Socializing the Islamic World and the International Society: Adoption of Muslim Minority Issues in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

M. Aulia Rachman

Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University Phase 4
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Abstract
The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is a unique entity, an intergovernmental organization in the era of nation-states based on coreligionist aspirations claiming guardianship or representation of the global Islamic community, the Muslim umma. By bringing together heads of states and foreign ministers to talk on religious issues, or coreligionist-cooperation on secular issues, the OIC attempts to unify religion and formal intergovernmental politics. In doing so, there are instances where the two are not readily compatible and may require a compromise. One such instance is when the OIC decided to involve itself in the issues of the Muslim minority community in non-member states. This paper looks at the development of OIC involvement in the issues concerning Muslim minority communities to examine how the OIC balances its dual commitments integral to its aforementioned twin identity. By considering the formal adoption of Muslim minority issues by the OIC, as shown mainly in resolutions taken at its annual foreign minister conferences.
and triennial summits, this paper argues that the organization treads closer to being a subset of the international society (of nation-states) and its commitment to the (transnational) Muslim umma is gradually framed within the norms and rules of the former. Nonetheless, its function involves engaging the Muslim world with the secular international society and vice versa, and its relevance may rest in its capability to do so effectively.

Keywords
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, international society, transnationalism, Muslim minority

Introduction

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is a unique entity, an intergovernmental organization in the era of nation-states based on coreligionist aspirations claiming guardianship or representation of the global Islamic community, the Muslim umma. Naveed Sheikh writes that the OIC adheres “…to secular logic of multistate functionalism, its ideological source is reflected solely … of Islam, and its purpose is guided by a single imperative … of pan-Islamism.” It must be noted that “pan-Islamism” must be interpreted in its looser context, as Sheikh himself clarifies as “…ideational subscription to unification, or integration, of Muslim peoples regardless of divisive antecedents such as … geography and polity” (emphasis added), and not in its strict definition of the quest for an internally borderless unified Islamic polity. The term “coreligionist” is employed to emphasize the (again, loosely defined) religious basis of the relationship carried within the organization without necessarily invoking an image of an all-encompassing mutual identification that “pan-Islamism” may inadvertently bring to the discussion. How far does the OIC tread closer to being part of the nation-state system and to pan-Islamic ideals is, however, still moot. In the International Relations context, the OIC seems to go against the view that relegates religion into being a strictly informal, sub-state element of international politics, or a transnational element to which national borders matter little.

By bringing together heads of states and foreign ministers to talk on religious issues, or coreligionist cooperation on secular issues, the OIC attempts to bring together religion and formal intergovernmental politics. In doing so, there are instances where the two are not readily compatible and may require a compromise. One such instance is when the OIC decided to involve itself in issues concerning the Muslim minority community in non-member states. The most tangible sign of a religion’s existence is its communities

3 In this regard, compare, for example, the entry Pan-Islamism in Oxford Islamic Studies Online [http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1819], which agrees with Sheikh’s definition in the discussion on post-Ottoman Empire Islamic movements in Peter Mandaville, Global Political Islam (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 46-48.
4 Other scholars have used the term “coreligionist solidarity” at least since 2003, e.g. Rizal Sukma, Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 32, used in the context of the Indonesian foreign policy of not recognizing Israel (not for coreligionist reasons), and Faiz Ahmed, Afghanistan Rising (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 105, in the context of “shared sentiments” of Indian Muslim under British occupation with fellow Muslims living under colonial rule elsewhere.
of believers. These communities, abstract summations of individuals, may organize themselves—or not—in various ways. The borders between them could overlap with other types of social identity as well as geographic proximity. Referring to these communities of believers interchangeably as “people” or “community” involves not surrendering to defining the social borders more rigidly but acknowledging how these borders are porous and flexible. The OIC involvement in the issues of Muslim minority communities is therefore a good place to start if one is to make a critique on the organization’s dual commitment.

That said, the OIC involvement with Muslim minorities is rather understudied. The most (if not only) comprehensive paper, by Saad Khan, published in 2002, is a historical exposition of OIC conducts and stance with only a minimal attempt at deep evaluation. Deeper insights on OIC involvement in Muslim minority community issues are available from works discussing each specific community or issue/conflict, like Alpaslan Ozerdem’s discussion focusing on the Mindanao issue, Paoyee Waesahmae’s thesis focusing on the southern Thailand issue and Hamza Karcic’s paper focusing on Bosnia after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Some works focusing on comparative aspects of Muslim-minority-related conflicts such as the ones by Moshe Yegar and Zachary Abuza also include some discussion on OIC involvement in the issues. As a part of his comprehensive discussion on the OIC, Turan Kayaoglu also briefly discusses the OIC involvement in the issue of Muslim minority communities, framing it as a part of the organization’s limited successes, arguing that some limitations within the organization, including its non-use of hard power, prevented the OIC from exerting a strong influence on the issue.

Nonetheless, instead of elaborating on the OIC involvement in certain Muslim minority issues, this paper looks at the development of OIC involvement in general and how it balances its dual commitments as a member—or aggregation of members—of the secular, formally anarchical international community and as an entity claiming to represent Islam and the Muslim world. Covering the whole story would take at least a volume of a book, and therefore this paper focuses only on one aspect: the formal adoption of Muslim minority issues by the OIC, as shown mainly by the resolutions adopted at its annual foreign minister conferences and triennial summits.

The paper starts with a chronological exposition of the Muslim minority issue adoption in OIC main conferences, followed by a brief explanation to annotate the chronology. The later part discusses how the OIC’s international-transnational dual identity is integral to its involvement in Muslim minority issues, mainly within the (broad) framework of the social constructivist lens of International Relations. This is illustrated by the OIC involvement in three Southeast Asian Muslim minority communities—the Moro people in the Philippines, ethnic Malay Muslims in Thailand Deep South, and Rohingya people in Rakhine, Myanmar, which, at a glance, share enough similarities to expect an equivalent treatment, yet in practice turned out differently.

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6 Khan, “The Organization of the Islamic Conference.”
10 Moshe Yegar, Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and Western Burma/Myanmar (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), and Zachary Abuza, Forging Peace in Southeast Asia, Insurgencies, Peace Processes, and Reconciliation (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Yegar tended to give the OIC more prominent role than did Abuza, in the context of stressing the role of Islam in the conflicts he discussed.
11 Kayaoglu, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Chapter 4.
Timeline of the adoption of the Muslim minority issues by the OIC

This part focuses on how the OIC got involved in Muslim minority issues and how the rhetoric on it developed throughout the OIC main decision-making forums: the Islamic Summits and the annual Foreign Minister Conferences from the inception of what would later be known as the OIC in 1969 following the incident of arson at the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem\textsuperscript{12} to 2017.

The OIC started involving itself in Muslim minority issues as early as 1972, adopting the issues of the Moro people of the Philippines and the Muslims of India at the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Of the two, the issue of Muslims in India was not made into a resolution and mentioned only in the final declaration,\textsuperscript{13} although the situation in the sub-continent in general was mentioned focusing on the ongoing disputes between India and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{14} At the same conference, the OIC also adopted a resolution covering the issue of Muslim minority communities in general, calling for a compilation of studies and statistics of “Muslims living in ‘non-Muslim countries’” (\textit{bilad ‘an ghair al-Islamiyah}).\textsuperscript{15} The resolution was under the heading “Islamic organizations and cultural centers,” while the issue-specific resolution of the Moro people was under its own heading “The condition of Muslims in the Philippines,”\textsuperscript{16} which was placed last on the agenda after the one on Portuguese aggression on Guinea and the (political) situation in the sub-continent. Although the categorization of the adopted resolutions was not yet done, the issue of Muslims in the Philippines was deemed political, while the issue of Muslim minority communities in general was less so.

A year later, in Benghazi, Libya, the Foreign Ministers Conference adopted another resolution clarifying the OIC’s general position on the matter of Muslim minority communities, this time under its own heading.\textsuperscript{17} It was agreed in the conference that “international laws and norms” should be the basis of rights of Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. As mentioned in the previous part, this conference also raised the issues concerning Muslims in the Philippines using a harsher tone condemning the “genocide campaign” and urging the Philippine government to address the issue of migration of Christians from northern Philippines to the Muslim regions in the south as well.\textsuperscript{18} On behalf of the Muslim countries, the conference decided to form a commission comprising Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Somalia, which would later be known as the Committee of Four or the Quadripartite Committee, and would for some time liaison with the OIC in dealing with the issue. At the same time, the resolution also mandated Indonesia and Malaysia to liaison with the fledgling Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), worded to “seek good offices within ASEAN” to help resolve the problem.

Apart from the political and diplomatic rhetoric, the conference also decided to take a socio-cultural step to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future and an economic—or perhaps more fittingly humanitarian—move to alleviate the sufferings of Muslims there. The first was a proposal for founding

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} The first non-organizational content of the Declaration of the Rabat Islamic Summit Conference, Rabat, 1969 considered the arson incident as the entry point from which the participating heads of states voiced their opinions against the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem (and the post-British-colonial Palestine): Kayaoglu, \textit{The Organization of Islamic Cooperation} considers the incident as the trigger for the conditions enabling the post-colonial world-in-the-making and the Arab coalition’s defeat to Israel in the Six Days War.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Declarations and resolutions of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Jeddah, 1972.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Resolution No. 9/3 of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Jeddah 1972.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Resolution No. 73 (6) of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Jeddah 1972.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Resolution No. 12/3 of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Jeddah 1972.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Resolution No. 10/4 of the 4th Foreign Ministers Conference, 1973.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Resolution No. 4/4 of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Benghazi, 1973.
\end{itemize}
Islamic Cultural Centers worldwide, citing the plight of Muslim communities among its raison d'etre.\textsuperscript{19} The second was an issue-specific resolution for Muslims in the Philippines giving it a transnational (or inter-human) dimension of Islam—real economic expectations aside—by calling for each OIC member state to organize fund-raising activities at the governmental and popular level.

On the Indian sub-continent front, the conference adopted a resolution citing a report by the International Red Cross on the maltreatment of Pakistani soldiers and civilians in Indian prisons,\textsuperscript{20} portraying international conflict between the two countries, rather than attention to Muslim minorities per se, as the dominant rhetoric on the issue. This resolution was the last adopted by the conference for a while regarding the issue in the subcontinent.

At the Fifth Foreign Ministers Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1974, the custom of categorizing the adopted resolutions into headings like “Political” and “Economic”\textsuperscript{21} was started, and given the options at the time, the issue of Muslims in the Philippines was labeled “political.”\textsuperscript{22} The issue of Muslim minority communities in general shared the heading in the next conference held the year after in Jeddah.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1976, the Seventh Conference in Istanbul adopted a resolution pledging to support the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus to make their voices heard in international forums. The conference commended the community under the leadership of Rauf Denktash for its contribution to Islamic solidarity.\textsuperscript{24} With brief interruptions by refugee issues in Africa and Kampuchea in 1979-1980, which led the OIC to focus its resolutions on the humanitarian—rather than political—aspects, the issue of Muslim communities of the Philippines and Cyprus would enjoy patronage not shared with other communities until 1986, when the conference adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria against a “policy of forceful assimilation” by the country’s government.\textsuperscript{25} This OIC involvement in the affair of Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria lasted for only half a decade, ending a year after the regime change in the country, with the old regime being responsible for the ethnic Turkish Muslims crisis\textsuperscript{26} that affected ethnic politics both in Bulgaria and Turkey.\textsuperscript{27} This involvement with Bulgaria can be said to mark the end of the first phase of OIC involvement in Muslim minority affairs worldwide.

Although the fall of Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, which practically reset the Bulgarian Muslim problem adopted earlier by OIC, may be considered an independent phenomenon triggered by the country’s social crisis, it was followed by events of a much greater scale. The year 1990 saw signs of the USSR and Yugoslavia collapsing and the end of the Cold War (in the strictest sense). The OIC Foreign Ministers Conference adopted a resolution calling for its Secretary General to study the condition of “Muslim minorities in East European States” and “prepare a comprehensive strategy needed for dealing with the current developments in those States [sic] so as to enable Muslims to maintain their identity…,”\textsuperscript{28} highlighting concern over the looming uncertainty instead of the more usual protest against specific governments. The

\textsuperscript{19} Resolution No. 12/4 of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Benghazi, 1973.

\textsuperscript{20} Resolution No. 5/4 of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Benghazi, 1973.

\textsuperscript{21} Resolutions adopted at the Fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

\textsuperscript{22} Resolution No. 18/5-P of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

\textsuperscript{23} Resolution No. 9/6-P and Resolution No. 10/6-P of the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Jeddah, 1975.

\textsuperscript{24} Resolution No. 16/7-P of the Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Istanbul, 1976.

\textsuperscript{25} Resolution No. 30/16-P of the Sixteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Fez, 1986.

\textsuperscript{26} Darina Vasileva, “Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return,” The International Migration Review 26 (5) (Summer 1992): 342-352.


\textsuperscript{28} Resolution No. 42/19-P (4-a) of the Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Cairo 1990.
concerned development in East (and perhaps also Central) Europe not only gave the OIC a headache in the
form of migration of East European Jews to “occupied Palestinian territory,” but also marked the entrance
of another complicating factor in its involvement with Muslim minority communities, of which only a brief
exposition is provided here.

The 1991 Foreign Ministers Conference in Istanbul “accepted messages” from representatives of
Muslim communities of the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Albania, although no specific resolutions were taken
on them. In the next five years, the Muslims of Yugoslavia (and perhaps Albania) became re-identified as
representatives of Muslims of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sandzak. Of the three, the Sandzak issue disappeared
in 2003 as the mountainous region was (relatively) amicably divided into Serbia and Bosnia and Sarajevo.
(James Ron mentions that even during the peak of the conflict, the Serbian forces showed differential
treatment toward Muslim communities in Sandzak and in Bosnia). Francine Friedman, however, highlights
the fact that although ethnic and religious harassments did occur in the region, he cautioned against the
radicalization of otherwise relatively secular Muslims there.) The issue of Bosnia and Kosovo lingered
on at least until 2017. The Bosnian issue gradually focused on the social, economic, and humanitarian
aspects of rebuilding and development of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a new country, while the issue of
Kosovo developed differently. Although Kosovo became stabilized into a political entity, the OIC member
states were still divided as of 2017 on whether Kosovo’s breakup from Serbia was legitimate. The OIC
General Secretariat has, however, since the leadership of Secretary General Ihsanoglu, supported Kosovan
independence and has been urging the member states to recognize Kosovo as a state.

The important aspect concerning Muslims of former Yugoslavian states is that the nature of their
problem, including their ontology as Muslim peoples, changed along the temporal dimension before and
after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Before the breakup, their issues were not unlike the Moro people of the
Philippines or the Turkish people in Bulgaria (and to a lesser extent Cyprus, until 2004), in which they were
citizens of a legitimate sovereign state and not considered to be colonized by it. The breakup of Yugoslavia
however created new borders and new centers of political power and new sovereign states. It is in this regard
that OIC member states differed, with some members arguing that Kosovo was a part of Serbia rather than
its equal within the pre-breakup Yugoslavia. Such a difference in interpreting the status of Kosovo was
not limited to within the OIC member states: among members of the United Nations (i.e. most nation-states
in general), the split, to some extent, followed the line between the United States and the European Union,
which supported Kosovan independence, and Russia, which supported Serbian claim over it.

Rewinding to the period around the end of the Cold War, in 1990, the 19th Foreign Ministers

29 Resolutions and Final Communiques of 21st (Karachi, 1993), 22nd (Casablanca, 1994), and 23rd (Conakry, 1995) Foreign
Ministers Conferences and the Seventh Islamic Summit, Casablanca, 1994.
30 James Ron, “Boundaries and violence: Repertoires of state action along the Bosnia/Yugoslavia divide,” Theory and
31 Francine Friedman, “The Muslim Slavs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (With Reference to the Sandzak of Novi Pazar):
32 Resolutions on Muslims in Bosnia adopted at OIC Foreign Ministers Conferences, 1994-2017
33 Resolutions on Muslims in Kosovo adopted at OIC Foreign Ministers Conferences, 1994-2017
34 See for instance OIC Journal, “The OIC Secretary General and His Historic Visit to Kosovo,” OIC Journal 24 (July
2013), 18.
Kosovo.” In On the Way to Statehood: Secession and Globalisation, eds. Aleksandar Pavkovic and Peter Rادan (Aldershot:
36 See for instance Sheikh, The New Politics, 75-76.
Conference in Cairo saw the Kashmir issue back in the OIC forums. In the next four conferences, the OIC resolutions on the issue revolved around highlighting Human Rights violations by India in the region all the while asking both India and Pakistan to show restraint. A new dimension of the Kashmir conflict officially made it the OIC forums at the 22nd Foreign Ministers Conference in Casablanca, 1994, this time with an added dimension: support for “the true representatives of Kashmiri people” in form of a commitment to channel their voice into international forums.

From that point on, the OIC started to pick up pace bringing issues of various Muslim minority communities to its forums. In 1995, the 23rd Foreign Ministers Conference in Conakry mentioned in a resolution its concern over the denied rights of the Turkish Muslim community living in Western Thrace, Greece. This issue received more elaborate mention in the following years, focusing on the denial of cultural and religious freedom with the obstruction for assembly and for building a mosque. In a similar spirit, the 25th Foreign Ministers Conference in Doha, 1998, started to separate the cause of Muslims living as religious minority in India from the ongoing Kashmir issue by mentioning their plight in a resolution condemning the destruction of the historical Babri Masjid half a decade earlier by Hindu nationalists. An interesting note here is that for quite a while this series of resolutions was placed under the label “Cultural,” signifying that it was separate from the “Political” resolutions on Kashmir.

The conference in 1995 also highlighted discrimination against Muslim immigrants living in Europe. The broad coverage of Muslim communities, identified specifically as not originally from where they are presently living, started slightly earlier in the 1993 conference when a concern was voiced on the linkage of “diaspora of member states” with their Islamic heritage. After the 9/11 incident, the issue of Muslim diaspora communities became blurred with Muslims living in the West, and their concerns became specified into the problem of Islamophobia and the attribution of terror attacks by Islamist militants to Islam and Muslims in general.

In 2000, two new region-specific issues were adopted at the 27th Foreign Ministers Conference in Kuala Lumpur: (a) the Chechnya issue on which the OIC recognized Russian sovereignty over the region and (b) without specifying the community or region “of some Muslims” in the Union of Myanmar. Five years later, the 32nd Foreign Ministers Conference in Sana’a adopted the issues of Muslims in Xinjiang/East Turkestan while recognizing the sovereignty of the People’s Republic of China. The same resolution also addressed the recent outbreak of violence in southern Thailand, which involved its Malay Muslim community, stating that the conflict was not religious in nature.

As mentioned in the beginning, the case of Muslim minorities in Myanmar and Thailand are particularly interesting and may warrant another paper to provide a more extensive analysis of the issue in relation to the OIC. After its first mention in the 2000 Foreign Ministers Conference, the OIC gradually

37 Resolution No. 21/19-P of the Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Cairo, 1990.
38 Resolution No. 8/22-P of the Twenty Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Casablanca, 1994.
40 Resolution No. 48/8-P(IS) of the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference, Tehran, 1997.
41 Resolution No. 17/25-C of the Twenty Fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Doha, 1998.
43 Resolution No. 37/21-P of the Twenty First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Karachi 1993.
44 For instance, Resolution No. 1/32-MM of the Thirty Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Sanaa 2005.
specified the problem, mentioning the Arakan state in 2003, calling ASEAN countries to “coordinate on the issue” in 2005, and finally commending its own Secretary General for “uniting the ranks of Rohingya Muslim organizations” in 2009. This lack of clear agency and representation of the Rohingya people continued until the establishment in 2011, of an umbrella group of “Rohingya Muslim organizations,” mostly Rohingya diaspora organizations worldwide, under the auspices of the OIC Secretariat General of Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU). The new organization was (and continues to be) headed by Dr. Wakar Uddin, chief of the North American chapter of the Rohingya diaspora organization, a professor of plant pathology at an American university and the former chief of a charity organization, Muslim Aid USA. Although a political activist of some sort, his background point toward out a more humanitarian than insurgency-inclined activism. The Malay Muslim community in Thailand formally made it to the OIC agenda in 2005 following the escalation of tension in the Thai Deep South provinces where Muslims form a significant part of the population. The early 2000s escalation of tension culminated in an assault by Thai security personnel at the historic Krue Se mosque killing scores of Muslims in 2004, and in 20015, a violent response by Thai police to a related mass protest killed around 70 protesters: this incident later came to be called the Tak Bai incident. At the 2005 conference, the OIC only noted in its resolution the activity of its fact-finding mission, and declared in the final communique (though not adopted into resolution) that what occurred in southern Thailand was “not a religious conflict.” Nonetheless, in the following years, the OIC consistently adopted a resolution on the issue, although always in a reserved tone, and outside the conference, it maintained a working relation with the Thai government across ruling regimes regarding the peace process in the southern region.

The 34th Conference of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad, 2007, addressed the problem of unspecified Muslims living as minority in African states, especially the least developed countries. Between 2009 and 2010, the OIC adopted a resolution each for the Muslim communities in Indochina and Latin America, both focusing more on strengthening the contact between these communities and the Muslim world and assisting in their development than on the more common issue of conflict between minority groups and their government or other demographic groups of the country in which they live. Such conflict-response resolutions, however, made a comeback quite soon in 2013 with the adoption of a resolution expressing concern toward a “growing manifestation of hostility” against Muslims in Sri Lanka. In 2014, the OIC also adopted a resolution underscoring the importance of safeguarding the interests of the Tatar Muslim community in Crimea following the growing hostility between Russia and Ukraine over the region.

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50 Resolution No. 4/36-MM of the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Damascus, 2009.
51 “Rohingya leaders agree to form the Arakan Rohingya Union,” OIC Journal 17, June 2011, 34.
59 The OIC visited Thailand during PM Thaksin Shinawatra’s term (“OIC Doubts Transfers Were Enough,” Bangkok Post, June 4, 2005), PM Surayud Chulanont, who presided after the coup against Thaksin (OIC Journal 16, March 2011, 20), and PM Yingluck Shinawatra (OIC Journal 25, December 2013, 30).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>3rd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), Jeddah</td>
<td>Muslim peoples living in non-member states (in general)</td>
<td>Resolution No. 7/3-6 recommended compiling studies and statistics of Muslims living in non-member states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>7th ICFM, Istanbul</td>
<td>Indo-Pakistan subcontinent</td>
<td>No resolution; Final Declaration highlighted the Kashmir dispute alongside the Pakistan-Bangladesh issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muslims in the Philippines</td>
<td>Resolution No. 12 expressed serious concern over the plight of Muslims in the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>7th ICFM, Istanbul</td>
<td>Turkish Muslims in Northern Cyprus</td>
<td>Resolution No. 16/7-P considered the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, commending the community for contributing to Islamic solidarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16th ICFM, Fez</td>
<td>Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria</td>
<td>Resolution No. 30/16-P highlighted concern over “forceful assimilation policy” by the Bulgarian government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>19th ICFM, Cairo</td>
<td>Muslims in Eastern Europe</td>
<td>Resolution No. 42/19-P requested the Secretary General to convene a meeting to study the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>21st ICFM, Karachi</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Resolution No. 7/21-P condemned Serbian “genocidal aggression”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>23rd ICFM, Conakry</td>
<td>Sandzak</td>
<td>Resolution No. 19/23-C highlighted the community’s situation alongside the Bosnian issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turkish Muslims in Western Thrace (Greece)</td>
<td>Resolution No. 37/23-P mentioned that the community has been denied rights by the Greek government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>25th ICFM, Doha</td>
<td>Muslims in India</td>
<td>Resolution No. 17/25-C mentioned urgency to keep Indian Muslim minorities safe in light of the violence toward Muslim communities and destruction of Islamic objects of worship, mainly the demolition of the Babri Masjid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>27th ICFM, Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>Resolution No. 13/27-P requested the Secretary General to talk with both Chechen and Russia regarding the conflict in Chechnya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muslims in Myanmar</td>
<td>Resolution No. 58/27-P deplored “continuing oppression and displacement” of some Muslims in Myanmar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 Timeline of adoption of Muslim minority issues in OIC foreign minister conferences

This timeline showed that OIC was not involved nearly as extensively in Muslim minority issues in its first two decades compared to the next two. In the period until 1990, the issue of Moro people was the only case in which the OIC maintained a sustained involvement in an issue not directly involving a member state as part of the issue, that is, the OIC and its member states became involved as external actors exerting influence from without. The other three specific-community issues (Kashmir/Indo-Pakistan front, Bulgaria, Cyprus) involved two of the OIC member states even before the OIC adopted the issue, and they could be seen less as external actors than as part of the problem themselves, in varying degrees: The issue of Kashmiri people is directly related to the separation between India and Pakistan and the latter’s claim of representing Muslims in the sub-continent. However, issues concerning the Turkish community both in Cyprus and Bulgaria stemmed from the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in which its legal successor and the OIC member state, the Republic of Turkey, was involved both socio-culturally as a co-ethnic nation-state bound to (or perhaps exercising) ethnic politics and politically through multiple treaties governing the transfer of former imperial territories and the populations living there. Contrary to the aforementioned three cases,

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61 See for instance Kucukcan, “Re-claiming Identity.”
the main sponsor of early OIC involvement in the Philippines was Libya, a country that does not share geographic proximity with the Philippines and (to a great extent, consequentially), has no shared culture and history except that both Libyans and the Moro people were explicit in pronouncing Islam as an important part of their identity at the time.\footnote{Though Malaysia also played a significant role, Libya was arguably the main sponsor at least as apparent from the extent and openness of the support; see Marites Vitug and Glenda Gloria, \textit{Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao} (Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, 2000), 60-61, and Yegar, \textit{Between Integration}, 281.}

In the next part, aspects of OIC involvement in Muslim minority affairs is elaborated: the first and most readily visible involvement is the number of Muslim minority communities whose issues were taken up by the OIC; and the second is the status of the issues taken vis-à-vis the OIC member state(s), focusing on whether an OIC member state is directly involved in a particular adopted issue; and third, is the nature of OIC involvements themselves, especially in how the organization framed the issue and its involvement in the matter. These explanations would help annotate the chronological exposition given above to facilitate discussion on how the relationship between the OIC and the Muslim minority communities could contribute to the study of the intersection between the nation-state system and the transnational Muslim world.

**Discussing the issue adoptions**

Ever since the OIC first took up the Muslim minority community issue as an agenda in its decision making forums in 1972 until 1990, the OIC consistently discussed and adopted resolutions only on four Muslim minority communities: Muslims in India-controlled Kashmir, Moro people of the Philippines, Turkish people in Cyprus, and the Turkish people in Bulgaria. However, the nuance of helping the struggle of Kashmiri people and for Kashmir to become a political entity of its own was pronounced only in 1990, and the OIC resolutions before that focused more on the conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory and to some extent on the other excesses of the Indo-Pakistan separation. Beside these four, the OIC adopted a couple of resolutions on Muslim refugees in Uganda and a resolution on Muslim refugees from Kampuchea, which focused on humanitarian actions like urging member states to provide asylum to the refugees and subsidizing those who would do so. Unlike in the four earlier cases, they tended not to portray the Muslim communities as political actors in their own right. Moreover, it makes sense to rule these out from the discussion at hand because of the short lifetime of these issues on the OIC agendas.

The two decades between 1990 and 2010 saw the rapid growth of the adoption of issues related to Muslim minority communities by the OIC. The breakup of Yugoslavia put the issues of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sandzak on the table, and a while later, the issue of Chechnya, which is arguably a leftover from the USSR breakup, also joined the list. The crisis concerning Muslims in Myanmar—later specified as the Rohingya issue—also made it to the forum at the same time as the Chechnya. This period also saw another ethnic Turkish community, now those living in the Western Thrace region of Greece, included in the OIC agenda, with the issue of Muslims living in India getting a separate set of resolutions from the Kashmiris. Next came the Muslim minority communities of (the People’s Republic of) China, among which the Uyghur people in Xinjiang or East Turkestan was specified as receiving less than desirable treatment from the government in Beijing. Three other entries might not qualify as specific “people,” but they were rather marked by (social and political) geographic proximity: Muslims living as minorities in the least-developed countries (LDCs) in Africa, Indochina (specifically Cambodia and Vietnam), and Latin America.

At the 29th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Khartoum, Sudan, in 2002, the OIC...
started to separate the issue of Muslim minority communities from the more general “political issues” passing resolutions on the topic under an independent heading that would be applied from thereon. Previously, nearly all resolutions concerning the Muslim minority issue were placed under the political category and given the suffix “-P” (e.g. Resolution No. 13/27-P). However, after the 2002 ICFM, most resolutions on the issue have the suffix “-MM” (e.g. Resolution No. 1/29-MM). The effect of this change, if only rhetorically, is twofold. First, by this, the OIC acknowledges the special status of the Muslim minority issue and how it extends “beyond politics.” At the same time, however, it also allows the OIC to distinguish between its commitments to different Muslim minority communities, as demonstrated at the 2002 conference by keeping the problems associated with the breakup of Yugoslavia and the problems of Cyprus and Jammu- Kashmir under the heading “political,” instead of bringing them together with the issues of Philippines and Myanmar, which were given the new “Muslim minority” tag. This differentiation in turn allowed the OIC later to support the formation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and, to a lesser degree, Northern (Turkish) Cyprus as a country while still framing the Philippines and Myanmar issues as associated within the sovereignty of these countries. This separation was also relevant when the OIC adopted its new charter half a decade later.

Meanwhile, the summit conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, just a year after the one in 2003 saw another development in the OIC rhetoric on the Muslim minority issue. The summit adopted a resolution partially accepting a proposal submitted by Oman a few years earlier to change the term “Muslim minority” in the OIC rhetoric into “Muslim community”; the decision was however to change that wording only in the Arabic language instruments of the OIC, while retaining keeping the term “minority” in the English and French language version of the instruments. The decision can be summarized as follows: The OIC proposes the use of the term “Muslim groups and/or Muslim communities” (al-Mujtama’ al-Islami and/or al-tajamma’ al-Islami) in Arabic instruments and the term “Muslim minorities” and “minorites musulmanes” in English and French, respectively. Although the change in wording is beyond the scope of this paper as an analysis of the underlying social, cultural, and political contexts merits its own research paper, for the discussion at hand, it signified the importance of the issue for OIC member states as such a decision was taken by the forum in a negotiated manner, instead of just wholly accepting it or wholly rejecting it.

In 2005, the OIC started an organizational reform formalized through a Ten-Year-Program-of-Action midway through the adoption of a new charter in 2008. Besides being twice as long—36 articles to the original 14—the new charter specified many of its general rules and added detailed guidelines for its operations. It also extended the term of office for each Secretary General from two years, extendable once, to five years and extendable once, which would apply to the Secretary General in-charge of leading the organizational reform, Turkey’s Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, a former chief of the OIC’s cultural body.

Among the changes in the new charter, rhetoric and technical, two things are crucial for the discussion at hand. The first is that the new charter rhetorically (or depending on interpretation, more fundamentally) recontextualized the “Islamic cooperation” of the OIC, moving on from the Cold War and post-colonial contexts that contributed to the making of the original charter. Gone was the powerful yet-
vague commitment of “strengthening the struggle of all Muslim peoples with a view to safeguarding their
dignity, independence and national rights” (emphasis added) as written in the original charter. Two clauses in
the new charter instead became its spiritual successors: “To support the restoration of complete sovereignty
and territorial integrity of any Member State under occupation, as a result of aggression, on the basis of
international law and cooperation...” referring to the national rights of member states, and “To safeguard
the rights, dignity and religious and cultural identity of Muslim communities and minorities in non-Member
States...” in reference to Muslim peoples outside member states. This change of rhetoric in the new charter
reflected a position the OIC adopted back in the mid-1970s when it first raised the issue of Muslims living
in the Philippines, thereby, resolving the dilemma of dual commitment by sticking to the primacy of state
sovereignty by default.

If the official shift in rhetoric limited the options and capability of the OIC in dealing with Muslim
minority issues—although arguably it had already given up the use of hard power on such issues three
decades earlier—it apparently retained (or probably gained) some degree of perceived-representation of
Muslim communities worldwide. Although Saad Khan may be right in claiming that the OIC could not act
much against modern big powers like China and Russia regarding the issue of Xinjiang/East Turkestan
Muslims or Chechnya, records of interactions between these two countries and the OIC do exist. In
conducting diplomacy with the organization’s Secretariat General and member states throughout the early
2010s, both China and Russia made conscious attempts to portray that as a country they have no grudge
or malicious intent against Islam or the Muslim umma by stressing (vaguely defined) Islam and (non-
or-less-problematic) Muslim communities as part of these nations’ culture and history and by organizing
events promoting cultural and economic cooperation between them and the Muslim world, with the OIC
Secretariat General seemingly approving these courtships while throwing soft rebukes every once in a
while. This does not disprove Khan’s aforementioned claim, and in a sense supports it as the approach by
China and Russia could be interpreted as an effort to distance the ongoing issues of Chechnya and Xinjiang
away from the Islamic dimension and frame them as strictly domestic issues of ethnic politics and nation
building. Nonetheless, through these policies, China and Russia became aware of the need to court the OIC
to avoid a thorough anti-Islam image, to some extent giving importance to such identity politics in their
foreign relations. In the post-Cold War world, this would have included maintaining “friendship” in the
context of the so-called “New Great Game” not only in the (to some extent) Muslim central Asia but also in
the wider geopolitics stretching from Africa to the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia, all of which
include countries with some degree of identification with (however vaguely defined) Islam and in turn
representation in the OIC.

The second crucial change is about the rule of accession for potential members. Works on the OIC
written before (and some after) the adoption of the new charter commonly mentioned how the OIC did not

68 Article I (4) of the Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2008.
70 Khan, “The Organization of the Islamic Conference.”
71 See for instance, in the Chinese case “First high-level Chinese delegation to the OIC discusses communication
72 “Concern over sentencing Uygur Muslims in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China,” OIC Journal 25, December
2013.
73 William H. Overholt, Asia, America, and the Transformation of Geopolitics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008),
218-219.
define the term “Muslim states,” which was the only basic requirement for countries wishing to become a member state—subject to the approval of the Foreign Ministers Conference.\textsuperscript{74} The new charter revised the rule so that to apply for membership status, a country needs to be both a member of the United Nations and have Muslim-majority population, although adding a subsequent clause saying that the new rule does not affect current members,\textsuperscript{75} a number of whom, especially those in Africa, are not Muslim-majority although Muslims are prominent members of either the government as a whole or the foreign policy sector. This revised rule limited accession for even “OIC-approved” entities and de facto states with Muslim majority population like Northern Cyprus and Kosovo, as they had to be first recognized as members of the UN. On the contrary, it prevented countries with significant but minority Muslim population like India as well as countries with longstanding relations to the OIC like the Philippines and already-an observer Thailand from becoming full members. What did not change, by the way, is that the OIC would only accept “states” as its members, reaffirming its decision back in the 1970s to not accord recognition beyond observer-ship to representatives of Muslim minority communities.

In the specific context of the issues concerning Muslim minority communities, the new rule practically changed the cards that could be played both by the OIC member states and the political entities representing Muslim minority communities. Currently—and in the future—non-member states having a problem with Muslim minority communities inside its border would have to worry less about the OIC giving de facto recognition to the Muslim region and jeopardizing its territorial integrity. On the other hand—perhaps depending on a later interpretation of the clause—OIC member states may have less at stake when they voice their support for certain Muslim minority communities in the forum as, by definition, the OIC could not grant membership to those not recognized by the broader international community in the United Nations. Outside the Muslim minority context, the new rule gives the OIC a sense of (literal) democracy. It answered the question of OIC membership—and hence, what constitutes an “Islamic” or “Muslim” country for that specific purpose—by specifying that the majority of the population needs to be Muslim for a state to be admitted as a new member. While the new rule does not retroactively affect the older, non-Muslim majority members, in the future, the OIC may specify its rhetoric of being the representative of the Muslim world, although it should be noted that given this new rule, it is quite unlikely that the OIC would have new members soon unless some Arab countries undergo a peaceful split or Kosovo (and perhaps Northern Cyprus) manages to convince the broader international community to accept and recognize its statehood.

The relevance of the OIC: brief elaboration and theory mirrors

The previous sections have shown the timeline of how the OIC adopted Muslim minority issues as the agenda for its conferences and the rhetorical context in which the OIC framed—or may frame—its involvement. In retrospect, although it has hardly ever been at the center of issues concerning Muslim minority communities, the OIC has nonetheless been perceived as a relevant actor, and it has somehow maintained a degree of relevance well into the present time. Using the cases of OIC involvement in three Muslim minority communities of Southeast Asia, as mentioned early on, this section illustrates how the OIC position vis-à-vis the Muslim world and the international community is integral to the organization’s

\textsuperscript{74} For instance, two texts specifically about OIC: Sheikh, \textit{The New Politics of Islam}, p. 39, and Kayaoglu, \textit{The Organization of Islamic Cooperation}, and one discussing OIC involvement in international law-making: Samuel, \textit{The OIC, the UN, and Counter-Terrorism Law-Making}, p. 27; Article VIII of the Charter of the Islamic Conference.

\textsuperscript{75} Article 3(2) and 3(3) of the Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
relevance regarding the issue of Muslim minority communities.

It would be good to start the discussion by describing what kind of powers the OIC has when involving itself in Muslim minority issues. The term “power” here simply means the ability of the OIC to achieve a certain goal, which in this context mostly means its capability to exert an influence in the politics of Muslim minority communities and the concerned non-member states in which they live; in other words, it refers to the capability to be relevant in the issue, and hence the heading of this section. In this regard, the framework of power employed here does not deviate far from K. J. Holsti’s formulation, although the discussion below shows that at times such a capability requires not only inherent assets (those already present in the OIC, material or otherwise), but also a synthesis of ideas and understanding of the situation—how the inherent assets become relevant—akin to Alexander Wendt’s elaboration of the constructive relation between knowledge, power, and interest. In view of this, the paper focuses on how the OIC deals externally, assuming for the sake of argument that it is either an agency-wielding actor in its own right or is a secondary identity of member states acting under its banner.

First, with a commitment to frame Muslim minority issues within the realm of the host-country’s sovereignty, it is safe to say that this rules out the use of military force—the hardest form of power as a valid option. The next valid option is economic power, which is in two forms. One is the ability of OIC member states to deal damage to a non-member state posing problem for its Muslim minorities through trade—or refusal to trade. Although the rhetoric of asking member states to exert economic pressures on a country deemed to be abusing its Muslim minorities has become less prominent presently—and perhaps less viable—the idea that OIC is really capable of exerting economic pressure was clearly perceived by both by the OIC member-states and by Thailand and Myanmar in the 1970s when the oil price was increased, an OIC agenda initially meant to support the Palestinian cause. While the details are not clear, it has been reported that the Philippines was either embargoed or threatened with an oil embargo by some Arab countries around the period of President Marcos’ martial law.

The other form of economic power vested with the OIC is the material support it can offer for the cause of a Muslim minority group, which could translate into aid for armed insurgencies as was the case with Libyan support for Moro rebels and the alleged Malaysian support for southern Thailand separatists.

Looking back, such direct support hardly exists in the OIC repertory—the aforementioned acts were carried out by member states instead of the organization itself: in the last two decades, attempts by OIC member states to use the organization to channel logistical support directly into an ongoing armed conflict during the breakup in Yugoslavia also failed. The more common rhetoric—and more viable for realization—is relief aid for depraved Muslim communities. If the relation between a host-state government, the Muslim minority community, and OIC countries is amicable or at least conducive, the OIC also donates aid including

77 Alexander Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 96-98, 135.
78 “For the sake of argument” because previous works on OIC have already exhaustively discussed how its internal politics severely limit the decisions it can make as a united body. Naveed Sheikh went to the extent of concluding that the OIC is “an arena” of contention among its dominant members (Sheikh, The New Politics, 129).
80 Paust and Blaustein, “The Arab Oil Weapon.”
82 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent, 163; Stern, Nurr Misuari, 45-46.
84 OIC ICFM and Summit adopted various resolutions on this.
for regional infrastructure development likely channeled through the host-state government. Between 1977 and 2011, the Islamic Development Bank—the main financial arm of OIC—disbursed USD 284.5 million for non-member countries, without specifying which community/country got how much of it. The number, while not small, is meager compared to the total financing disbursed by the IDB between 1975 and 2011, totaling USD 87.2 billion.

The other form of OIC power—the main concern of this paper—is the international personality of the OIC and its capability to channel an issue to international forums. This comes from the status of OIC member-states as sovereign, theoretically part of the international community of equals. On the one hand, the OIC can considered an international forum, a sub-community of sovereign states in their own right. This part is especially visible in its early days and within the context of post-colonial global politics, when Muslim minority groups tried to involve themselves in OIC conferences, probably as much for material support as for legitimacy, which may stand to reason considering how the connection and acknowledgment of the OIC helped keep the Moro National Liberation Front in the game after its real power on the ground waned. In turn, member states like Pakistan and Turkey also attempted to bring OIC attention’s to an issue by framing it with the rhetoric of Islamic solidarity as was the case with the Kashmir dispute and the split of Cyprus. On the other hand, more recently, the OIC also became a vehicle for bringing an issue to the broader international forum of the United Nations, by sponsoring resolutions concerning the Rohingya people at the UN General Assembly. It should be noted, though, that this power of the OIC becomes relevant only if the other parties deem it so. For Thailand, since the 1970s and well into 2005, the unwanted attention that the OIC could bring seemed enough to convince the country to communicate with the organization, probably due to Thai’s persistence in keeping its Southern Border Province problem a domestic one—as shown explicitly when a remark of ethnic and religious solidarity by a Malaysian government official toward Malay Muslims of South Thailand caused a ruckus in Bangkok in 1974. Conversely, regarding the Rohingya issue, the OIC only managed to attract the Myanmar government’s attention when the country was starting on its course of democratization.

A critical aspect of OIC use of its international identity as a form of power is its ability to link the identity-as-states (i.e. commonly accepted international personality) of its members—hence members of the international society—and the transnational Islamic umma (or at least the notion of it). Being a member

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85 For instance, see Economic Research and Policy Department, Islamic Development bank, 39 Years in the Service of Development (Jeddah: Islamic Development Bank, 2013), 8; See also multiple ICFM resolutions for development aid—usually mandating Islamic Development Bank to manage the aids.
86 Islamic Development Bank, 39 Years in the Service of Development, 9.
87 Islamic Development Bank, 39 Years in the Service, 5.
88 See, for instance, the 1974 ICFM in Kuala Lumpur, as mentioned in Waesahmae, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Khan, The Organization of Islamic Conference.
89 Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent, 107, 109, 159-160: Abuza, Forging Peace, 81-83.
90 Khan, The Organization of Islamic Conference.
92 “Malaysia asked for explanation” in Bangkok Post 19 June 1974, p. 1; see also Yegar, Between Integration, 66, although Yegar tended to downplay the issue’s long-term importance; well into the 2000s, news of external actors getting involved in Thai southern problem still counted as a scandal at the domestic level: see, for instance, Thaweeporn Kummetha, “Interview: What is being discussed by OIC,” Prachatai English (2016), https://prachatai.org/english/print/5763.
93 The OIC pretty much started getting a response from Myanmar government when the military junta started to loosen its absolute control, see e.g. Joint Communiqué between the Central Committee for Implementation of Stability and Development in the Rakhine State of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and OIC, November 17, 2013: around this time, the OIC members also managed to sponsor the United Nations General Assembly 3rd Committee Resolution No. A/C.3/68/L.55 on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.
of the international society, the OIC could lend a form of credential and some degree of legitimacy to the Muslim minority communities it represents. On the other hand, its transnational linkage could be used to establish a mediated connection between an otherwise flawed network inside a defined border, which many so-called nation states are. The host-states would entrust (with varying degrees of trust) the OIC with the mediation, believing in the organization’s commitment to keep the rhetoric of the issue within the host-states’ sovereignty. This practice, formalized in early resolutions on the Muslims of the Philippines in the 1970s and reiterated when OIC adopted its new charter in 2008, can be seen in the Wendtian context as socializing the supposedly transnational umma into the state-based international system and vice versa. Borrowing Buzan’s categorization of primary institutions of the international society, this commitment and act of the OIC could be interpreted as placing transnational linkage of coreligionist solidarity within the frame of the institutions of sovereignty and/or territoriality, giving national governments the final say in the issue yet reshaping the pattern of relationship so that the Muslim minority communities might have a firm place in the governments’ political calculations. This framing is in turn made possible because the OIC member states and non-member states hosting the Muslim communities in their territories belong to, or accept to some extent, the institution of diplomacy, which provides them a forum almost-exclusively belonging to fellow sovereign states.

On the ground, this “linkage” could translate into both pleasant development and otherwise to actors involved in the Muslim minority issues. On the one hand, it can be a “blessing” for non-member states’ government in the form of “free” resource, that is, the development aids provided by OIC, its organs, or member states in an act of selective altruism quite similar to diaspora politics, meant to help the Muslim minority if managed properly would benefit the recipient country as a whole. Yet, this selective altruism could also jeopardize the OIC—and the Muslim people’s—interest as, through the lens of other communities in the host-country, transnational Islam embodied by the OIC could be perceived as a latent threat, as was the case in both Thailand and Philippines in the 1970s, and in Myanmar in the 2000s. Without a good public diplomacy, the appearance of transnational Islam could worsen social tension in a country. Another point worth noting here is that the OIC’s linkage would only be valuable on the ground only when it is established in the first place. In both the Philippines and the Thailand cases, the so-called representatives

94 Historians of politics like Benedict Anderson (see e.g. *Imagined Communities*), political geographers like John Agnew (see e.g. *Globalization and Sovereignty*), and political anthropologists/theorists like Peter Mandaville (see e.g. *Transnational Muslim Politics*) each had different explanations; the main point is that many modern nation states do not necessarily have control, or even proper linkage, with societies confined within its border owing to historical differences or other factors.
95 See e.g. Resolution No. 18/5-P of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.
99 A common sentiment by Suharto of Indonesia, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore—referring to the Mindanao problem and involvement mainly by not only Libya but also other OIC members—was that the “Asian problem” should be resolved from within; see e.g. “Post-Summit Accord Cited,” *Bulletin Times* June 1, 1974, 1, and “Lee Kuan Yew also Advocates Non-Intervention,” *Bulletin Times* June 2, 1974, 1 and 4.
of the Muslims communities showed their willingness to harness support from Muslim countries, hence enabling OIC participation on their side. Taking the example of the Philippines case, both MNLF and MILF do not seem to reject the international community as a whole, and it may be assumed that even if they somehow manage to secede from the Philippines, they might join the international community as a state. A so-called third “Islamic rebel” group in the Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf group, which closely identifies itself with the international terrorist group Al-Qaeda, was practically outside the direct reach of the OIC. Theoretically, this suggests the limits of the Islam-sovereign state linkage that the OIC could claim and offer to its non-member states.

The notion of stigma management in international society as elaborated by Rebecca Adler-Nissen is useful to explain the mixed success of the OIC’s international personality and international-channeling as a power. Adler-Nissen elaborated the notion of shaming and exclusion discussed among the proponents of the international society theory and more generally social constructivists, explaining its root in Durkheim’s theory in sociology, according to which, sanction by society against deviations defined the limit of norms and values in the society. Taking off from there, she proposed that there are three methods by which countries stigmatized by other members of the international society—countries or intergovernmental organizations—could cope with it: (a) recognizing the stigma and committing to conform to the society, exemplified by post-Nazi Germany vis-à-vis the post-World War II world, especially the West; (b) rejecting the stigma typically by claiming that other members of the society share the same stigmatized conducts or characteristics and thus reducing its value as a deviation, exemplified by Right Wing-controlled Austria in in early 2000s vis-à-vis the European Union; and (c) using the strategy of counter-stigmatization through affiliating oneself with “another society,” accepting the stigma but labeling it as belonging to another—now irrelevant—moral order, as shown by Cuba vis-à-vis the United States during the Cold War when the former sought support from the Communist Bloc and the USSR. The OIC on the one hand serves as a society in its own right, a platform of counter-stigmatization for its member states, like Turkey in its support for the ethnic-Turkish-dominant Northern Cyprus and to a lesser extent Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute. On the other hand, toward Myanmar—and to some extent Thailand and the Philippines—the OIC acted as a “stigmatizer” who shamed the countries in the bigger forum of the international society deemed to contain both the OIC and the stigmatized countries, i.e. the United Nations. This way, Myanmar became susceptible to OIC pressure only when the broader international community became more relevant through the opening up of the country. On the OIC side, this reliance on the broader international community also sets limit to how far it can claim the moral high ground when stigmatizing non-member states: the OIC is just as susceptible as any of its members to shaming by the society—including other aspects within the rules of the game. In this regard, Kayaoglu commented that the increasing reliance of the OIC to the acknowledgment by the United Nations and the West seemed to swing its rhetoric toward liberalism, an aspect many of its member states are infamous for not doing well, although being a collective actor, it could also contribute in the norm-

102 MNLF practically saw their struggle as a continuation of the anti-colonial struggle, See Stern, Nur Misuari, 83, Appendix; Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent, 46; MILF compared to MNLF emphasized Islamism in its governance more and less on Moro nationalism: but, nonetheless, they have maintained respect to some extent toward other Muslim countries although declaring that if they do become independent, they would make a new model instead of emulating Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, see Vitug and Gloria, Under the Crescent, 111-112.


making of the wider system.\textsuperscript{105}

Concluding remarks: OIC, the Muslim world and the international structure

When the OIC was still in its infancy in 1986, Martin Kramer published a book discussing the (mostly failed) attempts of the organizing of global Muslim congresses.\textsuperscript{106} On why Muslim leaders or polities failed to organize a lasting institution—despite clear foreseeable benefits—Kramer remarked that lack of “inspiring leadership, radiance and purpose” prevented Muslim communities/representatives in congresses to overcome their difference and turn these congresses into a lasting institution.\textsuperscript{107} On the other hand, he remarked that, the attempts to keep organizing yet other congresses were not futile in itself. Facing the status quo of disintegration after the collapses of caliphates and empires alike, each congress, “drew on the traditional concept of the \textit{umma} [sic], the universal indivisible nation of Islam…represented a standing protest by Muslim cosmopolitans against the arbitrary division of the Muslim world by foreign powers, a division accepted so readily by pragmatic secular nationalists.”\textsuperscript{108}

Commenting on (at the time) the newest attempt of global Muslim congress—presumably the OIC, though not mentioned by name—Kramer said: “…This time its purpose was the establishment of an organization of Muslim states, many of which had just achieved their independence…Thus was realized, \textit{in form if not in substance}, the vision of those Muslims…in the shadow of the West.\textsuperscript{109}"

As discussed early on, the OIC early days happened within the broader contexts of the ongoing Cold War as well as the \textit{still in-the-making} post-colonial period. If the former dictated that smaller and weaker states must maneuver between the super powers, the latter meant that for many nations, national border and statehood status were still questionable and moot. In this regard, Kramer’s remark came partly from his observation that two pressing matters that led to the founding of the OIC were the issue of Palestine and the breakup of India and Pakistan; the issue of nationalism, statehood, and territorial integrity of nation-states where Muslims live was now a problem of the Muslim world—the line between transnational and international became thin for the \textit{umma}. Although these were not the only determining factors, the contribution is visible in forming expectations of countries that constituted OIC founding members, in addition to shaping the space in which the political maneuverings happened as illustrated in the abundance of anti-colonial rhetoric in the 1974 OIC founding charter. One aspect relevant here is the yet-undefined term of “Muslim peoples” that the OIC committed to assist in pursuing independence and national rights.\textsuperscript{110}

In this context, it is not strange that ethnic liberation movements are being nominated by a Muslim country and given credential and international personality by the OIC—as with the Libyan sponsoring of MNLF. Within this global context, the actions of each relevant OIC member state must also be considered, including how Libyan action was seemingly motivated in part by its leader Muammar Gaddafi’s personal ambition in

\textsuperscript{105} At least for its vote pooling in the United Nations in certain aspects of Human Rights Issue and concerning the so-called defamation of religion: see also Katja L. H. Samuel, \textit{The OIC, the UN, and Counter-Terrorism Law-Making: Conflicting or Cooperative Legal Orders?} (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2013) for the OIC role in shaping international counter-terrorism regime.


\textsuperscript{107} Kramer, Islam Assembled 166-168.

\textsuperscript{108} Kramer, Islam Assembled 168-169.

\textsuperscript{109} Kramer, Islam Assembled 169.

\textsuperscript{110} Article II, Charter of the Islamic Conference, 1974
contributing to the cause of some sort of Muslim liberation movement.\textsuperscript{111}

In the post-Cold War world, though, the OIC needed to redefine its role. The OIC’s new charter signifies its status as a cooperation-based international/intergovernmental organization inclined to global governance with concern for trade and development and a strong rhetoric of adherence to United Nations’ rules of the game.\textsuperscript{112} The decision to clarify its position vis-à-vis Muslim people living in non-member states, not seen as colonizing them, was taken and the precedent made in the 1970s was formalized in the new charter, which clarifies the extent to which the OIC would endeavor to help different types of “Muslim peoples.” The rhetoric of independence and national rights now belong specifically to those living under colonial occupation, while Muslim minority communities living in sovereign non-member states are entitled to some degree of religious and social rights without any notion to help them secede from their host country. As the OIC only picked up the pace of issue adoption since the 1990s, it is mostly in this context that the OIC involves itself in the issues of Muslim minority communities.

It would be tempting to agree with Kramer that three decades after his remark, this modern Muslim congress was really progressing “…in the shadow in the West,”\textsuperscript{113} and between “Muslim” (the substance) and “congress (of countries),” (the form) the OIC is mostly the latter. There is however another way to look at the situation. Crucial in understanding OIC involvements in Muslim minority issues is the social constructivist notion of role-assigning, which is done simultaneously by OIC member states, the Muslim minority communities, their host (non-OIC member) states, and the international community. The substance of OIC as a Muslim congress in the age of the nation-state is to socialize the transnational Muslim world and the international society with each other—at least ideally speaking with world peace and human security as the objective. In the “form” of a congress, this association of Muslim countries had survived for almost half a century, and now attention needs to be paid to the aforementioned “substance,” especially in a world where the question of who speaks for the religion and what kind of role it should or can have in the context of interconnected societies matters.

References


\textsuperscript{111} See for instance Vitug and Gloria, \textit{Under the Crescent}, 60.

\textsuperscript{112} See the Charter of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2008

\textsuperscript{113} Kramer, \textit{Islam Assembled} 169.
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