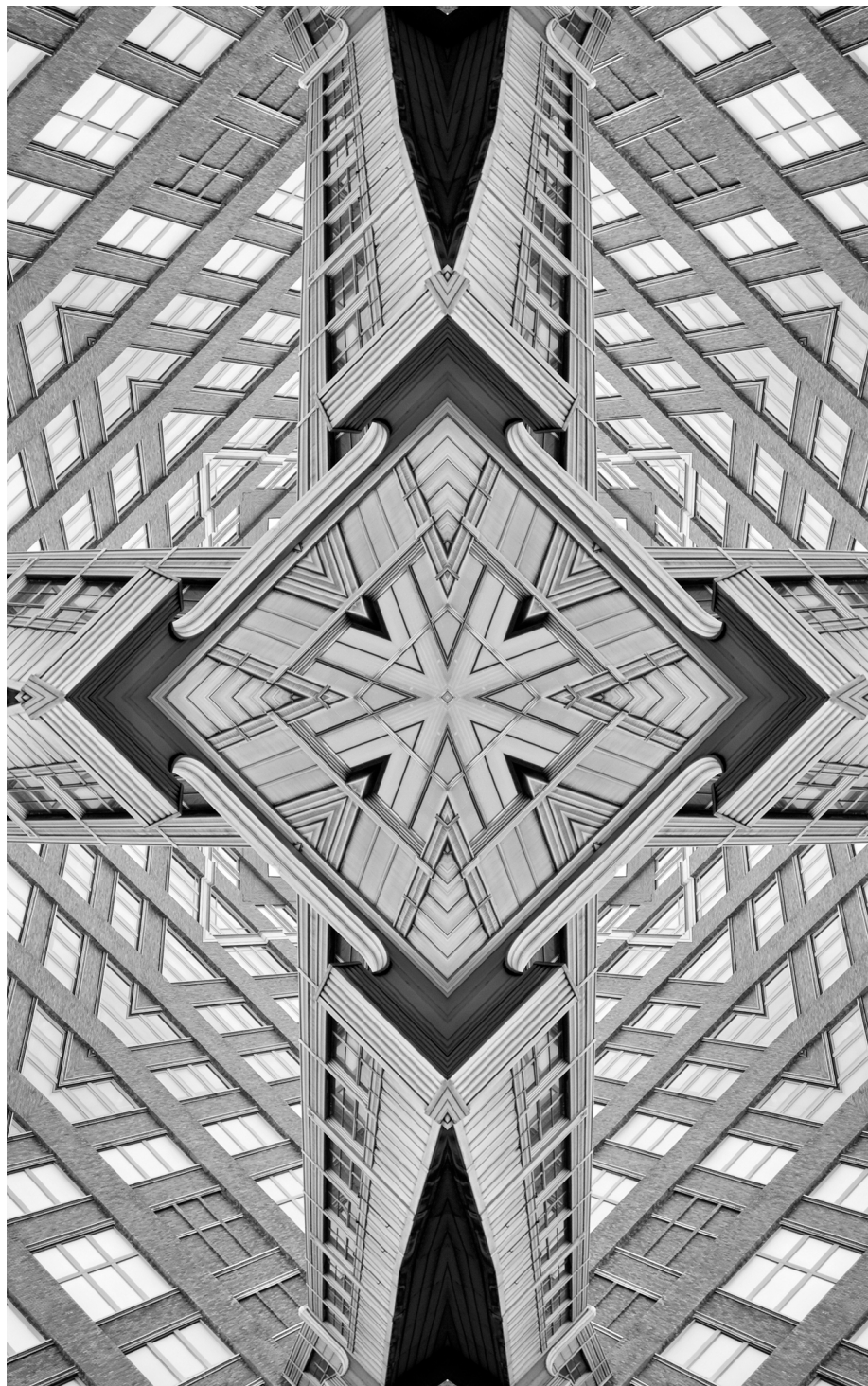


Issue Brief

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Pakistan's Role in Kashmir's Terrorism Challenge Post-2019

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Abstract

The Pahalgam terror attack of 22 April 2025 raised the spectre of cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir yet again. Initially claimed and then denied by The Resistance Front (TRF), a Lashkar-e-Taiba affiliate, the attack triggered nationwide condemnation and protests, including among the local population in the Union Territory. After the 2019 revocation of Articles 370 and 35A, the Indian government intensified efforts to integrate Kashmir politically, socially, and economically by implementing security measures and development initiatives. This led to regional economic growth that exceeded the national average, which in turn caused a decline in local support for separatism and terrorism even as Pakistan's backing for terrorism and proxy wars grew during that period. With the waning of local support for its proxy war, Pakistan pivoted and began engaging in narcoterrorism and recruiting foreign militants. This brief analyses the evolving nature of terrorism in post-2019 Kashmir, highlighting Pakistan's changing tactics in its proxy warfare.

The Pahalgam terror attack in April this year claimed the lives of 26 civilians, drawing widespread condemnation beyond Kashmir. Shortly after the incident, The Resistance Front (TRF), a splinter group of Lashkar-e-Taiba, initially claimed responsibility; following protests and condemnations from religious leaders in Kashmir, the TRF denied any involvement in the attack.¹

In 2019, New Delhi revoked Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution of India to alter the region's administrative structure and framework, aligning it with the aspirations of the population of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).² After 2019, Pakistan faced challenges in sustaining its decades-old campaign to fan separatism and recruit locals for its terrorist activities. At the same time, New Delhi effectively managed support for its decision from global organisations and international stakeholders through deft diplomacy, complemented by periodic diplomatic visits to the Kashmir Valley. In January 2020, 15 foreign delegates visited the Union Territory (UT), followed by over 24 international envoys from various nations meeting with different groups, including youth, in February 2021. New Delhi leveraged its G20 presidency to highlight the Valley's rich tourism potential and increased political stability after 2019. In May 2023, Kashmir hosted the third G20 Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting focused on promoting green, inclusive, and resilient tourism development.³ Additionally, New Delhi has launched a focused political initiative aimed at integrating J&K's socio-economic and political aspects with the Union of India. The assembly elections for the Union Territory in 2024 were held without incident, representing a successful initial trial of democracy since 2019.^a

Concurrently, New Delhi also prohibited separatist organisations and effectively controlled terrorist activities throughout the Kashmir Valley. Incidents of stone-pelting, which had become commonplace, gradually subsided.⁴ New Delhi implemented measures aimed at the region's economic and social transformation through diverse initiatives in infrastructure, tourism, and horticulture, among other domains. With the implementation of enhanced economic stimulus packages beginning in 2020, the Lieutenant Governor (LG) announced an economic stimulus package of INR1,350

a Observers from 15 countries participated in monitoring the election and visited various polling stations in Srinagar and Budgam.

million, aimed at supporting tourism and other sectors affected by the financial repercussions of both the security lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2019, the region has undergone an economic transformation, achieving a growth rate of 7.8 percent, slightly above the national average of 7.77 percent over the past three years.⁵

The enhanced security measures and growing economic transformation changed the attitudes of the youth towards New Delhi. The younger generation of Kashmiris realised how Islamabad has deceived Kashmiris for decades by exploiting religion, the Quran, and prophetic sayings (Hadees).⁶ Furthermore, since 2019, Pakistan has engaged in malicious activities such as narcoterrorism, not only to finance terrorism and violence but also to undermine the remnants of the Valley's syncretic culture. The rising drug addiction in Kashmir, driven by a constant supply of narcotics across the border and the escalating political and economic problems within Pakistan, has undoubtedly influenced the perception of Kashmiri society towards Islamabad. There has been a notable decline in local support for Pakistan's proxy conflict against India.

The tangible transformations in the region have contributed to intangible outcomes. Renewed hope and aspirations among the local population have rekindled the spirit of the Valley's *Kashmiriyat* (or 'identity'), restoring the land's communal and social harmony that had for long characterised its culture. This situation frustrated Pakistan-backed terror organisations and compelled them and their state supporters to increase the presence of foreign terrorists, alter their geographical focus and operational terrain, and initiate attacks on non-locals to instigate psychological warfare.

This brief explores Pakistan's role in terrorism related to Kashmir post-2019, emphasising how it has evolved from being Pakistan's tactical proxy war to targeted attacks on specific groups, to fuel communal tensions and disharmony across India.

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

Shortly after the repeal of Articles 370 and 35A, Pakistan deployed the narrative that New Delhi's actions were illegal and a breach of international law. Subsequently, Pakistan's prime minister at that time, Imran Khan, labelled the move as unconstitutional and cautioned that it could trigger further attacks similar to the Pulwama incident.⁷ He "directed that all diplomatic channels be activated to expose the brutal Indian racist regime and human rights violations."⁸ Pakistan engaged with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and sought discussions on Kashmir at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). China supported Pakistan, facilitating closed-door consultations regarding the Kashmir issue at the UNSC.⁹ However, these efforts to politicise India's domestic affairs failed to garner support from the international community.¹⁰ The UNSC meetings did not result in a single press statement supporting Pakistan or Beijing in this regard.

India, meanwhile, reaffirmed its position, asserting that terrorism and dialogue cannot coexist, and emphasised that matters related to Article 370 of the Constitution were strictly India's internal affair.¹¹ India's commitment and persistent diplomatic efforts appeared to have borne fruit, particularly among the Arab countries, as they did not support Pakistan. Even the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood by India.¹²

This is not to say that support for Pakistan in this regard was nil. Countries such as Türkiye and Malaysia backed Islamabad's stance on Kashmir. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during the 74th UN General Assembly in September 2019, raised the issue. He criticised the restrictions imposed in the Valley by the Indian government, referring to them as "virtually under blockade with eight million people unfortunately, unable to step outside of Kashmir." Erdogan urged a resolution to the problem through dialogue.¹³ In a similar vein, then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad addressed the UN General Assembly, invoking UN resolutions on Kashmir. He emphasised that the issue should be resolved through peaceful means and called on India and Pakistan to find a solution together.¹⁴ The Western powers, particularly the European Union (EU)¹⁵ and the United States (US), have remained supportive of India's actions in Kashmir since August 2019; and so have Russia and France.¹⁶

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

Following the August 2019 decision, Pakistan raised concerns about alleged human rights violations, a security clampdown, and the arrests of civilians at international forums, prompting New Delhi to invite foreign diplomats and lawmakers to the Kashmir Valley for fact-finding. The first visit occurred in October 2019 with diplomats from the EU, followed by another group from 15 nations.^b However, the EU's diplomats declined to participate in the second visit and insisted on meeting with detained political leaders.¹⁷ Since Pakistan was unable to draw global attention to the Kashmir issue after August 2019 through diplomatic channels, it also faced challenges in garnering international support, as acknowledged by the Pakistani High Commissioner to India from 2014 to 2017.¹⁸ Consequently, Pakistan reverted to employing old and tested state policy strategies by utilising terrorism for geostrategic and geopolitical purposes against New Delhi in J&K.

Diminished Local Support

Since 2019, Pakistan has faced challenges in attracting separatists and local terrorists, mainly due to shifts in conflict dynamics and growing concerns and doubts within the J&K population about the separatist movement. In February 2019, India's Ministry of Home Affairs designated Jamaat-e-Islami-J&K (JeI) as an unlawful association for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967.¹⁹ The outfit continued to operate as a leading organisation for separatism and extremism in the Kashmir Valley until it was banned. Following this, many separatist leaders committed to bonds of good behaviour, pledging to maintain peace and refrain from any violent actions or secessionist activities.²⁰ Stone-pelting, strikes, and protests at encounter sites were widespread until August 2019. According to official data, Kashmir experienced 1,999 stone-pelting incidents in 2019, up from 1,458 in 2018 and 1,412 in 2017.²¹ Approximately 400 terrorists were in the Valley after the revocation of special status,²² with about 16 returning home due to encouragement from their families and security agencies in the first six months of 2020.²³ Within one year of the abrogation of Article 370, terrorist incidents decreased by 70 percent, falling to 124 in the first seven months of 2020 from 198 in the same period of 2019.

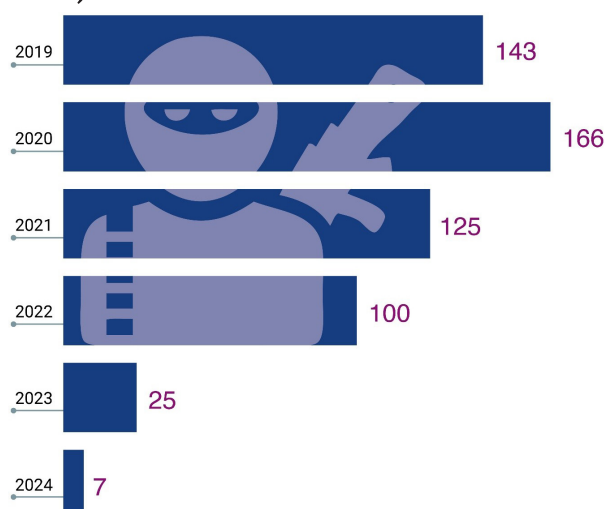
^b They included representatives from the US, South Korea, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Fiji, the Maldives, Norway, the Philippines, Morocco, Argentina, Peru, Niger, Nigeria, Guyana, and Togo.

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

Following the August 2019 decision, supported by new administrative reorganisation and enhanced Centre-state relationships, security agencies, particularly in South Kashmir, successfully clipped terrorism and extremism. In 2020, these agencies eliminated 221 terrorists,²⁴ including 47 commanders of different outfits, in 100 counterterrorism operations.²⁵ The security forces also arrested 299 terrorists and their associates by dismantling the overground network of terror groups, halting stone-pelting, strikes, and protests at encounter sites.²⁶ Between 2019 and 2022, at least 750 terrorists were eliminated in J&K, with 83 percent being locals and 17 percent foreign nationals.²⁷

The government also curtailed funding of terror outfits from Pakistan and other countries. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) looked into cases of terrorist financing, revealing a connection between the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and terrorist organisations.²⁸ The crackdown targeted terrorism funding and individuals supporting or harbouring terrorists, including OGWs and JeI cadre. Terror incidents dropped, and the number of locals joining terrorism decreased to seven in 2024. In 2019, 143 local individuals joined terrorist groups, a number that increased to 166 in 2020, before declining to 125 in 2021. After 2022, the recruitment of locals dropped sharply, with 100 youth joining terrorism that year, then decreasing to 25 in 2023, and just seven in 2024.²⁹ This trend contrasts with earlier periods, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Local Terrorist Recruitment (2019-2024)



Source: Author's own, using data from *The Deccan Herald*³⁰ and *The South Asia Terrorism Portal*.³¹

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

The decline in terror recruitment can be attributed to outreach efforts and security measures like conducting seminars on drug addiction and terrorism, and providing professional training to students for jobs and entrepreneurship. Similarly, the reduction in quasi-violent incidents is linked to security agencies' persistent engagement with the community. Additionally, the UT administration revitalised its surrender and rehabilitation policy, resulting in eight youths surrendering during encounters,³² and over 50 others exiting quietly.³³

The prohibition of funeral rallies for slain terrorists since June 2020 has ensured that terrorist organisations can no longer exploit these emotionally charged occasions as recruitment avenues.^{c,34} Additionally, the lifespan of terrorists was reduced by six months after joining the terror groups due to the increased security grid and dominance of security agencies, especially in South Kashmir.³⁵ With setbacks in South Kashmir, local terror groups like HM were compelled to reassess their strategies and relocate their bases. In 2020, of the 203 militants killed, 19 were in Srinagar, including HM's Operations Chief Saifullah Mir and the District Commander Junaid Ashraf Sehrai. In 2019, four militants were also killed in Srinagar.³⁶ At the time of writing, local terrorist groups such as HM no longer exist due to a lack of recruitment from the local population. Following 2019, HM encountered a shortage of weapons and ammunition³⁷ as heightened vigilance along the LoC (Line of Control) obstructed Pakistan's attempts to smuggle arms into J&K.

Terrain, Targets, and Tactics after 2019

Facing reduced backing from the Valley and struggling against security forces in urban areas, the terrorists from Pakistan relocated their operations to the forests south of Pir Panjal in the Poonch and Rajouri districts. When the abrogation occurred, Pakistan was under heightened scrutiny from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which placed it on its grey list from 2018 to 2022.³⁸ The FATF's monitoring prompted Pakistan to create new virtual terror groups and resort to narcotics to finance terrorism in Kashmir. New groups, such as TRF, Jammu Kashmir Ghaznavi Force, People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAAF), and Kashmir Tigers, were established to manage FATF scrutiny until 2022. These are fronts for LeT and other terrorist outfits, with the TRF mainly utilising its funding channels. PAAF acts as a proxy for Jaish-

c Since the killing of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) commander Burhan Wani in 2016, the funerals of terrorists had become recruitment venues for the terror groups and their handlers in Pakistan.

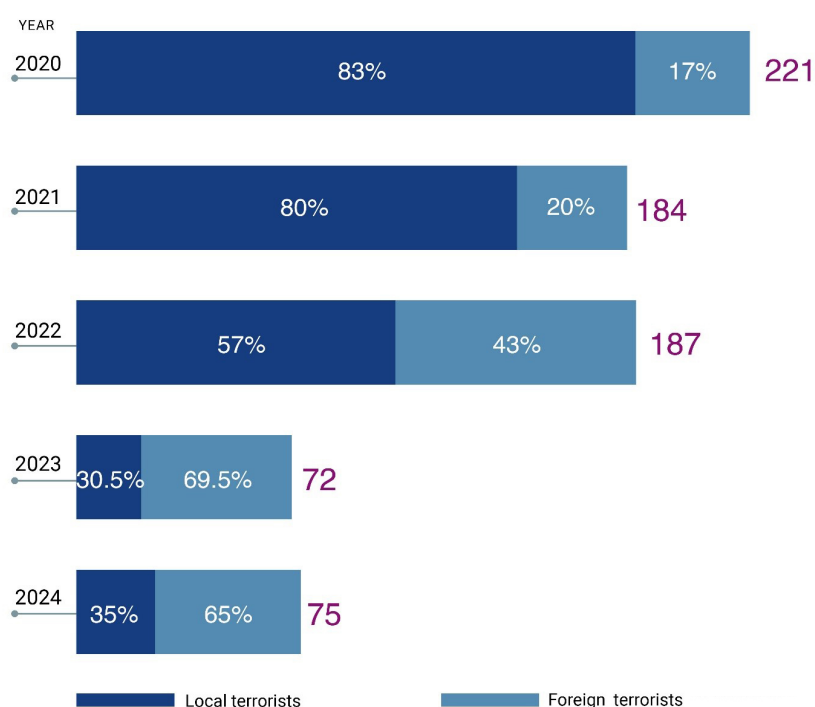
Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

e-Mohammed (JeM), responsible for the February 2019 Lethpora/Pulwama suicide attack. Security agencies report that Pakistani terrorists in the Valley and Rajouri-Poonch districts collaborate with drug addicts, enticing them with drugs, cash, or weapons; they also compel them to inform on security forces or deliver weapons. This strategy has been effective for terror groups.

The shift of activities from the Kashmir Valley to the south of the Pir Panjal Range has mirrored a movement among drug smugglers.³⁹ The security grid in the twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch was weakened due to the reassignment of specific forces to Eastern Ladakh in response to Chinese aggression along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) after 2020.⁴⁰ Terrorists took advantage of the opportunity, leading to a rise in terrorism south of the Pir Panjal range, where they attacked security forces. From 2020 to August 2023, in the forest areas of Poonch and Rajouri in the Pir Panjal range, 26 soldiers, including five para troopers, have been killed in counter-terrorism operations.

Since 2022, Pakistan has also increased the number of Pakistani terrorists in J&K, actively supported by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and army to sustain its proxy war against India. From 2019 to 2021, the percentage of Foreign Terrorists (FTs) killed was at 17 percent, increasing to 43 percent in 2022 and 69.5 percent in 2023. By 2024, the rate of FTs eliminated by security forces remained at 65 percent, while the figure for local terrorists dropped from 83 percent in 2020 to 30 percent in 2023 and then rose to 35 percent in 2024 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Terrorists Killed, Local and Foreign (in %, 2020-2024)



Source: Author's own, using data from *The Deccan Herald*,⁴¹ *The South Asia Terrorism Portal*,⁴² and *Economic Times*.⁴³

Security agencies report that there are about 59 foreign terrorists and just 10 local terrorists currently active in the region.⁴⁴ These FTs are well-equipped with weapons such as M4 Carbine assault rifles,⁴⁵ night vision goggles, and highly encrypted Chinese telecom equipment typically used by the Pakistani army.⁴⁶ They use guerrilla warfare, dense forests, and complex terrain, especially in the Jammu region and South Kashmir, to ambush security forces.

In 2023, the Jammu region experienced 43 terror attacks, primarily in the Rajouri and Poonch districts. The following year saw a drop in terrorist incidents in these districts, while there was an increase in attacks in Reasi, Kishtwar, Kathua, Doda, Udhampur, and Jammu (see Table 1). In 2024, terror attacks in Jammu claimed 44 lives, including 18 security personnel, with most of these incidents involving targeted killings, ambushes, and

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

encounters.⁴⁷ At the same time, the number of terror incidents reported in the Valley decreased from 126 in 2021 to 103 in 2022 and further to 29 in 2023.⁴⁸

Table 1: Areas in J&K Witnessing Increased Terror Attacks since 2019

Date	Incident	Area	Casualties	Perpetrators
8 July 2020	Assassination of a BJP leader	Bandipora	3 Civilians	Unknown
29 Oct 2020	Attack on BJP workers	Kulgam	3 Civilians	The Resistance Front (TRF)
13 Dec 2021	Ambush on a police vehicle	Srinagar	3 policemen	Kashmir Tigers
11 Aug 2022	Foiled suicide attack	Rajouri	3 Army troops, 2 terrorists	Lashkar-e-Taiba
20 April 2023	Attack on security forces	Poonch	5 Army personnel	People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF)
5 May 2023	IED blast	Rajouri	5 soldiers	PAFF
14 September 2023	Attack on security forces	Anantnag	3 security officers	TRF
21 Dec 2023	Ambush	Poonch	5 Army soldiers	TRF
9 June 2024	Attack on civilians	Reasi	9 civilians	TRF
8 July 2024	Attack on the Army convoy	Kathua	5 Army troopers	Unknown
20 Oct 2024	Attack on labourers	Ganderbal	7 Civilians	TRF
22 April 2025	Pahalgam Attack	Pahalgam	26 civilians	TRF

Source: Author's own, using data from *The South Asia Terrorism Portal*, *Hindustan Times*,⁴⁹ *Times of India*,⁵⁰ and *NDTV*.⁵¹

Adapting Strategies to the New Political Landscape

Targets and Infiltration

In Kashmir, terrorists not only target civilians, non-locals, and police officers but also utilise hybrid terrorists to demonstrate their influence on the proxy war in the UT. In 2022, a total of 30 civilians, including eight non-locals, lost their lives. The previous year saw 36 civilian fatalities, including six non-locals. Moreover, in 2020, 33 civilians, mainly locals, were killed by these groups, while two attacks on migrant workers after August 2019 resulted in five deaths. In 2023, there were 13 civilian deaths due to terrorist actions, and in 2024, 31 civilians were killed.⁵² The underlying motive for these assaults on soft targets is to instil psychological fear among the Kashmiri population, display the existence of heightened terrorism in the area, and exacerbate the communal divide.

The patterns of soft targets and ambushes in J&K reflect the increasing frustration of terror groups and their Pakistani supporters. After experiencing setbacks in the Valley, these groups now focus their efforts on one area at a time instead of operating throughout J&K, aiming to prolong the proxy war and inflict psychological challenges among the local populace. These terrorists remain in forests with a good understanding of the topography, revealing their presence by ambushing security forces and soft targets without initiating contact from their side.

Likewise, FTs continually adapt their strategies, techniques, and pathways by using drones, tunnels and difficult terrain for cross-border infiltration based on the regions they aim to penetrate. Along the LoC in Kashmir, security forces have observed a notable decline in successful infiltrations over the past four years. The infiltration into the Valley through the LoC has become increasingly complex due to an improved intelligence grid, enhanced coordination among security agencies, and a lack of ground support. In 2019, approximately 130 infiltrations were recorded along the LoC; from January to October 2020, only 30 successfully crossed the point. In 2021, there were 31 successful infiltrations, which fell to eight in 2022. The toll of terrorists killed during these infiltration attempts rose from six in 2021 to 18 in 2022.⁵³ By 2023, security forces successfully eliminated over 26 terrorists attempting to infiltrate along the LoC. Terrorists utilised tunnels along the 192-km border of Jammu to infiltrate via the International Border (IB). This transformed pattern of infiltration routes presents significant challenges for anti-terrorism operations, as detecting underground movements of terrorists is far more difficult than identifying ground-level infiltrations. From 2021 to 2023, India's border security forces identified at least five underground tunnels located approximately 400 meters from the IB fence.⁵⁴

Shifting Sentiments: Kashmiri Perspectives on Pakistan and Terrorism

Until 2019, Kashmiris were coerced by target killings and social boycotts into supporting separatist ideologies and extremism, as religious leaders and separatists—particularly the JeI—promoted and enforced Pakistan’s state-sponsored terrorism for geostrategic and geopolitical interests against India. Indeed, Islamabad has employed state-sponsored terrorism against New Delhi in J&K since 1989, through the distortion of the Hadith (sayings and traditions attributed to the Prophet Mohammad) and the Holy Quran. The mosques served as venues for fostering radicalisation, and the negative perceptions of India that had developed among the people of Kashmir over the decades were exacerbated after 2008, mainly due to events like the Amarnath land row.⁵⁵ The subsequent violence resulted in 38 fatalities. Pakistan and separatist elements attributed a communal dimension to this violence, strengthening the separatist movement in J&K. They used social media for disinformation and propaganda campaigns against alleged human rights violations to amplify and implement radicalisation. Pakistani propaganda continues to play a vital role in the radicalisation of Kashmiris and offers doctrinal arguments to legitimise the militant leanings of the youth in the Valley.⁵⁶

In light of the fatigue experienced over the past several decades and the unsuccessful attempts at ‘soft measures’ to mitigate the conflict, New Delhi was compelled to take radical steps in August 2019 with the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, resulting in the division of the erstwhile state into two UTs. This was done based on the perception that 41.2 percent of Kashmiris believe separatists and regional political parties have exploited the autonomy to emotionally manipulate people. Meanwhile, 28 percent said ‘no’, and the remaining 30.5 percent either did not answer the question or claimed they did not know in 2018.⁵⁷ Post-August 2019, around 71 percent of people were affirmative about New Delhi’s decision to abrogate. With the altered administrative and security situation in the Valley, Kashmiris recognised the need for their integration with India on both psychological and political levels. New Delhi has also worked to connect the Kashmir valley with the rest of India by fast-tracking infrastructure projects. Between 2019 and 2024, approximately 1,984 industrial and other units commenced operations, attracting investments of INR 9,606 crore and generating 63,710 jobs. Additionally, there are new investment proposals worth INR 1.6 lakh crore in the pipeline, which could generate 5.9 lakh jobs.⁵⁸

Shifting Sentiments: Kashmiri Perspectives on Pakistan and Terrorism

Proponents of secession or separatism faced bans or imprisonment to promote a peaceful and prosperous environment in the Valley, providing people with relief from stone pelting, protests, and strikes after 2019. At the same time, Pakistan's struggling economy and its FATF grey-listing compelled Islamabad to increase the smuggling of narcotics across the LoC and IB to finance proxy warfare and terrorism in J&K. Pakistan's narco-terrorism is fuelling its proxy war against India, with 1.3 million drug users in the Kashmir Valley as of August 2023.⁵⁹ Heroin smuggled from Pakistan is the most prevalent opioid in the region. The revenue from heroin supports separatist activities and exacerbates instability. Estimates indicate that each drug addict in Kashmir spends approximately INR 88,000 per month on drugs. Annually, security agencies in J&K seize drugs worth hundreds of crores. Recent security agency busts reveal significant challenges posed by terror modules to societal security. The drug addiction crippled the centuries-old social control system of the Valley based on the principle of Kashmiriyat: the end-product of the centuries-old cultural and religious synthesis of Pandits and Muslims that shaped the sociocultural and socioeconomic fabric of the society.

The removal of security and internet restrictions in the Valley, along with several governance and development initiatives by the new UT Administration, has swiftly ushered in a period of stability. Kashmir's youth have become increasingly curious about these developments, especially concerning the growing drug menace and Pakistan's involvement. Moreover, Pakistan's escalating economic and political crisis following Imran Khan's removal and arrest in May 2023 has compelled his supporters in Kashmir to reconsider their stance. The ensuing protests, rioting, and vandalism of military property by Khan supporters were widely discussed.⁶⁰

Kashmiri society is experiencing a shift in its views towards Pakistan. Many have come to understand that Pakistan's backing of terrorism stems not from true support for Kashmiri Muslims, but rather from Islamabad's own vested geopolitical goals aimed at undermining India's ascent on the global stage. This is why each instance of terror sponsored by Pakistan has sparked strong and often vocal protests in opposition by Kashmiris.⁶¹ Similarly, religious leaders in Kashmir have condemned the practice of narcoterrorism by Pakistan, openly addressing it from the pulpits of mosques. This issue has ruined the lives of many youths, including women, in the Valley.

Shifting Sentiments: Kashmiri Perspectives on Pakistan and Terrorism

The religious leaders and youth feel that Pakistan has frequently been exploiting religion and prophetic sayings. Following the Pahalgam attack, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir condemned the terrorist act from the pulpit of the Jamia Masjid during his Friday sermon.⁶² This mosque, once notorious for supporting Pakistan-backed separatism and inciting stone-pelting protests on a near-daily basis before 2019, witnessed a significant shift. The Mirwaiz denounced the attack on tourists based on their religion, underscoring a crucial transformation in the valley's overall attitude toward Pakistan and terrorism. The entire Valley witnessed protests, candlelight vigils, and anger against the Pakistan-perpetrated terror incident.⁶³ Identifying a silver lining in these challenging times proves difficult; however, there is one. For the first time in 35 years, the Kashmir Valley is experiencing a mass outrage and protests against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

Conclusion

Kashmir has experienced a quiet revolution in perspectives in recent years. Local investments, entrepreneurship, and a renewed faith in the prospects of peace and prosperity reflect a growing disillusionment with cross-border meddling and more integration towards the Union of India. The Pahalgam terror attack underscores the evolving challenges the region has faced since the repeal of Article 370. Attributed to Pakistani terrorists of TRF, a faction of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the event revealed the persistent danger of proxy warfare backed by Pakistan, despite a notable decline in local support. The attack not only claimed lives but also elicited a backlash from Kashmiris, who protested and voiced their rejection of terrorism perpetuated by Islamabad. This marked a shift in public sentiment, indicating increasing frustration with Pakistan's interference in the Valley.

New Delhi should use a prolonged and sustained approach by strengthening the security and surveillance along the LoC and IB with more interagency coordination to curb infiltration and narcoterrorism. In addition to targeting terror infrastructure deep within Pakistan as a deterrent, as was done during Operation Sindoor, New Delhi should focus more on confidence-building measures to foster peace rather than polarisation within J&K. To maintain peace in the region, New Delhi should leverage its diplomatic influence in the UNSC and FATF to press Pakistan to stop using terrorism as a proxy against India. 

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All views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors, and do not represent the Observer Research Foundation, either in its entirety or its officials and personnel.

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