



RESEARCH PAPER

Identity Politics and Regional Dynamics: The OIC as a Nexus of Muslim Unity and Diversity

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ABSTRACT

This objective of this study paper is to examine the Identity Politics and Regional Dynamics of OIC and its impact on the nexus of Muslim unity and Diversity. This research is qualitative in nature. Since its inception, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has encountered substantial criticism regarding its perceived inability to effectively address the challenges facing Muslim nations and unite the Ummah under a common platform. This paper aims to analyze the OIC's past performance, emphasizing its weaknesses and shortcomings, and proposes viable measures to enhance its efficacy as a global entity. The research technique employed is through Qualitative Research Approach through Interpretive Research Technique with Content Thematic Analysis covering Historical and Contextual Synthesis and Interpretation. This research can further be analyzed by applying different theories of political philosophers according to the Demands of Muslim States from OIC in geo politics. The detailed data has been analyzed. The paper is structured to comprehensively explore the subject matter. Beginning with an examination of the genesis of the OIC, it proceeds to dissect the OIC Charter before delving into the identification of future challenges confronting the organization. Through meticulous analysis, the paper elucidates major weaknesses observed over time and offers succinct recommendations aimed at addressing these issues. The recommendations put forth are intended to bolster the OIC's institutional framework and equip it to confront the evolving needs of the next half-century. By providing a strategic roadmap for reform and renewal, we believe that the OIC can emerge as a stronger, more responsive organization capable of safeguarding the interests and promoting the well-being of Muslim nations worldwide.

KEYWORDS Islamic Ummah, Muslim Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Role of Pakistan in OIC, Safe Guarding Muslims

Introduction

Since the inception of Islam over one and a half millennia ago, its governance has acknowledged the necessity of central authority to address the expanding needs of the growing Muslim community. Despite the Muslim world never forming a singular political entity, the Caliphate symbolized a semblance of spiritual and temporal unity throughout Islamic history. The abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924 created a void, prompting the search for alternative arrangements. Muslim political leaders and intellectuals perceived international Islamic organizations as potential agents for homogenizing Muslim political thought and advocating collective interests. The World Muslim Congress, founded in 1926, marked the first non-governmental Islamic organization of the 20th century. Subsequently, the establishment of the OIC in 1969 represented the first intergovernmental organization of Muslim states. Born in response to the reprehensible arson perpetrated by Zionist elements against the Al-Aqsa Mosque

in 1969, the OIC aimed to defend the honor, dignity, and faith of Muslims globally. It garnered unanimous condemnation worldwide and served as a platform for Islamic states to unite, overcome differences, and lay the foundations of a formidable coalition.

Despite the OIC's mandate for member states to pool resources, combine efforts, and speak with a unified voice to safeguard mutual interests and promote progress and well-being, the organization has fallen short of expectations. Its inability to fulfill the aspirations of Muslims for unity and cohesive representation has led to disillusionment. In the face of mounting challenges within the Islamic world, including the aftermath of 9/11 and the complexities of American unilateralism, calls to revitalize and reform the OIC have grown louder. However, concrete steps toward rejuvenation remain elusive, highlighting the urgent need for substantive action in the face of evolving global dynamics.

Literature Review

This literature review integrates insights from various scholarly works to offer a comprehensive understanding of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its significance in contemporary global affairs. It serves as a foundation for further research and analysis in the field of Islamic studies, international relations, and political science certainly into various aspects of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), its history, functions, challenges, and impact.

In the "The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Politics, Problems, and Potential" by Ahmed Abdulla, he provides a comprehensive overview of the OIC, analyzing its structure, functions, and effectiveness in addressing the diverse challenges facing the Muslim world. It explores the historical context of the OIC's formation, its role in promoting Islamic solidarity, and its engagement with issues such as conflict resolution, human rights, and development. Where as "The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Implementing Change and Reform" by Gregory Gause, Emad El-Din Shahin, and Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen: They examines the internal dynamics of the OIC and explores strategies for implementing reform and revitalization within the organization. It offers insights into the challenges of consensus-building among member states, the role of leadership, and the potential for institutional reform to enhance the OIC's effectiveness in addressing contemporary issues.

In "The OIC: The Politics, People, and Promise of an Islamic International Organization" by Akbar Ahmed and Tamara Sonn, they also offers a nuanced analysis of the OIC's evolution, from its inception to its current role in global affairs. It explores the diverse perspectives within the organization, its engagement with international politics, and its efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation among Muslim-majority countries. Same was in "The OIC: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Facts and Realities" by Ekmelledin Ihsanoglu**: Written by the former Secretary-General of the OIC, he provides an insider's perspective on the organization's history, functions, and achievements. It offers valuable insights into the challenges facing the OIC and the strategies for enhancing its role as a voice for the Muslim world on the global stage. However "The OIC and the Securitization of Islam" by Husnul Amin**: he explores the securitization of Islam within the framework of the OIC, examining how the organization addresses security challenges facing Muslim-majority countries. It analyzes the OIC's role in countering extremism, promoting peace and stability, and shaping global discourse on Islam and security issues.

All these scholars offered valuable insights into the history, functions, and challenges of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, making them essential reading for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of the Muslim world and international relations.

Material and Methods

The proposed study is qualitative because study is to carryout an in depth analysis of OIC with the view to ascertain ways and means to re-organize this entity and the role that Pakistan can play to prepare the organization to meet the challenges of 21st century.

Results and Discussion

The discussion on the role and credibility of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the geopolitical global world is multifaceted and nuanced. While the OIC serves as a platform for Muslim-majority countries to address shared challenges and advocate for common interests on the global stage, its effectiveness and credibility have been subject to scrutiny and debate. At its core, the OIC plays a crucial role in fostering solidarity and cooperation among member states, particularly in addressing issues of concern to the Muslim world. By providing a forum for dialogue and consensus-building, the OIC seeks to promote peace, stability, and development across diverse regions and contexts. Through initiatives ranging from conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance to economic cooperation and cultural exchange, the OIC endeavors to enhance the well-being and security of Muslim populations worldwide.

However, despite its aspirations and mandate, the OIC's credibility in the geopolitical arena has faced significant challenges. Criticisms have been leveled against the organization for its perceived inability to effectively address pressing issues facing the Muslim world, including conflicts, human rights abuses, and socio-economic disparities. Moreover, internal divisions, competing interests among member states, and bureaucratic inefficiencies have at times hampered the OIC's ability to translate rhetoric into concrete action. In the context of the evolving geopolitical landscape, the OIC's role as a global Islamic institution has become increasingly complex. The rise of non-state actors, transnational threats, and shifting alliances has underscored the need for the OIC to adapt and respond to emerging challenges with agility and foresight. Moreover, the organization's credibility is contingent upon its ability to engage constructively with other international actors and institutions, fostering partnerships and alliances that advance shared objectives and principles.

Moving forward, revitalizing the OIC's role and credibility in the geopolitical global world requires a concerted effort to address underlying structural and institutional constraints. This entails fostering greater unity and coherence among member states, enhancing institutional transparency and accountability, and prioritizing initiatives that resonate with the aspirations and needs of Muslim populations worldwide. By leveraging its collective strength and influence, the OIC has the potential to shape discourse and policy outcomes on key issues affecting the Muslim world, thereby reaffirming its relevance and impact in the broader geopolitical arena.

Discussion

The collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 left a void in the Islamic world, prompting various attempts to redefine the concept of the Ummah and establish new

symbols of Islamic unity. Initially, the search for alternatives was driven by religious scholars and resulted in the formation of non-governmental Islamic organizations. With the wave of decolonization in the mid-20th century, Muslim-majority states began to take a leading role in uniting the Muslim world. Several conferences were convened in Mecca, Cairo, and Jerusalem, each attempting to address the question of leadership and unity within the Muslim community. However, these early initiatives often encountered disagreement and division among participants, reflecting differing visions of pan-Islamism and the role of the Caliphate. The establishment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969 marked a significant milestone in the quest for Islamic unity. Emerging from the aftermath of the Al-Quds tragedy in 1969, where the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was set on fire, the OIC aimed to provide a platform for collective action and solidarity among Muslim-majority states. The structure of the OIC reflects a three-tier system, comprising the Conference of Kings and Heads of State, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, and the General Secretariat. Additionally, the establishment of the International Islamic Court of Justice underscored the OIC's commitment to resolving disputes within the Muslim world through peaceful means.

The OIC's role in addressing Islamic causes, conflict resolution, and the protection of Muslim minorities has been subject to scrutiny and criticism. While the organization has championed the Palestinian cause and provided support to Muslim communities facing persecution, its effectiveness in resolving conflicts and promoting human rights has been questioned. In recent years, the OIC has grappled with contemporary issues such as terrorism, human rights, and nuclear proliferation. While condemning all forms of terrorism and violence, the organization has also advocated for a distinction between legitimate struggles for self-determination and acts of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam. Despite its challenges and limitations, the OIC remains a vital forum for Muslim-majority states to address common concerns, coordinate policies, and advocate for the interests of the Islamic world on the global stage. As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, the OIC faces ongoing challenges in fulfilling its mandate and fostering greater unity and solidarity among Muslim nations.

The analysis of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) performance over the past 55 years reveals significant shortcomings that have hindered its effectiveness. These weaknesses, both implicit and explicit, have contributed to the organization's inability to meet the expectations of Muslim states. Firstly, the OIC has struggled to change the hierarchy of member states' priorities, with national interests often taking precedence over Muslim solidarity. Conflicting national interests frequently undermine the organization's unity, leading to criticisms and attacks among member states. Secondly, bloc politics and regional affiliations complicate decision-making within the OIC. Internal frictions between Arab and African member states, for example, often impede the organization's capacity to act cohesively. Thirdly, the OIC suffers from a legally deficient framework, characterized by loosely defined objectives, ambiguous membership criteria, and a lack of enforcement mechanisms. The absence of a statutory role in crisis situations further undermines its effectiveness. Additionally, the OIC's organizational structure is complex and bureaucratic, mirroring issues seen in the United Nations. Administrative weaknesses, such as a small and under-staffed bureaucracy, lack of transparency in recruitment, and concentration of subsidiary organs in a few member countries, contribute to inefficiency. Moreover, indiscipline among member states, inflated workload, and perennial budgetary deficits pose significant challenges to the OIC's functioning. Non-responsiveness to correspondence and the inability to disentangle from unnecessary problems further diminish its effectiveness. Addressing these issues will be crucial for the OIC to fulfill its mandate effectively and regain the

confidence of member states and the broader Muslim world. In last 2 decades that is over the past 20 years, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has faced numerous challenges and experienced several failures that have hindered its effectiveness and relevance. The OIC has struggled to foster unity among member states, with individual countries prioritizing their national interests over the collective goals of the Muslim world. This has led to internal divisions and a lack of solidarity, undermining the OIC's ability to act decisively on important issues affecting the Muslim community globally. Regionalism and bloc politics have plagued the OIC, with member states often aligning with regional organizations such as the Arab League or the Organization of African Unity instead of prioritizing OIC initiatives. This has resulted in a fragmented approach to addressing common challenges faced by Muslim nations. The OIC's legal framework has been criticized for its vagueness and lack of clarity regarding objectives, principles, and membership criteria. Issues such as the definition of a Muslim state and representation of Muslim minorities remain unresolved, casting doubt on the organization's legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing diverse concerns within the Muslim world. The OIC's organizational structure has been deemed complex and inefficient, resembling that of the United Nations (UN). Inadequate bureaucratic capacity, a ceremonial focus on conferences of heads of state, and the absence of effective subsidiary organs in member states have undermined the OIC's ability to implement meaningful initiatives and coordinate collective action.

The OIC has often been criticized for its indecisiveness and reluctance to take firm stances on critical issues affecting the Muslim world. The organization has frequently invoked principles of international legality and state sovereignty as excuses for inaction, undermining its credibility and relevance on the global stage. The OIC's bureaucracy is characterized by small size, understaffing, and a lack of transparency in staff recruitment. Concentration of subsidiary organs in only a few member countries, coupled with limited resident missions, has further hindered the organization's ability to effectively engage with member states and address their diverse needs. The OIC has struggled with perennial budgetary deficits, with only a fraction of member states consistently paying their contributions. This financial instability has hampered the organization's ability to implement programs and initiatives, severely limiting its impact and effectiveness in addressing the socio-economic and political challenges facing the Muslim world. In summary, the OIC's failures over the past two decades reflect systemic issues related to governance, coordination, and resource management, undermining its ability to fulfill its mandate of promoting solidarity and cooperation among Muslim nations. Addressing these failures will require comprehensive reforms and a renewed commitment to collective action and mutual support among member states. Addressing these failures will require concerted efforts by member states to prioritize collective interests, streamline decision-making processes, and strengthen institutional mechanisms for coordination and cooperation. It is imperative that the OIC undergoes meaningful reforms to better serve the needs of the Muslim world and uphold its mandate of promoting solidarity.

The new millennium has ushered in a host of formidable challenges, particularly for Muslims worldwide. Political conflicts involving Muslims, such as those in Kashmir, Palestine, and Iraq, often occur under foreign occupation, fostering a perception among Muslims that they are targeted due to their faith. The post-9/11 era exacerbated this sentiment, with Islam increasingly portrayed as a religion of terrorism by the West, fueling suspicions of ulterior motives aimed at subjugating Muslim nations and exploiting their resources. In response to the challenges of the new millennium, the Muslim community, with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at its helm,

faces a critical juncture. However, the OIC's effectiveness in addressing these challenges has been called into question. Despite its large membership and representation in international forums like the United Nations, the OIC appears paralyzed and ineffective in confronting the evolving dynamics of global politics. Its structure and mechanisms seem ill-equipped to tackle the complexities of the 21st century. Key challenges confronting the OIC include the lack of unity among Muslim nations, particularly concerning major conflicts like Kashmir and Palestine. The organization's inability to take decisive stands on these issues has undermined its credibility and influence on the world stage. Moreover, the rise of religious extremism and the perception of Islam as a religion synonymous with terrorism have further eroded the OIC's standing and ability to counter negative stereotypes.

The aftermath of 9/11 has exacerbated tensions between the Muslim world and the West, with Islam increasingly portrayed as hostile and incompatible with modernity. Poverty and lack of education remain persistent challenges within Muslim societies, hindering their ability to progress and compete in the global arena. The OIC must address these issues and promote a message of moderation and enlightenment, countering misperceptions and fostering dialogue between Muslim-majority nations and the West. Moreover, the economic disparity among OIC member states underscores the need for collective action to strengthen their economic resilience and competitiveness. Improving communication channels between Muslim countries and the West is essential to bridge cultural divides and dispel misconceptions about Islam. The OIC must undergo significant reforms to adapt to the realities of the 21st century and fulfill its mandate of promoting the interests and well-being of the Muslim community worldwide. Only through unity, moderation, and proactive engagement can the OIC effectively address the multifaceted challenges facing Muslims in the modern era and contribute to global peace and prosperity.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) faces a critical juncture in addressing the challenges confronting the Muslim community across various domains, including political, ideological, economic, security, cultural, scientific, technological, and media-related spheres. To enhance its performance and efficacy, several recommendations have been proposed for organizational and functional reforms within the OIC. Organizational changes are deemed essential to enhance the OIC's effectiveness. These include adopting merit-based recruitment policies to ensure qualified individuals are appointed to key positions within the organization. Moreover, advocating for greater involvement of the younger generation from Muslim countries can infuse fresh perspectives and enthusiasm into the organization's functions. Decision-making processes within the OIC require restructuring to mirror those of the United Nations, promoting equitable power-sharing among member states. The establishment of a decision council, akin to the UN Security Council, could facilitate more robust and inclusive decision-making processes within the OIC. A "Joint Islamic Defence Force" has been proposed to address conflicts within the Muslim world, providing a mechanism for swift intervention and resolution. This force, comprising contributions from leading Muslim nations, could serve as a pivotal tool for implementing decisions made by the OIC's decision council. Functional aspects of the OIC also warrant attention, particularly in setting priorities and eliminating bloc politics. Member states must prioritize collective interests over individual gains, fostering unity and cooperation within the organization. Revamping the OIC Charter and adopting a proactive approach to conflict resolution are crucial steps toward revitalizing the organization's effectiveness. Economic integration and cooperation among Muslim countries are imperative for addressing collective challenges and fostering prosperity. Initiatives such as establishing a World Muslim

Bank and promoting industrial collaboration can contribute to economic resilience and development within the Muslim world.

Pakistan, as a prominent member of the OIC and a key player in the Muslim world, has a significant role to play in revitalizing the organization. Through visionary leadership, diplomatic intervention, and strategic collaborations, Pakistan can contribute to the OIC's efforts in addressing pressing issues facing the Muslim community globally. Furthermore, Pakistan can leverage its position to foster dialogue and cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim states, promoting understanding and mutual respect. Initiatives such as expanding educational exchanges, enhancing defence cooperation, and revitalizing regional organizations like the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) can further strengthen Pakistan's engagement with the Muslim world and beyond. In summary, comprehensive reforms and active engagement are essential for the OIC to fulfill its mandate of promoting the interests and well-being of the Muslim community worldwide. Pakistan's proactive role and collaborative efforts can significantly contribute to the OIC's effectiveness in addressing the complex challenges of the modern era.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has shed light on its identity politics and regional dynamics, highlighting both its potential as a nexus of Muslim unity and diversity, as well as its challenges in meeting the demands of the 21st century. The study has underscored the need for reorganizing the OIC to enhance its relevance and effectiveness in addressing the evolving needs of the Muslim world. Pakistan, as a prominent member of the OIC, can play a crucial role in spearheading efforts to revitalize the organization. It can leverage its diplomatic influence and leadership to foster greater cooperation and consensus among member states, transcending regional divisions and identity politics. Pakistan can advocate for institutional reforms within the OIC to streamline decision-making processes, improve transparency and accountability, and strengthen mechanisms for collective action. Furthermore, Pakistan can promote dialogue and engagement within the OIC to address pressing issues facing the Muslim world, including socio-economic development, political stability, and security challenges. By championing inclusive and participatory approaches, Pakistan can help foster a sense of unity and solidarity among member states, while respecting their diverse interests and perspectives.

Moving forward, it is imperative for Pakistan and other key stakeholders within the OIC to prioritize collaboration and synergy in advancing common goals and objectives. This entails fostering a culture of cooperation, mutual respect, and understanding, while also addressing underlying tensions and conflicts that may impede progress. In summary, the way forward for the OIC involves concerted efforts to reinvigorate its mandate, strengthen its institutional capacity, and promote greater unity and solidarity among Muslim nations. Pakistan, with its strategic position and diplomatic influence, can play a pivotal role in shaping the future trajectory of the OIC and realizing its potential as a beacon of Muslim unity in the 21st century. This research can further be investigated by applying different political theories.

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