



Diplomacy in a Multipolar World Talking to Anyone for the Good of Everyone

On February 15, the Foreign Minister of Oman, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, delivered a lecture on diplomacy in a multipolar world. Using the ongoing tragedies in the Middle East as a powerful spur to reflect on the history of the region and the complexities of the international system, he underscored the rejection of simplistic binary rhetoric of good versus evil, zero-sum games, and elective non-communication. Instead, he emphasized the need to recognize the multipolar nature of the world, with its intricate, overlapping interests and identities.

His Excellency denounced the reductionist and sectarian interpretations of Middle Eastern politics, labelling them 'sectarian slander'. He pointed out that, historically, religious identity had not been the foundation of politics in the region; rather, a more inclusive and ecumenical culture had been predominant. Regarding the Gaza conflict, he proposed convening an international conference, involving a wide range of countries, including Hamas and the 'global majority', to acknowledge Palestinian statehood as the cornerstone for a two-state solution. More broadly, he



HE Sayyid Badr Albusaidi

called for a revival of multilateralism and reform of the UN, specifically advocating for the removal of the veto power from the permanent members of the Security Council. He suggested that majority votes, with consideration for dissenting minority views—not dissimilar to the ICJ—would provide for a more effective system. He concluded by emphasising a just resolution of the Palestinian issue as essential for long-term positive change in the Middle East.

Britain and the Muslim World New Partnerships with Old Friends



The Lord Ricketts of Shortlands

On February 7, Lord Ricketts of Shortlands delivered a lecture at the Centre focusing on the evolving dynamics between Britain and the Muslim world. He emphasized the need for new partnerships grounded in mutual respect and understanding, acknowledging the historical context and importance of learning from past mistakes. The lecture stressed a nuanced approach to diplomacy that goes beyond traditional power politics, engaging with the complexities of contemporary international relations. Lord Ricketts highlighted the changing geopolitical

landscape, marked by the rise of multipolarity and non-Western influence. He argued for a more inclusive and collaborative British foreign policy, engaging with emerging powers in the Muslim world through bilateral ties and multilateral forums. Addressing common challenges like security, trade, and climate change, he emphasized the necessity for Britain to adapt to the realities of a multipolar world.

In his concluding remarks, Lord Ricketts underscored the importance of cultural diplomacy and people-to-people connections, such as educational exchanges and cultural programs, in fostering mutual understanding. He highlighted the role of diverse ethnic communities in enhancing Britain's soft power. Urging a commitment to long-term engagement as different from short-term benefit, he affirmed the potential for Britain and the Muslim world to collaboratively address global challenges and build a more inclusive, stable international order.

Visiting Fellows

The Centre welcomed the following Visiting Fellows:

Dr Fouzia Farooq Ahmed (Quaid-e-Azam University), *Atlas Visiting Fellow (Pakistan)*

Dr Md Abdullah Al-Masum, (Chittagong University), *AbdulAziz al-Mutawa Visiting Fellow (Bangladesh)*

Dr Melike Batgiray Abboud, *Abdullah Gul Chevening Visiting Fellow (Turkey)*

Dr Oumama Emad Hamasha, *Chevening Visiting Fellow (Jordan)*

Dr Mohammed Faiz Bin Shaul Hamid, *Chevening Visiting Fellow (Malaysia)*

Dr Muhammad Abubakar, *STEMS Visiting Fellow (Pakistan)*

Dr Ahmed Rabie, (Al-Azhar), *Chevening Visiting Fellow (Egypt)*

Professor Zekirija Sejдини (Heidelberg) *(Germany)*

Dr Nur Ain Shahrier, *SC-OCIS Visiting Fellow in Islamic Finance (Malaysia)*

Dr Fadoua El-Heziti, PhD (Seville) *(Morocco)*

Dr Erdal Harunogullari, MSc, PhD (Sakarya University), *Visiting Research Fellow (Turkey)*

Dr Mirzokhid Rakhimov, Phd (Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan), *Imam Bukhari Visiting Research Fellow (Uzbekistan)*

Dr Kamala Imran-Lowe, *Academic Visitor (Azerbaijan)*

Dr Mansooreh Khalilizand, BA, MA (Tehran) MA, PHD (Wuppertal), *Academic Visitor (Germany)*

International Contacts

Kuwait



KFAS representatives with the Director

The first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Centre's Kuwait Programme was held in Michaelmas Term. The Kuwait delegation included Shaikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al Ahmad Al-Sabah, Dr Ameena Rajab Farhan and Dr Suliman Al-Atiqi.

India

HE Mr Vikram Doraiswami, High Commissioner of India to the UK, visited the Centre and received a guided tour from the Director, followed by a lunch attended by senior Centre Fellows.



HE Mr Vikram Doraiswami

The visit provided an opportunity for His Excellency to learn more about the Centre's work and to discuss potential areas for cooperation and to strengthen ties between the Centre and India.

UK-Uzbekistan Day Ambitions for the Future



HE Mr Sodiq Safoyev

A roundtable on 'UK-Uzbek relations: ambitions for the future' featured inaugural speeches by His Excellency Mr Sodiq Safoyev, First Deputy Chairman of the Senate of Uzbekistan, Sir Alan Duncan, Former Minister for Europe and North America, and Mr Timothy Smart, the British Ambassador to Uzbekistan. The first panel, chaired

by Professor Peter Frankopan, examined Uzbekistan's cultural and civilizational model, with contributions from Professor Robert Hillenbrand, Ambassador Shoazim Minovarov, Dr Silke Ackermann and Professor Charles Melville. The second panel addressed the UK and Uzbekistan's shared vision on climate change, sustainability, and emerging technologies, including AI, with input from Professor Akram Umarov and Ms Aziza Umarova. The third panel focused on Uzbekistan's economic potential, development plans, and strategies to enhance bilateral trade and investment.

Lecture on Kazakhstan: Past, Present and Future

The Centre was pleased to host the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UK, HE Mr Maghzan Ilyassov, to deliver a lecture on 'Kazakhstan: past, present, future.' His presentation, enhanced by photographs showcasing Kazakhstan's rich architectural history and landscapes, emphasized the country's multifaith population and its secular constitution, which supports the practice of various religions without discrimination. His Excellency also outlined Kazakhstan's plans to leverage its extensive mineral resources

to foster growth in allied industries and technologies, and to develop expertise domestically. Following the lecture, a drinks reception and dinner were held in his honour, attended by Centre Fellows and senior members of the University.



HE Mr Maghzan Ilyassov

King Faisal Lecture

The Significance of the Dome in Islamic Architecture



Professor Robert Hillenbrand

Professor Robert Hillenbrand, a renowned art historian and King Faisal laureate, delivered the inaugural King Faisal Lecture at the Centre on the significance of the dome in Islamic architecture.

Speaking to a large audience, including the Secretary-General of the Prize, Professor

Hillenbrand used a typological approach, richly illustrated with photographs, to explore the internal and external impact of domes in Islamic architecture. He discussed the evolution of domes from precursor civilizations and highlighted the unique forms, rapid construction, and intricate decorations, particularly those from the Ottoman era.

Professor Hillenbrand emphasized the enduring significance and symbolic power of domes, noting the remarkable speed of construction in historical Islamic architecture despite the absence of modern technology.

Professor Sir John Kay lectures on Navigating a Radically Uncertain World

Professor Sir John Kay presented the annual Keith Griffin Lecture at the Centre on 'Navigating a radically uncertain world.' His lecture addressed the challenges of decision-making in an unpredictable world. He began with a thorough critique of the limitations inherent in conventional economic models, which often fail to account for real world uncertainty. He argued that these models are increasingly inadequate in the face of today's multifaceted global challenges and advocated for a more adaptive, nuanced approach to decision-making, emphasizing the need

for strategies that prioritize flexibility and resilience. By drawing on examples from various sectors, he highlighted how rethinking risk management is crucial for navigating the uncertainties of modern times.



Professor Sir John Kay

Roundtable on UK Domestic and Foreign Policy

Lord Mandelson led a roundtable on contemporary issues related to UK domestic and foreign policy. There was a discussion around urgent priorities for current and possible future governments and how transformative changes can be implemented to address the contemporary challenges faced at home and abroad.



Lord Mandelson

Roundtable on Understanding the Muslim Mind

Centre member participated in a roundtable discussion with Mr Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. The discussion centred on his book, *Understanding the Muslim Mind*, and also addressed Gandhi's enduring relevance in contemporary times, his principles of non-violence and non-cooperation, and lessons from his legacy.



Mr Rajmohan Gandhi

Seminars

The following seminars took place at the Centre

Professor N. Crawford (Oxford), 'Civilian casualties in war.'

Professor F. Devji (Oxford), 'Khilafat and the pan-Islamic imagination.'

Dr J. Wilson (Konstanz), 'Medieval Syria and the onset of the Crusades: Bilad al-Sham 1050-1128.'

Professor J. Johns (Oxford), 'Muslim justice under Christian rule: the Banū Rajā' qādis of Norman Sicily.'

Dr Mohammed G. Abdelnour (SOAS), 'From the higher objectives of Islamic Law to the higher objectives of Islamic theology.'

Professor T. Qutbuddin (Oxford), 'Khutba: rhetoric, religion, and ritual in orations of early Islam.'

Dr D. Weil (Cambridge), 'Written in the margins – articulating Islam in early modern China.'

Dr J. Guiffard (Institute Montaigne), 'Crisis in the Sahel: causes and consequences for Africa, Europe and the Muslim World.'

Dr T. Andersson (Uppsala), 'Sufism in al-Sanusi's theological works.'

Professor P. Jackson (Keele), 'Chinggis Khan's empire restored? The conquests of Tamerlane.'

Professor Ali Qasmi (LUMS), 'Qaum, mulk, sultanate: citizenship and national belonging in Pakistan.'

Professor R. Ismail (Oxford), 'Post-globalism and the ulama: contestation of authority.'

Dr M. Gallien (Sussex), 'Smugglers and states: negotiating the Maghreb at its margins.'

Professor M. Alemzadeh (Oxford), 'Iran's Revolutionary Guards: a history.'

International Law in
Times of War



Sir Christopher Greenwood

In his *Sultan Azlan Shah* Lecture at the Centre, Sir Christopher Greenwood discussed the development of international law in warfare, emphasizing both its effectiveness and limitations and concluding that a gap exists between the ideal and reality in times of conflicts.

Introducing the K. A. Nizami Collection Sources for The Study of Islam in South Asia

On Monday, 4th March 2024, the Centre's Library organized an event to mark the launch of its Special Collections. The focus was on the K. A. Nizami Collection which is now fully catalogued and open for readers. This collection, consisting of over 11,000 printed volumes and rare lithographs, 260 coins, and 360 Persian and Arabic manuscripts, was donated to the Centre in 2018 and constitutes a significant addition to our Library's resources on Islam in South Asia. At the event, Professor Bruce Lawrence (Duke University) delivered a lecture giving insights into the academic and professional contributions of Professor K. A. Nizami and spoke about the importance of his collection for the study of Islam in South Asia. Dr Shailendra Bhandare (Ashmolean Museum) introduced the coin collection highlighting the broad time spread and rich regional variety. Professor Francis



Robinson (Royal Holloway) presided at the event. There was an exhibition in the Library, prepared in close collaboration with the Oxford Conservation Consortium, displaying a selection of 118 items including manuscripts, lithographs, rare books, coins and archival documents from the Nizami collection. The exhibition received close attention and much praise from the visitors and initiated future cooperation projects for the Centre's Library within Oxford.

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OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Marstson Road, Oxford, OX3 0EE, UK

Tel: +44 1865 278730 Fax: +44 1865 248942 Email: islamic.studies@oxcis.ac.uk

www.oxcis.ac.uk