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Topic: GS2: IR - India and OIC



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Fifty years apart, the story of two OIC fiascos

Context:-

- For the **first time** India has been invited to a meeting of the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, **which is an influential grouping of 57 Islamic countries** and Minister of External Affairs attended the inaugural plenary of foreign ministers' conclave of the OIC meet as the guest of honour.
- However, India's most recent encounter with the OIC bears an uncanny resemblance to India's failed attempt to gain entry to the inaugural session of the same grouping held in Rabat, Morocco, in 1969 despite being the **third largest Muslim population in the world** and for much the same reasons.

Reasons for the Failure in 1969:-

- **Fiercly Opposition by Pakistan:** Since India's membership of the OIC would be perceived as a powerful refutation of the basis on which Pakistan (as separate demand of nation for Muslims in British India) was created, it was bound to object stridently to India's induction into the organisation.
- **Greater Clout of Islamabad within OIC circles Than New Delhi:** Pakistan had great leverage with the conservative Arab monarchies for ideological reasons and because of the fact that its military was willing to provide the Arab monarchies with well-trained soldiers for hire that the latter needed to protect their insecure regimes.

- Pakistan at that time also had close relations with Iran and Turkey with whom it shared membership in CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation, formerly the Baghdad Pact) and an anti-Soviet and pro-U.S. orientation.

Present Situation:-

- The situation today is both different and similar to 1969, and this was clearly reflected in India's latest experience with the OIC.
- In an apparent gesture of goodwill, invitation to External Affairs Minister as the guest of honour and keynote speaker despite Pakistan's objections is a reflection of India's growing economic and political stature internationally and the desire on the part of the Gulf monarchies to cultivate New Delhi in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by India's expanding economy and its technologically skilled workforce.
- However, the impact of Ms. Swaraj's speech, especially her denunciation of terrorism that was clearly aimed at Pakistan, was more than neutralised by a number of events that followed her address.

Outcome of the Recent OIC Summit:-

- **No Expression of Thanks and Other Formalities to Guest of Honour:** The Abu Dhabi declaration issued at the end of the meeting did not contain even a simple expression of thanks to the Indian External Affairs Minister for addressing the plenary session of the assembly.

- Furthermore, it failed to mention the fact that Ms. Swaraj was the guest of honour at the meeting and delivered the keynote speech. This omission was very glaring in view of the fact that the document mentioned all sorts of unimportant issues, such as the UAE hosting the 2020 Expo in Dubai.
- **Praise of Pakistan PM's Initiative without Contextualising Pulwama Terror Attack:** The document's only reference to the India-Pakistan stand-off stated that the OIC welcomes the "positive initiative undertaken by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to hand over the Indian pilot as a gesture of goodwill to de-escalate tensions in the region". There was not even an implicit reference to the primary reason that led to the most recent India-Pakistan conflagration, the attack in Pulwama that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel.
- **Resolution on Kashmir Against India:** Resolution on Kashmir that accompanied the Abu Dhabi declaration included the phrase "Indian terrorism in Kashmir" while condemning what it called "atrocities and human rights violations" in the State.

Conclusion:-

- It is clear from this sequence of events and the wording of the documents that emanated from the OIC

- meeting that despite the invitation to Ms. Swaraj, the leopard has not changed its spots and that Pakistani influence within the organisation has diminished only marginally.
- The Ministry of External Affairs should have thought long and hard before advising the Minister to accept the invitation.
- As a country whose foundational philosophy was based on secularism, It is both morally wrong and politically futile to take part in OIC, an organisation whose defining criterion was shared religious identity.