

# **Introduction to the Special Issue on Selected Papers from the 2nd International Conference on Debate & Dialogue (ICDD2) 2025**

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## **Introduction**

We are delighted to present selected papers from the 2nd International Conference on Debate and Dialogue (ICDD2), held in Doha, Qatar, in May 2025. Organized biennially, ICDD2 was hosted by QatarDebate Center, founded by of Qatar Foundation, in collaboration with leading international partners, bringing together scholars, practitioners, and young leaders to advance research in debate and dialogue.

In its second edition, the conference brought together over 800 participants from 36 countries and featured 60 papers selected through a double-blind review process, addressing a broad spectrum of topics, including Islamic legal reasoning and debate traditions, cross-cultural models of argumentation, informal logic, political and organizational discourse, artificial intelligence in debate education, and the impact of debate on education and civic engagement. The conference's contributions were organized around three main themes: The first focused on the theoretical exploration of argumentation, encompassing its role in politics, media, international dialogue, and Islamic intellectual traditions. The second emphasized practical applications, highlighting how debate and dialogue operate within societal, technological, and educational contexts. The third theme consisted of practitioners' workshops, providing a platform to share best practices in debate training and to engage in discussions on adjudication and effective facilitation.

Only the papers from ICDD2 that focused on the first theme, theoretical exploration of argumentation, are published in extended form in this special issue of *Informal Logic*. These publications aim to ensure that the scholarly debates initiated in Doha will reach a broader global audience and stimulate further academic engagement.

All papers were independently reviewed by at least two reviewers from the original conference committee, and in some cases, by additional experts external to the ICDD2 program committee. Only those papers for which the reviewers reached agreement on the quality and substance of the extended work were accepted for inclusion in this Special Issue. The five papers presented here represent the top contributions as determined by the peer review process.

Before presenting a concise synopsis of the five selected papers, we would like to provide the reader with some context about the conference, which emerges as the result of more than a decade of efforts to promote a culture of debate, dialogue, and argumentation in the Arabic and Muslim societies.

### **Context: Promoting Debate and Dialogue in a Challenging Environment**

Debate and critical thinking have a rich and enduring tradition within Arab-Islamic societies, exemplified by the historical practice and scholarship of *munāẓara*. *Munāẓara*, literally meaning “regarding together” or “joint reasoning,” evolved from *jadāl*, a discipline that guided how Muslim scholars conducted theological and jurisprudential debates. Within Islamic intellectual history, the study of debate and argumentation is known as *ādāb al-baḥṭh wa-l-munāẓara*, meaning “ethics and methods of inquiry and argumentation.” It is widely believed that the first work on this subject is the 13th-century epistle *Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa-l-Munāẓara* by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī (d. 1302). It continued to flourish both as an intellectual practice and as a formal field of study from the 14th through the 20th centuries (Oruç et al., 2023, p. 116).

Despite this deep-rooted heritage, Arab youth at the beginning of the 21st century had little or no access to structured debating platforms. Debate was neither integrated into the educational system nor

featured prominently in media outlets, leaving younger generations without meaningful exposure to its practices or values.

Over the past two decades, the landscape has shifted dramatically, driven by the rapid rise of digital media platforms accessible to all, evolving political contexts in the region, and the emergence of NGOs and civil society initiatives dedicated to promoting debate and dialogue in the Arab world. A key milestone in this revival was the establishment of the Qatar Debate Center in 2008 as a non-profit organization under the Qatar Foundation.

Operating locally, regionally, and internationally, the Center has played a pivotal role in inspiring a surge of interest in debate culture among Arab youth, manifested in the launch of the International Universities Arabic Debating Championship (IUDC) in 2011 and the International Schools Arabic Debating Championship (ISDC) in 2012 in Doha. These tournaments significantly accelerated the growth of vibrant communities of Arabic-speaking debaters aged 15 to 25 across Arab and non-Arab countries and are now recognized as the largest Arabic debating platforms worldwide, attracting participants from over 50 countries and 120 universities. Building on this momentum, regional and continental tournaments were introduced in non-Arabic-speaking regions, including the United States, Europe, Asia, and Türkiye, connecting young immigrants and new learners of Arabic with contemporary discussions shaping the Arab world. Collectively, these tournaments elevated debate into a prominent competitive educational practice, fostering dynamic local and international circuits, while many inspired participants returned to their home countries to establish debate programs through newly created NGOs in Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, Tunisia, and Libya, contributing to a decentralized yet interconnected movement bridging tradition and modernity in approaches to dialogue.

As many of these debaters graduated from school and university, their engagement with debate evolved beyond the competitive arena. A significant number successfully applied the skills and values gained through debating to civic initiatives, community leadership, and various public engagement programs. At the same time, a growing group developed a deeper interest in exploring the theoretical, historical, and pedagogical dimensions of argumentation, seeking to connect their practical debating experience with scholarly inquiry.

This emerging demand for structured research pathways and academic collaboration prompted QatarDebate Center to expand its mandate, leading to the creation of dedicated Academic & Research Programs aimed at bridging the gap in contemporary academia for original, cross-disciplinary research projects exploring debate from diverse perspectives, including argumentation theory, artificial intelligence, rhetoric, linguistics, education, sociology, and Islamic intellectual traditions.

In response, the first International Conference on Debate & Dialogue (ICDD) was launched in 2023, alongside the inaugural cycle of the QatarDebate Research Fellowship Program, together creating a global platform for researchers, educators, and practitioners to exchange insights, develop collaborative projects, and build a vibrant network of scholars.

### **This special issue:**

The *munāzara* tradition, rooted in classical Islamic intellectual culture, was a sophisticated integration of procedural rules and ethical norms, with its insistence on the interdependence of procedural (how arguments are sequenced and structured) and agential (the virtues and intentions of the debaters) norms (Oruç et al., 2023). Such agential, ethical and character-based concerns find their counterpart in Western scholarship through Virtue Argumentation theory, which highlights the virtues and vices of arguers as pivotal to understanding and evaluating argumentation (Aberdein and Cohen 2016).

Accordingly, it is unsurprising that ethical and character-focused perspectives occupy a central role in the papers selected for this issue. Three of these contributions: by Andrew Aberdein, Karim Sadek, and Hareim Hassan, engage explicitly with Virtue Argumentation theory from different angles: Aberdein, a prominent scholar of the field, examines whether virtuous arguers can legitimately defend positions they do not personally endorse; Sadek adapts the procedural ethics of classical Islamic debate to address an “ethical gap” in contemporary normative theories, proposing a framework of non-authoritarian argumentation that fosters cooperation, equality, and mutual respect among arguers; and Hassan combines Virtue Argumentation theory with Islamic traditions to propose a cross-cultural

framework of “argumentative civility” that can maintain constructive dialogue across deep political and cultural differences.

The remaining two papers focus on the application of argumentation theory to legal reasoning, while Ronnie Haidar employs Harald Wohlrapp’s theory of orientation to analyze international climate change negotiations, seeing them as opportunities to build shared meaning rather than simply applying existing rules. In contrast, Muhammed Komath turns to classical Islamic jurisprudence, focusing on al-Ghazālī’s theory of analogy (qiyās) and its sophisticated use of defeasible reasoning and probabilistic logic. By comparing al-Ghazālī’s approach with two modern models: Scott Brewer’s abduction and Douglas Walton’s argumentation schemes, Komath demonstrates how al-Ghazālī anticipated and integrated key aspects of both, thereby enriching and challenging contemporary understandings of legal reasoning and argumentation.

In the following sections, we provide a brief overview of these papers, highlighting their individual objectives and contributions, while leaving detailed discussions to the full articles

The first article by Andrew Aberdein, titled "*Virtuous Argumentation and Unendorsed Claims*" addresses a core theoretical question at the heart of virtuous reasoning: Can one argue well while defending claims they do not personally endorse? And should competitive debates require participants to do so? From this question, the author embarks on an intellectual exploration of various situations in which arguers reason from premises or to conclusions they do not endorse, practices known across philosophy, rhetoric, and debate since antiquity, including hypothetical reasoning, argument *ex concessis*, devil’s advocacy, and reasoning *in utramque partem*. Aberdein clarifies that these practices arise specifically within contexts of adversariality, where arguers adopt opposing and mutually exclusive positions.

Within this framework, the article places the concept of *virtuous adversariality* at its centre. “Adversariality,” often associated with hostility, is unpacked into four distinct dimensions as outlined by Stevens and Cohen (2021, p. 900). First, *the adversarial attitude*, characterized by aggression and zero-sum thinking, is regarded as a vice. Second, *the adversarial stance*, involving the adoption of formal roles such as proponent or opponent in structured debate, is

considered permissible for virtuous arguers. Third, the *adversarial function*, refers to the epistemic necessity of weighing opposing considerations. Finally, *the persuasive-adversarial effect* describes how offering reasons for one claim may indirectly persuade an opponent. By distinguishing among these dimensions, the article demonstrates that while adversarial attitudes undermine argumentative virtue, both the stance and the function of adversariality are not only acceptable but epistemically indispensable when pursued under the guidance of intellectual virtues.

The article concludes that, although bad-faith argumentation is vicious, reasoning to or from claims that the arguer does not personally endorse can be conducted virtuously. When undertaken with integrity, this practice becomes a refined exercise in understanding others, broadening intellectual horizons, and sharpening argumentative skills, but only if carried out transparently and without misleading the audience about the arguer's true commitments.

The second contribution, "*Munazara and (non-)Authoritarian Argumentation*" by Karim Sadek advances the discussion by shifting focus from what arguers say to how they behave. Sadek argues that in public discourse, argumentation is not limited to exchanging reasons or offering arguments; it also encompasses the ways in which arguers interact, what he terms the "behavioral dynamics" between interlocutors. These dynamics involve the interplay of successive acts, shaped by the style of responses, timing of objections, manner of listening, and even tone and body language. Despite significant advances in argumentation theory, Sadek contends that contemporary normative approaches, whether act-based norms or agent-based theories such as Virtue Argumentation Theory, remain insufficiently attentive to the ethical dimension inherent in these dynamics. This results in what he calls an "ethical gap," as these approaches tend to evaluate argumentation primarily from logical or character-based perspectives, rarely addressing arguers' obligations dispositions and intentions, which are crucial for determining whether an argumentative exchange is authoritarian or non-authoritarian.

Authoritarian argumentation is considered a fundamental problem because it undermines individuals' ethical autonomy by asserting a monopoly on truth and validity and dismissing interlocutors' perspectives outright. This not only hinders productive public debate

but also marginalizes minority perspectives and silences vulnerable voices, thereby undermining democratic values and obstructing the cooperative search for truth. In contrast, Sadek proposes non-authoritarian argumentation as a normative ideal: one that regulates the argumentative process to foster cooperation and reciprocal equality between arguers, incorporates obligations alongside dispositions and intentions, and shifts the focus from which reasons are offered to how reasons are exchanged.

To develop this framework, the study draws inspiration from a seven-century-old Islamic tradition known as *ādāb al-baḥṭh wa-al-munāzara*, in which ethical considerations are systematically integrated into the procedural rules of dialogue. Building on this tradition, the paper introduces two types of norms within a new normative framework. The first, sequencing-based norms, regulate the ordering of arguers' critical moves within a debate which embody an ethic of cooperation, fostering virtues such as patience and humility. The second, derailment-based norms, identify argumentative vices, such as arrogance, subjugation, usurpation, and hastiness—that undermine reciprocal equality and cooperative truth-seeking.

The article concludes that achieving non-authoritarian argumentation requires more than merely following procedural rules; it demands ongoing self-work by arguers to ensure that their compliance with norms reflects genuine dispositions rather than chance or duplicity. Arguers must act from an awareness of, and commitment to, the values embedded in sequencing and to the reciprocal equality compromised by derailments. Through this systematic integration of ethical considerations into procedural rules, the proposed framework enriches the normative toolkit of argumentation theory and promotes democratically enhancing public debate, fostering discourse in which citizens present reasons grounded in their deeply held convictions and identities while avoiding authoritarian practices.

The third paper, "*Civility: One or Many? Introducing 'Argumentative Civility'*" by Hareim Hassan addresses the challenge of political polarization and cultural divides in contemporary public discourse. It asks how engagement can be fostered when disagreements deepen into profound divisions, where parties lack shared norms for evaluating evidence or resolving disputes, without resorting to coercion or force. Unlike other spheres of discourse, political

argumentation is not necessarily truth-oriented but is often interest-driven, shaped by divergent interests, priorities, and power dynamics, making legitimate dissensus, which is acceptance of ongoing disagreement, an inherent part of its nature. As Hassan frames it, the problem lies in the fact that traditional notions of civility risk privileging those already served by the status quo and can function as an oppressive tool, silencing dissent and privileging dominant voices. This reality calls for a rethinking of the very concept of civility and for the development of a new framework that ensures disagreements remain alive and productive without devolving into destructive conflict.

To address this challenge, the author proposes a novel framework of argumentative civility, conceived as a cluster of argumentative virtues enabling participants to engage in discourse that preserves peaceful coexistence while accommodating, rather than delegitimizing, socio-political change. The framework rests on four key principles: respect for equal political dignity, respect for the minimum principles of argumentation such as freedom of conscience and freedom of expression, fulfilling the duty of providing reasons for political claims, and openness to socio-political change. These principles, according to the author, do not impose consensus but instead create an environment in which interlocutors can present their arguments and listen to others in a climate that guarantees equality and respect, even in the face of seemingly intractable differences.

However, for the framework of argumentative civility to be effective and robustly cross-cultural, it must transcend cultural boundaries by integrating insights from Western traditions with perspectives from Islamic traditions. Here, the author combines Western Virtue Argumentation Theory, which emphasizes the virtues and vices of arguers and focuses on their character and argumentational qualities such as being communicative, having faith in reason, intellectual courage, and intellectual empathy, with the Islamic traditions of *Munāzara* and *‘Adāb al-Jadal*. The Islamic traditions added to the table rules such as using familiar terms, avoiding interruptions or personal attacks, refraining from laughing, shouting, or belittling the opponent, and prioritizing truth-seeking over personal victory. This integration, the article argues, produces a more inclusive framework capable of fostering constructive engagement across cultural divides,

thereby making argumentative civility more responsive to diverse contexts and enabling intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue.

While the first three articles refine normative theories of argument, the next contribution, "*International Law and Argumentation: Navigating Constraints and Seeking New Orientations*", by Ronnie Haidar puts theory into analytical practice. By applying the argumentation theory of the German philosopher Harald Wohlrapp to international law, Haidar examines how global legal debates, exemplified by climate change negotiations, function as forums for constructing shared orientations.

He begins with a longstanding question in legal thought: although international law is recognized as a form of argumentation, its core purpose remains disputed. Haidar criticizes existing approaches to international law, whether those that view it as a form of persuasion through normative and concrete arguments or as a system that legitimizes facts via primary and secondary rules, arguing that both fail to account for the diversity of state interpretations shaped by history, tradition, politics, and power. As an alternative, he adopts Wohlrapp's theory, which sees argumentation as a cognitive process for acquiring, refining, and sustaining *orientations*, the lenses through which we perceive and act in the world.

This model rests on four concepts: *Orientations*, which guide understanding and action; *Validity*, achieved when conclusions withstand objections in open debate; *Mid-range universality*, which balances community-specific and broadly applicable norms; and *Frames*, which shape interpretation and determine what counts as reasonable or true. Haidar demonstrates the framework's utility through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), showing how differing state *Orientations* make negotiations sites for mutual understanding, how *Validity* grounds decisions in rigorous evidence rather than compromise, how recognition of diverse *Frames* prevents domination by a single perspective, and how *Mid-range universality* builds common ground between local priorities and universal principles, protecting both state interests and individual rights.

In conclusion, Haidar argues that Wohlrapp's framework offers a balanced and more effective analytical tool for addressing the complex and contested nature of international law, as demonstrated

through its application to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Moreover, he sees this approach as extending well beyond climate negotiations, holding promise as a resource for developing more inclusive and principled discourse within the global legal community, advancing the goals of the United Nations, and promoting a richer and more diverse discourse in international legal scholarship.

The fifth and final paper, "*Rational Force of Analogy/Qiyās in Law: Logic of Law in Islamic and Contemporary Legal Reasoning*" by Muhammed Komath revisits a foundational yet contested element of legal logic: the role of analogy (*Qiyās/Analogy*) as a vital tool of reasoning.

In legal reasoning, *qiyās* (analogy) has long served as a fundamental mechanism for ensuring consistency and predictability in rulings, whether in contemporary legal systems or Islamic jurisprudence. Yet despite its undeniable practical value, analogy remains an inherently fragile form of argument: it draws conclusions from perceived similarities while risking the neglect of significant dissimilarities. This tension between necessity and fragility forms the point of departure for Komath's inquiry, in which he asks a central question: How can analogy be rationally justified so that it is accepted not merely as a functional or rhetorical device, but as a genuinely inferential tool?

Komath draws out the parallels between debates in contemporary and Islamic legal theory, seeking within them new possibilities for a logical justification of analogy. He grounds his analysis in the writings of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), particularly *al-Mustasfā fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and *al-Muntaḥal fī al-Jadal*, and rereads them in light of two contemporary Western models: Scott Brewer's theory of abduction, which focuses on deriving an Analogy-Warranting Rule (AWR) from legal precedents through a process akin to *Istinbāt al-'Illa* (the Abduction of Occasioning Factor) in Islamic jurisprudence, and Douglas Walton's conception of analogy as a defeasible argument, supported by argumentation schemes and critical questions to test its strength.

Through careful comparison, Komath argues that al-Ghazzālī's approach to analogy anticipates an integrated synthesis of Brewer's abduction theory and Walton's defeasibility evaluation. Al-

Ghazzālī's theory of dialectical reasoning (*jadāl*) features a structured system of *su'āl* (objections) and *jawāb* (answers) closely paralleling Walton's critical questions framework. This system operates within a *ẓannī* (probabilistic) logic, where an argument retains rational force until effectively challenged by an objection. Such a logic underpins the persistent legal plurality in Islamic law, legitimizing divergent rulings across various *madhāhib* (schools of law) and accepting *ikhṭilāf* (divergent conclusions) as valid dialectical outcomes. What distinguishes al-Ghazzālī, Komath explains, is his account of the rational force of *ẓannī* legal arguments, not only as a justification of juristic method but as a model of logical validity that accommodates disagreement within divine law.

Ultimately, Komath concludes that al-Ghazzālī's model is not only a sophisticated exemplar of Islamic legal theory but also offers significant theoretical insights for contemporary legal reasoning. Rather than aiming to secure a singular definitive ruling, logic serves as a grammar of pluralism, legitimizing multiple, rational, and probabilistically justified conclusions (*ikhṭilāf*). Thus, the study of analogy moves beyond skepticism about its rational force to become a broader philosophical project, one that enriches global legal thought by bridging contemporary and Islamic legal debates and exploring non-Western perspectives that transcend cultural boundaries.

The final note we would like to make in this introduction to the special issue is to highlight that four of the articles, those by Karim Sadek, Hareim Hassan, Ronnie Haider, and Muhammed Komath, represent ongoing projects that will continue to be developed over the next two years, as they were awarded fellowships in the second cycle of the QatarDebate Center Fellowship program.

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