

**COMSATS University, Islamabad**

**Assignment # 3**

**Political Challenges of Muslims and their Solutions in light of Islamic Teachings**

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**Introduction**

In this assignment, we have discussed current political challenges faced by Muslims. We have discussed that Muslim countries are themselves divided and there is no unity among them. This is due to the fact that small Muslim independent states work for their interests and not for Muslims/Islam in general.

Relations of Muslim countries with others are similarly based on mutual interest, so conflicting situations arise, such as that of China-Pakistan friendly relations and India-Pakistan enmity. This results in biased political statements from leaders, favoring Chinese in same situations where they would otherwise condemn India. This stance weakens Islamic identity of Muslims.

We have also discussed solutions to these problems in the light of Islamic teachings.

**Political Struggles among Islamic Countries**

1. Brief History

Political struggles among Muslims started shortly after the death of prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

1. The First Fitna

The **First Fitna** (656-661 CE) was the first civil war of the Islamic Empire fought between the fourth Rashidun Caliph, **Ali ibn Abi Talib** (656-661 CE), and the governor of Syria, **Muawiya** (later Muawiya I; r. 661-680 CE). Deep fissures divided the empire after the murder of the third caliph Uthman (r. 644-656 CE) in 656 CE. Uthman's cousin Muawiya, and several other prominent Muslims, demanded vengeance, and when Ali failed to comply owing to internal political ordeals, fighting broke out and hostilities lasted until Ali was martyred by a renegade group called the Kharijites. **[8]**

1. The Second Fitna

The **Second Fitna** was a period of general political and military disorder and civil war in the Islamic community during the early Umayyad Caliphate. It followed the death of the first Umayyad caliph **Mu'awiya I** in 680 and lasted for about twelve years. The war involved the suppression of two challenges to the Umayyad dynasty, the first by **Husayn ibn Ali**, as well as his supporters including Sulayman ibn Surad and Mukhtar al-Thaqafi who rallied for his revenge in Iraq, and the second by **Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr**. **[8]**

1. The Third Fitna

The **Third Fitna** was a series of civil wars and uprisings in the Islamic community. It followed the death of the twelfth Umayyad caliph Yazid III in 744 and lasted for about six years. The war culminated with the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate and the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750.**[1]**Following the death of Yazid III in 744 and the abdication of his successor Ibrahim the same year, Marwan II became the sole ruler of the caliphate. **[8]**

1. The Fourth Fitna

The **Fourth Fitna** or **Great Abbasid Civil War** resulted from the conflict between the brothers al-Amin and al-Ma'mun over the succession to the throne of the Abbasid Caliphate. Their father, Caliph Harun al-Rashid, had named al-Amin as the first successor, but had also named al-Ma'mun as the second, with Khurasan granted to him as an appanage. Later a third son, al-Qasim, had been designated as third successor. After Harun died in 809, al-Amin succeeded him in Baghdad. Encouraged by the Baghdad court, al-Amin began trying to subvert the autonomous status of Khurasan, and al-Qasim was quickly sidelined.

In response, al-Ma'mun sought the support of the provincial élites of Khurasan and made moves to assert his own autonomy. As the rift between the two brothers and their respective camps widened, al-Amin declared his own son Musa as his heir and assembled a large army. In 811, al-Amin's troops marched against Khurasan, but al-Ma'mun's general Tahir ibn Husayn defeated them in the Battle of Rayy, and then invaded Iraq and besieged Baghdad itself. The city fell after a year, al-Amin was executed, and al-Ma'mun became Caliph.

This way, conflicts among Muslims continued till today. As we will discuss **The Arab Revolt** of 1916-18.

The roots of the Arab Revolt is in Arab nationalism that emerged during the Ottoman era. The Arab nationalism drew inspiration from 19th-century Western ideas. This led to the rebellion against Ottomans, resulting in British support to Arabs during World War I and the independence of small Arab states followed.

1. Current Political Conflicts

Muslims today are divided into many small states, and each state acts according to their interest. So it triggers nationalist and other movements that renders Muslims un-Islamic We have discussed some of the modern political conflicts among Muslims.

We can also see that some of these conflicts are among Shias and Sunnis. The general effect of these conflicts is that, Muslims are weakened.

1. Saddam Hussain’s Era in Iraq

In September 22, 1980, Iraqi President **Saddam Hussein**, a Sunni ruling over a majority-Shiite country who fears the spillover effects of the Iranian Revolution, sends his troops to occupy part of an oil-rich province in Iran. The move sparks an eight-year war, resulting in roughly one million deaths. Iraq is backed by Saudi Arabia and the United States, the latter responding to hostility from Tehran’s new government following the Islamic revolution and taking hostage of U.S. diplomats.**[2]**

In February 28, 1991, Riots erupt in the Shiite cities of Basra and Najaf after U.S.-led allies drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait and rout them on the battlefield in the first Gulf War. The Shiite protestors are in part motivated by a perception that they will receive U.S. backing if they turn against Saddam. U.S. officials say this was never promised. Saddam’s forces mount a brutal crackdown, killing tens of thousands of Shias, shelling the shrines of Najaf and Karbala, and razing parts of Shiite towns.

1. Libya Under Muammar Gaddafi

After World War II, Libya was ceded to France and the United Kingdom, and both countries linked it administratively to their colonies in Algeria and Tunisia. However, the U.K. favored the emergence of a monarchy controlled by Saudi Arabia and endorsed by the U.N., the Senussi dynasty, which ruled the country since its "independence" in 1951 under the monarchy of King Idris I, who kept Libya in total obscurantism while promoting British economic and military interests. When oil reserves were discovered in 1959, the exploitation of wealth did not translate into benefits for the people. According to political analyst Thierry Meyssan, during the monarchy, the nation was mired in backwardness in education, health, housing, social security, among others. The low literacy rates were shocking, according to Meyssan, only 250,000 inhabitants of the four million could read and write. But it was in 1969 that the Senussi dynasty was overthrown by a group of officers led by Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi who proclaimed true independence and removed the dominant foreign forces from the country. One of Gaddafi's immediate policies was to share the benefits and wealth to all Libyans.

Since Gaddafi took power, oil has been the main resource in the hands of the leader of the newly proclaimed Libyan Arab Republic. The triumph of the 1969 revolution marked a paradigm shift, moving the new government to use its oil income to boost redistributive measures among the population, generating a new model of economic and social development for the country. **[10]**

1. Modern Era in Middle East

In February 21, 2015, Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi, Yemen’s president, flees Sanaa after the **Houthis**, a Zaydi Shiite militant group in the country, take over the capital Sanaa. Al-Qaeda uses the Houthi advance to attract recruits and improve its standing among Yemen’s Sunnis. Tehran praises the Houthi takeover, and Iranian civilian flights land in Sanaa for the first time in twenty-five years. Saudi Arabia, backed by nine Sunni-majority countries and the United States, launches air strikes against Houthi targets in March.

In January 3, 2016, Saudi Arabia breaks off diplomatic relations with Iran for the first time since 1988–90. The escalation comes a day after Saudi Arabia executed **Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr**, a Shiite cleric who had led anti-government protests in the country’s east, where a Shiite minority lives atop major oil reserves. Iran’s leaders denounced the execution, and the Saudis broke off ties after Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran and a consulate in Mashhad. The crisis threatens U.S. efforts to broker a settlement to the Syrian civil war with both Iranian and Saudi participation. Saudi allies Bahrain and Sudan break off diplomatic relations, and the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait downgrade relations with Iran.

**Political Struggles between Muslims and non-Muslims**

1. Brief History
2. Arab Revolt

During World War I, Ottoman Empire sided with Germans, as a result The United Kingdom agreed in **the McMahon–Hussein Correspondence** that it would support Arab independence if they revolted against the Ottomans. This revolt resulted in the direct fight between Arabs and Ottomans and liberation of the Arab lands into separate small states. As a result, Ottoman Empire, which was considered to be a caliphate by Muslims broke into small Islamic states.

1. Balfour Declaration

The **Balfour Declaration** was a public statement issued by the British government in 1917 during the First World War announcing support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, then an Ottoman region with a small minority Jewish population. **[7]**

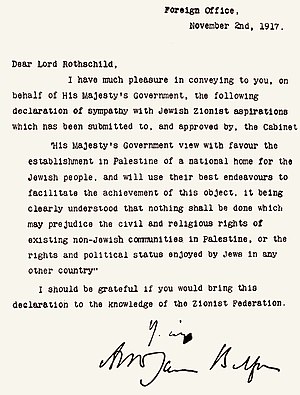


Figure : The original letter from Balfour to Rothschild

The declaration had many long-lasting consequences. It greatly increased popular support for Zionism within Jewish communities worldwide, and became a core component of the British Mandate for Palestine, the founding document of Mandatory Palestine, which later became Israel and the Palestinian territories. As a result, it is considered a principal cause of the ongoing **Israeli–Palestinian conflict**, often described as the world's most intractable conflict.

1. Khilafat Movement

Fall of Ottoman Empire sparked another event in India. The **Khilafat movement** (1919-1924) was an agitation by Indian Muslims allied with Indian nationalism in the years following World War I. Its purpose was to **pressure** the British government to preserve the authority of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the war.**[6]**

1. Current Era

The historical events mentioned above are causes of some of the military/political challenges faced by Muslims these days. Important among them is Israel-Palestine conflict. Creation of state of Israel is supported publicly by the British as we discussed Balfour Declaration above.

1. Israel-Palestine Conflict

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

1. US invasion of Iraq

In March 2003, U.S. forces invaded Iraq vowing to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and end the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein. When WMD intelligence proved illusory and a violent insurgency arose, the war lost public support. Saddam was captured, tried, and hanged and democratic elections were held.

1. Afghanistan War

Afghan War, in the history of Afghanistan, the internal conflict that began in 1978 between anticommunist Islamic guerrillas and the Afghan communist government (aided in 1979–89 by Soviet troops), leading to the overthrow of the government in 1992. More broadly, the term also encompasses military activity within Afghanistan after 1992—but apart from the Afghanistan War (2001–14), a U.S.-led invasion launched in response to the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001. By this broader definition, many analysts consider the internal Afghan War as lasting well into the 21st century and overlapping with the U.S.-led Afghanistan War. **[9]**

These conflicts prove that today’s Muslims are far weaker than other states in the World, both economically and militarily.

**Solutions of these Challenges**

Following are the possible solutions to political challenges faced by Muslims today:

1. Unity

*Nu’man b. Bashir reported Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.***[3]**

Unity among Muslims is the most important way to prevent any conflict among Muslims. It also empowers Muslims, so they can deal with offences from outside.

The failure in solving the most pertinent issues is a very fine depiction of the disunity and lack of support from Islamic countries. The Kashmir issue captures the popular imagination of Muslim leaders globally. Moreover, If we look into the Afghan crisis there is no unity among Muslim countries to curtail the Afghan crisis. Further, the role of the Muslim world about Uyghur Muslims has proved to be a failure. According to the United Nations, human rights officials estimate that 1 million or more Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities are detained at camps in a huge Chinese detention system. Many former detainees allege they were subjected to attempted indoctrination, physical abuse, and even sterilization.

*Narrated Anas bin Malik:*

*Allah’s Apostle said, “Whoever prays like us and faces our Qibla and eats our slaughtered animals is a Muslim and is under Allah’sand His Apostle’s protection. So do not betray Allah by betraying those who are in His protection.” .***[4]**

1. Education

The very first word of the Quran which reveals on prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by Allah is 'IQRA', it means to read. And the whole Qur'an is about the teaching of Allah about learning to lead the lifestyle of believers. Hence, in hadiths, there are various chapters related to Ilm which means knowledge. Thus, Muslim scholars say that education is the essence of knowledge. Moreover, it is the channel through which one can strengthen their faith and Imaan. Therefore, it also helps you in acquiring the necessary knowledge.

*It was narrated from Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:*

*"Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swines."* **[5]**

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