**Kashmir unveiled**

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On 5 August 2019, India abrogated Article 370 and 35A of its constitution thereby revoking the special status, or limited autonomy to Kashmir. Since then, the situation developing at either LOC (Line of Control—between India and Pakistan) or LAC (Line of Actual Control—between China and India) is an ongoing story of events. Although Pakistan and China have no differences on Chinese claims, the dispute revolves between Pakistan-India and China-India. Both Pakistan and China desire a peaceful resolution of their disputes over Kashmir but whether India desires the same remains ambiguous. With China in the picture, having claims on Aksai Chin and the northern part of Ladakh (approximately a belt of 10-30 kilometers along the LAC with Ladakh), India is conscious of its worst nightmare of the two-front war. The US wants to keep China engaged regionally through India, force China to forego its plans with reference to Silk Routes vis-à-vis BRI (of which CPEC, is one portion), halt China’s advances in Africa, Middle East, Europe and South America, and subvert the ever-growing Chinese economy; but US stakes in India may be failing.

[US forces shoot down armed drone over US embassy in Baghdad](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/us-forces-shoot-down-armed-drone-over-us-embassy-in-baghdad)

India in its own euphoria, with the much-hyped US association, to capture the mantle of regional leadership, has prematurely engaged itself with China. The two-front war may not necessarily be ruled by the confines of conventional war and a regional affair and has the potential to flare into a global conflict. The titillating question which is confounding Indian policymakers is whether the timing, of abrogating the ‘controversial’ and ‘unlawful’ Article 370 and 35A, was ripe? The question becomes more pertinent when a natural calamity in the form of coronavirus has hit an ill-prepared India which has also affected its economic clout, adding to the debacles at Chabahar and Afghanistan. The removal of special status of Jammu and Kashmir seemed an easy way out to pave the way for ‘doctored solution’, but it seems that prudence was overpowered by the intemperate BJP albeit RSS mindset, affecting a deliberate decision. Military experts like Pravin Sawhney have given a warning call to the Indian military to re-think, revise and re-devise their doctrine to counter the menace of two-front war, since the current capability and capacity of India to confront such a nemesis is unfathomable.

[Israel releases Jordanian citizen accused of 'spying for resistance'](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/israel-releases-jordanian-citizen-accused-of-spying-for-resistance)

India now has the full aim to change the demography of Kashmir; the rights to own property by other Indians and have domiciles. The Kashmiri fears of demographic invasion by the Hindus, is now turning into reality and subsequent introduction of laws by the Indian government has made it quite easier for Hindus from other states, to apply for residency as well as purchasing and owning property. The speed with which relevant laws have been passed in the Indian parliament indicates that India wants the demographic alteration to be effective within two to three years. This would effectively pave the way for any plebiscite, if ever conducted under the auspices of the UN.

India also had plans to build a separation wall; 79km long wall in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K), to separate the southwestern portion of the disputed region from Pakistan. New areas for the settlers from other parts of India have been earmarked and new settlements will be seen erupting in the near future. A policy of apartheid is in effect, despite any official claims but being espoused by the Indian policy makers. The raising of settlements seems to be in consonance with the elections in neighbouring states of Kashmir in 2022; Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand. The ruling party is quite hopeful to swing the vote in its favour and it would not be unanticipated if the Indian government announces polls in IIOJ&K in next few years.

[Highly contagious Delta variant raises concerns of 3rd wave of COVID](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/highly-contagious-delta-variant-raises-concerns-of-3rd-wave-of-covid)

Over the last two decades, especially after the Kargil conflict, India has undertaken substantial developmental projects in IIOJ&K which mainly includes construction of massive road and communication infrastructure as well as construction of large-scale dams to fulfill its never-quenching thirst for water. However, the delay in extending this development in the area near LAC has cost India dearly, which is evident from the Chinese incursion in Galwan Valley last year and subsequent national embarrassment.

Pakistan has not been able to take advantage of the developing situation, especially after the revocation of special status of IIOJ&K which as per Indian policymakers is fait accompli. The lacunas in the Indian law have neither been understood nor exploited; when India can knock the door of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the release of ‘unlawful’ detention and capture of its infamous spy, Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav, then what stops Pakistan to approach the ICJ or UNHRC for pursuing the Kashmir case, in the light of UN resolutions as well as human rights violations, when life under lockdown after the abolition of ‘special status’ is miserable and the cases of enforced disappearances and illegal encounters have increased. Pakistan requires a deeper introspection at the policy level and it needs to be understood that lip-service would not matter much when the Kashmiris are being mauled every day.

[Yemeni gov't wrests control of central district from Houthis](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/yemeni-gov-t-wrests-control-of-central-district-from-houthis)

US would be free to concentrate on its faltering economy, and focus and engage China, after its pullout from Afghanistan. The best possible option available for the US is to undertake multilateral engagements with China. Does the US have the capacity to carry out multilateral engagements with China? Yes, Blue Dot Network and the Quad alliance are products of such designs. India would avoid getting embroiled with China, but the ground realities dictate otherwise. Chinese policy seems to revolve around avoidance of any direct conflict and achieve its objectives (through informationized warfare), however, it would benefit the US to keep China engaged through India and any outbreak of conflict would pay dividends. Chinese strategists warn that US strategy includes boxing-in China through an increased military presence in Central Asia (with long term military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan), by staying militarily engaged in Pakistan while forming a long-term strategic partnership with India in South Asia, and in Southeast Asia. Possibly, that is one of the reasons that US wants to have access to Pakistan bases, apparently for its pullout, and which Pakistan vehemently denies to do so. In all eventuality, if the Kashmir case is not handled well, in the context of regional and international dynamics, it would add to the strife of Kashmiri populace.

[Merkel urges stepped-up cooperation among West Balkan states](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/merkel-urges-stepped-up-cooperation-among-west-balkan-states)

Apparently, India’s centre of gravity is its union of states; resultantly the notion of Kashmir as an ‘atoot ang’. The pillars of Indian state are legislature, executive and judiciary; strengthened by its media, doubtlessly providing a strong shoulder to the Indian state. It would not be prudent to say that the Indian media does not have dissenting voices, but they are seldom and few and when it comes to national interests, they are one voice. India has accrued a lot of advantage through its media policy and leading journalists have always been taken on board for policies of national interest. To harness the opinion of the international audience, India has created in-roads with leading media channels like BBC and CNN and by buying airtime in those channels, it has been able to promote its agenda. The plan to launch Doordarshan International has an additional edge; India has been strengthening its media to undertake Information Warfare. Pakistan needs to take a leaf from India’s media policy and contemporary history has proven that journalists vis-à-vis the media win half the case for the state. Similarly, articles in international newspapers and engagement of international media to project Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir with an all-out similar engagement at ambassadorial level, which is sadly absent, would pay dividends. Pakistan also lacks engagement through social media platforms to put forth its perspective. Alongside, Pakistan needs to keep abreast with the Kashmiri (Azad Kashmir and IIOJ&K) public opinion.

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35a of the Indian constitution, change in demography of Kashmir and concurrent settlements, development of massive infrastructure, enhancing its special forces and revitalizing its military and air forces, reinforcing its war stamina compounded with BJP vis-à-vis RSS doctrine, has a very different story to offer when conducting analysis of competing hypotheses alongside link analysis. Four wars fought with India over a span of over 70 years and all but one had Kashmir in the focus, and the one fought for East Pakistan still managed to change the frontiers in Kashmir. War is a harsh reality but the trails indicate that Kashmir will be the main focus for another war between India and Pakistan, if there is one. Where so much is happening in Kashmir, India wants to keep itself engaged and remain viable in Afghanistan through military, intelligence, rebuilding infrastructure and ‘humanitarian’ assistance. The only plausible explanation is to keep Pakistan engaged in its western frontiers, be it through its proxy of TTP and Daish, or support to a Pakistan hostile regime in Afghanistan; compliments of Ajit Doval. The possible motive is to gain time with its Kashmir mechanizations, as well as keeping Pakistan at bay while engaging with China. So far this policy is working in India’s favour. Modi would be the likely contender and ‘hot favourite’ for another term in 2024. Despite his horrendous performance in the 2nd term, there may be a possibility that a false flag operation (like Pulawama) may be conducted to create a nuance and keep Pakistan tied up in its aftermath.

Pakistani intelligentsia and policymakers need to understand the altering regional dynamics.