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Dispute dissolution through dialogue reflecting historical perspective: a proposed OIC framework

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The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is formed to ensure peace and prosperity in its member countries. The paper intends to highlight the contemporary OIC leaders' acumen to remove their differences, and thereby resume and maintain political relations among them. Moreover, the paper proposes a framework to ensure strong cooperation in various fields (e.g., political, economic and defense) among the OIC member states to ensure tangible benefits for their people. The current phenomenon is that the opposite sides agree to establish the necessary mechanisms with the encouragement of dialogue between them to minimize their differences. The recent trend is that OIC leaders intend to enhance unity and solidarity through dialogue. Most specifically, the contemporary OIC leaders' acumen prefer a dialogue-centered approach to conflict prevention and resolution of disputes. The paper articulates a framework taking the three constructs (i.e., political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance) under three layers among OIC countries. These constructs can be viewed as hierarchy of solidifying the foundation of political ties among the member states by removing their differences through dialogue. The three components of the proposed framework that incorporate the three constructs seems to help to ensuring global peace and prosperity. Additionally, this paper guides to understand the way the second largest international organization (after the UNO) with a membership of 57 states can establish closer ties for betterment of their people.

KEYWORDS

economic cooperation, defense alliance, organization of Islamic cooperation, peace, political ties, prosperity, Qatar

Introduction

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the collective voice of over 1.5 billion people of the world. On 25 September 1969 (12th Rajab 1,389 Hijra), the OIC was established upon a decision of the historical summit in Morocco, with a view to ensure a peace and prosperity in its member countries. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states, which spread over four continents. The OIC is the second largest organization after the United Nations (Ali and Sultan, 2023). Since its establishment, the OIC plays its role in the global peace and prosperity addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems. The fact that the OIC endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of its people in the spirit of promoting global peace. Since its inception, the Member States of the OIC have been facing many challenges (Kayaoglu, 2015).

Historically, the way the OIC Head of States attempted to resolve their crises and tensions in the past somewhat lacked wisdom. Interestingly, the way in which those challenges are addressed in the 21st century by the contemporary rulers (e.g., Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani) is very promising and pragmatic. The paper intends to focus on these issues, highlighting the contemporary OIC leaders' acumen. Moreover, the paper proposes a framework to ensure strong cooperation in various fields among the OIC members to ensure tangible benefits to their people. The paper articulates the model taking political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance under three layers into account to enhance peace and prosperity. The proposed model provides a way for effective functioning of the OIC.

OIC members states divided or united

The OIC member states are more divided than united, with historical, political, and religious dimensions. The divisions among the member states are a result of a complex interplay of factors, including sectarian schisms, geopolitical and national interests, political and ideological differences, economic disparity, and colonial legacy. Historically, disputes that evolved in the OIC countries remained to exist for a long time (Askari, 1994). The fact that there was time when the OIC head of states used to take tough stance against each other where there was a conflict of interest. There were a lot of reprisal mechanisms such as expelling expatriates, boycotting import/export, cutting diplomatic ties etc. Sometimes, they took a move which was an extreme form such as the deployment of troops to border or even engaging all-out war. For example, the Iran–Iraq War lasted 8 years (September 1980 to August 1988), taking around 500,000 lives before a ceasefire.

Contemporary crises and visionary leadership

The world is facing significant challenges for which the OIC countries can play roles to resolve their disputes and disagreements, and thereby mitigate their impacts. The contemporary OIC leaders (such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman) are keen to ensure peace and progress through the use of a dialogue-centered approach to conflict prevention and resolution of disputes. A few cases have been mentioned below that show the quick reproachment between the disputing countries. This approach actually reflects the visionary leadership of the contemporary leaders. The fact that the current phenomenon is that the opposite sides agree to establish the necessary mechanisms with the engagement of dialogue between them to resolve their crises, and thereby restore political ties between them.

Saudi Arabia and Iran reproachment

The long-standing rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, both influential OIC members, is a dominant factor. Saudi Arabia and Iran relations have long fluctuated between cooperation to enmity and distrust (Kalin et al., 2023). We have seen Saudi Arabia and Iran maintained a distance in their political diplomatic ties for a long time. Saudi Arabia had cut ties with Iran in 2016. But under current leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, there is an rapprochement between these countries, as part of a Chinese-brokered deal. The diplomatic ties are restored in March 2023 with a Chinese mediation. As a result, the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia

have warmed. On 6 April 2023 then Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud signed a joint statement on the restoration of diplomatic relations, in the presence of Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang. On 31 July 2024 Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz has sent a message to Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian concerning relations between the two nations, which was delivered by Minister of State Prince Mansour bin Miteb in Tehran. Parallel to this, Houthi backed Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia have reached an agreement to resolve their disputed issues through dialogue. Although they still have disagreement in many issues, they have at least realized the importance to have good relations for regional peace in particular.

Qatar diplomatic crisis

There was a disagreement between Qatar and other GCC member countries on various issues. This led to the deterioration of ties between Qatar and the Arab league (including GCC) between 2017 and 2021. Within few years, they have restored their diplomatic ties (Nuruzzaman, 2015). If it was the case in 20 years back, there might have been a military incursion in Qatar or the deployment of soldiers near Qatari border to keep pressure (Kinninmont, 2019). Or at least this tension might linger for a very long time before normalization of their relationship and restoring diplomatic ties among them. It is to be noted that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud invited Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar to participate in the 32nd Regular Session of the Arab League Council Meeting at the Summit Level. Similarly, the Qatari Amir welcomed the leaders and representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to participate in the 44th GCC Summit (Shahbaz and Hassaniyan, 2024). Eventually, the tensions between the two sides came to an end in January 2021, following a resolution. This also reflects the current rulers' strong conviction and commitment for the regional peace.

Turkey -Saudi Arabia ties

Turkey and Saudi Arabia are bound by strong religious, cultural and historical ties. But ties between the two countries were strained by the 2018 death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Since then there was a tension between them in various fronts, subsequently their ties deteriorated (Ozturk, 2022). However, this did not lead to severe their diplomatic relationship. Both the countries kept their diplomatic channels open and eventually, the tension is diffused with the visits by the leaders of the both countries. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Saudi Arabia twice in April 2022 and again July 2023 that helped rapprochement. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman also reciprocated by traveling to Turkey in June 2023.

Iran- Bahrain ties normalization

Bahrain and Iran have had long-standing disputes for more than a decade. The fact that these two countries are also bound by strong religious, cultural and historical ties. But diplomatic ties between them have remained extremely friendly at times and extremely strained at

others. For example, Bahrain accused Iran of being involved in a 2011 anti-government protest movement led by the country's Shia community. Consequently, Bahrain had cut ties with Iran in 2016, but relations improved following the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement last year (International Crisis Group, 2024). In June 2024 Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani traveled to Iran, where he met his Iranian counterpart. Finally, both countries agree to start talks aimed at restoring ties.

Morocco- Algeria rapprochement

The relations between Morocco and Algeria have been quite tense on many occasions in the history of both countries. However, the tensions between the two neighboring countries greatly intensified in December 2020 when Morocco normalized its relations with Israel in exchange for U. S. recognition of between Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara territory. This led to the Algeria's decision to unilaterally sever diplomatic ties with Morocco in 2021 – days after the Presidency announced in a statement their relations would be reviewed (Rachidi, 2022). As mentioned earlier, the hostility and the long-time rivalry between the two countries has been long running. Recently, Algeria reinforced its military presence on the border with Morocco. Against this backdrop, the leaders of both countries are cautious in their diplomatic move, and have not taken any radical decision that may lead to small scale military conflict.

Syria- Arab countries relations

Before the Assad regime collapsed on 8 December 2024 due to a major offensive by opposition forces, the civil war was an ongoing multi-sided conflict in Syria involving various state-sponsored and non-state actors. In November 2011, with the support of 18 of its 22 members, the Arab League voted to suspend Syria from the organization and, further, imposed sanctions on the regime. 12 years into Syria's devastating civil war has resulted in an estimated more than 300,000 violent deaths, making it the second-deadliest conflict of the 21st century (Ray, 2023). After more than a decade of civil war, Syrian regime and the Arab governments have finally opted for normalization. In particular, Arab League shifts its position by restoring Syria's membership in the Arab League, which had been suspended in 2011 following Assad's brutal crackdown on anti-regime protesters (Robinson, 2023). In 2021, the Arab League initiated a process of normalization between Syria and other Arab nations. On 7 May 2023, at the meeting of the Council of the Arab League in Egypt, it was agreed to reinstate Syria's membership. Against this backdrop, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was given a warm welcome at an Arab summit on May 19 2023.

It is to be noted that on 8 December 2024, the Assad regime collapsed during a major offensive by mainly by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army.

Political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance hierarchy

The paper articulates a model termed as *Peace and Prosperity Pyramid* to ensure peace and prosperity among Member states of the

OIC. *Peace and Prosperity Pyramid* has three layers considering political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance. These constructs can be viewed as a hierarchy of political, economic, and defense cooperation. The three layers in the proposed *Peace and Prosperity Pyramid* is depicted in Figure 1. The paper reveals that in order to contribute to global peace and prosperity the OIC members need to emphasize the strengthening of their ties and narrowing down their differences. The three components of the proposed framework (i.e., *Peace and Prosperity Pyramid*) that incorporate political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance are elaborated below.

Political dialogue

The initiative of political dialogues encourages more open discussions that helps to eliminate differences. The fact that the frequent interactions help to build trust (Jasimuddin et al., 2014). However, it depends upon the goodwill and commitment of the leaders. The contemporary OIC rulers (such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani) are visionary leaders as they are keen to set a long-term vision by creating a strategic plan to achieve that vision, and empowers others to collaborate toward that shared goal of peace and prosperity. They have a long-sighted view as a visionary leader, very pragmatic and accommodative to face challenges and differences. The leaders of OICs are moving toward reconciliation and urge for dialogue. Moreover, the rulers are demonstrating their willingness and political wisdom in reconciliation and restoration of ties. The current head of states are keen to engaging themselves and agreeing to sit at the discussion table.

Economic cooperation

The economic cooperation and integration is a key objective of the OIC and its sister concern the Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC). It is to be noted that the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) is the main multilateral economic and commercial cooperation platform of the OIC member states. The COMCEC is proved to be a central Forum to address the social and economic challenges faced by the member countries, and provide solutions to them. Moreover, it contributes to the development efforts of the Member States, and provides all possible means of strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among them. Warm relationships among the OIC countries open trade and investment opportunities for their economy. For example, recently, Saudi Arabia promises to invest \$5 billion to boost Pakistan's economy. Foreign direct investment from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Turkey has surged to \$5.6 billion (AED20.6 billion) from 2002 until August 2023. Parallel to this Turkey and the UAE have signed deals worth \$50.7 billion as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rounded off a three-country tour of the Gulf states. The value of Saudi investments in Türkiye is estimated to be around USD 2 billion. On the other hand, Turkish investments in Egypt reached nearly \$3 billion, employing approximately 70,000 people directly and 100,000 indirectly, with an annual turnover of \$1.5 billion (Turk, 2023).



FIGURE 1
Peace and prosperity pyramid.

Hopefully, the member states gradually begin to implement unified policies to facilitate intra-OIC businesses, such as tariff waivers for intra-member states' trade, and culminate in the creation of a OIC Customs Union and introduce a unified customs tariff on inter-states imports. Such initiatives will definitely set the foundation for the establishment of the OIC Common Market, and for the introduction of policies that will grant the citizens equal treatment across member countries in business licensing and activities.

The implications of the most recent events (e.g., Israel-Iran war, Gaza situation, Iran's nuclear ambitions)

The OIC's framework is built upon the principles of upholding international law, and promoting peace and security in the region, and supporting the rights of the Palestinian people as an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC has been very active in its condemnations of the Israeli military operations in Gaza, describing them as crimes of genocide, destruction, starvation, [and] These condemnations are consistent with the OIC's long-standing advocacy for Palestinian rights. Displacement. The OIC has also repeatedly called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to be a central issue for the OIC, and recent events have only intensified its response. The OIC has also urged the international community to impose sanctions on Israel and halt the transfer of military equipment. The OIC has consistently and strongly condemned Israeli actions against Iran. The strikes on Iranian

nuclear facilities, brings the issue of nuclear proliferation and security to the forefront of the OIC's agenda. The OIC has called for Israel to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Since member states have varying degrees of relations with both Israel and the United States, which limit the OIC's ability to take unified, concrete action beyond issuing statements.

The ambition to expand the Abraham Accords

The chance of the Abraham Accords being expanded is high, with key targets being Saudi Arabia. While the original signatories of the Accords are UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel would be a historic diplomatic achievement, and it remains a central goal of the U. S. administration. The current situation in Gaza has complicated this significantly. The ongoing war in Gaza has made public opinion in the Arab world highly critical of any normalization with Israel. Saudi officials have made it clear that a deal is now contingent on the establishment of a viable path to an independent Palestinian state.

Security and defense alliance

As mentioned earlier, building strong trust and close ties through political dialogue can strengthen commercial and business ties across sectors. The fact that the movement of capital

(investment and trade) among the OIC countries can lead to economic growth. The strong political ties and economic cooperation can help to divert the surplus resources for building defense and security among the member countries, reaffirming their shared objectives for self-sufficiency in defense. For example, Turkish defense industry firm Ramsa defense will be a partner in a \$120 million technology investment in Saudi Arabia, it is to be noted that the notion of security and defense has got top priority with the creation of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), an intergovernmental counter-terrorist military alliance between 42 member states, in which most of its participants are members of the OIC. This has been initiated by Saudi Arabian then defense minister (now Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia) Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud on 15 December 2015. The main purpose of the IMCTC is to protect OIC countries from all terrorist groups (Karen, 2015). Another example of the possible security alliance is the recent meeting of Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia to expand defense cooperation. The foundation of political relations and economic cooperation can encourage the development of closer military ties among the member countries.

Figure 1 demonstrates Peace and Prosperity Pyramid of the OIC. The bottom level of the OIC framework is the political and diplomatic ties. It is the foundation on which economic cooperation and defense alliance success depend. Hence solidifying the foundation of political ties among the member countries is crucial to remove their differences through effective dialogue. Next step of the OIC members is to engage in economic cooperation. The closer the political ties, the higher the possibility of economic cooperation among them. This will enhance trust and commitment among them to cooperate more in various fields including defense. This will eventually help to reach the next level of the defense and security pact/ cooperation, which is at the top level of the pyramid to ensure peace and prosperity.

The fact that political dialogue encourages more and more open discussions and the elimination of differences. The frequent interactions help to build trust. Strengthening political ties and removing differences among the OIC countries leads to strengthen economic cooperation and investment and movement of workforce. As a result, security and defense collaboration is expanded. Security pact and strategic alliance such as the formation of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition can protect and safeguard the interests of the OIC nations.

Conclusion

The OIC's fundamental mission is to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among its member states. Most specifically, the OIC's goals are multifaceted, encompassing political, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian dimensions. The OIC's reach is considerable due to its large membership, but its influence can be inconsistent. As mentioned earlier, the contemporary leaders of the OIC demonstrate their wisdom to establish the appropriate mechanisms with the encouragement of talks between them to study how to remove their differences and thereby restore political ties. The fact that the OIC's goals are officially stated in its charter and have evolved over time to address contemporary challenges. Its reach is extensive, covering a vast geographical area and a

significant portion of the world's population. However, its influence is often more symbolic than practical, limited by the internal divisions and competing national interests.

The 15th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference was held in Republic of Gambia on 4 May 2024, and the theme of the summit is to “*Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable*.” This theme reflects the dialogue that gets most priority in terms of conflict resolution mechanism to enhance unity, solidarity and peace among the OIC member countries. The paper helps to understand the way the second largest organization (after the UNO) with a membership of 57 states can closer ties for wellbeing of their people. Most specifically, the proposed model will enable the OIC countries to compete and lead in a globally-connected post-pandemic world, through joint efforts to restore economic growth, resume free trade and people movement, and strengthen strategic partnerships with the member states.

The contemporary OIC leaders, particularly Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, are keen to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the OIC countries and its peoples, to encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Removing restrictions on OIC citizens' ability to travel, work and live within their countries by transforming restrictive laws and promoting visa free travel to enhance movement of all citizens in all OIC member countries.

Parallel to this, the proposed OIC framework can enhance peace and prosperity, taking political ties, economic cooperation and defense alliance into account under three stages. These constructs can be viewed as a hierarchy of solidifying the foundation of political ties among the member countries so as to broaden their economic cooperation, and thereby strengthen their military pack. The proposed framework actually aims to guide the effective functioning of the OIC in the coming days. Accordingly, such an organization can continue to take strong unified position to stop genocide and bring peace in OIC member states like Palestine and Sudan.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

SJ: Resources, Visualization, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Investigation, Data curation, Methodology, Validation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Software, Supervision. NA: Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing.

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