

***The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Politics, Problems, and Potential*, by Turan Kayaoglu. London: Routledge, 2015, 184 pp.; ISBN: 9780815377733, £38.39**

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Turan Kayaoglu's 2015 publication, *The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Politics, Problems, and Potential*, offers a comprehensive and critical examination of a prominent yet undervalued international organization. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has evolved from a tiny alliance established in reaction to the 1969 Al-Aqsa Mosque fire into an entity including 57 Muslim-majority states, rendering it the second-largest international organization following the United Nations. Nonetheless, the OIC has frequently faced criticism for its ineffectiveness, lack of unity, and internal discord, prompting inquiries on its capacity to effectuate significant change in global governance and the Muslim community.

Kayaoglu, an Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Washington, Tacoma, offers a comprehensive analysis of the OIC's history, its function in international diplomacy, its internal framework, and the obstacles it encounters in achieving its objectives. This review will examine the principal themes of the book, evaluate its merits and shortcomings, and discuss its wider implications for comprehending the OIC's role in world politics.

Kayaoglu initiates his examination of the OIC by presenting a comprehensive historical overview of its establishment. The 1969 fire at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem catalyzed the establishment of the OIC, uniting Muslim-majority nations to tackle the political, religious, and social issues facing the Muslim world. Kayaoglu delineates the organization's formative years, characterized by elevated expectations with very modest progress in practical accomplishments.

Since its establishment, the OIC has sought to enhance Islamic solidarity, safeguard the interests of Muslims worldwide, and cultivate peace, security, and

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growth within the Muslim community. Nonetheless, as Kayaoglu illustrates, the organization's capacity to fulfill these aims has been impeded by various causes, including the political heterogeneity of its member nations, internal conflicts, and external influences. The book elucidates the OIC's endeavor to reconcile its religious and political identity amidst the intricacies of international diplomacy.

Kayaoglu examines the OIC's political structure, asserting that it serves as both a source of strength and a considerable hindrance to its efficacy. The OIC's membership is heterogeneous, comprising nations from various areas with differing political systems, economic development levels, and strategic objectives. This diversity, although potentially advantageous, has also hindered the organization's ability to move decisively on numerous challenges.

The OIC employs a consensus-driven decision-making method, which Kayaoglu contends frequently results in inaction when confronted with sensitive matters. The necessity for agreement among member nations has often led to the adoption of the lowest common denominator as the organization's official stance. This has proved especially challenging in resolving disputes inside the Muslim world, including the Syrian civil war, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, and the tensions between Sunni and Shia-majority nations.

Kayaoglu examines the impact of significant member states, notably Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, on the policies and decision-making of the OIC. As the host nation of the OIC's headquarters in Jeddah and a principal financial supporter, Saudi Arabia has had significant influence on the organization's agenda. This dominance has prompted criticism that the OIC is excessively connected with Saudi geopolitical interests, especially regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict and relations with Iran.

Kayaoglu recognizes that the OIC has achieved certain advancements in institutional reform despite these limitations. He emphasizes the formation of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) in 2011 as a constructive advancement in addressing human rights concerns within the Muslim world, while he acknowledges that the commission's effectiveness has been restricted by political limitations.

Kayaoglu's perspective primarily emphasizes the OIC's function in foreign diplomacy. The OIC has established itself as a champion of Muslim interests in international forums, aiming to mediate conflicts, promote peace, and advocate for the resolution of issues impacting Muslim-majority nations. Kayaoglu illustrates that the OIC's diplomatic performance is inconsistent, frequently hindered by internal discord and insufficient resources.

The book offers comprehensive descriptions of significant diplomatic endeavors by the OIC, encompassing its mediation efforts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Palestine, alongside its involvement in humanitarian crises in Somalia, Yemen, and Syria. Kayaoglu contends that, although these efforts occasionally produce

favorable outcomes, the OIC's diplomatic attempts are frequently obstructed by insufficient political will and cooperation among member states. The OIC's failure to adopt a cohesive position on the Syrian conflict and the political unrest in Egypt has underscored the organization's constraints in impacting significant geopolitical occurrences.

Furthermore, the OIC's association with other international entities, especially the United Nations, has generated both cooperation and conflict. Kayaoglu analyzes the OIC's efforts to operate inside the UN framework while concurrently promoting the unique issues of the Muslim world. The OIC's diplomatic presence in the UN and other international institutions has facilitated the elevation of awareness regarding concerns impacting Muslim-majority nations; yet, its ability to enforce decisions is constrained. In contrast to the UN, the OIC lacks peacekeeping procedures and the capacity to enforce resolutions, rendering its influence predominantly symbolic in numerous instances.

Kayaoglu emphasizes that one of the most contentious elements of the OIC's operations is its stance on human rights. The OIC has consistently encountered criticism for its seeming indifference to human rights concerns, especially in relation to women's rights, freedom of expression, and religious liberty. In 1990, the OIC ratified the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, aimed at establishing an Islamic framework for the safeguarding of human rights. The proclamation has faced extensive criticism for not meeting international human rights standards, especially with its prioritization of Islamic law over universal human rights principles.

Kayaoglu examines the internal discussions within the OIC over human rights, highlighting that certain member states, including Turkey and Malaysia, advocate for an increased focus on human rights, whilst others, especially conservative nations, oppose these initiatives. Consequently, the OIC has frequently hesitated to adopt firm stances on human rights violations committed by its member states, resulting in allegations of hypocrisy and double standards. He recognizes that, notwithstanding these problems, there have been notable advancements in the OIC's stance on human rights. The formation of the IPHRC is regarded as a positive development, although its effectiveness has been curtailed by the political limitations set by member governments. Kayaoglu contends that for the OIC to bolster its credibility and legitimacy internationally it must adopt a more consistent and principled approach to human rights concerns, even if this necessitates confronting the conduct of certain influential members.

Besides its political and diplomatic endeavors, the OIC has aimed to foster economic development and collaboration among its member states. Kayaoglu examines the diverse initiatives implemented by the OIC to enhance economic integration, such as the creation of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the encouragement of trade and investment among Muslim nations. Kayaoglu contends that, despite some progress, the OIC's economic objective has been impeded by insufficient cooperation

and political resolve.

A primary problem confronting the OIC in economic development is the significant discrepancy in economic situations among its member states. Although nations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates possess substantial oil wealth, numerous other member states, especially in Africa and South Asia, contend with poverty and underdevelopment. Kayaoglu contends that the OIC has not yet formulated a cohesive plan to tackle these imbalances and foster equitable economic growth.

The book additionally addresses the OIC's initiatives to advance Islamic finance and banking as a mechanism for stimulating economic development. The emergence of Islamic finance has created novel prospects for investment and economic development in the Muslim world; nevertheless, Kayaoglu observes that the OIC's involvement in this domain has been comparatively restricted. He proposes that the OIC may assume a more proactive role in advancing Islamic finance as a mechanism for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Kayaoglu underscores the necessity for institutional reform within the OIC to realize its potential as a global entity. He contends that the organization's consensus-based decision-making process, intended to foster unity among member nations, frequently results in delay and indecisiveness. Kayaoglu proposes that the OIC implement a more adaptable decision-making framework, facilitating increased autonomy and leadership from regional blocs inside the organization.

Kayaoglu pushes for enhanced openness and accountability within the OIC, especially regarding its financial management and governance. The organization's dependence on voluntary donations from member governments has frequently resulted in financial instability and insufficient long-term planning. Kayaoglu contends that the OIC may augment its efficacy and credibility by instituting more robust finance structures and intensifying its collaboration with civil society organizations.

The book provides a thorough examination of the history, achievements, and shortcomings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, making it a valuable contribution to the field of international relations. The book also addresses the OIC's initiatives to advance Islamic finance and banking as a mechanism for stimulating economic development. The emergence of Islamic finance has created novel prospects for investment and economic development in the Muslim world; nevertheless, Kayaoglu observes that the OIC's involvement in this domain has been comparatively restricted. He proposes that the OIC may assume a more proactive role in advancing Islamic finance as a mechanism for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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