

EDITOR'S NOTE

AlMuntaqa remains committed to making Arab scholarship on the Arab region accessible to English-speaking communities. It does so by selecting articles from the various journals published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies that AlMuntaqa team deems the most qualified to be translated into English. The articles are vetted for their originality, not just in relationship to Arab scholarship, but to the broader one as well. Their originality can be theoretical, methodological or empirical. Our goal is for AlMuntaqa's content to enrich global discussions of Arab studies as well as to take a leading role in defining them. It is a platform not only for disseminating Arab scholarship in English, but also for documenting Arab public opinion. One particular feature of AlMuntaqa is the regular publication of material from the Arab Opinion Index (AOI), an annual survey conducted by the ACRPS in order to gauge Arab public opinion around a number of political, cultural, and social topics. The AOI is one of the most relevant materials produced in the Arab region on Arab societies to serve policy making. A team at the Arab Center contextualizes and analyses the data produced by the survey in a series of articles. The AlMuntaqa team then selects and translates a handful of these articles into English.

The below articles were selected for this volume to offer multi-faceted contributions in accordance with AlMuntaqa's mission.

Adham Saouli and Raymond Hinnebusch's contribution proposes a new theoretical framework for state-building in the Arab world. Taking a comparative historical methodology on regime and state formation and deformation, the article proposes a bell-shaped curve to explain statehood in the Arab region rather than the usual linear trajectory adopted by the Weberian or Westphalian model.

Mohammed Hemchi's review article of one of Azmi Bishara's earlier works, *Civil Society: A Critical Study* (The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 1996), provides an original analytical framework by situating Bishara's theoretical analysis of civil society within Global South Studies. It outlines the different problematics that Bishara engages with and highlights the continuous relevance of Bishara's critique of the use and abuse of the concept of civil society. The review concludes with an affirmation of Bishara's original argument for an explanatory power and democratic function of the concept of civil society.

Nouri Dris' work analyzes the relationship between the rentier economy and stalled democratization in Algeria. The author argues that rent-seekers in Algeria would have accepted political reforms but not the economic reforms necessary that would have led a transition to capitalism and the rise of a bourgeoisie and a working class, two factors in any democratic equation.

Lorenzo Veracini's article, first published in an Arabic translation of the original submission, shows the negative correlation between Islamophobia and anti-semitism. It highlights how the two phobias are space-specific and tied to an imaginative geography while also driven by colonial and settler-colonial imaginaries and world views.

Majid Hassan Ali offers a qualitative approach to the displacement of the Yazidi communities in Iraq, providing a historical background to the disenfranchisement of the Yazidi community in Iraq, outlining the repercussions of ISIL's invasion of Northern Iraq on the Yazidi community, and analyzing the factors impeding the return of the displaced Yazidi to Sinjar. The author concludes that there is no prospect for a durable and equitable solution for the Yazidi community.

The first study based on the Arab Opinion Index (2019-2020) concludes that Arab citizens, unlike Arab political elites, generally prioritize democracy. It also concludes that Arab states constitute different clusters, based on their citizens' views on Arab regimes. The second study outlines Arab public opinion trends towards government performance in public policy and the provision of basic services and the position of the latter within the citizens' priorities. Moreover, it offers some insight on how public health services and confidence in government affected the behaviour of citizens during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This volume features a book review of Azmi Bishara's *Understanding Revolutions: Opening Acts in Tunisia* (I. B. Tauris, 2021), published originally in Arabic in 2012. Mouldi Lahmar situates the book within the world literature on political revolutions. He analyses Bishara's navigation of the interlaced relationship between empiricism, theory and his own positionality towards the revolution. He outlines Bishara's critique of the narratives of revolution while offering a thorough assessment of the author's own theoretical comparative framing of the Tunisian revolution and the place of democracy and democratization in this process.

Taken together, the content of this volume offers much food for thought on the Arab state and Arab societies and provides contributions to a wide range of scholarship on the Arab region. These contributions will no doubt be integrated into broader intellectual engagement on the history, present and future of the region.