

## PAKISTAN AND THE CONFLICTS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD: A CASE STUDY OF OIC

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### ABSTRACT

*The OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) is an international organization comprised of 57 Muslim states. It is the second largest multinational organization after the United Nations. The OIC is basically the mouthpiece of the Muslim world and it highlights the interests of the Muslim community in line with global tranquility. Pakistan not only played an important role in the formation of this organization but, as a sole nuclear power and as a leader, has actively fought the case of the Muslim world from the platform of this organization since its inception. This research article mainly endeavors to unearth Pakistan's efforts, particularly in the OIC, to resolve various issues plaguing the Muslim world like Kashmir, Palestine and Afghanistan. The desk research method was employed to assess whether Pakistan is successful in fulfilling one of its key foreign policy objective by playing an efficient role in solving the aforementioned conflicts prevailing in the Muslim world.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, OIC, Muslim World, Conflicts, Foreign Policy.

### INTRODUCTION

The OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) is a bloc of 57 Muslim countries. It includes states from virtually all the regions of the world like Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, etc. It is such a large organization that it almost makes up one-fourth of the total number of states in the United Nations. All the members of the OIC are aware of the fact that they cannot change their own futures as well as the future of the Muslim world by acting individually in a fragmented way. It will be a waste of energy and valuable resources. They also know, for sure, that they can change their own as well as the future of the whole Muslim community by taking a united front against all the evils coming in their way (Hanif).

This article explores the role of Pakistan in dealing with the problems faced by the Muslim world and specifically in the OIC. The Muslim world's largest representative body is the OIC. Since the foundation of the OIC in 1969, the Muslim world has faced various challenges. To cope with those challenges, the Muslim world needed a combined effort and this is evident in the shape of the OIC.

In this regard, the strategic and geographic location of Pakistan, with more than 200 million people, cannot be ignored (Hussain, F., & Hussain, M. 2017). A state with such potential can play an effective role in bringing about peace and prosperity in the whole world and particularly in the Muslim world. And history shows that Pakistan has always played a positive role in achieving the aforementioned goal since 1947. In other words, Pakistan has never yielded to the nefarious designs of its enemies in the realization of the peace-loving dream of the Muslims of the sub-continent. Pakistan has faced all those problems with courage and its efforts in various fields are yielding fruitful results. The world in general, and especially the enemies, cannot deny it.

The Islamic world is in possession of vast natural resources. This is coupled with the fact that these resources are under the control of the followers of Islam. This fact was not easily digested by the

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colonial powers of the previous century. Resultantly, the colonial powers intentionally put the Muslims to the sword. Millions were killed in the process (Hanif).

A comprehensive analysis of the problems of Kashmir, Palestine and Afghanistan was carried out in terms of Pakistan's individual efforts as well as the efforts it took in the OIC. Kashmir, Palestine and Afghanistan have always been important for Pakistan as these issues have directly or indirectly played havoc with the peace and prosperity of Pakistan. Pakistan will, therefore, always try to find peaceful solutions to these problems.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Pakistan's foreign policy is a true reflection of the vision and values of its founding father, named Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He stressed that Pakistan will always strive to establish friendly relations with all the states of the world. Pakistan will never infringe upon the territorial integrity of any other nation. Pakistan will always honor the commitments that it has made with the international community. It will leave no stone unturned to promote global peace and prosperity. And true to the spirit of the charter of the United Nations, Pakistan will always extend helping hands to all the suppressed and oppressed inhabitants in any area of the globe (Vatikiotis, 2016, p. 45). Apart from this, the 1973 constitution of Pakistan (Article 40) has also framed the guidelines for the foreign policy of Pakistan to take into consideration in the future. Firstly, Pakistan should maintain a strong bond with the Muslim states in line with the injunctions of Islam. Secondly, Pakistan should raise its voice for the due rights of the inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Thirdly, it should fight against global aggression and tyranny. Lastly, it should promote friendly and brotherly bonds throughout the world and support the peaceful settlement of all disputes (Yang, 2018, p. 35).

The principles devised by M. A. Jinnah and the Constitution of Pakistan clearly envisage that the foreign policy of Pakistan wants nothing short of global peace. Pakistan has, thus, always supported all the efforts to establish and promote peace at both the global level and in the Muslim world. Pakistan is also against terrorism. It has also been known to dislike extremism. Both are detrimental to global peace.

Moreover, the prime objective of the OIC is to establish a world order where everyone can prosper. This also needs a peaceful Islamic world. Pakistan, as one of the founding fathers of the organization, has always supported this objective and its actions in this regard are self-explanatory.

The efforts of Pakistan for global peace are also visible in its actions in support of the United Nations. It has always contributed its military, paramilitary, and police forces whenever the United Nations requested it to maintain peace at particular places. The words of the previous Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki Moon, are on the record in which he praised Pakistan for its concrete efforts in ensuring global peace not only as the head of the UN but as an ordinary human being. He further gave Pakistan the top spot among the hundred states who contribute troops for the UN missions (Cleveland, 2018).

Pakistan is always against violence, aggression, war and sectarianism. On the contrary, it has always supported the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue, reconciliation, third-party solutions, etc. Pakistan wants to apply the same principles to the solutions to the problems of Afghanistan, Palestine and Kashmir. This is because these places are of paramount importance to Pakistan. By doing so, Pakistan will give practical shape to the principles of the 1973 constitution, particularly its second chapter, where great force is put on the government of Pakistan to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the problems of the Muslim world and the world in general. This is the only way forward and Pakistan is trying its best to act upon it (Yamin, 2017; Naazer, 2018).

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

This study employs a desk review methodology along with a qualitative research strategy. The outcomes of the already-published papers are presented and evaluated throughout the desk review process (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Accordingly, this study's discourse analysis includes books, newspaper articles, and research papers. Keywords like "Pakistan Foreign Policy" and "Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan and Palestine" were used during the search process. Only the stuff that was exclusively about Afghanistan, Palestine, and Kashmir was included in the in-depth debate and subsequent analysis; all other materials were discarded.

### **Background of Kashmir conflict**

The state of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, generally known as "Kashmir," occupies an area of 84471 square miles. Geographically, it is located in the extreme north of the Indo-Pak sub-continent, reaching the heights of the Pamir; it is surrounded by India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China (Hanif). Two independent sovereign countries, India and Pakistan, appeared on the political map of the sub-continent in mid-August 1947, when the nine decades of British colonialism ended. According to the criteria fixed by the British parliament for the partition of India, the areas in which the Hindus were numerous would join India while the areas in which Muslims were numerous would join Pakistan. This scheme for the partition of India was acceptable to all the communities of the sub-continent. This scheme was followed in the majority of cases, but with a few exceptions. One such exception was Kashmir. The ruler of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was Hari Singh and he was a Hindu while the religion of the majority of the people residing in his state was Islam. So, as a state which had a Muslim majority, it should have joined Pakistan. Hari Singh and India did not want this to happen. A limited war broke out between the two neighbors over Kashmir. The matter was taken to the United Nations. The UN declared that the future of the people of Kashmir would be decided through a referendum. Due to mistrust between India and Pakistan, this referendum has never seen the light of the day (Sehgal, 2011).

The 1948 war between India and Pakistan would not have happened if both the hostile neighbors had shown self-restraint. India hurriedly sent its troops on the false supposition that Hari Singh was joining them. On the other hand, the informal Pakistani men captured a large chunk of Kashmir, citing the fact that the people of Kashmir were robbed of the right of self-determination. The UN had to broker a ceasefire through its resolutions (1948 and 1949) between the two warring nations (Hilali, 1997). After the war in 1948, the two neighbors locked their horns once again in 1965 over Kashmir. Similarly, in 1971 the real war between India and Pakistan was in the East Pakistan but it spilled over to the Western Pakistan particularly in Kashmir. Moreover, the Siachin glacier dispute is also a thorn in the relationship between India and Pakistan. Furthermore, after becoming nuclear powers in May 1998, the two nations once again fought in Kargil (part of Kashmir). In short, the issue of Kashmir is still not settled and if senses do not prevail then it can lead to nuclear holocaust between the two hostile South Asian neighbors.

#### **Pakistan, OIC and Kashmir**

The issue of Kashmir has always been on the table of negotiations between India and Pakistan. Pakistan has also raised the voice of Kashmiris in other forms as well like the United Nations, SAARC, etc. Apart from this, there is hardly any conference of the OIC where this issue is not discussed. Numerous resolutions have been passed for the solution of the Kashmir dispute from the platform of this organization. The said issue gets further attention and discussion time when the conference is either held in Pakistan or in close cooperation with Pakistan. All these efforts will help in the final peaceful settlement of the issue. One successful example is the Casablanca (Morocco) summit of the OIC in 1984, where a strong-worded resolution was passed against India for the human rights violations committed by its troops in the occupied Kashmir (Singh, 1994).

The relationship between Pakistan and the OIC is very deep. Historically, it has supported the Pakistani government in all its efforts for the peaceful resolution of the problem of Kashmir. Apart from providing verbal support to Pakistan, the OIC has extended its visible assistance in the political as well as economic fields. In this regard, whenever Pakistan needed funds for the projection of the problem of Kashmir, the OIC never shied away from providing what Pakistan demanded. But before accumulating funds and assistance, it is necessary that Pakistan do its homework on the empirical data which shows the exact location of the spending of the money. Pakistan is trying its best to do the needful.

For the solution of any problem, it is necessary that the issue at hand be properly understood in all its dimensions. Pakistan's efforts with regard to the Kashmir dispute are spot on. It has projected the violation of the due rights of Kashmiris by the Indian army in a credible way. For this purpose, Pakistan has used the platform of the OIC in a very productive way. The various resolutions of the OIC and other organizations are witness to that. The three ministerial level resolutions and summits of the OIC, for example, have greatly supported the causes of the Kashmiris and Pakistan. The Islamic world has stood firmly with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and it has been vehemently stressed that the problem of Kashmir should be solved under the resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations. These words were expressed at the Dakar summit (6th) of the OIC. Along with this, a Pakistan-sponsored

resolution about the issue of Kashmir was also accepted unopposed at this particular summit (Orakzai, 2010).

Similarly, the OIC, through its various resolutions, has strongly protested the blatant violations of the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir at the hands of more than half a million Indian troops. These voices from the Islamic world were recorded on the occasion of the formation of the Commission of the Eminent Persons of the OIC in the capital of Pakistan. Moreover, at the turn of the century at the Doha summit (9th), the heads of the Islamic world once again stressed India to stop the atrocities that it commits in the occupied Kashmir. A combined effort to make India refrain from such action was stressed upon. It was also said at this very forum that the Islamic world would support whatever the Kashmiris want (Imam, 2002). It is worth mentioning here that India has always opposed such resolutions which Pakistan has called for on the platform of the OIC or any other organization.

### **Background to the Palestine conflict**

Palestine is a small area of land that has had a significant impact on the old and current history of the Middle East (Pappe, 2004). Palestine's set of experiences has frequently been set apart by political clash and fierce land seizures because of its significance to many significant world religions, and in light of the fact that Palestine is at an important geographic junction between Africa and Asia. Until 1948, Palestine was usually alluded to as the geographic region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. There is no global agreement on borders, and Israel has been involved in numerous regions claimed by the Palestinians for years (Falah and Newman, 1995).

In 1947, after over twenty years of British rule, the United Nations proposed separating Palestine into two sections: a free Jewish state and an autonomous Arab state. Jewish pioneers upheld the move, however numerous Palestinian Arabs, some of whom had been dynamic against British and Jewish interests in the district since the 1920s, firmly went against it (Abonima, 2006). In May 1948, less than a year after the execution of the partition plan, Britain pulled out of Palestine and Israel proclaimed itself a free state to carry out the partition plan. This is an indication of assent. The Arab-Israeli War of 1948, which included Israel as well as Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Toward the conclusion of the conflict in July 1949, Israel was involved in more than 66% of the previous British Mandate, while Jordan had assumed command over the West Bank, and Egypt over the Gaza Strip (Efrat, 2006). In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was set up to create a Palestinian Arab state on land previously controlled under the British Mandate, which the PLO considered to be illegally occupied by the State of Israel. In the Oslo Accords of 1993, the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist in exchange for the formal recognition of the PLO by Israel—a high water mark in Israeli-Palestinian relations. On June 5, 1967, Israel invaded Egypt. Both nations argued that they were acting in self-defense in the ensuing conflict, which ended on June 10, as well as in Jordan and Syria, which sided with Egypt. By the end of the war, Israel had taken possession of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula (a desert area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea) and the Golan Heights (Efrat, 2006).

The primary Oslo Accord set a course of events for the Middle East harmony process and a proposition for the breaking of the Palestinian government into two pieces of Gaza and the West Bank (Shlaim, 2016). This understanding was endorsed in 1993. The process was carried on by the Second Oslo Accord in 1995. Under this accord, a mechanism was agreed upon by all the parties concerned for giving full autonomy by Israel to different areas, including the West Bank.

Unfortunately, the Oslo Accords failed to achieve their primary task of devising a plan of action which could bind both the Palestinians and the Israelis into a peaceful coexistence. Moreover, Palestinians are on the receiving end. They have not been able to achieve their rightful independent international status.

### **Pakistan, OIC and Palestine Conflict**

Pakistan was the practical shape of the Islamic aspirations of the Muslims of the subcontinent. Once created in 1947, Pakistan has always felt the pain of the problems of the Muslim world in its heart. The foremost problem in this regard is the problem of Palestine. Since the end of British imperialism, the Israelis have been dealing with the Palestinians in an inhuman way. Their atrocities have made history. Pakistan has always fought against the subjugation of Arab Muslims at the hands of the Jews. This support for the cause of the Palestinians by Pakistan is not only at the individual level but at all other fora like the OIC and the UN. Pakistan has never recognized Israel on this matter. Pakistan is also among the initiators of many international resolutions against the illegal occupation of the Palestinian

territory by the Israelis. Similarly, Pakistan will never rest unless and until the Palestinians get an independent sovereign state in the Middle East (Touval, 1982).

The OIC was in reality created as a reaction to an event in Palestine. Since then, it has been working for the cause of Palestine as well as for the general unity of the Muslim world. Hardly has there been any meeting of the heads of the states or ministers for foreign affairs of the Muslim countries where the question of an independent state for the Muslims of Palestine has not been raised. One prime example of this is the Dakar (Senegal) summit of the OIC (Aroman, 2011).

The OIC has stressed the problem of Palestine in virtually all its summits, but it was utterly felt that a representative organization of the Palestinians is necessary which can take bold decisions on their behalf. This need was highly stressed at the tenth and eleventh summits of the organization. A Palestinian State based on the desires of the Palestinians is the only acceptable solution to the issue of Palestine. Since its foundation, several emergency meetings have been called by the OIC, and if any breach of the status quo was started by Israel, the OIC has fully denounced it and pressurized the anti-Palestine powers to refrain from cruel actions against the interests of the Arab Muslims. An emergency meeting of the foreign ministers of the Muslim states was called upon by the OIC at Doha (Qatar). At this gathering, Dr. Nizar Madani strongly protested the colonization of Muslim lands by Israel, which has hit innocent Palestinian citizens unjustifiably and badly by stealing Islamic sentiments and stimulating instability in the Middle East as well as around the whole world.

### **The Background of the Afghanistan Conflict**

Afghanistan, which has also been referred to as the Central Asian crossroads and the Asian cockpit, has had a tumultuous past (Kayani, 2015). Resistance and combat have been part of its history, and this country has not been able to maintain complete stability for a sufficient duration in its past and has remained insecure during the reigns of even powerful monarchs. Afghanistan was invaded by many foreigners. The first among those were the Scythians. The White Huns followed the Scythians. After them, Afghanistan was conquered by the Turks. It was then subjugated by the Muslim Arabs (642). They also brought the religion of Islam to the land with them. And after being impressed by the Islamic teachings, an overwhelming number of people embraced Islam.

Towards the end of 1979, the relationship between Soviet Russia and Afghanistan went sour. The Afghan leader, Mr. Hafizullah Amin, was not interested in paying heed to the demands of its Soviet neighbor. The situation got out of the hands of the Afghans on December 24, 1979, when a large influx of the Red Army took place by land and air into Afghanistan, claiming to perform military exercises but in reality helping the Communists in Afghanistan to take over their government. In the skirmishes between the Afghans and the Soviet-led army, Hafizullah Amin was killed (December 26, 1979). Babrak Karmal was brought back to Afghanistan and installed as the new premier of Afghanistan. He belonged to the Parcham group and had a communist agenda. The ensuing war between the Soviet-backed Afghan government and the US/ Pakistan backed Mujahideen continued for a decade. Thousands were killed during the Afghan civil war. The Soviets tried their best to pacify the resistance, but in vain. They were finally convinced that they would not be able to win the Afghan war, so they resorted to dialogue. The prolonged sessions of the dialogues among the representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the USA and the Soviet Union led to the signing of the Geneva Agreements in 1988. Through this, the outstanding disagreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan were resolved under the vigilance of the USA and the Soviet Union. It was further ensured that both the super powers would not poke their noses into the internal matters of Afghanistan. The refugees were guaranteed a safe passage back to Afghanistan. It was also decided that the Soviet troops would completely move out of Afghanistan by February 15, 1989 (Grau, 2007).

### **The OIC and the Problem of Afghanistan**

The signing of an agreement between the United States of America and the Afghan Taliban is supported by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as it will hopefully open the door for intra-Afghan talks and a peaceful political settlement through the Afghan-owned peace process. Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimen, the Secretary-General of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has once more urged all Afghan authorities and groups to cooperate to forge a quick and lasting cease-fire and put an end to the violence. To achieve a thorough reconciliation and enduring peace within the framework of the Afghan-led and Afghan-led peace process, he urged everyone to engage in discussion.

His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, sent a letter to the Secretary-General of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in which he

praised the efforts of the OIC and its Secretary-General to bring peace to Afghanistan. The start of intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha was also hailed by the Secretary-General of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Al-Othaimen underlined his call for negotiators, Afghan authorities, and parties to seize this historic chance for a rapid and durable end to conflict and violence during a virtual speech at the opening ceremony.

The Secretary-General of the OIC called on all Afghan parties to take the historic opportunity to seek and promote dialogue, to put an immediate end to fighting and bloodshed and to work towards reconciliation and sustainable peace. These remarks were made in a statement given digitally at the "2020 Afghanistan Meeting," a ministerial conference held in Geneva and co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Government of Finland and the United Nations on November 23–24, 2020.

In his address, the Secretary General recalled the support provided to the institutions of the OIC and to the Member States, contributing to efforts to facilitate the establishment of an Afghanistan that is standing on its feet with internal harmony and no foreign interference in its internal affairs.

Now the time has come for the entire Muslim world to unite and eliminate their shortcomings by working for the benefit of all Muslims. Here, the role of research scholars is of utmost importance. They should reflect on the contemporary problems faced by the Islamic world and propose workable solutions for them.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between Pakistan and the OIC is very old. It goes back to the time of the creation of the organization in 1969. Pakistan was one of the key players in the formation of the OIC and its various bodies and agencies. The creation of the said organization was a good step in the right direction, but one criticism is often lodged against it. It is not practical in its approach. So far, its various summits have yielded thousands (3200) of resolutions for various political, financial and social considerations, but all are devoid of any practical course of action. One prime example of this is the voting pattern of the members of the OIC at the United Nations. Despite previous agreement, the members of the organization have never voted with one voice in the United Nations except on Bosnia.

The OIC is, in fact, the largest Muslim representative body, which represents 57 countries around the globe. The crux of the matter is that the Muslim world is faced with many problems and all the Muslim states look up toward the OIC for help in their distress, but the role of the latter is not what it should be.

An organization whose position in the past has been little more than a debate forum and a venue for empty declarations for almost four decades will not be able to mend its ways overnight. It is true that its work is not praiseworthy, but it is still working for the benefits of Muslims. The main reason behind the failure of the OIC to take a unified stand against the issues confronted by the Muslim world is that it is an internally divided organization. These centrifugal tendencies are: the Shia-Sunni division, Iran-Saudi Arabian groupings and pro-Islamic vs. pro-European inclinations. The main obstacles facing the Muslim world are Kashmir, Afghanistan and Palestine. Except for making resolutions in this regard, the OIC has done nothing praiseworthy that can create a deterrence against the enemy. The net result is that the aforementioned problems are still not resolved.

Time has not passed yet. Now is the ideal time for the OIC to adjust itself to the realities of the present world. In this regard, the Malaysian summit (2003) was a good step in the right direction. At this summit, on the advice of Pervez Musharraf (Pakistan), a commission of eminent persons was set up. The main purpose of this commission was to give new life to the OIC by proposing structural reformation and ideological coherence. A practical approach to the problems is the need of the hour. To this end, it will not be a shame if, for example, the OIC copies the successes of the European Union.

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