Trump on Kashmir Issue

What is the issue?

- US President Donald Trump has said that Indian PM Modi had asked him to mediate on Kashmir and that he “would love to help”.
- Trump’s claim has since been refuted by the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson and the External Affairs Minister.

What is Trump's rationale?

- There could be several reasons for Trump trying to wade into Kashmir.
- Earlier in 2019, he claimed to have defused the India-Pakistan standoff that arose from the Pulwama attack.
- The US is also said to have played a part in the release of an Indian Air Force pilot who was captured across the LoC.
- The US also played a role in forcing China to agree to the designation of Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a “global terrorist”.
- Most recently, Trump took credit for the arrest of Lakshar terrorist Hafiz Saeed.
- Besides, it was the US again that defused tensions and persuaded India away from a war with Pakistan after the 2001 Jaish-e-Mohammad attack on Parliament.
- Perhaps, the US President thinks that if his Administration succeeded in bringing Taliban for negotiating with Afghanistan, it can do the same with India and Pakistan too.

Why is India reluctant to mediation?

- India has always shown mistrust to outsiders meddling in India's internal affairs.
- It has strongly felt the need to protect its secular nationhood project.
- Jawaharlal Nehru, who took Pakistan’s invasion in 1947 to the United Nations, was quick to realise his mistake.
- The UN missions flowing from the resolutions were not in line with India's preferences.
- E.g. the Dixon Mission led to the Dixon Plan of 1950 calling for partition of some areas of J&K between India and Pakistan, plus a plebiscite in the Valley

- This strengthened India’s determination to not go with international mediation on the Kashmir issue.

What is India's present stance?

- India has now reiterated this longstanding position that there is no room for mediation in Kashmir or on any other India-Pakistan issue.
- It has also emphasized that all outstanding matters between the two countries would be resolved through bilateral dialogue.
- However, this is possible only when Pakistan ends cross-border terrorism in India.
- Moreover, the 9/11 attack on the U.S. ushered in the UNSC-backed international legal regime against terrorism.
- After this, India has looked increasingly to the world for help in dealing with Pakistan.
- Nevertheless, this was only on one issue, which is putting an end to the terrorist groups that flourish on Pakistani territory.
- The objective is to put pressure on the Pakistan Army and political leadership to desist from permitting anti-India terrorist activity on its territory.

What is Pakistan's view?

- The framework for bilateral resolution of problems between India and Pakistan was written into the 1972 Simla Agreement.
- It was again reiterated 27 years later in the Lahore Declaration in 1999.
- Nonetheless, Pakistan has continued to believe in “internationalisation” of the Kashmir issue.
- It sees this as its best bet towards reversing J&K’s accession to India.
- Pakistan has thus used every global forum to criticise India’s “illegal occupation” of Kashmir.
- Now, Pakistan PM Imran Khan has welcomed Trump's offer of mediation, saying Kashmir will not be resolved bilaterally.

What is the way forward?

- How the new issue would impact the present uneven and unpredictable relations with the United States remains to be seen.
- The response from both sides could now be to put aside the issue quietly and move ahead.
- For New Delhi, it may be time to recognise that Mr. Trump’s comments are a sign of new realities in international diplomacy.
- The government should pursue the issue through diplomatic channels with the U.S. government.

- Moreover, international interest in Kashmir has usually found expression when there is a vacuum in India-Pakistan engagement.
- Given this, it is crucial that India extend its diplomatic efforts to mend bilateral ties with Pakistan.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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