

# Spheres of Influence

Indonesia, Syria & Algeria have been opposing moves by Organisation of Islamic Conference during its annual meets to issue strong statements on Kashmir



India has worked overtime to increase its stakes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt



Central Asian states, which are also OIC members, are seeking deeper ties with India

In a **major diplomatic victory for India** and a setback for Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates has invited foreign minister Sushma Swaraj to attend the **foreign ministers' meet of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) States**, set to take place in **Abu Dhabi**, the first such invite in five decades.

Finance Minister Sushma Swaraj will be the **"guest of honour"** at the inaugural plenary **46th meeting of OIC foreign ministers**.

The move is seen as a major blow to Pakistan that has consistently **opposed India's entry into the grouping** despite having the **third-largest Muslim population in the world**.

**India is not a member of the OIC**, but was invited to the Abu Dhabi meeting as the guest of honour.

## About Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) States:

- The OIC is a **57-member grouping of Muslim majority nations**.
- 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 endeavours 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.

- **Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.**
- Like NAM again, the **OIC is a toothless tiger** when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.
- Since everyone has a veto on what is said, **nothing serious** can be said, let alone done, about the **many serious disputes** between the member states that are now shaping the Middle East.
- In its statement, the **UAE government** said the theme of the **46th ministerial meet** was **“50 years of Islamic cooperation: The road map for prosperity and development,”** coinciding with the celebration of the **50th anniversary** of the organisation.
- In a strong statement, the Pakistan Foreign Minister protested the OIC’s decision to grant a **“guest of honour” status to India.**

### **Indian views in OIC meeting:**

India see this invitation as a **milestone in our comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE.** We also see this invitation as a **welcome recognition** of the **presence of 185 million Muslims in India** and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India’s contribution to the Islamic world.

Ms. Swaraj said the **fight against terrorism and extremism** does not amount to a clash of cultures and instead described it as a **fight between ideas.**

She presented **India’s pluralism and diversity as a source of strength** and said Indian Muslims are a **“microcosm” of India’s larger diverse culture.**

Besides, India has worked overtime to **increase its stakes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.**

While **secular Central Asian states** which are also OIC members are seeking deeper ties with India, Delhi despite pressure from the USA, has continued to engage in a **concrete fashion with Iran,** another OIC state.

In the **Gulf region and wider West Asia** all other five states, Jordan and Iraq besides UAE have strategic partnership with India that helped Delhi’s entry as a guest in OIC.

### **OIC Countries: Economic and Energy Independence with India:**

The present situations created a **new framework for India’s engagement with the Muslim world and the Middle East.**

Equally important has been the **region’s growing economic and energy interdependence with India,** which is emerging as the **world’s third-largest economy** and one of the **biggest hydrocarbon importers and labour exporters.**

As the region’s geopolitics enters a turbulent period, the potential for India as a **military partner** is also coming into view.

That India has one of the **world’s largest Muslim populations,** of course, is the immediate explanation of the surprising invite for Swaraj to address the OIC.

**India's observer status** at the OIC does not appear to be around the corner. Swaraj's participation in the Abu Dhabi ministerial, therefore, must be viewed as a **diplomatic opening** for a **sustained and long-term political engagement** of the Islamic world as a collective.

**Conclusion:**

India has been consistently **criticised by the OIC** for its alleged human rights violations in Kashmir, often seen at the behest of Pakistan.

Pakistan on its part had objected stating that any country wishing **to get observer status** should **not be involved in any dispute with an OIC member state** the reference being to the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir.

With India moving to **recraft and consolidate its ties** with major Muslim countries in recent years, countries such as the UAE and Turkey besides Saudi Arabia have responded to New Delhi's overtures.

Elaborating on **India's vast Muslim community**, Foreign Minister highlighted about Muslim in India speak Tamil and Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi, Bangla and Bhojpuri or any of the numerous languages of India.

They have **diverse culinary tastes, myriad choices of traditional attire**, and they maintain **strong cultural and linguistic heritage** of the regions they loved and have lived for generations.