

Ijtihad Journal in Its Third Year

Consolidating the Project and Broadening Its Horizons¹

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In its third year, the Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies in Europe continues its scholarly journey, committed to developing its research project and expanding its academic reach within Europe and the Arab and Islamic worlds. During the first two years of the journal, only two issues were published each year in Arabic and English. In the third year, we are publishing

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three issues, which reflects the growth of the journal and the expanding community of researchers and readers.

The fifth issue was published in June last year, while the sixth issue is scheduled for publication in October this year. The seventh issue, which will be published in English, is expected to appear in December.

Our experience with the previous English-language issue highlighted the importance of gradually expanding the journal's linguistic scope to include European languages, particularly English and French, in line with its academic profile and European context. This approach is also expected to broaden the journal's reach and attract new audiences, including researchers and others interested in Islamic and Arabic studies in the Western world.

In this context, Ijtihad Journal seeks to make academic rigour, intellectual openness, and service to the research community the cornerstones of its mission. These commitments are reflected in three key dimensions of its work, as outlined below.

Firstly, it is imperative to ensure academic rigour in the evaluation of research and studies. The journal employs an exacting process for the evaluation of articles and reviews. This process commences with preliminary reading and internal review, subsequently followed by a double-blind peer review. Following this, the article undergoes a revision by the author in response to the comments provided by the reviewers and the editorial board. The next stages involve linguistic and methodological editing, culminating in a final review by the Editor-in-Chief. The acceptance of an article by the reviewers does not necessarily imply that it will progress to the final acceptance stage; this depends on the extent to which the author addresses the scientific and methodological comments and adheres to the journal's standards. Consequently, on more than one occasion, the journal has been compelled to reject articles at the final review stage—even after they had passed the peer-review stage—because the authors failed to make the required revisions or did not meet the established standards.

Secondly, the journal places particular emphasis on the European and Western context within which this research is conducted. Consequently, it gives priority to studies related to Islam in Europe and the West, as well as Orientalism, Arabic Studies, and Islamology, while remaining clearly open to

topics from other fields of knowledge, such as religion, sociology, philosophy, ethics, politics, and culture. Notwithstanding the journal's recent inception, it has begun to occupy a notable position in the field of Islamic studies in Europe and the West, as evidenced by the growing presence of some of its articles and reviews in researchers' works and scholarly citations.

Thirdly, the objective is to contribute to the development of junior researchers and students in Europe and the Arab and Islamic world. The journal's function extends beyond mere acceptance and publication of research; rather, it aspires to fulfil a guiding and methodological role through the feedback provided during the preliminary review, the referees' reports, and the guidance that researchers receive, allowing them to refine their manuscripts and enhance their scholarly and methodological standards. A number of researchers have reported positive benefits of this process, citing the acquisition of skills in academic writing, formulation of research questions, documentation of sources, and enhancement of methodology and analysis.

The sixth issue of Ijtihad Journal can be considered to align with the overarching vision of the publication, a goal which has already begun to be realised within a relatively brief period of no more than three years. It is with considerable satisfaction that a new building block is added to the project through the publication of the present issue. This includes five peer-reviewed studies, an editorial, two reviews, and a translation, in addition to news from the Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training in Belgium, updates on recent publications related to Islam in Europe and the West, as well as a variety of religious, intellectual, philosophical, and social topics.

The first study, conducted by Dr. Abdallah Laassiri, is entitled "From Integration to Belonging: A Relational Framework for Analyzing Membership in the Spanish Immigrant Community." The concept of "mutual belonging" is proposed as an analytical alternative that shifts the focus from the adaptation of the individual immigrant to the relationships, norms, and institutions that produce membership and recognition. The present study employs the Spanish context as its field of application, focusing on individuals of Moroccan origin and Muslims as two partially overlapping groups, without assuming a

correlation between national origin and religious affiliation. The proposed framework is predicated on five dimensions: equal recognition, meaningful participation, institutional justice, the symbolic stability of membership, and the society's capacity for transformation. Within the limits of the evidence examined, the study concludes by characterizing Spain as a "transitional immigrant society," in which legal and policy frameworks are advancing at a clearer pace than the levels of institutional, social, and symbolic membership that the evidence allows us to demonstrate.

The second study, by Dr. Mohammed Karrouk Kerkich, is titled: "Arab Feminist Movements in Diaspora: Religion, Migration, Gender and Integration: An Analytical Sociological Approach." The text discusses some of the social issues arising from migration in relation to religion and gender, with a focus on Arab women's movements in Western contexts. The study sets out to examine the roles played by these movements in responding to the challenges of integration, and in analyzing the intertwined relationship between religion, migration and gender within changing economic, cultural and political contexts.

The third study, by Dr. Aziz Baazi, examines "Mahdi Elmandjra and the Critique of the World System: Postcolonialism and Cultural Pluralism." The text presents an analysis of Elmandjra's perspective on the concept of postcolonialism, interpreting it as a novel form of hegemony that transcends the confines of traditional colonialism, thereby encompassing cultural, economic, and political dimensions. The text also provides a review of the three stages that Elmandjra identifies in contemporary history: direct colonialism, neocolonialism and postcolonialism. The study focuses on Africa's position within the global system and on the manifestations of structural dependency that persisted after independence, before presenting the alternatives proposed by Elmandjra, foremost among which are self-reliance, South-South cooperation, a renewed emphasis on local languages and cultures, and cultural pluralism and interaction.

The fourth study, conducted by Dr. Asmae Keji, concerns the theme "Reversal in Creation in the Holy Qur'an: The Implications of the Text in Light of Medical Sciences." The objective of this study is to provide an interpretation of the verse in question. It is evident that a correlation exists between the

duration of existence and the degree of reversion in creation, a notion that is often overlooked. This assertion is supported by scientific evidence derived from both descriptive and analytical methodologies, as outlined in medical literature (Yasin: 68). The study examines the Qur'anic and lexical implications of the concept of regression, as well as the manifestations of natural aging that affect the human body with advancing age, including changes in hair, skin, and the musculoskeletal system. The conclusion is that the correlation between advancing age and regression in creation is substantiated by specific contemporary medical findings and research.

The fifth study, conducted by Dr Ahmed El Farrak, examines the relationship between violence and nonviolence, exploring its historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and future prospects. It approaches violence as a phenomenon shaped by the interplay of political, anthropological, and historical factors, while challenging the deterministic association between violence and religion. Drawing on early Islamic history and modern colonial policies, the study critically examines the historical and political contexts in which violence emerges. It conceptualizes violence as a form of "political emergency" arising from the absence of effective contractual mechanisms and constitutional crises. The study further argues that divine revelations, in their normative orientation, are consistent with the values of human dignity and nonviolence. It also challenges particular forms of condescension and double standards, calling for an alternative paradigm grounded in peaceful coexistence, moral consciousness, and democratic participation.

In addition to the in-depth studies, this issue features two reviews. The first, it is a critical review prepared by Dr Mohamed Halfaoui, examines Margoliouth's study of the poetry collection *Sibt Ibn al-Ta'awdzi*. The second is a review of Dr Mohamed Bouchikhi's book, *Deconstructing Salafism: Its Transformations and Shifts from Scholars' Circles to Battlefields*, prepared by the journal's editorial board.

In the "Translations" section, the journal's Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Tijani BOULAOUALI, presents an Arabic translation of "An Introduction to the Qur'an," an article by the German Orientalist Gustav Weil, based on the English version translated from German by Frank K. Sanders and Harry W.

Dunning. The translator goes beyond simply rendering the article into Arabic, accompanying it with an in-depth critical review.

To conclude, the editorial committee wishes to express its sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the researchers who have placed their trust in Ijtihad Journal and whose valuable contributions have enriched this issue. The committee also extends its thanks to the reviewers and experts who generously devoted their time and expertise to carefully reading and evaluating the submitted manuscripts.

Special appreciation is also due to the members of the editorial board and the scientific, advisory, technical, and administrative committees, whose dedication and contributions have played an essential role in bringing this issue to publication and advancing the journal's mission and aspirations.

Ghent – Belgium, October 17, 2026