

Contextualising Development and Security of Jammu and Kashmir through the Whole of Government Perspective

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Abstract:

The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been a concern for India's territorial sovereignty. Since independence, J&K's accession to India marked the conflict between India and Pakistan. Countering militancy, development, and assimilation of J&K to the rest of India have been prominent issues throughout various parties' governments in India. The militancy poses a security threat and a developmental threat to the residents of this region. The initial strict military approach to the security and development of J&K has proved vividly inadequate. The J&K region requires a Whole-of-Government (WoG) approach toward the recurring threats of militancy. The study examined the WoG perspective on security and developmental challenges of the Union territory of J&K. The paper assesses the policy shift in the three broader categories, namely administrative reforms, welfare schemes, and environmental stewardship that marks the apparent departure from the traditional approach towards the security threat.

Keywords: Sovereignty, Conflict, Militancy, Development, Whole of Government, Welfare, Environment, Policy.

INTRODUCTION:

The previous state of Jammu and Kashmir has a long history of invasion, infiltration, proxy war, and militancy. We can trace back to the invasion of 712 CE by Muhammad bin Qasim in the Sindh province on Indian soil. The Subsequent religious and cultural amalgamation of the local population can be termed the driving agent of the current social dynamics of the region. The former state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is the only Indian state with a Muslim-majority population. The birth of this state had been a dramatic event, and the conversion of this state into a union territory brought even more dramatic reactions from our friendly neighbour.

The year 1929 marked the dawn of local politics in the province. The local Kashmiri Youth formed Reading Room Party, which later merged under the All J&K Muslim Conference.

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This party laid the foundation for the struggle against the autocratic rule of the kingdom (Para, 2020). Hindu ruler Maharaja Hari Singh ruled the Himalayan region of J&K at the dawn of the Indian Partition. Maharaja Hari Singh's naïve affirmation to create an independent nation-state, staying aloof from India and Pakistan, proved highly miscalculated. According to Puri (2008), under the India Independence Act of 1947, the Maharaja had the authority to opt for his future allegiance when British India was divided into two dominions, but he was hesitant to choose India. This reluctance soon converted into the apparent decision to accept the *Instrument of Accession* to India in the wake of the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir in 1947.

According to scholars, Nehru's decision to drag the bilateral conflict of Indo-Pak of 1947 to the United Nations was inherently guided by his idealistic outlook. United Nations offered the plan of action as a plebiscite once the Pakistani troops withdrew from the region. Troops never withdrew, and the plebiscite never took place. This left Pakistan with a vast province area as Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). The event sowed the seeds of conflict between India and Pakistan and future instability in the province of J&K. The instability had manifold implications for the growth and development of the province. As the institutional apparatus of the state crumbled, dialogue and assimilation had limited success due to extremist threats to moderates (Mohan, 2012). The valley's instability and militancy not only discourage any dialogue and representation but also hinders the process of nation-building in the long run.

From the initial years of independence till the eve of the twenty-first century, the Indian government's over-emphasis on the role of police and military to curb the threats of militancy and upheaval in the valley proved to be inadequate in its efficacy. The region is still under the fear of militancy and terrorism. The shift in government policies is evident as the course of action encompasses other domains of development as well. The special status of the province under Article 370 of the Indian constitution was another obstacle to assimilation into mainstream India. The Whole of Government (WoG) Approach initially originated in the context of the Arctic security and development of the region's aboriginal people. The concept refers to the holistic governmental effort to develop a particular region. The approach emphasizes inter-departmental coordination in policy formation and implementation.

The paper analysis the Indian government's approach toward the security and development of the valley. The concept of WoG comprises every aspect of the government, such as defence, diplomacy, security, environmental security, administrative reforms, welfare policies, etc. To be concise and comprehensive, I limited the scope of study and made an attempt to contextualize the WoG approach of the Indian government towards the former state of J&K. I

analyzed the context of security and development of the valley in the realm of administrative reforms, welfare schemes, and environmental stewardship.

ROLE OF MILITARY IN THE VALLEY

The Indian army was ordered with Operation Rescue on 27th Oct 1947 to save Kashmir, which was under attack from Pakistan. The invasion was well-planned and highly swift in its implementation. As Major Sinha (1977) notes,

“The enemy had planned the invasion of Kashmir in two phases. The first phase commenced in September 1947 when he carried out several border raids along the 500 miles Pakistan border. This was in the nature of a deception to force Jammu and Kashmir State Forces to dissipate their strength. In this, he appears to have succeeded, for when his second phase commenced, the State Forces were dispersed in several small garrisons all along the border. This phase started on 20th October 1947 when over 2000 raiders in motor lorries poured across the border from Pakistan. These raiders were a motley crowd comprising Hazara tribesmen, Afridis, Moslem League National Guards, and Pakistan Army personnel said to be “on leave.” They were equipped with a complete range of infantry weapons, including machine guns and heavy mortars. It was obvious that this large force had been assembled, equipped, and launched into battle by Pakistan”.

Operation Rescue was the first military operation in the state of Kashmir and proved to be successful in its efforts, eliminating the invaders from the valley. This operation can be termed as the first governmental move towards ‘Nation Building’. Operation Meghdoot in 1984 was another army operation of India that resulted in the final seizure of the Siachen Glacier. The major conflict between India and Pakistan occurred in 1999 after their nuclearisation. Western media closely covered this conflict as the war broke out between two nuclearised states sharing a disputed border and had a legacy of tensions since their independence. The event also occurred in the former state of J&K. Another event, *Operation Sarp Vinash*, was an army operation targeted to flush out terrorist camps in the Pir Panjal area of J&K in 2003. This operation was marked by searching and eliminating hideouts of insurgents. Other military operations against the militancy and insurgency were Operation Calm Down in 2016 and Operation All Out in 2017. Nevertheless, one operation had a significant impact on the trust building of J&K. Operation Sadbhavana (Goodwill) was a magnificent operation exploring the army’s capacity to assimilate and forge the feeling of a nation. According to Cariappa (2008), the major focus areas under *Operation Sadbhavana* are shown in Diagram 1.

This Operation Goodwill (Sadbhavana) was the first deliberate attempt from the Indian government to employ a holistic approach or Whole of Government perspective. The army was a capacity builder to develop infrastructure, communication, agriculture, education, and empowerment. Sadhbhavana projects were mainly executed in areas close to the Line of Control (LOC) and remote areas of the Valley. Due to their territorial proximity to

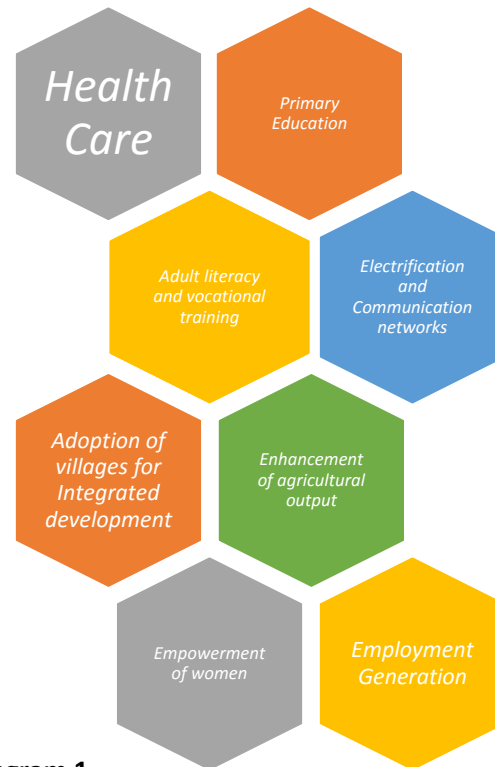


Diagram 1

LOC, these areas were prone to infiltration across the border. Improving the living standards of the local population in these areas could serve the purpose of stability (Anant, 2011).

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

The Whole of Government approach requires a coordinated plan of action to secure the long-term policy objectives. J&K witnessed various administrative reforms to facilitate the efforts of other departmental agencies in their goals. The government's primary focus has been to secure the valley's peace, security, and development. The governance from the top creates friction in the smooth dialogue and functioning of state machinery. Accommodation of all the stakeholders in the decision-making could facilitate good governance and stability. As Behera (2016) suggests,

"A top-down dialogue process confined to the bilateral level has, for all effective purposes, excluded a whole array of important stakeholders and paid little heed, if at all, to their voices and demands. Interestingly, there is a complete and steadfast agreement on this issue at the top; that is, the peace process involves a single high table with only two seats for New Delhi and Islamabad. While both sides profess to confabulate with their respective constituencies, precisely 'who' is consulted, 'how', 'when' and 'to which end' is mostly determined unilaterally".

Following are some of the selected administrative reforms which were executed for better governance in the region.

1. **Single Line System:** Sheikh Abdullah's government introduced a decentralised district-level planning administration system, also called Single Line Administration, in 1976. This reform created District Development Boards with the Deputy Commissioner of the district ex- officio member. District Development Commissioner was assigned extensive delegated powers related to finance and administration. Other guidelines related to the administration were introduced in 1993 to improve the system further. According to Mehra and Kaur,

"The main purpose behind the Single Line Administration was to decentralise administration and to build up a particular base at the district level...The Single Line System in the state yielded considerable benefits in terms of extending the impact of developmental programmes and in encouraging public involvement as well as reducing regional disparities."
2. **The J&K State Accountability Commission Act, 2002:** The act was introduced to curb the corruption and abuse of power by civil servants in the former state of J&K. The act provides for the creation of an Accountability Commission to examine and report on the issue of such misbehaviour by civil officers.
3. **Right to Information (RTI):** Enacted in 2004, the Right to information act in J&K proved to be a significant step towards the transparency and accountability of the government. It is a surprise that J&K had an RTI act in force before the National RTI was enacted in 2005. After the enactment of the RTI act by the Indian parliament, the final J&K RTI act came into existence in 2009. In 2006, Aruna Roy, Shanker Singh, and Nikhil Dey wrote,

"These efforts placed the issue of RTI in the centre of democratic action and radically altered the discourse on what was often dismissed as a largely academic issue."
4. **The J&K Bifurcation and removal of the special status of J&K, 2019:** On the 5th Aug 2019, through the presidential order, the special status of J&K was revoked, and the former state of J&K was bifurcated into two union territories. The removal of special status has enormous significance in the long run as it promotes normative assimilation of the region into India. The creation of Union territories to curb and manage the insurgency through central authority has been a welcoming step towards stability and peace. The measure has been highly controversial, and the government has a considerable task to justify its decision. There are ample opportunities for better governance of the valley, but it comes with a hovering threat of increased separatist tendencies. As noted by former DGP of J&K Dr Bhan (2019),

“Security measures and slogans for developments and jobs will have to be supplemented by strong steps to win the hearts and minds of people in the valley. The government will need to win the valley's 'Vishwas' by resuming the political process and taking the mainstream political parties of the state into confidence. Any vacuum in this regard will only encourage separatists and anti-national forces”.

WELFARE SCHEMES

Welfare schemes play a crucial role in the process of social upliftment and inclusive growth of marginalized communities. These schemes act as the bridge to fill the gap between “have and have not.” Social welfare policies are broad plans of action comprising strategies and methods to execute welfare services (Kulkarni, 1964). These welfare policies include a wide range of social services for the disadvantaged section of society. Social welfare services refer to special facilities for people with particular needs (Dubey, 1971).

The government introduced various schemes to ameliorate local distress and under-development. These schemes run parallel to the defence and administrative actions to improve governance and stability. The government launched various pension schemes for the old age, handicapped and widows. National Social Assistance Programme is one such centrally sponsored welfare programme. The government works towards women’s empowerment through diverse approaches such as Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna (IGMSY). In order to save the youth from radicalization and militancy, the government emphasises education through a wide range of scholarship programmes.

Diagram 2 shows the government’s focus areas of welfare policy and schemes.

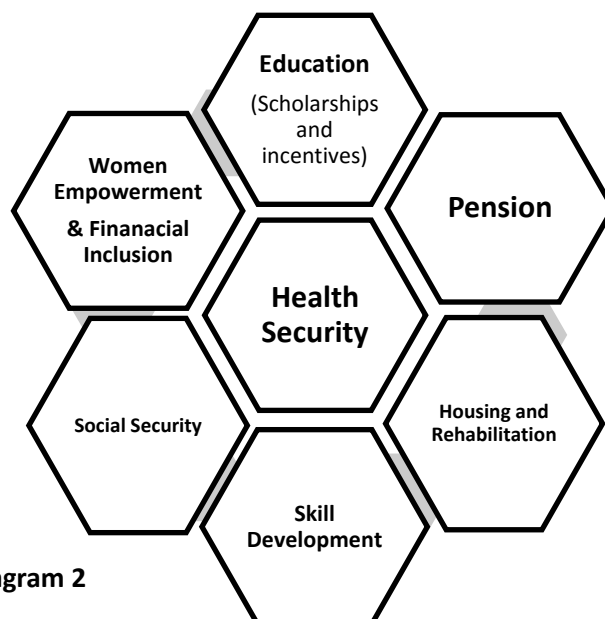


Diagram 2

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The former Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir has a delicate environmental and ecological balance and requires special attention in policy formation. From wetlands to biodiversity, J&K has been an environmentally sensitive zone. Any unorganized human activities can heavily vandalize and compromise the entire ecological system. Melting of glaciers, deforestation, pollution of water bodies, and loss of biodiversity pose threats to the fragile ecological balance of the valley. Global Warming threatens the biodiversity of high-altitude ecosystems and causes the risk of extinction ((La Sorte & Jetz, 2010; Mondoni et al., 2011, 2012). The Department of Forest was created in 1881 for the province of J&K, and J C McDonnell assumed the first chair of the Conservator of Forests in J&K. The main objective of this department was to conserve and manage the forest areas in the valley. The Himalayan region spans Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and China. The major area of the region belongs to India, Nepal and China. The rapidly increasing risk of climate change requires quick actions from these nations. India and China are termed irresponsible carbon emitters as both countries rank high in global carbon emissions. The proper management of the Himalayan ecosystem and biodiversity can restore the international reputation of India in terms of its environmental commitments. India can showcase its pledge of environmental stewardship in the development and conservation of the valley. The conservation of this mountaintop ecosystem can help in satisfying natural resource demand and promoting tourism as well.

CONCLUSION

The province of Jammu and Kashmir has been a territory of contestation between India and Pakistan since independence. The security of the valley stood as a priority of every successive government of India. While threats to national security and J&K, in particular, have been tackled with efficacy, small-scale ceasefire remains the recurring issue. Due to security sensitivity and prone to militancy, the government's approach always favoured military actions. We can also observe the operation of other policy areas but certainly less effective. I traced some of the areas which can be characterized as the elements of the Whole of Government approach to the valley. Some of the government initiatives truly reflect holistic developmental plans. Government efforts through various departments and ministries are evident in administrative reforms and welfare schemes, but there is a clear coordination gap between diverse policy aims and implementation. The Whole of Government perspective on the development and security of the region requires coordinated and combined efforts of all the government and non-governmental agencies. Physical security indeed forms part of the stability and development of

a particular area, but the threat of violence also hinders overall growth. The government must plan its policies to remove such obstacles to the progress and prosperity of the valley. Policies aims must include trust building, employment generation, welfare programs, education and reducing the risk of climate change for holistic and multidimensional progress through a Whole of Government perspective.

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