5

The Line... the People

In this chapter I discuss border space transformations near the LoC. I argue that the ambivalent legal nature of the LoC as a border, rather than preserving the status quo, is an essential part of this transformative activity. The limited opening of the LoC in 2005 for separated families and the exchange of goods was framed as part of a broader understanding by the governments of India and Pakistan that viewing borders as barriers is no longer sustainable because of the pressure of globalization. However, this mobility is still ‘filtered’ through bureaucratic procedures and new technologies of surveillance and control. I maintain that the opening of crossing points is itself a bordering process, by which the two states attempt to gain control over the edges of their polity where state sovereignty is uncertain. These edges are currently held through exceptional legal means and authoritarian politics, but the aim is to incorporate them into the rest of the state’s territory through economic and infrastructural interventions. Unable to negotiate the political dissent that arises in such disputed territories, the state attempts to ‘normalize’ life there by making them, materially and symbolically, into ‘normal’ state spaces.

**The opening of the LoC**

On 7 April 2005, the inauguration—amid great security—of a fortnightly bus service linking Srinagar and Muzaffarabad symbolized the first ‘formal’ opening of the LoC since 1949.[[1]](#endnote-1) This initiative was based on the premise that increasing interaction between the divided territories would improve people’s life conditions and reduce support for violence.[[2]](#endnote-2) Such confidence-building measures (CBMs) became a relatively popular instrument for conflict management and peace-building processes in the 1990s, and have played an important role in nuclear diplomacy in South Asia. They are an instrument of what Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Susanne Jonas have termed ‘neoliberal peace’: a process designed ‘to put in place the institutional forms of a peaceful society without bothering about the question of social justice.’[[3]](#endnote-3) In the case of Kashmir, this can be explained by the fact that regulated mobility and the facilitation of economic exchange would favour the creation of a climate of confidence and contribute towards changing the conflict.

CBMs are framed by a persistent understanding of international security based on the realist paradigm: the disposition of states (or parties) toward war and the need to have a minimum agreement in place to end the pattern of damage and destruction. In Kashmir, CBMs aim to create favourable conditions for the solution of the conflict in the future by managing interventions in the present. However, this logic implies extending the state of exception until India and Pakistan can properly incorporate the territories as ‘normal’ state spaces. CBM initiatives are neither politically neutral nor implemented in a vacuum, because they shift the debate from the sovereign character of Kashmir (the political settlement of all disputed territories) to the sovereign control (incorporation) of territories that are already administered by the respective states. Rather than putting the question of sovereignty of the disputed areas on hold, CBMs recognize a particular state of affairs. In the case of Kashmir, this is not that different from what John Agnew describes as the sovereign game for which sovereignty is ‘the result of a system of interdependence between states in which it is the recognition (with a nod and a wink) by other states of each state's sovereignty that keeps the entire system afloat.’[[4]](#endnote-4) In other words, it is the recreation and continuation of the state system. In this context, the opening of borders implies the normalization of state space in territories whose state sovereignty is uncertain. Therefore, the opening of the LoC, with its attached rules and regulations allowing the movement of people and goods, represents a territorialization process that aims to control the murky edges of the state in a context of ‘political normality’, rather a deterritorialization in which geographic territory loses its importance.

The India–Pakistan dialogue process was conceived with specific ideas about the regional space. First of all, the opening of the LoC is part of a larger context resulting from lobbying activities by groups in both countries, part of what is known as Track Two diplomacy, and is mainly based on the views of foreign policy bureaucrats, analysts, and advisors in India who have taken a new approach to Pakistan.[[5]](#endnote-5) In their view, conflict in the region cannot last forever and constitutes a burden on India’s foreign policy. This coincides with the proposal by the former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf of ‘making borders irrelevant’.[[6]](#endnote-6) Second, making the border a non-issue—‘irrelevant’—shifts the debate on the disputed character of these territories (which is related to the question of social justice) to an issue of political normalization (related to questions of governmentality and governance). Third, if the LoC is no longer relevant, this means that the border will move somewhere else; that differentiation can be expressed in other non-territorial terms such as in the constant exercise of surveillance and control over people and by interventions in the border territories with the aim of transforming their conflict character. Relatedly, the LoC (as the border) becomes the channel by which the border space, the murky edges, is incorporated through economic processes into the realm of the state. Filtering (who and what can cross the border) and spatial fragmentation (into different legal regimes) become necessary means to sustain the process.

Thus, the initial ‘de-freezing’ of the LoC by promoting the movement of people and goods is aimed at creating a base in society that supports the dialogue process. Society in general in AJK and the Kashmir Valley did not oppose these initiatives, but this cannot necessarily be interpreted as backing of the dialogue process. The reason for this is that the LoC per se is not the main bone of contention for those demanding a political solution for the fate of their territories.[[7]](#endnote-7) It does not play a central role for those who are seeking justice (relatives of disappeared, prisoners, etc.), or for those who are demanding political freedom and the end of militarization. The question of opening the LoC shifts attention from the political issue to the question of the incorporation of the disputed territories into the respective states—a change that denies the right of dissent to those groups who are at odds with the state. This reading of the question can be illustrated with the cases I studied at local level: the movement of people and the movement of goods.

*A: Mobility of People*

Until 2017, mobility across the LoC via the bus services—buses were exchanged at the border — was quite a restricted affair. Travel was only allowed for divided families who were able to prove cross-border relationships, and this did not apply to those working in government positions or people who had been displaced from the Kashmir Valley after 1990.[[8]](#endnote-8) Those wishing to travel on the buses first needed to go through a lengthy application procedure to obtain clearance from the authorities. The initial waiting period was two years, but this significantly shortened to a few months around September 2008, when the fortnightly service started to operate on a weekly basis to accommodate the demand. However, interruptions occurred from time to time owing to unexpected catastrophes (the 2005 earthquake and the 2014 floods), periods of political tension between India and Pakistan (e.g., after the Mumbai attacks in November 2008) and mass unrest in the Valley (e.g., in the summer of 2016). Personal impressions gathered through testimonies during my visit in November 2014 indicate that the initiative had not made any significant inroads beyond improving the possibility of separated families to meet. In general, those I spoke to in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad saw the measure as only concerning a specific group, unrelated to the larger political problem.

According to data from the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, between 2005 and 31 December 2017 some 34,361 passengers had travelled across the LoC, mostly from the Kashmir Valley to AJK.[[9]](#endnote-9) This seems like a small figure considering that the number of divided families in these territories may amount to several hundred thousand. In addition, there are some 30,000 displaced people in AJK, mostly Paharis, who crossed the LoC after 1990 but cannot return to their former homes because the Indian Government suspects them to have been involved in militancy.[[10]](#endnote-10) A noticeable group of militants who have given up fighting and are now stranded in AJK and Pakistan are also barred from travelling on the buses. These latter return to the Kashmir Valley mostly via Nepal. They take a flight to the Himalayan capital, and once there they enter India by road. Sometimes they are detained by the police to check their identities, after which they are released.[[11]](#endnote-11) This seems to indicate that there is a tacit agreement between the Indian and Pakistani authorities after the passing of a resolution supporting the return of former militants by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in 2010. The way the former militants are returning to their homes also illustrates how India and Pakistan are carefully managing the symbolic aspect of the conflict to address the legal problem these men pose as combatants. They are barred from travelling back across the LoC or via a direct flight from Pakistan to India, a fact which amounts to a non-recognition of their lives’ trajectories, in particular, their first crossing of the LoC from the Valley into AJK to receive arms training.

The tight control exercised over potential bus passengers and the truck services is based on security concerns. Militant groups who oppose the dialogue process tried to sabotage the bus on its very first day in Srinagar in 2005, because they perceived the initiative to be undermining the main cause of the conflict. Concern over security can also be seen in how travel is handled at the departure and arrival points in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Upon recommendations from friends and interviewees, I opted not to visit the arrival/departure place in Srinagar, which is located in a government area. However, I did observe the green and yellow buses arriving in and departing from the restricted government area in Muzaffarabad in September 2009 and March 2010. Unlike the typical bustling bus stations in the region, travel in the cross-LoC buses occurred almost as a secret affair in government building complexes. The scene was far from normal, although no exceptional security measures were taken except for the presence of a few armed police. Only a few passengers’ relatives showed up and no other locals were present.[[12]](#endnote-12) This was rather unusual owing to the often-spontaneous public curiosity in South Asian societies, and the normal courtesy whereby large family gatherings meet and say goodbye to relatives.

I heard mixed reports during my informal talks with passengers on the spot in Muzaffarabad. On the first occasion, in September 2009, people from the Valley had arrived in AJK; on the second, in March 2010, those from the Valley were returning after a stay in AJK. Some of the passengers, who were elderly, had themselves suffered separation, while in a significant number of cases the visitors were descendants of divided families. All of them expressed happiness to see their relatives across the LoC, but when I asked about their impressions about how they saw the Kashmir Valley compared with AJK and vice versa, I noticed that criticism extended to both sides. Militarization in the Kashmir Valley and the lack of freedom in AJK were mentioned, while everyone recognized that the Valley was economically more developed than AJK.

With a few exceptions, most of the passengers I talked with on the spot, at a distance from the police presence, were middle-aged men. What struck me was that they seemed to be fairly open in expressing their views. I had a longer conversation with a man from Sopore, probably in his mid-sixties, who had just arrived. His son-in-law had come to pick him up. He had travelled to AJK on four previous occasions, but this was the first time on the cross-LoC bus. Earlier, he had married his daughter to an AJK resident from Muzaffarabad (a relative of Kashmiri origin). The purpose of the visit was to see her daughter and her family, who were residing in Lahore, having moved there from AJK because of economic opportunities. He said that despite the better economic situation in the Valley (he owned a shop), life conditions were very hard because of the presence of military forces who committed ‘atrocities’ against people. For this reason, he was of the view that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan.

Although opportunities for divided families to meet via air travel or by land routes across the Lahore border have been restricted in the past, there have been cases of cross-border marriages, normally involving women from the Valley who move to their husbands’ places in AJK and Pakistan. Numbers are not known, but it seems this phenomenon has increased after the establishment of the cross-LoC bus services. The existence of this transport has facilitated the re-enactment of ties among those separated by creating a sort of normality in their lives. An interviewee from Uri who was living in Srinagar and employed in the administration pointed out that he had travelled to Muzaffarabad in 2007 and arranged his daughter’s marriage there. Before moving to Srinagar, he had travelled to AJK simply by crossing the border because people from the border area ‘had arrangements’. However, he admitted that this possibility later became very risky, so he had gone via Lahore to AJK for his daughter’s wedding. At the time of our meeting, the daughter was about to return on the bus to deliver her child in her family home. Marriages show the renewal of ties across the border which had been interrupted by decades of forced separation.

Despite these family stories of re-encounter, the impact of the cross-LoC buses on transforming the conflict context is marginal, particularly in the Kashmir Valley. Other issues of social justice are more pressing there and have been largely ignored. In other words, the division created by the LoC is one aspect of the conflict, but there is also the question of the victims, including those who have been tortured, have disappeared, or are imprisoned in Indian jails. Little is known about violence and repression in AJK because the ‘known conflict’ has taken place mostly in the Kashmir Valley. The bus services ameliorate the situation of those who have been separated, but the modality under which they operate has little potential to influence the political context. Moreover, the nationalist platform of the Hurriyat, though not opposing this mobility on humanitarian grounds, considers the initiative to ‘ha[ve] nothing to do with the political issue’, as Yasin Malik pointed out.[[13]](#endnote-13) Objections to cross-LoC mobility were mentioned in Muzaffarabad on the grounds that this ‘legal’ movement legitimized the LoC as a border and diluted the political problem.

In addition, mobility across the LoC is denied to those who moved across since the insurgency began in the 1990s and the surrendered militants stranded in AJK and Pakistan, as mentioned above. The non-recognition of these two groups relates to the political problem they represent for both states: the role of Pakistan in supporting and manipulating insurgent groups, and India’s interest in not addressing the existence of a force at odds with the state. Interestingly, both states agreed not to make these two groups visible in the cross-LoC mobility because they are a reminder of the existence of a deep disagreement. The filtering character of the LoC is representative of a new moment, across which divided families and goods can meet or be exchanged, but where dubious state subjects such as militants should return to their homes without leaving a trace, as if nothing had happened in the last two and a half decades. Unlike neighbouring non-disputed border contexts (such as the Nepal–Tibetan border) where there is an increasing recognition of borderlands as distinct areas in legal terms, in the vicinity of the LoC there is a sanctioning of a discriminated mobility proper of normal state borders, on the basis of what normal state borders may or may not allow.[[14]](#endnote-14)

*B. Mobility of goods: The case of cross-LoC trade*

From October 2008, trade among the divided parts of the Kashmir Valley and AJK was allowed within a restricted context. Two border posts were opened at Chakothi–Salamabad (linking the Kashmir Valley and Muzaffarabad areas) and Tratinote–Chakan Da Bagh (connecting Poonch and Rawalakot in central AJK). The respective Chambers of Commerce in Muzaffarabad and Srinagar became involved in the process as intermediaries with political negotiators, but only some of their members participated in the trade. This exchange occurred in a similar manner to the movement of people: trucks from each side were only allowed up to the border, where the commodities were offloaded and reloaded into trucks from the opposite side to continue the journey. Neither buses nor trucks have yet crossed the LoC (as of June 2017). As a foreigner, I could not access these restricted areas, but I gained an insight into the cross-LoC trade, mostly about the Chakothi–Salamabad route, from interviews with traders conducted in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad and newspapers and NGO reports dealing with the subject.

The characteristics of the cross-LoC trade are not the same as the general India–Pakistan commercial exchange, but they share similarities in the sense that the trading partners have some family relationship or knowledge of each other.[[15]](#endnote-15) In both cases the exchange is limited to twenty-one products, but the cross-LoC trade is a barter trade—that is, a trade in kind—and is excluded from the general taxation that applies to India–Pakistan trade.[[16]](#endnote-16)

It was in 2010 that I first interviewed Mr. Dar, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce, at the Chamber’s office in Srinagar; this association includes traders, exporters, and houseboat owners, and has a total of 800 members.[[17]](#endnote-17) The Chamber was first constituted in 1924, and during our meeting Mr. Dar proudly showed me a picture of the first members hanging on the wall. He pointed out a couple of them, explaining they were businessmen from places now located in AJK, and also referred to the fact that before 1947 there was a branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank in Muzaffarabad. This underscored the past regional connections when both areas were part of the same political entity, as opposed to the current situation characterized by a lack of communication facilities between AJK and the Valley. The Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Dar pointed out, played the role of facilitator in the cross-LoC exchange by forwarding suggestions to the Indian Government, but it was not involved as a party in the process. In his view, the cross-LoC trade was a ‘symbolic activity’ meant ‘to alleviate suffering’ and a ‘proof of good will’, but had nothing to do with the ‘Kashmir issue’.

In 2008–2015, the cross-LoC trade was worth some US$ 400 million total (including exports and imports in both directions under the barter system), whereas the volume of trade between India–Pakistan in 2011 alone was over US$ 1900 million.[[18]](#endnote-18) The cross-LoC traders I met in Srinagar described the activity as a positive experience, despite the many hurdles. These included the absence of currency and bank services, the lack of telephone facilities in Indian Kashmir that allowed calling the Pakistani side, and the lack of border infrastructures to store and preserve goods. These issues, they said, were preventing the development of this exchange. Traders involved saw themselves as carrying out an activity that was not really about making profit but was instead aimed at the betterment of the general social and political climate. They underlined this by referring to the fact that exchanges were not in cash but in kind, and for this ‘trust’ was needed. Although they also labelled their activity as ‘symbolic’ and were wary about acknowledging its profitable character, economic differences and the lower prices of some commodities in AJK and Pakistan were advantageous for them. This notwithstanding, the practical regulations of this trade and the perceptions that the traders (at least those I interviewed) have about it differ slightly from the more positive considerations provided by the reports of some NGOs, pro-government bureaucrats, and those involved in two-track diplomacy between India and Pakistan.[[19]](#endnote-19)

The often-mentioned ‘symbolic’ character of trade refers to its regulatory aspects, the norms and specific activities carried out by the traders themselves, as well as its altruistic or non-economic value. These aspects are strongly connected with the ambivalence about the spatial dimension of the LoC. Mr. Dar considered the cross-LoC trade to be intra-Kashmir or ‘domestic trade’ and unrelated to the resolution of the ‘Kashmir issue’, in the sense that those participating in these activities had no particular political agenda except doing ‘business’. But then, if their activity was seen as mainly ‘symbolic’ in character, was it not inherently part of a broader agenda than merely doing business? Mr. Dar commented on the potential of this trade and the prospects for the future: in an improved scenario, he said the Kashmir Valley would be re-connected to the Central Asian trade networks as in the past, instead of depending on Indian trade alone. In a way, LoC traders could be considered investors, who were expecting future benefits.

As of November 2014, cross-LoC commodities were being exchanged at the LoC transit zone, and travellers also had to change buses because vehicles were not allowed to cross. The regulation of this mobility of bodies and goods against the immobility of the infrastructure (buses and trucks) can be related to uncertainty about the border space. This filtering of mobility can be regarded as an attempt by the states to exercise control over territory in a global context in which complete ‘legal’ absence of cross-border relations between states cannot be sustained.[[20]](#endnote-20) Interaction can occur only once the separation imposed by the border space has been clearly stated. This filtering of mobility is about the ‘normalization’ of the border space as a space of separation in which a degree of ‘legal’ interaction is permitted between the divided parts, but this ‘normalization’ undermines local struggles that have a potentially divisive nature.

During an interview on the AJK side, in Muzaffarabad, a Pakistani retired brigadier who was responsible for the cross-LoC trade in AJK described the opportunities created by the cross-LoC exchanges. He said that the landscape was changing because shops and tea stalls had been opened along the route to Chakothi, whereas before there was nothing there. This director, who provided information on the details of the cross-LoC agreement, encouraged me to note down his positive view. He appealed to the humanitarian and economic aspect of the initiatives but avoided commenting on the political consequences. In his view, the cross-LoC activity was the result of an India–Pakistan agreement that benefited the AJK border area. However, he did not talk about what this implied for the relationship of AJK with Pakistan, given its semi-independent character. In his role as a Pakistani officer—and Pakistan is responsible for AJK’s foreign affairs—his understanding of cross-LoC trade was more as a ‘foreign’ matter than a ‘domestic’ one.

This is not a minor issue, because of its political consequences and also because it preoccupies some members of the business community in Muzaffarabad. While some agreed to participate in this exchange activity, several traders I met raised objections about the manner in which the trade was being conducted. In their view, bureaucratic procedures such as the need to stop at the border for controls, to exchange goods and change buses, instead of continuing the journey straight away, undermined the political aspirations of AJK nationalism (in terms of defending their political reunion with the Kashmir Valley) and ‘diluted the sixty-year-old conflict’. These views were expressed on condition of anonymity, and although it is not clear how relevant they are in AJK society they show the existence of a view that is critical of the dialogue process. A businessman of Kashmiri origin living in Muzaffarabad observed that the bureaucratic conditions under which this trade was carried out meant it could not be considered domestic, in the sense of an intra-Kashmir trade. He concluded: ‘You have to stick to the border regulations. It is not free.’[[21]](#endnote-21) This man, probably in his early sixties, had no objections to the bus services—he confessed that he was applying to visit his family in the Kashmir Valley—but was of the view that the cross-LoC trade was a step toward the recognition of the LoC as a border. This was not just his own view, he clarified, but was a feeling shared by a number of people in AJK. Despite this opposition to the LoC trade because of its lack of freedom, he conceded that it was an opportunity for some because of the precarious economic position of AJK, a landlocked territory without significant economic resources.

To understand this, it is important to mention that AJK’s economy depends on Pakistan.[[22]](#endnote-22) As a mountainous region, fertile soil for agriculture is limited and possibilities for industrial development are scarce. Moreover, AJK’s important hydroelectric resources are under the control of Pakistan because they are essential for the country.[[23]](#endnote-23) One of AJK’s main sources of income is remittances from diaspora communities in the UK (mostly from those who originated in the area of Mirpur in the south), AJK migrants to the Gulf (mostly from the northern and central parts), and from the seasonal migration to other parts of Pakistan.[[24]](#endnote-24) According to Nissar Hamdani, professor of economics at AJK University, investment in the region is discouraged by political uncertainty, although there is scope to establish some medium-sized industries.[[25]](#endnote-25) AJK is poorly connected to the north and south; in fact, a significant volume of economic activity between Muzaffarabad and Mirpur takes place via Rawalpindi (proper Pakistan territory), as there are not better direct connections between the two cities through AJK territory. In this context, the so-called intra-Kashmir trade appears to be a good opportunity even though it is regulated by the Pakistani authorities.

During an interview with Mr. Bukhari, an entrepreneur in the food sector participating in the cross-LoC trade, he pointed out that despite its limitations this exchange was good for the people of AJK, and admitted that if conditions improved more people would join it.[[26]](#endnote-26) This has to do with the fact that while in the Kashmir Valley the cross-LoC trade is seen primarily as symbolic in character, in Muzaffarabad it is perceived as an economic activity that can benefit the area, and probably limit its dependence on Pakistan. Moreover, unlike the Kashmir Valley, the bulk of the products traded from AJK are not locally produced because they come from Pakistan. Indeed, traders from Muzaffarabad complained about the toll of 20 rupees (in 2010) they had to pay each time the loaded trucks crossed the Pakistan–AJK border. As of November 2014, cross-LoC trade continued despite the lack of addressal of traders’ demands for currency and banking facilities and improvements to the border infrastructure.

The traders must be state subjects, but such a status involves several possibilities.[[27]](#endnote-27) Some of the traders I met have both Kashmiri and Pakistani identity cards, as they have residences in AJK and in Pakistan. Others are involved in the activity with Pakistani nationals as partners, a common practice of businesses in AJK because Pakistani citizens cannot buy property there. This is interesting because the initial figuration of the LoC economic exchange, conceived for those in the divided parts (as state subjects) and thereby legally attached to a place (as residents of a ‘disputed’ territory), is being subverted by informal practices of mobility (AJK residents having Pakistani partners, the Kashmir Valley’s residents becoming middlemen for Sikh traders in the cross-LoC trade) and the mobility of commodities (AJK traders get the products they trade from Pakistan). Hence, what was initially framed as a political and economic initiative to induce change and create trust in a specific ‘contained’ territory is no longer confined to that boundary.

In reality, the Kashmir Valley is trading with Pakistan. This can be seen as a consolation prize for the Pakistani authorities, in the sense that although Pakistan is not in control of the Valley (territory), the country still benefits from this economic exchange. This trade also situates the Kashmir Valley in an advantageous position to gain access to a broader market, despite the limited list of permitted items for trade. However, the situation is particularly problematic AJK supporters of an independent Kashmir, who see in the practice of cross-border trade a way to legitimize the LoC as a border, and thereby to reinforce separation (from the Indian side) and increase the AJK’s dependence on Pakistan with the possibility of its ultimate absorption by that state.

*C. Mobility and fixation: transformations of the border space*

Cross-border trade is considered a symbolic activity by those involved in it because the products are not freely exchanged in a ‘intra-Kashmiri’ space. The monitored movement of people and goods constitutes part of the ‘normal regular activities’ between states, and the bureaucratic processes attached to this movement imply aspects of border fixation. This transformation has an ideological character because it is a selective process by which movement across is forbidden to ‘political subjects’—such as former militants or divided families who have moved to the Pakistani side since 1990—as they are reminders of the ‘disputed condition’ of the border. Kashmiri nationalist groups have no say in this process. Moreover, no measures have been implemented to address the human rights situation, either in AJK or in the Kashmir Valley. In other words, the transformation of the border space through economic initiatives and the good-will cases of reuniting divided families takes place in a context of apparent immobility concerning the political conditions of these territories. Under different legal arrangements, both AJK and the Kashmir Valley continue to be administered under a state of exception.

The relationship of the border’s filtering character with its fixity can also be examined as part of a wider international context, for example from the perspective of the Indian Government, which attempts to regulate the mobility of Kashmiris as Indians. For example, China maintains that Kashmir is a disputed territory, and for this reason Kashmiris travelling to China receive a separate visa stapled into their passports. The Indian Government has protested this practice.[[28]](#endnote-28) The fixation of borders is an attempt to control the edges—the border of the state or the passport control at airports, among others—but does not necessarily mean attempts towards inclusion are made as signs of statehood. The fixing of the LoC is accompanied, at least on the Indian side, by ‘normalization’ processes that attempt to turn the ‘conflicted’ Kashmir Valley into a normal part of the Indian state. For a section of AJK traders, participation in cross-LoC trade is not a neutral activity because it has consequences for the political future of AJK. As a semi-independent territory, AJK as a distinct political space is shrinking in favour of a merger with Pakistan. Hence, the opening of the border poses a political dilemma for those advocating the creation of a different political setting.

**Border immobilities: separation across Kargil (Ladakh) and Baltistan**

While the India–Pakistan dialogue allowed a limited exchange across the Kashmir Valley and AJK, this did not extend to Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh. The same LoC divides these other territories, but the local context differs substantially from that of the Valley and AJK. First, the border inhabitants of Baltistan and Kargil have not challenged the role of the LoC as a border, but they still disagree with the impossibility of interaction across it. Second, the establishment of the LoC in 1949 had the greatest impact on the new border districts, compared with more distant areas such as Hunza, Leh area or Jammu, for example.

Divided families have demanded the opening of the road between Skardu and Kargil to facilitate exchanges between villages on both sides and allow access to the neighbouring areas.[[29]](#endnote-29) There are a few thousand divided families, some of living less than 50 kilometres from each other, who can only meet after going through lengthy applications and travelling to the other side through the distant Wagah–Attari land route (flights are normally expensive and unaffordable for all but a few).[[30]](#endnote-30) Others choose to meet in third-party countries such as Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, often while performing religious pilgrimages. Although there are a few local activists and politicians on both sides putting pressure on their respective governments to address their case, at the time of writing (2018) India and Pakistan have not reached an agreement.

The forced separation of Baltistan and Ladakh poses an interesting case of border politics in relation to the Kashmir dispute. India and Pakistan have not agreed to follow steps like the cross-LoC initiatives between the Kashmir Valley and AJK along this border tract, despite the fact that the measure could gain more popular support there. The reason seems to be the existence of an open border dispute at the LoC’s easternmost point: the struggle for the Siachen glacier.[[31]](#endnote-31) This dispute is the result of the development of modern technologies that facilitate the conquest of what was previously no man’s land: in the Karachi Agreement of 1949 neither India nor Pakistan bothered with the territory beyond the map coordinate NJ9842, which should continue to the Chinese border. Controlled by India since 1984 and contested by Pakistan, military presence in this inhospitable area is only possible through the use of sophisticated equipment, although still at a high cost of human life such as occurred in April 2012, when some 129 Pakistani soldiers and eleven civilians died in an avalanche.[[32]](#endnote-32) The fight over the Siachen glacier has been often mentioned by my interlocutors from the border areas of Ladakh as the main obstacle to the normalization of cross-border relations.

There is also an economic (and ideological) component that should not be underestimated. My interlocutors in Baltistan indicated that Pakistan did not want to open the LoC due to the possibility of adverse consequences for Baltistan, a territory which Pakistan’s seeks to protect (securitize). Fears were expressed that if the border were opened Indian tourists would literally flood this economically weak region, and since the tourists would be better off and have different cultural values this tourism would have adverse effects on the society. These fears are connected with the common suspicion that India’s negative influences are aimed at destroying Pakistan.[[33]](#endnote-33) This ideological aspect undermines more real preoccupations connected with the economic imbalance of Gilgit-Baltistan with respect to the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. Moreover, China’s activities and interests in Pakistan are a source of concern for India, and a number of people I spoke with believe that if the border were opened the entire region could be destabilized. Members of the business community in Baltistan are aware of this broader context and maintain that it negatively affects the prospects of opening the LoC. Owing to the economic stagnation of Baltistan, which became more acute after 2001 because of diminishing of tourism in the region (one of the main sources of income), the Indian side of the LoC is seen as offering the greatest opportunities for local businessmen. As a tour operator from Skardu with experience on cultural tourism packages to northern Pakistan and Central Asia commented:

We know that many Indian tourists go to Ladakh and even now they travel up to Turtuk. So if the border were opened they could also come here and see this part. It will generate employment and we can benefit from it. The Gilgitis are benefiting from businesses with China. They are very clever and we cannot compete with them. It is too far and costly. Then why the government [of Pakistan] does not allow our region to develop? We want the same and the only reachable area we have is toward the south. The road is very good. We have an airport.[[34]](#endnote-34)

At the same time, people are concerned about the potential deterioration of security and increase in sectarian violence in Pakistan, given the marginal and landlocked position of Baltistan. There are fears that the sectarian violence in Gilgit could spread to Baltistan, which at the time of writing in 2018 is relatively peaceful, and this could cause further instability at the border..[[35]](#endnote-35) A well-educated teacher from Skardu, himself a Shia, who was critical of the Shia religious leadership in Baltistan and also considered the Shias of Gilgit as being intolerant, manifested disillusion about the present context in the following terms:

In India people live together regardless of their faith and we know about the life conditions of Shias in Kargil. They are neither marginalized nor prosecuted. The Indian state treats them well. However, you see how the situation is here. Now we had this incident [an attack on a bus along the KKH targeting Shia passengers] and things can turn worse. If we [Shias] here in Baltistan are killed, nobody would care about it. You know, we are very few. Who will defend us?[[36]](#endnote-36)

These broader geostrategic, economic, and religious issues are absent in attempts to address the border question in AJK and the Kashmir Valley. Although the AJK is economically dependent on Pakistan, it is not as marginal as Baltistan in terms of its proximity and connectivity to large urban centres. While the opening of the LoC connects AJK with the Kashmir Valley and Jammu, the LoC between Baltistan and Ladakh raises other concerns because of the proximity of China and the strategic character of the KKH, which links it with Pakistan. Moreover, violence against the Shia minority is almost non-existent in AJK and the Kashmir Valley. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the border context in Baltistan–Ladakh is different from that of the Valley and AJK; despite the LoC being the same in the two areas, it separates a different kind of space.

The military appears to be an important actor in deciding the border’s fate because of its own interests. A high-ranking bureaucrat of the Gilgit-Baltistan administration based in Islamabad admitted with a gesture during our meeting that the military was opposing the move.[[37]](#endnote-37) This officer also explained how the legal and economic status of the region was controlled from Islamabad.[[38]](#endnote-38) Unlike the Kashmir Valley and AJK, where the dispute is about moving (by military means) the LoC or transforming it into an open border, in Ladakh and Baltistan it is about keeping control of already-held territory. This can be best illustrated in the case of the Siachen glacier, but it is also evident in the monitoring of sparsely populated villages and mountain peaks such as in the Chorbat La region.

Although it is impossible to sustain the existence of unconquered land—or, as noted by Scott, ‘non-state space’—in the twenty-first century, Baltistan and Ladakh resemble frontier areas where state control is marginal, except for the military presence. They have less importance for state integration because of their rural and sparsely populated condition, their relative remoteness and disconnection, and the lack of significant resources to exploit. Understandings of state space attach a great importance to territory as an essentially populated area, as an object and means of governance.[[39]](#endnote-39) Whereas episodes of army confrontation in the Kashmir Valley and AJK quickly receive international attention, confrontation in Baltistan and Ladakh rarely makes headlines.

From the perspective of those affected, the main issue in Baltistan and Ladakh concerns separation rather than the legal status of the LoC: people do not challenge the border, but do demand it be opened. On both sides are groups that want their areas to be properly incorporated into either Pakistan or India, although for the latter the control of these border territories is mainly strategic, in terms of military control and access to neighbouring regions. Military control on behalf of both countries of geographical features such as mountain peaks and glaciers is part of ‘gaining access’ and is framed as a competition between the two. This competition is reminiscent of a sort of conquest, of who possesses control over the mountain peaks, the glaciers, and the rivers. The geostrategic context as defined by state institutions (government, military, and bureaucrats) and other actors (strategic analysts, pressure groups) influences decisions about patterns of local movement. In this respect, socio-spatial imaginaries, as discursive phenomena that represent space for purposes of the mobilization of territory, substantiate state intervention by creating a context of uncertainty that needs to be managed.[[40]](#endnote-40)

**Border work: normalizing the state space**

From an international perspective, the image of people travelling across the LoC and goods being exchanged at what is known as the ‘world’s most dangerous border’ (see Chapter 2) is a powerful one. However, the situation on the ground shows a more ambivalent picture about the transformation of the border. Nationalist groups in the Kashmir Valley represented by the Hurriyat platform and AJK nationalist groups contest the legitimacy of the LoC. This is shared by sections of the society in the Valley and AJK.[[41]](#endnote-41) At the same time, non-recognition of the LoC challenges the ambivalent status of ‘Indian Kashmir’ as an integral part of the Indian state. Moreover, the way the cross-LoC mobility of divided families and trade unfolds indicates the sensibilities that are emerging about the border space. As mentioned above, the implementation of a bureaucracy and technology to regulate the border exchange, along with fencing of the LoC from India (to keep threats away), helps sustain the idea that the LoC is becoming a normal border, despite continued differences. This idea of normality does not apply to the border area between Baltistan and Kargil, where strong disagreements about the control of some parts of the territory persist.

The border is becoming more difficult to cross for those who have been doing it ‘illegally’ for decades, while only those who have gone through the necessary bureaucratic procedures and possess the appropriate permits and identification documents are permitted to cross legally. This filtering character reminds us of what Mezzadra and Neilson conceptualize as ‘differential inclusion’, that is, the ‘means for describing and analyzing how inclusion in a sphere, society, or realm can be subject to varying degrees of subordination rule, discrimination, and segmentation.’[[42]](#endnote-42) Differential inclusion is a ‘border method’ of administering through the interplay of humanness (of divided families allowed to meet and traders conducting symbolic trade) and processes of securitization (reflected in fencing and regulation). It denotes a form of governance operating as a new rationality, a strategy of border institutionalization by agents of the state—army, border officials, police administration—to control these territories in new ways.[[43]](#endnote-43) Since inter-state conflict and hostility is no longer sustainable, and dissent in these territories has not been channelled by democratic or more inclusive processes (in either AJK or the Kashmir Valley), India and Pakistan seek to gain control of these areas through non-military means that imply more sophisticated techniques of control. Gradually, the ambivalent and ‘unruly’ border space is being subsumed into the realm of the state space. This does not only affect the interventions that specifically concern the LoC, but also results in the transformation of the disputed character of these territories. The Indian and Pakistani sides of the Kashmir-disputed territories use different strategies to approach this process.

*The ‘return to normalcy’ and ‘normalization’ policy in Indian Kashmir*

Unlike in Pakistan, Indian governments have not shown much interest in claiming AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, except for the continued depiction of these territories as part of India on maps.[[44]](#endnote-44) Sporadic outbursts by chauvinist Hindu politicians that have gained prominence in the second decade of the twenty-first century can be seen more as an irritating issue than a real demand. India has never initiated a major military operation across the border, although it has occasionally incited border tensions for political purposes at home, such as during the serious border clashes in 2013, and it is held responsible for the increasing border tension since the summer of 2016 in which its army even allegedly crossed the LoC.[[45]](#endnote-45)

However, the Indian state has pursued a strategy of incorporating Kashmir into the realm of the Indian nation through the gradual transformation of the constitutional and legal status of the region, making it economically dependent on India and melting Kashmir’s diversity into the secular Nehruvian ideal of nationhood. Since the post-Partition period, central governments in Delhi have sought to intervene in Kashmir’s domestic affairs, eroding the autonomy of the state as granted by the Indian Constitution, undermining its political party system, and using repressive policies to suppress local discontent. The consequences of this fragmentation are well known, as they gave way to armed conflict during the 1990s.

In the mid-2000s, a new political discourse on Kashmir promoted by the then-BJP-led government in Delhi and amplified by the mainstream media, both Indian and abroad, began to gain significance: the position held that in Kashmir there was a gradual ‘return to normalcy’ that could be exemplified by the increasing number of tourists visiting the Valley.[[46]](#endnote-46) This socio-spatial discourse referred to a new context for the Valley in which, with the diminution of violence, there was a general perceived improvement in life conditions.[[47]](#endnote-47) This latter was observed in the resumption of economic activities previously affected by the periodic *hartals* (closing down of shops and businesses). Communications with the rest of India improved and institutions began to resume activities, in contrast to the paralysis they suffered during the violence (this including the university, hospitals, and sections of the state administration). The celebration of regular electoral processes in the state also helped convey this idea of normality. This new context claimed by the authorities, however, is intended to turn a blind eye on the consequences of more than a decade of violence perpetrated by the security forces that includes, among others, rape and torture, disappearances, and mass graves.

In this new narrative, tourism became the main indicator of normalization. Tourists (including religious pilgrims) to the Kashmir Valley have increased from some 200,000 in 2003 to more than 1,300,000 in 2011.[[48]](#endnote-48) A traditional destination for European and American travellers in the past, Kashmir is now catering to the needs of the increasing Indian middle class and a growing number of travellers from other parts of Asia. This industry directly benefits tour operators, houseboat associations, and *shikara* (long boats)owners, among others, but its promotion also has clear political aims. Apart from those who wish to escape the heat of the Indian plains in the summer, other Indian visitors go to the Valley on government travel schemes providing paid vacations for bureaucrats. Families of soldiers and paramilitary forces deployed in the region (an unknown number that can amount to a few hundred thousands) are offered free tickets to visit them. During the summer season, the flights from several Indian cities that are continuously landing at Srinagar airport give the impression of intense activity.[[49]](#endnote-49) In addition, the state government has implemented a number of credit facilities to allow the building of accommodation for tourists, leading hotels and guesthouses have mushroomed in the city at an incredibly fast pace. As some of my interviewees have critically commented, there seems to be a policy—which is also in the interest of some local groups—of ‘pumping as many visitors as possible into the Valley’.

Together with leisure tourism, religious pilgrimages have received promotion since the mid-2000s. These activities, albeit seasonal, are significantly modifying the Kashmir space on the symbolic and material levels. Tourism reinforces the symbolic links of Kashmir with India, while Hindu pilgrimages underscore the Hindu character of Kashmir, albeit in a new fashion that suits India’s Hindu right.[[50]](#endnote-50) On a material level, the tourist-related economy creates a dependence on the Indian state—in terms of the continuation of incentives for travelling to the area and the management of the security situation, amongst others—but also involves other territorialization initiatives that are more sustainable over time. The most obvious case of this is, perhaps, the Amarnath yatra (see Chapter 2) and the controversy that arose in May 2008 concerning a plot of land initially allotted by the state government to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), which manages the shrine. Although constituted by an Act of the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly, SASB has an Indian component: the chief executive is a senior officer of the Indian Administrative Service. Local groups and organizations in the Valley protested this initiative because they considered it as an attempt of Indian Hindu nationalism to gain a foothold in the Kashmiri heartland. Large mobilizations took place during the summer months and in response Hindu right-wing groups from Jammu blocked access to the Valley.

Under the guise of political normalization, several interventions have attempted to transform the landscape of the Valley. One contestation concerns the construction of separate colonies for ex-army servicemen and their families, also known as Sainik colonies. The plan to build one near the airport in Srinagar provoked agitation in 2016 because the State Subject Rule bars non-Kashmiris from possessing immovable property in the state.[[51]](#endnote-51) The army soldiers are not state subjects, except for the few Kashmiris enrolled in that institution. The building of Sainik colonies involves a legal aspect of India’s sovereignty over the region; that is, the application of India’s legislation and its extension to the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. While these colonies can be built anywhere in the Indian Union, the Jammu and Kashmir State enjoys a special autonomy according to the Constitution, and the ownership of immobile property there is restricted, irrespective of the fact that it is a disputed territory.

One crucial question in the normalization policy is the return of exiled Pandits. The governments led by A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh developed several schemes to facilitate the reinsertion of this community, but few have accepted these opportunities. After the arrival of Narendra Modi to power in Delhi and the PDP–BJP ruling coalition in the state in the 2014 elections, a plan was drafted to build separate enclaves for them in selected areas. This caused much anger among separatist leaders and social groups in the Valley, who perceived it as an attempt to change demographics for electoral purposes.[[52]](#endnote-52) Before the conflict began, Pandits used to live in neighbourhoods alongside Muslims, albeit maintaining a degree of separation.[[53]](#endnote-53) In an interview well before the elections of 2014 (when the division of minorities was central in the campaign), a retired law professor expressed the problem in the following way:

Now the Indian Government wants to build separate enclaves for the Pandits who wish to return to the Valley and offer them jobs. We do not oppose their return. They are from here like us and they have lived with us. But the government wants this policy of creating division with the aim of changing the population’s imbalance for electoral reasons.[[54]](#endnote-54)

A section of Kashmiri society understands opposes to these attempts by the Indian state to undermine the conflict character of the Valley by segregating groups as a means of managing the existing social diversity. These interventions have similarities, despite the different historical trajectory, with colonization patterns in Palestine.[[55]](#endnote-55)

Hence, ‘normalization’ in the Kashmir Valley, as understood by the Indian and state governments, is an active policy sustained by the idea of a ‘neoliberal peace’ in which improvement of the economic situation will undermine the political issue. Moreover, normalization is about specific actions that address the conflict by separating the Muslim majority of the Valley from the state’s minorities. This normalization can only be achieved by maintaining the legal situation of exception. Indian tourists and pilgrims are visiting the Valley because they feel the situation has improved, but also because of the presence of the Indian military which will protect them in the event of danger.[[56]](#endnote-56) The security forces, especially the paramilitary, have a role in everyday life: they mix with the civilians when they are deployed in the streets and tourist areas, and they occupy civilian buildings in different neighbourhoods, in addition to setting up observation posts (facing streets), barbed wire, and traffic blocks.[[57]](#endnote-57)

To sustain this ‘normal’ context, the Indian state has also engaged in a dialogue with Kashmiri society by sending interlocutors from New Delhi to address potential sources of disagreement. The outcome, *A New Compact with the People of Jammu & Kashmir*, was made public in May 2012, and provided an overview of the most important issues for ordinary people and social groups in Kashmir, offering conclusions similar to earlier documents that had been elaborated for the same purpose and made public in 2006–2007.[[58]](#endnote-58) The report does not question the fact that Jammu and Kashmir is an entity of the Indian state (page 2), although it does recognize its social diversity and proposes the creation of several degrees of autonomy for some territories such as Ladakh.

*Normalization through exceptional rule: compartmentalization of the border space*

Popular unrest has become a permanent feature of the Kashmir Valley since 2010, when the stone pelting movement (youths throwing stones at the paramilitary forces after Friday prayers) gained momentum. Despite the limited space for showing disagreement and the increasing refinement of the technology of repression and surveillance, new forms of resistance have been articulated, as evidenced during the deep crisis of the summer of 2016, after the killing of Burhan Wani, a popular militant from Hizbul Mujahideen. This violence has coexisted with an image of normalization, as depicted in the idyllic images of tourists staying in houseboats by the banks of the Dal and Nilgiri lakes. At the same time, as I observed during my own visits, curfews imposed in the old city of Srinagar did not disturb the economic activity in the tourist areas close to the Dal Lake and the middle- and upper-class resident areas of Rajbagh in the south of the city.

As I noticed during my interactions with the Srinagar police, curfews are no longer announced but are instead arbitrarily imposed as part of normal life or simply announced in the local newspapers as ‘travel restrictions’. In this respect, the context in the Kashmir Valley echoes Agamben’s reflection that ‘the state of exception has become the rule’ in developed societies.[[59]](#endnote-59) However, the legal state of exception does not mean a ‘normative void’, and does not necessary imply complete isolation—i.e., the Kashmir Valley is not a separated place or ‘camp’, to follow Agamben’s thinking.[[60]](#endnote-60) Rather, the context of legal exceptionalism allows the adoption of new techniques of compartmentalization for the reshaping of these spaces to make them ‘normal’ state spaces in which the political, shaped by conflict and resistance, is marginalized and suppressed. As Mezzadra and Neilson point out in the cases they study, with a focus on the multiplication of labour, border zones are ‘sites where norms can be analysed in the making and in their constant adjustment to changing circumstances, including their relations and conflicts with other norms.’[[61]](#endnote-61) In the case of the Kashmir Valley, the normalization and fencing of the border goes hand in hand with the normalization and compartmentalization of the border space. These interventions, and their associated norms, aim at transforming the border space into normal state space.

Thus, in my view, ‘normalcy’ and ‘security’ represent strategies (as in creating spatial imaginaries) in which the sovereign power of the nation-state (in this case the Indian state) is being re-asserted—even if as an illusion—in new ways over a territory whose sovereignty has been contested since decolonization.[[62]](#endnote-62) Normalization of the space within the edges—be it the Kashmir Valley, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, or Ladakh—goes in parallel with the opening and fencing, understood in terms of enclosure, of the border space as state space.[[63]](#endnote-63) This occurs as part of a specific global socio-economic context characterized by heterogeneity in which complete isolation through borders is no longer possible and therefore mobilities have to be filtered and managed (or mismanaged) in new ways. The state form still matters, particularly for those who have not attained it, such as many disputed and colonized territories.

**Conclusion**

The decision by the states of India and Pakistan to open the LoC is based on the assumption that conflict cannot continue in a world context where mobility and economic exchange under globalization processes are no longer (if they ever were) contained within state borders. The opening of the LoC must be understood as part of a neoliberal rationality whose main aim is the management of risk as a matter of governance, rather than addressing matters of social justice. In other words, conflict can be managed, and its resolution postponed. Yet the implementation of cross-LoC mobilities—of people and goods—and the views of actors and groups involved in them, as well as those who oppose these movements, evidence the gradual conversion of the LoC into a border.

Mobility is filtered through regulations about who and what can cross and under which conditions. This performativity involves an understanding of the border space as one that is being ‘normalized’. At present, mobility is only allowed in some points in the border tract between AJK and the Kashmir Valley. In the border area of Ladakh and Baltistan, however, the persistence of the border as a barrier denotes the existence of a different spatial imaginary in which strong disagreements persist about the border space. The views of people living on both sides of the LoC reflect strong disagreements about the way mobility and immobility on the LoC is being managed, although they see as a positive step the existing limited connections.

Rather than making the border irrelevant, the opening of the LoC instead implies its fixity as a border. This is not only sanctioned by the military and other security agencies dealing with aspects of security and bureaucratic control, but is also endorsed by the participation of people (divided families) and specific social groups (traders) in the cross-LoC mobility. Interventions in the border territory are intended to convey a certain idea of normalization, as shown in the Kashmir Valley, in which instances of conflict and resistance are being erased through denial and their compartmentalization as separate issues. This normalization represents new ways in which postcolonial states attempt to gain control over their edges.

1. Until the mid-1950s, however, mobility across the then-ceasefire line was relatively flexible for residents on both sides. Bose, *Contested Lands,* 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Khare, ‘Bus to Muzaffarabad’. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jonas and Lipschutz, ‘Beyond the Neoliberal’, 2; Lipschutz, ‘Neoliberal peace’, 7–10. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Agnew, *Globalization,* 77–78. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Sewak, *Multi-Track Diplomacy*; Bajpai, ‘India’s strategic culture’; Askari-Rizvi, ‘Pakistan’s strategic culture’. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Reddy, ‘Make boundaries irrelevant’. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. I refer to the fact that the main issue is not the LoC itself, but rather the political problem. The LoC is certainly a big problem for those living in nearby villages and for separated families. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Conditions may have changed since then. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2017–18*, 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. # The figure is from the photo-book Mass Welfare Foundation, *Life in the Migrant Camps of AJK,* 7. This is a joint report published by the NGOs Interchurch Peace Council and Mass Welfare Foundation. It is also drawn from Rahman and Mahmud, ‘Kashmiri Refugees’, 43–67. The ban on this specific group’s use of the buses was mentioned in several interviews in Muzaffarabad in September 2009.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. I knew of this practice after meeting two former militants who had returned to the Kashmir Valley after living for more than a decade in AJK and Pakistan, and from an interview with a senior officer of the Kashmir police in Srinagar on 16 July 2012. For detailed information, see Jeelani, ‘The departed’; Yasir and Dixit, ‘A field study’. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. I have been told that many passengers use the bus services to reach the very last stop on the border on each side, because their destinations may be nearby or they do not necessarily need to proceed to Muzaffarabad or Srinagar. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Interview, Srinagar, 12 May 2010. Nationalist leaders met the Indian governments of Athal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh to address the question of political prisoners and the situation of the Kashmir Valley, but talks were not successful. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Schneiderman, ‘Himalayan border citizens’*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Taneja, ‘India-Pakistan Trade’. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Interestingly, the lack of taxation has led to a trade diversion, according to my interviewees. Sikh traders from Punjab are using the Poonch–Rawalakot route through local middlemen who possess state subjecthood. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Srinagar, 11 May 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Rough estimates of Cross-LoC trade are based on Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, ‘Cross-line of control’; Naseem, ‘Cross-Border barter trade’; in India the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. *Trade Statistics,* http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/iecnt.asp. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, ‘Cross-line of control’; Ali, *Cross-LoC Trade-Success*; Chari and Askari-Rizvi, ‘Making borders irrelevant’. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Perhaps the only exception to this reality is the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. Suk-Young, *DMZ Crossing*. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Interview, Muzaffarabad, 27 September 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Snedden, *Untold Story,* 180–188. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. A few of my interviewees in Muzaffarabad, including an official of the AJK Government and an engineer of the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), referred to Pakistan’s plans in the hydro-electric sector as problematic for AJK. Despite these projects’ location in AJK and involving the use of land (a scarce resource), it seems that issues such as the payment of royalties to the AJK Government and access to power are often not clear. These problems are also reflected in what is until present (2018) the main dam project in AJK, the Mangla dam, built in the 1960s. See Haines, *Rivers Divided*, 70–76. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. It is difficult to find data on migration in AJK but based on a World Bank report Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary have estimated the importance of remittances in AJK’s economy compared with Pakistan as a whole. That note that AJK is 2 percent of Pakistan’s population and receives 6.25 percent of remittances. Sengupta, Mahmud, and Choudhary, ‘Cross-line of control’, 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Interview with Prof. Syed Nisar Hussain Hamdani, Muzaffarabad, 24 September 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Interview with Mr. Bukhari, Muzaffarabad, 10 March 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. State subjects are citizens of the Jammu and Kashmir princely state. This form of modern territorial citizenship was developed at the beginning of the twentieth century to ensure that residents of the state would be able to secure employment in an administration dominated by outsiders. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging,* 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. The Government of China has maintained equal distance from both parties in the Kashmir dispute, but owing to the fact that India has territorial claims on the Aksai Chin as part of Kashmir and both countries maintain a border dispute in India’s eastern sector regarding the region of Tawang (in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh), China has adopted a policy of not recognizing the Indian passports of those living in Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, as if they were not entirely ‘foreigners’. Ramachandran, ‘Stapled Visas’. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. There has been a demand to open a road between the largest village (or smaller town) of Khaplu and the border villages in Chorbat La, a few hours away. However, there is no formal road linking both sides, since travel in the past was across the mountains. Scheduled meetings at border points such as those between AJK and the Kashmir Valley have been requested by those living in villages near the LoC through various associations. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. This piece of news illustrates a normal case of the long journey undertaken by divided families to reunite with those who otherwise live very close. Shah and Jariwala, ‘Homecoming’. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. On the Siachen dispute, see Wirsing, ‘War or peace’, 18–20. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. ## Dawn, ‘Desperate rescue efforts’; Parvaiz, ‘Killer Siachen’

    [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. The view that India aims for Pakistan’s destruction is part of Pakistan’s perception of India in military and strategic circles. However, this view is also part of the common domain, expressed by both ordinary people and educated persons. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Interview, Skardu, 18 July 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. On the sectarian context in Gilgit, see Ali, ‘Outrageous state’; Stöber ‘Religious identities’. For Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas, ‘Mixed legacies’ [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Interview, Skardu, 15 July 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Interview, Islamabad, 2 May 2012. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. See Mato Bouzas, ‘Territorialisation’, 208–211. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Jessop, *The State,*124. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Jessop*, The State,* 138–139. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. There are no reliable data on the political preferences of those living in the border territories. My impression from fieldwork undertaken over the course of six years is that there is significant support in the Valley for separation from India, which does not necessarily mean support for the nationalist leadership. In fact, I noticed an increasing split between the leadership and society as a whole, in which particularly the youth are searching for new forms through which they can express political disagreement. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Mezzadra and Nielsen, *Border as Method,* 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Mezzadra and Nielsen*, Border as Method*, 175–178. On the subject of governance as a form of neoliberal rationality, see Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 122–131. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. See Ministry of Home Affairs, *Mandate of Border Management Division*, in which the Government of India claims, in the first page, to have a 106-km border with Afghanistan (along the Wakhan corridor), the northern border of Gilgit division, but there is no reference to border management of this specific border tract. Accessed 10 May 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. BBC, ‘India and Pakistan in Kashmir’; *The Caravan*, ‘Surgical strikes’; Hussain, ‘Mystery of’. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. See Kennedy, ‘Tourists return’; *The Tribune*, ‘Governor sees normalcy’; Kak, ‘Kashmir’s stone-pelters’, 32–33. Bhan contextualizes this normalization as part of the policy of ‘healing touch’ initiated by the former chief minister Mufti Sayeed in 2002 and intended to heal the scars of violence and the consequences of militarization, *Counterinsurgency,* 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Militancy is assessed annually by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs on the basis of the number of incidents and deaths caused by the Special Forces, civilians, and terrorists. According to the yearly reports, these figures for 2012 are ten times lower than in 2005, when violent activities were already decreasing compared to the previous decade. See Chadha, ‘Time to withdraw’. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, ‘Tourists coming to the Kashmir Valley’. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Muzaffar, ‘36 Flights to operate’; Amin,‘AirAsia to operate’. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. The appropriation of the past by hinting at Muslim or Hindu sources to reshape Kashmir’s contemporary identity is very much debated by state government institutions as well by other relevant social groups in Kashmir society. See Zutshi, *Kashmir’s Contested*, 298–316. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Masood, ‘Jammu and Kashmir moves’. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Motta, ‘Sainik Colony’. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. To gain an understanding the coexistence of these two religious groups in rural Kashmir in the 1960s, see the classical sociological work Madan, *Family and Kinship*. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Interview, Srinagar, 26 May 2011. Although such views may be seen as exaggerated, given the number of potential returnees, they illustrate that the topic is quite sensitive in the society. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. # The historical context of Palestine is different because there was a clear colonization pattern meant to expel the Palestinians from their territories, which has not occurred in Kashmir; see Pappe, *The Ethnic*.However, the politics of identity in the sense of dividing and separating different communities along religious and political lines is certainly an issue in Jammu and Kashmir State and shares similarities with the case of Israel. See BBC, ‘Kashmir: Outrage’; IANS, ‘Geelani-led Hurriyat’.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Normalization is strongly connected to the imposition of tight security control in which the Jammu and Kashmir State has little room for manoeuvre. For example, the NC leader Omar Abdullah, who has close ties to Indian political elites in the Congress Party, was elected as chief minister of the state in 2008 and promised to suppress the AFPSA, but he unable to negotiate the demilitarization. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Bhat, ‘Captive city’. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Kumar, Ansari, and Padgaonkar, *A New Compact*; Mato Bouzas, *India y Pakistán,* 119–121. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Agamben, *Stato di Eccezione*, 110–111. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method,* 236. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method,* 236. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Brown, *Walled States*, 25. This illusion has very material consequences at the social level. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. In the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, see Mato Bouzas*,* ‘Territorialisation’. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)