**Demographic altercations and IIOJ&K**

On **Aug 12, 2022** [Aimen Malik](https://nation.com.pk/authorpost/columnist/aimen-malik/)

The Kashmir imbroglio poses a serious threat to regional peace and security. Since partition, the conflict has been hanging like the Sword of Damocles. Its volatility serves as a flashpoint between the two nuclear neighbours. The ante has been upped since the BJP government on August 5, 2019, abrogated Article 370 and 35-A, in a bid to illegally annex the Muslim majority region of IIOJ&K. To understand the significance of the action, it is important to analyse the background of these constitutional provisions. Article 370 gave Kashmir a special autonomous status, while Article 35-A was introduced to protect and preserve the demography of the region. However, ever since the abrogation of Article 35-A, outsiders are now allowed to buy property, cast votes, and have other privileges previously provided only to the native Kashmiris. People from anywhere in India can now buy property in the disputed territory. Multinational companies have also been invited to set up their businesses in the held state. All of this is tantamount to a shift in the demographic realities of IIOJ&K.
India also introduced several new legislations in IIOJ&K, such as the new domicile law. The procedure for obtaining a domicile certificate was issued in May 2020, in which all non-Kashmiris were given the rights and privileges that were given previously restricted to the locals. The new rules of domicile reflect New Delhi’s aspiration to alter the demographic tangibles. An estimated 3.2 million domiciles have been issued within a span of four months. Various other significant changes have also taken place since the revocation of Articles 370 & 35-A. For instance, the national flag of the state is not being used anymore. Moreover, the Indian Constitution is being applied in the occupied state, which is a legal contravention in itself. India has also started mining the natural resources in the held state. However, locals are not included in this process, which is leading to mass unemployment. All the mining rights of the 261 mineral blocks were handed over to the Indian citizens, in bidding held in February 2020. Most of the rights are now with the Hindu populace. In addition, India has renamed the landmarks which were once named after Muslim leaders or related to Pakistan in any way. The intention is to disorient the future generations of Kashmiris from their legacy. For instance, Takht-e-Suleman is now renamed Shankaracharya temple. Moreover, Hindi is now the national language of Kashmir.
Likewise, Kashmiri Muslims are also not included in the administrative affairs of IIOJ&K. They are excluded from key departments of divisional commissioners and the civil secretariat. Moreover, Muslims are also being portrayed as ‘invaders’ and ‘foreigners’ by the Indian administration at the state level. Against this backdrop, revocation of Article 370 and 35-A has caused further damage to the personal identity of Muslims in IIOJ&K. Allowing outsiders to settle in the territory will ultimately lead to tectonic shifts and subdue demographic realities. Last but not least India has finalized the constituencies’ delimitation process in IIOJ&K, which confirms BJPs’ agenda to turn the Muslim majority into a political minority. The representation of Hindus has increased rapidly as compared to the Muslims through the recent delimitations. This ultimately means that in the future, even if a plebiscite is held in Kashmir, the results would never be credible. It is high time the international community starts paying attention to the systematic atrocities being committed by India in the disputed state. The issue of Kashmir, if not resolved, could cast serious repercussions for the region and beyond.