

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Contested Lines, Constructed Powers The Discursive Production of Space and Geopolitical Legitimacy in Kashmir and Ladakh

verfasst von | submitted by

Dario Jäger

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2025

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 589

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Internationale Entwicklung

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Helmut Krieger

Abstract

This thesis examines how the Line of Control (LoC) and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) operate as contested demarcations that shape India's power relations and geopolitical decision-making in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Building on the legacies of Indo-Pakistani Partition and colonial cartographies, and considering recurrent border crises alongside recent institutional reorganisation, the study asks how border lines become instruments of spatial ordering, legitimation, and control, and with what implications for regional stability. Methodologically, it employs a qualitative, document-based strategic discourse analysis with a theory-led coding architecture. Postcolonial theory, Foucauldian power/knowledge, and critical geopolitics provide the theoretical frame, with spatial theory serving as a bridge. The analysis finds that bordering practices discursively produce political space and normalise exceptional governance through security and development narratives; that authority is affirmed through historical storytelling and constitutional-administrative routines while alternative voices are structurally constrained; and that crisis episodes symbolically reinscribe the LoC/LAC, linking domestic ordering with external posture. The study presents a limited, theory-informed approach that brings discourse, power, and space together and enables a structured reading of India's strategies in relation to Pakistan and China.

Keywords: Line of Control; Line of Actual Control; contested borders; discursive production of space; postcolonial theory; critical geopolitics; spatial theory; power and knowledge

Abstrakt

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht, wie die Line of Control (LoC) und die Line of Actual Control (LAC) als umstrittene Demarkationen Indiens Machtverhältnisse und geopolitische Entscheidungen in Jammu und Kashmir sowie Ladakh prägen. Ausgehend von Nachwirkungen der Indo-Pakistanischen Teilung und kolonialen Kartographien und unter Einbezug wiederkehrender Grenzkrisen sowie jüngerer institutioneller Neuordnungen fragt diese Masterarbeit, wie Grenzlinien zu Instrumenten räumlicher Ordnung, Legitimation und Steuerung werden und welche Folgen dies für die regionale Stabilität hat. Methodisch basiert sie auf einer qualitativen, dokumentbasierten strategischen Diskursanalyse mit theoriegeleiteter Kodierung; Postkoloniale Theorie, Foucaults Macht/Wissen und Kritische Geopolitik bilden den Rahmen, Raumtheorie fungiert als Brücke. Die Analyse zeigt, dass Grenzpraktiken politische Räume diskursiv herstellen und über Sicherheits- und Entwicklungsnarrative normalisieren; dass Autorität über historische Erzählungen und verfassungs-administrative Routinen bestätigt und alternative Stimmen strukturell begrenzt werden; und dass Krisenepisoden die LoC/LAC symbolisch aufladen und innen- mit außenpolitischen Haltungen verketten. Die Arbeit versteht sich als begrenzte, theorieinformierte Annäherung, die Diskurs/Macht/Raum zusammenführt und eine strukturierte Einordnung indischer Strategien im Kontext Pakistan/China ermöglicht.

Schlüsselwörter: Line of Control; Line of Actual Control; umstrittene Grenzen; diskursive Raumproduktion; Postkoloniale Theorie; Kritische Geopolitik; Raumtheorie; Macht und Wissen

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Research Questions	9
1.2 Significance and Objectives of the Study and Outline of the Thesis ..	10
2. Theoretical Framework	12
2.1 Postcolonial Theory: Origins, Representation, Subalternity	13
2.2 Foucauldian Power/Knowledge: Discipline, Visibility, Truth	20
2.3 Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitical Codes and the Territorial Trap	26
2.4 Spatial Theory as Bridge: Lefebvre’s Triad and Harvey’s Spatial Fix ..	30
3. Methodology and Research Design	33
3.1 Research Design and Approach	33
3.2 Coding Architecture (H1–H5): Rationale and Categories	33
3.3 Data Collection and Corpus Construction	37
3.3.1 Internal Differentiation of the Empirical Corpus	37
3.3.4 Selection Logic and Delimitation	40
3.3.5 Coding and Analytical Implications	41
3.4 Data Collection and Source Selection	41
3.4 Ethics, Reflexivity, and Use of AI Tools	42
3.5 Ethical Considerations	44
4. Constructing Borders, Power, and Legitimacy along the LoC and LAC... 45	
4.1 Colonial Genealogies and the Making of Jammu & Kashmir	45
4.1.1 The Princely State as Imperial Frontier	45
4.1.2 Partition, Accession, and the Ceasefire Line	47
4.1.3 From Ceasefire Line to Line of Control	49
4.2 Institutional Power and the Legal Architecture	54
4.2.1 Article 370 and Constitutional Reorganisation	54
4.2.2 Regimes and Agreements on the LAC	55
4.3 Discursive Architectures and Strategic Border Constructions	57
5. Cases: Strategic Conflicts and Discursive Border Crises	67
5.1 The Kargil War	67
5.1.1 India’s Strategic Trajectories	68
5.1.2 Pakistan’s Strategic Decisions and Public Framing	69
5.1.3 Post-Conflict Strategic and Institutional Adjustments	70
5.1.4 Diplomatic Consolidation and Narrative Closure	71

5.2 The Galwan Valley Skirmish	72
5.2.1 India's Strategic Decisions and Public Framing	73
5.2.2 China's Strategic Decisions and Public Framing	74
5.2.3 Consequences for Mobility and Administration	75
5.2.4 Diplomatic Track and the Current Baseline (2020–2024)	76
5.3 Pahalgam: A Culminating Moment	77
5.3.1. Why Pahalgam Matters	79
6. Crisis Event Cluster Analysis	82
7. Conclusion	91
7.1 Meta-Cluster (MC:A, MC:B, MC:C)	91
7.2 Discussion - Theory-Led Vantage Points	93
7.2.1 Why a Theory-Led Reading	93
7.2.2 Postcolonial Lens (Said; Bhabha; Spivak; Chatterjee; Anderson)	93
7.2.3 Foucauldian Lens (Power/Knowledge; Discipline; Visibility; Temporality)	94
7.2.4 Critical-Geopolitics Lens (Ó Tuathail; Agnew)	94
7.2.5 Spatial Lense	95
7.3 Final Conclusion	96
7.4 Future Research	100
Closing words	103
References	104
Appendices	109
A. Disclaimer	109
B. Full Coding Matrix (H1–H5)	110
C. Ledger of Coded Units	114

1. Introduction

This thesis investigates the discursive construction of contested borders in South Asia, namely the Line of Control (LoC) and the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It examines how these demarcations shape India's geopolitical strategies, practices of governance, and spatial claims to territorial legitimacy in the regions of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. These two frontiers, one separating India from Pakistan, the other India from China, are not only sites of military standoff and political tension. Drawing on postcolonial theory, critical geopolitics, and discourse analysis, this thesis approaches the borders as contested spaces in which sovereignty, legitimacy, threat, and belonging are continuously narrated and enforced, rather than as fixed demarcations.

Although no formal fieldwork was conducted, the thesis' process started with my private journey through Ladakh, the Kashmir Valley and Jammu in the Summer of 2024, which functioned as an epistemological threshold, shaping the emergence of the topic and its research questions through situated impressions. In the spirit of reflexive social anthropological writing, due to my Bachelor's background, I want to allow myself a few brief personal reflections. These are not intended as empirical material. They function as points of orientation for the reader, moments that rendered visible the otherwise abstract tensions between sovereignty and security in this complex region. This introductory chapter offers my account on how that process unfolded. This thesis does not analyse the journey itself; instead, it accounts for how specific spatial and affective encounters made the conceptual tensions addressed in this research accessible. In doing so, I aim to position the personal as the starting point for a more structured academic investigation, instead of treating it as the object of analysis.

The journey began in Leh, the capital of Ladakh, located at around 3,500 metres above sea level. By that time, I had already spent several weeks during my second visit in India, where I was informally exploring a rather different idea for my thesis. My original plan was to develop a fieldwork-based thesis on the colonial legacies of the former Portuguese colony of Goa and its interplay with the contemporary tourism industry. I had travelled there for preliminary research, mapping out potential contacts and preparing for a visa

application that would allow for a formal stay to conduct field-research. For various reasons, however, the project slowly dissolved. With several weeks of my trip still remaining and the monsoon making much of the subcontinent hardly accessible, I decided to travel north to Ladakh, which lies in the rain shadow of the Himalayas. What began as a geographical detour became the starting point of this thesis. The descent into the former military airport opened onto a landscape of layered brown, purple and red rock, unlike I have ever seen during my upbringing in the Alps, framed by jagged mountain ridges, with spare green strips of land along the rivers. Upon arrival, the effects of the altitude were immediate, marked by shortness of breath and dizziness, accompanied by a sense of physical disorientation. Other passengers rested on the floor of the arrival hall, waiting for their bodies to adjust. Outside, Leh appeared vibrant and layered. Shopfronts opened onto narrow streets lined with prayer flags. Vajrajana-Buddhist symbolism shared the space with mosques, Hindu signages, western-style cafés, and local guesthouses. On the surface, there was little that signalled a zone of exception, except perhaps the terrain and the intense altitude itself. That impression shifted when I attempted to leave the city after a few days of altitude adjustment. Travel in any direction requires special permits issued by the district administration and countersigned by military authorities at every checkpoint along the road. Because of my personal interest in Astronomy, I applied for permission to visit the Indian Astronomical Observatory in Hanle, located in eastern Ladakh near the Line of Actual Control, the contested border between India and China. The road eastward climbed through stark terrain, where state presence became increasingly visible. The ascent was punctuated by checkpoints, with convoys, tanks, and fenced-off military compounds lining the route. At Pangong Lake, movement was more restricted. Across the lake, outposts on the contested side were faintly visible, although it was not clear to me who managed them. At one point along the way, the mountainside revealed signs of heavy fortification, likely related to the former military conflicts between China and India in this region. Despite its intense geographical remoteness, the space was carefully monitored and politically saturated.

After a few days, I returned west through Leh and continued toward the City of Kargil, followed by a brief three hour sleepover in Dras. The landscape gradually became greener, more settled and the traces of past conflict became even more pronounced. Between the ridgelines and riverbeds, rusted artillery from the Kargil War of 1999 stood by the roadside, now reclaimed by rust and vegetation. These remnants were not marked or explained. At Zoji La Pass, near the transition into the administrative territory of Jammu & Kashmir, the bus halted in the middle of the night. In the cold and dark, passengers waited quietly as handwritten forms were distributed. The atmosphere was not one of tension or confrontation, it felt just like a process of bureaucratic categorisation. Though the road had never crossed a formal international border, the procedure made the experience like one of sovereign transition. In Srinagar, this threshold reappeared in infrastructure. The prepaid SIM card I had purchased in Mumbai no longer worked. In Ladakh, I already had to obtain a local replacement, as only local SIM cards were working. Jammu & Kashmir required a third. The registration process demanded biometric data, passport scans, and a one hour long in-person verification at a licensed shop. The shopkeeper who processed my application glanced at me and said, "You look like you're from here." He referred to my beard, my clothes, and the way I had been standing outside eating paan-flavoured ice cream before entering the shop. The comment was offhanded, yet very indicative. It clarified that appearance had no bearing on mobility. Access was regulated through inscription, and it seemed as if this was not limited to foreign visitors. The significance of these impressions culminated on Indian Independence Day, which is one day after the Independence Day of Pakistan. I stood at the edge of Lal Chowk, the central plaza of Srinagar, which had been cordoned off. Outside the square, much of the city was quiet. Shops were closed, and the streets beyond were marked by old barbed wire and long established sandbag bunkers. At the centre, a group of people waved flags before a digital projection of the Indian tricolour, while patriotic, cheerful music played from loudspeakers on maximum volume. Riot police in full gear lined the perimeter. The space was not hostile, but it did not feel completely safe either.

This journey can not substitute formal academic research. It marked the beginning of the academic process. I did not arrive with a research plan, but I left with one. This thesis emerged from a series of encounters in which statehood became perceptible through atmosphere, repetition, disorientation, and control. These embodied thresholds, spatial and symbolic, gradually shaped the foundation for a question: how are contested border regions such as those across this region discursively constructed, secured, and legitimised within the frameworks of postcolonial statehood and geopolitical power? The thesis asks how the LoC and the LAC are narrated, normalised, and contested in official, and developmental discourse; questions that demand academic engagement beyond personal experience. In response, this thesis adopts a structured analytical framework. It draws on a broad corpus of sources, including policy documents, security strategies, media coverage, development programs, as well as a multitude of academic literature. The research is theoretically guided by postcolonial literature such as Said (1978), Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), and Chatterjee (1993, 2004), by critical geopolitics (Agnew, 1994, 2003; Ó Tuathail, 1996), and by Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power (Foucault, 1995, 1980). These are complemented by spatial theory and urban critique (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1989), which help illuminate the material and performative dimensions of border production and governance. Accordingly, the thesis narrows its focus to the LoC and LAC as key geopolitical interfaces through which India's internal legitimacy and regional identity are actively produced. These demarcations do not just divide control of territory. They organise political thought, while legitimising security infrastructures and underpinning development narratives.

Since the time of my journey, the relevance of these questions has only intensified. In the aftermath of the 2025 attack in Pahalgam and the subsequent violent escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan, the LoC has regained prominence in national and international discourse. In this shifting context, reflecting on the discursive construction of borders, and their role in producing legitimacy, has gained critical urgency. I therefore aim

to offer a contribution to the study of conflict, contested borders, spatial power, and postcolonial statehood in contemporary South Asia.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions serve to structure the investigation. They operationalise the thesis's central concern, with particular attention to India's strategic positioning in relation to the LoC and the LAC. The main question states as follows:

How do the contested border demarcations of the Line of Control and the Line of Actual Control influence India's power relations and geopolitical decisions in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh?

This inquiry is extended by the following sub-questions:

How have the Kargil War and the Galwan Valley Clash affected the geopolitical dynamics and power relations between India, Pakistan, and China along these contested borders?

To what extent do the historical outcomes and postcolonial dynamics resulting from the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan continue to impact India's geopolitical strategies along the LoC and LAC in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh?

What are the implications of the contested border regimes for regional stability in South Asia and their broader significance for global security discourse?

1.2 Significance and Objectives of the Study and Outline of the Thesis

This thesis examines how the LoC and the LAC operate both as geopolitical borders and as discursively produced instruments of strategic governance. Particular attention is given to how the Indian state frames and instrumentalises these demarcations, while also accounting for the discursive interplay with Pakistani and Chinese actors.

The inquiry centres on a historical build-up, culminating in selected episodes and discursive moments, namely the Kargil War of 1999, the Galwan Valley Clash of 2020, and the Pahalgam attack of 2025. Through this lens, the study contributes to a postcolonial and critical-geopolitical understanding of how bordering functions as both a spatial and rhetorical practice in South Asia. Although not originally integrated in the first full draft of this paper, I determined that I must include the events of Pahalgam, even if it meant major revisions of the analysis. The escalation following the 2025 Pahalgam attack illustrates how contested border regions like Jammu & Kashmir remain deeply embedded in the symbolic and strategic imagination. On 22 April 2025, armed assailants opened fire on tourists at Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam, killing 26 people, including a Nepali national, in what was reported as the deadliest such attack in Kashmir in decades (Al Jazeera, 2025). Indian authorities attributed the assault to Pakistan-based groups linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba and presented it as a direct challenge to national security (Government of India Press Information Bureau, 2025a). Within days, the Line of Control re-emerged as a central trope in political and media discourse. On 7 May, India launched Operation Sindoor, striking nine targets in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and in Pakistan proper; officials characterised these actions as measured and intended ‘to deter and to pre-empt’ further attacks (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 2025a). International responses condemned the violence while urging restraint. The United Nations Security Council and the Secretary-General called for de-escalation, while Pakistan rejected responsibility and accused India of provocation (United Nations Security

Council, 2025; United Nations, 2025; Dawn, 2025). This moment underscores the urgency of critically examining how these bordering practices operate.

The structure of the thesis is designed as follows; Chapter 2 develops the dense theoretical framework, integrating postcolonial theory, critical geopolitics, spatial theory and foucauldian discourse analysis. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach, including research design, source selection, use of AI Tools, research ethics and the implementation of a deductive-inductive coding matrix aligned with five analytical dimensions. Chapter 4 examines the historical construction of the borders, legal-institutional discourses, and geopolitical agreements. Chapter 5 presents the three detailed cases; The Kargil War, the Galwan Valley Clash, and Pahalgam, and evaluates them through a combined strategic and discursive lens. Chapter 6 integrates the findings to enable a broader analysis, while Chapter 7 is presenting the Meta-Cluster findings, answering the research questions and reflecting on the implications and possibilities of future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter sets the foundational stage for the analytical exploration of how the LoC and LAC are produced and maintained as geopolitical and discursive constructs. It introduces four theoretical pillars: postcolonial theory, critical geopolitics, Foucauldian discourse analysis, and spatial theory, which together offer complementary yet sometimes tension-filled perspectives on the dynamics of sovereignty and power, as well as on questions of belonging and territorial legitimacy. These frameworks are not synthesised but rather used as individual conceptual units. Each section introduces a body of thought, not for immediate empirical application, but to familiarise the reader with the intellectual tools that will later converge in the analytical chapters. The purpose of this arrangement is twofold: it provides a clear entry point for each theory, ensuring their unique contributions to understanding border regimes and spatial power are highlighted, and it establishes a conceptual toolkit that will be interwoven with the methodological coding architecture, as explained in Chapter 3. This allows the reader to follow the argument's development systematically.

The selected frameworks and theorists were chosen to support specific analytical elements and to address the complexities of the LoC and LAC. Postcolonial theory, drawing on Said (1978), Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), Chatterjee (2004), and Anderson (2006), highlights colonial legacies, identity construction, and discourses of otherness, providing a crucial historical and ideological foundation. Critical geopolitics, with Ó Tuathail (1996) and Agnew (1994, 2003), deconstructs geopolitical narratives and explores the discursive construction of state-centred claims. Foucault's discourse analysis (1995, 1980) contributes insights into power/knowledge relations, surveillance, discipline, and the formation of truth regimes within border conflicts. Finally, spatial theory serves as a bridging concept that encompasses the distinct contributions of Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (1989). Lefebvre's model of the production of space via his spatial triad emphasises the social construction of space, while Harvey's work focuses on the materialist and capitalist dimensions of space and uneven development. This theoretical strand bridges these perspectives to form a conceptual platform that addresses

both discursive and material aspects of spatial power and control relevant to this paper. The following section introduces postcolonial theory as the first theoretical framework, outlining its conceptual relevance and setting the stage for the examination of colonial legacies, identity constructions, and the discourses of otherness.

2.1 Postcolonial Theory: Origins, Representation, Subalternity

Postcolonial theory emerged as a foundational pillar for analysing historical and discursive conditions that shape contemporary global power dynamics in the broader global south and north-south relations. It offers a critical framework to examine how the colonial past continues to influence the construction of identity and sovereignty today. Instead of treating borders and identities as static or natural, postcolonial theory foregrounds their constructed, and often contested, nature.

The term postcolonial signifies a temporal and conceptual rupture. It marks the transition from formal colonial rule to the post-independence period, while simultaneously recognising that the power dynamics of colonialism persist in new forms.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) aids us to understand how 'the West' has historically constructed 'the Orient' as an object of knowledge and governance. Said, drawing on Foucault's *power and knowledge* (1995), argues that Orientalism is not an academic field, it is a discursive formation that produces the Orient as a space of difference, subjugation and control (Said, 1978, pp. 31–49). This construction operates through what he terms as imaginative geography, where spatial and cultural boundaries are established to demarcate the 'rational and civilised West' from the 'irrational and backward Orient' (Said, 1978, pp. 49–73). These discursive practices extend beyond European colonial contexts, resonating in the production of geopolitical frontiers where territory and identity intersect with questions of legitimacy. In this paper, Orientalism is approached not as a fixed Western phenomenon. I am positioning it as a dynamic framework that reveals the persistence of exclusionary narratives and epistemic hierarchies. Its relevance extends beyond the classical colonial period to contemporary

contexts such as the LoC and LAC, where discursive constructions of Otherness continue to shape border regimes and strategic representations. However, this analysis does not conflate Said's critique of European Orientalism with the internal dynamics of South Asia. Instead, it highlights the adaptability of Orientalist logics in postcolonial settings, where states like India, Pakistan, and China reproduce discursive patterns of exclusion and projection.

Said's distinction between latent Orientalism (the deep-seated cultural assumptions about the Orient as backward and irrational) and manifest Orientalism (the explicit discursive and representational practices that reinforce these assumptions) further clarifies how Orientalist discourse operates on multiple levels (Said, 1978, pp. 201–225). This dual logic helps to explain why the depiction of regions like Kashmir or Ladakh continues to oscillate between portrayals of backwardness and strategic indispensability in national portrayals. Another crucial element I see in Said's analysis is his critique of textual attitudes: the reliance on inherited textual and discursive artefacts rather than lived experience and direct engagement (Said, 1978, pp. 93–98). This reliance produces a self-referential discursive system that both defines and sustains the 'truth of the Orient' as a constructed object of knowledge. Applied to the context of this thesis, this insight highlights how narratives about contested borders are often shaped by external perspectives, be they strategic doctrines, media reports, or historical accounts. The production of knowledge about the borderlands is thus not neutral but serves to stabilise and legitimise specific territorial and political imaginaries.

Moreover, Orientalism's logic is not confined to the dichotomy between East and West but resonates in internal postcolonial dynamics. As argued in the introduction to this paragraph, this analysis does not suggest a direct transposition of European Orientalist discourse onto South Asian reality. Instead, it recognises that states like India, Pakistan, and China have internal exclusionary discourses that echo Orientalist logics. These strategies are not simply inherited from colonial discourse; they are also appropriated and

rearticulated by regional actors who have themselves been shaped historically by the legacies of Orientalism.

This dynamic evokes what Bhabha (1994) terms mimicry, a process whereby the colonised subject adopts and adapts the language and practices of the coloniser. However, as will be further explored below, mimicry does not entail a straightforward replication of dominant narratives. It introduces a subversive difference within sameness that unsettles the very authority it appears to imitate (Bhabha, 1994). This distinction is crucial for understanding the complex power relations at play, where Orientalist logics are rearticulated in ways that simultaneously reinforce and disrupt prior dominant discourses. Closely tied to mimicry is Bhabha's hybridity, particularly his notion of the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 19–39). The Third Space is a discursive arena, rather than a static location, where meanings are constantly negotiated and rearticulated. It is here that the binaries of self and other, coloniser and colonised, are deconstructed and replaced by new, hybrid identities. This space allows for the emergence of counter-narratives that challenge dominant thought and create openings for subaltern voices. Moreover, Bhabha's reflections (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 102–122) deepen this analysis by showing how authoritative discourses are translated and misread, then rearticulated by the colonised. In these moments of translation and reinterpretation, the apparent stability of colonial authority is undermined, revealing the hybrid and contingent nature of power. Similarly, in context of the LoC and LAC, state narratives of control and legitimacy do not remain monolithic. They are continuously reinterpreted and challenged. Bhabha therefore introduces the idea that national identity itself is ambivalent and fragmented (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 211–218). The nation is not a unified, coherent entity but is constituted through performative discourses that oscillate between pedagogy (the telling of a unified national story) and performance (the lived, everyday expressions of belonging and identity). The LoC and LAC, as margins of the nation, exemplify this ambivalence. This understanding of the border as a site of performative negotiation and hybrid identity opens a conceptual bridge to Chatterjee's exploration of the postcolonial nation. While Bhabha focuses on the symbolic and discursive constitution of identity

within hybrid and liminal spaces, Chatterjee (1993, 2004) extends this analysis into the political and social realms, where these identities are materially enacted and contested. Through his concepts of Political Society and fragmented national narratives, he demonstrates how hybrid and informal practices shape the exercise of governance, the experience of citizenship, and the articulation of territorial claims. The following section will expand upon this, tracing how Chatterjee's framework complements and extends Bhabha's insights into the fractured and negotiated nature of the postcolonial nation.

Chatterjee (1993) argues that nationalism in the postcolonial world is not a derivative form of Western models but a differentiated and subversive project in itself (pp. 3–13). Unlike the modular and universal narratives of 'the West', which claims, or at least strongly implies, a homogeneous modernity, postcolonial nationalisms emerge as fragmented and hybrid. They reflect both an internal critique of colonial power and an appropriation of its forms. This perspective shifts the focus from a dichotomous view of domination and resistance to a more nuanced understanding of how local actors and institutions negotiate identity and sovereignty. They are not just replicating the colonial project, postcolonial nationalisms, including those shaping the narratives along the LoC and LAC, engage in complex processes of differentiation and rearticulation (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 3–13).

Central to this is his critique of universalist frameworks and his emphasis on the multiplicity and fragmentation inherent in national narratives. He posits that both Western universalism and Orientalist exceptionalism are inadequate for capturing the intricacies of postcolonial political formations (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 3–13). This argument resonates strongly with the LoC and LAC context, where the discourse of national unity collides with on-the-ground realities shaped by local differentiation and contestation, and further complicated by negotiation. Chatterjee's approach foregrounds the ways in which formal claims to sovereignty are enacted through selective historical narratives, which serve as both a legitimising and performative strategy. The selective evocation of partition histories and imagined pasts constructs a

fragmented temporal architecture of belonging, where history functions as a tool of both inclusion and exclusion (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 76–94).

Extending his analysis into the material and socio-political realm, Chatterjee (2004) introduces *Political Society*, which describes how marginalised populations engage with state structures through informal, tactical negotiations rather than through formal legal rights (pp. 131–145). This showcases how local communities, security regimes, and state apparatuses co-produce a hybrid governance space, where sovereignty is continuously rearticulated rather than unequivocally imposed. *Political Society* does not reflect a passive adaptation to state power but constitutes an active, though often asymmetric, negotiation of agency. Chatterjee's analysis reveals how sovereignty and national identity are not established through monolithic narratives or legal instruments but through fragmented, performative practices that simultaneously reinforce and destabilise authority. Just as Bhabha's concept of hybrid performativity unveils the cracks within dominant discourses, Chatterjee's focus on *Political Society* highlights the socio-political dynamics that render these discourses ambivalent and contingent. This continuity echoes the broader postcolonial logic, as discussed in the previous sections: Orientalist legacies are not confined to the colonial encounter but reverberate in contemporary power relations. Chatterjee's contribution enriches the theoretical framework of this thesis by shifting the focus from symbolic discourse to social practice. Yet to fully grasp how such discourses are not only narrated and performed but also inscribed into the visual and administrative representations of space, I now will briefly turn to Benedict Anderson's reflections on the map as a discursive instrument of power and identity.

Anderson (2006) demonstrates how maps do not only depict reality but actively construct it, embedding colonial and postcolonial borders with political meaning and national imagination. While 'the map' will not be extensively elaborated on here, its relevance will become more apparent in the subsequent historical chapter, as this aspect constitutes an especially important part of the discourse about Indian and Pakistani Identity regarding the legal ascension of Kashmir and Ladakh. Anderson (2006, pp. 163–185)

argues that maps are not passive representations of territorial reality but active tools that produce and fix imaginary national boundaries. Through their circulation in administrative and educational contexts, maps become visual anchors of state authority and national coherence. These cartographic practices are remnants of colonial administration but continue to shape broader narratives and claims to sovereignty. Anderson foregrounds the role of visual media in constructing and legitimising these territorial claims. Maps visually inscribe the imagined community onto the physical landscape, creating a symbolic cohesion that masks the fragmentary, hybrid and contested realities of the borders. This dynamic resonates with Bhabha's performativity, where the visual and the discursive coalesce to both stabilise and subvert narratives of unity.

As the analysis moves forward, it becomes necessary to ask: who and what is performatively represented in these visual and discursive constructs? What narratives are amplified, and which are rendered silent? These questions anticipate the following section's exploration of Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) work on subalternity and epistemic violence, where representation itself becomes a contested and uneven terrain.

Spivak (1988) critiques Western theoretical frameworks, particularly those of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, for overlooking the structural and ideological mechanisms through which subaltern voices are excluded from hegemonic discourses. Her argument introduces epistemic violence, which describes how dominant knowledge systems distort, erase, or appropriate the voices of the subaltern. This form of violence silences subaltern subjects, but more importantly it causes them to be structurally incapable of speaking within the dominant discourse. A key element of Spivak's analysis is her distinction between representation as speaking for and representation as representation (pp. 271–313).

The conflation of these two forms obscures the mechanisms through which power operates, reducing subaltern subjects to objects, not actors, of discourse. Spivak's critique highlights the impossibility of the subaltern speaking within dominant frameworks that co-opt or misrepresent their

voices, even when such frameworks claim to offer space for their expression. This insight carries particular significance for the broader analysis undertaken in this thesis. It encourages a critical examination of how certain voices and narratives become institutionally marginalised, as official discourses and historical accounts may silence local perspectives, even while geopolitical strategies project them onto national and global stages. This thesis draws on Spivak, but it is crucial to recognise my own positionality. My analysis can not and does not claim to recover or amplify the silenced voices of subaltern populations in Kashmir or Ladakh. It adopts a critical discursive lens to examine the systemic conditions, rooted in colonial legacies and sustained by postcolonial state practices, that produce and perpetuate the silencing of these voices. This approach acknowledges the ethical imperative of avoiding the reproduction of the same forms of epistemic violence Spivak critiques, and it refrains from assuming a representational authority over subaltern subjects. Nevertheless, due to the nature of this analysis, it must be asked in what ways the thesis itself plays its part in the reproduction of epistemic violence, even if this question can not be answered at this point in time. This resonates with the broader argument of this chapter: dominant discourses, whether academic, political, or cultural, do more than fail to represent subaltern voices. They often actively constitute their exclusion.

Spivak's emphasis on epistemic violence complements the preceding discussions of discursive constructions of Otherness and hybrid identities, while also introducing a critical tension within my multi-axis theoretical framework. Specifically, it challenges the Foucauldian notion that power is always productive and dispersed by foregrounding the role of ideological state apparatuses and colonial legacies in perpetuating silence and erasure (Spivak, 1988, pp. 271–313).

This theoretical tension is not resolved at this point but acknowledged as a difficulty inherent in combining such complex approaches within a single model. The subsequent exploration of Foucauldian discourse analysis revisits questions of power, knowledge, and subjectivity from a different angle, while the methodological discussion will later address how these tensions can be engaged in a more systematic attempt at productive integration.

2.2 Foucauldian Power/Knowledge: Discipline, Visibility, Truth

If postcolonial theory has shown how the legacies of empire shape geopolitical imaginaries and representational hierarchies, Foucauldian discourse analysis shifts the focus toward the microphysics of power that structure social relations through institutional practices, normative frameworks, and linguistic operations. Where postcolonial thinkers such as Said or Spivak interrogate the global asymmetries of knowledge production and voice, Foucault highlights how these asymmetries are enacted in concrete discursive formations, where they become stabilised and reproduced over time. The goal here is not to displace postcolonial critiques but to situate them within a differentiated analytical framework that considers how truths are formed, subjects shaped, and space made governable (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133).

Foucault's understanding of discourse departs fundamentally from linguistic or ideological models. Rather than asking what a given statement means, he investigates the historical and institutional conditions under which such statements become thinkable and speakable. Discourse can be seen as the production of truth regimes that delineate the field of what can be said, by whom, and with what effect instead (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133). Seen in the context of South Asia's contested borderlands, such an approach is indispensable. The LoC and LAC appear as geopolitical artefacts yet also operate as discursive formations, continually reproduced through security narratives, developmental framings, and constructions of identity. As such, they become spatialised expressions of power/knowledge configurations: through border patrol protocols, biometric registration systems, and state-sanctioned media narratives, certain identities are made visible and governable, while others are obscured or delegitimised. Importantly, this theoretical move also responds to a methodological necessity. The empirical material analysed here cannot be adequately interpreted without accounting for how they produce, circulate, and institutionalise specific knowledge claims. These claims shape how border conflicts are perceived and represented, how they are acted upon, how they are governed, and materially

entrenched. Discourse, therefore, is not the background to conflict, but one of its most potent instruments.

This section will unfold in five parts: first, exploring how bodies are disciplined and movements regulated in militarised border zones; second, unpacking the architecture of surveillance and visibility; third, examining the production of authorised knowledge; fourth, foregrounding marginalised knowledges and genealogical critique; and finally, concluding these insights to pave the way for the next theoretical section on critical geopolitics. The analytical aim is to make the invisible operations of power perceptible, and to show how spatial practices are saturated with historically contingent forms of discourse.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault introduces the ‘docile body’ to describe how modern power inscribes itself on the body through minute, calculated techniques that discipline individuals useful, obedient, and efficient (Foucault, 1995, pp. 135–169). Rather than relying on spectacular violence or sovereign decrees, disciplinary power produces its effects through repetition, spatial distribution, and regulation of time, eventually shaping the very capacities of the human body. This transformation is not metaphorical. It operates through a detailed anatomy of control: gestures, postures, gazes, and rhythms are broken down, examined, standardised, and recomposed into a productive corporeal machinery. In contrast to earlier regimes that prised the body as a symbol of bravery or honour, modern power treats it as a plastic entity to be moulded.

“a body that is docile may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 136).

These techniques are not confined to the military barracks, although that is one of their archetypal sites. They extend into schools, hospitals, factories, any institution concerned with regulation. Discipline thus becomes a generalised scheme of power, reaching into the most mundane routines and reorganising social life from the body outward. The docile body marks the site of a double movement: as the individual is made shapeable, they also internalise surveillance. Disciplinary regimes succeed through external force,

but also because they generate subjects who govern themselves in anticipation of being seen or corrected. This transition from coercion to consent is the distinctive feature of modern power, as argued by Foucault. In this framework, subjectivation emerges not as a spontaneous self-expression, but as a structured outcome of power's productive logic. The body, as Foucault notes, becomes both the object and instrument of control (Foucault, 1995, pp. 135–169). He expands his analysis of disciplinary power by introducing a new architectural and epistemological model: the panopticon. Originally designed by Jeremy Bentham, as a prison that allows for constant visual access to inmates from a central tower, the panopticon becomes for Foucault a diagram of modern power. Unlike earlier mechanisms of exclusion or sovereign punishment, panoptic power functions through the controlled distribution of visibility. Its effectiveness lies not in actual observation, but in the awareness of the possibility of being watched (pp. 195–228). The subject, never certain whether they are under scrutiny, begins to behave as though they always are. This dynamic creates what Foucault terms a

“state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201).

The eerie brilliance of panopticism lies in its economy: it requires minimal active enforcement and becomes viable by outsourcing surveillance to the surveilled. Surveillance becomes embedded in the spatial configuration of institutions. Power is no longer enacted primarily by agents but by arrangements like architecture and sightlines. Power thus circulates anonymously and automatically, operating through a

“concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes” (p. 202).

This spatialisation of power also constructs knowledge. The visibility of bodies, actions, and records enables continuous normalisation. Through this process, individuals are made knowable and therefore governable. Foucault suggests that visibility becomes a key condition for the production of knowledge. What can be seen can be measured and corrected. As such, surveillance and knowledge are not supplementary to power, but intrinsic to

it. The panoptic scheme, then, does not describe a single institution discussed here, but a general logic of modern governance, shared between all contemporary actors. It represents a shift in the modality of power from physical coercion to affective modulation. From punishing the body to producing subjects who self-regulate to not be punished. As Foucault notes, *“The Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form”* (p. 205).

In the theoretical architecture of this thesis, panopticism functions as a critical link between material structures and discursive formations. It provides a conceptual language to analyse how spatial arrangements are designed to contain but also to constitute behaviours and truths. Furthermore, Foucault’s *power/knowledge* (1980) represents one of his most influential interventions in modern theory. He explicitly challenges the idea that knowledge exists independently of power. Instead, he posits a constitutive relationship between the two:

“We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p. 93).

Knowledge is never neutral. It emerges from and reinforces specific institutional configurations and material practices, while also extending into discursive fields. This notion destabilises conventional assumptions about epistemic authority. Truth, for Foucault, is not an objective discovery but a social effect produced within *regimes of truth*, which he defines as historically specific systems for producing, circulating, and validating knowledge (pp. 131–133). These regimes are not imposed solely by the state or the law but are co-produced through scientific institutions such as the university, as well as through media, bureaucracies, and other disciplinary technologies. What counts as truth is thus neither timeless nor universal. It is contingent and governed by power relations. This framework does not reduce truth to illusion or ideology. Foucault is not suggesting that all knowledge is false or that power simply distorts reality. Rather, he insists that every truth claim must be examined in relation to the institutional conditions and power effects that make it possible. This requires analysing

how discourses define what can be said, who can speak, and what counts as valid evidence within a given field. In a broader theoretical context, the power/knowledge nexus becomes a diagnostic tool for deconstructing dominant narratives. It allows the researcher to shift attention away from *what* is said, and toward *how* and *why* it is said and with what effects. As such, this concept forms a methodological cornerstone for discourse analysis. It enables an inquiry into how political authority and expert legitimacy, together with strategic discourse, operate as internal constituents of knowledge. In the theoretical structure of this thesis, Foucault's framework helps account for how institutions and discourses come to define and legitimise geopolitical categories. This approach avoids the binary of truth versus manipulation and instead reveals how forms of knowledge become central to governance itself. At last, Foucault introduces subjugated knowledges in his chapter Two Lectures (pp. 78-109), a category encompassing both

“historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence” and “naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy” (Foucault, 1980, p. 82).

These knowledges are neither simply forgotten nor irrelevant. They are actively disqualified by dominant discourses, which establish epistemic hierarchies that separate legitimate expertise from discredited experience. Their exclusion is not incidental but functional to systems of control. Subjugated knowledges offer an entry point for critique. Unlike grand theories that seek universality, they arise from local contexts and contingent struggles. Foucault's genealogical method is oriented precisely toward recovering these submerged fragments, not to reinstate them as ultimate truth, but to trace how their repression sustains dominant epistemic orders. Genealogy, in this sense, is not a linear history but a method of *counter-memory*. It resists the smoothing effects of institutionalised knowledge. This methodological orientation has deep implications for critical research. Genealogy does not aim for total explanation; it seeks to disturb, to fracture taken-for-granted assumptions, to showcase the discursive work through

which certain perspectives are silenced while others acquire authority. As Foucault insists,

“Genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges” (Foucault, 1980, p. 85).

At the same time, this perspective prepares the ground for the next theoretical register. Subjugated knowledges are not just epistemically excluded. They are often spatially dislocated, marginalised not only in discourse but also in territory.

Foucault’s work reveals how power operates through micro-practices and spatial arrangements, as well as the regimes of truth. Through concepts such as *docile bodies*, *panopticism*, and *subjugated knowledges*, he demonstrates how individuals are shaped not through coercion alone, but through the internalisation of norms, the management of visibility, and the circulation of knowledge. Disciplinary power, in Foucault’s account, is not a centralised force but a capillary network that permeates everyday life. It is in this sense that borders, bodies, and infrastructures emerge as effects of power: spatially distributed, discursively legitimised, and functionally productive. Such a perspective allows this thesis to move beyond representations of the border as a contested line and instead view it as a site where subjectivities, practices, and claims to truth are continuously produced and regulated. The next sub-chapter now turns to critical geopolitics, which brings the spatialisation of geo-political power into sharper focus. It addresses how geopolitical knowledge is constructed, how space is framed and coded through state practices, and how such representations shape perceptions of threat and legitimacy. Building on the discourse-analytical foundations laid here, the forthcoming analysis will examine how geopolitical narratives and spatial imaginaries produce the borders themselves as governable and securitised zones.

2.3 Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitical Codes and the Territorial Trap

If the previous section has outlined how power operates through discourse, knowledge, and embodiment, critical geopolitics extends this line of inquiry to the spatial formations through which political authority and global order are imagined and enforced. Building on the genealogical and postcolonial frameworks already introduced, this chapter turns to how space becomes a vehicle for power, structured by geopolitical reasoning which is enforced through state-centric narratives. Critical geopolitics has its gaze on the production of political space. According to Ó Tuathail (1996, pp. 11–39), space is a stage upon which politics unfolds and it is a discursively constructed entity imbued with strategic meanings. Critical geopolitics enables a theoretical transition from epistemic asymmetries to political-/spatial asymmetries, bridging knowledge production with territorial ordering.

Once again, I have decided to structure this conceptual exploration along the main pillars of critical geopolitics which are central to my own inquiry. John Agnew's (1994) critique of the territorial trap argues that international relations theory is based on three flawed assumptions: that states are fixed containers of sovereignty, that domestic and foreign realms are distinct, and that the state exercises power uniformly within its borders (Agnew, 1994, pp. 53–80). This spatial ontology misrepresents the uneven and porous nature of state control and obscures how borders are discursively produced as sites of legitimacy (Agnew, 2003, pp. 15–21, 31–36). From the perspective of critical geopolitics, the border is not a neutral line but a representational act. It emerges through maps and speeches, through doctrines and rituals that frame the political stage. Drawing from Foucault's notion of dispersed power (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133), these representations can be seen as part of a wider apparatus, aiding in space being made governable and securitised. Yet, unlike Foucault who generally avoids large-scale spatial analysis, critical geopolitics centres the politics of spatial framing itself.

Ó Tuathail (1996, pp. 11–39) describes how geopolitical reasoning is always mediated through discursive acts. This can be in the form of expert commentary or media coverage, as well as other acts of statecraft. It frames space in ways that make it actionable, reducing complex entanglements to

bounded-, strategic frontiers or zones of influence. In this process, knowledge and territory become co-constitutive. Such insights are crucial to interpreting how India, Pakistan, and China frame the LoC and LAC as discursive artefacts embedded in a broader geopolitical imagination. Through parliamentary speeches and military doctrine, along with cartographic representations, these contested demarcations are produced and stabilised as zones of sovereign assertion. It reveals how political elites, security institutions, and technocratic actors produce representations of space that are essential for the performance of authority and the justification of intervention. What matters is not what the state does, but how it frames its actions as meaningful.

Ó Tuathail (1996, pp.11–39) furthermore describes the state as operating through scripts that define geopolitical reality. This can range from framing allies and naming threats, or help establishing frontiers through routinised discursive acts. These scripts circulate and form what he terms ‘geopolitical codes’: bundles of representations that define who belongs, who threatens, and what must be secured. These codes are productive discourses that guide geopolitical behaviour and not just reflections of an objective reality. This resonates with Foucault’s view of discourse as productive rather than reflective (Foucault, 1980, pp.109–133). However, critical geopolitics foregrounds the spatial dimension. In this process, cartography plays again a central role. Similar to Anderson (2006), Ó Tuathail (1996, pp.11–39) notes that maps are active interventions into reality. They define what exists and what must be protected. Statecraft, then, becomes a form of spatial narration. Political actors narrate space in ways that make certain responses seem rational, as long as they are based in the logic of the narration. Here it does not matter if they are justified or not, whether in the form of development corridors or border infrastructure, as long as the spatial strategies are embedded in larger geopolitical narratives. Agnew (1994, pp.53–80) points out, such narratives often depend on the assumption of spatial fixity, which is the idea that states must control clearly defined territories to be sovereign. This is the core of the territorial trap.

This reveals the performative power of statecraft, and it lies precisely in its ability to break down complex spatial processes into simplifications which are comprehensible. The representation of space as bounded and/or strategically vital allows governments to mobilise resources and justify exceptional measures to neutralise dissent. Such a perspective is vital to understand how India, Pakistan, and China legitimise their respective positions along the LoC and LAC. Statecraft becomes a spatial performance. Through maps, parliamentary resolutions, and militarised infrastructures, governments narrate their sovereignty not as a given, but as a discursively enacted and spatially performed reality.

Additionally, but absolutely vital for this perspective, security and securitisation are fundamental discursive constructs of geopolitical narration. Ó Tuathail (1996) explains how geopolitical reasoning frames particular spaces as dangerous and unstable, or threatening in ways that enable specific political responses. These framings do not emerge spontaneously. They are embedded in institutional processes and historical imaginaries that give coherence and urgency to certain threat perceptions (pp. 38–53). This securitising function of discourse operates through the construction of spatial binaries, mirroring the effects of Othering in Orientalist literature: inside/outside, civilised/uncivilised, secure/insecure. By coding a space as dangerous, whether through references to terrorism or infiltration, state actors legitimise interventions that might otherwise be contested. This is the ‘geo-graphing of danger’, where maps and strategic language actively create the geopolitical terrain (Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 50–53). In this framing, I see the production of threat as inseparable from the production of space. Geopolitical discourse generates ‘dramatic spatializations’. Scenarios in which geopolitical actors and spaces are cast in moralised roles. Threats become spatialised and externalised, reinforcing the boundary between the sovereign self and the threatening other. The state is positioned as both the guardian of territorial order and the rational manager of external or infiltrating danger (Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 41–47). Agnew’s (1994) territorial trap complements this diagnosis by revealing how security discourses depend on the reification of state borders as the natural boundaries of governance.

When borders are framed as fragile or penetrable, they become breeding grounds for intensified surveillance and militarisation, as well as for infrastructural reinforcement. The border is no longer a passive line, it is a performative site where the state reasserts and 'defends' its own legitimacy. In this sense, securitisation is discursive, but it very much is also spatial and material (Agnew, 1994, 2003).

What is at stake here is not the question of whether a threat is real or not, but how its spatial articulation mobilises geopolitical practices. Ó Tuathail (1996) reminds us, geopolitical discourses stage reality. They produce a world in which specific actors are positioned as threats and others as defenders, where territory becomes the condition of danger, and security the rationale for intervention (pp. 44–53).

This allows me now to build on those insights, to interrogate how Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese discourses narrate their respective border regions as spaces of exceptional threat. Rather than assuming these discourses to be natural responses to danger, it asks how the category of threat is constructed, and how this construction authorises specific forms of territorial control and infrastructural governance. While critical geopolitics deconstructs the rhetorical and epistemic frameworks that make territory intelligible, it does not, by itself, fully capture how such discourses are operationalised on the ground. To move beyond a representational critique and towards a situated analysis of power in space, the argument now turns to what is labeled here as spatial theory, specifically, the work of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. It provides the necessary methodological bridge that connects the diverse theoretical strands thus far with the spatial practices and territorial transformations at the heart of this master's thesis.

2.4 Spatial Theory as Bridge: Lefebvre's Triad and Harvey's Spatial Fix

To effectively interrogate how contested borderlines such as the LoC and LAC are produced and legitimised, I aim to integrate spatial theory as a critical analytic layer. Spatial theory positions space as more than a physical container or passive backdrop. Rather, space must be understood as actively produced through social relations, like a dynamic interplay of power and everyday lived practices (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 83). This conceptual approach brings attention from borders as fixed territorial lines to borders as ongoing processes shaped by stated dynamics.

For my analysis, the central element of Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory lies in his spatial triad, which differentiates three interwoven moments or dimensions of space: conceived, perceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). The triad was developed to explain how space is produced under capitalist modernity across architecture and everyday life. In this paper it is adapted to border governance.

In Lefebvre's framework, conceived space refers to the representations of space created by planners, architects, and other authorities, such as maps, territorial plans, and strategic frameworks. These representations present an ordered, rationalised image of space, often created top-down by experts and institutions. In border regions, conceived space appears in military cartographies and administrative infrastructures that assert sovereignty and spatial control. Perceived space, according to Lefebvre, concerns the everyday practices through which individuals experience and navigate space. It includes the ways in which people inhabit, use, and interact with their surroundings. In the context of border governance, perceived space is illustrated through recurring patterns such as border crossings, security patrols, economic exchanges, and interactions with infrastructure. These practices both reproduce and subtly subvert official territorial ordering, thereby exposing the limitations of abstract cartographic rationality.

Finally, lived space captures the symbolic, affective, and cultural dimensions of spatial experience. It refers to the ways in which individuals and

communities imbue space with meaning, memory, and identity. In Lefebvre's original framework, lived space includes embodied experiences and representational spaces. In the context of borders, lived space is exemplified by how border communities ascribe meaning to their environments, through collective memories, religious practices, local narratives, and symbolic reappropriations that challenge state-centred mappings of territory (Lefebvre, 1991).

Lefebvre's critique is applied to abstract space, a homogenised and reductive spatial logic characteristic of modern state planning and capitalist commodification (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 124–125, 308, 337–338). Abstract space reduces diverse realities to uniform grids and administrative modules, while infrastructures privilege visual coherence and calculability. In the process, local histories and social contradictions are often erased. Border infrastructures such as fences, checkpoints, or biometric surveillance exemplify this logic by imposing simplified territorial order on far more complex lived geographies. Against this, Lefebvre (1991, pp. 403–405, 417) describes differential space, which emerges through local appropriations and symbolic reassertions of diversity that resist homogenisation. In borderlands, such spaces foreground embodied experience and local agency. Borders are therefore not only imposed from above; they are also subject to reinterpretation and resistance from below.

Complementing Lefebvre's conceptualisation, David Harvey's work on the spatial dynamics of capitalist accumulation provides a necessary materialist dimension. Harvey argues that capitalist economies routinely seek a 'spatial fix', a geographical resolution to their internal contradictions by expanding into new spaces and embedding surplus capital into new physical arenas, such as infrastructure or territory (Harvey, 1989, pp. 284–299). Border regions, often presented as zones of geopolitical tension and threat, simultaneously become critical sites for economic investment via infrastructural projects. The securitisation of border zones thus operates as an opportunity for capital accumulation through infrastructure construction and resource exploitation. Harvey further traces the contemporary shift in governance from managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, where public authorities act

increasingly as competitive agents to attract global capital (Harvey, 1989, pp. 345–368). This transformation reshapes border areas into speculative landscapes, where state and military actors deploy spectacular infrastructures and development corridors, along with security projects designed both to project authority and to attract investment as a means of manifesting control. Such processes transform contested borders from peripheral frontiers into central nodes within transnational circuits of capital and geopolitical visibility.

Both Harvey and Lefebvre warn against the dangers of spatial abstraction, understood as the reduction of space to capital logics and technocratic rationality. Such abstraction risks erasing social complexity and lived experience. Taken together, their perspectives emphasise how borders can materialise abstract geopolitical and economic rationalities, while concealing the social contradictions and everyday struggles these processes generate.

In this thesis, spatial theory is positioned as a point of connection between material and discursive dimensions of border spaces. The contribution of Lefebvre and Harvey is essential, but it gains its full significance only within the broader theoretical model developed here. From this perspective, borders are not approached as geopolitical outcomes or strategic artefacts, instead they are formations continuously produced through discourses, infrastructures, colonial legacies, and political economies. By emphasising space as both symbolic and material, spatial theory supports a more grounded understanding of how territorial conflicts are governed and contested. This allows the analysis to move beyond representational critique and to address the interrelations of practice, meaning, strategy, and development.

3. Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This thesis employs a qualitative research design tailored specifically to exploring the contested geopolitics, spatial practices, and discursive power structures along the LoC and LAC in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Recognising that standard methodological frameworks, while valuable, seem to not fully capture the relational complexity of the region's geopolitical and postcolonial dynamics, I have chosen to introduce an interpretive coding method architecture developed through iterative application and refinement across other research contexts.

3.2 Coding Architecture (H1–H5): Rationale and Categories

The interpretive coding method architecture applied here operates as a hybrid, multi-layered analytical structure, integrating three complementary methodological stages: deductive, theory-driven coding; inductive cluster formation; and synthetic interpretation. The initial deductive coding draws directly on theoretical categories established from postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994; Chatterjee, 1993), Foucauldian notions of discourse, power, and knowledge (Foucault, 1995, 1980), critical geopolitical frameworks (Ó Tuathail, 1996; Agnew, 1994, 2003), and spatial theory (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1989). These theoretical anchors establish a systematic coding matrix comprising five analytical dimensions, H1 to H5, specifically constructed to trace the nuanced intersections of legitimacy, power, space, and representation.

H1: *Discursive Production of Space* – including cartographic imaginaries, strategic visualisation, and spatial framing

H2: *Representation and Legitimation* – encompassing national myths, security narratives, and developmental framings

H3: *Disciplinary Techniques and Control* – tracing how space is normalised, secured, and regulated through infrastructure and bodies

H4: *Subjectivation and Exclusion* – analysing processes of inclusion, marginalisation, and performative loyalty

H5: *Epistemic Violence and Truth Regimes* – focusing on silenced knowledges, historiographical control, and expert authority.

Each dimension includes multiple subcategories, derived from theoretical concepts but refined during iterative reading. Coding was conducted manually, using a colour-coded annotation system. Each theoretical categorisation in the coded units was assigned a colour-code, and each unit was marked with either conceived, perceived or lived space. This dual-marking system enabled the tracing of both discursive logic and spatial materiality within the same segment. While no specialised software (e.g., MAXQDA) was used, interpretive reliability was ensured through consistent manual cross-referencing of codes, annotations, and with the aid of different GPT models, using specialised custom Agent structures to externally check manual validation (see 3.5). To guarantee reproducibility, transparency, and appropriate thesis length, the detailed coding legend and coded sections can be found in the appendices. This coding book logs each process from single coded unit to coded clusters and coded meta-clusters.

The process was not linear. Re-coding occurred at several points when contradictions, hybrid cases, or thematic tensions emerged; particularly in the overlapping areas. In such instances, theory functioned less as a prescriptive template than as an interpretive compass, guiding a dialogical reading of the material. Following the initial coding phase, codes were clustered inductively into thematic aggregates. These clusters were not predetermined but emerged through repetition across the case-samples. For example, across both Galwan and Kargil material, the repeated association of infrastructure projects with both security and development was clustered under a composite theme of *strategic modernisation*. This cluster merged subcodes from H2.2, H2.3, and H3.4, and exposed the functional overlap between sovereign presence and biopolitical justification.

Clusters were then organised into meta-clusters, each capturing a broader discursive pattern or strategic logic. These meta-clusters allowed for a cross-case empirical synthesis, particularly valuable in comparing distinct contexts

(Kargil's post-1999 nationalisation of space vs. Galwan's transnational spatial ambiguity) while maintaining interpretive coherence. Pahalgam, as a third empirical anchor, further nuanced the analysis. Meta-cluster formation was not aggregative but reflexively theorised: key tensions between state-centric visibility and localised silence, or between imagined cartographies and lived negotiation, were treated as interpretive rather than empirical fact. These moments of dissonance were central to understanding how border regimes operate as both discursive and material formations.

The interpretive architecture was partly inspired by- and aligns methodologically with aspects of qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), particularly regarding the systematic category development, and contextual discourse analysis (Keller, 2012), with its emphasis on context-sensitivity and reflexivity. However, this method architecture differs notably in its structured approach, specifically designed to capture relational dynamics and cross-theoretical intersections more comprehensively. The coding-architecture was first developed and applied in the context of a co-authored paper prepared for the Relating Systems Thinking and Design Symposium 2025, where it produced promising analytical results. Although that work is not yet published at the time of writing, insights and refinements from it were adapted here to the thesis's geopolitical and discursive elements of spatial production.

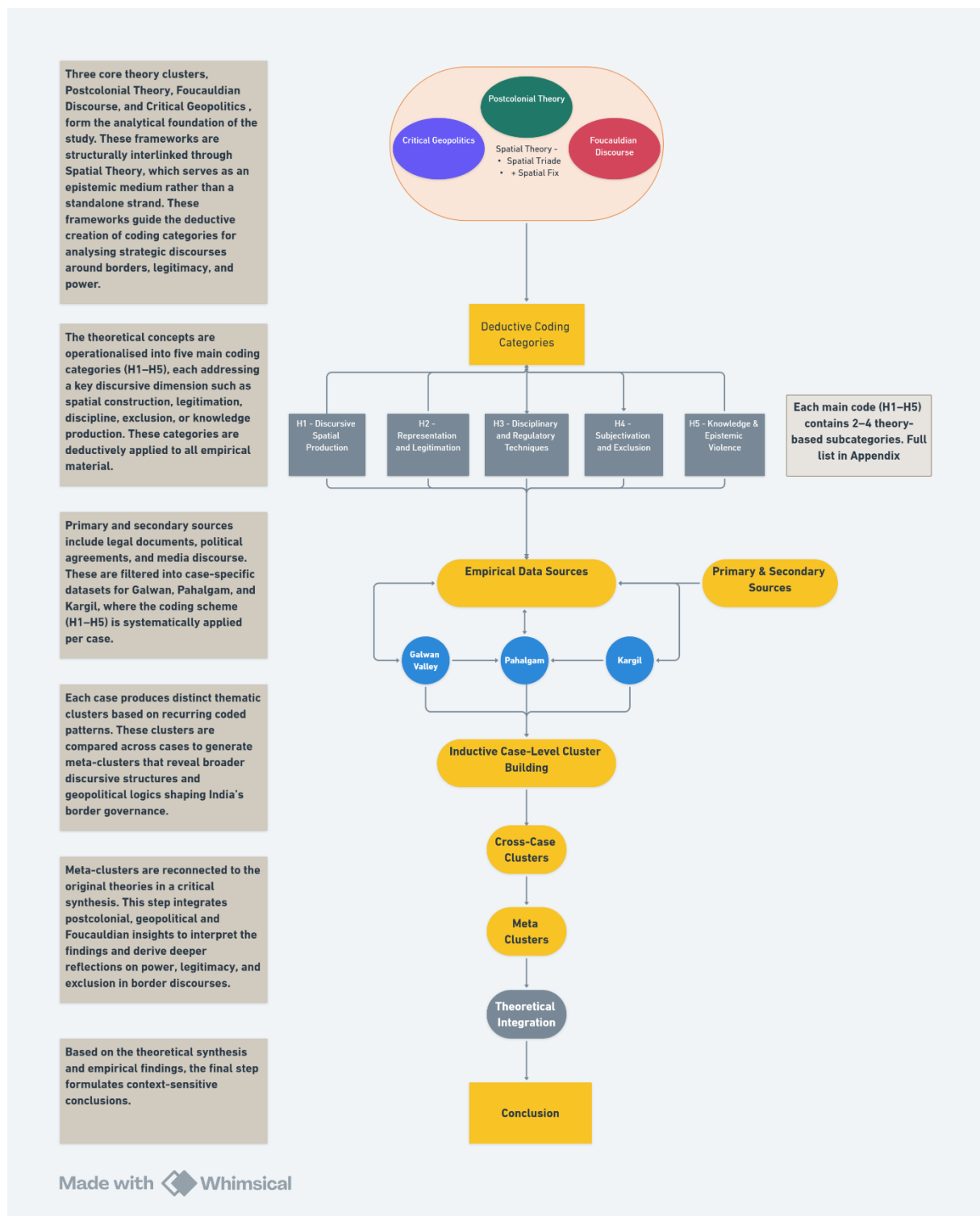


Figure 1. Coding architecture (D. Jaeger, 2025, author's own illustration, created with Whimsical)

3.3 Data Collection and Corpus Construction

This thesis is based on a single, finite empirical corpus. All empirical material used in the analysis is defined and delimited in this section. The corpus was closed prior to coding and interpretation.

Material selection was completed before analytical engagement. Selection relied on empirical and institutional criteria. It did not rely on theoretical categories, anticipated analytical outcomes, or emerging coding results. No distinction was made between “empirical” and “non-empirical” material at the level of coding or analysis. All materials included in the corpus were subjected to the same interpretive coding architecture described in Section 3.2.

The corpus was constructed to analyse how border regimes along the LoC and the LAC are produced, stabilised, and contested through legal, institutional, discursive, and spatial practices. The aim was not comprehensive event reconstruction or full representativeness, but traceable analysis of forms of border governance, production and discourse.

Corpus construction followed three criteria:

Institutional relevance to the governance of the LoC and LAC.

Legal or historical significance for the formation and regulation of the conflicts.

Discursive centrality in official, media, or expert articulations of border-related issues.

Material that clearly met these criteria was included and coded. Where borderline cases occurred, inclusion depended on sustained relevance to LoC or LAC governance within the research’s timeframe.

3.3.1 Internal Differentiation of the Empirical Corpus

The empirical corpus is internally differentiated by analytical function. This differentiation serves clarity of presentation and analytical sequencing. It does not imply hierarchy, epistemic priority, or differences in empirical status.

Two functionally distinct but methodologically equivalent corpus segments are distinguished: “Foundational empirical material”, and “Event-centred empirical material”. Both segments form part of the same empirical corpus. All materials listed in Tables A and B were coded, entered into the coding ledger (in Appendices), and contributed to cluster and meta-cluster formation.

The designation of material as foundational or event-centred is expository. Foundational material empirically analyses the structural and discursive conditions under which the conflicts are constituted. Event-centred material empirically analyses how these conditions are activated, contested, and normalised in concrete crisis episodes.

Table A

Event-Centred Empirical Corpus (Crisis Episodes)

Corpus segment	Material type	Source category	Temporal scope	Analytical function (procedural)	Primary chapters
Kargil War (LoC)	Contemporary reporting, official statements, military briefings, strategic assessments produced during the episode	Government communications (India, Pakistan); domestic and international media; security and policy commentary	May–July 1999	Enables episode-specific tracing of how restraint, violation, legitimacy and status-quo maintenance are articulated during a high-intensity LoC confrontation	5.1
Galwan Valley confrontation (LAC)	Official statements, military briefings, diplomatic readouts, contemporaneous media reporting	Government communications (India, China); domestic and international media; strategic analysis published in-period	May–June 2020	Enables tracing of how presence, restraint, ambiguity and infrastructural signalling are articulated under conditions of an undelimited LAC	5.2
Pahalgam attack and aftermath (LoC)	Official statements, security briefings, diplomatic reactions, contemporaneous media reporting	Government communications (India, Pakistan); international organisations; domestic and international media	April–May 2025	Enables tracing of crisis escalation, justification and containment narratives following a mass-casualty attack without transition to open war	5.3

Table B

Foundational Empirical Corpus (Structural–Contextual)

Corpus segment	Material type	Source category	Temporal scope	Analytical function (procedural)	Primary chapters
Colonial boundary formation in Jammu & Kashmir	Treaties, cartographic records, administrative correspondence, historical reconstruction	Colonial administrative archives; historical scholarship	ca. 1846–1947	Establishes the structural conditions of boundary ambiguity and territorial abstraction preceding postcolonial conflict	4.1.1
Partition, accession and ceasefire formation	Legal instruments, political records, historical analysis, curated testimonies	State documents; UN material; historical scholarship; curated memory institutions	1947–1949	Establishes the initial production of divided sovereignty and provisional territorial control	4.1.2–4.1.3

Corpus segment	Material type	Source category	Temporal scope	Analytical function (procedural)	Primary chapters
Institutionalisation of LoC governance	Bilateral agreements, diplomatic records, institutional documentation	Indian and Pakistani state records; bilateral agreements	1972–1999	Establishes the procedural stabilisation of the LoC as a managed line without final settlement	4.1.3
Constitutional status of Jammu & Kashmir	Constitutional provisions, legal acts, governmental documentation	Indian constitutional and governmental records	1950–2019	Establishes the legal architecture governing autonomy, integration and subsequent reorganisation	4.2.1
Institutional regimes on the LAC	Bilateral agreements, military protocols, diplomatic mechanisms	Indian and Chinese governmental records	1993–2019	Establishes the procedural management of interaction and restraint along an undelimited frontier	4.2.2
Curated memory and national narration of Partition	Museum-based testimonies, curated narrative collections	Public memory institutions and curated archives	Post-1947	Establishes the affective and narrative horizon within which border legitimacy is publicly framed	4.1.3

The complete list of all sources included in the corpus can be found in the reference list.

3.3.4 Selection Logic and Delimitation

Documents were included based on their documented role in the production, regulation, or interpretation of border governance in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Corpus construction was document-based and institutionally anchored.

The corpus was deliberately delimited. It does not include interviews, social media material, or exhaustive multilingual media sampling.

No claims of full representativeness are made. Analytical findings are bounded by the defined corpus.

3.3.5 Coding and Analytical Implications

All empirical material listed in Tables A and B was coded using the same coding architecture. No analytical distinction was made between foundational and event-centred material during coding or clustering.

The functional differentiation of the corpus structures the analysis without creating an epistemic hierarchy. Foundational material empirically anchors the conditions of formation of the conflicts. Event-centred material empirically captures how those conditions are activated, contested, and normalised in specific geopolitical episodes.

All analytical claims advanced in Chapters 4 and 5 are grounded in coded material drawn from this defined corpus. Findings should therefore be read as claims about the empirical material analysed here, not as general statements about all possible perspectives on the LoC and LAC conflicts.

3.4 Data Collection and Source Selection

The following section reflects on two dimensions of the research process: first, the epistemically situated integration of AI-based tools, and second, the ethical considerations informing source selection, authorship, and representation. These ethical concerns reach beyond tool use to include asymmetrical source availability, geopolitical sensitivities, and the portrayal of marginalised perspectives.

Data was gathered through purposive sampling. Each empirical case, namely the Kargil War in 1999, the Galwan Valley skirmish in 2020, and the Pahalgam attack in 2025, was treated as a separate cluster, with documents chosen to capture both event-specific developments and the wider geopolitical narratives reflected in media discourse. These clusters were later brought together through empirical condensing in the interpretive phase of analysis.

Limitations of scope of a Master's thesis and personal language capabilities constrained the systematic inclusion of many sources. As such, relevant references to many positions are primarily drawn from English local- or international sources reporting on official statements, actions, or diplomatic exchanges. The selection criteria were grounded in strategic relevance to the thesis' framework, rather than representativeness in a statistical sense.

Documents were chosen for their discursive density and potential to illuminate dynamics of legitimation, spatial authority, and representational conflict. As such, the material base supports a layered qualitative analysis rather than any claim to general comprehensiveness.

While the discovery and filtering of some supplementary materials, such as media coverage of specific events or hard-to-access grey literature, were supported by AI-based research tools, the majority of the corpus was compiled through extended academic engagement. Key documents, including geopolitical agreements, constitutional texts, and foundational literature, were identified through long-term study of the region during my Bachelor's in Social Anthropology, through conventional literature research, and through direct engagement with academic and non-academic sources during personal stays in India.

3.4 Ethics, Reflexivity, and Use of AI Tools

This research also integrates the use of generative AI tools in accordance with established ethical standards for transparency, authorship, and academic integrity. All AI tools were used between August 2024 and September 2025, across varying stages of the thesis, as well as during its editorial preparation. Large Language Models (LLMs) were employed to support, but not replace, critical thinking and theoretical interpretation, nor the evaluation of empirical material or the final writing process. The use of AI is aligned with current best practices on responsible AI use in academic contexts, including those outlined by the University of Vienna (2024) and the “Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research” by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission (2025)

ChatGPT-4o served as a continuous reflexive companion throughout the early research process. It was used to stress-test the coherence of theoretical arguments, propose structural options for chapter layout, and support the formatting of the multi-level coding matrix. The matrix itself, including the five deductively developed core categories H1–H5, was independently conceptualised and refined by myself. AI input was limited to reflecting on

the internal logic of categories and potential overlaps, never to generate them autonomously. Other earlier versions of ChatGPT (o1 and o3) were used selectively to identify inconsistencies and thematic resonances between cluster drafts and emerging triangulations. These uses remained exploratory and interpretive, never displacing my personal methodological agency.

ChatGPT-4.5 was employed in the early drafting phase of select text segments. These drafts served as scaffolds, not final text: all sections were manually revised, expanded, and subject to rigorous critical scrutiny. No AI-generated text appears in its original form. In the final stages of the editing process, GPT-5 was introduced and used methodically to cross-check the final drafts formal structure, reflect on the coding results and refine certain textual or layout elements, such as coherent UK spelling or the presentation of the coding ledger in appendices. Additionally, the Open-AI-based search assistant-tool 'Deep Research' was used to locate and extract relevant grey literature for the case chapters, especially regional newspaper coverage, policy briefings, and institutional statements related to the Galwan, Kargil, and Pahalgam episodes. This material, which would otherwise have been difficult to obtain, was then manually reviewed, filtered, coded, and cited in line with academic standards. Throughout this paper, AI was used a passive tool and it was certainly never used to fill blank elements with generic input, but it functioned as a dynamic cognitive ledger, an evolving archive that systemically and relationally organises and presents my own conceptual developments, interpretive decisions, and methodological refinements, provided my use of it adheres to principles of ethical integrity. Externalisation of tasks via API bridges or repetitive prompt libraries to automate the research/editorial process were deliberately not introduced, although very feasible, to guarantee personal authorship and critical reflection of the thesis' development.

At no stage were LLMs used to simulate empirical interpretations, literature reviews, or final analytical conclusions. All core contributions, empirical insights, theoretical applications, and methodological decisions, remain the exclusive intellectual product of myself. The integration of large language

models into the research process was always epistemically situated rather than treated as neutral.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This thesis is situated within a field of inquiry where questions of visibility, voice, and discursive legitimacy are not only empirical themes but methodological concerns. Rather than centring procedural ethics or fieldwork, which are addressed in the Declaration in Appendices, this section reflects on the ethical and epistemological implications of working with contested geopolitical narratives, mediated local voices, and the interpretive act of coding. No direct engagement with human participants was conducted; however, the analysis confronts the structural silences and exclusions that pervade strategic, state-driven discourses. In doing so, it draws on critical traditions that demand reflexivity not just in relation to the subject matter, but to the position of the researcher and the epistemic infrastructures through which knowledge is produced. As such, the ethical stance adopted here is one of a more situated critique. Furthermore, the coding process itself was not framed as a technical exercise, but as an interpretive and ethically situated act. Codes were not simply assigned, they were constructed in dialogue with theoretical concepts, empirical material, and broader questions of geopolitical representation. The five deductively developed dimensions emerged through this iterative engagement, and their application involved continuous reflexive scrutiny, particularly regarding whose voices were being made legible, and which positionalities were rendered peripheral. This thesis refrains from treating knowledge as extractable, while explicitly acknowledging practical limitations. The interpretive method architecture aims to foreground the co-productive nature of meaning-making, even when working solely with textual artefacts. It acknowledges that every analysis is shaped by the researcher's positionality, institutional embeddedness, and conceptual commitments. In this sense, ethics is not separated from methodology, it is inscribed in every interpretive choice made.

To now continue into the empirical part of this paper, Chapter 4 begins where many borderlines are born. Not on the map, but in the contradictions of empire. The Line of Control and the Line of Actual Control did not randomly

appear one day: they emerged from a set of legal ambiguities, territorial performances, and violently sedimented narratives. These layers become the beginning of my object of empirical analysis.

4. Constructing Borders, Power, and Legitimacy along the LoC and LAC

4.1 Colonial Genealogies and the Making of Jammu & Kashmir

4.1.1 The Princely State as Imperial Frontier

The territorial entity of Jammu and Kashmir has a long history. In its contemporary form, however, it emerged as a colonial artefact and not mainly through local consolidation. Following the defeat of the Sikh Empire in the First Anglo-Sikh War, the British East India Company signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846, transferring control of the Kashmir Valley and adjoining regions to Maharaja Gulab Singh in exchange for monetary compensation. This transfer was a fiscal and strategic arrangement and less an affirmation of sovereignty (Huttenback, 1964, pp. 477–488). The princely state, in this conception, was not as much of a self-contained polity than a composite frontier zone held together by imperial convenience and mutual arrangement.

As Lamb (1991) outlines in his examination of early British boundary-creation, the spatial configuration of Jammu and Kashmir was deliberately kept vague, particularly in the trans-Himalayan regions bordering Tibet and Central Asia. The British refrained from fixing clear borders in Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and along the frontier with today's Xinjiang Province. This was a conscious strategy: provisionality allowed the Empire to retain diplomatic manoeuvrability in a region of growing geopolitical tension between Britain, Russia, and China (pp. 3–20). Maps often conflicted, and the distinction between claimed and administered territory was blurred, creating a cartographic structure based on ambiguity.

Internally, this ambiguity was mirrored in a deeply fragmented territorial governance. Gulab Singh's Dogra dynasty, Hindu in religion, ruled over a heterogeneous population including a Muslim majority in the Kashmir Valley, large Buddhist communities in Ladakh, and different tribal groups in the northern areas. Administrative authority was uneven, often concentrated in

more accessible or economically productive regions, while others, such as Gilgit or Skardu, were only loosely integrated into the Dogra state apparatus (Schofield, 2010, pp. 1–30). Governance relied on extractive taxation and indirect rule, without establishing continuous representative consent or territorial cohesion.

British oversight reinforced these patterns. The princely state was nominally autonomous but functioned under indirect rule, dependent on British political agents and bound to overarching imperial interests. Decisions regarding frontier management and diplomatic relations, as well as military access, remained within the purview of the colonial administration. For instance, the lease of Gilgit to the British in 1935 and its subsequent return in 1947 illustrate the extent to which territorial control was treated as a strategic commodity within the imperial structure (Lamb, 1991, pp. 15–20).

By the time of decolonisation, these structural legacies had congealed into a political formation marked by contradiction. The state had no stable international borders, no unified internal identity, and no consistent legal framework. Its strategic value, due to its location at the junction of British India, Tibet, and Central Asia, had long outweighed any concern for internal legitimacy or integration in a modern nationalist sense. Thus, when the British withdrawal began in 1947, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir stood as a geopolitical anomaly. It was a space neither clearly within nor outside the emergent postcolonial order.

This inherited ambiguity would prove decisive. Read through Schofield (2010), the lack of definitive boundaries and the asymmetries of internal governance were not historical accidents. They were structuring conditions of colonial statecraft (pp. 1–30). These conditions shaped the crisis of 1947–48 but also formed the substrate upon which later contestations over the LoC and LAC would rest. The fragmentation of sovereignty, both internal and external, remained embedded in the political morphology of the region. The following section will turn to the moment of Partition and Accession, where these unresolved colonial legacies collided with postcolonial state formation. The Maharaja's indecision, the incursion from Pakistani territory, and the signing

of the Instrument of Accession must be read as events within a longer continuum of spatial indeterminacy and legal ambiguity. An imperial inheritance that continues to animate border politics in South Asia until today.

Read analytically, the material assembled in this subsection shows how Jammu and Kashmir was produced as a frontier space through practices of deliberate non-fixation. Treaties, boundary descriptions, and administrative arrangements did not seek to consolidate territory or sovereignty. They maintained ambiguity as a governing condition. The absence of clearly defined borders, the uneven reach of administration, and the reliance on indirect rule were not signs of institutional weakness. They were functional to imperial strategy. Across the sources, territory appears as something held provisionally rather than settled, and authority as something exercised without full integration. Maps, legal instruments, and administrative decisions worked together to stabilise control while deferring resolution. This mode of rule allowed flexibility in diplomacy and security while leaving questions of sovereignty, representation, and belonging unresolved.

This pattern matters because it establishes ambiguity itself as a durable form of governance. The colonial frontier did not collapse with decolonisation. Its spatial logic persisted. The later crises of accession, partition, and line-making unfolded within conditions already shaped by this inherited indeterminacy. What follows in the analysis is therefore not a rupture from the colonial order, but its reconfiguration under postcolonial state formation along the LoC and LAC.

4.1.2 Partition, Accession, and the Ceasefire Line

The end of British colonial rule in August 1947 marked a deepening of inherited tensions. As seen in the preceding discussion of Jammu and Kashmir's colonial constitution, the state's spatial incoherence and political liminality positioned it uneasily within the newly forming postcolonial order. When the Indian Independence Act of 1947 came into force, princely states were formally given the option to accede to either India or Pakistan. However, this legal abstraction collided with complex grounded realities. Jammu and

Kashmir, governed by a Hindu monarch over a Muslim-majority population, stood at the crossroads of religious and geopolitical divisions (Lamb, 1991, pp. 101–121; Schofield, 2010, pp. 27–49).

Unlike many other princely states, the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, refrained from immediate accession. His hesitation should not be understood as a neutral gesture. It was rooted in a desire to maintain sovereign autonomy amid a volatile regional environment, paired with quiet engagements with both dominions in an effort to avoid alignment (Lamb, 1991, pp. 101–121). This effort at strategic non-alignment quickly eroded. On the 22nd of October 1947, armed men from Pakistan's North-Western Frontier Province entered Kashmir, triggering an escalation that would draw both newly independent states into their first open conflict. Schofield (2010) states that the “tribal incursion”, which received indirect support from official Pakistani actors, was aimed at pre-empting a pro-India accession and triggering local rebellion in favour of Pakistan (pp. 27–49).

In response, Hari Singh fled the summer capital of Kashmir, Srinagar, and formally requested Indian military support. The Indian government made its assistance conditional on legal accession to the Republic of India. On the 26th of October 1947, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession, ceding control over defence, communications, and foreign affairs to the Indian state. Troop airlifts began the next day. While India framed this move as constitutionally valid and temporally constrained, this raises doubts over the document's finalisation, particularly regarding the timing and procedural transparency of its signing (Lamb, 1991, pp. 101–121).

The war that followed did not yield a decisive outcome. By the time of the UN-brokered ceasefire in January 1949, Kashmir was effectively divided. India held most of the Kashmir valley, Jammu, and eastern Ladakh; Pakistan controlled Gilgit-Baltistan and the most western part of the Kashmir valley. The ceasefire did not resolve the territorial question but institutionalised a fragmented sovereignty that was spatially entrenched but politically unsettled (Schofield, 2010, pp. 40–49). Pakistan and India initially committed to a UN-led plebiscite to confirm the accession's legitimacy. However, as

control solidified and diplomatic dynamics evolved, the proposal receded from the political agenda. The emerging territorial arrangement would later be renamed the Line of Control after the Shimla Agreement of 1972. But its roots lie in this moment, when colonial spatiality gave way to postcolonial military geography without any clear mechanism of closure.

The material assembled in this subsection shows how Partition and Accession produced a condition of divided sovereignty without establishing a stable settlement. Legal documents, contemporaneous descriptions, and later historical accounts do not converge on a resolved act of state formation. They frame accession as both necessary and provisional, justified through emergency and entitlement while remaining open to dispute. The language used to describe intervention, assistance, and incursion plays a decisive role in shaping legitimacy. Acts of military entry are narrated through opposing moral registers, while legal procedures are presented as sufficient to authorise control without resolving consent. The ceasefire arrangement formalised this tension. It stabilised military positions while deferring any determination of final status.

This moment matters because it translates inherited colonial ambiguity into a postcolonial territorial order governed through suspension rather than closure. Partition does not appear here as a concluded historical break, It operates as a reference point through which claims, justifications, and exclusions are repeatedly organised. The spatial division that later becomes the Line of Control emerges from this unresolved condition, leaving governance possible without settling sovereignty. Subsequent practices along the LoC draw their intelligibility from this origin moment of institutionalised deferral.

4.1.3 From Ceasefire Line to Line of Control

The ceasefire declared on 1 January 1949, following United Nations intervention in the first Indo-Pakistani War, introduced a new territorial arrangement without settling the question of sovereignty. What emerged was the Ceasefire Line. A military demarcation that reflected positions held by Indian- and Pakistani forces at the time of cessation, without any political

consensus or legal agreement over territorial boundaries. This line was never intended as a formal border, it was a pragmatic means to stabilise hostilities while the UN pursued a long-term resolution (Lamb, 1991, pp. 97–112). The Ceasefire Line was delineated by military representatives of India, Pakistan, and the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan. Its drafting relied on topographical maps and ground-level assessments, resulting in an uneven trajectory across Jammu and Kashmir. Crucially, the ceasefire agreement did not treat the line as fixed or sovereign. Instead, it was explicitly provisional—subject to modification pending the plebiscite, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 47. This status rendered the line a placeholder (United Nations Security Council, 1948; Lamb, 1991, pp. 97–112).

Despite this provisional character, the Ceasefire Line began to acquire a degree of permanence. Schofield (2010) explains how both Indian and Pakistani governments increasingly consolidated their respective zones of control, building infrastructure and embedding administrative structures that lent *de facto* legitimacy to their territorial claims (pp. 40–49). The absence of a plebiscite and the indefinite suspension of the demilitarisation process, caused by disagreements over sequencing and mutual distrust, meant that the line's status drifted from temporary ceasefire arrangement toward functional boundary.

This drift was formalised in 1972 with the Shimla Agreement, signed in the aftermath of the Bangladesh War. The agreement marked a discursive and diplomatic pivot, because for the first time, the two states jointly renamed the ceasefire demarcation as the Line of Control. The terminology shift was not merely semantic. It reflected India's growing emphasis on bilateralism and its strategic goal of removing Kashmir from the international agenda. The Shimla Agreement stipulated that future disputes would be resolved bilaterally and that neither party would unilaterally alter the LoC, thereby implicitly recognising it as a functional delimiter of state authority (Government of India & Government of Pakistan, 1972; Schofield, 2010, pp. 40–49). However, the Agreement did not alter the underlying ambiguity of the line. It remained unrecognised as an international border and was not subject to third-party verification. The Agreement failed to clarify the legal nature of

the LoC, leaving open questions about sovereignty, finality, and the status of Kashmir as a whole (Lamb, 1991, pp. 97–112). Both states continued to refer to the region as disputed, even while building competing territorial narratives grounded in control over land, populations, and symbolic cartography.

Thus, the LoC emerged from institutionalised deferral. Its evolution from ceasefire line to quasi-border illustrates how territorial governance in Kashmir has been shaped by legal indeterminacy. While it has stabilised hostilities at times, it has also served as an object of friction; contested in discourse and deeply embedded in national imaginaries on both sides.

The effects of Partition did not unfold solely within the domain of diplomatic treaties and princely decisions. They erupted into the lived fabric of the subcontinent, shaping memories and people long before and long after legal borders were codified. While Jammu and Kashmir was entangled in a complex matrix of accession politics and military intervention, its transformation occurred within a wider regional climate marked by violent dislocation and existential uncertainty. Before I can conclude this first part of the empirical part of the thesis, there is the urgency to contextualise this broader condition. This section foregrounds two testimonies from *“Partition: Stories of Separation”* (Ahluwalia, 2018), a curated volume produced in conjunction with the Partition Museum in Amritsar, an institution dedicated to commemorating the human experience of Partition in all its plurality. A museum I would recommend visiting in person when in Punjab. Written and compiled by Mallika Ahluwalia, the museum’s CEO and co-founder, the collection documents a cross-section of Partition narratives, drawn from diverse backgrounds and regions across present-day India and Pakistan. These accounts are not from Kashmir, but their inclusion here is important and deliberate: they reflect the wider trauma of Partition, a shared rupture between India and Pakistan that did not discriminate by geography, religion, or class. It affected all communities, regardless of their location or status, and forms the affective background against which the Kashmir conflict must be situated. For this reason, I decided to include them nonetheless. Without the positionality to the broader rupture of Partition, my analysis of Kashmir would remain shallow.

The first narrative is that of Captain Manmohan Singh Kohli, one of India's most well-known mountaineers and the leader of the 1965 Everest expedition. His story recounts his family's flight from Haripur in present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. They delayed their departure to allow him to complete his matriculation exams, hoping that discipline and prayer might shield them from collapse. That hope was shattered when Haripur was burned and overrun. The family escaped, disguised, passing through a militarised and disintegrating public sphere (Ahluwalia, 2018, pp. 26-37). Kohli recalls friends turning into informants, refugee camps haunted by the disappearances of women, and a targeted train attack that nearly killed his family. For him, the newly established border was not a cartographic abstraction. Instead it was a terrain of exposure, deciding over life or death. His story ends with an enrolment in Amritsar that marked the beginning of a partitioned life, shaped irreversibly by violence.

The second account is from Gulzar, one of India's prominent poets and lyricists, whose writings have profoundly shaped Indian cultural memory. Since he had been displaced by Partition as a child, he reflected later on:

"Countries can be divided, land can be divided, roads can be divided - but you were dividing people, dividing cultures. These cannot be severed. How will you partition the air? The trees that were split will grow again, and their shadows will fall on one side of the border in the morning, and the other side in the afternoon. There is no use in cutting shadows." (Ahluwalia, 2018, p. 60).

The metaphor condenses a form of historical affect: how Partition transformed rooted lives into narratives of drift. Gulzar's memory is in the sensory and emotional dislocation that many millions experienced. This is the context in which the historical framing of the contemporary border conflicts between India and Pakistan have to be read.

While neither Gulzar nor Kohli directly narrates the events of Partition in Kashmir, their testimonies offer insight into how displacement and national belonging have been constructed in post-Partition India. Their stories reflect the broader patterns in which Partition trauma was absorbed into dominant narratives of state-building. Their inclusion in this chapter is not intended to-

and is unable to substitute or universalise the Kashmiri and Ladakhi experience. These narratives are read critically as cultural artefacts that contextualise the asymmetries of voice, power, and visibility in post-1947 South Asia. These, and similar, affective afterlives were gradually sedimented into institutional forms. The Shimla Agreement and the establishment of the LoC did not close the wound of Partition.

The Analysis of the sources of this subsection shows how the ceasefire line was transformed from a provisional military arrangement into a durable object of governance without ever being settled as a border. Legal documents, diplomatic agreements, and administrative practices repeatedly defer questions of sovereignty while stabilising control on the ground. The renaming of the ceasefire line as the Line of Control formalised this shift. It normalised an arrangement that combined permanence in practice with ambiguity in law.

This process reorganises the legacy of Partition. The LoC emerges as a mechanism through which unresolved claims are managed rather than settled. Governance becomes possible precisely because finality is suspended. Territorial authority is exercised through repetition, infrastructure, and security routines, not through legal closure.

The Partition testimonies included here situate this institutional process within a wider landscape of displacement that shaped postcolonial state formation across the subcontinent. They do not document Kashmir directly. They register how territorial division was lived as rupture and loss, and how these experiences were gradually absorbed into national narratives rather than addressed as ongoing political questions. Read alongside the institutional material, they clarify how violence and displacement became background conditions of governance rather than objects of resolution.

The Line of Control condensed an unresolved historical rupture into an administrable spatial form. It stabilised control while leaving sovereignty open. What remained unsettled was made governable through the very structure that claimed to contain it.

4.2 Institutional Power and the Legal Architecture

4.2.1 *Article 370 and Constitutional Reorganisation*

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, long perceived as a provisional mechanism, formalised Jammu and Kashmir's distinct constitutional status within the Republic of India. Originally embedded in Part XXI of the Constitution, under the heading "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions", it reflected the negotiated terms under which the princely state acceded to India in 1947 (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice. (2024). Instead of establishing full integration, Article 370 preserved a limited set of central powers, specifically in the domains of defence, foreign affairs, and communications, while all other legislative matters remained under the purview of the state's own institutions. Medha (2019, pp. 2–3) elaborates, this arrangement represented a constitutional compromise, codifying both accession and autonomy within the emerging postcolonial federal structure.

Legally, this autonomy was articulated through Article 370(1)(b), which stated that Union laws could apply to Jammu and Kashmir only in areas corresponding to the Instrument of Accession and only with the consultation or concurrence of the state government. Moreover, Article 370(3) imposed a procedural safeguard. Any modification or abrogation required a Presidential order supported by a recommendation from the state's Constituent Assembly, a body which ceased to exist after 1957 and was never reconstituted. Thus, the article's original architecture created both a legal framework for asymmetrical federalism and an implicit structural limitation on its own repeal (Medha, 2019; Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice (2024).

This provisionality, however, became a site of political contention rather than resolution. Although Article 370 appeared to postpone final integration, it increasingly came to symbolise constitutional dissent from the Indian centre. Its meaning was never static, as it evolved through shifting institutional interpretations. Its formal abrogation in August 2019 marked a legal rupture and the culmination of a long erosion of regional autonomy, initiated through administrative centralisation and finalised through constitutional reengineering.

Beyond the legal annulment of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy, the government's decision in August 2019 also triggered a territorial and institutional transformation that redefined the region's status within the Indian Union. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, enacted alongside the revocation of Article 370, dissolved the state's former federal status and split it into two distinct Union Territories. Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh, both governed directly from Delhi. Unlike most other Indian regions, Jammu & Kashmir would no longer have constitutional protections or full legislative powers, while Ladakh was placed under central administration without any elected assembly. This move represented a clear downgrading of the region's position within India's federal structure. According to Medha (2019), the bifurcation left Kashmir "far less autonomous than other states within the Indian federation," (pp. 3–4), signifying not only a juridical intervention but a symbolic gesture of central dominance.

4.2.2 Regimes and Agreements on the LAC

The central government justified this reorganisation by invoking a developmental rationale, claiming to respond to long-standing demands from Ladakh's Buddhist population. Yet, no transparent consultation was held with affected communities (Medha, 2019, p. 3). This instrumental deployment of regional aspiration functions as a fragmenting discourse: by decoupling Ladakh from the broader Kashmiri identity and institutional structure, the state reframed the border region as a distinct, governable, and ostensibly depoliticised space. This reframing not only facilitates administrative control but also erodes the symbolic cohesion of the contested territory. In this light, the Reorganisation Act appears not as a neutral act of administrative efficiency but as a calculated spatial intervention. It dissolves the federal compromise that once underpinned India's claim to constitutional pluralism in Kashmir and replaces it with a centralised structure designed to consolidate authority.

The legal and institutional architecture governing Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh is tied to wider transformations in space, history and strategy. The revocation of Article 370 and the subsequent territorial reorganisation marked a constitutional turning point that condensed longer trajectories of

fragmentation and reconfiguration. These trajectories run through laws and state structures, but also take shape in representations and in the deployment of developmental or security discourses. To trace how such shifts unfold beyond formal legal frameworks, and how they are constructed, justified and contested in discourse, the analysis now moves from institutional description to theoretical engagement. The next section opens a theory-driven examination of the discursive architectures underpinning India's border regimes in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, building on the empirical foundations established above.

The Materials examined in Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 show how constitutional differentiation functioned as a mode of governance rather than as a temporary exception. Article 370 seems to structure integration. By framing autonomy as provisional and procedurally mediated, the provision created a legal space in which asymmetry could be managed, narrowed, and reinterpreted without resolving questions of consent or final status.

The measures enacted in August 2019 mark a shift in how this asymmetry was administered. The revocation of Article 370 and the territorial reorganisation did not introduce central authority into a previously autonomous domain. They reconfigured an existing hierarchy by converting conditional constitutional differentiation into direct executive control. Legal procedure became the vehicle through which political closure was asserted, while continuity was maintained through formal constitutional language.

The separation of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh further clarifies this transformation. Administrative and developmental rationales reframed territorial restructuring as technical adjustment rather than constitutional rupture. In doing so, spatial reorganisation was detached from historical agreement and representative consent. Ladakh, in particular, was constituted as a distinct object of governance, rendered legible through administrative simplification and direct central oversight.

Taken together, these materials show how law and administration operate as spatial instruments. Authority is not exercised outside the constitutional domain. It is produced through it. The legal architecture examined here does

not merely reflect power relations. It reorganises the conditions under which territorial legitimacy, participation, and contestation become possible.

4.3 Discursive Architectures and Strategic Border Constructions

Having traced the colonial formation of Jammu and Kashmir and the subsequent legal reordering of its constitutional status, this chapter now shifts from empirical-historical contextualisation and analysis to theory-based interpretation. This is the first direct analytical application of the methodological framework outlined earlier. Using the deductive–inductive coding matrix, the analysis reads the materials examined in Sections 4.1 to 4.2 for recurring discursive mechanisms through which territorial authority, legitimacy claims, and spatial order are produced and stabilised. The result is a set of clusters that condense these mechanisms across the chapter.

These clusters do not function as final results. They operate as analytic units that condense historically sedimented power relations as patterned discursive formations. Their purpose is twofold. They further structure the interpretation of the legal and historical record in Chapter 4. They also establish a transferable analytical template that will be applied to the crisis episodes examined later along the LoC and the LAC , including Kargil, Galwan, and Pahalgam. Meta-cluster formation and final analysis will follow only after the cross-case comparison has been completed.

Cluster 1: Colonial Cartographies and Epistemic Control

This cluster is constructed from coded materials classified under KE-01, drawing primarily on colonial treaties, cartographic records, and administrative descriptions analysed in Sections 4.1.1–4.1.2. The dominant codes capture how archival and cartographic practices pre-configure legitimacy by rendering territory legible to imperial authority. The analytical focus lies on how representational artefacts, rather than lived territorial relations, organise claims to sovereignty. In Lefebvrian terms, the cluster operates at the level of conceived space, where abstract representations stabilise control without resolving political integration.

The materials show that Jammu and Kashmir was not inherited as a coherent territorial unit but produced as a governable frontier through colonial cartographic and archival practices. Sovereignty was not grounded in lived territorial relations. It was assembled through treaties, maps, and administrative descriptions that rendered space legible to imperial authority. The Treaty of Amritsar exemplifies this logic. Territory appears as a transferable object, detached from social or political consent and anchored instead in imperial transaction and strategic calculation (Lamb, 1991, pp. 3–20).

Across the colonial record, spatial ambiguity functions as a governing technique rather than an administrative failure. The absence of fixed borders, the coexistence of conflicting maps, and the distinction between claimed and administered space allowed imperial authorities to exercise control without committing to territorial closure. Blank or indeterminate zones on colonial maps did not signal ignorance. They preserved room for manoeuvre, intervention, and future redefinition (Lamb, 1991, pp. 13–17). Authority was stabilised through representation rather than consolidation.

This cartographic order operated as an epistemic regime. Treaties, boundary descriptions, and official correspondence did not merely document territory. They produced categories of governability that framed sovereignty as a technical problem to be managed through expertise. In Foucauldian terms, these materials functioned as elements of a truth regime in which legal and cartographic knowledge authorised control while displacing questions of belonging, consent, and internal legitimacy (Foucault, 1980).

Within this regime, Kashmir was repeatedly described through strategic spatial metaphors. It appeared as a buffer, a crossroads, or a zone of instability. Such descriptors aligned the region with broader imperial and later geopolitical imaginaries, scripting it into logics of security and intervention (Ó Tuathail, 1996). These metaphors did not reflect an objective spatial condition. They performed it, naturalising external authority by framing territorial uncertainty as inherent and therefore governable only through strategic oversight.

Read through Lefebvre's spatial triad, this cluster is anchored in conceived space. Kashmir emerges as an abstract object of administration, defined through representational practices rather than lived social relations. This conceived spatial order did not dissolve with decolonisation. It provided the epistemic substrate upon which later territorial regimes were constructed. The Line of Control, constitutional differentiation under Article 370, and subsequent legal-administrative interventions all draw on this inherited mode of spatial reasoning, in which ambiguity remains a resource of governance rather than a problem to be resolved.

Cluster 2: Partition as Origin Discourse

This cluster is derived from coded units grouped under KE-02, based on legal documents, historical reconstructions, and diplomatic narratives examined in Section 4.1.2. The analysis traces how accession, incursion, and emergency are discursively stabilised without resolving sovereignty. The cluster spans conceived space, where legal narratives project authority, and perceived space, where spatial metaphors of vulnerability and volatility organise geopolitical reasoning.

Partition operates as a historical event but it is especially functioning as a foundational origin discourse. A performative layer that legitimises contemporary state authority through the selective narration of sovereignty. The narrative foregrounds Maharaja Hari Singh's decision not to accede to either India or Pakistan at the time of Partition, portraying this as a conscious articulation of Jammu & Kashmir's independent agency. This invocation of princely autonomy functions discursively to establish a legal-historical lineage for India's subsequent claims, what Chatterjee (1993, pp. 3–13) might describe as a curated narrative of historical belonging that mirrors, yet subverts, colonial modalities of legitimation. By positioning accession as a deferred but ultimately voluntary act, the discourse enacts a postcolonial sovereignty that is both continuous and differentiated from colonial rule. It is a form of rearticulated authority deeply embedded in historical storytelling (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 76–94).

This strategic narration is complemented by the discursive construction of threat through the semantic framing of the so called tribal invasion of October 1947. The use of terms such as “incursion,” “rebellion,” and “Pakistan-backed” not only delegitimises the agency of local insurgents but casts Pakistan as a morally intrusive actor. An enemy that violates the imagined order established by legal succession. This language performs a dual function. It marks India’s actions as reactive and stabilising, while positioning Pakistan as externally disruptive. In Said’s (1978) terms, this constitutes an Orientalist Othering; the depiction of Pakistan as irrational, violent, and outside legitimate norms of statecraft (pp. 201–225). Similarly, Ó Tuathail’s (1996) geopolitics of threat construction frames this representational act as part of a broader strategic scripting, in which spatial interventions are justified through moral hierarchies.

Spatially, the region is represented as a territory in flux but it is also represented as a volatile crossroads of religious, and geopolitical cleavages. This metaphor describes Kashmir’s material location, and it’s discursively produces a geopolitical imaginary wherein territorial control equates to managing ‘civilisational’ fault lines. Read through Ó Tuathail (1996), such spatial scripting serves to naturalise geopolitical interventions by embedding them within a broader cartography of insecurity and identity. Here, Lefebvre’s spatial triad becomes visible: Jammu & Kashmir emerges as both conceived space (a strategic projection of state rationality) and perceived space (laden with affective resonances of fragmentation and vulnerability). The analytical movement from administrative legality to spatialised anxiety mirrors how space becomes both the object and the medium of geopolitical governance.

Taken together, these representational logics form a cluster in which Partition appears as an ongoing temporal architecture that is continually revisited. Through this origin discourse, sovereignty is reaffirmed again and again by means of legal claims, constructions of the other, and spatial imaginaries. As in Chatterjee’s conception of postcolonial nationalism, such narratives differentiate themselves through the appropriation and localisation of legitimising histories (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 3–13; 2004, pp. 131–145). The cluster shows how historical belonging, moral boundary-drawing, and spatial

framing converge to sustain a logic of postcolonial authority, enacting legitimacy through repetition rather than closure.

Cluster 3: Line-Making as Discourse

This cluster is constructed from materials coded under KE-03, drawing on ceasefire agreements, bilateral treaties, and state communications analysed in Section 4.1.3. The coding tracks how the transition from Ceasefire Line to Line of Control re-articulates spatial ambiguity as governable order. Analytically, the cluster operates within conceived space, where discursive designation stabilises authority without legal closure.

The transformation of a fluid military demarcation into a codified geopolitical boundary, the shift from Ceasefire Line to Line of Control, epitomises the discursive work involved in territorial consolidation. As traced in Chapter 4.1.3, this process cannot be understood solely through the lens of international legal negotiation or statecraft. Rather, it requires attention to the symbolic and performative architectures that produce space as contested. At the centre of this transformation lies the act of naming. To designate a line as a 'Line of Control' is not a neutral cartographic description. Instead, It can be read as a geopolitical statement that reifies the authority of the Indian or Pakistani state over a volatile terrain. Such naming practices encode geopolitical meaning, reducing spatial complexity into functional binaries. Control versus incursion, governance versus chaos (Ó Tuathail, 1996). I would argue that the naming of the LoC also functions as Foucauldian truth regime. It works as institutionalised system of knowledge production that authorises certain representations of reality while excluding others. Within this discursive formation, the absence of a plebiscite ceases to appear as a political failure. It is overwritten by institutional narratives that present the LoC as the naturalised expression of territorial stability. This discursive stabilisation is further reinforced by the Shimla Agreement, which rearticulates the ceasefire understanding in terms of bilateral diplomacy and territorial mutuality. While framed as a gesture towards peace, the agreement's insistence on the bilateral nature of the dispute simultaneously delegitimises international mediation, thereby insulating the LoC from

broader legal scrutiny. This maneuver reflects Foucault's (1980) insight that modern governance operates through dispositifs that do not resolve conflict. They prefer to strategically contain it within manageable discursive boundaries.

The LoC thus emerges as a discursive line, a geopolitical technology that transforms spatial ambiguity into institutional legibility. Lefebvre's (1991) conceived space is descriptive once again. The LoC is not a line on the ground; it is a spatial imagination. It represents the state's attempt to order space through representational practices that efface contingency and obscure the violent histories of its production. The discursive framing of the LoC also activates the security imaginary. By embedding the line within a narrative of territorial defence, state discourse mobilises the logics of threat and exception. Ó Tuathail's geopolitical reasoning becomes salient. The LoC is continually reinscribed through performative acts of statehood that require both an internal audience (citizens) and an external one (international observers). This cluster reveals how line-making is a discursive event. It produces space and authority, influencing memory through the combination of framing and institutional repetition. The LoC, in this sense, is both a product and producer of power, its durability resting on the slow but steady sedimentation of geopolitical discourse.

Cluster 4: Memory and Silencing

This cluster draws on coded units grouped under KE-04, based on curated testimonies, constitutional narratives, and institutional framings analysed across Sections 4.1.3 and 4.2.1. The materials are read for how memory becomes legible only through sanctioned forms, while other experiences remain structurally excluded. In Lefebvre's triad, the cluster centres on lived space, foregrounding how affect and remembrance are governed through classificatory regimes.

This cluster examines state- and elite-mediated memory within the analysed corpus. The focus lies on Partition as the organising origin discourse and on the constitutional and developmental framings surrounding Article 370. The

cluster engages with representations of memory rather than Kashmiri or Ladakhi testimonies.

I read the Kohli and Gulzar accounts from the Partition Museum in Amritsar as curated artefacts of national memory that make the affective afterlife of Partition legible within categories admissible to the dominant discourse. Their inclusion is a deliberate methodological choice, as they anchor the chapter in Partition's wider experiential horizon while avoiding the ventriloquism of Kashmiri or Ladakhi testimonies that are absent from my corpus and often structurally inaudible within the regimes that organise public remembrance. Following Spivak, the point is not that subaltern voices are 'missing,' but that they are positioned outside the conditions of intelligibility, such that audibility depends on prior classificatory frames (Spivak, 1988). By foregrounding museum-based narratives whose legibility is institutionally secured, the cluster highlights the politics of selection: these testimonies situate the Kashmir discussion within Partition's *longue durée* without appropriating voices I cannot represent, while also exposing how remembrance is governed. These dynamics intensify where the withdrawal of autonomy is framed as constitutional necessity and developmental rationality. This casts legitimacy as historical continuity while displacing locally grounded deliberation and presenting the rollback as necessary and inevitable. Bhabha's notion of the pedagogical temporality of the nation helps capture this formation: the state claims to speak in the name of inherited continuity while dislocating alternative temporalities of belonging (Bhabha, 1994). Within this regime, remembrance gains political traction only when mediated through sanctioned vocabularies. Divergent memories are reclassified as affective deviation or latent threat. Silencing thus operates as an effect of classification embedded in the structures that govern visibility. Audibility depends on compliance with loyalty scripts and admissible categories; what falls outside is rendered inaudible even when narrated.

The spatial imprint is evident. Constitutional and cartographic frames, as conceived space, configure the conditions under which memory becomes audible in lived space: who may speak in and for Kashmir, who appears only as an object of security or development, and where remembrance can be

staged safely without controversy. This coupling of time and space anchors border order along the LoC and LAC by allocating visibility and normalising particular subject positions. The corpus demonstrates how memory is governed with Partition functioning as origin logic; Article 370 embodies temporal politics; textual artefacts provide personalised yet regulated testimony. Silencing emerges here as a productive effect of rule, operating through archives, vocabularies, and classifications that shape who becomes visible and how belonging is performed.

Cluster 5 – Constitutional Normalisation and Legal Hegemony

This cluster is formed from coded materials under **KE-05**, drawing on constitutional provisions, presidential orders, and legal interpretations analysed in Section 4.2.1. The coding traces how legality is mobilised to normalise territorial reconfiguration while maintaining procedural continuity. The analytical emphasis lies on conceived space, where juridical abstraction reorganises political authority without participatory consent.

The constitutional integration of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh has relied on formal legal instruments, while it has been discursively constructed through a regime of truth that gradually delegitimises the regions' autonomies by reframing legal exceptions as outdated or procedurally overcome. This discursive strategy, reflects what Foucault (1980, pp. 109–133) describes as the productive function of power/knowledge formations, where the Indian state mobilises legal language to produce a specific geopolitical order in which its authority appears natural and self-evident.

The legal trajectory anchored in Article 370 and its appendices (such as the Instrument of Accession and subsequent presidential orders) becomes a repository of truth effects. The frequent references to temporariness, exceptionalism, or full integration retroactively authorise each new legal act, forming a recursive logic of legitimation. The constitutional text is thereby transformed into a space of scripted sovereignty, aligned with Lefebvre's (1991) conceived space, where governance is enacted through normative abstraction and spatialised through law. Simultaneously, the absence of institutional consent from local bodies, particularly after the 2018 dissolution

of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly and the imposition of President's Rule, points to a structural asymmetry. The revocation of autonomy via the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act was legally framed as a continuation of constitutional procedure, despite the lack of a representative entity to endorse the changes. This absence aligns with Foucault (1995) on how power often functions through the emptying of agency while retaining the appearance of proceduralism. This juridico-political architecture also operates performatively. Following Bhabha (1994), one may read the Indian state's constitutional interventions as acts of national performativity. These acts, from the 1954 constitutional order to the 2019 reorganisation, simulate an unbroken logic of national integration while erasing the ruptures and contestations that have marked India's political history. Lastly, the absence of Kashmiri participation in these legal-political acts cannot yet be coded as a full subaltern intervention, but the structural exclusion already identified signals a deeper epistemic marginalisation.

Cluster 6 - Developmental Territorialisation and Spatial Discipline

The reorganisation of the Jammu & Kashmir State into two Union Territories in August 2019 marks a discursive and spatial recalibration of Indian sovereignty. Justified through a lexicon of development, the reform narrative foregrounds the state's aspiration to bring modernity and order to a supposedly underdeveloped periphery. In this context, development operates as a strategic discourse of legitimisation. It is a *dispositif* that recodes the flow of capital, space and authority under the guise of national upliftment (Harvey, 1989). The government's assertion that the reorganisation responded to long-standing demands of the people reveals the performative logic of national integration (Chatterjee, 2004), in which the state constructs its own legitimacy through selectively imagined popular will. More significantly, the spatial language of governance intensifies: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are no longer conceptualised as semi-autonomous regions with unique constitutional status. They became administered units to be directly controlled from the political centre. This shift from negotiated federalism to bureaucratic command mirrors a broader movement towards conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991), where spatial representation becomes an instrument

of control. The language of administrative efficacy, supported by references to neutral expertise and institutional rationality, reinforces the regime of truth (Foucault, 1980) surrounding the state's authority to define and reorganise its territorial margins. The role of infrastructure within this logic is not incidental. As Harvey (1989) points out, infrastructure is never purely technical, though it is inherently political. In the case of Jammu & Kashmir, connectivity projects do not link spaces. They discipline them, binding them to the centre and subjecting them to new forms of logistical sovereignty. This infrastructural disciplining represents an extension of state power into the everyday life of peripheral regions.

This logic culminates in the symbolic and spatial recoding of Ladakh, a region now frequently portrayed as a distinct, remote, yet governable frontier with inflowing capital and newly built infrastructure. The narrative of distinctiveness, while ostensibly recognising Ladakh's unique cultural identity, simultaneously removes it from political representation, justifying centralised rule through appeals to security. The territory is not just governed, it is made governable discursively. This reflects a panoptic spatial order (Foucault, 1995), where visibility becomes a technique of control.

As such, Ladakh emerges as a reorganised administrative unit and laboratory of post-Article 370 governance, where the Indian state experiments with new modes of presence, visibility, surveillance, and infrastructural entrenchment. This shift prepares the ground for a distinct form of spatial conflict. Less visible than outright war, but no less consequential. In this sense, Ladakh becomes a hinge, linking the internal reterritorialisation of India's constitutional space with its external confrontation along the LAC. The following cases will explore how these discursive and infrastructural architectures extend into geopolitical tensions, where questions of visibility and sovereignty, of securitisation discourse and development take on explicit stakes.

5. Cases: Strategic Conflicts and Discursive Border Crises

Fine-analysis and corpus anchor. Chapter 5 draws on the event-centred corpus (Table A) and operationalises each episode within the same deductive–inductive matrix used in Chapter 4. The material base consists of contemporaneous reporting, official statements, diplomatic readouts, military briefings, and in-period strategic assessments specific to each crisis episode. Coding proceeds from material features to coded units, from coded units to case-clusters, and only then to interpretive claims.

What follows shifts from design to practice. The concern here is how border governance becomes visible in concrete episodes, through movement and restraint, through meetings and patrols, and through the ways violence and risk are publicly narrated. Two sites anchor this move from architecture to event. The Kargil conflict refers to a high-altitude confrontation along the Line of Control in the western Himalaya, where a conventional territorial clash was folded into a moralised story about defending an established line. By contrast, the Galwan Valley Clash in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control exposes a different register of border politics: an encounter on an imprecisely delimited line, structured as much by procedures, patrolling practices and infrastructural presence as by firepower. Taken together, these episodes show how the LoC and the LAC mobilise distinct repertoires of control and legitimation.

A final subsection turns to the Pahalgam attack in Kashmir as a culminating moment. Positioned through media reporting, it marks the end-point of a longer build-up and a renewed phase of India–Pakistan confrontations, before the crisis ebbed again. While it ultimately stopped short of open war, the trajectory made further escalation appear very possible. It also underscores that all three principal actors in this border complex, India, Pakistan and China, are nuclear-armed.

5.1 The Kargil War

The Srinagar–Leh road threads Kargil through deep valleys and sheer ridges, its narrow hairpins both vital and exposed. When I travelled this route, more

than two decades after the fighting, overgrown shell fragments, rusting artillery cases, and pockmarked rock faces from past bombardments still marked the slopes. Kargil lies on the western frontier of Ladakh, close to the border to the Kashmir Valley. Through winter, exposed posts at altitude were often thinned out, leaving ridgelines dominating the Srinagar–Leh corridor vulnerable to seasonal contestation. In early May 1999, Indian patrols reported that heights overlooking key approaches to Ladakh had been occupied, and exchanges of fire intensified. New Delhi read this as a direct threat to connectivity and state reach in a high-altitude periphery, framing its response as restoration of the status quo on its side of the line (Shakoor, 1999, pp. 52, 54–55). Contemporary Indian media captured both the immediacy of the danger and the mobilisation of sentiment. Cover stories on sacrifice and a nationwide patriotic upsurge became emblematic of the national mood (India Today, 1999a, 1999b). Editorial reflections also contrasted the optimism of the February 1999 Lahore Declaration with the rupture brought by Kargil, contributing to a discourse of betrayal in India (Indian Express, 1999). Under a shadow after the 1998 Pakistani nuclear tests, escalation control was as much a governance question, as it was a military one; high-level diplomacy in early July aimed to restore pre-conflict positions (The Washington Post, 1999).

5.1.1 India's Strategic Trajectories

India paired tight operational aims with disciplined signalling and active diplomacy. Authorities emphasised restraint and insisted that forces would not cross the LoC. A widely noted U.S. line recorded at the time: “to our knowledge, India has not struck over the Line of Control, deliberately or accidentally” (Tellis, Fair, & Medby, 2001, p. 22), publicly validated India's posture and narrowed Pakistan's manoeuvring room. The G-8 expressed deep concern and linked de-escalation to the end of infiltration and a return to the line (Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22).

Operationally, New Delhi accepted the cost of high-altitude assaults to re-establish control of ridge lines within the LoC constraint. In Shakoor's (1999) reading, this was less tactical bravado than a statecraft choice to restore reach and administrative legibility in a difficult periphery without widening

the theatre (p. 55). Media narratives reinforced this self-limiting posture by elevating frontline figures and framing the campaign as a disciplined restoration rather than a revisionist move (India Today, 1999a, 1999b). Taken together, strategic restraint and evocative public imagery proved consequential for external support and for consolidating the LoC as a reference line in public discourse (Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22).

Analytically, this subsection captures how restraint is produced as a security truth through external validation and spatial practice. The insistence on not crossing the LoC functions as a security grammar that frames India's conduct as stabilising rather than escalatory, while third-party confirmations and diplomatic endorsements convert that framing into an authoritative reference point. At the same time, restraint is not purely discursive. It is enacted materially through ridge-line control, patrol regimes, and the occupation of commanding heights, which translate doctrine into visible spatial order. Authority is thus assembled across registers: conceived through restraint narratives and expert validation, and perceived through terrain-based control that renders restraint legible on the ground. In this configuration, the LoC is consolidated less through legal finality than through the alignment of security language, external expertise, and spatial practices that make restraint appear both credible and enforceable.

5.1.2 Pakistan's Strategic Decisions and Public Framing

Islamabad situated Kargil within an unsettled dispute, resisting any ascription of finality to the LoC. Officials treated the line as provisional under the Shimla Agreement and drew on precedents such as the Siachen-Glacier delining to argue that facts on the ground had shifted before; hence, the line should not be policed as if it were a recognised border (Shakoor, 1999, pp. 55–57). Public argumentation alternated between deniability (foregrounding “mujahideen” as forward elements) and the claim that the confrontation could not be reduced to boundary-keeping. Contemporaneous statements by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz emphasised internationalising Kashmir and the need for talks, while later retrospectives acknowledged the political costs of the operation inside Pakistan (Rediff, 1999; Dawn, 2018). As external pressure mounted, diplomatic isolation deepened; with U.S. messaging aligning de-

escalation to a clear withdrawal pathway, the Clinton–Sharif understanding on 4 July 1999 made a return to previous positions the only politically viable outcome (Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22; The Washington Post, 1999).

After coding this subtextual data it seems that by foregrounding the line's non-final character, Pakistani state discourse sustains an alternative regime of truth in which territorial closure is continuously deferred. Historical references, selective precedents, and the oscillation between deniability and diplomatic appeal do not resolve ambiguity; they actively preserve it as a resource. Within this framing, sovereignty is argued genealogically rather than territorially, anchored in competing origin stories and labelling practices that keep the dispute narratively open. Authority here is produced in the register of argumentation, where contestation itself becomes the means of maintaining relevance. The LoC thus appears not as a stabilising reference line but as a rhetorical hinge through which Pakistan resists sedimentation and converts uncertainty into a persistent claim.

5.1.3 Post-Conflict Strategic and Institutional Adjustments

The Kargil episode catalysed consensus in New Delhi on addressing systemic gaps in intelligence coordination, high-altitude logistics, and rapid deployment. The Kargil Review Committee identified weaknesses in integrated assessment across agencies and recommended institutional reforms alongside posture changes to prevent winter vacuums in exposed sectors (Kargil Review Committee, 2000). Follow-on discussions summarised these recommendations and underscored the need to harden forward defences, winter-stock positions, and strengthen surveillance in the high Himalaya (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2000). In practice, the war underscored the vulnerability of single-axis supply lines into Ladakh and pushed a shift toward more robust forward defence and intelligence processes to pre-empt future incursions (Tellis et al., 2001, pp. 57–61).

What emerges after Kargil through the coding analysis is not simple organisational learning, but the institutionalisation of security through logistics, surveillance, and expert review. The language of reform translates vulnerability into administrative routines, where winter stocking, forward

deployment, and intelligence integration become permanent features of territorial management. Security is no longer framed as episodic defence, but as continuous preparedness embedded in infrastructure and procedure. Authority is exercised through monitoring, anticipation, and technical optimisation, rather than through overt confrontation. In this way, the post-conflict adjustments convert a contested frontier into a securitised development space, where material investment and institutional expertise stabilise control by normalising presence and routine in the high Himalaya.

5.1.4 Diplomatic Consolidation and Narrative Closure

While the tactical phase ended in July 1999, the diplomatic follow-through was decisive. The Clinton–Sharif meeting on 4 July publicly committed Pakistan to withdrawal, and reporting framed the intervention as urgent crisis management between nuclear-armed rivals, anchoring the outcome in status quo ante rather than revised cartography (The Washington Post, 1999). Inside Pakistan, initial insistence that forward elements were “mujahideen” gave way in later commentary to assessments of strategic overreach and diplomatic isolation (Rediff, 1999; Dawn, 2018). In India, commemorative framings entrenched Kargil as a symbol of national resilience and of securitised border governance (India Today, 1999a; India Today, 1999b). For development-oriented analysis, these post-conflict narratives mattered because they underwrote subsequent investment in high-altitude infrastructure as instruments of both economic integration and territorial consolidation (Kargil Review Committee, 2000; Tellis et al., 2001, pp. 57–61).

Kargil crystallised a pattern in which the LoC’s practical sanctity, rather than legal finality, structured both crisis conduct and diplomatic closure. India’s restoration frame, Pakistan’s provisionality claim, and U.S. crisis management together normalised a return-to-line template under the nuclear shadow. Post-1999, forward occupation, logistics hardening and surveillance converted the high Himalaya into a securitised development frontier, binding mobility and border practice into a single governance logic.

The Galwan Valley Clash two decades later unfolded along the Line of Actual Control, not the LoC, yet it reproduced key features of this logic: contested

demarcation, escalatory ambiguity in extreme terrain, and the rapid translation of tactical gains into diplomatic bargaining. The next case traces how infrastructural visibility and patrol practices became the very medium through which sovereignty was performed and disputed.

Analysing the material, the return to the pre-conflict line is not presented as a contingent outcome, but as the restoration of an already legitimate spatial order. Diplomatic intervention translates military disengagement into political finality, while commemorative narratives transform restraint into national virtue. This symbolic consolidation performs two functions at once: it fixes the LoC as the unquestioned reference point for acceptable action, and it converts crisis resolution into a mandate for long-term territorial investment. Infrastructure development and forward presence do not follow the war incidentally; they materialise its authorised meaning. In this way, memory, diplomacy, and construction operate together to sediment a governance logic in which restraint legitimises control and control is enacted through enduring spatial practices.

5.2 The Galwan Valley Skirmish

On a traverse from Leh via Pangong along the LAC toward Hanle, the corridor registers as a high, dry rim of the Tibetan Plateau where thin air, hard light, and distance make movement conspicuous. As Norberg-Hodge (1991) describes, which is consistent with my own experiences, one narrow road can decide who moves first, who verifies presence, and who yields at a blind bend. Ladakh's social ecology of frugality, cooperation, and finely timed irrigation evolved around short growing seasons and scarcity; in such a landscape, roads, bridges, and patrol tracks quickly become signs of rule as much as conduits of mobility (Norberg-Hodge, 1991).

The political topography is equally stark. In Aksai Chin, the border was never definitively delimited. Huttenback (1964) shows how the 1899 British proposal remained unadopted, leaving overlapping cartographies and patrol traditions that later hardened into different perceptions. To manage routine friction, India and China put rules and channels in place: the 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) codified liaison mechanisms (flag meetings,

hotlines, eg.) and simple conduct rules for close encounters in uncertain terrain, such as avoiding tailing patrols where there is no common line, exercise “maximum self-restraint”, and prevent the use of firearms (Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, 2013).

In spring 2020, face-offs multiplied across the Galwan–Pangong–Depsang arc. On the night of the 15th of June at Patrolling Point 14, a non-firearms clash caused fatalities on both sides and pushed commanders into stepwise disengagement and verification. Public readouts on 17th–18th of June balanced restraint with assurances that contact would be stabilised through established mechanisms (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18; Reuters, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020, June 17). A Corps Commander-level meeting on the 22nd of June set out the initial on-ground modalities; by 26th–27th of June, media and imagery reports showed new structures and tracks even as talks proceeded, underscoring how restraint and consolidation could coexist (BBC, 2020, June 25; Times of India, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020, June 20). From that point, restraint remained in the language of rules while presence and infrastructure hardened on the ground; diplomacy contained escalation but did not restore the pre-2020 patrol rhythm.

5.2.1 India's Strategic Decisions and Public Framing

New Delhi framed its actions around three interlinked claims: restoring the status quo preceding spring 2020, adhering to BDCA-style restraint, and hardening infrastructure to secure mobility. Public lines emphasised that Corps Commander talks, hotlines, and meetings would govern disengagement and verification, and that India would not accept unilateral alteration of the status quo. This can be seen as an attempt to keep encounters within agreed channels while signalling that presence on the ground would be sustained by logistics rather than escalation (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18; Reuters, 2020). Through the summer, authorities accelerated roads and bridges, expanded winter stocking for altitude posts, and strengthened surveillance to shorten reaction times along narrow valleys and ridgelines where movement is easily constrained (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18).

Gokhale (2021) situates Galwan as a structural rupture in India–China relations, arguing that the long-standing *modus vivendi* of “cooperate while disagreeing” had already narrowed and the 15 June melee made that narrowing visible. The dual tone after the clash, from reassurance that talks were active to resolve that the baseline would be upheld, maps onto this diagnosis. Tarapore (2021) highlights the practical cost of the ensuing posture: a more militarised, year-round LAC requires manpower, winter stocking, rotation planning, and surveillance upgrades at scale, potentially diverting attention and resources from maritime modernisation and broader force transformation. In development terms, infrastructure becomes a technology of governance as much as a military tool: all-weather roads and bridges set patrol tempos, compress winter, and make mobility an everyday function of state care and control in high-altitude districts.

Analytically, India’s response in Galwan hinges on a deliberate separation between restraint in speech and consolidation in practice. Public framing foregrounds procedural discipline: status quo ante language, liaison mechanisms, and commander-level talks function as a security grammar that presents India as stabilising rather than escalatory. This doctrinal restraint is conceived through formal commitments to dialogue and verification, reinforced by references to agreed rules and expert-managed processes. At the same time, restraint is not enacted as spatial withdrawal. It is materially sustained through accelerated logistics, infrastructure expansion, and surveillance intensification that secure continuous presence along the LAC. Roads, bridges, winter stocking, and rotation regimes translate restraint from a diplomatic posture into an operational condition. Authority is thus produced across registers: conceived through restraint narratives and procedural compliance, and perceived through logistical capability that makes presence durable without overt confrontation. In this configuration, sovereignty is not asserted by advancing the line, but by ensuring that movement, reaction time, and endurance remain firmly under state control.

5.2.2 China’s Strategic Decisions and Public Framing

Beijing’s statements stressed ‘differing perceptions’ of the LAC and framed responsibility for the clash in terms of alleged Indian transgressions and

construction in contested pockets. The vocabulary (control differences, avoid escalation, return to dialogue) tracked the BDCA's lexicon while insisting on sovereignty claims (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, June 17; Al Jazeera, 2020, June 20). CCP-linked media echoed this line, presenting on-site consolidation as defensive and proportional and contrasting Galwan with earlier standoffs to suggest continuity rather than rupture (Global Times, 2020, May–June; Global Times, 2021, February). In a sector never delimited, patrol routes operate as claims in motion (Huttenback, 1964); in practice, formal invocations of restraint (non-use of firearms, liaison meetings) coexisted with massed presence and field fortifications.

It seems China's response operates through the production of authority as a representational and communicative order rather than through explicit territorial demarcation. By repeatedly invoking "differing perceptions" of the LAC, official statements establish a durable truth grammar in which indeterminacy itself becomes normalised. Cartographic ambiguity is not treated as a deficit to be resolved, but as an enabling condition that allows competing claims to coexist without juridical closure. Within this framework, restraint language drawn from BDCA protocols performs a stabilising function while simultaneously insulating sovereignty claims from concession. Patrol routes and infrastructure are thus framed as defensive continuity rather than revision, converting movement into an implicit cartographic assertion. Authority here is conceived through map-based reasoning and communiqué logic, where the repetition of procedural vocabulary sustains legitimacy even as material consolidation proceeds on the ground. The result is a mode of governance in which spatial control is exercised through representational persistence rather than through explicit line-making, keeping the border politically open while operationally dense.

5.2.3 Consequences for Mobility and Administration

By late June and into the summer, reports and imagery depicted verification steps, selective buffers, and altered patrol rhythms alongside a deepening logistics routine at altitude. On the Indian side, airlift posture, winter stocks, and coverage scaled to reduce seasonal vulnerability; forward presence expanded in key valleys and ridgelines. These measures carried an

administrative knock-on: convoy timing and road maintenance cycles were synchronised with weather windows; winter stocking moved into fixed calendar slots for remote posts; and surveillance systems acquired regular maintenance and upgrade schedules within Ladakh's civil-military planning (Royal United Services Institute, 2020; Times of India, 2023). On the Chinese side, depth deployments and dual-use works continued while official messaging emphasised dialogue and the management of differences, preserving a claim to responsibility without conceding the sovereignty narrative (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, June 17; Global Times, 2020–2021). The outcome, as Tarapore (2021) notes, is a competitively stable yet strategically costly equilibrium, especially for India. Gokhale (2021) adds that trust narrowed and did not return to pre-2020 levels, which is consistent with a baseline where routine presence substitutes for confidence.

This subsection shows how governance along the LAC is normalised through routine rather than resolution. Verification steps, buffer practices, and altered patrol rhythms do not move the dispute toward closure. They stabilise it by translating uncertainty into administrable sequences. Mobility becomes rule-bound through timetables, maintenance cycles, and surveillance schedules that render presence predictable and repeatable. Authority is exercised through the management of tempo, visibility, and endurance, rather than through declarative sovereignty. In this configuration, confidence is replaced by routine. Trust between actors narrows, but governance remains functional because daily movement, logistics, and monitoring substitute for political agreement. The border is thus governed as an operational environment, where rule emerges from repetition and infrastructure, and where stability is produced through the disciplined circulation of people, materiel, and information under conditions of permanent ambiguity.

5.2.4 Diplomatic Track and the Current Baseline (2020–2024)

Successive Corps Commander rounds and communiqués announced incremental steps (disengagement protocols, verification sequences, and commitments to avoid new incidents) reaffirming the BDCA's restraint plan and keeping the frontier below a firearms threshold even as buffers and forward works became part of the landscape (Government of India Ministry

of External Affairs (2013). Early 2021 saw a visible milestone with announced pullbacks at Pangong Tso and associated verification, while other friction points required sustained negotiation. By late 2024, officials on both sides indicated substantial progress on remaining areas, with Indian statements describing disengagement as almost complete and Chinese military messaging characterising implementation as comprehensive and effective (The Hindu, 2024). The frontier thus settled into a normalised state of securitised mobility: talks contained immediate risk, but the corridor remained logistics-first and costly.

Here, the diplomatic track seems to function less as a path toward settlement than as a procedural technology that stabilises space through sequence. Corps Commander talks, verification steps, and staged disengagements do not resolve competing cartographies. They authorise a shared grammar of action in which restraint is performed through process itself. By repeatedly translating friction into meetings, timetables, and implementation phases, diplomacy produces a governable baseline without requiring agreement on the line's meaning. Authority is exercised through adherence to protocol rather than territorial clarity. In this sense, dialogue does not merely accompany spatial practices. It actively constitutes them. The LAC is governed as a managed environment, where place is made through procedure, and where stability emerges from the routinisation of negotiation under permanent indeterminacy.

5.3 Pahalgam: A Culminating Moment

On 22nd of April 2025, several gunmen attacked a tourist convoy near Pahalgam in Jammu & Kashmir, killing twenty-six civilians and injuring many more (Al Jazeera, 2025). Within hours the incident was framed across Indian and Pakistani media as a decisive rupture: for major Indian outlets, an 'act of war' demanding a calibrated but firm response; for segments of Pakistani discourse, a 'false flag' designed to internationalise pressure (Al Jazeera, 2025; Dawn, 2025). What followed was a compressed sequence of military, diplomatic and economic moves that aimed to punish the perpetrators, raise the costs of cross-border facilitation, and contain escalation.

New Delhi publicly linked its retaliation to the defence of civilians and the restoration of deterrence. On 7th of May, India launched Operation Sindoor, a set of precision strikes against what it called Pakistan-based terror infrastructure; open-source assessments place the operation in the ‘limited but conspicuous’ band, designed to signal resolve while avoiding Pakistani regular forces (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; The Diplomat, 2025; The Hindu BusinessLine, 2025).

Concurrently, the Cabinet Committee on Security adopted sovereignty measures announced by the Ministry of External Affairs on 23rd of April: India announced that implementation of elements of the Indus Waters Treaty would be held in abeyance pending security reviews; the Attari Integrated Check Post was closed; visas for Pakistani nationals were cancelled, including SAARC exemptions; and defence/naval/air advisers from the Pakistani High Commission were expelled with reciprocal withdrawals (Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 2025a). Senior leaders repeated the line that “blood and water cannot flow together,” presenting the water decision as a lawful response to cross-border terror and a signal that treaty benefits require credible restraint by the other side (Government of India Press Information Bureau, 2025a, 2025b). Pakistan publicly disputed the legality of any unilateral alteration to treaty implementation in subsequent statements reported in regional media (Dawn, 2025).

This triad of limited force, legal-administrative leverage, and narrative discipline sought to keep India’s actions inside a self-consciously legal frame (focused, measured, non-escalatory), even as it imposed tangible costs and re-ordered day-to-day connectivity at the border. It also mirrored lessons from earlier crises about the signalling value of process compliance plus targeted punishment.

Islamabad condemned the strikes as ‘blatant aggression,’ rejected Indian attribution for Pahalgam, and called for an international investigation, while warning of destabilising consequences should India persist (Dawn, 2025). Chinese state-linked commentary urged restraint by both sides and framed further escalation as contrary to regional stability (Global Times, 2025a,

2025b). Western partners called for de-escalation and restraint without endorsing any narrative of status-change: the European Union issued a formal statement on 8th of May; G7 foreign ministers followed on 10th of May; the U.S. Department of State signalled direct engagement with Islamabad and New Delhi (Council of the European Union, 2025; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2025; U.S. Department of State, 2025; Reuters, 2025).

Against this backdrop, the legalistic posture proved consequential: by emphasising proportionality, avoidance of regular Pakistani military targets, and conformity with self-defence narratives under international law, New Delhi made it harder for third parties to recast the episode as a conventional interstate clash (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 2025a).

For development and security studies alike, the ceiling on escalation is as analytically important as the punishment logic. Comparative crisis research shows that even small nuclear arsenals generate powerful deterrent effects, constraining conventional options and pushing both sides toward calibrated coercion rather than open war (Ghani, 2012, pp. 141–145). The 2008 Mumbai attacks offer a pertinent analogue in Indian strategic memory: despite intense public pressure, New Delhi refrained from large-scale conventional moves, precisely because the perceived nuclear threshold curtailed feasible options, an experience widely debated in India’s civil–military community and explicitly revisited in 2025 commentary (Ghani, 2012, pp. 144–145). The Pahalgam cycle shows a similar pattern: punitive action short of war, paired with administrative and economic levers that raise costs without breaching thresholds (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; The Diplomat, 2025).

5.3.1. Why Pahalgam Matters

Read against Kargil and Galwan, Pahalgam works less as a standalone episode than as a culminating scene in the western LoC theatre. The strikes that followed the attack asserted punishment across the line while pointedly disavowing any intent to redraw it. An approach that, in effect, keeps the LoC in place. In that sense, the logic visible since 1999 endures. International

audiences are reassured by the language of restraint, and the boundary is reproduced as the practical reference point even at moments of anger and fear.

What stands out in 2025 is how sovereignty was performed not only through calibrated force but also through the control of flows. The closure of the Attari crossing, the cancellation of visas and the decision to hold elements of the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance temporarily re-ordered movement, access and resource sharing. These were territorial acts by other means. Cast as lawful and proportionate, they shifted the burden of everyday governance: crossings, permits, water releases and administrative coordination became the levers through which the state made its presence felt at the border, even as Pakistan publicly disputed the legality of unilateral changes and sought international scrutiny (Dawn, 2025).

The episode also underlined how crises are now mediated. Official statements, live blogs and rapid commentary produced duelling narratives in real time. This led to attribution and resolve on the one side; denial, counter-allegation and calls for inquiry on the other, while third parties urged de-escalation without adjudicating claims (Al Jazeera, 2020, June 17; BBC News, 2025, May 8; Council of the European Union, 2025). Beneath that performance sat the same nuclear ceiling that has shaped India–Pakistan decision-making since 1998. As the post-Mumbai debate made clear, even a small risk of large-scale damage can steer policy away from expansive conventional options; Pahalgam followed that pattern with bounded action paired to administrative pressure (Ghani, 2012, pp. 141–145). The near-miss dynamic is familiar from earlier chapters: stability is recovered, but the pre-event rhythm is not fully restored.

Seen together with Galwan, the link is direct. Along the LAC, protocols and infrastructure turned presence into a logistics-led routine; along the LoC, counter-terror force was coupled to border administration. In both theatres the state's visibility, who controls movement, crossings, water, visas, became the medium through which authority was enacted, under the watchful gaze of domestic publics and external observers (Al Jazeera, 2020, June 20; 2025b;

BBC News, 2025; Dawn, 2025). Here, then, the arc of Chapter 5 closes. Kargil, Galwan, and Pahalgam have shown (each in its own register) how authority along the LoC and LAC is enacted through a recurrent pairing: a public language of restraint and legality, and a practical routine of presence, mobility control, and infrastructural hardening. With these empirical contours in view, the next chapter turns from description to interrogation. Using the coding matrix, I re-read the material through the thesis's theoretical lenses to examine how legitimacy is staged, how "Others" are produced and managed, and how governance operates through the regulation of movement, memory and risk.

This second round of coding analysis marks the end of the empirical component of the thesis. The final discussion chapter then returns to the coded outputs to interpret their patterning, draw out meta-clusters across the cases, and reflect on what they imply for India's power relations and strategic practice along the LoC and LAC.

6. Crisis Event Cluster Analysis

Chapter 6 organises the case analyses developed in Chapter 5 into a structured interpretive reading. It does not introduce new empirical material. The Kargil, Galwan, and Pahalgam episodes are revisited through the coding matrix in order to make recurring configurations of border governance visible across the cases.

The analysis moves from coded material to cluster-units and from cluster-units to bounded interpretive observations. Each cluster identifies a specific pattern in how authority, restraint, and control are enacted through discursive and spatial practices already documented in the case chapters. Theory is used to name and stabilise these patterns, not to extend the empirical scope or advance standalone explanatory claims.

Cluster 7: Restoration-as-Legitimation

Across the Kargil material, the restoration frame consistently legitimises force through the promise of returning to the existing line rather than revising it. Public and diplomatic messaging emphasised rule-bound conduct, most visibly in the insistence that Indian forces would not cross the LoC, so that restraint itself became a marker of authority (Tellis, Fair, & Medby, 2001, p. 22). In Shakoor's contemporary reading, costly assaults to retake exposed heights were framed less as expansion than as a statecraft choice to re-establish reach along a vulnerable corridor (1999, p. 55). The Clinton–Sharif understanding of 4 July 1999 then fixed a withdrawal pathway and aligned external signalling with a return-to-line closure (The Washington Post, 1999; Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22). Media narratives that elevated sacrifice and discipline further reinforced this framing, casting the line itself as the object of protection rather than modification (India Today, 1999a, 1999b; Indian Express, 1999).

Within the coding model, this configuration is organised as a security discourse in which space is framed as dangerous in order to authorise specific practices, while legitimacy is tied to adherence to rules rather than overt territorial gain. Two elements in the material intensify this effect. First, national performativity: commemorations and frontline imagery present

restraint and endurance as attributes of the nation, translating conduct into collective virtue (Bhabha, 1994; Foucault, 1995). Second, spatial framing semantics stabilise meaning under pressure through labels such as “restoration,” “status quo,” and “incursion,” which organise terrain through oppositional terms (Ó Tuathail, 1996; Said, 1978). Official briefings, third-party validations, and diplomatic communiqués then circulate as the authoritative record against which action is evaluated, consolidating this framing as a regime of reference (Foucault, 1980; Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22).

In spatial terms, ritualised statements and memorial practices translate into operational constraints and public expectations. Escalation control under a nuclear ceiling, external endorsement that India had not crossed the LoC, and closure tied to withdrawal to pre-conflict positions remain the consistent empirical anchors for this cluster (Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22; The Washington Post, 1999).

Cluster 8: Provisionality as Discursive Lever

Within the coding model, this pattern is organised around competing truth claims that seek to reorder what counts as authoritative knowledge about the line. Historical belonging narratives and Partition legacies are mobilised to reopen genealogies, while shifting labels and attributions distribute legitimacy and blame across actors (Chatterjee, 1993; Anderson, 2006; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988). These elements do not resolve ambiguity. They preserve it as a discursive condition through which relevance and claim-making are maintained.

As external pressure increased, the available discursive space narrowed. The July 4 understanding functioned as a closure moment in which competing framings lost traction and withdrawal emerged as the only viable outcome recognised by third parties (The Washington Post, 1999; Tellis et al., 2001, p. 22). The empirical anchor remains the same. Provisionality operates effectively until it is overridden by external validation that fixes a temporary settlement.

Cluster 9: Securitised Development Frontier

After the fighting, policy discussion shifted toward procedures, logistics, and surveillance. Review processes identified intelligence coordination gaps and seasonal vulnerabilities, recommending hardened positions, integrated assessments, and continuous presence at altitude (Kargil Review Committee, 2000). Follow-on analyses consolidated these priorities into requirements for forward defence, winter stocking, and intensified surveillance along critical approaches into Ladakh (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2000; Tellis et al., 2001, pp. 57–61). In practice, roads, depots, and routine patrol patterns tied state reach to altitude presence, embedding security functions into everyday mobility and supply.

Within the coding model, this alignment of infrastructure, logistics, and monitoring is read through Foucauldian notions of disciplinary power, where control is exercised not through episodic force but through continuous visibility, routine, and technical management (Foucault, 1995). Observation posts, sensors, and regularised checks produce a condition of asymmetric visibility that normalises conduct in extreme terrain. At the same time, Harvey's account of infrastructure as a spatial fix helps to name how roads, depots, and supply chains bind remote terrain into durable governance circuits, stabilising control through material investment rather than formal boundary change (Harvey, 1989).

Expert discourses reinforce this configuration. Committee reports, think-tank briefs, and doctrinal updates assemble an evidentiary narrative in which infrastructural expansion appears as a technical necessity rather than a political choice, consolidating authority through expertise and documentation (Foucault, 1980; Ó Tuathail, 1996; Kargil Review Committee, 2000; IPCS, 2000).

Read in spatial terms, the conceived emphasis on procedural fixes and expert validation translates into perceived routines such as stockpiling cycles, patrol rhythms, and surveillance schedules. These practices have structured the LoC's everyday management since 1999, converting a high-altitude corridor into a securitised development frontier in which mobility and governance are inseparably intertwined (Tellis et al., 2001, pp. 57–61).

Cluster 10: Rules Stand in for Borders

In the Galwan material, procedural arrangements substitute for territorial delimitation. Liaison channels and conduct rules perform the ordering work that a fixed boundary would otherwise provide. The 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement codified this logic by establishing sequences of encounter, communication, and separation as the default architecture of stability in an undelimited sector (Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, 2013). Public readouts following the 15 June 2020 clash repeatedly reaffirmed these mechanisms, especially restraint commitments such as the non-use of firearms, framing stabilisation as adherence to procedure rather than as territorial resolution (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18; Reuters, 2020).

This pattern seems organised in conceived space as a normative script that governs how actors are expected to meet, speak, and disengage where authoritative cartography is absent (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). The historical record clarifies why such scripting is necessary. The 1899 proposal remained unadopted, and overlapping patrol traditions hardened into what later official language described as “different perceptions” of the line (Huttenback, 1964). Anderson’s account of the cartographic imagination helps to name how maps and their circulation stabilise territorial imaginaries even without legal settlement, while Agnew’s critique of territorial fixity clarifies why procedural rulebooks gain prominence where state-as-container assumptions cannot be sustained on the ground (Anderson, 2006, pp. 163–185; Agnew, 1994, pp. 53–80).

Expert discourse consolidates this configuration. Official communiqués, verification procedures, and repeated references to agreed mechanisms circulate as authoritative points of reference, deriving their force from institutional repetition rather than from boundary finality (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133; Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 38–53). In this sense, rules stand in for borders. Sequences of conduct operationalise the frontier where the line itself remains politically indeterminate.

Cluster 11: Restraint-in-Speech, Logistics-in-Practice

After the Patrolling Point 14 fatalities, official statements foregrounded active talks and adherence to established mechanisms, while insisting that the status quo ante would not be unilaterally altered (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18; Reuters, 2020). Public language stressed restraint, dialogue, and procedure as the appropriate response to heightened risk. In the material, this framing presents vigilance as rule-bound conduct rather than as escalation.

By contrast, contemporaneous reporting and imagery showed rapid consolidation on the ground. Within days, new tracks and structures appeared, and through late June and the summer India accelerated roads and bridges, expanded winter stocking, and intensified surveillance to compress seasonal vulnerability along the LAC (BBC, 2020, June 25; Times of India, 2020). Roads, depots, and hardened posts calibrate reaction times, set patrol tempos, and convert altitude presence into a repeatable routine.

This pairing is organised as a dual register of governance. Security discourse legitimises restraint in speech, while infrastructure and logistics enact consolidation in practice. Foucauldian concepts are used here to name how authority is exercised through routine, visibility, and technical management rather than through declarative force (Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1995). Harvey's account of infrastructure helps to describe how material investments bind presence, mobility, and endurance into durable governance circuits without requiring territorial advance (Harvey, 1989).

A conceived spatial emphasis on liaison and restraint translates into perceived rhythms of convoy slots, verification sequences, and stock-up cycles that embed the rulebook in everyday practice (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Contemporary assessments converge on this diagnosis: the earlier logic of “cooperate while disagreeing” narrowed after Galwan, and sustaining a year-round posture along the LAC entails significant manpower and resource commitments (Gokhale, 2021; Tarapore, 2021). The empirical anchor remains consistent. Calming language at the microphone coexists with consolidation

along the tracks, held together by the repeated scripting of mechanism-led restraint.

Cluster 12: Routine as Rule (Visibility and Mobility)

As summer progressed, governance along the LAC stabilised through routine. Verification steps and selective buffers were accompanied by a deepening logistics calendar: airlift posture and coverage scaled, winter stocks moved into fixed slots, and road maintenance and convoy timings aligned with narrow weather windows (Royal United Services Institute, 2020; Times of India, 2023). Mobility and presence were no longer organised ad hoc but sequenced through repeatable schedules. This produced a frontier managed through tempo. Patrol rhythms, maintenance cycles, and stocking timetables made altitude presence predictable and administrable. In spatial terms, this corresponds to perceived space organised as route and timetable, where governance operates through the regulation of movement rather than through formal settlement (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33).

Within this arrangement, visibility functions in a mundane register. Observation posts, sensors, and routinised checks normalise control by making conduct anticipatory in exposed corridors (Foucault, 1995, pp. 195–228). Compliance is shaped less by direct coercion than by the expectation of being seen, verified, and logged within established sequences.

Strategic visibility amplifies this effect. In terrain defined by long sight-lines and distance, the capacity to show steadiness matters. Public imagery and official readouts perform continuity and restraint, while field works and patrol routines persist on the ground (Indian Express, 2020, June 17–18; BBC, 2020, June 25). Together, routine becomes the rule: stability is produced through repetition, scheduling, and visibility rather than through resolution of the line itself (Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 38–53).

Cluster 13: Legalistic Retaliation and External Validation

After the Pahalgam attack, India structured its response through a calibrated sequence of limited force and administrative measures. Precision strikes were publicly framed as defensive and deterrent, explicitly avoiding regular

Pakistani military targets. Open-source assessments characterised the operation as “limited but conspicuous”, designed to signal resolve without widening the conflict (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; The Diplomat, 2025; The Hindu BusinessLine, 2025). In parallel, sovereignty measures were announced through formal channels as administrative acts consistent with law and self-defence, including changes to cross-border connectivity and treaty implementation (Government of India Press Information Bureau, 2025a, 2025b).

Empirically, this sequencing anchored retaliation in legality rather than escalation. Official statements, press briefings, and published justifications established a narrow frame of proportionality and restraint, within which action was rendered intelligible and defensible. These materials circulated as the authoritative record against which conduct was evaluated, shaping how the episode was read domestically and internationally (Reuters, 2025).

The international response reinforced this framing. Statements by the European Union, G7, and the United States consistently called for restraint and de-escalation while refraining from endorsing any narrative of territorial revision (Council of the European Union, 2025; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2025; U.S. Department of State, 2025). This constrained the diplomatic field: escalation was discouraged without undermining India’s legal posture. Pakistani counter-claims of denial, calls for investigation, and assertions of illegality sustained contestation, but did not displace the dominant proportionality script in official readouts (Dawn, 2025).

Analytically, this configuration shows retaliation governed through a conceived order of law-sounding procedures and validations. Danger is narrated in ways that authorise limited force and regulatory leverage, while third-party statements stabilise the frame by repetition rather than adjudication (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133; Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 11–39). In Lefebvre’s terms, authority is exercised primarily in conceived space: through statements, legal rationales, and recognised channels that discipline conduct without recourse to overt territorial revision (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33).

Cluster 14: Coercive Flows (Sovereignty via Circulation)

Following Pahalgam, India exercised sovereignty through the regulation of circulation rather than territorial movement. Administrative decisions temporarily altered cross-border flows: elements of the Indus Waters Treaty were held in abeyance, the Attari crossing was closed, and visas were cancelled. These measures re-ordered access, timing, and everyday routine without shifting the LoC itself (Government of India Press Information Bureau, 2025a, 2025b). Empirically, the effect was immediate. Water release schedules, gates, and permits became instruments through which the state constrained movement and imposed costs while remaining within a legal-administrative frame.

These interventions disciplined space by binding mobility to state-managed schedules and checkpoints. Circulation was no longer continuous or reciprocal but conditional and revocable. Infrastructure and administration thus operated together to translate security concerns into procedural control, producing compliance through design rather than force (Harvey, 1989, pp. 284–299, 345–368; Foucault, 1995, pp. 135–169).

Public rhetoric reinforced this ordering. The phrase “blood and water cannot flow together” framed rivers and crossings as moralised instruments of security, aligning circulation with punishment and restraint (Government of India Press Information Bureau, 2025a). This language did not create new territorial claims. It stabilised the meaning of existing measures by coding everyday flows as legitimate sites of coercion (Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 11–39; Said, 1978, pp. 49–73). Pakistan’s response kept contestation alive through claims of illegality and calls for scrutiny, sustaining a parallel record of obligation and restraint without displacing the operative measures (Dawn, 2025).

Analytically, this cluster shows authority enacted through circulation control. In Lefebvre’s terms, perceived instruments of mobility regulation are scaffolded by conceived legal and semantic repertoires that render coercion procedural rather than exceptional (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Sovereignty here is exercised by modulating flow, not by redrawing lines.

Cluster 15: Time-boxing / Mediated Crisis

Following Pahalgam, escalation was governed through sequencing rather than territorial movement. Announcements, verification windows, and diplomatic readouts were released in fixed intervals, pacing momentum and containing uncertainty. The crisis advanced through calendars and deadlines rather than manoeuvre or line revision (Council of the European Union, 2025; U.S. Department of State, 2025; Reuters, 2025). Empirically, pressure was made visible while action remained bounded.

This constitutes temporal control as a mode of governance. Calendars, intervals, and routines regulate conduct and expectation, replacing open-ended escalation with administrable phases (Foucault, 1995, pp. 135–169). Time here functions as a disciplining medium: what may happen, when, and for how long is scripted in advance.

The same sequencing unfolded in mediated form. Competing narratives of attribution, proportionality, denial, and inquiry circulated in real time, producing the experience of crisis as a managed rhythm across news cycles and official updates (Al Jazeera, 2020b; BBC News, 2025; Dawn, 2025). Expert commentary and official briefings stabilised what counted as progress, restraint, or violation, anchoring interpretation to authorised temporal markers rather than to events alone (Foucault, 1980, pp. 109–133; Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 38–53).

In Lefebvre's terms, this cluster is anchored in conceived space: scripts, communiqués, and schedules that organise action in advance, with lived resonance in how publics encountered the episode as a time-boxed sequence rather than an indeterminate crisis (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33).

7. Conclusion

This chapter brings the thesis to a close by re-ordering the cluster-level findings from Chapters 4–6 into three cross-chapter groupings. These meta-clusters do not introduce new empirical material. They serve as an organising device that brings together recurring patterns already identified through the coding process, allowing comparison across the LoC and LAC cases. Read through Lefebvre’s spatial triad, the clusters highlight how border order is repeatedly articulated through discursive framing, procedural enactment, and material stabilisation rather than through fixed delimitation.

The chapter performs three bounded functions. First, it consolidates evidence by aligning the clusters with the historical and institutional frames developed earlier in the thesis. Second, it situates these patterns within existing theoretical vocabularies, using spatial theory to clarify how different strands of the literature illuminate the same coded material from distinct angles. Third, it provides a structured point of departure for discussion and future research, without extending the analytical scope beyond the corpus examined here.

7.1 Meta-Cluster (MC:A, MC:B, MC:C)

MC:A - Discursive Making of the Line: Security Semantics & Truth Regimes

Across Chapters 4 and 5, the LoC/LAC are stabilised primarily through discourse. Naming practices, security semantics and nationally performative messaging establish the line as a reference point without requiring legal finality. In Kargil, the restoration frame and non-crossing claims; in Galwan, restraint-first readouts; and in Pahalgam, proportionality and legality scripts all reproduce boundary authority through public language and record. In Lefebvre’s terms, conceived space dominates (designation, framing, ritual, communiqué). Select conceived to perceived spillovers occur where briefing lines set operational expectations, while lived resonances appear in memorialisation and real-time media that sediment recall. The meta-pattern is consistent: discourse does constitutive work that subsequent practice follows rather than precedes.

MC:B - Performance legitimises Borders: Protocols, Timing & Verification

Where delimitation is absent or contested, procedure functions as the boundary. Rulebooks, timings and verification sequences choreograph encounters and make order actionable. After Galwan's Clash, liaison mechanisms, non-firearms constraints and staged pull-backs organised behaviour as a sequence; Kargil and Pahalgam show similar pacing through scripted announcements and fixed windows. Terrain intensifies this logic: at extreme altitude along single-axis roads with long sight-lines and narrow passes, procedure substitutes for cartographic certainty by sequencing meetings and verifying presence. Here conceived scripts cascade into perceived routines (flag meetings, buffers, convoy slots), with a lived cadence as crises are experienced as timed events rather than territorial swings. The centre of gravity is the script: the border enacted as process.

MC:C - Governing by Development: Infrastructure, Surveillance & Flows

Infrastructure renders governance continuous. Roads, bridges, depots, patrol tracks, and controls over circulation (gates, water releases, visas) tie altitude corridors into governable space. These systems enable mobility and discipline it simultaneously, converting logistical presence into territorial rule and routine. The dominant register is perceived space (installations, rhythms, checkpoints), supported by a conceived scaffold (legal and semantic justifications) and registering in lived space. Where MC:B choreographs behaviour, MC:C furnishes the operational stage; the material and flow architectures on which order runs.

Seen as a combined conclusion, MC:A sets the language of order, MC:B choreographs how order is performed, and MC:C provides the material and circulatory systems that stabilise it. These are the principal empirical results on which the theory feedback and strategic recommendations now build.

7.2 Discussion - Theory-Led Vantage Points

7.2.1 *Why a Theory-Led Reading*

As final step of the coding architecture, I now reintegrate the three meta-clusters into the thesis's theoretical foundations. The aim is not to restate results in theoretical jargon. The aim is to position them within, and against, the postcolonial canon, Foucauldian power/knowledge, and critical geopolitics. Each lens corroborates parts of the findings, exposes blind spots, and narrows the scope of valid inference. Detailed anchors for the claims made here are traceable to the coded material listed in Appendices; the focus below is on what the literature would recognise as robust, where it would press for caution, and which tensions remain to be addressed. A spatial analysis follows to reconcile overlaps and divergences; for now, the lenses operate in parallel.

7.2.2 *Postcolonial Lens (Said; Bhabha; Spivak; Chatterjee; Anderson)*

Read through postcolonial theory, the meta-clusters affirm the primacy of imaginative geographies and narrative authority. MC:A's emphasis on naming, restraint talk, and legality scripts fits Said's account of how the line is produced as an object of ordered knowledge and moral distinction (Said, 1978). National performativity within MC:A also resonates with Bhabha's pedagogy/performance dyad, where the nation is reiterated in commemorations and set-piece statements rather than discovered as a fact (Bhabha, 1994). Anderson's insight that maps and their circulation stabilise imagined communities helps explain why restoration frames travel so well across audiences, even without legal finality (Anderson, 2006).

The same lens complicates MC:B and MC:C. Procedural choreography and expert verification can, as Spivak warns, narrow audibility by privileging authorised speakers and formats; restraint narratives and liaison readouts risk becoming epistemic filters (Spivak, 1988). Chatterjee's political society further cautions that developmental control of flows in MC:C can repackage coercion as care, shifting consent from rights to managed access (Chatterjee, 1993, 2004). These critiques do not negate the clusters. They mark where power's cultural grammar does its heaviest work: who gets to define a breach,

who labels proportionality, and who experiences flow controls as governance versus exclusion.

The corpus underpinning MC:A–MC:C is rich in communiqués, media readouts, and policy texts, which skews visibility toward state-facing discourse and away from subaltern registers. Moments where lived memory surfaces, like in the real-time media during Pahalgam, hint at alternative narrations but do not overturn the authorised record. The postcolonial reading thus both corroborates the clusters’ emphasis on discursive making and qualifies their generality.

7.2.3 Foucauldian Lens (Power/Knowledge; Discipline; Visibility; Temporality)

From a Foucauldian vantage, the findings specify how power/knowledge becomes border practice. MC:A reads as the consolidation of a narrow bandwidth of legitimate description. Truth-effects that make restoration, status quo, or differing perceptions sound self-evident (Foucault, 1980). MC:B shows procedure substituting for delimitation: cadence, verification, and non-firearms rules enact the boundary as a sequence, not a line. MC:C details the capillaries: mundane techniques through which visibility, timing, and logistical presence normalise conduct (Foucault, 1995).

The same lens also marks fractures. Productive power rarely operates without slippage, and the corpus records such tensions where compliance vocabulary is coexisting with consolidation on the ground; restraint while tracks lengthen along exposed corridors. These are not contradictions so much as signatures of a dispositif that rewards being seen to comply while building material depth.

7.2.4 Critical-Geopolitics Lens (Ó Tuathail; Agnew)

Critical geopolitics clarifies the persuasive logic running through the results. MC:A’s danger/responsibility thematics fits Ó Tuathail’s account of dramatised spatialisations that makes action intelligible to domestic and external audiences (Ó Tuathail, 1996). MC:B shows how choreography sidesteps the territorial trap identified by Agnew: when delimitation is unsettled and staged sequences allow states to act *as if* a boundary existed, without conceding legal finality (Agnew, 1994). MC:C extends this to visibility

and flows, where infrastructure and circulation controls are geopolitical techniques that naturalise state reach by making movement appear safe and well managed. This lens also pushes back against over-neatness. Scripts simplify complex ecologies. In altitude corridors, the cost of mis-timing or mis-signalling is high; what appears as a calm protocol can, in practice, be a brittle compromise. Moreover, the same narratives that reassure external observers may entrench expectations at home, narrowing policy manoeuvre in the next crisis. The literature thus showcases the communicative efficacy of the clusters while warning about path dependencies: successful scripts harden into templates, and templates can dull sensing of change.

The reach of critical geopolitics is strongest where audience-facing performance is dense in Kargil's memorialisation, Galwan's verification readouts, Pahalgam's legality claims and media coverage. Its value here is to connect the clusters' procedural and infrastructural pragmatics to the narrative work that makes them stick: strategy is argued into existence before it is built into place.

7.2.5 Spatial Lense

This lense connects the three meta-clusters with the literature by using spatial theory as the bridge. In Lefebvre's terms, conceived, perceived and lived space are not parallel layers but a translation chain: discourse specifies an order (conceived), protocol and cadence enact it (perceived), and experience sediments it (lived). Harvey's contribution sharpens why this chain endures: infrastructures and circulation regimes "fix" authority by locking political choices into material systems and recurrent flows. Read this way, MC:A, MC:B and MC:C are not separate findings but successive moments of the same spatial production.

The chain also runs in reverse. Material systems reshape discourse by changing what can credibly be said. A hardened road or verified buffer underwrites future claims of restraint; sensor-derived evidence feeds the next communiqué; reliability of flows (or the alteration of it) frames proportionality narratives. Each layer gives the others traction: discourse authorises choreography; choreography demands infrastructure; infrastructure, once in place, narrows the plausible discursive field. The result

is path-dependence: successful scripts harden into templates, and templates anchor investment and expectation.

7.3 Final Conclusion

India's choices along the LoC and LAC are shaped less by fixed cartography than by a layered border order that the state helps to co-produce. Read through the meta-clusters, the LoC/LAC emerge as regimes that stabilise authority through language, procedure and material systems. In Lefebvre's terms, conceived logics of meaning and rule cascade into perceived routines and, ultimately, into lived rhythms that normalise presence and control. This architecture explains why escalation is contained, why routine becomes the medium of power, and why infrastructural governance so often stands in for settlement. If we now take these findings, we are able to answer the originally stated research questions.

Main question

How do the contested border demarcations of the LoC and the LAC influence India's power relations and geopolitical decisions in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh?

The contested demarcations of the LoC and the LAC function as structuring conditions that orient India's geopolitical choices in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Rather than determining outcomes, they channel strategy into three interrelated registers that recur across the cases analysed.

First, discourse frames action. Restoration, restraint, and proportionality render authority legible to domestic and external audiences, narrowing the range of publicly acceptable moves while preserving room for calibrated manoeuvre. Second, protocol performs the line where delimitation remains unsettled. Liaison mechanisms, verification sequences, and timing scripts translate ambiguity into managed practice, enabling bargaining and signalling without formal concession of sovereignty. Third, infrastructure embeds policy into routine. Roads, depots, surveillance systems, and controls over circulation bind altitude corridors into governable space, converting presence into repeatable practice rather than episodic assertion.

These registers shape how power is exercised and contested along the LoC and LAC. They privilege steadiness, procedure, and credibility over territorial revision, while shifting contestation toward semantics, verification, and administrative leverage. The resulting pattern is one of disciplined continuity: decisions are calibrated to sustain the existing border order's plausibility, even when tactical pressures or domestic expectations favour more demonstrative action.

Sub-question 1

How have the Kargil War and the Galwan Valley Clash affected the geopolitical dynamics and power relations between India, Pakistan, and China along these contested borders?

The Kargil War and the Galwan Valley clash reshaped geopolitical dynamics along the LoC and LAC by consolidating a recurrent template for crisis management rather than by resolving territorial disputes. In both cases, escalation was contained through return-to-line closure, mechanism-led restraint, and the normalisation of logistics and presence.

Kargil reinforced the proposition that non-crossing and status-quo restoration can generate diplomatic validation and domestic legitimacy. The episode also initiated sustained investment in altitude logistics, surveillance, and winterised posture, which raised the baseline of Indian state presence along the LoC without altering the line itself. Galwan extended this logic to an undelimited frontier. There, procedural rulebooks, liaison mechanisms, and sequenced talks substituted for formal borders, while infrastructure expansion and year-round deployment thickened the frontier under conditions of restraint, including the continued non-use of firearms.

Across both episodes, the nuclear ceiling structured choices by elevating punishment short of war and administrative or logistical pressure over territorial revision. Power relations were therefore not transformed in a decisive sense. They were re-patterned. Credibility accrued to actors able to align restraint discourse with durable consolidation on the ground, while contestation shifted toward narrative framing, verification disputes, and tactical positioning within constrained escalatory space. The resulting

equilibrium is competitively stable yet strategically costly, sustained through routine investment, procedural management, and continuous signalling rather than through settlement.

Sub-question 2

To what extent do the historical outcomes and postcolonial dynamics resulting from the 1947 Partition continue to impact India's geopolitical strategies along the LoC and LAC?

The historical outcomes and postcolonial dynamics of the 1947 Partition continue to shape India's geopolitical strategies along the LoC and LAC in a constitutive rather than residual sense. Partition operates as an origin discourse that supplies the basic grammar through which borders are named, narrated, and stabilised. Colonial cartographies, treaty lineages, and constitutional arrangements established categories of legitimacy, provisionality, and authority that remain operative in contemporary practice. This grammar persists most clearly in India's emphasis on restoration, status quo maintenance, and constitutional framing. Border action is repeatedly articulated as the defence or reassertion of an inherited order rather than as territorial innovation. Postcolonial dynamics add a second layer. National performativity and regimes of truth integrate legal change, crisis conduct, and development initiatives into a continuous narrative of integration, allowing governance, security, and development to be presented as mutually reinforcing rather than politically distinct.

Empirically, this continuity is visible in the recoding of peripheral regions as governable frontiers. Constitutional reorganisation, infrastructural expansion, and procedural management do not break with Partition's legacy. They operationalise it under contemporary conditions. Spatial order is produced through discourse, rehearsed through rules and protocols, and stabilised through material systems, while definitive juridical settlement remains deferred. The extent of Partition's impact, therefore, lies less in specific historical grievances than in the durable epistemic and spatial frameworks it generated. These frameworks continue to channel strategy toward managing, normalising, and performing the border rather than resolving it.

Sub-question 3

What are the implications of the contested border regimes for regional stability in South Asia and their broader significance for global security discourse?

The contested border regimes examined here have stabilising and cost-producing effects for South Asia. Regionally, they reduce the likelihood of sudden, large-scale war by channelling confrontation into procedural forms. Escalation is managed through scripts, buffers, and verification sequences rather than territorial advance. This containment carries a sustained material burden. Stability depends on continuous logistics, surveillance, and infrastructure investment, raising the long-term cost of peace and making friction durable. Crises are more often mediated through scheduled statements and managed phases than decisively resolved.

The result is a competitively stable but structurally tense equilibrium. The absence of definitive settlement does not generate constant crisis. It produces permanent management, where authority is reproduced through repetition and routine. Conflict is less likely to escalate rapidly, yet more likely to recur in bounded, administrable forms.

Beyond South Asia, the cases point to a wider shift in global security practice. Borders increasingly operate as performed orders rather than settled legal facts. Authority is asserted through procedural choreography, infrastructural sovereignty, and the regulation of flows, often reinforced by selective international validation. Where delimitation remains contested, order is sustained less through treaties than through routines, and control over circulation becomes as consequential as control over territory. These implications clarify why the LoC and LAC shape India's strategic decisions in durable ways. The border order privileges meaning, mechanism, and material systems over legal finality. The meta-clusters therefore describe an observable mode of governance in which borders are made discursively, enacted procedurally, and stabilised infrastructurally. The remaining task is to situate these findings within the study's evidentiary limits and indicate how future research might test or refine them.

7.4 Future Research

This thesis has argued that the LoC and LAC endure less as fixed lines than as governing orders made in discourse, performed through protocol, and stabilised by infrastructure. Within the scope of a Master's thesis, several necessary choices narrowed the lens: reliance on publicly available sources; an emphasis on just three emblematic episodes (Kargil, Galwan, Pahalgam); and an analytical centre of gravity on conceived and perceived space rather than lived space at the border. These constraints do not weaken the core claims, but they identify where additional evidence would most meaningfully thicken or test them.

A first extension concerns the evidentiary base. Because the analysis draws primarily on official readouts, reputable media, policy reports, and secondary literature, future work should widen the corpus to include multilingual materials (Hindi/Urdu/Mandarin) and systematically versioned archives of communiqués and parliamentary interventions. Where ethical and safe, limited-access administrative sources, redacted liaison logs, verification schedules, or procedural guidelines could then be used to test how conceived scripts translate into practice without compromising operational security.

A second priority is recovering lived space. The codebook illuminated how discourse and procedure structure the border order, yet it could not fully register everyday experience and representational spaces validly. Carefully scoped oral histories and short ethnographies at the LAC and along LoC corridors would show how change in national discourse narration, routines and infrastructure shape daily life. Such work requires robust risk protocols to avoid exposing participants in sensitive settings and, crucially, early and sustained coordination with relevant local authorities (civil administration, police, border management, village councils). Access, routes, timing, liaison, and data-handling should be co-designed through formal agreements that safeguard participant anonymity and the researcher's academic independence. Collaboration must not become gatekeeping. The design should balance security imperatives with open, results-oriented scholarship; e.g., by pre-clearing anonymised protocols, committing to aggregate/non-sensitive publication, and putting independent ethical oversight in place.

Third, temporal depth would strengthen the claims. The thesis used three anchor moments to build cross-case inferences; longitudinal designs that track discursive, procedural, and infrastructural variables across several seasons, especially including quieter intervals and “near-miss” incidents, would test whether the three meta-clusters persist outside headline crises and how they adapt as routines settle.

Comparative transfer is a fourth avenue. The meta-clusters likely travel to adjacent theatres and to different modalities of contested lines. Comparative work should specify boundary conditions more precisely. High-altitude single-axis roads and long sight-lines may amplify procedure-as-border more than lowland or urban frontiers, for example near Jammu. Beyond South Asia, cautious parallels with other ceasefire regimes can clarify what is Himalayan-specific and what is general.

Legal-administrative granularity also merits closer attention. Here, legal frames were treated chiefly as discursive. Follow-on studies could map which measures are reversible by administrative order, which are treaty-bound, and how review clauses are operationalised over time (water releases, gate regimes, visa protocols). Greater precision on these levers would sharpen how conceived legality conditions both performance and infrastructure. Relatedly, infrastructures and flows can be studied as datasets. Change-detection of roads and posts and curated registers of flow decisions would allow researchers to relate infrastructural serviceability and circulation controls to incident pacing without asserting causality beyond the evidence. Any geospatial work should adhere to do-no-harm thresholds to avoid highlighting sensitive sites.

Finally, the methodological architecture developed here, the theory-anchored codebook, the cluster to meta-cluster analysis, and the explicit use of Lefebvre’s spatial triad to mediate across postcolonial theory, critical geopolitics, and Foucauldian analytics, can itself be an adaptable contribution. With independent validation (inter-coder reliability checks, external audit of code decisions, replication), the approach could be ported to other contested borders or crisis corridors.

These directions extend the thesis' focus along the same analytic spine, while addressing what could not be done here. By widening sources, recovering lived experience, adding temporal depth, testing portability, sharpening legal-administrative levers, and validating the method itself, subsequent studies can verify, nuance, or delimit the three meta-clusters and, in doing so, advance a more general account of how contested borders govern.

Closing words

Almost exactly a year after my journey through Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, the experience that marked the epistemic threshold from which this thesis emerged, these final pages are written at another. In September 2025, while in Kathmandu, a sudden and unexpected nationwide social-media shutdown was followed by escalating street clashes, young participants of demonstrations being shot publicly, and the subsequent fall of the Nepali Government. I was accidentally present as the private residence of Nepal's president was burned to the ground, stones striking its walls while crowds cheered. Standing before the flames, I was confronted with the immediacy of what this paper has traced in a more abstract register: discourse, legitimacy and fragility are not abstract concepts, they are lived realities. When the airport reopened under military authorisation, I left Nepal and brought the thesis to its conclusion in Shimla, India. The choice of Shimla was not random. As the site of the 1972 Shimla Agreement, which transformed a ceasefire line into the Line of Control, and as a city layered with colonial past, it resonates both as a place of imposed closure and of postcolonial ambiguity. Ending here is not a gesture of finality, even though this marks the end of my Master's. In a world of renewed conflicts, the task is to continue interdisciplinary research on contested spaces and the fragile conditions of peace. This thesis thus concludes as it began, at a threshold pointing beyond itself to the inquiries still ahead.

References

- Agnew, J. (1994). The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory. *Review of International Political Economy*, 1(1), 53–80.
- Agnew, J. (2003). *Geopolitics: Revisioning world politics*. Routledge.
- Ahluwalia, M. (2018). *Partition: Stories of separation*. Rupa Publications.
- Al Jazeera. (2020, June 17). *How Indian and Chinese media reported the deadly Ladakh clash*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/17/how-indian-and-chinese-media-reported-the-deadly-ladakh-clash>
- Al Jazeera. (2020, June 20). *China lays claim to Galwan Valley, blames India for border clash*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/20/china-lays-claim-to-galwan-valley-blames-india-for-border-clash>
- Al Jazeera. (2025, April 23). *‘Act of war’: What happened in Kashmir attack that killed 26 tourists?* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/23/act-of-war-what-happened-in-kashmir-attack-that-killed-26-tourists>
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.
- BBC News. (2020, June 25). *Galwan Valley: Satellite images ‘show China structures’ on India border*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53174887>
- BBC News. (2025, May 8). *India and Pakistan blame each other for escalating military tensions* [Live page]. <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/cwyneele13qt>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2025, May 7). *Indian airstrikes in Pakistan: May 7, 2025*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2025/05/indian-air-strikes-in-pakistan-may-7-2025?lang=en>
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. Columbia University Press.
- Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020, June 17). *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s regular press conference*. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202405/t20240530_11346818.html
- Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice. (2024). *The Constitution of India* (6th pocket ed., as amended up to 1st May 2024). Legislative Department, Official Languages Wing. <https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india>
- Council of the European Union. (2025, May 8). *India/Pakistan: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the latest developments*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/05/08/indiapakistan-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-latest-developments/>

Dawn. (2018, July 1). *The making of the Kargil disaster* (excerpts from Nasim Zehra's *From Kargil to the coup*). <https://www.dawn.com/news/1417105>

Dawn. (2025, May 10). *India and Pakistan just stepped back from the brink of war. Here's how it unfolded*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1910509>

European Commission. (2025). *Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research* (2nd ed.). Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc_en?filename=ec_rtd_ai-guidelines.pdf

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977* (C. Gordon, Ed.). Harvester Press.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1975)

Ghani, U. (2012). Nuclear weapons in India–Pakistan crisis. *IPRI Journal*, 12(2), 137–145. <https://ipripak.org/summer-2012volume-xii-number-2/>

Global Times. (2020, June 16). *China–India border tension flares up in Galwan Valley, won't lead to another 'Doklam standoff': Experts*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1188681.shtml>

Global Times. (2021, February 19). *China reveals truth of Galwan Valley clash after half a year, showing the country as 'a lion with wisdom and kindness'*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215947.shtml>

Global Times. (2025, May 8). *UN chief calls for military restraint from India, Pakistan*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202505/1333493.shtml>

Global Times. (2025, May 9). *Pakistan condemns India's 'blatant aggression,' says it brings 'two countries to brink'*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202505/1333486.shtml>

Gokhale, V. (2021, March 10). *The road from Galwan: The future of India–China relations*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/03/the-road-from-galwan-the-future-of-india-china-relations?lang=en>

Government of India, Kargil Review Committee. (2000). *From surprise to reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee report*. Sage.

Government of India Ministry of External Affairs. (2013, October 23). *Border Defence Cooperation Agreement between India and China*. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/22364>

Government of India Press Information Bureau. (2025, April 23). *Government brief on the Pahalgam attack and initial measures* (Press Release No. PRID-2127370). <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2127370>

Government of India, Press Information Bureau. (2025, May 8). *Briefing on precision strikes against terror infrastructure* (Press Release No. PRID-2128748). <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2128748>

Government of India, & Government of Pakistan. (1972, July 2). *Shimla Agreement*. New Delhi/Simla.

Haraway, D. J. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity*. Blackwell.

Hindustan Times. (2019, July 26). Hooda, D. S. Lessons Pakistan Army learnt from Kargil—and one it did not. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/lessons-pakistan-army-learnt-from-kargil-and-one-it-did-not/story-IM47QmP6q8s8K1CcDjD1SJ.html>

Huttenback, R. A. (1964). A historical note on the Sino-Indian dispute over the Aksai Chin. *The China Quarterly*, 18, 201–207. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000001519>

India Today. (1999, June 28). Kargil War: Lest we forget our heroes. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/from-the-india-today-archives-1999-kargil-war-lest-we-forget-our-heroes-2564928-2024-07-10>

India Today. (1999, July 19). It's their war too: Patriotic upsurge throughout India. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19990719-kargil-war-brings-a-fierce-patriotic-upsurge-throughout-india-824812-1999-07-18>

Indian Express. (1999, July 18). India won't forget Kargil 'betrayal'. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-wont-forget-kargil-betrayal-2/>

Indian Express. (2014, February 20). Recalling the spirit of Lahore. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/recalling-the-spirit-of-lahore/>

Indian Express. (2020, June 17). Day after Galwan, PM says will respond appropriately if provoked; foreign ministers talk of ensuring peace. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-china-galwan-june-17-wrap-modi-6463684/>

Indian Express. (2020, June 20). PMO acknowledges: This time, Chinese came in much larger strength to LAC. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/narendra-modi-in-india-china-border-dispute-galwan-all-party-meeting-6467932/>

Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies. (2000a). *Armed forces and the media*. https://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=406

Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies. (2000b). *Kargil Committee Report (overview)*. https://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=350

Keller, R. (2012). *Doing discourse research: An introduction for social scientists*. SAGE.

Lamb, A. (1991). *Kashmir: A disputed legacy, 1846–1990*. Roxford Books.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell.

Medha. (2019, August). *The revocation of Kashmir's autonomy: High-risk Hindutva politics at play*. GIGA Focus Asia, (5). GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies.

New Indian Express. (2020, September 15). China's attempt to unilaterally alter status quo unacceptable, says Rajnath Singh in Lok Sabha.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/Sep/15/chinas-attempt-to-unilaterally-alter-status-quo-unacceptable-says-rajnath-singh-in-lok-sabha-2197172.html>

- Norberg-Hodge, H. (1991). *Ancient futures: Learning from Ladakh*. Sierra Club Books.
- Ó Tuathail, G. (1996). *Critical geopolitics: The politics of writing global space*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Rediff. (1999, June 4). *Sartaj Aziz lists his agenda for talks with India*. <https://in.re-diff.com/news/1999/jun/04kash10.htm>
- Reuters. (2020, June 18). *India's Modi says there was no border intrusion in deadly clash with China*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/indias-modi-says-there-was-no-border-intrusion-in-deadly-clash-with-china-idUSKBN23Q0NR/>
- Reuters (2025, May 7). *How world leaders react to Indian strikes in Pakistan after Kashmir attack*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/reactions-indian-strikes-pakistan-after-kashmir-attack-2025-05-06/>
- Royal United Services Institute. (2020). *Analysis of India–China Ladakh crisis logistics and posture* [Commentary].
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon.
- Schofield, V. (2010). *Kashmir in conflict: India, Pakistan and the unending war* (3rd ed.). I. B. Tauris. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755625211>
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. SAGE.
- Shakoor, F. (1999). The Kargil crisis: An analysis. *Pakistan Horizon*, 52(3), 49–65. Pakistan Institute of International Affairs.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Tarapore, A. (2021, February 23). *The crisis after the crisis: How Ladakh will shape India's competition with China*. Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/crisis-after-crisis-how-ladakh-will-shape-india-s-competition-china>
- Tellis, A. J., Fair, C. C., & Medby, J. J. (2001). *Limited conflicts under the nuclear umbrella: Indian and Pakistani lessons from the Kargil crisis*. RAND Corporation. <https://doi.org/10.7249/MR1450>
- The Diplomat. (2025, May 8). *In retaliation for Pahalgam attack, India strikes Pakistan-based terror camps*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/05/in-retaliation-for-pahalgam-attack-india-strikes-pakistan-based-terror-camps/>
- The Hindu. (2024, December 17). *India–China agreement to end Ladakh standoff being implemented comprehensively and effectively: Chinese military*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-china-agreement-to-end-ladakh-standoff-being-implemented-comprehensively-and-effectively-chinese-military/article69029787.ece>
- The Hindu. (2025, May 12). *Operation Sindoor — A reshaping of confrontation*. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/operation-sindoor-a-reshaping-of-confrontation/article69576403.ece>
- The Hindu. (2025, May 13). *No country for pacifists: What Operation Sindoor reveals about India's political mood*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/operation-sindoor-india-pakistan-war-conflict-no-country-for-pacifists/article69574736.ece>

The Hindu BusinessLine. (2025, May 7). *'Operation Sindoor' unleashed: Indian forces hit back after Pahalgam carnage*. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/operation-sindoor-unleashed-indian-forces-hit-back-after-pahalgam-carnage/article69546652.ece>

The Times of India. (2020). *India–China border dispute: How the Galwan Valley clash unfolded*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-china-standoff-how-the-galwan-valley-clash-unfolded/articleshow/76418009.cms>

The Times of India. (2023). *Winter stocking and convoy scheduling in Ladakh: What changes post-Galwan*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>

U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. (2025, May 10). *G7 foreign ministers' statement on India and Pakistan*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/g7-foreign-ministers-statement-on-india-and-pakistan>

U.S. Department of State. (2025, April 24). *Secretary Rubio's call with Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif* [Readout]. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/04/secretary-rubios-call-with-pakistani-prime-minister-sharif/>

The Washington Post. (1999, July 5). *U.S. says Pakistan will withdraw*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/07/05/us-says-pakistan-will-withdraw/0e9bc37a-b5d9-400f-900c-d77b69a7d843/>

University of Vienna. (2024). *Guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching* (2nd ed.). University of Vienna. <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/detail/o:2092606>

United Nations Security Council. (1948, April 21). *Resolution 47 (1948)*

Appendices

A. Disclaimer

This thesis is an academic work developed in full compliance with ethical research guidelines, scientific best practices, and applicable laws and regulations during the time of the personal journey described. The journey, undertaken solely for private purposes, was not conducted as field research and involved no collection of data or systematic observations for academic purposes. Any interactions during the journey were of a purely personal nature and unrelated to this research. The personal impressions referred to are used exclusively as reflections that inspired the academic inquiry and do not constitute empirical data. The thesis relies solely on publicly available materials and contains no sensitive or restricted content. The research was conducted solely for academic purposes and adheres to the ethical guidelines of the University of Vienna and international standards of research integrity. It carries no political intent.

In line with the freedom of scientific inquiry, this work was conducted transparently and responsibly. It strictly respects the rights and perspectives of all individuals, communities and institutions, and fully acknowledges the complex realities of the regions referenced. The author assumes full responsibility for the ethical and academic integrity of this research, in accordance with both academic and international standards.

B. Full Coding Matrix (H1–H5)

Derivation Path – from Theory Blocks to H-Categories

Source theory block	Key concepts	Deductive bridge	Resulting H-category
Spatial Theory (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1989, 2003) + Critical Geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, 1996; Agnew, 1994, 2003)	Production of space, spatial fix, cartographic power	Space understood as socially produced and strategically visualised	H1 Discursive Spatial Production
Critical Geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, 1996; Agnew, 1994, 2003)	Geopolitical gaze, territorial trap, geopolitical imagination	Narratives legitimising state control	H2 Representation and Legitimation
Foucault (1995, 1980)	Discipline, panopticism, biopolitics, governmentality	Techniques that normalise bodies and space	H3 Disciplinary Techniques
Post-colonial Theory (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988; Chatterjee, 1993, 2004)	Othering, ambivalence, subalternity, imagined community	Subject production and exclusion at the border	H4 Subjectivation and Exclusion
Foucault (1980) + Spivak (1988)	Regimes of truth, epistemic violence	Control of what counts as valid border knowledge	H5 Knowledge, Truth and Epistemic Violence

3 Colour Legend

(Note: This was changed in this document for layout reasons. Manual coding was assigned colour during coding-process)

Post-colonial Theory = green

Foucauldian Power/Knowledge = red

Critical Geopolitics = blue

Spatial Theory = orange

3.1 Main and sub-codes with sources, rules, indicators

H1 Discursive Spatial Production

Theoretical roots: Lefebvre (1991); Harvey (1989, 2003); Ó Tuathail (1996); Agnew (1994, 2003)

Coding rule: Text that constructs LoC or LAC as space

Typical indicators: Maps, territorial metaphors, spatial naming

- **H1-1 Cartographic imagination**
Authors: Anderson (2006); Agnew (1994; 2003)
Rule: Maps legitimising sovereignty
Indicators: National atlases, “rightful map” claims
- **H1-2 Strategic visibility**
Authors: Ó Tuathail (1996); Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Visual surveillance and display of space
Indicators: Satellite imagery, border-cam feeds
- **H1-3 Spatial framing semantics**
Authors: Ó Tuathail (1996); Said (1978)
Rule: Adjectives framing land as natural or threatened
Indicators: Speech tropes, media framing
- **H1-4 Panoptic spatial order**
Authors: Foucault (1995)
Rule: Architecture enabling unilateral gaze
Indicators: Watchtowers, checkpoint layout

H2 Representation and Legitimation

Theoretical roots: Chatterjee (1993; 2004); Foucault (1995; 1980); Ó Tuathail (1996); Agnew (1994; 2003); Bhabha (1994)

Coding rule: Narratives that justify territorial control

Typical indicators: Security, heritage, development rhetoric

- **H2-1 Historical belonging**
Authors: Chatterjee (1993); Anderson (2006)
Rule: Past-oriented claims to land
Indicators: Partition references, princely treaties
- **H2-2 Security discourse**
Authors: Foucault (1995; 1980); Ó Tuathail (1996)

Rule: Threat frames legitimising force
Indicators: “National defence”, “terror menace”

- **H2-3 Development legitimization**

Authors: Chatterjee (1993); Agnew (2003)
Rule: Modernisation rhetoric
Indicators: “Backward region uplift”, road-building

- **H2-4 National performativity**

Authors: Bhabha (1994); Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Rituals reproducing nation
Indicators: Flag hoisting, military parades

H3 Disciplinary Techniques

Theoretical roots: Foucault (1995; 1980); Harvey (1989; 2003)
Coding rule: Practices normalising behaviour
Typical indicators: Curfews, drills, zoning

- **H3-1 Bodily disciplining**

Authors: Foucault (1995)
Rule: Regulation of posture and movement
Indicators: Military drill, frisking lines

- **H3-2 Panoptic surveillance**

Authors: Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Visibility without reciprocity
Indicators: CCTV, biometrics, ID checks

- **H3-3 Temporal control**

Authors: Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Regulation of daily rhythm and conduct
Indicators: Curfew hours, timed passes, administrative schedules

- **H3-4 Infrastructure disciplining**

Authors: Harvey (1989; 2003); Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Roads and dams as vectors of control
Indicators: Border roads shaping mobility

H4 Subjectivation and Exclusion

Theoretical roots: Spivak (1988); Bhabha (1994); Said (1978); Chatterjee (1993; 2004); Foucault (1995; 1980)
Coding rule: Labelling, silencing and Othering
Typical indicators: Enemy images, loyalty rites

- **H4-1 Labelling and enemy images**

Authors: Said (1978); Spivak (1988)
Rule: Terms such as “terrorist” or “anti-national”
Indicators: Government notices, headlines

- **H4-2 Performance of loyalty**
Authors: Bhabha (1994); Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Public acts signalling allegiance
Indicators: Anthem singing at checkpoints
- **H4-3 Subaltern invisibilisation**
Authors: Spivak (1988); Chatterjee (1993; 2004)
Rule: Silencing of local voices
Indicators: Absence of local quotes
- **H4-4 Norm and deviation coding**
Authors: Foucault (1995; 1980)
Rule: Binarising identities
Indicators: “Law-abiding” versus “suspect”

H5 Knowledge, Truth and Epistemic Violence

Theoretical roots: Foucault (1980); Spivak (1988); Anderson (2006); Chatterjee (1993; 2004); Ó Tuathail (1996)
Coding rule: Control over valid history and facts
Typical indicators: Expert panels, archival dominance

- **H5-1 Colonial genealogies**
Authors: Anderson (2006); Chatterjee (1993; 2004)
Rule: Colonial archives for legitimacy
Indicators: Gazetteer citations, Raj maps
- **H5-2 Subjugated knowledges**
Authors: Spivak (1988); Foucault (1980)
Rule: Marginal knowledge ignored
Indicators: Folk histories excluded
- **H5-3 Regimes of truth**
Authors: Foucault (1980)
Rule: Institutionalised truth circuits
Indicators: White papers, think-tank reports
- **H5-4 Expert discourses**
Authors: Foucault (1980); Ó Tuathail (1996)
Rule: Elites producing authoritative claims
Indicators: Strategic panels, briefings

C. Ledger of Coded Units

Legend

Per-unit fields: Section - Case - Primary - Secondary - Theory-Cluster-Tags
- Lefebvre Spatial Triad (C/P/L) - Cluster tag - Code rationale - Lefebvre justification

Theory-Cluster-Tags (spelled out): Postcolonial - Foucault - Critical Geopolitics - Spatial Theory

Lefebvre Spatial Triad: (C) Conceived - (P) Perceived - (L) Lived

C.2 Case-level Coding Ledger (31 units; 5.0-Intro excluded)

Chapter 4 - 4.1 to 4.2.1

KE-01 - 4.1.1 Colonial Histories and the Princely State of J&K

Section: 4.1.1 - Case: — - Primary: H5-1 - Secondary: H1-1; H2-1 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Colonial Cartographies and Epistemic Control

Code rationale. Colonial archives and treaty frames are deployed as epistemic authorities (H5-1), backed by cartographic authority claims (H1-1) and historical-belonging narrative (H2-1).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - space is constructed through archival-legal abstractions and representations.

KE-02 - 4.1.2 From Partition to Accession

Section: 4.1.2 - Case: — - Primary: H2-1 - Secondary: H4-1; H1-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(P) - Cluster: Partition as Origin Discourse

Code rationale. Accession framed via historical right (H2-1) is moralised through labels such as “incursion” (H4-1). Spatial semantics scaffold the narrative (H1-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived for narrative-legal framing - Perceived where the account touches positional practice.

KE-03 - 4.1.3 Drawing the Line

Section: 4.1.3 - Case: — - Primary: H1-3 - Secondary: H2-2; H5-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Line-Making as Discourse

Code rationale. Naming acts and agreements discursively materialise the line (H1-3). Security language legitimates control (H2-2). Institutions stabilise a truth regime (H5-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - diplomatic semantics and textual constitution dominate.

KE-04 - 4.1.4 Lived Borders and Remembered Displacement

Section: 4.1.4 - Case: — - Primary: H4-3 - Secondary: H5-2; H4-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (L) - Cluster: Memory and Silencing

Code rationale. Subaltern voices are structurally absent (H4-3). Local knowledges are subordinated (H5-2). Norm and deviation coding (H4-4) constructs subject positions.

Lefebvre justification. Lived - emphasis on memory, displacement, and experiential registers.

KE-05 - 4.2.1 (Intro) The Constitutional Logic of Article 370

Section: 4.2.1 (Intro) - Case: — - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H2-4; H4-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Constitutional Normalisation and Legal Hegemony

Code rationale. Constitutional semantics function as a truth regime (H5-3), supported by national performativity (H2-4) and structural exclusion (H4-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - legal and institutional schemata shape space at the normative level.

KE-06 - 4.2.1 Territorial Reorganisation and Administrative Centralisation

Section: 4.2.1 - Case: — - Primary: H2-3 - Secondary: H3-4; H4-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster: Development as Control Strategy

Code rationale. Development rhetoric legitimates reorganisation (H2-3). Infrastructures discipline mobility (H3-4) amid limited local participation (H4-

3).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - material governance via roads and administrative rewiring.

KE-07 - 4.2.1 Symbolic and Spatial Framing of Ladakh

Section: 4.2.1 - Case: — - Primary: H1-4 - Secondary: H3-2; H5-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Panoptic Territorialisation

Code rationale. A governable space is constructed through visual and administrative ordering (H1-4), surveillance rationales (H3-2), and expert advice (H5-4).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - representational and administrative pan-optic ordering.

Chapter 5 - Case studies (Intro not coded)

Kargil (5.1)

KE-08 - 5.1 Context (para 1)

Case: Kargil - Primary: H1-3 - Secondary: H3-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Post-colonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster: Mobility corridors as sovereignty vectors

Code rationale. Mobility corridors are semantically charged (H1-3) and materialised as governance instruments (H3-4).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - practical mobility and built environment shape access and tempo.

KE-09 - 5.1 Context (para 2)

Case: Kargil - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H2-4; H1-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(L) - Cluster: Restoration as legitimisation

Code rationale. "Status quo on our side" is a security frame (H2-2). National performativity (H2-4) and spatial semantics (H1-3) consolidate the claim.

Lefebvre justification. Conceived via justificatory discourse - Lived via commemorative affect.

KE-10 - 5.1 Context (para 3)

Case: Kargil - Primary: H3-3 - Secondary: H2-2 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Time-discipline under the nuclear lid

Code rationale. Sequencing and time-discipline (H3-3) constrain escalation within a security grammar (H2-2).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - doctrinal timing scheme such as rules of engagement and escalation windows, that is, a conceived temporal order rather than field-rhythmic practice.

KE-11 - 5.1 India's strategic decisions

Case: Kargil - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H5-4; H1-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(P) - Cluster: External validation of restraint

Code rationale. Not crossing the LoC is framed as security restraint (H2-2), validated by external expertise and diplomacy (H5-4). Heights and patrols enact a panoptic order (H1-4).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived and Perceived - vantage and patrol regimes materialise restraint, bridging conceived doctrine and terrain-based control.

KE-12 - 5.1 Pakistan's strategic decisions

Case: Kargil - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H2-1; H4-1 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Provisionality as discursive lever

Code rationale. Provisionality of the LoC sustains a contesting truth regime (H5-3) via historical scripts (H2-1) and labelling (H4-1).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - argumentative regimes dominate.

KE-13 - 5.1 Post-conflict adjustments

Case: Kargil - Primary: H3-4 - Secondary: H3-2; H5-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster: Institutionalised security-development

Code rationale. Reviews institutionalise logistics and forward defences (H3-4), surveillance (H3-2) and expert authority (H5-4).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - infrastructures, routines and monitoring in practice.

KE-14 - 5.1 Diplomatic consolidation

Case: Kargil - Primary: H2-4 - Secondary: H5-3; H3-4 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) to (P) - Cluster: Memory to mandate to materiality

Code rationale. Memorialisation performs nation (H2-4). Diplomacy consolidates the outcome as “truth” (H5-3). Infrastructure investments materialise it (H3-4).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived to Perceived - symbolic consolidation moves into material embedding.

Galwan (5.2)

KE-15 - 5.2 Context (para 1)

Case: Galwan - Primary: H3-4 - Secondary: H1-2 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster: Sovereignty by road

Code rationale. Single-axis roads and bridges set mobility regimes (H3-4) and strategic visibility (H1-2).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - built form and operational mobility and ISR.

KE-16 - 5.2 Context (para 2)

Case: Galwan - Primary: H1-1 - Secondary: H5-4; H3-3 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Rules stand in for borders

Code rationale. Indeterminate mapping (H1-1) is operationalised through procedural and expert scripts (H5-4) and temporal rules (H3-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - spatial imagination and codified procedures stand in for a physical boundary.

KE-17 - 5.2 Context (para 3)

Case: Galwan - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H3-4; H1-2 - Theory-Cluster-Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) ↔ (P) - Cluster: Dual track - speech restraint and spatial consolidation

Code rationale. Verbal restraint builds a truth frame (H5-3) while infrastructures consolidate positions (H3-4) under managed visibility (H1-2).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived and Perceived - interplay of communicative regimes and material consolidation.

KE-18 - 5.2 India's strategic decisions

Case: Galwan - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H3-4; H5-4 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(P) -

Cluster: Restraint in speech, logistics in practice

Code rationale. Status quo ante and liaison mechanisms (H2-2/H5-4) with accelerated logistics (H3-4).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived for restraint doctrine - Perceived for logistics in practice.

KE-19 - 5.2 China's strategic decisions

Case: Galwan - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H1-1; H2-2 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre:

(C) - Cluster: Truth by map and communiqué

Code rationale. "Differing perceptions" asserts a durable truth grammar (H5-3) anchored in cartography (H1-1) and security lexicon (H2-2).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - representational and communicative order predominates.

KE-20 - 5.2 Mobility and administration

Case: Galwan - Primary: H3-4 - Secondary: H3-3; H1-2 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster:

Routine as rule

Code rationale. Verification, buffers and routines (H3-3) normalise governance at altitude. ISR and visibility (H1-2) are instrumental.

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - routine and material techniques structure practice.

KE-21 - 5.2 Diplomatic track

Case: Galwan - Primary: H5-4 - Secondary: H3-3; H1-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre:

(C) to (P) - Cluster: Process makes place

Code rationale. Protocols and sequences (H5-4/H3-3) authorise disengagements. “Managing differences” (H1-3) frames space via process.

Lefebvre justification. Conceived to Perceived - procedural scripts translate into field routines.

Pahalgam (5.3)

KE-22 - 5.3 Context

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H3-2; H3-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) - Cluster: Crisis visibility and timing

Code rationale. Breach frame plus drones and blackouts establish a security narrative (H2-2) with panoptic and temporal techniques (H3-2/H3-3).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived - operational visibility and cadence through infrastructural means.

KE-23 - 5.3 India’s response (Strikes)

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H5-3; H1-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Legalistic retaliation

Code rationale. Proportionality and prudence rhetoric legitimates action (H2-2) within a legalistic truth frame (H5-3) and spatial semantics (“act upon the line”, H1-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - normative and discursive framing of action and site.

KE-24 - 5.3 India’s response (Flows)

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H3-4 - Secondary: H5-3; H1-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) + (C) - Cluster: Coercive flows

Code rationale. Water, gate and visa regimes enact territoriality via circulation (H3-4) under legal and semantic justification (H5-3/H1-3).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived for instruments of circulation control - Conceived for juridical and semantic scaffolding.

KE-25 - 5.3 “Blood and water ...”

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H2-2 - Secondary: H1-3; H5-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Moral metaphors govern movement

Code rationale. The moral metaphor links security to movement and flow, saturating the line's meaning (H1-3) within a truth framework (H5-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - ideational coupling and discursive moralisation of space.

KE-26 - 5.3 Pakistan and neighbourhood

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H2-2; H4-1 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Narrative adjudication

Code rationale. Competing truths such as "aggression" and "false flag" circulate via security discourse (H2-2) and labelling (H4-1).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - argumentative contest over meaning and attribution.

KE-27 - 5.3 EU/G7/US

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H5-4 - Secondary: H2-2; H5-3 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: External epistemic validation

Code rationale. Third parties set acceptable action frames via expert discourses (H5-4), affirm the security grammar (H2-2), and co-define truth conditions (H5-3).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - external authorisation through statements and communiqués.

KE-28 - 5.3 Nuclear risk and Mumbai analogue

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H3-3 - Secondary: H2-2; H5-4 - Theory-Cluster-

Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) - Cluster: Time-boxing under thresholds

Code rationale. Crisis choreography such as windows and sequences caps escalation (H3-3) under security and expert benchmarks (H2-2/H5-4).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - temporal governance is model and script driven.

KE-29 - 5.3 Why Pahalgam matters (Line)

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H1-3 - Secondary: H2-2; H5-3 - Theory-Cluster-
Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre:
(C) - Cluster: Line-making by restraint

Code rationale. Acting upon the line reproduces sacrality without legal finality. Security semantics and truth claims consolidate restraint.

Lefebvre justification. Conceived - the line is treated as a semantic and normative construct.

KE-30 - 5.3 Why Pahalgam matters (Flows)

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H3-4 - Secondary: H1-3; H5-3 - Theory-Cluster-
Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre:
(P) + (C) - Cluster: Sovereignty via circulation

Code rationale. Closures, permits and abeyance are territorial acts via circulation regimes (H3-4), framed semantically and legally (H1-3/H5-3).

Lefebvre justification. Perceived for instruments of control - Conceived for normative semantics and legal frames.

KE-31 - 5.3 Mediatisation and near-miss

Case: Pahalgam - Primary: H5-3 - Secondary: H3-3; H2-2 - Theory-Cluster-
Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) + (L) - Cluster: Mediated
crisis governance and sticky temporalities

Code rationale. Live formats generate competing truths (H5-3) and re-time crisis rhythms (H3-3) within a persistent security grammar (H2-2).

Lefebvre justification. Conceived for mediated frames - Lived for residual affective and temporal experience.

C.3 Mapping of codes to case-clusters

Note: Tags are spelled out - Lefebvre triad in parentheses

Cluster-Unit 1 - Colonial Cartographies and Epistemic Control (KE 01)

Dominant: H5-1 - Support: H1-1, H2-1 - Tags: Postcolonial; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Archives and maps pre-configure legitimacy. Belonging scripts anchor claims.

Triad justification. Conceived aggregation of representational-epistemic mechanisms.

Cluster-Unit 2 - Partition as Origin Discourse (KE 02)

Dominant: H2-1 - Support: H4-1, H1-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(P)

Rationale. Foundational belonging narrative plus labelling plus spatial semantics.

Triad justification. Conceived narrative tied to Perceived positional claims.

Cluster-Unit 3 - Line-Making as Discourse (KE 03)

Dominant: H1-3 - Support: H2-2, H5-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Naming and agreements sediment semantic control of the line.

Triad justification. Conceived discursive constitution with security and truth scaffolds.

Cluster-Unit 4 - Memory and Silencing (KE 04)

Dominant: H4-3 - Support: H5-2, H4-4 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (L)

Rationale. Structural invisibilisation and subordinated local knowledges.

Triad justification. Lived experiential focus.

Cluster-Unit 5 - Constitutional Normalisation and Legal Hegemony (KE 05)

Dominant: H5-3 - Support: H2-4, H4-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Institutional semantics and national performativity stabilise change.

Triad justification. Conceived juridical and discursive order.

Cluster-Unit 6 - Developmental Territorialisation and Spatial Discipline (MERGE) (KE 06 + KE 07)

Primaries: H2-3 and H1-4 - Support: H3-4, H3-2, H5-4, H4-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) + (C)

Rationale. Ladakh reframed as a governable space via development legitimisation and panoptic ordering, supported by infrastructures and expertisation.

Triad justification. Perceived material disciplining plus Conceived visual and administrative construction. Two primaries apply only at cluster level.

Cluster-Unit 7 - Kargil: Restoration as Legitimation (KE 09, 11, 14)

Dominant: H2-2 - Support: H2-4, H1-3, H5-3, H3-4 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C) to (P)

Rationale. Disciplined restoration framed as restraint. Memorialisation and semantics consolidate the line. Infrastructures materialise it.

Triad justification. Conceived to Perceived translation from frame and ritual to practice.

Cluster-Unit 8 - Kargil: Provisionality as Discursive Lever (KE 12)

Dominant: H5-3 - Support: H2-1, H4-1 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Contesting finality through alternative genealogies and labels.

Triad justification. Conceived argumentative tactics.

Cluster-Unit 9 - Kargil: Securitised Development Frontier (KE 08, 10, 13)

Dominant: H3-4 - Support: H3-2, H5-4 - Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P)

Rationale. Logistics, surveillance and reviews form a lasting dispositif.

Triad justification. Perceived infrastructures and routine surveillance.

Cluster-Unit 10 - Galwan: Rules Stand in for Borders (KE 16, 21)

Dominant: H1-1 and H5-4 - Support: H3-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Procedures and sequences operationalise an undelimited border.

Triad justification. Conceived codified rules and cartographic imagination.

Cluster-Unit 11 - Galwan: Restraint in Speech, Logistics in Practice (KE 18, 17)

Dominant: H2-2 and H3-4 - Support: H5-4 - Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (C)/(P)

Rationale. Calming communication coexists with material consolidation.

Triad justification. Conceived doctrine plus Perceived logistical enactment.

Cluster-Unit 12 - Galwan: Routine as Rule (Visibility and Mobility) (KE 15, 20)
Dominant: H3-4 - Support: H3-3, H1-2 - Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics;
Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P)

Rationale. Timetables and ISR normalise altitude presence.

Triad justification. Perceived recurring and embodied practice.

Cluster-Unit 13 - Pahalgam: Legalistic Retaliation and External Validation
(KE 23, 27, 26)

Dominant: H2-2 and H5-3 - Support: H5-4 - Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C)

Rationale. Proportionality rhetoric, third-party validation and competing frames.

Triad justification. Conceived legal, discursive and communicative ordering.

Note. Postcolonial also appears in KE-26.

Cluster-Unit 14 - Pahalgam: Coercive Flows (Sovereignty via Circulation) (KE 24, 30, 29)

Dominant: H3-4 - Support: H1-3, H5-3 - Tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory - Lefebvre: (P) + (C)

Rationale. Water, gates and visas operate as territorial levers without line shift.

Triad justification. Perceived circulation instruments plus Conceived semantic and legal scaffolding.

Cluster-Unit 15 - Pahalgam: Time-boxing and Mediated Crisis (KE 28, 22, 31)

Dominant: H3-3 - Support: H2-2, H5-3 - Tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics - Lefebvre: (C) with (L) resonance

Rationale. Sequencing caps escalation. Mediated rhythms persist.

Triad justification. Conceived temporal scripts - Lived resonance where media shape experience.

C.4 Sub-codes not observed and decision rationale

H3-1 Bodily disciplining - not observed. The corpus foregrounds institutional, legal and infrastructure grammars rather than corporeal drill or frisking routines. Decision: keep absent to preserve construct validity; add only upon explicit textual evidence such as checkpoint SOPs.

H4-2 Performance of loyalty - not observed. No dense description of ritualised allegiance such as anthem, flag or oath. Memorialisation remains under H2-4. Decision: keep absent; tag H4-2 only upon explicit rites to avoid boundary blur with H2-4.

C.5 Foreground versus Background

Foregrounded: H2-2; H5-3; H3-4; H1-3. Crisis-centred cases (Kargil, Galwan, Pahalgam) and the LoC and LAC contrast favour securitisation, institutionalised truth circuits, logistical governmentality and semantic line-making.

Backgrounded: H5-1; H5-2; H1-4; H4-4; H2-1. Historical and archival frames launch Chapter 4 but recede in Chapter 5's crisis pragmatics. Panoptic architecture and subject binaries appear less densely than time and infrastructure mechanisms.

Meta-Clusters

MC:A - Discursive Making of the Line: Security Semantics and Truth Regimes

System layer: Discourse (Conceived) - Colour tags: Postcolonial; Foucault; Critical Geopolitics (Spatial Theory transversal)

Dominant codes: H1-3; H2-2; H2-4; H5-3 - Support codes: H1-1; H2-1; H4-1
Lefebvre: Conceived dominates with selective C to P transitions. Lived resonance where memory and mediation are evident.

Core claim: The LoC and LAC are stabilised as reference points through naming, security framing, national performativity and circulating truth regimes - without requiring legal finality.

Theoretical roots (examples): H1-3 (Ó Tuathail; Said) - H2-2 (Foucault; Ó Tuathail) - H2-4 (Bhabha; Foucault) - H5-3 (Foucault) - Medium: Spatial Theory (Lefebvre).

Designations such as "Line of Control", lexical binaries such as "status quo" and "incursion", and commemorative and national performances script border meaning. Security discourse legitimates restraint as authority, while institutional briefings and communiqués circulate as the authoritative record. Cartographic and historical references support but do not mechanically

determine this consolidation.

KE anchors: Chapter 4 - KE-01; KE-02; KE-03; KE-05 - Kargil - KE-09; KE-11; KE-14 - Galwan - KE-16; KE-19; KE-21 - Pahalgam - KE-23; KE-25; KE-26; KE-27; KE-29 - Lived resonance: KE-31

MC:B - Performative Rulebooks as Borders: Protocols, Timing and Verification

System layer: Performance (Conceived to Perceived) - Colour tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics (Spatial Theory transversal; Postcolonial only via cartographic support)

Dominant codes: H5-4; H3-3; H2-2 - Support codes: H1-1; H1-3

Lefebvre: Conceived to Perceived - scripted procedures and temporal sequences translate into field routines such as verification, windows and staged disengagements. Lived resonance in mediated crisis pacing.

Core claim: Where delimitation is absent or disputed, protocol performs the boundary. Expert rulebooks, temporal choreography and verification practices enact order and enable restrained bargaining.

KE anchors: Kargil - KE-10; KE-11; KE-14 - Galwan - KE-16; KE-18; KE-20; KE-21 - Pahalgam - KE-28; KE-31

MC:C - Governing by Development: Infrastructure, Surveillance and Flows

System layer: Infrastructure (Perceived with Conceived scaffold and Lived resonance) - Colour tags: Foucault; Critical Geopolitics; Spatial Theory (Postcolonial where flow semantics are explicit)

Dominant codes: H3-4; H3-2; H1-2 - Support codes: H1-3; H5-3

Lefebvre: Perceived dominates through roads, depots, ISR and circulation controls. Conceived provides legal and semantic scaffolding. Lived appears where everyday rhythms and mediated experience register the order.

Core claim: Mobility governance equals territorial governance. Infrastructure, surveillance and regulated flows such as water, gates and visas discipline space and normalise state presence without moving the line.

KE anchors: Cross-case, especially KE-15; KE-20; KE-24; KE-30 and the Kargil and Pahalgam infrastructure sequences.