

ASIAN BORDERLANDS



Antía Mato Bouzas

Kashmir as a Borderland

The Politics of Space and Belonging
across the Line of Control

Amsterdam
University
Press

Kashmir as a Borderland

Asian Borderlands

Asian Borderlands presents the latest research on borderlands in Asia as well as on the borderlands of Asia – the regions linking Asia with Africa, Europe and Oceania. Its approach is broad: it covers the entire range of the social sciences and humanities. The series explores the social, cultural, geographic, economic and historical dimensions of border-making by states, local communities and flows of goods, people and ideas. It considers territorial borderlands at various scales (national as well as supra- and sub-national) and in various forms (land borders, maritime borders), but also presents research on social borderlands resulting from border-making that may not be territorially fixed, for example linguistic or diasporic communities.

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This book is dedicated to the women living in the border territories near the LoC. Sometimes we met from an uncomfortable distance, at other times we spoke to each other and I heard their stories of hard work, displacement, forced marriage, violence, imprisonment, and the loss of their sons.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Acknowledgements | 9 |
| Introduction | 13 |
| 1 Kashmir: The Idea and its Parts | 35 |
| Making the princely state: fixing borders and building a power centre in the Kashmir Valley | 38 |
| Partition and the importance of taking sides | 45 |
| Territorial integrity and transformation of the border space | 48 |
| Conclusion | 60 |
| 2 Conceptualizing a Borderland Approach to Kashmir | 63 |
| The borderland | 64 |
| Border roads: the contours of making state space | 71 |
| Violence, social diversity, and fragmentation | 77 |
| The Kashmir borderland as a distinct political space | 82 |
| Conclusion | 88 |
| 3 Urban Areas Near the LoC (I) | 91 |
| The 'Kashmir Issue' in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad | |
| Militaryization of the urban | 93 |
| Srinagar: the epicentre of conflict | 95 |
| Muzaffarabad: the place of refuge and support of the Kashmir cause | 107 |
| Conclusion | 117 |
| 4 Urban Areas Near the LoC (II) | 119 |
| The 'Kashmir Issue' in Skardu and Kargil | |
| The specific position of Skardu as a non-Kashmiri and non-Pakistani location | 121 |
| Kargil and the borders of the nation | 131 |
| Conclusion | 137 |
| 5 The Line... the People | 139 |
| The opening of the LoC | 140 |
| Border immobilities: separation across Kargil (Ladakh) and Baltistan | 153 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Border work: normalizing the state space | 157 |
| Conclusion | 164 |
| Conclusion | 167 |
| The Politics of Belonging in the Kashmir Borderland | |
| The case of Ahmed | 169 |
| Understanding belonging: space and identity | 171 |
| Belonging across borders as claims to recognition | 176 |
| Politics of belonging and world (b)ordering | 181 |
| Acronyms | 189 |
| References | 191 |
| Index | 203 |

List of Maps and Images

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| Map 0.1 | Map of the Kashmir disputed territories | 12 |
| Image 2.1 | Cover of <i>The Economist</i> , 9 May 2011 | 68 |
| Image 2.2 | Border area on the Indian side, Kargil | 68 |
| Image 2.3 | Border area in Kargil, showing part of the Skardu-Kargil road | 69 |
| Image 2.4 | Amarnath, camp area for pilgrims, located next to a military camp | 75 |
| Image 2.5 | Sign about the Kargil War memorial | 75 |
| Image 3.1 | Lal Mandi footbridge with the <i>azadi</i> (freedom) slogan, Srinagar 2014 | 98 |
| Image 3.2 | A view of Muzaffarabad city in September 2009 | 110 |
| Image 4.1 | Skardu, August 2009 | 122 |
| Image 4.2 | Kargil, June 2011 | 132 |

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Map 0.1 Map of the Kashmir disputed territories



Introduction

This book examines the Kashmir dispute from a borderland perspective. It explores the conflict by considering the views of those affected who live on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), especially in the less-researched territories of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK or Azad Kashmir) and Balistan. The work investigates the distinct political space that the border has created: a space that is not strictly seen as a state space nor entirely considered a non-state space. This is the space of conflict, characterized by the uncertainty regarding future political developments that permeates the lives of the inhabitants at all levels. The borderland reveals itself as an arena for competition between the different actors and groups with claims to the territory: people are dragged into the space of conflict even though they may not subscribe to the dominant ways the dispute has been defined. This analysis of the Kashmir borderland shows how the conflict is manifested in territory – specific locations with geopolitical meanings – thereby providing evidence of the discrepancies between ‘representations’ and the ‘living’. It also demonstrates how the main source of insecurity in securitization discourses emanates from the making of the postcolonial state.

Following critical approaches – mainly in the fields of political geography, political science, and international relations, with a focus on border studies – this work questions the limits of explaining the dispute as an interstate conflict or as a case of (Muslim) nationalist separatism (in its various identity explanations). These broad perspectives do not say much about local dynamics in the disputed territories or about the inhabitants’ views and trajectories. Such understandings neither elaborate on the distinctive nature of the postcolonial state as a process in the making, nor provide an account of the interrelations between the various territories, since state perspectives revolve around categories that represent the political reality within a specific territorial container. Considerations of the Kashmir dispute from a state perspective ignore the fact that the state is the main source of insecurity at the border. They also fall into what John Agnew has

defined as the 'territorial trap' of state territoriality.¹ While the border can be seen as a 'site' for examining statehood, it also becomes a producer of particular conditions for understanding that reality.² For this reason, the present work proposes to investigate the conflict by taking into account ongoing transformations in the border territories, thereby highlighting the importance of place.

The LoC has an ambivalent status as a border because, under international law, it is unsettled. What is separated by this 'line' remains unclear – two states, different peoples or 'ethnic' groups, different political cultures? Yet bordering practices have taken place since the establishment of the ceasefire line in 1949 and have created new political spaces marked by legal-political ambivalence. These spaces cannot qualify as proper state spaces because the idea of statehood has been contested from the beginning (in the case of Kashmiri nationalists); the people have not been included as equal citizens in the new polity (or the possibility of inclusion has immediately been denied, as the case of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan illustrates); or, as the result of these realities, a context of uncertainty still prevails under the premise that the future of the region remains to be ascertained. A number of actors in the disputed territories, ranging from the state to nationalist groups, religious organizations, divided families, businessmen, and ordinary people, are constantly expecting that the current context might suddenly be altered. This means that the border has its own temporality.

Ongoing bordering practices take place on both sides of the LoC, including fencing, cross-LoC exchanges, and regulation of the socio-economic conditions of those living in border villages. Bordering practices do not only occur 'at the border', but also imply the transformation of the interior and thus the state's spatiality. Economic and infrastructural interventions in the Kashmir disputed territories have the intention of transforming the disputed character of the entire area into something else. The different understandings of these bordering practices reflect the present-day uncertainties of those living in these areas.³ By examining people's views regarding these interventions, it is possible to observe the postcolonial character of the state as a product of Western spatiality. This aspect is briefly introduced below and will emerge periodically throughout the book.

Of all the places I conducted fieldwork, the people who most proudly identified with a state were residents of the town of Kargil, on the Indian

1 Agnew, *Globalization*, 22.

2 Van Schendel, *Bengal Borderland*, 3-4; Parker and Adler-Nissen, 'Sovereign' border', 777-778.

3 Parker and Adler-Nissen, 'Sovereign' border', 776.

side of the LoC. This was mainly explained by the fact that, as one resident put it, 'we have got jobs, health facilities, they [the army] protect us, and India is a democracy.'⁴ However, in some border villages a few kilometres from Kargil town, people's attitudes were different. Working as porters for the Indian army – a risky activity that is not always voluntary and paid – and worrying about an imminent attack from Pakistan, the idea of being part of one state or the other was problematic for them. Apart from the fear of a confrontation, the inhabitants of one village also mentioned the risks of getting lost when taking their cattle to mountain pastures and being captured by Pakistani soldiers, as had happened to two shepherds years before.⁵ These views illustrate that definitions of what the state at the border 'is' are highly contentious, but I start with the assumption that states have borders and that the meaning of these spaces will be revealed by an analysis of the border context.

The background context of this book is the dialogue initiated between India and Pakistan in 2004 to address the 'Kashmir issue'. The process of dialogue created, at least for some, a context in which differences could be addressed peacefully, and also generated expectations through concrete initiatives such as the opening of the LoC to bus and truck services for the first time since Partition to allow for divided families to see each other and goods to be exchanged.⁶ For others, such as Kashmiri nationalist organizations (grouped around the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, commonly known as Hurriyat) and the victims of human rights violations (e.g., the Association of Parents of Disappeared People, or APDP), the dialogues did not affect much change because they ignored the political questions and the conditions of the victims. For the Indian Government, a central element of the dialogue process was to transform the conflictual character of the Valley – that is, to end militancy and the Pakistani support of militant groups, to agree to gradual demilitarization, to dialogue with separatist forces of the Hurriyat, and to provide economic incentives, among other things. This transformation was followed by a 'healing touch' policy in the state of Jammu

4 Interview with an elderly woman near Kargil, 17 July 2012. She was a farmer with some education, whose husband and son were employed in the local administration. The interview was at her home, and from the window it was possible to see the Pakistani side at a distance of a few kilometres. She explained that being in India was better because many in the village had government jobs while those in Pakistan were having a hard time. The association of state membership with being employed in the administration has been expressed in a number of interviews and conversations.

5 For a fictional account of this real case, see: M. Hussanan, 'Feet across the border'.

6 Linking the towns of Muzaffarabad (AJK) and Srinagar (Kashmir Valley), and Rawalakot (AJK) and Poonch (Jammu).

and Kashmir, as defined by the then-prime minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, which was framed to address the concerns of a population who had suffered from decades of violence and were alienated from the Indian state. However, for the Pakistani Government, which has never accepted the proposal that the LoC become an international border, the dialogue process was initially seen as an opportunity to push for territorial concessions. Since this was unacceptable to India, Pakistan later proposed, under what came to be known in political circles as the ‘Musharraf’s formula’, the granting of greater autonomy to the divided territories, which would then be placed under the joint supervision of the states of India and Pakistan. Musharraf’s idea was intended to make ‘borders irrelevant’ without changes to state sovereignty.⁷

In the disputed territories, however, these proposals were viewed differently. Implementing an India-Pakistan solution without considering the opinions of the nationalist and autonomist groups of the Kashmir Valley was considered problematic. The same can be said of the critical voices in Azad Kashmir, although it is difficult to understand the political opinions of people in this territory because they lack political freedom. Moreover, the opening of the LoC for exchange between both sides was limited to the connection of the Kashmir Valley with AJK; it has not been extended to the northern part of the line between Ladakh and Baltistan, where a few thousand divided families are pleading for the same treatment. While the opening of the LoC has brought some relief to separated families and businessmen, this is not relevant for nationalist forces who do not recognize the LoC and who demand a political solution.

The problem of defining the state at the border

Debates in various social science disciplines – ranging from political science to political geography and political philosophy – centre on the decreasing role of the state in the context of globalization processes and, consequently, the blurring of the division between national and international domains.⁸

7 These are the state positions, broadly speaking, but the government of Nawaz Sharif (who took office in 2014) tried to distance itself from Musharraf’s plan. At the least, this is what emerges from government declarations and from the answer I received from the former Pakistani ambassador to Germany (and incumbent ambassador to India), Mr Abdul Basit, in a talk entitled ‘Jammu and Kashmir Dispute: Hurdle to Peace and Prosperity in South Asia’ on 27 November 2013, delivered at the German Geographical Society, Berlin. ‘Musharraf’s formula’ was made public in the former general’s memoir, Musharraf, *Line of Fire*, 303.

8 See Agnew, *Globalization*; Sassen, ‘When national territory is home’.

These perspectives highlight the relational character of the concept of sovereignty as no longer being, if ever it was, contained in the state. Yet some scholars observe the state's continued relevance or adaptation through its 'rescaling' by processes of regionalization at the supra- or substate levels under changing economic dynamics that denote new ways of control, including decentralized control.⁹ While these works are very valuable, they tend to reproduce a kind of knowledge that ignores the diversity of world contexts and the experience of the postcolonial state in the Global South in particular. Their focus is on socio-economic processes, seen from one perspective – as if the Western state model and the exercise of power and authority reproduce more or less uniform, though unequal, forms of space and time.

A key question within debates about the state's role under globalization concerns the principle of national sovereignty. Stuart Elden has demonstrated the increasing inconsistency of the principle of the state's territorial integrity as the spatial extent of sovereignty by examining international interventions from the perspective of international law.¹⁰ While he shows that most of the countries where military interventions occur are only nominally sovereign, he does not explain how this relates to the history of direct or indirect colonialism (and partition) in the cases he discusses. Likewise, Wendy Brown maintains that processes of walling and erecting fences constitute reactions to the state's waning sovereignty, but she does not address the fact that most of the cases she describes (e.g. Israel/Palestine, Kashmir, Melilla) occur in postcolonial states that are preoccupied with creating their own *demos*.¹¹ The examples provided by Elden and Brown demonstrate the 'contingent' (to use Elden's terminology) character of sovereignty despite attempts at rescaling or 'rebranding' the state (through walls and fences), such as those described by Brown. However, what is left unexplored is that these processes are occurring in zones of weak security regimes and, because the state is not in full control of the territory, agents claiming to act on behalf of the state attempt to take hold of it. They do this through the exploitation of resources and the exercise of violence – that is, by creating a context of insecurity where they can dominate and conquer. This occurs for a significant period of time; this exceptional context has some degree of permanence. These zones, normally 'weak' sovereign border areas, experience the intensification of sovereign power through a number

9 Paasi, 'Resurgence of the 'Region'', 217; Paasi and Moisio, 'Beyond state-centricity'.

10 Elden, *Terror and Territory*.

11 Brown, *Walled States*, 24.

of regulations that permeate the lives of their inhabitants. Power as state power is heavily inscribed in territory, but paradoxically – as this book illustrates with regard to the Kashmir border areas – it is also inscribed in a territory that cannot be considered a proper state space.

The sovereign character of the postcolonial state, as an institution that maintains security within its borders and hence exercises control over its domestic domain, has been examined by a number of authors. David Newman has highlighted the relevance of territory in bordering processes and ‘othering’ in Israel/Palestine in the construction of the Israeli state.¹² Similarly, Sankaran Krishna has pointed out that India’s ‘cartographic anxiety’ about bringing the border areas under control and its obsession with foreign infiltration are symptoms of its postcolonial condition.¹³ Krishna’s argument, however, does not take into account the fact that the construction of the postcolonial state is also a reaction to colonialism, and the interfering and dependent relationship between the colonial power and the colonized. In this respect, the present work considers the postcolonial state as a recent process in the making and that, compared with the history and development of the European state, it has a strong external component that shapes the conditions within, as Ranabir Samaddar has rightly observed regarding the external character of peace processes in conflicts.¹⁴ The nature of the postcolonial state can be seen at the border, where processes of intervention, appropriation, and rescaling of the border areas take place.

In the Kashmir borderland the state is the main actor concerned with the maintenance of the LoC because the state’s legitimacy rests on the control within. This means that the LoC acts as a divider because there are two polities – India and Pakistan – that have sufficient instruments to enforce separation at various levels (i.e., the military, state nationalism, state socialization, and the economic reorganization of communications). Although the state is defined by and within its borders on the basis of a territory homogeneously governed by a specific law and politics, statehood is not equally distributed over the territory. Compared with state-building in Europe, where state borders were created following the successful control of territory through the incorporation and management of the social body within, as understood in Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’, in the postcolonial model the borders of the state tend to come first. The latter has

12 Newman, ‘Barriers or bridges?’ Also from the same author ‘Resilience of conflict’, 100-101 and 105-106; ‘Colonization as suburbanization’.

13 Krishna, ‘Cartographic anxiety’.

14 Samaddar, *Space, Territory*, 184.

different consequences than the former because the incorporation of the social body at the border does not necessarily precede any form of socialization in the state polity.¹⁵ In other words, in the postcolonial setting state incorporation does not necessarily mean integration or state socialization.

Those living in the Kashmir borderland have either rejected (those in the Kashmir Valley) or been excluded from (those in Gilgit-Baltistan) the state-making process. Even so, they have been monitored under various administrative and military regimes as if they were non-state citizens. To expose the inconsistencies and changes in the state-making process it is crucial to analyse how the Kashmir conflict is understood, lived, and perceived 'at the border' – a specific location where ideas of statehood and belonging are particularly problematic. Such an exercise can unfold what Anssi Paasi and Sami Moisiö call 'mundane geographies of stateness', formations that do not necessarily coincide in shape and content with normative ones and can provide insight for the investigation of spatial transformations.¹⁶ The ways in which local populations have been kept on one side or the other of the LoC constitute important empirical material for examining statehood. For this purpose, I follow a mesolevel approach that relates the interactions of interventions from above (macroscale) in the border disputed territories of the LoC with people's perceptions and reactions to these interventions (microlevel or local scale), which highlight the role and agency of people in the discourse on borders in conflict.

What is the Kashmir dispute, territorially and spatially?

The Kashmir dispute is normally defined as a 'South Asian dispute' because it is 'contained' between India and Pakistan – two South Asian states according to area studies divisions (in this, the Chinese parts are omitted). The conflict in the Kashmir Valley, which is administered by India, is often labelled as 'Indian' rather than 'South Asian' because the main source of dissent is Kashmir's accession to India in 1947 and how India has controlled the Valley since then (by not respecting the special status of the state within the Indian Constitution). The other disputed territories – different parts of the former princely state including Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan, and Gilgit – are 'trapped' in the cartographic map and, perhaps with the exception of AJK, the people living there feel neither Kashmiri nor part of the conflict in the Kashmir Valley. On the contrary, they feel they are suffering because

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 113-114.

¹⁶ Moisiö and Paasi, 'Beyond state-centricity', 263.

of the continuous linkage from above (by the state and the international community) of their territories to the disputed map. Jammu is culturally and economically connected to the Punjab and the rest of India, but the northern Kashmir territories share cultural and religious traditions with various parts of Central Asia ranging from Iran to Tibet. Despite these connections Kashmir is not normally described as being part of Central Asia for a number of reasons, such as the historical links of the region with the South – the Kashmir Valley was a place for Sanskrit learning, and the southern AJK was culturally assimilated to the Punjab – and the shared colonial history.¹⁷ These relatively ‘safe’ representations do not easily stand up to scrutiny when it comes to the spatial analysis of the conflict in the various locations of the borderland.

The border territories under consideration are interconnected by their disputed condition. This condition can be explained in material interventions, understood in a broad sense – that is, the building of major infrastructure, the enforcement of specific legal-constitutional systems, the fostering of tourism in former conflict zones, the conditions under which the LoC has been opened, and so on. The disputed character can also be seen in the social relations and interactions – involving participation, acceptance, rejection, or reformulation – that are derived from the various interventions, as well as the discursive practices that revolve around these interventions.¹⁸ For example, the militarization of the Kashmir Valley in India has had an enormous impact on the lives of ordinary people for two-and-a-half decades, and an entire generation has grown up in a state of exception under draconian rules such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1990 and the Public Safety Act (PSA), both of which restrict basic freedoms.¹⁹

For a significant period of time people in the Valley have lived in a context of constant surveillance by the security forces, intelligence agencies, and sometimes members of their own community or family. Militarization has affected mobility in various ways, including: restrictions during curfews; the

17 On this debate see Zutshi, *Kashmir's Contested Pasts*, 303–314.

18 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, Introduction.

19 On the issue of militarization see Kazi, *Between Democracy*, Ch. 3; Kak, ‘Kashmir’s stone-pelters’. In this regard it is interesting to point out the publication of personal accounts of this period, such as the one provided by Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night*, or the most militant portrayal of one of the leading female activists, a member of the *Muslim Khawateen-e-Markaz*, by Anjum Zamarud Habid, *Prisoner No. 100*. In the cultural scene, literary works in English such as the novel *The Collaborator* by Mirza Waheed and films in Urdu and Hindi such as *Harud* (2012) and *Haider* (2014) – the latter an adaptation of *Hamlet* for the Kashmir context – revolve around the gradual insanity of the young male protagonist set against the confusing dynamics of a context of conflict that he is no longer able to grasp.

obligation to travel at night with the car's interior lights on; a bar on entering certain places; the need to carry identification; periodic body searches; arbitrary detentions; and the once popular 'crackdowns' (search and arrest operations) of the security forces, which separated men and women and gathered the men outdoors for hours to be identified (while the women were sometimes harassed or raped by the security forces). Moreover, militarization has undermined certain aspects of privacy and intimacy, as well as matters of trust, by fostering (or forcing) collaboration between civilians and the security forces, causing important fractures in the society. As portrayed by the Indian state, militarization at the level of discourse revolves around the argument about security, in which 'militants' or 'terrorists' aided by Pakistan periodically attempt to snatch this territory from India. Yet, as Seema Kazi points out, 'militarisation in *Kashmir* is inseparable from the militarisation of the (Indian) state over Kashmir.'²⁰ This suggests that it is not only about securing borders from the enemy 'other', but militarization is an strategy functional to the changing nature of the state and its ability to maintain control of the territory.

Any research is a limited and synthesized explanation of social phenomena, and for the investigation of the spatial dimension of the Kashmir dispute, some complex aspects have been simplified in my methodological design with regard to the fieldwork and material collected. Several issues have been a matter of concern, particularly the terminology and conceptual work involved; the fieldwork conducted on a 'disputed context' in terms of access to sources and the sensitive nature of the topic; and the question of scale and its implications for the understanding of conflicts. The way I handle these issues will become clear in the following chapters.

Before going further, it is important to provide a few clarifications. First, the term 'Kashmir' can be misleading because it refers to different territorial configurations: the historic princely state of Jammu and Kashmir; the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India; the Kashmir Valley; Kashmir province; and finally an ideal territorial configuration that, in principle, does not coincide with those mentioned previously and is yet to be decided. To simplify this, I use 'Kashmir' to refer to the disputed territories between India and Pakistan that were part of the former princely state, in the sense that they were included in that political entity before Partition.²¹ When referring

²⁰ Kazi, *Between Democracy*, 68.

²¹ Kashmir also encompasses some territories in China which have been ceded by Pakistan under the 1963 border treaty and the Aksai Chin, which is claimed by India. The Aksai Chin is not permanently populated and is not usually referred to in discussions of the dispute by those

to the conflict zone in Indian Kashmir, I use 'Kashmir Valley' (including the surrounding mountains) or 'Kashmir administrative division'. For the Pakistani Kashmir areas, I employ 'Azad Kashmir' or 'AJK' to refer to the liberated areas of the present Divisions of Muzaffarabad, Poonch, and Mirpur, which were administratively part of Kashmir (in the case of Muzaffarabad) and Jammu (in the case of Poonch and Mirpur). Gilgit-Baltistan (known before 2009 as the Northern Areas) is a separate administrative entity from AJK and therefore stands for that region in the northeast; when I mention Pakistani Kashmir-related areas, it can be assumed to be included. The terms coined by Kashmiri nationalists and by India and Pakistan, such as 'Pakistan occupied Kashmir' (also known as PoK) or 'Indian-Held Kashmir' (IHK), are less known and usually involve a connotation that has limited explanatory purposes. The use of 'state of Jammu and Kashmir' to denote the disputed areas in India, for example, is no less problematic because it implies adopting the position of the Indian state. However, as my research addresses precisely the construction of the several political units after the disintegration of the princely state, it is worth considering them as they are usually referred to.

Likewise, the use of concepts such as 'region' and 'border' is not exempt from problems. Kashmir barely qualifies as a region, if 'region' is understood as either a supstate or substate entity sharing a series of commonalities – interactions, social and cultural affinities, or some sort of institutionalization – and characterized by a sense of proximity and connectivity.²² Kashmir is practically the opposite because of the prevalence of fragmentation and separation compared to cooperation and interaction. This is in part due to its geographical condition as a high mountain area, with the exception of the sizeable Kashmir Valley, which affects connectivity, but also to post-1947 political divisions and reorganizations of the various territories that have reinforced divisions among peoples. Kashmir could be considered a 'negative region', following the work of James Scott, who uses the concept to define

affected on both sides of the LoC. In the case of the Kashmir Valley, there has been a pro-Chinese sentiment among the nationalists because of, among other things, China's policy of stapled visas. Visas given to Kashmiris (and people from Arunachal Pradesh) are not sealed on Indian passports but instead stapled to a separate sheet. However, this positive view of China does not apply to Ladakhis because Aksai Chin is their border and India exercises claims to it in the context of the India-China border dispute. I do not refer to the Kashmir territories in China in the present work because they are not significant for the various claims over the dispute that are addressed here.

22 Paasi 'Resurgence of the 'Region'', 124; Keating 'Invention of regions'; Castells, *The Power of Identity*.

Zomia on the grounds of its variety.²³ While Scott underlines disconnection as a distinct factor of the Zomia region, he ends by acknowledging some significant commonalities such as 'patterns of diverse hill agriculture, dispersal and mobility, and rough egalitarianism,' alongside the relatively stateless character of these territories.²⁴ Such common patterns are absent in Kashmir.

Defining Kashmir as a region in a normative manner is problematic because historically it is no more than an artificial amalgamation of various territories, including several forms of political allegiances, over time, through rough conquests and treaties resulting from colonial interests.²⁵ This notwithstanding, Kashmir can be regarded as a region (a negative and open one) – a region in the making, whose process of becoming was dramatically affected by the conflict in 1947-1949. The reference to Kashmir as a region in the present work bows to the question of the uncertain political status of these territories and the impossibility for those living there to ascertain their political future. Kashmir qualifies as a region based on its condition as an area that is fragmented yet connected, surrounded by various political boundaries – international, regional, administrative – that impact one another and have enormous implications for people's lives.

By 'border' I do not mean a static element that is invariable over time, but an institution resulting from social processes that shape political space, which is at the same time influenced by other institutions.²⁶ The border emerged out of the state-making process after Partition and the appropriation of the Kashmir territories of the former princely state by the polities of India and Pakistan. The border is the context in which processes of exclusion, disconnection, and connection take place and shape the construction of spaces that ultimately lead to its own transformation. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson focus on the border as a multiplication of labour and alert us to the risks of reducing its function to that of isolation because border struggles produce political subjectivity.²⁷ Although border politics

23 Zomia is a term first coined by Willem van Schendel to refer to the high-altitude area or territory stretching from north-east India to south-east Asia, whose peoples have historically been characterized as avoiding the incorporation in the nation-states. James C. Scott, however, takes the term further to consider Zomia as a sort of entity, a 'negative' region. Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, ix, xiv, 16; Van Schendel 'Geographies of knowing', 653.

24 Scott, *The Art of Not Being*, 19.

25 Lamb, *Kashmir*, 1-82; Haines, *Nation, Territory*, 17-51; Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*; Rai, *Hindu Rulers*; Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*.

26 Paasi 'Resurgence of the 'Region'; Keating, 'Invention of regions'.

27 Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as a Method*, 7, 13.

does not necessarily happen at the border, the border does constitute a site from which to observe the continuing importance of territory in processes of border weakening, enforcement, and transformation.

The borderland perspective: seeing the conflict from the border

The analysis of the Kashmir dispute from the border – a border that displays an ambivalent spatiality – reveals the contiguities and ruptures of the space of conflict beyond its dominant representation as an ‘Indian’, ‘Indian-Pakistani’, and ‘Kashmiri’ affair. It highlights the claims made on behalf of statehood and shows how people living in various locations on both sides of the LoC feature in broader discourses about the dispute that do not reflect their views or experiences. In other words, the borderland perspective reveals the gap between hegemonic representations of the dispute and the views, experiences, and expectations of those represented by those imaginaries. For example, a 2007 report on Kashmir from the European Parliament deplors ‘the continuing political and humanitarian situation in all four parts of Jammu and Kashmir’, while also considering how to address the dispute in terms of managing the existing territorial borders of India and Pakistan, as well as promoting dialogue and exchanges across the LoC.²⁸ The report emphasizes the importance of democratization and the promotion of greater social equality in the Pakistani territories of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, discusses the Kashmir Valley as an issue of ‘violence’ in which abuses by security forces should not be tolerated, and ends by admitting that the conditions for the plebiscite, according to the United Nations resolutions, to ascertain the future of the former princely state can no longer be met.²⁹ Rather than a fairly balanced account of the conditions in the existing territories, the report is a political document expressing the European institution’s preference of siding with India’s viewpoint. The document advocates for the integration of the respective disputed territories into the states of India and Pakistan (a position that India favours, at least tacitly). Hence the report reduces the conflict to a matter of governance, ignoring both the local contexts in each of the territories and the aspirations of people that have motivated the conflict and supported its permanence over time.

28 European Parliament, Committee of Foreign Affairs, ‘Report on Kashmir’, 8.

29 Surprisingly, the report includes an interesting finding: ‘Kashmiris on the Chinese side remain outside that process’, 5. Common knowledge of the Kashmir dispute – which I also investigated on the Pakistani side – maintains that there are no permanent populations in the Chinese Kashmir areas of Aksai Chin and in the territory ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963, let alone that those living there can be identified as ‘Kashmiris’.

Theoretically, this book draws from the burgeoning literature on borders and territory in various social science and humanistic disciplines that was further developed after the 1990s. The main debates centre on processes of territorial fragmentation, liberalization (the 'borderless world' thesis), and border transformations and multi-territoriality; the critique of state space and the question of sovereignty; and the epistemological consequences derived from this critique, especially those consequences concerning state formation in non-Western societies and the history and politics of those living in the borderlands of many postcolonial states.³⁰ The present work engages with these debates through their intersection in the notion of borderland, as a way to question what Willem van Schendel calls 'geographies of knowing' – that is, how established cartographies presuppose hierarchies in knowledge production.

In the case of Kashmir, this dispute has been analysed through the lens of various international relations paradigms whose main concern lies in the anarchic character of international society and cooperation among states, as key actors in international political life, in preserving security and peace.³¹ However, what was initially studied as a territorial conflict between states (from a realist perspective) has gradually been examined through the lens of identity: either as two conflicting state identities (in a constructivist view), or in the context of the formation of regional identities *vis-à-vis* state nation-building processes.³² These 'identitarian' approaches at the state or substate level do not engage with the importance of context, state formation, and the question of sovereignty that results from decolonization.

State perspectives on the Kashmir dispute have underlined the centralized character of the Indian state and the lack of development of democratic processes in this territory to explain the insurgent movement that arose in the 1990s.³³ The same arguments apply to Pakistan with regard to the preservation of the Kashmir territories as 'separate' or 'independent'.³⁴ The academic literature on the Kashmir dispute tends to reproduce the bordered character of the LoC and rarely reflects on engagement (or lack of it) between the two sides. This can be seen in the work of Christopher Snedden, which discusses developments in the Kashmir Valley and AJK without relating

30 Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries*; Haesbaert, *Desterritorialización*; Agnew, *Globalization*; Elden, *Terror and Territory*; Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics*; Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*; Edney, *Mapping an Empire*; Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*.

31 Acharya and Acharya, 'Kashmir in the International System'.

32 Behera, *State, Identity*; Bose, *Roots of Conflict*.

33 Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative Perspective*.

34 Snedden, *The Untold Story*, 83-110.

them to each other,³⁵ and of Sten Widmalm, which despite arguing for an indigenous understanding of the conflict in the Kashmir Valley situates the problem within the state framework of India's interventionism into the fragile democratic process of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.³⁶ The disputed character of the LoC as something that delimits the state space is addressed only marginally in both books. The work by Seema Kazi, which examines the militarization of the Indian Valley, maintains that the division of Kashmir was 'neither affirmed nor reversed', although the author clearly assumes that the Indian state is a security provider and criticizes the state's failure to provide security to its (Kashmiri) citizens.³⁷

During fieldwork I noticed that the state is very much at the root of the problem and is questioned on both sides of the LoC, albeit for different reasons. This can be observed at several levels: in the legal-political context of the territories, in the biographical accounts of local inhabitants, and in their inability to frame political demands and aspirations. The critique of the state, for example, appears in the imaginative proposals from various groups in Gilgit-Baltistan who seek political-territorial solutions for their territories as a way to overcome the political impasse.³⁸ Although inhabitants of the disputed territories are familiar with state spatiality through the dynamics of conflict, this socialization is experienced through an authoritarian form of politics that is characterized by interventions from the centres of political power through non-democratic means (the rule of exception). This is, in my view, an aspect worth investigating, and the present work attempts to fill this gap. In other words, it matters how people are being bordered.

The borderland approach shows how the conflict dynamics on both sides of the LoC are intertwined, and how a development in one specific location has the potential to impact others. For example, the basic demand of divided families in the border area between Baltistan and Ladakh (in the district of Kargil) to open the LoC for exchange is motivated by a sense of equal treatment, since this opportunity has been granted since 2005 to separated families in the Kashmir Valley and Azad Kashmir as a result of the dialogue process. Although Baltis normally claim that they have opted for Pakistan and have nothing to do with Kashmir, their demand that the LoC be opened is articulated on the basis that their territory, part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, is also disputed.

35 Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir*.

36 Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative*, 125.

37 Kazi, *Between Democracy*, 79 and 67-68.

38 Kreutzmann, 'Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Pakistan'.

The impact that the interrelations of various actors on both sides of the LoC have on each other can be tantamount to Norbert Elias' understanding of 'figuration'.³⁹ This concept has guided the present research under the Crossroads Asia programme as a way to study increasing patterns of mobility, and the construction of new spaces, in an area stretching from Western Iran to Northern India.⁴⁰ Elias did not consider actors as isolated in society, but instead as acting and impacting one another – that is, forming a figuration that constitutes a source of knowledge. According to him, concepts such as 'family' and 'football match' can only be understood through the mutual interaction of their members. In the case of the concept of 'family', for example, alterations in the practices of family members induce changes in how a 'family' is defined at a particular moment.⁴¹ Elias explained the term mainly with regard to the evolution of manners and emotions in court society, although he follows a similar methodology in his other works.⁴²

While Elias' approach in his sociological studies can be seen as normative from a contemporary perspective, it does offer a useful insight into social power relations within a spatial dimension. In fact, despite their different methodologies of inquiry and thematic preoccupations, it is possible to find connections between Elias' theories and the outcomes of Henry Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre's focus is on the production of space (social space), and he alludes to 'representations' that need to be investigated to expose their contradictions.⁴³ As he points out, 'Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity.'⁴⁴ Similar views can be found in Elias' volumes of *The Civilizing Process* and his co-authored study with John L. Scotson in which he builds on the construction of social differences that imply spatial separation, such as in the building of a court society or the presence of new residents as 'strangers' against a established community in a Leicester suburb.⁴⁵

39 Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 128-33 and also from the same author *The Civilizing Process*, 489-490.

40 The Crossroads Asia programme received funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the period 2011-2016, and it was organized as a competence network between several German universities and research institutes. See <http://crossroads-asia.de/crossroads-asia.html>

41 Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 13-14.

42 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

43 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41.

44 *Ibid.*, 87.

45 Elias and Scotson, *The Collected Works of*.

Drawing from these ideas, what makes Kashmir (the dispute) is not the territory itself but rather the different actors acting in this territory, who shape it with their mutual activity and their attempts to induce changes in it. It is by observing this activity that a study of the conflict in its full dynamic character can be undertaken. Kashmir is not a static issue, despite the fact that ‘nothing relevant has happened’, as foreign policy analysts working on South Asia readily say. On the contrary, it is changing and there are several conflicting forces involved in the process. For this reason, although I do not expressly engage with the concept of figuration at length in this book, the idea of figuration is very much present in how interconnections are explored in the border territories.

Fieldwork in disputed border areas

This book is the result of fieldwork carried out between 2009 and 2014 at different sites in AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, Ladakh, and the Kashmir Valley.⁴⁶ Various restrictions apply in these disputed zones: sometimes special permits (non-objection certificates) are needed to enter an area; sometimes, there is technically free mobility but also somebody monitoring one’s movements, thereby restricting one’s mobility. Military zones in the vicinity of the LoC are formally no-entry places for outsiders. For reasons of feasibility, then, I limited my research to four urban areas: Srinagar, Kargil, Muzaffarabad, and Skardu. The town of Baramulla in the Kashmir Valley might have been a better research site than Srinagar since a large number of families (and later boys-turned-militants) departed from there across the LoC, but as a number of other scholars acquainted with the security situation have pointed out, there are great difficulties associated with carrying out fieldwork in this location.⁴⁷ I conducted five detailed interviews near Baramulla in the summer of 2012; while I do refer to them in this book, they provide only very limited insight into the dynamics of the conflict.⁴⁸ In addition to the research in urban contexts, I also conducted fieldwork in neighbouring rural villages. The focus was, on the one hand, to study the connections and ruptures across the LoC and, on the other, to explore the importance of the different divided territories in the dispute and the spatial hierarchies created – for example, the pre-eminent role of the Kashmir Valley and AJK

46 With an additional visit to Baltistan in 2017.

47 Whitehead, *A Mission*, 3.

48 Although few in number, these interviews lasted for hours and were quite detailed in providing insights on the context in the area.

in the dispute compared to the peripheral position of Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh.

The fieldwork consisted of interviews, conversations, and the collection of local published and unpublished sources. Moreover, there has been an ethnographic component to my observations and participation in activities, but in no sense would I call this anthropological work. I mention this not to misguide the reader but to expose the problematic aspects of doing research in disputed zones because permits and the length of stay in one place are important issues. Researchers who have worked on the Kashmir divided territories have reflected on this aspect in their books: the impossibility for Indian scholars to do research on the Pakistani side and vice versa; foreigners working on human rights issues on the Pakistani side being unable to conduct work on the other side; and the difficulties experienced by foreign scholars in accessing some places, unless they have been 'invited' or supported by high-ranking officials.⁴⁹

These situations have also opened up a range of ethical issues that need to be discussed. I have adopted a series of measures to protect the anonymity of the people with whom I spoke, depending on the context and topic, which I explain in more detail below. I encountered no problems in interviewing businessmen involved in cross-LoC trade on either side, divided families in Kargil, and some nationalist politicians and religious leaders. In my interactions, references to 'the other side' (i.e., the opposite side of the border in each location) have normally been the most sensitive issue. As part of my interactions, I have noticed that educated people in the various locations (those who are referred to as understanding the conflict, bureaucrats and intellectuals among others) have only limited knowledge about the 'other side' compared with the accurate information possessed by ordinary divided families. The reason for this is that the latter are the only groups that continually re-enact ties of the shared space through phone or Skype conversations, exchanging videos of relatives, and meeting on either side or in a third country. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the borders of communication between the sides, still existing at the time of writing in 2018: those in Indian Kashmir cannot make calls to the Pakistani side, although the reverse is possible, and there are frequent temporary bans on mobile phones and the internet owing to perceived insecurity.⁵⁰

49 Behera, *State, Identity*, 16; Robinson, *Refugees: Political Subjectivity*, 41; Stern, *Terror in the Name*, 126-134.

50 As a consequence of the unrest which erupted in summer 2016 in the Kashmir Valley after the killing of the popular and respected militant Burhan Wani on 8 July, India banned all internet

In my fieldwork, I initially focused on two groups who have been particularly affected by the divided character of the LoC and who had an interest in opening the border within the context of the dialogue process: the separated families and traders. Interviews, both recorded and handwritten, have been a source of information. However, on many occasions I simply held conversations, avoiding writing them down *in situ*. Occasionally I have been explicitly told to not mention names and not to write because what was being said were contextualizations of a particular topic, although the insights were very interesting. I would later recollect these meetings in a diary, but in the form of ideas and opinions rather than full sentences that could be transcribed literally. I refer to these instances indirectly with the date and location of the meeting.

I was mainly interested in interviewing ordinary people who were affected by the conflict in various ways. However, in exploring the political status of these territories and investigating the 'Kashmir space', I was able to talk to lawyers, bureaucrats (only on the Pakistani side), nationalist leaders, former militants, locally recognized intellectuals, development organizations, cultural activists, and religious leaders, who also helped me to form an opinion about the intricacies of some aspects related to my topic. When I refer to 'ordinary people' I am expressing a critique of the tendency to explain conflicts by reducing them to a 'handful of key actors' as representatives of the various parties in the dispute, a tendency that avoids questioning the existence of problematic relations between the society in general and its leadership.

Chapter Outline

The structure of this book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides a succinct historical introduction to the construction of the Kashmir borderland, specifically after the creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846. Drawing from the Kashmir historiography, it discusses how the different territories of the princely state came together – from the sale of the Kashmir Valley to the conquest of Gilgit – as part of a larger territorialization process by the British colonial power intended to take control of the frontiers. The primary thrust of the princely state was the development of the Kashmir Valley as an economic centre; territories such as Ladakh or Baltistan became peripheral areas and were ruled through a

and mobile communications. The ban on communications, apart from the clear censorship, created a climate prone to human rights violations. See Ashraf, 'Kashmiris living outside'.

loose system of loyalties. This process of accumulation led to the emergence of an educated, politically active, Muslim middle class in the Valley and explains the development of a democratic movement in the Kashmir Valley in the initial decades of the twentieth century and the absence of such a development in the mountain territories, where feudal forms of authority continued to prevail.

Thus, at the time the subcontinent was partitioned the inhabitants of the various territories (notably people in the Valley rather than in Gilgit or Baltistan) experienced being part of the princely state differently. Notions of India, and above all of Pakistan (as a new state), were vague at the time, as evident from accounts collected from the elderly in Baltistan and the border area of Ladakh. Based on these trajectories, the chapter discusses the post-Partition context, which is characterized by the reproduction of the territorial unit of the princely state in the conflict negotiations, despite alterations to the status quo via legal-constitutional transformations in the divided areas.

The second chapter analyses the concept of borderland as a distinct political space, neither part of nor separate from the state. Willem van Schendel pointed out the normative implications of the study of borderlands by focusing on the peripheries of the state. Although his interest lay in the history of borderlands, the approach also applies to the study of borders as symbols of state security. Adopting a borderland perspective is not only a matter of shifting location but also of seeing borderlands as units of analysis, which, from a political point of view, implies exploring interventions into these territories at both the material and symbolic levels. This is the case with the transformations along the road from Srinagar to Kargil: militarization and the creation of a sense of fear that in turn justifies militarization, and the promotion and logistics surrounding the Amarnath *yatra*, a Hindu religious pilgrimage that has become a highly political issue. In each of these cases, interventions demonstrate the state incorporation of these territories by managing and at the same time changing the space of conflict. Interventions are also examined under the exceptional legal-constitutional regimes of AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the special relationship of the Kashmir Valley to the Indian state. Despite processes of appropriation and division which have led to the articulation of popular resistance, the border territories have maintained coexistence to a certain degree, as reflected in the prevailing human and cultural diversity that is based on past interactions. Considering this diversity helps to understand that the Kashmir borderland is as much the result of a historical process as it is of a permanent denial of the opportunity to become a different political space.

To clarify what I mean by 'permanent denial of the opportunity to become a different political space', Chapters Three, Four, and Five address issues of fragmentation and interaction at various levels in the Kashmir divided territories, thereby providing a more dynamic understanding of spatiality than is normally described in representations of the dispute.

Thus, the third and fourth chapters examine the dispute that is habitually referred to as 'the Kashmir issue' and its frame in four urban areas: Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, Kargil, and Skardu. They explore the attachment (or not) of local inhabitants to the dispute and its manifestation in their everyday lives, in the process demonstrating what Stephen Graham describes as the intimate relationship of cities and war.⁵¹ As a militarized city, Srinagar is the epicentre of the conflict, with the dispute framed as opposition to the Indian state and the need to 'take a decision' (a plebiscite). In Muzaffarabad, the conflict mainly concerns people who have fled the Kashmir Valley at various times, and those who aim to regain the Valley, such as the militants. The third chapter also discusses the imposition of the term 'Kashmir' by the Pakistani state on those who would prefer Azad Kashmir to become part of Pakistan. Chapter Four shows how the context of conflict in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad differs radically from that of Kargil and Skardu, which can be regarded as peripheral territories in the dispute. The primary issue in Kargil and Skardu is the divisive nature of the LoC, since security measures arising from the permanent hostility between India and Pakistan render cross-border interaction almost impossible. The dynamics of conflict have, on the one hand, created new spatial hierarchies, demonstrating that the 'Kashmir issue' has gone beyond mere decisions about the future status of the Valley and, on the other hand, illustrate that developments in one place have impacts in other locations and are thus interrelated. By looking at manifestations of conflict in specific locations, these chapters show how bordering processes are intrinsic to the way social reality is framed 'within the borders'.

Drawing on the above-mentioned considerations, the fifth chapter is devoted to the question of locating people in the debates about borders, notably in relation to the ambivalent spatiality created by the LoC as a non-demarcated border. Hence the chapter focuses on explaining the ambiguous nature of the LoC and its transformation over time from a porous border that allowed the movement of displaced persons and militants to one that is highly fenced in an attempt to regulate cross-border traffic. It also discusses what exactly the LoC divides. It then contextualizes the cross-LoC initiatives

51 Graham, *Cities, War*, Introduction.

emanating from the India-Pakistan dialogue process that saw the establishment of cross-LoC bus and truck services between the Kashmir Valley and AJK. While these initiatives have been considered a sign of normalization between India and Pakistan, things are viewed differently on the ground. To clarify the case, the chapter delves into empirical material collected from two groups with an interest in the opening of the LoC – separated families and traders – some of whom have already benefitted from the cross-LoC exchanges that began in 2005. The chapter highlights the ongoing ‘border work’: despite the discourse on ‘making borders irrelevant’ and the creation of a post-conflict context in the Kashmir Valley (defined as ‘normalization’), new forms of bordering and control are being established. These bordering processes bear witness to attempts by the postcolonial state to gain control of the territory.

Finally, drawing from the case of Kashmir, the conclusion puts forward the concept of belonging as an analytical approach to the spatial problematic involved in border conflicts. It underlines the usefulness of this concept for the scholarly articulation of more inclusive political spaces, spaces which themselves are already in existence at societal level. Issues of belonging unfold in line with ongoing struggles about place-making. The chapter first examines the scope of the concept in relation to identity by emphasizing the problematics of place and space that are implied in both. It then goes on to discuss the aspect of displacement that is involved in the notion of belonging, as being in one place (and part of a collective) and longing for another, paying attention to the contexts in which this is articulated. Claiming belonging is thus tantamount to claiming recognition and becoming visible. The last section of the chapter focuses on the politics of belonging, with reference to the circumstances that lead people and groups to make a distinction between belonging and not belonging. Since belonging necessarily embodies a translocal and transnational experience, I argue that it generates specific knowledge about how the world is (b)ordered. The chapter shows that the investigation of issues of belonging leads to a new understanding of the Kashmir borderland that can provide insights into new ways of dealing with the dispute.