

# Round Table Discussion Report

## CURRENT SITUATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR AND RESPONSE OPTIONS

November 14, 2017



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New Delhi



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## SUMMARY

The round table discussion (RTD) on ‘Current Issue in Jammu and Kashmir and Response Options’ conducted at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) on November 14, 2017, touched upon the following main issues, which were elucidated with multiple examples by the presenters.

1. There is a political and intellectual leadership vacuum in the state, leading to a shift of political allegiance of the local population in the valley to figures such as Burhan Wani, who they can look up to as a Kashmiri hero.
2. In response to the unfolding political scenario, a threefold plan was proposed to address the issues: (i) creation of hope in the minds of the Kashmiri people, (ii) focus on the youth of Kashmir and (iii) thinking of and developing a multi-tiered governmental plan.
3. Government responsiveness to the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people is very low, leading to a trust deficit and continuous alienation of the Kashmiri people. The government must take proactive steps to create jobs and opportunities for the people of the state, especially for the youth.
4. Operation *Sadbhavana* conducted by the Indian Army is but one step that has been taken towards the betterment and integration of the local population. This must now be supplemented by the efforts of the state and centre government.
5. Identity politics has become the centre focus for various political actors, which is being exploited by Pakistan for developing terror links. It is imperative for India to change the game that it is playing with Pakistan, engaging with it in its own game and ensure that it can effectively counter the efforts made by Pakistan to undermine Indian efforts in Kashmir.

6. There is a need to develop positive narratives to counter the problem in Kashmir and the problem of Kashmir, which needs to be supplemented by an effective system of dialogue, especially one that focuses on the youth.

## **Introduction**

On November 14, 2017, the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), hosted an RTD with senior military officials, veterans, senior journalists and members from the civil society to discuss the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the possible response options. Jammu and Kashmir has presented itself to be a dynamic case, with different sections of the population supporting different actors, misinformation campaigns run by Pakistan shifting the discourse in the state as well as the almost continuous cultural, structural and physical violence in Kashmir eroding the space for reconciliation and conflict transformation. Against this background, it becomes exceedingly important to take into consideration the views, opinions, hopes and aspirations of the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and formulate new responses for them. The RTD aimed at developing a deeper understanding of the situation on the ground in the state, possible future developments in the area and to develop a new response to counter violent extremism in the state.

The round table had seven presenters, namely, Colonel Haridas M, Mr. Iftikar Gilani, Lt. General Satish Dua, Mr. Shabir Makhdoomi, Lt. General DS Hooda, Lt. General Gurmit Singh and Brigadier Narender Kumar. The presentations were followed by an open discussion with the participants.

The following sections of the report encapsulate the important points discussed by the presenters, followed by a brief of the RTD between all the participants and the presenters, concluding with an analysis of the meeting and the recommendations put forth by the same. The concept note and the programme details are attached at the end of the report.

## Presentations

1. The first presentation of the RTD was on sentiment analysis.
  - a. The presentation was based on a project submitted by students, which looked at the mapping process for sentiments of people in a geographical area based on social media analysis in real time.
  - b. The project, which uses multiple softwares to synthesize information on a tag, say 'Burhan Wani', from tweets and retweets, manages to geotag the keywords, allowing us to see the geospatial locations of the tweeters.
  - c. The project uses open-source material for its analysis and would be useful for army commanders at various levels, since it can be used to monitor, predict and prevent eminent hostile events.
2. The second presentation was on 'Options to Create Space for Dialogue, Reconciliation and the Process of Restoration of Political Stability'.
  - a. The main problem was identified as problems in recreating political space for the two mainstream political forces, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference by the Indian government.
  - b. This is most visible in South Kashmir, which has historically been influenced by the actions of *Jamaat-e-Islami*. It was noted that due to the strong counter-militancy operations in the area, these militant groups have shifted base to Srinagar, leaving a political vacuum, allowing various other radical elements to come in.
  - c. It was this very vacuum that allowed for the shift of political allegiance of the people to figures such as Burhan Wani, who was one of the few 'true Kashmiri heroes' to the general populace in Kashmir whom they could follow or almost worship.
  - d. The difference between the problem of Kashmir and the

problem in Kashmir was stressed, arguing that an effective system of dialogue needs to be enabled to deal with and resolve the problem of Kashmir, with a simultaneous mechanism of empowerment and democratic dialogue space being created to solve the problem in Kashmir.

- e. The focus of the dialogues should be the youth, and college spaces should be utilized in Kashmir as they are being in Jammu.
  - f. However, it remains imperative to recognise that there are other regions in the state too, and regional disempowerment, especially in Ladakh and Kargil that must be addressed; open democratic space must be made consciously in the state for better engagement with the local population.
3. The next presentation was on ‘Political, Military, Social, Cultural, Youth, Governance and Developmental Construct’.
- a. The main argument was that in order to move forward, we have to fully understand the current situation and the historical constructs that led to these developments.
  - b. The main issue identified was not of violence, rather it is the alienation of the Kashmiri people.
  - c. While the security forces must be better aware of on the ground happenings, they can only control the violence, and that peacetime management is not under their purview. It was noted that despite this being the domain of the government, they have not capitalised on it and have rather outsourced it to the army. Consequently, there has been little effort made to address the problems faced by the people.
  - d. In response to this, a threefold plan was proposed to address the issues: (i) creation of hope in the minds of the Kashmiri people, (ii) focus on the youth of Kashmir and (iii) thinking of and developing a multi-tiered governmental plan. The three are interlinked and depend on governmental inputs and proactivity to develop new initiatives that would allow the people, especially the youth of

the state to become more involved. One of the mediums is the creation of jobs, youth clubs and sports organisations to involve the youth in a more constructive manner, taking them away from a life of violence to the one where they can use their skills and build their lives.

- e. Operation *Sadbhavana* is only one step that has been taken by the army—this must now be supplemented by continuous efforts of the state and central government for the better integration of people.
  - f. Finally, a more mature media institution is needed—the absence of positive stories on the progress made in Kashmir does play a role in managing the perception of the people. Responsible private individuals can help change this.
4. The next presentation was on ‘Perception Management Strategy to Create Space for Dialogue’ and the main points noted were as follows:
- a. The social dynamics are different in different parts of the state and must be kept in mind when dealing with the separatist threat in different parts of Kashmir.
  - b. Due to the curtailment of the liberal mainstream parties and actors along with the state being led by the bureaucracy, the local populace has low levels of trust in the government in power.
  - c. There is a need to manage perception of the people at all levels in the state, especially to control the anti-Delhi and anti-India sentiments. However, we must keep in mind that the people in Jammu and Kashmir are generally very humane and not against Indian people.
  - d. In the same vein as the previous presentations, it was underscored that economic deprivation remains the primary issue and that a better engagement with the masses is required.
  - e. It is crucial to have a sustained dialogue and peace between India and Pakistan to have lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Dialogue must be purposeful and must include confidence-building measures.

5. The fifth presentation was on, 'Jammu and Kashmir: Narrative and Counter Narrative' and the main issues raised were as follows:
  - a. We must understand the drivers of the conflict in the state and not simply look at the manifestations. The main driving force has been the fear of the future. This has taken the shape of identity and identity politics. People are wondering what will happen to my identity in the future? The *Hurriyat* is consequently pushing the idea of Muslim identity under threat, leading to identity conflict over resources in the state.
  - b. With regard to this, there are four dominant narratives which are driving the conflict in the state—Kashmiris discriminated against in India, highly militarised region (though that is not entirely true), state is against the people (i.e., use of pellet guns) and seeing Pakistan's role and hand in every occurrence of the state. These narratives are perpetuated via social media and are influenced by religious radicalisation.
  - c. It was noted that the state remains responsible for conflict resolution and for building counter narratives. However, what is needed at this stage is a multipronged approach and the development of political structures to go along with these counter narratives.
  - d. To go towards the end goal of conflict resolution, we need to be able to manage it at this stage, requiring credible commitment to peace by all actors and the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy for the terrorists.
6. The next speaker spoke on 'Future Contours of the Conflict and Options Thereof for Shaping Positive Narrative'.
  - a. The speaker argued that we need to disrupt the dominant narrative. For this, we need to focus on the four centres of gravity in Jammu and Kashmir—Pakistan terrorism links, *Awam* (social aspects), state responsibility and narrative. While the four aspects work in

tandem and must be looked at as such, we must remain aware that the alienation and subversion of the population has primarily been due to radicalisation, which has been due to the perpetuation of certain narratives.

- b. Pakistan's strategy on that front has been stable—they want less investments and huge disruptions and wish to affect the minds of Indians, the Kashmiris in particular.
  - c. In reaction to this, India has not played the same game. India is still narrowly focused on maintaining the status quo. We need to change that by changing the game that we are playing. This can be possible by not simply refuting the narratives that are being currently perpetuated, rather by focusing on creating new narratives, shifting the conflict dynamics and backing this up with alternative and responsive political leadership that focuses on developing political solutions to the conflict and enhancing territorial integrity of the state with India.
7. The final presentation of the day was on “Kashmir: A Fresh Narrative”.
- a. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is a hybrid war being fought by Pakistan and India for leverage over Kashmir and being led by narratives.
  - b. We need to develop positive narratives, especially those that would help counter violence (cultural, structural and physical) and violent extremism in the state.
  - c. This exercise must also be taken up by the army in a fluid manner, allowing it to manage and adapt to changing narratives and situations as they crop up in the state. Due to the fact that the army is already engaged in construction and development projects in the region, especially in the more remote areas, this engagement must now be utilised to engage with the people in developing positive narratives for the armed forces in the valley.

- d. There is an intellectual leadership vacuum in the state and that this must be addressed by bringing the people who had left the state to study elsewhere back to Kashmir, by enabling them to establish more opportunities for the youth in the state. If the democratic situation is discredited, there leaves a scope for non-state actors to take power.
- e. Finally, finding a solution to the Kashmir problem will not come from Delhi, but from Baramulla or Srinagar. Engagement with the populace from the ground up is the only solution.

## CONCEPT NOTE

Cultural, structural and physical violence in Kashmir has eroded the space for reconciliation and political process. The centre stage has been taken over by the radicals through misinformation campaigns and psychological warfare. Pakistan through its sustained efforts has effectively implemented inner front strategy so that movement can be sustained by the popular support of the public. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is not a security problem anymore but is a war of perception and misinformation that is driving the agenda. It will be a miscalculation to see conflict in Kashmir through the prism of security problems. It will require a counterviolence extremism strategy to deal with the cultural, structural and physical violence. The current efforts are focused on countering physical violence/terrorism whereas more efforts and focus is required to fight the other components of hybrid war.

There seems to be a dichotomy in the implementation of a comprehensive counter violent extremism strategy that can effectively deal with all aspects of a hybrid nature of conflict that is unfolding in Kashmir. The synergy between the security forces may have been achieved but what is left uncontested is countering misinformation campaign, shaping the public opinion so as to create a space for reconciliation and political process. More than conflict resolution and negotiation, the priority at this stage should be to create space for interaction by putting a strategy to counter misinformation campaigns and the psychological war of Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relation (ISPR). It would certainly require an effective, credible and sustained multi-tier approach by the government.

Scope of the discussion will be:

- a. Pakistan wants India to believe that Kashmir is a victim of terrorism. It is a strategy to deflect the focus from the inner front and misinformation strategy so that it can effectively carry-out

passive aggression to capture the political, public and societal space.

- b. Decoding the contours of conflict. Unless the strategy put in place by Pakistan is demystified, counter measures cannot be put in place.
- c. ISPR campaigns and methods employed by it to keep the pot boiling in Kashmir.
- d. Counterviolent extremism strategy to deal with cultural, structural and physical violence.
- e. More than countering the misinformation campaign, there is a need to counter the overall strategy. Piecemeal efforts may be counterproductive.
- f. Methods or modes of counterviolent extremism strategy.

**Program Details**

**ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON CURRENT SITUATION  
IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR AND RESPONSE OPTIONS**

Tuesday, 14 November 2017, 1000–1600hrs

Chanakya Hall, CLAWS, Delhi Cantonment

**Programme**

1000–1015h	<b>Tea and Registration</b>
1015–1020h	Welcome Remarks by Lt Gen Balraj Singh Nagal (Retired), Director Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)
1020–1030h	Presentation on Sentiment Analysis by Col Haridas M
1030–1055h	Options to Create Space for Dialogue, Reconciliation and Process of Restoration of Political Stability by Mr Iftikhar Gilani
1055–1120h	Political, Military, Social, Cultural, Youth, Governance and Developmental Construct by Lt Gen Satish Dua
1120–1140h	Perception Management Strategy to Create Space for Dialogue by Mr Shabir Makhdoomi
1140–1210h	Jammu and Kashmir: Narrative and Counter Narrative by Lt Gen DS Hooda (Retired)
1210–1230h	<b>Tea Break</b>
1230–1250h	Future Contours of the Conflict and Options Thereof for Shaping Positive Narrative by Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retired)
1250–1310h	Kashmir: A Fresh Narrative by Brig Narender Kumar (Retired)
1310–1340h	Discussion
1340–1410h	<b>Lunch</b>
1410–1555h	Internal Discussion with representatives of Service Headquarters and CLAWS Faculty
1555–1600h	Closing Remarks by Lt Gen Balraj Singh Nagal (Retired), Director CLAWS