

Situation in Kashmir Post July 2016: An Analysis

Nagender S P Bisht , Rajeev Jain and Victor Gambhir

PhD Scholar at the JECRC University, Jaipur

Director, School of Management, JECRC University, Jaipur.

Vice Chancellor, Maharishi Markandeshwar University(MMU), Mullana, Ambala.

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Abstract:

Kashmir has been in turmoil for almost three decades now primarily due to active support of Pakistan who has been funding and supporting Pakistan based jihadi groups like Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Hizbul Mujahedeen(HM) and Lashkar-e-Toiba(LeT). There have been numerous bouts of unrest, but the unrests of 2016, post the death of Burhan Wani on 8 July, 2016, a local HM terrorist, was different. In these unrests, Burhan Wani became the rallying point and the protests including stone pelting became a norm. For next four months the Kashmir valley was in turmoil. It is important to understand that Burhan Wani's death was only the initiator, the ongoing radicalization and finance from Pakistan and other sources were the primary drivers both for ideology and for mobilization of masses. This became a major national security issue for the government which it had to tackle at the earliest. This paper is based on the on ground experience of the authors, and their interviews and interactions with local kashmiri politicians representing both sides, academicians, youth, security forces personnel's and media inputs coming out of Kashmir. It has clearly emerged that the dissatisfaction and distrust with the ruling dispensation in Kashmir was simmering for a long time. Moreover successive governments in J&K, were all along were treating the symptoms and not the cause. It also emerges that today the unrest and militancy is confined to six or seven districts of Kashmir valley, while the remaining state remains relatively calm. Lastly the compulsion of the common kashmiri to participate in protests is driven by the fact that he wants to be the part of the group and not stand out as a sore thumb.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

In 2016, for months the valley of Kashmir witnessed large scale demonstrations and confrontation of the local population with the security forces and this kind of confrontation continues till date. This situation in valley has no parallels in past and there was an uninterrupted curfew of 53 days from 15 July to 31 August 2016. Even after this the curfew was imposed intermittently in parts of Kashmir till end September 2016. On January 12, 2018, in a written reply to question of National Conference MLA Mubarak Gul, Ms Mehbooba Mufti informed the Legislative Assembly that from July 8, 2016 to February 27, 2017, 51 people were killed and over 9000 people sustained injuries in security forces

action in unrest in Valley. Off the over 9000 people who were injured, giving the details she said "368 people were injured by bullets, 6221 by pellets, four by pava shells and 2449 people by other means during the law and order situation in the valley". Two security personnel died and more than 5000 were injured during this time. Large amount of government property and a number of vehicles of government, police and CAPF were burned or damaged.

The media attributes the death of Burhan Wani on July 8, 2016 a local Hizbul Mujahidin terrorist from Tral, the trigger for these disturbances. This view has a wide acceptance amongst a large percentage of the population. This question was posed to a wide

diaspora of local kashmiri population and their reply to this response is tabulated:

Serial Number	Profession/ Category	Agree	Partially Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
(a)	Politicians (Mainstream parties)	86%	14%	-	-
(b)	Politicians (Separatist parties)	94%	6%	-	-
(c)	Academicians	64%	12%	14%	10%
(d)	Youth (Male)	76%	12%	12%	-
(e)	Youth (Female)	92%	8%	-	-
(f)	Police Personnel	70%	30%	-	-
(g)	Defense Personnel	26%	22%	32%	20%

From the responses it is evident that the local view supports the argument that killing of Burhan Wani was the immediate trigger for the unrest in July 2016. In addition, there are many views on why the unrests erupted. Some sections attribute these to poor governance and lack of involvement of the ruling elites.

Another section blames the release of youth from jail, held under the Act No. 6 of 1978, Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 or the Public

Safety Act (PSA), by PDP when it came to power last year and if this section is to be believed, they are responsible for the wide spread stone pelting and confrontation with security forces. If some sections are to be believed, than it is cyclic, and will happen every four or five years. When this query was posed, the reply of the respondents is tabulated as under:

Serial Number	Profession/ Category	Agree	Partially Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
(a)	Politicians (Mainstream parties)	64%	14%	04%	18%
(b)	Politicians (Separatist parties)	54%	26%	26%	04%
(c)	Academicians	54%	36%	04%	06%
(d)	Youth (Male)	66%	12%	10%	12%
(e)	Youth (Female)	76%	4%	2%	18%
(f)	Police Personnel	70%	30%	-	-
(g)	Defense Personnel	26%	22%	32%	20%

There was a balanced agreement on the fact that the unrests in Kashmir are cyclic and have a tendency to occur with a certain periodicity. Is it Cyclic? An

Explanation

Why cyclic? Why do such situations arise after every few years? An answer may lie in the fact that as the separatists in Kashmir and the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Pakistan observe the Kashmiri society settling down, people earning their lively hood in peace, local police rather than fighting terrorism starts dealing with local law and order problems and other indicators of a peaceful state, they become jittery and unsettled. More over the separatists have to justify the funding that they are getting from ISI every year and contributions from various organizations both from within India and abroad. Within the ISI, Joint Intelligence North (JIN) is exclusively responsible for operations in the Jammu and Kashmir region in India and Northern Areas in Pakistan . This section is responsible for handling the entire situation in Kashmir including the terrorists and the separatists and has been supporting both the separatists and various terrorist groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir. On instructions from them, to justify the funding and to prove their existence, the separatists in Kashmir start hunting for triggers for unrest. The periodicity can be attributed to this fact.

What is positive for them is that in 1989 when the insurgency in Kashmir began, the men in their 40s provided the ideological support where as the younger population made up the armed militants with training and weapons provided by the ISI and the Pak Army. By 1997-98, this wave was stymied by the security forces and a narrative started to take form that the bad days of insurgency are over. In 1999 came Kargil and along with it came a new wave of infiltrators. This gave the next big impetus to insurgency in Kashmir. This was brought under control by 2007-08 and in large part of Kashmir there was minimal influence of militancy, barring Kulgam, Anantnag, Shopian and Pulwama in South Kashmir, certain areas of Srinagar and the forested areas and towns of Sopore, Kupwara, Handwara and

Baramulla in North Kashmir. Along with this came the spread of internet and mobile telephony on which rode the social media, in Kashmir valley. The media was over active and the judiciary went into hyper drive. This was the time when children born after 1989 were 16 to 18 years old. The first large scale public unrest was the Amarnath land row from June to August 2008. The trigger was allocation of 39.88 hectares of forest land to Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) on May 26, 2008 and the unrest spread to the entire state. It ended in Kashmir with the government cancelling the land transfer on June 29, 2008 but fueled protests in Jammu and remaining country . By end July 2008 the protests subsided. The 2010 Kashmir unrest was a series of violent protests, restricted to Srinagar, Baramulla, Sopore and Anantnag , started in June 2010 after the security forces claimed to have killed three “Pakistani infiltrators” but it was later revealed to be a case of a fake encounter. In this incident three men were lured from their village in Baramulla district and allegedly killed in a staged encounter at Sona Pindi gali, a pass on the Line of Control (LoC) . As per the local and national media about 112 personals lost their lives in these protests . After 112 deaths and because of the positive steps taken by the government, the protests subsided . In the two instances the triggers were incidents, which the government was able to control, strike a compromise with the protesters and return to normalcy. However the ISI, the terrorist leadership in Pakistan and the separatists did not have a „Mascot“ or a „Rallying Figure“, around which the unrests in the valley could be triggered and also be repetitive.

Shifts in Government of India Policies while dealing with Kashmir, Pakistan and immediate neighborhood May 2014 onwards: What’s the Difference This Time

Last time such unrest erupted, it was attributed to certain decisions of the government of the time and misdemeanors by the security forces. It went on for lesser period and there were higher civilian casualties. What’s different now? Why so much of anger...so much of anti India sentiment? Does it have

long term repercussions? Is the present situation in West Asia and North Africa influencing the events in Kashmir? What are the alternate futures for Kashmir?

In addition to the already mentioned players, this time there are three important ingredients, i.e., the social media, a mascot „Burhan Wani“ and the radicalized youth. The youth, radicalized and rallied

by the death of Burhan Wani, in a backdrop of 24X7 media and thriving social media, have played a leading part in the unrest this time. The impact of media and social media was another game changer, which was the catalyst in spread of unrest. The reply to this question supports this argument.

Serial Number	Profession/ Category	Agree	Partially Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
(a)	Politicians (Mainstream parties)	84%	14%	-	16%
(b)	Politicians (Separatist parties)	74%	16%	-	10%
(c)	Academicians	76%	10%	08%	04%
(d)	Youth (Male)	70%	22%	06%	02%
(e)	Youth (Female)	76%	18%	2%	4%
(f)	Police Personnel	70%	30%	-	-
(g)	Defense Personnel	56%	24%	12%	08%

The media, social media and the other reasons has created the present situation in the Kashmir valley. A point to be noted is that till 2006-07, militancy was panning the entire J&K state. It was in Doda-Kishtwar, Budhal-Kandi, Udhampur, Rajouri and Poonch-Surankote. Today this is limited to the Kashmir valley. A case in point is the recent operation in Poonch in September 2016, where the security forces eliminated four terrorists who had infiltrated from Pakistan. When the Army declared the operation over, thousands of locals entered the areas where the operation was conducted and raised anti Pakistan, pro India and pro Army slogans .

In Kashmir, this time there are some differences. In a primarily Sufi Kashmir, a wahabi and salafi radicalization has taken deep roots, initially localized in the urban areas of Srinagar, Anantnag, Shopian, Sopore, Baramula and Kupwara, today has spread to rural Kashmir. This fact has also been flagged in the

Annual Report of the ministry of Defense 2015-16 . The effect of this is more in South Kashmir because the population is affluent, educated, predominantly Kashmiri and a greater urban influence. In the time lines of rise of militancy in Kashmir, it was in Srinagar town and the urban areas of Kashmir, where the militancy first arose under the Afghan Mujahedin, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and other militant groups in 1989 with very active support of Pakistan Army and ISI. Majority of the youth who initially joined the different militant groups were kashmiris with very few gujjars or paharis. Demographically, kashmiris form large part of population of South Kashmir and are relatively affluent where as in North Kashmir a large part of population comprises of paharis and gujjars, who are poor and uneducated . By 1994, as part of a shift in Pakistani strategy, most of the local kashmiri militant groups seeking independent Kashmir, either

broke apart or came into a ceasefire with the Government of India. The mantle of fighting insurgency shifted to the Pakistan based Hizbul Mujahadeen (HM), Al Badr, Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and other such groups, whose ideology was based on wahabi or salafi teachings and teachings of Abdullah Yusuf Azzam. In Kashmir, at that time Jammāt-e-Islami Kashmir (JIK) was the predominant organization preaching the wahabi teachings. They had a well established hierarchy right up to the villages and they provided the ideological support to HM, especially in South Kashmir. By beginning 2000s, two more organizations gained ground in Kashmir, Jamiat-e-Ahle-Hadith and Dukhtaraan-e-Millat (DeM). Today these three organizations primarily working towards radicalization of the youth, on salafi and wahabi ideologies. The focused work of these three organizations has created an environment where the young boys and girls, today talk of Jihad...martyrdom..... from „Ghulam Kashmir“.....support ISIS and other forms of expressing support as seen in radicalized areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Middle East and North Africa. In most villages in the Kashmir valley, there are three types of mosques, i.e., JIK mosque, Jamiat-e-Ahle-Hadith mosque and Sufi mosque. The worrying part is that not only the numbers of Sufi mosques are decreasing and the mosques of the other two sects are increasing.

Members of DeM are present in almost all schools and colleges of Kashmir and are indoctrinating the young girls into a Wahabi thought of Islam. In addition there are a number of madrasas which are functioning across rural Kashmir. They having not produced any militant of any tanzeem is a fact, but their impact can today be seen very clearly in the ongoing turmoil.

Today's Kashmiri youth see's his or her jihad in pelting stones at security forces, marching to the army camps, burning and looting police stations and in extreme cases, lynching the policemen. This indoctrinated vigilante brigade now believes in enforcing their own local rules, restrictions on local population, meting out punishments to so called informers of police and security forces and in some cases disallowing locals to be suppliers of day to day requirements to the security forces. This is increasing the chasm between the government and the population. With curfew in place the locals are suffering, the security forces are seemingly more alienated than before and the day to day functioning of the government has come to a standstill. When the aspect of impact of radicalization was posed to a wide spectrum of population in Kashmir, the response was indicative that there is radicalization and it had its own impact on the spread and viciousness of the unrest. The results are tabulated as under

Serial Number	Profession/ Category	Agree	Partially Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
(a)	Politicians (Mainstream parties)	54%	14%	04%	28%
(b)	Politicians (Separatist parties)	44%	12%	08%	36%
(c)	Academicians	54%	06%	04%	36%
(d)	Youth (Male)	56%	12%	10%	32%
(e)	Youth (Female)	44%	14%	2%	28%
(f)	Police Personnel	70%	30%	-	-

(g)	Defense Personnel	76%	02%	02%	20%
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A question is asked many times: Is a simple Kashmiri anti India or pro India, anti Pakistan or pro Pakistan? What freedom does he want? A Kashmiri is smart and has a world view of his own. The opening up of cross LC trade along Uri – Muzaffarabad in 2008 had two positive outcomes. The Kashmiris on the two sides of LC were able to judge the ground situation on their own. On indicator of this fact is that when any one from Indian side of Kashmir went to PoK, he returned much before his visa expired. Whereas who ever came from PoK, put in a request for an extension of visa. Also the local Kashmiri trader was able to weigh the ease of doing business with traders in Jammu, Amritsar or Delhi viz a viz trader in PoK. A small part of local population realises the advantages of being part of India but then this view has not percolated to the large part of estranged population, hence doesn't correlate to the ground situation. Why this dichotomy of facts? The trans LC trade was not able to impact the lives of large number of people, and due to lack of opportunities and absence of a vibrant private sector, the government jobs today have become the major bread earner for the locals. With focus on government jobs, there is large scale corruption to get the job and once an individual gets the job, he further indulges in corrupt practices. This has been happening for a long period of time. The other three sources of employment, i.e., handicraft, horticulture and tourism are seasonal and are also victims of corruption. When radicalization is added to this there develops a personality of a youth who see's merit in what the wahabi and salafi preachers in the mosques are saying. From there he derives his salvation which is in this extreme form of religion and fighting for this form of religion and cause. He has an idea of freedom but doesn't visualise the manifestation of this freedom. Stone pelting and expressing support to an idea or organization, that looks to destabilize an existing system, today has become synonymous with a Kashmiri idea of freedom.

These are some of the themes that the instigators of the stone pelting crowds take advantage of. Who are these instigators? Are they Kashmiri's or Pakistanis or any some others? These instigators are primarily local Kashmiri's, who are members of JIK or Jamiat-

e-Ahle-Hadith. The women are instigated by the DeM. These instigators know what they are doing and are well funded. They also pay some youth money, though a partly amount, to throw stones. They always remain in the background, at a grass root level they keep track of who is participating and who is abstaining from the demonstrations and they target them through the village mosques. They coordinate these young crowds and identify the places to be targeted. When part of crowd pelting stones or burning a police station or lynching a police man, it is this background support which constantly exhorts this crowd to continue as this action is the Jihad of the participants or as revenge for the people killed or for the azadi of Kashmir. When the objective set is completed, these individuals who are the background support vanish and go back to their homes to their wives and children, who never form or will form part of these crowds.

Who are they? Most of them are active members of JIK or Jamiat-e-Ahle-Hadith or DeM. They are very well funded, indoctrinated and at times may be government employees also. Over so many years they have accumulated vast wealth, have investments in real estate and their children study in schools and colleges outside the J&K. A case in point is Nayeem Khan and Hamida Amin, important separatist leaders. The real estate owned by leading separatist leaders in Phalgam is a known fact. Even some new faces like Zaffarulla, in this time of turmoil has constructed a huge house in SK Colony, Anantnag . It is these people whom the government needs to target very selectively and initiate the legal process in earnest.

The crowd of the stone pelters, mostly youth, when dispersed, some are identified and arrested by the police. They are generally charged under Public Safety Act (PSA) and put in jail. Two things happen, firstly in jail, even if they are there for few weeks, they come in touch with radicalised extremists, who further influence their minds. When they come out, with a jail term they become ineligible for a government jobs. This further exasperates the feeling of injustice, enhances his or her faith in the radical organization and further alienates the youth. In such a situation the option with the youth is to continue pelting stones or in extreme case join the militant

group. The idea of Jihad has further evolved, with rise of ISIS and its idea of Caliphate, in the young minds forming part of the crowd.

This cycle of public agitation gathered steam from 2008 onwards during the Amarnath land row. We see this cycle continue and this seems the third iteration. The youth continue to get sucked into this cycle and in times ahead this will only create more disgruntled and alienated youth joining the protests and the protests will generate even higher levels of violence and participation.

Is this the only way ahead? If representation of people of Kashmir in governance of state is concerned, there is an elected government in J&K, which is a coalition of PDP and BJP, two parties with strong religious views. What this has created are two ends of extreme views. The Kashmiri view and the Hindu view and accordingly the two areas.....Kashmir and Jammu. These extreme views are vitiating an already existing already volatile situation. Any decision or announcement or declaration these days has a Kashmir angle and Jammu angle. This thought process may also be attributed to the present cycle of violence in Kashmir. In the efforts to regain control, get semblance of peace and effective functioning of the government, during his visit to Srinagar, Shri Rajnath Singh projected a security first approach. Media is agog with reports that Army is going to get more powers and „The Army marches in to rural areas of the four districts of South Kashmir“ was the trending headline and army deployed some of its reserve formations in South Kashmir. The other trending issue is the restricted use on pellet guns for crowd control instead use of PAVA shells for crowd control. The large number of deaths and injuries due to the use of pellet guns and other non-lethal means can also be due of lack of training of forces employed for crowd control and dealing with the situation in Kashmir. The forces employed on the ground are also under tremendous amount of stress and the also work in environment which has strict restrictions. Many a times a trooper on ground is overwhelmed by the conditions and situations existing, emerging and constantly changing around him. He is trained to fight and kill terrorists or UGs or Naxalites. The crowd control in other parts of the country, when CAPF is employed is nothing like what they face in Kashmir. And all said and done, the crowds do have local support and people in

background, adequately funded and indoctrinated, that constantly motivates the crowd. The Human Cost

The human cost, purely in numbers, in the present turmoil today stand at 89 civilians dead and more than 11,000 injured. Of the injured, a number of them have sustained severe injuries, which will maim them for life. These figures do not include the casualties of the security forces and civilians killed or injured by militants. On top of it is the continuous curfew or shut down calls by the separatists.

An event gone unnoticed is the discrimination, intimidation and finally moving out of over 200 employees from various KP colonies in the Valley where they were posted under the Prime Minister Special Employment package in 2008 .

Is this the only human cost? There is an invisible intimidation and discrimination happening at village levels which is never reported and will never ever be acknowledged. A lady doctor on duty in Badgam was humiliated by local youths, on the pretext that as per Islam, women do not work.....What are you doing here? You are not required. In another incident in South Kashmir, a pregnant women travelling by a mini bus was asked to get off and was told to lift her phiran, to prove that she was pregnant. This again by a group of youth, who were manning a so called check post. In yet another incident a seriously ill man was being taken in an auto rickshaw to District Hospital Anantnag and en route the auto rickshaw was pelted with stones .

The Way Ahead

What may be a way ahead? Is invoking of harsh measures a way in right direction or it will be counterproductive? In the present situation harsh methods will only mean playing into the hands of the extremists and separatists. Harsher the response of the government is more jubilant will the extremists and separatists will be. The focus and efforts of the law enforcement agencies must be to get hold of the background supporters and throttle the flow of funds. The youth who are identified as compulsive stone thrower, must not be arrested or charge sheeted. If they are arrested and charge sheeted, it will be counterproductive. The family and the villagers must be apprised that their son or daughter is an identified stone pelter and they should control them. Also the panchyats need to be empowered and should be the final decision making body regarding development of the village and should be

accordingly funded. The top side is that there are chances that the funds will be siphoned off to radical organizations and terrorist groups. The CAPF must be trained to handle demonstrations of this magnitude and intensity, use of non lethal weapons and handling of civilian population in Kashmir. The youth who have been injured in the present turmoil, need to be taken out of Kashmir, in adequate numbers, and treated in reputed hospitals in other parts of the country by the government at its expense. When this happens some part of the family should also travel. These later needs to be developed as themes for perception management. The need of the hour is to strengthen the intelligence network, including technical intelligence and establish a 27 X 7 surveillance grid in the valley. Shutting down the mobile networks and blocking internet may seem an important tool in controlling the situation as an immediate need, but in long run it dries up an important source of intelligence for the security agencies. This fact holds ground only if we have an elaborate and extensive technical intelligence network and surveillance grid. At international level, Pakistan must be isolated and made to understand the price it has to pay for supporting and perpetrating terrorism not only in India but in South Asia. And lastly, accountability in Kashmir is essential if corruption has to be controlled and the political parties have to work maturely as they have a great role to play in such a situation. They have to get together, work together and keep the larger national interest supreme.

Impediments and scope for further studies

This examination was planned just to make an assessment of whether people actually know what open data is and from where to access it? The study also investigated that to what extent the open data is useful for the end users and what are the constraints which prevent the citizen from using open data. There is scope for further research by segmenting the open data into various categories and test their usefulness for citizens.

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