

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Al-Muntaqa* brings together contributions that move across Sudan, Jordan, Morocco, and Palestine, while sharing a concern with postmodern thought and the ways political authority is produced, contested, and made durable through institutions, territory, resources, and law. From postmodern critique to state formation, water governance, settler-colonial economy and space, and voter turnout, the issue's articles examine how social and political orders are shaped by both structural constraints and popular agency.

The first article by Azmi Bishara offers a critical reading of the implications of importing postmodern thought into a non-Western context. It argues that postmodern claims on the relativity of truth, the deconstruction of grand narratives, the transcendence of the authority of universal reason, and scepticism toward human agency are grounded conditions of Western modernity that remain absent in partially modernized societies. Bishara focuses on the domains of science and ethics by deconstructing postmodernist arguments regarding scientific discourse and ethical standards.

The second article by Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk examines Sudanese peace agreements from 1972 to 2020, situating their repeated fragility within the deeper legacy of state formation. The article argues that Sudan's conflicts cannot be understood apart from the historical concentration of power and development in the political centre, particularly the riverain provinces, at the expense of peripheral regions. It shows why successive peace agreements, limited to partial arrangements for sharing power and wealth, failed to address the structural roots of conflict.

The third article by Youssef Dahraji examines the evolution of water policy in Jordan and Morocco, challenging any assumption that water management has been a neutral technical field. It shows how water has been used since independence as a strategic instrument of territorial control and political authority, arguing that neoliberal approaches to governance have transformed water from a public right into an economic commodity, producing social and spatial inequalities while deepening vulnerability.

The fourth article by Mahmoud Elkhafif, Raja Khalidi, and Tareq Sadeq addresses the economic cost of Israeli settler-colonial occupation on the Palestinian people from 1948 to 2022. Reviewing existing literature and available evidence, the article develops methodological approaches for estimating cumulative Palestinian economic losses, including aggregation, counterfactual estimation, and the calculation of occupation gains.

The fifth article by Walid Habbas and Anmar Rafeedie maps the Israeli settlement project in the West Bank, focusing on its historical development, institutional architecture, and legal status. Proceeding from the premise that the settlement project constitutes an integrated structure organized against Palestinian space, the article traces the bodies, agencies, and planning frameworks through which settlement expansion is administered and sustained.

In the Arab Opinion Index section, Abdelkarim Amengay and Yasmine Lahnin examine the relationship between citizens' perceptions of regime democracy and voter turnout in the Arab world. Drawing on data

from the eighth Arab Opinion Index, the article investigates how subjective evaluations of democracy shape voter turnout. Its findings indicate that citizens who view their political systems more positively in democratic terms are more likely to vote, even where objective indicators classify those systems as non-democratic.

Complementing these articles, the issue includes two book reviews that extend its engagement with questions of belonging, knowledge, and contemporary transformation. Mohamed Oubella and Mohamed Salmi review *The Manufacturing of Belonging: A Study of Land Ownership in the Sahrawi Community (the Ait Oussa Tribes 1600–1958)*, while Khatri Elayachi reviews *The Conceptual and Technical Foundations of Artificial Intelligence and Its Evolution: From Computational Models to Machine Learning*.

Across these contributions, *Al-Muntaqa* continues its commitment to critical and interdisciplinary scholarship attentive to the historical depth and contemporary complexity of Arab societies.