# NEXT IAS

## DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

### TOPIC

## Resurgence of Militancy in Jammu Region

# RESURGENCE OF MILITANCY IN JAMMU REGION

## Context

- In the past three years (2019-2022), there has been a noticeable resurgence of militancy in the Jammu region, accounting for 40% of killings of security personnel in the Jammu region that seems like the epicentre of these incidents has shifted from the Kashmir Valley to the Jammu division.

## About

- Traditionally, the Kashmir Valley bore the brunt of terrorist-initiated incidents. However, since 2021, the Jammu division has seen a surge in such attacks, and remained relatively peaceful for nearly two decades.

## Patterns and Incidents

- **Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal Region:** The resurgence of militant activity primarily centers around **two areas:**
  - **Chenab Valley:** Comprising districts like Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Kathua, Udhampur, and Reasi.
  - **South of Pir Panjal:** Encompassing Rajouri and Poonch districts.
- Since 2021, the Jammu region has witnessed 31 terror incidents, resulting in the deaths of 47 security personnel and 19 civilians.
- In 2021, at least 51 security personnel lost their lives in various incidents initiated by terrorists across districts like Poonch, Rajouri, Kathua, Reasi, Doda, and Udhampur.
- In 2022 and 2023, Jammu witnessed six attacks, resulting in the deaths of 12 security personnel.
- In comparison, the Kashmir Valley reported 263 terror incidents during the same period, leading to the loss of 68 security forces and 75 civilians.

## Reasons Behind the Resurgence

- **Thinning of Security Grid:** After the 2020 Galwan clashes in eastern Ladakh, a significant portion of the Army was redeployed to the China border. Consequently, the security grid in Jammu became thinner, leaving vulnerable areas.
- **Infiltration from Pakistan:** An estimated 20-25 hardened militants are believed to have infiltrated from Pakistan. They operate around 40-50 km from the border, with active groups in both the Poonch-Rajouri and Kathua-Doda-Basantgarh regions.
- **Topography of Jammu:** The Jammu division's topography—dense forests, hilly terrain, and thick foliage—provides cover for terrorist groups, and the **proximity** of Rajouri and Poonch districts in Jammu to the **Line of Control (LoC)** also makes them particularly suitable for militants.
  - A group of 20-25 foreign terrorists, entrenched in an area of 30-40 sq. km., has been responsible for multiple attacks.
  - These terrorists are well-armed and familiar with the region, making it difficult for security forces to track them.
- **Local Intelligence Gap:** One significant factor contributing to the recent surge in terrorism is the redeployment of a large number of troops to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh after the 2020 standoff with China.
  - It has created a vacuum in local intelligence, making it harder to track and preempt militant activities.
- **Technological Advancements:** Terrorist groups have adapted to modern technology. They now use encrypted communication channels, social media, and other digital tools to coordinate and spread their propaganda. This technological leap has allowed them to find new routes and maintain their insurgency.
- **Trust Deficit with Locals:** Botched security operations have eroded trust between the local population and the state. When civilians feel caught in the crossfire or face human rights violations, it undermines cooperation and fuels resentment.
  - Building trust and ensuring that security forces operate with sensitivity toward civilians is crucial for long-term stability.

- **Shift from Foreign to Local Militants:** Initially, foreign terrorists often crossed the LoC to lead attacks. However, there has been a trend toward pushing local militants to the forefront. This shift aims to give the insurgency a more homegrown face, especially as international pressure mounts on Pakistan.
  - The narrative of "homegrown" militancy complicates counterterrorism efforts and requires a nuanced approach.
- **Emergence of New Terror Groups:** New terror outfits have claimed responsibility for some attacks. These groups may have different motivations and strategies, making it harder to predict their actions.
  - Counterterrorism efforts need to adapt to address these evolving dynamics.
- **Changing Tactics:** Jammu witnessed dark days of terrorism in the 1990s, but the recent resurgence shows different operational tactics employed by militants. Meanwhile, the overall security scenario in the Kashmir Valley has seen improvements, especially after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.
- **Political Context:** The imminent assembly polls and the desire to disrupt the narrative of peace returning to the region play a role. Militants often exploit political uncertainties and sensitive moments to escalate violence.

## Implications and Challenges

- **Security Concerns:** The rise in attacks poses immediate security challenges. Casualties among security forces are unacceptable and highlight the need for stricter adherence to standard operating procedures.
- **Long-Term Consequences:** The resurgence of terrorism could have adverse and lasting effects. It not only threatens lives but also impacts economic development, tourism, and social cohesion.
- **Foreign Infiltration:** The entry of foreign terrorists onto Indian soil adds complexity to the situation. Effective border management and intelligence sharing are critical.

## Steps and Initiatives (Countering Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir)

- **Enhanced Security Measures:** Security forces have intensified **proactive operations** against terrorists. These operations involve targeted strikes, raids, and neutralisation of terror modules.
  - Increased **night patrolling and stringent checking** at security checkpoints help prevent infiltration and monitor suspicious activities.
- **Intelligence Coordination and Vigilance:** Various intelligence agencies collaborate to share crucial information about terrorist activities, sleeper cells, and infiltration attempts.
  - Security forces maintain a high level of alertness to respond swiftly to emerging threats.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** The Indian government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism. This includes strict enforcement of laws against anti-national elements.
  - **Use of Anti-Terror Laws:** Authorities invoke the **Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act** and other relevant laws to conduct raids, detain suspects, and prevent terrorist activities.

## Way Forward

- **Multi-Layered Strategy:** Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach. Augmenting troop levels alone won't suffice. Quick and decisive action at the highest levels of government, involving all stakeholders, is essential.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging with local communities, especially the Gujjar-Bakerwal community, can help build trust and gather intelligence.
- **Technology and Intelligence:** Leveraging technology for better intelligence gathering and sharing is crucial. Additionally, improving coordination among security agencies is vital.
  - Security forces need to maintain heightened vigilance in vulnerable areas.
  - Better coordination and intelligence sharing between agencies are crucial.
- **Addressing Root Causes:** Socio-economic development and addressing grievances can help prevent youth from joining military ranks.

## Addressing Local Challenges

- **Terrain Exploitation:** The complex terrain in the Jammu region has been exploited by terror groups to infiltrate. Security forces are adapting to these challenges by using technology, including drones, and improving border management.

- **Community Engagement:** Building trust with local communities is essential. Engaging with residents helps gather intelligence and prevents radicalization.

- **Post-Abrogation of Article 370**: The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 led to a shift in terror group strategies. Attacks in Jammu are seen as an attempt to deter assembly elections in the region.

- **Restoring Normalcy:** Efforts to restore normalcy and democratic processes are crucial for long-term stability.

## Conclusion

- The resurgence of militancy in Jammu demands a multifaceted approach—one that combines robust security measures with community outreach and socio-economic development.

- The evolving security landscape in Jammu and Kashmir demands adaptive strategies. As the focus shifts from the Valley to Jammu, authorities must address the challenges posed by dense forests, cross-border infiltration, and sophisticated terrorist networks.

- As the situation evolves, staying proactive and adaptive remains critical. The safety of our security personnel remains paramount, regardless of the region they serve.

## Source: TH

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### Mains Practice Question

**[Q]** What are the underlying factors for the emergence and persistence of militancy in the Jammu region? Highlights the key measures for countering militancy in the region.