

## The state of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the dawn of the new millennium

Devon A. Hansen, University of North Dakota

Mohammad Hemmasi, University of North Dakota

*Abstract:* An ever-increasing number of inter-governmental organizations (IGO) exist to promote political, defense, economic, and scientific cooperation among member states. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is a unique IGO with the primary objective of promoting “Islamic solidarity” among the member states. A majority Muslim population qualifies a state for inclusion in this Organization, whose voluntary membership has more than doubled since its inception three decades ago. Yet, the processes related to globalization, the influences of nationalism, and the differences in the relative levels of social and economic development among member states often prevent deepening their cooperation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study examines the state of the OIC at the end of the millennium. To assess levels of development and policy options for future cooperation, the OIC states were ranked on the basis of their composite development index scores. As expected, many of the states registering a high development index are the oil-exporters located in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. At the lower end of the spectrum are the majority of the least developed Islamic states in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Successes and failures of the Organization and policy options are also discussed.

### Introduction

In the last half of the twentieth century, the growth in regionalism and a declining role for the traditional nation-state are indicative of the global change in the political and socio-economic

perspective (Cusack 1998; Miyoshi 1993). The economic, political, and geographical processes of globalization are redefining the base of power. There has been a proliferation of IGOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in recent decades. Within the context of the global society, the objectives of these IGOs are to coordinate relations among member states to achieve common goals (Cusack 1998). After thirty years, the OIC remains unique among IGOs; its primary purpose is to promote “Islamic solidarity” among members, as well as to consolidate cooperation in social, political, economic, cultural, and other areas. This study examines the relative development levels among the OIC member states at the end of the millennium. It also analyzes the Organization’s successes and failures in fulfilling the goal of “Islamic solidarity” in the context of reducing gross disparities in the quality of life among member states and managing political challenges. These will follow a brief historical background to this potentially powerful supranational organization.

### **The Formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)**

The OIC is an inter-governmental organization comprised of Islamic states with its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It was founded in September 1969, following an appeal from the former Mufti of Jerusalem to all Islamic states to join the First Islamic Summit at Rabat, Morocco. The summit was held in response to the August arson attack on the holy al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This historic meeting was instrumental in the formation of the OIC, and Islamic solidarity became the framework to increase cooperation and exchange among the Islamic states. In 1971, the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference formally established the OIC by approving the Charter, which a majority of member states had ratified by February 1973 (Selim 1997; Baba 1993). Under the Charter, the objectives of the OIC are:

- to strengthen Islamic solidarity among member states;
- to consolidate cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields;

- to safeguard the dignity, independence, and national rights of Muslim peoples;
- to safeguard the Holy Places and support the struggle of the Palestinian people;
- to eliminate racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism; and,
- to promote cooperation and understanding between member states and others (OIC Permanent Delegation to UN Web Site, 18 Aug. 2000).

The principal institutional framework of the OIC is comprised of three parts. First, the Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government defines the strategy for Islamic policies. Second, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers examines the progress on implementing the Islamic Summit's decisions. Finally, the General Secretariat is the executive organ of the OIC and headed by a Secretary General, who executes the decisions of the Islamic Summit and the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (SESRTCIC Web Site, 18 Aug. 2000).

The OIC has created a number of committees to promote cooperation among member states in various fields. Included are: the Jerusalem (Al-Quds) Committee; the Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs; the Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation; the Committee for Scientific and Technical Cooperation; and the Islamic Peace Committee (SESRTCIC Web Site, 18 Aug. 2000).

Twenty-five member states comprised the OIC in 1969 at its formation, increasing to the present 56 members. These Islamic states stretch from Guyana in the northeastern part of South America to Indonesia in Southeast Asia, and from Kazakhstan in Central Asia to Mozambique in East Africa. They account for approximately one-sixth of the world land area and one-fifth of the world population. According to Article 8 of the Charter, every Muslim state is eligible to join the OIC. Although not clearly defined by the Charter, the term Muslim state implies where Muslims are a majority. To become an OIC member, a Muslim state submits an application expressing its willingness to adopt the Charter (Sarwar 1997).

## Development Studies

One of the major goals of the Organization is to promote the socioeconomic development of Muslim communities. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has defined human development as a "process of enlarging people's choices" (UNDP 1990, 10). Within this context, meeting the basic needs of people constitute but one of the objectives of the development process; a significant component includes people's participation in this dynamic process. With increasing globalization and proliferation of IGOs, the roles of the states and the international community are continuously being redefined. As global markets and technology become more integrated, "more people are being pushed to the periphery—and the markets are not taking care of those who lose" (UNDP 1995, 119). To ensure the well being of all, the focus should be people and their productive potential in the expansion of global opportunities.

Measuring development as a dynamic process has posed challenges to researchers. One of these challenges involves the use of objective and subjective components as indicators of development. In general, objective socioeconomic variables, such as labor force and employment, income, and education, are published for geographical areas and social groups. Although less commonly reported, subjective measures should include how people feel about their own lives (personal well being) and the world around them (social well being). Measures of social well being appear "to provide useful insights into the state and fate of nations" (Eckersley 2000, 22). The present study of the OIC incorporates objective socioeconomic variables as indicative of the relative levels of development among the member states.

To broaden the perspective on development, researchers have made concerted efforts to generate composite indexes with greater numbers of relevant variables. The techniques to develop composite indexes include rankings of places, calculation of standard scores, scaling methods, and factor or principal component analysis (Guveli and Kilickaplan 2000; Mazumdar 1999; Weng 1997; Hemmasi 1995; Dasgupta and Weale 1992; Stover and Leven 1992; Ram 1982). Since 1990, the UNDP's *Human Development Report* has

constructed several composite indexes to measure aspects of human development. The Human Development Index (HDI) measures development in terms of longevity, knowledge, and income sufficiency (UNDP 1990). The Human Poverty Index (HPI) measures the different dimensions of deprivation in human life (UNDP 1995). The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) are composite measures reflecting gender inequalities in human development (UNDP 1997).

Besides the above-mentioned composite indexes used in the Human Development Reports, scholars have constructed other measures of development. For example, Morris (1979) developed the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) for comparison at the international level. The PQLI combined three indicators—life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy—into an equally weighted composite index to complement measures of income. The Human Suffering Index measured the living conditions in 130 counties by using 10 human-welfare factors associated with demography, health, economics, and governance (Camp and Speidel 1987). The Social Development Index (SDI) was a weighted composite index employing eight social indicators of human well-being (Mazumdar 1996). The Development Index (DI) is a composite weighted index computed from factor scores in order to rank states on their levels of development (Weng 1997). Recently, the United Way developed a “caring index,” which compares 32 key indicators to measure overall well-being in the United States (United Way Web Site, 30 Nov. 2000).

Development studies reveal that this type of research has focused on populations at various spatial scales, including international, national, subnational, and city. Guveli and Kilickaplan’s (2000) study assessed the levels of socioeconomic development for 40 OIC states in 1996. Their study used principal component analysis and 33 variables (14 economic and 19 social indicators), which produced six factors accounting for 74.5 percent of the total variance. They argued that the 23 variables loading highly on the first dimension, Socio-economic Development Factor, which accounted for 41.6% of the total variance, could be used as a “yardstick” for development among the OIC states. The factor scores for this first component were ranked, resulting in three

groupings of states. These groupings consisted of the seven oil-rich Gulf States plus Malaysia, the 14 North African and Southeast Asian states, and the 19 states in West Africa. The findings of Guveli and Killickaplan (2000) suggest that the differences in the economic and social structures of the OIC states may hinder economic integration.

Mazumdar (1999) measured the well being for 68 developing states of Asia, Africa, and Latin America from 1960 to 1990. In addition to the three indicators of the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI), two additional variables—percentage of urban population and per capita calories—were incorporated in the study. Over the time periods, the author found that the highest achieving states were located in Latin America, while those that performed the worst were sub-Saharan African states. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was evidence of improvement for almost all the developing states, but the 1980s were “disastrous” (Mazumdar 1999).

Principal component analysis was utilized to identify spatial economic patterns and to evaluate change over time in the Zhujiang Delta in southern China, post-Mao development strategy (Weng 1997). Ten variables were included to reflect the levels of economic development in the Delta between 1980 and 1992. The findings indicate a change in the spatial economic pattern from a single core to two separate areas. Further, the results of the development indices divides the Delta into three classes of areas—developed with high ranking in both 1980 and 1992; developing with ranking in between; and underdeveloped with low ranking in both years. This study also uses principal component analysis to assess relative development among OIC member states.

## Data and Analysis

As basic indicators of development, the four variables comprising the Human Development Index (HDI) reflect longevity, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. However, its shortcomings in measuring worldwide achievements in development have been acknowledged by the *2000 Human Development Report*, which states that the HDI “must be

**Table 1:** The variables used in the OIC States level of development index.

Variable	Description
<b><u>Demographic:</u></b>	
U5mr	Under-five mortality rate
Imr	Infant mortality rate
Tfr	Total fertility rate
LifeExpect	Life expectancy at birth
Urban	Urban population as percent of total population
<b><u>Educational:</u></b>	
Literacy	Adult literacy rate
Fliteracy	Female adult literacy rate
Enrolment	Combined first-, second-, and third-level gross school enrolment ratio
<b><u>Economic:</u></b>	
Ex/Import	Global Exports/Imports ratio
GDPpercap	Gross domestic product per capita
Indus/ser	Percent employed in industry/services
Agrlabor	Percent employed in agriculture
<b><u>Others:</u></b>	
Tphone	Main telephone lines per 1,000 people
Location	Sub-Saharan Africa <u>0</u> , non sub-Saharan Africa <u>1</u>
Oilstate	Oil exporter <u>1</u> , non oil exporter <u>0</u>

supplemented with other indicators of human development” (HDR 2000, 148). While our study includes the above-mentioned HDI variables, additional relevant social and economic variables are incorporated that may better reveal inequalities among the OIC member states. We constructed a weighted composite index of development based on 15 latest available variables (Table 1).

All member states of the OIC are potential observations. Thus, membership in the organization qualifies a state for inclusion, provided the necessary data are available. However, due to lack of comparable data, only 42 of the 56 OIC states are included (Figure 1). Excluded are the Central Asian republics, which recently joined the OIC after their independence from the Soviet Union, and therefore, lack comparable data. Furthermore, reliable data are unavailable for war-torn states, such as Afghanistan and Albania. A geographic data matrix consisting of 15 variables for 42 states were analyzed using principal component techniques. Most of the

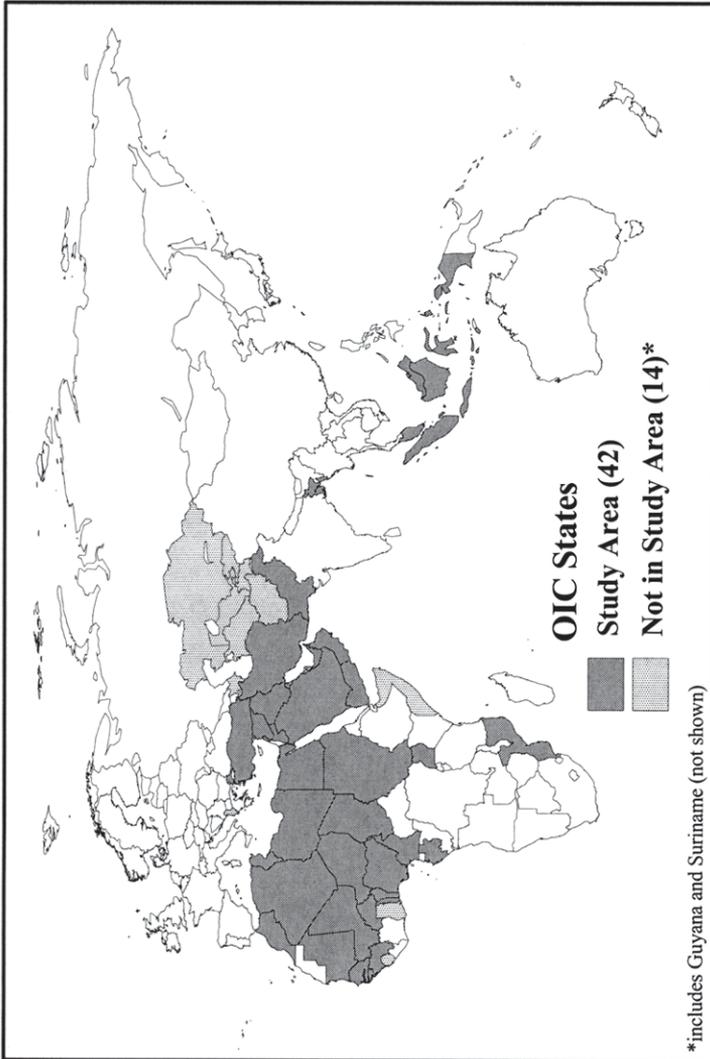


Figure 1: Location of the OIC States.

data are secured from United Nations sources, such as the Human Development Reports 1999 and 2000. A very informative site <[www.sesrtcic.org](http://www.sesrtcic.org)> established by the OIC also provides some of the latest data for member states, as well as valuable information about different aspects of the Organization.

Principal component analysis reduces a larger set of initial variables to a smaller, more manageable set of derived indicators without assuming that all variables are of equal importance. The overall procedure is based on the statistical reduction of the original indicators to their “principal components,” based upon mathematical covariance relationships among all original variables. A varimax rotation of the extracted principal components produces orthogonal factor scores. These factor scores indicate the relative rankings of observations on the derived composite measures (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black 1998).

Using a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 criterion, principal component analysis of the data matrix containing initial indicator values for the 42 OIC countries yielded two factor solutions (Table 2). These two factors (principal components) together accounted for 79 percent of the total variance, indicating their significance as explanatory variables. Factor one, the most important dimension, accounted for 69 percent of the total variance. As shown in Table 2, this factor is comprised of variables with high positive loadings, such as life expectancy (LifeExpect), female literacy rate (Fliteracy), percentage of urban population (Urban), and percentage of industry/services labor (Indus/ser), plus variables with high negative loadings, such as under-five mortality rate (U5mr), total fertility rate (Tfr), and percentage of agricultural labor (Agrlabor). The combined effect of these variables implies a dimension of socioeconomic development. This first factor can be labeled an “Urban Socioeconomic Development” component. High positive factor scores on this component were recorded for Lebanon (1.64), Brunei (1.48), and Malaysia (1.42), suggesting their leading role in the socioeconomic development among the OIC states. Larger negative scores belonged to states in sub-Saharan Africa, including Niger (-1.82), Burkina Faso (-1.36), and Guinea (-1.33), further implying a weaker performance on this component.

**Table 2:** Varimax rotated factor matrix and final communalities, 1998.

Factor	<b>Factor Pattern Loading</b>		Community
	I	II	
Variable	Urban Socioeconomic Development	Global Trade	
U5mr	<b>-0.927</b>		.89
LifeExpect	<b>0.903</b>		.89
Literacy	<b>0.836</b>		.77
Fliteracy	<b>0.826</b>		.76
Imr	<b>-0.924</b>		.89
Enrolment	<b>0.837</b>		.79
Indus/ser	<b>0.806</b>	0.506	.91
Agrlabor	<b>-0.806</b>	-0.506	.91
Location	<b>0.833</b>		.71
Tfr	<b>-0.812</b>		.66
Urban	<b>0.696</b>	0.570	.81
Tphone	<b>0.771</b>		.69
GDPpercap	<b>0.612</b>	0.548	.68
Ex/Import		<b>0.861</b>	.74
Oilstate		<b>0.797</b>	.70
Variance			
Explained	8.781	3.012	
Cumulative			
Percent of			
Variance	69.18	78.62	

Factor two describes an important aspect of the spatial economic landscape among the 42 OIC countries (Table 2). Accounting for nine percent of the total variance, this factor relates positively to those variables depicting trade with the rest of the world, such as the global export/import ratio (Ex/import) and the presence of oil-exporting countries (Oilstate). Thus, the second factor can be termed "Global Trade," since high loading variables are reflecting the greater integration in the global exchange. High positive scores were registered for states heavily relying on oil exports for their survival, such as Iraq (2.31) and Kuwait (1.77) in the Middle East and those located in Africa, such as Gabon (2.05) and Nigeria (1.68). Large negative scores were found in areas not participating in the oil exporting industries. For example, Comoros had the largest negative score (-1.41), followed by Bangladesh (-1.14) and

Egypt (-1.12). Furthermore, several variables have positive loadings greater than 0.50 for factor two, including the percentage of urban population (Urban), percentage of industry/services labor (Indus/ser), and gross domestic product per capita (GDPpercap), plus a negative loading on percentage of agricultural labor (Agrlabor). Both dimensions of our study imply that an ever-widening gap divides the “haves” and “have-nots” of the OIC member states.

The factor scores from principal component analysis are used to compute a development index (DI). This is a weighted composite indicator used to determine differences or degrees of development among the OIC states. It is mathematically expressed as:

$$DI = \sum_{i=1} X_i f_i$$

where:  $X_i$  represents the  $i^{\text{th}}$  factor score and  $f_i$  percentage of the total variance the  $i^{\text{th}}$  factor explains (Weng 1997). A state with a higher positive development index has a higher level of development.

## Discussion

The levels of development among the OIC states were examined by ranking their DI scores (Figure 2). Overall, the DI scores range from a positive 1.1 in Brunei, a small oil-rich state located in Southeast Asia, to a negative 1.3 for Niger, a landlocked state in sub-Saharan Africa. Twenty of the OIC states recorded positive DI scores, indicating relative high development. These states were further grouped as 11 highest-development and 9 high-development (Table 3). As expected, many of these states have achieved higher levels of development and higher incomes, primarily due to their substantial oil revenues. These oil-exporters are located around the Persian Gulf and in North Africa (Figure 3). Included in the more developed group are non-oil states such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Jordan, which owe their relative prosperity to industrialization and social welfare efforts in recent years.

The remaining 22 OIC states registering negative DI scores have relatively weak socioeconomic resource bases, and can be easily differentiated from the states with positive DI scores. These

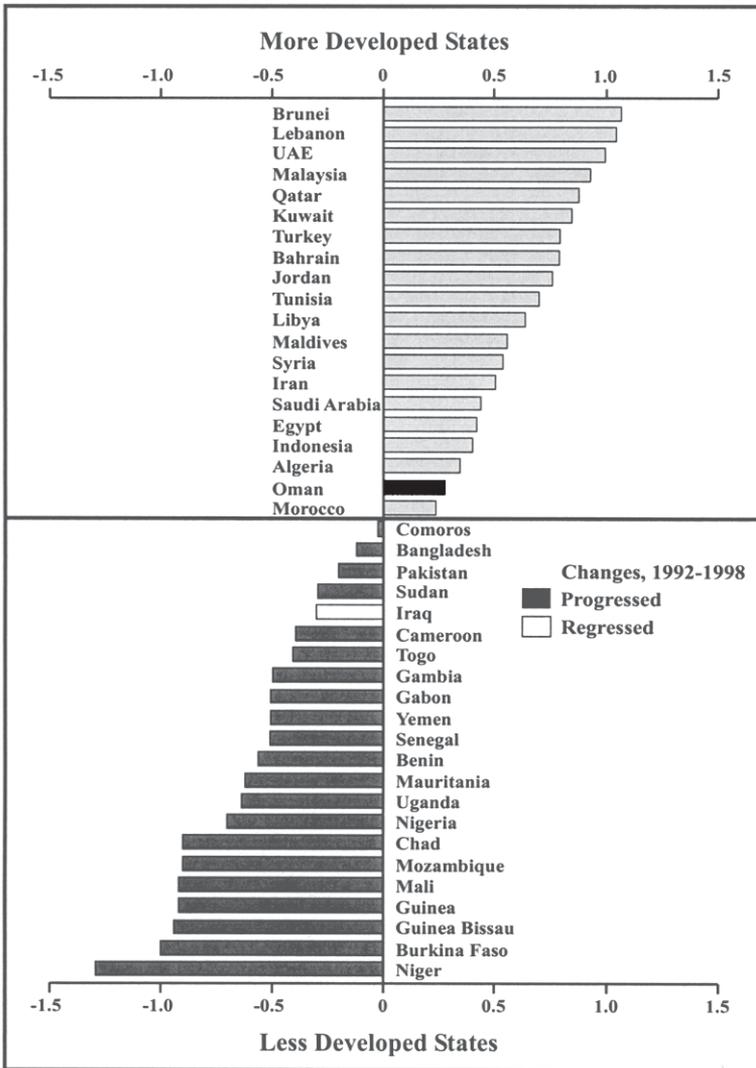
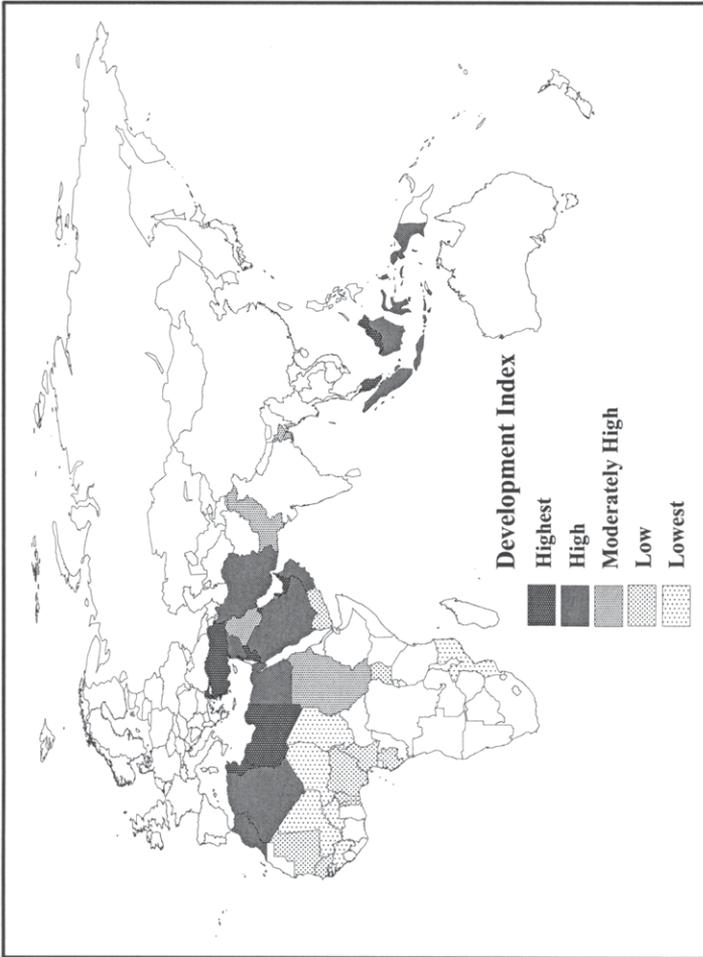


Figure 2: Development index (DI) scores, 1998.



*Figure 3: Development index scores for the OIC States, 1998*

**Table 3: Summary statistics for the OIC state groups, 1998.**

State Groups	No. of Countries	Population (millions)	Percent of Total	Intra-OIC Trade*		Non-OIC Trade*		GDP Per capita
				Percent Exports	Percent Imports	Percent Exports	Percent Imports	
<u>More Developed:</u>								
Highest	11	115.7	10.0	46.5	63.4	46.0	53.7	11,657
High	9	433.8	39.0	44.9	24.0	42.9	36.4	5,111
<u>Less Developed:</u>								
Moderately Low	5	323.8	29.0	5.1	9.4	3.8	4.5	1,813
Low	10	182.3	16.0	3.1	2.6	6.8	4.2	1,698
Lowest	7	66.8	6.0	0.4	0.6	0.5	1.2	904
Total	42	1,122.4	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	4,910

\* Data for 1997

states were divided into three distinct subgroups: five moderately low, ten low, and seven lowest development. They are all in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exceptions of Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Iraq has suffered over the last two decades because of its involvement in international wars, military expenditures, and subjugation to a decade of economic sanctions and isolation. Throughout most of the eighties, Iraq was engaged in a war with Iran. In 1990 Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in a dispute over boundaries and oil extraction activities, and the Gulf War followed. The plight of Iraqi people is reflected in the declining trend in life expectancy, from 66 in 1992 to 63.8 years in 1998. Likewise, Iraq's under-five child mortality rate has increased from 85 in 1992 to 125 in 1998.

A recent UNICEF study focused on the under-five mortality rate as the principal indicator of the state of the world's children. This rate measures the end result of the development process, indicating the outcome of factors such as the nutritional health of mothers, maternal and child health services, immunization levels, and clean water and sanitation (UNICEF 2000). The moderately low-, low-, and lowest-development groups register very high under-five mortality rates, and fall well behind those for the highest- and high-development groups.

The OIC states are not an economically homogeneous group. Although the oil industry plays a significant role in the economy of some OIC states, agriculture continues to be the main productive sector for many others. For example, agricultural labor exceeds 75 percent in nine of these 22 countries, ranging from 77 percent in Chad to 92 percent in Burkina Faso. States in the low- and lowest-development groups have experienced conflicts, droughts, floods, and have very fragile economies. Sub-Saharan Africa's poor economic performance has been a function of structural problems in its leading productive sectors, inefficient resource use, low levels of technology, poor export performance, low levels of investment, and severe debt burdens.

Furthermore, the United Nations designated 43 states worldwide as least developed in 1998; 16 of these are OIC member states (UNDP 2000). By most socioeconomic characteristics, these 16 states are considered among the poorest and the least developed.

For example, ten of these recorded life expectancies below 51.9 years, which is the average for all least developed states. As an indicator of development, life expectancy at birth reflects a state's level of health, nutrition, and income. Low life expectancy values may reveal a large percentage of a state's population face "poor living conditions" and a "lack of proper health facilities" (Mazumdar 1996).

The summary statistics in Table 3 shows the diversity that exists in the demographic and economic structures of the OIC states. For example, 10 percent of the total populations of the 42 OIC states reside in the highest-development group with a GDP per capita of nearly \$11,700. While at the other extreme, six percent of the people live in states of the lowest-development group, where the GDP per capita is about \$900. As stated in the *Annual Economic Report on the OIC Countries 1999*, the income differences among the populations of the OIC states "may constitute one of the basic factors that hinder intra-OIC economic cooperation" (SESRTCIC 2000, 13).

It is evident from the summary trade statistics that the three groups of OIC states registering negative DI scores, and especially the lowest-development group are "benefiting little from expanding markets and advancing technology" of globalization (UNDP 1999, 2). These groups have had only marginal participation in world markets. In contrast, the highest- and high-development groups accounted for roughly 90 percent of the OIC global trade. The uneven distribution of these global opportunities and benefits become more pronounced for the intra-OIC trade. The lowest-development group had an even smaller share of the trade among the OIC states than their share of the global trade.

There is an urgent need for infrastructural facilities, better health and educational institutions, and especially, economic development aimed at poverty alleviation in the less developed, poorer OIC states. It is a sad reality that neither the West nor the prosperous OIC member states have been eager to invest in these states. The OIC member states have the necessary capital resources, technical know-how, and moral obligation to assist the poorer members in order to create a stronger supranational organization. Yet, the existing OIC bureaucratic structure, the preoccupation of members with their

national interests, and the attitude of crisis management, prevents the OIC from growing into an effective engine of development. It seems wishful thinking to expect “Islamic solidarity” to take root among states with such wide gaps in their level of well-being and life chances.

### **Convergence/Divergence Trends**

One of the main goals of the OIC is to reduce the gross inequalities among the Islamic member states. This objective is similar to one held by the European Union (EU) regarding the disparities that exist among its member states. As a supranational organization uniting 15 states with 376 million people, the EU has reached a plateau achieved by no other IGO. It constitutes one of the world’s richest markets and generates roughly 40 percent of all world exports. A recent study investigated the convergence/divergence process across the member states of EU, where convergence was defined in terms of economic, social, and quality-of-life factors. The use of economic indicators alone to evaluate the convergence across states and regions have received far greater research attention than the inclusion of social and quality-of-life variables. Yet, concern for the well-being of all people makes it imperative that quality-of-life factors be a part of any evaluation of the relative inequalities between states (Giannias, Liargovas, and Manolas 1999).

Our study investigates the convergence/divergence trends in development across the five subgroups of the OIC states by calculating a coefficient of variation defined in terms of the 13 ratio socioeconomic variables for 1992 and 1998. The coefficient of variation is used to measure and compare the relative variability in the data, and is expressed as a percentage of the mean:

$$C.V. = s / \bar{x} * 100$$

where: *s* and  $\bar{x}$  represent the standard deviation and mean, respectively. Convergence between the socioeconomic variables occurs when the coefficient of variation decreases over time.

An analysis of the 13 variables indicates that the convergence occurred in the spread of literacy, urbanization, and communication

(Table 4). The divergence, however, was a result of disparities in mortality, fertility, global trade, and especially GDP per capita. These results are alarming because they indicate a widening gap between “haves” and “have-nots” of the OIC members. Contrary to the stated policies of the Organization, the least developed states have experienced setbacks in areas of human survival and economic prosperity during the 1990s. In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have expressed concern over these persisting interstate gross inequalities, as well as Organization’s ineffectiveness in the world political arena (Dabour 2000; Guveli and Killickaplan 2000; Alibabai 1997; Hamour 1997; Zeinelabdin 1996).

### Successes and Failures of the OIC

The OIC’s successes and failures must be evaluated in the context of two interrelated dimensions: (1) promoting security and well-being of the member states and people; and (2) resolving political disputes/conflicts. As a major component of the “Islamic solidarity” concept, the OIC Charter envisaged cooperation in a

**Table 4:** *Changes in the coefficient of variation, 1992-1998.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b><u>Convergence:</u></b>		
Literacy	38.03	34.53
Enrolment Ratio	38.94	34.84
Female Literacy	51.59	46.74
Urban	52.62	46.78
Industry/Service Employment	55.36	51.85
Telephone	135.60	127.59
<b><u>Divergence:</u></b>		
Life Expectancy	17.02	17.38
Total Fertility Rate	26.62	30.98
Infant Mortality Rate	56.24	65.66
Under Five Mortality Rate	61.21	74.18
Agricultural Employment	61.81	66.48
Global Trade Ratio	77.59	85.61
GDP Per Capita	117.69	119.91

variety of fields among the member states. However, an assessment of the Organization's successes and failures reveals tendencies toward ineffectiveness rather than bold successes.

The mere existence of the OIC is considered a remarkable achievement. The formation of the OIC, based on the concept of Ummah identity, reflects the desire for unity among Muslims, irrespective of political, economic, cultural, or racial differences. However, the commitment to national sovereignty often hinders the Islamic states' full cooperation in areas that may adversely influence their national interests. Sarwar poses a crucial question pertinent to the identity issue: "Will the secular nation-state or Ummah identity command the supreme loyalty of Muslims?" (Sarwar 1997, 92). A critical evaluation of the Organization's overall achievements and weaknesses seems to indicate that "nationalism" has played a greater role than "Islamic" brotherhood in their decisions. Overall assessment of the successes and failures of the OIC concur with Selim's conclusion:

The OIC still has a long way to go, if member states want to be an effective framework for achieving the declared objectives. It needs to develop a reform agenda designed to deal not only with past deficiencies, but also with new global challenges (1997, 57).

The OIC has set up various committees and institutions to encourage economic cooperation among member states. Twenty-five years ago, the OIC established an international financial institution, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), with its main office located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the IDB is to assist the economic and social development of its 53 member states and Muslim communities in non-member states, all in accordance with the principles of Shariah (IDB, 5 Feb. 2001). The Bank's main operations include project financing, technical assistance, trade financing, and special assistance. In 1999, nearly US\$2.1 billion was approved for these operations, which was an increase of 21 percent over the previous year. Included were 77 projects (US\$973 million) and 35 technical assistance operations (US\$10 million), which involved 42 member states (17 least developed). In the same year, the gross disbursements for all

operations totaled US\$1.2 billion, less than 60% of the approved budget (IDB 2000). The Bank's success in providing financial assistance to the poorer states has been generally limited and hampered by bureaucratic delays, lack of firm commitments, and often insufficient capital. While the member states expect the OIC institutions do many things for them, they are reluctant to pay their dues with an annual shortfall of 70 to 50 percent (SESRTCIC Reports 1997).

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OIC held in Tehran, Iran in 1997, the Bank outlined the Ummah's "preparation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in areas of economic, trade, and financial cooperation. The OIC recommended the expansion of intra-OIC trade by 3 percent during 1999-2001. This would only increase the intra-OIC trade from 10 to 13 percent of their total trade. During the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OIC in Doha, Qatar in 2000, the leaders of the member states reaffirmed their commitment to a "long-time dream" of establishing an Islamic Common Market.

The goals of the OIC include the resolution of political disputes and conflicts among member states and those involving Muslim minorities in non-member states. In this area, however, the Organization has had only limited success. Under the Charter, the OIC professes 'to coordinate action to safeguard the Holy Places and support the struggle of the Palestinian people.' As previously noted, the Palestine issue was the major force in the founding of the OIC. A 15-member Al-Quds Committee directs the implementation of its policies toward the Palestine problem. However, the "Peace Process" for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is being pursued mainly through the mediation by the United States and close consultations with the major Arab states. While, there is no direct role for the OIC in these negotiations, indirectly it adds some weight to the position of the Palestinians. Rarely have the member states been unanimous in their policies and actions toward this issue. As reiterated at the 2000 Arab League meeting in Cairo and the 9<sup>th</sup> Islamic Summit in Doha, Qatar in 2000, some OIC states advocate cutting all Muslim ties with the Jewish state, while others that benefit from economic and political relations with Israel want to maintain ties. However, the OIC's financial, political,

and moral assistance has been vital to the Palestinians struggles for a universally recognized state.

In the peaceful resolution of interstate disputes, the Charter defines the OIC's role as 'the settlement of any conflict that may arise by peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration.' The OIC has intervened in several disputes: the Pakistani-Bangladesh dispute in 1971-74; the Iranian-Iraqi conflict in 1980-88; the Senegali-Mauritanian dispute in 1989; the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict in 1990-91; and the Afghan civil war since 1989, but failed to arrive at their peaceful resolutions (Selim 1997). Furthermore, the Charter of the OIC professes 'to strengthen the struggle of all Muslim people to safeguard their dignity, independence, and national rights.' Yet, the OIC has taken basically a rhetorical stance in dealing with the issues in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kashmir, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, the southern Philippines, Kosovo, Lebanon, Algeria, Sudan, and Iraq. In some instances, such as Bosnia and Palestine, the OIC has been more involved. Overall, it is very difficult to find many instances where the Organization has successfully assumed the roles and implemented the ideals stated in its Charter in ameliorating inequalities and resolving political conflicts.

## Summary

Three decades of experiment have shown that religion affinity alone is not sufficient to create an effective international organization within the complex global context. Glassner states that "Nationalism ... is a more powerful influence on most people in the world than religion ..." (1996, 502). In other words a group of economically powerful, politically democratic states with shared interests may have a better chance of forming a successful supranational organization than very diverse states sharing only religious foundations. Scholars are vigorously debating the inherent problems and structural obstacles that prevent OIC from becoming an effective viable organization. They suggest policies and structural adjustments at both nation-state level and supranational level to adapt to the global realities of the new millennium (Dabour 2000;

Sarwar 1997; Taeb 1997; Zeinelabdin 1996). Initiatives include pushing for an Islamic Common Market to promote trade/economic integration, adapting effective policies for alleviation of poverty, and having a consultant firm study ways “to ensure that the OIC renewed both its relevance and effectiveness” (New Straits Times, January 15, 2001).

To succeed in reducing the existing gross inequalities, the member states must act resolutely rather than just supporting resolutions in their summits. They must support common programs of the Organization even if they do not have an immediate and direct influence on their national interests. It is imperative that member states maintain a balance between their national interests and their obligations to the supranational organization. While fundamental changes in policy and planning development have to begin at the nation-state levels, OIC could significantly facilitate the process. Whether the Islamic states and the OIC, as an umbrella, have the vision and the will to meet the challenges presented to them by the global economy and world politics remains to be seen.

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