The untimely death of Christoph Schumann was a great shock for all of us who knew him and were close to him. He had been for many years first my student, then colleague, finally successor and always a friend. We both enjoyed historical approaches for analysis. But he also was very much attracted by the theories political science had to offer. He still belonged to a generation which concluded studies with a *Magister* in two or three fields. One of those was *Islamwissenschaft*, the German equivalent of *Islamic Studies*. But I do not think that he considered himself an *Islamwissenschaftler*. His concern was writing about the modern period of the Middle East with the tools and methods history and political science had to offer. To my knowledge he never wrote on Islam per se but included it wherever it played a role in modern history. Thanks to his knowledge of *Islamwissenschaften* and his excellent Arabic he could analyze contemporary issues as only few political scientists in Germany, who have made the Middle East their topic. He was an excellent political scientist and historian of the modern Middle East.

Christoph Schumann’s doctoral thesis, completed in 2000 at the university in Erlangen,¹ raised an important question: why would people of the same generation, sharing similar social experiences and living in the same general region, identify with different (but in all cases more radical), parallel variations of Arab nationalism, i. e. with Lebanese, Syrian or pan-Arab nationalism. He applied the discourse concept of Foucault to nationalism, analyzing texts as well as symbols and rituals. The question of power he answered by an analysis of who

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used in which context which symbols and concepts and succeeded in making them acceptable. Furthermore, Schumann investigated individual reasons and circumstances determining specific identification with a particular variation of Arab nationalism. He adopted Bourdieu's concept of social space and the “*habitus*”, which establishes the theoretical link between the social conditions of a person's origins, the processes of his socialization and his political formative development. He chose autobiographies as source material for this investigation, albeit with a keen awareness of their limitations for intellectual history. He had a unique talent to consistently link theoretical approaches with a critical reading of historical evidence.

In 2003/4 Schumann was awarded a Feodor-Lynen scholarship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to spend a year as a Visiting Scholar to the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. He was at the time engaged in a major project comparing the Turkish immigration to Germany, starting in the 1960s, with the Arab immigration to the US after World War I. He continued to work on this project also in Bern. The results of the project were published in several articles which deal with partial aspects of the project.

In the last ten years or so Schumann's main focus shifted to the issue of Liberalism in the Arab World. This was not just another critique of Hourani’s *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. He relied on his own insightful theoretical analysis of the term “Liberalism” to uncover the methodological flaws arising from a certain misunderstanding of the term. He argued that Liberalism did not present another “world view as a consistent philosophy or world view with one particular principle or particular mode of argumentation at its center”, such as “nationalism”, “Islamism”, “Fascism” or “Communism”. He therefore deliberately avoided the term “Liberalism” and spoke of “Liberal thought” or “Liberal attitudes”. Nationalism might be liberal but it might also lead to authoritarianism. The same is true for the relation between democracy and liberalism, which might but must not necessarily coincide. The introduction of constitutionalism is no guarantee for liberalism and certainly not the introduction of a “rule-of-law”. Schumann postulated to study each case of these world views and concepts as applied to actual politics, evaluating what liberal elements might and might not be juxtaposed with illiberal elements in the same political order. With the three books mentioned in the footnotes Schumann opened a whole new way to detect liberal thought as experienced in Middle East, and to mine its sources for new views on Arab intellectual and political history in the modern era.

After having taught two years as Assistant Professor at the University of Bern, he was appointed four years ago Professor for *Politik und Zeitgeschichte* of the Middle East at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg – one of the very few