

INSURGENCY IN JAMMU REGION BY LOV PURI

Introduction :

The present project seeks to contribute to the studies of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir state by focusing attention on its rather neglected regional aspects. It concentrates on the origin and growth of militancy in Jammu region of the state.

It was found that the causes of origin and various stages of growth of militancy were different from these in Kashmir. It started much later in Jammu and persisted even after it visibly declined in Kashmir. Its character, composition and objectives in the two region also varied.

The distinctive character of militancy is due to its special features like geography, ethnic-religious composition and socio-political situation., This as long as militancy comprised youth from the Kashmir valley and was inspired by ideology of Kashmir nationalism, it did not have much appeal in ethnically different region of Jammu, But when youth from PoK and Punjab part of Pakistan joined the militant movement and it turned from a Kashmir to a Muslim movement , its response in Kashmir declined but improved in Jammu which was ethnically closer to the new militants.

The Hindu backlash against mass killings of innocents which was special feature of militancy in Jammu as also lapses and excesses of the security forces, in areas remote from the gaze of media and the human rights activists , too, contributed a vicious circle of distrust.

As Jammu had much less share in political power which is more concentrated in the hands of the Kashmiri leadership , the resultant frustration often got communal outlet which feeded the militant movement. Ignorance of political leadership of the state and of the country and planners of security strategies about the peculiarities of the region further handicapped the counter-militancy measures. These and allied problem are covered in this study which also takes note of the diversities within the region. A district wise analysis of the situation is added to that of over all trends in the region. As this is the first study of its kind, it cannot claim to be perfect. But it is hoped that the material and ideas provided by this study will generate sufficient interest for scholars to undertake a more in-depth studies into this vital aspect if the problem. Which is posing one of the greatest challenges to the nation.

Jammu is an indispensable geo-political link between Kashmir valley and the rest of India. Development in Jammu region have often affected the situation in Kashmir and vice versa. But there are autonomous causes of developments in each region.

This obvious fact has often been ignored by studies on Kashmir problem; in particular of militancy in the state. Though it had its origin in Kashmir, it extended to different parts of Jammu at different times. It was, in no sense, an automatic extension. Local causes also contributed to it. Even the timing of emergence of militancy in different parts of the region was at different times.

No study of militancy in the state would be complete nor an effective counter militancy police can, therefore, be evolved with out studying the demographic and political character of Jammu. The vital questions in this respect are: What role ethnic barrier between the Muslims of Jammu and those in Kashmir have played in thier divergent political aspirations and varying response to militancy? How far Hindu-Muslim relations responsible for preapring a fertile ground for the growth of militancy in Jammu? What changes took place in Kashmiri militancy before it became acceptable to the Muslim majority districts of Jammu? What are the differences in composition, and objectives of the militancy in the two regions? What are its various phases in Jammu till it acquired clear terrorist form when it reached Hindu majority areas of Jammu city?

These and allied questions will be dealt with in the present study.

FROM ACCESSION TO ALIENATION

The decision of Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir state to accede to the Indian Union on 26 October 1947 had overwhelming popular support as it was endorsed by the premier political party of the state, the National Conference and its most charismatic leader Sheikh Abdullah. But growing differences over center-state relations and Kashmir-Jammu relations led to controversy over the issue of accession itself, after few years. A number of national and international factors added further complications into the situation; which resulted in dismissal from power and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah on 9 August 1953.

The consequent alienation of Kashmiri Muslims has assumed many forms and degrees ever since. But it expressed itself in its first phase within broad Indian values like secularism and democracy as Kashmir's freedom movement had been nourished by the values during its close affinity with and support from Indian national movement; in particular its leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Even during his long incarceration and political wilderness Sheikh retained the sympathy and support of leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Rajagopalachari and Socialist Party.

Thus the split of Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 could provide a fresh opportunity for a dialogue between Sheikh Abdullah and the government of India which culminated into his return to power in 1975. The center agreed to review the laws extended to the state after his arrest in 1953, on the recommendation of the state

government while Sheikh Abdullah promised to concede regional autonomy to satisfy regional aspirations of Jammu and Ladakh.

Start of Militancy in the state

The state of Jammu and Kashmir since its accession to the Indian Union on 26th October 1947 has witnessed many ups and downs in its relations with the Union.

From 1953 to 1971, Plebiscite Front led by Sheikh Abdullah was the most dominant force in Kashmir. But from seventies to mid eighties it was almost as normal as any other party of the country. In 1984 duly elected government of Dr. Farooq Abdullah was dismissed by engineering detection in his party by the Congress ruled central government. Two years later Farooq patched up with the then Congress after agreeing to share power with it much to the annoyance of his Kashmir based following. The coalition closed secular outlet for popular discontent as the opposition space was vacated. It was further stifled when in 1987 assembly elections held on 23rd March amidst alleged rigging of the 1987 assembly elections. This time the democratic outlet too was closed. The main nucleus of the militants movement was formed of the persons who had fought the elections but were fraudulently declared defeated and locked up and humiliated.

In sheer frustration they crossed over to Pakistan and got training and arms to start a violent movement for the liberation of the state. They established contacts with and became part of the Jammu and Kashmir liberation Front led by Pakistan based Amanullah Khan. It made its presence felt by powerful bomb blasts in Srinagar and abortive attempt on the life of the DIG Police at his residence on 17th September 1989. The reports of the Union Home Ministry started pouring in of the presence of armed infiltrators of JKLF in the state. In January 1990 the state came under the Governor's rule; who dissolved the state assembly. It removed another buffer between the government and the people. The ruthless manner in which the militant activities were sought to be suppressed turned them into an insurgency.

The JKLF founder Amanullah Khan led a historic march on February 11, 1992, for a symbolic violation of line of Control dividing Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The JKLF cadre was attacked and 21 persons were killed by security forces of Pakistan. The initial phase of militancy which was dominated by JKLF cadre was soon eclipsed by pro Jamat-e- Islami Hizbul Mujhaideen, after an internecine battle witnessed between the two frontal militant groups for gaining a platform of supremacy. HM, with the support of Pakistan government eclipsed JKLF. Many members of the JKLF were eliminated in encounter by the security forces. The JKLF laid the blame on the HM which was trying to push it in the background. The JKLF Chief Amanullah Khan openly says, " it was an attempt by Pakistan to hijack the movement and of the vested interests to communalize the movement" later militant movement witnessed emergence of new militant groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba or lately Jaish-e-Mohammad which by its more sensational acts overshadowed even the HM.

Militancy in Jammu Region

The pattern of militancy in Jammu region in other half of the state followed a completely different pattern from that of the valley. In the initial three years the entire province remained untouched by the insurgency.

The region is comprised of six districts- Doda, Udhampur, Kathua, Jammu, Rajouri and Poonch. The first major act of militancy in Jammu region occurred in the district headquarters of Doda in 1993. It later spread to other parts of the district. The hilly and sparsely populated district is also the third largest district of the state after Leh and Kargil with total area almost equivalent to that of Kashmir valley. It was the first district where mass scale minority killings occurred in the following years.

The twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch situated on the sensitive line of control remained untouched by militancy in the first five years of its emergence in valley. But militants who were infiltrating from this part to Kashmir valley soon started setting up their bases here and started carrying out active operations. It came to be realized that tackling militancy in this hilly belt was the most challenging task for the security personnel because of many factors which will be discussed later.

The militancy in the province reached its peak with the sensational acts in the heart of Jammu city like the attack on the Raghunath Mandir. Also in the peripheral areas of the city, there were gruesome terrorists attacks of unprecedented nature like Rajiv Nagar and Kaluchak; in which at least 60 people including women and children were killed.

There are some questions which come to mind and answers to which may give a clue to the response of different parts of Jammu region to the militant movement in Kashmir.

For instance the armed movement in the state led by the cadre of Jammu and Kashmir liberation Front started in 1990s. Why Jammu region remained unaffected by it and it became the hot bed of militant movement in the later years?

Secondly it is widely known fact that Rajouri and Poonch hilly border areas of the Jammu region due to porous terrain provide safest infiltration routes and launching pads for the militants. In the early 1990s militants entering through this part headed towards valley. Why only after five years there were local recruits from Rajouri and Poonch to militant ranks and soon these areas became one of the most violent and troubled parts of the state, perhaps in terms of daily killings more than Kashmir region?

Another question which strikes is the fact why Doda was the first district to be afflicted by militancy and rest of the area was safe.?

Also why no over ground political secessionist formation could gain ground in the troubled parts of the region even after local recruitment in the militant ranks?

For answering these question we need to have an over view of the state followed by identifying distinctive features of Jammu region including its geographical, social, ethnic and religious diversities.

Pre-partition Profile

The present Jammu and Kashmir comprises of three regions- Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh which are ethnically much apart from each other. Before 1947 the present territorial boundaries were much different from the past status. With an area of 2,22,236 sq. Kms it was one of the largest 565 princely states of India. Jammu province occupied an area of 32,067 sq Kms, Kashmir province 22,165sq.Kms and the frontier district of Ladakh and Gilgit 1,64,604.86sq.Km. Jammu province was composed of six districts namely Udhampur including the present day Doda district, Reasi, Mirpur, Poonch, Jammu and Kathua. In Kashmir region the districts were Srinagar, Baramulla, Anantnag and a non- Kashmiri speaking Muzaffarabad. In the third category came Ladakh, Gilgit agency, Astore and Gilgit. With the marking of the cease fire line between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir regions on 1st January 1949 , the area of the state under India's control was effectively reduced to 1,38,992 sq. Kms.

The impact of this division on state was enormous. In terms of area Jammu province was reduced to 26,689.4sq. Kms and that of Kashmir to 15,520 sq.kms.

The population of Jammu region according to the census report of 1941 was 19,81,433 where as that of Kashmir 17,28,705 and the frontier district of Ladakh and Gilgit with 3,11,478 persons.

Besides an obvious territorial effect of the partition the demographic details also altered. Jammu, which was a Muslim majority province, became a Hindu majority region. This was due to the fact that the Muslim majority district of Mirpur and parts of Poonch Jagir became an administrative unit of Pakistan which had a total population of 8,08,483 persons. The density of population among the affected districts was the highest in Poonch Jagir with 259 persons per sq. mile followed by Mirpur(238). In the parts of Jammu province, which went to Pakistan Muslim Rajputs, constituted a considerable chunk. The total number of Muslim Rajputs was 2,26,000 persons and their stronghold was Mirpur district and Poonch Jagir. Muslim jats lived in western Jammu province and their number was 1,21,000 and majority of them lived in Mirpur. Gujjars a nomadic community spread all over the hilly parts of Jammu province at the time of partition had population of 2,72,431 persons. Even after partition Gujjar population in Jammu province remained considerable despite migration from the peripheral area of the city. The details become particularly relevant with the shaping up of the events in Jammu with regard to growth of militancy in the last over one-decade. Clearly going by the figures Jammu province of the state was one of the most affected by communal riots during partition. The events of 1947 caused large-scale in flow and out flow of persons. Migration of Muslims from Hindu dominated parts of Jammu and inflow of Hindus to present state amidst communal frenzy took place.

Socio-Political scene close of 1947

a) *Political Scenario:*

The political movement that started in the valley in 1931 under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah could not sweep Jammu irrespective of the fact that it was a Muslim majority province, partly because of its anti-Dogra character. The political gulf between Jammu and Kashmir became as wide as cultural and geographical gulf between them. Somehow Sheikh Abdullah could not trust or retain the trust of even his Muslim colleagues of Jammu. The important group of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas was the first to leave the National Conference not long after it was formed. Among Muslims leaders Chowdhary Mohammad Shaffee under a Congress banner was able to extend an effective political base mainly among the Hindus of Jammu. But some low leaders like him failed to get response from Congress party who gave their unflinching support to the Sheikh and recognized only his party National Conference.

In a void of secular parties, Muslim Conference which was accepted by the Muslim league as its representative emerged as a vocal voice of the community while Hindu Sabha sought to fill the vacuum in the Hindu community. The political soil of Jammu was fertile for the communal riots which engulfed the whole of province and caused large scale migrations.

b) *Surgical Operation*

After independence of the country and accession of the state to the Indian union, its partition in 1947 struck a serious blow to the prestige and personality of Jammu. It was the most populous region of the state before independence. The surgical operation called the cease-fire line of 1949 - later rationalised and named line of actual control after the Indo-Pak war of 1971 — cut a major portion of Jammu region of the state while its other cultural units like Kashmir and Ladakh remained more or less intact.

Large scale communal bloodshed and transfer of Hindu and Muslim populations across the line caused not only untold suffering to the people but also distorted the character of Jammu. The rehabilitation problem of hundreds of thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees displaced from Pakistan and settled in different parts of the state, lingered even after five decades of independence, causing many tensions in the region.

The cease-fire line changed Jammu's Muslim majority into a minority while most of the Muslim leadership of the region migrated or was transferred by the state government to Pakistan during those troubled days.

Social Scenario of the Border Belt

The peasantry remained largely cut off from the urban politics. Rajput Muslims, Gujjars and tenants of both communities were mostly loyal subjects of the Maharaja and the landlords. In the Muslim majority area of Rajouri and Poonch a part of which is now

administered by Pakistan Muslim Rajputs were an influential group before 1947. They had fought many battles under the Dogra rulers to build up the state. In terms of percentage of population it provided largest recruitment in the country to the British army in the second world war. For instance Bagh tehsil in Poonch district was almost totally dependant on the army. But for the influence of Punjab their revolutionary potential could have retained a secular character.

The same martial race living in the border belt of Jammu region which had supported the merger of the state to Pakistan in 1947 did not support Sheikh Abdulah's struggle for plebiscite after 1953. Even after five years of the emergence of militant movement in valley it failed to evoke response here. The reasons to this will be discussed later.

Aftermath Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971

Jammu was also the worst suffer in the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. Out of 210 square miles of Indian territory invaded by Pakistani forces in 1965, 190 square miles was of the Chhamb sector of Jammu. The thrust of the raiders, too, was deepest in the region, beyond 100 miles, between the Pir Panchal range and the Chenab. Again, out of a total displaced population of 2,70,000 as many as 2,50,000 belonged to Jammu. The later estimate was subsequently revised to 3,00,000. If we include Muslim refugees also who fled in opposite directions, the number would be colossal, affecting at least every fourth household in the region as a whole.

Diversities

Apart from problems bequeathed to the region by war and politics, natural factors also contributed to lack of its unity and stability. Unlike other regions of the state, it abounds in geographical, cultural, linguistic, communal, caste and class diversities. Its kaleidoscopic diversity is confined within a small range of well defined boundaries. Bounded by the Ravi and the Pir Panchal range, its altitude varies from almost sea level to 16,000 feet. The rise is so steep that while the city of Jammu the winter capital of the state on occasions records the highest temperature in the country, the snow line is not farther than thirty miles from it.

In terms of number of religious communities living in the region and languages and dialects spoken by its people, the diversity is equally pronounced. According to the census of 1981, the population of the region is 27 lakhs which is 45 per cent of the total population of the state and lives in an area of over 26,000 square kilometers. Hindus constitute 62 per cent of the region's population while 33.8 per cent of it are Muslims. The population of the state as per the 2001 census is 10,069,917 where as in the six districts of Jammu region it is 43,95,712.

The scheduled castes, whole percentage of population in the region is 18.3, constitute 31 per cent of the Hindu community, which if further divided on caste lines. Other communities of Jammu include Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Buddhists.

Out of the three regions of the Jammu and Kashmir state, Jammu is now-i.e. after partition-number two in population as well as area. Kashmir valley with two-fifth of its area out-numbers it by just three lakh while sparsely populated Ladakh is four times in territory.

Single largest linguistic community is that of Dogras. Dogri is the mother tongue of about 54 per cent of the population. Other principal languages spoken in the region are Kashmiri, Gojri, Pahari, Punjabi, apart from dialects spoken by a smaller number including Bhaderwahi, Poonchi, Siraji, Kisthwari, Pothoari, Padari, Poguli etc.

Cultural Layers

The predominant influence on the personality of Jammu is of course of the Dogra community concentrated mainly in the central belt of the region, around the Kandi, rocky plateau of 2 to 4 thousand feet high. On its south and west, the Dogra cultural mainstream gets mixed up on its borders with cultural current overflow from the East and the West Punjab. Towards the North, it merges into cultural currents like that of Kashmir, Gujjars and local variety. An overflow of Dogra culture is also discernible in the adjoining areas of Chamba and Kangra in the Himachal Pradesh.

Specific Details about the Six Districts of Jammu region

(Following information is based on official document of state government)

JAMMU DISTRICT

Jammu district is named after its headquarters and state's winter capital, Jammu, popularly known as city of Temples. It is located between 74 degree-24 and 75 degree-18, East longitude and 32 degree-50 and 33 degree-30' North latitude. It is bounded by Udhampur district in the North and North East, Kathua district in the East and South East, Pakistan (Sialkote) in the West and POK (Bhimber) and Rajouri district in the North West. the district also shares more than 100 miles plain International border with Pakistan and it through this part from where the railway line used to run via Sialkote district of Punjab province of Pakistan.

Jammu district is spread over an area of 3097 sq. kms and has a population of 1,571,911 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 83,5,63 and females 736,276. in rural belt the population is 873,237 while in the urban side the population is 698,674. its population was 943,395 as per 1981 census comprising 491,972 males and 451,423 females. the population density of the district has risen from 305 sq. kms in 1981 to 390 sq. kms in 1991. it is the second largest populated district of the state and second large in terms of population density.

Jammu city had a population of 223,361 as per 1981 and since then it has grown manifold. the influx of migrants from Kashmir since 1990 due to disturbed conditions there also contributed some increase.

The district has the most fertile area of R.S. Pura and Bishnah which is known as rice bowl of the state. it produces the fine quality of Basmati rice.

KATHUA DISTRICT

Known as Gateway of Jammu and Kashmir state, Kathua district lies in South-East of the state. it is bounded on the East of Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh and on south by Shakergarh tehsil of Pakistan and Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Ramnagar tehsil of Udhampur district and Bhaderwah tehsil of Doda district call on its North while Samba tehsil of Jammu is on its North West. on the South West lies Indo-Pak border. it is located 32.17'to 32.55' North latitude and 75.32' to 76.16' East longitude. Kathua district has a population of 544,206 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 285,308 and females 258,898. in rural belt the population is 466,870 while in the urban side the population is 77,336.

For administrative purposes, the district has been divided into four tehsils namely Kathua, Hiranagar, Basohli and Billawar and with a sub- division at Basohli for administrative purposes and eight blocks. District broadly comprises three district zones. These can be described as border, Kandi and hilly areas. The areas falling south of Pathankot-Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in four blocks of Kathua, Barnoti, Hiranagar and Gaghwal form the border belt. To north of national highway and upto the foothills in Billawar and Basohli blocks, is the kandi area and further areas of Bani and Lohai Malhar blocks and partly Basohli and Billawar blocks constitute hilly area of the district. The border area is mostly irrigated and economic condition of the people is better than that of Kandi and hilly areas the district has 587 villages (32 un-inhabited) 183 Panchayats and equal number of Patwar halquas. The number of Panchayats are proposed to be raised to 179 under re-organization scheme. Kathua, Hiranagar, Basohli, Billawar. Lakhanpur and Parole are six towns of the district.

Because of altitudinal varieties, there is vast difference between the temperature of the two plain tehsils of Kathua and Hiranagar with those of hilly tehsils of Basohli and Billawar. The temperature rises as high as 48C in the plains and goes down below 1.5 degree C in upper hilly areas. In other two tehsils of Basohli and Billawar, the temperature does not cross 36C. Most of the higher areas in these tehsils experience snowfall for most part of the year. The average rainfall ranges between 200 and 1200 mm for different areas. Basohli and Billawar areas receive more rainfall than other areas. The two main rivers of the district are Ravi and Ujh, which are major contributors to the prestigious Ravi- Tawi Irrigation Complex.

As regards the main ethnic groups, Hindu constitute 91% of the district while Muslims form 7% and Sikhs 2% of the population. The major concentration of scheduled Tribe population is in the blocks of Bani and Lohai-Malhar. The scheduled castes population in the district is 22.83% as per 1981 census.

Dogri is the main language spoken by the people of the district. Though Dogri spoken in major towns in the plain it has some influence of Punjabi yet the rural areas and

especially the hilly tehsils of Basohli and Billawar are free from this influence. The language in the rural and hilly areas has maintained its native purity, accent and sweetness. However, a very small section of the population (Kashmiri Muslim settlers) residing in Lohai-Malhar and Bani blocks also speak Kashmiri. Gojri is also spoken by the miniscule Gujjar community settled here and there. However, with others they converse in pure Dogri.

There are two major roads in the district, which serve as its lifeline. Pathankot-Jammu national highway runs 56Kms within the district right from Lakhanpur to Jatwal and 45 Kms Dhar-Udhampur road which enters the state as Thein runs upto Ramkote within the district. These two lifeline of the district have been connected by link roads from Lakhanpur to Thein and Dayalchak to Chhalan. Besides, another landmark in road sector is the consolidation and construction of 88 Kms long road from Basohli to Bani and then to Bhandarwah via Chhatar Gala. Old Kathua- Jammu road also serves border areas of the district. The district is well served by bus services within the district and to other states. The broad gauge Railway line in this district is 46 Kms Gobindsar (Kathua), Budhi, Chhan Rorian, Dayala Chak, Hiranagar and Ghagwal are the six railway stations falling in the district.

Various shrines associated with Muslim saints are ziarats of Pir-Fozal Shah near Kathua and Pir Chhatar Shah near Parole, Baba Surgal at Kathua and Bua Bagan temple at Tharakalwal are also very famous shrines of the district. Besides, Panjtirthi and Backon are important places of river of pilgrimages in the district.

RAJOURI DISTRICT

Rajouri district is located between 70 degree and 74 degree-4' East longitude and 32 degree-58'and 33' degree-35' North latitude. It is flanked by Poonch district in the North, Jammu district in the South, Udhampur district in the East and Pak occupied Kashmir (Mirpur area) in the West. Carved out of the district of Poonch in 1968 to facilitate process of development and better supervision, Rajouri district has an area of 2630 sq. km with six tehsils, seven blocks, 158 panchayats and 381 villages. Rajouri town, located 154 km from Jammu, is the largest town of the district and serves as district headquarters. Rajouri district has a population of 478,595 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 253,129 and females 225,466. in rural belt the population is 445,171 while in the urban side the population is 33,424.

The district with an area of 2,630 sq. kilometers has peculiar physical features. The Dhaura Dhar range across the North Eastern part of the district and topography of Rajouri. Budhal and part of Kalakote tehsils consists of numerous hills and small valley of meandering brooks. The tehsils of Sunderbani, Nowshera and Kalakote mostly plain and kandi lie in the South and hilly Budhal tehsil in the North East of the district.

The climate varies from semi-tropical in the southern part comprising Nowshera, Sunderbani and Kalakote to temperate in the mountainous northern part encompassing the areas of Rajouri, Budhal and Darhal blocks of the district, the sub-tropical region

receives regular monsoon whereas the northern part prone to hailstorms experiences excessive rains.

The remnants of fortified Mughal inns at Nandpur, Chingus, Rajouri, Fatehpur and Thanamandi are a pleasant reflection of the glorious days of the place when it used to be a camping site for the Royal Mughal entourage proceeding towards Kashmir Valley.

Shahdara Sharief

It is the shrine of Baba Ghulam Shah in the lap of mountains which is well connected with 30 kms black topped from Rajouri town. Buses, Cars and Jeeps carrying pilgrims ply on this road regularly. the shrine commonly known as Shahdara Sharief is a popular tourist spot in Rajouri district. Reportedly 2000 pilgrims visit the shrine daily. There was a pir named Ghulam Shah who was born in Syed Family at village Saidian Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan). Ghulam Shah made Shadara his abode for the rest of his life. Over a period of time, this shrine has grown into symbol of communal harmony as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs visit this place in large numbers, offer prayers and seek blessings of the Pir.

POONCH DISTRICT

Poonch district is the smallest of the 14 districts of J&K state. It falls between 32 degree-25' to 34 degree-01' north latitude and 73 degree-58' to 74 degree-35' east longitude. Poonch is flanked by the districts of Baramulla and Pulwama of Kashmir valley in the north-east areas of the state by Pakistan in the north-west and by the Rajouri district in the south. Poonch district has a population of 371,561 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 193,970 and females 177,591. In rural belt the population is 348,119 while in the urban side the population is 23,442.

Spread over an area of 1,674 sq. kms, Poonch district is totally hilly and mountainous barring few-low lying vales. In has varied climate depending upon altitude of the place.

The district comprises three tehsils of Haveli, Mendhar and Surankot and five community blocks of Poonch, Mandi, Surankote, Mendhar and Balakote. It has 178 villages of which 168 are inhabited, 51 panchayats and a town.

A small district with comparatively less population, Poonch district has a rich cultural heritage and distinct historical background connected with the great Mughals. The carvans of Mughal emperors of Kashmir passed through Poonch district in 17th century and that route is known as Mughal road.

As per 1981 census the district had population of 2.24 lakh, comprising 1.19 lakh males and 1.05 lakh females, constituting only four percent of the total population of the state. Though no census had taken place in the state in 1991 however, the projected population of the district in 1991 was estimated at 3.08 lakhs. About 94 percent of the population of

the district lives in rural areas while only six percent resides in towns. The literacy rate of the district is 34.79 percent.

The people speak Gojri and Poonchi which according to Grieson, is a sister language of Punjabi dialect Lendi. Both the languages have rich folk-lore Potari and folk songs.

Thanks to the geographical and climatic conditions, the Poonch district has rich fauna and forests in the district covering an area of 83,914 acres constituting 29.60 per cent of the total land.

Poonch and Kashmir Valley are separated by the gigantic Pir Panchal mountain range, whose highest peak Tatakuti (15,560 ft) falls in Poonch. It is said that the peak was visible even from Lahore on a clear day.

Though there are many trekking routes yet the popular routes of the district are, Poonch to Gulmarg viz Jammu Gali and Chor Gali, Poonch to Nandhishul viz Loran, Poonch to seven Alpine lakes viz Girjan and Panjtari, Poonch to Toshmaidan and Yusmarg viz Nurpur Gali Khaara Gali, Poonch to Tatakuti viz Hill Kaka and Dhara marg and Poonch to Srinagar viz Peer Marg.

UDHAMPUR DISTRICT

Fifth largest district of the state, Udhampur is situated in the southern part of J&K state and is bounded by Rajouri district in the north, by Anantnag, in north-east, by Doda district, south-east by Kathua district and in the south-west by Jammu district. In 1948, Doda district was carved out of Udhampur district. Udhampur district has a population of 738,965 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 394,949 and females 344,016. In rural belt the population is 620,744 while in the urban side the population is 118,221.

The district lies between 32 degree-34 minutes to 39 degree-30 minutes north latitude and 74 degree-16 minutes to 75 degree-38 minutes east longitude. The district having an area of 4,550 sq. kms which accounts for 2.05% of the total provisional area of the state has been divided into five tehsils viz Udhampur, Ramnagar, Reasi, Chenani and Mahore. Administratively it is headquartered at Udhampur at a distance of 66 kms from Jammu on the Jammu- Srinagar National Highway.

The district has 624 villages including 6 un-inhabited, 12 community development blocks namely Udhampur, Chenani, Panchari, Ghordi, Ramnagar, Majalta, Dudu-Basantgarh, Reasi, Pouni, Arnas, Mohore and Gool. The blocks are further broken up into 214 gram panchayats. There are 6 towns in the district, viz Udhampur, Reasi, Katra, Ramnagar, Chenani and Rehamble.

Total reporting area of the district is 4.31 lakh hectares of which 1.92 lakh hectares is under forest. Net sown area is 71,000 hectares while 1,17,620 hectares is gross cropped area. Double cropping is being done in 0.70 lakh hectares.

Due to altitudinal variation ranging from 600 metres to 3000 metres there is wide variation in temperature in different parts of the district. The temperature rises sometimes as high as 42 degree Celsius and very seldom goes below 1.5 degree Celsius in low altitude areas. May, June and July are the hottest months when the mercury rises sometimes to 42 degree Celsius. December, January and February are the coldest months when the temperature in some areas comes down to 1.5 degree Celsius. Most of the rainfall takes place during July, August and September in summer while January and February in winter.

Though Udhampur is drained by major rivers namely the Chenab, Ans, Tawi and Ujh yet due to mountainous and undulating topography, much utilization of water is not possible. The district is mainly drought prone and only small area has been brought under irrigation.

The dialects of the area are Dogri, Pahari and Gojri. The folk dances are Kud, Yatirs and Bhangra. Kud dance is based on traditional Dogri folk, dance and performed mainly in Pancheri and Dudu-Basantgarh areas the folk songs of the district are Lok-geet, Barran, Karkaan and Bhakha. Bhakha are certain songs sung independent of musical instruments.

The most precious possession of Udhampur district is the world famous Hindu shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi located in the sacred Trikuta Hills. Over four million devotees visit the shrine annually.

DODA DISTRICT

Carved out of the erstwhile Udhampur district in 1948, Doda district is the third largest in terms of the area after Leh and Kargil. Lying in the outer Himalayan range in J&K state, the district falls between 32 degree-53' and 34 degree-21' north latitude and 75 degree-1' and 76 degree-47' longitude. On its north is Anantnag district of Kashmir, while south-West and south-west and south are bordered by the districts of Udhampur, Kathua and Chamba area of Himachal Pradesh. On the east and south east is Leh district.

Spread over in an area of 11,691 sq. kms the district has population of 5.25 lakh (as per estimates of 1991), of which 4.97 lakhs live in rural areas. As per 1981 census, the population of the district was 4,25,262 of which 2,23,362 were male and while rest female. The density of population 36 per sq. kms. The literacy percentage as per 1981 census was 18.5 percent. The population of scheduled tribes according to special enumeration conducted in 1992 was 67,400 persons while scheduled caste population was 37,000. Doda district has a population of 690,474 as per the estimates made in 2001 comprising males 361,471 and females 328,003. In rural belt the population is 638,665 while in the urban side the population is 51,809.

Administratively, the district with 655 villages, three of these being un-inhabited, has been divided into four Sub-Divisions viz Doda, Ramban, Bharderwah, and Kishtwar. it has seven tehsils viz Doda, Bharderwah, Kishtwar, Ramban, Banihal, Thathri and

Gandoh. There are 14 Rural Development Blocks comprising Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Ghat (Doda), Thathri, Gandoh, Inderwal, Padder, Marwah, Warwan, Ramban, Ramsoo Bhagwa, Assar and Banihal. the number of Panchayats is 262.

The district is endowed with vast wealth of natural beauty and resources. The attitude varies from 8,000 ft to 15,000 ft. Owing to varying physical features of the district, the climate is also varied. While the areas like Kishtwar, Bhaderwah and Banihal have a temperate climate, the climate of area like Ramban and Doda is sub-tropical. The average rainfall is 35 inches per annum which is lowest as compared to other district of the division. The Chenab, main river flowing through the district, is commercially very vital transportation of timber from forests and power generation.

The people are also credited to have unity in diversity. For example besides regional languages, there are about one dozen languages being spoke in different areas. These are Kashmir, Dogri, Bhaderwahi, Kishtwari, Kishtwari, Siraji, Pongli, Khashali, Gojri, Paddri and Punjabi etc.

The Bhaderwah group includes three dialects, viz Bhaderwahi, Bhalesvi and Padri. Bhaderwahi language is abundantly rich in words, phrases and idioms.

Hindus and Muslims are the two main communities of the district whereas other communities like Sikhs, Budhists and Christians are in small numbers.

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Eruption of militancy in the Jammu region has seen several ups and downs. In early nineties when militancy engulfed Kashmir valley the six districts of Jammu region remained peaceful. The security experts could not explain this fact . But what further surprised them was when they did not expect militancy to gain ground in Jammu region it did. Varying reasons were given for this phenomenon . It was explained for instance by the argument that the militants were seeking refuge in Jammu region due to pressure on them by the security forces in the valley. Though in the early nineties Rajouri and Poonch areas provided the main infiltration routes for the Kashmiri speaking militants to sneak into Indian territory, it was difficult for them to carry out active operations there on account of lack of local support. This was in contrast to the times of wars between India and Pakistan. In 1947 or even 1965 it was in this belt where the Pakistan forces were able to capture several areas due to support from the people . The invaders and infiltrators respectively in 1947 and 1965 largely belonged to the same ethnic stock as that of people in these districts where as they were not able to get any response from Kashmiris. In fact people of the valley helped India in resisting the frontal attacks of the infiltrators. The same contradiction in the attitudes of both regions was equally true when the Kashmiri insurgency started in 1989 failed to inspire the Muslims of Rajouri and Poonch for a long time.

The first part of Jammu region where militancy was able to strike in early nineties was Doda district which can be considered as a "cultural bridge" between Jammu and

Kashmir . The events in Doda did shake the security apparatus as it had a large and mountainous terrain . The security grid could not immediately respond to the events in Doda .

The arc of militancy in the mid nineties also engulfed the hills of Udhampur in the areas of Gool, Gulabgarh and Mahore where the Muslim community lives in sizeable number . Strangely the border belt of Rajouri and Poonch both Muslims dominated districts and the hot beds of infiltration were touched by militancy as late as in 1995. It was after the 1996 J&K assembly elections that militancy took roots in the remote parts of Rajouri and Poonch. A section of Gujjars an ethnic group (who are cent percent Muslims in the state) also started wavering from their broad pro India line and joined the ranks of militancy. Later militancy also took root in the Muslim majority parts of the hilly tract of Kathua district.

The militancy in the state which in the early nineties was a Kashmiri revolt acquired a Muslim character when it hit specifically the Muslim parts of Jammu region. By 1995 militancy outgrew its Kashmiri character. In sharp contrast to Kashmir valley the militancy here was pioneered by pro Pak militants and Islamist groups like Harkat -ul - Ansar, Hizbul Mujahideen and Muslim Janbaaz groups. The character of militancy was distinctively different from the militancy in Kashmir. In Kashmir the first mass killing of Hindus i.e. Kashmiri Pandit community occurred at Wandhama as late as in January 1998 whereas the first mass communal killing was in Doda district of Jammu region in 1993. A religiously diverse society of Jammu region was bound to get disturbed with the Muslim character of militancy hitting it. The communal reaction added Muslim support for militants.

The militancy reached its climax in the region by the year 2001 when it struck at the heart of Jammu city. It hit the headlines of media with one sensational terrorist strike after another. The terrain and the diversity as discussed earlier in the report, give us an idea what the region constitutes. With the terrorists striking at will and with a larger design to provoke a religious conflict by targeting temples it has become impediment for the security planner to understand the Jammu region holistically.

Most of the attackers in all these sensational and brutal terrorists strikes belonged to non-Kashmiri stock of militants who had crossed from the approx.198 KM long International border on Jammu frontier.

Any study on militancy in the region has to examine the geographical, ethnic and cultural factors which were and are at the present equally responsible for its spread. Although it is difficult to give a definite process for the growth of militancy in the region, examination of the local and other factors may shed a light on it . For this there is a need to examine the local environment in which the militants operated in six districts of Jammu region.

GEO-ETHNIC VARIATIONS IN SIX DISTRICTS OF JAMMU AND ITS EFFECTS ON MILITANCY

Process :

The militancy which has engulfed the whole Jammu region by now did not start at once in all its six districts. Jammu which was the most populous region of the state before 1947, now comprises over 45 percent of its population and is double the area of Kashmir valley has been largely ignored by media. Now as the Jammu's security, identity and peace are being seriously threatened from the closely related and mutually complementary triple phenomena of militancy, communalism and criminalization, no effective counter insurgency policy can ignore Jammu factor.

Initiation of Militancy in Jammu region

DODA

Doda was the first district of Jammu region to catch the fire of militancy but only after it had gained ground in all the districts of Kashmir valley. In August 1991, a bomb exploded in the district head quarters which surprised many. The blast was not aimed at causing any damage but it was a symbolic show of their presence by the militants. The main insurgent groups which pioneered militancy in Doda were Muslim Jaanbaz and in the later years Hizbul Mujhaideen. Strikingly both groups stood for the state's accession with Pakistan. This was in sharp contrast to Kashmir where the militant movement was initiated by JKLF for independence of Kashmir representing Kashmiri nationalism.

As the internal communications in the district are still in its infancy, the people in one area had little idea of what was happening in the other. But broadly youth who joined the militants ranks from the district were from middle class homes. Among the youth who picked up the gun there was also a section which had studied in Jammu but returned to Doda.

Sociological Reasons for the rise of Militancy in Doda

Doda district is a melting pot of many cultures. In the district as many as 12 languages and dialects are spoken. But broadly speaking it is the confluence of Kashmiri and Dogra cultures. The dialect changes within the range of few kilometers. For instance while in the Doda town, Kashmiri is spoken in the surrounding area i.e. in its rural part, the dominant dialect is Siraji; which are different from each other.

The main linkage of the district with the Kashmiri militancy lies in the fact that approx. 40% of the population is of Kashmiri origin and speak Kashmiri or some of its dialects. Historical accounts show that many centuries ago people from Kashmir valley, more specifically from its Anantnag district migrated to Doda district on account of break out of a famine in the area. Some of them still maintain relations with the people on the other side of mighty Pir Panjal. This is true only about Muslims of Doda district of Jammu region. On account of cultural and religious affinity with Kashmir valley, the district has also been influenced by political currents in Kashmir. Abdul

Qayoom Zargar a social worker says, " The district was the only one in Jammu region where the Plebiscite movement led by Sheikh Abdullah from 1953 to 1975 had some following ." The events in Doda and its political aspirations remained unarticulated on account of its hilly tract which is away from the national and international gaze of the media .

Despite its cultural and religious affinities with Kashmir , Doda culture could not be submerged in the homogenous Kashmiri culture. As discussed earlier Doda is multi cultural society where besides Kashmiri other identities such as Dogra, Baderwahi, Kishtwari, Padri also exist. Further , the fact which makes it different from Kashmir valley is in the context of its minorities. In Kashmir valley minority population constituted five percent which had almost entirely migrated from the valley in early nineties. In Doda 42.2 percent of population are Hindus giving a totally different dimension to militancy .

The ideological diet of Kashmiriyat which sustained militancy in the valley could not hold true for a diverse district like Doda. In the later years the militants did exploit the communal polarisation which had meanwhile taken place in Doda society. Seizing the insecurity among the Muslims, militants managed to get some sympathy but the sustenance was also provided by the Hindu communal forces. Doda militancy had a twin character which had to depend by resorting to its Kashmiri as well as Muslim character. Both the factors gave new dimensions to the aims of militancy in the district which is substantiated by developments in the last one decade .

Social Picture during the attacks

Gaddis (Hindus herders) initially for various motives helped the local militants in the transportation of arms and ammunition. But the communal killings in the district created a feeling of distrust among the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) for each other and Gaddis emerged in the times to come as the main sources of information for the security forces. As mentioned earlier, the initial communal killings by the militants were mainly the act of the local militants. In the latter years as the foreign groups took over the command of the militants groups, the communal killings had a definite aim. The reason of the massacres of the Hindu community by the militants, according to observers was to communalize the social frame work of the Doda district. But besides the militants, several other factors did contribute it to further communalize the environment. Every massacre was justified by the militants as an act of revenge.. Security forces did act in a hap hazzard manner at times as a reprisal for the militants acts. For instance tensions ran high in Doda town after an Imam was allegedly tortured by Armed forces at Bhagwa area. Similarly number of times troops run amuck after they suffer a casualty. The latest was in the mid of the year 2002 when the forces burnt the entire village in Marmat area when their commander was killed in an IED blast forcing the people to migrate to Doda town. The security forces however denied the charge .

Militant groups in Doda

The first militant organization in the Doda district was Muslim Janbaaz group. The main person, who led the movement was Firdous Baba popularly known as Babar Badr. He later on forbade goodbye to armed struggle . According to him the first batch which attempted to cross the Line of Control was a group of five boys but they failed due to problem of logistics.

Firdous Baba was the first person from Doda to have gone across the Line of Control. In the Doda district most of the militants groups had their ideological leanings towards accession with Pakistan. Doda remains strongly linked with Jammu city. Some of the militants from the district lived in Jammu city but later on due to ideological leanings picked up the gun.

Conspicuous was the absence of the pro Azadi groups like Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in the district . The militancy was dominated by groups inclined more towards Pakistan. Most of the massacres in the Doda district were the handiwork of the cadre of pro Pak militant groups. At present the Lashkar-e-Toiba remains one of the strongest militant outfits in the district. The Intra-militant group gun battles are common to Doda district for gaining supremacy over one another . The two groups which have fought number of times in the past are Hizbul Mujahideen dominated by local cadre and Lashkar-e-Toiba mostly commanded by foreigners.

Active Militancy Operations

The exact year of mass recruitments of militants from the district can not be easily traced. The events in Kashmir valley were being closely watched by residents of Doda district. The factor of ethnic similarity of a large section of Doda's society was an important factor for this close linkage. Doda in the initial phase was more of a sanctuary for the militants as it provided a large terrain to hide . But as per the information and details given by the residents of the area, the first recruitment started in 1990 itself though on very low level mainly in towns of Doda and Baderwah . The district shares borders with Ladakh , Kashmir and also Himachal Pradesh .The communication equipment of the militants which is indispensable in a terrain like Doda started arriving in early 1990s . Firdous Baba former commander of the banned militants outfit Muslim Janbaaz says, " By 1993 on the basis of information shared by former militants about 50 youth had already received training from across the line of control in Azad Kashmir ." Even before the sensational massacres by the terrorists hit the district, indications of coming violence were discernable . There was a blast in Baderwah in 1990 which blew off a bridge. The ammunition used was from the local raw material which is employed in road building and not imported from outside. At the same time there was an attack on a Video Parlour in Doda town injuring one person . The main motive of the attack was cultural policing by the militants. There was also a bank robbery in the district. A French engineer Silva Antonia was abducted on 14th October 1991 in Kishtwar from Dul Hasti Hydro electric project by Pro Pak Al-Fateh militant outfit thus leading to temporary suspension of the project.

In December 1992 pro Pak Harkat -ul-Mujahideen attacked a Police post at Chhattroo in northern Doda district. On February 26, 1993 a Central Industrial Security force Camp at Shalimar in Kishtwar was the target of the militants. The first active local militant shot dead in Doda district was Nazir a resident of Doda town in 1993. Being a local, his funeral was attended by many people. His body was buried in a local graveyard. Militants started interfering in the social and economic set up of Doda. In 1994 the Tehrik-ul-Mujhaaiden increased its presence in Doda district and ordered that no timber be taken out of the district.

The official view treated militancy in Doda as an offshoot of militancy in the valley and was expected to die out automatically if it was crushed in the Kashmir valley .

The first militants strike which brought Doda to the national attention was in August 1993. On 13th August militants killed 17 Hindus at Sarthal area of Kishtwar . The way Hindus were segregated on communal lines in the village and Hindus were killed simply because they were Hindus had till then no precedence in the militancy in Kashmir valley. The event, as expected, had its repercussion on the social fabric of Doda district. The incident shocked the nation as the entire character of militancy had changed. In political terminology it was a transition from militant to terrorist movement in the state and from Kashmiri nationalism to Islamist ideology.

In the security circles the attack was considered to be the handiwork of Haji a commander of Harkat-ul-Ansar, a group standing for state's accession with Pakistan. The massacre did not go unnoticed in Doda's religiously diverse society. It provoked migration of Hindus to the neighboring parts of Chamba of Himachal Pradesh. The communal fall out was the natural consequence of militant activity which had targeted minority community . The communal profile of the Doda district is very complex . It is a Muslim majority district but within it, there are Hindu dominated tehsils. Therefore any perceived injustice to the member of one community does provoke backlash in the other community . In a way, the communal killings as stated by the locals created " sense of insecurity" among minorities both Muslims and Hindus in their respective areas. The attack on the bus passengers was a watershed for militancy in the state and also for the security strategy which had to move away from Kashmir fixation.

The first mass killings of Hindus by militants according to counter insurgents was on a local initiative and not as per the directions of the commanders across the Line of Control. Haji the main conspirator behind the killings of the bus passengers was a local and was educated in Jammu city. The attack was mainly out of a desire to sensationalize the movement and as per the disclosures of the former militants, even they did not have any idea about the consequences of the inhuman act. Haji later went to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir for training and there after did not operate in Doda. Finally he was killed in an operation in Kashmir.

At the time when militancy started in Doda, the state was under Governor's rule which had created political vacuum in the district. In the civilian administration at that time most of the upper echelons belonged to other parts of the state and therefore had little

understanding of the situation . In the insecure milieu dependance of Hindus on security forces increased and Muslims in turn started depending upon militants. In the same period, the Hindu leaders demanded that Doda should be declared as disturbed area and handed over to the army. But this demand was only made by Hindus while the Muslims were apprehensive about it. A vicious circle of communalism and militancy started feeding each other. Another event which was again a watershed in the political landscape of Doda was the killing of district President of BJP Santosh Thakur in the year 1993. The first political killing in the district further widened the communal gulf and the situation turned for the worse. It was then that a national Party like BJP also joined in the demand for declaring Doda as disturbed area and for handing it over to the army. But the Muslims of the district got isolated from the country as no political party in the country intervened for secularising the environment. An attempt, however, was made by the Gandhian team led by Nirmala Deshpande whose team worked there for one month. The locals say that this was the first time they felt that they had some one with whom they could air their grievances. But the peace was short lived as one massacre after another hit the heights of Doda district. On 5th January 1996, 16 Hindu villagers at Barshalla were killed.

The 1998 will go down as year of bloody massacres in the district. The blood trail started with the killing of twenty five members of a wedding procession at Champnari near Doda town on June 19,1998. The Home Minister L.K.Advani visited the spot and promised additional troops in the district. The Minister had then stated that the ruler who could not protect his subjects did not have the right to rule . Later on 28th July , 16 Hindus villagers were murdered in Kishtwar villages of Thakrain-Hor and Sarwan.On August 8 , 34 road construction workers were shot dead in Kalaban area of Chamba district in Himachal adjoining the borders of Doda district . It demonstrated the dangerous dimension militancy had acquired in the region from which it is still to recover. A year after on 19th July 1999 15 Hindus were massacred in Layata area . The next year on 2nd August 2000, 11 Hindus were massacred in Doda district. The year 2001 was remarkably similar to that of 1998. Eight Hindus were massacred in Atholi area of Kishtwar tehsil on 10th May 2001. Twenty Hindus were killed by militants in two separate massacres of Kishtwar area on 22nd July 2001. On 5th August 2001 militants killed 15 persons all Hindus in remote Sharote Dhar area of Doda. After series of massacres on 8th August 2001 Jammu, Doda, Udhampur and Kathua were declared as disturbed and brought under Armed Forces(J&K) special powers act ,1990. With this, entire state barring Ladakh region came under the special act to give armed forces a free hand to tackle militancy as two remaining districts of Jammu viz Rajouri and Poonch and the entire Kashmir valley were already covered by it.

Role of VDC and its affects on Society

The Village Defense Committee is a mechanism devised to safeguard the locals. In this, locals are provided arms and rudimentary training to thwart any militant attack. VDC comprises of four or more members who are recruited as Special Police Personnel with a monthly stipend of Rs.1500. Usually the VDCs members are provided with 7.62 mm bolt action rifles.

The main reason for the formation of the VDC in Doda district was because of the acceptance of the reality in the security circles that providing security to each and every part of the huge hilly terrain of Jammu region was an impossible task particularly in sprawling Doda district. Protecting minorities was the immediate challenge before the authorities. Mass recruitment of Hindus in VDCs was thus started in Doda.

Arming the Hindus had its own implications as it created a sense of insecurity among the Muslim community. As mentioned earlier Doda district is communally sensitive. Though Muslims have an edge over Hindus in demographic terms, the difference is marginal. In the remote areas, the arming of VDC personnel and lack of discipline among its ranks did create a sense of insecurity among the Muslims. And this fear was exploited by the militants who sought to portray themselves as the defender of the Muslim Community. This can be understood from the fact that in many of the massacres in the district militants justified them on the pretext of the alleged wrong doings of the VDCs.

The first targeted attack on VDC was when militants mowed 15 members of three families at Layata a 10 Kilometre walk from Thatri on the Doda-Kishtwar highway. The group was targeted for its participation and support of the village Defense Committee Programme. The killings would have been more but for the bravado shown by six residents including three Children Amrik Singh, Bhushan Kumar and Ramesh Kumar. The six residents took the gun into their hands and kept the militants engaged the whole night till the security forces arrived on the scene.

POONCH

Initiation of Militancy in border district of Poonch

Militancy reached Poonch district much later than all the districts of Kashmir and Doda district of Jammu; though it was not only one of the main entry points of infiltration from across the Line of Control to the state but its hilly terrain was also far more suitable to them than the plains of the valley.

Going by the incidents reported and also the view supported by the people of the district, the militancy failed to take roots here till as late as 1996. Before 1996 the involvement in the militancy was to the extent that the locals acted as guides for the militants sneaking into the Indian territory and showing them the routes to Kashmir valley or Doda district. The Infiltration was going on day to day basis though violent incidents in the interiors were not uncommon at times. Historical importance of the district lies in the fact that it falls on the famous Mughal road which was the traditional link of Kashmir valley with the rest of the country. More than half of the pre 47 Poonch district is at present part of Azad Kashmir held by Pakistan. Poonch had the status of a Jagir within the state before 1946 when the Maharaja Hari Singh finally made it a part of Jammu province.

The much talked about problem of divided families divided by LoC is most relevant to this part of the state as Kashmir valley as an ethnic entity was not divided in 1947. Here villages were divided, families were divided, father was separated from his son, brother from his brother and so on. Any war between the two countries has greatest impact on this district of the state. The Kashmiri revolt had failed to inspire the people of this district which has its own distinct culture. The ethnic barrier between Poonch and Kashmir is more formidable than the geographical barrier of 11,000 feet high Pir Panchal. The recruitment for the militant groups in this district started when the so called foreign militants arrived on this side, who were non-Kashmiri speaking.

The foreign militants is a misnomer when we study its ethnic profile. Most of the militants in this category belong to Azad Kashmir who belong to the same ethnic stock as that of Poonch. A foreign militant who is in an alien in the valley owing to its different ethnic background may be at home while he is in this border district. The first Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Ibrahim Khan belonged to this part of the state.

Migration across the LoC

As on both sides of LoC, people of the same ethnic stock live, right from 1949 certain amount of trans-border migration has been a common facet of life. The frequency of migrations picked up during the time of disturbances. Most of the migrations take place because the people of the same ethnic stock living on both sides of artificial divide who share same culture, perceived better economic opportunities on the other side. Mendhar is one sector in Poonch district where the migrations across the Line of Control are most rampant. During the months of April to July 1991 there was sudden spurt in migrations particularly in Panjani area where over 400 men, women and children went across to POK. The incidents of exfiltration usually witness an increase during the border tension. In the border tension, witnessed in the post December 13, 2001 period, the migration across the LoC again witnessed an increase. Among the people who migrate across the LoC, Muslim Rajputs are the predominant. This community is the main power center in Azad Kashmir. During 1991, the year in which elections were held in Azad Kashmir, it is said, many supporters of Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan, the candidate for President ship, crossed the LoC to campaign for him. The illegal crossing over of population assumes importance as at times they become guides for the militants and provide them vital information about the routes to follow where the vigil of the forces is comparatively less.

Specifics of Militancy in Poonch district

The two assembly segments of the district i.e. Mendhar and Poonch Haveli fall right on the borders. The present hot bed of militancy Surankote forms an arc behind these two segments. But this is the area which even in defense circles is known as "liberated" zone.

Surankote a "liberated" zone

The much talked about militancy in Poonch district evolves around the Surankote assembly segment. In terms of area it is the largest assembly segment where the population is scattered. It touches Kashmir valley on one side and is on what is called "highway of militancy" which stretches from North West of Jammu region to North east district of Doda along southern side of the Pir Panchal. The geographical divide of a river marks difference of intensity of militancy. The hilly belt beyond Suran river is considered a security planner's nightmare. Beyond the Suran river the hilly and forest belt starts. Mustaq Bukhari MLA Surankote says, "it is the militants who dominate the show as guarding this huge and sparsely populated areas is next to impossible." Post Operation Sarp Vinash the security forces claim to have established dominance in several pockets of the area.

Ethnic Details

In order to understand the local characteristics of militancy in Poonch, we must have an idea about the demographic environment in which the militants operate. The district, as stated before, falls on the Mughal road and as such, many people belonging to different areas made it their home since historical times. It is a Muslim dominated district but here the religious homogeneity is broken by ethnic diversity. It will not be wrong to say that it is the ethnic diversity of the district which has shaped its post independence history which also left its impact on the character of militancy. The communities which dominate the area include ----Rajputs Muslims, Gujjars, Syeds, Mughals and also pockets of Kashmiri speaking population. In reaction to the assertion of Gujjars, Paharis as a common umbrella identity of non-Gujjars emerged. The nomadic lifestyle is what gives Gujjars a distinguishable identity. The term Pahari in the context of the state has been misunderstood in many respects. Usually Paharis are wrongly termed as the people who live on mountains. On the contrary it is a linguistic identity. But this point should also not be missed that in Pahari linguistic umbrella there are people who speak other languages and also there will be minor differences in between the dialects they speak. Talking specifically about Poonch district except Gujjars who speak Gojri others speak Poonchi dialect of Pahari. Microscopic Kashmiri speaking populace is also living here in the places like Poshana, Mandi and Loran villages but now have been indigenized and are equally conversant in Poonchi.

Two dominant identities Pahari and Gujjar have asserted themselves in the political battlefield. In the elections in the recent past the polarization was demonstrated in a glaring manner, thereby implying Gujjars community voted for its candidate and Pahari vote for its own irrespective of their party affiliations. But Obviously this is a simplified view and there can be exceptions to this rule. The Hindu population most of whom migrated during the communal riots from Azad Kashmir resides in Poonch town, which is thus Hindu majority island in the district.

Delayed Response to Militancy in Poonch

The fierce encounters on the Line of Control at the Poonch sector was a common feature of early 1990's with the increasing infiltration of Kashmiri speaking militants.

Even in the interiors forces were able to track down militants on mid way while they were on their way back to the valley . For instance in one such major operation on 17th July 1990, 33 militants were gunned down who had crossed Sauji area of Mandi in Poonch district. All these militants were Kashmiri speaking and belonged to Pulwama and Anantnag districts of the valley. Militancy started taking roots in Poonch since 1996 when the militants hit the security personnel. At that time the security planners described this trend as an attempt by the militants to make sure that road to Kashmir valley and Doda remained safe for them. Eventually Poonch district became an active zone where the militants started carrying out normal operations like they did in valley. The clear purpose was to recruit locals in their ranks, which they could not do till 1996. The delayed response to militancy in Poonch was on account of various factors. As discussed earlier the ethnic gap between Kashmir and Poonch is enormous. Even in the past, the two parts of the state though sharing religious affinity have responded differently to the historic events. In 1947 it was in erstwhile Poonch Jagir that the first revolt in the state took place in Bagh tehsil against India which synchronized with tribal attack on Kashmir sponsored by Pakistan though resisted by people of Kashmir valley. Similarly in 1965 war, the infiltrators got sufficient amount of support from the locals in Poonch district and they were able to win a large tract of land . Even local commanders had been appointed who had declared themselves independent from Indian rule . This was in sharp contrast to Kashmir where the infiltrators received no such response both in 1947 and 1965 Indo-Pak war.

In the present era militancy became common to both parts only in the mid nineties narrating an incident during his administrative posting in the district Chief Secretary S.S.Bloeria of Dogra origin recalls that once a Gujjar came to his office for help. He in turn directed the Gujjar to see his co-religionist bureaucrat in charge of the area . The Gujjar categorically stated that as the area officer was a Kashmiri he will not understand his problem but " as you are closer to us, you will do justice with us."

Alienation

The reasons for the response to militancy in the district are multi fold. Poonch before partition was well connected to prosperous cities of undivided Punjab like Rawalpindi and Lahore. But after 1947, it was isolated due to creation of new boundaries . The movement on one side was blocked by the security forces on the Line of Control. Administratively and economically the district suffered as it was far from the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar. Employment opportunities in the district thereby remained bare minimum . Rafiq Khan of Mendhar says, "Much of the share of the enormous Central Government funds was galloped by other districts of the state." The internal connectivity within the district was also not well developed after partition . Unlike the plain and accessible Kashmir valley the remote hamlets of Poonch till the present day have not been brought on the road network. In the matter of necessities like electricity the district was on low priority.

Political factors

Political factors for the start of militancy in the district are also worth examining. Poonchi pride had always been a cementing factor between Hindus and Muslims of the area and had satisfied the political aspirations of the people of the district. In the pre and immediate post independent era, Ghulam Qadir Bandey popularly known as Shere-e-Poonch captured the limelight and symbolized the legacy of secular Poonchi identity. But after his death the district was pushed into a political vacuum with none of the political set ups in the state wished and neither had the vision to fill it up. The space was created for the communal politics which was in turn exploited by the militants who came from across the Line of Control. The militants from across the Line of Control came with the fanatic religious and Jehadi mindset. This was in contrast to earlier phase of militancy which was distinctively Kashmiri in character. Further the fact that the militants coming from across the Line of Control belonged to broadly Pathwari speaking communities, which extends upto Islamabad the capital of Pakistan struck a chord with the same ethnic stock on this side of LoC. The militants who came from across the Line of Control, the so called foreigners got shelters and in the latter stages active support of a section of the local Muslim populace of the district. Once a section of the locals got emotionally involved with the changing phase of militancy which had religion as well as ethnic appeal it did not take long for Poonch to become hot bed of militancy. Besides these factors there was added factor of martial character of the people living in this district. During Dogra rule, Poonch provided one of the highest recruitments from all the districts of the state. Most importantly the district's contribution to the British army was the largest in terms of proportion of population to any other part of the British India. It did not take the martial communities of Poonch long time to take part in the armed movement. Muslim Rajputs were attracted to the other side of line of Control by the fact that political power and major benefits across have been almost exclusively cornered by the Rajputs, a fact exercising a strong psychological pull on Muslim Rajputs this side. Despite professing the same religion, the two communities viz Rajputs and the Gujjars have a number of distinct features. Traditionally the power centres had been controlled by Muslim Rajputs in this area. Their relations with the Gujjars have remained far from cordial, with one treating itself to be an offshoot of the ruling elite and looking down the people as essentially pastoral i.e. nomadic. The antagonism between them and Gujjars further widened as the latter were given the Scheduled Tribes status by the Government of India in 1991. Similarly Gujjars too in the year 1997 became alienated when they were denied the political representation in the state cabinet during Farooq regime. Out of three Muslim majority constituencies of Poonch, there was not even one Gujjar MLA. All three Muslim ministers in the state cabinet, from Poonch and the adjoining district of Rajouri were Paharis and not a single Gujjar. The community was represented in the state ministry for many years by a minister of state elected from Kashmir region whereas earlier its representation used to be larger with atleast one cabinet minister from the district. This alienated them and the loyalty of the Gujjar community could no longer be taken for granted.

Inter Militant rivalries and its reasons

The recruitment from the district in the militants ranks may have been universal owing to the same religion but the ethnic differences no doubt left its imprint on the consequences. The point will be illustrated in the following example.

The first militancy related incident which had shaken the entire state as well as the country was the killing of 20 family members in Sailan area near Surankote . On 3rd August 1998 militants killed a Gujjar, Zakir Hussain who was an active militant and received training from across the border. The reason for his killing was that he had allegedly turned an informer of the security forces. The killing led and directed by Imtiaz a Pahari militant whose family fearing a reprisal took refuge in the house of Mohd.Shabir Sheikh . On the basis of an eyewitness account in the intervening night of 3rd and 4th August, a group of Gujjar militants swooped at the house of Mohd.Shabir Sheikh. Each member of the family was asked to line up and first the parents of Imtiaz were shot dead. In order to make sure that no foot print is left of those who carried out the massacre every one present was killed which included six children. A pregnant woman was also killed. The brutality can be imagined from the fact that even after killing the parents of Imtiaz , their bodies were cut into pieces. The lone survivor of the massacre is Mohd.Shabir Sheikh a teenager then. He was saved as he had gone to a distance for urinating when unidentified personnel knocked at his house. He saw the whole incident in front of his eyes behind the bushes when his entire family was wiped out. According to Shabir he identified the men and told the Defence Minister George Fernandes and then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah when they came to visit the site. Mohd.Shabir alleges that he has been number of times attacked by the culprits as they feared that his survival will always remains a looming threat to them. Sheikh had to leave his village and migrate to Poonch town. Just two years after the massacre of his family he went to his house. He was then approached by the militants to join their ranks and take revenge from the Gujjar who were responsible for his tragedy. Till now Sheikh has refused their offer.

In another case of local rivalry at Morha Bachhi(again in Surankote segment) in the month of August 1999 , 15 Muslim belonging to three Pahari family members were killed. Those killed included five woman and seven children, with two families completely wiped out. The dispute was rivalry between Gujjars and Paharis .The above examples clearly illustrate the nefarious role of the gun in the environment of ethnic polarity . At the local level gun becomes a tool to settle various differences between ethnic groups . Joining militant ranks gives member of an ethnic group power to dominate the other. For instance , when Chowdhary Ghani member of Gujjar community and also a Congress block level leader was killed by a group of Pahari militants, in reaction to this Gujjars recruited into militants ranks in large numbers to take revenge.

Contradictions of militants with Local Culture

Many contradictions came to the fore between the militants and the local culture. The militants tried to capture the ground with the single appeal of religion with no respect and understanding of the local culture of the region which was no less pronounced. A Jehadi

militant whose sole aim was to fight in the name of religion had least respect for the local culture thus provoking the harsh reaction against them. For example on 29th July 1998 in the Hari Marote a foreign militant polished his shoes with a cloth tied on a Ziarat (burial place of a saint) which is revered by the local people. This instantly provoked a reaction among them who took out protest demonstrations against militants. Similar incident happened at a Ziarat called Jammu Shaheed. Here the foreign militants protested against the serving of food at a ceremony of Urs and termed it as Un-Islamic. Locals resented and there was largely unreported backlash from them against the militants. But the militants tried to suppress the contradictions by resorting to sensational communal killings claiming to be the defender of the Muslim community. On 1st July 1999 nine Hindu villagers at Mendhar in Poonch district were killed. The reason had a local dimension. The marriage of Muslim female Faheen Kauser with a Hindu boy Shankar Lal was one possible reason for these killings according to the locals. The Muslim community alleged that the girl had been kidnapped. In the absence of political and social institutions, common to both communities which could have amicably resolved the misunderstanding. The militants intervened in their own way and mowed down nine Hindu villagers. The militants tried to keep the contradictions between their ideology and local culture under the carpet by increasingly resorting to communalizing the situation. In one of sensationalist communal strikes, militants beheaded two Hindu priests after kidnapping them from a temple near Dhundhak bridge on Surankote-Poonch road on 28th August 2001. As tension gripped the area, the authorities imposed an indefinite curfew in Poonch and Surankote to guard against possible outbreak of communal violence. The political and administrative vacuum failed to take advantage of the contradictions between the militants and the local culture. The atrocities of the security forces here and there also kept the contradictions between local culture and Jehadi militant at bay.

RAJOURI

The present day Rajouri district comprises some areas of Mirpur district presently in "Azad Kashmir" and some area of the erstwhile Reasi district. It was severely affected by the events of 1947. A part of the district on the south was bifurcated between India and Pakistan. The district witnessed mass scale migrations from one part to the another. While Hindus and Sikhs migrated from neighboring districts like Mirpur, Poonch, Bhimber, Kotli (now in Azad Kashmir) and settled down in different parts of Rajouri, many Muslims families migrated to the other side.

After the partition Rajouri became part of Poonch district; out of which a new district called Rajouri was carved in late 1960's. The district is hilly and comprised four assembly segments. All the segments namely Nowshera, Kalakote, Rajouri and Darhal have their own distinguished characteristics in terms of geographical, community and ethnic features. Administratively, the district has six tehsils, seven blocks, 158 Panchyats and four small towns of Rajouri, Nowshera, Sunderbani and Thanamandi. About 94.85 populations of the district lives in villages. Most of the areas of the present Rajouri district were taken over by Pak regulars or raiders in 1947 and was re-captured by Indian army after Maharaja signed instrument of accession.

Strategic Location of Rajouri

The district falls on the famous Mughal road and was therefore of immense strategic value. Mughal emperor Jehangir had died in this district on his return journey from Kashmir. Now also it is the main supply line for forward Poonch district. In the first Indo-Pak war in 1947-48 the district was the scene of action as one of the most fierce battles between the two countries was fought here. The district remained under the occupation of raiders for around six months before Indian forces could successfully push back them. The famous battle of Jhangar was fought in Nowshera tehsil where Brigadier Usman lost his life. Nowshera was earlier part of the Mirpur district presently in "Azad Kashmir". The route to Mirpur was via Nowshera. Now also a signboard can be seen in this sector which shows the route to Mirpur.

According to army officers of the sector, the infiltration at Nowshera is comparatively less than the other sectors in the district. The reason they cite is that the area is mostly inhabited by the Hindus and the infiltrators feel insecure in passing through it. But on the military side the sector remains one of the most alive sectors on the Line of Control as shelling is rampant in this sector all through the year; particularly in the areas like Laroka, Lam and Jhangar. A large area in this belt has been mined. Every now and then when ever there is tension at the borders, the migrations across the Line of Control start. For the militants, Rajouri district as a whole holds lot of importance. As discussed earlier the district shares border with three districts namely Poonch, Udhampur and Jammu. For the militants Dharhal-Budhal-Mahore stretch is the 'highway' for their journey to Doda district and Udhampur hills. When the militancy started in the district, the Hindu community in the heights became the main target as they were suspected to be informers of the security forces. After the massacre of many of them, Hindus had to migrate in large numbers and take refuge in Rajouri town or in other parts of Jammu region where they could feel secure. The Village Defense Committee mechanism which was first started in Doda was also replicated in Rajouri district. Most of the VDCs were concentrated in Budhal tehsil. The tehsil is hilly and provides safe routes for the militants to further venture into other district for their operations. Most of the area in this tehsil is far away from the nearest motarable road and in many cases it took the forces almost a day to reach the spot where militants had committed massacres. Keeping this in view giving weapons to the vulnerable community became the only solution to provide security to the people. But only some months after its constitution, the families of VDC personnel were specifically targeted. VDCs 303 rifles were no match to the sophisticated weapons of the militants and in most cases the casualty on the side of the former was far greater.

Providing security to each and every part of huge Budhal tehsil is an arduous job. Following the border deployment that took place after 13\12 attack on Parliament, the security cover in the interior was reduced. Most affected by shift of the army from the interior to the border was Budhal tehsil where militants got a freer hand as stated by the then 16 Corps commander of the army, which is responsible for the entire counter insurgency operations in the Jammu Province.

Differences from Poonch district

Rajouri district does share a lot of similarities with Poonch but it is lot more heterogeneous patch in terms of religion and ethnic profile . Bimber Gali pass is a natural geographical barrier between Rajouri and Poonch districts . Unlike Poonch which is Muslim majority , in Rajouri Hindus inhabit the district in large numbers and the gap between the two communities is much less. In percentage terms Muslims are 58.28 percent of the total population. Community wise Rajouri could be conveniently divided in north-western and south-eastern halves. In the southeast Suderbani , Kalakot and Nowshera tehsils are overwhelmingly Hindu populated where as the northwestern tehsils of Rajouri, Thanamandi and Kotranka are predominantly Muslim with fair representation of Hindus in few villages . In Rajouri town Hindus are in a majority in nine out of ten wards. Ward number ten is almost exclusively inhabited by Muslims. In sum, Rajouri is a district where the distribution of Muslims and Hindus is very complex. In one part one community may be majority but there may be various sub parts where the members of the other community are in a majority.

Within the two communities there are caste divisions which some times submerge even the religious differences. Out of the four assembly segments , two segments namely Kalakote and Dharhal are located in the interior areas. Kalakote is mainly a Hindu majority area but has high concentration of Gujjars a nomadic community . Similarly Nowshera which falls on the Line of Control is a Hindu majority segment but has high concentration of Gujjars.

In the interiors Dharhal is a Muslim Dominated segment . But here the caste divide between the Gujjars and Paharis is sharp . This can be substantiated by the fact that in the 2002 Assembly elections in this over 90 percent Muslim dominated segment , a little known Hindu Pahari candidate Thakur Puran Singh trounced a Muslim Gujjar candidate of politically important family . Thus caste and religious differences cut across each other. The population ratio is different in each tehsil .

Militancy in the district

The heterogeneity existing in Rajouri gives militancy somewhat different character from Poonch district, though sharing several similarities . The epicenter of militancy in the district are in the interior tehsils like Dharhal , Budhal , Thanna Mandi and outer parts of Rajouri town . Some time the militants do make their presence felt in the Hindu majority areas like Kalakote and Nowshera. In the first two years of militancy in the district, the militants were interested in using the hilly terrain of the district especially the tehsil Budhal to reach the hills of Udampur i.e. Mahore -Gool , further upto Doda district and using the passes in the area to enter into the Kashmir valley. The interiors of Rajouri district particularly the Thanna Mandi -Budhal tract are mainly hilly and heavily forested. It gives the militants safe passage. It was in this tract that the militants started coming into encounter with the forces when the latter in a well planned manner tried to bloc the routes of the militants in the late 1990s.

In the initial period, there were direct encounters between the militants and security forces. For instance in the month of September 1997, the militants directly engaged the army positions around Thanna Mandi by occupying the heights of Ratan Pir and fired Mortars . It took the army full one week to clear the area and in the resulting encounters over a score of militants were killed whereas the army also lost one Major, One JCO and a Jawan. The attack was so intense that the eyewitness of the incidents recall that 50 militants were active in four villages.

But soon the militants started attacking newly constituted VDCs in the isolated hilly areas of the district.

In an inhuman act, the militants struck in a big way in Swari village of Budhal tehsil of Rajouri on 24th September 1997 killing eight Hindus and wounding four others. This was one of the first major strike in the hilly belt against Hindus. In the latter year the pattern of militancy further changed with the militants attacking Hindu population in the remote hills on the suspicion of their being involved with VDCs. On February 19, 1998 the day Prime Minister Vajpayee started his Lahore Bus Yatra militants killed 20 Hindus villagers in Bal Jaralan, Khorbani and Bharyana villages in Rajouri and neighboring Udhampur district. Six Hindus were killed in Kot Dhara area of Rajouri on 19th August 2000 which increased insecurity among the Hindus in the scattered hills.

Militant became even more brutal with women and Children being their direct victims. Some times the militants targeted families for their involvement with VDCs. For instance five minors and two women were among eight persons killed in Dharamsal area of Kalakote assembly segment on 18th Febuary 2002. Militants also made their way in the largely Hindu majority areas of the district. Four Hindus were massacred in Nowshera in Kanara Chowkian village on 31st August 2001.

Finally even Muslim Community was also not spared. In a gruesome incident in the district, fifteen persons of three families of Village Defense Committee members including three women and seven children were roasted alive when militants after locking all of them inside their houses set them ablaze at village Morasalahi of Kot Charwal , 40 KMs from Budhal area of district Rajouri on February 10th , 2001. All the persons killed were Gujjar Muslims and killed on a mere suspicion of being informers of security forces. There were also attacks on the political leaders and on their relatives. On 18th August 1998 , two relatives of the former Speaker of J&K Assembly Mirza Abdul Rashid were killed in Dandhoke near Darhal. In between , J&K Police also was the target of the militants. In one of the devastating attack , 17 persons including thirteen police personnel, two medical assistants and two civilians were killed in Kyoli jungles of Manjakote on March 2 , 2001. Strong punishment for the informers is not only limited for men but also for the women. On the night of 2nd September 1999 militants slaughtered a young girl in Gujjar Mandi area of Rajouri district on the charge for her links with the security forces. Militants(belonging to Al-Badr militant outfit) killed three Muslim girls in Hasyote village on a mere suspicion that they provided information to the forces on 19th December 2002 . After massive resentment by people

including Muslims another group of the militants Jaish-e-Mohammad apologized for the killings.

Effect of Militancy on Society

Rajouri district being religiously a heterogeneous society and affected by militancy could not remain untouched by the communal virus. In the last one decade, the communal tension erupted in the district occasionally. In the Rajouri town the tension has been more pronounced. This can be substantiated by the fact that a clear divide exists in localities in the Rajouri town as both communities have been ghettoized in their separate zones. Also several incidents of communal tension have been reported in the town in the last one decade some times even over trivial issues., Even the students and educational institutions have also been touched by the communal virus. For instance on 17th September 2000 , curfew had to be clamped down in the town following a clash between Hindu and Muslim students in the Government Degree College over a trivial issue. In the playground of the Rajouri college , a Hindu boy had kicked a volley ball which was being played by Muslim boys. A quarrel erupted with both Hindu and Muslim students started physically assaulting each other . The events acquired a political over tone. One of the reasons that the communal tension mostly remained limited to the Rajouri town is of the fact that the society settled there has not got deep here . Most of the population settled in Rajouri town has come from outside during partition or migrations from the forwards areas during 1965 and 71 war. Unlike Poonch district where both Muslims and Hindus are proud of their common Poonchi identity , the same kind of synthesis between the Muslims and Hindus does not exist . The members of two communities live in separate localities .

Rajouri is a Hindu majority town surrounded by over whelming Muslim majority. The response to every militancy related incident gets polarized on the basis of religion. For instance, there will be instant shutdown in Rajouri Bazaar after Hindu killings by the militants in a remote village of the district and in the same vein after every alleged killing of Muslim innocents by the forces there is protest by the Muslims of the area.

Militancy also had an affect on some social customs and traditions . For instance in the month of December 2002 for the first time a veil campaign started which was uptill now unknown to the women of the district . The campaign had a local dimension with the orthodox section asking the Muslim girls to wear the veil. A local incident in Thanna Mandi tehsil where the dancing of boys and girls of a college during picnic proved to be a provocation for the veil campaign. Immediately the religious heads of the Muslims community of the area stepped in and asked the girls to wear veil. There after the militants stepped in to take advantage and asked the society to comply. Militants writ had an impact and for the first time in the history of the district, veil became a norm in the society, though the campaign fizzled out after some time. But in the short time when the veil was at its peak, the Hindus settled in the district got frightened as it perceived it to be stereotype of Muslim fundamentalism. As more and more women of the district complied with the veil campaign , the Hindus became alarmed and it was basically based on this fear and the reactions of Hindus that the media characterized it as

Talibanization. This summarization in turn reinforced the fear of the local Hindus. The migration of Hindus from the remote villages started after the Swari massacre in the month of September 1997 in which eight people were killed. Villagers migrated to safer places from Mangota, Upper Mangota, Kalal, Uppar Kalal, Baljarala, Dalouri areas of Rajouri and also certain villages in Thanna Mandi tehsil. Families took refuge in Rajouri town or came to Jammu city. In Jammu city most of them camped at Belicharanna situated in its outskirts. These villagers are still to return to their villages. Besides, many families were staying either in the houses of their relatives or in rented accommodation in the town. Migration in certain pockets was the fall out of militancy. However despite heavy odds some people continued to live in isolated areas and stuck to their ground. Alleged excesses by the security forces in the area further increased the alienation of Muslim population of the area. In number of cases alleged killings of the innocents took place whereas the army claimed that the killing was the result of cross firing between militants and forces.

JAMMU

Jammu district is by far the most important district of the province. It is the most populous district of the state and is its winter capital for six months. As the district is a plain area, the road net work in the district is most advanced and is connected with all other districts of the state.

Apart from being headquarter of the departments of the state government during darbar move, Jammu city is also the headquarter of regional offices. The city is the main scene of political activity in the Jammu region and the mood prevailing here is in many ways is representative of rest of the district. This is also because of the fact that city and the rest of the district are culturally much less diverse than other districts of the region. The district is over whelmingly a Hindu majority area with Hindus constituting 91% and Muslims only 4% of its population(census 1981). The rest are Sikhs and Christians.

Most of the Muslim population of the city is concentrated in the peripheral areas and comprise 4.27 percent of the total population. Most of the Muslim in rural areas belong to the Gujjar community (cent percent Muslims in the state) and are the main providers of milk products to the city. Though Dogri is the predominant mother tongue of the people, its close linguistic cousins Punjabi and Gojri are also spoken languages in the district.

To understand the present reaction to militancy it is important study the past. The past events which are responsible for shaping the present reaction to militancy need a mention. Before the partition Muslims constituted more than half of the Hindu population in the district. As per the 1941 census, the population of Muslims was 1,70,789 where as the Hindu population was 2,48,173 persons. The district, particularly the city was one of the worst affected parts of the country by communal carnage in which several Muslims were killed by Hindu mobs in the most brutal way and large scale migration of Muslims took place to neighboring parts located in western Punjab in

Pakistan . A large number of localities such as Ustad Mohalla , Afghan Mohala, Jullahka Mohalla , Peer Mitha, Lakhdata and Rajinder Bazaar were largely Muslim dominated . But the city was in no way communally polarized as both Muslims and Hindus lived in large numbers in the same localities. The two communities shared number of common aspects of life. In the sphere of devotion , the Pirs and Sufis were common to both . Even now the city has a lot of Ziarats of Muslim saints to which Hindus and Muslims show equal devotion.

The outflow of Muslims from the district during partition and at the same time in flow of a large number of Hindus and Sikhs from "Azad Kashmir" cast its shadow on its reactions to the various events in the state. The whole social and cultural composition was greatly altered as population running into Lakhs from the various parts of Azad Kashmir namely Mirpur, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Bhimber, Poonch and also parts of neighboring Sialkot district settled down in the district . The agony and the circumstances in which they left their homes has to an extent influenced the reactions of the people and their younger generations to the present events.

Jammu district's involvement with militancy has been both direct and indirect. The indirect involvement with militancy has been immense mainly due to the fact that the inflow and outflow of information from rest of the districts here is fast. It is in the city which has reacted with surcharged emotions towards various militancy incidents all over the state. Since the militancy erupted in the valley in late 1989, its reaction has varied depending on with the factor of time, event, area, community affected by militancy . The reaction has also been affected by the fact that most of the displaced population due to militancy in the state have settled in and around Jammu city. In the initial stages, the city was host to the Kashmiri Pandit community which migrated from the valley . The emotions of the city ran higher when there were massacres of Hindus in other parts of the region; due to the close cultural linkages with rest of the districts particularly with the parts like Rajouri, Poonch and Doda.

Direct Involvement with militancy

It was the direct involvement with militancy which made its population insecure and lead to surcharged reactions , some times angry and violent demonstrations against the government . But it never turned into anti-Muslim riots . The very fact that the militants targeted the city with the sole purpose to kill innocent Hindus marked a clear change in the character of militancy since it started in the valley. The tactics of the militants in the district are apparently clear to kill as many as possible to provoke communal trouble and hit the headlines. Initially they carried out blasts in crowded places and in the later stages sensational suicide attacks. The attacks in the city provided more publicity as compared with any other part of the state.

Jammu's involvement with militancy can be traced to the time even before Kashmiri militancy. In 1980's when Punjab was in turmoil Jammu district was directly affected by militancy. Number of Sikh youths from the district did join the Sikh militant ranks . For instance the militant Ranjit Singh alias Neeta whose name figures in the top

twenty list of the terrorists and criminals submitted by the Indian government to Pakistan authorities for their repatriation hails from the Simbal camp of Jammu district . The Sikh militant organizations like Khalistan Zindabad Force had a presence in the outskirts of Jammu city where there is large Sikh population. There were some occasional bomb blasts allegedly masterminded by the Sikh extremists . On 13th February, 1985 12 passengers were killed in an explosion that rocked the Calcutta-bound Sealdah Express near Ghagwal in the neighboring Kathua district . One bogey was completely destroyed.

A number of Sikh militants were shot dead in different encounters in the district. There were incidents in the region which brought to the fore links between the Kashmiri and Sikhs militants. There were ugly reprisals by the Sikh militants against the people who left their ranks. In one such broad day light attack in early nineties , a former militant Avtar Singh was shot dead allegedly by the Kashmiri militants in Nanak Nagar locality as Kashmiri as well as Sikh militants suspected him to be an informer . The city also witnessed one of the worst anti Sikh riots on 13th January 1989 in which 15 Sikhs were killed and several injured . But over the period of time the Hindu-Sikh tension subsided as the normalcy was restored in Punjab. The security of the district was once again threatened with militancy starting in Kashmir .

Proneness of the city

There are a number of factors which make the city a soft target. The district shares approx.198 KM International border with Pakistan. From Ravi to Mannawar Tawi , the International Border is a terrain which provides several infiltration routes. Even the Jammu city is only six Kilometres from the International Border. Before the militancy started in the state, the International Border in the state was used for the inter country smuggling. Taking advantage of several ravines and ditches , the smugglers used to sneak into Pakistan and return back. The main route taken by the infiltrators is the Basantar corridor in Samba tehsil and also the Hiranagar sector which again has a number of ravines and Khuds. There is linguistic affinity between the people on the other side of IB more specifically Sialkot sector of Pakistan . For this reason it was difficult to detect smugglers from this side or from that side by the authorities on both sides. In the pre Partition era Jammu-Sialkot relationship was very close and Sialkot was the only rail link between Jammu and rest of the country .

In the later year of militancy, the militants also started using the International Border with porous patches to infiltrate into the region. In the initial period the militants first infiltrated into the Jammu district and then started on their long trek to Doda via Mansar Lake and parts of Kathua district. But lately the militants coming from the International border have hit the soft targets in the city. The soft targets have ranged from temples and localities of slum dweller.

The village defence groups were also formed in Jammu close to the International Border in October 1995 as a self defence mechanism . Number of times the VDCs encountered the militants and there by gave adequate time to the forces to arrive on the spot where the militants were spotted. For instance in August 2001 in Sapwal area it was the detection by the VDCs that the plan of the militants to carry out a sabotage on the railway track

was aborted. The tough resistance given by the VDC gave adequate time to the army to reach the spot and carry out an assault on the militants.

Major Strikes in Jammu

It was on 19th March 1994, for the first time militants carried out a murderous assault in the city . The attack was on former Speaker, J&K Legislative Assembly, Wali Mohammed Itoo . He was gunned down by militants in Jammu after he was coming out of a Mosque in Talab Khatian locality. The very fact that militants could carry out an open attack with precision shocked the people of the city. Just months later , on 16th June 1994 a powerful blast rocked a mini bus in Jammu city leaving seven dead. On 22nd November , 1994 , 9 persons were killed and 36 injured in a similar bus blast in the city . Only some days later on 12th December in yet another blast three persons including a woman were killed and 10 others injured in a passenger bus near Jammu. The year 1995 was no different. On 26th January 1995 Governor K.V. Krishna Rao escaped bid on life as 3 bombs went off in M.A. Stadium, Jammu; eight persons killed, including 3 Information Department officials, and 45 injured The then Governor K.V.Krishna Rao was delivering his customary Republic Day speech in 1995 when a bomb went off only some yards away from him . The incident shook the entire nation. The very fact that militants could carry out such an act against the head of the state in the most guarded and sansitized area on the occasion of Republic day caused ripples in the security circles. In the mid of the year on 20th July 1995 another blast rocked the heart of the city in the Purani Mandi area in which 19 people were killed and 60 injured . In the Jammu district , militants have also targeted the Railway track which at places is situated only some Kms away from International border. There were unsuccessful attempts earlier also . On January 21, 1990: There was a blast a few meters away from the Railway Station near the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in godown. One bogey of a stationary goods train was damaged. But on June 24, 1999: eight passengers were killed when a blast rocked the Delhi-bound Shalimar Express near Bari Brahmana. Bomb was planted on the track. Similarly on February 10, 2000: Five passengers of the Calcutta-bound Sealdah Express were killed and eight injured in a blast. The first suicide attack in the city took place on August 1, 2000 and in which pilgrims to the holy Amarnath cave in Kashmir were the targets. On Tuesday afternoon the militants attacked the heavily guarded office in Jammu City where Amarnath-bound pilgrims were registered. The militants opened fire with automatic weapons on the registration centre and in the subsequent gun battle, one militant was killed. Sophisticated weapons were also recovered by the Police. In one such prized catch Police recovered Chinese-made 107-mm sophisticated rockets from Niki Tawi near Bhagwati Nagar area of Jammu city. The rockets were planted in the area close to MAM Stadium, where a state-level function was going on Republic Day . The rockets were believed to have been planted by Pakistani backed militant Irfan, who escaped from Kot Balwal jail. The sophisticated rockets are activated by solar energy and take only five-and-a-half minutes to ignite when attached to a two-cell battery, and have the capacity to damage big buildings and structures within the range of seven to 10 km.

The water shed in the character of militancy in the state was the Suicide attack on Railway station on the evening of 7th August 2001. Nine persons including two army

men, two women and two Sadhus were killed and thirty other injured some of them seriously. It was believed to be the handiwork of three terrorists in which one was killed and other managed to flee away in melee. It was the first suicide attack in the Jammu city which resulted in such mass scale killings and increased sense of insecurity among the citizens from which they are still to recover. The next year 2002 suicide attacks hit the city and its periphery at regular intervals. On March 30 2002 , two terrorists launched a suicide attack on the historic Raghunath Temple situated in the heart of Jammu city. Both the terrorists were killed but not before they mowed seven persons including three security personnel . The death toll later increased to nine. In another incident on May 14th, 2002 three terrorists launched suicide attack on an army family camp . The modus operandi of the terrorists was striking . A group of three terrorists dressed in army combat uniforms boarded a Jammu bound bus coming from Kulu in Himachal Pradesh at Samba 40 Kms from Jammu city in the early morning hours . Just when the bus reached the Kaluchak army camp , at around 5.35 A.M., the terrorists forced the driver to stop and started firing indiscriminately at the passengers . Seven persons including four men and three women were killed on spot. Thereafter the terrorists ran towards the camp of the 196 Artillery unit of the Army and scaled the wall and entered it. The terrorists managed to enter into the family quarters . Twenty three persons were killed in the attack which included ten children, eight women and five army men. The three terrorists could only be killed after five hours at 10.30 A.M. when commandos equipped with rocket launchers were pressed into action. The incident provoked an outrage in the country and led to mass deployment of forces on the borders. The threat of war between India and Pakistan loomed high. Only two months later , there was yet another similar suicide attack . This time the terrorists targeted a slum dweller locality known as Rajiv Nagar on the evening of July 13 2002 situated in the peripheral part of the city. Two youths in late teens arrived in the evening and started indiscriminately firing on the slum dwellers. The terrorists continued firing for half an hour and the terrorist managed to escape there after. In the incident, twenty nine persons including a large number of Children were killed. Only some days after the incident , on August 2 , Jammu Police managed to eliminate one militant and some days later the other militant identified as Mohd. Abdullah hailing from Pakistan was apprehended in the nearby dense forests . In the operation three Police personnel were killed. At the end of the year terrorists launched yet another attack in the evening hours on Raghunath Temple and a neighboring Shivalaya temple on 24th November 2002. One terrorist was killed in the Raghunath Temple the same evening while the other was killed the next day after 13 hours encounter near Shivalaya . In this terrorist attack, twelve people were killed. On June 28, in a pre-dawn attack two Fidayeens pierced the heavily guarded Sanjuwan army camp and killed 12 sleeping army personnel. Later both Fidayeens were killed. Almost a month later for the the time the militants struck at Katra the base camp to the Vaishno Devi Shrine . In the evening of 21st July , 2003 two grenades were lobbed at the Vaishno Devi pilgrims at the Katra base camp in which six pilgrims including an infant died and more than forty people were injured. Hours later in a sensational attack a fidayeen almost succeeded in wiping out the top leadership of Northern Command at Tanda army camp on 22 July, 2003. Three Fidayeens early morning sneaked into the Tanda EME camp (repair workshop) and killed seven Jawans. Two Fidayeens were killed and in the evening time when GOC Northern Command Lt. General Hari Prasad, 16 Corps

Commander Lt.General TPS Brar along with other senior commanders came to inspect the area, a fidayeen appeared from the Sarkanda area and blew himself to target the commanders. Luckily the commanders escaped unhurt but a Brigadier was killed in the incident and a Major General was seriously injured. Militants made an abortive attempt to blow up the Shalimar express train at Jatwal area(Jammu-Pathankot route) on 26th October, 2003. There was no casualty in the incident. The same group of militants stopped a private car a few distance from the railway track and killed two passengers. On gun point the driver of the car was asked to drive to Jammu and later they took a TATA Sumo to proceed to Poonch. The same night they were intercepted by forces on the bridge over Chenab river. In a trail of 13 hours the two militants were killed and eyewitness account said the militants spoke chaste Punjabi hinting they were from Punjab province of Pakistan.

Background of Militants active in the district and targets

In the Jammu district militants did not expect to get support. The militants choose soft targets. In the 1990's, they exploded bombs in the crowded places or in passengers buses. In the recent past, they carried out more sensational acts like suicide attacks on temples and other crowded places. The aim clearly was to provoke the Hindu population and attract publicity. In most of the attacks, no militant organization claimed responsibility. While police described the suicide attacks to be the handiwork of Lashar-e-Toiba militant outfit, but the commonality in the place of origin among most of the attackers was striking. The identity of the terrorists was traced to Punjab part of Pakistan which shares broadly the same culture with Jammu district. Kashmiri speaking militant have not been involved in suicide attacks. Owing to the similar language, the identity of the militant from across the border cannot be easily distinguished in Jammu district where as Kashmiri speaking militant does not enjoy this advantage. Most of the attackers who have carried out the sensational terrorists acts in the city in the last one year have crossed the International border from Punjab province of Pakistan. For instance in the Rajiv Nagar terrorist attack, the terrorist who was arrested some days later identified himself as Mohd.Abdullah a resident of Multan area of Punjab and spoke chaste Punjabi during his brief interaction with press men. Even in other cases where the attackers have been shot dead, the police in most of the cases have described origin of there area from Punjab province of Pakistan. In most of the suicide attacks in the city the terrorists have used the International border to sneak into Indian territory. The Inspector General BSF for Jammu range Dileep Trivedi says, " The terrorists use this route as in this way they can quickly carry out their attacks because of the proximity of the city" In the recent past, Jammu Police has made some sensational arrests of terrorists hailing from Punjab province of Pakistan or "Azad Kashmir" operating in the area. Their arrest confirm the fact that most of them were from Punjab province of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.

Effect of militancy on Society

In the last decade militancy in the region has seriously affected the society of the district particularly the city of Jammu. Number of families in the city have come from different

parts of the province and some times maintain close linkages with their respective districts of origin . Both Hindus and Muslims from as far as Bhandarwah and Kishtwar areas of Doda district are settled in Jammu region. The militancy in the respective areas did leave an impact on the people. For instance it were the Muslim youth grown up and educated in Jammu but originally from Doda district who pioneered the armed movement in their respective areas. Similarly when the series of massacres of Hindus rocked Doda, it led to surcharged reaction among the Hindus belonging to the district. The direct involvement of local Muslims of the district in militancy has not been found till this date though with the exception of few . There have been a few incidents of bravado of the local Muslims who provided vital information at the risk of their lives. For instance a Gujjar Muslim Kaka a resident of Raika forests near the Rajiv Nagar at high risk to his life over powered the terrorist involved in the Rajiv Nagar resident when he came to his house for shelter. Kaka called the Police and handed him over to Police. Now Kaka has been provided security because he is in constant threat from the militants. The militancy acquired a new character in the state when it entered in the province with the Hindus settled in the hilly districts of the region becoming soft targets. Both Hindus and Muslims living in the city have their own insecurities. The reaction to the various massacres of Hindus in the province with over whelming Hindu population has some times acquired a tendency of a communal over tone causing insecurity among the minuscule Muslim population living in Ghettoized areas . The demands of the BJP after every massacre that the Muslim localities should be sanitized and searched has only enhanced the insecurity among the minuscule Muslim population of the city.

UDHAMPUR

The present day Udhampur district also included Doda district till 1948 when Doda district was carved out of it. Reasi which was a separate district was made part of it. The district is heterogeneous in terms of geography and community profile. It is the geographical heterogeneity like other districts of Jammu region which makes it significant . The altitude varies from 600 metres to 3000 metres; consequently there is wide variation in temperature in different parts of the district. In Community profile the district is Hindu majority with 26.23 percent Muslim population most of which reside in Mahore tehsil. The headquarters of the district is at Udhampur town located at the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway . It is the second biggest town of the region, after Jammu . Its importance is also due to the fact that it is the head quarters of Northern command of Army . The district has been divided into five tehsils namely Udhampur, Ramnagar, Reasi, Chenani and Mahore. Out of five tehsils, four namely Udhampur, Ramnagar, Reasi and Chennani have Hindu majority while Mahore is a Muslim majority tehsil .

Within Hindu majority tehsils, there are villages of high concentration of Muslims and vice versa. For instance in Hindu majority Ramnagar tehsils Dudu and Basantgarh blocs have high concentration of Muslims. Similarly in Mahore teshil there are Hindu majority villages. In the hilly and militancy areas of Mahore and Dudu -Basantgarh , Rajput Hindus, a martial community lives in significant numbers. Gaddis (Hindu shepherds) also inhabit these hilly tracts in eastern part of the district.

Most of Muslims belong to Gujjar community spread all over the district some pockets are Kashmiri speaking muslims also . The latter are concentrated in Mahore tehsil bordering Kashmir region. It is the fifth largest district of the state in area and is spread over 4550 Sq Kms. At the social level, the rivalry between Gujjars and Kashmiri speaking Muslims is intense due to difference in social customs and traditions. The Gujjar community like in the rest of the state has its own typical nomadic culture and a distinct language called Gojri. The Kashmir speaking Muslims is not a nomadic community and had migrated from the valley many years ago. The community still follows a typical Kashmiri life style though they have also absorbed the local culture of the district . In the lower Mahore more specifically area of Arnas touching Reasi teshil there are pockets of Dogra Muslim descendants of Mian Deedo, a Dogra guerrilla general who had led a rebellion against the occupation of Jammu by Maharaja Ranjit Singh . After he was got killed by the ruler of Punjab with the help of Raja Gulab Singh, his descendants fled to take shelter under the Muslim ruler of Mahore to escape the persecution of rulers of Jammu after Deedo was killed by Maharaja Gulab Singh .

Spheres of militancy in Udhampur

As Udhampur is a huge district with varying community profile, militancy is not spread to the entire district. The militancy is concentrated in the Muslim majority parts of the district and the hilly tract of Reasi a predominantly Hindu area. River Chenab is a natural border between Mahore and Reasi. Mahore is located on the right side of the Chenab while Reasi is on its left side. Mahore shares borders with Doda district and also Anantnag district of Kashmir. It is on the "highway" route for the militants coming from Budhal tehsil of Rajouri on their trek to Doda district and for crossing the Pir Panjal range for entering into Kashmir valley. Mahore touches Ramban tehsil of Doda district. The entire tehsil is a mountaineous patch. The road connectivity even within the tehsil headquarters is poor. It is one of the poorest parts of the state with a large section of people living below the poverty line . The first areas to be hit were the Kashmiri speaking areas of the tehsil namely Gulab Garh touching Kashmir region via Pir Panchal ranges. The other community i.e. the Gujjar community also got involved in militancy in the later years in varying degree.

Importance of Mahore

Mahore was important for the militants as it fell on a strategic location for them . Since early 1990's Kashmiri militants used the tract for their foot journey to Kashmir region on their way from Rajouri district bordering LoC. But the involvement of the local Muslims of the tehsil started much later. It was mainly after the Pro Pakistan Hizbul Mujhaideen took over from the pro Azadi JKLF that militancy started taking roots in Mahore. Kashmiri speaking militants were first recruits in HM and then years later in the late nineties Gujjars also involved themselves with militancy. In Mahore the Hizbul Mujhaideen dominates over all the other militant organizations. The security officials point out that it was the involvement of Gujjars in the later years which gave impetus to militancy in the belt . Even the tacit support of Gujjars of the belt had an immense

importance for militancy as a whole. As said earlier the belt comes on the highway to Doda district and also to the Kashmir region. Gujjars a nomadic community were more familiar with the hilly belt than any other community. Gujjars were useful for the militants in providing shelters and trekking routes and as guides to safe passes. The knowledge of shortcuts and exact routes in the hills is of immense value and Gujjars mostly have this advantage. For instance the community knows the trek between Keris (hill tops).

Causes of Gujjars joining Militancy

The involvement of Gujjar community in militancy was never categorical and is the result of complex factors. When interviewed, some of the community headmen said that they(Gujjars) were suspected by both the sides; security forces as well as the militants. At many places they had no alternative but to give shelter to militant otherwise they were threatened to be killed. Gujjar community of the area was perhaps one of few Muslims of the region who dared to form Village Defence Committees to protect themselves from the militants. For this many Gujjars of the area became victims of the militants. As in remote hilly areas they could not get the protection of the security forces they joined the militants ranks or provided indirect assistance. An additional reason cited by many locals was the lure of money given to those who worked as their guides. Of course, religious factor could not be ruled out altogether.

Spheres of militancy in Udhampur

In the district, militancy can broadly be divided into two zones -Mahore tehsil and Reasi tehsil. Unlike Mahore, in Reasi the aim of the militants was to keep the hills safe for their trek and also terrorize the population. As it is predominantly Hindu majority place, militants knew that the local support would not be forthcoming. Therefore they aimed at spreading terror. In Reasi tehsil, except the town, the population is scattered in the surrounding hills. The roads connectivity in the tehsil is poor and many of the remote villages can only be accessed on foot some times taking more than a day. Anticipating the danger, Village Defence Committees were constituted here in late nineties which became the main targets of the militants.

On the night of April 17, 1998, 28 Hindu villagers were slaughtered at Prankot village in the Reasi area. Prankote is in an administrative unit, comprising a group of villages of Reasi tehsil. It can be reached only after an eight-hour trek over a mountainous stretch, the last motorable road being 8 km away. The news of the gruesome massacre reached the authorities after 10 hours and it took more than 24 hours for the security forces to get to the village. The militants had killed the villagers with cleavers and not with weapons. The Prankot incident marked a new chapter of militancy in the state when series of mass killings of Hindus started. When the electronic media reached the spot and beamed the twenty-eight blood-splattered, beheaded bodies, it moved the entire nation. The incident sent shock waves through out the hilly belt. Several families were completely wiped out in the attack. There were some lucky survivors. For instance Krishan Kumar lost his parents, two sisters and a younger brother. Twelve-year-old Sudesh lost her

entire family which was massacred right in front of her eyes. The incident provoked mass migration as about 1,000 people from villages in Pauni and Reasi fled in fear and took refuge in the plain areas of the tehsil. The VDCs had not given adequate security cover to the population in the hilly areas of Reasi due to a number of reasons. Superiority of weapons of the militants and poor back up of the security forces made the VDCs prone to high casualties. For instance on April 8 2002, terrorists struck in groups of four at different houses at Dandli at 9P.M. They opened fire indiscriminately and asked the VDC members to surrender their weapons and come out unarmed with their family members. The VDC members refused to give in and told the terrorists that they would rather fight till the last breath. In the nine hour battle between terrorists and VDC personnel seven persons including three children were killed. At 6 A.M. next day, the first batch of Special Operations Group of the J&K Police arrived at the spot and by then terrorists had escaped from the spot.

In Mahore tehsil in the initial period militants used the tract as a "Highway" for their entry into Kashmir and Doda district. The militants attacked the forces to make sure that the road ahead remained safe for them. Some time later, the militants came down and targeted the vehicles of the security forces vehicles plying in the interior road network in the Mahore tehsil. The tehsil has been active zone of the militants where they have attacked Police posts, BSF camps and detonated Improvised Explosive Devices on the roads. But in the later years civilians were also targeted in the higher reaches. The aim was to clear out any section of the population who they believed could be informers of the forces. The first eye of suspicion fell on the Hindus settled in the isolated hamlets in the hills. For instance On Aug 15, 2001 when the country was celebrating its Independence day the militants gunned down five old members of a Hindu family in remote Sahar Badoli village in Thanda of Mahore. Presumably, militants struck at the family when six members of a family including three women and two brothers who had gone to their dhoks (Temporary shelters in upper reaches) in upper reaches of Sahar Badoi to celebrate Hindu festival Janamashtmi (Birthday of Lord Krishna) in an old temple. The attacks on the VDC members and their families were even more brutal. Four children of a member of a Village Defence Committee Gyan Singh in Shajru hamlet were killed on December 1, 2000. His children, 15-year-old Hoshiar Singh, daughters Pinki Devi (12), Darshana (10) and Anju (3) were killed. In the latter stages militants also attacked their coreligionists for their involvement with the forces. In a bizarre incident on May 6 2002, the militants gunned down a Muslim constable of Special Task Force (STF), his brother and father in their house at Seel Dhar, about 12 kms from Mahore. The victims have been identified as Nazir Ahmed, an STF constable posted in Mahore, his brother Bashir Ahmed and their 60-year old father Habibullah.

Just a month later, Muslim VDC were also targeted. Militants killed four members of the Village Defense Committee in Tilloo village of Mahore area on June 9 2002. The VDC volunteers who were killed were all Muslims namely Nazir Mohammad, Abdul, Saghi Mohammad and Shaffi Mohammad. Terror was also spread to the educational institutions. On 19 September 2002 heavily armed militants entered the Government High School, Jamalām at 10.40 A.M. and asked the teachers and students of Hindu community to stand in a separate queue. The militants then opened fire killing a teacher

Deep Chander Badyal and student Pyara Singh on the spot while a number of them were injured .

Personal Rivalries

Militants also bring with it the sense of power. The local militants exploited the new found power. In one incident, militants massacred five members of a family belonging to Fateh Mohammad Gujjar including three women and injured three others at Budhan in Gool area of Udhampur on 23th March 2000. The deceased was a family of masons. His only fault was that he had demanded wages for the masonry work done by him in the house of local militant Mohammad Shaffi. After the work was over Shafi's family refused to pay the wages. Fateh Mohammad then approached the militant's relatives and urged them to help him get Rs.8, 000\/- due to him as his wages. This made the local militant angry and hence his family was massacred . Militants also targeted relatives of political leaders in the district. In one such incident on June 29th 1999 Ali Mohammad Khan brother of Haji Buland Khan, an influential Gujjar leader was killed by the militants in Arnas area of Udhampur.

Other parts affected by Militancy

The other places of Udhampur affected by militancy are Dudu and Basantgarh areas. The two lie in Ram Nagar tehsil of the district which is Hindu majority. But in Dudu and Basantgarh the concentration of Muslim population is high . Most of the Muslim belong to Gujjars and Dogra community. The two parts are located close to southern parts of Doda district bordering Baderwah tehsil. The parts also border hilly tract of Kathua district. Militant violence in the belt has been generally low due to the lack of response. The belt is sparsely populated and militants prefer to enter the safe zones in Doda district where they expect active response. The hills of the area fall on the highway route of the militants . VDCs were formed in anticipation of any attack on the vulnerable Hindu community in the hills. Occasionally, giving gun in the remotest interiors to a community has led to misgivings among the Muslim community . Militants took advantage of this ground reality and sighted as reasons for attacking VDCs . Number of attacks have taken place in Dudu-Basantgarh e.g. in the summer of 1999 they Kidnapped and killed three VDC personnel.

KATHUA

Militancy entered Kathua in its last phase that, too, more as a route to Doda district. It falls in between International Border and Doda district . The strategic importance of the district , as explained in detail in the first chapter lies in the fact that it is gateway to the state and borders the states of Punjab and Himachal . Jammu , Udhampur and Doda districts of the Jammu region, apart from Pakistan on the other hand the district shares a 60 KM long International Border (IB) with Punjab province of Pakistan. IB in the district has a number of rivulets which provide porous infiltration routes. Before militancy started the IB in the district like the Jammu border was used by the smugglers. The district is divided into four tehsils namely Kathua, Hiranagar, Basohli and Billawar.

The district can be divided into two halves- plain area and the hilly tract. The plain areas comprising Kathua and Hiranagar touches Punjab province of India in south east. Most of the International borders fall in the Hiranagar sector while some of the patch also exists in Kathua tehsil . The plain areas of the Kathua district are a homogenous entity . In community profile Hindus live in over whelming majority. The Gujjars Muslims population is scattered in the plain areas. The northern areas of Basolhi and Billawar tehsils are hilly . In this patch Muslims, who comprise 6.96 percent of the total population of the district, live in large numbers .Muslim population comprises of Gujjars, Dogras and Kashmir speaking communities. Most of the Kashmir speaking Muslims live in Lohai Malhar area. The blocks in Bani and Lohai Malhar situated in Basolhi and Billawar tehsils respectively are a vast hilly tract. The blocks have heterogenous profile- with Hindus and Muslims living in sizeable numbers.

Militancy in Kathua

The militants use the 60 KM International border for infiltrating into Indian Territory from Pakistan and when ever there is a pressure on the militants in Doda , they enter for refuge in the neighboring district. . During the turmoil in Punjab when the border in Punjab was fenced , the Sikhs militants started using the IB to enter into Indian territory and then gain entry into neighboring Punjab for their operations. After the end of Punjab militancy , militants also started using the IB to gain entry into the state and further venture into the Doda district. Most of them were from Punjab province of Pakistan, as was revealed by the messages of the militants intercepted by the security forces. The hilly tract of the district is sparsely populated. In order to ensure the safety of civilians the Village Defence Committees were formed both in plain and the hilly tract. The important Jammu-Pathankot National Highway 1A as well as the railway track passes through the district. In the past several attempts were made to damage the railway track. VDCs formed in the plain stretch have also been entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the track.

Incidents in the district

It is only occasionally militants have struck in the district. Relatively speaking, the district has witnessed less violence as compared with other districts of the state. The plains of the district baring some occasional incidents have been free of violence and are also known as safest parts of the state. Strikes in the hilly terrain of Kathua have been made with the aim to keep the highway safe. As compared to the route in Rajouri and Udhampur , the trek in the district is less used as it is mostly populated by Hindus The response from the Muslim population is mixed. Money seems to be the motivation of the locals who were involved in militancy or who harboured militants . In one of the more sensational strikes in the district on March 1 2001 there was a bid to loot Rs.1 Crore which government treasury officials were carrying from Kathua to Basohli . It was found out that out of the four militants , two namely Zahoor Hussain and Muzaffar, belonged to Basohli in Kathua district. Militants have also struck in the areas near the neighboring Doda district .

On April 5 2001, a group of militants barged into the house of a BJP leader, Abdul Ghani Bhat, and killed him and his relative. They also killed a retired forest guard in the Lohai Malhar area of Billawar tehsil. The militants had entered into the house of Abdul Ghani Bhat, to eliminate two of his close relatives who had given up militancy. Militants active in this part have also struck in the neighboring areas in Punjab. For instance in December 2001 militants struck at Mamoon Army camp in Pathankot. In the plain belt there have been occasional incidents. Near the border in Village Ghati two brothers were killed while they were hunting in the forests by the militants. Apparently the militants killed them as they had spotted them. The only vital link of the state with rest of the country the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway has also been once scene of terrorists strike. On 1 October 2002, the day of the J&K elections, two Fidayeens dressed in Police uniform, after crossing the International Border at Hiranagar border, hijacked a bus at a place called Katar and directed the driver to take him to election booth in the town. The driver after traveling for some time rammed the bus on the right side of the road when the bus was few metres away from the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway. In panic the terrorist came out of the bus and started indiscriminate firing. In the firing seven people lost their lives. The terrorists managed to escape from the spot. On the way the terrorists also attacked a village Janak Singh, naib tehsildar and killed him. Massive hunt was launched by the army as well Police to flush out the militants. But success came only after some messages were intercepted by the Police which were between the militants and mentors in Shakergarh tehsil of Pakistan. On 3rd October 2002 the Jammu Police managed to track down the militants at Jandi Nala area of Hiranagar, 3 KM from the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway. Both the terrorists were gunned down. In the encounter one Police officer of the rank of Deputy Superintendent Jagtar Singh also lost his life. According to the Police both the terrorists belonged to the Punjab province of Pakistan. The locals say that number of times they have spotted militants as they make their way

Local Involvement

Most of the Muslim population is concentrated in the hilly patch of the district with a scattered Gujjar Muslims living in the plains of the district. The part comes on the highway route of the militants to get into Doda district. Reaching Doda is a long journey and takes three to four days. Shelter is a must and also the knowledge of routes. The presence of army in the remote and interior parts of the hilly tract is less. Militants are able to get shelter on the point of gun. But some times showing bravado the Gujjars Muslim community has provided vital clues to the forces leading to success in anti militancy operations. For instance in 2001 in Village Digam in Billawar tehsil Gujjars tipped off the forces about the presence of militants in their dhoks(temporary shelter) leading to the killing of seven militants. The hilly part of the district is one of the poorest part of the state. The lure of money given by the militants also helps getting the local support. Gujjars and Bhakerwals are scattered all over the plains of the district. Gujjars community being a nomadic community have the knowledge of all the routes within the district whereas Bakerwals whose movement is not restricted to one district know the inter district routes. For the militants both are beneficial in their own respects.

In the earlier chapters, various factors, which led to the rise of militancy in the six districts of Jammu region, have been detailed. It is an attempt to identify the peculiarity of militancy movement in Jammu region as distinct from that of Kashmir; though at the same time a number of commonalities between the two have also been noticed. The beginning and the spread of militancy movement in Jammu region did cause a decisive shift in its character, composition and objective. It also marked a change in the reaction of the world, which in the early 1990's generally looked at the movement as a freedom struggle of Kashmiris. The mindless killing of the innocents which became a pronounced feature of Jammu phase of militancy brought a qualitative change in the world's perception towards it. While the world reacted quite strongly to the violations of human rights by the security forces in early nineties in Kashmir valley, the condemnation of killings of innocents by the militants was also instant. The principle of use of violence as an instrument of settling the Kashmir dispute has not found many supporters in the world.

Militancy in Jammu since its beginning behaved differently in many ways from that in Kashmir region. Even from the perspective of the militant outfits, different strategies were adopted in fighting out the security personnel. The militants have adopted the guerilla tactics in the hilly areas of Jammu, which were required by the terrain of the region. The acts of attrition rate by the militants remained low in the early nineties. Gauging the necessity of different tactics for the Jammu region some of the militant outfits formed different sub outfits for Jammu region. For instance, the largest indigenous militant group still active in the state, Hizbul Mujhaideen had set up a different sub-group known as Hizbul Mujhaideen Pir-Panjal regiment for this side of the state. The outfit had its own commanders who planned the strategies for this part. By targeting the Hindus in the hills and also Muslims, who are suspected to be informers of the security personnel, the militants want to establish their superiority in interior terrain. Hills surrounding the roads also gave them an advantage. Safeguarding the road network still remains one of the most difficult tasks for the security agencies particularly in the Rajouri-Poonch tract and to the North of Udhampur ie. Mahore-Arnas belt. In these areas, security agencies are left with no option except to stop the vehicular movement after the evening hours.

With the apparent difference in character of terror due to various reasons, strategies adopted in Kashmir valley did not work in Jammu region. The reason is obvious -a much different terrain and a totally different kind of society composition. We have already stated the complex factors of each district of the Jammu region, which have been responsible for growth of militancy. Therefore even the counter terror strategies for the region have to be different and devised according to the ground realities.

The factor of terrain, social composition and political framework in the region, all demand quite a different approach. Unlike Kashmir where due to the plain terrain, a road network has been built up, the transportation system in Jammu region has remained under developed. Even today several villages of the region can only be accessed after

trekking for more than a day, which underlines the difficulties involved in the counter terror strategies. This is the reason why most of the time, security agencies fail to track down the militant who commit the gruesome massacres. Some times the only way to evacuate the injured is with the help of helicopters. With the exception of Jammu district all other districts are hilly. Even connectivity within the districts is poor. The Herculean task of providing security to the vulnerable population requires in-depth studies. As militancy in six districts of Jammu started at different time space in different areas and had their own characteristics, each requires a different approach but at the same time good and qualitative coordination within the region and also with the agencies in Kashmir is equally important.

The success of the counter terror strategies in Jammu will have an impact on the militancy movement in Kashmir as well. The region provides one of the safest infiltration routes to the militants entering into the state including Kashmir valley or for their active operations in hilly areas of Jammu or even striking in the plains. Past experience, including that of 1965 war when armed infiltrators from Pakistan had come to the state and had established control over most parts of the Rajouri-Poonch, clearly underlines the importance of close cooperation among security forces, civil administration and political leadership. In 1965, it was collapse or absence of the latter that had handicapped the role of the security forces and facilitated the task of infiltrators, supported by Pakistan army. With its vast terrain the region provided innumerable escape routes to the militants. As most of the Indian military presence in counter militancy operations was limited to Kashmir valley, militants used it as safe shelter in the beginning. When the local recruits joined the militancy it acquired new impetus. Thus started the fight between the security forces and militants for domination in the hilly areas of Jammu. Reaching every corner of the district is an impossible task for the forces. The militants mix with population in towns and strike at times.

It was region's communally sensitive history with the Muslims and Hindus both living in large number which provided fertile ground for the protagonists of a pan-Islamic movement in the state.

The areas where there was early recruitment had backgrounds of communally incidents. For instance Bhandarwah tehsil one of the most communally sensitive part of the state and had a history of riots on petty issues. The communally fragile environment of region was further made worse with violence in the state. A section of Muslims felt sympathetic with the militant movement. The sphere of sympathizers and degree of sympathy was widened by the excesses of the security forces. On the other hand Hindus considered army as their saviors and treated Muslims with suspicion. The extremists on both sides of the communities were able to widen the gulf.

Multiple Strategies

A) Security

The hilly terrain and innumerable passes in the border belt of 260 KM (LoC) plus approx. 187 KM of IB of Jammu region cannot be easily guarded. On account of various

difficulties the fencing of the border could only start some time back . At various times, the army commanders have admitted the fact that due to the vast and difficult terrain they could not defend every inch of the border. Winter season acts as a deterrent to entry of the militants into the state because the high passes in the border areas are capped by snow. The real challenge is during the summer season when the passes open up and infiltration and ex-filtration are resumed . It is the time when younger ranks are recruited to fill up the gap caused by the casualties suffered by the outfits during the winter after getting training from across the border. This period is also utilized by the militants to import as much arms and ammunition as it is possible to fill the stocks for the whole year. There have been instances when even the children have been used to carry logistics which clearly shows the porous nature of the Line of Control on the Rajouri-Poonch corridor . Disclosing this, the area commander of the sensitive Rajouri-Poonch belt, former Major General Randhir Singh points out that in the months of July- September, 2002 a 13 year old boy was carrying arms to this side along with six other militants . All of them were killed. This period witnesses high degree of violence. For instance the figures given by defence sources disclose that since the start of militancy in the region the militants killed 3396 civilians in the summer seasons stretching from April to October, while the figures from November to March is far less .

The use of techniques like the Surveillance gadgets hold the key for reducing the infiltration rate on the Line of Control . For instance in the Mendhar sector of Poonch where these gadgets were introduced in 2002 , officers point out that there has been swift detection of any intrusion. Surveillance technology should have been used much earlier and should now be extended to other parts of the LoC . Blocking the infiltration routes by fencing is an option. The present Chief of Army Staff NC Vij has clearly stated that the fencing operations on 490 KM Line of Control would be completed by June 2004. . Similarly on the plain approx. 187.5 KM Indo-Pak International border , which is entirely in Jammu region fencing operations must be expedited. The operations started after a lot of delay as late as in January 2001 . As this route was used by the infiltrators even during the winter, this was long over due. The Director General Border Security Force Ajay Raj Sharma points out that the project would be completed in two years from now which would make the IB sealed for infiltration . Similarly in the war against terror there is a need for upgrading small scale weaponry to deal with individual terrorists rather than large scale armoury like tanks. While we have decided superiority over Pakistan in big scale armoured tanks, missiles, war ships to nuclear weapons, in some places the militants are better armed in small-scale warfare. For instance the Village defence Committees established in the hills of Jammu as a self Defense mechanism need up-gradation of arms. Protective gear of the soldiers fighting on the battlefield particularly close to Line of control needs to be enhanced. Recently there was a shocking disclosure by the Parliamentary Committee for defence that there was shortage of bullet proof jackets to the extent of 2.5lakhs . The security strategy calls for flexible approach in the hills of Jammu . For instance Ind Post in Udhampur district was attacked for five times consecutively in March -April 2003 in which twelve persons have lost their lives . The post of 28 Police men still remains there as sitting duck for the militants to carry another attack . Better strategic places should be chosen in the Budhal-Mahore

Stretch which could be well guarded and prevent movement of the militants on this vital route that link Doda district to the Line of Control.

Cooperation of People

Apart from constructing an effective security strategy to block infiltration at the frontiers of the border district, support and cooperation of the people for the security forces is a must. Militants do need local support to operate in the area for shelter and guidance for entry to the interior. No strategy can work till the people are involved in the counter terror strategies. Sadhbavana mission started by the army should be further refined, keeping in view needs and urges of the people; so that civilian and army personnel interaction becomes more fruitful.

As discussed earlier, the districts of Rajouri and Poonch share linkages with "Azad Kashmir" in language, customs and religion. Even amidst a tension filled environment in the last 13 years, a section of population living near the Line of Control has migrated to the other side. For tackling the migratory populations, community leaders and civil administration have to be involved in the counter terror strategies. Elaborate knowledge and interaction with the people living in the forward villages is important to keep a watch over the movement of every family. The civil administration particularly the revenue department should keep a record of the population living near the border belt and assist the army. The support of the village heads such as Numberdars and Sarpanches is vital in this connection. There are occasions in the past when the population living in the villages had been allowed to migrate to the other side. This is a sign of defeatism. Lack of trust in the Muslim population living near the Line of Control will not help the planners to design an effective anti terror strategy in the Muslim dominated parts of Jammu. For instance in the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the intruders were able to conquer a large tract with the help of local people. The intruders appointed even the local commanders. Though initially ignored by the army, it was the local people who came to the army's rescue and finally the areas were liberated. The same analogy will work in the present circumstances. The role of active police force remains pivotal and therefore the local recruitment to police needs to be encouraged. Efficient police force with a good information network is very effective for counter terror operations.

In the Muslim belt of the Jammu region the mass anti-India demonstrations or for Azadi have been rare. But such demonstrations do occur when the security forces kill an innocent. Such incidents further weaken the fight against terror. The forces need to be sensitized to the importance of winning the confidence of the local people and therefore made accountable for their lapses. Most of the Human Rights groups and media representatives are headquartered at Srinagar. Thus there is a need for State Human rights Commission to open its offices in this part of the state to check human rights abuse. Similarly the security forces need to observe greater restraint in dealing with the civilians so that no body is pushed to the path of militancy. The security of the Hindus in the remote hills spread over long distances needs special attention. Usually the militants strike at the places which fall on the highway routes to make sure that their march remains safe. Hindu scattered in the interiors of Budhal belt of Rajouri district

are vulnerable and have to be protected. The concept of Village Defence Committees was started as a self defence mechanism to meet the challenge of militants striking the vulnerable population living in the remote hilly areas. The examples where this has succeeded are many. But the VDC personnel are armed with .303 rifles, which cannot compete with the sophisticated weapons of the militants. Several times the VDCs have been specifically targetted. The arms and ammunition of VDC need an immediate improvement. The obsolete arms of the VDC are certainly no match to the sophisticated weapons of the militants. Before recruitment proper training needs to be imparted and this is felt even by the VDC personnel. The coordination among the VDCs, army and Police needs to be improved. Number of times when the militants attacked the VDCs, the support of security agencies came after lot of time when enough damage had been done.

While the militants, on the whole, failed to disrupt the September-October 2002 elections to the state assembly, in Surankote assembly segment election staff could not even reach several booths. Beyond the Suran River from where the forested and hilly parts (considered a "liberated zone") starts, there was no staff to conduct the election due to the severe bombardment of rocket launchers and bullets by the militants resulting in re-poll at number of booths. At number of places the poll meetings were attacked by suicide bombers in the middle of the town. For instance minutes before the Congress meeting was scheduled, 11 Police men lost their lives in a brutal attack at Surankote. Strategy on the military side should be based on strengthening the intelligence network in these parts and try to gain an upper hand in the near future. Getting the people on their side with the help of civil administration is very vital in this task.

On the plains of Jammu region, like the city which have seen terrorist strikes, a security strategy depends on strengthening the intelligence network. As described earlier it will be far easier for a militant coming from Azad Kashmir or Punjab province to carry an attack in Jammu mainly due to the striking similarity in Language with the local people. This is the reason why almost all the terrorist Strikes in Jammu city are the handiwork of Punjabi speaking militants. But it is a great irony that the main thrust of the security agencies has been to keep an eye over the Kashmiri speaking youth. A Punjabi speaking youth from Pakistan can easily intermingle with the people of the city and adjust here as compared with a Kashmiri youth. This basic fact is to be understood by the security agencies. There is a need for developing a good network in the interior areas of the city. The last one decade has seen the loosening up of the friendly ties between Hindus and Muslims due to various reasons. The void should not be allowed to increase and there is a need for strengthening the ties between the two communities. This is equally true for the Police side as dynamic officers who can handle the complex situations should be posted here who should be able to engage in a regular interaction with the people of the border villages.

B. *Civil administration*

The civil administration in the area has failed to meet the changing needs of people of the region. Government servants posted in the hilly belt of the region consider it as punishment and therefore lack the will to perform with some exceptions. The

centralized polity of the state with the decisions taking powers concentrated alternately in the twin capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu every six months is responsible for lowering the morale and sapping the initiative of the local administration. Locals allege that as soon as the militancy started, there was a vacuum of civil administration in the hilly areas of Jammu region. Security agencies took over the civil administrative duties and this continues even today. After the imposition of Disturbed area act in Jammu region in the month of August 2001 the civil administration further paralyzed as the army was entrusted with additional powers. For instance it tried to manage the schools located in the militancy affected areas. With due respects to army, it would have done a better service to the people of the district if it had merely helped the civil administration to function effectively instead of replacing its function. For instance the absence of civil authority has resulted in teachers playing truant even if there is no real threat to them by the militants. Much of the time of the teachers is spent in trying to get them transferred to their homes. The policy should be such that the lower layer of administration should be manned in their own native places, with obvious exceptions. At the higher level, employees who know the complexities existing in the district should be deputed or at least made to know these. In the interior areas, the civil administration can become operational with the active support of security agencies. The energetic bureaucrats need to be assigned the task of handling the border districts and suitable incentives should be given to them. As advised by the present J&K Chief Secretary Sudhir S. Bloeria the post of Special Commissioner should be revived for the tense districts. The communally disturbed parts of Rajouri and Doda districts need a delicate handling. The population in Rajouri and Doda is heterogeneous in religious terms and over the last few years chasm between the Hindus and Muslims has widened. There have been sections in the political spectrum which have been quick to exploit the insecurities of both the communities. Any massacre of Hindus in the interiors of Rajouri and Doda invariably leads to a violent reaction elsewhere in the region. Similarly the killing of any innocent Muslim leads to violent reaction among the Muslims of the surrounding area. In this direction civil administration and security agencies have to coordinate so that these incidents are not allowed to be exploited by the sectarian elements. This calls for an energetic civil administration and civil society.

C. *Cultural component of Anti-terror strategy*

The use of mass media can go a long way in tackling the propaganda from the other side and emotional integration of the border districts with the rest of the country. In "Azad Kashmir" due to over dose of religion in the last 13 years has resulted in a kind of cultural starvation. Programmes based on rich cultural heritage of the area should be telecast. Special attention needs to be given towards reviving folk music and literary programmes. This can be an cultural offensive by India towards the people living in Azad Kashmir. The programmes can appeal to the prospective recruits from Azad Kashmir. The success of cultural component of Anti-terror strategy can be illustrated by an example which happened a few years back. In Nov. 2001, a Hindu teacher was kidnapped by militants belonging to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. After roaming for days in the forest under militants captivity, one day the teacher started singing the popular musical lyrics from the Saifulmalok famous epic of the region. The musical lyrics

melted the militants hearts , who became friendly and they decided to grant freedom to the teacher signifying the potentiality of the common cultural heritage . The border belt has a proud history of communal harmony with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs taking pride in their common cultural identity. Dialects like the Mirpuri , Poonchi are akin to Gojri , Dogri and Punjabi . . This feeling needs to be encouraged and none better than the mass media can help in this regard. Nothing better than the collective strength of the secular linguistic and cultural identity can provide resistance to the religious appeal of militancy in the Muslim dominated districts. Unlike Kashmir valley which is separated from Azad Kashmir by topography with high mountains the reality in Jammu is opposite. The radio and television of the state controlled Pakistan has a good receptivity in this part which relays programme having the same medium of language as this side . This is quite distinct from the poor receptivity of the State Controlled Doordarshan in the hilly parts of the district. Similarly on the plain International border the Programmes made in Jammu city have been popular in Punjab province of Pakistan and some of the individual artists receive fan mail from across the border in loads.

Special funds allotted by the central government such as the full fledged Kashir channel which annually spends Crores of Rupees in the production of varied programmes fails to meet the specific needs of the people of either of the two regions . Broadly speaking there are two distinct families of languages. One known as Kashir as Kashmiri is locally called. The other family includes languages and dialects of Dogri,Punjabi, Gojri and Pahari. There should be separate channel for producing and telecasting the latter family of languages .The latter alone is relevant for the region as well as "Azad Kashmir" and Punjab province of Pakistan. Kashir channel , as it exists today is admixture of different families of languages does great injustice to Kashmir valley and is a source of humiliation to Jammu region. This confusion has been exploited by vested interests and resulted in scandals some of which are being probed into. TV and radio stations, which are geographically and ethnically closer to the area, must be upgraded for production and telecast or broadcast services. Even from the economic perspective this will be cheaper remedy, as airing programmes from the valley for rest of the state requires use of satellites and other sophisticated equipments . Jammu's cultural icons of yesteryears like Malika Pukhraj , Allah Rakha and KL Sehgal and literary stars like Krishna Chander and Chirag Hasan Hasrat are binding forces as of all communities. Their memories need to be kept alive and the contributions need to be celebrated. Special efforts needs to be made for safeguards and promotion of culture and mother tongues of all ethnic communities and for recognition of Dogri, the prominent language of the region , in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution.

D. *Economic*

Different parts of Jammu have their own economic problems. Rajouri and Poonch for instance suffer from lack of economic infrastructure. The main occupation of this area was recruitment to the state or British Indian army . In the post independence period, the rate of recruitment drastically came down. Due to rocky and infertile terrain and no past experience of other trades , there was no alternate occupation. Being at the remote edge of the country it nurses a grievance of economic neglect since 1947. The border

districts were on the historic Mughal road to the Kashmir valley. The districts were also economically and socially integrated with the prosperous cities like Lahore in the Punjab province of Pakistan. But scenario altered and these districts became landlocked. Poonch district was now 225 KM from the nearest rail head i.e. Jammu city. Once famous for its tourist places, the successive governments turned a blind eye to their problems.

Keeping in mind these facts, special recruitment drive should be launched by the security forces to provide employment to these border districts. They will go a long way in creating defensive infrastructure in the form of manpower which knows the local terrain and has the tradition to fight. If this happens even the efficiency of forces belonging to Punjab or nearby parts of the country will improve due to similarity in language. Special funds for developing the road infrastructure should be provided.

Subsidized air taxis must be started for emergency movements which could become a commercial proposition as well. As long term steps for improving industrial base of the belt cannot be taken right now because of the unsuitable environment prevailing presently, emphasis must be paid to the short-term measures. The traditional occupations such as rearing of Silk worms, cottage industries, bee keeping, horticulture and resin extraction need to be encouraged.

Doda district of Jammu also suffers from similar economic problems. Most of the recruitment in the militant's ranks occurred in the rural parts of the district. Being a hilly and third largest district of the country after Leh and Jaisalmer, the district has remained economically backward. Ameliorating the problems of the population of the district has received the lowest priority by the successive governments. The district stands as a unique example of official apathy. Various road networks which could have really changed the entire face of the district were not given appropriate attention. For instance the Bhaderwah-Bani or Bhaderwah-Chamba road network could have provided the district straight access to rest of the country and thus opening the door for socio economic development. There are number of villages even within the district which remain to be connected with roads. It is one district of the state where government officials have to walk for hours to reach their official destinations. Doda is a large district and even within it there are economic disparities.

Some of the areas of the district like Wadwan, Dachin can only be accessible after walking for days. In these areas the militants operate freely as there is lack of security checks in the areas. Locals allege that the police does not patrol in the remote areas thus creating environment of insecurity. The absence of proper road network is itself affecting the forces in their attempts to overpower militants. Doda specific package, which entails the road connectivity, is a must. The district has natural provisions of power generation and the authorities have shown interest in it. It can become an energy surplus district thus exporting energy to rest of the state or even outside. This will open floodgates for the economic development of the district giving employment to a large number of unemployed youth. One of the main reasons of joining militancy in the district is the low economic level of the people with many living below poverty level. Number of power

dams like Dul Hasti in Kishtwar or Baglihar in Chanderkote on river Chenab have been started. But in both the projects the local labour force has been inadequately employed and employees accused of inhuman treatment with the local workers. Number of agitations have occurred in these areas thus further increasing the unrest of the local workers. In the hilly tract of Udhampur and Kathua districts also road connectivity remains poor. The poor transport and communication network in these hills act as an obstacle for the smooth movement of forces particularly in upper reaches of Gool-GulabGarh area of Udhampur district.

In the plain area of Jammu, series of terrorists attacks have resulted in de-industrialization with number of national level units leaving the region and shifting to other areas of the country. An anti terror insurance cover should be provided to all the industrialists so that it acts as an incentive for them to invest in the region. The entire densely populated border belt of Jammu starting from Paharpur in Kathua district to the last point in Akhnoor is prone to shelling from across the border. In the Parakaram Operation, at least 1.75 Lakh border migrants were displaced from their homes. As the IB between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir sees the highest exchange of fire as compared to any other sector in the country the border residents settled in this belt suffer the most. For these border migrants alternate sheds need to be created where they can shift when ever border is troubled. Trenches around their farms could be dug so that they could get shelter while continuing their agricultural activities, when shelling takes place from LOC. The state government has already initiated the move in Akhnoor sector and it needs to be extended to provide them permanent relief. Proposal for providing insurance cover to the men and cattle on the border also deserves consideration. But economic prosperity cannot come about till the time the region is not politically empowered.

E. *Political component*

Lack of political share in decision making process relating to problems of the region since independence is mainly responsible for its alleged backwardness and non-fulfillment of its aspirations. The political power in the post independence era has been centralized in the leadership based in Srinagar. There have been various regional agitations for ending Kashmir's hegemony over it. For instance, the famous Poonch agitation of 1978 in which it was alleged that the state government led by Sheikh Abdullah(hailing from Kashmir) was responsible for alleged nepotism in recruitment of government jobs. The agitation started on a minor issue but it snowballed into a movement, which engulfed the whole Jammu region under its fire. The whole Jammu region, both Muslims and Hindus, jointly participated in this agitation what they termed Kashmiri domination over Jammu. But some leaders of the very movement allege that it was an extremist group of Hindus which compromised with the Kashmiri leadership and sabotaged the popular agitation and sowed the seeds for the Hindu-Muslim disunity. The frustration of the people of the region, in the absence of secular outlets has often led to communal articulation. The last one decade has seen attempts to break the regional identity which has contributed to the militancy in the region. The damage to the regional identity has been at the cost of communal harmony of the area. The previous National

Conference government officially sponsored this move in the form of a report in which it sought division of region into three parts largely on communal basis. The traditional links between the people of the region were tried to be broken under the disguise of economic considerations. The general disaffection with the politics of the state has recently been added with the demand of statehood to Jammu principally started by the RSS after its Krukshetra resolution in the month of June 2002. A RSS sponsored group Jammu State Morcha fought assembly election. In the Muslim dominated border belt, the demand is seen as an attempt to enforce Hindu domination. In a fierce reaction to the statehood demand there has been another counter movement by the Muslims belt for separate regions of their own naming it as Pir Panjal in Rajouri-Poonch districts and Chenab valley in Doda district. To summarize, the political scene was tending to be polarized with Hindus and Muslims fearing domination of each other. The move of trifurcation of the state has led to demands of trifurcation of Jammu based purely on communal identities. This political development has a tendency to reduce the resistance of the people against the Jehadi militants who seek support on religious considerations. One of the main planks of anti-militancy strategy should be strengthening Hindu-Muslim relations and encouraging common leadership of the two communities and also secular politics. Counter terror strategies in Jammu must start with rooting out the factors which were responsible for breaking out of militancy. The mass killings of Hindus were often defended as an act of reprisal for the acts of Hindu extremists. Even the victims of some gruesome massacres corroborate this theory. For instance Shubh Sharma who lost his entire family in the infamous Champnari massacre in which 28 members of bridal party were killed gave some revealing inputs. According to the boy the killings of his family members was the result of killing of four Muslims by RSS workers by drowning each one of them in the river Chenab in the same area. After the incident, militants issued a warning to the villagers not to celebrate any marriage in the area. For a long time the warning had its impact as no body dared to violate it.

Any way the militants got it wrong when they attacked a bridal party which belonged to some other village. Immediately after the incident there was a big communal upsurge in the entire region particularly near the district headquarters i.e. Doda town. Hindus started to live together and Muslims with their coreligionists leaving its imprint on the social fabric of the society. As Subh says in frustration "We (Hindus and Muslims) live in two different worlds now". The political environment in the region further worsened the communal relations in the area. The political parties exploited the insecurities of both Hindus and Muslims. While the support of the Muslims for the militants increased, the Hindu reaction was represented by parties like the BJP which added fuel to the fire with the shrill voices of handing over district to the army. As discussed earlier when the Disturbed area act was clamped, under which the whole region was handed over to the army it undermined the role of civil administration and facilitated the task of the militants.

No counter terror strategy can escape from the fact that the region's communally sensitive baggage needs to be properly tackled. The society cannot fight terror if we exclude a section of society. Muslims in mixed areas saw VDC as an attempt to put them into insecure environment. Muslims recruitment in the VDCs is negligible. Though the

threat perception to the Muslims from the militants is less, there are number of Muslims members who want protection from the militants like Sarpanches, Panches and members of the mainstream parties who have in the recent past borne the brunt of the militant attacks. There is also a need to keep a check over the Village Defence Committees so that they are of mixed character and, in any case, do not make Muslims insecure. On the social level the efforts of non-government organizations need to be promoted as they provide a social platform for the Hindus and Muslims to come together and collectively work for the up-liftment of the district. This can be substantiated by the efforts of Gandhian organizations, which are working in Doda. The traditional bonds between the Hindus and Muslims must be restored. Greater responsibility lies on community leaders encourage communal harmony.

In the areas where the militancy is at present at its peak, non-fulfillment of aspirations has often described as reason for the people to be disillusioned with the political mainstream. Unlike Kashmir valley here we cannot blame the unfair elections to be the main cause of popular alienation. But the disappointment is apparent with the lack of political say in the affairs of the state. There have been several political agitations in the region which were eclipsed by the larger Kashmir problem. The continuous ignorance of political aspirations of the people by the central and state government has been a factor precipitating the worsening of the security scenario in the region. Piecemeal and adhoc measures to appease communal and ethnic urges, without structural changes, only misfired. For instance the Schedule tribes enjoy benefits of reservations of seats in legislature and government services in other parts of the country as enshrined in the Indian constitution. But due to its special status under article 370 and its own constitution, J&K has no similar provisions for the scheduled tribes in the state. Thus Gujjars, one of the most important communities of the state, are deprived of this benefit, giving rise to a sense of disaffection. Similarly the Pahari community started a movement for granting them the scheduled tribe status which every political party promises them at the election time. The failure of the Political parties to keep their promise to the community has left them frustrated.

Special significance of the assembly elections of 2002 was the emergence of a secular identity of Jammu region. For the Congress party, which won maximum number of seats did it mainly on its projection of a Muslim leader of the region, GN Azad, as the prospective first chief minister from Jammu region; which satisfied long cherished power urge of the people and united Hindus and Muslims. For instance in one of the most the communally sensitive assembly segment of the region i.e. Bhaderwah assembly segment Hindus and Muslims voted for the Congress candidate Mohammad Sharief Niaz in massive numbers resulting in his victory. But for wider consideration Congress yielded the post of Chief Minister to Kashmir based PDP leader. Though the Common Minimum Programme of the coalition government and pronouncements of its ministers commits themselves to equal treatment of all three regions of the state, and adhoc measures are not enough to satisfy the power urge at regional and district levels. Militancy has particularly survived in these parts of the region which have not shared political power. Another important measure for the empowerment measure for the people at the grassroots level in the rest of the country is through Panchayati Raj

provided for in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution which are not applicable to the state. The Panchayati Raj act of the state, on the other , provides for nomination of women and SC and ST to the Panchayats and nominated head of the district boards. Even such a government dominated Panchayati Raj has yet not been implemented. Thus centralized system of government has alienated all sections of society in the region.

SUMMARY

The broad conclusions of the foregoing study can now be summed up.

That the militancy started in Kashmir region and then gradually spread to Jammu region is well known. In both regions, the source of arms and later manpower for militancy activity is based in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir . Much scholarly and journalistic work has been done on the causes of its origin. But the fact that it took several years to spread to different parts of Jammu and persists here with greater intensity after it lost much of its momentum in Kashmir pointed to significant peculiarities of its own was somehow overlooked.

Jammu is different from Kashmir valley in a number of ways. The major languages spoken in the region belong to the same family while is quite distinct from the valley. Geographically the valley is vast plateau surrounded by lofty mountain ranges while Jammu is mostly hilly area. Politically Kashmir has nursed grievances against the central government, which for want of adequate avenues of outlet eventually supposed to have got a violent outlet. Jammu grievances, on the other hand, were mostly directed against Kashmir based political leadership under a centralized, constitutional and political system. In the absence of adequate secular outlet, regional discontent tends to get communal outlet. Communalism was further encouraged by and , in turn , aggravated militant movement which tried to represent one community and threatened the other.

The geo-cultural background of the region which is very vital for the study of the problem is given in the beginning of the report in the first chapter . Further variations have taken into account micro studies of different parts of the region. The fact that Jammu is ethnically much closer to Azad Kashmir than both are to Kashmir valley is of crucial significance to the study of causes and character of militancy and its composition. As stock of Kashmiri militants declined and non-Kashmiri militants were unwelcome in Kashmir the so called foreign militants were more acceptable to the Muslims of Jammu as most of them were either from Azad Kashmir or adjoining Punjab part of Pakistan with closer ethnic affinity with Jammu. The counter militancy strategy must take account all peculiarities of the region ; geographical, administrative , cultural , economic and political. The concluding part of the study deals with appropriate measures on all these fronts. Security , it is by now universally recognized is not merely job of security forces but also involves coordinated approach of all relevant factor with due emphasis on the role of the people and institutions to effectively mobilize them.

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 - a) Brief account of militancy in Kashmir region. Its Kashmir centric character and causes. Page 3
 - b) Pre-partition Profile of Jammu and Kashmir Page 5
 - c) Linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographical profile of Jammu region which would provide clues to the understanding of all subsequent conclusions. Page 8
 - 2. MILITANCY IN JAMMU REGION** Page 14 to 38

How the distinct character of the region prevented the spread of militancy in the initial phase? What were the causes, including political, that gave rise to it later. The main hypothesis of the project that militancy in Jammu region has an autonomous character, despite its inter-connection with that in Kashmir region and common source of supply of arms and funds, training and command from the LoC, will be tested on the basis of gathered data. The chapter is based on the micro study of six districts.

- a) Doda

- b) Poonch
- c) Rajouri
- d) Jammu
- e) Udhampur
- f) Kathua

3) COUNTER TERROR STRATEGIES FOR JAMMU REGION

Page 39 to 48

- a) Security
- b) Civil Administration
- c) Cultural component of counter terror strategy
- d) Economic
- e) Political Component
- f) Summary of the Report

4) Bibliography and list of persons interviewed Page 49