

Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir

December 9, 2021

Manifest pedagogy:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the parliament that in 1,118 militant-related incidents, a total of 269 security forces personnel have been killed in J&K in the last three years. In this context it is prudent to know the history and the circumstances behind the rise of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

In news: Militant killed in Jammu & Kashmir's Shopian

Placing it in syllabus: Security

Static dimensions:

- Rise of Militancy in 1980's
- Reasons for the rise

Current dimensions:

- Role of Pakistan
- Role of Non state actors, Front organisations and OGW'S in militancy
- Developmental steps taken by Indian Government

Content:

Rise of Militancy in 1980's:

- Jammu and Kashmir, long a breeding ground of separatist ambitions, has been wracked by the insurgency

Situation upto 1980s:

- After independence from colonial rule India and Pakistan

were engaged in a war over the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

- At the end of the war India controlled the southern portion of the princely state. While there were sporadic periods of violence there was no organised insurgency movement
- During this period legislative elections in the state of Jammu and Kashmir were first held in 1951 and Sheikh Abdullah's secular party stood unopposed. He was an instrumental member in the accession of the state to India.
- However, Sheikh Abdullah would fall in and out of favour with the central government and would often be dismissed only to be re-appointed later on.
- This was a **time of political instability and power struggle** in Jammu and Kashmir, and it went through **several periods of president's rule** by the Union Government.

Political changes after the demise of Sheikh Abdulla

- After Sheikh Abdullah's death, his son Farooq Abdullah took over as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Farooq Abdullah eventually fell out of favour with the Central Government and the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had his government toppled with the help of his brother-in-law G. M. Shah.
- A year later, Abdullah reached an accord with the new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and announced an alliance with the Indian National Congress for the elections of 1987. The elections were allegedly rigged in favour of Abdullah.

Rise of militancy:

- In the second half of 1989 the alleged assassinations of the Indian spies and political collaborators by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front was intensified.

- Over six months more than a hundred officials were killed to paralyse the government's administrative and intelligence apparatus.
- The daughter of then interior affairs minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was kidnapped in December and four terrorists had to be released for her release. This event led to mass celebrations all over the valley.
- Farooq Abdullah resigned in January after the appointment of Jagmohan Malhotra as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently, J&K was placed under Governor's Rule under Article 92 of state constitution.
- Under JKLF's leadership on 21–23 January large scale protests were organised in the Kashmir Valley.
- As a response to this largely explosive situation paramilitary units of BSF and CRPF were called. These units were used by the government to combat Maoist insurgency and the North-Eastern insurgency.
- The challenge to them in this situation was not posed by armed insurgents but by the stone pelters. Their inexperience caused at least 50 casualties in Gawkadal massacre. In this incident the underground militant movement was transformed into a mass struggle.
- To curb the situation AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) was imposed on Kashmir in September 1990 to suppress the insurgency by giving armed forces the powers to kill and arrest without warrant to maintain public order.
- During this time the dominant tactic involved killing of a prominent figure in a public gathering to push forces into action and the public prevented them from capturing these insurgents.
- This sprouting of sympathisers in Kashmir led to the hard-line approach of the Indian army.
- JKLF used distinctly Islamic themes to mobilise crowds and justify their use of violence. They sought to establish an Islamic democratic state where the rights of minorities would be protected according to Quran and

Sunna and economy would be organised on the principles of Islamic socialism

Reasons for the rise:

Islamisation of Kashmir in 1980s

- During the early period of militancy in the 1980s, multiple militant groups strive to Islamise Kashmiri culture and political setup to create a conducive environment for the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan.
- Numerous Islamist groups were formed in early 1990 who emerged advocating Nizam-e-Mustafa (Rule of Muhammad) as the objective for their struggle.
- Militant groups like Hizbul mujahideen and Jamaat-e-Islami asserted that the struggle of Kashmir will continue till Islamic Caliphate is achieved in Kashmir.
- Murder of Kashmiri Hindus, Intellectuals, Liberals and activists were described necessary to get rid of un-Islamic elements.

Rigging of 1987 Assembly elections

- The insurgency was sparked by the apparent rigging of state elections in 1987.
- Following the rise of Islamisation in the Kashmir valley, during the 1987 state elections, various Islamic anti-establishment groups including Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir were organised under a single banner named Muslim United Front (MUF), that is largely current Hurriyat.
- MUF's election manifesto stressed the need for a solution to all outstanding issues according to the Simla Agreement, work for Islamic unity and against political interference from the centre.
- Their slogan was wanting the law of the Quran in the Assembly.
- But the MUF won only four seats, even though it had

polled 31% votes in the election.

- However, the elections were widely believed to be rigged, changing the course of politics in the state.

Mujahideen influence:

- After the Mujahideen victory against the Soviet Union Occupation in Afghanistan, Mujahideen fighters, under **Operation Tupac** with the aid of Pakistan, slowly infiltrated Kashmir.
- The goal was to spread a Radical Islamist ideology to Jihad against Indian occupation in Jammu and Kashmir

Accusations of Human Rights abuses:

- human rights violations are said to have contributed to the rise of resistance in Kashmir
- After the insurgency started in the Kashmir Valley in the late 1980s, Indian troops entered the Kashmir Valley to control the insurgency.
- The troops have been accused and held accountable for several humanitarian abuses and have engaged in mass extrajudicial killings, torture, rape and sexual abuse.
- Amnesty International accused security forces of exploiting the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) that enables them to “hold prisoners without trial”.
- The insurgents have also abused human rights, driving Kashmiri Pandits away from the Kashmir Valley, an action regarded as ethnic cleansing.
- The government’s inability to protect the people from both its own troops and the insurgency has further eroded support for the government.

Religious insecurities:

- The majority of the people of Jammu and Kashmir practise Islam.
- Many analysts say that while India itself is a secular state, Muslims feel they are politically, culturally and

economically marginalised when compared to Hindus in India as a whole.

- The government's decision to transfer 99 acres of forest land near Amarnath in the Kashmir Valley to a Hindu organisation (for setting up temporary shelters and facilities for Hindu pilgrims) solidified this feeling and led to one of the largest protest rallies in Jammu and Kashmir.

Economic reasons:

- High unemployment and lack of economic opportunities in Kashmir are also said to have intensified the struggle.

Psychological factors influencing youngsters towards militancy:

- Psychologist Waheeda Khan, explaining the rebellious nature of the Kashmiris, says that because of the tense situations in the valley from the 1990s, the generation gap between parents and young generations has increased.
- Young generations tend to blame their parents for failing to do anything about the political situation. So they start experimenting with their own aggressive ways to show their curbed feelings and would go against any authority.
- Also young people easily identify themselves with the "group" rather than with their individual identities. It leads to psychological distress which causes antisocial behaviour and aggressive attitude.
- Often, this situation is worsened by the availability of weapons and people becoming familiar to violence after having been exposed to conflict for so long.
- Waheeda Khan remarks, the major concern is that generations of children who are experiencing long-term violence in their lives, may reach adulthood perceiving that violence is a fair means of solving ethnic,

religious, or political differences

Role of Pakistan:

- The Pakistani central government originally supported, trained and armed the insurgency in Kashmir, sometimes known as “ultras” (extremists).
- The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence has encouraged and aided the Kashmir independence movement through an insurgency
- Due to its dispute on the legitimacy of Indian rule in Kashmir, insurgency is used as an easy way to keep Indian troops distracted and cause international condemnation of India.
- Former Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf in Oct 2014 said during a TV interview, “We have sources (in Kashmir) besides the (Pakistan) army...People in Kashmir are fighting against (India). We just need to incite them.”
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in their first ever open acknowledgement in 2011 in US Court, said that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) sponsors terrorism in Kashmir and it oversees terrorist separatist groups in Kashmir
- In 2019, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan publicly discouraged Pakistani people from going to Kashmir to do a jihad. People who went to Kashmir will do an “injustice to the Kashmiri people”.
- Most of the Pakistani militants who had crossed the border over the years and were caught by the Indian security forces were found to belong to the Punjab province of Pakistan

Role of Non state actors, Front organisations and OGW'S in militancy

- Numerous Islamist groups were formed in early 1990 who emerged advocating Nizam-e-Mustafa (Rule of Muhammad) as

the objective for their struggle.

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- Murder of Kashmiri Hindus, Intellectuals, Liberals and activists were described necessary to get rid of un-Islamic elements.
- Concurrently all cinema houses, beauty parlours, wine shops, bars, video centres, use of cosmetics and similar things were banned by militant groups.
- Many militant organisations like Al baqr, People's league, Wahdat-e-Islam and Allah Tigers imposed restrictions like banning cigarettes, restrictions on Kashmiri girls
- The different insurgent groups have different aims in Kashmir. Some want complete independence from both India and Pakistan, others want unification with Pakistan and still others just want greater autonomy from the Indian government
- Over the last two years, the militant group, Lashkar-e-Toiba has split into two factions: Al Mansurin and Al Nasirin.
- Another new group reported to have emerged is the "Save Kashmir Movement". Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (formerly known as Harkat-ul-Ansar) and Lashkar-e-Toiba are believed to be operating from Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir and Muridke, Pakistan respectively.
- Other less well known groups are the Freedom Force and Farzandan-e-Milat. A smaller group, Al-Badr, has been active in Kashmir for many years and is still believed to be functioning.
- All Parties Hurriyat Conference, an organisation that uses moderate means to press for the rights of the Kashmiris, is often considered as the mediator between New Delhi and insurgent groups.

Developmental steps taken by Indian Government

The government wants to use development as tool against the militancy in Kashmir for that it launched several initiatives:

Udaan Scheme:

- It was started with an aim to provide skill to the youth of the valley.
- The Udaan Scheme, a Special Industry Initiative (SII) for the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), is funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs and implemented by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- Based on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee, the scheme has been a major initiative of the central government towards making the educated youth – graduates, post-graduates and three-year diploma holders in engineering – of J&K employable.
- The scheme is now in its closure.

PM's development package for J&K: (PMDP)

- under this government focused on creating new avenues of employment and better infrastructure in transportation, health, renewable energy, tourism etc.

Project Himayat:

- Himayat – a Skill Development Programme for the youth is under implementation since 2011.
- Himayat is a placement linked skill training programme for unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir and is being implemented by the Himayat Mission Management Unit, J&K State Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKSRLM), Govt of J&K.
- The Programme is an outcome of the recommendations of Dr. C. Rangarajan Committee report submitted to the Prime Minister in 2011. It suggested a scheme of Skill Development for school/college dropouts.

- The Report suggested increasing employability of youth by improving their skill-sets and providing support for placement and self-employment.
- Youth will be provided free skill training for a duration of 3 to 12 months, in a range of skills for which there is good market demand.
- At the end of the training, the youth are assured of a job and there is one year post-placement tracking to see how they are faring.

Project Sadbhavana:

- The Army's Sadbhavana drive is an informal approach mechanism for the officers and soldiers to interact with and show genuine concern and interest in the welfare of the local population.
- Operation Sadbhavana is being carried out in all the three divisions of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Army's focus has been on women & youth empowerment, providing quality education, infrastructure development, health, veterinary care, and educational tours to various parts of the country.
- In addition basic needs like water supply schemes, electrification and animal husbandry in far flung areas is given a priority with projects based on participation of the local people, elected representatives and civil administration.
- Education has been a prime intervention, with the Indian Army establishing about 55 modern English medium Goodwill Schools under the State Board and Central Board of Secondary Education.
- Another major intervention by the Army is in the field of infrastructure development. In the nineties the terrorists had destroyed culverts, bridges and power stations to sever linkages with the national mainstream. The Army then stepped in to construct foot bridges, tracks to improve connectivity in rural areas,

orphanages, primary health centres, etc

Project Umeed:

- A Programme under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) implemented by the Jammu & Kashmir State Rural Livelihoods Society
- Aims to reduce poverty in the state by building strong grassroots institutions of the poor, engage them into gainful livelihoods interventions and ensure appreciable improvement in their income on a sustainable basis
- To reach out to 66% of rural population across the erstwhile 125 blocks,
- Link them to sustainable livelihoods opportunities and nurture them till they come out of poverty and enjoy a decent quality of life.

Surrender and Rehabilitation of Militants:

- Surrendering in Jammu and Kashmir has been institutionalized over the years.
- The 1990s saw some surrender policies, while in the 2000s, there was a policy for militants belonging to Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir and another for Pakistan administered territory.
- The first surrender policy for militants in Kashmir was launched on 15 August 1995. It was a copy of the policies already there for Naxalites.
- Militants are also motivated by security forces at encounter sites as well.
- Some attempts are successful, while others are not.
- Mothers and other family members have made videos urging their child turned militant to surrender to the security forces.
- Sometimes the family member is brought to the encounter site and urged to talk to their children through loudspeakers to surrender

Mould your thought:

1. Militancy in J&K is a complex political, social, and economic problem. Examine.

Approach to the answer-

- Introduction to the topic
- Discuss the political roots of militancy (Indo-pak conflict, Electoral rigging, etc)
- Discuss the social roots of militancy (religious insecurity / Rise of islamic fundamentalism etc)
- Discuss the economic problems leading to militancy (joblessness, relative underdevelopment etc)
- Add the psychological issues also
- Conclusion