Kashmir: The Idea and its Parts

**Abstract**

The map of the Kashmir dispute conveys an idea of territorial continuity and unity that is understood not in the sense of identity but rather as a spatial relationship with the Kashmir Valley. The continued framing of the dispute as an issue between India and Pakistan and as a nationalist struggle in the Kashmir Valley reinforces the notion that there was once a consolidated colonial entity against which present developments are to be examined. However, since its creation Kashmir has been a contested space. A border perspective shows how territorialization processes that took place in the colonial and postcolonial period can explain the different attitudes held by those living in these disputed territories towards the whole Kashmir question.

**Keywords:** Kashmir, colonial entity, Partition, territorialization, militarization, border perspective

 ◊◊◊◊◊◊

Conceptualizing a Borderland Approach to Kashmir

**Abstract**

The literature on the study of borderlands highlights their importance for the construction of difference and therefore the understanding of international reality. The Kashmir borderland is often depicted as a world hotspot, and the Line of Control (LoC) enjoys a mystical character as a fracture which is denied by India, Pakistan, and nationalist groups. On the ground, however, ongoing bordering processes on both sides of the LoC are evidence of attempts to bring this area under state control and, in so doing, end the possibility of articulating its social diversity in more inclusive political terms. Bordering processes follow the logic of state spatiality in which borderlands are deemed not to exist.

**Keywords:** Borderland approach, security discourses, bordering processes, political spaces, state space

◊◊◊◊◊◊◊

Urban Areas Near the LoC (I): The ‘Kashmir Issue’ in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad

**Abstract**

The ‘Kashmir issue’ manifests differently in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The dispute demonstrates both spatial hierarchies and a centre-periphery organization. The disputed condition of Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is framed through the legal regime of exception. This is manifested in Srinagar by militarization, which is backed by a series of legal instruments that limit peoples’ basic rights, and also by the transformation and fragmentation of the urban space. Conflict in Muzaffarabad, a place of refuge for many Kashmiris from the Valley, is related to the display of Kashmiriness as an attachment to the conflict in the Valley, which in effect restricts the possibility of advocating for other political forms owing to the control of the territory by Pakistan and the restrictive political context.

**Keywords:** Kashmir issue, Srinagar, Muzaffarabad, military urbanism, production of space(s), mobility

◊◊◊◊◊◊◊

Urban Areas Near the LoC (II): The ‘Kashmir Issue’ in Skardu and Kargil

**Abstract**

Skardu and Kargil are sparsely populated cities that are formally located in the disputed territory, but their residents do not feel part of the conflict and state that they suffer ‘because of the Valley’. Civilians from these areas have not participated in the dynamics of violence and confrontation between the Indian and Pakistani armies. However, their locations near the LoC create a precarious existence for urban dwellers on both sides because they are subjected to restrictive rules that affect their basic rights and their loyalty to the nation is often questioned. The perspective on the conflict from these ‘marginal’ sites underscores the interwoven character of the dispute. Despite ongoing bordering processes and the long-term dispute that has reinforced social borders between groups, cities in the Kashmir borderland can still be seen as socially diverse places.

**Keywords:** Kashmir issue, Skardu, Kargil, peripheries, social heterogeneity, immobility

◊◊◊◊◊◊◊

The Line... the People

**Abstract**

The opening of the LoC to connect Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (and other points between the Kashmir Valley/Northern Jammu and AJK) in 2005 was intended to facilitate the visits of divided families and boost cross-border economic ties through trade. This and other confidence-building measures aim to transform the conflict character of the region without addressing the question of social justice. Groups on both sides who do not recognize the LoC as a border maintain that its opening to exchanges, an apparent deterritorialization process, is in fact contributing to its institutionalization as a border. The border filters mobility through bureaucratic regulations that limit who can cross it and, in the process, it also becomes institutionalized (fixed) as a border. but also becomes fixed. In the border areas of Ladakh and Baltistan, however, the LoC remains closed.

**Keywords:** Dialogue process, confidence-building measure (CBM), neoliberal peace, status quo, divided families, cross-LoC trade

◊◊◊◊◊◊◊◊

The Politics of Belonging in the Kashmir Borderland

**Abstract**

For those living in the disputed territories, the Kashmir issue is expressed in terms of the impossibility of being part of a political project or taking a decision about their own political future. This sentiment is mainly articulated in terms of belonging: by departing from an experience of dispossession or rootlessness to trace a relationship with a multitude of places and spaces. The literature on belonging developed by feminist and migration studies provides interesting insights for grasping the spatial dimension of conflicts about borders such as the Kashmir dispute. Belonging necessarily embodies a translocal and transnational experience and therefore generates specific knowledge about international reality and the way the world is ordered.

**Keywords:** Kashmir borderland, belonging, politics of belonging, displacement, cosmopolitanism, world order