

PROJECT ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND ENVIRONMENT IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

Muslims comprise roughly a quarter of the world population and contribute similarly to global GDP. Their geographic distribution and widely variable economic conditions also make countries with significant Muslim populations disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly on their environment, health and resources (food, water and, in several cases, energy). These affect all but particularly magnify the struggles of the already-disadvantaged.

Simultaneously, major disruptive technological advances are introducing era-defining social conundrums. If not managed wisely, these disruptions may threaten the social and economic relations required for adaptation and mitigation of future threats.

To tackle the unique and pervasive upheavals of our era, today's Muslim societies need to emulate their predecessors who pioneered many fundamental scientific and technological advances, including applications in medicine and public health. They made systematic efforts to build scientific knowledge, innovate technologies, and train practitioners. This was accompanied by the coherent exposition of faith and philosophical values, and of legal concepts that prioritised people-oriented urban design and the conservation and preservation of land, water, and air for future generations.

Navigating future challenges will require a good understanding of the values that determine societies' engagement with science and technology, and for policy to be grounded in scientific evidence. Additionally, a sound philosophical and ethical basis will be needed for societal acceptance of these policies, especially in regions where faith plays a dominant role. The global nature of contemporary challenges also requires dialogue across faith and cultural barriers, and for collaboration beyond the Muslim world to effectively combat the drivers of existential threats such as climate change, global health, food security, etc., and mitigate their impacts.

Project on 'Science, Technology, and Environment in Muslim Societies' will study the ongoing efforts in a range of Muslim-majority countries. It will cover several areas of science and its technological applications. The project will gather information and promote research that recognises the challenges and proposes practicable steps to meet them in ways that are sustainable, equitable and socially acceptable. This goal requires understanding the religious and cultural norms in play, with an appreciation of their power to inform and motivate efforts to adapt for survival and for successfully meeting urgent challenges.

The challenges are global, and the pursuit of knowledge is always collaborative. The Project will, in alignment with the Centre's remit, be multi-disciplinary in its orientation and collaborate with other institutions worldwide to harvest the energy and creativity that can flow into an intellectual effort welcoming of different perspectives.

The Principal Investigator of the project is Professor Shahid Jameel, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Fellow at the Centre and Research Fellow at Green Templeton College, Oxford. The Islam and Environment strand of the project is led by Professor Adil Najam, President of WWF International, Professor of International Relations and of Earth and Environment at Boston University, and Mahathir Mohamad Visiting Fellow at the Centre. The Senior Adviser to the

project is Professor Sir David Clary FRS, King Salman Fellow at the Centre and President Emeritus of Magdalen College, Oxford. This project extends our previous one on Public Health, Science and Technology in Muslim Societies.

The relevance and urgency of the project will link to potential partners, some having expressed interest in supporting focused regional studies on which the quality and value of the project will ultimately be judged. Outputs will include publications collating the data that research has gathered, and policy papers outlining actions that can be taken.

The long-term goal of the project is to facilitate the establishment of a collaborative network across Islamic countries that uses science to address local and global challenges, and as a vehicle to unite people, while providing key tools for enabling the necessary exploration of the philosophies and values that identify permitted social adjustments and underpin societies' engagement with existing and new technologies.