

Topic of the week for discussion: 4th to 10th Aug 2016

Topic: The Total Clampdown

At least 39 people have died and more than 1300 people have been injured in violent clashes between pro-separatist protesters and security forces that have kept Kashmir boiling ever since **Burhan Wani was killed in an encounter on Friday, 8th July.**

Burhan Wani:

Burhan Wani, **22**, was a **commander of Hizbul Mujahideen** and Kashmir militancy's **poster boy**. He had a bounty of **Rs 10 lakh on his head**. On Friday evening- 8th July- security forces managed to gun him down, along with 2 other militants, in Anantnag district.

Ever since the news broke out of Wani's death, people started protesting across the valley. In many parts of **Srinagar and South Kashmir** curfew has been declared ever since then with mobile internet and trains suspended. Some 800 troops are sent to help restore the peace and order in the state.

Several media outlets suggested over **50,000 people assembled at the funeral** of Burhan Wani, other says number was as much as **2 lakh**. Regardless, Burhan was a popular name among the locals, a large credit for that goes to his social media savviness. Born to a highly-educated upper-class Kashmiri family, Wani - it is believed - **was driven to militancy at the age of 15**. Wani was **extremely active on social media**, and unlike militants in the past, did not hide his identity behind a mask. **His video messages**, which would often **go viral in Kashmir**, were on the topics of **Indian injustice and the need for young people to stand up to oppression**. In his last video he had warned **local police of "consequences"** if they continued to resist the "movement". India considered Wani a terrorist, but for **many locals he represented the spirit and political aspirations of a new Kashmiri generation**. Indian officials have admitted that he was instrumental in persuading local boys to take up arms in the state.

Insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir:

Insurgency has always existed in parts of Jammu and Kashmir between the **Pro-Separatists and Nationalists**. While the former group either seeks full independence of India-administered Kashmir or **merger with Pakistan**, the later one wants to **stick with India**.

Also, since Muslim predominated region, one should also factor extremist or hardliner pro-separatists- hiding in the peoples' movement, influencing the mass erroneously-who have their own Jihadist agendas for a separate state. While in the past, the conflicts were rather violent, as things progressed since the beginning of the new millennia, it simmered down significantly with reformists-separatist leaders opting for dialogues with Indian authorities to "find ways".

Topic
Introduction

Kashmir Unrest since 2008

However, in **2008, 2010 and 2013**, Kashmir went back to the ‘**unrest mode**’. In **2008**, tensions escalated after central and state government reached to an agreement to **transfer 99 acres of forest land of the main forest valley** to set up temporary shelters and facilities for Hindu pilgrims of Amarnath Yatra. The agitation continued for well over **2 months** between the opposing and supporting groups. A ‘middle way’ was found; **44 acres of land was agreed on to provide temporary** shelter during the relevant Yatra period. Nearly **40 people** lost their lives.

In 2010, the peace of the valley was disrupted again when security forces **killed 3 young men** in a **fake encounter** near the Line of Control, calling them “terrorists who had sneaked in” from Pakistan, when in fact they were local villagers. Widespread protests began, there were violence across- recollecting the horrors of worst anti-India insurgency of 1989. **The strife continued for months. Over 112 people died. 2013** saw some big and small violence, here and there. Notable one was the protests against the hanging of **Afzal Guru** (9th February) - the mastermind behind 2001 parliament. There were a few other incidences that ultimately led to the death of **63 militants**, at least 61 armed personnel and 15 civilians.

Situation at present:

The disruption of normal life in the Kashmir Valley after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen “commander” Burhan Wani was conveyed most poignantly by a photograph of a half page of advertisements in a Kashmiri newspaper. **One personal ad after another announced the cancellation of wedding functions** on account of what one of them called the “prevailing situation”. By the weekend, after **curfew, violent clashes, and mobile, cable TV and Internet disruptions, the morning newspaper too disappeared**. In a move as ill-advised as it was vicious, the police prevented the printing and distribution of local newspapers. It highlighted how suffocating the effort to control the narrative has been, **cutting off oxygen to all avenues for Kashmiris to voice their anger and to exchange information**. What is **forgotten is that** such a clampdown reinforces the **sense of siege** that has kept anger in the Valley on a slow boil. The protests after Wani’s death were, by all accounts, spontaneous. Instead of engaging with the range of reasons that drew young Kashmiris out to the streets in the full knowledge that they risked injury, even death, **the governments at the Centre and in the State took refuge in platitudes and evasion**.

Read further:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-on-jammu-and-kashmir-violent-clashes-learning-to-control-crowds/article8850348.ece>

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/mehboob-jeelani-on-jammu-and-kashmir-violent-clashes-behind-the-rage-in-south-kashmir/article8856105.ece>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pakistan-raises-kashmir-issue-with-un-officials-2925247/>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-36762043>