

Is an Indo-Pak war certain in the near future? With the events in the recent past, there appears to be a significant amount of brow-beating from both sides about war. This was triggered by the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution on the 5th of August 2019. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh proclaimed that talks with Pakistan will only be [for Pak-occupied Kashmir](#). More recently, Rajnath Singh [warned](#) Pakistan of more serious consequences. Even the soft-spoken career diplomat and current External Affairs Minister [proclaimed](#) that India will soon have physical jurisdiction over Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

The language from the Pakistani side has been much more vitriolic and hateful. This ranged from Imran Khan's [Twitter meltdown](#) to Sheikh Rasheed's threat of using [250g nuclear bombs](#) and Imran Khan's [hate speech and nuclear threat](#) on the floor of the UNGA!

From the Indian perspective, the article 370 abrogation was purely an internal change, with no change in territorial control. Then, one might wonder why Pakistan is so agitated about. In my opinion, it boils down to one word: influence. Rising powers attempt to extend their influence at the cost of falling powers, and falling powers try to maintain their original influence. This is what leads to a conflict between the two. When this conflict goes to an extreme, we see a war. Let us also note that this is assuming that the powers are comfortable in their domestic constituency, and are not unpopular. An unpopular government often takes steps which appear irrational to the external observer, but are only done to increase support for the government. Both of these are relevant for Pakistan.

While the events of August 5 are commonly described as the mere abrogation of Article 370, there were two other steps which are often ignored: 1) Jammu and Kashmir was made a Union Territory and not a state. 2) The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir was given a state legislature. These were essentially done to ensure the Indian government's influence is increased and for the political engagement of the people. In summary, these were done to eliminate Pakistani influence, which had built it up in the late 1980s and early 1990s using a combination of "Jihad" and "Azadi" narratives.

Around 1990, India was in a very weak position, with an economic crisis around the corner, and Pakistan had recently gained a good amount of resources profiting off the Soviet-Afghan war. India was politically fragmented and institutionally weak, while Pakistan was intoxicated with the near-certain prospect of centralized military control. Pakistan's military used this advantage to push its influence into Jammu and Kashmir by launching terrorism in Kashmir. Notably, they also rallied its population around the dream of getting Kashmir into

Pakistan.

However, in 2019, India is about three decades into an economic expansion and has a single political party with a majority in the government. It is stronger than ever. On the other hand, Pakistan is in a deep economic and political crisis, and is unlikely to emerge strong in the near future, as I have argued in a [previous article](#).

With the above details, we can see that Pakistan is the receding power and India is the rising power. Pakistan is not willing to give up influence, and India is snatching it forcefully. Kashmir just happens to be the competition zone. In this context, it is clear that there is a conflict between the two countries and both sides have an incentive for a full scale war. In fact, this pattern is far more common than one may think. We have a case from more than a hundred years ago, which was many similarities. This was the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95.

In the 1880s, Korea was the competition zone between China's Qing Empire and Japan. Because the Qing Empire was economically and militarily stronger, the Korean royalty were subservient to the Qing. However, Japan had recently undergone a liberalization program in 1868, called the Meiji Restoration. This program led to a high level of wealth creation in the following years, quite similar to India's case after 1991. It also increased the technological competency of the military. On the other hand, the Qing Empire was decaying under multiple rebellions and unequal treaties.

A rising Japan tried to increase its influence on Korea, and a falling Qing Empire wouldn't give up the influence it had. It is a situation like this that can be turned into a full-scale war triggered by a small spark. This war was decisively won by Japan, leading to its domination of Korea and direct control of Taiwan. In fact, this growth of Japanese power led them to become stronger by the day, leading them to conquer virtually all of East and South-East Asia. They were only pushed back by the Allies in World War II.

With this history behind us, we can state that a rising India and a falling Pakistan are in a state of conflict, but not yet in a full scale war. India and Pakistan see each other as threats, and will always try to minimise the threat perceptions. With a weakening Pakistan, India will try to reduce the threat from it. It is left to be seen how India does it.



**CERTIFICATE COURSE IN
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

SIX-WEEK ONLINE COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BY THE KOOTNEETI

JOIN TODAY!

team@thekootneeti.com
courses.thekootneeti.in
(+91) 120 4565994

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team

Facebook Comments