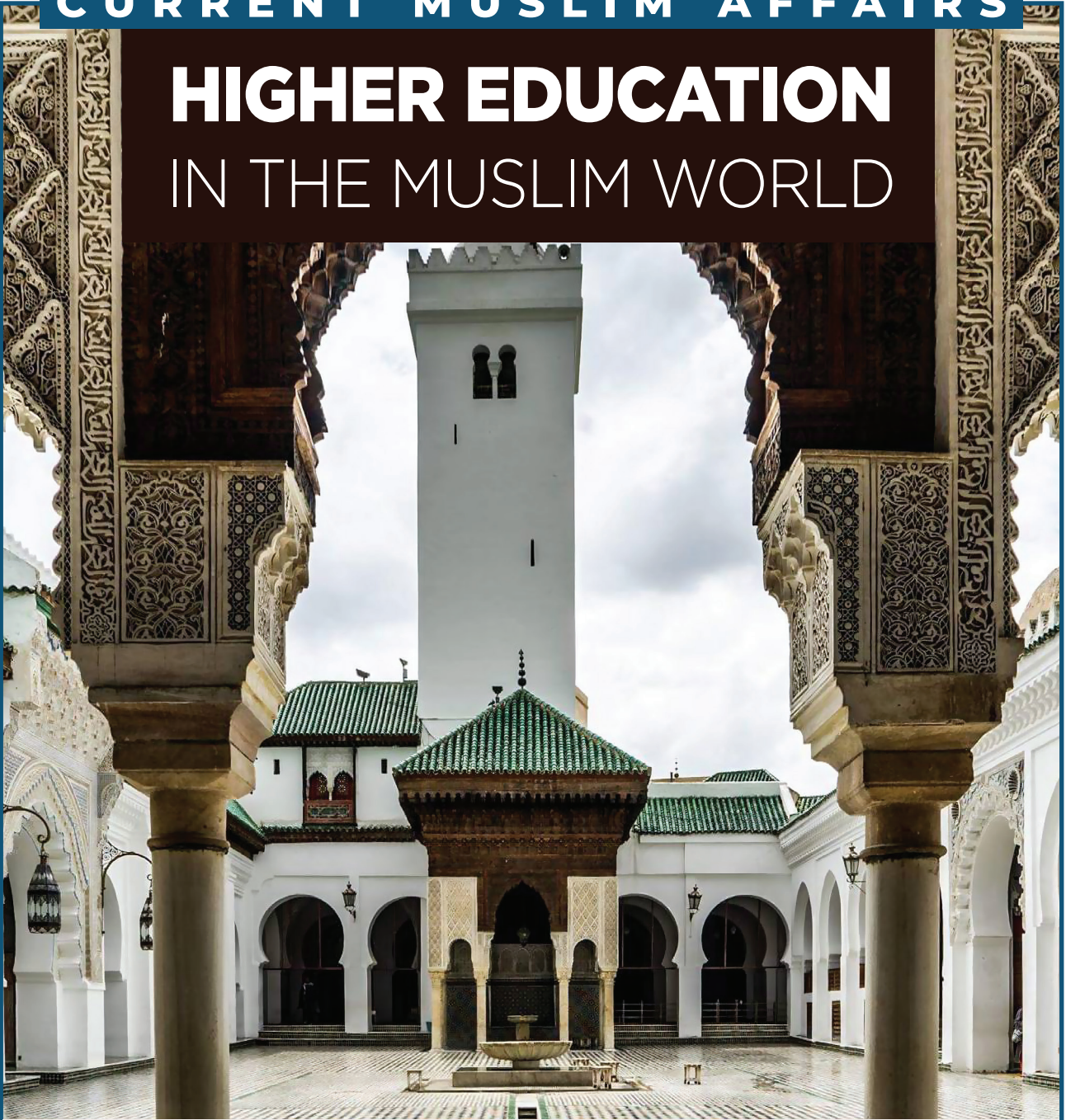


THE PLATFORM

CURRENT MUSLIM AFFAIRS

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD



ANALYSIS

**Higher Education,
Scientific Production
and R&D in Islamic
Countries**

Nihat Erdoğan

INTERVIEW

**“The sort of epistemic
violence academics and
activists have experienced
since October 7 already
existed before.”**

Samer Abdelnour

INFOGRAPHIC

**Higher Education
Data at a Glance**

ANALYSIS

**Fear, Politics and
Students in Kashmir**

Ilymon Majid

Research Centre for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM) was founded to realize the goal of a just, equitable, and prosperous society. In addition to contributing to social thought, it aims to propose practicable solutions to contemporary social challenges. We aim to witness the different dimensions of social change based on knowledge and to bring solutions to social problems on the axis of common values and benefits. The activities we carry out at TODAM are based on a realistic understanding and constructive approach to current social issues from the lens of social sciences. In this way, we act as a bridge between researchers, decision-makers, and civil society and advance the possibility of producing independent knowledge about our social world.

PLATFORM

Platform magazine is published within the body of TODAM of the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural agendas of Muslim societies. Platform is an output of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project. It aims to be a platform where the affairs of the Muslim world are followed and analyzed through the activities of influential think tanks, research centers and institutes, universities, and political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and the ongoing intellectual accumulation are presented to Turkey and the world through Platform magazine. It keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world through its website and its database of current institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

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Editor's Note

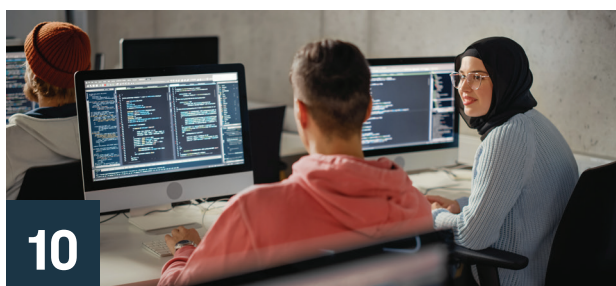
Higher education institutions play a crucial role in shaping the worldview of societies, guiding their cultural accumulation, and fostering scientific production and technical skills. Therefore, higher education is a crucial factor in the development and prosperity of a society. Issue 31 of the Platform focuses on higher education in the Muslim world.

Nihat Erdođmuş presents his findings on scientific productivity in Islamic countries, shedding light on the outlook of higher education in the region. Brain drain and international education are critical aspects of the higher education issue. Gökhan Kavak examines why a significant portion of African youth prefer to study abroad in his article "Brain Drain in Africa." Hacer Atabaş discusses the progress of internationalization in higher education in Turkey in her article on international student mobility. Muhammed Karayađlı delves into the Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) system, which criticizes the Western-centric nature of international law and institutions. On the other hand, digitalization in education is one of the prominent realities of today's world. In his article, Maan Habib explores the opportunities and challenges of digitalization in higher education in conflict-affected societies, while Aisha Ammar Almansuri discusses the digitalization of higher education in Libya.

In the "Current" section, our focus is again on Palestine. Hakkı Hakan Erkiner evaluates the outcomes of the genocide case opened against Israel in the International Court of Justice.

We hope this issue, which addresses higher education in the Muslim world, will benefit our readers.

THEME: HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD



10

Higher Education, Scientific Production and R&D in Islamic Countries

Nihat Erdoğan

Brain Drain in Africa

Gökhan Kavak



18



22

The National Motivations and Global Consequences of International Education and the Turkish Context

Hacer Atabaş

What if the Teaching of International Law is Itself Colonialist?

Muhammed Karayağlı



26



Interview with Samer Abdelnour, Co-founder of Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network

30

Shattering Boundaries: Enabling Female Empowerment in Higher Education across Muslim Communities

Abdulgaffar Olawale Fahm



32



36

Digitalization of Higher Education in Conflict-affected Societies

Maan Habib

E-learning in the Libyan Higher Education

Aisha Ammar Almansuri



40



43

Fear, Politics and Students in Kashmir

Ilymon Majid

Interview with Mahsuk Yamac, Dean of Graduate Studies at Zaytuna College



46

Interview with International Students in Istanbul



49



55

Evaluating the International Legal System through the Case of Israel at the ICJ

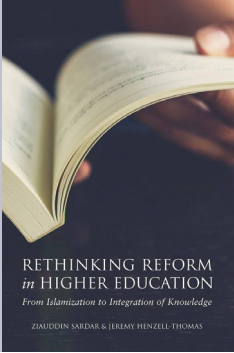
Hakkı Hakan Erkiner

Israel on Trial at the International Court of Justice: Legal and Political Implications

İLKE Agenda



58



62

RETHINKING REFORM
in HIGHER EDUCATION
From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge
ZAUDDIN SAIDUR & JEREMY HENZELL THOMAS

Book Review: Rethinking Reform in Higher Education

Ayşenur Höcük

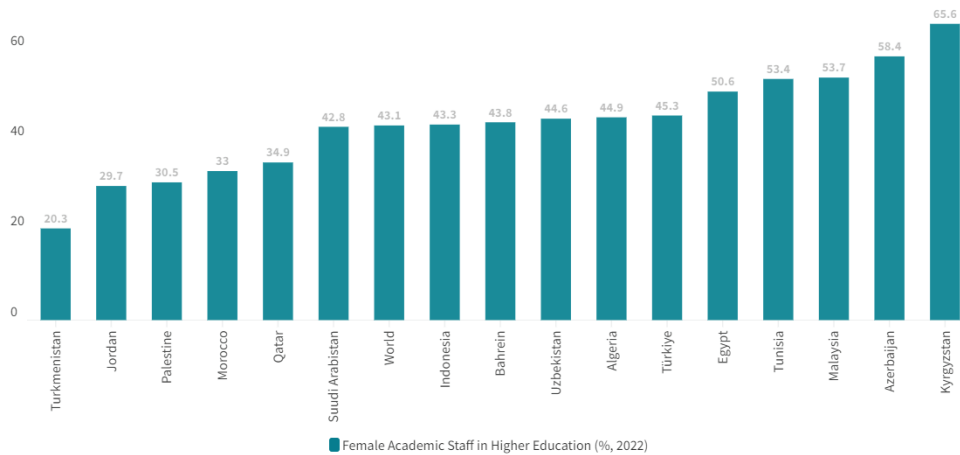


BOOKS

66

HIGHER EDUCATION DATA AT A GLANCE

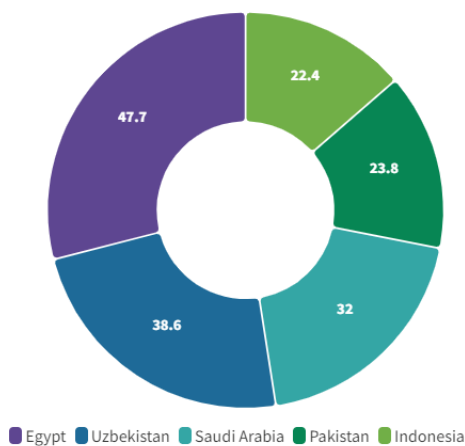
Figure 1. Female Academic Staff in Higher Education, By Country (2022)



Source: Our World in Data

Although Saudi Arabia and Qatar rank high in university rankings, it is noteworthy that they remain below the world average in terms of female academic staff in higher education. Efforts to internationalize universities in Saudi Arabia and Qatar should be supported regarding the quality and quantity of female academic staff. Contrary to expectations, the high number of female academic staff in Kyrgyzstan leads us to break some taboos in our minds.

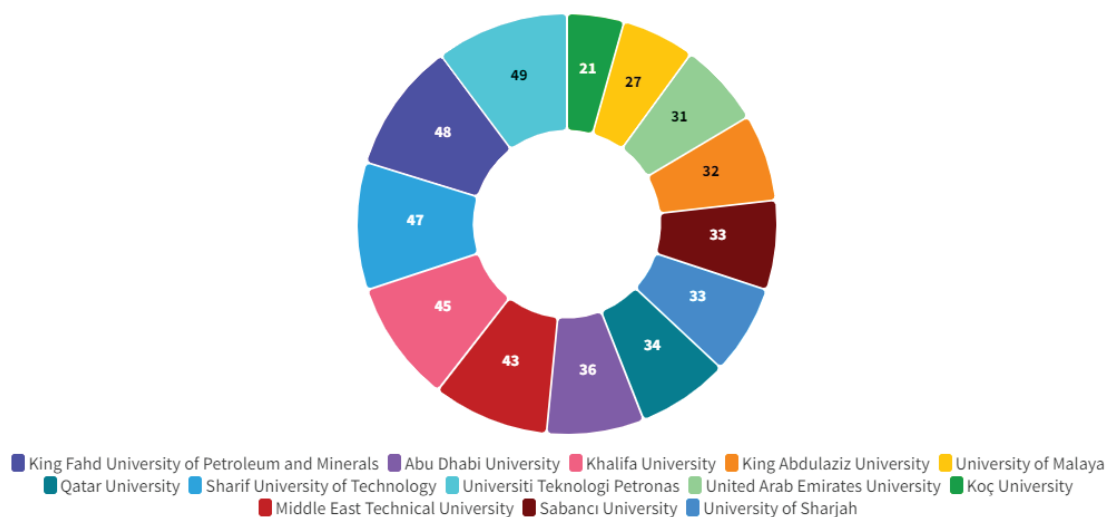
Figure 2. The Proportion of Research Funding for ISR, By Country (2023)



According to a report published by Times Higher Education and Schmidt Science Fellows in 2023, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Indonesia universities are among the top 10 in budget allocation for interdisciplinary research. This indicates that these countries are shifting their focus from single-discipline approaches to more interdisciplinary ones. Thus, it reveals a transformation in the understanding of knowledge within Muslim societies.

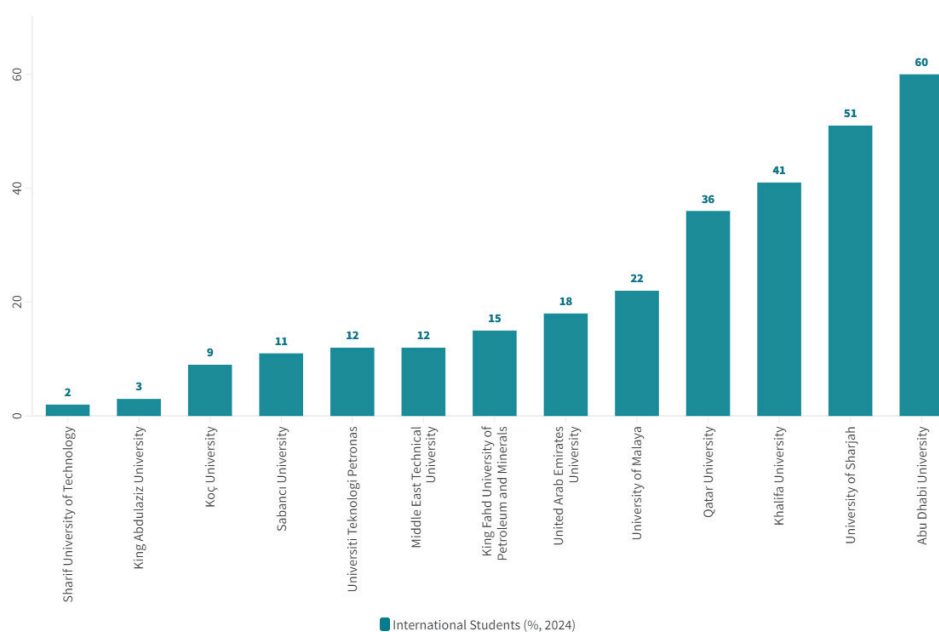
Source: Times Higher Education and Schmidt Science Fellows (2023), Product Development Report: Interdisciplinary Science Rankings

Figure 3. The ISR Publication Rate of Universities in the Top 400 in the World Rankings



When universities in the top 400 are examined in terms of their Interdisciplinary Science Rankings (ISR) publication rates, universities that predominantly focus on technology and natural sciences stand out. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach emerges as a popular and sought-after approach, particularly in the field of natural sciences.

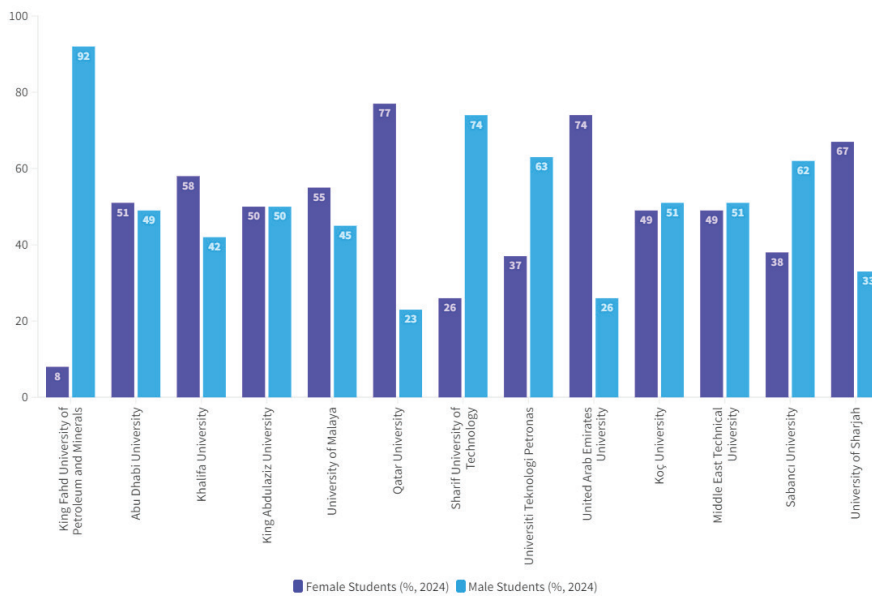
Figure 4. The Percentage of International Students (2024)



It appears that international students primarily prefer universities in the UAE, followed by those in Qatar. This indicates that the UAE has established a strong network of international students and possesses desirable universities. The political conditions and international student policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran may be effective in the low rates of international students in these countries.

Source: Times Higher Education

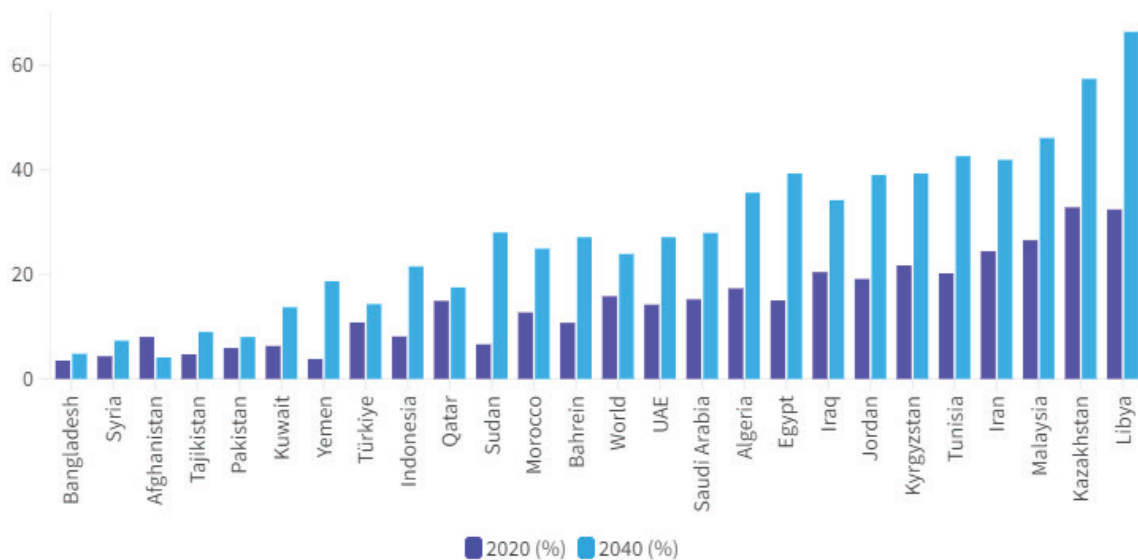
Figure 5. The Percentage of Female / Male Students in the Universities in the Top 400 in the World



Source: Times Higher Education

Universities such as Sabancı University in Türkiye, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia, and Sharif University of Technology in Iran predominantly offer programs in technology, engineering, management sciences, and architecture, with a higher proportion of male students. This data shows that gender plays a central role in departmental preferences and is an effective component of the university's departmental diversity.

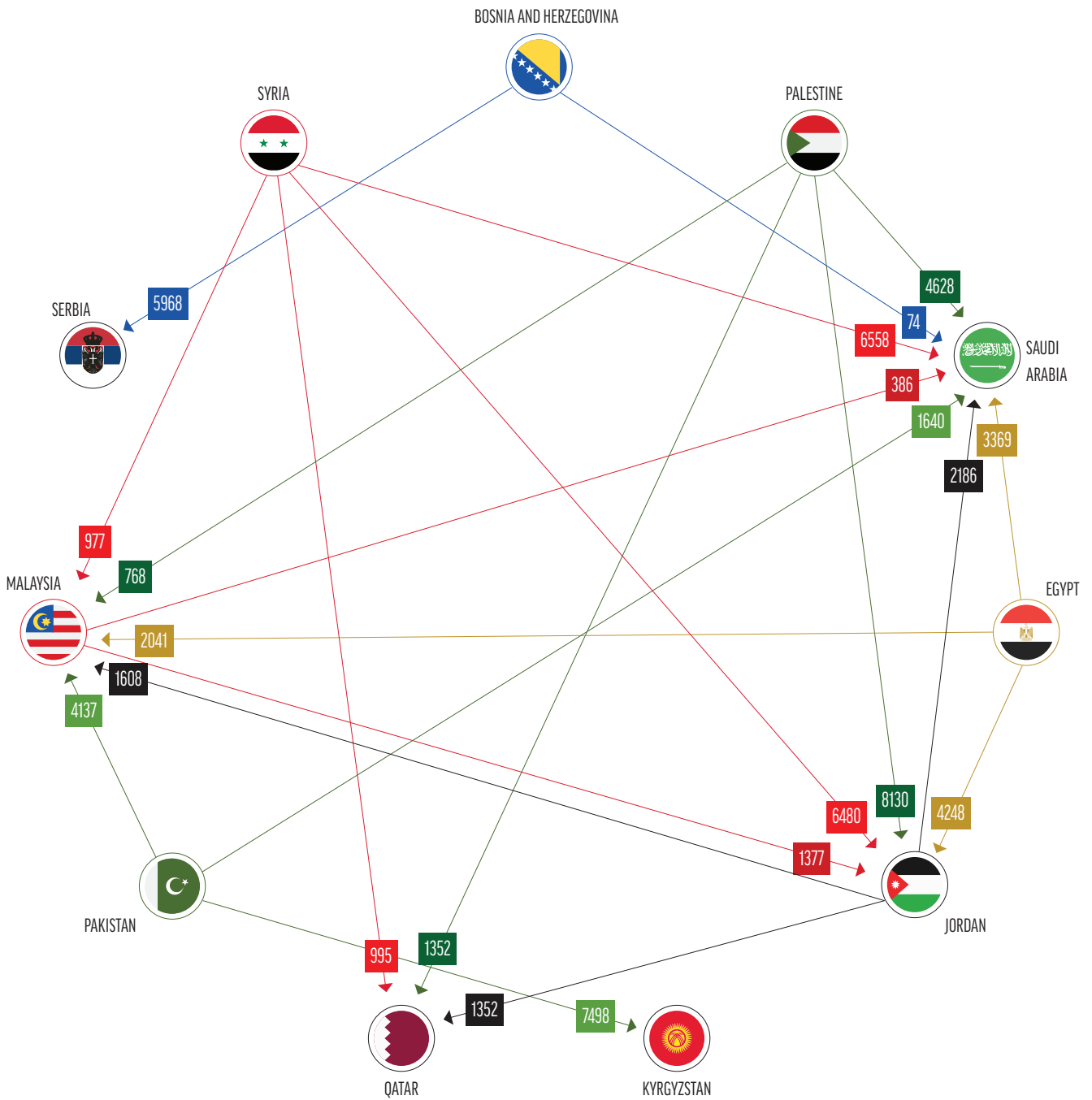
Figure 6. Estimated Share of Higher Education Graduates (2020-2040)



Source: Times Higher Education:

Based on the estimated share of higher education graduates in 2020, the projected rates for 2040 have been calculated. Accordingly, Tunisia (%22.4), Egypt (%24.3), Kazakhstan (%24.6), and Libya (%34) are expected to see an increase in the share of higher education graduates. Particularly in Libya, universities faced quality issues and employment problems after the revolution, leading to a rise in the number of state universities. Although the increase in universities does not necessarily improve quality, it significantly affects the number of graduates. On the other hand, Afghanistan is expected to experience a decrease in the number of higher education graduates compared to other conflict regions.

Where do students go to Study?



Source: UNESCO

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Malaysia were among the preferred countries for education in 2022. Compared with the list of universities in the top 400, universities from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Malaysia were included. It is observed that there is a growing trend of student mobility towards these countries. It is noteworthy that students from Pakistan prefer Kyrgyzstan. Several factors contribute to Pakistani students' preference for Kyrgyzstan, such as strong political relations between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, affordability, recognition of medical education obtained in Kyrgyzstan in Pakistan, and the absence of any entrance exam requirement. Interestingly, Egypt was not among the preferred countries for education in 2022.

Higher Education, Scientific Production and R&D in Islamic Countries



Nihat Erdoğmuş

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Department of Business
Administration

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg120>

Today, higher education institutions are engaged in research, education, and community service. While carrying out these activities, higher education institutions also contribute to economic and social benefits alongside knowledge production and the acquisition of vocational and social skills. Although the levels of education in the past were not as open as they are today, higher education institutions have functioned as the foremost educational and knowledge-producing institutions of their periods. In this context, we can talk about the thousand-year history of the university. Nizamiyya Madrasas in the Islamic world and Bologna, Oxford, and Paris universities in the West are cited as the first examples of universities. Through many religious, political, social, and economic struggles, the concept and functions of the university have evolved from the 11th century to the present day. The fundamental transformations in the development of the university are commonly defined as the Medieval University, the Humboldtian Model, and the Third Generation University. Expectations for the commercialization of scientific production and the generation of economic benefits have also increased alongside education and research in today's universities (Erdoğmuş, 2023).

It is crucial for Muslims and Muslim countries to invest in research, education, and knowledge production for their economic and social development. Furthermore, there is a need for Islamic countries to contribute more to global science and education and solutions for fundamental problems of humanity. This paper presents a basic overview of the current state of higher education institutions and research and development activities in Muslim countries. Due to data sources and identification challenges, the focus is on the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) since it is not feasible to determine the contribution of Muslim scientists outside these countries. Various studies have covered different periods and fields of science, particularly in the last thirty years, to gauge scientific productivity and performance in the Islamic world. We have tried to reveal the current situation based on the most recent and comprehensive studies available.



Universities in Islamic Countries and Their Ranking

It is not easy to determine the exact number of universities in each country, and there are often approximate numbers and estimates available. The website *statista.com* provides estimated numbers of universities for different countries. Based on the numbers on this website, the number of universities in prominent Islamic countries is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Estimated Number of Universities Worldwide by Country as of July 2023

Country	Number of Universities
Indonesia	3277
Iran	440
Pakistan	359
Malaysia	351
Nigeria	278
Tunisia	236
Türkiye	208

Source: *statista.com*

When analyzing the table above, it is essential to consider the size of universities in each country. In this context, since Türkiye's universities are relatively larger, it appears to have fewer universities than some countries with lower figures in terms of population and number of university students.

University rankings have been closely monitored in recent years, albeit subject to ongoing debates. Ranking institutions utilize different methodologies. The Times Higher Education (THE) ranking system focuses on research-intensive universities. In contrast, the QS World University Rankings focuses more on reputation criteria and the research factor has less compared to THE. This section presents the positions of universities in Islamic countries in the top 500 university rankings according to these two ranking systems. The universities in Islamic countries within the top 500 of The Times Higher Education 2024 rankings are listed below.

In The Times Higher Education 2024 ranking, 25 universities from Islamic countries (members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) are within the top 500. In this ranking, while 14 universities were in the top 500 in 2020, this number has increased to 25 today. Among the OIC member countries in the 2024 ranking, 6 universities are from Malaysia, 5 from Saudi Arabia, 5 from the UAE, 3 from Türkiye, and 3 from Iran. Pakistan, Qatar, and Brunei each have 1 university in the ranking. It is worth noting that larger countries with higher education systems, such as Türkiye and Iran, have fewer universities in this ranking compared to smaller countries with smaller higher education systems.

Another ranking system, QS World University Rankings 2024: Top Global Universities, lists the top 50 universities in Islamic countries (OIC), which is presented below.

Table 2. The Universities in Islamic Countries in the Top 500 According to The Times Higher Education 2024 Ranking

Ranking Range	University	Country
201-250	King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals	Saudi Arabia
251-300	Abu Dhabi University	UAE
	Khalifa University	UAE
	Qatar University	Qatar
	King Abdulaziz University	Saudi Arabia
	University of Malaya	Malaysia
301-350	Universiti Teknologi Petronas	Malaysia
	United Arab Emirates University	UAE
351-400	Amirkabir University of Technology	Iran
	University of Sharjah	UAE
	Koç University	Türkiye
	Orta Doğu Technical University	Türkiye
	Sabancı University	Türkiye
	Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Brunei
401-500	Zayed University	UAE
	Quaid-i-Azam University	Pakistan
	King Saud University	Saudi Arabia
	Prince Sultan University (PSU)	Saudi Arabia
	Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	Saudi Arabia
	Iran University of Science and Technology	Iran
	University of Tehran	Iran
	Universiti Utara Malaysia	Malaysia
	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia
	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Malaysia
	Universiti Sains Malaysia	Malaysia

Source: The table was created by the author from The Times Higher Education 2024 rankings.

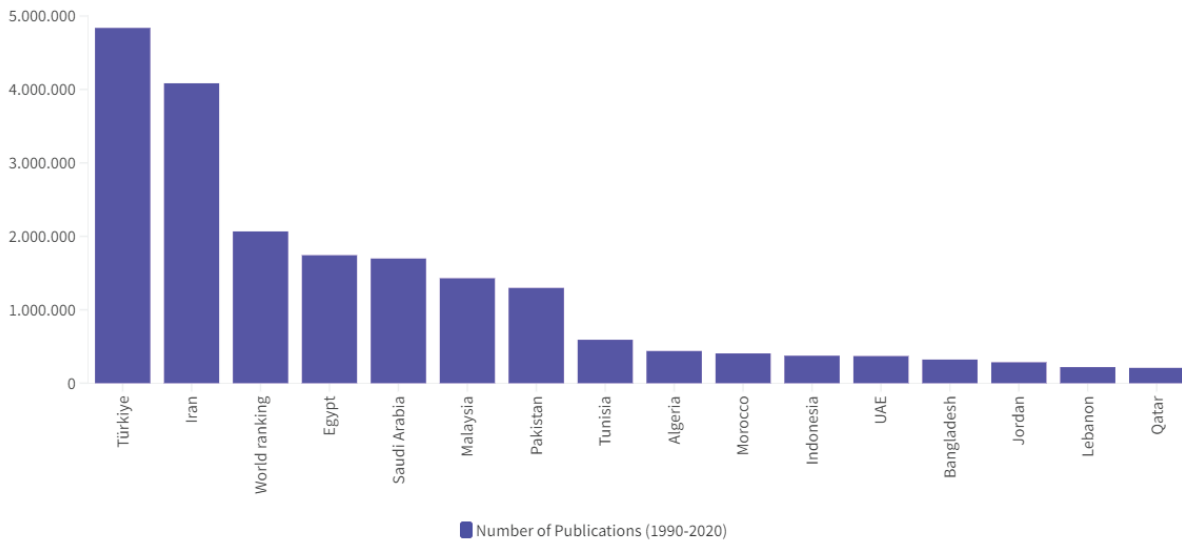
Table 3. Top 50 Universities in Islamic Countries (OIC) in QS World University Rankings 2024: Top Global Universities List

OIC Ranking	World Ranking	University	Country
1	65	Universiti Malaya (UM)	Malaysia
2	137	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	Malaysia
3	143	King Abdulaziz University (KAU)	Saudi Arabia
4	158	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	Malaysia
5	159	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	Malaysia
6	173	Qatar University	Qatar
7	180	King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals	Saudi Arabia
8	188	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Malaysia
9	203	King Saud University	Saudi Arabia
10	226	American University of Beirut (AUB)	Lebanon
11	230	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	Kazakhstan
12	230	Khalifa University	UAE
13	237	Universitas Indonesia	Indonesia
14	263	Gadjah Mada University	Indonesia
15	281	Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB)	Indonesia
16	284	Taylor's University	Malaysia
17	290	United Arab Emirates University	UAE
18	300	UCSI University	Malaysia
19	307	Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP)	Malaysia
20	310	Hamad bin Khalifa University	Qatar
21	315	Quaid-i-Azam University	Pakistan
22	334	Sharif University of Technology	Iran
23	345	Airlangga University	Indonesia
24	355	L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU)	Kazakhstan
25	360	University of Tehran	Iran
26	364	American University of Sharjah	UAE
27	367	National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Islamabad	Pakistan
28	371	Cairo University	Egypt
29	375	Amirkabir University of Technology	Iran
30	387	Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)	Brunei
31	404	Istanbul Technical University	Türkiye
32	415	The American University in Cairo	Egypt
33	431	Koç University	Türkiye
34	454	Sultan Qaboos University	Oman
35	465	University of Sharjah	UAE
36	489	IPB University (Aka Bogor Agricultural University)	Indonesia
37	502	Bilkent University	Türkiye
38	514	Bogaziçi University	Türkiye
39	525	Universiti Teknologi Brunei	Brunei
40	526	Sabancı University	Türkiye
41	538	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	Malaysia
42	540	Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)	Pakistan
43	551	Ajman University	UAE
44	551	Canadian University Dubai	UAE
45	555	Universiti Teknologi MARA - UITM	Malaysia
46	582	Applied Science University - Bahrain	Bahreyn
47	586	Sunway University	Malaysia
48	590	Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd university	Saudi Arabia
49	595	Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (IAU)	Saudi Arabia
50	605	American University in Dubai	UAE

Source: The table was created by the author from QS World University Rankings 2024: Top Global Universities.

Figure 1. Distribution of Publications in the Web of Science Database in Member Countries of the OIC between 1990 and 2020

Source: Oldac, 2022



In the QS World University Rankings 2024: Top Global Universities list, 36 universities from Islamic countries (members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) are within the top 500. Among the OIC member countries in the QS 2024 ranking, 8 universities are from Malaysia, 5 from Indonesia, and 4 from the UAE. In this ranking, Saudi Arabia and Iran have 3 universities; Türkiye, Egypt, Qatar, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan have 2 universities; and Lebanon, Oman, and Brunei have 1. Similar to THE rankings, it is noteworthy that larger countries with higher education systems, like Türkiye and Iran, have fewer universities in this ranking compared to smaller countries with smaller higher education systems. In contrast, Malaysia has the highest number of universities in this ranking, and Indonesia, which does not have any universities in THE rankings, has 5 universities in the QS rankings.

As mentioned before, since the methodologies of the ranking systems differ, the number of universities of countries in the rankings also differs. A notable development is that the number of universities from Islamic world countries in both rankings has increased over the years. Yet, although the increase in the number of universities in Islamic countries in the rankings is important, it requires a more comprehensive analysis. The following section discusses the productivity of universities in Islamic countries.

The contributions of Muslim countries to global science relative to their populations were lower until the 2010s, but there has been an increase since then.

Scientific Productivity and Performance in Islamic Countries

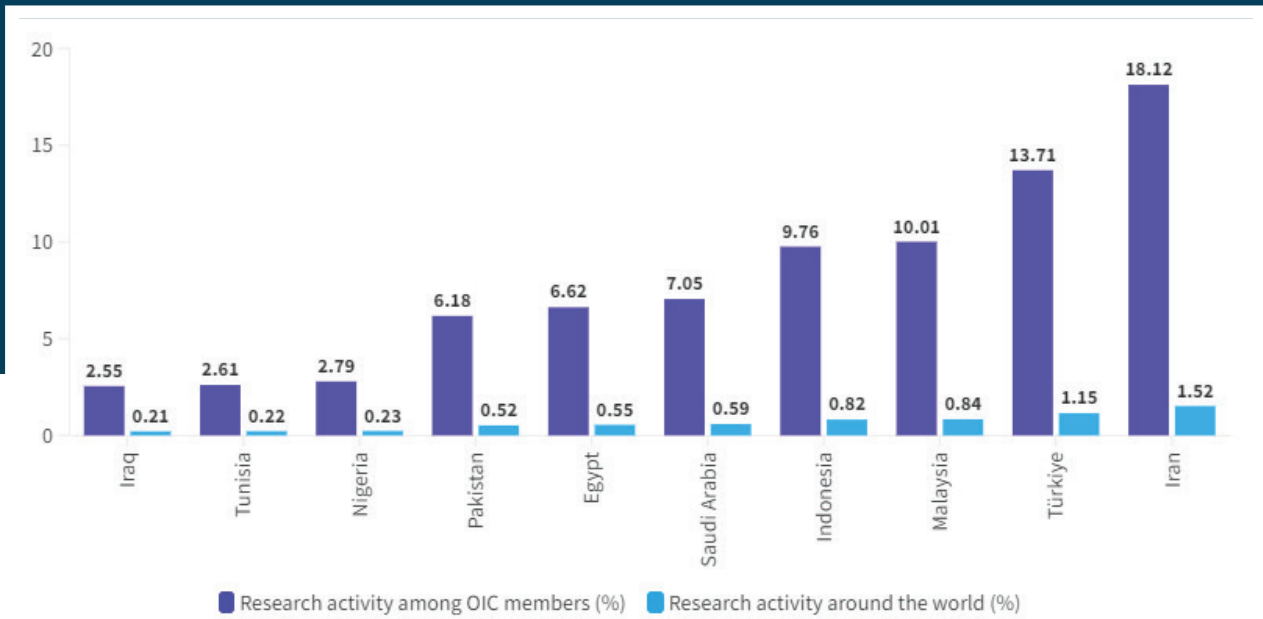
In their analysis based on articles published in SCOPUS between 2000 and 2011, Sarwar and Hassan (2015) examined productivity and collaborations in science and technology within the Muslim world. According to their study, Türkiye ranks first in scientific outputs, followed by Iran, Malaysia, Egypt, and Pakistan. The majority of research outputs are in the

fields of veterinary medicine, chemical engineering, chemistry, dentistry, agriculture, and biosciences. Between 2000 and 2011, there was an increase of over 10% in all fields of science and technology. The areas with the highest increase include economics, econometrics and finance, immunology and microbiology, agricultural and biological sciences, mathematics, and computer science. Except for Tunisia's and Algeria's collaborations with France, Islamic countries have primarily collaborated amongst themselves. Authors from countries other than Türkiye and Iran have worked with broader groups. Another notable development during this period is that research outputs from the Muslim world surpassed the world average in 2009.

In Oldac's (2022) study covering the last 30 years based on articles published in WoS, Türkiye ranked

Figure 2. Research Activity among OIC Members (2018)

Source: Haq and Tanveer, 2020



21st, Iran 23rd, Egypt 39th, Saudi Arabia 40th, Malaysia 43rd, and Pakistan 46th in the world ranking. The figure below shows the total number of publications in some Islamic countries in the last 30 years:

According to this figure, Türkiye and Iran are significantly ahead of other Muslim countries and are above the world average. They are followed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Pakistan. The contributions of Muslim countries to global science relative to their populations were lower until the 2010s, but there has been an increase since then.

We have previously noted that the number of publications from Islamic countries surpassed the world average from 2009 onwards, and there has been an increase in research outputs since the 2010s. There have also been some changes in this period. Until 2014, Türkiye was at the forefront of scientific productivity, but Iran took the lead after that year. As of 2018, the research productivity of the top ten member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is shown in Figure 2 below. The graph provides both the position of countries among OIC countries and their position in global research activity. In terms of global research activity, the United States (17.30) and China (15.18) rank first and second, respectively. Among OIC countries, Iran (1.52) and Türkiye (1.15) are at the forefront.

According to Haq and Tanveer (2020) and Oldac (2022), there have been changes in publication trends in Islamic countries in recent years. Since 2014, Iran has taken the first place, while Türkiye is in the second place. Moreover, it can be observed that Saudi Arabia,

Egypt, and Pakistan have been on the rise during these years and have surpassed Malaysia. However, countries' positions in publication activity differ when these rankings are considered in terms of population. In this context, although Malaysia's position in the ranking seems to have decreased, the production system in this country should not be ignored. When rankings are based on the journal percentiles, larger countries with broader scientific systems (such as Türkiye, Iran, and Pakistan) are ranked lower. In contrast, smaller countries (such as Qatar, the UAE, and Lebanon) or emerging countries (such as Indonesia and Bangladesh) are ranked higher in this ranking.

Some R&D Indicators in Islamic Countries

According to Hamid (2015), OIC countries allocate 0.5% of their GDP to R&D. The world average in this regard is 1.78%, while it is 3% for developed countries. According to Oldac's study (2022), some R&D indicators in 15 OIC member countries that stand out according to their scientific publications in the WoS database in 2017-2018 are shown in Figure 3 and 4.

When Figures 3 and 4 are analyzed, the UAE and Malaysia are above 1%, while Türkiye is close to this ratio. In terms of total R&D expenditures per capita, the UAE and Qatar stand out as the countries with the highest amounts, prominently ranking at the top. Following these countries, Malaysia and Türkiye have ratios close to the world average. Regarding the total number of R&D personnel, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt

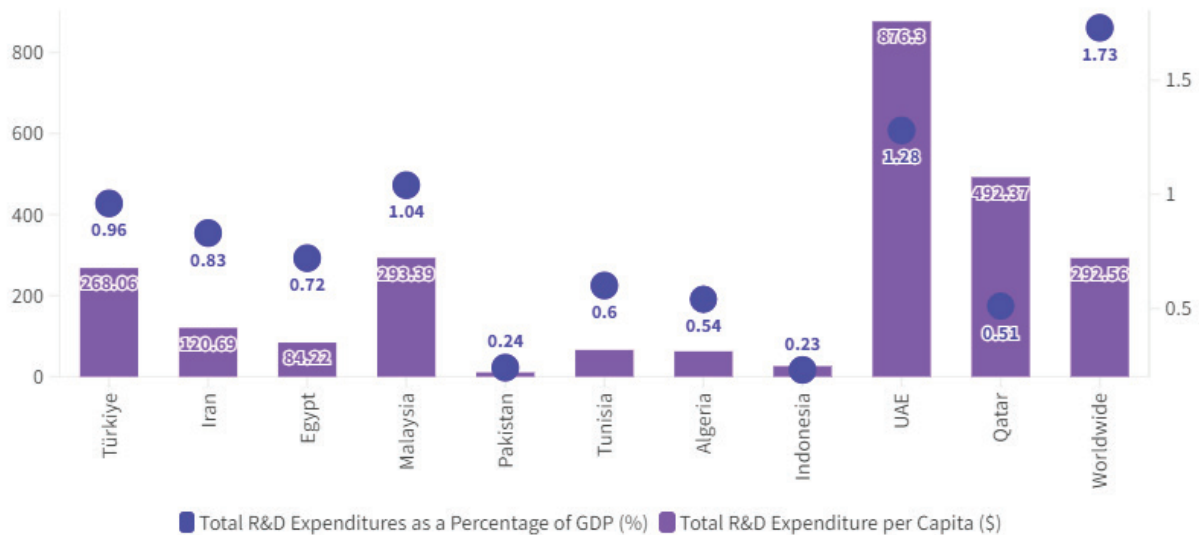


Figure 3. The ratio of R&D expenditures to GDP and the per capita total expenditure in some member countries of the OIC which stand out according to publications in the WoS

Source: Oldac, 2022

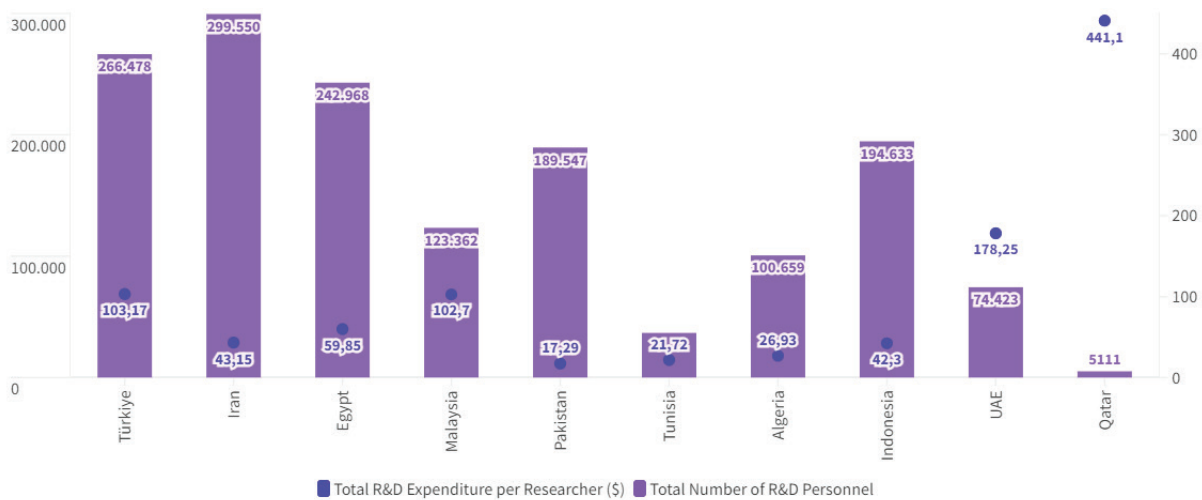


Figure 4. Indicator of R&D expenditures per researcher in some member countries of the OIC which stand out according to publications in the WoS

Source: Oldac, 2022

are at the forefront. These results indicate that quantitative factors are not automatically converted into publications or R&D outputs.

The share of OIC countries in global patent applications is 1.8%. In this regard, China, the United States, and Japan are in the lead in the world. Among OIC countries, Iran, Indonesia, Türkiye, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia share the top positions. These five countries account for 71% of patent applications in OIC countries (SESRIC, 2023).

Conclusion

Political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental changes worldwide deeply affect higher education. Developments in higher education make it necessary to approach higher education with a strategic perspective and make structural and administrative changes with this perspective. It is important to respond quickly to the changes that will occur and meet the expectations of higher

education in today's world (Erdođmuş, 2019). In this sense, positioning higher education and knowledge production as significant factors in economic and social development is necessary.

Universities and knowledge production play a significant role in the economic and social development of countries. Out of more than 200 countries worldwide, 57 or 28.5% are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). OIC countries have a population ratio that can have a global impact. After the G20 countries, OIC countries have the largest population in the world institutionally, corresponding to 24.56% of the world's total population. However, the total gross national income of OIC countries has not reached a level that can be sufficiently effective globally. The total gross national incomes of OIC countries correspond to 35.29% of the European Union (EU), 49.24% of China, and 32.23% of the United States institutionally. In other words, it is only about 1.65 times that of Germany and approximately 1.33 times that of Japan. The economic size of OIC countries corresponds to only 7.81% of the world economy, which clearly demonstrates that they are not influential enough globally (Yıldırım & Yeşilata, 2020).

Abdus Salam from Pakistan won the Nobel Prize in Physics, Ahmed Zewail from Egypt and Aziz Sancar from Türkiye won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Additionally, there are numerous researchers and scientists living and working in the United States and other countries. It is a fact that a significant portion of productive and prominent researchers and scientists reside outside Muslim countries. The three Nobel Prize laureates in science have lived and worked in the United Kingdom and the United States (Najam, 2015). In this context, it is essential to establish a contemporary infrastructure, well-educated scientists, a comprehensive research monitoring system, allocation of research and development funds, and practical research policies by removing cultural, political, and security barriers to foster innovative and productive research in Muslim countries (Rizvi, 2005).

When evaluating the contributions of Islamic countries to global science, it is important to note that the publications and indexed journals examined primarily focus on English and European languages, and publications in the languages used by OIC countries may not be represented enough. Furthermore, when referring to the Muslim world, it is important

not to limit it only to Islamic countries. The best example of this is India, which has a larger Muslim population than many other countries. Therefore, it is beneficial to consider these factors when assessing the publishing productivity of Islamic countries. Despite these constraints and the relatively recent increase in scientific production, it is clear that there is a need for an improvement in scientific output and performance in Islamic countries, as well as the creation of the necessary environment and resources to support it.

Islamic countries should focus on enhancing quality, capacity, and efficiency in areas such as research, knowledge production, and acquiring professional knowledge and skills in higher education. On the other hand, it is essential for higher education institutions not to lose sight of their goals and priorities, such as providing answers to human existence and the search for meaning and providing philosophical and intellectual knowledge. Islamic countries and higher education institutions should strive to follow mainstream developments in higher education and knowledge production globally while simultaneously seeking to develop original approaches and methods.

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Brain Drain in Africa



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Africa is often referred to as “The Continent of the Future” or “Rising Africa.” The continent is known not only for its abundant natural resources but also for its young population. Therefore, it’s crucial to discuss the type of education and employment opportunities provided for the young population. With a population of 1.3 billion and an average age of 19, a significant portion of African youth prefer to pursue education outside the continent for various reasons.

The internal political, economic, and security issues of African countries are among the leading causes that negatively affect the education system and lead African youth to leave their countries for better education. Of course, each country has its own unique problems, and at the same time, the reasons why young people choose foreign countries for education are reported. According to a report titled *Best Global Destinations for Higher Education for African Students* published by the U.S.-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2000, 281,000 young Africans chose to pursue education abroad, while this number increased to 441,000 in 2010 and 624,000 in 2020. While Moroccans are the first among those who prefer education outside the continent, Nigerians take the lead in Sub-Saharan Africa. France is first among the countries preferred outside the continent, followed by China, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada, and Türkiye.¹

Why do African Youth Prefer to Move Outside the Continent?

There are different reasons why African youth prefer to study abroad, especially in the US and Europe. Reasons include the scholarships, accommodations, job opportunities, laboratory and classroom facilities provided by foreign countries, compared to many African countries where education doesn’t receive sufficient budget allocation and where the curriculum and education conditions are not ideal. Additionally, it’s worth noting that obtaining education in Western countries is perceived as a “prestige” in Africa.

¹ See <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/07/13/what-are-top-global-destinations-for-higher-education-for-african-students-pub-90203>



In addition to the quality of education, young Africans and people from all over the world prefer the Republic of South Africa for its living conditions and natural beauty.

Hence, African youth also choose education overseas to gain more acceptance and higher status in their own societies.

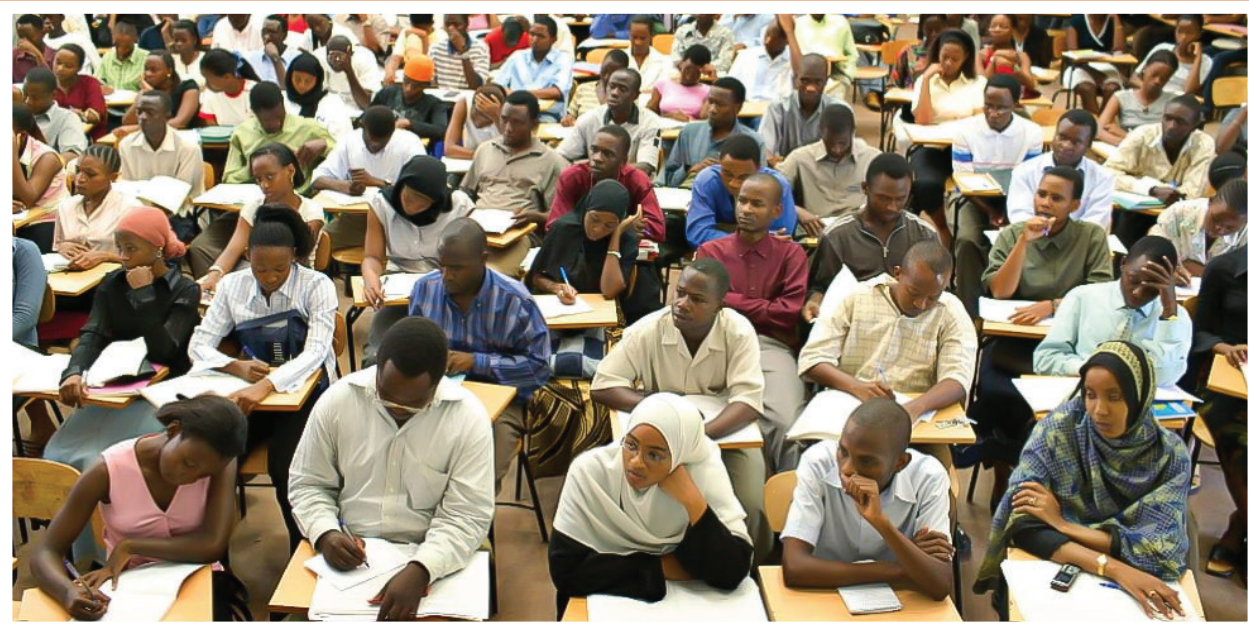
The number of universities in many African countries is increasing every year. In recent years, many foundation universities have also been established in addition to state universities. Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya are just a few examples of these countries. For instance, while only one university

was operational in Uganda in the 1970s, now nearly sixty universities provide education. Indeed, Uganda Islamic University, established in 1988, currently provides education to around 10,000 students from twenty-two countries in Africa and beyond.²

Three Examples for Africa: Nigeria, Sudan, and South Africa

Considering that there are 54 countries in Africa and a population of 1.3 billion, it is necessary to elaborate on the topic with notable examples without generalizing. In this regard, give the examples of South Africa, known for its quality education, Sudan, whose education system has been devastated due to internal conflict, and Nigeria, where unresolved problems pose a significant threat to the education system. South Africa, which stands out with its education quality and opportunities for students,

² See <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dosya-haber/afrikali-gencler-universitelerin-yetersiz-olmasi-nedeniyle-kita-disina-gidiyor/3034272>



also hosts many students from Türkiye for education. It is home to universities such as Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Pretoria, and Stellenbosch, ranked within the top 500 globally. This country constitutes a significant alternative to Western universities with its high quality of education and affordable tuition fees. In addition to the quality of education, young Africans and people from all over the world prefer the Republic of South Africa for its living conditions and natural beauty.

While South Africa shines with its education quality, many African countries have experienced a decline in education quality in recent years due to economic and political crises. Sudan serves as a very vivid example in this regard. Particularly favored for Arabic and Islamic education, Sudan's education system has suffered greatly in recent years due to political crises and internal conflicts. Young people who came to Sudan for education from various countries, particularly from Africa, were forced to return to their countries after the civil war. Despite being seen as an education hub for the Islamic world, Sudan's education system has suffered irreparable damage due to economic crises and internal conflict. Institutions like the International University of Africa, Al Neelain University, University of Bahri, University of Medical Sciences and Technology, Elrazi University, Sudan University of Science and Technology, University of Kordofan, Omdurman Islamic University, Jazeera University, and University of Khartoum highlight the international dimension of education in Sudan. The internal crises in Sudan, which creates an alternative

in Africa, have negatively affected the education system and students, forcing many students to drop out of their education.

With a population of 220 million and a rich religious and cultural heritage, Nigeria's educational institutions struggle with many problems from kindergarten to university. Insufficient budget allocated to education, inability to pay salaries on time, strikes, internal conflicts, terrorist attacks, corruption, and high tuition fees negatively affect education. In Nigeria, where the gap between the rich and the poor is growing, education in public schools is declining due to insufficient budget, while there is a notable increase in private schools. Today, nearly 170 universities are operating in Nigeria. Education in the country, with its state system, revolves around state administrations, churches, private schools, and madrasas, with no common curriculum. Despite efforts, Nigeria remains among the countries where the education system fails to achieve the desired level. Therefore, those with economic means in the country send their children to either costly private universities or schools in Western countries.

The country often hits the headlines with academics on strike due to unpaid salaries, and many aspire to work abroad. Nigerians working abroad in fields like medicine, pharmacy, or engineering cannot contribute to their homeland. Nigerian youth prefer countries like Ghana, Benin, Egypt, or pre-civil war Sudan for education, adversely affecting the Nigerian economy. Indeed, students studying abroad spend approximately \$3 billion annually.



African youth studying abroad have the opportunity to transfer their experiences and knowledge to their people upon returning to their countries, while those who do not return contribute to brain drain.



Nigeria is home to the highest number of children who cannot go to school in the world due to Boko Haram attacks and other reasons. In addition, more than 7 million Almajirai aged between 4 and 15 in the country grow up without protection, vocational, or formal education. The Almajiranci system, a form of education to memorize the Quran, has become dysfunctional due to colonial policies and neglect by Muslims in the country. The children in the Almajiranci system try to meet their needs by begging, and when they cannot find jobs in the future, they either fall into the hands of armed groups or engage in illegal activities, thus not only ruining their own futures but also negatively impacting the country's development.³

Brain Drain in Africa and Its Consequences

The fact that African students receive education abroad has both positive and negative consequences. Indeed, African youth studying abroad have the opportunity to transfer their experiences and knowledge to their people upon returning to their countries, while those who do not return contribute to brain drain. When young individuals choose not to return to their home country after completing their education, fulfilling the demand for skilled workers in African countries becomes increasingly challenging. This situation also results in the inability of educated young people to transfer their experience and knowledge to their own people. Although it is possible to say that young people who return to their countries have the opportunity to observe their countries from an external perspective and see their shortcomings, it is an undeniable fact that a

significant portion of African youth do not want to return to their countries after their education.

On the other hand, we should also note that "African elites" and their children also demand education outside the continent. Indeed, African leaders in power, wealthy Africans, or prominent members of society prefer their children to go abroad for education, which results in the country of education deepening its political, economic, and military influence in African countries. Many political and military elites in countries such as Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, and African countries greatly affected by coups in recent years have received education in the United States or Europe. This situation highlights that the education process can create a "dependency" relationship, leading to economic, cultural, and political dependence on the countries that provide education.

As long as the problems in the education system, as seen in the examples of Nigeria and Sudan, are ignored, they grow and create even bigger societal problems. Conflicts, poverty, and parental neglect adversely affect children's education. Young people who do not receive a good education and cannot find employment engage in crime, negatively affecting the country and society.

Unless the state mechanism, the business world, and the prominent members of society collaborate to find a holistic solution to the problem of education in African countries for economics, security, and employment after graduation, the problems become permanent. Otherwise, Africa and these countries, which have a rich history in education, cannot solve their own problems or contribute to regional or global solutions due to problems in the education system.

³ See <https://afam.org.tr/bir-afrika-ulkesinin-tarihi-serencami-nijeryada-egitim-meselesi-ve-almajirilik-sistemi/>

The National Motivations and Global Consequences of International Education and the Turkish Context



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It is not a new phenomenon for students to travel long distances in search of knowledge and the opportunity to engage with leading scholars in a particular field. The travels of scholars and missionaries to different regions to spread religious teachings, along with the travels of students and seekers to obtain religious education, can be considered pioneering examples of academic mobility as the most important sources of knowledge of their time were carried among different geographies. In this regard, Timbuktu, which became prominent among the centers of Islamic education in West Africa around the 13th century, attracted scholars, thinkers, and students from all over the world and became a vibrant center of scholarship in fields such as mathematics, law, astronomy, science, and history, representing a strong example of the relatively recent past (Kane, 2023).

International Mobility in Higher Education

International education has evolved as an instrument within the established and absolute systems of nation-states, where international relations, i.e., diplomacy, are based on various interests. Particularly during the colonial period, student mobility was encouraged to create an educated elite familiar with the values, economic, and political priorities of the colonizers to support their local administration (Rizvi, 2011). With the decolonization period, policies such as the Fulbright Scholarships of the United States, the education program of the Soviet Union, and the Colombo Plan of the Commonwealth countries began to be implemented, whereby states brought international students to their countries to provide education with their own resources. In this regard, the extensive technical assistance and higher education scholarships offered by the Soviet Union were considered to align with the ideological goal of introducing socialism as an alternative (Kret, 2013). As a counter-move, the Fulbright program of the United States was implemented as a “soft power” practice to prevent newly independent countries from joining the communist bloc (Nye, 2005). On the other hand, the Colombo Plan aimed to provide education to foster the development of a skilled labor force in newly independent countries (Oakman, 2005).

Along with the increasingly widespread scholarship programs targeting international students with



differentiated political objectives, international mobility at the global level has increased from 108,000 international students in 1950 to 6.4 million in 2022 (Carter, 1973; OECD, 2023). On the one hand, international student mobility has made it possible to improve educational practices through the exchange of experiences, to develop the skills and qualities of individuals to contribute to progress, and to mitigate the effects of unequal development between societies through the transfer of knowledge and technologies. Within the historical process, this situation has established the global knowledge economy, playing a significant role in the international economy alongside globalization (Gürüz, 2008). On the other hand, the mobility of ideas and values has improved interpersonal and international relations by increasing intercultural dialogue, developing an international understanding, increasing sympathy for the host country, and raising responsible citizens globally. In this regard, international student mobility has gained widespread acceptance because it is regarded as a crucial element of cultural or public diplomacy practices. (Peterson, 2014; Akli, 2012; Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Internationalization of Higher Education in Türkiye

When we look at Türkiye's experiences with international students, we can trace them back to the

final years of the Ottoman Empire. Various studies highlight the education of students sent by Arab, Albanian, and Kurdish tribes at the *Aşiret Mektebi* (School for Tribes) established in Istanbul (Bolat, 2017; Akın, 2020; Yavaş, 2022). The education of these students, referred to as "ajnabis" (foreigners), belonging to tribes living within the borders of the state but in distant provinces (Bolat, 2017), was adopted as a state policy aiming to strengthen ties with their tribes through education (Akın, 2020) and to benefit from the trained human resources in public duties (Yavaş, 2022). Similarly, educational opportunities offered to international students continued in limited ways during the early years of the Republic period, parallel to global trends. Aligned with global trends, Türkiye began to show increased interest in international student programs after World War II. Student and expert exchanges included in bilateral and multilateral agreements, along with a certain number of scholarships, became a means for Türkiye to enhance cooperation and strengthen relations.

Although the internationalization of higher education in Türkiye has been a long-standing phenomenon, it was formalized and monitored with the "Law on Foreign Students Studying in Türkiye" enacted in 1983 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye, October 14, 1983). Rather than a regulation aimed at encouraging international students to study in Türkiye, it was a law that determined the responsibilities of the military government regarding how students would

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**International mobility at the global level
has increased from 108,000 international
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be monitored during their education process primarily based on security concerns. However, during the negotiations, it was emphasized that the issue of international students was important in promoting Türkiye and Turkish culture, academic knowledge, intellectual capacity, and technological development (Advisory Parliament of Türkiye Journal, 1983).

As of the 1980s, Türkiye’s desire to establish new partnerships to support itself in the Cyprus case and the transition to an export-oriented, free-market economic system following the January 24 (1980) decisions, which necessitated diversified economic cooperation, formed the basic motivations of its foreign policy approach. Hence, international students and international education have become mechanisms to support this foreign policy. For instance, Türkiye has strengthened its relations with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) during this period (Aykan, 1993). It also supported the higher education scholarship program initiated in 1983 by the Islamic Development Bank for the education and expertise in technical fields of Muslim communities in non-member countries. A protocol was signed in 1989, aiming to familiarize the students with the Turkish language, culture, and heritage so that they could contribute to the development of their communities. The program has provided education opportunities to hundreds of students from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Burma, Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi in Türkiye.

In the 1990s, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Turkic Republics, various collaborations were designed to support state-building and development processes by enhancing relations with these newly independent states and providing scholarships to study at higher education institutions in Türkiye was one of these projects. Thus, the “Grand Student Project” (Büyük Öğrenci Projesi - BÖP) initiated in 1992, enabled international students from the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, particularly the Turkic Republics, to come to Türkiye and pursue their education with scholarships. The Minister of

National Education initiated the scholarship program to foster the growth of human resources, promote the Turkish language and culture, and build connections with neighboring communities (Yarman Vural & Alkan, 2009).

Implemented between 1992 and 2011, BÖP contributed to internationalization in higher education; however, it could only partially achieve its goals. Despite the relatively low number of studies conducted on the program, it was observed that the number of qualified applications was low, and universities did not actively participate enough in promoting scholarships. Additionally, there were certain inadequacies in the public services offered to international students. These included issues with accommodation, visa, and health insurance, insufficient support in Turkish language teaching, and a lack of consideration for the changing educational requirements of international students (Yarman Vural & Alkan, 2009; Özoğlu, Gür, & Çoşkun, 2015). Hence, in parallel with the new orientations in Türkiye’s foreign policy, international student policies were restructured and centralized in 2012.

Coordination of government-funded scholarship programs, initially established under the Prime Ministry at the time, was transferred to the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) with the aim of expanding the target student audience to allow global access. The program, named Türkiye Scholarships, aims to support public and education diplomacy, promote academic and scientific development in Turkish universities, strengthen the internationalization of higher education, and encourage development cooperation policies (YTB, 2012; Official Gazette, June 17, 2014). As a result of the impact of this program in promoting Turkish higher education on a global scale and the internationalization strategy adopted by the Council of Higher Education, the number of international students enrolled in Turkish universities has increased dramatically from approximately 25,000 in the 2010-2011 academic year to over 300,000 in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Türkiye has gained a significant global position due to the increasing international student mobility in the 21st century. International education has become integral to its foreign policy to develop relations with new countries, establish different partnerships, and strengthen ties by providing support through development cooperation. Therefore, Türkiye's active diplomacy and cultural relations strategy, particularly in recent years, have contributed to the increase in the number of international students in the country, making it a global education destination. In return, the network formed by international alumni has strengthened relationships and created cultural and economic depth on a global scale. However, we should note that a more detailed analysis is required to determine whether the alumni network indeed constitutes a sustainable global interaction and cooperation platform.

In conclusion, student mobility has continued to evolve with different dynamics throughout history and has played a significant role as an instrument of international relations today. Starting with the centralization of religious teachings, student mobility is part of international education today. Since the colonial period, the tendency of nation-states to use international education for their own interests has continued to increase with the decolonization period. State-sponsored scholarship programs and educational policies led to a rapid increase in international student mobility, resulting in positive effects such as experience exchange, development of educational practices, and increased intercultural dialogue. These developments have brought dynamics such as cultural interaction, the spread of ideas and values, strengthened diplomatic ties, and the contribution to the local economy through the increased educational capacity of internationalizing universities, along with a globalized economy, an internationalized labor market, and international development cooperation. These factors make international education attractive and strengthen its impact on individuals and policymakers. Hence, it is clear that international education will continue to be an effective tool in countries' foreign policies.

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What if the Teaching of International Law is Itself Colonialist?



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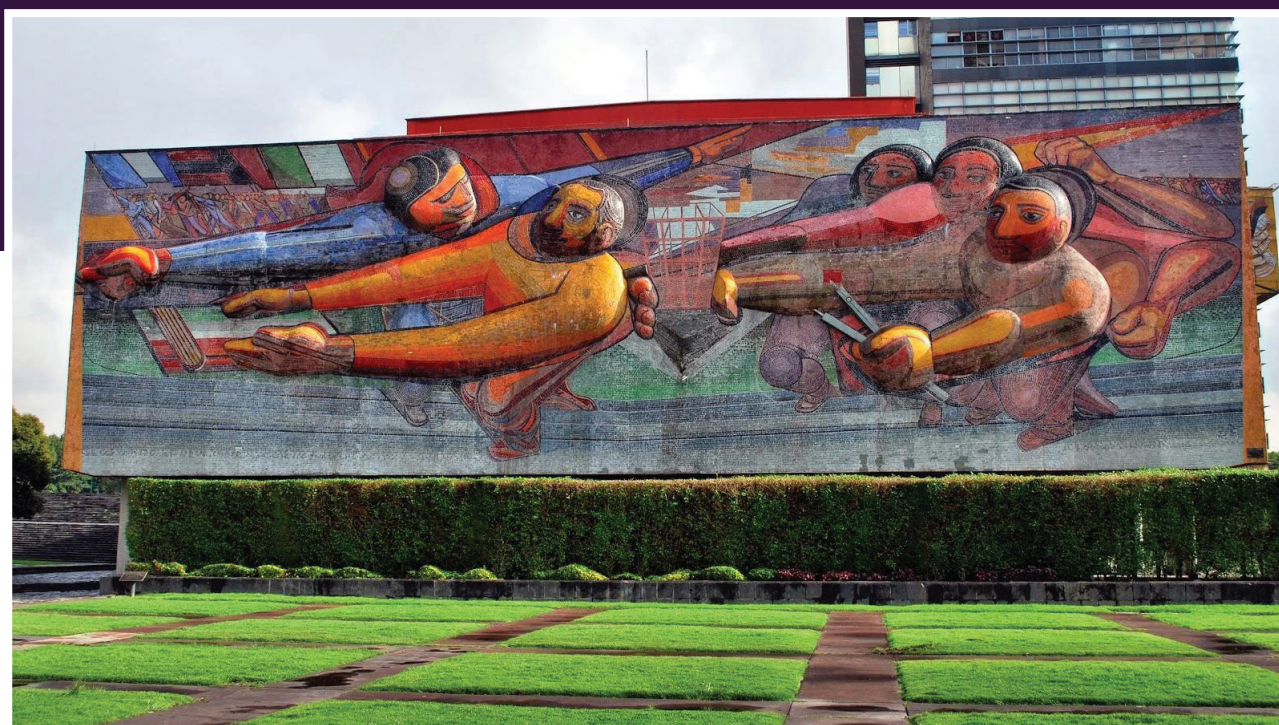
<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg123>

Teaching international law from an objective, universal, and positivist perspective is a widespread problem worldwide. In recent years, one of the movements that point out and object to this problem is the growing awareness and visibility of “Third World Approaches to International Law” (TWAIL). TWAIL is a critical theory that criticizes Western-centric views, denies the claim that colonialism is a historical fact of the past, and argues instead that it continues to exist in transformed forms. It contends that international law and institutions operate in favor of the interests of first-world countries and against those of third-world countries.

Some have argued that the European character of international law reflects a historical reality and, therefore, should not be dismissed. However, contrary to popular belief, TWAIL rejects the claim that international law emerged from European scholarship and argues that this “European” international law was created through imperialist intervention (Anghie & Chimni, 2003). It is designed to advance the interests of European states while denying that it is neutral and intended to apply equally to all (Anghie, 2020). TWAIL theorists not only critically examine the institutions and principles of international law but also argue that international legal education should be thoroughly examined and critiqued by TWAIL’s methods and should be free from a colonialist and Western-centric perspective. Moreover, they argue that this perspective overlooks nuances within societies and masks deficiencies and contradictions in international law (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023).

Mainstream approaches, such as the positivist perspective, have dominated the teaching of international law. These dominant approaches hold privileged status in the teaching and research of international law; critical approaches are often seen as “other,” while the positivist mainstream remains the “subject” of instruction (Shako, 2023). TWAIL scholars call for a change in the teaching curriculum, advocating for critical approaches not to be taught merely as an alternative alongside the positivist mainstream but to be the “subject” of legal education (Shako, 2023). In the curriculum of international law, issues such as colonialism, slavery, and numerous genocides are downplayed, while non-European cultures, practices, and epistemologies are completely ignored (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023). Furthermore,

Mural by David Alfaro Siqueiros at UNAM, called “El pueblo a la universidad, la universidad al pueblo (The people to the university, the university to the people).”



according to the mainstream perspective, the solution to any international legal problem is always twofold: either better implementation of existing laws or the creation of more laws. In other words, if an international agreement fails, a new one must be made. Thus, it is assumed that there is no inequality, injustice, deficiency, gap, or distortion in the system but only a need for updating. Hence, this perspective perpetuates a self-reinforcing cycle instead of offering an approach that can be adjusted according to broad geographical and cultural differences.

The early academics of mainstream international law, such as Vitoria, Vattel, Grotius, Pufendorf, and Westlake, were predominantly white Europeans. Their Euro-centric works reinforced the West's epistemic hegemony by ignoring legal practices and traditions outside of Europe and thus normalizing bias against non-European approaches (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023). An example cited at the TRILA conference in Singapore in 2018 summarizes the gravity of the situation: “I have difficulty interesting my students in [international law] when the only reference made to my country in a major textbook is that it was ‘uncivilized’” (Anghie, 2020).

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**Why does
Palestine,
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Although international law is claimed to be universal, the founding fathers of international law have openly admitted that international law is geographically European and religiously and culturally Christian. Lassa Francis Lawrence Oppenheim, regarded as one of the most eminent international law scholars by positivists, wrote that international law “in its origin is essentially a product of Christian civilization” (Oppenheim, 1905). Similarly, Hugo Grotius, considered the “father” of international law, traced the origins of this discipline back to the sixteenth-century Spanish Christian theologian and jurist Francisco de Vitoria (Mutua & Anghie, 2000).

Even a brief review of its history shows that international law (was) developed through the encounter and struggle between Europe and the rest of the world. With the adoption of classic Western textbooks in other countries, the dominant and inevitably Western-centric perspective in these sources has also spread (Anghie, 2020). For instance, the concept of sovereignty served as the key to justifying, directing, and legitimizing the colonial enterprise, which enabled a small number of European states to expand across more than three-quarters of the globe for their own interests.

TWAIL emphasizes the contradictions in the practice of international law to instill a critical understanding of the dialectic within the international legal system (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023). Unlike positivist jurists, it argues that the cause of these practical difficulties lies not in the incorrect application of international legal rules but rather in the rules themselves and their historical origins. For instance, when considering principles such as the maintenance of world peace, the sovereign equality of states, and the prohibition of the use of force in international law, there is no difference between the invasion of

Iraq and the invasion of Ukraine. However, there is a vast difference in the international community’s reactions to these two invasions. While the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin (Leff et al., 2023), it did not issue arrest warrants for the political leaders responsible for the invasion of Iraq, namely Prime Minister of the UK, Tony Blair and US

President George W. Bush. Another obvious example is Palestine. In international law, the principle of recognition is addressed in establishing states. So why does Palestine, recognized by 137 out of 193 states worldwide, fail to attain statehood? There is no legal answer to this question. Decision-making processes in international organizations such as the United Nations General Assembly, IMF, and World Bank also serve as examples of these contradictory situations. The rules these organizations impose are also contrary to the principle of sovereign equality of states. Furthermore, neither United Nations mechanisms nor customary international law rules foresee a process for abolishing the veto power of the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council.

TWAIL pedagogy, on the other hand, offers a nuanced understanding of the history of international law, presenting a perspective that exposes the injustices of international law and narrates the struggles

of the third world against them. TWAIL authors emphasize the necessity of reflecting different geographies and perspectives in international law and, thus, in the teaching of international law (Anghie, 2020). However, as some argue, the call and effort of TWAIL is not merely a call for a comparative approach (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023). Therefore, TWAIL pedagogy offers a nuanced understanding of the history of international law, presenting a perspective that exposes the injustices of international law and narrates the struggles of

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the third world against them. Antony Anghie, one of the prominent figures of TWAIL, emphasized the importance of this issue by stating, “Critical teaching is a crucial way of at least attempting to ensure that the act, the vocation, of teaching itself might resist these developments and perhaps in some small way further the struggle against inequality and injustice” (Anghie, 2020). Despite being limited and insufficient, the awareness and effort demonstrated through TWAIL and similar movements and studies show how crucial it is to pursue this awareness and effort. With this awareness, international law researchers will understand that positivist international law is not the only and indispensable way to understand and articulate this field, but rather one of many paths. Mohsen Al Attar, one of the prominent names associated with TWAIL and pedagogy, expressed the function of TWAIL in this regard: “Using history, dialectics, and epistemic renewal, we can build momentum towards international law’s reimagination. TWAIL has shown the way; whether mainstream international legal scholars can keep up remains to be seen” (Al Attar & Godínez, 2023).

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While TWAIL calls for epistemic renewal, it aims to redirect legal pedagogy to consider the values, experiences, and epistemologies of non-Europeans.

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Interview with Samer Abdelnour, Co-founder of Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network



How would you define the concept of academic freedom in the West, and why is this concept important for non-Western societies?

The concept of academic freedom, in principle, is meant to guarantee an academic's ability to undertake research and teaching free from the political positions and sympathies of the institutions and states within which they work and live. Yet, in this time of overt fascist repression of speech on specific issues – such as about Palestine and Palestinian rights – we see that universities in the West are shying away from academic freedom by painting certain topics as “controversial.” Where states are heavily involved in suppressing academic freedom, universities are sometimes put in a double bind: trying to maintain some semblance of academic freedom and intellectual pluralism on one hand while complying with political and regulatory authorities on the other. Should non-Western society embrace academic freedom? Absolutely, especially when interpreted as enabling progressive and minority voices to engage in writing, teaching, and public debate in ways that enhance social justice, cultural pluralism, and political accountability.

Many Palestinian academics are engaged in academic studies around the world. What difficulties do you think Palestinian academics face in carrying out their academic work?

The genocide in Gaza and increased violence across occupied Palestine have put tremendous pressure on Palestinian academics. In Gaza, the education system has been destroyed. Every university and college has been deliberately targeted, with buildings destroyed or damaged, hundreds of faculty and staff murdered, and thousands of students murdered, injured, and disabled. Elsewhere in Palestine, faculty are delivering courses online as it is simply too dangerous to travel to and from the university. Universities in the West Bank have been raided, and students arrested and killed.

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Academic freedom is essential to enable academics and students to stand in solidarity with Palestinian calls for a ceasefire, a global ban on arms trade with Israel, and a full economic, academic, and cultural boycott of Israel.

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In fact, hundreds of Palestinian students from the West Bank and Jerusalem have been imprisoned by Israel. In the West, Palestinian academics like myself, students, and those in solidarity with our cause face the threat of harassment or silencing via accusations of antisemitism through policy instruments like the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance “working definition” of antisemitism (IHRA), which strategically conflates criticism of Israel with anti-Jewish racism to silence free speech on Palestine.

Since October 7, during the Israeli-Palestinian “war,” how have Western countries restricted academic freedom? Can you explain this with examples?

This is not a war between Israel and Palestine. It is genocide. Since October 7, we’ve seen increased repression of pro-Palestine speech across the West, particularly in those countries that have a history of imperialism and settler-colonial white supremacy: the US, the UK, Europe (especially Germany, France and Italy), Canada, and Australia, among others. While repression has intensified, it is not new. The sort of epistemic violence academics and activists have experienced since October 7 existed before and includes shutting down protests and events, police presence and violence on campuses and at protests, university administrators threatening student activists over actions, monitoring and policing of social media, and faculty being reprimanded and silenced as a result of false claims of antisemitism. It also includes self-censorship for fear of repression, especially for people in precarious positions.

As a Palestinian academic, how have you and your colleagues been affected by academic restrictions since October 7?

We have become more cautious. In my own institution, I know academics who have canceled courses and modified the curriculum they teach. Students,

especially graduate students, are also shifting their topics to avoid administrative hostility. Across the UK and the West, attacks on academic freedom have skyrocketed and are well documented by groups like the European Legal Support Centre (Europe, UK) and Palestine Legal (US) and also academic associations like the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES, UK), all of which have issued detailed reports on the topic. I encourage your readership to look them up.

What is the importance of international cooperation in ensuring and protecting academic freedom on the Palestinian issue? What could be the leading role of Al-Shabaka in this context?

Global solidarity is integral and happening. It is essential to maintain academic freedom everywhere so that academics and students can speak truth to power in order to challenge societal injustices and, in the case of Gaza and Palestine more broadly, genocide, occupation, and apartheid. Academic freedom is essential to enable academics and students to stand in solidarity with Palestinian calls for a ceasefire, a global ban on arms trade with Israel, and a full economic, academic, and cultural boycott of Israel. More importantly, academic freedom is integral to ensuring university spaces where Palestinians and our supporters can articulate and work for our liberation from occupation and all forms of repression so that we can advance our goals of freedom, justice, and return. Unions and worker organizing are integral to this, as are organizations and projects that platform Palestinian voices, political aspirations, and dreams. In this regard, Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank I co-founded, is one of many organizations. Visualizing Palestine, Makan and Decolonize Palestine are a few others that come to mind.

Shattering Boundaries: Enabling Female Empowerment in Higher Education across Muslim Communities



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In the constantly changing terrain of higher education, the enduring challenge persists with the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, especially within Muslim societies. This article probes deep into the complex interplay of cultural, societal, and religious factors that have historically shaped the participation of women in leadership roles. In addition, it scrutinizes contemporary initiatives dedicated to dismantling these barriers, shedding light on the ongoing efforts to address this long-standing issue and promote greater gender equality in leadership within educational contexts.

The roots of women's education in Muslim societies can be traced back to the early Islamic period, marked by the establishment of educational institutions known as *madāris*, where women had the opportunity to access knowledge on par with men. Influential figures such as Aisha and Fatimah played pivotal roles in shaping the early tradition of women scholars. However, as time progressed, a myriad of factors, including the impact of colonialism and patriarchal interpretations of Islamic teachings, imposed restrictions on the educational opportunities available to women. Despite the initial strides in fostering gender equality in education, these external influences contributed to the limitations placed on women's educational pursuits within Muslim societies (Anjum, 2006; Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2017).

Cultural norms and societal expectations play a crucial role in shaping the extent of women's participation in higher education leadership within Muslim societies. The influence of traditional gender roles is particularly noteworthy, as they frequently emphasize that women should prioritize familial responsibilities over their career aspirations. Consequently, women may encounter barriers to advancing within educational leadership due to these deeply ingrained cultural expectations. Moreover, the degree of conservatism prevalent in society further affects the educational opportunities available to women, with more liberal societies affording greater freedom for women to actively pursue and occupy leadership roles in higher education. In such progressive environments, women may find themselves more empowered to break free from societal constraints and contribute significantly to educational leadership. Thus, an intricate interplay between cultural norms, gender roles, and the overall societal



landscape significantly shapes the trajectory of women in higher education leadership roles in Muslim societies (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017; Samier, 2016).

Religious interpretations within Islam also play an immensely significant and central role in shaping the opportunities and access that women have to leadership roles within the realm of higher education. The Quranic principle emphasizing gender equity serves as a focal point for diverse interpretations by scholars and religious authorities, thereby resulting in a spectrum of perspectives that influence the inclusivity of women in educational leadership positions. Some interpretations enthusiastically advocate for and promote women's active academic engagement, fostering an environment that encourages their participation and contribution. On the contrary, alternative interpretations adopt a more conservative stance, imposing restrictions on women's involvement in educational leadership

The varied perspectives within the religious framework contribute to the complex landscape that shapes the trajectory of women's participation and influence in higher education leadership within the context of Islam.

roles based on stringent readings of Islamic texts. These varied perspectives within the religious framework contribute to the complex landscape that shapes the trajectory of women's participation and influence in higher education leadership within the context of Islam (Larsen et al., 2013; Mahmood, 2005).

To tackle the prevalent issue of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within higher education, numerous initiatives have been strategically implemented in various Muslim societies. A prime example of such endeavors can be observed in Qatar, where the Qatar Foundation has taken significant steps to address this disparity. One particularly noteworthy case study revolves around the establishment of initiatives like the "Distinguished Arab Women Scholars." This visionary program is specifically designed to empower and provide substantial support to women actively engaged in the academic sphere. The initiative aims to cultivate a more inclusive and diverse higher



education leadership landscape by fostering an environment conducive to their growth and advancement. Furthermore, the Distinguished Arab Women Scholars program in Qatar is a commendable initiative that emphasizes identifying and championing exceptional women within academia. This noteworthy program not only serves as a conduit for women to exhibit their remarkable achievements but also actively cultivates mentorship opportunities, thereby playing a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of female scholars. By doing so, it contributes significantly to the cultivation of a more inclusive and diverse academic environment, reinforcing the importance of recognizing and supporting the invaluable contributions of women in scholarly pursuits (Qatar Foundation, 2023; Sellami et al., 2022).

A parallel initiative that merits attention is Saudi Arabia's committed effort through the "Women in STEM" program. This undertaking is strategically designed to tackle the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within the realms of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The core objective of this initiative is to amplify the presence of women in leadership positions within higher education, particularly focusing on STEM-related fields. By actively encouraging and promoting the participation of women in these crucial areas, Saudi Arabia aims to usher in a positive transformation, breaking down barriers and fostering gender equality in higher education leadership. Through

these concerted efforts, both Qatar and Saudi Arabia demonstrate a shared commitment to creating an environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the academic landscape, thereby reshaping the future of higher education in the region. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's Women in STEM program is a comprehensive and well-thought-out strategic initiative that seeks to significantly amplify the involvement of women in the expansive realms of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This groundbreaking program goes beyond conventional measures, as it not only offers substantial scholarships but also extends valuable mentorship and a plethora of professional development opportunities. The overarching objective is to dismantle deeply entrenched gender barriers that have historically hindered women's progress in these critical fields. Through fostering an environment of inclusivity and empowerment, the program aspires to inspire and embolden women to actively and confidently pursue leadership roles within the dynamic landscape of STEM-related disciplines, ultimately contributing to the creation of a more diverse and innovative workforce (Sellami et al., 2022).

Researchers underscore the critical significance of acknowledging and effectively addressing the intricate array of challenges that women face when aspiring to assume leadership roles within the context of higher education in Muslim societies. The multifaceted nature of these challenges is rooted in cultural norms, societal expectations, and diverse

interpretations of religious doctrines, which collectively present formidable barriers. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that initiatives geared towards facilitating progress, such as mentorship programs, comprehensive leadership training initiatives, and robust support networks, have demonstrated considerable success in fostering increased participation of women in various leadership capacities within the academic sphere. These proactive measures play a pivotal role in dismantling existing barriers, enabling women to overcome hurdles and contribute meaningfully to leadership roles in higher education within Muslim societies.

The unequivocal success achieved by these initiatives vividly highlights the imperative necessity for meticulously crafted solutions that judiciously take into account the intricate nuances of regional variations. It is paramount to acknowledge that not all societies adhering to the Muslim faith encounter identical challenges, and the methodologies proving efficacious in one particular context may not possess universal applicability. Thus, it becomes indispensable to embrace a profound recognition of the diversity inherent within Muslim-majority nations, as this serves as the foundational cornerstone for the formulation of interventions that are not only effective but also imbued with inclusivity.

A Call to Action

While examining women's scholarship and participation in higher education leadership within Muslim societies, several key observations emerge that underscore the significance of recognizing and actively dealing with cultural norms. Additionally, it emphasizes constructive engagement with religious interpretations and the implementation of initiatives geared toward fostering mentorship and support networks. These crucial insights underscore the need for a multifaceted approach that integrates cultural sensitivity, religious understanding, and supportive structures to enhance the involvement of women in leadership roles within the context of higher education in Muslim societies. Addressing these aspects comprehensively can contribute to the creation of an inclusive and empowering educational environment that facilitates the growth and success of women in leadership positions, ultimately enriching the entire academic landscape.

This article strongly advocates for proactive involvement from educators, policymakers, and civil society, urging them to carefully reflect upon the insights presented here while dedicating their endeavors to enhance the representation and participation of women in scholarly pursuits and higher education leadership within Muslim societies. Overcoming the obstacles impeding advancement necessitates a concerted and cooperative strategy that engages stakeholders across various echelons. The imperative lies in nurturing inclusivity, comprehending regional subtleties, and customizing interventions to create a conducive environment, thereby laying the groundwork for a future marked by enhanced equity in leadership roles within the sphere of higher education in Muslim societies. By joining forces, we possess the potential to dismantle these barriers and facilitate the empowerment of women, enabling them to assume leadership roles with authority and influence in the academic realm.

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Digitalization of Higher Education in Conflict-affected Societies



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Armed conflicts severely disrupt lives, destroy educational infrastructure, and hinder access to learning, demanding innovative digital education solutions for continuity. This article explores the transformative role of digitalization in advancing higher education within conflict-affected societies and examines the challenges of digital adoption. The focus is on overcoming barriers to ensure accessible, quality education through digital platforms, aiming for resilience and inclusivity in education systems amidst adversity. The framework indicates the importance of developing digital infrastructure, capacity building for educators, e-learning platforms, digital content, and public-private partnerships. These measures are pivotal in expanding access to education, encouraging collaboration, facilitating remote learning, and improving the global competitiveness of individuals in war-torn regions.

Digital Transformation in Education

Higher education in conflict-affected societies faces unprecedented challenges, from damaged infrastructure to disrupted academic schedules. In a world increasingly reliant on digital connectivity, the digital transformation of higher education emerges as a pivotal opportunity to rejuvenate the educational landscape in regions ravaged by conflict, such as Syria. This shift towards digitalization introduces resilience against the myriad physical and socio-economic obstacles imposed by ongoing conflicts, facilitating access to inclusive and flexible learning opportunities. Digital shift refers to integrating digital technologies into various aspects of society, fundamentally changing how organizations operate and deliver value to their stakeholders. In the context of higher education, digital transformation encompasses the adoption of technologies such as online learning platforms, e-libraries, and digital communication tools, as well as the growth of digital skills among educators and learners. Remote teaching can be conducted through synchronous (real-time) or asynchronous (self-paced) methods, depending on the needs of students and the availability of resources, as illustrated in Figure 1. However, the journey towards the digitalization of higher education in conflict-affected societies faces significant barriers, primarily rooted in the infrastructural

A school destroyed by the conflicts in the rural Damascus

Source: M. Abdulaziz, UNICEF



and socio-economic landscape of these regions. Initially, the destruction or inadequacy of physical infrastructure, such as buildings, electricity, and internet hardware, poses a fundamental challenge. Educational institutions struggle to adopt digital technologies without the basic premises for a stable power supply and internet connectivity. Secondly, the digital divide becomes more pronounced in these settings, where internet accessibility is scarce and often non-existent. Many areas remain disconnected from the global network, making online education a distant reality for the local population. Lastly, socio-economic factors further complicate digital adoption. High poverty rates, limited digital literacy, and the cost of digital devices create an environment where even if digital resources are available, they are not accessible to everyone.

Challenges and Opportunities

The digitalization of higher education in conflict-affected societies presents challenges and opportunities. Key concerns include the risk of exacerbating the digital divide, where the poorest and most

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The journey towards the digitalization of higher education in conflict-affected societies faces significant barriers, primarily rooted in the infrastructural and socio-economic landscape of these regions.

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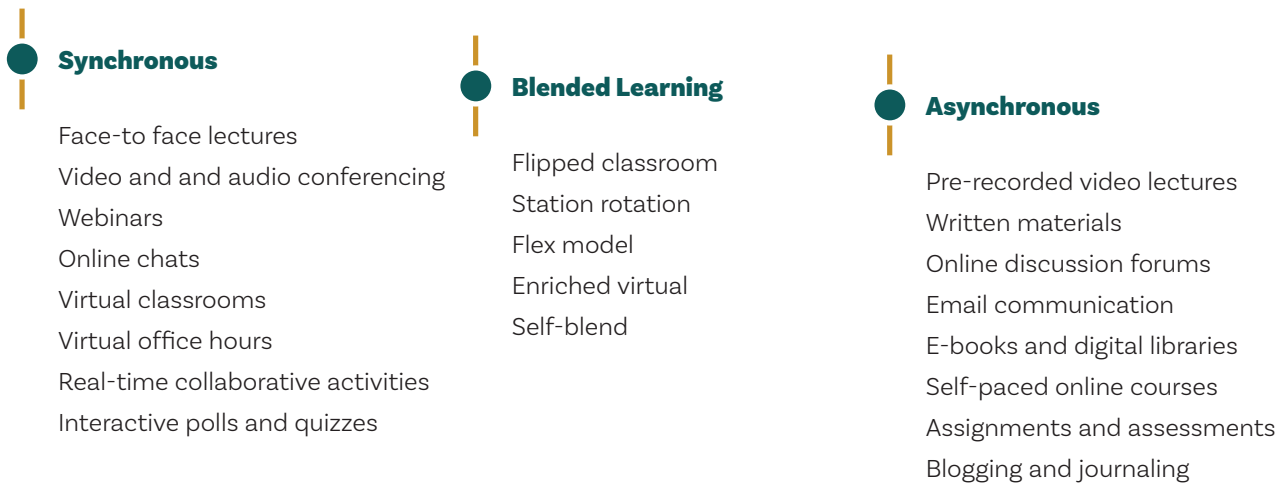


Figure 1. Synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning approaches in higher education

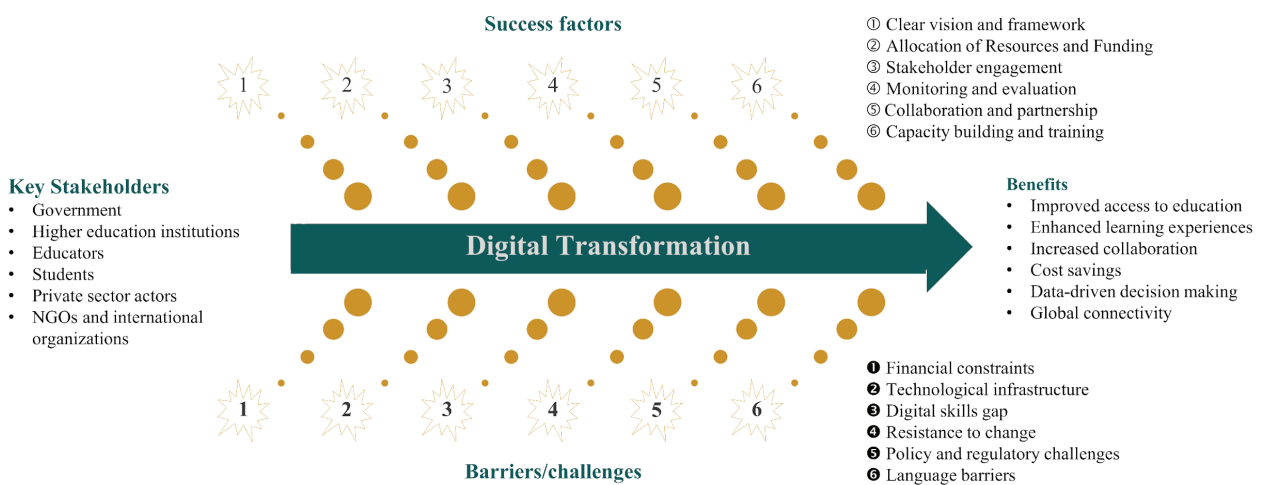


Figure 2. A comprehensive overview of the key stakeholders, benefits, barriers, challenges, and success factors for digital transformation in Syrian higher education

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Higher education can ensure quality education for all, contributing to the country’s recovery and future workforce development by embracing digital technologies and collaborative approaches.

marginalized have limited access to digital technologies, potentially widening educational inequalities. There is also the issue of ensuring quality education through digital platforms and the need for robust cybersecurity measures to protect students and institutions. Comprehensive policy and support frameworks are essential to effectively implement digital education in conflict-affected areas. Governments must enact policies that promote digital infrastructure development, ensuring reliable internet access and the provision of digital devices to students and educators. Equally crucial is the role of international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which can offer financial aid and technical expertise. These entities can assist in deploying digital learning platforms, training educators in digital pedagogy, and developing localized educational content that is accessible. Collaborative efforts between local governments, international bodies, and the private sector are vital in creating resilient, inclusive, and adaptable educational environments. Through such partnerships, digital education can transcend barriers, offering quality learning opportunities to those in the most challenging contexts. The proposed framework for digital transformation in Syrian higher education is designed to address the critical challenges identified through the literature review, expert interviews, and case analysis. This framework comprises four main components: digital infrastructure, e-learning platforms, digital content, and capacity building. Figure 2 indicates the interplay between the various elements contributing to successfully implementing digital transformation initiatives in Syria’s higher education sector.

Conclusion

Digital technologies facilitate continuity in education during times of instability and introduce innovative

teaching methodologies that can enhance student learning outcomes worldwide. Digital transformation offers a critical solution to the challenges faced by the higher education sector due to conflict, enabling access to education and fostering a resilient, inclusive system. This article highlights the need for remote teaching, capacity building, and improved infrastructure as key strategies. Higher education can ensure quality education for all, contributing to the country’s recovery and future workforce development by embracing digital technologies and collaborative approaches. Implementing digital transformation is essential for educational resilience and long-term growth. However, achieving this potential requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Governments, educational institutions, international organizations, and private sector partners must collaborate to invest in the necessary digital infrastructure and policy frameworks supporting the scalability and sustainability of digital education initiatives. This entails improving internet connectivity and access to digital devices, developing comprehensive digital literacy programs, and creating inclusive, context-sensitive educational content.

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E-learning in the Libyan Higher Education



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Higher education in Libya is provided by universities and higher technical and vocational institutions. The University sector in Libya started in the early 1950s with the establishment of the Libyan University, which has campuses in Benghazi and Tripoli. The higher education system is financed by and under the authority of the state; however, the Open University is the only institute within the public sector that relies, to some extent, on tuition fees paid by students. In recent years, policymakers have allowed the creation of private institutions of higher education through what are known as educational cooperatives.

E-learning in Libyan Higher Education

Artemi & Aji (2009) stated that Libyan Higher Education Institutes (LHEIs) are grappling with a shortage of skilled specialists for programming and e-learning projects and high technical staff income rates. Bukhatowa (2010) believes that Libyan universities face challenges in improving education services, efficiency, and new teaching methods but can address these by improving teacher training, implementing e-technologies, and providing professional development. This is confirmed by Kenan (2013), who specified that most Libyan universities lack staff with formal qualifications in distance learning or e-learning due to the Ministry of Libyan Higher Education's inability to recognize these modes of education as valid. However, the University of Tripoli introduced video-conferencing services for online examinations in 2003, similar in structure to the theoretical part of the UK driving test, but the Libyan government does not approve a degree obtained through either distance learning or e-learning. As stated by Othman (2013), the main challenges faced by the Libyan higher education sector in implementing ICT in daily teaching and learning are inadequate ICT infrastructures, insufficient network facilities and educational software products, lack of technical departments, Libyan specialists for online learning and language and cultural differences of teachers and students.

On the other hand, Hamdi (2007) mentioned that the national policy for information and communications technology in Libyan education was launched in 2005, and a number of initiatives and projects were



put forward before the revolution of February 17, 2011. For instance, in 2006, the Ministry of Vocational Training sent 200 post-graduate students from Libya to the UK for a one-year course in modern management techniques and education system management. In 2009, a 60 million e-learning pilot project was initiated. To further develop ICT in Libya, the Libyan General Company for Postal Services and Telecommunications provides ICT training for teachers and staff, including ICT for education. UNESCO and the Libyan government are collaborating on a National ICT project to establish Local Area Networks (LANs) and a Wide Area Network (WAN) for all 149 faculties, digital libraries, and ICT-enhanced learning solutions. The project also includes faculty and staff training, a national ICT resource center, and automation of university management systems.

Plans to Improve ICT in Libya

The Libyan government is working to improve education in Libya through large-scale projects to provide ICT infrastructure to institutions. According to Almansuri (2018), Information and Communication Technologies confirmed the government's attitude toward providing better services for Libyan Citizens. They stated that Libya, after the revolution in 2011, has the approach of approving a new regulatory government for telecommunications as the Libyan

Ministry of Communications and Informatics has chosen a high-level committee of telecommunication experts and lawyers from the ministry as well as from outside to draft a new Telecommunication Act. The new draft aims to perpetuate market competition, ensure high-quality services at competitive prices, and encourage private sector improvement in telecommunication services. Additionally, as an e-government strategy, the Ministry launched the e-Libya program to improve government services for all Libyans and businesses using modern communication networks and systems. Hence, it increased the accessibility of government services to citizens.

Furthermore, the National Communications and Informatics Strategy 2023-2027 published by the Communications and Informatics Authority (2023) sets various strategic objectives, including achieving accessible and affordable communications for all while promoting digital literacy, using ICT communications and information technology for good and effective governance, ensuring infrastructure security, including the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of all data systems used. The report also emphasizes the goal of improving economic growth and sustainable development through information and communications technology and preparing Libya to become the center of information and communications technology in Africa.

“ The main challenges faced by the Libyan higher education sector in implementing ICT in daily teaching and learning are inadequate ICT infrastructures, insufficient network facilities and educational software products, lack of technical departments, Libyan specialists for online learning and language and cultural differences of teachers and students. ”

Recommendations for the Future of E-Learning in Libya

To achieve better e-learning applications in Libyan higher education, Almansuri (2018) suggested that Libyan universities and LHEIs need strategic planning to enhance their future and competitive advantage in the changing educational environment and emphasized that larger leadership, complex communication, and teamwork are crucial. Furthermore, he noted that HEIs should adopt new technologies, updated syllabuses, and quality assurance to improve competitiveness and formulate effective strategies. They should also determine how to use technology as a teaching tool and adapt their existing teaching methods to e-learning education.

Almansuri & Elmansuri (2015) provided additional recommendations for both government officials and academic and private institutions to enhance e-learning practices in Libyan higher education. Necessary actions suggested for the government include improving physical and ICT-related resources, providing funds and careful planning, sharing coordination and resources among institutions, increasing government-private sector partnerships, and integrating e-learning in the education system. On the other hand, academic and private institutions are encouraged to raise awareness of e-learning and ICT potential in Libyan institutions, supporting e-learning implementation by senior managers, allocating a fixed budget, and providing updated training for instructors on software and hardware changes. Moreover, they should enhance teaching and learning methods and provide training at different levels, improve learning management, curriculum management, and staff use, conduct research for future developments, and connect with advanced resources globally. These efforts would facilitate

the successful integration of e-learning into Libyan higher education, enhancing the quality and accessibility of education for all stakeholders.

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Fear, Politics and Students in Kashmir



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In 2009, fearing that the annual convocation of the University of Kashmir, to be presided over by the then President of India, Pratibha Patel, might be disrupted, the university administration banned the Kashmir University Students Union (KUSU). A year later, its office was demolished. Formed in 2007 “as a pressure group to take up student issues” (Raina, 2007), the Union quickly engaged in anti-establishment politics, organizing protests against human rights violations and other such issues (Naqash, 2017). Two things are stark in these administrative decisions and the political positions of the Union: one, student politics is highly discouraged by university administration at the behest of the state authorities, and second, student politics is intimately connected to the politics of the right to self-determination in the region. Nevertheless, despite the ban, in 2017, the organization called for protests, and thousands of students, some even in their uniforms, turned to the streets chanting the slogans of freedom (Masood & Ehsan, 2018).

This brief history and influence of KUSU provide an insight into what student politics in Kashmir is about. In this article, I mainly focus on student politics in the post-accession period in the context of the ongoing struggle for self-determination movement in Kashmir. In 1947, as the British left the subcontinent, the former ruler of Kashmir was given the option to either join India or Pakistan or remain independent. Amid communal riots, massacres, and, subsequently, a war, the ruler decided to join India. Since then, a movement for the right to self-determination has been ongoing, which turned into a popular insurgency in the late 1980s. Huzaiifa Pandith argues that unlike what is expected of student politics -of advocating student issues- student politics in Kashmir is markedly different. Rather, he notes, “it places itself squarely in the people’s struggle for self-determination and counter-colonial sentiment in the Kashmir Valley” (Pandit, 2019, p. 95). Thus, student-led agitations in Kashmir often have been initiated to counter government repression. From the late 1970s, student politics became more palpable. With the rise of organizations like Islami Jamiat Tulba (the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami) and Islamic Students League, the role of religion in politics took center stage. However, it also intensified the debate around the nature of the self-determination movement. For decades, the movement relied



on dialogue with a very low-intensity insurgency accompanying it. However, for multiple reasons, not least student politics, it changed and effectively shaped the current insurgent movement, especially its high-intensity phase in the middle of the 1990s.

I am not interested in providing a more detailed historical timeline of the student movement in Kashmir or on university campuses; rather, I am interested in understanding what it means to be a student activist in a contested territory like Kashmir with a high degree of violence. However, I should note here that the spread of education affected Kashmiri society generally, and it is one of the main reasons that student politics is so attached to the politics of self-determination. Thus, for example, when a relic of Prophet Muhammad was stolen from a mosque, leading to massive protests, the students demonstrated in front of UN offices and demanded a plebiscite (Naqash, 2017). Mohd Tahir

Student-led agitations in Kashmir often have been initiated to counter government repression.

Ganie argues that contemporary youth in Kashmir are remarkably different from earlier generations due to their embeddedness in the social media ecosystem. However, the unique experiences of living in an armed conflict in the “post-9/11 world order, and the concomitant rise of Islamophobia/War on Terror discourses” influence the political consciousness of Kashmiri Youth. Yet, they have an organic link with earlier generations through the poli-

tics of Azadi (Freedom). This political consciousness, however, leads the Indian state to think about Kashmiri Youth from a security perspective (Ganie, 2022, pp. 97–98). The aforementioned case of KUSU is an apt example of understanding this. However, there is a grim reality also where hundreds of young Kashmiris (students) have been killed, maimed, tortured, or simply are languishing in jails.

In this situation, where politics is heavily securitized, and the threat to life is imminent, what does it

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The Palestinian context provides an ideal space where the politics of protest can be articulated, especially since Kashmir and Palestine have evoked solidarity towards each other.

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even mean to be a student? What happens to her aspirations? In the last half a decade since India unilaterally revoked the autonomous status of the region, it might be easy to define such aspirations straightforwardly since the choice is obvious between life and fear. Does that mean the possibility of a student-led social movement is faint? It brings me to the points raised by Ganie that Kashmiri youth are embedded in a social media ecosystem with a lived experience in which the Muslim Question features prominently not just locally but globally. I am particularly thinking about Palestine and how social media has helped to understand the situation, especially when the mainstream has taken a very pro-Israel stand. The Palestinian context provides an ideal space where the politics of protest can be articulated, especially since Kashmir and Palestine have evoked solidarity towards each other (Javaid, 2023). However, such has not been the case, and one plausible answer to this predicament is fear and total control over life in Kashmir by the state. A report in the Associated Press noted that Indian authorities have “asked Muslim preachers not to mention the conflict in their sermons,” further adding that “the restrictions are part of India’s efforts to curb any form of protest that could turn into demands for ending New Delhi’s rule in the disputed region” (Hussain & Saaliq, 2023).

Recently, Hafsa Kanjwal has made an argument that the early decades of India’s rule were marked by what Neve Gordon calls a “politics of life” in which the Indian government propagated development, empowerment, and progress to normalize its control over the region (Kanjwal, 2023). This theoretical category also explains the post-2019 situation but with a slight difference, as fear has been a profound part of everyday life. Student politics in universities is most affected by such situations since it comes

into the way of aspirations. It might seem a grim picture, but it only reflects the slowness of adapting to new political realities. It is difficult to gauge the direction in which the student movement would move and what possibilities it would generate for a comprehensive social movement attached to the self-determination movement. What is required is perseverance and intense conversations about it.

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Interview with Mahsuk Yamac, Dean of Graduate Studies at Zaytuna College



How and why was the College founded? Do you have a target audience of prospective students?

Zaytuna College was founded in 2009 in Berkeley, California, with the mission to provide a traditional liberal arts education that combines the pedagogical approach as well as the curriculum of such a program from both the Islamic and the Western perspectives. The College has two programs, and the target audience of each is unique. For the BA-level program in liberal and Islamic studies, our aim is to train students in the Islamic sciences, the liberal arts, and the Western canon more generally. The result is a graduate who is conversant in two traditions and equipped to contribute critically to any field, whether academically or professionally. Our BA graduates go into higher education, medicine, law, philanthropy, and other important fields that positively impact society.

The MA Program in Islamic Texts specifically was founded to address a gap in higher education in Western academia. Namely, it is not normally possible for students pursuing an MA or PhD to study the Islamic tradition from *within* the tradition. Zaytuna's MA program fills this gap, offering students the opportunity to delve into textual studies at a relatively advanced level while also studying and researching in the Islamic and Western academic traditions. Notably, students complete a publishable research thesis, which serves as a formidable training for PhD studies. Our MA alumni often go on to pursue PhD studies and other academic professions, such as research and teaching, at other higher education institutions.



In the modern context, where Muslims have a growing presence in non-Muslim societies, it is more important now than ever for us to be grounded in both Western and classical Islamic traditions.



It is stated on the official website that the institution aims to educate intellectuals “who are grounded in the Islamic scholarly tradition.” How do you integrate traditional Islamic knowledge into the mainstream education curriculum in the USA?

Technically speaking, Zaytuna College is accredited by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), which means that there are objective and consistent criteria that our college has to meet in order to issue recognized degrees at the BA and MA level, including requirements in our assessment of students and how they align with program learning outcomes. WASC is the accrediting body for other well-known universities, such as Stanford and UC Berkeley. It is a very thorough and difficult process to gain accreditation, and Zaytuna is the first and only Muslim liberal arts college that has done so in the USA. This naturally places our curriculum into the mainstream educational system.

At the same time, colleges in the USA have the ability to design their own curriculum independently. So beyond meeting the technical requirements for colleges, the pedagogical approach, as well as the courses that are taught, reflect the Islamic scholarly tradition.

In your opinion, what role do Muslim colleges play in the overall education system in the USA? And in this sense, what challenges and opportunities do they face in the USA?

Currently, Zaytuna is the only liberal arts college founded by Muslims, which means the role of such institutions is limited in the overall education system in the USA. As a liberal arts college, we are part of an academic circle that is reviving a lost tradition. Through the efforts of our college president, Hamza Yusuf, and many of our faculty members, we engage in academic discourse with other institutions in the

form of conferences, publications, and other avenues. We also know that globally, Zaytuna College is looked upon as a standard of what an integrated Islamic and Western liberal arts education should be, and I believe we can hold the same position in the American context.

How do you think that the College addresses the challenges of balancing Muslim identity in a Muslim-minority country, affects the subject formation of Muslim identity, and shapes the worldviews of Muslim students?

The liberal arts are powerful in training and broadening the human mind. In addition, our college is not just an academic institution. The student experience is integrative and holistic, combining an academically rigorous program with lived reality. So, the study of Islamic law, ethics, and philosophy—all of these are pursued at a deep level and also practiced in their own lives. They are witnessing how Islamic values can transform and benefit their own character, as well as how those values uphold human dignity and justice for everyone. Our goal is to produce well-rounded individuals who are conversant in two traditions and comfortable in their own skin. Because of their nuanced worldview, which is grounded both in Islamic and Western scholarship, our students are able to make meaningful contributions to the world.

Finally, how do you envision the future role of Muslim colleges in Muslim-minority countries in shaping the education and subject formation of the Muslim community?

Institution building is a hallmark for the successful integration of minorities of every kind. Without our own institutions of higher learning, it will be impossible for Muslim communities to train academics and scholars who are competent and well-versed



in the educational standards of their societies while also being grounded and educated in the Islamic tradition. The problem is also cyclical: If we do not train academics at places like Zaytuna, then the professors of Islamic studies departments at all major universities and Western institutions will not accurately represent our values and worldview. So, I envision and hope for colleges like ours to produce scholars, academics, and professionals in every field because they will meet the challenges of every sphere in which they are present. For example, the

students who graduated to go into medicine and law have excelled both academically and at their work, and this becomes a kind of validation for others who might want to apply to Zaytuna College. We have students who are studying to become professors as well, so we hope they will be influential and excellent scholars who can have a lasting imprint in their respective fields. All of this is only possible if we produce students who are truly grounded in the Islamic and Western liberal arts.

Interview with International Students in Istanbul



Abdullah, Syria

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Abdullah, and I am 26 years old. I come from Damascus, where I did my high school, but I had no clear idea what I wanted to study at university. So, I attended medical school for a couple of years before I moved to Istanbul, Türkiye, to assume Computer Engineering as a scholastic path. I completed my bachelor's degree at Üsküdar University, and upon graduating, I enrolled in a master's program at Marmara University.

Have you had the opportunity to engage with student organizations, especially country-specific diaspora organizations, while you were studying/as you are studying? If so, in what ways were they influential or beneficial for your development here as a student?

I don't have a direct yes or no answer since my first school year in Türkiye was the beginning of the COVID-19 restrictions, so the already limited connections I could make in the first semester had

to be more limited. Nevertheless, I enjoyed working with a group of Arab-Turkish university students who gathered regularly to do "sohbet" for the first two years. I also found Istanbul, especially its historic quarters, to be a rich environment in which to meet people from around the globe, which presented a continuous opportunity to grow and learn.

How was the language-learning process for you? Did you find opportunities for language exchange or practice with local students, and how did this contribute to your language-learning journey?

A rollercoaster! But it was definitely an enjoyable one, alhamdulillah. I can hardly claim to speak Turkish, but I am more than self-sufficient when it comes to comprehension; that's because I learned Turkish from the street and a lot of unplanned conversations here and there. My university education was -unfortunately- in English; hence, I couldn't rely much on school for that aspect.



Emina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Could you introduce yourself?

Assalamu alaikum! I am Emina Maglić, and I was born and raised in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, I am a bachelor's degree student at Marmara University in Istanbul. I embarked on this journey roughly six years ago, back in 2018, when I decided to move to Türkiye to pursue my higher education. My academic pursuit started with studying the Turkish language with other foreign students in a one-year TOMER program. Upon successful graduation, I also moved to learn Arabic for one year, where the intensive courses prepared me for my bilingual studies (Turkish and Arabic) of theology. Currently, I am a full-time student at the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University, studying at the Department of International Theology.

How did you decide to pursue higher education in Türkiye? What were the application procedures, such as governmental scholarships, tuition fees, and applying to a specific university, etc.?

While I planned to continue my education in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, God had a different plan. It was an unfolding of circumstances and events that led me to consider living and studying in Türkiye. Upon graduating from secondary school as a valedictorian, my professors encouraged me to consider studying abroad through a governmental scholarship scheme. While deciding between Japan and Türkiye, considering the area of my interest (theology) and close geographical and cultural proximity, Türkiye seemed like a more cogent choice. Shortly after submitting my application for the Türkiye Diyanet

Scholarship, I was invited for a series of examinations and, finally, an interview. The application system was conjoined with the YTB, so it was fairly systematic and convenient. After a couple of months, I was informed that I was awarded a fully-funded study opportunity at my preferred school, which was Marmara University, Faculty of Theology.

Were there any support services or resources provided by the university that either met or exceeded your expectations in terms of helping international students integrate into academic and social life?

Before attending the classes, unfortunately, I had very limited information about the educational system in Türkiye (or my preferred school specifically).

English versions of the websites usually don't provide the same detailed insight into resources available to prospective students compared to their Turkish version, and considering the linguistic barrier at the beginning, it was very hard to attain much information; therefore, there was very little to base the expectations on. TOMER office was rather keen to help us navigate our social life in Istanbul, but as for the academics, there were no specific support services. Aside from a need to update official English websites, I think it would be appropriate to establish an orientation program or counseling services to help international students with assimilation and more comfortable integration into academic life.



Hossam, Morocco

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Hossam, and I am Moroccan. I am 26 years old. I studied Physics in Morocco in Rabat for around four years before coming to Türkiye. Then, I was searching for ways to come to Istanbul to complete my studies. There was an agency that told me if I came, I could save all the modules I studied in physics and complete my studies. I liked the idea, and I came to Istanbul after I was chosen for the mechanical engineering program at Haliç University, as it was one of my goals since I was in high school to do engineering. However, all the promises of saving my modules and completing what I started were lies, so I started from zero.

What were your expectations before coming to study in Türkiye, and how have they matched up with the reality of your experience so far?

Before I came to Türkiye, I had high expectations of the quality of education until I started my first month, and I realized that my expectations were higher than the reality. Personally, I think that Türkiye

doesn't have high-quality teaching as far as I experienced. It has a massive number of universities and manufacturers, but the education they have is based on quantity, giving you a lot of things with a poor explanation, and in the exams, they make it so hard for students.

What advice would you give prospective international students considering higher education in Türkiye?

To calculate your chances well before you come to study in Türkiye, you have to do your research on your own and prepare for your classes. If you are planning to work and study at the same time, it will be so challenging as the professors will fail you if you pass a certain number of hours of absence (it happened to me before). Yet, besides that, Türkiye has an amazing environment for the students if they have the means; the campuses are usually nice and chill, and you can find libraries everywhere in Istanbul, which makes you focus on your studies better.



Said Ramadhan, Indonesia

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Said Ramadhan. I'm from Indonesia, and I study Islamic theology at Istanbul University. I came to Türkiye in November 2020 to study theology because Türkiye has always been one of my dream countries to study. Also, the fact that it has a massive Islamic history and is a Muslim-friendly country affected my choice.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education system in Türkiye, from your perspective as an international student?

The main strengths are the opportunities for student exchanges, especially the cross-European equivalency of the education system. So, there is no need to take an equivalency when you want to continue your studies at different European universities. Also, you have many opportunities for conditional scholarships here. On the other hand, sometimes

international students have difficulties accessing information due to a lack of it. The education system is independent and self-learning, and the language is difficult to understand because many majors use Turkish, which is an obstacle to graduating on time.

Were there any support services or resources provided by the university that either met or exceeded your expectations in terms of helping international students integrate into academic and social life?

Yes, there are many interesting clubs to join to develop life skills. There are opportunities for student exchanges and many internships, which are easy to get for international students. But, sometimes, we also need to network with other people to learn about those projects and programs we didn't know about before, as several university activities are only for local people.



Tamari, Georgia

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Tamari, and I'm from Georgia. I am a senior at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Faculty of Arabic Islamic Sciences.

How did you decide to pursue higher education in Türkiye? What were the application procedures, such as governmental scholarships, tuition fees, and applying to a specific university, etc.?

Studying in Türkiye has been my dream since I was a child. My father studied in Kayseri and graduated from the Department of Islamic Studies. That's why we always had guests at our house during Ramadan, and after the Tarawih prayers, my father would preach to them. I always admired my father and wanted to read his books, learn about my religion, and teach others. When I finished high school, I had the opportunity to realize my dreams, and with family support, I came to Türkiye to study at the university.

What were your expectations before coming to

study in Türkiye, and how have they matched up with the reality of your experience so far?

My expectation from the education I would receive in Türkiye was to be a starting point in shaping my future. My university environment, professors, and friends helped me fulfill these expectations.

Have you had the opportunity to engage with student organizations, especially country-specific diaspora organizations, while you were studying/as you are studying? If so, in what ways were they influential or beneficial for your development here as a student?

I had the opportunity to meet Georgians who had to immigrate from Soviet Russia years ago and settled in Türkiye. I got involved in their associations and foundation activities in various fields, and we worked to do beneficial things for Georgians living here and in our country. As a student, it helped me express myself, understand the importance of teamwork, and develop myself.



Sumayya Haroub, Tanzania

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Sumayya Haroub Mohamed, and I am from Tanzania. I am currently studying at Istanbul University in the Faculty of Business Administration, and it is my second year. I am a scholarship student. I have been in Istanbul, Türkiye, for almost two and a half years. I first completed my TOMER (Turkish as a Foreign Language Courses) at Istanbul University Language Center for eight months and started my studies afterward.

What were your expectations before coming to study in Türkiye, and how have they matched up with the reality of your experience so far?

I knew it would never be easy from the beginning as the thought of studying my course in another language than English was always in my head, and I am studying the course that I desire in the Turkish language, which I find very hard to cope with. But I am still trying my best to achieve my goals. So far, language is the only challenge that I have been facing and am still facing, but other things like the experience of exploring, learning new things, meeting new cultures, and meeting people from different parts of the world are fun for me. This all matches reality as I believe that life is full of competition wherever I go, and that's what makes it meaningful, so I keep on moving to try to learn more.

Have you had the opportunity to engage with student organizations, especially country-specific diaspora organizations? If so, in what ways were they influential or beneficial for your development here as a student?

I actually didn't get to have the opportunity to engage with student organizations at all. I am still new to this, but I am part of the Tanzanian Community in Türkiye (TCT), which is a diaspora organization. It hasn't been that long since I joined the organization, but I learned a few things about how to survive in a foreign country as a foreigner and a student, and it made me strong enough to encounter most of the challenges. Apart from that, I joined a Turkish organization known as Assalam, which also has a branch in my home city, Zanzibar. I joined Assalam to experience and learn how I can help the people in my country and those in Türkiye by engaging and increasing my network. So far, it has made a huge influence in the past year since I joined the organization. I learned many things, which helped me with experiential and academic learning, as I have been learning more about management, volunteering, and much more. Coming to Türkiye couldn't be a wrong decision for me; even though there are things that make me want to go back, I still have to change myself by learning many things far from home.



Inga, Georgia

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Inga, and I'm Georgian. I am a senior at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Faculty of Arabic Islamic Sciences.

How did you decide to pursue higher education in Türkiye? What were the application procedures, such as governmental scholarships, tuition fees, and applying to a specific university, etc.?

Since Georgia is a Christian country and very few people know about Islam or live Islamically, I always wanted to learn the true Islam and then teach it to our youth, especially since Islam was misrepresented to us in our schools. Therefore, I first received a two-year Quran course education in Türkiye and then decided to continue my education at university. My family supported this decision, and I came to Türkiye to study with my own means.

What were your expectations before coming to study in Türkiye, and how have they matched up with the reality of your experience so far?

Since there were very few people around me studying in Türkiye, I didn't have much information about education here, but of course, I had some expectations. My expectations from the department I would study in were exceptionally high. I wanted to learn Islamic

sciences at the highest level and improve my Arabic. During my studies, I realized that the education I received at school alone was not sufficient, but I had many opportunities in Istanbul to compensate for this deficiency. Although this process was challenging for me, I can say that my expectations regarding education were fulfilled.

Have you had the opportunity to engage with student organizations, especially country-specific diaspora organizations, while you were studying/ as you are studying? If so, in what ways were they influential or beneficial for your development here as a student?

During university in Istanbul, I had the opportunity to engage with diaspora organizations that carry out various educational and cultural activities here. We planned projects with them that we could implement in our homeland, and I had the chance to evaluate my country through their eyes. I saw not only the needs and deficiencies in Georgia but also in the Islamic studies in the Caucasus region. I tried to identify which areas I needed to work on more and to develop projects regarding the educational programs I would offer along with my department. I hope I have been able to improve myself.



Abdullah, East Turkestan

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Abdullah, and I was born and raised in Turfan, East Turkestan. With the support of my family, after completing my memorization of the Quran at an early age, I pursued my education in Turfan. During this time, alongside formal education, I secretly received an education in Islamic Sciences and intensely focused on developing myself in this field. I aspired to attain a higher position in Islamic Sciences and ensure the correct portrayal of Islam among Uyghurs. Thus, I embarked on a journey of knowledge to Egypt in 2016 for higher education. However, in 2017, due to the agreement between

the Egyptian government and the Chinese regime, which led to the initiation of a policy of arresting and deporting Uyghur students to China, I was compelled to migrate to Türkiye. I completed my undergraduate education at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University in 2021 and commenced my master's degree in Basic Islamic Sciences at Marmara University in the same year. Currently, I am writing my thesis and an instructor at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University.

Were there any cultural or lifestyle factors that influenced your decision in Türkiye, and how did these factors affect your education and life throughout your student life here?

The fact that Uyghur Turks and Anatolian Oghuz Turks belong to the same lineage brings linguistic, customary, and cultural similarities. Upon first setting foot at Istanbul Atatürk Airport, realizing that officials spoke the same language as me and being greeted with such warmth filled me with indescribable joy. Throughout my time in Türkiye, I constantly felt a sense of similarity in language, religion, and culture. I never felt like a stranger in these lands; Türkiye embraced me, and I embraced Türkiye.

Since the Chinese government did not allow Islamic science education in East Turkestan, Uyghur Turks secretly pursued education in Islamic Sciences. Because of strict governance and oppression, educational methodologies were outdated and not integrated into modern educational systems. However, Islamic or Religious Sciences education in Türkiye has a longstanding tradition in theological faculties. Efforts are made in these faculties to integrate and develop the old theological system into the modern educational system. This context significantly influenced my academic life and perspective on Islamic sciences. I also studied at the Faculty of History. My education in Türkiye led me to believe I should not limit myself only to classical religious sciences. I concluded that I needed to learn different foreign languages and acquire deep knowledge in other disciplines that could support Islamic Sciences. Thus, I focused on self-improvement accordingly.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education system in Türkiye, from your perspective as an international student?

As an international student studying in Türkiye since 2017, I believe I have partially experienced the strengths and weaknesses of Türkiye's higher education system. Türkiye having trained scientists in many fields and possessing a well-equipped academic staff creates a strong impression that it has

a quality human resource, the most critical component of an educational system. Another strength of Türkiye's higher education system is that the education is mostly conducted in Turkish. Education is provided in Turkish in various fields, from medicine to engineering, from Islamic Sciences to international relations, and there are sufficient Turkish resources available. Türkiye also supports higher education students through KYK (Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution) scholarships and civil society organizations. This situation contributes positively to Türkiye's international effectiveness by enabling Turkish students to integrate with different cultures. Another strength of higher education in Türkiye is that there are internship opportunities in many fields. Students can intern in a wide range of areas, from medicine to Islamic Sciences, from librarianship to engineering.

However, alongside the strengths of the Turkish higher education system, there are also weaknesses. Overall, foreign language teaching, especially at the middle and high school levels, does not achieve the desired success, which has negative implications for higher education. Language teaching generally progresses by focusing on grammar and reading comprehension, while there are significant deficiencies in speaking and writing skills. Furthermore, the requirement for exams to adhere to specific criteria, the compulsion of irrelevant exams, or some exams being based on rote learning are some weaknesses of Turkish higher education. Finally, I would like to mention that international students who complete their higher education in Türkiye face visa issues when re-entering their country. I believe that the entry of a student who has received an education in Türkiye for many years should not be evaluated in the same way as other foreigners.

Evaluating the International Legal System through the Case of Israel at the ICJ



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The Legal Foundations of South Africa's Genocide Case Against Israel at the International Court of Justice

Based on Article IX of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948 Convention), South Africa, relying on the competent jurisdiction provided by the ninth article, brought a case against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Following the initial hearings held on January 11-12, 2024, the ICJ announced its interim decision regarding urgent requests for provisional measures on January 26, 2024, 14 days after the first hearings. According to the aforementioned ninth article of the 1948 Convention, disputes between the contracting parties relating to the interpretation, application, or fulfillment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article 3, can be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

According to the second article of the 1948 Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

According to the third article of the Convention, genocide; conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; attempt to commit genocide; complicity in genocide are punishable acts and natural persons who commit these acts are subject to punishment under Article IV of the 1948 Convention. In the case brought before the ICJ, the respondent state is judged in terms of its international responsibility for the internationally wrongful act of genocide attributed to it. The court authorized to prosecute natural persons (in other words, individuals) for specified crimes is the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICJ prosecutes states for their international responsibility regarding state responsibility due to an international wrongful act.



Individuals are prosecuted for international criminal responsibility before the ICC.

Some of the international obligations arising from international wrongful acts are peremptory norms of international law, also known as *jus cogens* norms. The existence of such norms is confirmed in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. *Jus cogens* norms are imperative rules of international law that cannot be deviated from by any state or replaced by a subsequent general rule of international law of the same nature. The prohibition of genocide is an example of a *jus cogens* norm.

International obligations arising from peremptory norms of international law are obligations *erga omnes*, which means that each state owes them to the international community as a whole. Any state can invoke *erga omnes* obligations against any other state. According to the UN document A/RES/56/83, international responsibility arising from the violation of an *erga omnes* obligation can be invoked by any state against the state responsible for the violation.¹

South Africa's application against Israel in the ICJ is a submission arising from a serious violation of an *erga omnes* obligation stemming from a *jus cogens* rule, and it is based on Article IX of the 1948 Convention, which automatically confers jurisdiction and authority on the ICJ. Under this automatic jurisdiction, Israel is not required to accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ. Article IX of the 1948 Convention regarding extraordinary automatic jurisdiction has allowed South Africa to submit its application.

Interim Measures in the Genocide Case Against Israel at the International Court of Justice

On January 26, the ICJ has issued the following rulings against the State of Israel:

1. In accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to the Palestinians in Gaza, Israel will desist from the commission of any and all acts within the scope of Article II of the Convention, in particular, killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to the members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
2. It will ensure that its military, as well as any irregular armed units or individuals do not commit any acts described previously.
3. It will ensure that people do not engage in direct and public incitement to commit genocide or attempt to commit genocide, and insofar as they do engage therein, steps will be taken towards their punishment.
4. It will take all measures within its power to prevent the deprivation of access to basic

¹ Hakkı Hakan Erkiner, *Devletin Haksız Fiilden Kaynaklanan Uluslararası Sorumluluğu*, Seçkin Publishing, Ankara: 2023; UN Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, Article IV, see p. 287.

services and humanitarian assistance urgently needed to alleviate the adverse living conditions faced by Palestinians in Gaza.

5. It will take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II of the 1948 Convention.
6. It will submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one month.

The fact that the South African State's application was not rejected in this interim decision and that the indicated measures were ordered means that ICJ did not deny the existence of the danger of genocide. In the decision, the ICJ only announces its ruling on interim measures, while it will declare its decision on the existence of genocide at the end of the case.

International Criminal Responsibility and the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court

There are two types of responsibility for acts committed under international law. The first is the international responsibility of states for wrongful acts under international law. In cases such as the case instituted by South Africa against the State of Israel for wrongful acts in violation of the 1948 Convention, the competent international court is the International Court of Justice. The proceedings here are not criminal but rather a determination of responsibility and reparations such as restitution, compensation, and satisfaction. Essentially, states do not have criminal responsibility in international law, but they have international responsibilities arising from wrongful acts under international law, which are not of a criminal nature. The second type of responsibility for acts committed in international law is the international criminal responsibility of individuals, or in other words, the international criminal responsibility of natural persons. The competent international court in this regard is the International Criminal Court. Here, individuals are prosecuted for international crimes. While the State of Israel is on trial at the International Court of Justice for its international responsibility, the

competent court to prosecute individuals such as the president, prime minister, foreign minister, ministers, politicians, and soldiers for the international crimes they commit is the International Criminal Court. Indeed, in 2021, the ICC declared itself competent to prosecute international crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territories.

On May 22, 2018, the government of the State of Palestine applied to the ICC. It was Palestine's fourth application to the Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Israeli civilians and forces. However, three years later, on February 5, 2021, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber, on the referral of the ICC Office of Prosecutor, ruled that the ICC has jurisdiction over the territories mentioned in Palestine's referral to the Court. In the specified ruling, it was declared that the ICC has jurisdiction in Palestine which is recognized as a state under Article 12(2)(a) of the Rome Statute, and has the right to self-determination. Since October 7, 2023, Israeli state officials have submitted numerous complaints and applications to the ICC Office of Prosecutor, along with evidence, regarding severe and serious international crimes committed in Gaza. These crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression as defined in the Rome Statute. Currently, there are no ongoing cases initiated by the ICC Office against Israeli state officials for the mentioned crimes. However, investigations are continuing.

According to the established rule of attribution in the international responsibility of states, first, the conduct of any state organ is considered an act of that state under international law, whether the organ exercises legislative, executive, judicial, or any other functions, whatever position it holds in the organization of the state, and whatever its character as an organ of the central government or of a territorial unit of the state. The second, an organ includes any person or entity which has that status in accordance with the internal law of the state.² Hence, there are individuals who have created the threat of genocide whose existence was not denied in the ICJ's interim decision. According to the mentioned attribution rule, the individuals committing the acts attributed to the state in state responsibility are natural persons, namely individuals. Therefore, those persons representing the State of Israel should also be prosecuted in the ICC.

2 Hakkı Hakan Erkiner, *Devletin Haksız Fiilden Kaynaklanan Uluslararası Sorumluluğu*, Seçkin Publishing, Ankara: 2023; UN Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, Article IV, see p. 277.

Israel on Trial at the International Court of Justice: Legal and Political Implications

Editor's Note: The text was compiled from the ILKE Agenda seminar held on February 15, 2024.

Mutaz Qafisheh

My talk will be divided into two parts. First, I will talk about the genocide case that South Africa brought against Israel to the International Court of Justice. The second part will be dedicated to the impact of the Gaza war and the decision of the International Court of Justice on the international discourse and international law in general. The decision of the International Court of Justice that was delivered on January 26 regarding the genocide that is taking place in Gaza right now is historical. Because it is the first time in history that such type of genocide is taking place in an unprecedented way. Until now, we have about 100,000 Palestinian martyrs, about 30,000 who were murdered by the Israeli forces, and more than 70,000 Palestinians who were injured by Israeli forces, which is about 5% of the entire population of the Gaza Strip.

In addition to the destruction of more than 80% of the buildings in Gaza, the destruction of deliberately targeted hospitals. And, as I speak now, the Israeli forces are invading the Nassar hospital in Khan Yunis. It is probably the first time since the Second World War that hospitals are directly targeted by military forces, of course, all along with the destruction of schools, universities, municipalities, courts, bar associations, and all facets of life. If we take, for example, the five cases of genocide that have been pleaded before the International Court of Justice, this would probably be the highest number of casualties and mass destruction in comparison to the other cases, such as Bosnia, Croatia, or Myanmar cases. But this decision is a historical one because it is the first time that Israel has been brought to the International Court of Justice and charged with genocide. Nobody would have imagined, when the Genocide Convention was crafted in 1948, that Israel, for which the Genocide Convention was drafted after the Holocaust, would be charged with committing the holocaust for or against other people.

In regards to the case, nobody expected that the court would decide this significant majority against them; 16 judges said that the genocide in Gaza was plausible. That means that there are serious indications that genocide is taking place in Gaza. However, we were not expecting that this high number of judges would decide that there is genocide because of the compulsion of the court. Actually, the

composition of the court was not promising because we have judges from the United States, Germany, Slovakia, India, Australia, Australia, and Uganda, and most of these countries' policies are pro-Israel. But I think it was overwhelming for the judges to decide that there is genocide in Gaza because the facts speak for themselves. So, I also think this judgment will have a far-reaching impact and result in other aspects of international law, including international criminal law. I expect, and I hope that the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, will take action soon to bring charges against the officials who are committing the crime of genocide, which is the crime of the crimes. This genocide was committed by Israeli officials who declared publicly that they were going to erase Gaza and commit actions that are genocidal by character in addition to the intention that was declared publicly by the Israeli Minister of Defense, Israeli Prime Minister, and a number of other cabinet ministers. But of course, I know some people were disappointed by the judgment because the Court did not declare a ceasefire. I know that there are different opinions in this respect. Still, I think the essence of the court order is to apply or to enforce a ceasefire in Gaza because the court ordered the cessation of genocidal acts, the opening of the crossings for Gaza for humanitarian aid, and stopping all incitement for genocide.

Some people were hoping that the court would order the ceasefire directly, but given the composition of the court, that would have been a bit difficult, as indicated by the German judge in the court that the court would not decide on other general international law issues, including the issue of self-defense, ceasefire, self-determination and the application of international humanitarian law. Yet the order is very clear and imposes obligations on Israel. Also, what we call in international law erga omnes obligations, which require that all states take actions to stop genocide in Gaza, based on the genocide

In the case of Ukraine and Palestine, those who crafted international law, particularly international human rights law and international humanitarian law, are the very violators of international law.

convention. There are 153 states that are members of the Genocide Convention, and all of them have so-called erga omnes obligations to stop genocide, challenge Israel, and take action against the Israeli genocidal acts in Gaza. On the 19th of February, the Court will conduct a hearing from February 19 to February 26 regarding the legality of the Israeli occupation. Fifty-two states and three international organizations will be speaking at the court.

On the other hand, the other aspect is the impact of this decision on international law generally. International law is quite significant for us as Palestinians and indeed for all those who are living under oppression. International law is the tool for us to claim and continue claiming our rights. I think giving

up on international law or not calling for the implementation and enforcement of international law will be a gift for those who abuse international law. International law is the tool for the Palestinians to address the illegality of the Israeli settlements, the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem, and the Israeli confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources. Also, the right of return for Palestinian refugees is based on international law, and the International Criminal Court, in particular, is the tool by which the Palestinians can claim that the court has the duty to investigate and punish those who are committing crimes in Palestine.

The International Law Before and After October 7

I think international law before October 7 is different from international law after October 7. What happened after October 7 showed very clearly the international or Western hypocrisy in dealing with international law and how they approach international law. In the case of Ukraine and the case of Palestine, those who crafted international law, particularly international human rights law and

“ South Africa is the symbol of an oppressive imperialist mentality, so, for South Africa to bring Palestine to the attention of the world is very significant. ”

international humanitarian law, are the very violators of international law. Because they are not only not trying to prevent, but they are even complicit and are supporting Israel in violating international law. Germany, for example, punishes anyone, especially after October and November, who calls for a ceasefire, so if you are calling for peace and a ceasefire, you will be charged by the German police. What hypocrisy would be more than that? International law was undergoing a historical transformation even before October 7; we could see that certain powers in the world were trying to find a more just international order and law that would be enforceable.

We could see that in Ukraine and China, so-called BRICS countries are trying to find an alternative to the international security order created after the Second World War, whereby the Western colonizers are dominating the international order and including international law. In the coming years, we will witness a certain transformation of the international order. Western countries are aware of this fact and know that Western civilization, especially American hegemony, is declining, and they are trying to stop this fact from happening. But I think what happened on October 7 will accelerate that process of the decline of the Western hegemony and colonization of international law towards more just international law and international order.

Of course, it's a difficult moment for the Palestinians and Gaza, but that might contribute to putting more pressure on international organizations, including the United Nations, to recognize the state of Palestine, recognize the rights of Palestinians, to end the Israeli occupation, and probably the next decision of the International Court of Justice regarding the illegality of Israeli occupation. They might impose certain obligations on all states in the world to contribute to putting an end to the

Israeli occupation by actions, for example, imposing certain sanctions, including diplomatic sanctions and commercial boycotts, to grant Palestine full membership in the United Nations to recognize the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including the right of Palestinian refugees and the liberation of Palestine from the Israeli colonization not only in words but also in practice.

The impact of October 7 and the decision of the ICJ will be felt in the international legal order in general. Gaza will be the stone upon which international law will be tested and be clearer toward a more just international order. I think international law is changing, and international justice and other actors will contribute to the new international order, including many of the countries in the South of the world.

Symbols of the Struggle for Existence: South Africa and Palestine

Sami al-Arian

The question of “Why South Africa?” is very important because South Africa has been a symbol of the South African struggle for existence for decades and culminated in the 1980s until Nelson Mandela was freed in 1990 and then elected president in 1994. This is very important because South Africa is the symbol of an oppressive imperialist mentality. So, for South Africa to bring this to the attention of the world is very significant. Indeed, no other country was willing to do it, including Muslim countries. Fifty-seven countries have 5 million soldiers, 5500 airplanes, 22,000 men, and thousands of artillery. And all these countries with all these facilities couldn't

bring one bottle of water to Palestine unless Israel said yes. However, we have one country that brought this to the International Court of Justice. Now, a lot of people don't know what that means, but it is indeed very important because, for the first time, Israel is brought under scrutiny. South Africa presented an impeccable case with an 84-page report and wrote the charges against them in a way that makes it very difficult to deny what happened. A lot of people say this is a political case as well as a legal case, and therefore, because many of the countries on that court were supportive of the Israeli genocide, that they're the people who are representing these countries would probably try to sway or not be forthcoming or no role in a way that would be in favor of the Palestinians here.

The Details of the Trial at the International Court of Justice

14 out of the 15 judges in the Court accepted the South African case. South Africa asked for nine demands, while Israel asked to dismiss the case because there was no direct dispute between South Africa and Israel. The court rejected all of Israel's demands and accepted the demands of South Africa. But we have to remember that South Africa did not ask for a ceasefire. A ceasefire is a term used between states, and what's happening in Gaza is not between states since Hamas is not the state. Israel is trying to achieve what it couldn't achieve back in 1948, which is the complete expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine. The Court of Justice came with these six rulings, which effectively declared that Israel has to keep records of all the things that are taking place in Gaza; it cannot incite against Palestinians; it must open all doors to help the Palestinians and get all the aid needed to the Palestinians, and the last one, it also has to present a report of what's

taking place. Now, what was Israel's response? Totally ignored it. So, the political implications are significant because those who help Israel commit genocide are as guilty as the one who commits genocide according to the Genocide Convention, which means the United States is also implicated.

Let me conclude by saying there are many important implications of this. First of all, this is the first time that Israel is facing the court, an international body that is going to say it is guilty of genocide. Unfortunately, the wheel of justice is very slow, so it will probably take two years before they determine that. But in that ruling, it says that there are plausible cases of genocide that by itself puts it into the light that it is committing genocide. Secondly, those who help Israel to commit are themselves implicated. Third, anyone who will prevent genocide is justified. It cannot be said, as the US or the UK says, "You cannot have Israeli shipping because that would lead to disruption of international trade," because anyone trying to prevent the genocide is justified by international law. Fourth, for example, if Türkiye, as a powerful and regional country, was waiting for someone to help and saying that we don't want to move alone, it could go and help the Gazans. They cannot necessarily stop the genocide, but at least give them the aid, medicine, food, water, and electricity that they deserve, and they can do that on by international law. Because that ruling says that all aid must reach the Palestinians, and no one can, meaning Israel, prevent that aid. So, it will be armed by international law. However, what is missing here is the political will because the US as a state basically controls the international order that it created; everybody is afraid of the US. And I say if countries are afraid, it is then the people who have to move and force their governments to do the right thing.

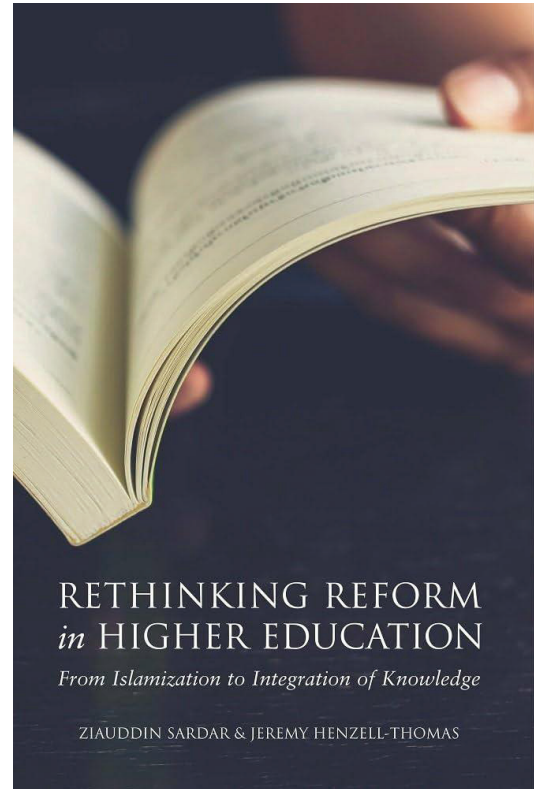
Book Review: Rethinking Reform in Higher Education



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<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg129>



Ziauddin Sardar & Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*. London: 2017.

In the 21st century, where almost everything undergoes rapid change, it is an undeniable fact that education and knowledge production are as crucial as ever. Both the personal development of individuals and the direction societies take largely depend on the quality and functioning of education systems. Furthermore, with globalization, there is a tendency towards modernization, Westernization, and standardization in knowledge production. Yet, it has not been completely as harmonious in Muslim societies as in Western countries and has resulted in a complex reaction within the specificity of the societies.

Compiled from the writings of Ziauddin Sardar and Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge* discusses the genesis of this reaction, the problems of non-Islamization in the current system of knowledge production, and how the reform movement should be pursued. The book primarily seeks to provide explanatory answers to the question, "Is it possible to produce authentic knowledge in the higher education institutions (universities, various

institutes, etc.) of Muslim societies?” and consists of four chapters.

In the introductory chapter titled “Mapping the Terrain,” Sardar addresses the problems of inadequacy and degradation of higher education institutions and the necessary system change. Michel Godet has identified the current and major problems in the education system as the epistemological crisis, the crisis of aims, the crisis regarding the content and organization of education systems, the crisis of the selection process, and the crisis of authority and control. He also pointed to the quality of education and teachers, functionality, and economic and social effects regarding education. Moreover, we should note that the capitalist system did not separate its mechanisms from knowledge production. Private universities and private schools have turned into workplaces where education is marketed.

On the other hand, it is highlighted in the book that “the main problem for the confusion surrounding European higher education and its reform is that we do not know what a university is for” (p. 15). Throughout history, educational institutions have drifted into a void of meaninglessness and purposelessness by the 19th century, as noted by European scholars. Despite attempts to define the purpose of education in German, English, and French schools, there has been no universal agreement on what education should aim to achieve.

Referring to the emerging sciences and the social structures and ideas that construct them, Sardar emphasizes that disciplines are “socially constructed.” One important point to keep in mind is that knowledge is never produced in a vacuum, separated from people, timeless, spaceless, or without a historical context. Science is always embedded in the values, assumptions, cultures, and worldviews in which it is produced. However, since it has been primarily produced under the monopoly of the West, it naturally reflects the worldview of the West. Consequently, the most significant differences between the West and other developing or colonized states become apparent in their knowledge production and educational systems.

In the second chapter, titled “From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge,” Sardar seeks answers to the questions, “How can we achieve Islamic reform in higher education? How have Muslim societies and

Western modernity confronted each other in the development of sciences?” In the following pages, he outlines answers to these questions as follows (p. 126):

We are talking about “holistic education” in a more universal sense. Our goal is to create a new paradigm based on the first principles, where knowledge, creation, life and humanity are perceived as integrated within a universal framework. As such, we intend to go beyond the attachment to existing paradigms and models (which are usually inherently dichotomous and adversarial) in the realization that the way forward is a new mode of consciousness which is integrative and inclusive and involves embracing the Other.

This section also provides a recurring message of “unity” as a subtext. In the sciences, one can speak of opposites and dichotomies such as knowledge-value, quantitative-qualitative; in social life, modern-traditional, and religious-secular. To sustain its functioning, the Western system requires uniform social and even scientific structures and does not tolerate separation and differences. However, in Islamic educational reform, contrasts are seen as richness. Today and tomorrow share the same atmosphere, where people, their endeavors, and sciences are not segregated into “self and other.” In other words, ongoing and forthcoming technological developments will concern not only the West but all of humanity. Therefore, higher education institutions need to embrace an innovative paradigm based on universal good, beauty, and healing without excluding the other. In other words, “We need to see the Muslim civilization as a human civilization” (p. 132).

In the third chapter of “The Integration We Seek,” Jeremy Hanzell-Thomas opens with an insight into the unraveling and reweaving of layers of meaning. On the one hand, the glorification of the West through a globalized narrative symbolizes Western antagonism, and on the other hand, it gives rise to an excessive defense of traditional values and methodologies and a blind adherence to them. Even without the ostentatious tools of modernity, societies that lose their core values will inevitably succumb to corruption. Thomas opposes the passive acceptance of cultural values without any effort and adds: “We must move past the tired debate that

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Islamic reform promises paradigms that transcend the limits of dialectics, liberating from the rigidity and dryness of false certainties.

”

pits the modern West against its backward other and recover the Enlightenment ideal of rigorous self-criticism” (p. 148).

The term “Fuad” is frequently mentioned in this chapter, emphasizing not only the rational aspect of human beings but also the importance of unity of heart and mind in the expanded disciplines approach. It is widely acknowledged that a university should teach uniqueness, creativity, imagination, social responsibility, and the ability to take risks. However, in addition to these, the curriculum should also facilitate independent thinking, the ability to reach out to the other through dialogue and communication, genuine interest and deep kindness. It should also pave the way for students to attain an open heart and mind, and understanding. In this regard, educators should play an active role not only in knowledge transmission but also in cultivating the spirit and fostering students’ character development.

Henzell-Thomas concludes the book with the chapter “Towards a Language of Integration.” As the title suggests, the main theme of this section revolves around language and, subsequently, the need for new paradigms that prioritize the semantic-conceptual richness created by international languages and emphasize human values. Islamic reform promises paradigms that transcend the limits of dialectics, liberating from the rigidity and dryness of false

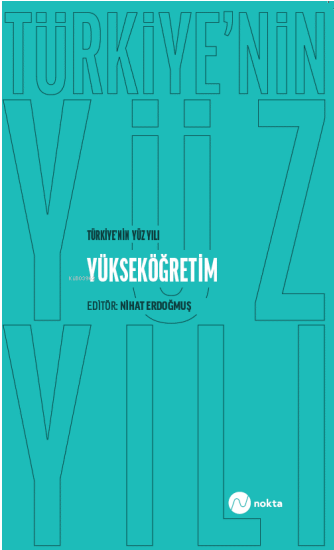
certainties. “Meeting this challenge is integral to our intention to find what might best be described as a seminal language to activate, shape and drive forward a new and dynamic discourse on the integration of knowledge for the revitalization of education in Muslim societies” (p. 178). Moreover, the need for reformation against the Western monopoly of meaning is not only felt in Eastern and Muslim societies. Western scientists also require new areas of meaning that respect humanity’s sustainability and ontological and physical existence due to the increasing problems arising from technological developments and the growing visibility of nature and human degradation.

In conclusion, Sardar and Thomas present the necessity of rethinking the education system in Islamic terms through their writings. They diagnose the problems with social and technical elements within a logical framework and outline reform steps from a holistic perspective. These writings are also valuable in illuminating the action plan for scholars and candidates who feel trapped in the modern world. Moreover, they also provide an inclusive space for everyone within a Westernized and globalized system. Education is fundamental to the sustenance and continuity of life, and education nourishes the values of life. Thus, there is an inherent cyclical structure between them.

BOOKS

Higher Education in the Muslim World

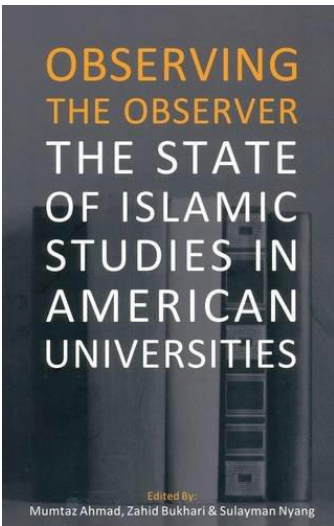




Türkiye'nin Yüz Yılı: Yükseköğretim (Century of Türkiye: Higher Education)

Nihat Erdoğan (Ed.)

A part of the “Century of Türkiye” series, the book edited by Nihat Erdoğan addresses the development process of higher education in Türkiye. The main themes of the book include Türkiye’s higher education system, changes and developments, access to education, individuals produced by higher education, and its outputs. The book presents the journey of higher education in Türkiye over the centuries. Alongside the historical evolution of the higher education system, the book profoundly examines gaps, structural issues, and the relationship between higher education and employment. Despite being rooted in Türkiye’s political tradition, changes and developments in higher education over the past century have encountered certain obstacles. Additionally, the book includes a comprehensive chronology highlighting the milestones of the Turkish higher education system.



Observing the Observer: The State of Islamic Studies in American Universities

Mumtaz Ahmad, Zahid Bukhari & Sulayman Nyang (Ed.)

In the past few years, there has been a significant increase in the number of universities and programs in the United States focusing on teaching Islam and the lives of Muslim communities in higher education. As explored in the book, there are many reasons for this; the large number of Muslims immigrating to the US, America’s strong relationship with Islamic countries, petroleum trade, and Americans’ interest in Islam are among the primary reasons. Additionally, the book relates the reasons behind this noticeable increase in Islamic studies to America’s desire to create a global integration and cultural pluralism atmosphere. However, approaching the subject from an “observational” perspective, the book indicates that the main reason for this great interest in Islam in higher education is America’s desire, especially after the September 11 attacks, to understand the conflicts and unrest between Islamic countries and America. The author also believes that the relationship between the United States and the study of Islam in higher education is not a satisfactory one and needs reform. The author argues that the phenomenon of “Islam-making” is not based on real knowledge, but is perpetuated by some journalists, educational institutions, and experts who transmit rote knowledge.

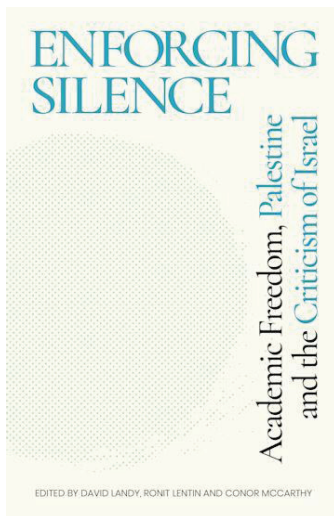


Academic Motherhood in a Post-second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, and Possibilities

Hallstein Lynn O'Brien & Andrea O'Reilly (Ed.)

Is there a special relationship between motherhood and academic life? If so, what are the challenges created by this relationship and what are

the factors shaping this relationship? In this book, the author addresses these important questions in light of second-wave feminism and its ideas shaping the concepts of women, mothers, doctors, and academics. Indeed, the discourses of “new motherhood” create intense labor pressures in the practical and daily life of the academic mother. Additionally, this book offers different solutions for mothers to cope with the challenges and pressures they face in academic life while questioning the reasons for the current structure of academic and social systems. The book, which will attract the interest of researchers working on issues such as women’s employment, invisible labor, and feminist parenting, is also recognized as a model for the scientific application of feminist methodologies.



Enforcing Silence, Academic Freedom, Palestine and the Criticism of Israel

David Landy, Ronit Lentin & Conor McCarthy (Ed.)

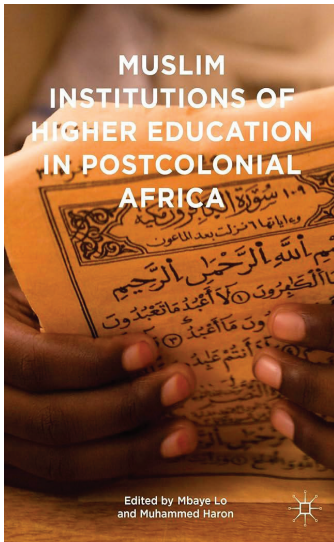
In an age where universities should be spaces supporting freedom of expression and providing platforms for it, we continue to witness censorship and restrictions imposed on academia and academic production. Compiled from the articles of three researchers, this book investigates the validity of restrictions on freedom of expression regarding Israel’s Palestinian issue and extensively discusses crucial topics such as whether the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement really represents a violation of the academic freedom of Israeli researchers. The researchers in this book have conducted interviews with both new and established academics and researchers from Palestine, the Middle East, the United States, and Europe to understand the difference between the impact of the boycott on Israeli academics and the restrictions imposed on academics supporting Palestine.

Higher Education in the Digital Age

William G. Bowen

Former president of Princeton University and expert on the relationship between economics and education, William G. Bowen, despite his previous skepticism about the extent to which technology can serve education without harming it, presents his views on the possibility of technology achieving a cheaper and more accessible educational experience in this book. The author believes that online education currently offers us capabilities in terms of educational projects and various tools that can mimic higher education in universities. This is because distance education addresses the fundamental problem of high cost that face-to-face education encounters. However, the fundamental question is whether distance education is truly cheaper. Additionally, the author questions the ability to build a decision-making, organized, and robust structure similar to existing higher education institutions, while also providing a positive outlook on the success and efficiency of distance education.

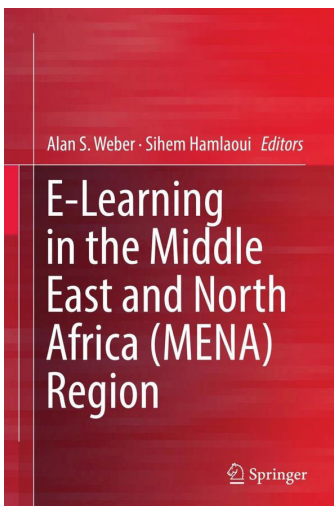
Higher
Education
in the
Digital Age
William G.
Bowen



Muslim Institutions of Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa

Mbaye Lo & Muhammed Haron (Ed.)

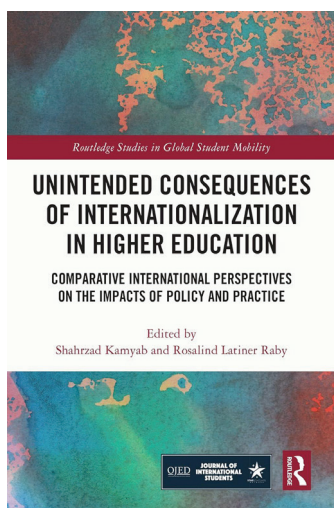
This comprehensive study consists of three important chapters, each addressing different aspects. The first chapter titled “Reform in Islamic Learning” examines the transformation of Islamic education in Africa. The second chapter, “The Emergence of Modern Islamic Universities and Colleges: Remembering and Rebuilding,” discusses the evolution of contemporary educational institutions. Lastly, the third chapter titled “Islamic Colleges and Universities: Texts, Contexts, and Graduates” explores the dynamics of Islamic higher education in Africa in the post-colonial period. Furthermore, the book expands its scope beyond examining African countries by providing statistical comparisons of the experiences of various Muslim communities.



E-Learning in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

Alan S. Weber & Sihem Hamlaoui (Ed.)

In the past decade, the advancement of information and communication technology has led the world to transition to e-learning on a large scale. This change has been experienced by many countries, including those in North Africa. However, despite the increase in levels of higher education and electronic literacy rates, there are several obstacles to the development of e-learning in the region, such as the limited availability of Arabic content and resources, the cost of internet access, cultural and censorship laws, and a shortage of educated teachers. The book is considered the first comprehensive study that identifies the history, development, and current status of e-learning in 20 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region while addressing these obstacles.



Unintended Consequences of Internationalization in Higher Education: Comparative International Perspectives on the Impacts of Policy and Practice

Shahrzad Kamyab & Rosalind Latiner Raby (Ed.)

This book examines the effects of internationalization policies and practices in higher education by providing comparative international perspectives. Authored by experts, the book extensively analyzes the undesirable consequences often accompanying globalization policies. Going beyond traditional criticisms, it sheds light on the complexities and nuances of internationalization, deepening readers’ understanding of global impact and emphasizing the necessity of a sensitive approach. The book’s comparative style and diverse perspectives on the subject also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The Platform is published by TODAM under auspices of İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education in an attempt to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic and cultural affairs of Muslim societies. The Platform is published as part of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project.

It aims to be a platform where the Muslim world affairs are analysed in light of the activities of major think tanks, research centres and institutes, universities, and political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and its intellectual advances are presented to Türkiye and the whole world through Platform magazine. The magazine keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world and uses its website and database to share news and developments related to different institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

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