

5. İİT ÜYESİ ÜLKELER DÜŞÜNCE KURULUŞLARI FORUMU

5th THINK TANKS FORUM OF THE OIC COUNTRIES

Çeşitlilik İçinde Birlik: Gücün Kaynağı
Unity in Diversity: Source of Power



21-22 Şubat
February 2014,
Bağdat

STRATEJİK VİZYON BELGESİ - TASLAK
STRATEGIC VISION DOCUMENT-DRAFT



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5TH OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES THINK TANKS FORUM

“Unity in Diversity: The Source of Power”

21 - 22 February 2014, Baghdad

Today the social, economic and political situation of the OIC member countries tenders a scenery full of problems. Regarding the issues such as freedoms, welfare, justice, education, environment; it is visible that OIC countries have fallen behind the internationally accepted criterions. Ideological and sectarian confrontations have grown into external and internal problem piles.

Contrary to the developed countries where political competition is seen as a race in revealing the best program, it is perceived as the art of destroying the rivalries at the OIC countries. No member country of OIC has precisely the values such as the supremacy of law or freedom of religion and speech. Despite the fact that 23 % of the world population is Muslim, only 11 % of world production belongs to Muslim World. Yet, half of the list of “least developed countries” is composed of OIC member countries.

Regional inequalities in the OIC countries, too, pose serious problems from the socio-economic, thus military security viewpoint. The conduct of socio-economic and cultural diversities in a manner that would not spoil the societal order and integrity is the fundamental problem of politics. Those cultural diversities, together with the denominational and regional inequalities propound top level threat. Even though protection of integrity and order is easier in the countries where diversity based on ethnicity, language, race or religion is relatively small, one cannot mention this kind of homogeneity, nearly in no country. While there are more than 5000 ethnic and religious communities, only 193 state is currently member of UN. On the other hand, the developments in the fields of communication and transportation; democratization and globalization have made all kinds of discrepancies more visible and have paved the way for the show up of the identities never heard before. Under the pressure of urbanization, thanks to technological developments and increasing possibilities in education, communication and transformation the interaction among civilizations, countries and social groups has intensified and has made the development of the culture of co-existence mandatory.

Although the current situation concerning co-existence and sustention of discrepancies is not heart-warming in OIC countries, there is a serious and qualitative questioning process in order to reach better situation both at the administration level, the intellectual level and also among the



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masses. If this process might be oriented in a positive manner; it would be possible for OIC countries to reach the desired stability and welfare levels and to mobilize historical civilization accumulations. In our era, it is impossible to overleap or suppress the cultural discrepancies. However, it is possible to prevent the cultural confrontation with democratic methods and protection of the unity in diversity. Actually, this is the fundamental principal of the EU, which is a project of permanent peace and democracy in Europe.

The amelioration of the conditions that foster despair, exclusion and marginalization is the indispensable provision of developing the environment which co-existence would be secure. To this end, the economic and social conditions in the OIC countries should be increased to the acceptable levels urgently.

After the First World War, the geography of the OIC countries was either divided based on sectarian and ethnic lines or it was divided without considering various sects and ethnic groups. The only goal in these divisions was whether they were convenient for Western powers' interest. As for the conflicts and wars between local elements in the region, they have become the wars of representation conducted on behalf of colonial powers. The most prominent tools that were used by external powers to divide the region according to their interest have been exploitation of ethnic, religious and sectarian identities.

Unfortunately local elements which do not realize the perils of this situation and stuck in their shallow perception of interests easily become the instrument of external powers. But, OIC countries are still vulnerable against external interventions due to their natural resources and global strategic positions. In the upcoming days; it is highly possible that all great powers will try to exploit ethnic and sectarian tensions which are the soft belly of many OIC countries. In order to prevent this, it is necessary to build local and intellectual consciousness in the region.

The removal of ethnic or religious identities is neither possible nor humane. Especially with modernity; particularly in the Western World, identities and interests have begun to be determined on the basis of ethnicity. Nation and state building processes have been carried out on this basis. Thanks to irresistible power of European countries which have risen upon national identities, "Nationalism" has become the main ideology in the world. In the countries outside of Europe; especially in Muslim world, a definition of interest and nationalism merely via ethnic identities has almost never been possible. The main reason that lies beneath this situation is the absence of a struggle between religious institution and Bourgeoisie in Europe in the Muslim society.



5. İİT ÜYESİ ÜLKELER DÜŞÜNCE KURULUŞLARI FORUMU

Çeşitlilik İçinde Birlik: Gücün Kaynağı

5th THINK TANKS FORUM OF THE OIC COUNTRIES

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As a sociological obligation, there have been disagreements and divisions in Islamic World. However the words of Prophet Mohammed “Diversity of my people (Ummah) is a blessing from God” manifests that this diversity might be sustained with unity, mutual tolerance and dialogue. As historical facts show, the diversity of Muslim World has transformed into real stability, peace and wealth during the period in which this understanding reigned. But when religious and sectarian identities are used as a tool to secure the interests of certain groups and to trigger political segregations; the history has witnessed most horrible incidents.

Today’s political, sociological and technological opportunities and difficulties force people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds to live together unlike traditional periods of the past. Also advancement in modern transportation, communication and trade not only bind different religious and ethnic groups in a country but also affect all countries in a region. Therefore ending disputes, tensions and conflicts between different groups and prevalence of peaceful co-existence at individual, territorial and international level should be made dominant both national and international levels.

Identities of actors in a conflict determine the characteristics of their perceptions and emotions about who is friend or foe. The changes in perceptual, emotional and behavioral dimensions in a conflict affect other dimensions. Therefore managing and shaping the image of a conflict is important as managing the perceptual, emotional and behavioral elements of a conflict. If these elements are to be manipulated by external actors; parties involving in the conflict cannot create their own identities or interests. Therefore unless OIC countries shape their behavior in accordance with perception of a broader Muslim world identity, they would continue to be dragged along as a subject of the history.

The main reasons of conflicts are lack of lack of communication and dialogue. If parties do not communicate about their needs and interests or communicate on behalf of outside actors’ needs and interests; it would not be possible for them to reconcile on discrepancies and to liquidate the conflictual milieu. The resolution of a conflict can only be provided with dialogue based on sincere feelings, openness of communication channels and limited intervention of second parties (Although they might be sincere). Human nature has a tendency to trust misperceptions or misunderstandings. At this point; the interactions and experiences of the past has a huge effect. Besides, many people try to resolve conflicts without fully understanding. During the periods when conflicts intensify, the possibility of decision making via rational thinking begins to disappear. In any case; the resolution of the conflicts become easy when there is open communication channels.



5. İİT ÜYESİ ÜLKELER DÜŞÜNCE KURULUŞLARI FORUMU

Çeşitlilik İçinde Birlik: Gücün Kaynağı

5th THINK TANKS FORUM OF THE OIC COUNTRIES

Unity in Diversity: Source of Power

Carrying historical confrontations and segregations to the actual period has no meaning and brings no profit. In the first hand, this would mean not taking lesson form the past. In the second hand, the conflicts of the past have occurred as a result of the conditions, practices and impositions of traditional period. As for the modern and post-modern periods, there have been important changes in the fields varying from politics and sociology to economics. In any case, basing upon mutual respect, modern state makes mandatory the co-existence of various groups of people.

Unity does not mean monotony. It is possible to attain unity without ignoring typical and characteristic conditions of each OIC country. The rich fabric of Muslim World can be a bright instance for unity in diversity. OIC countries should understand that the only way to become more stable, powerful and wealthy is to provide the unity and integrity of Muslim World.

The need for an authentic solution is gradually being felt more deeply in the OIC countries. On the other hand, it possibility of exploration of ethnic and sectarian discrepancies is seriously high. The main goal of 5th OIC Countries Think Tanks Forum is to provide a communication milieu that would contribute to the understanding of unity in diversity in the name of protecting the interests of OIC countries and their people.

Main Theme

Unity in Diversity in the Muslim World: The Source of Power

Sub Themes

Historical Background and Economic, Cultural and Psychological Factors

The Effect of Ideological and Theological Background

Outside Powers Governing Dynamics

The OIC Countries Perspectives; Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan

Governing Models with Regional References

The Difficulties of Developing Genuine Politics within the Multipolar New World System

Systemic/Structural Issues, Opportunities, Cooperation