

PAKISTAN, OIC AND THE CHALLENGES OF MUSLIM WORLD

Abstract

Pakistan is the torch bearer of Muslim ummah emerged as the first Atomic Power in the Muslim world. On the other hand Organization of Islamic Countries is the sole representative organization of Muslim world. Pakistan has always tried to confront all challenges through the podium of OIC faced by Muslim ummah. This article reveals the challenges of Muslim ummah along with the efforts that have been done by OIC to resolve such issues. Moreover, the efforts of Pakistan have also been highlighted on the platform of OIC. Particularly the following question; gigantic problems of Muslim world, like Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan and terrorism are still waiting for the solutions, while many futile efforts have done on the podium of OIC? Why? At the end it is concluded that success couldn't be get on overcoming the challenges.

Keywords: OIC, Ummah

Introduction

This article deals with the Pakistan's role in the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and especially the challenges faced by Muslim ummah. OIC is the sole representative of the Muslim world. From its establishment ummah has been facing numerous challenges. The research question framed for the article is:

Gigantic problems of Muslim world, like Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan and terrorism are still waiting for the solutions, while many futile efforts have done on the podium of OIC? Why?

Institutions are fairly product of evolving ideas. Ideas act as a source of inspiration and struggle. These ideas basically represent the thoughts and ideology that is the key motivator behind any deliberation and initiative. OIC is the product of the creative thought of Muslim unity in modern settings, with the Islamic ideology.

The Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC) is an inter-governmental organization grouping fifty-seven states from East Asia, Africa and Gulf Arab regions, which correspond to one-quarter of the membership of the United Nations. These States decided to pool their resources together, unite their efforts and speak with one voice to safeguard their mutual concerns and ensure the progress and welfare of their people and those of other Muslims in the world.

Pakistan, a country of 160 million people, is strategically and geographically placed at a very important part of the world. It has a vital role in the world, specifically in Islamic world. Since its inception conspiracies are being hatched by its enemies to undermine the immense struggle of the Muslims of subcontinent and over shadow the vision of its pioneers. By the grace of almighty Allah, Pakistan is not only surviving in the volatile envisionment but world has also observed the good speed progress in various fields.

Muslim Ummah and Islam lingered a hot topic from the last many decades but it was not so burning subject ever, till the onset of 20th century. 20th century saw the aggression and wickedness against Muslims and their collective slaughter. This was not a mishap but the planed possession of the non-Muslim forces. The strength, Muslims have, is their one faith and natural resources.

An intensive review was done on the issues of Kashmir, Palestine, Afghanistan and terrorism with reference to Pakistan and OIC efforts. These three states have special importance to Pakistan and Pakistan can directly or indirectly affect them and vice versa.

Issue of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir

The State of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, usually known as 'Kashmir' covers an area of 84471 square miles. Geographically, it is placed in the extreme north of the Indo-Pak sub-continent, touching the heights of Pamir; it is surrounded by India, Pakistan Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China.

Background

The problem of Kashmir began when The Accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to India was signed by the Maharaja Hari Singh (last Dogra ruler of the State) on 26th October, 1947. Its roots goes back to the unjustified division of Red Clif Boundary Commission who gave the Muslim dominated region of Gawaderspour to India and bestowed it a land way to enter in Kashmir and opened the way of resistance between the newly emerging two states.

It has always been the policy of the Pakistani nation and successive Pakistani Governments that the issue has to be resolved according to the UN resolutions.³ In fact, during the decades of the '50s and '60s and later on, several rounds of bilateral discussions took place between India and Pakistan in 1964, 1972 and 1999 to resolve the differences over Kashmir but no sober accomplishment resulted.

Pakistan's efforts on the OIC forum

Along with the mutual discussions with the Indian government, Pakistan also highlighted the importance of this issue on the international forums like UN and this issue is also the part of nearly every resolution and conference of OIC. The issue of Kashmir is intensely discussed in many conferences of OIC which were held in Pakistan or with the close cooperation of Pakistan proved as millstone for the resolution of Kashmir.

Islamabad on the other hand succeeded in securing the passage of resolution condemning reported violations of human rights by the Indian troops in Kashmir at the 4th summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Casablanca, Morocco (1984).

OIC has been a forum of strong and credible political and economic support to the Government of Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. This relationship has gained strength over a period of time. The meaningful struggle cannot be done without the proper funds and assistance at the huge level. This support can only be

sufficient when the international community and especially Muslim world aid in this regard collect statistical and informative data about where the help is required.

Each effort from Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue and promote the legal rights of Kashmiris' resulted in the progress of this issue with the better understanding of the desires of Kashmiris. This endeavor from the government of Pakistan secured response from the international organizations especially OIC in the form of resolutions and verbal support on the issue of Kashmir.

The OIC has extended strong and unanimous support to Pakistan on all issues of concern. The OIC has three Jammu & Kashmir related Summits and Ministerial resolutions. These resolutions expressed the Islamic world's solidarity with the Government of Pakistan and the Kashmiri people in their struggle for the right of self determination and called for a peaceful settlement of the Jammu & Kashmir Dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. This was said in the sixth summit of Islamic conference in Dakar and Pakistan sponsored resolution on Kashmir was adopted unanimously in the summit.

The OIC resolutions also condemned the continued massive violations of human rights and called for the respect of the human rights of the Kashmiri people. This resolution appeared during the formation of OIC Commission of Eminent Persons in Islamabad.

In a resolution passed in 9th Islamic Summit in Doha, (2000). Islamic leaders reportedly "condemned flagrant violations of human rights in Kashmir and called on member states to take all necessary measures to convince India to put an immediate end to these violations". The resolution also called for "the people of Kashmir to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination". New Delhi has dismissed such resolutions, which it said mooted by Pakistan, over the years.

Challenge of Palestine and OIC

Background

The history of Middle East region remained violent in the past 100 years due to the importance of its natural resources and geopolitical significance.

After World War II, the newly formed United Nations (which then had fewer developing countries as members) recommended the partition of Palestine into two states and the internationalization of Jerusalem. The minority Jewish people received the majority of the land (Tessler, 1994).

In 1967, Israel simultaneously attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan in a "pre-emptive strike" against the Arab troops along with its borders. Israel captured key pieces of land, such as the strategic Golan Heights to the north on the border with Syria, to the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza strip from Egypt.

In 1978, the Camp David accords were signed between Israel, Egypt and US and Israel returned Sinai back to Egypt in return for peace between them. To many in the Arab world, Egypt had sold out because of US pressure. To US and Israel, this was a great achievement; Egypt was obviously not to be underestimated

in its capabilities, so the best thing would be to ensure it as an ally, not an adversary (see Malley and Agha).

1993 saw the Oslo Peace Accord, whereby Israel recognized the PLO and gave them limited autonomy in return for peace and an end to Palestinian claims on Israeli territory. This has been largely criticized as a one-sided contract that benefits only Israel, not the Palestinian people. It resulted in Israeli control of land, water, roads and other resources (Stephen R. Shalom, 2002).

Further attempts in the beginning of 2000 were made at continuing the Wye River accord, but kept breaking down due to Palestinian protests of continued new Israeli settlements. The Camp David summit in 2000 also failed to come up with solutions on Jerusalem. In late 2000, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Mount Temple sparks of the current round of protests and violence.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is still a problem awaiting solution. Several peace agreements have been failed since then, including the Camp David (1980), Madrid (1991) and Oslo (1993) agreements, while the number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank has been multiplied, more and more Palestinian lands have been taken over, and tension has increased in the occupied territories (see Scot, 2000).

Palestine is called the Holy Land. It is a unique country in the sense that great number of messengers of God disembarked on this land. As a Muslim country, Pakistan has consistently supported the Arab and Palestinian causes since its establishment. It has fully supported the absolute rights of the Palestinian people of self-determination and the establishment of an independent state in Palestine which is their innate right. Pakistan has again reminded the world community that they all had a pledge in the immediate resolution of the conflict in the Middle East and especially the role of Muslim countries is very crucial in this regard. For this purpose, Pakistan has presented a

number of resolutions in the Security Council and the General Assembly, which call for the establishment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab lands and the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to an independent and sovereign state of their own in their homeland, Palestine.

OIC and Palestine

OIC played a significant role in the issue of Palestine and proved a source of the unity of Ummah where they can take steps for their betterment. All the OIC summits and conferences of foreign ministers discuss the progress on the issue of Palestine and showed their determination to stand with the people of Palestine until they get their independence, similar fortitude was appeared in the sixth Summit of The Organization of Islamic Conference.

As at the occasions of all the summits and conference Palestine issue is highlighted and discussed in detail similarly at the time of 10th and 11th Islamic summit of the OIC it was "reaffirmed the need to establish an independent

Palestinian State" and stressed the need of the solution of Palestine problem according to the acceptance of the people of Palestine.

Many emergency meetings were called by the OIC since its establishment and whenever any violation happened by Israel then OIC condemned it fully and pressurize the opposing forces to get away from their cruel plans. Assistant Foreign Minister Dr. Nizar Madani at the emergency OIC foreign ministers in Doha condemned the military rule of Israel who was hitting the innocent Palestine people unjustifiably and severely throbbing the Islamic feelings and increasing tension in the region and endangering international peace and security.

Afghan Problem

Background

Afghanistan, often called the crossroads of Central Asia, has had a turbulent history. The resistance and fighting's remained part of its history and this region could not get full peace for a longer period of time and lingered unstable in the regime of many rulers. In 328 BC, Alexander the Great entered the territory of present-day Afghanistan. Invasions by the Scythians, White Huns, and Turks followed in succeeding centuries. In AD 642, Arabs invaded the entire region and introduced Islam and immense number of inhabitants embraced Islam after being impressed by the Islamic teachings (see Malik).

By October 1979, however, relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union were tense as Hafizullah Amin refused to take Soviet advice on how to stabilize and consolidate his government. Faced with a deteriorating security situation on December 24, 1979, large numbers of Soviet airborne forces, joining thousands of Soviet troops already on the ground, began to land in Kabul under the pretext of a field exercise. On December 26, these invasion forces killed Hafizullah Amin and appointed Babrak Karmal, exiled leader of the Parcham faction, as Prime Minister. Massive Soviet ground

Forces invaded from the north on December 27 (see Muhammad Ali). The Geneva Accords and Aftermath; By mid-1980s, the tenacious Afghan resistance movement--aided by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and others--was exacting a high price from the Soviets. Although informal negotiations for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan had been underway since 1982, it was not until 1988 that the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the United States and Soviet Union serving as guarantors, signed an agreement settling the major differences between them. The agreement, known as the Geneva accords, included five major documents, which among other things, called for U.S. and Soviet non-interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the right of refugees to return to Afghanistan without fear of persecution or harassment, and most importantly, a timetable that ensured full Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan by February 15, 1989.

OIC and Afghan Problem

OIC as a representative of Muslim Ummah raise and consider the issues which are troublesome and source of continuous destruction for the Muslim

countries. During its establishment all the Muslim Ummah was hopeful about the resolution of all its problems through the effective and solid role of OIC. Over the years its role has gradually shrunk reducing to an insignificant position. In spite of the fact that the Muslim Arab countries are enriched with the oil and supply it all over the world, their mutual strength is very little. It was previously thought that new Muslim block would emerge put its stress against any issue of Muslims significantly and would make the more balanced world for Muslims.

Except few occasions when the OIC tried to address the challenges by evolving a consensus on decisions and charting out a course of action for the fulfillment of its aims, the Organization has been, on the whole, a non-starter. Nearly 40 years are going to complete since its formation and number of conferences have been held but the result is not an iota. This speaks volumes of the inability and helplessness to which Muslim Ummah has been pushed (Ahmed, 2007). OIC not only failed in the resolution of Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88 and Iraqi invasion in Kuwait in 1990 but also showed little settlement on the issue of Palestine, Iraq, Kashmir, Afghanistan etc.

The failure of OIC can be taken as a symbol of collective failure of the whole Muslim community especially the larger and more stable Muslim countries. Looking at the structure of the organization what becomes clear is the fact that it lacks physical and economic infrastructure, which might serve as an impulsion for speedy and fruitful action (see Samina). There are hardly any sub-branches of the Organization to be found tasked with undertaking specific assignments in a scientific and comprehensive manner. Compare this with the organizational structure of UN and EU; the difference would be manifestly clear.

In the view of the absence of a systematic line of action, the Organization has been unable to take decisions in line with its avowed aims with the decision-making process have been reduced to capricious and whimsical thinking. Along with this, organization also lacks in the capability of independent decision making and does not appear as bold step taker for the better future of the Muslim Ummah.

The liberal allotment of funds is a necessary part of any sound planning in both economic and political areas. All the world bodies, think tanks and consultative groups can only show progress when they have excessive monetary resources along with the proper planning in order to achieve the maximum results. The lack of physical and economic infrastructure constitutes the important part of the internal obstacles, the organization faces (Aziz Beg & Nasim Ahmed).

Similarly Saad Khan (2001) concluded that the ambiguities in the charter of OIC are also a cause of its lackluster performance. This is because of these factors that OIC meetings have ended up without producing tangible results bringing into quick relief the innate structural flaws in the body. This is what its inability to address political issues becomes even more marked. It is also required that OIC keenly involve itself in 'expeditious implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the OIC mission' and its resolutions.

Now the time has come that the whole Ummah should unite at one place and work for the mutual benefits and take direction from their past weaknesses (see Orhan).¹¹⁸ Along with the Muslim Ummah, Muslim Scholars also require to

unit and focus on the mutual problems and issues that the Muslim world is facing today.

Terrorism

For last many years, a new but grave challenge of terrorism has cropped up in the OIC countries. It is fast on the rise. Many members of the OIC are involved in or falling victim to terrorist activities threatening the peace of land and endangering security. Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Bahrain and many other OIC member states are facing political instability. It is one of the biggest challenges of the day OIC has been facing. The issue is highlighted everywhere in media and all superpowers and strong multilateral bodies are making efforts to eliminate it vigorously. Because of terrorism, image of Islam and the Muslims is distorted worldwide. Many times, terrorists justify their acts on the pretext of self-defense.

OIC should take serious measures to preach the true concept of Islamic teachings as Islam is the religion of peace and tolerance. The parties involved in killing activities and suicide bombing are not performing some religious act or ritual and the whole nation or Ummah should not be blamed for falsified actions. It has become a major challenge for OIC to portray the true image of Islamic teachings in member and non-member states alike so that they could practice Islam in true spirit and non-Muslims may get the true picture of Islamic teaching. Any movement proved involved in extremism and terrorist activities should be penalized. False propaganda should be strictly controlled and only authentic information should be broadcast.

OIC is providing zero or no support to its member countries in terms of protecting their interests from foreign bodies. An example is when the US-led forces attacked on the pretext of the presence of the weapons of mass destruction, OIC could not stop it. The US and the UN inspectors could not find any weapon in Iraq but even then they inflicted heavy loss on the country ruining its people, wealth and infrastructure OIC even did not protest that uncalled-for attack by the US forces.

OIC has respected the sovereignty making it clear that it did not cherish any dream of becoming supranational body. Perhaps due to the similar reasons, it could not forcefully stop Iraq-Iran war and war between Iraq and Kuwait. OIC should ensure that the foreign powers should also respect the sovereignty of its member states and not exploit with their resources and peace.

Conclusion

OIC over a period of years has emerged as the sole spokesman of the Muslim Ummah that presents 57 nations on the world globe. It is true that the Organization has not lived up to the expectations of Muslims. It was unfortunate that most international issues were linked directly or indirectly to the Muslim world, the role of OIC was hardly there.

Pakistan has played a pivotal role in the deliberations of OIC since its inception. Pakistan is a founding member of the Organization of the Islamic Countries. It has played a vital role in the establishment of the Organization and a

number of its subsidiary organs and affiliated bodies. The OIC has been long on idiom but short on action. Since its inauguration in 1969 the OIC summits have produced more than 3200 resolutions ranging from the boycott of Israel to raising the level of economic, cultural and political cooperation among the member countries. Very few substantive resolutions have ever been implemented. In past, OIC has approved many resolutions urging member countries to vote with one voice in international forums like UN. With the exception of one resolution over Bosnia, the OIC has never voted as a bloc in the UN despite earlier agreement. One senior staff at the OIC Secretariat admitted that “less than 10 percent of the resolutions on political cooperation have ever seen daylight” (Ba Hamzah).

An organization whose role in the past has been almost for four decades no more than a forum of discussion and a platform for passing hollow declarations cannot be expected to overnight turn into a proactive international body. Despite these setbacks, the OIC succeeded in continuing to hold its regular meetings. The OIC has had a disappointing record. Stricken by infighting, power struggles and a failure to articulate clear and consistent policies, the OIC is more a symbolic meeting place than a dynamic political body. As far as major challenges of Muslim ummah are concerned like Kashmir, Afghanistan, Palestine and terrorism, OIC just made contact groups and passed the resolutions but didn't take any practical steps which would be a serious threat to aggressors. So the challenges are remained as they were.

It is most heartening that now there is a growing realization that OIC must be in **sync** with the contemporary world otherwise it would loose its relevance. This realization was the motivation for the historic initiative taken by the former President Musharraf in the summit held in Malaysia in 2003 to establish a Commission of Eminent Persons, which should look into all aspects and make recommendations for OIC's reform and restructuring, both in terms of organizational structure and the ideological policies. OIC should develop a mode to act practically worldwide. For this purpose OIC should follow the footsteps of other successful organizations of the world like EU and Council of Europe.

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