



BEYOND STATE NARRATIVES: THE REALITIES OF CONFLICT, IDENTITY, AND GOVERNANCE IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

PURPOSE

The goal of this research is to critically examine India's multifaceted strategies for establishing **sovereignty** over Jammu and Kashmir. Specifically, we focus on **development initiatives** and **governance frameworks** as instruments of **control**. The research is guided by a dual approach, addressing two main areas:

- The utilization of development projects as a veil for hegemonic influence.
- The adaptation of tactics from India's colonial history for modern-day nationalistic objectives.

DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS

SETTLER
COLONIALISM

The importance of this research lies in the inherent invisibility of post-colonial accords between nation-states; the remnants of colonial regimes and the geopolitical dynamics that shape the relationships between former colonies and their ruling powers. This research endeavors to understand how the actions mentioned earlier impact the sovereignty and well-being of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

BACKGROUND

1947 **Partition Post Independence:** Created India and Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir initially chose independence, but later joined India without public consent, sparking the first Indo-Pak war

First Indo-Pak war

Instrument of Accession: Allowed India to control defense, foreign affairs, and communications, but let the region keep autonomy in other areas

1949 **Article 370 & 35A:** Granted the territory with its own constitution and full discretionary power to decide who the 'permanent residents' of the state are

1965 **Second Indo-Pak War**

1971 **Third Indo-Pak War**

1972 **Simla Agreement:** Turned ceasefire lines into the Line of Control (LoC).

1999 **Kargil War:** The last major armed conflict between India and Pakistan in the region

RECENT CHANGES

2019 **Article 370 and 35 A Revoked:** India ended the region's special status, creating two union territories: Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh

2020 **Domicile Law:** Altered who could be considered a resident, raising demographic concerns

Communication Blackouts: Regularly imposed by the Indian government for "national security" purposes

STATE
CENTRIC
APPROACH

HUMAN
CENTRIC
APPROACH

WHAT'S OFTEN MISSED

Historical events and recent developments largely highlight the **territorial ambitions** and **state-centric views** held by India and Pakistan. This framing fails to adequately consider the complex and often heartbreaking human realities that are lived daily within Jammu and Kashmir. In an arena shaped by the interests of two nuclear-armed nations, the voices and perspectives of the **actual residents** of the disputed territory are frequently **marginalized** or altogether **ignored**.

This common narrative leaves a critical void in our understanding of the conflict: a comprehensive look at the conflict through the lens of the people who call Jammu and Kashmir home. This absence is not just an academic oversight but a glaring gap perpetuating a **one-sided story**.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to rectify this **imbalance**. Our aim is to shift the focus from the **geopolitical and territorial** to the **personal and human**.

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METHODS

Elevating Human Narratives in a Complex Crisis
Going beyond state-centric views, we focus on the human experiences often left in the shadows. Our qualitative research aims to fill these critical gaps.

SEMI
STRUCTURED
INTERVIEWS

DOCUMENT
ANALYSIS

Objective: To capture the lived experiences that geopolitical discussions often bypass

Procedure: Two-hour-long interviews were conducted using secure and encrypted platforms to guarantee participant safety and anonymity.

Objective: To scrutinize key legal frameworks that directly impact the human lives in question.

Procedure: Meticulous examination of primary legislative documents like the Abrogation papers of Article 370 and the Act of Accession. Secondary data gathered from scholarly articles, reports, and media.

The Importance of Anonymity: Given the high-risk nature of our subject, particularly in the context of media censorship, maintaining participant anonymity wasn't solely a methodological decision; it was an ethical imperative. Anonymity serves as a safeguard, enabling participants to share authentic narratives without the fear of potential repercussions.



DISCUSSION

Paradox of Legalized Power

Militarization in Kashmir is legitimized by special legal frameworks like the **Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA)**. The AFSPA grants extraordinary powers to the armed forces, including the **right to shoot to kill** in certain situations, to **arrest without a warrant**, and to **detain people indefinitely**. This framework magnifies state-centric narratives while shielding military misconduct, thereby violating civil liberties.

This **state-sanctioned violence** contributes to a culture of **fear** and **repression** among the civilian populace, which has been proven to be counterproductive to any conflict resolution efforts.

Unrealized Development Goals

Article 370's abrogation aimed to integrate Jammu and Kashmir for 'regional development.' However, this led to political unrest, and **economic stagnation**, and questioned the constitutionality of the move.

Furthermore, the government's rationale for the abrogation was to encourage **private investment** and revitalize Kashmir by amending land ownership laws. However, a closer look at official statistics unveils a disconcerting trend. Investments for the fiscal year 2021-22 barely reached **\$46 million**, a stark contrast from the previous years, including **\$102.8 million** the year before.

Control to Construction

Article 370's abrogation also marks a significant turning point in Jammu and Kashmir's territorial landscape, giving rise to speculations about **reshaping** the region's **religious demographics**. The widespread issuance of **domicile certificates** suggests a **settler colonial strategy** aimed at erasing indigenous culture and altering population composition.

Therefore, it can be said that employing these measures extends beyond mere territorial control, aspiring to **construct** a way of life that ensures **sustainable legal authority** and **control**.

CONCLUSION

Next Steps:

Investigate specific economic policies hindering private investment in the region and work with local policymakers and community leaders to further explore the social impacts of the new domicile policy.

Real-World Applications:

The research findings carry diplomatic implications that could influence future India-Pakistan peace talks and internal Indian policy-making for Jammu and Kashmir.

Importance of Findings:

The research highlights the gap between policy rhetoric and reality, advocating for a more effective, human-centric approach to addressing the Kashmir crisis.

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