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## Kashmir Requires Missionary Zeal to Promote Peace



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### Abstract

There is a need to continuously evolve the conflict management strategy in a fluid and dynamic asymmetric war. Status quo mindset will lead to either stalemate or a situation that may become irreversible. The Security forces can suppress the violence in Kashmir for a specific period, but cannot resolve a socio-political conflict that is slowly changing into Jihad for an Islamic State. It is the responsibility of the State to envision a road map for conflict management since it has the resources and tools to identify, analyse and assess the evolving situation. The inexorable conflict in Kashmir requires missionary zeal and participation of multi-stakeholders to build capacity for peace and to end violence. Promoting security with a view to stimulating stability would require synergised efforts of all stakeholders under an overarching structure consisting of military and non-military agencies engaged in dealing with the conflict. India must use all available tools of national power at its disposal to ensure it does not become a potential geopolitical challenge.

### Key Points

1. Conflict in Kashmir is a national security challenge and needs to be addressed as such.
2. Suppression of violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism requires a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy.
3. Reconciliation requires state, civil society and religious organisations to come together to play a critical role in changing discourse among communities where extremism germinates.
4. The public institutions should be more transparent and accountable to the people in order to address the grievances and disaffection.
5. The people can be agents of peace and security and not merely passive recipients of extremist violence.
6. The state requires a structure to bring synergy to the efforts of all stakeholders to eliminate terrorism in a holistic manner.

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## Kashmir Requires Missionary ...

### Introduction

In 2019 the conflict in J&K has entered its 30th year. The conflict has seen three distinct phases in the last three decades. The period between 1990 and 1998 saw rise of terrorism and euphoria among the pro-independence groups who believed that independence was on the horizon. This was the period when the security grid was evolving and active involvement of foreign terrorists commenced in the Valley. The period between 1998 and 2006 saw the rise and fall of terrorism in the North and South of *Pir Panjal*. The security forces were able to suppress violence but the political leadership failed to seize the opportunity. This period saw a mushrooming of terrorist organisations with their command structures based in Pakistan, namely, LeT, JeM, Hijbul Mujahideen and Al Badar, to name a few, and a period of beginning of asymmetric war directly controlled by the Pakistan Army. The period from 2006–2014 was a period of comparative peace but separatists and Pakistan were able to give a new fillip to the conflict by manufacturing triggers to destabilise the prevailing peace. The period from 2014 till now has seen conflict in Kashmir evolving as asymmetric war that has blurred the distinction between civilian and non-state actors where both combine their efforts to coordinate all activities deemed necessary to achieve success.<sup>1</sup> Mass uprising and stone pelting to disrupt operations by security forces has become a norm. Terrorists who use social media to garner support, recruit new cadres and communicate with cadres and people through this media is the new normal. In each of these phases, tactics and operational modalities kept changing, but what remained consistent was inability of political leadership to step in whenever the situation was stabilised by the security forces. A fundamental problem in analysing conflict in Kashmir is that it has not been addressed as a National Security Challenge. As a result the Pakistani policy of fostering, aiding and abetting extremism has remained constant. Their modus operandi has changed as per global sensitivities and pressures.

Resultantly, the Indian state is unable to make it costly for Pakistan to pursue a policy of cross-border terrorism. The continuum of conflict in Kashmir is required to be addressed at all three levels (strategic, operational and tactical) to defeat the state-sponsored proxy war that is slowly turning into a lethal hybrid conflict. A fundamental problem in analysing conflict in Kashmir is lack of a clear understanding of the relationship between external and internal security challenges. As a matter of principle, the conflict in Kashmir should not be looked at from the prism of political convenience but a key issue that threatens internal and external security. The radicalisation and demonisation of Kashmiri society is having a catastrophic impact on peace providence in the Valley. Kashmir today is a victim of structural violence that is relatively permanent and is somehow built into the social structure.<sup>2</sup>

The Suicide attack that killed more than 40 Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel in Jammu and Kashmir is a harbinger of a major security challenge that may unfold in Kashmir. This trend if not checked will create a deeper void between Jammu and Kashmir Valley and it will alienate the Kashmiri *Awam* further in the rest of the country. The danger is that suicide attacks will force security forces to re-impose stringent measures to control movement of public and increase frisking of people and vehicles that will certainly cause inconvenience to the public at large. Widening trust deficit will impact tourism, trade from and to Kashmir, studies of students and the movement of Kashmiri *Awam* in the rest of the country. Even international travel by Kashmiri youths will be subjected to more scrutiny since no country is willing to allow radicalised youths and suicide bombers in their country. The genuine grievances and sympathy of the people towards the Kashmiri youth may be lost forever. Investment will come to naught and will trigger greater unemployment in the Valley. Unchecked and uncontrolled radicalisation has serious consequences.

### Pursuance of Conflict Management with Missionary Zeal

Suppression of violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism requires a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy. The objective of the proxy war and cross-border terrorism in Kashmir is to destroy and discredit the institutions of governance and create a void and disaffection between the state and its subjects. The governments and civil society alike have failed in Kashmir to connect the dots to promote non-violent action that can help communities address grievances while absorbing the youth alienation upon which the terrorist movement feeds.<sup>3</sup> Use of weapons to pull out the roots of terrorism is a strategy to nowhere. The State cannot stop terrorism and bring change to the radicalised mindset by eliminating terrorists alone. Dissent, dialogue, debate and concessions are a way forward. Use of force and stalling dialogue process by the State to deal with the crisis situation is indicative of lack of understanding of the conflict resolution strategy. Some of the suggestions to deal with the conflict in Kashmir are as follows:

- **Reconciliation Requires Multi-Stakeholder Engagement.** Governments alone cannot address violent extremism and there are already positive examples of the social organisations playing an active role in severing sources of financial and material support for violent extremist activities.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, civil society and religious organisations can play a critical role in changing discourse among communities where extremism germinates. The stakeholders, those who need to be engaged, are the institution of family, social organisations, religious clerics (who are prepared to work against radicals) and teachers. It is also up to civil society to develop legitimate governance structures and institutions to make the political establishment accountable to the people.<sup>5</sup> Engagement must be with those who are opposed to the idea of India rather than every time talking to those who are already on your side. The resistance can be broken by interaction and not by isolation.

- **Address Genesis of Conflict.** It is difficult to pinpoint a single cause of disaffection and violent extremism, which means that violent extremism in Kashmir has its roots in cultural, social, economic, religious, psychological and political faultlines. The disaffection and violent extremism can be addressed through education, employment opportunities, promoting cultural and social interaction with the rest of the country, legal framework to bar people involved in anti-national activities from jobs and by promoting Sufism. Social media and vernacular press have a great role to play and this space needs to be discreetly controlled by the government so that it is not exploited for radicalisation and information war against the state.
- **Rethink Muscular Policy as a Tool to Suppress Violence.** The military and intelligence services are critical tools to suppress violence; prolonged employment of military is likely to produce negative results. Eric T. Olson quoted from the US Army Field Manual in 2010 that, “Some of the Best Weapons to Fight Counterinsurgents Do Not Shoot.”<sup>6</sup> In other words the State cannot end violent extremism by bleeding insurgents. Therefore, “elimination of terrorists is not elimination of terrorism.” The Government must make an endeavour to end bleeding by involving stakeholders. Though attrition on terrorists must continue so that they do not acquire phenomenal proportions but efforts should be to prevent youth joining terror ranks. Use of terminology is also important, by giving terms such as “Operation All-Out” is indeed intimidating. Use of such terminology by responsible government agencies must be proscribed because it creates a perception that the state is at war with its own people. Implementation of a soft approach may pose difficulties in the beginning but it presents both opportunities and dangers. However, care must be taken to carry out an assessment if the strategy is working or not. If it is failing, the

government must reverse this policy and adopt a structured approach without disturbing the security equilibrium.

- **Devise and Initiate Solutions from within Kashmir.** The conflict resolution initiative in Kashmir would require civil society to play an active but discreet role in addressing violent extremism. In fact it should be local youths who should be at the forefront of counterterrorism initiatives. Creation of a credible leader is critical to the implementation of any containment strategy. Local youth icons or acceptable leaders have a greater understanding of *Kashmiriyat* and religious peculiarities; and can garner greater respect than an individual from across the LOC or from South of Pir Panjal. Local leaders and priorities should drive the development of strategies and solutions, so that they can properly reflect the unique environments and capabilities of communities affected by violent extremism.<sup>7</sup>
- **Remove Governance Deficit.** There is growing governance deficit and it is one of the main root causes of the persistence of violent extremism. Similarly, the disconnect between citizens and the political leaders has acted as an inhibiting factor to counter the promise of political, social and even economic empowerment of disaffected citizens. The public institutions should be more transparent and accountable to the people in order to address the grievances and disaffection.
- **End Rampant Corruption.** There is a popular perception among the people of Kashmir that one of the root causes of terrorism is enduring and rampant corruption in the state. There is a need for a transparent investigation of all projects funded by the State and Central Governments since the beginning of terrorism for exposing politico-bureaucratic corruption behind the veil of Kashmir being a disturbed area. Disproportionate assets of politicians, bureaucrats, clerics and even private persons need to be investigated. Corruption is

emerging as one of the biggest sources of funding of radicals, terrorists and stone-pelters. To gain support and trust of the people the Government should end the regime of endemic corruption in the state.

- **Address Issue of Radicalisation in a Holistic Manner.** The Kashmiri youth is not willing to be lectured to by an outsider on religion and radicalisation. The popular perception is that youths in Kashmir are victims of state repression and cultural isolation. As per their understanding Jihad is a way forward to get rid of societal ills and neglect by the state. This is a dangerous trend and needs to be checked. Anti and counter-radicalisation measures should be spearheaded by local youths and citizens rather than an outside organisation. The first step to kick-start this initiative is to identify youth, conduct workshops to train these leaders and thereafter let them start this initiative in the Valley. It is not only important to start the initiative but equally important to assess the impact of the initiative. There is also a requirement to monitor clerics as to what they should not preach in mosques. Rhetoric of *Jihad* and giving call to the people to indulge in violence and mass public disorder should be prohibited by law enforcement agencies. In addition to the legal recourse, the *Deoband* and other *Ulemas* must be brought on board to proscribe endeavours by radicals to misuse religion.
- **Moral Exclusion and Irrelevancy of Secessionists.** There is a need to ensure moral exclusion and irrelevancy of extremists and radicals in a progressive society. It is not an issue of governance; it is an issue of societal responsibility. There is no justification of moral acceptability of violence be it political, physical, cultural or structural. Physical and structural violence occur only because it is legitimised or rationalised in the collective consciousness of the society. There is a need to

examine how social/political entities in the Valley view themselves in relation to others in terms of the psychological processes of “inclusion and exclusion”<sup>8</sup> of legitimacy of *Jihad*. Moral exclusion of secessionist elements should be spearheaded by social organisations, religious organisations and civil society.

- **Build Civil Society as Co-equal to Ensure Peace and Harmony.** The tendency to treat civil society in isolation from state institutions is wilful creation of void because civil society co-produces state institutions through constant debate and negotiation.<sup>9</sup> Politics and civil society are co-equal to build harmony and peace in society. The most critical part is de-politicisation of conflict because that can remove bias and extremist ideology to prevent encroachment of societal space by radicals. The people can be agents of peace and security and not merely passive recipients of extremist violence. Though it is the responsibility of the state to provide security, the monopoly of the state on providing security must not be seen as the only method to end violence. In fact the state and the society must take over the responsibility as co-equals to ensure end of violent extremism and beginning of an era of stable peace. Kashmir lacks the participation of society in building peace, thus there is a need to create space for the society to assume its role in securing peace and harmony.

#### **Structure for Executing Synchronised and Synergised Strategy**

The measures given above require a structure to bring synergy to the efforts of all stakeholders to eliminate terrorism in a holistic manner. The existing structure appears to be inadequate to handle the complex conflict. Ideally the Unified Command should function under the Governor or single ministry of the Government of India, because there are Central

and State agencies involved in dealing with various facets of the conflict. There is a need to bifurcate military and non-military aspects between civil and military authorities under the Unified Command Headquarters. Counterterrorist operations (military and intelligence), perception management, cyber war and psychological operations ideally should be under the Army Commander Northern Command. (All counterterrorist agencies including the Army, Intelligence, CAPF and Police should be responsible to a single command authority.) Non-military measures should be controlled by a nominated civil authority to include de-radicalisation, rehabilitation of surrendered terrorists and de-radicalised youths, programme for youth engagement and revival of *Kashmiriyat* and civil society. To make this system efficient, there is a requirement of making unified command HQ functional on 24x7 basis with staff pooled in from all agencies. This will ensure greater degree of synergy, synchronisation, consistency and continuity of efforts and actions.

#### **Conclusion**

India must make all endeavours to prevent Kashmir becoming a potential geopolitical challenge from military and diplomatic points of view. It is one of the prime security concerns that India faces at the moment and must be viewed accordingly. It needs all the focus and the tools of the national power at the disposal of the government, with utmost urgency and sincerity. Unfortunately, Kashmir is not inviting sufficient attention and cannot be handled at a bureaucratic level. It will invite sufficient attention if it is placed under direct supervision of the Prime Minister. India cannot afford to go to the brink of conventional war after every six months or a year. Therefore, there is a need to review the conflict management and conflict resolution measures so that the situation does not exacerbate further.

## ... to Promote Peace

### Notes

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2. Mira Alexis, P. Ofreneo and Tesa C. de Vela, *Political Violence as Moral Exclusion: Linking Peace Psychology to Feminist Critical Theory*, Features No. 2, 2006.
3. Maria J. Stephan and Leanne Erdberg, "To Defeat Terrorism, Use 'People Power,'" United States Institute of Peace, March 27, 2018.
4. Espen Barth Eide, "10 Ways to Target Violent Extremism," *Images*, October 8, 2018.
5. Ibid.
6. Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, paras 1-153.
7. Ibid.
8. Alexis, Ofreneo and Vela, No. 2.
9. Mathijs Van Leeuwen and Willemijn Verkoren, "Complexities and Challenges for Civil Society Building in Post-Conflict Settings," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, October 25, 2012.

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