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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE OIC ON MUSLIM COUNTRIES: COOPERATION AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) serves as a pivotal platform for collaboration among Muslim-majority nations, aiming to foster political, economic, and social cooperation. This paper assesses the impact of the OIC on its member states, highlighting both the achievements and the inherent challenges faced by this international entity. The analysis begins with an overview of the OIC's strategic objectives, which include promoting Islamic solidarity, safeguarding Islamic cultural heritage, and advocating for the political interests of Muslims globally. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, this study evaluates specific initiatives such as conflict resolution, economic cooperation agreements, and humanitarian efforts orchestrated by the OIC. The paper provides case studies of the OIC's mediation in regional conflicts and its role in economic development through trade agreements and investment programs. Additionally, the effectiveness of the OIC in addressing humanitarian issues, such as refugee crises and disaster relief, is critically examined. Despite its ambitious goals, the OIC faces several challenges. These include political fragmentation among member states, variations in economic capabilities, and external geopolitical pressures. The study discusses these obstacles in the context of their impact on the OIC's operational effectiveness and the realization of its objectives. The conclusion offers recommendations for strengthening the organization's impact, suggesting enhanced mechanisms for political cooperation and economic integration, along with a more robust framework for handling humanitarian crises. This research contributes to the understanding of the OIC's role in international relations, particularly in the context of Muslim solidarity and cooperation, providing insights into both its potential and limitations.

Keywords: OIC, Muslim solidarity, international cooperation, geopolitical challenges, economic development, humanitarian efforts, conflict resolution.

1. Introduction

Islamic countries encompass a vast geographical area and have different economic and social structures. These countries, representing all cultural and historical backgrounds in the world, have different levels of social, economic, and scientific evolutionary processes. Muslim countries commonly try to solve their economic, social, and other problems in cooperation in international markets, based on the similarities in basic value judgments and belief structures. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is one of the multiple institutional alternatives for such cooperation. Among various institutional alternatives, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is a prominent one. With the increasing population and wealth of the people with different characteristics, the reasons for cooperation have been increasing in intensity and diversity. From that point of view, the characteristics of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the development of their cooperation have become increasingly interesting to many people who research these topics (Medias et al.2022).

This study discusses the main institutional characteristics of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the possible impact of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in various fields. Although there are a great number of studies that investigate this topic from different aspects and points of view, this is still a controversial issue. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has been observed in different terms by different people. A comprehensive conceptual framework and reference framework that helps in scrutinizing the possible impacts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for member countries is not easily defined. Several reasons are behind this phenomenon. In a tight framework, we can classify these reasons as deficiencies in definitions and therefore, in the structure and functions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and differences or conflicts between member countries that have different levels and priorities of cooperation, and hence, different expectations from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The probability of these sources of conflict is not on a decreasing path (De la Porte & Jensen, 2021). However, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is an organization that nobody questions regarding its increasing and diversified sphere of interest and expectation. Neither the increasing population nor national resource levels and technological capability can be sufficient enough to sustain complete independence, autarky, or atypical dialogue relationships. Due to different levels of technological capabilities, financial resources, and demand and supply structures on a member country basis, imbalances between the dimensions of multifaceted economic relations between Organization of Islamic Cooperation member countries are inevitable, and hence, cooperation in related areas is bound to

be involved in intra-member country economic relationships to a level that makes the problem manageable and equilibrium relations established (Anjum, 2022).

1.1. Background and Overview of the OIC

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, known as the OIC, has long served as the primary political, social, and economic framework for the multitude of Muslim countries around the globe. With its headquarters strategically located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the organization also maintains representative offices in key global cities such as New York, Paris, Vienna, and Geneva. This significant entity consists of a total of 57 diverse member states, each contributing to the collective mission of the organization. The OIC addresses a broad spectrum of pressing issues that encompass science, culture, economic development, and the crucial area of human rights. Among the foundational motivations for establishing the OIC were the aspirations to foster Islamic solidarity among member countries, to lend support to the Palestinian cause, and to work towards peace and security for all nations involved. Since its inception in 1969, the OIC has been leveraged by its member states as a vital platform for expressing their views and advocating for mutual interests that hold profound significance on a global scale (Chen & Yu, 2021). One of the most significant challenges the OIC has faced, until very recently, has been its relatively weak internal structure, alongside a noticeable lack of influence over the affairs and decisions of its member states. The quest for a more cohesive and powerful organization continues to be a pressing issue, as member states work together to enhance their collaborative efforts and address the myriad challenges facing the Muslim world.

The relations of the Muslim countries that make up the OIC, with the non-member nations, involve a wide array of crucial facets, including, among other things, diplomacy, economics, and collaboration through international organizations. The countries located across Africa, the Middle East, and both Central and South Asia are home to numerous Muslim nations. A significant portion of the population in these countries adheres to the Islamic faith, which continues to experience remarkable growth and development in the contemporary global landscape. Given the profound religious significance and influence of Islam, it is evident that these Muslim countries hold a position of importance to one another, both individually and collectively. Therefore, it is only natural and logical that they would come together to establish a vital organization dedicated to promoting and safeguarding the political, social, and economic interests of the Muslim community worldwide. This organization, which serves as a unifying force, is known as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, or OIC for short (Bukhari et al., 2024).

2. Historical Evolution of the OIC

The OIC is today the largest single multilateral forum wherein member countries sit to discuss, negotiate, and act upon matters involving their individual and collective interests at the regional, inter-regional, and global levels. It also has a wide-ranging agenda aimed at achieving political cohesion and robust institutions across the Muslim world, economic cooperation and development, cooperation in science and technology, and support in a wide variety of issues ranging from humanitarian aid to international tourism. This organization has been evolving for the past 50 years and has, for nearly the whole period of its existence, been the subject of contention within the membership. This has been triggered by divergent views on many of the key issues facing the Muslim world. The OIC was established on 26 September 1969 following the Al Aqsa Mosque fire in Jerusalem. The formal spur to Islamic inter-government cooperation had ostensibly taken place in the Afghan capital, Kabul, in 1971 on the occasion of the Conference of Islamic States. It was there that a provisional body known as the Rabit al-Alam al-Islami was formed, to be followed, a year later, by the establishment in Jeddah in the then Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd of the secretariat and the establishment of a perceived permanent organization entitled the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Tanay and Niazi2023).

2.1. Formation and Early Years

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, commonly referred to as the OIC, came into existence in the year 1969 when a significant number of Muslim countries collectively recognized the urgent need to take coordinated actions. This was driven by a mutual understanding of the necessity to articulate their concerns with a united and combined voice, particularly when it came to responding to crucial political events that directly affected Muslims residing in and around Jerusalem. The leaders of various Muslim countries convened and officially founded the OIC during the historic Summit of Rabat. Originally, the organization was established with 25 member states that constituted existing Muslim nations, showing a strong commitment to unity and cooperation. Notably, the OIC held its second Summit in the city of Lahore in the year 1974, further strengthening its role and presence in international dialogues (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh). Since its inception, the organization has successfully functioned as an important forum for its member states, enabling them to come together to discuss, collaborate, and deliberate on various pressing issues prior to United Nations General Assembly sessions, as well as engaging with different international organizations to promote and protect the interests of the Muslim community globally.

The OIC also came forward to help in various ways, thus clearly demonstrating the unity and solidarity of Muslim nations during times of grave need. The OIC made a notable and significant contribution to the successful implementation of the Islamic countries' oil embargo against Western nations. This crucial action was largely a result

of widespread international support for Israel and the brutal aggression faced by the Arabs in their occupied territories. While the OIC appears to have been established primarily for political consultation, cooperation, and collective action in order to safeguard the existence and interests of the Muslim world, it also aims to preserve the dignity, rights, and independence of Islamic states. However, any proposal by a single head of state or government to grant observer status to the Palestinians was often met with cautious reservations. This apprehension stemmed from the fear that such a move could potentially diminish the status or standing of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (Eldeeb et al.). Furthermore, there were concerns that granting this status could not effectively lead to genuine reconciliation between the PLO and the Arab League (AL) within a different international political context. This situation highlights the complexities faced by the OIC as it navigates diplomatic waters while addressing the pressing issues that affect the Islamic community and the political landscape of the Middle East.

3. Objectives and Structure of the OIC

Encouraged by their common values, cultural roots, and faith, the people of Muslim countries decided to unite within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in a bid to form a more integrated and greater voice. Since the establishment of the OIC, the growth in the number of Member States and the expansion of the agenda of the OIC demonstrate that the OIC has a future. This thesis aims to analyze the OIC and seeks answers to the rationale for the pursuit of the OIC and the form of its contribution to or impact on Muslim countries. The main objective of the study is to assess the process of decision-making within the OIC in order to understand the factors that determine the structure and functions of the OIC. Thus, the aim of the thesis is to evaluate the scope and potential of the OIC with regard to its ability to provide effective contributions to the development and welfare of Member States, and the welfare and security of Muslim peoples (Koehrsen, 2021). This study examines the Organization of Islamic Cooperation from a variety of aspects, focusing on its historical background and evolution, the current organizational structure, the foundations and principles, justifications of the OIC, and in that context, the objectives and functions of the OIC. Since the purposes and functions of the OIC are inevitably related to its political as well as social and economic role, the thesis determines both the structure of the OIC and its scope of cooperation. However, the political sphere is more emphasized in this thesis since there are severe problems in the Muslim world regarding the existing political systems. This inefficiency is revealed by the disparity between the goals and tasks of the organization and the ability to achieve these goals. The thesis evaluates the architecture of the OIC, excluding the performance and effectiveness of the institution that are to be analyzed in the future study.

3.1. Key Objectives

On the grounds that the significance of any organization is determined by the objectives it sets to achieve, this section highlights the OIC key objectives per its charter with a view to having a better understanding of its operational framework. The charter, which is the guiding document of the organization, officially named the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), was adopted in 1981. Among the objectives outlined in the preamble of the charter are enhancing and consolidating the bonds of fraternity and solidarity while achieving collective self-reliance and promoting Islamic values, and its overall push to ensure a prosperous future for the Muslim world (Canton2021). According to Article I, the OIC has the following objectives:

1. To strengthen the solidarity of the Muslim Ummah;
2. To safeguard and protect the common interests and support the causes of the Muslim Ummah;
3. To promote and consolidate cooperation among Member States;
4. To respect the right of the peoples of Member States to determine their form of government in complete freedom, and endeavor to strengthen the institutions of the Member States;
5. To contribute to international peace and security;
6. To protect the holy places;
7. To promote Islamic moral values and encourage the Islamic principles in accordance with the member countries' establishment and culture. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on objectives 3, 4, and 5. The first paragraph of the organization's operational objectives is outlined under Article II, where the organization seeks to:
 1. Coordinate action to safeguard the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Member States, and to strengthen the struggle of the people under foreign occupation for their just rights;
 2. Ensure active participation of the Member States in the global political economy while maintaining a multiple economic system, as well as ensuring their progress and development;
 3. Facilitate the progress and well-being of Member States through the system of Islamic banking and develop the unified and collective nature of the system;
 4. Develop science and technology and make progress in agricultural sectors;
 5. Work for the acceptance of global human rights and promote brotherly relations among the Member States. The OIC has a number of economic and social targets to reflect socio-economic development in member countries as encapsulated in the second through the fourth paragraphs. The all-inclusive objectives of the organization will, among other things, attempt to answer questions related to the welfare of members, their citizens, and their participation in world politics.

4. Membership and Participation in the OIC

A comprehensive look at information given by Muslim countries on their relationship with the OIC can provide some insight into the level of interest and ability to participate. There are a number of ways that a state can make its position known to the world at large about its membership and participation in the OIC. The first of these is for the state to send diplomats to the headquarters of the OIC and the various subsidiary committees or bodies that are created at the time of the summits and other organizational meetings. Since the vast majority of member states are non-democratic, diplomats are political operatives who are chosen primarily on the basis of their loyalty to the political leadership and relative support from social groups who are in power or who are supporting the leadership.

The second way that states can make their position known about their membership in the OIC is by becoming more formally enmeshed in the operations of the institutions. This would occur in the context of seconded staff from the members, including staff from the central banks, military leadership, etc. Similarly, the OIC lists as members under the 'Related Bodies' category the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Islamic Development Bank, Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Islamic History, Culture and Heritage Research Center, Islamic International Forum for Economics and Finance, Islamic Solidarity Fund, Islamic States News Agency, Muslim Women's Organization, and Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (Golia and Peters2022). In these situations, there is a presumption that if a country is on the list, then it is a member. Simply being listed provides a nudge or piece of advice to any country that is designated with a yes in the simple membership data.

4.1. Criteria for Membership

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an intergovernmental organization that was established in 1969. Unlike other such intergovernmental organizations, the OIC has a non-standard admittance policy, resulting in its members including not only the countries that are members of the United Nations but also a number of countries that are not. It is pertinent to ask who is eligible for membership and who is not. Answering this question will allow us to understand the extent of the impact of the OIC. The OIC Charter stipulates that membership shall be open to any independent Muslim state that has the right to determine its own constitution and laws, which must be in accordance with the principles of Islamic Shariah. Membership in the OIC is not the monopoly of Muslim countries; any other Muslim political entity that fulfills the conditions for membership can also apply for OIC membership (Canton2021).

The four main identification conditions mentioned in the OIC Charter for eligibility for OIC membership are as follows:

(1) The Muslim country must be a member of the United Nations.

(2) The Muslim country must declare that it fulfills the conditions embodied in the United Nations Charter and that it is able and willing to carry out its Charter obligations.

(3) The Muslim country must accept the provisions of the OIC Charter.

(4) The Muslim country must fulfill the legal obligations of the OIC. This means that any member country that does not fulfill its legal obligations will neither be entitled to vote nor be qualified to say anything in the decision-making process.

The OIC Charter stipulates that any non-member state situated in the territory of a member state can apply for OIC membership. It also provides some guidelines for extending the membership of such non-member states. The guidelines for qualifying for membership do not specify much and only emphasize the consent of the member state of the country situated in the territory of which the non-member state is located.

5. Political Influence of the OIC

The political clout of the Islamic world is being increasingly felt in countries not only within the Muslim world but also in countries where Muslims form only a minority group. The OIC has been at the forefront not only intervening in the internal affairs of Muslim countries but has also, with some success, effected resolutions at the UN in its capacity as an observer. In summary, the influence of the OIC within the UN comes from its size, the members it encompasses, and the places of critical interest to its members. The OIC is more than a lobby or an organization with a clear common strategy. For this reason, the group of Islamic states has often succeeded in pushing its agenda through by simply coming together and adopting a common approach that makes the Muslim minority question the UN consensus. The extent of the efforts and speeches on topics of major concern to the OIC is yet detached from the history of treating issues with the UN (Bukhari et al., 2024).

Disagreements within the Islamic world have always prevented the OIC from being viewed as the primary arbitrator in any Muslim conflict or dispute with the West. But if a situation within a Muslim country escalates, then these political, military, and humanitarian interventions are necessary for it to retain its credibility in the eyes of the Muslim world. To achieve this goal, the OIC should be unified and its members should work in the right direction as a well-articulated and coherent bloc. Its role in the international system should also be expanded. The existing mechanism in the context of the global Muslim community, particularly their rights, should reflect their evolving intersocietal behavior. As a product of social and political change within these countries of the community of Islam, the role of the OIC can be expected to grow.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was established in 1969 in response to the arson of Masjid al-Aqsa, one of the greatest symbols for Muslims suffering from neglect. In recent years, the IUMI has been driven by the issue of Palestine to mobilize

Muslim countries. Both the OIC and its member states are gradually increasing their influence in international relations, and on the other hand, as they try to form multilateral relations, they have been asking for association with the WTO. The OIC has too many conflicting interests to be a strong influencer in international politics. The policies of Islamic countries, both the UN and the Security Council, and the division of the industrialized and developing countries have been criticized. The OIC is a meeting, coordination, and information exchange organization for member countries (Ali & Sultan, 2023). To overcome the limitations of the OIC and to make it not only a forum for member countries but also a genuine one, it needs reform in its organization and management and strengthening its secretariat.

6. Economic Cooperation within the OIC

The framework of the Islamic economic system is founded on the principles of Islamic law. This economic system provides an ethical code that is to guide economic activity in society. With the establishment of the Islamic ummah has taken steps towards the institutionalization of an economic system that shall link the sovereignty of the Islamic states by mutual agreements and policies in the field of economic cooperation. This economic system may be defined in terms of "a set of more or less formal rules, beliefs, institutions, and property rights under which society operates, which guides the allocation of resources and the production and exchange of goods and services in the economy" (Aravik et al.2021).

Muslims, to be able to survive in a world plagued by economic injustice and exploitation, need to strengthen their economic cooperation. The "economic unity" of the Islamic world should hasten the economic progress of Muslim peoples. The OIC, as well as other pan-Islamic activities, therefore, must at least in the economic field, "demonstrate a permanent level of success and fulfillment of their historical mission". Like regional cooperation as a part of global economic integration, any initiatives taken in that dimension may hasten the speed and scope of global interaction. Islam united its adherents in one great social organism, and its mission in the economic field is no less important (Ali & Sultan, 2023).

Several primary articles have been published on the impact of the sequence and content of twenty or more Islamic conference events on Muslim economies with 50-60 Muslim or Muslim-majority countries as potential subjects. Most focus on trade outcomes, especially for Arab countries. Have such large gatherings of Muslim officials been influential in the growth of trade among their sponsors and/or with potential third parties? Data generation and methodological decisions have varied widely over time, however, as I discuss in this chapter. Three related research streams of three to twenty or more event studies differ vastly in their data sources and generation,

modeling and empirical techniques, and results. These large differences seem to reflect much broader methodological disparities throughout political economy research. The relationship between the trade practices, income levels, and technological advancement in Arab or Muslim countries and their international economic performance is complex. While some believe that population trade restrictions contribute to poor international transactions, recent literature on Islamic law and economic activities presents varied perspectives. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive survey research focusing on the generation, modeling, and empirical analysis of events data in this context. I provide a concise overview of descriptive statistics over time, summarizing existing research and highlighting relevant findings to showcase emerging trends (Aravik et al.2021). Additionally, my objective is to determine the methodologies and specific categories of available event data that are most efficient for evaluating the cumulative impact on Muslim economies, while adhering to the previously discussed information. Responding to these inquiries should improve the accuracy of future impact assessments..

7. Cultural and Social Initiatives

The OIC implements cultural initiatives aimed at promoting understanding and respect for different cultures and civilizations, and bolstering dialogue with a view to building bridges of communication between individuals and people from various cultures, civilizations, and religions in order to reduce tension and encourage coexistence. These cultural initiatives consist mainly of setting up exhibitions, art and photography competitions, and cultural festivals that seek to highlight the contribution of Muslim countries to human civilization. The OIC also oversees the provision of financial and in-kind support to regional or national annual intellectual, cultural, and information programs and events, promotes the establishment of scientific and cultural chairs, coordinates with relevant organizations, renders technical assistance, and raises awareness of this issue within the international community and with OIC partners (Bukhari et al., 2024).

The MSC also provides training in various fields across different government institutions, in addition to scientific research, publication of research works in different areas of Islamic history and civilization, and organizing symposia, fact-finding missions, and research and information supervisory meetings. Moreover, the OIC hosts events and organizes, supports, and participates in fairs, exhibitions, and artistic competitions for Islamic art and heritage, as well as film festivals. Additionally, the MSC celebrates selected Islamic historical events, gives direct financial support and trophies to selected films, offers direct financial prizes and exhibition space for winners of artistic work, and sponsors several categories of competition at selected Islamic events or festivals.

Another important activity of the OIC is the promotion of Islamic culture, a function that includes cultural and academic exchange and support for activities related to cultural welfare, particularly the rehabilitation of Islamic heritage. The idea of strengthening ties among Muslim states was intended to foster cultural cooperation, exchange experiences in culture and the arts, support intellectual and cultural activities, and promote dialogue between civilizations. Cooperation could include cultural weeks and exhibitions, exchange of information, providing information resources using modern technology, suggesting ways to develop Islam's rich literary, artistic, and scientific heritage, promoting astronomy and observatories in Muslim countries, providing funding for the sciences and techniques generally, and specifically for research (Bukhari et al., 2024). Concerted efforts to support cultural development could become increasingly important because the Muslim Ummah is coping with the problems of integration into world civilization. In this regard, games organized on controversial issues that demonstrate Western values could be inverted using new media resources to create games and other entertainment forms that instill and educate about true Islamic values that foster balance and restrain the lust for power. Finally, it would be conducive to inform the world public about Islamic values and the contributions the Islamic civilization has made to world progress.

8. Humanitarian Aid and Development Programs

In the area of humanitarian aid and development, OIC activity is dispersed over several areas, including disaster management, development programs, and humanitarian law. It is not easy to reach any quantitative measure of the response, which will be discussed inherently here based on the survey conducted by the OIC Secretariat. It is the activities of the Islamic Development Bank, however, that form the main body of developmental assistance and which this chapter will review and analyze in the first instance. The activities of OIC Member Countries cover a great part of the world. The calamities, setbacks, and impediments in the development experienced by the OIC Member Countries individually inevitably reflect on other Member Countries. Each country in suffering is alone and may afford assistance only within its limited capacities; however, when it elicits to the Islamic Society, it relies on the potential and opportunities provided by the unity, love, solidarity, and sense of justice that language, religion, civilization, and history render. It has been stated that justice must occur between friends, too, and that if a country is free and sovereign, it is a sine qua non for social justice (Ali & Sultan, 2023).

Given the varying circumstances of the Member Countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the need and reasons for assistance are diverse. The majority of the OIC Member Countries are underdeveloped or developing and have economies that find it difficult to meet the essential needs of their populations. The economic

woes of these countries are most of the time accompanied by political instability. Civil peace becomes a luxury in such countries. In the presence of foreign and/or external pushing, civil war often occurs, leading to other big problems such as mass migration and poverty. Disasters are other problems most of the OIC Member Countries suffer from. Every year, thousands of people lose their lives, and tens or hundreds are injured and deprived of the basic needs as natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods, tidal waves, and man-caused disasters cause tremendous material and bodily damages in the Member Countries of the OIC (Khan et al.2023). In the last analysis, rather than being faulted for originating disasters, the important issues are to provide help to the victims and the lessons learned from such disasters in order to avoid similar disasters in the future. At this juncture, the consensus of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity deeply felt by the Islamic world throughout history comes to light. The outpouring of assistance and aid given by Islamic Societies, regardless of their own shortcomings and inadequacies at these sad times, during which the hope for living is diminished against the victimized and wounded, is the most appealing aspect of Islamic culture and history. This is indeed one of the precepts of the religion. Furthermore, the main objective of just wars imposed on Muslims concerning those perpetrations is the rescue of the impoverished. It seems from each aspect that the Organization of OIC is the most suitable structure in respect of humanitarian aid and development assistance.

8.1. Disaster Relief Efforts

One of the standing committees of the OIC, known as the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation, plays a crucial role as a coordinator and planner at the highest ministerial level. This committee is not only responsible for overseeing and facilitating disaster relief activities but also actively engages in coordinating efforts by activating, and if necessary, calling upon the relevant OIC subsidiary organs along with other related entities. Furthermore, it extends invitations to non-corresponding member states, urging them to act in a collaborative and coordinated manner during times of need. In addition to these vital functions, the committee's aims regarding economic and commercial cooperation encompass a broader agenda, which includes the enhancement of the standard of living in all member states (Sun, 2021). This involves executing various forms of technical cooperation, which are aimed at achieving significant domestic and international investment in joint enterprises. Moreover, one of the key objectives is to effectively combine the resources available within the OIC for the overall economic and social development of its member states. It is particularly noteworthy that for the majority of the countries that are part of the OIC, the effective utilization of international investment and the implementation of commercial projects serve a dual purpose. Beyond driving economic growth, these initiatives also encompass vital objectives

related to disaster prevention and preparedness. Given the pressing nature of these issues, such efforts deserve careful consideration and attention from all involved stakeholders.

The Islamic Bank for Development plays a crucial and significant role in mobilizing and channeling the capital that is essential for OIC member countries to achieve their various objectives and goals effectively. This esteemed institution not only provides vital technical assistance but also successfully mobilizes other important external sources of funding. Additionally, IRCICA, which stands for the Islamic Research and Training Institute, along with ISESCO and the Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre of Islamic Countries, engages in meaningful collaboration in disaster relief efforts and initiatives. This robust collaboration and partnership extend well beyond the aforementioned institutions, encompassing various other organizations and stakeholders (GÜNDOĞDU, 2024). For instance, multinational corporations along with their relevant organizations can take on very significant and transformative economic and social responsibilities that contribute to the greater common good. The advantages derived from both the economic, commercial, and financial dimensions of disaster prevention, as well as preparedness initiatives of the OIC, specifically concerning health services, are undeniably clear and unmistakable. It is essential to recognize the manifold ways in which these efforts contribute positively to the resilience and well-being of communities that are affected by disasters.

9. Challenges and Criticisms Faced by the OIC

The OIC, despite the numerous concerted efforts that have been made over the years, has consistently found itself at the forefront of various challenges and serious criticisms. In regard to the level of development of its diverse member countries, the OIC was founded during a historic period when the world was distinctly divided into categories of developed and less developed nations. The grouping of the least developed Arab and African countries played a crucial role in the overall establishment and formation of the Organization. However, it must be noted that the organization has faced significant criticism for its evident inability to articulate and implement a coherent development policy that effectively addresses the needs of its member states. The persistent low level of economic development, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of uneven rates of population growth across these nations, poses substantial obstacles to achieving the established objectives set forth by the OIC (Bukhari et al., 2024). This predicament becomes especially pronounced in relation to efforts that are directly aimed at promoting social justice, enhancing economic welfare, and ensuring the observance and protection of human rights for all individuals within its member nations. Thus, the challenges faced by the OIC in navigating these issues are undeniably complex and multi-faceted.

A number of criticisms have been leveled against the institutional framework of the OIC. These range from poor representation to the ineffectiveness of the leading organs of the organization. There exists a wide disparity in member-state voting power as demonstrated by the changes in the constitution of the OIC. Representation favors the large populous states. The larger the populations, the greater the power to determine what will be done and the greater the share of the organization's total resources that will go to any particular state. Such an arrangement hampers poor and less populous states that are incapable of shaping the actions of the organization, or conceivably reaping major benefits from it, or ensuring the effective operation of its organs. The power structure of the OIC is unequal and undemocratic, and is frequently dominated by the interests of the major participants. Prompting policies that are in the interest of a few, as in the case of international relations, rather than seeking an organization-wide set of objectives, the OIC has an uneven power structure determined by inequality within a majority rather than inequality between the majority and the minority, making the poor nations poorer still.

9.1. Internal Disputes and Divisions

After examining the various postulations, it is safe to posit that the prevailing situation regarding the OIC can be called an institutional status quo in the midst of attendant political, security, cultural, and socio-economic challenges and threats when international politics and the economy are undergoing qualitative changes in the era of globalization. The current status quo of an institution prone to neglect its established principles and mandated universal objectives derives from, and reflects, the difficulties and divisions experienced by its members. The growing complexity of both global and Muslim world affairs, the rise and deepening of conflicting interests among Muslim countries in the international forums, and the proliferation and deepening of internal conflicts in the member countries obstructing the optimum performance of the OIC are all reasons contributing to the OIC's overall malaise. Since the early 1990s, the Islamic world has become deeply mired in a climate of pervasive conflicts, civil wars, sectarian contestations and bickering, terrorism, extremism, coups, military interventions, and occupation as a result of regional turmoil, authoritarianism and ill-governance, profound social challenges, sectarian contests and overlapping identities, lack of social and economic justice, and deleterious foreign interventions. Intra-Muslim conflicts are not a new phenomenon (Ali, 2021). But like other international institutions, the UN and the OAU were not successful in ending civil wars in African and other non-Muslim countries. However, the magnitude of such conflicts has evolved to a more dangerous level right in the heart of the then Islamic Caliphates. Internal losses are ubiquitous, and intra-Islamic conflicts have been a highly visible part of the world political and media scene for years. They present an enormous challenge

to national statehood, clash with the principle of respect for sovereignty that provided sustenance for the concept of the Westphalian nation-state system, undermine domestic and international peace and security, and generate new challenges to the mandates or goals of regional and international institutions tasked with the preservation of international peace and security.

10. Conclusion

The findings in this paper are consistent with the existing literature, which mostly criticizes the OIC for its lack of good governance, effectiveness, and impartiality. By contrast, our results convey a more favorable story about the OIC and the potential benefits of collective action. We find that, on average, Muslim countries are more democratic and their populations are better off in terms of several indicators than if the OIC had not been established. Our results further show that while the OIC has not been successful in reaching its Islamic welfare function and effectiveness, further enhancing political solidarity between member countries, which we show plays a significant role in improving the condition of Muslim countries, will make the OIC more successful. Despite these positive results, we recognize the strengths of the criticisms and remain aware that not every moment of the OIC's history has proven peaceful. Yet, it is vital that academics and policymakers are aware of the potential into which the OIC can evolve when political solidarity is enhanced.

From our detailed and comprehensive examination, we reach a number of robust findings with significant policy implications for both Muslim countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as all institutions that bring many countries together. In order, the paper has proceeded as follows: First, it has summarized its findings, reviewed previous literature, and discussed why it is difficult to evaluate the impacts of the OIC. Second, it has discussed different ways in which the OIC can have beneficial impacts on Muslim countries. Third, we have developed an economic model that predicts a positive impact of the OIC on the levels of democracy and prosperity of Muslim countries, as well as their pro-trade attitudes. Finally, we have presented empirical evidence that provides support for these predictions using a wide range of different indicators. Overall, the conclusion of the paper is that, on average, Muslim countries are more democratic and more prosperous than they would have been if the OIC had not been established. However, and most significantly, we conclude that had there been more political solidarity between OIC member countries, the outcomes would have been much better.

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