ABSTRACT
International politics is all about struggle for power. In this scramble for power, one thing is important, that is, national interest. In the achievement of national interest, nothing is permanent except the objective of nation-state. In international politics, everything is in flux; no one can be regarded as permanent enemy or as eternal friend. Given this nature of international system, India must endeavour to have good relations with OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Since its inception in 1969, OIC has become a platform for Pakistan to propagate against India and to fuel anti-India sentiments among the major Islamic countries of the world. India must associate with OIC and must ensure end of anti-India propaganda against it. Given this assumption, this paper seeks to examine the nature of India-OIC relations. A recent development of March 2019, where India was invited as a Guest of Honour in the 46th conference of foreign ministers of OIC, seems to have laid a correct path for India for pursuing a new beginning with OIC.

Keywords: OIC, India, Pakistan, West Asia

INTRODUCTION
Nothing is permanent in international politics. No one can be permanently branded as enemy nor as friend. One thing is permanent i.e. the objective of serving of national interest, for which all countries are endeavouring. At present circumstances, India must endeavour to have good relations with OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Since its foundation in 1969, OIC has been working as a platform from where Pakistan unilaterally passes resolutions against the interests of India. For Pakistan, OIC has become a medium for propagating mis-information against India. India must take appropriate steps for ensuring dis-continuance of such strategy of Pakistan at OIC by developing good relations with OIC, particularly with the influential members of OIC such as UAE and Saudi Arabia. A recent development of March 2019, where India was invited as a Guest of Honour in the 46th conference of foreign ministers of OIC, seems to have laid a correct path for India for pursuing a new beginning with OIC.

India’s relations with OIC dates back to the year 1969, when the foundation of OIC was laid down in
Rabat, Morocco. Criteria for the inclusion of members into the OIC at that time were:

i. Countries having muslim majority population
ii. Countries having a muslim head of the state

India wanted to participate in this Islamic conference in order to represent her composite culture containing religious values of religions like Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism etc. Foreign policies are designed to serve national interests of a country and at the same time foreign policy also reflects internal dynamics of a country. Indis is a secular country but at the same it can not ignore the fact of large section of muslims residing in India. This tradition of composite culture had encouraged India during the pre – independence era also to raise her voice against the abolition of Khilafat after the end of first world war1.

Initially India was not invited to attend the conference of OIC at Rabat, however later on an invitation was extended to India to participate in the conference. It may please be noted that till now India is not a formal member of OIC but India was officially present in the inaugural session of OIC in September 1969 in Rabat, Morocco. Indian delegation under the acting leadership of Ambassador Gurbachan Singh participated in the plenary session of OIC on September 23, 1969. When official Indian delegation headed by Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, then Union Minister for Industrial Development, Government of India, arrived in Rabat on September 24, 1969, ground situation in meeting venue altered dramatically under the nuisance role of President of Pakistan Yahya Khan. Unfortunately at the same time communal riots were broke out in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. President of Pakistan made it an issue and asked rest members of OIC to ensure that Indian delegation would not be permitted to participate in the conference. Morocco, the host country under the pressure of ensuring success of first meeting of OIC, bowed down under the tactics of Pakistan and requested Indian delegation not to participate in the conference of OIC. All these developments led to the serious embarrassment of India at Rabat. It may be noted that President of Pakistan Yahya Khan used the issue of Ahmedabad communal riots as a pretext to ensure embarrassment of India but in reality it was a strategy of President of Pakistan to silence its opponents in Pakistan on the issue of India’s participation in Rabat conference that would project India as a country having a composite culture negating the two nation theory of Pakistan. Since then India has remained outside the membership of OIC despite the fact that around 190 million muslims live in India. It may be noted that India is the country having third largest muslim population in the world. OIC, a forum who represents itself as a voice of muslim world, how can ignore represntation of such 190 million muslims living in India2.

In March 2019, a historical development took place in the relations of India with OIC, when India was invited for the first time as a Guest of Honour in the meeting of 46th Conference of Foreign Ministers of OIC. This invitation was forwarded by the host country i.e. UAE (United Arab Emirate). UAE cited two reasons behind this invitation to India namely:

i. Rising global status of India and
ii. Having a composite culture with significant Islamic component.

India accepted this invitation of UAE. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the then India’s External Affairs Minister, attended the meeting on March 01, 2019 at Abu Dhabi, UAE. Pakistan maintaining its tradition at the platform of OIC opposed India’s presence and boycotted the conference of foreign ministers of OIC. In her speech, Smt. Sushma Swaraj highlighted the challenges being emanating from terrorism
including the issue of sheltering and funding of terrorists by state actors without naming Pakistan. She also made it clear that terrorism and religion cannot be linked together and in the name of terrorism, religion has been distorted.

According to scholars, this invitation to India as a guest of honour in the conference of foreign ministers of OIC distinctly contributes to the success of foreign policy of India and recognises one fact i.e. status of India has changed from a post-colonial state to an aspiring global power. The world is changing as well as India. At present India have strong bilateral relations with key members of OIC such as UAE, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt etc. These bilateral relations seem to compel OIC to adopt a balanced approach in respect of its relations with India and Pakistan.

Pakistan continues to have important relations with key members of OIC. It may be noted that Pakistan is the only Islamic country in the world having its own nuclear weapons. Due to this reason, Pakistan has a special position in the strategic calculation of OIC. Despite that, OIC has taken steps to improve its relations with India. To strategists, even OIC is eager to reduce the tension between India and Pakistan. Such eagerness was shown by the crown prince of Saudi Arabia during the shooting down of MIG 21 fighter aircraft of India by Pakistan Air Force in February 2019.

In the last 50 years, India has significantly improved its relations with the countries of West Asia, a region hosting maximum members of OIC. A number of factors are responsible for this positive development and they are as follows:

- Success of foreign policy of India in strengthening its bilateral relations with the countries of West Asia.
- Indian Diaspora in West Asia.
- UN peace keeping operations in the conflicting areas of West Asia involving the active role of Indian Troops under the UN flag.
- Development of science and technology and the rise of India as IT superpower.
- People to people contact.
- Students of Islamic countries reading in various universities of India.

Abu Dhabi Declaration, which was the main document released after the conclusion of conference of foreign ministers of OIC, made no mention about the Kashmir issue. This can be certainly regarded as a diplomatic victory of India at the platform of OIC, which has been consistently passing resolutions on Kashmir criticizing India. According to reports, UAE and Saudi Arabia had important roles in this regard as they wanted to ensure that the guest i.e. India is not embarrassed. However, other resolutions of this conference raised the issue of Kashmir, Babri Masjid, India-Pakistan peace process, the recent airspace violation and situation of minorities in India etc.

REMITTANCE FLOW TO INDIA AND SIGNIFICANCE OF OIC

According to Michal Rutkowski, Senior Director of the Social Protection and Jobs at the World Bank, “Remittances have a direct impact on alleviating poverty for many households and the World Bank is positioned to work with countries to facilitate remittance flows”. In contemporary times, remittances become an important factor capable to accelerate economic progress of a country in a significant way. Since the last five years, India remains a top recipient of foreign remittances. According to India’s inward remittances survey 2016-17 done by the Reserve Bank of India, 54% of
the total remittances received by India originated from 05 countries of West Asia namely UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. All these five countries are the members of OIC.

CRUDE OIL IMPORTS TO INDIA AND SIGNIFICANCE OF OIC
India’s crude oil requirements are primarily met by imports. India is the third largest importer of crude oil in the world. India imports around 80% of its requirement of crude oil from foreign countries. Out of this 80% imported crude oil, share of West Asian countries is about two-thirds. In the energy security of India, West Asian countries play a pivotal role. Countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE and Kuwait act as main sources of crude oil for India. All these countries are influential members of OIC. According to International Energy Agency (IEA), West Asia will continue to be a big source of crude oil imports for India.

INDIAN DIASPORA AND IMPORTANCE OF OIC
India’s diaspora numbering about eight million (80 lakh), acts as an asset for New Delhi in West Asia. Scholars equate this huge diaspora as an instrument of soft power capable of serving national interest of India in the region of West Asia. This region is the main source of remittances for India; around 50% of remittances originate from this area alone.

CONCLUSION
India must make efforts to strengthen its relations with OIC to serve its national interests. For becoming a member of OIC, consensus of each member of OIC is required and this seems to be an impossible task for Indian diplomacy given India’s relations with Pakistan. Despite this fact, India should continue its efforts that aim at cementing its relations more strategically with the leading countries of OIC like UAE, Saudi Arabia etc. Gradually West Asian countries are also realizing menace of terrorism and they are eager to strengthen their counter-terrorism operations with India. Recently Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia during his visit to India made a proposal in this regard. Terrorism has no religion and no country; it is a danger to entire humanity. Issue of sheltering and funding of terrorism must be highlighted at the international forum to unravel the real character of Pakistan. India must work to isolate Pakistan on the issue of terrorism particularly at the platform of...
OIC. OIC has been a platform for Pakistan for making false allegations against India; therefore India must take steps diplomatically to debar Pakistan from using this platform against the interests of India. Besides this, OIC 2025 Programme of Action, which calls for OIC’s role in peace and development in the Muslim world and beyond, will also compel OIC to forge better relations with India, which has around 190 million Muslims. In this 21st century, it is imperative for India and OIC to work together to serve the interests of humanity.

ENDNOTES
1 Singh, “How Pakistan Scuttled India’s Invitation to the First OIC Plenary.”
2 Ibid.
3 Shrivastava, “Indian Diaspora Set to Send Remittances Worth $80 Billion Back Home in 2018.”
4 Reserve Bank of India, “RBI Press Release, Remittances.”
5 Pethiyagoda, “How India’s Diaspora Affects Its Role in a Multipolar Middle East.”

REFERENCES