



Opinion Piece on India-Pakistan Contention: Cost of Indian Propaganda Machines

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If there's one thing that became clear during the latest episode of confrontation between India and Pakistan, it is that there are no winners when it comes to the conflict – no matter how small – between the two nuclear-armed states.

The sovereignty of a state – which is protected under United Nations Charter Article 2(4) – is nothing to be taken lightly. Hence, when the Indian Air Force [breached](#) Pakistan's sovereignty on 26th February 2019, it was considered as a major act of aggression, thereby exacerbating the tensions.



Nuclear Bombing of Japanese city of Hiroshima in WWII – via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Bearing in mind that both states have considerable firepower, not to mention well over a hundred [nuclear warheads](#) each, the nerve-racking imagination of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) – unimaginable loss of life, decimation of infrastructure and devastation of economy – is a primary and often-cited stark reminder to both states that no good can come from the usage of such force – or any force for that matter – against each other. The annihilation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima is a horrifying aide-mémoire of this.

The aggressive and warmongering statements by the BJP Government just to fortify their seats in the upcoming general elections have strongly jeopardized the economy of both

countries. It is unimaginable in 21st century that a self-proclaimed “democratic state” such as India is threatening to wage a war against Pakistan in political congregations just to incite the innocent people through infiltrating them with religious and xenophobic hatred – not to mention the outrageous [display of army personnel and fighter jets on the election campaign banners](#). War hysteria is extremely damaging for a country's economy as it has an adverse impact on trade, damages investment outlook, disrupts the movement of people as well as commercial goods within the country, and not to mention the suspension of airspace for commercial flights. Hence, considering the current economic outlook of both countries, and the stability of the region as a whole, peace is indispensable for both India and Pakistan. Both countries being developing economies cannot afford any of the aforementioned consequences as it would bring the economic growth to a standstill by adversely impacting the foreign direct investment, trade, tourism industry, and industrial exports – to name a few. Moreover, any conflict between the two would seriously undermine the peace and stability of the already fragile South Asian region. It will undermine the efforts of regional and international organisations.

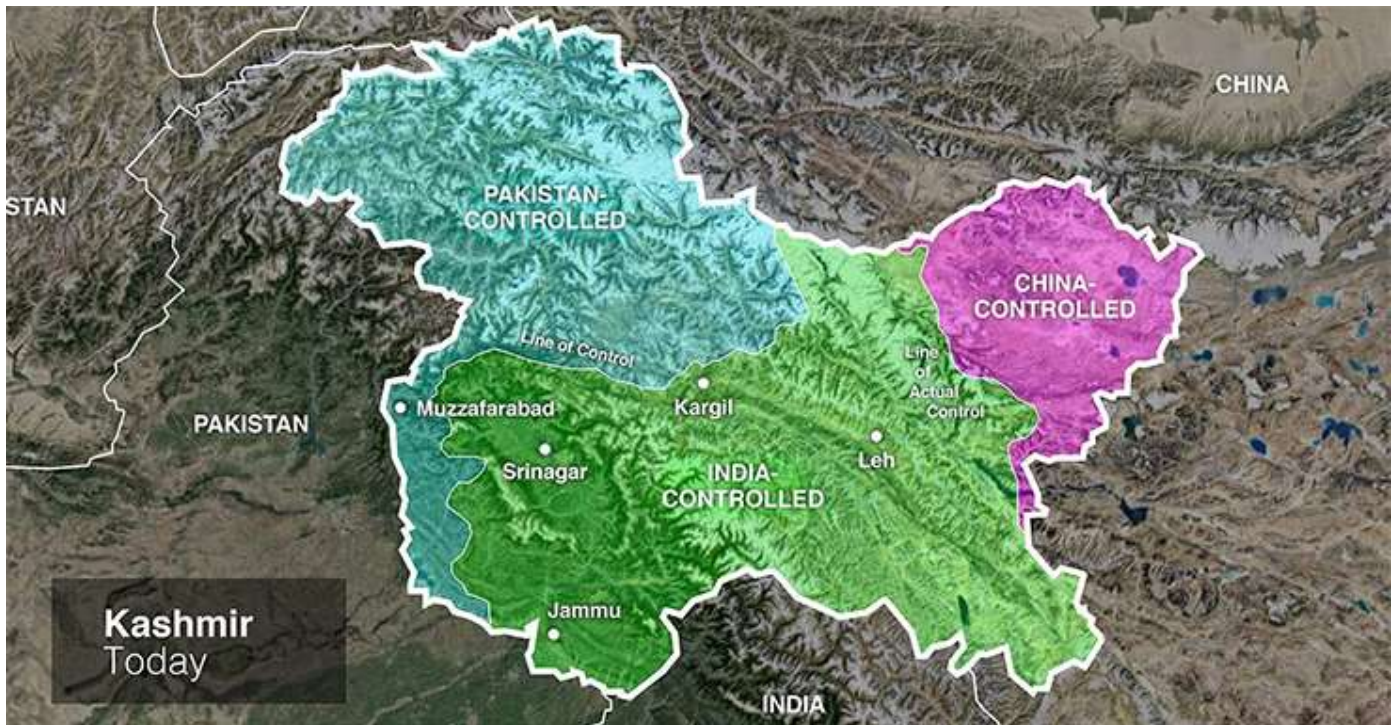
But there's more to it than mere MAD, loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and instability in the region. Perhaps one of the most, if not the most, adverse impact of such Indian aggression is what it does to the millions of innocent Kashmiris who continue to wander in the abyss when it comes to the question about their future. Millions of Kashmiris have been subjected to worst forms of violence since 1947. According to [UN Human Rights Report on Kashmir](#) (2016-2018), over 150 civilians died in a period of fewer than two years, while thousands have been injured – including 6,221 who were targeted by Indian forces with metal pellets between 2016 and 2017.

In the [words](#) of former UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, “the political dimensions of the dispute between India and Pakistan have long been centre-stage, but this is not a conflict frozen in time. It is a conflict that has robbed millions of their basic human rights, and continues to this day to inflict untold suffering”.



Protests in Kashmir – via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Just recently, a day after the Indian Air Force breached Pakistan’s sovereignty, on 27 February 2019, again [four innocent civilians](#) – including two children – were killed in Azad Jammu & Kashmir due to shelling by Indian forces from other side of Line of Control. This is exactly what needs to be kept in mind – innocent and young lives are being lost in the midst of conflict. It is reassuring to see that the UN-mandated peaceful resolution has been and remains Pakistan’s as well as the international community’s priority, as reflected by numerous statements by the Pakistani leadership as well as UNSC resolutions. However, such a contentious environment is anything but helpful for the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Therefore, a comprehensive dialogue – as proposed numerous times by Pakistan – between India and Pakistan needs to be initiated as soon as possible with UN mediation as exclusive bilateralism hasn’t bode much success in the past. In the midst of all this turmoil Pakistan has maintained peaceful gestures by immediately releasing the Indian pilot resulting in neutralization of the perilous conflict, but also extending its hand to Indian government for peaceful settlement of the disputes especially the Kashmir issue.



Map of Kashmir – via [BBC](#)

Kashmir is not just a bone of contention since 1947, but an absolutely beautiful reflection of heaven on earth as well as an area of geostrategic importance. Whether it be the natural Indus water system that forms the lifeline of both countries, or merely the geographic location itself, Kashmir holds great importance in the world of geopolitics. However, Kashmir should be treated much more than simply a case study of “geopolitics” – by not only policymakers but also analysts. Kashmiris and their land should be humanised rather than (geo) politicised.

One of the most astonishing things to see during the chain-of-events that initiated in February was the coverage and role of media – especially on the [eastern side](#) of the line of control. Indian media, unfortunately, played the role of a war-drum while acting as a [“propaganda machine”](#) to provoke the Indian population by playing with their emotions. By simply going over a few headlines and news coverage of events taking place in the last few weeks, one could easily reach the conclusion that war is indeed imminent. Knowing how serious the matter is, and how influential media’s role is in informing public opinion as well as foreign policy, a key institution such as media should act in a responsible and humane manner. Media, as well as policymakers, need to think about the consequences of their actions – as actions in times like these often end up defining the decades and centuries that follow.

Where do we go from here?

The [release](#) of captured Indian pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman by Pakistan was surely a welcome, necessary and right call. It showed not just the people on both sides of the border, but also the international community, that the path of peace is better than the path of confrontation and conflict. In doing so, it further strengthened the mandate of the UN and the resolve of UNMOGIP officials dedicated to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Dialogue is not only key in resolving conflicts, but also the need of time. Without sitting down, discussing the key issues, and laying down an actionable pathway, it is extremely difficult that the prevailing environment disperses.

Hence, both countries should move forward towards having a regular dialogue for resolution of all disputes especially Kashmir, Junagadh, Siachen and others. We are living in the 21st century where North and South Korea, together with the United States, have opened a direct channel of communication. Thus, a regular communication channel between India and Pakistan does not seem farfetched anymore.

Indian media should now realise that their propaganda has resulted in nothing but harm and a bad repute for their country in front of the entire world. Critically-acclaimed analysts and newspapers around the world criticized the unprofessional approach of Indian media which played as a catalyst to throw 1.4 billion people almost into brink of destruction. Therefore, it is pertinent that media should play the pacifist role of peace-lover rather warmonger.

It is time to practice the ideas freely on which the partition of subcontinent was drawn. Quaid-i-Azam's vision of right of self-determination and peaceful relations with neighbours on the basis of equality is what guarantees the peaceful future of South Asia. Two Nation Theory cannot be infringed and it should be realized by the Indian government.

It is time that we let bygones be bygones. It is time that we choose peace over conflict. It is time that we zoom out and see the bigger picture – or in sociological terms – seek the “general” in the “specific”. It is time that we think about the people of Kashmir before anything else. It is time that we treat one another as humans.