



# *LUMS RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL*

## STUDY GUIDE



# HUJJAT E HAQ

(MUN)



# WELCOME TO LUMS RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL!

*This study guide has been prepared to help students and institutions understand what to expect in this category to ensure a smooth and overall engaging experience.*

## WHAT IS HUJJAT-E-HAQ ?

Hujjat-e-Haq will host a Model UN conference, where students will step into the roles of diplomats representing countries or organizations. In MUN, participants debate global issues, negotiate solutions, and draft resolutions to address real-world challenges. It's a platform to enhance public speaking, critical thinking, and diplomacy skills while learning about international relations and global affairs. This year Hujjat-e-Haq will host an OIC council with the agenda "**Establishing a Unified Islamic Bloc: Lessons from other models of Regional Integration**". The council will be in session throughout the duration of LRF (Friday to Sunday) at the scheduled times.

Delegates (participants) will be assigned one of the 57 OIC member states and are expected to represent its policies and perspectives during discussions. The format includes speeches, moderated debates, unmoderated caucuses for negotiations, and eventually, collaborative resolution drafting. Topics range from humanitarian crises and climate change to global conflicts and technological advancements.

## OIC

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1969 to promote and protect the collective interests of the Muslim world. The OIC's primary mission is to foster unity among its 57 member states, address challenges the global Muslim population faces, and contribute to international peace and security. The OIC focuses on strengthening solidarity among Muslim countries, addressing socio-economic inequalities, safeguarding Islamic holy sites, and countering Islamophobia worldwide.

It serves as a platform for dialogue and collective action, advocating for the rights and development of Muslim communities globally, especially in regions facing oppression, displacement, or crises. Overall, the OIC plays a crucial role in advancing the aspirations of the Muslim world by fostering cooperation among its members and with other international organizations.



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# ESTABLISHING A UNIFIED ISLAMIC BLOC

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

### KEY TERMS:

- **Unified Islamic Bloc:** A strategic vision of political, economic, and cultural integration among Islamic countries to enhance collective strength, solidarity, and global influence.
- **Regional Integration:** Coordinating policies, economies, and governance structures among neighbouring countries to achieve mutual benefits.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Collaboration among countries to establish shared markets, trade agreements, and financial frameworks that encourage economic growth and interdependence.
- **Political Unity:** The alignment of political systems and governance structures among member states to pursue common goals while respecting sovereignty.
- **Cultural Cohesion:** Preserving and promoting shared cultural, religious, and historical values to strengthen identity and unity among member states.
- **Sovereignty:** The authority of a state to govern itself without external interference, often a key concern in regional integration discussions.
- **Economic Disparity:** Variations in income levels, development stages, and resource allocation among member states that may hinder integration efforts.
- **Supranational Governance:** A governing body or institution above individual states that can make decisions binding on all member states, often debated in integration models.
- **Intergovernmentalism:** A model of cooperation where decisions are made collectively by member states without delegating authority to a supranational entity.
- **Lessons from the EU:** Key insights from the European Union's integration process, including economic frameworks like the Eurozone, shared governance, and the challenges of maintaining unity.
- **Challenges to Integration:** Political diversity, religious interpretations, economic inequalities, and historical conflicts may impede efforts to unify.
- **Common Market:** An integrated economic system allowing the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor among member states.
- **Shared Security Framework:** A collective agreement to address security challenges, including terrorism, border conflicts, and regional instability.
- **Islamophobia:** Discrimination or prejudice against Islam and Muslims, often a unifying issue for OIC member states in global diplomacy.
- **Multilateralism:** Collaborative decision-making and cooperation among multiple states, emphasizing equal representation and shared interests.
- **Islamic Finance:** A financial system based on Islamic law (Shariah) principles, promoting ethical investment and shared prosperity.
- **Economic Resilience:** The ability of a region or bloc to withstand and recover from financial shocks and external pressures.
- **Gender Parity:** The state of equal representation, access, and opportunities for all genders in political, economic, and social spheres
- **Women's Empowerment:** The process of enhancing women's ability to participate fully in economic, social, and political life, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making and their rights are upheld across the bloc.

# ESTABLISHING A UNIFIED ISLAMIC BLOC

## COMMITTEE AGENDA

The concept of a Unified Islamic Bloc (UIB) finds inspiration in successful regional integration efforts, such as the European Union (EU), which brought together diverse nations under a single economic, political, and cultural framework. The EU's model demonstrates the benefits of collective bargaining, unified markets, and a shared vision for long-term growth and peace. Similarly, organizations like the African Union (AU) and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) showcase the potential of regional alliances in addressing shared challenges, promoting economic cooperation, and enhancing political stability. By leveraging shared Islamic values and fostering solidarity, the UIB aims to elevate the global standing of Muslim-majority countries and provide a unified voice on critical issues such as trade, security, and climate change. It is crucial to carefully examine the potential constraints and implications—both positive and negative—of such integration models, particularly within the context of the Islamic world, which encompasses diverse biomes, ethnicities, and varying levels of economic stability.

### PROS:

- **Economic Empowerment:** A unified bloc would enable member states to establish a common market, fostering free trade, investment, and resource-sharing. This integration could enhance economic resilience, create jobs, and unlock growth opportunities, especially for smaller or less-developed member states.
- **Collective Political Influence:** By presenting a united front in global forums, the UIB could amplify the influence of Muslim nations on issues such as Palestine, Islamophobia, and climate justice, driving meaningful action and negotiation outcomes.
- **Shared Security Measures:** A unified security framework could improve counterterrorism efforts, regional stability, and defense against external threats. Collaboration on military capabilities and intelligence-sharing would reduce individual vulnerabilities.
- **Cultural Solidarity:** Promoting shared Islamic values and heritage could strengthen identity and pride among member states, fostering greater unity while respecting diversity.
- **Reduction of Dependency:** A UIB would reduce reliance on external powers for economic or security needs, allowing the bloc to achieve self-sufficiency and better resilience against global financial shocks.



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## POTENTIAL CONCERNS AND FEASIBILITY CONSTRAINTS:

- **Economic Disparities:** Significant differences in the economic development levels of OIC member states (e.g., between resource-rich Gulf countries and lower-income nations in Sub-Saharan Africa) could create challenges in establishing equitable policies.
- **Political Diversity and Sovereignty Concerns:** The broad spectrum of political systems—from monarchies to democracies—may make consensus difficult, and some member states may be hesitant to cede sovereignty to a supranational entity.
- **Resource Allocation Conflicts:** Disputes over the equitable sharing of resources and responsibilities could hinder progress, especially in areas like energy, trade, and humanitarian aid.
- **External Geopolitical Pressures:** Non-OIC powers may attempt to interfere in the bloc's development to protect their strategic interests, creating challenges for internal cohesion.
- **Cultural and Sectarian Differences:** Historical tensions and sectarian divisions within the Muslim world could impede cultural and political unity efforts.

## RELEVANT STATISTICS AND FIGURES TO CONSIDER:

- Key contributors to OIC trade include Malaysia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia, collectively accounting for approximately 72.3% of the bloc's trade in 2020.
- Most OIC countries rank lower on the HDI compared to global averages. Notably, only five OIC countries are among the top 50 globally, with the United Arab Emirates leading.
- Between 2019 and 2023, OIC member states experienced a GDP increase from approximately \$19.9 trillion to \$26.3 trillion, marking a 32% rise.
- In 2020, intra-OIC exports amounted to \$290 billion, representing 19.5% of the total trade of OIC countries—the highest rate achieved in the last decade.
- The EU is one of the world's largest trading entities, accounting for 13.2% of global exports and 14.8% of global imports in 2022. This extensive trade network has been a key driver of the member states' economic growth and job creation.
- The East African Community has made strides in regional integration, with intra-EAC trade accounting for 15% of the total trade in 2023. However, the growth rate in total intra-EAC trade decreased slightly by 0.3 percentage points to 10.9% in 2023 from 11.2% in 2022, indicating challenges that must be addressed to enhance trade within the region.
- ASEAN has experienced significant growth in merchandise trade, with a 4.8% increase in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in the previous year. This growth reflects the region's dynamic economic integration efforts.
- In 2017, intra-ASEAN trade constituted 23.1% of ASEAN's total trade, highlighting the importance of regional trade partnerships in the bloc's economic landscape.

# FOR THIS UNIFIED BLOC, THREE KEY ASPECTS—ECONOMIC, GEOPOLITICAL, AND SOCIAL—WILL BE ANALYZED, DRAWING INSIGHTS FROM OTHER MODELS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION.

## A) ECONOMIC

The economy forms the cornerstone of regional integration, providing the resources, infrastructure, and mechanisms for shared prosperity. For the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), establishing a Unified Islamic Bloc (UIB) presents significant opportunities inspired by successful models like the European Union (EU) and ASEAN. These examples highlight how integration can enhance trade, attract investments, and create jobs while also showcasing challenges such as economic disparities and structural alignment.

- A unified bloc could boost intra-OIC trade, which reached \$290 billion in 2020, by reducing tariffs and streamlining trade policies. Following the EU's example, shared markets could foster economic interdependence, while investment in key sectors like renewable energy and technology could drive innovation and growth. Job creation across industries, including Islamic finance, manufacturing, and green energy, could significantly reduce poverty and improve living standards. However, economic disparities among OIC member states, such as the vast difference in GDP per capita between Qatar and Niger, pose challenges. Lessons from the EU, which used structural funds to bridge development gaps, suggest that an "Islamic Development Fund" could help weaker economies. Similarly, addressing infrastructure deficits, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, would be essential to facilitate trade and mobility.
- The bloc's reliance on external markets for exports, particularly in hydrocarbons, underscores the need for economic diversification. Promoting sectors like technology and education will reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Introducing a unified currency while reducing transaction costs would require careful planning to avoid financial instability, as seen in the Eurozone. To succeed, the OIC must harmonize trade policies, support weaker member states, and invest in innovation. By learning from the EU and ASEAN, the UIB can create a resilient and equitable economic framework that fosters shared prosperity and strengthens the Islamic world.



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## B) SOCIAL

- The social dimension of establishing a Unified Islamic Bloc (UIB) presents a complex challenge, as the bloc encompasses **diverse ethnicities, sects, and varying levels of religious and cultural alignment**. Similar to the European Union's experience with integrating culturally and politically distinct member states, the OIC fosters unity while respecting its members' unique identities. One of the primary challenges is addressing sectarian divisions, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities, which have historically fueled conflicts in the Middle East. Extremist factions, rebel groups, and political unrest—exacerbated by external interventions—further complicate regional cohesion. For instance, the Arab Spring, while initially hailed as a movement for democracy and reform, revealed the deep-rooted social and political divides within many Muslim-majority states. The mixed outcomes of the Arab Spring underscore the difficulty of achieving stability and harmony across nations with differing levels of religious and cultural alignment.
- Additionally, the bloc must reconcile **varying degrees of secularism and religious conservatism among member states**. Countries like Turkey and Indonesia, known for their more secular and modernist approaches, often contrast with nations like Saudi Arabia and Iran, which adhere to stricter interpretations of Islamic law. This diversity poses a significant challenge to creating unified social policies that resonate across the bloc. Lessons from the EU offer valuable insights. The EU successfully integrated nations with deep historical rivalries, such as those in the Balkans, by fostering economic interdependence and promoting shared cultural and social values. Similarly, ASEAN has navigated ethnic and cultural diversity by emphasizing consensus-driven policies and non-interference in domestic affairs. The OIC could adopt similar approaches by focusing on shared Islamic values, encouraging dialogue, and establishing platforms for cultural exchange to bridge divides.
- **Gender inequality** remains another critical issue in the region. While recent years have seen some progress in expanding opportunities for women in education, employment, and politics, many OIC member states still face significant challenges. Social norms and traditional practices in several countries have historically restricted women's roles in society, particularly in the Middle East. A Unified Islamic Bloc could play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality by implementing policies that ensure women's participation in governance, education, and the workforce. Drawing inspiration from international conventions and the successes of gender-focused reforms in countries like Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, the bloc can drive progress by setting collective goals for women's empowerment and rights.

The bloc can work towards harmonizing its diverse member states by emphasizing common goals such as poverty alleviation, education, and social justice. Programs to address sectarian conflicts, promote inclusivity, and invest in cross-border cultural initiatives will be key to fostering a sense of shared identity. Similarly, prioritizing gender equality by creating frameworks to enhance women's access to education, employment, and leadership roles will be vital. The OIC must learn from other regional integration models to address social divides through dialogue, inclusivity, and shared purpose.

While diversity poses challenges, it also creates opportunities to build a more united bloc by leveraging its cultural and religious commonalities. Through careful policy-making and collaboration, the UIB can build a socially cohesive framework that respects its members' unique identities, promotes women's empowerment, and drives collective progress.



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## C) GEOPOLITICAL

- A unified geopolitical strategy within the context of a Unified Islamic Bloc (UIB) presents a transformative opportunity for the Islamic world to amplify its influence on the global stage. With key stakeholders such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Turkey, the bloc could leverage its collective power to advocate for smaller, less globally influential nations, providing them with a stronger voice in international forums. The bloc's vast reserves of strategic resources, particularly oil and gas, already make the Islamic world an essential partner for the West, and a cohesive foreign policy could significantly enhance its negotiating power. Unified lobbying efforts by influential states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE could ensure that smaller member states gain representation and support in resolving critical issues such as economic development, humanitarian aid, and global security. The ability of Gulf states to exert pressure on Western nations, which are heavily reliant on Middle Eastern energy exports, provides the bloc with a strategic advantage. A collective foreign policy could also serve as a counterbalance to external influences, protecting the interests of the Islamic world from exploitation or geopolitical manipulation.
- However, significant challenges exist, particularly due to strained relations among OIC member states. Long-standing disputes such as those between Saudi Arabia and Iran, stemming from ideological differences and rivalries over regional dominance, remain a major obstacle. The conflict in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and Iran back opposing factions, exemplifies the deep-seated divisions that could hinder the formation of a cohesive bloc. Similarly, Turkey's strained relations with Syria and Egypt further complicate unity within the Islamic world. These tensions raise critical questions about how these disputes can be set aside or resolved to present a united front. Ongoing conflicts, such as those in Palestine, Libya, and Afghanistan, add another layer of complexity. For the UIB to be effective, it must address these issues through dialogue and mediation. Lessons can be drawn from the European Union, which overcame historical rivalries among its member states through institutional mechanisms that promote dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Similarly, ASEAN's principle of non-interference has allowed it to navigate tensions among its diverse member states while fostering cooperation.

To build a unified geopolitical framework, the UIB must focus on shared goals, such as advocating for Palestinian statehood, combating Islamophobia, and addressing humanitarian crises in member states. Establishing conflict-resolution platforms and fostering diplomatic ties among members will be critical. Moreover, smaller states must be assured that their interests will not be overshadowed by the larger, more influential members, ensuring equitable representation and decision-making. Despite the challenges, the potential of a unified geopolitical strategy is immense.

By harmonizing foreign policies, resolving internal disputes, and leveraging their strategic resources, OIC member states can transform their collective influence into a global force. This unity would not only benefit the Islamic world but also contribute to global stability and peace, reinforcing the bloc's position as a key player on the international stage.





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## MECHANISING A UNIFIED BLOC OF MUSLIM STATES

A Unified Islamic Bloc (UIB) envisions an unprecedented level of cooperation and integration among OIC member states, leveraging shared values, resources, and strategic goals. Central to this vision is the establishment of free markets, allowing seamless trade and investment across member states while promoting lenient immigration and labor policies to ensure a fluid movement of skilled workers and resources. A potential OIC Parliament, composed of elected representatives from each member state, could act as the legislative body to oversee decisions on economic, social, and geopolitical matters, ensuring a fair and democratic representation of the bloc.

Further, the bloc could aim for a unified stance on global issues and conflicts, allowing member states to present a collective voice in international forums. Shared military cooperation might also be considered, with the possibility of a Unified Defense Authority to oversee arms exchange, joint military drills, and the deployment of troops across borders when needed for collective security. Drawing inspiration from the European Union, such structures mirror the EU's parliamentary system, single market, and cooperative defense agreements under mechanisms like the Common Security and Defence Policy. However, the technicalities, framework, and policymaking for this vision are left to the creativity and strategic thinking of the delegates.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE STATUS QUO

The idea of regional integration is not novel, with successful examples such as the European Union (EU), ASEAN, and the East African Community (EAC) providing valuable insights. The EU demonstrates the economic benefits of shared markets and currencies, as well as the political stability achieved through cohesive institutions and a collective voice on global issues. ASEAN, on the other hand, highlights the importance of balancing diversity through non-interference and consensus-based decision-making, making it a relevant model for a bloc as diverse as the OIC. Delegates are encouraged to study these examples to understand their benefits and struggles.

The EU has achieved remarkable economic and political cohesion, but it has also faced challenges like Brexit and internal divisions. ASEAN has succeeded in fostering regional cooperation but remains cautious of deeper integration due to member-state disparities. Delegates must analyze how these models address the economic, social, and geopolitical challenges specific to their regions and determine how such mechanisms could be adapted to the Islamic world. By reflecting on these models, delegates will be tasked with crafting a framework that addresses the unique diversity and challenges of OIC member states. They must propose solutions that align with the three core aspects discussed earlier—economic, social, and geopolitical—while ensuring that the bloc remains inclusive, equitable, and adaptable to the evolving needs of the Islamic world.



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## QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

- How can the diverse ethnic, sectarian, and cultural identities within OIC member states be harmonized under a unified bloc without compromising individual identities?
- What mechanisms should be put in place to resolve existing disputes and conflicts among OIC member states (e.g., Saudi-Iran relations, Yemen, Turkey-Syria tensions)?
- How can a unified foreign policy be established that balances the interests of smaller member states with the strategic goals of key stakeholders like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the UAE?
- What economic policies should the bloc adopt to ensure equitable trade, resource sharing, and development, given the significant economic disparities among member states?
- Should a unified currency be introduced, and if so, how can its implementation mitigate risks such as inflation disparities and economic instability?
- What role would an OIC Parliament or legislative body play in decision-making, and how can representation be ensured for all member states?
- How can the bloc promote free markets, encourage intra-bloc trade, and reduce reliance on external powers while fostering economic resilience?
- What strategies can be adopted to counter external geopolitical pressures and strengthen the bloc's global influence?
- How can the OIC develop shared defense and security mechanisms to address both internal and external threats effectively?
- How can the lessons and challenges of existing regional integration models like the EU, ASEAN, and the EAC inform the development of the Unified Islamic Bloc?





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## RESEARCH MATERIAL

The statistics referenced earlier can be explored in greater detail through the following references. The committee will closely examine the successes and challenges of similar regional integration models, analyzing their relevance and applicability to the Islamic world to assess feasibility and potential benefits. Delegates are encouraged to research additional academic papers and scholarly works to reinforce their frameworks during the conference.

**COMCEC Report on Trade and Investment - Key Contributors to OIC Trade**

**SESRIC Report - HDI Rankings of OIC Countries**

**Eurostat - International Trade Overview (EU Trade Volumes)**

**Zawya Report on EAC Trade**

**ASEAN Statistical Brief - Growth in Merchandise Trade**

**ASEAN Economic Integration Brief - Intra-ASEAN Trade**

**Sectarianism in the Middle East and Asia**

**Explaining the Sectarian Violence in the Middle East: A Conflict Analysis of the Saudi-Iranian Rivalry**

**How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy**

**Muslim States and the Syria Question (2012)**

**Status of Women's Rights in the Middle East**

**Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in the Middle East and North Africa (2020)**

**Gender-Inclusive Policymaking in the Arab Middle East and North Africa**

**Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women and the Public Sphere - World Bank**

