



## INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **'INVEST IN UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS RADICALIZATION IN J&K'; NEW DELHI THINK TANK**

Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), a New Delhi based think tanks has published two reports addressing political transformation in Ladakh and religious radicalization in Kashmir Valley.

First report titled, '**Understanding the Transformation in Ladakh : Issues, Threats and Early Warnings**' is authored by **Tashi Morup**, which tries to explore questions linked to emerging challenges and issues in Ladakh. The questions are framed in the backdrop of the situation where local populace, especially Buddhists, have raised voices of dissent against successive governments of the State in J&K from time to time and sought direct central administration.

According to the report, the above dissent exacerbated into a full scale agitation with communal flare ups in 1989. Some of the key conclusions of this report include the following. Analysing the negative sides of development, the report says that people had great hope when the Hill Council status was granted. Though establishing a decentralized governing body at the district brought about significant changes, it failed to address the larger issue of planning with a broad vision. The Council continued to follow the blueprint of development, being implemented under a rigid administrative system for decades, without doing or undoing changes needed as per suited to the local topography. This where, there is a need to emphasis on development planning.

The report recommends that Ladakh learns from other state, which have taken giant leaps forward in economic sectors leaving J&K, especially, the trans- Himalayan region Ladakh region far behind the rest in the 21st century of modernity and globalization. More importantly, on panchayat raj, the report states, during 2001 – 2006, there were visible changes in villages of Leh with enthusiastic Sarpanches and Panches at the grassroots taking full responsibility to develop their own villages and hamlets despite half-hearted empowerment of this governing system in J&K.

Second report titled, '**Understanding Religious Radicalization: Issues, Threats and Early Warnings in Kashmir Valley**' is authored by **Arjimand Hussain Talib**. This report elaborates on various issues related to the religious radicalization in Kashmir Valley. According to the report, greater levels of education among Kashmiris are working both ways. At one level they are creating a critical mass of people who are more willing to understand, respect and co-exist with people of other faiths. At another, greater exposure to global political developments, mainly in the Middle East, evokes sentiments

of radicalization and aversion to peaceful co-existence with other religions. Moreover, the author presents how there are two facets of the debate on religious radicalization in Kashmir. At one level, the trends of organized radicalization are on a clear decline. The decimation of the structures and cadres of organizations like the once influential Jamaat-i-Islami and its offshoot organizations during the last twenty years has seen a systematic decline in the trend of organized radicalization. On the other hand, events like the Amarnath land controversy of 2008 have served to radicalize vast sections of Kashmir's youth, who see such developments as a clear manifestation of furthering 'Hindu India's religious domination over Kashmir' and the 'dilution of its overwhelmingly Muslim character'

Some of the key conclusions of this report include the debate on religious demography which has been a major issue in J&K. This issue is a highly emotive one – something which, in the first place, fuelled the agitation against the Amarnath land transfer in Kashmir in 2008. This issue continues to breed religious radicalism in Kashmir. The report also says that the three regions of the J&K – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh – continue to nurse their own feelings of neglect and discrimination visà- vis each other. These feelings and perceptions have served to sharpen both regional and religious divides.

More importantly, the report says that over the last few decades, the emergence of radical Kashmiri Pandit groups, like Panun Kashmir, which espouses radical political and religious ideologies, has changed the perception of the community. On the other side, the report concludes, that with the increasing unpopularity of certain practices of Kashmiri Muslims who identify themselves with the Hanafi school of thought, mainly the practices concerning the Sufi shrines, Wahabi ideology is gaining ground in Kashmir. Although there is a clear growth in the number and influence of Islamic Madrasas in Kashmir, the fact remains that they are, for most part, politically passive.

These reports are a part of an ongoing project at the Institute of Peace focusing on building peace and countering radicalization. As a part of this project, the Institute has been organizing conferences, workshops in J&K, and publishing reports. Full reports can be downloaded from the Institute's website – [www.ipcs.org](http://www.ipcs.org).