



Media Analysis Center, Kashmir

- The free flow of negative content on Kashmir and its wide circulation on social media is damaging Indian interests locally, nationally and internationally. There is urgent need to counter this content in an organized and efficient manner.
- **Media Analysis Center, Srinagar** - a civil society initiative of Lehar Foundation - is an organized initiative to counter negative propaganda and content on Kashmir locally, nationally and internationally.
- Media Analysis Center (MAC) shall generate content which shall aggressively counter the lies being peddled regarding Kashmir in the domestic, national and international media.
- The content produced by MAC shall include news reports, features, videos and documentaries.
- The purpose is to break the toxic plot that keeps feeding malicious, negative news on Kashmir and circulating the same to deepen stereotypes of oppression and alienation. The attempt is to bring in a reality check on Kashmir and refresh the narrative in a positive, inclusive direction.
- MAC shall also provide a platform to bring together positive and happy voices of aspirational Kashmir youth, within Kashmir or outside. The Kashmiri voices of positivity and growth within India shall act as a force multiplier for the youth within Kashmir.

Kashmir's Militant-Centric Flawed Policy Must Go

DDC ELECTIONS

Poll Officers in Many Areas Abused, Cursed Voters, woke up government to impact of disastrous state policy



Photo Credit: The Wire

After the inception of militancy in Kashmir, policy focus shifted from the common Kashmiris to the militants. State planners devised ways and means through official policy so that militancy could be contained. Policies were framed for the rehabilitation of surrendered militants. They were offered employment or other incentives to return to the mainstream. State help was extended for the support of the widows and orphans of militants.

This policy making was deeply flawed. The larger section of Kashmiri society who stayed distant from the turmoil was not in the centre of planning or decision making. Every state action was guided towards bringing peace, and providing relief to end militancy.

This approach, which seemed reasonable

at that time, had dangerous consequences. Surrendered militants had contaminated mindsets. This had initially led them into militancy. These same militants were co-opted into the system. They got the patronage of the powerful, which emboldened them. Crime got incentivized. Kashmiri society got criminalized.

Alarming experience in recent DDC Elections

In the recent elections to District Development Councils (DDCs) in Kashmir, polling was low across the districts of south Kashmir. At scores of polling stations, polling officers cursed and abused the local residents who had come there to vote.

This is the result of the flawed policy

followed by the Centre and also by the erstwhile governments of Jammu and Kashmir. Due to the distorted focus in Kashmir, thousands of individuals influenced by the deadly ideology of separatism and violence became part of the administrative system of the state. The system now finds it hard to deal with them.

Kowtowing to the powerful Jamaati/Wahabi

Kashmir's political class got habitual of appeasing those with deadly ideology for electoral gain or local influence. This influenced Kashmir's administrative officers. The impact has been seen for decades, and is visible even now.

Those who have watched the Civil



Secretariat closely have seen this first hand. When a powerful Jamaati or a Wahabi reaches the Civil Secretariat, it is the priority of officers at various levels to somehow appease this individual because he holds local eminence in his area. He is feared.

The common Kashmiri has been watching this for decades. He sees the powerful Jamaati or Wahabi intimidating the people in his area. He sees the administrative machinery at diverse levels kowtowing to this powerful Jamaati or Wahabi. The common Kashmiri, who has tried to protect himself and his family from this toxic ideology, is sidelined by the administrative machinery. This becomes one of the reasons for the social shift towards these violent ideologies.

How Waheed Para mollycoddled terrorists

Echoes of this distorted policy can be seen in the present. In Pulwama district alone, notorious double dealer Waheed Para got those people appointed on government positions who are closely related to the terrorists or are Over-Ground Workers (OGW) themselves.

It is amazing to see that that Waheed Para even ensured a government job for Maimoona, the Kashmiri wife of Abu Dujana, the deadly Pakistani terrorist. Dujana was commanding Lashkar e Taiba (LeT) in Kashmir.

As an additional bonus, Maimoona's brother was employed in the J&K Police Department. Similarly, Para also got appointed the son of dreaded slain militant Tariq Aziz in JK Bank.

The Dachnipora Example

In Dachnipora in south Kashmir, the chief commander of Hizbul Mujahideen was Amir Khan, a dreaded terrorist. Amir Khan's son Naseer Khan is the main contractor and supplier to the Army since 2001. He is a rich and powerful man of the area.

All the common Kashmiris who stayed within the bounds of law and order are disenchanted with the system when they find that militants and rogues are rewarded.

How The Greedy Political Class Used This Policy Flaw

Kashmir's greedy political class craftily abused the policy for the appeasement of

Due to flawed Kashmir policy, thousands of individuals who were influenced by the deadly ideology of separatism and violence were co-opted into the administrative system of the state. The system now finds it hard to deal with them

Mujahideen. Afzal's son Mudassir Ahmad is today a contractor and the business partner of the son of a powerful political figure of the Kulgam district.

In the offices and residences of Kashmir's ministers and legislators, one could see a number of surrendered militants. For example, the Khanabal residence of Rehman Veeri, former MLA and minister flocked with surrendered militants. In the Khanabal housing colony, which was posh government accommodation, political workers actually competed with each other to lure more and more surrendered militants and Jamaatis. It is because these surrendered militants and Jamaatis hold influence in villages.

Policy Review Essential

Government policy regarding militants and Over-Ground Workers should actually have been the reverse. The focus of state policies should have been the peace-loving Kashmiris who kept a distance from toxic ideologies. These people should have been incentivized with diverse welfare and upliftment schemes. These people loving people must be the priority of the UT Administration.

Why must Kashmir always speak of the rehabilitation policy of militants?

This skewed policy approach must be corrected. Policy focus must be on Kashmir's peaceful majority. It is they who should be rewarded and given incentives. Employment packages must be for those who have remained untouched by toxic beliefs.



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militants. As ministers and legislators, Kashmir's politicians got those persons deployed in their personal security, or in their offices as PAs or PROs, who were directly linked to militants and militancy. There are hundreds of such instances which can be quoted to prove the point.

In Kulgam district, one Mohammad Afzal of Panipora Chattbal village was the Treasury Officer. In the 90s, Afzal joined militancy and became the district commander of Hizbul

Debar Politicians Who Collaborated with Terrorists

All those political figures who associated, collaborated or helped the terrorists and their ideologues should be debarred from contesting elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Appeasement of militants and extreme ideologues by politicians amounted to incentivizing crime and terror. It set the agenda for Kashmir society. It is time now for the shift to happen.



PEOPLE-CENTRIC KASHMIR

The Shift That Must Happen In The Mainland

Over the last few decades, The Kashmir Policy of New Delhi has been militant-centric. Ditto does for the narrative in the mainland. Since the 90s, Kashmir was and continues to be seen through the militant lens.

We were hit by Covid in 2019. By mid-2020, we learnt to live with it. By the last quarter of 2020, people realized that life had to move on. Life had to make space for social and economic activity.

It is the principle of life to move on. Then why has the Kashmir narrative remained stuck on militants and militancy? It is a land of people who continued with aspirations, people with dreams for themselves and their children. When we talk of Kashmir, this is



what we must talk about. The Kashmir narrative must change.

Kashmiris are fatigued with the militant-centric policy of the government. It is the people – their social and economic issues – that must take centre stage.

The political parties in the mainland must also shift focus on Kashmir. Yes, we have the problems posed by Pakistan. Yes, Kashmir has militancy. But for a region where lakhs of people reside, the policy focus cannot be militancy alone.

Kashmir needs better infrastructure. Kashmir needs efficient delivery systems for education, healthcare, bijli, sadak, paani. Kashmir needs police reforms. Kashmir needs efficient, corruption-free administrative systems. The needs of the common Kashmiris must gain precedence.

It is also in national interest to make the needs of the common Kashmiri the focal narrative. Qualitative improvements in standards of living are known to build peace globally.

The political parties in the mainland too must shift their focus away from militancy in Kashmir. The narrative of the mainland’s political parties must also be the Kashmiris. Attaching too much importance to militancy and militants is counter-productive. It gives them the visibility they desire.

It is in national interest that the mainland political parties focus on the common Kashmiris and their needs for better employment, business and trade opportunities. It is our best bet for peace in Kashmir.