THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD SYSTEM

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Today, the Islamic world is one of the key elements in the structure of international relations. The Islamic factor has a significant influence on the formation of international politics, as the main events in world politics in the 21st century are directly or indirectly related to the Muslim world. In the modern world, Islamic states and organizations actively participate in international relations, influencing political, economic, and cultural processes. The term “Islamic factor” encompasses a wide range of issues. The Islamic factor includes not only fundamentalism, extremism, or terrorism, but also the entire spectrum of political, economic, cultural, and religious aspects related to Islam and Islamic states that influence international relations.

Since its founding by the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) in the 7th century, Islam has spread widely throughout the Arabian Peninsula, gaining not only spiritual and social significance, but also political influence that could not be ignored. After the death of the Prophet, during the time of the caliphs, and later the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, Islam began to spread rapidly throughout the world thanks to conquests and missionary activity. Islamic states played a significant role in international relations for centuries. For a long time, the caliphates, which controlled vast territories, were centers of culture, science, and trade. In the Middle Ages, Islamic states such as the Ottoman Empire and the Timurid Empire became important players on the world stage, influencing political and economic processes in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Islamic world was greatly affected by colonialism, which caused political, economic, and social shifts. Many countries were colonized by European powers, which destroyed the nascent structures of states and led to the introduction of a new administrative system. The process of decolonization after World War II allowed many countries in the Islamic world to gain independence. However, decolonization left behind a legacy of political instability and economic hardship.

Today, the Muslim ummah unites people living in approximately 120 countries around the world. In 28 of these countries, Islam is the state religion, and in 43 countries, Muslims make up the majority of the population. Some countries have large Muslim diasporas, such as India and Russia. At the end of 2025, the world population was approximately 8.3 billion people. According to data published in June 2025, Muslims accounted for 25% of the world's population in 2020. Based on these

indicators, it can be said that Islam has a significant influence on world processes, especially given that among Muslims, religion often plays an important role in decision-making, as it is not separate from society but is perceived as a way of life. In 2023, the total GDP of all countries in the world amounted to $105.44 trillion, according to World Bank figures. Based on aggregated data from a sample of countries with a predominantly Muslim population, the total nominal GDP of these countries amounted to $21.86 trillion (WB 2023). This represents almost 20% of global GDP, revealing the influence of the Islamic factor in the economic sector.

A distinctive feature of Muslim countries is the influence of Sharia law on social and political life. Regardless of their political structure, countries with a predominantly Muslim population tend to take Islamic requirements into account. The foreign and domestic policies of such states may vary, but often include support for Islamic solidarity and cooperation with other Muslim countries. For example, countries such as Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan illustrate strict adherence to Sharia law in all spheres of life. In these countries, the vast majority of the population professes Islam. Countries such as the UAE, Malaysia, Oman, etc., while remaining committed to the tenets of Islam, are tolerant of representatives of other faiths within their borders. Secular states with a Muslim majority, such as Turkey and Uzbekistan, strive to balance Islamic traditions and dogma with a secular way of life.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation serves as the main platform for business and cooperation between countries. Islamic countries, particularly those with significant oil and gas reserves, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, play a key role in the global economy. These countries are major exporters of energy resources, making them important players in the global market. In addition to economic issues, there are organizations that coordinate the political, economic, and social efforts of Islamic countries, as well as promote solidarity between them and the resolution of their common problems. Examples of such organizations are the League of Arab States, the OIC, and the OIC.

Brzezinski viewed Eurasia, and the Middle East in particular, as a chessboard where the geopolitical interests of major players in world politics clash, thanks to the region's energy potential and strategic location. Given that most of the region is made up of Muslim countries, Islam has remained a significant factor in all conflicts and events of the last century, acting as a trigger for the start of conflicts or a factor in their escalation. Examples include the Arab Spring, the color revolutions, the Syrian Palestinian crisis, the civil war in Yemen, the revolution in Iran, etc. The Islamic factor can also manifest itself through political movements such as Islamist parties, terrorist and extremist organizations that seek to create fundamentalist caliphates. For example, groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and

Hezbollah have used Islamic slogans in their extremist activities. Thus, the factor of Islam occupies a significant position in the issue of global and regional security.

Thus, the Islamic factor is an important element in the structure of international relations, exerting a significant influence on political, economic, and cultural processes in the world. Historically, Islamic states have played a key role in international politics. The Islamic world, which unites a significant number of people and possesses considerable resources, continues to be an important player on the world stage. In order to better understand the role of the Islamic factor and its influence on global processes, it is important to take into account the diversity of the Islamic world and the differences in approaches to religion and politics. The influence of Islam on the politics, economy, and culture of various countries underscores its importance in international relations.

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