

The Washington Post

**Monkey Cage** Analysis

# Why Kashmir may see increased violence after the revocation of Article 370

[+ Add to list](#)

Here are the longstanding tensions – and potential new ones.

By Aditi Malik and  
Shivaji Mukherjee  
August 14 at 7:58 AM

On Aug. 8, in a 40-minute address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi argued that Article 370 of the Indian constitution had [prevented economic development](#) from reaching Kashmir and had stimulated terrorism and corruption.

Three days earlier, Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had announced the abrogation of Article 370, which had accorded the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) [special status](#) — including a separate constitution, a state flag and control over internal administrative matters. India also abolished Article 35A, part of Article 370, which stipulated that only permanent residents of J&K could own property in the region.

What could scrapping Article 370 mean for the future of insurgent violence in Kashmir?

Internal conflict in J&K began [in 1989](#) and escalated through the 1990s and [early 2000s](#). More recently, following the 2016 killing of popular rebel leader [Burhan Wani](#), Kashmir has witnessed [an uptick](#) in insurgent violence and a rise in stone-pelting — a [form of protest](#) against Indian security forces.

Here's what you need to know:

### **1. J&K's accession to India in 1947 was hurried and controversial**

Prior to the [1947 partition](#), which established India and Pakistan as separate nations, J&K was a Muslim-majority princely state that was subject to indirect, rather than direct, rule under the British.

This status gave the region's Hindu ruler, Maharajah Hari Singh, the power to decide whether the state would accede to India or Pakistan in 1947 — or become independent. An incursion by Pakistani raiders in October 1947 and a subsequent war between the two countries resulted in Hari Singh hurriedly acceding to India. While Indian leaders welcomed his decision, Pakistan maintained that Hari Singh was in no position to make this choice on behalf of his people.

This troubled context led the Constituent Assembly of India to enact Article 370 [in 1949](#); when the Indian constitution came into force in 1950, so did Article 370.

India always intended this provision to be temporary — and Hindu nationalist groups have pushed for its revocation [since the 1950s](#).

But for Kashmiris, especially Kashmiri Muslims, Article 370 has [long held symbolic value](#) as a guardian of their unique identity within India. It also has provided them with [real benefits](#), including preference in securing local jobs.

## **2. Insurgent violence in Kashmir did not arise overnight**

After the 1947-1948 [Indo-Pakistani war](#), the U.N. Security Council adopted [Resolution 47](#) in April 1948. [This resolution held](#) that Pakistan must withdraw its troops from the region, India must reduce its military presence, and India must hold a referendum to allow the Kashmiri people to determine their own fate.

In elections held in Indian-administered Kashmir in 1951, voters supported J&K's union with India. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of the Congress Party used these results to argue that the will of the Kashmiri people had rendered the referendum question irrelevant. India's Congress government reiterated this position in 1954-1955 when it alleged that [Pakistan had failed to withdraw its troops](#), which was a precondition for the referendum.

State-level elections in Kashmir in 1987 [precipitated insurgent violence](#). The J&K National Conference (JKNC) party, which supported the state's integration with India, was declared victorious. However, [election observers suggested](#) that the Muslim United Front (MUF) coalition, which favored separatism, had won the contest.

In the aftermath of the 1987 elections, numerous young Kashmiri Muslim men [began joining insurgent groups](#), and the government instituted curfews, lockdowns and other forms of repression. In early 1990, Kashmir also witnessed the [mass exodus of the Hindu Pandit community](#), when Muslim militants targeted this local minority.

As homegrown rebel groups such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) started losing ground to entities supported by the Pakistani army and intelligence — such as the Hizbul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Muhammad in the 1990s — the insurgency intensified.

### **3. The marginalization of Kashmiri Muslims could increase violence**

Political science research suggests two pathways through which violence in Kashmir could escalate following the revocation of Article 370.

First, [studies indicate that](#) when a national minority in a peripheral region is politically excluded from power, such exclusion can fuel insurgent violence. The [recent house arrests](#) of prominent Kashmiri politicians could further increase Kashmiri Muslims' sense of marginalization, and invigorate rebel groups.

A second way that conflict might escalate is through strengthening nativist sentiments. Scholars call these “sons of the soil” conflicts —

when incoming migrants clash with native populations. This type of violence in India has been tied to ethnic riots and insurgencies.

With the abrogation of Article 35A, non-Kashmiris now have the right to move into the region and acquire property. The demographic changes from an influx of non-Muslims into the Muslim-majority Kashmir region of J&K could generate conflict between newcomers and the local population.

#### **4. But job creation and political inclusion could help stabilize the area**

In his Aug. 8 address, Modi promised peace and development for Kashmir and appealed to citizens to invest in the region to boost job growth. Evidence from India's other long-running insurgency — the Maoist conflict, which has also affected states that were previously under indirect rule — suggests that generating employment can stanch conflict. But whether India will create enough jobs to stem the deep-seated grievances of Kashmiri Muslims remains to be seen.

There's another potential pathway to mitigate violence — if younger local leaders can come to replace dynastic politics, which is commonplace in J&K. The two main parties in the region — the JKNC and the J&K People's Democratic Party (JKPDP) — are headed by well-to-do Muslim families who have dominated Kashmiri politics for generations. Modi has implied that repealing Articles 370 and 35A would allow fresh faces to enter the electoral arena.

Changes in local leadership could dampen the sense of exclusion among Kashmiri Muslims and help to restore their faith in Indian democracy. This would entail genuine political representation and transparent and fair elections. However, if the BJP's revocation of Article 370 — which required [approval from J&K's government](#) — is anything to go by, then such political liberalization does not appear to be part of the ruling party's modus operandi.

*Don't miss anything! Sign up to get TMC's smart analysis in your inbox, three days a week.*

*Aditi Malik (@aditimalik\_) is assistant professor of political science at the College of the Holy Cross. She studies political violence, political parties and ethnic politics in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.*

*Shivaji Mukherjee is assistant professor of political science at the University of Toronto. He studies civil war, political violence and colonial origins of the Maoist insurgency in South Asia.*