

The Use of Soft Power by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a prominent international organization representing Muslim-majority states, and its utilization of soft power tools to advance its objectives and influence global affairs. The authors use soft power as a theoretical framework throughout the research. The principal aim of the study is to analyze how the OIC leverages various soft power instruments, including diplomacy, cultural exchange, development assistance, and interfaith dialogue, to promote its agenda on issues like human rights, peacebuilding, and economic cooperation. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis of official OIC documents, speeches, and resolutions, alongside academic literature and secondary sources. This journal article reveals the specific soft power tools employed by the OIC and their relative effectiveness, the challenges and limitations faced by the OIC in utilizing soft power as well as the impact of the OIC's soft power efforts on international relations and global issues relevant to Muslim-majority states. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the OIC's role in international relations and its strategic use of soft power. It also provides valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in Muslim-majority states' engagement with the global community and the dynamics of soft power in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), soft power, diplomacy, peace building, economic cooperation

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Introduction

Born in the wake of the 1969 Al-Aqsa Mosque arson attack, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) emerged as a beacon of solidarity and collaboration for Muslim nations. More than just a forum for political alignment, the OIC has actively sought to foster cultural understanding, champion social progress, and alleviate suffering across its diverse membership (Citaristi 2022, 736–43). Within its tapestry of departments, the Directorate of Culture, Social and Family Affairs weaves a vibrant thread. It safeguards revered Islamic sites, bridges interfaith divides, and champions the well-being of families, recognizing their critical role in the fabric of Muslim societies. Notably, the OIC's 2016 action plan for women's advancement stands as a testament to its commitment to gender equality and empowerment (Oman Observer staff 2020).

When “tragedy strikes,” the OIC's Department of Humanitarian Affairs stands ready. Coordinating emergency relief and rehabilitation efforts, it lends a helping hand to Muslim communities reeling from conflict or natural disasters (OIC staff 2022). From the earthquake-devastated villages of Pakistan to the refugee camps of war-torn Syria, the OIC's presence brings a flicker of hope amidst the desolation (OIC staff 2023b). Education, too, remains a cornerstone of the OIC's mission. From the hallowed halls of Islamic universities in Niger and Uganda to the bustling classrooms of the American Islamic College in Chicago, the OIC fosters intellectual growth and nurtures future generations of Muslim leaders. In Guinea-Bissau, the Islamic Solidarity Centre stands as a symbol of this commitment, illuminating the path towards knowledge and progress (SESRIC staff 2016). According to the organization, the OIC aims to unite Muslim nations under the banner of cooperation, empathy, and an unwavering faith in a brighter future (Rahman, Mahdi, and Schimmel 2018).

The OIC serves as a representative body for both its member states and Islam on the global stage. Established under a charter adopted by its members in 1972, the organization's primary objectives include the resolution of legal disputes among member countries and the promotion of Islamic solidarity. The Statute of the OIC encapsulates and embodies the values and principles of Islam. Informed by the Charter of the United Nations, the OIC's charter underscores key principles such as the avoidance of military force, the preservation of international peace and order, and the mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity (Firoozabadi 2016).

The OIC actively endorses peace initiatives in the Middle East and aligns itself with the emerging international order, exemplified by its involvement in formulating a distinctive charter on human rights from an Islamic standpoint. The idea of Islamic unity holds a pivotal position in the collective thinking and collaboration of Muslims globally. The primary objectives of the OIC encompass the establishment and sustenance of peaceful relations, the enhancement of multilateral ties, and the alignment of policies among its member states (Firoozabadi 2016).

The OIC assumes a noteworthy role in global governance, notwithstanding perceptions of its relative weakness on the world stage. Representing over 1.8 billion people globally, it has actively engaged in conflict resolution among Muslim nations since its inception. While the OIC may not always wield significant influence, it has achieved success in mediating various disputes within the Muslim community (al-Ahsan 2017). It is imperative that all OIC organs, standing committees, and agencies contribute to fostering stability in governance across various levels within the Muslim world. Being the second-largest organization globally and spanning four continents, the OIC underscores its paramount importance in world politics (Ali and Sultan 2023).

The OIC possesses the potential to actively contribute to mediation endeavours in conflicts involving the Muslim community. Notably, the OIC played a significant role in mediating the conflict in the Philippines. In this context, it held a distinctive relationship with both the government and the rebels, successfully facilitating negotiations in 1996 (UN staff 2001). The Moro National Liberation Front, recognizing the OIC as a neutral party, entrusted it as the sole entity for mediation. Beyond the Philippines, the OIC has extended its mediation efforts to conflicts in Thailand, Iraq, and Somalia. Its engagement in mediation proves particularly effective in addressing humanitarian crises, as exemplified in Somalia. Here, the OIC not only facilitated access to affected areas but also collaborated with international organizations to coordinate the delivery of humanitarian assistance (Sharqieh 2012).

The effectiveness of the OIC's mediation endeavours hinges on the robust political will exhibited by its member states. The impact of the Secretary General's mediation activities is contingent upon substantial support, and without such backing, the outcomes may be constrained. To bolster the Secretary General's office, the delegation of authority and the allocation of financial resources are pivotal components. Empowering this office is integral to enhancing the overall efficacy of the OIC's mediation efforts (Reinalda and Verbeek 2004). Moreover, it is imperative for the OIC to harmonize its initiatives with other interveners, ensuring a synergistic approach and averting unnecessary duplication. Collaborative efforts with regional and international organizations are indispensable to cultivate a more streamlined and effective approach to mediation (Sharqieh 2012).

Nigeria, a diverse nation with multiple ethnicities and religions, sees Islam and Christianity as its primary faiths. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is significant for Nigeria's Muslim community. However, some Christians use the country's secular stance to distance themselves from the OIC, viewing it as exclusively for Muslims. Despite its Islamic origins, the OIC offers economic and political opportunities to all member countries. However, Nigeria's relationship with the OIC remains fragile due to its Islamic foundation. This paper suggests that Nigeria would benefit if both Christian and Muslim communities either fully embrace or unanimously reject the OIC. However, Nigeria's membership can divide the nation

and hinder its unity and development (Faseke 2019).

The OIC has endeavoured to address conflicts among its member states through diplomatic means, with varying degrees of success over time. Notably, the organization demonstrated efficacy in resolving disputes between the PLO and Jordan, as well as between Bangladesh and Pakistan. The achievements in these cases are attributed, in part, to competent and earnest leadership. However, the OIC faced setbacks in its attempts to mediate conflicts involving Iraq during the 1980s and 1990s (Gassama, Ebrahimi, and Yusoff 2018). Despite its intentions, the OIC has not consistently translated Qur'anic principles of mediation into actionable strategies for fostering peace among conflicting parties. A more resolute commitment to conflict resolution grounded in notions of fairness and justice might have served as a preventive measure, potentially averting the wars of 1991 and 2003 (al-Ahsan 2004).

The OIC has faced challenges in effectively addressing the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar, prompting criticism regarding its efficacy in safeguarding Muslim rights. A scrutiny of the OIC's institutionalization through the lens of Samuel P. Huntington's theory, the Clash of Civilizations, incorporating factors like adaptability and complexity, autonomy, and coherency, reveals several impediments contributing to the OIC's constraints in handling the Rohingya conflict. These hindrances include a lack of adaptability alignment between the subject and object, insufficient support from political organizations, and a deficiency in cooperative dynamics between the subject and object. The OIC's limitations in addressing the Rohingya issue emanate from various facets of its institutionalization, reflecting the challenges it encounters in the international arena (Soleman 2017).

Soft Power

In international relations, soft power refers to a nation's ability to shape the behaviour of other nations not through coercion or force, but through attraction and persuasion. This approach involves the use of charm and charisma rather than threats or intimidation. To draw an analogy, hard power can be likened to a formidable stick, while soft power can be compared to a carrot. While hard power relies on military and economic strength to achieve objectives, soft power uses elements such as culture, values and foreign policy to cultivate the willingness of others to align with one's interests (Mcclory 2018).

The theory is about inspiring others to willingly align themselves with a nation's leadership out of admiration for its culture, values, or policies. Soft power emanates from a variety of sources, including a nation's popular culture, democratic values, technological achievements, or a foreign policy that emphasises peace and cooperation (Soft Power 30 staff 2019). Soft power is complex and involves a variety of factors, including a nation's history, culture, political system, economy, and foreign policy.

It is a powerful tool for achieving foreign policy objectives. It facilitates the building of relationships, encourages cooperation, and builds support by winning hearts and minds (Bohorquez 2005).

Fostering Dialogue, Bridging Cultures: The OIC's Soft Power Strategy

Beyond the forefront of geopolitical alliances and religious debates lies a discreet but influential facet within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This vast Islamic consortium, representing 57 member states, implements a nuanced and intricate soft power strategy to advance its goals and influence global affairs (OIC staff 2018). Central to the OIC's approach is a dedicated focus on intercultural dialogue and understanding. Initiatives such as the World Dialogue Centre and the Interfaith Iftar Dinner series facilitate conversations between representatives of different faiths and ethnicities, building connections where divisions once existed (MAP staff 2023). Educational and scientific cooperation, exemplified by the Islamic Development Bank's investments in education and technology, stimulate knowledge transfer and uplift communities. The OIC's humanitarian efforts, spanning conflict zones and natural disasters, underscore a commitment to global well-being that transcends religious boundaries (Latif 2021).

Cultural exchange is emerging as a key element in this complex soft power framework. The OIC actively promotes Islamic art, music and cinema through festivals and exhibitions, providing insights into the diverse tapestry of Muslim societies. Initiatives such as the World Islamic Games celebrate athletic prowess and artistic expression, fostering a sense of shared identity and pride among the world's 1.8 billion Muslims (IRCICA staff 2004). Technology is another important tool in the OIC's soft power repertoire. The organization uses social media platforms and online publications to spread its message of peace, development and cooperation. Web-based programs such as the OIC Virtual University extend educational opportunities to underprivileged communities, bridging geographical divides and empowering individuals (Han et al. 2022).

However, the OIC's soft power trajectory faces challenges. Critics point to internal disagreements on policy issues and a perceived lack of tangible results from certain initiatives. Navigating complex geopolitical landscapes while balancing the interests of diverse member states requires constant adaptation and refinement (Akbarzadeh and Ahmed 2017). Despite these challenges, the OIC remains steadfast in its commitment to soft power. By fostering dialogue, promoting cultural exchange and harnessing the power of technology, the organization seeks to build bridges in today's increasingly interconnected world. As the global Muslim community faces complex challenges, the OIC's soft power odyssey serves as a compelling reminder that understanding, cooperation and shared values can pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future for all (FRSA, Murray, and ICR Research Ltd. 2023).

Diplomacy and Harmony in International Relations

Founded in 1969, the OIC is a global organization that brings together 57 predominantly Muslim nations. Its primary objective is to strengthen solidarity among Islamic nations and facilitate cooperation in various fields. Since its inception, OIC has been instrumental in addressing and resolving geopolitical tensions among member states. OIC uses a number of strategies to achieve its goals of mitigating conflict between nations, including:

Diplomatic mediation: OIC is proactive in mediating disputes between conflicting Islamic nations. Notable successes include mediation between Somalia and Ethiopia (Hiiraan staff 2024), Pakistan and India (Sibal and Sinha 2021), and Lebanon and Israel (Al Jazeera staff 2006). The organization forms mediation teams of representatives from member states to facilitate constructive dialogue between conflicting parties and guide them towards a peaceful resolution.

The OIC has expressed solidarity with Somalia and stressed the need to respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. This was in response to a Memorandum of Understanding for Partnership and Cooperation signed between the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and Somaliland on January 1, 2024 (OIC staff 2024). The OIC has offered to mediate between Pakistan and India. The OIC Secretary-General, for example, expressed the intention to send a team to Kashmir and suggested that Pakistan and India may meet (Singh 2019). However, it's worth noting that the relationship between India and the OIC has been complex due to opposition from Pakistan (Chakravarty 2020).

Facilitating dialogue between conflicting Islamic nations is indeed a cornerstone of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's approach. The OIC organizes various meetings and forums that provide a platform for communication and negotiation between conflicting parties. Recognizing that dialogue is central to conflict resolution, the OIC seeks to find common ground for joint engagement by allowing parties to articulate their positions and interests (UN staff 2016). The OIC consistently strives to resolve conflicts among its member states through diplomatic means. Over its history, the organization has encountered several instances of disputes involving two or more member states and has effectively facilitated reconciliation in certain cases. The OIC draws from two distinct traditions in the realm of conflict resolution: the Islamic tradition spanning approximately 14 centuries and the legacy inherited from the League of Nations and the United Nations (al-Ahsan 2004).

The OIC collaborates with international mechanisms, encompassing every specialized UN agency, as well as governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) to tackle issues of significance to its member states and the global Muslim community. The OIC has implemented various measures to formalize its association with the UN, contributing to capacity enhancement through mediation and electoral assistance. Additionally, the organization engages in desk-to-desk discussions with the OIC on

shared concerns, particularly in the realms of peace and security (ICNL staff 2023).

Promoting economic cooperation: Recognising the potential of economic cooperation in conflict resolution, OIC advocates joint economic initiatives among Islamic nations. Support for joint economic projects is seen as a means of enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation (OIC staff 2016b). The organization believes that economic cooperation can reduce tensions and build trust among Islamic countries, and seeks to support projects that benefit all member nations. It actively promotes cooperative economic projects among Islamic nations, realizing the potential of economic cooperation in conflict resolution (OIC staff 2021a). Preserving Islamic, social and economic ideals, promoting unity among member states, and expanding collaboration in social, economic, cultural, scientific, and political spheres are among the goals of OIC (OIC staff 2019a).

Endorsing joint economic projects is perceived as a strategy to bolster mutual understanding and cooperation. Illustratively, during the 47th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the OIC formulated resolutions addressing various economic issues. These included topics such as labor and employment, tourism and transportation, intra-OIC trade and investment, poverty reduction, and economic support to OIC Member States and Muslim Communities in occupied/disputed areas as well as non-OIC nations under the OIC Mandate (OIC staff 2020). The organization holds the view that fostering economic cooperation can alleviate tensions and foster trust among Islamic nations. It actively implements its conflict resolution mechanisms, enhancing the Organization's role in mediation and preventive diplomacy. Additionally, the OIC engages in collaborative efforts with the United Nations, leveraging each other's strengths to formulate joint strategies aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts (OIC staff 2016a).

The OIC endeavors to endorse projects with collective benefits for all member nations. For example, the OIC adopted a resolution that included the Arab and Islamic Financial Safety Net's activation. With this proposal, the Government of the State of Palestine and UNRWA, the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees, will receive aid and financial, economic, and humanitarian support (OIC staff 2023a).

The Use of Soft Power by the OIC in Resolving Disputes Between Nations

The OIC helped Ethiopia and Somalia reach a peace deal in 2008 (UN staff 2008). At the time, the UN ambassador to Somalia declared that the ceasefire deal negotiated between the Islamist insurgents and the country's transitional government was a positive step towards ending their lengthy battle. Following three days of negotiations backed by the UN and the larger international community, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) signed the agreements in Djibouti (University of Edinburgh staff 2015).

The agreement provided for a ceasefire, UN monitoring, and political cooperation between the two parties. A mediation delegation was indeed sent to facilitate dialogue between the warring parties. This culminated in a peace agreement that was seen as a significant step towards ending the conflict that had been ongoing for two decades (UN staff 2008). In 2013, OIC played a key role in brokering a ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India, resulting in a significant reduction in tensions between the two countries. A mediation delegation facilitated dialogue and contributed to the ceasefire agreement (Sibal and Sinha 2021).

In 2006, during an emergency meeting in Malaysia, the OIC expressed strong dissatisfaction with the perceived international double standards on Israel's offensive in Lebanon. The OIC urgently called for a comprehensive ceasefire and insisted that the UN Security Council fulfill its responsibility for maintaining global peace and security. Condemning Israel for "blatant and flagrant violations of human rights" following attacks at Qana and Khiam in southern Lebanon, the organization held Israel entirely accountable for the consequences of its aggression. Additionally, the OIC urged the international community to assist Lebanon, including convening a donors' conference, to address the "human, social, and economic tragedy" confronting the nation (Al Jazeera staff 2006).

The OIC has also played a role in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Notably, the organization has convened meetings to tackle the intensifying military situation in Gaza and its surroundings, along with the worsening conditions posing threats to the lives of civilians and the broader security and stability of the region (Bhattacharya 2023). The OIC also supports the call for "strengthening its role in conflict prevention, confidence building, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitations in Member States as well as in conflict situations involving Muslim communities".

The strategic use of soft power by the OIC is critical to achieving its goals of conflict resolution among Islamic nations. The use of soft power mechanisms helps to build trust, promote understanding and encourage economic cooperation between conflicting countries. Building trust between conflicting nations: OIC's soft power initiatives play a key role in building trust between conflicting nations by providing a platform for communication and exchange of views. Improving understanding and cooperation among Islamic nations: OIC's soft power initiatives contribute significantly to enhancing understanding and cooperation among Islamic nations by facilitating dialogue and promoting economic cooperation. The OIC strategically deploys a range of soft power tools to effectively advance its objectives and exert influence on global affairs. Each of these tools serves as a significant mechanism in shaping perceptions and fostering cooperation among member states.

Cultural Diplomacy

The OIC conducts cultural diplomacy through a range of events, exemplified by the Islamic Solidarity Games—a multinational, multi-sport event held every four years. This competition features elite athletes from OIC member countries participating in various sports. Originally designed to foster Islamic camaraderie and instill Islamic values, especially among the youth, the Islamic Solidarity Games serve as a platform for promoting cultural understanding and cooperation (OIC staff 2019b). In addition to sports, the OIC also promotes Islamic art and culture through the Islamic Arts Festival. This festival serves as a platform that celebrates and showcases the diverse cultures of the Islamic world. The festival is a significant event that helps in promoting Islamic identity in arts and reducing discrimination towards Muslims. These events not only foster a sense of unity and solidarity among Muslim countries but also provide a global platform to showcase the rich heritage and diverse cultures of the Islamic world (OIC staff 2019b).

Humanitarian Aid

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays an active role in humanitarian efforts, extending aid to countries facing crises (ICNL staff 2023).

Palestine: The OIC has been involved in providing financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (OIC staff 2021b). This assistance supports the development programs of the Palestinian Authority, demonstrating the OIC's commitment to alleviating the challenges faced by the Palestinians (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations 2023).

Syria: The OIC has been actively involved in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The OIC has condemned the Syrian regime for its military operations and aerial bombings, which have led to the death and injury of hundreds of civilians and aggravated the humanitarian situation. The OIC has called for the implementation of a ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid (OIC staff 2016c).

Somalia: The OIC has been engaged in discussions with the United Nations Integrated Office in Somalia to strengthen support for the country (OIC staff 2021c). The OIC has also been involved in providing aid during the famine that hit Somalia in 2011 (IOL staff 2011). The OIC coordinated around 40 Islamic aid agencies and civil society organizations to provide aid during this crisis (Zyck and Svoboda 2015).

Thailand: The conflict in Southern Thailand, marked by an insurgency since 2004, has attracted global attention, particularly from the Islamic world, due to its perceived religious underpinnings. Despite this, no individual Islamic nations have directly intervened in the conflict. Instead, the OIC, has taken on this role. Their intervention aims to protect the rights of Muslim minorities in the region. However,

this involvement has strained relations between the OIC's mission and sovereign states. The OIC's role in this conflict serves as a notable example of its efforts to mediate disputes involving Islamic nations (Waesahmae 2012).

The OIC's humanitarian efforts are coordinated by the Islamic Cooperation Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD), which was established in 2008. The ICHAD coordinates the activities of humanitarian organizations, demonstrating the OIC's active participation in humanitarian efforts (ICNL staff 2023).

Economic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) bolsters economic cooperation among its member states through various initiatives and institutions (Rahman, Mahdi, and Schimmel 2018).

The OIC is home to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), a specialized organization that acts as a global finance source. The 2nd Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in Karachi in 1970 gave rise to the idea of creating the IDB, which was formally opened on October 20, 1975. Its main goal is to support member nations' and Muslim communities' social and economic advancement while upholding Shariah principles, such as justice, on an individual and communal level (IsDB staff, n.d.). The IDB lends money to profitable projects and businesses and offers ownership involvement. It also provides several sorts of financial support to member governments in order to aid in their social and economic development and to facilitate international trade cooperation among member nations (IsDB staff 2019).

One of the OIC's four standing committees, the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) was founded in 1981 during the Third Islamic Summit Conference in Mecca/Ta'if (COMCEC Coordination Office 2014). COMCEC serves as a multilateral platform for economic and commercial cooperation among Islamic nations (COMCEC staff, n.d.). The President of the Republic of Turkey chairs the organization's yearly ministerial-level meetings in Istanbul. The committee's main goals are to promote private sector partnership as well as commerce, transportation, agriculture, tourism, financial services, and poverty reduction. Addressing economic issues within the Islamic Ummah (nation) and supporting member nations' development initiatives are the main objectives of COMCEC (COMCEC staff 2024).

Media

Employing media as a strategic tool, the OIC founded the International Islamic News Agency (IINA) to disseminate news and information about the Muslim world. The establishment of OIC TV serves as an additional platform, broadcasting news and

programs focused on the Muslim world to enhance global understanding (MSVE staff 2024).

The IINA, now recognized as the Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA), functions as a specialized body within the OIC. Established in 1972, the agency disseminates news in Arabic, English, and French, with a primary focus on reporting about the Islamic world and Islamic affairs. Evolving from the IINA, the UNA serves as an umbrella organization for news agencies and training centers. Its key objectives encompass the promotion and defense of issues within the Muslim World, with a primary emphasis on the matters related to Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound. Additionally, the UNA is committed to countering discourses of racism, hatred, extremism, racial discrimination, and Islamophobia (OIC staff 2017).

Education

In the realm of education, the OIC champions initiatives through institutions like the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). This organization plays a pivotal role in promoting education and scientific research within member countries through conferences, workshops, and various educational programs. Operating under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), formerly known as the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), is a specialized organization. ICESCO was established in May 1979 and is committed to promoting education, science, culture, and communication in Islamic countries in order to strengthen ties between its member states (UN staff 2025).

ICESCO plays a pivotal role in promoting education and scientific research within member countries (ICESCO staff 2023b). It organizes various activities such as conferences, workshops, and numerous educational programs. It endeavors to enhance collaboration among its Member States in the domains of education, science, culture, and communication (UNESCO 2024). Its mission includes fostering mutual understanding among people both within and beyond its Member States. Additionally, ICESCO strives to contribute to global peace and security, with a particular emphasis on achieving these goals through education, teaching, and cultural initiatives (ICESCO staff 2023a).

Furthermore, ICESCO comprises three entities: The General Conference, The Executive Council, and The General Directorate. The General Conference convenes triennially and the Executive Council comprises representatives from each Member State with expertise in education, science, culture, or communication, and the General Directorate is led by a Director General.

Religious Diplomacy

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) employs religious diplomacy in key events, including the Islamic Summit. This summit serves as a primary organ of the OIC, dedicated to formulating, developing, and executing decisions made by the 57 member states (OIC staff 2023d). Attended by heads of states such as prime ministers, presidents, emirs, and equivalent leaders, the Summit plays a crucial role in addressing pressing issues. As an illustration, the Eighth Extraordinary Islamic Summit was convened upon the invitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to address the severe Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people (OIC staff 2023c).

The OIC's dedication to promoting interfaith dialogue and comprehension is manifest in endeavors like the World Interfaith Harmony Week (UN staff 2024). This yearly occasion takes place during the initial week of February, following its recognition by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. The OIC actively engages in the annual dialogue to mark the World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW staff, n.d.). These tangible instances highlight the OIC's versatile utilization of soft power mechanisms. The organization's primary objectives encompass the promotion of global peace and security, the cultivation of dialogue among civilizations, cultures, and religions, and the steadfast adherence to noble Islamic values, emphasizing moderation, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Future Role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Diplomatic Conflict Resolution

OIC continues to play a significant role in resolving conflicts among Islamic nations. Increasing its efforts in mediation, dialogue facilitation and economic cooperation will be instrumental in furthering this work.

Potential areas for increased OIC involvement in diplomatic conflict resolution

Strengthening ties between Islamic nations: OIC can strengthen ties between Islamic nations by organising additional meetings and forums that bring together representatives from different member states. Supporting cultural and educational projects that promote understanding between different Islamic cultures is also an avenue for increased engagement.

Increasing organizational transparency: Increasing the transparency of its work will benefit OIC. Disseminating more information about its conflict resolution efforts and establishing clear standards for evaluating the performance of mediation teams can contribute to greater transparency.

Use of social media: OIC can use modern technology for more effective conflict resolution. The use of social media platforms to spread messages of peace and tolerance among Muslims and the use of artificial intelligence for data analysis can enhance the organization's conflict resolution capabilities.

By increasing its efforts in these areas, the OIC can play an even more effective role in resolving conflicts among Islamic nations, thereby promoting lasting peace and stability in the Islamic world.

Conclusion

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a pivotal role in resolving conflicts among Islamic nations. Through the effective use of soft power, the organization has successfully navigated and resolved numerous disputes among its member states. As the OIC continues to evolve, its commitment to diplomatic mediation, fostering dialogue, and promoting economic cooperation will remain essential to cultivating lasting peace and stability in the Islamic world. The OIC stands as a resilient and influential force, born out of the aftermath of the 1969 Al-Aqsa Mosque arson attack. Far beyond being a mere political forum, the OIC has actively embraced a multifaceted approach, employing soft power tools to foster cultural understanding, champion social progress, and address humanitarian crises across its diverse membership.

The Directorate of Culture, Social and Family Affairs, within the OIC, exemplifies the organization's commitment to cultural preservation, interfaith dialogue, and the well-being of families as integral components of Muslim societies. Noteworthy initiatives, such as the 2016 action plan for women's empowerment, underscore the OIC's dedication to gender equality and empowerment. The OIC's humanitarian endeavours, spearheaded by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, provide crucial support to Muslim communities facing conflicts or natural disasters. From earthquake-stricken villages in Pakistan to the refugee camps of Syria, the OIC's presence brings hope amid desolation, showcasing its commitment to global well-being that transcends religious boundaries.

Education remains a cornerstone of the OIC's mission, with initiatives spanning Islamic universities in Niger to the American Islamic College in Chicago. The Islamic Solidarity Centre in Guinea-Bissau stands as a symbol of the OIC's dedication to fostering intellectual growth and nurturing future Muslim leaders. The OIC's journey reflects resilience, progress, and a shared sense of purpose. Emerging from a moment of shared grief, it has evolved into a powerful force for good, uniting Muslim nations under the banner of cooperation, empathy, and an unwavering faith in a brighter future. As a representative body for its member states and Islam on the global stage, the OIC actively endorses peace initiatives, aligns itself with the evolving

international order, and upholds the principles of the Shariah.

Soft power, a key element in the OIC's arsenal, is wielded strategically through cultural diplomacy, humanitarian aid, economic cooperation, media, education, and religious diplomacy. The OIC's soft power trajectory, while facing challenges, remains steadfast, fostering dialogue, promoting cultural exchange, and harnessing technology to build bridges in an interconnected world. Looking ahead, the OIC has positioned itself to play a crucial role in diplomatic conflict resolution among Islamic nations. Strengthening ties, enhancing organizational transparency, and leveraging modern technology are identified avenues for increased effectiveness. The OIC's commitment to soft power serves as a reminder that understanding, cooperation, and shared values can pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future for the global Muslim community and beyond.

The OIC's strategic deployment of soft power tools is evident across various domains, reinforcing its influence and global impact. Cultural diplomacy stands out through events like the Islamic Solidarity Games and the Islamic Arts Festival, fostering unity, celebrating diversity, and reducing discrimination. Humanitarian aid, channeled through the Islamic Cooperation Humanitarian Affairs Department, showcases the OIC's commitment to alleviating challenges faced by nations like Palestine, Syria, and Somalia. Economic cooperation, facilitated by institutions like the Islamic Development Bank and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation, not only promotes joint initiatives but also addresses issues like poverty reduction, intra-OIC trade, and investment. The OIC's media endeavors, including the International Islamic News Agency and OIC TV, disseminate information to enhance global understanding and counter narratives of racism, hatred, and Islamophobia.

In education, the OIC, through bodies like the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), actively promotes collaborative initiatives, conferences, and workshops, contributing to knowledge transfer and mutual understanding among member states. Furthermore, religious diplomacy, exemplified by the Islamic Summit and participation in the World Interfaith Harmony Week, highlights the OIC's commitment to global peace, dialogue among civilizations, and the promotion of noble Islamic values. The OIC's role in conflict resolution is substantial, mediating disputes and fostering dialogue among conflicting Islamic nations. Notable successes in Somalia, Pakistan-India tensions, and ceasefires between Ethiopia and Somalia showcase its impact. However, challenges persist, necessitating increased transparency, social media utilization, and stronger ties between member states to enhance conflict resolution efforts.

As the OIC continues its soft power journey, building trust, promoting understanding, and encouraging economic cooperation among conflicting nations remain at the forefront. By leveraging its unique position as a representative body for over 1.8 billion Muslims globally, the OIC has the potential to play an even

more effective role in resolving conflicts, contributing to lasting peace and stability within the Islamic world. In an era where soft power is increasingly recognized as a potent force in international relations, In addition, its commitment to fostering understanding, cooperation, and shared values serves as a beacon for creating a more harmonious and interconnected world. The OIC's multifaceted approach, driven by its dedication to the principles of Islam, positions it as a dynamic force for positive change on the global stage.

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Јусуф М. Алџамал, Мустафа М. Алџамал

Употреба меке моћи од стране Организације исламске сарадње

Сажетак: Ова студија има за циљ да испита Организацију исламске сарадње (ОИС), истакнуту међународну организацију која представља државе с муслиманском већином, и њену употребу алата меке моћи у сврху унапређења својих циљева и утицаја на глобална питања. Аутори користе концепт меке моћи као теоријски оквир током читавог истраживања. Основни циљ рада је анализа начина на који ОИС користи различите инструменте меке моћи, укључујући дипломатију, културну размену, развојну помоћ и међурелигијски дијалог, како би промовисала своју агенду у областима као што су људска права, изградња мира и економска сарадња. Истраживање се ослања на квалитативни приступ, користећи анализу садржаја званичних докумената ОИС-а, говора и резолуција, као и академске литературе и секундарних извора. Овај научни чланак открива конкретне инструменте меке моћи које ОИС примењује и њихову релативну ефикасност, изазове и ограничења са којима се суочава у тој примени, као и утицај напора ОИС-а у области меке моћи на међународне односе и глобална питања релевантна за државе с муслиманском већином. Рад доприноси дубљем разумевању улоге ОИС-а у међународним односима и његове стратешке употребе меке моћи. Такође пружа вредне увиде за научнике, доносиоце одлука и практичаре заинтересоване за ангажман држава с муслиманском већином у глобалној заједници и динамику меке моћи у савременом свету.

Кључнe речи: Организација исламске сарадње (ОИС), мека моћ, дипломатија, изградња мира, економска сарадња