



## Invitation

**Thursday, 28th February 2008, 6 p.m.**

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### Venue

Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33  
14129 Berlin

## Annual lecture in honour of the 75th birthday of Prof. Dr. Dietmar Rothermund

# Crisis of Authority: Crisis of Islam

**by Prof. Francis Robinson  
(University of London)**

This lecture will begin by examining the nature of authority in Muslim societies before the European onset, focussing in particular on religious authority. It will consider how the overwhelming of most of the Muslim world by Europe between 1798 and 1920 began to undermine this authority, and then go on to consider how it was further undermined and fragmented by Muslim attempts to respond to the European challenge. Moving on to the mid-twentieth century and beyond, the lecture will explore how processes of globalisation have produced yet further fragmentation of authority as increasingly individual Muslims interpret the sources of authority for themselves and as, for instance, women come to challenge the old patriarchal understandings of the faith. The lecture concludes by considering how this crisis of authority has on the one hand permitted dangerous and threatening interpretations of Islam to flourish while on the other hand it has opened the door to positive understandings which bring the faith into harmony with democracy, pluralism and gender equality. Where possible supporting evidence will be drawn from the South Asian region.

**Prof. Francis Robinson** was from 1963 educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where from 1969 to 1973 he was a Prize Fellow. Since 1973 he has taught at Royal Holloway, University of London, where from 1990 he was Professor of the History of South Asia, and from 1997-2004, Vice-Principal. Prof. Robinson was also President of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1997-2000, 2003-06. His main research interests lie in religious change in the Muslim world since 1800 and his recent and forthcoming publications are: *Islam, South Asia and the West* (OUP, Delhi, 2007); *The Mughals and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia, 1206-1925* (Thames & Hudson, London, 2007); and ed., *Islam in the Age of Western Domination, Vol. 5, New Cambridge History of Islam* (CUP, Cambridge, 2008). He was made a Commander of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours, 2006, for his contributions to Higher Education and to the History of Islam.

**Prof. Dr. Dietmar Rothermund** studied history and philosophy in Marburg, Munich and Philadelphia. After a long research residence in India, in 1963 he came to the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University as an Assistant Professor. From 1968 to 2001, he was Professor for South Asian History and for many years Managing Director at the South Asia Institute. He has been a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London since 1988. From 1997 to 2006 Prof. Rothermund was the President of the European Association of South Asia Studies, where he is now Honorary President. He is an Honorary Member of the Humboldt University Berlin. Dietmar Rothermund was a member of the ZMO Advisory Board for many years.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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