

Editorial Note

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As we proudly commemorate four decades of scholarly excellence, we reflect upon the remarkable journey that our journal has undertaken, solidifying its position as a beacon of knowledge and a catalyst for academic progress in the interdisciplinary fields of the social sciences and humanities focused on Islam and Muslims.

The brainchild of Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman as well as founding co-editors, Drs. Sulayman S. Nyang and Mumtaz Ahmad, the journal was established in 1984 under the name *American Journal of Islamic Studies* (*AJIS*) and first published by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS).

In 1985 it was re-named the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (*AJISS*) when, signifying evolution, it entered into a partnership with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) with a view to widen its network of readership, expand scholarly representation, and develop a more firm foundation. In 2013, when AMSS changed its name to the North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (NAAIMS), the journal witnessed IIIT becoming its sole publisher per an agreement with NAAIMS.

Finally, 2020 marked a further turning point in the journal's history, as it not only transformed its design to express a more modern aesthetic but also notably changed its name to the *American Journal of Islam and Society* (*AJIS*). This reflected the evolution of the scholarly landscape

and a global community of readers interested in a wider range of topics pertaining to Islam's increasingly complex role in society both on the local and international level.

This 40th anniversary celebration serves as a testament to the resilience, vision, and unwavering dedication of our journal's contributors, past and present, who have left an indelible mark on the scholarly landscape and have shaped the intellectual discourse in profound ways.

The sustained success of our journal can be attributed to the commitment of our esteemed editors, editorial boards, diligent reviewers, and committed staff members, who have meticulously upheld the journal's reputation for excellence.

Throughout these forty years, our journal has been a trusted platform for researchers, scholars, and practitioners, serving as a conduit for the exchange of ideas, the dissemination of cutting-edge research, and the cultivation of intellectual dialogue. Many of us found this journal a space for ruminating, discussing, and developing our *own* narratives on our Islamic heritage and what it means in the contemporary world. Especially compared to anti-Islamic biases in other corners of academia, *AJIS* is a coming "home."

One constant throughout the past forty years is the journal's commitment to scholarship that documents and explores Islam's rich religious, intellectual, legal, philosophical, and social heritages. The assumption is that these various perspectives have meaningful things to say about the human condition and our place in the world. Debate, discussion, and disagreement all appear in these pages, but always grounded in an underlying steadfastness that Islam is a faith tradition that is not obsolete; that Muslims can contribute positively to humanity's betterment. That said, the journal is not a place of religious homilies. This is an academic journal, with a double-blind peer review process. Articles that are published thus pass muster in the discipline in which they conduct their research. Let us thank the authors who have entrusted us with their groundbreaking research, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and enriching our understanding of critical issues in our disciplines.

The *American Journal of Islam and Society* invited me to guest edit this special fortieth anniversary edition. I was given a list of the fifty top

articles the journal has published over the last four decades and asked to choose nine to include in this anniversary edition. Without realizing, when I said “yes,” the excellence of every article, I did not fathom the difficult journey ahead of selecting only nine.

Three different indexes were used to compile the master list: Scopus (the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature); the “most read” on the *AJIS* website; and the “most accessed” on Google Scholar. There are articles in this master list from every decade of the journal’s publication: the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s. This means that even as academic methodologies, theories, and range of subjects evolve as time passes, *AJIS* scholars can hold their own. Some have written robust essays that stand the test of time.

Always conceived of as an umbrella journal that would be open to the full scope of work by scholars in the social sciences and humanities, the master-list highlights this range. There are essays in business, economics; education; hadith studies; history; Islamic law; Islamophobia; media; philosophy; political science; political theory; psychology; anti-racism; sociology; Quranic studies; and women’s studies. Some are technical essays with discipline-specific terminologies; others are written in language that makes them accessible to a wider audience.

To select the nine articles to be included in this special fortieth anniversary edition, I developed a score sheet that would allow me to rank them. It did not make the task much easier. I wanted this edition to be widely celebrated and read. I wanted this edition to speak to its readers in our current context, in this 2023 moment of anti-Muslim racism, war, humanitarian and climate crises, inflation, global poverty and injustice, in these times of confusion over faith and the difficulty of living a pious life. Some of my criteria, then, were that the article be accessible and not replete with discipline-specific terminology; that the article not be dated; that it have a timeless message which would have spoken to its readers when it was initially published, and which still resonates; that it cover topics on the minds now of many Muslims living as minorities in Euro-American societies. Articles are reproduced here as they were published, with allowance made for minor typographical corrections.

The journal's early rootedness in the intellectual movement known as the Islamization of Knowledge has evolved into a focus on the Integration of Knowledge, one component of which is *maqāṣid al-sharī`a* (aims and purposes of *sharī`a*). Many of the journal's publications explore what that means for various disciplines. I encourage you to look through the archives and find recent discussions about the *maqāṣid* in relation to medical ethics, Muslim youth movements, and how the International Islamic University of Malaysia has managed the transition to the Integration of Knowledge paradigm in its publications and curriculum.

In this special issue I have included a 2007 article by Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki and Nurdianawati Irwani Abdullah that discusses how the *maqāṣid* and the principle of *maṣlaḥa* (the public good) speak to the business world's exploration of corporate social responsibility. The authors point out that there are not many discussions of corporate social responsibility from an Islamic point of view. The authors argue that conceptualizing the moral and ethical foundations of what that responsible behaviour might be has been inconclusive. They offer the *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥa* as fruitful conceptual tools to build a firm foundation. All of us have a stake in corporations managing their profit-making businesses in ways that do not harm the planet and its inhabitants.

In the related field of economics, Akhmad Akbar Susanto's 2020 essay offers a comprehensive critique of the attempts to theorize and instantiate something called "Islamic Economics." He argues that the field has yet to define clearly what "Islamic" economics is and how it differs from "Western" economics. His essay attempts to provide that clarity. His proposals are meant to define the scope of the field and help provide basic standards that could then be used to devise real-world economic policies and strategies.

After 9/11, Muslim educational institutions came under scrutiny for their alleged inability to teach humane values and prepare students to be good global citizens. A pressure tactic of international foreign policy is Westernizing curricula. Rosnani Hashim's 2005 essay looks at these external pressures as well as internal challenges to argue that Islamic education needs an overhaul. She focuses on the goal of Islamic education, its curricula, teachers, teaching methodologies and the school environment.

Emad Hamdeh's 2020 essay explores the long and detrimental impact Western colonialism has had on traditional education. He looks also at the modern challenges of the internet, which gives instant access to books that previous curriculums would only allow to be read once a student had mastered certain basics. The crisis of authority that plagues the Muslim world and gives rise to the autodidact has fragmented us into a confusion of "what Islam really says."

Many Muslims celebrated the 2011 fall of authoritarian rulers and the (re)instantiation of democracy in North Africa and Southwest Asia. The subsequent reappearance of authoritarian rule is a disappointing turn of events. Yet it is "Islam" or "Muslim culture" that is often blamed for blocking the rise of responsible government in the region. Glen E. Perry's 2003 article investigates the concept of democracy's alleged incompatibility with Islam and concludes it does not hold up to scrutiny. Since Islam is not a rule by Divine Right of Kings, nor a theocracy, human beings must make policies. This process can be compatible with democracy without disturbing God as the Ultimate Sovereign.

Jasmin Zine's 2002 article takes up the problem in Western cultural discourse of negative representations of Muslim woman as oppressed. She makes a comparison between today's image of the suppressed Muslim woman with that of the medieval representations in which the Muslim woman figured as a strong personality. Zine traces lines of continuity between negative colonial representations and those of many contemporary Euro-American feminists.

Fadel Abdallah's 1987 essay focuses on those who criticize Islam's approach to slavery. He argues that the Qur'an and hadith employed a wise, gradualist approach for slavery's elimination. He says while Muslims may have been involved in the slave trade, we must distinguish between what people do and what the religion teaches. This is obviously a point true over a range of human activities. Slavery might be legally outlawed, but it exists still as an institution in parts of the world: be it traders preying on refugees making their way up to Libya hoping for a better life after crossing to Europe; prison labour; or bonded labourers in Asia. Meant as a universal message to any era, the Qur'an's teachings on the good treatment of slaves while eliminating slavery are apt today.

My recent research exploring how Muslim healthcare workers cope with anti-Muslim racism in the workplace drew attention to the disconnect between science and religion that medical students here experience. They told me that medicine as a discipline is hostile to religion. Healthcare workers can find it difficult to keep up with worship in this corrosive environment. The master list contained several groundbreaking articles looking at psychology as a field from the point of view of blending or merging Western science with Islamic medical history. We know that Muslim scientists pioneered many medical practices, techniques, and instruments, and was once the world leader in that domain. I chose Amber Haque's 1998 essay as representative of this conversation examining the relationship between Western and Islamic psychology.

Many of the previous essays cover dilemmas related to the issue of Islam's connection to secularism. Muslims often use "secular" as a derisive word. Muslim religio-political movements position themselves as "anti-secular" as they conceptualize what an "Islamic" state should look like. On the flip side, secularists view "not being secular" as the rationale for the policing of, and attack on, Muslim practices in countries such as France, or provinces such as Quebec. Banning the headscarf from Muslim women who work for the State, or students from praying in public schools, is considered a "defence" of secularism. How interesting then is Sherman A. Jackson's 2017 investigation of an "Islamic Secular?" He posits a realm of decision making that is non-shari'a based, but still religious.

When the journal turned twenty-five, I was its editor. I am honored to witness and be part of its fortieth anniversary. It is not easy to sustain a publication, especially in the era of open access and an overload of free information on the internet. Congratulations to the *American Journal of Islam and Society* for its adaptability and sustainability over the years. Congratulations for being a top-quality outlet for scholarship on Islam and society that accepts, and does not denigrate, our faith and its heritage, and for allowing critical discussions on how to move forward in the twenty-first century.

I look forward to *AJIS*'s future with great anticipation, eager to learn from its continued fostering of intellectual curiosity, inspiring new

breakthroughs, and contributing to the collective body of knowledge in our fields for the next forty years and beyond.

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