STUDY GUIDE
ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES
Committee History:

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.

In 1970 the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. Dr. Yousef Ahmed Al-Othaimeen is the 11th Secretary General who assumed the office in November 2016.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar on 13-14 March 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

The Organization has the singular honor to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and have actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts
of over 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and has strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against Muslims in all forms and manifestations.

**Under the charter, the organization aims, inter alia, to:**

Enhance and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity among the member states;

Safeguard and protect the common interests and support the legitimate causes of the member states and coordinate and unify the efforts of the member states in view of the challenges faced by the Islamic world in particular and the international community in general;

Respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in domestic affairs and to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each member state;

Ensure active participation of the member states in the global political, economic and social decision-making processes to secure their common interests;

Reaffirm its support for the rights of peoples as stipulated in the U.N. Charter and international law;

Strengthen intra-Islamic economic and trade cooperation in order to achieve economic integration leading to the establishment of an Islamic common market;

Exert efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive human development and economic well-being in member states in order to realize these objectives,
Member States shall act, inter alia, in accordance with the following principles:

- All Member States commit themselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter;
- Member States are sovereign, independent and equal in rights and obligations;
- All Member States shall settle their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from use or threat of use of force in their relations;
- All Member States undertake to respect national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other Member States and shall refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of others;
- Member States shall uphold and promote, at the national and international levels, good governance, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

The Organization is composed of the following main bodies:

The Islamic Summit, composed of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Member States, is the supreme authority of the Organization. It convenes once every three years to deliberate, take policy decisions and provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realization of the objectives and consider other issues of concern to the Member States and the Ummah.

The Council of Foreign Ministers, which meets once a year, considers the means for the implementation of the general policy of the Organization by, inter alia:

a. Adopting decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest in the implementation of the objectives and the general policy of the Organization;

b. Reviewing progress of the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted at the previous Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers;

The General Secretariat, which is the executive organ of the Organization, entrusted with the implementation of the decisions of the two preceding bodies.
In order to coordinate and boost its action, align its view points and stands, and be credited with concrete results in various fields of cooperation -political, economic, cultural, social, spiritual and scientific- among Member States, the Organization has created different committees, nearly all, at ministerial level, a number of which are chaired by Heads of State. The Al-Quds Committee, the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), the Standing Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC), and the Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) are the ones Chaired by Heads of State. The number and types of secondary organs and institutions, working toward the achievement of the OIC objectives, have been steadily increasing, and cover various areas of cultural, scientific, economic, legal, financial, sports, technological, educational, media, as well as vocational, social and humanitarian. Depending on their degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the parent organization, they are classified as subsidiary organs and specialized or affiliated institutions.
Introduction:

Qatar, a gas and oil rich Gulf State and one of the most affluent countries of the world, faces a diplomatic severance from its neighbor Gulf States as well as air, sea and land route suspension to and from the country.

“Saudi Arabia and other Arab fellow nations were forced to take painful measures against Qatar. Common sense and logic will convince Qatar to take the right steps. The decisions that were made were very strong and will have a fairly large cost on Qatar and we do not believe that Qatariis want to sustain those costs”

(Adel Al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister, 5 June 2017)
What, When, Who and Why?

It was on June 5 that the Gulf region tumbled into diplomatic crisis when four major Gulf countries i.e. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt announced their diplomatic cutoff from Qatar. They have accused it of diverging from the Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) commitment of fighting terrorism and Iranian influence in the Gulf region. Soon Libya, Yemen and The Maldives also declared the suspension of their diplomatic ties with the country.
A Look into History:

Creation of GCC

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a regional political and economic alliance between six Arab Gulf countries i.e. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. Its Charter was officially signed on 25 May 1981 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The organization was established as a response to the various security threats and military tensions that the region was facing.¹ Some of these security concerns were the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 1979, the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty 1980 and the outbreak of Iran-Iraq war of 1980s². The six Gulf monarchies, as it is widely held, came together primarily to build a defensive front against the regional security threats that they mutually faced. Saudi Arabia has been the “de facto” leader of the GCC because of its spatial, economic and political influence³.

¹ [http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1685/1/1997alsaudphd.pdf](http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1685/1/1997alsaudphd.pdf)
² [http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/2015/03/201533011258831763.html](http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/2015/03/201533011258831763.html)
Lack of Consensus

Since its inception, the GCC members have struggled amongst themselves to reach a consensus on the “key regional foreign and security policy challenges”\textsuperscript{4}. An example to illustrate this could be of the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. The lack of consensus among the six GCC members became apparent when Saudi Arabia and Kuwait staunchly supported Iraq against Iran in the war; however, Bahrain also sided with the Saudi-Kuwait bloc later. On the other hand, Qatar and Oman tried to maintain a neutral position. Unique was the condition of UAE where two camps emerged; Dubai, Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain opted for neutrality while Abu-Dhabi, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman and Fujairah supported Iraq.\textsuperscript{5}

Also in 1990s, there was a divergence in the policies of the GCC members over their relations with Iran. While Qatar and Oman stood for improving relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain on the other hand resisted this move.\textsuperscript{6} Apart from this the GCC members have had many border disputes amongst themselves, the severest being that of Qatar and Bahrain – the two contenders were about to go at war with each other.


\textsuperscript{5} http://www.academia.edu/4112777/The_Gulf_States_and_the_Iran-Iraq_War_Pattern_Shifts_and_Continuities

\textsuperscript{6} http://www.acarindex.com/dosyalar/makale/acarindex-1423936189.pdf
Therefore, it can be said that a lack of coordination and consensus has plagued GCC from the beginning. Same is the case with the Gulf region as a whole – the complete region is suffering from turmoil and turbulence since decades. However, this consensus scarcity seems to be pretty logical because despite of similarities in political structures and source(s) of economic gains, the six member Gulf countries had different constitutions and thus the aims and resolutions of the GCC were decided to be adhered to according to each member’s “own constitutional and other legal requirements”7. Moreover, one can also make a case that GCC was not created on the basis of a shared Arab identity or a shared common destiny. It was mainly the regional security threats that brought them together. As a result, conflict of interests on key political and security issues is apparent since its foundation.

Understanding GCC is important for understanding the issue at hand i.e. the Qatar Diplomatic Crisis because the country has been primarily accused of ‘not complying’ with the GCC aims and initiatives.

“Our patience with Qatar’s ambiguous foreign policy is quickly running out. We cannot longer tolerate Qatari refusal to sympathize with GCC initiatives aimed at contrasting terrorism and Iranian influence in the Gulf”
(UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, 29 May 2017)

Having generally touched upon the tensions within GCC, we now move on to look at more ‘Qatar-focused’ tensions within the Gulf and the GCC in order to get a historical perspective of the current crisis.

7 http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1685/1/1997alsaudphd.pdf
**Qatar: The Gulf's Problem Child**

**Qatar-Bahrain Dispute:** Qatar got into a territorial dispute with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands – both the countries made their claims over them. In 1986, both the countries were at the verge of an “armed confrontation” that was closely sidestepped because of the Saudi intervention. Qatar took this dispute to the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1991. The dispute was finally resolved in 2001 in the ICJ.

**Qatar-Saudi Dispute:** An agreement in 1965 had settled Qatar's only land border with Saudi Arabia. However, it was in 1992 that both the countries were caught up in a border dispute with one another, when a border clash resulted in three deaths. Qatar blamed Saudi Arabia for attacking its border post at Khafus while Saudi Arabia contended the

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clash to have taken place on its territory between Bedouins from both the sides. After this clash, the already weak border agreement was further abandoned by Qatar. The dispute was finally settled in July 2008 when both the countries finally concluded an agreement on the issue.

**Yemeni Civil War 1994:** In the 1990, former North Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh gained power over the united Yemen. Saleh enjoyed decent relations with Riyadh however, tensions began when Iraq invaded Kuwait and Saleh having good relations with the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein opposed the U.S military intervention that was supported by other Gulf countries. As a result, all the GCC members suspended their financial support to Yemen, which led to the outbreak of a civil war in the country in 1994.
While on the one hand all the other GCC members supported the separatist movement against Saleh, Qatar supported the opposite side.¹⁰

**1995 Objection:** In 1995, Qatar opposed the appointment of Jamil al-Hujailan, a Saudi, as the new Secretary General of the GCC. Its reason for objection was the rejection of a Qatari proposed candidate for the post that had never been held by a Qatari since 14 years of GCC’s establishment. The Qatari delegation even walked out of the closing session of the 1995 GCC summit and declared to boycott any meeting that was attended by the Saudi secretary general. There were also rumors of Qatar withdrawing its membership in the GCC.¹¹

**(Potentially) Saudi-led Coups:** In 1996, Saudi Arabia was accused by Qatar for being involved in a coup attempt in the country for the reinstalation of the deposed Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad. It was the case in 2005 as well.⁸ Later in 2010, the Emir of Qatar forgave the Saudi citizens involved in the coup against him for improved relations with Saudi Arabia⁹.

**OIC Summit 2000:** Qatar’s trade relations with Israel again provided for strained Qatar-GCC relations. The Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz boycotted the OIC Summit 2000 in protest of Qatar’s move⁹.

**2002 Tensions:** Unnecessary meddling of Qatar’s Al Jazeera in its internal affairs by giving a platform to the Saudi rebels to discuss country’s “politically sensitive” internal issues and criticize the Saudi ruling family infuriated Saudi Arabia to an extent that in 2002 the country withdrew its ambassador from Doha⁸.

**Arab Spring:** Qatar-GCC tensions intensified during the Arab Spring – an anti-government revolutionary upsurge throughout North Africa and Middle East beginning in 2010 in Tunisia. Qatar supported reformist Islamist movements that were condemned by

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¹⁰ [http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/62405](http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/62405)

other Arab Gulf countries especially UAE and Saudi Arabia. Qatar had different policies and attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood and did not consider it a threat to regional security as other Arab Gulf states did. For example, in Libya, after supporting the overthrow of Gaddafi regime in 2011, UAE and Qatar were seen as backing different sides – UAE supported Tobruk-based government whereas Qatar supported Muslim Brotherhood-led Islamist coalition in Tripoli.\(^\text{12}\)

Later in June 2013, power in Qatar was transferred from Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani to his son Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani. The new emir faced growing pressure from Saudi Arabia and UAE to realign Qatar’s trajectory and policies to the GCC aims and objectives especially because of reports that after toppling of Mohammed Morsi in Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood leaders had taken refuge in Qatar. It had also previously granted refuge to the fleeing members of al-Islah – Muslim Brotherhood’s UAE branch – in 2012.\(^8\)

Understanding Qatar’s role in the Arab Spring and the tensions that it got into with other Gulf States regarding Muslim Brotherhood is utterly crucial for developing a historical sense of the situation that is ahead of us today.

**2014 Cut-off:** It was in March 2014 that Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain called off their ambassadors from Doha pertaining to Qatar’s regional policies, relations with Muslim Brotherhood and line of action taken by Doha-based Al-Jazeera. The ties between the three Gulf States and Qatar remained suspended up until November 2014 when Qatar made a series of concessions that restored GCC’s belief in the state. The concessions included relocation of Muslim Brotherhood members to Turkey from Doha, shutting down Al-Jazeera’s branch in Egypt etc.\(^8\)

**Recent Flow of Events:**

Last section, “A Look into History” provided a historical perspective to the standoff we now face in the Gulf region. This section will take into account recent events (i.e. of 2017) that led to the crisis.

**Release of Qatari Hunting Party April 2017:** Twenty-six Qatars, including members of the state’s royal family and two Saudis were abducted in December 2015 while hunting in southern Iraq. Qatar had been negotiating with “Iran, Hezbollah and Syrian rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra to secure their release.” News suggests that Qatar paid $1 billion for the release of those 26 members in southern Iraq and about 50 Shia milita
ts captured in Syria by a Sunni group Tahrir al-Sham having links to al-Qaeda, in April 2017. Payment of such a huge ransom to the parties that are viewed as threats to the regional security led Qatar-GCC tensions to revive once again. Even the Iraqi government was infuriated as the deal was locked without the involvement of or approval from the Iraqi government.

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14 [https://www.ft.com/content/dd033082-49e9-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43](https://www.ft.com/content/dd033082-49e9-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43)
Riyadh Summit May 2017:

Riyadh Summit 2017 was a series of three summits, which marked the visit of President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia. The Arab-Islamic-American Summit – one of the three summits – was a platform where leaders of 55 Arab and Muslim countries and Mr. Trump came together for “building close partnership to confront extremism, terrorism, fostering regional and international peace, stability and development”\(^\text{15}\). The summit mainly focused on countering terrorism and extremism. President Donald Trump remarked that for achieving this purpose unity is required and that he is looking for a coalition of countries in the Middle East that can join hands with him in beating terrorism and religious extremism in all its forms. He also signed a memorandum of understanding with the GCC members in his meeting with them. Trump also cracked a $110 billion arms deal with the Kingdom in his bilateral meeting with the Saudi King.\(^\text{16}\)


May 23 Hacking:

On May 23, 2017, a report appeared on the website of Qatari News Agency presenting the statements supposedly made by Qatari Emir in an event of National Guard recruits in Qatar. According to those statements, the Qatari Emir acknowledged the regional prominence and standing of Iran and criticized his Gulf neighbors for their anti-Iranian stance. The emir termed Hamas to be representative of the Palestinian people and defended Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah as well, according to that report. The report was however taken down within 30 minutes and Qatar's foreign ministry reported that the news agency's website had been hacked. Even after official denial, many regional media outlets kept on airing the ‘false’ statements.\textsuperscript{17} According to popular opinion it was this incident that sparked the current diplomatic crisis in the region.

June 4 Hacking: UAE’s ambassador, Yousef al Otaiba’s email account was hacked and emails were leaked on June 4, 2017. According to the leaked emails, Emirates’ ambassador had ties with Washington and was involved in blotting Qatar’s reputation regionally as well as internationally.\textsuperscript{9}

June 5 Cutoff: Three GCC states, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain along with Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Maldives announced the severance of their diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017. Kuwait and Oman of GCC kept their relations with Qatar; Kuwait has resolved to act as a mediating party. Saudi Arabia also announced the withdrawal of Qatari troops in the war against Houthis in Yemen; the Yemeni government also supported this decision. Along with strained diplomatic ties, the countries also called for air, water and land route suspension with Qatar. Iran and Turkey expressed grief on the incident and called for dialogue; both the countries also indicated to extend a helping

\textsuperscript{17} https://www.memri.org/reports/uproar-gulf-following-alleged-statements-qatari-emir-condemning-gulf-states-praising-iran
hand towards the isolated Gulf state. Even US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson condemned the GCC rift and encouraged to maintain unity.¹⁸

**June 6 Tweets:** In contrast to the statements of US Secretary of State, Mr. Trump tweeted:

![Twitter Posts](http://donald.trumptwitter.online/2017/06/tuesday-june-6-2017.html)


As opposed to Trump’s tweets, The Pentagon expressed its appraisal for Qatar for hosting US Al-Udeid Air Base. Qatar’s “enduring commitment to regional security was also commended.19

On the same day, Jordan announced cutting its diplomatic ties with Qatar and also cancelled the license of Al-Jazeera18.

June 7, Cutoffs continue: Mauritania and Senegal also suspended their diplomatic ties with Qatar18.

For detailed study of day-to-day happenings since the eruption of the Qatar crisis, visit:

“Actions undertaken by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE are quite concerning. There is now a big question mark over the future of the GCC as an effective organization”

Qatar’s Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, June 9

13 Demands, June 23: A list of 13 demands was issued to Qatar by its Gulf neighbors to which the state had to comply within 10 days. The demands can be read at: http://www.khaleejtimes.com/region/qatar-crisis/complete-list-of-13-demands-on-qatar-by-arab-nations

Qatar refused to comply with these demands describing them as “neither reasonable nor actionable” and are rather aimed at “limiting Qatar’s sovereignty”20.

Qatar and the UN

Qatar approaches UN: On June 27, Qatar’s foreign minister, Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, informed the media about his discussion on the matter with UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. He has accused the involved Gulf countries for violating the international law by imposing blockade on Qatar, for demonizing the country, and for apparently doing nothing to solve the crisis contributing to further destabilizing the region.21

“The entire crisis has been based on a fragile foundation, which is a cyberattack, which is considered an electronic terrorism against the state of Qatar”
“There is a role for the Security Council and for the General Assembly and all the United Nations mechanisms, because of course the violations have continued”

Qatar’s Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani

Sort out your Problem22, UN says: In response to Qatar’s call for UN to offer help in resolving the crisis, the UN Security Council has asked Qatar to resolve its dispute with other Gulf States of the region and that UN would not interfere in the issue until and unless there is a formal request or need to do so. Error! Bookmark not defined.

In addition, UN’s civil aviation agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization, have also declined to take any action regarding the air route blockade imposed on Qatar by its neighboring Gulf States. In response to Qatar’s complaint, the organization issued the following statement,23

"After taking note of the Qatari complaint, the reply from the four counter-terrorism nations and hearing from the ICAO's general secretariat about the flow of air traffic over international waters the ICAO Council acknowledged that political outstanding issues between these concerned states should be tackled in international forums away from the ICAO,"

QARMA

1. What is at stake for all the members of the committee due to the present crisis? How important solving this issue is for the OIC members?

2. What is or what should be the stance of OIC towards Islamist militant forces? – keeping all the nuances in mind.

3. What steps should be taken to resolve the Gulf diplomatic rift for the betterment and prosperity of Muslim world in general and Gulf region in particular?

4. What measures must be taken to ensure compliance of the proposed actions and solutions by all actors? Is a regulatory body is required for the settlement of the issue and for monitoring the pace and success of the settlement?

5. What can be done about contrasting views of Qatar and its Gulf neighbors on militant Islamist organizations such as Muslim Brotherhood? How it can be and must be dealt with? Can a common ground be achieved? If yes, then how?

6. What importance the Western powers especially the US must hold in this situation? What level of interference and intervention must be allowed and/or requested (if needed at all)?
Other references:

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http://www.oicOCI.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en

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Topic B - Finalizing terms for Islamic Military Alliance

Committee Background

The IMA, officially known as the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT), is a Sunni-Muslim intergovernmental counter-terrorism coalition initiated by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince, Defense Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, announced its creation on 15th December 2015. The alliance had 34 members when it was formed but not all the members pledged to offer their military assistance, even initially. A few members were signed up by Saudi Arabia without consulting them.

The alliance does not have any clear objectives for now and has also not taken any particular military action to end transnational terrorism. There is little known about how the coalition works because it is still new and few details have been announced by either Mohammad bin Salman or its first Commander-in-Chief, General Muhammad Raheel Sharif from Pakistan. The coalition intends to follow the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and seeks to legitimize itself through coordinating with other transnational organizations and powers and partaking in offensive and defensive military strategies in Iraq and Syria.

The Islamic Military Alliance’s logo.
The alliance currently has 39 members. Pakistan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates fulfill the coalition’s key military roles as these countries are in possession of nuclear weapons and other advanced weaponry that the other states, being relatively poor, do not. There is as yet no set voting policy to decide what military strategies the alliance will be pursuing or how they will be administered in the future.

**Organization and Policy.**

**Background**

As mentioned earlier, the alliance was formed without a proper discussion with all its initial member states. In fact, some were even obliged by Saudi Arabia, the main party, to join the alliance.

As a result, some of the states decided to simply not offer any sort of military power or even participate in any military activities. Countries like Malaysia, Palestine, Qatar and Bangladesh have expressed their full support but will not be sending their troops for any fight against a terrorist group.

Initially the areas selected to target terrorism were Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan. However, although these potential target locations have been decided on, the alliance gave out vague statements regarding the military stance that they will take to tackle the terrorist organizations operating in those areas.

“Saudi Arabia announced earlier in the day the formation of the 34-nation military alliance, a move welcomed by the United States which has been urging a greater regional involvement in the campaign against the Islamic State militants who control swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.” (Browning and Irish, 2015).
The alliance also initially that they will be positioning troops in the previously mentioned areas but as yet have not released any statement on which member states are expected to provide troops and weaponry and in what ratio or whether the alliance will have its own army. This vagueness from their side to provide all these important technical details has led to speculations and also suspicions from a few countries and institutions that think that the coalition is more harmful than beneficial.

The alliance does plan on following the United Nations and notes the importance of working with the global community while coordinating with the Arab organizations to combat terrorism in the targeted areas.

An interesting thing to note is that the leader of the coalition, Saudi Arabia, forcefully at times, made Muslim majority states join the alliance. And yet Iran, a Shi’ite Muslim majority state was not invited then and hasn’t been invited to join since. This could be most likely because Iran poses a threat to Saudi Arabia’s power and influence in the Arab region. There have been proxy conflicts between the two nations in Syria and Yemen, poorer Muslim majority nations and dependent on the aforementioned two.

This also brings to mind the question of who Saudi Arabia really wants to attack - ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) or the Shi’ite (Iran) states?

Malaysia and Bangladesh have also expressed concerns for there not being any Shi’ite Muslim majority countries as part of the alliance due to both the countries’ policy of being neutral in Sunni-Shi’ite conflicts.

There has been speculation that due to the heavy concentration of Sunni Muslim majority countries in the alliance, Saudi Arabia has started its own camp against Iran, Iraq, and Syria – all Shia Muslim majority countries.
However, this is not entirely true since the coalition does have non-Sunni Muslim majority countries, too, some of which have also pledged full military support such as Bahrain. Even countries that have friendly relations with Iran such as Pakistan and Bangladesh have joined the coalition.

With this evidence, it could be said that the reason Iran has refused to join the coalition is the political tension between Saudi Arabia and itself. It especially views the coalition as an attack against itself and has raised its guards even higher.

The ISIL threat is definitely one of the main reasons for the creation of the alliance since it poses a very real threat to the stability and security of the Muslim world. It challenges the unquestioned power of Saudi Arabia, too, by setting up a “caliphate” in Iraq and proclaiming itself to be the leader of the Islamic world.

“The alliance also serves two other purposes: it presents a united Sunni front to restore the Muslim legitimacy which both Iran and ISIL seek to undermine with revolutionary Islamic rhetoric; and it has a tactical military component, if a limited one – no standing army, no command structure, and no integrated units.” (Gaub, 2016)

**Countries Involved in the IMAFT**

The Islamic Military Alliance initially had 34 members but soon grew to 41 members.

The original members of the coalition are Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Chad, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen with Afghanistan, Oman, and Eritrea joining on various later dates. All initial 34 members are also a part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
“Saudi Arabia appeared intent on reaching across the Red Sea to build alliances in the Horn of Africa, where piracy, drug and weapons smuggling, and terrorism threaten commerce in the world's busiest shipping lanes. This was evident during the Saudis' intervention in Yemen. Over the past year, they built a coalition of African partners to help dislodge Houthi rebels who were in control of most of the country, including the capital, Sana’a. Eritrea played a key role, although it was not technically part of the Saudis’ 12-nation coalition. Eritrea allowed the United Arab Emirates to use an airbase and logistics hub in the port town of Assab. The two countries also shared intelligence.” (Pike, 2017).

However, as mentioned before even though some countries have refused any military support or participation, the IMA has this point covered with the following countries.

**Pakistan**, whose ex-army chief General Raheel Sharif is also the coalition’s first Commander-in-Chief, has the sixth largest standing army in the world, the largest in the Muslim world and is the only country in the coalition to possess nuclear weapons.

**Bangladesh** has the largest blue water Navy in the Muslim world and thus in the cooperation.

**Saudi Arabia** which has one of the most highly-funded armed forces in the Middle East region.

The **United Arab Emirates** has their Union Defence Force which owns the F-16, very advanced war weaponry for the Middle East region.

**Turkey’s** Armed Forces has a lot of experience in building and creating new war weapons, and is thus not entirely reliant on the United States like most other countries in the Islamic world. Turkey is perhaps going to be the most valued member of the alliance because of its ability to come up with new weapons.
**Need For Counter-Terrorism**

**How it all began**

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th on The World Trade Center in the United States, there was an increase in global terrorist activities, especially Islamic extremist terrorist activity. The War on Terror began as a way to counter this terrorist activity. Influential and large extremist groups were organized similarly to the military power of entire countries. The major extremist groups, also labeled as the most dangerous, are Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah and have been the leading positions since the past two decades. These organizations were also an inspiration for other extremist terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Al-Nusra. The Islamic State stands out the most amongst these terrorist organizations because of the continued conflicts in Syria and other areas of the Middle East and is considered the biggest threat to western nations and ideology.

**History of the ISIL**

ISIL, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is a “militant Sunni movement” started in 2003 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It is currently headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who has spent time in US and runs jails in Iraq.

“The group targeted American and coalition forces and interests during the war in Iraq, while also targeting Shiites and Sunni Iraqis who spoke out or fought against them. As coalition forces withdrew from the country, the group targeted the Maliki government. Finally, as it expanded into Syria, it targeted other Sunni opposition groups in Syria although it initially concentrated its attacks against Shiite groups such as Hezbollah.” (Cassman, 2017).

According to the BBC and its reports, ISIL rose to the international scene quite abruptly. Prior to 2014 it was just one of the small militant/terrorist organization wreaking havoc all over the Middle East and Europe. However, in 2014, ISIL had managed to capture large parts of Syria and Iraq and declared them to be under the rule of the “caliphate”. 
The Islamic State is known for its brutal murders ever since 2014. It parted ways from the Al-Qaeda and declared a caliphate of its own while also laying claims to territories such as Libya, Egypt, Algeria, as well as Saudi Arabia. It has gained much popularity in news as The Islamic State, but it is also known as IS, ISIS, ISIL, Da’esh and other names although it was first formed in the 1999 as the Jama’at al-Tawheed wal-Jihad. Initially, for a short while after it was formed, they pledged their loyalty to the Al-Qaeda and served as a subversive group in Iraq after the end of Saddam Hussein’s rule.

A few years later, the organization retained its position in the country and adopted the name “Islamic State of Iraq” with their intentions to create the ideal Islamic State in accordance to their radical interpretations of the Qur’an. During the Syrian Civil War, they stationed insurgents inside Syria and attempted to ally with al-Nusra but failed. During this the split with Al-Qaeda also deepened.

“Support for ISIS proved to be divisive for some groups, with some members or leaders announcing allegiance to Baghdadi while others maintain their own group’s independence or uphold previous pledges of allegiance. In particular, some groups that worked with or pledged allegiance to AQ were hesitant to break their pledges, as many Islamist militants consider such a break as a significant betrayal that reflects poorly on credibility.” (Cassman, 2017).
Currently, the Islamic State is responsible for a series of unpredictable terrorist attacks in Europe, and the United States, but also focusing primarily on the Middle East. Their notoriety began in 2014 when the members of the Islamic State rehearsed small-scale shootings and decapitated victims and posted the videos online to warn other groups and people from fighting against them.

“In 2013, it changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Over the course of 2013 and 2014, ISIS quickly took over territory in Syria and Iraq. In addition to its rapid expansion, the group also drew attention for its public beheadings of Western captives and its large contingent of foreign fighters. On the ground, ISIS fought the Assad Regime and allied Shiite forces, Syrian opposition groups, the Iraqi military and militias, and the Kurdish peshmerga (freedom fighters). The U.S. began airstrikes against the group in fall 2014.” (Cassman, 2017).

The very first incident of their activity was when on 15th December 2014 a gunman took over a Syrian cafe, held 17 people hostage, and killed 2 of them. There were several more attacks on a similar pattern in the same month - they captured a Jordanian pilot whose plane had experienced mechanical failures while flying over Syria and had crashed. His name was Muath Al-Kasabeh and he was used as part of a hostage exchange with the Jordanian Government. The Jordanian government demanded video evidence proving that the pilot is still alive. Shortly after, the ISIS responded with a video of the pilot that shocked and appalled the Jordanian government and other nations too. In the video they soaked the pilot in gasoline and burned him alive. This is when the global community realized the extent to which ISIS was willing to go to prove itself and its power. After this incident, the Jordanian government conducted airstrikes that did result in the killing of a lot of militants.

Another incident took place on March 20th when the militants killed off over 130 Muslims in a series of suicide bombings during the weekly Friday prayer. Before this, the ISIS had never killed any of their fellow Muslims and had so far only attacked people from
other nations and other sects even within the Muslim faith. This showed that they had no empathy, even for their own nation or religious community. The global community also then realized that the ISIS had no loyalties with anyone.

The attacks continued and were as frequent and severe as their previous ones before the ISIS started attacking the European citizens in retaliation to the airstrikes that were carried out throughout the Middle East by the Western Powers, mainly NATO allies. An ISIS militant opened fire on a high-speed train in France in the month of August, wounding a few passengers while some American passengers managed to prevent the attack. In November of 2015, ISIS carried out their largest ever terrorist attack in France and led combined attacks in a sports stadium, restaurant, a musical concert, and a street corner that led to the death of 130 people and left 100 wounded. Bataclan, a music hall, was the most destructive scene. Some of the victims from the music hall were so brutally tortured that their injuries were never shown publicly. The attack came as a shock to the western nations because now it showed the seriousness of the intentions of these militants.

Current Situation

The main focus of the Islamic Military Alliance is to counteract the terrorist activities of the ISIL. The recent attacks and their severity pose a threat to the people living in the Middle Eastern territories. The Islamic State not only attacks Western nations but also Muslims who do not conform to their radicalized version of Islam. The attacks by them are unpredictable and brutal; they have tarnished the image of Islam all around the globe to a point where it has reached to hate crimes against Muslims because of Islamophobia.

A problem that is faced with alliances of this scale is the cooperation needed to counter attack terrorism. Since terrorist attacks can be unpredictable it is important to have a strong multinational network to predict the areas that are most vulnerable to attack so counter-active and even preventive measures can be taken immediately and effectively.
Another problem is that ISIS funds itself through the oil and drug trade and ransom of its captives. “The Islamic State financed itself through oil sales since its days as AQI, first stealing oil products to sell and then operating oil refineries that it seized. It also received funding from foreign donors, including the fighters that came to join it, and earned money through crimes like kidnapping and smuggling. It consistently relied on networks in Syria to funnel goods, money, and people into its Iraqi territory.”(Cassman, 2017). The Da’esh still use the leftover weapons, from the period after Saddam Hussein, when they stayed in Iraq.

They even use the American vehicles that were left behind in the same era. To gain control of the situation, it is important to attack the resources of ISIS.

Another very important issue faced is the recruitment of people from all over the world into the ISIS. Organizations like the ISIS are very efficient and successful at recruiting people especially through social media. They advertise themselves to younger Muslims who are attracted by the swift justice system, teachings, and principles. For the ISIS, these recruits are much easier to control for their jihadi cause. Some people are coerced into recruitment to save their family members or by other reasons. Regardless of what the reasons are, slowing down and stopping recruitment is important because the ISIS not only wants to replace its dead militants but also wants to expand the organization further. Action must be taken by the IMA to put an end to this.
Data security is another very important topic to tackle. This problem is caused by third party encryption methods for phones and laptops. The ISIS militants use an encryption method to communicate with each other and it is quite difficult to crack unless the device is known and in reach. Being able to decode messages would make it much easier to track the timings and locations of the planned attacks.

Besides this there are airstrikes and ground combat operations that are being undertaken by the military. Engaging the military is the most effective way of combating terrorism but it can also be a drain on resources and capital. The countries that are part of the Islamic Military Alliance could carry out joint military operations. These countries will need to dedicate their time, resources, and utilities and cooperate with their neighbors. They should be prepared to combat terrorism on all fronts to ensure the security of the Middle East as well as the global community at large.

**Analysis of the Current Situation**

Germany’s Minister of Defense, Ursula von der Leyen, has advised the alliance to work under the Vienna Process, which includes European countries, as well as the United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, and even Saudi Arabia.

**The Vienna Process: What it is about**

“During their meeting in Vienna on 14 November 2015, the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) agreed on a framework for a nationwide ceasefire and a parallel political process in Syria. The Vienna Process was welcomed by the international community, especially as the urgency to address the conflict in Syria was highlighted by the terror attacks claimed by ISIS that took place in the days before the meeting. In this Syria Alert.” (The Vienna Process: Priorities for a process towards peace and transition in Syria, 2015).

Saudi Arabia has faced a lot of political pressure lately. The recent attacks in Yemen have strained resources and this is where the alliance falls into place.
It will help regain some control over the region to oppose the influence of Iran. It will also help repair Saudi Arabia’s image both at home and globally while also controlling resources like weapons and troops because it is now a combined effort.

Another thing to be noted is that there are not many countries in this alliance who are as powerful as Saudi Arabia. Will most decisions be dictated by Saudi Arabia? Or will the decisions be taken democratically?

**Questions to Consider**

1. How can Saudi Arabia’s power be held in check by the rest of the alliance members?
2. Which of the member countries should have more voting rights to decide what stance the coalition should take?
3. What ways can the supporters of the alliance be coaxed by the members to provide military aid?
4. Should the coalition function under the Vienna process?
5. What kind of military protocol should be taken for any joint military operations?
6. Should the member states of the alliance stop using encryption just so a few more IS recruits can be stopped?
7. How can the number of newly recruited people in ISIS be slowed down?
8. How should the Muslim community all over the world be educated on actual Islamic values so that the preaching of ISIS values can be erased?
9. How can the unpredictability of the terrorist attacks be controlled, slowed, or even stopped?
10. Should all the nations make an equal contribution to the alliance whether or not their military is capable or not?
Resources for Further Research

Bibliography


