

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The *Iranian Journal of International and Comparative Law (IJICL)* is committed to fostering scholarly dialogue on the most pressing issues in international and comparative law. In this spirit, we are pleased to feature an insightful exchange between Professor Abdulmalik M. Altamimi of Alfaisal University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Professor Mostafa Fazaeli, Editor-in-Chief of the *IJICL*. This correspondence addresses the role of cultural and civilizational perspectives in shaping international law, a topic of profound relevance to our journal's mission.

We extend our gratitude to Professor Altamimi for his thoughtful critique and to Professor Fazaeli for his considered response. Such exchanges exemplify the kind of rigorous and respectful discourse that enriches the field of international law. We encourage our readers to engage with these ideas and contribute to this vital conversation.

Below, we present the correspondence in its entirety.

Letter from Professor Abdulmalik M. Altamimi

Dear Editors of the IJICL,

Thank you for sharing two copies of your new journal on international and comparative law. I read the announcement with great interest, particularly the emphasis on the role of international legal language in fostering interaction, empathy, and integration among societies. Undoubtedly, this goal can be advanced by highlighting the civilizational legal contributions of Iranian history as part of Islamic civilization.

However, I wish to express a concern regarding the journal's first two stated goals: (1) reflecting the Iranian perspective of international law, and (2) reconsidering the Iranian-Islamic legal culture's role in the evolution of international law. While these objectives are commendable, they risk being perceived as reflecting local politics or religious interpretations, which may conflict with the universal and secular nature of international law. In my review of Khalid Bahsir's book on *Islamic International Law* (attached with full footnotes), I argued that the language of international law today is—and should remain—apolitical and secular. Promoting these features is essential to maintaining its universal applicability.

I recognize that, as a journal based in the Middle East, these goals may serve an affiliation purpose, such as securing institutional approval. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remain mindful of the broader purpose of international law, as articulated in Mary O’Connell’s *The Power and Purpose of International Law*, a work inspired by her mentor, Professor Louis Henkin. Western scholars, whether traditional or contemporary, religious or secular, are not immune to bias. Examples include their often-flawed analyses of the 2003 Iraq invasion, the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the global arms trade. For Eastern scholars to gain acceptance and support within the international research community, it is imperative to articulate their views in a manner that aligns with the apolitical and secular framework of international law. In this regard, the works of scholars such as Christopher Weeramantry and Onuma Yasuaki—particularly his *International Law in a Transcivilizational World*, which draws on Edward Said’s *Orientalism*—offer valuable guidance.

Thank you once again for sharing your work and for your contributions to the field.

Sincerely yours,

Abdulmalik M. Altamimi

Professor of Law, Alfaisal University
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Response from Professor Mostafa Fazaeli, Editor-in-Chief

Dear Professor Altamimi,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter and for engaging with the mission and vision of the *IJICL*. I apologize for the delay in my response and appreciate your patience.

I wholeheartedly agree that the language of international law must remain free from bias toward any particular culture or civilization. However, it is equally important to recognize that this universal language—often described as secular and apolitical—is itself the product of a confluence of diverse cultural and civilizational traditions. While some may argue that international law remains predominantly influenced by Western paradigms, its evolution toward true universality requires the inclusion of perspectives from all significant legal traditions.

The inclusion of representatives from various civilizations and geographical regions in international legal and judicial bodies underscores the fact that the intellectual frameworks of international lawyers are inevitably shaped by their cultural and civilizational backgrounds. These frameworks, in turn, influence their interpretation and application of international legal principles. By publishing a journal dedicated to international and comparative law, we aim to provide a platform for these diverse voices to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and universal legal language.

When we speak of “reflecting the Iranian perspective of international law,” we do not seek to advance a parochial or exclusionary vision. Similarly, “reconsidering the Iranian-Islamic legal culture’s role in the evolution of international law” is not an attempt to introduce an Islamic international law. Rather, these goals are intended to explore the interplay between

these perspectives and the broader framework of international law, enriching our understanding of its historical and cultural dimensions.

Your observations are invaluable, and I deeply appreciate your constructive critique. I hope we will have the privilege of publishing your work in the *IJICL* in the future. Let me reaffirm that while the *IJICL* is committed to scientific impartiality, it will never remain indifferent to the pursuit of justice and equity.

Sincerely yours,

Mostafa Fazaeli

Editor-in-Chief, *Iranian Journal of International and Comparative Law (IJICL)*

Closing Note from the Editor-in-Chief

We are profoundly grateful to Professor Altamimi for initiating this dialogue and for his incisive critique. Exchanges such as this are essential to the intellectual vitality of our journal and the field of international law as a whole. They remind us of the importance of balancing cultural and civilizational perspectives with the universal aspirations of international law.

We invite our readers to reflect on these ideas and to contribute their own perspectives to this ongoing and similar conversations. The *IJICL* remains committed to providing a platform for rigorous, inclusive, and transformative discourse on international and comparative law.