

21st Century and the Birth of the United Nations of Islam

By Jawed Ul Haq Siddiqui. Pakistan, Karachi: USI Publications, 303 pp.

This book studies the possibilities, objectives, characteristics, and advantages of the unity of Muslim nations in the foreseeable future. The author, Jawed Ul Haq Siddiqui, deals with the various dimensions and functions of this aspired unity and offers an ambitious institutional scenario for its attainment. Its dominant feature is the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Unity (OIU), which will replace or reconstruct the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The OIU will work to establish various institutions and processes of unification by the year 2000, ultimately to establish the United States of Islam (USI) by the year 2010.

The birth of the USI will result by accumulating different processes of unification undertaken by Muslim nations from now until the year 2010. USI's confederation will be open for membership to all Muslim states. In order to join,

Muslim states must sign on to at least one of the basic points of confederation. The basic points are the following:

1. Membership in the Islamic Monetary Fund and the Islamic Development Bank and acceptance of the flotation of the Islamic dinar as the common currency of the Muslim world.
2. Membership in the Islamic Common Market, agreeing to create a free trade area and customs union among the Muslim states.
3. Acceptance of a defense and security agreement among Muslim states leading to the formation of a joint Islamic Alliance for Defense.
4. Acceptance of a common foreign policy.
5. Agreement to modify state laws under the guidance of the Shari'ah and to establish the Islamic Court of Justice.
6. Agreement to a common education policy.
7. Acceptance of a Muslim confederation that recognizes the rights and obligations of citizens of all Muslim states with respect to movement, transfer, employment, and residence among member states (pp. 245–246).

The legislative function in the USI will be performed by a Muslim parliament, in which every Muslim member state will be represented by at least one permanent member. The Muslim parliament will hold regular quarterly or special sessions as needed. It can pass legislation and enact laws on all matters of common interest in accordance with the constitution of the confederation and discuss and approve the budgets of the confederation (p. 246).

With respect to the voting system, the Muslim parliament plans to adopt a dual majority voting system. Resolutions or recommendations of various sessions will be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present in the session. The dual majority voting system will be based on representing each country by a single vote and representing each country by a proportional number of votes based on its population (pp. 246–247).

Siddiqui's study consists of five parts. In the first and second parts, the author studies the geography, demography, and history of Muslim nations. In the third part, Siddiqui introduces his vision of the OIU—its name, charter, members, objectives, main bodies, location, and organizational set-up of the secretariat. In the fourth part, he details the legal, educational, economic, military, and political elements of unity. And finally, in the fifth part, the author introduces his idea of the USI.

In the first part, "The Muslim World Today," the author explores the contradictions between the possible capabilities of Muslim nations' vast territories, large populations, and existing raw materials and their current economic and educational problems. The author emphasizes the current disunity of Muslim nations as a cause of these contradictions and, therefore, prescribes unity as a solution for them (pp. 1–12).

In the second part, "The History of Islam," Siddiqui studies the different stages in the history of Islam and emphasizes some lessons that summarize the experience and wisdom of this history. He deals with Islamic history from the era of the "righteous" caliphs through the Umayyad period, the Abbasid Caliphate, Spain under Muslim rule, the Holy Wars between the Cross and the Crescent, the Ottoman Empire, and Islam's role and history in Africa, Afghanistan, Iran, India, and South Africa until the 1980s (pp. 13–51).

In his analysis, Siddiqui emphasizes some reasons for the decline of the Islamic civilization, such as succumbing to the lifestyle of luxury, compromising principles, and giving preference to personalities over the principles of Islam (pp. 20–24). He sees the mechanism of decline as a process of separating the

Muslim (the practice) from Islam (the principles) and subjecting it to secular power. Therefore, he recommends returning to Islamic principles and establishing Islamic unity as soon as possible (p. 51).

In the third chapter, "Current Developments," the author defines the challenge that is currently facing Muslims as a choice between joining the Islamic block or the non-Islamic one (pp. 52–54). In addition, Islam is in need of an advanced political system; hence, it is invited to benefit from the Western models and to develop a more advanced solution, thereby helping itself and Western countries, which also need help with their problems (pp. 55–56). After that, he studies the OIC, its background, establishment, achievements, and future. He thinks that the OIC succeeded as a medium of unification but that its role is expected to remain limited; hence, it can serve a better role as a stepping stone to a stronger organ for unity in the twenty-first century (pp. 57–62).

The development aspired to is the OIU. The OIU's ideology promotes unity among Muslim nations under a confederal umbrella to be operated through "consultative democracy." Its object is to set up immediately various organs such as a parliament, councils, committees, and corporate institutions and to make them fully operational by the year 2000; to achieve the goal of establishing the United States of Islam; and to strive for sustainable world peace (p. 64).

In the last part of this chapter, the author introduces a form of the charter of the OIU. He defines six articles that cover membership, adoption of the Islamic charter as depicted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, its objectives, and its main bodies. The articles determine also the distribution of authority and roles among council of heads of state, the Muslim parliament, and the council of foreign ministers. In addition, the charter defines the organizational set-up of the secretariat and the duties and responsibilities of the councils of education, economic affairs, foreign affairs, and defense (pp. 65–77).

In the fourth part, "Elements of Unity," Siddiqui details the elements of Islamic unity, from the implementation of Islamic law to education, economics, the military, and foreign policy. His approach is comprehensive, dealing with the past, present, and future of these elements and introducing a detailed view of their functions in the unity (pp. 78–240).

To implement Islamic laws, as the first element of unity, OIU will establish three institutions: the Council of Islamic Ideology, the Islamic Banking Advisory Council, and the Council of Islamic Shariat Courts. In addition, member Muslim nations will have to sign an agreement to adopt Islamic laws. The Council of Islamic Ideology will be the principal body that will streamline the procedures and reforms necessary for the implementation of Islamic laws in the member states (pp. 78–83).

With regard to education, the Council of Education will work to achieve a literacy rate of 100 percent. It will work to restructure the education system in the Muslim world by harmonizing secular education with religious education at all levels and establishing institutions of higher education in all fields of social and natural sciences (pp. 84–93).

The economic element of unity consists of developing inter-Islamic trade and establishing the Islamic Common Market, the Islamic Monetary Union, and the Islamic Development Bank. With regard to the development of inter-Islamic trade, Siddiqui reviews many important current statistics about the structure and geographical orientation of Muslim nations' trade. In this section, he gives a detailed description of the current inter-OIC trade. In his opinion, the development of inter-Islamic trade requires the development of other economic institu-

tions, such as Islamic trade facilitation centers, Islamic chambers of commerce, commodity exchange and marketing organizations, advertising services, and the infrastructure for communication (pp. 94–134).

According to Siddiqui, the task of forming an Islamic common market faces several problems, such as its large size; the existing disparity in levels of income, wealth, resources, and state of development even between countries in the same geographical region; the underdevelopment of the infrastructure required to move goods between Muslim nations; and the existing trade alliances and treaties between the Islamic countries. Hence, the Islamic Common Market agreement should take into account these problems.

An agreement on an Islamic Common Market would be based on the idea that each member state will promote free and fair trade with the other member states and remove all quota restrictions. Furthermore, each member state will allow citizens of other member states to work at the same pay, social security benefit, and working conditions as its own citizens. Other provisions include the establishment of common external tariffs, the division of the Islamic Common Market into separate zones, and other cooperative activities between Muslim states (pp. 135–147).

Establishing an Islamic Monetary Fund is important. Through its authority, the Muslim nations will be able to float the Islamic dinar as the common currency of the Muslim world for inter-Islamic trade. The Islamic Monetary Fund will work to establish the Islamic dinar as the common currency in the Muslim world, optimizing inter-Islamic trade through financing currency needs in Islamic dinar and implementing adjustment programs. Furthermore, it will work to fund deficits in member state balance of payments and current accounts due to disproportions in their imports and exports within the Muslim world, interest free (pp. 148–172).

The Islamic Development Bank is by far the greatest achievement of the OIC so far. Under the system of the OIU, the Islamic Development Bank will have representation in every Islamic country and enhance a relationship with all the major banks in the Islamic world. In addition, it will cooperate with and benefit from the Islamic Development Organization, change its role from trade financing to development financing, and finance unprofitable and law development projects (pp. 173–186).

With regard to the political and military elements of Islamic unity, Siddiqui develops a plan for initiating the Islamic Alliance for Defense and a unified Islamic foreign policy. The Islamic Alliance for Defense would be an agreement between the member Muslim states to defend one another in case of aggression by a nonmember or member state, as well as settle disputes between member countries. The charter of the Islamic Alliance for Defense confirms that its member states believe in the sovereignty and independence of all independent states and promise not to attack any foreign state except in self-defense (p. 193).

The joint Islamic Alliance for Defense (JIAD) is to function as an international organization of Muslim member states with no supranational structure. It is also to coordinate with NATO, to alleviate all potential Western fears that a Muslim defense alliance would threaten world peace, and to avoid the development of a second phase of the cold war after the breakup of the Soviet Union (pp. 193–196).

According to Siddiqui, an Islamic common foreign policy should be to enhance rationality in international relations so that both Muslims and the outside world realize the obvious mistakes that have prompted many dangerous

rivalries between Islamic civilization and the rest of the world, both at present and in the past.

For instance, the United States has built its foreign policy toward the Muslim world according to its own narrow and short-term interests. Moreover, it has used and is still using offensive foreign policy strategies toward some Muslim states, such as the hypocritical nuclear policy, the dual containment policy, and the policy of economic and trade sanctions (pp. 206–214).

On the other hand, the Muslim world should change the opinion held by some Muslim states that view the United States as the “number one enemy of Islam.” Instead of condemning the United States, these countries should build influence within it, promote investment as a means of cultivating influence, and strengthen Islamic institutions in order to spread Islam throughout the United States (pp. 215–225).

In his analysis, Siddiqui details the Islamic common foreign policy toward Russia, China, secular India, Europe, and Israel. In addition, he introduces his view of the charter of an Islamic foreign policy (pp. 226–240).

In the last section, Siddiqui introduces his view of the Confederation of Muslim States. He discusses its declaration, membership, parliament, voting system, head, councils, citizenship rights and obligations, future, and importance for the Muslim world and world peace (pp. 241–250).

This book presents a comprehensive review of the political past, present, and future of the Muslim world and of its economic and educational present and future. It also contains many useful statistics about the current economic and educational situations of the Muslim world. In addition, the author’s ideas are realistic and moderate especially with regard to his political opinion.

The idea of the book, Islamic unity, is a central and core idea in current Muslim thought, and the author works hard to emphasize and support its importance, necessity, and form of implementation. However, he falls into some methodological pitfalls that negatively affect the overall value of his work.

The first pitfall is the “ought to” approach; the author was occupied with describing what shape the aspired Islamic unity would take. However, he neglected the urgent question regarding how to achieve the aspired Islamic unity. In other words, the author neglects the procedures of the unity and the study of the real factors that have kept Muslim states away from it.

Second, the author tends to give his opinions more than offer a scientific and theoretical analysis. He does not mention the various theories and methods of international political and economic integration and cooperation. In addition, he fails to reference outside sources except in a two-page bibliography at the end of the book. The absence of references actually devaluates the validity of the book, at least as a scientific book.

Lastly, the approach is too comprehensive. The author burdens himself with the formation of a whole theory of Islamic unity. He took on the past, present, and future of all of the different dimensions of Islamic unity. The author himself demonstrated why Muslims cannot seem to create unity as he forgot the fundamental basis of unity—cooperation and labor distribution. Islamic unity requires the work of the entire ummah and cooperation between Muslims.