

A Word from the Guest Editor: Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

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Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
Saudi Arabia

In this special issue of the *Politics and Religion Journal* we are pleased to present a collection of scholarly research on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). As a major intergovernmental organization, the OIC has profoundly influenced political, social, and economic discourse both within the Muslim world and globally. This issue provides a comprehensive examination of the OIC's historical evolution, key decisions, reforms, and ongoing challenges.

The OIC has also in recent years assumed a more dynamic role in global diplomacy, marked by notable shifts in its strategies and priorities. It has heightened its efforts in combating Islamophobia, advancing human rights, and promoting sustainable development, alongside fostering interfaith dialogue. Among its achievements are initiatives aimed at addressing religious discrimination and advocating for Muslim minorities on the international stage, which have strengthened its influence within the United Nations and other global forums. However, the OIC still faces complex challenges, necessitating its adaptation to rapidly evolving economic and geopolitical realities. This issue offers a series of in-depth analyses on various dimensions of the OIC's role and influence. Among the topics explored are the historical evolution of the OIC, as detailed in *From Historical Caliphate to Modern Governance Alliance*, its efforts to counter religious defamation and Islamophobia, the Palestinian question, the advancement of women, the plight of displaced women, the OIC's use of soft power, Waqf development, and the safeguarding of minority rights.

Mahmoud Alrantisi examines the evolving stance of the OIC on the Palestinian issue, particularly in light of the recent Israeli aggression since October 7, 2023. Recognized as the principal international entity representing Islamic nations, the OIC's role is crucial in addressing this significant concern for Islamic communities. The study highlights the OIC's achievements and challenges in supporting Palestinian

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rights, employing a descriptive analytical and comparative approach to assess OIC decisions, speeches, and relevant literature. Notably, it underscores the OIC's rejection of Palestinian displacement from Gaza

In "From Historical Caliphate to Modern Governance Alliance: Tracing the Origin and Evolution of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation", Mohammad Khalid Husain traces the OIC's transformation from the traditional model of the caliphate to a modern political institution. Established in 1969, the OIC embodies the leadership ideals of the Islamic world in the wake of postcolonial transitions, marked by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of nationalism. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict further crystallized a collective Islamic identity, which the OIC continues to uphold while navigating the complexities of contemporary governance. Husain delves into the OIC's ideological roots, its enduring role, and its significance in today's global landscape. He emphasises that the OIC must continue to integrate core Islamic principles—such as unity, justice, and consultation (shura) - into modern governance and diplomacy, ensuring its relevance in addressing the social, economic, and political challenges of the Muslim world.

In "The Use of Soft Power by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)", Yousef M. Aljamal and Mustafa M. Aljamal examine the OIC's strategic application of soft power to further its objectives in the global arena. This study employs a soft power framework to analyse how the OIC utilises various instruments, such as diplomacy, cultural exchange, development assistance, and interfaith dialogue, to address pressing issues like human rights, peacebuilding, and economic cooperation. Through qualitative analysis of official OIC documents, speeches, and relevant literature, the authors uncover the effectiveness and challenges of the OIC's soft power initiatives, enhancing the understanding of its role in international relations and the dynamics of engagement for Muslim-majority states.

In "The Advancement of Women in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)", Badriya Rawy examines the OIC's perspective on women's empowerment and its potential implementation, underscoring the significance of women's advancement at a civilizational level. The article articulates the OIC's approach to gender issues within the framework of Islamic values, contrasting it with secular perspectives. By analysing the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW-2016) and the establishment of the Women Development Organization (WDO) in 2020, the author evaluates progress achieved across various member states. While significant advancements in women's empowerment have been noted, the article highlights the uneven implementation of policies. It ultimately recommends studying barriers to progress and fostering cooperation to develop effective national and regional strategies.

In her article, "Navigating Displaced Women's Protection in the Muslim World: Analysis of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation," Sandra Pertek offers a critical examination of the OIC's approach to supporting displaced women. She highlights both the opportunities and limitations within the OIC's system, noting that while the

organization makes numerous political commitments and proposes initiatives, these efforts often lack substance due to the absence of a unified refugee support mechanism. Nevertheless, Pertek acknowledges that the OIC's actions are underpinned by Islamic ethical principles. She concludes by advocating for the integration of faith-based perspectives into global displacement responses, which could significantly enhance protections for displaced women in Muslim-majority contexts.

Adel Aissaoui and Takoua Talhi provide a critical analysis of the OIC's initiatives aimed at developing waqf economies within Islamic countries. The OIC's strategic emphasis on waqf financing and investment is positioned as a means to advance sustainable development across various sectors, including renewable energy, agriculture, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. The authors advocate for the OIC and its member states to implement innovative strategies for waqf management, prioritising knowledge-sharing, collaborative initiatives, strategic partnerships, legislative reform, and the integration of modern technology to optimise sustainability and financial performance.

In "The OIC's Strategies and Impact on Combating Religious Defamation and Islamophobia," Riad Amiraoui explore the OIC's vital role in addressing religious defamation and Islamophobia since its inception. The OIC has successfully mobilized international opinion against acts such as Quran burning, leveraging its 57 member states to create significant legal momentum within the United Nations. The author examines the adoption of UN Resolution 35/16, its controversial replacement with Resolution 18/16, and the Istanbul Process, highlighting the OIC's achievements and challenges in defending religious freedom.

Hassna Al-Ghamdi analyses the role of the OIC in safeguarding the rights of Muslim minorities globally, particularly in Europe and Asia. Established in 1969, the OIC seeks to promote global peace and unity among Muslim populations. This article evaluates the OIC's responses to discrimination faced by Muslims in France, Germany, Myanmar, and China, highlighting its diplomatic initiatives and legal actions. While recognising significant progress, Al-Ghamdi emphasises ongoing challenges related to the political will of member states and advocates for a more proactive OIC strategy.

In his paper "Epistemological Contestations in Global Governance: The OIC and the Conceptualization of Minorities," Hibatuallah Bensaid discusses the OIC's role in framing Muslim minorities as a distinct sociopolitical and discursive category and its subsequent global advocacy efforts. His research contributes to the broader understanding of how religious frameworks intersect with modern political structures, positioning the OIC as both an influential and constrained actor in advancing justice, epistemic sovereignty, and equity for marginalized Muslim communities.

Finally, Lilia Chentouh reviews Turan Kayaoglu's *The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Politics, Problems, and Potential* by providing a critical examination of the OIC's evolution since its founding in 1969. Kayaoglu analyses the organization's

attempts to foster solidarity among Muslim-majority nations while highlighting internal discord and external pressures that impede its effectiveness. The book addresses the OIC's diplomatic initiatives, economic collaborations, and human rights challenges, underscoring the necessity for institutional reforms. Kayaoglu contends that an adaptive decision-making framework is crucial for the OIC to fulfill its potential in international relations.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the authors for their insightful contributions, which significantly enhance the discourse on the OIC's past, present, and future. We trust that readers will find this issue both informative and thought-provoking, offering a nuanced understanding of one of the world's most influential international organizations. I also wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Miroљub Jevtić, the esteemed Editor-in-Chief of the *Politics and Religion Journal* for the opportunity to edit this special issue. His unwavering commitment to advancing the Journal's scholarly impact is deeply appreciated. I am equally grateful to the reviewers for their invaluable feedback, which has greatly improved the quality of this issue. Additionally, I thank the authors for their collaboration and dedication, which have been crucial in bringing this issue to fruition. Their collective efforts have enriched the content and impact of the Journal.