

# EDITOR'S NOTE

## AlMuntaqa's Second Year!

As we release the fourth issue of AlMuntaqa, we are excited to enter our second year. To get a sense of how far we have come, we can rely on the number of downloads and views our journal has received the past year. The journal's materials have been downloaded a total of 3192 times between the period 07 / 2018 - 03 / 2019. Hence, the journal achieved a reasonable number of article downloads. Not only this, but the geographic scope of the journal's material downloads has also been impressive. Table 1 below shows the details:

Continent / Region	Views & Downloads	Percentage
Asia	1032	32.33%
Europe	927	29.04%
North America	827	25.91%
Africa	333	10.43%
Oceania	38	1.19%
South America	32	1.00%
Unknown	3	0.09%

This year AlMuntaqa aims to continue proliferating top notch Arab scholarship for an English speaking audience. In this issue we have even ventured into the topic of social science and humanities methodology in the hope of providing an ever wider scope of topics for the reader. It is our hope that the readers will not only read, cite and utilize the data in our studies but that they will effectively encourage other scholars, professionals and intellectuals to read our work. In this way, AlMuntaqa can serve as a first step in bridging divides within academia as well as bringing research from the Arab world into ongoing scholarly discussions.

In this issue of AlMuntaqa we start with article on the cities of the Arab gulf titled "The New Arab Urban: Test Beds, Work-arounds, and the Limits of Enacted Cities". In this study, Molotch and Ponizini demonstrate how "Examining the Gulf expands our understanding of how contemporary cities and urban societies can be built and sustained. Extremes and distinctions in the Gulf—heights of buildings, demographic incongruity, and the contrast of traditions with cosmopolitan ambition—offer up lessons applicable to many other places." But they warn that there are clear limitations to the efforts aimed at "artificially" enacting "urban environments and societies."

In the second article, Madani discusses and suggests very innovative approaches to utilizing old historical texts in order to draw quantitative data on the demographics of early Islamic cities throughout history.

He employs mathematical inferences that can be drawn from the spatial dimensions of these cities and the number of their public facilities, in as much as these inferences provide indicators of the dynamics of population size and growth in these cities. But he warns that these quantitative innovations must be historically and cognitively situated in order to utilize them most effectively.

The following article is a study by Al-Kati titled “The Kurdish Movement in the Arab World: The Syrian Kurds as a Case Study”. He first provides a comprehensive guide to the various Kurdish parties and divisions. Then he analyses their discourse, focusing mainly on the demands and perceptions of the Kurdish issue in Syria historically. He finds that “the escalation of the Kurdish discourse in Syria will make dealing with the Kurdish movement inside Syria more difficult in the future” especially given that a large segment of the Syrian people view this discourse with suspicion.

The fourth article titled “Iraqi Shi’is and the Pressure of Religious Identity: Unpacking the Meaning of Shi’i Identity” by Haider Saeed, attempts to understand the dynamics of “Shi’i identity” which developed in conjunction with modernity. He finds that “the idea of transnational Shi’i identity, adopted by Shi’i Islamism, was not an extension of this inherited overlap from the ancient world. Rather, it was based on another model, namely, the introduction of transnational identities as an alternative and a rival to national identity.”

In this issue’s Arab Opinion Index article “...”, Dana El Kurd attempts to understand popular Arab perceptions of Iran. She finds that Iranian foreign policy is widely perceived negatively in most of the countries in the sample, with a few exceptions. Moreover, even in those few dissenting countries we have issues with non-response and acquiescence bias. Thus, it becomes clear that Arab perceptions of Iran are overwhelmingly unified, and that they have deteriorated since 2011.

Finally, in the critical discussions and book reviews section we start with Azmi Bishara’s opening lecture for ACRPS’ Seventh Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities, which dealt with Research Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities and was held in March 2019. Critical reviews for two books are also available. The first is *The Virtual and the Revolution: The Place of the Internet in the Emergence of an Arab Civil Society* by Jawhar al-Jamusi, reviewed by Nadim Mansouri. Rabhi Radwan then reviews El Hasan Laghraib’s book *The History of Minorities in the Far Maghreb: The Case of Christians during the Middle Ages*.