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“The Arab Spring”: Implications for Australia’s National Security

Tuesday 17 May 2011 5.30-6.45pm

Finkel Theatre, John Curtin School of Medical Research

Recent months have seen the people of the Arab world from Yemen to Egypt, and most recently in Libya, shaking off decades of repression and political dictatorships to embrace rapid transformation. From the less violent transitions which have occurred in Jordan and Bahrain, to the brutal civil war prevailing in Libya, the international community has become embroiled in the moves toward security of individual and collective rights for Arab people’s. This public seminar brings together leading experts on the region to discuss the events, key drivers of change, the military action, the Responsibility to Protect and energy politics. The panel will also consider the national security implications for Australia.

Speakers:

Professor Amin Saikal is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies (The Middle East and Central Asia) at the Australian National University. Professor Saikal is a specialist in the politics, history, political economy and international relations of the Middle East and Central Asia. He has been a Visiting Fellow at Princeton University, Cambridge University and the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex), as well as a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in International Relations (1983-1988). In April 2006, he was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to the international community and to education, and as an author and adviser.

Dr Matthew Gray joined the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies as Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum Senior Lecturer in January 2005. Dr Gray is ‘Coursework’ and ‘Flexible Learning and Delivery Adviser’ in the Centre. Prior to this appointment he held several positions with the Australian Government, working at the Australian Trade Commission from 1997 to 2002 and the Department of Defence from 2002 to 2004 in intelligence and policy roles, and with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs as Director Middle East and Africa from 2004 to early 2005. Dr Gray is the author of *Conspiracy Theories in the Middle East: Sources and Politics* (Routledge, 2010); He has also published widely in particular on the politics and political economy of the Middle East in academic journals.

Dr Rodger Shanahan is a former army officer and now a non-resident Fellow at the Lowy Institute. Operationally he served as a UN Military Observer in South Lebanon and Syria, as a battery commander in East Timor in 1999, as the Military Liaison Officer in Beirut during the evacuation of Australian and other foreign nationals from Lebanon in 2006, and has deployed as an operational inquiry officer to Afghanistan several times. He was the Assistant Defence Attaché in the Australian Embassy Riyadh in 2005 and the Defence Attaché in Abu Dhabi in 2006/7. Dr Shanahan has MAs in International Relations and Middle East Studies from the ANU and a PhD in Arab and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney.

Presented by

National Security College

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