

Academic Statement of Purpose

It is not a mere coincidence that my research interests lie in the historical study of Kashmir conflict, the impact of agrarian land reforms on the socio-political contours of the Himalayan region and the rise of religious movements within the contentious valley. The Kashmir 'quagmire' always remained a deep personal subject of concern having been brought up in the conflict-torn valley. I closely monitored the power play in the region while working as a journalist in New Delhi for about 6 years. My curiosity in these areas of research began during the restive summer of 2008 and 2010, when the disputed region witnessed massive protests. I had never seen this mixture of political, religious and social upheaval before, despite bearing witness to massive militancy during the previous decade.

While I practiced my interest to understand the nitty-gritty of politics within the power corridors of New Delhi, I found myself detached from the social churning in Kashmir as an observer, and more importantly as a researcher. At the same time, I felt compelled to further hone my skills as a researcher to better analyze the fast-changing realities of the social lexicon of Kashmiri society, the refining of Kashmir conflict, and the transforming contours of militancy in the region.

At SOAS, University of London, where I got an opportunity to study the Master's course in Violence, Conflict and Development, I was introduced to the theories of political economy, violence, and development. I began analyzing and understanding the subtleties of violence and conflicts through a more nuanced perspective. The courses on 'security' and 'political economy of violence, conflict and development' exposed me to whole new seminal works. I was very intrigued by the works of Mahmood Mamdani and Micheal Foucault, and their critiques of intersection between politics, power and society. Furthermore, I was deeply captivated by the works of Akbar S. Ahmed, the author of the *'Thistle and the Drone'*, and his analysis of the 'War on Terror' and ongoing wars and conflicts within the Middle East.

To further better my understanding, I am interested in understanding how the agrarian land reforms of 1950 in Kashmir played a critical role in rise of anti-India militancy in the regions – a crucial factor highly under researched on the subject. I seek to investigate the rise of socio-religious groups in shaping the course of Kashmir conflict. My goal is to contribute cutting-edge research on the interplay development and security through the historic consequences of the land reforms. The primary focus of my research would also be to analyze how the socio-political movements developed following the sweeping land reforms.

I look forward to studying at the ISS since I am impressed by the wide breadth of resources available at this prestigious institute, and by the faculty's excellent academic work in the area of my interest. The institute's emphases on interdisciplinary academic

approaches, which are at the core of my research, further, motivate my application. The institute has a prestigious reputation in Development Studies, and I think that I can contribute to the solidity and quality of the program. Finally, I am convinced that I would learn a lot from working with graduate students and faculty members of such caliber. I believe that the institution will provide a vibrant climate for my intellectual growth, foster a nuanced understanding of these issues and give me an opportunity to explore diverse cultures in an engaging environment.

Sincerely,

Haris Zargar

Working proposal

Redefining the development-security nexus: A case study of the agrarian reform of 1950 in Jammu and Kashmir state and its role in the subsequent outbreak of insurgency

Haris Zargar

1.0 Introduction

This research proposal seeks to examine one of the least studied areas of development studies in which sweeping agrarian reforms (development) resulted in mobilisation of a marginalised community through grassroots level socio-political activities (social movement) that ended up in outbreak of a large-scale insurgency (Security). The research proposal seeks to investigate whether the conventional understanding of development-security nexus holds any validity where contentious over territory occurs.

The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region has been at the heart of a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, and the two nations have fought several wars to reclaim the area (Mukherjee, 2016). India's suppression of dissent has marked much of the region's history, but it was not until 1986 when Delhi rigged an election that locals launched an armed rebellion against the Indian rule. What followed was a protracted militancy that continues to gain strength till date (Yaqoob, 2016). Intriguingly, even as the insurgency began about four decades after the start of the dispute, seeds of the insurgency were sown in early 1950's through a landmark decision by then J&K government to transfer land from landowners to local peasants.

On October 17, 1950, the then Prime Minister of J&K state Sheikh Abdullah declared a policy of liquidating the estates by enacting Big Landed Estates Abolition Act, which granted the ownership rights of land to peasants and tillers (Ganai, 2009). The beneficial feature of the reforms was that landownership was expropriated and the possession rights of lands were transferred to cultivating peasants free of any encumbrances (Aslam, 1977; Hamdani, 2016). Popularly known as the 'Land To Tiller' Act, the massive agrarian reforms changed the region's socio-political landscape, liberating hundreds of thousands of poor peasants of the valley from feudal autocracy, and abbreviated the power of landlords and ruling elites (Dar, 2010).

The land reforms of 1950 remain one of the most defining moments in Kashmir's history that significantly transformed the socio-political and economic complexion of the Kashmiri society (Thorner, 1953; Ganai, 2015). Prior to these agrarian reforms, the majority Muslim peasants of the valley lived in abject poverty, remained disenfranchised and held almost no administrative, social or political positions under the Maharaja's rule (Hamdani, 2016). The Land to Tiller Act helped the Kashmiri populations to slowly remove this gap over the years, and allowed Kashmiris to reclaim socio-political spaces and yield socio-economic and political clout (Aslam, 1977). Noticeably, this resulted in the greater assertion of political rights, and calls for resolution of Kashmir dispute became dominant. To put it simply, once the survival rights and livelihood were taken care of, the fight for socio-political rights began.

Before the partition of the Indian sub-continent, Kashmir was a Muslim majority state ruled by a Hindu King. Despite the agreement following which every Muslim majority

state would become part of Pakistan, the ruler of Kashmir opted for the Indian Republic instead, which ultimately resulted in a contention between the two newly formed nations (Lamb, 1991). The Plebiscite movement initiated in 1955 in Kashmir sought the creation of a referendum to decide whether the region should remain part of India, join Pakistan or become independent. This movement gained momentum due to local support but was dissolved in 1975 (Bhakaya and Bhatti, 2009). In the early 1990s, nationalistic movements were overpowered by the Pro-Pakistan discourse, which favoured a solution that would keep Islamic identity as a central parameter. Since then, the Indian state succeeded to a great extent in discrediting the nationalistic struggle as an extremist ideology. Concurrently, Pakistan continued to pitch its stand in order to gain support from Muslim countries, highlighting the oppressive conditions in which the people of Kashmir live. In this constant quagmire, radical or militant Islam has increasingly gained impetus as a substitute (Singh, 2016; Upadhyay, 2016).

Pertinently, there is an abundance of academic literature that has sought to analyse the Kashmir insurgency through Islamic fundamentalism, or geopolitical framework. However, so far, no analysis have been drawn over the implications of 1950 agrarian reform on political movements in the region and their subsequent effect towards the rise of anti-India militancy. Much scholarly work has completely failed to highlight the resurgence of Kashmir militancy through the 'territory-identity' framework, and role of land redistribution initiated by the J&K state in creating the contemporary Kashmiri identity. There is no research on how the agrarian reforms altered the socio-political and religious dynamics in the region, particularly the religious revivalism through the rise of socio-religious movement like Jammāt-e-Islami especially in rural spatial paradigm.

My research seeks to examine how the agrarian reform resulted in economic growth and capital accumulation particularly in the rural areas of the Kashmir valley, and lifted agriculture sectors that eventually contributed in resurgence of religious and political movements in Kashmir. In addition, I seek to examine how institutionalized functionalities like land reforms can contribute to the assertion of a ethno-religious nationalistic identity in the restive region, demystifying the conventional wisdom of development-security nexus framework. I am interested in researching this academic gap on the dynamics of Kashmir conflicts, ethnic nationalism and militancy through the analysis of the fallout of the J&K state's land reforms of 1950.

2.0 Land reforms and Kashmiri militancy: The missing links in the existing discourse

Scholars have drawn connections between development and security, both within developing countries and globally, hypothesizing that security is an objective of development, and that lack of insecurity has adverse consequences on economic growth. Inversely, it argues that lack of development, or imbalanced economic growth

that involves sharp horizontal inequalities, is a critical cause of conflicts (Stewart, 2004). There is also a recognition that in conflict zones, "building the capacity" for economic growth, along with security and good governance, is the "only path to long term peace and security" (Strangler et al, 2010). Interestingly, the government of Sheikh Abdullah opted for land reforms not only with an aim of uplifting Kashmiri Muslims but purportedly also to use that as a tool to yield political clout, and to maintain tranquillity among the masses that saw itself an integral part of Pakistan (Hussain, 2010). The ruling regime seemingly tried to gain the trust of Kashmiris by land distribution as a rehabilitation technique for the people to forget their demand of secession. Similar policies are tried even today by the Indian state, which continues to see Kashmir conflict through the prism of economic and employment prism (Habibullah, 2004). This policy, it can be said, has failed to provide any relief to the state, and only lead to more militancy and nationalism with the Kashmiris.

Previously, some scholars on Kashmir conflict have focused on the relation between armed conflict and Islamic radicalization (Behera, 2006), while others have mainly focused the analysis on the emergence of armed insurgency in Kashmir (Bose, 2003), its militarization (Kazi, 2010) and the resulting socio-psychological impact on the Kashmiri population (Naqshbandi and Amin, 2013). Much scholarship has failed to dissect how the group identity of the Kashmiri population has changed over the decades, and how the transformed socio-religious ethos of the Kashmiri society has generated a 'political identity', which mobilises the population towards a nationalistic cause. There is no research on how the Kashmiri socio-religious identity has been, if at all, been shaped in response to the population's perception of a threat to its territory.

Rai (2004) has attempted to look at the Kashmir through the historical study of rights, religion and regional identity of the disputed region through the socio-economic division of Kashmir during the colonial period. Behera (2006) has focused on the parameters of the Kashmir conflict, its actors, and regional-internal politics, and argued that the militancy as an extension of Pakistan's covert military action. Nyla (2012) has sought to address various aspects of political, cultural, and socioeconomic life in the valley; While Wani (2011) analyses the evolution of Kashmir's revolutionary sentiment from the emergence of nationalistic organization like National Conference to the emergence of assorted labour unions like the Mazdoor Sabha. Wani looks at the land reforms of 1950 as an absolute resulting pronouncement of such political organizations and labour movements. Likewise, Ganaie (2015) has sought to explain the social reform movements in Kashmir as a result of western impact on education and the population's behaviour towards the socio-political engagement.

Much of this scholarship lacks any in-depth analysis of the socio-religious political movements, their historic evolution and role of key local actors like JEL that transformed these movements. This academic work has completely neglected to evaluate the direct fallout of 1950 land reforms on Kashmir's socio-political-religious landscape, and

its subsequently impact on the conflict and militancy. There is complete absence on understanding how institutionalized functionalities like land reforms, or factors like territorial contestation has contributed to the assertion of a ethno-religious nationalistic identity, which draws a militant response from the Kashmiri population. My research seeks to fill this scholarly gap on the role of land redistribution on eruption of militancy in the region.

The focus of my research would also cover the historical parameters of the agrarian land reforms and the rise of the Jamaat-i-Islami as a socio-political movement. It will seek to analyze the influence of postcolonial thought, and the fall of socialist-Marxist political groups like Kisan Mazdoor Party. My specific research interests involve looking at how the contours of the Kashmir local politics the role of land reform and rise of Jamaat-i-Islami in the launch of anti-India armed militancy and its evolution over the last seven decades. Very limited work has been done, so far, on these aspects, and I aim to fill this gap.

My research would contribute to four main areas of academic discourse: Islamic militancy or 'Jihadism'; ethnic wars or critical race theory; postcolonial history in Muslim societies and most importantly the impact of land reforms on security. In the realm of 'Jihadism', I am interested by the work of Erin Saltman's *Islamic State: The changing face of modern Jihadism*, Akbar Ahmed's *Thistle and the Drone* and Thomas Hegghammer's *The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighter: Islam and Globalization of Jihad*.

I seek to analyze the previous and on-going debates around Kashmir's ethnic groups through critical race theories such as Mona Bhan's 'Aryan Valley' and the *Politics of Race and Religion in Kashmir*, which has dissected the Kashmir conflict on ethnic lines. In the context of the study of postcolonial history, I seek to analyse the discussion on Kashmir nationalism like Suvil Kaul's *Kashmir at the limits of Postcolonial Nationalism*; Nilanjan Raghunath's *Jammu and Kashmir: Competing Concepts of Nationalism*; and Amita Shastri and Jeyaratnam Wilson's *The Post-Colonial States of South Asia: Political and Constitutional Problems*. While I seek to bring these themes into discussion with each other in my own work, I also aim to highlight how even these discourses on the Kashmir conflict have limited the understanding of the resurgence of militancy and of changing societal landscapes, as well as the response to the conflict.

The thesis will examine how collective identity has evolved in contemporary Kashmir and analyze the role of the Indian State in the processes of identity formation in the spheres of administration of Land. The research will investigate how land reforms and administration of land continues to remain a critical factor in fostering a nationalistic aspiration among the Kashmiri population. Though there are many facets to the collective Kashmiri Identity, the sentiment of resistance to Indian Rule will forms the core area of research.

3.0 Key Research Questions

3.1 What was the impact of the agrarian land reform of 1950 initiated by the Jammu & Kashmir government on the socio-religious and political movements in Kashmir?

3.2 Whether (and to what extent) did the land redistribution contributed in the rise of socio-political groups like Jamaat-i-Islami, which form the backbone of militancy in the region?

3.3 To what extent were the land reforms instrumental in reshaping the contemporary Kashmiri ethno-nationalistic identity, and the subsequent rise of militancy?

3.4 Are the existing notions that economic prosperity and development ensures greater security, or reduces chances of insurgencies wrongly conceived?

4.0 Methodology

The researcher aims to use qualitative research techniques to conduct the research. Given the nature of the present research and its deeply rooted societal ramifications, qualitative research techniques are best suited for the study. This PhD will take a 'relativist' ontological stance and will epistemologically lean towards 'interpretivism'. Qualitative research techniques will enable the author to study the phenomena in their innate setting and to interpret them from the point of view of the subjects and with the meanings they attach to these events.

The present study will employ in-depth interviews and discourse analysis. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to gain insights into the individuals' stories, and to investigate how these individuals perceive their experiences in the spatial, temporal, and persona-social dimensions. In this way, interviews are not only descriptive but also serve analytical and representational purposes. A further benefit of interviews is that they can indicate how individual, group, and cultural stories and identities intersect and how they inform social phenomena and are in turn informed by these phenomena (Ibid). In this context, conducting semi-structured interviews in Kashmir will be particularly useful to understand the personal experiences and inclinations of the Kashmiri people towards armed or nonviolent resistance. The analyses will further elucidate people's perception of parties Jel, land reforms and the role in socio-religious movement.

Selection of interview participants: the sample size for this phase of the research will depend on the theoretical saturation, i.e., the point in data collection when new data no longer bring new insights or information to the research question. Participants will be diverse in terms of geographic locations mostly in the Muslim majority regions of the

Kashmir valley and Pir Panjal area. Since I hail from the region and can speak the local language, carrying out such interviews and research should not be of particular difficulty. Moreover, having worked as a journalist, I will be able to reach people cutting across political, religious and ideological lines. Despite this proximity, my research primarily seeks to better understand the subject and not to prove any established personal perceptions.

Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for studying discourses, the critical discourse analysis of this research will involve analysing language texts (spoken or written); evaluating discourse practices (processes of text production, distribution and consumption); and analysing discursive events as instances of sociocultural practices. On the other hand, discourse analysis will include textual analysis of different local, national, and international newspapers, Kashmiri blogs, Kashmir-based news web portals, websites of newspapers and news channels containing news contents, video and discussions about the changing faces of dissent in Kashmir. These resources can be accessed from libraries in Kashmir, India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The present research will include studying the discourses in books written on militancy and social movements in Kashmir in the past two decades. It will also involve looking at books written in Urdu language, vernacular newspapers, or achieved pamphlets, etc that is available in state archives and/or personal collections in the state.

The research is further going to employ the historical methodologies. The historical methodology constitutes a study of historical events, processes and institutions for the purpose of finding the antecedents of contemporary social issues. It is very important in the context of the Kashmir conflict to understand the surge in Jamaat ideology in the valley. Through this technique, the research will analyze the transition of the Kashmiri political and militancy movement from its 'nationalistic' character to a more Islamist one. Through this, the researcher seeks to examine what institutions, social-religious movements and historical events contributed to the change in Kashmir's socio-political and religious landscape. This will involve conducting interviews with prominent socio-political actors that have been active in the Kashmir polity. The researcher plans to access internal communications material and content produced by various socio-religious and political institutions in the valley.

This research will utilize the security-development nexus as a key theoretical framework tools to examine the questions raised during my research. Within this framework, for example, the 'post security-development' narrative places emphasis on the nexus as linked discursive practices that produces specific realities and are thus tools of power. Practices and discourses reproduce defined relations of inequality, injustice, harmful mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, violence, insecurity and danger. Security and development are here seen as possible, however inherently self-contradictory in themselves and in relation to each other as a nexus. Likewise, another tool within this framework would look at security and development as a dead end and something that

is not desirable. For several reasons security and development is out of reach and each effort at achieving development creates underdevelopment and the same goes for security leading to more insecurity, threat and violence. According to this narrative the nexus is empty, impossible, harmful and undesirable.

The research will also use social constructivism as a framework to disentangle questions of socio-political identity formation in Kashmir. As a social theory, Constructivism is based on questioning 'how the objects and practices of social life are "constructed"', especially those that are taken as 'given or natural' (Fearon & Wendt 2002: 57). Constructivists believe that the 'social world is in part constructed of physical entities', and the ideas and beliefs that people hold towards these entities, are of utmost importance. (Jackson & Sorenson 2007: 165). Using Social Constructivist theories, such as Group Theory and Competition Theory, the research will explore the role of the agrarian reforms and territorial contestation in identity formation in Kashmir.

5.0 Timescale of research:

The author is aware of the fact that every research project needs to be carried out in a meticulously planned manner, as comprehensive planning during the course of the research pays rich dividends. The author intends to dedicate about 130 to 150 hours per month to the research. A preliminary research outline follows in a tabular form.

Target	Year
Taking research training modules; literature review; finalizing research questions, the methodology and the proposal	First year
Working on the theoretical framework Conducting field research; primary and secondary data collection; content analysis.	Second year
Analysing results; Post-fieldwork Seminar	Third year
Writing the draft and finalizing the thesis	Fourth year

6.0 Bibliography

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