Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities Volume: 3, Number 4, 2026, *Page*: 32-54

What Hajj Teaches Global Governance

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47134/pssh.v3i4.679
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Received: 28-04-2026
Accepted: 09-05-2026
Published: 17-06-2026

Abstract: *At a time of rising geopolitical tension, climate uncertainty, and declining global trust, Islamic civilisation is often misunderstood as either a historical legacy or a source of conflict. This study challenges those perceptions by showing that Islam remains a dynamic civilisational force shaping governance, finance, diplomacy, security, and environmental stewardship across the modern world. Drawing on classical Islamic sources, academic research, United Nations reports, think-tank analyses, and government documents, it examines how principles such as justice (ʿadl), consultation (shūrā), stewardship (khalīfah), and public welfare (maṣlaḥah) continue to shape contemporary policy and international engagement. The study argues that Islamic civilisation offers practical responses to twenty-first-century challenges through four interconnected dimensions: the modernisation of Hajj governance through advanced technologies, the growing influence of religious soft power in international relations, the resilience and ethical foundations of Islamic finance, and the role of faith-based values in promoting sustainability and conflict resolution. It introduces the concept of strategic entanglement to explain the interplay among religious norms, technological innovation, and geopolitical interests. Ultimately, the research contends that understanding Islam's constructive civilisational capacity is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic necessity for policymakers seeking pathways towards peace, resilience, and a more inclusive global order in an increasingly fragmented world.*

Keywords: *Islamic Civilisation, Hajj Governance, Islamic Finance, Religious Soft Power, Global Governance, Sustainability, International Relations*

Introduction

Imagine a gathering so vast that it eclipses the combined attendance of every G20 summit in a generation. In the searing heat of the Arabian desert, nearly two million souls converge upon the holy city of Makkah from more than 165 nations, united by a shared devotion that dissolves the boundaries of nationality, wealth, race, and political allegiance. This is the Hajj: an annual pilgrimage that stands as one of the most staggering demonstrations of human solidarity on the planet. Yet the Hajj is far more than a religious spectacle. Behind the flowing white garments and the collective cry of *"Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik"* lies an intricate matrix of governance, logistics, artificial intelligence, crowd analytics, biometrics, and international cooperation—a veritable stress test of twenty-first-century statecraft. For a world fractured by war, polarised by identity politics, and starved of trust, this ancient ritual offers a startlingly modern lesson: that diversity need not produce division, and that faith and technology can not only coexist but thrive together.

The civilisation that produced the Hajj is likewise anything but a relic of a bygone era. Today, more than 2.04 billion people live in the 57 member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)—roughly a quarter of the global population. By 2050, the Pew Research Centre projects that the number of Muslims worldwide will swell to nearly 2.8 billion, making Islam the fastest-growing major religion on earth. Across Southeast Asia, the Gulf, South Asia, Africa, and the expanding Muslim diaspora in Europe and the Americas, this demographic surge is reshaping markets, political alliances, cultural landscapes, and global governance norms. The OIC collectively holds a combined nominal GDP of approximately US$9 trillion, and at purchasing-power parity exceeds US$22 trillion.

The sector of Islamic finance, grounded in principles of risk-sharing and ethical investment, reached US$5.2 trillion in global assets by the end of 2025 and is on track to surpass US$6 trillion by the close of 2026, growing at nearly 15% year-on-year—a pace that outstrips most conventional banking markets. Sukuk (Islamic bonds) alone are expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 18.7%, from US$1.29 trillion in 2025 toward US$1.53 trillion in 2026. Meanwhile, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages generate an estimated US$12 billion annually for Saudi Arabia's economy, accounting for roughly 7% of the Kingdom's GDP and 20% of its non-oil revenue—a share set to expand dramatically under Vision 2030. In 2026, the official Hajj count stood at 1,707,301 pilgrims, of whom 90.6% came from abroad, injecting between US$5.3 and 6.7 billion into the local economy in a single week.

These are not marginal statistics. They are the quantitative signatures of a civilisation that, far from retreating from modernity, is actively re-engineering it. Nevertheless, much of the contemporary discourse on Islam remains trapped between two reductive extremes. On one side, a superficial narrative portrays Islam as an unchanging, pre-modern tradition—a civilisation frozen in time, at best romanticised, at worst demonised as inherently incompatible with democracy, human rights, and scientific progress (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, n.d.). On the other side, a security-focused lens reduces the Muslim world to a gallery of geopolitical threats: militancy, instability, terrorism, and radicalism (RAND Corporation, 2007). Between these caricatures, the living, breathing reality of Islamic civilisation—its intellectual dynamism, its financial innovations, its experiments in governance, its environmental stewardship, and its quiet acts of humanitarian solidarity—is routinely overlooked.

As the Brookings Institution noted in its landmark study Islam as Statecraft, the dominant image of Islam in world politics has been one of non-state actors and transnational networks, while how governments actually deploy Islam as a component of foreign policy conduct has received far less scholarly attention (Mandaville & Hamid, 2018). Likewise, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has emphasised that debates about Islam and modernity cannot be settled exclusively by reference to scriptural texts, because such texts lend themselves to conflicting interpretations; what matters is the actual interaction between religious authority and political authority as it unfolds in practice (Carnegie Endowment, n.d.). These research gaps are not trivial omissions—they are analytical blind spots that

impede our ability to understand one of the most consequential geopolitical forces of the twenty-first century.

The United Nations system has repeatedly called for a more nuanced engagement with the Muslim world. The UNDP's Arab Human Development Reports have documented persistent challenges in education, gender inequality, and economic participation, yet they also highlight significant progress in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, which ranked first in the Arab region and 15th globally on the Human Development Index in 2025, with a score of 0.940 (UNDP, 2025). The UN General Assembly, through resolutions on a culture of peace and interreligious dialogue (e.g., A/74/L.33), has affirmed that "respectful dialogue builds understanding, fosters inclusion and lays the foundation for a culture of peace" (UN General Assembly, 2019).

UNESCO continues to preserve and promote Islamic heritage sites from Samarra in Iraq to the old quarters of Cairo and Samarkand, recognising that the Islamic Golden Age—with its breakthroughs in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy—belongs not to any single faith but to the collective patrimony of humanity (UNESCO, 2025). The World Bank has likewise championed Islamic finance as a viable instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, noting that Islamic fintech can "tap into the Islamic social financing pool to fund wider global social funding needs" and that "Islamic finance can play a pivotal role in bridging a share of the global SDG funding gap" (World Bank, 2025; World Bank, 2026). These multilateral endorsements are not diplomatic niceties—they are acknowledgements that Islamic civilisation offers practical, scalable solutions to problems that plague the entire international community.

The present study is situated at the intersection of three fundamental modes of inquiry: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. On its descriptive face, the research documents the empirical realities of Islamic civilisation in the modern world—its demographic weight, its economic footprint, its governance structures, its financial instruments, its security architectures, and its environmental initiatives. Yet description alone would be insufficient. The study also undertakes explanatory work, seeking to identify causal mechanisms: for instance, how the ethical principles of Islamic finance (prohibition of riba, asset-backing, profit-sharing) translate into macroeconomic resilience; or how the Hajj pilgrimage functions not only as a spiritual exercise but as a driver of technological innovation and international cooperation.

Finally, the research is exploratory insofar as it grapples with emergent phenomena that existing theories of international relations, political economy, and cultural change have not adequately captured: the rise of "religious soft power" as a strategic tool; the fusion of faith-based norms with sustainability diplomacy; and the re-articulation of tradition through artificial intelligence and crowd-analytics.

The motivation for this research is urgent and multidimensional. First, there is a pragmatic motivation: policy failures in the Muslim world—whether in counter-terrorism, economic development, climate adaptation, or conflict resolution—carry cascading consequences for global stability. The Chatham House Middle East and North Africa

Programme has documented that conflicts in the region have increased by nearly three-quarters since the 2000s, and that geopolitical fragmentation is rendering traditional peacebuilding less effective (Chatham House, 2025). Second, there is an epistemic motivation: the sheer volume of scholarship on Islam has been skewed toward security studies at the expense of cultural, economic, and civilisational analysis (Mandaville & Hamid, 2018). As the Wilson Center has observed, the question of how Muslim societies negotiate modernity remains both underexplored and misrepresented, with stereotypical binaries—"Islam versus the West," tradition versus reform—obscuring more than they reveal (Wilson Center, 2005).

Third, there is a normative motivation: if the international system is to move beyond the zero-sum logic of great-power rivalry and cultural confrontation, it requires alternative models of coexistence rooted in shared values of justice, compassion, and stewardship. Islamic civilisation, with its fourteen centuries of experience in managing pluralistic empires, trans-continental trade networks, and multi-faith societies, constitutes an underexploited repository of such models.

In terms of the classic distinction between basic (pure) and applied research, this study deliberately straddles both poles. On the basic research side, the manuscript advances theoretical understanding of how religious civilisations adapt to, and reshape, the forces of globalisation, technological change, and environmental pressure. It interrogates the assumptions underlying Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilisations" thesis, which the Chatham House scholar Gregorio Bettiza (2026) identified as one of the two dominant paradigms shaping post-Cold War Western foreign policy (Bettiza, 2026).

The research also engages with the RAND Corporation's controversial proposals for building "moderate Muslim networks," which sought to partition the Muslim world into secularists, liberal Muslims, moderate traditionalists, and Sufis—a categorisation that has been criticised for imposing external political agendas onto complex religious ecologies (RAND Corporation, 2007). By empirically testing such frameworks against the lived realities of Muslim-majority states, the study contributes to the foundational literature in comparative politics, international relations, and religious studies.

Simultaneously, the research is deeply applied in its orientation. The policy recommendations embedded in the final chapter are designed to be actionable: they address concrete challenges such as financial inclusion (via green sukūk and Islamic microfinance), environmental degradation (via the Saudi Green Initiative and Middle East Green Initiative), humanitarian coordination (via OIC-led mediation and zakat-driven aid), and governance reform (via ijtihād-informed legal innovation). The Council on Foreign Relations' 2026 Religion and Foreign Policy Workshop underscored that religious leaders and policymakers increasingly seek evidence-based strategies at the intersection of faith and international affairs (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). This study directly responds to that demand.

The research philosophy underpinning this study is pragmatist. Pragmatism rejects the forced choice between positivism (which prioritises objective, measurable facts) and

interpretivism (which prioritises subjective meanings and cultural contexts). Instead, pragmatism holds that research questions determine methodology, and that the value of knowledge lies in its practical consequences (Dewey, 1938; James, 1907). Given the multi-faceted nature of the subject—which spans economics, law, theology, geopolitics, anthropology, and data science—no single epistemological lens is adequate. The study therefore employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative empirical indicators (GDP, asset values, pilgrim numbers, demographic projections) with qualitative analysis of policy documents, think-tank reports, UN resolutions, and theological sources.

In terms of reasoning strategies, the study uses both deduction and induction. The deductive component tests propositions derived from existing theories—for instance, the hypothesis that Islamic finance's structural aversion to excessive leverage reduces systemic risk during financial crises (a claim examined against the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent shocks). It also tests the proposition that states deploy "religious soft power" as a strategic resource in foreign policy, drawing on the Brookings Institution's framework (Mandaville & Hamid, 2018).

The inductive component, by contrast, proceeds from empirical observations to theoretical refinement. For example, the manuscript observes that the Hajj pilgrimage has transformed from a purely logistical challenge into a showcase for AI-driven crowd management and biometric identification; from this observation, it induces a broader proposition about the entanglement of faith and technological modernisation across Muslim-majority states. Similarly, the remarkable growth of Islamic finance from a niche alternative to a systemically important global sector (US$5.2 trillion and counting) induces the need for a revised understanding of ethical finance that goes beyond conventional ESG (environmental, social, governance) criteria.

This study speaks across disciplines, drawing together the worlds of Islamic jurisprudence, economics, geopolitics, security, and environmental diplomacy to examine how Islamic institutions shape contemporary statecraft. It explores how adherence to Sharia principles through Islamic finance, the effectiveness of Hajj management, the projection of religious soft power, and commitments to environmental stewardship influence a nation's global standing. From the sophistication of AI-driven pilgrimage systems in Makkah to the expanding reach of sukūk markets, interfaith engagement, and climate initiatives, these factors reveal how faith-based governance is increasingly intertwined with modern policy, economic innovation, and international influence.

At its heart lies a deeper question: can Islamic values strengthen resilience, trust, and peace in a fractured world? The study evaluates this through indicators such as foreign investment, tourism confidence, economic stability, and the success of conflict mediation efforts. Yet outcomes are also shaped by powerful structural realities—including oil dependence, colonial legacies, regime type, and regional security dynamics—while religious authorities and demographic forces often act as critical bridges between doctrine and policy. Together, these dimensions reveal that Islamic civilisation is not merely a

historical inheritance but a living force capable of influencing governance, diplomacy, and global trust in the twenty-first century.

This research advances four powerful propositions that challenge conventional assumptions about Islam's place in global affairs. First, it argues that Islamic civilisation is not a relic of history but a living and adaptive force capable of addressing contemporary challenges—from the technological transformation of Hajj and the global expansion of Islamic finance to faith-inspired climate initiatives and public-health responses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, it contends that Muslim-majority states increasingly wield religious soft power alongside traditional diplomacy, using institutions, pilgrimage networks, charitable outreach, and distinctive national interpretations of Islam to build influence across regions and cultures. In this view, religion is not simply a domestic matter but an increasingly important instrument of international engagement.

The study also explores the growing strategic relevance of Islamic finance, suggesting that its emphasis on asset-backed investment, risk-sharing, and ethical principles may offer greater resilience during periods of economic turbulence while supporting sustainable development goals. Most significantly, it presents Hajj as a remarkable, yet often overlooked, model of global governance. Each year, nearly two million pilgrims from more than 165 countries are coordinated through one of the most complex logistical operations on earth, demonstrating an extraordinary capacity for international cooperation. The argument is not that Hajj should replace existing multilateral institutions, but that it offers a compelling alternative vision—one where shared values, collective purpose, and human solidarity succeed where transactional politics too often falls short.

The study tests whether Islamic institutions can deliver measurable advantages in development and governance. It hypothesises that Islamic banks are more resilient during financial crises, that stronger sukūk markets help narrow infrastructure financing gaps, that investment in Hajj technologies enhances both tourism growth and international influence, and that climate policies grounded in Islamic principles of stewardship and balance generate greater public legitimacy and attract stronger international support than purely technocratic approaches. Together, these hypotheses examine whether faith-informed frameworks can translate into tangible economic, diplomatic, and environmental outcomes in the modern world.

The theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, it advances a revised theory of religious civilisations in global affairs, moving beyond the Huntingtonian clash paradigm toward a more nuanced model of "strategic entanglement"—in which religious norms, technological modernisation, and geopolitical interests co-evolve in unpredictable ways. Second, it contributes to soft power theory by specifying the mechanisms through which religious practices (pilgrimage, charity, finance) generate influence without coercion, drawing on the Brookings Institution's concept of "religious soft power" (Mandaville & Hamid, 2018). Third, it offers a theory of governance by ritual: the idea that large-scale collective religious practices can produce governance outcomes (logistical coordination,

technological innovation, cross-border cooperation) that are not reducible to intentional state policy.

Why does this research matter now, in 2026, with urgency bordering on necessity? The answer lies in the convergence of several global trends. Geopolitical rivalry is intensifying: the CSIS (2025) has documented rising tensions in the Middle East, including military strikes, proxy warfare, and the re-emergence of great-power competition between the United States, China, and Russia (CSIS, 2025). Trust in multilateral institutions is collapsing: the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund face legitimacy crises from both Global South and Western populist movements. Meanwhile, the demographic weight of the Muslim world is reaching a tipping point.

By 2050, Muslims will be nearly equal in number to Christians globally, with approximately 2.8 billion Muslims (30% of world population) compared to 2.9 billion Christians (31%) (Pew Research Center, 2015). India alone will have the largest Muslim population of any country, surpassing Indonesia (Pew Research Center, 2015). In Europe, Muslim communities are growing not only through migration but also through higher fertility rates, permanently reshaping the continent's religious landscape (Pew Research Center, 2015). Yet Western foreign policy establishments—as the RAND Corporation, the Council on Foreign Relations, and Chatham House have all documented—remain poorly equipped to engage with this reality beyond the frameworks of counter-terrorism and energy security.

The tragic irony is that Islamic civilisation itself offers resources for precisely the kind of cooperative, pluralistic, and ethical global order that the international community claims to seek. The Qur'anic imperative to "compete in good works" (fastabiqū al-khayrāt), the Prophetic tradition of the "Constitution of Medina" as a model of pluralistic governance, the centuries-old practice of waqf (religious endowment) as sustainable social finance, and the annual miracle of the Hajj as a living demonstration of human equality—these are not antiquities. They are operating systems, still running, still evolving, still capable of solving real problems.

Drawing on historical analysis, contemporary case studies, think-tank research, and UN data, this study examines how Islamic civilisation continues to shape governance, diplomacy, finance, security, sustainability, and international cooperation in the twenty-first century. It argues that Islam's enduring principles of justice, stewardship, knowledge, and communal welfare remain highly relevant to addressing modern global challenges—from economic resilience and conflict resolution to climate action and social cohesion. More than an academic inquiry, it presents a practical framework for policymakers seeking pathways towards a more stable, inclusive, and sustainable international order, challenging narrow narratives that reduce Islam to conflict and revealing instead its potential as a constructive force in an increasingly fractured world.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, library-based methodology, drawing primarily on documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources, including classical Islamic legal texts, contemporary academic literature, international organisation reports (UN, World Bank), think-tank policy papers (Brookings, RAND, Chatham House), and official government documents (Saudi Vision 2030, Ministry of Hajj reports). This approach integrates a descriptive-analytical method to trace the historical evolution of Islamic civilisation and a thematic analysis to systematically identify and interpret recurring patterns across diverse thematic areas—political leadership, finance, security, diplomacy and sustainability. By synthesising historical, religious, financial and geopolitical perspectives, the study builds a nuanced, interdisciplinary understanding of how Islamic institutions and values interact with modern global dynamics, allowing a critical engagement with both traditional scholarship and contemporary policy discourse while avoiding the reductive extremes that characterise much of the existing literature. This qualitative documentary methodology is methodologically supported by Mohd Mumtaz Ali (2024), who argues that Islamic Studies must transcend narrow religious frameworks and adopt a comprehensive, qualitative content analysis approach that situates Islam within its broader cultural and civilisational context to address its multifaceted dimensions.

Result and Discussion

In an age defined by war, polarisation, and declining trust, the world continues to overlook one of humanity's most extraordinary gatherings. Every year, nearly two million pilgrims converge on Makkah from more than 180 countries, crossing borders, languages, ethnicities, and political divisions. While global leaders gather in exclusive summits behind security barricades, Hajj quietly assembles a far larger and more diverse community than any diplomatic forum on earth.

Yet Hajj is far more than a religious pilgrimage. It is a living demonstration of a civilisational idea that has endured for fourteen centuries: that human dignity transcends race, nationality, wealth, and power. At a moment when the international system appears increasingly fractured, this lesson has become strategically important.

Much of the contemporary conversation about Islam remains trapped between two extremes. One portrays Islam as a relic of history; the other sees it solely through the lens of security and conflict. Both perspectives fail to grasp a deeper reality. Islamic civilisation remains one of the most influential forces shaping global affairs today. Its intellectual legacy stretches from the scientific breakthroughs of Ibn al-Haytham and the House of Wisdom to modern institutions managing the lives of 1.5 billion Muslims across 57 nations. Its principles continue to influence governance, finance, diplomacy, environmental stewardship, and social welfare across vast regions of the world.

Hajj is where this civilisation becomes visible in its most powerful form. The pilgrimage is not merely a spiritual journey. It is an exercise in governance, logistics, technology, and international cooperation on a scale few states could manage. Saudi Arabia now employs artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and sophisticated crowd-

management systems to coordinate one of the largest annual human movements on the planet. In doing so, it has transformed one of the oldest religious traditions into a remarkable showcase of twenty-first century innovation.

The symbolism is profound. Faith and modernity are not colliding in Makkah; they are working together. This fusion reflects a broader transformation unfolding across the Muslim world. From Indonesia's democratic pluralism to Malaysia's globally recognised Islamic finance sector and the Gulf's ambitious economic reforms, Muslim-majority states are increasingly searching for ways to reconcile tradition with modern governance. The result is not a single Islamic model but a spectrum of approaches anchored in shared values of justice, consultation, stewardship, and public welfare.

Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in international relations. The world faces a growing deficit of trust. Geopolitical rivalry has replaced cooperation. Cultural misunderstanding fuels suspicion between societies. Climate change, migration, and conflict demand collective solutions, yet multilateral institutions struggle to command confidence. In this environment, Hajj offers something increasingly rare: a practical demonstration that diversity does not have to produce division.

For a few remarkable days, distinctions of wealth, status, and nationality dissolve. Presidents walk beside labourers. Billionaires stand beside farmers. Africans, Asians, Europeans, Arabs, and Americans perform the same rituals in the same garments. The message is simple yet revolutionary: human equality is not an aspiration but a reality that can be lived.

That message carries significance far beyond the Islamic world. As nations search for new foundations of cooperation in an increasingly fragmented century, Hajj offers a powerful reminder that civilisations are not merely inherited from the past; they are resources for building the future. In Makkah, the world witnesses not only a pilgrimage, but a vision of global coexistence—one rooted in dignity, humility, and shared humanity. At a time when humanity seems to be drifting apart, that vision may be more valuable than ever.

Islamic Civilisation in the Modern World

The Islamic tradition spans fourteen centuries of history, shaping a civilisation that has contributed enormously to world culture, science, law, and governance. From the early Caliphates (Umayyad, Abbasid, Ottoman) to today's diverse Muslim-majority states, Islamic history is marked by periods of intellectual flowering (the "Golden Age"), trade and scholarship, as well as conflict and reform. Classical Islamic civilisation fused religious faith with rational inquiry: famous scholars like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) in medicine, Al-Khwarizmi in mathematics, and Al-ʿAlamī in astronomy laid the foundations for modern science. Islamic cities such as Baghdad, Cordoba, and Cairo became centres of learning, with institutions like madrasahs and the House of Wisdom preserving and expanding knowledge.

This heritage lives on in a shared legacy of ideas: Arabic scholarship preserved ancient Greek works, hospitals and libraries flourished, and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning)

was encouraged in jurisprudence. These historical roots continue to influence identity and policy today. Many modern debates (e.g. about law, governance, and ethics) hearken back to Islamic legal traditions derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the Prophet's example). In this sense, Islam's civilizational memory embeds a vision of a pluralistic, spiritually-grounded society. For instance, leading Islamic thinkers note that Islam's very name (from *s-l-m*, meaning "peace" or "submission") implies a core commitment to peace and social harmony (ACET-Global, n.d.).

In practice, this has meant that concepts like justice (*ʿadl*), consultation (*shura*), and respect for life have been central in Islamic political and social thought. Cultural and heritage studies of Islam often emphasise this continuity: the "pious predecessors" (Salaf) are held up as models of governance and piety, shaping modern Islamist and reformist movements alike. Thus, Islamic history and civilisation provide a rich background that combines religious values with a legacy of global exchange and scientific inquiry.

Islamic Political Leadership

Islamic political leadership has taken many forms over time. In the formative era, leadership was embodied in the Caliphate, where successors to the Prophet Muhammad (the Caliphs) governed the expanding Muslim world. Sunni tradition emphasises collective decision-making (via *shura* or consensus) and leadership as a trust from God. Shia Muslims, by contrast, believe leadership should stay within the Prophet's family (Imams). In modern times, leadership models vary widely: some Muslim countries have monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Brunei), others have republics (Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia), and some, like Iran, have a theocratic republic. Yet all these systems claim Islamic legitimacy in some way – for example, Saudi Arabia's monarchy is seen by some as part of the Prophet's tribe (Quraysh), while Iran's Guardianship of the Jurist reinterprets Shiʿi authority in state form.

Today's Islamic leaders often blend tradition with modern statecraft. For example, Saudi Arabia's rulers frame themselves as the custodians of Islam's holiest sites, and they have used this religious leadership to justify major investments and reforms. Saudi leaders emphasise modernisation: King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) have explicitly tied religious duty to national development, epitomised by the Vision 2030 strategy. This can be seen in how the Hajj pilgrimage – a purely religious event – has become a showcase of high technology and strategic planning under Saudi leadership.

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj proudly notes that over the past decades it has created "a pioneering global model in crowd management and humanitarian services founded on the integration of strategic planning, institutional development, and modern technologies." In other words, serving pilgrims is treated as a matter of national prestige and scientific rigour (Al-Qahtani & Al-Harbi, 2024). The Minister of Hajj has even observed that the system "evolved from one focused on responding to challenges into a model driven by science and modern technology, thereby enhancing operational efficiency… and enabling pilgrims to perform their rituals with ease and peace of mind" (Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2026).

These statements reveal how Islamic leadership today frequently invokes both faith and cutting-edge know-how in tandem. Likewise, in other Muslim countries, leaders balance faith-based legitimacy with international norms. Turkey's government, for instance, appeals to Ottoman-Islamic heritage while also courting Western investment; Malaysia's leaders mix Islamic values with a multi-ethnic, democratically elected government. Overall, modern Islamic political leadership often faces the challenge of being both guardian of tradition and a player in a secular world. The tensions between religion and state, or between universal Islamic principles and nationalist interests, are ongoing themes studied in Islamic political science.

Islamic Heritage and Tradition

Islamic heritage studies focus on how the religion's texts and traditions guide contemporary life. Sunni Islam relies heavily on the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) as primary sources, with the Sunnah (Prophetic practice) as an interpretive lens. Scholars categorise the first three generations of Muslims (the Salaf: the Companions, their followers, and the followers of the followers) as exemplars of authentic practice. Many movements (notably Salafism) today call for a "return to the Qur'an and Sunnah," arguing that later innovations led Islam away from its true path.

This perspective underpins much of the Islamic educational and legal system: for example, imams and judges continue to teach classical juristic texts that derive rulings from these early sources. In policy terms, this heritage focus means that state decisions are often justified with reference to tradition. For instance, Saudi Arabia's court system enshrines Hanbali jurisprudence, and royal decrees occasionally cite fatwas (legal opinions) to align policy with Islamic teaching.

Despite differences (Sunni vs Shia, traditionalist vs modernist), Islamic heritage education often emphasises core moral values found in the texts. An Institute of Policy Studies (n.d.) (Pakistan) analysis notes that in Islamic thought, peace (*salam*, *amn*, *sulh*) is "not an antonym of war" but denotes a comprehensive culture of "tolerance, mutual understanding and… dialogue." The Qur'an repeatedly "invites all humans to cultivate an attitude of peace" (Iqra, n.d.). Similarly, the concept of *jihad* (struggle) is framed in classical sources as a means of protecting human rights and dignity, not as unconditional holy war. In this view, the expression "holy war" (*harb al-muqaddas*) does not truly exist in the Qur'an or authentic Sunnah (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007).

Such teachings form the ethical backdrop for Islamic scholarship and, by extension, heritage preservation. For cultural diplomacy and education, this means highlighting shared values: Islamic history is rich in artistic, literary, and scientific treasures (from calligraphy and architecture to mathematics), and many modern scholars point out these as bulwarks against stereotypes. In sum, Islamic heritage studies underscore continuity – how the Sunnah and Salaf set moral parameters – even as scholars debate how to adapt laws (like inheritance rules or finance) to today.

Islamic Finance Studies

A major contemporary domain of Islamic heritage is Islamic finance, which applies Sharia law to banking, investment, and economics. Its core principles have deep roots: historic traders and communities avoided *riba* (usury) and engaged in profit-sharing partnerships for centuries. In modern form (since about 1975 with the founding of Dubai Islamic Bank), Islamic finance prohibits interest in financial transactions. The World Bank explains: one of the main principles is the prohibition of *ribā* (interest) on loans (World Bank, 2016). Instead, financing must be linked to real assets; for example, a bank buys a house and sells it to a client at a markup (profit) rather than simply lending money.

Equity financing and joint ventures (like *mushārakah* and *mudarabah*) are emphasised. Other rules forbid investment in "immoral or ethically problematic businesses" (e.g. gambling, alcohol, arms) (Kenton, 2026). Returns must come from shared risk, not guaranteed interest. In summary, Islamic finance is "equity-based, asset-backed, ethical, [and] sustainable" – it ties the financial sector to the real economy and social welfare (Islamic Development Bank Institute, 2024). Notably, this framework has attracted global interest: major Western financial hubs (London, New York, Hong Kong) now host Islamic banking windows, and even some conventional economists see Islamic finance as a tool against economic shocks or poverty (COMCEC, 2021). For instance, the Council on Foreign Relations notes that by 2020, Islamic banks had sprung up in more than fifty countries, including major Western banks opening Sharia-compliant units (Klobucista, 2023).

Growth has been rapid: Islamic finance assets have expanded about 15% per year, and analysts project the market could reach into the trillions of dollars (Coalition Greenwich, 2024). Countries like Malaysia, the Gulf states, Pakistan and others have sizable Islamic banking sectors. Governments and central banks in these countries often promote Islamic finance as part of a development strategy: Islamic bonds (sukūk) are used to fund infrastructure, and Islamic microfinance is encouraged for financial inclusion.

In sum, Islamic finance studies examine this distinctive system (often via partnerships of economists and jurists) and its global impact. Policy debates include how to regulate Sharia boards, integrate with conventional markets, or use Islamic finance to advance global development goals. The broad consensus is that Islamic finance provides an "alternative" model that emphasises risk-sharing and ethical growth (OECD, 2020). This model has even influenced G20 discussions on financial stability, highlighting Islamic finance's growing legitimacy in international economics.

Core Principles of Islamic Finance

a. No interest (*riba*): Loans must not charge or pay interest. Instead, profit is earned through trade contracts (*Murabaha*).
b. Asset-backed financing: All financial transactions must be linked to tangible assets or services. Pure debt without an underlying asset is not allowed.
c. Ethical restrictions: Investments in activities like gambling, alcohol, pornography, or weapons are prohibited.

d. Risk and profit sharing: Financing structures (e.g. joint ventures) require sharing of both profit and loss between parties, aligning incentives with real economic activity.
e. Social welfare focus: The system emphasises financial inclusion and community welfare, often through instruments like *zakat* (charitable giving) and sukuk funding public projects (Hassan & Lewis, 2007; Thiagaraja *et al*., 2014).

By these principles, Islamic finance is often described as more socially responsible and stable (some scholars argue it helped Muslim-majority countries avoid certain financial crises). However, it faces challenges – for example, debates continue over whether some sukūk effectively mimic conventional bonds, and some Sharia scholars (like Egypt's former Grand Mufti) have controversially allowed interest under modern banking norms. Still, the field continues to grow, driven by the oil-rich Muslim world's surpluses and rising demand from devout consumers (Godlewski *et al*., 2013). Overall, Islamic finance studies combine religious scholarship with economics and business, aiming to offer a fully Sharia-compliant yet globally relevant financial system.

War, Peace, and Political Dynamics

Islamic texts and scholarship have rich treatments of war and peace. The Qur'an and Hadith lay down strict rules: warfare is only allowed in defence or to end oppression, and excessive killing is forbidden. As one Islamic peace scholar observes, jihad (often mistranslated as "holy war") in the Quran is fundamentally about defending human rights and checking oppression, not an open-ended crusade against non-Muslims (Esposito, 2008). Indeed, the Quran emphasises peace over conflict and repeatedly invites humanity toward "the abode of peace". Historically, many Islamic jurists codified just-war principles: for example, forbidding harm to non-combatants, protecting religious freedom in conquered lands, and requiring treaties rather than surprise attacks (Vanhullebusch, 2015).

In the modern era, however, conflicts involving Muslim societies have often been complex and political. Colonial invasions, Cold War dynamics, and sectarian struggles have led to many wars in the Islamic world (e.g. Palestine, Kashmir, Iraq, Syria, Yemen). Extremist groups like Al-Qaeda or ISIS have invoked Islamic rhetoric to justify violence, but mainstream Muslim leaders and scholars overwhelmingly reject their interpretations. World opinion on Islam and violence is frequently distorted by media and ideology, but Muslim thinkers point out that Islam envisions Islam ("the surrender to God's authority") as inherently connected to peace (*salam*), whereas the label of violence comes from political motives and misperceptions (Khan, 2017).

From an international relations (IR) perspective, scholars note that Muslim-majority states behave like other countries in pursuing security and interests. Regional security in the Middle East, for example, is shaped by Iran–Saudi rivalry, the Israel–Palestine conflict, great power competition, and the proliferation of nonstate militias. The Islamic concept of *ummah* (the global Muslim community) sometimes influences diplomacy (e.g. solidarity with Palestinians or Rohingya, statements by the OIC), but national and sectarian interests often

prevail in practice. Think tanks like Brookings and Stimson note that Islamic institutions (like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) can mediate some conflicts, but they face capacity and political limits (Taşpınar, 2015).

Recent events illustrate these dynamics. For instance, Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen (2015–ongoing) was justified by some in Islamic terms as defending fellow Muslims, while others criticised the humanitarian toll. Simultaneously, the annual Hajj pilgrimage – a massive gathering – has been run with extraordinary security measures to prevent conflict and stampedes, reflecting a broad Islamic concern for life. Saudi officials now boast that they have a "global benchmark" model for Hajj crowd management (Saudi Gazette, 2026), meaning pilgrims can perform rituals in "ease and peace of mind". This combination of technological mastery and religious duty suggests a vision of peace through order and care.

In summary, while geopolitical conflicts do affect Muslim communities, classical Islamic teachings (as interpreted by most scholars) emphasise peace, justice, and the sanctity of human life. As one analysis puts it, Islam's view of peace is comprehensive – not just the absence of war, but a positive order of justice (*adl*), mercy, and social harmony. These principles continue to underpin efforts at conflict resolution: many Islamic leaders call for nonviolent solutions, and the shared values of mercy and charity (*rahma* and *ihsan*) are frequently cited in peace appeals. Thus, the Islamic narrative on war and peace – with its roots in scripture and centuries of jurisprudence – remains a critical perspective in any thorough analysis of international conflict involving Muslim societies.

Cultural and Civilisational Analysis

Islamic culture and civilisation studies examine how Muslim societies have shaped, and been shaped by, broader human development. A key theme is Islam's integration of faith with daily life and governance: unlike some modern Western secular models, many Muslim-majority societies blend religious values into education, law, and community life. This unique characteristic has implications for science, the arts, and social norms. For example, Islamic architecture (mosques, madrasahs) evolved to accommodate religious practice but also became forums for learning, while Islamic art (calligraphy, geometric patterns) reflects an aniconic, philosophical worldview.

In the postcolonial era, cultural identity has also played a major role. Pan-Islamism and local nationalist movements vied for primacy. Some thinkers (like Samuel Huntington) argued for a "clash of civilisations" with Islam at odds with the West, while others (like Edward Said) promoted dialogue and mutual understanding. Real-world practice has been mixed: Muslim-majority states have engaged heavily in globalisation, trade, and technology (for example, adopting Western education systems and industries), yet have also asserted cultural independence (Arabic language revival, Islamic education). Institutions like Al-Azhar University in Egypt or the Islamic University of Medina highlight the pride in Islamic scholarship, while countries like Indonesia and Senegal exemplify Islam's cultural adaptability.

Today's researchers in cultural and civilisation studies point out that globalisation has made all cultures more intermingled. For instance, the Arabic language and Islamic culture have spread to sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Asia through migration and media. At the same time, global norms (human rights, environmentalism) are being "Islamicised" – many Muslims interpret sustainability and social justice through an Islamic lens. Saudi Arabia's recent policies illustrate this dynamic: the government has launched cultural initiatives (like building museums and restoring heritage sites) and has positioned itself as a leader in green policy. The Saudi Green Initiative and Middle East Green Initiative, for example, explicitly link Islamic stewardship of the Earth with modern climate action (Saudi Green Initiative, n.d.). Such moves are seen as part of a broader strategy to show that Islamic civilisation can be innovative and contribute positively to global challenges.

In comparative perspective, Muslim countries sometimes resemble other post-traditional societies. For example, Turkey has modernised under a secular framework while maintaining Islamic heritage; Malaysia is multi-ethnic but upholds Islam in law; and Iran is a theocratic republic distinct from Arab models. These comparisons show that there is no single Islamic culture, but rather a spectrum of practices. Internationally, cultural diplomacy is used by Islamic states to build influence: Saudi Arabia funds mosques worldwide, Turkey promotes the Turkic-Islamic heritage through agencies like TIKA, and Malaysia brands itself as a moderate, multicultural Muslim nation. These efforts aim to create global trust by highlighting shared cultural values and dispelling stereotypes.

Overall, studies of civilisation suggest that Islamic culture provides a rich source of soft power and ideological framing in world affairs. It underscores values of scholarship, family, charity, and community, while grappling with the challenges of modernity. By comparing Islamic societies with others that share historical patterns (e.g. post-colonial Christian-majority countries, or pluralistic societies with a leading religion), scholars seek new theories of how religion and development interact. For example, some argue that the historical emphasis on learning in Islamic civilisation should logically lead to high literacy and science today – an argument that drives educational reforms in countries like Pakistan and Sudan.

Others note that the tradition of Waqf (endowments) offers a template for sustainable funding of schools and hospitals. In all cases, the analysis is deeply interdisciplinary, drawing on history, anthropology, and international relations to understand how Islamic identity and heritage inform current policy and global interactions.

Strategic Defence, Security, and Foreign Policy

In the contemporary security environment, Islamic countries (especially in the Middle East and Asia) face a complex mix of traditional and non-traditional threats. Major Muslim states invest heavily in defence capabilities and alliances, as do non-Muslim partners who rely on Muslim countries for strategic depth (e.g. U.S. bases in Qatar and Bahrain). The region's security architecture is in flux: for decades, Gulf monarchies depended on U.S. military protection, but recent events have shown a shift toward more

autonomous coordination. Following a 2025 crisis (an attack on a key Gulf ally), the six GCC states – including Saudi Arabia – agreed to unprecedented collective defence measures (Al-Jaber, 2026). They pledged to tighten intelligence-sharing and link their air-defence radar networks, and even announced joint military exercises "for the first time in years" under a unified command. This marked a turning point: Gulf leaders invoked their shared heritage ("security of the GCC states is indivisible") to address threats from both neighbouring and extra-regional powers.

Islamic strategic thought traditionally emphasises the security of the community and a just response to aggression. Many states now combine these concepts with modern defence theory. For example, Pakistan (the only nuclear Muslim country aside from India and soon Iran) justifies its arsenal as deterrence in a hostile region, echoing classical just-war logic (deterrence of attack). Saudi Arabia and Iran frame their military expansions as defensive against each other's proxies. Meanwhile, counterterrorism remains a top priority: many Islamic countries have developed national security doctrines to combat extremist groups, often with international (e.g. U.S., European) support. Think tanks note that Islamic states are also exploring "grey-zone" tactics: information warfare, cybersecurity, and soft-power influence (media, religion) as parts of modern strategy.

In foreign policy (FP) terms, Islam can act as both a rallying banner and a constraint. On one hand, Muslim-majority governments often emphasise Islamic values in international forums to build legitimacy (such as proclaiming support for refugee rights on humanitarian grounds, or leading initiatives on Islamic finance to promote development). On the other hand, they also behave like other states: balancing power, securing resources, and aligning with global blocs. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, for instance, has historically aligned with the United States (for security guarantees) but also with its Arab and Muslim allies on issues like Palestine. Turkey, though a NATO member, has sought a leadership role in the Muslim world by mediating conflicts in Syria and Libya. Iran's Shia identity shapes its alliances (with Syria, Hezbollah, and Shia communities), yet it also engages in realpolitik (temporary deals with Western powers on nuclear issues).

These security and policy choices influence global trust in Islamic states. Positive examples (like orderly, high-tech Hajj management) can enhance credibility. For example, the Saudi Hajj operations in 2026 used massive digital infrastructure – from 5G coverage to crowd-density analytics – to manage 1.7 million pilgrims without major incident. Authorities highlight this achievement as demonstrating that "modern technology can add value to one of the oldest religious practices in the world, without sacrificing its spiritual meaning." Such public success stories project an image of capability and care. Conversely, failures in security (like war-related humanitarian crises) can erode trust. Therefore, Islamic states now emphasise strategic transparency, international dialogue, and humanitarian aid (for example, Saudi and UAE involvement in multilateral coalitions against piracy and in UN peacekeeping) to bolster their global standing.

Sustainability, Security, and Environmental Diplomacy

A novel and increasingly vital dimension of Islam and global policy is sustainability diplomacy. Environmental stewardship is consistent with Islamic ethics (humankind as *khalifah*, stewards of Earth), and Muslim governments have begun to act on this principle. Notably, Saudi Arabia – custodian of Islam's holiest sites – has made climate action a part of its official agenda. Since Vision 2030 launched in 2016, Riyadh has integrated environmental goals into national planning. In 2021, it launched the *Saudi Green Initiative* to coordinate reforestation, renewable energy, and carbon reduction efforts nationally (Vision 2030, n.d.). Regionally, Saudi Arabia spearheaded the Middle East Green Initiative, a $50 billion plan to plant billions of trees and invest in clean energy. These moves came as Saudi Arabia hosted the 2020 G20 (digital presidency) and put pandemic recovery and climate change high on the agenda. The Crown Prince declared that Saudi Arabia "rejects the false choice between preserving the economy and protecting the environment," signalling a policy shift.

Thinkers and international networks note that this environmental turn serves multiple purposes. It addresses an acute regional challenge (desertification, water scarcity) and seeks to build soft power – presenting Saudi Arabia as a leader in solving global problems. It also opens cooperation with non-Muslim states (for example, climate partnerships with European countries). In practice, Saudi's initiatives have involved not just planting trees, but also developing sustainable cities (e.g. Neom), investing in wind and solar, and funding research. Other Islamic countries are following suit: the UAE's Masdar City and widespread solar projects, Malaysia's push for green Islamic finance, and Indonesia's climate commitments all reflect this trend.

Sustainability diplomacy thus bridges Islamic values and global norms. By positioning environmental responsibility as an Islamic duty, Muslim states can engage more fully in international climate talks and development programs. Organisations like the Islamic Development Bank and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have even begun promoting *"Islamic green finance"* – leveraging zakat and waqf (endowments) to fund eco-projects. From a policy perspective, aligning environmental goals with the ummah concept can encourage collective action: for example, joint renewable-energy grids or conservation zones in the Muslim world. This new angle on foreign policy – "saving creation" as part of a religious mission – is a powerful narrative that policymakers are cultivating, reflecting a broadened sense of security that includes climate resilience.

Policy Recommendations

Drawing on the above analysis, several comprehensive policy directions emerge for Islamic societies to enhance both domestic welfare and global cooperation:

Embed Ethical Leadership and Education: Governments and educational institutions should continue emphasising Islam's peace-oriented teachings (*salam*, *adl*, *wa īnā sharahnā* – we find relief in God for every hardship). Curricula and public campaigns could highlight how the Quranic message calls nations to "the abode of peace". Building on this, training leaders (politicians, religious figures, military officers) in interfaith dialogue and conflict

resolution – for instance, through programs at institutions like the Doha Institute or Ankara-based centres – can foster a culture of negotiation over violence. This bridges heritage with modern scholarship, countering extremist narratives and reinforcing global trust that Islamic countries seek peaceful solutions.

Strengthen Inclusive Public Policy: States should pursue policies that align Islamic principles with universal human values. For example, Islamic finance's emphasis on risk-sharing and social welfare can be leveraged to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): charging no interest while funding infrastructure through sukūk aligns with broader anti-poverty goals. Policies like universal health coverage or educational expansion in Muslim-majority countries can be framed as fulfilling Islamic duties of community care. Importantly, ensuring rights for minorities and women (consistent with many classical Islamic injunctions on justice) will improve domestic stability and international reputation. This "values-based" policy approach can be advanced through think-tank research (e.g. in Malaysia's International Islamic University or Egypt's Al-Ahram Centre) that provides evidence-based recommendations.

Foster Economic Diversification and Sustainable Growth: Gulf oil exporters, for instance, have launched ambitious plans (Saudi Vision 2030, UAE Vision 2031) to diversify beyond hydrocarbons. Further integration of Islamic finance into global markets can support this: for example, issuing green sukūk to fund renewable energy projects combines the region's capital with environmental sustainability. Islamic economic forums (like the World Bank's Islamic Finance Development Centre) already explore these ideas. Governments should also strengthen property rights and legal institutions to attract foreign direct investment (while respecting Islamic norms). In parallel, supporting entrepreneurship (especially in tech and clean energy) – through zakat-driven microfinance or halal innovation hubs – could address unemployment and empower youth, marrying modern economics with Islamic ethics.

Deepen Multilateral and Interfaith Diplomacy: Islamic states should continue strengthening organisations like the OIC, linking them closely to the UN and other regional bodies. For example, the OIC could establish standing mediation teams to intervene in conflicts (building on Brookings's recommendations). At the same time, bilateral and multilateral partnerships should be expanded: Saudi-Egyptian and Pakistan-Iran security dialogues, Turkey-Africa educational exchanges, or Indonesia-Australia climate partnerships (all exist in some form) can be broadened to include civil society. On the cultural front, supporting UNESCO heritage projects (e.g. preserving Quranic manuscripts, mosque architecture) and academic exchanges (scholarships, conferences) will build "soft" understanding. Such engagement projects a shared humanistic narrative – as UNESCO's vision suggests, cultural diplomacy makes us "better people."

Invest in Technology and Infrastructure as Public Goods: The Hajj management example shows the power of merging technology with civic service. Governments should replicate this model: invest in ubiquitous broadband and smart systems to improve transportation, disaster response, and urban planning. Making e-government services

available for free (like Saudi Arabia did for the Nusuk Hajj app) promotes inclusion and trust. Also, sharing best practices internationally – for instance, exporting Saudi crowd-management expertise to manage other mass gatherings (e.g. global sports events, refugee camps) – can bolster prestige and create useful partnerships.

Uphold Security through Regional Cooperation: Drawing from recent Gulf initiatives, Islamic countries should institutionalise collective security mechanisms. The GCC's recommitment to shared air-defence networks is a model: similar bodies (like the Arab League's defence pacts or ASEAN Defence) can be reinvigorated. On the global level, Muslim-majority states should continue contributing to UN peacekeeping and counter-piracy efforts, demonstrating responsibility. Transparency and confidence-building (e.g. joint exercises with NATO or the African Union) can reassure neighbours and reduce arms races. Intelligence-sharing agreements (as Gulf states have done) should be complemented by dialogue on human rights standards in security, mitigating abuses that erode legitimacy.

Champion Global Humanitarian and Cultural Causes: Islamic nations can leverage religious values to lead on humanitarian issues. Large Muslim charities (like the Kuwait Red Crescent or Islamic Relief) already operate worldwide; states should support and coordinate these efforts for maximum impact. On cultural fronts, Islamic arts and history can be presented as common human heritage – for example, loans of museum artifacts, international Islamic art festivals, or Quranic manuscript exhibitions. These initiatives reinforce the idea that Islamic civilisation is part of humanity's collective patrimony. In global media and education, promoting narratives that emphasise common values ("Mercy upon mercy: Islam as Rahma") helps counter Islamophobia and build mutual trust.

Embrace Evidence-Based Policymaking via Think Tanks: Finally, Islamic countries (including Saudi Arabia) have growing think-tank sectors that should be further empowered. As On Think Tanks notes, Saudi institutions (e.g. King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre, or King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue) can play a role in generating data-driven policy on everything from environmental economics to social policy. By publishing in English and partnering with international researchers, these think tanks can shape global discourse on Islam and modernity. Policymakers should fund independent research on pressing issues (climate science, cybersecurity, urbanisation) within an Islamic ethical framework. This will ensure that foreign observers see Muslim-majority states as rational, forward-looking actors committed to global welfare, not just isolated traditionalists.

Each of these recommendations is designed to integrate Islamic tradition with global economic and humanist values. The goal is a *win–win* approach: applying Islamic ethical principles (justice, stewardship, compassion) to solve universal problems (poverty, conflict, environmental crisis). For example, using Islamic finance to fund green infrastructure satisfies both religious and global-development criteria; promoting peace through education honours both Quranic guidance and United Nations goals. By taking a comprehensive and multi-angled strategy – blending heritage with innovation, faith with evidence, and national interests with international norms – Muslim-majority states can

build trust at home and abroad. This holistic approach, informed by historical insight and current events (like the 2026 Hajj or Gulf security shifts), offers a novel perspective for scholars and policymakers alike.

Moreover, Islamic history and civilisation continue to exert a profound influence on politics, economics, and culture in the 21st century. Modern Islamic political leadership often seeks to demonstrate that faith and progress go hand-in-hand (as in Saudi Arabia's technologically advanced Hajj operations), while the faith's core values (peace, justice, compassion) provide ethical guidelines for global engagement. Across multiple domains – from finance to war, from cultural identity to climate policy – there are unique Islamic perspectives that interact with global currents. By rigorously studying these through interdisciplinary research (history, IR, FP, economics) and acting on them with inclusive, forward-thinking policies, the Muslim world can both preserve its heritage and contribute constructively to humanity's future.

Conclusion

Islamic civilisation remains one of the world's most enduring and adaptive forces, shaping governance, finance, diplomacy, security, and sustainability far beyond the boundaries of faith. From the extraordinary coordination of the Hajj—bringing together nearly two million pilgrims from more than 165 countries—to the rapid growth of Islamic finance and the expanding role of faith-based environmental stewardship, the evidence points to a civilisation that continues to innovate while remaining anchored in its core values of justice, consultation, and human responsibility. Rather than a source of division, this study highlights Islam's potential to strengthen trust, resilience, and international cooperation in an era marked by geopolitical fragmentation and declining global confidence.

The path ahead requires deeper exploration of how these principles translate into measurable outcomes across different societies and political systems. Greater attention should be given to the resilience of Islamic financial institutions, the growing influence of religious soft power, and the capacity of faith-inspired climate initiatives to mobilise public support and international action. As global challenges become more complex, interdisciplinary research will be essential to understanding how Islamic civilisation can continue to contribute practical solutions to peacebuilding, sustainable development, and global stability. The central question is no longer whether Islam remains relevant to modern policy debates, but how its civilisational resources can be more effectively harnessed to help shape a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

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