

Spring 2016

MBI Al Jaber ● Foundation

# review

## In this Issue

*Euro-Arab Dialogue to  
Counter Extremism*

*Message from the Chairman*

*Publication of the 'Comparative  
Study of Textbooks' with UNESCO*

*Launch of Grant Scheme for  
MBI Alumni*

*Helping Further the Work of  
Liverpool Arabic Centre*

*Update on The MBI Lecture Series,  
LMEI, SOAS*

*Annual MBI Al Jaber Lecture at  
The British Museum*

## Euro-Arab Dialogue to Promote Tolerance and Democratic Engagement



Foundation Patron and Chairman, Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber, recently gave the keynote speech at the Day of Discussion and Mobilization. His talk on 'The Youth of Europe, the Middle East and Africa and the Rise of Terrorism, Extremism and Intolerance – What Options for the Future?' was well-received by policymakers, academics, business leaders, international organisations experts and activists who exchanged ideas on how to address the crucial challenge of extremism. Similar future conferences in Azerbaijan, Iraq and Morocco were proposed for continuing the dialogue.

The event was organised by Project Aladin in conjunction with UNESCO, the European Commission and the French National Ministry of Education and took place in Paris at the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research.

Sheikh Mohamed emphasised that violence, extremism, and pointless confrontation in the Arab region and beyond requires that we 'work hand in hand to end it, regardless of the religions that we follow, the civilizations that we belong to, the languages that we speak, and the minor and major identities that we embrace'. He stressed the importance of working with UNESCO, international committees and NGOs 'in order to promote the values of tolerance, dialogue, and coexistence, and to embrace the culture of peace instead of the culture of war, violence, and destruction'. Sheikh Mohamed's vision and ideas were recognised as having had 'a powerful impact on the discussions throughout the day' by Projet Aladin's Executive Director, Abe Radkin.

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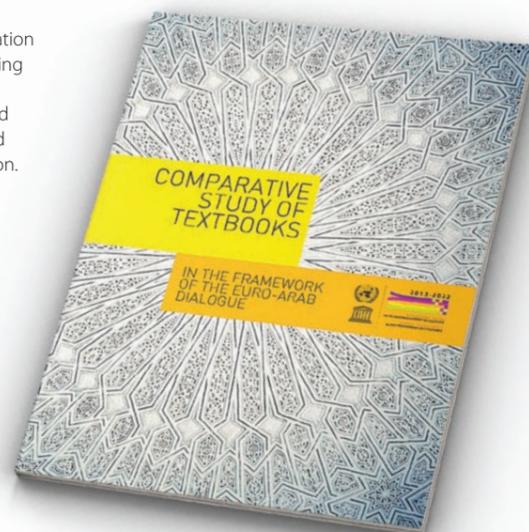


## Publication of the 'Comparative Study of Textbooks' with UNESCO

We are pleased to announce the recent publication of the 'Comparative Study of Textbooks', a working document in the framework of the Euro-Arab Dialogue Initiative (EAD). The text was produced with the generous support of Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber and the MBI Al Jaber Foundation.

Sheikh Mohamed, who has a strong belief in the importance of cultural dialogue between the MENA region and the wider world, and dialogue going hand-in-hand with the creation of practical resources, joined forces with UNESCO to revitalise and re-launch the EAD Initiative with a series of conferences and technical workshops. His support resulted in the first UNESCO/MBI Al Jaber Foundation International Conference, 'EAD: Contribution to a New Humanism', which took place in June 2012. Here it was stressed that education and culture have a fundamental role in creating an attitude of tolerance in the minds of all generations, particularly in the young. UNESCO was urged to conduct further work on textbooks, as these play a vital role in the education of future citizens and sometimes also contain stereotypes and clichés. Textbook contents can hide prejudices that are unfavourable to a more open and objective mutual understanding.

The Comparative Study of Textbooks introduces the project objectives and areas of investigation, detailing the ambitious nature of the EAD Initiative, as well as examining the shared objectives and obstacles encountered by a project of this nature. Education at schools is identified as a 'key player' in the success of such a venture.



The 2013 conference in Portugal

Since the 2012 conference, the MBI Al Jaber Foundation has supported a number of technical workshops, including the EAD Conference: 'Our Commonly Shared Values', held in Portugal on 25-26th November, 2013. A high-level international conference, as a follow-up to the Vienna summit, will take place during 2016. Further details will be announced shortly.

## Message from the Chairman

World events have meant that the MBI Al Jaber Foundation's commitment to dialogue continues to be at the top of our Agenda. It is therefore particularly appropriate that this edition of our Review features many of our projects in this key area.

In January, I was asked to speak alongside representatives from UNESCO, the EU, and the French Government on the importance of dialogue, and we continue to build upon our work on Euro-Arab Dialogue with UNESCO, culminating in a conference later this year. As well as our projects at strategic level, we have been giving a number of smaller grants in the areas of education, cultural dialogue and good governance, and have formalised a long standing initiative whereby members of the MBI Alumni Association can apply for grants at key stages in their careers.

I hope you will enjoy reading about these, and some of our other recent activities, in this edition of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Review.

**Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber**  
Patron and Chairman

## Launch of Grant Scheme for MBI Alumni

The MBI Al Jaber Foundation Alumni Association has recently made several small grants to its members who are currently undertaking research and extending their knowledge and expertise. The Alumni Association makes small grants available to previous recipients of MBI Al Jaber Foundation scholarships with one of the main aims being to help Alumni at key stages of their career.

Both Dr Ibrahim Natil, Visiting Scholar at the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin, and Dr Lobna Ben Salem, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Manouba, Tunisia, have received funding. Dr Natil is currently attending conferences and presenting papers in the lead up to writing his book on "Women's Political Empowerment: Challenges and Lessons", which will be published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, while Dr Ben Salem plans to come to the UK during the summer of 2016 to conduct research at SOAS. She is preparing text for a book she is writing on the condition of the Palestinian diaspora and its relation to the notion of 'home'. Whilst wishing every success to Dr Natil and Dr Ben Salem, the Foundation continues to welcome applications for small grants from all members of its Alumni Association!



Dr Ibrahim Natil



The teaching staff and the children of Liverpool Arabic Centre

## MBI Al Jaber Foundation Helps Further the Work of Liverpool Arabic Centre

The MBI Al Jaber Foundation recently donated an educational grant to the Arabic School at the Liverpool Arabic Centre (LAC). The grant will help with funding for a new member of teaching staff, enabling the centre to provide weekly Arabic classes for children aged five years and older. The school, currently in its eighth year, allows children from the local community to develop new Arabic language skills or improve and build on their existing abilities. Classes are administered by highly qualified teaching professionals and deliver specialist training based on the individual needs of each child. As well as providing Arabic classes for children, the LAC serves to strengthen togetherness with all people of Liverpool, as well as celebrating and promoting many aspects of Arabic history, language and cultural identity.

# The MBI Lecture Series at the MBI Al Jaber Building, LMEI, SOAS

The MBI Lecture Series, launched in 2015, goes from strength to strength. Lectures are held on the third Thursday of the month from October to June in the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Building, London Middle East Institute, SOAS, Russell Square. The lectures series continues to attract audiences with exciting and informative lectures covering a wide range of topics focussed on the MENA region.

Presentations have so far included 'Digitising British Imperialism in the Gulf: The British Library - Qatar Foundation Partnership' by Louis Allday, Gulf History and Arabic Language Specialist; 'The Abraham Path: A Trail of Dignity Across the Middle East' by Stefan Szepesi, Executive Director of the Abraham Path Initiative; 'A Lens on the Waves of Political Change in Yemen' by Nawal Al Maghafi, Film Producer and Journalist, as well as lectures on Neolithic Jordan by Professor Bill Finlayson of CBRL and Yemeni Architecture by Professor Trevor Marchand of SOAS.

We have three lectures left in this series:

**Thursday 28th April**, Dress and Identity in the Sultanate of Oman by Aisa Martinez, Project Curator, British Museum.

**Thursday 26th May**, Understanding Syria's Civil War: Revolution, Regime Resilience, and Stalemate by Michael Kerr, Professor of Conflict Studies and Director of both the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies and the Centre for the Study of Divided Societies at King's College London.

**Thursday 16th June**, Mamluk Geometric design in Cairo (1250-1517) by Eric Broug, Author, Educator and Founder of the School of Islamic Geometric Design.

If you would like to receive notification of our Lectures, please email [info@mbifoundation.com](mailto:info@mbifoundation.com)



Professor Trevor Marchand



Professor Bill Finlayson

## Annual MBI Al Jaber Lecture at The British Museum



The MBI Al Jaber Foundation continues to support The British Foundation for the Study of Arabia's Seminar for Arabian Studies which takes place this year 29th-31st July. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Seminar for Arabian Studies has been the only annual international forum for the presentation of the latest academic research in the humanities on the Arabian Peninsula.

This year, for the MBI Al Jaber lecture we are branching out to take the opportunity of bringing the well-known 'Jewel of Muscat' marine archaeologist and historian Dr Eric Staples to present and discuss a preview of his new film 'Maritime Traditions' of Oman, followed by a Q and A session with Dr Staples.

More information will shortly be available on this and other Foundation events on our website, Facebook page, or Twitter @MBIFoundation.

