THE ROLE OF THE MUSLIM WORLD IN COTEMPORARY WORLD POLITICS

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The term "Muslim world" in this paper refers mainly to the Muslim community in the Middle East. The characteristics mentioned here are by no means all the ones that the Muslim world is privileged with. Muslim world and its role in contemporary world politics will be analyzed in the context of globalization.

1. *Characteristics of the contemporary Muslim world*

Islam is the world's second largest religious group with approximately 1.6 billion adherents, making up over 23% of the world population. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, the effect of globalization on Islam and the Muslim world has emerged as a hotly debated topic. The Muslim world has witnessed many changes in its political, cultural and social life and is trying to find ways to adapt to the new circumstances. Generally, there are eight characteristics of the Muslim world today. First, the Muslim community is globally united in their belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad. Second, the community has no separation between religion and politics. Third, the community has fluctuations in its faith which are reflected mainly through Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Extremism. Fourth, the community has been

divided by the conflict between progressives/moderates and conservatives/extremists. Fifth, the community has been more strongly Islamized. Sixth, the community has been deeply affected by tribalism. Seventh, the community has been showing anti-American and anti-Western sentiment more strongly and more frequently. Finally, the community had been less integrated than any other religious communities in the world when the globalization knocked on the door of their world.

Characteristic 1: The community is globally united in their belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad.

Islam has become international. It merged all nationalities into one Ummah. In the globalization context, the fact that ummah is a universal Muslim community based on shared Islamic faith and implementation of its law has been a greater reality. The Muslim community has indeed become a more powerful monotheistic and unifying force.

Along with the advancement of technology, globalization has helped to connect millions of Muslims around the world. The Internet, social networking sites, satellite television, the telephone make them more cohesive and contribute to maintaining the identity of this religious community. This connectivity has strengthened Muslims' sense of belonging to one community. Muslims have more opportunities to experience the support of their followers all over the world.

The concept of Ummah has been regarded as an important contributing factor in the rise and development of Islam and Islamic civilization. Although Muslims have shared a sense of being part of a global ummah since the time of prophet Muhammad, it is the globalization that is promoting a greater ummah consciousness or a heightened sense of belonging to a global community of adherents. The intensity of this feeling varies significantly across Muslim countries; however, it tends to be stronger among

the Muslim community in the Middle East than among other Muslim communities in other parts of the world.

Islam transcended all types of nationalities, languages, and ethnic backgrounds and hence established a global community. In other words, the Muslim community is not founded on race, nationality, locality, occupation or kinship. It does not take its name after the name of a leader,a founder or an event either. Therefore, a Muslim community is an ummah only when it is nourished and strengthened by Islam. To show that one belongs to ummah, he needs to express his submission to the will of Allah, obedience to His law and commitment to His cause.

The Muslim community is also built on the concept of brotherhood. Muslims are decreed to have the feelings of and to apply the concept of brotherhood. In this regard, the Quran states in Surah Al-Hujurat (The Inner Apartments) the following, "The believers are but one single brotherhood." (Quran 49:10).

Every religion functions as a guide for the behavior of its adherents. Muslims have used the Quran as comprehensive instructions on how to behave and treat others, which unites all Muslim people and creates a somewhat "homogeneous community". The concept of being one ummah is explained clearly in the Quran. In Surah Al-Anbiya (The Prophets), Allah says, "Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your lord and cherisher: Therefore serve me (and no other)" (Quran 21:92). Muslims regard the Quran as a final, the fullest and the purest bible. The Quran is compared to glue that gathers over 1.6 billion followers in the most sustainable and natural way. The Quran will be the most meaningful and powerful bible when it is read out in a single language - Arabic. Therefore, all Muslims, regardless of their nationality, prefer to use Arabic during their prayer time.

The Islamic doctrine and law should be consistent to all Muslims. As long as Sharia exists in the Muslim community,

it shows the community's obedience to Allah. For Muslims, Sharia is not only God's law but also the instructions of life. Sharia is also regarded as a natural law. Besides, the sense of international community has been demonstrated during the daily prayers, the Friday congregational prayers, during the two feasts and especially during the time of Hajj Pilgrimage.

Characteristic 2: The community has no separation between religion and politics

Globalization is prompting a reformulation of the common Muslim belief that Islam is not only a religion but also a complete way of life. In other words, Muslims believe religion is an essential aspect of a person's identity and influences every part of one's life. It has provided guidance in every sphere of life, from individual cleanliness, rules of trade, to the structure and politics of the society. Every area of human existence comes under the authority of Islam.

In general, one can see that Islam is a religion which not only governs the private religious life of an individual, but also mandates and regulates all aspects of public life. Muslims have always been proud and sensitive about their religion because Islam is not only a faith but also a law that regulates all aspects of their life.

Muslims see that they themselves as well as the world around them must be in total submission to God and his Will. Moreover, they know that this concept of His rule must be established on earth in order to create a just society. Like Jews and Christians before them, Muslims have been called into a covenant relationship with God, making them a community of believers who must serve as an example to other nations by creating a moral social order. God tells the Muslim global nation, "You are the best community raised for mankind, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong" (Quran 3:110).

Consequently, there is no distinction between religious and state authority in Islam. The close connection between the two was formed in the earliest days of the faith, when the Prophet Muhammad was regarded to be both a religious guide and a political leader. He turned faith into religion. Moreover, he turned the Muslim tribes into a powerful state and then an international empire.

In Islam, God is acknowledged the sole sovereign of human affairs, so there has never been a separation between religion and politics. Throughout Christian history until the present times, there have always been two authorities: 'God and Caesar', or 'church and state.' The distinction, so deeply rooted in Christian history, between church and state has never existed in Islam.

Although Islam is an international religion, it has no communion, priest or clergy. Therefore, religious authority lies not in the communion but in every believer.

Historically, many forces attempted to separate Islam from political power; however, they have always experienced failure. For example, the Ottoman state introduced two concepts of Sultan and Caliph. The term Caliph referred to Kings and the term Sultan referred to religious leaders who had ultimate political power. However, in the mid-seventeenth century, Sunni Muslims rejected the two concepts of Caliph and Sultan and combined religious authority with political authority.

Nowadays, political and religious power in the Middle East countries have been passed by the mode of "hereditary". In Syria, Hafez Assad died after three decades in power, but his son, Bashar continued to lead the country. In Jordan, political power lied in the hands of the Hashemite family. In Morocco, it was the Alaouite. In Saudi Arabia, it was the al-Sauds. In Kuwait, it was the al-Sabahs. Islam has always played a crucial role in the political system in these countries. The leaders of these countries are also missionaries. They maintain their influence through

the construction of mosques and the implementation of Islamic law and principles. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed many political leaders who combined their regime and personal identity with Islam. Currently, all actions of the President and the Parliament in the Middle East seem to be in accordance with religious rulings. Like Saudi Arabia and Sudan, Islamic law governs most areas of life, and the political process is strongly influenced by religious beliefs. Islamic involvement in the political process has been greater reality in this region.

Unity between religious and political authority is considered to be a central issue of modern Islamic history. Many scholars argue that it is necessary to separate the two because this separation will help to break down barriers and pave the way for the development of Muslim world. They prefer a modified version of Islamic law that would be reserved only for certain areas of life, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. However, Islam has been a complete way of Muslims' life for thirteen centuries; therefore, this separation will be very hard for the Muslim world.

Characteristic 3: The community has fluctuations in faith which are reflected mainly through Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Extremism

Since the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, it has become the faith of every citizen in this desert region. In the past, the fluctuations in their faith were hardly recognized. However, since the early twenty-first century, many Muslims feel the tenants of the faith have been distorted through the actions of its radical elements. The fluctuations in faith are mainly shown through Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Extremism. To some extent, these fluctuations have countered Islamic values and have worsened the Muslim image in the eyes of the international

community. Both fundamentalists and extremists have never been the representatives of the Muslim world.

Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic extremism have emerged as a tendency to reaffirm the position of Islam in the contemporary world. It has been political reaction to the dominance of the West. This tendency poses a serious challenge to international relations.

Islamic fundamentalists and extremists share the same targets. Both of them desire to eliminate or minimize new variations of religion as well as political leaders and non-Muslims who are considered threats to their fundamentalist beliefs and return to what they see as the roots of Islam. However, they are different in their methods of operation. Islamic fundamentalists are considered to be conservative and radical in theory; whereas, Islamic extremists are conservative and radical not only in theory but also in practice. Therefore, Islamic extremists are closer to Islamic terrorists than Islamic fundamentalists.

As some authors argue, globalization has strengthened fundamentalism and Islamic extremism. The processes of globalization hence proved highly turbulent and have generated new conflicts, hostilities and exclusions throughout the world. Globalization has shaped the way Islamic fundamentalists behave in modern societies. At the heart of Islamic fundamentalist beliefs is the desire to return to the original teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the Quran.

These two tendencies (Islamic fundamentalism and extremism) cannot be the path leading to general prosperity and stability of the Muslim world. Both fundamentalists and extremists will never have the religious authority to become representatives of Islamic civilization.

Characteristic 4: The community has been divided by the conflict between progressives/moderates and conservatives/extremists.

The history of the Arabian Peninsula has been marked by tensions between two major denominations of Islam: Sunni and Shia. However, in the context of globalization, this traditional conflicts between the two sides do not seem to be the central issue of the Muslim world. Currently, the key problem of the Muslim world is that it has to find a solution to the relationship between the past, the present and the future; between theory and practice; between democracy and conservation; between tradition and modernity; between progressivity and radicalization.

As a result of that, the Muslim community has been divided by the conflict between progressives/moderates and conservatives/extremists.

The struggle to gain the religious authority has been among the causes of the Muslim world crisis. Indeed, Islamic moderates and Islamic extremists have been engaged in a struggle for the right to define the spirit of Islam. This struggle seems to be endless.

That is also the struggle between "hybridity" and "authenticity" that represents perhaps the most important challenge of globalization for the Muslim ummah. It is one of the underlying causes of the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist movements. They feel that Islamic religious identity is at risk and is being eroded by cultural and religious hybridity.

Like other religions, Islam has been struggling to exist and adapt to globalization. It seems that it has to face up to choosing one of three options for its future. The first is secularization. The second is conservation and radicalization. The third is between the first and the second. It is the conservation and the radicalization that is dividing the Muslim world and killing its motivations for development.

Characteristic 5: The community has been more strongly Islamized

The contemporary history of the Middle East has been cast in Islamic terms because Islam is supposedly the main element that has shaped Muslim minds and societies since the Prophet. In other words, Islam has been at the core of Middle East politics, culture, and identity.

Islam has had power to define the identity of people in the Middle East. Religious identity has gradually formed the national identity. In the era of globalization, Islamization of politics, culture, and society has been becoming a noticeable tendency. This tendency is actually an expression of the demand for protecting the local cultural identity from the invasion or dominance of Western cultures.

Dubai is a typical example of this tendency. While foreigners constitute as much as 95% of Dubai's population indigenous people only 5%. The latter are still trying to express themselves differently than thosethat come from other continents by conserving every small piece of Islamic culture. Dubai is the most typical example of local Muslim people's Islamization of society with the aim to protect its traditional identity. Dubai is also a demonstration of identity crisis in the Muslim world. The wave of globalization has strongly affected all aspects of Muslims' lives, especially their concept of identity.

Another example is the application of Islamic law and principles from the middle Ages to the modern society by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). These rules have been applied to those who have different ideologies than ISIS fighters, or refuse to convert to Islam. The highest goal of the ISIS is to establish an Islamic state throughout the Middle East and then apply Islamic law to the entire Muslim society.

A group of Muslims in oil-rich Saudi Arabia has also urged the worldwide adoption of a purist strand of Islam

and advocated making it the sole basis of society and politics.

The Islamization of Muslim society has been an obstacle to the development of Islam and the Muslim world. The reason is that many rules issued thirteen centuries ago are no longer suitable to the modern society. More seriously, these rules have been used by extremists. This can result in the deepening of the Muslim world crisis

Characteristic 6: The community was deeply affected by tribalism

"Tribalism and Religion (Islam) played and still plays ... Indeed, they are inter-twined in such a way that they are considered the most important factors and variables which shape and determine Arab Political culture and the Arab Political Mind. Tribes have been central to politics in Arab states, many of which as Tahsin Bashir put it, are simply tribes with flags[1]".

Seventh-century Arab tribal culture influenced Islam and its adherents' attitudes toward non-Muslims. Today, the embodiment of Arab culture and tribalism within Islam impacts everything from family relations, to governance, to conflict.

Islam raised tribal society to a higher, more inclusive level of integration. But it was not able to replace the central principle of tribal political organization.

The rest of the world may confuse the tribal traditions practiced in Islamic countries with the religion of Islam. This is one of the causes for creating the negative image of Islam in the eyes of non-Muslims.

Things like honor killings, arranged child marriages, or even burka-wearing should not be understood as Islamic because they are cultural customs which existed at a date earlier than the arrival of Islam to a community and which appear to be unsupported by Islamic doctrine. The West

has sparked countless debates about Muslim women wearing the veil, It is emphasized that the burka-wearing is a tribal tradition in the Arabian Peninsula. In the Quran or Hadith, there is not a single line that would force Muslim women to cover their faces in public places.

Because the concepts of male honor and female subservience are deeply ingrained in tribal culture, honor killings have become commonplace in Arab and Middle Eastern countries. According to tribal and religious culture, a woman is a man's possession and a reflection of his honor. Women's misbehavior is not only a shame on the family but on the community. In that case a woman will be condemned as dishonorable and deserving of death. Reputation and rumor play an important role in instigating honor crimes and the killing of women.

The UN reported that as many as 5,000 women and girls worldwide were killed in 2000 by family members, majority of them for having brought "dishonor". The available statistics on honor killings show just the tip of the iceberg. The reality is far darker because many honor killings never get reported or registered.

In 2012, the World Economic Forum ranked Yemen's gender equality at the lowest position. The story of a fifteen–year-old girl who was burnt by her own father because she had gone to see her fiancé before their wedding shocked a great number of non-Muslims. The fact remains that when the story was posted on social networks, non-Muslims may have misunderstood that it is Islamic law or principles rather than tribal culture still existing in the world of poverty and economic backwardness.

Characteristic 7: The community has expressed higher
anti-American and anti- Western sentiment

Anti-American and Anti-western sentiment is rife in the Middle East countries. Western countries, especially,

Germany, Britain and Denmark are all blamed for colonial crimes of the past and present. The US is deemed the most arrogant of all, with around 50 years of interference, support for Israel at the expense of the Palestinians, sanctions on Iran and invasion of Iraq.

Overseas opinion surveys showed dramatic increase in hostility toward the United States in the Arab world. This sentiment was expressed all too clearly by huge crowds burning American flags and the emergence of Islamist extremists and terrorist groups. The Middle East is the sole region where anti-Americanism is both deep and widespread. Eighty-five percent of Egyptians and Jordanians and 73% of Turks voice a negative opinion of the United States. Only 10% of Egyptians, 12% of Jordanians and 19% of Turks have a favorable view. The Egyptian rating is the lowest among the 43 nations in the study. The Tunisians are divided: 42% positive, 47% negative[2].

Moreover, there is considerable evidence that the opinion many Muslims have of the United States has gone beyond mere loathing. According to a recent Pew survey, majorities in seven of eight predominantly Muslim nations believe that the U.S. may someday threaten their country — including 71% in Turkey and 58% in Lebanon[3].

In the list of nine countries that "hate" the United States the most, carried by 24/7 Wall in 2014, eight are Muslim countries[4].

According to the 2011 survey of Pew Research Center, both Muslims and Westerners continued to view their relations as generally bad, with both sides holding negative stereotypes of each other. Meanwhile, Muslims in the Middle East generally see Westerners as selfish, immoral and greedy – as well as violent and fanatical. Many Westerners considered Muslims to be fanatical, violent, less tolerant and disrespectable toward women. More specifically, according to this survey, the number of people who said that

relations between Muslims and the West are worse is quite high in Palestine (72%), Turkey and Lebanon (62%), and Egypt (60%)[5].

Arab anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism reflect a deeper rejection of undemocratic political systems in the Arab countries, which for decades have been underwritten and supported by the United States and the Western countries. It is the United States and the West which have been the main obstacle to the emergence of democracy in the Middle East.

The anti-American and anti-Western sentiment has shown the crisis in the Muslim world. The rise of anti-Western feelings in Muslim countries poses a serious threat to the contemporary international relations.

Characteristic 8: The community has been less integrated than other communities

It seems that the Muslim community in the Middle East has been less integrated than other religious communities.

Mecca and Medina are only for Muslims. Streets in Saudi Arabia in the 21st century are mainly black and white.

The fanaticism of the leaders makes Arab society more "isolated". The leaders view the West as the culprit of degradation of the Muslim world and have turned Islamic societies into isolated areas.

For most of its history, the Middle East was the most globalized part of the world. It used to be a commercial and intellectual bridge between Asia and Europe. However, today it has been the least globalized part of the world. The lack of integration is also reflected in very deep isolation that Iran, Iraq and Libya have imposed on themselves through violence and support for terrorist groups. King Abdullah of Jordan said, "the Middle East is really an isolated series of islands of production. It cannot survive on that basis."

2. *The role of the Muslim world in contemporary world politics*

The Muslim community has played an increasingly important role in contemporary world politics. There are four major reasons for this community to become one of the central issues of the world politics including considerable growth of global Muslim population; greater frequency of Islamic terrorist attacks on the global scale; a more important role of Islamic countries in maintaining the world energy security and finally the political, cultural and social impact of Muslims through global migration.

Reason 1: Considerable growth of the global Muslim population

The fact that Islam is the second largest religion in the world shows the extent to which this religion affects religious and political life on a global scale. In the twenty-first century, almost one out of every five human beings is a Muslim and a quarter of the human race will probably be Muslim.

According to new population projections by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life,the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35% in the next 20 years, from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030. Globally, the Muslim population is forecast to grow over the next two decades at about twice the rate of the non-Muslim population. If current trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030, up from 23.4% of the estimated 2010 world population of 6.9 billion[6].

This religion has been constantly witnessing an increasing number of followers for two reasons. Firstly, the birth rate of Muslim community is increasing. According to the teachings of this religion, a child is automatically recognized as a follower provided that his father is an Islamic

person. Secondly, in comparison with other religions, the procedures to become a follower of this religion are also quite simple, regardless of the social status or personal identity.

Huntington states that, "Muslim population growth will be a destabilizing force of both Muslim societies and their neighbors. The large numbers of young people with secondary education will continue to power the Islamic Resurgence and promote Muslim militancy, militarism, and migration. As a result, the early years of the 21st century are likely to see an ongoing resurgence of non-Western power and culture and the clash of the people of non-Western civilization with the West and with each other"[7].

The larger Muslim population will put more pressure on Muslim societies which are struggling to overcome poverty and crisis. Once the Muslim societies fall deeper into poverty and crisis, they will become a burden for neighbouring countries. Thus, they will have greater influence on the international relations.

Reason 2: Greater frequency of Islamic terrorist attacks

The war on terrorism has significantly changed the landscape of global politics and economy hence leveraging a redefinition of international relation on global security. The nations' collective fight against terrorism will extensively determine the future course of international relations. A pivotal point in international relations and the role of international terrorism for state relations were the September 11, 2001 attacks on American institutions, namely the World Trade Centre and the US Pentagon.

A series of Islamic terrorist attacks from the late twentieth century to early twenty-first century has affirmed the influence of this religion on the world politics. Acts of Islamic terrorism are not localized but rather have massive implications on international security.

Highly-publicized recent events with the involvement of Islamic elements such as 11/9 attacks on the World Trade Center, the US Pentagon, Madrid bombings of March 2004, the murder of the Dutch film maker Theo Van Gogh in November 2004, the London bombings of July 2005, the riots in Parisian neighborhoods, the Danish cartoon crisis, reactions to Pope Benedict's remarks about Islam, the Swiss Minaret referendum, the Charlie Hebdo attack of January 2015 in Paris, and the November 2015 Paris attacks are shaping the contemporary world politics.

Recently, the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) has been considered the most dangerous terrorist group in the 21st century. It has also become the central issue in the international relations.

The ISIS highest goal is to establish an Islamic state throughout the Middle East and apply Sharia into this region. ISIS' core objective is also to restore the caliphate (an Islamic empire led by a supreme leader). In the New York Times, Nawaf Obaid and Saud al-Sarhan confirm that, "Saudi Arabia is not the source of ISIS, it's the group's primary target." However, its ambition could hardly be achieved within a short time so it has executed innocent people and then launched these videos on social networking websites to attract attention and put pressure on American and British governments.

The ISIS is growing with alarming speed by seizing valuable economic, financial and energy assets and using a variety of tactics to recruit fighters from all over the world. Islamic rebels are now holding areas in Iraq and Syria which are larger than the area of England. Matthew Levitt, a former US Treasury terrorism and financial intelligence official said that, "The Islamic State is probably the wealthiest terrorist group we've ever known"[8].

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia recently pointed out that ISIS is not only a threat to the Middle East, but to Europe and America as well. It is the most brutal, most de-

termined foe of the civilized world since the end of the Second World War. Most likely, the Islamic State will strive to possess weapons of mass destruction and the means to employ such weapons. The Islamic State is not at all static in terms of membership and in the near future will likely attract thousands more recruits, mainlyfrom the Middle East, but also from all regions of the world. The ISIS has been regarded as the "biggest threat" to humans. Itis more dangerous than Al-Qaeda. The State is actually stateless, a cross-border phenomenon. Its rapid rise and strength present a challenge to the international affairs.

It is confirmed that Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. But Islam, like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. Islamic terrorists will never be the representatives of Muslim world since they have accounted for a very small percentage of Muslim population and they are contrary to the true values of Islam.

Reason 3: A more important role of Islamic countries in maintaining the world energy security

It is obvious that oil plays an important role in maintaining energy security and political stability in the world. "Throughout the second half of the 20th century oil has been at the heart of foreign policy. The Suez Crisis in 1956, the 1973 Arab oil embargo, the consequences of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, and the two Gulf Wars in 1990 and 2003 most visibly illustrate how oil has been implicated in international relations"[9].

The contemporary global economy and politics are premised upon energy consumption. With diminishing supply and rising prices, ongoing oil dependency is widely recognized to have serious economic consequences[10].

Numerous countries, such as Libya and Iran, have used the presence of oil in their territories as a means to assert their authority in world politics. Therefore, the power of oil as a political weapon became more evident in the 21st century. Claude Salhani confirmed that, "oil and politics have always gone together for a simple reason; since oil became an indispensable commodity without which the world as we know it today would not function, countries that produce oil have learned how to use it as a weapon. And who says weapons, says politics"[11].

Most of the world's oil reserves are in the Middle East. Oil reserves in the Middle East are estimated at 724 billion barrels, which accounts for 68% of the world oil consumption. They are also the main oil suppliers of the United States (over 50%), EU (36%), Japan (90%), and China (45%). The Middle East's output is over 30% of the world's crude. In addition, the Middle East holds 40% of the world's conventional gas reserves[12]. Besides, Islamic countries are key members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which operates about 40% of total world oil output and holds about three-quarters of world oil reserves. The bulk of OPEC oil reserves in the Middle East amounts to around 66% of the OPEC total[13].

Oil also contributes to the shaping of the political landscape in the Middle East. The Arabian Peninsula was not only the empire of Muslims but also the empire of oil. Oil, similarly as Islam, dominates the Arabian Peninsula. Nowadays, oil's influence is even stronger than Islam's. The disputes of the Eastern and Western countries in this region are directly or indirectly oil-related. Examination of the motives underlying the invasion of Iraq and US-Saudi relations leads to the conclusion that the interests of the oil industry and concern with energy security have been peripheral to US. The modern history of the Arabian Peninsula is the dominance of Islam and oil, if these two elements are upheld, the nature of the Middle East will be

found. The Middle East, which has been regarded as the basin of wars and conflicts for more than a century, continues to be one of the central issues of the contemporary world politics.

Recently, the penetration of northwestern Iraq by the extreme Islamist movement ISIS has prompted major concerns about the world's oil supply and energy security. Therefore, rich oil-producing Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait will play more important role in the international relations.

Reason 4: The political, cultural and social impact of Muslims through global migration

Islam has been spreading worldwide for thirteen centuries. In the past, Islam was spread primarily through military battles or trade routes. Nowadays, it is mainly done through migration and asylum. Through migration and asylum, radical Islam can be spread all over the world, which has raised concerns about the political security of host countries.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) analyzed migration activities in 60 countries in 2014, and the 5 countries with the most displaced people in this group are Iraq, Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. The most typical migration is 2.2 million Iraqi people who have been forced to migrate to other areas in order to avoid ISIS attacks in 2014 and 2015. Thus, the total number of migrants in the country has increased to 7.6 million, accounting for 40% of the national population.

Another fact is that thousands of people from Africa and the Middle East have been crossing into Europe. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), from 2008 to 2013, every year there are about 10,000 to more than 60,000 African people migrating

into Europe. Particularly, in 2014, this figure increased to over 200,000. Currently, this continent has approximately 44 million Muslims and it is anticipated that by 2030, the Muslim population in Europe will exceed 58 million.

A new opinion survey shows that more than half of all Europeans believe there are too many immigrants in their countries and that immigration is having a negative impact on their lives[14]. Prime Minister Viktor Orban has taken a hard line. He calls the migrants a "threat to European security, prosperity and identity"[15]. European economies suffered increasingly owing to the burden of Muslim families on the welfare state. Most Europeans also agree with the survey statement, "Immigration has placed too much pressure on public services" in their country: Britain (76%), Spain (70%), Belgium (68%), Hungary (59%), Germany (58%), France (56%), Italy (56%), Sweden (40%) and Poland (27%)[16].

Another consequence is a clear rightward shift in European politics. A dramatic example of the way in which concern about European Islam led to a political upheaval was in Denmark, where a sensational 2001 report predicting catastrophic long-term effects of Muslim immigration in that country led voters to replace the socialists who had dominated Danish politics for decades with a conservative coalition. Another pan-European survey, the "Guardian Euro Poll," shows that concern about Muslim immigration is widespread and not just limited to the political far right. The poll shows that although 62% of Europeans view themselves as "liberal" rather than "traditional" on social issues, pluralities in the four biggest countries (Britain, France, Germany and Spain) are opposed to immigration from outside the European Union. The survey also shows that unrestricted immigration is the first- or second-most serious problem a large number of Europeans face[17].

Europe's migration crisis is exposing the deep divisions that exist within the European Union. Details are emerging of strong differences of opinion between Europe's lead-

ers as they try to address the problems caused by soaring numbers of migrants. In the face of an unprecedented migration crisis, which has seen more than 150,000 migrants cross into Europe during the first six months of 2015, the EU has demonstrated the lack of action. More than 715,000 people have applied for asylum in the EU during the past twelve months. Hungary's parliament, for instance, has approved the construction of a massive border fence with Serbia as part of a new anti-immigration law that also tightens asylum rules. Critics say the decision to build a fence evokes memories of the Cold War, when Europe was divided between East and West.

In short, impacts of Muslim immigrants on the EU politics include the threat of Islamic terrorism and extremism, the rise of the far-right in Europe, the division in European attitudes toward immigrants and the growing concern of "Islamization of Europe".

Conclusion

The Muslim community is becoming a thriving and influential force in the international political life for four reasons. First, the increase in the number of Muslim population will confirm more strongly that Islam and Muslims will have more influence in the contemporary world politics. Second, although Islamic conservatives and extremists are small in number, they have had a negative impact on the rest of the world. Terrorism in the name of Islam with the ambition of establishing Islamic global home or an Islamic state across the Middle East has put Islam into one of the central issues of contemporary world politics. Third, Muslim countries with huge oil reserves will have more influence on the current world energy security. Last, through global migration, Muslims will have stronger impact on the politics of the receiving country. In short, Islam has become an important factor in the chessboard of international politics today.

NOTES

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