Despite the difficulty of neatly dividing the individual papers along these lines, these processes, however, overarched the lively and critical discussion that ensued.

Soares opened the conference with his paper on Islam and Its Expression in Twentieth-Century West Africa. He drew from a rich sample of case studies on the appeal and influence of public intellectuals in West Africa, a challenge to the adequacy of Weberian categories of rationalization and disenchantment to explain these movements. On the other hand, Schleke's paper on the debate over mawālīd in Egypt revealed a religious trend (even though a minority) that matched Weber's predictions. And a case study of a small group of intellectuals in Turkey by Stremmelaar, showed how Weber was used as an anti-symbol to deride an emerging Protestant Islam among the middle classes of Turkey. The conclusions drawn from the discussions pointed to the persistence of Weber's thesis despite its inadequacy.

Another set of papers highlighted the production of intellectual capital in certain very specific contexts, and through very different resources. Kugle's paper on Advocates of Non-Violence in Modern Islamic Theology traced this ethic in the Quran, and more significantly, in modern Indian history in the Khudai Khidmatgar (servants of God). Senturk's paper: Intellectual Dependency: Muslim Intellectuals in search for Human Rights in Islam, argued that an Islamic justification for human rights in late modernity was both necessary and unavoidable. While Meijer's paper traced the emergence of new Islamic politics in the posturing and missives of the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, Desplat's paper showed how orthodoxy was constructed partly also by conspiracies, forged documents, and the Internet.

The conference also featured papers on the theoretical conception of modern Islamic thought. Vahdat launched the second day with a paper on Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective, was held in Utrecht. Altogether, the conference papers raised issues and questions about the production, transformation, and reception of Islamic intellectual discourse.

ISIM/Conference

Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective

On 29-30 September 2005 a two-day conference on Modern Islamic Intellectual History in Comparative Perspective, was held in Utrecht. Altogether, the conference papers raised issues and questions about the production, transformation, and reception of Islamic intellectual discourse.

On the first day, presentations focused more on the contextual dimension of the modern intellectual production, whilst on the second they stressed the theoretical questions that have been raised for the last one hundred years by and about Muslims. Despite the difficulty of neatly dividing the individual papers along these lines, these processes, however, overarched the lively and critical discussion that ensued.

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The conference also featured papers on the theoretical conception of modern Islamic thought. Vahdat launched the second day with a paper on the possibility of critical theory among contemporary Muslim intellectuals. Martin's paper reflected on a Muslim Enlightenment that was not restricted to the eighteenth century, but alternatively to a set of ideas and dispositions about the religious and the secular. Leezenberg considered the application of Foucault or Stalinism to better understand Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. Tayob concluded the presentation of papers by appealing to a discursive employment of religion among Muslim modernists.

The conference ended with a general discussion on the two-day meeting. Three possible areas of attention were highlighted: The first, on a better comparative understanding of public intellectuals; second, attention to explicit and implicit modern definitions of Islam; and last, attention to adequate theoretical tools to develop our understanding of the trajectory of Modern Islamic intellectual discourses.

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