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Issue Brief

Resolution of Kashmir Issue: A Key to Indo-Pak Relations

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Bilateral relations between India and Pakistan have always been subject to hurdles and turmoil. At the heart of these turbulent relations, Kashmir has been the core issue between the two nuclear armed neighbours. The wars that took place between Pakistan and India, the main reason behind them have always been Kashmir (implicitly or explicitly).

The Chief of Indian National Investigation Authority (NIA) on Thursday, June 2, 2016, while talking to an international news agency, revealed that there was no evidence of Pakistan's involvement in Pathankot attack. The Indian government used the Pathankot attack as an excuse to call off the Foreign Secretary level meeting to discuss modalities regarding the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue (CBD). The Jammu & Kashmir dispute, as an integral part of agenda matter, was to be discussed during the dialogue along with Siachen, Sir Creek, counter terrorism, peace and security. India has subjected to such escapist manoeuvres time and again to avoid discussing the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.

The main motive behind India's current Kashmir policy and its non serious attitude towards any dialogue on the issue is its adamant aims to annex Kashmir. A large segment of its armed forces have been deployed in Kashmir (about 750,000) approximately for the past seven decades. Pakistan, on the other hand, wants the liberation of the people of Kashmir, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 47, who have been a target of Indian aggression and oppression for so many decades. Pakistan believes that as the rights of the Kashmiri people are involved, they should be given the right to self determination and the choice to decide their own future.

The international political environment is changing rapidly and the two nuclear neighbours need to adapt accordingly. Pakistan and India need to realise the gravity of the situation prevailing in the region. It is imperative for Pakistan and India to act responsibly. Even a minor mistake can lead to a nuclear catastrophe. The international community has been persuading both the countries to work towards reconciliation. While Pakistan has been acting responsibly and playing by the book all along in accordance with the international law and political environment (as evident by its practices and policies), India, is a completely different story.

India, from the very beginning, has been acting in an extremely dangerous manner towards Pakistan and has never accepted nor respected its existence. India has been engaging in malicious practices to suppress and malign Pakistan in the region and in front of the international community. Cross-border shelling, border incursions and violations of the international border, which consumes the lives of numerous innocent Pakistani citizens, is a routine practice conducted by India. As evident by its

practices, the state of India has no regard for international laws and conventions. Behaviour of India regarding the Kashmir dispute is a stark example. India considers Kashmir a bilateral matter and rejects the mediation of any third party. This shows the insecurities, narrow-mindedness and insincerity that prevail in the Indian establishment. India even declares the UN Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP, deployed since 1949 across the LoC) to be outdated and ineffective since the Simla Pact and calls for its disbandment.

India needs to acknowledge the fact that Kashmir is the core issue between India and Pakistan. Without the resolution of Kashmir, bilateral relations between the two countries will always be prone to turbulence. India declares Kashmir to be an integral part of its territory and refuses to talk on this matter. It wants to take the issue of Kashmir off the table in talks with Pakistan. Statements and stands like these are an indication of notorious Indian designs and thinking which has left the region unstable for decades on end.

The Kashmir dispute holds utmost significance for Pakistan and it is an integral part of its agenda regarding talks with India. The latter constantly tries to sabotage the dialogue process whenever things start to turn for the better between the two countries. Indian strategy to sabotage the peace process involves conducting various exercises, such as imprisoning Kashmiri leaders prior to commencement of any talks between Pakistan and India or by giving provocative statements, (for example the statement of the Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in August 2015 which said that, "Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Pakistan Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs and National Security, was welcome in New Delhi if Pakistan could give an assurance by midnight that talks would be confined only to terror and not Kashmir"). Border incursions and violations, proxy terror activities (in Balochistan and Karachi) and undergoing the age-old practice of blame game against Pakistan are also some of the tools India uses to sabotage dialogue process.

Pakistan on the other hand has been following legal, moral and political norms all along, and is always first to extend a hand of friendship towards India. Pakistan is ready to discuss all issues with India but Kashmir needs to be addressed first in order to ensure durable peace and cooperation. India needs to stop blaming Pakistan for all the ills in the region, especially terrorism, because Pakistan is the worst victim of this menace and has suffered the most. In fact, Pakistani state has done the most in the fight against terrorism as compared to any other state in the world.

International political environment demands economic cooperation and dependence. This is the age of globalisation where soft power has surpassed hard power. Economy is the buzz word for the day and age. Hence, it needs to be kept in the spotlight. Pakistan and India should look at the bigger picture and come out of the dark pits of history and old experiences.

Pakistan and India should renew efforts to promote peace and security for the resolution of their disputes. They should explore common grounds in order for a peaceful solution to their core issues. The position taking should be seen with fresh perspectives. Kashmir is the primary issue and point of conflict. Result-oriented efforts should be made for its resolution but, for that confidence and trust needs to be restored before any progress can be made. Pakistan and India should break the stereotypes. Numerous venues of cooperation and trust building exist in the world today which can be explored.

Cultural exchanges, student exchanges, joint tourism programmes and combined sporting events can be conducted. This will help build confidence between the governments of the two countries but also help the people of the two nations bond and understand each other in a better manner. Joint ventures can be undertaken by Pakistan and India to tackle problems like poverty, unemployment and environment degradation which is plaguing both the countries. Being the two most powerful states in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), India and Pakistan should work towards reorganising the regional body which would not only help in regional cooperation and stability but also bring down the tensions between India and Pakistan as well. Mutual respect and obedience towards international laws and conventions should be observed for long lasting peace and cooperation.

National interests are supreme and the state of Pakistan acknowledges this fact. India should look out for its national interests but not at the peril of Pakistan's national security interests. In the end it all boils down to the fact that Kashmir is the most significant part of Pakistan's national security interests and without its resolution things cannot move forward. To avoid stalemate, Pakistan and India need to reengage.