

Indo-OIC Relations Perspective and Trends-I

A.K. Pasha

[The end of cold war and US victory over Iraq has led to a virtual Pax-Americana in the Gulf region. Pakistan as Chairman of OIC has shown deep interest in the Kashmir issue with apparent US support and has worked hard to mobilise support from the Islamic states on this issue. It has launched unprecedented propaganda against India using the OIC to isolate India from the Islamic world and to wrest Kashmir from India. This article makes an attempt to highlight OIC role in the Kashmir and Ayodhya issues. It would also make an attempt to see the options available for India to neutralise the challenge from the OIC-Author]

The Genesis of OIC

After Egypt's defeat with Israel in the 1967 war, Saudi Arabia emerged as the leading Arab state. The arson at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on August 29, 1969 propelled Riyadh to organise a Conference of Islamic heads of state on September 22-25, 1969. The summit paved the way for the establishment of the OIC in May 1971. The charter was adopted in March 1972 comprising 14 articles emphasising the Islamic solidarity. There were 38 founding members and now it has over 50 states as members of the Organisation.

For India, the Rabat conference was a major disaster as Pakistan opposed the Indian participation as member of the Organization even though at Saudi intervention, India was officially invited to participate in the Conference. The 1971 Indo-Pak war and the emergence of Bangladesh led to the straining of our ties with some OIC states notably Saudi Arabia. The OIC called upon India to repatriate quickly Pakistani Prisoners of War "so that the existing relations between Muslim states and India might not be effected"¹. With great skill, India managed to convince the Saudis of India's desire to live in peace with Pakistan. However, Pak-Saudi relations continued to remain close. In February 22-24, 1974 Pakistan hosted the second Islamic summit at Lahore.

Soon after the Islamic summit in May 1974, India exploded a nuclear device, which came under criticism in Pakistan and also in some other countries. Egypt's isolation in the Arab world due to Sadat's Peace policy with Israel resulted in Saudi pre-eminence in the region. The unprecedented oil wealth, which gives Riyadh enormous financial muscle, has partly been channelled to OIC. The fall of Iranian Shah in 1979 posed a serious challenge to Saudi dominance, which led to the closer of Saudi-Pak relations.

Moreover, Khomeini succeeded in challenging Riyadh's claims to leadership of the Islamic world.

Saudi-Iranian ties deteriorated not only due to the Iran-Iraq war and on account of sharp fall in oil prices, but also due to the killing of Iranian hajees (Haj pilgrims) in 1987 in Mecca. The OIC failed to resolve the Iran-Iraq war until Khomeini accepted the cease-fire in July 1988.

Iran's highly inflammatory media campaign on Kashmir and highlighting the condition of Indian Muslims brought a new factor in India's interaction with the Islamic world. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the disintegration of the Soviet Union coupled with the demise of the cold war and the emergence of Pax-Americana in the wake of US Victory over Iraq in the Gulf war, affected India's relations with some OIC members in the gulf region. Pakistan's decision to send troops in the war over Kuwait on Saudi soil enabled it to forge closer ties with Riyadh. India's ambivalent attitude during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91 led to the straining of Indian ties with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Kuwaiti leaders publicly expressed anguish and surprise at India's stand during the Kuwait crisis. Kuwait articulated its reaction: "We will forgive and not forget"². This situation led to the Kuwait support to Pakistan in the OIC meeting calling for holding plebiscite in Kashmir, which emboldened Pakistan.

OIC, Pakistan and Kashmir Issue

Unable to resolve the Kashmir issue to its satisfaction, Pakistan made its first attempts to 'internationalise' the Kashmir issue at the annual session of the OIC in Cairo in May 31 – June 3, 1990. Pakistan took this step because it could not by itself revive the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council, as it needed the support of two third members especially when China and the US were opposed to such a move. Pakistan's strategy was to get the OIC raise the Kashmir issue at the UN since the UNSC would not be able to ignore a united call by more than 45 Islamic states to put Kashmir on the agenda. It was widely believed that the OIC would not raise Kashmir at the UNSC as a single issue. It would add Kashmir to the independence movements in Soviet Central Asia and Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The OIC then would appear to Muslims as the great champion of the rights of Islamic people everywhere in the world of the right of self-determination, human rights and even independence. At the conference, Pakistan succeeded in getting approval for a resolution calling for settlement of the Kashmir issue on the basis of the UN resolutions and the Simla accord. Tunisia, Bahrain and Jordan separately called on May 27, 1990 on India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue on the basis of Simla accord³.

Pakistan's success at the Cairo meeting on Kashmir and the decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia during the Kuwait crisis brought it closer to some of the OIC states, and some of with it also maintains extensive military cooperation. This should be seen in the backdrop of misgivings entertained by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia over India's initial role in Kuwait crisis. It was with great difficulty and through skilled diplomacy that India was able to remove the misgivings of these Gulf States. In the meantime, Pakistan attempted to portray New Delhi in a bad light in respect of the Kuwait war as well as on the Kashmir issue⁴.

By now it had become quite well known that Pakistan feeling overwhelmed by its victory at Cairo OIC meeting would pursue the Kashmir issue with even greater vigour at the forthcoming meeting of the OIC in Istanbul, from August 3-8, 1991 raising the issue of violation of human rights in Kashmir. However, as on earlier occasions, the Foreign Ministers exhorted India and Pakistan to resolve their differences over Kashmir in accordance with the Simla agreement and the relevant UN resolutions.

For the first time, at the behest of Pakistan, they adopted a ten point political resolution on Kashmir in which they called upon India to allow the international human rights groups and other

humanitarian organisations to visit Jammu and Kashmir State in India. It also decided to send a three-member fact finding mission to the troubled state and submit its report to the OIC Secretary General (SG). At the same time, the OIC expressed its concern at the prevailing tension between the two countries, which it said, threatened the security and peace in the region. In a clear departure, OIC called upon both the countries to “redeploy their forces to peace time locations”. The OIC, however, for the first time, in a provocative move mentioned Kashmir in the resolution, again departing from its earlier resolution adopted in Cairo, which was silent on the issue. Nothing the emphasis of continuation of a dialogue between India and Pakistan, the resolution said: “OIC encourages further negotiations with a view to resolving their outstanding difference through peaceful means and affirms that a sustained dialogue is essential to address the core of the problem and to remove basic cause of the tension” between the two countries.

India reacted strongly to moves by the OIC to intervene in the Kashmir issue and termed it as an interference in the internal affairs of the country and rejected the organisation’s move to send a fact-finding team to Kashmir to investigate the human rights situation. A spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that the OIC had no locus standi in the matter, we have and will continue to reject all efforts to treat the Kashmir situation as a religious issue. “The spokesman also pointed to the manner in which Pakistan had pressed a resolution at the Istanbul meeting denouncing India on the Kashmir issue. This would only encourage Pakistan in its sponsorship of terrorism and secessionism. “We do not view this as a practical and constructive measure”, he said⁵.

India, OIC and the Dakar Summit

India in a preemptive move to the Dakar (Senegal) OIC Summit (December 9-12, 1991), once again made it clear that the OIC had no locus standi, whatsoever, as far as the situation in Jammu and Kashmir was concerned. Commenting on reports that Pakistan was likely to press for a resolution on the subject at the Dakar meeting, a MEA spokesman said: “We deeply regret that Pakistan is using international forums in its campaign against India, especially in relation to the state of J&K”. He said there was “no question of our accepting any good offices or fact finding or mediatory missions since we have invariably rejected all efforts to treat the situation in Kashmir as a religious issue”. The spokesman said that Indian missions had briefed the OIC states on the problem and expressed the hope that they would realise that their support to the Pakistani resolution would only encourage it to step up its support to secessionist elements in this country.

The sixth OIC summit at Dakar was considered something of a “fiasco” because most of the Arab heads of state did not attend the meeting. Since this meeting was the first OIC Summit in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Africans felt humbled down at the hands of Arabs. As the host, the Senegalese President, Abdou Diouf said: “We give more importance and respect to the Arab countries than they give to us”. The most conspicuous Arab leader who was absent was King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, especially because the Conference centre in which the summit was held was named after him as Riyadh had paid for it. The kingdom instead was represented by Crown Prince (CP) Abdullah who announced cancellation of \$310 million worth debts owed to it by eight of the poorest Muslim countries — Somalia, Djibouti, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Uganda, the Camoros and Cameroon. The Saudis also announced an increase in its participation in the capital of Islamic Development Bank and a gift of \$ 10 million to the OIC.

The Islamic solidarity which was one of the items on the summit agenda failed to take practical shape as indicated by the refusal of Saudi CP Abdullah to greet King Hussain of Jordan and PLO's Yasser Arafat due to their pro-Iraqi positions on Kuwait crisis.

Iran, which was represented by a huge delegation after a ten-year break, was led by President Rafsanjani and he denounced the Arab-Israel peace process and called for Jihad. Iran, which wanted to host the next OIC summit had to be content with the next but one. For all practical purposes, Iran remains isolated in the IOC, as except Azerbaijan, all the members are Sunni dominated.

Interestingly, the summit passed a lengthy resolution denouncing terrorism "which is strictly speaking irrelevant to real Islamic concerns and also without specifying whether Israeli or US or any other state sponsored terrorism"⁶.

Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Solanki after returning from a visit to Dakar on March 22, 1992 said the Senegalese President Abdon Diouf told him that he favoured a bilateral settlement of the Kashmir problem between India and Pakistan. Senegal, as OIC Chairman, further assured India that it would advise Pakistan not to support terrorist activities in Kashmir. Solanki, who had gone to Dakar in connection with G-15 troika meeting said he apprised Abdon Diouf of India's efforts to improve relations with Pakistan and the situation in Kashmir and how Pakistan continued to support the terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir⁷.

OIC, India and Kashmir Problem

The OIC, under the bidding from Pakistan, kept up its pressure on India which has obvious from the communique issued after its annual coordination meeting at Foreign Ministers' level at New York in September 1992, which condemned the 'massive' and 'systematic' violation by India of human rights of the people in Kashmir, including their right to self-determination. The OIC also charged India with 'alarming escalation' of 'repressive measures' against the people in Kashmir and decided to send a fact-finding mission to the state and also to other areas occupied by Pakistan. It also decided to send a 'good offices mission' to India and Pakistan with a view to ease tension between the two and promoting peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue.

The communique came after the Foreign Ministers heard a report by the OIC SG, which was highly critical of India and accused New Delhi of "state sponsored repression" of Muslim population in Kashmir. Urging India to "respect the human rights", it called for a speedy and peaceful settlement of the "Kashmir dispute" in accordance with the UN resolutions and in the spirit of the Simla accord. The report said that almost for two years "Indian controlled", J&K has been a "locus of civil strife and "state sponsored repression". The report further said, India had initially agreed to hold plebiscite, but later refused to honour its commitment. Since then it has disregarded the various UN resolutions calling for plebiscite and continues to occupy Kashmir by force against the wishes of its people. The core of the issue, it said, is the "denial of the exercise of the right of self-determination to the people of J&K in accordance with the UN Security Council's Resolution", it added.

The eight page report said the movement for self-determination in Kashmir is “mass based and entirely indigenous”. Charging Indian security forces with excesses, the report said, “free from any fear of accountability, the security forces have been indulging in harassment, extortions, torture, arson, rape and indiscriminate killings. To conceal its repression India continues to deny access in Kashmir to Amnesty International, the International Red Cross and other humanitarian groups”. The report further said evidence of “continuing Indian atrocities” against the people of J&K is mounting. “Well documented reports reveal a gruesome picture for gross and systematic brutalisation of an innocent people by the Indian security forces”, it said.

The OIC released alongwith the communique a resolution adopted by the Dakar OIC summit, which, while condemning the “human rights violations” welcomed the commencement of dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through peaceful means. Interestingly the report did not refer to the fact that Pakistan is abetting, arming, training and supporting militants and separatists in Kashmir⁸.

India, as expected, rejected the OIC communique saying the organisation had no locus standing in the matter and its views were one-sided, prejudiced, unacceptable and irrelevant. There is no question of India accepting “any good offices or fact finding or mediatory mission”, the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson said. He added that while the OIC communique was a matter of great regret, it was not one of surprise, considering the past record of the organisation. The OIC had been handling the matter in a distorted fashion, which had been made clear to the participants of the conference on earlier occasions. He said the disturbed situation in Kashmir is a product of external support to terrorism and militancy. This has been explained to the members of the OIC. “We have categorically asserted that the problem is not a religious one”, he said⁹.

OIC, Pakistan and Ayodhya

Not content with the stand taken by the OIC on Kashmir, Pakistan decided to approach the OIC regarding the Ayodhya incident which it said “had pained not only Muslims the world over but had also caused concern amongst all rational people”. The OIC was approached with a view to exert pressure on India to protect the “Rights of Indian Muslims and their places of worship”. Describing the demolition of the Babri mosque as one of the “unprecedented fanaticism” it said, it made a mockery of the Indian claim of secularism. “Many in Pakistan urged the Islamic states to protest with India and break all relations with it”¹⁰.

India, OIC and Ayodhya

As early as on July 15, 1992, the OIC had expressed “profound concern” over construction activities in Ayodhya describing them as serious violations of the rights of Indian Muslims.

The OIC was the first to react to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The OIC Secretary General, Mr. Hamid al Ghabid in a statement strongly denounced “this odious crime” and expressed regret “that the Indian government allowed fundamentalist Hindus to cause damage to this great symbol of Islam in India: light must be shed on this barbarous act and those responsible must be punished”. He noted that the OIC had several times called the attention of India to the gravity of the situation. In a second statement, he said, that the entire Muslim world

was shocked by this heinous and premeditated crime and expressed regret that the Indian government has “succumbed to the fundamentalists”. These were not only harsh and damaging words but had even serious implications because Mr. Ghali, some months ago when the OIC was considering the Babri crisis, had spoken of imposing “an embargo” on India, obviously meaning an oil embargo”¹¹.

More importantly, the OIC nations at the UN expressed “outrage and anguish” over the Ayodhya incidents and urged UN Secretary General, Dr. Ghali to use his moral and political authority to ensure safety of Muslims in India. In a statement, the OIC expressed anguish over the demolition and regretted “the failure of the Indian government to take appropriate measures to protect this important holy Muslim shrine”. They favoured raising of the issue at the next session of the UNHRC at Geneva. The OIC, however, appealed to the Muslims of India and all concerned to exercise restraint to avoid further deterioration of the situation as “tolerance and respect for all religious beliefs is the salient feature of Islam”.

The OIC expressing its deep concern for the safety and security of the Muslim community in India condemned the killing of “hundreds of innocent and defenceless people”. It also called upon the Indian government to ensure that the life and property of Muslims in India is fully protected and their religious and cultural rights are respected and Islamic holy sites in accordance with the “responsibilities and obligations under the universal declaration of human rights as well as other relevant international instruments are protected”.

Releasing the statement at a press conference, the OIC ambassadors said that they would be watching the implementation of the Indian government decision to rebuild the Babri mosque. When asked what action they contemplated if India did not honour the commitment to rebuild the mosque as had happened in the case of Kashmir, they said: “We would watch the developments”. They decided to meet Dr. Ghali to highlight these issues to him. Among those who spoke during the discussions at the OIC meeting were representatives of Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Qatar, Algeria, Malaysia, Bahrain and Palestine¹².

As a follow up, a delegation of 53 members of the OIC and Arab League met Dr. Ghali on December 11, 1992 and conveyed their “pain anguish and concern” over the destruction of the mosque. They also urged him to use his “influence and good offices” to ensure an early start for the reconstruction of Babri Masjid, which they said, would help defuse the situation”¹³.

Not surprisingly, India reacted sharply to the OIC statements condemning it for the demolition of the Babri Mosque. Mr. R. L. Bhatia, Minister of State for External Affairs, told the OIC ambassadors based in Delhi that the resolution not only impinged the country’s sovereignty but would also encourage “reverse communalism”. He made it abundantly clear that the Ayodhya issue was an internal problem for India and that the government expected to the international community to create an atmosphere which would help it address to the task of preserving and even strengthening India’s secular and democratic polity.

The ambassadors who spoke at the meeting with Mr. R. L. Bhatia stated in general that while the demolition of the Mosque had been condemned around the world and throughout India itself, the “quick and strong action” taken by the government in remedying the situation had also been

appreciated. The ambassadors who met Mr. Bhatia were from Algeria, Morocco, Uganda, Malaysia, Senegal, Brunei, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and Indonesia. The chief representative of the Arab League, Ali Muhsen Hamid, was also present at the meeting¹⁴.

The Times of India in a sharply worded editorial said:

“It is to be hoped that the appreciation expressed by the ambassadors of several Islamic countries in Delhi about the condemnation of the demolition of Babri Masjid within India and the action taken by the government will be reflected soon enough in the pronouncements of their governments as well”.

Highlighting the deep differences between the OIC members, it further said: “The concept of the Umma itself is something of a myth considering the unending squabbles among the Islamic countries”. The paper termed the response from Islamic countries as “provocative” which has “less to do with outrage at what has happened than with the need to use the opportunity to fight opponents at home”. It further added

“Given the nature of the Islamic fundamentalist threat which even the Muslim rulers face, it will be in their interest not only to stop meddling in India’s internal affairs, but also to emphasize the manner in which a democratic society like India deals with an explosive religious issue”¹⁵.

The Babri issue and the subsequent communal violence which flared up in many parts of India continued to attract the attention of the OIC with a number of members taking active interest in the developments. As the Kashmir issue had already strained India’s ties with a number of OIC members but the Ayodhya issue simply widened the differences.

The bureau of the OIC decided to hold an extraordinary meeting in Dakar on January 11, 1993 to discuss the expulsion of Palestinians by the Israel. The Babri issue was sure to be raised by Pakistan. In anticipation of such a move, India cautioned members of the OIC bureau against falling in line with any Pakistani move to issue a provocative resolution on the communal riots in India.

Iran, well in advance of the meeting urged the OIC to demand that Muslims be treated with fairness in India. This set the tone to what can be termed a very negative resolution adoption by the OIC bureau even in the face of hectic lobbying by India with key OIC members. India’s efforts to counter Pakistani propaganda and apprising them of the demolition events in its true perspective obviously did not fully yield the results.

The bureau meeting was, among others, attended by Senegal, Indonesia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. A strongly worded resolution issued at the end of the meeting stated:

“After having noted with interest the announcement by the Indian government of its commitment to rebuild the Babri mosque, the Islamic world has been surprised by the authorisation given immediately after this announcement to the Hindu fundamentalists to perform their religious rites on the site of the mosque that they destroyed.”

Reflecting the sentiments of the Muslims the meeting called upon the government of India to honour its pledge to rebuild the mosque.

It became known that Pakistan had lobbied very hard to get the bureau adopt a resolution highly critical of India. The draft resolution prepared under Pakistani influence was much more strongly worded and it was watered down because of, among other things, intervention by the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and the Senegalese President Abdon Diouf, to adopt a balanced and moderate approach to the issue.

For India, even this was not acceptable and hence condemned it. The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson said while the Ayodhya events were unfortunate and regrettable, “they were exclusively in the internal jurisdiction of India”. India, he said, took particular objection to the bureau’s statement in urging it to “take effective measures to protect the human rights of the Muslims of India, particularly their religious and cultural rights as well as their mosques and holy places”. The spokesman said India “needs neither advice nor exhortation in regard to the protection of the human and religious rights of its Muslim minority numbering over 100 million”¹⁶.

OIC and the Kashmir Issue

Due to the consistently hostile attitude of the OIC towards India concerning the Babri issue and the Kashmir issue, India rejected a request for visas by the OIC to send a team to study the situation in Kashmir. The Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Dinesh Singh said: “We had rejected the OIC request and had communicated that no visas would be given for the purpose”. A formal request for visas was received (in February 1993) in pursuance of a decision taken at the September 1992 meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting where India was accused of “State sponsored repression” of Muslims in Kashmir. In the face of refusal by India, however, the OIC fact finding mission visited ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (POK), from February 14 to 18, 1993 and met the displaced Kashmiris from India, who had crossed over the line of control in Kashmir¹⁷.

The OIC fact finding mission submitted a 13 page report to the OIC Secretary General., Mr. Ghabid, in which it held the Indian allegations of Pakistan’s support to the Kashmiri militants as “baseless and a self serving transposition of guilt”. It said the mission in its extensive visit saw no evidence of any such alleged terrorist support in terms of training centres or facilities to provide arms”.

After exonerating Pakistan of abetting militancy in Kashmir, the report recommended to its member states to consider revising their economic and trade relations with India, making them conditional on the reversal of its repressive policies and practices in Kashmir. In particular it asked member states to consider also “imposing restrictions on scientific, cultural, manpower and other exchanges with India pending the reversal of India’s repression in held Kashmir”. It mentioned that India is one of the biggest exporters of manpower to WANA besides having large economic and trade interests with these Islamic states. It also recommended extending “full political, diplomatic, moral and material support to the Muslims of Kashmir for the realisation of their right to self-determination”.

Moreover, the team came to the conclusion that India had “sanctified” extreme repression through draconian laws and its security forces were involved in brutalisation of the Kashmiri people. It said the Indian strategy was to employ overwhelming force to suppress the uprising of the Kashmiris demanding self-determination. It accused the Indian forces of deliberately targeting the Kashmiri youth with operations such as “Catch or Kill” and were involved in “Systematic and organized gang rapes of Muslim women”. It also charged Indian forces with opening indiscriminate fire on mass demonstrations, detention without trial, torture and acts of arson in the valley.

The OIC report termed India’s explanations of its repressive measures as “absurd”. It recommended that pressure should be exerted on India, bilaterally and at international fora, with a view to putting an end to the repression in Kashmir. It also argued for making a concerted effort at the UNGA, the UNHRC and other relevant fora to investigate the violations of human rights in Kashmir. It also said that the OIC Secretary General, Mr. Ghabid had concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the report and urged the member states to adopt concrete measures to stop India from carrying out repression against the Kashmiris.

It also emphasized the need for intensifying efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN resolutions and spirit of the Simla accord. The report said the OIC mission had noted that Pakistan wanted a peaceful solution to the dispute under the UN resolutions and in the spirit of Simla accord. It also noted that India had rejected the offer of Pakistan to settle the issue through a dialogue.

Undoubtedly one could see the Pakistan hand in drafting the OIC report, because, again, not a word was mentioned about Pakistan’s role in the Kashmir crisis. The onesidedness was all too apparent. Pakistan had much reason to be gratified with the report since it so closely followed its projection on the history and current status of the Kashmir issue that it could have as well been drawn up at the Pakistan Foreign Office.

The OIC fact finding report was considered by the political committee of the OIC Foreign Ministers conference held in Karachi towards the end of April 1993¹⁸.

The Karachi OIC Meet

The OIC, Secretary General Mr. Ghabid told the 21st OIC Foreign Ministers Conference at Karachi that the situation in Kashmir had deteriorated to such an extent that the region had become a source of tension. Whereas the 13-page report was presented to the political committee, a senior Pakistani official said that his country would not press for the adoption of the recommendation on the stoppage of manpower import from India. He also said, “our Muslim brother countries have substantial relations with India which we do not want to jeopardise nor will they like to take such a stand”. He also said the thrust of the OIC was to pressurise New Delhi to accept Kashmiri’s right to self-determination for a peaceful settlement of the issue and also stop what he termed as the human rights violations in the Valley¹⁹.

The Foreign Ministers endorsed the entire draft recommendations and conclusions prepared on Kashmir. The OIC members were called upon to “take all necessary steps to persuade India to

cease forthwith the massive human rights violations of the Kashmiri people and to enable them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination as mandated by the relevant resolutions of the UNSC". The resolution was milder and did not identify the measures the member states could take, providing enough leeway to Muslim countries having friendly relations with India. A new element in the recommendation provided for coordination between OIC members at the UNGA and the UNHRC level to "promote respect" for the fundamental human rights of the people of J&K. The 18 point resolution requested the OIC Secretary General to establish contact with the governments of India and Pakistan and the "true representatives of the Kashmiris for a just and peaceful settlement of the dispute".

The resolution also appealed to the OIC members to mobilise funds and contribute generously towards providing humanitarian assistance to the Kashmiri people. The fact finding mission on Kashmir, the report submitted by the OIC Secretary General to the conference is now an official document of the OIC²⁰.

The conference also condemned the destruction of the Babri mosque by "extremist Hindus" and called on India to reconstruct the mosque at the original site. It appealed for the removal of "the makeshift temple" which had been put up in the Babri mosque site.

Pakistani diplomacy achieved considerable success as the OIC, for the first time, adopted a resolution in which atrocities and human rights violations against Kashmiri people by the Indian Security forces were equated with similar resolutions on Palestine, Bosnia and South Africa. Thus, the OIC moved much closer to expressing as much concern over the plight of Muslims in India, especially in J&K, as it traditionally expressed over the plight of their brethren in Palestine and elsewhere. At the end of the conference, Pakistan (then) Foreign Minister Mr. Farooq Leghari, who chaired the session, expressed his gratification at its "categorical and vigorous support to the suffering people of Kashmir"²¹.

Indian Reactions to Karachi OIC Meet

India strongly objected to Pakistan using the OIC forum to seek the "Safeguards for rights and welfare of Muslims in this country". The Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Salman Khurshid said India was perfectly capable of looking after all its citizens without exception. A Ministry of External Affairs spokesman did not mince words on the OIC's self-assumed role on matters concerning the Indian Muslims. He said, "the political gimmickery inherent in this futile gesture was obvious. The interest of stability and protection of minorities in the Indian sub-continent were not served by such tendentious statements by the OIC".

He said the OIC had presumed to take on a role in safeguarding the interests of more than 100 million Indian citizens "who happened to be Muslims". Surprisingly the spokesman complained against India's exclusion from the OIC. It was ironic, he observed, that the OIC which refuses India's participation in its activities, despite this country being endowed with one of the largest Muslim population in the world, "now pretends to arrogate to itself a role to protect their interest".

The spokesman's statement said: "The communique and resolution adopted at Karachi make it obvious that the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting was misled by certain elements of the OIC

secretariat and the host country. In this circumstances, the views expressed in the communique and the resolution do not come as a surprise to the Government of India (GOI). At the same time, the GOI categorically questions the assessment and recommendations endorsed by the OIC at the FM's meeting at Karachi.”

“We consider these totally unacceptable. Kashmir is an integral part of India and the enduring question is for Pakistan to come to terms with the realities and to cooperate with India to serve the larger objectives of peace and stability in the subcontinent. The OIC resolution will serve no purpose other than encouraging Pakistan to persist with its support and sponsorship of terrorism and subversion directed against India”.

From the resolution adopted by the OIC Foreign Ministers it was clear that some members accepted willingly or otherwise, extreme positions, running counter to their individual judgment, as indicated in their bilateral relations with India²².

In this connection, members in both Houses of Parliament (MP's) cutting across party affiliations expressed concern over the OIC resolution on Kashmir and Indian Muslims, passed at the Karachi Foreign Ministers conference, and demanded immediate diplomatic efforts to counter the anti-India propaganda. The former Foreign Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral raised the issue through a special motion in the Rajya Sabha, and urged the government to intensify its diplomatic efforts to remove the OIC member countries' misconception about India's position on Kashmir. Mr. Gunral regretted that many Arab and African countries had supported the resolution at the behest of Pakistan despite the fact that India had been supporting these countries on various issues.

Supporting Mr. Gujral, the Congress member, Mr. Suresh Kalmadi said the government should warn Pakistan and 51 other countries, which had attended the conference not to fiddle with India's internal matters. What was causing worry was the fact that Pakistan had succeeded in putting the Kashmir issue on the agenda of the next OIC conference as well, he observed.

The BJP member, Mr. J.P. Mathur supported Mr. Gujral's contention that religion should not be the basis of self-determination. If this concept, as proposed at the Karachi meet, was accepted, it would lead to the breaking of many a country in the world.

In the Lok Sabha, the former speaker, Mr. Rabi Ray (Janata Dal), demanded a statement from the government explaining how it was going to win over Islamic countries to India's point of view on the Kashmir issue. Expressing concern over Pakistan's success in getting an anti-India resolution, Mr. Ray said that for the first time OIC had equated violations of human rights in Kashmir with Palestinian situation.

Mr. Mohammad Afzal, Janata Dal Member of Parliament, forcefully argued that by passing the resolution, the Islamic countries had harmed the interests of Indian Muslims. He said the OIC had no right to espouse the cause of Indian Muslims as it had refused to admit them as a member of the organisation. Stating that the Indian Muslims did not require the politically – motivated support of Pakistan or any other country, Mr. Afzal referred to the demolition of Babri mosque to remark that the other parties should also understand that because of their action thousands of Indian Hindus working in Saudi Arabia were being discriminated. Criticising Pakistan, he said it had no right to

speak on behalf of the Indian Muslims. “A large number of Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from here were still being referred as Mohajirs (refugees) and treated like second class citizens”, he added.

In the face of all round criticism of the government on the OIC stand at Karachi, Mr. Digvijay Singh alone sounded optimistic. He said that there was no cause for the government to get unnecessarily worked up because of the OIC resolution, as there was still a lot of goodwill towards India in many Islamic countries that had attended the Karachi OIC conference²³.

In fact, just before the Dakar OIC summit in December 1991, in a discussion in Lok Sabha, the former Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh had alerted the government that the OIC might discuss terrorist operations in J&K with a view to embarrassing India. He had suggested to the government that it should take steps to forestall this. Speaking during zero hour, Mr. Buta Singh said if a delegation had to be sent to Senegal, it should be called an Indian delegation and not by any other nomenclature, which might show that it represented only Indian Muslims. Any attempt to identify people in the country by religion should be resisted, he added²⁴.

After the Karachi OIC Foreign Ministers meeting, a series of articles/editorials appeared in Indian newspapers ridiculing/ questioning OIC credibility as a responsible regional organisation. Typical was an article by Aabha Dixit in ‘the Observer’ entitled “Garnering Islamic opinion: The OIC has to become Pakistan’s base camp for its campaign against India”. She said, “...from the very beginning, the organisation had betrayed its own sense of achievement. Factionalism, Sectarian issues and struggle for control of its leadership had left the OIC in tatters. And, beyond the odd meeting it had hardly been able to achieve anything worthwhile. (Moreover)...it has failed to act as a unified pressure group. Instead it has become a divisive political forum, where deep-rooted intra-sect schisms along with numerous other historical and geographical factors, continue to dominate the political agenda as contentious issues”²⁵.

The Hindustan Times in an editorial entitled OIC’s mischief said: “The OIC is a negative association which has done little to promote Islamic solidarity, or to use petro-dollars to feed, educate and nurse millions of destitute Muslims. There have been cases when OIC have cordially embraced a “heathen” West to humiliate fellow Islamic nations. And, all this has been done in the name of Islam. The sterility of OIC thinking is self evident in a host of instances, the latest being the resolution on Kashmir. The time has come for the OIC to get over its flinkered view that only non-Muslims are capable of sins. The turmoil, instability and infighting in the OIC and realisation of the problems – may hopefully be the beginning of a search of heart within the OIC. It can evolve as a purposeful association only if it is able to redefine Islam in today’s world”²⁶.

The Patriot in its editorial “OIC factor in the Valley” said that it was not a mere coincidence that certain developments took place in the Kashmir Valley or in areas close to it, near the time when the Foreign Ministers of the OIC were meeting at Karachi.... These presumably were timed to obtain from the OIC the hysterical response Pakistan had long been demanding from it.

“The OIC had been offered a grand stand view of Pakistan’s capacity to hit at India... The OIC Foreign Ministers largely echoed what the Pakistanis wanted on the issue”²⁷.

Not only the press was extremely critical of the OIC Karachi meet, but MP's as seen earlier, not only asked questions or sought clarifications but actively sought government's action to rectify the situation. The MP's asked Mr. R. L. Bhatia and Mr. Salman Kursheed (Indian Ministers of State for Foreign Affairs) about the implications of the resolution adopted by the OIC. The two ministers told the MP's that the government had already taken corrective action by taking up the matter with the OIC members that the resolution adoption in Karachi was one-sided, and not conducive to good relations between India and those countries. They were also told that India took up this issue specifically through diplomatic channels with the OIC members and reiterated its firm rejection of the suggestions contained in the communique as well as the resolution in respect of Kashmir, Babri Masjid and the Muslim population of this country²⁸.

The MP's urged the government to remain firm on important issues. On Kashmir, they underlined that discussions with Pakistan could only take place bilaterally under the Simla agreement and maintained that there could be no compromise on the "basic position" that Kashmir "is an integral part of India". The MP's were of the opinion that:

"Pakistan should not be allowed to use extraneous factors like human rights issue to build up on the cacophony over Kashmir.

In a clear sign of hardening of India's approach towards the OIC and its members, Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. R. L. Bhatia told the Rajya Sabha on August 5, 1992 that India proposed to review its bilateral relations with each OIC country which had taken an anti-India attitude on the Kashmir issue. He said the government had suitably conveyed to the OIC member states that their stance on Kashmir would be taken note of in the bilateral relationship. However, it is not known what steps India has taken in this matter so far.

It is significant to note that at the Istanbul meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers, India's Ambassador Mr. Gajendra Singh in Turkey was specifically instructed not to go about lobbying. Much earlier in December 1991, during and after the OIC summit in Dakar, Senegal, MP's asked the government "What is our Embassy in Senegal doing" to counter Pakistani propaganda on Kashmir and other issues. Of course, the embassy had an Ambassador and IFS probationer. However, it would be too much to expect that two officers would lobby with more than fifty delegations especially when they are led by heads of state or government²⁹.

OIC, India, Pakistan and Bosnia

Pakistan achieved a major success on the issue of lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims in the Vienna meeting in June 1993. Having achieved this, it immediately mounted an attack on India alleging massive human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

In reaction to the OIC move on Bosnia, India said that the special declaration on Bosnia is not worth the paper it written on and though it might serve the cause of the OIC, it would not serve the cause of Bosnia, Dr. L. M. Singhvi, leader of the Indian delegation, said that the 54 nations which abstained from voting (including India) could have blocked the resolution. He also said that the west was alarmed by Pakistan's role in the declaration and would be "on guard" in future about the OIC³⁰.

A special ministerial meeting of the OIC was held in Islamabad on July 12 and 13, 1993. A resolution on support to Bosnia contained some references to Kashmir. The relevant paragraph reads:

“The meeting strongly condemned the continuing, massive and systematic violations of the human rights of the Kashmiri people and expressed its serious alarm over the deployment of thousands of additional Indian troops to quell the popular Kashmiri uprising for self-determination. It urged the international community to persuade India to cease forthwith its policy of repression against the Kashmiri people and to enable them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. It also appealed to the member states to provide humanitarian assistance to the Kashmiri people. It also reaffirmed the provisions of resolution 9/21 on J&K dispute adopted by the 21st OIC Foreign Ministers Conference and called for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions”.

India once again accused Pakistan of attempting to involve other Islamic countries in its acts of subterfuge in blatantly interfering in the internal affairs of India. After the release of the resolution on Kashmir, Indian diplomats abroad contacted a number of representatives of the OIC states, which had taken part in the meeting. The Minister of External Affairs (MEA) spokesman said “these friendly countries have indicated to us that in fact references to Kashmir were not discussed at the special meeting and were imposed on them at the last minute as a Pakistani proposal”.

“They did not wish to raise the controversy over the issue at the forum of the OIC meeting convened to discuss Bosnia Herzegovina. But they have clarified to us that they, on their part, did not question the territorial integrity of India or concur with the advocacies for the dismemberment of any state under the guise of the concept of human rights or self-determination”.

The MEA spokesman maintained that Pakistan had once again patently attempted to involve the other Islamic countries in India’s internal affairs, and said:

“Pakistan’s conduct is in contravention of the spirit of the Simla accord under which India and Pakistan are committed to resolve their differences through bilateral negotiations. Though India has high respect for the member countries of the OIC and has friendly relations with them, it is regrettable that the OIC Secretary General had made the statement at the meeting which was in its approach on Kashmir, partisan and attempted to project his views as the views of the OIC. In any case, the government and the people of India, find his views untenable and unacceptable”³¹.

Meanwhile, as the situation became uncomfortable abroad due to anti-India resolutions on Kashmir, the government had to face a hostile Parliament, which was anxious to know what the government proposes to do to contain the damage. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh claimed, however, in the Lok Sabha that there was “wide support” for India’s stance on Kashmir among members of the OIC. He was responding to a question by Mr. Chetan Chauhan, BJP, on the meeting of the OIC held in Pakistan recently and at which the Kashmir issue had figured. The minister made it clear that the meeting did not, as such, pass any resolution on Kashmir. He noted that Pakistan presented the Kashmir question as a religious issue, making it embarrassing for the OIC members to express any opposition”³².

His deputy, Mr. R. L. Bhatia said that India had been in touch with not only the OIC states but also with other countries and explained its stand on Kashmir to them. He added that, "Pakistan's rhetoric had not affected India's bilateral relations with other countries".

More importantly, Mr. Dinesh Singh replying to Ramesh Chennithala, M.P., acknowledged that the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992 had indeed affected the sentiments of Muslims in other countries. But they fully appreciated the role of the government and were aware that it was capable of protecting the minorities and fostering secularism despite such operations.

Despite the government's claim that Kashmir issue had not affected ties with the OIC states and that they remained friendly, India initiated a drive to find alternative assured sources of oil supplies in the wake of the termination of the rupee trade arrangement with Russia as also make the country much less vulnerable to the threat of an oil embargo (by Gulf states), and New Delhi entered into contacts with Nigeria, Yemen and other countries³³.

OIC and the Hazratbal Crisis

During the army cordon of Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar, where Kashmiri militants and about 300 people were holed up, the leader of Jamaat-I-Islami, Syed Ali Shah Geelani appealed to the OIC and UN Secretary General to intervene and help defuse the situation. Accordingly the OIC urged the Indian government to withdraw its troops encircling the shrine. Moreover it demanded that those confined inside the complex be allowed to leave unconditionally³⁴.

In a much familiar pattern, India took strong exception to the remarks made by the OIC Secretary General, in which he had accused the Indian security forces operating in J&K of violating human rights. In a strongly worded statement, the government emphasised that the Indian "security forces were exercising the greatest restraint and will continue to perform their duties to subdue militancy and terrorism and protect innocent Indian citizens in Kashmir. The only persons held in detention are those directly associated with militancy, terrorism, breach of the peace and violations of the rule of law. Such allegations by the OIC SG are outrageous and have no relevance to facts"³⁵.

Despite the sharp Indian criticism, the OIC Secretary General Mr. Ghabid in a further provocation after a two-day visit to Pakistan said that the organisation would spare no effort to support the "struggle of the Kashmiris for the restoration of their inalienable rights including the right of self-determination. He made this assurance in Jeddah after meeting Pakistani leader Ms. Benazir Bhutto and other from the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

India Rejects OIC Mediation

India rejected the mediation offer of the OIC on Kashmir, accusing it of allowing "itself to be used by a member country to unjustifiably criticise the country, which is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world".

"The legality of J&K's accession to India cannot be questioned as it has been sanctified by the popular will as represented by its Constituent Assembly in 1954 and by many elections held in the

state”, Mr. Satish Chandra, India’s permanent representative in Geneva said rightly in his reply to OIC Secretary General’s statement at the UN Human Rights Commission’s meeting.

Mr. Satish Chandra expressed disappointment with the OIC Secretary General’s statement by saying that the alleged human rights violations by India in J&K have been exaggerated and were unfounded. He said the current disturbed situation and conditions in the state were squarely the result of external involvement in the terrorist activities directed against us. He said that the Simla accord provides a tried and tested framework to discuss the differences. He accused the OIC Secretary General of not properly appreciating “our concern for the security of Muslims of J&K is far greater as they are Indians living in India. Ours is a secular state in which we respect all religions equally and all individuals as Indians are equally integrated into the national mosaic”.

Mr. Satish Chandra further said:

“I would like to underline that there can be no threat to the Muslim community in India, which incidently is not a marginal minority, but number more than 120 million. This is because of our national ethos, traditions, democratic framework and institutions and also because Muslims play an active and vibrant part in every aspect of our national life.

A campaign of unparalleled violence has been unleashed against us. Inspired, trained, financed and armed in Pakistan, thousands of terrorists have sought to rip apart the fabric of democracy, which flourished for decades in the state. They have committed the most heinous crimes and atrocities systematically eliminating all that is most valuable and decent in society including teachers, professors, judges doctors and civil servants”³⁶.

He further said the security forces were trying to protect human rights and the fabric of democracy in J&K and that they were working in the most difficult circumstances as the terrorists they confront were equipped with massive and modern supplies of arms, ammunition and equipment. They were observing utmost restraint, which was best explained during the Hazratbal crisis³⁷.

India, OIC and UNHRC

India took an exception to the OIC Secretary General’s statement on Kashmir and on several occasions accused it of being one sided. At the UNHRC meeting in February-March 1994 where Pakistan planned to table a resolution on Kashmir, Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Salman Khursheed again drew the OIC Secretary General’s attention to the fact that India had the largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. He said the OIC support to the Pak-sponsored resolution would be detrimental to the interests of the Muslims in India. He said the OIC had taken India’s point very well and would not be influenced by Pakistan on voting en bloc on its resolution on Kashmir. He also said that there is no consensus in the OIC where many think it is a bilateral issue and should not be pursued at UNHRC. However, he made it clear that India would not yield under the pressure of the resolution. At the sametime, it would abide by its commitment to safeguard human rights³⁷.

Pakistan and Iran at UNHRC

Pakistan, after having presented a resolution on Kashmir, first amended the resolution and then voluntarily withdrew the same at the last moment. This was mainly under the pressure from Iran and China as also from other OIC members who preferred to remain outside the contest. Infact, most of the OIC members and others did not wish to be exposed to the dynamics of having to choose between India and Pakistan for a variety of reasons; one of them being the size of India's large market in the liberalisation environment and the other being Pakistan's close contacts with oil rich Islamic states.

Indian Foreign Secretary, Mr. Krishnan Srinivasan said that 15 countries had specifically asked Pakistan to withdraw its resolution after Iran's intervention. Referring to the Iranian ambassadors statement in Geneva about a group of ambassador's from Muslim countries visiting Kashmir, he said it could not be assumed that the envoy's visit would be termed as an international fact-finding mission. He explained that all New Delhi based ambassadors including those from Muslim countries with the exception of Pakistan and Libya, did not require any prior permission to visit Kashmir. He said, "Iran and China have been helpful in persuading Pakistan to withdraw and we are grateful to this effect" and added that any effort by Iran to persuade Pakistan to create a constructive climate for an Indo-Pak dialogue to resolve bilateral issues would be acceptable³⁹.

Meanwhile, Pakistan said that it had agreed to "defer" the resolution on the Iranian initiative because India had agreed to allow ambassadors from the Islamic states to visit Kashmir on a fact-finding mission. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mr. Asif Ahmed Ali said it is a "spectacular beginning" and claimed a "great victory" for Pakistan. "Our resolution remains alive at all times", the sword is in Pakistan's hand and can fall on India at the time of our choosing". Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shaharyar Khan said, "the pressure (on India) is beginning to build and will build further". He said that the OIC Secretary General should choose the team, which should have all freedom to meet and visit people and places in Kashmir.

In the ultimate analysis, India did not concede anything at the UNHRC meet in Geneva. Even in the matter of sending Muslim ambassadors to Kashmir, this was part of India's new policy of openness and greater transparency and Pakistan could not claim any mileage from it, more so because ambassadors have not visited under the aegis of OIC of which Pakistan is Chairman. OIC attempt to send a group under its banner simply did not work.

Even though Pakistan did everything to mobilise support for the resolution including sending special envoys to the capitals of all countries who are UNHRC members offering incentives, including arms and disincentives, but by withdrawing its resolution Pakistan brought ridicule on itself and bailed out India.

India deliberately did not send special envoys to the capitals and kept a low profile, asked for no favours and worked in a normal mode. Of course, India coordinated its policy with Iran, but at the same time by tracking every delegation and monitoring their response on a day to day basis on a specially prepared score-sheet, India was confident of defeating the resolution if it was put to voting. The cooperation between India and Iran made it possible for India to show grace and avoid embarrassment to its friends while achieving its goal.

Pakistan's ploy certainly hurt India as many of the countries who would have normally voted for India went into an abstention position. It also realised that New Delhi had now to be goaded into taking special measures to improve the ground situation in J&K especially in the valley.

The Times of India in an editorial summed up the situation at Geneva and the implications for India as follows:

“By calling Salman Khursheed a “rented Muslim”, Pakistan was insulting a Muslim community bigger than their own and in calling India the “sick man of Asia” they ultimately compelled the latter to show the world where the basic cause of the disease lay.

Ultimately India felt compelled to act in Geneva because it could have been the beginning of a process that would have seen India being pilloried by the OIC as well as by the UNGA later this year. By effectively countering the threat of being blamed for the wrong reasons and by spelling out the limits of what it is willing to offer in Kashmir, India has forestalled such a possibility. Its next move should be to act swiftly to restore normalcy in Kashmir⁴⁰.

After the Geneva UNHRC fiasco, the Kashmiri militant organisations, especially the JKLF openly criticised the “incompetence” of the Pakistani diplomats to carry the day with them. In order to recover from the setback, Pakistan sought to convince the Kashmiri militants that it is still sincerely committed to their cause. In this connection it appears to have encouraged the All Parties Hurriyat (Liberation) Conference, an umbrella of 30 odd organisations to seek membership of the OIC in a clear move to keep the Kashmir issue alive at least in the Islamic world.

Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, Hurriyat's Chairman and Moulvi Abbas Ansari, its executive member said: “We are working out modalities to apply for OIC membership. The OIC will provide us another platform to carry on with our struggle”.

Since only an independent, sovereign country is eligible for membership of the OIC, the Hurriyat may seek to set up a “government in exile” before seeking OIC membership. In the wake of the clear refusal by important countries like Iran, China and many OIC members to get involved in the Kashmir imbroglio and their stand that India and Pakistan should solve it bilaterally under the Simla agreement. Pakistan as well as Kashmiri militant leaders have been looking for avenues to build international pressure on India. Since Pakistan happen to be the current Chairman of OIC, Hurriyat's move is obviously done at the behest of Islamabad, which will do its best to help the organisation to get membership or association with the OIC⁴¹.

Indian Overture to OIC

After having consistently rejected the OIC stand/resolutions on Kashmir, saying it has no ‘locus standi’, India on a significant but bold departure in its attitude has initiated a dialogue with the OIC. The beginning was made in early April 1994 when Mr. Salman Haidar, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs met the OIC Secretary General Mr. Ghabid and Mr. Ibrahim Saleh Bakr (a Saudi) who is Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs in Jeddah. Mr. Bakr incidentally was one of the OIC official who undertook a “fact finding mission” to POK last year and submitted a report to OIC Foreign Ministers meeting in Karachi in April 1993 indicting India

not just for the conditions prevailing in Kashmir but also for not permitting the OIC team to visit the strife torn J&K.

Mr. Salman Haider invited the OIC to send a senior official to New Delhi as the first step towards regular discussions between India and OIC – an international organisation which is officially recognised by the UN and which has more than half of NAM nations as its members. Infact, the invitation is nothing new or surprising. During the UNHRC session in Geneva in early March 1994, India did invite the OIC representative to visit New Delhi. Even before this step, Mr. Ishrat Aziz, India's Ambassador in Riyadh, paid a visit to OIC headquarters in Jeddah. In fact, Aziz had prepared the ground for a higher-level contact with the OIC.

Through this dialogue, India hopes that the OIC will tone down its hostile position. If there is a perceptible change in the OIC, in particular if it restrains Pakistan on Kashmir, then perhaps the dialogue will continue and would find public acceptance in India. The OIC is commonly perceived as an instrument of Pakistan's Foreign office and the OIC headquarter is heavily Pakistani staffed⁴¹.

Conclusion

Since India was rudely rebuffed in the 1969 Rabat conference due to the hostile role played by Pakistan, even though India as a secular country was officially invited to the conference, led to the opposition within the country for any contacts with the OIC. This cold attitude to the OIC prevailed until very recently, even though India managed to establish friendly relations with most of the Islamic countries.

In the wake of growing militancy in Kashmir and particularly after the demolition of Babri masjid and the negative reaction it evoked in most OIC states, many in India felt that New Delhi should try to counter Pakistani propaganda offensive by sending high level emissaries to the OIC countries, while others felt that, "we need not unduly worry about it". Their contention was that India's stand on Kashmir has been sufficiently explained to its friends. As one observer put it, "A resolution here or a resolution there should not alarm us"⁴³.

In fact, many felt that Indian at the Dakar OIC summit took a much more relaxed attitude towards what the members would say on Kashmir. As one writer put it: "No longer are lobbying missions sent around Muslim countries prior to such meetings to try and persuade them not to be too condemnatory on Kashmir. Now they are merely informed that their relations with India could be adversely affected"⁴⁴.

The disillusionment was also due to the fact that the OIC generated few ideas towards resolving the issues affecting Muslim countries. The Afghan crisis, Iran-Iraq war and the defeat of Iraq over Kuwait clearly indicated the inability of the Muslim governments to develop multilateral solutions.

Even though there was no direct significant damage to India's interests (With Islamic states) in the wake of the Ayodhya and Kashmir crisis, but this did not rule out the possibility of deterioration of

India's diplomatic relations with the Islamic countries straddling half the world and its implications for India's diplomatic and global interests.

Many believe that the worst may be over politically over Babri Masjid and Kashmir, but the repeated assurance that the mosque would be reconstructed is primarily meant to please the Islamic states some of which control huge oil supplies. Special attention was paid to removing misgivings and convincing the Gulf countries of the government's firm commitment in upholding secularism in India. But it was clear that some Islamic countries accepted willingly or otherwise extreme positions at OIC meetings running counter to their individual judgment as shown in their bilateral dealing with India.

Pakistan's attempt to carry India failing to Arab/Islamic countries and thereby globalising Kashmir, Ayodhya and the issue of Indian Muslims was beginning of damage India's core interests in the OIC states. In fact, Pakistan strategy was emboldening many OIC states to ignore Indian plea for moderation and even-handedness. It was felt that India would not afford to antagonise several OIC states who also maintain close ties with Pakistan and US and in the wake of the defeat of Iraq, US influence in the area has substantially increased. Given this reality and the feverish arms race among the Gulf states some of whom have extensive military ties with Pakistan and this was bound to have an effect on India's security as well. It must be noted that in the OIC, there is no vote and decisions are arrived at with consensus, though at the end of the conference the full plenary is asked if any member has objection to the resolutions.

It was realised that a new approach was called for towards the OIC especially in the wake of Pakistan's relentless propaganda war against India in the OIC states. Pakistan's diplomatic skills and single mindedness has put Kashmir on to the global limelight. But whether one likes it or not, Islamic resurgence is a real fact of life in most of the OIC states. One could afford to ignore this reality only to one's peril. This factor made it difficult for the OIC states to be seen to oppose Muslim "causes" and Kashmir undoubtedly has become a global Muslim cause. Surely there is bound to be a gap between the public and private positions of the OIC states but India should not draw too much comfort from it. Governments, which express reservations on OIC positions, do so due to some compelling reasons to safeguard their national interests.

It became quite obvious since 1989 when the Kashmiri militancy erupted that world opinion had indeed turned adverse because most of the OIC states allowed themselves to be persuaded by Pakistan's propaganda. Pakistan has been repeatedly highlighting the fact that "talks for the sake of talks are meaningless". Pakistan's contention is that several rounds of bilateral talks have been held between India and Pakistan "without touching on Kashmir". It first wants the "air to be cleared and an agenda specified" before meaningful talks can be resumed⁴⁵.

Pakistan would always be tempted to take the multilateral route unless there was some tangible progress in the bilateral negotiations "to which we will never close the door", as Ms. Bhutto said. She also said: "We don't want the bilateral talks to become a pretext for crushing the Kashmiris". Explaining the need for "tangible progress" on the Kashmir issue and other outstanding irritants, She said the six non-papers given by India "do not encourage us to believe that there can be any tangible progress". Moreover, she said: "We want to internationalise the Kashmir issue, we want to put handcuffs on the Indian army. We want to force Indian to open up". While her claim that

India was not ready to accept the “hard reality” that it had, “lost the war in Kashmir and that it had lost the hearts and minds of the people of J&K” is an exaggeration, but it is true that so far India has been unable to evolve a viable policy towards Kashmir or at best India’s approach is adhoc.⁴⁶

Indeed it has become painfully obvious that India’s diplomacy on Kashmir so far simply could not summon the necessary nerve to make a reasonable convincing case of India’s predicament, aggravated by Pakistan stoking the fires of insurgency in Kashmir. But after the Hazratbal crisis and the UNHRC Geneva meet this year, it has become imperative to find a solution to the Kashmir tangle, which could accommodate Kashmiri aspirations within a democratic framework. Of course, various expressions of concern, both domestic and global, which a democratic political system can never cap, some voiced tactfully and some bluntly, have indeed further emboldened the Kashmiris.

Additionally, India must impress and do everything possible to highlight upon the OIC members that despite occasional excesses committed by the security forces in the face of grave provocations, the political system remains strictly and sincerely committed to the rule of law in all respects for the lives and liberties of citizens. If India does what it ought to do as a transparent democratic political system, then there is no reason why Indian diplomacy should be seen as flawed.

India’s assurance to the effect that it would rebuild the mosque and take steps to ensure the safety of the minorities went a long way towards removing the misgivings in the OIC states. But India’s credibility with the Islamic world lies in meeting the promise to rebuild the demolished mosque. India’s oil supplies and economic ties remain virtually untouched and they are unlikely to suffer unless there is deterioration at the domestic front. But India should not assume that her interests would remain immune from the consequences of future developments in Kashmir front or on the communal front. Most people and leaders in the OIC states were observing developments in India with keen interest, especially the fulfillment of assurances given by Indian leaders on various issues.

It has been argued that strong OIC resolution on issues concerning India in fact help domestically both the Congress-I and the BJP. Apparently they help the former in projecting itself to its supporters as a party with an Islamic world foreign policy. Due to this fact, it is said that India does not seriously work to mobilise the OIC states or lobby energetically.

But, it has become essential to send delegations to OIC states to mobilise support periodically and large delegations should be sent before and during, to the countries where OIC meetings are held. Moreover, whenever India perceives a change had occurred, as is likely to occur, she must promptly clarify her position to put things straight. India simply cannot afford to take a relaxed approach towards any OIC member, especially when Pakistan is bent upon internationalising the Kashmir issue in the future.

While the deep differences exist and which may be unending, and even wars have and will be fought among the OIC states, and it does not rule out the search for consensus on matters of common interest. At the last NAM summit in Jakarta, Islamic countries catalysed by Malaysia acted in concert as a bloc over Bosnia where Muslim interests were involved. India was not too

happy about it and many speculated that it is for this reason that Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao may have left Jakarta without waiting for the final communique or for the concluding session.

India must pursue a policy with OIC states, which will have a package of incentives (including modest military aid and training) and disincentives or deterrents in respect of each OIC member state to see what combination would steer them to endorse India's stand or at the least to keep off issues concerning India. Of course, India could totally ignore the OIC and its anti-India resolutions as South Africa and Israel did towards NAM and UN, but that would surely lead to India's isolation. Is India prepared to pursue this hard option especially in the wake of the collapse of USSR and India's mounting economic problems and growing dependency on outside countries? At any rate, India's policy should not in any way lead to alienation/isolation from the Islamic world some of whom are also leading NAM nations.

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**Assistant Professor, Gulf Studies Programme, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.*