Kashmir Issue - Part II

Click here for the Part I.

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What is the issue?

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The Kashmir valley is back into national focus.

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Why the Kashmir Valley back into national focus?

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- The first was the **abysmal voter turnout** in the Srinagar parliamentary by-poll.
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- The second was a video of **protesters abusing and assaulting jawans** of the CRPF in Budgam district.
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- The third was a video showing a **Kashmiri tied to an Army jeep** in order to prevent an attack from stone pelters in the same district
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What has changed between 2014 and 2017?

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- The Indian state has long flaunted electoral participation as a validation of its claim of Indian democracy being in firm demand in the Valley.
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- The voter turnout in the 2014 Lok Sabha election in the same constituency was just 26%. Even by that standard, the fall to 7% last week was huge.
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- **The Government:** In 2014, the verdict was split. Due to fractured mandate the BJP and The Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) formed

an alliance.
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- The alliance with the BJP may have induced a sense of betrayal among its supporters.
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- **Burhan Wani killing:** The commander of the terrorist organization Hizbul Mujahideen was killed in an encounter last summer.
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- The killing resulted in a prolonged season of stone pelting by Kashmiri youth.
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- The response by the security forces, restrained as it was, ended up killing some and blinding (or partially blinding) some others, the latter because of the use of pellet guns as a riot-control weapon.
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- The inability of the security forces to uphold the highest norms of morality in a conflict zone was overplayed, and it continues till today as the outrage over the Kashmiri man tied to the army jeep shows.
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What is the way ahead?

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- It is time to take a **calm, practical and realistic look** at the situation in the Valley.
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- **Youth engagement is the key**. This is obvious and efforts in this direction have to be spurred on.
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- We have to take our own steps to **improve border management. A smart fence** is required immediately.
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- Similar focus should be given to the separatists. Decide on one way to deal with them and carry that through. Ignoring them is no longer an option.
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- The confidence on the government agencies will come only through words and deeds.
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- The rhetoric will continue, it now seems to have acquired a life of its own, but the government and all its organs, including the security forces, must calmly assess the situation and adopt a clear strategy.
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- **Development is helpful** but it cannot compete with the power of emotions,

with desires and perceived wrongs. These will have to be tackled only in the human domain.
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Source: The Indian Express & Live Mint

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