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Urban Areas Near the LoC (I):

The ‘Kashmir Issue’ in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad

Manifestations and understandings of the Kashmir dispute differ from place to place. In the Kashmir Valley there is a context of open violence, while in AJK there is a question of freedom of expression. Moreover, proximity to the LoC enforces separation and militarization, with various consequences for the populations living in the area. The next two chapters explore these consequences in four urban areas on either side of the LoC by examining what it means for their inhabitants to be part of the dispute. The locations chosen are the Muzaffarabad and Srinagar municipalities in AJK and the Kashmir Valley, respectively, and Skardu, Baltistan and Kargil, Ladakh. For practical purposes I refer to these urban areas as ‘cities’, although not all of them qualify as such. While Srinagar has more than one million inhabitants, Kargil can be considered a small town with a population of a little over 15,000. Muzaffarabad’s municipality can be considered the home of around half a million people (Muzaffarabad district has 650,000 inhabitants), while Skardu, pending the publication of official data from the 2017 census, can be estimated to have a population of around 131,000.[[1]](#endnote-1) Fieldwork has been conducted mainly in these locations of significant human agglomeration and therefore the findings cannot necessary be extended to other locations or to rural contexts. Their condition as ‘border cities’ can also be called into question, because their distance from the LoC ranges from 10 kilometres in the case of Kargil to some 120 kilometres in the case of Srinagar. Regardless of these differences, all of them are very much affected by the conflict dynamics of the LoC.

In this chapter I consider Muzaffarabad and Srinagar. I argue that the disputed condition, framed as a legal regime of exception, of these territories acts as the context for a number of interventions by state actors that deviate from the normal path of politics.[[2]](#endnote-2) These interventions occur in a variety of fields including security, development, and leisure, with the aim of fully integrating the border territories into the state. In this light, the borderland condition of these locations is both the context that allows such interventions to take place and the space to be eliminated as a result of such interventions.

In the following section I explore how the militarization of the urban spaces in the Kashmir borderland—the so-called military urbanism—contributes to border making by rendering violence an issue of ‘domestic order’ and controlling people’s mobilities. I then examine the manifestations of conflict in Srinagar, providing a brief description of the city based on the existing administrative and legal regimes, its social diversity, and the mobility/immobility of urban dwellers. In the third section, I follow the same approach to analyse the case of Muzaffarabad. In doing this, I intend to incorporate the ideas and opinions about the Kashmir dispute given by residents of these areas, specifically focusing on how the inhabitants frame the spatial borders of the conflict that affects them.

**Militarization of the urban**

The urban areas in the Kashmiri disputed territories fall under what Graham defines as ‘new military urbanism’: ‘a constellation of ideas, techniques and norms of security and military doctrine’ that permeates the way war and organized political violence function using a city’s infrastructures and basic architectures.[[3]](#endnote-3) While interstate violence is rare, Graham observes, cities have increasingly become the sites of state and non-state political violence, that is, the *locus* through which the state imaginary and practice of violence continues to reproduce itself. War has become an urbanized affair but, as Saskia Sassen notes, unlike in the past, when cities were destroyed with no respect for human life, such destruction is no longer considered acceptable by the international community.[[4]](#endnote-4) Instead, the continual use of techniques of control and killing over time raise the level of permissible violence, which goes unnoticed provided the city is not under attack. This can be seen in places such as Srinagar. While during the early 1990s the killing of dozens of demonstrators demanding self-determination raised concerns among international human rights associations, during the unrest in summer 2016 the continual killing and maiming of civilians—many blinded by metal pellets—was hardly featured in the international media.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Graham depicts a chaotic world, an uneven geography of military urbanism that blurs the difference between cities in the ‘homeland’ (in Europe and the US or other parts of the world’s most developed areas) and those on the ‘colonial frontiers’ or peripheries, mainly located in the global south. Likewise, other scholars such as Sassen also underline the decentred character of the new geography of power.[[6]](#endnote-6) By focusing on the Kashmiri urban border areas, I maintain that such spatial differentiation is a quite organized affair and that place matters. Interventions by postcolonial states such as India and Pakistan in parts of their territory where state authority has been weak (i.e., FATA, parts of Balochistan, north-east India, or the forests of central India which are under Maoist control) are acts of territorial consolidation. The relatively long distance and disconnection from the centres of political power mean that state actors can undertake measures that would be considered difficult to enforce in mainland territories of the state. For example, during the protests in Srinagar during the summer of 2016 the Indian Government used technology to impose a shutdown of the telephone and internet connections in the Kashmir Valley, making impossible any communication with the rest of the world.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Mobility is often associated with a progressive force in the context of globalization in which the national frame loses its importance. However, as Michael Skey observes, this positive view of mobility can be misleading in the cases of those for whom the national is a referent which marks their own experiences.[[8]](#endnote-8) Cities are often characterized as open mobile spaces, despite the existence of new forms of urban disconnection, forced immobility, and the creation of enclosures and marginalization.[[9]](#endnote-9) In the case of the cities considered in this study, on the other hand, the relative immobility of city dwellers is related to dispossession caused by the erection and closure of borders, and the subsequent problematic references to a national frame. As a result, the urban groups display alternative forms of place-making rather than the nationally ascribed ones, such as demanding a separate state and claiming to belong to a specific community across the border.

In Srinagar, conflict is present in everyday life through checkpoints, the occupation of urban civilian buildings (former hotels, cinemas, etc.) by the paramilitary and their constant presence patrolling the streets, scenes of police employing violence against civilians, urban guerrillas, and so on. In Muzaffarabad, Skardu, and Kargil, on the other hand, conflict is mostly perceived—at least by the outsider—as remaining at a latent level, as a fluid barrier between what can and cannot be expressed and done in public owing to the presence of large army camps and the role of intelligence agencies. Because conflict manifests differently from place to place, it is possible to talk about a hierarchy of places when attempting to understand the dispute. As Ananya Kabir has described, the Kashmir Valley is the object of desire, the bone of contention, because it is central to the claims of Pakistan, India (as part of the country’s secular project), and Kashmiri nationalism.[[10]](#endnote-10) The emergence of an insurgent movement in the late 1980s only reinforced its centrality. Muzaffarabad’s importance lies in its role as a place of exile and of the organization of the armed struggle (with the support of Pakistani intelligence agencies). Residents of Skardu and Kargil are aware that the dispute is ‘because of the Valley’: they generally see themselves as having a marginal role in the whole question, despite the fact that they suffer from it.

**Srinagar: the epicentre of conflict**

*The city*

With a population of 1,236,829, Srinagar is the largest city of the Kashmir Valley and can be considered the epicentre of the dispute.[[11]](#endnote-11) Along with Jammu, Srinagar was the political centre of the former princely state (1846–1947) and an economic hub for the regional shawl and handicrafts trade to Europe and other places, along the network later known as the ‘Silk Route’.[[12]](#endnote-12) These past interactions explain the still-cosmopolitan character of the city, despite the closing of the borders in the neighbourhood in 1947–1949. Fearing for their lives after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang and Tibetan Muslims sought refuge in Srinagar, and their descendants still live in the city. More recently, a small colony of displaced Ladakhi Muslims who fled the anti-Muslim boycott led by Buddhists in the early 1990s were living in the Safa Kadal neighbourhood in July 2012. Despite the fact that the conflict in the Kashmir Valley affected these groups, leading some families to move to Turkey in the 1990s, Srinagar became a place of refuge, of being protected, according to their account.[[13]](#endnote-13) At the same time, conflict in the Valley did not discourage a stream of immigration of poor daily labourers from the northern Indian states and from Nepal. The conflict expelled or made other groups flee, such as the native Pandits who, feeling threatened, sought refuge in camps in Jammu and other parts of India.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Numerous accounts of the Kashmir separatist conflict that erupted in the 1990s describe how violence became a permanent feature in places such as Srinagar, completely disrupting urban life and tearing the fabric of society apart.[[15]](#endnote-15) Although the fighting mainly occurred in the hinterlands, severely affecting rural areas, urban violence and the consequent militarization of the cities became the identifiable measure by which to understand the state of the conflict. This is because, despite the violence, the cities have remained more accessible and developments there have received more attention than the often neglected tragedies occurring in the countryside.[[16]](#endnote-16)

In the early 2000s, however, militancy decreased and the Indian and Kashmiri governments adopted a new approach to specific sectors of the population who were disenchanted with a decade of violence. In fact, the India–Pakistan dialogue initiated in 2004 coincided with Indian rhetoric on Kashmir arguing for the existence of a ‘normalization’ process following the arrival of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to power in the state two years earlier. The chief minister had adopted a ‘healing touch’ approach to ‘heal’ the wounds of more than a decade of conflict.[[17]](#endnote-17) This approach was framed in terms of initiatives in the development and economic fields meant to revive the stagnant economy. It also implied a humanitarian component regarding victims of the violence from all sides and included a dialogue with militants and separatist leaders. The ‘healing touch’ agenda conveyed the idea of a post-conflict scenario, although this assertion has been challenged over the years by new episodes of urban mobilization, such as the stone-pelting movement that erupted in the summer of 2010 and the dramatic demonstrations in the summer and autumn of 2016 that were fiercely suppressed by the security forces.[[18]](#endnote-18) These developments demonstrate that, despite the official narrative, the situation in the Kashmir Valley remains far from normalized.

Srinagar’s urban geography of conflict includes landmarks related to violent episodes which are part of the collective memory, including houses, cinemas, bridges, and shrines.[[19]](#endnote-19) The same occurs with buildings and historical sites that are currently occupied by the security forces: while people refer to these locations in their accounts, they are no longer accessible.[[20]](#endnote-20) Certain lower middle-class neighbourhoods in the old city, such as Maisuma and its surroundings, are known for their support of the armed struggle, and mosques have become symbols of different political affiliations. During the curfews in the summers of 2010 and 2011, and during autumn 2014, these places were the most affected by mobility restrictions and were no-go areas for visitors and tourists. The traditional architecture of these districts contrasts with that of the more impersonal buildings of residential areas characterized by large houses owned by wealthy locals living abroad, bureaucrats, businessmen, and a few leaders of the nationalist camp. Location, in terms of one’s place of origin, matters in the understanding of the conflict.



Image 3.1: Lal Mandi footbridge with the *āzādi* (freedom) slogan, Srinagar 2013.

Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

During interviews with people who supported the nationalist cause (including journalists, university professors, bureaucrats, lawyers, shopkeepers, and students), I noticed an emphasis on the fact that ‘conflict affected all segments of society’. However, in meetings with the families of victims of violence—people involved in militancy, or disappeared or killed by the security forces—I observed that most of them belonged to the urban and rural lower-middle classes. This suggests that the exercise of violence, dissent, and repression in the urban landscape has an element of class.[[21]](#endnote-21) The armed struggle, though widely supported by different social strata, was carried out by the less well-off (though not poor) elements of the society, who also suffered most of the consequences.

Militarization is the most striking feature of the city. The security forces, military, paramilitary, and state police occupy and monitor large parts of the public space, blurring the boundary between civil society and the military. Militarization is sanctioned under AFSPA of 1990, an instrument of the Indian Government used to regain control of disturbed areas. AFSPA actually confers on the armed forces ‘special powers’ by which they become an ambivalent authority outside of legal scrutiny. Aside from the large army camps in Srinagar, such as Badami Bagh (which can itself be considered a city within a city) and Badam at the airport, compounds of the paramilitary force of the CRPF are also scattered throughout the city.[[22]](#endnote-22) Improvised checkpoints and watchtowers with vigilant armed soldiers keep an eye on passers-by. Militarization implies control and the use of security techniques on urban dwellers. On the other hand, the city is a weak regime and the existence of the civic has the capacity to temper the destruction exercised by the state and non-state powerful actors.[[23]](#endnote-23) In other words, militarization constitutes a tool for waging urban warfare and gaining control over the meaning of the city, because it is an instrument of support for the nation-state’s project in the peripheries.[[24]](#endnote-24) Srinagar’s new military urbanism—to appropriate Graham’s concept—serves the purpose of controlling and taming the city as part of the national space: that is, of making the city an indisputable part of the state.

*The conflict*

Conflict in Srinagar cannot be detached from the militarized condition of the city. The people with whom I interacted made frequent references to this condition as part of everyday life. During my meetings, I asked three specific questions after introducing the topic of my research: ‘Who is a Kashmiri?’, ‘What is the Kashmir issue about?’, and ‘What are the boundaries of the dispute?’[[25]](#endnote-25) In posing these questions, I wanted to know what ordinary people understood by ‘Kashmir’. The idea was to identify the nature of the boundary (division) and, following the work of Richard Jenkins, the interplay of nationalism and ethnicity within it.[[26]](#endnote-26)

When I began to carry out fieldwork in Srinagar in May 2010, I noticed that it was not rare for my interviewees—traders, petty businessmen, and university professors—to make a digression in which they positioned themselves vis-à-vis *maslā-e Kashmir* (‘the Kashmir issue’). This positioning was expressed in sentences such as: ‘this [the specific topic to which he/she was referring] has nothing to do with the *issue*’, ‘while the *issue* is not being solved’, ‘depending on the solution of the Kashmir *issue*’, and so on.[[27]](#endnote-27) The ‘issue’ was referred to as something above them in which they could not interfere, implying an element of uncertainty in the sense that a decision would have to be taken at some point. Only in very few concrete cases—such as in a meeting with a businesswoman belonging to the Dogra community, a high-ranking member of the state police, and two high-ranking bureaucrats—was the ‘issue’ articulated as a matter of the past, as a matter of law and order, and as a revolt of misguided youth during the 1990s. The difference between those for whom a settlement is yet to come and those for whom the issue is already part of the past lies in the challenge of Kashmir’s accession to India.

In the course of the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s, the official Indian discourse portrayed those who revolted as non-loyal members of the Indian nation. India has maintained that the armed struggle was not a genuine movement evolving from Kashmiri society but was instead fabricated by Pakistan through manipulating the local youth, the so-called ‘Pakistan sponsored-terrorism’.[[28]](#endnote-28) Yet this standpoint has carefully avoided relating the armed struggle to Kashmir’s wish to join Pakistan.[[29]](#endnote-29) Pakistan, on the other hand, has insisted that the movement was indigenous and supported the demand for self-determination, although it would want the area to merge with Pakistan. Popular rhetoric in India has normally played on the fact that joining Pakistan is the worst option for secular Kashmiris.[[30]](#endnote-30) Although the Kashmiri nationalist movement has relied on Pakistani support, and some groups such as the *Jamaat-e-Islami* (Jamaat) defend the possibility of annexation to that state, popular sympathies are not with Pakistan. To illustrate the case, in an interview in 2012 with a respected professor of law known for supporting the Jamaatand at the time close to its leader Syed Ali Shah Gilani, he referred to the future of Kashmir in the Valley in the following terms: ‘Now, if there is a referendum in the Valley, people would favour independence rather than joining Pakistan.’[[31]](#endnote-31) During our long exchange, in which we discussed opinions about the conflict and he subscribed to the general views of the Jamaat, it became clear that independence was not his own preference, but, he stressed, based on his assessment, was what the people wanted.

If a decision will need to be taken in the future, uncertainty will prevail and permeate everyday life until the moment of decision arrives. Yet things can go on like this for a long time and therefore the present needs to be administered. At least, this is the answer I was repeatedly given when I enquired into the apparent contradiction, in my view, of ‘defending that there is an issue to be solved’ while at the same time ‘participating in electoral processes’ that legitimize the existing ‘unjust’ political order.[[32]](#endnote-32) A lawyer from Srinagar in his early sixties who was sympathetic to nationalists views, but who claimed to have voted for the Janata Party in the state elections of 1977, tried to explain this to me in the following way: ‘The elections are not for deciding the status of the region. They are for administering the most pending issues. We need roads, electricity, and other infrastructures.’[[33]](#endnote-33) The provisional sense of the present reflected in these views raises questions about the ways the conflict is being sustained over time.

As the epicentre of the Kashmir movement for self-determination, life in Srinagar provides some insights into how the conflict is being sustained. Forms of local mobilization and expressions of dissent have been severely curtailed: critical scholars and foreign human rights activists are not welcome in the area; student associations are not allowed in the university; and demonstrations are severely repressed.[[34]](#endnote-34) Other less visible and unwritten forms of coercion and harassment of dissenting voices also occur.[[35]](#endnote-35) At the same time, the nationalist leadership of the Hurriyat, split into two factions, is viewed with ambivalence by ordinary people, because although the leaders are morally respected they are also criticized in private for toying with Pakistan and being ambivalent about the country’s role regarding the militancy.[[36]](#endnote-36) Despite the restricted political space, a few women have put forward an agenda to address some sensitive issues. One of them is the well-known mother of a disappeared person Parveena Ahangar, who through the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP) has been collecting data on enforced disappearances during the conflict in order to seek justice.[[37]](#endnote-37) Although the involvement of the Indian security forces in disappearances, torture, rape, and mass graves is well-known and documented, the Indian state has never made a public apology.

The period 2008–2017 saw an increase in popular mobilization and opportunities to express dissent in the public space have been severely curtailed. The unrest that broke out in the Valley in July 2016 after the killing of Burhan Wani, a popular militant of Hizbul Mujahideen, caused several hundred deaths and mutilations. Burhan Wani had engaged with social media and symbolized the emergence of a new generation of fighters who raised hopes for the continuation of the armed struggle.[[38]](#endnote-38) The demonstrations (as well as ordinary civilians not taking part in the mobilizations) were put down with new methods such as metal pellets (first introduced in Kashmir during the revolts of 2010) which blinded many, including children.[[39]](#endnote-39) Despite the façade of normalization claimed by political authorities in Srinagar and Delhi, popular mobilization has increased, and its violent suppression has seen a refinement of security techniques. In the same way, normalization and the continuation of the political struggle has become a rather spatialized urban affair.

The latter can be exemplified in the tourism industry, considered the main indicator that ‘Kashmir is going back to normal’. Tourism has significantly grown in places such as Srinagar since the mid-2000s, bringing with it the development of the industry: there has been a boom in hotel construction, houseboats, and the opening of restaurants, cafes, and shops to cater to visitors’ needs. Indian tourists, and to a lesser extent foreigners, literally occupy the surroundings of the Dal Gate and Residency Road in the summer. However, as I observed during my visits between 2010 and 2014, while this happened in the so-called ‘tourist areas’, in other parts of the city curfews were imposed, disrupting the everyday life of urban dwellers and impeding access to the old city, and roads were blocked with barbed wire and barricades. ‘Normalization’ implies the production of space for the normal, which in Srinagar is associated with leisure activities connected to tourism.

During my visit to Srinagar in late October 2014, de facto curfews (on account of the beginning of Ashura, the Shia celebration during the month of Muharram) were announced as ‘restrictions of movements’ in the newspapers.[[40]](#endnote-40) ‘Restrictions’ was also the term employed by the CRPF and police personnel I approached on several occasions to find out whether I could visit a certain place in Srinagar. ‘Curfew’, a legal exceptional instrument that must be declared, was being reduced to a ‘restriction’ of movement that could occur in a number of non-exceptional situations. By not declaring curfews, the security and political establishment was conveying an idea of normality.

Transformations in Srinagar’s urban space are a reminder of how Agamben’s oft-cited state of exception is becoming a characteristic feature of contemporary societies. Agamben’s thought, which is rooted in part in the Foucaultian development of biopolitics in terms of the disciplinary control of bodies, revolves around the intensification of control by the sovereign power—but it allows several important aspects of contemporary life to go unnoticed.[[41]](#endnote-41) One of these aspects is spatial mobility, which Agamben surprisingly leaves unexplored; another is the dispossession (of the individual) that makes moments of resistance impossible.[[42]](#endnote-42) Srinagar, a militarized city that is part of a territory ruled by exceptional legal instruments and itself the host of torture centres, in some ways resembles Agamben’s understanding of the camp.[[43]](#endnote-43) However, the departure from Srinagar of local qualified people as migrants to the USA and Europe and as pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, and the arrival to this city of tourists and outside workers are constant features of the urban landscape. Yet this mobility contrasts with the immobility of the conflict, the context of stalemate that is described above.

Mobility in the militarized city is restricted and movement is channelled in certain directions while others are banned—that is, mobility across the LoC is forbidden and travel to Pakistan is discouraged through the erection of many bureaucratic obstacles. The city’s apparent openness goes hand in hand with its gradual walling; the urban space is being constantly divided. Furthermore, the mobility of tourists *in* the city (mobility of the normal) contrasts with the lack of mobility of urban dwellers, the relatively frequent house arrests of critical nationalist leaders, and the lack of access of locals to the public space under the AFSPA’s restrictions. Whereas some religious communities such as the Shia cannot make use of the main public space during celebrations, other religious organizations such as Ahl-e-Hadith (which allegedly has connections to religious radicalism) are becoming important entrepreneurs in the fields of education and charity.[[44]](#endnote-44) Mobility invites a reflection on who is mobile and who is not in the disputed city, and the reasons for that condition.

*The borders of the conflict*

One of the most problematic aspects of the Kashmir conflict lies in the relationship of territory to time. Territory is a product of appropriation during a specific historical-political period, but the temporality of the conflict has changed the terms of what is disputed.[[45]](#endnote-45) Kashmir is often presented as a frozen dispute resulting from decolonization and concerning the political status of the territories of the former princely state. Such a perspective attaches more importance to the borders of the former political entity, as well as to the LoC (as a dividing line resulting from warfare), than to the experiences of those living in the affected territories for whom state belonging has been a rather problematic experience.

I argue that the incorporation of people’s views on the dispute can contribute to disentangling its persistent monolithic representation as an Indo-Pakistan affair. The conflict has changed over time and uncertainty has played a significant role in determining the life conditions of residents. In Srinagar, militarization and the persistence of popular resistance reminds us that a war is still going on, as some of my interlocutors would say. However, politicians, security personnel, the administration, and sectors of the business community who back the project of making the city a tourist attraction all subscribe to the view that it is a post-conflict scenario. However, as some interlocutors defending one or another view have expressed, ‘things can turn worse at any time’.

Time and uncertainty about the future have also blurred the borders of the conflict. During the whole period of my fieldwork in Srinagar, only a few interviewees mentioned the location of the borders of the state in October 1947 (before the tribal invasion) and admitted that the Kashmir Valley is the area whose status needs to be ascertained, either as an independent state or as part of Pakistan. Three university professors I met underlined the differentiated cultural character of the Valley and the Kashmiri-speaking areas of Jammu (Kishtwar and Doda) as constituting a community distinct from other regions of Jammu and Ladakh, in line with the ethnic arguments discussed in some academic works on the dispute.[[46]](#endnote-46) They explained these were just their personal views, based on their own visits and knowledge of the territory rather than on statistical data.[[47]](#endnote-47) Their accounts differed, however, from others for whom the territorial or ethnic aspects (in terms of language or religion) of the ‘Kashmir issue’ were not clearly defined or at least were not relevant.

One such account was that of the Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, chairman of one faction of Hurriyat and the spiritual leader of Kashmiri Muslims. During a meeting at his residence, I asked about the borders of the Kashmir issue, referring specifically to the case of Ladakh and Baltistan where the majority do not sympathize with the nationalist cause. He observed: ‘Kashmir will be about what people want it to be. If Ladakhis do not want to be involved, they have to decide, it is their choice. But first let us have the possibility to decide.’[[48]](#endnote-48) Nationalist leaders from the Valley have occasionally participated in talks with Pandits and Ladakhi Buddhists which could be qualified as more symbolic than substantive. There is resentment between the religious communities because of past violence. Muslims from the Valley have been blamed for their lack of support of other minorities and for being unable to include them in their demands. This view helps sustain the ‘ethnic’ character of the dispute, by which Kashmiri Muslims are held responsible for wanting to ‘leave India’ and causing trouble for those who think differently. However, it lacks proper contextualization because it does not approach the political question in terms of the representation of the community, that is, the future of those living in the territories. In other words, the question is not who is a Kashmiri, but who wants to take part in a certain political project.

If the community is not able to represent itself, or this possibility is denied, it cannot embrace membership. A young Kashmiri science professor, a returnee from New York, is a good example of this aspect, which I also found reflected among the younger generations. In our meeting she narrated how her research at the time (in 2010) looked at similarities between architectural construction patterns in the Valley and in Ladakh.

There are many links within the various regions [of Jammu and Kashmir] that we are not aware of. This is because of the disconnection due to the lack of communications. There is only one weekly flight between Srinagar and Leh [in 2010] in contrast to the growing number of connections from Srinagar and Leh to India. But we also do not have the opportunity to talk to each other or have an interest in each other. Disconnection is privileged over connectivity.

During the meeting she recalled how people expressed solidarity by helping each other in the aftermath of the Valley’s blockade of July 2008. She said there was a scarcity of some products in the market because the only highway to Jammu and the rest of India was cut off by Jammu Hindu chauvinist groups in protest over developments in the Amarnath land transfer. On that occasion, ordinary people had helped with the distribution of food. Similar views were expressed by other interviewees, who often had difficulty spelling out the Kashmir issue in territorial terms.

Therefore, unlike the general understanding of the dispute that maintains that Kashmir is about the borders of 1947 and which state owns the area, or about making the area independent, I argue that the issue is instead about the representation of the community and the impossibility of having a thorough debate among those affected. Conflict is perceived as a matter of uncertainty because of the way it is materialized as a permanent legal state of exception. Although ‘legal’ mobility in and out of Srinagar is possible, and even encouraged in specific directions, it is aimed at transforming the exceptional context into a ‘normal’ one in a way that allows no room for resistance or the incorporation of dissent. Representation of the community is no longer possible because normality implies connections to distant places—migrant and religious networks, international finances, visits to tourist sites in India, and so on—rather than the possibility of revisiting what is perceived as nearby, in the vicinity.

**Muzaffarabad: the place of refuge and support of the Kashmir cause**

*The city*

In spite of the current disconnection, urban locations in the Kashmir borderland on either side of the LoC share a number of links with each other, in part due to past historical ties but also to the dynamics of conflict since Partition. Muzaffarabad was a district of the Kashmir province before 1947 and since the sixteenth century had developed as a secondary town, originally connecting the Valley with major trading routes toward Central Asia and then, at the end of the nineteenth century, acting as a main route to access the Valley.[[49]](#endnote-49) Past connections are still present in the urban landscape, such as in the case of descendants of *khwaja* Kashmiris (Kashmiri-speaking traders) from the Valley who settled there in previous centuries to take advantage of trading opportunities. The *Khwaja* bazaar in the old city is a reminder of their presence. Other groups include Hindko speakers from neighbouring areas of the Jhelum and Hazara, who are culturally connected to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and Paharis from the mountains to the east (in the direction of the Kashmir Valley) who have traditional links to both the Valley and Punjab. There are also other small religious communities such as a few Bahai’i families with cultural ties to Gulf migration, Christians originally from Punjab, and refugees from Afghanistan who moved there in search of economic opportunities. The social diversity of Muzaffarabad is attributed to its frontier character over centuries. Partition brought a divide that led settled Hindu and Sikh communities to flee, but a degree of social diversity still persists in the city.[[50]](#endnote-50)

Muzaffarabad was almost destroyed by an earthquake on 8 October 2005. The disaster caused around 75,000 deaths, most of them in AJK where the city is located. National and international response was quick—although this was partly motivated, as in the case of US agencies, by security concerns.[[51]](#endnote-51) In fact, as Schütte and Kreutzmann point out, ‘4 years after the earthquake, most agencies had already withdrawn from the area’ and in 2015 some of the affected areas were still far from recovered.[[52]](#endnote-52) At the time of my visits in 2009 and 2010, a significant part of the city centre had been rebuilt. The urban landscape looked like a site ‘under construction’ in which international donors such as Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Turkey, and NGOs provided support by building housing and healthcare, education, and water and sanitation facilities.[[53]](#endnote-53) The reconstruction, following a plan elaborated by Japanese engineers and architects, was intended to build a modern city able to attract foreign capital, as described to me by an officer of the State Earthquake Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Agency (SERRA) in March 2010. Indeed, the city was not only being rebuilt: major infrastructure projects were being developed throughout the district, such as hydroelectric projects at the confluence of the Neelum and Jhelum rivers, which involved a consortium of several international companies, and in the Jhelum at Hattian/Kohala, undertaken by a Chinese company. The entire district seemed to be under construction, conveying a sense of ‘opening’, substantiated by the presence of foreign workers and investors. However this view contrasted with what appeared to be a strengthening of bureaucratic measures to enter the territory—the need for a Non-Objection Certificate, or NOC, for foreigners—and, judging from comments made by interviewees, with the tight control that Pakistani security agencies were exercising over the population at the time.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Unlike Srinagar, Muzaffarabad is difficult to access for foreigners, particularly for those wishing to undertake field research.[[55]](#endnote-55) Bureaucratic processes to apply for the required permits are not always clearly stated. This situation explains why, with the exception of a few remarkable academic works in English and published material in Urdu by Pakistani and Azad Kashmiri authors, there is a lack of research in the social sciences and humanities on this otherwise fascinating area. The University of Azad Kashmir has produced a few publications addressing questions of culture and society, but this scholarly lacuna cannot be dissociated from the political situation.[[56]](#endnote-56) For these reasons my fieldwork in Muzaffarabad was limited to a few weeks during two visits, although I carried out additional interviews with AJK residents in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Muzaffarabad seems like a separate place, different from other Pakistani cities, but not so different. In a sense, the urban space tends to emulate at a symbolic level the federal (semi-independent) status of Azad Kashmir as part of Pakistan, framed in The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act of 1974.[[57]](#endnote-57) A series of bureaucratic measures have been implemented to convey this idea that it is located in a different kind of territory, such as the requirement for the aforementioned NOC for foreigners issued by the Pakistani Ministry of Interior and the need to travel there through the ‘official’ border point to enter AJK territory, the payment of border customs (or taxes) for Pakistanis having business with AJK, and inspections by the security forces. This legal-bureaucratic separation of Muzaffarabad, which is designed to resemble entering a ‘foreign’ territory, contrasts with the experience of cultural continuity that many outsiders have noticed during their visits to the city. A language professor from AJK University explained in an interview that there is no dominant cultural group in the area and hybridism characterizes life in public spaces and in everyday interactions. Azad Kashmiris may not be very different from Pakistanis in cultural and social terms, but they are represented as a different collective. In Muzaffarabad, the absence of Pakistani symbols such as flags and government information banners contrasts with the overwhelming presence of informative posters by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government announcing their premises and the activities they undertake. This idea that Muzaffarabad is a place distinct from Pakistan, yet at the same time undifferentiated from it, is also reflected in the way the conflict is manifested.

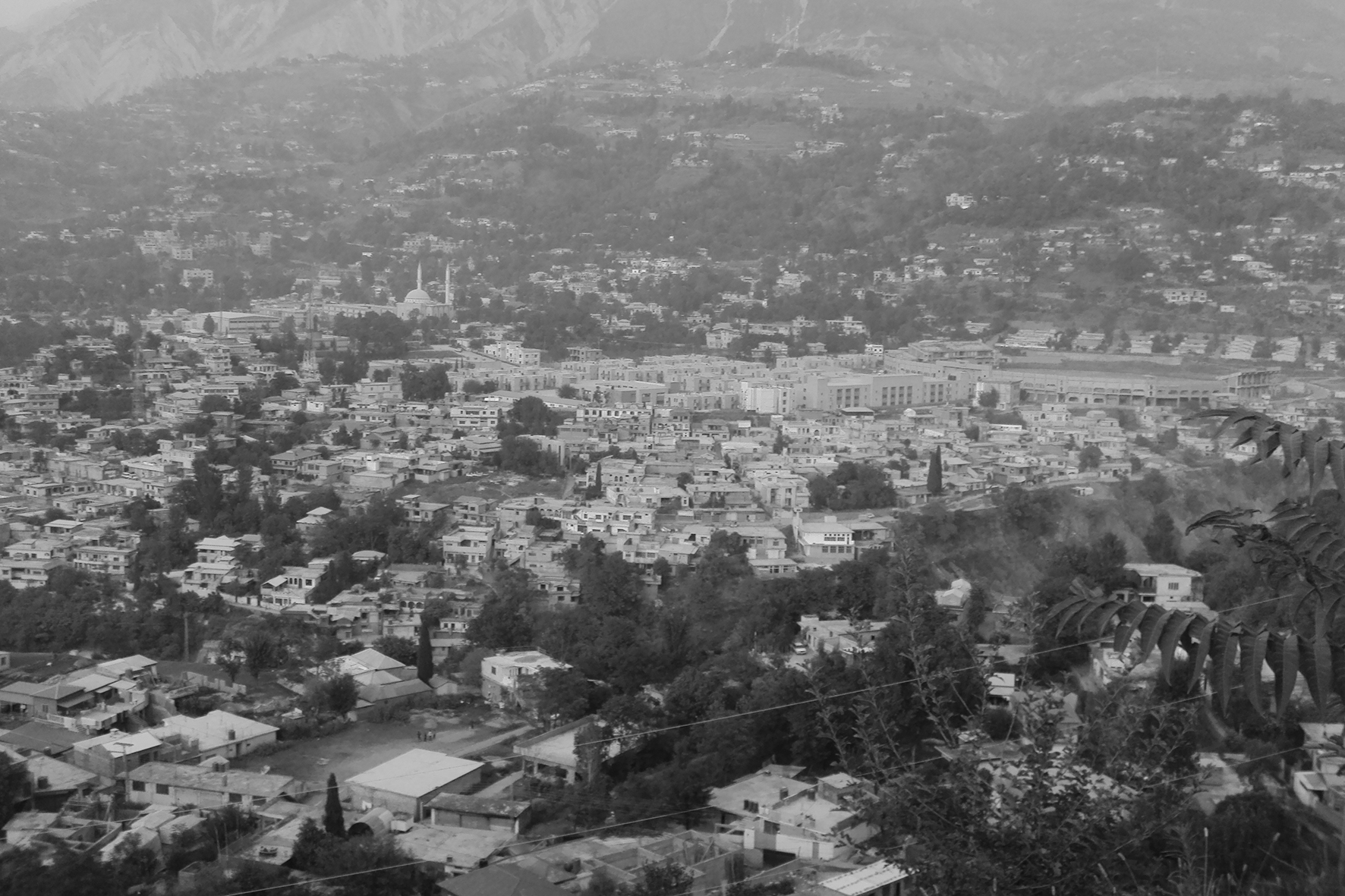


Image 3.2: A view of Muzaffarabad city in September 2009. The city was almost completely rebuilt after the 2005 earthquake. Photograph by Antía Mato Bouzas

*The conflict*

During a visit to a local NGO working on education for women outside Muzaffarabad, I was accompanied by a young man from Baltistan who had worked in rescue activities in AJK following the earthquake and who, as a student, became my assistant during the trip. Along with him, there was a middle-aged man from another region of Pakistan who was assigned to me for security reasons, since I had to travel a few kilometres outside the city and it was unclear whether my NOC was valid for that area. On the way back, we had a conversation in Urdu about general aspects of the landscape. At some point, the man pointed out a settlement across the Jhelum river that looked like any other village to me. He explained that those living there were refugees (he used the English term) from the Kashmir Valley and then began talking to my assistant. They became engaged in a conversation on the status of refugees in which I did not intervene. After some time there was a silence and my assistant told me in English: ‘You know, these refugees have many privileges, the Government [Azad Kashmir] gives them 15,000 rupees for the birth of a child and they receive other benefits. Just because they are from the other side, but they have been living here for many years. This is not good.’ I began to argue with him in English to try to understand the meaning of his words, and I asked the other man’s opinion in Urdu. Both were unhappy with the authorities’ decision to privilege the refugees over the local population. Their criticism, however, was directed at the existence of a separate Azad Kashmir Government and not expressed as a form of racism against the displaced people. They both criticized the existing context, that is, the support of the Kashmiri nationalist movement and its fight over Kashmir, on the basis that it was more of a burden than an advantage for Pakistan. These views are not rare in the Pakistani context despite the official propaganda on Kashmir, but it was interesting to hear that people from the Pakistani security establishment operating in AJK (such as the man who accompanied us) were of the same opinion.

The understanding of the Kashmir dispute in Muzaffarabad can be presented as a display of Kashmiriness (in the sense of an attachment to the dispute) in public and private spaces despite the fact that residents cannot openly express their opinion about the independence for whole of Kashmir or criticize the Pakistani state. The common issue of certain AJK elites sympathizing with Pakistan is that, unlike in the Valley, there is political freedom in AJK, a statement to which anyone visiting the area can object. Other critical voices complained about the lack of freedom of expression in AJK because the question of independence cannot be publicly addressed. The scarce human rights reports on AJK also confirm this lack of basic freedoms.[[58]](#endnote-58) The Azad Kashmir Government and legislative assembly are the political institutions that represent a ‘liberated’ zone, set against the ‘occupied’ Kashmir Valley—even though the region is actually at the mercy of Pakistan, which exercises significant control through security and non-security means. This can be seen in the way that the activities of the Azad Kashmiri bureaucracy are monitored by the Pakistani state regarding sensitive matters such as the control of water resources and the development of hydroelectric projects.

In a meeting with a high-ranking bureaucrat in the Azad Kashmir Government, I was informed about problems in the negotiations with Pakistani authorities concerning the Neelum-Jhelum hydroelectric project which was being built at the time. According to him, the initial project plan had negatively impacted Azad Kashmir because, although the dam was to be built on AJK soil, the energy produced would be mainly for consumption in Pakistan. In his view this initial plan deprived AJK of appropriate economic compensation in the form of royalties. During the interview, this officer said that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the Government of Azad Kashmir had rejected the project plan because it would affect the provision of water for Muzaffarabad district. Moreover, he criticized the Pakistani authorities for what he saw as interference in AJK affairs. In the middle of our interview, when this bureaucrat was narrating the case, a man came into the office and sat next to the door listening to our conversation. Toward the end of our meeting, in what I interpreted as an attempt to please the unidentified listener, the officer pointed out that ‘thanks to the Pakistani Government’ the most problematic aspects of this hydroelectric project had been solved. The few bureaucrats I was able to interview (mostly from offices dealing with cultural and social issues) all made some references to the limits to freedom of speech before they agreed to talk. Other scholars have also noticed this dissatisfaction among AJK bureaucrats, which indicates the limited ability of the Azad Government to act as an independent institution.[[59]](#endnote-59)

Within this general context, it is possible to distinguish urban manifestations that connect the restricted political atmosphere of AJK with the conflict in the Kashmir Valley. One concerns the ‘separate’ legal condition of AJK as a part of Pakistan, which situates the area in a constitutional limbo. Pakistan treats AJK as a semi-independent state at a formal level, despite its lack of recognition by the international community. The reality, however, is that Pakistan intervenes in the region at all levels and locals cannot oppose it. As a non-formal sovereign territory, AJK resembles what Elden describes as the consequences of a dissociation between sovereignty and territory, as an area which, owing to its legal limbo, is subject to exploitation for several purposes.[[60]](#endnote-60) Pakistani actors such as the intelligence agencies, the military, and Islamist groups—acting in unison or separately—have used this territory to launch their activities on the Indian side, for which they claim no direct responsibility. At the same time, the legal vacuum allows infrastructural projects such as dams to be carried out without opposition in a very small territory (compared with the size of other Pakistani provinces) where there is a lot of pressure on scarce resources.

Another manifestation of the relationship with the conflict in the Kashmir Valley is displacement. The refugees from the other side of the LoC fled from violence in different periods, ranging from Partition to the early 1990s.[[61]](#endnote-61) Among them, there are more settled groups of Kashmiri speakers who moved mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, and Paharis living in the nearby mountain areas who, despite living on the east side of the LoC, historically had more interaction with Muzaffarabad. At the time I visited the city in March 2010, there were still a few refugee camps inhabited by those who had arrived in the early 1990s.[[62]](#endnote-62) While field research within the camp was not allowed at the time, it was possible to speak with some residents outside the compounds. Most of those living in the camps were Paharis who faced many practical difficulties in terms of access to work, healthcare, and education, apart from their physical and legal ‘confinement’ in these secluded places.[[63]](#endnote-63) Their fate differed substantially from the impression shared by my assistant and the Pakistani agent described above, who considered them privileged compared with the rest of the local population. The reality I encountered coincided more with the way refugee groups are normally seen by receiving societies: as competitors for scarce resources. The existence of this displaced population from the other side of the LoC is a reminder of how the conflict dynamics of AJK are interconnected with the Kashmir Valley. Their case show that Kashmiriness, as an attachment to the Kashmir dispute and not in the sense of identity, is articulated as a relationship with place. However, this relationship is not restricted to an ethnic expression, to bounded territory, but a relationship with a specific location called ‘home’, and therefore is expressed in terms of belonging.

The involvement of the Pakistani intelligence services in the support of militancy in the Kashmir Valley and its fuelling of *jihadi* organizations has been well documented.[[64]](#endnote-64) However, the question of how this context affects the position of AJK residents and the displaced population has garnered little attention.[[65]](#endnote-65) Militancy has received support among the exiled community in AJK and in other Pakistani cities, but this has not been true of the rest of the population of AJK. A few non-Kashmiris with whom I interacted in Muzaffarabad saw ‘Kashmir’ (and more generally the whole problem with India) as a burden on their lives.[[66]](#endnote-66) The international pressure on the Pakistani state to close down the training camps of *jihadi* organizations in AJK may have also affected the ways residents thought about the activities of these organizations in their territory.[[67]](#endnote-67) It is not an accident that Muzaffarabad drew international attention in December 2008 following a crackdown on *Lashkar-e-Taiba* members for their participation in the Mumbai attacks on 26 November of that year.[[68]](#endnote-68) Several people were detained in the city and its outskirts, and the media depicted the place as dangerous, with terrorist groups roaming freely and preparing for action elsewhere. Yet the exploitation of AJK’s territory by Pakistan also defines the contours of the dispute and imposes a certain narrative that suppresses the most problematic aspects of the relationship of Azad Kashmir with Pakistan.

*The borders of the conflict*

As in the case of Srinagar, the borders of ‘the Kashmir issue’ in Muzaffarabad are characterized by an element of uncertainty, although framed in slightly different terms. Whereas in Srinagar there is a publicly articulated sentiment that ‘a decision has to happen’, in Muzaffarabad such a possibility is expressed in ambiguous terms. This reality is connected with Pakistan’s handling of the ‘disputed’ status of AJK by being the key mediator for Azad Kashmiris internationally, as well as exercising great control over affairs locally. The Pakistani military bureaucracy that controls the country favours the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan over the creation of an independent state. In fact, the oath of office of the president, the government, and members of the legislative assembly of Azad Kashmir includes the formula: ‘I will remain loyal to the country and the cause of accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan’.[[69]](#endnote-69) Pro-independence parties, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), are barred from participating in the political process because they advocate the merger of the divided parts and the independence of the combined whole.

This scenario is to some extent reproduced in the society. The exiled and displaced people with whom I interacted were mainly concerned about their home areas across the LoC and saw Kashmir more as a question about the divided territories than an issue of integration into Pakistan. Among the local residents with whom I spoke, such as a female politician from Mirpur, the focus was on the future of the Kashmir Valley and its reunion with AJK, rather than the merging of AJK with Pakistan. For others, such as a group of Hindko speakers with whom I talked at length, Kashmir was not an issue of interest. Although these views cannot be generalized, they reflect a range of positions on how things are perceived in Muzaffarabad. They illustrate a complex scenario which, as in the case of Srinagar, indicates that there is a significant gap between the representation of the dispute and the living of the conflict. The reality is that, as in Srinagar, in Muzaffarabad people do not have a say in the political issues that affect them.

However, pro-Pakistani sentiments do exist among a section of the population. On my way to Muzaffarabad from Rawalpindi in a minibus in July 2010, I had a conversation with a fellow traveller, a middle-aged migrant worker returning for Ramadan to his village near Muzaffarabad after staying two years in Saudi Arabia. At a certain point, while descending to the mountain resort town of Murree following the zigzag of the road and seeing the Jhelum river and the Kohala bridge on our left, he exclaimed, pointing with his eyes and hand to the other side: ‘*Yeh Pakistan pe panchwan ki subah banega*’ (‘This should become the fifth province of Pakistan’). Given the context, I did not dare ask the meaning of his words, but I sensed from his account of his hard life as a migrant that he was uncomfortable with the state of things regarding AJK and Pakistan. Snedden, who has conducted exhaustive work on AJK, points out that historically ‘Azad Kashmiris had always wanted to be part of this nation [Pakistan]’ and that ‘most Azad Kashmiris have not considered any option other than joining India or Pakistan’ despite the autocratic treatment of the region by Pakistan.[[70]](#endnote-70) While certainly the historical argument is correct and ordinary people in Azad Kashmir may not object to becoming part of Pakistan, this does not mean they cannot contemplate options other than merging with Pakistan. The domestic context of AJK is far more complex, as shown in some human rights reports.[[71]](#endnote-71) In my interactions, I sensed that discontent with Pakistan, caused by various concerns, cannot be seen as a marginal sentiment. The point to consider is how people can articulate their political opinions in public in such a vulnerable context. On the one hand, the Pakistani military controls the area and has its own strategic agendas by which locals become victims or are involved in erratic military operations. On the other hand, if the Pakistani army were to vacate AJK, many fear that there would be retaliation by the Indian state.

Tensions between the AJK Government and Pakistan do sometimes arise, but critical sections of the AJK administration and groups in the society articulate them in the form of a complaint to the Pakistani state for its interference in affairs that should be addressed internally. Open confrontation with Pakistan is not possible, partly due to the unequal strengths in the relationship and partly because a section of AJK’s population is sympathetic to the possibility of a merger with Pakistan. This can be seen in moments of crisis, such as the judicial stand-off that occurred in April 2010 after the removal of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Supreme Court Chief Justice by the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, only to have the Chief Justice be reinstated in the post by the President of Pakistan (both politicians are from the dominant party, the Muslim Conference). Another judge of the AJK Supreme Court had filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan about the Chief Justice’s eligibility for that position, by claiming to be the most senior judge. Moreover, the post of Chief Justice was challenged in the AJK Supreme Court by a local lawyer whose petition was dismissed.[[72]](#endnote-72) Demonstrations in the streets of Muzaffarabad protested against what was seen as interference in AJK’s domestic affairs by Pakistan, with protestors insisting that the Supreme Court of Pakistan had no jurisdiction over AJK. The tension during this period was evidence of the sensitive nature of AJK’s relations with Pakistan and Pakistan’s ‘continuous meddling in the AJK affairs’, as some of my interviewees commented privately. During one demonstration in March 2010 along the main Secretariat Road in the government area of Muzaffarabad, I sensed open criticism of Pakistan’s interference in domestic affairs in the demonstrators’ banners and slogans, but they did not mention Pakistan on them.

From the perspective of Muzaffarabad, there are two major spatial inconsistencies in the understanding of Kashmir. One is how the AJK’s relationship with the Kashmir Valley hampers debate on other relations that are vital for the development of this territory, in terms of the potential merger with Pakistan or the attainment of independence. The other, related, inconsistency concerns the preservation of the AJK as a ‘separate’ entity, exemplified in paraphernalia such as the administrative and security controls (border posts) at Kohala, the symbolic representation of the AJK as unrelated to Pakistan, and the tight control of the population and of movement within AJK. In this regard, what characterizes Muzaffarabad is that despite the underlying idea of ‘being a disputed territory’ but at the same time ‘liberated’ (*āzād* or ‘free’), freedom is limited by the impossibility of those living there to decide their own political future and, in many cases, even to talk openly about it.

**Conclusion**

The urban dynamics of Muzaffarabad and Srinagar show the interdependencies created over time by the Kashmir dispute and the centrality of these places in the conflict. Manifestations of the conflict in the urban landscape highlight the problematic role of the state in promoting a dominant narrative that undermines the views of those affected. As in other twin cities separated by Partition, such as Lahore and Amritsar and Mumbai and Hyderabad, Pakistan, developments in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad have impacted each other.[[73]](#endnote-73) However, their relationship is better described as one of ‘dependence’, rather than ‘twin’ in the sense of similar or equal. Srinagar, once an economic centre and a place of refuge for other groups following the closing of borders in the neighbourhood, has exiled part of its population, who sought refuge in Muzaffarabad and other places across the LoC in Pakistan. Others left the Valley’s capital because of the need to find opportunities in India and abroad. Despite the destruction caused by the conflict, Srinagar has experienced an important economic transformation and the influx of money (not necessarily from transparent sources) is constant. However, conflict endures and has the potential, as in 2007, 2010–2011, and 2016, to dominate the urban landscape.

Unrest in the Kashmir Valley affects developments in AJK despite the lack of open confrontation in the society. The Government of Pakistan supports the holding of a plebiscite and, less enthusiastically, the self-determination of Kashmir. However, expressions of dissent against Pakistan and the mobilization of sentiments for independence are not allowed in public, and indeed strong measures are taken to prevent this from occurring. Interviewees in Muzaffarabad are aware that the future of AJK is closely linked to developments across the border. This is not the case in Srinagar, because there is a significant political movement, backed by the society, that challenges both Indian and Pakistani narratives of the dispute. In other words, the Kashmir Valley is more important for the political claims of AJK than vice versa. At the same time, Muzaffarabad, and AJK in general, is economically more vulnerable than Srinagar because of its limited resources and communication links.

In short, the perspectives on the dispute from these two cities show a degree of interdependence between the divided parts due to the conflict dynamics, but not a unitary view of the dispute. The framing of the dispute in each place is a function of a set of interdependencies. While in Azad Kashmir it is the relationship with the Pakistani state and its frontier character, with no dominant group determining political developments—among other issues—that frames the dispute, in Srinagar it is the context of militarization that determines life conditions, apart from the existence of a shared sentiment in the society about the need to ascertain their own political future.

1. Pakistan conducted a census in 2017 (the previous one dates from 1998), but at the time of writing at the end of 2018, no data has been officially published concerning the populations of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the data does circulate on some websites and is in use by NGOs. Data concerning Muzaffarabad’s District population is given in the report ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’ (p. 4) of the Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, Planning and Development Department. The document ‘Damages earthquake-2005’ provided by the State Earthquake Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Agency (SERRA) notes a population of 970,000, of which half or more probably live in the main city. Data for Baltistan was obtained by chance during an interview at an NGO in Skardu (28 June 2018), and is part of the same unpublished census report. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. By the term ‘state actors’ I refer to institutions formally acting on behalf of the state which controls these territories such as the army and intelligence agencies. These state actors do not limit their work to enforcing the rule of law but also create their own framework of operations, including developing their own interests. I consider the state, as defined by Bob Jessop, to be a set of apparatuses whose socially accepted function is to enforce collective binding decisions on the population of a given territorial area in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community (the idea of the state). Jessop, *The State,* 49–51. By ‘normal path of politics’, I refer to the expression of political authority that abides by the rule of law, using instruments of negotiation and through institutionalized channels. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. ## Graham, ‘New military’, 85.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Sassen, ‘Urban capabilities’, 234–236. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Waheed, ‘India’s crackdown in Kashmir’. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Sassen, *Losing Control,* 98. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Mehta, ‘India had the highest’; Human Rights Watch, ‘India: 20 Internet shutdowns’. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. As Michael Skey observes as a critique of Ulrich Beck’s ‘cosmopolitan vision’ of diminishing the importance of the national frame, the view of mobility as a progressive force can be reductive in contexts where activities and interventions are articulated in reference to specific bounded frames—not only national, but ethnic, regional, etc. See Skey, ‘Boundaries and belonging’, 103. The same critique applies to Sheller and Urry’s mobilities’ paradigm, even when this concept embraces contexts of immobility and disconnection. Sheller and Urry, ‘Mobilities paradigm’, 211. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Sheller and Urry, *Mobile Technologies,* 1–5. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Kabir, *Territory of Desire,*15. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Government of India, Census of 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging,* 80–87. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. On the resettlement of Kazakh and Uighur groups in Turkey, see Andrews and Benninhaus, *Ethnic Groups,* 593–595. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Datta, *Uncertain Ground*. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Numerous works on the Kashmir conflict offer details of incidents in Srinagar that provide an idea of the existing context at the time. See, for example, Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict,* 145–173; Bose, *Roots of Conflict,* 95–96, 107–115; Mattoo, ‘Women’s college’. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. One of the cases that did feature in the international news was the Chittisinghpora massacre against the Sikh community on the eve of the American President Bill Clinton’s visit to the subcontinent in March 2000, in which 34 Sikh men were murdered. The circumstances surrounding the responsibility for this tragedy and its motivations have never been fully clarified. See Jabbar, ‘Blood soil’. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. For an overview of this policy in relation to terrorist activities, see Swami, ‘Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir’, 53*.* Also, the respected scholar Madhu Kishwar wrote an ‘intriguing’ (because of its paternalistic tone) piece on the effects of the ‘healing touch’ policy, ‘Best antidote’. For a more critical note on the discourses of healing, see Bhan, *Counterinsurgency,* 8–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. For an understanding of the mobilizations that took place in the summer of 2010 from the perspective of mainly Kashmiri young scholars, journalists, activists, and writers, see: Kak, *Until my Freedom*. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. On the history of Srinagar’s cinemas, see Nakas, ‘Cinema-halls’. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. A personal account of the city and how conflict has altered the urban landscape is provided by Peer, *Curfewed Night*, 108–35. See also, Bhat, ‘Captive city’. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. To acknowledge that there is a class issue means addressing a difference that could undermine the collective values of the armed struggle as ‘Kashmiris’. I have searched for this class element in literature written by Kashmiri authors in English, but only found a reference to this aspect in the short stories by Bashir, *Scattered Souls.* [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. A rare news article about land occupied by the security forces estimates 1.7 lakh *kanals* of unauthorized occupation in the Jammu and Kashmir state (some 85.27 sq. km), where the total land under the army and paramilitary forces is 7.77 lakh *kanals* (around 389.77 sq. km). If the total territory administered by India is 81,954 sq. km., the land under the military and security forces amounts to almost 0.5 percent. Maqbool, ‘1.40 Kanal under unauthorized’.4 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Sassen, ‘Urban capabilities’, 235–236. By ‘non-state powerful actors’, I refer to militant groups supported or operating from the Pakistani side, such as LeT, that have committed terrorist attacks in the Kashmir Valley and in India (such as Mumbai in November 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Gohain, ‘Militarized borderlands’, 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. By ‘boundaries of the dispute’, I was interested in understanding the kind of entity they envisioned and, if that is the case, its territorial boundaries. This aspect is discussed in the Conclusion. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Jenkins, ‘Boundaries and borders’, 12, 25. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Kabir, *Territory of Desire,* 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Mato Bouzas, *India y Pakistán*, 138–139. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. In her journalistic account of the Kashmir conflict based on her friendship with the NC leader Farooq Abdullah, Tavleen Singh observes how the Indian establishment always saw Kashmiris as traitors because of how they questioned the accession of the State to India, but also because of their tilt towards Pakistan, which was basically an expression of anger. Singh, *A Tragedy*, 1, 122, 152. The memoir by A.S. Dulat, the former head of the intelligence service Research & Analysis Wing, also conveys this idea. Dulat and Sinha, *The Vajpayee* *Years.* [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Kishwar, ‘Best antidote’, 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Interview, Srinagar, 12 May 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Kak, ‘Ballot, bullet’, 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. The Kashmiri-based parties contesting elections are mainly the National Conference (NC) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. # See, for example: Mehta, ‘How I was deported’; Masood ‘Lecture by Mridu Rai’. Following the student demonstrations in many towns and cities in the Kashmir Valley in April 2017, the telephone mobile companies were asked to suspend their advanced networks in order to manage the leaking of information about the protests and repression by the security forces. See PTI, ‘Kashmir: students clash’.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. During my field visits I witnessed several violent scenes: youth throwing stones at the paramilitary, and who in return were severely retaliated against; police beating people who were peacefully protesting due to the apparent mismanagement of a high ranking police officer; verbal abuse, and occasional frisking. Some interviewees have mentioned the lack of academic freedom at Kashmir University and other cultural institutions, and the occasional coercion of journalists. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Most of its leaders have political, social, and personal connections to Pakistan and have relatively more facilities to travel there compared to the hazards faced by ordinary families divided across the LoC. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Interview, Srinagar, 31 May 2011. Data on APDP can be found at: www.apdpkashmir.com. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. In October 2013, a well-informed local journalist from Srinagar pointed me toward a new generation of Kashmiris who were engaged in the armed struggle and based in southern Kashmir. Interestingly, he did not consider the members of *Lashkar-e Toiba* who were involved in sporadic attacks at the time as ‘local’. See Shah, ‘Kashmir’s young rebels’. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Naz, ‘Kashmir 2016’; Waheed, ‘India’s crackdown’. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Yusuf, ‘Curfew-like restrictions’, 1, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Agamben*, Homo Sacer,* 189–201. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Specifically, when Agamben addresses the relationship of ‘territory, order and birth’. *Homo Sacer*, 196–201. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. On the existence of torture in Kashmir and the torture centres in Srinagar, see the documentary directed by Jezza Neumann, *Kashmir’s Torture Trail*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNTB\_d3Ifq0. On the idea of the camp, I refer to the relatively bounded character of this territory, which is ruled by an exceptional legal regime, which makes ordinary people vulnerable to the power of the sovereign and unable to see the possibility of a change. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. In an interview on 12 May 2010, Maulana Showkat (who was assassinated in April 2011) indicated that Ahl-e-Hadith was running some 150 schools in the state at the primary and secondary level under the Salafiya Educational Research Trust and was involved in various charity activities. The organization also wanted to build a Transworld Muslim University, which has not materialized at the time of writing. Mr. Showkat claimed that the organization had some 1.5 million members in the Jammu and Kashmir state, which seems a bit exaggerated. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. For a discussion on the meanings of territory (as state territory and hence ‘bounded’), see Elden, *Terror and Territory,* xxv–xxviii; Raffestin, ‘Space, territory’, 135. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. For example, Behera, *State, Identity*; Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow,* Ch. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. One of these professors did refer to a post-poll survey conducted by the Delhi Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) after the assembly elections of 2002 to demonstrate that the context of the Valley was very different from Ladakh or Jammu. The CSDS survey certainly shows the lack of legitimacy of electoral processes in the Kashmir administrative division and the coercion of voters, mainly by the security forces (to participate in the elections) but also by militants (to not take part in the electoral process). Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Development Societies, *Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Election 2002. Findings of A Post-Poll Survey.* I thank the library personnel of the CSDS for locating this material for me. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Interview, Srinagar, 12 July 2012. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. At the time of research, Muzaffarabad was known as one of the three Divisions of AJK, consisting of the districts of Muzaffarabad and Neelum. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. For a historical account, see Mehta, ‘This happened’, 1–41. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Schütte and Kreutzmann, ‘Linking relief’, 6; Wilder, ‘Aid and stability’. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Schütte and Kreutzmann, ‘Linking relief’, 6. See also Jillani, ‘Kashmir earthquake’. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. In fact, the Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the area several times. Naqash, ‘Turkey’s help’. See also Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, ‘Briefing on Reconstruction’. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. After the 2005 earthquake, access to AJK became easy because bureaucratic controls were relaxed. This changed a few years later, partly because the Pakistani authorities wanted to preserve their control over the Kashmir policy and partly because of the use of AJK’s soil by terrorist organizations, which were seen as embarrassing for the international image of Pakistan’s fight against terrorism. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Robinson, *Refugees,* 41–45. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. An example is the *Kashmir Journal of Language Research* published by the Department of English. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. This repealed the 1970 Act, by which the Pakistani Government allowed the introduction of a parliamentary system through the creation of a lower house or Legislative Assembly. It also establishes an Azad Kashmir Council based in Islamabad ‘to perform the functions of Federal set-up, with the same subjects at its disposal, as the Federal Government of Pakistan has vis-a-vis [sic] the Provinces’. Gilani, *Constitutional Development*, x–xi. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Human Rights Watch, ‘“Friends like these”’. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Snedden, *The Untold Story,* 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Elden, *Terror and Territory,* 60–61, 169. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. The United Nations Commissioner for India and Pakistan Josef Korbel located the figure of ‘refugees’ in Pakistan and the Azad territory after the ceasefire of 1 January 1949 at 525,000, of which 150,000 were in Azad territory. Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, 153. Khalid Rahman and Ershad Mahmud identify four waves of migration since 1947. The latest one, between 1990 and 1994, involved some 10,000 people. ‘Kashmiri Refugees’, 43–67. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. For a more detailed work, see Robinson, *Refugees,* 356–365. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. As Robinson has demonstrated, residents of the camps participate in militancy across the LoC and this might be the reason for the restrictions on entering these places imposed by the authorities. Robinson, *Refugees*, 363–364. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. The investigative journalism work by Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy, *The Siege,* provides a fairly accurate idea of the context. See also Evans, ‘Kashmir insurgency’. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. An exception is the anthropological work by Cabeiri deBergh Robinson, *Body of Victim.* [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. I refer to people without ties across the LoC. This excludes the Pahari community in southern AJK and its diaspora in the UK, who have actively mobilized for the Kashmir cause. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. In January 2002 Pakistan banned LeT following US pressure, but the organization continue to function by changing its name and shifting its activity from Pakistan (state) territory to the more constitutionally undefined Azad Kashmir, on the grounds that the ban did not applied there. Zahab, ‘Door of paradise’, 149–150. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. # Shah, ‘Pakistan arrests’.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Khan, *The Interim Constitution,* 61–63. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Snedden, *Untold Story,* 109–110. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Human Rights Watch, ‘“Friends like these”’. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Mahmud, ‘Judicial crisis’. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Talbot, *Divided Cities*; Aggarwal, *Sindh: Stories.* [↑](#endnote-ref-73)