

**BANGLADESH AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE
ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC): 1988-2002**

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fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

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I do solemnly hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "***BANGLADESH AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC): 1988-2002***" being submitted to the Centre for South, Central, South East Asian and South West Pacific Studies is a record of my bonafide work carried out by me.

This work is original and has not been submitted in part or full to any university for the award of any degree.

New Delhi
17 July 2004

Md. Masud Sarker

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...dedicated to

my father,

Late Md. Akhiluddin Sarker

*whom I lost in 1993, who taught me at an early age to appreciate the value of learning
and who above all imprinted on my life an inerasable mark.*

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PREFACE

Interdependence has encouraged countries to work together in order to collaborate in social, economic and political spheres. The formation of international organizations becomes a process in this unifying endeavour to work for a better future and a prosperous world. At present there is no part of the world which is not encircled by an international organization of one kind or another. Therefore, the investigation of international governmental organizations becomes a crucial and imperative field that requires a sustained interrogation for the betterment of multilateral relations between countries of the world. Such a study positively develops into an integral part of the academic framework of contemporary International Relations.

By the mid 20th century – the Cold War players, Non-aligned Movement and the movement for solidarity among Muslims – Pan-Islamism – gradually became institutionalized. The ending of the Cold War resulted in the end of most of these movements although only a few like pan-Islamic movements by some means managed to continue to exist. In fact the pan-Islamic movement capitulated into the establishment of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969. Over the years, the OIC has institutionalized itself with a wide network spread over Asia, Africa, Central Asia and East Europe. The OIC is unique as it is the only international governmental organization which is based on religious affinity. Within this organizational setup, no major problem of the contemporary Muslim world was to be left untouched, either in the local or the international scene.

The OIC represents the culmination of efforts of the Muslims since the end of the First World War to establish a pan-Islamic organization to protect the Islamic cause in the international arena and promote relations among Muslim people and states. The journey of which, started with 25 nations, has strengthened into a unity of 57 independent Muslim countries of the world. The OIC is an organization which has a marvelous potential for integrating Muslim countries into a well-knit group, while at the same time promoting the cause of reciprocated advancement. This noticeably becomes an exceptional prerequisite for achieving strength and practicability. The OIC places a moral pressure on the non-Muslim countries from pursuing suppressive

policies over the Muslims in those countries while at the same time restricting any possible discrimination inflicted on minority religions in the Muslim countries.

As a distinguishing body of conference-diplomacy, the OIC has been taking a position on all major issues pertaining to the Muslim world in particular and humanity in general. The OIC is not only a place where representatives of the member states accumulate for airing and sharing views and for mobilizing world opinion but also an arena for carrying out diplomacy. All these aspects make the OIC a very important and vital subject for a serious consideration. But no major recent study has so far been made exclusively dealing with the subject of the OIC and provides a wide-ranging account of the issues and various facets related to it in an integrated way.

No country has attained wide importance in such a short time in the OIC as Bangladesh. All indications point to the fact that the country's importance in the organization will continue to grow. A country like Bangladesh has become an important actor in the OIC and convincing evidence can be mentioned to illustrate this growing importance. It becomes undoubtedly an imperative to study the role and diplomacy of Bangladesh in the OIC. As the second largest Muslim country, Bangladesh has always maintained a high profile in it. Bangladesh's relations with the Muslim world and its activities within the OIC form a part of its overall foreign relations activities and its hunt for political distinction and legitimacy and economic improvement. It is indeed regrettable that there is no systematic and/or comprehensive study of this aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy anywhere.

Islam has figured prominently in the post-Cold War paradigms of international politics. Given the disappearance of the communist threat, and post September 11 developments, leading scholars within the discipline of international relations have described Islam as the "next ideological threat" vis-à-vis the present world order. The strategic importance of the organization is extensively enhanced by the fact that the territories of its 57 member nations combined include a huge land mass with rich natural resources and an exceptionally vital geographical location from the point of view of international sea and air passage routes. Contrary to the general opinion however, the OIC does not have enough "power" per se in international affairs as it deserves in view of its size, resources and strategic location.

The main thrust of the study is to identify certain factors that led to the initial reluctance on the OIC's part to recognize Bangladesh, and the later benefits that Bangladesh obtained from the Muslim world. Through a gradual process, Bangladesh improved its relations with the Islamic world and within a short span of time after its entry in the OIC it became an outstanding member of the major committees and bodies of it which has been discussed in the first chapter. Chapter two highlights the historical background of the formation of the OIC, the kinds and structure of its various bodies. The chapter attempts to critically evaluate its numerous programmes and policies related to different issues. Chapter three deals with the specific stand Bangladesh has taken on the various political issues confronting the Islamic world during the mentioned period in great detail. Chapter four has undertaken a brief discussion about the profile of the Bangladesh economy and its economic relations with the OIC countries and how far Bangladesh has benefited economically, socially and even in the cultural area from its membership in the OIC. The final chapter summarized the main findings of the study and offered policy implications for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh seeks and obtains supports collectively of its diplomatic objectives, which has generated greater security for itself. It is one of the major beneficiaries of the OIC's developmental assistance in different fields. Therefore, it is imperative for Bangladesh to have good relations with the OIC. An attempt has been made to examine the factors that strengthen the organization and those which prevent the fulfillment of its lofty goals.

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CHAPTER I

THE CREATION OF BANGLADESH AND ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE OIC

1.1 Introduction

Bangladesh is the first country after World War II to achieve independence as a consequence of a civil war. It emerged into the world scene in December 1971 as the eighty-eighth independent state in terms of area, which occupies the ninth position in terms of population by falsifying the two-nation theory¹. Bangladesh is the result of a nine month long liberation war against the armed forces of the mother state, Pakistan.

The departure of the British from the sub-continent in 1947 created a predominantly Hindu India and overwhelmingly Muslim Pakistan. Pakistan had then two wings, namely East Pakistan and West Pakistan, which were separated by 2080 km² of Indian landmass, considered to be hostile. The East and West wings of Pakistan hardly had any noticeable similarities. Islam was the only reason for placing East and West Pakistan together. The Federation between the two wings of Pakistan proved untenable and the pull of Islamic brotherhood yielded to the push of utilitarian nationality. Religion could not sustain the Pakistani union³.

Soon after the British parted, a polarization on regional basis began to creep up in the internal politics of Pakistan. Issues like democracy – preferred by East Pakistan, the need to recognize Bangla as one of the national languages of Pakistan and a proportionate share of the national revenue for its developments – were some of the demands strongly voiced by the eastern wing. These and other demands met with stiff resistance from West Pakistan⁴. The economic exploitation, political suppression and the cultural infiltration that was systematically perpetrated by the military bureaucratic regime of the western wing onto the east, reduced the eastern part into nothing but a colony of West Pakistan. These demands were later organized into a Six Point Charter by the Awami League (AL) in 1966 and continued till the time of the War of Liberation.

¹ Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi observed, “The war with Pakistan and the emergence of independent Bangladesh had falsified the two nation theory and vindicated our principles of secularism”. See *Indian and Foreign Review*, New Delhi Vol. 9 No. 8 February 1972, p. 4.

² One had to fly over India from East Pakistan to West and vice-versa. See Harunur Rashid, *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh*, Rishi Publications, Varanasi, 2001, p 16.

³ Lawrence Ziring, *Bangladesh: From Mujib to Ershad: An Interpretive Study*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 1.

⁴ S. R. Chakravarty, ed., *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p.12.

The AL in its manifesto of this charter fought the general election on the 7th of December 1970 under the military regime, securing an absolute majority. But the denial of the handover of power to the leader of the AL, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and a brutal military crack down under the name of “Operation Searchlight” on the unarmed Bengali population in East Pakistan by the Pakistani military junta was inflicted on the 25th March 1971. Soon after the barbarous action by the Pakistani army on the Bengalis, Major Ziaur Rahman (later general and president of Bangladesh) declared independence on the 27th of March 1971 at the Kalur Ghat Betar Kendra (Kalur Ghat Radio Centre, Chittagong)⁵. The war ended with a total defeat of the western wing in December 1971. East Pakistan then emerged as a sovereign state called Bangladesh.

1.2 International Political Ambience

Bangladesh could hardly achieve her independence without a relatively favorable external setting. Indeed the regional and global alignments helped her immensely to overcome the obstacles of political separation, which remains the only example of a successful revolt against a well-established state of Pakistan in contemporary history⁶. Of the external forces that helped the cause of Bangladesh, India played a pivotal role. Obviously, the idea of an independent Bangladesh was not of Indian origin, but once the Bangladeshis conceived it, India precipitated its “caesarian” birth⁷.

India provided all sorts of moral and material support for the Bangladeshis in their struggle for liberation. India wanted to divide Pakistan and the people of the former East Pakistan needed India’s help. Therefore it was a “hand-in-glove” situation for the people of the two countries. It was a war between India and Pakistan⁸.

China supported the integrity of Pakistan and therefore indirectly opposed the liberation of Bangladesh, due to the compulsion of the Cold War politics interplaying in the

⁵ There are different versions of Major Zia’s declaration. It was believed by some that he had declared the independence in his own name. Another group maintains that he corrected his first declaration by announcing independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujib.

⁶ The secession of Singapore from Malaysia in August 1965 was of a different nature; it was apparently brought about by peaceful negotiation and mutual agreement.

⁷ Nurul Momen, *Bangladesh in the United Nations: A Study in Diplomacy*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1987, p. 15.

⁸ The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation has been described as “second liberation for India” for it made the nation “more secure than it ever was”. See Pran Choppra, *India’s Second Liberation*, Delhi 1973, pp. 3-4.

Liberation War of Bangladesh. In the Chinese perception, the independence of Bangladesh was seen as a threat to the territorial integrity of its ally, Pakistan and secondly it was supported by the alliance of its “enemy number one” the Soviet Union and its southern hostile neighbour, India. China vocally opposed the struggle and supported Pakistan unheeding the appeals of the pro-Chinese organizations participating in the Liberation War⁹. In fact Peking’s (Beijing) argument was that the Bengali problem was Pakistan’s internal affairs.

The former Soviet Union – a communist dictatorship – alone came to assist the cause of Bangladesh¹⁰. Moscow was aligned with India during the entire period of the Cold War as the US supported Pakistan against India. The Soviet Union wanted to prop up India against both the US and the Chinese hegemonistic influences in South Asia¹¹. India and the Soviet Union saw the emergence of Bangladesh as inevitable. The Soviet Union believed that the Pakistani military had to come to a political settlement leading to the independence of its former eastern wing, East Pakistan, as Bangladesh.

The United States like China showed a great concern for the territorial integrity of Pakistan, throughout the crisis. The people of Bangladesh were disappointed by the attitude of the US government. President Nixon did not come forward to denounce publicly the gross violation of human rights committed by the Pakistani military on the innocent people of Bangladesh¹². The Bangladesh crisis took place at a time when the US was recasting its global and Asian policies and the Sino-American détente was in progress. As the crisis deepened, the US government continued to help Pakistan with military and economic assistance, despite congressional moves and public assurance to the contrary. Washington also cautioned India not to go war with Pakistan, while several socialist states of Europe provided moral support along with communist superpower the Soviet Union. East Germany, Mongolia, Bulgaria and Poland had recognized Bangladesh even before Moscow.

⁹ There were many Chinese Communist Parties in East Pakistan which were more organized and strong than their allies in West Pakistan, most of the different Maoist organizations in East Pakistan were actively participating in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the National Awami Party of Maulana Bhashani, NAP (B) was the strongest among them.

¹⁰ Nurul Momen, *op. cit.*, p.15.

¹¹ Harunur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

It is interesting to note that President Bill Clinton during his visit to Bangladesh in March 2000, indirectly referred to the inactive role maintained by the Nixon administration in not recognizing Bangladesh. He said: "Twenty-nine years ago this month, against extraordinary obstacles, Bangladesh began a lonely fight for existence that did not receive the support it deserved from many countries around the world".

Even the Islamic world, particularly the Muslim countries of the Middle East did not favour the creation of Bangladesh by breaking a powerful Muslim country, Pakistan, with the help of India (A country dominated by non-Muslims), and the communist Soviet Union. They saw the liberation struggle of the people of Bangladesh with suspicion and Pakistan was able to prejudice their views on the crisis. In their perception the arms struggle (War of Independence) by the people of Bangladesh against an *Islamic* Pakistan was a foreign conspiracy to weaken the solidarity of the Islamic Ummah¹³. The support of the Islamic countries to Pakistan at a time of its crisis in 1971 was a manifestation of their appreciation to Pakistan for championing the cause of Islam.

1.3 United Nation's Position

A full-scale war had erupted on December 3, 1971 between India and Pakistan. Both sides accused each other for the outbreak of the armed hostilities between the two countries. India took a politically critical decision and recognized Bangladesh on the 6th of December 1971, as the war went on. The UN Security Council was puzzled by the differences that crept up in the opinions of the permanent members, namely, the US, the Soviet Union and China. A draft resolution moved by the US was put to vote on 13 December 1971 calling upon the ceasefire and withdrawal of troops from East Pakistan. The ceasefire would have helped Pakistan tremendously as it was losing the war in Bangladesh. However, the US resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union. Three days later, on 16 December 1971 the issue was settled on the battlefield itself with the surrender of the Pakistanis forces in Bangladesh.

1.4 The Stance of the OIC

The stance taken by the OIC was an interesting one. It did not initially support the disintegration of Pakistan and thus opposed the Liberation War of Bangladesh. In June –

¹³ Ibid., p. 29.

during the liberation war – the 22 nations conference of Islamic Countries in Jeddah supported Pakistan’s effort to “safeguard its [Pakistan’s] national unity and integrity”. A communiqué issued by the conference condemned any foreign interference in Pakistan’s internal affairs. However, after its independence the good offices of the OIC persuaded Pakistan to recognize Bangladesh.

The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), held in Jeddah in March in 1972 took up the question of Bangladesh as one of its main issues. The issue was added to the agreed agenda. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia inaugurated the conference, saying that “it was most unfortunate for the Muslims of Pakistan to have fallen a prey to the machination of the enemies of Islam”. The head of the Pakistan delegation Mairaj Khalid tried to make out that there was a conspiracy between India and Israel to weaken Pakistan¹⁴. The conference also resolved to send a delegation of conciliation composed of Algeria, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia to Islamabad and Dhaka to bring about a reconciliation between the estranged brothers¹⁵. It was in a way giving *de facto* recognition to the existence of the two states born out of the erstwhile-united Pakistan.

1.5 Role of the Western Press

The support generated by the western press to the world audience regarding the sufferings of the Bangladeshis, aroused spontaneous sympathy and help paving the way to independence. The English newspapers and the BBC brought out detailed coverage of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani soldiers upon the citizens of their own country. However, Bhutto branded the attitude of the western press as ‘deplorable’ which ‘unashamedly supported the secessionist movement’.

1.6 The Aftermath of the War

Immediately after the liberation of Bangladesh, the nascent state began to face serious internal as well as external problems which seemed to threaten its very survival. Internally, the reconstruction of the economy, the resettlement of nearly ten million of its inhabitants who had taken shelter in neighbouring India and the maintenance of law and order were some of the crucial tasks at hand. Externally, Bangladesh posed a puzzling

¹⁴ Noor Ahmad Baba, *Organization of Islamic Conference: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p.78.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.79

question of legitimacy and identity for the contemporary state system owing to the unconventional nature of its birth. Understanding and guided by the political realities the government of Bangladesh declared that it would be part of the non-aligned group of nations and sought recognition from as many countries as possible. As a country that need massive assistance for its economic and its overall developments, Bangladesh's approach to foreign affairs must be essentially development oriented.

1.7 The Process of Foreign Policy Making

In this world of interdependence, no country however large or small, powerful or weak, can afford to live in isolation. In the course of interaction, the nation and the states are constantly being changed and influenced by each other. Through such interaction, each state tries to protect its perceived national interest by pursuing a broad range of policies in order to create a favourable environment where such interests can be preserved. Such a pursuant of policies to influence the external behavior of another country to its favour is termed as the countries foreign policy¹⁶. Diplomacy is the principal peaceful means to pursue goals and objectives of foreign policies. A country's foreign policy is the legislative aspect and diplomacy is the executive aspect of managing foreign relation¹⁷. In order to thoroughly understand the gradual intimacy that developed between Bangladesh and the Muslim world and its membership and role in the OIC, it is essential to evaluate Bangladesh's early foreign policy, its goals, objectives and principal determinants. A country's foreign policy is nothing but the extension of its domestic policy. Determinants of foreign policy are simply factors, sources or variables, which influence the nature, style, objective and strategy of the foreign policy of the country.

The legacy left by the freedom struggle has largely conditioned the evolution of the foreign policy of Bangladesh. Since its inception, the freedom struggle had been debating and demanding a foreign policy based on world peace, non-alignment and anti-colonialism for the country. The movement unequivocally supported the struggle for all freedom loving people against the vestiges of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The freedom struggle also talked of self-reliance, close friendship with all neighbouring

¹⁶ Emajuddin Ahmed and Abul Kalam, ed., *Bangladesh: South Asia and World*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p. 39.

¹⁷ Mohammad Tajuddin, *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Liberation War to Sheikh Hasina*, National Book Organization, New Delhi, 2001, p. 41.

countries in general and with India in particular¹⁸. Bangladesh's options in foreign relations appeared to be limited due to its geographical location, its size and its poverty stricken people. Bangladesh's conduct of its foreign relation, took a distinct direction during the period of arms struggle to gain support from other foreign powers.

The domestic compulsions in the conduct of foreign relations are created in the light of history, national character, constitutional and economic conditions of the country. Apart from the domestic compulsions within the country the external environment is consequential for a country such as Bangladesh that is a recipient of foreign aid for its economic progress and development.

In regional or international affairs there exist no mandatory independent bodies responsible in resolving disputes among the countries. It is the strong player who can readily enforce the rules over the weak. In an unequal world, the old maxim "might is right" rules the day. In the light of this background, Bangladesh had to be always alert and vigilant to ensure that its national interests are fully protected. Bangladesh cannot afford to be complacent in conducting bilateral or multilateral relations¹⁹. The principal determinants of the aims and objectives of a country's foreign policy is the maintenance of the integrity of the state, economic development and advancement, providing national security and protecting national prestige.

Article – 25(1) of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh states that: "The state shall base its international relation on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlements of all international disputes and respect for international laws and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter". Article 25 – (2) says: "The state shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity". The main objective of Bangladesh's foreign policy, right from the beginning of independence has been inter-alia preservation of its

¹⁸ S. R. Chakravarty, op. cit, p. 13.

¹⁹ Harunur Rashid, op. cit, p. 35.

independence and security, gaining economic well being for the people and the promotion of peace and stability in the region²⁰.

Due to the geographical location, Bangladesh must maintain and promote close links with the countries in South East Asia, for cultural and religious reasons it must feel certain affinities with the Muslim nations in Asia and the Middle East as well. In fact the close ties binding Bangladesh historically and culturally with the Islamic countries that was manifested after independence in the recognition of the new state of Bangladesh by most of the Islamic states in quick succession despite reservation. This goodwill towards Bangladesh was further demonstrated in the interest they showed in the admission of Bangladesh as a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the participation of Bangladesh in the Islamic Summit in Lahore in 1974²¹.

The objectives of Bangladesh's foreign policy can be identified and categorized as politico-security objectives and economic objectives²². Among the politico-security objectives the important ones include:

1. To maintain friendly and good neighbourly ties with India which is required for the economic development of Bangladesh.
2. To create and maintain pro-Indo-Bangla cooperation lobbies in the provincial capitals bordering Bangladesh particularly West Bengal and Tripura where it has separate missions.
3. To strive for the peaceful resolution of bilateral problems with India, Myanmar and Pakistan.
4. To strive for peace and stability in the sub-continent and the South Asian region as a whole.
5. To enhance its international standing through active participation in international organizations on major international issues.
6. To secure leadership and responsible positions in regional and international organizations and affairs.

²⁰ Q.K. Ahmed, ed., *Bangladesh: Past Two Decades and the Current Decade, : Assimilating Past Experiences Towards Shaping the Future*, Proceedings of a National Seminar Held in Dhaka, 29 Jan-4 Feb, Organized by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), Academic Publishers, 1994, p.438.

²¹ Mohammad Shamsul Huq, *International Politics: A Third World Perspective*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, p.234.

²² Mohammad Tajuddin, op. cit, p. 91.

7. To strengthen and diversify bilateral relations with friendly countries.

Along with these politico-security objectives Bangladesh strives to achieve the constitutionally assigned objectives of disarmament, the right of self-determination, the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism and enhance Islamic solidarity among Muslim nations.

The economic objectives of Bangladesh's foreign policies include:

1. The procurement of a targeted amount of external assistance from aid donors and to endeavour to raise the amount of aid and number of donor states.
2. To secure fair and stable price for Bangladeshi exports and promote the volume of exports and number of countries which import Bangladeshi goods. To explore the possibility of common export strategies with the countries that export same commodities, which are exported by Bangladesh.
3. To highlight the problems of LDCs in particular and Third World in general on multilateral forums and in North-South negotiations.
4. To demand for changes in international monetary and financial system so that this leads to the emergence of a just and equitable economic world order.

“Friendship towards all malice towards none” is the motto of its bilateral diplomacy²³. Bangladesh like any other state is not exclusively dependent on multilateral diplomacy but uses it only in addition to bilateralism. Bangladesh has good bilateral relations with those countries, which serve its foreign policy objectives. The multilateral institutions which are used by Bangladesh as instruments of diplomacy like all other member states of the institutions are- the United Nation System, the Non-aligned Movement, the Commonwealth, the Organization of Islamic Conference, SAARC and the G-77.

As the second largest Muslim country Bangladesh is an active member of the OIC. Recognizing the importance of the OIC for its national interest Bangladesh actively participates in its activities. It joined the Conference in its Second Summit in 1974 at Lahore. The OIC played a very important diplomatic role to bring Bangladesh and

²³Mohammad Tajuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Pakistan on one platform, when Pakistan recognized Bangladesh and the relationship between the two countries were made normal²⁴.

1.8 Role of Islam in Bangladesh and the Dilemma of Cultural Identity

The Muslim population in Bangladesh comprises of nearly 90 per cent of the total population. Islamic forces are potent and able to exert a strong influence on the socio-political life of the country²⁵. Islamic parties have sprung up by the hundreds, in the country²⁶. Their common cause is the establishment of an “Islamic State”. Islamic forces in Bangladesh have strengthened their clout in domestic politics as well. The whole picture has often been described by the loosely used term ‘Islamization’.

Islam is an influencing factor on the foreign policy and diplomacy of all Muslim states either as a capability or as a constraint. The degree of its role on the foreign policy may vary from country to country depending on the state ideology. The unity and universality of the Islamic world and Muslim people has weakened due the imposition of colonialism by the western powers over them. They introduced modernization and secularization that resulted in the emergence of territorial national sovereignty. The Khilafat was superseded by the European system of law over Sharia law. But the feeling of a single Ummah has survived and rather strengthened among Muslims everywhere in the post-war period. The doctrine of Islamic brotherhood, the scriptures, the rites and rituals and the past history of Islam provided a bond for the Muslims. The urge for Islamic solidarity is expressed in the form of the OIC. The OIC has gradually emerged as a forum for the Muslim states to collectively deliberate on the problems of the Muslim Ummah and the Islamic states. The creation of the OIC has enhanced Islam’s role in the foreign policy of the member states. The regular and specialized meetings of the OIC have become a motivating or at least a pervasive factor for member states to be considerate to Islamic issues in the making of their foreign policy and in its implementation²⁷.

²⁴Mohammad Tajuddin, *Bangladesh and Islamic World*, Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies, Calcutta, 1998, p. 30.

²⁵ Sukumar Biswas and Hiroshi Sato, *Religion and Politics in Bangladesh and West Bengal: A Study of Communal Relations*, Tokyo, 1993, p.85.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁷ Mohammad Tajuddin, *op. cit.*, n. 24, p. 10.

Islam is one of the independent determinants of the foreign policy and diplomacy of Bangladesh. The first government in Bangladesh was constitutionally a secular one. The state of Bangladesh was founded on the basis of four major principles: nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism.

The new constitution in 1972 laid down the principle of 'secularism' as the reflection of an adverse reaction against the Islamic forces, which was so intense and was easily erased from the minds of the people. Among the administrative actions in accordance with these principles was the banning of the Islamic political parties²⁸. By 1973/74 the Awami League Government started the process of renouncing its 'secularist' policies. The foreign policy reorientation that the first oil crisis forced on Bangladesh had an important implication for the domestic policy on the Islamic forces. This reorientation made it easier for the Bangladesh Government to resume ties with the Middle East countries through the mediation of Pakistan and the US. The Islamic Foundation that had been abolished immediately after independence was revived. At the inaugural ceremony Prof. Yusuf Ali, Minister for Labour, Social Welfare, Sports and Cultural Affairs, stated, "Bangladesh is committed to the ideas and teachings of Islam and she would continue her efforts for the establishment of peace and universal brotherhood – the most important tenets of Islam"²⁹.

Right from the 19th century Bengali Muslims have been faced with a dilemma regarding their cultural identity. To them the vital question is whether they are Bengali Muslims or Muslim Bengalis. Some are tended to identify themselves with the Arab and Islamic world while others unwilling to find their connection with the Arab world rather submerged themselves in the Bengali culture. The Muslims of Bengal after a very brief interlude with the Muslims of West Pakistan were back to their old situation and a clear-cut solution to their dilemma continues to elude them even today. Jinnah regarded the Muslims of Bengal as weak Muslims in spirit.

Searching for a proper identity there is some similarities between the Muslims of Bangladesh and Indonesia. Since independence both Indonesia and Bangladesh experimented with secular nationalist ideologies. Due to the global effect of the

²⁸ Sukumar Biswas and Hiroshi Sato, op. cit, p. 89.

²⁹ Anwar Hussain, 'Bangladesh and Islamic Countries, 1972-1983', *Bangladesh Studies: Politics, Administration, Rural Development and Foreign Policy*, ed., by Mohammed Mohabbat Khan and Syed Anwar Hussain, Centre for Administrative Studies, University of Dhaka, 1985. p.243.

resurgence of Islam, the Muslims of Indonesia and Bangladesh wish to combine their appeal towards their indigenous identity with the common ideology of the world Muslim Community.

There should not be any dilemma regarding the proper identity of the people of Bangladesh. A Bengali Muslim may ask himself: "is he first of all a Muslim or a Bengali?" The proper answer would be that both the identities are correct and it is only relevant in what context the question is asked. If it is an ethnic one it should be Bengali, if it is a question of faith, the answer should be, Muslim. For the purpose of identification the two aspects of the question are totally different and there need not be any hierarchy or priority. One relates to his faith which is transcendental and has no boundary where as the other is bound with his ethnicity and country. When a citizen of Bangladesh travels abroad his relevant legal identification is that he is a Bangladeshi as described in his passport according to the country's constitution.

The feelings of the Bengali Muslims of Bangladesh are that they must preserve their distinct Muslim culture and identity while preserving their rich Bengali cultural heritage and ethnicity. Sheikh Mujib felt that the Bengali Muslim culture must be preserved and protected against the Hindu cultural influence emanating from Hinduism³⁰. The Bengali Muslims of Bangladesh aspired for a well-established Muslim culture to prevail and flourish in all aspect of their daily lives. They wanted to take pride in being part of an established international community of Muslims spreading all over the world.

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujib along with most of his family members, Major General Ziaur Rahman came to power and he made some amendments in the constitution. In 1978, the commencement of the Constitution of 1972 was changed to "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim" (in the Name of Allah, most Compassionate, most Merciful). The word 'secularism' was removed and clause 25 – (2) read, the state shall endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among the Muslim countries. Zia dropped the principles of secularism in favour of Islam³¹. The new provision that was

³⁰ Salahuddin Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Past and Present*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2004, p. 318.

³¹ Shaheen F. Dil, "The Myth of Islamic Resurgence in South Asia", *Current History*, April 1980, p. 185.

incorporated placed full faith in Almighty Allah³². Zia was always found prefacing his public official speeches with “Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim”. He declared Bangladesh is keen to strengthen ties with the Muslim countries of the world with which it has religious, historical and cultural ties. Even the manifesto of the BNP founded by Zia in 1979 carried the declaration, “Religious and love for religion are a great and imperishable characteristic of Bangladesh”. The Islam factor provided an opportunity for the government to strengthen ties with Pakistan and other Muslim countries.

Zia selectively liberalized the activities of the former Islamic political parties that were banned by Sheikh Mujib, by proclaiming the new Political Parties Rule of May 1976³³. Among the Islamic parties three were allowed to revive their activities. Among them were the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which was the most active, effective, popular and the strongest in the country. It has come to be an important and deciding force in the country. It played a very active role in the agitation against the autocratic rule of H. M. Ershad during the 1980’s. In the general election of 1991 JI got 18 seats in the parliament and acted as a deciding factor in the formation of the government and in 2001 Parliamentary Elections it secured 17 seats and is now sharing power by holding two important cabinet seats.

The Constitution of Bangladesh granted the freedom of religion to all citizens of the state³⁴. As per provision of Article 28, “the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”. Article 41(1) of the Constitution mandates, subject to any law, public order and morality:

- a. Every citizen has the right to profess, practice or propagate any religion;
- b. Every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

³² Article 8(1A), The Constitution of The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Law, the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1998, p. 4.

³³ The banned Political Parties were the Council Muslim League, The Convention Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Nizam-e-Islam. See M Kabir, *Experiences of Exile- Life in Occupied Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1972 pp. 103-120.

³⁴ M G Chitkara, *Bangladesh: Mujib to Hasina*, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1997, p. 74.

Bangladesh is a secular state where the constitution has guaranteed the freedom of religion to all its citizens. Secularism is the guiding directory principle of the government policy³⁵.

Immediately after take over of power in March 1982, Ershad declared the introduction of Arabic language into the general education³⁶. In two of his initial speeches Ershad had made it clear in unmistakable terms that Islam would be the only basis of state policy. While speaking to the Bangladesh Secretariat staff in Dhaka he said, "We will have to give Islam its right-full place in our constitution. Why should there be any fear if it is made the state religion? After all Islam is a religion of tolerance and accommodation". The Eighth constitutional amendment in 1988 by Ershad made Islam a state religion but other religions were to be observed in peace and harmony. With and after Ziaur Rahman, nobody ever questioned Bangladesh's Islamic credential. Gen. Ershad has always been careful to promote Islam but he stopped just sort of introducing it into politics. Defining Islam as the state religion in the place of declaring an 'Islamic State' Ershad defended the amendment to be different from that of the Pakistani formulation. He claimed harmony between Islam and nationalism.

Islam is a very powerful force in Bangladesh and it has gradually come to occupy an important position in the lives of the people. All political parties exploit Islam for their own political gains, keeping in consideration the feelings of the mainstream population. Even the erstwhile Communist Party of Bangladesh had invoked Allah in its resolutions, speeches, pamphlets and election posters particularly in the 1991 election. The use of religion for political ends has progressively increased since 1974 in Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dropped the use of 'Joy Bangla' in his speeches as valedictory term and replaced it by 'Khuda Hafiz' and began using Islamic terms³⁷. It has become a constitutional duty of the government of Bangladesh to strive for strengthening relations with the Islamic countries after the Fifth Amendment of the constitution done by Ziaur Rahman. There are numerous non-governmental religious institutions and organizations that work for the promotion of Islam in the country and its expression in its foreign policy. There are daily, weekly and monthly publications which have an ideological

³⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

³⁶ Sukumar Biswas and Hiroshi Sato, op. cit, p. 101.

³⁷ Mohammad Tazuddin, op. cit, n. 24, p. 11.

orientation towards Islam having liberal, radical and orthodox views. These publications give extensive coverage to the news concerning the Muslim world and help in formulating public opinion, for or against, issues related with Islam and Muslims.

Bangladesh has developed close relationship with Islamic countries, the process of which has been started during the period of Mujib³⁸. Sheikh Mujib initiated the process of opening up bilateral relations with Islamic countries, due to the progressive economic deterioration in the country. Mujib turned to the Arab countries in the hope of receiving substantial economic aid. This process grew and matured during the post Mujib regimes and is even presently maintained today, on the same pattern, under the present government of the Four Party Alliance. The rise in Islamic sentiments among the people of predominantly Muslim Bangladesh was in favour of closer relation with the Islamic states. These moves by successive governments towards giving more importance to Islam should not be considered as a rise in Islamic fundamentalism in the country but rather should be seen as a product of its economic and political compulsions. Islam became a useful instrument for attracting majority support for a political regime in the country.

1.9 The Process through which Bangladesh Entered the OIC

Coincidentally Bangladesh as an independent state and the OIC as an International Islamic Organization were born in the same period. The emergence of Bangladesh in the world scene in December 1971 angered some of the conservative Muslim states. However Bangladesh actively sought to improve its relations with the Islamic world and secured membership in the OIC in 1974. Since then Bangladesh has maintained a very viable and active role in the OIC and on issues of great importance to the Muslim world.

Bangladesh in order to gain recognition from the Arab countries played up its “Muslim-Card” and during the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, it sent a team of military doctors to help the Arabs. Bangladesh’s support to the Arab cause impressed the Arab countries. Mujib said, “During the recent Arab-Israeli war Bangladesh extended a helping hand as comrades-in-arm to Arabs. As a result, the people of Arabs have accepted Bangladesh as a true friend”. The Arab Islamic countries actively prompted the participation of

³⁸ S R Chakravarty, op. cit, p. 58.

Bangladesh in the 2nd Summit of the OIC held on the 22nd and the 23rd of February 1974 at Lahore³⁹.

On February 21st, 1974 the leaders of the Arab countries gathered at Lahore, Pakistan. They pressurized Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan into recognizing Bangladesh, thus facilitating the way for Mujib to attend the Summit. A delegation of seven Arab countries led by the Foreign Minister of Kuwait, a brother of the Amir of Kuwait came to Dhaka on the same day to request Mujib to participate in the summit and escorted him to Lahore. The importance of relationship between Islamic countries acquired an added dimension with the incorporation of Bangladesh to the OIC. The summit proved to be a great diplomatic gain for Mujib and Bangladesh. As a result the country gained its entry into the OIC, a tremendous achievement by the country on account of the fact that, the independence of Bangladesh had brought mixed reactions from the Islamic countries to begin with. For establishing any relations with the Islamic states it was necessary for Bangladesh to get recognition from them. Sheikh Mujib succeeded in getting recognition from those states except a few.

During the Liberation War of Bangladesh Iran and the Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf gave diplomatic support to Pakistan, while other Arab states – Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria remained comparatively silent⁴⁰. Jakarta was interested in the peaceful settlement of the crisis. It offered good offices in the endeavour to keep West and East Pakistan together. When Bangladesh emerged and a government was established in Dhaka, Indonesia and Malaysia were the first Muslim states to recognize Bangladesh on February 25, 1972 without any inhibition. The Bangladeshi foreign minister visited Iraq, Syria and Egypt in 1972, even after coming to face the negative attitude of the Arab States towards Bangladesh; it consistently avoided any link with Israel.

Bangladesh did not lose any opportunity to express its solidarity with the Arab countries vis-à-vis Israel and upheld the Palestinian cause. In the 1973 Arab-Israeli war Bangladesh strongly supported the Arabs. In a symbolic gesture Bangladesh sent tea and a military medical team to Cairo. Sheikh Mujib personally visited the war zone within

³⁹ Mohammad Tajuddin, op. cit, n. 24, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Asghar Ali, 'Bangladesh and the Muslim World', *United Asia* (Bombay), Vol. 23, No. 3, 1971, p. 139.

weeks of the ceasefire. These efforts proved fruitful in the years to come. Most of the Arab and the Islamic countries excluding Saudi Arabia and Sudan recognized Bangladesh during the regime of Mujib, who met King Faisal of Saudi Arabia at the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) Summit of 1973 and the Islamic Summit of 1974⁴¹. After attending the 4th NAM summit held in Algiers in September 1973, Sheikh Mujib told his people in December 1973: "By attending Bangladesh at the Algiers Non-aligned Conference the majority of the Arab and African countries have acknowledged and recognized our sovereign status". This Summit provided a precious opportunity to Bangladesh to introduce herself to many nations, particularly those of the Arab world whose knowledge of Bangladesh was not just inadequate but depressingly wrong⁴². After Mujib's meeting with King Faisal, a Saudi spokesman commented that Bangladesh was a better understood country in the Middle East than ever before.

On the eve of the Lahore Summit of 1974 the Muslim World was caught in a whirlpool of controversy as whether Bangladesh should be given membership of the OIC⁴³. By 1974 Bangladesh secured recognition from 116 countries including some Muslim nations. It was therefore quite paradoxical to leave Bangladesh out of the fold of the OIC. Mujib stated, 'we are willing to join the summit meeting only after the Pakistan's recognition'. With a membership of the OIC Bangladesh became a fully recognized member of the Islamic community. The year 1974 was indeed a year of diplomatic success for Bangladesh⁴⁴. The two outstanding successes were Bangladesh's admission to the United Nations and normalization of her relationship with the Islamic World.

Within a very short time span, Bangladesh became very active in the OIC. Bangladesh became one of the founder members of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The change of government in 1975 was the watershed in Bangladesh-Middle East relations. Under the Presidency of Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh received substantial economic assistance from the Arab world. He maintained a high profile as the head of the state of a country with a Muslim majority. The government of Ershad continued the policy of maintaining close friendship with the Islamic countries. Begum Zia (1991-1996) followed the path of her husband; Sheikh Hasina also did not deviate from the policies of

⁴¹ Mohammad Tazuddin, op. cit, n. 24, p.16.

⁴² Syed Anwar Hussain, op. cit, p. 259.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 260.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 260.

the previous governments in respect of maintaining close relations with the Islamic countries. The present day government of the Four Party Alliance continues the same policy.

Since her joining the body in 1974, Bangladesh has been playing a significant role in the OIC. The importance attached to this international body for Bangladesh is properly realized when we see her maintaining a permanent representative and also from her candidature for the post of Secretary General for the third time.

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE: FORMATION, STRUCTURES, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

2.1 The Historical, Political and Religious Background of the Formation of the OIC

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is an inter-governmental organization grouping fifty-seven states, which is the product of mid-20th century international politics. It is an international pressure group, diversified yet unified, in the pursuit of a common cause of making the quality of life of its member states better¹. It is composed of states that are Muslims in terms of their socio-cultural and religious identity but not necessarily in the sense that they have adopted Islam as their official state religion². Islam provides a source of affinity to a group of countries, which have joined together under the state-centric framework of the OIC – an organization of sovereign nations. It is an international Islamic organization committed to protect and promote the legitimate interests of the world Islamic Ummah³. The OIC is a heterogeneous assembly of states and institutionalized instrument of Islamic states to achieve Islamic solidarity and cooperation among substantial number of African, Asian and East European nations⁴.

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The OIC is the only international organization based on religion, which is also a conglomeration of wealthy nations as well as poor (developing) nations. It is an expression of a great awareness, on the part of the Ummah, to bring the entire Muslim world under one umbrella. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was set up in 1969 by the Kings and Heads of states and Government of the Islamic states.

A combination of different factors has been responsible for the establishment of the OIC as an international body⁵. Religiously speaking, the seeds of the OIC appear in the Islamic ideology itself. Unity and Solidarity among Muslims are one of the basic tenets of Islam. Islam postulates a universal concept of nationhood, bringing diverse people, nations and regions together within Islamic cultural and political harmony. Verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet clearly stress the minimum requirements of justice, brotherhood and harmonious relationship among Muslims. In the Qur'anic Verse of "Sura

¹ Zafar Imam, *The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC): Continuity & Change and India*, ABC Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, p.7.

² Noor Ahmad Baba, *Organization of Islamic Conference: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p. viii.

³ Nilufar Chowdhury, 'The OIC and the Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim States', *BISS Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, 1983, pp. 57-58.

⁴ Hasan Moinuddin, *The Charter of the Islamic Conference and Legal Framework of Economic Cooperation Among its Member States*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, p. 69.

⁵ Mehdi Haider, *Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC): A review of its Political and Educational Policies*, Progressive Publishers, Zaildar Park-Ichhra, Lahore-Pakistan, 1988, p. 11.



Annas”, or the Verse on “Humanity”, emphasis has been given on the unity of the people, which is clearly indicated as a basic conceptual formation of nationhood, irrespective of geography, language, culture, color or race⁶. All believers are but brethren. Hence, the idea of a universal Islamic nationhood originates as part of a fundamental Islamic concept⁷.

The Prophet repeatedly reminded his followers during his lifetime to live with peace and harmony⁸. In practice this message was not followed; rather they destroyed each other by internecine wars and conflicts. With the rise of imperialism in Europe, and as a result of internal conflicts, the Muslim Empire began to loose its stronghold. Yet the idea of Islamic Solidarity and brotherhood was not given up⁹.

The desire for an expression of universal Muslim solidarity in an international forum is not new. In the past, several attempts were made by voluntary organizations or individual governments to unite Muslims in a corporate identity and form international forums with the explicit purpose of the political expression of the Muslim Ummah¹⁰.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

⁸ For examples, the Quran says, “The Believers are but a single Brotherhood...” S.XLIX: 10. “And fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God’s favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren... Thus doth God make His signs clear to you: that ye may be guided... Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs: for them is a dreadful penalty— S.III: 103-105. In addition there are several injunctions of the Prophet of Islam, which reinforces this fellow feeling and the sense of unity among Muslims. Some of the famous *hadiths* (traditions) of the prophet are that,

- i) “In relation to one another, the Muslims are like a building. Every unit reinforces and is reinforced by all others.”
- ii) Bukhari reports that Ans Ibn Malik said that Prophet said, “None of you truly has faith, if he does not desire for his brother of the Muslim that which he desires for himself.” *Bukhari*, Book 2, Bab 9, No. 14.
- iii) Bukhari, from Abdullah Ibn Umar: “The Messenger of God said: The Muslim is brother of the Muslim: he shall not do him wrong or let wrong be done to him. If he comes in his brother’s need, Allah shall come in his own need; if he delivers him from suffering, Allah shall deliver him from some of the sufferings of the Day of Resurrection, and if he shields a Muslim, Allah shall shield him at the Resurrection.” *Bukhari* Book 46, Bab 3, No.9.
- iv) Ibn Isheq reports that the Prophet said (on his farewell pilgrimage), “Know that every Muslim is a Muslim’s brother, and that the Muslims are brethren. It is only lawful to take from a brother what he gives you willingly, so wrong not yourselves. Oh Allah! Have I not told you?” A. Guillaume, *The Life of Mohammad* (Oxford, 1955), p. 651.

⁹ Zafar Imam, op cit, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ Mehdi Haider, op. cit, p.12.

The OIC emerged in a historical context of turmoil in the Middle-Eastern region. It is an incarnation of global Islam¹¹. In fact, the OIC may well be regarded as the child of the 'Arab Cold War' which had trifurcated the regional system of the Middle East and North Africa into three competing camps – a regional scenario that only added complexity to a global picture of the bipolar Cold War – during which the Muslim world found itself divided into three categories: Pro- US, pro- Soviet, and Non-aligned¹².

International organizations are a modern phenomenon. Historically speaking the OIC with its diplomatic and multifarious organizational and institutional dimensions is a development of recent origin. In Islamic history the concept of an organization of Muslim countries was unknown until the 20th century when it started gaining currency¹³. The organization of the Islamic Conference is primarily an outcome of Pan-Islamic vision. It started after World War I and gained frequency and popularity in the aftermath of World War II. The trend of the Islamic conference has been referred to as “neo-pan-Islamism” as well.

In the late 19th century, during the colonial and imperialist era, this idea got a new lease of life by Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-1897). He wrote profusely on the decay of Muslim societies and against imperialist domination over them¹⁴ and attempted a transnational movement known as the Pan-Islamic Movement to unite Muslims. Afghani called upon the Muslim Ummah to refuse any kind of nationality or solidarity except Islamic solidarity. It was no surprise that he totally failed. Later, the Ottoman sultan, Sultan Abdel Hamid (1876-1909) took up the cause of Pan-Islamism. But his brand of Pan-Islamism was in reality a desperate bid to save his empire, which finally crumbled after its defeat in the World War I¹⁵.

During the inter-war period (1919-1939), the idea of Pan-Islamism was once again sought to be revived after the abolition of the institution of the *Khilafat* by the Turkish nationalists. Two conferences were held in quick succession in 1926 at the invitation of the Saudi King Ablullah Bin Aziz. One was held in May 1926 at Cairo and was attended

¹¹Naveed S. Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy in a world of States*, Routledge Curzon, New York, 2003, p. 18.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 34

¹³ Noor Ahmed Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁴ Zafar Imam, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10

by a delegation from 13 countries and the other Islamic conference was held at Makkah in June 1926. A positive step that the conference took was to constitute itself into a permanent organization, named as “The Congress of the Islamic World” which was to meet only at Makkah during the time of Hajj¹⁶.

Between 1910 and 1920 in the Indian sub-continent, Maulana Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali organized the *Khilafat* Movement to support the Othmania *Khilafat* of Turkey and to defend the unity of the Muslim Ummah as symbolized by the Ottoman Emperor of Turkey¹⁷.

This was followed by the World Muslim Congress (WMC), which was established in Jerusalem in 1926 by Muslim leaders to contemplate on the deteriorating conditions of the Islamic Ummah and to articulate Muslim political views on broader issues of political significance in the international arena¹⁸. It was the initiative of Pakistan that provided a new impetus to the efforts for creating an organizational structure for Islamic solidarity. In the very second year, after the creation of Pakistan, the need for a world Islamic body was much in demand. As a result, in February 1949, such a body was set up at Karachi. This organization was known as the World Islamic Congress – with its headquarters at Karachi. By the beginning of 1953, Pakistan had given up all pretensions of Islamic solidarity and it openly joined a US sponsored military alliances¹⁹.

President Nasser of Egypt in the 1950s explicitly spoke of the need of solidarity amongst Muslims around the world and for this purpose he called for an international Islamic conference and was able to establish “*Mutamer Islam*” an organization entrusted with the responsibility of seeking Islamic unity²⁰. An attempt was made by the King Hussain of Jordan to form the World Conference on Palestine in 1957²¹. In 1960 President Soekarno of Indonesia called an Afro-Asian Islamic Conference. A secretariat was established in Jakarta. In 1962, “*Rabiata al-Alam al-Islami*” (the Muslim World League) was created with its headquarters in Makkah at the initiation of the government of Saudi Arabia and

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.11-12.

¹⁷ Aslam Abdullah, ed., OIC: ‘A Survey and Assessment’, *Arabia: The Islamic World Review*, No. 28, Bucks, England: The Islamic Press Agency, December 1983, p. 34.

¹⁸ Mehdi Haider, op. cit, p.13.

¹⁹ Zafar Imam, op. cit, pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Mehdi Haider, op. cit, p.13.

²¹ Ibid., p.9.

with the participation of prominent religious scholars. In 1964, Tenku Abdul Rehman, Malaysian Prime Minister and later the first Secretary-General of the OIC-suggested that a “Commonwealth” of Muslim countries be created with a view to coordinate political activities of the Islamic countries²².

In 1964, representatives of many Islamic countries met in Mogadishu for a conference and strongly articulated the need for the convening of an Islamic Summit Conference to discuss the problem afflicting the Islamic Ummah. Abden Abdullah Osman, the then Prime Minister of Somalia suggested the creation of an inter-governmental Islamic organization. In 1964, Tenku Abdul Rahman, Malaysian Premier and later the first Secretary General of the OIC, suggested that a “Commonwealth” of Muslim countries be created with a view to coordinate political activities of the Islamic countries. In 1965, the Muslim World League held a conference in Makkah. The late King Faisal Ibn Abdul Aziz reiterated the call for the creation of an international organization of Islamic countries to form a common perspective on issues facing the Islamic Ummah. Subsequently, King Faisal traveled to many Arab and Islamic countries with the explicit intention of gaining the consensus of Muslim leaders to convene an Islamic summit conference and to transform the concept of Islamic solidarity into a significant international force aimed at safeguarding the rights of the Muslim community throughout the world²³.

In 1969, the unfortunate incident of fire inside the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem happened. The Al-Aqsa mosque is known as the first *Qibla* and third holiest shrine of Islam. The first meeting of the leaders of the Islamic world was held in the city of Rabat in the wake of this criminal arson perpetrated by Zionist elements against Al-Aqsa Mosque. The leaders of the Muslim world, at their Summit at Rabat, seized that event – which brought about unanimous worldwide condemnation and reprobation – to think together of their common cause and muster the force required to overcome their differences, unite and lay the foundation of this large grouping states, that is, the Organization of the Islamic Conference which they entrusted, in absolute priority, with liberating Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa from Zionist occupation. The burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the ideological division between East and West, which led the Muslim states

²² Ibid., p.14.

²³ Ibid., p.15.

to use their religious bond as their principal source of solidarity and form an organization that would meet the challenges facing the Islamic world²⁴.

The anticipated initiation of the OIC took place at the Rabat Summit. Two major decisions were taken at this conference. Firstly, it was decided that in March 1970, a conference of foreign ministers would be held with the specific aim to review the joint actions of the Muslim states in regards to the Middle East situation. Secondly, it was also decided to establish the structural framework of the OIC at the international level by establishing a permanent secretariat. The proposed meeting of the foreign ministers took place in March 1970 in Jeddah.

The structural framework of the OIC began to take effect at the Jeddah conference. Some of the decisions taken in this meeting include, the establishment of a permanent secretariat of the organization in Jeddah, pending the liberation of Jerusalem, the agreement to hold a regular annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states, and the first Secretary General was also selected during this meeting. The consultations at the 1st Foreign Ministers Conference followed by the 2nd Conference held in Karachi in December 1970. The 3rd Conference of Foreign Ministers adopted following the Karachi meeting, a formal Charter of the organization in 1972.

2.2 Objectives and Principles of the Organization

Third Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference held at Jeddah from the 29th of February to the 4th of March 1972. It was in this conference that the charter of the OIC was approved after a lengthy debate and discussions on its various aspects. The charter clearly defined the objectives of the organization and the principles on which it was to operate. It also elaborated on the organizational structure of the main bodies of the organization, their jurisdiction and mode of operation in addition to questions related to finances, organization, amendments and so on.

Article II of the OIC Charter stipulated the objectives of the “Organization of the Islamic Conference” are as follows:

²⁴ Mohammad, Javad Zarif, “The Need for Reforms in the OIC”, *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IX, No.3, 1997, p. 372.

- a. To promote Islamic solidarity among member states;
- b. To consolidate cooperation among member states in the economic, social, cultural, scientific, and other vital fields of activities, and to carry out consultations among member states in international organizations;
- c. To endeavour to eliminate racial segregation, discrimination, and to eradicate colonialism in all its forms;
- d. To take necessary measures to support international peace and security founded on justice;
- e. To coordinate efforts for safeguarding the holy places and supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine and helping them to regain their rights and liberate their land;
- f. To strengthen the struggle of all Muslim peoples with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence, and national rights;
- g. To create a suitable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding among member states and other countries.

The charter also enumerates guiding principles, which the member states undertake to inspire themselves in order to achieve the objectives of the organization. The guiding principles are:

- a. Total equality between member states;
- b. Respect for the right of self-determination, non-interference in the domestic affairs of the member states;
- c. Respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each member state;
- d. Settlement of any conflict that may arise by peaceful means such as negotiations, mediation, reconciliation or arbitration;
- e. Abstention from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity, national unity or political independence of any member state.

The OIC also strives to promote cooperation and understanding among member states and other countries of the world. In order to achieve its objectives, the organization has been divided into many layers. These include the main bodies, secondary organs, institutions and specialized committees.

2.3 Membership

According to Article VIII of the OIC Charter, all states that participated in the first Summit Conference at Rabat and two subsequent Foreign Ministers Conferences held at Jeddah and Karachi and were signatories to the OIC Charter when it was adopted, are members of the organization of the Islamic Conference. It also provided that every Muslim state is eligible to join it upon submitting an application expressing its desire and preparedness to adopt this 'Charter'. The application has to be forwarded through the General Secretariat and must get approval of a 2/3 majority of the OIC's member countries at the level of the first Foreign Ministers Conference that is held following the submission of an application. The Rabat Summit Conference was attended by only 25 countries and 31 countries were present to approve the OIC Charter. At present there are 57 members belong to Africa, Asia and Europe.

2.4 Main Organs of the OIC

The OIC as per Article III of its charter was to be composed of three main bodies:

1. The Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government;
2. The Conference of Foreign Ministers; and
3. The General Secretariat and subsidiary organs.

However, the Taif Summit Conference in January 1981 decided to establish the International Islamic Court of Justice as the 4th organ of the OIC to adjudicate on disputes between member states.

2.4.1 The Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government

This is also known as the Islamic Summit Conference. According to Article IV of the Charter it is the supreme authority of the organization empowered to define the strategy of action for the member states, to examine questions of vital importance to the Muslim world and to spell out the policy of the organization. The charter had originally stipulated that it would hold its meeting whenever the interests of Muslim nations warranted it to consider issues of vital concern to them and to coordinate the policy of the organization accordingly. However the amendments were made in the Charter by the Third Summit Conference in January 1981, stipulating that a conference of Kings and Heads of the Government shall be held periodically – once in three years. Till date, 10 summit-level

conferences were held²⁵. The 11th Summit Conference is scheduled to be held in Senegal, 2006. A “Special Summit” can be called whenever required.

The Islamic Summit is mainly a demonstrative occasion devoted to formal speeches by the heads of the delegation, and curtsey calls to kings or heads of host countries. Very rarely discussions on any subjects take place, although it does meet with a formal agenda. Much of the background work related to the agenda is usually done in the conference of foreign ministers and sub-committees specially formed for the occasion. The representatives of the Muslim community of India also attended the First Rabat Summit (22-25 September 1969) and representative of PLO also attended the meeting as observer.

President Zia of Bangladesh was elected one of the two Vice-chairpersons of the Third Summit.

2.4.2 Conference of Foreign Ministers

According to Article V of the Charter this is the second principal body of the OIC after the Summit. Under Article II, the Foreign Minister Conference shall be convened once in a year for an ordinary session. The Foreign Ministers of the Islamic countries can also meet in an extraordinary session whenever justified by events. Article V of the Charter states that the purpose for holding an Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference shall be:

- a. To consider means of implanting the general policy of the conference;
- b. To review progress in the implementation of resolutions adopted at previous sessions;
- c. To adopt resolutions on matter of common interest in accordance with the aims and objectives of the conference set forth in the charter;
- d. To discuss the report of the Financial Committee and approve the budget of the General – Secretariat.

²⁵ The First Summit Conference (Rabat, September 1969). Second Summit Conference (Lahore, Pakistan February 1974). Third Summit Conference (Taif, Saudi Arabia, January 1981). Fourth Summit Conference (Casablanca, Morocco, January 1984). Fifth Summit Conference (Kuwait, July 1987). Sixth Summit Conference (Dakar, Senegal, December 1991). Seventh Summit Conference (Casablanca, Morocco, December 1994). Eighth Summit Conference (Tehran, Iran, December 1997). Ninth Summit Conference (Doha, Qatar, November 2000) and Tenth i.e. last Summit Conference were held in Putrajaya, Malaysia in October, 2003.

At each session, the Conference of the Foreign Ministers elects a chairperson to hold office until the next session, and normally the host country is given this honour. In addition the conference appoints the Secretary General and on his recommendation four Assistant Secretary Generals²⁶. It fixes the dates and venues of the conferences. It may also consider any issue affecting one or more of the member states whenever a request to that effect is made. Two-thirds of the total membership of the organization forms the quorum of the Foreign Ministers Conference and its resolutions and recommendations have to be adopted by a two-thirds majority.

Since the establishment of the OIC, 31 Conferences of Foreign Ministers have been held, the last one in June 2004 at Istanbul. Till date, 11 special sessions have been held. A coordination meeting of the organization is held every year in New York during the regular session of the UN General Assembly with a view to drawing up a common strategy on matters of interest to member states in the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly. Bangladesh attends the ordinary and extraordinary sessions of the ICFM at the ministerial level and is always represented at high levels at the Coordinating Committee Meetings. Bangladesh hosted the 14th ICFM at Dhaka from 6-11 December 1983. Consequently Bangladesh became the chairperson of the OIC Coordinating Group at the UN in New York for 1984. The special bureau meetings of the conference on specific issues are also held. For example, during the last few years the issue of Bosnian Muslims was regularly taken up in such meetings.

2.4.3 General Secretariat

According to Article VI of the Charter the main executive organ of the OIC is the General Secretariat. The General Secretariat is headed by a Secretary General appointed by the Foreign Ministers Conference for a period of four years renewable once only. Initially the tenure was two years later it was extended to four years. After a number of amendments, it was in 1991 when the Sixth Summit of the OIC decided to extend the tenure of the Secretary General to four years, which could be renewed once only. The

²⁶ It may be noted that originally the Charter talked of only three assistants. It was the Third Islamic Summit Conference that decided to increase the number of assistants to four.

Secretary General is assisted by four Assistant Secretary Generals (ASG) who are also elected²⁷.

As the highest authority of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs, the Secretary General is responsible for the conference and its decisions. He is to submit reports to the Conference on the execution of his duties. In the exercise of his duties, the Assistant Secretary Generals, officials and experts assist the Secretary General.

The Headquarter of the General Secretariat is located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, pending the liberation of Jerusalem²⁸. The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English and French. It assists the subsidiary organs and specialized agencies in performing their tasks and coordinating their programmes. It is interesting to note that the Secretary General has his own secretariat, called "Cabinet of the Secretary General". It has three departments, each for administration and finance, protocol and public relations, and finally the department for coordination of subsidiary and specialized organs as well as various affiliated institutions.

The functions of the Secretariat are distributed among its main departments. Each department is headed by an Assistant Secretary General who is responsible to the Secretary General for the running of his department. The Secretary General is authorized to appoint the staff of the General Secretariat from among the nationals of member states, paying due regard to their competence and integrity and in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution²⁹. Assistant Secretary Generals are appointed by the Conference of Foreign Ministers on the recommendation of the Secretary General of the organization who in making such a recommendation is expected to take into consideration factors such as competence, integrity, and dedication to the objectives of the charter as well as equitable geographical distribution³⁰.

²⁷ They are (1) Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs (2) Assistant Secretary General for Legal Matters and Affairs of Muslim Communities in non-member states (3) Assistant Secretary General for Economic Administration and Financial Affairs (4) Assistant Secretary General for Information and Culture and Social Affairs.

²⁸ The charter declares that the headquarters of the Secretariat General shall be in Jeddah pending the liberation of Jerusalem. See "Charter of the Islamic Conference".

²⁹ See "Charter of the Islamic Conference", Art VI

³⁰ Ibid., Article V

For its finance the OIC has to depend on contributions from member states. But all through its existence it has been faced with difficulties on this account as many member states, quite often; do not pay their share of contributions to the organization. Practically it is dependent on the contributions of a small number of states such as Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, who alone are punctual in this regard.

Since its establishment nine Secretary Generals have been appointed³¹. In the appointment of the Secretary General there seems to be no set pattern. The Arab-*Maghrib* and Africa had dominated, while no leading Arab country including Saudi Arabia was ever given this high office. Bangladesh has fought this time for the post of Secretary General for third time.

Dr. Arshaduzzaman of Bangladesh was an Assistant Secretary General from 1980-1984, Mr. Mohammad Mohsin has been elected as an ASG for the period of 1989-1993. Another Bangladeshi also served as an ASG who was in charge of legal affairs of Muslim communities in non-member states.

2.4.4 International Islamic Court of Justice

The Islamic Court of Justice is being set up as the fourth organ of the OIC. It is aimed to emerge as the principal judicial organ within the OIC. It was the third summit conference at Taif in 1981 that decided to establish it as the fourth organ of the OIC to arbitrate in all conflicts that may arise between Islamic states. The court was proposed to be located in Kuwait. From all indications available it is clear that court is still in the process of being set up and has not yet started functioning to date. However, the jurisdiction of the court is to cover:

- a. All cases whose referrals to the court are agreed by member states;
- b. It may look into disputes that may arise among member states;
- c. It may arbitrate in cases of differences that may arise in the interpretation of the Charter of the Organization;

³¹ They are (1) H.R. H. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia, 1971-1973, (2) H.E. Hasan Al-Touhami, Egypt, 1974-1975, (3) H.E. Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye, Senegal, 1975-1979, (4) H.E. Mr. Habib Chatty, Tunisia, 1979-1984, (5) H.E. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Pakistan, 1985-1988, (6) H.E. Dr. Hamid Algabid, Niger, 1989-1996, (7) H.E. Dr. Azeddine Laraki, Morocco, 1997-2000, (8) H.E. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz, Morocco, 2001-2004, (9) Recently H.E. Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu of Turkey has been elected for the period of 2005-2008.

- d. It can be asked to give *Fatwas* – consultative opinions – on legal issues at the request of the Summit Conference, the Foreign Minister Conference or by any organ of the organization provided such requests are approved by the Foreign Ministers Conference³².

The International Islamic Court of Justice remains to be formed, although the reasons for its delay are not officially known. OIC has not formally dropped this programme from its agenda, it remains to be seen when and how this International Islamic Court of Justice could even be formed. The court is to consist of a panel of eleven members elected by the Conference of Foreign Ministers, after nominations are made by member states. The member states shall also bear all expenses of the court, which shall have an independent budget. The official languages of the court are to be Arabic, English and French.

2.5 Subsidiary Organs

There are organs, which are established within the framework of the OIC in accordance with the resolution adopted by the Islamic Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government or the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. They are subsidiary to the General Secretariat. The Secretary General is the highest authority as far as the General Secretariat and subsidiary organs are concerned. Member states shall automatically become member of these organs and their budgets are to be approved by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. The heads of the subsidiary organs are appointed on nomination by the Secretary General and approval by the members. Finances are controlled and audited by the Permanent Finance Committee and Finance Control Organ.

The subsidiary organs of the OIC are:

1. The Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries.
2. The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture.
3. The Islamic Institute for Technology.
4. The Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade.
5. The Islamic *Fiqh* Academy.
6. The Executive Bureau of the Islamic Solidarity Fund and its *Waqf*.

³² See "Charter of the Islamic Conference".

7. The Islamic University of Niger.
8. The Islamic University of Uganda³³.

2.5.1 The Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC)

This is one of the important subsidiary organs of the OIC established following the 8th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Tripoli, 1977. This is located in Ankara, Turkey. The main objective of the center is to support the process of socio-economic co-operation and development among the member states of the OIC by undertaking activities in the areas of statistics, research, training and technical cooperation. It also aims at organizing and supporting training programmes in selected fields geared to the expressed needs of the member states to assist them in the training of their administrative and technical personnel in the relevant subjects as well as to the general objectives of the organization. It has a three-tier structure such as, the General Assembly, Board of Directors and the Director.

2.5.2 The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)

This centre is located in Istanbul, Turkey. The 7th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul in May 1976 decided to establish a Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture. The functions of this subsidiary organ are multifarious; the following are some of its important functions:

- i. To organize training courses to promote skills and techniques relevant in the fields of Islamic arts and culture.
- ii. To organize conferences, symposia, exhibitions and other activities in various subject areas in Islamic culture and civilization throughout the world.
- iii. To act as a focal point and meeting place for scholars, researchers, historians, intellectuals and artists from the member states and the world in the field of research on the Islamic legacy towards a better understanding of Islam and its civilization.
- iv. To publish periodicals of scholarly and informational nature concerning the centre's activities and Islamic cultural activities in the world.

³³ <http://www.oic-oci.org/english>

- v. To render advice to member states and to the Secretary General on all matters connected with Islamic civilization and carry out special studies required by the ICFM or by the Secretary General.
- vi. To establish a documentation and information facility comprising audio-visual and other material on subjects within its fields of activities.

2.5.3 The Islamic Institute for Technology (IIT)

This is another important subsidiary organ of the OIC, which the 9th ICFM held at Dakar, in April 1978 decided to establish with its headquarters in Dhaka. Initially it was named as ICVTTR then IIT and presently it is known as Islamic University of Technology (IUT). It was created to promote technical know-how in the member states. The objectives of this organ include:

- i. To train instructors, technicians and tradesmen in the technical and technological fields of interest to the member states.
- ii. To conduct research on technical and vocational education in the Islamic countries.
- iii. To assess the requirements of technical and vocational education in the member states.
- iv. To promote technical cooperation, exchange of technical know-how and disseminate basic information in the field of development of human resources in general and vocational education, in particular.
- v. To harmonize training and labour policies in the Muslim countries.
- vi. Hold examinations and grant and confer certificates, degrees and diplomas and other academic distinctions on persons who have pursued courses of study provided by the centre and have passed examinations of the centre under such conditions as may be prescribed by the academic rules and regulations of the centre.

2.5.4 The Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT)

This centre as a subsidiary organ of the OIC was approved by the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah *Al-Mukarramah* in January 1981. The headquarters of the

centre is in Casablanca, Morocco³⁴. The objectives of is to promote trade exchange among the OIC member states by:

- i. Undertaking studies and researches.
- ii. Helping disseminate trade information and data among member states.
- iii. Organizing fairs exhibitions and other trade activities to contribute to the promotion of member states products.
- iv. Encouraging contacts among businessmen of member states and bringing them together.
- v. Organizing symposia, and training seminars for participants from member states.
- vi. Helping member states create national organizations or associations for the promotion of trade, or reinforcing existing ones.

2.5.5 Islamic Fiqh Academy

The 3rd Islamic Summit Conference held in Makkah *Al-Mukarramah* and Taif approved a resolution for the establishment of an Islamic *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) Academy. The headquarters of the Academy is located in Jeddah, KSA. Its main objectives can be enumerated as:

- i. To strengthen the link of the Muslim community with the Islamic faith.
- ii. To achieve the theoretical and practical unity of the Islamic Ummah by striving to have man conform his conduct to the principles of the Islamic *Sharia* at the individual, social as well as international level.
- iii. To draw inspiration from the Islamic *Sharia*, to study contemporary problems from the *Sharia* point of view and to try to find the solutions in conformity with the *Sharia* through an authentic interpretation of its content.

2.5.6 The Executive Bureau of the Islamic Solidarity Fund and its Waqf

The Islamic Solidarity Fund as one of the vital subsidiary organs of the OIC was established in pursuance of a resolution of the Second Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore, February 1974. The headquarters of this organ is located at the General Secretariat of the OIC in Jeddah, KSA. It was established with the following objectives:

³⁴ Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, p. 230.

- i. To take all possible steps to raise the intellectual and moral levels of the Muslims in the world.
- ii. To grant assistance to Muslim minorities and communities so as to improve their religious, social and cultural standards.
- iii. To provide required material relief in case of emergencies such as natural catastrophes and man-made disasters, that may befall the Islamic states³⁵.

2.5.7 Islamic University of Niger

The Second Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore in February 1974, proposed the creation of the Islamic University of Niger with a view to responding to the needs of the Muslim population in West Africa. The statute of the University was approved by the Fifth ICFM held in Sanaa, Yemen in December 1984. The name of the University is Oum Al-Qura University of Niger, which was inaugurated in November 1986.

2.5.8 The Islamic University of Uganda

The Second Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore, Pakistan in February 1974 decided to establish Islamic University of Uganda to cater for the needs of the Muslim populations of Central and East Africa. The University was inaugurated in February 1988.

2.6 Specialized Institutions and Organs

Specialized Institutions are established within the framework of the OIC in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Islamic Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government or ICFM. Memberships to these organs are optional and open to OIC member states. Their budgets are independent of the budget of the General Secretariat and those of the subsidiary organs and are approved by their respective legislative bodies as stipulated in their statute. Bangladesh is a member of all the Specialized Institutions and Organs. Four specialized institutions have been established so far, which are as below:

1. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB)
2. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)
3. The Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO)
4. International Islamic News agency (IINA)³⁶

³⁵ <http://www.oic-oci-org/english>

2.6.1 The Islamic Development Bank

The IDB was created in 1973 and became operational in 1975. The idea of establishing IDB dates back to the 2nd ICFM. The purpose of the bank is to foster the economic development and social progress of member states and Muslim communities individually as well as collectively in accordance with principles of the *Shariah*. The functions of the bank are to provide equity participation and grant loans for productive projects and enterprises and to provide special assistance to less developed member states as well as for promoting trade between the OIC members. As per *Sharia*, it does not provide or accept interests. It has a Board of Governors and a Board of Executive Directors. The President of the IDB is the executive head of the Bank. The condition for membership is that the prospective member country be a member of the OIC. The headquarters of the Bank is in Jeddah. At present the authorized capital of the Bank is Six billion Islamic Dinars³⁷ divided into 600,000 shares among subscriber.

2.6.2 The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ISESCO is a specialized institution of the OIC in the field of Education, Science and Culture. It was established in May 1982 with aim to support and protect the Islamic culture. The institution seeks to strengthen cooperation among the member states in educational, scientific and cultural research in order to protect Islamic cultures. It also seeks to protect the identity of Muslims in non-Muslim states. The organs of the ISESCO are a General Assembly and an executive Board headed by a Director General. It also wants to consolidate authentic Islamic culture and to protect the independence of Islamic thought against all forms of invasion and all factors of cultural alienation, distortion and disfigurement. The headquarters of the ISESCO is in Rabat.

2.6.3 The Islamic States Broadcasting Organization

ISBO was established in pursuance of a resolution adopted by the 6th ICFM held in Jeddah, 1975. The headquarters of the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization is located in Jeddah, KSA. The principal objectives of the ISBO are as follows:

- i. To propagate the principles of the Islamic *Da'wa*, and teach the Arabic language.
- ii. To get Muslims peoples to know one another.

³⁶ Zafar Imam, op cit, p. 82.

³⁷ The value of the Islamic Dinar, which is the unit of account of the Bank, is equivalent to one Special Drawing Right (SDR) of the International Monetary Fund. One Islamic Dinar = 1.3 US Dollar.

- iii. To explain and fight for Islamic causes.
- iv. To strengthen the spirit of brotherhood among the Muslim peoples.
- v. To develop cooperation between the Islamic technical organisms and institutions of member states in the field of broadcasting.
- vi. To produce and exchange radio and television programme for promoting the objectives of the Organization³⁸.

Its objectives are similar to those of the IINA. Like IINA, the ISBO is also constrained by a lack of sufficient funds and non-payment of contributions by the member states. Radio and Television Corporation of the member states are its active members.

2.6.4 International Islamic News Agency

IINA is the oldest and one of the most important bodies that have come up within the OIC framework. The agency was an outcome of the OIC authorities' disgust with the way the Western news media had ignored and underplayed news about the OIC activities. The decision to establish IINA was taken as early as 1970 by the Second ICFM held in Karachi. The IINA was created with a view to reducing the Muslim world's dependence on the Western media. The vital objectives for the establishment of the IINA were:

- i. To develop close and better relations between members states in the field of information.
- ii. To promote contacts and technical cooperation between the new agencies of the member states.
- iii. To work for better understanding of Islamic peoples and their political, economic and social problems.

IINA was to work for the creation of a full-fledged international news agency with its own regional centre. The headquarters of the IINA is in Jeddah. All news agencies of the member countries are its members. The IINA has been facing a kind of crisis on account of its financial difficulties. Almost 75 per cent of the members have not been paying their contributions.

³⁸ Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, n. 2, pp.235-6.

2.7 Affiliated Institutions

Affiliated Institutions, according to the OIC sources, are group entities formed by the member states. The membership of these entities is optional, although they are established under the auspices of the Summit meetings of the OIC and its Foreign Ministers. Their budgets are independent of the budget of the Secretariat General and those of subsidiary and specialized organs. But they may obtain voluntary assistance from various agencies and organs of the OIC.

So far seven Affiliated Institutions have been established which are as under:

1. Islamic Chamber and Commerce and Industry
2. Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities
3. Sports Federation of Islamic Solidarity Games
4. Islamic Committee of the International Red Crescent
5. Islamic Ship owners Associations
6. World Federation of International Arab-Islamic Schools
7. International Association of Islamic Banks³⁹

2.7.1 Islamic Chamber and Commerce and Industry (ICCI)

The ICCI is based in Karachi. It is composed of the National or Federal Chambers of Commerce and Industry or other similar institutions of the OIC countries. The main objective of the Chamber is to strengthen cooperation in trade and industry between member countries and to make recommendations for safeguarding the economic and commercial interests of these countries. The chamber has a General Assembly and Executive Committee and General Secretariat. The objectives are in line with the recommendations made under the General Agreement of economic activities of the member states in their mutual interest.

2.7.2 Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities

The organization was officially established on 30 January 1980 by a resolution adopted by the First General Conference of the Organization held in Makkah where the administrative council and the Secretary General were deputed. The headquarters of the organization is in Makkah Al-*Mukarramah*. The main objectives of the organization are

³⁹ Zafar Imam, op cit, p. 37.

to strengthen the bonds of friendship, brotherhood and solidarity among the Islamic capitals and cities, promoting, developing and expanding the scope of cooperation among the Islamic capitals and cities, preserving the identity and heritage of Islamic capitals and cities and upgrading the standards of public services and utilities in the Islamic capitals and cities. The administrative structure of organization consists of three bodies – the General assembly, Board of Directors and the General Secretariat.

2.7.3 Sports Federation of Islamic Solidarity Games (SFISG)

The Third Islamic Summit Conference decided to establish the Sports Federation of Islamic Solidarity with aims of strengthening Islamic solidarity among the youth in member states and to promote Islamic identity in the fields of sports, reinforcing the bonds of unity, amity and brotherhood in member states, preserving sports principles and promoting the Olympic sports movement in the Muslim world and finally making the member states aware of the objectives of the OIC. The headquarters of this body is located in Riyadh.

2.7.4 Islamic Committee of the International Red Crescent

This is one of the important affiliated institutions of the OIC. It helps to alleviate the sufferings caused by natural disaster and war. The Tenth ICFM held in May 1979 approved the creation of this committee. This organ is designed to improve medical assistance and to assuage the sufferings caused by natural catastrophes and man-made disasters and to promote all necessary assistance within its possibilities to international and local organizations serving humanity. This organ is based in Benghazi, Libya⁴⁰.

2.7.5 Islamic Ship owners Associations (ISA)

The ISA is an affiliated institution of the OIC whose headquarters is in Jeddah. The Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Taif decided to establish this association and approved its statute. Its objectives are:

- i. To coordinate and unify the efforts of the members in realizing cooperation among the maritime companies.
- ii. To encourage members to set up a joint maritime companies and shipping lines between member states.

⁴⁰ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

- iii. To establish contacts between the Islamic world and other countries within an integrated maritime network.
- iv. To develop periodical and regular freight and passenger voyages between Islamic and other countries.
- v. To conduct studies and research in various disciplines of maritime transport.
- vi. To assist in drawing up a unified policy for Islamic maritime transporting.

The membership of the association is open to all the maritime transport companies engaged in the field of international trade or similar associations registered in any of the member states⁴¹.

2.7.6 World Federation of International Arab-Islamic Schools

The federation's headquarters is in Riyadh but the central administration is in Jeddah. This federation represents the Arab-Islamic schools all over the world and seeks to support and assist them. The Federation also works for the dissemination of Islamic culture and the teaching of Arabic – the language of the Holy Qur'an – by extending support to the schools and cultural centers and by training personnel and developing cooperation among institutions in the cause of spreading Arabic and the Islamic culture all over the world as well as by creating, sponsoring and supervising Arab-Islamic schools.

2.7.7 International Association of Islamic Banks (IAIB)

The IAIB was founded under the auspices of the OIC in August 1977, which is based in Jeddah. The fundamental objectives of the Association are designed to:

- i. Promote the concept and ideas of Islamic banking.
- ii. Coordinate with Islamic banks to resolve common conceptual and operational problems including the standardization of operations and application of Islamic Sharia.
- iii. Undertake research and development in Islamic economies.
- iv. Provide assistance in manpower development.
- v. Maintain databank of all Islamic banking.
- vi. Provide technical assistance in Islamic banking.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 231.

- vii. Represent, mediate and act as arbitrator for and between Islamic banks.
- viii. Represent the common interests of the Islamic banks at the national and international level.

2.8 Standing Committees

The OIC has from time to time set up standing committees to follow up its policies, decisions and actions in their respective fields of specialization. The standing committees include:

1. Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee
2. The Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs
3. The Standing Committee for Economic & Trade Cooperation
4. The Standing Committee for Scientific & Technological Affairs.
5. Permanent Finance Committee⁴².

2.8.1 Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee

The Al-Quds Committee was founded in 1975 on the recommendation of the Sixth ICFM. The objectives which were entrusted on it by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers are:

- i. To study the evolution of the situation in Jerusalem.
- ii. To follow the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Islamic Conference in this regard.
- iii. To follow the implementation of the resolutions adopted by various international bodies on Jerusalem.
- iv. To make contacts with other international institutions that could play a role in safeguarding Jerusalem.
- v. To put forward proposals to the member states as well as all bodies concerned on measures to be taken to ensure the implementation of these resolutions and to face new situations.
- vi. To submit an annual report to the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

⁴² Ibid., p. 215.

The Al-Quds Committee meets on the request of its Chairperson or that of the Secretary General of the OIC. It has assembled eight times since its establishment. The Committee comprises of 15 members. Bangladesh is a member of the Al-Quds Committee⁴³.

2.8.2 The Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC)

This committee was formed in 1981 by a resolution of the Taif Summit. The committee has to study the means of strengthening cooperation among the member states in the field of information and culture. The committee is also entrusted with following up the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Islamic Conference on information and cultural affairs. This ministerial committee is open to all member states. Bangladesh is a member of the COMIAC. The President of Senegal is the chairperson of the committee.

2.8.3 The Standing Committee for Economic & Trade Cooperation (COMCEC)

This ministerial level committee was established by the Taif Summit in 1981. It studies the means of strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among the Islamic states. Representatives of all members make up the COMCEC. The President of Turkey is the chairperson of the committee.

2.8.4 The Standing Committee for Scientific & Technological Affairs (COMSTECH)

This committee was also formed by a resolution of the Taif Summit. COMSTECH studies the ways of increasing scientific and technological cooperation among the member states. This Committee is also responsible for following up the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Islamic Conference in the scientific and technological field. The President of Pakistan is the chairperson of this committee.

2.8.5 Permanent Finance Committee (PFC)

The Permanent Finance Committee was established under the provision of Article VII of the Charter of the OIC. It meets annually to assist the Secretary General in preparing and supervising the budget of the secretariat in accordance with the rules lay down by the ICFM. Representatives of all member states constitute this committee. Its headquarters is located along with the headquarters of the OIC in Jeddah⁴⁴.

⁴³ Zafar Imam, op cit, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁴ Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, p. 215.

2.9 Critical Evaluation of the OIC

The OIC membership includes monarchies, republics, Islamic republics, revolutionary governments, democracies and military dictatorship. In terms of world economic standards, they include some of the highest per capita income group of countries as well as the lowest per capita income group of countries⁴⁵. The countries comprising of the OIC have different geographical, historical, cultural, economic and political experiences. Islam is the only connecting force, which binds them together, but presently being a “semi-dormant ideology” it does not provide sufficient force to overcome political, ethnic, sectarian and economic disputes existing within the countries of the OIC bloc. The member states of the OIC allow their national and parochial interests to influence their actions and decisions at the OIC. As a result, a concrete and collective action cannot always be taken on matters of great importance to the Muslim world though a semblance of unanimity as is usually maintained on such issues.

Due to their economic superiority, conservative Muslim states like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf-States have come to play a more dominant role in the organization. Consequently on certain issues, the progressive states like Algeria, Syria and the Peoples Republic of Yemen have not shared the OIC position. The prolonged war between the two member countries Iran and Iraq during the 1980’s pitted the other Islamic countries against one another. The countries of the Middle East do not always share the same views on economy, religion and ideals for a unified Arab world. The national interests of Arab countries supersede all other interests.

There are hardly any noticeable achievements of the OIC⁴⁶. With all the internal clash of interests that remains irreconcilable within the OIC, what appears to be its greatest achievement is that it has managed to survive in its original form. The OIC has completely failed to promote solidarity among member states, which is their primary objective.

The OIC was facing an acute dilemma regarding the war between two of its member states Iran and Iraq. It failed to bring about a rapprochement between the two and its

⁴⁵ Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, ‘Indonesia’s Changing Role in OIC: Is it “Necessity of Foreign Policy”?’ *Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 2003, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, ed., *OIC: Contemporary Issues of the Muslim World*, A FRIENDS Publication, Rawalpindi, 1997, p. 96.

position became more awkward when the Islamic Republic of Iran showed little respect for and lack of faith in it. But when ultimately the Secretary General of the UN succeeded in bringing about a ceasefire between them the OIC was nowhere in the sight. The OIC tried its best to resolve the conflict between Iran and Iraq but failed. The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq that led to the first Gulf War was a direct consequence of the Iran – Iraq war. The Iraqi adventure went against the fundamental principles on which the OIC is based. The OIC could not do anything to undo the aggression⁴⁷.

The Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan exposed the fragility of the Muslim unity. While the majority of the Muslim states opposed outright the Soviet intervention, some others – Syria, South Yemen, Algeria, Libya and the PLO – who because of their friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the dependence on its support wanted to brush aside the issue. When the Geneva Accord was signed – whereby the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was ensured – the OIC had no role to play. The OIC's contribution was confined to moral and material assistance, to the suffering Afghan migrants and the *Mujahidin*.

The OIC has no means to force the member states to abide by its decisions and counsels. It can only request and at best arrange a meeting of the contenders, and probably, nothing beyond that! The OIC has repeatedly asked its member states to boycott Israel and Zionist agencies that directly or indirectly deal with it. To enforce this decision and coordinate the member countries' moves in this direction, a bureau for the boycott of Israel was established within the OIC. We have seen that such moves did not prove effective. States like Turkey within the OIC have all along retained normal diplomatic relations with the Israel. After Camp David Egypt established a full-fledged relation with the Israeli. Iran had been maintaining diplomatic liaison with Israel till 1979 but the revolution changed the situation. Unless the OIC is made more effective through some system that permits its voice to be heard, it shall remain the same ineffective body that it is today in the achievements of its primary objectives of promoting solidarity among the member states.

⁴⁷ Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, p. 69.

On the organizational structure, the OIC has been able to lay down an elaborate structure not only for itself but also for various subsidiary organs and institutions. But a critical study of these organs shows that, these have been created without any regard to actual needs and in the most haphazard manner. Whenever proposals are submitted either individually or collectively for starting projects and creating centers, they are usually approved without a detailed study. Some of these organs are actually redundant. There is an overlapping of functions and a lack of coordination.

It has been seen that some of the standing committees are chaired by the heads of the state and they report directly to the summit and cannot be brought under the purview of the ICFM. The General Secretariat is not active enough to effectively discharge its responsibility of making the OIC run smoothly. High-level meetings of the OIC are held in different countries, which results in secretariat staff away from the headquarters for a considerable period of time. In my opinion the OIC may consider making Jeddah the seat of all Islamic meetings as in the case of the UN headquarters in New York. It has also been observed that the OIC maintains a very low profile at the UN. The proper liaison is not maintained with the UN and its various organs. Except for the ministerial level and ambassadorial level, the OIC does not function in a concerted and concrete way at the UN.

The OIC is not very active as an international organization and does not play a prominent role in world affairs particularly in matters relating to the Islamic world. Everyday, if one looks at newspapers headlines or listens the world news; one is struck by the misery and sufferings of Muslims all around the world. Massacres and rape of Muslims in Bosnia, starvation of Muslims in Somalia due to the civil war among the Muslim warlords, occupation and systematic violation of human rights in Palestine for the last 55 years, killing and rape of Muslims in Kashmir by the Indian army and savage violation in Chechnya are evidence of the miserable condition of Muslims in today's world. The OIC is helplessly watching the systematic extermination and humiliation of fellow Muslims. One of the organization's principal aims as emphasized in its charter is to free Islamic holy sites and supports the Palestinian people's struggle to regain their rights and territories. Has the OIC succeeded even partially, in bringing this holy task to fruition?

Despite these above mentioned setbacks, the OIC did succeed in continuing to hold its regular meetings and contribute in forging cooperation among the Muslim countries in the fields of economy and culture and to a limited extent, politics. During the past quarter of a century it comes to light that it has remained sincere in its efforts to achieve its objectives. It has done commendable work in almost all the fields and has tried to solve the problems of the Muslims by extending its cooperation to the member states.

The OIC has taken many constructive and concrete steps in the direction of economic and cultural cooperation. It lays emphasis on the education of Muslims and has helped in the establishment of Islamic universities in Niger, Uganda, Malaysia and Bangladesh. It has organized seminars and symposia on various aspects of Islam and has extended support to publications concerning Islam. In March 1989, the OIC denounced Salman Rushdie for his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses* and demanded its withdrawal from circulation and urged the member states to boycott publishing houses that showed reluctance to follow the popular demand. The OIC has given assistance to the Muslim communities affected by wars and natural disasters in liaison with the UN agencies, particularly the UNHCR. The countries of the Sahel region – Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal – have received particular attention on victims of drought.

The Islamic countries seek to express their opinion and profess their solidarity in the OIC on matters concerning the Muslim world. Finally we can say that though the OIC may not have been able to take a very positive role in most matters of political importance, it at least acts as an important forum where opinions can be expressed and solidarity demonstrated on matters of grave concern to the Muslim world. The ultimate success of the OIC will be determined by the Muslim world growing out of a state of dependency.

CHAPTER III

BANGLADESH AND THE OIC – MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter, to a large extent, is to deal with some of the major political issues confronted by the Muslim world and will focus on the position taken by Bangladesh and the OIC. The criminal attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque – one of the sacred holy places of Islam – by the Zionist elements had immediately brought together the leaders of the Muslim world. They condemned this sacrilege crime against the religious rites of the Muslims¹ in one voice and unanimously expressed the need to create an organization of Muslim nations to counter such an audacious act. The decisions taken by the Muslim leaders in the meeting at Rabat in 1969, guided by their principal interests of promoting among themselves close ties and cooperation in all spheres of life, to collectively deal with such attacks against the Muslim world. They made the declaration in a single voice that their governments and people are strongly determined not to accept any kind of solution of the Palestinian issue which would deny Jerusalem the status it had before June 1967. The countries also declared their solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain land and guaranteed full support for the restoration of their rights. Thus, the Palestinian problem has played an important role in the formation of the OIC.

In the past 35 years since its inception, the OIC has been working to achieve its objectives of increasing mutual cooperation in all major areas and understanding between the Islamic countries. There is no major problem in the contemporary Muslim world either local or international, which is not somehow reflected in the OIC deliberations. Here an attempt has been made to deal with only those outstanding issues confronting the Muslim world such as the Palestine problem, the Gulf Wars, the Afghan issue, problems of Muslim minorities residing in non-Muslim countries, the Kashmir issue, the Ayodhya issue, the Muslim issue in Southern Philippines and a few more.

3.2 Bangladesh and the Palestinian Issue

It has been mentioned earlier that the idea of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) was born out of the Palestinian issue, following the desecration of the Holy Al-Aqsa mosque by the Zionist forces in August 1969. Although there were many political,

¹ In Islam, a mosque is not only a place for worship but is also a place where a countries administrative work and decisions are taken for running the state. Therefore an attack on a mosque is not only considered to be a religious attack but also a political attack, not to mention that this mosque was the 3rd most sacred in the Muslim world

socio-cultural and economic issues that the OIC had been grappling with, the Palestine Question and the occupation of Jerusalem remained the topmost agenda. The anxiety caused by the Palestine problem and the continued occupation of Jerusalem by Israel had led to certain concrete steps by the OIC member states. Though the first conference at the initial stage of its formation was not able to reach a consensus on the Palestine issue and failed to adopt a joint strategy against Israel, gradually, the issue gained prominence in the activities of the OIC and the member states were able to develop a common feelings and sympathy towards the country lost to the Zionists².

The First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) held in Jeddah in 1970 adopted a number of resolutions regarding the Palestinian issue.

- i. The conference reaffirmed the right of the people of Palestine to struggle for the liberation of their homeland and restoration of their rights.
- ii. It called upon participating states to expand political, material and moral support to the people of Palestine in their fight against Israel.
- iii. It decided to consider the 21st of August of each year (the day of the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque) as a day of solidarity with the struggle of the people of Palestine.
- iv. It called upon the participating states for actions on an international level in support of the people of Palestine and of their usurped homeland and the Holy places.
- v. It also urged the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and to take strong measures for the implementation of the UN resolutions regarding Palestine.
- vi. And finally, it denounced the Zionist movement as a racial, aggressive and expansionist movement conflicting with all the noble human ideals and constituting a permanent threat to world peace³.

In the Fourth ICFM in 1973 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was recognized for the first time as the only legitimate representative of the Palestine people and the

² Md. Golam Mostafa and Mohammad Humayun Kabir, 'The OIC and the Palestinian Problem', *BISS Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, 1983, pp. 31-32.

³ Final Declaration of the First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, 23-25 March, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (General Secretariat, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia), 1970.

member states were requested to sever all forms of relations with Israel and provide the PLO with all facilities including in the opening of the PLO office where it did not exist. The recognition of the PLO by the OIC as the sole representative of the Palestinian people was a landmark in their history of struggle against Israel. This decision of the OIC gave an impetus to hold the Palestinian banner high in the fight against the Zionist entity. At the Sixth ICFM held in Jeddah in 1975, a Permanent Committee on Jerusalem was created to coordinate efforts of the Islamic countries for the solution of the Palestinian problem including the restoration of the Holy city of Jerusalem to its Islamic and Arab sovereignty. Bangladesh was elected a member of the Jerusalem Committee, which was upgraded to the ministerial level committee later⁴.

The extra ordinary session of the Jerusalem Committee held in Casablanca in 1980, set up a 3-member committee of Heads of State consisting of the King of Morocco and the President of Bangladesh and Guinea to evolve a new strategy to liberate Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) and to restore to the Palestinians their inalienable rights. The 7th ICFM adopted a resolution, which called on the member states to issue a special postage bearing the name “The Palestinian Stamp” for the help of the Palestinian people in their struggle.

As a symbol of solidarity with the Palestinian people the 10th ICFM suspended the membership of Egypt in the OIC and its various bodies for signing a separate peace treaty with Israel in 1979. The conference also condemned the United States for its policy in the Middle East and denounced the Camp David Accords. The activities of the OIC regarding the Palestinian issue reveals that the resolutions, decisions and measures adopted at various levels reflect the sincere feelings and concern of the member states. Of all activities of the OIC, Palestinian issue holds the most important place⁵.

The OIC decided to declare a *Jihad* against the Zionist forces, as the duty of every Muslim – man or woman – ordained by the *Sharia* and glorious traditions of Islam. It called upon all Muslims living inside and outside Islamic countries to discharge their duty by contributing, each according to his capacity, in the cause of Allah, the Almighty, the

⁴ Mohammad Shamsul Haq, *Bangladesh in International Politics: The Dilemma of the Weak States*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993, p. 259.

⁵Arshad-uz-Zaman, *Privileged Witness: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 2000, p.218.

Islamic brotherhood and the righteous path⁶. The OIC has developed a specific organizational framework to supervise the implementation of its policies towards the Palestine issue. The 3rd Summit introduced the position of an Assistant Secretary General for the affairs of Al-Quds-Al-Sharif and the Palestinian question to supervise the OIC's Palestinian policy. In 1975 the 6th ICFM decided to establish a 15-member committee called the Al-Quds Committee to follow up the situation in the city and the 7th ICFM established an Al-Quds Fund in order to finance projects designed to resist the policy of Juadization. The OIC also established other functional committees⁷ such as,

- i. The committee of Muslim experts concerned with devising means aimed at combating the dangers of Zionist and imperialist settlements in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories;
- ii. The establishment of an Islamic committee for the surveillance of the actions of the Zionist;
- iii. The Islamic bureau for military coordination with Palestine and
- iv. The main Islamic office for the boycott of Israel.

The OIC has also been donating funds to support the PLO and the Palestinian Intifada since 1987, but today in the so called "peace process", the OIC has been the least involved organization in this situation⁸.

The 26th ICFM stressed the question of Palestine and Al-Quds as the paramount Islamic cause and reiterated its full support for PLO. It affirmed its full support of the peace process in the Middle East and its commitment to the principles and parameters of the peace process⁹. In cooperation with other likeminded world organizations like the non-Aligned Conference, the OIC got some resolutions passed in various world bodies particularly in the UN General Assembly, favouring the Palestinian cause.

We must keep in mind that the OIC initially established to support the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people, which had been curbed by the Zionist

⁶ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, ed., *OIC: Contemporary Issues of the Muslim World*, A FRIENDS Publication, Rawalpindi, 1997, p. 17.

⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁸ Ibid., p. 176.

⁹ IRCICA Newsletter, August-September 1999, No.49, p. 4.

movement. Bangladesh had gained entry into the OIC by playing the Palestinian card and sympathizing with the Arab cause. Today it continues its interest in maintaining support to the Palestinian cause. Thus the role of Bangladesh in relation to the Palestinian problem is of paramount importance. The Asian country has espoused the Palestinian and the Holy Jerusalem cause much more than many Arab states have ever done. Bangladesh regards the Palestinian issue as the core of all problems in the Middle East. Peace in the area never can be achieved without solving this problem. Bangladesh views that a comprehensive settlement of the problem needs a call for a complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories including Jerusalem. Palestinians should be allowed to exercise their inalienable rights to determine their own destiny including the establishment of a state of their own with Jerusalem as their capital.

Bangladesh since its creation has not lost any opportunity in expressing its solidarity with the Arab countries vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause¹⁰. Even after facing the wrath of the Arab states towards the creation of Bangladesh, it consistently avoided any links with Israel. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman spurned Israeli overtures for its friendship¹¹. In the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Bangladesh strongly supported the Arabs, which was the first opportunity for Bangladesh to demonstrate an urge for Islamic solidarity. There were protest rallies, processions and public meetings all over Bangladesh¹². As a gesture of goodwill and solidarity a twenty eight-member army medical unit was sent and dispatched one lakh pound of Bangladesh tea for Egypt¹³. More over a five thousand strong volunteer brigade, mostly composed of ex-freedom fighters, was ready and willing to join their Arab brethren in their war of liberation against Israel.

In the first official stance held by the Bangladesh government on this burning issue, it was made clear by the then parliamentary Speaker Abdul Malek Ukil in November 1975, "... solution of the Middle East problem has to be based essentially on respect for sentiments of the uprooted Palestinian Arabs and Arab countries involved in the crisis. After all it must not to be forgotten that the PLO is a reality and Mr. Yasir Arafat is the only popularly recognized leader of the Palestinians". One of the first acts of Bangladesh after

¹⁰ S.R. Chakravarty, ed., *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1994., p. 60.

¹¹ Mohammad Tajuddin, *Bangladesh and the Islamic World*, Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies, Calcutta, 1998, p. 16.

¹² Md. Golam Mostafa and Mohammad Humayun Kabir, op. cit, p. 38.

¹³ Ishtiaq Hussain, "Bangladesh and the Gulf War: Responses of a Small State", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 50, No. 2, April 1997, p. 43.

entering the UNO was to co-sponsor a resolution inviting the PLO to take part in the UN plenary debate on Palestine¹⁴. In response to a request from Yasir Arafat, the government of Bangladesh agreed to allow Palestinian students to study in Bangladesh.

The consistent and unequivocal support of Bangladesh to Palestine and other Arab countries continues in all international forums including the Security Council. Bangladesh consistently maintained that no durable peace in the Middle East was possible without a complete and immediate withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories including the Holy City of Jerusalem, the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including the right of their own independent state and the acceptance of the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Bangladesh herself, tabled a resolution on the 30th of April 1980 to reaffirm that Israel should withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since June 1967. The position of Bangladesh on the grave situation in Palestine was reflected at a ministerial level emergency meeting of the NAM's coordinating bureau on Palestine in Nicosia, July 1982. The meeting suggested among other measures active steps to mobilize the world public opinion to:

- i. End the Israeli aggression.
- ii. Find a package political solution involving the PLO's recognition, Israeli withdrawal and respect for Lebanese sovereignty.
- iii. Obtain international support for relief and rehabilitation of over 800,000 Lebanese people from their homes and for the surviving families of over 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians killed by Israeli invasion.

The delegation of Bangladesh took an active part in initiating many of these proposals. Bangladesh's representative to the UN Khawaja Wasiuddin told the General Assembly that there would be no peace unless the Palestinian people exercise their legitimate right of self-determination. About 400 Bangladeshis were killed while fighting side by side with the Palestinian and about 300 were captured by Israel¹⁵.

¹⁴ Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries, 1972-1983", *Bangladesh Studies: Public Administration, Rural Development and Foreign Policy*, ed. by Mohammed Mohabbat Khan and Syed Anwar Hussain, Centre for Administrative Studies, University of Dhaka, 1985, p. 261.

¹⁵ S.R Chakravarty, & Virendra Narain, eds., *Bangladesh Vol. 3, Global Politics, South Asian Studies Series 14*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988, p. 149.

The first meeting of the Al-Quds Summit Committee was held in Rabat in November 1980. President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh who had all alone taken a keen personal interest in the Palestine problem presented a concrete action plan for the solution of this problem which was well received as a valuable input in developing the future strategy. President H. M. Ershad a member of the eight men summit level committee of Palestine which was set up by the 7th Non Aligned Conference held in New Delhi, termed it as “one of the most intractable problems of our times”¹⁶. In his special message the Bangladesh president stated, “The government and people of Bangladesh are deeply committed to the cause of Palestinian people. We are convinced that just and durable peace in the Middle East cannot be established without a total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and without the achievement of the inalienable rights by the Palestinian people, with Jerusalem as its capital. The participation of the PLO the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people on an equal footing with all other parties on the basis of relevant UN General Assembly resolution is indispensable”. The role of Bangladesh was highly appreciated in the conference, which was attended by the representatives of 137 countries and 80 NGOs. It is also important to note that Bangladesh was elected as one of the vice-presidencies allotted to the Asian group of the current international conference on Palestine¹⁷.

At the 4th Islamic summit held at Casablanca, President H.M. Ershad put forward an 11-point proposal for safeguarding and promoting the political and economic security of the Islamic countries. The first and foremost of the 11-point proposal was, a comprehensive programme of action on Palestine. President Ershad declared that Bangladesh was totally committed to the just cause of the Palestinian people and reaffirmed that “we shall do everything possible within our means to help in the struggle for the Palestinians with Jerusalem as its capital”¹⁸. At the 5th Islamic summit in Kuwait, President Ershad referred to the continued and the illegal occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories by the Zionist regime as a flagrant violation of the principles of the UN and world public opinion. Bangladesh conveyed to the PLO in univocal terms its “total and all out

¹⁶ Syed Tayeb-ur Rahman, *Global Geo- Strategy of Bangladesh, OIC and Islamic Ummah*, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1985, p. 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.73.

support” to the Palestinian people till their final victory. President Ershad regarded the Palestinian cause very close to Bangladeshis heart.

This principled position of Bangladesh has consistently been reflected in statements on various occasions in the Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the Non-Aligned and the OIC. The 21st August is celebrated in Bangladesh every year along with other Islamic nations as a “Day of Jerusalem and Solidarity with the people of Palestine”. In 1980 Bangladesh also issued a commemorative postage stamp on this occasion. Bangladesh as a Muslim country could not remain indifferent to the blatant oppression of Palestinians by the Israelis and its policy of annexation of Jerusalem. On Bangladesh’s entry to the OIC in 1974, Mujib declared, “the illegal occupation of the Arab land must be vacated. We must regain our right over Jerusalem”. All leaders and officials of Bangladesh, both in the OIC and other international forums, have echoed this sentiment over time. The strong, unequivocal and persistent stand of Bangladesh regarding the Palestinian issue can be easily understood by the statement of the Bangladesh Government, when it asked at the Security Council in 1982, “is it not, indeed ironic that all the acts of oppression, intolerance, injustice and persecution to which the Jews were subjugated to not only in Germany but in various parts of Europe during the first half of this century, should, during the 2nd half of the century be practiced by the very survivors of the holocaust against the people in whose land they took refuge and shelters ”¹⁹.

3.3 Bangladesh and the Iran-Iraq War

The Middle East and the Muslim world were thrown into a fresh confusion in September 1980 when Iraqi troops invaded Iran. President Saddam Hussein of Iraq had several motives for launching the attack. He was afraid of a so-called militant Islam spreading across the border into Iraq from Iran. The Iraqi’s claimed that the Iranian border province of Khuzestan should rightfully belong to them, there was a long standing dispute over the Shatt-el-Arab waterway and Saddam thought that the Iranian forces would be weak and demoralized soon after the fundamentalist takeover, so he expected a quick victory, which became clear that he miscalculated badly²⁰.

¹⁹ Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, Security Council Debate on Occupied Arab Territories, April 1982, Bangladesh Mission to the UN Press Release.

²⁰ Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern World History*, Macmillan India Ltd., 1997, p. 242.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq conflict in 1980, the OIC held an urgent extra ordinary session of foreign ministers in New York and formed a goodwill mission to mediate between them. The OIC tried hard to reconcile the two parties but it did not succeed in even bringing the two parties onto the negotiation table. A “Good Offices Committee” was designed especially at the level of heads of state to resolve the conflict chaired by the president of Guinea and the president of Gambia. The committee submitted two proposals, which were rejected by Iran. This was basically because Iran felt that the OIC was biased towards Iraq²¹. Iran was offended when the OIC refused to condemn Iraq as the aggressor, and as a result it boycotted the 3rd Summit held in Saudi Arabia in 1981. The OIC failed to workout a rapprochement between the warring parties and the conflict continued for eight years, leading to tremendous material and human losses for both states²².

The escalation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq since the second half of 1980 destabilized the situation in the Middle East. Bangladesh regarded the war as fratricidal. The role of Bangladesh in this fratricidal war is not insignificant. Ever since the eruption of hostilities in September 1980, Bangladesh supported all initiatives directed to halt the conflict and resolve the crisis in a mutually acceptable and peaceful manner. While welcoming the initiatives of the OIC for an undertaking of a “mission of goodwill”, Bangladesh supported the Security Council members to adopt the resolution called upon by Iran and Iraq to immediately refrain from any further use of force and to settle their disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law²³.

The 3rd Islamic summit at Taif in 1981 expanded the goodwill committee membership to nine in which Bangladesh was unanimously elected to the committee. President Ziaur Rahman was entrusted as the one-man mission by the chairman of the committee to mediate between the two brothers²⁴. Zia maintained neutrality in the Iran – Iraq war and played an active role as a member of the peace initiative taken by the OIC²⁵. He visited the capitals of both the countries three times and held meetings with the leaders urging

²¹Col. Ghulam Sarwar, op. cit, p. 43.

²², Noor Ahmad Baba, *Organization of Islamic Conference: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p. 157.

²³Syed Anwar Hussain, op. cit, p. 267.

²⁴Mohammad Tajuddin, op. cit, p. 24.

²⁵ Mohammad Shamsul Huq, op. cit, p. 268.

them to effect an immediate ceasefire. The role of Zia in this regard was highly lauded by the 12th ICFM held in Baghdad in 1981.

The committee of nine undertook three peace missions. The committee met the leaders of both the countries with specific proposals, which included a plan for a ceasefire from the 12th of March to be followed by the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from the Iranian territory. The ceasefire and the withdrawal would be supervised by the military observer appointed by the OIC member states and approved by the two countries. The mission also recommended that an Islamic Peace Keeping Force be set up to enforce the ceasefire. The divergent attitudes of Iran and Iraq fell through this plan²⁶.

Bangladesh played an active and constructive role and used her good offices in an endeavour to moderate the stance of the two warring countries. As a member of the UN Security Council, Bangladesh took the earliest opportunity to draw the attention of the Security Council to the solid framework provided by the UN charter for action in ending this conflict. The then Bangladesh Foreign Minister Prof. Shamsul Huq addressed in the UN Security Council in the following words, “Bangladesh assures the council of its fullest cooperation in performing its charter of responsibilities in ending the hostilities between Iran and Iraq and ensuring peace and security”.

The most heartening outcome of the one- man (President Ziaur Rahman) peace mission – the OIC peace committee – was the consent obtained from the presidents of both Iran and Iraq for the establishment of three committees namely – an Enquiry Committee, a Ceasefire and Withdrawal Committee and a Peacekeeping Force. Bangladesh was proposed to be a member of each committee by both the parties. This was the most significant step forward towards ending the Iran – Iraq Conflict. Unfortunately the OIC failed to act immediately on the report of President Zia and did not meet during the last six months and in the meantime President Zia was assassinated 30 May 1981. The Change of the government in Bangladesh in 1981 did not effect any change in the role of Bangladesh in the Islamic Peace Committee (IPC). Bangladesh’s role in the mediation between the two countries and President Ershad’s action plan for ending the Iran-Iraq war were appreciated by the leaders of other delegations at the 6th Session of the IPC held in

²⁶ S.R Chakravarty & Virendra Narain, op. cit, p. 147.

July 1984. A vigorous attempt was made by Bangladesh to bring about a comprehensive plan for an amicable settlement of the conflict and a resolution for exchanging prisoners of war was adopted at the 14th ICFM, held in Dhaka in 1983. When President Ershad put forward his 11-point proposals at the 4th Islamic Summit Conference on the Iran-Iraq war, he appealed to both parties in order to exercise restraint and urge the summit to adopt concrete measures to bring this fratricidal war to an end in a just and honorable way²⁷.

Delivering his speech at the 5th Islamic Summit in Kuwait in 1987 President H.M Ershad appealed to Iran and Iraq to “open a dialogue through the good offices of the Islamic Peace Committee (IPC)” to end the tragic war between the two brotherly countries. He urged both Iran and Iraq that if they have difficulties in speaking their mind formally they are welcome to speak “to anyone of us privately and tell us how this bloodshed can be stopped honorably for both parties”. Bangladesh made a forceful plea for an immediate cessation of the Gulf War, and greater cohesion of the Muslim world in the 17th ICFM held in Jordan 1928. In all UN General Assembly sessions since the outbreak of hostilities, the Security Council debates on the Iran-Iraq war and during the NAM meetings, Bangladesh had voiced its concern and called for a speedy solution to the problem. Bangladesh warned the Islamic foreign ministers “if the war continues, the unity that we seek for the world of Islam could be seriously jeopardized and call for a continued separate and coordinated effort on the part of the UN, OIC, NAM and GCC to restore peace in the region”.

The escalating armed hostilities between Iran-Iraq paid nothing but economic disastrous and loss of human lives. Saddam talked about “total victory” and Iranians demanded “total surrender”. The UN became involved and succeeded in arranging a ceasefire in August 1988. Bangladesh supported the Security Council Resolution 598 and welcomed Iraq’s acceptance and called for its immediate implementation by both the parties. This was monitored by the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG)²⁸. 24 countries sent observers to the UNIIMOG and Bangladesh was one of the six OIC countries. These 6 OIC countries were most acceptable to both the parties. The OIC could play no role whatsoever having been labeled and charged pro-Iraq by Iran. It is equally ironical that despite Iran’s repeated stand that the UNO is merely a vehicle to promote American

²⁷ Syed Tayeb-ur Rahman, op. cit, p. 73.

²⁸ Norman Lowe, op. cit, p. 243.

interests, the ceasefire resolution which Iran finally accepted was a UN Security Council resolution. It is equally sad to note that this resolution of the Security Council served Irani interests no better than several early proposals developed by three successive Heads of the State Committees of the Islamic Summit formed for the specific purposes of bringing about cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq.

3.4 Bangladesh and the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion to Afghanistan is one of the important issues in the 1980s in international politics. This exposed the fragility of the Muslim unity, which resulted in a suspension of Afghanistan's membership in the OIC in January 1980²⁹. The successive ousting of Daud, Taraki and Hafuzullah Amin's governments were regarded as internal developments by the OIC as well as by the UN. But the installation of Barbak Karmal with the Soviet assistance brought a qualitative change to the situation. Muslim states of the world opposed outright this soviet occupation with the exception of Syria, South Yemen, Algeria, Libya and the PLO. They wanted to brush aside the issue due to their different relations with the Soviet Union.

The evolving situation in Afghanistan placed Bangladesh in an awkward position. It presented a great dilemma for Bangladesh, making it walk a tight rope³⁰. Bangladesh's policy vis-à-vis the Afghan crisis evolved slowly. Because the problem involved a super power, which had played a significant role in her emergence as an independent nation but at the same time Bangladesh was genuinely concerned for the fate of a member of the OIC whose non-aligned status was infringed upon. Initially the Bangladesh foreign ministry remained almost reticent and non-committal, but the steps that Bangladesh took began to annoy the Soviet Union and pleased the OIC member countries that had initially stood by its side.

The stand taken by Bangladesh on the Afghan crisis became clear when it came forward with a resolution in the Security Council on January 1980 along with 5 other non-aligned members calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. In the debate, the Bangladesh representative, K.M. Kaiser informed the Security Council that

²⁹Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

³⁰Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and the Organization of Islamic Conference", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1987, p. 28.

“the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is a serious violation of the fundamental principles and inconsistent with the aims and purposes of the UN Charter”. The resolution was vetoed on the 8th of January by the Soviet Union. The obvious understanding was that further action would be impossible within the Security Council and Bangladesh along with 11 other members of the council voted on 9 January that the General Assembly should discuss the issue. In the General Assembly, Bangladesh played an active role in the adoption of resolution on 15 January by 104 votes to 18 calling for immediate withdrawal of troops from Afghan territory³¹.

Shortly after the Soviet invasion the convening of the extraordinary session of the OIC and the suspension of the Afghan membership was sponsored by Bangladesh. The flow of aid from the OIC member nations provided the major imperative for this policy and assistance from Moscow decreased substantially. Dhaka also wanted to please the US, an important factor in the country’s foreign policy. The session of the ICFM in Pakistan in January, adopted a specific measure against the Afghan government and the Soviet Union, suspending the membership of Afghanistan and boycotting the Olympic Games of Moscow. The OIC’s support of the Mujahidin and condemnation of the Soviet intervention represented a strong pressure on the Soviet Union. It was most likely one of the factors, which led the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in 1989³².

Although the OIC linked the restoration of Afghanistan’s membership to the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, it responded to that withdrawal by granting the Mujahidin, the seat formerly held by Afghanistan’s in the 18th ICFM held in Riyadh in 1989. Finally when the Mujahidin came to power, the OIC called for the establishment of a broad based government of national consensus and mediated between their fighting factions in collaboration with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan³³. An agreement was signed under the supervision of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan by those factions in March 1993 for peace and reconciliation and an OIC mechanism was set up for the observance of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities in Afghanistan. 21st ICFM endorsed the setting up of this kind of

³¹S.R Chakravarty & Virendra Narain, op. cit, p.148.

³²Col. Ghulam Sarwar, op. cit, p. 38.

³³ Dakar Declaration, Sixth Islamic Summit Conference, Dakar, December 1991, 1-5.

mechanism, which is known as the OIC's Permanent Mission in Afghanistan³⁴. This office acts as the principal OIC arm for peace talks. The OIC has only three permanent missions of this type in the world, the other two being in New York and Geneva. When inter Mujahidin clashes escalated, the OIC Secretary General offered his good offices. He paid special visit to Afghanistan and adjacent countries.

The deliberations of the 1st extraordinary session of the ICFM strongly condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The conference considered the Soviet policies in Afghanistan as blatant disregard of international covenants, flagrant violation of international laws, norms of conduct in the affairs of global politics, primarily the Charter of the UN and the Charter of the OIC and demanded the unconditional withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan³⁵. It urged the member states to withhold recognition to the Karmal regime and sever diplomatic relations with the country till the withdrawal of Soviet troops³⁶.

While speaking in the 11th ICFM the Bangladesh Foreign Minister reiterated clear and unequivocal stand on the Afghanistan issue that Bangladesh believes in scrupulous respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and non-interference by one country in the internal affairs of another. The presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is a violation of these fundamental principles and urged their immediate withdrawal in the interest of peace and stability in the region. Bangladesh expressed deep sympathy for its fellow Afghan brothers who have been uprooted from their homes and who have taken shelter in other countries. With regard to Afghanistan Bangladesh has remained consistent in supporting the resolutions of the OIC³⁷. It urged all the Islamic countries of the world to do everything possible individually and collectively to alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan refugees. "Bangladesh of course, upholds the sovereign and inalienable rights of our Afghan brothers to determine freely their own form of government and choose their own political, economic and social system

³⁴ Dr. Saad S. Khan, "Pakistan and the Organization of Islamic Conference", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 56, No. 1, January 2003, p. 64.

³⁵ Haider Mehdi, *Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC): A review of its Political and Educational Policies*, Progressive Publishers, Zaildar Park-Ichhra, Lahore-Pakistan, 1988, p. 59.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Syed Anwar Hussain, op. cit, n. 14, p. 270.

without external interference or military intervention” said the Bangladesh foreign minister in the same conference.

President Ershad put forward an 11-point proposal in the 4th Islamic Summit Conference where he referred to the situation in Afghanistan he said, it is an insult to the international community and poses a threat to the security of the entire region. He expressed full sympathy to the plight of the “Afghan brothers” and extended full support in their valiant struggle to exercise their right of self-determination and the preservation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity³⁸. Bangladesh was particularly concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. Bangladesh perceived her national security threatened by the presence of a super power on the western flank of South Asia. The fate of Afghanistan, the foreign intervention in Grenada and the raid on Libya have exposed the serious helplessness of small states against big powers. The continued presence in Afghanistan was regarded by Bangladesh as a threat to Afghan’s Islamic and non-aligned character. The arm intervention in Afghanistan and continued presence of foreign troops are a violation of the independent sovereign status of a Muslim country, which is also a founding member of the NAM. Bangladesh consistently voted against the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan.

Bangladesh spoke out against the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan in the meetings and conferences of NAM and the Security Council and General Assembly. At the 8th NAM Summit Bangladesh said: “we reaffirm our total support to the UN Secretary General’s efforts for an immediate settlement of the problem in Afghanistan. President H.M. Ershad called upon the OIC member countries in the 5th Summit meeting to join hands in the name of Allah in quest of peace and security based on honour and justice by referring to the continued occupation of Afghanistan by foreign forces. He expressed the concern in such words: “Our brothers in Afghanistan continued to remain in a tragic plight being deprived of their rights of self-determination, national independence and basic human dignity by a foreign occupation force”³⁹. Bangladesh was asked about its stand on Afghan issue in the context of the Geneva talks at a press briefing in Dhaka on March 23, 1988. The Foreign Secretary, Nurul Islam said Bangladesh shared the concern expressed by Pakistan for forming a coalition government in Kabul before the total

³⁸ Syed Tayeb-ur Rahman, n. 16, p. 73.

³⁹ BSS, 29 January 1987.

withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan so that more than five million Afghan refugees who had taken shelter in Pakistan and Iran could go back home with honour and dignity⁴⁰.

Bangladesh's stand on Afghan crisis is properly understood from the withdrawal of its ambassador to Afghanistan and down graded its mission to the level of Charge d' Affaires. Bangladesh remained fully committed to upholding the sovereign and inalienable rights of the freedom loving people of Afghanistan to determine their own destiny free from outside interference or subjugation of any kind.

During the Afghan crisis, the contribution of the OIC consisted no more than the moral and material assistance given to the suffering Afghan migrants and the Mujahidin. Ultimately the problem was solved because of factors lying outside the purview of the OIC and the changing political scenario within the Soviet Union⁴¹.

3.5 Bangladesh and the Gulf War 1990-1991

The invasion of Kuwait on the 2nd of August 1990 was the biggest armed robbery in history. Crime on a grand scale is perhaps far too inadequate an expression to describe this attempt to eliminate an entire nation. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait initiated one of the most important international conflicts since the Second World War⁴². The crime of the Iraqi invasion and the occupation of Kuwait is no doubt a horrendous crime whose essence is that one country usurped another which had been internally sovereign and independent for more than two and half centuries. It is an unprecedented crime in the history. In response to the nature of the crimes event, which lasted almost 7 months and ended with the liberation of Kuwait. Kuwait is one of the few countries, which attempts to democratize its governance.

The Iran- Iraq war of 1980-88 was a watershed on the road to the 1990 war. Even before he had accepted the peace terms at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein began his next act of aggression. His forces invaded and quickly occupied the small neighbouring state of Kuwait that took place on August 2 1990. Saddam's motives were

⁴⁰ The New Nation, 24 March 1988, Dhaka.

⁴¹ Noor Ahmad Baba, n. 22, p. 269.

⁴² Musallam Ali Musallam, *The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Saddam Hussain, his State and International Power Politics*, British Academic Press, London, 1996, p. 1.

as follows⁴³. Firstly, he wanted to get his hands on the wealth of Kuwait, secondly, he claimed that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq and finally he did not expect any action from outside world. But the harsh reality is once again, as the case of Iran, Saddam had miscalculated.

The Arab state system did not have the capacity to persuade Saddam Hussein back across the border. The international response was rapid and clear. The international community condemned this criminal action, demanding on immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops and the restoration of legitimacy of the state of Kuwait. The international community expressed these terms in the decisions and resolutions, which were issued by the General Assembly of the UN and the Security Council. The UN Security Council immediately, after the invasion, condemned it and considered it to be a breach of international laws, peace and security. Successive UN resolutions led to economic sanctions against Iraq and a maritime blockade. Finally it was declared that if Iraq had not withdrawn its troops from Kuwait by the 15th of January 1991 a coalition force under the umbrella of the UN would be permitted to use “all necessary means” against it to clear them out. An international force consisting of over 600,000 from 33 nations began an attack on Iraqi troops on February 24, 1991. Within four days the Iraqis had been driven out of Kuwait and routed. Kuwait was liberated and Saddam Hussein accepted the defeat⁴⁴.

The Iraqi invasion and the occupation of Kuwait had created a situation that greatly undermined the concept of Islamic solidarity in general and the OIC’s framework for fraternal relationship among its member states in particular. The OIC was concerned about this serious and dangerous new situation created in the region and which was characterized notably by the use of force to settle a bilateral dispute⁴⁵. The OIC remained quite incapacitated and played no significant role and showed no capacity or resolve to vacate the aggressor. The matter soon went into the hands of the UN Security Council and of course the USA. The military power of America and its coalition partners had to do this job, to the utter humiliation and shame of the Muslim community and the OIC.

⁴³ Norman Lowe, n. 20, p. 243.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 244.

⁴⁵ A. K. Pasha, *Iraq: Sanctions and Wars*, Sterling Publishers Pvt., New Delhi, 2003, p. 50.

In the 20th ICFM, Turkish President Turgut Ozal urged the member states of the OIC to demonstrate greater unity to present a repetition of Iraq's lawlessness in invading Kuwait. The conference in its final communiqué welcomed the restoration of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait as well as its legitimate government. It expressed sorrow over the ordeal to which the Iraqi people were subjugated. It charged the Iraqi regime with full responsibility for the human and material losses caused by its invasion of Kuwait and stressed that Iraq's non-commitment to the implementation of all UN resolutions necessitated the continuation of the sanctions against it.

Muslim states including Bangladesh joined the US led coalition to fight Iraq. Saddam Hussein appealed to the Muslim Ummah for support against the onslaught but response was ineffectual⁴⁶. Many Islamists and nationalists rallied to Iraq for US imperialism was deemed to be a greater enemy of Islam than even Saddam Hussein but without the active support of Muslim states they could not attack Iraq. The passions of ordinary Muslims were easily contained. Iraq was left to fight alone and the Arab world's most dynamic state was demolished. Thus, Arabs were left divided.

Bangladesh's response to the Gulf crisis as a small and weak power was tinged with pragmatism. Bangladesh condemned the Iraqi invasion and the occupation of Kuwait. It supported and complied with all UN sponsored resolutions on this crisis and sent 2300 troops in support of the coalition forces. This small number of troops was a token but important one because it expressed solidarity with the majority countries of the Islamic world, it expressed solidarity with the democratic world, and it expressed solidarity with the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Gulf states⁴⁷. This assistance to the Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti regimes though insignificant has increased the worth and status of Bangladesh and proved its fidelity and dependability before them. Bangladesh's reaction and involvement in the crisis was in accord with the majority viewpoint.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister Barrister Aminul Islam Mahmud visited Islamic countries namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Maldives and Pakistan directly from Riyadh on a Saudi government plane. As a result of this shuttle diplomacy, the six

⁴⁶ Simon W. Murden, *Islam, Middle East, and the New Global Hegemony*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, America, 2002, p. 196

⁴⁷ Ishtiaq Hussain, n. 13, p. 42.

countries including Bangladesh issued a joint statement asking Saddam Hussein to immediately withdraw his forces⁴⁸.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her address in the 6th summit of the OIC in Dakar in December 1991 mentioned the disruption of the OIC following the cruel invasion and occupation of Kuwait, which challenged fundamental principles “to our charter and split our ranks”. The Prime Minister said the invasion of Kuwait sent shock waves affecting the world’s economy. She hoped that Iraq would return to the path of reason and legality in full compliance with the resolution of the UN Security Council.

The decision taken by the Bangladesh Government to send troops to Saudi Arabia was a difficult and delicate one because it was not a popular one at home and there was strong personal relationship between President Ershad and President Saddam Hussein. Despite all this, Dhaka’s decision to send troops came around in the nation’s interest to support Saudi Arabia which was desired by America and Saudi Arabia the two important donor countries. Bangladesh’s Gulf policy did not change even after the resignation of Ershad. The new government continued with the Gulf policy of the previous government. Bangladesh’s stand is that Iraq must comply with all Security Council resolutions and should release all Kuwaiti prisoners of wars without any further delay.

There was observed mixed reactions to the crisis among the people of Bangladesh. There was pro-Saddam demonstration after the allied aircraft began their air strike on Iraq. Chanting, “March ahead, Saddam the victory is yours”, the demonstrators held up portraits of Iraqi President Saddam and set ablaze effigies of President Bush. Like pro-Saddam demonstration, those supporting Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were also held in Dhaka and other Bangladeshi towns. These marches numbering thousands demanded the restoration of Kuwait’s sovereignty. Clashes were also held between the groups. Officials, academics and common people called for a concerted world wide move to stop the Gulf War but all reiterated the view that Iraq must first withdraw its troops from Kuwait because the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq is the root cause of the Gulf War.

⁴⁸S.R. Chakravarty, n. 10, p. 67.

Islamic political parties were also divided over the question of Iraqi's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. All Islamic political parties joined secular political parties in condemning Bangladesh decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia. The Jamaat-e-Islami was most firm in condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It organized demonstrations in Dhaka and elsewhere to protest Iraq's action against Kuwait. But at the same time it condemned the air strike on Iraq and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. It also demanded the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Jamaat's position can be better explained in the following words: "The war will not only weaken Islam but will terribly destroy Saudi Arabia's capabilities. We feel the war should be discontinued immediately. Iraq should withdraw from occupied Kuwait. The western forces should also leave the Gulf". While there was a general sympathy for the cause of the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty, there was also a strong feeling among the public as well as foreign ministry officials that Iraq should not be destroyed.

3.6 Muslim Minority Issues in Non-Muslim States

The OIC as an international Islamic organization vows to uphold the cause of Muslims all over the world including Muslim minorities in non-member states. Almost 35 per cent of the world's Muslim populations live beyond the OIC member states. The OIC – the equivalent of the United Nations to the Islamic world – cannot remain silent about the fates of this large number of people – which is committed to protect and promote legitimate interests of the world Islamic Ummah. An attempt has been made in this section to examine the role of the OIC in promoting cause of Muslim minorities and to highlight the limitations that it encounters in the process. In 1977 in Tripoli during the 8th ICFM, the conference called upon the governments concerned to ensure full respect for the legitimate social, economic, educational and religious rights of Muslims minorities in their countries. The problem of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim states has received formal and institutional patronage of the OIC at the highest level.

3.6.1 Bangladesh and the Kashmir Issue

Kashmir problem has its root in the partition of the Indian sub-continent after the end of the British colonialism in 1947. Kashmir emerged as one of the flashpoints between India and Pakistan when its then ruler Maharaja Hari Singh refused to accede to either nation, apparently in a bid to preserve Kashmir's independence. An invasion by Pakistani tribesmen in August and September in 1947 and an uprising among Kashmiri Muslims in

the western region of the state led the Maharaja to seek the assistance of Prime Minister Nehru of India. Nehru agreed to send troops only if Kashmir formally accede to India. On October 27, 1947 the Maharaja agreed to Kashmir's accession to India on the condition that Kashmir be permitted to retain its own constitution. Indian troops succeeded in halting the Pakistani forces, driving them back to the western third of the state, which then came under Pakistan's control as "Azad" – free Kashmir⁴⁹. The Indian portion became known as Jammu and Kashmir.

The dispute over Kashmir between the two countries subsequently gave rise or contributed three wars and a limited war in 1999 known as Kargil war. It is widely thought that the Kashmir is the likeliest flashpoint for the outbreak of nuclear war in the third world⁵⁰. The recent state of near civil war in Kashmir is the outgrowth of increasing discontent in the region reflecting opposition to India's attempt to interfere in Kashmir's politics and reduce its autonomy. The Indian army has engaged in repeated atrocities on a massive scale in the process of its crackdown. The level of military misdeeds is so high that one may conclude that it is government policy to terrorize the Kashmiris into accepting Indian rule.

Systematic torture, including sexual abuse has been another standard strategy used "routinely" by the security forces operating in Kashmir. Though the problem is widely known to the authorities in Srinagar and New Delhi, neither has ever made any serious effort to curb it⁵¹. Rape especially of women relatives of suspected militants or dissidents has also been commonly employed by both security forces and their paramilitary allies.

Both the countries tried to resolve the Kashmir issue bilaterally, time and again. Failing to resolve the Kashmir problem bilaterally, Pakistan made an attempt to internationalize the Kashmir issue at the 19th ICFM held in Cairo in 1990. Since Pakistan alone could not revive the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council, its strategy was to get the OIC to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN as the Security Council would not be able to ignore a united call by all Islamic states to put Kashmir on the agenda⁵². At the conference Pakistan succeeded in getting approval for a resolution calling for a settlement of the

⁴⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/Kashmir/1996>

⁵⁰ <http://www.amherst.edu/mbkolodn>

⁵¹ <http://www.hrw.org/hrw/reports/1999>

⁵² A.K Pasha, *India and OIC*, Centre for Peace Studies, New Delhi, 1995, p. 54.

Kashmir issue on the basis of the UN resolutions and the Simla Accord⁵³. The following year another resolution was adopted on Kashmir at the Istanbul conference with its emphasis on the human rights aspect and the nomination of a fact finding mission from the OIC to visit Kashmir and at the same time the OIC expressed concern at the prevailing tension between the two countries which threatened the security and peace in the South Asian region. In the resolution the OIC encourages further negotiations with a view to resolving their outstanding differences through peaceful means and affirms that a sustained dialogue is essential to address the core of the problems and to remove the basic cause of tension between the two countries.

India's sharp reaction to the OIC's resolution was "the Kashmir issue is India's internal affairs" and refused to allow a fact-finding mission to visit Kashmir having no *locus standi* in the matter. Instead the mission went to the Pakistan controlled part of Kashmir⁵⁴.

Earlier the main emphasis of the OIC was on the implementation of a UN resolution and bilaterally through a dialogue between India and Pakistan. But the OIC's resolutions have recently spoken of the violation of human rights by India in Kashmir and calling the Kashmiri struggle as self-determination⁵⁵. A communiqué issued after its annual coordination meeting of foreign ministers in 1992 at New York, which was highly critical of India and accused New Delhi of "state sponsored repression" of the Muslim population in Jammu and Kashmir. It urged India to respect the human rights and called for a speedy and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN resolutions and in the spirit of the Simla Accord. India had initially agreed to hold a plebiscite but later refused to honour its commitment, which is the clear violation of the UN resolution and continues to occupy Jammu and Kashmir by force against the wishes of its people⁵⁶.

The OIC members were called upon to take all necessary steps to persuade India to cease immediately the massive human rights violations of the Kashmiri people to enable them

⁵³ Zafar Ahmad Nizami, "Organization of the Islamic Conference" *World Focus*, Vol. 16, No. 2-3, Feb-March, 1995, p. 46.

⁵⁴ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, n. 6, p.75.

⁵⁵ Riyaz Punjabi, & A.K Pasha, eds., *India and the Islamic World*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p. 24.

⁵⁶ A.K. Pasha, n. 52, p. 60.

to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination as mandated by the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council. It also asked member states to consider imposing restrictions on scientific, cultural, manpower and other exchanges with India pending the reversal of India's repression in occupied Jammu and Kashmir where India is one of the biggest exporters of manpower to the OIC states besides having large economic and trade interests with these Islamic states⁵⁷. The OIC resolution appealed to its members to mobilize funds and contribute generously towards providing humanitarian assistance to the Kashmiri people. The Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in her address in the foreign ministers of the OIC states in Islamabad called on the international community to organize a Kuwaiti-type military intervention in Jammu and Kashmir. She declared, "The Kashmiri people in their hearts and souls are Pakistani"⁵⁸.

Following a request by the OIC Foreign Ministers Summit in Islamabad, in October 1994 the OIC formed a special Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir. The group consisted of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Niger and the Secretary General's representative. The Kashmir contact group meets regularly in the UN premises in New York. It may be noted that the OIC in the initial 20 years of its existence between 1960 and 1989, the Kashmir issue never constituted a part of the OIC agenda, resolutions or communiqués. Only from 1990 onwards has Kashmir been a part of the proceedings of the OIC⁵⁹.

The OIC through its contact group on Jammu and Kashmir and the Islamic group in New York continues to express its collective concern over the Indian violation of the inalienable fundamental human rights of the Kashmiri people. The contact group also continues to coordinate the efforts of the Islamic states for promoting the Kashmiris rights of self-determination in accordance with the UN resolution⁶⁰. The 10th Summit Conference of the OIC held in October 2003 in Putrajaya which is the largest gathering of Muslim leaders since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the US, recalling the UN Security Council and the OIC resolutions providing a plebiscite in the Indian

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 161.

⁵⁹ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, n. 6, p. 75.

⁶⁰ Shahid Hussain S, 'The Collaborative Roles of the OIC and the UN in World Affairs', *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 50, No.2, 1997, p. 26.

occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their right to self-determination⁶¹.

India and Pakistan fought three wars over the disputed territory of Kashmir since their independence. In Bangladesh's view, the Kashmir dispute not only acts as a spoiler in bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, but it leads to the instability and unpredictability in the region. The disruption between the two countries leads to suspicion on each other with the result that each thinks of a sinister hidden agenda behind any action or proposal by the other. Bangladesh cannot ignore these realities in the region. Bangladesh voices its support for the Kashmiri people in the Islamic meetings and conferences and in the UN as well. Bangladesh wishes to keep away from the friction of the two countries and does not wish to get involved in a dispute which is required to be settled in terms of the Simla Agreement of July 2, 1972 between India and Pakistan. This agreement provided a friendly and harmonious relationship between the two countries. Begum Khaleda Zia during her visit to Islamabad in 1992 underscored deep concern over the continued violence in the Kashmir valley and consequent escalation of tension between India and Pakistan⁶².

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a press conference on her return from the 9th Islamic Summit held in Doha in 2000 called for a dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute. She said: "We want an end to the conflict with equal rights for the people of Kashmir, irrespective of their religions".

Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed by the people of Bangladesh to express their support to the oppressed people of occupied Kashmir struggling for their right of self-determination in February 6, 2004. The day was marked by various functions held in different political, religious and social organizations. A social organization, The Bangladesh – Kashmir Brotherhood Council, held a photographic exhibition in the National Press Club on human rights violation in Kashmir on 30 January 2004. Various photographs of Indian atrocities over men, women and children of Kashmir were displayed.

⁶¹ The Daily Dinkal (A Bengali Daily), 20 October, 2003.

⁶²S. R. Chakravarty, op. cit, p. 202.

A procession was also organized on the day by the Council where the participants were holding placards, banners and chanting slogans to express the solidarity with the people of Kashmir and a seminar was also organized by the Council on the Kashmir Solidarity Day on 30 January 2004.

It must be brought into notice that among the OIC countries, the support was given by Bangladesh in lifting the cordon of the Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar by the Indian troops, which was stated by Mustafizur Rahman, the Foreign Minister⁶³. Since the last 56 years of India, the valley of Kashmir witnessed day-to-day atrocities and human rights violation. In my opinion, the UN resolutions could be regarded as the best corner stone for the solution to this problem, which is also recommended by the OIC.

3.6.2 Bangladesh and the Demolition of the Babri Mosque

The Babri Mosque in Ayodhya is not only a mosque but also a historical monument of 500 years. Hindu extremists had demolished this mosque in a well charted out plan, on the 6th of December 1992. A situation of unrest prevailed throughout the sub-continent following the destruction of the mosque. It was indeed shocking to the conscience of mankind, which brought worldwide condemnation for India. It was not only an attack on a mosque but an outrageous attack on the entire Islamic Ummah. India's image as a secular country, which secured the religious right for all, was the main sufferer. The Indian government in particular, stood condemned before the whole world for this barbarous act and human killing of the Indian Muslim minority. The world's conscience spoke out against such barbarism.

The demolition was an ugly breach of the sanctity of the great Indian constitution which states, "Every temple is sacred, every mosque is sacrosanct, every gurdwara is a source of inspiration and every church is a place for communication with God. We respect every religion". Therefore the destruction of the Babri Mosque was the strongest assault ever mounted on the Republic's concept of secularism.

⁶³A. K. Pasha, op. cit, n. 52, p. 104.

The OIC was the first to react to the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya⁶⁴. Its Secretary General Mr. Hamid Al Gabid in a statement strongly denounced the odious crime and expressed regret that the Indian government allowed Hindu fundamentalists to cause damage to this extent on Islam in India, he further stated that light must be shed on this barbarous act and those responsible must be punished.

Before the demolition of the mosque, construction activities were taking place at the site. The OIC had expressed profound concern in July 15, 1992 which it called as a serious violation of the rights of the Muslims in India. In another statement the Secretary General said that the entire Muslim population around the world was shocked by this premeditated and heinous crime and expressed regret that the Government of India had succumbed to the fundamentalists.

The OIC appealed to the Muslims of India and all concerned to exercise restraint to avoid further deterioration of the situation as tolerance and respect for all religious beliefs is an integral part of Islam. The OIC member countries at the UN expressed their outrage and anguish over the incident and urged the UN Secretary General Butros Butros Ghali to use his moral and political authority to ensure the safety of Muslims in India⁶⁵. A delegation of 53 members of the OIC and Arab League met Mr. Ghali in December 11, 1992 and conveyed their pain, anguish and concern over the destruction of the mosque. They also urged him to use his influence and good offices to ensure an early start for the reconstruction of the Babri Mosque. Releasing the statement at a press conference in New York, the OIC ambassadors said they would be watching the implementation of the Indian government's decision to the rebuild the Babri Mosque.

The OIC resolution on destruction of Babri mosque strongly condemned the demolition of historic mosque by the Hindu militants and called on India to take an immediate step to implement its solemn commitments to reconstruct the mosque in the original site and punish those guilty of sacrilege act. It appealed for the removal of the makeshift temple, which had been constructed at the site⁶⁶. The resolution also called upon the Government of India to ensure the safety and protection of all, Islamic Holy sites throughout India in

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

accordance with its responsibilities and obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other international instruments. The resolution also expressed deep regret over the failure of the Indian authorities to take appropriate measures to protect this holy site as well as controlling the riots after it, which left thousands dead and many more injured. Despite the early warnings given by the OIC to the Indian government, as early as 5 month prior to the actual demolition, the OIC was at pains in trying to understand the reasons behind India's neglect of these calls and suspected its intention. Among those who spoke during the discussion at the OIC meeting, Bangladesh's voice was the prominent.

The UN Secretary General Mr. Ghali also expressed deep concern over the demolition of the Babri Mosque and subsequent violence in India. Meanwhile in the General Assembly Pakistan raised the issue of Indian Muslims and said they were living in a constant threat in several Indian cities and accused New Delhi of doing very little to avert the tragedy and save the mosque while trying to shift its responsibility on the state government. The final resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly called upon states to take utmost efforts to ensure that religious places and shrines are fully respected and protected.

The Rabi'at-e-Alam-al-Islami – the world's largest Muslim humanitarian organization – accused the Indian Government of being fully responsible for the destruction of the mosque⁶⁷ and said that it is the responsibility of the Government of India to rebuild the historic mosque as it failed to protect it⁶⁸.

The reaction of some of the OIC members should be mentioned here. The most critical stand was taken by Iran. Iran appealed to the Indian government to “make wise and calculated decisions”. Khomeini called upon Indian Muslims not to tolerate the destruction of the mosque. He also offered to cooperate with India to expedite the reconstruction of the mosque, a call, which was rejected by New Delhi. Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Tunisia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the General Secretariat of the Islamic World League, Kuwait and even Bangladesh expressed their common desire for the reconstruction of the mosque at the earliest. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as early as December 6 1992 described the Ayodhya event as sacrilege and an unpardonable

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁸ *The New Nation*, 18 December 1992, Dhaka.

act. Pakistan described the demolition of the mosque as a mockery of the Indian claim of secularism. The sentiments of the people of the Muslim world may never be the same even if the mosque is restored to its original position.

Bangladesh expressed deep shock and intense concern at the demolition of the mosque in India describing it as “an outrageous act of desecration unprecedented in the annals of history”⁶⁹. Addressing a meeting of the permanent representatives of the UN from the OIC countries at the New York headquarters on December 8, 1992, the permanent representative of Bangladesh, Humayun Kabir said that the demolition of the mosque had stunned people all over the world, particularly those of the Muslim countries. Immediately after the incident the Bangladesh parliament on December 7, 1992 strongly condemned the demolition of the mosque. There were protest rallies, processions, posterings, wall writings, circulation of pamphlets, issuing statements by almost all political parties, leaders, NGOs (working in the country) against this atrocious act. The views of all these bodies held that the Indian government was responsible for the failure of saving the Babri Mosque, and its inability to protect the lives and property of its people. They demanded stern measures against those responsible for the demolition.

The Institute of Human Rights, Legal Affairs and Liberty of Bangladesh issued a statement condemning the barbarous destruction of the mosque. It urged all Bangladeshis to boycott Indian goods “this is, we feel is the least we can do to make India behave as a civilized nation” stated Justice Abdur Rahman, the president of the institute⁷⁰. He appealed to the entire Islamic world and the Muslim states to impose economic sanctions on India and deport all non-Muslim Indians working in the Middle East and Arab countries. The Jamaat-e-Islami – the largest and strongest Islamic political party in the country – condemned the demolition of the Babri mosque severely calling it an act of utter irresponsibility and sheer madness. It said, no sensible and democratic minded person would support such madness, which is against all norms of civilization. It also stated that, India’s tall claims on secularism leaves Islam out. The Jamaat-e-Islami submitted a memorandum to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, which was addressed to the Indian Prime Minister. It incorporated the demands including the reconstruction of the Babri mosque at its original site and on the previous model, and that

⁶⁹ *The Bangladesh Times*, 10 December 1992, Dhaka.

⁷⁰ *The Morning Sun*, 10 December 1992, Dhaka.

exemplary punishment ought to be given to those responsible for demolishing the mosque and apologize on behalf of the government of India to the Muslim Ummah. But at the same time Jamaat called upon the people of the country to show utmost restraint and patience and maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the country. Jamaat's stand was that Bangladeshi Hindus are not responsible for the demolition of the Babri mosque in India and said: "it is the duty of all of us to ensure the safety and security of non-Muslims in our country at all costs".

Eleven prominent political leaders including Khondoker Mustaque Ahmed strongly condemned and protested the desecration and demolition of the historic mosque. In a joint statement they called for suspending economic relations with India by all the Muslim countries, boycotting Indian manpower and goods and ending cultural exchanges with that country. They also demanded a peace mission to India, to be sent by the OIC. A group of Ulema decided to start on a long march towards Ayodhya in India on January 2, 1993 demanding that the demolished Babri mosque be rebuilt at its site, while claiming that the demolition of the Babri mosque India proved that India was heading backwards.

Bangladesh along with Pakistan made a plea for the reconstruction of the Babri Mosque at the same place to maintain communal harmony in India and its neighbouring countries. The Jamaat leaders exchanged views with the envoys of many countries on the effective role of the concerned countries and the OIC for the rebuilding of the Babri mosque. They wanted to work on strategies to pressurize the Indian government to provide durable protection to the life, property, honour and religious rights of the Muslim minorities. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia, in the Victory Day address to the nation on December 16, 1992 strongly deplored the demolition of the Babri mosque and demanded reconstruction on its original site.

To refute the worldwide condemnation, the Indian government claimed that the Babri mosque affair was India's internal concern and thereby rejected the calls from the OIC and other Muslim countries. The OIC however believes that as an international organization of the collective Muslim countries, it has a legitimate right to voice its concern and discuss matters pertaining to Islam and Muslims in all parts of the world. One of the basic objectives of the OIC, and outlined in its charters, is that to protect the Holy sites of Muslims.

The common Muslim perception was that the BJP had masterminded the whole game of destroying the Babri mosque and took advantage of the inefficient Indian government ruling at that time. Another commonly held perspective was in disbelief of the fact that the Indian army and its para-military forces could prevent the demolition if the ruling Indian government had sincere and unbiased intention.

India had initially promised to rebuild the Babri Mosque in its original site. However, even after 12 years of its demolition it has not fulfilled this commitment. A conclusion can be drawn from the words of the Shahi Imam Bukhari, who said, "Muslims have got nothing after independence except bloodshed and false promises. The injustice meted out to them and the bloodshed of Bhagalpur, Aligarh, Meerut, Ahmedabad, Bombay and other places can not be forgotten"⁷¹.

3.6.3 Bangladesh and the Muslims in Cyprus

Since the 1950s Cyprus has been a place of tension, friction and violence, which was caused by the clash of interests between the two local communities and three NATO allies namely Greece, Turkey and the UK. The Cypriot dispute has presented a threat to international peace and security and caused the UN, the EU and the OIC involvement in various ways and settings.

The population of the island country consisted of 80 per cent Greeks, loyal to the Christian Orthodox Church while the rest were Muslims of Turkish origin⁷². The Cyprus problem has gone through three main phases. Until 1960, it was a colonial issue, which was settled with the granting of independence and the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. From 1960 to 1974, the problem was basically an internal dispute between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots in which external powers were involved. The third phase covers the period from 1974 to present following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974; the dominant element of the problem has resulted in a division of the island and the continuing military occupation of its northern part by Turkey.

⁷¹A. K. Pasha, *op. cit.*, n. 52, p. 20.

⁷²Norman Lowe, n. 20, p. 432.

The roots of the ethnic conflict in Cyprus go back into history and deep into a bi-communal structure of the Cypriot society. Despite four centuries of co-existence, the two communities remained separate, distinct and self-contained ethnic groups divided along linguistic, religious and cultural lines. The ethnic fissure reinforced the political divide of the two groups within their motherland⁷³. After the declaration of independence in 1960, the colonial problem of Cyprus went through a transformation and turned into an ethnic conflict. Greek – Turkish confrontation over Cyprus was manifested in both the military and diplomatic front and repeatedly brought the two countries to the brink of war.

Being unable to reconcile themselves to a second place in a Christian dominated system, the Muslim Turks revolted which led to the breaking out of a civil war in 1963. Turks were regrouped in the North. The Muslim Turks of Cyprus demanded a federation of two fully autonomous states of Cypriots and Turks. In 1974, Turkey sent troops to help establish a separate Turkish state in the North and the island has remained divided since then. Turks occupy the northern part, which was roughly one-third of the island. Greeks dominated the south, with the UN troops keeping the peace in between. The Greek – Turkish feud over Cyprus has been a concern of the international community for more than four decades. A UN peacekeeping force has been stationed on the island under the supervision of the Security Council since 1964⁷⁴. Many attempts were made to find agreement but all failed. Concern and involvement of world organizations have been mainly directed towards the restoration of peace, the containment of the conflict and the search for a settlement of the dispute by peaceful means.

The Cyprus issue first came up for discussion in the OIC during the 7th ICFM, held in Istanbul in 1976. A resolution was adopted supporting the right of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus. It supported the equality in rights for Turkish Muslims in Cyprus as co-partners with the Greek Cypriot community with the framework of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-alignment of the Republic of Cyprus. The conference also agreed that the representatives of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus could attend the meetings of the OIC. The 8th ICFM resolution was to support a

⁷³ Joseph S. Joseph, *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics – From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*, ST. Martins's Press, INC, New York, 1997, p. 33.

⁷⁴ Nilufar Chowdhury, 'The OIC and the Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim States', *BISS Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, 1983, p. 57.

negotiated settlement on the principle of political equality⁷⁵. The 13th ICFM held in Niamey in 1983 urged the member states to take necessary steps to promote the cause of Muslim Cypriots and reaffirmed its support for the efforts of the Secretary General of the UN to reach a permanent negotiated settlement⁷⁶. Since the outbreak of the Cypriot problem, it had become an important issue in all the ICFM and other OIC summit meetings. In the last conference of foreign ministers, solidarity with the Turkish Cypriots and their cause was reaffirmed. It called on the two parties to negotiate freely a mutually acceptable solution and expressed its appreciation for the constructive efforts of the Turkish Cypriot side in this connection. It recalled its previous decision to remain seized of the Turkish Cypriot application for full membership in the OIC and to continue to promote the participation of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus in the activities of all the organs of the conference. The conference called on member states to increase and expand their ties with the Turkish Cypriot people in all fields including trade, tourism, culture, information, investment and sports.

The 10th Islamic Summit held in Putrajaya on October 2003 reaffirmed its support for the cause of the Muslim Turkish community in Cyprus to reach a just settlement on the basis of the principles of equality and parity between the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot sides. It expressed its satisfaction at the UN Secretary General's efforts for the settlement of the Cypriot issue. It welcomed the measures taken by the Turkish Cypriot part that created a favourable atmosphere and paved the way for a comprehensive settlement⁷⁷.

Bangladesh voiced its full support for the Turkish Cypriots in all the ICFM and Summit meeting as well as at the UN and NAM meetings. Bangladesh's emphasis is that no solution to the problem can be lasting unless it takes into account the legitimate aspirations of both the communities. While speaking at the NAM Summit about the Cyprus issue, Bangladesh reaffirmed its position on the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned status of Cyprus and requested the non-aligned countries to continue their full support to the UN Secretary General's efforts for a solution to the problem. A unilateral declaration of independence by the Turkish Cypriots

⁷⁵ Haider Mehdi, n. 35, p. 111.

⁷⁶ Nilufar Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁷⁷ <http://www.oic-oci.org/english>

shortly before the Dhaka meeting created a dilemma for Bangladesh. At the conference Bangladesh actively lobbied with all the OIC states for extending recognition to the Turkish – Cypriot movement. Given the larger stakes that were involved, a non-committal resolution was passed registering sympathy for the Bangladeshi view⁷⁸. At the 11th ICFM Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Prof. Shamsul Huq said, "We share the anxiety of our Turkish Cypriot brothers and believe that it is the solemn obligation of our organization to do everything possible to promote a peaceful settlement of the problem. There can be no better way of achieving this settlement than through the resumption of the inter-communal talks"⁷⁹.

President H.M. Ershad while putting forth his 11-point proposal at the 4th Summit Conference he suggested for adopting measures to support the efforts of the Turkish Cypriots for a constructive and meaningful dialogue with the representatives of the Greek Cypriot Community. His view was to establish a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in Cyprus where the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the both communities would be fully respected and protected⁸⁰.

The Security Council under the presidency of Bangladesh in 2001, the President of the Council made a statement to the press, expressing full support to the UN Secretary General's efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

3.6.4 Bangladesh and the Muslims in Philippines

The Philippines had a long history of Moro uprising movement dating back to the Spanish rule. Resistance to colonization was especially strong among the Muslim population of southwestern Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. With the pride of their cultural heritage and strong desire for independence, the Moro's fought the Christian and foreign domination. The Moros earned a reputation as fierce fighters in combat against the occupying US troops. Following the independence, the Filipino Muslims continued to resist Manila's rule leading to widespread conflict in the 1970s. The Moros complained that since the 1950s, Manila's policy had been to push northern Christian Filipinos into the Muslim south with the objective of imposing political and commercial supremacy.

⁷⁸ Syed Anwar Hussain, n. 30, p. 29

⁷⁹ POT, Bangladesh Series, Vol. V, Part, 99, 22 May 1980.

⁸⁰ Sayed Tayyab-ur Rahman, n. 16, p. 74.

Threatened with such domination and in the face of Manila's continued religious persecution, the Moro Muslim formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which was welcomed by many Muslim leaders around the world.

Fighting for an independent Moro nation, the MNLF received support from Muslims in Libya and Malaysia. The MNLF demanded complete independence for the Muslims while Hashim Salamat, the leader of a breakaway faction insisted on autonomy under the banner of the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO). The BMLO had made its appearance in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Rashid Lucman one of the Mindanao's sultans. The increasing differences among the Muslims have not only turned out to be an instrument in the hands of Manila's authorities but also reduced the potential of international support including those from the OIC.

One of the most important problems, which put the credibility, and effectiveness of the OIC vis-à-vis the Muslim minority issue to test is the problem of the Muslims in the southern Philippines. In 1972, Philippines Muslim politicians brought their grievances to the OIC, the latter felt bound to respond. Its conference of foreign ministers first announced its interest in the problems of the Philippines Muslims. Over the years the OIC used a variety of means to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict between the Philippine government and the MNLF including good offices, mediation, inquiry, sanctions, consultation and coordination with regional organizations. However the OIC stopped short of backing the MNLF's demand for independence. In the end, this forced the MNLF to lower its aspirations from independence to political autonomy within the framework of the Philippine territorial integrity. During the last three decades 4 million Moro Muslims began a renewed struggle for an autonomous Muslim state in the southern Mindanao area of Philippine⁸¹.

The OIC in its 4th ICFM in 1973 expressed deep concern over the repeated repression and extermination of Muslims in southern Philippines⁸². The OIC sent a delegation to the Philippines to discuss the issue with the government. In its 5th ICFM in 1974, the OIC called for a political solution to the southern Philippines Muslim problem within the

⁸¹ Ibid. , p. 39

⁸² Haider Mehdi, n. 35, p. 90.

context of Philippines sovereignty⁸³. The conference also recognized MNLF as the sole representative of the Muslims in the South and still continues to enjoy observer status in the OIC.

Under the pressure of the Islamic Conference Marcos agreed to negotiate with the MNLF. A series of meetings were held between the two sides under the auspices of the Islamic Secretariat, which led to the Tripoli Agreement signed in 1976 between the MNLF and the government of Philippines. By 1977 the OIC was able to negotiate an agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine government where Moro Muslims were promised autonomy in the 13 provinces in southern Philippines where they constitute a majority⁸⁴. Under the OIC supervision, the government of Philippines and the MNLF resumed negotiations in October 1992 in Tripoli, Libya⁸⁵.

However, the implementation of the Tripoli agreement was still to be seen. The OIC issued a series of resolutions criticizing the Filipino government's actions, supporting most MNLF demands and indicating the implicit support of the Islamic world for the struggle of the Muslims in the Philippines. One of the stronger ICFM resolutions against the Marcos regime (at the 11th ICFM in 1980 held in Istanbul) requested the OIC member states to assert economic, social and political pressure on the government of Philippines to induce it to implement the Tripoli Agreement. Through the process of resumption, a negotiation between the Filipino government and the MNLF in The Final Peace Agreement was signed under the sponsorship of the OIC. The agreement has become the basis for a change in behaviour and interaction of the parties. This change is evident in the MNLF, which has adopted the path of "liberation through peace and development and integration" into the Philippine political mainstream.

From 1996 until the signing of The Final Peace Agreement onwards, the OIC in all its Summit meetings and the ICFM expressed its consideration for the important steps taken towards full implementation. The conference called on the government of the Philippines and the MNLF to cease hostilities and to safeguard the benefits of the agreement, particularly the restoration of peace to the south of the country, and called for adequate

⁸³ Ibid., p. 100.

⁸⁴ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.*, n. 22, p. 136.

⁸⁵ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, n. 6, p. 47.

guarantees for that purpose. It also called on all parties concerned to continue providing adequate assistance to fully implement the peace agreement during the transitional period with a predetermined time frame until the establishment of the autonomous region in the southern Philippines. In the final communiqué of the last Summit (10th Summit held in Putrajaya, 2003) the conference urged the Republic of the Philippines to diligently end its military operations in the south and to implement the remaining agendas of the agreement signed between the Republic of the Philippines and the MNLF in 1996 and agreed upon a plan of comprehensive settlement in the Muslim autonomous region in southern Philippines to accomplish the restoration of stability and peace in the region⁸⁶.

Nearly 3 million Muslims have been fighting for greater autonomy or independence for years in the southern islands of the Philippines. Muslims in Bangladesh lent their moral support for the struggle of their Muslim brothers in the Philippines⁸⁷. A Bangladeshi national – when he was serving as one of the Assistant Secretary General of the OIC – Dr. Arshaduzzaman was an active participant of all discussions related to the fate of the Moro Muslims of the Philippines. He said, Nur Misuari was a regular visitor to his office in Jeddah and they used to have discussions on the problems concerned. The question of Moro Muslims figured regularly in their agenda. He discussed with Marcos about the problems when the latter visited Jeddah on the invitation of the OIC Secretary General Habib Chatti. While as the acting Secretary General of the OIC, for a short period of time, Dr. Arshaduzzaman had talks with Aquino and his delegation, where he was able to convince him to settle the Moro Muslim problem, once he is in power. Unfortunately that was his last discussion and he was gunned down by the goons of Marcos⁸⁸.

Bangladesh as one of the important members of the OIC Committee of Eight, headed by Indonesia and instructed to monitor developments relating to the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Filipino government and the MNLF.

The Philippines has always given the utmost importance to its relationship with the members of the OIC. Bangladesh has always maintained good relations with the Philippines, and may therefore enjoy its goodwill, and influence over the issue in the

⁸⁶ <http://www.oic-oci.org/english>

⁸⁷ Harun-ur Rashid, *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh*, Rishi Publications, Varanasi, 2001, p. 125-6.

⁸⁸ Arshad-uz-Zaman, n. 5, p. 220.

future. Bangladesh, a leading member of the OIC today, recently supported the Philippines bid for an observer status at the OIC. The Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Mr. Morshed Khan met the foreign affairs secretary of the Philippines Blas Ople in Tehran during the 30th (most recent) ICFM. Mr. Khan has a deep understanding of the situation in the Philippines and has committed to give his support for Philippines bid of an observer status at the OIC. Mr. Khan and Ople had talks where he expressed his interests in the latest developments relating to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and told that like the rest of the OIC members, Bangladesh condemns all forms of terrorism.

Mr. Khan also met Governor Parouk Hussein of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the concurrent head of the MNLF delegation to the OIC. Hussein had informed Khan of the MNLF's support for the Filipino government's efforts to obtain observer status at the OIC. MNLF is currently an observer in the OIC. Hussein was of the opinion that the Philippines should sit as an observer in the OIC as it is the one that represents all the Muslims in the Philippines. The OIC still recognizes MNLF as sole representative of the Muslims in Philippines.

3.7 Bangladesh and Bosnia Herzegovina

Of Yugoslavia's six republics – Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia – Bosnia Herzegovina was the most diverse. It was a miniature Yugoslavia. As the most ethnically mixed republic of the former Yugoslavia – 44 per cent Muslims, 17 per cent Croat and 33 per cent Serb in 1992 – Bosnia faced the greatest challenge in establishing a stable post-communist multiethnic community⁸⁹. Bosnia and Herzegovina's political experience was also diverse, more so than that of Yugoslavia's other republics. They were the only lands that were first under the Ottoman and then under Habsburg administration before becoming part of Yugoslavia in the 20th Century. They had been independent or autonomous medieval states that came under the Ottoman Turkish rule by the mid – 1400s. After World War I, Bosnians became part of a southern Slavic state where for the first time they experienced the expansionist ambitions of the Serbs. During World War II, Bosnia was a part of the Croat Ustasha (Fascist)⁹⁰.

⁸⁹ Elinor C. Sloan, *Bosnia and the New Collective Security*, Prager Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1998, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1998, p. 30

Slobodan Milosevic who became president of Serbia in 1988 bears much of the responsibility for the tragedy that followed. In November 1980 the Bosnians held a multiparty election half a year after Slovenia and Croatia and a month before Serbia. The communists were ousted from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and resented Serbia's attitude. Franjo Tudjman former communist leader and now leader of the right wing Croatian Democratic Union did all he could to stir up Croatian nationalism and wanted an independent state of Croatia. Slovenia also wanted to become independent. Only Milosevic opposed the division of the state. The culminating point was reached in June 1991 when Slovenia and Croatia declared themselves independent against the wishes of Serbia. Bosnia declared itself independent under the presidency of the Muslim Alija Izetbegovic in March 1992. The international community recognized the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia- Herzegovina⁹¹.

War in Bosnia broke out in April 1992 and continued till October 1995. The Bosnian government unprepared for war appealed to the United Nations for assistance. The UN responded by recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state on May 22, 1992. On May 30th, the UN imposed sanction against the aggressor, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for its involvement in the conflict. In spite of the UN sanction the war continued. Atrocities were committed in which Bosnian Serbs were the most guilty. They carried out the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims, their primary target in a preplanned and systematic manner. The "ethnic cleansing" policy in Bosnia implemented first in Muslim villages began with the harassment and the terrorizing of locals, many of whom fearing the loss of their lives left voluntarily. Mosques, libraries, schools and public places important to Muslims were all targeted for destruction. Anti-Muslim propaganda played an important role in implementing this policy⁹².

The western countries and the UN were already aware of what was happening in Bosnia but they chose not to reveal it or to intervene on behalf of the victims. Despite of massive media expose little would have been done to stop the anti-Muslim genocide. As late as summer 1995, when the Srebrenica was "cleansed" of its Muslims – 6,000 men were executed while rest of the towns inhabitants were forced to flee – the powers still failed to act. By December 30, 1994, Bosnia had seen at war for 1,000 days. The estimated

⁹¹ Norman Lowe, *op. cit.*, n. 20, pp. 213-4.

⁹² Carole Rogel, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

number of deaths was 200,000 there were 2 million refugees, 1.1 million of whom now lived abroad⁹³.

March 1994 saw the beginnings of a new phase in the Bosnian conflict, the product of intense US diplomatic efforts to end the war in Bosnia also heated up in the spring and summer of 1995. All members of the contact groups were engaged, while the Americans led the mission. President Clinton and Yeltsin agreed to cooperate on peace arrangements. A peace conference met in the USA at Dayton in November and a treaty was formally signed in Paris in December 1995. The Dayton agreement confirmed the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The breakdown of Yugoslavia and the Serbian aggression on the Muslim majority province had posed a challenge to the OIC. The role of the OIC in the Bosnian crisis has been probably more noticeable and effective. In the case of Bosnia, the OIC for the first time drew an Action Plan, which did not have precedent in the previous cases. The Action Plan required a mission of foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkey and Senegal and Security Council and the Secretary General of the OIC to visit permanent members of the Security Council in order to encourage them to remove Bosnian arms embargo, implementing a ceasefire and started international negotiations for resolving the Bosnian crisis. This plan also required the UN Security Council to increase the safe areas to five in Bosnia and also emphasized on the establishment of a war crimes tribunal.

In the 6th Islamic Summit held in Dakar in 1991, the OIC expressed its support for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia. As the full scale Serbian assault on Bosnia commenced in March 1992, the OIC provided the Bosnian government US\$200,000 for humanitarian assistance⁹⁴. In view of the deterioration of the situation in Bosnia the OIC held an extra ordinary session of foreign ministers in Istanbul in June 1992. The Foreign Ministers Conference (FMC) expressed solidarity with the Bosnian government and formed a 5 member contact group consisting of the OIC countries permanent representatives to the UN to monitor the situation in Bosnia⁹⁵.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹⁴ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, n. 5, p. 39.

⁹⁵ Noor Ahmad Baba, "The Organization of the Islamic Conference: Conceptual Framework and Institutional Structure" *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. IX, n. 3, Fall, 1997, p. 375.

The OIC established a Permanent Mission to the United Nations European Office in Geneva in order to ensure effective representation in the work of the steering committee established to supervise the Bosnian negotiations. The Islamic Solidarity Fund and the Islamic Development Bank, both organizations of the OIC, allocated US\$650,000 and US\$21 million respectively for humanitarian assistance and for the implementation of urgent projects in Bosnia. The 21st ICFM requested the Security Council to act decisively and expeditiously under the provision of Chapter VII of the UN Charter and appealed to authorize its member states to use all necessary means in cooperating with the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to uphold and restore the sovereignty and unity of the besieged republic. The conference decided that member states should jointly seek the formal expulsion of Serbia and Montenegro from the UN and all its agencies, bodies and programmes. In addition to that, member countries also pledged a total aid of US\$90 million for the Bosnian Muslims⁹⁶.

The ineffectual western response and the evident paralysis in the UN Security Council was to the real disadvantage of Bosnian Muslims. The UN arms embargo on all sides left the Bosnians without the ability to properly defend themselves against the already well-armed Serbs. Tens of thousands of Muslims were killed and terrible massacres were perpetrated in places such as Bihac and Srebrenica in front of a watching world. The ethnic cleansing in Bosnia with the systematic extermination of Bosnian Muslims at the end of the war was estimated to be 400,000 Muslims adults and 40,000 Muslim children. More than 100,000 Muslims were in concentration camps while 70,000 Muslim females had been raped and 20,000 kidnapped by the Serbs⁹⁷. After a decade in June 2004, the Bosnian Serb officials have acknowledged for the first time that their security forces carried out the massacre of up to 8,000 Muslims at Srebrenica, a UN declared safe zone⁹⁸.

The OIC Summits and ICFM reaffirmed its determination regarding the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina to continue to provide the necessary financial support for development and reconstruction projects in the country and asked the member states and specialized financial institutions which had pledged financial assistance to fulfill their

⁹⁶ Noor Ahmad Baba, *op. cit.*, n. 22, p. 195.

⁹⁷ Col. Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, n. 5, p. 260.

⁹⁸ *The Hindu*, Sunday, 13 June 2004, Delhi.

commitments in order to urgently boost the completion of projects for the return and resettlement of refugees and rehabilitation of the state's infrastructure.

The OIC having welcomed the Dayton Peace Agreement is now vigilantly advocating the need to mobilize international efforts for the reconstruction of the nation-state and in that context, the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in honour and a secured condition. It had raised its voice in the General Assembly and in the Security Council against the delay in the apprehension and prosecution of those who have been indicted as war criminals for their heinous and atrocious crimes against humanity, including those indicted during the years of the former Yugoslavia (right before independence of the states). Through its Contact Group on Bosnia-Herzegovina the Aid Mobilization Group of the OIC continues to play its role in supporting the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in collaboration with the UN. The crisis in Bosnia showed, the OIC can mobilize global public opinion in support of an important issue.

On the Bosnian crisis on which there were unanimous views among Muslim governments and the Muslim masses, Bangladesh took a more clear, vocal and representative stand. The Bangladeshi foreign minister attended the July 1993 special ministerial meeting of the OIC in Islamabad on the Bosnian issue and was one of the seven countries, which pledged to contribute troops under the United Nations Protection Force to save the Bosnian Muslims.

In a joint statement Bangladesh along with Sri-Lanka expressed deep concern at the deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two countries reaffirmed their conviction towards a peaceful negotiated settlement of the dispute and hoped that the UN efforts would bring the human tragedies in Bosnia -Herzegovina to an end. Addressing the 7th Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca on December 14, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed solidarity with the people of Bosnia- Herzegovina in the context of their tragedy and sufferings. Bangladesh consistently asked for a negotiated settlement of the issue on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. Bangladesh urged the Islamic Ummah to make all-out efforts to secure a just settlement of the issue when the Bosnian brothers had shown flexibility and understanding by accepting the peace plan of the western contact group.

Referring to Bangladesh's support to the Bosnian brothers, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia strongly deplored the Serb attacks in the Bihac area. Bangladesh condemned such cowardly attacks by the Serbs on the UN peacekeepers and called for ensuring safety and protection of the UN peacekeeping forces including those from Bangladesh⁹⁹. In international forums other than the UN, Bangladesh highlighted its definite stand on this problem. Bangladesh also warm-heartedly welcomed the Dayton Peace Agreement. It praised the significant role played by the UN peacekeeping mission, which was responsible for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In Bangladeshis view, the continued presence of indicted war criminals in the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina was voiced at the Security Council. This helped stress the importance of a need to continue the support for the region. Bangladesh applauded the continued efforts of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina to rebuild a well-functioning sovereign state.

With the UN blocking Bosnia's right to self-defense, Muslim states were limited in what they could do. Iran and Libya provided some military training and weapons, although even this was ended by the US after it became more involved following the Dayton Agreement 1995. For Muslim states, the supply of money and humanitarian aid was as much as they could be seen doing. The lifting of the UN arms embargo and the defence of the Muslim world itself; were really the responsibility of the West. The West failed to act in time and the decisive US intervention came far too late when already the murders crossed 200,000. Bosnia was left with deep scars and many saw yet another conspiracy of western indifference, double standards and inaction.

3.8 September 11 Episode

The significant role-played by the OIC, after the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Foreign ministers of the OIC met in Qatar to ponder over the consequences that could befall the member states as the US planned its retaliation. The extraordinary meeting of the OIC on the 10th of October strongly condemned the terrorist attacks. In the aftermath of the attacks, a wave of anxiety swept the Middle East. While Muslim states moved to support the US retaliatory action, the OIC insisted that such shameful terror acts are opposed to the tolerant divine teachings of Islam. The conference affirmed the commitment of all the

⁹⁹ *The Daily Star*, 15 December 1994, Dhaka.

OIC member nations to combat international terrorism but called on the UN to take a more prominent role in defining the war on terrorism without selectiveness or double standards. The OIC communiqué stressed its rejection of any linkage between terrorism and the rights of Islam and the Arab people including the Palestinians and Lebanese people's right for self determination self-defence, sovereignty, resistance against Israeli and foreign occupation all of which are legitimate rights enshrined in the UN Charter and in the international law.

The OIC's Qatar statement essentially supported the war against Al-Qaeda,s international terrorism but the markers were very clear. Al-Qaeda was a legitimate target and notwithstanding concerns for the Afghan civilians and the Taliban became a sacrificial lamb, but if the US sought to refocus its war on terrorism against those Arabs engaged in the Arab-Israeli conflict it would meet the opposition of the OIC member states.

When the September attacks took place, a caretaker government was in power in Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh strongly criticized this inhuman, heinous and brutal terrorist attack, which left thousands of innocents' people dead and many from Bangladesh. In this context, Bangladesh had a stand similar to the US. It urged the Taliban to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions. Bangladesh also did not support any acts of terrorism from the Afghan territory. It also agreed to allow the US to use its air base when requested by the latter.

Bangladesh touched on the above-discussed issues and conflicts at every multilateral conference, given all its internal limitations. In addition to all these issues Bangladesh gave its clear stand on various debates and discussions on issues, which shocked the world people in general and the Islamic Ummah in particular. Issues have been a subject of deliberation for Bangladesh are in Bulgaria, Eritrea, Namibia, Chechnya, Rwanda and apartheid issue and so and so. In the United Nations and NAM, Bangladesh supported these issues in accordance with the majority opinions of those bodies. In brief, the stance taken by Bangladesh on the major political issues, which came before the OIC are in conformity with the mainstream of the organization.

CHAPTER IV

BANGLADESH AND THE OIC – ECONOMIC AND SOCIO- CULTURAL ASPECTS

4.1 State of the Economy

Around 25 countries of the OIC belong to the category of Least Developed Countries (LDC). Bangladesh is the largest and most populous LDC, which has about 20 per cent of the total population of the world's LDCs. As the largest LDC, Bangladesh suffers from a general economic backwardness, which lacks basic socio-economic infrastructure for development. It lacks the primary needs of proper housing, medical and educational facilities. Its transport and communication facilities are considered insufficient. The per capita income of the country is currently US\$365, which is considered very low by international standards.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world with about 138 million people. 1003 persons are residing per square kilometer. It is an agricultural based economy. It had always food deficit. But in the recent years Bangladesh has become self-sufficient in food. Though the literacy rate is still 62 per cent, the trend towards higher education in the urban society is noticeable. The problems that the third world countries are facing in the process of nation building such as overpopulation, poverty, political instability, lack of natural resources, underdeveloped economy, and weak political institutions are so intensive and pervasive in Bangladesh. After considering all this, scholars regard Bangladesh as a representative country among the third world nation¹.

Bangladesh has persistent balance of trade and balance of payment problems and like all other LDCs perennially suffers from the chronic syndrome of poverty. The union with Pakistan had seen Bangladesh's resources drained away and its economy left thoroughly impoverished and underdeveloped. The liberation war had a destructive effect upon such an economy. After the war the percentage of population below poverty line was 70. It was only after 1978 that it started to decline. By 2000 the poverty level in Bangladesh has come down to 43 per cent.

4.2 Economic Growth

Bangladesh is one of the open economies in the developing world. Since 1996 its annual economic growth has been over 5 per cent on average and exports have doubled during

¹ Mohammad Tajuddin, *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Liberation War to Sheikh Hasina*, National Book Organization, New Delhi, 2001, p. 321.

1993-97. On average Bangladesh's exports are growing by 15 per cent every year. The life expectancy at birth has increased from 45 years to 61 years. At current prices, the GDP during the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001/02 has been provisionally estimated at Tk.2,71,124 crore. In FY 2000/01, GDP was Tk.2,53,2555 crore. At current prices, GDP growth rate in FY 2001/02 was estimated at 7.06 per cent. GDP growth rate was 5.16 per cent in FY 2000/01 and during that period, national savings and investment ratios stood at 22.32 per cent and 23.11 per cent respectively².

Table – I
Per Capita GDP, GNI, NNI, etc. at current prices (in US\$)

Items/Year	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
GDP	348	357	363	363	362
GNI	359	369	377	377	375
NNI	332	341	348	349	347
National Savings Rate	21.77	22.31	23.10	22.32	22.43
National investment Rate	21.63	22.19	23.02	23.11	23.18

Source: *Bangladesh Economic Review 2002*, Economic Adviser's Wing, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June 2002, p. 15.

4.3 Situation in the External Sector

External trade can potentially be an engine of economic growth for Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been pursuing a liberal trade policy consistent with the trends of the global market economy, which is based on the Uruguay Round Talks and policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO). To this end, the Government of Bangladesh has taken up programmes for tariff reduction. Import duties were reduced to a maximum of 37.5 per cent in 1999-2000 and tariff slabs were also reduced to 5 per cent. This trend also continued in 2000/01 and 2001/02. A five-year (1997-2002) import-export policy was introduced in 1998 for further liberalization of import-export regions³. Foreign trade in Bangladesh is still dominated by imports resulting in an adverse balance of trade. Export has registered a significant volume of growth over the past years and the export-import gap is on the decline each year. However the terrorist incident on 11 September 2001 in the USA and its negative impact adversely affected the external trade of Bangladesh.

² *Bangladesh Economic Review 2002*, Economic Adviser's Wing, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June 2002, p.2-3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

In the early 70s, jute and jute products dominated the exports of Bangladesh. In fact 90 per cent of the export earnings at that time was from the jute and the remaining 10 per cent from leather and the tea sector. The situation started changing with the introduction of non-traditional items like shrimps, fish, readymade garments, finished leather, newsprint, handicrafts and so on. In 2001/02 the overall export earnings amounted to US\$6476 million⁴. The introduction of readymade garments as an export item in the 1980s has been an important development for trade in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has become one of the six largest garment exporters to the European Union and the United States. The industry is still growing. At present more than 60 per cent of the total export earnings is generated by the garment industry.

Although the import structure of Bangladesh has not changed much over the years since independence, import payments however have increased due to the increased prices of capital machinery and other essential products resulting in an unfavourable terms of trade. The major imports include crude oil, petroleum products, food grains, machinery, equipment, oil, oil seeds, cotton, textiles, fertilizer, cement, chemical products, drugs and medicine and other consumer items. Annual turnover of the imports in terms of value was about US\$9,361 million in 2001/02. In the first half of FY 2001/02 import payments stood at US\$4200 million, which was 6.44 per cent lower than the payment of the corresponding period in the preceding year. Against this, export earnings stood at US\$2999 million, which was 11.48 per cent lower than the earnings of the corresponding period of the previous year. The export situation showed improvements from January 2002 due to the policies adopted by the government. As a result, in the first nine month (July-March), export earnings amounted to US\$4440 million against US\$4781 million in the corresponding period of the previous year representing a decline of 6.69 per cent⁵. It is expected that export earnings would improve further onwards.

In 1999/00 trade deficit was US\$2,641 million. In 2000/01 trade deficit and current account deficit stood at US\$2,887 and US\$816 million respectively. The remittances including export earnings are gradually improving since January 2002 following the prudent steps taken by the government of Bangladesh.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

Table – II

Balance of Trade of Bangladesh (Value in Crore Taka)

Year	Exports	Imports	Balance
1995-96	14452	25465	-11013
1996-97	17155	29019	-11864
1997-98	22941	31892	-8951
1998-99	24562	34102	-9540
1999-2000	24742	37202	-12460

Source: *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2001*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, December 2002, p. 253.

4.4 Foreign Aid Dependency

Any flow of capital to less developed countries that are non-commercial from the point of view of the donor and are on concessional terms may be characterized as foreign aid. The concept of foreign aid that is now used and accepted as one, that encompasses all official grants and concessional loans in kind, aiming at transferring resources from the developed to the less developed nations. In a word, foreign aid is a transfer of capital goods or services from a donor country to a recipient country. Foreign aid may be given in the form of either cash or technical assistance, for either civilian or military purposes.

Aid can have different connotations for the donor and recipient countries and its actual definition may vary from one donor country to another depending upon the attitude and meaning each attribute's to it. Its use in the modern era began in the 18th century when Prussia subsidized some of its allies. After World War II, foreign aid developed from a subsidy into a more sophisticated instrument of foreign policy, and the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration showed that rich nations were beginning to view official international aid as an essential element of postwar reconstruction. International organizations were created to provide aid to war-ravaged countries and newly freed colonies.

Initially, aid may be motivated by genuine humanitarian desire to help but over a period of time, donor countries expected some kind of benefit in return. Donor countries at times, give aid primarily because it is in their political self-interest to do so. The economically powerful and developed nations can use, and are using the Third World as their political playground.

Recipient countries with their scarce domestic resources often tend to accept readily and uncritically the foreign aid offered with a hope of changing the structure of their economy or achieving self-sustaining economic growth. The foreign aid programme of the donor countries aims at producing a political and economic environment conducive to the attainment of the donor countries' social and political leverage over the recipient nations. Donor countries often attach conditions to their aid, including the requirement to buy goods from the donor country. Thus, foreign aid is a powerful tool of a foreign policy for the developed countries.

One of the universal features of the third world countries is their aid dependency for economic growth and development. A fundamental characteristic of Bangladesh's foreign policy is to ensure foreign aid and it was always given top priority in the foreign policy mechanism. Aid or economic assistance of any kind was regarded as vital to the economic development of the country. Ever since independence, there has always been a tremendous need for foreign aid⁶. In the initial stages of the independence, external economic assistance was mainly geared to support the relief and rehabilitation efforts for the recovery of the war ravaged economy. Because of its precarious economic conditions various donor countries and agencies had provided the country with a substantial amount of public foreign assistance.

Bangladesh like other LDC needs aid not only for development but also even for recurring regular government expenditure and for survival. Bangladesh receives large quantities of foreign aid. Foreign aid in Bangladesh has been used to overcome the two critical gaps namely, the domestic savings-investment gap and the export-import gap, which is known as the trade or foreign exchange gap⁷.

Bangladesh is exceptionally dependent on foreign aid. The Bangladeshi policy makers wait upon decisions in Washington, London, Tokyo, Bonn, Paris and Islamic countries before formulating their annual development budgets, import policy, food policy and decisions even about the number of children to be born⁸. The aid dependence is not a

⁶ Dilara Chowdhury, Al-Maud Hasanuzzaman & Tareque Shamsur Rahman, 'Bangladesh's External Relations: An Overview', *Regional Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, autumn, 1996, p. 74.

⁷ Habib Zafarullah, M.A. Taslim & Anis Chowdhury, Eds., *Policy Issues in Bangladesh*, South Asia Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, p. 98.

⁸ Mohammad Tajuddin, op. cit. p. 79.

post liberation phenomenon in Bangladesh. The pattern had already been set up by the Pakistani planners and the system was structurally geared towards the need for external resources inflows for sustaining the development process. This process continued even after the liberation. Thus, Bangladesh inherited from Pakistan the aid dependency syndrome⁹.

Generally Bangladesh obtains four kinds of aid: food aid, commodity aid, project aid and technical assistance. The share of the food aid in the total foreign aid disbursed to Bangladesh amounts to more than 21 per cent, projects aid consists of 50 per cent, commodity aid 20 per cent and technical assistance constitutes about 5 per cent¹⁰. In order to keep economic activities on the rise, it is essential to keep foreign exchange reserves at a reasonable level and also to maintain the flow of foreign economic assistance at the higher level. Seeking to defend the country's over dependence on foreign aid, the planners further observe that since a developing country like Bangladesh does not have enough foreign exchange resources to import consumers goods, industrial raw materials and other commodities for the operation and maintenance of existing productive capacities, it is essential for the country to seek and accept foreign economic assistance.

As an LDC, Bangladesh gets aid at very liberal terms, which in most cases are grants or are given on highly concessional terms. Bangladesh has no problems about the quantum of aid. It can get as much aid as it can absorb¹¹. Since independence, in Bangladesh, aid disbursements have financed 60 per cent to 65 per cent of the development budget. Aid remains an important source of revenue for the government.

Analyzing the pattern of aid one can find that the donor countries are interested in 'project aid' rather than 'food aid', while Bangladesh had a food deficit, mainly due to natural calamities and disasters, the demand for food aid was always immense. But the donor countries failed to demonstrate proper response in this sector.

⁹ Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 265-6.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 265.

4.5 Source of Aid to Bangladesh

During the initial years after independence, Bangladesh received foreign aid from only a handful of countries and international agencies. Later, it had successfully diversified its aid sources. The source of aid to Bangladesh can be broadly categorized into five groups: Developed Assistance Committee (DAC) countries, international institutions, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), centrally planned countries and other countries. Japan is the biggest bilateral donor in the group of DAC countries and overall among all bilateral donors. The position of the USA is second, which was the largest donor of Bangladesh till the early 1980s. The second largest source of aid to Bangladesh is from the international institutions. These institutions are largely financed and managed by the DAC countries, which include IDA, ADB, EU, UNICEF, WEF, IFAD and other organizations of the UN system. Some non-western international institutions providing aid to Bangladesh are OPEC Fund for International development and the IDB. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, the oil exporting states of the Gulf are among aid donors to Bangladesh. The Soviet Union and China were the largest and second largest bilateral aid donors in the group of centrally planned countries before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The post communism regimes in these countries have become aid recipients. After 1991 they do not give any aid to Bangladesh. China is the only country in this group, which still gives aid to Bangladesh. Apart from these donors there are some third world countries such as India, Pakistan, Turkey and so on.

The Islamic countries of the Middle East are an important source of aid to Bangladesh¹². The Islamic countries constitute the third important group of countries after the developed countries and UN systems. But the proportion of this aid in the total value of aid received by Bangladesh is very small. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and to some extent the UAE are regular donors. Iraq, Iran, Libya have given aid to Bangladesh. Saudi Arabia remained as the single largest donor among the Islamic countries giving aid to Bangladesh.

¹² Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, &, Sayed Anwar Hussain, *Bangladesh Studies: Politics, Administration, Rural Development and Foreign Policy*, Centre for Administrative Studies, University of Dhaka, 1985, p. 250.

Table – III
Foreign Aid Received From the Islamic Countries/Agencies
(Value in Million Dollars)

Country/Agency/Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
IDB	11	19	14	12	17
Kuwait	10	10	3	6	14
OPEC	16	17	11	3	8
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-
Saudi Arabia	31	10	14	4	6
UAE	2	2	4	3	-
Total Aid from the OIC Country	70	58	46	28	45
Grand Total Aid from the Country	1445	1480	1252	1536	1587
% Share of Aid from the OIC Countries	4.84	3.91	3.67	1.82	2.83

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 382.

4.6 Bangladeshi Migration and Remittance from Islamic Countries

International migration for employment is amongst the most important aspect of the development of the country during the post independence era. Attracted by high levels of wages, better job opportunities abroad, and faced with abject unemployment and poverty at home, migration for employment has now become an integral part of life for millions of people. Bangladeshis are now present in almost all the Middle East countries and other Islamic countries as well. Bangladeshi migrants are seen in Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, KSA, UAE, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives and so on.

Table IV
Geographical Distribution of Bangladeshi Migrants to the Islamic Countries

Country/Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Bahrain	3759	5010	7014	4639	4637
Brunei	3062	303	162	1	1420
Iran	-	-	-	-	-
Iraq	-	-	-	-	-
Jordan	5303	27401	21728	9596	1780
Kuwait	21042	21126	25444	22400	594
Lebanon	7173	2762	2002	563	n.a
Libya	1966	1934	1254	1744	1010
Malaysia	66631	152844	551	551	5288
Oman	8691	5985	4779	4045	11095
Qatar	112	1873	6806	5611	1433
Saudi Arabia	70734	106534	15715	185739	144618
U.A.E.	23812	54719	38796	32344	34034
Total Migrants to the OIC Countries	205603	380461	124251	267233	205909
Grand Total Migrants	209714	381077	267667	268182	423001
% Share of Migrants of the OIC Countries	98.03	99.84	46.41	99.64	48.67

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 97.

The most tangible aspect of international migration is the corresponding inflow of foreign exchange from nationals working abroad. The overseas remittances sent by Bangladeshi immigrant workers have emerged as the most important source of foreign exchange to the country. The maximum numbers of migrant workers from Bangladesh are in the OIC countries (See Table IV). The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training was created in 1976 by the Government of Bangladesh to regulate and increase the flow of labour to the Middle East and other countries. Bangladeshi immigrants to the Islamic world comprise of mostly unskilled workers. The relative share of those who could be classified as professionals and semi-professionals such as doctors, engineers, scientists, and teachers are minimal. The latter accounted around 8 per cent of the total migrants going to the Islamic countries.

Table – V
Distribution of the Migrants by Different Skilled Groups

By Profession & Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Professionals	3188	3797	9574	8045	10669
Skilled	64301	65211	74718	98449	99606
Semi-skilled	34698	193558	51590	44947	26461
Unskilled	109536	118511	131785	116741	85950
Total	211714	381077	267667	2861182	222686
Recruiting Media					
BMET & BOESL	398	350	419	309	525
Recruiting Agent	118670	235793	85300	110669	91475
Individual	92646	144934	181948	157204	73871
Total	211714	381077	267667	268182	222686

Source: *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2001*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, December 2002, p. 163.

The remittances sent back home by these Bangladeshis contribute to an increase in the economic growth of the country and an increase in its import capacities. Remittances flowing into Bangladesh originate from two major parts of the world such as the Islamic World and Western World. The relative share of these two regions of the total remittances went through significant changes over the time. But the share of the Islamic countries remains the largest.

Table – VI
Country wise Distribution of Remittance
(Value in Million US Dollars)

Country/Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000 (June-August)
Bahrain	30.20	2.81	33.22	41.08	29.63
Iran	0.20	31.66	0.39	0.39	-
Kuwait	203.70	207.96	219.22	242.45	166.27
Libya	0.20	188.93	0.25	0.04	0.10
Malaysia	72.70	22.47	71.28	57.22	34.41
Oman	93.20	52.05	88.84	94.10	60.62
Qatar	58.00	57.522	60.25	64.5	42.32
Saudi Arabia	530.76	521.71	626.08	791.93	631.28
U.A.E.	93.80	91.79	116.28	124.53	99.94
Total Remittances from the Islamic Countries	1082.76	1176.90	1215.81	1416.24	1064.57
Grand Total Remittances of the Country	1355.34	1525.03	1599.24	1796.62	1954.95
% Share of the OIC Countries	79.88	77.17	76.02	78.82	54.45

Source: http://www.hrexport-baira.org/country_yearwise_remittance.htm

The information on the level of remittance as shown in the above table is only the officially accounted source. This official statistics however, covers only that portion of the savings of nationals working abroad coming into the country through the institutional channels such as cash remittances through banks and post offices. Excluded from these flows are remittances flowing into the country through the “unofficial” channels either in cash form or in the forms of goods. Accordingly, there are leakages in the flow of remittance, giving an underestimation of their actual level. According to the different sources such leakages are estimated to be around 10 to 20 per cent of the official level of the total remittance.

4.7 Economic Relations of Bangladesh with the OIC Countries

Bangladesh is an overwhelmingly Muslim majority country and claims to be the second largest Muslim country in the world (based on population), after Indonesia. It attaches great importance to its relations with other Islamic countries and pursues active economic diplomacy with these countries. It gives high importance to its economic diplomacy with the oil exporting Islamic countries for their manpower import, economic cooperation and technical assistance. The most important part of the economic relations of Bangladesh with the rich Islamic countries is the employment of the unskilled, skilled and professional Bangladeshis in these countries. Geo-political position of Bangladesh is of particular importance to the Muslim world. The geographical location of Bangladesh

emphasizes its paramount significance as the bridge between the Middle East and South and South East Asia¹³. Bangladesh is dependent on the Middle East for almost all of its crude oil requirements. The Persian/Arab Gulf is a very important region for all the nations of the world because of its oil reserves. Its significance is even more to the poor, developing countries, such as Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has extremely cordial relations with almost all the Islamic countries of the world. Bangladesh developed economic ties with the Middle East countries particularly with the oil rich Arab states that by now have turned into major sources of the country's external assistance. The oil rich Arab countries in the Middle East not only emerged as a major source of external aid to Bangladesh but gradually, the region had turned into a potential market for Bangladeshi labourers-both skilled and unskilled¹⁴.

Since Bangladesh's prime preoccupations in the Middle East policy were to ensure the inflow of more aid and to increase the remittances by seeking more jobs for its nationals, the trade sector was either neglected or did not get proper attention. Bangladesh's trade with the high-income oil exporting countries namely, Oman, Libya, Saudi Arabia and the UAE is still very negligible. Bangladesh exports mainly jute, jute products, tea, fish and fish preparations, fruits, vegetables, live animals, sanitary fittings, and readymade garments to the Islamic countries. A national committee on export at the highest level headed by the prime minister and comprising of the minister of foreign affairs, finance and commerce, industries, planning, jute and textile as well as senior government officials and representatives of important trade associations has been formed recently. The committee reviews the export situation and provides necessary direction and resolves problems.

¹³ Ibid., p. 247.

¹⁴ Md. Golam Mostafa, 'Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor' *BISS Journal*, Vol.7, No.1, 1986, p. 48.

Table – VII
Exports from Bangladesh to the OIC Countries
(Value in Million Taka)

Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Total Exports to the OIC Countries	8455	9308	10048	10073	8314
Grand Total of Exports to the Countries	144521	171554	229408	245620	247415
% Share of the OIC Countries	5.85	5.42	4.37	4.10	3.36

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 286-290 & Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, December 2002, p. 254.

Bangladesh imports mainly petroleum and petroleum products from the Middle East countries. The share of the imports from the Middle East is not so high in the country's total imports bill. Trade with the area is very significant and important for Bangladesh because a major share of the import bill is paid through loans and grants.

Table – VIII
Import from the OIC Countries
(Value in Million Taka)

Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Total Imports from the OIC Countries	17293	28766	36777	39717	53152
Grand Total of Imports from the Countries	254646	290187	318917	341017	372022
% Share of the OIC Countries	6.79	9.91	11.53	11.64	14.28

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 286-290.

The total export and import figures of the Islamic countries vis-à-vis the global trade indicate that excepting the Islamic countries in the OPEC cartel, the remaining member states of the OIC including Bangladesh are having foreign trade deficit.

Table – IX

Bangladesh’s Exports and Imports with the OIC Countries

Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Total Exports to the OIC Countries	8455	9308	10048	10073	8314
Total Imports from the OIC Countries	17293	28766	36777	39717	53152
Export/Import % Share Ratio	0.49	0.32	0.27	0.25	0.16

Bangladesh has a three-pronged strategy to deepen its economic relations with the Islamic countries¹⁵. These are, to continue the traditional commodities trade, to expand and diversify Bangladesh’s exports into new products and to continue to contribute to the economy by sending Bangladeshi workers to the Islamic countries. The promotion of the education sector in Bangladesh is yielding results and students from the Gulf countries come to Bangladesh for higher education.

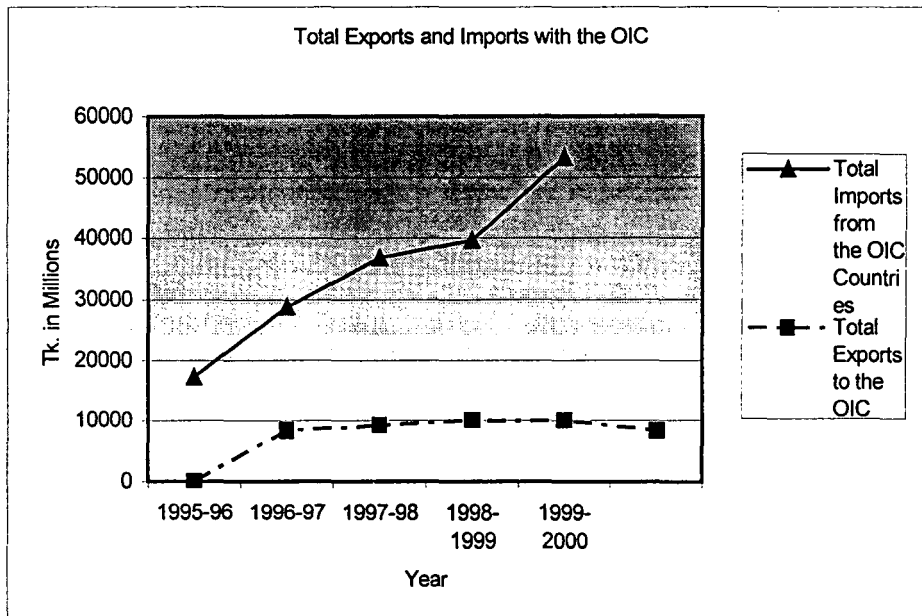


Figure 1 – Total exports and imports with the OIC countries

The above figure shows the gradual decline of Bangladesh exports to the OIC countries and imports from the same are increasing which indicates that Bangladesh is becoming more dependent on the OIC countries. This is mainly because, Bangladesh tries to ensure more remittances from these countries by seeking more employment for its nationals and therefore the trade with these countries has never received proper attention. Remittance

¹⁵ Harunur Rashid, *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh*, Rishi Publications, Varanasi, 2001, p. 164.

from these countries increases the import capacity of the country. Also due to the increased prices of capital machinery and other essential products, this resulted in unfavourable terms of trade. However it is expected that recent policies taken by the Bangladeshi government would improve further export earnings. It cannot be denied that trade with these countries is crucial and imperative for Bangladesh due to the need to meet the import bill which is paid through loans and grants.

Saudi Arabia was the last Muslim country to recognize Bangladesh after the Sheikh Mujib era. During the initial years of the relationship in 1973-74, Bangladesh received US\$200 million Saudi aid and one billion dollars in 1978. During the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) Saudi aid was 7 billion dollars. In December 1978 a Joint Saudi-Bangladesh Commission was formed to promote bilateral economic and technical cooperation. Under the first agreement Saudi Arabia offered commodity grant assistances worth US\$150 million, and another project loan assistance worth US\$150 million was granted. Since 1974 the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) had advanced loans for such projects on railway rehabilitation, Jaypurhat Limestone Fertilizer and Low Lift Pumps. In May 1983 Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to set up a Saudi-Bangladesh joint investment company with an authorized capital of 60 million dollars, half of which was paid by the Saudi government and remaining half by Bangladesh¹⁶.

Bangladesh has a number of joint venture with the Islamic countries mainly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey. One such project is the Saudi-Bangladesh Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company Limited (SABINCO), which was established in 1984 as a joint venture between the Bangladesh and Saudi government. SABINCO has extended financial assistance to a number of projects including the setting up of a leather manufacturing unit, three shrimp culture units, two catfish and carp culture units, two manufacturing units, one PVC granules manufacturing unit, one fish feed unit, one dairy unit, one vegetable cold storage unit and two polyester and cotton yarn manufacturing unit. Bangladesh's export to Saudi Arabia in 1999-00 stood at Tk. 201 million and imports to Bangladesh in the same period was Tk. 10807 million.

¹⁶S.R. Chakravarty, & Virendra Narain, eds., *Bangladesh Vol. 3, Global Politics, South Asian Studies Series 14*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988, p. 132.

Riyadh has become the largest donor and the largest human resource importer from Bangladesh among the OPEC countries. Often after assuming power in the country every Bangladeshi head of the government paid his or her first trip to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the most responsive among the West Asian Islamic nations towards the economic, political and security problem¹⁷.

Before the Gulf War, Bangladesh had excellent relations with Iraq. Bangladeshi manpower was exported to Iraq in large numbers. A few agreements were concluded between the two countries. Iraq financed the construction of a large mosque in Dhaka. It helped Bangladesh in 1978 to tide over temporary difficulties of rehabilitating Burmese refugees. In December 1978, Bangladesh and Iraq agreed to set up a joint fishing company where Bangladesh would have 51 per cent share of the company. Since the liberation of Kuwait, Bangladesh had severed ties with Iraq in consideration of the ban imposed by the United Nations.

One of the earliest examples of bilateral relationship was provided by the accord signed between Bangladesh and Kuwait in November 1974 for “long term economic cooperation and a more meaningful and mutually profitable collaboration in various fields”. Kuwait was quite generous towards Bangladesh in her assistance. The Kuwaiti government agreed to increase Kuwait’s deposit with the Bangladesh Bank to US\$100 million which enabled Bangladesh to make up for the seasonal decline in foreign currency reserve during that time and also gave one of Kuwait’s 707 planes following the request of foreign minister of Bangladesh in 1980¹⁸.

Bangladesh’s relation with Kuwait has deepened with the passage of time. Kuwait is a development partner of Bangladesh. Kuwait assured loans of US\$200 million for infra-structural developments. In 1999 Kuwait committed US\$125 million for the implementation of projects in the energy and transportation sectors. Bangladesh’s exports to Kuwait during 1999-00 stood about Tk.17 million and import to Bangladesh was Tk.3234 million. Kuwait has been engaged in many socio-economic projects in the country to alleviate poverty in the rural areas. It has assisted financially to run many

¹⁷Mohammad Tajuddin, *Bangladesh and the Islamic World*, Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies, Calcutta, 1998 Islamic World, p. 23.

¹⁸ Mohammed Shamsul Haq, *International Politics: A Third World Perspective*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, p. 247.

orphanages including the construction of one orphanage for boys in Gazipur. One Kuwaiti NGO constructed a dormitory for the female students in Dhaka University. One Kidney Dialysis Centre and a 250-bed hospital in Dhaka were constructed with financial help from Kuwait. Kuwaiti funds were utilized in the construction of mosques and madrasas in the country.

After the second Gulf war Bangladesh-Iran relations achieved a new momentum. Iran is taking active interest in Bangladesh as a competitor of Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Islamic world¹⁹. Bangladesh's relations with Iran are rooted in history. There exists a Joint Bangladesh-Iran Economic Cooperation Forum at the minister's level to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Iran agreed to construct a cement factory and food grain storages in Bangladesh. Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on fisheries and livestock with Iran in February 2000. Bangladesh sent its nationals including medical doctors to Iran for gainful employment. The trade between the two countries in 1999-00 stood at Tk.1867 million in terms of exports to Iran, Tk.1890 million in imports to Bangladesh.

Both Iran and Bangladesh continue to show a keen interest to cooperate with each other within the ambit of the organization. On the economic issues, with the exception of oil exports, their approaches are similar. Bilateral relations are based on mutual respect, while Islamic solidarity and non-interference is an integral part of each other's internal affairs. During 1980s Bangladesh's policy was perceived to have tilted towards Iraq in relation to Iran but after the 1990 Gulf War, the perceived tilt was shifted during the first democratically elected government in 1991-96.

Begum Khaleda Zia visited Bahrain in August in 1992. Two agreements to promote economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries were signed. A ministerial level joint committee was formed to oversee the implementation of the agreements²⁰. The trade between the two countries in 1999-00 stood at Tk.1204 million of which export to Bahrain was Tk.7 million and import to Bangladesh was Tk.1197 million.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

Turkey, Egypt, Libya and Morocco are other Islamic countries, which responded to Bangladesh's initiative to have good bilateral relations. Ankara provides training facilities to Bangladeshi troops. Some teachers from Bangladesh are working in Turkey. A protocol on economic, trade, technical and cultural cooperation between Bangladesh and Turkey was signed in Dhaka in February 1992. Bilateral trade is growing and joint ventures are being considered. The two-way-trade during 1999-00 stood at over Tk.2531 million of which Bangladesh's exports to Turkey Tk.1069 million. Both the countries attach great importance to the economic activities of the OIC. On the international and regional issues both often support each other because of the common approach. Bangladesh's relations with Turkey are mutually beneficial and Bangladesh may look forward to some real benefits through its economic relationship with that country for the future²¹.

With the establishment of a diplomatic mission in Rabat in the late 1980s, Bangladesh consolidated bilateral relations with Morocco. During February 2000, Morocco's foreign minister visited Bangladesh. Bangladesh's exports to Morocco during 1999-2000 were valued at Tk.47 million.

Among the Arab Islamic states, Egypt was the most sympathetic to Bangladesh in its initial years after its emergence and helped it diplomatically in getting membership in the different international institutions and recognition by the countries. Many Bangladeshi students go for study in the Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Bangladeshi agriculture scientists go on deputation for six months every year to work in the International Agricultural Research Institute at Cairo²². Nearly all heads of the government of Bangladesh paid a visit to Egypt. Bangladesh and Egypt work together in the OIC and in other international organizations where both are members. Bangladesh proposed to conclude a Double Taxation Avoidance agreement with Egypt and this shows that economic relations are growing between the two countries. The trade between the two countries in 1999-00 was Tk.240 million in exports to Egypt and Tk.379 million in imports from Egypt.

²¹ Harunur Rashid, op. cit, p. 163.

²² Tajuddin, Mohammad, *Bangladesh and the Islamic World*, Abul Kalam Azad Institute of South Asian Studies, Calcutta, 1998, p. 25.

Bangladesh was able to send many skilled and semi-skilled workers together with professionals to Libya in 1970s to contribute to its development. A trade delegation visited Tripoli in 1987 to strengthen trade with Libya. Bangladesh's export earnings to Libya during 1999-2000 were Tk.21 million.

With Yemen, UAE, Qatar and Oman bilateral cooperation has always been on the rise. Mostly trade and migrant workers from Bangladesh are contributing to the economy in these countries. President Ershad visited Yemen in 1987 and signed two agreements on bilateral cooperation during the visit. During 1997-98 Bangladesh's exports to Yemen stood at Tk.255 million, Tk.1323 million to the UAE, Tk.597 million to Qatar and to Oman Tk.131 million. The UAE President Sheikh Zaid came to rescue the Bangladesh Janata Bank in Abu Dhabi by agreeing to make a personal deposit of US\$30 million with the Janata Bank in 1980²³.

In the post-Mujib era, Pakistan had gradually emerged as the most important neighbouring Islamic country. After the change of regime in 1975, Pakistan immediately announced to dispatch 50,000 tones of rice and 5 million yards of cloths. Pakistan offered a Boeing 707 and 28 railway coaches to Bangladesh. Pakistan has given 40-discarded F-6 Chinese fighters to Bangladesh. Trade Agreement, Joint Businessmen Agreement, Joint Economic Commission Agreement and Cultural Cooperating Agreement were concluded. Air, shipping lines and telecommunications were established. Pakistan agreed to establish cement and a sugar plant in Bangladesh. Trade between the two countries increased²⁴. Bangladesh exports to Pakistan stood at Tk.2306 million during 1999-00 while imports from Pakistan were Tk.5223 million. Pakistan is the second largest trading partner of Bangladesh after the USA and the largest among the OIC countries. Bangladesh exports to Pakistan include raw jute, tea, and jute goods etc. while imports include raw cotton, cotton yarn, textile, light engineering goods, pig iron etc²⁵.

A joint committee was also set up between Bangladesh and the Maldives in 1983. Recently, both countries agreed to elevate this committee at the level of foreign ministers

²³Mohammed Shamsul Haq, op. cit, p. 247.

²⁴ Harunur Rashid, op. cit, p. 95.

²⁵S.R. Chakravarty, ed., *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p. 70.

to further promote and widen the scope of bilateral relations between the two countries. Bangladesh and the Maldives have agreed to bolster cooperation in the economic, cultural and educational fields to the mutual benefits of the two countries during Begum Zia's visit to Maldives in 1994²⁶. They also agreed to take specific steps towards expanding and diversifying the bilateral trade, increasing the scope of investment and exporting more skilled and unskilled manpower from Bangladesh.

The other important Islamic neighbouring countries are Indonesia and Malaysia. The relation with Indonesia though not up to the expectations of Bangladesh, is still good. There was an exchange of naval mission and an informal joint exercise of Indonesian and Bangladeshi navies in 1978. Bangladesh purchased one AS-332 helicopter from Indonesia for VIP use in 1989²⁷. Though there is a trade agreement between the two countries signed in 1978, significant trade did not develop. The trade between the two countries in 1999-00 stood at Tk.421 million in exports to Indonesia and imports to Bangladesh stood at Tk.14501 million. Indonesia mainly imports jute, jute products, leather and raw cotton from Bangladesh and exports furniture products, cement, tyres, mat, pulp, paper and glass. Both sides feel that there are huge potential sectors between the two countries where cooperation is possible for mutual benefit. Bangladesh and Indonesia cooperate in the international forums. Both are the members of the OIC and on many issues they have common views affecting the Islamic world. Indonesia in its bilateral relations has begun to recognize more fully the degree to which they share similar interests in important global and regional issues²⁸.

Bangladesh has excellent relations with Malaysia. A joint economic commission is working between them. Bangladeshi workers are working in the rubber plantations and professionals work in various fields. Malaysia as the emerging radical and vocal leader of the developing world cooperates with Bangladesh in the different fields²⁹. It is the new emerging most important market for Bangladeshi labourers. About 100,000 Bangladeshi workers were legally employed in Malaysia in 1994. On the persuasion of Bangladesh, Malaysia legalized the status of 1,300 Bangladeshi detained workers in the same year. Kuala Lumpur also agreed in that year to annually employ 50,000 Bangladeshi workers.

²⁶ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. XIX, No. 270, New Delhi, 10 December 1994, pp. 1088-89.

²⁷ S.R. Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²⁸ Harunur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p.128.

²⁹ S.R. Chakravarty, *op. cit.*

Dhaka has set up banking arrangements in Malaysia to facilitate Bangladeshi workers to send money home³⁰.

Bangladesh is one of the largest importers of palm oil from Malaysia. It also imports consumer's goods from Malaysia. During 1996-97 the two-way trade was around Tk.9309 million. Both are the members of the OIC and they have a common approach to remove disparity between the rich and the poor countries³¹.

The direction and trend of Bangladesh's trade like other countries of the south is mainly with the western countries. For petroleum and petroleum products Dhaka mainly depends upon the OPEC Islamic countries. Non-petroleum trade with these countries is marginal. Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia are the Islamic countries with which Bangladesh has notable non-oil trade relations. Bangladesh unfortunately has a regular negative balance of payment with most countries. The remittance provides a relief and ameliorates the balance of payment. To promote bilateral economic interactions with the spirit of "south-south" cooperation, Bangladesh regularly signs bilateral joint committees or commission of agreements with almost all-important Islamic countries³². There is an emerging awareness among Islamic countries for the need of greater economic cooperation among them and the possibilities in this regard including the creation of an Islamic Common Market (ICM), have been at the centre of discussion at the various OIC forums.

Intra-OIC trade is the major field where cooperation among the Islamic countries is possible. For most of the OIC members, primary products account for 60 per cent to 100 per cent of their exports. There are also the oil-producing countries, where 60 per cent of the export earnings come from the sales of only one commodity. However, for Bangladesh and a few other countries, manufactured goods account for a substantial part of their exports.

From the tables and figures presented earlier, it is very clear to us that the volume of Bangladesh's trade with the OIC countries is quite low compared to its global trade. It may also be mentioned here that the volume of trade among the Islamic countries

³⁰ Harunur Rashid, op. cit, p. 121.

³¹ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. 19, No. 275, New Delhi, 16 December 1994, p. 1110.

³² S.R. Chakravarty, op. cit, p. 72.

themselves is generally low compared to their total volume of trade. Neighborhood considerations, proximity, historical ties, the regional availability of communications and transportation systems and the membership within the same sub-regional economic grouping continue to play a dominant role in the commercial links between the member countries. Therefore, we find that the OIC member countries' trade links with other Islamic countries is weaker than that of the non-OIC countries. In other words, their principal trading partners continue to be a few industrial countries. For detail trade relations of Bangladesh with all other Islamic countries see annexure IV and V.

4.8 The IDB Operation in Bangladesh

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had initially started as a political forum. However, it was subsequently, realized that effective political action should be based upon improved economic cooperation amongst its member countries. In fact, the Charter of the OIC approved by the 3rd Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in February 1972, set inter alia, its objective as "to consolidate cooperation among member states in the economic, social, cultural, scientific and other vital fields of activity and to carry out consultation among member states in the international organizations"³³. As a result, economic cooperation activities have become items for major agendas at OIC forums. In this regard various decisions have been taken to strengthen economic and commercial cooperation amongst the countries. A basic institutional structure was created to provide technical support in order to enhance the cooperation activities in various fields.

The OIC created an infrastructure for establishing various economic institutions. It is responsible for the creation of such bodies like, the Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (ECC), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT)³⁴. The most prominent and effective among them is the IDB. The IDB is an international Islamic financial institution established within the framework of the OIC to assist member states in the economic development and promote the economic and commercial cooperation among them. It is a conglomeration of a diverse set of countries

³³Oker Gurler, "Role and Function of Regional Blocks and Arrangements in the Formation of the Islamic Common Market" *Journal of Economic Cooperation*, October 2000, p. 12.

³⁴Noor Ahmad Baba, "The Organization of the Islamic Conference: Conceptual Framework and Institutional Structure" *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Fall, 1997, p. 377.

in terms of economic conditions. The annual per capita income of the IDB members ranges from US\$200 to over US\$20,000. The bank classifies the countries according to the following categories:

- i. Oil exporting – Petroleum dominated;
- ii. Low/ middle income – sectorally diverse;
- iii. Least developed – Predominantly agricultural.

The IDB members are basically primary producers in various stages of industrialization and socio-economic development. The IDB is playing an important role in the overall economic development of the OIC countries.

Bangladesh is a founder member of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). With a view to forge closer ties with the government, the President of the IDB visited Bangladesh more than once. Bangladesh constantly calls for an increase in economic, technical; and commercial cooperation among the Islamic countries through the IDB. Bangladesh hosted the 9th annual meeting of the Board of the IDB in February 1985. Mr. Mizanur Rahman, a Bangladeshi bureaucrat has been an executive vice-president of the bank from 1985-87. Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir former Cabinet minister was a member of the board of executive directors of the IDB who represented Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Maldives and presently some Bangladeshis are working at the professional level in the Bank. Since March 1977, the IDB started its operation in Bangladesh³⁵.

From the time of it's functioning in Bangladesh, around 70 projects or operations have been approved for financing in Bangladesh by the IDB. These projects have been either joint ventures between Bangladesh and other IDB member country's or based on direct assistance and development from the bank. Direct assistance from the bank are usually given to important areas like flood control and irrigation projects. The IDB had given a loan for the completion of the Zia International Airport with a repayment period of 30 years amounting to Islamic Dinar (ID) 6,087,000 (US\$7 million) and another loan was of ID 7.39 million (US\$ 10 million) for the establishment of the East-West Electrical Interconnector Project (River Crossing) with a repayment period of 20 years. An amount of ID 7.24 million was allocated through 'lines of equity' to Bangladesh Shilpa Bank

³⁵ Mizanur Rahman, "The Islamic Development Bank: A New Approach to Multilateral Financing", *BIISS Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1983, p.117.

(Industrial Bank) to be used in the development of small and medium sized industrial enterprises. Loans have also been given as technical assistance, amounting to ID 120,000 was allocated to conduct a feasibility study and a preliminary design of a natural gas transmission network in Chittagong and other cities of the country. As for leasing operation, the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation received two cargo vessels to increase its carrying capacity³⁶.

The IDB has financed the Teesta Bridge Project for agricultural development with the Saudi Fund for Development as co-financers to help increase the production of rice by 900,000 tones per year. The Kurigram Flood Control and Irrigation Project was also financed by the IDB in collaboration with Bangladesh, with the ultimate aim of contributing to the attainment of self-sufficiency in food grain production. With the IDB equity participation, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia established a Joint Islamic Investment Bank named Al-Baraka Bangladesh Bank Ltd. Apart from this there are a number of other private banks established jointly by Bangladesh and the Middle Eastern countries, for instance, the Arab-Bangladesh Bank, the United Commercial Bank, The City Bank, the National Bank, the Social Investment Bank, the Faysal Bank of Bahrain and a few others. The IDB sponsored the establishment of the Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. with a share of US\$6 million³⁷. The Islami Bank and the al-Baraka Bank and the Social Investment Bank are operated according to the Islamic Sharia. The IDB gave assistance worth US\$300 million in 1983 for Bangladesh in supporting infrastructure and industrial needs, as well as long term project assistance and import finance³⁸.

Bangladesh started using foreign trade financing facilities of the IDB from 1979. Since then Bangladesh received millions of Islamic Dinars for the import of mainly crude oil, cement, and rock phosphate. An agreement has been signed with the bank amounting to US\$16 million for providing heavy machinery and technical support to the Chittagong Urea Fertilizer factory under leasing scheme. The IDB extended a loan of US\$6.35 million during in 1988 for the distribution of electric energy to the northwest region of Bangladesh namely the greater Rajshahi. In the same year the IDB gave a grant of US\$

³⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. VIII, Part, 232, New Delhi, 10 December 1993, p. 1992.

10 million for the reconstruction of elementary schools destroyed by the severe flood in that year.

The recent important operations of the IDB in Bangladesh could be described as follows:

- Import trade financing – US\$10 million for crude oil and refined petroleum products.
- Unit investment fund – US\$15 million in February 2000 was approved by the President of the IDB to purchase refined petroleum products and crude oil.
- In order to create facilities for skills development and hence to improve the socio-economic status of women in the country, the IDB contributed US\$3 million as Least Developed Member Countries (LDMC) and US\$5.807 million as loans. The total cost of these came to US\$11.682 million for the establishment of polytechnic institutions for women in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi, which was approved in April 2000³⁹.
- For integrated area development in Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur and Pirojpur project, to improve small farm holder families the IDB's contribution is US\$9.576 million, the total cost of which is US\$12.343 million.
- The 206th session of the IDB Board of Executive Directors approved new finances for US\$8.8 million as loan financing for the Comilla Rural Infrastructure Development Project in Bangladesh.
- The IDB is co-financing the ITFO for US\$30 million for Bangladesh in favour of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) to purchase urea fertilizer⁴⁰.
- Loan was also given for the Sylhet Feeder project (Phase-V), Rajbari-Gopalganj Rural Electrification (Phase-II), construction of government primary schools, greater Noakhali and Chittagong District Feeder Road, Water Supply Facilities in Coastal Belt (Phase-II), establishment of a Union Health Centre.
- Loan and LDMC was given small holders in the agriculture sectors in Barisal, Patuakhali, Jhalkathi and Barguna districts and for the Islamic University of Technology (IUT).

³⁹ http://www.isdb.org/english_docs/idb

⁴⁰ http://www.isdb.org/english_docs/idb

The IDB also tries to mobilize the technical capacity of the member countries towards increased technical cooperation among them. In the field of the technical cooperation among the member states, the OIC established Islamic Centre for Vocational and Technical Training and Research (ICVTTR), which is now known as the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) based on Dhaka. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for the Islamic Countries (SERSTCIC) in Ankara, the ICDT in Casablanca and the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD) in Jeddah are operating smoothly. The IUT started functioning from 1986 and at present it has thousand of students from various member countries from the OIC.

The IDB since its inception contributed a lot in the promotion of Islamic banking which resulted in the establishment of many Islamic banks and financial institutions in Muslim as well as non-Muslim countries around the world. Together with particular emphasis in promoting closer cooperation with local Islamic banks, during these years, the IDB has been able to workout an effective working relationship with the regional and international financial institutions. The IDB since its inception has been active in extending support towards the development efforts of Bangladesh

4.9 Economic Issues between Bangladesh and the OIC

Bangladesh is the second largest Muslim country in the world and at the same time falls in the category of the least developed member countries of the OIC. Since its inception in 1974, Bangladesh has been playing a very active role in the efforts of the OIC to strengthen the unity of the Islamic countries through their political and economic consolidation. And great confidence was reposed on Bangladesh by the OIC leadership while continuously electing it in high-level committees of the OIC⁴¹. Bangladesh being the largest LDC, always calls for an increased assistance to the least developed countries at all the Islamic conferences as well as at the UN and non-aligned meetings⁴².

In the 3rd Islamic Summit (Taif) President Zia called upon the Islamic countries to extend full support to the Islamic LDCs and hoped that the Summit would initiate a programme of action to provide immediate relief to the LDCs. Therefore, the Summit decided to

⁴¹ Mizanur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p.117.

⁴² Mohammed Tajuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

request the IDB to grant urgent increasing aid to the least developed member states, including trade finance on more concessionary and flexible terms. Bangladesh repeatedly called for the adoption of a common Islamic strategy and declared "in view of the deteriorating international economic situation". Bangladesh as an Islamic LDC, urges this conference for taking immediate steps of the important decision of the Taif Summit. In the field of food and agriculture, Bangladesh called for the establishment of a food security system for the Islamic countries. The vast majority of the Islamic countries are now heavily dependent on other countries for their food supplies. The aim should be self-sufficiency in food. The Islamic Summits and ICFM have also passed resolution in this regard.

Bangladesh takes a special interest in the problems of the least developed countries among the member states. It acts as a spokesperson of these states. At the Taif Summit Zia eloquently presented the cause of these countries and proposed an eleven point programme for their political and economic security. On all possible occasions Bangladesh pleads for the transfer of resources to the less fortunate member nations.

Bangladesh proposed the establishment of an Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training in Dhaka at the 8th ICFM in 1977, which was approved and established in Dhaka. The Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been established in Karachi following the proposal of Bangladesh in a conference of the member countries. At the 6th ICFM in 1975, Bangladesh placed the proposal for the formation of an Islamic Economic Community, which later developed into the idea of Islamic Common Market (ICM)⁴³. This proposal was corresponded by Bangladesh and Turkey in Taif Summit. Progress has been made in this regard but it not fully materialized. Bangladesh is endeavouring for this.

Of late there has been a revival of interest within the OIC and the IDB among the Islamic countries on forming an Islamic Common Market. By removing the restrictions for the movement of goods and ensuring a smooth flow of trade, the countries are on the process of setting up of such market. Priority would be given in the sectors of trade, manpower and investment among the Islamic countries. Bangladesh feels that by pooling resources

⁴³Ibid., p.31.

together and creating a common Islamic market, the Muslim world would add a feather in their cap while strengthening itself in the larger world economic scheme.

Shortly after achieving the membership of the OIC, Bangladesh demonstrated her commitment to the cause of the Islamic Ummah by becoming the co-founder of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in April 1975⁴⁴. The rationale for the efforts of Bangladesh could very well be understood, if we take a closer look at the resources of the Islamic world. With the combined population of almost a quarter of the world's population, inhabiting strategic areas in three continents and producing over 60 per cent of the world's energy, over 70 per cent of rubber, nearly 80 per cent of jute and a huge quantum of natural gas, the Islamic world with a political will can become a force to reckon with. Keeping this picture of the Islamic world in mind and with an urge for transforming the apparently fundamentalist urge of Islamic solidarity into a politico-economic reality, Bangladesh tabled a set of proposals at the 10th ICFM in May 1979⁴⁵.

These proposals included inter alia:

- i. An exchange of capital human resources;
- ii. Proper harnessing of manpower resources for productive use;
- iii. Concerted efforts to achieve autarky in the basic necessities of life and strategic materials and
- iv. Formation of Islamic Economic Community.

The last of these proposals subsequently crystallized into an idea of Islamic Common Market. The idea behind the proposal is to forge greater cooperation among the members of the OIC and move towards a collective self-reliance.

In the Tripoli Conference of the Islamic Foreign Ministers in May 1977, Bangladesh proposed the establishment of an Islamic Food Bank to allocate financial, technological and skilled resources among the member countries so that the Islamic world could achieve self-sufficiency in basic food items. Bangladesh also proposed the establishment of a Joint Islamic Shipping Line together with the Joint Islamic Insurance Arrangement to handle trade between the member countries of the OIC⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Syed Anwar Hussain, 'Bangladesh and the Islamic Conference', *Asian Affairs* (Dhaka), Vol.9, No.1, 1987, p.19.

⁴⁵ Syed Anwar Hussain, op. cit, n.16, p. 144.

⁴⁶ Sayed Tayeb-ur Rahman, *Global Geo- Strategy of Bangladesh, OIC and Islamic Ummah*, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1985, p. 58.

President Ershad put forward an 11-point proposal at the 4th Summit for safeguarding and promoting the political and economic security of the Islamic countries. In the economic field President Ershad proposed the undertaking of a special action plan for the least developed Islamic countries to assist them in the face of global economic upheaval, establishment of Islamic Common Market, increased investment in the Islamic world both in the public and private sectors and preparations and publication of country profiles of the Islamic countries containing basic socio-economic indicators identifying specific areas of cooperation among them and its prospects and opportunities⁴⁷. In recognition of the initial services of Bangladesh towards the cause of the Islamic world, the OIC took a decision to hold the 14th ICFM in Dhaka, which was held in 1983.

4.10 Bangladesh and the OIC – Socio-Cultural Aspects

The third and perhaps the most widely known area of activity of the OIC lies in the cultural sector. One of the objectives of the OIC is to consolidate cooperation among member states in the economic, social, cultural and scientific and other vital fields of activity. Activities are of immediate and general interest and in fact their scope and size is so large that totally erroneous impression has been created in the public mind that the organization is essentially a cultural and confessional one.

To improve the socio-economic conditions of the Muslims all over the world and combine the efforts of the Muslims in these fields into fruitful cooperation are some of the goals of the OIC. Ever since its establishment, the OIC has been coordinating joint Islamic action among member states in the cultural and social fields, endeavouring to preserve and promote the Islamic common heritage and striving to promote a generation of conscious Muslims youth, proud of their sublime Islamic values and achievements of their glorious civilization.

A number of committees, subsidiary organs and affiliated bodies have been established by the OIC to deal with cooperation among the member states in the social and cultural fields and numerous other institutions have been created to improve the socio-economic

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

well-being of the Muslims⁴⁸. The following include various bodies established by the OIC in the socio-cultural fields:

- i. The Islamic Fiqh academy, Jeddah.
- ii. The Research Centre in Islamic History, Arts and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul.
- iii. The Islamic Commission for the Preservation of the Islamic Heritage, Istanbul.
- iv. The Islamic Solidarity Fund, Jeddah.
- v. The Islamic States Educational, Scientific and Cultural Institution (ISESCO), Rabat.
- vi. The Islamic Committee for International Red Crescent, Benghazi.
- vii. The Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Jeddah.
- viii. The World Federation for International Arab-Islamic Schools, Jeddah, Cairo.
- ix. The Sports Federation for Islamic Solidarity, Riyadh.

The OIC these days is working to establish a major programme for dialogue among the civilizations in the line with the UN resolutions to consider the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among the Civilizations.

A key element in the cultural context is the financing of activities through the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), which is the financing arm of the OIC. The ISF provides relief and aid to Muslim states and to Muslim minorities in the non-Muslim countries and strives to raise the international levels of the Muslims. The ISF plays a major role in relieving the effects of crises, catastrophes and natural disasters that may hit Muslim minorities in non-member states. It is important to note that ¼th of the total disbursement of the ISF were channeled for the interests of the Muslim minorities⁴⁹.

Right from the beginning, education was identified as an area, which had been a serious cause of drawbacks in the Muslim world in general, as well as for the Muslim communities living in the non-member countries of the OIC. Financing in the education sector is not just confined to assist existing institutions. The OIC has been deeply conscious of the importance and role of university education and had financed the establishment of full-fledged universities in several places. Such new universities are

⁴⁸ Noor Ahmad Baba, *Organization of Islamic Conference: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p. 231.

⁴⁹ Nilufar Chowdhury, 'The OIC and the Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim States', *BISS Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, 1983, p. 61.

established in Niger, Uganda, Mali, Malaysia, and Bangladesh⁵⁰. Financial assistance had also been given for the expansion of universities in Tombouctou, in Islamabad, in Cairo, in Jakarta, in Istanbul and elsewhere. The IDB had given assistance to establish Islamic Nizamiyah University in Sri Lanka, Islamic College for Training of Teachers of Arabic Islamic Education in Majboraka (Sierra Leone) and the establishment of Arab Islamic Schools and assistance to Benin University at Lome, Togo⁵¹.

The establishments of chairs of Islamic studies have been financially supported in several western universities such as Temple and Shaw and Michigan in the USA and Oxford in the UK. One of the major projects of the OIC was the contribution for the establishment of an American Islamic University in Chicago which cater not only to the large Muslim community in the USA but also to non-Muslim Americans interested in Islamic studies as well as boys and girls from the member countries who are interested in studying American curricula in an academic environment. The other ISF supported universities, institutions and Islamic centre in non-Muslim states include in the UK, Yugoslavia, India, Korea and West Germany and so and so⁵².

The establishment of Islamic University in Bangladesh was first reviewed at the 14th ICFM held in Dhaka in December 1983. The conference adopted a resolution appealing to the member states and all organs and institutions of the OIC to provide technical and financial support to this project. The 4th Islamic Summit held in Casablanca in 1984 requested the member states to extend material support to the Islamic universities to enable them to achieve the notable objectives for which they were established. The Islamic University of Bangladesh received a huge contribution from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Brunei Darussalam, Rabita-al- Alam-al-Islami and the Islamic Solidarity Fund. The Government of Saudi Arabia donated US\$1,33,333 to the Islamic University of Bangladesh as a part of the Kingdom's programme to encourage the propagation of Islamic education in the country⁵³.

The Islamic University of Bangladesh remains only the highest learning based on Islamic teachings and thought to create social structure that is both modern and authentically

⁵⁰Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, n. 34, p. 377.

⁵¹Nilufar Chowdhury, op. cit, p. 62.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³*POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. XII, No. 19, New Delhi, 28 January 1987, p. 229.

Islamic⁵⁴. It has a faculty of Sharia, a faculty of commerce, humanities, law and a faculty of applied science and technology. Its student strength is around 7000 against an initial target of an enrolment of 750 students. The most recent Islamic Summit urged all member states of the OIC, the IDB, the ISF, and the Muslim World League and other Islamic financial institutions to provide adequate academic and financial assistance to the Islamic University of Bangladesh so that it can achieve its objectives. It was also decided in the meeting that the IESCO be member of the board of Trustee of the Islamic University of Bangladesh⁵⁵.

The OIC recommended that Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran, might be included in the curricula of the educational institutions for strengthening the bonds of solidarity among Muslim States. In Bangladesh Islamic studies is a compulsory subject for Muslim students in the primary and secondary school levels. In the universities under the faculty of humanities – Islamic History and Culture, Islamic Studies and Arabic Language and Literature departments cater to a large number of students interested in those fields. With the Saudi assistance, the King Faisal Institute was established in Dhaka in 1975 for importing both religious and modern education. The OIC sponsored the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) in Dhaka, which is a university of international standards in the technological fields. Students from various OIC countries study there.

From time to time, the OIC organizes seminars and academic symposia, either direct or in cooperation with the member states and other international organizations. Its objective in doing so is to introduce and highlight the Islamic point of view on issues of global interest or to examine in greater depth the different alternatives available in resolving a specific human problem. Dialogue with the two other monolithic religions is an element of the outward looking nature of the OIC in a specific cultural context. In this connection, contacts with the Vatican as well as with the World Council of Churches have been constant and have helped in a better understanding of each community.

One of the decisions of the 11th ICFM held in Istanbul in 1980 was to hold games and sports festivals regularly among member nations of the OIC. This decision was the

⁵⁴ This is the only Islamic University of the country administered by the government. Apart from this there are some private Islamic universities established in the recent past.

⁵⁵[http:// www.oic-oci.org/english](http://www.oic-oci.org/english)

outcome of a Bangladeshi proposal. The first of such a festival took place in Izmir of Turkey in August 1980. The next Islamic Solidarity Games will take place in Saudi Arabia in April 2005.

Bangladesh's argument was that such a competition will generate a sense of pride especially among the younger generations and strengthen the fraternal Islamic bonds among the member countries. On the recommendation of the 6th session of the ICECS, the 3rd Summit decided to accept the proposal of Bangladesh to call the games as the "Islamic Solidarity Games" and to establish the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF). A special committee of eleven was formed to draw up the draft statute of the ISSF in which Bangladesh was one of the important members. The OIC's support for Muslim youth and its investment in their physical and spiritual welfare has been largely in the form of youth training camps, conducted in cooperation with member states and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY).

Another regular feature of the OIC's socio-cultural activities is its continuous participation in assistance to Muslim communities suffering from calamities and natural disasters. This results from the unfortunate fact that the majority of the refugees in the world today are Muslims. The OIC has therefore kept in constant and close touch with the UNHCR in Geneva and has participated generously in providing direct relief in cash and in kind to the Palestinians, Afghans, Somalians, Lebanese, Cambodians, Bosnian refugees and so on. Similarly, it has provided assistance to the victims of floods and tidal waves in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and earthquake victims in Algeria, Indonesia, Iran and Yemen etc.

A subsidiary organ of the OIC – the Islamic Solidarity Fund – was created to provide relief to the Islamic countries at the time of natural disasters. Financial assistance is given to the affected countries. During the severe flood in Bangladesh in 1988 and Cyclone in 1991, the Islamic countries sent relief and emergency materials to victims of such natural disasters. For example, Egypt sent medicines and tinned food, Kuwait sent medicines, tents and helicopters on lease. Under the Saudi Arabia's 'sacrificial meat utilization project' in collaboration with the IDB, frozen meat is sent every year normally by sea freight to a number of Islamic countries. In 1988 after the flood, Bangladesh's share that was 13 per cent of the total meat utilized was sent by air so as to ensure a speedy delivery.

In addition to that, the Saudi people made huge cash contribution individually toward flow of relief. Saudi Arabia and Iraq supplied aircraft to carry out relief operations⁵⁶.

The 18th ICFM had appealed to the OIC countries and OIC specialized agencies following the devastating flood of 1988 to provide generous assistance to Bangladesh, especially in its plans and programmes for long term and effective solution as well as in its reconstruction and rehabilitation⁵⁷.

4.11 Dhaka Declaration of Islamic Human Rights

The 14th ICFM was held in Dhaka in 1983. The conference adopted a “Dhaka Declaration of Human Rights” undertaking the principles of Islam⁵⁸. The 10th ICFM decided to set up an ad hoc commission of Muslim experts to prepare a document on human rights. A draft document drawn up by the Muslims legal experts was studied at the 14th ICM in Dhaka. The 4th Islamic Summit approved the Dhaka declaration. The subsequent conferences of foreign ministers have given a call to the expert committee to finalize the draft document.

The Dhaka Declaration on Human Rights underlying the spirit and principles of Islam. The Declaration expressed the belief of the member states of the OIC in the Islamic Sharia, reaffirmed the cultural and historical role of the Islamic Ummah and described the fundamental rights and freedom according to Islam as an integral part of the Muslim faith⁵⁹.

The Dhaka Declaration signifies “all men are equal in dignity and basic duties and responsibilities without any discrimination on account of race, colour, language, religion, sex, political opinion, social status or other considerations. And all human beings are Allah’s subjects who serve His subjects and no one has superiority over another except on the basis of piety”⁶⁰.

⁵⁶Salahuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh: Past and Present, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2004, p. 224.

⁵⁷ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. XV, No. 125, New Delhi, 2 August 1990, p. 1332.

⁵⁸ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. VIII, Part, 234, New Delhi, 13 December 1983, p. 2009.

⁵⁹ Syed Tayeb-ur Rahman, op. cit, n. 46, p. 71.

⁶⁰ *POT, Bangladesh Series*, Vol. VIII, Part, 234, New Delhi, 13 December 1983, p. 2010.

The role and steps taken by the OIC in some other socio-cultural fields is also significant. The 1st Islamic Cultural Ministers Conference was held in Dakar in 1989 to seek ways to increase cooperation among the Muslim countries in the cultural fields. The 7th ICFM recognized the fact that some member states were undergoing accelerated economic and social development and some other had an abundant supply of labour and technical know-how and therefore gave a call for an exchange of labour and know-how among Muslim states⁶¹. The 1st international seminar on “Human and Natural Resource of the Muslim World” was held in Dhaka in 1978.

Drug abuse and trafficking in narcotics is an issue that has received much attention in the OIC in the recent years. The 15th and 16th ICFM adopted resolutions on drug abuse and control. An expert committee meeting on narcotics was held in Istanbul in October 1988. Bangladesh is a member of the International Narcotics Control Board and also attended the experts committee meeting of the OIC member countries held in Istanbul.

The OIC devotes special care to Muslim women by promoting joint Muslim women activities in the various scientific and cultural areas and acts to highlight the important role played by the women in developing Muslim society and institute an organizational framework for women. Similarly, the organization pays special care to children and for the protection of their rights in Muslim societies.

The OIC in all its Summits and ICFM stressed and urged the member countries to pursue their efforts to important Islamic values in young people and carry out more cultural activities for them. The OIC review in all its communiqué the activities of all agencies, formed particularly in the field of socio-cultural aspects.

⁶¹Noor Ahmad Baba, op. cit, n. 48 p. 113-4.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5. Summary and Conclusion

Bangladesh attained its status as an independent nation almost 33 years ago. The path to independence was long and costly in terms of human life and material. It is the outcome of the absurd foundations upon which Pakistan was built. The demand for the creation of Bangladesh has the appearance of a natural logical conclusion. For the people of the Eastern Wing of Pakistan, Pakistan was their national state and independence was the panacea for all ills¹. Thus the emergence of Bangladesh by discarding the two-nation theory proved that religion could not be the sole factor of determining the status of a national entity.

Although Bangladesh is overwhelmingly populated by Muslims, the minority communities namely, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians practice their religion in peace and harmony. In every sphere of life, society and administration, the minority communities are represented including at the highest levels in the judiciary of Bangladesh. The majority and minority communities live in peaceful co-existence and there is hardly any apparent difference between the individuals of the different communities².

The emergence of Bangladesh as the second largest Muslim country, apparently seemed that this new state would very soon find its right place among the Islamic Ummah. This however did not happen. We have seen that there was reluctance on the part of the majority of the Arab and Muslim states to recognize the new state for a long time. It was only after the assassination of Mujib, which reversed the ideological basis of the country, leading to the Islamic world to recognize Bangladesh as an independent state. There was a sea change in the relations between Bangladesh and the Islamic world after 1975³.

The initial reluctance to recognize Bangladesh on the part of the Islamic countries was probably because the Islamic world felt that the liberation struggle was an act of defying the Islamic values in a state, which had achieved its own independence on the basis of

¹ Vishnu Prajapati, *South Asia: Power and Politics, Studies in Political Identity and Regional Resurgence*, Vol. I, 1998, p. 81.

² Harunur Rashid, *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh*, Rishi Publications, Varanasi, 2001, p. 43.

³ S.R Chakravarty, & Virendra Narain, eds., *Bangladesh Vol. 3, Global Politics, South Asian Studies Series 14*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988, p. 159.

those values. The Islamic countries could not see any reason for recognizing a state, which appeared to be to all intents and purposes, an Indian satellite⁴. They may have misunderstood secularism enshrined in its constitution as one of the fundamental principles of the policy of Bangladesh. They seemed to have confused secularism with atheism and Pakistan was able to fully exploit this misperception⁵. Pakistan's threat to cut off diplomatic relations with those countries, which recognized Bangladesh, might have acted as a deterrent. It is also assumed that since the inception of the OIC, Pakistan has been an active member of it and therefore, the member states may have felt reluctant to hurt the feelings of Pakistan. Immediately after the liberation of Bangladesh, the extent of friendship with the Soviet Union and the East European countries was an irritating factor for the Muslim world. Furthermore, they might have been annoyed with Bangladesh for dismembering a powerful Islamic Pakistan as well⁶.

However, through a gradual and slow process, Bangladesh relations with the Islamic world improved and within a very short period after its admission in the OIC in 1974, Bangladesh became a member of the major committees and bodies of the OIC.

The principle objectives of the Bangladesh foreign policy is to protect and promote the interests of Bangladesh in the global arena, to develop close and cooperative relations with other countries and international organizations based on mutual interest in accelerating the socio-economic development process in Bangladesh⁷. Being the second largest Muslim country, Islam plays a dominant role and became an independent determinant of the foreign policy and diplomacy of Bangladesh. It maintains good relations with the entire Islamic world. Many "push and pull" factors influence Bangladesh's relations with many countries. However the Bangladeshi foreign policy towards the Islamic countries, remains close to unchanged regardless of all the internal and external strife that may go on. Islam is considered by the mainstream of the Muslim population to be one of the core elements of their identity irrespective of observance of

⁴Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries, 1972-1983" in *Bangladesh Studies: Public Administration, Rural Development and Foreign Policy*, ed. by Mohammed Mohabbat Khan and Syed Anwar Hussain, Centre for Administrative Studies, University of Dhaka, 1985, p. 258.

⁵Harunur Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, "Bangladesh and International Cooperation for Development" in Muzaffer Ahmed & Abul Kalam, eds. *Bangladesh's Foreign Relations: Changes and Directions*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1989, p. 129.

Islamic rites and rituals in personal life. As a corollary to the mainstream identification with Islam or Islamic values the majority of the population wants that the government of Bangladesh should identify with the issues and problems of the Islamic world and the issues concerning Muslims and have good relations with the Islamic countries.

Bangladesh's untiring efforts to promote Islamic solidarity can partly be traced to its internal political dynamics, not the least is the constitutional obligation. Under Article – 25(2) of the constitution of Bangladesh it is a principle of policy that “the state shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among the Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity”⁸. The India factor indirectly influences Bangladesh's attitude towards the Muslim countries. Bangladesh is encircled by India from three sides and in the south – in the Bay of Bengal the presence of the Indian navy is overwhelming for Bangladesh. This geo-political situation makes India an important player for Bangladesh. Dhaka does not have any Islamic country as its close neighbour unlike other Islamic states. The consciousness of this isolation had made its unique contribution to Bangladesh's desire for Islamic solidarity⁹.

Politically the Islamic countries are important for Bangladesh both individually and collectively. Islamic countries collectively supported Bangladesh on the water dispute with India when the issue was raised at the UN General Assembly in 1976. They also supported its candidature of the Security Council as non-permanent member in 1978 and 2000.

Economically the oil rich Islamic countries are very helpful in their own specific ways. They provide economic aid most of which is in the form of grants to Bangladesh. The Islamic countries have become the largest market for the Bangladeshi labour force both skilled and unskilled. The Islamic countries constitute the third most important group of countries giving aid to Bangladesh after the developed countries and the UN system. Bangladesh is one of the major beneficiaries of the OIC developmental assistance in different fields. Bangladesh is enthusiastically endeavoring for the establishment of the

⁸ The Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Law, the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1998, p. 7.

⁹ Tabarak Hussain, “Domestic Inputs in Foreign Policy” in S.R. Chakravarty & Virendra Narain ed. *Bangladesh: Global Politics, Vol. 3, South Asian Series-14*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd. , New Delhi, 1988, p. 2.

Islamic Common Market under the OIC¹⁰. This push and pull factors together are responsible for influencing Bangladesh's foreign policy towards the Islamic world.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) represents the culmination of efforts of Muslims since the end of World War-I to establish a pan-Islamic organization to defend the Islamic cause in the international arena and promote relations among Muslim people and states. It has been noted earlier that the OIC is an international organization of sovereign nations who are Islamic. Islamic does not mean only those states that profess Islam as an official creed. On this account the OIC is very accommodative and has a sort of umbrella character. By and large any state in which the majority of the people profess some brand of Islam is qualified to become a member of the OIC. It is for this umbrella character that in certain cases it has even embraced countries in which only about half of the population is Muslim or a state where the head of the state is a Muslim even though the Muslims constitute only a minority of the total population¹¹.

The most interesting thing is that no member country has so far left the OIC. The strength of the organization in terms of numbers has always been increasing with time. The OIC started its journey in 1969 with a number of 25 nations, which presently represents 57 independent countries of the world. Egypt and Afghanistan's membership were suspended but they did not withdraw from the organization. Uganda with a 16 per cent Muslim population did not leave the OIC even after the fall of the Muslim ruler. Nigeria, Cote d' Ivoire though not a Muslim majority state gained admission after having observer status for a long time. Thailand with 10 per cent Muslims is enjoying an observer status since 1998 and a proposal is being considered positively to give an observer status to the Philippines. The OIC member states with some exception are the members of the NAM, which denotes that mainstream thought of the OIC is not basically different from that of the NAM.

¹⁰ Muhammad Tajuddin, *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Liberation War to Sheikh Hasina*, National Book Organization, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 76.77.

¹¹ This has brought together a wide range of Muslim states ranging from the radical Islamic country like Iran and the conservative Muslim state like Saudi Arabia, to the religiously neutral state like Indonesia, professedly secular state like Turkey and the religiously divided Lebanon. Even Uganda with a non-Muslim majority was granted this membership as at the time of its application, its President – Idi Amin – happened to be a Muslim.

The OIC was an important step forward for Islamic representation in the international arena but it was a limited inter-governmental alliance. The OIC Charter affirmed its commitment to the UN Charter. The OIC was a forum in which common Islamic responses might be formulated, but it had no power to define a consensus or to implement decisions beyond those which were agreed by all members. The institution itself is limited, and a greater limitation of the OIC's capacities stemmed from the divisions that were immediately apparent within its own ranks. The big Muslim states differed over their interpretations of Islam as well as about what role the OIC should have in times of international crises. General foreign policy hostilities between the Muslim states were transferred into the OIC¹².

The great limitation with the OIC as an organization was in the realm of action and in this respect the lowest common denominator tended to be the norms. Expressing Islamic ideals and sensibilities was one thing, and doing things in the state system is another. The OIC Summits looked and sounded impressive but consensus that they produced almost always precluded actions that might bring Muslim states into direct conflict with foreign powers.

It is no easy task to maintain a unit of purpose among 57 independent nations, extending from Mauritania to Indonesia and from Kazakhstan to Mozambique, which includes multi-racial, Africans, Asians, Central Asians, Arabs and even Europeans. The geography of the OIC countries includes some of the world's pivotal areas and thus are subjected to international intrigues and power plays.

The Muslim world saw enormous and unsettling events in the 20th century. The Ottoman Empire finally faded into history. European colonialism came and went, Zionist colonialism came and stayed. Nationalists led the way to independence but were tarnished by a troubled modernization and by military defeat at the hands of the Zionists. Apparently the OIC has not achieved what many of its leaders had envisioned at the time of its inception. In its resolutions on the various issues, the OIC had expressed lofty goals

¹²Simon W. Murden, *Islam, Middle East, and the New Global Hegemony*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, America, 2002, p. 191.

and ideals but in reality it has yet to go a long way in achieving those goals¹³. The role played by the OIC regarding issues such as the Afghan crisis, Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has not given us many successful stories. The OIC has not achieved much to raise effectively the issues of Muslim minorities in non-member states such as in India, and the Southern Philippines. However, the OIC has dealt with the case of the Southern Filipino Muslims more effectively than any other issue. In the cases of differences between the two Muslim states or among Muslims within a country, the OIC is not so successful in resolving the issues¹⁴.

The OIC has repeatedly declared that the security of each Muslim country is a collective responsibility of all Islamic states but it has not been able to develop any form of collective security for its member states so far. The OIC is still not yet an organization that can exert effective pressures on its members. The OIC member states are more polarized than that of other international system.

Despite all these limitations, the achievements and success of the organization in various fields of activities are also praiseworthy and laudable. In its 35 years of operation, the OIC has endeavoured to bring its member states closer in the political, economic and cultural spheres. The OIC has not only survived over the years of its existence but has also contributed reasonably well towards the realization of Muslim countries and their interests internationally and has developed an organizational infrastructure which can provide a good foundation for future development and achievements¹⁵.

The OIC as an international forum of independent Islamic states, many of which are undergoing different stages in the process of their political, social and economic transformation, it would be understandable that the OIC should move in the direction of the fulfillment of its objectives with caution and patience. So, if the results of the OIC's endeavour in promoting cooperation among its member states in the economic, social, cultural, scientific, commercial and other vital fields of activity may appear to be modest

¹³Col. Ghulam Sarwar, ed., *OIC: Contemporary Issues of the Muslim World*, A FRIENDS Publication, Rawalpindi, 1997, p. 88.

¹⁴Reza Nazar Ahari, "The Organization of the Islamic Conference: Positive and Negative Grounds for Future Activities" in *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Fall, 1997, p.405.

¹⁵Fasahat H. Syed, "Structural Reforms in the OIC" in *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Fall, 1997, p.395.

or slow, this should not detract from the fact that as instrumentality for such cooperation is in place and it is operating in a progressive yet realistic manner¹⁶.

The OIC has been more successful in fostering economic cooperation among the member countries than in dealing with the political issues. The OIC has created an infrastructure for establishing various economic institutions. The IDB and the Ankara Centre are prominent. The agreements have been signed by the OIC member states such as the General Agreement for Economic, Technical and Commercial Cooperation and the Agreement for Promotion, Protection and Guarantee of Investments. These agreements provide incentives and guarantees to encourage economic cooperation and the flow of investment between member states.

The analysis of the actual role of the OIC in the resolutions of the inter-state disputes reveals that it actively intervened in only five disputes, namely, the Pakistani-Bangladeshi dispute in 1971-74, the Iraqi-Iranian conflict in 1980-88, the Senegali-Mauritanian dispute in 1989, the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict in 1990-91 and the Afghan civil war. These conflicts represent a small fraction of the gamut of the conflicts between the Muslim states¹⁷. In the case of Arab Israeli conflict and the Bosnian conflict the practices of the OIC moved beyond the level of verbal condemnation. Its role regarding the minority Muslims of the non-member states are also noticeable. Above all, through its regular conferences and with its observer status in international organizations like the United Nations, the Organization of the African Unity, Non-aligned Movement and so on. The OIC has been involved in socio-political and diplomatic interactions with members of the world community and its impact is not exclusively confined to its member states alone.

The organization has been effectively active in the cultural arena by forming affiliated educational, scientific and cultural institutions, such as the Centre for the study of Islamic History, Art and Culture, the International Commission for the Protection of Islamic Heritage, the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation, the International Women's Organization and the World Federation of Islamic-Arab Schools. The founding of Islamic universities in such countries as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and

¹⁶ Shahid Hussain, "Fostering Cooperation among Muslim Countries: OIC's Response and Responsibilities", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 51, No.2, April 1998, p. 19.

¹⁷ Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43.

so on are also the OIC's efforts. The organization's cultural activities are usually carried out within the framework of the Committee for Information and Culture (COMAIC). Its most important measure is known as the cultural strategy for the Islamic world, involving much debate and exchange of views on cultural matters in its various related committees¹⁸. The OIC is also significant because it expressed an authoritative Islamic view on some of the big philosophical and legal debates going on in the post-cold war international system.

Since the expansion of intra-Islamic trade is one of the most concrete ways of developing close economic ties among the Muslim states, the IDB has worked closely with COMCEC to develop programmes and schemes to promote intra-trade.

The OIC region, which comprises 57 independent Muslim states, is a recognizable entity, it accounts for 25 per cent of the total global area, 1.4 billion of the world's population and 44.5 per cent of the world's oil production¹⁹. Of the 77,215 billion cubic meters known natural gas reserves in the world, 50,710 cubic meters are held by the OIC. The OIC's share of the total of 14 million tones of cotton production worldwide is over 3 million tones. One sixth of the world's rice production is produced by the OIC²⁰. Therefore, in terms of natural resources the OIC member countries are quite blessed.

The OIC is an organization, which has tremendous possibilities for integrating the Muslim countries into a well-knit group collectively promoting the cause of mutual economic progress, which is the singular most important requirement for achieving strength and viability. Muslim countries are rich in physical resources but these are being exploited by others for their economic interests²¹. The cause of Muslim minorities if strongly presented to the international arena by the OIC might restrict the non-Muslim countries from pursuing repressive policies over the Muslims in those countries. Today's Islamic power generates a universal reluctance to antagonize Muslims. Thus, countries

¹⁸Mohammad Javad Zarif, "The Need for Reforms in the Organization of the Islamic Conference", *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Fall, 1997, p. 377.

¹⁹ Syed Nawab Haider Naqvi, "Globalization, Regionalism and the OIC", *Journal of Economic Cooperation Among Islamic Countries*, Vol. 19, No.1-2, January-April 1998, p.285.

²⁰Ghulam Sarwar, op. cit, p.113.

²¹Fasahat H. Syed, op. cit, 15, p. 384.

with sizeable Muslim minorities might probably be persuaded to make an effort to slacken their minority policy²².

Another important suggestion for the OIC can be presented to safeguard the interests of the Muslim minority in non-Muslim states and to ensure that the non-Muslim minorities in Muslim states are treated as an equal footing with the Muslim citizens so that the Islamic states may serve as examples worthy of emulation by non-Muslim countries in the treatment of their minorities.

The OIC must take concrete steps to increase technical cooperation among the Asian and African member countries. It should act as the forum for direct and bilateral exchange of technical know how and skills. Intensive intra-OIC trade should be encouraged for mutual benefit of the member countries. The OIC has to rise above its rhetoric to enhance its credibility among its own members through more substantial and concrete actions.

The OIC has reasonably fared well at representing the Muslim bloc and articulating the Islamic viewpoint but remained some way from being able to do things for the Muslim world. Until the majority of Muslim states could agree to coordinate significant common actions, the 1.4 billion people of the Muslim world would fail to actualize their potential in the international system. It should be stressed once again that closer political and economic cooperation between Arab Muslim states and non-Arab Muslim states can be a source of enormous strength to the OIC and reduce the vulnerability of the weak Muslim states in particular, those of which are for political and economic reasons viewed as strategically important to the great powers.

The emergence of Bangladesh angered some of the conservative Muslim states. However, Bangladesh actively sought to improve its relations with the Islamic world and secured membership in the OIC in 1974. Since then Bangladesh has maintained a very viable and active role in the OIC and on issues of great importance to the Muslim world. The relation with the Islamic countries is to be an area of importance to Bangladesh's foreign policy makers. The OIC exerts a considerable influence on the formulation of the

²² Nilufar Chowdhury, 'The OIC and the Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim States', *BIISS Journal*, Vol.4, No. 4, p. 64.

Bangladesh foreign policy. Bangladesh followed a consistent and constructive policy in lending her full support to the objectives of the OIC and intensification of efforts for increasing cooperation among the Islamic countries in safeguarding and promoting their security interests both in economic and political terms.

Bangladesh is an active participant in the OIC affairs. The objectives, which Bangladesh wants to achieve through its diplomacy in the OIC, include:

- 1) To get economic and financial assistance and other benefits for its development from concerned institutions of the OIC.
- 2) To use its OIC diplomacy as a leverage, for its relations with affluent Arab-Islamic countries, upon which it depends for aid, oil and foreign exchange remitted by its nationals working in these countries.
- 3) To get political and diplomatic support of Islamic solidarity for the achievement of its foreign policy objectives in the international organizations.
- 4) To enhance its sense of security in countering any threat to its national security and also as a deterrent to the possible threat²³.

Bangladesh's economic compulsions and its political interests elicit the role that the country takes in different situations. During the American hostage crises in Iran and the Libyan-US conflicts, Bangladesh took a moderate path. Bangladesh has comfortable relationship with the USA and as Iran and Bangladesh have religious ties binding them together. More importantly, in the critical years of 1974-75 Iran allowed Bangladesh to import oil on deferred payments²⁴. Bangladesh had to take care not to side with either in their conflict. Bangladesh declared its abundant goodwill for the people of Iran and at the same time urging both the parties to adhere to the provisions of the UN Charter, international law and conventions. Thus as a member of the Security Council during that period, Bangladesh voted for resolutions asking Iran to release the hostages and also abstained on a draft resolution calling for sanctions against Iran²⁵.

Also, during the Libyan-US crises that erupt from time to time, Bangladesh took a moderate stand and enjoined caution on the warring parties, while condemning the use of

²³S.R Chakravarty, ed., *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p. 72.

²⁴ Syed Anwar Hussain, 'Bangladesh and the Organization of the Islamic Conference', *Asian Affairs* (Dhaka), Vol.9, No.1, 1987, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

force and reaffirming adherence to the principles of the UN Charter. As Bangladesh depends on the west and the oil rich countries for external resources inflows, it has to take care not to jeopardize its relations with either, and finds non-alignment, the most convenient approach.

Bangladesh in pursuance of its foreign policy objectives has developed close ties and intense interaction with the OIC. The country has secured membership of the organization's different major special committees, which are:

- i. 15-members Permanent Committee on Jerusalem, which is also, known as Al-Quds Committee.
- ii. 3-members Al-Quds Summit Committee.
- iii. 9-members OIC Peace Committee, known as Islamic Peace Committee, which was formed, to mediate in the protracted and fratricidal war between Iran-Iraq.
- iv. 13-members Permanent Committee of the Islamic Solidarity Fund.
- v. 13-members Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs.
- vi. Permanent Finance Committee²⁶.
- vii. A member of nine, formed to solve the problems of Filipino Muslims.
- viii. A member of the Islamic Monitoring Group in Afghanistan.

Apart from these, Bangladesh is the member of all organs and institutions of the OIC owing to her membership of the parent body. A Bangladeshi national was one of the Assistant-Secretaries General.

The political and diplomatic advantages derived by Bangladesh from its membership in the OIC also leave a good deal to be desired. While opening the doors to the Islamic world in the mid-70s one of the aims of Bangladesh was to project its image and win over a moral backing which seemed necessary to consolidate its position in the comity of nations. It can be safely said that to a great extent Bangladesh has been able to achieve this aim. This is seen in the backing it received at the time of its becoming members of the World Health Organization and the United Nations. On the other hand membership

²⁶, Syed Tayeb-ur Rahman, *Global Geo- Strategy of Bangladesh, OIC and Islamic Ummah*, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1985, p. 59.

of the 8 specialized committees of the OIC is to be a rare honour for a country like Bangladesh.

Over the years, Bangladesh has secured unequivocal endorsement of most of the Islamic countries on various issues. The Farakka and Ganges Waters dispute pose a serious threat to Bangladesh. The Farakka issue was included in the Joint Communiqué of the 7th ICFM in May 1976. In 1978 and 2000, Islamic countries supported Bangladesh for its seat in the Security Council. Saudi Arabia not only lends her support for Bangladesh but the Saudi permanent representative to the UN actively lobbied for Bangladesh. Indonesia at one time withdrew from a high-level UN position for Bangladesh²⁷. The Islamic group of states in the United Nations expressed complete solidarity with Bangladesh regarding the presentation of her problems in the Law of the Sea Conference that took place in New York in 1976²⁸.

Bangladesh's economic diplomacy in the OIC is comparatively more successful. Bangladesh proposed the establishment of an Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training in Dhaka, which was approved, and the centre was established in Dhaka now known as the Islamic University of Technology. The Islamic Chambers of Commerce and Industry has been established in Karachi at the proposal of Bangladesh. At the 6th ICFM, Bangladesh placed a four point proposal for economic cooperation, one of which was the formation of the Islamic Economic Community, which later developed into the idea of the Islamic Common Market (ICM). Bangladesh is also the founder member of the Islamic Development Bank and one of the great beneficiaries of it by receiving loans and grants for its overall development. Bangladesh wants to strengthen the unity of the organization through political and economic consolidation of the member states so that the Islamic bloc can play a role in the political and economic development and security of the member countries.

Economically, the oil-rich Arab-Islamic countries have proven to be very helpful in different ways for Bangladesh. They provide a great deal of economic and strategic aid most of which is in the form of grants to Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, the Islamic

²⁷ Harunur Rashid, op. cit, p. 127.

²⁸ Khan, Mohammad Mohabbat & Hussain, Sayed Anwar, *Bangladesh Studies: Politics, Administration, Rural Development and Foreign Policy*, Centre for Administrative Studies, University of Dhaka, 1985, p.135.

countries have become the largest market for Bangladeshi labour force-both skilled and unskilled. The remittance sent by these Bangladeshis is a vital source of foreign exchange. Trade between Bangladesh and these countries have good prospects, and are increasing in volumes. The terms of trade is favourable to Bangladesh as a major share of the import bill is paid through loans and grants. West Asia is the major source of employment for the Bangladeshi migrants. More than 800,000 Bangladeshi live in different countries of West Asia and 74 per cent of the total remittances into the country comes from these areas²⁹.

Bangladesh followed a consistent and constructive policy in lending full support to the objectives of the OIC and intensification of efforts for increasing cooperation among the Islamic countries in safeguarding and promoting their security interests both economic and political. Bangladesh is determined to make the OIC one of the most dynamic and effective international organizations of the world. During the 4th OIC Summit, the former Bangladeshi president stated forcefully of the needed for a new kind of statesmanship and a new brand of courage, which could rise above narrow parochial interests and respond to the challenges of the time with all the nerve, understanding, cooperation and confidence at its command³⁰.

Bangladesh endeavours to have many intensive and extensive bilateral relations with the Islamic countries and to make the OIC active and important organization. The level of its relations is determined by responses of these countries because Bangladesh is at the receiving end with the important Islamic countries.

Bangladesh today occupies an important position in the world community due to the efforts to achieve full development and to eradicate underdevelopment from its sisterly Islamic countries, which is striving to follow the Islamic revival that the Muslim world is undergoing at the present time. The various conferences under the auspices of the OIC provided Bangladesh an opportunity to become closer to the Islamic world. While identifying itself with the Arab cause it also made it a point to secure effective support from members for different problems that faced Bangladesh.

²⁹S.R. Chakravarty, op. cit, p. 20.

³⁰ Sayed Tayeb-ur Rahman, op. cit, p. 74.

A small country like Bangladesh with gigantic economic and political problems, would always continue to remain susceptible to external strategic manouvres and foreign influences³¹. Even so, Bangladesh still continues to play an active and constructive role as a member of the OIC and tries to demonstrate its full commitment to the objectives of the OIC and also its preparedness to cooperate fully with sister member countries in promoting the interests of the Islamic countries. Bangladesh should try to maintain good, friendly and brotherly relations with all the Islamic countries by avoiding involvement in existing political antagonisms and controversial issues and conflicts.

Bangladesh participated in all the Summits of the OIC including special Summits. It found the OIC and its various organs most valuable as forums for discussing problems of common interests to the Islamic Ummah and taking united action in dealing with them. They also provided a unique opportunity for Bangladesh to get closer to sister Muslim countries including those where Bangladesh did not have any diplomatic missions to represent itself. The intensification of cooperation between Bangladesh and the Islamic countries proved to be mutually beneficial both economically and politically. The bilateral relations between Bangladesh and other co-Islamic countries have been strengthened to their mutual benefit. Bangladesh solicits and gets supports collectively in pursuance of its diplomatic objectives, which has generated greater security for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh as an important member of the OIC played an active role in all its meetings. In international forums and the United Nations Bangladesh highlights and takes definite stand on the problems of the Islamic world. Bangladesh as the second largest Muslim state has its legitimate important position in the OIC. Bangladesh gives high importance to its multilateral diplomacy at the OIC. Dhaka strives for further developing the OIC system in new areas and consolidating its activities in the established avenues. It is one of the major beneficiaries of the OIC developmental assistance in different fields. During its nascent stage Islam was a constraint to the foreign policy of Bangladesh which later became quite advantageous during the post Mujib era.

³¹ Dilara Choudhury, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy Outlook: Regional and International Settings", *Bangladesh: South Asia and the World*, ed. by Emajuddin Ahmed and Abul Kalam, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p. 53.

The successive governments in Bangladesh recognized the importance of developing good and friendly relations with the Muslim world for the economic betterment of the country. Bangladesh has to be careful not to antagonize the major power blocs and not to take sides with the subtle grouping within the OIC. Bangladesh's positions on the major political issues before the OIC are in accordance with the mainstream thought in the Islamic world. As a country economically dependent on the Arab and other Islamic countries Bangladesh has little option but to go along with the mainstream of the OIC.

The role of Bangladesh in the OIC can fairly be termed as satisfactory. The records of the OIC clearly reflects Bangladesh's efforts for the consolidation of Muslim unity on a worldwide basis and for widening and strengthening cooperation among the Muslim states in the political, diplomatic, economic and cultural fields. As an ardent supporter of Islamic unity, Bangladesh has always tied itself with the OIC decisions, be it on the Afghanistan or Palestine or Kuwait issues. This has enhanced the standing and prestige of Bangladesh among the comity of nations. The commitment to the cause of Islam is a cardinal principle of the foreign policy of Bangladesh. Bangladesh's unstinting and unabated support to the OIC in particular and the Islamic world in general is likely to grow regardless of the political parties that come to power. This contribution will hopefully be as meaningful and as positive in the future as it has always been.

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<i>The Bangladesh Times</i>	(Dhaka), 1992.
<i>The Daily Sangram</i> (Bangla)	(Dhaka)
<i>The Daily Inqilab</i> (Bangla)	(Dhaka)
<i>The Daily Prothom Alo</i> (Bangla)	(Dhaka)
<i>The Daily Dinkal</i> (Bangla)	(Dhaka)
<i>The Hindu</i>	(Delhi)
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Annexure – I

List of the Member Countries of the OIC

	Name	Joining date
1	Islamic State of AFGHANISTAN	1969
2	Republic of ALBANIA	1992
3	People's Democratic Republic of ALGERIA	1969
4	Republic of AZERBAIJAN	1992
5	Kingdom of BAHRAIN	1972
6	People's Republic of BANGLADESH	1974
7	Republic of BENIN	1983
8	BRUNEI-DARUSSALAM	1984
9	BURKINA-FASO (then Upper Volta)	1974
10	Republic of CAMEROON	1974
11	Republic of CHAD	1969
12	Federal Islamic Republic of COMOROS	1976
13	Republic of DJIBOUTI	1978
14	Arab Republic of EGYPT	1969
15	Republic of GABON	1974
16	Republic of The GAMBIA	1974
17	Republic of GUINEA	1969
18	Republic of GUINEA-BISSAU	1974
19	Republic of GUYANA	1998
20	Republic of INDONESIA	1969
21	Islamic Republic of IRAN	1969
22	Republic of IRAQ	1975
23	Hashemite Kingdom of JORDAN	1969
24	Republic of KAZAKHSTAN	1995
25	State of KUWAIT	1969
26	KYRGHYZ Republic	1992
27	Republic of LEBANON	1969
28	Socialist People's LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA	1969
29	MALAYSIA	1969
30	Republic of MALDIVES	1976
31	Republic of MALI	1969
32	Islamic Republic of MAURITANIA	1969
33	Kingdom of MOROCCO	1969
34	Republic of MOZAMBIQUE	1994
35	Republic of NIGER	1969
36	Federal Republic of NIGERIA	1986
37	Sultanate of OMAN	1972
38	Islamic Republic of PAKISTAN	1969
39	State of PALESTINE	1969
40	State of QATAR	1972
41	Kingdom of SAUDI ARABIA	1969
42	Republic of SENEGAL	1969
43	Republic of SIERRA LEONE	1972
44	Republic of SOMALIA	1969
45	Republic of SUDAN	1969
46	Republic of SURINAME	1996
47	SYRIAN Arab Republic	1972
48	Republic of TAJIKISTAN	1992
49	Republic of TOGO	1997
50	Republic of TUNISIA	1969
51	Republic of TURKEY	1969
52	TURKMENISTAN	1992
53	Republic of UGANDA	1974
54	State of the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1972
55	Republic of UZBEKISTAN	1996
56	Republic of YEMEN	1969
57	Republic of Cote d'Ivoire	2001

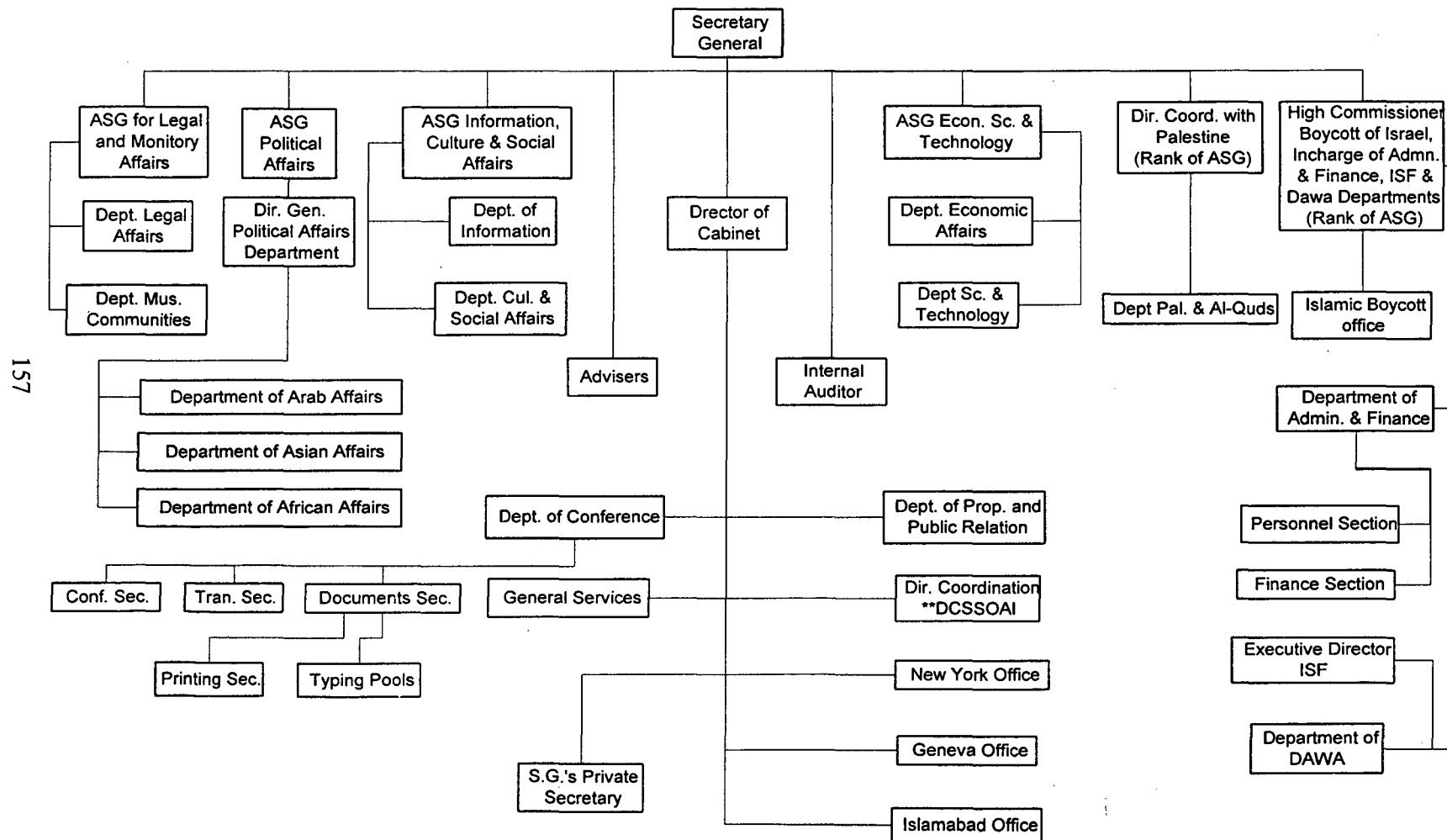
Annexure - II

LIST OF OBSERVERS

	STATES	Date of Joining
1	BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA	1994
2	Central AFRICAN Republic	1997
3	Kingdom of THAILAND	1998
	MUSLIM COMMUNITIES/ORGANIZATION	
4	Turkish Muslim Community of KIBRIS	1979
5	Moro National Liberation Front	1977
6	UNITED NATIONS (UN)	1976
7	Non-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)	1977
8	League of ARAB STATES (LAS)	1975
9	Organization of AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)	1977
10	ECONOMIC COOPERATION Organization (ECO)	1995

Annexure - III

CHART. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF SECRETARIAT GENERAL



Annexure - III

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**Department of Coordination with Subsidiary & Specialized & Affiliated Institutions.

Source: Zafar Imam, The Organization of Islamic Conference: Continuity and Change and India, p.85.

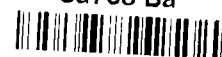
Annexure – IV

Imports from the OIC Countries (Value in Million Taka)

Country/Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
Afghanistan	-	9	9	46	14
Albania	-	-	-	-	-
Algeria	153	200	63	-	-
Azerbaijan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Bahrain	5	507	441	91	1197
Benin	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Brunei	32	55	-	-	-
Burkina Faso	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Cameron	3	69	149	66	350
Chad	-	1	-	2	3
Comoros	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Djibouti	-	-	-	-	2
Egypt	165	874	437	479	379
Gabon	-	5	-	-	-
Gambia	9	2	-	-	-
Guinea	9	2	-	-	-
Guinea Bissau	-	-	-	16	4
Guyana	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Indonesia	2920	4923	9998	13056	14501
Iran	-	859	722	1580	1890
Iraq	-	4	1	1	2
Jordan	9	53	28	36	23
Kazakhstan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Kuwait	44	605	3693	2223	3234
Kirghistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Lebanon	-	2	1	-	-
Libya	-	328	2	-	-
Malaysia	4973	9060	8349	7108	9076
Maldives	1	13	12	-	1
Mali	-	108	35	9	106
Mauritania	-	3	-	-	-
Morocco	-	-	1	1	-
Mozambique	-	51	152	8	57
Niger	-	-	4	-	-
Nigeria	1	20	43	331	88
Oman	25	99	87	45	55
Pakistan	4638	2792	3586	4690	5223
Palestine	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Qatar	11	928	201	120	262
Saudi Arabia	3562	5800	4963	5550	10807
Senegal	-	21	1	2	9
Sierra Leone	-	-	-	-	1
Somalia	3	16	6	-	7
Sudan	159	331	941	596	505
Suriname	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Syria	107	356	770	86	138
Tajikistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Togo	36	9	38	116	152
Tunisia	1	1	147	-	514
Turkey	95	662	398	2781	1462
Turkmenistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Uganda	-	-	80	-	11
U.A.E	341	-	1390	644	3068
Uzbekistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Yemen	-	-	29	34	11
Total Imports from the OIC Countries	17293	28766	36777	39717	53152
Grand Total of Imports from the Countries	254646	290187	318917	341017	372022
% Share of the OIC Countries	6.79	9.91	11.53	11.64	14.28

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 286-290.

Note: n.a = Not Available
1 US\$ = 59 Taka



Annexure – V

Exports of Bangladesh to the OIC Countries (Value in Million Taka)

Country/Year	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
Afghanistan	76	279	482	110	46
Albania	-	-	-	-	1
Algeria	76	-	53	7	72
Azerbaijan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Bahrain	4	8	42	9	7
Benin	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Brunei	-	2	8	1	-
Burkina Faso	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Cameron	48	43	54	19	28
Chad	-	-	-	2	-
Comoros	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Djibouti	-	1	-	2	-
Egypt	705	286	220	612	240
Gabon	-	-	-	-	1
Gambia	-	-	8	2	3
Guinea	7	1	3	6	3
Guinea Bissau	-	-	7	1	1
Guyana	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Indonesia	125	466	221	396	421
Iran	1682	2200	1527	1547	1867
Iraq	9	1	104	151	-
Jordan	167	55	115	59	57
Kazakhstan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Kuwait	15	24	17	25	17
Kirghistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Lebanon	24	8	15	30	15
Libya	32	3	-	94	21
Malaysia	226	432	821	158	233
Maldives	3	1	-	-	-
Mali	-	-	-	-	-
Mauritania	-	-	-	-	-
Morocco	71	35	10	27	47
Mozambique	12	40	25	24	19
Niger	-	-	2	-	-
Nigeria	31	95	24	10	-
Oman	154	132	131	13	13
Pakistan	1521	1479	1512	2249	2306
Palestine	3	-	-	5	1
Qatar	33	20	29	17	17
Saudi Arabia	159	114	597	240	201
Senegal	2	-	9	1	135
Sierra Leone	-	3	1	-	-
Somalia	-	2	-	9	-
Sudan	359	803	906	860	380
Suriname	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Syria	1085	1370	534	732	179
Tajikistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Togo	12	6	15	3	11
Tunisia	136	29	8	165	20
Turkey	1060	699	964	1410	1198
Turkmenistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Uganda	13	27	6	27	44
U.A.E	600	642	1323	1029	705
Uzbekistan	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Yemen	5	2	255	21	5
Total Exports to the OIC Countries	8455	9308	10048	10073	8314
Grand Total of Exports to the Countries	144521	171554	229408	245620	247415
% Share of the OIC Countries	5.85	5.42	4.37	4.10	3.36

Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, June, 2002, p. 286-290 & Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh, 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, December 2002, p. 255

