

**BANGLADESH AND
THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE :
1971 — 1988**

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TUHFA ZAMA



CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL AND SOUTH - EAST ASIAN
AND SOUTH - WEST PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

New Mehrauli Road :: New Delhi-110 067

Centre for South, Central, South-east
Asian and South-west Pacific Studies

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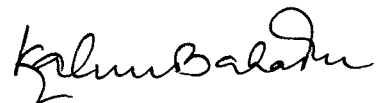
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Certified that the dissertation entitled "BANGLADESH AND THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE : 1971 - 1988" submitted by Tuhfa Zaman is in partial fulfilment of six credits out of a total requirement of twenty four credits for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this university. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of an M. Phil. Degree in this University or any other University. This is her own work.

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(DR. KALIM BAHADUR)
Supervisor



Acting Centre Chairperson

Chairperson

Centre for South, Central and Southeast
Asian and South West Pacific Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

PREFACE

This study attempts to identify the factors that shaped and moulded Bangladesh's relations with the Muslim world leading to its membership to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), to review the activities of Bangladesh within the OIC and the stand the country has taken on the various issues concerning the Muslim world, and to determine the extent to which membership in the OIC has benefitted the country. 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 visible and active role in the OIC and on issues of grave importance to the Muslim world. Relations with the Islamic world continue to be an area of importance to Bangladesh's foreign policy decision-makers.

Bangladesh's relations with the Muslim world and its activities within the OIC form a part of its overall

foreign relations activities and its search for political prominence and legitimacy and economic gains. No comprehensive study on this aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy and relations has as yet been undertaken.

Though originally a student of political science, I became keenly interested in foreign relations and in the working of international organisations during my husband's posting in New York at the Bangladesh Permanent Mission at the UN from 1982-1986. The present study emanates from that interest. In a way, I was fortunate that, in June 1988, during the course of my study, my husband was transferred from New Delhi to Jeddah as the Consul-General of Bangladesh, and I was able to consult the publications of the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), which are not readily available elsewhere. I was also able to interview prominent personalities and officials of Bangladesh and at the OIC, to whom gratitude is expressed.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all my teachers at JNU, especially Professor Urmila Phadnis, and Professor Kalim Bahadur, my supervisor, for their invaluable guidance. I am grateful to all the officials

of the School of International Studies for the cooperation and assistance I received during the two years of my study at JNU.

To my parents, Janab and Begum C.I. Zaman, of Dhaka, I express indebtedness, for instilling in their children a love for knowledge, and to my relations for their encouragement.

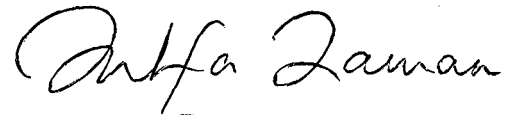
I wish to record my gratitude to my uncle- and aunt-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Matiul Islam, of UNIDO, for their affection and the generous hospitality that they extended to me during my stay in New Delhi for the completion of my dissertation.

I am grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Mozharul Huq, of Bangladesh High Commission, New Delhi, for their gracious assistance and to Dr. and Mrs. Rizwanul Islam, of ILO, New Delhi, for their kind friendship. I wish to thank Mr. M. A. Salek, in Jeddah, and Mr. Ziaur Rahman, in New Delhi, for meticulously typing the manuscript.

I acknowledge with affection the encouragement I have always received from my sons, Nausher and Nageeb.

It was the knowledge of their pride in their mother's work and the assurance of their love that sustained me during my stay in New Delhi.

To my husband, Syed Muazzem Ali, who has been a pillar of strength and inspiration, I owe my deepest gratitude. I know that without his support and encouragement I would never have returned to studies after such a long break.



Tuhfa Zaman

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi.

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CHAPTER I

EMERGENCE OF BANGLADESH AND ENTRY INTO THE OIC

Emergence of Bangladesh

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state on 16 December 1971¹. Till its independence Bangladesh had been a part of Pakistan. When the British colonial rule ended in the South Asian sub-continent in August 1947, in its place emerged a pre-dominantly Hindu India and an overwhelmingly Muslim Pakistan.² Islam was the only bond that had brought East and West Pakistan together. Attempts by the ruling elite of West Pakistan to subjugate the Bengali culture and language gave rise to certain amount of unrest and dissatisfaction among

¹ It needs to be noted here that " more than eighty five percent of the people of Bangladesh are Muslims, and much of their values and norms emanate from the inspirations and teachings of Islam." See Emajuddin Ahmed: "Introduction", : *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: a Small State's Imperatives* (Dhaka, 1984).

² Mizanur Rahman Shelly: *Emergence of a new nations in a Multi-polar world: Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1977), p 132.

the Bengalis of East Pakistan right from 1948.³ A complete polarization on regional basis took place in the politics of the country.⁴

The geographical separation of the two wings of Pakistan and the magnitude of the cultural and linguistic differences between them, coupled with the conduct and attitudes of the governing elite of the central government towards East Pakistan made it extremely difficult for East Pakistan to continue further in the union. The economic exploitation, political suppression and cultural infiltration that was systematically perpetrated on East Pakistan by the military - bureaucratic regime from West Pakistan was directed at making East Pakistan a colony. The refusal of the military - bureaucratic central government, in early 1971, to hand over power to the legitimately elected leader of the majority in the National Assembly, and the subsequent military crackdown, forced the Bengalis to start the liberation struggle for a separate homeland. The only force that had bound the two wings of

³ Kuldeep Singh: India and Bangladesh (New Delhi, 1987), p 1

⁴ A.M.A. Muhith: Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation (Dhaka, 1978), p 58

Pakistan together was "Islamic unity", and that link was not strong any longer.

The External Environment

The Bangladeshis, in their struggle for liberation, received active moral and material support from India, and moral support from the Communist superpower Soviet Union and several Socialist states of Europe. The United States sided with Pakistan, with China giving Pakistan great moral support. The response of the Soviet Union was conditioned by the general Soviet policy towards Asia (to "contain" Chinese influence in the area) and by its close ties with India.⁵ For the United States, the Bangladesh crisis erupted at a time when it was recasting its global and Asian policies,⁶ and the Sino-American detente was in progress. China was suspicious of the Soviet Union and was not sure what were the ultimate Soviet goals were in Asia.⁷

⁵ Shelly, n.2, p. 79-83

⁶ *ibid*, p 111

⁷ *ibid*, pp 105-106

The Muslim countries of the Middle East did not favour the break-up of Pakistan, a powerful Muslim State. They looked with misgivings at the secessionist movement of the eastern wing of the country, particularly in view of the assistance it received from secular India and socialist Soviet Union. The motives of the actors were regarded with suspicion and ironically, the emergence of Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim country in the world, "angered the Muslim block in the Middle East".⁸

Bangladesh was born under a unique set of circumstances and an extraordinary combination of factors - an international setting that was substantially, though not formally, favourable towards it, shortsightedness on the part of the Pakistani military rulers, the pragmatic approach of the Indian leaders, the superior strength of the Indian army and the fierce determination of the Bengali freedom fighters to liberate their land.⁹ Guided by the political realities, the Bangladesh government declared that it

⁸ S.M. Ali: After the Dark Night: Problems of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, (Delhi, 1973), p. 129.

⁹ Shelly, n.2, p. 72.

would be non-aligned and sought recognition from as many countries as possible. "As a country which needs massive assistance for its economic reconstruction, Bangladesh's approach to foreign relations must be essentially development - oriented. For reasons of geography, she must promote close ties with countries in South East Asia; for cultural and religious reasons, she must feel certain affinities with the Muslim nations in Asia, as well as in the Middle East."¹⁰ By middle of 1972, close to eighty countries had accorded recognition to Bangladesh, including Indonesia and Malaysia which are two large and important states with Muslim majorities. However, the majority of the muslim states were still waiting.¹¹

The reaction of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)- a grouping of Islamic States and States with Muslim majority population-was most interesting. The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM)-the second highest body of the OIC-meeting in Jeddah in February - March 1972, considered the situation in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent arising

¹⁰ S.M. Ali, n.8, p. 130.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 132.

out of the emergence of Bangladesh. It declared its full support to Pakistan, "urged all peace-loving nations which respect moral values to support the Muslim nations in maintaining peace and security of the Islamic territories and Muslim people", called upon "all Muslim states to make every possible effort to preserve the heritage of Islam" and decided to send a delegation of reconciliation comprising of Algeria, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia to Islamabad and Dhaka "to bring about reconciliation between estranged brothers".¹² However, by the time of the Fourth ICFM, meeting in Benghazi in March 1973, the OIC had accepted the realities of the situation. The ICFM passed a resolution calling for the release of the Pakistani prisoners of war in India and requesting member states to extend assistance to Pakistan in the repatriation and rehabilitation of the prisoners.¹³ In the meantime, a great number of the Islamic states gradually extended recognition to Bangladesh.

¹² File of the Islamic Summit Conference and Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Riyadh, 1989), pp. 125-126.

¹³ Declaration and Resolutions of the Heads of States and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conferences 1968-81 (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 50

Determinants of the goals and objectives of Bangladesh's Foreign Policy

In order to study the gradual development of Bangladesh's relations with the Islamic world and Bangladesh's entry into the OIC, it is essential to examine its foreign policy objectives and goals. Foreign policy is the set of rules and practices that govern the relations of one state with the other states, and is usually conditioned by the objective of preserving its national interest amidst domestic constraints and global and regional pressures and pull. It is "the actions of a state toward the external environment and the conditions under which these actions are formulated."¹⁴ As in the case of all other countries, the goals and objectives set by the Bangladesh foreign policy decision-makers are determined by its geography, past experiences, economic conditions and needs, its ideology and its leadership, and at the same time are shaped by the regional and international environment. "To understand the foreign policy of any country, one has to bear in mind its

¹⁴ K.J.Holsti : International Politics : A Framework for Analysis (Eaglewood - Cliffs, 1972) p.21.

history and geography, its people and their problem."¹⁵ The principal determinant of the aims and objectives of a country's foreign policy is the maintenance of the national interest which incorporates a) maintenance of the integrity of the state, b) economic development and advancement, c) providing for national security and d) protecting the national prestige. the fact that the foreign policy of one country differs from the foreign policy of another is because of the particular domestic and international inputs that condition the foreign policy of each country.

The constitution of Bangladesh, in Article 25, enumerates the basic principle guiding the country's international relations as "respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes and respect for international law and the United nations charter."¹⁶ Through the successive governments of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad, the aims and

¹⁵ T.N.Kaul : Ambassadors Need Not Lie, Vol.1 (Delhi,1988) p.2

¹⁶ Article 25 (1) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (Dhaka, 1986) p.8.

objectives of the Bangladesh foreign policy have, more or less, remained the same, though the priorities have shifted. In addition to the basic foreign policy goals of all countries, that is, to safeguard the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the country and to abjure the use of force in the settlement of disputes, Bangladesh seeks to a) maintain good relations with the Islamic countries, b) ensure a constant flow of external resources for the country, and c) follow a non-aligned foreign policy¹⁷

All small powers possess a narrow margin of safety. "With a small territory (normally) and few resources, and with uncertain friends, it has very little time in which to correct mistakes. Fearing to take risks, caution is enjoined."¹⁸ In such circumstances, safeguarding security interests of the country becomes an issue of paramount importance. The traumatic circumstances of its birth, its geo-political situation and the geographical and cultural proximity of a powerful neighbor, India, to a very great extent

¹⁷ M. Shamsuul Huq: International Politics: A Third World Perspective (New Delhi, 1987), p 67

¹⁸ Robert L. Rothstein: Alliances and small powers (Colombia, 1968), p.25.

determine Bangladesh's foreign policy objectives and goals. Furthermore, "neutrality and non-alignment have always appealed to the small powers. The possibility of withdrawing from the struggles between the Great Powers, and of enjoying a period of years devoted to peace and internal developments, is the eternal myth for all small powers."¹⁹ Since 1966, East Pakistan's political leaders had been calling for Pakistan to renounce its military pacts with the West; hence, it was natural that, after independence, Bangladesh will follow a non-aligned foreign policy. Bangladesh also seeks strength in number, and is committed to the principles and policies that guide the Non-aligned Movement. And seeking strength in number and hoping to gain prestige and position in the international arena, Bangladesh sought to become member of various international bodies and organizations, notable among them being the OIC.

Bangladesh's own internal resources are inadequate to take care of the needs of the people.²⁰ Thus, one of the major objectives of the country's foreign policy is

¹⁹ *ibid*, p 30.

²⁰ Jayashree Biswas: US-Bangladesh Relations. A study of the Political and Economic Developments during 1971-81 (Calcutta, 1984), p 76.

to ensure a constant flow of foreign economic assistance. Whether this will ultimately lead to real development and help Bangladesh achieve self-reliance or will make her more dependent on aid is open to debate.²¹ However, in the years since independence Bangladesh's search for foreign aid has influenced its relationship with other countries. Soon after liberation, the Awami League leaders proclaimed their intention of building a socialist society, and as the immediate need for humanitarian relief ended, the government declared the necessity of curtailing dependence on the Western Powers and focusing on the assistance that the Soviet Union, India and the Eastern European countries could offer. However, they soon realized that the requirements of Bangladesh were too massive for the countries of the socialist bloc to meet. Gradually Sheikh Mujib was convinced that the country " could attract more aid by avoiding close links with countries unable or unwilling to meet her resource needs."²² Thus, Bangladesh

²¹ Rehman Soubhan: *The Crisis of External Dependence The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1982), pp 146-157

²² Mosharaf Hossain: "Nature of State Power in Bangladesh" *The Journal of Social Sciences* (Dhaka, 1979) October, No. 5, p. 34

constantly had to look for new sources of external assistance and to keep a working relationship with the old ones. "The need for extensive external support for our national development efforts has prompted us to develop close relations with more well-endowed countries."²³

The economic assistance that Bangladesh now receives from the Islamic countries, and expectations of more, is one of the main reasons Bangladesh seeks to have friendly relations with these countries. ²⁴ The Middle East is also seen as a potential market for the export of its manpower and thus as a source of huge foreign exchange earnings.²⁵ Bangladesh has to attract foreign assistance and investments, expand trade, export manpower and protect and promote its economic interests as a least developed country.²⁶ So the country's narrow

²³ Anisul Islam Mahmud, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh "Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges" *Bangladesh Backgrounder* (Dhaka, 1989) Vol.2, No.13, p.2.

²⁴ Nikhil Chakravathy, "Bangladesh" in U.S. Bajpai, (ed) *India and its Neighbours* (New Delhi, 1986), p. 296

²⁵ M. Golam Mostafa, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor" *BIISS Journal* (Dhaka, 1986) Vol.7, No.1, p.35

²⁶ Speech by Foreign minister, n. 23

resource base exerts substantial influence on the formulation of foreign policy and thereby the country's relations with other countries. Bangladesh thus turned to the West and the oil - rich Arab world. One of the principal objectives of Bangladesh's foreign policy has been to maintain and promote relations with the Islamic countries.

Islam in Bangladesh

The vast majority of the people of Bangladesh are Muslims, with Hindus, Christians and Buddhists making up less than twenty percent of the population. "Since the nineteenth century, Bengali Muslims have been faced with a dilemma regarding their cultural identity."²⁷ The question they have pondered over is whether they are Bengali Muslims or Muslim Bengalis. Some have identified themselves with the Arab and Islamic world, while others have ignored their connection with the Arab world and submerged themselves in the Bengali culture. The muslims of Bengal, after a brief interlude with Muslims of West

²⁷ Salahuddin Ahmed, "The Bengal Renaissance and the Muslim Community" in David Kopf and Safiuddin Joarder (eds), *Reflections on the Bangla Renaissance* (Dhaka 1977), p. 40

Pakistan, were back to their old situation and a clear-cut solution to their dilemma continues to elude them even today. The Bangladeshis are said to be "jealous of the newly won freedom" and "the basic consciousness is against any political identity with either Pakistan or India."²⁸

Immediately after liberation, the Awami League leaders declared secularism, socialism and democracy as the three fundamental principles of state policy, with nationalism added by Sheikh Mujib on his return from internment in Pakistan.²⁹ The insertion of secularism as a state principle created some misunderstanding among the people who had fought against Pakistan but had not rejected Islam. Sheikh Mujib, himself a devout Muslim, emphatically declared in the Constituent Assembly in November 1972, that secularism would not mean the absence of religion in the country, that he would in fact protect and promote all religions, but would not

²⁸ Subrata Banerjee, "Some Aspects of Political and Social Tensions in Bangladesh" in K. Bahadur (ed): *South Asia in Transition: Conflicts and Tensions* (New Delhi, 1986), p.185

²⁹ Ataur Rahman Khan, "Comments" in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed) : *Islam in Bangladesh: Society, Culture and Politics* (Dhaka, 1983), p.248

allow them to be used for political ends.³⁰ However, secularism was generally interpreted as "an extension of Indian ideological dominance."³¹ As in the case of all large and powerful countries bordering small and weak countries, India, being an immediate and large neighbor and almost completely surrounding Bangladesh, is feared by the people.

With the progressive deterioration in the economic situation in the country, Sheikh Mujib gradually turned to the Arab countries in the hope of substantial economic aid. A world-wide resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, coupled with the discovery of immense oil wealth in the Arab world, had its repercussions on a small nation like Bangladesh. In a free country, with such a vast proportion of Muslims, and where Islam is deep rooted, it is almost impossible to ignore the religious sentiments of the people. Bangladesh turned to the Islamic world in response to the pressures exerted both internally and globally by the changes in the ideological environment, and for its own economic needs.

³⁰ Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends" in Rafiuddin Ahmed, n.29,p.192

³¹ Khan, n. 29, p.247

"Toward the end of his rule, Sheikh Mujib 'Islamised' his speeches by using terms and idioms which were peculiar only to Muslim Bangladeshis."³²

The government of Ziaur Rahman played up the Islamic sentiments of the people and assiduously cultivated the Muslim countries. He himself said that Islam would be encouraged by the government.³³ Bangladesh did not declare itself an Islamic republic but measures were taken and reforms introduced paying attention to the general Islamic sentiments of the people and with an eye to gaining support of the Muslim countries. By a proclamation order in 1977, invocation was made to Allah in the preamble of the constitution of the country. The fundamental principles of state policy in the original constitution (1973) were changed by the proclamation order to read as follows, "The principles of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism, meaning economic and social justice...shall constitute the fundamental

³² Maniruzzaman, n. 30, p.197

³³ Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade*, (New Delhi, 1982), p.300

principles of state policy."³⁴ The following clause was added : "Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis of all actions."³⁵ Article 12, which prohibited patronage of any religion by the state, was dropped.³⁶ The article dealing with the foreign policy objectives of the country was amended to include the following : "The state shall endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity."³⁷

The change from the principle of "secularism" to "trust and faith in Almighty Allah" may be attributed to various reasons. Through these measures Ziaur Rahman sought to gain the support of the Arab world as well as of a sizeable member of people within the country. The economic needs of the country and the expectation of substantial foreign resource inflows from the newly rich Arab countries greatly influenced these moves. Ziaur

³⁴ *Constitution*, n.16, amendment to article 8(1), pp. 157-158

³⁵ *Ibid*, article 8(1A), p. 158

³⁶ Akmal Hussain, "Bangladesh and the Muslim World" in Emajuddin Ahmed (ed), *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, n.1, p.88

³⁷ *Constitution*, n.16, amendment to article 25, p. 158

Rahman was also trying to win the support of the Islamic political parties and such elements in the country who had been banned after liberation and had been lying low, with the objective of broadening his power base.³⁸ Ziaur Rahman was looking for legitimacy, and what better way to legitimize oneself than by proclaiming faith in Islam in a predominantly Muslim country and thereby touching a very sensitive chord in the Bangladeshis' lives. "For gaining mass support and the much needed legitimacy, he had built up an ideology around the concept of Bangladeshi nationalism."³⁹

The old question of the identity of the people as Bengali - Muslims (or Muslim - Bengalis) was raised, and most other political groupings in the country refrained from making any big issue out of it, for fear of hurting the feelings of the people. Thus, the Islamic political parties could recapture their lost position and were rehabilitated. Prominent among the parties with Islamic titles or those based on Islamic principles are the factions of the Muslim League, Islamic Democratic

³⁸ Emajuddin Ahamed, "Comments" in Rafiuddin Ahmed, n.29, p. 244

³⁹ Santimay Ray, "An Overview of the Dynamics of Bangladesh Politics" in K. Bahadur, n.28, p.192

League, *Jammat-i-Islami*, *Nizam-i-Islam* and *Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islam*. *Jamaat-i-Islam* is by far the most active and effective.

In 1968-69, *Jamaat* had 425 full members and 40,000 associate members in the area comprising Bangladesh, and by March 1980, there were 650 full members and 100,000 associate members.⁴⁰ *Jamaat* has come to be an important force in the country in recent times, mostly in regard to stirring agitation against government moves. Hussain Muhammad Ershad's various political maneuvers to get a positive response from the Islamic political parties, has on occasion met with failure. Around the middle of 1984 he gradually began to woo the left and other parties.⁴¹ All this is aimed at gaining political support.

Recently, Islam has been declared the official religion of Bangladesh, though the name of the country has remained unchanged. This does not indicate any drastic change, but rather spells out the intention of

⁴⁰ Figures derived from Mairuzzaman, n. 30, pp. 210-211

⁴¹ Ray, n. 39, p. 185

the government and ruling party to encourage the practice of Islam. The fact that the country has not been renamed an "Islamic Republic" means that the laws of the country will not be changed to conform to the Islamic *Shariah* laws, as was done in the case of Pakistan, about whom an analyst comments, "Islam as a religion and Islamisation are two different things....Theocratisation of a state is a political act."⁴²

Islam is a powerful force in Bangladesh, and it has gradually come to occupy an important position in the lives of the people, - important in the sense that religion serves as a cushion against the social and economic malaise that threaten the lives of the people. "Decline in politics and economy has driven many to seek alternative sources of solace."⁴³ The rise in Islamic sentiments among the people of the predominantly Muslim country and the moves by the successive governments towards giving more importance to the religion should not be viewed as a rise in Islamic fundamentalism in the

⁴² Virendra Narain, "Tensions in Pakistan : Politics behind Religious Fundamentalism" in K. Bahadur, n. 28, p.153

⁴³ Sadek Hossain, "The Jannat Factor in Bangladesh Politics", *Courier* (Dhaka), Oct. 28 - Nov.3, 1988.

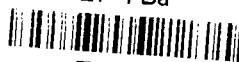
country, but rather as a product of its economic and political compulsions.

The countries of the Middle East are held in great respect by the Muslims of Bangladesh as the birth place of their religion, - since devotees of all religions hold the birth place of their religion in reverence. Apart from that, Bangladesh has always had great sympathy for the Jerusalem cause, which is at the core of the OIC. The OIC was born in the aftermath of the attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is sacred to the Muslims as the third most important mosque. Also known as *Al-Quds Al-Sharif*, Jerusalem has a great religious and spiritual significance for the Muslims. "Muslims, for historical and religious reasons, view their right to Al Quds as sacred, eternal and inviolable."⁴⁴ All these facts put together may be seen as crucial to Bangladesh's desire to join the OIC.

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⁴⁴ Statement by M Shamsul Huq, former Foreign Minister, on Jerusalem Day, *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1979) vol. 3, no. 1, p. 10



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Bangladesh's Entry into the OIC

Bangladesh attended the Fourth Non-aligned Summit held in Algiers in September 1973. Sheikh Mujib told his people in December 1973: "By admitting Bangladesh at the Algiers non-aligned Conference, the majority of the Arab and African states have acknowledged and recognized our sovereign status."⁴⁵ Bangladesh, in order to gain recognition from the Arab countries, played up its "Muslim" image and during the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, it sent a doctor's team to help the Arabs.⁴⁶ Bangladesh's support to the Arab cause impressed the Arab countries. Sheikh Mujib said, "During the recent Arab-Israel war Bangladesh extended a helping hand as comrades-in-arms to the Arabs. As a result the people of the Arab world have accepted Bangladesh as a true friend."⁴⁷ In January, 1974, while addressing the country's parliament, the President of Bangladesh Mohammad Ullah said "Bangladesh has made significant

⁴⁵ Sheikh Mujib's address to the nation on 16 December, 1973, *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1973) Vol.2, no.2 p. 14

⁴⁶ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka, 1980), p. 88

⁴⁷ Sheikh Mujib's address, n. 31, p. 14

progress in entering into and developing friendly relations with the Arab world. It is our sincere hope that this will pave the way for mutually beneficial cooperation with these countries in various fields."⁴⁸

On February 21, 1974 the leaders of the Arab countries gathered at Lahore, Pakistan, for the Second Islamic Summit. They pressurized Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan into recognizing Bangladesh, thus facilitating the way for Sheikh Mujib to attend the Summit. Sheikh Mujib had insisted on recognition by Pakistan as a precondition for attending 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 relations with the Islamic countries acquired an added dimension with the admission of Bangladesh to the OIC"⁴⁹ The Summit proved to be a great diplomatic gain for Sheikh Mujib and Bangladesh.

⁴⁸ President's address to Parliament, 15 January, 1974, *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1974), Vol.2, no.3, p.10

⁴⁹ Shamsul Huq, n.17, p. 73

Sheikh Mujib, addressing the leaders of the Islamic world, said, "Indeed we are very happy that the 75 million people of Bangladesh have been able to take their place in this forum to declare their fraternal solidarity with their brethren who are assembled here and extend their support to the just cause of our Arab brethren."⁵⁰ Bangladesh thus gained entry into the Organization of Islamic Conference, which was considered a tremendous achievement by the country, on account of the fact that the independence of Bangladesh had brought mixed reactions from the Islamic countries. With its membership of the OIC, Bangladesh was now a member of the major international organization or bodies, except the United Nations, where its admission was blocked by the Chinese veto. The membership of the OIC also paved the way for Bangladesh to resolve its outstanding issues with Pakistan, like repatriation and division of assets. Bangladesh hoped that the Arab influence on Pakistan could bring about a speedy resolution of these problems.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Sheikh Mujib's Speech at Islamic Summit Conference, February 24, 1974. *Bangladesh Documents*, n. 34, p.21

⁵¹ M. Golam Mostafa, n. 25, p. 35

Within a very short time Bangladesh became very active in the OIC. At the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference (ICFM) held in Jeddah in August 1974, Bangladesh became one of the founder-members of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB),⁵² The then Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. Kamal Hussain, visited various Muslim countries and highlighted the close bonds of friendship with those countries.⁵³ The change of government in Bangladesh in August 1975 (and the assassination of Sheikh Mujib) was followed by *de jure* recognition by Saudi Arabia,⁵⁴ as Sheikh Mujib's government had been considered too pro-Soviet and pro-Indian for their taste. The change of government was the watershed in Bangladesh-Middle East relations. Under the presidency of Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh received substantial economic assistance from the Arab world⁵⁵

⁵² Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Change : Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi, 1982), p.141

⁵³ *Bangladesh Documents*, Vol.2, no.3, pp 20-23 and Vol.4, pp 22-25

⁵⁴ *Bangladesh Times* (Dhaka), 17 August 1975

⁵⁵ Craig Baxfer: "Bangladesh at ten:an appraisal of a decade of political development" in *The World today* (London, 1982), Vol. 28, no.2, p.35

and he maintained a high profile as the head of state of a country with Muslim majority. The then Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Professor M. Shamsul Huq, says in retrospect, "I think Bangladesh succeeded during this period in placing her relations on a stable and mutually beneficial footing inspired by shared values."⁵⁸ The government of Hussain Muhammad Ershad continues the policy of seeking close friendship with the Islamic countries and Bangladesh is very active within the OIC.

Summary

Bangladesh, whose emergence was not very favourably perceived by some of the Islamic countries, fights for Arab and Palestinian causes at the UN, the Non-aligned Conferences and other multilateral organizations. Bangladesh has been able to secure membership in major special committees in the OIC. It is very active within the OIC and strives to maintain a conspicuous position in the Organization's political, economic, social and cultural fields, as the study will show. A view at the Organization itself is necessary in order to understand Bangladesh's activities in the right perspective.

⁵⁸ Interview of Professor M. Shamsul Huq by the writer at Dhaka on January 3, 1989

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

There have been numerous attempts at forging Islamic unity since late nineteenth century - to bring the Muslims living in different areas of the world on a common platform of solidarity, namely, the Muslim "Ummah" (brotherhood). It was felt by the Muslims that Islam was threatened by the influence of western civilization and by the deterioration within the Islamic society itself.¹ Jamaluddin-al-Afghani (1830-96) has been called the inventor of Pan-Islamism, that is, the belief that the Muslims, by restoring unity amongst themselves, can stop European aggression and regain lost territory.² Shah Waliullah, a prominent Muslim intellectual of India in the mid-eighteenth Century, was of the opinion that the decline of Islamic power (in

¹ Kalim Bahadur, "The Politics of Islamic conferences" in *Secular Democracy* (New Delhi), November 1972, p. 11

² Yuvraj Deva Prasad, *The Indian Muslims and World War - I* (New Delhi, 1985), p.4

India and worldwide) was "due to the social and moral degeneration of the Muslims."³

The several attempts at bringing the Muslims of the world together for an Islamic Conference may be traced back to 1898, when the first known assemblage of Muslims was held in Makkah.⁴ This was followed by the different attempts at forging unity over the question of Caliphate of Turkey. The unsuccessful *Khilafat* Movement of India (which started in 1917) may be termed as an attempt to bring the Muslims together. The Sultan of Turkey was considered the *Khalifa* (Caliph) of the Muslims, or their religious and political leader.⁵ The *Khilafat* Movement has been described as "a movement in support of retaining the Turkish Sultan as the Caliph of the Muslim world."⁶ The reaction of the different countries towards the threat faced by the Caliphate varied. Attempts were made to convene Islamic meetings, but these mostly met

³ G.P. Bhattacharjee, *Renaissance and freedom movement in Bangladesh* (Calcutta, 1973) p. 4.

⁴ Bahadur, n.1, p.11.

⁵ Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Political System of Pakistan* (Karachi, 1967), p. 23.

⁶ Kamruddin Ahmed, *A Socio-Political History of Bengal and the Birth of Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1975), p.11.

with failure. Noteworthy among these attempts was the First Islamic Congress held in Cairo from May 13, 1926 under the Chairmanship of Shaikh Ul Islam of Egypt.⁷ The Second Islamic Congress was opened in Makkah on June 7, 1926 at the initiative of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of the area now comprising modern Saudi Arabia.⁸ The Third Congress was held in 1961 in Jerusalem for studying the ways to strengthen and safeguard Islam.⁹ According to expert opinion, the three afore mentioned Congresses could not achieve much Success as "National interests of the Muslim world could not be harmonized at any point."¹⁰

In 1949 and 1951 Islamic Conferences were held in Karachi, in Jerusalem in 1956, 1960 and 1962, in Damascus in 1956 and in Baghdad in 1962.¹¹ The World Muslim League, based in Makkah, convened Conferences on

⁷ Bahadur, n. 1, p. 13

⁸ *File of the Islamic Summit Conference and the ICFMs* (Riyadh, 1989), p. 16.

⁹ Bahadur, n. 1, p. 14

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 14

¹¹ *Saudi Gazette*, (Riyadh), article "OIC closes Muslim rank 13 March, 1989

a more or less regular basis.¹² Calls were given for convening an Islamic Summit at a Meeting of some Muslim countries held in Mogadishu in 1965 and a meeting of the World Muslim League held in Makkah the same year.¹³

THE FORMATION OF THE OIC

In september 1969, an Islamic Summit was called in Rabat at the initiative of King Hasan of Morocco and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem brought the leaders of the Muslim world together at Rabat and the urgent need for establishing an Islamic Organization was also discussed.¹⁴ The Rabat Summit, called the First Islamic summit Conference, passed a resolution directing the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic countries to "discuss the subject of establishing a Permanent Secretariat, charged *inter alia* with the responsibility of making contacts with Governments represented at the Conference,

¹² Bahadur, n.1, December 1972, p. 28-29

¹³ *Saudi Gazette*, 11 March 1989

¹⁴ *Arab News*, (Jeddah), 11 March 1989

and to coordinate their activities."¹⁵ Subsequently, the meeting of the Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah in March 1970 formally announced the formation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).¹⁶

The OIC has endured since then. The rallying point for the Islamic countries was the Jerusalem cause. The leaders expressed their deep faith in Islam, affirmed their adherence to the UN charter and condemned the sacreligious attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque which was in occupied territory. They declared that the Palestinians cannot be denied their inalienable right to their homeland and urged upon the superpowers to intensify their efforts to secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied areas. The Summit also resolved to promote, among the Islamic countries, mutual cooperation in the economic, scientific, cultural and spiritual fields.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Organization of the Islamic Conference, Charter and Declarations/Communiqués of the Islamic Summits* (Jeddah, n.d.) p. 21

¹⁶ *Riyadh Daily*, (Riyadh), 11 March 1989.

¹⁷ File, n. 8, p. 31.

THE OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE OIC

The Charter, as approved by the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign ministers (ICFM) held in Jeddah in 1972, states that the objectives¹⁸ of the OIC are to promote Islamic solidarity among member states, to consolidate economic, social, cultural and scientific cooperation among them and to coordinate consultations among the member states in international organizations. The charter also calls for the elimination of racial discrimination and eradication of colonialism in all its forms, and supports international peace and security founded on justice. The OIC coordinates the efforts for safeguarding the Muslim Holy Places, and also the supports that the people of Palestine receive in their struggle to regain their rights and liberate their land. It's objective is also to strengthen the struggle of all Muslim peoples for safeguarding their dignity, independence and national rights. The OIC also strives to promote cooperation and understanding among member states and other countries.

¹⁸ *The Organization of the Islamic Conference* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 10.

The principles¹⁹ guiding the activities of the OIC are : complete equality among member states, respect for the right of self-determination, and non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries. The OIC members will respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other members. The OIC supports settlement of disputes through peaceful means and abjures the threat or use of force for settling such disputes.

MEMBERSHIP

The OIC is composed of the states which participated in the Rabat Summit, attended the ICFM at Jeddah (March 1970) and Karachi (December 1970) and are signatory to the Charter of the OIC.²⁰ States with a Muslim majority are eligible for membership, but an application for membership has to be approved by a two thirds majority of the ICFM. At present there are forty-six members belonging to Africa, Asia and Europe.²¹ The OIC encompasses one-third of humanity living in the oil-

¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 11.

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 11

²¹ *ibid*, p. 14

rich countries of the Middle East as well as the poor states of Asia and Africa.

MAIN BODIES OF THE OIC

The main bodies of the Organization of the Islamic Conference are:

- i) Conference of Kings and Heads of States and Governments,
 - ii) Islamic Conference of foreign Ministers,
 - iii) General Secretariat, and
 - iv) International Islamic court of Justice.
-
- i) Conference of Kings and Heads of States and Governments:*

Also known as the Islamic Summit Conference, this is the supreme authority and the highest policy-making organ of the OIC.²² It considers issues of vital interest to the Muslim world and coordinates the policies and activities of the OIC accordingly. Originally expected to meet whenever the interest of the Muslim world warranted it, the Summit, as per the

²² *ibid*, p. 16

decision of the Third Islamic Summit (1981), now meets once every three years.²³ Five Summit meetings have been held so far. The Rabat Summit²⁴ (22-25 September 1969) was attended by the Heads of States and governments and representatives of thirty-five Muslim Countries. The representatives of the Muslim Community of India also attended the Summit, with the representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) attending as observers. The Second Islamic Summit²⁵ was held in Lahore (22-24 February 1974). It was attended by the Kings and Heads of States and Governments and representatives of thirty-five States, Bangladesh gaining admission to the OIC at this Summit. Palestine was represented by the PLO, and Iraq attended as an observer. The Third Islamic Summit Conference²⁶ was held in Makkah and Taif (25-28 January 1981) and was called "Palestine and Al-Quds 'Al-Sharif Session." It was attended by the Kings and Heads of States and Governments of thirty-eight countries. Afghanistan did

²³ *OIC*, n. 15, p. 16

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 18-21.

²⁵ *ibid*, pp. 23-26

²⁶ *ibid*, pp. 29-49

not attend as its membership had been suspended. Iran and Libya were absent. President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh was elected one of the two Vice-Chairmen of the Summit. The fourth Summit,²⁷ held in Casablanca (16-19 January 1984), was attended by Kings and Heads of States and Governments of forty-two countries including Palestine. The Turkish Cypriots and the Afghan Mujahideen attended as observers. The Fifth Islamic Summit²⁸ was held in Kuwait (26-29) January 1987). It was attended by the Kings and heads of States and Governments of forty-four member States. The sixth Islamic Summit Conference is scheduled to be held in Senegal in early 1990.²⁹

ii) *Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM):*³⁰

The ICFM meets once a year in one of the member states, though it can meet sooner in extraordinary sessions at the request of a member state or the Secretary General of the OIC with the approval of two-

²⁷ *ibid*, pp. 53-64

²⁸ *ibid*, pp. 67-80

²⁹ *ibid*, pp. 80

³⁰ *OIC*, n. 15 pp. 12-13 and *OIC*, n. 18, pp. 17-18

thirds of the members. The main functions of the ICFM are to consider means for implementing the general policy of the OIC, to take decisions on matters of common interest in accordance with the Charter, to discuss the Finance Committee report and to approve the Secretariat's budget. The ICFM also appoints the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretaries-General. All resolutions and recommendations of the ICFM have to be approved by a two-third majority.

Since the inception of the OIC, the ICFM has so far met seventeen times in the annual or ordinary sessions and four times in extraordinary sessions. The Coordinating Committee of the Foreign Ministers also meet in New York every year during the United Nations General Assembly session. 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 fourteenth ICFM at Dhaka from 6-11 December 1983. Consequently, Bangladesh became the Chairman of the OIC Coordinating Group at the UN in New York for 1984.

*iii) General Secretariat:*³¹

The Executive organ of the OIC is the General Secretariat. It follows up the resolutions and decisions of the Summit Conferences and the ICFMs and submits reports to the Conferences on the results of its activities. It assists the member states in mutual consultations and helps keep the avenues of communication between them open. The Secretariat assists and coordinates the activities of the specialized committees and subsidiary organs.

The General Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General who is elected by the member-states for a non-renewable term of four years. The previous Secretaries-General of the OIC have been from Malaysia, Egypt, Senegal, Tunisia and Pakistan. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada of Pakistan served for the period 1985-88. Dr. Hamid Al-Gabid of Guinea has been elected to succeed him.

The Secretary-General is assisted by four Assistant Secretaries-General (ASG) who are appointed by him on the recommendation of the member states on the basis of

³¹ *OIC*, n. 15, pp. 13-15 and *OIC*, n. 18, 18, pp. 19-20

geographical region. The Assistant Secretaries-General also serve for a non-renewable term of four years. In the original Charter there was provision for only three Assistant Secretaries-General to be in charge of a) Political Affairs, b) Cultural and Social Affairs and the Islamic Solidarity Fund and c) Economic, Administrative and Financial Affairs. At the Third Summit (Taif, 1981) it was decided to create the additional post of an Assistant Secretary-General for Al-Quds Al-Shareef and Palestine cause.

Dr. Arshaduzzaman of Bangladesh was an Assistant Secretary-General from 1980 to 1984. Mr. Mohammed Mohsin has been elected as ASG for 4 years starting from 1989. Officials from Bangladesh have also served and are serving the General Secretariat at high levels on deputation from the Government. They mostly work in the Economic Affairs Section.

The expenses of the Secretariat are to be borne by the member states in proportion to their national income. However, Al-Gabid complained soon after taking over that the member-states have been irregular in

paying their dues.³² The head quarters of the Secretariat are located in Jeddah, till the liberation of Jerusalem. The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English and French.

iv) International Islamic Court of Justice:

The decision to establish the Court was taken at the Taif Summit.³³ However, it has still not been set up. The Court shall examine disputes that may arise between member states and shall provide the interpretation of the Charter in case of any misunderstanding. The Court shall have seven members elected by the ICFM. The expenses of the Court shall be met by the member-states.

SPECIALIZED COMMITTEES

Specialized Committees have been formed within the general structure of the OIC and entrusted with specific functions. These Committees may be divided into two

³² *Saudi Gazette*, 7 March 1989.

³³ OIC, n. 15, p. 42.

groups.³⁴ One group of these committees are at the Ministerial level and are chaired by the Head of an Islamic State. Each Committee has a certain number of members as agreed upon at the Conferences. The other group consists of the Committees which are composed of representatives from all member states.

The specialized Committees are also called Permanent or Standing Committees. The following are the specialized Committees of the OIC³⁵ :

- i) Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee
- ii) Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs.
- iii) Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation.
- iv) Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation.
- v) Permanent Finance Committee.
- vi) Finance Control Organ.

³⁴ Report no. ICFM/17-88/AF/D.12 (OIC/COM/3-87/D-2) Annex III, OIC, (Jeddah) - also known as the SIPA Report.

³⁵ OIC, n.18, pages 25-35

vii) Standing Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs.

i) Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee:

The Al-Quds Committee was established on the recommendation of the Sixth ICFM (Jeddah, 1975). It studies the situation in Al-Quds, follows up the implementation of the resolutions of the ICFM and other international organizations and fora and submits an annual report to the ICFM. It has a membership of fifteen with King Hassan II of Morocco as the Chairman. Bangladesh is a member of the Al-Quds Committee. Bangladesh was also a member of the Al-Quds Summit-level Committee, which has become quite inactive now.

ii) 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 means of strengthening cooperation among the member states in the fields of information and culture. This Ministerial Committee is composed of fourteen members. Its Chairman

is the President of Senegal. Bangladesh is a member of the COMIAC.

iii) Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH):

Also formed in 1981 by a resolution of the Taif Summit, COMSTECH studies the ways of increasing scientific and technological cooperation among the member states. It has fourteen members and the President of Pakistan is its Chairman.

iv) Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC):

This is the third Specialized Committee that was established by the Taif Summit (1981). It studies means of strengthening economic and commercial cooperation among the Islamic states. Representatives of all the member states make up COMCEC. The President of Turkey is the Chairman of the Committee.

v) Permanent Finance Committee (PFC):

The Permanent Finance Committee was established under the provisions 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 General Secretariat in accordance with the rules laid down by the ICFM. Representatives of all Member States constitute this Committee. Bangladesh was elected a Vice-Chairman of the Committee for 1988, and has served as Vice-Chairman earlier well.

vi) Finance Control Organ (FCO):

Established in 1974, the Organ has eight members. It reviews and audits the accounts of the General Secretariat and reports to the ICFM. Bangladesh was a member of the FCO for four years from 1984-1988.

vii) Standing Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS):

This is one of the most active and effective specialized Committees of the OIC. It was established in

1976 on the basis of the resolution passed by the Seventh ICFM (Istanbul). It reviews progress of economic, cultural and social cooperation among member states. It also studies the economic, cultural and social issues that are being proposed by member states for submission to the ICFM. The Commission is composed of the representatives of all member states. Bangladesh is one of the Vice Chairmen of the Commission.

SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE OIC

These are the organs which are established by the OIC and are subsidiary to the General Secretariat.³⁸ The Secretary General is the highest authority as far as the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs are concerned. The member-states contribute to the finances of these organs and the finances are controlled and audited by the Permanent Finance Committee and the Finance Control Organ. Member states automatically become members of the Subsidiary organs. The heads of the subsidiary Organs are appointed on nomination by the Secretary-General and approval by the members.

³⁸ *Report*, n. 34

The subsidiary organs³⁷ of the OIC are :

- i) Islamic Solidarity Fund
- ii) Al-Quds Fund
- iii) Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for the Islamic Countries
- iv) Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture
- v) Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research
- vi) Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development
- viii) Islamic Centre for Development of Trade
- ix) International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Heritage
- x) Islamic Fiqh Academy
- xi) Islamic Civil Aviation Council
- xii) International Islamic Law Commission

The following are active subsidiary organs of the OIC:

³⁷ OIC, n. 18, pages 37-54

1 Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF):

The Fund was established in accordance with the resolutions of the Second Summit Conference (Lahore, 1974) and is based in Jeddah. Its objectives are to a) raise the intellectual and moral levels of the Muslims, b) provide relief and aid to Muslim states during droughts and floods etc., and c) assist Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries to raise their social and cultural standard and provide them with all kinds of material assistance like building mosques, hospitals and educational institutions. The finances of the Fund come mainly from voluntary contributions by the member states. The Fund has a Permanent Council and an Executive Organ. The Council has created many sub-committees for proper functioning of the Fund. Bangladesh is a member of the 13-member Permanent Council.³⁸

³⁸ Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and the Organization of Islamic Conference" in *Asian Affairs*, (Dhaka, 1987), Vol. 9, no. 1, page 19.

ii) Al-Quds Fund

The Fund was founded after the Seventh ICFM (1976) with the dual aim of checking the judaization of the occupied Arab territories and supporting the struggle of the Palestinians in Jerusalem and other occupied territories.³⁰ It is based in Jeddah and is financed by contributions from the Islamic Solidarity Fund and through voluntary contributions of the member states.

iii) Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for the Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) :

The eighth ICFM (1977) adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of the Centre. The main aims of the centre are to evaluate and study the economic, social and industrial structures of the member states, conduct research to find out ways of developing trade relations among member countries, determine means of maximum utilization of available resources of the member states and conduct training sessions in the field of statistics. The Centre is administered by a Director, appointed by the Secretary-General, and a Board of

³⁰ *File of the Summits and ICFMs*, n. 8, p. 165.

Directors. The General Assembly of the Centre meets once every two years. In addition to finances provided by the member states, the Centre also collects payments for services rendered. The Centre is located in Ankara (Turkey).

iv) Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (RCIHAC) :

The research Centre was created by the Seventh ICFM (1976) and is based in Istanbul (Turkey). It carries out research for better understanding among the Muslims, and creates conditions for close cooperation among the writers and historians of the Islamic countries. It helps in exchange of information and books among the institutions of higher education in the Islamic states. It is also entrusted with the job of organizing seminars and publishing quarterly reviews on the subject under its purview. The Centre is run by an Executive Bureau with a Director-General, and a Governing Council. Its finances are met by the Member States and the Islamic Solidarity Fund.

v) Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research (ICTVTR) :

The centre is based in Dhaka. In 1976 Bangladesh first offered to set up the Centre under the OIC⁴⁰ and it was created at the Ninth ICFM (Dakar, 1978). It conducts research on the technical and vocational education in member countries and trains personnel in the technical and technological fields. It also assists in the exchange of technical expertise among member states in the field of development of manpower resources. The Centre is administered by a General Assembly and a Board of Directors. The Director of the Centre is a Bangladeshi national.

vi) Islamic Committee of International Crescent (ICIC):

Created by the Tenth ICFM (Fez, 1979), the ICIC is based in Benghazi. Its objectives are to provide medical assistance to member countries to alleviate the sufferings caused by natural disasters and war, and to offer assistance to other international and local organizations serving the same purpose.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 188

vii) Islamic foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD)

The Foundation was created by the Sixth ICFM, (Jeddah, 1975). The main objectives of the Foundation are to increase cooperation in the field of science and technology among the Muslim countries, and to encourage research activities in these fields within an Islamic framework. The foundation is run by a Scientific Council and an Executive committee with a Director-General as the head. It is based in Jeddah.

viii) Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT):

The ICDT was established by the Taif Summit (1981). The Centre's main aim is to promote intra - OIC trade through exchange of information and ideas, research activities and contacts among businessmen. Located in Casablanca, the Centre has a General Assembly and a Board of Directors, the administration being taken care of by a Director. Part of the Centre's finances come from income for services rendered by it.

ix) International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage :

The Commission was created by a resolution adopted at the Ninth ICFM(1978). It is based in Istanbul and has a Board of Directors headed by a Chairman. The Commission aims at promoting cooperation and exchange of information on the cultural heritage of the Muslim world, and preserving that heritage through preservation of historical monuments, cities, manuscripts and works of arts and publication of books and manuscripts.

x) Islamic Fiqh Academy :

The Islamic Fiqh or Jurisprudence Academy was established by the Taif Summit. It is based in Jeddah. It studies the problems of contemporary life and provides solutions to these based on Islamic thought and culture. It has a Council and an Executive Bureau with specialized sections dealing with different aspects of Islamic life.

INDEPENDENT ORGANS

Independent organs emanate from the Organization of Islamic Conference but are not subsidiary to the General Secretariat.⁴¹ They function within the general framework of the OIC. They are not under the financial control of the General Secretariat or the ICFMs, and they are financed through subscriptions or contributions of member states. The membership of the independent organs is limited to those Islamic states who have signed the Statute of the organs. Bangladesh is a member of all the independent organs of the OIC.

The following are the independent organs⁴² working within the framework of the OIC :

- i) Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Jeddah
- ii) International Islamic New Agency (IINA),
Jeddah
- iii) Islamic States Broadcasting Organization
(ISBO), Jeddah

⁴¹ *Report, n. 34*

⁴² OIC, n. 18, pages 56-72

- iv) Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Commodity Exchange (ICCICE), Karachi
- v) Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Makkah
- vi) Islamic Shipowners Association (ISA), Jeddah
- vii) Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Rabat
- viii) Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF), Riyadh
- ix) Islamic Cement Association (ICA)
- x) Islamic States Telecommunication Union (ISTU)

The important independent organs are:

Islamic Development Bank (IDB) :

Based in Jeddah, the IDB has a present membership of forty-one Islamic countries. It is one of the most effective organs of the OIC. The Bank offers loans to member states and aims at promoting intra-OIC trade and contributing to economic development of member states. 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 IDB was created in 1973 and became operational in 1975.

International Islamic News Agency (IINA) :

The IINA works to develop close contacts among the news agencies of the member states and a better dissemination of information and understanding among these states. It is based in Jeddah. It has a General Assembly and is administered by a Director-General and an Executive Board. There are plans to merge ISBO with IINA.

Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Commodity Exchange (ICCICE) :

The ICCICE 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 objectives of the Chamber is to strengthen cooperation in trade and industry among the 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 a General Secretariate.

**Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organisation (ISESCO) :**

Established to support and protect the Islamic culture, the ISESCO is based in Rabat. The Organization seeks to strengthen cooperation among the member countries in educational, scientific and cultural research in order to protect Islamic thought from infiltration by foreign cultures. It also seeks to protect the identity of Muslims in non-muslims countries. The organs of the ISESCO are a General Assembly and an Executive Board headed by a Director-General.

THE SUPER POWERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The membership of the OIC today includes monarchies, revolutionary governments, democracies and military regimes. In recent times, due to their economic superiority, conservative Muslim states like Saudi Arabia and some Gulf states have come to play a more dominant role in the Organization. Consequently, on certain issues, the progressive states like Algeria, Syria and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen have not

shared the OIC position. The prolonged war between the two member countries, Iran and Iraq, at one time pitted the other Islamic countries against one another.

The United States and the Soviet Union have shown a great deal of interest in the Middle East "From an ethnic, religious, political and economic standpoint, the Middle East is perhaps the most complex region on Earth."⁴³ The countries of the Middle East do not always share the same views on economy, religion and on ideals for a unified Arab world. The national interests of individual Arab countries supersede all other interests. Hence, military and ideological conflicts have erupted between neighbours, and domestic problems, in Lebanon, have had serious international implications. The problem facing the region - the question of equitable sharing of resources, the crises of national and regional identity, the need for cooperation in all spheres for the economic development of the entire region, and the matter of political development - are such that they become objects of interest to the power blocks. Moreover, the strategic location of the Middle

⁴³ Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy toward the Middle East since 1970* (New York, 1978), p.2

East, and the concentration of half the world's oil reserves in the area, have heightened the interest of the West as well as the Soviet Union in the Arab World.

"Although one of the first states to recognise Israel, the Soviet Union quickly espoused the Palestinian cause, thus placing it firmly at the side of the Arab and Islamic worlds."⁴⁴ This contrasted sharply with the United States' avowed policy of support for Israel, thus putting the Soviet Union in a very favourable position with the Arab countries. However, the Muslim countries identify the Soviet Union with atheism, and this has made them somewhat averse to accept Soviet influence. Notwithstanding that, at different points of time, the Soviet Union has been involved in Egypt, Iraq, South Yemen, Algeria, Libya, Iran, Syria and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in varying degrees and have influenced their political, economic and military decisions to some extent.

⁴⁴ Adeed Dawisha, "The Soviet Union in the Arab World : The Limits to superpower influence" in Dawisha and Dawisha (eds), *The Soviet Union in the Middle East : Policies and Perspectives* (London, 1982), p. 11

The interest of the United States and the West on the Middle East has been long and constant. Iran had been the base of US strategy in the region, and after the fall of the Shah of Iran, Saudi Arabia became very important for them. The United States' relations with Saudi Arabia has always been friendly, but the Americans have never been able to make the Saudis enter into any formal alliance or security pact with them.⁴⁵ However, the US can expect Saudi Arabia, with its abundant oil wealth and its position as the custodian of the two holy places of Islam, to lead the smaller and conservative Gulf states and also to exert some influence on the more radical Arab countries. The issue that has marred the United States' relations with Saudi Arabia is the former's unequivocal support of Israel. The Islamic countries are very unhappy with the United States' refusal to recognise the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, which is at the core of the OIC.

By and large, the OIC is a centrist organisation with a vast majority of its members from Asia and Africa

⁴⁵ John C. Campbell, "The Middle East : A House of Containment built on shifting Sands" in *Foreign Affairs : American and the World, 1981* (New York, 1982), p. 607

professing moderate ideologies. The declarations are less condemnatory of the US as compared to NAM declarations. The OIC position on Afghanistan demonstrated its anti-Soviet bias. Jeddah being the OIC headquarters also puts the Soviet Union in a disadvantage as the latter does not have any diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE OIC

The member states of the OIC allow their national and parochial interests to influence their actions and decisions at the OIC, with the result that concerted and collective action cannot always be taken on matters of great importance to the Muslim world, though a semblance of unanimity is usually maintained on such issues.

As a study of the organs and bodies of the OIC shows, these have been created without regard to actual needs and in a most haphazard fashion. Some of these organs are actually redundant and result in duplication of work. There is an overlapping of functions and a lack of coordination. In fact, the fourteenth ICFM (Dhaka, 1983) adopted a resolution calling upon the OIC to defer

the establishment of any new centre.⁴⁸ Whenever proposals are submitted, either individually or collectively, for starting projects and creating centres, these are usually approved without detailed study.

These is, in certain cases, a duplication of supervision, with both the Secretary-General and the General Assemblies supervising the activities of the organs. As we have seen, some of the Standing Committee are chaired by the Head of States, with the result that these committee report directly to the Summit and cannot be brought under the purview of the ICFM.

It is reliably learnt that the General Secretariat is not active enough to effectively discharge its responsibility of making the OIC run smoothly. Greater care should be taken in the selection of the personnel of the OIC to bring it at par with the UN. High-level meetings of the OIC are held in different countries, so that the Secretariate staff is away from headquarters for a considerable period of time. In the opinion of the writer, the OIC may consider making Jeddah the seat of

⁴⁸ *File*, n. 8, p. 356

all Islamic meetings, as in the case of the UN headquarters in New York. The last Secretary-General spent there-quarters of his tenure travelling to other countries, thereby draining the organization's finances. There are not enough publications of the OIC, and no library or archive is maintained, so that information about the OIC is lacking and hampers the work of research students.

It has been noticed that the OIC maintains a very low profile at the UN. Except for the Ministerial - level and Ambassadorial - level coordinating bureau meetings of the OIC member countries held at New York, the OIC does not function in a concerted and concrete way at the UN. Proper liaison is not maintained with the UN and its bodies. 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. The OIC, in fact, lets its chances slip by. The Islamic Conference had been the only link with both Iran and Iraq during the period 1982 to 1987, but when ultimately the Secretary-General of the UN succeeded in bringing about a cease-fire between them, the OIC was nowhere in sight. Similarly, when the Geneva

Accord was signed (whereby withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghansistan was ensured) the OIC had no role to play.

Even though the Islamic countries seek to express their opinion and profess their solidarity in the OIC on matters concerning the Muslim world, the Islamic states geographically further removed from the Arab countries tend to be less emotional on matters dealing with the Arab world and the poor countries dependent on Arab economic aid tend to go along with the decisions of the oil-rich Arab countries. We may, however, conclude that though the OIC may not have been able to take a very positive role in most matters, 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.

We may now analyse the position Bangladesh has taken on the political issues confronting the Islamic world.

CHAPTER - III

BANGLADESH AND THE OIC - THE POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

When the leaders of the Muslim world gathered in Rabat in 1969 and expressed the need to have an organization of Muslim countries, their principal interest was in "promoting between themselves close cooperation and mutual assistance in the economic, scientific, cultural and spiritual fields, inspired by the immortal teachings, of Islam."¹ The attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in Jerusalem, had brought the Muslim leaders together and they condemned the sacrilege against one of the sacred shrines of the Muslims. They declared that "their Governments and peoples are firmly determined to reject any solution of the problem of Palestine which would deny Jerusalem the status it had before June 1967."² The leaders further affirmed their full support to the Palestinian people for the restoration of their rights and in their struggle for

¹ *File of Islamic Summit Conferences and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers* (Riyadh, 1989), p. 31.

² *ibid*, p. 31

the liberation of their land. However, even though the Muslim leaders had come together after the attack on one of Islam's most revered shrines and had declared their solidarity with the Palestinian peoples in their struggle to free their land, their intention to form the organization of Islamic Conference was influenced by the need to promote cooperation among the Muslim countries in the socio-economic fields.

Through the last twenty years, the Organization of Islamic Conference has continued to work for increasing cooperation and understanding among the countries of the Muslim world, but the character of the OIC has changed to include discussions of political nature. The Palestine issue, which is at the core of the OIC, continues to dominate but other issues or incidents which infringe on the "dignity, independence and national rights"³ of the Muslim countries also draw the attention of the organization. Notable among these are the Iran-Iraq dispute and the Afghan issue.

³ *OIC, Charter and Declarations/Communiqués of the Islamic Summits* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 10.

Bangladesh and the Palestine Issue

Bangladesh had gained admission into the OIC by playing the Palestine card and sympathising with the Arab cause, and it continued its interest and maintained its support to the Palestine cause. Bangladesh's position on the Middle East may be summarised as follows:

- 1] Palestine is at the core of the problem in the Middle East and peace in the area can be achieved only when this problem was solved;
- 2] a comprehensive settlement of the problem calls for complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories including Jerusalem;
- 3] Palestinians should be allowed to exercise their inalienable right to determine their own destiny including the establishment of a state of their own with Jerusalem as their capital; and

- 4] the PLO must be allowed to participate in the deliberations on an equal footing.⁴

Through the last seventeen years Bangladesh's support for the Palestine and Jerusalem cause has been steadfast. As with Muslims in other parts of the world, Jerusalem is sacred to the Bangladeshis, therefore their support for the liberation of Jerusalem. Bangladesh believes that a "threat at Al-Quds Al-Sharif is a threat to the entire Islamic world."⁵ And since Bangladesh itself had gained independence after a prolonged subjugation by the Pakistani military-bureaucratic rulers and through a lot of bloodshed, Bangladesh took the side of the oppressed and supported their right to their homeland. "Having ourselves paid such a heavy price for our own national independence, we can well appreciate their suffering and anguish. Our involvement

⁴ Statement of Dr. Kamal Hussain, former Foreign Minister, at 5th ICFM (Kuala Lumpur, 1974), *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1974), Vol. 2, no.4, p.29; and statement of Prof. M. Shamsul Huq, former Foreign Minister at 3rd extraordinary session of ICFM, (Fez, 1980), *Bangladesh Documents*, (Dhaka, 1980), Vol. 4, p. 47.

⁵ *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1980) Vol. 4, p. 53

in the freedom struggle of the Palestinian people is total."⁶

In 1974, on Bangladesh's admission to the OIC, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared : "The illegal occupation of arab land must be vacated. We must regain our right over Jerusalem."⁷ This sentiment has been echoed through the years by the leaders and officials of Bangladesh in the OIC itself and in the other international fora. The first proposal that Bangladesh co-sponsored at the UN after its admission into the international organisation was the insertion of the question of Palestine on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).⁸ Bangladesh declared that as a Muslim nation it could not remain indifferent to the blatant oppression of Palestinians by the Israelis and its policy of annexation of Jerusalem: "The just cause of our Arab and Palestinian brethren has our

⁶ S.A. Bari A.T., former Deputy Prime Minister, at the Emergency Special Session of the UNGA on Palestine, New York, July 1980; *Bangladesh Mission to the UN Press release*.

⁷ *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1974), Vol. 2, no. 3, p. 22

⁸ *Ten years of Bangladesh in the UN* (Dhaka, 1984), p. 27 (Statement by Dr. Kamal Hussain, former Foreign Minister, at 29th UNGA, October 1974).

total support,"⁹ and stated at the UN: "All canons of justice and morality demand the restoration to the Palestinians of their inalienable national rights including their right to a state of their own."¹⁰

In 1978 Bangladesh was unanimously elected to the Jerusalem (also known as Al-Quds) ministerial committee. The Jerusalem Committee was set up at the tenth ICFM (Fez, 1978) with King Hassan II of Morocco as its Chairman to propagate the cause of Jerusalem at all international Meetings and Conferences. Subsequently, when Israel decided to annex Jerusalem and declare it as its capital, OIC formed a summit-level committee at an emergency meeting of the Jerusalem ministerial committee in 1980. King Hassan II of Morocco was made the Chairman of the three-member Summit-level Jerusalem Committee, with President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh and President Sekou Toure of Guinea as the other two

⁹ Statement by Prof. M. Shamsul Huq, at Tenth ICFM, Fez, May 1979.

¹⁰ *Ten Years*, n. 8. p. 67 (statement by Prof. Shamsul Huq at 34th UNGA, October 1979).

members.¹¹ This summit-level committee met from time to time to review the situation in Palestine and Jerusalem.

Bangladesh has consistently maintained its position on Palestine at the annual meetings of the coordinating bureau of the ICFM and the meetings of the foreign ministers of non-aligned countries held in New York during the UNGA Sessions. Bangladesh became a member of the UN Security Council for 1980-81, and during this period it voted in favour of all resolutions condemning Israel for its settlement policies and acts of terrorism.¹² In 1982, Bangladesh asked at the Security Council:

Is it not, indeed, ironic that all the acts of oppression, intolerance, injustice and persecution to which the Jews were subjected to not only in Germany but in various parts of Europe during the first half of this century, should, during the second half of the century be practised by the very survivors of the holocaust against the people in whose land they took refuge and shelter?¹³

¹¹ *OIC, Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of States and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conferences 1969-1981* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 430.

¹² See n. 6.

¹³ Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, Security Council debate on occupied Arab territories, April 1982, *Bangladesh Mission to the UN Press release*.

At all sessions of the UNGA and in the Security Council debates, Bangladesh gives statements reiterating its support for the Palestine cause, "Our consistent position stems from our firm belief in the principles and purposes of the charter of the UN,"¹⁴ and calls for an unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestine and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

In the conferences of the non-aligned countries at various levels, Bangladesh gave statements condemning Israeli actions and calling for an early peaceful settlement of the problem. At the Seventh NAM Summit in New Delhi, President Ershad voiced support for the Arab Peace Plan (resolved by the Arab countries) as the basis for bringing peace to the region.¹⁵

Balgladesh was also a member of the ministerial-level Non-aligned Committee of the Nine on Palestine

¹⁴ Khwaja Wasiuddin, Permanent Representative, Security Council debate on occupied Arab territories, August 1983, *Bangladesh Mission to the UN Press relese*.

¹⁵ Statement of President Ershad at the 7th NAM Summit, New Delhi, March 1983.

which was formed after the eighth NAM Summit at Harare. Bangladesh called on the Non-aligned countries to remain resolute on the Palestine issue and not let any of their own actions cause division amongst themselves.¹⁶

August 21 is celebrated in Bangladesh, along with other Muslim countries, as Jerusalem Day and Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. Commemorative postage stamps have also been issued on the occasion.

Bangladesh and the Iran - Iraq Conflict

The escalation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq since the second half of 1980 destabilised the situation in the Middle East to a great extent. The relations between neighbouring Iran and Iraq had deteriorated rapidly after the fall of the Shah of Iran in February 1979 resulting in numerous verbal and military skirmishes between them. On 17 September 1980 Iraq renounced the 1975 Algiers Pact setting the border between Iran and Iraq along the middle of the Shatt-al-Arab, and the ensuing war, made up of minor encounters

¹⁶ Statement of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, former Prime Minister at 8th NAM Summit, Harare, September 1986,

and sometimes heavy fighting, threatened the power structure in the Middle East.

The Islamic Foreign Ministers, assembled in New York in September 1980, for the UNGA, convened an extraordinary session and set up a three-member Islamic goodwill summit committee. Subsequently, the Islamic Summit at Taif (1981) expanded the goodwill committee membership to nine.¹⁷ 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 countries.¹⁸ He visited the capitals of both the countries three times and held meetings with the leaders, urging them to effect an immediate ceasefire.¹⁹ Ziaur Rahman's role as a member of the Islamic Peace Committee (as the goodwill Committee later came to be known) was lauded by the Islamic foreign Ministers at the Twelfth ICFM (Baghdad,

¹⁷ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n.11, p.730.

¹⁸ Interview of Prof. M. Shamsul Huq in Dhaka, 3 January 1989

¹⁹ Syed Anwar Hussain : "Bangladesh and the Organization of Islamic Conference", *Asian Affairs* (Dhaka, 1987), Vol. 8, no.1, p.19.

1981)²⁰ The change of government in Bangladesh in 1981 did not effect any change in the role of Bangladesh in the Islamic Peace Committee (IPC). The role of Bangladesh in the mediations between the two countries and President Ershad's Action Plan for ending the Iran-Iraq conflict were appreciated by the leaders of the other delegations at the Sixth Session of the IPC held in Jeddah in July 1984. ²¹ At the Fourteenth ICFM (1983) held in Dhaka, vigorous attempts were made by Bangladesh to bring about a comprehensive plan for an amicable settlement of the conflict, and a resolution for the exchange of prisoners-of-war was adopted.

When the armed hostilities between the two countries came to an end in August 1988 with the acceptance of the Security Council resolution 598 (1987) an United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) was set up. Out of the twentyfour countries that have sent observers to the UNIIMOG, six are OIC members. They are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Senegal and Turkey. These are the countries in

²⁰ *File*, n.1, p. 261.

²¹ *Documents of the IPC meetings* (Jeddah, n.d.)

the islamic world which are most acceptable to both Iran and Iraq.

In all the UNGA sessions since the outbreak of hostilities, the Security Council debates on the Iran-Iraq war, and in the NAM meetings, Bangladesh had voiced its concern and called for a speedy solution of the problem. Bangladesh expressed its distress at the escalation of armed conflict between the two Islamic and Non-aligned countries.²² The new threat to peace in the Middle East was viewed with alarm and appeals were made to Iran and Iraq to accept the peace initiatives made to them to bring their conflict to an honourable end.²³ Bangladesh warned the Islamic Foreign Ministers, "If the war continues, the unity that we seek for the world of Islam will be seriously jeopardised,"²⁴ and called for continued separate and coordinated efforts on the part of the UN, OIC, NAM and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to restore peace in the region. In 1987, at NAM and UN

²² *Bangladesh documents*, n.5, p.48.

²³ A.R. Shamsud-Doha, former Foreign Minister, in 38th UNGA, October, 1983, *Bangladesh Mission to UN Press release*.

²⁴ Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, former Foreign Minister, as Chairman of 14th ICMF, in ICMF Coordinating Bureau Meeting in New York, October 1984, *Bangladesh Mission to UN Press release*.

meetings, Bangladesh supported the Security Council Resolution 598, welcomed Iraq's acceptance of the resolution and called for its speedy implementation by both the parties.²⁵

Bangladesh and the Afghanistan Issue

The evolving situation in Afghanistan during the late 1970s was watched with concern by Bangladesh. The successive ouster of Daud, Tareki and Hafizullah Amin's Governments were regarded by the OIC and UN as internal developments. However, the installation of Barbak Karmal with Soviet assistance, made a qualitative difference to the situation. Bangladesh, in the later months of 1979, had requested the convening of an extraordinary session of the ICFM to consider the threat to Islamic countries from outside, particularly those relating to Iran (hostage crisis) and the Arab countries.²⁶ The developments in Afghanistan arising out of Soviet

²⁵ H.R. Choudhury, at Non-aligned Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York, October 1987. *Bangladesh Mission to UN Press release.*

²⁶ Prof. Shamsul Huq at Emergency Session of ICFM, Islamabad, *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1980), Vol.4, p.7.

intervention in that country overtook the events and the extraordinary session of the ICFM ultimately took place in Islamabad in January 1980 to consider the "situation in Afghanistan and also developments in the region which are closely interlinked with the situation in Afghanistan."²⁷ The First Extraordinary Session of the ICFM passed resolutions on a) the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and on its ensuing effects, b) foreign pressures on certain Islamic states and c) external pressures against the Islamic Republic of Iran by the USA.²⁸ The resolution on Afghanistan called for withdrawal of Soviet troops, restoration of the rights of the Afghan people and suspension of the membership of Afghanistan in the OIC. It urged the member states to withhold recognition to the Karmal regime and sever diplomatic relations with the country till the withdrawal of all Soviet troops.

Bangladesh was particularly concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. As a small state, Bangladesh perceived her national security threatened by the presence of a superpower on the western flank of South

²⁷ *Declaration and Resolutions*, n.11, p.525.

²⁸ *ibid*, pp 533-39.

Asia. "By security we mean protection and preservation of minimum core values of any nation : political independence and territorial integrity."²⁹ Surrounded by a big power, India, and aware of the presence of China on the north, Bangladesh's perception of the threat to her security was heightened by the intervention of Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. "The fate of Afghanistan, foreign intervention in Grenada and the raid on Libya have exposed the helplessness of small states against big powers."³⁰

Bangladesh felt that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was a violation of the Principles of the UN Charter and the Non-aligned Movement which envisage respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and restraint in the threat or use of force for solving disputes. For this reason, Bangladesh condemned the situation in Afghanistan and Kampuchea

²⁹ Talukdar Maniruzzaman : "The Security of Small States in the Third World", *Canberra Papers on Security and Defence*, no.25 (Canberra, 1982), p.15.

³⁰ A.I. Akram : "The Security of small states in the South Asian context", Hafiz and Khan (ed) : *Security of Small States* (Dhaka, 1987), p.129.

(where Vietnamese troops had entered) in all international fora: "We cannot condone the right of states to interfere in the affairs of other states. We have, therefore, consistently voted against the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and Kampuchea."³¹ Bangladesh regarded the continued presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan a threat to the latter's Islamic and non-aligned character. "The armed 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 non-aligned Movement."³² Bangladesh withdrew its Ambassador to Afghanistan in January 1980 and downgraded its mission to the level of *Charge d'affaires*.

When the Afghan problem came to the Security Council in early January 1980, Bangladesh, as a member of the Security Council, co-sponsored a resolution, along with five other Non-aligned members of the Security Council, calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. However, this

³¹ *Ten Years*, no.8, (Statement by A.R.S. Doha at 30th UNGA, October 1983), p.103.

³² Shamsul Huq, n.26, p.8

resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union.³³ During the same period, an emergency special session of the UNGA was also convened to discuss the question of Afghanistan, Bangladesh attended the session and declared, "We are committed to upholding the sovereign and inalienable right of the freedom loving people of Afghanistan to determine their own destiny free from outside interference or subjugation of any kind."³⁴

At the UNGA sessions since 1980 Bangladesh has co-sponsored the resolutions on Afghanistan. In the 35th UNGA, the vote in favour of the resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan was 111 with 22 votes against it.³⁵ As action could not be taken in the Security Council due to the veto of a permanent member (USSR), the issue continued to be raised in the UNGA every year. In the 36th session of the UNGA(1981), on the resolution introduced by Pakistan and co-sponsored by 44 nations, including

³³ S.A.M.S. Kibria, "Bangladesh in the Security Council" in *Bangladesh Quarterly* (Dhaka, 1981), Vol.1, no.3, p.9.

³⁴ *Bangladesh Documents*, (Dhaka, 1980), Vol.4, p.2.

³⁵ A/Res/35/37; *UN Chronicle* 1/81 (New York, 1980), p.7.

Bangladesh, the vote was 116 to 23, with 12 abstentions.³⁶ Of the Non-aligned countries, 65 voted for the resolution and 13 voted against it.³⁷ In 1984, in the 39th UNGA, the vote was 119 in favour, 20 against, with 14 abstentions.³⁸ The next year, at the 40th UNGA, the vote recorded was 122 in favour, 19 against, with 12 abstentions.³⁹ We, therefore, notice a steady increase in the support for the resolution during the period.

In the meetings and conferences of the NAM, Bangladesh again spoke out against the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. Commending the efforts of the South-East Asian nations, for a comprehensive settlement of the Kampuchean issue, Bangladesh said at the 8th NAM Summit, "We reaffirm our total support to

³⁶ *Issues before the 37th General Assembly of the UN (1982-83)*, (New York, 1982), p.43.

³⁷ *The New York Times*, November 19, 1981.

³⁸ *Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the General Assembly during the first part of the thirty-ninth session*, United Nation Press release GA/7085 (New York, 1985), pp. 19-20.

³⁹ *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly during the first part of the fortieth session*, UN Press release GA/7272 (New York, 1986), pp. 16-17.

the UN Secretary-General's efforts for an immediate settlement of the problem in Afghanistan."⁴⁰

Bangladesh and Cyprus Problem

The Cyprus issue first came up for discussion in the OIC during the Seventh ICFM (Istanbul, 1976).⁴¹ A resolution was adopted supporting the right of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus to be equal partners with the Greek community within the framework of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-alignment of the Republic of Cyprus. The resolution decided to support the right of the Turkish community in Cyprus to be heard in all international fora on a footing equal with the Greek Cypriots. It was also decided that representatives of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus could attend the meetings of the OIC. In all ICFMs and Summit meetings since then the Cyprus issue has been discussed. In the UN, the "Question of Cyprus" is mentioned in the agenda of the General Assembly each year, but remains undebated by

⁴⁰ Statement of Mizanur Rahman Choudhury, see n. 16.

⁴¹ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n. 11, p. 196.

mutual consent so long as negotiations for a settlement are in progress.⁴²

However, Bangladesh voices its support for the Turkish Cypriots in the Islamic meetings and conferences, the UN and the NAM., "We emphasize that no solution to the problem can be lasting unless it takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the two communities."⁴³ At the 8th NAM Summit, Bangladesh, while reaffirming its position on the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned status of Cyprus, requested the Non-aligned countries to continue their full support to the UN Secretary-General's efforts for a solution to the problem.⁴⁴

⁴² *Issues before the 40th General Assembly of the UN (1985-86)*, (New York, 1985), p. 47.

⁴³ Statement of H.R. Choudhury at 39th UNGA, New York, October 1984. *Bangladesh Mission to the UN Press release*.

⁴⁴ Statement of Mizanur Rahman Choudhury, see n. 16

SUMMARY

Bangladesh touches on the foregoing issues at every multi-lateral conference that it attends, in addition to the other issues that come up for discussion and debate, for example, the condition of muslim minorities in Phillipines, Bulgaria, Eritrea and India, the Namibia issue, apartheid etc. To sum up, Bangladesh's position on the major political issues before the OIC are in accord with the main-stream thought in the Islamic world. In the UN and NAM, Bangladesh supports these causes, and, again, is in agreement with the majority opinion in those bodies. As a country economically dependent on the Arab and Islamic countries Bangladesh, in real terms, has little option but to go along with the mainstream in the OIC. In the next chapter, we will discuss how far Banglaesh has benefitted economically from its membership in the OIC.

CHAPTER IV

BANGLADESH AND THE OIC - ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Profile of Bangladesh Economy

Twenty-one member countries of the OIC belong to the UN category of the least developed among the developing countries. Bangladesh happens to be the largest. As a Least Developed Country (LDC), Bangladesh suffers from a general economic backwardness and lacks basic socio-economic infrastructure for development. Its annual per capita income is about US\$ 140, considered low by international standards; it lacks proper housing, medical and schooling facilities; and transport and communication facilities are considered inadequate.¹ Bangladesh has persistent balance of trade and balance of payments problems, and, like all other LCDs, perennially suffers from the chronic syndromes of poverty. The Bangladesh economy is predominantly agricultural, with 50.48% of the Gross Domestic Product

¹ K.T. Hossain : "Development of Bangladesh Economy: Challenge and Response" in *Bangladesh Quarterly*, (Dhaka, Vol. 7, No.4, December 1988), p. 21.

(GDP) coming from agriculture, and the rest from industries, power and gas, construction etc. (1985 - 86).² During 1987 - 88 Bangladesh's population stood at approximately 10.74 crore in an area of 143.998 square kilometers, with a density of 733 per square kilometer, making Bangladesh one of the most densely populated countries in the world.³

Bangladesh emerged, after the war of liberation, with a completely devastated economy. A quarter-century's union with Pakistan had seen Bangladesh's (or East Pakistan's) resources drained away and its economy left thoroughly impoverished and under-developed. The nine-month long liberation war had a destructive effect upon such an economy, and the country's economic and political viability was seriously threatened.⁴ "While

² *Bangladesh Economic Survey, 1987-88*, (Dhaka, 1988), p.2

³ *ibid*, p. 387.

⁴ Jayashree Biswas: *US-Bangladesh Relations: A Study of the Political and Economic Developments during 1971-81* (Calcutta, 1984), p. 76

the economy was underdeveloped to begin with, the destruction incurred in 1971 was extensive."⁵

Dependence on Aid

"For an economy where the gap between supply and demand is as large as that which obtained in Bangladesh, exclusive dependence upon foreign aid becomes inevitable."⁶ The tendency in the country was to take advantage of the prevailing climate of sympathy and obtain a massive inflow of resources to reconstruct the economy. Aid can have different connotations for the donor and recipient countries, and its actual definition may vary from one donor country to another donor country, depending on the attitude and meaning each attaches to it. "The concept of foreign aid that is now widely used and accepted is one that encompasses all official grants and concessional loans, in currency and in kind, that are broadly aimed at transferring resources from developed to less developed nations (and, more recently, from OPEC to other Third World Countries)

⁵ Rounaq Jahan: *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka, 1980), p. 73.

⁶ Biswas, n.4, p.76.

on development and/or income distributional grounds".⁷ 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.

"Donor countries give aid primarily because it is in their political, strategic, and/or economic self-interest to do so".⁸ In the beginning aid may be motivated by genuine humanitarian desire to help, but over a longer period of time, donor countries do expect some benefit in return. The economic leverage that the donor country attains vis-a-vis the recipient country has "immense potential for political manoeuvrings."⁹ The economically powerful and developed nations can thus use the Third World and less developed countries as their political playground. Speaking about the foreign assistance programmes of the US, one analyst observes that foreign aid is a tool of foreign policy aimed at producing a political and economic environment conducive

⁷ Michael P. Todaro: *Economic Development in the third World* (New Delhi, 1985), p. 441.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 445.

⁹ biswas, n.4. p. 78.

to the attainment of the donor country's social and political leverage over the recipient country.¹⁰ Recipient countries, with scarce domestic resources, often tend to accept readily and uncritically the foreign assistance offered, in the hope of changing the structure of their economy or achieving self-sustaining economic growth.¹¹

Bangladesh had inherited from Pakistan the aid-dependency syndrome. "Aid dependence is not a post-liberation phenomenon in Bangladesh".¹² The pattern had already been set by the Pakistani planners and the system was structurally geared towards the need for external resource inflows for sustaining the development process. This pattern continued after liberation.

The Bangladesh economic planners observe that domestic resource constraint has been a perpetual

¹⁰ Hollis B. Chenery: "Objectives and Criteria of foreign assistance" in G. Ranis (Ed): *The United States and the Developing Economics* (Norton, 1964), p. 91.

¹¹ Todaro, n.7, p. 450.

¹² Rehman Sobhan: *The Crisis of External Dependence: The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1982), p.1.

hindrance to the implementation of economic programmes. "In order to accelerate the economic activities of the country, it is essential to keep foreign exchange reserve at a reasonable level and also to maintain the flow of foreign economic assistance at a higher level."¹³ 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 consumer 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.¹⁴

In Bangladesh, since liberation, aid disbursements have financed 60% to 65% of the development budget. Aid remains an important source of revenue for the government.

¹³ *Bangladesh Economic Survey 1984-85*(Dhaka, 1985), p.171

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 171.

TABLE 1

**COMMITMENT AND DISBURSEMENT OF FOREIGN AID TO BANGLADESH
DURING 1971/72 TO 1986/87**

(in million US \$)

A)	CATEGORY OF AID	COMMITMENT	DISBURSEMENT
	Food aid	3950.8	3766.9
	Commodity aid	6135.0	5672.6
	Project aid	11058.8	5972.4
	Total	21144.6	15411.9
B)	TYPE OF AID	COMMITMENT	DISBURSEMENT
	Grants	9719.6	7854.8 (50.97%)
	Loans	11425.0	7557.1 (49.03%)
	Total	21144.6	15411.9

(Table computed from Bangladesh Economic Survey 1986/87, Dhaka, pp 203-205).

As the table indicates, project aid accounts for the largest inflow of foreign exchange. The ratio of grants and loans to total foreign aid commitment have fluctuated widely in different years. Initially, Bangladesh received foreign aid in the form of grants and concessional loans. However, gradually loans came to assume greater proportion in the total aid.

As evident, the external resource inflows are in the form of food aid, non-food commodity and services aid (also known as non-project aid), and project aid. The following argument is put forward by the Bangladeshi planners in their search for food aid. "Besides its nutrition effect on the poor people and its critical role in times of natural calamities, food aid in recent years has also become an important instrument for agricultural and rural development."¹⁵ In fact, food aid disbursed under the food-for-work programme finances many development projects.¹⁶ The Planners feel that commodity aid is "by far the most important category of

¹⁵ *The Third Five Year Plan* (Dhaka, 1985), pp. 96-97.

¹⁶ Sobhan, n. 12, pp. 26-31.

aid for Bangladesh as it helps maintain the flow of essential raw materials for industries and generate counterpart fund in support of the development budget" and they are of the opinion that "higher absorption of project aid is essential to steady growth of the economy."¹⁷ Project aid, in fact, finances almost all the major sectors of the annual budget.

¹⁷ *Plan*, n. 15, pp. 96-97.

The extent of aid dependence can be observed from the following table :

TABLE 2

YEAR	DISBURSED AID AS % OF DEVELOPMENT BUDGET	AID DISBURSEMENT AS % OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
1972/73	107.77	8.7
1973/74	120.39	4.8
1974/75	203.38	8.5
1975/76	141.18	11.3
1976/77	81.97	8.3
1977/78	104.08	11.8
1978/79	97.83	11.6
1979/80	81.17	12.2
1980/81	79.13	10.5
1981/82	78.26	13.7

(Source : Rehman Sobhan, n.12, p.9)

A steady increase in aid dependence for financing the annual development budget is evident.

aid for Bangladesh as it helps maintain the flow of essential raw materials for industries and generate counterpart fund in support of the development budget" and they are of the opinion that "higher absorption of project aid is essential to steady growth of the economy."¹⁷ Project aid, in fact, finances almost all the major sectors of the annual budget.

¹⁷ *Plan*, n. 15, pp. 96-97.

Aid Sources

Today Bangladesh continues to receive aid - in the form of commodity, project and non-project aid - from the West, the socialist bloc and the Muslim countries. To date, the main donors from the West - or industrially developed countries - have been Australia, Canada, Sweden, USA, Japan, UK, France, F.R.G., Netherlands and Norway. The main socialist bloc donors have been U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Rumania, G.D.R., Yugoslavia and China. The major donors among the Middle Eastern countries have been Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Iraq and Kuwait. India was a big donor in the early post-liberation period. Bangladesh has also been receiving aid from the UN system, IDA, OPEC, IDB, ADB, UNICEF and the EEC.¹⁸

¹⁸ Source: *Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh (as of June 30, 1986)*, (Dhaka, 1986).

TABLE 3
CATEGORY-WISE SUMMARY OF FOREIGN AID TO
BANGLADESH FROM MAJOR DONORS
 (DEC. 16, 1971 - JUNE 30, 1987)
 AID DISBURSEMENT (IN MILLION US DOLLAR)

DONOR COUNTRY AGENCY	FOOD AID	COMMODITY AID	PROJECT AID	TOTAL (1+2+4)
1	2	3	4	5
DAC COUNTRIES				
1. Australia	144.0	15.2	48.9	208.1
2. Canada	586.6	236.4	157.5	980.5
3. Denmark	1.9	76.3	104.4	173.6
4. France	25.1	29.0	191.3	245.4
5. F.R.G.	80.6	371.9	186.3	638.8
6. Japan	257.7	845.3	397.5	1500.5
7. Nether- lands	11.9	310.8	145.4	468.1
8. Norway	2.0	148.4	47.9	190.3
9. Sweden	22.1	174.7	83.2	280.0
10. U.K.	40.6	289.0	252.0	582.0
11. U.S.A.	1086.1	489.4	511.5	2087.0
OPEC COUNTRIES				
12. Iraq		55.5	11.4	66.9
13. Kuwait			118.5	118.5
14. Saudi Arabia	105.7	287.5	141.8	535.0
15. U.S.E.	5.0	61.0	31.4	97.4
SOCIALIST BLOC COUNTRIES				
16. China	10.7	9.3	60.1	80.1
17. Czechoslovakia			46.2	46.2
18. Romania	0.1		52.4	52.5
19. U.S.S.R.	49.9	49.0	269.2	368.1

	1	2	3	4	5
OTHER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL OR MULTILATERAL AGENCIES					
20. India	113.3		129.1	91.8	334.2
21. Yugoslavia	0.9			58.8	59.7
22. E. E. C.	279.2		127.8	24.5	431.5
23. A.D.B.			49.0	546.5	595.5
24. I.D.A.			1117.1	1050.5	2167.6
25. I.D.B.			111.1	29.5	140.6
26. I.F.A.D.			15.0	43.4	58.4
27. I.V.A.			5.4	100.6	106.0
28. OPEC			58.3	63.7	122.0
29. UNICEF	23.5		26.9	112.2	162.6
30. UN-System	553.5		96.2	193.1	842.8

(Table derived from Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh)

As is evident from the tables, a large proportion of the total aid was received from the Western sources during the period 1971-1986. The second largest source was the international and multilateral agencies which usually derive their finances from the West. The OPEC and the IDB have also increased their aid to the country. The third largest source was the Middle Eastern countries and the socialist bloc countries made up the next largest source. Among the Middle Eastern or Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia has remained the main donor. The following table will further clarify the position.

TABLE 4
SOURCES AND KIND OF AID
RECEIVED UPTO JUNE 30, 1986

(in million US \$)

CLASSIFICATION OF DONORS	GRANTS	LOANS	TOTAL	% age OF TOTAL AID RECEIVED
a) DAC Countries	4909.2	2542.3	7451.5	55.63
b) International/ Multi-lateral agencies	1504.5	3134.2	4638.7	34.63
c) Middle East Countries	499.7	331.6	831.3	6.20
d) Socialist Countries	42.0	429.8	471.8	3.52
	6955.4	6437.9	13393.3	

(Table derived from Bangladesh Economic Survey, 1986/87, p.219-221)

We may, therefore, conclude that aid from the Middle East or Arab Muslim countries does not constitute a major portion of the total aid received by Bangladesh and this process has not undergone any major change with the successive changes of government in the country.

Remittance from abroad

Remittances by Bangladeshis working in the Middle East and Arab countries constitute a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the country. According to the latest figures available, from April 1976 to March 1988, a total of 5,75,000 Bangladeshis have been employed overseas.¹⁶ The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training was created in 1976 by the government to regulate and increase the flow of labour to the Middle Eastern and other countries. From 1976 till the end of April 1979, 32.3 percent of the Bangladeshis working abroad were employed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 12.7 percent in Oman, 12.6 percent in Saudi Arabia and 9.1 percent in Kuwait, and by the end of 1983, these figures had changed to : 22 percent for Saudi Arabia, 16

¹⁶ Survey, n. 2, pp. 400-401.

percent for the UAE, 14 percent for Oman, 13 percent for Iraq and 12 percent for Kuwait.²⁰ In August 1985, there were 70,000 Bangladeshis working in Saudi Arabia; in August 1988 this had increased to 1,50,000, which means an increase of 114.3 percent over a three-year period.²¹ Migrant workers to Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa come, in that order, from Egypt, Pakistan, India, Yemen A.R., Sudan, Phillipines, Jordan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Turkey and Thailand.²² A vast majority of workers coming from Phillipines, South Korea and Thailand, followed closely behind by India, have been non-muslims.

From 1978 to 1983, 7.2 percent of the emigrants from Bangladesh were professionals (engineers, doctors, teachers, technicians etc.), 35 percent were skilled workers (mechanics, electricians, cooks, masons, carpenters, drivers etc.), 6.2 percent were semi-skilled

²⁰ Emin Carikci, *The Economic Impact of Temporary Manpower Migration in Selected OIC member countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan and Turkey)*, (Jeddah, 1987, pp. 22-23

²¹ *Saudi Gazette*, August 10, 1988 (article by Peter Wilson "Salary cut, so what?").

²² Carikci, n. 20, p. 10.

and 51.6 percent unskilled workers.²³ 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. In the year 1986-87 total remittances to Bangladesh from overseas was US \$ 696.40 million and in 1987-88 it was US \$ 737.00 million.²⁴ In 1987-88, remittances financed 30.11 percent of imports, while foreign aid financed another 61.70 percent.²⁵ Hence Middle East and Arab countries constitute an important area of economic interest for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's role as an LDC in the OIC

Bangladesh, being the largest LDC in the OIC, always calls for increased assistance to the Least Developed Countries at all the Islamic Conferences, as well as at the UN and the Non-aligned meetings. In 1981, at the Third Islamic Summit (Taif) Ziaur Rahman called upon the Islamic countries to extend full support to the

²³ *ibid*, p. 25.

²⁴ *Sachitra Bangladesh (Illustrated Bangladesh)* (Dhaka, 1989), Vol. 10, no. 8, p. 17.

²⁵ *Survey*, n.2, p. 569.

Islamic LDCs and hoped that the Summit would initiate a programme of action to provide immediate relief to the LDCs. Thereupon, the Summit decided "to request the IDB to grant urgent increasing aid to the least developed member states, including trade finance on more concessionary and flexible terms."²⁶ It also urged the member states and other Islamic organizations to provide assistance to the Islamic LDCs in times of disasters and emergencies and requested the OIC Secretariat to follow up the implementation of the resolutions adopted about the LDCs.²⁷ Bangladesh repeatedly called for the adoption of a common Islamic strategy for the different meetings of the UN Conference on LDC's (also known as the Group of 77), and declared, "In view of the fast deteriorating international economic situation, Bangladesh, an Islamic LDC, urges this Conference for taking immediate steps for the implementation of the important decision of the Summit (Third)."²⁸

²⁶ *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conferences 1969-1981* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 733.

²⁷ *ibid*, p. 734.

²⁸ Statement of H.R. Choudhury at 12th ICFM (Baghdad, 1981).

Bangladesh and IDB

Bangladesh is one of the founder-members of the Islamic Development Bank. The IDB is an international financial institution established within the framework of the OIC to assist member states in economic development and promote economic and commercial cooperation amongst them.²⁹ The present membership of the Bank is 44 countries. It is a conglomeration of a diverse set of countries, in economic terms. The annual per capita income of the IDB members ranges from US \$ 200 to over US \$ 15,000.³⁰ The Bank classifies the countries according to the following categories :

- a) "Oil exporting" - Petroleum dominated
(9 member countries).
- b) "low/middle income" - Sectorally diverse
(14 member countries).

²⁹ *The Organization of the Islamic Conference* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 56.

³⁰ *Thirteenth Annual Report (1987-88)*, Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah, 1988), p. 52.

- c) "least developed" - predominantly agricultural
(21 member countries).³¹

The IDB members are basically primary producers and are in various stages of industrialisation and socio-economic development. They come from many geographical regions, and most are also members of their own regional groups, which in many cases include non-OIC members. "These factors may reduce the effectiveness of any comprehensive scheme for economic cooperation encompassing all members."³²

Bangladesh consistently calls for an increase in economic technical and commercial cooperation among the Islamic countries through the Islamic Development Bank and the various organs of the OIC. Bangladesh hosted the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the IDB in February 1985.³³ The next meeting of the Board of Governors is scheduled to be held in Morocco in 1989. Mr. Mofizur Rahman, a Bangladeshi bureaucrat, was an

³¹ *ibid*, p. 53.

³² *Ninth Annual Report 1983-84*, IBD, (Jeddah, 1984), p. 39.

³³ *Ninth Annual Report 1984-85*, IBD, (Jeddah, 1985), p. 218.

Executive Vice-President of the Bank from 1985-87.³⁴ At the present time there is one Bangladeshi working at the Director level and seven others working at the Professional level in the Bank.

From 1976 to 1988 fifty projects or operations have been approved for financing for Bangladesh by the IDB, amounting to US \$ 604.60 million.³⁵ These projects have been either joint ventures between Bangladesh and another IDB member country, or assistance and development projects like flood control and irrigation projects. Bangladesh's subscription to the Bank amounts to 1.29% of the total subscription of the Bank.³⁶

Economic, technical and commercial cooperation among OIC member countries

The Third Islamic Summit Conference (Taif, 1981) approved the Plan of Action for strengthening economic cooperation among member countries drawn up by the Conference on Economic Cooperation that was held in

³⁴ *Thirteenth Report*, n. 30, p. 218.

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 159

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 271.

Ankara in late 1980. The Plan deals with cooperation in the fields of food and agriculture, trade, industry, transport, communication and tourism, energy, science and technology, manpower and social welfare, population and health, and in matters of financial and monetary questions, and technical cooperation.³⁷ If implemented properly, and in its totality, the Plan should contribute to socio-economic development and progress of the Islamic states. However, this has not happened even though seven years have passed since the adoption of the Plan.

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."³⁸ The Islamic Summits and ICFMs have also passed resolutions in this regard.

³⁷ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n. 26, p. 777-787.

³⁸ Statement by Ziaur Rahman, Third Islamic Summit, Taif, 1981.

In the majority of the OIC member countries, agriculture is the dominant productive sector, but food shortage in many of them has become a serious problem. Attaining food security would involve ensuring a sustained, adequate and stable production and supply of food, at the same time ensuring access to food by the poor segments of the population.³⁹ In Bangladesh the gap between production and consumption is growing wider at an alarming rate. Therefore, food security becomes of paramount importance to Bangladesh. IDB has financed the Teesta Barrage Project for Agricultural Development with the Saudi Fund for Development as co-financiers to help increase the production of rice by 900,000 tons per year.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

³⁹ Paper read at IDB Symposium of Agricultural Development and Food Security in member countries, Rabat, 1989, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Ninth Report*, n. 32, p. 94.

⁴¹ *Tenth Report*, n. 33, p. 115.

The Plan of Action emphasizes the need for joint ventures to effectively bring in economic cooperation among the Islamic countries. Bangladesh has a number of joint ventures with Islamic countries, mainly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey and Iraq. 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 Governments. SABINCO has extended financial assistance to a number of projects including one leather manufacturing unit, three shrimp culture units, two catfish and carp culture units, one fluorescent manufacturing unit, one PVC granules manufacturing unit, one fish feed unit, one dairy unit, one vegetable cold storage unit and two polyester and cotton yarn manufacturing units.⁴²

With IDB equity participation, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have established a joint Islamic investment Bank, namely the Al-Baraka Bangladesh Ltd.⁴³ Apart from that, there are numerous private banks established jointly by Bangladesh and Middle Eastern countries, for example,

⁴² Economic and Commercial Section, Embassy of Bangladesh, Riyadh.

⁴³ *Thirteenth Report*, n. 30, 1989.

Arab Bangladesh Bank, United Commercial Bank, City Bank, National Bank and Islamic Bank. The Islamic Bank and Al-Baraka Bank are operated according to the Islamic *Shariah*.

The IDB extended a loan of US \$ 6.35 million during the year 1988 for a project for the distribution of electric energy to the north-west region of Bangladesh (Greater Rajshahi).⁴⁴ This would expand the existing electricity distribution network to serve 38,000 consumers and would operate 3,000 water pumps. During the same year IDB gave a grant of US \$ 10 million for the reconstruction of the elementary schools destroyed during the recent floods.⁴⁵

Intra-OIC trade is by far the major field where cooperation among the Islamic countries is possible. Most of the Islamic countries are primary producers; hence there is a concentration of primary goods in the export structure of the OIC member countries, and a concentration of manufactured goods in their imports.

⁴⁴ *Arab News*, April 7, 1988.

⁴⁵ *Arab News*, January 31, 1989.

For most member states, primary products account for 60% to 100% of their exports. These are the oil-producing countries. Again, for some countries 85% of their export earnings come from the sale of only one commodity.⁴⁶ However, for Bangladesh and a few other countries, manufactured goods account for a substantial part of their exports.

Bangladesh's total exports in 1987-88 amounted to US \$ 1,076.80 million and total import to US \$ 2,730.30 million.⁴⁷ Bangladesh's exports to other OIC member countries totaled US \$ 115.00 million which was 10.7% of the total exports of the country. Bangladesh's imports from the Islamic countries amounted to US \$ 319.90 million, that is 11.7% of its total imports.⁴⁸ The flow of trade between Bangladesh and OIC member countries can be seen from the following table :

⁴⁶ *Inter-Islamic Trade, Annual Report, 1985-86, Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (Casablanca, 1980) p. 9.*

⁴⁷ *Thirteenth Report, n. 30, p. 68.*

⁴⁸ *ibid, p. 68.*

TABLE 5

**FLOW OF TRADE BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND
OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES**

Particulars	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Exports to member countries in % of total exports	18.4	21.3	19.9	20.6	18.1	19.2	14.7	10.7
Imports from member countries in % of total imports	13.6	25.9	19.9	18.5	10.9	14.2	12.1	11.7

*(Table derived from Thirteenth Annual Report,
IDB, p. 62)*

Bangladesh has trade with the following Islamic countries:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, U.A.E., Uganda and Yemen A.R.⁴⁹ Bangladesh mainly exports jute, jute goods, leather, tea, frozen food, readymade garments, furnace oil, paper and chemical products and handicrafts, and imports foodgrains, edible oil, petroleum products, crude petroleum, fertilizer, cement, cotton and yarn.⁵⁰

It may appear that the volume of Bangladesh's trade with OIC member countries is quite low compared to its total trade. In fact, in 1987, only fourteen out of the forty-six Islamic countries had higher percentage of intra-OIC trade in both the export and import sectors. Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, Yemen Arab Republic and Yemen People's Democratic Republic have a

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 69.

⁵⁰ *Survey*, n.2, p. 258 and p. 288.

higher percentage of exports with OIC member countries than Bangladesh. In the import sector, Bahrain, Chad, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen A.R., and Yemen P.D.R. have higher percentage than Bangladesh.⁵¹ It may be mentioned here that the volume of trade amongst the Islamic countries themselves is generally low compared to their total volume of trade. "Neighborhood considerations, proximity, historical ties, the regional availability of communication and transportation systems, and the membership within the same sub-regional economic grouping continue to play a dominant role in the commercial links among member countries."⁵² Therefore, we find that the OIC member countries trade links with other Islamic countries is weaker than that with non-OIC countries. In other words, "their principal trading partners continue to be a few industrial countries."⁵³

⁵¹ *Thirteenth Report*, n. 30, p. 62-63.

⁵² *Twelfth Annual Report (1986-87)*, IDB, (Jeddah, 1987), p. 57.

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 47.

In the field of technical cooperation among member states, the ICTVTR based in Dhaka, the SESRTCIC in Ankara, the ICDT in Casablanca and the IFSTAD in Jeddah are operating smoothly.⁵⁴ The IDB also tries to mobilise the technical capacity of the member countries towards increased technical cooperation among them.

The ICTVTR started functioning in 1986 and at present has students from seventeen Muslim countries.⁵⁵ They are being given training in various technologies and trade. In 1988 the Centre conducted six short courses or workshops, including one in Istanbul in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Education.⁵⁶

The idea of an Islamic Common Market as a means of increasing economic cooperation among Islamic countries was first mooted by Bangladesh at the Third Islamic summit (Taif, 1981) "Closer cooperation among the Islamic countries on the basis of economic complementarity would, in our view, be more desirable,

⁵⁴ *File of Islamic Summit Conferences and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers* (Riyadh, 1989), p. 429.

⁵⁵ *Saudi Gazette*, 16 March 1989.

⁵⁶ *Riyadh Daily*, 19 March 1989.

practicable and mutually beneficial."⁵⁷ Recently there has been a revival of interest within the OIC and IDB, and among the Muslim countries on forming an Islamic Common Market. Through the scheme restrictions on the movement of goods would be removed, thus ensuring ease of trade. "Islamic countries possess all tools needed for the setup of such market."⁵⁸ Priority would be given in the sectors of trade, manpower and investments among Islamic countries.⁵⁹

OIC relief during natural disasters

The Islamic Solidary Fund, a subsidiary organ, was created to provide relief to the Islamic countries at times of natural disasters. Financial assistance was given to the Comoros after the volcanic eruption in the Kartahla Mountains in 1979, and after the torrential rains in May 1980.⁶⁰ The drought in the Sahelian Zone, the countries of which are members of the OIC, has

⁵⁷ Statement of Ziaur Rahman at Third Islamic Summit.

⁵⁸ Ahmed M. Ali, President of IDB, in *Islamic Economic Magazine*, issue 1, February, 1989, p. 18.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.2, Statement of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

⁶⁰ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n. 26, p. 455 and 616.

received much attention of the organization. A special programme of assistance and rehabilitation was drawn up and the Islamic countries were requested to contribute to the implementation of the programme both collectively and individually.⁶¹

During the floods in Bangladesh in 1988, the Islamic countries sent relief and emergency material, for example, Egypt sent medicines and tinned food, Kuwait sent medicines, tents and tinned food. Saudi Arabia sent medicines, tents and helicopters on lease. Under Saudi Arabia's sacrificial meat utilization Project, in collaboration with IDB, frozen meat is sent every year, normally by sea freight, to a number of Islamic countries. In 1988, after the floods, Bangladesh's share, which was 13% of the total meat utilized,⁶² was sent by air so as to ensure a speedy delivery.⁶³ In addition, the Saudi people made huge cash contributions individually toward flood relief.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 756.

⁶² *Thirteenth Report*, n. 30, p.148

⁶³ Embassy of Bangladesh, Riyadh.

Summary

Aid-dependence of the economy of Bangladesh is, by and large, inherited from Pakistan. The economic problems faced by the country on independence were enormous and dependence on aid continued. Bangladesh diversified the sources of its aid in order to maximise the inflows of external resources. However, the economic assistance received from the oil-rich Arab countries, though substantial, have not been up to expectations. Economic, technical and commercial cooperation among the OIC member countries is yet to pick up momentum. Bangladesh calls for increased cooperation in these fields and draws the attention of the wealthy Islamic countries towards the needs of the LDCs. A major proportion of Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings is derived from the remittances sent by the Bangladeshis employed in the Middle East; hence, the Arab and Islamic countries continue to be an area of economic interest for Bangladesh. On the other hand, there has not been much cooperation among the member states on the social issues, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER V

BANGLADESH AND THE OIC - THE SOCIAL ASPECTS

One of the objectives of the OIC, as incorporated in its Charter, is "to consolidate cooperation among member states in the economic, social, cultural, scientific and other vital fields of activity."¹ Improving the socio-economic conditions of the Muslims all over the world and combining the efforts of the Muslims in these fields into fruitful cooperation are some of the goals of the OIC. For this reason, a number of committees, subsidiary organs and affiliated bodies have been established by the Organization to deal with cooperation among member states in the social and cultural fields, and numerous other institutions have been created to improve the socio-economic well-being of the Muslims. The standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), the standing Committee for Economic, cultural and Social Affairs (ICECS), the

¹ *Organization of Islamic Conference, Charter and Declarations/ Communiqués of the Islamic Summits*, (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 10.

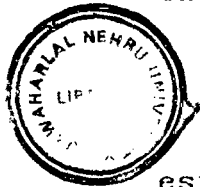
Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), the International Islamic News Agency (IINA), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) and Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) deal with social and cultural cooperation.

COMIAC is charged with increasing cooperation in the information and cultural fields, and the ICECS with socio-economic and cultural cooperation. The ISF provides relief and aid to Muslim states and to Muslim minorities in non-muslim countries and strives to raise the intellectual levels of the Muslims. The IINA tries to improve understanding among the Muslims about their Islamic identity, the ISSF encourages cooperation in sports among member countries.

Islamic Universities

The need to promote Islamic studies was felt by the OIC since its inception. The third ICEM (Jeddah, 1972) recommended the establishment of an Islamic University, open to everyone, where all academic subjects would be

taught.² At the Ninth ICFM (Dakar, 1978) a decision was taken for the establishment of Islamic Universities in Niger and Uganda.³ With substantial financial allocation from the ISF and member countries, these Universities became operational, though on a marginal scale, in the late 1980's. Saudi Arabia pledged US \$ 5 million and UAE announced a donation of US \$ 1 million to the Islamic University in Niger during the Thirteenth ICFM (Niamey, 1982).⁴ The international Islamic University in Malaysia started functioning in 1983⁵ and has a present enrollment of over 1200 students.



At the fourteenth ICFM (Dhaka, 1984) the establishment of an Islamic University in Bangladesh was first reviewed. The conference adopted a resolution appealing to "the member states and all organs and institutions of the OIC to provide technical and

² *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conferences - 1969-1981* (Jeddah, n.d.), p. 24.

³ *ibid*, p. 24.

⁴ *File of Islamic Summit Conferences and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers* (Riyadh, 1989), p. 305.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 352.

financial support to the project."⁶ The Fourth Islamic Summit (Casablanca, 1984) requested the member states to extend material and moral support to the Islamic Universities to enable them to "achieve the noble objectives for which they were established."⁷ The Islamic University in Bangladesh has a) Faculty of Islamic Studies, b) Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and c) Faculty of Applied Science and Technology.⁸ The existing Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Education was merged with the University.⁹ The University has received, in addition to land and cash donated by Bangladesh, contributions from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Brunei Darus Salam, World Muslim League and the ISF. Against an initial target of an enrollment of 750 students, the University at present has enrollment of 950.¹⁰

⁶ *ibid*, p. 352.

⁷ *OIC* n. 1, p. 62

⁸ Clause 23(i), Islamic University Act.

⁹ Explanatory Notes on cultural Affairs for the ICECS (Jeddah, 1989). Report no. ICECS/14-89/CS/D.4, p. 12.

¹⁰ Report and recommendations of the ICECS, 14th Session (Jeddah, 1988). Report No. ICECS/14-89/CS/REP.

Other institutions for education and research were also simultaneously established by the OIC in different parts of the world. The Islamic Centre in Guinea-Bissau was established through a resolution adopted at the Seventh ICFM (Istanbul, 1976).¹¹ At the same Conference, decision was taken to establish an Islamic Historical, Art and Cultural Research Centre in Istanbul.¹² The Third Islamic Summit (Taif, 1981) approved the establishment of the Regional Institute for Islamic Research and Studies in Timbuktu (Mali).¹³ Regional Institute for Complementary Education (RICE) was established in Islamabad in pursuance of the decision of the Fourteenth ICFM (Dhaka, 1983).¹⁴ With Saudi assistance, the King Faisal Institute was established in Dhaka in 1975 for imparting both religious and modern education.¹⁵

¹¹ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n. 2, p. 204.

¹² *ibid*, p. 203.

¹³ *ibid*, p. 768.

¹⁴ File, n. 4, p. 353.

¹⁵ *Saudi Arabia's Economic and Social Development Aid to the Islamic World - 1988*, (Riyadh, n.d.), p. 68.

In addition to these, the OIC recommended that Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran, may be included in the curricula of the educational institutions for "strengthening the bonds of solidarity among muslim states."¹⁶ In Bangladesh Islamic studies, or *Islamiyat* is a compulsory subject for Muslim students in the primary and secondary school levels. There are a number of religious schools, or *madrassas*. In the Universities, in the Faculties of Humanities, Islamic History and Arabic Language departments cater to a large number of students interested in those subjects.

Islamic Games

At the Eleventh ICFM (Islamabad, 1980) Bangladesh proposed the holding of International Games amongst the member countries, and Turkey offered to hold the first Islamic Games in Izmir.¹⁷ Bangladesh was confident that "such a competition will generate a sense of pride specially among the younger generations and strengthen the fraternal Islamic bonds among the member

¹⁶ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n.2, p. 160.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 669.

countries."¹⁸ On the recommendations of the Sixth session of the ICECS, the Third Islamic summit (Taif, 1981) decided to accept Bangladesh's proposal to call the games the "Islamic Solidarity Games" and to establish the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF).¹⁹ A Special Committee of eleven was formed to draw up the draft statute of the ISSF. Bangladesh was one of the members of this Committee.²⁰ The First Islamic Solidarity Games was held in Izmir in 1980 and the Second Games in Riyadh in 1983. No other Games has been held since then.

Muslims minorities in non-Muslim states

The question of the socio-economic well-being of the Muslim minorities and the extent of their freedom to exercise their religious rights in the non-Muslim states has been of concern to the OIC. The Fourth ICFM (Benghazi, 1973) directed the General Secretariat to prepare a report on the condition of the muslim

¹⁸ *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1980), Vol. 4, p. 16. (Statement of Prof. Shamsul Huq at 11th ICFM).

¹⁹ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n. 2, p. 772.

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 773.

minorities in the non-member states, specially in those states which deprive them the freedom to exercise their religious and political rights.²¹ The Eight ICFM (Tripoli, 1977), however, noted that the question had to be studied carefully in order to "avoid having the OIC accused of interference in the affairs of non-Islamic states, which may have Muslim minorities, and yet be valuable allies in the fight against Zionism and in the pursuance of the other aims of the Organization."²²

More than one-third of the muslim population lives in non-Muslim states.²³ The condition of the Turkish muslims of Bulgaria, the Muslims of southern Philippines, the Turkish Cypriots and the Muslim minorities in Eritrea were of great concern to the OIC. The Fifth Islamic Summit (Kuwait, 1987) adopted a resolution on the conditions of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, upholding their religious, cultural, political and economic rights.²⁴ The Seventeenth ICFM

²¹ *ibid*, p. 55.

²² *ibid*, p. 305.

²³ *ibid*, p. 600.

²⁴ *File*, n. 4, p. 99.

(Amman, 1988) reiterated the call by appealing to member states to ensure, through contacts with non-Muslim states, that the Muslim minorities are treated in accordance with the provisions of international law concerning basic human rights.²⁵

Bangladesh, while expressing its sympathy with muslim minorities at the OIC, has always maintained that it was an internal matter for the countries concerned. Bangladesh expressed the hope that Philippines would honor the Tripoli agreement and that the protocol signed between Bulgaria and Turkey would help solve their problem. "We would also like to assure the Islamic Conference of our support to its efforts in protecting the legitimate rights of the Muslim minorities within the framework of the charter of the UN, the OIC and the principles of Non-alignment."²⁶ And at the Fifth Islamic Summit (Kuwait, 1987), President Ershad declared, "I am particularly perturbed to hear about our brothers in Islam in Bulgaria."

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 425.

²⁶ *Bangladesh Document*, n. 18, p. 13.

The ISF and the IDB give financial assistance to the Muslim communities in non-Muslim states through grants for schools and hospitals. The IDB has a scholarship programme for muslim communities in non-member countries. The programme was first implemented in 1982 with students from Muslim communities in India, Sri Lanka and Kenya, and by the end of 1988, includes students from eighteen other countries.²⁷

Dhaka Declaration of Islamic Human Rights

The Tenth ICFM (Fez, 1979) decided to set up an *ad hoc* Commission of Muslim experts to prepare a document on Human Rights.²⁸ A draft document drawn up by the Muslim legal experts was studied at the Fourteenth ICFM (1983) at Dhaka. The preamble and Article 1 of the draft document was approved under the title "Dhaka Declaration of Human Rights in Islam."²⁹ The Fourth Islamic Summit (Casablanca, 1984) approved the Dhaka Declaration but decided to postpone its decision on the endorsement of

²⁷ *Riyadh Daily*, April 11, 1989.

²⁸ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n.2, p. 505.

²⁹ *File*, n. 4, p. 332.

the whole Document on Human Rights in Islam and asked the Experts Committee to fully study it.³⁰ The subsequent Foreign Ministers' Conferences have given calls to the Experts Committee to finalize the draft document. A revised draft was presented to the Fifth ISC (Kuwait, 1987). The draft document was sent to each member state for study and comments.

Other social and cultural issues at the OIC

Drug abuse and trafficking in narcotics is an issue that has received much attention in the OIC in recent years. The Fifteenth ICFM (Sanaa, 1984) and Sixteenth ICFM (Fez, 1986) adopted resolutions on drug abuse and control.³¹ The Seventeenth ICFM (Aman, 1988) urged the member states to develop bilateral and regional cooperation in preventive education and rehabilitation and to be vigilant against the dangers of drug abuse.³² An expert Committee meeting on narcotics was held in Istanbul in October 1988.³³

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 81.

³¹ *Explanatory Notes*, n. 9, p. 48.

³² *File*, n. 4, p. 430-431.

³³ *Explanatory Notes*, n. 9, p. 49.

Specific data and statistics on drug abuse in Bangladesh is unavailable, but Bangladesh is fast becoming the centre of transit trafficking in the international drug trade which can have disastrous effect on the country. Bangladesh is a member of the International Narcotics Control Board and also attended the Experts Committee Meeting of the OIC member countries in Istanbul.

The Seventh ICFM (Istanbul, 1976) recognized the fact that some member states were undergoing accelerated economic and social development and some others had an abundant supply of labour and technical know-how, and gave a call for an *exchange of labour and know-how* among muslim states.³⁴ The first International Seminar on "Human and Natural Resources of the Muslim world" was held in Dhaka in 1978.³⁵

The First Islamic Information Ministers' Conference was held in Jeddah in 1988 in response to a call given by the Fifth Islamic Summit (Kuwait, 1987) to implement

³⁴ *Declarations and Resolutions*, n.2, p. 205.

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 396

the Information Plan and formulate an *Islamic Information Strategy*.³⁸ Similarly, the First Islamic Cultural Ministers' Conference was held in Dakar in 1989 to seek ways to increase cooperation among the muslim countries in the cultural field.

Summary

Though cooperation among the OIC member states in the social and cultural field was one of the objectives of the organization when it was first established, there has not been much progress and cooperation in this area. The cultural and social diversity of the countries with Muslim majorities hinders such cooperation. Due to geographical location, different cultural heritages, and social interactions with other groups of people of the same region, the Muslim countries do not always share the same views on and attach the same importance to different situations or issues. This diversity of opinion and views is quietly acknowledged; and the conservative members of the OIC frequently call for an alignment of social customs and cultural norms among the Muslim countries. This, however, has not been possible,

³⁸ *File*, n. 4, p. 101

but an awareness among the OIC member countries regarding each other's social aspect may be developed to bring about greater understanding within the OIC.

We may now summarize the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

We have seen that after the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state there was reluctance on the part of the majority of the Arab and Muslim states to recognize the new country. This reluctance may have been due to various reasons. It was probably because they 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 those values. Pakistan had mounted an extensive and vigorous diplomatic offensive against the Bengalis and their struggle for an independent state, portraying them as *kafirs* (non-believers) or as Muslims who had gone astray.¹ Pakistan's threat to cut off diplomatic relations with those countries which recognize

¹ Interview of Professor Najma Choudhury, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka by the writer on April 9, 1986 in New Delhi.

Bangladesh may have also acted as a deterrent.² In addition, we may assume that as Pakistan had been an active member of the OIC since its inception, the member states may have had some reluctance to hurt the feelings of Pakistan. The Muslim states may also have had some reservations about the real nature of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's government which had proclaimed itself secular and socialist, and about the extent of friendship of the new state with the Soviet Union and the East European countries. However, through a gradual and slow process, Bangladesh's relations with the Islamic world improved and within a very short period after the country's admission into the OIC, Bangladesh had become a member of the major committees and bodies of the OIC.

Bangladesh is the only Muslim country which does not border another predominantly Muslim country. It is also the second largest Muslim state and the largest LDC within the comity of Muslim nations. All these factors dictate Bangladesh's desire to maintain a conspicuous posture within the OIC.

² Akmal Hussain, "Bangladesh and the Muslim World" in Emajuddin Ahmed (ed), *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: a small state's imperatives*(Dhaka, 1984) p. 85

The OIC is an amalgamation of a varied kind of governments, from monarchies, revolutionary governments to democracies. However, largely due to domestic compulsions, no member country has so far left the OIC. Though Iran and Libya have bitter relations with Saudi Arabia, one of the more prominent members, they have not dissociated themselves with the OIC. Egypt, whose membership was suspended after the Camp David agreement (signed between Egypt and Israel), has been allowed to resume its seat (1985) and is hosting the Nineteenth ICFM (1990) largely to consolidate its position. Likewise, Afghanistan's membership was suspended after the Soviet intervention, but Afghanistan did not withdraw from the Organization. Uganda, with less than 10 percent Muslim population, did not leave the OIC even after the fall of the Muslim ruler. Nigeria, though not a Muslim majority state, gained admission after having observer status for a long time (1975-87). All these point to the fact that, due to domestic compulsions, these states have to remain within the OIC and to the importance that the Muslim countries attach to the Organization. Interestingly, the Arab League, on account of differences among its members, has not been able to

hold any Summit meeting in recent times, while the Heads of State of OIC member countries have met on schedule.

The national interests of the Muslim countries, shaped by their geopolitical situations and their socio-economic compulsions, constrict deliberations on most matters of concern to the Muslim world. A semblance of unanimity is maintained, or resolutions are adopted in such a way that the thorny issues are avoided. Hence, the desire for forming a world Islamic community seem far from being realized.

In regard to the OIC itself, it must be made more relevant to all the members so that they may derive definite benefits from it. 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 rhetorics to enhance its credibility among its own members through more substantial and concrete actions. Some states, who feel they have not derived much benefit from the OIC, have

refrained from paying their subscriptions, thus adding to the burden of the Organization.³ It would seem that some states, not expecting much advantage from the Organization, technical or economic, have lost interest in the OIC and have charged the secretariat with inaction.⁴ The member - states and the secretariat have to work concertedly for the benefit of all member countries, irrespective of their economic conditions and political beliefs.

Out of the forty-six OIC member states, forty-four are members of the NAM, with the exception of Turkey and Brunei Darus-Salam. So the mainstream thought of the OIC is not basically different from that of the NAM. Hence we may infer that Bangladesh, as member of both the OIC and the NAM, follows the main trend of thought of both these groupings. Bangladesh has followed a non-aligned foreign policy from the very beginning. We may recall that the East Pakistani political leaders had rejected, in 1966, the idea of political and economic alignment with any power bloc. As is evident from the study,

³ Dr. Gabid. Secretay-General, OIC, said that only 12 out of the 46 members have been regularly paying their dues. *Saudi Gazette* (Jeddah), March 7, 1989.

⁴ Editorial, *Saudi Gazette* (Jeddah), Mar 9, 1989.

Bangladesh calls for peaceful solution of all issues, which is also the general trend in the NAM, the OIC and the Commonwealth.

Bangladesh's economic compulsions and its political interests dictate the role that the country takes in different situations. During the American hostage crisis in Iran and the Libyan-US conflicts, for example, Bangladesh took a middle of the road position. As Bangladesh has a comfortable economic and political relationship with the USA and as Iran and Bangladesh have religious ties binding them together, Bangladesh had to take care not to side with either country in their conflict. Bangladesh declared its "abundant goodwill for the people of Iran", at the same time urging both the parties to adhere to the provisions of the UN charter, international law and conventions.⁵ Thus, as a member of the Security Council during that period, Bangladesh voted for the resolution asking Iran to release the hostages, and also abstained on a draft resolution calling for sanctions against Iran

⁵ *Bangladesh Documents* (Dhaka, 1980), Vol. 4, p. 15, (Statement of Prof. M. Shamsul Huq, former Foreign Minister, at 11th ICFM, Islamabad, 1980).

(subsequently vetoed by USSR).⁸ Again, during Libyan - US crises that erupt from time to time, Bangladesh takes a moderate stand and enjoins caution on the warring parties, while condemning the use of force and reaffirming adherence to the principles of the UN Charter. As Bangladesh depends on the west and the oil-rich Arab countries for external resource inflows, it has to take care not to jeopardize its relations with either, and finds Non-alignment the most convenient approach.

During the period under study Bangladesh achieved a certain degree of recognition in the international community by virtue of its non-aligned foreign policy, and by being in the mainstream of the major world groupings, like the OIC, NAM and the Commonwealth. Bangladesh also maintains a high profile in these organizations as the eighth largest state in the world, the second largest Muslim state, and the largest LDC. A militarily weak and economically least developed country like Bangladesh cannot, in fact, aspire to the degree of prominence as Bangladesh has actually achieved. However,

⁸ S.A.M.S. Kibria, "Bangladesh in the Security Council" in *Bangladesh Quarterly* (Dhaka), Vol. 1, no. 3, 1981, p. 8.

by virtue of its conspicuous presence and its non-aligned foreign policy, Bangladesh has gained stature in the world fora. At the Third Islamic Summit Conference, Sixth Non-aligned Summit, numerous ICFMs and at the Non-aligned Conferences, Bangladesh has been made Vice Chairman or elected to make statements on behalf of the Asian group of nations. Bangladesh's non-aligned foreign policy was found acceptable to the countries of the OIC, which elected Bangladesh to the Ministerial and Summit-level committees on Jerusalem, and the Islamic Peace Committee on Iran Iraq. The Twelfth ICFM (Baghdad, 1981), meeting soon after the assassination of Ziaur Rahman, paid tributes to his memory and called him "one of the eminent Islamic personalities who had devoted his life and consecrated his efforts .. to Islamic solidarity."⁷ It has been observed that such language is usually reserved for leaders who have been very active within the OIC.

Bangladesh, being militarily weak and with an underdeveloped economy, is not a security threat to any

⁷ *File of Islamic Summit Conferences and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers (Riyadh, 1989), p. 261.*

other country.⁸ Bangladesh does not figure prominently in the foreign policy goals of other countries, except perhaps that of its immediate neighbours. However, its non-aligned foreign policy and moderate stand, in conformity with the majority opinion in world bodies, has stood it in good stead and has secured for the country economic aid and, to a certain degree, political prominence. During Zia and Ershad's time, Bangladesh has proclaimed its solidarity with the Islamic world and, at the same time "has continued to reach out to a panoply of non-Muslim Third World states and to maintain friendly ties with the major world powers."⁹ It has been observed that, in most issues, except probably those concerning Palestine and Jerusalem, the fact that a state is a Muslim-majority state does not have much effect on its relations and the voting pattern.¹⁰ Other factors may figure more prominently in the decision of that state to take a certain stand. In Bangladesh's

⁸ J.P. Jain, *Soviet Policy Towards Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi, 1974), p. 210.

⁹ Peter J. Bertocci, "Bangladesh : Composite Cultural Identity and Modernization in a muslim - majority state" in Stoddard, Cuthell and Sullivan (eds), *Change in the Muslim World* (New York, 1981), p. 79

¹⁰ Adeed Dawisha (ed) *Islam in foreign policy* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 178

case, its underdeveloped economy and need for foreign aid, and its security perceptions and political interests play a very important role in its actions and inter-actions in the international political arena.

Due to budgetary constraints, Bangladesh is unable to maintain resident diplomatic missions in most of the countries of black Africa and in South America. In fact, it has only three resident missions in black Africa. Bangladesh, therefore, may make proper use of the OIC forum and the different Islamic meetings to develop bilateral ties with the African countries, particularly in the field of technical cooperation. The numerous OIC meetings held throughout the year offer Bangladesh opportunities to enhance its bilateral ties with the Arab countries and thereby get preferential treatment over the non-OIC countries as regards trade, employment and commerce. These opportunities need to be fully utilized.

Though Bangladesh had been close to the Soviet Union and East Europe at the time of independence, we have seen that this gradually changed due to the economic constraints faced by the country and the

inability of the Soviet Union and its allies to meet the country's economic needs. Bangladesh had to diversify its aid sources to include the industrially developed countries of the West and the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. Though the aid that has come from the Middle East countries till date has not been enormous, a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the country is the remittances sent by Bangladeshis working in those countries. In that context, Bangladesh's membership in the OIC gains another dimension, since Bangladesh receives preferential treatment, as an LDC within the OIC with huge manpower resources, when recruitment of workers takes place. As a spokesman of the LDCs in the OIC, at the NAM and in the UN, Bangladesh also gains a prominent position in the comity of nations.

Among the Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and U.A.E. have been the most prominent donors to Bangladesh. Iraq, Kuwait and U.A.E. provided substantial aid before August 1975 which was frozen for some time after the change of government.¹¹ Saudi Arabia extended

¹¹ Rehman Sobhan, *The Crisis of External Dependence: The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1982), p. 140.

a grant of US \$ 10 million to Bangladesh for the purchase of foodgrains during 1974/75, even before granting diplomatic recognition to the country, although no further aid was committed till 1976/77.¹² None of these Islamic countries have built major commercial links with Bangladesh and have not thus had reason to exert influence on the domestic or foreign policies of the country. Bangladesh's external relations and the position the country has taken on various issues in the world fora have always been in line with that of the majority opinion of the world groupings of significance.

Bangladesh society is said to be factionalised between the secularists and the Islamists and between the rightists and the leftists.¹³ However, the majority of the population, poverty stricken and living in villages, is unconcerned about these political ideologies. Islam is the way of life for eighty-five percent of the population since they were born in that religion. The constitutional changes that have been gradually brought about will not affect the life of the

¹² *ibid*, p. 155.

¹³ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka, 1980), p. 140.

average Bangladeshi to a very great extent. These changes do, however, have political connotation. The regimes in power may have been anxious to develop a symbol of harmony and congruence within Bangladesh to differentiate it from India, just as language differentiates the country from Pakistan.¹⁴ These changes may have been due to the personal ideological inclinations and political self-interests of the regimes in power as much as to win preferential treatment from Saudi Arabia and the rich countries of the Islamic world.

We may conclude that, by its membership in the OIC, Bangladesh has gained collective strength and identity in the international arena as an Islamic and non-aligned state. The Islamic links thus developed has been used to further Bangladesh's relations with other Muslim countries in various stages of economic development and professing varied political beliefs. The economic wealth of the oil-rich Arab countries also became more easily accessible and Bangladesh received preferential treatment, with the result that economic aid and foreign exchange earnings (in the form of remittances from

¹⁴ Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Bangladesh Revolution and Its Aftermath* (Dhaka, 1980), p. 241.

Bangladeshis working in the Middle East) increased substantially thereby easing the economic constraints of the country to some extent.

The successive governments of Mujib, Zia and Ershad recognized the importance of developing and maintaining good and friendly relations with the Muslim countries, for the economic upliftment of the country and for their own political survival (through a broader support base within the country). An official Islamization process is maintained and the government declares that there has been an increase in Islamic sentiments among the people. Bangladesh's relations with the Muslim countries and its membership of the OIC are the products of the country's economic, social and political compulsions.

Bangladesh maintains ties with the Muslim countries and upholds the rights of the Muslims at all international fora. In this regard Bangladesh has to be careful not to antagonize the major power blocs and not to take sides with the subtle groupings within the OIC and in conflicts between member states. As a non-Arab Muslim state, and that too one without much economic or political clout, Bangladesh must maintain a balanced and

moderate posture in all issues concerning the Muslim world, so as to derive the most benefit out of its membership of the OIC.

Appendix I

LIST OF MEMBER STATES OF THE OIC

1. Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (1)
2. People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
3. State of Bahrain
4. People's Republic of Bangladesh
5. United Republic of Cameroon
6. Republic of Chad
7. Federal Islamic Republic of Comoro
8. Republic of Djibouti
9. Arab Republic of Egypt
10. Republic of Gabon
11. Republic of Gambia
12. Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea
13. Republic of Guinea-Bissau
14. Republic of Indonesia
15. Islamic Republic of Iran
16. Republic of Iraq
17. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
18. State of Kuwait
19. Republic of Lebanon
20. Malaysia
21. Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
22. Republic of Maldives
23. Republic of Mali
24. Islamic Republic of Mauritania
25. Kingdom of Morocco
26. Republic of Niger
27. Sultanate of Oman
28. Islamic Republic of Pakistan
29. Palestine
30. State of Qatar
31. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
32. Republic of Senegal
33. Republic of Sierra Leone
34. Somali Democratic Republic
35. Democratic Republic of the Sudan
36. Syrian Arab Republic
37. Republic of Tunisia
38. Republic of Turkey
39. Republic of Uganda
40. State of the United Arab Emirates
41. Burkina Faso
42. Yemen Arab Republic
43. People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.
44. Sultanate of Brunei Daressalam
45. Federal Republic of Nigeria
46. People's Republic of Benin

(1) Membership suspended.

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