



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

ACRPS Conference for Arab Graduate Students in Western Universities (AGSC)

Fifth Round

3 – 5 October 2026

[Timetable](#) | [Participants and Abstracts](#) | [Discussants](#)



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Timetable

Day 1: Saturday, 3 October 2026

8:30 – 9:00	Registration	
9:00 – 10:00	Opening Session	
10:00 – 10:15	Coffee Break	
10:15 – 11:30	Session 1	
	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1)	Ramadan Alatrsh: The State as Domination, Institution, and Meaning: A Comparative Analysis of Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and Hegel Discussant: Mohammed Hemchi
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2)	Mohamed Elgohari: From Legalism to Algorithmic Control: Law, AI, and the Reconfiguration of Authoritarian Governance in the MENA Region Discussant: Walid Al-Saqaf
	Conflict/Settler Colonialism Studies Academic Building - Room (3)	Lamiaa Abed: Academic Mobility in Post-Conflict Syria: Brain Drain, Push–Pull Dynamics, and the Reconstruction of Higher Education Discussant: Sansom Milton
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4)	Jihad-Rosty Othman* : Identifying the Factors Explaining Immigrants' Mental Health in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic Across Migration Stages Discussant: Mohamad Musa
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5)	Malika Salah: What Does it Mean to be Human? Coloniality and the Lived Experiences of Arab Muslim Women in Refugee Camps Discussant: Laila Omar
11:30 – 11:45	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6)	Akram Alashqar: Untitled: My Journey Through Desktop Documentary Filmmaking to Uncover the Voice of Palestine Discussant: Azza El Hassan
	Coffee Break	

* Online

Session 2	
11:45 – 13:00	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Mostafa El Sharkawy: Clerics and Contention in Kuwait Discussant: Ali Alsayegh
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Mohammad Hashem Krayem: Liberalization and Economic Growth Under Conditions of Informality Discussant: Ayhab Saad
	Conflict/Settler Colonialism Studies Academic Building - Room (3) Sara Badran: Dispossessed Body Data: Colonial Dispossession of Body Data Through Self-Tracking Wearables Discussant: Fadi Zaraket
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Hajer Jemai: Prioritizing Elements of Culturally and Religiously Sensitive Maternity Care for Muslim Women in Australia: Findings from a Nominal Group Technique Study Discussant: Diala Hawi
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Basma El Doukhi: "Release the Cat": Symbolic Annihilation and the Associational Realities of Syrian and Afghan Organizations in Turkey Discussant: Ghassan Elkahlout
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Ali Alrifae: The Trachoma Paradox in French-Mandate Syria and Lebanon (1918–1940): Institutional Neglect and Selective Health Priorities Discussant: Amal Ghazal
13:00 – 14:15	Lunch Break

Session 3	
14:15 – 15:30	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Mostafa Hetteh: Institutionalizing Unequal Political Belonging: Dignity, Securitization, and Ethno-National Politics in Iran Discussant: Mahjoob Zweiri
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Nour Hariri: The Crisis of Science and the Question of Progress: "We", Modernity, and Pre- and Post-Modernity Discussant: Karim Sadek
	Conflict/Settler Colonialism Studies Academic Building - Room (3) Ashraf Abumousa: UNRWA's Organizational Resilience Amidst Digital Settler Colonialism Discussant: Ayat Hamdan
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Fatima Qaraan: Child Marriage in Canada: Prevalence, Policy, and Public Awareness Discussant: Dina Taha
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Bayan Anouz: The Diaspora as a Transformative Force – Agency, Resources, and Challenges of the Syrian Diaspora in the Context of Political Transformation in Syria Discussant: Abdullah Majeed
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Hicham Bouhadi: Tracing the Dynamics of Readership through Paratexts: Rodosizāde's Ottoman-Turkish Translation of <i>Wafayāt al-A'yān</i> as a Case Study Discussant: Abderrahim Benhadda
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee Break

Session 4		
15:45 – 17:00	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1)	Duaa Hassan: Academic Freedom under Authoritarian Constitutionalism in Sudan: The Hollowing Out of University Autonomy Discussant: Hamid Ali
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2)	Ayman Tibi: Conditional Trade Policy for Peace? The Economic Effects of QIZs in the Middle East Discussant: Laura Sayah
	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (3)	Amena ElAshkar: Before Security: Conceptualizing Security Through the Everyday Lives of Exiled Sunni Muslims in Istanbul Discussant: Tariq Dana
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4)	Radja Chinoun: Mapping Belonging: Muslim Students' Experiences of Belonging and Mattering in US Higher Education Discussant: Nabil Khattab
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5)	Bilal Hisham: "Blessed are the Strangers": Egyptian Exiles' Navigation of Legality and Citizenship in Istanbul Discussant: Abdel-Fattah Mady
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6)	Mohamed Zalalo: Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in Arabic and Spanish Sources: A Comparative Study Discussant: Abderrahim Benhadda

Day 2: Sunday, 4 October 2026

Session 5	
9:00 – 10:15	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Jad Baghdadi: The Political Economy of State-Capital Relations in Lebanon: The Case of the Pharmaceutical Sector Discussant: Imad Mansour
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Mohammad Al-Masaeid: The Wage Gap Between Public and Private Workers in Jordan: Role of Experience, Education, Location and Gender Discussant: Elias Khalil
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Soha Almeahmadi: The Lived Experiences of Arab British Carers Between Home and Heritage: Rethinking Caregiving Theory in an Ethnically Minoritized Context Discussant: Marwa Farag
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Fadi Hasan: "Perhaps moving to Germany solved some of our problems caused by the war in Syria, but...": A Structuration Theory Analysis of the Meanings and Transformations of Marriage and Family Systems in the German Post-Refugee Context Discussant: Dina Taha
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Shadi Rohana: Cervantes and the Arabs: al-Andalus in Don Quixote and Its Translations into Arabic Discussant: Hiba Ghanem
10:15 – 10:30	Coffee Break

Session 6	
10:30 – 11:45	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Jasmine Ali: A Pioneering Urban Spectacle and Ecosystem Hero: Sabah Al Ahmad Sea City, from the 1980s to Today Discussant: Yousef Jabareen
	Conflict/Settler Colonialism Studies Academic Building - Room (3) Mohammed Amer: Islamic Peacebuilding and Resistance: Ifsha Al-Salam's Approach to Confronting Organized Crime and Gun Violence in Palestinian Communities in Israel Discussant: Ibrahim Khatib
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Lama Karame*: Poverty on Trial: Law, Welfare, and Childhood in Lebanon's Juvenile Courts Discussant: Sari Hanafi*
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Kamal Kassam: The Effect of Refugees on Bilateral Trade Between Hosting Countries Discussant: Jad Chaaban
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Achouak Chalkha: Translation Issues in Non-Arabic Corpora: Translation as a Third Space of Semantic Negotiation and a Practice of Symbolic Resistance Among the Moriscos Discussant: Fuad Alqaisi
11:45 – 12:00	Coffee Break

* Online

Session 7	
12:00 – 13:15	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Sultan Al Bimani: Soft Diplomacy Tools in the Sultanate of Oman: A Theoretical Perspective and Cultural Applications Discussant: Said Alhashimi
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Besma Soltan: Conditional Legitimacy: Racialized Women Entrepreneurs and the Structural Limits of Ecosystem Access in Canada Discussant: Rabia Naguib
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Mortada Al-Amine: When Meritocracy Challenges and Justifies Inequality: The Interplay Between the Dimension of Meritocratic Belief and Type of Inequality Discussant: Jad Chaaban
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Khaled Alosaimi: From Victimhood to Agency: The Role of Yemeni Displaced Women in Cultural Transformation Discussant: Abdulla Majeed
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Ghada Ghazal: Nazm al-Quran and the Hermeneutics of Surah Structure: A Comparative Study of Amin Ahsan Islahi and Michel Cuypers Discussant: Zahia Jouirou
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch Break

Session 8	
14:15 – 15:30	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Abdullah Bin Mansour: Saudi Leadership and the Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy Toward China (1949–2015) Discussant: Marwan Kabalan
	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (2) Muhammed Zeyn: Weaponized Exile and Reclaimed Citizenship: How Social Media Mediates Syrian Political Rights Across Displacement and Return Discussant: Ammar Shamaileh
	Sociology/Psychology Academic Building - Room (4) Sarah Hasbini: Fragmented Statehood and the Gender Regime: Civil Society and Violence Against Women in Lebanon Discussant: Abdelkarim Amengay
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Abdallah Ounour: Assisted Migration or Human Trafficking? Eastern Sudan as a Gateway for Irregularized Migration Discussant: Hamid Ali
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Safnaz Saad: Rereading Kinship in the Modern Arabic Novel: Ethics of Coexistence Discussant: Farah Aridi

Day 3: Monday, 5 October 2026

Session 9	
9:00 – 10:15	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1) Khaled Sayed Ali: Economic Development Under Military Regimes: A Comparative Study of the Nasser and Sisi Eras in Egypt Discussant: Abdel-Fattah Mady
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2) Bilal Abu Jafar*: Exporting Under Volatility: Firm Responses of Palestinian SMEs in a Conflict-Affected Economy Discussant: Laura Sayah
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (4) Mamdouh Abdelkader: Fiscal Policy and the Transition to Renewable Energy: Empirical Evidence from US Industrial Electricity Generation Discussant: Laurent Lambert
	Migration/Refugee Studies Academic Building - Room (5) Hassan Mortada: The Abridged Subject: Empire and the Anteriority of the Immigrant in Library and Information Science Discussant: Dina Taha
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6) Latifah Alrdaian: Between Reality and Fiction: Saudi Women in the Works of Jean Sasson and Zoe Ferraris Discussant: Rafiah Al Talei
10:15 – 10:30	Coffee Break

* Online

10:30 – 11:45	Session 10	
	Politics and International Relations Academic Building - Room (1)	Youssef Sharaf: A State of Two Speeds: Administrative Elite Recomposition in Mubarak's Reform-Era Egypt, 1990s-2000s Discussant: Hani Awad
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (2)	Alyaa Almaadeed: The Predictive Factors of Turnover Intentions and Counterproductive Work Behaviour Among Social Service Employees in Qatar Discussant: Mohammed Aboramadan
	Economics, Public Policy, Energy, and Urban Studies Academic Building - Room (4)	Pakinam Hassan: Perceptions on Improving the Participatory Urban Planning in Alexandria, Egypt Discussant: Yousef Jabareen
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (5)	Saifeddine Jemli: From Group Agency to Plural Agency: Republican Perspectives on Collective Agency Between Hannah Arendt and Philip Pettit Discussant: Karim Sadek
	History, Philosophy, Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies Academic Building - Room (6)	Mounir Saifi: Toward an Engaged Counter-Orientalist Scholarship: Wikipedia and the Reproduction of Orientalist Epistemic Injustice Discussant: Housamedden Darwish
11:45 – 12:00	Coffee Break	
12:00 – 13:30	Session 11	
	Introduction to Encyclopedia Arabica	

Participants

Abstracts



Abdallah Ounour

Anthropologist and a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo (Italy) & the University of Bayreuth (Germany). His current PhD research is titled: *Assisted migration or human trafficking? Sudan's role in international migration*. He is also a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Gadarif in Sudan. He has conducted research on human smuggling to and from Sudan, and more recently, within Europe and toward the UK. His work also includes research on refugee camps in Eastern Sudan, Artisanal Gold mining, and seasonal labour migration.

Assisted Migration or Human Trafficking? Eastern Sudan as a Gateway for Irregularized Migration

This paper examines Eastern Sudan as a key migratory gateway within broader trans-Saharan and regional mobility systems. While mobility has long been a socially embedded practice in Sudan, recent external interventions – particularly by European actors – have contributed to the criminalization of such movements, transforming them into clandestine and costly journeys. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2016 and 2019, the study employs qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and observation. Guided by Wenger's concept of communities of practice, it analyses the relational and negotiated roles of migrants, smugglers, local communities, and state actors. The paper proposes "assisted migration" as an alternative conceptual lens to dominant trafficking/smuggling frameworks, emphasizing migration as a socially learned and collectively organized process. It argues that irregularized migration in Eastern Sudan is coproduced through dynamic interactions that blur boundaries between legality, assistance, and criminalization.



Abdullah Bin Mansour

PhD researcher in International Relations at the University of Edinburgh. His research focuses on Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, Saudi–China relations, and the dynamics of power and strategic hedging in the international system, particularly through the lens of neoclassical realism. His doctoral research examines Saudi Arabia's foreign and security policy toward China, analysing how systemic pressures and domestic political factors shape strategic decision-making. Bin Mansour has conducted extensive fieldwork and participated in the Visiting Scholar Program in China. He is also a lecturer at King Saud University and has participated in several international academic and policy programs related to global governance and Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Saudi Leadership and the Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy Toward China (1949–2015)

This paper examines the evolution of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China between 1949 and 2015, focusing on the role of leadership perceptions in redefining national interests. Drawing on a neoclassical realist framework, the study analyses how systemic pressures within the international system interacted with domestic factors – particularly leadership beliefs, ideology, and strategic calculations – to shape Saudi foreign policy choices. During the Cold War, ideological differences and Saudi Arabia's strategic alignment with Western powers limited engagement with China. However, gradual changes in the global balance of power, China's economic rise, and shifting Saudi perceptions of national interests led to a cautious but steady rapprochement. By tracing the policies of successive Saudi leaders, the paper demonstrates that foreign policy transformation cannot be explained by systemic pressures alone, but must also account for the perceptions and priorities of decision-makers in translating structural incentives into policy outcomes.



Achouak Chalkha

PhD researcher in linguistics on the "Linguistics and Discourse Analysis" program at the University of Cádiz in Spain. She holds a PhD in Spanish Language and Literature from Mohammed V University in Rabat (2008), where her dissertation focused on a sociolinguistic study of the Morisco Aljamiado manuscript no. 4178, held at the National Library of Madrid. Her research interests centre on sociolinguistics, language contact, and Morisco studies, with a particular focus on Aljamiado texts as a field of linguistic and cultural interaction. She supervises a project on the translation of Moroccan women's poetry into Spanish. Her publications address Arabic–Spanish language contact in Aljamiado texts, the linguistic situation and identity of the Moriscos, education and cultural diversity in Europe, and Morocco's role as a bridge between Africa and Europe through cultural diplomacy and education.

Translation Issues in Non-Arabic Corpora: Translation as a Third Space of Semantic Negotiation and a Practice of Symbolic Resistance Among the Moriscos

This paper addresses the issue of translation in Aljamiado literary texts produced by the Moriscos between the 15th and 17th centuries, considering translation as a third space for semantic negotiation and a practice of cultural resistance. The study focuses on how translation was used to preserve religious and cultural identity in a context of persecution, through a hybrid language combining Castilian and Arabic script. It adopts a comparative analytical approach to selected texts, particularly manuscript 4845, held in the National Library of Madrid, in order to examine mechanisms such as literal transfer, borrowing, and morpho-syntactic interference. The study draws on concepts such as the "third space" and the "third language" to understand translation as an interpretive and negotiating act rather than a simple transfer. It also highlights the role of "resistant translation" and "taqiyya translation" in producing a dual discourse that both conceals and preserves meaning. The paper concludes that Aljamiado translation functioned as a tool for constructing a hybrid and resistant identity and for safeguarding collective memory, making it an early model of translation as a cultural and political practice that transcends the linguistic dimension.



Akram Alashqar

Palestinian filmmaker, educator, and PhD researcher in Theatre, Film & Television Studies at the University of Glasgow. His research focuses on the aesthetics and significance of soundtracks in the Palestine revolution for over 12 years. He has served as a film and media faculty member at Al-Quds University, and Palestine Technical University. His films include *First Picture* (2006), *Red, Dead, and Med.* (2006), and *Untitled* (2025). As a project manager with the Royal Film Commission in Jordan, he had the opportunity to help establish three cinema centres, including two unique cinema buses that brought the magic of film to unexpected places.

Untitled: My Journey Through Desktop Documentary Filmmaking to Uncover the Voice of Palestine

This practice-based documentary research examines the systematic erasure of Palestine across digital space. The primary creative output is a 35-minute archival documentary that employs the computer screen as a vital frame, reflecting the contemporary digital battleground where the narrative of resistance challenges the narrative of domination. The film, *Untitled* (2025), functions as a critical intervention that repurposes the very digital tools and archives often implicated in the erasure of Palestine, with the aim of undermining dominant narratives and amplifying the Palestinian voice. This research addresses the following question: how can a practice-based methodology employing screen recording operate effectively to subvert dominant narratives and centre Palestinian voice, not as a historical subject, but as an active agent and narrator of history? The research posits that the archival documentary model is uniquely suited to this task. Its inherent reflexivity renders the processes of research, compilation, and testimony constituent parts of the narrative itself. In doing so, the film exposes the mechanisms of information control whilst simultaneously constructing an alternative archive that preserves Palestinian memory.



Ali Alrifae

Doctoral researcher at the Institute of Humanities in Medicine (IHM), University of Lausanne and Lausanne University Hospital (UNIL-CHUV). His doctoral research is funded by the prestigious SNSF Doc.CH fellowship and examines the networks of female healthcare workers and the processes of medicalization in Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate (1920–1948), with a particular focus on transnational circulations of knowledge, professional practices, and gendered dynamics in colonial medicine. He holds a master's degree focusing on French colonial health policies in Syria from 1867-1920 and their role in shaping modern national identity.

The Trachoma Paradox in French-Mandate Syria and Lebanon (1918–1940): Institutional Neglect and Selective Health Priorities

This paper offers a historical study of trachoma in Syria and Lebanon during the French Mandate, examining it as a widespread endemic disease classified among the "neglected diseases" of colonial health policy. Despite affecting large segments of the population, particularly in rural areas and refugee camps, trachoma remained marginal to official priorities when compared to acute epidemics. The study demonstrates how efforts to combat the disease were shaped by political and international considerations, especially in relation to refugee management, schooling, and the medical regulation of mobility. Drawing on Mandate archives, League of Nations reports, and humanitarian records, the paper argues that responses to trachoma were selective and fragmented, contributing to the reproduction rather than the resolution of health inequalities. It also highlights the central role played by women caregivers, nurses, missionary sisters, and midwives, showing how anti-trachoma work became a key arena of female medical labour within a context of official neglect and administrative reliance on non-governmental networks.

Alyaa Almaadeed

Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Work at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She holds a PhD in Social Work from Howard University, US and is the first Qatari professor appointed at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Her research focuses on organizational culture, social work management, and social welfare, with a commitment to strengthening social services through capacity development as a certified trainer. Her work appears in *The Educational Forum*, *Cogent Social Sciences*, *BMC Psychology*, and *JMIR Formative Research*. She is a contributor to the *Routledge International Handbook of Social Development, Social Work, and the Sustainable Development Goals* and a co-author of the 2026 Arabic book *Digital Culture: When Choice Becomes Necessity*.

The Predictive Factors of Turnover Intentions and Counterproductive Work Behaviour Among Social Service Employees in the State of Qatar

Employee counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) remains a critical challenge affecting the stability and efficiency of social services in Qatar, particularly as high turnover rates create substantial financial and operational burdens. This study examined which demographic and work-related characteristics best predict turnover intentions (TI) and CWB among social service employees. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, an online survey was administered to employees holding at least a bachelor's degree and a minimum of two years of experience. Stratified random sampling included participants from government, non-governmental, and health sectors. A total of 415 responses were collected; 227 were retained after data cleaning. Using SPSS, canonical correlation analysis showed that age, nationality, sector, and gender significantly predicted TI and CWB, explaining 20% of the variance. Post hoc regression revealed that TI was specifically influenced by sector, nationality, and educational attainment. The findings highlight the need to strengthen organizational value-based environments to better attract and retain local and younger professionals.



Amena ElAshkar

PhD candidate in International Relations at the Geneva Graduate Institute. Her research lies at the intersection of critical security studies, religion, and everyday life, examining how Sunni Muslim communities conceptualize security beyond dominant state-centric frameworks. Drawing on ethnography and discourse analysis, she explores how religious practices, affect, and memory shape perceptions of threat, protection, and identity. Her work engages questions of war, visibility, and knowledge production, with a regional focus on the Middle East. Her research seeks to rethink security from within lived experience rather than external governance frameworks.

Before Security: Conceptualizing Security Through the Everyday Lives of Exiled Sunni Muslims in Istanbul

This research examines how Islamic actors conceptualize security under conditions of exile, repression, and global misrecognition. Moving beyond dominant approaches in Critical Security Studies that treat Islam as an object of securitization, it reverses the analytical lens to ask what security means for Islam. Through an interpretivist framework c ethnography, the study explores how exiled Sunni Muslim intellectuals and activists in Istanbul articulate alternative understandings of protection, order, and moral responsibility. It traces how these imaginaries are shaped both by Islamic concepts and by global discourses that equate Islam with terrorism, often producing self-censorship and epistemic tension. By foregrounding Muslims as producers of security knowledge, the project seeks to provincialize liberal, state-centric notions of security and contribute to a decolonial rethinking of security as a lived, ethical, and socially embedded practice.



Ashraf Abumousa

PhD researcher and teaching associate at Queen Mary University of London's School of Business and Management. He holds a master's in Development Policy from the Korea Development Institute and is a former policy leader fellow at the European University Institute. Abumousa has 17 years of experience in academia, public organizations, and NGOs. His PhD research focuses on UNRWA's humanitarian work amid digital settler colonialism. His interests include postcolonialism, digital colonialism, critical data studies, organizational studies, and humanitarian governance. He also published on firm innovation in the Asia-Pacific region in the *International Journal of Export Marketing* (2018).

UNRWA's Organizational Resilience Amidst Digital Settler Colonialism

This paper critically examines UNRWA's digital resilience within the context of digital settler colonialism, conceptualizing resilience as a contested and politically embedded process rather than a neutral technological or organizational capacity. It discusses how UNRWA maintains humanitarian service delivery through digital transformation while adapting to the implications of digital settler colonialism, such as infrastructural limitations, surveillance, and restricted ICT access, demonstrating that resilience both enables and limits organizational autonomy. Furthermore, the paper explores archival resilience via digitized archival systems, emphasizing their role in preserving refugee identity despite limited access, fragmentation, and political control. Methodologically, it employs a qualitative case study approach using secondary data, including UNRWA's annual accountability reports, Commissioner-General reports, policies, official statements, and scholarly literature on digital resilience, humanitarian governance, and Palestinian digital rights. The study also draws on reports from organizations such as UNESCO and 7amleh, utilizing thematic analysis to examine how resilience functions as both adaptation and resistance across UNRWA's digital infrastructures.



Ayman Tibi

PhD candidate in Economics at the University of Mannheim, Germany. His research interests span development economics, political economy, and international trade. He focuses on developing and emerging economies and is currently working on several research projects, including studying the effects of the Qualifying Industrial Zones agreement between Egypt, the US, and Israel on the Egyptian economy; how the Indian government influences the results of elections by funding newspapers through government ads; and the effects of software technology parks in India. His research combines applied economic methods with general equilibrium modelling, to look at both micro and macro implications of economic policies.

Conditional Trade Policy for Peace? The Economic Effects of QIZs in the Middle East

This paper examines how conditional trade policies with input-sourcing requirements affect firms' exports, production, and labour outcomes through an examination of Egypt's Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) program, which grants duty-free access to the US market conditional on sourcing inputs from Israel. It estimates event-study and triple-difference specifications using firm-level customs data, industrial census records, and labour force surveys. The study finds large and persistent export gains along both intensive and extensive margins alongside improvements in output, productivity, employment, and wages. These improvements are driven by US market access rather than the quality of Israeli inputs. To map these firm-level responses into aggregate and welfare implications, the research develops a quantitative heterogeneous-firm trade model with endogenous QIZ compliance, rules-of-origin costs, and productivity upgrading. This framework is used to quantify the program's economy-wide effects and conduct counterfactual analyses that vary the Israeli content requirement, highlighting the trade-off between policy conditionality and gains from market access.



Basma El Doukhi

PhD graduate in Migration Studies from the University of Kent, UK. Her research focuses on forced migration, refugee-led organizing, identity and labelling in displacement, and the politics of integration and social cohesion. Using feminist and critical migration approaches, her work examines the lived realities and associational practices of displaced communities, particularly Syrian and Afghan associations in Turkey. El Doukhi combines academic research with extensive humanitarian practice, including work with refugee communities in Lebanon, Syria, and the UK. Her doctoral research, *Deconstructing the "Refugee-Led" Concept and "Refugee" Label*, contributes to debates on refugee agency, localization, and displaced collective mobilization.

"Release the Cat": Symbolic Annihilation and the Associational Realities of Syrian and Afghan Organizations in Turkey

Since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Global Compact on Refugees, Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) have been increasingly celebrated within humanitarian and policy discourses as emblematic of localization, participation, and refugee self-reliance. Yet little empirical research has examined how displaced collectives themselves understand, negotiate, or contest this category—particularly within restrictive host-state contexts. Drawing on a qualitative multiple case study of Syrian and Afghan associations operating in Turkey, this article critically examines the RLO label as a form of organizational categorization and governance. Based on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation with founders, staff, volunteers, and community members, the findings reveal that the RLO category is widely rejected, strategically instrumentalized, or deliberately concealed by associations. Far from empowering, the label often homogenizes diverse organizational trajectories, erases historical and legal differences, and exposes associations to heightened surveillance and political risk. The article argues that RLOs function less as an analytical category and more as a donor- and policy-driven tool that obscures power relations and constrains associational autonomy in restrictive migration regimes. It concludes by calling for context-responsive, self-defined approaches to displaced collective organizing that move beyond universalized RLO frameworks.



Bayan Anouz

Doctoral researcher in Political Science at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). Her research concentrates on diaspora engagement, transnational networks, and collective agency in post-conflict contexts. She is an educational scientist specializing in migration and education at Oldenburg University and a lecturer in Social Work at International University Bremen. In 2024, she conducted a critical racism study titled "They Assigned Me a Role: The Victim Role", examining subjectivation processes among women with refugee experience from Syria. In 2025, she published a scholarly contribution on Muslim feminism, addressing ignorance and power relations in feminist discourses through the example of debates surrounding Muslim feminist perspectives.

The Diaspora as a Transformative Force – Agency, Resources, and Challenges of the Syrian Diaspora in the Context of Political Transformation in Syria

This research examines the engagement of Syrian actors in the German diaspora in the reconstruction of Syria. It asks how Syrian actors mobilize and utilize material, social, symbolic, and institutional resources to assume responsibility for reconstruction, what challenges they encounter, and how they enact their agency in navigating these conditions. The study employs a multi-method design combining biographical-narrative interviews, participant observation in diaspora initiatives, and mapping and structural analysis of organizations, networks, and projects initiated or co-shaped by Syrian migrants in Germany. Theoretically, the research draws on critical migration and diaspora studies, integrating concepts such as transnationality, hybrid identities, and collective agency. Syrian diaspora actors navigate transnational spaces, linking their engagement in Germany as a host society with Syria and other locations worldwide. The project highlights how they mobilize resources such as education, professional expertise, social networks, and civic engagement while navigating structural constraints, contributing empirical insights into diasporic engagement in post-conflict reconstruction and transnational governance.



Besma Soltan

PhD Candidate in Interdisciplinary Social Research at Trent University, Canada. Her research examines how intersectional identities shape racialized women's entrepreneurial experiences and the structural barriers that limit equitable participation in entrepreneurship. She has 15 years of experience across grassroots organizations, nonprofits, startups, incubators, and higher education and holds a master's in Education and an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Business and Communications. Soltan serves in research and community leadership roles focused on advancing gender and racial equity.

Conditional Legitimacy: Racialized Women Entrepreneurs and the Structural Limits of Ecosystem Access in Canada

This research argues that racialized women entrepreneurs' access to legitimacy within the Canadian entrepreneurship ecosystem reflects conditional legitimacy, i.e. credibility extended provisionally, contingent on racialized proximity to whiteness, the need to present themselves in ways aligned with masculine-coded entrepreneurial norms, and continuous, self-managed legitimacy work not required of entrepreneurs who fit the dominant norm. Drawing on eleven semi-structured interviews with racialized women entrepreneurs across sectors in Canada, analysed through an intersectional thematic approach, this research extends Suchman's (1995) theory of legitimacy and recent scholarship on gendered and actively constructed entrepreneurial legitimacy to the intersection of race and gender. Findings demonstrate that legitimacy is unevenly granted along racial lines rather than simply present or absent, requiring sustained identity management as a condition of ecosystem access. This research proposes conditional legitimacy as a novel construct to gender and entrepreneurship scholarship, with implications for ecosystem design and support.



Bilal Abu Jafar

PhD researcher in International Business Management at the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), UK. His research examines export barriers and internationalization strategies of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in volatile and conflict-affected economies, with a particular focus on Palestinian firms. He holds an MSc in Project Management from the University of Roehampton, London, UK, and a BSc in Industrial Engineering. He previously contributed to several consultancy projects and institutional capacity-building initiatives related to SME development and the internationalization of firms across the Middle East.

Exporting Under Volatility: Firm Responses of Palestinian SMEs in a Conflict-Affected Economy

This paper examines the export barriers faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in conflict-affected economies, focusing on the case of Palestine. Drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with SME owners and managers, the study explores how firms navigate a volatile political and economic environment while attempting to access international markets. The analysis identifies key barriers including movement restrictions, logistical uncertainty, financial constraints, and regulatory challenges. The findings also highlight the role of internal resources such as managerial experience, business networks, and strategic adaptability in enabling firms to mitigate these constraints. Drawing on insights from the Uppsala internationalization model and the Resource-Based View (RBV), the paper shows how SMEs develop incremental and network-based strategies to sustain export activities under conditions of prolonged uncertainty. The study thus contributes to the literature on SME internationalization in conflict-affected environments.



Bilal Hisham

PhD researcher in Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. His research interests lie at the intersection of exile, religion, political economy, and theories of the state. He holds an MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University in Vienna, Austria, where his research examined Arab migration to Turkey. He also holds a master's in Politics, Economics, and Philosophy from the University of Hamburg, Germany, where his thesis examined the development of the Egyptian military economy, and a BA in Political Science, Economics, and Sociology from Marmara University in Istanbul.

"Blessed are the Strangers": An Ethnography of Egyptian Exiles' Navigation of Legality and Citizenship in Istanbul

This paper explores the experiences of Egyptian exiles in Istanbul based on fieldwork undertaken between 2021 and 2024. Due to the absence of an "exile" legal status, the paper shows how exiles navigate Turkey's changing legal structures influenced by the Syrian migration. The exiles found themselves legally categorized as "tourists" until confronted with expiring passports, leading them to "socially navigate" various strategies, including asylum outside Turkey or humanitarian residence. It also examines "exceptional Turkish citizenship" as a preferable strategy by many exiles, contextualizing it within broader Turkish citizenship. Finally, the research demonstrates the embodied effects of citizenship in overcoming "stuckedness" for the exiles, elaborating on the process of acquiring citizenship. The paper argues that the "disembeddedness" from society and subjectification to humanitarian discourses immobilized their rights-claiming subjectivity, turning some of the exiles into "humanitarian subjects". This study offers a critical perspective on how humanitarian frameworks, legal ambiguity, and bureaucratic constraints redefine citizenship and belonging in a transnational context like Istanbul.



Duaa Hassan

PhD candidate in Law at the University of Birmingham, specializing in constitutional law and human rights. She holds an LLM from Northeastern University and an LLB from the University of Khartoum. Her doctoral research examines academic freedom and university autonomy in authoritarian contexts, analysing the relationship between liberal constitutional guarantees and the exercise of power in non-democratic regimes and periods of constitutional transition. Her research interests focus on the gap between constitutional texts and institutional practice. She has presented papers at international conferences on academic freedom and constitutional guarantees.

Academic Freedom under Authoritarian Constitutionalism in Sudan: The Hollowing Out of University Autonomy

This paper argues that authoritarian constitutionalism does not exclude academic freedom or its constitutional guarantee, embodied in the principle of university autonomy, from constitutional texts. Rather, it retains and reconfigures this principle to legitimise political and military control over higher education institutions. Although Article 63 of the 2019 Sudanese Constitutional Document recognizes university autonomy and the freedom of scientific research, higher education laws in Sudan reveal that this recognition is embedded within a legal and institutional framework that constrains its protective effects. The paper develops a legal-analytical framework to assess university autonomy as a structural guarantee for academic freedom by examining the relationship between Sudanese constitutional provisions and the regulatory architecture of higher education. Instead of merely asking whether autonomy is implemented, it analyses how the principle is reinterpreted within the legal order in ways that regulate and discipline rather than safeguard the academic sphere.



Fadi Hasan

PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Osnabrück. His research focuses on community-engaged scholarship related to issues of migration, society and family. Recognized for his strong commitment to social engagement and intercultural communication, he has received numerous awards at both national and international levels. He has actively participated in many conferences, workshops, and seminars. Professionally, he has worked with international organizations and academic institutions such as UNHCR, IRC, and the University of Osnabrück, contributing to research, policy discussions, and community-oriented initiatives.

"Perhaps moving to Germany solved some of our problems caused by the war in Syria, but...": A Structuration Theory Analysis of the Meanings and Transformations of Marriage and Family Systems in the German Post-Refugee Context

The marital and family relations of Syrian couples in the post-refugee context in Germany have not only been transformed by the geographical movement and the "before-and-after" of forced relocation, but also by more complex developments that created unforeseen challenges for spouses. Based on that, this paper examines changes in the social system of marriage among Syrian families living in Germany through the lens of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory. The analysis focuses on couple relations and the experiences and perceptions of spouses to examine how structure-agency interrelations are affected by the various implications that forced migration has on this social system of two.



Fatima Qaraan

PhD candidate in Political Science at York University, Toronto, Canada, specializing in social policy, cultural studies, and justice frameworks. Her research interests include child marriage policy, psychoanalytic theories in social justice, and feminist resistance in performance arts. Her publications include "Reclaiming Resistance: Brazilian Feminist Voices and the Theatre of the Oppressed" (2026), exploring embodied activism through Boal's techniques, and "Re-Framing, Re-Envisioning, and Re-Claiming Justice in Haiti Post-Revolution" (forthcoming), examining post-colonial equity and reparative frameworks. As Vice President of Finance for the York University Graduate Students' Association, she bridges academia and leadership through graduate student advocacy.

Child Marriage in Canada: Prevalence, Policy, and Public Awareness

This paper examines the concept of childhood in Canada, analysing how legal, cultural, and social frameworks shape children's lived realities across diverse communities. Central to this analysis is an examination of child marriage, a global issue that transcends cultural and religious boundaries, including its manifestation in Canada despite commitments to international human rights standards. Utilizing theoretical approaches like the imagined community and gender political theory, this paper interrogates how childhood is socially constructed and regulated through laws and policies that interact with prevailing gender norms and national identity discourses. Drawing on prevalence statistics from Statistics Canada and provincial records, alongside legal analysis of federal and provincial marriage laws, this study maps child marriage patterns and policy enforcement gaps. Building on experience from Jordan, the paper offers a transnational perspective contrasting Canada's challenges with Jordan's anti-child marriage innovations. Engaging Canadian debates, this research bridges rhetoric and practice while advancing Arab intersectional policy solutions.



Ghada Ghazal

PhD candidate in Islamic Studies at Charles Sturt University, Australia. Her research focuses on *Nazm al-Qur'ān* and the rhetorical structure of the Qur'anic text, through a comparative study of Amin Aḥsan Iṣlāhī and Michel Cuypers. She examines sūrah unity, textual coherence, and the relationship between structural order and ethical formation in contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics. Her publications include "Qur'ānic Hermeneutics in the Ottoman Context: Abū al-Su'ūd's *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*" (forthcoming in *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 2, 2026), and "Comparative Scriptural Reading of Muslim-Christian Marian Texts" (*Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, Vol. 34, Issue 2, 2024).

Nazm al-Quran and the Hermeneutics of Surah Structure: A Comparative Study of Amin Ahsan Islahi and Michel Cuypers

This study examines *nazm* al-Quran – the principle of structural and thematic coherence – as a hermeneutical framework for understanding surah composition in the Quran. It investigates how structural unity and rhetorical design shape interpretive possibilities and contribute to ethical meaning. The research is guided by a central question: How does *nazm* function as a hermeneutical key for interpreting surah structure, and how do the methodologies of Amin Ahsan Islahi and Michel Cuypers converge and diverge in articulating Quranic coherence? Although situated in distinct intellectual traditions, both approaches share a conviction that coherence is intrinsic to the Quran's discourse. The theoretical framework of this study integrates three strands: 1) Classical Arabic rhetoric (al-Jurjani, al-Biqā'i, al-Razi), which first articulated coherence as a feature of 'ijaz (inimitability), 2) Modern Islamic exegesis, especially the Farahī–Islahi school, which reasserts coherence as central to the hermeneutics of revelation; and 3) Contemporary literary methodologies, particularly Semitic rhetorical analysis, developed by Cuypers and refined by scholars such as Raymond Farrin. The analysis highlights points of convergence, such as their emphasis on macro-structure, as well as divergence in epistemological assumptions and theological orientation. By situating these readings within their broader intellectual contexts, the research assesses the potential for methodological resonance between Islamic thematic tafsir and Western rhetorical criticism.



Hajer Jemai

PhD candidate in Public Health at the College of Sport, Health and Engineering, Victoria University, Australia. Her research explores the impact of culturally and religiously sensitive maternity care on the mental wellbeing of marginalized women in Australia. Using a mixed-methods, three-phase design – incorporating Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Nominal Group Technique, and framework validation – her work culminates in the Culturally and Religiously Sensitive Maternity Care Framework. Her study titled "Faith, Birth, and Belonging: Muslim Women's Experiences of Culturally and Religiously Sensitive Maternity Care in Australia" is published in the *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* (2026). Jemai is committed to decolonial, community-informed research that centres Muslim women's voices in healthcare reform.

Prioritizing Elements of Culturally and Religiously Sensitive Maternity Care for Muslim Women in Australia: Findings from a Nominal Group Technique Study

Muslim women in Australia often navigate maternity systems that fail to recognize their religious, cultural, and spiritual identities, with serious consequences for their mental wellbeing. This research comprises three sequential phases. Phase 1 uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis with 14 Muslim women to explore lived experiences of maternity care, revealing themes of religious insensitivity, emotional harm, silencing, and positive encounters built on respect. Phase 2 applies the Nominal Group Technique with a multi-stakeholder group to identify and prioritise elements of a culturally and religiously sensitive maternity care model. Phase 3, currently underway, validates the resulting framework through a Content Validity Index with academic experts and a Diffusion of Innovations assessment with Muslim women.



Hassan Mortada

PhD candidate in Library and Information Science at the University at Buffalo (State University of New York). His doctoral research examines how the human sciences, and knowledge-organization systems in particular, produce and stabilize state administrative categories as naturalized objects of study, with sustained attention to the category of "the immigrant."

The Abridged Subject: Empire and the Anteriority of the Immigrant in Library and Information Science

The immigrant is conventionally understood as a person who moves and is then classified. This paper argues the reverse and advances three hypotheses. First, the category is anterior: movement fills a position prepared in advance rather than creating it. Second, categorization operates as anticipatory reduction, an apparatus predetermining which single trait of a person is retained. Third, this process produces immigrantness, a durable epistemic condition that outlives movement, survives changes of legal status, and can be ascribed to those who have never migrated. The paper further contends that although immigrantness is produced across the humanities, Library and Information Science plays a distinct structural role, rendering the classificatory apparatus visible and securing the category's historical persistence. Law makes the immigrant; knowledge makes the immigrant last. The individual is thereby reduced to an abridged subject, fitted to a decision made in their absence.



Hicham Bouhadi

Research associate in the Emmy Noether Junior Research Group TRANSLAPT and a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Münster, Germany. His PhD project examines Ottoman translations of Arabic biographical dictionaries, with particular focus on the Turkish renderings of Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-A'yān* and their socio-cultural circulation and reception in the manuscript age. He received his MA in Islamic Studies from the University of al-Qarawiyyin (Morocco) in 2020, with a thesis on Ibn Rushd's critique of *kalām* atomism. He also pursued advanced training in Turkish at Marmara University (Turkey).

Tracing the Dynamics of Readership through Paratexts: Rodosīzāde's Ottoman-Turkish Translation of *Wafayāt al-A'yān* as a Case Study

During the early modern period, the Ottoman Empire witnessed significant translation activity, as many Ottoman figures from diverse scholarly and bureaucratic backgrounds translated numerous Arabic and Persian works into Ottoman Turkish. Yet research on these translations remains limited, especially regarding their reception and the socio-cultural backgrounds of their readers. This paper addresses this gap by focusing on Mehmed b. Mehmed Rodosīzāde's (d. 1113/1701) Ottoman Turkish translation of Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-A'yān* – an Arabic biographical dictionary compiled in the late thirteenth century between Mamluk Cairo and Damascus – completed in 1092/1681 under the patronage of the grand vizier Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa. Drawing on approximately twenty manuscripts out of the forty-five identified copies, the paper uses material philology and paratextual evidence – especially colophons, ownership notes, and endowment seals – to shed light on the socio-cultural readership networks that shaped the reception of this work.



Jad Baghdadi

Political economist and doctoral candidate awarded the Rhodes scholarship at the Oxford Department of International Development. His research explores state formation, class relations, sectarianism, market capture, and state-capital relations in the Middle East. His doctoral thesis examines the relationship between the state and capital in Lebanon, and how these dynamics reproduce the country's sectarian and capitalist structures. He has taught Political Economy and Middle East Politics at Oxford. He is a nonresident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, and he previously worked as a research analyst at The Economist and held research positions at the LSE Middle East Centre and the UNHCR. He holds an MSc in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Oxford and a BSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics.

The Political Economy of State-Capital Relations in Lebanon: The Case of the Pharmaceutical Sector

This paper examines Lebanon's pre-2019 pharmaceutical sector as a lens onto state-capital relations. Drawing on Nicos Poulantzas and Stuart Hall, it conceptualizes the state as the material condensation of a relationship of social forces in which class and sect are articulated as mutually constitutive. The sector's defining features – import-dependency, oligopolistic structure, excessive supply, and high out-of-pocket costs – are not by-products of state weakness or institutional failure but structured outcomes of this articulation. A historically entrenched importing class, backed by multinational firms, secures its dominance through the sectarian structure: sectarian networks command the sector's institutions in pursuit of patronage and political control, and their control produces the fragmented, open market on which importers depend, while the sector's commercial weight in turn sustains the networks that organize it. The paper traces this relation across three institutional sites – the Ministry of Public Health, the National Bureau of Medicine, and the Order of Pharmacists – and three regulatory domains: trade, pricing, and prescribing. It also interrogates the concept of state capitalism, questioning its analytical value where the state enables accumulation through selective withdrawal rather than ownership or direction.



Jasmine Ali

PhD candidate in urban geography at McGill University. Her research examines the development logic for 'future-proofing' Gulf countries and how the creation of new master-planned eco-cities built from scratch are designed to contribute towards national continuity and stability in the post-oil era. She has received her Bachelor of Arts with Distinction in Urban Planning from Concordia University and completed her master's degree in Urban Planning in the School of Urban Planning at McGill University in 2020. Ali recently published a paper titled "New cities for a 'new Kuwait': Planning for national continuity and stability", in *International Planning Studies*.

A Pioneering Urban Spectacle and Ecosystem Hero: Sabah Al Ahmad Sea City, from the 1980s to Today

Recent scholarly attention has turned to the proliferation of urban mega-developments in the Gulf states, including new airports, skyscrapers, districts, mega-malls, artificial islands, and new cities built from scratch. Most of the research on mega-developments in the Gulf states has focused on Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Saudi Arabia. This paper examines Sabah Al Ahmad Sea City (SAASC), a pioneering urban mega-development in Kuwait, announced in 1986 and overlooked in the scholarship on Gulf urbanism. SAASC is a coastal city with luxury housing and the inverse of Dubai's Palm Jumeirah: rather than artificial islands, it consists of a network of canals that extend seven kilometres inland. The paper provides a history of SAASC, examining its pivots and adaptations over time as the project shifted its goals, and critically analysing how the project has taken on the mantle of an 'ecosystem hero' that purports to nurture the natural environment.



Jihad Rosty Othman

PhD candidate in Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. His research interests include migration, refugee studies, mental health, and research methods.

Identifying the Factors Explaining Immigrant's Mental Health in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic Across Migration Stages

According to the WHO, world migration numbers have increased after the pandemic era; estimates are that 281 million people are or would be migrants after the pandemic. People move from across national boundaries, bringing change to both sending and receiving countries in terms of economic development, labour and population health. Despite extensive research on migrant wellbeing during settlement and integration, less attention has been paid to their mental health outcomes. Using data from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research-funded study entitled: *The Mental Health and Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples, Immigrants, Refugees, and Racialized Peoples in Canada, the USA, and Mexico*, my dissertation examines immigrants' mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic through different sociological perspectives, including life course theory, structuration and agency theory, and human capital theory. By employing quantitative methods, my study examines the different mental health outcomes for immigrants from age cohorts, socioeconomic statuses, genders, education levels, and occupational backgrounds when they relocate to Canadian communities.



Kamal Kassam

PhD student in Economics at the Humboldt University of Berlin and a researcher at the Institute for Employment Research in Nuremberg, Germany. His research interests focus on applied microeconomics, labour economics, and migration, with a particular emphasis on policy evaluation. He is currently working on a number of research projects that analyse the effects of mobility restrictions imposed on refugees, study the impact of refugees on the lives of local citizens, and research the impact of refugee flows on trade relations between countries.

The Effect of Refugees on Bilateral Trade Between Hosting Countries

This paper quantifies the economic impact of hosting Syrian refugees on bilateral trade between host countries and examines the potential channels through which this impact operates. It integrates data on Syrian refugees and migrants from the UN Refugee Agency with industry-level bilateral trade data from The CEPII Trade and Production Database across all manufacturing sectors. The empirical strategy is based on the structural gravity model estimated in a two-stages via the Poisson Pseudo Maximum Likelihood (PPML) estimator. The model accounts for multilateral resistance terms and isolates the contribution of refugees induced trade elasticity. Additionally, it relies on various heterogeneity analyses at the regional and sectoral level. The main findings focus on the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Europe (EU), as the main receiving countries for Syrian refugees as well as main trade partners with Syria before 2010. Preliminary results indicate that a 10\% increase in the Syrian refugee population among trading partners leads, on average, to a 0.3\% increase in bilateral trade. The effect of Syrian refugees is pronounced in the textile and food production sectors where it increased by approximately 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively, and it is mainly driven by Syrian refugees after 2011 rather than by the pre-existing Syrian diaspora.



Khaled Alosaimi

Researcher focusing on community-driven reconstruction and governance in post-conflict settings. He completed his PhD at Coventry University, UK, in 2025, and holds a master's degree in Monitoring and Evaluation from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden (2008). His research focuses on community empowerment, collective action, social cohesion, and governance in fragile contexts, with a particular emphasis on Yemen. His recent publication in the *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (2026) develops a grounded theory explaining how reconstruction activities can address sources of division and support recovery in conflict-affected communities.

From Victimhood to Agency: The Role of Displaced Yemeni Women in Cultural Transformation

Existing research on displacement often frames displaced women as vulnerable and dependent, with limited attention to how their skills and experiences contribute to social change in host communities. This study addresses this gap by examining how displaced Yemeni women recognize and apply their assets and how these processes shape cultural transformation. Drawing on qualitative data from Aden (urban) and Marib (rural), the study employs thematic analysis to explore women's lived experiences. The findings show that when displaced women recognize their own skills and capacities, they begin to challenge narratives of victimhood and actively engage in economic and social life. When these assets are applied and acknowledged by host communities, they contribute to service provision, social cohesion, and shifts in gender norms. The study argues that displaced women can act as agents of social change when their assets are both recognized and effectively utilized within supportive community contexts.



Khaled Sayed Ali

PhD researcher in Development Studies at School of Oriental and African Studies. His research examines the relationship between military rule and economic development through a comparative analysis of the Gamal Abdel Nasser and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi eras. He received his MA from SOAS in 2020 with a thesis on the expansion of Egypt's military economy since 2013, focusing on military investments in the housing and construction sectors. His research interests lie in the political economy of development and the role of military institutions in shaping state–economy relations in authoritarian contexts.

Economic Development Under Military Regimes: A Comparative Study of the Nasser and Sisi Eras in Egypt

This paper examines development trajectories in Egypt under military rule since 1952 and develops an analytical framework to understand the country's development crisis through the concept of Fettered Development. The study analyses the political, economic, and social dimensions of this crisis and shows how they have contributed to entrenched dependency and deepening inequality, while also highlighting their connections with regional and international contexts. It adopts a comparative approach, examining the development experiences during the eras of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954–1970) and Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (2014–present), with particular attention to the development models adopted by each regime and the ideological visions shaping the ruling elite's approach. The paper argues that development trajectories under military rule have produced a model of fettered development characterized by persistent dependency and inequality. While development policies during Nasser's era faced structural limitations, the neoliberal trajectory that intensified under Sisi has further institutionalized class disparities and reinforced Egypt's dependence on regional and Western economic and strategic orientations, prioritizing the consolidation of military rule over balanced and sustainable development.



Lama Karame

DPHil candidate in Socio-Legal Studies at the Faculty of Law at the University of Oxford. Her research examines the socio-legal construction of childhood through an ethnographic study of Lebanon's juvenile courts, focusing on the intersections of childhood with religion, class, and gender. She is a lawyer and researcher with experience in law, public policy, and human rights in Lebanon and the MENA region. She teaches Law and Justice Around the World at George Mason University in the United States and consults for several international organizations.

Poverty on Trial: Law, Welfare, and Childhood in Lebanon's Juvenile Courts

This paper explores how juvenile courts in Lebanon navigate child protection and juvenile delinquency cases amid the near-collapse of public welfare and social protection systems. It draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2021–2022, during what the World Bank described as one of the world's worst financial crises since the nineteenth century. Based on interviews with judges, analysis of court documents, and observations of over 200 hearings, the study explores how juvenile courts have become default sites for addressing social vulnerability, particularly poverty. It argues that gaps in social protection have produced an overreliance on the judiciary, a process I term the judicialization of welfare, whereby courts assume roles typically filled by welfare institutions. This shift individualizes structural problems, offering case-by-case remedies while leaving systemic inequalities unaddressed. At the same time, it contributes to the increased penalization of juveniles, particularly in poverty-related cases. While scholarship on welfare in Lebanon has largely focused on clientelism and sectarian governance, it has paid little attention to the role of the judiciary and its penal apparatus within this system.



Lamiaa Abed

MEXT Scholar and PhD researcher at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University, Japan. Drawing on her background in applied linguistics and pedagogy, she combines practical language expertise with macro-level research on education. Her current research explores the broader educational and developmental hurdles in developing and conflict-prone nations, with a focus on Syria. Abed holds a BA in English Literature and two master's degrees in Applied Linguistics and Translation & Interpreting from Damascus University.

Academic Mobility in Post-Conflict Syria: Examining Brain Drain, Push-Pull Dynamics, and Their Effects on Higher Education

This study examines the impact of academic mobility on higher education in post-conflict Syria, focusing on the dual dynamics of brain drain and brain gain. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines survey data from students, local academics, returnees, and diaspora with qualitative insights to assess changes in educational quality, research capacity, and institutional performance. The preliminary findings indicate that academic outmigration has negatively affected teaching quality, increased workloads, and reduced research productivity within Syrian institutions. At the same time, returnees and diaspora academics expressed their strong will to contribute to knowledge transfer, international collaboration, and capacity building, primarily through virtual engagement. Push factors such as political instability and limited resources drive mobility, while pull factors-including national belonging and the desire to contribute-encourage return and engagement. The study highlights that while international experience enhances academic capacity, its impact depends on institutional conditions, emphasizing the need for policies that facilitate sustainable academic collaboration and reconstruction.



Latifah Alrdaian

PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of Leeds, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, funded by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education. Since 2023, her doctoral research has examined the representation of Saudi women in American Literature, with particular attention to gender, agency and cultural discourse through feminist and postcolonial frameworks. Her master's research explored the breakdown of the tribal system in South Africa through *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton. She served as a Research Culture Intern from 2024 to 2025 and as a PGR representative from 2023 to 2024.

Between Reality and Fiction: Saudi Women in the Works of Jean Sasson and Zoe Ferraris

This paper compares the representation of Saudi women in American fiction and nonfiction published between 1990 and 2019 to trace shifts in portrayal over nearly three decades. While non-fiction texts often present themselves as testimonial and factual, fiction employs plot, characterization, and genre conventions to shape readers' perceptions. By analysing works that portray both royal and ordinary Saudi women, the study highlights how these distinct modes of writing influence the depiction of gender, agency, and constraint. Drawing on feminist and postcolonial theory, the research situates these representations within broader debates on Orientalism and narrative authority. It adopts a comparative methodological approach to evaluate patterns of continuity and change. By placing fiction and non-fiction in direct dialogue, this study identifies transformations in the literary construction of Saudi women over time.



Malika Salah

PhD candidate at SOAS, University of London. She has presented her work at the Love and War Conference in Northern Ireland, the Lebanese Institute for Studies in Cambridge, and at a conference on honour based abuse. Alongside with her academic work, Salah is working with a UK women's rights organization specializing in "honour" based abuse. Since 2018, she has independently travelled as a self-funded volunteer to refugee camps across the Mediterranean. These experiences continue to shape and inform both her research and her advocacy. Across her work, she engages with the question of coloniality.

What Does It Mean to Be Human? Coloniality and the Lived Experiences of Arab Muslim Women in Refugee Camps

This research examines the lived experiences of Arab Muslim refugee women in Lebanon through a foundational decolonial question: what does it mean to be human within a world structured by coloniality? Using a decolonial feminist view, it argues that refugee women's lives are shaped by co-constitutive systems of power through which coloniality governs humanity itself. Drawing on one-year ethnographic research conducted in refugee camps in Lebanon, the thesis develops the concept of the moral architecture of coloniality to explain how hierarchies of human worth are produced, legitimized, and reproduced through moral grammar logics. Empirically, the thesis traces these dynamics across humanitarian intervention, host-community relations, camp governance, and intimate life, showing how each layer reinforces the other and reproduces the figure of the racialized female Other. Rather than treating these systems of power as distinct, the research shows how they operate together to sustain domination as ethical, necessary, and ordinary.



Mamdouh Abdelkader

Research Economist at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and recently completed his PhD in Economics at the University of Ottawa (October 2025). His research focuses on environmental and energy economics, macroeconomics, and evidence-based public policy, with particular interest in innovation, industrial competitiveness, and the low-carbon transition. At Ottawa, he served as both Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant, contributing to work on renewable energy, climate policy, and monetary economics. He also worked as a Research Assistant at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he contributed to research on FDI, economic growth, and labour economics.

Fiscal Policy and the Transition to Renewable Energy: Empirical Evidence from US Industrial Electricity Generation

This paper examines which public policies can most effectively speed the shift from fossil fuels to renewable electricity. Using data on US states and electricity producers from 2000 to 2015, it compares three tools: taxes on fossil fuels, tax incentives for clean energy, and public support for energy research. The findings show that policies that change energy prices directly – by making fossil fuels more expensive or renewable power more affordable – have the strongest and fastest effect on increasing the use of renewables. Research support also matters, but its impact is smaller and takes longer to appear because innovation develops gradually. In settings where new carbon taxes are politically difficult, the results suggest that expanding clean energy tax incentives and redirecting research support away from fossil fuels toward renewables can still offer a practical and effective path for accelerating the energy transition.



Mohamed Zalalo

PhD Researcher at the University of Alicante in Spain. He is specializing in Arabic and Islamic Studies, with a particular focus on the history of the Moriscos and their expulsion from Spain. He has authored a paper titled "Visión de un viajero árabe en el siglo XVII sobre la expulsión", examining 17th-century Arab travelogues concerning the Morisco expulsion.

Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in Arabic and Spanish Sources: A Comparative Study

The expulsion of the Moriscos in the early seventeenth century (1609–1614) represents a major turning point in Spanish and Arab history. It marked the end of more than nine centuries of Muslim and Arab cultural, social, and religious presence in the Iberian Peninsula, spanning from 711 to 1614. This study compares representations of the expulsion in Arabic and Spanish sources. Contemporary Arab accounts are brief and fragmented, scattered across legal, literary, and historical texts, many of which remain in manuscript form, while others still await translation into Spanish or compilation into a single volume. By contrast, Spanish sources offer exhaustive detail. Authors like Jaime Bleda and Marcos de Guadalajara documented the process, causes, and consequences extensively. Because many of these writers were clergymen involved in evangelization, their perspectives are deeply influenced by the Spanish administrative and religious authorities of the time. These works have been widely studied and translated, creating a more robustly documented narrative in the West, in contrast with the scattered Arab testimonies. This study argues that a comprehensive understanding of the Morisco expulsion requires moving beyond the exclusive reliance on Spanish sources and integrating Arabic testimonies into the broader historiographical framework. The comparison between Arabic and Spanish narratives reveals not only differing interpretations of the same historical event but also the diverse cultural, political, and religious contexts in which these narratives were produced.



Mohamed Elgohari

Political Sociologist and Affiliate Faculty at George Mason University. His research examines how law and coercive institutions sustain authoritarian consolidation, with related work on AI governance, algorithmic control, and digital repression across MENA. He also analyses militant and extremist propaganda ecosystems. With more than 10 years in policy research, including at the Atlantic Council, Elgohari recently managed the University of Chicago's Project on Security and Threats, expanding primary-source archives and briefing US and European senior officials. He founded "Bulletin from the Shadows", and his writing appears in *Foreign Affairs* and *Arab Law Quarterly*.

From Legalism to Algorithmic Control: Law, AI, and the Reconfiguration of Authoritarian Governance in the MENA Region

This research examines how authoritarian regimes across the MENA region are re-engineering legal frameworks to accommodate emergent modalities of digital repression. I argue that, far from representing a decline of law under authoritarianism, the current moment reflects its transformation: law is being recalibrated to function as both the infrastructure and the justification for technologically mediated forms of authoritarian governance. This shift is not merely technical but profoundly juridical, as artificial intelligence (AI), executive decrees, and opaque regulatory mechanisms converge to reshape the legal landscape of the region.



Mohammad Al-Masaeid

Economist with a PhD in Economics from Flinders University, Australia. He holds master's and bachelor's degrees in Economics from Yarmouk University and Hashemite University in Jordan. His research focuses on issues in development, health, education, labour, applied economics, and economic policy in the MENA region. His current projects address household education, the labour market, the public–private wage gap, and the marriage market. His research has been published in journals such as *Applied Economics*, *Journal of Economic Studies*, and *Social Responsibility Journal*. He applies econometric and advanced data analysis using Stata, and work with micro and macro data, including cross-sectional, panel, and time-series analyses.

The Wage Gap Between Public and Private Workers in Jordan: The Role of Experience, Education, Location, and Gender

This paper analyses the wage gap between private and public sector workers in Jordan using labour market panel survey data. On average, private sector workers earn 10.7% less monthly wages than public sector workers. The private–public wage gap is largest for women, low-educated workers, and those who work outside Amman, while higher education and employment in Amman mitigate the private-sector wage gap. Private-sector experience reduces the wage gap more for highly educated workers, while the dynamic private-sector wage premium operates mainly for men, as women face lower wages and no additional return to private-sector experience. Using the Oaxaca–Blinder decomposition, we show that the public–private wage gap is driven by observable characteristics for men such as experience, occupation, location, and job stability, while most of the female wage gap remains unexplained, indicating the importance of unobserved factors in shaping women's private-sector wage disadvantage. The wage gap is not uniform across the wage distribution, and wage differentials are much higher at the bottom than at the middle and become a positive wage gap at the top of the wage distribution, especially for men.



Mohammad Hashem Krayem

PhD student in International Relations at Georgetown University. His research interests centre on international political economy, comparative political systems, and international law. Prior to joining Georgetown, he earned a Mathematics degree from the University of Munich (BSc) and a master's in public policy (MPP) from the Hertie School. His publications include "The Pound in the Post-Assad Era: Currency Stabilization in Syria", in *Syria after Assad* by the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS).

Liberalization and Economic Growth Under Conditions of Informality

Does financial liberalization promote economic growth unconditionally? This paper argues that the informal economy is a missing moderator in existing accounts of liberalization's developmental consequences. Using a two-way fixed effects panel estimator across 153 countries from 1990 to 2018, I find that the growth returns to financial openness decline systematically as informal economic activity becomes more pervasive. Financial liberalization is associated with positive growth outcomes among countries with low levels of informal output but with neutral or negative growth among those with widespread informality. This effect is more pronounced in countries with higher levels of public debt. The findings suggest that the heterogeneous growth effects of financial liberalization documented in the cross-country literature are a function of the structural pervasiveness of informality.



Mohammed Amer

Doctoral researcher in the Department of International Relations and a doctoral tutor in Global Studies at the University of Sussex. His work examines Islamic peacebuilding within Palestinian communities in Israel, focusing on grassroots initiatives addressing organized crime and gun violence, and contributing to debates on religion and peacebuilding, decolonial conflict resolution, and faith-based activism. Through ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, he explores how religious actors mobilize Islamic frameworks, community networks, and reconciliation to address internal violence and revive social values. He has also worked with the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in Washington DC.

Islamic Peacebuilding and Resistance: Ifsha Al-Salam's Approach to Confronting Organized Crime and Gun Violence in Palestinian Communities in Israel

This paper examines how the Ifsha al-Salam Committee responds to organized crime and gun violence within Palestinian communities inside Israel. Asking how the committee's interventions can be understood, the study analyses its approach through the lens of Islamic peacebuilding and indigenous community-based conflict resolution. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork – including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and engagement with community initiatives – the research explores how religious leaders and activists mobilize Islamic peace frameworks and practices such as *silm*, *Sulh*, and *islah* to address internal violence. The study situates these efforts within the broader political context shaped by structural marginalization, settler-colonial dynamics, and the crisis of organized crime affecting Palestinian society in Israel. It argues that the Ifsha al-Salam Committee represents a form of indigenous grassroots Islamic peacebuilding that combines moral authority, social cohesion, and community mobilization. By examining this case, the dissertation contributes to debates on religion and peacebuilding, decolonial approaches to conflict resolution, and non-state responses to violence in marginalized communities under the constraints of colonial violence.



Mortada Al-Amine

PhD candidate in Social Psychology at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research asks how people make sense of fairness and inequality. His research began with studies on collective action and political polarization during the 2019 Lebanese uprising and now extends to educational inequality in European societies. He holds degrees from the American University of Beirut and his work draws on both quantitative and qualitative methods across academic and applied research settings. His publications include a chapter in *The 2019 Lebanese Uprising: Voices from the Revolution* and a study on post-uprising political polarization in Lebanon.

When Meritocracy Challenges and Justifies Inequality: The Interplay Between the Dimension of Meritocratic Belief and Type of Inequality

Why does endorsing meritocracy sometimes motivate opposition to inequality and other times justify it? This paper argues that this reflects the fact that meritocratic beliefs are not unidimensional and whether they challenge or justify inequality depends on which kind of belief is endorsed and which type of inequality is evaluated. Across three studies (total N = 1,056, samples from Europe and the UK), the research distinguishes between descriptive meritocracy (the belief that society *does* reward merit) and prescriptive meritocracy (the belief that it *should*), examining how each relates to education-based versus ethnic-based inequalities. Descriptive meritocracy consistently predicted greater perceived fairness of both inequality types. Within prescriptive meritocracy, we identify three components: equal opportunity, desert, and anti-egalitarianism. These show divergent patterns: equal opportunity predicted lower perceived fairness across both inequality types, while desert selectively legitimized education-based but not ethnic-based inequalities. These findings demonstrate that meritocracy is not a unified ideology, helping explain why it can be invoked to both challenge and justify inequality.



Mostafa El Sharkawy

PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Michigan, specializing in Comparative Politics and Political Methodology. His research interests include religion and politics, Gulf politics, text-as-data, and statistical methods. He has a master's degree from the University of Michigan and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto. During his time in Canada, he worked as a researcher at the Canadian House of Commons and the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society.

Clerics and Contention in Kuwait

How do religious elites who hold official state positions navigate political expression? This paper argues that the apparent consensus of clerical apoliticism is largely a measurement problem. Using an original dataset of 235,000 tweets from 58 Kuwaiti clerics and a fine-tuned Arabic language model, this research documents systematic variation in clerical political speech between 2010 and 2024. Clerics are predominantly apolitical but increase political speech during contentious episodes. Regime-supportive messages are framed in religious language while regime-critical speech relies on secular and civil frames. Finally, clerics' personal social media diverges substantially from the state-written Friday sermon they are required to deliver, suggesting that institutional obligations shape but do not fully determine clerical political expression. These findings advance our understanding of how religious elites navigate the tension between their official roles and independent political voice in the Arab Gulf.



Mostafa Hetteh

PhD candidate in Political Science at York University in Toronto, Canada. His doctoral research investigates how state securitization of ethnic diversity produces a crisis of belonging and dignity among sub-national communities. Drawing on critical nationalism studies, feminist theory, and political sociology, his work explores the intersections of identity, citizenship, and state power. Hetteh has taught courses on politics, identity, migration, and intersectionality and has conducted research on international negotiations and Middle Eastern politics.

Institutionalizing Unequal Political Belonging: Dignity, Securitization, and Ethno-National Politics in Iran

This research examines how the Iranian state's governance of ethno-national diversity generates a persistent crisis of belonging. While state policies have long justified centralization and cultural homogenization in the name of sovereignty and national cohesion, this study argues that such policies obscure a deeper problem: the systematic denial of dignity to sub-national communities. Despite formal citizenship, many groups experience social, political, and economic marginalization. Focusing on ethnic communities, including more than 15 million Sunni citizens, the study reframes the so-called "ethnic question" in Iran as a struggle for dignity rather than merely a security concern. Drawing on theories of recognition and redistribution, it conceptualizes dignity as both a moral and material condition of justice. Using qualitative methods, including interviews, discourse analysis, and document review, the research explores how exclusion operates and how marginalized communities assert dignity through everyday practices and subtle forms of resistance.



Mounir Saifi

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow with a PhD in Humanities from the University of Madrid. He also holds an MA in Semitic Studies from Sorbonne University, Paris. His doctoral research was conducted within the EU-funded Horizon 2020 Innovative Training Network *Mediating Islam in the Digital Age (ITN-MIDA)*, a transnational and transdisciplinary program investigating the extent to which digitization and technological developments impact issues pertaining to Islam. He carried out his doctoral research at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). His current research explores media and digital knowledge production, with a focus on cultural memory and the politics of representation.

Toward an Engaged Counter-Orientalist Scholarship: Wikipedia and the Reproduction of Orientalist Epistemic Injustice

This paper examines how contemporary Orientalism is reproduced in digital knowledge platforms, with a particular focus on Wikipedia. Drawing on Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, it argues that dominant representations of Islam and Muslims privilege external, primarily "Western," epistemic authority while marginalizing alternative, local voices. Through critical discourse analysis of selected Wikipedia entries and their bibliographic references, the study demonstrates how Orientalist knowledge regimes persist through the uncritical circulation of inherited Orientalist assumptions and biases, as well as through narrative framing, citation, and editorial control. These mechanisms contribute to both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, limiting the capacity of Arab and Muslim subjects – and, more broadly, Global South epistemic actors – to participate in the production of knowledge about themselves. By tracing the continuity between classical Orientalist scholarship and its digital afterlives, the paper highlights the structural nature of Orientalist epistemic injustice. It concludes by advocating for an engaged counter-Orientalist scholarship aimed at fostering epistemic justice and reclaiming the right to self-representation in the digital age.

Muhammed Zeyn

PhD candidate in Migration Studies at COMPAS, University of Oxford. He holds master's degrees from Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul and the University of Oxford. His research focuses on the psychosocial impacts of displacement and digital media and the integration issues facing displaced communities and returnees.

Weaponized Exile and Reclaimed Citizenship: How Social Media Mediates Syrian Political Rights Across Displacement and Return

The late 2024 collapse of the Assad regime in Syria, after fifty-three years of authoritarian rule, created unprecedented conditions for voluntary return and identity reconstruction among fourteen million displaced Syrians. Drawing on digital ethnographic observation of Syrian social media discourse between December 2024 and October 2025, and an ongoing qualitative interview study with Syrian refugees in Türkiye and returnees in Syria, this paper examines how digital platforms mediate displacement, return, and transitional governance in the post-Assad period. It advances three arguments: that social media functions simultaneously as a site of identity reclamation, a channel for return decision-making, and an arena of civic accountability; that dignity, freedom, and national sovereignty, rather than material reconstruction, constitute the primary drivers of Syrian repatriation; and that online platforms are reshaping citizen–state relations in Syria's institutional vacuum. The findings challenge dominant humanitarian frameworks whilst foregrounding Arab-Islamic cultural values as indispensable analytical categories.



Nour Hariri

PhD researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy and History at University of Innsbruck. Her dissertation addresses the problem of mathematical a priori knowledge, focusing on the conditions under which objective knowledge is produced in Arab and Islamic contexts. Her research interests include philosophy of science and mathematics, philosophy of culture, political theory, and contemporary Arab thought. She has published several translations, most notably works by the American philosopher Judith Butler, including *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, *The Psychic Life of Power*, and *The Force of Nonviolence*. In addition to her translation work, Hariri has published research in philosophy and translation studies. Her recent publications include a book chapter titled "To Opt for the Bad Side," as well as the studies "The Future of Culture: Nature as the Center of the Imaginary of Reality" and "Arab Theater between the Evental and the Modern."

The Crisis of Science and the Question of Progress: "We", Modernity, and Pre- and Post-Modernity

This paper offers an epistemological critique of the concept of "progress" as established by the rationality of modernity, which has contributed to continuous dynamics of deconstruction, reconstruction, and shifts at the level of subjective representation, without producing logical antithesis. It examines the rise of contemporary currents such as postmodernism, theological leftism, and artificial intelligence as critical movements directed at the progressiveness of modernity, yet confined to the level of the very representation they seek to critique. The paper also addresses the critique of Orientalism and the idea of Decolonization and Deconstruction, in which colonialism and Western centrality are reduced to moral and political issues that overlook the epistemic structure of this critique. The analysis draws on historical epistemology and the philosophy of mathematics, emphasizing that critique gains legitimacy only insofar as it is disciplined by science. The paper argues that the concept of progress emerged from a reductive synthesis of algebra and geometry, producing the dominance of a formal-geometrical approach to knowledge and highlighting mathematics as the central point for understanding progress and scientific dialectics.



Pakinam Hassan

Assistant Professor in the Sustainable Architecture Program at the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST) and a Fellow of Advance HE in the UK. She holds BSc and MSc degrees in Architecture and Urban Design from Alexandria University and earned her PhD in Human Geography from the University of Birmingham in 2024. With around ten years of academic experience in Egypt and the UK, her work focuses on urban design and planning, particularly the relationship between human behaviour and the built environment. Her research also explores the empowerment of marginalized groups. She previously worked as a researcher and data analyst on the SEREDA project and served as a community research mentor in the Community Practitioner Research Programme.

Perceptions on Improving the Participatory Urban Planning in Alexandria, Egypt

In recent years, Egypt has experienced rapid urban development with minimal public involvement, leading to growing dissatisfaction on social media, where current projects have faced widespread criticism for ignoring community needs and weakening local identity. This study explores how residents could be meaningfully included in planning decisions and at which stages their engagement is most beneficial in Egypt, with Alexandria as a case study. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with experts and academics and quantitative surveys of residents. The results identify several challenges for participation, including time constraints, weak local governance, lack of trust, low public awareness, centralized decision-making, and social stereotypes. At the same time, the findings highlight opportunities for improvement, such as involving communities early and testing small-scale local projects. This study presents a participatory strategy suitable for all the process stages and concludes that successful participation depends on shared knowledge, an authentic process, and shared responsibility among stakeholders.



Radja Chinoun

PhD candidate in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development with a concentration in Higher Education at North Carolina State University. Her research focuses on Muslim students' experiences in US higher education, with particular attention to belonging, mattering, and campus climate within broader sociopolitical contexts. Drawing on critical quantitative approaches, her work explores how intersecting identities shape students' academic experiences and sense of inclusion. Chinoun's research contributes to ongoing conversations about equity, diversity, and religious inclusion in higher education.

Mapping Belonging: Muslim Students' Experiences of Belonging and Mattering in US Higher Education

This research examines how Muslim students in US higher education institutions experience belonging and mattering within contemporary sociopolitical contexts. Using survey and quantitative data, the study explores how identity, campus climate, and institutional environments shape students' academic experiences and sense of inclusion. The project highlights the ways Muslim students navigate religious identity, social belonging, and academic success in environments that are often shaped by broader political and cultural narratives. By examining these dynamics, the research contributes to ongoing discussions about equity, diversity, and the experiences of religious minorities in higher education. The study also offers insights for universities seeking to create more inclusive and supportive campus environments for diverse student populations.



Ramadan Alatrsh

PhD candidate in Comparative Political Theory in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. His research focuses on the theory of the state through a comparative analysis of Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and Hegel. He employs conceptual history (Begriffsgeschichte) and the Cambridge School methodology to examine political concepts as historically situated linguistic practices shaped by their discursive contexts. His work reconstructs the relationship between power, institution, and meaning in the formation of the modern state. He has participated in the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) and the ECPR General Conference. He is currently completing his dissertation titled: *The Origin, Concept, and Function of the State in Political Theory: A Comparative Study of Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and Hegel*.

The State as Domination, Institution, and Meaning: A Comparative Analysis of Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and Hegel

This paper analyses the concept of the state through a comparative reconstruction of its conceptual logic in the political thought of Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, and Hegel. It argues that the state is not merely a legal or institutional entity but a historically constituted conceptual structure emerging at the intersection of power, institutional organization, and normative meaning. The analysis is organized around three foundational moments: domination, institution, and meaning. Aristotle conceives the polis as a natural ethical community oriented toward the common good; Ibn Khaldun interprets the state through the dynamics of *'asabiyyah* and political domination; and Hegel understands the modern state as the actuality of the ethical idea, the institutional realization of objective freedom. Methodologically, the paper draws on conceptual history and the contextualist approach associated with Quentin Skinner to reconstruct the historical and linguistic contexts shaping these theories.



Safnaz Saad

Adjunct faculty in the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of Bamberg, where she teaches Arabic literature, creative writing, and literary translation. She is pursuing a PhD in Arabic Studies at Bamberg University (*Everyday Heroines: (Re)formation of Subjectivity and Kinship in al-Zayyat and Ashour*) and holds an MA in English and Comparative Literature from the American University in Cairo. Her research engages comparative literature, women's writing, and translation. Her publications include "Alienation à la Madeleine: The Migration Experience of a French Woman" (Bamberg Univ. Press) and "Becoming Samia: The (Hi-)Story of an Authentic Woman" (Tirant lo Blanch).

Rereading Kinship in the Modern Arabic Novel: Ethics of Coexistence

Although friendship is a recurring theme in Arabic literature, it has usually remained in the background of critical discussions, overshadowed by more conventional familial relationships. In Radwa Ashour's novel *Farag* (2008), friendship moves to the centre. The story reimagines it as a vital mode of connection – one that reaches beyond its traditionally secondary role. A Bildungsroman at its core, the novel follows Nada, a middle class translator of Franco-Egyptian heritage, as she navigates life in post-revolutionary Egypt. Following unfortunate incidents involving her friends, an encounter between Nada and her aunt becomes a turning point, opening the novel's quiet but insistent reflection on how kinship and non-blood relationships might be reconstructed for collective survival. Building on Haraway's idea of "making oddkin" from *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), this paper explores how Arabic fiction pictures new ways of "becoming-with" others – relations of care, solidarity, and shared vulnerability that emerge when traditional social structures falter.



Saifeddine Jemli

PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Ottawa. He holds a master's degree from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a bachelor's degree from the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) of Tunis. He is interested in the republican tradition of political thought and its recent neo-republican revival. His doctoral research is centred around the concept of "the people", its various interpretations, and normative implications in both contemporary republicanism and democratic theory, with a particular focus on the works of Hannah Arendt and Philip Pettit.

From Group Agency to Plural Agency: Republican Perspectives on Collective Agency Between Hannah Arendt and Philip Pettit

In *Republicanism*, Philip Pettit distinguishes his neo-republican project from the larger republican tradition and its earlier association with communitarian themes. He specifically criticizes what he calls the populist influence in Hannah Arendt's writings. In *On the People's Terms*, Pettit elaborates more on the role of the collective, suggesting that politics should be governed by a system of popular influence exercised through a system of democratic control. Although Pettit does not elaborate on his accusation against Arendt, it seems that he perceives her vision of a collective participatory practice of politics as leading to domination and a populist nature. This paper refutes Pettit's assessments of Arendt and argues that in order to achieve freedom as non-domination, neo-republicanism needs the insights present in Arendt's republicanism, especially when it comes to the collective practice of politics. It contends that the image of the collective presented in Pettit's *Group Agency* and *On the People's Terms* lacks a much-needed relational phenomenological aspect present in Arendt's account of agency, for both the individual and the collective, as presented in *The Human Condition* and the *Origins of Totalitarianism*. The argument aims to reconcile the two distinct but appealing conceptions of good life presented by Philip Pettit and Hannah Arendt within the larger republican tradition.



Sara Badran

PhD student in Digital Humanities at the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on racial and colonial biases in Generative Artificial Intelligence models, having previously worked with GPT-4o, Gemini 2.0 and DALL-E 3. She has a range of publications, including book chapters, journals, and research blogs centred on AI bias, labour markets, higher education, technological neutrality, and challenges surrounding facial recognition systems. She is a member of the Centre for Governance and Human Rights Student Group where she has worked on projects surrounding algorithmic bias and resistance.

Dispossessed Body Data: Colonial Dispossession of Body Data through Self-Tracking Wearables

Self-tracking practices that metrically quantify body data to measure progress are not new. Recent technological developments, particularly self-tracking wearables, have intensified the process of body data extraction and body exploitation through colonial logics of dispossession. This paper argues that colonial logics of dispossession, particularly accumulation by dispossession, render the human body a passive site of extraction, where the human acts as the sensor to serve technology, through wearables, to benefit capitalist actors who own, remediate, and profit from user body data. The research proposes three main focal points to this study, the first of which being hyperconnectivity and the "pleasure" of being connected, which convince users to willingly adopt wearables. This perspective is then considered within the transfer of ownership of body data and the subsequent (dis)embodiment through wearables, particularly through end-user licence agreements (EULAs) and the consideration of wearables within social norms. Lastly, the paper discusses these issues with relation to the "technological body" where the user becomes subjected to their body data, as illustrated through the examples of Vitality's "shared-value" insurance policy and the "ZOE" gut-health tracking application. These illustrations explore the capitalization and convergence of hyperconnectivity, privatization and the 'technological body' onto the human body.



Sarah Hasbini

Doctoral candidate in the Department of Politics at York University. Her dissertation examines gender regimes, state capacity, and mechanisms to curb violence against women in Lebanon, with a focus on how institutional fragility and elite mediation shape gender governance. Her broader research engages questions of state violence, governance, and the datafication of the body. Hasbini's forthcoming work includes *Datafied Bodies: The Intersection of Technology, Gender, and Healthcare in a Post-humanist Era* (Concordia University Press) (2026) and *Digital Exclusion, Sextech, and Human Rights: Rethinking Bill C-36's Impact on Sex Workers in Canada* (Palgrave Macmillan) (2026).

Fragmented Statehood and the Gender Regime: Civil Society and Violence Against Women in Lebanon

This paper examines why violence against women (VAW) persists in contexts where both state institutions and civil society are active, focusing on Lebanon as a critical case. While existing scholarship emphasizes the role of state capacity and autonomous women's movements, the paper argues that in fragile settings, responses to VAW are shaped by an elite-driven model of feminism that prioritizes service provision over structural transformation. Although NGOs provide essential protection and advocacy, their proximity to political elites and reliance on international funding constrain their ability to challenge entrenched patriarchal and sectarian systems. Drawing on feminist institutionalism and political economy, the paper shows how state fragility reconfigures gender governance by embedding feminist action within existing power structures. The research is based on original fieldwork, including interviews with civil society actors and analysis of legal and policy frameworks. It demonstrates that elite mediation enables service delivery while simultaneously limiting transformative change, offering a new framework for understanding the persistence of VAW in fragile contexts.



Shadi Rohana

A literary translator between Arabic and Spanish and full-time faculty member at the Center for Asian and African Studies at El Colegio de México (Mexico City), where he teaches Arabic language, modern Arab literature in Spanish translation, and literary translation. From Spanish into Arabic, he has translated the novel *Battles in the Desert* by José Emilio Pacheco (Akka, 2016) and *Becoming Palestine* by Lina Meruane (Cairo, 2020), and from Arabic into Spanish *Contra el apagón. Voces de Gaza durante el genocidio* (Mexico City, 2024). His research examines interactions between Arabic and Spanish across different historical periods, and he has published academic articles in Spanish and English. His current doctoral project at the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico, titled *Cervantes and the Arabs*, explores Miguel de Cervantes' relationship with Arabic language in his time and in its modern translations.

Cervantes and the Arabs: al-Andalus in *Don Quixote* and Its Translations into Arabic

Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* evokes special attention from the contemporary Arab reader, as it portrays al-Andalus, which is one of the most significant chapters of Arab-Islamic history. Although the first part was published more than a century after the fall of Granada, the novel revives this legacy through language, characters, geography, and a multiplicity of narrative voices. This presence is particularly evident in the figure of Cide Hamete Benengeli, the presumed Arab author, who lends the work a complex interpretive dimension. This element has contributed to the novel's incorporation into Arabic translation traditions and has raised questions about the place of Arabs and their culture within what is often termed "world literature". This paper addresses this problem, examining how this Arab-Islamic presence has been rendered in modern Arabic translations by tracing their history since the nineteenth century and analysing translators' strategies in dealing with its linguistic and cultural dimensions.



Soha Almehmadi

PhD researcher at the Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham and a Lecturer in Public Health Department at the Saudi Electronic University in Saudi Arabia. Her research examines how Arab carers in the UK navigate caregiving across the intersections of culture, migration, and social policy. Her work focuses on caregiving, health inequalities, and culturally responsive care, with an emphasis on amplifying Arab voices in research and policy. She has contributed to research on caregiving in Saudi society and previously served as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador at the University of Birmingham.

The Lived Experiences of Arab British Carers Between Home and Heritage: Rethinking Caregiving Theory in an Ethnically Minoritized Context

This study explores the lived experiences of Arab British carers in the West Midlands, UK, focusing on how they navigate unpaid caregiving and access formal support services. It also examines how caregiving experiences are shaped by intersecting identities such as gender, religion, and ethnicity. Despite their important role, carers from ethnic minoritized communities remain under-represented in research and often face barriers to accessing support, partly due to policies shaped around majority cultural norms. Arab carers in particular have received limited attention in the UK context. The study adopts a qualitative, intersectional approach, drawing on theories of stigma, culture, and gender. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with carers and key stakeholders, and analysed using thematic analysis. Supported by a systematic review of existing literature, the study identifies key research gaps. By centring Arab carers' voices, the findings contribute to more inclusive, culturally responsive policies and practices in caregiving support.



Sultan Al Bimani

Omani diplomat and academic researcher specializing in soft power, cultural diplomacy, cultural heritage, and tourism. He works at the Foreign Ministry of Oman and previously served as a diplomat at the Embassy of Oman in Berlin. He holds a PhD from the University of the Balearic Islands in Spain and a master's degree from Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom. He is the author of the book *"Cultural Heritage as a Tool of Soft Power: The Case of Oman"*. His notable research includes: *"Cultural Heritage as an effective tool for countries to strive for soft power"* and *"Opportunities and Challenges for Oman's Soft Power: Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism"*.

Soft Diplomacy Tools in the Sultanate of Oman: A Theoretical Perspective and Cultural Applications

This paper examines the role of cultural heritage and cultural institutions in the Oman as effective tools of soft diplomacy within the broader framework of soft power in international relations. It distinguishes between soft power as a state's ability to attract and persuade and soft diplomacy as the practical use of cultural and heritage resources to advance foreign policy goals and enhance a country's international image. The study analyses key initiatives such as the ship Shabab Oman II, which serves as a floating ambassador for the Sultanate, the Royal Opera House Muscat, as well as forts, museums, and traditional souqs that reinforce national identity and promote cultural tourism. It also highlights other tools of Omani soft diplomacy including cuisine, heritage tourism, traditional festivals, and elements inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage lists, while discussing challenges related to globalization, the commodification of culture, and balancing heritage preservation with development.



Youssef Sharaf

PhD fellow in Political Science at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and Assistant Lecturer at Cairo University. His research investigates the recomposition of Egypt's politico-administrative elites and the politics of neoliberal reform in the 1990s and 2000s. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, he analyses how ministers' entourages, senior bureaucrats, and internationalized reform-oriented ruling party networks interacted in reconfiguring state authority during the economic liberalization era. His recent article in *Critique Internationale* explores the role of international expertise and bureaucratic actors in shaping education reform in Egypt, contributing to broader debates on state transformation in the Middle East.

A State of Two Speeds: Administrative Elite Recomposition in Mubarak's Reform-Era Egypt, 1990s-2000s

This paper investigates the recomposition of Egypt's administrative elite during the neoliberal reform era initiated by the 1991 structural adjustment program. Moving beyond narratives centred on crony capitalism; it argues that economic liberalization reshaped the state from within rather than simply weakening it. Reform unfolded through a process of institutional layering, marked by the emergence of donor-backed techno-managerial enclaves at the apex of key ministries. Staffed by Western-trained economists and directly connected to powerful ministers, these "technical offices" functioned as incubators of a new internationally connected elite while bypassing traditional administrative hierarchies. Rather than supplanting the existing bureaucracy, however, these enclaves coexisted with senior officials who adapted to the new order and repositioned themselves as intermediaries linking donors, state, and business elites. The result was a fragmented yet functional hybrid state architecture – one that initially bolstered regime's external credibility while gradually generating internal tensions revealed during the 2011 uprising.

Discussants



Abdel-Fattah Mady

Editor-in-Chief of *Hikama: A Journal of Public Policy and Administration* published by the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and the ACRPS. He served as Professor of Political Science at Alexandria University and as a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. He has also held appointments with UNDP, the University of Denver, and the Cordoba Peace Institute. Mady has authored, edited, and co-edited many volumes, including *Egypt's New Authoritarian Republic* (with Robert Springborg, 2025). His research focuses on regime transitions and civil-military relations. He earned his PhD from Claremont Graduate University, California in 2005.



Abdelkarim Amengay

Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He holds a joint PhD in Political Science from Sciences Po Paris and the University of Ottawa. His research focuses on political behaviour, particularly populism, trust, protest, and elections in the Arab world. He has published in international and Arabic-language peer-reviewed journals and contributed to several edited volumes. He is also principal investigator of a research project on protest in non-democratic regimes funded by the Qatar National Research Fund. His recent publications include "The Arab State Through the Eyes of Its Citizens: An Individual-Level Analysis", published in *Siyasat Arabiya*.



Abderrahim Benhadda

Researcher and professor at the Royal Documents Directorate; Editor-in-Chief of *Ostour Journal for Historical Studies*; and former Dean of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and of the Faculty of Arts at Mohammed V University in Rabat. His research concerns Turkish and Moroccan historiographies. His recent publications include *Ottoman Historiographies, 1860–1973*; "The State of Historical Writing in Morocco, 1956–2022"; *On the Sanctification of the Individual in Turkish Culture: From Genghis Khan to Erdoğan*. Forthcoming works include *The Alienated Language: Arabic in the Ottoman-Turkish Sphere*, *The Conquest of Constantinople between History and Memory*, and *Transformations in the Teaching of History at Moroccan Universities*. He has previously published studies on Ottoman and Moroccan travel literature and is currently involved in developing the *Dictionary of Moroccan History*, writing an autobiography, and preparing the second part of *Ottoman Historiographies, (1973-2000)*.



Abdullah Majeed

Political and historical anthropologist and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. His research and teaching focuses on global imperial entanglements, futurity, citizenship, sovereignty, and everyday practices of communal life-making in the aftermath of catastrophic violence. His current book project *Zones of Excess* is an ethnographic monograph with Iraqi exiles that examines the ways through which imperial and authoritarian hauntings inform practices of community making that articulate alternative sovereign-modes of occupying the world. Prior to joining the Doha Institute, he was a Graduate Fellow in Ethnographic Writing with the Centre for Ethnography at the University of Toronto-Scarborough and a Digital Editorial Fellow with PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Online. His work has previously appeared in *Economic Anthropology*, *Allegra Lab*, *Political and Legal Anthropology Online*, and *Jadaliyya*, among other platforms in English and Arabic.



Ali Alsayegh

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Journals Published by ACRPS and the Doha Institute

	<i>Omran</i> is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies since summer 2012. Its name draws inspiration from Ibn Khaldun's concept of al-umran. The journal addresses issues in the Arab social sciences and humanities and seeks to contribute to the development of their methodologies and the examination of their key intellectual and research challenges.	
	<i>Tabayyun</i> is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies since autumn 2012. It specializes in philosophical studies and critical theory and embraces questioning, critique, review, deconstruction, and intellectual transcendence as foundations of the research process.	
	<i>Siyasat Arabiya</i> is a peer-reviewed journal published every two months by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Its first issue appeared in March 2013. The journal publishes studies and research in political science, international relations, comparative politics, and institutional systems. It also covers public policy, political systems and behaviour, civil society trends, and political and social participation.	
	<i>Ostour</i> is a peer-reviewed biannual journal published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies since January 2015. It specializes in historical studies and seeks to establish a renewed Arab historiography that engages with previous Arab scholarly achievements while developing and advancing them.	
	<i>Hikama</i> is a peer-reviewed academic journal published three times a year by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. It specializes in public administration and public policy, including governance, public policy formulation and implementation, and the management of state institutions and third-sector organizations. The journal addresses researchers, public officials, policymakers, and professionals working in civil society organizations.	
	<i>Al-Muntaqa</i> is a peer-reviewed academic journal published in English every four months by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. It offers new perspectives on Arab studies by publishing selected research in the social sciences and humanities. The journal aims to make Arab scholarly production accessible to researchers who do not read Arabic.	



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Encyclopedia Arabica

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Beyond serving readers directly, Arabica will contribute to the wider Arabic digital knowledge ecosystem. By making high-quality, well-sourced Arabic content available online, it can also serve as a reliable source for search engines and for artificial intelligence systems whose effectiveness in Arabic depends on the availability of accurate and reliable Arabic language information online.



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