



## **CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES**



### **ASSESSMENT OF 'NON-QUANTIFIABLE PARAMETERS OF SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE' IN KASHMIR POST ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370: BASED ON FIELD STUDY TOUR**

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## **Foreword**

The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is one of the major unresolved national security challenges that India faces since Independence. The princely state of J&K acceded to India in October 1947 under the Instrument of Accession to protect its territory from the raiders sent by Pakistan. Parts of J&K are under illegal occupation of Pakistan and China, making the region a point of contention. Despite numerous unsuccessful attempts to challenge India's sovereignty over the state of J&K, Pakistan has been sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Kashmir and has caused large-scale violence and death of innocent civilians and security forces personnel. The government of India on 5 August 2019 abrogated the temporary provisions of Article 370 and Article 35A that provided special status to J&K and reorganised it into two union territories – J&K and Ladakh. Ever since, Pakistan has been disseminating misinformation, fake news, and propaganda in a bid to incite violence and instability in the region.

We, at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), have published various research papers on J&K focusing on radicalisation, cross-border terrorism, governance, perception management and emerging threats in the hybrid domain. We have also conducted various round-table discussions and national seminars with an endeavour to understand the complexities of the situation and devise pragmatic strategies for resolution of the conflict. To provide a balanced and objective literature on the situation in Kashmir post abrogation of Article 370, a team of two research scholars from CLAWS carried out an on-field study tour in various northern, central and southern districts of Kashmir between 04 and 13 September 2020.

In this report, based on their interactions with the youth, teachers, villagers, Army and Paramilitary officers, ex-terrorists, parents of surrendered terrorists, etc., the authors have highlighted several 'non-quantifiable parameters of security' and have drawn certain key findings. Given the fact that Article 370 was abrogated with the aim of ushering peace and development in the region, it is an excellent opportunity for the government to work in this direction with a great sense of commitment and urgency. To this end, the report provides certain constructive policy recommendations for consideration of the policy makers and multiple stakeholders. While a study related to the development in Ladakh has already been conducted in the recent past, this study exclusively focusses on the situation in the Kashmir

Valley. CLAWS is also planning to conduct a similar study for the Jammu region in the near future.

I would like to compliment the young researchers on their preparations before the visit, interactions with different segments of society on the ground, and their analysis and policy recommendations to bring normalcy in the Valley.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b><i>AGuH</i></b>	<i>Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind</i>
<b><i>AIIMS</i></b>	<i>All India Institute of Medical Sciences</i>
<b><i>AIM</i></b>	<i>Atal Innovation Mission</i>
<b><i>AQ</i></b>	<i>Al Qaeda</i>
<b><i>ATL</i></b>	<i>Atal Tinkering Labs</i>
<b><i>BADP</i></b>	<i>Border Area Development Program</i>
<b><i>CB</i></b>	<i>Crime Branch</i>
<b><i>CLAWS</i></b>	<i>Centre for Land Warfare Studies</i>
<b><i>CRPF</i></b>	<i>Central Reserve Police Force</i>
<b><i>GoI</i></b>	<i>Government of India</i>
<b><i>HM</i></b>	<i>Hizbul Mujahideen</i>
<b><i>IA</i></b>	<i>Indian Army</i>
<b><i>IB</i></b>	<i>International Boundary</i>
<b><i>IPHS</i></b>	<i>Indian Public Health Standards</i>
<b><i>ISI</i></b>	<i>Inter-Services Intelligence</i>
<b><i>ISIS</i></b>	<i>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</i>
<b><i>ISJK</i></b>	<i>Islamic State in Jammu and Kashmir</i>
<b><i>ISPR</i></b>	<i>Inter-Services Public Relations</i>
<b><i>IT</i></b>	<i>Information Technology</i>
<b><i>IW</i></b>	<i>Information Warfare</i>
<b><i>J&amp;K</i></b>	<i>Jammu and Kashmir</i>
<b><i>JAK LI</i></b>	<i>Jammu Kashmir Light Infantry</i>
<b><i>JeI</i></b>	<i>Jamaat-e-Islami</i>
<b><i>JeM</i></b>	<i>Jaish-e-Mohammad</i>
<b><i>JKLF</i></b>	<i>Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front</i>
<b><i>JKP</i></b>	<i>Jammu and Kashmir Police</i>
<b><i>JuM</i></b>	<i>Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen</i>
<b><i>LeT</i></b>	<i>Lashkar-e-Taiba</i>

<b><i>LoC/LC</i></b>	<i>Line of Control</i>
<b><i>MHA</i></b>	<i>Ministry of Home Affairs</i>
<b><i>MoSJE</i></b>	<i>Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment</i>
<b><i>NC</i></b>	<i>Nasta Chun</i>
<b><i>OGW</i></b>	<i>Over Ground Worker</i>
<b><i>PAFF</i></b>	<i>Peoples Anti-Fascist Front</i>
<b><i>PHC</i></b>	<i>Primary Healthcare Centre</i>
<b><i>Psywar</i></b>	<i>Psychological War</i>
<b><i>TISS</i></b>	<i>Tata Institute of Social Sciences</i>
<b><i>TRF</i></b>	<i>The Resistance Front/Terror Revival Front</i>
<b><i>UAPA</i></b>	<i>Unlawful Activities Prevention Act</i>
<b><i>UK</i></b>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
<b><i>UNDCP</i></b>	<i>United Nations International Drug Control Programme</i>
<b><i>US</i></b>	<i>United States</i>
<b><i>UT</i></b>	<i>Union Territory</i>
<b><i>VPN</i></b>	<i>Virtual Private Network</i>

## **I. Executive Summary**

### **General**

Situated in the extreme north of India, the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) forms the crown of India and is bound by Afghanistan on the north, Pakistan on the west (Khyber Pakhtunkwa and Punjab Province), Indian UT of Ladakh on the east and Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab on the south. Parts of J&K and Ladakh are under illegal occupation of India's neighbouring countries – Pakistan and China. The geo-strategic importance of J&K has caused it to be a point of contention between India and Pakistan, since 1947. The most brutal episode of this dispute began with the cross-border terrorism of 1989 in Kashmir, supported by the Pakistani establishment. Over three decades later, more than 41,000 people including locals and security personnel have lost their lives in J&K.<sup>1</sup>

With the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A by the Government of India (GoI) on 5 August 2019 and the consequent introduction of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, dividing the state into two separate UT– J&K and Ladakh – came a watershed moment in the history of Kashmir. It further amplified the India-Pakistan bilateral tensions and intensified the propaganda unleashed by Pakistan against India. Pakistan's obsession with Kashmir is evident in its frustrated and desperate attempts to influence the global perception against India. It was noted that while the diplomatic community at large had supported and welcomed India's decisions, some people amongst the civil society in Europe and the United States (US) criticised India.<sup>2 3</sup> Additionally, a lot of Pakistan-supported and inspired misleading media reports, and social media propaganda have augmented regularly. All this indicates that Pakistan has ceaselessly tailored its influence campaign against India.

### **Objective and Methodology**

According to the available statistical data for the period post-abrogation of Article 370, security situation in the Valley has slightly improved with a drop in terror recruitment, sharp decline in terror-related incidents and number of people killed by the terrorists. However, relying only on such statistical indicators will lead to management and not resolution of the problems in Kashmir. To achieve peace and development as promised during the abrogation of Article 370, it is essential that the non-quantifiable parameters be also well-studied. A team of researchers from the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) undertook an on-ground study in the Kashmir Valley between 04 and 13 September 2020 with an aim to

provide an objective assessment and unbiased view of the situation as it exists on the ground, with a primary focus on the non-quantifiable parameters of security and related activities. This includes an analysis of various intangible factors that are not measurable or statistically demonstrable. Authors interacted with the youth, middle and old-aged group, school teachers and principals, women, ex-terrorists (Ikhwans)/surrendered terrorists, villagers of forward areas, and the Army and the Paramilitary officers. Areas covered in the Study include –

- **North Kashmir-** Tangdhar, Tithwal, Simari, Lolab, Sopore
- **Central Kashmir-** Srinagar, Budgam (Beerwah Town), Sharifabad, Pattan
- **South Kashmir-** Wuzur, Pulwama, Awantipora

### **Key Findings**

The overall situation seems to be improving at a fast pace with the business, market and other daily activities opening up after the COVID-19 induced lockdown. Schools and colleges which were functioning normally after one month of the abrogation of Article 370, had to be closed due to the pandemic. Without high speed internet connectivity, school management is facing difficulties in providing timely classes to the students. The horticulture and handicraft industry has been functioning properly, but the tourism sector in the past one year has faced heavy losses. Based on interactions with the local population including security forces and civilians, it was observed that due to ban on Jamaat-e-Islami (vanguard of extremist religious ideologies) and clampdown on the internet, terror recruitment has significantly reduced. Moreover, the youth of Kashmir appeared very aspirational and highly optimistic about the future with respect to better educational and employment opportunities, private investment, sustainable peace and development.

Based on the study conducted, the cardinal security and development/governance-related findings are as follows :–

- **Development and Governance Related Findings**
  - ❖ **Lack of Internet Facilities.** Prolonged ban on high-speed internet has caused several problems across all spectrums (education, health, e-governance initiatives, trade, tourism, etc.) of society. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the dependency on internet in the form of e-learning, work from home culture, telemedicine, among others. The biggest group affected by the ‘digital darkness’ is the youth. According



to them, the digital darkness that has existed in J&K for over a year will lead to resentment and alienation amongst the population.

- ❖ **Apathy of civil administration.** Villagers expressed concern about the rampant corruption in government offices and lack of proper internet connectivity for effective usage of e-governance platforms. Villagers in some areas complained that their MGNREGA dues remained unpaid since 2016-17. In fact, the officials from the district administration rarely visit these areas because of lack of all-weather connectivity. Many locals in areas such as Tangdhar, Tithwal, Simari, Lolab and Beerwah, expressed their resentment against the 'Back to Village' programme and claimed that it did not have a review mechanism.
- ❖ **Poor Infrastructure and Poor Connectivity (Intra-District and Forward areas).** Villagers in Tangdhar, Simari, Tithwal and adjoining areas demand an all-weather road connectivity to villages in the higher reaches of Shamshabari ridge which get isolated from the mainland during the winters.
- ❖ **Poor Higher Educational Opportunities.** Youth during their interactions with the authors expressed a concern that the existing universities/colleges lack experienced staff and research-based teaching due to which they feel that they cannot fulfil the requirements of the extremely competitive job market in the country and abroad. They also expressed that new courses in humanities, commerce, sociology, and other streams must be introduced.
- ❖ **Unemployment: Dichotomy in Aspirations.** A major concern is the increasing unemployment amongst the educated youth. Several youths and villagers of Beerwah, Tithwal, Tangdhar, Lolab and Srinagar drew a direct linkage between growing unemployment and youth indulging in anti-social cum national activities such as drug abuse, stone-pelting and terrorism. While the older generation desires creation of more government jobs, the younger population encourages private sector jobs in the Valley.
- **Security-Related Findings**
  - ❖ **Change in the Meaning of 'Azadi'.** Majority (95%) of the youth, with whom the authors interacted, asserted that *Azadi* no longer means independent Kashmir or accession to Pakistan but has got a new meaning, i.e., **freedom from corruption, unemployment,**

**terrorism, Pakistan's propaganda, inflation, drug abuse, crimes,** and other social evils which has been causing turmoil and violence in the region.

- ❖ **Role of Family in Radicalisation.** In some families, from an incredibly young age the children are indoctrinated by parents and relatives with beliefs such as 'India is an occupying force', '*Jihad* is needed for *Azadi* of Kashmir', 'Indian Security Forces are *Kafirs*, *Batta chu marun* (local non-Muslims need to be killed), and 'the only path to *Jannat* is by achieving *Shahadat* during *Jihad* for the *Azadi* of Kashmir'.
- ❖ **Lack of De-radicalisation/Counter-Radicalisation Programmes.** Firstly, due to lack of understanding of the concept and meaning of radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation have also not been well-defined. Secondly, there are no known institutional frameworks or programmes for counter-radicalisation or de-radicalisation by the local administration, panchayats, educational institutions, or the security forces.
- ❖ **Societal Glorification of Terrorists.** A small section of the society and media have accepted terrorism as a part of life and support its ecosystem, hence encouraging the younger generation to pick up arms. Glorification of terrorists has such a psychological impact on the children that instead of looking up to their teachers, social activists, sportspersons, security forces, etc., they start emulating the terrorists.
- ❖ **Weak Counter-Measures to Information cum Psychological Warfare.** Pakistan has been leading a strong influence operation against India, both physically and virtually. However, to counter the fake propaganda, false narratives, extremist thoughts, etc., being propagated, India lacks an institutional framework. Also, there are gaps in the synergy between the security forces in fighting the information cum psychological war.
- ❖ **Weak Surrender/Rehabilitation Policy.** Existing policy does not have many incentives to encourage terrorists to surrender. Safety and security guarantees to surrendered terrorists and their families, monetary incentives, societal attitude, **follow-up mechanisms** are some primary requirements. Also, there exist no provisions to address the crimes committed by the "now surrendered terrorists", even before they joined terrorism.
- ❖ **Drug Abuse and Mental Health.** Drugs are easily accessible to the youth who are increasingly consuming them. Many people are facing psychiatric illnesses such as

depression due to violence. Lack of awareness and rehabilitation centres is slowly incapacitating the Kashmiri youth, which will gradually undermine the country.

- ❖ **Women Safety and Empowerment.** Even though better educational and employment opportunities have empowered the women, many still are subjected to domestic violence, harassment, physical abuse, etc., unaddressed by the law-enforcement agencies.
- ❖ **Increasing Inflow of (Illegal) Migrants into the Valley.** There has been a steady increase in non-Kashmiris migrating to the Valley. While many migrants have been working in orchards, saffron and paddy fields, brick factories, etc., at low wages, some are vulnerable to falling prey to Pakistan's nefarious activities against India, for instance being used as couriers to smuggle weapons and ammunitions.

Based on the above key findings, the authors discuss in detail the relevant policy recommendations for the concerned stakeholders. Six of the most significant recommendations are:-

- 1. Restoration of high-speed internet connectivity in all districts of J&K. However, for security reasons the same can be partially shut down, wherever need be.**
- 2. Greater accountability and transparency in the functioning of the civil administration.**
- 3. Addressing the menace of radicalisation through sustainable de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation strategies.**
- 4. Creation of avenues to generate employment and better higher educational opportunities for the youth that has been the worst-affected.**
- 5. Full-body truck and container scanners must be installed at all international and domestic entry points of the UT to deter the attempts of smuggling contrabands (narcotics, weapons, fake currency, etc.)**
- 6. A 'whole-of-government and society approach' must be adopted to counter the propaganda, fake news and misinformation campaigns by the adverseries.**

## II. Introduction

Kashmir, an administrative division of the UT of J&K is a valley bounded by the Pir Panjal Range on the southwest and the Himalayan Range on the northeast. The Kashmir Valley can be divided into three distinct regions – North Kashmir comprising Kupwara, Bandipora and Baramulla; Central Kashmir comprising Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal; and South Kashmir comprising Pulwama, Kulgam, Shopian and Anantnag. The Valley has a varied geographical terrain ranging from lakes, snow-capped mountains, coniferous-laden hills to glacier-fed rivers. The Valley floor comprises saffron and paddy fields along with orchards of apples, apricots and other fruits. The major ethnic groups living in J&K includes Kashmiris, Gujjars, Bakarwals, Paharis and Dogras. The Kashmiris live in the main valley of Kashmir and in the Doda and Kistwar districts of the Jammu division. Some Pahari people live in the northern areas of Kashmir in the Ganderbal and Kupwara districts. The nomadic Gujjars and Bakarwals (about 14 per cent of the population in Kashmir) practice transhumance and travel between north and south Kashmir as per the climatic conditions. According to the 2011 Census, Islam is the most practiced religion in the Kashmir Valley (96.4%), followed by Hinduism (2.45%), Sikhism (0.98%) and others (0.17%). On acceding to India in 1947, the state covered an area of 2,22,236 sq km, apart from the 78,114 sq km occupied illegally by Pakistan, 5,180 sq km handed over illegally by Pakistan to China and 37,555 sq km under illegal occupation of China.<sup>4</sup>

J&K has been a flashpoint between India and Pakistan since 1947. There have been all-out wars and a skirmish between the two countries over Kashmir. Since its multiple failed attempts at winning a conventional war against India, Pakistan has been waging a proxy-war since 1989. Unfortunately, despite having provided corroborating evidence by India against state-sponsored terrorism of Pakistan since the late 1980s, it continues to evade strong international backlash and sanctions. The situation in Kashmir has been changing dynamically and has witnessed numerous watershed moments. These have been widely discussed and debated across the political, academic, intellectual and the strategic community. This report discusses in detail the situation in Kashmir, post abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent conversion of J&K into a UT, through various quantifiable and non-quantifiable parameters of security. It is based on authors' primary experiences in Kashmir between 04 and 13 September 2020 which involved interactions with the local Kashmiri youth, women, villagers, residents along the LoC, teachers, ex-terrorists, families of surrendered terrorists and a number of Army and Paramilitary personnel.<sup>5</sup> Based on these

interactions, the report highlights certain key findings and suggests salient policy recommendations on pertinent issues.

### **III. Historical Background**

Kashmir is rightly described as the ‘Paradise on Earth’ by the Sufi poet Amir Khusrau in his famous couplet – “*Agar firdaus bar roo-e zameen ast, hameen ast-o hameen ast-o hameen ast.*” The Valley of Kashmir is located between mountain ranges and is abundant in lakes, rivers and glaciers. Since historical times, the Valley has had a unique identity. Sir Walter R. Lawrence in his book *The Valley of Kashmir* (1895) describes Kashmir as “possessing a distinct nationality, character, language, dress, and body of customs, affords much that is interesting, while its unique history and curious administration are worth careful study.”<sup>6</sup> An aesthetic land with its serenity, it has been swamped by various predicaments - inter-religious violence, ethnic and sectarian divisions, machinations of great powers, political instability, insurgency and Pakistan-sponsored proxy war cum terrorism, among others. This history dating way beyond the last three or seven decades has shaped the situation in the Valley into its current form.

Historically, Kashmir has been a popular route for traders, scholars and invaders. This resulted in a cultural blend of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism, in the Valley. Being a conglomerate of diverse religions; tolerance, inclusivity and syncretic culture - commonly known as ‘*Kashmiriyat*’ – got assimilated to the entire population of Kashmir. The Valley has been subjected to alien rule, since at least the seventh century, by Buddhist, Hindu, Afghan, Mughal, Sikh and Dogra emperors. Moreover, its geographical isolation can be credited for its distinctive cultural identity. All of this collectively explains the dynamics behind why even after acceding to India in 1947, the thought of being a ‘Kashmiri’ was stronger than the sentiment of being an ‘Indian’.

The princely state of J&K materialised after the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46) when Gulab Singh, who fought on the British side took over the Kashmir Valley.<sup>7</sup> Strong resentment amongst the Muslim population emerged against the Dogra clan and led to communal violence even before Independence of British India. Various events in the history of J&K - the ugly invasion by Pakistan in 1947 and rescue by India upon signing the Instrument of Accession, United Nations resolution, agreement on a ceasefire line, political and social instability, 1987 legislative assembly elections, insurgency, Pakistan-sponsored terrorism -

are sacrosanct in the collective memory of the Kashmiri society and has been transferred over generations through oral and written histories.

Since 1989, Kashmir has seen periods of calm and unrest, on and off. The years 2008 (Amarnath land transfer controversy), 2010 (alleged human rights violations and death of young boy Tufail Mattoo), 2013 (hanging of the terrorist Afzal Guru) and 2016 (killing of the terrorist Burhan Wani) are considered to be watershed moments in the history of modern-day Kashmir. An addition to this list is 5 August 2019, the day when the Parliament of India abrogated the temporary provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution of India that provided J&K a special status and also passed the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, bifurcating the erstwhile state into two UTs – J&K with a legislature and Ladakh without one.

#### **IV. Quantifiable Parameters**

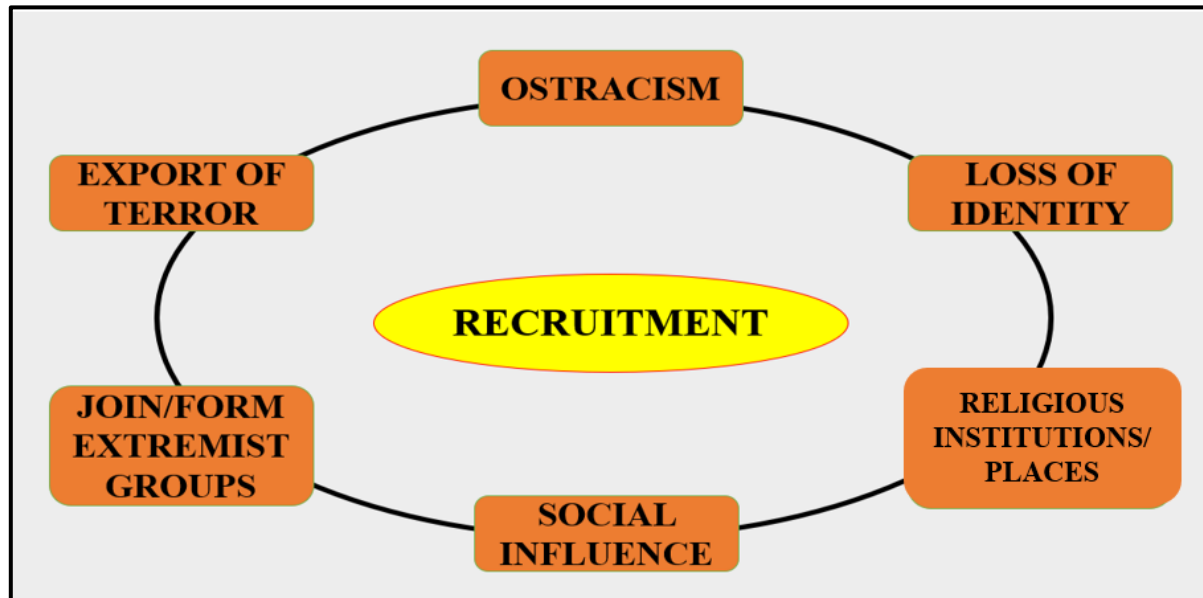
The government and security forces while assessing the security situation in Kashmir turn to statistical data of the number of terrorists killed, new terror recruits, number of cordon and search operations, civilians and security forces personnel killed, etc. The success of India's counter insurgency/counter terrorism operations as also the success of government policies in Kashmir have always been gauged through the prism of quantifiable data. However, this is a limited approach as it does not take cognisance of the non-quantifiable parameters. Some of the significant quantifiable parameters for the last few years have been discussed below.

- **Terror Recruitment**

The situation in Kashmir is changing dynamically with terrorism being at a critical juncture. Many in the top leadership of the terror *tanzeems* operating in the region have been successfully neutralised by the security forces. There have been many watershed moments in Kashmir in the recent past like the new wave of protests and stone-pelting in 2010; general elections in 2014; the encounter of 'Burhan Muzzafar Wani' in 2016 and the increased usage of social media to organise protests, radicalise the youth and increased recruitment; the emergence of videos of 'Zakir Musa' supporting Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind's (AGuH) ideology and creation of Islamic State in J&K (ISJK) in 2017; Pulwama Attack in February 2019 and abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in August 2019, among others. The years preceding 2016 were seen as relatively peaceful with not much terror activities or security operations taking place, but the security officials term this as a period with many undercurrents especially

because several vulnerable youths were radicalised and recruited to different terror *tanzeems* operating in the Valley.

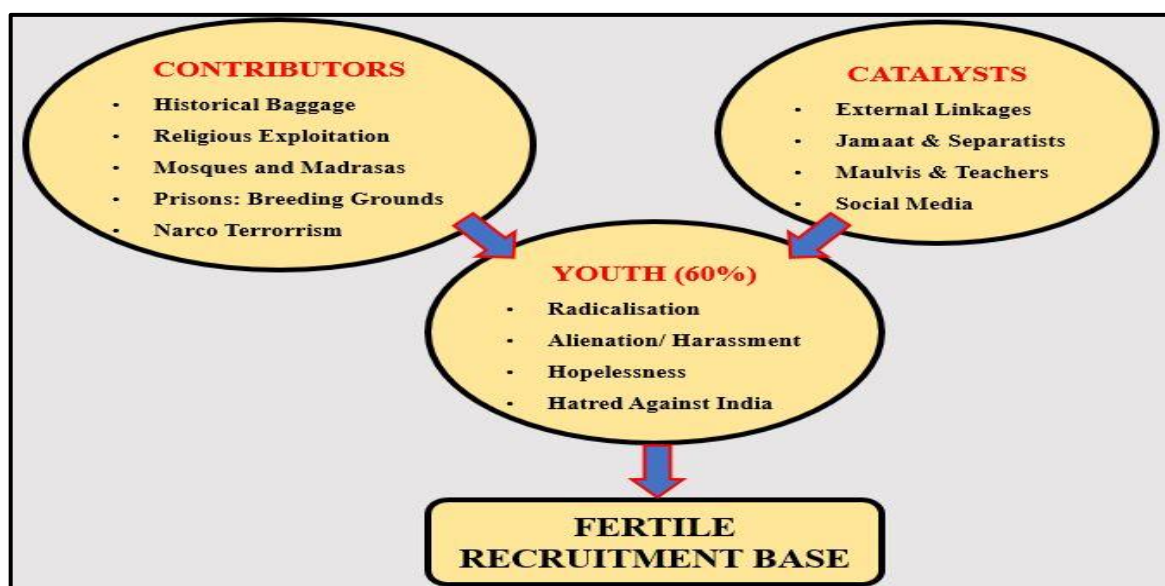
**Figure 1: Contributors to Terror Recruitment**



*Source: Prepared by the authors based on interactions in Kashmir*

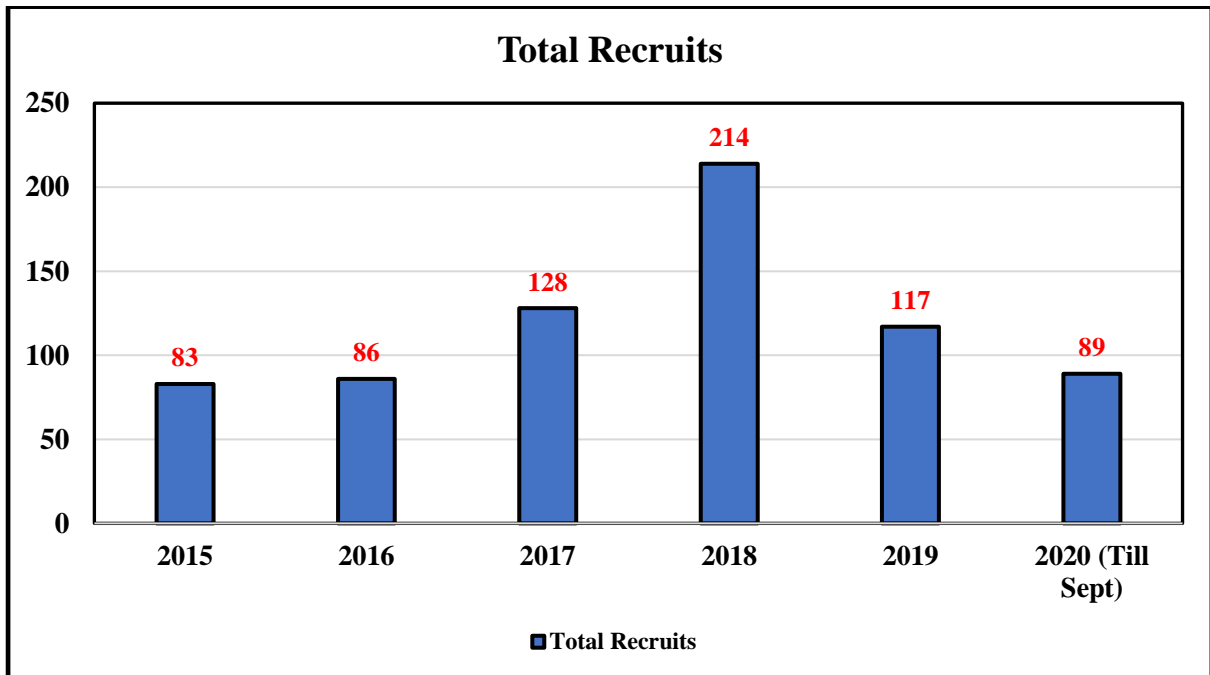
Many contributors motivate the youth to pick up arms against the state. The youth bulge combined with unemployment and various other catalysts increases the chances of recruitment.

**Figure 2: Terror Recruitment in Kashmir**



*Source: Prepared by the authors based on interactions in Kashmir.*

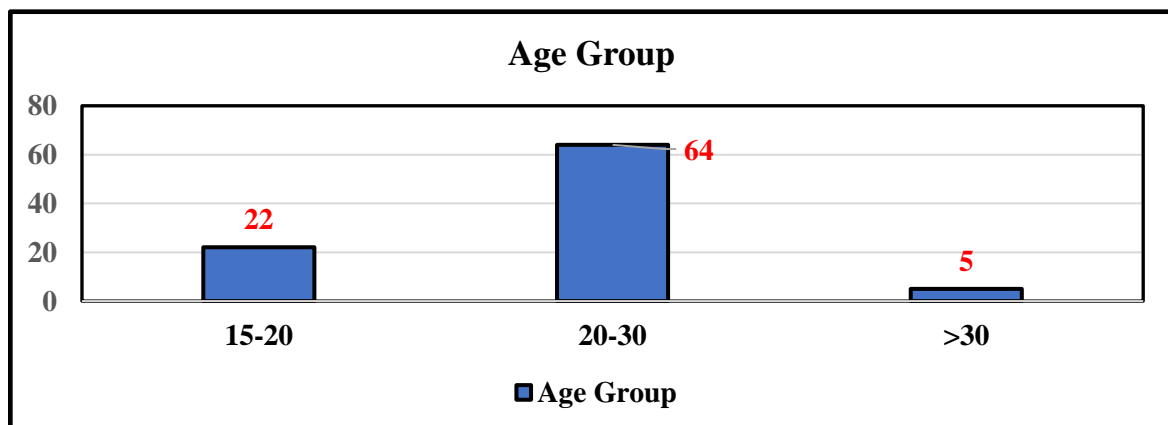
**Graph 1: Terror Recruitment of Last Five Years (2015-2020)**



*Source: Compiled by the authors based on interactions with security officials in Kashmir.*

In the last five years, 2018 saw the highest number of terror recruits due to factors such as social media radicalisation, the glorification of terror, unemployment, amongst other things. However, there has been a steady decrease in the recruitment post 2018 due to increased security surveillance and killing of many top leaders. In the recent past, the synergy between the security forces deployed in Kashmir has increased manifold resulting in successful anti-terror operations.

**Graph 2: The Age Group of Terror Recruits**



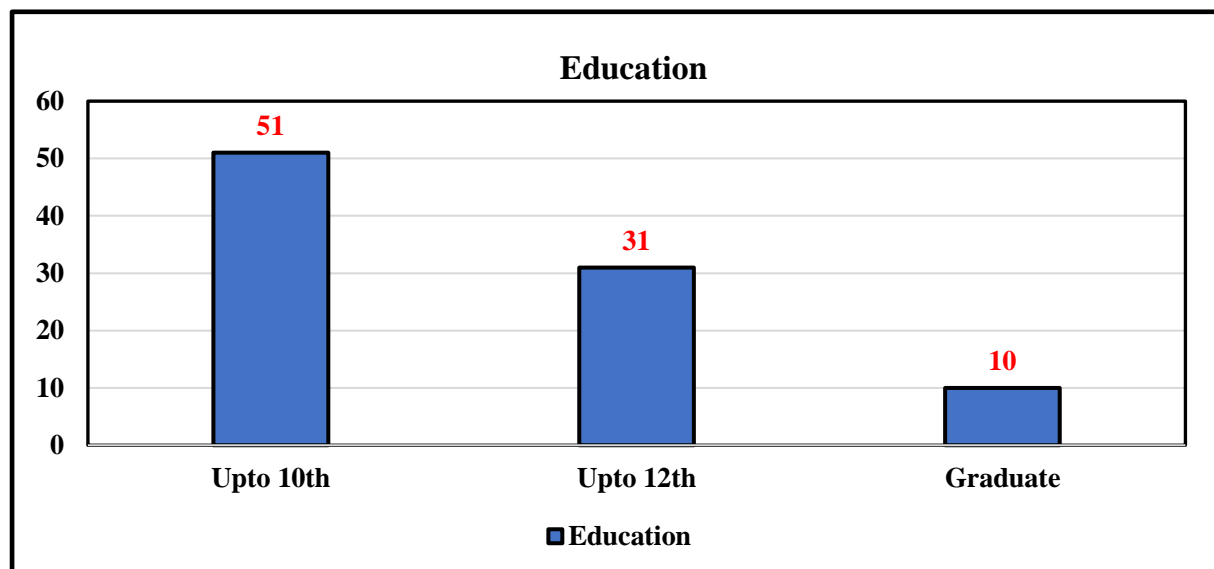
*Source: Compiled by the authors based on interactions with security officials in Kashmir.*

Local population between 20 and 30 years of age are the most vulnerable with respect to terror recruitment, especially because they have grown up seeing the beginning of terrorism



in Kashmir since 1989 and the resultant mental trauma that has remained unaddressed. According to the official sources, there are approximately 59 lakh mobile users, out of which 49 lakh are smartphone users. Due to lack of sufficient recreational activities to channelise their energy, youth in the age group of 15-30 years fall easy prey to terror recruitment.

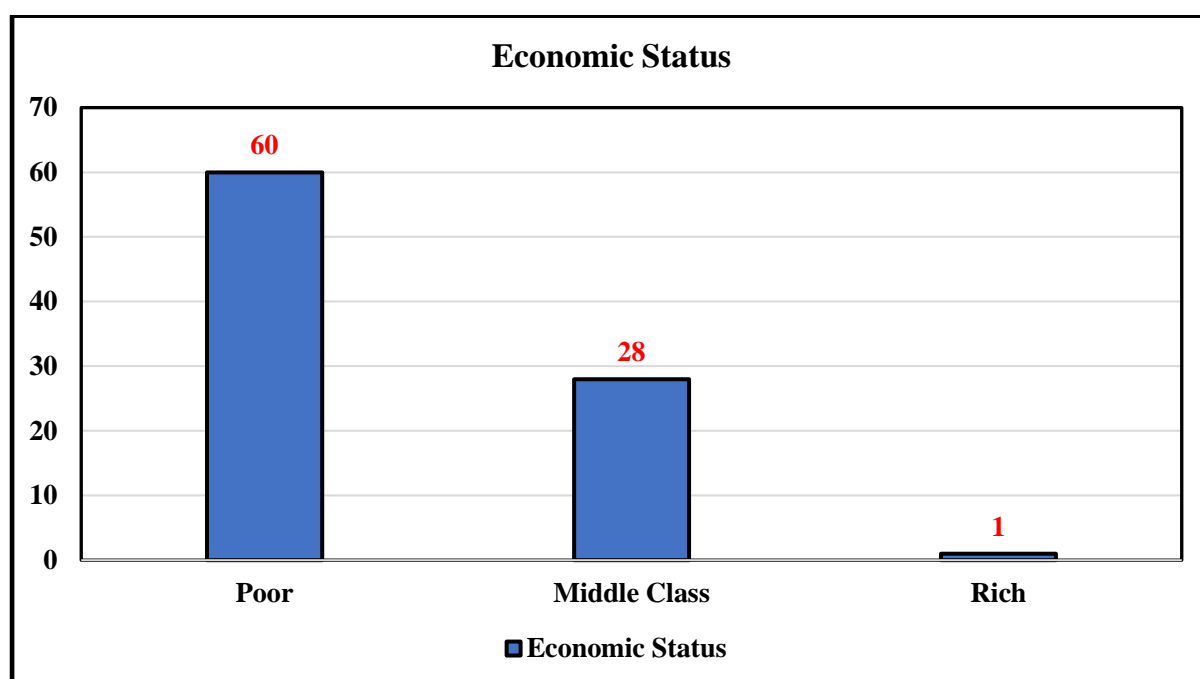
**Graph 3: Education Level of Terror Recruits**



*Source: Compiled by the authors based on interactions with security officials in Kashmir.*

Statistics show that majority of the recruited terrorists have educational qualification less than or up to class 10. The influence of Jamaat-e-Islami plays a crucial role in recruiting such young impressionable minds. The role of the family is yet another factor that must be studied. Recently, it has been noted that a few well-educated youths from Kashmir, after having completed higher education in other parts of India have returned to Kashmir and joined terrorism. A case in point is the recruitment of Waleed Bashir Mir from Sopore - a bright student who was interested in sports and played football at the university and district levels. He moved to Uttar Pradesh for higher education in 2018. After returning to Kashmir in late 2019, according to official sources, there were visible changes in his behaviour such as giving up sports, following orthodox religious practices, etc., unlike before. Soon, he was reported missing for weeks and his photo appeared on social media as a recruit of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). He was killed in a security operation in June 2020.

**Graph 4: Economic Status of Recruited Terrorist**



*Source: Compiled by the authors based on interactions with security officials in Kashmir.*

A large number of terror recruits belong to poor economic background. Thereby, terrorism often becomes a means to escape the socio-economic problems of the household. They fall for the false promises by recruiters and over-ground workers (OGW) of financial support to their families upon joining a *tanzeem*. Some locals during interaction with authors shared that most of the recruiters and OGWs or the ‘masterminds’ of terrorism belong to the rich South Kashmir whereas the terrorists carrying out attacks belong to the comparatively poorer North or Central Kashmir.

- **Terror *Tanzeems* Operating in Kashmir.**

Since the early days of terrorism in Kashmir in the late 1980s, different *tanzeems* have operated in the region based on their ideology, objective and support base. This report broadly categorises the terror *tanzeems* operating currently into domestic, Pakistan (Pak)-based, Transnational and New terror *tanzeems*. A commonality between these is the support from Pakistan for their anti-India activities.

- **Domestic *Tanzeems*:** These are homegrown *tanzeems* based in Kashmir but financially and logistically sponsored by Pakistan. They ideologically promote ‘*Azadi*’ for Kashmir from India. Their area of operation is limited to J&K. The first such group was Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), popular in the 1990s. Presently, **Hizb-ul-Mujahideen**

(HM) and Al-Badr are the two prominent domestic *tanzeems*. While Al-Badr is only in the stage of revival, HM is the most active with the highest recruitment.

- **Pak-Based *Tanzeems*:** Cadre, though limited, of these *tanzeems* operate in Kashmir according to the directions given by their handlers in Pakistan. These have training camps and launch pads across the Line of Control (LC) for infiltrating and carrying out attacks in Kashmir and even in other parts of India, for example, 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack. They are ideologically inclined to Pakistan's military doctrine of 'Bleed India with a thousand cuts'. They encourage terrorists to fight for the secession of Kashmir and its accession to Pakistan. They get active support from Pakistani establishment and ISI in terms of funding, arms, training, etc. These *tanzeems* have an active OGW base across the Valley to help them in logistics and identification of individuals for recruitment. **LeT & Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)** are two active Pak-based *tanzeems* operating in the Valley today. After the Pulwama terrorist attack of February 2019, many district commanders of these *tanzeems* have been neutralised in successful anti-terror operations by security forces. Also, with increased border security, surveillance and intelligence dissemination, infiltration of foreign terrorist has reduced significantly.
- **Transnational *Tanzeems*:** These are offshoots of global terrorist *tanzeems* promoting pan-Islamism, Global *Jihad* and establishing a Caliphate in a borderless world. Like elsewhere, growing Islamophobia globally has resulted in the popularity of these *tanzeems*, even in Kashmir. **AGuH, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda and ISJK, an offshoot of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)** are the two transnational *tanzeems* operating in Kashmir. Their extremist ideology is propagated mainly through social media platforms as they are still struggling to create a strong cadre. These *tanzeems* have slowly started finding support base in Central Kashmir, specifically in Downtown Srinagar among the urban population. Even though Pakistan supports the modules of Al-Qaeda and ISIS operating in other parts of India, specifically in Kashmir, there is limited Pakistan support for AGuH and ISJK due to the friction between these groups with the domestic and Pak-based *tanzeems*.
- **New Terror *Tanzeems*: *People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF)* & *The Terror Revival Front or The Resistance Front (TRF)*** are the so-called two new terror *tanzeems* that have emerged post the abrogation of Article 370. Currently, their presence is confined to the dark web and social media and do not have any cadre on the ground. However, few OGWs have been recently arrested in the Valley with pistols and grenade. According to the security agencies, these *tanzeems* are outgrowths of Pakistan-sponsored *tanzeems*,

formed to escape international scrutiny and also to give an indigenous flavour to the terrorism in Kashmir.

**Table 1: District-Wise Terror Recruitment for the year 2020 (Till September)**

District	<i>Tanzeem</i>						Total
	LeT	HM	JeM	AGuH	Al Badr	ISJK	
Baramulla	05	01	02	-	-	-	08
Kupwara	07	04	-	-	-	-	11
Bandipora	02	-	-	-	-	-	02
Sopore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Srinagar/Ganderbal	-	-	-	-	-	01	01
Anantnag	-	-	-	-	01	-	01
Kulgam	03	16	02	02	01	-	22
Budgam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulwama	03	07	08	01	02	-	21
Shopiyan	02	14	01	-	04	-	21
Awantipora	-	01	01	-	-	-	02
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>89</b>

*Source: Compiled by authors based on interaction with security officials in Kashmir.*

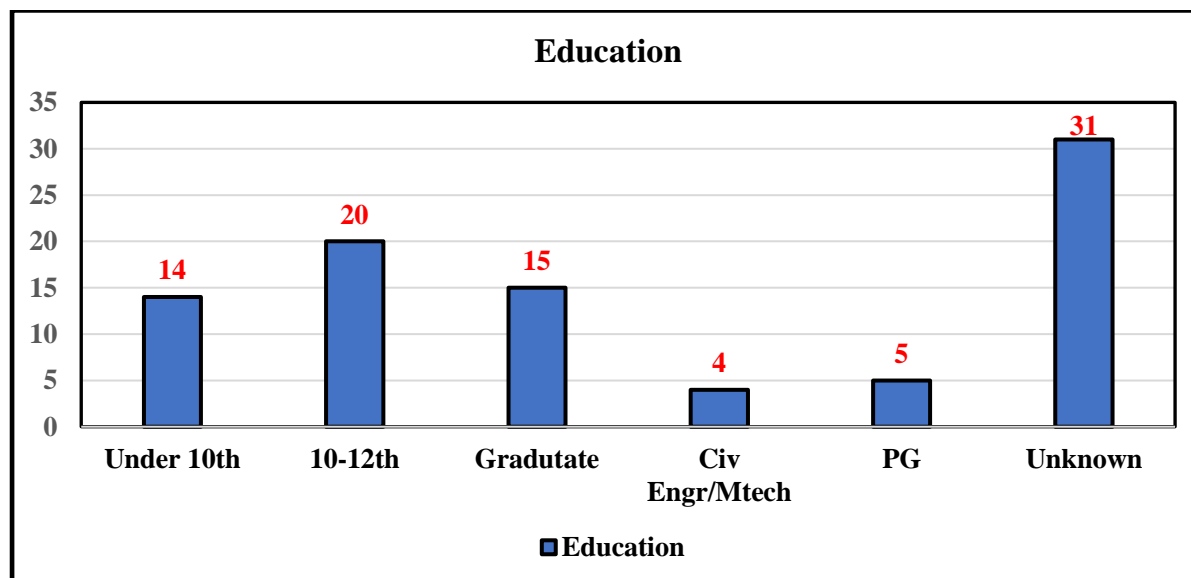
**Table 2: Region-Wise Terror Recruitment in the Year 2020 (Till September)**

<i>Tanzeem</i>	Total	North Kashmir	South Kashmir
LeT	22	14	08
HM	43	01	42
JeM	14	02	12
AGuH	02	-	02
Al Badr	07	-	07
ISJK	01	01	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>71</b>

*Source: Compiled by Authors based on interaction with Security officials in Kashmir.*

From the above tables (1 & 2), it is clear that South Kashmir continues to be the hotbed of terrorism with HM being the most active *tanzeem* in recruiting people.

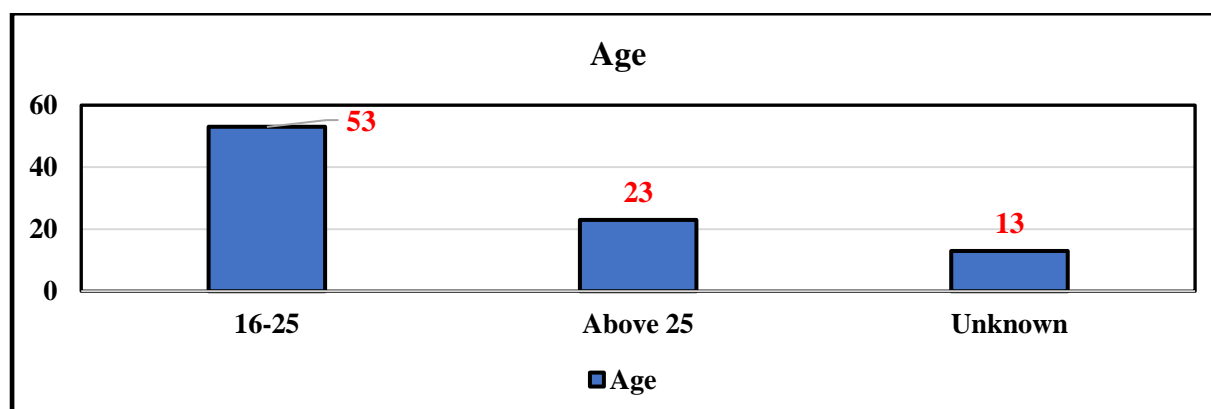
**Graph 5: Education-Level of Recruited Terrorists in the Year 2020 (Till September)**



*Source: Compiled by Authors based on interaction with Security officials in Kashmir.*

More concerning today is the recruitment of highly educated youth with post-graduate degrees and in some cases even an MPhil or a PhD. Case in point is one Sabzar Ahmed Sofi who after completing his MSc and MPhil informed his family that he is heading to Delhi for preparation of competitive examinations. Incidentally, the police later found that he had joined HM.

**Graph 6: Age of Recruited Terrorists in the Year 2020 (Till September)**



*Source: Prepared by Authors based on interaction with Security officials in Kashmir.*

In the past one year, the youth of 16-25 years of age has been the most vulnerable. Quite notably, after the abrogation of Article 370, the anti-India propaganda circulated by Pakistan

has added to the alienation and dissent amongst few people, thereby resulting in terror recruitment. However, the situation has comparatively improved as it is only a minute percentage of the population supporting or joining terrorism and there exists a large percentage that has rejected violence and terrorism, however, their views have been ignored in the popular discourse.

## • Narco-Terrorism

Narcotics and terrorism is one of the deadliest combinations to cripple an entire society. In a place like Kashmir where a complex security situation due to various factors already exists, the linkages between ‘narcotics’ and ‘terrorism’ is turning out to be more challenging for the security and law-enforcement agencies. Pakistan has been abetting terrorism in Kashmir for the last several decades but has been unable attain a conventional victory. Therefore, it has resorted to pushing drugs through the smuggling routes along the LC, and from the International Border (IB) in the Jammu-Punjab region. It aims to not only use these smuggled narcotics for funding terrorism but also to incapacitate the youth by luring them into drug abuse and in turn undermine the society.

**Figure 3: Map representing the possible drug smuggling routes**



*(Map Not to Scale and used only for representation.)*

Popular drug smuggling routes comprise :-

- 1. Punjab-Jammu International Border**
- 2. Rajouri Sector**
- 3. Uri, Tangdhar Sector**
- 4. Gurez Sector**

The smuggling routes into Kashmir are depicted in Figure 3. According to official sources, it takes approximately 7-14 hrs to reach the Valley floor after infiltrating from the Uri sector. Similarly, 17-22 hrs from the Rajouri sector and 4-7 days from the Gurez sector. OGWs work in tandem with the handlers in Pakistan and use information technology as well as social media and dark web to communicate with each other and get the drug/arms consignment smuggled into the Valley floor.

Due to additional patrolling and increased border surveillance, smuggling has been difficult. Therefore, the terrorist and the sympathisers are now forcing the farmers of South Kashmir to cultivate drugs in their farms to generate funds and finance terror activities. According to a survey conducted by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) in February 2019, 6,00,000 people, i.e. 4.6 per cent of the total population of the erstwhile state of J&K use opioid drugs, while 80 per cent of the drug addicts in Kashmir use heroin and morphine.<sup>8</sup> According to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), there are about 70,000 substance abusers present in the Valley, out of which 31% are women.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, an addiction data published by the Government Psychiatric Hospital, Srinagar, states that around 90 per cent of drug abusers belong to the age group of 17-35.<sup>10</sup> But, statistical data on narcotics seizures and consumption in the recent months has not yet been released in the public domain.

Narcotics are being continuously smuggled through Tangdhar and Baramulla sectors of the LC. Drones are being used to drop weapons, ammunitions and explosives across the border in Kathua and Samba in the Jammu region from where these are transported across the Banihal through couriers, including women. Though the suspension of LC trade has obstructed the ecosystem of smuggling narcotics and other contrabands, despite this it has been reported that huge quantities of narcotics and fake Indian currency (FICN) have been seized by the security forces in the border areas. The combined impact of narcotics and terrorism is a growing menace in Kashmir and will pose severe challenges to an already stressed society.

## V. Non-Quantifiable Parameters

The situation in Kashmir has never been a simple black and white phenomenon and contains several shades of ‘grey.’ Hence, to undertake a comprehensive study of the security situation in Kashmir, the authors have attempted to analyse various intangible factors that are not measurable or statistically demonstrable. These factors are extremely important in providing a holistic view of the situation in the Valley and formulating effective policies, reviewing government schemes and determining the role of every stakeholder in the region.

- **Social Media**

Terror *tanzeems* across the world have been using social media to radicalise, recruit and influence people as well as raise funds to finance terror activities. In J&K (where according to 2011 census, around 70 per cent of the population was below the age of 35 years<sup>11</sup>) social media has grown to be a menace due to its increasing use by terror *tanzeems* for indoctrinating, radicalising and recruiting the youth of Kashmir.

In today’s information-dominated security landscape, a person with a smartphone can easily mobilise people for widespread protests, radicalise youth, manipulate public opinion and undermine a nation’s ability to fight conventional and unconventional conflicts. After an absolute military failure against the Armed Forces of India, Pakistan vented out its frustration by turning to unconventional means of warfare against India in Kashmir. To this end, it has developed one of the most sophisticated psychological operations campaigns. They have developed unparalleled propaganda machinery which has millions of bots, motivated youth, hackers, social media influencers, strategic think tanks and renowned journalists to spread fake messages, malevolent videos, radical literature and false narratives to manipulate global perceptions on Kashmir.

In early 2008, social media was still emerging as a platform for exchange of ideas, news, images and to connect like-minded people. Back then, ‘Orkut’ was being used as the most preferred social media platform in Kashmir. Soon, with high-speed internet connectivity and availability of smartphones at economical rates, more youths started using internet and social media platforms. Gradually over the years, separatist leaders, terror recruiters and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) began exploiting these platforms for their diabolical agendas.

The unfortunate accidental death of Tufail Mattoo, a Kashmiri schoolboy, due to teargas shelling on 11 June 2010, was an ostensible flashpoint setting the Valley afire as mass



protests erupted all over.<sup>12</sup> Fake news, doctored videos and hate speeches were shared all across the social media, further complicating the situation. After the incident in 2010, social media influence grew at an alarming rate and was being used for organising protests, mobilisation of people for stone-pelting and so on.

Many young Kashmiris and security officials confirmed to the authors that after ‘Orkut’, ‘Facebook’, ‘Instagram’ and ‘Twitter’ became the more preferred platforms for the youngsters. Consequently, even the terrorists shifted to these platforms for recruitment. Recently, with increasing security restrictions and surveillance of these platforms, terrorists have shifted their activities to encrypted platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram for internal communication as well as to approach their targets for recruitment.

These encrypted messaging applications and closed groups on Facebook are used to mobilise people for stone pelting, protesting at encounter sites and blocking roads for creating safe passage for the terrorists. Such cases have especially surged at an alarming rate since 2016. According to official sources, 250-300 WhatsApp groups, each having more than 200 members, were active before 5 August 2019 to mobilise people.

Social media is unquestionably being used to spread misinformation. This is a continuous process and is happening across platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp as well as music apps like SoundCloud, Spotify, etc. Pakistan uses its official media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on these platforms to share doctored videos, old videos/photos and audio messages. These are falsely represented at different platforms as the current situation in Kashmir. Pakistan has further elevated its propaganda machinery ever since the special status of Kashmir has been abrogated. To mark the first anniversary, Pakistan had prepared a range of events with various hashtags (#) on social media like #KashmirLivesMatter, #ChainedKashmir and #OccupyingForces to appeal to a wider audience, with a motive to change the global perception on Kashmir and show India in a bad light.

- **Glorification of Terrorists**

Many in Kashmir perceive guns as symbols of ‘empowerment’ since the initial days of cross-border terrorism. The youths have grown up seeing gun-wielding terrorists or security forces. The famous slogan ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’ stands true for Kashmir to some extent. When an individual joins any terror *tanzeem*, there are sections of the society that regards him a ‘fighter’ for the cause of Kashmir’s ‘*Azadi*’. Societal

glorification exists both offline and online. Reportedly, calls for *bandhs* issued by terror *tanzeems* are circulated and accepted by the locals. Again, during a '*janaza*', at least one person from each family from the locality attends the funeral, compulsorily. Pamphlets and diktats by terror *tanzeems* are circulated locally. In fact, there have been many instances wherein during a security operation, the local residents including men and women gather in alarming numbers near the encounter site to pelt stones at the security personnel in a bid to obstruct the operation and give free passage for the terrorists to escape. Social media is a catalyst for such perceptions. It glorifies a terrorist brandishing an AK-47 and depicts his larger than life image. In 2016, there was a sudden upsurge in terror recruitment after pictures of the infamous Burhan Muzzafar Wani in his combat uniform, commando-style appearance, long beard, and AK-47 gun appeared on various social media platforms. When this self-styled terrorist was killed in an encounter in 2016, a huge gathering of people and mass hysteria was witnessed. People were heard shouting pro-Pakistani slogans and pro-*Azadi* slogans glorifying his death. Certain sections of the youth started regarding him as a martyr for the 'Kashmiri' cause.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, in 2017, Zakir Musa, a former commander of HM and founder of AGuH, posted his video on YouTube, encouraging the youth to follow the '*Shariah Law*' and work towards establishing a 'Caliphate.' He warned people that they would be beheaded for referring to Kashmir as a 'political struggle' and not an 'Islamic struggle'. Zakir Musa often posted hate speeches, inciting youth to throw stones at security forces, not in the name of '*Azadi*' for Kashmir but in the name of '*Azadi*' for Islam.<sup>14</sup>

Both these incidents took social media by storm and attracted a number of youth who made them their role models and had their pictures as their mobile/laptop wallpapers. Such glorification and hero worship of terrorists on social media have indoctrinated and radicalised many youths over the years.

- **Religious Indoctrination**

Religious indoctrination has been one of the primary causes for the rise in terrorism in the Valley. Historically, the 'Sufi' culture acted as a firewall against extremist ideology taking roots in Kashmir, however it was uprooted by Pakistan in the late 1980s by introducing extreme puritanical values of Salafism and Wahhabism. There are two facets of religious radicalisation. One, by Islamic organisations like JeI and its offshoots, second, the religious

polarisation of events like 2008 Amarnath Yatra land controversy, abrogation of article 370, 2014 and 2019 elections, etc.

The dissemination of fundamentalist Wahhabi ideology was supported by a well-funded network of numerous JeI institutions, mosques and literature present throughout the Valley. This fundamentalist ideology branded the Indian system of multi-ethnic secular democracy and development efforts as un-Islamic. The Wahhabi and JeI ideologues and their foreign mentors thus built an aura of egalitarianism and quick justice based on summary trials in Shariat courts and unity based on Islamic solidarity (Ummah). They ridiculed the affluence and economic benefits generated by development initiatives in Kashmir over the years.

Pakistan has used the JeI and separatist leaders to indoctrinate the young population of Kashmir with select extreme discourses of Salafism and Wahhabism as opposed to the more tolerant and diversified values of 'Sufi Islam'. This became more prominent after terror *tanzeems* like the HM, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Ansar, LeT and Markaz Dawaul-Irshad launched a religious campaign against the non-Muslim minorities and publicly prided themselves for killing Hindus in the name of '*Jihad*.' These extremists launched a malicious campaign against the Kashmiri Hindus by periodic write-ups in local newspapers, circulating pamphlets and sermons in mosques.

With dynamic changes at global level, there is a small section of people who want a greater 'Caliphate' to be established from Kashmir till Syria and other regions of West Asia. As a result, though small but a group of youngsters are gravitating towards the AGuH and ISJK's argument of the Kashmir issue being a struggle for a divine cause.

From the above, it is clear that religious radicalisation in Kashmir has local, regional and global dimensions. The most important factor fuelling religious radicalisation is the role of religious fundamentalist organisations preaching radical Islam and the political disempowerment felt by the Kashmiris over a period of time.

- **Loss of Identity**

Since the princely state of J&K acceded to India, the region has perceived that its identity has been distinct and separate within the subcontinent. For several years, political discourse in Kashmir has emphasised that Article 370 provides a special status to J&K under the Union of India, hence it is different from India. The false narrative built by Pakistan regarding an apparent threat to the Kashmiri identity was one of the main factors for the rise of insurgency


and terrorism in Kashmir. Every major flashpoint in the history of Kashmir starting with the 1931 uprising against the Dogra rulers till abrogation of Article 370 has been depicted by the vested interests as linked to the Kashmiri identity. After the 5 August 2019 decisions, Pakistan's propaganda machinery has attempted to instigate the Kashmiris by circulating false narratives like demographic change, exodus of Kashmiri Muslims, lack of opportunities for Kashmiris, private businesses from other parts of India taking over land of Kashmiris, etc. While some have fallen for such propaganda, the ground reality is that the majority have rejected such claims. However, continuous attempts are still being made both by nefarious forces inside and outside India to generate alienation in the minds of Kashmiri population using this fallacious narrative.

- **Process of Radicalisation to Recruitment**

Radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation do not have any universally agreed definitions. However, generally, radicalisation refers to a gradual process whereby individuals or groups develop a mindset that can under right circumstances and opportunities increase the risk that he or she will engage in violent extremism or terrorism.<sup>15</sup> De-radicalisation can be understood as a gradual process directed at individuals and groups already radicalised or on the path of radicalisation. The objective is to dissuade them from violent extremism and terrorism and reintegrate them into the society. They must be encouraged to reject extremist ideology and embrace moderate values and beliefs. Counter-radicalisation refers to a combination of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes targeting communities to reduce the potential risk of radicalisation. In Kashmir, various local dynamics are attached to the process of radicalisation and it differs from person to person. However, during the authors' interactions with security personnels in Kashmir, it was highlighted that a general process of radicalisation involves few common steps as depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3: Process of Radicalisation to Recruitment**

<b>Family</b>
<b>Jamaat-e-Islami Institutions &amp; Mosques</b>
<b>Involvement in Local Crime</b>
<b>Acquiring Weapon and Affiliating to a Terror <i>Tanzeem</i></b>
<b>Announcement of New Recruit by <i>Tanzeem</i> on Social Media</b>



*Source: Prepared by Authors based on interactions with security officials in Kashmir*

The environment in which a child grows also plays an important role in the motivation to join terrorism. One of the most prominent factors influencing people is the religious indoctrination through fundamentalist Islamic. Moreover, all terror *tanzeems* in Kashmir receive active monetary support from Pakistan and local logistical support from the OGWs.

Most importantly, radicalisation is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach. In recent years, terrorism has become a means of ‘escapism’ for some young boys, from crimes committed locally. For example, official sources shared with the authors that in Sopore a recently killed terrorist had joined the ranks not because he was radicalised through a religious institution or thought process but rather to avoid repayment of loan. Since he was unemployed and wanted to evade punishment, he joined the ranks of HM and was killed in an encounter with security forces, within three months.

- **Role of Family**

During interactions with security officials as well as some local socio-political activists, authors got insights into the role of the family in the process of radicalisation. Given the complex and sensitive nature of the subject, not much literature is available on this factor. Sometimes, families, especially the mother, plays a vital role in indoctrinating extremist anti-India thoughts into the mind of the child since a very young age. Children in Kashmir get influenced the most by the parents.<sup>16</sup>

Women in any society are pivotal for the development of the family and society at large and same is true for Kashmir. However, over the years, women have been supporting terrorism on the premise of the narrative of ‘victimhood.’ Few Kashmiri women adopt extremist thoughts and legitimise the attacks on and killing of security forces personnel by the terrorists. They believe that it is their ‘right’ and religious ‘duty’ to fight the forces, depicted as ‘*kafirs*’.

Mother of a killed terrorist gets utmost respect in the society and it is believed that a special place in heaven is reserved for her. Over the last few years, reportedly, there have been certain instances of mothers giving gun salute to their slain terrorist sons at funeral processions.<sup>17</sup> For example, in 2018 during the ‘*Janaza*’ of HM terrorist Saddam Paader, killed in an encounter in Shopian, his mother was seen giving a gun salute.<sup>18</sup>

Not only are there cases where mothers have planted extremist Islamic thoughts in their sons, but many have also played a role in recruiting youth into *tanzeems*. For example, Naseem Bano, mother of killed HM terrorist Tawseef Sheikh was arrested in June 2020 under the

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for serious criminal activities including recruiting terrorists.<sup>19</sup> Often, parents show their frustration and anger against the security forces in front of the children. Many are brainwashed to even wage '*Jihad*' for Islam. During interactions with locals it was found that at some places in Kashmir, alphabets are taught to children in a unique manner - A for *Azadi*, B for *Batta*. M for *Marun*. *Batta chu marun* is taught, where *Batta* refers to local non-Muslims, *marun* refers to kill, hence meaning – 'The local non-Muslim has to be killed'.

## **VI. Perspectives of Different Sections of Society**

One year since the abrogation of Article 370, authors during their visits to different parts of Kashmir attempted to gauge the perspective and aspirations of different sections of the society. The society can be divided into three categories – one, people against India; two, people supporting India; three, 'fence-sitters', a huge 'silent majority' waiting and analysing the situation before taking a precise stance. Overall, the situation in Kashmir is very peaceful and people in general are hopeful for improved development and governance post the constitutional and administrative changes made in 2019. Some believe that abrogating Article 370 will not make any difference as the Article had over the years been diluted while others have welcomed the decision and expect better development and economic growth. Unfortunately, due to the fear of backlash from terrorists and their sympathisers in the neighbourhood, the latter do not openly share their perception about the situation in Kashmir.

### **• Youth**

Interaction with the young population (16-35 years) gave the impression that the youth of Kashmir are very ambitious. They voiced their strong opinions on a variety of issues like abrogation of Article 370, state politics, terrorism, Pakistan's psychological war, drug abuse and trafficking, unemployment and educational reforms, among others. Majority (95%) of the youths, authors interacted with welcomed the decisions of 5 August 2019 and expressed their desire for the better quality of life in Kashmir sans the hardships caused by the incessant violence witnessed by them since childhood. There is an explicit resentment amongst the youth against the prolonged ban on high-speed internet connectivity that is hampering their education and employment opportunities. While the entire country shifted to online learning due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, students in Kashmir faced a huge challenge due to the inability to access online classes using the low-speed internet connectivity. Downloading and uploading of assignments, notes, videos, etc., is indeed strenuous using an

internet, functioning at a snail's pace. According to a young student leader in Beerwah, Budgam, "frequent strikes, curfews and violence before 5 August 2019 caused schools and colleges to shut down. Post 5 August 2019, ban on high speed internet connectivity is affecting education in schools and colleges. This will be detrimental to our employment prospects because our education is not at par with students of other parts of India, keeping us behind them in competition. Students are not able to apply for the courses offered by the universities both at the state and national level. The students preparing for competitive exams are badly affected. Many software engineers and those who provide online services have been rendered jobless."

A concern for majority of youth was the lack of higher education opportunities and employment in similar fields. Due to lack of good quality institutions of higher education many students are forced to shift to Jammu or other parts of India. However, not everyone can afford this as the costs are very high. In fact, many students even after completing their higher education fail to attain employment in the same field due to which some join jobs unrelated to their education or remain unemployed. Many migrate to other states of India or abroad for employment. Even though many new colleges have been sanctioned in the region, nothing much has materialised on the ground. In fact, many colleges approved years ago still lack adequate space, infrastructure and other facilities for proper functioning.

The youth is well versed with the role of Pakistan in radicalising and encouraging terrorism in Kashmir. India's weak response to Pakistan's information cum psychological war and the role of different types of media are major worrying factors. Fake news, misinformation, exaggerated claims on the situation, misreporting, hate speeches, doctored videos and images, rumour mongering etc., covered by national, local and social media platforms leads to alienation of many youths and become one of the reasons for growth in resentment against India.

Interestingly, the youth is becoming socio-politically aware and is actively engaging in countering the Pakistan-supported propaganda and misinformation by promoting a Kashmiri youth-led intellectual discourse. To this end, youth-driven think tanks, social media accounts, youth-led NGOs etc., are coming up in the Valley. Post abrogation of Article 370, it was frequently reported that shops are closed, and schools/colleges are not attended as a collective choice and a mode of civil disobedience. Also, some research has claimed that 97 per cent of males and 94 per cent of females in Kashmir are against the abrogation of Article 370. On being enquired on the same, the youth claimed that these were exaggerated claims and far from the ground reality. There prevailed a major threat of the OGWs, terrorist sympathisers

and terror attacks and even social boycott which dissuaded many from opening shops/businesses and attending schools/colleges.

The youth in Lolab Valley gave three sharp aspirations for them – greater investment of the private sector; an enhanced quality of life in Kashmir with better recreational activities; and the end of corruption and better transparency in all walks of life.

Even though there exist grievances amongst the youth against the administration and some law enforcement agencies, but, based on authors' interactions with the youth of Kashmir, it can be concluded that there exists a vast majority of youth in Kashmir who reject terrorism, stone-pelting and *Jihad*. To them, *Azadi* no longer refers to seeking independence from India or joining Pakistan. The question then arises as to why does then the opinion of this majority get subdued by a comparatively minuscule number of terrorists and their supporters. Indeed, this needs to be addressed. During an informal conversation with the youths, it was found that the journalists and progressive intellectuals face a threat from anti-national elements due to which they refrain from writing and promoting positive developments.

- **Middle and Old-Aged Group**

A different perspective prevails amongst the middle and old-aged men. In areas like the Lolab Valley, Tangdhar Village, Simari Village, it was noticed that the men with whom the authors interacted, in the age of group 35 to late 60s are disgruntled with the abrogation of Article 370. Some of them said, "*humse humari pehchan chheen li hai*" (our identity has been snatched away from us) and demanded its restoration. What remains unclear is how far are they aware of the provisions of Article 370 and the pros and cons of its abrogation! Nevertheless, the cohort seems keen to move ahead and expects improvement in the situation. They opined that a golden opportunity to resolve the bilateral dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir was available during the government of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who looked at the problem from the prism of '*Kashmiriyat, Jamhooriyat and Insaniyat*'. During an informal interaction with the people in Tangdhar and Lolab, it was found that there are four categories of people in Kashmir: insignificant number who propagate pro-Pakistan stand; few people who propagate the narrative of '*azadi*' based on unification; few old party leaders who continue to support the restoration of article 370; and, who support statehood.

According to people, in the last one year, no tangible development or change has been witnessed due to which poverty and inflation are increasing. While few businesses like handicrafts and horticulture were functioning normally since 5 August 2019, others like tourism, manufacturing, IT sector, etc., did face a decline due to poor internet connectivity,



terror attacks on non-local labourers, etc. A sharp contrast exists between the younger and older generation in their approach towards the private sector. Unlike the younger cohort, the older generation has reservations about private investment in Kashmir and favours government jobs over private sector jobs. Apprehension towards the private sector is mostly due to the misinformation being spread that private companies and individuals from other parts of India will occupy the land of the Kashmiri population, perceived as an engineered demographic change. The inclination towards government jobs exists to the extent that some older men in the Tangdhar village suggested the authors during the interaction that the Indian Army must raise another regiment exclusively for people from J&K, similar to the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAK LI).

Yet again, the reason behind the youth turning to terrorism, narcotics abuse/trafficking, OGW and other social evils are due to poor quality of education and lack of employment opportunities. The older generation is averse to the youth migrating from Kashmir to other parts of India or abroad seeking education or employment. Due to this, many youths forego available opportunities of better education or employment and settle down with jobs unrelated to their interest or area of study. Not only does it hamper them economically but also causes mental exhaustion. Among the middle and older generation, some demand the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A, but at large their support for terrorism and separatism is minute and attached to other socio-politico-economic grievances. Others are of the opinion that “if stronger political will and good governance reaches the doorsteps of each household, it will completely eradicate the local support for those running the terror industry in Kashmir.”

- **School Teachers and Principals**

A common sentiment amongst the teachers and principals prevail that there needs to be reforms in the education sector. Teachers need to be provided with better training facilities. Students need to be taught moral science as a subject from primary classes upto higher secondary classes in order to fight the social evils. Lack of smart education, employment in the preferred field, low monetary incentives are the major concerns and cause alienation when combined with other factors. The youth of Kashmir is very ambitious. Apart from academics, co-curricular activities such as fine arts, sports, handicrafts, etc., are also popular among the students. Teachers of a school in Srinagar shared with the authors that schools cannot offer all co-curricular activities due to limited infrastructure. Playgrounds, community centres, stadiums, coaching centres etc., are not well-maintained in some areas or are too costly, due to which children do not get properly trained in their foundation years to later

pursue a career in these vocational activities. A teacher in Tithwal village explained his existing agony due to slow internet connectivity. He claimed, “*subha pahad chadte hain tab jakar signal milta hai aur notes WhatsApp group par dalte hai. Bache dusre din ussi pahad par chadte hai aur homework group par share karte hai*” (Due to slow internet, I climb up the hill to get proper connectivity and upload notes and assignments on the class’ WhatsApp group. Similarly, the next day the students climb and upload their homeworks). In the immediate months after the abrogation of Article 370, schools were functioning normally as teaching was in-person. However, due to COVID-19, when teaching completely shifted to the online medium, high-speed internet connectivity has become a necessity for the students and teachers alike.

According to many teachers, drug abuse in the last one year has increased because children are indulging in it as a means of ‘escapism’ (Refer pages 16-17). The initial ban on internet and communication channels, present unavailability of high-speed internet, the shutdown of schools due to COVID-19 pandemic etc., combined with a lack of recreational activities induces children to use drugs to escape mental distress. Apprehensions were expressed by some that the domicile certificates announced by the Government of India will generate greater competition for the Kashmiri children. Considering the growing radicalisation, misuse of social media, fake news etc., some schools in Kashmir have proactively started organising workshops, parent-teacher interactions, mental therapy classes and other activities to generate awareness in the society. Shortage of funds inhibits the sustainability of such activities. The need for corporate sector in Kashmir was also emphasised by the school teachers and principals.

- **Women**

In December 2012, a three-member all-girl rock band ‘Pragaash’ came into existence in Kashmir. They were bullied, harassed, and termed ‘un-Islamic.’ A fatwa was issued against them, they were forced to apologise, disband the group and not allowed to practice music again. Eight years later, it is quite difficult to confirm if the life of women has improved in Kashmir. Women in the rural areas are reticent to express their thoughts openly especially in front of the elders of the locality. It was surprising to note that a female BDC Chairman in the Tangdhar village when asked by the authors about her opinion on abrogation of Article 35A and its impact on the Kashmiri women’s inheritance rights, initially expressed discomfort in answering the question. In fact eventually, prompted by few elderly men of the neighbourhood with political affiliations, she denounced the abrogation. Clearly, this did not look like her own opinion! Nevertheless, young girls in the Tithwal and Simari village,

despite facing numerous challenges due to close proximity to the LC shared their aspiration of obtaining higher education and becoming doctors, teachers and even joining the Armed Forces.

Women in urban areas are empowered to the extent of seeking education and employment. Many Kashmiri women have today built successful careers in civil services, sports and even security forces but they also face several challenges, especially related to security. Women in Kashmir are victims of domestic violence, social practices, terrorism and other crimes prevailing in the state. A report by Crime Branch of the JKP reveals that, “at least 3,363 cases of atrocities against the women were registered by police in 2017 which included kidnapping, abduction, rape, molestation, dowry, cruelty by husband and other crimes. The number rose to 3,623 in 2018- an increase of 260 cases compared to the previous year. In 2018, 1,602 cases of molestation and 354 cases of rape were registered by police across 22 districts of the state. The number of rape cases reported in 2017 was 314. In a worrying trend, 1,079 cases of abduction and kidnapping were registered in 2018, showing an increase of 119 cases, compared to 2017. According to the police reports, near about 70% of the cases of crime against women are of domestic nature, i.e., cruelty of husband, extra martial affair, dowry, physical and mental abuse.”<sup>20</sup> One young girl in Srinagar said, “Girls are not supposed to go out of house after sunset. If recreational activities are introduced in the Valley, there will be restrictions imposed on the women. Also, if the corporate sector is introduced and BPO call centres come up here, how many women will be allowed to apply, given the rotational shifts.” Another major challenge faced by Kashmiri women, often ignored by popular discourse is the atrocities committed by terrorists. Reportedly, many Kashmiri women have been forcibly kidnapped and assaulted for several months and those who resisted were killed gruesomely. Unfortunately, rarely do the women subjected to sexual exploitation by terrorists register formal complaints. Much more needs to be done to break the shackles of orthodoxy and patriarchy entrenched in the Kashmiri society.

- **Ex-Terrorists (Ikhwans)/Surrendered Terrorists**

Abdul Rashid Dar alias Khursheed Alam, an Ikhwan turned policeman was shot dead by Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) terrorists in July 2020. The authors’ interaction with his brother brought to light how he joined the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in the 1990s and later switched to the Ikhwan Policy of the Government of India. According to him, JKLF terrorists during the 1990s would forcefully enter each household and force the family to send one of the sons to join the *tanzeem* and on refusal would misbehave and torture the family members including the women. As a young boy, late Abdul Rashid Dar, frustrated by this

harassment, eloped from the house to join JKLF in a bid to protect his family from the latter's abuse. Within three months, he surrendered and became an Ikhwan working for the Indian security forces. Later, he got recruited in the JKP. However, the life of Ikhwans and their families have always been under threat and are frequently attacked by the terrorists.

Another case is of recent surrender by an LeT terrorist Shakoor Ahmad Ganie from Kulgam in June 2018. Parents of the said terrorist shared their ordeal with the authors. A class 9 student, Shakoor eloped from his house in the pretext of travelling outside Kashmir for employment. According to the parents, he never showed any signs indicating that he was getting indoctrinated and radicalised even till their last interaction with him. According to the parents, there exist many OGWs belonging to JeI in each locality of Kulgam motivating the innocent or vulnerable youth to join terrorism. They befriend young boys and gauge his perception and desires to later use them for radicalisation. These young boys are given hollow promises that they can easily fulfil their desires by joining a particular terror *tanzeem*. The parents threw light upon reaction of the neighbourhood towards Shakoor's recruitment and surrender. Initially, with the news of Shakoor's recruitment into LeT, his family was put on a pedestal by the society and they regarded him a 'hero'. However, the moment Shakoor surrendered, not only was he labelled a traitor, but the entire family was ostracised in the locality. The local support for terrorists can also be witnessed during *janaza* or mass funeral procession of killed terrorists and their graves being revered as shrines. It is alleged that mother of a killed terrorist receives a special position in heaven as her son died fighting for the *Azadi* of Kashmir.

Unfortunately, these are only some among the numerous other cases on similar lines. Interactions with few Ikhwans and surrendered terrorists of 1990s in Tangdhar village and Lolab Valley highlighted that many Ikhwans after crossing border in the 1990s, felt disillusioned with the Pakistani narrative and preferred returning. In fact, many claimed that one of the reasons for ending their affiliation with Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir was that once back, they were earmarked to kill their own Kashmiri people, to which they did not agree. Also, these ex-terrorists of 1990s claim that society was readily accepting the surrendered terrorists and was helping them to reintegrate into the society. However, the same cannot be said for those who have surrendered recently, making it a major cause of concern.

- **Villagers of Forward Areas**

People in the forward areas at large are positive about the abrogation of Article 370. Despite some resentment, they are looking forward to a prosperous Kashmir. A visit to the forward

areas in the Tangdhar sector gave authors an opportunity to speak to the local population. Lack of connectivity and being cut off from the rest of Kashmir for over six months is a major grievance in the region. There exists severe resentment against the civil administration for not providing basic necessities to the public. MGNREGA payments according to locals of Tangdhar village have not been paid since 2017. It needs to be looked at if the same have been disbursed in other surrounding villages. There is a great dependency on Operation Sadbhavana for education, employment, healthcare and other civic amenities in this region.

Two civilians were ‘deliberately’ shot at by Pakistan in an unprovoked ceasefire violation in the Simari village of the Tangdhar sector in August 2020. The villagers shared their agony with the authors. Both of the injured men were constructing a community bunker and it was pre-informed to Pakistan by the Indian Army. Despite this, in an act of frustration they attacked civilians, violating the International Humanitarian Laws. Moreover, the villagers shared that nobody from the local administration contacted or assisted the injured individuals or their families. Life is tense in the village because they are caught in the direct line of fire. There exist inadequate number of bunkers for protection during a ceasefire violation. Due to an incessant threat, villagers avoid switching on lights at night as Pakistan continues attacking civilians unprovoked.

Lack of high-speed internet and poor condition of roads are major challenges for the people living in forward areas. Women in these areas are very talented in handicrafts. A group of women in the community centre of Tithwal village have been teaching the craft to the young girls and are also selling their produce locally. They aspire to sell their produce on e-commerce platforms for better competitive prices. According to them, their work not only gives them monetary incentive but also gives a sense of independence and self-reliance. Due to poor educational and employment opportunities in the forward areas, students are forced to migrate to other areas. Those who cannot economically afford shifting to other areas work in fields different from their interest. Some restrain from migrating and work at positions giving less remuneration due to the inhibition of leaving family behind. The people living in the forward areas experience the destruction caused by Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and have minimal affiliation to the JeI and separatists’ ideology. There exists a strong sentiment against those joining terrorism or demanding ‘Azadi’ in Kashmir as well as hatred for Pakistan and its propaganda. Few locals in Tangdhar said to the authors, “*aapko terrorism, Azadi jaisi baatein, Shamsabari ke is paar kabhi nahi milengi. Yeh sab sirf us paar ke log bolte hai joh yahan ke bure haalat nahi jante*” (Terrorism and Azadi cannot be found in the local discourse on this side of the Shamsabari Ridge, these are ideas in the minds of people

on the other side of the Ridge who are unaware of the difficulties existing here). The physical and psychological trauma faced by the people is beyond imagination and needs to be given special consideration by the local bodies, state administration as well as the central government.

## **VII. Key Findings**

After abrogation of Article 370 and 35A on 5 August 2019, a lot of Pakistan-led fake news, rumour mongering, misinformation and propaganda was circulated regarding the situation in the Kashmir Valley. Even until recently, certain media platforms and ‘independent’ researchers have claimed that the situation in Kashmir is grim and terrorism is significantly increasing. Unfortunately, these are not only exaggerated claims but far from the ground reality. Meaning of the term ‘normalcy’ is contestable, hence authors avoid pushing the narrative of ‘normalcy’. Yet, the truth is that today like all states of India, business is as usual in Kashmir. Yes, there are some sectors of economy, especially tourism, that have been badly affected by the developments of 5 August 2019 as well as the pan-India lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. Also, there have been few instances of violence, stone-pelting, pellet injuries, terror recruitment, etc. However, these few instances over a period of one year cannot be used to describe the entire Valley and its population. After the abrogation of Article 370, there exists no resentment against Indians from other parts of the country visiting Kashmir, contrary to what is being painted by few with vested interests. Travelling between the picturesque landscape of the Valley is completely safe and the fear psychosis that has been developed must be strongly rejected. The population is very warm and welcoming and is not hesitant in sharing their experiences and viewpoints on any issue. Based on their own study tour in Kashmir and interaction with different sections of the society, the authors have arrived at certain findings, broadly categorised into ‘Security-Related’ and ‘Development and Governance-Related’ Findings.

### **❖ Security-Related Findings**

- **Change in the Meaning of ‘Azadi’**

The term ‘Azadi’ has resounded in the Valley since the beginning of the insurgency cum cross-border terrorism in late 1980s. Though chanted in unison, the meaning has never been constant. The term has had different connotations for different people - independence for Kashmir, joining Pakistan, creation of pre-1947 princely state of J&K as an independent country, establishment of the Islamic caliphate in Kashmir, *Nizam-e-Mustafa*, etc. During an

interaction with the local youth (socio-political activists, student leaders, lawyers, young scholars, etc.), the authors come across a different perception of '*Azadi*.' As per them, today, the term for Kashmiris means '*Azadi*' or freedom from corruption, unemployment, drug abuse, crimes, Pakistan's proxy war, terrorism, inflation, etc. People across the spectrum in Kashmir have rejected the previous narratives on '*Azadi*', being propagated by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and separatists. Unfortunately, such an understanding of '*Azadi*', especially amongst the youth, remains obliterated from the social, political and academic discourses on Kashmir.

- **Role of Family in Radicalisation**

Radicalisation in Kashmir is a complex phenomenon with diverse factors inciting some vulnerable youth to either join terror *tanzeems* or provide them logistical support. One of the less known or discussed factors of indoctrination and radicalisation in Kashmir is the role of family, especially of the parents. During the authors' interactions with local civilians in Kashmir, few raised a concern that radicalisation sometimes starts within the family from an incredibly young age. From the age of 2-3 years, a child is indoctrinated by the parents and relatives by inculcating in him/her beliefs such as – 'India is an occupying force', '*Jihad* is needed for *Azadi* of Kashmir', 'Indian Security Forces are *Kafirs* and need to be killed' and 'the only path to *Jannat* is by achieving *Shahadat* during *Jihad* for the *Azadi* of Kashmir'. Such beliefs learnt since childhood increases the resentment against India and when combined with other factors of radicalisation, motivates a youth to become a stone-pelter or even a terrorist to wage *Jihad* against India for the so-called *Azadi* of Kashmir (Refer page 24).

The role of family in radicalisation has not been widely researched upon due to difficulty in substantiating it and the sensitivities attached. The scope of this factor is hard to be established. However, such exposure of children to radical and extremist thoughts from their earliest days could have unprecedented security implications.

- **Lack of a Common Conceptual Understanding of Radicalisation**

Countering radicalisation in India has become a gargantuan challenge for the government and security forces. One of the reasons for this is the lack of consensus in the political or scholarly discourse on '**What is Radicalisation?**' There is no single agreed-upon definition of radicalisation. The parameters of radicalisation existing in India is different from that prevailing in Syria, the US or even the UK. In fact, the parameters of radicalisation within

India also change from state to state, i.e., the radicalisation of people in Kashmir is different from that in Maharashtra or Kerala. Local dynamics are attached to it due to which it is difficult to arrive at an all-inclusive definition for the country. A lacuna in de-radicalisation/counter-radicalisation in Kashmir is that even the concerned authorities including the government, security forces and law enforcement agencies do not have a consensus on the existence of radicalisation, particularly in Kashmir. There are different perceptions, even between the Indian Army officers. This presents a challenge in our approach to radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation.

- **Lack of De-radicalisation/Counter-Radicalisation Programmes**

Unfortunately, very weak efforts are being made in Kashmir towards de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. There are no known institutional frameworks or programmes by the local administration, panchayats, educational institutions or security forces to this end. In such a scenario, even if people who are at-risk or those contemplating on joining or have surrendered after joining terror *tanzeems* are identified, there is no proper mechanism to assist them in overcoming their extremist thoughts. Due to this, the rates of recidivism remains unknown.

- **Drug Abuse and Mental Health:**

The political instability, turmoil, violence and rise in terrorism over the last three decades has resulted in rise of psychiatric illness in Kashmir and has caused depression, PTSD, OCD and drug addiction problems. According to the authors' interaction with villagers and security forces in Beerwah, Srinagar, Tithwal, Tangdhar, Lolab, Sopore, and Sharifabad; drugs are now easily available in the markets and the most commonly used drugs in Kashmir are cannabis, brown sugar, heroine, inhalants like Fevicol, SR solution, thinner, shoe polish, paint varnish and 'dirty socks'. These drugs are smuggled into the Valley from Pakistan and some are grown in the higher reaches of the Shamsabari mountain ranges (Refer page 16-17). According to some teachers in Srinagar, most of the youth who indulge in drug addiction are engaged in bad company, lack parental attention, or resort to drug peddling for quick money. Security forces also agreed that this narcotics trade and the illicit money being accumulated is being used to fund terror activities in the Valley. Lack of awareness and rehabilitation centres, is slowly devastating the young generation of Kashmir.



- **Societal Glorification of Terrorists**

A challenge that still exists in Kashmir is that of societal glamourisation or ‘acceptance’ of terrorists. It seems that some sections of the society have accepted terrorism as a part of life and support its ecosystem, hence prompting the younger generations to pick up arms. This is evident in the fear or stigma faced by parents of surrendered terrorists. A case in point is authors’ interaction with parents of Shakoor Ahmad Ganie, a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist who surrendered during an encounter with the security forces in 2018 (Refer pg 31). The local support for terrorists can also be witnessed during *janaza* or mass funeral procession of killed terrorists and their graves being revered as shrines. As mentioned earlier, allegations suggest that mothers of killed terrorists receive a special position in heaven as their sons died fighting for the *Azadi* of Kashmir.

Glorification and glamorisation of terrorists even by media gives them ‘legitimacy’ in the society. A major concern is that children instead of looking upto their teachers, social activists, sportspersons, security forces, etc., start emulating terrorists. For example, the likes of Burhan Wani, Riyaz Naikoo and Zakir Musa have been humanised, heroised and instilled in the collective memory, however, atrocities against the security forces and their families such as killing of Sarpanch Ajay Pandita Bharti (2020), Rifleman Aurangzeb (2018), Lt Ummer Fayaz (2017) or the Kaluchak Massacre (2002) have been completely wiped off from the collective memory due to lack of media representation.

Islamic concept of after life is the biggest glorifying factor that motivates the youth to become terrorists. Funerals and graveyards have become places for large gathering and mobilisation of local people in support of the killed terrorist. Due to the COVID-19 health advisories, security forces have stopped handing over the bodies back to the families.<sup>21</sup> This has controlled the mass hysteria to an extent, however, there does not exist any long-term strategy to address this issue, once health advisories are lifted and needs to be considered.

Admiration, public recognition and sanction for terrorists and backlash against surrendered terrorists and their families by the society only complicates the situation in Kashmir. Such attitudes can encourage other youths to join terrorism on the one hand and on the other hand discourage the terrorists from surrendering and returning to the mainstream.

- **Weak Counter-Measures to Information cum Psychological Warfare**

India's adversaries have been waging a strong information cum psychological war in Kashmir. Pakistan has employed all tools of the state in influencing the minds of Kashmiris both physically and virtually. Internet and social media have been weaponised by Pakistan for promoting fake propaganda, false narratives, extremist thoughts, doctored images and videos etc. For over two decades, Pakistan has been reserving a special quota for the students of Jammu and Kashmir in its professional courses, especially engineering and medical.<sup>22</sup> Authors' interactions with Kashmiri youth and security officials highlighted a major concern. "There have been certain cases wherein young Kashmiri students have crossed the border legally via Wagah-Attari border to study and returned through the LC with arms and ammunitions on them."<sup>23</sup> The number of such cases that have occurred in the recent past and the modus operandi needs to be further investigated.

Countering information cum psychological war needs an institutionalised framework which lacks in India. Also, there are gaps in the synergy between the security forces in fighting the information war. For instance, to prevent unwarranted glorification of terrorists, in May 2020, it was decided by the Indian Army that henceforth name of the terrorist killed in an encounter will not be declared and he will remain just another terrorist who had been earmarked to be eliminated. However, "the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and JKP, along with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) continue to name terrorists killed in encounters and list their criminal activities in official press releases and media bytes."<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding, several similar attempts are being made but there is lack of uniformity in the counter-strategies being led by different organisations in the country. In view of this, India's attempts to counter Pakistan's nefarious designs become insignificant.

- **Weak Surrender/Rehabilitation Policy**

Before neutralising, the security forces give terrorists a large amount of time to surrender, lay down their arms and re-join mainstream society. Some terrorists have surrendered in this way but the surrender/rehabilitation policy of the GoI in Kashmir seems inadequate as it does not have many incentives to encourage terrorists to surrender. Safety and security guarantees to surrendered terrorists and families, monetary incentives and societal attitude and support for reintegration are some primary requirements in a surrender/rehabilitation policy. However, during the authors' interactions with family members of *Ikhwans* and surrendered terrorists, two shortcomings were brought to light - threats from terror *tanzeems* to the surrendered

terrorists and families is common and society does not always support their reintegration. Examples of these include killing of Ikhwan turned policeman Abdul Rashid Dar by terrorists at Kulgam in July 2020 and the social ostracisation of Shakoor Ahmad Ganie's family post his surrender in 2018, respectively.

- **Women Safety and Empowerment**

An important issue raised by many women of Kashmir during their interaction with the authors was the security-related challenges faced by women in the Valley. Even though better educational and employment opportunities have empowered the women, but many still face an acute challenge in the form of domestic violence, unaddressed by the law-enforcement agencies. In fact, certain studies have revealed that more than 40 per cent of Kashmiri women are physically or mentally abused by the husbands and his family.<sup>25</sup> Even crimes such as kidnapping, molestation and rape have been on the rise. Due to fear of crimes, women are not able to travel alone at night, seek employment in jobs demanding night-shifts, etc. While the challenge of radicalisation and terrorism is widely discussed at various forums, awareness regarding women safety in Kashmir also needs to be generated.

- **Increasing Inflow of (Illegal) Migrants into the Valley**

There has been a steady increase in non-Kashmiris migrating to the Valley. The locals accepted that while many migrants have been working in orchards, saffron and paddy fields, brick factories, etc., at low wages, but there have been some cases where these migrant labourers are used as couriers to carry weapons and ammunitions by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and OGWs. According to official sources, there is a significant Rohingya refugee population residing in J&K who, if unmonitored, can become soft targets for Pakistan to carry out anti-India activities. However, the statistical data or literature on this subject remains limited.

## ❖ **Development and Governance-Related Findings**

- **Lack of Internet Facilities**

Education is an important part of everyone's life. Like elsewhere in India, Kashmiri children also aspire to seek good quality education and become doctors, teachers, software engineers, and the likes. However, currently students in Kashmir are struggling to keep up with their academics due to limited internet availability. Due to an extended ban on high-speed internet, students across the Valley are facing difficulties in accessing the basic good quality education. During the authors interaction with students, teachers and principals in Kashmir, a

unanimous demand for restoration of high-speed internet for quality education was raised. The principal of a school in Tithwal shared the difficulties faced by teachers and students in ensuring that education is not hampered during these challenging times (Refer page 27-28). Similarly, female teachers of a school in Srinagar mentioned how no/ low speed internet has impacted e-learning facilities and due to more free time, some students tend to indulge in drug abuse.

Few Army and paramilitary officers also opined that high-speed internet facilities must be restored as technical surveillance and digital footprint of a terrorist can be tracked faster and more accurately to pinpoint the location. Additionally, they mentioned that the restrictions imposed on high-speed internet has led to creation of many new Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), a bigger security threat: one, data maybe misused by the VPN service provider; second, by using these VPNs the youth are indulging in accessing dark web making the surveillance more difficult. Though, dozens of VPNs are blocked by the security agencies, new ones gets created, almost immediately.

E-commerce activities dependent on high-speed internet has also seen a downfall due to which people involved in tourism, handicrafts and horticulture have suffered losses. Online portals for bookings related to travel industry and sale of indigenous products have been functioning very slowly at the available low-speed internet.

- **Unemployment**

Unemployment is one of the biggest challenges faced by the youth in Kashmir. With many graduates and post-graduates passing out each year, unemployment amongst the educated youth is increasing. According to the 2011 census, the working age group in J&K is 65.9 per cent.<sup>26</sup> Several youths and villagers of Beerwah, Tithwal, Tangdhar, Lolab and Srinagar, during their interaction with the authors, drew a direct linkage between growing unemployment and youth indulging in anti-social activities such as drug abuse, stone-pelting and terrorism. One of the teachers in Lolab, highlighted that youth of Kashmir has lot of aspirations like any other youth of the country but the unemployment is compelling them to indulge in criminal activities for getting quick money.

- **Poor Higher Educational Opportunities**

Kashmir lacks good higher education opportunities. Interactions of authors with the youth in Budgam district gave an understanding of the various difficulties faced by the youth in the

Valley for attaining good quality education. With more than 60 per cent of the Union Territory's population living in semi-urban or rural areas, the students of the UT are moving to different Tier 1 or 2 cities in search of different opportunities. Since the existing universities/colleges lack experienced staff and research-based teaching, the youth feel that they are unqualified to fulfil the requirements of the extremely competitive job market in the country and abroad. The youth also voiced their demand on introducing newer courses instead of restricting to engineering and medicine.

- **Absence of co-curricular activities**

Kashmiri youth are ambitious towards sports, music, fine arts and like participating in national and international competitions. However, there is a lack of proper training facilities/centres, skilled trainers due to which they are left out. Very few co-curricular activities are taught in schools and many fail to continue their participation due to lack of infrastructure beyond schools. Many stadiums, district sports complex have been shut down due to frequent violence and hartals and infrastructure for co-curricular activities except sports are limited.

- **Apathy of civil administration**

A common grievance shared by the local population with the authors was the apathy of the civil administration. They blamed the civil administration for having a disconnect with the masses. Many development-related activities have suffered delays due to lack of transparency, accountability and corruption. Villagers in some areas complained that their MGNREGA dues are unpaid since 2016-17. In fact, the officials from the district administration also rarely visit these areas because of lack of all-weather connectivity.

Many locals in areas such as Tangdhar, Tithwal, Simari, Lolab and Beerwah, expressed their resentment against the 'Back to Village' programme and claimed that it did not have a review mechanism. According to them, there were hardly any attempts made to address the grievances raised during the first phase, even while the second phase commenced. People complain that even after several days since the first snowfall, electricity is not restored in many parts of the Valley and snow clearing processes also experience repeated delays. The Kashmiri society, amidst violence perpetrated by terrorists, is also bugged by the menace of corruption. Corruption pertains to ascendancy to political leadership through favouritism, contractor-controlled bureaucracy and political machinery, kickbacks for government contracts, bribery, and non-responsiveness of bureaucrats. According to locals in different

parts of Kashmir, despite the abrogation of Article 370, corruption exists as a primary challenge. Reportedly, developmental funds have not been disbursed to the grassroot levels of governance. According to locals, bribery is rampant amongst all sectors of the government and the nexus between the government departments hinders the developmental projects in the region. Due to this, recently, many *Panchs* (member of the Gram Panchayat) across Kashmir have been resigning citing lack of transparency. The population is looking forward to further strengthening of transparency, anti-corruption laws and grievance cells.

- **Poor Infrastructure and Poor Connectivity (Intra-District and Forward areas)**

The cycle of violence that has engulfed the valley for decades has impacted the development significantly. The state of road, industrial and economic infrastructure is far from satisfactory quite evidently not only in the forward areas, but also in some parts of main cities like Srinagar.. The authors during their travel from Srinagar to various places noted that there exists poor infrastructural development and connectivity between the districts. The Jammu-Srinagar Highway closes down frequently due to landslides in the rainy and winter season. Villagers in Tangdhar, Simari and Tithwal, voiced their demand for an all-weather road in their area as villages in the higher reaches of Shamsabari ridge get isolated from the mainland during the winters which impacts their daily life. During the interaction it was also highlighted that there are no industrial corridors as there are no private investments. Also, infrastructure required for corporate sector to flourish such as IT hubs and skill development centres, among others. have not been developed.

## **VIII. Policy Recommendations**

Based on the key findings discussed in the previous section, a few policy recommendations, divided into short-term and long-term measures, are discussed below for the consideration of the concerned stakeholders, to improve the situation in the Kashmir Valley.

### **❖ Development and Governance-Related Recommendations**

- **End Digital Darkness: Restoration of High-Speed Internet Connectivity**

Internet has revolutionised the way of human life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the advancement of technology, it has become an integral part of our social and economic lives. Most of the aspects including e-governance, healthcare, education or business, have shifted to online platforms. However, in Kashmir since the ban on high-speed internet in August 2019, people have been facing various challenges. Additionally, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has

increased the dependency on internet in the form of e-learning, work from home culture, telemedicine, among others. Although internet has been partially restored, the speed has continued to remain too low for online learning or video calls.

The biggest group affected by the ‘digital darkness’ is the youth. According to them, the digital darkness that has existed in J&K for over an year will lead to resentment and alienation amongst the population. While the country is progressing fast in the digital space, there is a lag in the innovation and development in the Valley. Many have not been able to attend online classes regularly due to low internet speed. Businesses have faced several challenges in functioning over the past one year, so also basic activities like filing of income tax returns on time has been a mammoth task. There are certain internet-dependent services such as e-commerce, websites for job procurement, e-trading, e-banking applications etc. Restoration of 4G in two districts (Udhampur and Ganderbal) recently is a welcome step, but it is the right time that government considers restoring high speed internet soon for the benefit of the people and let them also avail the e-governance initiatives that are being launched.

**Short Term:** Restoration of high-speed internet in all districts of J&K. However, for security reasons the same can be partially shut down, wherever need be.

**Long term:** Setting up district-level social media monitoring groups with members of local administration, civil society, social media influencers etc., to flag any misuse of social media for anti-India activities as also to counter anti-India propaganda.

- **Boosting the Healthcare Sector**

The healthcare sector in Kashmir needs to be strengthened to provide good-quality treatment for different ailments. In 2019, as per the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms, J&K required 69 new community Health Centres, 222 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) and 1396 Sub Centres to serve the entire population.<sup>27</sup> In fact, many of the functional PHCs and Sub-Centres are understaffed and lack adequate infrastructure. In the short-term, there is a need to open more Jan Aushadhi Kendras and Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) stores. This will provide affordable medical facilities to the poor and disadvantaged, suffering from lifestyle and chronic diseases. All India Medical Institute (AIIMS)-led community-based clinics in association with district hospitals can be initiated for better healthcare services delivery to the people living in far-flung areas of the district. It has been noted that the healthcare sector in J&K has been mostly government-led and around

80 per cent of facilities are being provided by the public sector. Due to excess dependency on government hospitals and healthcare services, many patients from Kashmir travel to other parts of India seeking specialised and quality treatment. In the long term, entrepreneurship and private investment must be encouraged in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. Release of J&K State Healthcare Investment Policy 2019 is a step in the right direction. Considering the scenic beauty and the pollution free atmosphere in Kashmir Valley, it also has the potential to attract medical tourism. To this end, wellness centres and spas, health clubs, massage centres and Ayurveda resorts must be constructed in the famous tourist destinations.

- **Educational Reforms**

**Short Term:** Teacher education is an integral component of a successful education system. Recruitment of trained teachers and their consistent evaluation based on qualitative indicators of teaching must be carried out. Teachers must be provided training to use technology and innovative learning strategies. Emphasis must be laid on a practical and scientific approach to teaching rather than a text-book based teaching. This will encourage critical thinking amongst the students since the early days of education. In the short-term, high-speed internet facilities must be restored for disruption-free e-learning and online classes. Online learning platforms like Byju's and Vedantu must be promoted for holistic learning experience. Smart classrooms in all schools must be made mandatory. Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) must be promoted in large number of schools to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination as well as inculcate computational thinking, adaptive learning and practical applications-based self-learning in the young students. Capacity building/integration tours must be organised for mutual exchange of students from Kashmir and other parts of India. Moreover, the youth of Kashmir, travelling outside Kashmir for education and employment must be assured safety and security by the central and concerned state government.

**Long Term:** Introduction of moral science and vocational training courses among the school and university students could help them follow moral values and good lifestyle. More colleges and universities providing social science and professional degree courses need to be established in Kashmir. State syllabus in Kashmir needs a revamp and CBSE schools must be promoted. More Navodaya and Kendriya Vidyalaya schools must be introduced and made more attractive than religious schools. The industry must be roped in to improve the skills of the local youth under PPP framework. Schools must have an industry-academia partnership



to facilitate skill development centres, technical institutions and innovation centres. More Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) can be established in North Kashmir region which have higher percentage of tribal population. This will help in imparting education to the underprivileged tribal population practicing transhumance as these schools apart from educational facilities can also provide lodging and boarding to the Scheduled Tribes students.

- **Reviving the Tourism Sector**

The tourism sector in Kashmir has been hit hard in the last one year, first due to abrogation of Article 370 and later the COVID-19 pandemic. With the lifting of countrywide lockdown, the time is right to revive the sector with better infrastructure and promotion. Adventure activities such as trekking, mountaineering, skiing, angling, white water river rafting etc. must be promoted in more areas of Kashmir. Effective publicity of such activities must be carried out to attract not only domestic but also international tourists. Religious and spiritual tourism in Kashmir must be promoted by developing Hindu and Sufi pilgrimage circuits. Also, the unexplored tourism spots in the border areas must be promoted under a Border Circuit.

Many traditional fairs and promotional events are held in the Kashmir Valley throughout the year. Some of these being Tulip Fair, Shikhara Fair, Apple Fair, Garden of Paradise Fair, Water Sports Fair, Snow Carnival, Saffron Fair etc. Large-scale publicity campaigns must be organised by the government and tourism stake holders through print media, broadcast media, social media platforms, etc. To further promote tourism in the Valley, a celebrated Kashmiri can be nominated as the brand ambassador. Tourism and allied infrastructures must be increased for employment generation.

- **Employment Generation**

Employment generation is the key to provide better standard of living to the large number of unemployed youths of the Valley and to discourage them from going on the path of violence. A concrete employment policy to this end must be charted out by the government on priority basis. There exists preference amongst the youth for government jobs, primarily because of very few private sector job opportunities in the Valley. In this regard, there is a need to broaden the scope of private investment in important sectors such as horticulture, agriculture, handlooms and handicraft, carpet industry, information technology (IT), pharmaceuticals, sericulture, tourism, food processing, etc. Climatic conditions are very favourable in developing world-class IT parks that can transform the region. There is a huge potential to

bring large-scale private investment and employment generation. Necessary physical and digital infrastructure must be created on a war footing.

Leading corporate and business houses must conduct conclaves and workshops to promote private investment and gain confidence of the public. District administration must facilitate the organising of job Melas and on-campus placement recruitment drives periodically. A push must be given to improve the digital economy in Kashmir such that e-commerce platforms can be utilised by local artisans for selling indigenous handicraft. This will not only give them better monetary incentives but also empower the women artisans. Micro and small-scale industries must be promoted in the border areas under the Border Area Development Program (BADP). Kashmiri handicrafts and handloom products such as Pashmina shawls, carpets, embroideries, chain stitch, *phool kari*, *Basohli Paintings*, *Calico Paintings*, woodwork and silverwares are very popular across the world. Promotion of these on social media and e-commerce platforms as well as setting up of their stores in different cities in India and abroad will provide better monetary incentives to the artisans in Kashmir.

- **Infrastructure Development**

Priority should be given to development of road and rail infrastructure to improve the connectivity within the UT. Also, better connectivity with other parts of India is essential especially during the winter months. The government should work towards better maintenance of national highways, state-highways, local roads, including the roads in the forward areas. Few villages in the forward areas are completely isolated due to lack of well-maintained roads and also harsh winters. Government must consider building all-weather roads in these areas not only for better connectivity for civilians but also travel of security forces for strategic reasons. Development of Nasta Chun (NC) Pass Tunnel in Tangdhar Sector is a long-standing demand of the people. Geo-tagging of all infrastructure development projects must be mandatory to ensure transparency and time-bound completion. To develop world-class infrastructure, government must consider the feasibility of the PPP models by inviting private infrastructure companies to invest. This will also help in large-scale employment generation. Moreover, infrastructure development in the border areas needs an immediate attention. While travelling to the Simari village in the Tangdhar sector of the LC, the authors witnessed a stark contrast in the condition of the roads on the other side of the LC in comparison to the status of roads on the Indian side. While there are well-built and maintained roads and highway near Pakistan occupied Simari village, the road leading to

the Indian side of the same village needs urgent repairs. The government must also consider improving the funding and transparency in the BADP to improve the infrastructure in the border areas.

- **Accountability and Transparency in Civil Administration**

Technology-infused transparency in the administration must be adopted to prevent corruption. Some possible initiatives in the Valley are: online portal for single-window clearance mechanism, mobile apps/online portal to render citizen-centric services in an integrated form on a single platform to citizens where the status of e-applications/requests can be monitored from time to time. During the harsh winters when the mountain passes like the NC Pass to Tangdhar and Rajdhan Pass to Kanzalwan and Gurez Valley close for over 4 to 5 months, helicopter services may be made available to the district officials to visit the forward areas and hence improve the interface between the government and people. A real-time tracking of interaction between the district officials and locals needs to be mandatory. To this end, photos/videos, action taken must be uploaded on the public domain. The Indian Army under ‘Operation Sadbhavana’ has been fulfilling several welfare and development requirements of the region, especially in the border areas. A proactive role of the civil administration is essential, and a bottom-up approach must be promoted in the areas of infrastructure development, healthcare facilities, social awareness campaigns, education and women empowerment. It should be compulsory for all the UT administration officers and employees to declare their income and liabilities annually. More importantly, periodic ‘performance audit’ should be the main monitoring mechanism to ensure that people-friendly projects or schemes are implemented, as planned, failing which strict penalties should be levied on the concerned official.

- **Revival of Democratic Process**

Autonomous, empowered and democratic institutions at grassroot level will be a major solution for the problems being faced by people of Kashmir. With the abrogation of Article 370, implementation of all provisions of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts, 1992 in totality is the need of the hour. Election Commission and Finance Commission must ensure regular elections, participatory democracy, financial transparency, decentralised planning, and people-led development. There exists a general demand that the electoral process in the UT be revived. Most importantly, people aspire to have a youth-led political trajectory due to heavy resentment against the mainstream parties and politicians. With the formation of a UT legislature, policy formulation and decision-making will become decentralised. Headway

towards this recommendation must be made in the short-term. Due to history of possible manipulation in electoral processes, it is essential that future elections must be free and fair, give equal opportunities to all and also those contesting be given security. Moreover, in the recent months there have been cowardly terrorist killing of local political workers and BDC members in a bid to stifle the democracy in Kashmir. Such attempts need to be averted in the short-term by strengthened security and law-enforcement measures.

- **Representation of Kashmir in the National and International Media.**

Journalists in the valley find it difficult to write about the positive developments, due to the high threats they face from certain anti-national elements. To this end, government must ensure effective safety and security of the journalists and progressive intellectuals, to report in fair and unbiased manner. Local people from Kashmir, especially the youth, must be given opportunities in the national and international media to put forth their ideas. They must also be involved in policy making at the local and national level. Therefore, think tanks, media houses both print and broadcast media, should engage with the local population on a regular basis.

### ❖ **Security Related Recommendations**

- **Counter-Strategy for Information Warfare (IW)**

Due to the dire socio-politico-economic situation of Pakistan today, it will continue its hybrid war against India. Cognitive domain is the new battlefield and India needs strong offensive and defensive strategies and capabilities to tackle the information cum psychological war (Psywar) being waged from across the border. Post abrogation of Article 370, Pakistan has intensified circulation of propaganda, fake news, misinformation campaigns, etc., against India in Kashmir. To counter this a whole of government and society approach is indispensable.

**Short-term:** There are many ‘social media warriors’ as also IT professionals in Kashmir who must be empowered to counter Pakistan’s propaganda. They would have better knowledge of the nitty-gritties of the ground reality which will allow India to develop better quality counter-narratives. Different branches of the government and security forces are involved in countering Psywar. However, better coordination with utmost seriousness is necessary in these efforts. Also, the paramilitary forces and UT police have made very limited efforts towards perception management and countering malicious narratives. The malicious campaigns directed towards them needs to be countered with effective IW apparatus.

**Long-term:** India lacks an official Strategic Communications Policy which identifies India's strategic objectives and crafts a strong policy with diplomatic and communication programmes targeting specific audiences. Such a policy needs to be formulated to bring uniformity and overcome communication gaps between different sections of society, for example, the government, bureaucracy, media, military, etc. India must proactively counter Pakistan's IW by exploiting the various religious, economic, political and social faultlines within the country as also the human rights abuses committed against its own population. The feasibility of a dedicated IW agency in the country must also be delved into.

- **Addressing Radicalisation**

Radicalisation is a grave threat to the Kashmiri society and needs to be tackled post-haste.

**Short Term:** The terms radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation in Kashmir must be defined with the consensus of various stakeholders. This will ensure a uniformity in the society's approach to radicalisation. There is an immediate need for a comprehensive de-radicalisation programme in J&K, jointly by the government and civil society. Social media must be monitored regularly, and counter-narratives must be effectively used against propaganda by terrorists and their sympathisers. Counter-radicalisation needs a whole of society approach, i.e., the support of family members, senior citizens, educationists, teachers, NGOs, etc., to the attempts made by government to address the causes of radicalisation. To address radicalisation amongst women, focus must be on empowering the women through self-help groups, creating community-level women grievances redressal forums wherein female officials of the local level government attend to the challenges being faced by the women of the locality. Not much has been discussed and written about the role of women, but this single factor, if unaddressed, will have a deep impact on the future discourse in the Valley.

**Long Term:** The Government of India must ensure formulation of a policy to address the challenge posed by encrypted social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. These are being increasingly used for radicalisation and terror recruitment to escape scrutiny of law enforcement agencies. The education system must aim at developing critical thinking faculties in children since primary classes to prevent them from being dogmatic. Since religious radicalisation is most prominent, Islamic theological centres and moderate Islamic religious teachers must be roped in to counter the fundamentalist Salafi and Wahhabi

ideology as also to disseminate the correct interpretation of various religious values and beliefs.

The authors did not get an opportunity to interact with religious leaders during the study tour, but as Bashir Assad writes in his book ‘K Files’, religious teachers propagate anti-India sentiments and radical Islamic thoughts.<sup>28</sup> Also, a study conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), as presented at CLAWS during a national seminar ‘Mapping of Perceptions In Jammu and Kashmir: The Way Ahead’ suggested that, “around 65 per cent of the respondents expressed a great deal of trust on the religious institutions and leaders. In fact 84 per cent of the youth suggested that they visited religious institutions in spare time.”<sup>29</sup> Hence, religious leaders can be identified and trained for de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation.

- **Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy**

The first surrender policy in J&K was introduced in 1995 and promised monetary incentives to ex-terrorists. A pro-government militia, the Ikhwan Force, with these ex-terrorists was also raised. This policy turned out to be ineffective and new policies were introduced in 2004, 2010 and in 2019 a draft policy titled ‘Reintegration Policy for the Misguided Youth’ was prepared.<sup>30</sup>

**Short Term:** There is an urgent need for a comprehensive surrender and rehabilitation policy which is effective in its entirety. Most importantly, the policy must ensure safety of surrendered terrorists from active terrorists after surrender. Along with monetary incentives, they must be deradicalised through dedicated programmes and also provided vocational training. A separate department or agency must be established for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the surrendered terrorists and their families. It must ensure that the surrendered terrorists receive the other benefits guaranteed to them. A sustainable policy for surrendered terrorists must have a monitoring mechanism in which regular checks are carried out on them by the local administration to prevent recidivism.

**Long Term:** In many cases, society disapproves the reintegration of surrendered terrorists into the mainstream. Tackling this requires gradual social reforms including educating the young population, sensitising general public in community centres and religious institutions.

- **Reforms in Law and Order**

Police is the backbone of the society, they maintain the law and order and are significant in collecting intelligence at the local level.

**Short Term:** Post abrogation of Article 370 the Police is now under the Ministry of Home Affairs. There is a need for independent body to carry out social and financial audit of the police. Strategies for police reforms must not be isolated but should be in tandem and integrated with the reforms in the governance framework.

There is a need for e-policing by establishing more Cyber Crime Cells. Police, at all levels, must be trained in using technology for policing purposes. It is important that with gradual restoration of high-speed internet, digital registration of cases be given impetus.

‘Prison reforms’ are an important part of law and order reforms. With the rise in insurgency and terrorism in J&K in 1990s the prisons were filled beyond capacity and prisons became the most common place for a person to get radicalised. Even today, in many prisons, criminals who have committed crimes of different intensity are put together due to which there is always a looming threat of radicalisation. Also, government must consider organising vocational training for prisoners or run job-oriented skill development centres to help the prisoners reintegrate into the mainstream society.

**Long Term:** Government should empower more women to join the UT Police Force and provide them with greater on-the-ground responsibilities. For example, many women have been caught as couriers of drugs or weapons and have indulged in many other crimes. With more women police personnel, a check can be kept on the women in areas beyond the mandate of male police personnels. Better traffic management is very crucial in Kashmir and to this end installing CCTVs at every junction and stricter implementation of road safety rules must be considered.

- **Tackling Drug Abuse**

Drug menace has increased manifold, to tackle this problem there needs to be proactive measures by the government as well as civil society.

**Short term:** The civil society must be proactive in generating awareness among the youth about the ill-effects of drugs. School and college students must be targeted for the same. Energy of the youth energy must be channelised to different recreational and co-curricular activities.

More drug de-addiction centres need to be constructed in every district and social stigma associated to drug abuse must be tackled simultaneously through community-level programmes. Smuggling of drugs from border entry points of the UT must be checked by deploying full body truck and container scanners and more women security personnels for frisking women.

**Long Term:** Better surveillance and stricter implementation of anti-narcotics laws of the land is vital to check this menace. Farmers and other locals indulged in growing drugs in their fields must be penalised accordingly.

The supply chain is the backbone of drugs entering the society, there are various agencies that keep a check on these, these agencies must be equipped technologically and deploy more stringent measures at the border to check the consignments entering the Valley. This process must be made less bureaucratic.

## **IX. Conclusion**

The conflict in Kashmir dates back to the pre-independence period and has resulted in major changes in the socio-politico-economic scenario of the region. A turning point in the history of Kashmir is abrogation of Article 370 and reorganisation of J&K into two UTs, declared on 5 August 2019. Though several apprehensions have been raised from time to time regarding the future discourse of Kashmir, however, the people at large, especially the youth is optimistic about the changes brought by the GoI. There is a growing expectation for widescale employment opportunities, quality education and accountability and transparency in the civil administration. These reforms will reduce the level of violence and deter people from supporting/joining terrorism, hence bringing peace and tranquility in Kashmir. Hence, the governance system must work with a great sense of commitment to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the people with a sense of urgency .



## End Notes

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