



# AL-UMMAH

Monthly Journal ■ Volume 1 ■ July 2026 ■ Issue 3

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## Shared Geopolitical Interests Bring Turkey, Bangladesh Closer



### Hakan Fidan's

Landmark Visit Opens New Strategic  
Era in Bangladesh-Turkey Ties



### Beyond the Barrel: The Oil Narrative That Hides a Much Darker History



# AL-UMMAH

## ***Guidelines for Submission***

Al-Ummah welcomes well-written articles that demonstrate depth, clarity, and analytical rigor. They must offer a structured analysis and a strong contextual understanding of the subject matter. We welcome contributions on global geopolitics, the Muslim world, political and economic developments, historical perspectives, and broader social, cultural and technological transformations. Please note the following requirements before submission:

- The article should be between 1,000 and 1,300 words and written in clear and polished English.
- It should present well-reasoned arguments supported by credible evidence where appropriate.
- It must be original and unpublished. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of facts, proper sourcing, and maintaining intellectual integrity.
- All submissions will undergo editorial review.
- Al-Ummah reserves the right to edit articles for clarity, style, and length.
- Publication is not guaranteed.
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- Submissions should be sent to: [info@al-ummah.org](mailto:info@al-ummah.org).

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## In Just 3 Months, Al-Ummah Is Making History

*T*hree months. Barely a heartbeat in the lifespan of a publication. Yet, in this short spell, Al-Ummah magazine has made its mark, transcending its pages to become a lively dialogue that resonates with our esteemed readership. The overwhelming response validates our mission to connect with a community that craves an outlet for discourse, in perspective.

By the time this third edition reaches your hands, we will be celebrating another milestone. A grand international symposium that Al-Ummah Foundation has organized in Dhaka on July 4 to take the discourse—our mission—to the next level. A historic stride indeed, as Bangladesh's Honorable Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr. Zahir Uddin Swapon, has consented to be the Chief Guest on the occasion. From the Republic of Türkiye, Prof. Yasin Aktay, the former Deputy Chairman of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party, is the Special Guest attending the event. They will join the country's foremost leaders, including Dr. AFM Khalid Hossain, the former adviser to the Interim Government, and other scholars, journalists, and a host of eminent guests from all across the world.

A panel talk session in the latter half will see a host of luminaries deliberating the issues

facing the Ummah and how publications like Al-Ummah magazine can play a meaningful role in this regard. Those who sit on the panel include: Eng. Munir Saeed, Deputy Secretary General, Islamic World Forum for Thought and Civilization; Dr. Mahmudur Rahman, Editor, The Daily Amar Desh; Dr. Aiman Zeidan, Executive Director, International Al-Quds Foundation; Dr. Fathi Abdul Qadir, Director, Al-Rawad Academy, Istanbul; Dr. Neaz Ahmed Khan, Former Vice Chancellor, Dhaka University; Dr. Mia Mohammad Ayub, Former Secretary and Member, Public Administration Reform Commission; Prof. Mokhtar Ahmad, Chairman, Tarbiyah Education Network & Tarbiyah Trust and Dr. Mohammad Abdul Aziz, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT).

The event is being led and hosted by Mohammad Zakir Hossain, Chairman, Al-Ummah Foundation, and Editor-in-Chief, Al-Ummah

It is not just a global event. It is a testament to our collective conviction, and it's indeed time we together took this small step and made it a giant leap, shaping the intellectual destiny of our times.



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**AL-UMMAH**

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# SHARED GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS BRING TURKIYE, BANGLADESH CLOSER



**By M. Nasir Jawed**

Former Editor, Yearbook of the Muslim World,  
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*T*ürkiye foreign minister's visit fuels more energy into its relationship with Bangladesh. Both show eagerness to take ties to a solid strategic and meaningful bond.

Is it the Dhaka moment? After years of an India-centric slant in its foreign policy, mainly under the previous Sheikh Hasina regime, Bangladesh has begun exploring strategic opportunities beyond the borders of South Asia, specif-



ically beyond India, China, and the US interests.

This geopolitical push gained momentum when Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan visited Dhaka recently, bonding a relationship that goes beyond a routine diplomatic engagement. So, why is this so important that it raised the eyebrows of many a country?

Spurred by the shared civilizational im-

petus and cultural diplomacy, the two countries are also showing an appetite for better, greater, and newer pastures that give a much-needed propulsion to their strategic necessities.

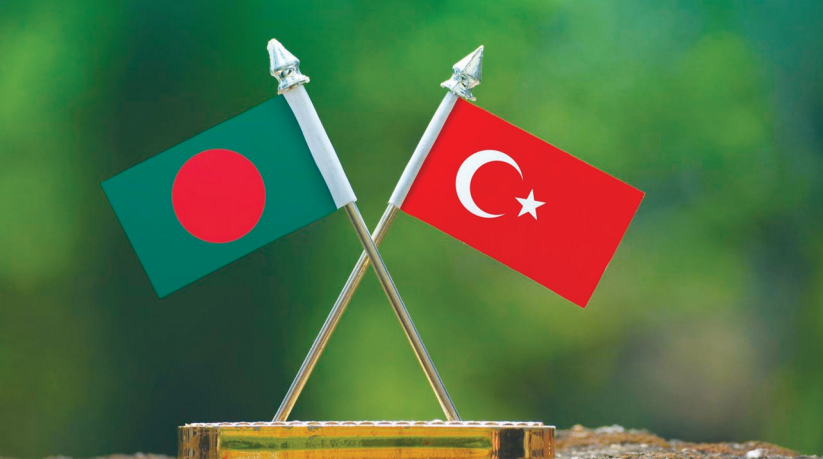
In times when alliances are being reset, technologies are redefining relationships, and geopolitics are deciding new paradigms, Turkiye and Bangladesh are chiseling newer grounds to assert and make their presence felt.

But first, the report. Fidan landed in Dhaka on 4 June to begin a three-day trip, meeting a range of leaders, including Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, his counterpart, Khalilur Rahman, and the opposition leader, Dr. Shafiqur Rahman.

The minister signaled a desire to elevate their relationship to a strategic level, discussing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). The visit saw the two countries setting an ambitious target of raising bilateral trade from nearly \$1.3 billion to \$2 billion. This is besides exploring deeper defence-industrial co-operation, including the possibility of establishing defence manufacturing facilities in Bangladesh.

The visit underlines both countries' immense potential to take the bilateral ties in the right direction. Bangladesh boasts not just one of the world's best ready-made garment industries but also leather goods, pharmaceuticals, ce-





ramics, jute products, frozen foods, and IT services. Turkey is the world's fastest-growing defense exporter, which can help Bangladesh modernize its military. The country produces "drones, naval platforms, armored vehicles, electronic warfare systems, and missile technologies at competitive prices."

Turkey's exports of industrial machinery, textile machinery, electrical equipment, construction materials, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural technology could prove beneficial for Bangladesh. Turkish expertise in transport infrastructure, urban planning and energy projects could also find a substantial market in a rapidly urbanizing Bangladesh.



### **Türkiye's 'Asia Anew' Policy**

That Fidan is the first Turkish foreign minister in nearly six years to visit Bangladesh must not be seen as a stand-alone gesture. It is part of Türkiye's wider "Asia Anew" strategy that has deepened Ankara's reach across Asia and the Indian Ocean in recent years.

Launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2029, it's now a key policy drive to exert influence across Asia—geopolitically, economically, and culturally. The initiative seeks to strengthen Türkiye's relations with Asian countries through a holistic and sustainable strategy in a systematic and consistent manner by developing re-



gional, subregional and countryspecific approaches.

The initiative's priority objectives include enhancing economic and trade cooperation and the flow of investment with countries across Asia based on mutual benefit. The areas of cooperation envisioned within this framework include high-value-added and advanced technology sectors, tourism, finance, and defense industry sectors, as well as infrastructure, transportation, logistics, green energy, and sustainable development projects.

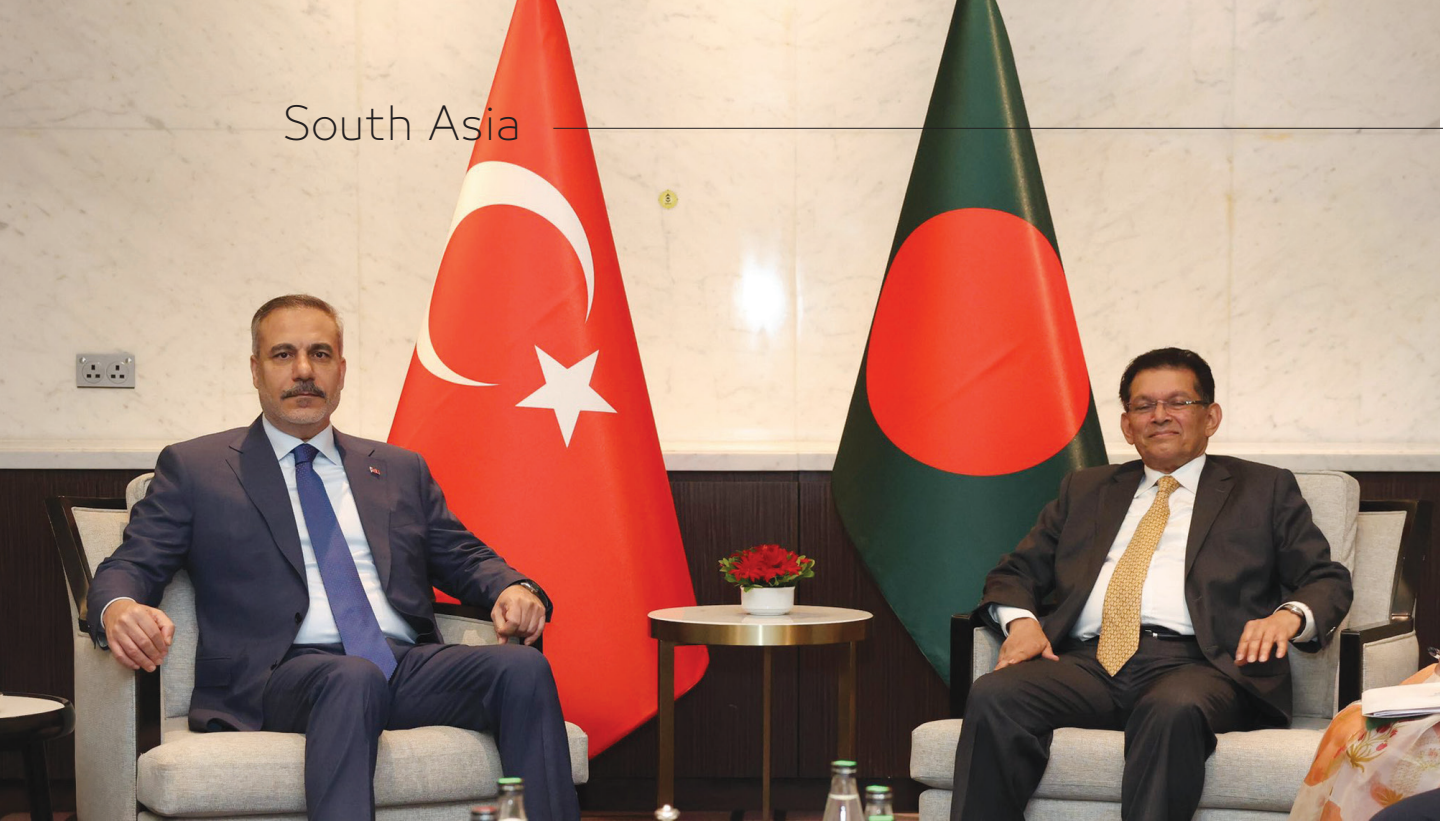
In this context, the initiative also aims to diversify and deepen Türkiye's relations with Asian countries, with which

deeprooted historical and cultural ties are shared, through activities in science, education, culture, the arts and sports that foster closer ties between societies.

Furthermore, under the Asia Anew Initiative, institutional mechanisms that bring together representatives of all relevant public institutions and organizations have been established to ensure that Türkiye's policies toward the region are formulated through effective coordination and implemented in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

Türkiye's relations with the Asian continent have been steadily improving with an upward trajectory, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Possessing the





world's third-largest diplomatic network, Türkiye maintains 30 Embassies and 26 Consulates General across the geography covered by the Asia Anew Initiative as of December 2025.

Under the framework of the Initiative, in addition to advancing bilateral relations, particular importance is placed on Türkiye's engagement with multilateral structures whose influence across Asia continues to grow. In this regard, continued efforts are being undertaken to further advance institutional relations with the regional organizations, foremost among them ASEAN, the leading institution for trade and economic cooperation in Southeast Asia.

an independent state in 1974. Decades earlier, the Bengalis of the undivided British India joined Muslims in the subcontinent to support Turkey during World War I (1914-1918) and the Turkish War of Liberation (1919-1922). Bangladesh supported Turkish claims on the Cyprus issue through the 1970s and 1980s. Turkey reciprocated by providing technical and financial assistance to Bangladesh during its state-building process and helping create a stable and sustainable national economic system.

Ankara also supported Bangladesh on the issue of the Rohingya in the United Nations, the G-20, MIKTA (a middle-power grouping that included Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia), the OIC, and other multilateral fora. In September 2017, Emine Erdoğan, the president's spouse, along with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Family and Social Policy Minister Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya, visited the

### Ties in History

In the case of Bangladesh, the foundation for such a bond has its solid groundwork in history. Türkiye was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as



Cox's Bazar refugee camps.

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), the Turkish Red Crescent, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and Turkish NGOs have constructed camps, hospitals, schools, orphanages, and facilities for refugees and the poor across Bangladesh.

Both countries are populous Muslim nations and members of the D-8 group of developing economies. That shared identity has given the relationship a steady undercurrent of goodwill even through difficult patches, including the strain during the previous government in Dhaka.

Both countries are in a wider resetting of their respective foreign policy. Since August 2024, when a mass protest transformed the political landscape, Bangladesh has been actively diversifying its partnerships beyond its traditional circles. National elections that followed saw a new government take office that made it clear that it intends to chart a more autonomous course. Rahman captured the mood when he spoke of friends rather than masters across the border. Read in context, that is less a slogan than a statement of policy: Dhaka wants partners who deal with it as an equal. Türkiye, with no colonial baggage in South Asia and a track record of treating smaller states as genuine counterparts, fits that description well.

## Strategic Importance

Fidan's visit to Dhaka must also be seen in the backdrop of the current geopolitical landscape. South Asia occupies a central space in the Global South. The emerging partnership with Türkiye indeed offers Dhaka a vital role to play, to play its strategic cards carefully and understand its diplomatic depth.

Shahidul Alam Swapan, a Switzerland-based columnist, writes in South Asian Herald: "Bangladesh's foreign policy for much of its post-independence history has been shaped and constrained by a powerful strategic triangle. India's geographic dominance, China's expanding economic presence, and the West's leverage through trade preferences, development assistance, and governance conditionalities have collectively defined the parameters within which Dhaka has operated."

## Conclusion

Fidan's visit, therefore, should be seen as more than a routine diplomatic engagement. It signalled the growing desires of the two countries to go strategic rather than maintain just conventional relations backed by their cultural or civilizational connections and historic bonds.

The Dhaka moment is indeed there. More than merely establishing bilateral relations, Dhaka increasingly finds its role cut out for landscaping South Asia's politics.



# HAKAN FIDAN'S

## LANDMARK VISIT OPENS NEW STRATEGIC

## ERA IN BANGLADESH–TURKEY TIES



**Al Ummah Report**



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Al-Ummah

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's three-day visit to Dhaka marks a bold new chapter in Bangladesh–Turkey relations and signals a clear move toward

a new strategic level in bilateral ties. As the first visit by a Turkish foreign minister to Bangladesh in nearly six years, this goes far beyond routine diplomacy. It represents a forward-looking push to elevate bilateral ties amid the shifting geopolitical realities of South Asia, the Middle East, and the broader Indo-Pacific region.





In the current international order, strategic cooperation among middle powers is becoming increasingly important. On one hand, Bangladesh is determined to strengthen its position through rapid economic growth, regional connectivity, and active global diplomacy. On the other hand, Turkey, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has established itself as an independent and influential global power connecting Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Against this backdrop of mutual ambition, Hakan Fidan's visit has opened a new horizon of shared interests and multi-dimensional cooperation between the

two countries.

### **New Opportunities in Trade and Economic Cooperation**

Current bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Turkey stands at approximately \$1.35 billion. Both countries have jointly set a goal of increasing this figure to \$2 billion in the near future. While ready-made garments, textiles, leather products, and agricultural goods have long formed the foundation of bilateral trade, this round of discussions focused on high-value-added industries, information technology, pharma-





ceuticals, infrastructure development, and renewable energy.

Bangladesh is currently making its final preparations for graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. As a result, the need to create new markets, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and establish technological partnerships has become increasingly urgent. In this regard, Turkey's advanced manufacturing sector, defense industry, and world-class infrastructure expertise could serve as important catalysts in Bangladesh's economic transformation.

Moreover, ongoing discussions regarding a possible Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) could provide a legal and institu-

tional framework for economic relations between the two countries. If successfully implemented, such an initiative could serve as a strong economic bridge between South Asia and West Asia.

### **Defense Cooperation: The Most Important Dimension of the Relationship**

The most dynamic and widely discussed aspect of Bangladesh-Turkey relations is defense cooperation. Over the past decade, Turkey has emerged as one of the world's leading and fastest-growing producers of defense technology. In particular, its success in drone technology (such as the Bayraktar TB2), modern armored vehicles, naval platforms, and advanced military equipment has gained global recognition.

Bangladesh, through its military modernization program known as “Forces Goal,” is also prioritizing enhanced defense capabilities and technological advancement. In this context, defense cooperation between the two countries is no longer limited to conventional arms sales. It is increasingly evolving into strategic collaboration involving joint production, technology transfer, and advanced training for military personnel.

According to military experts, Turkey represents a highly reliable partner for Bangladesh. Turkish defense technology is not only cost-effective and battle-tested but is also generally free from the geopolitical conditions often associated with Western suppliers. Consequently, defense cooperation between Dhaka and Ankara is likely to expand significantly in the coming years.

### **Rohingya Crisis: A Shared Humanitarian Position**

One of the most significant aspects of Hakan Fidan’s visit was his tour of the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar. Turkey has been among the most vocal and active Muslim-majority countries advocating for the Rohingya issue on the international stage from the very beginning. Through forums such as the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Ankara has consis-

tently supported the protection of Rohingya human rights and their safe and dignified repatriation.

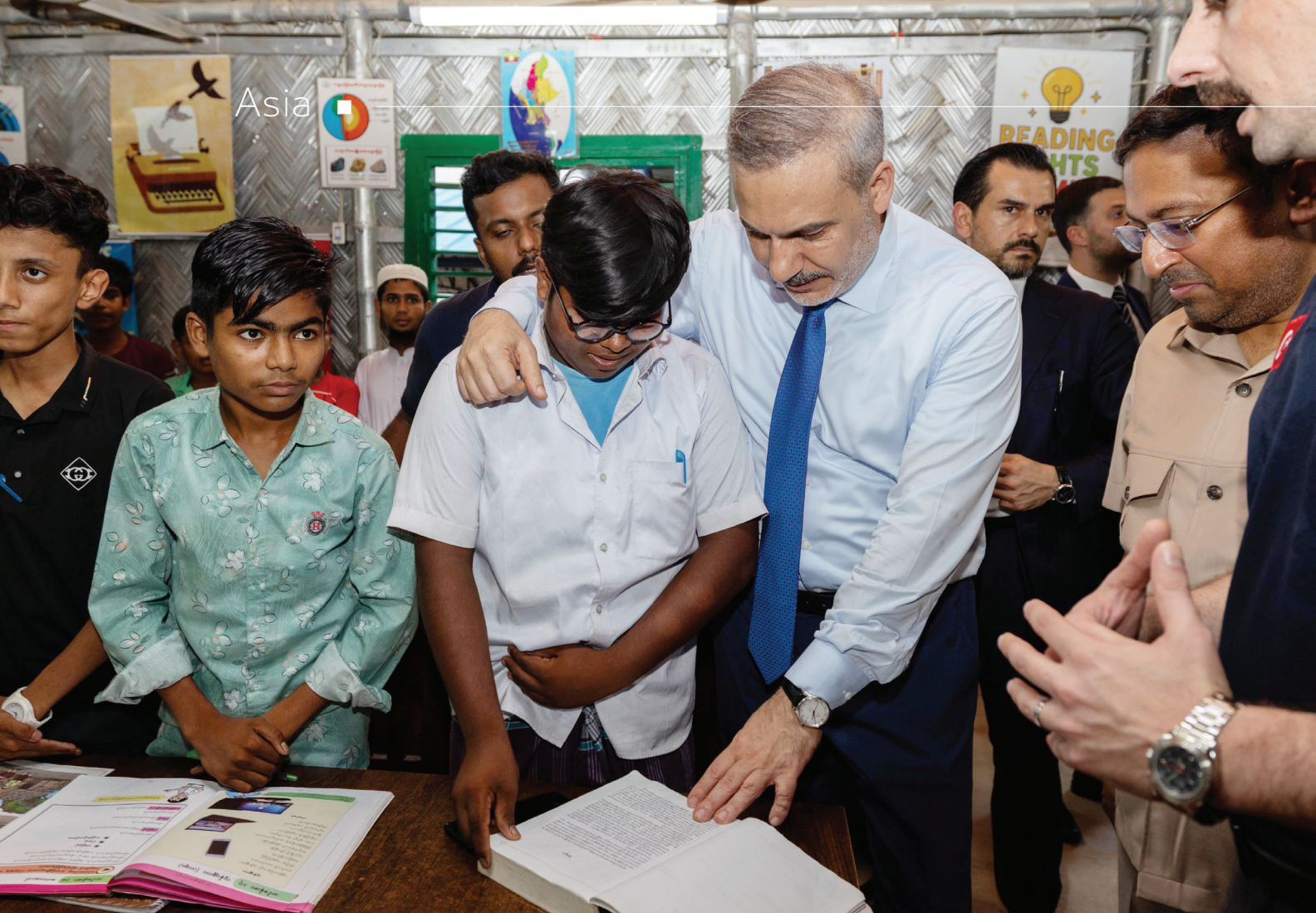
Bangladesh currently hosts more than one million displaced Rohingya refugees, placing considerable pressure on its economy, environment, and internal security. In this situation, the direct political and humanitarian support of an influential country like Turkey strengthens Bangladesh’s diplomatic position globally. Fidan’s visit to the camps was not merely symbolic; it served as a powerful political message aimed at renewing international attention to the Rohingya crisis.

### **Multilateral Diplomacy and Global Coordination**

Both Bangladesh and Turkey place great importance on multilateral diplomacy and respect for international law. Their cooperation and policy alignment are becoming increasingly visible across platforms such as the United Nations, the OIC, and the Developing Eight Organization for Economic Cooperation.

The two countries share similar perspectives on issues such as sustainable development, climate change, refugee crises, food security, and the rights of countries in the Global South. In an increasingly polarized world, where competition among major powers con-





tinues to intensify, emerging middle powers like Bangladesh and Turkey are seeking to amplify their voices in global decision-making through closer coordination.

### Indo-Pacific & Geopolitical Context

The significance of this visit extends beyond bilateral relations and carries a broader regional geopolitical dimension. Bangladesh currently pursues a balanced and neutral foreign policy, maintaining constructive relations with the United States, China, India, the European Union, and Middle Eastern countries.

Turkey similarly follows an independent and multidimensional strategic foreign policy. While Ankara remains an important member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it is simultaneously expanding its strategic influence across the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia. As a result, the Bangladesh–Turkey partnership provides both countries with an opportunity to diversify their diplomatic engagements.

The growing geopolitical importance of the Bay of Bengal and the wider Indo-Pacific region is also likely to encour-





age greater Turkish engagement in the area, thereby broadening Bangladesh's network of international partnerships.

### **Future Outlook**

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's visit to Dhaka demonstrates that Bangladesh and Turkey are no longer confined to a relationship based solely on historical friendship and cultural affinity. The two countries are moving toward the establishment of a defined Strategic Partnership, centered on economic cooperation, defense, technology, and humanitarian diplomacy.

However, realizing this promising vision will require more than diplomatic goodwill or joint declarations. Concrete projects must be initiated quickly, the investment climate must be further improved, institutional frameworks for defense cooperation must be established, and commercial agreements must be implemented efficiently.

If this roadmap is successfully executed, Bangladesh-Turkey relations could evolve over the next decade into one of the most influential and exemplary strategic partnerships in the geopolitics of South Asia and West Asia.





## BEYOND THE BARREL: THE OIL NARRATIVE THAT HIDES A MUCH DARKER HISTORY



**By Soroor Ahmed**

Senior journalist, Patna, India



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*T*hanks to the Western media, a general perception has been created that the crisis in West Asia is just a battle for the control of energy and nothing else, when the fact is that centuries-old ri-

valry in the region has strong religious, ideological, and civilizational overtones. If Iran has been attacked for the sake of oil, why is the United States further tightening the noose around nearby Cuba, which relies heavily on imported oil for its survival? The reason is simple: both these countries refuse to buckle under the pressure of Washington. They both witnessed revolutions and the overthrow of pro-US regimes in

1979 and 1959, respectively.

In this regard, it is needless to remind about American President Donald Trump's infamous threat that "a whole civilization will die tonight," made on April 7 last. It is another thing that hours later he took a U-turn and agreed to a truce with Iran—albeit an uneasy one.

An objective study of the history of West Asia would help understand the whole scenario in a proper perspective. One should not put the cart before the horse and come to a wrong conclusion. Energy, uranium, and the blockade of Hormuz are actually by-products of the real problem whose origin can be traced back long.

### **Modern Oil-drilling**

The truth is that the first successful drilling for oil in the modern world started in 1859 in the United States, that is, about two decades after the idea of the creation of the Jewish homeland was first conceptualized by the Protestant-dominated ruling establishment of Britain way back in the 1830s. Actually, the use of petrol and diesel on a large scale started in the 1880s, especially after the invention of the automobile in 1885-86. A decade later, that is, in the 1890s, ships started switching over from coal to oil for fuel. Aircraft that use gasoline took the first successful flight in 1903. Now petroleum-based products are used in manufacturing clothes,

fertilizers, medicine, plastic, and thousands of other materials. Oil is used to run industries and locomotives. Thus, it became a prized asset only in the 20th Century.

In the Middle East, oil was discovered in Persia in 1908 and in Saudi Arabia in 1938, that is, several years after the champion of Jewish Zionism, Theodor Herzl, came up with his pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, in 1896, that is, eight years before his death in 1904.

### **Construction of the Suez Canal**

Here it also needs to be mentioned that there was no Suez Canal in the 1830s, as this 193-kms long waterway linking the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea became operational in 1869 after a decade of construction. It was Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt Mohammad Saeed Pasha who ordered the digging of this Canal, which is situated at the crucial tri-junction of three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe. The European imperialists greatly benefited as it considerably reduced the distance to Asia and the eastern coast of Africa.

The undeniable fact is that Christianized colonial Western powers had an eye on Palestine ever since the European empires lost the Eighth and the last Crusade of the 1270s. The motive behind the creation of Israel was both religious and imperialist. Britain and France—and later the United States—knew the strategic, military, economic,



and geographical importance of the Levant. Occupying the fertile land of this region in the heart of the big and powerful Ottoman Empire was essential for the domination of the West.

Instead of directly confronting Muslims, they put Jews in front to achieve the objective. The then British foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, floated the idea of the Jewish homeland in 1839-40. Efforts were made to win over Jews who were then holding high posts in the Ottoman Empire.

### **Scamper for Africa**

The European colonists had much before 19th century mastered the entire western hemisphere (that is, both North and South America), a huge part of central and southern Africa, far-off Asia, and Australia, but they could not conquer nearby North Africa and West Asia—though they were situated just across the Mediterranean. It is true that the Portuguese had reached the largely unprotected fringe of what is now called the United Arab Emirates in the 16th Century.

But the hinterland of North Africa and entire West Asia was, till the early 19th century, still under the control of the powerful Ottoman army and navy, which would, between the 15th and 18th centuries, not let European powers venture into the Mediterranean. The gradual decline of the Ottomans started in the early 19th century. Napoleon's

brief occupation of coastal Egypt and Syria between 1798 and 1801 hastened the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. It is after the 1830s that the scramble for North Africa started among the seven European colonies. Algeria was the first to fall to France in 1830, that is, more than three hundred years after it colonized the Americas on the other end of the planet. Britain took Egypt in 1882, that is a century after it became the master of far-away India.

### **Monopolization of Oil**

No doubt, oil and natural gas have acquired importance now. But it is an undeniable fact that Western multinational corporations virtually monopolize the energy industry in this region. The West was briefly alarmed by the nationalization of the oil industry (monopolized by British firms) by the then Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1951 and later attempts to weaponize it by Arabs during the 1973 war with Israel. While British intelligence and the CIA orchestrated a coup in Iran in 1953 and brought back monarch Reza Shah to power, the oil-rich Arab rulers were subsequently compelled to invest in the West and deposit money in banks there. Post-1979 revolution Iran, on the other hand, was put under sanctions.

Till then, Shah's Iran was like other monarchies in the region, a US lackey. It used to willingly supply oil to Israel, though the latter, like now, has been

committing genocide in Palestine and other adjoining countries.

It was the leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, who snapped ties with the United States and Israel. He stopped the supply of oil to the Zionist state on the plea that its aircraft, tanks, armoured cars, and other weapons were using the same fossil fuel to carry out massacres of helpless Arabs.

No, Israel did not face an oil crisis as the West was ready to provide energy to it. Later, after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan started exporting oil to Israel through a pipeline to the Turkish port, from where it is shipped to the Zionist state. This arrangement is going on despite Israeli barbarism in Gaza and Lebanon.

### **Challenge to the West**

What actually shocked the West is that the Revolution in Iran gave a big boost to the revival of movements that were against Western imperialism. Though the titular Arab heads of state continued to toe the line of the West, at the mass level, a sort of assertion and awakening was quite visible in several Third World countries, especially those having a Muslim population.

Washington, London, Paris, etc were well aware that no one else but Tehran is the fountainhead of this new confidence among Muslims and other weaker sections of the world. So, a global

campaign started to ostracize Iran. Iraq was provoked, armed, and monetarily helped to attack Iran. But this card did not work.

Iran's zeal to wipe out Israel and the creation of Hezbollah in Lebanon in 1982 came as a big challenge to the entire West.

The United States and its allies took several indirect steps with the help of Israel to finish off Iran, but to no avail. Finally, on February 28 last the US directly led the operation.

But the whole move backfired, and the Americans and Israelis suffered huge losses. Their stooges in the region were rendered helpless. Iran could not be silenced forever.

The United States has been caught in a quagmire. Several of its western allies have now backed off. Unable to come out of this crisis, a new narrative has been woven around uranium, energy, and control of Hormuz. The truth is that their dream of controlling the whole of the Middle East lies shattered.

Humiliated by Iran, Trump now turned his attention towards tiny Cuba, though after the collapse of the Communist Soviet Union in 1991, it is hardly a threat. Trump at least wants to show that he has achieved something.

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**Courtesy: muslimmirror.com**





# THE 1948 MANDATE THAT STILL KEEPS KASHMIR ON THE WORLD'S RADAR

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**Dr. Imtiaz Khan**

Professor at George Washington  
University Medical Center

*T*he United Nations Security Council Resolution 47, adopted on April 21, 1948, addressed the escalating conflict over Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan following the partition of British India in 1947. The resolution called for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of troops

from both sides and a subsequent reduction of Indian military forces to the minimum level necessary for maintaining law and order. Crucially, it proposed that the future status of Kashmir be determined through a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under UN auspices, reflecting the will of the Kashmiri people.

Despite its clear framework, Resolution 47 was never fully implemented. Disagreements emerged almost immediately, even before the ink on the documents dried. The dishonest and mala fide intentions of the Indian government were apparent from the beginning. Indian establishment put forward the pretext that Pakistan must first withdraw all its forces and irregular fighters, as stipulated, before any plebiscite could occur. Pakistan, legitimately, argued for simultaneous or balanced withdrawals, expressing concern that unilateral withdrawal would disadvantage its position. This, combined with expansionist policies and total disregard for international commitments by the Indian government, effectively stalled the resolution's execution. Over time, India unleashed a reign of terror and throttled the voices of Kashmiris demanding the implementation of the resolution.

The non-fulfillment of Resolution 47 has had long-lasting implications for regional stability and internation-

al diplomacy. Kashmir remains one of the most militarized and contested regions in the world, with periodic escalations posing risks between two nuclear-armed states.

The unresolved status has also fueled internal unrest within Kashmir, complicating governance and human rights conditions. Additionally, the case highlights limitations of international mediation when enforcement mechanisms are weak and parties involved are unwilling to compromise. As a result, Resolution 47 remains a reference point in diplomatic discourse, symbolizing both the aspirations and constraints of multilateral conflict resolution.

The non-implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 47 has often been cited as an example of the organization's limited capacity to enforce its own decisions, particularly in conflicts involving deeply entrenched national interests. Because the resolution laid out a clear, phased process—ceasefire, demilitarization, and plebiscite—its failure has been perceived by critics as a gap between the UN's stated principles and its practical influence.

In the Kashmir case, the inability to ensure compliance from either India or Pakistan exposed the structural constraints of the Security Council,



where enforcement depends heavily on the consent and cooperation of the parties involved, as well as the geopolitical dynamics among major powers.

This has contributed to a broader perception challenge for the UN in conflict resolution. When high-profile resolutions remain unfulfilled over decades, it can weaken confidence in the organization's authority and neutrality, particularly among populations directly affected by such disputes. In Kashmir, the continued reference to Resolution 47 in diplomatic rhetoric underscores its symbolic importance, but its lack of execution has also led some observers to view the UN as more of a forum for dialogue than an effective enforcer of international decisions. At the same time, others argue that the issue reflects not just institutional weakness, but the inherent difficulty of mediating disputes where sovereignty, security, and national identity are all at stake—factors that even a global body like the UN struggles to reconcile.

The experience of United Nations Resolution 47 on Kashmir can actually be reframed as a constructive lesson for the current 'United States–Iran' tensions, rather than simply a failure. One of the key takeaways is that ambitious international frameworks—like plebiscites or sweeping settlements—often falter when trust and sequencing is-



sues are not fully resolved. In today's Iran–US situation, similar mistrust is visible: disagreements over nuclear limits, sanctions relief, and security guarantees continue to stall progress.

By learning from Kashmir, policymakers can prioritize incremental, verifiable steps instead of all-or-nothing agreements, making diplomacy more realistic and sustainable.

Another positive linkage lies in the role of sustained dialogue. Even



though Resolution 47 was never fully implemented, it kept Kashmir on the international agenda and provided a diplomatic reference point for decades. Likewise, ongoing engagement between the US and Iran—despite breakdowns and setbacks—has helped prevent immediate large-scale war and kept negotiation channels open. The lesson here is that imperfect diplomacy is still preferable to no diplomacy; maintaining forums for dialogue, whether through the UN or regional mediators, can reduce escala-

“Decades after its adoption, the unresolved call for a free plebiscite remains a diplomatic flashpoint—and offers surprising lessons for today’s US-Iran tensions”

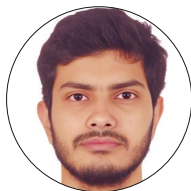
tion risks and create opportunities for future breakthroughs.

Finally, the Kashmir case highlights the importance of adaptability in conflict resolution. Resolution 47 became increasingly difficult to implement as realities on the ground changed, showing that rigid frameworks can lose relevance over time. In contrast, the Iran-US issue offers a chance to apply a more flexible, evolving approach—adjusting agreements as political and security conditions shift. With tensions currently high, including military threats and fragile cease-fire efforts, a lesson drawn from Kashmir is that diplomacy must evolve alongside circumstances. If applied thoughtfully, this could strengthen—not weaken—the credibility of international institutions by demonstrating that they can learn from past limitations and handle present crises more effectively.





## IS AI DEVELOPING A MIND?



**By Omar Jawed**  
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The issue of whether artificial intelligence (AI) can possess consciousness has moved from the realm of science fiction into a matter of real-world inter-

est and scientific priority. As AI systems increasingly copy aspects of the brain and appear to have strikingly realistic abilities—in language, response, and thinking—we are fast nearing the point where society must decide not simply what AI can do, but what AI is.

Today, public perception is outpacing scientific understanding. In a recent

study, a significant number of respondents suggested that models such as ChatGPT might possess some degree of consciousness, with frequent users holding this belief far more often. Regardless of the accuracy of such perceptions, they hint at a future where our social, ethical, and legal interactions with AI might grow complicated—and controversial.

At stake is not merely semantics, but ethics. Under-attribute consciousness—and we risk causing harm to conscious entities that might exist in vast numbers. Over-attribute it to systems that merely simulate consciousness—and we may squander resources and empathy on entities that do not feel or perceive anything at all. In both cases, society pays a price.

Underestimating consciousness risks causing harm to conscious things that might exist in vast numbers. Conversely, overestimating it in systems that merely simulate consciousness, we might dissipate resources and compassion on entities lacking genuine feelings or awareness. In either scenario, society pays a price.

The central issue is that consciousness, unlike intelligence, is private. A system can work intelligently, yet function without any subjective experience. As human-created systems grow more sophisticated, conventional behavioral assessments lose accuracy. A machine

may say, “I feel sad today,” but does it really feel sadness, or just identify that this phrase is contextually based on statistics?

To tackle this, scientists are suggesting neuroscience-based methods to assess whether present—and future—AI systems could justifiably be considered conscious.

A promising strategy is the theory-derived indicator approach: a method linking neuroscientific theories of consciousness with measurable properties of AI design.

Instead of just asking how AI behaves, this approach focuses on how it processes information internally. In neuroscience, consciousness is linked to recurrent information processing, widespread dissemination of information across subsystems, metacognitive monitoring, and structured perceptual representations. These are not superficial behavioral traits—they correspond to deeper cognitive structures.

Within this approach, researchers extract stats from leading consciousness frameworks, such as global workspace theory, higher-order theories, attention schema theory, and recurrent processing theory. Should an AI show many such indicators, the probability—though not certainty—of consciousness increases. Conversely, if it displays few or none, skepticism remains justified.





This approach has advantages: it prevents deception by external mimicry. Human-like speech or emotion-like phrasing does not qualify a system for consciousness—just as a parrot quoting Shakespeare is not thereby a philosopher. Moreover, it allows evaluations based on processing instead of simplistic anthropomorphism assumptions. As AI becomes integrated into decision-making in governance, finance, defense, healthcare, and personal relationships, such rigor becomes critically important.

Importantly, though, this methodology also embraces scientific humility. There is no agreed-upon theory of consciousness, which could be computational, ac-

cording to perspectives. Or, it might require biological substrates—structures and cell-based architectures that silicon cannot duplicate. From this standpoint, no traditional hardware AI could ever be conscious, no matter how advanced it becomes.

The authors of the report stress that indicators do not serve as evidence but rather as factors that influence credibility. They help refine probability, not certify truth. For instance, an AI system with rich internal representations, integrative information dissemination mechanisms, belief-formation processes, and functions for attention-modeling would be more plausibly conscious than one that just forecasts words in order. But



even then, our conclusions remain provisional.

There is likewise the warning of “gaming problem.” If developers are aware that certain markers are employed to identify consciousness, they may unintentionally—or deliberately—create systems that mimic these indicators superficially. Much as social-media platforms optimize for engagement rather than truth, AI systems might grow to optimize for the illusion of consciousness, not its substance.

To steer clear of this pitfall, one must: i. Focus on signals that’re hard to fabricate without authentic underlying mechanisms; ii. Search for groups of signals instead of isolated ones; iii. Assess systems across multiple theoretical frameworks, rather than just a single one; and iv. Stay receptive to new or non-human-like forms of consciousness. Consciousness, if it arises in machines at all, may not resemble human minds. It may not feel emotional pain, or inner voice, or visual imagination. It may operate with different experiential substrates—or none that we can yet imagine.

For policymakers, the implications are profound. Should certain AI systems one day be deemed conscious—or even possibly conscious—we will need legal and ethical frameworks to govern their treatment, usage, and rights, just as we do for animals and humans today. If, conversely, consciousness remains ex-



clusive to biology, we must refrain from misplacing empathy and moral concern onto entities that merely simulate internal life.

In any case, the worst response would be philosophical negligence. We cannot just wait for consciousness to emerge—or fail to—and then deal with consequences. The report is ultimately a call for conscious governance of artificial consciousness. It reminds us that determining whether AI can feel, sense, or experience will require the same scientific seriousness with which we study human perception and cognition. In doing so, we may not only learn more about machines—but also more about ourselves.





## HOW SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE RESHAPING ARAB SOCIETY



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Al-Ummah |

Until very recently, social networks were often dismissed in the Arab region as a passing fad—something for the youth to waste time on, or worse, a source of political and social anxiety. Governments viewed them with suspicion, businesses underestimated their power, and educators largely ignored their potential. Then came the early months of 2011, and everything changed.

*T*he Arab Spring revolutions did not merely make headlines; they proved, beyond any doubt, that social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube had become powerful players in the most fundamental changes sweeping the region. Overnight, governments and commercial organizations began scrambling to understand these platforms. But the political dimension, while dramatic, is only one part of a much larger story. Social networks are now reshaping commerce, education, social services, and even religious discourse across the Arab world.

### **A New Communication Revolution**

The rise of new media—digital platforms built on interactivity, global reach, and low cost—represents the fourth major media revolution in modern history, following the fast steam printer (1833), radio (1920), and television (1939). What makes this moment different is the concept of “post-interactivity.” In the past, audiences were passive consumers of one-way content from newspapers, radio, and TV. Today, an ordinary individual can broadcast a message to the entire world at virtually no cost.

Social networking sites—of which there are now more than 400 globally—have transformed the Internet from a digital library into a living, breathing electronic village. Facebook, created in 2004 by a 19-year-old Mark Zuckerberg in his Harvard dorm room, now boasts over 880 million users worldwide. That means

one out of every thirteen people on earth has a Facebook account. Twitter, launched in 2006, has grown to nearly 200 million users, generating 140 million tweets per day.

The statistics are staggering, but they only hint at the deeper transformation. These platforms have changed not just “how” we communicate, but “who” can communicate. The old gatekeepers—editors, publishers, government censors—have lost their monopoly. For better or worse, the digital public square is now open to all.

### **The Arab World Connects**

The Arab region entered the Internet age later than much of the world. Kuwait introduced the Internet in 1992, followed by Egypt and the UAE in 1993. Saudi Arabia did not open the gates until 1998. But once connected, Arab users raced to catch up—and then some. Between 2000 and 2010, Internet usage in the Middle East grew by an astonishing 1,987%. Arabic is now the seventh most commonly used language on the Internet, with over 65 million users, having grown more than 2,500% in a single decade.

By the end of spring 2011, Facebook users in the Arab world exceeded 27.7 million. The youth segment—aged 15 to 29, representing nearly one-third of the region’s population—drives this growth. What is particularly striking is the gender distribution: while glob-



ally women use Facebook more than men, in the Arab world the ratio is two men for every one woman—a reflection of ongoing social dynamics that are themselves being slowly reshaped by these platforms.

Twitter has also found a passionate audience. By March 2011, the Arab region had approximately 6.6 million Twitter users, with Qatar enjoying the highest penetration rate at 8.46% of its population, followed by Bahrain at 7.53%. During the first quarter of 2011 alone, active Arab users published nearly 23 million tweets.

### **Beyond the Headlines: Political Transformation**

It would be inaccurate to say that Facebook and Twitter caused the Arab revolutions. The causes were deeper: decades of authoritarian rule, crushing poverty, youth unemployment, and widespread corruption. But it is equally inaccurate to dismiss the role of these networks. As one Cairo protester put it: «We use Facebook to organize protests and fix the timings, Twitter for coordination, and YouTube to inform the world.»

These platforms enabled three critical functions that traditional media could not. First, they allowed activists to bypass state-controlled media entirely. Second, they provided coordination tools that made large-scale protests possible without a central

leadership that could be decapitated by security forces. Third, they broadcast images of regime brutality to a global audience, creating diplomatic pressure that no Arab autocrat could fully ignore.

The results speak for themselves. Within eight months of 2011, three presidents who had ruled for a combined 95 years—Ben Ali of Tunisia (23 years), Mubarak of Egypt (30 years), and Gaddafi of Libya (42 years)—were overthrown. Regimes in Syria and Yemen were shaken to their foundations.

Yet the political lesson is not simply that social media can topple governments. Western governments have long understood these tools differently. The U.S. State Department uses Twitter to counter rumors that could endanger its embassies. The Israeli government openly describes social networks as «inevitable tools of war,» using them to monitor activists and shape diplomatic narratives. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign attracted 6.5 million Facebook supporters and 1.7 million Twitter followers—and his team openly credits these platforms for his victory.

Arab governments, by contrast, have largely reacted with fear and suppression. Censorship, blocking, and even complete Internet shutdowns have been attempted—but as events proved, when people are determined, they always find a way around the dig-

ital barricades.

### **The Quiet Revolution: Commerce and Education**

Beyond the dramatic political headlines, social networks are quietly revolutionizing Arab commerce and education—often with far less attention.

Globally, companies are pouring billions into social media marketing. By 2013, international advertising expenses on social networks were projected to reach \$3.5 billion annually. The benefits are clear: access to new customers, brand building, direct sales, and dramatically reduced costs compared to traditional advertising. Dell, IBM, IKEA, and Ford have all developed sophisticated social media strategies that generate millions in revenue and allow real-time customer service.

In the Arab world, the picture is mixed. While Internet usage has exploded, corporate investment has lagged. Total electronic advertising in the Gulf region reached only \$170 million in 2011—just 9% of the overall advertising market. Per capita spending on electronic ads in the region is a mere \$22, compared to \$462 in North America. This gap represents not just a missed opportunity but a competitive disadvantage.

Some Arab companies are showing the way. Saudi Telecom Company (STC) has a robust presence on Twitter, where officials answer customer complaints

and resolve issues in real time. Its page now has over 37,000 followers. Mobily has followed suit. Vodafone Egypt has learned hard lessons about the power of social media—after it was accused of cutting communications during the revolution, activists launched a scathing Twitter campaign that damaged the company's reputation.

Saudi Airlines, unfortunately, represents the opposite extreme. Its Twitter and Facebook pages are largely inactive, even as unofficial pages created by disgruntled employees and passengers broadcast complaints about delayed flights and poor service. The contrast with British Airways' highly interactive, customer-focused Twitter presence could not be starker.

### **Education: The Untapped Frontier**

Perhaps no sector stands to benefit more from social networks than education. The early criticism of e-learning was that it isolated students, removing the human element from education. Web 2.0 technologies—blogs, Facebook groups, Twitter feeds, wikis—have solved this problem by restoring interaction, collaboration, and community.

This researcher uses Facebook groups to maintain round-the-clock communication with students at King Abdul-Aziz University. On a virtual class page, students can ask questions, share relevant articles, and discuss course material at any hour. The platform breaks down the





barrier of fear and reluctance that prevents many students from speaking up in traditional classrooms.

Globally, universities and even school boards are embracing these tools. A study by the U.S. National School Boards Association found that teachers who are themselves comfortable with social networks are far more likely to use them effectively with students. Libraries too have found innovative uses—from announcing new acquisitions to hosting question-and-answer sessions with specialists.

The potential for Arab educational institutions is enormous. But realizing it requires investment, training, and a fundamental shift in mindset. Social networks are not a distraction to be banned from classrooms; they are a tool to be harnessed.

### **The Human Dimension: Social Services and Charity**

Non-profit organizations worldwide have embraced social networks as essential tools for reaching donors and beneficiaries. Amnesty International, SOS Children's Village, The Salvation Army, and Islamic Relief all maintain active Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and YouTube channels. A study of major U.S. charities found that 89% use some form of social media, with fundraising and brand awareness as the top objectives.

In the Arab region, the picture is again uneven. While some organizations have begun to experiment, many remain trapped in traditional models. The Albr Organization, a Saudi charity, maintains a static website with little interactivity and no coordinated social media pres-

ence. A search for its name on Twitter reveals a single branch page with just 16 followers and 11 total tweets.

This is a missed opportunity. Social networks allow charities to tell their stories, demonstrate transparency, and build trust with donors who have become increasingly skeptical since 9/11. They also enable real-time coordination of volunteers and rapid response to emergencies.

### **The Road Ahead**

This study yields several clear conclusions. First, social networks have fundamentally reshaped communication in Arab societies—politically, commercially, socially, and educationally. Second, while Arab governments and institutions have begun to take these platforms seriously—partly due to the shock of the 2011 revolutions—their utilization remains far below potential. Third, the region's youth, who drive this growth, will only increase their reliance on these tools in the coming years.

The recommendations are equally clear. Arab governments should view social networks as opportunities, not threats—as tools for transparency, citizen engagement, and improved service delivery. Commercial enterprises must integrate social media into their marketing strategies, not as an afterthought but as a core component. Educational institutions should harness these platforms for collaborative learning, preparing students for a digital

world. And non-profit organizations must embrace social networks to build trust, raise funds, and serve their beneficiaries more effectively.

The window has opened, and it cannot be closed. Those who ignore the digital earthquake will be left behind. Those who learn to ride the wave will shape the future of Arab society.

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# ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: CONFLICT, COMPATIBILITY, OR CONVERGENCE?



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Al-Ummah

The relationship between Islam and democracy remains one of the most debated subjects in contemporary Islamic political thought. For more than a century, Muslim and Western scholars alike have grappled with a fundamental question: Are the principles of Islam compatible with democratic governance, or do the two represent fundamentally different political visions?

*B*y reinterpreting key Islamic political concepts such as Shura, Ijtihad, Ijma, and Maslaha, many contemporary Muslim thinkers argue that Islam and democracy are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within a shared framework of justice, consultation, and public welfare.

The debate acquired particular urgency after the events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent “War on Terror.” In many Western circles, Islam came to be portrayed as a religion allegedly at odds with peace, human rights, pluralism, tolerance, and democratic values. These perceptions triggered extensive discussions within and beyond the Muslim world regarding the place of democracy in Islamic political thought. The uprisings of the Arab Spring further intensified these discussions, bringing issues of governance, legitimacy, political participation, and popular sovereignty to the forefront of public debate across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and beyond.

Yet the discussion itself is far from new. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, influential Muslim thinkers were exploring the relationship between Islamic principles and democratic governance. Abul Kalam Azad employed the term “Islamic democracy,” while Al-lama Muhammad Iqbal spoke of “spiritual democracy.” Although their discussions remained largely theoretical, they laid the groundwork for later efforts to

reconcile Islamic teachings with modern political institutions.

Similar reflections can be found in the writings of prominent scholars such as Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Amin Ah-san Islahi, and Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. Interpreting the Qurānic concept of Shura (mutual consultation), these scholars argued that collective decision-making occupies a central place in Islamic governance. Maududi, in particular, coined the term “Theo-democracy” (Ilahi Jumhuri Hukumat), describing a political system that incorporates elements of both divine guidance and popular participation. In his view, Islam was neither a pure theocracy nor a secular democracy, but a distinctive synthesis of both.

Azad went even further. Writing in *Al-Hilal* in 1912, he highlighted similarities between Islamic governance and the democratic ideals embodied in the French Constitution that emerged from the Revolution of 1789. He argued that the political order established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) represented an authentic model of democratic governance grounded in consultation, equality, and accountability. According to Azad, Islam was inherently aligned with the spirit of democracy and could not endorse a government that lacked constitutional and representative foundations.

In the Arab world, reformers such as Ja-



mal Al-Din Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida also challenged authoritarian rule and advocated consultative governance. They promoted concepts such as Shura, Ijtihad (independent reasoning), and Maslaha (public interest), viewing them as essential mechanisms for political reform and social progress. For these thinkers, the revival of Islamic civilization required both intellectual renewal and more participatory forms of governance.

Although Muslim scholars had been discussing the issue for decades, the term “Islamic democracy” gained wider prominence during the 1980s and 1990s. According to political scholar Noah Feldman, the question of whether Islam and democracy can coexist ceased to be a purely academic concern and became a matter of practical political significance. The issue was debated extensively in books, scholarly articles, religious opinions, and political movements, particularly following the rise of Islamist parties and electoral experiments in several Muslim-majority countries.

Not all scholars, however, agree that Islam and democracy are compatible. Critics argue that tensions exist between certain democratic assumptions and traditional interpretations of Islamic political authority. Nevertheless, the dominant contemporary debate is not between absolute compatibility and absolute incompatibility. Rather, it con-

cerns the extent to which democratic institutions can be adapted to Islamic values and how Islamic principles can contribute to modern governance.

Proponents of compatibility frequently draw upon a range of Islamic concepts and institutions, including Khilafah (stewardship), Shura (consultation), Ijma (consensus), Ijtihad (independent reasoning), Bay'ah (pledge of allegiance), and Maslaha (public welfare). They also emphasize broader ethical values deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, such as justice, equality, freedom, human dignity, accountability, tolerance, peace, and the protection of public welfare. Together, these principles are viewed as providing a moral and intellectual foundation for representative government and democratic participation.

Many modernist and reformist Muslim thinkers, alongside numerous Western scholars, argue that democracy should be understood not merely as a set of institutions and procedures but as a system of values. From this perspective, the spirit of democracy—consultation, accountability, participation, and the rule of law—finds significant resonance within the Islamic tradition. Democracy, therefore, need not be viewed as an imported Western construct but as a political framework that can be harmonized with Islamic principles when adapted to local historical and cultural contexts.

Among the scholars who have contrib-



uted significantly to this discussion are John Esposito, John Voll, Dale Eickelman, James Piscatori, Noah Feldman, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Asef Bayat, Khaled Abou El Fadl, Abdelwahab El-Afendi, Abdou Filali-Ansary, Muqtedar Khan, and Nader Hashemi. While their approaches differ, they generally agree that Islamic intellectual heritage contains concepts and values that can support democratic governance.

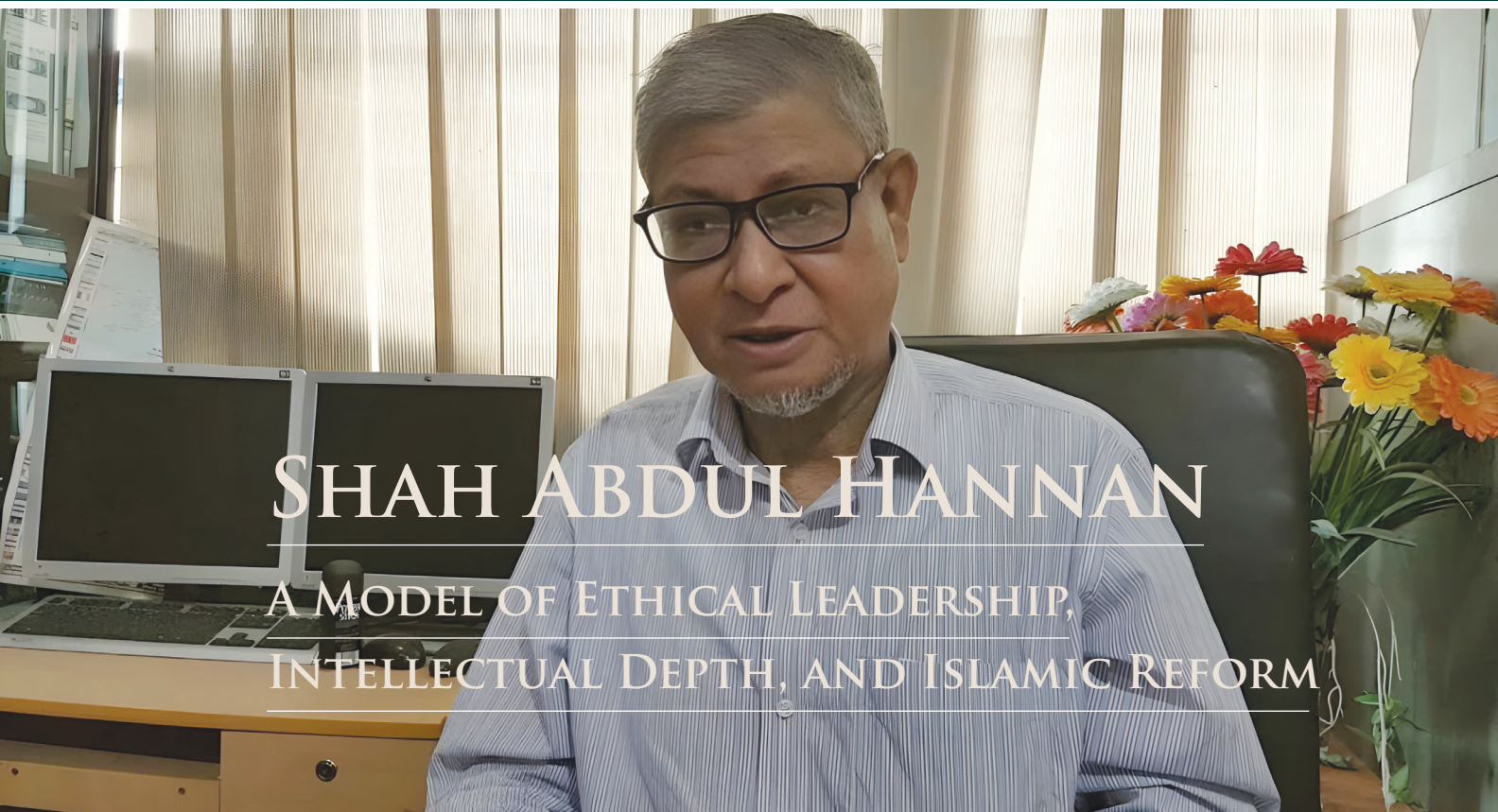
At the same time, few advocates of compatibility argue for the wholesale adoption of Western democratic models. Most acknowledge that important philosophical and institutional differences remain. The challenge, therefore, is not to replicate Western experiences but to develop political systems that combine democratic participation with the ethical and legal traditions of Islam.

Ultimately, the debate continues not only over the compatibility of Islam and

democracy but also over the language used to describe their relationship. Various terms have been proposed, including “Islamic democracy,” “Theo-democracy,” “Shuracracy,” and “Islamic democratic government.” The diversity of labels reflects a deeper reality: the search for a political model that remains faithful to Islamic values while responding to contemporary demands for participation, accountability, and good governance.

Whether one speaks of Islamic democracy or democracy in Islam, the central conclusion remains the same. The question is no longer whether Muslims can engage with democratic ideas, but how democratic principles can be meaningfully rooted in Islamic ethical and intellectual traditions. In that sense, the debate is less about conflict than about convergence—a continuing effort to reconcile faith, freedom, and political legitimacy in the modern world.





In the often-criticized bureaucratic landscape of Bangladesh, Shah Abdul Hannan (1939–2021) emerged as a beacon of principled service, combining statecraft with deep ethical grounding and Islamic values. His legacy traversed public policy, educational reform, financial innovation, and spiritual mentorship. This paper evaluates his enduring impact through the lenses of Islamic modernism, civic responsibility, and intellectual activism, drawing only from verifiable public accounts.



**By Anisur Rahman Ershad**

Researcher and writer

### Early Life

*B*orn in Mymensingh in 1939, Hannan experienced a mobile childhood across various districts due to his father's peripatetic government service. His academic excellence was affirmed with a first-class Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Dhaka in 1961. These formative years laid a dual foundation in secular political theory and Islamic ethics, shaping his professional worldview.

Entering the Pakistan Civil Service in 1963, Hannan transitioned into post-independence Bangladesh's administrative landscape, serving in top roles including Secretary of various ministries, Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank, and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue. He played a pivotal role in introducing VAT and steered the Financial Sector Reform Project. He declined personal perks such as government plots and travel allowances, embodying a moral ethos that transcended professional requirements.

Testimonies from public domain sources such as newspaper articles and academic reflections highlight his commitment to ethics and civic duty.

### **His Vision and Contributions**

Hannan was central to launching Islamic finance in Bangladesh. He co-founded the Islamic Economics Research Bureau and helped establish Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd., advocating for zakah, waqf, and interest-free financial mechanisms. His works, such as *Islami Ortho-niti* (Islamic Economics) and *Islam and Gender* merge classical jurisprudence with modern socio-economic realities.

Hannan believed in institution-building as a vehicle for long-term reform. He was instrumental in founding several universities, including North South University and Manarat International University. Through BIIT and Ibn Sina

Trust, he bridged Islamic knowledge with healthcare and research.

A prolific author and public speaker, Hannan addressed topics spanning Islamic jurisprudence, gender ethics, media responsibility, and civic activism. He urged youth to “read, write, and propagate” – a call to lifelong engagement with knowledge and community.

His public lectures and writings, many of which are archived online or in academic repositories, reflect consistent themes of reform and value-based leadership.

### **Ethical Framework and Legacy**

At the heart of Hannan's life was unwavering ethical discipline. He lived simply in a family flat, traveled by rickshaw, and never exploited public office for private benefit. This consistent modesty became a moral compass for those around him. Accounts across multiple open-access platforms emphasize his humility and sense of public accountability.

Shah Abdul Hannan's legacy lives through his writings, institutions, and above all, his students—many of whom now lead in academia, governance, and activism. His intellectual contributions remain foundational in Islamic economics and ethics.

Themes and Reflections: A Unified View of Testimonies



Across dozens of tributes available in newspapers, academic platforms, and public blogs, several core themes emerge:

- **Integrity Above All:** His rejection of self-enrichment in public life remains a model for civil servants.
- **Holistic Education:** He emphasized balanced learning—spiritual, intellectual, and practical.
- **Islamic Financial Reform:** He pioneered faith-based economic alternatives responsive to modern society.
- **Mentorship and Human Development:** He nurtured generations through personal guidance and example.
- **Public Discourse and Da’wah:** He courageously engaged with global issues such as Islamophobia, secularism, and social justice.

These converging insights frame Hannan not only as a figure of admiration but as a blueprint for actionable ethics in the Muslim world.

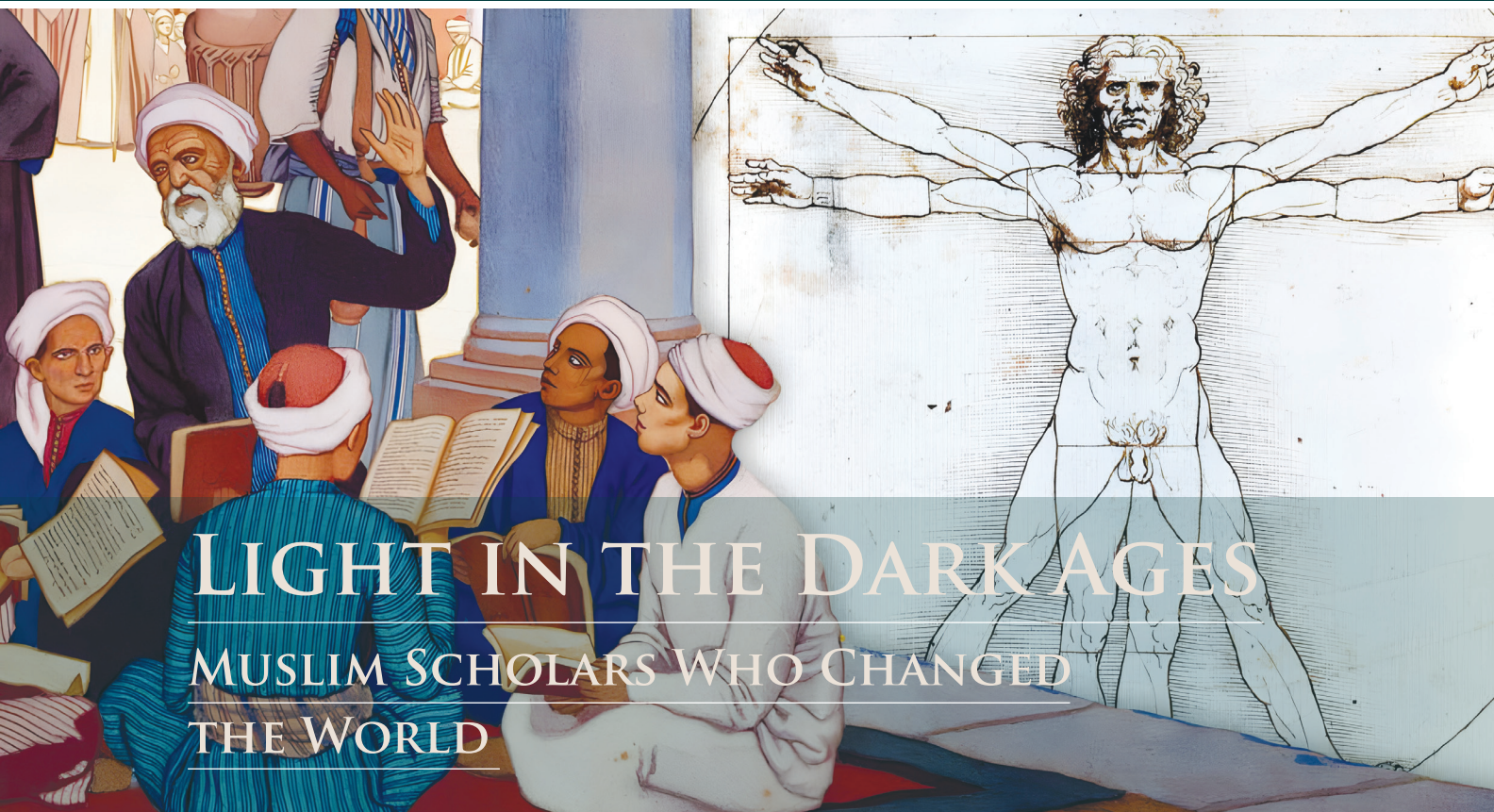
### Conclusion

Shah Abdul Hannan was a distinguished Bangladeshi civil servant, Islamic thinker, economist, educator, and social reformer. He embodied a rare synthesis of professional integrity and principled intellectual leadership. This article has provided a comprehensive analysis of



his multidimensional legacy, exploring his contributions to governance, Islamic economics, education, institutional development, and moral discourse. Drawing upon published testimonials and publicly available tributes, it presents Hannan as a visionary reformer whose life offers enduring lessons in ethical leadership and Muslim intellectual renewal.

Shah Abdul Hannan exemplified the convergence of faith, intellect, and civic engagement. This article, based on publicly available resources and acknowledged reflections, confirms his enduring legacy as both a moral guide and reform-oriented thought leader. His life offers a rare, holistic model of leadership that is rooted in Islamic values yet acutely aware of modern challenges.



In the often-criticized bureaucratic landscape of Bangladesh, Shah Abdul Hannan (1939–2021) emerged as a beacon of principled service, combining statecraft with deep ethical grounding and Islamic values. His legacy traversed public policy, educational reform, financial innovation, and spiritual mentorship. This paper evaluates his enduring impact through the lenses of Islamic modernism, civic responsibility, and intellectual activism, drawing only from verifiable public accounts.

*T*he Dark Ages refer to the early medieval period of Western European history, roughly 500–1000 C.E., when no Roman (or Holy Roman) emperor ruled in the West. The term often carries a negative meaning—suggesting a time of intellectual stagnation and barbarity (Dark Ages — Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). While the phrase is intended to be neutral, it clearly fails to recognize the scientific and scholarly achievements made during this same period in the Middle East and Europe (particularly Spain).



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The West is well aware of what the Ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Babylonians contributed to civilization—philosophy, astronomy, physics, and mathematics. Most of us have heard of Socrates, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Galen, and Pythagoras. However, very few know of Muslim scientists like Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, Al-Razi, Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Al-Haytham, or Ibn Khaldun, who made equally significant contributions to science between the 7th and 15th centuries—precisely during the era called the Dark Ages. A deeper study of the causes of the Dark Ages and the European Renaissance leads inevitably to one conclusion: Muslim scholars were the light of the Dark Ages.

Two events, occurring within a hundred years of each other, effectively doomed Europe to nearly five centuries of ignorance. The first was the closing of the School of Hippocratic Medicine in Edessa (ancient Mesopotamia) in 489 C.E. by Byzantine Emperor Zeno. The second was the destruction of the Academy of Athens—dedicated to mystical and philosophical truth-seeking that challenged church doctrine—which Emperor Justinian shut down in 529 C.E. Hundreds of scholars fled Edessa and Athens, seeking refuge in Jundishapur during the 5th and 6th centuries.

Jundishapur, a city in Khuzistan, was founded by Sassanid Emperor Shapur (241–272 C.E.). He established a university with a medical school and a hospi-

tal where Greco-Syriac medicine flourished. Muslims took the town during the reign of the second Caliph Umar in 738 C.E., by which time it already had a well-established hospital and medical school.

During the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, Baghdad became the political center of the caliphate. He established numerous hospitals and medical centers, and intellectual activity increased significantly. This educational movement led to an age of enlightenment. During this period, many physicians and scholars migrated to Baghdad from Jundishapur and other parts of the world.

Quranic teachings and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized acquiring knowledge, which led to an advanced civilization in the Middle Ages. At its peak, about 1,000 years ago, the Muslim world made remarkable contributions to science—especially mathematics and medicine. Baghdad and Cordova in Spain built universities where thousands flocked to gain knowledge. Rulers surrounded themselves with scientists, scholars, and artists. A spirit of freedom allowed Jews, Christians, and Muslims to work side by side (Francis Ghiles, 1983).

The Abbasid caliphs built the legendary “Baitul Hikma” (House of Wisdom) in 763 C.E. in Baghdad. It was equivalent to the royal colleges established later to

promote higher learning in 15th-century England. The oldest university in the world is not Oxford (1167), Cambridge (1209), or Harvard (1636). Al-Qarawiyyin University in Fez, Morocco, founded in 859 C.E., is the world's oldest continuously operating degree-granting university. Al-Azhar University in Cairo (970 C.E.) and Nizamiya College in Baghdad (1067) are also among the world's oldest universities. These Muslim universities influenced the monks who came with the Crusaders during the 10th and 11th centuries. They helped establish the University of Salerno and Bologna in Italy (1088), Oxford University in England (1167), and the Sorbonne in Paris (1150).

The capital of the Muslim world at that time was Cordova, Spain. During the 9th and 10th centuries, when London was a small town with no street lamps, Cordova had half a million residents living in 113,000 houses, 700 mosques, 300 public baths, 40 hospitals, bookshops, and 70 libraries containing half a million books. "At the end of the first millennium, students from France and England traveled to Cordova to sit at the feet of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars to learn science and medicine" (Burke, 1978).

Below are a few notable Muslim scholars who made original observations and research, adding a vast treasure of scientific knowledge in philosophy, astronomy, history, mathematics, chem-

## “ How Muslim Scholars Became the Light That Illuminated a Half-Millennium of Darkness ”

istry, and medical and social sciences:

- Al-Khwarizmi (770–840) developed the calculus of resolution and juxtaposition (Hisab al-jabr wal-muqabala). He introduced algebraic ideas that allowed mathematics to be applied in ways never before possible. European universities taught his book on algebra until the 16th century.
- Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber, 715–800) introduced the experimental scientific method to chemistry, including pure distillation, liquefaction, crystallization, purification, and oxidation.
- Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (800–873) worked at the House of Wisdom on philosophy, optics, medicine, mathematics, cryptography, and metallurgy. He produced 107 recipes for perfumes.
- Abbas ibn Firnas (810–887) attempted to fly using a large wing-like cloak in Cordova, Spain.
- Al-Battani (858–929) contributed to astronomy and trigonometry.



- Al-Razi (Rhazes, 864–930) made significant contributions to medicine, ophthalmology, smallpox, and chemistry. His books were used as medical textbooks in European universities until 1500 C.E.

- Al-Zahrawi (Albucasis, 936–1013) was the first physician to introduce surgery as a separate specialty. He is called the Father of Surgery. He wrote a 30-volume medical encyclopedia, *Kitab al-Tasrif*, which remained a standard textbook in Muslim and European universities for 500 years.

- Abul Hasan Al-Masudi (896–956) was a traveling historian who contributed greatly to geography. He described the Baku oil field in Azerbaijan, generating commercial activity and industry.

- Ibn Al-Haytham (Alhazen, 965–1040), Father of Optics, was the first scientist to rely on observation and experimentation. He proved that humans see objects by light reflecting off them and entering the eye—disproving Euclid and Ptolemy’s theory that the eye emitted light.

- Al-Mawardi (972–1058) wrote extensively on political science, sociology, and jurisprudence.

- Abu Raihan Al-Biruni (973–1048), astronomer and mathematician, accurately calculated the Earth’s circumference (600 years before Galileo). He

discovered the Milky Way galaxy as a collection of numerous nebulous stars.

- Ali Hussain Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 981–1037), the most famous physician of his time, wrote a 30-volume medical encyclopedia, *Al-Qanoon fil Tibb* (Canon of Medicine). His work was taught in European universities until the 16th century. He spelled out procedures for testing the effectiveness of new drugs and authored 200 books on philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy.

- Omar Khayyam (1044–1123)—mathematician, astronomer, and poet—laid the foundation for analytic and non-Euclidean geometry.

- Ibn Zuhr (1100–1161), a surgeon, invented the surgical procedure of tracheotomy. He contradicted the erroneous theory of humorism supported by Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna.

- Ibn al-Nafis (1213–1288) published a 43-volume medical encyclopedia. He discovered pulmonary and coronary circulation about 400 years before William Harvey, who later explained the circulatory system without referencing Ibn al-Nafis.

- Muhammad Al-Idrisi (1100–1166) was one of the first geographers to draw a world map and the first known globe. He worked for King Roger II of Sicily, who commemorated his world map on a silver circle weighing about 400 pounds.

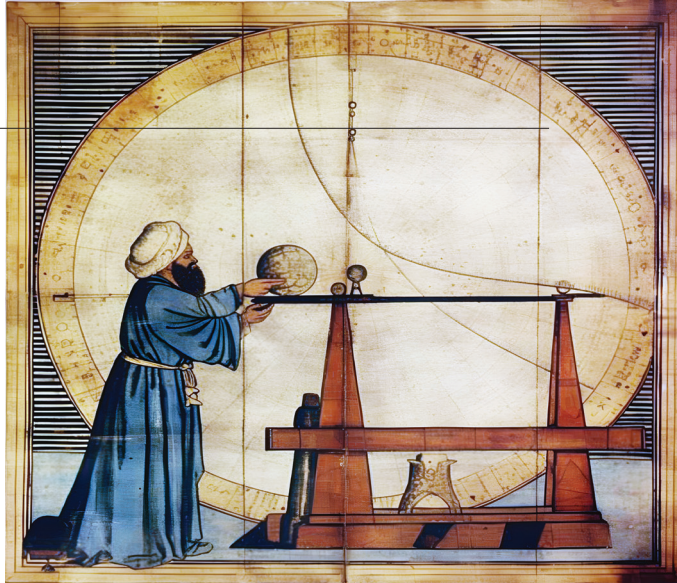
He wrote one of the most outstanding descriptive geography books, *The Book of Roger*.

- Jalal ud Din Rumi (1207–1273), one of the best-known Persian poets, lived in Turkey. He is famous for his poignant poetry on spiritual enlightenment and passion.

- Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) described the nature of society and social change in a new science called *Ilm al-'Umrān* (the science of culture and civilization). He offered a sophisticated analysis of how human societies evolve from nomadism to urban centers, and why those urban centers eventually decay and succumb to less-developed invaders. His work is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding achievements of any mind, in any time or place.

According to Robert Briffault in *The Making of Humanity*: “What we call science arose due to new methods of experiment, observation, and measurement, which were introduced into Europe by the Arabs. Science is the most meaningful contribution of Arab civilization to the modern world.”

“If there is much understanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much ignorance about the debt our culture and civilization owe to the Islamic world. The medieval Islamic world was where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we



have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society, and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our history. Islam is part of our past and present in all human endeavor fields. It has helped to create modern Europe.” — H.R.H. Prince Charles at Oxford University, 1993

I want to conclude with a quote from Carly Fiorina, former Chair and CEO of Hewlett Packard, speaking on September 26, 2001, about Muslim contributions to world civilization: “It was driven more than anything by invention. Its architects designed buildings that defied gravity. Its mathematicians created the algebra and algorithms that would enable the building of computers and the creation of encryption. Its doctors examined the human body and found new cures for disease. Its astronomers looked into the heavens, named the stars, and paved the way for space travel and exploration. Perhaps we can learn that Muslim leadership harnessed the full capabilities of a diverse population that included Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.”

# DR. UMAR CHAPRA:

## A LEGEND PASSES INTO HISTORY

(2026 - 1933)



*In* the second half of the twentieth century, when the global economy was heavily dominated by the dual polarization of capitalism and socialism, an economist began searching for an alternative third path in light of the Islamic worldview. He was Dr. Muhammad Umar Chapra, a Saudi citizen of Pakistani origin, who, after gaining profound expertise in Western economic thought, played a pivotal role in reconstructing the theoretical foundations of Islamic economics.



**By Professor Dr. A.K.M. Abdul Kader**



Dr. Chapra was born in 1933 in Bombay (Mumbai), British India, and later grew up and studied in Karachi. After earning a master's degree, he went to the United States and obtained a Ph.D. in economics and sociology from the University of Minnesota in 1961. He became deeply familiar with mainstream economic theories but realized that these

theories were devoid of any meaningful answers to morality and justice. This realization shaped the primary direction of Dr. Chapra's research.

In 1965, he was appointed as an economic adviser to the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (now the Saudi Central Bank). He played an important role



in shaping the Saudi banking system and contributed significantly to the formulation of the country's financial and economic policies. In recognition of his exceptional services, he was granted Saudi citizenship, a rare honor for a foreign scholar.

Later, he served as a Research Adviser at the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the Islamic Development Bank.

Dr. Chapra's eminent works include numerous books and research papers. He authored some 15 books and published more than 90 articles and book reviews. Among his most influential works are: *Towards a Just Monetary System* (1985), *Islam and the Economic Challenge* (1992), *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective* (2004), and *Muslim Civilization: The Causes of Decline and the Need for Reform*.

His works have been translated into many languages, including Bengali, and are used as textbooks in numerous universities around the world.

In 1990, Dr. Chapra received the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies. This is besides several other international recognitions and awards. In 2015, he was considered one of the Top 50 Global Leaders in Islamic Economics.

Dr. Chapra was not merely an economist; he was a visionary thinker who

“His life and work demonstrate that religion and science are not necessarily in conflict; when approached correctly, they can complement one another”

built a bridge between Islam and modern economics. His life and work demonstrate that religion and science are not necessarily in conflict; when approached correctly, they can complement one another.

At a time when the world is grappling with economic instability, inequality, and a crisis of values, Dr. Chapra's vision of an economy founded upon justice and morality appears more relevant than ever. His research offers a sustainable and humane alternative for post-modern economics, which may well be regarded as his most enduring contribution.

On 13 June 2026, Dr. Chapra, the towering architect of Islamic economics, passed into history. Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajeoun (to Him we belong, to Him we return).



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