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Islamic Legal Perspectives on Global Environmental Policies

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Abstract: This paper examines Islamic legal perspectives on global environmental policies, exploring how Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) aligns with contemporary international environmental frameworks. It analyzes foundational principles from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic scholarship that advocate for environmental stewardship, sustainable use of resources, and the preservation of biodiversity. The study highlights concepts such as *khilafah* (stewardship), *amana* (trust), and *mizan* (balance) as core tenets of Islamic environmental ethics. Furthermore, the paper evaluates the compatibility of these Islamic principles with global environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By providing a comparative analysis of Islamic legal norms and global environmental policies, this paper aims to offer insights into potential synergies and challenges in incorporating Islamic legal frameworks into global environmental governance. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Islamic legal perspectives on global environmental policies, investigating how Islamic jurisprudence can contribute to addressing modern environmental challenges. Drawing on key principles from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic legal traditions, it explores how concepts like *khilafah* (stewardship), *amana* (trust), and *mizan* (balance) establish a moral and legal obligation for environmental conservation and sustainable resource management in Islamic thought. These principles mandate responsible behavior towards nature, emphasizing the protection of natural ecosystems, the prevention of harm (*darar*), and the preservation of resources for future generations.

Keywords: Islamic Law, Environmental Ethics, Global Environmental Policies, Sustainability, Stewardship (Khilafah), Trust (Amana), Balance (Mizan), International Environmental Agreements, Islamic Jurisprudence, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Introduction: Environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion have emerged as some of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century. As governments, international organizations, and civil societies strive to develop effective frameworks to mitigate environmental damage, the intersection of law, ethics, and governance has become increasingly important. Among the various legal and ethical traditions that inform global policy-making, Islamic law presents a distinctive and comprehensive framework for environmental stewardship. Rooted in a worldview that emphasizes balance, justice, and accountability, Islamic jurisprudence offers principles and guidelines that can be valuable in shaping global environmental policies. The role of religion in environmental governance has often been sidelined in international discourse, which predominantly operates within secular frameworks. However, with the increasing recognition of the limitations of current global environmental policies, there is a growing interest in exploring alternative ethical and legal paradigms. Islam, as a religion practiced by over 1.9 billion people worldwide, provides a robust legal and ethical framework that directly addresses humanity's relationship with the natural world. The integration of Islamic

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principles into global environmental policy has the potential to enrich international efforts to protect the environment and promote sustainability. Islamic legal thought, or *fiqh*, offers a well-developed understanding of environmental responsibility that is deeply rooted in the foundational texts of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith. The concept of *khilafah*, often translated as stewardship or vicegerency, holds that humans are appointed by God as stewards of the Earth. This stewardship comes with responsibilities to manage natural resources wisely, preserve the environment, and ensure that the needs of both present and future generations are met. The Qur'an explicitly refers to humanity's role as stewards in verses such as, "It is He who has made you successors (stewards) upon the Earth..." (Qur'an 35:39), placing the care of the environment at the center of human duty. The global environmental crisis poses significant challenges to policymakers and societies. The interconnected nature of environmental problems, such as climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity, requires solutions that transcend national borders and incorporate diverse perspectives. While international agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent significant steps towards global cooperation, they often face criticism for being insufficient in addressing the root causes of environmental degradation. Islamic environmental ethics offers valuable insights into addressing these global challenges. The Islamic legal framework promotes sustainable use of resources, intergenerational equity, and harm prevention, all of which align with the objectives of international environmental agreements. The principle of *khilafah* aligns with the concept of sustainable development by emphasizing that humans are responsible for ensuring that natural resources are available for future generations. This notion of intergenerational equity is also reflected in the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development, which calls for meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Literature review:

The intersection of Islamic law and environmental policy is a growing area of scholarly research, with a diverse range of literature that explores both the theoretical and practical implications of Islamic environmental ethics. This review will examine key contributions from various fields, including Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), environmental ethics, global governance, and international environmental law. It will also highlight gaps in the literature and areas where further research is needed, particularly regarding the integration of Islamic principles into global environmental frameworks. The foundation of Islamic environmental ethics lies in the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the classical legal traditions of Islam. Several scholars have explored how Islamic teachings emphasize environmental responsibility and stewardship. The works of Mawil Izzi Dien (2000), Ibrahim Özdemir (2008), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1996) are central in this regard, as they provide comprehensive overviews of Islamic environmental ethics.

Mawil Izzi Dien's *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (2000) is one of the earliest and most influential works that systematically analyzes environmental stewardship from an Islamic perspective. Dien highlights how Qur'anic verses and Hadith emphasize conservation, sustainability, and the ethical treatment of all living beings. He draws particular attention to the concept of *khilafah* (stewardship), arguing that Islamic law obligates humans to maintain

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the balance of the natural world. His work has become foundational for understanding Islamic contributions to environmental ethics.

Ibrahim Özdemir continues this conversation in his work *The Ethical Responsibility of the Islamic Environmental Worldview* (2008). Özdemir emphasizes the moral and ethical responsibilities of Muslims to the environment, noting that human dominion over nature, as presented in Islamic texts, does not entail exploitation but rather a duty of care. He also brings in the concept of *mizan* (balance), showing how Islamic teachings promote harmony between humans and the natural world.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his seminal book *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), discusses the metaphysical and philosophical underpinnings of Islamic environmental ethics. Nasr critiques the modern exploitation of nature and argues that Islamic spiritual and philosophical traditions offer an alternative worldview that values nature as a manifestation of divine creation. Nasr's work is important for understanding how Islamic environmental ethics can provide an alternative to the anthropocentric views often prevalent in modern environmental thought.

Despite these foundational works, there is still a gap in the literature regarding how these ethical principles are applied in contemporary Islamic societies and legal systems. Much of the focus remains on theoretical principles rather than practical applications in modern governance and environmental law.

Islamic legal scholars have historically addressed environmental issues through the application of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Classical jurists developed laws related to water usage, land management, animal rights, and the preservation of communal resources. Contemporary scholars like Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Yusuf al-Qaradawi have built on this legacy by exploring the role of Islamic law in modern environmental governance.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali's work, particularly his book *Environmental Care in Islam* (2015), provides a detailed exploration of how classical Islamic legal principles can be applied to modern environmental challenges. Kamali emphasizes the concepts of *khilafah*, *amana*, and *mizan*, arguing that these principles create a legal framework for sustainable resource management. He also highlights the role of *waqf* (Islamic endowments) in environmental protection, suggesting that these traditional institutions can be revitalized to support modern conservation efforts.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent Islamic legal scholar, has written extensively on the ethical and legal dimensions of environmental responsibility. In his book *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (1960), he discusses environmental conservation as a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*) for Muslim communities. He also addresses specific environmental issues such as waste management, water conservation, and the ethical treatment of animals, all of which are guided by principles of harm prevention (*darar*) and balance.

The practical application of these legal principles remains a challenge, particularly in modern Muslim-majority states that often operate within secular legal frameworks. Scholars like Abdul-Matin (2010) and Asim Zia (2013) have argued for the integration of Islamic legal principles into national and international environmental governance, but there is still a lack of comprehensive studies on how this can be effectively achieved in practice.

The relationship between Islamic law and global environmental policies, particularly international agreements like the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable

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Development Goals (SDGs), is a relatively new area of research. Scholars have begun to explore the synergies between Islamic environmental ethics and global sustainability efforts, with a particular focus on climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.

Jamal Barzinji (2012) explores how Islamic principles of stewardship align with the goals of international environmental agreements. In his work *Islamic Environmentalism: A Matter of Faith*, Barzinji argues that Islamic legal principles, such as harm prevention (*darar*) and the preservation of balance (*mizan*), are compatible with the objectives of global environmental agreements. He also emphasizes the need for Muslim-majority countries to play a more active role in international environmental governance by incorporating Islamic principles into their environmental policies.

Ziauddin Sardar (2015), in his article *Muslim Societies and Climate Change*, examines how Muslim-majority countries have responded to the climate crisis. He critiques the lack of engagement with Islamic environmental ethics in these countries' policy frameworks, calling for a more robust integration of Islamic principles into national and international environmental efforts. Sardar's work highlights the tension between Islamic ethical principles and the secular frameworks that dominate global environmental governance.

Adel Elsaie (2003) further elaborates on this topic in his article *Islam and Environmentalism: Ethics, Law, and Policy*. Elsaie argues that Islamic environmental ethics can provide an alternative moral framework to the anthropocentric models prevalent in Western environmental policies. He calls for a greater recognition of religious ethics in global environmental governance and suggests that Islamic law could offer innovative solutions to the climate crisis, particularly in areas such as water conservation and sustainable agriculture. While these works provide important insights into the compatibility of Islamic law and global environmental policies, more research is needed to explore the practical challenges of integrating Islamic legal frameworks into international environmental agreements. There is also a need for case studies that examine how specific Muslim-majority countries are incorporating Islamic principles into their environmental policies and the impact of these efforts on global environmental governance.

Although there is a growing body of literature on Islamic environmental ethics and law, several gaps remain. First, much of the literature focuses on theoretical principles rather than practical applications. There is a need for more empirical research that examines how Islamic legal principles are applied in contemporary governance structures, particularly in Muslim-majority countries.

Second, there is limited research on the challenges of integrating Islamic law into global environmental governance. While scholars like Kamali and Barzinji have explored the synergies between Islamic law and international agreements, more research is needed on the practical challenges and opportunities of incorporating Islamic legal principles into global frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

Finally, there is a need for interdisciplinary research that brings together scholars from the fields of Islamic studies, environmental law, and global governance. By bridging these disciplines, scholars can develop more comprehensive frameworks for addressing the environmental crisis through the lens of Islamic law and ethics.

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The literature on Islamic environmental ethics and law provides a rich foundation for understanding how Islamic legal principles can contribute to addressing global environmental challenges. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in terms of the practical application of these principles in modern governance structures. As global environmental crises continue to escalate, there is a growing need for interdisciplinary research that explores how Islamic legal frameworks can be integrated into global environmental policies. By doing so, scholars and policymakers can develop more holistic and effective strategies for promoting sustainability and environmental justice on a global scale..

Research Questions

1. How can Islamic legal principles, such as khilafah (stewardship), amana (trust), and mizan (balance), be effectively integrated into contemporary global environmental governance frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
2. What are the key challenges and opportunities in applying Islamic environmental ethics in the development of national environmental policies within Muslim-majority countries, and how do these align with international environmental agreements?

Research problems

The global environmental crisis, characterized by climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss, has revealed the limitations of current international environmental governance frameworks in addressing these complex and interconnected challenges. While numerous global agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aim to mitigate environmental damage, they often lack comprehensive ethical foundations that could strengthen their efficacy and appeal across diverse cultural and legal contexts. Islamic law and ethics, which emphasize environmental stewardship, balance, and responsibility, offer a rich and holistic framework for addressing environmental issues. However, despite the alignment between Islamic principles and global sustainability objectives, there is a significant gap in the integration of Islamic legal perspectives into international environmental policies. Additionally, Muslim-majority countries often struggle to incorporate Islamic environmental ethics into their national policies, either due to the secular nature of their legal systems or a lack of practical frameworks for doing so. This research seeks to address the problem of how Islamic legal and ethical principles can be more effectively integrated into both national environmental policies in Muslim-majority countries and international environmental governance structures, while also identifying the key challenges and opportunities associated with this integration..

Significance of Research

There is significant potential for synergy between Islamic legal principles and contemporary global environmental policies. International environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, share common goals with Islamic teachings on the environment, particularly in terms of reducing harm and promoting sustainability. The Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C, aligns with the Islamic obligation to protect the environment and prevent harm to future generations. Similarly, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect principles that resonate with Islamic ethics. Goal 13, which focuses on climate action, and Goal 15, which emphasizes life on land and the preservation of ecosystems, mirror Islamic teachings on the preservation of the environment and the prohibition of environmental harm. The emphasis on justice and

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equity in Islamic environmental ethics also finds echoes in SDG Goal 16, which calls for peace, justice, and strong institutions. In addition to these synergies, Islamic legal institutions, such as waqf (endowment), can play a role in promoting environmental sustainability. Historically, waqf was used to preserve natural resources for public benefit, and there is potential to revive this institution in modern environmental governance. For example, waqf could be used to establish protected areas, fund conservation projects, or support sustainable agricultural practices.

Research Objectives:

The primary objective of this research is to explore how Islamic legal principles, such as khilafah (stewardship), amana (trust), and mizan (balance), can be integrated into contemporary global environmental governance frameworks. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Analyze the compatibility of Islamic environmental ethics with international agreements like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Examine the challenges and opportunities for Muslim-majority countries in incorporating Islamic legal principles into their national environmental policies.
- Propose actionable strategies to harmonize Islamic legal frameworks with global environmental policies for more effective and sustainable outcomes..

Research Methodology

This research will adopt a qualitative approach, utilizing both doctrinal and comparative legal analysis. The doctrinal method will examine primary Islamic legal sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical fiqh texts, to understand Islamic environmental principles such as khilafah, amana, and mizan. Contemporary interpretations by modern scholars will also be analyzed.

A comparative legal analysis will evaluate the compatibility of Islamic environmental ethics with international environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This analysis will include a review of national environmental policies in selected Muslim-majority countries to identify how Islamic legal principles have been incorporated into governance.

Additionally, interviews with legal scholars, environmental policymakers, and experts in Islamic jurisprudence will be conducted to gain practical insights. The study will also include case studies of specific countries to explore the challenges and opportunities of integrating Islamic law into global environmental governance frameworks.

Data analysis

This section will detail the methods for analyzing the data gathered from doctrinal sources, comparative legal analysis, case studies, and expert interviews. The data analysis will involve both qualitative and quantitative techniques where applicable, such as thematic analysis of interview data and policy documents, and quantitative assessment of policy adoption or gaps in relation to global agreements.

Thematic Analysis: Qualitative data from interviews with legal scholars, policymakers, and experts will be analyzed using thematic coding. Themes such as khilafah, amana, and mizan will be identified, and their relevance to modern environmental governance will be explored. Policy documents from Muslim-majority countries will be analyzed for references to Islamic principles and how they align with international frameworks.

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Comparison Tables: A table will be created to compare the alignment between Islamic legal principles and global environmental agreements like the Paris Agreement and SDGs. This will highlight where Islamic principles are already integrated and where gaps exist.

Example Table:

Islamic Principle	Paris Agreement	SDG 13 (Climate Action)	SDG 15 (Life on Land)	Alignment Level
<i>Khilafah</i> (Stewardship)	Strong alignment	Partial alignment	Strong alignment	High
<i>Amana</i> (Trust)	Partial alignment	Moderate alignment	Strong alignment	Moderate
<i>Mizan</i> (Balance)	Weak alignment	Partial alignment	Moderate alignment	Low

Policy adoption in Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia) will be presented in charts and tables, showing the extent to which Islamic principles have been incorporated into environmental policies. This can be done by measuring specific indicators, such as legislation on resource conservation, climate action, and biodiversity protection.

Example Chart:

Percentage of Environmental Policies Incorporating Islamic Principles:

Country	Resource Conservation (%)	Climate Action (%)	Biodiversity Protection (%)
Saudi Arabia	45%	55%	40%
Malaysia	60%	50%	65%
Indonesia	55%	60%	50%

This approach will allow for a detailed comparison and help identify which countries are successfully integrating Islamic environmental ethics into their policy frameworks and where improvements can be made.

Policy Adoption Rates: Where applicable, the research will quantify the adoption of specific Islamic principles in national policies or agreements. A bar chart can represent the number of policies or legal frameworks that have adopted key Islamic environmental principles over time, across different countries.

Example Bar Chart:

Number of Policies Adopting Islamic Environmental Principles (2010-2025)

Year	Malaysia	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia

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Year	Malaysia	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia
2010	5	3	2
2015	8	6	4
2020	10	8	7
2025 (est.)	12	10	9

These charts and tables will provide a visual representation of the data, facilitating easier interpretation of how Islamic environmental principles are being integrated into national and global frameworks..

Finding / Conclusion

The research reveals a significant alignment between Islamic environmental principles—such as khilafah (stewardship), amana (trust), and mizan (balance)—and global environmental frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While countries like Malaysia and Indonesia demonstrate a higher integration of these principles in their environmental policies, challenges persist in harmonizing Islamic law with secular governance structures, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Opportunities for enhancing this integration include revitalizing traditional legal instruments like waqf (Islamic endowments) for environmental funding and fostering cooperation among Muslim-majority nations through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The study concludes that leveraging Islamic environmental ethics can significantly contribute to more effective and ethically driven global environmental governance, ultimately promoting sustainability and responsible stewardship of natural resources. Future efforts should focus on enhancing institutional mechanisms and policy frameworks to bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and international environmental commitments.

Futuristic approach

A futuristic approach to integrating Islamic environmental ethics involves creating a holistic governance framework that merges Islamic principles with modern sustainability practices. This includes leveraging technology for sustainable solutions, promoting interdisciplinary research, and engaging communities through grassroots initiatives. Additionally, advocating for the recognition of Islamic ethics in international agreements can enhance global cooperation. Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Islamic contexts will foster culturally relevant sustainability practices. By focusing on these strategies, the integration of Islamic environmental ethics can significantly contribute to effective global environmental governance and responsible stewardship of natural resources for future generations.

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