

ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: TOWARDS A MORE INTEGRATED FUTURE



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Introduction: Why solidarity? Why now?

In the simplest terms, being in solidarity means to carry another's burden. In philosophical discussions, burden-sharing appears as a universal human value that no moral system would preach against. Nevertheless, when it comes to international politics and the inter-state system, burden-sharing brings with it complex issues, subjecting solidarity to a set of conditions, such as: to what extent should a sovereign nation-state weigh non-nationals' interests and global welfare? To what extent should states share with others their scarce resources (land, water, or security forces) in order to alleviate the suffering of others? (Benvenisti, 2013). As complex as these questions are, they also require urgent answers within the context of the 21st century.

By the turn of the new Millennium, intensified globalization has brought upon radical challenges to the private self-contained vision of state sovereignty (Benvenisti, 2013). For one, the world—the states and communities that inhabit it— has become more interdependent and interconnected than ever. A growing body of research has exposed, for example, that endemic diseases spread due to the interconnectedness of the world (Lee, Buse, & Fustukian, 2002), health problems requires global, coordinated policies (Kay & William, 2009), and the entire global population must act to reduce environmental degradation (Vertovec & Posey, 2003). This body of research has made it clear that policymaking in one part of the world noticeably influences another part.

Second, recent economic crises and persistent poverty, hunger, and inequality have put development strategies based on conventional territorial nation-state model into question, bringing forward the need to recognize interlinkages among distant people and their future outcomes (TFSSE, 2014). These interlinkages imply that the impact of a given state's actions and decisions are no longer confined to its territorial scope, but affect foreign stake-holders. Similarly, economic and political crises can no longer be simply reduced to individual countries' faults and mistakes; rather more often than not today's crises have systemic causes requiring transnational solutions— as in the cases of terrorism as well as climate change.

Third, crises that face the world today are not only structural in nature but have moral dimensions and dramatic moral consequences. This has become most evident in the on-going Syrian Refugee Crises, the most staggering humanitarian and protection crisis today (Karageorgiou, 2016). The tragedies in the Mediterranean have revealed shortcomings of the idea of a nation-state as an isolated sovereign, responsible only for its own stakeholders, and showed the necessity for a fair distribution of responsibility amongst sovereign nation-states when faced with global humanitarian crises. More broadly, the rapid rise of Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism across the world have made sharing and responsibility towards global welfare an increasingly pressing agenda for the sovereigns. In short, 'growing interdependence ... perpetually reinitiates a debate about the moral responsibility and demands generated by this interconnectedness' (Derpmann, 2009: 306).

The private, self-contained concept of sovereignty is becoming less and less compelling within the context of Muslim inter-states relations as well. Indeed the fact that a sovereign affects non-national others in policy areas ranging from trade, right to asylum, and biodiversity —without those affected having a say and especially when those who have no say suffer negative externalities (Benvenisti, 2013)— must pose a greater concern for the Muslim communities. This is because Islam has divinely ordained a collective identity to Muslims, the Ummah, and each and every Muslim is bounded to one another under this shared identity.

Moreover, the crises that mark the most Muslim countries, particularly security threats, rising global violent extremism, and conflict and economic stagnation, are rooted not merely in national histories but regional and global relations and have global systemic causes. The self-contained concept of nation-states, as such, 'not only does not address the major economic and social issues among countries, but also obstructs the trans-national functions of their relations...' (Zandi, 2007: 71). In today's global context, consequentially, solidarity has become an urgent need and necessity. More specifically, in the contemporary context, inter-state solidarity:

- has acquired a vital *political function* for the well-being of each sovereign and for the global welfare
- has come to constitute a core component of *sustainable social and economic development* and growth
- has become a *moral necessity* to handle humanitarian and global crises

These fundamental functions of solidarity are being recognized by various actors, from academics to development specialists and intergovernmental stake holders, such as the EU. In the last decade or so, Europe for example has been searching for and considering new kind of solidarity channels and approach to better overcome ongoing financial and political challenges (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012).

More broadly, and across the globe, in recent years a new development approach has emerged, Social and Solidarity economy (SSE), referring to ‘the production of goods and services by a broad range of organizations and enterprises that have explicit social and often environmental objectives, and are guided by principles and practices of cooperation, solidarity, ethics and democratic self-management’ (UNRISD, 2016:10) attesting to the indispensable role of solidarity at local, regional, and global levels. These developments also prompt a call for the OIC as the largest Islamic supra-national body, to develop a more thorough and systematic approach and policy framework for intra-OIC solidarity.

1. How to Frame intra-OIC Solidarity: A proposal for Ummatic Solidarity

At this juncture, the next question is how to coherently frame intra-OIC solidarity and map the most effective route in pursuit of solidarity objectives.

The international relations theory understands and frames solidarity around the notion of ‘interest’ and takes the nation-state as its main referent (Akram, 2007). In other words, the discourse and logic for cooperation is

driven from the political, economic, and strategic safety of the state, which then leads separate actors (states) to pursue cooperation and solidarity.

The intellectual underpinnings of this framework have been located in Durkheim's work and his separation of mechanical versus organic solidarity (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012). Durkheim defines mechanical solidarity as solidarity that is based on a shared identity. This shared identity generates altruism, which then generates the moral imperative to help "one of us". This type of solidarity marks the traditional society where the group is homogenous, socialized into same patterns and norms, and has a strong sense of "us". Organic solidarity, in contrast, emerges in modern society, where members are differentiated but interdependent. The heterogeneity of modern society, in turn, lessens the feeling of a shared identity and associated altruism. Rather, the impulse for solidarity is functional: "helping others and to the society serves my own interest" (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012).

The Western regional organizations are better understood in terms of organic solidarity (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012). What prompted the European integration, for instance, have been the awareness of the need for a common project and its benefits, rather than a strong sense of belonging or identity. In fact, in the face of contemporary crises, an emerging scholarship on European solidarity suggests that European solidarity should move away from a horizontal approach, which emphasizes social cohesion and common identity, towards a vertical approach, where solidarity is established around specific issues at hand, such as pollution or immigration (see for this approach, White, 2003).

In the context of the EU the organic style of solidarity has translated into two mechanisms of inter-state solidarity: direct reciprocity and enlightened self-interest (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012). The direct reciprocity is a reciprocal aid in the face of risk that is equally shared by any member (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012); an example is the EU solidarity Fund, which helps member states when faced with a natural disaster. Each state is both a potential giver and potential receiver; the rationale is: I help others in case tomorrow I need their help (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012). The latter, self-

enlightened interest, informs the EU cohesion policy. Solidarity is driven by the idea that helping others and the Union itself more broadly, is self-beneficial (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012); for instance, helping poorer states benefits richer states by increasing trade or exports.

Without doubt solidarity serves the interests of the nation-state in crucial ways. However, a strategy and definition that base solidarity merely on utility and function miss a very crucial component: the moral component. That missing component, importantly, is what is required for sustainable solidarity and to develop an approach that can face contemporary crises, which are increasingly humanitarian in nature and thus by definition have moral dimensions and consequences. These moral dimensions, such as the right of refugees or hunger, cannot be addressed through a mere utility approach.

Muslims states and Muslim international organizations need not to opt for the utility model and thinking (Akram, 2007). In fact, within the Islamic context, a framework that acknowledges and recognizes both the utilitarian and moral dimensions of solidarity can be developed. This particular framework can be driven from the notion of Ummah, 'which is spiritual in nature and has an almost decisive impact on Muslim political behavior' (382)

Ummah has no equivalent in the Western languages; it is neither a state nor a community. Community in the modern usage refers to a collective of people in a geographical area; ummah, on the other hand, refers to Muslim people that are extra-geographical and diasporic (Akram, 2007). "...it expresses the basic unit of all the Muslim faithful without geographic divisions and despite the differences between peoples and communities, or the gradations and nuances within Islam... Muslims are aware that they are Muslim and they have an affinity to their co-religionists in distant lands and sense of solidarity with them" (Yegar, 2002: 11).

The paper proposes ‘ummatic solidarity’ as the main framework and approach upon which OIC MSs can frame and define intra-OIC collaboration, and more broadly, Islamic solidarity. Ummatic solidarity (1) takes the notion of ummah as the basic referent of solidarity—using ummah as the main referent allows for a solidarity model that cuts across notions of race, nationality, and the state and recognizes the equal value of each member, and (2) takes both moral and functional dimensions of solidarity into account equally.

In fact, OIC, as the largest supra-national Islamic organization, has been using an Ummatic language to some extent. Through this language, some scholars have argued (see for example, Akram, 2007), OIC acknowledges the ground reality of sovereign states, but does not hold dear the boundaries within the Muslim world, as such it tries and indeed may be able to strike a balance between the territorial state and extra-territorial Muslim identity. The first step is to further develop this language and establish its practices. This Ummatic language would be an especially well-crafted framework to handle today’s crises, because:

- It can overcome certain problems and difficulties among Islamic countries posed by realist and nationalist paradigms. One such difficulty is to find a balance between national self-reservation tendencies and accountability for supra-national issues and altruism (Zandi, 2007). Through its universality and emphasis on both moral and functional dimensions, ummatic solidarity can reduce the differences while, at the same time, reinvigorating the national identity of Islamic countries (Zandi, 2007).
- By providing a framework for religious unity, ummatic solidarity language can better accommodate cultural diversity of the believers and that of the states on the same token (Hassan, 2006).
- Equally importantly, the ummatic solidarity may have greater capacity in overcoming the issue of public reaction. In frameworks that are based on organic solidarity, national public expects solidarity to be based on self-interest. However, national public might have difficulties to see the benefits for helping other countries

for such benefits may be long-term and the receiver may be accused by the public for being guilty of its own misery (Fernandes & Rubio, 2012). This problem emanates in large part from the lack of a moral dimension and a binding common identity. The ummatic solidarity overcomes this problem. Ummah is a community of believers whatever their national, racial, or cultural origins are. Ummah as a community of believers creates a state of mind, a form of social consciousness, or an imagined community (Hassan, 2006). "This consciousness allows Muslims to identify with other Muslims who are subjected to oppression, violence and injustices by the other" (317). More broadly put, Ummatic solidarity provides a moral motive for and understanding of solidarity and is therefore able to link the principle of solidarity to justice and equity, without needing to identify a tangible self-benefit to potential givers.

- The Ummatic consciousness would also help to expand and sustain technical and economic cooperation among Islamic countries, which would also spill over political and security areas (Zandi, 2007). Expanding such ties, shared practices, and common procedures among Islamic countries would in turn
 - prevent the potential for escalation of issues to crises and tensions,
 - provide better opportunities for participation at different regional and international levels,
 - reduce the influence of international powers for intervention in sub-systemic crises (Zandi, 2007).

Most importantly, the ummatic model of solidarity by its emphasis both on moral and pragmatic aspects prescribes a comprehensive approach to solidarity that goes beyond economic and material strategies and encompasses all aspects of life. It is only through such a comprehensive approach that solidarity can have real impact and be sustainable for such an approach can address intolerance and discrimination based on ethnic, cast,

color, or language that work against solidarity, and establish a spirit of affection among elements of Muslim societies.

In what follows, the paper first details the Islamic view on solidarity and introduces different areas of solidarity based on Islamic principles, ranging from propriety solidarity to political solidarity to public solidarity. It then reviews the OIC activities oriented towards promotion of solidarity. The paper continues by identifying possible new channels and areas for intra-OIC solidarity. Related to economy, it discusses solidarity based financing instruments like Zakah, Sadaqah and Waqf, which can address some important contemporary issues like poverty alleviation and humanitarian assistance. Related to social solidarity, it capitalizes science diplomacy and youth cultural diplomacy as areas of solidarity that need to be further pursued and developed both at the OIC and national levels. Within that, the paper suggests establishment of a new body of youth that would enable volunteering or work of young people in member states for solidarity related projects and establish deep and empathetic bridges among OIC youth.

Finally, the paper utilizes the case of Azerbaijan and its contributions to Islamic solidarity. This final section illustrates best practice examples developed by Azerbaijan in its consistent efforts to buttress Islamic solidarity and aims to inspire new ideas and modalities that can advance intra-OIC solidarity. More broadly, a review of these efforts reveals that best, impactful and sustainable solidarity practices emanate from a very particular vision, one that takes to its core cultural diversity, peaceful coexistence, and religious tolerance. These values provide an overall approach towards solidarity and serve as antidotes against sectarian conflict, economic stagnation, violent extremism, and humanitarian crises, which hamper Islamic solidarity in the contemporary era.

2. Islamicview on solidarity

Humans are social creatures by nature living within communities, societies and nations. It is difficult for a human to live in isolation of others and to satisfy all his needs without the support and help of other. People need to assist each other due to their inherent weakness; Allah says '**Mankind was created weak**' (The Noble Quran 4:28). One of the beauties of Islam's philosophy and approach is that Islam did not limit the focus to meeting the spiritual needs of the soul, but paid equal attention to the problems and suffering of societies and presented practical road maps for solving them. The road maps presented by Islam are not only applicable to Islamic societies, but to the whole of humanity. This is in line with the global and humanitarian scope of the Islamic religion. Islam is keen to provide a dignified and decent living for all human beings regardless of their religion, race, ethnicity and nationality; Allah says: '**and we have certainly honored the children of Adam**' (The Noble Quran 17:70) and is also keen to elevate them from the focus on locality to globalism, from the interests of the individual to the interest of society, from thinking about oneself and self-absorption to thinking about others.

The Wisdom of Islamic Solidarity

To elevate humankind and to safeguard their honor and provide them with a dignified and decent living, Islam introduced the concept of solidarity in jurisprudence and legislated solidarity in Islamic law. The linguist meaning of solidarity in the Arabic language refers to the responsibility of the individual to help his fellow human being who is in need, it refers to the responsibility of individuals and communities to come together and pool their energies and resources for the common good. The purpose of the divine wisdom in introducing solidarity is to shrink the great disparities between the rich and the poor; and to decrease the inequalities between individuals and between societies; and to raise individuals and create societies that are committed to cooperation in meeting each other's needs and alleviating each other's suffering (the messenger of Allah says:

If anyone fulfills his brother's needs, Allah will fulfill his needs¹, and he also says: **Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Resurrection. And whoever alleviates the need of a needy person, Allah will alleviate his needs in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever shields [or hides the misdeeds of] a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah will aid His slave so long as he aids his brother²**

Islam introduced its version of solidarity as a solution to the complex economic and social problems of societies. Solidarity in Islam is a path to social peace and a regulator of social and economic relations serving to foster the cohesion and unity of society. Islamic solidarity deepens the feelings of brotherhood between people and calls for mutual compassion and the spread of security and harmony. Grounded in intellectual, spiritual and behavioral interdependence, Islamic solidarity is the guarantor of integration and social balance.

Islam prepared the foundation of solidarity by binding believers with the bond of brotherhood; Allah says ***"The believers are but brothers"***³. This brotherhood is the highest expression of social rights and duty in the Islamic society inspiring compassion, empathy and cooperation and resulting in an model society committed to the common good and the struggle against evil; the messenger of Allah says ***"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim: he does not oppress him, nor does he fail him, nor does he lie to him, nor does he hold him in contempt ...It is evil enough for a man to hold his brother Muslim in contempt. The whole of a Muslim is inviolable for another Muslim: his blood, his property, and his honor"***⁴.

From this understanding of brotherhood emerges solidarity in which people believe in their responsibility towards each other, everyone according to his capacity, for ***Allah does not burden a human being beyond its capacity***⁵. The brightest example of solidarity in Islamic history which has served as an

¹Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

²Narrated by Muslim

³Surah Al-Hujurat [49:10] - The Noble Quran

⁴Narrated by Muslim

⁵Surah Al-Baqarah [2:286] - The Noble Quran

inspiration throughout the ages is the model of the Muhacireen (immigrants) and Ansar. Muslims of Medina (the Ansar) embraced with love and sincerity the Muhacireen and shared with them their food, houses, cloths and livelihood in total solidarity; emotional and material. It is this solidarity that made them worthy of Allah's praise: ***And those who, before them, had their abode in this realm and in faith (Al Ansar in Medina)-[those] who love all that come to them in search of refuge, and who harbour in their hearts no grudge for whatever the others may have been given, but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot: for, such as from their own covetousness are saved - it is they, they that shall attain to a happy state***⁶

The Scope of Solidarity in Islam

What distinguishes solidarity in Islam is that it is not limited to the material side, but extends to the emotional and moral side. In the emotional and moral side, solidarity is not just feelings of sympathy and empathy, these feeling have to be associated with concrete positive action. The scope of solidarity in Islam in wide engulfing every aspect of life: economic, social, political, spiritual...etc. This is to be expected as Islam is a comprehensive religion and thus solidarity in Islam is comprehensive and not limited to certain domains. According to Islamic scholars⁷ there are different types of solidarity in Islam, which are listed as follows:

➤ **Propriety solidarity:**

Human beings are required to treat one another in respect and to show love and sympathy for each other. Personal and social relations in Islamic are based on the principle of propriety solidarity; the messenger of Allah says ***"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the***

⁶Surah Al-Hashr [59:9] - The Noble Quran

⁷See Societal Solidarity in Islam (Arabic) by Ahmed Abdo Awad, Nabulsi Encyclopedia (Arabic), Societal Solidarity in Islam (Arabic) by Muhammad Abu Zahra, Political Solidarity in Islam (Arabic) by Anas Inaya, Islam's Socialism (Arabic) by Mustafa Al-Sibayi, Societal Solidarity in Islam (Arabic) by Abdullah Ulwan

limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever”⁸

➤ **Educational and Scholarly solidarity**

Educational and scholarly solidarity refers to the shared obligation between individuals, communities, society and the state in: providing educational opportunities to all people, encouraging students to seek knowledge, and coming together in order to eliminate illiteracy and its negative effects.

➤ **Defensive solidarity**

Every individual in the Muslim community must contribute to defending his community, country and nation. In addition, they must defend people who are being subject to injustice and oppression; Allah says: *And what reason do you have not to fight in the cause of Allah, to rescue the helpless oppressed old men, women, and children who are crying: "Our Lord! Lead us forth [to freedom] from this town whose people are oppressors; send us a protector by your grace and send us a helper from your presence?*⁹

➤ **Ethical solidarity**

It means the obligation and right to protect Islamic values and moral principles and to guard society from chaos, corruption and degeneration, based on the belief that prevention is better than correction, that is, if even a small part of society is subject to corruption and degeneration then this corruption and degeneration may spread and effect the whole of society and as a result rectifying and reforming society might become impossible or challenging at the least; Allah says” *The true believers, both men and women, are protectors of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong*¹⁰

➤ **Economic solidarity**

Economic solidarity is rooted in the principle of economic interdependence mandating that everyone should cooperate in

⁸Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

⁹Surah An-Nisa [4:75] - The Noble Quran

¹⁰Surah Al-Tauba [9:71] - The Noble Quran

preserving the wealth of the nation from loss and waste and preventing harmful commercial and economic activities such as manipulation of prices, fraud in transactions, monopoly and the exploitation of the vulnerability of the needy to force them to deal with usury. Economic solidarity also renders it impermissible for money to be spent in profusion and flamboyancy and to place money in the hands of the irresponsible, foolish and greedy; Allah says: ***And do not entrust to those who are weak of judgment/feeble minded the possessions which God has placed in your charge***¹¹

➤ **Social solidarity**

This type of solidarity is a priority in Islam and has been legislated in Islamic law so that society will bear the burden of caring for the poor, sick and needy; Allah says ***“True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west - but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his wealth - however much he himself may cherish it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, -and for the freeing of human beings from bondage”***¹²

➤ **Political solidarity**

Political solidarity ensures that the political rights of people are protected and that people share the responsibility in building the political order and the state according to the principles of ***Al-Kukum Al-Rashid*** (good governance).

➤ **Public solidarity**

Public solidarity refers to the responsibility for one to look after the common good of people who fall under his responsibility and authority; the messenger of Allah says: ***“All of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects. The ruler is a guardian and responsible for his subjects; the man is a guardian of his family; the woman is guardian in her husband's house and responsible for her wards; a servant is guardian of his master's property and***

¹¹Surah An-Nisa [4:5] - The Noble Quran

¹²Surah Al-Baqarah [2:177] - The Noble Quran

responsible for his ward. So all of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects"¹³

Conclusion

Islam introduced its version of solidarity as a practical solution to the complex problems facing mankind with the ultimate objective of safeguarding people's honor and providing them with a dignified and decent life. Solidarity in Islam is set apart by its comprehensiveness touching upon all aspects of life; material, emotional, moral and spiritual. Rooted in individual and collective responsibilities and rights, solidarity in Islam ensures that all resources and energies are pooled for the greater common good. With humanity witnessing the worst level of suffering since the end of the Second World War, it is time to activate Islam's concept of solidarity and implement it on a global basis for the salvation of mankind.

3. The Past: The History of Solidarity in the framework of OIC Frameworks for Solidarity

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was founded on an act of solidarity in 1969 in response to arson attempts on al-Aqsa mosque, and for the express purpose of protecting the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony. Towards the end of upholding values, ideals and interests strategic to the Muslim world, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation acts as a facilitating and coordinating referent authority providing expertise, insight, linkages and a platform for synergy to address multiple challenges; which if addressed collectively are more easily resolved than if taken alone.

The OIC provides frameworks and platforms for synergy, cooperation and solidarity at both the intergovernmental and civil society level. The role of OIC institutions under the guidance of the OIC General Secretariat cannot be understated given the otherwise absence of concerted, cooperative action

¹³Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

throughout the Muslim world. The OIC General Secretariat is at the center of a broad network of coordinative and consultative initiatives; with the emphasized benefit of all under the banner of regular ministerial and presidential summits between all member states; identifying avenues for common action and shared stands on issues of collective significance.

Moreover, a landmark in this area of action is the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) with its novel approaches to integrating Zakat and Waqf into poverty reduction, undertaking sustainable development initiatives among OIC member states. More critically, the IDB engages in supportive and cooperative action with other OIC initiatives in line with strategic value and return.

Equally essential in this regard is the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), which provides essential facilitation of scientific and educational knowledge sharing between OIC member states. Moreover, it actively promotes and consolidates cooperation between Member States throughout the key areas of education, science, culture and communication; with a mind towards complementarity and coordination.

To that end, the Science, Technology and Innovation Organization (STIO) also exerts significant efforts in generating strategic partnerships and linking resources of private and public sectors for research, development and scientific discovery on the regional and international levels. This extends to the level of developing technology transfer policies between OIC member states for collective benefit. In a relevant manner, the efforts of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries are indispensable to raising awareness of shared challenges and opportunities through its flagship reports on policy areas essential to the development, growth and harmony of the Muslim world. More so, the Centre also serves as the focal point of OIC technical co-operation between member states. Similarly, the Research Center For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) carries out essential work in serving as a focal node for scholars, educators and institutions cooperating and building ties on issues of Islamic civilization and cultural solidarity, not to mention the preservation of

Islamic heritage, arts and history; as essential as they are to Muslim solidarity and identity.

In the same regard, the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade carries out an essential mission within the overall framework of promoting solidarity and cooperation in terms of promoting trade exchanges between OIC member states. Of relevant note is an existing OIC mechanism mandated to carry out work solidarity, specifically the Islamic Solidarity Fund and Waqf. Equally relevant are the efforts undertaken by the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation in the domain of developing Islamic solidarity among youth and promoting Islamic identity in the fields of sports with over 2695 implemented projects. The Islamic Solidarity Games held most recently in Baku, Azerbaijan from 12 to 22 of May 2017 are an excellent example of the latter.

Expanding on this point however, the Islamic Solidarity Games serve a larger function beyond bringing together athletes for sporting competitions. It also serves to alter perceptions of the Muslim world towards itself and those of the international community towards it, showcasing its rich culture, diversity and above all, unity. The 4th Islamic Solidarity Games featured more than 3,000 athletes from 57 OIC member states, reflecting the ideals of 2017 being declared the “Year of Islamic Solidarity”. Only a year prior, Azerbaijan was also host to the 7th Global Forum of Alliance of Civilizations, where all concerned stakeholders gathered to discuss and address essential issues of intercultural dialogue.

The effects of solidarity building however, are perhaps most notable in the domain of youth. To this end, the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC) has taken major strides in promoting joint-OIC efforts towards enhancing the state of youth, most recently in a historic joint youth action policy document development a political framework for collective work. Moreover, it was largely successful in marshalling the international community in defending the rights of Muslims throughout the world, as with its campaigns in support of Palestine, the Rohingya and Khojaly. In the latter case, it developed mechanisms for youth

action in over 30 countries, achieving international condemnation of the Armenian genocide on Azerbaijani lands.

Beyond this, similar efforts may be found in the youth work and rapprochement carried out by the International Union of Muslim Scouts (IUMS) which facilitates and promotes Islamic scouts throughout the world, allowing for intra-OIC cooperation on the level of youth, coordinated social, humanitarian and relief activities and most importantly to develop a spirit of solidarity and brotherhood among youth of the OIC.

On the intellectual and educational level, an excellent instance of solidarity promotion is the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which hosts over 25,000 students from around the world; promoting education and civic engagement, brotherhood and solidarity throughout the Muslim world long after graduation.

Intra-OIC perceptions of solidarity are undoubtedly critical to promoting the spirit of solidarity throughout the OIC, relying on the exchange of perceptions, media, trade and travel. In this regard, the development of intra-OIC tourism is undoubtedly essential towards reaching greater levels of integration and cooperation between OIC member states. In this regard, the adoption of the Framework for Development and Cooperation in the Domain of Tourism has been essential to fostering intra-OIC tourism and the promotion of regional tourism initiatives. One such example is the OIC City of Tourism Award, beginning with Al-Quds al-Sharif, with the added effect of promoting intra-OIC trade.

Finally, an outstanding initiative on the solidarity front is that of the OIC Educational Exchange Programme, which seeks to promote the collective popularization of knowledge by linking graduate studies and facilitation of academic and scientific cooperation, shared reform throughout the Muslim world.

4. The Future: How to foster intra-OIC and Ummatic solidarity

This section identifies possible new modalities and areas for solidarity both in economic and social realms. It reviews how Islamic notions can help the fight against poverty and humanitarian crises. Second, it detects emerging societal solidarity areas and highlights science diplomacy and youth cultural diplomacy as areas that can significantly improve solidarity objectives. It also identifies necessary steps that can be taken to further flourish science and youth diplomacy as tools of strengthening intra-OIC solidarity.

Solidarity through economic cooperation

Fostering economic cooperation among its member states is an integral part of OIC's agenda for development. Over the years, the OIC has made serious efforts to develop the necessary institutional and multilateral legal framework to initiate and implement joint Islamic actions for the welfare of Ummah. A landmark achievement in this regard is the establishment of the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) to enhance financial inclusion, eradicate poverty and promote solidarity among the member states. Despite these noble efforts, however, majority of OIC countries are still characterized by the lowest incomes and greatest economic disparities among the have and have not. This state of affairs raises an obvious question regarding the mobilization and distribution of resources to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged populations across the OIC countries.

Infaq and solidarity

Islamic teachings give great importance to redistribution of income and wealth across the society for achieving socio-economic stability and solidarity and promoting economic activity. In order to do so, Islam prescribes instrument of '*infaq*' as a main pillar of Islamic economic system and way of life. The very importance of this concept can be understood by the fact that this term is used in Quran at almost sixty places (Aziz et al., 2008). Literally, infaq mean spending. According to the Islamic

jurisprudence, it means spending resources for the betterment of society and its members (Kahf, 2004). There are many types of infaq with Zakah, Sadaqah and Waqf being the most common instruments practiced in OIC countries. The resources generated from these instruments are usually used for giving financial aid to the poor or help in construction of school, mosque, madrasah, clinic, hospital and also working capital assistance to the people in need. For the sake of this study, we will discuss and evaluate the role of solidarity based financing instruments like Zakah, Sadaqah and Waqf in addressing some important contemporary issues like poverty alleviation and humanitarian assistance.

Poverty alleviation

Poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomena that has captured the attention of numerous academics and institutions across the globe. It is estimated that around 8 million of the world total population of 7.1 billion live on US\$1.25 per day (UN, 2016). In the 57 OIC member countries, which constitute around 1.6 billion people, 22.4% of the total population lives below the poverty line of US\$ 1.25 per day (SESRIC, 2016). The Islamic instruments for solidarity-based financing have important features of poverty alleviation. These instruments most notably include:

1. Zakah

Zakah is one of the key institutions in Islam that helps in the redistribution of income and wealth in the society. Its' proceeds can be used to serve religious pilgrims, students, travelers, prisoners, indebted and most importantly to improve the living standard of the poor and needy (Qur'an 9:60). The main importance of Zakah is its role in handling poverty; it is seen as a method for securing more equitable distribution of income and wealth, for achieving social stability and solidarity, and enhancing the circulation of capital in the economy. The rate of Zakah varied from 2.5% of assets to 5%-10% on agricultural products. Even though there is no data available on the exact amount of total Zakah collection, a few studies have shown some estimated amounts. It is estimated that total amount of Zakah collection in the Muslim countries can be between 10 to 600 billion USD

globally. There is ample evidence available that Zakah could play an important role to eradicate poverty in many OIC countries. According to a study by the World Bank (Mohieldin et al. 2011), 20 OIC countries can actually alleviate the poorest living with income under \$1.25 per day out of the poverty line simply with proper Zakat collection and management.

2. Waqf

Waqf is another important tool to fight poverty in OIC countries. It is a charitable endowment for enhancing social welfare. In addition to providing support to various religious matters, which is its main goal, Waqf can be created to help the poor and needy (Khairi et al. 2014). In the early days of Islamic civilization, this institution was so efficient and served a wide range of social services such as, educational institutions, food and water, clothing, shelter, medical care, construction, repairing of roads and bridges, and other public utilities (Bayyah 2012). Given the fact that there is no harmonized database on Waqf properties, it is very difficult to calculate current worth of Waqf assets across the OIC countries. The estimated value of Waqf assets varies between 100 billion to 1 trillion USD.

In general, Waqf properties in OIC countries are mostly unproductive where very few are served for the socio-economic development purposes (Ahmed, 2004). The values of waqf properties are also huge. In a report published by IRTI (2014) shows that Indonesia has 1400 sq. km of waqf land. Its estimated value is equivalent to US\$ 60 billion and if these properties are properly utilized then US\$ 3 billion incomes can be generated which could be spent for various social welfare purposes. The report finds that the total market value of Awqaf properties in India could be around US\$24 billion. It also reveals that Malaysia has a total of 11,091 hectares of Awqaf land worth of US\$ 384 million. Besides, there are other Muslim countries i.e., Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc. where the waqf properties have very higher market values but not so well-managed and utilized. There remains a potential for utilizing these Awqaf properties where the return from properties could be sufficient for satisfying the humanitarian needs. These potential funds are huge in amount but remain untapped.

3. Islamic Microfinance

Today, microfinance is regarded as an important instrument to help millions of poor people to get out of poverty and live a respectful life. Considering the prevalence of high unemployment, poverty, and low levels of financial access in many OIC countries, the demand for microfinance is very high in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, there is overwhelming evidence that mainly due to its non-compliance with Islamic principles, a large number of potential clients especially in Islamic countries, refrained from using conventional microfinance (Karim and Khalid, 2011). Keeping in view this situation, it is quite evident that microfinance institutions operating in line with the Islamic principles i.e. Islamic Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) are very crucial to reach millions of poor Muslims which are currently not served by the conventional microfinance. In fact, Islamic Microfinance is very successful in many countries like Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia to address poverty and income generation related problems of the poor and needy people. For instance, Rural Development Scheme (RDS) under Islamic Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) is most successful that offers Shariah compliant Islamic microfinance programs to 947,305 members. Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) is also a popular Shariah-compliant Microfinance provider that has transformed around 366 thousand people to successful entrepreneurs in 2015. Baaitul Mal wat Tamwil (BMT), or Islamic Savings and Loan Cooperatives, is another well-known Islamic Microfinance institution (MFI) that supports micro and medium entrepreneurs. There are countries such as, Jordan, Yemen, Syria, West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Afghanistan, etc. where demand for Islamic Microfinance is rapidly increasing (Mohieldin, M, et. al. 2012).

However, over 70 percent of the products currently offered by the Islamic MFIs are Murabaha based (Karim, 2008), where the MFI purchases a specific good which the client will purchase from the MFI at a deferred mark-up that may be paid in installments. Islamic MFIs generally offer only one or two Shariah-compliant products. This signifies the need for product diversification so that Islamic MFIs can serve the various financial needs of the poor. To achieve this end, it is imperative for the Islamic microfinance industry to develop new products and services through comprehensive

market research and financial innovation. In addition, governments of Islamic countries should also play an active role and pursue pro microfinance policies to encourage and facilitate the Islamic MFIs.

In spite of its expansion, microfinance continues to face two primary challenges; access to affordable finance and inadequate human resources confronted both by the providers and recipients of services. Existing models have largely failed to adequately overcome all the challenges. A recent collaborative work of the Centre for Islamic Economics, IIUM and SESRIC (2015) suggests an innovative integrated model of Waqf and microfinance as solution to these existing challenges. This IWIM model has been empirically verified in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia. The authors claim that the model is more Shariah compliant as it focuses on riba-free financing and it relies on project financing which follows the equity based Islamic modes of transaction i.e., Mudarabah (a business partnership in which one party brings capital and the other supplying the labor and skill), Musharakah (a business partnership with financial investment and profit/loss sharing implications for all partners), and Ijarah (leasing). Besides, its Takaful (Shariah-compliant insurance) arrangements will safeguard the risks and uncertainties of clients' respective projects.

4. Humanitarian assistance

At present, many OIC member countries are affected by conflict and war. Of the ongoing human train crisis ongoing in the world, 90 percent occur in OIC countries. Currently, over 239 million people are vulnerable in selected OIC countries and approximately, 148 million are from Syria, Yemen and Iraq and 22.2 million from Mali, Libya and Niger (SESRIC, 2014). These vulnerable people need of food, shelter, education and health care services. Many national, regional and international organizations are working hard to meet the humanitarian needs but there is a huge shortfall of financial resources to do so. For instance, the amount of unmet needs was recorded at US\$15 billion in 2015 (UN, 2016). There is quite large amount of resource shortfall in humanitarian programs, and the gap between supply of and demand for funds are expanding over the last couple of years. According to

the report of UN high level panel on humanitarian financing (2016), this funding gap for humanitarian action can be met with Islamic social finance comprising Zakah, Waqf and Sadaqah (voluntary charity). Islamic social finance not only serves the basic needs of the vulnerable people but it also supports them to be economically self-reliant. Islamic Development Bank (IDB), for instance, had created an Islamic Solidarity Fund for socio-economic development for its countries in 2007. To finance various development activities, IDB had raised a total of USD 10 billion from the sources of Zakah, Waqf and Sadaqah (SESRIC, 2017).

As of now the tools of Islamic social finance are not effectively utilized. For example, if Zakah is properly managed and collected it could support all the humanitarian needs of OIC countries. Islamic social financing tools are supposed to satisfy humanitarian needs. An innovative Islamic social financing model can create long-term impact on the socio-economic livelihoods of the crises affected people. It not only helps creation of real wealth and increases the financial capacity of the victims in the long-term it also reduces the existing humanitarian funding gaps. Not many studies are conducted on how to properly employ the Islamic social financing mechanism to address various humanitarian needs. It is the high time to realize and implement a sustainable Islamic social financing tool for humanitarian support.

Sadaqah or voluntary social spending is a complement to Zakah institution. This voluntary charity is for those who are in emergencies or critical situations. During the early periods of Islam, foods and other goods were collected from the state funds as well as from the rich individuals and merchants for assisting the people in famine affected areas in Arabia (Krafess, 2005). At this condition of global humanitarian crises, Muslims are strongly encouraged to make donation in humanitarian aid programs.

Actionable Insights for promoting Economic Solidarity among OIC MSs

Traditionally, Islam provides several instruments for solidarity-based financing with important features of social responsibility. Despite huge potential, however, most of these instruments remained underutilized due to various reasons. In case of Zakah, the method of collection and administration remained a significant concern. Since 1980s, governments across the Islamic world began establishing official agencies to manage the collection and distribution of Zakah. As of 2014, 27 OIC countries have institutionalized Zakah with transnational practice that focuses specifically on poverty alleviation (Pickering, 2015). However, there is still a great deal of variation in how Zakah is managed in these countries. For example, Zakah is mandatory and it is collected by the state in Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. On the other hand, countries such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan and Lebanon have a centralized collection system but payment is voluntary. Across the majority of OIC countries, a significant portion of Zakah is used for consumption with smaller and temporary impact whereas the share of Zakah used for investment (human, physical, and financial capital) with stronger and permanent impact is almost negligible. In addition, most of the contemporary Zakah institutions appear to be weak and ineffective in collection and distribution.

In general, Sadaqah and Zakah are paid in relatively small amounts, through a variety of official and unofficial channels, which dilutes their potential impact. There are several examples of national and regional level initiatives to establish Zakah Funds to pool the resources at national level. For example, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has established national Zakah Fund in 2003 to collect Zakah and develop and spend its revenues in Sharia-compliant channels to contribute to the social development of the UAE. At the regional level, IDB has developed several innovative initiatives and has successfully utilized the institutions of Zakah, Waqf and Sadaqah to finance and support projects on health and education for Muslim communities in non-OIC countries, relief operations in the event of natural disasters,

scholarship programs, technical cooperation programs and technical assistance to member countries.

Historically, Waqf institution has been successfully used to mobilize additional resources to address various socio-economic needs of the people in the Islamic world. However, its effectiveness was greatly undermined by the colonial rulers in Muslim countries. The institution was badly handled and later forcefully uprooted by the colonial rulers. Keeping in view the potential of waqf for socio-economic development, there has been an increasing awareness about the need to revive, restructure and modernize the Waqf institutions across the OIC member countries. In 2011, IDB has established the World Waqf Foundation (WWF) to promote Waqf through effective partnership between philanthropists, NGOs and the public sector, to contribute to development projects and programs. The Awqaf Properties Investment Fund (APIF) is another regional initiative managed by the IDB. The main objective of the APIF is to develop and invest in accordance with the principles of Islamic Shariah, in Awqaf real estate properties that are socially, economically, and financially viable, in member countries of IDB and Islamic communities in non-member countries. In the current situation, however, Waqf resources in rich OIC member countries are largely remained underutilized whereas some member countries with active Islamic MFIs suffer from lack of adequate fund to maximize their support for the need of the poor. Many experts are of the view that the financial capacities of the Islamic MFIs can be enhanced by channeling waqf fund to these institutions.

As per the available information, currently there are no international standards and uniform regulatory mechanism for calculating and channeling the solidarity-based Islamic financing instruments across the countries. Due to significant national level variations in collection and management of these resources, it is difficult even to estimate their true value and potential for social and economic development. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to develop an intra-OIC framework for standardization of data collection and management of solidarity based financing to facilitate global donation and usage.

Solidarity through social cooperation

Sustainable solidarity must have a comprehensive approach where solidarity addresses not only economic and political cooperation but also and equally cultural and social cooperation. This section highlights two emerging areas of social solidarity, science diplomacy and youth diplomacy, and discusses the ways in which these areas can contribute to intra-OIC solidarity and what to turn these areas into full-fledged tools of solidarity.

Science Diplomacy and Solidarity

Science can be a vital area for inter-state solidarity (Sunami, Hamachi & Kitaba, 2013; Turekian & Neureiter, 2012). In fact, the 21st century has witnessed the emergence of a new inter-state solidarity area termed 'science diplomacy'. Science diplomacy, the fusion between science and diplomacy, can be defined as "the use and application of science cooperation to help build bridges and enhance relationships between and amongst societies..." (Ruffini, 2017:11).

Science diplomacy distinguishes itself from other forms of international cooperation given that science is neither inherently political nor ideological, but it is universal language that has a broad appeal (Davis & Putnam, 2014). As such, science diplomacy can provide unique approaches and new modalities for Ummatic and OIC solidarity.

To begin with, science (and technology) can serve as a vehicle to better understand and address challenges that transcend national borders and contribute to regional and global instability, from emerging diseases, energy shortages, climate change, biodiversity loss, water resource availability, natural disaster management and food challenges. By inquiring and addressing such challenges, science diplomacy can help forge international consensus on global issues and build partnerships that go beyond political strategies and therefore are more sustainable in the face of major international crises. In fact, science diplomacy has '... a particular interest in working in areas where there might not be other mechanisms for engagement at an official level." (Ruffini, 2017:11).

Second, science diplomacy can build smart partnerships by strategically leveraging asymmetrical expertise and resources among countries and achieve optimal impact. In other words, science is better equipped to leverage the gap between resource-rich countries and talent-rich countries and convert this gap into mutually impactful and meaningful cooperation. Similarly, science diplomacy can offer a solidarity model that is able to take into account not only varied levels of development but also diverse problems of sovereigns (whether this is water scarcity or energy shortages) and as such forge smart cooperation yielding tractable solutions to these challenges and strengthen regional ties. These aspects of science diplomacy can prove to be especially useful for OIC and Ummatic solidarity given the heterogeneous structure of OIC MSs and Muslim communities across world, from geography to main challenges facing individual sovereigns to dispersion of talents and resources.

All in all, science diplomacy can help OIC MSs to formulate a “smart” approach to shared political, economic and cultural challenges and can help galvanize OIC MS’s into action on development issues and to strengthen the Ummatic ideal of empowering Muslim welfare and wellbeing.

Actionable Insights for promoting Science diplomacy among the OIC MSs

Some OIC Member States have already engaged science diplomacy as an aspect of inter-state relations and cooperation. There are some examples of science diplomacy both at the national level and international level among the OIC MSs. In 2012, for example, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a Protocol with Ministry of Science Industry and Technology to develop the science diplomacy activities of Turkey. In 2013, Turkey appointed the Science and Technology Counselor cadre as science diplomats to the foreign representatives of the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology in such countries with a well-established research record as the USA, Germany, China, Korea and Japan (Dogan, 2015). One prominent example at the international level, on the other hand, is The InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), a global network of national science academies that includes Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, and Jordan. The IAP aims both to build

capacity in the sciences and to provide scientific evidence to inform national and international policymaking (Dohjoka, Campbell, & Hill, 2017). These examples, however, are not the rule but the exception: science diplomacy is still at its infancy in most OIC MSs and it is yet to emerge as an area of structured cooperation within the OIC framework itself.

Nurturing science diplomacy for purposes of solidarity will require a comprehensive approach and participation of a wide range of stakeholders, from scientific community to ministries. The first step however will be building an environment that is conducive to science-policy interaction at national and OIC level. Some key efforts that can help build such an environment will include:

- 1) Articulating and promoting a vision for science diplomacy among OIC MSs that includes a clear definition of the discipline.
- 2) Grooming and nurturing a new generation of scientists among the OIC MSs to meet current and future demand at the science-policy interface. To build this new scientific generation:
 - programs for “brain circulation” among OIC MSs —‘international mobility of human resources for science (Sunami, Hamachi & Kitaba, 2013)— can be established
 - youth-focused academic mobility can be encouraged and increased

While building a new generation of competent science communicators, existing networks of scientists should be assessed with an eye to increase their contribution to science diplomacy. Such networks need not to be limited to the OIC geography, but can include tapping into Muslim diaspora networks and initiatives.

3) *Establishing an OIC Research Area*

- The OIC research area would create platforms for collaboration and information sharing in the region, such as a database of scientists, universities, research centers and think-tanks
- It would establish a body tasked with devising science diplomacy strategy and implementing it.

- It would develop a charter for best practices in research, technology transfer, and science diplomacy generally as well as a road map.
- It would identify new ways of financing research for development
- It would also adopt new strategies to encourage MSs to increase per cent of GDP invested in R&D.

Youth diplomacy for solidarity

International organizations now widely recognize young people as stakeholders in sustainable development as well as international cooperation and exchange. Policymakers, however, have mainly viewed young people as ‘beneficiaries’ of development and solidarity policies— as for example in the case unemployment and economic development. Since the turn of the new millennium, nevertheless, young people have proved not only to be beneficiaries but also and equally ‘benefactors’ of national development and international cooperation.

This capacity of youth for being benefactors has become most evident in welfare and humanitarian acts and volunteerism of YNGOs (youth non-governmental organizations), especially in the face of political and humanitarian crises.

The current growing importance of youth agency for intra-state, and more specifically intra-OIC, solidarity must be understood within the changing architecture of international relations in an increasingly interdependent world (Ang, Isar & Mar, 2015). Diplomacy is no longer merely directed to governments. Rather, it targets diverse national and global audiences and publics. Paralleling the changing audience, diplomacy and cooperation are no longer confined to such traditional areas as economic or political alliance. Rather, cooperation is increasingly expanding towards cultural diplomacy: practices that are related to exchanging ideas, information, arts, and culture that aim to promote mutual understandings, organic relationships, and trust amongst citizens or different countries. (Ang, Isar & Mar, 2015).

Young people have emerged as actors with a unique capacity in this new setting oriented towards cultural diplomacy; namely, they have a unique

capacity for creating a foundation of trust with other people, connecting with masses beyond inter-governmental engagement through a sense of empathy and respect, and resourcefully employing tools of cultural diplomacy such as art, religion, history, music, theater (Kim, 2011).

The importance of having young people as cultural diplomats has further grown in the current information age. New media platforms and the Internet provide new opportunities to promote culture even more widely and youth has the vital asset of being the first adapters of such technology and change. In fact, Joseph S. Nye, a prominent international relations scholar contends that (2004): “Power in the information age will come not only from strong defenses but also from strong sharing.” demonstrating why youth cultural diplomacy matter today more than ever.

Examples of youth’s role in solidarity promotion can be found in individual member states of the OIC. One prominent example is Azerbaijan’s *Bridge to the Future Youth Union*, a non-profit youth organization founded in 2000. The Union’s main mission is to increase youth participation in society across markets, volunteerism and civil action, education and intellectual life, and sustainable development and environment as well as developing mutual relationships between Azerbaijani and world youth. In that, the Union has cooperated with various foreign stakeholders including, Germany, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Hungary, Belgium and France, as such, it has built new cultural solidarity bridges between Azerbaijani society and other societies.

In recent years, OIC has also doubled its efforts to engage young people on board whether this relates to development or to intra-OIC cooperation. For example, the OIC’s affiliated forum, ICYF-DC (Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation), focuses solely on youth and youth related issues. The forum has pursued various activities and programs to advance the role youth can take to promote OIC solidarity. It has, for instance, selected an OIC youth capital to strengthen the brotherly ties and promote a spirit of unity among the youth of OIC MSs; it established a conference, International Model Organization for Islamic Cooperation

(IMOIC), to facilitate trans-cultural dialogue among young people; it organized a Youth Camp bringing together Muslim youth from across OIC MSs to participate in academic lectures, sporting activities, and cultural exchanges.

This historical record signals that OIC is moving towards the right direction regarding facilitating the role of youth as benefactors of solidarity; however, there is yet to emerge a more active approach and structure that can directly and thoroughly mobilize youth for OIC solidarity objectives.

Actionable Insights for promoting youth diplomacy among the OIC MSs: a proposal for a new youth solidarity body

One such structure, where youth can be fully included for solidarity promotion, may be establishing a body that would bring young people of OIC MSs, as well as that of Muslim diaspora (most notably that of the observer states), together to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or other MSs. The main goal of this body would be enabling OIC youth to galvanize Ummatic solidarity by supporting vulnerable people, responding to societal and global challenges, and building sustainable bridges among Muslim communities. For example, young citizens of one member state can volunteer or work in another member state to help rebuild a school center or assist in projects relating to disabled people, children and education, or youth entrepreneurship.

Such structures already exist both under the European Union and UN bodies, such as EVS (European Volunteer service), EU Solidarity Corps, and UN Peace Corps. In fact, evaluations of European Volunteer Service (EVS) have shown that such projects can have tangible outcomes regarding solidarity. For example, the EVS program (European Commission 2017) has been effective in increasing young people's interest in European issues, making young people more aware of common European values, and facilitating cultural diversity solidarity, tolerance and mutual understanding among young people.

In formulating the content and operations of the new youth body, relevant stakeholders can benefit from the know-how, history, and experience of these structures.

Paralleling EU solidarity Corps, for example, the youth body can operate through a platform where a pool of young applicants and organizations that run solidarity related projects register. Organizations may include governmental and non-governmental organizations (local or regional), municipalities, and companies (multinational, local, or start-up businesses). The platform would be used by both parties to search for one another (youth looking for projects and organizations, and organizations looking for people) based on various criteria, such skills and project areas.

To pursue solidarity objectives, project areas can be identified around challenges that face OIC MSs as well as by referring to the OIC-2025 Programme of Action and its goals towards building a better future for the Ummah. These areas may include: humanitarian crises, children and youth's education and training, children and family, human rights, environment and natural protection, youth employment and entrepreneurship, and sports, art and culture.

While contributing to OIC solidarity through working in solidarity related projects, the presence of such a youth body would also organically contribute to OIC solidarity by facilitating dialogue among youth coming from different backgrounds, breaking down stereotypes, creating a sense of brotherhood, promoting a culture of peace, and strengthening the sense of belonging to the Ummah.

5. The case of Azerbaijan and Islamic Solidarity

So far, the paper has tried to illustrate that in the contemporary context, where people and states are ever more inter-connected, inter-state solidarity has become a political and a moral necessity as well as a core component of sustainable development and growth. These emerging functions of solidarity call policymakers to further advance intra-OIC solidarity and develop a thorough approach.

To develop such an approach, the paper has pointed out to Ummatic solidarity and language, which can overcome many hindrances that face classical frameworks of solidarity that are typically based on self-interest.

Within the framework of Ummatic solidarity, the paper has identified possible new channels and areas for where OIC solidarity can be enhanced. In economic terms, such channels include, for example, solidarity based financing instruments like Zakah, Sadaqah and Waqf, which can address some core issues as poverty alleviation and humanitarian assistance. In the social realm, the paper has capitalized science diplomacy and youth cultural diplomacy as areas of solidarity that need to be further pursued and developed both at the OIC and national levels. To advance each area within the body of the OIC, the paper has also presented actionable insights.

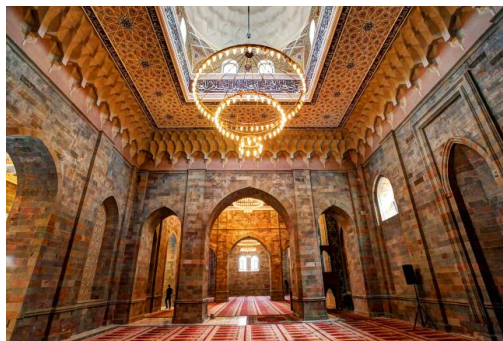
The following presents the case of Azerbaijan and the country's contributions to Islamic solidarity. This section compliments preceding discussions by offering concrete examples of how Ummatic solidarity has been effectively put in practice by Azerbaijan, as such providing a model and that can inspire policymakers to advance intra-OIC and Islamic solidarity.

**Reflections by H. E. Faig Bagirov, the Ambassador of the Republic of
Azerbaijan to Turkey**

Azerbaijan - The Pearl of Islamic Culture



As one of the most important centers of the Islamic civilization, Azerbaijan has played an important role in spreading out the Islamic religion and formation of the Islamic Renaissance. All of these created the conditions for the establishment of material and intangible cultural heritage of the Islamic religion in Azerbaijan. The Shamaha Juma Mosque, built in 743, and the old manuscripts preserved at the museums of Azerbaijan are obvious examples of this.



SHAMAKHI JUMA MOSQUE

ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: TOWARDS A MORE INTEGRATED FUTURE

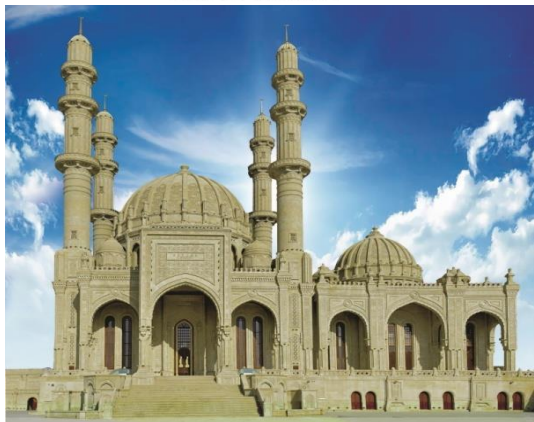
Even in the Soviet period, when hard banishments existed, the people of Azerbaijan managed to preserve its language, religion, culture and other values. Although there had been 17 mosques in our country during the Soviet Union, in over 25 years after regaining the independence the number of the mosques has exceeded over 2000, more than 300 of which are preserved as historical-cultural monuments. Thanks to the special care and support by the Azerbaijani state to the Islamic values, in recent years the precious buildings of Islamic culture like Bibiheybet, Tezepir, Ejderbey, Şamahi Juma mosque and "Imamzade" complex in the Ganja city have been rebuilt and reconstructed throughout the country, and the Haydar Mosque, the greatest religious building in the South Caucasus has been built in the capital Baku city.



BIBIHEYBET MOSQUE



TEZE PIR MOSQUE



HAYDAR MOSQUE



ICHERI SHEHER JUMA MOSQUE

By being elected as the member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, ISESCO, as well as other prestigious organizations that combine Muslim countries, the Republic of Azerbaijan has been established mutually beneficial relations with the Islamic world and has acted as the organizer of some important global cultural forums.

For the continuation of these activities and as the host country of the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games the President of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev has signed an Order on declaration of year of 2017 as the Year of Islamic Solidarity.

Worth to mention that, more than 6,000 athletes from 54 nations competed in 21 sports during the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games hold on 12-22 May in Baku, which is a record, as so many countries have never been participated in the previous Islamic Solidarity Games. As Mehriban Aliyeva, the First Vice-President of Azerbaijan, chairman of the Organization Committee of the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games stated, the integration of the entire Islamic world in Baku for the sake of friendship, brotherhood, peace and cooperation will become a great sport festival, at the same time will contribute to the cooperation among Muslim countries.



It should be noted that the Government of Azerbaijan maintains and promotes values of Islamic religion and culture as well as formulates peaceful coexistence principles and multicultural ideals in a time when the

countries and societies of the world are experiencing serious human tragedies caused by religious intolerance, racial discrimination and strengthening of Islamophobia tendencies. With the initiative of the President Ilham Aliyev, the continuity of the multicultural environment that is historically shaped in our countries being fortified, as well as important steps are being taken to present it as a valuable contribution to the world politics. The establishment of the Baku International Multicultural Center and organization of the Intercultural Dialogue and other humanitarian forums in Baku every two years with participation of high level politicians from many countries of the world are obvious examples of contribution of Azerbaijan to the development of the multicultural policy.

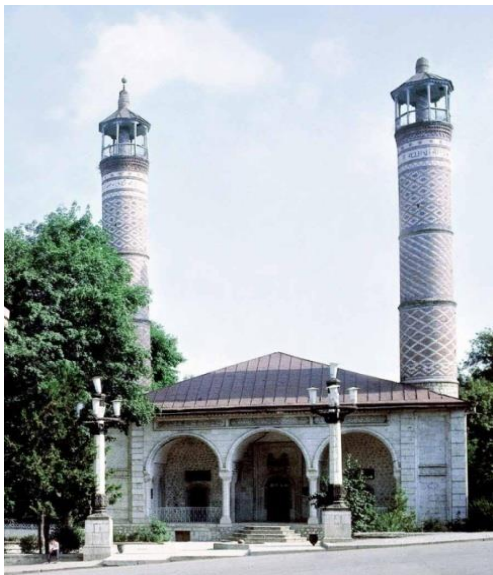
Unfortunately, while Azerbaijan encourages different religions and nations to live in peace, 20 % of its internationally recognized territory has been occupied by Armenia and more than 1 million people who have been forced to leave their historical lands still cannot return to their homes. More than 900 religious cultural monuments had been completely destroyed in the occupied Azerbaijani territories as a result of Armenian occupation policy and vandalism. Cemeteries, tombs, temples, monuments of Caucasus Albanian and other religious, cultural and historical monuments in the occupied historical lands (Hocalı, Shusha, Lacin, Kelbecer, Gubadli, Zengilan, Agdam, Agdere, Fuzuli and Cebrayıl) of Azerbaijani Turks are being destroyed.



AGHDAM MOSQUE



**AGHDAM MOSQUE
(after occupation)**



SHUSHA GOVHERAGA MOSQUE



**SHUSHA GOVHERAGA MOSQUE
(after occupation)**

Reflections by Mubariz Gurbanli, Chairman of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The successful model of state-religion relations of Azerbaijan is the best example for other countries



The most valuable wealth of any nation is national-spiritual values that come from the history. The values play important role in formation of the national identity, culture and become stronger tool to overcome any issues society faces. At the same time, it helps to establish national solidarity and unity among the communities.

Social values include national-spiritual values as well. Because the social values are the common values in society that have historical roots and accepted by the people. These values are embodying history, language, religion, culture, national tradition, rituals and the like.

These cultural elements have different manifestation in almost all nations. Azerbaijanis is not only distinctive for their tolerance, respect to the cultural diversity, promoting ideas of solidarity but also for supporting peaceful ideas and welfare in the world through the real life practices. All these ideas and cultural elements are core of humankind. Geographical location of Azerbaijan between East and West, accurate interpretation and perception

of Islam and its ideas of humanism make Azerbaijan an oasis of cultural diversity. The observations show that the population of multicultural countries is more tolerant than others. If we look back to the history, we can see that all the representatives of different nations regardless of their nationality, culture and religion live in peace, there have never been any confrontations and misunderstandings on ethnic or religious grounds in Azerbaijan. Our people have been preserving the values – these are very need of world today- of peaceful coexistence and solidarity as a legacy of our ancestors left to the present day.

Promoting these values is very important, since humanitarian crisis occurs in different parts of the world. In particular, creating chaos and disunity among the people in the name of religion have become today's unpleasant reality.

In recent years, the scope of the crimes committed by certain groups under the slogan of “brining happiness, prosperity and democracy to the nations” and in the name of religion is expanding.

By creating radical religious organizations or providing logistical support to the groups who want to carry out their vicious plans such as to provoke conflicts in the Middle East, they try to weaken influence of the Islamic World and prevent the technological development in this region. By doing so, they want to dominate in this hydrocarbon rich region where well-structured transportation system has been working.

Today, the world does not only compete for economic, political, military power but also there is religious and civilizational competition. Unfortunately, these unequal and unfair competitions cost lives of many innocent people. It is clearly seen in the Middle East, Syria and other Muslim countries. The results: **“the color revolutions and springs, which actually entail “autumn”, chaos, ruined cities, millions of displaced people.**

It is undeniable that the groups which support terrorist organizations operating under the name of Islam encourage Islamophobia around the world. It is unfortunate that European public opinion relates all terror acts

to Islam. Thus, 70 percent of terror acts around the world is committed in Muslim countries while only five percent of them occurred in European countries in 2015. But deliberate policy of the world media has muted 70 percent of terror acts in the Muslim world by making that very five percent more noticeable. Actually, terrorists in Muslim countries are those who (mis)use the name of Islam and are funded by certain authorities. Therefore, finding alternative ways for preventing conflicts under the religious factor in the Muslim world is needed more than ever. Alternative solutions to overcome these problems are to promote religious tolerance, peaceful coexistence, multicultural values as well as the idea of solidarity among the Muslim communities. To stop such unpleasant tendency, there is need to propagate true Islam in the world as a religion of peace - saying that Muslims are not terrorists rather they are tolerant to everyone regardless of religion, race and social status. Indeed, these values penetrated into Azerbaijani people's lifestyle, and as a result of it we are delivering message on "this is an alternative way" to the world.

Today not only religious but also, ethnic conflicts and misunderstandings occur. Thus, Azerbaijanis were more subjected to ethnic cleansing and genocide in the end of the 20th century. The aggression policy of Armenians has been accompanied by massacres through the history. As the result of military aggression by the Armenia, 20 percent of internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions have been occupied as well as almost one millions of people have become refugees and internally displaced persons.

Numerous historical, cultural and religious monument in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan have been brutally destroyed, humiliated, and in most cases grigorianized by Armenians. The Kodaly genocide, which occurred on the night of February 25 to 26, 1992, is one of the most serious crimes not only against the Azerbaijani people, but also against humanity and the whole mankind. Khojaly genocide, which is not inferior to other genocides like Katyn, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Sonqmi, Rwanda, Srebrenica and horrible genocide as the Holocaust will never be forgotten in the history of the world. These events reverberated in the world as genocide of the civilians and caused a great deal of resonance throughout history of the

wars. Important practical steps had been taken in bringing the truth about Azerbaijan to the world. However, Azerbaijan subjected to Armenian aggression almost one millions of people have become refugees and internally displaced persons but Azerbaijan state is stand still loyal to its multiculturalism traditions and pursues a successful policy in this direction.

The whole international community recognizes and supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan. In connection with the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict, international organizations have adopted numerous decisions and resolutions based on the norms and principles of international law. The U.N. Security Council adopted four resolutions, namely 822, 853, 874 and 884, regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that confirms the occupation of Azerbaijan territories by Armenian armed forces. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has adopted many documents and resolutions on the conflict. OIC resolution recognized Armenia as an aggressor and strongly condemned the destruction of Islamic monument in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. OIC is one of the international organization that recognize Khojaly tragedy as genocide.

Moreover, even cursory glance at economic performance of the OIC countries reveals that Muslim world is in desperate need of unity. Although OIC countries supply 41,5% of world total oil production and 36% of world gas production, their share of world GDP is only 15% (GDP PPP). Case studies prove that there is great potential for development in agriculture, renewable energy and many other fields if they would have enough investment. Meanwhile, level of intra-OIC foreign direct investment (from richest members to poorer) leaves much to be desired. Only avoidance of political and mostly religious cleavages and promotion of respect and tolerance can address social and economic issues and bring prosperity to the OIC countries.

Declaration of 2017 “Year of Solidarity in Azerbaijan” is logical continuation of “Year of Multiculturalism” by President Ilham Aliyev is a call to the world on “To be tolerant and respectful to each other, establish a dialogue between

religions and denominations". The best example is the model of Azerbaijan's state-religion relations, founded by national leader Haydar Aliyev, is being studied and researched by other states.

Under the auspice of this marvelous model which founded by National Leader groundwork of returning back to our national-moral values has been established. Now, Azerbaijani government takes care of its history, traditions and religion while freedom of religion is fully provided. The country has made the great achievement in the field of religion and moral values coordinated to our national characters since religious clashes and sectarian conflicts that tried to provoke by outside influences in our country prevented. Freedom of conscience has been identified as one of the fundamental human rights in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and it also broadly reflected on Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief".

Although the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief" developed to ensure freedom of conscience, status of religious organizations and coordination of their activities, it was demand of time to establish a central executive body to regulate relations between state and religion in the country in line with legislation. In 2001, the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SCRA) was established by the Decree of the National Leader Haydar Aliyev and it was beginning of a new stage in the development of state-religion relations. SCRA plays a major role on implementation of state-religion relations, submits recommendations for the improvement of relevant legislative acts, controls implementation state policy on religion as well as contributes exercising of programs in the field of state and religion. Today, the policy pursued by President Ilham Aliyev is an obvious example of the state care to religion which is an integral part of national-spiritual values of Azerbaijani people. A lot of work in the direction of the preservation and development of national and moral values is carried out under the leadership of his presidency. For this purpose, a lot of works have done in the direction of the construction and restoration of worship houses.

During the collapse of Soviet Union there were 17 mosques functioning in the country, but today that number exceeds 2000. Over the past 13 years, more than 200 mosques have been built and over 80 mosques renovated in Azerbaijan. In line with the decree and orders of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, overhaul, restoration and reconstruction works carried out in Bibiheybat mosque shrine complex, Tazapir mosque, Icarishahar Juma and the Prophet Muhammad mosques, Ajdarbay, Shamakhi, Sumgait Juma mosques and Ganja Imamzada sanctuary. On December 26, 2014, opening ceremony of Heydar Mosque was constructed under the instructions of the head of the state in Binagadi district was held. It is the largest Mosque in the South Caucasus region.

I would also like to stress the importance of efforts of First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva, in preserving and promoting national - moral values of the Azerbaijani people. Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva always draws attention of international community to Azerbaijani realities. Under her leadership restoration works in various religious objects such as Pir Hasan Shrine dates back 16th century in Mardakan settlement, Imam Rza and Mohsun Salim Mosque in Bina Settlement, “Hazrati Zeynab” mosque in Gandja, Juma (Friday) mosques in Buzovna settlement have been carried out while new mosques have been built within the project of “Azerbaijan – Address of Tolerance”.

There has not been experienced any religious confrontations in Azerbaijan due to successful establishment of state - religion relations during interreligious and interfaith conflicts in the contemporary world. For centuries, the Islamic world's two largest - the Shia and Sunni sects carried out their rituals in separately in different places. Several times in the history, initiatives are being made for their unity and solidarity, but this process has not become resistant. During the period of sectarian conflict in the forefront of the Islamic world, on January 15, 2016, a joyful crowd of religious, government and community leaders joined together to witness and participate in a groundbreaking experience – a “unity prayer” of Shia and Sunni Muslims, it becomes a tradition and implemented in other mosques.

As Azerbaijan achieving stability in the area of religion, practical steps have been taken strengthening of relationship and solidarity with the Islamic world. From the presidency of the National Leader, Azerbaijan takes an active part in the work of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

National Leader Haydar Aliyev repeatedly emphasized that Azerbaijan is an integral part of Islamic world and his Speech at the OIC Summit in Morocco “I, as the president of the Azerbaijan Republic, attach great importance to establishment of personal mutual relations and solidarity with brothers - the heads of Muslim states is the best example of giving great attention to the relation with the Islamic world. Pointing out Azerbaijan’s the importance role on reconciling mission between the East and West, that our county is at the crossroads between two continents, “We are on the European continent. But at the same time, in the intersection of Europe and Asia, our country in the history of its people, its national culture, historical roots and mentality are the synthesis of the East and the West, Europe and Asia. Therefore, we realize our historical mission and we have done necessary work for its performance” said National Leader Haydar Aliyev. We can proudly say that the world outlook, views and political skill of the great leader successfully carries out by President Ilham Aliyev. Azerbaijan that is a member of the Council of Europe and ISESCO established friendly and cooperative relations between Western and Muslim Countries. Today, Azerbaijan plays an important role in the direction on promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the development of multicultural values and tolerance as well as strengthening solidarity among Muslim countries.

If we look at the geographical location of international events related to these directions in recent years, we can see that the vast majority of them implemented by the initiative of Azerbaijan already known as land of different civilizations and cultures. In this regard, it would be more timely to mention following initiatives: Celebration of International Day of Tolerance (16 November) which was first celebrated in our country by the decree of the great leader Haydar Aliyev, International conference on

"Haydar Aliyev and religious policy in Azerbaijan: Realities and Prospects" in 2007, Declaring Baku as the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2009 and Nakhchivan as the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2018, International conference on "Tolerance in Islam" in 2006, World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku once every two years since 2011, the 12th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in 2012, First International Baku Forum "State and Religion: Strengthening Tolerance in the Changing World" in 2014, International Conference on "Religious Co-existence in the traditional Muslim countries", "Azerbaijani experience: different religions existing in Muslim country", five Baku International Humanitarian Forums, 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and etc.

We can proudly emphasize that President Ilham Aliyev's purposeful activities contribute to Azerbaijan has become the venue hosting regional and international conferences, events and forums on promoting of civilizations and cultures, religious tolerance, traditions of coexistence as well as solidarity. Policy of Azerbaijan on regulation state-religion relations is being carefully watched and highly appreciated by the international community.

Declaration of 2017 "Year of Islamic Solidarity" by the President Ilham Aliyev in Azerbaijan is a step that responds the challenges of the modern world in a timely manner. "Year of Solidarity" is not only a religious factor but also it expresses more support to Muslim countries and enhances solidarity among them in the sphere of economy, culture and morality while this initiative is an answer to those who want to plant seeds of discord in our midst. At the same time, very important international event- the fourth Islamic Solidarity Games held in our country shows the well reputation of independent Azerbaijan in the Muslim world.

President of Azerbaijan noted that: "This is a major political, cultural event, and a great social event. It is once again demonstrating Azerbaijan as an independent, loyal to national and Islamic values, at the same time it will be the best answer for those who engaged in the dirty campaign against Islam. Because they are trying to form an opinion about Islam, as if it was a backward civilization.

Using their own capabilities, the media and public opinion, and through various non-governmental organizations, they circulate the opinion that Islam poses a threat to the world. They identify Islam with terrorism, increasing Islamophobia, dividing peoples by religion and showing disrespect for Muslim refugees”.

Today, OIC collectively stands for 22 percent of world population since this figure is expected to reach 30 percent in 2050. It shows that the Islamic factor plays a crucial role in the world policy. Historically Azerbaijan has been very part of Muslim world and as a cultural and religious center it became mediator in the resolution of different problems between Muslim countries. It is known that there are some disagreements and contradictions on some issues, conflicts in different Muslim countries. These differences are emerging at the expense of sects and denominations. Azerbaijan has equal good and friendly relationships with all Muslim countries. Therefore, Azerbaijan is a good example with its conciliatory, peaceful position.

It has been noted by the president Ilham Aliyev on 10 January 2017 at the meeting of Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to results of socioeconomic development of 2016 and objectives for future that “Azerbaijan is a country enjoying great respect in the Islamic world. Look at the level of respect we enjoy with the leaders of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Muslim countries that sometimes do not get along too well with each other treat us with great respect. Why? Because we are conducting a sincere, correct, fair, principled and courageous policy! This is our policy”.

Thus, Azerbaijan is a good example to the other countries for ensuring social and political stability, living in peace and tranquility of the citizens, the preservation of a multicultural and tolerant values amid increasing conflicts, clashes, strife on the religious grounds, terrorism, religious extremism, negative trends in the world. The architect of this model is National leader Heydar Aliyev and guarantor is the President Ilham Aliyev !

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