

HEGEMONY, SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND DISPOSSESSION DECODING INDIA'S RESTRUCTURING OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Saba Ghulam Nabi^{*1}, Abdul Rehman²

^{*1,2}Research Officer at Centre for International Strategic Studies AJK

¹sabaghulamnabi@gmail.com, ²abdulrehman007.ar93@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Saba Ghulam Nabi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16417989>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
22 April, 2025	09 June, 2025	09 July, 2025	25 July, 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the contemporary transformation of the Kashmir conflict through the theoretical lenses of settler colonialism, Gramscian hegemony, and David Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession. In the aftermath of the revocation of Article 370, the Bhartiya Janata Party-led Indian government has intensified its Hindutva-oriented policies in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, employing coercive legal frameworks, demographic reengineering, and cultural repression. The study situates these developments within a settler colonial framework, wherein state-led infrastructural expansion and legal manipulation facilitate the displacement of indigenous populations and the restructuring of territorial control. Simultaneously, the BJP's invocation of development and normalcy operates as a hegemonic project, relying not solely on coercion but on the cultural and institutional internalization of Hindu nationalist ideology to legitimize domination and suppress dissent. These processes are further examined through the prism of accumulation by dispossession, as land acquisition, ecological degradation, and the restructuring of the region's agrarian economy disproportionately benefit state and corporate interests at the expense of Kashmir's local population. The paper argues that the BJP's policies represent an intertwined project of ideological, territorial, and economic domination, reshaping the identity, demography, and political landscape of the region under the guise of development.

INTRODUCTION

Since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been a source of significant geopolitical tension, marked by ongoing political and social turbulence and contention. Before partition, the Muslims of the state endured severe policies of Dogra Raj and struggled against them, but after partition, India took this issue to the UN, and the people are waiting for the plebiscite to decide their future as per UN resolutions, right to self-determination. After partition, Kashmiris have been fighting for their just cause, making significant sacrifices, and the struggle continues to this day.

Since then, every Indian government has used different tactics to acquire control over Kashmir

and weaken the Kashmiri people and their freedom movement. Despite of facing harsh brutalities, such as human rights violations, deaths, unlawful detentions, torching, rape, and harassment, they weren't successful in their efforts. To merge the State of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union, all Hindutva forces formed the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980. The BJP is the RSS's political wing and a loyal kid. The BJP adopted the RSS's ideological manifesto in its political agenda. That

is why the BJP emerged as the party in power in the 2014 and 2019 elections.¹

The tactics of aggression for IIOJK have altered, particularly after 2014, when the BJP took power, but the BJP's ultimate goal remains the same: to change the region's identity. The BJP made tremendous attempts to bring significant demographic changes in the area. Following its party manifesto in 2019, the BJP unilaterally revoked the special autonomous status of the state without the consent of the Kashmiri people. Subsequently, the Indian Supreme Court considered this unilateral action legal as well.²

Article 370 granted significant power to the state, allowing it to maintain its flag and constitution, as well as the power to make decisions in various domains, except for certain areas such as communications, foreign affairs, finance, and defense, which remained under the purview of the Indian government.³

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi abrogated Article 370 on 05 August 2019, asserting that this action would facilitate regional development. Initially, the people of Jammu supported this decision, hoping it would bring prosperity, but now they lament the repercussions.

By revoking Article 370, the Indian government aimed to demonstrate its control over the territory and further integrate Jammu and Kashmir into the rest of the country. Following the repeal of Article 370 and the area's conversion to a union territory, a delimitation commission was established in March 2020. The central laws of India, including the Constitution, are considered to be entirely applicable to Jammu and Kashmir.⁴

The Indian administration of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claims that revoking Articles 370 and 35(a) will bring development and normalcy to the conflict zone, placing an end to violence. At an address to the public in October 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured his supporters that it would take no more than four months "to normalize the

abnormal situation that continues to persist in Jammu and Kashmir."

But the consequences differ from the BJP's claims of normalcy and prosperity, peace, and development. The people of Jammu and Kashmir suffer significant economic losses and educational issues (11000 schools remained closed till December 2019). The revocation of Article 370 damaged the business climate, tourism, and natural resources of Jammu and Kashmir.⁵

The BJP has left no stone unturned in changing the identity of Kashmir. All legislative efforts were established to declare the non-natives of the state as natives of the state, to change the job quota, in which the quota for Hindus was increased and for Muslims decreased, and demographic engineering, sociopolitical, and religious initiatives to suppress the Muslims of the state. In the present scenario in IIOJK, the BJP government is claiming development and normalcy in the region by launching railway projects, highways, by destroying the fertile land of Kashmir, which is back backbone of Kashmir's economy and a source of earning for the local natives.

The primary goal of these so-called developments is to transform the region's identity to reflect the Hindutva perspective. The study highlights how all strategies of the BJP are attempting to transform the Muslim identity of Kashmir by ignoring the fundamental rights and needs and sociopolitical and religious norms of the people of the region, specifically in relating to the removal of Article 370 and how BJP is promoting its Hindutva agenda in the only Muslim state of the region.

Theoretical Framework

The study draws on a composite theoretical framework integrating Settler Colonialism theory, Gramscian cultural hegemony, and David Harvey's concept of Accumulation by Dispossession to interrogate the BJP-led Indian government's policies in IIOJK post-2019.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Pathak, K. K. (2010). Of Jaswant Singh, The BJP And The RSS. Mumbai: The Rajaji Foundation.
- ² Khurshid, T. (2016). India Occupied Kashmir (IOK) Elections 2014. *Strategic Studies*, 36(2), 122-139.
- ³ Bhat, K. A. (2017). *Special Status of Jammu & Kashmir: Article 370: An In depth Analysis*. Educreation Publishing.

⁴ Government of India. "Chapter11- *The Right to Information Act, 2005*." Department of Personnel & Training, ministry of personnel, Public Grievances and pensions, <https://dopt.gov.in/sites/default/files/ch-11.pdf>.

⁵ Yamin, A. (2019, July 6). Why You're Wrong in Celebrating the Removal of Article 370. Youthkiawaaz.com.

At the core, Settler Colonialism, as theorized by Patrick Wolfe⁶ is understood not as a singular historical event but as a persistent structure that seeks to eliminate and replace the indigenous population. In the context of Kashmir, India's systematic demographic engineering through domicile law amendments, land acquisition, and cultural erasure mirrors classic settler colonial tactics aimed at transforming the region's Muslim-majority character into a Hindu-settler dominated landscape. Lorenzo Veracini⁷ expands this by noting that settler regimes are marked by "territoriality, elimination, and replacement," all of which resonate with the Modi regime's aggressive land and identity policies in Kashmir.

To understand how such practices gain ideological legitimacy, the paper turns to Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Gramsci posited that ruling classes maintain dominance not only through coercion but by manufacturing consent via institutions, religion, media, and education. In Kashmir, the BJP uses the rhetoric of "national unity" and "development" to normalize its control, while promoting Hindutva ideology through cultural and legal reforms. Furthermore, the BJP's actions reflect what Gramsci termed a "passive revolution", a gradual, top-down transformation where structural changes (such as the revocation of Article 370 and legal overhauls) are carried out within existing institutions to consolidate control while suppressing organic resistance.

Finally, David Harvey's theory of Accumulation by Dispossession⁸ helps interpret the BJP's "development" agenda, railway expansions, highway constructions, and mineral resource extraction, not as genuine socio-economic upliftment but as mechanisms for capital accumulation. These projects forcibly reorient Kashmir's land and natural wealth toward Indian state and corporate interests while displacing and disenfranchising the local population, particularly agrarian and orchard-based economies that form the backbone of Kashmir's indigenous livelihood.

By deploying this multidimensional framework, the paper analyzes how coercive governance, ideological manipulation, and capitalist exploitation converge to facilitate a neo-colonial project in Kashmir, cloaked in narratives of nationalism and progress.

1. Article 370 & 35A: From Inception to Revocation

The government of India, influenced by RSS, wanted to gradually eliminate the Muslim identity of Kashmir and fully integrate it with India. In 1950, Article 370 was included in the Indian Constitution as a measure to preserve the unique identity of the region. By the Delhi agreement of 1952, Sheikh Abdullah won limited Indian powers in J&K while preserving Kashmir's flag, Prime Minister, and President, but the underlying Indian aim was to utilize Article 370 as a tool to trap Sheikh Abdullah and for the gradual integration of J&K, rather than to recognize its autonomy.⁹ While Sheikh Abdullah hoped to preserve the identity of the state and obtain unique privileges for its people, and his political future. India exploited the promise of special status as a pretext to seize control of J&K, mislead the world, and undermine Pakistan's position.¹⁰

After the 1947 Jammu genocide and weakening of Muslim leadership, Parja Parashad, sponsored by the RSS and its political wing, Jana Sangh, emerged as an essential tool in promoting Hindutva ideology in J&K. It firmly opposed the unique status of J&K, using eight-point agenda that included revoking state's autonomy, placing Kashmir under the Indian constitution and Supreme Court, and conducting new elections. Parja Parashid, with the support of RSS, staged rallies, protests, and propaganda campaigns against Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmiri Muslims under the slogan "**Ek Desh Mein Dou Vidhan, Dou Nishan, Dou Pradhan Nahe chaleingay**".¹¹

Their threat, along with Indian concerns that Sheikh Abdullah would harm India's secular image and may have intended independence with foreign

⁶ Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4): 387-409.

⁷ Veracini, Lorenzo. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. 2nd ed. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024.

⁸ Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁹ M. G. Chitkara. (2004). *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: National Upsurge*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, p.263.

¹⁰ Abdullah's. (2012). *Dafa 370 Ka Talhu Atish-E-Chinar*. Rawalpindi: Royal Publishing Company, p.355-356.

¹¹ Ibid

assistance, resulted in his detention in 1953, marking an important turn in India's control over Kashmir. On August 8, 1953, after Sheikh Abdullah's dismissal Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad was appointed as Prime Minister of Kashmir then Kashmiris started for the restoration of state subject rules enacted by the Maharaja's government in 1912, and 1927 to protect the Kashmir's identity and prevent outsiders from settling in J&K. These restrictions stemmed from the "Kashmir for Kashmiris" movement, led by Kashmiri Pandits.¹² To preserve these safeguards, the Indian government issued a presidential order in 1954 that incorporated Article 35A into the constitution, granting the J&K assembly the authority to define permanent residents and prohibit outsiders from owning property or obtaining jobs in the state, thereby preserving J&K's distinct status and identity. After the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, India began a gradual process of diluting the state's distinct status. Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad acted as the PM of the state but operated under Indian and Hindutva pressure.¹³

During his tenure, India expanded the power of the Supreme Court and the Election Commission (1965), established the Indian Administrative Services (1958), and removed the permit system (1959) to allow non-Kashmiris easier access. Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq used Articles 356 and 357 in 1964 to dismiss the elected government of Jammu and Kashmir and set up the president's authority. J&K's PM and president designations were replaced with Chief Minister and Governor in 1965, putting the state in line with the rest of India. Following his release in 1968, Sheikh Abdullah changed his mind and signed the Indra-Abdullah Accord in 1975, embracing India's leadership and refusing to revert to his pre-1953 position.¹⁴

Consequently, 28 constitutional orders and 262 union Laws imposed on J&K, granting India complete legislative and political power to revoke the state's special status without explicit repeal. The revocation of articles 370 and 35A has long been a major ideological goal of the RSS, which has continuously advocated for J&K's special status in

its electoral agenda. This claim became central to the BJP's election manifestos and Hindutva-driven campaigns, most notably during the 2014 and 2019 elections.¹⁵

In 2014, India's PM seat was taken up by Narendra Modi, who has been a lifelong member of the RSS. The BJP fulfilled the goal set by the RSS with the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A on the 5th of August in 2019. Modi hailed it as the "beginning of a new phase of development," which exposed the supremacy of the RSS and put into effect policies meant to deepen Hindutva and exterminate Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. Simply put, the BJP's move brought to realization the vision held by the RSS of a Hindu Rashtra for India by stripping the region of sovereignty.¹⁶

2. BJP's Legislative Measures: Shaping Demographics and Advancing Hindutva Vision

The BJP's legislative interventions in Jammu and Kashmir following the revocation of Article 370 exemplify settler colonialism, which is best understood as a structure that seeks to eliminate indigenous populations and assert permanent settler control. Through a web of constitutional changes, demographic reengineering, and legal instruments, the Indian state under BJP leadership is not merely integrating the region but systematically transforming it to fit a Hindu majoritarian vision inspired by Hindutva ideology. Settler colonialism operates through mechanisms of elimination, replacement, and control. In the context of Kashmir, this is evident in the replacement of the "permanent resident" status with "domicile" certificates, the distribution of these certificates to tens of thousands of non-local individuals, the opening of land markets to outsiders, and the redrawing of electoral constituencies in a manner that dilutes the political agency of the Muslim majority. These legislative efforts are not acts of benign governance but tools of settler expansion designed to dispossess the local population of its land, rights, and historical identity. By encouraging the influx of non-native populations and embedding them into the political and economic fabric of the region, the BJP is

¹² Khan, S. M. I. 1965. *The Kashmir Saga*. Ripon Print Press.

¹³ Saraf, M.Y. (2015). *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom vol2*. Mirpur: National Institute Of Kashmir Studies, p.467-469.

¹⁴ Bazaz, P.N.K. (2009). *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*. Srinagar: Gulshan Books, p.123.

¹⁵ Gokhale, S. *Hindu Rashtra's Propaganda On J&K*

¹⁶ Gokhale, S. *Hindu Rashtra's Propaganda On J&K*

advancing a settler colonial project aimed at permanently altering the demography, politics, and culture of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has taken a range of tactics to engineer the demography of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) by favoring Hindus, who are largely concentrated in the Jammu region. Following the revocation of the region's special autonomous status on August 5, 2019, the BJP has implemented various strategies to manipulate the demographic composition of IIOJK.

These approaches include legislative measures like the Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the J&K Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, delimitation exercises, granting non-Kashmiris domicile status, and allowing non-natives to own property in the state. These constitutional amendments and the passage of new legislation seek to diminish the proportion of Muslims in legislative affairs and bureaucratic administration in areas where Muslims are the majority. Furthermore, by these tactics, non-natives of the state, particularly Hindus, have been declared natives of the state, undermining the region's Muslim majority.¹⁷

The following legislative measures were amended and introduced after the revocation of Article 370 to alter the region's demographics and benefit Hindus.

a) **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Order (2020)**

After the revocation of Article 370, the Government of India issued a bill to redefine the region's status. As per this order, the Indian government divided the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. It also introduced Indian Laws to the region, including domicile and land ownership. Particularly, the order to change the Civil Services (Decentralization and Recruitment) Act by replacing the term "permanent residents with domiciles of J&K By using these measures BJP is exploiting the demographic and political integration of the non-local, predominantly Hindu population, and diluting the muslim majority.

b) **Domicile Certificate Rule 2020**

In May 2020, the J&K government announced the awarding of domicile certificates procedures 2020. These rules determine the requirements for providing a domicile certificate, which is now required for various purposes, such as employment, education, and property transactions for non-natives. The rule allows domicile certificates to be obtained simply through online applications, and specific revenue officials, such as tehsildars, can issue them. This amendment expanded the criteria for applying for a domicile certificate, allowing anyone who has lived in the region for 15 years or studied there for 7 years can claim it.

Moreover, the children of central government officials who have served in J&K for 10 years are also eligible for domicile status, and over 83000 outsiders have been granted a Domicile certificate in J&K. The aim of making it so simple and feasible is to accelerate the integration of non-locals, particularly Hindus, for strengthening its Hindutva ideology by transforming the Muslim majority region's demographic and cultural identities.

c) **Relaxation of Land Ownership Laws**

Before the revocation of the special autonomous status of the state, the region had its laws under which non-natives were not allowed to buy land in the state. These restrictions were lifted with the revocation of Article 35A. This move allowed people from the rest of India to purchase land in the region, which is now impacting the demography, culture, and economy of the local people of the state. This move of the BJP easing land ownership restrictions to encourage settlement by non-local, largely Hindu populations, as part of its Hindutva-driven agenda of culturally and demographically integrating J&K into a Hindu-majoritarian national identity.

d) **Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Orders (2023)**

The government of India in 2023 changed the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes order to

¹⁷ Nabi, Saba Ghulam, and Abdul Rehman. "Shifting Dynamics: Understanding the Impact of BJP's Legislative Strategy on Demographics and Elections in

IIOJK." *International Journal of Human and Society* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1375-1386.

include other communities like Padri, Gadda Brahman, and other non-Muslim communities in J&K and presented this move as a step towards expanding affirmative action privileges to specific areas, such as educational and job reservations.

However, the reality is that it was designed to change the region's demographic composition by offering such benefits to non-locals while depriving the Muslim community of equal representation and opportunities. The BJP is using these reforms to selectively award affirmative action privileges to specific groups, advancing its Hindutva objective by integrating Hindu-aligned or non-local people into the sociopolitical fabric of Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir.

e) **The Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.**

This bill modifies the 2004 Reservation Act by replacing the term "weak and underprivileged classes (social castes)" with "Other Backward Classes (OBCs)," expanding reservation benefits in jobs and education to 15 new communities, including West Pakistani refugees and Gorkhas, most of whom are from the Jammu region. This modification, which follows the 2022 delimitation process that granted the Jammu region six more assembly seats while Kashmir received only one, is viewed as part of a larger political tactic to shift power to Jammu, which is a Hindu majority area, the BJP's heartland.

As per the census of 2011, in the region of Jammu, almost 99% of the Scheduled Caste population and 63% of the Scheduled Tribes live in Jammu, which shows that reservation benefits disproportionately benefit Jammu-based tribes while the people of the valley, which is a Muslim majority region, have no benefit from it but in vain. These changes exacerbated existing regional and communal tensions, isolated Kashmiris, and jeopardized cultural identity, minority rights, and regional stability in the aftermath of enhanced central control following the revocation of Article 370.¹⁸

All these actions of the BJP are portrayed as efforts for the development of Scheduled Tribes and other communities, but in reality, they favor the Hindu-majority region of Jammu while neglecting the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir. This appears to be part of the BJP's Hindutva agenda aimed at

stripping Kashmiris of their identity. According to these new rules, more than 83,000 domicile certificates have been issued to non-natives, thereby granting them access to jobs, employment opportunities, and reserved quotas. This move is depriving the native population of their rights and is an attempt to alter the region's demography and establish Hindu dominance.

3. **Development Projects as a Disaster for the Region, and Benefit for Hindus**

A British American scholar, David Harvey's gave a theory of "Accumulation by Dispossession", which provides a powerful lens to understand the socio-political and economic transformations occurring in Jammu and Kashmir post the revocation of Article 370. According to Harvey, neoliberal regimes often sustain capital accumulation not solely through production, but through the expropriation of land, resources, and rights from marginalized populations. In Kashmir, the BJP-led government has deployed the rhetoric of "development" to mask a deeper strategy of dispossession, seizing fertile land, exploiting mineral resources, displacing traditional livelihoods, and militarizing public spaces. These actions reflect a systematic effort to appropriate Kashmiri land and resources for capitalist and ideological expansion, while simultaneously marginalizing the indigenous population. The state-driven infrastructure projects, natural resource extraction, and militarized spatial restructuring are not merely development initiatives, but tools of accumulation that dispossess Kashmiris of their economic base and cultural autonomy.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Hindu nationalist party have long opposed Article 370, and its removal was part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's electoral agenda. Following an unexpected win in the 2019 general elections, the administration moved quickly to fulfill its commitment. On August 5, 2019, the Indian government revoked Article 370 in an unprecedented and unilateral move, citing it as a barrier to the development of millions of J&K residents who have faced injustice over the years. Along with the revocation of Article 370, Article 35A was also revoked, allowing non-Kashmiris to purchase property in the region.

¹⁸ Ibid

At the time of the announcement of revocation of Article 370, “the Prime Minister of India assured people of Jammu and Kashmir that the revocation of Article 370 would usher in ‘Vikas’(Development) and Vishwas (Trust).”¹⁹ Since revocation, the actual development has been seen in the Kashmir Indian troops' deployment. From August 2019 until December 2019, the Kashmir valley experienced a curfew-like situation, and Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was implemented, which restricted gatherings of more than four people. The restrictions were so severe that roadways in numerous sites across the city were closed to vehicles and people; draconian laws like UPWA, PSA, and AFSA were imposed to suppress dissents. Internet blackouts, detentions of journalists and human rights defenders. Political leaders were put behind bars, and many were placed under house arrest. All these measures were staged to promote development in Jammu and Kashmir.

a) Expansion of Railways and Highway Projects

The Indian government is expanding railway and highway projects, but Kashmiris are being denied fundamental rights. They claim they do not want these developments and instead seek their basic rights. However, under its Hindutva policy, the BJP is taking Kashmiris' land with these projects.

- Awantipora-Shopian (27.6 km)
- Baramulla-Banihali (135.5 km)
- Baramulla-Uri (50 km)
- Sopore-Kupwara (33.7 km)
- Islamabad-Bijbehara-Pahalgam (77.5km)
- Zojila Tunnel (14.2km)
- Banihal-Qazigund Road Tunnel (8.45km)
- Sonmarg Tunnel (6.5km)
- Chenani- Nashri Tunnel (9.2km)
- Amaranth Road Project (110km)

Agriculture is not only a source of earning in J&K but also a way of life. Around 60% of the population is directly or indirectly employed in agriculture and other sectors, including horticulture. Apple farming is Kashmir's largest economic driver, employing millions. Now, a new

railway and road project jeopardizes many of those livelihoods.

Apple farming is a major source of livelihood in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, employing approximately 3.5 million farmers, or 27% of the region's population. The fruit's export provides more than 8% of the region's GDP. The apple growers claim they have dedicated their entire lives - and their limited resources - to growing the orchards, only to have them forcibly removed by the authorities. Kashmir is the largest producer of apples, despite its significance in agriculture's share in the GSDP has declined over the years from 38% in 1990 to 16.5% in 2021 there are number of challenges to this decline but these projects have created more challenges for thousands of farmers who had worked hard for years to develop their agricultural land or convert it to horticultural land.²⁰

Apple orchards will be damaged in South Kashmir. Thousands of trees cut down by the railway line are scaring off people who grow orchards for their livelihood. People who live in the area have launched protests and spoken out about their concerns over the railway line route that goes right through thousands of trees. They said no one has government official has requested a railway line on these particular routes.²¹

In addition these projects are also a danger to the region's fragile land and ecology, while the Indian government presenting these projects as a step towards modernization and economic growth but in reality, for Kashmir, these projects are not progress but a deepening of marginalization and control, as a part of a systematic land grab, a threat for both their economic survival and cultural identity.

b) Military Occupation of Grazing Lands in Kashmir Threatens Livelihoods, Livestock, and Environment

The people of IIOJK are struggling to find appropriate grazing space for their livestock due to

¹⁹ Mehta, M.(2003, February 1). The Role Of Hindutva In Indian Politics. The South Asia Monitor, no.55.

²⁰

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/4/10/kashmir-famous-apple-orchards-are-under-attack-from-a-rail>

²¹ <https://kashmirreader.com/2024/03/22/new-railway-lines-in-kashmir-have-major-drawbacks-could-impact-valleys-economy/>

the heavy military presence in the region. The Indian army has taken over much of the region's prime grazing pasture, rendering it inaccessible to cattle ranchers. Tosamaidan is one such meadow. The vast meadow, located around 70 miles west of Kashmir's summer capital, Srinagar, has proven fatal for shepherds and their livestock because it has been converted into an Indian military training location. Unexploded weapons left over from military exercises have also killed several civilians.

According to the Indian Ministry of Defence, the Indian army has acquired 28,840 hectares of land in Kashmir, whereas the Kashmir state administration states the army has taken 53,353 hectares, the vast majority of which is illegal. Traditionally, Tosamaidan was a popular grazing region for sheep, goats, and cattle. As per the animal husbandry department, more than 25% of Kashmir's sheep population used to graze in this vast meadow, which has not only become tough but also extremely hazardous, and hundreds of animals have been killed by these shells.²²

According to a report from Kashmir's animal and sheep husbandry department, restricted movement among certain highland meadows is one of the major challenges facing the livestock business in Kashmir. Animals are unable to obtain the nutrients they require due to a lack of suitable grazing pasture. Shepherds are already losing pastureland due to rapid urbanization and grazing land encroachment. As per a report, "In comparison to the national availability of 1.0 hectares per livestock, only 0.4 hectares is available in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, as most of the areas are inaccessible."²³

The transformation of meadows into an Indian military exercise zone is an alarming situation in Kashmir that has disrupted traditional lifestyle, cultural practices, livelihoods, and ecology of the region. The local people are facing diminishing access to grazing lands directly affects their livelihoods.

The existence of the Indian army on the meadows and unexploded shells is resulting in killings, fear,

and injuries among the people of Kashmir, worsening socio-economic issues. Despite the public opposition, the Indian military's continuing occupation indicates a systematic disregard for Kashmiris and environmental concerns. Because it is not only about grazing, it is about the future, safety and economy, and ecology, all of which Kashmiris are denied.

c) **India's Occupation of J&K's Natural Resources: Economic Development or Resource Colonialism**

Jammu and Kashmir is home to natural resources. It is located in the Great Himalayan zone, bordered by the Pir Panjal Range and the Vale of Kashmir. The climate varies with altitude, impacting both vegetation and animals. Jammu and Kashmir is a land blessed with natural beauty and abundance, and it has about 500 mineral blocks, including 261 in Kashmir. It is the region that produces borax and sapphire, as well as 42 different types of forests, along with significant amounts of water. The sapphire resource mines are located near Machail, Paddar.

India is utilizing 36% of Kashmir's graphite, 21% of its marble, and 14% gypsum resources. Jammu and Kashmir is drained by five major rivers: Jhelum, Chenab, Indus, Ravi, and Tawi. It includes numerous water resources, including lakes, glaciers, and rivers. Jammu & Kashmir has 1230 water bodies. The region's leading lakes include Wular Lake, Manasbal Lake, Dal Lake, and Nageen Lake. The region's documented forest area is 20,230 square kilometres, which is 19.95% of the total of India's total territory. Of the 19.95%, 87.21% are reserved forests, 12.61% are protected areas, and 0.18% are unclassified woods.²⁴

India is exploiting almost all the natural resources of Jammu and Kashmir. Anywhere else in the world, if a region has natural resources, the primary beneficiaries are the natives of that region. However, the case of Kashmir is entirely different. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the unfortunate Kashmiris are deprived of their rightful share in them. The Indian government is

²² <https://earthjournalism.net/stories/military-activities-destroy-kashmir-highland-pastures>

²³ Mir, Nazim Hamid, and Suheel Ahmad. 2016. *Livestock Rearing-Sectorial Status and Fodder-Feed Strategies in Kashmir Himalaya*. Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute. December 2016.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313573332_Livestock_Rearing-Sectorial_Status_and_Fodder-Feed_Strategies_in_Kashmir_Himalaya

²⁴ <https://unacademy.com/content/railway-exam/study-material/general-awareness/natural-resources-in-jammu-and-kashmir/>

using various tactics to keep the people of Kashmir from benefiting from these resources.

The discovery of lithium in J&K grants India the fifth-largest lithium reserves in the world and raises the prospect of self-sufficiency in a mineral essential to the technology sector. However, environmentalists warn that lithium extraction is often harmful to the environment, causing soil destruction and air and water contamination. A historian, Sidiq Wahid, and former chancellor of Kashmir's Islamic University of Science and Technology, said that "We know it is going to deprive the region of water, in a big way. The forested areas will become deforested, leaving behind a very scarred landscape."²⁵

India has ignored environmentalists' warnings and has begun exploiting the region's rich lithium resources by awarding contracts to outsiders. This reflects a broader strategy to alter the territory's demographic makeup. Doors are being opened to Indian investors, while Kashmiri businesses struggle due to economic constraints and limited access to resources.

The contracts for mineral extraction from the water bodies of Kashmir were first handed over to outsiders in 2020, with the bidding process conducted online during an internet blackout in Kashmir. This situation left many local businessmen at a disadvantage. Over 200 mineral blocks in Jhelum and its tributaries, including those in the 10 districts of the Valley, were opened for the mining of sand, boulders, gravel, and other riverbed materials. Non-resident contractors were awarded all ten blocks with a bid of Rs 5.08 crore.

The Department of Geology and Mining in Baramulla received Rs 20.15 crore for 38 mining blocks, of which 26 were secured by contractors from outside the Valley. Similarly, in Budgam, four of the seven blocks auctioned for Rs 4.67 crore went to Punjabi contractors, while Kashmiri contractors took the remaining three blocks along the Jhelum tributaries. Likewise, outside companies gained mining rights over more than 60% of the blocks in the Pulwama district.²⁶

This is how the claims of development are affecting the Kashmiris; this has not only impacted

the livelihoods of local Kashmiris but is also harming the ecology and biodiversity of the region. The people of Jammu initially celebrated the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A; now they are mourning it, as outsiders are the primary beneficiaries of the development promise made to them by PM Modi. The case of Ladakh is also the same. Before revocation, the BJP had made a promise of statehood for Ladakh. After revocation, the people of Ladakh are struggling for statehood, the 6th Scheduled, PSC, and removal of unemployment. Ladakhis are arguing now that the revocation of Article 370 was a blunder, that disempowered them, leading to a loss of political rights and a threat to losing their land.

d) Construction of Satellite Township

The government of India proposes to construct satellite colonies alongside the Ring Road in a strategy to exacerbate the destruction of agricultural areas already harmed by the Ring Road project. The construction of satellite colonies may leave inhabitants without land to support their livelihoods. This plan will confiscate the remaining land, rendering Kashmiris landless in their homeland.

The Kashmiri people have incurred enormous losses as a result of continuing road and highway projects." Dr. Raja Muzafar Bhat, a social activist who has thoroughly examined land acquisition in Jammu and Kashmir, highlights the extensive land loss. "The Srinagar Semi Ring Road Project alone requires thousands of kanals of fertile, irrigated land. More than 5,000 kanals were acquired in the Budgam district, but the affected farmers were not rewarded fairly under the Right to Fair Compensation Act, which became effective only after Article 370 was revoked. Land at Wathoor, Chadoora, was purchased for Rs 45 lakhs per kanal in 2021, when the market rate was more than Rs 1 crore. Farmers are still recovering from that shock, and the J&K Housing Board proposes to establish satellite townships along the Ring Road? Where will people grow crops and apples? Kashmiris are rapidly losing their agricultural land, which will result in a bleak future for Kashmir. "If this trend

²⁵ <https://www.wired.com/story/lithium-village-in-the-path-of-indias-electric-dreams/?utm>

²⁶ Ahmad, Mudasir. "In Kashmir, Jhelum Mineral Blocks Put Up for Online Auction." *The Wire*,

December 10, 2020. <https://thewire.in/government/kashmir-jhelum-mineral-blocks-bidding-online>.

of land occupation continues, Kashmiris will be landless by 2035."²⁷

Farmers and activists in Kashmir have expressed serious concerns over the intentions of the BJP government to build satellite colonies along the Ring Road, anticipating additional loss of agricultural land. They warn that the Ring Road project has already impacted them, and that building satellite colonies will leave them without land to support their livelihoods. Farmers claim they have faced huge losses due to ongoing road and highway projects.

4. Religious Suppression and Cultural Erosion of Kashmiri Muslims Under the BJP's Government Policies

From a Gramscian perspective, the BJP's sustained assault on the religious and cultural identity of Kashmiri Muslims reflects a deliberate effort to establish **ideological hegemony** in IIOJK. Antonio Gramsci (1971) theorized that dominant classes maintain control not only through coercive apparatuses like the military or police but more insidiously through **cultural hegemony**, the process of manufacturing consent by reshaping institutions, beliefs, and norms in line with the ruling ideology. In Kashmir, this is manifest in the BJP's Hindutva-driven strategy to delegitimize Islamic traditions, suppress cultural practices, and impose a homogenized Hindu-nationalist identity on the region. Such policies are indicative of what Gramsci called a "**passive revolution**", wherein transformation is enacted through state institutions and legal reforms rather than mass mobilization, allowing for the incremental erosion of resistance while maintaining an illusion of normalcy. The BJP's manipulation of religious spaces, celebration of Hindu festivals alongside restrictions on Muslim worship, and state-backed cultural interventions such as fashion shows during Ramadan are tools to normalize Hindutva ideology and reconstitute the Kashmiri Muslim consciousness in alignment with India's majoritarian ethos.

The Government of India is using various tactics to erase the identity of Kashmir. Under the guise of socio-cultural development, several strategies have been introduced, but the reality behind the scenes

is entirely different and alarming. These attempts aim to erase the socio-cultural, religious, and even historical identity of the region. The fact remains that Kashmir has a history dating back 4,500 years, but the BJP seeks to rewrite this history so that the youth of Kashmir remain unaware of their true heritage and are instead shaped according to the ideology the BJP promotes. The BJP is using several tactics to erase the socio-political and religious identity and history of Jammu and Kashmir.

a) Religious and Socio-Cultural Identity in IIOJK Under the Siege of Hindutva

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is systematically working to marginalize Muslims and erode their religious and cultural identity in IIOJK. Kashmiris face a continual assault on their Muslim identity. The agenda of the BJP in the IIOJK aims to eradicate Islamic origins and impose Hindutva philosophy. The RSS-backed Modi rule seeks to transform Kashmir from a region of Sufi saints into a Hindutva bastion of hatred. The BJP government officials are instructing Muslim businessmen in the Jammu region to stop selling meat, targeting their economic and cultural practices. The BJP administration is aiding the Hindu Yatra in IIOJK while enforcing restrictions on Kashmiri Muslims celebrating their festivals, such as Eid.

- The Indian occupation authorities prohibited Juma Ul Wida prayers in the famous Jamia Masjid; Kashmiri Muslims have been deprived of all liberties, including liberty of religion. The imposition of enforced lockdowns on Jamia Masjid and Mir Waiz Umar Farooq has been under house arrest. The restriction of religious freedom for Kashmiri Muslims is simply another example of the Hindutva BJP/RSS regime's continued assault on religious freedoms, which is a serious violation of applicable international human rights laws.

For performing Eid prayers, Muslims were also stopped by saying that it would block traffic. For Hindu festivals, they engaged roads for more than 2-3 days, but just for offering Eid prayer, which will take only 15 minutes. For justifying this, their arguments are simply baseless.

- A vulgar Fashion show was launched in Gulmargh, IIOJK, in the Holy month of Ramzan

²⁷ Qayoom, Atif. "Farmers, Activists Oppose Construction of Satellite Colonies along Ring Road." *Rising Kashmir*, December 1.

<https://risingkashmir.com/farmers-activists-oppose-constructing-satellite-colonies-along-ring-road/>

by Indians. This disgraceful event was condemned by the Kashmiri Muslims. These events are part of an organized scheme designed to mislead society, particularly the younger generation. The irony is that India, which purports to be a secular and democratic country, actively promotes religious and cultural intolerance in the IIOJK. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is recognized as the land of saints and Sufism (Islamic mysticism), and it has a strong spiritual history that influences many aspects of the lives of Kashmiri Muslims. The Indian government not only disrespected the religious sentiments of Muslims but also violated the essence of Islam, as well as Kashmiri culture and values in the only Muslim region.

- The Indian government, under the pretense of development, is encouraging the establishment of cinemas and fashion shows in IIOJK. These activities appear to be targeted at distracting the youth of its. The objective of incorporating such cultural aspects is to detach Kashmiri youth from their unique customs and Islamic beliefs. How can young people stay connected to their culture and Islamic beliefs if they are not present in society? Furthermore, the Indian government permitted the open selling of drugs in IIOJK, with many liquor stores now operating in the territory, adding to an increase in drug addiction among Kashmiri youth. In response, local Kashmiris have posted posters demanding that tourists respect local culture and refrain from consuming drugs in public. However, the authorities have taken out the placards. The efforts of the BJP are destroying the Islamic history of Kashmir in favor of a Hindu-centric narrative. The BJP's control over IIOJK's religious sites, which include Eidgahs, mosques, and shrines, shows a worried attempt to erode the region's Muslim identity, it noted.

b) **Waqaf Bill Amendment 2025**

"Waqaf refers to personal property, movable or immovable, that Muslims permanently donate for religious or charitable purposes." Once a property is declared as Waqaf, it is transferred to God (Allah) and cannot be sold or used for any other purpose. Waqaf is a fundamental aspect of Islamic civilizations. The Waqaf Act of 1995 currently

regulates Waqaf properties in India. However, a legal framework has existed since 1913, when the British colonial rulers approved the Mussalman Waqaf Validating Act. This was followed by the Mussalman Waqaf Act of 1923. After the Independence of India, the Central Waqaf Act of 1954 was enacted, and it was subsequently replaced by the Waqaf Act of 1995 to streamline the governance of these properties. The last amendment to the Act took place in 2013.

The Waqaf Amendment Act 2025, enacted by the Indian parliament, amends the 1995 Waqaf Act to increase governance control over Waqaf properties and allow non-Muslims, mainly Hindus, to hold positions on Waqaf boards. The current proposal proposes more than 40 revisions to transfer Waqaf jurisdiction from boards to state governments.

Apparently, the BJP's legislation aims to improve Waqaf property management. The current Waqaf board members and CEOs must be Muslims, but the proposed amendment allows non-Muslims to participate as members. Many Muslim scholars and activists believe that corruption and mismanagement are common on Waqaf boards, which results in low revenue creation.

There are currently management concerns with Waqaf properties in India.

However, this does not suggest that Muslims should be fully denied religious rights over these institutions. The Muslim community was not consulted on the proposed revisions, which is an injustice.²⁸ There is indeed a dire need for reforms in the Waqaf board, but with the inclusion and suggestions of the Muslims. Instead of resolving these issues, the Indian government intends to change the fundamental structure of Waqaf authorities so that they remain under state control.

This amendment poses a threat to the protection of their religious sites and Waqaf properties, and non-Muslims could have a majority on Waqaf boards and the Central Waqf Council. The political future of India's Muslims requires reforms, but not those that are proposed by the BJP. The representation of non-Muslims on governmental Waqaf boards affects the religious autonomy of the board. Many Muslims believe

²⁸

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/12/6/waqf->

[bill-why-indian-muslims-worry-about-modi-plan-for-14bn-endowments](https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/12/6/waqf-bill-why-indian-muslims-worry-about-modi-plan-for-14bn-endowments)

mosques and graves will be taken over. The BJP is already openly opposed to and destroying Muslim religious sites; countless shrines and mosques have been demolished by declaring the property illegal. This is just another attempt to erase Muslims' religious identity.

Conclusion

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), since coming to power, is systematically working to disempower Muslims and undermine their religious and cultural identity in IIOJK. Kashmiris are experiencing a relentless assault on their Muslim identity. The BJP's agenda in the IIOJK aims to erase its Islamic roots and impose Hindutva ideology. The RSS-backed Modi regime intends to transform Kashmir from a Muslim-majority region into a Hindu majority, establishing a Hindutva stronghold of hatred. The BJP's aggressive promotion of Hindutva through cultural programs and policies demonstrates a concerted effort to undermine Kashmir's rich Islamic heritage.

For over a century, Urdu was the official language of Jammu and Kashmir. However, in 2020, India's ruling party repealed Urdu's exclusive status by establishing Hindi, Kashmiri, and Dogri as official languages in Jammu and Kashmir, alongside Urdu and English. There are efforts underway to change the Kashmiri script from Nastaliq to Devanagari. According to Kashmiri sources in the occupied Valley, this has already occurred without being announced or formally sanctioned.

Political dissent is prohibited. Prominent human rights activists and journalists have been imprisoned under draconian laws such as the Public Safety Act and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Several religious and political organizations have been completely banned. The message is clear: any expression of Kashmiri Muslim identity that differs from the BJP's nationalist narrative must be repressed.

The state's enmity toward Islamic learning is further demonstrated by the widespread seizure of books by prominent Islamic thinker Abul A'la Maududi. In a series of raids, police seized copies of his work from Srinagar booksellers, citing vague

"security concerns." This is not simply suppression; it is intellectual erasure. Many ulema were imprisoned, and numerous Islamic scholars were charged under the brutal Public Safety Act as part of a crackdown on Muslim groups in Kashmir. The unjust detention of Islamic scholars is yet another Indian attempt to rob the Kashmiri people of their distinct religious and cultural identity.

To suppress legitimate voices speaking out against these inhumane actions, the Narendra Modi government has established an environment that discourages critical discourse. Several draconian laws have been placed on Kashmiris, inciting fear of imprisonment and harassment, making people unwilling to speak up about what is going on in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). These policies seek to silence dissent and project a false sense of normalcy in Kashmir. The government's purpose is to present the people as happy, yet the pain in their eyes and voices is clear. The international community, including Pakistan and various human rights organizations, has raised concerns that these legislative measures violate international laws, such as the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits altering the demographic composition of occupied territories. Critics contend that India's actions in J&K represent an attempt to change the region's demographic makeup, potentially affecting its political and social fabric in the long term.

The study concludes that all of the BJP's development plans for Kashmir are a frightening disaster. The consequences of these plans threaten to deprive the people of Kashmir of their livelihoods, which are deeply intertwined with their way of life. Moreover, these initiatives risk devastating the region's fragile land and ecology. Kashmir, long revered as "heaven on earth," is being turned into a living hell. To alter the region's demographics, the Indian government has initiated a campaign of demographic engineering. This raises an urgent call for the resolution of this prolonged conflict to save the Identity of Kashmir