

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are pleased to introduce issue 14 of *Al-Muntaqa* journal. This issue features a sub-title, a new cover page and an Advisory Board.

The sub-title, “New Perspectives on Arab Studies”, has been added to reflect the core mission of *Al-Muntaqa* as a platform for new perspectives in the social sciences and humanities by Arab scholars, most of whom belong to the Arab academy. The new cover page adopts a dynamic concept that allows us to feature artwork by Arab artists. Whenever possible, the artwork relates to a theme covered by one or more of an issue’s articles.

This issue also inaugurates a new phase for *Al-Muntaqa* as it replaces its Editorial Board with an Advisory Board. We welcome the Advisory Board members whose scholarship, expertise, and affinity to the Arab region will provide *Al-Muntaqa*’s team with guidance and feedback on the journal’s content and overall direction.

The articles in this issue cover topics related to Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, and Oman, four of which relate to politics and political culture in the Arab region while the fifth offers an anthropological analysis of Frankincense rituals.

In the opening article, Azmi Bishara unpacks the concept of political culture, discerning between a country’s political culture and its system of government, between political culture and the general culture, and between political culture and political practice. He rejects the claim that a democratic political culture is a precondition for democracy but emphasizes the importance of “civic culture” and the belief in liberal democratic values in preserving democratic stability.

Harith Hasan examines the shift in the conceptual basis of the political community in Iraq since the US-led invasion of 2003, and the emergence of a political ideology underpinning the formation of a new political system and governing state-society relationship: communalism. He argues that communalism reflects a process of “hollowing-out” the state and a shift away from the modernist/developmental definition of the state toward an identitarian-collective definition linked to the neo-liberalism and sectarian classifications in Iraq.

Ahmed Abdelmawgoud Elshenawy examines the role of Nubian political culture in galvanizing public action around a return to “Old Nubia”. The analysis interrogates the conception of this return among young Nubians, using qualitative data as well as Clifford Geertz’s “interpretation of cultures” approach. The article concludes that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution promoted political values that heralded the emergence of a novel political culture among young Nubians that revitalized the return but lacked the necessary tools to rectify the issue.

Ihab Maharmeh examines the sports boycott of Israel in the 2010s and its impact on the Israeli apartheid system. In addition to exploring the role of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in sports boycotts, he analyses how the Arab Spring further incentivized Arab youth to call for boycotting Israel, transforming major international athletic events into a space for political action and using sports boycott of Israel as an international policy tool to counteract Israel's international image.

Hajer Harrathi's anthropological study of Frankincense's ritual uses in Oman investigates the persistence of such rituals and related practices in the Sultanate of Oman despite social and cultural changes. The research relies on a combination of field observations as well as random and semi-structured interviews with Omani men and women in the provinces of Al Batinah North Governate. The study considers frankincense censing practice as a complex ritual with symbolic effectiveness based on the collective belief in the power of frankincense.

Using data provided by the Arab Opinion Index in the summer of 2022, Wajd Beshara explores public opinion towards the economic and political situation in Tunisia. She links a state of pessimism about the economic situation with decreasing confidence in Tunisia's political institutions and an increasingly critical attitude towards a democratic political system. This disenchantment with the political scene is translated into support for a government that is reversing the democratic transition but is expected to execute economic improvements.

This issue includes two book reviews. Ahmed Idrees reviews Bilal Awad Salameh's *On the Meaning of Land: Reclaiming the Palestinian Selfhood*, exploring the book's key themes, theoretical shortcomings, and contribution to the question of land in the Palestinian context. In his review of *Issues of Methodology in Political Science, History, Law, and Demography*, edited by Morad Diani, Ahmed Qassem Hussein delves into methodological issues in the humanities and social sciences, particularly methods and theories used as analytical tools to study the Arab region.