



Muslim Planet

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Welcome Message

We wish that you and the community are well, and you will enjoy this issue of the News Journal. Please share it with your family and friends, and forward it to your own email list.

February issue has the following content.

1. [Editorial](#)
2. [News Brief](#)
3. [Articles for the Muslim Community](#)
 - a. [USA makes Afghans pay](#)
 - b. [Turkey and UAE get closer](#)
 - c. [Reopening Muslim Minds](#)
4. [The Great Muslim Nation](#)

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[The Muslim Voice](#)

Editorial

In the past editorials we have predicted that French forces would leave Mali, largely because the mission has failed. Something larger than that has now actually happened. Not only the French Forces are leaving, all forces from all European countries are leaving Mali. This is the beginning of the end of neocolonialism in Africa.

The departure of European Forces does not leave any vacuum. Russia and China are already there to more than fill any vacuum that might have otherwise happened. That is fine with Mali and the Sahil as a whole; it is a significantly better outcome for Mali because it liberates the people of Mali from French stranglehold.

It is, however, a very bad outcome for Europe and USA. Europe is not only loosing Mali; they have no hope of getting back there, as Russia and China will make sure of that. It is a serious loss for USA as well. That is because the French stranglehold on the Malian people served USA very well. And the Russian and Chinese influence in Mali is a big pain for USA; plus, there is very little that USA can do to alter the situation.

This is not in isolation. The rest of Sahil will follow suit when they see the Malian people free and prosperous. The Maghrib will also change. Tunisia and Libya have already changed. However, they are going through growing pains. Algeria is a little behind the curve but it will catch on. Morocco is way behind, though the pillars of Monarchy there are cracking.

People learn from these examples. Please recall how the departure of Zain Ali from Tunis caused the departure of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt; and it also caused shaking in other parts of Middle East.

The Freedom Struggle was arrested by USA and Europe who installed the dictator Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in Egypt who serves them as well as the previous dictator did. However, that is a temporary situation, and the people of Egypt will be free and prosperous, as their ancestors were.

Same is likely to happen in Saudi Arabia. After the Saudi Family departs, and the current indications are that it may not take long. Saudi Arabia will then become the original Arabia.

All this is good news for Muslims and Islam.

News in Brief

Please **click** on the hyperlinks for more details:

1. US House of Representatives [passed a bill aimed at combating Islamophobia](#).
2. Watch Muslim Network News for [USA](#).
3. Watch Muslim Network News for [Canada](#).
4. Muslim [women footballers spar with French government](#) on hijab ban in sport.
5. Secularism in Canada: Controversy after [Quebec teacher fired for wearing hijab](#).
6. A [student challenges Hindu hooligans](#) at college in Karnataka state of India, during [Hijab ban by the college](#).
7. Bagheri: [Agreement closer](#) to get than ever before.
8. The Pentagon's [20-Year Killing Spree](#) Has Always Treated Civilians as Expendable.
9. Japan parliament to pass [Uyghur rights resolution](#) ahead of Beijing Olympics.

Articles for Muslim Community

USA Makes Afghans Citizens to Pay for 9-11

The common sentiment in Afghanistan is that the US has swallowed up the Afghan money to punish 38 million Afghans for a crime they did not commit.

For Rizakullah, taking money that belongs to Afghans to pay the families of 9/11 victims, while the country faces widespread hunger, is an act of atrocity.

A manual labourer from Kabul, Rizakullah asks why Afghans are being punished.

“I hardly make 100 Afghanis (\$1) a day. I cannot even buy enough plain bread to feed my family,” the 35-year-old told TRT World.

“We are isolated from the rest of the world and getting punished for a crime we have not committed.”

On February 11, US President Joe Biden signed an order to free \$7 billion in Afghan assets now frozen in the US, splitting Afghans' money between the 9/11 victims and humanitarian aid for Afghanistan.

The \$3.5 billion has been set aside for a US court to decide whether it can be used to settle claims by families of the victims.

The move will bankrupt Afghanistan's central bank and throw the country into an economic catastrophe.

Wages have already fallen by up to 18 percent in the past year, according to the World Bank.

By mid-year, the International Labour Organization projected job losses of about 900,000 - a contraction of about 14 percent.

The US sanctions on the country since the Taliban took over in August have also impeded aid organizations' efforts to help people in the country.

[Source link](#)

Global events pushing Turkey and UAE closer

The recent changes in the geopolitical situation and a United States that is less committed to the region could push Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to work together and focus on pragmatic cooperation in the Libyan crisis and the Eastern Mediterranean. Converging interests have driven regional power shifts in the Middle East, mainly led by Turkey and the UAE.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) visited Turkey for the first time since 2012 in November while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a visit to the UAE last week.

“Turkey is carrying out normalization processes with actors that emerged in a previous period as an opposition bloc but it can be seen that this process is much more accelerated and moving in a different direction with the UAE,” said Mustafa Yetim, a Gulf studies expert at the Ankara-based think tank, Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM). “This process can have a positive impact on actors that previously were against Turkey and in which the UAE had a significant position, and the crises in which these actors were involved.”

“However the UAE has seen the limits of the policy it has pursued since 2014,” said Vişne Korkmaz of Nişantaşı University. Korkmaz pointed UAE Yemen policy as well as its rivals such as Qatar taking greater roles in the region, of which Afghanistan is an example. She pointed further to the geopolitical conjuncture as a reason for these limits and highlighted that the U.S.’ regional policies and its stance affect the country. The U.S. is currently in no position to pursue a policy of polarizing regional states with high capacities, she said.

After years of looking abroad for answers, countries in the Middle East now appear to instead be talking to each other to find solutions following two decades defined by war and political upheaval.

The diplomatic maneuvering signals a growing realization across the region that America’s interest is moving elsewhere and that now is the time for negotiations that were unthinkable just a year ago.

And with the border-locking chaos of the coronavirus pandemic largely behind them, Mideast leaders are now shuffling, talking face-to-face amid a flurry of diplomatic meetings, seemingly eager to hedge their bets.

An intra-Gulf feud that saw Qatar boycotted for years by four Arab countries ended in January at Al-Ula.

Stressing that one of the main and most critical areas in which Turkey and the UAE can cooperate is the Libya issue, Yetim said: “The Libyan issue is critical in that it represents Turkey’s last circle and breakup from regional isolation efforts.” He reminded that the UAE’s involvement in Libya through proxies constituted a peak in the crisis between Ankara and Abu Dhabi and indicated that the UAE could contribute economically and politically to Libya’s restructuring and overcoming the dual structure in Libya through diplomacy.

“We do not have the Libya of 2014, which polarized countries such as Turkey, the UAE, Qatar and Egypt. The U.S.’ main goal seems to be to limit Russia’s presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Actors such as the UAE and Russia, which supported Haftar after 2014, have seen that Haftar neither possesses the military nor political power to control all of Libya,” Korkmaz said.

“In the Libyan crisis, the UAE has left its quasi automatic anti-Turkey stance and preferred dialogue and diplomacy after testing Turkey’s resistance in Libya and seeing Turkey’s maritime and military deal with Libya as well as the limitations of the claims of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration in the Eastern Mediterranean,” Yetim said. He added that the EastMed project, a planned subsea pipeline to provide natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. The project is strongly opposed by Turkey, and the project has entered a difficult phase, thus making another factor for the UAE's change of policy.

She further reminded that the U.S. withdrew its support from the pipeline project. “Since it was already an economically unfeasible project and was born dead due to the impossibility of realizing it without Turkey”. Korkmaz also said that in the midst of tensions with Russia due to Ukraine, Washington is aware of the position Ankara holds in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. “Knowing that the problems between regional countries are not ideological, the U.S. has played a facilitating role for Turkey, Egypt, Israel and the UAE to find a win-win ground.”

“At this point, it can be said that there is a lack of interest from global actors in the EastMed project, which had high costs but was supported to politically isolate Turkey, and that the regional anti-Turkey bloc has broken down,” Yetim said.

“Within this scope, Turkey being in a normalization process with Israel and voicing that it can play a role in transferring Israeli energy sources to international markets could lead to the UAE supporting this process as Abu Dhabi also started diplomatic relations with Israel with the Abraham Accords.” However this will not come at the cost of the Palestinian issue, he said.

“One of the most sensitive areas in this regard is Libya. Everyone accepts that the next process in Libya cannot be thought separate from Turkey,”

[Source link](#)

Reopening Muslim Minds

In the past century, we have seen the emergence of a wealth of discourse about Islam and Muslims. That’s because as colonialism retreated across the Islamic world, what followed was a slow eruption of nascent political movements that sought to reorient the power politics in their native countries in the direction of Islam.

Most of these political endeavours viewed Islam as being inseparable from questions of sovereignty and temporal power

By the turn of 20th century, many of these political movements metastasised into more gruesome forms. Take, for example, the Taliban, which chops off limbs as a punishment for theft as it zealously imposes its own interpretation of Islamic law; or the Iranian regime, whose legal stipulations are hardly more liberal than the Taliban’s.

In the larger context of debates surrounding modernity and democracy, these power struggles and the historical legacies that animate them have come under intense criticism. And at the heart of these critical debates is the role of the faith system that 1.9 billion individuals practice worldwide.

A provocative new book, *Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom, and Tolerance* by Turkish scholar Mustafa Akyol attempts to both figure out and rehabilitate all that is wrong with the Muslim world today. But unlike similar, previous initiatives, Akyol stops short of declaring Islam as a ‘problem’.

Instead, he identifies Muslims' approach to Islam as the one responsible for the current political pathologies plaguing Islamic lands.

Akyol locates the origin of the current troubles in the formative years of Islam, when serious philosophical debates raged about the meanings and import of "true" Islam.

One faction debated that the fate of individuals was predestined and that right or wrong was already foretold by the revelation (that is to say, Quran).

Arrayed against this orthodox sect were Muslim philosophers who championed the supremacy of reason. They argued that the individual was a free agent who enjoyed free will and that it is 'reason', not the revelation alone, that determines right or wrong.

These contestations hardened Muslim attitudes along two competing theological schools: Asharism and Mu'tazilah. While Asharites preferred the adherence to tradition, Mu'tazalites had a penchant for going beyond the revered conventions.

Mu'tazalites were passionate about philosophy and helped evolve the rich tradition of kalam. They were the exponents of a particular reading of the Quran that upheld freewill and reason.

Mankdim Shashdiw, a Mu'tazalite scholar, for instance, wrote a treatise saying God was bound by the constraints of justice. "He does not impose on people obligations that they can bear nor have knowledge of," he declared.

In their view, the Quran was a created document and did not co-exist eternally with God "for such thing would undermine Islam's emphasis on monotheism."

They argued that morality was subject to human reason and, therefore, can exist independent of the Quran. This bent of mind predisposed adherents of Mu'tazila to an ethos of fearless reasoning and free inquiry.

Thus, it goes without saying that as speculative traditions flourished in Muslim societies, Islam saw the surge of its 'Enlightenment' period.

Al-Jahiz (d. 868), a Mu'tazila scholar, wrote the Kitab al-Hayawan (Book of Animals) that not only describes more than 350 species with beautiful illustrations, but also argues that animals "engage in a struggle for existence," and "develop new characteristics ... transforming into new species." He is considered as a forebear of the modern theory of evolution.

Ibn al-Haytham wrote Kitab al Manazir (Book of Optics) in 1021, which was first to explain that vision occurs when light deflects off an object and then passes into one's eye.

Spain-born Ibn Baja's treatises on astronomy were so significant that in 2009, the International Astronomical Union gave his name to a crater on the Moon.

In 2018, Google, through its 'doodle' celebrated the 1,038th birthday of Ibn Sina, another avant-garde philosopher of Islamic Enlightenment who authored at least 131 books, including Al Qanun fil-Tibb (the Canon of Medicine), a monumental medical encyclopaedia that was translated into Latin in the 12th century and used as the primary text for European medical courses until the 17th century.

But the most towering advocate of Islam's speculative tradition was Ibn Rushd, a Cordova-born polymath-jurist.

In *The Incoherence of The Incoherence*, which Rushd wrote as a riposte to Asharite theologians, he persuasively explains the frailty of the doctrine of predestination. “Denial of cause implies denial of knowledge, and denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known, and that what is supposed to be known is nothing but opinion,” he wrote.

As Akyol writes, “Ibn Rushd realised that if we lose faith in objective reality, we would also lose reason. And if we lost reason, we would end up believing in a despotic God whose wisdom cannot be understood, let alone be interpreted.”

In books like *The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer*, Rushd went beyond traditional approaches followed in the four Sunni jurisprudences: Maliki, Shafi’i, Hanafi and Hanbali, that form the basis for Islamic *Sharia*. Instead of anachronistically reproducing stipulations from Prophet Muhammad’s time to address the problems in his own period, Rushd “went back to original sources,” Akyol writes, “especially in Qur’an to create more room for interpretation.”

Rushd argued that objective values were established by *sunan ghayr maktuba* (unwritten laws) and if they contracted the written law, that is the *Sharia*, the latter will have to be reinterpreted.

Written laws, he said, were contextual to the time and values for which they were revealed and may become unjust in a different setting and that is because “no one can lay down universal and general laws according to all people of all times and all places.”

But after a brief heyday, the tradition of *kalam* suffered a terminal decline among the Sunnis, “following which jurisprudence became the primary discipline. As a result,” writes Akyol, “Islamic culture became a ‘legal culture’, focusing on ‘proper behaviour’ rather than proper belief.”

But the biggest casualty of the suppression of Islam’s speculative tradition was a ‘Muslim mind’ which shut itself off to ‘*ijtihad*’ (independent reasoning), allowing ‘over-inclusive scripturalism’ to dominate the Islamic world, turning even trivial questions into religious problems. Muslims began to worry about things like, “Should one wear one’s wrist-watch on the right or the left wrist?”

Asharite theologians like Imam al-Ghazali, who wrote *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, instructed Muslims to avoid sinfulness through acts like “breaking musical instruments, spilling over wine and snatching silk garment from hewho is wearing it,” because Silk seemed “indulgent.”

Ghazali played the paramount role in marginalising Islam’s speculative philosophy. Ibn Taymiyya, another adversary of *kalam*, in his treatise *The Unsheathed Sword* calls upon Muslims to kill “anyone who insulted the Prophet, even if he repented,” although Qur’an actually prescribes no such punishment.

Contrast this with the sage counsels of Abu Hanifa, grandson of Caliph Ali who founded Hanafi jurisprudence. “We do not consider anyone to be an infidel on account of sin,” he wrote, “nor do we deny his faith.”

Abu Hanifa, whose rational philosophy survives to this day, made a crucial distinction between faith (*din*) and law (*Sharia*). All prophets brought the same religion, he argued, but promulgated different laws. One would not abandon religion by abandoning the law.

So what led to the decline of Islamic Enlightenment? One theory is that at one point, Abbasid rulers of the Muslim world reversed patronage to the Mu’tazilah school which led to the entrenchment of power by the

traditionalists whose conservative messaging only got stronger as Islam faced persecution at the hands of Mongols and Crusaders.

Under the Seljuk and Mamluk Sultanates, Asharism became the dominant ideology, culminating in the total marginalisation of Mu'tazilah. State persecution is also responsible.

In 1017, Mu'tazilah scholars were directed to publicly renounce their "heresies" and warned of corporal punishments. Some were persecuted, their works burned publicly.

In a world where political actors like the Taliban and Boko Haram weaponise Islamic tenets to legitimise and perpetrate violence, and where countries like Turkey and Malaysia are quick to shut down speech and penalise blasphemy and heresy, Reopening Muslim Minds sheds light on the lost theological tradition of Islam that had once cultivated a spirit of tolerance, moderation and free inquiry, now unseen in much of the Muslim world.

The book demonstrates the ways in which that forgotten tradition can be revived and repurposed to inspire an 'Islamic Renaissance'.

But, as with every other discourse on this subject, Akyol's book also becomes a vector for dangerous tropes about Islam and Muslims because it exceptionalises the Muslim right wing. It becomes part of that broader narrative that stigmatises every conservative expression in Muslim societies as proof of the universal Muslim pathology.

After all, there are no pressing debates that prescribe restorative treatment for European culture amid the rising wave of intolerance towards Muslim immigrants and their lifestyle; no calls for the reformation of the Hindu religion as India struggles with escalating ethno-religious chauvinism.

On the contrary, these changes are rightly interpreted through the prism of drastic political and economic shifts.

The 'closure-of-the-Muslim-mind' argument posits that Muslim people are victims of great intellectual crises that transcends time and culture, and of which figures like Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Ghazali and Sayyid Qutb are manifest examples, thus establishing a mutual connection between them.

It is at this point that the discourse becomes dangerous because Akyol is trying to excise all these individuals away from the broader temporal context which may be quite unique to their time.

For example, John C. Calvert, among the foremost scholars on Sayyid Qutb, traces the iconic Egyptian Islamist ideologue's history from being a disciple of liberal polymath Mahmoud al Aqqad to becoming a radical thinker who endorsed violence. Calvert ascribes Qutb's radical shift to the circumstances peculiar to British-administered Egypt and the ruthless repression by Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Likewise, Akyol puts the blame for the decline of the speculative tradition in Islam, for the most part, on the Muslim rulers who used Ashari doctrines to preserve political power.

This is at variance with what is written in his previous book, *Islam Without Extremes*, where this decline is being attributed not to "the attitudes and ideologies inherent in Islam," but to the economic stagnation brought by the "political position of merchant classes vis-a-vis the dominant military bureaucratic classes in Islamic societies."

Similarly, Akyol argues that Muslims see an affinity with fellow Muslims because a bulk of Sunni tradition was defined by a “communalistic school,” whose theological basis was Asharism. But in *The Idea of the Muslim World*, scholar Cemil Aydin gives different reasons for why Muslims came to evolve a communitarian view of self-identity in the 19th century, none of which has anything to do with Asharism.

Most crucially, some of Akyol’s assertions are based on the premise that there is a straightforward relationship between religious beliefs and individual behaviour. But this a view with which several scholars have disagreed with.

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Most crucially, some of Akyol's assertions are based on the premise that there is a straightforward relationship between religious beliefs and individual behaviour.

And as Edward Said writes in *Covering Islam*, "...for Muslims as for non-Muslims, Islam is an objective and also subjective fact because people create that fact in their faith. This is to say that media's Islam, Western reporter's Islam and Muslim's Islam, are all acts of will and interpretation that take place in history."

It means that religion or religious attitudes don't influence us as much as we shape them to our liking, based on the social, political and economic imperatives with which we interact. *Reopening Muslim Minds* is thus a powerhouse of incredible research work.

Mustafa Akyol

Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom, and Tolerance
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[Source link](#)



The Great Muslim Nation

We are the only organization of its kind in North America

eMail : iCommunity@mail.MuslimPlanet.org

Website : <http://MuslimVoice.org/>

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