ABSTRACT:

Middle Eastern astronomical discoveries and cosmopolitanism are commonly and romantically considered features of past eras. The golden age of Arabic science is often located in the Middle Ages, and said to have been followed by stagnation and decline. Similarly, the rise of nationalism in the twentieth century is often blamed for the destruction of earlier diversity. In contrast to these views, I argue that Arabs have continued to contribute to space exploration and cosmopolitanism until the present. Using telescopes and engaging in transnational collaborations, astronomers in Egypt and Qatar have made important discoveries. Looking at Earth from American and Soviet spacecraft, a Saudi astronaut and a Syrian cosmonaut also began to see our planet without national boundaries. However, rather than being hampered by nationalism, transnational collaborations in the fields of space science largely depended on funding by national governments in search of growth, prestige and security.