

## Unjust and unwise: On counter-insurgency operations in J&K

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Paper - III  
(Internal Security)

In a conflict-prone border province such as Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), security forces have to tackle not only terrorism but also engage in counter-insurgency operations in a precise and just manner. The Pir Panjal Valley, comprising Poonch and Rajouri districts, has witnessed fierce encounters between security forces and militants in jungle terrain, leading to the death of 28 soldiers this year. The death of three civilians who were detained by the Army in the Poonch-Rajouri area following a deadly ambush on an Army convoy on December 21, and the fact that five other civilians were badly injured due to alleged torture by the security forces, is a severe indictment of the counter-insurgency tactics there. Such heinous actions by security forces targeting civilians in response to militant attacks are clearly problematic, on two counts. First, this increases the unpopularity of a regime that has not been democratically elected in the Union Territory where provincial elections have not been held for more than half a decade. This is a blow against counter-insurgency in an area that has been relatively more peaceful in comparison to the Kashmir Valley. In fact, the Pir Panjal region has been experiencing militancy in the last two years after relative calm for a decade and a half. Counter-insurgency operations of the kind that followed the ambush last week breed discontent among residents in a region which has not been supportive of militancy in the near past.

One of the aims of militants in the asymmetric warfare waged against Indian security forces is to provoke the forces into committing rights violations against civilians and to use grievances and indignation among them to increase their own support base. Such actions by security forces play into the

### Why Terrorist Activity Has Shifted from Kashmir to Poonch-Rajouri?

- While the Kashmir zone, the traditionally more volatile area, is relatively quiet, in recent months, it is the Pir Panjal (South) in the Jammu sector which has witnessed more operational activity and presence of terrorists.
- The recent encounters in the depth areas of the Poonch-Rajouri sector have resulted in more losses for the Army than the terrorists.
- Possible Reasons Behind the Terrorist Presence and Activity in the Poonch-Rajouri Sector

### Terrorists Find it a Path of Least Resistance:

- Terrorism is like water and it takes the path of least resistance. Kashmir has become a challenging environment for terrorist activities due to a robust counter-infiltration and counter-terrorism grid.
- Moreover, this grid makes it difficult for Pakistan to execute proxy operations, a strategy integral to its doctrine of proxy hybrid war.
- The focus of terrorist has shifted to the Poonch-Rajouri sector, which has a history of local support for proxy operations.
- Although, there has been a decline in support over time, there has been effort to re-cultivate support, particularly among the Gujjar community.
- The terrain which is mostly forested and rocky tracts of the Pir Panjal (South), is seen as conducive to proxy activities.

### Article 370 Abrogation Impact:

- The abrogation of Article 370 is another factor making Kashmir less conducive to separatist trends.
- Since terrorists are finding it difficult to operate in Kashmir zone, they have moved towards Poonch-Rajouri sector to keep the proxy war alive.

hands of militants and their handlers across the border. Second, the legitimacy of force or violence and its use by the state depend on the justness of the actions. Indiscrimination in the use of violence targeting civilians without just cause only results in the questioning of that legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The J&K police have registered a murder case against unidentified persons following the deaths of the civilians and the Army has taken three senior officers off their posts while promising an inquiry. Both these agencies must now deliver justice quickly and in a firm manner. "Fake encounter" deaths and torture by security agencies in the Valley have resulted in spurts of increased militancy besides public outrage that developed into major law and order situations. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Union government has tried to use a no-holds barred security-centric approach to tackle the problem of militancy and public anger in J&K. The repeated acts of rights violations and crimes in the name of counter-insurgency are clear evidence that this approach is not working.

### Expected Question for Prelims

**Que. Consider the following statements with reference to the changes in the pattern of terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir:**

1. There has been a decline in terrorist activities in the valley region of Kashmir.
2. Terrorism has increased in the Pir Panjal region during the last two years.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1, nor 2

**Answer : C**

### Mains Expected Question & Format

**Que.: A change has been seen in the area of operation of terrorist activities in Kashmir, what are the reasons behind it? Also comment on the change in the relations between the army and the general public in Kashmir.**

**Answer's Approach:**

- ❖ In the first part of the answer, discuss the changes in the area of operation of terrorist activities in Kashmir and their reasons.
- ❖ In the second part, discuss the changes in the relations between the army and the common people in Kashmir.
- ❖ Finally give a conclusion giving suggestions.

**Note:** - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.