**Muslim leadership sparks resurgence**

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Karen Armstrong, in her book The Great Transformation, presents a very educational account of the Islamic Renaissance, which started in 7th-century Arabia. She explains how the Holy Prophet (PBUH) despite the adversity of his times, had professed humanity to “cut-throat capitalists” and instructed them to treat others with respect and courtesy. His message ultimately proved so effective that “this remained the policy of the Muslim empire long after His death”.

In modern times, regardless of their enormous resources of both wealth and population, most Muslim countries have remained weak, dependent, and nowhere in education and scientific advancement compared to the rest of the world. Thankfully, we are now starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

In recent times, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has sought rapprochement with the modern world by adopting a vision for humanity that is based on a new individualism that seeks to replace its traditional, ethnocentric tribalism. The KSA’s new rulership seems to feel that technological advancements and a culture that is interwoven with economic and political forces are the need of the hour.

[Four rescue workers die due to collapse of factory building](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2023/four-rescue-workers-die-due-to-collapse-of-factory-building)

Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman began working on his ambition to modernize the Kingdom soon after taking over the reins of power. As a young dreamer, MBS is ready to support new approaches to stabilize and unite his country and to capitalize on opportunities in these times of crisis. Though he has been criticized by the more conservative religious scholars in the Muslim world, their voices of dissent have remained meek in front of the immense power he wields. Meanwhile, the youth of the Kingdom have warmly welcomed the change in the air.

The ultra-conservative atmosphere of the old KSA had led them to suppress many of their desires, even the completely legitimate ones. For example, KSA was the only country in the world where women were not allowed to drive cars. They were also required to put on a hijab and always be accompanied during their travels by a male mahram. The strict Sharia laws did not really have a net positive effect on society—the Saudi youth did not turn strictly religious or observant as a result of these laws. In fact, because they would feel so confined in their own country, the youth would frequently travel to neighbouring Bahrain for ‘hedonistic oxygenation’.

[Committee formed to probe 'undercounting' in big cities during census 2023](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2023/committee-formed-to-probe-undercounting-in-big-cities-during-census-2023)

If MBS has been a transformational leader at home, in the international arena, he has stunned the world. His recent, historic icebreaking deal with Iran—KSA’s archrival—has taken everybody by surprise. It has been described as “the topsy and turviest of developments anyone could have imagined”. The two countries had remained at loggerheads for decades and fought many proxy wars against each other. Strangely, the recent breakthrough was brokered by China—apparently, the United States did not have a clue. This is yet another indication of the Kingdom trying to emerge from under the shadow of its past.

MBS has rightly broken the status quo! In stretching out, President Ebrahim Raisi deserves equal praise-something only one previous Iranian president has done. The visit by Syria’s President Bashar Asad al-Assad to the UAE this week shows that the sun is certainly peeking through the clouds.

The Saudi-Iran pact will open many doors for the Muslim world. For the first time, it has a real opportunity to emerge as a powerful block like the European Union. So far, the Organization of Islamic Conference has not really been able to assert itself forcefully, mainly because of the rifts between its member states. There is also new hope that the Yemen conflict and Syria’s agony can now end.

[British envoy offers 'all possible help' to overcome economic crisis](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2023/british-envoy-offers-all-possible-help-to-overcome-economic-crisis)

The international players who do not wish the Muslim world to flourish are likely to play their sinister games to jeopardize the peace deal. However, seeing MBS’s confidence and Iran’s commitment to not support the rebel Houthis in Yemen, as well as the emergence of China as an international leader and broker of peace, ought to give one enough confidence to remain optimistic about long-lasting peace.

The KSA is now well and truly on the path with its Vision 2030—creating a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. It has also left open the possibility of normalizing relations with Israel and ending the long-standing conflict in the Muslim world.

The Muslim world certainly does not have a dearth of other leaders to emulate. In the recent past, Mahathir Mohamad completely transformed an underdeveloped, corrupt, and inefficient Malaysia into a modern state and a top tourist destination by infusing a sense of patriotism in the soul of its nationals. His philosophy of compromising and winning people’s hearts set him apart from other leaders. He did nothing special—just pushed back his personal desire to shine and instead tread a path that made each of his country’s citizens prosperous. He proved that if one is sincere, the rocks will move. Today, Malaysia is a proud Muslim country.

[Pakistan reports 28 coronavirus cases in 24 hours](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2023/pakistan-reports-28-coronavirus-cases-in-24-hours)

One only needs such statesmen and their vision. Even gold mines and reservoirs of gas are not enough for prosperity. This was proved by Sheikh Mohammed, the ruler of Dubai. The tiny state did not have mineral resources like its neighbouring states, yet it is now a country everybody wishes to live in or at least visit. Its massive airports are thronged with visitors, and its ports are among the busiest in the world. For tourists, it has the world’s tallest building, the Burj Khalifa; it also has desert safaris, zoos, museums, beaches, deep sea diving, skiing in the summer, sky diving and many more attractions – all present within its small geographical boundaries. It is famously said that you just had to bring an idea to Sheikh Mohammad—implementation was his job.

The Ottoman Empire, which dominated world politics for seven hundred years, was forced to relinquish its rulership following World War I and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Türkiye, though modernized by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, failed to produce a dynamic leader due to the continuous meddling of the military. The emergence of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with massive public support, turned the tide. With aggressive reforms and the electorate’s support, he confined the armed forces to their primary role. Though he assumed office in a period of great economic and political crisis, Erdogan successfully established a stable government.

[Leaked intel suggests US not confident Ukraine will quickly defeat Russia](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Apr-2023/leaked-intel-suggests-us-not-confident-ukraine-will-quickly-defeat-russia)

Turkey’s ties with the countries of the Middle East are now being seen from a fresh perspective. One can feel an element of vibrancy in the relationship. The country is fast emerging as a regional power, and, taking cues from its magnificent past, it is hopeful of a fresh start as a global power when ‘the Treaty’ completes its hundred years in 2023, and its conditions are no longer binding. Erdogan’s slogan in the United Nations, “The world is bigger than five!” demonstrates Turkey’s support for oppressed nations. The country is truly enjoying the advantages of being led by a charismatic leader, and it is ready to play its role as a leader of the Muslim Ummah.

Considering recent changes in the global and regional political landscapes, I wonder whether we are aware that a major shift is likely to occur, and we would need to strategize a plan to act in response to some likely implications.

As other Muslim states awaken from their long slumber, Pakistan is passing through its worst political, economic, and now judicial crisis. The elite continues to engage in parochial strife while its masses continue to live on the edge. Across party lines and in state institutions, the politics of hate prevail at the highest echelons of power. This has caused the worst societal polarization. Pakistan, although being the only nuclear power among the Muslim states and notwithstanding its mammoth resources, is facing an extreme leadership crisis due to political intrigue.

My wish is that we, too, can contribute a light in the glowing dawn of the Muslim Renaissance. We cannot lose our infinite hope, and we must believe that it is better to bend a little than break.

“As sure as the spring will follow the winter, prosperity and economic growth will follow the recession.” Bo Bennett