims in the West. Such hegemonic views impede a more open examination of the relation between the West and Islam (see for the Dutch case, Van der Veer, p. 7). In its programmes the ISIM, together with its counterparts around the world, endeavours to contribute to more constructive approaches to the current crisis.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISIM Workshop

'Authority in Contemporary Shiism; Social Relations of Hekmat, Falsafa, Tasavvof, Erfan, Feqh and Kalam in Iran' is an ISIM workshop to be convened by Matthijs van den Bos (ISIM). Participants presenting papers include Mahmoud Alijenad (IIAS), Said Amir Arjomand (State University of New York), Forough Jahanbakhsh (Queen's University), Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud (Université de Paris VIII), Sajjad Rizvi (Institute of Ismaili Studies), and Farzin Vahdat (Tufts University).

The workshop addresses the social relations of the intellectual subtraditions of Shiism: theosophy, philosophy, Sufism, gnosis, jurisprudence, and theology. Intellectuals and clerics in Iran have often framed their arguments through generic conventions within these disciplines. This, in turn, is reflected in their positions vis-à-vis the primary topic of religious debate: spiritual authority in Shiism. In addition, intellectual disciplines of Shiism often have divergent social and political embeddings, which again affects their positions on authority. The scope of the workshop ranges from the beginning of the 20th century to the present, and includes overview analyses that also cover the Pahlavi era in which clerics such as Morteza Motahari and Mahmoud Taleqani (not to mention Ayatollah Khomeyni) made fundamental contributions to the debate on authority. Building on this, special reference will be made to developments surrounding Iran's 'new religious intellectuals', such as Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari, Mohsen Kadivar, and Abdolkarim Soroush. All of these thinkers have, in one way or the other, defined the current directions of

Shiite jurisprudence as problematic. Their critical positions, in turn, are often based outside jurisprudence, in gnosis, theology or philosophy. But the non-juristic disciplines are not in themselves, of necessity, vehicles for progressive readings of religion; the uses of gnosis and theosophy in conservative arguments in support of the '(absolute) rule of the jurist' will also be addressed. The workshop aims at an understanding of the discursive and institutional aspects of these developments within the context of Khatami's Iran, but also in the light of older, ongoing debates within Iran's religious sphere.

For further information please contact the ISIM secretariat.

ISIM Annual Lecture

On 23 November 2001, Professor Barbara Metcalf (University of California, Davies) delivered the third ISIM Annual Lecture: 'Piety and Persuasion in the Modern Islamic World'. She critiqued the common notion that Islamic movements in fact invariably seek to implement 'a complete way of life', engaging not only matters of doctrine, worship, and sacred authority, but all aspects of political, social, and economic activities. She explored various movements rooted in the Deoband, including the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, the Tablighi Jama'at, and the Taliban, demonstrating that Deobandi movements deploy an extraordinary range of strategies for operating in the shifting contexts of modern South Asia. The range is vast: the piety of the apolitical madrasa-based teachers; the piety and persuasion of the itinerant preachers; the politics that range from collaboration with non-Muslims, to op-

portunistic alliances in the Realpolitik world of contemporary Pakistan, to the militia-enforced Islam of the Taliban, to the withdrawal to an essentially private sphere of correct worship and behaviour as with the Tablighi Jama'at.

The lecture will be published in the ISIM Papers series.

ISIM Fellowships

The ISIM welcomes the following new fellows:

- Dr Christèle-Claude Dedeбат: *The Formation of South Asian Civil Society Networks outside South Asia*
- Dr Yoginder Singh Sikand: *Islamic Responses to the Challenge of Religious Pluralism in Post-1947 India*
- Mohammad Amer: *Revivalism as Empowerment: A Comparative Study of the Minhaj Movement among the South Asian Youth in Europe*

The ISIM invites applications and research proposals for various programmes. Applications from candidates in the social sciences, humanities, and religious studies will be considered. Applicants should be competent in academic English. The ISIM fellowships and their respective application deadlines include the following:

- Ph.D. fellowships (1 Mar 2002 and 1 Sept 2002)
- Post-doctoral fellowships (1 Mar 2002 and 1 Sept 2002)
- Visiting fellowships (1 Mar 2002 and 1 Sept 2002)
- Sabbatical fellowships (1 Mar 2002 and 1 Sept 2002)

For more information on the various fellowships, please consult the ISIM website: <http://www.isim.nl/isim/fellowships/>
Application forms may be downloaded from the website or obtained upon request from the ISIM secretariat.