

**Kashmir's Journey:  
From insurgency to militancy to terrorism.**

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In 1989, a massive Muslim insurgency erupted in Kashmir. A number of internal and external factors were responsible for it. Among them, was the "Rajiv-Farooq" accord towards the end of 1986, by virtue of which Farooq Abdullah, dismissed from power two years earlier, was brought back to power as interim chief minister (1987) after a deal with the Congress party.

By vacating his role as the principal pro-India opposition leader, Farooq left the Muslim United Front, the first party based on a religious identity, as the only outlet for popular discontent. As the assembly election of 1987 had been rigged to facilitate his return to power, the people felt that there was no democratic outlet left to vent their discontent.

Externally, the break up of the Soviet block where one satellite country after the other in East Europe got independence following protest demonstrations, was also a source of inspiration for the people of Kashmir who at last believed that "azadi" (*azadi in Urdu or Farsi means personal liberty. Its first political connotation among the people has become, without a doubt, representative democracy*) was round the corner if they followed the East Europe example. Furthermore, not far away, as the Soviet forces had pulled out from Afghanistan, harassed and vanquished by the Taliban who had the support of USA and of Pakistan, armed and trained Mujahids involved in that struggle became available and were diverted to Kashmir to support the local insurgency.

The initial mishandling of the situation by Indian forces with their ruthless and tactless repression led to a mass uprising, including sections of government employees and police force. Firing at the funeral procession of a political leader, Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, killed presumably by militants (1), who took a toll of 67 unarmed civilians, is an instance of tactless and senseless handling of the situation.

A political leadership, which for some years was waiting for such an opportunity, seized it. The most organized militant outfit was the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) led by Amanullah Khan in PoK's Pakistan

occupied Kashmir). Yasin Malik was its leader in the Indian side of the LoC (line of control).

Gradually every separatist political leader formed a separate militant outfit, which could bank on armed support from across LoC. Finally Hizbul Mujahideen, an outfit sponsored by the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (known as ISI) emerged as the strongest of all. All formed a loose political alliance under the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a kind of conglomerate of all separatist parties (2).

The mass insurgency could not be maintained for too long. The expectations raised by it proved illusory. As pro-azadi militants were replaced and in some cases, eliminated by pro-Pak militants, the Kashmiri nationalists were alienated. Yet, as alienation with India was greater, the militancy survived with passive popular support.

The militant phase in Kashmir, without active involvement of the people, continued through various ups and downs till it reached a point where it became no longer dependent on a local political support.

A new phase started when the militants, in a series of operations, killed innocent civilians, including women and children in a brutal manner. The incidents in which the death toll exceeded 20 were numerous. They included 23 out of 24 Kashmiri Pandits in Wandhama, 29 Hindus killed in Mahore tehsil of Udhampur, 25 Hindus at a marriage party in Chapnari near Doda, 20 Hindus in Kishtwar, 100 Hindus killed in various parts of the state on August 1, 2000, presumably to sabotage the signature of a ceasefire between the Hizbul Mujahideen and the government of India, then 34 killed in a family camp of the army at Kaluchak, 35 Sikhs killed in Chhatisinghpura, 25 killed in Rajiv Nagar near Jammu and 24 Kashmiri Pandits killed in Nandimarg in Pulwama district.

Gradually victims included Muslim families, suspected to be informers, members of pro-India parties or their relatives and those who declined to support the militancy. According to one definition of terrorism that distinguishes it from militancy, those who target innocent unarmed civilians for their religious and political beliefs are practicing terrorism. This entitled the Kashmiri militants to be branded as terrorists. And in act, since 9/11, the Kashmiri movement has universally being labeled as a terrorist movement.

As Pakistan was forced to join the America led "war against terrorism", it became difficult for her to openly support the movement in

Kashmir. Some of the militant outfits that had to be banned in Pakistan have become more ruthless and brutal. By now practically the entire political leadership on both sides of the LoC has disowned them.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, head of the largest faction in the Hurriyat, called upon the militants to back the dialogue process. For *"continuing with militancy would mean that Kashmiris would have to lay down another 100,000 lives"*. Yasin Malik's JKLF had given up violence in 1995. He chided his hosts in Pak administered Kashmir when he visited them along with the Hurriyat in June 2005, for romanticizing the role of the militancy. The Jamat's Amir (chief) Nazir Ahmad Kashani said, *"we do not believe in armed struggle and believe in dialogue for resolving conflicts"*.

The disillusionment with the armed movement across the LoC is no less pronounced. Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan, the most senior leader of the Pakistani Kashmir, for instance, held that *"the worst damage to the cause of Kashmir has been caused by the Jihadis. Jihad has no future, it is over."*

And Syed Ali Shah Geelani, whose faction had supported an armed movement, was suspended by the Jamat-e-Islami, of which he was the most important leader. Finally the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has now lost the support of five of its constituent parties.

Yet it would be hasty to conclude that the militancy in its present form is completely over. It does have the means to show its existence through some desperate acts as it demonstrated after the earthquake of October 8, 2005. Two days after the earthquake, 10 persons of two families were slaughtered in Rajouri district. A week later the Education Minister Ghulam Nabi Lone was killed. Within the next few days, workers of the National Conference, Congress and CPM were also killed.

On November 2, 2005, just two weeks after the change of government in Jammu and Kashmir, the PDP leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed being replaced by his coalition partner Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad (3), a series of blasts took place in Srinagar city, which though aimed at security forces, missed their target and killed innocent civilians.

Such acts caused further isolation of the militants from the people. Yet once again the United Jihad Council chairman Syed Sallahuddin warned that *"if India does not withdraw her forces from Kashmir, the war against them will*

*spread all across India since the militants have the potential to strike in any part of India”.*

The militants, whatever their number, demonstrated in 2000 that they indeed had such a potential by attacking highly symbolic targets: the Red Fort in New Delhi, then in 2001 the Indian Parliament and later on with a series of blasts in Delhi on October 29 the same year. Such attacks actually defined them more clearly as terrorists and implied that they sought to be a part of the international terrorism directed against non-Muslims all over the world.

That kind of militancy directly clashes with the interest of the people of Kashmir, the government and people of Pakistan as well as the secular Indian state.

Thus it is not surprising that a member of the Pakistan National Assembly, MP Bandera warned that *“terrorism has seldom achieved its aim and where it has, it murdered its own children”*. He advised militants *“to adopt a weapon more deadly and effective than terror. It is civil disobedience, non cooperation and willingness to go to jail in thousands”*.

It is doubtful that the militants will heed the advise of their friends and well wishers and transform themselves into a political party, like many other secessionist parties did elsewhere, to continue their struggle for the status they aspire to get for Kashmir. Room for a militancy will exist as long as the people of Kashmir feel cheated and the government of India remains unable to provide non- secessionist outlets for the expression of this alienation.

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**Balraj Puri's endnotes.**

- 1 Mirwaiz Maulana Farooq was assassinated in May 1990 by armed Indian agents, although some claim he was assassinated by his opponents.
- 2 The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an alliance of secessionist parties and leaders, was formed on March 9, 1993 as a political front to further the cause of Kashmiri separatism. The APHC perceives itself to be the sole representative of the Kashmiri people, a claim that has so far been endorsed explicitly only by Pakistan. The APHC enjoys an observer's status in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

There are currently two factions of the Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz (a hereditary title of one of Kashmir's important religious seats, and also head priest of the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar) Umar Farooq and Syed Ali Shah Geelani. The Mirwaiz-led group, also referred to as the 'moderate faction' along with non-Hurriyat leaders like Yasin Malik undertook, between June 2-16, 2005, the first formal visit of Kashmiri separatists to Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and subsequently, though unsanctioned by Indian authorities, to Pakistan.

Internal fissures within the Hurriyat Conference had culminated in a formal split on September 7, 2003, with at least 12 of its 26 constituents 'removing' the then Chairman Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari and 'replacing' him with Massarat Alam as its interim chief.

The Hurriyat Conference appointed Mirwaiz Umar Farooq as its caretaker chairman on August 8, 2004, saying efforts to unify the factions would continue. The decision was made at the Hurriyat's executive council meeting in Srinagar, attended by five general council members, invited especially for consultations. The executive council met for the first time to discuss the unification of the two factions after Maulana Abbas Ansari resigned on July 7, 2004.

- 3 Ghulam Nabi Azad (born March 7, 1949 in Kashmir is an Indian politician from the Indian National Congress. Upon the victory of the Congress in the last federal election, he first became Parliamentary Affairs Minister of India in the Manmohan Singh government. Then on October 27, he was appointed the chief minister of the Indian administered state of Jammu and Kashmir.

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