ALMUNTAQA'S SECOND ISSUE – MOVING FORWARD?

In this issue, AlMuntaqa continues its efforts to provide access to the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies' (ACRPS) Arabic language materials as well as its wide ranging existing network of Arab social scientists. Carrying on with this mission means continuously choosing articles and reviews based on valuable fieldwork, rich data, and primary materials that are difficult to access for English researchers or readers. Not only this, but AlMuntaqa continues to stress its interdisciplinary nature, as the articles in this issue tackle issues using varying political, sociological, historical and even etymological and philosophical approaches. In our humble opinion, this issue exceeds the first issue in terms of the goals set by AlMuntaqa's editorial board.

In the first article, "The Constant and the Variable in the Attitudes of Moroccan Islamists Regarding the Civil State," Hicham Khabbash utilizes an original survey of members of Morocco's two main Islamist parties (the Justice and Charity Movement and the Justice and Development Party) to examine their views regarding the modern secular state and to understand the extent to which these views have changed due to their direct experience with governance. He finds that there are notable differences between both parties, with the Justice and Development Party being more receptive to partial secularism and to the election of government officials. The change in attitudes for the sample as a whole reveals a rise in the number of positive attitudes towards secularism and a drop in those concerned with its twin, democracy, as well as a marginal decline in the number of positive attitudes towards party pluralism and the election of government officials.

The second article, "The Muslim Brotherhood: The Politics of the Generational Gap in the Post-Revolution Period," Duha Samir delves into the generational differences between members of the Muslim Brotherhood using a definition of generations as "different currents of intellectual thought," and not strictly categorized by age. The author uses focused or semi-structured interviews with current and former members of the movement as well as selected biographies, Facebook groups, and video recordings by the members. She examines the difference between generations in terms of the movement's organizational structure, decision-making process, culture of obedience, proselytizing (daawa) and politics, political party life, and reform. She finds that the difference between the young members of the Muslim Brotherhood are varied, such that there is no clear cut division between the younger and older generations in the movement.

In the third article "Ta'ifah, Sect and Sectarianism: From The Etymology of the Term and its Variable Implications to an Analytical Sociological Term," Azmi Bishara elaborates on the fundamental conceptual idiomatic distinctions between community according to religious or confessional affiliation (at-tai'fah), sectarianism (at-ta'ifiyyah) and confessionalism (al-madhabiyyah) – concepts and phenomena that are deeply intertwined. He also explores related concepts such as identity, religious affiliation, sect, difference, fanaticism (taasub), and others. Bishara analyzes the linguistic and semantic conceptual evolution of the term sectarianism, as well as the evolution of the term through the concepts of confession/group (firqa), sect

(tai'fa), and craft (hirfa) – concepts that reflect on the ways (turuq), i.e. the occupational and professional congregations as well as the Sufi orders, within Islamic society. All of these developments are examined to reach an understanding of the widespread modern Arabic term sectarianism – sectarianism being a modern term, and sect an old one. Through a critical debate with the modern Western sociological concepts of sectarianism (al-ta'ifiyyah or al-firqiyyah), the study attempts to develop the term "sect" as an analytical sociological term that can be used to analyze the formation, evolution, and characteristics of new contemporary imagined communities, according to religious communities that the author calls "imagined sects."

Fourthly, Hayat Amamu's paper "The Nature of Early Islamic Sources and the Debate Over their Historical Significance" examines the debate over the foundational Arabic/ Islamic texts in the early history of Islam and the first Muslims. These sources cannot be defined as primary sources—in as much as they were largely written beginning 150 years after the incidents they narrate. There is also a lack of archaeological evidence or independent archival records to corroborate these narratives. Yet, there is a wide variety of sources for early Islamic history, which are narrative, literary, theological and geographical in nature; the sources further span books of Hadith as well interpretations/commentaries (exegeses) of the Koran. This has led scholars, and particularly orientalists, to be divided over the merits of such texts as historical documents on which the history of early Islam can be based. Amamu surveys this dispute between scholars and seek to resolve it by examining the various methodological approaches adopted by historians towards the texts of early Islamic history beginning in the nineteenth century: the descriptive, critical, skeptical approaches, in addition to

a school of thought which relies entirely on foreign language sources—particularly Syriac/Aramaic and (archaic) Greek sources. She finds that the Skeptical school is excessive in its refusal to acknowledge any sort of authenticity for any of the Arabic language sources on the early history of Islam.

In this issue's Arab Opinion Index article "Religiosity and its Political Effects", Dana El Kurd attempts to answer the question: What is the effect of religiosity on public opinion? Using the Arab Opinion Index's 2016 data to examine the effect of individual religiosity on public opinion and political behavior, she finds that there is no link between increased religiosity and negative perceptions of democracy; rather the opposite is the case. She also finds no link between religiosity and levels of political participation. Finally, she demonstrates that in fact there is a positive correlation between religiosity and political tolerance.

Finally, this issue will feature two critical book discussions and one book review. Dina Khoury compares and contrasts two foundational sociological historians in Iraqi history: Hanna Batatu and Ali Al-Wardi. Walid Noueihed examines four books on the Syrian Revolution released by the ACRPS which are: Azmi Bishara's book *Syria's Via Dolorosa to Freedom: An Attempt at Contemporary History*, Mohammed Jamal Barout's *The Last Decade in the History of Syria*, Hamza Mustafa's *The Virtual Public Sphere in the Syrian Revolution and an edited volume titled Backgrounds to the Revolution*. Finally, Azzam Amin reviews the book *The Arab Intellectual and the Tiananmen Square Syndrome* by Amro Othman and Mrouwa Fikry which was released by ACRPS in 2016.