THIS ISSUE: SAUDI ARABIA

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The Middle East in London

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Dear Reader

Through all the recent disturbances in our region, following the Arab uprisings of 2011, Saudi Arabia has appeared to remain (with one or two little-publicised exceptions) a still point of calm. How people there are reacting to events around them, and what developments in thought and in society are taking place, is not particularly well known outside the Kingdom. In this issue we throw light on some of the important developments that are being implemented within the country.

George Joffe and Madawi al-Rasheed introduce us to the ferment of new ideas being broadcast on the social media, especially those of cleric Salman al-Awda. Al-Rasheed tells us of the way elements in Saudi society reacted to the events of the Arab Spring and its aftermath. Joffe discusses King Abdullah’s moves to modernise and change society, slow by the standards of other countries but significant in Saudi terms, and some of the problems that result. One of the King’s reforms has been the introduction of women to the consultative council, the Majlis ash-Shura and we have an interview with one of the first women to be chosen, Hoda al-Helaissi.

Janet Rady describes a flowering of Saudi art which has appeared on the contemporary art scene both in Saudi Arabia and here in London, while Aisa Martinez outlines the research she is doing at SOAS on a heritage collection of Saudi costumes. In the field of literature, Peter Clark talks about the so-called ‘Arab Booker’ prize competition which this year has a Saudi author on its short-list. An important archive of papers relating to the early history of the Kingdom and now housed in Oxford, the Philby collection, is described by Debbie Usher. In terms of infrastructure, huge developments are taking place in Saudi Arabia, one of which, the new metro in Riyadh, is discussed here.
George Joffé looks at the pressures facing Saudi Arabia today

The giant with the feet of clay

Two years ago, it seemed to be heading the phalanx of states resisting populist calls for change. Instead, King Abdullah sought to reinforce the social contract that has bound the Gulf states together since the advent of the oil era by distributing US$39 billion in February 2011 in additional benefits to the Saudi population, followed by a further US$100 billion two months later. The results seemed to be as intended – its own ‘day of rage’ in early March 2011 turned out to be even less than a damp squib and the Kingdom was able to openly support the Bahraini government in its successful attempts to suppress protest. There were, it is true, short-term protests in Oman and on-going tensions in Kuwait but elsewhere, despite governmental nervousness and occasional pre-emptive repression, the Gulf has remained calm.

The Saudi monarchy seemed, in short, to have got its response right, justifying its reputation as an unyielding block to populist modernity throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Yet, events of the last two years suggest that the situation is more fluid than we realised. Some degree of change, glacially slow, no doubt, by the standards of the rest of the region and managed from above, does seem to be happening in the Kingdom. Decried by many outside as far too slow and, perhaps, the result as much of external realities as internal preferences, things do seem to be changing with implications for the future that are as yet very difficult to quantify.

Economic realities

In part, the king’s generosity two years ago has created some ineluctable external realities. It is now wedded to high oil prices – perhaps as high as US$100 per barrel – just to cover the costs of its new domestic programmes. And that could be a problem, because the sudden advent of America’s burgeoning shale oil-and-gas industry might well introduce secular declines in world energy prices in the future. Of course, its foreign currency reserves are vast – $657 billion at the end of last year – but the pressures on them are great as well.

One of the most important pressures is employment; the Kingdom’s population is growing fast, from 27.5 million in 2010 to an expected 39.5 million in twenty-five years time and 30 per cent are below the age of 15. Unemployment overall is believed to be 16 per cent today and will rise in the near future.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign currency reserves are vast – $657 billion at the end of last year – but the pressures on them are great as well.

There is growing pressure inside the Kingdom from women for a greater public voice.
years to come, particularly amongst Saudi youth, because of inappropriate education and because, despite the government’s best efforts, job creation cannot keep pace with demand. That will leave a growing body of disgruntled, dissatisfied youth, feeling excluded from mainstream society and alienated from government priorities, however much their situation is eased by aid and handouts.

Of course, this problem is nothing new and the Saudi government has been trying to address it for many years. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) is one example, as are the ambitious programmes for six new technical cities. However, none of them address the key issues that face Saudi society today and that are beginning, despite the artificial calm of the last two years, to break through the officially-imposed carapace of social order – Sunni-Shi’a tensions, the Wahhabi hegemony, the status of women, the succession and the threat of renewed terrorist violence.

Society and government

One of the main indicators of growing social turmoil has been the explosive growth of social media in the Kingdom, especially Twitter. There are said to be 2.9 million users now and the comment they generate has been unrestrained, including criticism of the al-Sauds themselves. Surprisingly, protestors have not just included disaffected youth; even clerics have been making their feelings known. Salman al-Awda, a well-known critic of the current order, now regarded as a moderate, has more than 1.6 million followers on Twitter and has dared to challenge conventional Wahhabi views on protest as ‘fitna’, especially in the context of the Arab Spring (see Madawi al-Rasheed’s article on p. 7). But the most outspoken has been ‘Mujtahidd’; his identity is unknown but he appears to be well-connected and fearless – a symbol of the ways in which new media have provided an unexpected arena for public comment.

Nor are the critics necessarily moderates and radicals; conservative clerics, impeded for years by Wahhabi orthodoxy against public protest, began to voice their anxieties in public at the end of January 2013, with a demonstration outside the Royal Court and the delivery of a protest statement against the King’s recent decision to expand the Shura Council to include thirty women (see p. 9) for an interview with one of its female members – Hoda al Helaissi). Strangely enough, the protests were not just about the fact of giving women formal political representation; some influential conservative women commentators complained that those chosen did not reflect the view of most Saudi women, in a society which is predominantly still intensely socially conservative!

The King’s decision to allow women to vote in municipal elections and to enter the Shura Council also reflects the growing pressure inside the Kingdom from women themselves for a greater public voice. Women are beginning to complain about their professional status as well; lawyers complain about the lack of licences to practice and professional women are concerned about discrimination in the work place despite the fact that a Middle East business magazine recently named 15 Saudi women amongst the 100 most influential professional women throughout the Middle East! And, of course, the ban on driving and other constraints do not necessarily apply to professional women working outside the major urban areas.

The unrest touches on the security arena as well; in the Eastern Provinces, the Shi’a increasingly challenge official repression of social protest as expressions of sectarianism. Families in Buraydah protest the arrest and indefinite detention of their menfolk for taking part in demonstrations. There is no doubt that the King, despite his age and infirmity, is well-aware of the need to release such tensions as his cautious reforms attest. His problem is that he cannot know whether they will continue after he leaves the political scene. Structural reform, after all, does not necessarily mean real change, as stasis in the Constitutional Council has demonstrated.

He has, as a result, begun a slow process of restructuring the royal family. He has appointed Prince Muqrin, the youngest son of Abdelaziz al-Saud, as second deputy premier, to outflank his elder brother, Prince Salman, who is now recognized as no longer capable of succeeding him. Earlier, he had appointed Prince Mohammed bin Nayef as interior minister in place of his uncle Prince Ahmed – a deliberate snub to the Saudi tradition of power through seniority and, perhaps, an attempt to preempt the succession. At the same time, after particularly egregious abuses of power, the mutawa leadership was reined in. Change from the top is certainly on the way but the question now is whether it can outpace pressure from below!

George Joffé teaches at the Department of Politics and International Studies in the University of Cambridge and is a member of MEL Editorial Board
There is nothing that prompts us to encourage revolution as it is enshrined in danger... . It just comes when profound reform has stumbled.

Salman Al-Awda, Islamist

Like all of us watching the Arab world in the last two years, Saudi Islamists (I refer throughout to the Salafi Islamists) were taken by surprise when the Arab masses marched en masse calling for the downfall of their regimes. Official Saudi religious scholars immediately warned against the chaos of revolutions, banned demonstrations, and called for respect and obedience to rulers. Despite this, they supported the uprisings, perhaps in anticipation of Islamist parties and movements replacing the old regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and beyond. They were, however, cautious when revolutionary effervescence started creeping into the heart of Arabia. Amid Saudi calls for demonstrations, civil disobedience and change via the internet, they held back from endorsing such calls, as if to assert that neither they nor their followers were ready for peaceful collective action. Instead, they applauded the bravery and determination of Arab protestors abroad and shifted their focus to local battles with the Saudi regime against detention of prisoners of conscience, the legitimacy of peaceful collective action and the right of the people to be represented in an elected assembly.

On the eve of the Arab uprisings, Saudi Islamists had already reinvented themselves as peaceful activists seeking reform of the regime from within. During the uprisings they reinvigorated them as two Islamist parties came to power - al-Nahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. At the same time they supported the struggle of Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan, Yemeni and Syrian activists whom they dubbed Sahwa Islamiyya, (Islamic awakening). Many Saudi Islamists saw the Syrian uprising through the lens of sectarian politics and considered the Syrian rebels defenders of Sunni revival against the hegemony of a minority Alawite regime. On the Bahraini uprising, Saudi Islamists concurred with the Saudi regime that described the Bahraini revolution as a Shia-Iranian conspiracy to undermine the security of the Gulf. They also condemned the Saudi Shia uprising in the oil-rich Eastern Province. They accused the Shia of opportunism and blamed them for provoking the regime to increase oppression and arrest among their own activists.

Unlike the majority of official Saudi religious scholars, veteran Islamist Salman Al-Awda (born 1956) anchored peaceful collective revolutionary action in an Islamic...
framework and reached out for humanist interpretations that assimilate Western intellectual positions with his own Salafi orientation. He surprised his audiences when he published *As'ilat al-Thawra* (Questions of Revolution) in 2012. Al-Awda rehabilitated revolution after decades of Sunni religious scholars associating it with instability, chaos and danger. This book put him in a position different from both traditional official Saudi ulama and Jihadi ideologues, who had adopted violent strategies locally and globally. Needless to say the book was immediately banned in Saudi Arabia, prompting the author to circulate it on the internet. In this book, Al-Awda’s engagement with the question of revolution brought him back as a relevant figure at a critical moment in the Saudi and Arab public sphere. The eruption of unforeseen and unexpected revolutions needed an Islamic endorsement, interpretation and justification. Al-Awda swiftly seized the opportunity and improvised a text that moved away from the duality of the permissible and prohibited in Islamic political theology.

Al-Awda fuses western political thinking on revolutions by Marx, Popper and Fanon with his own Islamic Salafi heritage, producing a hybrid discourse that aims to reach beyond religious study circles. He defines revolution as building on the past, reform and reconstruction rather than destruction. It always starts peacefully but may later become militarised when confronted with oppression. Simply phrased, revolution is a fruit that ‘may ripen, dry prematurely or be belatedly harvested.’

Al-Awda proposes to go beyond the duality of total obedience to rulers or military revolt. His ‘third way’ centres on ‘organised collective action that regulates political opposition and accountability.’ The social contract, exemplified by the English Magna Carta, represents in Al-Awda’s thinking an early example of limiting monarchical powers and asserting individual rights. The strategy that collective action requires is not necessarily violent. Revolutionary attire, slogans and hunger strikes prove to be efficient and justified steps in a peaceful revolution. He acknowledges the diversity of al-jamahir, the critical Arab publics behind the revolutions.

On the sharia in a post-revolutionary phase, Al-Awda calls for gradual application in an attempt not to burden societies after revolutionary upheaval, a burden that may precipitate total rejection. Post-revolutionary justice requires accepting the diversity of Arab publics opinion. This justice requires reconciliation with all sectors in society including supporters of deposed regimes: as the Prophet said, ‘go, you are free.’

He warns against raising slogans such as demanding the immediate application of sharia, thus capitalising on people’s emotional dispositions. The purpose of sharia is to establish justice, protect property and guard lives.

Al-Awda asserts that in Islam there is no scope for a theocracy, the rule of Islamic jurists. The Islamic state is a contractual project between people on the basis of a civil contract. In his opinion, democracy proves to be better than autocracy. He calls for representation of the people, freedom and civil society. Why should Muslims accept autocracy and reject democracy if the latter proves to be the best available option simply because it is a western import, he asks. Democracy promises to be inclusive. Pluralism is a precondition for just government. He warns against alienating sectarian and ethnic minorities, a potentially dangerous strategy that triggers foreign intervention and civil war. He calls for respecting minority rights within a democratic framework.

While hesitating to call for revolution in Saudi Arabia, many Saudi Islamists have learnt hard lessons from a decade of terror that was displaced by peaceful collective action across the Arab world. It remains to be seen whether these new Saudi intellectual mutations will lay the foundation for a new era in an age of hybridity and pluralism. From the heartland of Salafism, Islamists are beginning to engage with this hybridity thanks to those Arab masses who have opened a new chapter in their struggle for freedom, dignity and social justice.
The King’s announcement about the selection of women to the Assembly was greeted with approbation in the Western media. Did you hear any adverse comment on it within Saudi Arabia?

The general consensus was very positive. Both men and women found the decision to be encouraging and promising. The appointment of 30 women – 20 per cent of the Shura Council – was a long-awaited pronouncement. As with anything novel, responses vary, ranging from approval to total disapprobation. I cannot stress enough

‘I cannot stress enough how honoured and proud I am to be playing a role in the upcoming, unfolding events’
How important a development do you think this selection is?
It is a very important development and this courageous and inspiring decision can only be considered as such because of the progressive effect it will have on our society. Development and evolution are inevitable in any living entity, and society never ceases to grow and change. We in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are part of this world and there will always be certain realities that we need to accept, admittedly at our own pace, if we are to continue playing an active role on a global level. Not only is this historic decision a pioneering one weighed down by a huge amount of responsibility that comes with the faith entrusted in us as Shura members, but it is also one that is embedded with the duties we are to carry out vis-à-vis our religion, our King and our country. As the first group of women in this position, we have the added responsibility of paving the way for future groups of women who will eventually replace us in our functions. We have to show that the trust was well-placed.

Our role as women in the council is not taken lightly; we all appreciate the leap that we are taking and the leap that was taken for us. Our presence as women in the council does not mean that we are to deal with only women issues. The majority of matters in society affect men and women alike and therefore our contributions, which will most probably reflect a different perspective to the one voiced in previous meetings, will be reached with understanding and communication with the men in the council. Working together will ensure better decision-making and that the conclusions we come to are informed and in the best interest of all concerned.

This development is not only important on a macro level but also on a micro level as it will have a constructive effect on our society as a whole. As more women enter the work force and contribute to the country’s economy, it is clear that their position on the career ladder is constantly rising and that society’s perception towards women is changing. Again, this is part of the natural process of change and it was only a question of time before women reached positions of power and leadership.

The Majlis is just a consultative assembly: members can propose draft laws but the King has to approve them before they are implemented. How much influence do you think the Assembly really has? Does the King endorse most of the proposals put to him by the Majlis?
I don’t think it’s fair to say the Council is ‘just a consultative assembly’ because the implication is that it is merely a group of people getting together to discuss issues who are nevertheless ineffective. If a comparison is to be made, I would say that Majlis Ash-Shura resembles the UK’s House of Lords. The people chosen to be in the Shura are from different walks of life, from various educational backgrounds and from diverse specialties. Their sense of responsibility is very high and they understand that the work before them is to be done conscientiously. Issues are discussed, laws are proposed and matters are researched and commented upon. They also review reports presented by the ministries and scrutinise government work as well as debate important current topics. The Council’s function is to advise and to consult. Approval and implementation or refutation and rejection come at a later stage based on valid reasons. I believe that most of the proposals presented to the King are endorsed but I cannot say for sure, as I have not seen any statistics regarding this matter.

When you attend sessions in the Yamama Palace, do you have to wear the veil? Are you in the same place as men?
If our taking of the oath is anything to go by, then we will be in the same hall as the men. As for the veil, it never ceases to amaze me the amount of attention that is given to it! The veil will be worn, and with pride. It is part of our identity, part of who we are and it will not affect the work we do, as proved over and over again by the hundreds of women who work effectively in their communities. Some will use it to cover their hair, others their face and others still will use the niqab – revealing only their eyes. It is a choice based on personal and religious beliefs.

This has been a huge step forward for women in Saudi Arabia. What do you think the next big step for them might be?
It has been a huge step forward. What is the next big step? That is to be seen. No one can really predict where we are going to be in the next five or ten years just as no one could have predicted that the empowerment of Saudi women and their development in the workforce would have resulted in the country being where it is today. The one sure notion, however, is that Saudi Arabia has changed; it has developed along with our changing society in our forever changing world. For the most part, these changes have taken place with the encouragement of fathers, husbands and brothers. We are living history and perhaps we should look back at our history books and take a couple of pages out of them to learn how much of a transformation has actually taken place.

Hoda al Helaissi is a former Vice-Chair at King Saud University and attended the Council for the first time on 24 February 2013

Hoda al Helaissi is one of the first women to sit in the Majlis Ash-Shura
A powerful cultural statement: Dress in Saudi Arabia

Arabian clothing with its decorative detail serves as a powerful cultural statement that communicates the wearer’s social values and identity. The colours, shapes, and motifs, as well as the placement and amount of embroidery, reveal the wearer’s age, gender, tribal affiliation, occupation, and socio-economic status without them uttering a word.

Since 2011, the London Middle East Institute has been working with the Art of Heritage Group in Riyadh (AOH) on a research project documenting styles of clothing worn throughout Saudi Arabia. The current phase focuses on embroidery and related forms of decoration.

This project uses a three-pronged approach to tell the story of Saudi dress: the AOH dress collection, European travellers’ accounts and photographs, and ethnographic research conducted during field visits to the Kingdom in 2012. In a region where there are few local textile industries, researching dress involves a global scope. For centuries, materials for making garments were imported from all over the world by pilgrims and traders.

Looking at dress in Saudi Arabia through these lenses of artefacts, archives, and interviews reveals how fabrics, threads, and decorative materials from all over the world were incorporated into local regional styles in the past century.

Garments in the AOH collection are estimated to be no older than 100 years, but they demonstrate how Saudi Arabia’s increase of wealth and subsequent consumption of goods has affected lifestyles and clothing choices. Shapes have changed from voluminous sleeves to close-fitting ones; the rough weave of cotton skirts worn in some agricultural communities contrasts with smooth synthetic silks worn by elite ladies in cosmopolitan urban areas. Glass beads and mother-of-pearl buttons are used on dresses for special occasions while less expensive plastic beads and buttons are increasingly used on dresses intended for mass consumption. Naturally dyed cotton threads have more recently been replaced by shinier and brighter coloured synthetic threads.

European travellers’ written and photographic records of the region place dress in an historical context. From the 18th century, they describe a then ‘unknown’ and ‘exotic’ Arabian Peninsula to a western audience. While the quality and quantity of clothing descriptions vary throughout the range of records, this archival material shows some styles, colours, and materials which are still found today and also shows certain elements of dress that may no longer be in regular use. Black-and-white photographs from the mid-19th century are of limited use in showing details of embroidery colours and fabric texture, but provide some useful visual evidence about Arabian dress in the past.

In 2012, I travelled to Saudi Arabia to meet with people who have been involved with dress-making and embroidery. Their stories add further context and depth to information revealed by the garments in the AOH collection and historical evidence of past explorers. Elderly women who had been hand-sewing their families’ wardrobes told how they used to sit in groups to sew, embroider, and socialise with other women in their communities. Saudi men of the same generation were sent to Mecca to train as tailors and reproduced their mothers’ older embroidery styles with sewing machines and new synthetic threads imported from Japan and China.

In Abha, capital of Asir province, foreign tailors (usually from south Asia) have taken over Saudi tailors’ trade to produce these embroidered dresses on a much larger scale, exporting well-known designs of communities in the South throughout the country.

The study of dress is an interdisciplinary undertaking. While this project involves research methods in art history, anthropology and history, there is potential for related projects to engage with ideas of modern economic and consumer trends as well as political notions of national and regional identity. For now, it is my hope that this unique project with the LMEI and AOH will contribute to a growing body of academic work on material culture and identity in Saudi Arabia.

Aisha Martinez is a Research Fellow for the Art of Heritage Project at the London Middle East Institute, SOAS.

Complete outfit worn by women of the Qahtan tribe (Asir)
Most of the voluminous papers and photographs of the famous Arabist and explorer, Harry St. John Bridger Philby, are housed in the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony’s College, Oxford. Not only did Philby live a colourful life, much of it in Saudi Arabia, but his papers and photographs also have an interesting custodial history, and have had a significant impact on the institutional development of the Archive.

Philby was a lifelong friend of Ibn Saud, who as King Abdulaziz, was the first monarch of Saudi Arabia. He converted to Islam in 1930 and played a significant role in helping to negotiate the first major oil contracts. Philby is most famous for being one of the first westerners to cross the largest sand desert in the world, the Empty Quarter, in 1931-1932 (he was beaten to it by Bertram Thomas, much to his chagrin). As intrepid was his 1936 journey through the rugged mountains of Najran and Asir to map the newly-established border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. He was an avid naturalist, and during his travels collected birds, insects and geological specimens for the Natural History Museum, London. He also gave hundreds of his photos to the Royal Geographical Society.

The Philby Collection in Oxford holds many treasures. The papers and photographs cover Philby’s education, clubs and political interests in Britain, his life as an Indian Civil Servant (1908-1914), his service in Mesopotamia (1915-1921), his service as Chief British Agent in the newly formed Transjordan (1921-1924), his work in Arabia for the business venture Sharqieh Ltd (1925-1946), and his life and work as a prolific author and explorer.

Some highlights of the material in the Middle East Centre relating to Arabia include photographs and diaries of Philby’s political mission to Central Arabia in 1917-1918, papers concerning the visit of

The 51 boxes of business papers provide a fascinating resource for the economic and social history of Arabia.
Philby was a hoarder and accumulated a substantial collection of papers and photographs during his lifetime.

Faisal bin Saud to Britain in 1919, *Hedjaz News* articles written by Philby in 1926, and papers relating to working out the longitude and latitude of Mecca.

The 51 boxes of business papers, of Sharqieh Ltd and Mitchell Cotts, provide a fascinating resource for the economic and social history of Arabia. The goods imported by the company chart the rise in prosperity, with luxury goods such as diamonds, silk and perfume appearing in the late 1940s. The papers also show the development of oil and mining projects and concessions in Arabia from 1921-1960. Prior to oil, the main source of government revenue had been the pilgrimage to Mecca. The 1929 depression had a catastrophic impact on revenue by dramatically diminishing the number of pilgrims - and Philby thought this Ibn Saud’s main reason for letting non-Muslims in to prospect for oil.

Philby was a hoarder and accumulated a substantial collection of papers and photographs during his lifetime, which made moving house difficult. Elizabeth Monroe notes in her biography of Philby that ‘getting crates of papers to Riyadh was expensive, and any friend motoring there was pressed into service. One American diplomat who obliged was caught half-way by a sudden storm of wind and rain that whirled lids off boxes and sent papers flying, soaked and irrecoverable, far into the desert. He could only shrug his shoulders, rescue the lids, nail them down, and drive on.’

Philby, however, did care about his papers and photographs. During his banishment in 1955, he delayed publishing his ‘Scandal of Arabia’ *Sunday Times* articles until he was certain that his papers were safe in the basement of the British Embassy. After his reconciliation with the Saudi royal family and his return to the Kingdom, Philby spent some years writing his books surrounded by his huge archive.

Following his death in 1960, the Saudi government took possession of all Philby’s papers and photographs. After the intervention of Philby’s son, Kim, the papers and photographs were sold (in line with Philby’s last wishes) to Saudi Aramco Library in Dhahran.

Elizabeth Monroe (who founded the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony’s) was asked by the Philby family to write a biography, and her *Philby of Arabia* was published in 1973. As part of her research for the book, she spent much time reading the Philby papers at Aramco Library. The large size of the Philby Collection was problematic for the library, which felt it did not have the resources to properly catalogue or preserve the material, or make it available to researchers. Recognising the importance of the collection, Aramco Library offered it to St Antony’s College, on condition that a microfilm copy of material relating to Arabia be made for them. This was done and the Philby Collection came to St Antony’s in 1972.

Saudi Arabia has seen huge physical and societal changes since the explosion of oil wealth from the 1940s onwards. From the 1950s, many historic buildings were destroyed in the drive for modernisation. By the 1990s, however, a sea change in attitude towards national history had taken place, and there was a surge of interest in cultural traditions and vanishing heritage.

It was in this context that the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives approached St Antony’s College with a view to making the Philby Collection available to Saudi scholars in Riyadh. In November 2001 a co-operation agreement was signed whereby the Saudis provided an endowment for the Archive, and the Middle East Centre agreed to provide copies of collections directly relevant to Saudi history - in particular the St John Philby Collection.

The endowment has made an enormous difference to the Archive; a qualified archivist has been employed to manage the collection, and there are now resources available for archival packaging and conservation work. Much work has been done on improving the catalogue of the Philby Collection. All of the Philby photographs (over 4,000) have been copied, and the copying of the papers is nearing completion (90,962 pages so far). The Philby Collection has been wonderful to work on. Some of the material has been surprising and unexpected, for example finding correspondence with A.A. Milne.

The future of the Middle East Centre Archive is also looking bright, with construction having just started on the new Softbridge building designed by Dame Zaha Hadid. These new premises will lead to a considerable upgrade of all the Archive’s facilities, including substantial space for its collections to grow.

*The Archive’s online photo galleries are at* [http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/mecaphotos-gallery.html](http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/mecaphotos-gallery.html)

*Debbie Usher has been an archivist at the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony’s College since 2002*
At London’s inaugural Art13 fair at the beginning of March, Jeddah’s Athr Gallery organised a talk entitled Saudi Arabia and Contemporary Art; Reaching Out, which focused on the question of identity and the continued evolution of the Kingdom’s contemporary art scene.

While the talk provided an overview of relevant developments, it was the setting that said most about exactly how far Saudi art has reached. Art13 acted as an international art showcase featuring works from markets as diverse as China, Brazil and Korea. The inclusion of Athr Gallery, as well as a talk dedicated to the topic, helped to position Saudi art as an established (though still developing) presence within the global contemporary art scene.

London, in particular, has come to the forefront as a place where visual art from the Kingdom is viewed by an audience increasingly accustomed to the arts and culture of the Middle East.

In 2010 the Lahd Gallery, founded by Princess Nauf Bint Bandar bin Mohammed Al Saud, opened in London and established itself as a space for the promotion of artists from the Middle East and North Africa region. As an artist herself, Princess Nauf’s decision to open a gallery is emblematic of the role of many Saudi artists, who occupy the roles of curators, artists and gallerists, and is pivotal in shaping the contemporary movement. Lahd, like many independent galleries across the Middle East, established a presence inside the region (in this case, in Riyadh in 2005) before branching out internationally. A representative for the Gallery told this author that the diversity and openness of the London market and collectors has encouraged a willingness to be more experimental in terms of medium and subject matter, thus invigorating Saudi art in new ways.

Initially set up with the aim of providing a platform for the promotion of female artists from the Gulf, since coming to London this objective has broadened into a desire to ‘create a level playing field for all Middle Eastern artists and to give them the opportunity to show their works alongside their global counterparts’. Of the 19 artists represented by the gallery, only two are Saudis. However, the Gallery’s desire to give Arab artists ‘a bigger voice in the wider world’ suggests that perhaps the aim is to normalise Saudi art within the general arts of Middle East and encourage a non-nationalistic reading of the works.

The aim is to normalise Saudi art within the general arts of Middle East and encourage a non-nationalistic reading of the works.
By contrast, one organisation which has kept raising the international profile of Saudi artists at the forefront of its agenda is the Edge of Arabia (EoA) collective, who brought their first eponymously titled show to the Brunei Gallery at SOAS in 2008. The exhibition featured the works of seventeen Saudi artists and aimed to explore the realities of living in the kingdom in the 21st century. To date, EoA has held three shows in the capital and will be looking to cement their presence with the opening at the beginning of March, of a permanent base in the city. Their new Middle East art and Education centre opened in Battersea with an inaugural exhibition entitled *It’s a Project* featuring artwork, film, installations and interactive displays.

The choice to have a permanent base in the city provides an opportunity to explore the impact of a globalised culture on works which are still oft en viewed within the context of a very specifi c cultural narrative. It also references the growing need to have a place to permanently display Saudi art in London, when increasingly established institutions are bolstering their collections to refl ect its growing importance.

For example, important London institutions such as the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum have been acquiring works by contemporary Saudi artists and curating shows which contribute to the increased visibility of art from the Kingdom to wider audience. Currently, the Victoria and Albert Museum is showing the beautiful *Light from the Middle East* exhibition of photography from the region.

Saudi Arabia is represented in the show by the superstars of its contemporary art movement Abdulnasser Ghaarem, Manal Al Dowayan and Ahmed Mater. Mater’s contribution *Magnetism II* (2012) is a photogravure of a cube-shaped magnet surrounded by iron shavings, which recall the circumambulation of pilgrims around the holy Ka’aba during the Hajj.

Al Dowayan’s contribution *I am an Educator* (2006) features a female Saudi English professor wearing heavy traditional jewellery and holding a board which obscures the lower half of her face. Across the board the phrase ‘ignorance is darkness’ is repeated. The work aims to look at questions concerning the creation of female Saudi identity and the confi nes within which this identity operates in contemporary society.

In contrast to this exhibition which explores the Middle East solely through photography, the British Museum’s 2012 *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* exhibition attempted to catalogue the tradition of Hajj through various mediums. Widely praised for its cultural diplomacy and academic vigour, this exhibition featured several historical items related to the pilgrimage as well as some contemporary pieces inspired by it.

Alongside the main Hajj exhibition, the British Museum hosted a smaller collection showcasing the work of seven young Saudi artists. Entitled *Create and Inspire; Youth Hajj*, the featured artists had been selected as the winning entries from a competition held by the museum in partnership with Edge of Arabia.

Smaller institutions have also demonstrated an interest in contemporary Saudi art; in June 2012 the Hardy Tree Gallery in St Pancras held an exhibition of photography by Wasma Mansour as part of the London Festival of Photography while in October 2012, Selma Feriani Gallery in Mayfair held the *Just Des(s)erts* exhibition of works by Maha Malluh and ARTSPACE London (in conjunction with Athr gallery) held the *Made in Makkah* exhibition dedicated to the works of Noha Al Sharif, Nasser Al Salem and the sublime Saddek Wasil.

The staging of these shows and the steady acquisition of works by the artists concerned defi nitely suggests that London institutions are invested in the creative (and pecuniary) possibilities of Saudi contemporary art; an art that is impressive, dynamic and just emerging from its nascent stages. The popularity of the shows suggests that the public is actively interested in watching this development and London is an increasingly good place in which to do so.

Michelle Smith is an administrator with Bonhams and Janet Rady runs Janet Rady Fine Art, a contemporary Middle Eastern art gallery based in London.

(Opposite) A piece by Sara Abu Abdullah entitled *Annees 999*

(Right) Magnetism by Ahmed Mater
A visionary and exciting new public transport system is being built in Riyadh. The huge project, involving a six-line metro with integrated rapid bus transport, is being undertaken by the Arriyadh Development Authority (the ADA), Riyadh’s planning body. It will be one of the largest projects of its kind in the world.

It is a measure of Saudi Arabia’s economic success, as well as its population growth, that motor traffic in its major cities has outgrown the capacity of its extensive road network. Saudis are said to have a ‘love affair with the motor car’: of the 7.4 million vehicle trips made daily in Riyadh, almost 90 percent are made by private cars and the demand is expected to exceed 12 million each day by 2030. The result is gridlock on Riyadh’s roads during rush hours (and there are many of these), a great waste of time and money, and a major frustration for citizens and for anyone trying to do business there.

To find out more about the planned construction, I spoke to two ADA officials who were in London in February. Firstly, I was interested to know if there was a British involvement in the project. Engineers from around the world have been consulted, and four consortia are currently tendering. These consortia include several British firms. There is another London connection - Crossrail, which is responsible for Europe’s largest infrastructure project, is comparing and sharing its experience constructing the railway across London with the ADA. The Riyadh project has many parallels with the London one.

To judge the scale of the project, we need some facts and figures. The new network will consist of six metro lines, whose total length of 175 kilometres will be the backbone of the new public transport system. Sixty kilometres of the new rail system will be underground and eighty kilometres above ground. Eighty stations are planned, including nine where lines interlink. Most stations will be above ground but twenty-seven of them will be deep underground. There will be a park-and-ride connecting to one of the stations. King Khalid International Airport will link into the system. This is a huge undertaking which has been some 12 years in the planning. It will be another ten years at least before it is finished.

The design of the stations has been a high priority. Most will have enclosed platforms with platform screen doors. The environment will be controlled and cooled by air-conditioning. The above-ground stations will have iconic roof designs and one station has been designed by the London-based Zaha Hadid Architects. These stations will be connected to the new bus system.

I wondered how difficult it would be to dig into the porous limestone that underlies Riyadh, with its sink holes, once underground lakes formed by prehistoric water seepage. The officials explained, however, that these areas could be incorporated into the tunnels when they are being dug and did not present a problem.

A more challenging consideration is how to keep the population ‘on side’ during the construction of this massive project.
which is bound to cause huge disruption to people's daily lives. The aim is to complete the work as quickly and efficiently as possible and the ADA will try to imbue and sustain a sense of pride among Riyadhians in having in their city the very first mass transit system in Saudi Arabia and owning one of the most advanced and sophisticated city transport networks in the world. However it remains to be seen if the citizens of Riyadh will react as the ADA hopes.

In a country where people are wedded to the idea of jumping into their cars to get from one point to another, how appealing will public transport be? The biggest problem for the ADA must be to find a way of luring people out of their cars, and offering them an attractive alternative. They said their objective is not to penalise car drivers but to make traffic flow faster on the roads, so that road users as well as those using public transport benefit. But there will be a few regulatory and fiscal measures to support the use of public transport and to constrain the use of private cars. They expect some people will continue to use the roads, some will be obliged to do so, but others, for example those going to a football match, will, it is hoped, find the alternative public transport system which takes them to their destination in fast, cool comfortable trains and buses a great advantage. This plan will bring certainty to people's timing which does not exist at present.

Another question is whether women will use the system in a city where it is rare for them to venture out except in their own cars with a driver, or in the few existing buses where they sit at the back. The issue has been considered. There will be family carriages on the trains, and family seating on the buses, they said. (In Saudi Arabia, 'families' means women, or women with children). The school buses will be incorporated into the new bus network, so that the next generation will grow up familiar with public buses. Furthermore the buses will look attractive, with smart clean designs and air-conditioning.

As for the timing of the project, the first contracts for the metro system are likely to be let in the summer of 2013 and the first part of the integrated system, the bus network, will start putting buses on streets as early as summer 2014. It is planned eventually to have 10,000 buses running, reaching the remotest parts of the city and connecting to the metro stations. There is already a transport control system, which uses count-down traffic lights and mobile phone applications with which people can check how the traffic is flowing before they leave home, as well as cameras which have led to a dramatic improvement in driving standards and hence a drop in traffic-related deaths. Saudi Arabia did have one of the worst road fatalities rates in the world.

If the new integrated system works as well as is hoped, I asked if there were plans to have similar systems in other major cities of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh's new integrated transport network is a pioneer project, and the King has already authorised developments of similar systems for Jeddah, Dammam and Mecca. Overground railways to connect the country's major cities are also being planned. Soon Saudi Arabia will have one of the best public transport systems in the world.

Ionis Thompson, author of Desert Treks from Riyadh and Hon. Secretary of the Saudi-British Society, is a member of the Editorial Board

(Opposite and Below) Model of a station on the new metro
The international prize for Arabic fiction is six years old

On 9 January 2013 the International Prize for Arab Fiction (IPAF, popularly, though incorrectly known as the “Arab Booker Prize”) announced the shortlist for the sixth annual award. Founded in 2007, IPAF has links with the Booker Prize Foundation and has for the last year been funded by the TCA Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. On the pattern of the Man Booker Prize, publishers are invited to submit novels. An independent panel of judges is appointed and over their year of work, they whittle down the one hundred plus submissions to a long list and then a shortlist of six. One of the six novels will be selected as the winner. He or she will receive a cheque for US$60,000 and the other five shortlisted novelists will receive US$10,000.

A long list was announced in December. The only two writers from the Arabian Peninsula have gone through from the long list to the shortlist. The shortlist is particularly interesting and is likely to be controversial, as established writers have been dropped. They include three Lebanese – Hoda Barakat, Elias Khoury and last year’s winner Rabee Jaber - as well as the Palestinian/Jordanian Ibrahim Nasrallah.

One of the two from the Peninsula is from Saudi Arabia. Mohammed Hassan Alwan is from a family originally from Asir. He was born in Riyadh and educated at the University of Portland, in the United States, and has lived in Vancouver, Canada. His novel, The Beaver, is about a Saudi, Ghalib, who reflects on the preceding generations of his family’s history as he migrates to Oregon. The novel is full of fragmented stories recalled by Ghalib as he goes on fishing trips on the Willamette river, accompanied by a beaver. He and his girlfriend meet up periodically in different towns, when she can get away from her husband. Mohammed Hassan Alwan has already published four novels and was identified in 2009 as one of the thirty-nine most promising Arab writers under forty.

The second novel from the Peninsula is The Bamboo Stick by Saud Alsanousi, who is thirty-one years old. Saud Alsanousi is a journalist and this is his second novel. This shortlisted novel tells the story of Josephine, a well-educated Filipina who comes to work in domestic service in Kuwait. The spoilt young man of the household, Rashid, woos her and gets her pregnant. A boy, José, is born but packed off to the Phillipines as an infant where he grows up, dreaming of his father’s country as a land of promise. This is a bold novel, touching on sensitive social themes of the status of foreign labour, mixed parentage and identity.

The other shortlisted novels are by writers from Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Tunisia. The Lebanese writer, Jana Elhassan is, at twenty-seven, the youngest writer to have been shortlisted.

The winner of the Prize will be announced in Abu Dhabi on 23 April.

Since 2009 the Prize has also organised an annual workshop for invited younger writers. The workshop is called a nadwa (symposium). Each year the judges of the Prize recommend eight writers whom they think have promise. Two more established writers join the nadwa as mentors and during the nine days each writer produces 3,000 words of a story or chapter which is then translated into English. Both language versions are later published in one volume, in a series Emerging Arab Voices. The nadwas have been sponsored by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Peter Clark, author and translator, is one of the trustees of the IPAF prize
Islamist Radicalisation in Europe and the Middle East: Reassessing the Causes of Terrorism

Edited by George Joffé

I.B. Tauris, £50.58

Reviewed by Edward Mortimer

A book on a contemporary subject based on an academic conference held three and a half years before publication, inevitably runs a risk. In this case, as the editor admits in his introduction, "one issue that is not covered in detail... although several chapters do refer to it, is the remarkable series of events that has transformed the politics of the Arab world during 2011".

In fact, those chapters that do refer to the "Arab Spring" do so only in a cursory way. None is precisely dated, but clearly all were finished by early 2011, and the introduction itself around the end of that year. One thus cannot help reading the book through the prism of events which the authors could neither integrate into their narrative nor use to modify their analysis.

That is not in itself a fatal flaw. While none of the writers would claim to have predicted the events in question, several chapters do provide valuable background and context for understanding them – particularly those on Egypt, Syria and the Gulf Region, respectively by Ezzedine Choukri Fishere, Raphaël Lefèvre and Abdullah Baabood. All three are clear and straightforward, and tell us much about the origins, variety and complexity of the Islamic movements that have been active in these three regions over the past few decades.

The Egyptian chapter is especially interesting. Although, with hindsight, Fishere can be seen to overstate the degree to which Islamist discourse had become mainstream or "hegemonic" in Egyptian society before 2011, his analysis goes a long way to explain the electoral and political success of the Muslim Brotherhood since then. His statement that "the decline of the liberals is not only in electoral performance; it can also be seen in the size of their parties' membership as well as their lack of mobilisation power" is also still relevant and illuminating, even if in the light of the last two years' events it needs re-phrasing.

There are also informative chapters on the history of Tripoli in Lebanon, on religious radicalism in Israel, and on Kurdish nationalism in Turkey – the last two hardly belonging under the overall title, but perhaps one should not cavil about that.

An interesting chapter by Johnny Ryan deals with the role of the Internet, but perhaps does not fully substantiate its argument that the cyber-universe is as much a challenge as a facilitator for militant Islamist narratives. And there is a useful summary by Hugh Goddard of the intellectual and political itineraries of two British Muslims (Ziauddin Sardar and Ed Husain) who have become less radical over time. But this reader, at least, was taken aback to find a chapter by three members of the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge which reads more like a manual for British government anti-radical agitprop than an analytical academic study.

The chapter on "Securitisation and Radicalisation", by Roxane Farmanfanian, is couched in impenetrable sociological jargon, and seems over-preoccupied with the use of terminology at the expense of substance. The one on Iraq, while much more clearly written and down-to-earth, also suffers from the latter defect, since the author James Spencer – identified as "a consultant who served with British forces in Iraq" – is mainly concerned with exonerating Iraqi insurgents from the charge of "radicalism" (not such a heinous one in my lexicon), by suggesting that most were mainly concerned with freeing their country from foreign occupation. And the one on Iran, by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, is far too breathless in its treatment of state repression and revolutionary militancy in Iranian history, endowing both with a strong sexual content, as "Licentious Power versus Revolutionary Libido".

Altogether, the book is something of a ragbag, containing essays of very uneven quality on widely varying topics, some of which fall outside its purported subject. Worst of all, it appears not to have been copy-edited at all. There are mistakes of grammar and/or typography on almost every page.

Edward Mortimer is author of Faith and Power: the Politics of Islam (Faber, 1982); formerly Foreign Affairs Editor of the Financial Times (1987-98) and Chief Speechwriter and Director of Communications to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1998-2006)
Politics of Qat: The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen

By Peer Gatter

Reichert Verlag, £108.91

Reviewed by Helen Lackner

Given its length and detail, it would be tempting to call this encyclopaedic work the definitive study of qat, were it not for the fact that the author is already working on a second volume on the Economy of qat. Under normal conditions, qat only features in European life within the context of Somali and Yemeni sub-cultures and proposals for its banning in the UK. Only last month, it was again decided to retain its current legal status.

Gatter discusses Yemeni political development over a thirty year period through policies on qat and the debate, or absence thereof, concerning its role. His thesis is that qat is the mechanism used by former president Ali Abdullah Saleh to seal his alliance with the main landowning tribal leaders in the highlands by providing subsidies for its cultivation [cheap credit and irrigation pumps] and low taxation. He also argues that qat both defines national identity and is a means of social control as demonstrations stop when the qat market opens.

Whether such length is necessary to make these points is arguable. Gatter provides more background than needed and delves at great length into aspects whose long-term significance is limited: given its small outcome, the 2002 qat conference hardly deserves 80 pages. Most of his data are from surveys he carried out as a consultant within the framework of preparations for the conference and other externally financed efforts to control qat: he provides very useful and interesting information on marketing in different places.

Gatter’s determination to be fully comprehensive leads him to provide potted analyses of different periods of Yemeni history in the past century. While some of these are helpful, others indicate superficial understanding of the situation [e.g. the development of the Local Development Associations in the Yemen Arab Republic] or simply contain errors [the Prime Minister of PDRY 1971-85 was Ali Nasser Mohammed, not Hayder al Attas]; moreover his characterisation of the pre-unification regimes is simplistic. The section on qat and Islamist terrorism is weak, despite being a subject deserving in-depth analysis. He sometimes appears to rely on single sources which may be unreliable: Yemeni qat exports to Saudi Arabia are unlikely to be as high as mentioned, particularly as this implies the export of such a high proportion of Yemeni qat. Discussion of the expansion of qat into Hadhramaut goes into detail about the obvious fact that habitual chewers native of the western part of Yemen continue to do so when in Hadhramaut; but he does not address the far more interesting question of whether/why Hadarem have taken up the habit.

Some information is rapidly out of date: the number of flights to Socotra continues to change. While he often mentions women, he does not analyse why they do or don’t chew qat. For women chewing has different social connotations from one area to another: in some places it is acceptable and respectable whereas elsewhere it is clearly associated with low status and immoral behaviour; age is also a relevant factor. As qat in other countries is mentioned historically, the absence of contemporary analysis and comparison of its political role elsewhere is unfortunate.

Correction of some typographical and spelling errors would be welcome: titles stating that the 2002 conference was in 2008 in some annexes is confusing; dating the photos would also be very helpful for future reference.

In conclusion, this is a major study of the role of qat in Yemeni politics and society under the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh, indispensable to anyone interested in qat in Yemen. A short book with the main points and an update would be most welcome in the future, allowing people to see how the post Saleh regime has addressed the issue.

Helen Lackner is an independent researcher and consultant on social development issues, with 40 years’ experience in Yemen.
Unshook till the End of Time: A History of Britain and Oman

By Robert Alston and Stuart Laing


Reviewed by Peter Clark

This is the affectionate joint work of two former British Ambassadors to Oman. It surveys the history of the country principally in its relationship with Britain. It is well written, and has sections detached from the narrative that clarify certain themes.

Oman has over the last four hundred years been more a geographical expression than a nation state. The city of Muscat grew up round a significant port that was occupied by the Portuguese in early modern times. They built the forts that dominate the old harbour, as part of a chain of communication from Western Europe, round Africa and on to the Far East. The first British agreement with the authorities in Muscat is dated back to 1650, and was part of Britain's global trading strategy, based on the growing commercial relations with India. By the nineteenth century Britain's interests extended to policing the Indian Ocean and suppressing the slave trade. By then there was an exclusive British presence – excluding other and potentially rival European powers. This exclusivity continued until the accession of the present Sultan Qaboos in 1970.

The geographic limits of Oman were loose. The coast of the Gulf, now part of the United Arab Emirates, was known as Sahil Oman, the coast of Oman, and the Trucial Oman Scouts were based at Sharjah in the UAE. Until the late twentieth century there was little political cohesion between the coast and the interior.

It is possible to see the Sultanate until 1970 as comparable to an independent Indian state before 1948. British control was loose, and had no wish to be involved with internal issues. Successive Sultans accepted this relationship. Sultan Sa'ïd bin Taymur, father of Sultan Qaboos, behaved like an Indian princeling. He spoke perfect English, having been educated with Indian princes at Mayo College. But with Indian independence much of the reason for this informal imperialism disappeared. However the suspicion that there may be oil in Oman changed the nature of British strategic interests. By the middle of the twentieth century, imperial responsibilities, however informal, developed a strong obligation to social development. Sultan Sa'ïd bin Taymur, however, had no interest in such matters. He secluded himself in a palace at Salalah, never went to Muscat in the last twelve years of his rule, but had a firm control over the country, running it through a small group of trusted advisers and the radio telephone. Oil wealth in the Gulf attracted Omanis to work abroad. When there was the possibility of comparable oil wealth in Oman, opposition to the archaic Sultan grew. To the west – in Dhofar – opposition became a Marxist military uprising. Sa'ïd had to go. Qaboos removed his father in 1970 and for the first time in his life went to Muscat as the new Sultan and lived there. Sa'ïd retired to London where he spent the rest of his life at the Dorchester Hotel.

The Ambassadors' account is particularly good on the final years of Sa'ïd. They draw together the various threads – oil, wider Arab politics, the social, religious and military contexts. They are also very good on other issues such as the practice and suppression of slavery.

The authors acknowledge that they base themselves mostly on British sources and they do not claim the apparatus of scholarship. There is one work of local scholarship that is available in English. The Ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, has written (in English) on what he calls "the myth of Arab piracy" and (in Arabic) on the nineteenth century Omani Empire. This book is primarily political, and there is little about the lives of Omanis or the immigrant Indians. But this was not their purpose. For those interested in Oman, and those visiting as tourists (and the Sultanate has some of the most magnificent beaches in the world) or taking up employment, this book is an excellent introduction to the country.

Peter Clark is an author with wide experience of living, working and travelling in the Middle East over the past fifty years.
The Coup

By Ervand Abrahamian

From Ervand Abrahamian, a leading historian on the Middle East, comes a lucid account of the CIA’s 1953 coup in Iran and how it paved the way to today’s diplomatic gridlock. The Coup is the first trade book to put the 1953 coup in context, filling a gap in the understanding of Iran’s history. Abrahamian relies on little-known archival information to position the coup and its aftermath in a new light, challenging conventional interpretations of the event and positioning it in the context of oil interests rather than the Cold War.


A month by the sea: Encounters in Gaza

By Dervla Murphy

In 2011, Dervla Murphy spent a month in the Gaza Strip. She met liberals and Islamists, Hamas and Fatah supporters, rich and poor. The people she met were touched by her interest and spoke openly to her about life in their open-air prison. She found a people who long for peace and an end to the violence that has distorted their lives. The book gives insight into how isolation has shaped society: how it radicalises young men and plays into the hands of patriarchs, yet also how it hardens determination not to give in and turns family into a source of support.

Jan 2013, Eland Publishing, £10.87

Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini

By Rasmus Christian Elling

Contrary to the popular understanding of Iran as a Persian nation, half of the country’s population consists of minorities, among whom there has been significant ethnic mobilisation at crucial stages in Iranian history. One such stage is now: suppressed minority demands, identity claims, and debates on diversity have entered public discourse and politics. In 2005–2007, Iran was rocked by the most widespread ethnic unrest experienced in that country since the revolution. The same period was also marked by the re-emergence of nationalism. This interdisciplinary book takes a step towards understanding these contentious issues.

Jan 2013, Palgrave Macmillan, £52.55
Becoming visible in Iran women in contemporary Iranian Society

By Mehri Honarbin Holliday

This book disputes the widespread stereotypes about Muslim women prevalent in the West, providing a vivid account of young women in contemporary Iran. Beginning at home, women are infusing dramatic change by challenging the patriarchal conceptions of men. Empowered by education, they transport the power of their minds and being from the domestic to the public and political. Mehri Honarbin-Holliday presents the experiences of these young women who wield a key, if indirect, political influence on the seemingly male-dominated politics of this society. For its direct presentation of women’s perspectives as well as its analysis and insight, this book contributes to our understanding of the lives of Muslim women and possibilities before them today.

Nov 2012, Hurst, £26.39

King Faisal of Saudi Arabia

By Alexei Vassiliev

In 1964, Faisal bin Abdul Aziz became king of a country holding a quarter of the world’s oil reserves. He was called ‘the most powerful Arab ruler in centuries’. Eleven years later, in front of television cameras, his nephew shot him at point-blank range. In this biography, Alexei Vassiliev tells the story of a pious, cautious and resolute leader who steered Saudi Arabia through a minefield of domestic problems, inter-Arab relations and the decline of Soviet influence in the Middle East. King Faisal maintained ties with both Egypt and the United States through two Arab–Israeli wars and the 1973 Arab oil embargo.

Dec 2012, Saqi Books, £50


By Sarah Yizraeli

This book provides readers with the context and background for an understanding of modern Saudi Arabia. Yizraeli examines Saudi royal family decision-making in the process of building a modern state. She tracks the internal deliberations in the formative years of development in the Kingdom, when priorities were defined. While Saudi Arabia today tries to mend past errors, the fundamentals of the regime have remained as they were shaped during the formative decades of development. Whether Saudi Arabia will be able to modernise its society without social and religious upheaval remains to be seen, but the course this modernisation takes will be determined by events outlined in this book.

Aug 2012, C Hurst & Co, £52.55
Adam Hanieh has always had a strong personal connection to the Middle East. My father was a Palestinian refugee, expelled from Yaffa in 1948 when he was 13 years old, so I’ve always had a strong personal connection to the Middle East. But I spent most of my childhood in Australia, far from the region and with little direct contact with my father’s family who were scattered across Jordan, Gaza, Egypt and the Gulf. After finishing an undergraduate degree in Australia, I decided to visit Palestine. It was initially planned to be for only a couple of months – but, like many people, once I had arrived I discovered that there were so many layers to Palestinian life that I wanted to learn more. I ended up living in the West Bank for close to 7 years! I was extremely fortunate to arrive in Palestine in the 1990s. At that time, I was able to experience the impact that the Oslo Accords had on the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Oslo produced a sense of political demoralization and passivity that had a deep impact through those years – the situation was clearly getting worse on the ground but there didn’t appear to be any alternative. But I worked for a time at Birzeit University, and had a lot of contact with Birzeit students who were more active than most. I learnt a great deal from those students and the people that I worked alongside.

Many of the contradictions of the Oslo years exploded in September 2000 with the beginning of the Second Intifada. By that time I was working in Ramallah for a Palestinian NGO, Defence for Children International (Palestine Section), as a research and advocacy coordinator. We did a lot of work documenting the impact of Israeli military actions on the Palestinian population and economy; much of that time (particularly in 2002 and 2003) we lived under a curfew imposed on the residents of the West Bank. One of the important areas of work was the situation of Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli jails. Hundreds of Palestinian children were also being arrested at that time, subject to arbitrary detention and torture in prisons. We attempted to provide legal defence for those children in Israeli military courts, as well as run campaigns to raise awareness of their situation at an international level.

I left Palestine in late 2003 to do my doctoral work in political science at York University in Toronto, Canada. One of the things that had really struck me while living in the Middle East was the significance of the Gulf states to the politics and economics of the area. I knew many friends and relatives who had spent time working in the Gulf, and it was clear that Gulf investors and ruling families played a major role in the politics of the region. At the same time, there was not really a satisfactory account of the ways in which the political economy of the Gulf was connected to the region as a whole. This became the focus of my academic research. I completed a PhD on the evolution of Gulf capitalism, examining both class and state formation in the Gulf states and the particular role of migrant labour. As part of this research, I lived and taught at a university in Dubai for about 18 months. I later developed my research into a book, Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011).

Since arriving to teach in the Development Studies department at SOAS in 2010, I have been trying to extend this research in light of the Arab uprisings that have unfolded over 2011 and 2012. I have been particularly interested in Egypt, looking at the role of the Gulf in Egyptian capitalism as well as the flows of labour migration from the country to the Gulf and Europe. I feel that much academic work on the region suffers from a form of ‘methodological nationalism’ – in which the political economy of states tends to privilege national processes rather than situating these within the regional framework.

I believe we are living through a period of immense change in the Middle East – and the position of the Gulf will be central to how these struggles eventually turn out. SOAS is a fantastic place to follow these events, with challenging and interesting students and a wonderful set of colleagues across all departments!
THE EVENTS and organisations listed below are not necessarily endorsed or supported by The Middle East in London. The accompanying texts and images are based primarily on information provided by the organisers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the compilers or publishers. While every possible effort is made to ascertain the accuracy of these listings, readers are advised to seek confirmation of all events using the contact details provided for each event.

APRIL EVENTS

Wednesday 3 April

TBC | Birds Eye View 2013 Film Festival: Celebrating Arab Women Filmmakers (Film & Documentary) Wednesday 3 - Wednesday 10 April. BFI Southbank, Barbican, ICA & Hackney Picturehouse. See website below for the full programme, ticket and venue details. E mail@birds-eye-view.co.uk W www.birds-eye-view.co.uk

Thursday 4 April

4:00 pm | Beyond the Empire: Egyptian Connections with Jordan in the First Millenium BC (Lecture) Jonathan Tubb, BM. Organised by: The Egypt Exploration Society (EES) and the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). During the 13th century BC, Tell es-Sa’idiyeh, ancient Zarethan, in the central Jordan Valley, was taken into Egyptian control. Despite the dissolution of the Egyptian Empire in the 12th century BC there is evidence to suggest that an Egyptian ‘legacy’ remained. This lecture considers two manifestations of this legacy, the first, in the 9th century BC, and the second, during the 6th century BC. Admission free - Pre-registration required. The Stevenson Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7242 1880 E contact@ees.ac.uk W www.ees.ac.uk

Wednesday 10 April

TBC | Personal Journeys: The Global Impact of Israel’s Dissenting Voices Organised by: Facilitate Global. Ilan Pappe and Miko Peled join Facilitate Global in an evening of activism, awareness-raising and debate on the key issues of the Israeli Palestine question. Welcome and introductions: Soraya Boyd, Facilitate Global. Tickets: £60 (until Monday 8 April - no bookings after this date and no admission without prior-booking). Venue details and timing of the event will be provided after registration. E info@facilitateglobal.org W http://facilitateglobal.org/new/

Thursday 11 April

8:30 pm | Hundred Faces for a Single Day (Film) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation. Part of the 2013 London Palestine Film Festival Pre-Festival Season, Thursday 11 - Friday 26 April. Dir Christian Ghazi (1971), 69 min. First UK screening of the avant garde masterwork that challenged the limits of militant filmmaking during the Palestinian revolutionary era. Various ticket prices T 0871 902 5734. Hackney Picturehouse, 270 Mare Street, London E8 1HE. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

Monday 15 April

6:00 pm | The Archaeology of Roman-Period Nazareth (Lecture) Ken Dark, University of Reading. Organised by: Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society and the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London. Admission free. Lecture Theatre G6, Ground Floor, Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY. T 020 8349 5754 E sheilard1@sky.com W www.aias.org.uk

Tuesday 16 April

7:00 pm | Insight with Shereen El Feki: Sex and the Citadel (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club.
Shereen El Feki has spent the past five years travelling across the Arab region asking people about sex. In her new book, Arab region asking people about five years travelling across the world. Tickets: £12.50/£10 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W1. Einfo@palestinefilm.org Wwww.palestinefilm.org

**Friday 19 April**


**Monday 22 April**


**Wednesday 24 April**

7:00 pm | Presidential elections in Iran: crackdowns and power struggles (Panel Discussion) Organised by: Frontline Club. On Monday 22 April, the U.K. government imposed sanctions on Iran, including a travel ban and asset freeze, in response to the country’s alleged human rights violations. The sanctions were lifted in January 2016, following a nuclear deal with Iran.

**Tuesday 23 April**

6:00 | Fallahin and nomads on the margins of Bilad al-Sham: Population dynamics and land-use by Byzantium to the crusades (Lecture) Organised by: Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL). Claudine Dauphin, Universities of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Lampeter; Mohamed Ben Jedou, "Orient et Méditerranée - Monde byzantin", French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique -CNRS, Paris. Crystal Bennett Memorial 25th Anniversary Lecture. Admission free. Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PY. Ecbrl@britac.ac.uk Wwww.cbrl.org.uk

6:30 pm | BBC Arabic Screening: Egypt’s Stolen Billions (Documentary) Organised by: BBC Arabic. Egypt’s Stolen Billions exposes the incompetence of the British Government in identifying Mubarak’s assets hidden in the UK. Followed by a Q&A with the reporter Reda Al Mawy; director and producer, Daniel Tetlow; Robert Palmer, Global Witness; Mohamed Abdel Ghani, United Egyptians and Jeremy Carver, Transparency International. Moderated by BBC Arabic’s Deputy Programmes Manager, Sam Farah. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ. T020 7479 8940 Wwww.frontlineclub.com

5:30 pm | Out of Africa (Lecture) Geoff Bailey, York University. Organised by: The Saudi-British Society. Bailey will give a talk on his work for the DISPERSE project, which is researching the theory that Anatomically Modern Humans originating in East Africa dispersed into the Arabian Peninsula 150,000 years ago. Admission free for members of the Society/£5 non-members. Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, 43 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1. Eionithompson@yahoo.co.uk Wwww.saudibritishsociety.org.uk

7:00 pm | The Bahari Foundation Lecture in Iranian Art and Culture: Early 'Siyah Qalam' style and the Great Mongol Shahnamah (Lecture) Barbara Brend, independent scholar. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T0771 408 7480 Wrosalindhadon@gmail.com Wwww.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

**Thursday 18 April**

6:30 pm | When the Boys Return (Documentary) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation in association with Amnesty International UK. Part of the 2013 London Palestine Film Festival Pre-Festival Season, Thursday 11 - Friday 26 April. Dir Tone Andersen (2012), 58 min. An account of one cohort of Palestinian teenagers undergoing the challenging processes of adjustment following release from detention. Followed by a panel discussion on the issues raised by Israel’s detention of minors with Adah Kay, author; Greg Davies, law expert; and Chris Doyle, Caabu. Admission free. Amnesty International UK, Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA. Einfo@palestinefilm.org Wwww.palestinefilm.org

**Wednesday 17 April**

5:30 pm | Out of Africa (Lecture) Geoff Bailey, York University. Organised by: The Saudi-British Society. Bailey will give a talk on his work for the DISPERSE project, which is researching the theory that Anatomically Modern Humans originating in East Africa dispersed into the Arabian Peninsula 150,000 years ago. Admission free for members of the Society/£5 non-members. Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, 43 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1. Eionithompson@yahoo.co.uk Wwww.saudibritishsociety.org.uk

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7:00 pm | Ottoman s & Safavids: Sultan Suleyman and Shah Tahmasp (Lecture) Colin Imber, University of Manchester, author of The Ottoman Empire. Organised by: The Iran Society. 6:30pm for 7:00pm. Admission free for members + one guest. See website below for dresscode. Marlborough Rooms, Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN. T020 7235 5122 Einfo@iransociety.org Wwww.iransociety.org

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26 The Middle East in London April-May 2013
With Maziar Bahari, journalist and filmmaker; Mehri Honarbin-Holliday, Canterbury Christ Church University and the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS; and Kelly Golnoush Niknejad, Tehran Bureau. Tickets: £12.50/£10 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ. T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

Thursday 25 April

11:00 am | A Private Collection Donated to Benefit the University of Oxford Part III (Sale) Organised by: Christie’s London. See listing for Tuesday 23 April for ticket, venue and contact details.

11:30 am | Art of the Islamic & Indian Worlds (Sale) Organised by: Christie’s London. Afternoon session at 2:30pm. See listing for Tuesday 23 April for ticket, venue and contact details.

Friday 26 April

9:00 am | New Media, New Politics? (post-) Revolutions in Theory and Practice (Conference) Organised by: Arab Media Centre and the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI). Two years since the world witnessed millions of Arabs march, strike and fight to remove their repressive regimes, the conference will address three key phases of analysis: pre-revolution (to December 2010), tipping-point (to March 2011), post-revolution (to the present) and will aim to engage in deep critical reflection. Tickets: £99/£49 students. University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London W1B 2UW. T 020 7911 5000 E journalism@westminster.ac.uk W www.westminster.ac.uk/research/a-z/camri

10:30 am | Arts of Islam (Sale) Organised by: Christie’s London.

Afternoon session at 2:00pm. See listing for Tuesday 23 April for ticket, venue and contact details.

8:30 pm | Massaker (Documentary) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation. Part of the 2013 London Palestine Film Festival Pre-Festival Season, Thursday 11 - Friday 26 April. Dirs Monika Borgmann, Lokman Slim, Hermann Theissen (2005), 98 min. Portrait of six perpetrators of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre. The film explores the content of collective violence and asks how a political environment has continued to shield them from justice. Various ticket prices T 0871 902 5739.

Ritzy Picturehouse, Brixton Oval, Coldharbour Lane, London SW2 1JG. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

Monday 29 April

6:30 pm | Reform, Stability and Change in Jordan (Lecture) Bassem Awadallah, former Jordanian Minister of Finance. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Chaired by Fawaz Gerges, LSE. Admission free. NAB 1.04, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6250 E r.sleiman-haidar@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Saturday 27 April

10:00 am | Nimrud, from Mound to Museum: Making Knowledge from Archaeological Objects (Study Day) Joan Oates FBA; Julian Reade, University of Copenhagen; Denise Ling, BM; Kathleen Swales, BM; Paul Collins, The Ashmolean Museum. Organised by: The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) and The Ashmolean Museum. How do archaeological artefacts

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get transformed into specimens for scientific and historical study? This study day will bring together a range of experts to give their personal stories of making knowledge from objects excavated from the ancient city of Nimrud, capital of the Assyrian empire in the early first millennium BC. Tickets: £10/£5 BSI members. The Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH. T 020 7969 5274 W www.bsi.ac.uk E bisi@britac.ac.uk

10:00 am | TASG Spring Symposium 2013 Gülennur Aybet, University of Kent; Clement Dodd, SOAS; Celia Kerslake; Zafer Toprak, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. Organised by: The Turkish Area Study Group (TASG). The Symposium will mark the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. St Anthony’s College, 62 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6JF. E nataliemartin@talktalk.net W www.tasg.org.uk

MAY EVENTS

Thursday 2 May

6:00 pm | When was Zarathushtra? (Lecture) Martin West, All Souls College, Oxford. Organised by: Department for the Study of Religions, SOAS in association with The World Zoroastrian Organisation. The Sixteenth Dastur Dr Sohrab Hormasji Kutar Memorial Lecture. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E ah69@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk

6:30 pm | Saving the Arab Spring: Economic development in the Middle East (Lecture) Bassem Awadallah, former Jordanian Minister of Finance; Adeel Malik, University of Oxford. Organised by: Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States. The speakers will argue that the struggle for a new Middle East will be won or lost in the private sector, and that dismantling regional barriers to trade constitute the most important collective action problem that the Middle East has faced since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Admission free. New Theatre, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E is.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

Friday 3 May

TBC | 2013 London Palestine Film Festival (Film & Documentary) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation. Friday 3 – Friday 17 May. Barbican Cinema, UCL and SOAS. See website below for the full programme, ticket and venue details. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

6:30 pm | Cracking the Egyptian Code: The revolutionary life of Jean-François Champollion (Lecture) Andrew Robinson. Organised by: Friends of the Petrie Museum. Admission free. Lecture Theatre G6, Institute of Archaeology, 31 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY. T 020 7679 2369 E j.picton@ucl.ac.uk W www.ucl.ac.uk/FriendsofPetrie/

Wednesday 8 May

5:30 pm | Producing colonial space and colonized bodies in Italian Libya (Lecture) David Atkinson, University of Hull. Organised by: The Society for Libyan Studies. Admission free. The Lecture Theatre, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E shirleystrong@btconnect.com W www.societyforlibyanstudies.org

Thursday 9 May

6:30 pm | The Enemy Within. Rome’s Frontier with Isauria between Konya and the Taurus Mountains (Lecture) Stephen Mitchell FBA. Organised by: The British Institute at Ankara. The Isaurians were a dangerous enemy at the heart of Rome’s Asia Minor provinces, this lecture will examine the creation and development of the internal frontier created by the Romans to meet the Isaurian challenge. Admission free - Pre-registration required. The Wolfson Auditorium, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5204 E

Friday 10 May

6:00 pm | From sedentism to nomadism: the development of Iranian nomadism and its changing demographic significance through time (Lecture) Dan Potts, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. Organised by: The London Centre for the Ancient Near East. Admission free. Room B104, SOAS. E ag5@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/nme/anc/lcane/

Saturday 11 May

10:00 am | Mysticism in Iraqi Christianity (Seminar) Organised by: Department of the Study of Religions, SOAS. Christianity in Iraq X Seminar. Various ticket prices. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E eb9@soas.ac.uk W www.easternchristianity.com

10:30 | Palestine and the Moving Image: An International Conference Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation in association with the Centre for Palestine Studies, LMEI, SOAS. The first event of its kind in the UK, this one-day event brings together scholars, filmmakers, and curators in a series of panels covering a broad spectrum of historic, aesthetic, ethical, and political approaches to the making and study of film on and from Palestine. Speakers include Refqa Abu Remaileh, Kamal Aljafari,

Saloua Raouda Choucair (b.1916) Self Portrait 1943 © Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundatio. Saloua Raouda Choucair (See Exhibitions, page 30)
Anna Ball, Haim Bresheeth, Nick Denes, Irit Niedhardt, Helga Tawil Souri, and Nadia Yaqub. For ticket details see website below. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. info@palestinefilm.org | www.palestinefilm.org

Monday 13 May

11:00 am | Recent archaeological fieldwork in the Sudan (Colloquium) Organised by: Sudan Archaeological Research Society. Various ticket prices. BM. T 020 7323 8500/8306 E SARS@

6:15 pm | The Hilly Flanks before Jarmo: new research into the first farmers of the eastern Fertile Crescent (Lecture) Roger Matthews, Reading University. Organised by: The London Centre for the Ancient Near East. Annual General Meeting followed by a public lecture. Admission free. Room B102, SOAS. E ag5@soas.ac.uk | W www.soas.ac.uk/nme/ane/lcane/

6:30 pm | A New Middle East: Palestine, Peoples and Borders (Lecture) Ahmad Khalidi, Oxford University. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Chaired by Fawaz Gerges, LSE. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6250 E r.sleiman-haidar@lse.ac.uk | W www2.lse.ac.uk

Wednesday 15 May

4:30 pm | Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that wasn’t (Seminar) Toby Matthiesen, LSE Kuwait Programme. Organised by: Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States and LSE Middle East Centre. Matthiesen shows how the regimes in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States have encouraged sectarian divisions to undermine protests, effectively creating a Sectarian Gulf and warns of the dire consequences this will have. Admission free. STC.S421, St Clements, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk | W www2.lse.ac.uk

5:30 pm | The Legal Aspects of Religious Diversity in Iran (Lecture) Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS. Houchang Chehabi, Boston University. Chaired by Nima Mina, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490/4330 E vp6@soas.ac.uk | W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

6:30 pm | Early Islamic Enamelled Glass and Its Iconography + Being a Sultan in Style: Calligraphy and Decoration in the Arts of the Late Mamluk Period (Lecture) Tanja Tolar, SOAS; Sami De Giosa, SOAS. Organised by: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Part of the Society’s Student Series. Admission free. Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD. T 020 7388 4539 E cl@royalasiaticsociety.org | W www.royalasiaticsociety.org

7:00 pm | Islamic Glass in a Chinese Context: an Aspect of the Famensi Reliquary Deposit (874) (Lecture) Roderick Whitfield, SOAS. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 0771 408 7480 E rosalindhaddon@gmail.com | W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

Wednesday 22 May

6:00 pm | Rare Persian Map Collection Launch Event Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS. Event to mark the rare Persian map collection donated to the Centre for Iranian Studies at SOAS by Dr Cyrus Ala'i.
**Tuesday 28 May**

6:30 pm | *Iran’s New Intellectualism: Trends in Contemporary Conscious Music* (Lecture) Maliheh Maghazei, LSE. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6250 E r.sleiman-haidar@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk

**Wednesday 29 May**

5:30 pm | *The role of the PDRY in creating a South Yemeni identity* (Lecture) Noel Brehony, author of *Yemen Divided: the story of a failed state in South Arabia* (2011). Organised by: The British Foundation for the Study of Arabia (BFSA) in association with London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Lecture to follow the Foundation’s Annual General Meeting. Admission free. G2, SOAS. E ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk W www.thebfsa.org

**Saturday 11 May**


**Sunday 12 May**


**EXHIBITIONS**

**Monday 1 April**

Until 7 April | *Light from the Middle East: New Photography* Contemporary photography from and about the Middle East by artists from across the region showcasing a range of creative responses - from photojournalism to digitally manipulated imagery - to the challenges and upheavals that have shaped the Middle East over the past 20 years. Admission free. Porter Gallery, V&A, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL. T 020 7942 2000 E vanda@vam.ac.uk W www.vam.ac.uk

Until 14 April | *Novrouz 1392* ARTSPACE London celebrates the Persian New Year with an exhibition of works by the three Iranian artists, Nicky Nodjoumi, Kambiz Sabri, and Malekeh Nayini. Admission free. ARTSPACE London, 7 Milner Street, London SW3 2QA. T 020 7589 5499 E info@artspace-london.com W www.artspace-london.com

**Wednesday 17 April**

Until 20 October | *Saloua Raouda Choucair* The first exhibition in the UK of Lebanese artist Saloua Raouda Choucair (b. 1916), comprising over 120 works, many of which have never been seen before. This retrospective will celebrate Choucair’s extraordinary body of work and her contribution to international modernism. Tickets: £10/£8.50 conc. Tate Modern, Bankside, London SE1 9TG. T 020 7887 8888 W www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern
An intensive five-week programme which includes two courses: an Arabic Language Course (introductory or intermediate) and another on ‘Government and Politics of the Middle East.

**Arabic 100**

This is an introductory course in Modern Standard Arabic. It teaches students the Arabic script and provides basic grounding in Arabic grammar and syntax. On completing the course, students should be able to read, write, listen to and understand simple Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

**Arabic 200**

This course focuses on reading, writing and grammar and provides training in listening. The course will also introduce modern media Arabic to prepare students to read newspapers, magazines and internet news sources published in the Arab world today. On completing the course, students should be able to read and understand texts of an intermediate level, compose short texts in Arabic on a variety of topics and be able to follow oral communication in Arabic. Students will also be trained in the basic skills necessary to read and understand Arabic news media with the aid of a dictionary.

This is an intermediate course. To qualify for entry into this course, students should have already completed at least one introductory course in Arabic.

**Government and Politics of the Middle East**

This course serves as an introduction to the politics of North Africa (The Maghreb), the Arab East (The Mashriq) including the Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, Israel, Turkey and Iran. It gives, on a country by country basis, an overview of the major political issues and developments in the region since the end of the First World War and addresses key themes in the study of contemporary Middle East politics, including: the role of the military, social and economic development, political Islam, and the recent uprisings (the ‘Arab Spring’).

Its main aim is to develop the students’ understanding of the major trends in Middle Eastern politics and their skills of political analysis through critical reading, lectures, presentations and informed discussion.

**FEES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee*</th>
<th>Accommodation fee**</th>
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<tr>
<td>24 June–26 July 2013 (two courses)</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
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* Early bird discounts of 10% have been extended to course fees before 15 May 2013.

For more information, please contact Louise Hosking on lh2@soas.ac.uk. Or check our website www.soas.ac.uk/lmei
SOAS, University of London, is pleased to announce the availability of several scholarships in its Centre for Iranian Studies (CIS).

The Centre, established in 2010, draws upon the range of academic research and teaching across the disciplines of SOAS, including Languages and Literature, the Study of Religions, History, Economics, Politics, International Relations, Music, Art and Media and Film Studies. It aims to build close relations with likeminded institutions and to showcase and foster the best of contemporary Iranian talent in art and culture.

MA in Iranian Studies

The members of CIS are launching an interdisciplinary MA in Iranian Studies, which will be offered from the academic year 2013/2014 onwards.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fereydoun Djam Charitable Trust, a number of Kamran Djam scholarships are available for BA, MA and MPhil/PhD studies.

For further details, please contact:

Scholarships Officer
E: scholarships@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7074 5091/ 5094
W: www.soas.ac.uk/scholarships

Centre for Iranian Studies
Dr Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Chair)
E: aa106@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4747
W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis

MA in Iranian Studies
Dr Nima Mina (Department of the Languages and Culture of the Middle East)
E: nm46@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4315
W: www.soas.ac.uk/nme/programmes/ma-in-iranian-studies

Student Recruitment
T: +44(0)20 7898 4034
E: study@soas.ac.uk