



### JAMMU AND KASHMIR: SECURING PEACE AND STABILITY THROUGH NON-KINETIC MEASURES

**Colonel Sushil Tanwar**

*Senior Fellow, Centre for Air Power Studies*



It has been three years since Article 370 was abrogated and the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was bifurcated. However, the complexities and challenges that confront the government in the newly created Union Territory (UT) are too myriad to be completely resolved in such a short span. It would thus be fair to assume that it will take a lot more time to fully maximize the positives of the new governmental approach, although even that is fraught with enormous uncertainties and risks.

While a spate of targeted killings, particularly of minorities, in the past few months has demonstrated the fragility of the security situation, broad parameters of violence, including the number of terrorists neutralised, the residual strength of terrorists in the hinterland, their recruitment levels, attempts of successful infiltration, etc., indicate that the security forces have gained a firm upper hand against the terrorist-separatist nexus. However, it is too early, and in fact inadvisable, to claim 'peace and victory' particularly because the local government hasn't yet been able to fulfil the promise of a 'new beginning' and is struggling to keep pace with the aspirations of the people.

#### **Current Security Situation – Trends and Challenges**

In terms of sheer statistics, it is evident that the current security situation is largely stable. The number of residual terrorists in the hinterland has been reduced to considerably low-levels and in recent times, security forces have been able to neutralise the highest

**Occasional and isolated incidents of deliberate killing have emerged as a lucrative, 'low-cost-high-impact' option for terrorists and their Pakistan-based sponsors. Targeted killings are aimed to compensate for the rapid depletion in their ranks and assert their influence over the local population**

number of terrorists, including many top commanders. Negligible numbers of successful infiltration attempts and a sharp drop in incidents of stone pelting and sponsored shutdowns also substantiate the claims of a vastly improved security situation.<sup>1</sup>

However, concerns about the capabilities and ability of terrorist outfits continue to persist due to frequent targeted killings. Between October 2021 and October 2022, over 23 civilians, most of them non-locals and minorities, were killed in terror attacks.<sup>2</sup>

**A four-pronged strategy of diplomatic manoeuvring, ideological radicalisation, calibrated use of violence, and influence operations is being actively pursued by Pakistan to sustain the ecosystem of terrorism and separatism.**

These occasional and isolated incidents of deliberate killing have emerged as a lucrative, 'low-cost-high-impact' option for terrorists and their Pakistan-based sponsors. It is also apparent that these targeted killings are aimed to compensate for the rapid depletion in their ranks and assert their influence over the local population. The fear psychosis that the minority killings have been able to create is reflected in the recent exodus of 10 Kashmiri Pandit families from the Shopian district in South Kashmir after Puran Krishan Bhat, a Kashmiri Pandit, was gunned down by terrorists in Choudharygund village on October 15, 2022.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from this critical aspect, certain other developments in the security domain also require serious examination. Reports have suggested high-end equipment such as steel core bullets and night sights that were left behind by the American Led NATO alliance in Afghanistan are being used. A renewed focus on the use of IEDs and frequent recoveries of sticky bombs is another formidable challenge before the security forces.<sup>4</sup>

Although infiltration by terrorists across LoC has become increasingly difficult, Pakistan-based terrorist organisations and their handlers have intensified the use of drones to tranship weapons, explosives, and other war-like stores in J&K and other border states. This challenge is further aggravated by the innovative use of tunnels along the International Border (IB). In 2022, five cross-border tunnels have already been detected by the BSF in the Jammu sector on the Indo-Pak border.<sup>5</sup>

The plethora of proxy organisations such as The Resistance Front (TRF), People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), etc., that have mushroomed in recent times should be seen as a manifestation of Pakistan's intent to prove that Kashmir is facing an indigenous freedom movement. Similar efforts to revive militancy are also being seen in the Jammu region, which has seen a discernible rise in terror incidents.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore clearly evident that the proxy war being waged in J&K is far from over. A four-pronged strategy of diplomatic manoeuvring, ideological radicalisation, calibrated use of violence, and influence operations is being actively pursued by Pakistan to sustain the ecosystem of terrorism and separatism.

## Counter Measures- A New Approach

Although relentless operations by the security forces have resulted in a significant drop in the levels of violence, it is the broad set of non-kinetic actions being undertaken by various government agencies that have inflicted maximum damage to the separatist-terrorist nexus. This could ultimately prove to be a potential game-changer in the war against terror.

### *Non-kinetic Actions*

They are defined as the “targeted application of military and non-military capabilities in the physical and nonphysical domain to generate desired non-kinetic effects such as behavioural change.” These actions include but are not restricted to legal measures and psychological operations.<sup>7</sup>

The subversive influence of the separatist ecosystem exerted due to its systematic infiltration into various sections of the government has been one of the main challenges in restoring normalcy in Kashmir. These organised structures over the years provided ideological and logistical frameworks for sustaining terrorism and often negated the success that was repeatedly being achieved by the security grid.

### *Neutralisation of Overground Workers (OGWs)*

Arrests and preventive detentions of OGWs have resulted in creating a deterrence amongst the locals against becoming a part of the terror ecosystem. In 2022 itself, over 170 OGWs belonging to different terror outfits have been arrested.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the decision to keep many of these suspects in jails in other parts of the country has led to the disruption of the earlier practised system of using jails in the UT as the hub of terror activities.<sup>9</sup> The banning of radical organisations like Jamaat-i-Islami and the dismissal of several government employees (44 till now), under Article 311 of the Indian Constitution, on serious charges of being involved with separatist outfits, has also created the desired effects in the minds of the local population.<sup>10</sup>

### *Crackdown on Terror Funding*

The crackdown on terror funding has been one of the biggest enabling measures towards improving the security situation. Sustained investigations and arrests by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the newly created State Investigation Agency (SIA) have resulted in severe setbacks to the separatist-terrorist nexus. The decision to ban the sale and transfer of any such immovable property in which the native terrorists of J&K based in Pakistan have any share, along with the identification and seizure of over a dozen such property sales used for terror funding, has put a much-needed stop to one of the prevalent means of generating funds.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the derecognition of MBBS degrees from colleges in Pakistan and investigations into the sale of these seats have exposed the separatist designs to fund terrorism.

## Legal steps by government

The legal course taken by the government towards identifying and charge-sheeting J&K residents who are presently in Pakistan and coordinating secessionist activities from across the border will also prove to be effective as it puts the onus on Pakistan. Although it is certain that Pakistan will not cooperate in any such investigations, the 'issue of the letter rogatory' and approaching the Pakistani court of law, through the internationally laid down channels, to seek information about the accused persons creates additional pressure on authorities in Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

## Education

The subversion of the education system was also considered a major stumbling block towards achieving peace and stability in the UT. The decision to adopt a uniform academic calendar in schools and implement the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) reflects the resolve to address this malaise.<sup>13</sup> Stern actions against indiscipline, as evident in the suspension of nine teachers of two government schools in the Kishtwar district for not hoisting the national flag in their educational institutions on the occasion of the 76th Independence Day, will also go a long way in mitigating the dangers of subversion in the education system.<sup>14</sup>

## Economy

A simultaneous focus on economic development is one of the key components of the Central Government's post-abrogation strategy. The allocation of the highest ever budget (Rs 10,8621 crores for the year 2020-2021), the adoption of transformational schemes such as '*Hunar se rozgaar tak*,' 'Back to Village,' 'Ujjala,' etc., and the approval of 54 projects worth approximately ₹5,6000 crores under the PM's Development Project (PMDP) signal the dawn of a new era of prosperity. The J&K government has reportedly signed MoUs with various industrial houses, including Dubai-based Emaar and Lulu Group, which can potentially make the UT an investment hub and create much-needed job opportunities for local youth. The tourism sector has seen remarkable growth this year, while a large number of infrastructure projects, such as the Udhampur- Srinagar Railway link, are also nearing completion.<sup>15</sup>

## Awareness campaign

Apart from all these proactive steps, *public campaigns* to enhance the visibility of the Indian state have been initiated across the UT. The 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign resulted in the unprecedented hoisting of tricolours across the valley, while the renaming of schools and roads after national and state icons (like Lt Umar Fayaz and Nazir Wani) has also been undertaken. Although some critics may dismiss them as cosmetic symbolic steps, these optical initiatives have gained enough momentum to rattle the separatist ecosystem, as is evident in their reactions.

## A Long and Hard Journey

Although the above-mentioned measures appear fairly impressive, it would still be premature to conclude that the systemic conditions sustaining terrorism have been completely dismantled.

Security forces have to remain oriented towards retaining their dominance over terrorist outfits and thwart any attempt by Pakistan-based sponsors to revive militancy. A robust counter-infiltration posture, complete focus on intelligence-based people-friendly operations, and ensuring that the desire to neutralise terrorists does not turn into unethical desperation for “kills” would be the key to their holistic success.

**Security forces have to remain oriented towards retaining their dominance over terrorist outfits and thwart any attempt by Pakistan-based sponsors to revive militancy.**

Narco-terrorism, in particular, needs to be vigorously addressed. It has been reported that terror organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul -Mujahideen (HM) are generating funds by smuggling and selling narcotic drugs to finance their cadres. The newly created Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) of J&K should continue its relentless drive as a result of which approximately 1249 kilogrammes of narcotics have been seized in the first seven months of 2022, while more than 359 people involved in the drug trade have been arrested.<sup>16</sup> Initiatives such as ‘Operation Sanjeevani’ launched by J&K Police to tackle drug cartels, need to be further strengthened.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the announcement of an impressive array of projects, governance will have to be further improved through the effective implementation of government schemes. Apart from the continuation of other non-kinetic measures, the administration, in coordination with civil society, must now make a conscious effort to address socio-economic issues such as religious radicalisation, gender discrimination, drug abuse, etc., that are quite pervasive across various sections of the society.

Extremely high levels of corruption at all levels in J&K remains the biggest impediment towards effective governance. Although the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and the promulgation of the Prevention of Corruption Act have led to the detection and investigation of a few corruption cases, the drive against corruption must be intensified with renewed vigour.<sup>18</sup>

It is also noteworthy that a largely negative public sentiment about official apathy and the autocratic ways of bureaucracy prevails across the UT. This undermines the governmental efforts of grassroots development and is also exploited by vested interests for propagating anti-national narratives and providing an intellectual framework to the separatist discourse. A testimony to this is the self-serving propaganda regarding issues such as power cuts in winter months and deliberate delays in the move of apple trucks which was widely debated recently.<sup>19</sup>

The conflict in J&K is primarily a war of narratives and ideas. Disinformation campaigns through cyberspace and mainstream media are being extensively orchestrated by the separatist ecosystem and their supporters based in Pakistan and various other countries. Although some steps have been taken to counter this adversarial propaganda, a coordinated approach between various central and UT agencies, under a broad framework at the national level, has to be formulated and implemented. Sensational and provocative coverage by some domestic media platforms has also been counterproductive to national interests and needs to be suitably addressed.

**Apart from the continuation of other non-kinetic measures, the administration, in coordination with civil society, must now make a conscious effort to address socio-economic issues. The conflict in J&K is primarily a war of narratives and ideas.**

It is also being argued by some observers that the lack of political empowerment and grassroots political activities signify the continued absence of normalcy in the state. While the elections to district development councils in 2020 can be portrayed as an attempt to restore the democratic process, the elected members themselves feel disadvantaged and vulnerable due to the absence of financial and administrative powers. A number of new voices and parties, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) have also emerged on the political landscape, which suggests the desire for political activity amongst the locals.

There is also a widely prevalent view that early conduct of elections in UT will lead to handing over of administration to the same set of local politicians and frittering away the gains that have been made in the valley. Although there is some merit in this argument, the full restoration of a fair democratic process must be undertaken sooner or later. Since the recently completed process of delimitation of constituencies is being viewed with suspicion, it is imperative that the fears of local stakeholders are allayed through the transparent dissemination of facts. Meanwhile, the government must explore the possibility of restoring statehood, as has already been committed by the Indian Home Minister and other high-level functionaries of the government.<sup>20</sup>

## **Conclusion**

There is no denying that even after nearly forty years of the eruption of militancy in J&K, the complete potential and power of the state have never been fully applied to address the problem. As a result, the Kashmir Valley became a classic case of a 'conflict economy' sustained by vested interests.

The time is now ripe to undertake a thorough revamp of state institutions and improve local governance. Ensuring the accountability of all stakeholders, countering separatist ideologies, along with identification and neutralisation of subversive elements, can best be achieved through non-kinetic means, some of which have already been adopted.

It is also important that sporadic incidents in UT are not viewed with a rhetorical, political, or communal lens. The narratives of having achieved a permanent solution to this long-standing issue must be kept pending for now, otherwise it may turn out to be a chimeric dream.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Sameer Patil, "Counter-terrorism scenario in J&K", Observer Research Foundation, September 08, 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/counter-terrorism-scenario-in-jk/>. Accessed on September 27, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ananya Bhardwaj, "As darkness falls, AK-47 rings in ears: Family of civilians killed in Kashmir living a nightmare", *The Print*, May 02, 2022, <https://theprint.in/india/as-darkness-falls-ak-47-rings-in-ears-family-of-civilians-killed-in-kashmir-living-a-nightmare/936034/>. Accessed on September 13, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> "10 Kashmiri Pandit families leave their village in Shopian days after killing of community member by terrorists", *Indian Express*, October 26, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/jammu/10-kashmiri-pandit-families-leave-village-shopian-after-killing-by-terrorists-8230068/>. Accessed on October 27, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Manjeet Negi, "Steel core bullets, night sights: Terrorists in Kashmir valley using weapons left by US in Afghanistan", *India Today*, May 04, 2022, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/terrorists-kashmir-valley-steel-core-bullets-canadian-night-sights-american-weapons-afghanistan-indian-army-1945483-2022-05-04>. Accessed on September 27, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Neeraj Chauhan, "NIA probes ISI link to drone intrusions", *Hindustan Times*, August 28, 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/niaprobes-isi-link-to-drone-intrusions-101661625191043.html>. Accessed on September 30, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Syed Amjad Shah, "No evidence about border crossing by Sunjwan suicide attackers: IG BSF", *Greater Kashmir*, May 05, 2022, <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/front-page/no-evidence-about-border-crossing-by-sunjwan-suicide-attackers-ig-bsf>. Accessed on September 10, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Martti Lehto, "Non-kinetic Warfare - The new game changer in the battle space", (Paper presented at the 15th International Conference on Cyber Warfare and Security, Norfolk, Virginia, Old Dominion University, USA, March 12-13, 2020), March 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339943524\\_Non-kinetic\\_Warfare\\_-\\_The\\_new\\_game\\_changer\\_in\\_the\\_battle\\_space\\_316\\_Non-kinetic\\_Warfare\\_-The\\_new\\_game\\_changer\\_in\\_the\\_battle\\_space](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339943524_Non-kinetic_Warfare_-_The_new_game_changer_in_the_battle_space_316_Non-kinetic_Warfare_-The_new_game_changer_in_the_battle_space). Accessed on October 03, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Arjun Sharma, "170 overground workers nabbed in J&K this year", *The Tribune*, May 04 2022, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/j-k/170-overground-workers-nabbed-in-jk-this-year-391903>. Accessed on September 05, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Sanjeev Pargal, "82 more separatists, militants shifted from J&K jails to outside", *Daily Excelsior*, May 15, 2022, <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/82-more-separatists-militants-shifted-from-jk-jails-to-outside/>. Accessed on September 17, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> "Zero-tolerance policy against anti-india elements | govt orders dismissal of 5 employees involved in terror crimes", *Greater Kashmir*, October 15, 2022, <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/front-page-2/zero-tolerance-policy-against-anti-india-elements-govt-orders-dismissal-of-5-employees-involved-in-terror-crimes>. Accessed on October 18, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Emaad Makhdoomi, "Properties of terrorists belonging to J&K, based and operating from Pakistan and PoK, sold to fund terror in J&K", *Greater Kashmir*, July 14, 2022, <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/front-page/properties-of-terrorists-belonging-to-jk-based-and-operating-from-pakistan-and-pok-sold-to-fund-terror-in-jk>. Accessed on October 01, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Sunil Bhat, "J&K's State Investigation Agency files chargesheet against 3 Hizb-ul-Mujahideen terrorists", *India Today*, May 03, 2022, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/jammu-state-investigation-agency-chargesheet-hizb-ul-mujahideen-terrorists-1944699-2022-05-03>. Accessed on October 04, 2022. Speech by Mariano Grossi, DG IAEA, "Ten-year anniversary of the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant accident: A decade of improving nuclear safety", IAEA, March 10, 2021, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/ten-year-anniversary-of-the-fukushima-daiichi-, nuclear-power-plant-accident-a-decade-of-improving-nuclear-safety>. Accessed on August 30, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> "Jammu And Kashmir Government Announces Uniform Academic Calendar In Schools", NDTV, October 7, 2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/education/jammu-and-kashmir-government-announces-uniform-academic-calendar-in-schools>. Accessed on October 18, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Dinesh Manhotra, "Nine govt teachers suspended in J&K for refusing to hoist National Flag on Independence Day", *International Business Times*, August 19, 2022, <https://www.ibtimes.co.in/nine-govt-teachers-suspended-jk-refusing-hoist-national-flag-independence-day-details-851488#Echobox=1660916444>. Accessed on October 04, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> "India's Jammu and Kashmir receives most tourists in 75 years", *Reuters*, October 6, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-jammu-kashmir-receives-most-tourists-75-years-2022-10-07/>. Accessed on October 10, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Ishfaq-ul-Hassan, "Drugs-free J&K: 1681 cases registered under NDPS Act in 2021; 1249 kg narcotics seized in first 7 months of 2022", *The Kashmir Monitor*, September 03, 2022, <https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net/drugs-free-j-1249-kg-narcotics-seized-in-first-7-months-of-2022/>. Accessed on September 17, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Dinesh Manhotra, "J&K first to have a comprehensive drug de-addiction policy after Punjab", *International Business Times*, June 18, 2022, <https://www.ibtimes.co.in/jk-first-have-comprehensive-drug-de-addiction-policy-after-punjab-details-849591#Echobox=1655578183>. Accessed on October 09, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Shabir Ibn Yusuf, "ACB cracks down on corrupt officials", *Greater Kashmir*, October 09, 2022, <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/front-page/breaking-norms-acb-cracks-down-on-corrupt-officials>. Accessed on October 25, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Peerzada Ashiq, "Protests continue over stranded apple-laden trucks in Kashmir, Mehbooba threatens agitation", *The Hindu*, September 27, 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/protests-continue-over-stranded-apple-laden-trucks-in-kashmir-mehbooba-threatens-agitation/article65942139.ece>. Accessed on October 10, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> "HM assures restoration of J&K statehood after assembly elections, claims AP", *Rising Kashmir*, October 5, 2022, <http://risingkashmir.com/hm-assures-restoration-of-jk-statehood-after-assembly-elections-claims-ap>. Accessed on October 09, 2022.



Centre for Air Power Studies

The Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) is an independent, non-profit think tank that undertakes and promotes policy related research, study and discussion on defence and military issues, trends, and development in air power and space for civil and military purposes, as also related issues of national security. The Centre is headed by Air Marshal Anil Chopra PVSM AVSM VM VSM (Retd).

Centre for Air Power Studies

P-284, Arjan Path, Subroto Park, New Delhi 110010

Tel: +91 11 25699130/32, Fax: +91 11 25682533

Editor: Dr Shalini Chawla e-mail: shaluchawla@yahoo.com

Formatting and Assistance: Dr Anu Sharma, Ms Mahima Duggal and Mr Rohit Singh

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and not necessarily of the Centre or any other organisation.