

Revocation of Article 370: Understanding India-Pakistan dynamics and the way forward

Background

South Asian geopolitics saw a major turn with the Indian government's announcement of revoking Article 370 on 5 Aug 2019. In a bid to integrate and develop the region completely, the government made the bold move of removing Jammu and Kashmir's special status while presenting it as an internal issue.^[i]

Jammu and Kashmir has long been the hotspot of conflict between India and Pakistan. The revocation of Article 370 added a new dimension to this conflict by heightening the mistrust between the two countries: Pakistan interpreted the move as a unilateral effort on India's part, to change the status quo of a territory which it regards as disputed while for India, the revocation represented an expression of sovereignty and a major step towards implementing an equilibrium in rule across all its territories. The contesting narratives served to further aggravate the hatred between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan's Immediate Reaction

Pakistan's response to this action was one of indignation. In no time after the abrogation was declared by the Indian government, it severed all its diplomatic ties with India, deported the Indian High Commissioner and suspended bilateral trade.^[ii] Islamabad brought the issue before the international community, in hope of mobilising the world against this action. Though Pakistan was able to attract a lot of support from Turkey and China, the world had generally considered the matter as India's internal affair.^[iii]

The abrogation also served as a contentious issue for Pakistan. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan actively raised the issue of Kashmir on multiple international forums. For instance, he spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, where he extensively discussed the situation in Kashmir.^[iv] He also referred to himself as the 'Brand Ambassador' of Kashmir and committed to taking the issue to every international forum.^[v] Since the abrogation, such efforts have formed a part of Pakistan's overall plan to internationalise the issue of Kashmir and attract international support in their favour. But the rhetoric aside, Pakistan's capacity to effect or bring about any change on the ground in this context has been limited. Further, the nation's perpetual economic issues, along with its internal political turmoil have greatly hindered its ability to counter any of India's future decisions.

India's Stance

The abrogation was an Indian idea, as a step to fully integrate Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the nation, eliminate perceived obstacles to economic growth and cross-border terrorism in the state. New Delhi has till now, been unyielding in its position that Jammu and Kashmir is and will continue to be an integral part of India and that the revocation of Article 370 is purely an internal affair. Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar has asserted that India does not accept Pakistan's position on the issue of Kashmir.^[vi] Naturally, the revocation has caused India to centre most of its diplomatic moves in pushing back against the fake narratives being put forth by Pakistan about Kashmir and to hasten its efforts to improve infrastructure and governance in Jammu and Kashmir.^[vii] But strict security protocols, heightened military

deployment and communication blackouts in the region^[viii] following the abrogation drew heavy criticism from human rights groups and many other segments of the international community that hindered India's progress towards Kashmir on several occasions. The ground realities within the region still remain complicated with political disenfranchisement and perpetual security issues.

Kashmir's Perspective

While the political narratives and the military threats between India and Pakistan^[ix] have made constant headlines, the Kashmiri narratives, largely central to the issue have been on occasion, ignored or marginalised by both the sides. From the perspective of the Kashmiris, the abrogation of the Article 370 brought about far-reaching social and political ramifications. The revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy not only stripped the region of its unique privileges but also pushed the locals into a deep sense of alienation.^[x] To this day, most Kashmiris view the abrogation as a betrayal from the Indian government, that ultimately compromised their identity and left them stranded between two drastically competing nationalistic narratives.^[xi] This alienation nurtured a fertile ground for more unrest in the region in the subsequent years. However, recent initiatives taken by the Indian government such as the Area Domination Plan and Zero Terror Plan^[xii] under its zero-tolerance approach to militancy, have been effective in curtailing militancy^[xiii] to a large extent, thus, causing a sharp decline in insurgency. These steps have also helped the region as a whole, to grow and stabilise despite the initial feeling of alienation from the local people. Additionally, several reforms introduced by the Indian government in the region post-revocation that have had far-reaching positive effects on the residents of the area. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019^[xiv] sought to draw the area closer to the Indian Union by bringing an end to political turmoil, separatism, and backwardness. Projects such as the Back to Village Program^[xv] facilitated people's participation through grassroots democracy by redressing local grievances. Furthermore, higher levels of central government investment^[xvi] and growth have also ensured enhanced infrastructure, jobs, and social integration as a factor, thus, boosting overall development and stability of the area.

While India has always provided justification for the abrogation with the argument that it had to bring Kashmir into the national mainstream and has taken sincere efforts to foster development in the region^[xvii], it can be argued that uncertainties might continue to linger, especially if Kashmiri sentiments remain unattended for a long period of time with the risk of again fuelling long-term instability, not only within Kashmir but subsequently, with Pakistan over this issue. Disregarding the voices of Kashmiri locals in decision, pertaining to the region's social, political and economic development could increase the distrust and kindle further violence in the region.

In order to prevent this, it is imperative that India proactively engage with local leaders, civil society organisations, and representatives of the local population to share their concerns and as

End Notes

[i] Suhasini Haidar, "The Perils of Post-370 Diplomacy", *The Hindu*, 2 Nov 2019, accessed on 18 Aug 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-perils-of-post-370-diplomacy/article29857257.ece>.

[ii] "India Rejects OIC Resolution on 'Indian Terrorism' in Kashmir", *The Hindu*, 3 Mar 2019, accessed on 24 Aug 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-rejects-oic-resolution-on-indian-terrorismin-kashmir/article26421044.ece>.

[iii] Ibid

[iv] "Pakistan's Kashmir Policy Post-Article 370", *The Diplomat*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/pakistans-kashmir-policy-post-article-370/>.

[v] "Will Become Brand Ambassador of Kashmir on International Forums: Imran Khan", *India Today*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/will-become-brand-ambassador-of-kashmir-on-international-forums-imran-khan-1580891-2019-08-14>.

[vi] "EAM S. Jaishankar Calls for Return of 'Stolen Territory' from Pakistan, Says Kashmir Resolution Near Completion", *The Economic Times*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/eam-s-jaishankar-calls-for-return-of-stolen-territory-from-pakistan-says-kashmir-resolution-near-completion/articleshow/118746692.cms>.

[vii] "Prime Minister's Address at the Red Fort on 77th Independence Day", *Press Information Bureau*, accessed on 15 Aug 2023, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1984904>.

[viii] Parveen Bhola, "Security State of Affairs in J&K Post Abrogation of Article 370", *Centre for Land Warfare Studies*, accessed on 7 Mar 2025, <https://www.claws.in/security-state-of-affairs-in-j-k-post-abrogation-of-article-370/>.

9."Conflict Between India and Pakistan. "Global Conflict Tracker", *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan>.

[x] "The Dismantling of Article 370: Key Changes and Consequences for Jammu and Kashmir", *Lawful Legal*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://lawfullegal.in/the-dismantling-of-article-370-key-changes-and-consequences-for-jammu-and-kashmir/>.

[xi] "Abrogation of Article 370: Judgement Summary", *Supreme Court Observer*, accessed on 13 Mar 2025, <https://www.scobserver.in/reports/abrogation-of-article-370-judgement-summary/>.

[xii] "Jammu Terrorist Attacks: Amit Shah Holds Security Review Meeting, Plans for Area Domination and Zero Terrorism", *Firstpost*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/jammu-terrorist-attacks-amarnath-yatra-security-review-meeting-amit-shah-area-domination-zero-terrorism-plans-13783124.html>.

[xiii] "Modi Government Adopting Zero-Tolerance Policy Towards Terror: MHA", *The Hindu*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/modi-govt-adopting-zero-tolerance-policy-towards-terror-mha/article66127862.ece>.

[xiv] "The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019", *Government of India*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15242/1/re-organisation_act%2C2019.pdf.

[xv] "Back to Village", *Government of Jammu and Kashmir*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://ramban.gov.in/back-to-village/>.

[xvi] "Prime Minister's Development Package for Jammu & Kashmir", *Press Information Bureau, Government of India*, accessed on 6 Mar 2025, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1845001>.

[xvii] "Prime Minister's Address", *Press Information Bureau*.

Saanya Sidhra, Research Intern, CS3 and Pritam Sarbabidya, Pondicherry University

Uploaded on 13-03-2025

Disclaimer : The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the organisation that he/she belongs to or of the USI of India.