

J&K after 9/11
More of the Same
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The wrong questions are being asked about events to come in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The wrong answers are starting to form the core of official received wisdom.

Of themselves, the questions circulating in New Delhi are both unexceptional and unsurprising. How serious is General Pervez Musharraf about fighting groups of religious fundamentalists in Pakistan? Does he intend to contain their activities in J&K? Can the General, assuming that he is earnest, achieve this objective? Will the coming summer see a de-escalation of levels of violence, or will an outbreak of war become inevitable? Or what, in future political dialogue, will Musharraf seek in return for his rejection of *Jehad* as an instrument of state policy? Underlying all these questions is the assumption that the world has changed in fundamental ways since September 11, 2001, and that Pakistan, as a consequence, can no longer sustain its war in J&K in quite the way it has in the past.

Left to himself, there can be little doubt about what direction Musharraf would like Pakistan's J&K policy to take. The Kargil War, for one, was premised on the assumption that an escalation of hostilities by Pakistan would ensure international intervention

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in the dispute, ending Indian insistence on bilateral conflict resolution. Pakistan's actions in recent months have, rather, been driven by pressure from the United States of America. As Pakistani commentator Ayaz Amir pointed out, in President George W. Bush's recent State of the Union Address,¹ "only two foreign leaders came in for mention and praise: Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan." "In a different era", Amir adds, "say in the 1950s and '60s when the fires of national liberation burnt bright, such American endorsement would have been seen as a kiss of death, a confirmation of the client status of the leader concerned". Pakistan, Amir balefully continued, had turned "ingratiating behaviour into an art form."²

To understand where Musharraf might be headed, then, one has to answer a more fundamental question, which is this: *has the United States of America's three-decade romance with the armies of Jihad, in fact, come to an end?*

Romancing the Right

Indian official doctrine has it that the United States wishes to eliminate the Islamist Right, seeing them as a threat to its interests. If this is indeed the case, some larger ideological meaning could well be read into Musharraf's actions in the wake of his January 12, 2002 speech. Leaving aside evidence that groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) or Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) continue to be active throughout India, Musharraf's efforts to curtail his domestic opponents on the religious right could then plausibly be read as part of a continuum of action that would eventually extend to terminating the state-sponsored *Jihad* in Jammu and Kashmir.

But, events that are still unfolding, suggest this proposition does not describe the real world accurately. Several figures involved in the proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which led to the birth of the Taliban and Al Qaeda,

¹ January 29, 2002, See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

² Ayaz Amir, "Not really a banana republic", *The Indian Express*, Mumbai, February 2, 2002.

have now again obtained central positions in the US policy establishment. Key among them is Bush's special envoy on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, who, one commentator has described as a "colourful figure with a formidable track record of justifying the unjustifiable."³ Khalilzad made his reputation as a junior official in the Ronald Regan years as an enthusiastic champion of armed insurgencies. He was one of the early supporters of Bosnia's Muslim insurgents and later supported the arming of Afghan *mujahideen*, including Osama bin Laden, against the Red Army. This was despite the then Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's warning to US President Regan that he was "creating a Frankenstein."⁴ By the mid-1990s, he had become a lobbyist for the oil company UNOCAL, arguing the merits of the Taliban. It was only after the bombing of Afghanistan in 1998 that Khalilzad changed his position.

Remarkable continuities can also be seen between the ideological postures of the Taliban and the new Karzai administration, the United States has installed. In a recent interview, the new Chief Justice, Fazal Hadi Shinwari, told the Afghan Islamic Press that, in accordance with Karzai's wishes, Islamic laws were to remain in force in Afghanistan. All cases in the district, provincial and Supreme Court would implement *Hudood* after guilt was proven. On what this would mean in practice, Shinwari was frank:

For instance, adulterers would be stoned to death when either of them or both were married. A murderer would have to pay blood money or be executed in the manner in which the murder victim was killed, depending on the wishes of the victim's relatives, he said. "A thief's hand would be cut off, and alcoholics and others would be punished under Islamic laws, but the condition would be that the crime is proved", he said.⁵

³ "The General's Manoeuvre", *Frontline*, Chennai, February 1, 2001, <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1902/19020040.htm>

⁴ Ed Vulliamy, "Hawks and doves fight for control of campaign", *The Observer*, London, September 30, 2001, <http://www.observer.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4267225,00.html>

⁵ "Afghanistan to follow Islamic laws: CJ", *The Tribune*, New Delhi, January 13, 2001.

No howls of outrage from Washington; and no surprise either, for all of this is at par with the past. Recall that, hours after the Taliban moved into Kabul, acting State Department spokesperson Glyn Davies said his country could see “nothing objectionable” about the Taliban’s version of Islamic law.⁶ By 1997, the United States–Saudi conglomerate UNOCAL was firmly entrenched in Afghanistan, flying Taliban leaders to the United States, and even arranging multi-million dollar investments in the training of technical personnel through the University of Nebraska.⁷ Underpinning the project to run an oil pipeline through Afghanistan and Pakistan was a single strategic passion: the isolation of Iran. As Richard Mackenzie has argued:

Pipelines through Afghanistan would exclude the possibility of direct supply by Iran of resources to meet Pakistan’s energy needs [and those of India], and the consequent flow of foreign exchange earnings into Iran’s coffers. The isolation of Iran is not especially an obsession of the State Department, but there are such strongly anti-Iranian attitudes in sections of Congress, reinforced by the lobbying of pressure groups such as the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), that a president has little incentive to take his political life in his hands by exploring the possibility of a less antagonistic relationship with Iran.⁸

Recent United States fulmination about Iran’s alleged arms sales to Palestine and its interference in the affairs of the Karzai government show this perspective is still alive.⁹ The US continues to believe, it would seem, in allies on the Islamic Right to combat its perceived competitors for influence in West Asia. While the current regime in Afghanistan may not contain Taliban and Al Qaeda elements explicitly hostile to the United States, Shinwari’s interview makes explicit the lack of ideological distance between

⁶ *Voice of America*, September 27, 1996, cited in Richard Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban”, in William Maley, ed., *Afghanistan and the Taliban: The rebirth of fundamentalism*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2001, p. 91.

⁷ “Odd Partners in UNOs Afghan Project”, *Omaha World - Herald*, October 26, 1997, cited in Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban”, p.98.

⁸ Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban”, p. 99.

⁹ “US, Iran clash over Afghanistan at WEF”, *Indian Express*, February 3, 2002.

the Taliban and the new government. While the United States pushed for action against terrorist groups hostile to its presence in Pakistan, there has been no real effort to terminate the activities of these groups in so far as they do not impinge on American interests there. Indeed, the word democracy has been conspicuously absent from US rhetoric on Afghanistan and Pakistan. No one seems to have even noticed that, as part of his alleged movement towards democratisation, Musharraf has stripped 90 per cent of Pakistan's population, who do not possess university degrees, of the right to contest elections.¹⁰ Neither have there been protests about his appointment of soldiers as judges in special anti-terrorism courts.¹¹

Efforts like these can be, and have been, seen as creating an apparatus with which – Kemal Ataturk style – to push Pakistan towards modernisation. But it is self-delusion to believe that this would mean an end to Pakistan's support of terrorist groups. Musharraf has, as his more perceptive critics have pointed out, always sought covert tactical alliances with the armies of *Jihad*, while seeking to exclude them from the sphere of legitimate political activity. This is because he understands the damage such groups have inflicted on Pakistan, yet needs them to sustain the war in J&K. Without this pistol to hold to India's head, the General knows, there would be no prospect of securing even the minimum gains on J&K that are necessary to give him the legitimacy he needs to push his domestic agenda. As Pakistani analyst Najam Sethi has argued:

The Musharraf model seeks to covertly ally with the *jihadi* groups while overtly keeping the mainstream religious parties out of the power loop. This is to enhance and sustain its covert external agenda, while internally maintaining an overtly moderate anti-fundamentalist stance for the comfort of the international

¹⁰ "One step forward, two backward", *Frontline*, February 15, 2002.

¹¹ "Appointment of Army men as Pak judges draws flak", *The Asian Age*, Mumbai, February 3, 2002.

community whose economic support is critical to Pakistan's financial viability.¹²

The US tolerance of the remnants of the Taliban in Pakistan, and of allied terrorist groups operating in J&K, is similarly, one of necessity. September 11 or no September 11, it needs tactical friends and ideological allies on the Islamist Right to negate challenges not just from Iran, but Iraq, Palestine, and the welter of anti-American Islamists scattered across West Asia. We now know, through the medium of National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra, that India sent diplomatic notes to the United States and the United Kingdom warning of the airlifting of some 5000 Pakistan and Afghan members of the Taliban after the fall of Kunduz. Mishra appeared surprised that neither responded.¹³

Only the truly gullible should actually have been surprised. The US has not, as some Indian officials have suggested, suddenly awoken from some kind of Rip Van Winkle haze to discover that Indian charges against Pakistan must be taken seriously "because they had been backed by proof."¹⁴ The United States has always known of the Pakistani state's role in terrorist acts directed against India, but chose to maintain a discreet silence so as not to jeopardise relations with its closest ally in South Asia. On occasion, the United States did use its influence to reign in the Pakistan intelligence establishment. Such intervention has, however, been sporadic, and of only limited effect. For example:

After a series of five hijackings by Sikh terrorists between 1981 and 1984, India managed to get clinching evidence of ISI involvement in 1984 in the form of a West German Government report that the pistol given to the hijackers of August 24, 1984, at Lahore by the ISI was part of a consignment supplied to the Pakistan Government by the West German manufacturers. This resulted in a severe warning to Pakistan by Washington, and a total discontinuance by the ISI of the use of

¹² Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, Lahore, May 18 to 24, 2001, cited in B Raman, "The Same Old Musharraf", South Asia Analysis Group, <http://www.saag.org/papers4/paper389.html>

¹³ "India 'protests' to UK', USA", *Tribune*, January 25, 2002.

¹⁴ "Kidnapper called India: Pak", *Indian Express*, February 2, 2002.

hijacking as a weapon against India for 15 years till the latest hijacking on December 24, 1999, after General Musharraf seized power on October 12.¹⁵

Nor has the United States ever called on Pakistan to extradite or even prosecute the authors of the Kandahar hijacking, or of the Mumbai serial bombings of 1992-1993, despite strong evidence of their presence in that country. It has not even agreed to either extradite or prosecute on its own soil twenty-one Khalistani terrorists who India says are in the United States. More recently, after the January 22, 2002 terrorist attack on the United States Information Service (USIS) in Kolkata, one was treated to the spectacle of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) chief, Robert Mueller, saying he would “like to wait and see what the investigation discloses about the purpose of the attack.”¹⁶ Mueller’s suggestion was that the attack could have been targeted at the police, rather than the United States facility. No investigation was needed to know this was absurd, just common sense. Had the Kolkata Police been the intended target of the attack, large numbers of its personnel could have been found undefended at several locations – including the parade ground down the road from the building – other than the USIS offices. For its own reasons, then, the United States will tolerate the continued existence of at least some elements of the armies of *Jehad*, and their covert use, within limits, by Pakistan.

Tactics of Terror

What does all this mean for India? Pakistan has made no secret of its post-January 12 intentions. Speaking to the Associated Press, the Prime Minister of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), Sikandar Hayat Khan, made it clear that the LeT and JeM continue to be free to operate from the region. He also made it clear that cross-border terrorist operations were free to continue:

I will protest if Pakistan turns over Kashmir *Mujaheddin* to India. I’ll discuss the issue with President Musharraf

¹⁵ B Raman, *Intelligence: Past, Present and Future*, New Delhi: Lancer, 2001, pp. 248-9.

¹⁶ “FBI chief gives no assurance on Indian list”, *Tribune*, January 22, 2002.

and urge him not to hand over any Kashmiri to India. The United Nations recognises Kashmir as a disputed territory and Kashmiris are waging a legitimate struggle. We do not recognise the Line of Control.¹⁷

Talk of ethnic Kashmiri *mujahideen* is hugely disingenuous. The bulk of LeT and JeM cadre, like Premier Khan himself, are not ethnic Kashmiri. The second-in-command of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen's (HM) military operations in J&K, Saif-ur-Rahman Bajwa, is from the Pakistani province of Punjab. Similarly, Musharraf's claim that he is willing in principle to extradite Indian nationals demanded by New Delhi apparently does not stretch to the Sopore-born commander of the Hizb-ul-Mujaheddin, Mohammad Yusuf Shah, who goes by the somewhat vain alias Syed Salahuddin. Shah contested elections in 1987, accepting the parameters of the Indian constitution, and has not, to anyone's knowledge, subsequently acquired Pakistani citizenship. No action has been taken against any of the 15 constituents of the United Jihad Council (UJC), which, including as it does the HM, are responsible for the majority of terrorist crime in the State of J&K. By Pakistan's own official account, just 1,957 cadre of all organisations of the Islamist Right have been arrested, most of whom have no operational role in J&K.¹⁸

Pakistan's compliance with international mandates to seize the funds of terrorist groups has been consistent with this record. Between September 11 and December 6, 2001, acting under Executive Order 13224, the United States blocked a total of 79 financial accounts within the country, freezing US\$33.7 million. This included the blocking by the Department of Treasury of the property and interests in property of several institutions, primarily the Osama bin Laden affiliated Al Barakaat Trust. The British Government followed by freezing 35 suspect bank accounts, immobilising more than £63 million of suspected terrorist funds. France announced the freezing of assets worth £2.7 million. One would have expected that Pakistan's action would have secured considerably larger, or at least comparable, assets.

¹⁷ "PoK's no to sealing of LeT, JeM offices", *Tribune*, January 22, 2002.
¹⁸ "1957 ultras held in Pak: Musharraf", *Tribune*, January 17, 2002.

On the contrary, the total amount was derisively low. The two accounts of the HuM [Harkat-ul-Mujaheddin] had a total of Rs. 4,742, the JeM had Rs. 900, the al Rashid Trust, which handled the accounts of the Taliban and the LeT, had Rs.2.7 million and US \$ 30. Ayman al-Zawahiri, of the al-Jihad, Egypt, who operated the accounts of the al Qaeda, had just US \$ 252. Pakistani Rs. 68 are equivalent to one US dollar. *The News of Islamabad* reported as follows on January 1, 2002: “The frozen accounts had a balance of \$190,554 and close to Rs. 10 million till December 20, 2001. The Government has sent the details of these bank accounts, including that of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, to the US authorities. Experts said the policy to freeze the accounts in ‘pieces’ gave ample time to most of these account-holders to withdraw their money”.¹⁹

Seen from ground up, moreover, there has been no significant transformation in either the levels or contours of violence since Musharraf’s decision to arrest top leaders of the LeT and JeM. For all the recent – possibly officially inspired – media hype about two successive ‘no-incident days’ in J&K, figures suggest that there has been no dramatic change in levels of violence in the wake of Musharraf’s speech.²⁰ Comparison of violence levels in the 12 days before the speech, the 12 days after it, and the relevant periods in 2001, make for interesting reading [see Table 1]. Broadly speaking, the Kashmir zone did indeed see a drop in levels of violence after January 12. So did the Jammu zone, but with a key exception. Violence for the period between January 13 and January 24, 2002, remained considerably higher than for the same period in 2001. The overall levels of violence from January 1 to January 24, 2002, were also considerably higher than for the entire month of January 2001. While the whole of January 2001 saw 56 violent incidents occur in the Jammu zone, that figure was matched in the first 12 days of 2002 alone. As for the drop in levels of violence in Kashmir, this can plausibly be attributed to reasons other than Musharraf’s speech. First, the zone, as indeed

¹⁹ B Raman, ‘The Same Old Musharraf’,
<http://www.saag.org/papers4/paper389.html>

²⁰ “No killings in Kashmir”, *Tribune*, January 28, 2002.

the whole of the State, saw a record numbers of killings of terrorists. That could well have translated into a reduction in levels of attacks on civilians and security force (SF) personnel. Second, there was considerable snowfall in mid-January, imposing a temporary pause on crossings along key areas of the Line of Control (LoC) from Sawjian to Kupwara, and the prospect of onward movement through the Pir Panjal from Jammu into Kashmir. As the data shows, similar declines in levels of violence took place in mid-January, 2001.

Table 1: Zonal Trends in Terrorist Activity

	Violent Incidents	Attacks on SFs	Attacks on Civilians	SFs Killed	Civilians Killed	Terrorists Killed
Kashmir Zone						
Jan 1 to 12, 2002	67	44	18	9	16	51
Jan 13 to 24, 2002	39	30	5	1	5	32
Jan 13 - 24, 2001	71	40	14	11	24	22
Jan 1 to 24, 2002	106	74	23	10	21	83
Jan 1 - 31, 2001	193	103	43	19	55	48
Jammu Zone						
Jan 1 to 12, 2002	56	20	9	12	22	27
Jan 13 to 24, 2002	38	17	11	5	12	23
Jan 13 - 24, 2001	27	15	6	2	10	11
Jan 1 - 24, 2002	94	37	20	17	34	50
Jan 1 - 31, 2001	56	32	16	4	21	33
Jammu & Kashmir						
Jan 1 to 12, 2002	123	64	27	21	38	78
Jan 13 to 24, 2002	77	47	16	6	17	55
Jan 13 - 24, 2001	98	55	20	13	34	33
Jan 1 - 24, 2002	200	111	43	27	55	133
Jan 1 - 31, 2001	249	135	59	23	76	81

Source: Union Ministry of Home Affairs

Clearly, if Pakistan does not intend to de-escalate – and there is no evidence that it does – Indian policy seems set to create a serious problem this summer. Counter-terrorist operations in

much of Jammu have come to a near standstill because of the forward movement of troops a week after the December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament – a build up that seems increasingly pointless as the weeks drag by. The 163 Brigade at Thanamandi, for example, has pulled out, replaced by just two battalions and a company of the Rashtriya Rifles, and a single company from the 1 Para Regiment. The 120 Brigade at Bimbar Gali has shifted its entire strength to the LoC, as has the garrison at Rajouri. Key areas of Rajouri and Poonch, like Buffliaz, Loran, Kandi, Buddhal, Darhal and Thanamandi are now almost without cover. Some troops have been sent in to replace the seven battalions withdrawn from counter-terrorist duties in Poonch, but are mostly committed to keeping roads open for Army traffic. The creation of the Rashtriya Rifles was intended to ensure that counter-terrorist operations would not be terminated in the event of a war or near-war situation. As the withdrawal of 53 regular Army battalions during the Kargil War illustrated, there is clearly some need for serious thought on the issue.²¹

One key element of terrorist tactics in Rajouri and Poonch has been to create communal fissures, taking advantage of the withdrawal of pickets intended to secure Hindu-dominated villages. On New Year's eve, the Lashkar-e-Toiba executed six Hindu villagers at Mangnar, approximately half an hour's drive from Poonch. Rajouri has seen a welter of similar killings as well. Three persons, including a woman, were shot dead at Sadda on the night of December 29, 2001, while two Hindus, one of them aged over 70, were executed at Sehr Nain on January 1, 2002. If it were not for the presence of Village Defence Committees (VDC), casualties may have been far more. Terrorists attacked the Rajouri village of Daggal Allal, Nerojal and Kheri, killing one villager in each assault, but withdrew after the return of fire inflicted losses on their group. Muslims perceived as backing India have also been hard hit, although their stories have passed largely unreported. Nazir Hussain was killed at his home in Kakora village on January 6, 2002, for having rented his house to troops, while Bagh Hussain was executed along with him because he had

²¹ This and much of the subsequent discussion of recent events in the border districts of Jammu draws on Praveen Swami, "From The Front", *Frontline*, February 15, 2001, p. 8-10.

served as a soldier. A photograph of Hussain in uniform was found on the body of JeM 'commander' Siraj Talibani, killed a few days later, along with his associate Yasir Ahmad. Earlier, on December 27, 2001, Mohammad Hussain and Abdul Rashid were executed on charges of being informers, as was Mohammad Shabbir on January 1, 2002. Two other alleged informers, Mohammad Shafi and Mohammad Bashir, were killed at Darhal on January 19, 2002. And in one dramatic December 23, 2001 raid, terrorists looted 14 weapons from guards at the village home of the National Conference candidate for the February 2002 Jammu Lok Sabha (Lower House of Indian Parliament) by-election, Choudhari Talib Hussain.

More importantly, terrorist groups have been seeking to reassert their influence over civil society, which had eroded as a result of the severe attrition in their ranks through 2001. JeM cadres have distributed leaflets in dozens of villages calling on Special Police Officers (SPOs) and policemen in the Special Operations Group (SoG) to resign their jobs. Other leaflets have warned villagers not to attend the funerals of Muslims executed by terrorists. As was the case during the 'non-initiation of combat operations'²² phase that ended in the summer of 2001, the Poonch area has witnessed the construction of reinforced bunkers in hill areas to make eventual army reoccupation expensive.²³ Homes and schools used by Army posts at Manjakote, Buddhal and Thanamandi had been torched after troops left for forward positions. This serves two purposes. The secondary objective is to ensure that the small numbers of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and India Reserve Police (IRP) sent in to replace the Army do not find ready shelter, and have to spend much of their time organising logistics. More important, the arson attacks provide a visible signal to local communities that they cannot rely on the Indian state for protection, and that while the presence of

²² The 'non-initiation of combat operations' – popularly referred to as the 'cease-fire' – was unilaterally announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on November 19, 2000, initially for the month of Ramadan. See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; J&K; Papers; www.satp.org. It continued under successive extensions till May 31, 2001. Also see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; J&K; Data Sheets; Ramadan Cease-fire Casualties; www.satp.org.

²³ "Ultras raise bunkers in Poonch", *Tribune*, January 30, 2002.

security forces is impermanent, the armies of the *Jehad* have come to stay.

What long-term consequences such self-inflicted harm can cause has long been evident in the district of Doda, where troop withdrawals during the Kargil War of 1999, continue to have serious consequences even today. On August 9, 2001, the Union government extended the Disturbed Areas Act through the Jammu zone, in response to the massacre of 22 Hindus by terrorists on the Sharhot *Dhar* (high-altitude pasture). While the decision to impose the Disturbed Areas Act was in part driven by panic – more communal massacres took place in 1998, for example, than in 2001 – it also reflected official despair at the deteriorating situation south of the Pir Panjal. Official data makes it clear that the problem lies, not in the absence of special powers, but in the physical absence of troops. In 1997, 11 Army and nearly nine paramilitary battalions were stationed in the police district of Doda, which excludes the *tehsil* of Ramban. The next year, despite a series of communal killings, two Rashtriya Rifles battalions were withdrawn. During the Kargil War, almost all Rashtriya Rifles battalions were pulled out, along with the Border Security Force (BSF). Three Rashtriya Rifles battalions and the BSF never came back [Table 2].²⁴

Table 2: Trends in Force Deployment

Period	Army / RR	BSF	CRPF	IRP	ITBP	JKAP	Total (in coys)
1996	8 bns	6 bns	33 coys	6 coys			109
1997	11 bns	6 bns	33 coys	5 coys			123
1998	9 bns	6 bns	23 coys	5 coys		2 coys	105
After the end of the Kargil War, 1999	6 bns		23 coys	5 coys	1 bns	1 bns	68
After April, 2001	5 bns		23 coys		4 coys	1 bns	57

²⁴ The discussion on Doda draws on Praveen Swami, “Disturbed Doda”, *Frontline*, August 31, 2001, p. 20-24.

Bns = battalion = 5 coys = companies

RR= Rashtriya Rifles; BSF= Border Security Force; CRPF= Central Reserve Police Force; IRP= India Reserve Police; ITBP= Indo-Tibetan Border Police; JKAP= Jammu Kashmir Armed Police

Source: Jammu and Kashmir Police, Doda.

A little time with the map makes clear why these deployment levels are so absurd. Doda, like many of the Jammu districts, is enormous, sprawling across 11,678 square kilometres, only a few hundred square kilometres less than the entire Kashmir valley. Over 60 per cent of this area is made up of the single *tehsil* of Kishtwar. The Kishtwar *tehsil* is cut by rivers into four major areas: the northern valley systems of Wadwan and Marwah are protected by just one Army battalion. Wadwan technically falls under the command of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, but even the single company traditionally despatched there each summer did not arrive in the summer of year 2001. During a visit to the region in November, this author found no permanent deployment of forces at all beyond the south Kashmir town of Verinag. Camps built by the ITBP on the Margan Pass and the Rashtriya Rifles in the Wadwan village of Inshan had been burned down by terrorists.²⁵ As a result, Wadwan has become home to one of the largest concentrations of terrorists in J&K. To the south, the Dacchan and Paddar valley systems have again been left unsecured. An ITBP company based at Gulabgarh, a few minutes drive from Ladder, pulled out in March 2001, a fact of some significance, given that many of the massacres before August that year took place in the Paddar valley.

Kishtwar is not the only area to have suffered from this unexplained unwillingness to commit troops. The 5 Sikh Light Infantry pulled out of the south Doda area of Gandoh early in the summer of 2001, leaving one of the district's worst-hit areas open for terrorist operations. Army officials claimed this decision was taken to shore up defences along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in the build-up to the Amarnath Yatra, but the battalion was moved out in April, months before the pilgrimage. The thinning out of troops in Doda, as also now in Rajouri and Poonch, came at a time when terrorist groups had been able to

²⁵ Praveen Swami, "In Terrorist Country", *Frontline*, January 4, 2002, p. 65 - 74.

assert their authority over civil society more effectively than at any point in the recent past. During the non-initiation of combat operations period, the Kishtwar Hizb-ul-Mujahideen began imposing *de facto* taxes on the treasury at Marwah. Salaries and dues worth Rs. 2 million are estimated to have been diverted before the cease-fire ended. Local intelligence had reported that up to 43 Kishtwaris joined terrorist groups between March and June 2001, up from next to nothing in the previous years.

Why has Doda suffered from shabby security cover? One explanation is that terrorism in its remote mountains rarely makes the front page. But, it is also hard to ignore even more cynical considerations. The withdrawal of formal cover has been mirrored by a massive proliferation in the numbers of Special Police Officers (SPOs), paid Rs. 1,500 a month to work with the Special Operations Groups and VDCs. Doda now has approximately 7,500 SPOs, including the 1,000 additional posts authorised by Union Minister of State for Home, I D Swami, in the wake of the Sharhot *Dhar* massacre. Most of those 1000 posts, it bears mentioning, already existed, but without a formal official allotment. But just 2,700 of these are actually deployed in operational roles with the district police. Although VDCs have played a valuable role in protecting villages, as have SPOs in operational roles, there have also been reports that the thousands posted with local politicians, mainly of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have had not a little to do with the otherwise inexplicable majorities the party has managed to secure in Muslim-dominated pockets of the district in successive elections. The SPO scheme is, moreover, mired in a surfeit of problems. VDC members simply cannot afford to remain in their villages year-round, and many migrate in search of jobs. Others leave their villages and their weapons when they find casual work in the area itself.

Political Strategies

It is not as if the state has given up on fighting terrorism. The year 2001 did, after all, see significant gains in the numbers of terrorists killed – an index of real significance. The problem is that the Union government does not appear to possess any meaningful paradigm within which it can understand the role of

coercive measures against terrorism, and from which it can proceed to shape tactics and wider strategies. Counter-terrorist operations are seen as a desultory, vaguely masturbatory activity for the boys to keep themselves occupied, while the men get down to the *real* business of finding a 'political solution' to the J&K imbroglio. As a direct result of this fallacy, the Union government has found itself in the ridiculous position of defending the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), on the one hand, and negotiating with self-confessed terrorists, their sympathisers and financiers on the other.

Much official engagement with Jammu & Kashmir rests on the twin pillars of discourse with the Kul Jamaat Hurriyat Conference [All Parties Hurriyat Conference: APHC], and with centrists in the HM, grouped around its former Kashmir valley 'commander', Abdul Majid Dar. No one disputes the need for such efforts. A vibrant internal dialogue is the best means available for India to avoid growing international pressure for third-party mediation on J&K. There is also little doubt that, should elements of either the Hizb or APHC join mainstream politics, the legitimacy of pro-Pakistan forces in the State would be undermined. But, the problem is that the dialogue process seems to have become a bureaucratic institution, one that exists simply because it does, rather than because its stated objectives appear to be progressing towards imminent or eventual realisation. Official interlocutor has followed official interlocutor – Wajahat Habibullah being the latest addition to a cast of characters as diverse as K C Pant, Brajesh Mishra and A S Dulat – but with Legislative Assembly elections now less than six months away, there are still no signs of concrete results.²⁶

First, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. It is now over 16 months since the Union government first began its engagement with Dar. The mechanics of the process, and the means through which it was brought about, have been documented earlier.²⁷ Shortly thereafter, Dar and his inner circle of secondary commanders were ordered

²⁶ Aasha Khosa, 'Government puts 'credible' face on JAMMU & KASHMIR talks', *Indian Express*, February 3, 2002.

²⁷ Praveen Swami, "Dialogue with the Hizb: Light in the Tunnel But is it Dawn or Sunset", *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict and Resolution*, New Delhi, vol. 6, August 2000.

back to Pakistan.²⁸ Little happened for almost a year, with Dar and his associates claiming they could not ‘abandon their cadres’ until replacements were decided upon. The best part of a year later, the *Shoura-e-Jihad* of the HM, its supreme war council, announced the appointment of new commanders.²⁹ Dar was replaced by Ghulam Hassan Khan, who uses the aliases ‘Saif-ul-Islam’ and ‘Engineer Zamaan’. Two deputy commanders, Abdul Ahmad Bhat, a Sopore resident who uses the *nom de guerre* Umar Javed, and the Pakistan national Saif-ur-Rahman Bajwa, made up the second rung of the new hierarchy. District-level replacements were also made. Javed Ahmad Rather, operating under the alias Zubair-ul-Islam, was given control of north Kashmir operations replacing Dar’s aide, Farooq Sheikh Mirchal, code named Feroz.

While most Hizb cadre reacted to the decision to remove Dar with disquiet, few dissenting voices were heard in public. That is, until November 19, 2001, when one of Dar’s closest aides shattered the silence.³⁰ Khurshid Ahmad Zargar, a one-time veterinary surgeon who operated as the south Kashmir head of the Hizb under the alias Asad Yazdani, told a group of journalists that, while he understood “the armed movement brought the Kashmir issue out of cold storage, at the same time we accept the gun alone is no solution to the problem... We want organisations like the Jaish-e-Mohammadi, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Harkat-ul-Mujaheddin to work under the local leadership. They should not have any role in policy making.” Zargar was at pains to dispel rumours of a division between “liberal and hard-line” elements in the Hizb. But, those very divisions showed up in stark relief over the next few days. A day after Zargar’s press conference, Khan issued a statement claiming he was not authorised to speak for the Hizb. His one-time ally replied the next morning, pointing out that the new Hizb leadership was not in place to take charge of the organisation. Shah himself called a meeting of the *Shoura-e-Jihad* on November 23, 2001, ordering Dar and his associates to

²⁸ ‘Hizb’s Kashmir chief Dar recalled to Pak’, *Indian Express*, November 18, 2000.

²⁹ ‘Hizbul Commanders in JAMMU & KASHMIR recalled to PoK camp’, *The Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, November 24, 2001.

³⁰ ‘Hizb rules out role for foreign militants’, *The Hindu*, Chennai, November 21, 2001.

return to Pakistan, and asking the Srinagar press not to publish statements issued by the dissident faction. That, however, achieved nothing. On November 24, the Srinagar Hizb issued another broadside, proclaiming loyalty to Dar, and making it clear that the leaders would not return to Pakistan until their replacements were in place on the field.

If it looks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, goes the old maxim, it probably is a duck. For all practical purposes, Dar had broken with the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen central command, dividing the organisation into two. His cause was helped not a little by a series of Intelligence Bureau (IB)-led operations in late 2001, targeting *hawala* (illegal money transfers) operators funneling funds through legitimate overground businesses to terrorist groups in Jammu & Kashmir.³¹ The seizures meant that the Hizb cadre did not receive their Ramadan-time payments, which most used to send home to support their families. There was, unsurprisingly, not a little muttering about Khan's incompetence, and a marked reluctance to engage in aggressive operations. But as ducks go, Dar was unmistakably one-legged. While he had secured the support of the Indian state - thus protecting himself against possible elimination - he had delivered nothing to his IB-Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) handlers in turn. Seen from his point of view, this course of action was eminently sensible. There was nothing to be gained from participating in an election, other than perhaps a seat in the J&K Legislative Assembly - hardly adequate compensation for risking his life. Without broader movement on the political front, the Dar faction of the HM has no incentive to come overground.

Read against the background of Dar's pronouncements when the engagement began, his current position shows remarkable consistency. At his meeting with journalists on July 24, 2000, when Dar first discussed the Hizb's decision to initiate a unilateral cease-fire, Dar made it clear that he saw the military gesture as part of a larger political strategy. The Union government's then-nascent offer of dialogue with the APHC, Dar suggested, was positive. "Let them talk to anybody", he

³¹ Praveen Swami, 'Channels of Blood Money', *Frontline*, January 18, 2002, page 25 to 26.

said, “the aim of the exercise should be to resolve the issue amicably, through a dialogue without preconditions.” The Hizb, Dar continued, would encourage politicians from India and abroad to visit the State, and participate in a process of dialogue with its people. Conscious of the reaction his statement was certain to provoke from Pakistan-based far-right groups, Dar described their cadres as “our brothers who have come to our help... Once the problem is resolved amicably and peace is restored”, Dar asserted with desperate optimism, “they will return peacefully.”³²

Key to such developments is the second element in New Delhi’s political engagement – the APHC. So far, like the Hizbul-Mujahideen, the organisation has done an excellent job of discrediting itself, but has made little progress towards actually joining a democratic process. Two years ago, centrists within the APHC, missed an opportunity to join hands with Dar, and thereby create serious pressure on the Union government to initiate a direct dialogue. The APHC had criticised the Hizb cease-fire, describing it as “a step taken in haste”. “The Hizb leadership”, it had argued, “has also failed to perceive the Indian machinations and cunning behaviour that has always been there to divide Kashmiri opinion on issues like this.” At the same time, however, the APHC insisted that the dispute on Kashmir “should be resolved through peaceful means, to ensure the prosperity of the region.”³³

Now, however, with its own representative character in question, the APHC has been calling for a three-way cease-fire, involving India, terrorist groups and Pakistan, as a precursor to talks between all three parties. APHC leaders have also been promising to set up an election commission of their own, which would then supervise a process to establish that the organisation did indeed represent the people of J&K.³⁴ Meanwhile, the Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabbir Shah, who had been engaged in the dialogue with K C Pant, announced that he had won Sikandar Hayat Khan’s support for a new party, which

³² ‘Hizbul Declares Unilateral Ceasefire For Three Months’, *Asian Age*, July 24, 1999.

³³ ‘Ceasefire decision hasty: APHC’, *Tribune*, July 28, 2000.

³⁴ “APHC to constitute election commission”, *Tribune*, January 29, 2002.

would merge several separate APHC constituents. “All the parties and groups joining the new alliance”, he told journalists, “will cease to be individual entities and will operate under one banner, one flag and one leader”.³⁵

Such enterprises serve only to evade the central issue before the APHC centrists and figures like Shabbir Shah: whether or not to participate in elections, rather than consolidate the militant constituencies they currently preside over. To understand the APHC’s bizarre behaviour, these developments need to be read in the context of Pakistan’s renewed efforts to revitalise the moribund organisation. In early January, Pakistan ensured that hard-line Jamaat-e-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who had been boycotting meetings of the APHC Executive since November 2001, participated in a three-member committee set up to meet the heads of foreign missions in New Delhi. The mechanics of this unity move were conveyed to Geelani by Bhat during his December 26 visit to Srinagar, which ended with his arrest two days later. Bhat, according to insiders, made two major points. First, he said, a divided APHC was an discredited APHC. Second, a united APHC had to push its cause with western nations if it was to hope to have any role in any future India-Pakistan dialogue. Without such a role, the APHC would find itself marginalised in any prospective peace initiative.³⁶

Geelani left for New Delhi on December 13, along with his most bitter detractors within the APHC, Yasin Malik and Abdul Ghani Lone. In the event, however, their appointments with the heads of the United Kingdom High Commission, and the United States Embassy were turned down as a result of some discreet lobbying by the Ministry of External Affairs. All that the APHC could secure was a meeting with a First Secretary from the United States Embassy, who insisted on visiting them at the Kashmir Awareness Bureau office in New Delhi, rather than inviting them to the mission. Deeply embarrassed, the APHC leadership issued a fresh press release, saying that they were aborting their diplomatic foray because of the arrests of 50 of their cadre in

³⁵ “Shah announces new party”, *Daily Excelsior*, January 25, 2002.

³⁶ Praveen Swami, “Machinations in Kashmir”, *Frontline*, February 15, 2002, p. 18.

Srinagar.³⁷ Just five APHC leaders had, in fact, been arrested, and more embarrassment was to follow. The press release was signed by a G M Gulfam, who turned out to be a driver employed by the Kashmir Awareness Bureau. His signature, it turned out, was put on the press release because Bhat's second-in-command in New Delhi, Abdul Majid Bandey, was too scared by his boss' arrest to put pen to paper. The APHC delegation chose to stay on in New Delhi until January 18, rather than return to Srinagar and face derision.

Abdul Ghani Lone and other moderates on the APHC seem to be considering the prospect of abandoning their irreparably leaky ship. Both he and Maulvi Abbas Ansari, through 2001, issued statements that they might be willing to participate in the State Legislative Assembly elections that must be held before September 2002. But Lone, sources close to him say, has proved unwilling to budge on his two major preconditions for participation in elections. The first was that the Indian government would have to concede that the elections were being held not just to determine who would govern J&K, but who represented its people. New Delhi has consistently disputed the APHC's claim to speak for the people of the State and demanded that it put its claims to the test. The second condition was that the Union government guarantee that it would engage the new government in a dialogue on the future status of J&K. Despite months of effort by Mishra and Dulat, Lone has shown no signs of weakening. Of the APHC leader's wish to end violence there is little doubt. He had, for example, backed the Union government's 'Ramzan cease-fire', arguing that "the biggest danger now is from the [Islamic] extremists" who would "make serious efforts to undermine the ceasefire."³⁸ He was, however, marginalised by Geelani, and other far-Right members of the APHC Executive, which is not dominated by centrists.

But Lone, like others who would join elections, have a problem similar to those of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen's Dar faction. Should they participate in elections and lose, they would be stripped of whatever legitimacy and power they now possess. In

³⁷ "Hurriyat team cuts short Delhi visit", *Tribune*, January 19, 2002.

³⁸ "Lone condemns extremists", *The Statesman*, Kolkata, December 8, 2000.

the event they do contest elections, even as part of a broad opposition front, they might still lose to the National Conference which, all said and done, still possesses the largest group of cadre and most effective patronage structure of any political organisation in the State. India, moreover, simply cannot provide the guarantees the APHC centrists seek. The APHC knows it is running out of time, but has no answers. "Issuing statements and shedding crocodile tears and visiting the families of martyrs will not solve the Kashmir problem," a Hizb statement had acidly proclaimed two years ago:

If our elders [the APHC leaders] believe that only an armed struggle will liberate Kashmir from the occupation and an honourable solution is possible through militancy, then they should come in the forefront and command the struggle. If not, they should at least send their wards to join militancy.³⁹

Today, no APHC leader except Syed Ali Shah Geelani sees hope in armed struggle – and even he has not sent his sons to join the *Jehad*. The opening of political space that caused so much excitement in the spring of 2000, it would seem, is inexorably heading towards an impasse.

Future Prospects

For two major reasons, such an impasse holds out very real problems for India. First, the absence of an internal democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir will, inevitably, raise international pressure to seek some externally - driven conflict resolution mechanism. Second, India's failure to secure a decisive military advantage over terrorist groups will mean that in future negotiations, secessionist and terrorist groups will seek a considerably higher price than India would wish, or be able to pay. Should Pakistan bring about a significant escalation in terrorist violence, which I believe is probable, the dismal state of India's containment - level security apparatus could well lead to a significant build - up along the Line of Control again. In such a

³⁹ "Pick up the guns if you don't want talks: Hizbul to Hurriyat", *Indian Express*, August 13, 2000.

situation, the United States would most likely insist that India and Pakistan sit down and discuss Jammu & Kashmir and arrive at some kind of an interim solution. What might the United States want? What could Pakistan accept? And what might India be willing to concede?

In mid-January, 2002, *The Washington Post* carried the contours of what such a price may be. Last July, it reported, India and Pakistan had been close to an agreement that would convert the LoC into an international border, with the crucial caveat that the six districts of the Kashmir valley would receive ‘special autonomy.’ It quoted Pakistan’s former Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, as saying that talks were at an advanced stage before they were derailed by unnamed hard-liners. This ensured that the proposal “died before it was publicly circulated”.

“If that process had continued”, he said, “who knows? Maybe in one or two or three years we could have found a solution or at least defused tensions. Today, in this atmosphere of hostility, no one is prepared to make even the slightest concessions. But I think it is still possible to move forward on Kashmir. This has to be done in a quiet way, away from the glare of cameras.”⁴⁰

Aziz was, in fact, being a little coy with his, perhaps, innocent interviewer. His proposals have been public since at least 1999 when, shortly after the summit between Prime Ministers Atal Behari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharief, he had called for a district-wise referendum in J&K.⁴¹ This was a dramatic, if sadly little-noticed, departure from Pakistan’s official policy. Although later events are well known, I believe they bear detailed recounting in the current context. Shortly after Aziz’s proposals were made, journalist Talaat Hussain, writing in *The Nation*, reported that Niaz Naik and R K Mishra, the ‘back-channel mediators’ during the Kargil War, had discussed what he called the ‘Chenab Plan’.⁴² The idea, Hussain said, was documented in a Pakistani proposal, an Indian response and a Pakistani counter-proposal. Former Premier Benazir Bhutto was the next to join the

⁴⁰ “India, Pak had plans to ‘carve up Kashmir’”, *Tribune*, January 17, 2002.

⁴¹ Cited in Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Mediation by any other name’, *Frontline*, July 30, 1999.

⁴² Cited in Praveen Swami, “Partition Plans?”, *Frontline*, October 22, 1999.

chorus. In July 1999, she laid out her own plans for a final resolution of the conflict in J&K:

Both sections would be demilitarised, and patrolled by either an international peace-keeping force or a joint Indian-Pakistani peace keeping force. Both legislative councils would continue to meet separately, and on occasion jointly. The people on both sides of divided Kashmir could meet and interact freely and informally. None of this would prejudice or prejudge the position of both countries on the disputed areas.⁴³

Interestingly, the first ideas for partitioning J&K along ethnic-communal lines emerged from the United States. On March 8, 2000, Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and a group of his top Cabinet colleagues held a secret meeting with Farooq Kathwari, a US-based secessionist leader. The closed-door meeting, held at the Secretariat at Jammu, appears to be just part of a larger US-sponsored covert dialogue on J&K. Indeed, there is growing evidence that the BJP-led coalition government in New Delhi was complicit in this dialogue, which could lead to a violent communal sundering of the State.⁴⁴ Kathwari heads the Kashmir Study Group (KSG), an influential New York-based Think Tank, which has been advocating the creation of an independent State carved out of the Muslim-majority areas of J&K. The owner of Ethan Allen, an upmarket furniture concern which includes the White House among its clients, Kathwari's associates in the KSG have included influential Indian establishment figures, notably former Foreign Secretary S K Singh and retired Vice Admiral K K Nayyar. The furniture tycoon was earlier blacklisted by successive Indian governments, on one occasion even being denied permission to visit a seriously ill relative. Shortly after the second BJP-led coalition assumed power in 1998, however, he was quietly granted a visa.

Kathwari arrived in New Delhi in March 1999, carrying a series of proposals for the creation of an independent Kashmiri State. On this first visit, Kathwari met what one senior

⁴³ Benazir Bhutto, 'Comment', *The New York Times*, June 8, 1999, reproduced as "For a Camp David for Kashmir", *Frontline*, July 2, 1999."

⁴⁴ "A divisive agenda", *Frontline*, April 14, 2000.

intelligence official describes as a “who’s who of the BJP establishment”. Kathwari also appears to have visited Jammu and Srinagar, staying at the home of a top National Conference politician. Public disclosure of Kathwari’s proposals provoked a minor storm. Nonetheless, Kathwari seemed encouraged enough to push ahead with a new version of his blueprint, *Kashmir: A Way Forward*. In September 1999, the fresh version of the document was finalised after, its preface records, receiving reactions from “government officials in India and Pakistan.” The new document outlined five proposals for the creation of either one or two new States, which would together constitute what is described in somewhat opaque fashion as a “sovereign entity but one without an international personality”:

The new entity would have its own secular, democratic constitution, as well as its own citizenship, flag and a legislature which would legislate on all matters other than defence and foreign affairs. India and Pakistan would be responsible for the defence of the Kashmiri entity, which would itself maintain police and gendarme forces for internal law and order purposes. India and Pakistan would be expected to work out financial arrangements for the Kashmiri entity, which could include a currency of its own.⁴⁵

The National Conference’s own proposals for J&K’s future have some similarities with those of the KSG. The report of the Regional Autonomy Committee [RAC], tabled in the J&K Assembly in 1999, and now in the process of being reworked, advocates cutting away the Muslim-majority districts of Rajouri and Poonch from the Jammu region as a whole, and recasting them as a new Pir Panjal Province.⁴⁶ The single districts of Buddhist-majority Leh and Muslim-majority Kargil, too, were to be sundered from each other and to become new provinces. In some cases, the RAC Report and the KSG proposals mirrored each other down to the smallest detail. For example, *Kashmir: A Way Forward* refers to the inclusion of a Gool-Gulabgarh *tehsil* in

⁴⁵ *Kashmir: A Way Forward*, Kashmir Study Group, New York, December 1, 1998, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Regional Autonomy Committee Report*, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Jammu, April 13, 1999.

the new State. There is, in fact, no such *tehsil*. Gool and Gulabgarh were parts of the *tehsil* of Mahore, the sole Muslim-majority *tehsil* of Udhampur district, until 1999. Gool subsequently became a separate *tehsil*. But the proposal for Mahore's sundering from Udhampur and inclusion in the Chenab province was first made in the RAC Report. According to the RAC plan, as in the KSG proposals, Mahore would form part of the Chenab province, while Udhampur would be incorporated in the Hindu-majority Jammu province.

Significantly, Farooq Abdullah's maximalist demands for autonomy for J&K dovetail with the KSG's formulation of a quasi-sovereign State. The report of the State Autonomy Commission (SAC), adopted by the J&K Legislative Assembly in 2001, would leave New Delhi with no powers other than the management of defence, external affairs and communications. Fundamental rights in the Union Constitution, for example, would no longer apply to J&K if the SAC had its way. They would have to be substituted by a separate chapter on Fundamental Rights in the J&K Constitution, which now contains only directive principles. The BJP, too, has several enthusiastic advocates for the sundering of Jammu from Kashmir, which would achieve much the same results as those sought by the KSG. So too would calls by Buddhist-chauvinist groups for Ladakh to be made a Union Territory.

No great imagination is needed to see how these ideas dovetail with the realms of the possible in the United States and Pakistan. No politician in Pakistan would be able to accept a settlement based on granting formal status to the Line of Control. Where a Zulfikar Ali Bhutto pleaded in the wake of the 1971 war that this would undermine his regime, so a Musharraf remains today. The least that any Pakistan politician can accept is a victory, however small, in the form a gain for that country beyond the existing status quo. This aspiration, of course, seems real and achievable to Pakistan because of the broad structure of official United States discourse on J&K, which has changed remarkably little over decades. That country does not accept the finality of the accession of J&K to India; nor has it ever backed efforts for the Line of Control to become a formal border. Many in the United States find the notion of at least some form of independence to

Jammu and Kashmir attractive, for the reason that it would become yet another centre in South Asia from which the world's sole superpower could project its power.

No Indian government would find it easy to make concessions of this kind, despite the existence of elements of the fanatical Hindu Right who have long argued that Jammu must pursue its destiny independently of the Kashmir valley. Nevertheless, the *mélange* of forces working towards some kind of *de facto* partition need to be watched carefully, because the consequence of their enterprise could be unimaginably horrible. It is also essential, with the demise of what was passed off as a peace process, to reconsider the fundamentals of our understanding of the decade-long conflict. Much thinking on J&K has become mired in received wisdom, and lacks a complex and nuanced understanding of the play of class, culture, community and ethnicity that drive violence. The veteran Punjab Communist leader, Satyapal Dang, once suggested to this author that the ways in which we have come to comprehend such conflicts is grossly inadequate. For a decade, he pointed out, what was called the Punjab problem was understood to consist of several other problems, like the sharing of river waters, the status of Chandigarh, the federal demands of the Anandpur Sahib resolutions, the scars of Operation Bluestar, and so on. Yet, when peace did come about, Dang pointed out, none of these problems had in fact been resolved. One explanation was that pure coercion had put an end to the violence that began in the early 1980s. Another possibility was that the real basis of the Khalistan movement, its ideological content and resistance to this, had not been understood properly. This perspective is relevant in J&K today. Although Kashmir, as 'experts' never cease to remind us, is not Punjab, neither is it inhabited by Martians.

What, then, lies ahead? Seen from Srinagar, the world after September 11, 2001 seems much the same as the world before it, fraught with the same uncertainties and perils. But, in ways that no one has even begun to consider, the world has in fact been transfigured. When Indian troops return from the LoC, it will mark a decisive moment in the history of violence of J&K. Pakistan's thresholds of aggression were always defined by the prospect of India going to war in response. Now, having rejected

India's demands for the extradition of suspects and an end to cross border terrorism, Pakistan knows the highest card in India's hand is not, in fact, worth much. A hallowed, three-decade old bluff has been called. This summer, Pakistan will be able to raise the stakes of its covert campaign, secure in the knowledge that there will be no Indian military retaliation across borders. How India will respond to this new scenario is still unclear. For years, experts have advocated the creation of an offensive covert capability, which could ensure that Pakistan's actions in J& K would provoke matching reprisals. But covert response capabilities have rarely interested Indian politicians because, unlike Army build-ups, they must, by definition, be secret.

A real peace process in J&K cannot be manufactured: it needs to emerge from real political activity, not closed-door intrigue and diplomatic manoeuvre. It will evolve in genuinely democratic fora, not in five-star hotel conference rooms; and issues, not deals, must be discussed. Critically, such a revival is premised on India's ability to contain, if not completely crush, terrorist activity in J&K. For this, the Union government must turn its attention from the television-driven war it has no intention of fighting to the bitter battle it is already engaged in.