



## The Rt Hon Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd lectures on The Rule of Law in a Post-Pandemic Society

On 28th October the Centre hosted a well-attended Sultan Azlan Shah lecture by the Rt Hon Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, former Chief Justice of England and Wales. The session was chaired by the Centre's Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow, the Rt Hon Baroness Hale of Richmond. Lord Thomas took as his title 'The Rule of Law in a Post-Pandemic Society'.

He noted that the pandemic had been a testing period for the rule of law. The Government had introduced unprecedented measures to stem the spread of Covid-19, and some confusion had been created between what was guidance to citizens and what had the force of law. This was an important distinction and the blurring of it was dangerous, especially when restrictions on fundamental freedoms were involved. There was also evidence of rushed and inappropriate conduct in other areas, for example tendering procedures.

Judges have traditionally seen themselves as key guardians of the rule of law and this was an important safeguard; parliament had signally failed to hold the



*Rt Hon Baroness Hale of Richmond and Rt Hon Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd during the question and answer session*

government effectively to account over issues during the pandemic. But a contrary argument was being mounted that parliament should have sole scrutiny of the legality of its dealings. The government was evidently considering legislation to restrict judicial scrutiny which, he argued, would remove necessary checks on the Executive, putting the rule of law at greater risk. The vote of thanks was given by Dinah Rose QC, President of Magdalen College.

## Professor Mariana Mazzucato speaks on A Mission-Oriented Approach for Inclusive Growth



*Professor Mariana Mazzucato during her lecture at the Centre*

On 18th October, the Centre welcomed Professor Mariana Mazzucato, Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation & Public Purpose. Delivering the Centre's annual Keith Griffin Lecture, Professor Mazzucato took as her title 'A Mission-Oriented Approach to Changing Capitalism'. Students and academics enjoyed an engaging presentation on how our economic systems can be reshaped in such a way that collective value, inclusion

and long-term stability constitute the fundamental objectives. Citing the Apollo moon landing mission as her pivotal point of comparison, Mazzucato called for a greater sense of ambition – a clear, targeted vision and concrete goals – when it comes to solving key societal problems. In detailing the features of such a purpose-oriented approach, she also drew on key principles of Islamic finance – emphasising the importance of partnership-based methods, as well as the need for investment in the real economy. The lecture was presided over by Stefan Dercon, Professor of Economic Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, and was followed by a wide-ranging question and answer session. The vote of thanks was given by Kimberly Griffin, daughter of eminent economist Keith Griffin, who served on the Centre's Board of Trustees for more than thirty years, and in whose honour this annual lecture is delivered.

## Visiting Fellowships: Michaelmas 2021

The Centre was delighted to welcome the following Visiting Fellows and Chevening Visiting Fellows during Michaelmas Term 2021. Their research interests range from Islamic finance to questions of orthodoxy, gender and the transmission of knowledge in Muslim societies.

Dr Bashayer Al-Majed, BA, MA (Kuwait), LLM (QMUL), PhD (Leeds), *Visiting Fellow*;

Ms Shabnam Mokhtar, BA (UPM), MSc (Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), SC-OCIS Islamic Finance *Visiting Fellow*;

Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, FCCA, ACA, *Visiting Fellow*;

Dr Pippa Virdee, PhD (Coventry), *Mohammad bin Ladin Visiting Fellow*;

Dr Asim Zubčević, BA (Aligarh), MPhil (Oxon), PhD (Leiden), *Abdul Aziz al-Mutawa Visiting Fellow*;

Dr Muhammad Akram, BA, MA (Punjab), MA MPhil (IIUI), PhD (Erfurt), *Chevening Visiting Fellow*;

Dr Olugbenro Oyekan, MS (Liverpool), MSc (Cranfield), MBA (Lagos State), *Chevening Visiting Fellow*;

Dr Nadia Hezlin Yashaiya, BSc (UTM), MBA (USM), PhD (UWA), *Chevening Visiting Fellow*.

## The Rt Hon Baroness Hale of Richmond speaks on Feminism in the Abrahamic Faiths



*Rt Hon Baroness Hale*

On 27th October the Rt Hon Baroness Hale of Richmond, Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow at the Centre, lectured on 'Feminism in the Abrahamic Faiths'. Noting the scope and complexity of this subject, Baroness Hale focused her attention on the legal dilemmas that it poses, offering a wide range of insights from her distinguished legal career. On the matter of religious dress, she emphasised that preconceptions surrounding questions of gender and Islamic dress are often reductive in their focus on notions of imposition and their disregard of individual agency. She recalled several cases in which an

individual's freedom to manifest their religion has come into conflict with institutional dress codes (such as school uniforms) or with the regulations and practicalities in a given institution (such as a court of law). Regarding the latter issue, she gave a detailed account of the complexities of balancing the need to see the face of a witness giving evidence with the need to respect their religious and cultural sensitivities if they choose to wear a full face covering. Also discussed in the lecture and subsequent lively Q&A were the conflicts that can exist between secular law and religious laws, particularly when it comes to marriage and divorce. She called for greater awareness of the implications that such conflicts can have regarding gender equality. Dinah Rose QC, President of Magdalen College, chaired the session.

## Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles speaks on Afghanistan: what went wrong?

On 10th November the Centre hosted Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, who took as his title "Afghanistan Afterword: Some Reflections on What Went Wrong and What the Future Might Hold". Speaking from his personal experience as British Ambassador at Kabul, Sir Sherard analysed the factors that underlay the failure of Western efforts to bring stability to the country. He drew parallels with other international peacekeeping campaigns and

drew attention to key issues which contributed to the success or failure of international intervention, including the balance between military and diplomatic efforts, the viability of the political process, and strategic patience.



*Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles*

## Central Asia Promoting Academic Cooperation

The Centre continues to build upon its growing relationship with academic institutions in Central Asia.



*The Director (second from left) with Ambassador Shaazim Minovarov (second from right)*

In October the Director travelled to Uzbekistan, where he acted as an International Observer in the Presidential

Elections and strengthened the Centre's international connections through a series of meetings and visits. He delivered a lecture at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, presided over by Senator Sodik Safojev; met with Ambassador Shaazim Minovarov, Director of the Centre of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan; and visited the Imam Al-Bukhari International Centre in Samarkand, accompanied by its Director, Dr Shovosil Ziyodov.



## Inspiring Future Leaders Celebrating 15 Years of YMLP

The 2021 Young Muslim Leadership Programme took place from 25th September – 3rd October. This annual residential programme is a joint initiative of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and The Prince's Charities. The Programme is designed with three aims in mind. Firstly, to provide an informed understanding of British social and political institutions and values, as well as to encourage thinking about the ways in which the participants can make a positive contribution to British public life and as global citizens. Secondly, to build a positive



*Zarah Sultana, MP*

identity in being British and Muslim. Thirdly, to foster a supportive network among the alumni. Participants are British Muslims aged between 21–30 who have demonstrated leadership potential

in various spheres, such as local or national government, commerce, media, the voluntary sector and the arts.

This year's programme included seminars from many high-profile speakers and distinguished experts from academia, banking, corporate and charity sectors, medicine and mental health, journalism, politics and public life. The YMLP participants visited the Jameel special exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; they also had a tour and attended a seminar in

Clarence House. The 2021 cohort spent much valued time together debating, exploring their career paths and generating ideas for their futures.

As this year marked the 15th Anniversary of the YMLP, the Centre hosted a YMLP Alumni Day on Saturday 2nd October. The keynote speech was given by Professor Shahid Jameel, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Fellow and Principal Investigator for the Centre's project on 'Public Health, Science & Technology in Muslim societies'. Professor Jameel spoke on 'Covid-19: Science, Leadership and Society'. Lectures were also delivered by three YMLP alumni. Hashi Mohamed, barrister and author (YMLP cohort 2007), delivered a talk entitled 'People Like Us'. Zarah Sultana, MP for Coventry South (YMLP cohort 2015), spoke on the subject of 'A Year in the Life of an MP'. Zara Mohammed, MCB Secretary General (YMLP cohort 2015), delivered a lecture entitled 'Leadership in the Public Eye'. Over 90 alumni attended the Alumni Day, which also included a delicious Afternoon Tea to celebrate 15 successful years of the programme.



*Hashi Mohamed*



*Zara Mohammed*



*YMLP alumni, with the 2021 cohort*

## Course on Arabic Calligraphy

On 6th November, the Centre offered a half-day course in Islamic calligraphy with Soraya Syed, a classically trained calligrapher and artist. Soraya offered a hands-on, practical calligraphy workshop, which primarily aimed to introduce some of the basic calligraphic letterforms and the specialist equipment used by professional artists. The workshop was followed by a walking tour, delivered by Soraya and Centre fellows Dr Moin Nizami and Professor Mohammad Talib. They discussed the Centre's architectural inscriptions and calligraphic artworks, which demonstrate the many ways in which Arabic letterforms can be used to create art and convey meaning.

## New Scholars: Michaelmas 2021

The Centre's Scholarship programme provides funding for students reading towards undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Oxford. The scholarships cover the full costs of study at the university, including tuition fees and living expenses. In Michaelmas Term 2021, seven new scholars began their studies with support from the Centre. The subjects studied by the new cohort include Economics & Management, Public Policy, Byzantine Studies, Law, Pharmacology and History.

The latest issue of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* was published in September 2021. It contains articles by Şeyma Afacan, on 'Idle Souls, Regulated Emotions of a Mind Industry: a new look at Ottoman materialism', and Mohammed Turki A. Al-Sudairi, on 'Traditions of Māturidism and anti-Wahhābism in China: an account of the Yihewani hard-liners of the Northwest'. The issue also contains 24 book reviews of some of the most recent publications about Islam and the Muslim World.

## Chair of the UK Defence Select Committee lectures on Developments in International Security

On 15th October, the Centre began its Michaelmas programme of Special Lectures with a talk by the Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP, entitled 'Re-energising Britain's Security Capabilities'. Ellwood was first elected as Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East in 2005. After previously serving as Under-Secretary of State for Middle East and North Africa (2014–2017), as well as Under-Secretary of State for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel (2017–2019), he was elected as Chair of the Defence Select Committee in January 2020. Reflecting on his previous and current roles, Ellwood emphasised the importance of remaining attentive to the threats and challenges arising on the world stage. He posited that the focus within politics on the 'here and now' too often comes at the expense of an engaged awareness of international affairs. Asserting that 'with connectivity comes

responsibility', he advocated for a stronger commitment in the UK to understanding the complexities of the world around us – and to using this understanding actively as a force for good. Only by doing so, he argued, can we successfully confront the ever-evolving threats faced on a national and a global level: from the growth of authoritarianism and extremism, to the undermining of cybersecurity, to the innumerable grave implications of climate change.



*Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood during his lecture*

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