

Geopolitical Challenges of Convergence in Islamic World

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Islamic world is a term applied to the countries in which the majority of populations are Muslims. At the present time, The Islamic world is combination of territories with variety of human and natural variations. Thanks to human and natural resources, strategic position, and common beliefs, the Islamic World is capable to play a role as regional power actor in world geopolitical order; but due to some factors and disagreements, such as religious and ethnic fragments, different political attitudes and political system, lack of independency, political and economic dependency to big state, territorial conflicts and etc, these potentials have unfortunately not been used appropriately so far. It should be mentioned that in spite of disintegrations caused by diversification among Islamic World, there is a context for Convergence and structural and functional incorporation, common interests and needs, common threats and so on which can lead to unity and combination in Islamic World. This article investigates and analyzes the most significant geopolitical challenges for Islamic world Convergence.

The Islamic World covers some vast lands in Asia, Africa and some part of Europe and considering the important geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic capabilities it enjoys, this land has many potentialities to become a power in the global geopolitical system. According to the experts, the Muslim countries can achieve their real status in the global power system through the convergence and unity and as the result the ground will be prepared to meet the interests of all Muslim countries via establishing «Islamic Countries Union».

Methodology

This article investigates and analyzes the most significant geopolitical challenges for Islamic world Convergence such as lack of independency, political and economic dependency to big state, religious and ethnic fragments, different political attitudes and political system, territorial conflict and so on which can lead to divergence and schism in Islamic World. This study employs the analytical-descriptive research method using documentation and literature review.

Results and Discussion

There are factors in the way of Muslim countries' unity such as religious and civilization similarities, structural and practical homogeneity and similarity, common interests and requirements, and the common sense of being threatened that can play role as the main base of convergence. On the other side, unity and convergence in the Islamic World is also faced with some substantial barriers and challenges. The followings are some of the main factors which create distance, separation and divergence among the Muslim nations and governments: The main reason which prevents from the Islamic World categorizing and as the result the regional convergence is the geographical detachment and lack of the land integrity, in such a way that the Islamic World could be categorized into some 11 geographical areas. The other factor is the religious and ideological differences as well as different interpretations of Islam that mostly emphasize their legitimacy and accept the others less and unfortunately some of them accuse the others of being infidel. So, cultism is an important barrier in the unity of Muslim World and the Muslims. The third factor is border and land conflicts between the Muslim countries. Existence of such conflicts especially when they become ideological and political is another main factor of divergence and conflict in the Islamic World. Too much difference in the income and social-economic development of the Muslim countries is one of the other factors led to divergence in the Islamic World and make some big barrier in cooperation of the Muslim countries. Existence of the poles of power with almost the same geopolitical status in the Islamic World and the competition and conflict between them is the other barrier in terms of convergence in the Islamic World. In addition, the Muslim countries' political, martial, economical, and technological dependence to the world powers in the past and at the present has laid the ground for their interference and also for increasing the gaps and separations in the Islamic World and led to aggravating the conflicts and tensions among the Muslim countries. Finally, the economic structures of Muslim countries including both production and consumption sectors is the other barrier for convergence in the Islamic World. Given that most of the Muslim countries export the raw materials, mineral materials, agricultural products etc on one side and on the other side they import industrial products and foodstuffs from the non-Muslim countries, instead of complementing each other, the Muslim countries are the rivals of each other in the field of trade. These are the main barriers which prevent from the convergence in the Muslim countries and aggravate divergence in them.

Conclusion

In analyzing the divergent and convergent forces in the Islamic World, it seems that the

divergent forces act more efficiently than the convergent ones both in terms of the power and number. In other words, despite existence of proper ground for the convergence, it could be said that the convergence process in the Islamic World faces serious challenges and barriers. There is no doubt that removing the barriers in the way of convergence and unity or reducing their role and significance requires conducting comprehensive and scientific studies by the Muslim scientists and preparing precise and realistic strategies. The obvious point is that today's world requires convergence and unity in the economic, political, cultural and social fields urgently and the globalization trend has led the nations toward the regional and global convergence. In such circle, the Islamic World should relies on the Islam-based convergence more than before.

Keywords: Convergence, Integration, Divergence, Islamic World, Geopolitical Challenges.