

Book review

Muslim Societies in Postnormal Times: Foresights for Trends, Emerging Issues and Scenarios.

Sardar, Ziauddin, Jordi Serra, Scott Jordan. Forward by IIIT London Office. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), in Cooperation with Centre for Postnormal Policy and Future Studies, 2019, 256 pp. ISBN 978-1-56564-992-7

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"Muslim Societies in Postnormal Times" shines as a ray of light in today's turbulent world, where change is the only constant. Challenging traditional ideas about the future, this groundbreaking book offers a roadmap for negotiating the complexity and unpredictability that confront Muslim societies. Authors of the book, Ziauddin Sardar, Jordi Serra, and Scott Jordan, propose a comprehensive framework for deciphering and embarking on the severe challenges of our contemporary global perspective. The authors are experts in a variety of subjects, including future studies, sociology, and Islamic studies. Their cooperative work in this book serves as an example of a multidisciplinary approach to dealing with difficult societal issues.

This review intends to explain the core arguments, strengths, and weaknesses of this book. The authors deftly dissect the concept of postnormal times as the conventional frameworks of certainty and predictability collapse because of the power of rapid change. They contend that Muslim communities, already vulnerable and marginalized, are at the forefront of this transformation. However, amidst the chaos, they find a glimmer of optimism in "future literacy," a fresh perspective on anticipating and influencing the future. This book contains three main sections: trends, emerging issues, and scenarios.

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The first section is trend analysis, which signifies answering the simple question, "What could be next?" The challenge of trend analysis lies in the critical evaluation of potential future developments, their probable consequences, and their possible solutions. Trend analysis should create a sharp awareness of what is actually going on around us and a mechanism for detecting prospective patterns of change from the past to the present. The data serve as the foundation for trend analysis. These data can be included as major global trends that could have an impact on Muslim societies, as well as local and international trends inside that societies. This section provides an outline of the major trends that influence post-normal Muslim society. It addresses a wide range of issues, including population and youth, the environment and living conditions, migration and refugees, politics and governance, the economy and energy, armed conflicts and terrorism, education and creativity, health and well-being, gender inequality, religion and culture, entertainment and sports, Islamophobia and the rise of the alt-right, social media and artificial intelligence, and Islam and religious thought. Each trend was explored in detail, highlighting its implications for Muslim societies and their challenges and opportunities.

Section two discusses emerging issues or phenomena that have the potential to have a significant impact on the future. Emerging issues sometimes play the role of hidden seeds of change, initially appearing unremarkable but with substantial potential to shape the future. They act as early indicators of new developments and provide insights into the direction and level of change. They frequently constitute trends and, owing to their fragmented and complex character, necessitate extensive research. These issues, sometimes known as "weak signals," cast doubt on long-held views and raise concerns about future development. The Menagerie of Postnormal Potentialities framework, which includes Black Elephants, Black Swans, and Black Jellyfish, provides a systematic procedure for recognizing and revising biases while assessing new challenges. Black Elephants teach us to recognize biases while observing the world. This reminds us of the fact that essential things are not missed. Black Swans emphasize sincerity regarding data collection, as we normally conclude based on limited information. Black Jellyfish instructs us not to avoid things considered unimportant, as they may seem small or insignificant. The authors

encourage readers to embrace complexity and uncertainty while investigating current issues and their ramifications for Muslim culture. It also emphasizes counting on prevailing contexts, perspectives, and creativity in visualizing potential futures.

The final section presents scenarios as useful instruments that highlight the diversity of possible outcomes while exploring alternate possibilities. They are created using a variety of techniques and might be normative or descriptive based on trends or particular issues. Despite the differences in methodology, the scenarios have several commonalities. They are usually written in the present tense to envision future possibilities. Scenarios in postnormal times center on intricacy and ambiguity, examining patterns and new concerns from three different perspectives: The Extended Present, Familiar Futures, and Unthought Futures. Every horizon raises certain problems that direct the creation of scenarios and encourage dialogue about the prospects for Muslim societies. Instead of predictions, scenarios are instruments of thought and investigation that promote more extensive conversations about potential futures.

“Muslim Societies in Postnormal Times” excels because of its insightful analysis and creative approach to envisioning the future. The writers successfully draw readers' attention to how global developments are interconnected and what this means for Muslim societies, challenging them to face their ignorance and uncertainty. The book's emphasis on empowerment and agency is especially admirable because it challenges readers to take an active role in creating their futures. While the authors manifest a commendable commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship throughout the book, upon closer observation, constructive criticism can lead to further improvement. Coherent presentation of arguments through vibrant explanations of concepts and the flow of more structured narratives would enhance the convenience for readers to achieve varying levels of familiarity with this interesting subject. Furthermore, including additional illustrative examples from various circumstances would not only clarify abstract concepts, but also increase the book's practical relevance and usefulness. By resolving these issues, the book may improve its accessibility and instructional value, appeal to a wider audience, and promote a more enriching reading experience.

In brief, “Muslim Societies in Postnormal Times” provides insightful guidance to explore the problems and prospects experiencing Muslim societies in the contemporary uncertain world. Inspiring readers to reconsider their preconceptions about the future, and guiding them to active engagement in constructing the expected future, this book significantly contributes to the contemporary debate regarding the role of future studies in addressing complicated social issues. With its innovative approach and comprehensive scope, this book is essential reading for policy makers, scholars or anyone to understand and address the challenges confronting Muslim societies in the 21st century.