Jihadist Radicalisation in Kashmir: An Analysis of Causal Factors

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Introduction

On 05 August 2019, the Government of India revoked the special constitutional status allotted to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution of India and abrogated Article 35 A which essentially authorised the legislature of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to define 'permanent residents of J&K' as also to define as to what rights and privileges does such residency[1] entail. In justifying Article 370's abrogation, the Government of India argued that the move would "prevent terrorism" and "restore Kashmiri youth's faith in the Indian State".[2]

The continuance of Article 370, though initially hailed as an example of the flexibility of the Indian Constitution and practice in Positive discrimination, over the years was perceived as an 'unfinished business of partition' and a 'tangible barrier' to the greater integration of J&K with the Indian territory.

Key Points

- Terrorism itself in Kashmir has adopted a hydra-like formulation, thus a question needs to be asked – What are the factors that motivate individuals to adopt violent means to put forth their demands? The answer can be found in the concept of Radicalisation.

- Understanding Islamic Radicalisation in the valley is imperative to undertake conflict prevention measures—one needs to gauge the opportunity factors that provide avenues for individuals to adopt violent extremist ideologies.

- The catalysts of Islamic Radicalisation in the valley are wide ranging— economic factors (two-box disease), Psychological factors, *Digihad*, Religious narratives, Apathy towards State, external dimensions and Domestic Political dimensions.

- Individual as well as mass radicalisation can be countered by promoting existing industries, tackling of trust deficit in governmental institutions, invocation of faith for effective de-radicalisation, promotion of vocational skills in de-radicalisation centres and countering of extremist narratives online.

The wider perception however has been that Article 370 promoted a sense of Kashmiri sub-nationalism which was in turn exploited by Pakistan to keep an almost thirty-year-old insurgency festering.

However, with rise in nationalistic sentiments after the Uri attack[3], Article 370 was seen to be a 'fertiliser' for terror in the valley. The heinous Pulwama attack in 2019 which was perpetrated by Jaish-e-Mohammed on a convoy of CRPF soldiers wherein 40 personnel were killed, changed the need for abrogation of Article 370 from simply a policy initiative to a counter-terror exercise by the Indian State.

Terrorism in Kashmir has adopted a hydra-like formulation, thus a question needs to be asked – What are the factors that motivate individuals to adopt violent means to put forth their demands? This article seeks to explicate the phenomenon of radicalisation; both amongst the common populace as well as individuals who join terror outfits; it does so by relating the "Islamicate" concept of jihad as an antecedent for developing violent extremist ideology. The next section then ventures onto distinct agents of radicalisation that provides a space to cause and nurture radicalisation. Finally, the article seeks to provide certain policy suggestions to effectively counter the phenomenon.

Figure 1: Fatalities in Kashmir

Source: The Hindu

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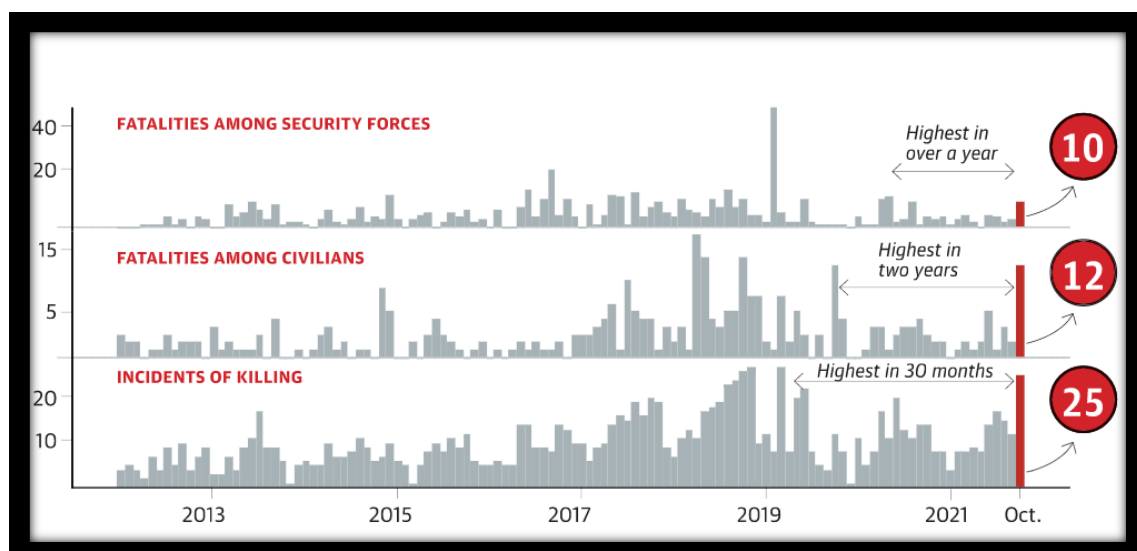
In the report titled "India's Kashmir Conundrum: Before and After the Abrogation of Article 370" Kashmir insurgency was termed as the era of quasi- violence, which essentially is a grey area between peaceful non-violent resistance and armed insurgency— this form of 'confrontational politics' involves usage of non-lethal tactics and is done with a considerable amount of publicity. [4]

There is a stark asymmetry between civilian participants facing off well-armed paramilitary forces, with the former appearing as a mere nuisance. Thus, by the usage of 'hit and run' tactics, there is an inherent attempt to delegitimise the authority of the state by trying to induce an overreaction and showcasing resolve. Thus, such events bolster the need to look at the antecedents of radicalisation in a concrete manner, as such confrontational politics could be a result of mass inculcation of radical thoughts, and alternately it could also provide breeding space for radical ideologues via groupthink.

A prominent example of such quasi-violent activity is stone pelting, perhaps inspired by the Palestinian Intifada. Incidents of stone pelting later escalated beyond mere expressions of anger wherein thousands of police and security forces were injured. From a radicalisation standpoint, stone pelting can also constitute a slippery slope that is it does not take much time for a violent activity to become a serious security threat.

Perceptions of Jihad in Kashmir

The Islamicate concept of Jihad possesses great moral value, except limiting it to religiously sanctioned warfare. Both Sunni and Shia schools of Islam distinguishes between a 'greater jihad' and 'lesser jihad'. The greater jihad (*jihad kabira*) involves a spiritual and moral transformation of the believer itself whereas jihad in terms of warfare constitutes the lesser Jihad (*jihad saghira*). In Kashmir especially with regards to refugees in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, there is no stark distinction between greater and lesser jihad— both of them exist in a continuum.[5]

Undertaking greater jihad prior to performing lesser jihad gives legitimacy to the latter. Refugees who either have experienced firsthand violence or the Kashmiri Mujahids from Muhajir settlements, who have been involved in militancy, help induce transformation by reinforcing the narrative of state perpetrated violence; thus this state of being aware of violence against one's own community (*quom*) creates an obligation to act on behalf of the larger community.

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Jihad as an armed struggle, in the Kashmiri communities, is legitimised by promoting a connection between human rights (*insani haquq*) and the individual's religious duties (*farz*) towards other individuals. At its core, the 1989 insurgency provided a confluence between a search for Islamic identity and Kashmiri sub-nationalism.[6] While, there were many reasons for insurgency to emerge—such as disenchantment with the electoral process, failing political economy, and external state sponsorship—but what differentiated the Kashmir conflict from other secessionist movements faced by India, is the mixture of secular-nationalist liberation struggle with the assertion of political Islam.

Impact of Global Events on Perceptions of Jihad

Global events such as the decline of secular forces within the Arab world after the 1967 defeat from Israel and ascendancy of the conservative Gulf regimes led by Saudi Arabia, with an aim to tackle the growing appeal of revolutionary, democratic, and 'Republican' Islam, post the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979, also had an indirect impact on the valley.

Conservative and hereditary regimes in the Gulf region with their growing financial clout, began to counter Iran by invoking Sunni consciousness among Muslims.[7] Saudi Arabia began to promote a hardline interpretation under its Wahhabi brand of Islam. The Impact of this fragmentation in the valley was that, a wide extent of new mosques started coming up with sectarian identifications, more prominently Salafi mosques reflecting the Saudi influence and funding. These mosques help spread more radical interpretations of Islam. Salafi-Wahhabi Sunni Islam is a doctrine which is ultra-conservative in its purview. This doctrine essentially preaches the requirement of an 'unadulterated' puritan form of Islam.

However, the Soviet withdrawal (1989) from Afghanistan had the highest impact on the insurgency wherein a small nation (Afghanistan) with its faith (*deen*) as the guiding factor, defeated a huge atheist superpower (Russia). The Afghan-Soviet insurgency also led Pakistan's security establishment to gain experience and expertise in usage of proxy warfare in Afghanistan and was more than willing to use it in J&K The emergence of Central Asian Republics (CAR) comprising Muslim majority population, following breakup of the Soviet Union, also provided huge source of motivation to the Kashmiris.

Jihad as a Tool of Social Mobilisation

Thus, with this background, militant organisations found it excessively easy to mobilise the common populace with Islamic slogans. But this, in turn, motivated the radical players to become more serious with Islamic aspirations. Organisations such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front {JKLF} (which for all practical purposes had a secular understanding of Kashmiri nationhood) capitalised on the sway held by political Islam by creating a 'crusader' like narrative against the supposedly 'Hindu/Indian State' (thus promoting notions of Groupthink and Ingroup-Outgroup Bias). Motivational literature used symbols and metaphors of Islam extensively, carefully selecting militant strands of Islamic history— all the while harking back to the heroic deeds of the Prophet Muhammad.

Several leaders used Islamic fables to persuade the population that 'jihad and martyrdom' would 'secure freedom' from India. The JKLF also used the *Friday Namaz* (prayer congregations) at the Jama Masjid in Srinagar to mobilise public support. On occasions, when huge amount of masses gathered at the mosque and after the *Imam* (religious leader)finished prayers, the JKLF boys dispersed amongst the crowd and raised slogans— *"Islam zindabad"* ("long live Islam") and *"hum kya chahatein, azaadi"* ("we want what-freedom').

Thus, to portray Kashmir's identity as distinct from the Indian state, a narrative has been created wherein Kashmir as a state has unique Islamic identity that is threatened by Indian notions of secularism. Thus in this scenario, Jihad should be waged against the Indian state, as *Quran* 'legitimises' violent action to defend the *Shariat*, which in this case is the Kashmiri people's right to govern themselves democratically. Establishing an Islamic state is not the end but the means to achieve an independent Kashmir.

Role of External Factors in Shaping Perceptions of Jihad

Final perceptions of Jihad in Kashmir are partly shaped by external forces; here Kashmir is established as an Islamic state, and Islam reigns supreme as the ideology of a Muslim state. The desire is for the Muslim resources to be harnessed for the growth of the 'Ummah' alone that is territory which is populated by majority of Muslims should be governed by a Muslim leader in accordance with *Shariat*. Emboldened by their success in Afghanistan, the foreign fighters embarked on a mission to realise a pan-Islamic agenda by their usage of militant

Jihad. Their self-professed goal was to establish a grand Islamic Caliphate stretching across the Middle East, Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia.[8]

Here, territorial sovereignty is not recognised and the Islamic caliphate is the only true form of governance. The aim is to liberate the 'Islamic' territories from 'apostate governments'. Pakistan's ties with the Mujahideen since the Afghan-Soviet Conflict and its own birth from the two-nation theory, in 1947, as a nation for Muslims, encourage a cognitive consonance, and hence the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan is supported. The seeds of a larger jihad, beyond J&K, were sown early in the conflict. Therefore, a multitude of foreign fighters from Pakistan arrived in Kashmir as well to revoke the historical 'injustices'.

The Hizbul Mujahideen chief— Syed Salahuddin, announced back in 1993 that, "We want to hit India economically ... and strike in every nook and corner". [9]Then in 1998, the group openly declared its intentions to take the "war against India outside Jammu and Kashmir" and to "move towards Delhi". As jihad in Kashmir evolved, the notion of insurgency started becoming more violent. [10] It was maintained by the Hizbul Mujahideen that, to gain Kashmir a greater jihad, that weakens the Indian State's political and military might, is the need of the hour.

Agents of Radicalisation in Kashmir

Two Box Disease: The Economic Dimension

In his article "India's youth Challenge", Pawan Kumar[11] eloquently elucidates the notion of 'two-box disease' wherein due to the separation of vocational training from higher education, graduates do not possess sufficient skills that would make them better equipped for the fiercely competitive labour market, therefore many qualified individuals either end up working in the unorganised low wage service sector or even the Primary sector. The Universities and colleges also churns out a growing number of unemployable graduates. This could have an impact both on the economic health and psychological perceptions of the individual.

Kashmir division remains tied up to employment patterns generated by agriculture. In 1981, less than a third of the state's population (30.4 percent) was classified in the census as 'main workers' (i.e. those working more than six months or 183 days), with another 13.9 percent classified as 'marginal workers' (finding less than six months employment), and fully 55.7 percent as non-workers'.[12]

The Valley was also an area of growth decline — wherein the ability of the economy to absorb youth steadily declined   as the cultural bias produced a pronounced imbalance in the sex ratio (for Kashmir the F: M ratio in 1981 was 878:1,000). There was a demographic tidal wave of unabsorbed youthful males appearing in the late 1980s who had an expectation-reality disconnect and lacked a sense of purpose.

A study carried out by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats reveals an 'inverted U model' wherein terrorism is carried out by those who are in the middle of the socio-economic curve rather than those at the lowest or highest ends.[13] Thus, on the economic front, an individual may face a situation known as 'relative deprivation' wherein an individual believes that resources which are 'rightfully theirs' has now been snatched away. Here, one does not see the micro-level grievance— the individual is not born into poverty; rather he gains a university education to dispel any chance illiteracy. Thus, a micro-level grievance is formed wherein the Indian State as a whole is blamed unavailability of jobs.

With a confluence of 'Islamisation' and sub-nationalism, an Individual forms a distinct identity, creating a 'Us v/s Them' narrative wherein the prosperity of the Indian State is built upon the toils of this particular deprived person. For some individuals, the short-term rewards offered by terror organisations, could itself provide incentives to join them.

The climate of uncertainty, posed by militancy, also deters private investors from establishing production units in the valley; year 2016 being a case in point, as discontent over the death of slain terrorist— Burhan Wani, led to widespread protests and curfews that lasted for more than fifty days.

Between July and November 2016, Kashmir suffered a massive fall in industrial production and frequent interruptions of continued economic activity. The 2016 Economic Survey estimated the total loss for the period to be over Rs 16,000 crore.[14]

Individual Experiences

In the post 1989 period, one of the most prominent methods of individual radicalisation has been through 'kinship connections' and 'one's surroundings, neighborhood, and family'. In her book *Body of a Victim and Body of a Warrior*, Caiberi DeBergh Robinson[15], provides accounts of individuals who decided to become militants to avenge the torture meted out to

the male members of their family or sexual violence committed against their sisters, daughters, and mothers.

Hizbul Mujahideen Commander, Burhan Wani, was reportedly drawn towards militancy after his brother was beaten by the security forces.[16] 'The 'revenge' motive was seen on two fronts in the Pulwama attack— the suicide bomber reportedly conducted the attack in retaliation tohis past arrests and humiliation by the Indian Military— an opinion voiced by his father. The second motivation was the killing of JeM leader Masood Azhar's son in 2018 by the security forces.[17]

Thus, such personal losses morphs terrorism into a 'counter- final activity'— a suicide bomber might be indoctrinated enough to believe that what he is doing is for a noble cause to mete out justice, but in psychological reality the said individual, have lost sense of his survival instinct and numerous other goals such as safety needs, love, belonging and self-actualisation required to stay alive.

Another important factor with regards to individual radicalisation is 'social ostracism' faced by ex-militants. The social exclusion iof ndividuals may fortify their threatened psychological needs (needs of belongingness, self-esteem, favouring one social identity such as religious with alienation from the other social identities such as national).[18]

This fortification leaves the individual with reduced cognitive regulation which in turn may have profound effects on information processing and later, as a consequence, may render individuals more receptive to social influence which ultimately transforms to radicalisation. [19]

Figure 2: Probable Factors of Radicalisation
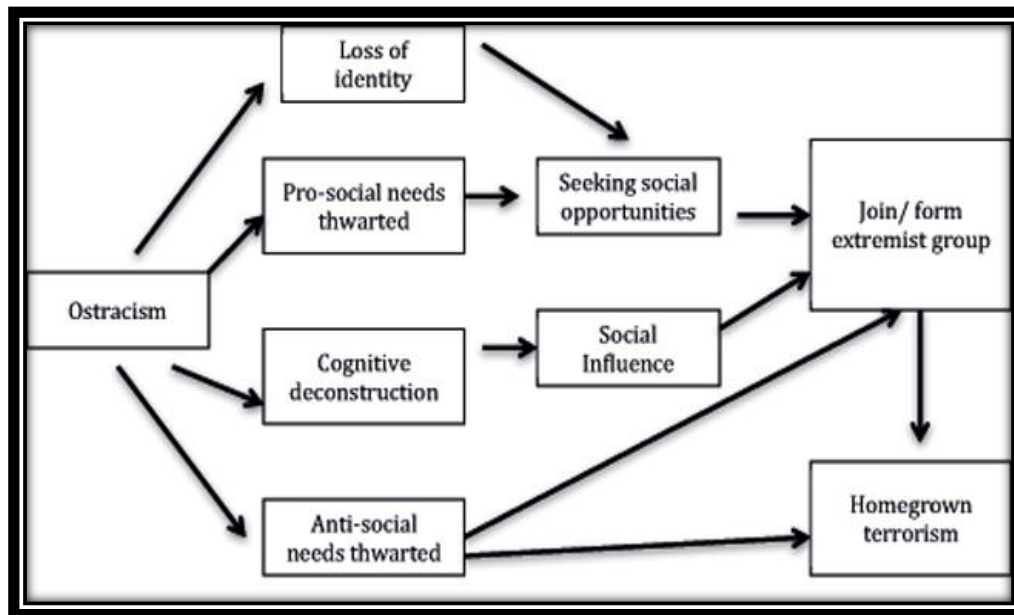
Source: Journal of European Psychology[20]

Apart from psychological dimensions, social ostracism also gives rise to economic factors which may make the individual vulnerable to radicalication. While the 2019 'surrender and revision policy', with its focus on socio-economic integration and good compensation appeared promising in the initial stages, however onerous paperwork, corruption and layers of security clearances, led to unusual delay and disillusionment.[21]

Apart from the social burden of a criminal record, the surrendered individuals might find it difficult to gain employment as they lack employment experience and moreover disintegration of social connections may lead to lack of job searching networks, thus giving rise to feelings of relative deprivation. Another aspect which may hamper the de-radicalisation process is that the surrendered individuals may themselves become targets as seen in the Ikhwezi project of 1990s.[22]

Individuals may also give importance to terror-justifying ideologies. Typically, such ideologies contains element of grievances and binaries are formed by assuming that 'there is a culprit' (in J&K's case the culprit refers to Indian Security Forces) who is presumed to be responsible for the injustices meted out and there is a 'morally warranted' and effective method of removing the dishonour created by injustice (militancy).

After the abrogation of special status, a communication clampdown was enforced in the valley, which in theory seemed to be a well thought out tactic to restrain the spread of violent tendencies, however it should be noted that radicalisation also takes place in areas where people feel alienated; people of one particular religious affiliation can develop shared fears, sometimes leading to mass hysteria— these enclaves are known as ideological sanctuaries and can lead to rapid dissemination of extremist ideologies.

After the abrogation, radicalisation 'by word of mouth' has become rampant, wherein overground workers (OGWs) of terrorist organisations, communicates through satellite phones and radicalises the youth during prayers at mosques. [23]

Digihad: The Cyber Dimension

The cyber dimension of radicalisation in Kashmir involves the trend of '*digihad'* (digital Jihad) which was popularised by the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS). In digihad, propaganda is used by Jihadis[24] to recruit, finance, and train more fighters for their cause and enforce their extremist worldviews on the recipients of propaganda, without even leaving their homes. Terrorist organisations also practices countering of the claims of governmental agencies via online platform.

Triggering a conflict through cyberspace can have a substantial impact without involving major costs; insurgents and terrorists throughout the world have come to rely heavily on cyber mobilisation, which is especially equipped to effectively carry out psychological warfare.[25] In Kashmir, many times due to closure of physical arenas, individuals tend to vent out their frustrations on the virtual space, which are later misused.

With the advent of phenomenon like the 'Digital Ummah'[26], radical and jihadist organisations have been trying to create a cyber-Islamic environment in Kashmir and have well realised the crucial role of cyberspace in stimulating a global Islamist identity among Kashmiri Muslims

Once, a Kashmiri police officer compared the internet with "a tap running 24x7, gushing out Islamist propaganda" over which the police have no control. Cyberspace is an unregulated environment in which anonymity offers ample opportunities to propagate extreme ideologies, targeted misinformation and creation of hoaxes, without revealing the identity of the organisation and the person behind the creation of the content.

Apart from facilitating mass mobilisation during protests and indoctrinating the individuals during the pre-radicalisation phase, cyberspace in Kashmir faced transformation when Burhan Wani promoted glamorous imagery of the insurgency, with the picturesque valley in the background, a copy of the Quran in one hand and Kalashnikov (Rifle) in the other.

Wani's image contained immense symbolism (juxtaposition of armed violence with holy text) and various gun snatching incidents later undertaken by the youth in South Kashmir were seemed to be inspired by his videos online. The unique aspect about the mode of propaganda dissemination by Wani was that, his mere presence provided a human face to the insurgency, directly in contrast to earlier periods wherein militants used to operate in clandestine situations, making themselves known only after death.

Wani's death sparked a sudden upsurge in the number of local militants. In 2015, the Kashmir police examined cases of 111 youngsters who had joined militancy— 58 of them eventually returned home. At least 88 of them fell in the age group of 15 to 30 yrs, and more than half were radicalised through the internet'[27]

The Lashkar-e-Taiba has also been using cyberspace to fuel the Kashmir insurgency. Few years ago, it used the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) – a technology that allows data encryption making it difficult to decode messages, for communication purposes'.[9]

Indian State Institutions' Perceptions as a driver of Radicalisation

Indian state's response towards militancy can be judged by the fact that, militancy in Kashmir is treated as a situation of insurgency rather than a problem or a conundrum. Thus, to quell an insurgency, counterinsurgency efforts – military or political (or both) should be undertaken. With respect to Kashmir, some of these measures have been adjudged to be highly contentious and could turn into potential sources of radicalisation.

The Indian Army's 2006 doctrine defines insurgency as "an organised armed struggle by a section of the population against the state, usually with foreign support. Possible causes of an insurgency include ideological, ethnic, or linguistic differences; or politico-socio-economic reasons and/or fundamentalism and extremism. Interference by external forces may act as a catalyst to provide impetus to the movement".[28] This definition by itself lays special emphasis to the external dimension and essentially forgoes the incorporation of the cognitive element which might ferment discontent from the populace in the first place.

India has adopted the 'support to the civil authority' doctrine. Thus, insurgency remains operationally, first and foremost, an issue of law & order and is required to be dealt by reinforcing the normal mechanisms of a state especially engaging the local security apparatus (police).

A framework of legal mechanisms has also been established to effectively deal with the insurgency. A variety of national and state ordinances have been implemented, allowed to lapse, then been resurrected.[29] Central have passed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act 1987, or TADA, and later The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, 2001, or POTO'.[30]

However, among these mechanisms, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act {AFSPA}(Jammu and Kashmir) of 1990 has proven to be extremely controversial as it involved the military into counter-insurgency dynamic and has turned the institution into a dominant force in terms of its sheer power.

AFSPA as a counter-terrorism tool has proven to be both meso (familial) and macro(state) level agent of radicalisation, if not direct militant action; actions undertaken under the ambit of such special acts can certainly promote charged atmosphere in interdictions, which can mark a gradual journey from development of extremist beliefs to their manifestation into militant activities.

The report— "The Kashmir Conflict: Managing Perceptions and Building Bridges of Peace"[31], comprising field surveys conducted in Kashmir between 2018 to 2019, concluded that the 'misuse of the laws has pushed increasing number of local youth towards militancy' and 'changed perceptions of the Kashmiri citizen towards the Indian State'.

The Special Powers Act also created a climate of impunity as it protects the soldiers from being tried in civilian courts, without the central government's permission, as was evidenced during widespread protests in 2006 with regards to verdict in the Pathribal encounter. Thus, while counter-terrorism is an effective management strategy, however it is not sufficient for eradication of perception of terror as a lucrative career option.

A 2018 study acknowledged that more intensive counter-terrorism operations—despite employing selective rather than indiscriminate violence, only seemed to bolster monthly recruitment and insurgent strength, 'thereby raising the graph of the total number of militants

each year".[40] In 2018, for example, 257 militants were killed, but 199 locals reportedly joined the militancy—a nearly 77 percent replacement rate.[32]

While the policy on counter-terrorism brought about an end to the first phase of insurgency via leader decapitation, however the security-intelligence grid, that enabled counter-terrorism, produced tremendous resentment amongst locals, that delegitimized the governing institutions.

External Dimension : The Pakistan Factor

Training Via Terror Camps

In the aftermath of the Uri attacks in 2016, the Indian Army, on receiving credible and specific inputs, decided to hold a pre-emptive strike to neutralise the team of terrorists who had positioned themselves at launchpads along the Line of Control (LoC).[33]

The existence of these terror camps, along the LoC, was vehemently denied by the Pakistani authorities. The situation became all the more serious when, soon after the Mumbai attacks (2008), under mounting international pressure, the Pakistani authorities sealed the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) offices in Muzaffarabad and arrested the Lashkar Chief– Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi from there.

Apart from providing training, these camps were also used to disseminate propaganda against the Indian State by creating an array of narratives— some of which states that Islam is in danger, from the polytheist forces of Hinduism, as evident from communal incidents such as Babri Masjid. During their *Dawati* training, the fighters involved in 26/11, were made to watch various propaganda videos showcasing the plight of Kashmiris at hands of the Indian state agencies.

Individuals from poorer economic backgrounds were attracted to such terror organisations as such organisations promised a functional job and decent remuneration. Ajmal Kasab upon being interviewed by the Mumbai Police stated thathe was indoctrinated whereinhe was made to believe that Muslims were not allowed to offer *Namaz* in India. He further stated that he was pleasantly taken aback when he first visited a mosque in India and realised that nothing was out of the ordinary; at the micro-level, Kasab's poverty status was

further exploited as he was made to believe that, inherent prosperity of the Indian state was directly responsible for his economic woes.

In the early days of insurgency, individuals crossed the border via J&K to attain military training and infiltrate the LoC to wage 'jihad'. For the lay individual, a two-fold narrative of 'revenge and recognition' was concocted— revenge against the security forces who were responsible for personal losses (both of family and material possessions).

Narratives adopted consisted of 'legend like formulations', an example being recognition in the eyes of God as the individual attains *shahadat* that is their body upon burying bypasses decomposition and elevates them to a saintly status with a promise of rewards in the afterlife.

Linkages with Terror Groups

Militancy in J&K, which originally started as a domestic movement, has J&K Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)— but they have been overshadowed by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Al- Badr, etc. Each of these terrorist outfits are affiliated to various overground political factions which are in turn based in Pakistan.

Figure 3: Militancy in J&K
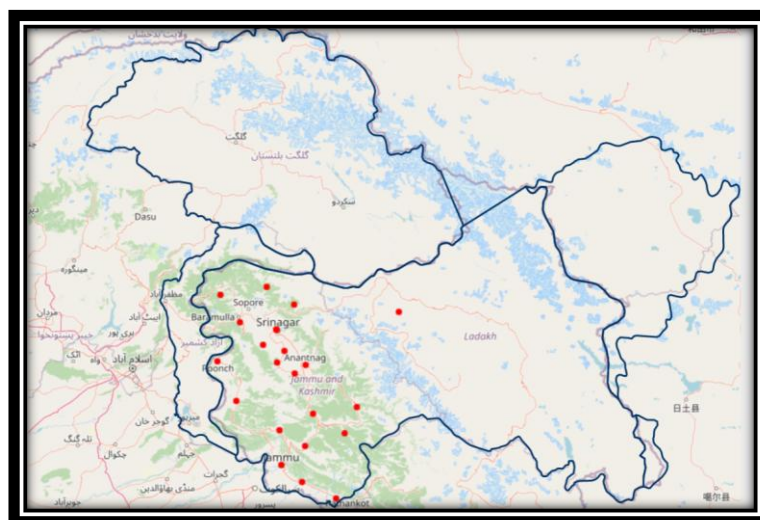
Source: satp.org[34]

The political wings of the HM —Jamaat-e-Islami and of the LeT — Markaz-ud-Dawa-Wal-Irshad, makes most of the collections and financial transactions for their militant wings

The Al-Rashed Trust, which was based in Karachi, was operated by Mohammad Masood Azhar and in the 1980s it was chosen by the ISI to channel Saudi Arabian funds to Kashmir— 'donations' were accepted for 'Kashmir Jihad' and the 'Mujahideen of Kashmir'. The Trust published advertisements in the Pakistani press soliciting funds for 'welfare work' in Kashmir, however it was the Trust' prerogative with respect to the manner the money attained for welfare would be used.

Pakistan based Markaz-ul-Dawa-Irshad, regularly publishes advertisements in its in-house monthly magazine– *Al Dawa*.[35]It also urged the Muslims to donate money for Kashmir 'Jihad fund' and deposit it in bank accounts.

Madrassas belonging to terrorist groups have been propagating a mix of 'Wahhabism' (a puritanical version of Islam) and 'Deobandism', claiming that the current laws of J&K does not originate from Sharia, hence should not be followed. Such line of thought has been propagated by epistemic terrorist leaders such as Hafiz Saeed, who has been trying to join the potential pieces of the ideological jigsaw wherein Indians are depicted as aliens &, infections and therefore must be purified.[36] Through such a form of Madrassa education, a collective identity or adherence to a particular *Maslak* is harnessed— students are deprived of individual critical thinking and are encouraged to develop a mob mentality and becoming effectively de-individualized. Systematically, the particular values and principles of a *Maslak* takes precedence over ordinary/individual beliefs, by successfully and effectively justifying the objectives and holy nature of a *Maslak* wherein the moral restraint is absolved and subsequently human rights violations are no longer considered crimes from the perpetrator's point of view. An example of a *Maslak* is the merging of a part of J&K into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the necessity of protecting it against the so-called infidel governments.

Jamaat-ud-Dawa's chain of schools propagates the ideology of Hafiz Saeed which asserts that, there is 'compatibility' and 'complementarility' between jihad & education and they would be rendered meaningless if they do not accompany each other.[37]

 In the eyes of Saeed, military training is an indisputable part of the educational syllabi at the Madrassas which prepare students to deeply espouse the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of

jihad. Saeed himself declared that: "Pakistan is a country for Muslims of the subcontinent. Therefore, it is incomplete without Kashmir; it is our duty to free these states from Hindu subjugation and assure their Muslim population that they will become part of Pakistan. This is our agenda for Pakistan's completion. We will continue to propagate it in India through speech and writing and take these states back through jihad".

Pakistan and Phases of Conflict in Kashmir

In her thesis Amritha Venkataraman introduces the phases of conflict in Kashmir—in 'Phase I', which lasted from 1989 to 1994, the Islamic terrorists encouraged participants to use violent Jihad against India and on appropriate occasion, Pakistan, in order to establish political independence in Kashmir. Phase 2 comprises extreme religious representation of Pakistani demands in Kashmir crisis; it emerged with an objective to establish 'Islamic Justice' by uniting Kashmir with Pakistan.

Thus, during Phase 2 of the J&K insurgency, Pakistan started providing its support by providing funding and training to pro-Pakistan militant groups. In the initial years of insurgency, an individual who did not have any proven relative on the PoK side or any sponsor who could attest to the individual's purpose of visit, the individual was then directed by the officials to join a *Tanzim* which could provide accountability for them.

A case in point is the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) which came into being in the Kashmir Valley in September 1989 with Master Ahsan Dar as its Chief. It was reportedly formed as the militant wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI)— an Islamist organisation. The Jamaat-e-Islami is reported to have set up the Hizbul at the behest of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to counter the JKLF, which had advocated complete independence of the State— many of the early Hizbul cadres were former JKLF members.[38]

By hiding behind the civilian population, 'Pakistan-backed jihadists' conducted acts of violence to provoke security forces into cracking down on the populace, which thereafter led to a narrative of persecution— often known as 'Jujitsu Politics'.

Internal Dimension

The Political Factors

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a combination of around 26 religious, social, and political organisations which came into existence on 09 March 1993, as an influential political front to raise the cause for the independence of Kashmir[39], the parties' disparate ideologies were held together by a common narrative that is 'Kashmir was under the occupation of India and is a disputed territory, hence India's control on it is not justified'.

The outfit's primary role has been to 'project' a 'negative image of counter-insurgency operations', by alleging security excesses and often distorting the facts to support its propaganda machinery. An example is the Haigam firing case of 16 February 2001. The incident was portrayed in Hurriyat funded channels as an assault on a peaceful gathering, whereas in reality the shot was fired as the gathering had turned violent— the protestors had blocked the Uri-Srinagar Highway and refused to let an Army convoy pass, thus making it a soft target for militants. The judicial inquiry cleared Armed Forces of the allegations.

Hurriyat has links with Pakistan; it was formed due to Pakistan's need to 'portray' the struggle for independence in J&K as an indigenous uprising. Syed Ali Shah Geelani stated that, the Constitution of Hurriyat only allows tripartite talks involving India and Pakistan. All Hill Party Conference's slogan is "No election, no selection only solution" thus indicating the party's position that it would not take part in any election process, if at all it brings power only in the ambit of the Indian Constitution. AHPC essentially seeks a solution through right to self-determination.

Some of the hardliner groups that were part of Hurriyat had militant wings of their own.[40]At present, there are two factions of AHPC indicating the moderate and extremist school of thoughts, the moderate faction led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq engaged in talks with the Indian Government. There is a propagation of 'self-rule' over autonomy and a mechanism to turn J&K into a fusion of India and Pakistan.

Whereas extremist— Tehreek-e-Hurriyat's, main objective is to pursue *Sharia* in Kashmir; the state should be governed by the principle of *'Quran'* and *'Sunnah'* ; battle should be waged against anti-Islamist Forces that come in the garb of nationalists, secularists, racists,

linguistic and chauvinists— "*Jab tak Islam ka nizam naafiz nahi hota, hamari jodujahad jaari rahe gi.*" (Until the rule of Islam prevails, we will continue our struggle)

Tehreek-e- Hurriyat's ideology has been particularly successful in attracting youth. Some of its important techniques are:

- *Mosques.* Leaders of Hurriyat fully utilises the Friday prayers to persuade people of their right to self-determination and incorporate Islam into the daily workings of their life.
- *Strikes and Protests.* By these strikes, Hurriyat attempts to draw international attention to the Kashmir dispute. According to Geelani, strikes are the only way by which oppressed people can fight for their rights.
- *Funeral Processions.* The leaders of THJK often offer *Namaz –e – Jenaza* of militants who are locally known as Mujahideens; the funeral procession becomes a rallying point for highlighting the excesses of the state agencies and to stress upon the right of self-determination.
- *Meetings.* Meetings (*ijtimas*) are held at the tehsil, unit and district levels. These meetings are attended by the general public and are addressed by party leaders. The party also organises seminars, discussions, and speeches in which different sections of the society are invited.
- *Print and Electronic Media* are also used for the dissemination of ideology.
- *Calendar.* In the year 2009, Geelani came up with a calendar to mark the history of the J&K dispute. The calendar also contains his preachings, addresses and alleged human rights violations by the Indian State.
- *Literature Distribution*. To popularise there books and pamphlets, the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat has adopted different tactics like *Maktabs* (book shops) where they sell such literature at lower rates and even distributes it free of cost. Many workers of the party voluntarily move from door to door to introduce their literature to different sections of society. The patriarch of the organisation —Geelani writes in Urdu.
- *Bait-ul-Maal*. Bait- ul- Maal essentially means 'treasuries'. Hurriyat gets its funds from the 'obligatory contribution' of the members of the organisation, sale of 'hides' of sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha, sale of books and zakat.

Another popular recurring theme with regards to political radicalisation in the valley, is the lack of social amalgamation with the rest of the Indian Society, caused by Article 370 and Article 35A.

Finally, the process of political radicalisation in Kashmir can be explained by the 'Social Movement Theory' which took shape in the 1940s, with the idea that movements arising from irrational processes of collective behavior occurring under strained environmental conditions, produces a mass sentiment of discontent[41], wherein individuals would join a movement because they passively succumbed to the overwhelming forces. In the present quasi-violent era interdictions spontaneous mass *gherao* of security force missions could provide an ideal scenario to view from SMT lens.

Interdictions also involves stone-pelting in a coordinated way to divert or hamper security forces seeking to kill or capture militants. When security forces lay a cordon for an impending kinetic engagement with militants, locals gather at the encounter site, form human barriers between security forces and their targets, and pelt security forces with stones to buy time for the militants to escape. Security forces are then forced to operate in an environment with high risk of civilian collateral damage and, as a result, cordon-and-search operations tend to go awry because militants escape and civilians are injured or even killed.

Contemporary militant funerals also provide spaces for collective public expressions of separatism. Sometimes, militants are directly able to address the attendees in funerals which then functions as venues for direct and indirect militant recruitment, mass incitement, and mobilisation, as mourning often escalates into street protests and stone-pelting. Thus, risky and reckless cathartic mass confrontational behavior is caused by anger with state's political system, and an inherent strength derived from the communal nature of such events, which often leads to a lack of regard for the power of organised security forces.

In due course, the erstwhile J&K state's party politics adopted 'coalitionist' overtones, thus inherently making state political parties more conforming towards the Centre's eradication-oriented counter-terrorism efforts, as submission can be coerced from these parties with a threat to dissolve state government coalitions. Priority given to counter-terrorism efforts tends to encourage corruption, poor governance, and financial irregularities in exchange for acquiescence.

Policy Suggestions to Tackle Radicalisation

Over the past two years, number of decisions have been taken to infuse more capital for infrastructure development and number of MoUs have been inked for investment in Kashmir, along with a focus on building more professional colleges across the UT, to equip the youth with skills essential for gainful employment. There has also been a reduction in incidents of stone- pelting and reduced attendance at funeral processions of militants. These are positive indicators that point towards improvement of the economic and security dynamic of Kashmir. However, to make this progress a sustainable phenomenon and wean away the youth from various agents of radicalisation, some measures are suggested in the following paragraphs.

In order to tackle the economic dimension of radicalisation, concerted efforts should be made by the Central Government to promote existing industries, evolve strategies targeted at providing loans to industrialists, rather than targeted capital diffusion and relief packages to revive sick industries should be actively dissuaded. An increase in developmental capital expenditure would act as an incentive for economic growth. The Central Government should adopt an 'infant industry' argument for Kashmiri industries; this approach will provide the secondary sector with a much-desired headstart against other mature Indian industries which have reaped the benefits of post 1991 liberalisation phase. A robust domestic industry would attract private investments and greater economic connections would act as a remedy to the 'lack of assimilation' conundrum and generate local level employment.

In order to counter the phenomenon of *Digihad*, there needs to be a sincere endeavour to counter terrorist propaganda online, with special internet referral units established at the police level. Taking inspiration from EU Crisis Protocol, a voluntary mechanism could be devised wherein Indian States' online service providers and Police apparatus could form anexus and could also involve preparation of operational plans by national law enforcement, real-time referrals to online platforms and sharing of hashes and URLs as well as crisis logs. Civil Society groups who counter the extremist messages and provide alternative narratives could also be more institutionally enshrined; something akin to an NGO.

De-radicalisation centres for individuals should serve not only as a place of 'unlearning' the past extremist ideology, but should also involve learning of vocational skills such as sewing and basic electrical works, so that an individual can be sustain once outside the centre. An

effort should be made to arrange proper psychological evaluation of the individual, and a consequent furnishing on a unique treatment plan administered by a trained professional.

While, 'faith' is often used as a driving factor in order to radicalise individuals, thus it is fair to invoke faith in order to persuade the individual to give away redressal of their grievances through violence. Revered leaders, who have been proven to have pacifist and knowledgeable credentials, should communicate to their followers about the misinterpretation of the holy text. This strategy should work effectively in de-radicalisation centres and could also prevent prison radicalisation.

The final suggestion would be to tackle the trust deficit with governmental institutions and releasing funds to the Panchayati Raj institutions. It should be ensured that the 'government should work on good governance principle with an inherent detachment from party politics. Local police should also be trained by the armed forces in order to provide security to elected heads. While 'Operation Sadbhavana', 'Mission Reach Out' and 'Super 30' are some commendable efforts by The Indian Armed Forces to provide a healing touch, however an amalgamation of Army's civic institution initiative alongside Panchayti Raj' administrative legitimacy could be incredibly effective to breakdown militant kinship networks at the grassroot level.

Conclusion

Kashmir, at this point in history, has been widely shifting from the epitome of 'Paradise on Earth' to a slightly pessimistic connotation of 'Trouble in Paradise'. Each side involved in the conflict, has their own lens from which they perceive the conflict and beseech their followers to adopt their world view. Thus, the need of the hour is of a constructive dialogue which keeps the most urgent interests of the Kashmiri Populace at the forefront alongside effective representation. Since, radicalisation is as much a social process as it is psychological, it would be wishful thinking to believe that radicalisation could be stopped just by a transformation within the individual; social institutions also requires adequate shifts. The armed sides should take cognisance of the fact that 'violence begets violence', the information dissemination mechanism, undertaken by the media in valley, should also be constantly aware of the fact that the valley is a sensitive region and proper well-founded research should go in. While reporting events, perspective from all sources should be curated to dispel any biased narratives. Thus, in sum while 'counter-terrorism' is the

'antidote', 'countering radicalisation' should be the prescribed treatment for conflict in the Valley.

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