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***Post-Colonial Nation-Building in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh: A  
Comparative Perspective***

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisors: Dr Madura Rasaratnam and Dr Sara Silvestri

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Chirag Ahuja, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the processes of post-colonial Indian nation-building in Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir. The three regions were part of one federal Indian state between 1947 and 2019 but have had starkly contrasting relationships with the Indian union. Whereas Ladakh and Jammu have been largely integrated within the Indian union, Kashmir has been the site of a militarised secessionist conflict that has been ongoing since 1989. This dissertation examines these contrasting outcomes through Andreas Wimmer's framework of nation-building that is focussed on the concept of exchange relations or networks. It shows that nation-building can successfully incorporate regions, as in Jammu and Ladakh, where state and state-aligned actors can build inclusive and reciprocal networks with the people. The absence of such networks leads to a failure of nation-building in Kashmir. The dissertation foregrounds the centrality of nation-building in explaining the contrasting political outcomes.

The timeline of the thesis stretches from 1846-2019. Understandably, most scholars choose the period between 1947-2019: from the accession of Jammu & Kashmir state to India until the abrogation of Article 370 (autonomous status of J&K removed for the state's 'integration'). However, the divergent processes of nation-building are rooted in the colonial period of J&K. Without the context of the colonial Jammu & Kashmir princely state, understanding the puzzle of the divergent post-colonial nation-building will be incomplete. The dissertation ends in 2019 when the Indian government abrogated Article 370, a moment that crystallised the contrasting and fractured processes of nation building across the three regions. The dissertation uses processes tracing to examine the contrasting trajectories in the three regions. The analysis is supported by qualitative interviews, archival analysis, and secondary scholarship in the public domain.

The dissertation contributes to three distinct literatures. Firstly, it contributes to the literature on the state of Jammu & Kashmir. This dissertation provides a comparative perspective by examining why the three regions had different political trajectories after 1947. I show why Kashmir has been embroiled in a conflict, unlike Jammu and Ladakh. I show that the differences between Kashmir, Jammu, Ladakh cannot just

be narrowed down to religion, international states, or the politics of 1947. Instead, India's nation-building processes have played a central role in the respective outcomes of the three regions. The dissertation also contributes to the literature on nation-building. It adopts and develops Wimmer's framework by showing the possibilities and limitations of establishing exchange relationships in a post-colonial case. Finally, the dissertation contributes towards the utility of examining the Indian case through political networks. Using the analytical lens of networks between the state and three regions provides a novel perspective on why different regions sharing same geographical, cultural, and religious boundaries can have different political trajectories.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project would not be possible without the encouragement and support of my supervisors, colleagues, family, and the incredible people I met during my fieldwork. My utmost gratitude would be for my supervisors, Dr Madura Rasaratnam and Dr Sara Silvestri. Their supervision involved support, critique, and consistent motivation. Dr Madura introduced me to Andreas Wimmer's work that shaped the arguments in the thesis. Dr Sara, not an expert on J&K, helped refine the thesis such that it can be informative for the non-expert readers and engaging for the expert readers. Both demand the highest standards from their students. I hope I have been able to meet their standards to the best of my abilities. At City, I am grateful to Dr Sasikumar Sundaram and Dr Andrew Payne. Sashi guided me as a friend, more than as a colleague. Andy has been an incredible International Relations lecturer and teaching over two terms under his tutelage has developed me both as an academic and as a person. I would also thank Tanya Shenan, the departmental administrator at City, who was always available to sort my queries for the fieldwork, whenever I called on her. This journey would not be possible without Dr Mervyn Frost, my dissertation supervisor and tutor at KCL. Turning the nascent idea of comparing Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir into a coherent research proposal was possible largely through his guidance and suggestions.

My parents, Kavita and Sanjay Ahuja, have been my biggest cheerleaders. They appreciated the importance of a good education for which they moved cities, started life from scratch, and set me on a path which led me to this doctoral thesis. They laboured through the most difficult moments of life to ensure that I and my sister experience everything that the world has to offer. My sister, Suhani, has perhaps provided the most enthusiastic yet stern support throughout the writing of this thesis. She celebrated my efforts while keeping me grounded at the same time. Finally, my gratitude to the person who I knew as a friend when I began the thesis and who became a partner-for-life by the time I finished the thesis: Vidushi. My morale wavered during this period, yet her support and encouragement from thousands of miles away did not.

Most importantly, the thesis would not have been possible without the people I met in Jammu, Ladakh, and New Delhi. Sushma Jamwal, at Jammu's Gulab Singh Research Centre became my point of contact for everything Jammu. She connected me with the people at other libraries and research centres, honed my understanding of Jammu through the numerous books and archives that I would not find elsewhere, and essentially mentored me throughout the Jammu leg of my fieldwork. Goverdhan Singh Jamwal, despite his 98 years of age, was the most incredible host who offered me his time and invaluable insights without asking twice. The only other individual who could attest to the time before 1947, Dr Karan Singh, took the keenest interests in my research. My conversation with him would help me even beyond this thesis. As would the conversations with Murtaza Khalili, the principal of the Mutuharry Public School in Baroo, Kargil. He embodied the struggle, tenacity, and ambition of Kargil. Unsurprisingly, his last day as the school principal in December 2023 involved a convoy of 50 cars as the Kargil community bode him farewell for his 25 years of service. The conversations with my cab driver in Ladakh were nothing short of enlightening. Perceptions about religions were shattered, the complex importance of rights and duties were debated, and the most nuanced picture of Ladakh was painted through our conversations. The conversations with the monk of the Diskit monastery, halfway between Leh and Turtuk, were just as enriching. He humoured the fact that given the intermix of religion and politics in Ladakh, Ladakh was very much like any other Indian region.

Finally, my gratitude to those unnamed individuals whose help, albeit limited, was immeasurable: the septuagenarian librarian at the Ranbir Singh library in Jammu; the young clerk who brought me the numerous undigitized documents at the National Archives, New Delhi; the curious teenager who escorted me to my hotel in Zamstiang from the Kargil bus stop and introduced me to Kargil's hospitality; and the army man at Leh's Hall of Fame Museum who encouraged me to ask everyone I meet in Ladakh- what occupation are you interested in? I discuss the answer later in the thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Abstract.....                                                                  | 3             |
| Acknowledgements.....                                                          | 5             |
| Table of Contents.....                                                         | 7             |
| Abbreviations.....                                                             | 11            |
| Maps and Images.....                                                           | 12            |
| <br><b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>                                        | <br><b>13</b> |
| 1.1 The Context: Three Divisions in the Princely State of Kashmir or J&K.....  | 17            |
| Kashmir.....                                                                   | 19            |
| Jammu.....                                                                     | 21            |
| Ladakh.....                                                                    | 24            |
| 1.2 The Puzzle: Divergent Trajectories After 1947.....                         | 26            |
| 1.3 The Argument: Networks of Nation-Building.....                             | 30            |
| 1.4 The Methodology: Process Tracing.....                                      | 35            |
| 1.5 Chapter Outline.....                                                       | 41            |
| <br><b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: NATION-BUILDING AND WIMMER.....</b>       | <br><b>44</b> |
| 2.1 Theories of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Traditional Perspectives..... | 46            |
| Nationalism Literature.....                                                    | 46            |
| Nation-Building Literature.....                                                | 53            |
| 2.2 Theories of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Indian Perspectives.....      | 56            |
| Impact of Colonialism.....                                                     | 57            |
| Indian Nationalism: Colonial and Post-Colonial Networks.....                   | 60            |
| Limitations and Opposition of Congress: Hindu Nationalist Networks.....        | 65            |
| 2.3 Nation-Building: Wimmer's Framework.....                                   | 67            |
| Wimmer's Framework.....                                                        | 68            |
| Wimmer and Mainstream Approaches.....                                          | 70            |
| Wimmer and Indian Case.....                                                    | 72            |
| Contributing to Wimmer's Framework.....                                        | 73            |
| 2.4 Conclusion.....                                                            | 74            |
| <br><b>CHAPTER 3: 1846-1947: DOGRA STATE AND CONTRASTING NETWORKS.....</b>     | <br><b>75</b> |
| 3.1 1846-1947: Jammu Dogras to Kashmiri National Conference.....               | 77            |
| 3.2 People and Society Under the Dogra Rule.....                               | 79            |
| Jammu.....                                                                     | 80            |
| Kashmir.....                                                                   | 81            |

|                                                                                          |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Ladakh.....                                                                              | 83         |
| 3.3 Jammu & Kashmir: State's Administrative Character.....                               | 85         |
| 3.4 Dogra's Political Networks.....                                                      | 89         |
| Dharmarth Trust.....                                                                     | 89         |
| Dogra Sadar Sabha.....                                                                   | 91         |
| Administrative Measures Under Ranbir Singh.....                                          | 93         |
| Pratap Act and Pratap Code.....                                                          | 94         |
| Begar.....                                                                               | 95         |
| Hereditary State Subjects Law.....                                                       | 97         |
| Muslim/National Conference.....                                                          | 100        |
| Dogra Administration in Ladakh.....                                                      | 104        |
| 3.5 Reciprocal and Neutral Networks: Jammu and Ladakh.....                               | 106        |
| Jammu.....                                                                               | 107        |
| Ladakh.....                                                                              | 110        |
| 3.6 Extractive and Non-Reciprocal Networks: Kashmir.....                                 | 112        |
| 3.7 Conclusion.....                                                                      | 114        |
| <b>Chapter 4: 1947-1989: ACCESSION IS NOT INTEGRATION.....</b>                           | <b>117</b> |
| 4.1 Political Apparatus of J&K: India's Coercive 'Integration', 1947-1989.....           | 119        |
| Circumstances of Partition.....                                                          | 119        |
| Special Status and Article 370.....                                                      | 120        |
| National Conference-Congress Alliance.....                                               | 121        |
| 4.2 Nation-Building in Kashmir: Elite Networks and Deinstitutionalization.....           | 123        |
| Land Reforms and Public Spending: Limited Political Economy Exchanges.....               | 124        |
| Abdullah's Land Reforms.....                                                             | 124        |
| Economic Measures Under Bakshi.....                                                      | 125        |
| Deinstitutionalization: Consolidated Polity, Client Governments, Suppressive Regime..... | 127        |
| NC's Consolidation of Kashmiri Polity, 1947-1953.....                                    | 128        |
| Client Governments and Suppression of Dissent, 1953-1975.....                            | 129        |
| Towards Insurgency, 1975-1989.....                                                       | 131        |
| 4.3 Nation-Building in Jammu: Communal Co-option of Voluntary Associations.....          | 133        |
| Violence Against Muslims, Praja Parishad, and Communalized Nation-Building.....          | 134        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1947-1963.....                                          | 137        |
| Congress and Communal Nation-Building.....                                               | 139        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1963-1975.....                                          | 140        |
| Key Voluntary Organisations of Jammu.....                                                | 141        |
| Dharmarth Trust.....                                                                     | 142        |
| Jammu & Kashmir People's Party.....                                                      | 142        |

|                                                                                               |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Proliferation of Jammu Organisations.....                                                     | 143        |
| RSS and Jana Sangh.....                                                                       | 143        |
| Muslim Identity and Muslim Federation.....                                                    | 144        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1975-1989.....                                               | 147        |
| 4.4 Nation-Building in Ladakh: Communal Exchange Networks and Cooperative Militarization..... | 147        |
| LBA and Kushak Bakula.....                                                                    | 149        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1947-1953.....                                               | 152        |
| Indian Army, BRO, and Development in Ladakh.....                                              | 153        |
| Early Relations with Army.....                                                                | 153        |
| BRO and Provision of Public Goods.....                                                        | 154        |
| Construction Activities and Employment Due to Wars.....                                       | 155        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1953-1975.....                                               | 157        |
| Ladakh Scouts, Tourism, Agitations for Autonomy.....                                          | 158        |
| BRO and Ladakh Scouts.....                                                                    | 158        |
| Tourism.....                                                                                  | 158        |
| LBA Agitations for Autonomy and Buddhist-Hindu Communalization.....                           | 159        |
| Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1975-1989.....                                               | 161        |
| 4.5 Analysis of India's Exchange Relations.....                                               | 161        |
| Non-Reciprocal and Repressive Relations: Kashmir.....                                         | 162        |
| Reciprocal Relations: Jammu.....                                                              | 163        |
| Reciprocal Relations: Ladakh.....                                                             | 164        |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: 1989-2019: INSURGENCY AND NATION-BUILDING.....</b>                              | <b>166</b> |
| 5.1 Timeline of Events in J&K, 1989-2019.....                                                 | 168        |
| 5.2 Nation-Building in Kashmir: Excesses of Violence.....                                     | 170        |
| Political Economy Amplifying Militancy, 1989-1999.....                                        | 171        |
| Staking Claims and Internationalizing Kashmir, 1989-2008.....                                 | 173        |
| Conflict, Economic Miseries, and Abrogation of Article 370, 2008-2019.....                    | 174        |
| 5.3 Nation-Building in Jammu: Jammu and Indian Identity Consolidation.....                    | 177        |
| Incentivizing Peace During Insurgency.....                                                    | 177        |
| Impact of Kashmir's Insurgency in Jammu.....                                                  | 178        |
| Incentivizing Peace Through organisational Linkages.....                                      | 180        |
| Hindu Nationalism, Muslims, and Article 370.....                                              | 184        |
| Growth of Hindu Nationalism in Jammu.....                                                     | 184        |
| Muslim Position in Jammu.....                                                                 | 187        |
| Hindu Nationalism and Article 370.....                                                        | 190        |
| 5.4 Nation-Building in Ladakh: Autonomy and Effective Militarization.....                     | 191        |
| Autonomy- Consequence of Organisational Exchanges.....                                        | 192        |

|                                                                              |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| War and Development in Ladakh: Political Economy Exchanges.....              | 195        |
| Exchanges During Kargil War.....                                             | 195        |
| Post-War Nation-Building.....                                                | 198        |
| Infrastructure and Tourism.....                                              | 200        |
| Hindu Nationalism in Ladakh- Communal Networks of Nation-Building.....       | 201        |
| 5.5 Analysis of India's Exchange Relations.....                              | 206        |
| Non-Reciprocal and Repressive Relations: Kashmir.....                        | 207        |
| Reciprocal Relations: Jammu.....                                             | 209        |
| Reciprocal Relations: Ladakh.....                                            | 209        |
| <b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: DYNAMIC NATION-BUILDING.....</b>                   | <b>212</b> |
| 6.1 Networks of Nation-Building for J&K.....                                 | 213        |
| 6.2 Findings from the Research.....                                          | 216        |
| 6.3 Contribution Towards the Literature.....                                 | 218        |
| 6.4 Avenues for Nation-Building Research: Northeastern India and Punjab..... | 222        |
| 6.5 Avenues for Nation-Building Research: Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir.....       | 228        |
| <b>Bibliography.....</b>                                                     | <b>231</b> |
| Archive Documents.....                                                       | 231        |
| Secondary Sources.....                                                       | 236        |

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AFSPA- Armed Forces Special Power Act  
APHC- All Parties Hurriyat Conference  
BJP- Bharatiya Janata party  
BRO- Border Roads Organisation  
BSF- Border Security Force  
CRPF- Central Reserve Police Force  
DSS- Dogra Sadar Sabha  
HM- Hindu Mahasabha  
HM- Hizbul Mujahideen  
ILP- Inner Line Permit  
J&K- Jammu and Kashmir  
JeM- Jaish-e-Mohammad  
JKLF- Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front  
LeT- Lashkar-e-Tayyiba  
KDA- Kargil Democratic Alliance  
LAB- Leh Apex Body  
LBA- Ladakh Buddhist Association  
MF- Muslim Federation  
MUF- Muslim United Front  
NC- National Conference  
PAP- Protected Area Conflict  
PDP- People's Democratic Party  
RSS- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh  
UT- Union Territory  
VDC- Village Defence Committees  
VHP- Vishwa Hindu Parishad

## MAPS AND IMAGES

|                                                                                                                                                                      |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Map 1. Indian-administered Jammu & Kashmir state between 1947-2019; and Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir (called POK- Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir- in India)..... | 13  |
| Map 2. Princely States and British India.....                                                                                                                        | 18  |
| Map 3. Jammu region of J&K princely state.....                                                                                                                       | 22  |
| Map 4. Stages of the creation of J&K and the territory of Ladakh.....                                                                                                | 25  |
| Map 5. Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.....                                                                                                          | 30  |
| Map 6. Jammu & Kashmir Princely State in 1946.....                                                                                                                   | 79  |
| Map 7. Kashmir and Jammu divisions in J&K state.....                                                                                                                 | 133 |
| Map 8. Ladakh division in J&K state.....                                                                                                                             | 149 |
| Map 9. Border Areas of Jammu.....                                                                                                                                    | 178 |
| Map 10. Ladakh Towns and Cities.....                                                                                                                                 | 192 |
| Map 11. Northeastern states of India.....                                                                                                                            | 223 |
| Map 12. Indian and Pakistan Punjab.....                                                                                                                              | 226 |
|                                                                                                                                                                      |     |
| Image 1. Wimmer's Argument.....                                                                                                                                      | 70  |
| Image 2. Signs in Ladakh signifying the role of BRO in nation-building.....                                                                                          | 156 |
| Image 3. Signs in Ladakh signifying the role of BRO in nation-building.....                                                                                          | 156 |
| Image 4. Event attended by the Indian elites in Jammu's border areas.....                                                                                            | 182 |
| Image 5. Event attended by the Indian elites in Jammu's border areas.....                                                                                            | 182 |
| Image 6. Event attended by the Indian elites in Jammu's border areas.....                                                                                            | 182 |
| Image 7. Comparison between Wimmer's hypothesis and Ladakh's case.....                                                                                               | 210 |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



Map 1. Indian-administered Jammu & Kashmir state between 1947-2019; and Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir (called POK- Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir- in India) (Simarpriti 2019).

Why did the three regions of J&K have different post-colonial political trajectories? Why did Jammu and Ladakh not go down Kashmir's secessionist trajectory despite being part of the same state of Jammu & Kashmir? The thesis addresses these research questions by examining the post-colonial nation-building networks between India and the three regions (Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh) of J&K between 1947 and 2019. The term post-colonial here refers to the temporal period in India after 1947, rather than identifying with a specific post-colonial theoretical approach. When the British Indian territory was partitioned into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan in 1947, the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley of J&K sought Indian rule. Kashmir's pre-eminent political party and its leader, the National Conference and Sheikh Abdullah, were vocal about joining India over Pakistan; much more than the Hindu princely ruler of the J&K state based in Jammu or the primarily Buddhist

leaders of Ladakh. The proximity between National Conference and India's biggest political party, Congress, also yielded a special status for the post-colonial state of J&K. This status gave J&K special autonomous powers, not bestowed on any other Indian state. Yet, since 1989, Kashmir valley has been embroiled in a secessionist movement against India. In 2019, the special status was revoked. Kashmiri elites and non-elites alike considered this a betrayal from the India state. Academics and analysts have focused on the political upheavals of Kashmir Valley in the past decades and century through various themes. Scholars have examined the valley through the India-Pakistan lens (Khan 1965; Gupta 1967; Dawson 1994; Schofield 2003); or the lens of Kashmir's internal political manoeuvrings (Menon 1956; Bamzai 1962); or the lens of historical narratives (Zutshi 2003; Kanjwal 2023); or a combination of factors (Ganguly 1997, 2003; Bose 2003, 2021; Sidhu et al 2006). Most of these texts begin their discussion from 1947. Lamb (1991) and Rai (2018) trace Kashmir from 1846 until the outbreak of insurgency 1989. In contrast, Jammu and Ladakh, the other regions of J&K have had a completely different trajectory.

For both the versed and unversed, the term Kashmir became synonymous with the entire state of J&K. However, the three regions of J&K (Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh) have had different political trajectories. Jammu was the seat of power in J&K between 1846 and 1947. In this period, J&K was a monarchical or princely state, under the reign of the Dogra dynasty. Jammu region, and J&K on whole, had a Muslim-majority. Meanwhile, the Dogra rulers were Hindu. The last ruler of J&K, Hari Singh, was undecided about joining India (Jha 1996; Snedden 2015). He even signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan. In contrast, Ladakh was largely unpoliticized. Despite being the largest region of J&K (almost twice the size of Kashmir and Jammu combined), Ladakh had only 300,000 people (compared to over 3.5 million people in the rest of the state) (Census of India 1941). Ladakh had a sparse population spread over a harsh mountainous topography which had negligible engagement with the Indian political developments. Meanwhile, the Dogra rule also had distinct relations with the three regions. These were cordial towards Jammu, ambivalent towards Ladakh, and repressive towards Kashmir. Therefore, Jammu/Ladakh and their elites were not as vocal and oriented towards India as Kashmiris. Indian elites of the time also engaged only with Kashmir's elites, not Jammu or Ladakh's. However, the political trajectories for Jammu and Ladakh

reversed after 1947. The two regions never sought secession from India. Despite being ethnically, religiously, and culturally distinct from India, Kashmir, and each other, Jammu and Ladakh sought 'complete integration' with India i.e. the removal of the special status. The organisations and elites of the two regions constantly demanded a political framework akin to other Indian regions. In 2019, their demands were accepted by the Indian government, and the special status of Jammu & Kashmir state was revoked. Ladakh was separated from the state of J&K; Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh were made two separate union territories (UT) of India i.e. administrative regions directly under central government's rule, unlike states that have their own legislatures and governments.

The thesis examines why this divergence between Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh happened and what this case tells us about India's nation-building processes in the three regions. For this, I focus on the formation of networks between the state elites and the population as the principal modality of nation-building. The analytical framework to examine these networks is drawn from the work of Andreas Wimmer (2018). He defines nation-building as the process of political inclusion of citizens into the national framework such that people identify with the nation more than their region, religion, or ethnicity. Wimmer's framework places attention on the slow-moving processes of nation-building by forming networks between state and people through which integration and identification with the nation-state is generated among different ethnic groups and regions. He stresses on the importance of inclusive, representative networks between state and people to facilitate nation-building. Absence of inclusive networks between state and people, he argues, breeds secessionist tendencies and conflict with the nation-state. I show that the Indian elites built comparatively inclusive networks with the people of Jammu and Ladakh after 1947 that encouraged their orientation towards India. In contrast, repressive and exclusionary networks with the Kashmiris reversed the region's positionality: from a pro-India stance in 1947 to a secessionist conflict against India since 1989. However, the processes of nation-building in the three regions did not always comply with Wimmer's framework. Even though the result in the three regions was in accordance with Wimmer's hypothesis, the processes preceding the result at times deviated from Wimmer's propositions. I'll elaborate on this deviation throughout the thesis.

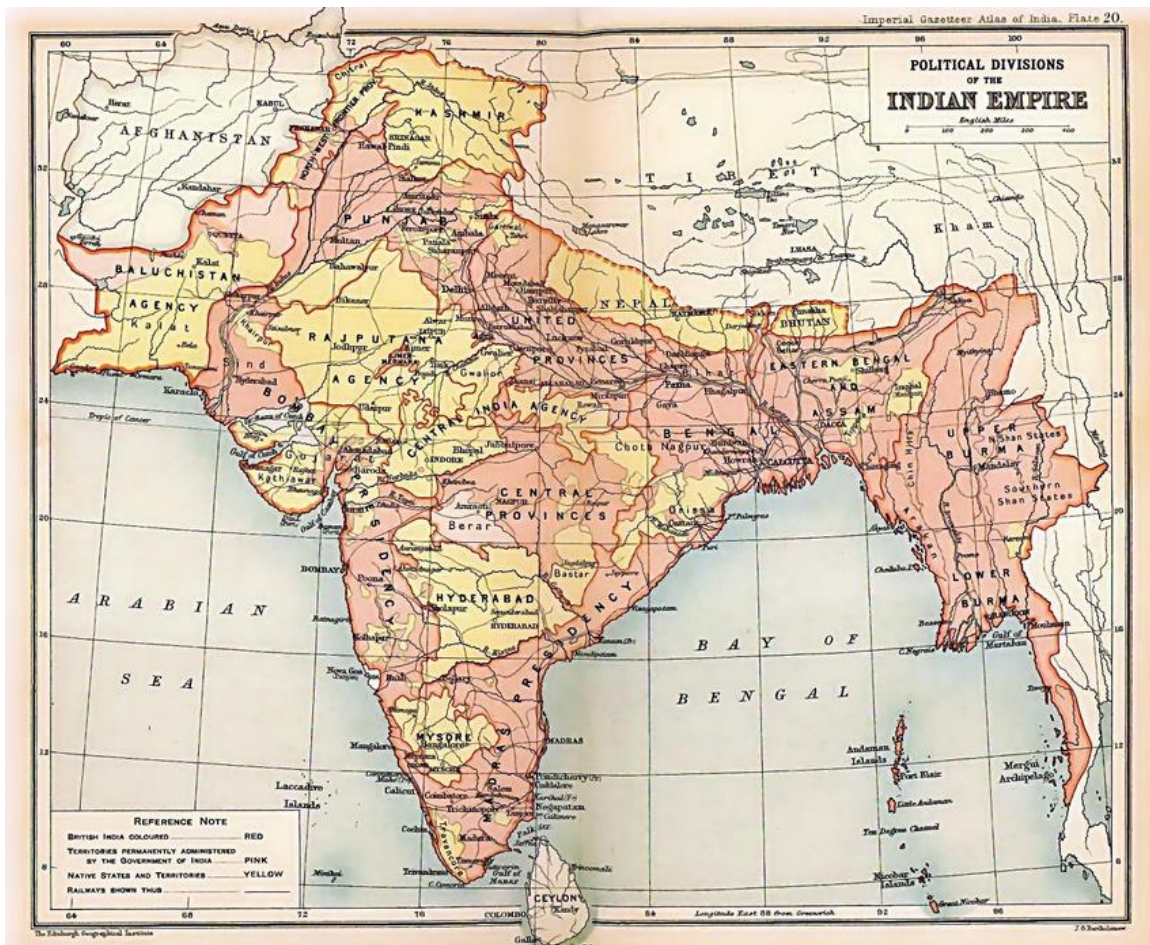
The analysis of nation-building in India has often foregrounded the role of networks. However, there have been different kinds of networks. Sumit Sarkar (1983) illustrates how the Congress shaped India's anti-colonial movement by building networks with people, communities, tribes, socio-economic and religious organisations. He described networks as the informal and powerful mediums of influence and patronage through which the diverse people and regions of India were stitched together in a pan-India movement. In the colonial period, Congress networks weaved the diverse Indian subcontinent to become a singular political unit. In the post-colonial period, Congress relied on electoral networks to link the people with the government (Brass 1965). Congress provided representation to diverse groups in electoral politics and in exchange, people ensured that Congress won elections at both federal and national levels until the 1970s. Besides Congress networks, there were also the networks of Hindu nationalists in the colonial and post-colonial periods. While Congress networks intended to acknowledge the diversity of India, Hindu nationalist organisations networks fashioned a Hindu-dominant conception for India (Jaffrelot 2007; Rasaratnam 2016). Some Hindu nationalist elites were part of Congress while the rest were in organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha (HM) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Chapter 2). In existence since the colonial period, the RSS and the HM have propagated the idea that India is a Hindu-majority nation that must be governed on the Hindu religio-cultural ethos. The RSS has also patronized the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). The BJP is the political arm of the RSS and the principle electoral opponent of the Congress. The BJP-RSS networks have rivalled and even displaced Congress networks in many Indian regions in the last three decades. On the other hand, Ashutosh Varshney stressed on the role of civic networks in mitigating Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India (2002). He argues that wherever networks of engagement exist between Hindus and Muslims, the propensity for communal conflict reduces.

While I elaborate on the various networks in the empirical chapters, the argument here points to the centrality of networks in analysing the Indian case. Networks between Indian ruling elites- Congress or Hindu nationalist elites, and state (Congress or BJP governments) or non-state elites (RSS)- and the people played a key role in India's nation-building processes. For this thesis, I employ the networks of

nation-building as proffered by Wimmer. Through this, I compare the post-colonial trajectories of nation-building in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Thus, the thesis contributes to three sets of literature: role of networks in the Indian case, J&K, and nation-building. The examination of India's post-colonial networks in the three regions answers why Jammu and Ladakh did not go down Kashmir's secessionist trajectory. Additionally, as I'll show in the empirical chapters and Chapter 6, I also contribute to Wimmer's framework. I emphasize upon the importance of networks, however, the results from this thesis partially deviate from Wimmer's hypothesis.

The following section provides a brief historical and political context of the three regions between 1846 and 1947. I discuss the ethnic, communal, and geographical divisions of the three regions. The context foregrounds the distinctions between the three regions as three separate entities within one state. The subsequent section elaborates on how the distinct post-colonial trajectories of the three regions in one state poses a puzzle for the scholarship on J&K and nation-building. It is a critical puzzle also because of the reversals in positionalities of the regions after 1947. The third section sets out the core argument; namely that the presence of inclusive Indian networks in Jammu and Ladakh facilitated the regions' integration and identification with India, whereas absence of such networks between Indian elites and Kashmiris steered the valley towards secessionist insurgency. The fourth section discusses the methodology of the thesis which involves process tracing. I illustrate how the nation-building trajectories of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir between 1949 and 2019 are examined. The final section provides an overview of the subsequent chapters.

### **1.1 The Context: Three Divisions in the Princely State of Kashmir or J&K**



Map 2. Princely States (Yellow) and British India (Pink). Kashmir or J&K in the north was the largest princely state (Shah 2023).

The Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir has drawn sustained international attention due to the protracted conflict in the Kashmir valley, that has been ongoing for nearly three decades since 1989. The academic literature has, understandably, focused on the politics of Kashmir, its demography and conflict. The mainstream narrative acquired a religious lens: a Muslim-majority state in a conflict with Hindu-majority India. The importance of Muslim Pakistan disputing India's control over J&K further reified the religious lens with which J&K was dominantly viewed. The variables of religion and conflict in Kashmir are undeniably important. However, they do not exist in isolation from other variables and regions of J&K. The Kashmir-centric representation of J&K has often overlooked J&K's ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, cultural, and geographical diversity. The following paragraphs make an appraisal of this diversity. I expand on the geographical divisions, demographics, ethnicities, languages, and political histories of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir before 1947. An

overview of the societal context until 1947 illustrates why the post-1947 period is a puzzle of nation-building.

### *Kashmir*

For numerous reasons, the Kashmir Valley has a pivotal place in the politics of the state. 'This is not solely because the rest of the world knows the state by this name and it has been represented, nationally and internationally, by Kashmiri-speaking leaders' but also because Kashmiris have led all governments in J&K since 1947 (Puri 2001: 70). The dominance of Kashmiris in J&K, however, was uncommon before the 1940s. For almost a century, since 1846 when the state of J&K first came into existence, power resided in Jammu with the Dogra rulers. The Dogras bought Kashmir from the British in 1846. Kashmir was made part of their pre-existing state of Jammu and Ladakh to form the state of Jammu & Kashmir (Karim 1994). With British support, the Dogras commoditized Kashmir like an economic asset (Fayaz et al. 2019: 1454). Kashmiri society was primarily dependant on agriculture. Yet even the poorest peasants were levied taxes beyond their capabilities. Kashmiri peasants were mostly landless tillers, worked on highly fragmented lands, employed traditional and unviable agricultural practices, and were severely indebted to the moneylenders. Their harvests were taken and guarded by the state officials as a way of taxation (pg. 1458). Kashmiri peasants were also compelled, by the Dogras and their dire economic conditions, to work as forced labourers for the state.

The economic condition of Kashmiri peasants under the Dogras must be understood in conjunction with the social and demographic layout of Kashmir. Kashmiri peasants were the lowest in societal hierarchy and the largest in the demographic framework of Kashmir. The peasants, and Kashmiri Muslims generally, were Sunnis. Muslims comprised 94% of Kashmir's population. Shia Muslims were a tiny minority of around 5% within Kashmiri Muslims (Census of India 1941). Shias were the manufacturers and traders of Kashmir's shawl industry, whereas Sunnis were the weavers. This was another layer of economic subjugation for the Kashmiri Muslims. They suffered most under Kashmir's biggest minority: Kashmiri Hindus. Only five per cent of the Kashmiri population, the Kashmiri Hindus or Kashmiri Pandits were the administrators, bureaucrats, and landlords under the Dogra state. They oversaw the

taxation, administration, and forced labour machineries of J&K. Interestingly, both the Hindus and Muslims belonged to the same ethnolinguistic group: Kashmiri. However, the practice of the tiny Hindu minority of Kashmir, exploiting the majority Muslim population, politicized their communal identifications. That the Muslims and Hindus of Kashmir were ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous became secondary to their religious boundaries.

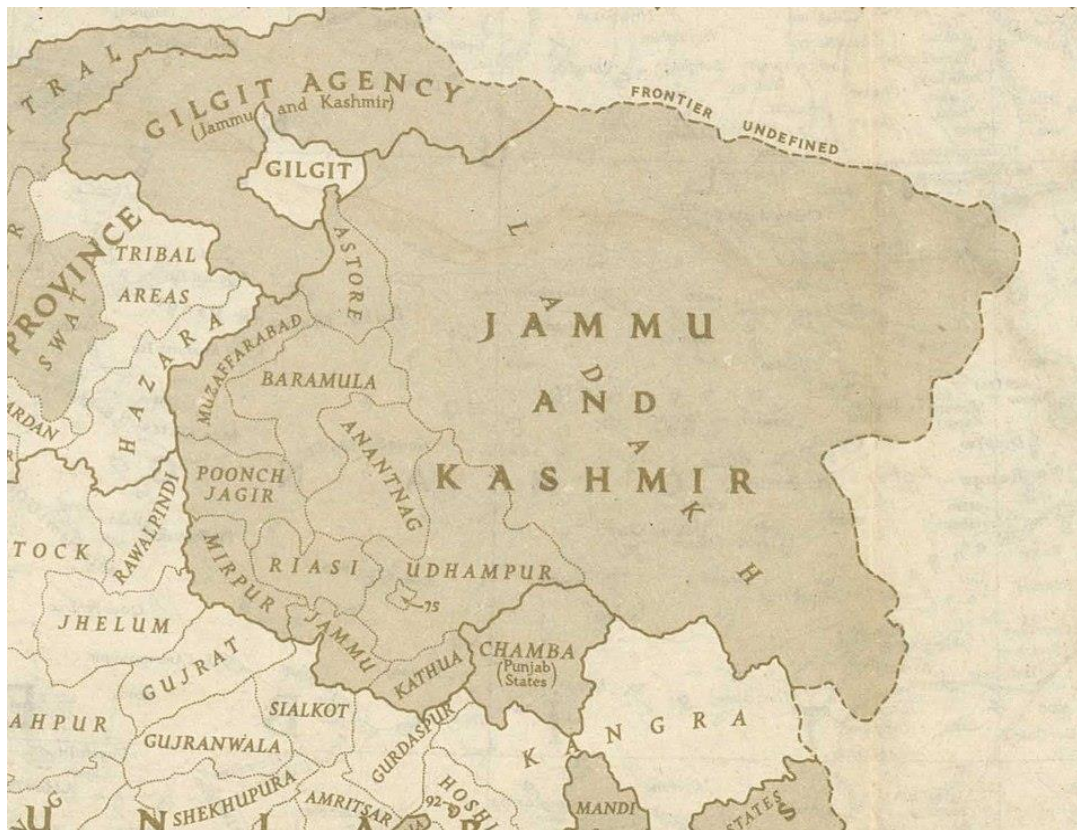
The geographical layout of Kashmir ensured that the valley remained ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous, until the communal politicizations under the Dogras. The 16,000 km<sup>2</sup> Kashmir valley is enclosed within mountains ranging between 10,000 and 18,000 feet. 'Kashmir...accepted Vedic, Buddhist, Shaivite and Islamic faiths successively' and retained the essence of all those shared historical beliefs, rituals and practices (Puri 2001: 71). Kashmir's geographical isolation from other regions, thus, sustained its societal homogeneity over centuries. Although Kashmiri Pandits still remained the administrators, even under the pre-Dogra regimes. Kashmiri Muslims, on the other hand were employed with other jobs. The religious distinctions between the two communities rarely overpowered the other shared tenets. Kashmiri Muslims considered their occupational differences as a 'traditional economic transaction' (Madan 1972), a consequence of the shared historical ties between the two communities. However, this idealized version of history ignored the exploitation of Kashmiri Muslims which worsened under the Dogra rule (Rai 2004). The Dogras governed the state along preferential communal lines. Hindus of Kashmir and Jammu were privileged over Kashmiri Muslims. Eventually, by the 1930s, the marginalised Kashmiri Muslims were mobilized by the National Conference Party (NC), led by Sheikh Abdullah.

The anti-Dogra political mobilization among Kashmiri Muslims initiated the transfer of power in J&K from Dogras to NC, from Jammu to Kashmir. The transfer of power cemented Kashmir's centrality in J&K thereafter. This transfer was also aided by factors outside Kashmir. The political developments in Kashmir coincided with the political developments in British India. From 1900 onwards, the Indian National Congress mobilized the people in British India through an anticolonial nationalist movement. Congress, the largest Indian organisation, built networks with diverse Indian regions, religions, castes, tribes, etc. This exercise in nation-building through

political networks garnered mass support for the anti-colonial movement (Sarkar 1984). Princely states, including J&K, were outside the ambit of anti-colonial sentiments, or Congress' expanding nationalist networks. Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, found a way to permeate in J&K through the National Conference. Congress and Nehru were driven by the ideals of acknowledging the plurality of India. Nehru envisioned a secular independent India where every religious community had equal and adequate rights. In this regard, helping Kashmiris in their struggle for enfranchisement became a key objective for Nehru (Rai 2004: 280).

Likewise, the NC sought the support of a popular organisation like Congress in its movement against the Dogras. While the details of this alliance are reserved for the empirical chapters, the NC-Congress alliance formalized the transfer of power in J&K. Abdullah became the first Prime Minister of the Indian state of J&K and Nehru became the first Prime Minister of independent India. Congress/Nehru-NC/Abdullah alliance prompted Kashmir's orientation towards India over Pakistan. Abdullah believed that Kashmir's aspirations and identity would be better preserved under India by Congress, than under Islamic Pakistan. He also enjoyed the support of Kashmiri Muslims who in turn, supported his choice of remaining with India. Muslim intellectuals in India also appreciated Kashmir's accession to India. An anti-colonial Muslim activist and the chancellor of Jamia Milia University in Delhi, wrote an extensive article in 1949 reminding Kashmiri Muslims of the benefits of acceding to India (File No. OSD/33/49, National Archives of India (NAI)). The extent of resentment in Kashmir against India after 1947 will be better understood if the rationale for Kashmir's orientation towards India before 1947 is kept in view.

*Jammu*



Map 3. Mirpur, Riasi, Poonch, Kathua, Udhampur, and Jammu comprised the Jammu region of J&K princely state (Upadhyaya 2022).

'Kashmir is hyphenated to Jammu, not the other way around. If anything, Jammu should be the shorthand of J&K, not Kashmir' (Interviews 2022; 2023). Three respondents from Jammu- two were heads of socio-political organisations and one a former military general- expressed this sentiment. The rationale for their suggestion was three-fold: the state of J&K was found by the governor of Jammu, the administration of J&K was from Jammu, and the rulers belonged to the Dogra ethnic group of Jammu. While their statement is critiqued in the later chapters, their rationale of Jammu's importance before 1947 is irrefutable. The centrality of Jammu during the princely rule period shaped J&K's societal and political context until 1947.

An appraisal of this context illustrates why J&K's case constitutes a puzzle after 1947. The state of J&K was formed in 1846 by Dogra Gulab Singh. He was previously the governor of Jammu under the Sikh empire of Punjab. Until 1947, the Dogra rulers of Jammu governed people who lived as far as Gilgit and Chushul, over 900 km away. They governed people who practiced Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam, Jainism, and Hinduism, among others. They governed people who spoke Dogri,

Pahari, Gojri, Urdu, Shina, Balti, Bhoti, and numerous other languages and dialects. They governed people who enjoyed cultural contacts with Punjab, Afghanistan, Tibet, and Central Asia. Within the diverse J&K state, Jammu region was the most diverse. The Jammu province had 23 Tehsils or administrative units, including Jammu city. Ten of those Tehsils were Hindu-majority (Census of India 1941). Many of the Muslim majority Tehsils were under the Mirpur division. Today, Mirpur is governed by the Pakistani administration as part of Azad Kashmir (Map 1). Likewise, the present Muslim majority regions of Jammu border either the Kashmir valley or Pakistan. Overall, therefore, Jammu was a Muslim majority region. Sixty-one per cent people practiced Islam and thirty-six per cent were Hindus. However, Jammu city was Hindu majority with sixty per cent Hindus and thirty-five per cent Muslims. The rest being Sikhs, Christians, and others. Yet the diverse people of Jammu speak languages belonging to one family (Puri 2001). Dogri (Fifty-five per cent) is spoken by the largest ethnic group of Jammu, Dogras. The Dogras are majorly Hindu, with a significant Muslim population (101-5 per cent). Gojri, Pahari, Punjabi are spoken by the rest of the population. The languages are spoken by 'all the religious communities, except by the Gujars, who speak Gojri (9.5%), and all of whom are Muslim' (pg. 73; Census of India 1941). The Gujar ethnic group comprised a fifth of the 4 million J&K population. Finally, Pahari was spoken by eighteen per cent of Jammu population, with Mirpuri Paharis now in Pakistan and Poonch Rajouri Paharis in India.

Atop this diversity, Dogra politics involved consolidating the vast state into a singular unit with power concentrated in Jammu; compelling every subject to direct their loyalty to the Dogra court in Jammu; and patronizing the Hindus of the state (Rai 2004). As the Dogra rulers extended their administrative and taxation net over J&K, they also carefully regulated the religious affairs of the people, particularly the Hindus. They patronized Hindu and Muslim religious figures, Hindu temples, and linked the state's patronage with the loyalty to the Dogra rule. Gradually, constructing and maintaining Hindu temples gained precedence over patronage to other religions. Minorities who worked on Hindu lands were exempted from taxes and forced labour (pg. 155). Kashmiri Hindus oversaw the consolidated Dogra administration. Hindus, elites and non-elites, were anyway granted various tax and labour exemptions by the

Dogras. Thus, the Dogras blurred the lines of religious and political. They built a state that favoured Hindu interests and organisations over others.

Meanwhile, the cost of the Dogra polity was borne by Kashmiri Muslims, much more than Jammu Muslims. Kashmiri Muslims were deprived of jobs in the state administration, Jammu Muslims were not. Kashmiri Muslims were prevented from joining the state army, Jammu Muslims were not. Unsurprisingly, Kashmiri Muslims often believed that Jammu Muslims were better off (pg. 266). More importantly, Jammu Muslims had little in common with Kashmiri Muslims, besides religion. Jammu Muslims were ethnically, linguistically, and culturally closer to Jammu Hindus than Kashmiris. They also enjoyed relatively more patronage under the Dogras, due to the centre of power being in Jammu. In the 1940s, however, things changed. Jammu Muslims, particularly in Mirpur and Poonch oriented towards Pakistan. Jammu Hindus, meanwhile, continued with their Dogra chauvinism. Meanwhile, the Dogra ruler was undecided on joining India or Pakistan. The Pakistani invasion of J&K compelled him to accede with India. While the essentials of these developments are discussed in Chapter 3, the primary takeaway from Jammu's context remains the consolidated and Hindu-centric rule of Dogras that was favourable only to Jammu's people and Kashmir's Hindus.

*Ladakh*



Map 4. Stages of the creation of J&K and the territory of Ladakh- Baltistan, and Gilgit (Aamir 2020).

‘Ladakh was always nationalist, but Delhi never cared to ask’ (Interview 2023). This sentiment was echoed by individuals from Kargil (Map 1) and Leh in the context of Ladakh’s positionality vis-a-vis India in 1947. Delhi, and the general academic scholarship indeed had little idea about Ladakh’s politics until 1947. There are multiple reasons for this. First, Delhi, or more importantly Congress, built its networks with the leaders of Kashmir valley alone until 1947, not Ladakh or Jammu. Second, the scholarship generally begins from the period after 1947. A few European travellers did give their ethnographic accounts of the society of Ladakh (Moorcroft 1841; Dainelli 1993). Yet the political orientations of Ladakhis before 1947 found no mention in their passages. Finally, Ladakh’s geography, topography, and demography posed a challenge in gaining insights about Ladakh’s politics.

Ladakh under the Dogras was bigger, more diverse, and more populated than the Ladakh that independent India inherited in 1947. Besides Leh and Kargil, Ladakh included the regions of Gilgit, Baltistan, and Astore (Map 3). The data available, thus,

describes the pre-1947 Ladakh. The Buddhists resided in the 'Ladakh' region (Map 4). They spoke the Bodhi language (46,240 speakers in 1941) and belonged to the Boto ethnic group. The Muslims of Ladakh, eighty-five per cent of the population of 311,478 (Census of India 1941), resided in the north and north-west territories of Gilgit-Baltistan. They belonged to Balti, Purig, and Brokpa ethnic groups. The Muslims generally spoke Balti (133, 476 speakers), Shina (76,602), and Burushaski (33,129). After the Gilgit-Baltistan territories were ceded to Pakistan, Indian Ladakh's population dropped to 88,651 from 311,478 (Census of India 1961). Ladakhi speakers were over 49,000 while Balti speakers were 33,458. Shina speakers were not more than 250. While Ladakhi speakers are predominantly Buddhist, the other languages are spoken by the Muslims. Several other tribal groups also habituate Ladakh that are either Buddhist (Garas, Changpas) or Muslim (Argon), or mixed (Brokpas, Bedas) (Jabeen and Dolma 2023: 387-396). Essentially, the religious and regional composition of Ladakh played a bigger role than its ethnic composition.

The religious divisions of Ladakh were reified under the Dogras to an extent and set the context for the region's post 1947-trajectory. Akin to Kashmir, Ladakh's people and animals were burdened under heavy taxation (Chapter 3). Yet Ladakh's Buddhist monasteries were also given certain exemptions. Simultaneously, the monasteries enjoyed considerable economic, cultural, and religious powers of their own. Meanwhile, Ladakh's Muslims were denied those limited concessions enjoyed by the Buddhists. Since Ladakh's Muslims are Shias, they also had little in common with the Kashmiri Muslims. This is the primary context of J&K until 1947: Ladakh's Muslims were marginalized over Ladakh's Buddhists by the Dogras; likewise, Ladakh and Jammu were marginalized over Kashmir by the Congress elites of India.

## **1.2 The Puzzle- Divergent Trajectories After 1947**

Following the transfer of power to Kashmir in 1947 through Congress' backing, one would presume that the valley would steer on the path of integration and identification with the Indian state. Afterall, the National Conference and Sheikh Abdullah were immensely popular in Kashmir. They enjoyed the political support of the immensely popular Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru. The popularity of these leaders and their parties ensured their electoral dominance in J&K and India for the

next four decades. NC and Congress alliance won every election in J&K until 2014. Congress formed the national government in Delhi for all but 6 years since India's independence until 1997 (Candland 1997). The Congress-NC alliance also yielded the special autonomous powers for J&K. Under this autonomy, the NC governments in Kashmir had powers to make laws on all matters except Defence, External Affairs, and Communication. J&K had its own constitution. J&K's special status was formalized under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, Nehru also promised a plebiscite in J&K to ascertain the will of the people regarding accession to India (Speeches by PM Nehru 2024; Shankar 2016). Through this plebiscite, the people of J&K could decide if they wished to remain with India, join Pakistan, or be independent. The promise of Plebiscite was also a consequence of the alliance between NC and Congress, and no former princely state was granted the option to validate their accession to India. These positive networks between NC in Kashmir and Congress in Delhi, however, could not prevent Kashmir seeking secession from India by 1989. In contrast, Jammu and Ladakh went down a different trajectory.

That Jammu and its people could enjoy similar cordiality with India as they did with the Dogras was inconceivable in 1947. Various reasons can be proffered for this. First, the Jammu region was excluded from Congress' anti-colonial networks. Congress leadership engaged only with the Kashmiri leadership before 1947. A prominent Jammu organisation, Dogra Sadar Sabha, declared its support for Congress' anti-colonial nationalist movement. However, Congress rejected this support and backed National Conference as its primary J&K partner (Puri 1983: 188). After 1947, Congress support to Jammu was limited. Only the Congress leaders with Hindu nationalist orientations engaged with Jammu. Instead, it was the non-state actors like RSS and later, political actors like the Jana Sangh/BJP that engaged with Jammu. More importantly, the networks of state and non-state Hindu nationalists were largely with Jammu's Hindus. Secondly, Jammu was the site of extensive violence against Muslims, by Hindus and Sikhs. After the partition of India in August 1947, thousands of Muslims of Jammu were killed and driven away into Pakistan (Snedden 2001; Copland 2005). Scholars differ on whether 50,000 (Copland 1953: 153-154) or 200,000 Muslims were killed (Stephens 1964: 200). The violence against the Muslims left an enduring impact on the social harmony between Jammu Muslims and Hindus. Their pre-1947 ethnic, linguistic, and cultural ties

became peripheral to their communal tensions in the ensuing decades. Third, the organisations and political parties in Jammu were created along Hindu lines. Indian elites and institutions that engaged with these organisations were anyway Hindu nationalist in orientation. Collectively, Jammu and Indian elites challenged the Muslim-majority governments of J&K. Jammu Muslims, for many decades, were excluded from these networks between India and Jammu. Yet 1990s onwards, Jammu's Hindus and Muslims collectively oriented towards India. Unlike the Muslims of Kashmir, Muslims of Jammu opposed the secessionist insurgency in J&K (Bloeria 2001). They even assisted the counter-insurgency measures of India.

Until 1947, Ladakh neither had the complete support of the Dogras nor the acknowledgment of its situation by the Congress. Jammu was looked after by the Dogras until 1947. Kashmir was the recipient of Congress networks after 1930s. Several other factors could have potentially affected India-Ladakh relations. Ladakh is cut off from India through the Zojila mountain pass (11,530 ft). The region's Buddhists shared relatively more cultural and religious affinity with Tibet than with India. Ladakh's Muslims had religious ties with Iran. After 1947, the cold desert of Ladakh found itself amid the geopolitical manoeuvrings of India, Pakistan, and China. In 1947, the Pakistani tribal invaders reached as far as Leh in their attempts to capture J&K. Three more wars with Pakistan (1965, 1971, 1999) and one with China (1962) militarized the region. The un-politicized region became a heavily militarized zone due to strategic and geopolitical needs. Militarized hotspots of the world have often been sites of human rights abuses, environmental hazards, emigration, severe consequences for women, and various other interdependent factors (Cappiali et al. 2024; Elveren et al. 2022; Jorgenson et al. 2019; Chenoy 1998). Kashmir has also been militarized since 1989 with countless incidents of human rights abuses, extra-judicial killings, and environmental degradation (Amjad 2025; Bose 2021; Roy; 2020; Dabla 2011). Likewise, Ladakh has faced countless challenges to its environment and society due to the region's militarization (Bose 2025; Davis 2023; Demenge 2011). Besides the militarization, the two regions and communities of Ladakh- Muslims of Kargil and Buddhists of Leh- don't see eye to eye on many issues. The social fabric of Ladakh has been rife with communal faultlines. Yet the Buddhists and Muslims of Ladakh, despite their differences and heavy militarization, were aligned in their orientation towards India. They not only

welcomed the militarization of their region but joined the Indian army in large numbers. The Indian state often relied on local help, which was readily available, against its multiple wars.

Essentially, the three regions reversed from their positionalities in 1947 and the presumed outcomes of those positionalities. Kashmir was enfranchised after the century-long repressive rule of the Dogras. The NC was constantly backed by the Congress governments in Delhi. The NC enjoyed more power than any other Indian political party through the aegis of Article 370. A secessionist movement could not have been predicted in the 1950s. In contrast, Jammu's power was transferred to Kashmir. Jammu's plural society was shaken after the violence against the Muslims. Compared to Kashmir, Jammu's engagements with Congress were marginal. Yet the communal divide of Jammu was not only bridged, but the people shared a pro-India stance. Like Jammu, one could also not predict that despite Ladakh's militarization, intra-communal dynamics, harsh topography, and cultural links with other nations, Ladakhis would be orientated towards India. As the decades went on, demands for the removal of Article 370 increased from Jammu and Ladakh. Political actors from both regions demanded 'complete' integration with India i.e. removal of the special autonomous status. The two regions demanded an administrative framework like other Indian territories. Their demands were accepted in August 2019. Article 370 was abrogated. The state of J&K was bifurcated into the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. This reversal of positionalities of the three regions and the un-predictability of their supposed outcomes provide the central research focus of this thesis: *Why did the three regions of J&K have different post-colonial political trajectories? Despite inclination towards India in 1947, why did Kashmir turn to secession from India? Why did Jammu and Ladakh not have similar trajectory despite comparatively lesser inclination towards India on the eve of independence?*



Map 5. Post-2019 Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Maps of India 2019).

### **1.3 The Argument: Networks of Nation-Building**

In this thesis I argue that the divergent trajectories in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh can be explained through the presence and absence of the networks of nation-building after 1947. When Indian elites provided people with strong, inclusive, and accommodative networks, like in Jammu and Ladakh, nation-building was easier. Most people of Jammu and Ladakh, for most periods, were the recipients of such networks by the Indian elites. In exchange, the people reciprocated with their loyalty towards the Indian state. With time, the people in Jammu and Ladakh were integrated with and identified with the Indian state. When the networks were weak, exclusionary, and repressive, like in Kashmir, nation-building was unsuccessful. In the absence of meaningful networks, Kashmiris did not reciprocate with loyalty towards India. Instead, they turned towards the secessionist insurgency against the Indian state. Consequently, the state of J&K witnessed the divergent trajectories of its three regions.

The comparison between Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh is done through Andreas Wimmer's framework of nation-building (2018). Wimmer defines nation-building as a process of political inclusion and national identification. His framework shows that nation-building is a continuous and slow process, spread over decades. To achieve political integration and national identification, two sides of the nation-building coin, networks between the state and citizens are crucial. Wimmer describes these networks as exchange relations. Exchange relations or exchange networks are described as such because the state provides people with opportunities and representation in their governance. In exchange, people proffer their loyalty to the state. Over time, this reciprocity through exchange relations becomes the norm and the process of nation-building steers ahead. 'If citizens are connected to government through relationships of authority and support, an inclusive national community emerges, and nation building can be said to have succeeded' (pg. 1). Conversely, nation-building fails in the absence of such networks.

Exchange Relations or networks, between the state and people are constituted around three variables. Wimmer posits a hypothesis for each variable. The organisational variable concerns the networks between the government on one hand and individuals or voluntary organisations on the other. Strong, institutionalized networks with political parties, socio-economic bodies, trade unions, religious associations, facilitates nation-building. Weak exchange relations, such as cash for votes or clientelism, generally create unfavourable conditions for nation-building. The political economy variable concerns the exchange of public goods and loyalty. If the state provides public goods and influence over political decisions, non-elite individuals and organisations support the government (including electorally) and offer military services. Absence of public goods, or the state withholding public goods from certain sections of people, leaves parts of population 'disconnected from the exchange networks' (pg. 28). Successful nation-building is unlikely in that scenario. Finally, the communication variable suggests that linguistic diversity slows down nation-building. Alliance networks are more plausible where people speak similar languages and communication is easier and less costly. Diversity of languages prevents actors, individual or state, from understanding and establishing meaningful ties with each other. This creates difficulties in building lasting and far-reaching networks. Wimmer suggests, through empirical case-studies and global quantitative

data sets, that exchange relations through any one of the variables facilitates nation-building. If people speak similar languages, or are provided public goods, or are connected to the government through organisations and institutions, their identification and integration with the nation-state is easier.

I show that the organisational exchanges in Jammu and the organisational and political economy exchanges in Ladakh facilitated their nation-building. Lack of exchange networks on any variable in Kashmir prevented the valley from integrating with or identifying with the Indian state. Before addressing the methodology for my argument, I address why the argument uses the lens of nation-building. It is not uncommon to question the relevance of nation-building in the age where multiple citizenships are common, inter-continental migration is common, and transnational movements are common. However, Nation-building remains an unignorable theme for three reasons (pg. 4-8). First, nation-building is essential for economic prosperity and peace. Civil wars, ethnopolitical conflicts, militancy, armed rebellions, secessionism remain just as common worldwide, as the effects of globalisation. Governments privileging their 'own' ethnic groups over others and empowering militant rule are also familiar sights. These actions hinder the prospects of peace and economic development of a state. In this regard inclusionary national integration, where every group is acknowledged and represented in the decision-making processes, becomes the prerequisite for peace and development. Second, issues like regional imbalance, separatism, language wars remain the legacy of many post-colonial states, including India. Many post-soviet states have also faced similar challenges stemming from their history, requiring the remedies of nation-building. Provision of health services, roads, schools, social security, and numerous other activities are central for even the post-national states of the European Union. They are central especially in the light of the rising anti-immigration sentiments across the EU. Hence, nation-building is necessary for all nation-states, irrespective of their varying histories. Finally, Nation-building is not merely a process of democratisation (Tilly 1975), or military interventions by the West in Global South (Dobbin 2003), or an extension from tribes to nation (Gat 2012), or assimilation of minorities (Mylonas 2012), or an end goal of a nation-state. Nation-building involves the extension of political networks across the territory. It involves building alliances with all groups in the country. Nation-building is dynamic and it can change or reverse positionalities.

Even after the success or failure of nation-building, new outcomes are possible if the exchange networks are dismantled or built, respectively. Nation-building is essential for it challenges the notion that political trajectories can be predetermined. For instance, a political observer in 1947 might predict that Jammu and Ladakh would seek secession from India whereas Kashmir would be adequately integrated. Hence, the thematic lens of nation-building, particularly for this case, is necessary.

The cases of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh, have been rife with paradoxes, reversals, conflicts, militarization, economic miseries, all which require a perspective of nation-building. Consider a thematically categorised reading list on the politics of Jammu & Kashmir. J&K has been studied as an international territorial dispute shaped by India's partition, India-Pakistan diplomacy, and UN interventions (Lamb 1991; Schofield 1996). J&K has been studied as a site of competing nationalisms- Indian, Pakistani, Kashmir- and identities (Zutshi 2003; Noorani 2011). A. G. Noorani, and authors like Anuradha Bhasin (2022; Interview 2022) have focused on J&K's constitutional status, Article 370, and its manoeuvres with autonomy. The most prominent theme has been the study of insurgency and militancy in J&K. The scholars have focused on the security and conflict dimension of the region (Ganguly 1996; 1997; Bose 2003,2021). Stemming from this is the theme of human rights and everyday life within the conflict. Basharat Peer (2008) and Ather Zia (2019) have explored everyday resistance against the militarization of the Kashmir valley since 1989. Alastair Lamb (1991) and Mridu Rai (2004) have traced the politics of J&K back to the Dogra period. They have linked the developments before 1947 to the politics after 1947, until the outbreak of insurgency in 1989. So far, the J&K scholarship has predominantly focused on the Kashmir valley.

Contrastingly, the politics of Jammu and Ladakh have been marginalized in the above texts. Rekha Chaudhary (2016; 2023), Zafar Chaudhary (2008; 2015) and Balraj Puri (1976; 1982; 1984; 2008) have challenged the dominant discourse's fixation on Kashmir. They have paid attention to the neglected identity of Jammu in their discussions of the politics of J&K. Navneeta Behera (2000; 2006) has collectively examined Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir. Her underlying theme is addressing the diversity of J&K as the basis of peace in the state. Martijn Van Beek (1999; 2004) and Jonathan Demenge (2011) have focused on Ladakh. They have

explored Ladakhi organisations' engagement with India and road-construction in Ladakh respectively

Some observations can be drawn from this snapshot of literature that necessitates a comparative argument of nation-building in the three regions of J&K. Most of the literature of J&K discusses Kashmir, not the other two regions. The conflict of Kashmir is largely analysed through the themes of international actors, constitutional issues, security studies, and competing identities, not networks. Unlike many scholars, Sumantra Bose and Ganguly discuss the role of networks between the Indian state and Kashmir. They stress upon the role of inclusive networks across all regions of J&K as the means of lasting peace in the state (Ganguly 1996; Bose 2003). However, their discussion, and that of many Kashmir-centric scholars, begins from the post-colonial period. Rai (2004) and Lamb (1991) acknowledge the politics before 1947 in influencing the post-colonial politics. However, their analysis stops after 1989. The scholars discussing Ladakh and Jammu also largely discuss the post-1947 politics with limited attention to the networks between India and the three regions. The scholars pay little attention to the reversal of the 1947 positionalities of the three regions. Most importantly, many scholars focus on the three regions independently, as exclusive from each other.

This thesis places the three regions of J&K on an equal footing and provides a parallel and comprehensive analysis of the three regions of J&K since 1846. It also accounts for the changes and reversals in the positionalities of the three regions; and addresses their divergent trajectories. Since nation-building is a continuous and dynamic process, I argue that the Dogra period placed the three regions on different positionalities vis-à-vis India and the developing nationalist networks of Congress. After 1947, the positionalities reversed due to the presence or absence of the networks of nation-building. By 1989, Kashmir was on the verge of a secessionist insurgency while most people of Jammu and Ladakh opposed the insurgency. With the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, India's nation-building failed in Kashmir and succeeded in Jammu and Ladakh.

Meanwhile, since nation-building is an endless process, new fissures have emerged in Ladakh and Jammu even after their 'successful' integration (Chapter 6). The

people in Jammu and especially Ladakh, are inclined towards the Indian state but are apprehensive of Indian people settling in and altering the demographics of the two regions. Ladakh, since 2019, has been in constant dialogue with the Indian elites in demanding more protection and autonomy for its people. Inconclusive dialogue has also often led to hunger strikes and violent clashes. The past seven years have again illustrated the relevance and ongoing nature of nation-building in the regions.

#### **1.4 Methodology: Process Tracing**

Besides the post-2019 developments, the ‘success’ of nation building in Jammu and Ladakh i.e. abrogation of Article 370- also requires a critique. Successful nation-building for Wimmer would entail that all communities are included in the ruling elites’ exchange relations. The divides between the communities, if any, would be bridged through the ensuing exchanges. Exchanges by the ruling elites would also be inclusionary towards all the regions within the state. However, this case has certain deviations from Wimmer’s propositions. The Muslims of Ladakh and Jammu were excluded from Indian exchanges for some decades after 1947 and ethnic divides between the Buddhists and Muslims of Ladakh were not bridged despite their shared inclination towards India. Moreover, the Indian exchanges in Jammu and Ladakh often fuelled hostilities towards Kashmir. I expound on these deviations in the empirical chapters. Essentially, Wimmer’s exchange relations through the three variables influenced the nation-building trajectories in the three regions. However, certain developments leading up to the ‘successful’ nation-building in Jammu and Ladakh deviated from Wimmer’s propositions. These developments or findings were brought to light as I researched my argument using the Process Tracing method.

The method of Process Tracing is most congruent with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Process Tracing, in simple words, examines the evidence of the case in alignment with the research question and the hypothesis. It can be defined as the examination of a process, to make inferences about how that process took place, and if it generated the outcome of interest (Bennett and Checkel 2014: 6-7). Process tracing as a qualitative tool is helpful because it not only describes the causal mechanisms and tests the hypothesis but also allows room to discover new hypothesis (Collier 2011: 824). The hypothesis of this thesis is that networks, or their

lack of, between India and the three regions shaped, the nation-building trajectories of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Process Tracing confirmed this hypothesis while the research also yielded new findings. These findings were aligned with the result that inclusive networks lead to nation-building. However, the networks in the three regions partially deviated from Wimmer's suggested networks (Chapter 5 and 6). As shown later in the chapters, Process Tracing assisted with illustrating this distinction.

Nonetheless, the examination of Wimmer's hypothesis, therefore, involved tracing the engagements between the Indian ruling elites and the non-elites and organisations of the three regions over seven decades. More importantly, the objective was to examine the exchange relations based on Wimmer's three variables. I looked at the extent of public goods deliverance in J&K by India, the extent of alliances between the Indian elites and the organisations of J&K, and the extent of linguistic homogeneity. Essentially, I examined not the high politics of government elites and international actors, but the micropolitical networks between India and the three regions between 1947 and 2019. To examine the exchange networks across these variables, I relied on the tools of qualitative analysis of the available secondary literature, qualitative semi-structured interviews, and archival analysis.

I imposed the lens of networks between state and people upon the available literature of the three regions. The exercise became one of making causal inferences (Benette 2010; Collier 2011: 824-827). Like Wimmer (2018: 42), I adopt a hoop test approach. This implies that my analysis affirmed the hypothesis of Wimmer's networks in J&K without providing irrefutable evidence for confirming it. To make causal inferences, I examined the seven decades of political developments in J&K and within them, focused on the extent of exchange networks. However, unlike Wimmer's analysis, the claims for integration and identification were not tested quantitatively. They were qualitatively examined through textual analysis, interviews, and archival research.

Consider the reading list discussed in the previous section. The texts focus on either the theme of India-Pakistan engagements, or the theme of J&K's autonomy, or the militarization of J&K, etc. In those texts I located the instances of networks between

the state and people. The thesis does not concern itself with the diplomatic manoeuvres of international actors over J&K. Instead, I probe if India included various organisations of J&K in those engagements or if the organisations were consulted regarding the decisions for their region. For instance, the discussion is not concerned with how the plebiscite was announced in J&K or the role of UN and Pakistan in it. I examine if and to what extent India built networks with the Plebiscite Front organisation, the principal organisation opposing the NC. I argue that the constant subjugation of the Front and other non-NC organisations by NC and Congress, without building meaningful networks with them, steered the valley towards insurgency. The thesis does not explicitly consider the normative question of whether J&K deserved autonomous powers, or if its abrogation in 2019 was justifiable. Instead, I probed the networks between India and the people of J&K regarding the continuation or removal of the autonomy. For instance, I examine India's networks with the Ladakh Buddhist Association and the Jammu Praja Parishad, two organisations that demanded the removal of Article 370. I argue that meaningful and persistent networks with the prominent organisations of Jammu and Ladakh over decades oriented the regions towards India after 1947. They also increased the demands for Article 370's removal in the three regions. The thesis also does not probe the extent of Indian militarization of Kashmir after 1989, or that of Ladakh after 1947, or the counter-insurgency operations in Jammu during 1990s and 2000s. Instead, I examine whether the militarization was beneficial or harmful for the people. I examine within those military operations, whether meaningful networks were built with the people. For instance, militarization of Ladakh resulted in provision of roads, employment, and other public goods for the Ladakhis (Chapter 4 and 5). In Jammu, the counter-insurgency measures after 1990s involved building networks with local organisations to assist the military activities (Chapter 5). In Kashmir, the militarization resulted in extrajudicial killings, human rights violations, and forceful detentions of the locals (Chapter 5).

Therefore, I relied on the secondary literature of the three regions and extract from them the extent of networks between Indian state and people. However, for various reasons, I also relied upon the personal interviews of actors from Jammu and Ladakh, not Kashmir. First, the available literature is dominantly Kashmir-centric. Its upside was that there was immeasurable information on the networks between India

and Kashmiris. The exercise of segregating the empirical information on networks from the other empirical information was easier in the case of Kashmir. India's public spending in Kashmir and engagements with NC, Plebiscite Front, and even the insurgent organisations, are comfortably accessible from the public domain. Comparatively, the task of extracting similar information for Jammu and Ladakh was laborious. There is comparatively less literature available exclusively on the two regions, necessitating interviews in Jammu and Ladakh. Building on that, there is limited information in the public domain regarding the various organisations of Jammu and Ladakh or their engagements with the Indian elites over the decades. This necessitated interviews with the members and heads of the various organisations of Jammu and Ladakh. Finally, the ethics committee of the University did not permit travel to Kashmir, which restricted the fieldwork to Jammu and Ladakh.

I conducted 20 interviews in Jammu, Ladakh, and Delhi. Like the textual analysis, the interviews were structured around probing the networks between Jammu/Ladakh and India. The information on the political economy networks had to be largely extracted from the public domain, whereas the linguistic networks have been least applicable in this thesis, as I'll show in the empirical chapters. Thus, the interviews were primarily concerned with determining the organisational networks. Through conversations with the prominent actors of Jammu/Ladakh, I also probed their views regarding integration and identification with India. The interviewees were identified based on this rationale. Ten of the interviewees (5 in Jammu and 5 in Ladakh) belonged to the prominent organisations of the two regions. The other ten (5 in Jammu and 5 in Ladakh) interviewees were identified as the prominent local elites of the two regions. These civil society actors were involved with or could speak about the networks. These individuals included a journalist, a school principal, an independent politician, and the son of the last Dogra ruler. Five respondents did not agree to share their names. Four interview requests were denied. These were the spokespersons and members of the four major political parties of J&K- Congress, NC, BJP, and PDP. Out of the twenty interviews, nine interviews were arranged through emails or dropping by their organisation's offices. Eleven interviews happened through the snowball method. Since the two regions were comparatively under-researched and 'hidden', particularly Ladakh, snowball method was useful

(Cohen and Arieli 2011). I took notes for every interview while only six interviewees agreed to being recorded. In all cases, the interviewees were given the information sheet and were told the objectives of the study. They were also asked for their preferences regarding anonymity, and I only recorded interviews when consented.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. This was a deliberate choice, and the experience of the interviews reaffirmed this. There was a set of questions that I decided upon for the interviews. These questions pertained to the nature and extent of their engagements with the Indian elites, the nature and extent of their engagement with the Kashmiri ruling elites, and the level of integration and identification with India. However, there was no fixed order for these questions. Often, the questions were also mere prompts between the conversation. The intention was to let the respondents express themselves freely regarding India's engagement with their region, without constraints (Fuji 2018). Since there are no fixed or linear answers when discussing the engagements with the ruling elites, or when discussing the perceptions regarding India; an informal, open-ended conversation was more suitable. I interjected with my questions when it was needed. Often, the answers were given without asking the questions. Herein, the decision for semi-structured and open-ended interviews was validated. Fifteen interviewees expressed surprise that 'somebody is talking about Jammu and Ladakh and not just Kashmir'. With these individuals, the conversation was largely one-sided. They were keen to talk about their respective organisations, region, and the relationship with India. I only intervened with my prompts and let the conversation flow. The downside was that there was considerable information given which did not pertain to my hypothesis. The upside of these interviews was that people shared anecdotes that are not in public domain (Chapter 5) and unflinchingly recalled their engagements with Indian elites.

As an outsider with no ties to J&K, I also had certain advantages in these interviews. I gained insights that could have been hidden from someone from J&K (Alvesson 2003). I was given detailed explanations of certain perspectives. Had I been from J&K or Ladakh, the individuals would have presupposed that I knew certain opinions beforehand (Yip 2004). The sentiment that Jammu and Ladakh had been academically and politically marginalised due to the politics of Kashmir was

prominently vocalized. Coincidentally, this marginalization prompted the elites to demand the abrogation of Article 370. The elites of the two regions envisioned more and adequate attention to their concerns after 2019, now that they were out of 'Kashmir's shadow'. The primary takeaway from these interviews, besides an understanding of the networks of nation-building, was that the two regions are still largely under-investigated. Moreover, the post-Article 370 period provides another avenue of research for nation-building in Jammu and Ladakh.

Besides the textual analysis and interviews, I also examined archival and other documents. I visited the National Archives of India in New Delhi, Teen Murti Bhavan Library in New Delhi, state archival repositories in Jammu and Leh, Ranbir Singh library in Jammu, Jammu University library, Maharaja Gulab Singh Research Centre in Jammu, University of Ladakh's Leh campus, Leh and Kargil tourist offices, the Hall of Fame Museum in Leh, the Ladakh Buddhist Association library in Leh, the District Library in Leh, the District Library in Kargil, and the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies in Chonglamsar, Ladakh. The exercise involved filtering through thousands of archival documents and locally written books. The objective was to find in those documents, texts, or passages, that point to the exchanges across the three variables between India and the three J&K regions (Trachtenberg 2006). This exercise also yielded information that was not mainstreamed and conveniently available. For instance, when researching the various organisations of J&K, I came across a short article in a not-so-known journal magazine of Jammu. The chapter discussed a defunct political party of Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir People's Party. Previous research into the Jammu's organisations came empty on this party. The article discussed the political party found by the former Jammu head of the National Conference (Shrivastava 2015). The article pointed to the networks between the party and the non-Congress Indian elites. For corroboration, I found only one archival document pertaining to the party's activities, in New Delhi (Chapter 4). Similarly, to probe the political economy networks through tourism in Ladakh, I required quantitative data about the tourist arrivals in Ladakh since 1974. Data on Leh's tourism was readily available. Scholars have also openly addressed Leh's tourism as a means of nation-building (Pelliciardi 2013; Vogel & Field 2020). However, information on Kargil's tourist numbers were available from the Kargil tourist office. Interviews in Kargil further shed light on the differences in tourism

between Leh and Kargil. This exercise also corroborated the earlier assertion that information on Kashmir is more accessible and available than on Jammu and Ladakh. Within Ladakh, the same can be said about Leh and Kargil. I expound on these in the later chapters.

### **1.5 Chapter Outline**

The chapters are presented as follows.

Chapter Two sets out the theoretical framework of the thesis. I make the case for Andreas Wimmer's framework on networks of nation-building in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. To stress why Wimmer's framework is essential to the thesis, I discuss the mainstream and Indian scholarship first. I explore the mainstream nationalism and nation-building scholarship within which Wimmer's framework can be placed. The nation-building scholarship itself stems from the expansive body of work on nationalism. However, the Indian case, colonial and post-colonial, differs from the western empirical contexts within which the dominant scholarship largely operates. Nationalist networks in the colonial period and nation-building networks in the post-colonial period have been central to the Indian case. The independent Indian state was formed with Congress' informal networks through the nationalist movement. The post-colonial period involved connecting the centre with the diverse Indian regions, religions, castes, tribes, through the nation-building networks. Using Wimmer's framework, I draw upon the available mainstream and Indian scholarship to offer a more comparative, non-deterministic, and dynamic approach towards the nation-building networks in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh.

Chapter Three expands on the contrasting historical processes of the three regions before 1947. I illustrate that unlike most Indian territories which were the recipient of Congress networks, J&K was the recipient of Dogra networks. The Jammu-based monarchical rulers of J&K built contrasting and uneven networks with Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. They built favourable networks with the people of Jammu and Hindus of Kashmir, extractive networks with Kashmiri Muslims, ambivalent networks with Ladakhi Buddhists, and extractive with Ladakhi Muslims. These uneven

networks determined the three regions' orientation vis-a-vis the independent Indian state in 1947.

Chapter Four examines the divergent nation-building networks in the three regions between 1947 and 1989 through Wimmer's variables. Kashmir's National Conference enjoyed favourable relations with India's Congress. Their pre-1947 engagements also yielded a special status for J&K in the form of Article 370. However, continuous suppression of non-NC organisations in Kashmir and reduction of public goods deliverance after the 1960s steered the valley towards insurgency by 1989. Jammu was the site of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims. Memories of the Dogra rule also persisted in former capital of J&K. Yet the co-option of Jammu's diverse organisations by the Indian ruling elites turned the region towards integration and identification with India. Over time, the ties between Jammu Hindus and Muslims were also bridged, albeit not completely. Under Dogra rule, Ladakh's deeply religious society neither enjoyed Jammu-like patronage nor experienced Kashmir-like exploitation. Yet the region was politicized and militarized after the 1947-48 war between India and Pakistan. Consequently, Indian elites co-opted Ladakh's organisations and the Indian military provided extensive public goods in the region, even if as part of their strategic measures. Since the networks mostly benefitted the Buddhists of Ladakh, they oriented towards India. Kargil's Muslims, meanwhile, became the recipient of Indian networks from the late 1990s onwards.

Chapter Five explores how the three regions steered further along their trajectories from 1989 until August 2019, when the state of J&K was bifurcated into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh. This happened with the abrogation of Article 370. After 1989, without building meaningful networks with the dissident organisations in Kashmir, India heavily militarized the region. India's counter-insurgency measures in Kashmir were replete with military excesses, human rights abuses, and forceful detentions. India's counterinsurgency measures increased the enmity between the people and the Indian state. Abrogation of the special status was the final nail in Kashmir's nation-building coffin. In contrast, the counter-insurgency measures in Jammu involved co-opting the region's Hindus and Muslims, and their organisations. The prevailing sentiment in Jammu became that its people must assist the Indian state against the insurgency. Both people and state considered the insurgents as

common enemies. Consequently, demands for the abrogation of Article 370 increased from Jammu which was fulfilled by the Indian state in 2019. Jammu & Kashmir became a Union Territory: a region directly governed by Delhi. This demand for UT was most vocally expressed by Ladakh's Buddhists. Ladakh's Muslims also became the recipient of Delhi's exchanges, particularly after their help in the Kargil war of 1999 between India and Pakistan. However, the Muslims were less concerned with the status of Article 370. The relations between the Muslims and Buddhists were also tensed since 1970s but the two regions were aligned in their orientation towards India.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis. I summarize the research project and my argument. I illustrate my findings from the fieldwork. For instance, Wimmer suggests that nation-building is successful when the ethnic divides are bridged by exchange relations. Contrastingly in Ladakh, India built meaningful exchanges with Leh and Kargil without bridging their divides. I also discuss my contribution to the literature on J&K, nation-building, and Wimmer's framework itself. For instance, I argue that in certain cases, such as Kashmir, more than one variable is needed to make nation-building easier. I suggest testing this assertion as the next avenue of research. I also suggest using Wimmer's framework to explore India's nation-building processes in other contested territories, like the North-Eastern states and Punjab. In relation to this, I also comment on nation-building being a continuous and endless process. Findings from the fieldwork and news reports suggest apprehensions in Jammu and Ladakh regarding the consequences of the UT status. The people of the two regions demanded protection from Kashmiris until 2019. Since 2019, they are demanding protection from the Indian population. This provides a fitting place to conclude the thesis by suggesting that despite Jammu and Ladakh's 'successful integration' in 2019, the Indian state must again turn to the networks of nation-building.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: NATION-BUILDING AND WIMMER

I stated in the previous chapter that the theoretical blueprint of the thesis rests on Andreas Wimmer's framework of nation-building (2018). Wimmer defines nation-building as a process of creating reciprocal exchange relations between people and the state such that the people are politically integrated with the state and strongly identify themselves as members of their nation, in exchange for resources from the state (pg. 24). Exchange relations are fostered through one of the three proposed variables. Nation-building is successful, he argues, where the state provides public goods equitably, or it co-opts with voluntary organisations both majorities and minorities, or it has people speaking a common language. He differentiates 'nation-building' from 'nationalism' – the foundational ideology of a modern state. He defines nationalism as the idea that government should rule in the name of a nationally defined people.

Wimmer's suitability for this dissertation is the close fit between the core research question that is addressed here and Wimmer's framework. I illustrate this in this chapter through a discussion of t western and Indian literature and how Western and Indian scholars define terms like 'nationalism', 'nation', 'state' and 'nation-building'. The first section discusses the traditional and mainstream perspectives of nationalism and nation-building. After their discussion, the section on Indian perspectives follows. In the Indian section, I show that the Indian history has been uniquely different from the European histories in which the mainstream theories are rooted. Finally, I make the case for Wimmer's framework as the most suitable for this thesis. But why is the discussion divided in this order?

I discuss the mainstream or traditional perspectives of nationalism and nation-building in the first section. These are the foundational perspectives of the long and evolving scholarship. Wimmer's framework is a recent addition to this scholarship. The thesis too strives to contribute to this scholarship. Essentially, to understand Wimmer's 'contemporary' (Özkırmli 2017) approach and why it is necessary, I first explain the 'traditional' schools of nationalism. Namely, Primordialism, Modernism, and Ethnosymbolism, and the prominent approaches/thinkers within them. These

approaches differ on the definitions of nationalism, causes for origins of nationalism, and if they perceive nationalism as the creator of a nation-state or vice-versa. I then explain how these approaches understand the concept of nation-building. While most 'nationalism' thinkers do not explicitly address 'nation-building', I extrapolate from their arguments how they suggest nation-building to happen. For ease of explanation, I follow the nation-building scholarship's division into Structural (Deutsch 1953; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983) and State-centric approaches (Weber 1976; Brubaker 1996; Mylonas 2012). Most of these approaches propose their arguments in Western empirical contexts. Indian history, meanwhile, has been starkly different.

The second section of the chapter explores the Indian perspectives. Indian nationalism and nation-building have not been primordial, or modernist, or followed the trajectory of western nation-building. In contrast, the Indian literature emphasizes the impact of colonialism (Breuilly, 1982; Kaviraj 1991; Goswami 2004), the role of Congress networks in pre-1947 nationalism and post-1947 nation-building (Sarkar 1984; Amin 1984; Chatterjee 1986; Brass 1965; Varshney 2002; Roy 2007), and the opposition to Congress networks before and after 1947 (Jaffrelot 1996,2007; Rasaratnam 2016). The common denominator between the Indian scholarship and Wimmer's framework is networks.

Despite the shared focus on networks or exchange relations (Wimmer's term for networks), what gives the need for Wimmer's framework for this thesis? One might also question the rationale in adopting a western scholar's framework after a critique of the mainstream scholarship for being western-centric. As stated earlier, the thesis' questions are best answered through Wimmer's framework. One, it focuses on networks between state and people. Second, the framework accounts for variance in the political positionalities. It operates with the assumption that nation-building is a continuous process. No positionality is permanent. Third, the thesis requires examining the colonial history to determine if and how it shaped the post-colonial political processes. But this does not entail an investigation into origins of Indian state. Only if the colonial developments shaped the post-colonial networks of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir. Wimmer's framework fulfils this requirement. Rather than assuming uniformity for the whole world, Wimmer works with the respective histories and societies of each nation-state. And the framework's variables are tailored

accordingly. Wimmer's three variables also clear the methodological scrutiny. They are backed by both qualitative and quantitative results. Therefore, the historical and comparative nature of Wimmer's framework is well suited to examine the post-colonial nation-building in Jammu and Ladakh. And its comparison with Kashmir. Wimmer's suitability, however, must be asserted in the context of the traditional and Indian scholarship.

## **2.1 Theories of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Traditional Perspectives**

The study of nationalism, nations, and nation-states is rife with theoretical debates. The first debate concerns defining these terms. The three foundational perspectives of nationalism (Primordialism, Ethnosymbolism, Modernism) and the diverse approaches within them define these terms differently. The second debate concerns the origins of nationalism (modern or pre-modern) and its characteristics (a sentiment, ideology, or a form of politics). The perspectives also differ on whether nationalism precedes nations or vice versa. A more recent debate concerns the theme of nation-building. Again, these perspectives and other approaches weigh in on nation-building's definitions and characteristics. More importantly, they provide context for making case for Wimmer's approach for the thesis.

### *Nationalism Literature*

Nationalism, by Primordialists, is defined as a sentiment or emotion that is natural, given, and rooted in primordial attachments (Özirimli 2017: 51). A primordial attachment is one that stems from the 'givens' of social existence. (Bacova 1998: 31). 'Givens' being the immediate conformity to kin and birth into a particular group, religion, caste, language, culture. Since birth, people just *belong* to these givens. With time, people's resultant attachments to the givens acquire a powerful control over them to the extent that they are elevated to an emotional, or even spiritual force. Clifford Geertz suggests that nationalism is such primordial attachment. Nationalism induces among people feelings which create perceptions of belongingness towards the nation (Özirimli 2017: 57-60). The 'nation' is a distinct construct of primordial sentiments, where an aggregate of people is closely associated with each other through common ties of descent, language, history, ancestry (Geertz 1993: 237). Yet Geertz does not

himself believe in this primordial, pre-modern reality. He analyses the nature of these attachments, the power they hold, and how *people believe* in the primordial nature of reality. He concludes that people *experience* nationalism and nations in *primordial terms* (pg. 239-245).

Geertz explores nationalism, albeit with pessimism, in context of the independent states of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here, the assertion is that the nation precedes the state i.e. a political institution constitutive of political loyalty, law, and governance (ibid.). He asserts that nations have existed since antiquity, but states are their modern, political realizations. He suggests four stages of nationalism aiding the process of nations becoming states, and after: how nationalism emerged, progressed, crystalized into states, and balanced the diverse primordial identities with a national identity (pg. 239-243). The first stage involved confronting centuries-old identifications of language, race, and culture with the modern idea of nationalism, a conception of collective identity and destiny. In the second stage, nationalism became a rallying cry for freedom from colonial rule. For example, in India, nationalism popularized the idea that Hindus, Kashmiris, Muslims, Marathas were not Englishmen. However, the idea that they were Indians, remained more difficult to permeate within people's conscious. And the independent states established through nationalist movements dealt with this challenge: to balance primordial diversity with the need to build a modern state enjoying civic loyalty (loyalty towards the political apparatus) of people.

By the final stage of nationalism, Geertz's pessimism comes to fore. Geertz cites the example of India, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Sri Lanka and numerous other new states suggesting that they struggle with the tension between primordial attachments on one hand and demands of a modern state on other. This tension becomes severe because people in these states are bound with primordial attachments to race, religion, caste, even nations, and rarely the broader collective goals of state (pg. 258). The struggle for both recognition of primordial identities and the creation of a collective national loyalty define political life in the new states. Nationalism in decolonized states, thus, started as a process of introducing a new form of collective attachment in steering anti-colonial sentiments, acquired mass popularity when establishing new states, and continues as an exercise, by the states in balancing nationalist attachment with the existent primordial attachments, with varying levels of success.

In contrast, Anthony D. Smith's Ethnosymbolism discusses nationalism and nations in context of histories, symbols, and myths of the ethnic communities around which nations are built. Nationalism, he defines, is an 'ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity, on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation' (Smith 1991: 73). Nations, per him, precede nationalism. Nation being a 'named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common enemy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (pg. 14). Smith contends that nations, even modern nations, are rooted in ethnic communities or *ethnies*.

Smith uses *Ethnies* to answer the questions of what constitutes nations, how they emerge, and how nationalism operates vis-à-vis nation. He explains ethnic communities as those with a sense of solidarity, a common culture and history, and associated with a specific territory (pg. 21). Persistent presence of these ethnies across centuries create nations centred around these communities. Yet, ethnic communities are of two types, creating different types of nations. Lateral ethnies constituted aristocrats and clergy, confined to their upper societal echelons with limited interaction with the masses. Vertical ethnies constitute different classes united under shared heritage and traditions (pg. 53). Nation formation from lateral ethnies happened as the aristocratic communities attempted a top-down incorporation of lower strata of society (England, France, and Spain). Nation formation from vertical ethnies happened as the intelligentsia of various communities mobilized the masses around common histories and symbols (Switzerland, Greece) (pg. 64). And in this process of nation-formation, emerged nationalism. Smith contends that while nations have roots in pre-modern era, an idea shared by Geertz, nationalism is a modern phenomenon that exploits and propagates pre-modern symbols. Nationalism, he asserts, is the ideology intended to achieve the goals of a nation (used interchangeably with state) and realize its national will by linking and appropriating with pre-modern symbols (pg. 72). Smith's approach is a bridge between 'primordial character of nations' of Primordialism and 'invention of nations' of Modernism.

Modernists challenge the idea that nations and nationalisms are natural or symbolic themes with pre-modern linkages. They claim that the two are an outcome of industrialization, capitalism, and political transformations of the last three centuries (Özkirimli 2017: 81). But Ernest Gellner's Industrialization approach, Benedict Anderson's Print-Capitalism approach, and John Breuilly's Political Action approach, differ extensively on definitions of nationalism, nation, and state, and their characteristics. Their contrasting perspectives are core to the modernist perspective of nationalism literature.

Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith's PhD supervisor, suggested 'nations and 'nationalism' as modern constructs, emerging due to the 'cultural homogenization' of the industrial age. The origins of nationalism, and the feelings and ideology associated with it, are rooted not in attachments or symbols, but in the modern processes of industrialization (Gellner 1983). He defines nationalism as a 'political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (pg. 1) i.e., each nation must have a state composed of people that are culturally similar. Nation is defined as a territorial unit of men sharing same culture where the culture is protected, imposed, and reinforced (pg. 54). He defines culture as a system of shared ideas and behaviours essential for social communication (pg. 11-13). The interaction between these terms underlines his thesis.

Gellner's central argument is that nationalism is a cultural ideology that becomes plausible only in modern period as it reflects the experiences of people during industrialization. Yet why did it not exist before industrialization? In the hunter-gatherer phase, there were no states or room for a 'national' culture. In the pre-industrial agrarian phase, the ruling class (kings, priests, bureaucracy) used their culture to distinguish itself from the majority population of agriculturalists, who had their separate cultures confined to their communities, with limited communication. Before industrialization, cultural homogeneity is neither present nor needed; once industrialization begins, homogeneity becomes essential. It is essential to enable the mobility, adaptability, and communication of people between diverse occupational roles. Standardised literacy in shared cultural idioms replace the local traditions and cultures, and create a unified cultural framework necessary for coordination, learning, and social integration across professions and regions (Gellner 1996: 106). Mass

literacy becomes the norm to propagate the shared cultural ideas. Only the state could build the expensive and large educational infrastructure, eventually bringing the spheres of polity and culture together. Gellner shows that cultures are homogenized under Industrialization's pressures, they are institutionalized by the state, and the resultant attachments and subjectivities creates nations. He, therefore, asserts that nationalism creates nations, and not the other way round (Gellner 1983: 55). Nationalism, thus, establishes a nation where the individuals are held together by a shared culture.

Benedict Anderson also emphasizes on cultural changes during industrialization producing nationalism, and nationalism creating nations, but posits a different analysis than Gellner. Anderson argues 'that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation' (Anderson 2006: 6). Gellner implies that every community can be juxtaposed to the status of nations. Instead, Anderson defines nation as an 'imagined political community' that is both limited and sovereign (ibid.). Imagined, he says, because while people of a region do not know each other, but in their minds, they are part of one group or nation. The nation is imagined as *limited* because it has boundaries and beyond it lie other nations; imagined as *sovereign* because the nations emerged in the modern period where freedom became the *raison d'être*; and imagined as a *community* because despite not knowing one another, people are willing to kill and die for their fraternal imaginings (pg. 7). To the question of what makes nationalism generate such powerful emotions, Anderson turns to culture.

Anderson suggests nations and nationalism as cultural artefacts emerging after the decline of pre-modern cultural systems: religion and dynasties (pg. 9-37). Religion provided the answer to people's everyday problems, including to the answer of life and death. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, importance of religion eroded, people's problems didn't. Monarchical dynasties too became redundant as the political system of governance: a system organised around high centre and legitimacy derived from religion and not people. Simultaneously, modernity influenced people's modes of apprehending the world. People were aware that the world functioned simultaneously for everyone. He gave the example of two people in different parts of a region reading

a newspaper on the same day, unknown to each other. In this regard, everyone knows that the similar activity is performed simultaneously by thousands of individuals, of whose existence he's confident, but of whose identity he's unaware (pg. 33-35). This is the notion of the 'imagined community'. Finally, it was the 'print-capitalism' that made nationalism popular and the 'imagined political communities' of nations to emerge. Print-Capitalism involved growth of printing technology enabling mass production of books and newspapers such that speakers of English, French, and Spanish became capable of comprehending each other via consumption of printed works (pg. 45). Print-Capitalism promoted nationalism by creating unified fields of communication in people's vernaculars and those languages communicating national ideas to diverse people strengthening the imagined community of nation. He acknowledges that European nationalism happened first and differed from anti-colonial nationalism. Anti-colonial nationalisms, Anderson argues, also emerged due to print-capitalism as colonies read about European developments and sought to replicate that model. Thus, Anderson advocates the rise of cultural nationalism which created nations, and the process being rooted in print-capitalism.

Breuilly takes a different position than Anderson, or Gellner regarding nationalism and state, and doesn't give a generalized hypothesis for diverse nationalisms. Breuilly treats nationalism as a form of politics. He defines nationalism as 'political movement seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments' (Breuilly 1994: 2). To him, nationalism is any political movement advocating a nationalist argument. Unlike other modernists, he opines that rise of nationalism is dependent on existence of nation-states. He asserts that the nation gives shape to nationalism and provides nationalist politics with its objective i.e., possession of the state. He defines the state as the possessor of sovereignty over a territory, with elaborate institutional structure to maintain the sovereignty and govern over its citizens (pg. 366). Breuilly also acknowledges that the processes of emergence of nations and nationalism, albeit modern conceptions, had different pace in different regions showing the plurality (anti-colonial nationalism, Arab nationalism, separatist nationalisms, sub-nationalisms, Nazism, etc.) of nationalism.

The genesis of Breuilly's argument is that it was the big political and administrative changes in the structure of politics that gave rise to nationalism, not industrialization

or print-capitalism. 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe witnessed transition from empires to states. Empires had churches, communes, and guilds that handled political, economic, and religious functions of the state. Gradually, this was replaced by an order where the political functions were left to bureaucracy and parliament, economic functions were left to free market forces, and religious functions to the church (Breuilly 1996: 163-164). As every institution adopted its specialized role, the nation-state developed. To bridge the people and state together, nationalism emerged. Finally, with emergence of nation-states and nationalism, how does nationalism work as a 'political movement'? Nationalist movements were necessarily oppositional to the state. They either sought to break away from the present state (separation), or reform it in a nationalist paradigm (reform) or unite it with other states (unification) (Breuilly 1982: 9). Furthermore, Breuilly also classified the movements depending on if the state was a nation-state or not.

His empirical discussion of nationalist movements thus looked like this (ibid.):

|             | Opposed to non-nation-states | Opposed to nation-states |
|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Separation  | Greek, Nigerian              | Basque, Ibo              |
| Reform      | Turkish, Japanese            | Fascism, Nazism          |
| Unification | German, Italian              | Arab, Pan-African        |

This survey of nationalism approaches addresses the debates concerning temporal origins of nationalisms, which consequently determines its definitions, and the trajectory of nation-nationalism relationship- whether nations precede nationalism (Geertz, Smith) or emerge from it (Anderson, Gellner). They emphasize on characteristics of nationalism, whether it involves emotional attachments (Geertz), is an ideological formation (Smith), induces cultural mobilisation (Gellner and Anderson), or a process of political restructuring (Breuilly). However, this survey isn't exhaustive. Many prominent nationalism approaches (Hatcher's internal colonialism or Hobsbawm's invention of tradition) and marginal perspectives like Constructivism or Marxism, are not discussed as they fall beyond the parameters of this section.

Furthermore, the nationalism perspectives, also haven't kept up with the subject's interdisciplinary proliferation, specifically the theme of 'nation-building'.

### *Nation-Building Literature*

The nation-building literature asks the question that once nation-states have come to exist, through the ways suggested by nationalism scholars, what are 'the forces that impel people to seek to belong to 'nations' rather than any other type of unit' (Smith 1986: 232)? Karl Deutsch pioneered this scholarship. Nation-building, he defined, is the construction of national identity by the nation-state (Deutsch 1966). Mylonas described it as a process through which the boundaries of the state and its citizenry are aligned (Mylonas 2012). Wimmer's definition (section 2.3) suggests that nation-building is the process of political inclusion by building inclusive exchange relations between state and people (2018: 24). The scholars of nation-building agree that it leads to national identification i.e., attachment with the nation over attachment to the ethnicity, region, or religion. Yet, if and how this identification is achieved, under what processes, is where they differ. There are three major perspectives (structural, state-building, foreign intervention) of nation-building. These perspectives are modernist in nature. I also briefly discuss the Primordial and Ethnosymbolist understanding of nation-building.

Geertz and Smith address nationalism and do not exclusively discuss nation-building per se. But I extrapolate from their works, how they *would* understand nation building. Geertz suggests that attachments of ethnicity, kinship, language are deeply rooted, ineffable, and primordial. In the post-colonial states of Africa and Asia, the state cannot just erase these primordial attachments to impose a purely civic national identity upon the people. Nation-Building, for Geertz, implies balancing the persisting primordial identities with a civic political loyalty for the state (Geertz 1963: 109). Since it is difficult to develop a unified national identity whilst also negotiating with primordial attachments, Geertz remains pessimistic about this complexity nation-building. For Anthony D Smith (1986; 1991; 1999), nations aren't just primordial givens or modern creations, but a consequence of myths, histories, symbols, and values of earlier ethnic communities. Successful nation-building must involve mobilization, re-interpretation, and institutionalization of older memories and symbols into the national framework

(Smith 1986: 16). Smith urges to link the modern state with its ethnic heritage and making it meaningful in the present (Smith 1991: 65). The dominant perspectives of nation-building, in contrast, are strictly modernist. I discuss only the structural and state-building perspectives, given the purview of the thesis.

For the structural scholars, nation-building is a by-product of broad socio-economic changes resulting from modernization. These scholars consider nation-building ‘as a process intertwined with other structural processes taking place in modernity— industrialization, urbanization, social mobilization, etc.’ (Mylonas 2020). Deutsch (1966) argued that nation-building is a consequence of the effect of modernization upon social mobilization. Social mobilization involves the way in which pre-modern social, economic, and psychological modes of communication of people are broken and readied for modern and shared patterns of communication where information is easily understood, transmitted, and recalled. The new communication systems involving a standardized language allowing for efficient exchange of information, helped integrate diverse populations into a cohesive nation.

Gellner and Anderson can also be categorized as structural scholars. Gellner (1983) saw nationalism as a product of industrialization and modern education which institutionalized shared culture and ideas, leading to development of a nation. Industrialization created educational institutions that equipped people with the skills necessary for an industrial society. Consequently, the modern institutions developed a standardized set of values, cultures, ideas, and the shared cohesiveness generated led to nation-building. Gellner’s analysis suggests that cultural homogeneity would just ensure a cohesive nation-ness, after a nation is formed. Similarly, Anderson (1983) too credits industrialization’s impact on print-capitalism as the driver of nation-building. Through print-capitalism, standardized languages were appreciated to the positions of power creating a reading public with a sense of imagined commonality. People, who never met, partook every day in shared discourses, acquiring a collective imagined sense of belonging to the nation. Anderson is critiqued by state-building scholars for the notion that the ‘imagined’ belonging towards the nation just sustains itself. Rogers Brubaker argues that Anderson takes for granted the ‘self-sacrificing love’ for nations as merely ‘imagined’ (Brubaker 2009: 30). Brubaker also criticizes Anderson, Gellner,

and other structural scholars for their macro-analysis of nationalisms, without any recognition of how it operates after a nation's formed (ibid.).

State-building scholars focus on the mechanisms of nation-building by the state as well as factors motivating the state elites to pursue those mechanisms. Rogers Brubaker (1996) examines Central and Eastern European states after cold war and the interplay of the three varieties of nation-building at work in these states: 'nationalising nationalism' by formerly disenfranchised ethnic groups who now have their own states; 'transborder nationalism' drives the states to promote the welfare and protect the interests of 'their' ethnonational kin in other states'; and 'minority nationalism' is invoked by those minorities affected by policies of nationalising nationalism. All these nation-building projects are advanced by the dominant elites of the state depending on their positionality in the three types of nationalisms.

Harris Mylonas (2012) begins his study of nation-building by asking what influences a state's choice to assimilate, accommodate, or exclude ethnic groups within its territory? Mylonas argues that 'a state's nation-building policies toward noncore groups—any aggregation of individuals perceived as an ethnic group by the ruling elite of a state—are influenced by both its foreign policy goals and its relations with the external patrons of these groups. He demonstrates how the politicization of ethnicity in the international arena determines which groups are assimilated, accommodated, or annihilated by their host states' (Mylonas 2020). Breuilly's analysis of state-centric nation-building to foster a unified national identity is charged with pessimism (1993: 276-277). He first distinguishes between nation-building (state-pursued policies) and national integration (that may happen with or without state efforts). He stresses that state-building efforts- education, welfare benefits, improved communication networks- do not always generate effective national identifications. While he acknowledges that he has little data to support this assertion, particularly from new states, he does question the efficacy of state-led cultural engineering of creating a national identity.

Finally, Eugen Weber's thesis of rural France (1976) shows how state-led nation-building works over a period time. His analysis looks at how the state really engages with people. Between 1880 and 1910, rural French peasants were transitioned from speaking multiple languages, following rituals of traditional feasts and fairs into

Frenchmen speaking French and adopting a uniform French national consciousness. This transition happened through a combination of state-led factors: expansion of roads and railways connecting the cities with towns and villages; spread of education and with it the French language and French values; and military service compelling peasants to follow orders in French, follow French signs, and familiarize themselves with the French nation. Weber shows this nation-building trajectory through the effect of the three mechanisms upon French festivals, culture, markets, reading, dancing, etc.

## **2.2 Theories of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Indian Perspectives**

Indian nationalism, like its western counterparts, has no single definition. But before addressing what it entails, why separate the Indian scholarship from Western? The Indian experience has been different from the Western experiences described by Modernists and Primordialists. India didn't experience the grand structural changes of Modernization (Gellner 1983). Industrialization was absent, there was no mass conscription, and literacy levels remained incredibly low. Indian people have strong attachments with caste, region, religion, and language. Yet, these attachments weren't primordial or ineffable, to use Geertz's terminology (1963). They were neither rigid nor fixed; instead, they were historical (Kaviraj 1991). Indian nationalism scholars agree that it emerged as a political movement of the Indian National Congress against the colonial rule. Beyond this consensus, however, scholars approach Indian nationalism from different thematic lenses.

I segregate this section into three thematic surveys. Distinct explanations of Indian nationalism are best understood through this segregation. The thematic division also charts a linear yet cohesive narrative of Indian nationalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1947. Indian nationalism's emergence must be seen through the theme of colonization's impact. I examine a two-fold impact of colonialism on Indian society: politicization of people's identifications, and the heightened political/cultural gap between Indian elites and non-elites. These implications then influenced the second theme, emergence of the Indian national movement. Congress' political networks were paramount here. Through political networks with multiple regions and communities, elites and non-elites, Congress steered a pan-India national

movement. These networks also shaped India's nation-building processes in the post-colonial period. Finally, I address the limitations and opposition to Congress-led Indian Nationalism. Congress' nationalism became synonymous with Indian nationalism. Yet Congress' networks were regionally and socially uneven. Hindu nationalist organizations like Hindu Mahasabha and RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) also operated in India's political landscape. Where Congress sought to establish a secular, democratic state after 1947, and it did; Hindu organizations envisioned a Hindu-nationalist state where the rule and culture of the Hindu majority prevailed. Congress had Hindu nationalists within its own ranks too. This kept the Muslims outside the Congress networks. The narrative, though, begins from the politicization of these identities due to colonization.

### *Impact of Colonialism*

Sudipta Kaviraj (1991), Manu Goswami (2004), and John Breuilly (1982) explore the societal implications of colonialism which inevitably led to the emergence of Indian nationalism. But they differ on its meaning. For Kaviraj, it's a discourse of imagination embedded in anti-colonialism. Goswami refers to Anderson's (1983) imagined vocabulary to describe Indian nationalism. And Breuilly, like Kaviraj, investigates the spread of English among the Indian elites', and their collaboration with the British at the root of Indian nationalism. The three scholars further differ on the extent of colonisation's impact in the emergence Indian nationalism.

Kaviraj expands on the two implications of colonization that inevitably created the discourse of nationalism. One implication was that the diverse Indian identifications went from fuzzy to enumerated due to British administration, censuses, and surveys (1991: 1-18). In pre-colonial India, an individual simultaneously belonged to multiple communities of caste, language, religion, occupation. Depending on the societal context, the individual identified with the required community. These identifications weren't political, or fixed. The pre-colonial Indian rulers let this fuzzy society exist as such. The British, versed in societal homogeneity, imposed their modernist vocabulary upon the heterogeneous Indian society. The colonial state involved itself within people's lives through new economic, legal, and political institutions. They enumerated the fuzzy identities. Identities of Muslim, lower or upper caste Hindus, Gujaratis,

Peasants, etc. became rigid and political. And fixed. To ease this transition, Indian elites were educated in the British modernist ideas. The British hoped that if leading Indian elites reoriented their common sense, the rest of the population would too. This created the second societal implication: a gap between Indian elites and non-elites. The British institutions were appreciated and understood by the elites but remained unfamiliar and oppressive to the population at large. The British altered the vocabulary of the elites but couldn't fashion 'a new common sense for the entire Indian society through their intermediation' (pg. 93). Gradually, Indian elites too saw through the exploitative British rule, within the mask of modernity. In response, they developed the modern discourse of Indian nationalism.

The early nationalist discourse, led by educated Indian elites, advocated that all the enumerated identities must orient themselves within a shared national identity, against the colonialists (pg. 85-125). The core idea involved accommodating India's diversity in a collective nationalist fold, channelled through anti-colonialism. This discourse of nationalism was intended to facilitate the 'imagination' of the Indian 'nation'. For Kaviraj, no Indian nation existed in history, only a collection of communities. Here, Kaviraj relates his discourse with Anderson's 'imagination' argument (1983). However, he argues that Indian modernism differed from Western modernism. Kaviraj critiques dominant modernist approaches' argument that modern institutions emerge only by erasing previous institutions, not by reworking upon existing structures. In India, the British refined the existing fuzzy identities through colonial administration.

Kaviraj (and Sarkar 1984) understands the enumerated identifications as a hinderance to the nationalist movement. Since the identities were now fixed and political, and caste and religious distinctions heightened, they often conflicted with each other (Hindu moneylenders vs Sikh peasants in Punjab or Muslim landlord vs Hindu cultivators in United Provinces). It was a challenge to accommodate these identities within a collective national fold. The language of the discourse ('nation', 'accommodating diversity', 'plurality', 'nationalist') was also inaccessible to the non-elite groups. The English-speaking Indian elite, aware about the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century world around him, possessed the cognitive ability to comprehend Congress' nationalist discourse. A peasant in the Indian hinterland, who conversed in a dialect

spoken by a few thousand people, was unaware of any 'nationalist discourse' taking shape in Delhi or Bombay. Millions were similarly unaware.

Breuilly's (1982: 170-183) perspective contrasts with Kaviraj's regarding colonization's contribution to Indian nationalism. He argues that Congress-led Indian nationalism wouldn't emerge without Indian elites' initial collusion with the British. Congress started as an organisation of Indian English-speaking elites, as a collaborator of colonial rule. The British administration relied on such Indian collaborators for day-to-day functioning. The increased administrative demand for collaborators at local and provincial levels prompted Congress to extend its organisational base from urban centres to rural territories. British collaboration, thus, aided Congress' expansion. Through its organisational strength, the Congress could bring the local and rural grievances to the national stage. But what was this 'national' stage? Since Kaviraj insisted that there was no Indian 'nation' to begin with.

Manu Goswami's *Producing India* (2004) focuses on British administrative and economic changes that produced imaginings of Indian nationalism, and the national 'stage'. Goswami repeats Kaviraj's argument that the Indian nation was imagined. But she deviates by arguing that 'national' identifications were possible only because the colonizer's territorial boundary made the Indian nation. Colonizers defined the boundaries of 'India' for their administrative ease. Colonization made people aware of 'their' territorial space, in which they 'belonged', and they then 'imagined' their nation within that space. This was because they also introduced a single currency for all the people in the that territorial space. This was alongside a uniform tax code, similar administrative practices and the production of maps. In this way, diverse non-elites were then bound together in shared economic practices. The spatial imagination of India was also infused with the Hindu cultural motif of recognizing India as *Bharat*, a Hindu imagination of the nation. Images of a Hindu Goddess (*Bharat Mata*) upon the new maps were extensively circulated by novelists and artists that facilitated national imagination with religious narrative. The image of a mother (*Mata*) representing nation made the abstract national imagination accessible and emotional for the non-literate population.

This brings back Kaviraj's discourse of nationalism- the obstacle of the gap between elites and masses. The Congress elites furthered a discourse of an encompassing nationalism. They recognized the importance of British-made western institutions and tailoring them to be inclusive. But the non-elites couldn't comprehend this due to lack of literacy and cognitive awareness of adapting the elite discourse. Sections of non-elites also became attracted to the Hindu nationalist discourse. Furthermore, the diversity of India complicated the adoption of the discourse. To communicate this discourse from the elites to the diverse commoners, I examine the role of Congress, Gandhi, and networks.

### *Indian Nationalism: Colonial and Post-Colonial Networks*

In this section, I examine the role of Congress networks in the colonial and post-colonial period. By Congress networks in the colonial period, I mean the informal yet powerful webs of influence, patronage, support, and linkages through which Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, mobilized Indian non-elites on nationalist lines (Sarkar 1983). In the post-colonial period, informal networks of engagement (Varshney 2002) and formal electoral networks of Congress (Brass 1965) furthered nation-building.

Sumit Sarkar's *Modern India* (1983) places Congress's history (1885-1947) as the fulcrum of Indian nationalism in the colonial period. Sarkar argues that Indian nationalism wasn't a uniform phenomenon. It was a political movement of diverse and contesting experiences (Sarkar 2012: 147-153). As the fuzzy identities got enumerated, upper-caste Hindus spoke of Hindu unity, lower-caste Hindus resisted upper-caste hegemony, Muslims advocated a separate nation, and so on. The analysis of Indian nationalism must, therefore, incorporate elements beyond just 'anti-colonialism'. It must address how Congress brought together diverse caste, regional, and religious groups towards the nationalist movement. Congress networks essentially bridged the problematic gap between elites and masses. Besides the urban English-speaking elites, Congress also became an organisation of workers, peasants, and labourers (1983: 3).

However, to credit just Congress for bridging the gap between elites and non-elites would be a disservice to the role of Mahatma Gandhi. Like Nehru, he too detected the obstacle of elite-commoners gap. Although Gandhi mentored Nehru and Congress until his death, Gandhi's utopian and non-western thought differed from Nehru's pragmatic and modernist ideas. Gandhi was critical of the western model of capitalist exploitation of the poor and the endless cycle of over-consumption and over-production (Chatterjee 1986: 85-86). He proposed a society led by a ruler and an economic system of reciprocity devoid of any labour exploitation (Gandhi 1958, vol. 35: 489-490).

Gandhi's utopian thought, nevertheless, laid the groundwork for Congress' discourse to be transferrable to the masses (Amin 1984) and the grievances of non-elites to be intelligible to the elites (Kaviraj 1991: 23). Gandhi's popularity within the Indian non-elites transpired from his travels across the breadth of India, wearing khadi robes that appealed to the impoverished Indian people, and being accessible such that people could always meet him and offer gifts. Gradually, his persona was elevated to the status of '*Mahatama*' (person revered akin to God). Gandhi's '*darshan*' (seeking blessings of a divine individual), became the norm wherever he travelled (Amin 1984: 290-292). Myths about Gandhi's 'powers' also gained prominence among the predominantly illiterate society. Myths like the well he drank from acquired fragrance, or a person who refused alms to a beggar asking in Gandhi's name had his buffaloes destroyed in a fire.

Gandhi, however, bridged the gap without bridging the meaning of nationalism. The non-elites' idea of nationalism still differed from Congress elites' idea of nationalism. But for resolution of their local causes and needs, diverse non-elite groups oriented towards the emerging nationalist movement. Peasants believed that Gandhi would help against the exploitative landlords and agricultural labourers believed that Gandhi would help them get landholdings (Sarkar 1983: 181-182). Some farmers sought protection of their cows (Amin 1984) and some sweepers wanted their pay increased (Imam 2013). Moreover, for Gandhi, modern industrialization forces were the real enemy, not the British. And the artisans, peasants, workers, who suffered due to colonizers' economic and 'modernizing' initiatives, resonated with his anti-industrialization approach.

Nehru disagreed with Gandhi (Nehru 1936: 370) and had a more western inclination. Envisioning social and economic objectives without establishment of a sovereign nation-state was futile, Nehru argued (Chatterjee 1986: 131). Nehru and other elites acknowledged the strengths of the modern ideals of democracy, secularism, and industrialization whilst accommodating Indian diversity. Congress adopted these ideals as end goals of the nationalist movement. Nonetheless, Congress needed Gandhi to bridge the gap with the non-elites. The masses needed Congress to platform their localised grievances.

Rural India was proliferating with diverse community-led movements against the British in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the 1905 Andhra tribal revolt against restrictions on forest produce; the 1910 Bastar peasant protests after ban on shifting agriculture; the 1917 Manipur rebellion against forced labour recruitment; protests in Maharashtra and Kerela against the dominance of upper castes in administrative posts, etc. These movements, against the British or their collaborators, always remained local. They differed in their language from Congress' anti-colonial nationalism. Yet, Congress extensively reached out to these local leaders and community figures, including teachers, lawyers, landlords, to bring them within the shared nationalist discourse. In exchange of these expanding networks, people contributed to Congress with money and volunteers. The community figures also provided Congress access to their social, occupational, associational networks.

Most importantly, people participated in Congress' mass nationalist protests, starting from the Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM) in 1921 (Sarkar 1983: 203-225). NCM's initial phase saw students leaving government jobs and lawyers giving up their practice. British goods were boycotted en masse after Gandhi's appeal. Consequently, the foreign cloth import value dropped from Rs 102 crore to Rs 57 crore between 1920-22. Urban and rural people alike took up the use of *Charkha*, an Indian cloth spinning wheel, both as symbolic and economic means of resistance. Indian industrialists made large-scale donations to Congress increasing its funds from Rs 43,000 in 1920 to Rs 13,000,000 by 1923. Around 400 labour strikes in 1921 forced a loss of 6,994,426 workdays. The mass movements of 1930-34 and 1942-

1945 experienced similar coming together of diverse Indian non-elites, resisting colonial rule in a variety of ways.

Sarkar echoes Kaviraj in arguing that Congress sought a democratised version of the colonial administration and institutions for the post-colonial period (pg. 4). Congress envisioned a nation-state where India's diversity would be recognized and enshrined with adequate rights. Nehru-led Congress nationalism, therefore, opposed the British (mass mobilizations, protests, co-option of local movements) until 1947 and shadowed their administration (democratic elections, centralized bureaucratic infrastructure, expansive legal framework) after 1947. Congress's pre-1947 networks and popularity ensured its electoral hegemony after 1947. Due to the continuous electoral victories, Congress continued to be the primary nation-building in India until the 1970s.

However, alongside the Congress there were also other social and political movements that sometimes worked alongside and sometimes against the Congress movement. Hindu nationalism, through Hindu Mahasabha and RSS (Jaffrelot 1996,2007; Rasaratnam 2016) facilitated Congress networks in some regions before 1947 and became dominant independently after Congress' decline in 1970s. Hindu Mahasabha was a pressure group within Congress and later an independent political organisation. RSS started as a quasi-paramilitary force in 1925 for the preservation and propagation of Hindu ideals. The purpose of the RSS was to 'defend' the Hindu nation against what it perceived as the key threats, namely Muslims and other minorities. The RSS and Mahasabha members sometimes engaged with each other but conflicted more often (Ganneri 2015). However, the key concern for this thesis is that these organisations propagated establishing a Hindu nation and nation-building along Hindu nationalist lines. I examine this later in the section. But Congress's networks after 1947 require a brief survey for two reasons. First, they continued the colonial thematic of recognizing Indian plurality. Second, the networks expanded from informal to formal.

Srirupa Roy's *Beyond Belief* (2007) demonstrates modified Congress networks in the Indian nation-building project between 1947-67. The project involved Congress portraying the Indian state as the ultimate authority and unifier of India's diversity. Roy

argues that the state was actively involved with cultural and material interventions in people's lives to further nation-building. It did so by producing visuals of Indian diversity; commemorating the diversity through televised tableaux of Republic Day Parades; and creating townships for workers of nationalised industries, promoting them as representative of post-colonial Indian spaces. Roy contradicts Anderson (1983) or Goswami's (2004) notion that the Indian identity is imagined. She claims that it has been created and reproduced through repeated encountering of the state in people's lives.

Paul Brass (1974) too advocates the notion of diversity in his analysis of Congress networks. For theoretical and practical purposes, Brass problematizes that the issue with nation-building isn't to look for or forge a singular national identity. Rather it is to recognise the existence of diverse identities, to orient diverse groups towards the national territorial unit without diminishing their identities. Brass calls India a multinational state (consisting of a Hindu nation, Muslim nation, Sikh nation etc.). He suggests that the Indian state focused on commonalities between these diverse groups, not differences, to further its nation-building project.

Brass (1965) examines how Congress' pre-1947 networks were altered in the post-colonial period, in accordance with the demands of the new democratic state. Congress expanded from the patron-client networks to electorally organised networks. Congress provided representation to the diverse groups in electoral politics and in exchange, people ensured that Congress won elections at both federal and national levels until the 1970s. Congress became a coalition of regional political parties, which were themselves coalitions of local and regional organisations, creating a bridge between the national and local India. It created a web of grassroot organisations extending upwards through an interlocking series of intermediate parties to the Congress administration in Delhi. This pyramid represented the variance of caste, language, religions, regions, tribes, and so on. And Congress co-opted them where it could.

Yet Congress networks weren't the only ones shaping India's nation-building project. Ashutosh Varshney questions why (after enumeration of identities) some regions in India witnessed Hindu-Muslim conflicts while others remained peaceful, given that

almost every region possesses communal diversity (2002). Varshney too turns to networks, but they differ from Congress networks. Varshney argues that wherever networks of engagement exist between Hindus and Muslims, their tensions and conflicts are lessened and mitigated. Where absent, communal conflict escalates (ibid.: 9). The networks can involve associational engagement (through organisations, clubs, local bodies, trade unions, political parties, pressure groups) or everyday engagement (Hindus and Muslims meeting each other, celebrating festivals together, participating in neighbourhood activities). Varshney examines 3 pairs of Indian cities, where one city witnessed endemic violence (without networks) and one with communal peace (with networks). He traces these networks back to the colonial period to examine the historical linkages between Hindus and Muslims. The thesis too concurs that the communal issue in India must be traced back to the colonial period, and to the Congress networks. The obstacle of India's diversity affected Congress before and after 1947. For most periods, formal and informal Congress networks could mitigate the issues of diversity. Congress, for all its popularity, had its limitations. There were also other networks beyond Congress'.

#### *Limitations and Opposition of Congress: Hindu Nationalist Networks*

Congress Networks co-opted most regions and groups of India but not all. Take for example, the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921. This was Congress' first mass participation all-India protest, and it was marked by significant regional variations (Sarkar 1983: 210-224). This was due to the uneven spread of Congress networks. Princely states (40% of Indian territory) remained unaffected by NCM since Congress networks barely penetrated these kingdoms; peasants led a militant uprising against the British in Rajasthan; Gujaratis gave complete support to Gandhian principles while Bombayites rioted against Europeans; In South India, NCM had limited appeal among the urban elites while Tamil Nadu's textile workers responded to the boycott calls with a 4-month strike. Similar variance prevailed in the final nationalist protests, the Quit India Movement of 1942. Among the Princely states, only Mysore witnessed major anti-colonial activities; Bihar and UP peasants participated with Congress, but relatively affluent farmers of Punjab and Gujarat stayed away. By 1940s, Congress mobilisation happened not through the

prosperous sections within the non-elites, but people lower on the socio-economic scale (pg. 399-405).

Besides this variance, Congress networks were layered with religious differences. For example, Congress was able to mobilise support among Tamils but not among Muslims (Rasaratnam 2016). Congress employed Tamil language and symbols to incorporate Tamil-speaking areas into the Indian national movement. It failed in similar co-option of the Muslims resulting in them being perceived as outsiders to the Indian national project. Ironically, before their co-option by the Congress, Tamil and Muslim movements were agnostic towards Congress. For Tamils, Congress was a north Indian Brahmanical organisation and for Muslims, it was a Hindu organisation threatening Muslim interests. Tamil and Muslim apprehensions were largely justified. Congress indeed had Hindu nationalists in its ranks. During the colonial period, they facilitated the spread of Congress networks in North Indian territories. Mostly, and particularly after 1947, Hindu nationalist organisations and networks opposed Congress networks as well as Congress' diversity-oriented approach for the Indian state.

Hindu nationalism also emerged like Congress, through British enumeration and education of Indian elites (Jaffrelot 2007: 6-7). Where Congress elites fashioned a pluralist idea of India, Hindu nationalists understood India as a Hindu nation under which all other religious groups must be subsumed. Congress expanded politically as the flagbearer of mass Indian nationalism. Hindu nationalism expanded socially through Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha, founded in 1925 and 1915, as the voice of Hindu culture. Congress networks, of co-opting local movements/organisations and client-patronage relations with community figures, made it a Pan-India political organisation. RSS networks, of promoting Hindu values and reversion from Islam, made them popular with over 80,000 members and 700 branches in 1940 (Parshad 2018: 75). Yet, not as popular as Congress. Instead, most Hindu nationalist ideologues worked within Congress. After 1947, Hindu nationalism separated from Congress as its own movement.

Although there was a lot of overlap between Congress and Hindu nationalists (Jaffrelot 2007; Rasaratnam 2016), the Hindu nationalist movement was also distinct

in its own regard (Anderson 1987; Hansen 1999; Basu 2020). The Hindu nationalist movement had its own political ideals and modes of organising. This thesis is primarily concerned with the political networks of Hindu nationalism in Indian nation-building, which initially assisted and later displaced the Congress networks. In the colonial period, 'Punjab, Bengal and the United Provinces (UP)—the three areas that contained the majority of Indian Muslims —the regional Congress was dominated by groups that were also closely associated with Hindu nationalism' (Rasaratnam 2016: 50). Yet Hindu nationalism remained only a fringe phenomenon within the Congress or as a social movement outside it. It did deter Muslims from associating with Congress in the three regions. However, Hindu-Muslim conflicts were otherwise limited and there was relative calm for most periods (Varshney 2002).

After 1947, Hindu nationalism expanded from a social movement into a political movement. Political parties such as the Jana Sangh and later the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged and were connected to the RSS (Jaffrelot 2007). Its institutional structure expanded from branches and offices in villages and cities to student organisations in Universities, Labour Union organisations, Tribal centres, etc. However, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hindu nationalist networks couldn't entirely displace Congress networks. Congress Networks ensured Congress' electoral dominance until 2014, with a BJP-led coalition government between 1999 to 2004. In the interim, RSS-led Hindu Nationalist networks did continue to develop steadily. This was not apparent in the overt political developments of the Indian state over which Congress governments presided. Instead, the movement expanded through subtle yet powerful and continuous propagation of Hindu nationalist ideas (Hansen 1999; Jaffrelot 2007). At the same time, RSS also networks expanded with branches in every town, locality, and village, student organisations, rallies, publications. Since 2014, the RSS-backed BJP enjoys power in Delhi and most Indian states (except south Indian states). The Hindu nationalist networks now enjoy the societal penetration that Congress once did with over 4 million members and over 88,000 branches in over 55,000 locations across India (Bhatia 2024; RSS 2025).

### **2.3 Nation-Building: Wimmer's Framework**

Andreas Wimmer's (2018) framework of nation-building is valuable to this thesis for its emphasis on political networks. As the preceding section shows, networks are central to the Indian case. Wimmer conceptualises a comparative and historical framework of nation-building: the process by which citizens are politically integrated with the state and identify with the national community (pg. 1-2). Wimmer argues that successful nation-building is likely where citizens speak a common language, or where state provides public goods equitably, or where strong presence of civil society organisations enables formation of political networks between state and people. Like Deutsch (1953) and Geertz (1963), Wimmer analytically separates 'nation-building' from 'emergence of nationalism and nation-states', concentrating on the former. But his framework does account for the temporal stage before the formation of nation-state. I expand on his framework- the argument, the three variables, and the exchange relations (Wimmer's networks) facilitating nation-building- in the next sub-section.

Following the discussion of Wimmer's framework, I state its suitability for this thesis through three key points: by situating it within the mainstream framework, by emphasizing its utility for analysing Indian nation-building, and my moderations to his framework. This framework is focussed on political networks and is flexible, allowing for adaptations, making it a valuable tool for the empirical cases examined in this thesis.

### *Wimmer's Framework*

Wimmer defines nation building as a long-term, slow-moving process of building reciprocal exchange relations between people and the state, resulting in strong identification with the nation and political integration. Exchange Relations emerge when actors, in this case state elites and non-elite people, exchange material and non-material goods by weighing the potential costs and benefits of their interactions. The exchange relations between state and the people are based on three distinguishable aspects: 'The political economy aspect refers to the resources that they trade. The organizational aspect describes whether and how their relationship is institutionalized. The exchange of meaning and information between them represents the communication aspect' (Wimmer 2018: 28).

For the Political Economy Variable, Wimmer hypothesizes that government elites provide public goods and influence in political decisions and in exchange, people assert loyalty to the government, offer military services, and provide fiscal cooperation. Where states provide public goods equitably, its elites represent an attractive exchange partner to the diverse non-elites. These non-elites seek political, military, and fiscal ties with the elites, facilitating inclusive nation-building. Conversely, if ruling elites provide only for their co-ethnics, and privilege certain communities over others, nation-building fails. The excluded communities seek separation from the state, or turn to violence against the state.

In the Organisational variable, the focus is on the extent of institutionalization of the political networks. Informal patron-client exchange networks are generally weakly institutionalized. Usually in such patronage networks, the patron provides political favours or specific policies for the client in exchange for their vote. These specifically catered networks are rarely encompassing. These networks can be said to be completely institutionalized in 'countries with strong, independent parties or with many voluntary organizations such as local political clubs, reading circles, trade unions, professional associations' (pg. 8). Different voluntary organisations facilitate nation-building across ethnic divides. They represent diverse individual interests that the ruling elites can respond to. They ensure ethnicity will be less politicized and governing elites more diverse. Organisations also give people representation in the government and a say in their governance, and in this way their loyalty to the state increases. However, that only completely institutionalized networks bridge ethnic divides is a popular tendency, not law. Patronage networks, at times, can also do the same. India provides a unique example of that (pg. 29-30). Indian political parties often provide targeted benefits to specific groups and individuals for their electoral support. Simultaneously, this is restricted to local and regional parties. At the national level, building ties across the divides is necessary. India's exceptionally large political structure necessitates that the national-level parties form multiethnic alliances. And the national-level political parties like Congress and BJP, co-opt various voluntary associations, including parties that indulge in clientelism.

The Communication variable concerns with how actors communicate with each other when negotiating their exchange alliances. If actors converse in a shared language, building exchanges is easier, nation-building is easier. Wimmer reaffirms Deutsch's (1966) argument that language heterogeneity hinders the actors from determining each other's demands and intentions, slowing down nation-building. Wimmer suggests that one of the three variables can facilitate nation-building. Which is why despite language heterogeneity, India's nation-building projects progressed in various regions. India's example shows that pan-national networks can emerge in the absence of a shared language.

While modernist Indian and mainstream scholars locate the emergence of nationalism and nations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Wimmer postulates a different assertion for that period. Wimmer argues that linguistic homogeneity and state's ability to provide public goods is determined by state centralisation before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or before the colonial rule. 'In the 20th century or after independence...subsequent governments could rely on this know-how and bureaucratic infrastructure to provide public goods equitably across regions' (pg. 12). In conclusion, the framework emphasizes long-term political processes that began before the colonial era or the formation of nation-states. It discusses three 'temporally proximate factors: organizational density, public goods capacity, and communicative homogeneity. These then enable political alliances to spread across ethnic divides in the contemporary period of independent nation- states. In turn, such cross- ethnic alliances encourage individuals to identify more strongly with the nation' (pg. 38).

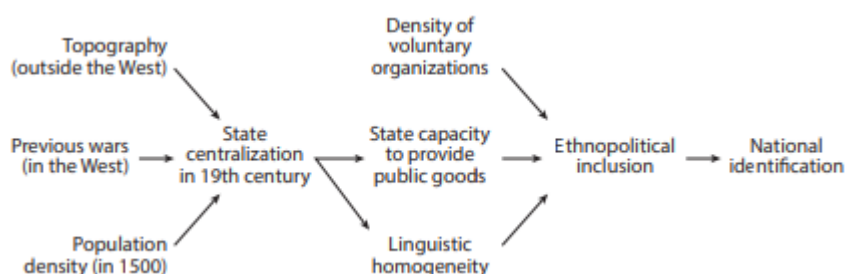


Image 1. Wimmer's Argument (Wimmer 2018: 20).

### *Wimmer and Mainstream Approaches*

Contrasting Wimmer with the mainstream scholars highlights the utility of his framework, particularly given its empirical and methodological breadth. Varshney (2002) evaluated his hypothesis on two cities to advocate that engagement networks promote communal harmony. Likewise, Wimmer evaluates his hypothesis- continuous presence of exchange relations through a variable furthers nation-building- on three pairs of two countries. Botswana/Somalia examined for Political Economy variable, Switzerland/Belgium for Organizational, and China/Russia for Communication. He then turns to quantitative analysis (2018: 171-228): survey of 155 countries between 1946-2005 to assess the political integration side of nation-building; and surveys from 123 countries representing 92% of world population to assess the national identification side of nation-building. His expansive study yields that exchange relations through one of the three variables over a prolonged period encourages political integration and national identifications, and thus, successful nation-building.

The primary focus of the thesis is analysing the networks between the state and people and the variance in nation-building processes. These are not the key questions in much of the nationalism literature. The dominant literature primarily asks why nationalism emerged, or if it precedes nations. Industrialization (Gellner 1983), Print-Capitalism (Anderson 2006), and recasting traditional ethnicities into nationalist narratives (Smith 1986) are suggested as the probable causes. The thesis does not ask how nationalism emerges, rather how it is adopted by the population at large through nation-building (Wimmer 2018: 18). Geertz (1963) suggests nation-building as a challenge of balancing primordial attachments with the modern state. It sees nation-building as culturally strained or ethnicity as primordial. Conversely, Wimmer sees nation-building as politically engineered and ethnicity as historically constructed, themes relevant to the Indian case. Wimmer and Breuilly (1994) agree on the importance of elites and the political nature of nation-building. However, while Breuilly examines how elites deploy nationalism as a political strategy, Wimmer examines how elites facilitate nation-building through inclusionary/exclusionary exchanges.

Wimmer's utility to the thesis is clearer when situated within the state-building strand of nation-building scholarship. Wimmer and Brubaker (2006) agree that nation-building is a modern political phenomenon but have different analytical orientations. Wimmer analyses the process and outcomes of nation-building. Brubaker focuses on *how* nationalism ought to be analysed. Since the focus of this thesis is to find causal explanations rather than offer a conceptual critique, Wimmer's framework is more useful. The framework also accounts for the role of Pakistan and China in Jammu/Ladakh's polity. However, unlike Mylonas (2012), it does not entirely rely on the role of international states in nation-building, or entirely on structural or primordial factors. Wimmer's framework is comparative, predictive, explanatory, historical, and accounts for the different histories of each nation-state.

### *Wimmer and Indian Case*

Acknowledgement of India's unique history, among other factors, makes Wimmer essential to the thesis. His framework offers a non-deterministic view of history (2018: 22). Most theories suggest that 'X,' 'Y,' or 'Z' ingredients are necessary for emergence of nationalism, or formation of the nation-state, and successful nation-building thereafter. Meanwhile, history shows that not all societies possess similar ingredients. History is also full of reversals. As Wimmer notes- 'Early modern Venice had good institutions, but then bad ones emerged. Rome was on the right track until Caesar killed its proto- democracy' (pg. 21-22). India, and the case of Jammu/Ladakh is rife with historical unevenness and reversals. India did not experience the grand structural changes or attachments of primordialism. And Kashmir was more receptive towards the Indian state than Jammu/Ladakh in 1947, yet the situation gradually reversed. To stretch the ingredients metaphor, Wimmer's framework works with the ingredients that a society possesses. It also accounts for the change in ingredients and with that, proffers the mechanisms for nation-building.

Wimmer's accommodation of unevenness also differs from the dominant approaches. Most approaches advocate a binary an all or nothing outcome to nation-building. Wimmer does that too, when he works with the three pairs of two countries. But he also proffers an approach that understands nation-building as a dynamic, continuous process. There is no fixed end goal of nation-building, Wimmer asserts.

For instance, despite Ladakh's demand for 'complete integration' with India being accepted in 2019, new fissures between them have emerged. Ladakhi elites have been protesting for more autonomy from the Indian state. Sonam Wangchuk, the man leading these protests, was put in jail in 2025. Thus, nation-building is a continuous process dependent on the absence or presence of reciprocal exchange networks.

### *Contributing to Wimmer's Framework*

This thesis contributes to Wimmer's framework by drawing on the cases examined here. It builds on the three variables of nation-building and shows that in certain cases, exchange relations through just one variable are insufficient for nation-building. In Kashmir, especially between 1950-70s, provision of public goods became the fundamental priority of the Indian state. Simultaneously, the ruling elites suppressed voluntary and political organisations operating in Kashmir's political space. The analysis shows that the absence of exchanges on the organisational aspect overpowered the presence of exchanges on political economy aspect, affecting Kashmir's trajectory of nation-building (Chapter 4 and 5).

Wimmer's analysis suggests that any one of the three variables can facilitate nation building. In Jammu, nation-building relied primarily on organisational exchanges, but political economy exchanges were absent. The organisational exchanges were enough to facilitate nation-building in Jammu. In contrast, in Kashmir, the absence of organisational linkages undermined the provision of public goods and prevented nation-building. My analysis offers some modification to this. I proffer the possibility of more than one variable being necessary for nation-building, in certain cases like Kashmir. I argue this in the empirical chapters whilst leaving the door open for amendment and further research on this possibility.

Observations from Jammu and Ladakh also contradict two other propositions of Wimmer. Wimmer postulates that state centralization before the formation of nation state ensures public goods provisions and linguistic homogeneity. The pre-independence rule of the Dogras, or centralised monarchies before them, failed to make Ladakh, Jammu, and Kashmir linguistically homogeneous. To date, each

region has people speaking one or more prominent languages. But state centralization did facilitate provision of public goods after 1947. And language heterogeneity was overpowered by political economy and organisational variables in Ladakh and Jammu. India's exchange relations in Ladakh between 1947-2019 failed to bridge the ethnic ties between Buddhists of Leh and Muslims of Kargil. Wimmer asserts that political integration is possible ethnic divides are bridged by the exchange relations. Ladakh's ethnic divides persisted throughout India's nation-building process. Intra-Ladakh issues aside, the provision of public goods and presence of voluntary associations still did facilitate nation-building in the region. Moreover, since 2019, Leh and Kargil organisations have joined hands to demand more autonomy from Delhi. Under the leadership of Sonam Wangchuk, Ladakhi organisations have collectively exercised their rights under the Indian constitution. This affirms Wimmer's notion that nation-building is a continuous ongoing process. Some observations from the case contradict Wimmer. Most are aligned with Wimmer's hypothesis. But none of them deviate from the argument that exchange relations through the three variables facilitate nation-building.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Wimmer's framework provides an empirically focussed and theoretically flexible framework to understand the case examined in this thesis. I use this framework to examine nation-building at regional and sub-regional levels. I analyse and compare India's networks across the three sub-regions of Jammu & Kashmir focussing specifically on the micro-political interactions between the Indian state and the sub-regions. The dissertation also contributes to the literature on the conflict in Kashmir. By focussing on exchange relations, it shows how and why Kashmir went from wanting a union with India in 1947 to secessionist conflict by the 1990s. The analysis also shows how and why Jammu and Ladakh went towards greater integration with India. This comparative analysis foregrounds the micro-processes that explain these contrasting outcomes. It focusses on exchanges rather than the macro-variables of political identities or constitutional demands. The next chapter begins the analysis with a focus on the colonial period in Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir.

## CHAPTER 3

### 1846-1947: DOGRA STATE AND CONTRASTING NETWORKS

In this chapter, I discuss the politics of the Jammu & Kashmir princely state between 1846-1947. More importantly, I discuss the networks of the J&K people with their rulers, the Dogras. The timeline spans the formation of J&K in March 1846 to India's independence in August 1947. I begin the empirical discussion 100 years before 1947 for two reasons. One, to examine the extent of state centralisation before the formation of the Indian nation-state. Wimmer suggests that the extent of state centralisation before colonisation influences the political economy variable after independence. Since the J&K state was formed in 19<sup>th</sup> century, I explore J&K's centralisation, if any, from that period onwards. Second, to determine the orientations of people of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir vis-à-vis India in 1947. India's nation-building processes began amidst the three regions' distinct positionalities at the time. These positionalities were a consequence of their networks with the Dogras.

The people of Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir had contrasting relations with the Dogras. Chapter 2 showed that Congress built a country-wide system of networks through the co-option of local movements, engaging with regional leaders and community figures, and mass protests and conferences across India. In exchange, people supported Congress by participating in and donating for its activities. Gradually, Congress integrated various regions and people of the subcontinent into the anti-colonial nationalist movement. Multiple Indian princely states, including J&K, were devoid of the Congress networks. The J&K state came into existence in 1846 and was ruled by the Dogras until 1947. The Dogras, not Congress, built political networks with the people. This put J&K on a different political trajectory during the colonial period compared to the rest of India.

The core argument of Chapter 3 is that Dogras networks in J&K were unequal and preferential. These preferential relations put Jammu/Ladakh and Kashmir on different paths vis-à-vis Indian nationalism. The Hindus (Jammu Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits) of the state, benefitted from the Hindu Dogra rule. The Dogras developed networks with the Hindus through promoting Hindu polity in J&K, provision of public goods, official recognition to Hindu organisations, and employing Hindus in the state

administration. Meanwhile, Kashmiri Muslims were deprived of similar patronage by the rulers. Ladakhi Buddhists were neither looked after like Hindus nor marginalised like the Muslims. The appeasing and ambivalent treatment to the Jammu/Kashmiri Hindus and Ladakhi Buddhists respectively, created a political void among the antagonised Kashmiri Muslims. For support against the Dogra rulers, they turned to the anti-Dogra National Conference (NC) party of Kashmir. Congress, from late 1930s, also supported National Conference's anti-Dogra stance. As Congress extended its networks to Kashmir, Congress gained another ally in NC for its anti-colonial nationalism. NC's popularity in Kashmir, through Congress support, primed it to displace the Dogras as the ruling elites of J&K after 1947. Every princely state was offered the choice to join India, or Pakistan, or be independent on the eve of independence in 1947. Consequently, in J&K, each of its region's positionality regarding India differed. Kashmir and National Conference favoured joining India due to Congress' networks. Even though the Dogra ruler in Jammu acceded to India, he initially favoured independence. Jammu's Muslims wanted to join Pakistan while Jammu's Hindus were inclined towards either Indian or Dogra rule. Dogra chauvinism in Jammu persisted, nonetheless. Ladakh remained largely neglected due to its difficult terrain and sparse population, yet its people joined the Indian army in the war against Pakistan of 1947-48. Within Ladakh, its Buddhists and Muslims had distinct political leanings, which are discussed in the later sections.

I also argue that the Dogras built a centralised state, to a large extent. The state was feudal, but also extractive. Taxes were extracted from far off places through an 'inhuman collection machinery' (Fayaz 2019: 1457). For instance, in Ladakh, which was inaccessible from Jammu for better part of winter, taxes were levied on houses, brokers, and monasteries (Cunningham 1970). Trade duties were also levied on imported goods like tea, spices, wool, tobacco (Ali 2022: 145). The taxes were also unequally levied as the peasants of J&K, mostly Kashmiri Muslims, suffered most under the Dogras (Rai 2004: 63; 150-151). The revenue establishment of the Dogras was managed by Kashmiri Pandits. Besides revenue, Pandits managed most of the Dogra administration. The Maharaja of Jammu resided at the apex of the centralised administration. The centralised administration also allowed the Dogra rulers to build their preferential networks with the three regions of J&K.

Essentially, this chapter charts the networks and relations of the three regions with their ruling elites pre-1947, which shaped their post-1947 exchange relations with India. The introductory section provides a brief history of the Dogra rule from 1846-1947. It is a capstone to the key actors and the timeline of events in the 100-year period. It is followed by the section on the people and society of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. The third section elaborates on the extent of Dogras' centralised state. Thereafter, I discuss the political framework of the state- the institutions like Dharmarth Trust, Dogra Sadar Sabha, Muslim Conference and laws like Pratap Code, Ranbir Code, and Hereditary State Subjects Law- through which Dogras built their preferential networks. The final section assesses the relations of the Dogras with the three regions (reciprocal and ambivalent relations with Jammu and Ladakh and extractive relations with Kashmir) where I reiterate the core argument of the chapter.

### **3.1 1846-1947: Jammu Dogras to Kashmiri National Conference**

Gulab Singh (1846-1856) was the founder and first ruler of the Jammu & Kashmir state. The Hindu ruler belonged to the Dogra Rajput ethnic group. Gulab Singh, initially, was the governor of Jammu, under the Sikh Empire of Punjab. In 1839, after a 5-year military campaign, he conquered Ladakh. Kashmir was surrendered by Sikhs to the British in 1846 after the Anglo-Sikh war. Some sources (Jawandha 2010: 63-64) state that Sikhs lost Kashmir due to collusion between the British and Gulab Singh. Afsir Karim's *Kashmir: The Troubled Frontiers* (1994: 14) states that the British lacked financial resources to govern Kashmir from their then capital Calcutta, in east India. Therefore, they sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh for 7,500,000 Nanakshahee Rupees. Hereafter, Gulab Singh and his successors were bestowed with the title of *Maharaja* (emperor). On 16 March 1846, through the Treaty of Amritsar, the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir came into being.

Gulab Singh governed the largest princely state under the British Indian empire, and the two shared cordial relations during his reign. British officers often visited Kashmir and Ladakh for their retreats. They were always hosted by the royal family. Although every princely state had to allow a Resident (liaison between princely state and British) in their territory, J&K was an exception (Sheikh 2010). This cordiality, in early Dogra years, helped Dogras centralise their administration. The Dogras, since Gulab Singh,

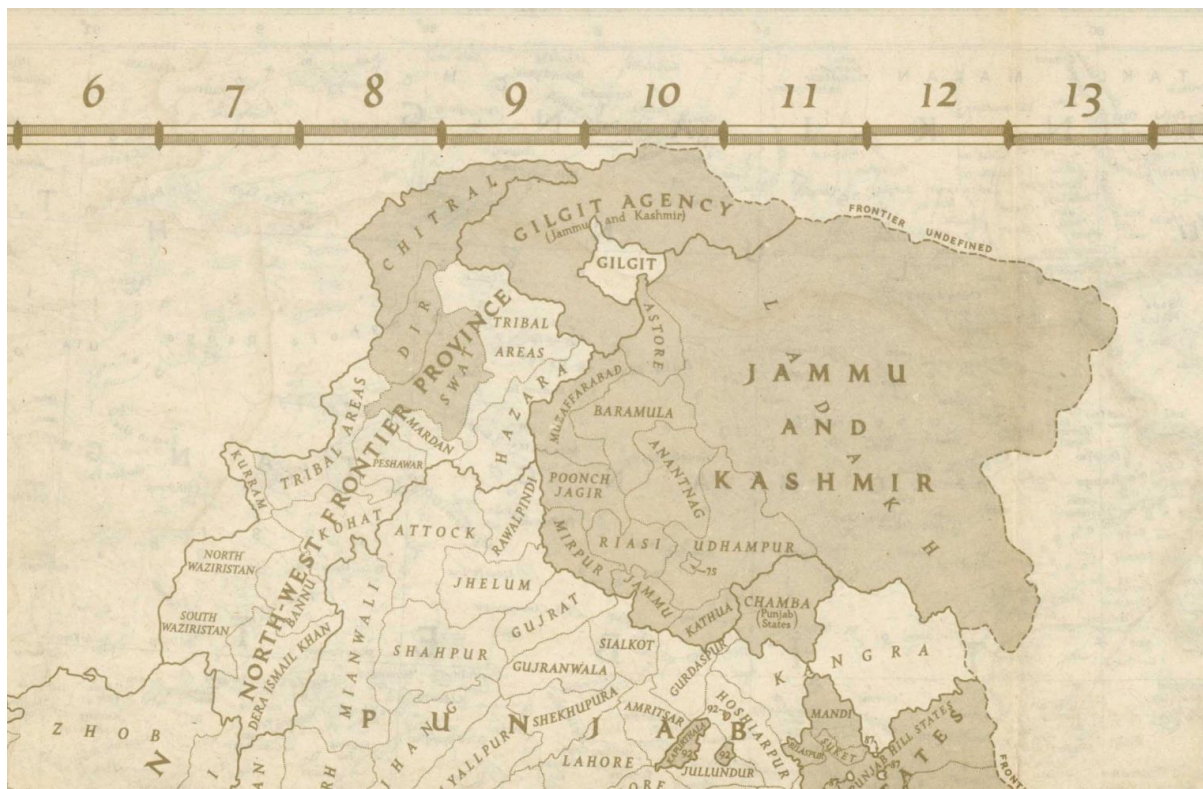
furthered their political legitimacy by creating institutions to oversee Hindu religious activities within the state. They advanced policies favouring the economic growth of Hindus of Kashmir/Jammu. Gulab Singh placed the Dogra ruler at the apex of the political, economic, and religious realms of J&K. They also kept J&K away from any anti-colonial activities in British India.

Dogra-British cordiality suffered under *Maharaja* Ranbir Singh (1856-1885). After the 1857 revolt against the British in their Indian-administered territories, many Indian rebels sought refuge in princely states. Ranbir Singh did not allow Indians to enter the state. However, European children and women fleeing the revolt were allowed (Charak 1985). In lieu of this loyalty, the British broached the Resident question. Ranbir Singh's refusal strained the Dogra-British relations. Their relations suffered further under *Maharaja* Pratap Singh (1885-1925) (Yasin 1984). For instance, the British stripped the *Maharaja* of his title between 1889-1905 on the accusation of conspiring with Russia to overthrow British in India. Although Pratap Singh couldn't lessen the British interventions in J&K, most administrative and developmental work in J&K was done under his reign. This further centralised Dogras' control over the large state.

By 1925, the Dogra state had a distinct polity. The Dogras governed a state of three diverse regions and demographics. Dogras were building contrasting networks with their subjects and regions. When the Indian nationalist movement took form in different corners of British India, J&K was kept away from it. At least until the 1920s. The anti-colonial sentiments were absent in the state largely due to the Dogras' allegiance towards British. They were also absent due to the Dogras' political networks within their territories.

Things changed during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh (1925-1947). Politically and economically marginalized Kashmiris arose in dissent, demanding separation from Dogra rule. The mantle for this Kashmiri nationalism was taken up by Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference (NC) party. With time and Congress support, Kashmiri voices gained prominence, and NC became the de facto representative of the J&K state. For writers, observers, and Dogras, 'Kashmir' was the shorthand for J&K, and it still is. But NC's rise and shift in power from Jammu to Kashmir hardened this nomenclature. Abdullah asserted that the state wouldn't function without the consent

and opinions of Muslims because the ‘Muslims wished ‘the Hindus to have their rights’ but only so long as the Muslims had their own’ (Rai 2004: 279). Yet, for gaining political legitimacy in Kashmir and across the state, Abdullah needed Congress. Similarly, Nehru perceived Abdullah as ‘another priest of (his) secular politics’ (pg. 280) eventually bringing Indian nationalism within Jammu & Kashmir’s borders. Congress was also supported by Hindu Kashmiri Pandits. They were motivated not by the anti-colonial movement but by their perception that Congress would be a ‘Hindu’ alternative to the Muslim politics of Abdullah (Bazaz 1954: 174-175). Sections of Jammu Hindus were also participating in Congress’ mass movements. But Dogras popularity was not displaced in Jammu. Moving beyond this timeline, the following section sheds light on the people and society of the three regions of J&K during the Dogra rule.



Map 6. Jammu & Kashmir Princely State in 1946 (Upadhyaya 2022)

### **3.2 People and Society Under the Dogra Rule**

This section provides a birds-eye view of the people and societies of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh under princely rule. I reiterate the ethnicities, demographics, religion, caste and class divisions, and general economic conditions of the three regions,

discussed previously in Chapter 1. Although this section is written in broad strokes, it contextualises the networks of the Dogra rulers.

### *Jammu*

Pre-independence Jammu region included Jammu city, on the banks of river Tawi and administrative units of Poonch, Udhampur, Kathua, and Reasi (See Map 6). Kotli, Bhimber, and Mirpur were also under the Dogras, but they are now under Pakistan-administered territories. According to the first Indian Census, population of the region was 1,439,543 (Census of India 1891). In Jammu city, for every 10,000 people, there were 6000 Hindus and 3880 Muslims. The rest were Sikhs, Christians, and Jains. But in Jammu region on whole, the Muslim population was around 61% (Census of India 1941). Dogri (54%), Pahari (18.3%) and Gojri (9.5%) were the major languages of Jammu. Dogri-speaking Dogras comprised Jammu's key ethnic group, about 50% of the total population. Although majorly Hindu, Dogras also consist of 15% Muslims in their population (Census of India 1941). The second largest ethnic group in Jammu is of Gujjar Muslims, around 20% of the 4 million J&K population. Like Paharis, Gujjars practice Sunni Islam. Yet, Gujjars have more ethnic, emotional, and cultural affinity with Gujjars (Muslim or Hindu) of the neighbouring Indian states than with Sunni Muslims of Kashmir (Puri 2001: 73). The inhabitants of Jammu division, despite ethnic and communal divisions, shared 'more commonalities among each other than with Kashmiri Muslims or Pandits, despite sharing respective religions with them' (EFSAS 2020).

The following occupational and agricultural structure had ramifications for the whole state, both before and after 1947. Although agriculture (76% of workforce) was the most important occupation in Jammu, people were also involved with production of textiles, sanitary services, commerce, and artistic professions. Most importantly and this is where the ramifications are, the agriculture system was feudal and hierarchical. The *Maharaja* presided at the apex followed by Landlords (*Jagirdars*) and Peasants (*Zamindars*). Under the previous Mughal rule, landowners were mainly Kashmiri and Muslim. Under the Dogras, they were generally non-Kashmiri and Hindu. *Jagirdars* were given the land in lieu of their services to the state. They had to provide military or civil services to the state and collect taxes from the peasants (75% of the revenue

from the produce given to state and 25% left with peasant). Landlords also collected other taxes like the grazing tax, forest revenue, and judicial fines (Naik 2012: 782). The extensive tax system was controlled by the Dogra court in Jammu and managed by the Kashmiri Hindu officials.

The Hindu-centric polity in Jammu began under the Sikh empire. Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh had a Hindu temple's dome painted in gold and got many temples' walls painted with depictions of Hindu epic, *Ramayana* (Seth 1987: 8-37). Gulab Singh continued this patronage towards the Hindu temples and shrines. His successors also introduced the concept of *Mauji* lands. These were the rent-free lands for religious purposes. In Jammu, the Brahmins were the recipients of this land. In Kashmir it was the Sayyid *Maulvis* (Islamic priests) and the Kashmiri Pandits. Through networks with religious elites, the Dogras sought political legitimacy for their rule (Naik 2012: 784).

In this context, Dharmarth Trust occupied an important position in Jammu, during the colonial and post-colonial period. Gulab Singh started the Trust in 1846 as an endowment for the temples and to manage the Hindu affairs of J&K. Ranbir Singh formulated its rules and brought temples from Kashmir and other Indian states within Dharmarth's fold. The Trust became the first social organisation of Jammu region. It oversaw religious practices in the state and provided loans to the state for deliverance of public goods in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dharmarth Trust, and its institutionalization, helped Dogras gain popular religious and political support from Jammu & Kashmiri Hindus. The people of Jammu were also co-opted through another socio-political organization, the Dogra Sadar Sabha. Though it was banned by Hari Singh in 1929 for supporting Congress' anti-colonial movement. Ironically, Congress too did not accept Dogra Sabha's support as the party only wished to endorse Kashmiri organisation (Chaudhary 2023). Thus, under this blanket of religion and politics, Jammu's society was woven.

### *Kashmir*

The demographic division of Kashmir's Hindus and Muslims, and the preferential networks with them, indicate why Kashmir sought independence from the Dogras. Kashmir's population before 1947 was less than Jammu's, with 1,157,394 people in

Kashmir (Census of India 1901). Kashmir valley is comprised of a single ethnolinguistic group: Kashmiris. The overwhelming majority of Kashmiris (93.6%) were Muslim, the rest were Hindus (5.24% Kashmiri), and with small minorities like Sikhs, Buddhists. The key variable of difference in Kashmir was not just religion, but also education. While Kashmir's Muslim population had around 470 literate females, Hindu female literates were 499. This is when the Hindu population share in Kashmir was 524 for every 10,000 and Muslim share was around 9500 (ibid.). The variable of education gave Kashmiri pandits the power within the Dogra administration.

Besides the educational divisions, the religious and occupational divisions of Kashmir also contextualise the emergence of Muslim discontent in Kashmir against Dogras. Until early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Kashmir was Hindu. Due to the proselytising, Kashmiri Muslims inherited the caste and occupational divisions of the Hindus, and many customary laws. It would be fair to say that Kashmiri society, despite proselytization, was culturally homogenous (Puri 2001: 71-72). Both Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims were proud of their shared ancestral past. However, the religious boundaries between Kashmiris were heightened under the Dogras. Caste divisions among Muslims were not as rigid as in Hindus. Yet the rigid occupational divide of Hindu castes affected the Muslims. Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Brahmins are used interchangeably for upper-caste Kashmiri Hindus. The Brahmins are those who conducted religious duties while Pandits were those higher-caste Hindus who shifted to other means of subsistence. Pandits were prevented from manual labour jobs owing to their caste status. Therefore, they relied on the Muslims for provision of essential services like barbers, artisans, washermen, etc. (Rai 2004: 40). Kashmiri Muslims viewed this as a 'traditional economic transaction' (Madan 1972), indicative of vital historical ties between the two communities. This adage of communal harmony prompted Congress to cite Kashmir as prototype for the modern secular Indian state. However, Mridu Rai believes that this was an idealized version of history plausible only in theory (Rai 2004: 40). The severe economic divide between the Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus, and the extractive Kashmiri Muslims-Dogra relations (Section 3.4 and 3.6) supports Rai's claims.

The Kashmiri Muslims are majority Sunni with a small Shia (5%) minority (Census of India 1941). Shias were the manufacturers and traders of Kashmir's shawl industry

while the Sunnis were weavers. This created another layer of economic divide for Kashmiri Muslims (Sunni). Yet the overall trading and manufacturing workers percentage was only 15.4% of the total population. Agriculture was still the major occupation, employing 71% of Kashmiri people (ibid.). Most Kashmiri Muslims were peasants, not landlords.

The economic repression of Kashmiri Muslims was also worsened by Pandits' monopoly in the administrative and agriculture sectors. Higher literacy levels and proximity with the ruling elites favoured the Pandits with jobs in the Dogra administration. With superior employment opportunities, Pandits were economically better off than their Muslim counterparts whether in rural or urban Kashmir. In rural Kashmir, the 2% Hindu population (mostly landowners) was at the apex of the agrarian society. In Srinagar, owing to their employment in the administrative posts, they earned more than the Muslims whilst also enjoying direct linkages with the Dogras rulers of Jammu. The wide economic divide between Kashmiri Muslims and Non-Muslims of the state was, thus, the core characteristic of Kashmiri society.

### *Ladakh*

The Dogra administration was divided into provinces (Jammu & Kashmir) and frontier districts (Ladakh and Gilgit). Ladakh had three administrative divisions: Leh, Kargil, and Skardu (Skardu became a part of Pakistan in 1947). According to 1901 census, the total population of Indian Ladakh (Leh and Kargil) was only 60,500. Another 20,000 people were added to the population by 1941 (Census of India, 1941). These low rates of population increase were due to the natural environment, epidemics, lack of modern medical facilities (Nag 2002). The major occupation of the region was agriculture (94%). However, owing to the high altitude and limited precipitation, the cultivation was confined to summer months in the river valleys. Often, snowfall was relied upon for irrigation. The agricultural yield was, therefore, quite low. Artisanal and commercial workers were only 0.6% and .54% of the total population (Census of India 1901). In contrast to the growing urbanisation of Jammu and Srinagar city, Ladakh's entire population was settled in villages.

At the time of independence, Leh and Kargil were not the cities they are today. The main ethnic group in the Leh area were the Botos, who are mainly Buddhist. They used the Ladakhi or Bodhi language (46,420 speakers in 1941). The Muslims of Ladakh, mostly in Kargil region of today, belonged to Balti, Brogpa, and Purig ethnic groups. Since areas Gilgit-Baltistan and Astore now belong in Pakistan, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number Balti, Shina, and Kashmiri speakers in 1941 Kargil division. Ladakh also has several other tribal groups that are either Buddhist (Garas, Changpas) or Muslim (Argon), or mixed (Brokpas, Bedas) (Jabeen and Dolma 2023: 387-396). For this thesis, the religious and regional composition of Ladakh play a bigger role than the ethnic composition. This is clearer in the next sections and chapters.

Despite agnostic relations between Ladakh and Dogras, why did Ladakh side with India after 1947? The answer, to an extent, lies in religious linkages of Buddhism and Hinduism. Leh is the seat of Buddhism in Ladakh, but its Buddhism also shared some religious affinity with Hinduism. Ladakh's Buddhism was infused with Hinduism's '*Tantrism*'. There has been evidence of representations of Hindu god *Shiva* and goddess *Trilochna* among the Buddhist sects (Census of India 1901: 32). Ladakhi Buddhists drew most of their cultural practices from Tibetan Buddhism. But they also shared some theological practices with Hinduism. These overlaps between Buddhism and Hinduism, presumably oriented Ladakh towards India and Jammu after 1947. Akin to Hinduism, Ladakh Buddhists too have caste and sub-caste divisions. And the society has a hierarchical structure. At the apex of Buddhist society are the priests (*lamas*). The relationship between the lamas and Buddhists is one of extreme devotion and obedience. In some cases, even more than the 'devotion displayed by the Muhammdans towards the propagators of the tenets of their religion' (ibid.).

"The lamas were put at top stratum of society followed by the king and the aristocrats that is the nobility and then the mass of commoners" (Dolma 2018).

The key institution of power within Ladakh were the Buddhist monasteries. The monasteries symbolised religious authority of the lamas and their intimate bearing on the life and culture of Ladakh. During and before the Dogra rule, Monasteries remained a major stakeholder in Ladakh's economy owing to their landholdings (pg. 229-237).

The monastery's lands were tilled by the lamas. The produce of the lands was often sold to Tibet or Central Asia. Donations and alms from the locals, and the interest gained from the money-lending operations constituted the remaining chunk of the monastery income. In their own small way, monasteries created a centralised system of culture and administration in Ladakh. Unsurprisingly, post-1947, the political position of Ladakh regarding India was dictated by a Lama (Chapter 4). He was backed by the monasteries, supported by the Buddhists, and patronized by Nehru. While mostly situated in the Leh region, some monasteries also operated in Kargil.

Kargil is inhabited by Muslims who were proselytized to Islam from Buddhism in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, unlike in Kashmir and Jammu, majority of Kargil Muslims are Shias and they largely shared cordial relations with Kargil's Sunnis (Kaplanian 2025: 152). Muslims practiced intermarriages between Shias and Sunnis (Grist 1998: 138). The differences between the two emerged in the post-colonial period (Chapter 4). However, even in the pre-independence period, Kargil Muslims considered themselves culturally different from the Buddhists, and the Kashmiri Muslims (Grist 1998: 54). Sections of Shias did, however, follow certain practices of their Buddhist ancestors. The importance of village, reverence to the land of Ladakh, and social hierarchy, to name a few (Kaplanian 2025: 152). The absence of Shi'ite schools of theology in Ladakh and India prompted Kargilis to travel to Najaf and Karbala in Iran for theological studies. This increased Kargil's cultural links with Iran although the region is ethnically closer to Leh and Tibet. This gave Ladakh a unique character in the pre-independence period: its people have shared ethnicity, yet Leh practiced Buddhism and was culturally closer to Tibet, and Kargil practiced Islam and was closer to Iran.

### **3.3 Jammu & Kashmir: State's Administrative Character**

Here, I examine the character of the Dogra state. The Dogras established an administratively extensive state that demarcated its population along ethnic lines. Dogras consolidate the power in Jammu. However, their consolidation involved integrating the diverse state without integrating its diversity. Hindus were involved in Dogra administration, but Muslims were excluded. Laws beneficial to Hindus were passed while Muslims were marginalized, even by the British. The British too were

keen to recognise the Hindu character of the state. But as time went on, they attempted to make J&K more representative. However, it was too late.

Wimmer (2018) argues that where centralized states existed before independence, the post-colonial state found it easier to build its exchange networks. However, the Dogra state was not centralised in the way Wimmer argues. He argues that an evenly centralized state ensures political uniformity across regions. In J&K, each region had a different political orientation regarding the ruling elites. Additionally, the legacy of the colonial centralized state ensures that diverse people also speak a common language (pg. 12). In the Dogra state, there never has been a common language or script. Jammu and Ladakh have 3 prominently spoken languages, besides sub-regional dialects. Moreover, Wimmer discusses centralization in pre-colonial states. Whereas in J&K, the colonizers assisted with the Dogra efforts of consolidation of power. I show in the next sections and chapters that Dogra's administrative structure did influence India's post-colonial nation-building, albeit differently.

The Jammu & Kashmir state came into being with the treaty of Amritsar (1846) with the approval of two entities: British East India company and Dogra Gulab Singh (Rai 2004: 18). The Dogras and their meandering collaboration with the British determined the political apparatus of the state. It was a feudal monarchy with the *Maharajas* being the sole decision-makers, with support and interference of the British. The Dogra-British apparatus centralized the state and set in stone the divisions between the three regions and people. There were strong, neutral, and weak networks with Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir respectively. There were also differential levels of patronage, high for Hindus, neutral for Buddhists and extractive relations with Muslims.

Gulab Singh formulated a hierarchical structure of the state with the Jammu *Durbar* (court) at the apex of all economic and religious decision-making. The *Maharaja* presided at the apex of that *Durbar*. The taxation system of the state was dictated by the Maharaja. 'The Dogra state employed its own tax-gathering agency to collect the revenue directly from the cultivators', the largest workforce of J&K (Rai 2004: 150). Enforcing this hierarchy were the Kashmiri Pandits. Pandits, owing to their literacy level, had been indispensable to every past Kashmiri dynasty's administration. This remained unchanged under the Dogras. Simultaneously, Kashmiri Muslims were

under-represented in the Dogra administration. The administrative preferences painted only a partial picture of Dogras' Hindu polity. As Hindu Rajputs, the Dogra kings were perceived as the protectors of the Hindu faith. Their religion and ethnicity legitimized their political position. The British too legitimized the Dogra rule through their support.

"All power located previously in subordinate levels was given up to the maharaja. This was done through the active intervention of the British, who assessed the proper seat of sovereignty to be located exclusively at the pinnacle of the new state, which was the person of the Dogra rule" (pg. 55).

The British also enumerated the religious identifications of J&K in assisting the Dogras. In 1877, when all the princely state monarchs were invited to Delhi, the British spoke highly of the Jammu *Maharaja*. They asserted that the Dogras' Hindu Rajput roots and loyalty towards the crown were reason enough for their legitimate rule over the state (Wheeler 1877: 68). The British implied that a Hindu rule was 'native' to the state, which was earlier ruled by the 'outsider' Muslims. The British singled out 'Kashmiri Muslims' even outside J&K territory. Kashmiris were described as 'foreign vagrants' whenever working in British Indian territories and often also sent back to their 'country' (Rai 2004: 112).

Gulab Singh's successor Ranbir Singh continued the Hindu patronization alongside state centralization. However, he also strained Jammu *Durbar's* relations with the British. He devised the civil and criminal code of J&K which remained in practice until 2019. He created *Ain-i-Dharmarth*, the rules and regulations of the Dharmarth Trust. This organisation was tasked with overseeing the Hindu religious affairs in the state. Ranbir Singh was also given Order of the Star of India in 1862 by the British and his Gun Salute was increased (Schofield 2003: 9). In exchange of their patronage, the British wanted to place their Resident in the state. It is here that ties between Dogras and British were strained. Ranbir Singh vehemently rejected the proposal (Yasin 1984: 22). The British placed their Resident after Ranbir Singh's death in 1885.

During Pratap Singh's reign (1885-1925), the British policy shifted from excluding Muslims to providing them representation. The British urged the *Maharaja* to shed his Rajput identification and adopt a more representative character. The British wished to place their Indian collaborators within the Dogra administration. And it fuelled further marginalization of the Kashmiri Muslims. Pratap Singh, averse to British interventions, often voiced his concern for the Dogras and Pandits losing their administrative hegemony. He brought the 'Pratap Code' in 1894 to give Dogras more access to lands and exemptions from taxation (Rai 2004: 141). These provisions were also extended to Kashmiri Hindus. Again, Kashmiri Muslims were excluded from Dogras' patronage.

Concurrently, Kashmiri Muslims' continued oppression under the Dogras was another reason why the British compelled the *Maharaja* to be more representative. But the decades-old marginalization seemed irreparable. The identities were firmer and political in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Status of Muslims under the Dogra rule was publicized in Punjab's newspapers. Many Indian and British writers of the time criticized the Dogra-British alliance for their religious discrimination. Mishandling of a famine during Ranbir Singh's reign, published in the newspapers owned by Punjabi Muslims, had mainstreamed Kashmiri Muslims' plight to the Indian audience.

"The most serious charge made was that 'in order to save the expense of feeding his people' the maharaja, Ranbir Singh, had preferred to drown boatloads of Muslims in the Wular Lake. The British government had taken these allegations seriously enough to appoint a commission of enquiry, but Kashmiri Muslims had, supposedly, been too frightened to come forward to provide corroboration" (pg.142).

Although these accusations remained unproven, the British were concerned at the potential discontent and mobilization among Muslims. They were apprehensive of any unity between Indian and Kashmiri Muslims. The British rightly prophesized the potential consequences of the continued exclusion of Muslims from the Dogra state-building processes. Kashmiri Muslims turned to National Conference and Congress for support against the Dogras under *Maharaja* Hari Singh's reign (1925-1947).

Hari Singh's reign (1925-1947) was riddled with complex, even paradoxical, political developments. In the First Round Table Conference in London in 1930, he proposed the Indian princely states to join an 'All India Federation' in demanding an equal and respectable place for Indians within the British commonwealth (Singh 2017). He also discussed lowering the Union Jack in J&K. Even though the *Maharaja* spoke in his state's best interests, the British perceived his words to be in support of the Indian nationalist movement. Contrarily, Hari Singh believed that the British would always rule India in some capacity. He therefore kept his distance from the rising Congress nationalism (Singh 1989: 39). Dr Karan Singh, son of Hari Singh and a Congress leader, believes that his father could never grasp the changing political situation- the inevitability of Indian independence or the Congress rule in independent India (Interview 2022). Rather, to remind the British of his support, Hari Singh sent Dogra troops in the second world war to assist the Allies (Kapur 1995: 88). Nevertheless, the long-standing Dogra-British alliance had broken by then. However, their alliance had created a state structure which established clear distinctions and divisions amongst the population.

### **3.4 Dogra's Political Networks**

This section elaborates on the institutional framework of the state (institutions, organisations, and laws) through which the Dogras built their preferential networks. These networks, then, determined the divergent positionalities in J&K vis-à-vis India. I discuss Dogras organisations like Dharmarth Trust and Dogra Sadar Sabha, the networks with the Ladakh Monasteries, and Kashmiri organisations that emerged in opposition to the Dogra rule. These organisations brought Congress' colonial networks to Kashmir. I also elaborate on laws like the Ranbir Penal Code, Pratap Code, Begar Law, and Hereditary State Subject Law which legalized Dogras' contrasting networks. Through this, Dogras established an institutional framework that had strong and reciprocal relations with the Kashmiri Hindus and people of Jammu, agnostic relations with Ladakhis, and extractive relations with Kashmiri Muslims.

#### *Dharmarth Trust*

The Dogras acknowledged the importance of patronising temples to gain political legitimacy (Rai 2004: 109). Mridu Rai asserts that Ranbir Singh used Dharmarth Trust to intricate religion with politics by bringing the Jammu *Durbar* within the private religious practices of the people. By involving state officials to manage Dharmarth's activities, he tied the state with the people through a Hindu thread. Formed under Gulab Singh, Ranbir Singh institutionalized it when he formulated the '*Ain-i-Dharmarth*' (Dharmarth Trust's regulations).

"Ranbir Singh worked towards establishing a fit between the sway of the Hindu religion over which he would preside as chief patron, and the borders of his political dominion, which he would command as Maharaja" (pg. 110).

The *Ain* prescribed the appropriate religious practices in J&K. On paper, it was focused on all religious but reality, it was mostly Hindu practices that were regulated. The Trust was made a state department and placed with a management council. Through this, Ranbir Singh transitioned the Dharmarth Trust from a private fund to a permanent political organization. Ranbir Singh entrusted his family and state officials to help the Trust with the vision to ensure the advancement of Hinduism. State officials volunteered to be a part of the pious department, potential embezzlers were threatened with the curse of religious sin, and Dharmarth officials were instructed to attend the Jammu *Durbar* for six hours a day. This weaved the Dharmarth Trust within the state's institutional framework (Rai 2004: 117). The Trust also weaved itself onto state's economic (section 3.5) and education activities.

"The members of the Dharmarth Trust council were asked to inspect regularly the religious institutions and schools in their charge; supervise the jagirs and land belonging to the trust, as also the income from the trade and business spun off from the capital of the fund" (pg. 117)

Moreover, anyone who wished to build a private temple or carry out a religious ceremony had to seek *Maharaja's* permission. Thus, practice of Hinduism was conditioned upon loyalty to the *Maharaja*. Even though Dharmarth supported certain Sikh and Muslim shrines, regulation of Hindu practices was its primary objective. Dharmarth Trust, in this way became a fully functioning state-backed

organization, with various sources of income. It started as a private trust of Gulab Singh with his 5,00,000 rupees donation in 1846. After the *Ain*'s formulation, temple offerings became its biggest source of income. Collection of revenue from Jagirs (lands owned by the Trust) was also important. This revenue was paid for by people from Jammu & Kashmir alike. Fines were also imposed on cattle owners whose cattle damaged the crops in Dharmarth-owned villages. The trust also relied on rental income from Dharmarth-owned shops. For instance, in their balance sheet of 1897, income from Jagirs was Rs 44,944; interest from government was Rs, 22,850; Receipts from tolls and railways were Rs 40,000; and rent from shops was Rs 7,700; and its total receipts were Rs 133,042. The total value of its assets and investments was close to Rs 1,900,000 in comparison to the debt of Rs 27,992 (Gull and Khan 2023).

The Dharmarth Trust also cemented Jammu's place within J&K as the seat of power. The Dharmarth office, headquartered in Jammu, was visited every month by officials and clergymen from all corners of J&K (Rai 2004: 118). 'In this way, the Dharmarth Trust made possible Ranbir Singh's goal of a religious centre in Jammu coinciding with a political centre and expanding to fill up the territorial outlines of the state' (ibid.). Pratap Singh furthered Jammu's prestige by patronizing the emerging voluntary organizations.

### *Dogra Sadar Sabha*

Pratap Singh's compulsion to be more 'representative' opened a public space where subjects could voice their concerns (pg. 226). Yet this compulsion came from the British who were wary of the growing anti-colonial movements in India. Opening the public space to the state subjects would be a cushion against potential anti-imperialist tendencies in J&K, the British believed. Political organisations were prohibited but socio-religious organizations were not. The emerging voluntary organizations were also directed to be loyal towards the *Maharaja* and the British. It's in this political context that the biggest voluntary organization of Jammu, the Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS), was formed.

The limited opening of the public space and two colleges created political awareness among literate Jammuities. And allowed mushrooming of voluntary organizations. The Arya Samaj, pan-India Hindu organisation, started operations in Jammu by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Anjuman-i-Islamia, pan-India Muslim body, started its Jammu operations in 1915 with Pratap Singh's permission (JETIR 2018: 321). There were also local Jammu organisations inspired by the Arya Samaj's social reform activities in Jammu (Gulzar 2019: 248). In 1904, the Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS) came into being as a social reform organisation for the downtrodden subjects of Jammu. It was formed with Pratap Singh's support. Dogra elites, Jammu Muslim elites, Kashmiri Hindus, and other state officials, were part of this organisation. All asserted loyalty to the Dogra rule. Its members also came from the Dogra community residing in parts of India and present-day Pakistan. Its purpose was to serve as a link between people of Jammu and the ruler and promote Dogra culture. According to its manifesto, DSS promoted social causes like prohibiting juvenile delinquency, supporting girl child education, removing caste discrimination, and encouraging widow remarriage (Dogra Sadar Sabha, Jammu 2022). Yet, under Hari Singh's reign, Dogra Sabha had a difficult relationship with the Jammu *darbar*.

According to Gulchain Charak, president of the DSS, the Dogras were nationalists who were always aligned with India (Interview 2022), despite the Dogra rulers' distance from the anti-colonial movement. Therefore, in 1929, the Sabha, 'in a letter addressed to the All-India Congress Committee, Lahore, declared itself to be the 'Congress Committee of the Jammu & Kashmir State', providing a common platform for 'Hindu and Mohammadan patriots' (Rai 2004: 230). Consequently, DSS was banned for a few years by Hari Singh. But DSS received no support from Congress. Congress intended to only focus on Kashmir (Chaudhary 2023: 72). Meanwhile, DSS was intent on supporting Congress, should it need, for the anti-colonial movement. Charak (Interview) suggested that DSS support to Congress existed parallel to their loyalty to the Dogra rulers, despite differences in their political leanings. He also claimed that Indian attention to Kashmir, at the expense of Kashmir, began in the colonial period itself. However, there is limited written record of DSS activities during that period or anything to suggest if DSS activities in the colonial period made nation-building easier in post-colonial period. The limited record is also indicative of its narrow reach, restricted only to the elites of Hindus and Muslims. Non-elite Jammu Muslims found

representation in *Anjuman-i-Islamia* that advocated educational, economic, and administrative reforms of the Muslims (Ganaie 2015: 296). While Muslim representation in the state administration remained only 15% in 1932 (JETIR 2018: 323), Anjuman's activities heeded results in education sector. Anjuman's engagements with Hari Singh yielded 20% of the Rs 302,918 scholarship fund between 1927-1931 being earmarked for Muslim students (Gupta 2024). Nevertheless, the DSS still remained the more popular Jammu organisation.

### *Administrative Measures under Ranbir Singh*

Ranbir Singh's administrative measures, besides centralizing the state, also made clearer the state's preferred recipients of its networks. Alongside the *Ain-i-Dharmarth*, Ranbir Singh drew up a document called the *Dastur-ul-Amal* which meant 'the will of His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir' (Rai 2004: 114). Formulated in 1882, it asserted the high regard and adherence to the Hindu religion by the Dogras being central to their legitimacy.

"Ranbir Singh went on to devise an intricate framework in which a religious centre in Jammu would correspond with a political centre overseen by the Hindu maharaja and extending to the territorial limits of the Jammu & Kashmir provinces" (pg. 115).

Ranbir Singh's state expansion initiatives invariably involved Kashmiri Hindu leadership. Irked by the tensions between Shias and Sunnis in Srinagar, Ranbir Singh formed the J&K police force (Charak 1985: 62). Equipped with rifles, swords, and sticks, the police stations were set up in towns and cities across the state, with a Kashmiri Pandit as its officer-in-charge (pg. 63). He managed a police force that had 630 Hindus, 744 Muslims, and 292 people from other communities. At the same time, 27 hospitals were set up during Ranbir Singh's reign with 9 in Jammu, 18 in Kashmir and 1 in Ladakh (pg. 65). 'Both Hindu and Muslim attendants were required in hospitals to serve on the patients of the two communities' (ibid.). Indigenous systems of medicine like *Ayurveda* were encouraged, but the allopathic department was headed by a Kashmiri Pandit. Similarly, a Kashmiri Pandit was also put in charge of the finance department of the state in 1869. Ranbir Singh also instituted the practice of moving the Dogra court to Srinagar in the summer months each year to escape the Jammu

heat (pg. 70). The practice helped keeping a close watch on Kashmir's affairs. It also potentially allowed people from the distant regions of Kashmir an easy access to the Dogra court. However, the extent to which the Dogra court was accessible to all people of the state, and not just Hindus, is questionable. Pratap Singh's measures, particularly the codification of laws, sheds a light on this.

### *Pratap Act and Pratap Code*

To summarise the discussion so far, the Dogras centralized their administration, enforced communal boundaries, and built preferential networks with its people and regions. In this process, they influenced the positionalities of the three regions of J&K vis-à-vis Dogras and India. Pratap Singh's two legal measures, Pratap Act and Pratap Code, supplemented these developments.

The legal laws allowed the state to regulate the customary practices of people and reify their communal identities. This was akin to the British enumeration activities in colonial India (Kaviraj 1991). The first ever college graduate from the state, Sant Ram Dogra, was tasked in his capacity as an assistant settlement officer to compile the customary traditions of the people of Kashmir valley, which would be the basis of a unified legal code i.e., Pratap Act. Dogras codified the customs of various tribal communities of Kashmir valley (which were pre-dominantly Muslim) into Hindu and Muslim personal laws. In doing so, the Dogra ruler firmly cemented the communal identities, which were previously fuzzy. People became either Hindu or Muslims rather than Kashmiris who shared common, historical norms and laws. Oral history and perceptions of the time suggest that Ram Dogra intended to make similar codes for Jammu and Ladakh, yet he died before he could take on that initiative (Upadhyaya 2022).

The intention behind such codification was that land rights were governed by local customary laws, which the Dogra state intended to alter. Rai opines that this measure too was preferential in nature (Rai 2004: 141). For instance, Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus had common inheritance laws owing to shared historical customs. However, Kashmiri Muslims were told that the shared laws preceded the period before their conversion from Hinduism, rendering the customary laws inapplicable for them as

Muslims (pg. 177-178). 'In effect, the decisions of the courts consistently informed litigants that, insofar as the state was concerned, they were either Hindu or Muslim and as such governed by their respective religious traditions. That they could be both or neither was no longer a valid position' (ibid.). Moreover, if people wanted a customary law to supersede the codified religious law, they were burdened with proving that the said law was in practice since time immemorial, an arduous task for the people at that time. Another evidence of the preferential treatment was the Pratap Code:

"In 1894, the maharaja and the council inaugurated the 'Pratap Code', this being 'a regulation to ameliorate the condition of the Dogra Rajputs'. Specifically, the code was intended to provide Dogra Raj puts greater access to land, on revenue-free terms for the first five years and at only half the rate subsequently; access to education; exemption of their villages from begar (forced labour), and of their cattle from taxation. Such anxiety for their 'circumstances' was reserved for the Dogras as they were the maharaja's 'brethren'" (pg. 141).

There were further concessions given to the Dogras under Pratap Code. The Dogras were exempted from capital punishment (Pros. October 1890/nos. 176-80, NAI) and Dogra Jagirdars of Kashmir were exempted from obtaining licences for firearms. Kashmiri Hindus were exempted from paying a tax on succession of a Jagir while Kashmiri Muslims were not (Rai 2004: 141). By introducing such laws in the institutional framework of the state, the basis for preferential relations was strengthened by Pratap Singh. It steered Kashmir further away from Dogras, and towards the impending anti-Dogra resistance. Rai opines that Pratap Singh did intend to adopt a more secular and representative character. But in doing so, he also created a permanent institutional wedge between his Kashmiri Muslim and the other subjects (pg. 177-178). These practices ascertained the preferential relations of the Dogras. But no other practice evidenced this more than the system of *Begar*.

### *Begar*

*Begar* was a system of forced and bonded labour. Begar labourers were the foot-soldiers of the centralised Dogra state. It was practiced under the Mughals, Afghans,

and Sikh rule in Kashmir and continued under the Dogras. But the Dogra state had the largest territory among its predecessors with areas as far as Gilgit-Baltistan. Situated over 300 miles away from Srinagar, the state army in the cold and mountainous Gilgit was in constant need of food and supplies. Due to the increased demand for labour, Begar reached its most notorious form under the Dogras. Peasants from Kashmir were employed as porters to carry those supplies on foot (Lone 2012: 861). They were usually unpaid. Sometimes, they were paid in a unit of rice and straw per day for food and making shoes, respectively.

“Every year thousands of coolies would be impressed for the carriage of loads to Gilgit, of whom very few returned to their homes with the result that 'Gilgit' had become almost synonymous with 'terror'...starvation and cholera were not uncommon” (ibid.).

Begar was gradually institutionalized by the Dogra state. Every year when the state capital moved from Jammu to Srinagar and back, Begar porters carried the state supplies and luggage of the administrative officials. Begar labour was also employed on the lands of state officials, by European travellers for carrying their luggage, and as labourers for construction of new buildings. Yet Begar was not evenly applicable upon the state's population. In the uneven application of Begar lies the locus of state's relations with the people. Hindus and Sikhs were exempt from Begar, and the Pratap Code made that official. Kashmiri Pandits, owing to their government positions were not only exempt from Begar but also oversaw the practice as the administrative arm of the Dogra state. Religious figures of Hindus and Muslims were exempted. As were the cultivators on the lands they held. People working on state-granted lands (*Jagirs*) or on the Dharmarth lands were also exempted. Thus, the elites of the state and those in urban centres of Jammu and Srinagar, Hindu or Muslim were free from Begar. The artisans, like the Shawl weavers, were also exempted (Rai 2004: 154). Exemption of the above-mentioned groups implied that the burden of Begar was on the Kashmiri Muslim peasants, the largest chunk of cultivators in the state. ‘Thus, out of a total population of 814,241 (according to census of 1891), 414,241 persons were actually liable for Begar’ (Lone 2012: 863). Making things worse was that Begar was needed most in the summer months when crops had to be sowed. Most cultivators, instead,

worked as bonded labour. It worsened the condition of agriculture in Kashmir, on top of *Jagirdars*' exploitation and heavy taxation.

Begar also strengthened the supremacy of Kashmiri Pandits and the Dharmarth Trust in the Dogra State. The demands for Begar were made through the revenue department of the state which functioned under the Kashmiri Pandits (Rai 2004: 155). 'For Muslim cultivators, freedom from begar was obtained at the cost of reinforcing their dependence on Pandit officials' (ibid.). Cultivators often also left their own lands to work on Begar-free lands, including the Dharmarth lands. Given that most cultivators were Muslims, their work on Dharmarth lands increased the revenue and prestige of the Trust. Muslim cultivators, thus, indirectly contributed towards legitimisation the Hindu polity of the state. Exemption from Begar, however, did not mean an exemption from the state's taxes or unofficial demands of the revenue officials. These demands included giving milk, wool, or other such goods from the produce. For instance, one village paid Rs 1300 per annum to the state, inclusive of a payment to the Dharmarth Trust. Yet above the tax, fees amounting to 30% of the tax (Rs. 410) was also paid to the Pandit officials (Pg. 150).

The construction of roads in Gilgit and Kashmir brought some relief to the Begar labour. For road construction, ponies replaced men to carry the heavy loads (Lone 2012: 866). Pratap Singh also attempted to reform the system by fixing the number of people from each village for Begar. He also fixed a salary of 4 annas per day for the porters (ibid.). There is limited information on the extent of the implementation of the reforms but the religious fault lines due to Begar had been firmly drawn. Muslim elites and Hindu and Sikh populations were spared the burden of forced labour while rural Kashmiri Muslims, laboured under this state-sponsored practice. Begar reinforced the preferential relations within the existing institutional framework run by the Kashmiri Pandit officials. Hari Singh's law on the state subjects was the final nail of division between Kashmiri Muslims and the other state subjects.

### *Hereditary State Subjects Law*

Interestingly, the provisions of this law were such that they would have benefitted all the subjects and regions of the state alike. However, in the end it benefitted Hindus

and Sikhs whilst disadvantaging Muslims. Following the appointment of the British Resident and his Indian collaborators from Punjab in J&K's governing council in 1922, the Dogras and Pandits were wary of the 'outsiders' taking over their jobs. This concern was eventually taken up by the Dogra Sadar Sabha in 1926. The meeting was held in Srinagar. It was attended by two hundred people from Dogra, Pandit, and Kashmiri Muslim communities (Rai 2004: 229). The objective was to highlight the concerns of the 'hereditary subjects' of the *Maharaja's* state. Thus, in January 1927, Hari Singh passed the 'Hereditary State Subjects Law' detailing the civil and political rights for the citizens of the state. The law stated that people settled in J&K before 1885 or before the reign of Gulab Singh were the 'State Subjects' and they were entitled to government positions over outsiders. This law became the basis to define the 'state subjects' under article 370 of the Indian Constitution after 1947. As such, the process of providing special status to Kashmir began in 1927 and culminated with article 370 (Jamwal 1993: 468). Although this law brought Kashmiri Muslim interests into the public sphere, it did not result in any improvement in their position.

For the implementation of this law, Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits joined hands. Yet all that did was strengthen the position of Pandits and Dogras vis-à-vis the Dogra ruler. The dominance of Punjabi Hindus in J&K's administrative posts had increased manifold. Expectedly, Kashmiri Hindus were apprehensive. They demanded a law to protect their interests and included Kashmiri Muslims in their protests. On one instance, a Kashmiri Pandit and a Kashmiri Muslim put posters across Srinagar forbidding Kashmiris to attend an event that had presence of 'Punjabi boys' (Rai 2004: 251). The Kashmiris sought the support of Dogra Sabha. To get all the people of the state in support for their grievances, the DSS even considered changing its name as the word 'Dogra' wasn't representative of the Kashmiris (pg. 229).

Implementation of this law, like others before it, indicated the state's indifference towards Kashmiri Muslims. After passing the law, Hari Singh announced 11 scholarships for Hindus and 1 for Muslims (pg. 256). Muslim representatives in Kashmir and Jammu confronted the *darbar* and then, scholarships were evenly distributed. Scholarships for Muslim students was a long-standing demand. This was raised not just from within the state but outside as well. Conferences held in Rangoon and Lahore during Pratap Singh's reign demanded from the *Maharaja* an increase in

number of Muslim schools, Muslim teachers, scholarships for Muslims, and more employment for Muslims in the Jammu *Durbar* (pg. 255). Pratap Singh argued that he provided equal opportunities for all but Muslims could not make use of these opportunities due to their poor literacy level for which they had themselves to blame. In 1924, Muslim elites also complained to the British viceroy of India demanding better jobs and educational facilities from the *Maharaja*. Fearing Muslim mobilization, Hari Singh, when he came to power, accepted their demands. He acknowledged that Kashmiri Muslims too were the 'hereditary subjects.'

However, Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits became the key beneficiaries of the Hereditary law owing to their literacy and proximity to the Maharaja. Muslim elite, meanwhile, 'demanded that if enough educated Muslim candidates with requisite qualifications were not available from within the state the opportunity should be made available to Muslims from other provinces. Their demand was not acceptable to the young *Maharaja* because he believed that his subjects should have a preference over the outsiders' (Jamwal 1993: 468). But Hari Singh, still accepted certain demands on occasion. Muslim elites in Jammu were promised 50% of administrative positions and in Srinagar, for certain posts, only Muslim candidates were considered (Rai 2004: 256). The surge in Kashmiri Muslim demands and mobilizations did not sit well with the Pandits. And the pre-hereditary law cordial alliance between Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims suffered. Jammu's Muslims, meanwhile, were in a better position than Kashmiri Muslims. The secretary of the Dogra Sadar Sabha wrote to the British to help secure more jobs for Jammu's Hindus and Muslims (File No. 518/P/1936, NAI), in light of increasing Kashmiri Muslim demands. The Kashmiri Muslim demands were a consequence of their disadvantageous position within the Jammu & Kashmir state. Given the decades of marginalization, the Kashmiri mobilization was inevitable. Eventually, the Kashmiri Muslim mobilization was organized under the aegis of Muslim Conference. In the meantime, according to Rai, the Pandit community felt threatened by the rise of Muslim 'communal' mobilizations.

"Confronted for the first time with an assertive Muslim population mobilizing for a share of the same pie, the comfortable adherence by the Pandits to a common

regional cause evaporated and they began to speak increasingly in the language of an endangered religious minority” (Rai 2004: 257).

### *Muslim/National Conference*

The Kashmiri Muslims were at the bottom of the economic and political hierarchy of the Dogra state. They suffered under the demands of the Begar system but were also largely excluded from the benefits of administrative employment. From the 1900s onwards, Kashmiri Muslims demanded more positions in administration, better economic and education opportunities, and exemption from Begar. By the 1930s, their demands were mobilized by Kashmiri Muslim graduates from Indian Universities. Sheikh Abdullah was one of them. Abdullah and his friends became part of the Reading Room Party in Srinagar which demanded socio-economic upliftment of Kashmiri Muslims. The party was neither political nor communal but was predictably perceived as such due to the prevailing circumstances- Kashmiri Muslims against Hindu ruler. Since the Dogras politicized the religious identities of J&K, resistance to their hegemony would also be of religious nature (Rai 2004: 9). Rai argues that Kashmiri Muslims could not turn to their state for their demands. They could only turn to their religion. Thus, both Dogra administration and resistance to their rule was infused with religion.

The resistance against the Dogras in Kashmir began after 1930 through Kashmiri organisations. Initially, the reading room party was led by educated Muslim elites. But its support increased among the non-elites after the communal developments of 1931. In response to rumours that Dogras were insulting Muslims in Jammu, a Kashmiri Muslim made a speech ‘to kill Hindus and burn their temples’ (Rai 2004: 259). The Kashmiri Muslim was arrested and Srinagar witnessed attacks on Kashmiri Hindus by the Muslims. On 13 July 1931, a large crowd gathered in the individual’s support outside Srinagar’s central jail. The Dogra police fired on the crowd. Twenty-two people and one policeman was killed in that violence. When Hindu shops were burnt and looted in retaliation, the Muslim elites assured Hari Singh of their loyalty. However, the British warned him of the threat of non-elite Muslims (pg. 259). The news of 13 July reached rest of India, and Congress politicians and Indian Muslims took note of the developments in Kashmir. Muslim organizations of Punjab wrote in the press about

the conditions of Kashmiri Muslims under the Dogras. Kashmiri Muslims also received support from the Muslim members of Congress. These powerful organisations took note of the incident and suddenly 'the plight of Kashmiri Muslims under a Hindu ruler supported by the colonial government became the focal point of their propaganda' (pg. 262).

Under these communally charged circumstances, the Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference was formed by Sheikh Abdullah and Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas in 1932. Gradually, Abdullah became an established politician of J&K. Hari Singh instituted *Praja Parishad*, a legislative assembly, in 1934, to add a democratic layer to the state's polity. Abdullah's venture into the electoral politics further elevated his popularity within the state, and outside the state. In the first elections of the Praja Parishad, National Conference won 16 of the 33 elected member seats (Dalal 1935: 137-147). Dogra Sadar Sabha supported group won 13 seats, while no election was held in Ladakh or Gilgit.

Abdullah's increasing popularity meant that he eventually met Jawaharlal Nehru in 1937. The meeting with Nehru coincided with Abdullah's changing political orientation. He spoke not just about Kashmiri Muslims but all state subjects. He even changed Muslim Conference's name to National Conference to project his representative outlook. Two facets of Kashmiri politics influenced this change. The first one was the emergence of the left-leaning associations in Kashmir. Multiple trade associations of Kashmir impressed upon Abdullah the importance of the politics of peasants and artisans. Second, he understood that to gain political legitimacy above the Dogras and beyond Kashmir, he must adopt a more secular and representative approach. His aide, socialist Prem Nath Bazaz also influenced Abdullah to adopt a more progressive, secular outlook. Abdullah was aware that his politics must be inclusive of all J&K people, not just Kashmiri Muslims (Dar 2023; Khattar 2025). Soon, he gained support of the Jammu Muslims. Gulchain Charak, head of the DSS, recalled that in Jammu, the Hindu Dogras felt betrayed by the Muslim Dogras when the latter protested with the slogan '*Kashmir Hamara Hai*' (Kashmir is Ours, of Muslims) (Interview 2023). Abdullah also engaged with the Kashmiri Pandits. Abdullah reminded Pandits that they were Kashmiris first, Hindus later. He started a newspaper with his Kashmiri Pandit friend, Prem Nath Bazaz. Gradually, Abdullah overtook the *Maharaja*

in terms of popularity in J&K (Rai 2004: 275). Yet there was also an unmistakable rift between Pandits and Muslims that had ramifications for the next decades.

The relations between Pandits and Muslim elites were disrupted when both began to claim the 'minority' status in Kashmiri politics (pg. 276). Pandits argued that they were the demographic minority. Pandit population was 5% of total J&K population (Census of India 1941). Abdullah argued that it was the Muslims' treatment under the Hindu rulers that should grant them a minority standing. Pandits appealed to the Hindus of the British India to pay heed to their situation. Abdullah argued that they would anyway enjoy the patronage of Jawaharlal Nehru who belonged to a Pandit family (ibid.), even though Nehru and Abdullah had a cordial alliance. In the valley, Abdullah positioned himself as a leader of Muslims fighting for independence against the Hindu Maharaja (Karim 1994: 64). But for Nehru and India, he was a secular nationalist aligned with the Indian freedom movement.

Sensing Abdullah's rise, his friend Bazaz wrote to Nehru in June 1936 (Bakshi 1996: 187). Bazaz was a prominent socialist and vocal critic of Dogras' autocratic rule and sought a democratically governed Kashmir state. Yet he was also averse to Abdullah's politics and prophesized that with the Muslim mobilization in Kashmir, the state would become '*Musalaman*' (Islamic). He feared the continuance of non-secular governance of Kashmir. Nehru responded by suggesting that the developments in Kashmir must be viewed through its alignment with the broader Indian struggle and 'not be overwhelmed by the petty happenings that seem so big today' (pg. 188-192). Nehru argued that the communal issue was a mere passing phenomenon and that the Pandits should not adopt policies that will 'irritate the vast majority of the state'. He concluded that no special protection will be given to the Pandits. Nehru urged the Pandits to work in alliance with the Muslim majority of Kashmir for they would eventually govern state's polity.

Thereafter, Abdullah presented a secular stance for Indian Nationalists and a Muslim for Kashmiris. However, this position requires some clarification. Abdullah's politics must not be construed as if Abdullah wanted Kashmir's complete independence. Abdullah was inclined towards India more than Islamic Pakistan. But he also wanted to preserve the Kashmiri Muslim identity from any outside interference, hence he

spoke to the Muslims in Kashmir and nationalists in India. Kashmiri Muslims were distinct from the Indian Muslims. The Kashmiri Muslim identity was a melting pot of Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions. Kashmir's geographical disconnect from the rest of the world also preserved a strong Kashmiri identity. 'It was the vitality of Kashmiri identity due to which the Kashmiri Muslims did not submerge in the mainstream of Muslim politics before the Partition of India' (Puri 2001: 72). Simultaneously, 'it was due to a better appreciation of the Kashmiri urges by Gandhi and Nehru than by Jinnah and the Muslim League leadership in 1947 that the Kashmiri Muslims opted for India' (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Abdullah's orientation towards India was not unanimous among all NC members. Many Muslim leaders of National Conference broke away from the party, harboured pro-Pakistan sentiments, and welcomed Mohammad Ali Jinnah to Kashmir in 1944. Abdullah continued his alliance with Congress. Akin to Congress' 'Quit India' movement against the British, Abdullah launched the 'Quit Kashmir' Movement against the *Maharaja* on 20 May 1946, for which he was imprisoned. Here, it is important to mention the characteristics of Kashmiri Nationalism that made it different from Indian nationalism. Indian Nationalism was a political movement against colonialism built upon recognition of plurality and aim of an independent democratic nation-state. Kashmiri nationalism emerged from the confluence of incredible poverty, repressive relations with the state, and religious revivalism. Though Indian nationalism too had religious movements in its ambit, it was relatively more pluralist than Kashmiri nationalism.

Thus, after 1930, National Conference and Sheikh Abdullah were introduced to J&K's institutional framework. Eventually, the Dogra rule in Jammu was challenged and replaced by National Conference rule in Srinagar after India's independence in 1947. The transition from Dogras to NC happened in under two decades. The cause of this quick transition was the absence of political networks connecting Kashmiri Muslims with the Dogras. The NC filled the political void left after disenfranchisement of the Kashmiri Muslims by the Dogras. The networks connecting the Dogras to the Ladakh were also very thin, however for reasons discussed below, Ladakh's political trajectory has been very different.

### *Dogra Administration in Ladakh*

This section highlights the agnostic relations between Ladakh and the Dogras. But one must also account for the demography and climate of the region, which prevented Kashmir-like mobilizations in Ladakh, and which kept Ladakh largely non-political in the colonial period. It is also important to note that until the Dogra invasion, Ladakh was much more closely connected to Tibet and Central Asia. The Dogra period however, ‘bound the region once and for all to a South Asian polity’ (Dolma 2018). The region of Ladakh was governed by a *Wazir* based in Jammu and his subordinate who lived in Leh, and they directly reported to the *Maharaja*. Under them were 5 officials governing 5 districts of Ladakh: Kargil, Drass, Suru, Nubra, and Leh (Ali 2022: 139). These officials dealt with matters of administration and taxation. The taxation system under the Dogras was like one followed by the previous rulers. About 18,000 houses in Ladakh were taxed, as were the brokers who dealt with transactions involving any trade passing through Ladakh. While the gross revenue from Ladakh during the previous rule was around Rs 58,700, it increased to 80,000 during the Dogra rule. This was due to inclusion of the previous rulers’ royal village also included in tax-paying households. Monasteries were also included, which were earlier exempted from paying taxes.

Taxation of monasteries was initially perceived as encroachment upon the Buddhist practices of Ladakh, which is significant in a deeply religious society. The Monasteries/*Gompas* served the religious needs of people, as well as their economic needs. In addition to providing Buddhist education to monks/*Lamas* of all ages, they also cater to the socio-cultural practices of the people. Monks from monasteries ‘are invited by individual families and also to villages for village ceremonies and the recitation of important Buddhist texts’ in exchange for food and money (Dolma 2018). Interaction with *Lamas* is, thus, the bedrock of every societal function in Ladakh. They are religious figures, teachers, physicians, and astrologers for the Ladakhis. On the occasion of birth, marriage, death, and everything in between, the *lamas* perform the necessary rituals.

Taxation aside, there were also other engagements between the Dogras and monasteries. Despite Dogra rule, monasteries’ influence in Ladakh remained

unchanged as they controlled much of the fertile land of the region. An arrangement with Jammu was made where only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the produce was paid as tax, much lower than in other regions (Ali 2022: 139). When in 1890s this tax was proposed to be increased, Ladakh resisted. The largest monastery, Hemis, reached an agreement with the Dogra ruler after promising a regular supply of produce. The monastery also permitted stationing a Dogra guard in Hemis premises. Moreover, the tenants of the monastery lands were exempted from Begar.

However, since Begar was not uniformly abolished, it still did affect Ladakhis. 'Gulab Singh government used the Begar system to gain more economic gains and oppressed the people...' (Dolma 2018). The British Resident too insisted that since it was in practice during all the previous regimes, its complete eradication was difficult. Hence, every village on the road between Srinagar and Leh had to provide men, ponies, and supplies for the state and British officials. The policy was altered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century under Pratap Singh. The policy stated that Begar would be retained, but that the labour shall be paid a fixed salary. Furthermore, labour through Begar was also considered as a form of tax, along with the monetary payments to the state.

In the early years of the Dogra rule, the taxes levied on Ladakh were extreme. This forced some Ladakhis to flee to Baltistan and Lahul in Himachal Pradesh, India (Ali 2022: 140). The manner of collection of taxes was also harsh. The tax officials did not pay for the food, commodities, or carriages, on their travels to the various villages of Ladakh. The taxation rates increased most under Pratap Singh when a grazing tax was imposed on sheep and goats. This led to reduced domestication of animals and loss of livestock. The grazing tax was eventually abolished in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (pg. 141). Taxes were also imposed on food items and such necessities like wood, wheat, and butter where a certain amount of these goods had to be paid annually to the state.

The discussion so far has been about the Buddhist society of Ladakh, without an acknowledgement of Kargil and its Shia Muslims. Exclusion of Kargil from Ladakh's pre-1947 literature has been a persistent issue of Ladakhi scholarship. For instance, a paper titled 'Ladakh Under Dogra Administration' mentioned Kargil only 8 times (Mehdi 2025). Another similar paper discussed here mentions Kargil only 3 times (Ali

2022). Even scholars focussed on contemporary Ladakh have shown a Leh-centric tilt (Van Beek 1999;2004; Aggarwal 2004). While this does not excuse a discussion on Kargil under the Dogra rule, the available literature provides little of relevance to the thesis. A British administrator wrote that Begar made upper class Muslims intolerant and the lower class unprincipled (Moorcroft 1841: 43-44). This judgement is also given by another European who compared 'wretched' Kargil Muslims to 'happy' Buddhists (Dainelli 1933: 248). What can be drawn from their ethnographic accounts is that Begar imposed severe hardships upon the 27,000 people of Kargil in 1911 (Rather 2018). Until the compulsory education programme of Hari Singh in 1940, Kargil had no school. By 1947, only 8 primary schools were active in Kargil. Except the Drass area of Kargil that has Sunni Muslims, most Kargilis are followers of Twelver Shi'ism. Shia Islam spread in Kargil most recently since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kargilis travelled to and from Iraq and Iran for theological studies and preaching (Gupta 2014). More is said on Kargil and in the next chapters. What is important to note from this period is that Kargil remained an oppressed region under the Dogras, culturally and religiously distinct from Leh and Kashmir.

Thus, the strong centralised Dogra state took control of the strategic and diverse region of Ladakh. The state built largely agnostic relations with Leh and oppressive relations with Kargil. But owing to their topography and sparse demography, Ladakhis were confined to their political realities. Ladakhi trade also suffered under the Dogras. For centuries, trade between India and central Asia passed through Ladakh. Its capital Leh was the terminus for caravans from both regions (Pandit 1997: 82). The Dogras understood its significance and put its people and trade under heavy taxation to supplement the state coffers in Jammu. However, the heavy taxation and absence of any significant public goods still did not push Ladakhis towards opposing Dogra rule, like the Kashmiris. I explain this positionality in the following section.

### **3.5 Reciprocal and Neutral Networks: Jammu and Ladakh**

Why is it that Jammu and Ladakh, two regions with no cultural or linguistic similarities, were relatively more integrated with the Dogra state? Much more compared to Kashmir, that sought ties with National Conference and Congress. The answer lies in the Dogra networks with Jammu and Ladakh. Due to relatively strong networks with

Jammu, the region leaned towards the Dogra rule comparatively more than the developing Indian nationalism. Jammu benefitted from preferential laws, development of its economy, exemption from Begar, and support to its organisations. Ladakh, particularly its Buddhist caveat, was oppressed under the Dogras' Begar and taxation policies. However, concessions to Monasteries and religious linkages with Hinduism, made it easier to form connections with the Dogras. Conversely, Ladakh was more indifferent towards Kashmir, as I'll show in the next chapter. The Monasteries meanwhile, that were the centre of religious, social and economic life were able to negotiate certain concessions from the Dogras. They were also the key agents of mobilizing people- so if the monasteries did not intend to protest against the Dogras, there would be no protest. Furthermore, this was a sparsely populated and geographically extreme region which prevented organisation of anti-Dogra resistance. Therefore, despite limited networks, Ladakh did not become a site of resistance. Patronage to Jammu's organisations and development works in Jammu, along with Hindu Dogra chauvinism, encouraged Jammu-Dogra ties.

### *Jammu*

Hindus and Muslims in Jammu benefitted from it being the state's political and religious centre. They were the recipients of state's development activities. They were employed with the Dogra army. They enjoyed religious and political patronage through institutionalization of Dharmarth trust and Dogra Sadar Sabha and other voluntary organizations. The Hindu orientation of the Dogra state also assisted its engagement with Jammu people, particularly the Hindus. The position of Dharmarth Trust in Jammu's society furthered the networks between the state and Hindus. By formulating the *Ain-i-Dharmarth*, the Hindu-centric trust wasn't just institutionalized but also became the provider of public goods in Jammu. The patronage of Hinduism increased construction activities within the state which generated employment opportunities for people. *Ain* directed the state to construct at least one well, stepwell, or temple each year (Rai 2004: 118). This was followed by a directive to construct and refurbish new and old temples throughout the state. Consequently, pre-Dogra rule temples were included in the Dharmarth's fold, and temples were constructed in Kashmir.

The Dharmarth Trust also involved itself with other public goods expenditures in the state. The benefits of these expenditures yielded Jammu's loyalty towards the Dogras. Dogra rule coincided with the spread of railways in India. Following that, Pratap Singh started construction of a railway line from Jammu to Sialkot (present Pakistan). For the 16 miles of railway line in the state's territory, Dharmarth Trust loaned Rs 1,285,000 for its construction at a 3.5% interest rate to the state (Wani 2017: 573). The loan was settled with the Trust in 1890 after the construction was completed. The above amount was also used to build a suspension bridge over Tawi river in Jammu in 1889. Dharmarth was also allowed to collect tolls from Tawi bridge (Gull and Khan 2023). The toll collections were later directed towards state revenue. Similarly, Dharmarth granted a loan of 750,000 for road construction in 1902. In 1917, Dharmarth also lent an amount of 70,000 at 5.5% interest rate to the state's public works department for expenditure on public utility works (ibid.). The state often turned to Dharmarth as the latter gave better interest rates than open market. The Trust also received large returns on its investments. Dharmarth's financing of public expenditure increased its prestige among Jammuites. Dharmarth also increased its prestige through grants and charities. It gave special '*Mukarraries*' grants to the Hindu and Muslim clergy. These were either in cash or in form of land grants.

Associating temple lands with Dharmarth also proved an economically viable endeavour. The lands attached to the temples were prevented from taxation, allowing the Jagirdars and the peasants more revenue from their produce. The temples also contributed to the local economy. For instance, the Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra provided employment for pony riders, water carriers, suppliers of ritual goods, among others (Wani 2017: 572). Moreover, people in the surrounding villagers opened their houses for the pilgrims in exchange of money and gifts, eventually constituting a paying guest system. Likewise, Dharmarth's maintenance, and regulation of temples provided employment to priests, accountants, cleaners, sweepers, gardeners, cooks, etc.

Where Dogras gained recognition from the Hindus due to Dharmarth Trust and its role in political economy of Jammu, the Muslims benefitted from employment in the state army. Although Kashmiris were prevented from joining the army, Jammu Muslims

were not (Rai 2004: 266). Kashmiri Muslims often believed that Jammu Muslims were better positioned than them. Unlike Kashmiri Muslims, Jammu Muslims were also employed in state administration (ibid.). Interestingly, Jammu Muslims and Kashmir Muslims, until the rise of National Conference, 'did not like each other' and their differences were evident (ibid.). Jammu Muslims also benefitted from the rise of voluntary organizations in the region. Most important among them was the *Anjum-i-Islamia*. They were also represented in the Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS). DSS was formed as an amalgamation of multiple organizations in Jammu to voice the region's concerns and promote its culture. Like Dharmarth Trust, the DSS also participated in the deliverance of public goods. One of the first hydro projects in the state, Ranbir Canal Hydro project (between 1903-1911), was done through contributions of the DSS, followed by construction of a bridge in Akhnoor, and support to the *Praja Sabha*, the Legislative Assembly of the Dogra state (Interview 2023).

Ranbir Singh's (1856-1885) administrative measures and the codification of laws under Pratap Singh (1885-1925) also improved the economic condition of the people of Jammu, compared to Kashmir. Ranbir Singh allowed more employment opportunities within the state's administration. Pratap Singh helped Hindus and sections of Muslims through reduction in taxes, exemption from Begar, and recognition of personal religious laws. With many Jagirs and Dharmarth lands in Jammu, Muslims worked on these lands and got exemption from Begar. The elite Muslims also benefitted from the Hereditary Law as their stronghold in the state administration was strengthened, for which they asserted loyalty to Hari Singh over National Conference.

That Jammu Muslims shared stronger ties with the Dogras than Kashmiri Muslims was down to their position under the Dogra rule. This was also remarked upon by the president of Muslim League in Jammu (Interview, 2023). Consequently, large sections of Jammu enjoyed strong and reciprocal relations with the Dogras. The Dogras looked after Jammu's needs and the people reciprocated with their loyalty to the princely rule. Consequently, they had little inclination towards Congress-led Indian nationalism. Exceptions, like DSS supporting Congress, persisted. Yet the Dogras remained more popular in Jammu than any other J&K or Indian organisation.

## *Ladakh*

While Jammu & Kashmir were on the extreme ends of Dogra networks, Ladakh was in the middle. This was also down to Ladakh's topography and sparse demography. Ladakh received both harsh taxation and occasional economic and political concessions from the Dogra state. The concessions, however, did little to change the economic miseries of Ladakh. But they were enough to prevent Ladakh from going down Kashmir's trajectory. Moreover, as I'll show in the next chapter, the leaders of Ladakh often invoked the Dogra rule and their relations with Jammu as the reason for remaining with India after 1947. The Dogra rule was also invoked when Ladakhi elites demanded separation from Kashmir. In this section, I'll discuss the limited networks between the Dogras and Ladakhis. These networks, however, were established mostly in response to or as a concession considering the generally exploitative system of Dogras in Ladakh. The limited deliverance of public goods and support to the Monasteries kept Ladakh from turning against Dogras, like Kashmir. This became the base from which India pursued its nation-building in the region post-1947.

Networks between Ladakh and Dogras began in 1830s itself. After the invasion of Ladakh, 800 soldiers were stationed in the region. Once the resistance to the Dogra rule ended, most troops were withdrawn (Stava 2023). By 1889, of the remaining soldiers of the Dogra army in Ladakh, 80 were Ladakhi. The nobles of the earlier regime were also kept in the Dogra administration, as part of the Dogra rulers' 'political-strategic measures' (Ali 2022: 135). The rebel nobles were taken to Jammu to facilitate a peace agreement. Jammu also took a close interest in Ladakh affairs. With the governance of the region directly through a *wazir* in Jammu, it brought the two regions in close administrative contact. While monasteries continued to pay taxes, they also enjoyed certain privileges. For instance, Hemis Monastery, the largest in Ladakh, was made responsible for the revenue administration of the region (ibid.). Workers on Hemis land were also exempted from taxation and Begar. But all other monasteries had to pay the taxes.

The taxation policies were both harsh and equitable which prompted Ladakh's ambivalence towards Dogras. Taxes were collected through land revenues, custom duties, and animal tax (Stava 2023: 19). The taxes were so harsh that two British

travellers in 1885 found many houses in Ladakh deserted by people who fled to neighbouring regions (ibid.). This was after the increase in total land revenue from Ladakh: from Rs, 32,000 to 50,000 in 1881. By 1911, the land revenue from Ladakh increased to Rs, 152, 621 (Sheikh 1999: 341). Moreover, the farmers were also consistently in debt and had to pay an interest rate ranging from 6% to 50% (pg. 345). Observers have also written that the fear of Dogra tax officials was so high that the villagers feared even random strangers (pg. 342).

Simultaneously, the Dogras also provided certain economic reliefs to the people. The taxes mostly affected the upper classes of Ladakh while the lower classes were marginally better-off. Under the previous rule, lower classes paid certain duties to upper classes and state officials. Under the Dogra rule, these duties were abolished. The upper classes and officials were stripped off their power and benefits. Consequently, despite increased income tax, abolished duties ensured that the lower classes were paying less than before to the state (Ali 2022: 140). The Dogra rulers also adopted a proportionate income tax system. Gulab Singh categorized the peasants- rich, medium, and poor- and they were taxed according to the land they owned. Even when taxes increased under his successors, the richer farmers remained most affected. On occasion, the poor farmers were absolved from taxes in lieu of Begar. In places where Begar was practiced, a system of loans was introduced (pg. 144). For instance, on the road from Leh to Srinagar, which passed through Kargil, people had to provide supplies and animals for the travellers. When Kargilis raised grievances in 1910 that not all people possessed ponies, loans were given by the state to buy them. Some Dogra officials also were praised by the locals for building settlements for the homeless people and building resthouses for the ponies (Sheikh 1999: 344). The Dogra state, to encourage trade through Ladakh, also abolished custom duties and import duties until 1885 (Ali 2022: 145-147).

The duality of harsh taxations and economic concessions was also evident in the sphere of trade. Ladakh, being an important trade transit point, witnessed caravans from Kashmir, Punjab, China, Tibet, and Turkmenistan passing through (File No. 9-11, NAI; File No. 44-47, NAI). Gulab Singh imposed trade duties on all goods passing through the region. Yet, when the officials charged more than stipulated, Ranbir Singh and the British fixed the trade duty at 5% (pg. 146). Moreover, after 1870, all taxes on

import through or in Ladakh was abolished along with export duty on Kashmiri Shawl. This encouraged the trans-Himalayan trade, and an office was set-up in Leh to oversee the process. Ladakh, that shared cultural and religious ties with Tibet, gradually formed political ties with the Dogra state in Jammu. The general economic condition of Ladakh was from being at par with Jammu. Yet the fruit of the limited relations between the two regions was borne in the post-colonial period. Kashmir, meanwhile, was deprived of even the limited concessions and networks that Ladakh enjoyed.

### **3.6 Extractive and Non-Reciprocal Networks: Kashmir**

Wimmer suggests that if a strong centralised state exists before independence, its capacity to deliver public goods after independence increases (2018: 32). But its flip side is that a strong centralized state, such as the Dogra state of J&K, also possesses the capability to withhold public goods and build extractive networks with its people. The centralised Dogra state developed an institutional framework that was tilted towards Jammu and somewhat for Ladakh, at the expense of Kashmir. The region paid the highest tax within the state without any significant public goods or institutional support in return. Rather the condition of Kashmiri Muslims worsened through exploitative laws, poor agriculture conditions, and Begar. Resistance against the Dogras by Kashmiri Muslims was inevitable. This was led by National Conference. In the process, the NC was co-opted by Congress-led Indian nationalist movement. Kashmir turned towards the Indian state, away from the Dogra state. Thus, except for Kashmiri Muslim elite, there were mostly extractive and non-reciprocal networks between the Dogras and Kashmiri Muslims.

Peasants formed the bulk of Kashmiri society under the Dogra ruler. Almost all Kashmiris (80 per cent) lived in the rural areas, and almost all were illiterate. Agriculture was the mainstay of the Kashmiri economy. Peasants or *Zamindars* were responsible for providing food to the non-agricultural population, people of Srinagar, and the royal family, on top of feeding themselves. During the six months of severe winter, many peasants found it difficult to sustain themselves and depended on coarse rice and aquatic products (Naik 2012: 786). During this period, they often migrated to

Punjab and Jammu for work. Or turned to pottery making, sheep rearing, cloth weaving etc. Heavy taxation and presence of *Jagirdars* or landlords worsened their condition.

The *Jagirdars*, generally Hindus or elite Muslims, enjoyed more privileges than the peasants. While in theory, the tax was set at collecting half of the produce, often three quarters of the produce was collected from the peasants. 'In several cases Jagirdars realized revenue in grain at a very low commutation rate which was 25% of the market rate in a normal year' (pg. 782). *Jagirdars* also employed intermediaries for revenue collection who exploited the peasants. 'Besides the legal taxes, the peasant in Kashmir had to pay additional share on one pretext or another...Moreover, the magnitude of taxation was such that even sometimes the actual village assets fell short of fulfilling their revenue liabilities. The liabilities were met from other assets than those of crops. Sheep were sold, blankets were sent to the city, and villagers tried to earn money by selling wood and grass and carrying loads' (pg. 787). Thus, Kashmiri Muslims paid the most amount of taxes with little or no improvement in their status over the course of the Dogra rule. The Dogra state couldn't help Kashmir even during the famine of 1877-9.

A note on the handling of famine indicates the extent of extractive relations between Dogras and Kashmiris. According to some estimates, the population of Srinagar was halved during the famine. 'The famine had brought to light the inadequacy of the protection afforded to Kashmiri cultivators by the agrarian arrangements of the Dogra state...substantial quantities of rice could have been salvaged and the staggering loss of life averted if cultivators had been permitted to cut their crop before the start of the rains that destroyed the autumn harvest of 1877' (Rai 2004: 149). The situation was worsened when the number of Kashmiri cultivators who were in debt increased, and they fled Kashmir to escape the Kashmiri Pandits officials. The captured fugitives were forced to cultivate the land (pg. 172). At the same time, the lands that were left fallow or abandoned by Kashmiri Muslims who fled to Punjab, were taken over by the Kashmiri Pandit officials (pg. 157). Moreover, it was said that not a single Kashmiri Pandit died during the famine. This furthered the divide between Pandits and Muslims, with Pandits being the sole Kashmiri beneficiary of the Dogra rule.

Kashmiri Muslims' condition worsened through Begar and imposition of the Pratap Act and Pratap Code. The Pandit-Muslim enmity worsened after the Hereditary law granted more opportunities to the Pandits in positions of power. Kashmiris arose in dissent and found in National Conference, an alternate ruling elite. The National Conference, in 1944, submitted a memorandum to Hari Singh outlining their plan to turn the state from monarchy to a constitutional democracy. NC also submitted a detailed economic plan for Kashmir. This was later adopted as the manifesto of National Conference after 1947. This plan also received Nehru's support. NC was assured of Congress support to the Kashmiri grievances after independence. This promise by Congress oriented Abdullah and Kashmiris towards India.

However, Kashmir's orientation towards Congress and India was not only a consequence of the Dogra oppression. It was also due to their contacts with people outside J&K, especially Punjabis. The agricultural produce from Kashmiri villages was sold in Srinagar by *Gulladars*, a Muslim trading class in Srinagar. However, due to lack of capital and entrepreneurial acumen, however, the Punjabis took over this occupation. At the same time, Kashmiris migrating to Punjab indulged in jobs like porters or selling locally produced arts and crafts. Kashmiris' engagement with people outside J&K predictably informed their political orientations. The Punjabis-owned press often highlighted the plight of Kashmiri Muslims, Muslims from Punjab settled in Kashmir as teachers, Punjabi Muslims issued proclamations for better economic and education opportunities in Kashmir, and Punjab Congress leaders were the first to engage with Kashmiri Muslims. This eventually engineered contacts between National Conference and Congress.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the preferential relations between the centralised Dogra state and the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh during the colonial period in India. The Jammu & Kashmir state was formed and sustained for a century through close ties between the Dogra rulers and the British. Through the diplomatic intrigues between them, the frontiers of the state were expanded and centralised. Centralisation of power in Jammu ensured that the Jammu rulers could efficiently govern those frontiers located more than 700 kms away. The Dogra ruler sat at the apex of the

administrative machinery that consolidated his power in Jammu. The Dogras mixed Hindu overtones within state's politics through organizations like Dharmarth Trust, Dogra Sabha, laws like Pratap Code and Act, Begar Law, and Hereditary law. They delivered public goods and supported institutions that helped betterment of everyone in the state except the non-elite Kashmiri Muslims.

Consequently, Dogras' networks with the three regions and its people differed. The contrasting networks put the three regions on different political trajectories. The Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs of Jammu benefitted most from the Dogra rule and were on the reciprocal end of political networks. They got the support of the Dharmarth Trust and Dogra Sabha, organisations that enjoyed state support. They were also beneficiaries of employment within Dogra army and administration, recipient of most development works under the Dogra rule, and exempted from Begar. The Kashmiri Hindus and Kashmiri Muslim elites & clergy also benefitted from the Dogra rule. The Kashmiri Hindus benefitted due to their historical administrative proficiency within Kashmir's previous regimes and exemptions from Begar and taxes. The elite and clergy Muslims also benefitted from such exemptions. The non-elite Kashmiris suffered the most under the Dogra rule and were on the extractive end of Dogras' networks. They paid the highest taxes, were exploited as Begar workforce, and deprived of any employment in the Dogra army or administration. They also worked on the Dharmarth lands and lands held by Hindu and Muslim elites of the state. Ladakh was in the middle of the political networks' spectrum. The Muslim and Buddhist groups of the region paid high taxes and were employed as Begar labour. Nevertheless, the occasional concessions to the Buddhist monasteries, limited employment in the state police and army, and loans for their labour, sustained Ladakh's relationship with the rulers in Jammu.

This was the position of the three regions for better part of the 100-year Dogra rule. It changed towards the end when the non-elite Kashmiri Muslims were mobilized by Sheikh Abdullah through support of the Congress. Through this, the locus of political activity shifted from Jammu to Srinagar. Jammu and Dogra ruler held power in the state since its inception in 1846 and on the eve of Indian independence in 1947, when last ruler Hari Singh acceded to India, Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah were the power holders of the state. The political networks and relations established during the Dogra

rule determined the position of the three regions vis-à-vis India. Kashmir was deprived of any meaningful relations with the Dogra state. NC and Abdullah took up case of valley's betterment with Congress. Jammu, primary beneficiary of the Dogra rule, was apprehensive of Kashmir's ascent to power in the state and sought continuance of the Dogra rule. The Hindus of Jammu were not averse to the idea of India. They also enjoyed cultural and religious ties with India's Hindu majority. However, Dogra chauvinism and the privileged position they enjoyed within the Dogra state made them apprehensive of change. Odes to the Dogra rule were also often invoked after 1947. This continues to date. Ladakh remained largely apolitical during this period. Rather, Ladakh's sparse demography was considered inconsequential to the political developments of the time. With the upheavals in Kashmir, little political or academic attention was paid to the position of Ladakhis. However, these positions change drastically in the years and decades after 15 August 1947. The following chapters trace how this happened.

## CHAPTER 4

### 1947-1989: 'ACCESSION IS NOT INTEGRATION'

The previous chapter charts the preferential political networks in the Dogra-led and centralised J&K princely state until 15 August 1947. This chapter charts the divergent processes of Indian nation-building in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) between 1947-1989. The story begins with the change in the ruling elites of J&K. The Dogra rule from Jammu was replaced by a dual rule of National Conference (NC) from Srinagar and Congress from Delhi. The Indian federal structure meant that the country was divided into multiple states with two governments ruling a state: state and central. Hence, the National Conference and Congress rule over the state of Jammu & Kashmir. National Conference retained power as the state government throughout this period. Congress, besides a few years of Janta Party, retained power as the Central government until 1989. Indian elites also included the Hindu nationalist organisations like the RSS and Jana Sangh. Therefore, ruling elites from two entities- Kashmir (National Conference) and India (Congress, RSS, Jana Sangh)- built networks with Jammu and Ladakh. Simultaneously, engagements between National Conference and Congress had consequences for Kashmir's relations with India. The story ends in 1989 with the divergent nation-building processes in J&K: Jammu/Ladakh being integrated with India and Kashmir on the verge of insurgency against India.

India's nation-building processes are analysed through Wimmer's exchange relations (Wimmer's networks). They are embedded in three variables: deliverance of public goods, spread of voluntary organisations, and communication barriers. Hindu nationalists' exchanges on the organisational variable led to Jammu's political integration with India and its people identifying with the Indian national identity. Congress' organisational and Political Economy exchanges ensured similar trajectory for Ladakh. Conversely, absence of exchanges on any of the three variables in Kashmir steered the region towards secessionism. These divergent trajectories are a consequence of the presence and absence of exchange relations.

I compress the four decades of exchange relations in J&K in the following order. The first section provides a brief chronological overview of the political apparatus of J&K in post-colonial India. The next three sections focus on the processes of nation-building

in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Through an analysis of the exchange relations in the three regions, I show why the trajectories of Indian nation-building differed in Kashmir and Jammu/Ladakh. The sections on Jammu/Ladakh also include a discussion of NC's rule in the two regions. Besides increasing exchange relations with India, the decreasing relations with NC/Kashmir also aided India's nation-building processes in the two regions.

My scope of analysis, as discussed in Chapter 2, is partially moderated for this thesis. Wimmer analyses national governments' exchanges with the people. I add the layer of state government to the analysis. This is because J&K is an anomaly within India's federal structure. As aforementioned, India's federal structure divides power between Delhi and the states. Delhi possesses more power over the states, than the state governments themselves. Through a special provision of the Indian constitution, Article 370, J&K was an exception. J&K was bestowed with considerable autonomy of its own. Until 2019, J&K state had its own constitution, flag, and laws. Indian laws pertaining to only Defence, foreign Affairs, and Communication, were applicable in J&K (Noorani 2011). Consequently, Jammu and Ladakh's immediate ruling elites were the NC governments based in Srinagar along with the Indian governments in Delhi. Jammu and Ladakh organisations were antagonistic to the Kashmiri rule. The regions sought a governing structure akin to the other Indian states. Jammu and Ladakh elites demanded the removal of Article 370 for 'complete' political integration with India. Indian ruling elites, not Kashmiri, built better exchanges with Jammu/Ladakh. Eventually, the two regions on the other sides of Kashmir oriented towards Delhi. Meanwhile, Kashmir was deprived of similar exchanges from its immediate ruling elites, India. Article 370 was also systemically eroded after 1950s. This resulted in the reversal of Kashmir's positionality.

Interestingly, all three regions witnessed reversals from their 1947 positionalities. Kashmir favoured accession to India in 1947 and secession from India in 1989. This is explained by the lack of adequate exchanges with Kashmiri Muslims by Delhi. Most voluntary and political organisations of Kashmir were banned by NC, at the behest of Delhi. Delhi also eroded the provisions of Article 370. In the absence of inclusive organisational linkages, regional and religious salience increased within Kashmir's polity by 1989. In Jammu, the reversal from Dogra chauvinism and violence against

Muslims to cohesive Indianization is explained through the institutionalization of voluntary organizations of Jammu. India co-opted Jammu's voluntary organisations, political parties, social bodies, and religious institutions. Consequently, the exchanges in Jammu cut across the ethnic and religious divides, increasing the salience of national over religious. Jammu's relations with Kashmir also underwent phases of crest and trough, like a wave. When inclusive relations were developed by the NC elites (crest), Jammu & Kashmir was closer. In the absence of such relations (trough), Jammu gravitated towards the more attractive exchange partner: India. Ladakh-Kashmir relations also underwent a similar pattern. India's nation-building processes in Ladakh were shaped by the organizational and political economy aspect of exchange relations. Co-opting with Ladakh's Buddhist organisations, increased public spending through the Indian military, and opening of tourism in the region led to its Indianization.

#### **4.1 Political Apparatus of J&K: India's Coercive 'Integration', 1947-1989**

Dr Karan Singh, son of *Maharaja* Hari Singh, said that Congress mistook J&K's accession to India in 1947 as its integration with India (Interview 2022). Integration, for him, implies building public acceptance towards the national authority beyond mere application of national symbols and constitution. Congress' idea of J&K's integration was to provide the state with temporary and special autonomy (Article 370). Interestingly, integration for Jammu and Ladakh implied the removal of this autonomy and direct governance under Indian rule. Most importantly, integration for Wimmer (2018) is when the political alliances cut across ethnic divides and all ethnic groups are represented in the government. Since, Jammu and Ladakhi people found little representation under the Kashmiri governments, alliances with Indian governments were sought. But integration in Jammu and especially Ladakh, did not entirely cut across the ethnic divides.

##### *Circumstances of Partition*

On the eve of independence, each princely state was given the choice to join India, or Pakistan, or be independent. Karan Singh asserts that his father wanted to remain independent and not hurt his Hindu or Muslim subjects by joining Pakistan or India

respectively (Singh 1984: 48). Other sources contest that he wanted J&K to accede to India but was undecided (Jha 1996: 113-123; Snedden 2015: 155). Hari Singh, therefore, signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan. He acceded to India only after the Pakistani invasion of capturing J&K in October 1947. The Congress leadership conditioned military help to the *Maharaja* upon his accession to India. After the war, Nehru promised a plebiscite in Kashmir to ascertain the will of Kashmiris regarding accession (Speeches by PM Nehru 2024: 79). The UN-sanctioned plebiscite was conditioned on India and Pakistan demilitarizing Kashmir (UN resolution 47, 1948).

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah was supported by Mahatma Gandhi to govern J&K after Dogra rule ended (Guha 2019). Abdullah was against acceding to Pakistan and hoped to govern J&K through his National Conference party. His close links with Nehru and the backing of Congress, complimented his desire to remain with India. Abdullah believed that Pakistan would enslave Kashmir under an Islamic regime while Congress and India would provide Kashmir with the autonomy and dignity, not provided under the Dogras. Kashmir, eventually, received the special autonomous status. Although the special status was for the entire state, its application was in the hands of NC governments of Kashmir. Hereafter, the politics and needs of Kashmir superseded those of Jammu and Ladakh. Kashmir became synonymous with J&K. India-Pakistan security manoeuvrers for Kashmir also often marginalized the needs of the other sides of Kashmir.

### *Special Status and Article 370*

Dogra rule, the geo-strategic position of Kashmir, 1947 war with Pakistan, and the Abdullah-Nehru cordiality gave J&K a special place in independent India. One that made J&K the anomaly in India's federal structure. An agent of the Indian government was appointed in Kashmir to deliberate on recognizing J&K's special status (File No. 118(2)- PR/47, NAI). Against opposition from Congress leader Sardar Patel and some members of Indian parliament (Thapliyal 2011), the special status of J&K was recognized after the Delhi agreement of 1952 between Nehru and Abdullah. Under the special status, people of Jammu & Kashmir would be recognised as citizens of India, but they'd also be considered special subjects of the J&K state. J&K had its own flag and constitution. J&K was exempted from Indian Supreme Court's jurisdiction. The

Fundamental Rights enshrined for the Indian citizens were also unapplicable in J&K. The special status was institutionalised under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

There were mixed reactions in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh to Article 370. Kashmiris felt that their decades-old, marginalised position was finally acknowledged. They believed that the autonomy would preserve their Kashmiri identity (Jamwal 1993: 468). But questions might be asked as to why Jammu reversed from Dogra chauvinism to favouring Indian rule in a short time of 1947-1952? Or how Ladakhi leaders switched from an ambivalent position in 1947 to demanding integration with India since the 1950s? The answer, somewhat, lies in their apprehensions towards Article 370. Jammu perceived this status as a hinderance in the way of 'complete integration' with India. Praja Parishad and Sahayak Sabha, two Jammu-based political organizations agitated for the complete application of the Indian Constitution in the state. They were averse to the constitutional roadblock of Article 370 between Jammu and India. They also regarded Article 370 as a tool for making Kashmir independent (pg. 469). Ladakhi Buddhists' perception was that the Article 370 would make the region economically dependent on the Kashmiri Muslims.

Although Article 370 did give J&K certain concessions, it was still within the ambit of the Indian Constitution. The three regions *remained* a part of India. However, the divergent perceptions regarding Article 370 among Kashmiri Muslims and Jammuities/Ladakhis made it central to India's nation-building project. For India, Article 370 was temporary. Indian elites intended to bring J&K at par with other India states with time. Article 370's erosion, i.e., gradual application of Indian constitution superseding the provisions of Article 370, was facilitated by the NC-Congress rule.

### *National Conference-Congress Alliance*

Like the Dogras until 1947, NC-Congress alliance presided at the apex of J&K's polity, until 1989. However, this alliance was dictated by Congress elites in Delhi. The friendship between Abdullah and Nehru yielded J&K's special status in 1952. However, Abdullah was also quickly incarcerated by Congress in 1953. Abdullah enjoyed cordial liaisons with India, until 1950s. Yet when Indian leaders became suspicious that Abdullah was advocating for Kashmir's secession, he was put in jail (Rai 2004: 289).

Abdullah's arrest prompted Congress to place puppet NC leaders at the helm of J&K's affairs. But the puppet or 'client' governments of NC did little to serve the needs of Kashmiri Muslims or build networks across the ethnic divides of J&K. Kashmiri organisations demanding just representation in the government were also crushed by the NC-Congress alliance.

A parallel process was the persistent and continued influence of Hindu nationalists within Congress. For instance, Abdullah undertook land reforms in the state for the upliftment of Kashmiris in 1948. These reforms intended to redistribute the lands from landlords to tillers. The reforms were dubbed communal by members of Congress (Wani 2019 81-82). Communal because most affected landlords were Hindus of Kashmir and Jammu, and most tillers were Kashmiri Muslims. Although Nehru and his allies in Congress supported Abdullah's land reforms, the opposition from conservative and Hindu nationalist figures in Congress sowed mistrust between Abdullah and India (Qasim 1992: 44). Thereafter, starting with Abdullah's incarceration, firm measures were taken to 'completely integrate' Kashmir. This was mostly done through the help of pliable NC leaders who did not adequately represent the will of Kashmiris.

In this regard, a note by then Indian president shows India's position regarding Kashmir (File no. 85/55, NAI). He says that on the eve of independence, all princely states were given the same choice and nowhere was the will of people taken in consideration. Yet, in Kashmir, the Indian government made a special gesture to listen to the popular party and grant them special privileges. The government also announced that should people of Kashmir feel discontent, their will shall be recognized. The United Nations asked India to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir, conditioned on Kashmir's demilitarization by India and Pakistan. However, the president added that India considered Kashmir at par with other states insofar as integration was concerned. Nehru, in 1964, also suggested that any discussion regarding Kashmir must be in accordance with the Indian stance, not Pakistan's (File no. 87, NAI). It is with this positionality concerning Kashmir that the Indian Foreign Minister categorically remarked for the UN that 'Kashmir is an integral part of India' (File no. 200, NAI). The unfulfilled promise of holding a plebiscite became a generational Kashmiri grievance against India.

Subsequently, the NC dominated all aspects of J&K politics. The NC's repressive rule was backed by Delhi as long as NC advocated Kashmir's unification with India (Ganguly 1996: 95). Gradually, NC lost the popular appeal that it enjoyed since the Dogra times. Abdullah was released from jail in 1975 and restored to power on the condition that he would drop the plebiscite demand (Noorani 2013: 316-318). Kashmiris, disillusioned with the NC and Abdullah's inability to get their will recognized, looked towards the organisations like the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) promising a violent resolution to Kashmiri problems. Thus, Kashmir and India were tied together politically only through NC and Congress, an elite alliance and not an institutional one. NC constantly tailored itself as per Congress and India's demands, shaping the political apparatus of J&K.

#### **4.2 Nation-building in Kashmir: Elite Networks and Deinstitutionalization**

The absence of the organizational and political economy aspect of exchange relationships between India and Kashmir, from 1947 led to the insurgency in the valley by 1989. In terms of organisational exchanges, Congress-NC ruling elites suppressed various voluntary organisations causing gradual deinstitutionalization in Kashmir. Deinstitutionalization implies erosion of institutions that encourage public participation through electoral or other channels. Such deinstitutionalization results in absence of exchanges between the ruling elites and people. These exchanges facilitate representation and integration. Kashmiris, therefore, had no say or representation in their governance. Delhi neither gained the loyalty of the Kashmiris nor was its legitimacy to govern Kashmir recognized.

Meanwhile, the financial aid from the Delhi to Kashmir until the seventies, the highest for an Indian state at the time, was a brief period of developing relations between Kashmir and India. As early as 1951, Indian elites recognised India being a market for Kashmiri goods (File No.13(5)-K/50, NAI) and prioritized Kashmir's economic development. A 137-page archival document lists the various schemes for Kashmir by numerous Indian ministries in 1954 (File No. 3(38)-K/54, NAI). To this end, between 1950-1970, 90 per cent of J&K plans were funded by Delhi, while other backward states like Bihar received up to 70 per cent funding (Prakash 2000: 2053). India also accredited Jammu and Kashmir University, based in Srinagar, such that its degrees

were recognised for employment purposes in India (File no. 26/36/49-CS, NAI). The economic exchanges also developed a generation of literate and politicized Kashmiris. They saw both the repressive rule of Indian elites and the coercive attempts of integration without their agency (Ganguly 1996). Maintaining control over Kashmir, with or without representation of non-elite people, took precedence for NC-Congress elites. I'll discuss the brief political economy exchanges first, followed by the discussion of organisational exchanges. Here, I pose the hypothetical of two variables being necessary for nation-building. Perhaps nation-building in Kashmir could have been easier with both organizational and political economy exchanges? It is possible that supplementing public spending with more representation to the people in governance, could have been the recipe for nation-building in Kashmir.

#### *Land Reforms and Public Spending: Limited Political Economy exchanges*

Wimmer argues that a state delivering public goods like roads, schools, health services, etc., can gain the loyalty of the people (Wimmer 2018: 69). People are more inclined to building alliances with the ruling elites that provide public goods. Nation-building suffers if the ruling elites fail in delivering public goods for the non-elites. In Kashmir, there was a brief period of public spending, especially under Abdullah and his successor, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad. Abdullah focused on the land reforms in the state and Bakshi focused on the overall economic development of the state. However, public goods deliverance gradually reduced after the 60s, halting Kashmir's exchanges on the political economy variable of nation-building.

#### Abdullah's Land Reforms

Sheikh Abdullah's agrarian reforms were partly beneficial to the Kashmiri Muslims. The reforms had three prominent features: abolition of all feudal privileges and lands given by the erstwhile Dogra state; transfer of all land, acquired through the abolition of these privileges, to the tillers; and debt cancellation of peasants (Lone 2015). Abdullah perceived Kashmiris through the lens of 'oppressor vs oppressed' i.e. Dogras vs subjects, rather than Hindu vs Muslim (Wani 2019: 67). However, most landlords and moneylenders were Hindu elites of Kashmir and Jammu, and the tillers were Kashmiri Muslims. The reforms, therefore, acquired a communal perception among

the non-Muslims. Muslim landlords and Hindu tillers were also spread across Kashmir and Jammu but lesser in number. Abdullah introduced the reforms to establish a more socialist J&K state. The primary achievements of the reforms were almost 80 per cent debt cancellation for peasants, around 130,000 tillers receiving land ownership, and savings for the state exchequer as the state's grants to the landlords were abolished (Lone 2015).

The reforms, egalitarian on paper, have been criticized for their implementation. The fruits of the land reforms, of redistributing land from landowners to tillers, were inaccessible to all the landless tillers. The landlords could choose what land they wanted to give away and retain the best lands with themselves. They had the expertise to circumvent the reforms and the foresight to transfer land to their family members to keep it amongst themselves (ibid.). Thus, while many landlords in Jammu had their lands taken, Hindu and Muslim landlords of Kashmir retained their lands. Certain Muslim and Hindu elites of Kashmir also retained their lands due to proximity with the state administration (Rai 2004: 289). Limited tillers in Kashmir and Jammu, hence, benefitted from the reforms. The land redistribution also reduced the size of landholdings making the holdings unviable for cultivation. The government also failed to conduct a census of the landholdings to calculate the percentage of cultivable land in relation to the number of landless tillers.

#### Economic Measures Under Bakshi

This section, again, discusses the probability that merely provision of public goods, in absence of political representation, may not facilitate nation-building. Wimmer argues that the political economy variable, or other variables on their own, can facilitate nation-building. However, I argue that in certain cases like Kashmir's, both organisational and political economy exchanges necessary. Sumit Ganguly (1996) affirms that public spending until the 60s raised a literate and politically aware generation that lacked the means of political expression and representation. NC increased the salaries of teachers and enrolment rate in schools and colleges increased by 157% in 1960, compared to 1947 (Wani 2019: 159). But the literate generation was deprived of any political representation. This drove them towards the insurgency.

After Abdullah was arrested in 1953, his successor, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, undertook several public spending measures to improve the economic condition of J&K. The NC-Congress prioritized the political economy exchanges also to counter the effect of Abdullah's incarceration or any civil resistance. Simultaneously, they suppressed Kashmiri political organisations and parties. The exchanges built due to his extensive economic measures were nullified by the lack of organisational exchanges in Kashmir.

In his first public address to Kashmiris through state radio, Bakshi praised India's economic measures. He spoke about the economic crisis under his predecessor, the benefits of economic policies of the Indian state, and announced certain economic concessions. The concessions involved discontinuing monopoly of cooperatives, more subsidies on salt, and scraping forced extraction of foodgrains from farmers (pg. 140-141). The Abdullah government used to forcibly procure 'grains from the wailing peasantry, giving rise to corruption, and rendering the Sheikh's agrarian reforms practically meaningless' (pg. 141). This extractive policy, that led to antagonism between the Kashmiri state and peasantry, was discontinued by the Bakshi government. Farmers were free to sell their produce to whoever they wished. If they sold to the government, the price of procurement was increased from Rs 9 to 10 per unit, and another rupee paid to the farmer for transportation (pg. 142). Over 150,000 units of rice and wheat were sent by India and supplied at subsidized prices along with reducing the rates of state-produced rice and wheat by 68 per cent and per cent respectively (pg. 143). Consequently, 'the cost of rice subsidies shot up to Rs 15 million per year as compared to Rs 1.9 million under Sheikh Abdullah' (pg. 143). Bakshi-India engagements also yielded employment opportunities for Kashmiris as administrators in the Central Secretariat, New Delhi (File No. 20/87/54-CS-B, NAI).

Essentially, Bakshi focused on bridging the gap between Kashmiri people and Kashmiri government by addressing their economic distresses through India's help. Likewise, India provided economic support to Kashmir to further its integration. The Indian Planning Commission advanced a loan of \$14.9 million to J&K in 1953. Besides agricultural developments, tunnels and roads between Kashmir and India were

constructed. The reduced toll tax for Indian traders also allowed mobility of trade, people, and ideas between Kashmir and India (Wani 2019: 174-175).

“During the five-year plan period from 1957–8 to 1961–2 Kashmir received the highest per capita grant-in-aid—Rs 41.7 or almost seven times the average for all the states which was Rs 6. It may be noted that at a time when all the states of India had deficit budgets, J&K had a surplus of Rs 38.016 million for 1959–60” (pg. 147).

Ganguly (1996) has questioned why the Kashmiri insurgency against India broke out only in 1989, not when Abdullah was arrested, or when the Plebiscite Front organisation demanding independence from India was formed in 1955, or during the India-Pakistan War of 1965 when pro-Pakistan factions in Kashmir had the ripe opportunity to revolt against the Indian state? The brief phase of exchanges in Kashmir through public spending became the buffer against the simultaneous deinstitutionalization of Kashmir. Wimmer asserts that in the presence of strong political economy exchanges, people ‘resist the siren songs of separatists and other oppositional forces’ (Wimmer 2018: 69). Thus, to answer Ganguly’s questions, despite the lack of organisational exchanges in this period, limited presence of political economy exchanges prevented Kashmiris turning to insurgency. When political economy exchanges also diminished after the 60s, Kashmir steered towards insurgency. Bakshi also started an annual state-sponsored cultural event from 1956 attended by Nehru and other Indian leaders and organisations. Yet these efforts to build a cultural consensus between Kashmir and India was exclusive of Muslim hardliners, supporters of Abdullah, and other dissident voices. For them, Bakshi-Congress chose the means of coercion and suppression.

*Deinstitutionalization: Consolidated Polity, Client Governments, Suppressive Regime*

Wimmer asserts that exchange relationships are more likely to succeed if a network of voluntary associations like political parties, social groups, trade unions is in place (Wimmer 2018: 29). Such network helps with nation-building as it represents the varied interests of all sections of society. However, the post-colonial period in Kashmir was characterized by the absence of organisational aspect of exchanges and eventual deinstitutionalization, i.e., complete suppression of political institutions in Kashmir.

This deinstitutionalization happened in three phases. The first phase lasted from 1947 until Abdullah's arrest by Delhi. Till then, his popularity consolidated NC as the sole organisational body in Kashmir. The second phase involved the installation of puppet NC governments in Kashmir by Delhi. Two decades of these client governments were devoid of meaningful exchanges between the ruling elites and the Kashmiri people. Rigged elections and suppression of opposition organisations were dominant in this period. The last phase lasted from Sheikh's return to power in 1975 until the outbreak of insurgency. In the resultant decadal absence of organisational exchanges, Kashmiris were co-opted by organisations proffering a violent resolution to their grievances.

#### NC's Consolidation of Kashmiri Polity, 1947-1953

This 6-year period set the precedent for NC to consolidate itself as the primary organisation and exchange partner in Kashmir. In 1947, Kashmir had three prominent political organisations. National Conference, Muslim Conference supporting accession to Pakistan, and Socialist Party & Kisaan Mazdoor Conference demanding independence for Kashmir. NC attacked them and consolidated itself as the primary organisation with Congress help. The NC was able to suppress all of its local opponents with Congress' help; 'some of them were also pushed to the other side of the border, and some left of their own accord' (Wani 2019: 37).

The repression of other political organisations did not, however, affect the NC's popularity. Sheikh Abdullah remained the most popular leader of Kashmir. For one, NC was the sole organisational body in Kashmir. Kashmiris had no alternative organisation. Secondly, it was the organisation that replaced the tyrannical Dogras. Moreover, six years was a short period to change people's affiliations in Kashmir. But most importantly, this was down to the organisational network of NC and its hegemonizing nature that ensured its supremacy as the primary exchange partner in Kashmir.

Observing in 1950s, Josef Korbel said that NC was the only organisation operational in Kashmir with cadres in every village. It influenced every decision in the state elections and distribution of public goods (Korbel 1954: 208). The former Chief Minister

of J&K, Mir Qasim, characterised the NC administration as resting on the 'props of tyrannical laws and their heartless implementation'. There was little tolerance for dissent and even a 'minor provocation was enough for petty officials to arrest and torture people like slaves in olden days' (Qasim 1992: 47). Moreover, that Kashmir could have joined Pakistan or been independent, remained a prevailing sentiment among Kashmiris. 'The existence of multiple voices in a politically volatile environment further hardened (Abdullah's) attitude towards enforcing one party rule. All those leaders who advocated accession to Pakistan were put in jails or pushed into Pakistan, or they were externed from the state' (Wani 2019: 112).

#### Client Governments and Suppression of Dissent, 1953-1975

This period had two prominent features: the first, installation of client governments; and second, continued suppression of voluntary organisations and dissenting voices. The former implied that Congress government of Delhi placed pliant NC leaders at the helm of J&K, strengthening NC-Congress domination over the state. The latter involved forceful suppression of organisations, rigging elections, and detaining political opponents of NC-Congress alliance. This period of client governments lasted until Abdullah was released from jail in 1975. Pliant NC leaders were put to power by Congress to facilitate valley's coercive integration with India. When an NC leader became in compliant, he was replaced by a different Delhi-backed NC leader. Thus, the lack of inclusive exchange relationships during this period, deinstitutionalized Kashmiri polity and hampered India's nation-building process.

After Abdullah's arrest, Indian (Congress) leadership cultivated alliances with the ideologically pliant Muslim elites. They installed some of them as heads of government 'to generate consent in the community, with the belief that it will somehow satisfy their psychological instinct of 'self-rule'' (Wani 2019: 9). Congress found an ally in Abdullah's deputy, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and gave him the post of J&K's Prime Minister. However, Bakshi and Congress made Kashmir a regressive and police state. 'The common man, under Bakshi's tyrannical rule, was denied even basic civil liberties' (Qasim 1992: 82). Political dissent was crushed through ruthless torture by the government agents (ibid.). Elections during this period were marred with corruption and cancellation of nomination papers of opposition parties (Wani 2019: 191).

Meanwhile Nehru argued that Bakshi's suppression of political opponents was acceptable for it served the 'national interests' of keeping Kashmir secure from any anti-India elements (Puri 1995: 46-47).

The exclusionary process of nation-building was furthered by diluting the provisions of Article 370. Jurisdiction of Indian departments, Supreme Court, and other administrative bodies were extended to Kashmir. Non-Kashmiris were also employed in Kashmiri administration and banks (Wani 2019: 192-193). Thus, the dual practice of suppression of dissent and institutions as well as encroachment upon Kashmiri administration, all without the will of people, negated the political economy aspect of building exchange relationships. Kashmiris perceived Bakshi and India's relationship to be transactional: Bakshi would be given a free hand to manage an accountable and repressive government and in exchange for facilitating J&K's 'integration' with India on New Delhi's terms' (Bose 2003: 68).

The depreciation of exchanges in Kashmir continued under the client government of GM Sadiq. The key opposition party to NC during this period was the Plebiscite Front, formed in 1955. It was patronized by Abdullah and led by his close aide; Mirza Afzal Beg. Plebiscite workers were often arrested for their demands and protests on the charge This organization was supported by large number of educated Kashmiri youth after the 1965 India-Pakistan war (Saraf 1979: Vol 2 1271-1275). Although Sadiq attempted to co-opt the members of the Plebiscite Front, Congress compelled him to suppress the Front. In an official statement after the arrests and detentions of the Plebiscite workers, Sadiq claimed that they resorted to 'terroristic methods' and were a threat to India (Progs., Nos. 102(9)-P.V.,1965, NAI). He was also compelled to suppress other pro-independence and pro-Pakistan organisations operating in Kashmir.

Congress not only compelled NC to suppress other organisations but attempted to subsume the National Conference itself. Congress leaders pursued a formal merger with NC. In response, Sadiq dissolved his faction of National Conference into a Congress body. Interestingly, this was done on 26 January 1965, on India's republic day that commemorates the Indian constitution. This was symbolic of bringing Kashmir further into the Indian fold (Lockwood 1969: 386). However, Congress did not account

that the National Conference was a symbol of Kashmir's socio-political achievements. Kashmiris associated memories of sacrifice with NC and 'with this move Sadiq and his colleagues further distanced Kashmir from Delhi instead of bringing Kashmir nearer to India' (Wani 2019: 217).

The third client government of Mir Qasim adopted a carrot and stick policy for Kashmir's organisations between 1971-1975. He suppressed those who did not agree with NC's stance and supported those who agreed on Kashmir's accession with India (pg. 267). But like the leaders before him, Qasim mostly complied with Congress and India's demands. He prohibited the Plebiscite Front from participating in the next elections. Qasim stepped down when Abdullah was released from prison in 1975 after a peace deal with Indian Prime Minister. However, the antagonistic political sentiment of two decades 'did not allow the 'peace' to be sustained for long' (pg. 269).

#### Towards Insurgency, 1975-1989

The 22 years of Abdullah's incarceration had changed the dynamic of exchange relations between Kashmiris and the ruling NC-Congress elites. The Congress-NC alliance was no longer the hegemonic representative of the collective will of Kashmiris. Their brief economic exchanges with Kashmiris prevented any major conflict escalations. However, their exclusionary, elitist, and unrepresentative rule sowed the secessionist tendencies in Kashmir. Other organisations, particularly the Plebiscite Front, were favoured by the Kashmiris. Within two decades, the Front had cadres at the grassroots level of Kashmir demanding the plebiscite. The organization had over 700,000 registered members by the late 60s, each member inculcating the idea of self-determination among Kashmiris (pg. 272-273). Meanwhile, the NC-Congress alliance suppressed them at every opportunity. Abdullah, who patronized the Front, gave up the demand for plebiscite under pressure from Nehru's daughter and Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Yet this news was not publicized. Sheikh Abdullah assured Kashmiris that a decision on the plebiscite will be taken. He assured India that he was completely aligned with the Indian nation-state. Sheikh's doublespeak proved costly, and the Kashmiris sought alternate exchange partners.

To reiterate, the NC-Congress alliance forced Kashmir's integration with India without building inclusive and representative exchanges with Kashmiris. The NC-Congress alliance continued their suppressive actions into the fifth decade after independence. After the rigged 1977 elections, NC suppressed its principal opponent, the *Jamat-i-Islami* (pg. 309). The *Jamat* was a socio-religious organizations promulgating Islamic religious thought through its schools and public seminars. Abdullah closed *Jamat's* schools and arrested its workers, further deinstitutionalizing NC's opposition. However, this only increased *Jamat's* popularity. This popularity reflected the growing alienation of Kashmiris with NC. They perceived that the NC served but New Delhi's needs, not theirs (Sikand 2002: 742). Abdullah passed away in 1982 and his son, Farooq Abdullah became the J&K Chief Minister. The demise of the 'Lion of Kashmir' propelled the rise of other voluntary associations wanting to co-opt Kashmiri grievances against NC-Congress rule.

The period after Sheikh Abdullah's death was characterized by Congress' efforts to integrate Kashmir, with or without Farooq Abdullah's help. With the continued repression of multiple organisations in Kashmir, Congress efforts of 'integrating' Kashmir were destined to fail. In a span of 4 years, Congress removed and re-installed Farooq Abdullah, bypassing the democratic channels of governance. The NC's constant bucking to Congress pressure was condemned in Kashmir. In response, multiple religious and political organizations of Kashmir came to form the Muslim United Front (MUF), an umbrella body to contest the 1987 elections (Wani 2019: 327).

Repeating history, the 1987 elections were rigged in the favour of NC-Congress alliance, further denting the organisational aspect of nation-building. These elections catapulted the armed struggle in Kashmir by 1989. The Congress-NC alliance had suppressed every political organisation leading up to the 1987 elections. This led to the emergence of MUF and from MUF, the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). It was an MUF candidate who recruited the core members of JKLF in Kashmir (pg. 329). JKLF itself was formed by the Plebiscite Front workers in the UK in 1977 (Jaffrelot 2002). The group's activities initially involved holding conventions for J&K diaspora Muslims and conducting kidnappings of the Indian diplomats in the UK. By 80s, JKLF's activities shifted to an armed struggle in the valley

“In 1988, increasing numbers of youth went mysteriously missing across the valley; they crossed the Line of Control in search of weapons and training and returned with the same in large numbers, leading to a paradigm shift—mass-based armed struggle for *azadi* (freedom)” (pg. 330).

As Wimmer puts it, curbing the political space for organisations representing diverse interests gives way for secessionist forces to develop exchange relations with people (Wimmer 2018: 27-28). National Conference’s relations with Kashmiris deteriorated with each decade. Moreover, its suppression of Islamic organisations like *Jamat* and MUF mobilized Kashmiris along religious lines. When the democratic means of staking claims over Kashmir were curbed, *Jamat* and MUF adopted radical means of dissent. Absence of adequate channels for expression of discontent against NC-Congress rule gave impetus to Kashmiri Muslims for a religious and militant movement (Ganguly 1996). Hence, within four decades, Kashmir went from favouring Indian rule to being embroiled in an insurgency against it.

#### **4.3 Nation-building in Jammu: Communal Co-Option of Voluntary Associations**



Map 7. Kashmir and Jammu divisions in J&K state (Simarprit 2019)

In Kashmir, the polity reversed from orientation towards India in 1947 to secessionist violence against India by 1989. In Jammu, the polity reversed from violence against Jammu Muslims in 1947 to the growth of India's nation-building project by 1989. Jammu had exchange relationships with two ruling entities: National Conference-Kashmir and Congress-India. Indian elites co-opted Jammu's organisations more than NC, facilitating exchanges between Jammu and India. I explain this organisational aspect under three sub-sections. First, through the Praja Parishad organisation. It was patronised by RSS, the pan-India Hindu nationalist body. Parishad agitated against Abdullah's rule and Article 370. Until its merger with the Bhartiya Jana Sangh in 1963, the parent body of Hindu-nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Praja Parishad participated in the J&K state elections as the key political party of Jammu. Then, I discuss the networks of Indian political parties like Jana Sangh and Congress with Jammu. These networks were Hindu nationalist in character. Finally, I discuss the role of Jammu's various socio-political organisations which represented the diverse voices of the region and bundled their interests together for the Indian state to respond to them with ease (Wimmer 2018). The sub-sections carry a chronological commentary on the breakdown of Jammu's exchange relations with NC/Kashmir. The NC elites provided neither public goods nor representation to the Jammuites in the state administration. Therefore, Jammu organisations sought exchange relationships with India. This parallel- of deteriorating relations with Kashmir and strengthened relations with India- began after the violence against Jammu Muslims in 1947

### *Violence Against Muslims, Praja Parishad, and Communalized Nation-building*

The Dogra rulers had relatively cordial relations with the Jammu Muslims, compared to Kashmiri Muslims (Rai 2004). However, the emergence of National Conference and circumstances surrounding the partition made Hari Singh suspicious of Jammu Muslims' allegiance. The situation was complicated by the migration of Hindus into Jammu from Pakistan's territories before and during the partition of India (Interview 2023; Chattha 2009: 179). The communally charged environment led to two major developments. One, the violence against Jammu Muslims and second, the emergence of the Praja Parishad organisation. In these two developments is the beginning of the process of India's nation-building in Jammu.

The 1947 violence against Jammu Muslims by its Hindus shows that inclusive exchange relations over decades can reduce the salience of religion in the polity and orient its people collectively towards the nation-state. By 1989, both Jammu Muslims and Hindus were antagonist towards Kashmir. Jammu Muslims also moved from an antagonist to an ambivalent orientation towards India. The 1947 violence against Muslims, however, was not sudden. Growing support for Pakistan from the Poonch region in Jammu, and its Muslims having ethnic and familial links with northwest Pakistan (Bhat 2017: 293), made Hari Singh apprehensive of their loyalties. Hari Singh burdened Poonch's Muslim soldiers of the Indian army under unreasonable taxes (Snedden 2001) and they agitated against the *Maharaja* in May 1947. Sections of Jammu Muslims also found National Conference as an appealing organisation. The change in the name from Muslim Conference to National Conference was suggested by two Jammu Muslims (Puri 2008: 13). Moreover, the Muslim Conference faction of NC found increasing support in Poonch and Mirpur areas of Jammu. Essentially, Jammu Muslims either favoured National Conference or Muslim Conference, but they shared an anti-Dogra stance. Consequently, the Muslims soldiers were disarmed by Hari Singh. These arms were redistributed to Sikhs and Hindus (Snedden 2001). The *Maharaja* abruptly cut ties with his Muslim population. Their agitations were also suppressed. In the resultant absence of equal networks by the ruling elites, violence ensued. In October 1947, Jammu Muslims were killed and their houses looted by the Hindu Dogra troops. Although there are conflicting reports on numbers of Muslim killed, 50,000 (Copland 2005: 153-154) or 100,000 (Bhasin 2015) or 200,000 (Stephens 1964: 200), demographics provide a lucid answer. The Muslim population in Jammu district was around 3,736 for every 10,000 people in 1941 and it dropped to 1,003 in 1961 (Census of India 1961). In the rural areas of Jammu, it shrank from 4,216 in 1931 to 862 in 1961 (ibid.).

Post-violence, Indian elites began their exchanges with Jammu's Hindu organisations, particularly the Praja Parishad. It was formed by the RSS members of Jammu after J&K's accession to India and transfer of power from Jammu to Kashmir. Soon after, Parishad's membership grew to 16,000 in Jammu, compared to 6000 of NC (Sharma & Bhoi 2021: 111). This growth was 'a reaction to the aggressive trends in the local nationalism of Kashmir' (ibid.). Its members were mostly the Dogra elite: landlords,

businessmen, and Dogra court officials. Landlords were motivated by land reforms that took away their estates, businessmen due to losses through debt cancellation policies, and court officials due to changes in administration (Wani 2019: 119). While Abdullah reasoned these reforms from the oppressor-oppressed lens, Parishad viewed it from a Hindu-Muslim lens. Their protests took an overt religious form after Urdu was made J&K's official language. Urdu was not commonly spoken in Jammu. Or Ladakh.

While Parishad excluded Muslims from its networks in Jammu, NC excluded Parishad from its networks in J&K. Abdullah suppressed the agitations against land reforms in Jammu and the prominent Dogra leader, Prem Nath Dogra was arrested. Parishad's popularity grew among both upper and some sections of lower-caste Hindus. This allowed Parishad to represent Hindu interests of Jammu (Schofield 1997:167) in the 1951 state elections. NC, meanwhile, cancelled Parishad's nomination papers. In response, Parishad boycotted the elections (Bose 2003: 55-57). Parishad took its grievances against Kashmir to the national level. Parishad sent a memorandum to the Indian president in 1954 with half million signatures demanding 'complete integration' with India (Hajam and Billore 2025: 209). Its agitations to oppose Article 370 were supported by the Indian Bhartiya Jana Sangh party, and leaders and organisations from Punjab (Sharma and Bhoi 2021; 113). Parishad's agitations were supported by Jana Sangh cadres in Gujarat and Delhi (File No. 1(3)-K/53, NAI). Congress too took note of Parishad's popularity within Jammu since its weekly meetings were attended in the thousands (File No. 8(6)-K/51, NAI).

Indian elites, thus, took cognizance of Parishad's demands in the 1950s, which propelled the nation-building processes in Jammu. Afterall, Parishad took up the mantle of Jammu's grievances against the Kashmiri elite with the Indian elites. Indian elites often received complaints against the Kashmiri rule by the Praja Parishad (File No. 1-K/50, NAI). However, these exchanges in the early decades were exclusive of Jammu Muslims. Jana Sangh led protests across India demanding the removal of special status to Kashmir, echoing Parishad's demands. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, founder of Jana Sangh, termed Article 370 as a means of 'balkanising' India (Kumar 1990). Praja Parishad also held a demonstration outside the Indian parliament. Its agitations continued in 1952 leading to arrests of over thousand Parishad and Sangh

workers in Jammu. Parishad also demanded the merger of Jammu and Ladakh as a separate Indian state (Bazaz 1954). Alastair Lamb echoed Bazaz's assertion that Parishad wanted to separate Jammu from Kashmir by making it a separate state within India (Lamb 1991: 197).

Initially, Nehru termed Parishad's agitations as narrow and bigoted. Later, he changed his mind and said that their voice could not be ignored. As the agitations increased, Nehru sent the head of Indian Intelligence Bureau, BN Mullick, to convey to Parishad that Kashmir's special status would eventually disappear (Mullick 1971: 30). Mullick also claims that Nehru agreed with Jana Sangh and Parishad about taking steps to fully integrate Kashmir with India (pg. 29-30). Like Abdullah, Congress too indulged in doublespeak. But Congress kept its promise to Jammu (Article 370's erosion in the ensuing decades). Parishad's agitations reduced after Abdullah's arrest. Yet electoral victories still evaded the Parishad. It also lacked support of those rural low-caste Hindus who benefitted from Abdullah's land reforms (Behera 2007). It eventually merged with the Jana Sangh in 1963. But until then, Parishad did enough to catalyse the exchange relations between India and Jammu.

#### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1947-1963

The organisational variable of exchange relations influenced India's nation-building process in Jammu. However, the crests and troughs of organizational and political economy exchanges with Kashmir, also pushed Jammu to seek India as the preferred exchange partner. Had Kashmir been more forthcoming with its networks in Jammu, the valley could have potentially had an ally in retaining the special status. Under the organisational variable, Parishad's agitations were suppressed by NC, and it was prevented from participating in state elections. Under the political economy variable, Abdullah's land reforms increased resentment against Kashmir, particularly among those Hindus affected by the reforms. Bakshi's tenure of economic development was the sole period of cordial exchanges between Jammu & Kashmir after 1947. That too declined gradually, deteriorating the relations between the two regions.

Abdullah's economic reforms, intended to reduce inequality in J&K, polarized the ethnic divides in J&K. As the primary beneficiaries of feudalism under the Dogras,

Jammu's landowners suffered under Abdullah's reforms. Parishad's agitations during this period and the NC's response also polarised the situation. The NC often closed roads to stop Parishad's supporters from India entering Jammu. This inflamed tensions but also led to reduced custom fees and thereby also the revenue of the state (Wani 2019: 99). The NC government then expanded its tax structures which led to further discontent and increased support for India amongst the Dogras. According to Govardhan Singh Jamwal, a military official commissioned under Hari Singh and later the Military Secretary to the Indian President, the losses suffered by the Dogras due to the land reforms pushed them towards joining the Indian military (Interview 2023). This practice conditioned the Dogra generations to never speak against India, he argued (ibid.). Ironically, the Indian army also occupied some lands in Jammu, especially those belonging to the *Maharaja* (Progs., Nos. 5(7)-K, 1953, NAI). However, the people of Jammu were more averse to their land being taken by the Kashmiri elites than by the Indian elites.

The growing tensions between Jammu & Kashmir were somewhat tempered during Bakshi's rule. During the Indian president's visit to Jammu in 1954, arranged by Karan Singh, the head of the Dogra Sadar Sabha met the president (File No. 52/2/54, NAI). He informed the president of that Bakshi was more inclined towards Jammu than Abdullah, albeit that more work was still needed. This shows that provision of public goods can push the non-elites to politically support the ruling government (Wimmer 2018: 28). In this case, Jammu's electoral support to NC. NC won 13 seats from Jammu compared to Parishad's 5 in the 1957 elections (1957 Election Results). Although Parishad and Plebiscite Front alleged that the elections were rigged (Vaganan 2002). A key difference in Abdullah and Bakshi's rule was that budgetary allocations from India for J&K were spent not just on Kashmir. Although still unproportionate, Bakshi government spent on Jammu & Kashmir both. When Bakshi reduced the prices of foodgrains, they were reduced both in Kashmir and Jammu (Wani 2109: 143). Agriculture research centres were set up in both regions including more money for irrigation, animal husbandry, and education & medical facilities (pg. 150-165).

Bakshi's efforts in reservation of seats in education and service sector also yielded some loyalty to NC from Jammu. He passed an order authorizing demographic-based

admissions and jobs such that in Jammu 70% seats were reserved for non-Muslims (pg. 182-183). Moreover, in Bakshi's Eid celebrations in Jammu, Hindus used to join in large numbers to show their support (Saraf 1979; vol 2 1223). Simultaneously, Bakshi's continued denial of democratic agency to Jammu where NC won 28 out of 30 seats in 1962 elections (1962 Election Results), led to the resumption of protests by Praja Parishad. Memories of the Dogra rule also persisted as Karan Singh's visits to Jammu, especially after he joined Congress, were often marred with protests and black flags (Interview 2022). Goverdhan Jamwal also claimed that Karan Singh was widely unpopular in Jammu due to his engagements with NC (Interview 2023). Karan Singh was also close to Nehru within Congress which presumably induced Jammu's hostile sentiments against the son of Hari Singh. Although Karan Singh also facilitated engagements of the India elites with Jammu's people. Upon Karan Singh's request, the Indian president came on a 4-day social visit to Jammu where he visited a school, attended a gathering in a local, and visited the most important temple of Jammu (File no. 12, NAI). Eventually, Jammu found sympathizers in the Hindu nationalist leaders of Congress.

### *Congress and Communal Nation-Building*

Congress Governments ruled India until the 1990s with a brief 3-year rule of Janta Party. Consequently, Indian processes of nation-building were, in essence, Congress' processes. As early as 1948, Congress began its public goods deliverance in Jammu. Nehru inaugurated a road connecting Jammu with the Indian city of Pathankot, over 110 kms away (File no. 14(174)/1948 PMS, NAI). Congress elites' position on J&K, however, wasn't always homogeneous. The Congress' Hindu nationalist camp, albeit in minority within Congress, was more sympathetic to Jammu than Kashmir. There were divided opinions in Congress regarding the constitutional status of J&K and these came to fore during Praja Parishad's agitations. When Nehru began acknowledging Parishad's agitations, Abdullah distanced himself from Congress and started pushing for Kashmir's independence (Wani 2019: 127). That Abdullah's relations with India suffered due to Praja Parishad's exchanges with Congress would be an understatement. Allegations of Abdullah's maltreatment of Jammu had reached Congress ministers from the early 50s itself (File No. 8(22)-K/51, NAI). There were reports of Kashmiri Muslim-dominated state police collecting bribes in Jammu,

kidnapping Jammu girls, and opening brothels. There was also news about Abdullah recommending Muslim students in a Bihar University over a Hindu student (ibid.).

Congress's exchanges with Jammu increased during the 1960s. Certain Congress members wanted J&K's complete integration with India by removing Article 370. The Parishad itself merged into the Hindu nationalist Jana Sangh party in 1963. After Nehru's death in 1964, his Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda stressed on J&K's integration with India and removing Article 370, a trope that until then was used mostly by Parishad (Abdullah 1986: 570). As conversations surrounding merging National Conference with Congress grew among the Congress hardliners, the Hindu Dogra members of NC supported this proposition (Wani 2019: 215). Congress was emboldened by this support from the Dogras. Subsequently, Congress implemented Article 356 and 357 of Indian constitution in J&K (Wani 2019: 216). These articles granted power to the Indian president to exercise his emergency powers and impose president's rule in J&K without consulting the state government. Moreover, the way Congress caved to Jammu's pressures, further weakened NC's deteriorating position among Kashmiris (ibid.; section 4.3).

The strengthening of relations between the Hindu nationalist of Congress and Jammu, were also a consequence of Jammu's marginalization by Kashmir. The Gajendragadkar Enquiry Commission (1968), to examine regional imbalance in Kashmir, found that elections in J&K were manipulated and unrepresentative. The report urged NC to be more representative and acknowledge the plurality of J&K. Congress leadership stepped in to cater to Jammu's grievances. To improve Jammu's communication with India, bus services were started from Jammu to Delhi and other states (pg. 259). Moreover, the first Sainik School of J&K was established in Jammu in 1970. Sainik Schools are run by the Indian Ministry of Defence to prepare its students for the Indian Military, Air Force, and Naval Services. In response, Jammu's Hindu nationalists pressured Congress to ask GM Sadiq to replace NC with a Congress body, and Sadiq complied. However, Congress was more dominantly engaged with Kashmir more than Jammu. Hindu nationalists, outside of Congress, eventually became the prominent Indian elites for Jammu.

#### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1963-1975

Jammu's depreciating exchange relations with Kashmir were institutionally recognized during this period. The 142-page Gajendragadkar Commission Report in 1968 by the government of J&K claimed that since 1947, the two regions of Ladakh and Jammu faced imbalanced regional development by the ruling Kashmiri elite. The committee was headed by 4 members of Indian bureaucracy appointed in consultation with the Sadiq government. The commission observed that:

"Many Jammu representatives felt aggrieved that the Jammu region was inadequately represented in the Secretariat and in various Government departments, and that frequently even peons, forest guards and Patwaris (accountants) from Kashmir...Communities such as the Gujjars (Jammu Muslims), Rajputs (Jammu Dogras), Shias, Christians, etc. all desired special quotas and reservations of appointments for themselves on the ground of their backwardness" (pg. 6).

These observations were drawn from both oral and primary evidence presented to the committee. Furthermore, as the financial assistance by India to Kashmir's overall planned expenditure increased gradually from 64% in 1956-61 to 97% in 1961-65, the expenditures for Jammu increased by 34% and for Kashmir by 47% (pg. 24-25). Overall, the expenditure in Kashmir was 22% more than in Jammu (pg. 42). While Sadiq and Mir Qasim's client governments did initiate development measures for Jammu, particularly for irrigation and horticulture (Wani 2019: 251), Gajendragadkar enquiry encouraged more contacts between Jammu's civil society and India.

### *Key Voluntary Organisations of Jammu*

The key Jammu organisations that facilitated growing links between Jammu and India, except a handful, were Hindu nationalist in orientation. India's exchanges with Jammu were aided by Jammu's antagonism against Kashmir. and this growing configuration of antagonisms and connections had clear ethnic dimensions. A key organisation was the pan-Indian and Hindu nationalist organisation the RSS. In Jammu the key organisations were the Dharmath Trust, that had existed since Dogra times as well as the newly formed J&K People's Party that was formed after independence to protest

Kashmiri Discrimination. Other organisations such as the Muslim Federation, the Akali Dal and the Dogra Sadar Sabha were organised on ethnic lines.

### Dharmarth Trust

The Dharmarth Trust remained the most-prominent Dogra-era organisation in the post-colonial period. It was started under the Dogras to maintain Hindu temples and to extend the Dogras' Hindu identity across the princely J&K state. The Trust first gained prominence in 1947 after helping with the influx of refugees in Jammu (Wani 2019: 94). Its primary task of maintaining temples and educational institutions was also extended to other Indian cities. Today, it maintains 102 temples in its purview in J&K and in Indian Hindu pilgrimage cities of Varanasi and Haridwar (Dharmarth Trust 2024). It also provides donations to Jammu's Hindu organisations like Sanatan Dharm Sabha and Dharmik Yuva Mandal for promotion and celebration of Hindu festivals (ibid.).

The circumstances surrounding the Trust's ownership between 1950-52 increased the animosity between Kashmiri rulers and Jammu's Hindus. Abdullah wanted to bring the trust under state control. Hari Singh wanted it to be with the Dogra family. Eventually, the Indian government mediated to transfer the Trust to Karan Singh and elected body administrators (Progs.,Nos. 1(18)-K, 1950, NAI). The Trust had been central to Jammu since the inception of Dogra state in both its religious and economic sphere. The NC's attempts to bring the Trust under its government control was criticized in Jammu. The situation was also complicated by the economic and political disparity between Kashmir and Jammu.

### Jammu & Kashmir People's Party

This party, albeit in existence for a short period, exemplifies Jammu's grievance against Kashmir, Jammu's support to India, and Indian elites' engagement with Jammu's organisations. It was formed in 1952 by the former Jammu head of National Conference, Parshu Ram Nagar. He was disillusioned with NC's Kashmir-centric policies. The Party's first public conference was attended in thousands in Jammu. Leading Indian political figures like Ram Manohar Lohia and future Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes also attended (Shrivastava 2015: 18). Through this party,

the non-Congress Indian elites found a way of making inroads in Jammu. The party's primary complaints were the concentration of power in Kashmir by NC, lack of Jammu's representation in the state administration, suppression of political opposition and dissent by NC, and the Congress' failure to check or reform the NC's direction (Progs., Nos, 8(18)-K, 1952, NAI). Nagar also prophesized that NC would eventually co-opt his party. He feared that his members, in absence of any strong support from Indian leadership, would succumb to NC's subversive practices. That did eventually happen. Since NC's activities involved suppressing any opposition through coercion or co-option; the latter happened with People's Party.

### Proliferation of Jammu Organisations

As Jammu's exchange relations with Kashmir declined, multiple voluntary organisations emerged in Jammu. This was best seen during the Gajendragadkar Commission's enquiries. Organisations representing Muslims, lower castes, farmers, and traders submitted memorandums to the Commission (Government of J&K 1968: 103-105). The Commission also received oral testimonies from the Sikh organisations of Jammu, ex-servicemen, and military personnel, elected politicians of Jammu, and prominent Hindu and Muslim civil society members from different towns of Jammu region (pg. 107-111). The key takeaway of this report is not its conclusions of regional imbalance of Kashmir against Jammu. Rather it is the diverse groups and organisations of Jammu submitting their grievances against Kashmir to the Indian commission. Although there is limited information regarding the extent and scope of these organisations, they represented religious, regional, ethnic, occupational, and economic interests of Jammu. Meanwhile, the RSS remained as a key Indian institution, with a regional body in Jammu.

### RSS and Jana Sangh

The RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) became a prominent Indian institution and the flagbearer of Hindu nationalism in Jammu. The RSS began operations in Jammu in the early 40s. Within a short time, RSS increased its sway in Jammu. For instance, Congress leaders MC Mahajan and Sardar Patel urged the RSS chief in Nagpur and RSS head in Jammu to convince the Dogra *Maharaja* to accede with India (Kashmir

Records 2024). An Indian intelligence report from 1951 stated that RSS held a public rally every Sunday, attended by thousands of people, where Jammu's fate under Kashmiri rule was discussed (File No.8(6)-K/51, NAI). With the Praja Parishad, the RSS undertook door-to-door campaigns discussing Kashmir's unfair treatment towards Jammu in the 50s. They emphasized the importance of integration with India. This two-pronged campaign- Kashmir's maltreatment and Indian integration- hinged on a Hindu nationalist ethos. The RSS's own activities were reduced after the merger of Praja Parishad and Jana Sangh. They increased after the 1989 insurgency, as the RSS overtly pursued its Hindu nationalist ideas in Jammu.

The RSS workers in Jammu, however, contested that their activities were national, not communal (Interview 2022). They claimed that their primary objective was J&K's integration with India i.e., removal of Article 370. To support this claim, an RSS member gave two examples. First, that abrogation of Article 370 would've implied 90% of reserved jobs for Jammu's Muslims. Second, that the first Muslim member of RSS in India was from Jammu (ibid.; Ganjoo 2020). But for many decades, the RSS networks were confined to Jammu's Hindus. RSS were also involved in the 1947 violence against the Jammu Muslims (Lamb 1991). Meanwhile, RSS' claims are challenged by the Muslim organisations of Jammu, particularly the Muslim Federation.

### Muslim Identity and Muslim Federation

Muslims of Jammu, especially in the Jammu district, were in a complicated situation after 1947. They were culturally, socially, and linguistically different from Kashmiri Muslims. These differences were amplified under the Dogra rule when Jammu Muslims enjoyed comparatively cordial relations with the Dogras. However, when the Dogras-backed violence against Jammu Muslims prevailed, they found themselves without any friends in Jammu or Kashmir. The exclusionary Hindu-centric nature of Indian exchanges in Jammu compelled the Muslims into further political dormancy. Yet there was no repeat of the 1947 violence again. Was this a consequence of fear among Muslims or amicable relations between Jammu's Hindus and Muslims? I argue, using's Wimmer's framework, that it was a result of both factors.

Wimmer suggests that building exchange relationships across ethnic divides to foster nation-building is a slow-moving process spread over decades. To reiterate, Jammu region's prominent ethnic groups are Dogras (45%), Gujjar-Bakarwals (upto 20%), and the rest being Paharis, Gaddis, and other tribal groups (Census of India 1981). While the majority of Dogras and Paharis are Hindus, Muslims are spread across the other ethnicities. Until the 1970s, Jammu Muslims stayed away from politics fearing a repeat of the violence. They also benefitted from Abdullah's land reforms (Puri 2001: 73), further distancing themselves from Jammu's Hindu-centric social and political networks. The absence of exchanges between India and Jammu Muslims was most evident during the 1965 India-Pakistan war. While NC pledged support to India, Muslims (Gujjar-Bakarwals) of Poonch and Rajouri joined the ranks of Pakistani infiltrators and supported their military efforts (Wani 2019: 220-222). They also supported the Plebiscite Front and joined Kashmiri militant outfits during the 1960s. Yet this brief period of violence was reversed after the war. Jammu Muslims oriented away from Kashmiri Muslims. The absence of Kashmiri exchanges is one reason for Jammu Muslims' reversal. But why would they turn to the Hindu polity of Jammu?

Different scholars writing about Jammu Muslims posit different interpretations. Wimmer's three variables underline all the interpretations. Rekha Chaudhary suggests that Kashmiri Muslims considered themselves different from Jammu Muslims. Kashmiri Muslim elites rarely built networks with Jammu's non-elite Muslims. Those Jammu Muslims who did partake in the 1965 war or the plebiscite movement were only fringe elements (Interview 2023; Chaudhary 2016: 166). She also suggests that Jammu's demography encouraged contacts between Jammu Muslims and Hindus after 1947 (2023: 194-196). Every region of Jammu has mix of Hindu and Muslim populations. But more importantly, they belonged to shared ethnic and cultural-linguistic groups. Their daily engagements in shared spaces allowed for a cohesive Jammu identity. Balraj Puri suggests that regional consciousness among Muslims emerged out of literary differences with Kashmir. Jammu was the site of the literary movements of Dogri, Pahari, and Gojri languages (Puri 2001: 75), the latter two spoken by Jammu Muslims. Linguistic supremacy of one language over another, such as Urdu imposition in J&K, also hampered exchange relations between Jammu Muslims and Kashmir (Wimmer 2018: 30-31). Zafar Chaudhary claims that after the

1947 violence, Jammu Muslims refused to indulge in Kashmiri movement. They preferred to persist with their quite lives in Jammu.

“After 1947, they found it in the fitness of things to have cordial relations with the immediate neighbours (Jammu Hindus). In times of joys and pains they had to fall back upon the neighbours...Whether out of compulsion or free will these relations grew by years to shape up the composite culture of Jammu...” (Chaudhary 2008: 13).

To probe the networks between Jammu Muslims and Hindus, I turn to Ashutosh Varshney. He contends that wherever robust associational forms (through voluntary organisations) or civic forms (routine interactions, celebrating festivals, interactions in schools etc) of relations exist between Hindus and Muslims, tendency for communal conflict reduces (Varshney 2002: 3). Varshney also contests that despite the presence of organisations like RSS, Hindus and Muslims can be communally unpolarized. He cites the example of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, a prominent seat of Hindu nationalists. He contends that it was the daily and informal interactions between Hindu and Muslim workforce of Lucknow, that prevented any communal conflict in the city. Even as Lucknow’s Hindus favoured BJP electorally, they avoided any communal polarization due to their daily economic engagement with Muslims. Likewise, differences with Kashmiri Muslims implied that Jammu Muslims relied on Jammu Hindus for their day-to-day interactions. These interactions ensured that despite the rise of Hindu nationalist organisations, relations of Hindus and Muslims of Jammu remained cordial. Jammu Muslims’ differences with Kashmir were also seen through the memorandums submitted by Muslim organisations from Poonch and Udhampur to the Gajendragadkar Commission (Government of J&K 1968: 109). It was in this context, that the Muslim Federation (MF) of Jammu was formed in 1972 by Abdul Majid.

MF had two objectives: to fill the political vacuum for Jammu’s Muslims and promote communal harmony with Hindus after decades of insecurity (Interview 2023). Majid joined hands with Gulchain Charak, head of the Rajput Mahasabha and later the Dogra Sadar Sabha, to form the Jammu Mahasabha. This body demanded devolution of powers to Jammu and an autonomous regional council. Together, Majid and Charak organized various public meetings. They promoted celebrating Hindu and Muslims festivals together (ibid.). Varshney argues that associational forms of engagement are

more effective in fostering peace in a communally polarized environment (Varshney 2002: 3-4). These organisations then collectively fostered Jammu's exchange relations with India after 1990s. While MF always refrained from commenting on the status of 370, citing itself as a social organisation, Dogra Sadar Sabha took a stand regarding 370. The DSS established itself as a key voluntary organization along with Muslim Federation through which India's nation-building process progressed in Jammu (Chapter 5).

#### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1975-1989

The governor of J&K and Abdullah's secretary recalled that Abdullah wished to include Muslim areas of Jammu within his independent Kashmir territory (Nehru 1997: 593; Ahmad 2008: 123-124). But as the previously discussed scholars claimed, Jammu was never spoken to or consulted by the Kashmiri leaders. Kashmiri elites merely gave speeches without Jammu's agency. Even as areas within Jammu division like Poonch sympathized with Kashmir, they were never co-opted by the Kashmiri leaders. Indeed, the NC's blatant corruption often brought Jammu's Hindus and Muslims together in protest; for example, in 1978 they protested the NC government's decision to offer teaching posts to its preferred candidates with high-school certificates over more qualified candidates with post-graduate degrees. For corruption in the 90% Muslim-majority district, both Hindus and Muslims protested (Wani 2019:315). That Jammu Muslims were averse to Kashmiri politics was evident in this period. But were they similarly oriented towards the Indian elites or Hindu nationalism, like the Jammu Hindus? Orientation towards India happened considerably after the insurgency. Yet Hindu nationalism remained an antagonistic issue for the Muslims. Thus, it was in the period after 1989, that the effects of communal harmony between Jammu's communities was seen.

#### **4.4 Nation-building in Ladakh: Communal Exchange Networks and Cooperative Militarization**

Exchange relations in Ladakh were underscored by two major themes: the dominance of Buddhism and the presence of Indian military. To briefly reiterate, Ladakh was the largest region of J&K (96,000sq km against 45,000sq km of Jammu & Kashmir) but

with only 2 per cent of the state population (134,372 people in Ladakh against 5,987,389 people in J&K state) (Census of India 1981). The population is spread over two districts of Leh and Kargil. Ladakh is Buddhist-dominated, Kargil is Shia Muslim-dominated, with Buddhists comprising 51 per cent of Ladakh population.

More than Jammu, Ladakh was deprived of meaningful exchanges by the Kashmiri elites and soon after 1947, Ladakh sought exchanges with the more viable exchange partner, India. By Ladakh, I imply its representative elites, the Buddhists. Like Ladakh was marginalized in J&K, Kargil was marginalised in Ladakh. I explore this intra-Ladakh nuance in the next sections and chapter. Nonetheless, Ladakh's Buddhists' decreasing exchanges with the Kashmiri elite coincided with the increasing exchanges with Indian elites, particularly its army.

Ladakh's reciprocal exchange relations with India came about through both organisational and political economy variables. For the organisational variable, I discuss the rise of the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) and Kushak Bakula, the most important Ladakhi leader. Bakula, a Buddhist monk, occupied the highest place in Ladakh's religious and political hierarchy. Aligned with the LBA, his stance vis-à-vis India and Kashmir became Ladakh's Buddhists' stance. Under the political economy variable, I analyse the impact of Ladakh's militarization on its economy. Indian military's presence in Ladakh led to building of roads, bridges, and employment for Ladakhis. The final sub-section discusses both aspects of exchanges through the growing relations between Indian Army and Ladakh, tourism in Ladakh, and agitations for autonomy by the LBA. As stated, a distinct feature of nation-building in Ladakh was the politicization of Buddhist identity. The Buddhists of Leh represented Ladakh in India and Kashmir. Kargil remained largely un-politicized until 1980s. Therefore, India's exchange relations between 1947-1989 were mainly with the Ladakh's Buddhists.



Map 8. Ladakh division in J&K state (Simarpriti 2019)

### *LBA and Kushak Bakula*

Why did a Buddhist organisation like the LBA, and a Buddhist monk Kushak Bakula, become the primary representatives of Ladakh after 1947? Two reasons can be given for why India's nation-building project in Ladakh began through its Buddhist actors. One, Nehru and Abdullah engaged mostly with the LBA and Bakula. Nehru even invited Bakula to his home in Delhi as Ladakh's representative. No such leader from Kargil was invited. Second and more importantly, the centrality of Buddhism in Ladakh ensured the centrality of Buddhists in Ladakh's politics. Ladakh underwent changes in its rulers from the Tibetan dynasties to the Dogras to the National Conference. Unlike the rulers, the centrality of Buddhism and Monasteries remained unchanged (Puri 2001: 77). For centuries, the Buddhist Monasteries and their *Lamas* governed all the religious aspects of Ladakhi life from birth to death, of kings and commoners. They were the largest landholders in Ladakh. Consequently, the monasteries also presided over the region's economy based on pastoralism and agriculture.

With the centrality of Buddhism established over centuries, Ladakh's Buddhist elites became its *de facto* representatives after 1947. Yet before 1947, there were very few social organisations and Ladakhi Buddhists were largely un-politicized. The first

Ladakh-based organisation was formed in 1933: Ladakh Buddhist Education Society (LBES). LBES was replaced by the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in 1938. YMBA had Ladakhi Buddhists and Kashmiri Hindus as its members. They were focused on the social reforms, like polyandry among the Buddhists. The 1947 war changed the name of YMBA to LBA (Ladakh Buddhist Association) and the organisation's orientation from a concern about Ladakhi society to asserting the 'need for secession of Ladakh from Jammu & Kashmir State' (Van Beek 2004: 200). The destruction of Buddhist Monasteries during the India-Pakistan war in 1948 also prompted the *Lamas* to take note of the geopolitics surrounding Kashmir (File No.8(60)-NEF/48, NAI).

The politicization of Ladakh was on communal lines. The LBA perceived Ladakh as a 'bastion of Buddhism under threat by the Kashmiri Muslims' (Upali 2024: 20). The central narrative of the LBA was a fear of Kashmir dominance which in turn produced an emphasis 'on Buddhism as a marker of Ladakhi people and the region as well' (ibid.). It was in this context that Chewang Rigzin, president of LBA, wrote a letter to Nehru in 1949 (Behera 2000: 311-314). The letter suggested Ladakh being distinct from Kashmir and argued for India's direct rule over Ladakh, or a merger with Jammu. The Indian president in 1954 also discussed Ladakh and Jammu in the same breath (File No. 52/2/54, NAI). When the Indian president visited Jammu on Karan Singh's insistence in 1954, he awarded a few scholarships to Ladakhis and deputed an Indian officer to survey Jammu for the establishment of industries. Backwardness of Jammu and Ladakh in comparison to Kashmir was recognised during this visit.

What explains Ladakh demanding merger with Jammu and India as early as 1949? The LBA vice-president suggested that Ladakh's Indianization was due to their association with the Dogra rule, the impact of the 1948 war, and the apprehensions of Kashmiri rule (Interview 2023). Another reason cited was that Ladakh was associated with Jammu since 1834. Kashmir became a part of the state only in 1846. Therefore, Ladakh had no association with Kashmir (Behera 2001). One can also not discount the linkages between Buddhism and Hinduism. Van Beek (2004) argues that Ladakhi inclination towards India was influenced by the Hindus outside Ladakh (citing the presence of Hindus in YMBA and LBA). The LBA participated in Praja Parishad's agitations and aligned itself with Jammu organisations throughout the 50s and 60s.

The LBA linked 'Ladakhi identity with the wider Indian identity by claiming Buddhism as essentially Indian' (Upali 2024: 21). The assertion of Buddhism as Indian was propagated by Kushak Bakula Rinpoche.

Kushak Bakula was the direct descendant of the last pre-Dogra king of Ladakh, and recognised by the Dalai Lama as a direct disciple of Buddha (FPMT 2018). His revered stature was acknowledged by Nehru, initiating India's nation-building process in the cold desert. In the meeting at Nehru's Delhi residence in May 1949, Bakula explicitly stated that Ladakh would remain within India, should Kashmir join Pakistan or declare independence (Wangchuk 2021). Nehru too visited Ladakh in July where Bakula formally joined politics. This reciprocity between Bakula and Nehru was strengthened through Abdullah's Land Reforms. Abdullah cited economic inequality as the rationale for redistributing lands of monasteries. Bakula urged Nehru for the exemption of monasteries from the reforms as they were crucial for religious and agriculture activities. On Nehru's insistence, the monasteries were eventually exempted (File No. 1 (33)-K/50, NAI). Establishing Buddhists as the representative of Ladakh was, thus, sanctioned by Delhi. Bakula also inaugurated the headquarters of LBA (Interview 2023), set up the All Ladakh Gompa Association for the preservation of Monasteries (Chodon 2024), and was Ladakh's first representative to J&K's legislature. In 1952, he made a speech in the J&K assembly underscoring the limited exchanges between NC and Ladakh as the reason to demand integration with India:

"If the Budget estimate is read from one end to the other, no mention of Ladakh is found anywhere in it...The economic development of our area has not come to the thought budget makers because there is no mention of it even by mistake in the budget..." (Wangchuk 2018).

That the area covering 40 per cent of J&K's territory had no funds allocated for it by the ruling elites, gained national and international attention (ibid.). Bakula also complained about the imposition of Urdu, the lack of assistance for the refugees fleeing Pakistan, and the corruption of Kashmiri officials of the state. As plebiscite demands in Kashmir increased, so did contacts between Bakula and India. Bakula, after his 1952 speech, urged Nehru to transfer Ladakh completely to Indian dominion (File No. 187/52, NAI). Bakula also wrote to the Indian Ministry of States regarding the

discriminatory treatment of Buddhists by the Kashmiri police officers (File No. M/52/6521/107, NAI).

### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1947-1953

Ladakh's orientation towards India, was also prompted by Kashmir's indifferences. After the Buddhist monasteries were desecrated in the war, no funds were provided by the NC government for their restoration (Behera 2001). The relief aid provided by India for the monasteries was diverted to the Muslims of Kargil by NC (ibid.). As corroborated by the Gajendragadkar Commission, no funds were allocated for Ladakh by Kashmir in the first J&K budget (Government of J&K 1968). Nehru's support to Bakula prompted a dialogue between Bakula and Abdullah for Ladakh's benefit, but their plans never materialized. Bakula's primary demands included autonomy to Ladakh, a separate Ladakh affairs ministry, replacing Kashmiris with locals in the state police, introducing Bodhi language in schools, and allocating funds for construction of roads (Behera 2001). As these demands remained unfulfilled, Bakula supported Parishad's agitations in Jammu.

"He maintained that Ladakh had no bond with Kashmir...He categorically mentioned that in no way-racially, linguistically, or culturally-did Ladakh have affinity with Kashmir. Interestingly, though, in respect of these cultural attributes, Ladakh is also equally distinct from Jammu, but the lama preferred to be a part of Jammu" (Wani 2019: 123).

Kargil Muslims, meanwhile, distanced themselves from the LBA and Bakula. They believed that the Buddhists shared affinity with Hinduism more than Islam (Bazaz 1954: 474). While the Buddhists of Ladakh feared domination in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir, 'the Ladakh Muslims also refused to be a part of any political and administrative arrangement which would subordinate them to a Buddhist majority' (Wani 2019: 36). The people in Kargil preferred Srinagar's rule over Leh's rule. They did not support LBA or Bakula's demands for Ladakh. However, Kashmiri organisations rarely sought Kargil's support in their activities (Interview 2023) Kargil leaders too relied on NC for their day-to-day needs without 'radicalizing' their politics (Wani 2019: 36). The Shia-Sunni equation of Kargil and Kashmir also kept them at a

distance. However, Kargil's sparse demography and harsh topography ensured that Kargil's position regarding Kashmir and Leh was inconsequential (Bose 2003).

### *Indian Army, BRO, and Development in Ladakh*

India's nation-building in Ladakh formally began through its army which has been stationed there since the 1947-48 war. Ladakh's militarization set-in motion the political economy exchanges between the people of Ladakh and the Indian army. The militarization necessitated construction of roads, bridges, and demand for such services required for maintaining military personnel. To this end, the Indian army engineered economic development in Ladakh. In exchange, Ladakhis joined the Indian military, and supported them by working as drivers, cooks, porters, etc. That people offer military services and political support to the state in exchange for public goods hold true in case of Ladakh (Wimmer 2018).

### Early Relations with Army

The 1947-48 war began Ladakh's coalescing with the Indian nation-building process. Kushak Bakula's letter to India regarding Kashmiri Police's ill-treatment of the Ladakhis, also mentioned Kashmiri police's ill-treatment of Ladakhis soldiers (File No. M/52/6521/107, NAI). He wrote about the Ladakhis in the 7 J&K battalion detained under false cases by the police. Bakula alleged that the Buddhist soldiers were prevented by the Muslim police from conducting their duties. Bakula expressed that 7 J&K battalion was the only source of relief for Ladakhis living under the Kashmiri administration (ibid.). This battalion originated from the Nubra Guards; an Indian paramilitary force of Ladakhi volunteers. A local, Tsewang Rigzin, who later became a colonel in Indian army, had raised this volunteer militia of over 1150 to assist the Indian army in the 1947 war (Gupta 2023). These Nubra Guards also included over 120 Dogra army troops within its ranks. Goverdhan Jamwal in Jammu and LBA president in Leh claimed that since this war, the regions directed their loyalty towards India (Interviews 2022, 2023). The war was significant because:

“everyone had a significant part in some or the other way, while some of them acted as a volunteered army, some were engaged in arranging food and transport facilities

and some acted as messenger from one place to another. Even, the monks from monasteries and the local families of Ladakh also extended their assistance by arranging grains supply to the army” (Dolma 2018: 502).

Ladakhis were also motivated towards joining the Indian army when Tsewan Ringzin, only 17 during the war, became the youngest Indian recipient of the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest Indian gallantry award. Moreover, Ladakh had no airstrips for the Indian aircrafts to land. A local engineer, Sonam Norbu, built a makeshift airstrip in Leh in March 1948 within three weeks (Stobdan 2019). For most local people, an aircraft was the first motor vehicle they had ever seen. Ladakh also saw an airstrip built before its first road. Post-war, India reciprocated with economic efforts for Ladakh’s development. India prioritised building roads in Ladakh through the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

#### BRO and Provision of Public Goods

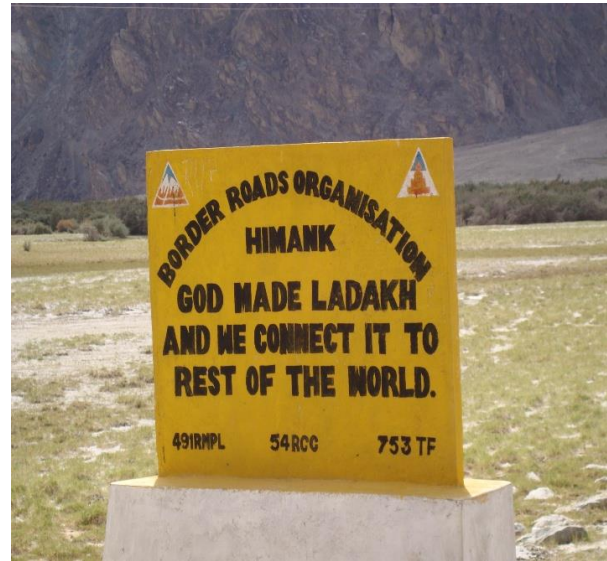
The BRO was formed in 1960 by Nehru for the construction of roads and airstrips for the army in India’s border areas. It became the key peace and war-time provider of infrastructure in Ladakh. During 1960-63, over Rs 32,200,000 was sanctioned by government of India for construction of roads and bridges across the region while the J&K government provided Rs 1,500,000 (File No. 20/12/61-K, NAI). Besides infrastructure, the military and the civilian leadership also worked to improve agricultural productivity. They ‘promoted the introduction of new crops, fertilizers, and pesticides in agriculture to reduce dependence on food imports from the plains.’ The surplus food that was produced was then ‘purchased by the army, which has personnel stationed in Ladakh in numbers said to equal or exceed the local population’ (Van Beek 2001: 537). In short, although it was the geostrategic location of Ladakh which necessitated Indian expenditure, it nevertheless aided India’s nation-building process.

Documents from the National Archives of India show the other ways in which Indian exchanges were cemented during the 60s. Scholarships were given to Ladakhi students to study in Sarnath in 1966, the place of Lord Buddha’s first sermon (file No. 2/4/66-K). A Nehru memorial primary school was sanctioned by the government to be opened in Leh, with focus on the employment for female teachers and educating

young girls of the region (File No. 16/12/66-K). The Indian government also erected a memorial in Aksai Chin region in the memory of 10 Ladakhi constables killed in an encounter with the Chinese troops in 1959 (File No. I-X-I/60-67). The Indian Administrative Services officers, the apex Indian bureaucrats, were also posted in Ladakh after 1960 (File No. 20/3/61-K), among other initiatives. By the 70s, relations between Ladakh and India had strengthened to the extent that an Action Committee for Central Administration in Ladakh was formed by a *Lama* demanding statehood for Ladakh. He demanded Ladakh being made an independent Indian state (File No. 12/34/73-K, NAI). The desire of merger with India also strengthened due to three wars during this period.

### Construction Activities and Employment Due to Wars

India's wars with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965, 1971) have been subject of literature on India-Pakistan relations, Sino-India relations, and Indian Military. But it was India's road construction in Ladakh, during and after the wars, that requires attention for this thesis. In Ladakh, 'the purposes of roads are manifold: economic, social, symbolic, administrative, and political – which includes internal politics, nation-building, and security' (Demenge 2011: 63). Thus, the construction of roads in Ladakh was prioritized by Delhi. With only few road projects completed until the 60s, the BRO was tasked as a specialized organisation to oversee the rapid construction of roads in strategic areas. Road construction through BRO became a major employment opportunity for the Ladakhis. 'Roads are always under construction or improvement through widening, tunnelling, rectification, reparation, blacktopping, maintenance, and the construction of walls, bridges, drainage, etc. This is true anywhere but more especially in mountain districts such as Ladakh' (pg. 86). BRO employed labourers, engineers, and surveyors, sometimes as many as 200 at one construction site. This provided alternate means of employment to the Ladakhis who were otherwise dependent on agriculture. Likewise, the construction of roads and deployment of army implied more consumers of limited Ladakhi goods like wool, milk, potatoes, cauliflower, and cabbage (Rizvi 1996).



Images 2 and 3. These signs signifying the role of BRO in Ladakh's nation-building are dotted across Ladakh's roads (Chirag Ahuja 2023)

Besides public spending and the gradual institutionalization of BRO, the reciprocity in exchanges was best seen through Ladakhis' employment in the Indian army. When multiple Indian regiments and battalions descended across Ladakh in 1947, they sought local help. The help was also sought in the 1962 war. While India lost that war with China, the army acknowledged the support of the 7 and the 14 J&K Militia. The two Ladakhi battalions in J&K were merged into a separate regiment of the Indian army called 'Ladakh Scouts' (Global Security 2024). The 1965 war with Pakistan was fought on Kargil and Leh fronts. Leh's responsibility was given to the Ladakh Scouts and Nubra guards (Hall of Fame Museum 2023). On the Kargil front, Ladakhis were involved through the BRO. They maintained the roads for army's movement. Ladakhis were again called upon during the 1971 war with Pakistan. Led by Tsewang Rigzin, Ladakh Scouts advanced into and captured 5 villages of the Turtuk area of Pakistan and brought it under Indian control (ibid.). The wars increased the popularity of the army to such extent that thereafter, nearly each Ladakhi family sent at least 1 male member to join the Ladakh Scouts (Wangchuk 2024; Interviews 2023).

Along with the Ladakh Scouts, Ladakhis also had new employment opportunities through tourism in the 1970s. The construction of roads had created avenues of tourism in Ladakh (Chapter 5). Ladakh was opened to India and the world in 1974. The tensions surrounding the wars had cooled down when Kushak Bakula urged the

Kashmiri and Indian government to consider Ladakh's tourism opportunities. Over 500 foreign tourists and 27 from India, visited Ladakh in 1974 (Tourist office Kargil 2023). Altogether, these economic activities by India politicized the Ladakhi identity, or Ladakhi Buddhist identity. The Ladakhi Buddhist elites sought governance under direct Indian rule i.e. the demand for being a Union Territory (UT) of India (Puri 1982). Besides the states, India has UTs. These are semi-autonomous regions directly governed by the central government in Delhi. The demand for UT, thus, became the condition for the 'success' of India's nation-building in Ladakh.

#### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1953-1975

The brief period of Bakshi's handouts improved the exchanges between Kashmir and Jammu. Ladakh enjoyed no such benefits from Kashmir. India remained the more viable exchange partner for Ladakh. An Indian delegation tasked to examine India's frontier areas concluded that under Abdullah and Bakshi's regimes, development plans for Ladakh remained mostly on paper (File No.6(16)-K/54, NAI). During the ten years of Bakshi's rule, no industrial or agricultural plans were initiated or implemented in Ladakh. 'As a result, the people of Ladakh continued to nurse grievances against the Valley's dominance in the State's power structures' (Behera 2001).

The Gajendragadkar Report quantifies the deteriorated Ladakh-Kashmir exchanges. According to the report, Rs 952 million was budgeted for J&K during 1951-61. Ladakh received Rs 23 million from it (Government of J&K 1968: 24-25). Given the area of Ladakh, while per square mile expenditure in Kashmir and Jammu was RS 13,809, Leh's was Rs 2905 (Van Beek 2000: 537). Sadiq, Bakshi's successor, attempted to make amends for NC's indifference towards Ladakh by setting up a Ladakh Development Board. The Board was formed under Kushak Bakula and Agha Ibrahim Shah, two leaders from Leh and Kargil. However, this too failed to yield any constructive results. The continued marginalisation of Ladakh by Kashmir initiated the phase of agitational politics in Ladakh from 1969 (Van Beek 2024: 202).

Ladakh's marginalization by Kashmir also increased contacts between Ladakh's organisations and Hindu nationalists of India. An active voice and organisation for Ladakh was the Jana Sangh. In 1973, the Sangh officially demanded making Ladakh

a Union Territory of India (Upali 2024: 25). Lama Lobzang, spokesperson of the LBA and founder of Ladakh Buddha Vihara, a Ladakhi organisation in Delhi, supported Jana Sangh in demanding the Union territory status for Ladakh (ibid.). Gradually, the depreciating Kashmir-Ladakh relations during this period, along with the appreciating Ladakh-Indian army exchange relations, pushed the region towards demanding the UT status. The demands for such autonomy only increased after 1975 and reached their zenith post-1989.

### *Ladakh Scouts, Tourism, Agitations for Autonomy*

Sheikh Abdullah resumed control of J&K in 1975 with its largest region demanding separation from the state. Ladakh's demands intensified after 1975, owing to their continued exchanges with India through political economy variable (activities of BRO, Ladakh Scouts, tourism) and the organisational variable (LBA).

#### BRO and Ladakh Scouts

With the growing strategic significance of Ladakh, BRO started a dedicated road construction project to ensure seamless military and civilian mobility within the region: Project Himank. Since its inception in 1985, Himank has been central to constructing and maintaining roads and airfields in the rugged terrains, snow clad peaks, and sub-zero temperatures of Ladakh. Himank took up construction activities from Kargil near Pakistan border to Pangong on China border. Consequently, roads and employments increased in Ladakh. Joining Ladakh Scouts, meanwhile, remained the perennial source of employment in Ladakh even after the wars. Ladakh Scouts was institutionalized within the Indian military structure increasing its prestige and India's visibility in Ladakh. Scouts' assistance during the preceding wars led to its reorganisation in 1983 as it received its own headquarters (Wangchuk 2018). The Scouts' popularity within the region has been such that the locals to date say that Ladakhis only have two professions: to join the Ladakh Scouts or drive taxis for tourists (Interviews 2023).

#### Tourism

Opening of tourism in Ladakh was part of India's nation-building process in the region. For one, it put Ladakh on the map of 'Indian' tourist destinations. Secondly, tourism generated diverse livelihood opportunities in Ladakh. Consequently, Ladakhis opened hotels, restaurants, taxi services, tour guide services, and shops to sell goods and fruits (Vogel and Field 2020: 3-5). Moreover, given the sensitive borders of Ladakh, all tourists require permits to travel beyond Leh. They are called Inner Line Permit (ILP) for Indians or Protected Area Permit (PAP) for foreigners. The permits are restriction placed on tourists, to prevent travel to the sensitive areas bordering Pakistan and China. In a way not dissimilar to the colonial period (Goswami 2004), the territorial boundaries of India were reinforced in Ladakh through tourism. The Ladakhi demographic involved with tourism had to attune itself with ILP/PAP. And through their daily interactions among themselves and with tourists regarding the permits, the Indian borders have been reinforced in Ladakh. The Indian Army also aided with tourism and reinforcement of Indian boundaries. Firstly, Army's presence and BRO's road construction facilitated opening the region to the tourists. Secondly, army camps were built across Ladakh. Their increased visibility to the locals and tourists further Indianized Ladakh. This was the development of the identification aspect of nation-building in Ladakh (Wimmer 2018). Emergence of Indian identifications compelled the LBA to launch agitations for the 'integration' aspect of nation-building i.e. agitations for the UT status. When Kashmir was edging towards insurgency against by 1989, Ladakh agitated for integration with India.

#### *LBA Agitations for Autonomy and Buddhist-Hindu Communalization*

The prominent feature of LBA's agitations in 1989 for the direct Indian rule over Ladakh was its overt communal nature. Leading up to the 1989 agitations, the LBA represented only Buddhists interests. Although LBA demanded UT status for entire Ladakh, it did not include or engage with the Kargil Muslims. Ladakhi Buddhists feared being a minority in J&K, therefore, they demanded the UT status. Likewise, Ladakhi Muslims feared being a minority in Ladakh and were bound to turn to NC. 'A vicious circle resulted, leading to the beginning of divisions among the Ladakhis into the Ladakhi Buddhists and the Ladakhi Muslims, along a communal faultline' (Behera 2001). The faultline was also drawn by Abdullah when he carved out a separate Kargil district in Ladakh in 1979 and included the Buddhist-majority Zaskar region in Kargil

district. The bifurcation of Ladakh on religious lines increased Buddhist resentment against the Muslim government of Kashmir (Van Beek 2000: 175). LBA opposed this division and its protests against the NC continued throughout the 80s. Ladakhi Buddhists elites were unaware that the economic developments which Indianized their identity, also politicized Kargil Muslims' sub-regional identity (Puri 1982: 273). Ladakhi Buddhists considered themselves as Ladakhi and Indian. Kargil Muslims were still Kargili and Muslim. LBA alliance with the Hindu nationalists, meanwhile, continued, during this period. In Delhi, LBA protests were supported by the BJP. In Ladakh, the LBA was supported by the RSS. Together, they agitated against the NC rule (Interviews 2023). The new generation of LBA leadership believed that communal networks would get the attention of New Delhi. 'A more active relationship with Hindu nationalist forces was an element of this new approach' (Van Beek 2004: 204).

Given the continuous recognition of Ladakhi Buddhists, and Leh being the bigger beneficiary of Indian exchanges, Ladakh's communalization was inevitable. In 1989, Ladakh witnessed its biggest communal conflict. Leh had seen an influx of Kashmiri Muslims and Ladakhi Muslims since the opening of tourism. 'Kashmiri Muslims bagged the development contracts for constructing buildings, roads and bridges in connivance with the Kashmiri-dominated bureaucracy' (Puri 1982: 273). The famous Leh market was dominated by Kashmiri hotel-owners and traders. Local Buddhists were antagonistic to this Kashmiri domination. The increased communal tensions in Leh came to fore when a scuffle between a Buddhist and four Muslims broke out in the Leh market in July 1989, leading to a state-wide agitation by the Buddhists. In Lucknow and Jammu, daily interactions between religious communities reduced communal polarization (Varshney 2002). In Ladakh, engagement between its Buddhists and Muslims was limited after 1947. The Ladakhi Buddhists, eventually, led a social and economic boycott of Kashmiri Muslims in Leh. The 'valley traders soon vanished from the Leh market and their hotels and restaurants were shut down' (Puri 1982: 273). The violence was more severe in villages outside Leh where the Muslim houses were burnt and their crops were damaged.

The LBA's social boycott was followed by a resolution that signified Ladakh's breakdown of exchange relations with Kashmir. The resolution suggested that Kashmiri Muslims possessed explosives, they targeted Buddhists in Jammu and

Ladakh, and that Ladakh's colonization by Kashmir must end (LBA Resolution 1989). 'This position of LBA strengthened its ability to gain sympathy of not only Central authorities, but also wide sections of the media' (Upali 2024: 26). Moreover, BJP sent delegations to Leh and the Indian Prime Minister, Narsimha Rao, to support LBA's demands (Van Beek 2004: 205). Kargil's Shia Muslims, stayed away from LBA's resolution and agitations and adopted a neutral stance. Their stance was in the light of Sunni Kashmir turning to insurgency and Buddhist Leh turning to violence against Muslims. Nevertheless, Ladakh-Kashmir association reached its lowest ebb. This was due to both the reciprocal exchanges with India and repressive exchanges with Kashmir.

#### Exchange Relations with Kashmir, 1975-1989

When Abdullah returned to power, he did little to improve the Kashmir-Ladakh relations and instead suppressed the LBA agitations. LBA's demands for separation from Kashmir and integration with India increased manifold in the 80s. Abdullah consistently denied the allegations of discriminating against Buddhists after LBA accused the NC of treating Zaskar Buddhists as slaves (Behera 2001). Moreover, India too indulged in a partisan approach. Indian elites vociferously condemned the communal actions of *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Kashmir. However, LBA's communalism was comparatively less condemned (Wani 2019: 312). LBA's agitations also often involved Kashmiri police firing and using tear-gas upon the protestors. Ladakhi representatives reasserted their accusations and demanded concessions based on Ladakh's area and difficult terrain. The agitations stopped after Abdullah's death and the change in Kashmiri leadership, only to emerge with full force in 1989 after the scuffle in Leh market.

#### **4.5 Analysis of India's Exchange Relations**

The three regions had exchanges with two prominent Indian elites: Congress and Hindu nationalists. In this period, Congress' exchanges were dominantly with Kashmir and Ladakh while Hindu nationalists had exchanges with Jammu. Congress' post-colonial nation building was coercive in Kashmir; in contrast to the nation-building during the anti-colonial phase which was through coalition and co-option. In Ladakh, Congress networks involved engaging with the Buddhist organisations and proving

public goods in the region. Kargil's Muslims were largely excluded from these networks. Conversely, the nation-building of the Hindu nationalist Indian elites in Jammu was reciprocal; but it was also communal. Hindu nationalist networks were not inclusionary of the Muslims of Jammu. Thus, Congress networks in Ladakh and Hindu nationalists' networks in Jammu facilitated their integration with India but the Muslims of the two regions were largely excluded from these networks. The Muslims of the two regions were engaged with after 1989. Meanwhile, Congress's repressive networks with the Kashmiri Muslims eventually led to the insurgency in valley.

### *Non-Reciprocal and Repressive Relations: Kashmir*

Strong exchange relations between the government and citizens are necessary to induce national consciousness and facilitate integration. There were only two periods of such relations between Kashmir and India since 1947: Abdullah's period before his arrest and Bakshi's period of economic development. During Abdullah's rule, NC-Congress alliance ushered in land reforms, Article 370 for J&K's autonomy, and suppression of any political opposition. Land reforms and Article 370 enfranchised the Kashmiri Muslim population which suffered under the Dogra rule. Hence, suppression of organisations had limited impact in this period. Similarly, Abdullah's arrest too caused limited disruption in the state. His arrest was countered by the NC elites emphasizing on developing Kashmir's economy and putting food and money in the hands of Kashmiris. Bakshi's reign of subsidies, employment opportunities, reforms in education and agriculture, raised his stature at par with Abdullah. But continued suppression of political organisations, by NC-Congress, hampered the exchanges between Kashmir and India.

Wimmer suggests that Belgium, theoretically, could have had an integrated nation since it was capable of delivering public goods (2018: 41-42). However, the absence of strong organisations meant that the nation-building in Belgium failed. Kashmir's case is comparable in this regard. Ganguly (1996) too asserted that the economic development in Kashmir created politically conscious Kashmiris who were then deprived of representation in J&K's polity. This denial of representative exchanges to the Kashmiri organisations accelerated under the Bakshi and subsequent NC governments.

The client governments, backed by Congress, prevented every organisation other than the NC to develop or institutionalize within Kashmir's polity. Even when more independently minded factions emerged from within the NC, the Congress leadership replaced them with more pliant leadership. Congress also backtracked on its promise about the plebiscite, suppressed the Plebiscite Front formed by NC members, and got Sheikh Abdullah to ban it in Kashmir. India's rationale for supporting the pliant NC elites and suppressing organisations in Kashmir was to ensure J&K's stability. However, the repressive approach denied Kashmiris political representation and eventually spurred the turn to insurgency. Even when the organizations under MUF sought electoral representation, Congress-backed NC's history of electoral malpractices denied them the chance to partake in peaceful forms of nation-building. Consequently, the organizations turned to militancy against the Indian state in 1989. Thus, constant denial of the political space to Kashmiri organisations prevented any loyalty for the Indian state to emerge. And the region succumbed to violence.

#### *Reciprocal Relations: Jammu*

Jammu had exchange relations with two ruling entities: Kashmir and India. Among Indian elites, Jammu had exchanges with Congress and Hindu nationalists. Lack of exchange relations from Kashmir oriented the region towards India. Jammu's Hindu organizations, discontented with the Kashmiri rule, found an ally amongst Hindu nationalist Indian elites. In fact, Jammu's organisations demanded that there should only be one ruling elite, India. The basis for Jammu's 'integration' became the abrogation of Article 370 i.e. removal of Kashmir's autonomous powers. Jammu's organisations sought a governing framework that was like other Indian states.

Indian elites' co-option of Jammu's organizations started with the RSS-backed Praja Parishad. Agitating against Kashmiri rule, the Parishad received support from Congress and Jana Sangh. Its grievances were acknowledged and supported by the Indian elites, particularly the Hindu nationalists. It could be argued that Parishad's 1952 agitation set in motion the events which led to Abdullah's arrest. Parishad's agitation provided Abdullah the excuse to question J&K's integration with India and to argue that Kashmiri Muslims would not be safe under Hindu India (Mullick 1971: 35).

Meanwhile, the implementation of land reforms by Abdullah was a major catalyst for Parishad's agitations. Their agitations also received Ladakh's support. After Abdullah, Bakshi's public expenditure resumed exchanges between Kashmir and Jammu. However, by this time, Congress and Jana Sangh made inroads in Jammu and expanded their networks. These Indian networks strengthened during the Gajendragadkar enquiry which discussed NC's discriminatory policies towards Jammu. Multiple voluntary associations took Jammu's grievances to the Indian state. The Dharmarth Trust, the Jana Sangh, the RSS, and the Dogra Sadar Sabha, and other regional and ethnic organisations that submitted memorandum to the Gajendragadkar Committee, represented Jammu's diverse interests in front of the Indian elites. The alliances with these organizations were bolstered after insurgency broke out in Kashmir.

#### *Reciprocal Relations: Ladakh*

Interestingly in Ladakh, two variables facilitated the nation-building processes. If we separate the two, the result might still be the same. The economic exchanges through Ladakh's militarization would be sufficient for Ladakh's integration and Indianization. The presence of the Indian army in Ladakh facilitated construction of roads, employment for Ladakhis, the opening of tourism, and other economic opportunities. Scholars critical of the environmental and human impact of road construction in Ladakh, have acknowledged the spread of connectivity in Ladakh due to the army and BRO (Demenge 2011; 2013). Van Beek suggested that the villagers in Ladakh always welcomed and credited the army's development efforts (2000: 537-538). Simultaneously, engagements with Kushak Bakula and LBA could have also yielded similar results. The most revered individual of Ladakh was backed by Nehru. His word became the gospel for Ladakhi Buddhists. The LBA spread his word through their extensive organisational network. LBA's networks with Indian elites were common. As were their persistent demands of a UT status. That both LBA engagements and economic development happened simultaneously in Ladakh, presents a unique case. And I examine both the variables distinctly.

From 1949 itself, Kushak Bakula and the LBA were recognized as the primary representatives of Ladakh by India. Given Ladakh's sparse and religious population,

the word of Kushak Bakula was final for Ladakh's Buddhists (Sengupta 2022; Interview 2023). The word being that Ladakh should be integrated with India. Integration implied the removal of Article 370 and the UT status within India. Indian presence increased in Ladakh through its army and BRO. The four wars between 1948-71 required local help and expertise. Ladakhis too reciprocated with their loyalty and military services (Wimmer 2018: 28). Institutionalization of Ladakh Scouts was a major step in India's nation-building project as it provided the locals with an important means of employment. This also increased India's prestige as an exchange partner in the region. Construction of roads and highways increased civilian mobility in Ladakh that facilitated opening of tourism in 1974. This step in Ladakh's economic development opened more avenues of employment. Consequently, the LBA protested against Kashmiri rule and demanded Indian rule in the 1980s. By 1989, as Kashmir turned to insurgency against India, Ladakh turned to agitations against Kashmir. Kargil, on the other hand, remained largely neutral during this period. Kargil elites disassociated with LBA's demands but also were ambivalent to the Kashmiri rule. It wasn't until the 1999 war with Pakistan that Kargil's political loyalties were evident.

## CHAPTER 5

### 1989-2019: INSURGENCY AND NATION-BUILDING

The previous chapter concludes with Kashmir on the brink of an insurgency against India, and Jammu/Ladakh on the opposite end of the nation-building spectrum. This chapter examines nation-building in the three regions from 1989 to 2019. Nation-building failed in Kashmir due to India's military excesses. Kashmir remained in a constant state of instability, violence, and conflict. Nation-building succeeded in Jammu and Ladakh due to the strengthening of their pre-1989 exchanges. More importantly, Jammu and Ladakh's demands for the abrogation of Article 370 were accepted in 2019. Ladakh became a Union Territory of India. As did Jammu & Kashmir. Ironically, the variable (abrogation of Article 370) for the 'success' of nation-building in the two regions, caused the 'failure' of nation-building in Kashmir. Moreover, as I'll show later in the chapter, nation-building in Jammu and Ladakh was not 'successful' as per Wimmer's framework. Even though the two regions were integrated with India, Ladakh's ethnic divides were not bridged, and Jammu Muslims were relatively excluded from Indian elites' networks. Nevertheless, the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, thus, serves as the concluding point for this thesis.

In the five decades between 1947-1989, Jammu and Ladakh were Indianized through reciprocal exchanges. In contrast, the Kashmir valley was driven from favouring accession with India to violence against India due to repressive exchanges. The propensity of secessionist violence in Kashmir increased in the absence of inclusive exchange relations. The marginalized Kashmiris were then mobilized by the insurgent groups. Simultaneously, if the state's reaction to such mobilization is one of indiscriminate violence, as done through the Indian counter-insurgency operations, armed conflict becomes inevitable (Lindemann and Wimmer 2018). Within this context of insurgency, India's nation-building project progressed in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh after 1989.

In Kashmir, India imposed military rule upon the Kashmiris, without engaging with the organisations enjoying local support or without catering to economic needs of the valley. India countered the insurgency with the permanent deployment of army and paramilitary units. Predictably, the relations between Kashmir and India deteriorated.

Even when Kashmir became a publicized bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, Kashmiri organisations were excluded from the conversations concerning their region. Finally, India abrogated Article 370 in 2019 i.e., removal of the structure that gave Kashmir autonomy within Indian nation. The move to directly govern Kashmir from New Delhi, failed India's nation-building project in Kashmir. Jammu and Ladakh, meanwhile, accelerated upon their divergent nation-building trajectories after 1989.

Jammu's Hindus enjoyed reciprocal exchanges with Hindu nationalist elites of India until 1989. Jammu Muslims were neutral towards India. Their relations with the Indian elites, mostly Congress, strengthened after 1989. Although the Muslims were apprehensive of the Hindu nationalist elites, their stance towards India was uncontested. India's alliances with Jammu's organisations helped the region when the migrating Kashmiri Hindus settled in Jammu and when sections of Jammu Muslims turned to insurgency. I show that the Indian elites often incentivized peace through Jammu's organizations. Organisations like the Muslim Federation and the Dogra Sadar Sabha were called upon to maintain communal harmony in Jammu. Although Jammu still witnessed sporadic communal incidents, yet it was the organisational exchanges between India and the diverse Jammuites that prevented major communal escalations in Jammu. With the abrogation of Article 370, the long-standing demand of Jammu organisations of 'complete' integration with India was fulfilled. Thus, the region which witnessed violence against Muslims in 1947 took a 180-degree turn by 2019.

Ladakh Buddhists' exchanges with Indian elites before 1989 intensified their 3 demands after 1989: Ladakh's separation from Kashmir, a Union Territory status under India, and the abrogation of Article 370. Besides Congress, the Hindu nationalists became a prominent Indian exchange partner for the Ladakhis. Ladakh's until then relatively un-politized Kargili Muslims also built reciprocal relations with the Indian state after the 1999 Kargil war. Like Jammu Muslims, Kargil's Muslims were apprehensive of the Hindu nationalists. Yet they were oriented towards India. Ladakh's exchanges with Delhi helped Leh and Kargil get their own autonomous powers. Simultaneously, the differences between Leh and Kargil also increased, especially as Leh reaped the benefits of tourism. But both regions were loyal to India. The Intra-Ladakh differences had little impact on Ladakh's collective orientation towards India.

Here, Ladakh's positionality deviates from Wimmer's argument (Chapter 2). The thesis shows that the ethnic divides between Leh and Kargil remained unbridged. Bridging of ethnic divides is a condition for Wimmer's nation-building. For instance, Indian exchanges aligned Jammu Muslims and Hindus together. Contrastingly, India's exchanges with Ladakh oriented the Ladakhis towards the Indian identity, without bridging intra-Ladakh divisions.

India's nation-building project in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh is, thus, a consequence of the presence or absence of exchange relations with the three regions. Following an overview of the timeline of events between 1989-2019, the first empirical section discusses the absence of exchanges in Kashmir. Imposition of the military rule since 1989 to the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 signals the failure of India's nation-building project in Kashmir. The second section discusses the reciprocal exchanges between Jammu's organisations and Indian state. A key element of this period remained the prominence of Hindu nationalism in Jammu and Ladakh. This furthered Jammu/Ladakh's gap with Kashmir and aligned them with India. Hindu nationalist elites of India integrated Jammu and Ladakh but at the cost of increasing hostility with Kashmir. In Jammu, Hindu nationalism was evident through the presence of the RSS-backed BJP in its electoral politics. In Ladakh, there was increased co-option between the RSS and the LBA. Asserting that Jammu and Ladakh suffered under the Kashmiri Muslim rule, BJP-RSS also demanded the removal of Article 370. The third section focuses on Ladakh's exchange relations through the organisations like LBA and through economic development through the army, BRO, and tourism. Therefore, in contrasting ways, India's nation-building project succeeded in Jammu and Ladakh.

### **5.1 Timeline of Events in J&K, 1989-2019**

The three decades in the Kashmir valley after 1989 have been subject of many academic texts and themes. For this thesis, I examine the exchange relations between India and Kashmiris during these decades. After 1989, Kashmir became the battle ground between Indian forces (Indian army and paramilitary organisations like Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force) and insurgent organisations (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front demanding Kashmir's independence and Hizbul Mujahideen demanding merger with Pakistan) (Bose 2021: 63-129). The JKLF was formed in the

UK in 1977 as an extension of the Plebiscite Front. It gained prominence in Kashmir through Pakistani and local support, in the aftermath of the rigged 1987 elections. Kashmiri youth were given arms training by the JKLF cadres in preparation for the insurgency for independent Kashmir. With its members upwards of 10,000 (Jamal 2009: 129), JKLF became a popular organisation in Kashmir, and among Kashmiris worldwide. Pakistan gradually diverted its resources and support to HM, the organisation favouring Kashmir's merger with Pakistan. A subsidiary of *Jamaat Islami*, HM too had over 10,000 trained fighters in its ranks (Staniland 2014: 85).

As unarmed protests and armed militancy became the norm in Kashmir, Indian forces suppressed both with brute force. The violence resulted in the deaths of thousands of Kashmiri Muslims and Indian military/administrative personnel. Hundreds of Kashmiri Hindus were also killed by the militants and over 150,000 migrated to Jammu and Delhi (Rai 2021). Kashmiri organisations remained marginalized in this period. The All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an umbrella body of Kashmiri political organisations, was formed in 1993 to use the democratic route for Kashmir's right to self-determination. But many organisations were suppressed under the AFSPA. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) empowered the Indian forces with an iron fist to counter the insurgency (AFSPA 1990).

Despite a pause during the 1999 Kargil war, insurgency and counterinsurgency remained a dominant feature of the Kashmiri life. Post-war, Kashmir was internationalized in 2000s through multiple bilateral talks between India and Pakistan. Kashmiri organisations were again excluded from such talks. The APHC and the JKLF acquired the popularity that NC held in Kashmir before '89. However, NC remained the primary recipient of Indian exchanges. After 2006, Kashmiri protests turned to stone-pelting on the armed forces (Bose 2021: 130-191). The military response was worse. Thousands disappeared in Kashmir through detentions by the army. At the same time Kashmiri youth also travelled to Pakistan for arms training by designated terrorist outfits like *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba* (LeT) and *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM). Although elections were conducted in the valley after 1989, they followed the historical pattern of rigging and corruption. The voter turnout was far from the pre-1989 levels. Leading up to the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the BJP-led Indian government imposed an internet and movement lockdown in the state. All leaders of the NC, the APHC, and

other political parties, were under house arrest when Kashmir's autonomy was revoked.

In contrast, the political events of the three decades in Jammu were relatively peaceful, for most periods. Jammu had an insurgent movement as well, but dissimilar to Kashmir. For instance, Poonch and Doda Muslims were radicalized in the late 90s and early 2000s (pg. 122-123), Pakistan-backed militants targeted Hindus (pg. 125-127, 151), and counter-insurgency operations were conducted in Jammu (pg. 100). However, these never escalated to Kashmir-like insurgency and counter-insurgency operations. Given Jammu's communal history, Hindu nationalists in its polity, and limited co-option of its Muslims, Jammu too could have turned like Kashmir. There are two reasons why it did not: Firstly, the insurgency in Jammu being backed by Pakistan and Kashmir-based organisations, increasing anti-Kashmir and pro-India sentiments in Jammu; and secondly- continuation of the Indian nation-building project through the organisational exchanges.

For Ladakh, the granting of UT status in 2019 was the culmination of continuous organisational and economic exchanges with India. The LBA's organisational depth and networks with India first led to the creation of Ladakh's Autonomous Hill Councils. Leh Autonomous Hill Council came in being in 1995 and was empowered to make decisions on development, healthcare, taxation, land use etc. Kargil's Council came into existence in 2003. Until then, Leh-Kargil relations had suffered considerably. However, after the 1999 Kargil war, Kargil was also included in discussions about Ladakh's affairs. Local support to the Indian army from Kargil attuned Delhi of the previously neglected strategic region. In the aftermath of the war, the Indian army launched Operation Sadhbhavana in 2003. This is a military-civic engagement scheme for the economic development of J&K. Not without criticisms, Operation Sadhbhavana's primary tasks in Ladakh were to open schools, provide skills-training programmes, and carry out such activities that ensure national integration (Kapoor 2015). Through the continued economic benefits of the road-construction projects and tourism, Ladakh's exchanges with India were cemented.

## **5.2 Nation-building in Kashmir: Excesses of Violence**

This section illustrates Wimmer's assertion that the absence of inclusive exchanges breeds secessionism and a violent response to the secessionist tendencies breeds conflict (Wimmer 2018; 2017). Such conflict, not resolved through proper institutional exchanges, is a recipe for failed nation-building. I show the absence of organisational and political economy processes of exchange relations during this period (1989-2019). India's failed nation-building project in Kashmir concluded with the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

### *Political Economy Amplifying Militancy, 1989-1999*

As discussed previously, the militancy in Kashmir was a result of several factors underscoring the absence of exchange relations. These factors were part of Kashmir's 'deinstitutionalization' (Ganguly 1996). The deinstitutionalization involved the suppression of political opposition by NC-Congress, subsuming of organisations, unfair election practices, lack of grievance redressal mechanisms, etc. Besides the failure of this organisational variable of exchange relations, there was also the decline of the political economy variable in Kashmir valley i.e., Srinagar and Delhi's failure to deliver economic development for Kashmiris. Since Congress funded 90% of J&K's development plans during the period of client governments, 'it failed to give the state an impetus to mobilise its own resources for economic growth' (Prakash 2000: 2053). Moreover, excessive tax concessions to the Kashmiri elites led to reduced tax revenues, and consequently, reduced public spending. Subsequently, until the 1970s, Kashmir's per capita income saw the least growth among all Indian states (ibid.). To change this trend, India reduced its grants and instead provided loans to the state government. Consequently, fifty per cent of the state's expenditure comprised debt and interest repayments. For every rupee loaned to J&K, the interest was Rs 5.35 (ibid.). Later, this debt crisis was cited by the militants as the reason for their insurgency against the 'colonizer India'.

I argued in the previous chapters that without organisational exchanges, public spending may not yield desired nation-building results. Interestingly, the absence of organisational exchanges also impacted Kashmir's political economy. Post-1950s, Congress-NC hegemony empowered the NC elites to dictate the state's economic

activities unopposed. Expectedly, Kashmiri economy suffered. The land reforms under Abdullah attempted equitable land ownership for Kashmiris. Yet the fragmentation resulted in below-optimum size holdings inconducive for modern agricultural practices (Bhat and Misri 1994; Prakash 2000). Kashmir's over reliance on cereal production over other goods, low costs of procurement from farmers, small landholdings, and increasing population, led to a dismal state of agriculture in Kashmir (Prakash 2000: 2055). The industrial sector was also replete with middlemen and corruption. To compensate for the lack of industrial and agricultural output, the NC government turned to subsidies. Whether it was in providing electricity within the state or transferring money to unemployed youth, corruption and inefficiency reigned atop the debt-ridden state exchequer. Two government reports in 1969 and 1984 documented corruption by NC elites and state officials. The reports documented as many as 3,300 cases of corruption between 1975-1981 (pg. 2057). The NC-Congress elites only served the economic interests of the urban Kashmiri proprietary classes and their own families whilst expanding their political base in Kashmir (ibid.). Consequently, the Kashmiri population were deprived of both organisational and economic exchange relations. They demanded secession from India by supporting JKLF and HM.

Throughout the 90s, battalions of Indian army, Border Security Force (BSF), and CRPF (Central Police Reserve Force) manned Kashmir's streets. The cycle of JKLF and Indian forces fighting, Kashmiris protesting the army's actions, protestors being fired upon, protests against army's violence, and JKLF fighting against the army, and so on, continued. Moreover, the funeral procession of the JKLF commander Ashfaq Wani was attended by over 500,000 people, much larger than Sheikh Abdullah's, indicative of JKLF's popularity in the 90s (Bose 2021: 72). The militant uprising had the support of 'workers, engineers, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, doctors, lawyers, even former MLAs [members of the Indian-sponsored J&K legislature] and the Jammu & Kashmir police' - essentially, the entire Kashmiri society (pg. 74). This Kashmiri support to insurgency was reinforced by the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA). This act gave the Indian forces immunity to do what was necessary for maintaining public order. It also led to the mushrooming of detention centres in Kashmir as the Indian forces were empowered to detain protestors without warning and conduct house searches for the suspected militants (pg. 77-78). Not restricted to just the insurgents, civilian Kashmiris also suffered under the excesses of AFSPA.

Certain statistics indicate the breakdown of exchange relations between India and Kashmiris. After 1990 until 2002, 56,000 insurgency-related incidents were recorded with deaths of over 16,000 insurgents, 13,500 civilians, and 4,600 Indian personnel. These numbers do not state the complete picture. For instance, 'they do not include the 'disappeared', mostly persons taken away by Indian forces and never seen again' (pg. 65). The militarization exceeded to such extent that there was one Indian soldier for every five Kashmiris (Metcalf and Metcalf 2012; 309). These statistics also do not account for the loss of Kashmiri Pandit lives and their displacement from the valley. One outcome of the insurgency against India was the targeted violence against Kashmiri Pandits, community seen as an extension of the Indian state (Datta 2017).

### *Staking Claims and Internationalizing Kashmir, 1999-2008*

As stated earlier, the thesis deviates away from the mainstream India-Pakistan engagements on Kashmir. Instead, I probe within these engagements the extent of exchanges with Kashmiri organisations, if any. Even after the insurgency, India missed multiple opportunities to co-opt Kashmiri organisations. India also missed multiple opportunities to find institutional resolutions to the conflict. Gradually, Kashmir became central within India-Pakistan bilateral relations at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This was always the case but in this period the stakes were different. Ideally, India had to engage not just with Pakistan, but also organisations backed by Pakistan. Indian exchanges with the Kashmiri organisations were needed to lessen Pakistan's influence in the valley. Bilateral engagements regarding Kashmir began during the diplomatic talks between Indian and Pakistan Prime Ministers in February 1999. Kashmir's internationalization continued with the Kargil War from May to July 1999. Kashmir remained in the news due through state (diplomatic channels) and non-state (Pakistan-sponsored attacks) actors. This period was an opportunity for India to include the Kashmiri organisations in the discussions regarding Kashmir and build exchanges thereon. However, Indian elites did not engage with Kashmiri organisations as required. Instead, India doubled down on its military excesses.

The war, and proxy efforts by Pakistan after the war to keep the Kashmir issue alive (Ganguly 2016: 34-36), succeeded only in fostering the exchanges between India and

Kargil. Likewise, the war and post-war period presented an opportunity for India to abandon its existing policy of martial rule over Kashmir in the favour of building alliances with aggrieved Kashmiri groups and organisations. However, India's pre-occupation with Kashmir's internal insurgency prevented any such alliances to develop. Between 1999-2002, militancy in Kashmir involved targeted attacks on Indian armed forces' convoys and installations. According to the Indian data, '161 army, paramilitary and police personnel died in these attacks between July 1999 and late 2002 (the army alone lost 82 men) and 90 fidayeen were killed' (Bose 2021: 116). These attacks were attributed to two Pakistan-based militant outfits, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM) and *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (Let). The attacks escalated into hijackings of Indian flights in exchange for captured militants, attack on the J&K state legislature, and the most known of all, the 2001 attack on Indian parliament in Delhi. Nevertheless, the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, favoured diplomatic channels with Pakistan to return normalcy within Kashmir. Afterall, the Kashmir conflict had grown from the confines of Kashmir valley to an international stage.

Normalcy, however, evaded Kashmir for three reasons (Bose 2003: 201-266). First, India's financial capital Mumbai was attacked in November 2008 by the JeM. The 2008 attack closed the diplomatic route between India and Pakistan. Secondly, attempts at normalcy in Kashmir were redundant without Kashmiri leaders' thorough engagement with Delhi and Jammu. Bose emphasized on the need for Kashmir's engagement with the Indian ruling elites and civil society leaders of Jammu. Recognition of the heterogeneity of J&K by Kashmiris was also needed, Bose contested. Finally, any attempts of peace in Kashmir were inconclusive without India's exchanges with JKLF and APHC. Indian exchanges were only limited to NC or other political parties. Meanwhile, NC's support base had long been ceded to JKLF. The insurgent organisation which enjoyed widespread popularity among Kashmiris. In the absence of thorough engagement with popular Kashmiri organisations, protests and clashes between the Kashmiris and Indian forces continued.

### *Conflict, Economic Miseries, and Abrogation of Article 370, 2008-2019*

Kashmir-India exchange relations were at their lowest during this period. Come 2009, the valley 'was still a tinderbox, far from pacified' (Bose 2021:162). The India-Pakistan

diplomatic engagements were inconclusive. The Indian armed forces were also unchecked in their power over the Kashmiri population. What followed was a decade of the same cyclical clashes between Kashmiris and Indian forces: Kashmiri protests through rallies, stone pelting, and aiding insurgents, and the Indian response through imposing curfews, violent crackdowns, and detentions of locals. The lack of Indian integration and identification in Kashmir was seen when PM Manmohan Singh, who 4 years ago met JKLF and APHC leaders, faced stone-pelting crowds during his 2010 Kashmir visit (pg. 165). This outcome was a result of the decades-long absence of exchange relations. Bose summarizes Wimmer's argument in analysing this outcome:

"This is the generation of 'stone-pelters', for whom the stone has replaced the AK-47s wielded by so many of the previous generation...The deep sense of oppression being vented by the stone-pelters goes back sixty years. Their grandparents' generation recall the 1950s and 1960s, when popular leaders - most notably Sheikh Abdullah himself - were cast into jail, harsh police methods used to muzzle dissent and elections doctored to install New Delhi's favoured clients in office. Their parents' generation grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, when any tentative liberalization of India's Kashmir policy relapsed into draconian control and election-rigging. By the mid-1980s, the [then] young generation was already a long way down the path to insurgency" (Bose 2010).

In absence of organisational exchanges- Congress still only co-opted the NC or the new People's Democratic Party (PDP) and not organisations like APHC- public goods provision became necessary. However, Kashmir's internal security dilemma prevented the government from catering to Kashmir's economic needs. The militarization of Kashmir also became detrimental to the Kashmiri landscape. The Indian Army's stationing in Kashmir resulted in illegal land grabs across the valley. Forests, agricultural fields, and riverbeds were cleared for army's permanent structures (Pandow 2020: 83). Omar Abdullah, Sheikh Abdullah's grandson alleged that the Indian military illegally occupied 855,407 units of land out of 1,054,721 units under its control, along with hundreds of buildings (ibid.). J&K also became financially dependent on Delhi after 2011. The Reserve Bank of India replaced the Jammu & Kashmir Bank as the primary financial institution for J&K's expenditure. Reliance on an Indian institution over a J&K institution implied that 'the state government would have to often visit New Delhi with a "begging-bowl for petty-finances"' (Pandow 2020:

84). The state also suffered economic losses due to the shutdowns and protests in the valley. For instance, in 2013 and 2016, the 2 years with the most unrest in Kashmir, J&K suffered losses of Rs 10.88 billion and Rs 6.55 billion respectively (Bhattacharya 2016). One respite to the Kashmiri economy was the cross-border trade with Pakistan. The villages at the centre of this trade witnessed reduction in violence when trade opportunities multiplied. This too was stopped by India in April 2019, in pre-emption of the abrogation of Article 370 in August (Pandow 2020: 86).

Before the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, Kashmir remained in the cycle of protests, curfews, and violence. The locals largely favoured the militants as 2013 (the execution of the 2002 Indian parliament attack accused Afzal Guru) and 2016 (killing of a 22-year-old HM militant Burhan Wani) saw the worst protests in the valley. The protests involved thousands getting injured (Bose 2021: 171;181). The BJP had also made inroads in the state through an alliance with the PDP during the 2014 state elections. Even though the PDP-BJP alliance broke in 2018, the BJP remained in power in New Delhi. These political developments rarely deterred the militancy in Kashmir. A 78-vehicle CRPF convoy was attacked by a bomb-laced van driven by a JeM member in February 2019. With over 40 killed and over 35 injured, multiple JKLF, and *Jamaat* members were arrested (pg. 190). This followed mass arrests of 'suspected' miscreants and stone pelters, journalists and civil society leaders, house arrests of leaders of all political parties, internet shutdowns, and suspension of any protest activities leading up to the abrogation of Article 370 in J&K (Lalwani and Gayner 2020: 14).

Thus, the framework of autonomy in J&K borne out of discussions between Abdullah and Nehru, at the peak of co-option between NC and Congress, was abrogated by the BJP without any consultation with Kashmiri organisations. The Indian rationale for bypassing the consultations was to prevent communication between the militants. Through the house arrests, the BJP also sought to prevent protests and violence in the aftermath of the decision (Brown and Oliver 2019). Nevertheless, the exclusion of Kashmiri organisations from a decision impacting Kashmir was symbolic of India-Kashmir exchange relations since 1953. In contrast, the abrogation of Article 370 was welcomed in Jammu for the long-standing demand of 'complete integration' was fulfilled.

### **5.3 Nation-building in Jammu: Jammu and Indian Identity Consolidation**

This section discusses how the exchange relations bridged the divides between Jammu Hindus and Muslims. The resultant process facilitated Jammu's successful nation-building. When the insurgency spilled over to regions of Jammu, its organisations campaigned to maintain peace, Indian forces countered Jammu's insurgents with much less ferocity compared to Kashmir, and gradually, support for the abrogation of Article 370 and 'complete' Indian integration intensified.

However, I don't suggest that the organisations 'always' campaigned for peace and succeeded; or that Jammu Muslims and Hindus were 'always' bound in a cohesive Jammu identity; or that 'all' Jammu organisations wanted Article 370 gone. Some nuance here is called for. The insurgency, particularly after the 2000s, heightened communal tensions in Jammu. Hindu nationalism also remained a prominent parallel to the cohesive Jammu identity. The BJP became the prominent Indian exchange partner in Jammu and Delhi. There were also communal skirmishes during the Amarnath Land row. Under one hundred acres of land surrounding the Hindu shrine in Kashmir was transferred to the shrine's management board (Bose 2021: 151). The land transfer led to widespread protests in Kashmir. Kashmiri agitations prompted cancellation of the land transfer leading to widespread protests in Jammu. My assertion is that despite these communal developments, it was the organisational exchanges which ensured that sections of Jammu Muslim supported Jammu Hindus during the Amarnath row. I show that the Jammu organisations prevented communal escalations after Kashmiri Pandits settled in Jammu. It was the organisational exchanges that prevented a Kashmir-like conflict in Jammu. Finally, these organisational exchanges yielded the abrogation of Article 370. The BJP had its own long-standing vision of abrogating the Article 370. It co-opted Jammu's demand of 'complete' integration with India in 2019.

#### *Incentivizing Peace During Insurgency*

As the insurgency intensified in Kashmir, so did its spill-over effects in Jammu. Insurgency grew in the Muslim-dominated border areas of Poonch, Rajouri, and

Mendhar. Border crossings of insurgents from and to the 'Azad Kashmir' in Pakistan became common. Especially in early 90s and after 2000s. However, Indian networks with Jammu's organisations prevented Kashmir-like conflict escalations. Or Jammu-like communal escalations of 1947-48.



Map 9. Border Areas of Jammu Division (CIA 2003)

### Impact of Kashmir's Insurgency in Jammu

Kashmir Valley's unrest spread to Jammu first through the migration of over 150,000 Kashmiri Pandits. Secondly, in the form of insurgency in Jammu's border areas with Pakistan. However, these developments were countered by strong organisational linkages. I discuss the linkages in the next sub-section. In these paragraphs, I discuss the impact of Kashmir's unrest in Jammu. Kashmiri Pandits' displacement from Kashmir, settlement in Jammu, and their positionality has been understood differently in the literature. Datta (2017) suggests that Pandits were perceived by the Kashmiri Muslims as an extension of Indian forces in Kashmir that led to the violence against them. In restarting their lives in Jammu, Pandits constantly sought 'Indian support' (pg. 35) as they were the victims of Kashmiri Islamism (pg. 175). This argument was also

invoked by 'Pannun Kashmir', an organisation of Pandit refugees in Jammu. The organisation claims Pandits to be the victim of 'secessionist Islamic Religious Fundamentalists'. The organisation's motto is 'to Save Pandits to Save Kashmir to Save India' (Pannun Kashmir 2024). Pandits' Indian orientation was also remarked upon by Tej Tikoo (Interview 2023), president of the All-India Kashmir Samaj. His organisation, while only a few hundred Pandit members strong, has often met the Delhi leadership in demanding more representation in J&K government for the Pandits. Interestingly, Tikoo claimed that not all Pandits demanded the abrogation of Article 370. It was mostly a Jammu and Ladakh demand, he suggested. Nitasha Kaul (2016) asserts that Pandits have always been a pawn for the Hindu nationalists. She claims that the BJP-RSS have always stood upon the Kashmiri Pandit shoulders to demonize the Kashmiri Muslims. Yet, that Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu have sought exchanges with the Indian elites remains uncontested.

The second impact of Kashmir's insurgency was the increased militancy in Jammu. One might question the emergence of militancy in Jammu despite the presence of organisational exchanges. Wimmer asserts (2018) that the exchange relations with the ruling elites do not eradicate the potential for conflict but reduce it extensively. Before I expound on these exchanges, an overview of the extent of Jammu's insurgency is called for. Two observations are key in this overview. First, the militancy increased in certain pockets of Jammu in certain intervals of time, not the entire Jammu division. Second, the local support to militancy in Jammu was relatively less than the local support to militancy in Kashmir. In 1990, over 100 youth from Poonch and Mendhar crossed the Indian border into Pakistan for arms training (Bloeria 1999). However, many of these militants surrendered. Poonch-Rajouri regions also witnessed an influx of the Afghan-origin militants. They crossed into Jammu to fan local support for the militancy. Insurgency was also extended to the Muslim pockets of the Hindu-majority Udhampur district. Yet the Muslims of Jammu largely resisted the spread of militancy in early 1990s. Pakistan-backed militancy again resumed in Poonch-Rajouri in 1995 and 1997. They again sought the local support which was hard to get. Why was the militancy in Jammu deprived of local support?

One reason is the absence of strong networks between Jammu Muslims and the Kashmiri elites. This continued even after 1989. The JKLF and the HM leaders spoke

about Jammu without consulting with Jammu Muslims. The second and more important reason for lack of local support to militancy lays in the organisational linkages in Jammu. For example, Ashfaq Wani, the JKLF leader whose funeral had a larger attendance than that of Sheikh Abdullah, spoke about an independent 'Islamic democratic state' of Kashmir in which the multi-ethnic Jammu was denied any special status (Bose 2021: 69). Meanwhile, *Jamaat* and APHC's Syed Geelani, who was aligned with the HM, opposed Kashmir's independence for it could divide the Muslims of Kashmir and Jammu. He favoured acceding Kashmir and Jammu to Pakistan (pg. 88). Thus, the Kashmiri factions had different visions for Kashmir and the role of Jammu in it, without any consultation with Jammu's Muslims (Chaudhary, 2016, Chaudhary 2018). The second and more important reason for lack of local support to militancy lays in the organisational linkages in Jammu

### Incentivizing Peace Through Organisational Linkages

As the distance between Kashmir and Jammu grew, India's nation-building process in Jammu also grew. Since a Kashmir-like situation in Jammu was undesirable, India relied upon its exchanges with the local organisations to foster peace in Jammu. These exchanges allowed diverse ethnicities of Jammu to partake in the decision-making processes. The immediate challenge in Jammu after the insurgency was managing the displaced Kashmiri Pandits. Pandits' protest marches against the Kashmiri Muslims communalised Jammu. The Dogra Sadar Sabha, Muslim League, Jammu Mahasabha, and other local organizations spoke against the Pandits' communal rhetorics so that 'Jammu doesn't become like Kashmir' (Interviews 2023).

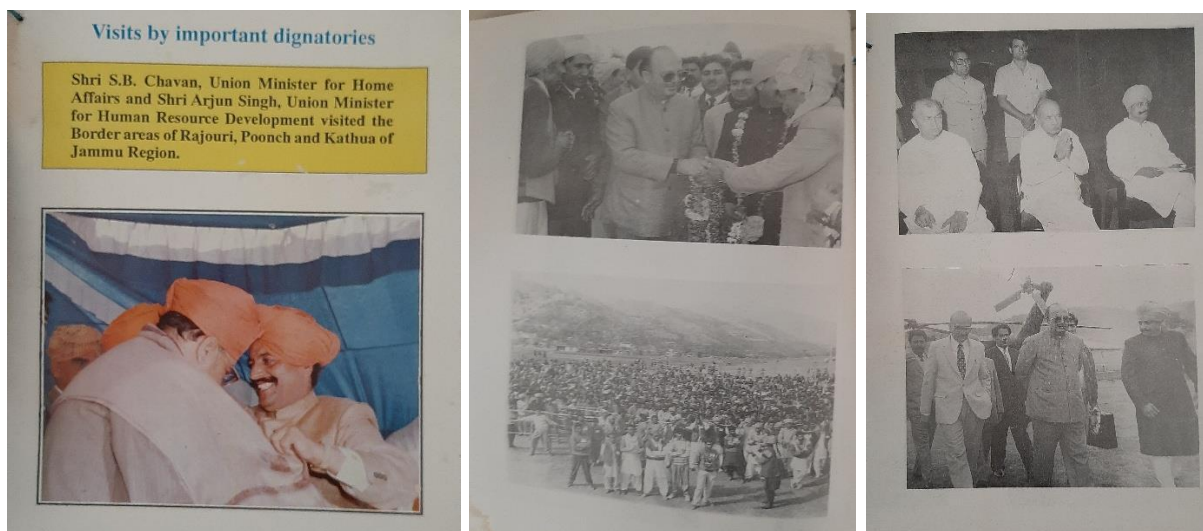
Out of these organisations, the case of Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS) and Muslim Federation (MF) requires attention. Although scholars have questioned the importance of the DSS in Jammu (Gulzar 2019: 250; Kak 2009: 20) due to its fixation with furthering the Dogra cause and culture. My findings suggest that despite its Dogra chauvinism (Chapter 3), DSS was crucial for maintaining peace in Jammu after 1989. The DSS did so by constantly engaging with the Indian leadership. The Indian elites also empowered DSS and MF to engage with Jammuites. Led by Gulchain Charak, DSS has military personnel, bureaucrats, union leaders, and academics as its members (DSS 2025). The organisation also has dedicated legal, media, and youth

cells. Besides the DSS, Charak also headed the Jammu Mahasabha, a conglomeration of Jammu organisations including the Muslim Federation. MF, though lesser in its membership, has Jammu Muslims from academia, police, and bureaucracy in its aegis. MF often shared public dais with DSS and Mahasabha organisations in demanding redressal from Kashmir's discriminatory practices. Although there is limited literature exclusively on these organisations, interviews and archival sources have yielded information about their engagements with the Indian elites and Jammu's people. These associational forms of engagement provided conditions for peace in Jammu (Varshney 2002). Eventually, the MF's Abdul Majid and the DSS's Gulchain Charak became the prominent faces of Hindu/Muslim communities of Jammu.

Charak and Majid suggested two reasons for their differences with the Pandits and exchanges with the Indian elites during the insurgency: ensuring Hindu-Muslim unity to preserve peace for Jammu; and safeguarding national interests (Interviews 2023). Newspaper reports from the time also suggest two other reasons for Jammu's general animosity against Kashmiri Pandits: Jammuites perception of being second-class citizens of J&K, i.e., them being behind Kashmiris (Hindu or Muslim) in the societal pecking order (JPRS 1993: 21); and the burden of Pandits on the weak economy of Jammu (pg. 24). Charak also stated that the Pandits' issues received national attention on many occasions. In contrast, Dogras, due to their loyalty to India, were taken-for-granted by India. Nevertheless, Charak added that Jammu became Delhi's 'fort' and 'bunker' against Kashmir (Interview 2023). Letting Pandits' anti-Kashmiri protests increase in Jammu would have given fodder to Pakistan for recruiting and radicalizing Jammu Muslims. However, Jammu Muslims in Poonch-Rajouri did turn to militancy. Yet the strength of Jammu-India organisational exchanges helped counter this militancy.

In 1991, the J&K governor tasked Charak and Majid to visit those border areas and interact with the locals (Interview 2023). Understanding that the militant tendencies would vanish in years, not days or months, their organizations campaigned for the locals' re-orientation away from participating in cross-border militancy. Hundreds of workers from these organisations spoke to the border people about maintaining peace in Jammu. Many militants also surrendered in this period. Charak said that he wanted

the Indian elites to publicly recognise and felicitate the surrendered militants. He hoped that a public interaction between the surrendered militants and Indian elites would encourage peace in Jammu. To this end, the Home Minister of India, SB Chavan, along with other Indian dignitaries, was invited by Charak to Mendhar. They were to address the people of the disturbed areas and felicitate the surrendered militants. Pictures adorning the archives of Dogra Sadar Sabha showed the Indian Home Minister's interactions with the locals of the disturbed areas (See below). The event was attended by thousands of Poonch and Mendhar Muslims. Seeing the Indian elites incentivizing peace for their region was a major step towards generating loyalty towards India. This event also involved honouring two world-renowned Musicians from Jammu region, Shivkumar Sharma and Allah Rakha Khan. The optics of famous people from Jammu, belonging to the two religious communities served as a reminder of the composite identity of Jammu which was under threat from militancy. Essentially, Jammu's organisational exchanges yielded state-people contacts to counter insurgency.



Images 4, 5, and 6. Event attended by the Indian elites in Jammu's border areas (DSS Archives 2022)

India too responded with the softer counterinsurgency approach towards Jammu, compared to Kashmir. The defence and administrative agencies in Poonch-Rajouri-Mendhar belt collectively engaged with the local population. Locals were kept in the loop about the movements and activities of the security forces to gain their trust (Bloeria 2001). Locals' complaints were managed by the district police and administration, not the military. The district police were generally drawn from the locals

and engaged with them daily. In contrast, in Kashmir, the military oversaw everything. Indian administrative officials extensively toured Jammu's border regions to address local concerns. A reward system was also introduced for information on the militants. The Indian approach also involved accelerating economic development in the region. The government prioritised completion and execution of short-term schemes that had quick and evident impact. 'Significant impetus was given to sericulture and horticulture-based activities for which the agro-climatic conditions of the area are ideally suited' (ibid.). All these efforts decreased local support for militancy. Charak's invitation to the Indian delegation was one among many such engagement efforts in Jammu.

Referring to this visit and the reciprocity of exchanges, SB Chavan spoke in the Indian parliament about the loyalty of Gujjar Muslims of Poonch towards India. He remarked upon their help against the militants and Pakistani infiltrators (Rajya Sabha 1992). Chavan discussed meeting prominent Jammu Muslim leaders and members of J&K assembly. He assured them of bringing the dissident Jammu Muslims into the mainstream polity to remove their alienations. Charak claimed that some of the surrendered militants were recruited as security personnel of the Indian parliamentarians (Interview 2023).

Thus, the organisational exchanges prevented conflict escalations in Jammu. Through the ensuing exchanges, the loyalty of Jammu Muslims and Hindus towards the Indian state was generated. This is not an absolute claim and there were exceptions. For instance, militancy did increase in Jammu during 1995-1996 and after 2000. However, it remained in regional pockets, within limited sections of population, and most locals supported the Indian agencies. In 1992, Charak, Majid, and over 100 representatives from Jammu's border areas met the Indian Prime Minister, PV Narsimha Rao, requesting him to visit Jammu (Interview 2023). They also asked him to form a special cabinet committee focussed on Kashmiri affairs; the PM himself later became the head of this committee. The delegation also met India's Human Resources Development Minister to update him of the positive influence of the earlier visit of Indian dignitaries in Jammu. They claimed that Jammu's people resisted insurgent advances from Kashmir which could exploit their ethno-religious fault lines. Instead, Jammuites oriented themselves towards the national interests. These high-level connections were

also reflected in everyday sentiments. Anuradha Bhasin, the editor of J&K's oldest English language newspaper and a critic of the abrogation of Article 370 recounted an incident from the Akhnoor region of Jammu during the Kargil war (Interview 2022). She met a farmer displaced from his home who was keen to return to Jammu so that he could be the 'eyes and ears of Indian army against Kashmir.'

### *Hindu Nationalism, Muslims, and Article 370*

In this section, I show that despite the communal developments in Jammu after 2000, the ethnic divides remained largely bridged in Jammu. The early 2000s were characterised by a resurgence of militancy in Kashmir and Jammu. Simultaneously, the RSS-backed BJP gained power in Delhi and its popularity increased in Jammu by 2008. The rise of the RSS was also an outcome of Congress-NC elites' neglect of Jammu. Therefore, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Jammu had a new Indian exchange partner: BJP. Yet support to the BJP was mostly electoral.

The relations between Jammu's Hindus and Muslims remained largely unaffected, despite the exclusionary tactics of the Hindu nationalists. Jammu's Muslims opposed both the communal tactics of the BJP and the secessionist tactics of the non-Jammu actors. Nonetheless, the BJP became electorally dominant in Jammu after 2008. The party spoke about abrogating Article 370. Article 370's removal was anyway the decadal demand of Jammu's Hindu organisations. I argue that despite the differences regarding the status of Article 370 and BJP, Jammu's Hindus and Muslims shared a cohesive Jammu identity that was loyal to India.

### Growth of Hindu Nationalism in Jammu

In this section, I discuss the communalization of Jammu and how Hindu nationalists became the dominant Indian elite building networks in the region. The Hindu nationalists served the political interests of a neglected Jammu. Their exchanges were exclusionary; however, the communal fabric of Jammu wasn't entirely damaged. By 1999, Congress lost its power in Delhi, appeal in Jammu, and the resurgent militancy set the stage for Hindu nationalists to occupy Jammu's vacant polity. Militancy in Jammu involved targeted attacks on Hindus and their pilgrimage sites in the city. The

Hindu Amarnath Shrine was also targeted by the militants for three consecutive years between 2000-2002 (Bose 2021: 126).

Post-1960s, the lack of Congress and Kashmiri elites' exchanges with Jammu ceded space to the Hindu nationalists in Jammu. In Congress' defence, they were preoccupied with Kashmir's politics, insurgency, and managing the internal security of J&K. Post-1989 Kashmiri elites also neglected Jammu on multiple occasions. The JKLF's memorandum that demanded Kashmiri inclusion in any international dialogue had 1.5 million Kashmiri signatories but did not include any signature from Ladakh or Jammu (Bose 2021: 143). The DSS president claimed to have met APHC's leader Geelani and JKLF's leader Yasin Malik in Kashmir. However, according to him, Kashmiri leaders denied his invitation for a dialogue in Jammu (Interview 2023). The NC formulated a Regional Autonomy Council 1996 to discuss the 'sharp neglect' of Jammu province, but no action was taken after the final report was tabled after 1999 (Wani 2013: 331). This was 'a sign of both the insular mentality typical of Valley politicians and the habitual reluctance of Kashmir independentists to engage with other points of view' (Bose 2021: 143). Thus, Jammu remained institutionally neglected by both the ruling elites and the new Kashmiri organisations. Karan Singh also claimed that he suggested to split the Kashmir provincial congress committee into 3 units to cater to Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. However, his suggestion was rejected by the Congress president (Interview 2023). Singh alleged that Congress was averse to networks with any party other than the NC. He suggested that Congress was reluctant to antagonize the NC by supporting non-Kashmiri politics. Coincidentally, Congress adopted a similar stance in the 1930s and 40s when it rejected DSS' support from Jammu for the anti-colonial movement (Puri 1983: 188). This reveals a pattern, whereby to maintain the NC's hegemony in J&K, Congress suppressed non-NC and non-Kashmiri organisations. It was this continued political vacuum in Jammu in late 2000s that allowed BJP and Hindu nationalists to enter J&K's polity.

It is important to note that even though the electoral support for BJP gradually increased by 2014, Jammu itself was not religiously polarised. Here, I imply that communal escalations between Hindus and Muslims of Jammu were less severe than in other Indian regions where the BJP did well electorally. This is despite the fact that the situation in Jammu was rife for communal violence with over 20 targeted attacks

in Jammu between 1998-2014 by LeT and HM (SATP 2024) and the Amarnath Land row of 2008. Out of the 87 available seats in J&K state assembly, BJP won 8 in 1996, 1 in 2002, 11 in 2008, and 25 in 2014 (Election Reports). What explains the increasing electoral support for BJP without creating major communal polarization? As discussed in Chapter 4, Jammu Muslims were not included in Kashmiri Muslim networks (Chaudhary 2016), while there were linguistic and cultural connections between Jammu Hindus and Muslims (Puri 2001). Most importantly, the daily engagement between Jammu Muslims and Hindus over the years 'shaped the composite culture of Jammu' (Chaudhary 2008). There was also an innate public acceptance in Jammu that these attacks were a consequence of Kashmiri and Pakistani extremism, and an acceptance that Jammu's people, Hindu or Muslim, were the collective victims of extremism. Finally, even as the Amarnath agitation made Jammu Muslims ambivalent towards the Hindu nationalists (Chaudhary 2012: 14), the notion of Jammu's cohesiveness remained uncontested (Chaudhary 2023: 211-212). Civic links between Hindus and Muslims, thus, acted as a moderating constraint against Hindu nationalism (Varshney 2002).

Besides the civic links, associational links- engagement across organisations like MF and DSS- are also important for Jammu's consolidated identity. The consolidated identity, here, implies the identity inclusive of all Jammu ethnicities. These connections illustrate the arguments made by both Varshney (2002) and Wimmer that organisational linkages can bridge ethnic divides. 'Political alliances tend to spread horizontally across an ethnic divide when there are many voluntary organizations' since it is easier to link actors of different ethnicities with each other (Wimmer 2018: 29). Wimmer and Varshney, therefore, assert that if diverse organisations (DSS and MF) have regular engagements, communal and ethnic divides are bridged. These engagements become taken-for-granted over a period of decades. They act as a constraint upon the polarizing tactics of a communal party (BJP). A nod to Varshney's thesis- engagements between Hindus and Muslims reducing communalism- can also be found in Abha Chauhan's (2021) edited works. A major cultural practice of Jammu has been the importance given to the Islamic *Sufi* shrines dotted across Jammu. The shrines are visited by people of all religions in Jammu, even today and they have also been patronized by Jammu rulers, including the Dogras.

For the reasons discussed above, the growing electoral popularity of the BJP did not necessarily lead to increasing Hindu-Muslim tensions, and this was also evident during the Amarnath Land row. Even as the BJP and RSS communalized the Amarnath issue, Muslim organizations supported Hindu organisations to not just express support for the restoration of land...but also against what they called continued discrimination against the people of Jammu, of which they were the worst sufferers' (Puri 2008: 9). Jammu & Kashmir Gujjars United Front and Muslim federation were vocal in their support for Jammu Hindus (Chaudhary 2023: 134-135). Moreover, whether in 1991 (see previous section) or 2008, most Jammuites prioritized the region over militancy or communalism. Although, there were also some instances of violence against Muslims by Hindu extremists during the Amarnath row, these instances did not escalate. However, that most Muslims of Jammu sided with the Hindus was also argued by Muslim Federation's president (Interview 2023).

Two conclusions can be drawn from this section: one, targeted militant attacks on Hindus, on civilians and Amarnath shrine, and absence of meaningful exchanges with other ruling elites proffered political space for the growth of Hindu nationalism. The BJP, with promises of abrogation of Article 370 (Interview 2023), found electoral support in Jammu. Secondly, Jammu's electoral support to Hindu nationalists did not entail Jammu's shared support to their Hindu nationalist vision of India. Akin to Lucknow (Varshney 2002: 171-200), the continuous decadal interactions between Hindu-Muslim elites and locals have prevented communalization in Jammu. Support to the BJP emerged due to Kashmir-centric polity of Congress, BJP's growing cadres in Jammu, and the assurance of abrogation of Article 370.

### Muslim Position in Jammu

How did Muslims in Jammu respond to the growing influence of the BJP? There are conflicting views in the scholarship. Aijaz Wani (2013: 309-341) argues that there are wide divisions between Jammu's Hindus and Muslims and the growing presence of Hindu nationalists has kept Muslims away from active political participation. Zafar Chaudhary (2008 11-13) agrees with Wani about Muslims keeping away from the Hindu nationalists but gives a slightly different picture of Jammu's Hindu-Muslim

relations. He suggests that both the Hindu Right and Kashmiri nationalists invoked Jammu Muslims in their strategies and rhetorics without including them in their networks. Due to this exclusion, Jammu Muslims chose to continue their day-to-day lives alongside Jammu Hindus. Rekha Chaudhary (2023) suggests that Jammu Muslims have had their differences with the Jammu Hindus. However, these differences could never overpower the plurality of Jammu. She asserts that their shared linguistic and ethnic ties cut across the religious divides giving the region a cohesive character. Ashutosh Varshney (2002) would argue that both the everyday linkages between the Hindu-Muslims and the linkages between their organisations (DSS and MF), maintained Jammu's communal unity despite the rise of the BJP. A Dogra Muslim, Abdul Majid of Muslim Federation (Interview 2023) took a 180° turn from Wani in saying that barring some skirmishes, Hindus and Muslims live in harmony in Jammu. They even celebrate each other's festivals together, Majid concluded.

Alongside organisational networks, another factor that helped foster connections between Jammu Muslims and Hindus is shared language. The differences in language amongst Muslims is also an important factor in explaining why Kashmir's insurgency was not that popular among the Muslims in Jammu (Bose 2001: 123; Puri (2001: 75). This is a nod to Wimmer's third variable of exchanges wherein he suggests that shared languages facilitate better exchanges relations (Wimmer 2018: 10). Shared languages, Wimmer asserts, makes it easier to negotiate differences, resolve conflicts, and understand intentions across the alliances.

The Gojri speaking Muslims in Jammu & Kashmir (around 3,000,000 speakers), language closer to Jammu's Dogri and Punjabi languages, refrained from joining the militancy (Bose 2021: 132). Providing a micro-analysis of Gujjar Muslims, Mohammad Javaid and Madhumita Sengupta (2024: 607-626) suggest that despite their huge population (1.5 million) (Census of India 2011), they were always marginalized by the Kashmiri governments. Moreover, Gojri, J&K's second most-spoken language and their mother tongue, was unrecognized in the J&K constitution. Gujjar Muslims' cultural, economic, and religious practices have been different from the Kashmiris. This reaffirmed their proximity with Jammu Hindus and aversion to the militancy.

Therefore, the Gujjar Muslims did not participate in the largely Kashmiri Muslim insurgency even as insurgent activity grew in Poonch and Rajouri regions of Jammu in the early 2000s. The Gojri-speaking Gujjars, 40% of Poonch population (Census of India 2001) also worked with the Indian army to assist with counter-insurgency measures. Their support helped set up the first Muslim Village Defence Committee (VDC) in 1995 in Reasi (Kaushik 2023). This committee of local Muslims was tasked to assist the Indian army with local information and networks. The VDCs targeted the areas where poor road networks delayed the arrival of security forces. 'The villagers, well-versed in the local topography, deterred many militant attacks and helped in their capture and killing' (ibid.). Just the Doda district had 1500 VDCs alone at one point. Even though concerns have been raised regarding their efficacy and their role in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu (Stand With Kashmir 2022; Joshi 1999: 401), VDCs became another avenue of networks between the state and Jammu people. Thus, while the militancy increased in pockets and phases, the organisational and communicative ties of Jammu ensured that most people kept their distance from the Pakistan-backed insurgency.

Thus, there are a number of reasons to explain the relative absence of Hindu-Muslim tensions and polarisation in Jammu. The patterns of political networks are a significant one amongst these. The absence of networks between Kashmir and Jammu Muslims fostered networks between Jammu Muslims and Hindus. Linguistic proximity between Jammu Hindus and Muslims also catered to their cohesiveness. These assertions also find support in the works of the scholars discussed above. Despite his critique, Wani acknowledges that successive Congress-NC governments, as recently as 2012, did not acknowledge the grievances of Jammu against Kashmir. Wani remarks upon the economic grievances of Ladakh and Jammu against Kashmir which 'has led to the development of a sense of economic sub-nationalism among these regions which cuts across religious lines' (Wani 2013: 333). Zafar Chaudhary (2015) wrote perhaps the first text on the history and positionality of Jammu Muslims. He argues that Jammu Muslims have been cornered into a no-win situation by the Hindu nationalists and Kashmiri elites. Therefore, Jammu Muslims have been ambivalent to the nationalist projects of India and Kashmir (pg. 143). Nevertheless, he adds that the tensions between Hindus and Muslims rarely escalated after 1989. Jammu Muslims, except those in Doda, discouraged locals from joining militant ranks. He also says that most

Jammu Muslims never supported Kashmiri insurgency, creating a feeling of solidarity with Jammu's Hindus. Abdul Majid (2023) says that the APHC, a key Kashmiri organisation did not have one person from Jammu. Kashmiri insurgents were also hostile to Jammu's Muslim Federation, and its close association with the Dogra Sabha. The insurgents assassinated one of the MF's members, he added. Majid even claimed that his engagements with the ministers of BJP and members of RSS have always been cordial. The importance of networks is also supported by Anuradha Bhasin's (Interview 2023) claim that it was the constant indifference of Kashmir against Jammu that conditioned its people to keep national interests above everything else.

### Hindu Nationalism and Article 370

It is possible that while Hindus and Muslims shared a cohesive Jammu identity, some Muslims may have been apprehensive about the rise of the Hindu nationalists (Chaudhary 2008; 2015). Yet, due to the lack of exchanges with Kashmir, they remained largely ambivalent regarding BJP's rise in Jammu while the Hindus welcomed it. However, as Varshney (2002: 201-216) has argued, growing Hindu support for the BJP needn't be detrimental to Hindu-Muslims relations as long as civic and associational forms of engagements between the communities exists.

This is the context in which the RSS backed BJP gained electoral power in Jammu after 2008. The growth of the BJP also took place in a context where Congress networks were not very well developed in Jammu. The BJP won 25 out of the 37 state assembly seats for Jammu in 2014, including 3/4 seats from militancy hit Doda-Kishtwar and 1/2 seats from other Muslim-dominated districts of Ramban and Rajouri (2014 J&K elections). The BJP also won both seats from Jammu in the 2014 and 2019 Indian parliament elections. Between 2015 and 2018, the BJP also participated in the coalition government of J&K, along with Kashmir's PDP (People's Democratic Party). This was the first time that there was a J&K state government that did not include the NC or the Congress party. It was in this context of growing power in the state that the BJP built the momentum to abrogate Article 370. The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, made 13 visits to the Jammu region between 2014 and 2019 (Barua 2024) increasing BJP's visibility in Jammu. The abrogation took place on 5 August 2019, after the BJP's second electoral victory in the Indian parliamentary elections. The

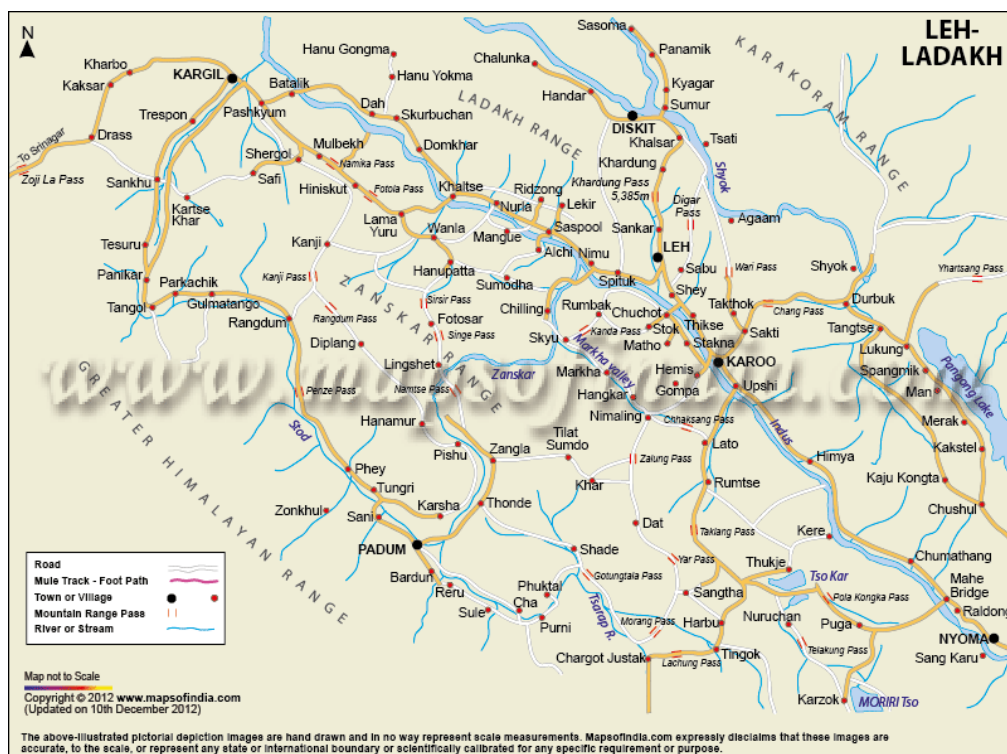
moment crystallised the divergent trajectories of nation-building across the three regions of the same state. In Kashmir, the Indian state had failed to build reciprocal networks but in Jammu, Hindu nationalist actors had succeeded. They also succeeded in Ladakh.

#### **5.4 Nation-building in Ladakh: Autonomy and Effective Militarization**

Indian nation-building in Ladakh continued after 1989 along the organisational and political economy linkages. India granted autonomous powers to Leh in 1996 and to Kargil in 2003. This autonomy to Ladakh was an outcome of India's long-standing alliance with the LBA. For the Political Economy exchanges, the BRO and Army facilitated Ladakh's development. They assisted with the construction of roads, spread of tourism, and employment for the locals. India-Ladakh exchanges were consolidated further after the 1999 Kargil war. A distinct feature of the war was the help by the people of Kargil to the Indian army. They worked as porters, guides, and provided food and warm clothes to the army. India reciprocated with post-war rehabilitation efforts in the form of skill training programmes, building schools, and other military-civic actions (Cariappa et al. 2008). The reciprocal exchanges finally placed Kargil in India's nation-building ambit. Even as Kargil-Leh relations declined, they were collectively oriented towards India. India, for most Ladakhis, was a better exchange partner than Kashmir. Like Jammu, Ladakh's exchanges were underscored by Hindu nationalism (Van Beek 2004). The RSS gained popularity in Ladakh after 1989 as prominent Indian elites. The RSS strengthened Ladakh's Buddhists' communal animosity against Kashmir. Kargil, owing to its Shia population and neglect by the Sunni Kashmiris, too was Indianized, albeit without RSS' exclusionary exchanges.

An interesting outcome of Ladakh's integration is that the ethnic divide between Leh's Buddhists and Kargil's Muslims remained in place even as they were integrated into Indian networks and institutions. This is different from the case in Jammu where, and as discussed above, the divides between Hindus and Muslims were somewhat bridged by shared culture and organisational networks. This is an important difference from Wimmer's model and points to the role unevenness of post-colonial nation building in India. In Kargil, it was primarily the Indian state and military that engaged in nation-building, whereas in Leh and the Buddhist regions of Ladakh it

was the Hindu nationalist organisations along with the military. Likewise, post-colonial nation-building, particularly as seen in Ladakh, is an open and continuous processes. This fits with Wimmer's focus on networks which are not static but always dynamic. Thus, in Ladakh, even after the abrogation of Article 370, new fissures have emerged and there have been new demands for even greater autonomy from Ladakh.



Map 10. Ladakh Towns and Cities (Maps of India 2023)

### *Autonomy- Consequence of Organizational Exchanges*

The main organisation that facilitated Ladakh's political integration with India was the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA). The LBA's extensive local networks made it the key actor in the region and one that Indian elites had to engage with. Its stature was linked to its close association with Kushak Bakula, most revered Buddhist religious figure and political leader of Ladakh (Chapter 4). In the sparsely populated landmass of Ladakh, the LBA operated seven regional centres, including in remote areas like Padum, Nyoma and Dah. LBA has also built outreach offices for many Ladakhi villages (Habib et al. 2023; Dollfuss 1995). Its 500+ membership as well as unofficial volunteers are spread across Ladakh. Its leadership and

executive council involve Ladakhis who are or have been active in the bureaucracy, army, activism, and journalism. LBA's current executive has members educated in Indian universities, who have worked in Indian administrative bodies, and even outside India (LBA 2025).

Since its inception over 90 years ago, the LBA has become the leading organisation on Buddhist culture and society (Chapter 3). The LBA publishes books for children in the Bodhi language and is closely involved with the Ladakhi monasteries. The LBA works in tandem with the LGA (Ladakh Gompa Association), the organisation tasked with managing the monasteries. The LBA has protested for the protection of monasteries from the land reforms, built guest houses for Buddhist pilgrims from Tibet, and organised multiple religious events in the monasteries and villages over the years (Interview 2023). Such activities further encouraged more networks between the LBA and the Ladakhi Buddhists. While the LBA's doors are open to both the Buddhists and Shia Muslims of Ladakh, it considers Sunni Muslims (Kashmiris) as outsiders in Ladakh (Upali 2024: 26). Nevertheless, LBA's position as the de-facto Ladakhi organisation was strengthened due to its organisational depth making it the primary Ladakhi institution for the Indian exchanges.

The negotiations for autonomy in Ladakh were dominantly led by the LBA. Considered as a means of 'institution-building' in Ladakh, Congress government in Delhi granted the region Autonomous Hill Councils, in Leh and Kargil. Their purpose was to ensure involvement of Ladakhis in decision-making of their local needs (Van Beek 1999: 439). This step towards 'institution-building' encouraged representation of Ladakhis in an inclusionary power-sharing arrangement (Wimmer 2018). The Hill Council's charter recognized the representative nature of its autonomy. The Council has powers to decide land allocations, form and review development plans, form and introduce schemes for education, and promote local institutions, language, and culture. It also has powers to collect state taxes and levy fees on services like grazing, business, transport (Behera 2000). The Council has 30 members, 26 elected from different constituencies of the Leh or Kargil district and 4 nominated by the state. The 26 territorial constituencies were drawn in consultation with the local Ladakhi leaders. This was to prevent the domination of Leh or other towns in the Council. After granting

of the Council, many Ladakhi leaders joined Congress increasing its popularity in the region (Van Beek 1999: 444).

However, there were limitations with the Hill Council. Though they granted Ladakh some administrative and financial autonomy, its decisions required the approval of the state government. In effect, their autonomy was dependant on the Kashmiri government. For instance, until abrogation of Article 370, Hill Councils could only use 10% of the total funds allocated for Ladakh by Kashmir (Kothari et al 2019: 9). Critics also argue that while a Council has powers of plan formulation, it has 'no control over the laws and policies that may define the directions and constraints and implementability of plans' (Kothari et al 2019: 12). Behera (2000) claims that after 5 years of its enactment, it was clear that the Hill Council had limited impact in Ladakh.

Despite these flaws, the Hill Council was nevertheless an important site of engagement between the political leaders of Delhi and Ladakh. For instance, just in 1999, LBA had multiple rounds of engagements with the Indian elites: over 5000 Buddhists rallied in Leh to urge the Indian government to grant asylum to a Tibetan monk; LBA sent a delegation to meet the Indian PM for the same (IALS 2000: 5); LBA joined hands with Pannun Kashmir and a Jammu student organisation in demanding separation of Jammu and Ladakh from Kashmir (pg. 13); When raising these demands in Leh, LBA's rally was attended by over 20,000 people (ibid.); Indian PM Vajpayee also met LBA members when visiting Leh where he was presented with the UT demands (pg. 15).

Meanwhile, Kargil leaders agreed with the principle of autonomy but postponed the idea of Hill Council until insurgency in Kashmir subsided. Most Kargilis were averse to Kashmiri insurgency. But they were also apprehensive of the Leh-centric and Buddhist-centric polity of Ladakh. Supporting the LBA-led negotiations for autonomy would've also strengthened Leh's negotiating position. However, after the 1999 war, Kargil too accepted its own Council in 2003.

These Councils allowed Ladakhis to elect their representatives in 52 constituencies. The Councils, sometimes, also consulted the locals before making decisions

(Kothari et al 2019: 14). Although they did not have much of an impact, locals, particularly the increasingly educated youth, held the LBA rather than the Indian state responsible for the failures (Upali 2024: 26). Amidst these shortfalls, the LBA again launched an agitation in 2000 demanding Delhi's direct rule in Ladakh (Behera 2000). In the early 2000s, the LBA president made multiple demands for the abrogation of Article 370. These demands remained in place until 2019. Meanwhile, the Hill Council elections continued to take place. In their limited capacity, the Councils undertook development measures. Thus, slowly but gradually, the demands for autonomy again snowballed into the demand for direct Indian rule. The momentum for these demands was maintained over the years. This momentum was also aided by the political economy aspect of exchange relations, particularly during and after the Kargil war.

### *War and Development in Ladakh- Political Economy Exchanges*

Ladakh's militarization resulted in economic exchanges between India and Ladakh through employment generation, road construction, and tourism. These exchanges nurtured Ladakh's (both Leh and Kargil) allegiance towards the Indian state. This allegiance helped India during the Kargil war of 1999 with Pakistan. The Ladakhi help was through the Ladakh Scouts, as well as local Ladakhis. For the latter, I briefly discuss the case of Brokpas, an ethnic group consisting of Buddhists and Muslims, and their help to the Indian army. After the war, India launched a civic-military engagement programme, 'Operation Sadhbhavana', for the economic development of Ladakh. Finally, I discuss the continued efforts of the BRO, which also contributed towards tourism. Thus, through multiple channels of economic exchanges, Indian nation-building succeeded in Ladakh by 2019.

### Exchanges During Kargil War

Besides the military operations, the most noteworthy aspect of the war was the Ladakhi support to the Indian army, particularly from Kargil. Kargil, until then, was largely excluded from both Indian and Kashmiri exchange relations. The LBA's agitations for autonomy or Kashmir's secessionist insurgency found little vocal support in Kargil. Distinct from both the Buddhist Leh and Sunni Muslim Kashmir,

the largely Shia Muslim population of Kargil was incorporated into Indian networks. The first report of the Pakistani infiltration in Kargil was by a shepherd from Batalik town of Kargil (Roshangar 2019). This started the Kargil war of 1999.

Until the war, within Indian perceptions, Kargilis were associated with the Kashmiri Muslims rather than with the Ladakhi Buddhists (Aggarwal 2004; Gupta 2013). However, the period during and after the war illustrated Kargil's loyalty towards India. Through fieldwork observations from Kargil, I suggest that despite differences with Leh, people in Kargil feel an attachment towards the Indian state and this was first and best seen during the Kargil war. A Kashmiri settled in Kargil spoke about Kargilis being 'incredibly Indian' in their outlook. Their help to the Indian army was impossible otherwise, he argued (Interview 2023). He suggested that the locals volunteered to be porters and cooks for the army when they set up camps in the high-altitude mountains. He argued that the National Conference did not engage with Kargil. This changed Kargil's neutral positionality vis-à-vis India and Kashmir during the war.

There were limited networks between Indian elites and Kargil prior to the war. India's main engagements were with Leh and the LBA. The Ladakh Scouts also had very few people from Kargil (Hussain 2013:5). However, the Kashmiri gentleman who longed for Kashmir's freedom asserted that post-war, Kargilis joined the Scouts and Indian army in large numbers. This was also corroborated by Sajjad Kargili. He is a prominent Kargili social-religious activist and politician (Interview 2023) and the current spokesperson of *Anjuman Islamia*, Kargil. The *Anjuman Islamia* is the largest Shia institution of Kargil. It serves as the leading institution in the religious matters of Kargil (Gupta 2014: 372-373). Sajjad Kargili claimed that while there were limited contacts with the army in Kargil before 1999, the war changed the Kargil society. Although Kargil never felt threatened by Kashmir, he suggested that the locals had a conscious understanding of keeping the insurgency away from Kargil's territory. When the war broke, they supported the army. He too suggested that the Indian military recruitment from Kargil increased after the war. A reason for the loyalty towards India was proffered by Murtaza Khalili. He is a school principal in Kargil town and the former spokesperson of *Anjuman Islamia* (Interview 2023). Khalili claimed that Shias are taught to be

loyal towards the land they live in. Grist (1998: 135-136) too suggests that Kargili Shias have been loyal to the land of Ladakh. Khalili cited that encouraging words about the Indian elites from *Anjuman Islamia* in Lucknow also increased Kargil's allegiance to India.

Mohammad Khan Kacho (Interview 2023), the unofficial 'king' of Turtuk village, a region captured by India from Pakistan in the 1971 war, cited discrimination against Shias in Pakistan as an important reason for Shia Muslim loyalty towards India. Turtuk's Shia Muslims acquired Indian nationality in 1971. Kacho's ancestors ruled in Baltistan for a millennium until it became part of the Dogra empire and later Pakistan. Talking about his apprehensions in the Hindu-majority nation during the 1970s, Kacho remarked that Indian army put the worries of Turtuk people at ease and 'cared for them like a baby'. The Army's cordial engagements with the former royal family and Turtuk's people ensured that each family of Turtuk sent at least 1 male member to join the Indian army, during and after the Kargil war. A letter of appreciation from Delhi for his help in 1999, and pictures with Indian military officials adorned the walls of Kacho's palace. Sunetro Ghoshal (Interview 2023), a Ladakh-based journalist claimed that region's underdevelopment under NC/Kashmir paved way for the exchanges with the army. He added that people of Kargil, whether for religious reasons or otherwise, were always inclined towards India. But, he added, Kargil's allegiance was only seen after 1999 because India was focused on Leh's Buddhists.

Mona Bhan's ethnographic work (2008: 139-157) on the Brokpas also illustrates how allegiances towards India through exchanges with the India army. Brokpas are a 5000-people strong community situated along the disputed India-Pakistan border. They are settled mostly in Dah and Hanu, but some Brokpas also live in Drass, Kargil (see Map 10). They speak a dialect of Shina, the language spoken in Pakistan-administered Gilgit. A practice central to Brokpas is *Khral*: contributions they make towards their villages. These contributions are in the form of material goods or through provision of labour. *Khral* was practiced even before Dogra rule and was invoked by the Indian army after 1947. While *Khral* was restricted to their villages and community, the Indian army sought Brokpas' labour during multiple wars, including Kargil. Carrying ammunitions and making food for the army became

the norm for Brokpas. Gradually, Brokpas, men/women and Buddhist/Muslim incorporated help to the army as part of their customary practice of *Khral*. Consequently, the army fixed their salaries. Paid labour became central to the Brokpa's economic sustenance. More importantly, *Khral* for the military became their 'duty as Indians' (pg. 150). It was through this practice of labour, that Brokpas' national identity emerged and was experienced (pg. 140). Thus, this small community, along with other people of Kargil and Ladakh, became participants in India's nation-building during the war.

### Post-War Nation-building

Indian army's popularity in Ladakh illustrates two facets of India's exchange relations. First, the army carried the potential to build inclusive exchanges with the people. However, if the army abused its powers, nation-building failed, like in Kashmir. Secondly, the army fostered strong exchanges in Ladakh such that it gained the loyalty of diverse groups of Ladakhis, including those in Kargil that weren't as politicized as Leh. The Indian governments then rewarded Ladakh's loyalty with concentrated efforts towards its development. The Indian army promised permanent enlistment post-war to the volunteering locals; the Brokpas were among the groups that benefitted from this. As India established more military bases across Kargil, the demand for porters increased. Subject to passing the recruitment tests, enlistment in the Ladakh Scouts increased considerably. The Ladakh Scouts' role in the war was recognized by Indians and Ladakhis alike which increased the Scouts' popularity in the region. Employment in the Scouts, as both an economic need and national duty, became a feature central to Ladakh, even Kargil (Interviews 2023).

"Ladakh Scouts...was restructured in 2000 by the Indian Government...that encouraged recruitment of locals on a large scale. For Brokpas, military recruitment after the Kargil war became the most accessible occupation" (Bhan 2008: 151).

Karin Gagné's ethnographic observation focusing on interactions between Ladakhi people and army leading to region's Indianization is worth noting: "For a generation that has grown up in Ladakh as a border area, the need for Ladakhis to act as

sentinels for the nation-state is often seen as a necessity, given the geo-political context of everyday life. Although many see the army as a route to employment, I have also often encountered the idea that enrolling in the army is a duty” (Gagné 2017: 236).

India also started a development centred programme, ‘Operation Sadhbhavana’, for Ladakh’s economic needs. Launched in J&K as a counter-insurgency operation, it gained popularity in Ladakh after the war. With the fears of post-war insurgency of Kashmir and Jammu spilling over in Ladakh, Sadhbhavana was made operational in Ladakh in 2002 ‘to meet the aspirations of the local populace and to integrate them as part of the national mainstream’ (Kapoor 2015). The purpose of this programme has been the concentrated development of remote and inaccessible areas of Ladakh whilst moulding public affiliation towards India.

Operation Sadhbhavana facilitated exchange relations through the provision of public goods: infrastructure development, women’s empowerment, and skill training programmes. Its operations spread across Ladakh including the far-flung border areas. Some of the tasks undertaken in this project are construction and repair of hospitals, construction of Army Goodwill Schools, orphanages, schools for differently abled children, sponsoring children for higher studies outside Ladakh, electrification projects near borders, and opening vocational training centres for enhancing skills in IT, knitting, and shawl weaving (Mattoo 2010). Over 2.75 billion rupees have been spent under this operation for the various projects until 2008, with the maximum expenditure on building schools (ibid.). The projects were identified through joint consultation with the state administration and local representatives and executed by the army. In addition to the economic measures, the Operation also strengthened the perceptions of the Indian military in Ladakh (ibid.).

The general principles guiding Operation Sadhbhavana were that the economic projects should be in consultation with the locals and must promote local representation in Ladakh’s administration (Anant 2011: 15). The operation, though, has its flaws. There has been a lack of consultation with the Ladakhi intelligentsia and absence of follow up on projects (Kapoor 2015). Ghoshal (Interview 2023) alleged that army has often occupied more land than required for setting up its projects and

construction of roads. However, the Operation has had its successes which aided India's nation-building in the region. A survey of counter-terrorist operations from 1989 to 2007 recognized that 2006 onwards, positive effects of Operation Sadhbhavana were seen (Anant 2011: 6). The author claimed that there was an evident support for the security forces and local support to Sadhbhavana projects not just in Ladakh, but Kashmir as well. Moreover, a research laboratory in Leh also launched an initiative in 2005 to introduce Ladakh's medicinal herbs in daily ration of soldiers posted in high-altitude regions (IALS 2006: 9-10). In conclusion, the exchange relations formed during and after the war fostered allegiance towards India in both Kargil and Leh.

### Infrastructure and Tourism

Finally, the economic expansion continued through the two core economic parameters of Ladakh: infrastructure and tourism. Work on both the parameters progressed due to the militarization of Ladakh. India recognized the necessity of increasing public expenditure in Ladakh's infrastructure after the 1999 war. This spending helped both military personnel and civilians, as well as encouraged tourism. In 2009, Delhi sanctioned \$3 billion for enhancing road networks in border areas. The BRO was also tasked with constructing all weather roads in Ladakh, including 4 strategic roads in 2010 (Rajagopalan 2013: 16). At present, over 4300 km of road has been constructed in Ladakh, of which the BRO made 2600 km (Ministry of Tourism Report 2022: 28). Along with the Project Himank, the BRO also launched 'Project Vijayak'. It is a border-specific project to ensure smooth road connectivity for the operational ease of the army. Started in 2010, *Vijayak* has been tasked with building and maintaining two strategic roads: one connecting Leh with Kashmir valley and other connecting Zaskar to Himachal Pradesh. This was significant because it brought the Zaskar region of Kargil within the development initiatives of Ladakh. With Zaskar's Buddhists being at odds with Kargil's Muslims, an infrastructure initiative can be an important step. While project Himank is headquartered in Leh, *Vijayak* is headquartered in Kargil. This is a nod towards India building exchanges with both Kargil and Leh after the war. This also corroborates the Kargil interviewees' assertion that Indian presence increased rapidly in Kargil after the war. However, one aspect in which Leh and Kargil differ till date is tourism.

Tourism has gradually become the backbone of Ladakh and contributes to about half of the region's GDP (Ministry of Tourism Report 2022: 9). While both Indian and International visitors have set foot in Ladakh over the decades, very few have made it past the Leh district. Since 2010, many visitors have made the trip to Turtuk, to see the 'former Pakistani region'. However, Kargil has received much less visitors. For instance, between 1998-1999, while Leh received over 33,500 tourists, Kargil received only over 5,500 (Kargil Tourist Office 2023). Although an important factor here is the presence of more 'touristic' sites in Leh, particularly its numerous Monasteries. However, these sites were also developed considering the Leh-centric focus in Ladakh's tourism.

In short, the post-Kargil war infrastructure development led to a tourism boom in Leh. Close to a million people visited Ladakh between 1974-2011, of which 400,000 were Indians (Leh Tourist Office 2023). In 2011, Kargil received 57,089 tourists and Leh had 181,437 tourists (Pelliciardi 2013). The number of Indian tourists in Ladakh increased rapidly after 2011, from 55,685 in 2010 to around 250,000 in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism Report 2022: 11). To contextualise the growth of tourism, Leh and Kargil's total population was around 275,000 in 2011 (Census of India 2011). Thus, tourism in Ladakh 'has generated revenue and created opportunities and jobs in related sectors such as hotels, guest houses, restaurants, catering services, tourist agencies, tour operators, taxi transport, guides, mule porters, shops, retailers and handicrafts' (Pelliciardi 2013: 2). This has not only created employment opportunities in Ladakh but also raised the standard of living of Ladakhis. Increased connectivity to Ladakh has also encouraged its people to travel to other Indian cities for education and jobs. Most importantly, everyday engagement of Ladakhis with Indian people, ideas, goods, and institutions, has seamlessly increased Indian identification within Ladakh. This explains why the locals often claim that Ladakhis only have two professions, to either join the army or drive taxis for tourists (Interviews 2023).

### *Hindu Nationalism in Ladakh- Communal Networks for Nation-Building*

From the late 1990s onwards, the Hindu nationalist RSS/BJP became the key Indian actors building networks the Ladakhis. By Ladakhis, the implication largely is the LBA. Despite Indian Congress elites building relations with both Kargil and Leh, Leh's LBA

still remained the dominant Ladakhi organisation. Its organisational network and influence in Ladakh remained unchallenged by any other Leh or Kargil body. Subsequently, LBA's anti-Kashmir and pro-India stance found an ally in the RSS. The RSS did not 'replace' Congress in Ladakh but emerged as a powerful parallel Indian institution for the exchange relations. Eventually, the alliance between the Buddhist and Hindu nationalists popularised the demands for abrogation of Article 370 and direct Indian rule, which the BJP granted in 2019 by bifurcating J&K. Akin to Jammu, it was the lack of exchanges with Kashmir which led to Ladakh's collective orientation towards India and allowed for the space for Hindu nationalism. Van Beek confirms this assertion:

"Whereas Kashmiri secessionists consider India as an oppressive, colonial power, Ladakhi autonomy movement leaders look upon Kashmir as their colonizer...Kashmir and Ladakh both claim the right to self-determination, although Ladakhi leaders have said that they have opted for accession to India" (2004: 195-196).

However, LBA's communal politics was different from the Hindu nationalists' communal politics (Brass 1997). Although both shared an anti-Kashmir stance, the LBA did not want RSS' Hindu nationalist vision to be adopted in Ladakh. The LBA's Buddhist-centric and anti-Kashmiri Muslims communalization was to protect Ladakh from outsiders, Indian or Kashmiri (Van Beek 2004). Brass argues that Ladakhi villagers often believed they were the victims of Islamic governments of Kashmir, long before their views were reaffirmed by the LBA or RSS. As shown in Chapter 4, LBA normalized the notion that Ladakh, a bastion of Buddhism, was under threat from the Islamic Kashmir. The LBA elites believed that the Ladakhi culture would be best preserved under the direct Indian rule. Simultaneously, the LBA was also conscious of its dalliance with the RSS. LBA's support to the Hindu nationalists was not a support for a Hindu Indian nation. That is the RSS's vision. The LBA deemed the political alliance with the RSS necessary to keep pressure on Delhi for its demands (Van Beek 2004: 198; 204). The LBA president Tsering Dorje corroborated that LBA sought the RSS support only to remind Delhi of its demands (Interview 2023). He asserted that Ladakhis are nationalists. Ladakhis will always be 'Indian', he said. Yet their engagement with the Indian elites was dependent on Ladakh's needs. For instance, they engaged with both BJP and Congress. The BJP kept their Union Territory status

demands alive and Congress granted them the Autonomous Hill Council in 1995. LBA's engagements with the BJP, however, were relatively more than the Congress.

The BJP's engagement with Ladakh began in the aftermath of the insurgency. A BJP convention, led by the future Indian PM Atal Behari Vajpayee, in Jammu in 1990 was attended by LBA leaders (Van Beek 2004: 205). Here, the BJP expressed its support for Ladakh's demands. The BJP also organised a similar convention on Ladakh's issues in Delhi. The RSS and BJP also started the annual *Sindhu Darshan* pilgrimage from 1997 on Indus river, near Leh (pg. 207). The annual Hindu pilgrimage to the Indus River increased tourism in Ladakh as well as the influence of Hindu ideas, despite apprehensions of the local Buddhists. An RSS member in Ladakh claimed that the LBA never supported the RSS publicly but only behind closed doors (Interview 2023). Van Beek suggested from his fieldworks that the Buddhists and RSS were on the same page regarding the growth of Muslim demographic in Ladakh (Van Beek 2004; 212). However, he too claimed that the Hindu-Buddhist alliance was not unanimous amongst all locals.

Regardless, the RSS continued its operations and opened education centres in Leh and Kargil. The RSS interviewee claimed that its activities were supported by the Ladakhi Muslims because they were unaware about the mainstream Indian narratives regarding Hindu nationalism (Interview 2023). This assertion, however, cannot be corroborated as the RSS presence did sharpen the religious boundaries in Ladakh. The differences between Leh and Kargil were wide, and they increased after the Kargil war. Post-war, the LBA complained about 'pampering of Muslims' by government and expressed concerns over their increasing demographic, to the extent that they campaigned against birth control measures. The LBA also demanded the extension of Operation Sadbhavana's ambit from Kargil's villages to Ladakh's Tibetan borders (Van Beek 2004: 215-216). Similarly, Buddhist shops and houses were damaged in 2006 in Kargil after reports about desecration of the Quran in Leh (Hussain 2013: 5). Moreover, when 23 Buddhists of Zaskar converted to Islam, communal riots followed (pg. 5-6).

Hindu nationalism in Ladakh had two consequences for the region. It led to the fulfilment of Ladakh's demands of UT status in 2019. Secondly, the support given by the RSS and BJP to the LBA's Buddhist chauvinism also increased the tensions

between Leh and Kargil. Wimmer argues that nation-building succeeds where exchange relations bridge ethnic divides and reduce the salience of ethnicity and religion in the polity (Wimmer 2018). Ladakh's case shows that sometimes nationalist actors can build networks with different ethnic groups whilst increasing tensions between them. Exchange relations facilitated linkages between India and Ladakhis but couldn't bridge the intra-Ladakh divides. Simultaneously, nation-building still did succeed in Ladakh. Both Leh and Kargil favoured being under direct Indian rule, even though they differed on the nature of the Indian rule, or on the status of Article 370. In 2002, *Islamiya* School and Imam Khomeini Trust of Kargil withdrew their support to the National Conference. They spoke for Ladakh's collective interests. Even though the Imam Trust opposed the UT demand, the consensus towards the Indian rule was evident. Likewise, some interviewees still did claim to have enjoyed the autonomy under Article 370, but were also not averse to the direct Indian rule (Interviews 2023). This made it easier for the Indian elites, Hindu nationalists or Congress, to develop exchanges with the two regions and 'integrate' them within Indian nation-state.

'Integration' for the LBA is different from Wimmer's 'integration'. Wimmer's 'integration' involves the alliances between various ethnic groups and their representation in an inclusive power arrangement. LBA's idea of 'integration' was the removal of Article 370 and direct Indian rule. Both kinds of integration happened as LBA continued its alliances with the RSS. Likewise, Kargil too, particularly after the war, continued to be the recipient of Indian exchange relations, whether through secular or communal actors. Kargil, which was politically neutral for the most part of postcolonial period, welcomed the exchanges. Despite the intra-Ladakh differences, India built exchanges with both Buddhists and Muslims of Ladakh. Simultaneously, Ladakh's 'integration' required the removal of autonomy granted to Kashmir i.e., failure of nation-building in Kashmir. In this context, nation-building succeeded in Jammu and Ladakh at the expense of failure in Kashmir.

Here, it is important to briefly remark upon the above-mentioned finding and the consequence Ladakh's 'successful' integration. This paragraph reiterates Wimmer's assertion that nation-building is a dynamic process. Since 2019, two umbrella organisations have emerged in Ladakh, Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) and Leh Apex Body (LAB). The KDA includes members of all religious institutions of Kargil

including, Imam Khomeini Trust, *Anjum Islamia* as well as prominent socio-political leaders of Kargil. LAB includes members of the autonomous hill councils, LBA, and the elected legislators of Ladakh (Lhaskyabs 2024). The two bodies also include current and former Ladakhi members of the BJP and Congress, including some of the interviewees discussed in this chapter like Sajjad Kargili and Tsering Dorjey. Anticipating that the UT status could be a threat to Ladakh's land and jobs from the people outside Ladakh, these bodies have joined hands to negotiate more autonomous safeguards from India. This also reiterates Van Beek's argument (2004) that LBA was aversive to both Kashmiris and Indian outsiders. LBA's engagements with BJP-RSS were to seek protection for Ladakh from Kashmir. In the same tune, the LAB and KDA have sent multiple delegations to the BJP government in Delhi for Ladakh's development, autonomy, and preservation (Bhakto 2024; Jsameel 2025). Thousands in Leh and Kargil have also protested since 2024 against Delhi, demanding more autonomy for Ladakh.

Despite these new fissures, Ladakh can still be called a successful case of nation-building because after granting the Union Territory status, its leaders have prioritized exercising their rights within the constitutional framework over their communal differences. These demands might also be construed as a sign of differences between Ladakh and India. However, they are an outcome of Ladakh's unique geographical and strategic position. Post-2019, Ladakhi elites and organisations can put forth their aspirations, without Kashmir's involvement, towards the more responsive ruling elites. Their aspirations are not of secession. They are based on the principle of federalism enshrined in the Indian constitution and since 2019, the BJP has engaged with the LAB and KDA leaders to find a resolution for their demands.

Respondents from Kargil, who were critical of the RSS and apprehensive of Article 370's removal, were nevertheless hopeful of the ongoing negotiations within the Indian framework (Interviews 2023). Sajjad Kargili, for example, feared that the BJP could make India a communal state like Pakistan and that Article 370's abrogation was unnecessary. However, he added that Ladakh would exercise its constitutional rights to engage with Indian governments meaningfully. Kargili indeed has been leading the KDA in the negotiations with Delhi. There were also other perspectives from Kargil. An educator argued that the Islamic influence in Kargil prevented its development and he

hoped that more autonomy after Article 370's removal would lead to positive changes. Sunetro Ghoshal said that there was no popular movement for abrogating Article 370 in Kargil. However, because of the development efforts of the army and government, there was greater support for direct Indian rule. Murtaza Khalili suggested that despite Kargil's religious bodies having affiliations with NC and Congress, it was the BJP that started most development works in the region. Despite these differing opinions on the Hindu nationalists, all the respondents unanimously agreed on Kargil's allegiance towards India. They also acknowledged the popularity of the BJP due to its role in constructing the Zojila tunnel. Upon completion, the tunnel would connect Kargil with Kashmir year-round. This fits with Wimmer's model in that it is not the ideological character of the government that matters in building loyalty, but rather its capacity to deliver public goods.

### **5.5 Analysis of India's Exchange Relations**

After 1989, India's nation-building project continued with its distinct trajectories in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. It symbolically ended with the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state of J&K into Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh. Kashmir was the most accepting of the accession to India in 1947 and was granted autonomy under Article 370 due to the positive relationship between the NC and Congress. However, the exchanges gradually declined leading to the insurgency since 1989. India's counter-insurgency measures were intended to protect the valley but ended up increasing Kashmiri alienation because of brutal human rights violations. Thereafter, relations between India and Kashmiris worsened, and culminated with the abrogation of Article 370- a demand of both Jammu and Ladakh.

Jammu had strong relations with Indian actors, particularly the Hindu nationalists, and these relations ensured that the effects of insurgency never escalated into a Kashmir-like conflict. Unlike Kashmir, Indian counter-insurgency operations in Jammu involved taking the public into confidence. Confidence-building measures characterised military operations in Jammu. Relations and networks with Jammu strengthened over time, particularly through the Hindu nationalist actors. Hindus and Muslims of Jammu shared a pro-India stance, but the Muslims remained apprehensive of the Hindu nationalist Indian elites. That exchange relations over a long period can induce

nationalist loyalty was best evident in Ladakh, especially in its Kargil region. Through the political economy aspect, the neglected region of Kargil was brought within Indian fold. Even as the two sub-regions of Ladakh were communalized, especially through the Hindu nationalist actors, they oriented towards India. Therefore, while the outcome in Ladakh was aligned with Wimmer's framework, the exchange relations in Ladakh were not (Chapter 6). Until the 1990s, the Kargil was excluded from the Indian exchanges. Kargil-Leh relations were also unimproved, a key requisite of Wimmer's 'successful' nation-building. Thus, the organisational variable in Jammu and the organisational and public goods variables in Ladakh generated political loyalty of the two regions for India, facilitating its nation-building project, albeit with certain deviations from Wimmer's framework. The failure of both organisational connections and economic benefits led to the failure of national building in Kashmir.

#### *Non-Reciprocal and Repressive Relations: Kashmir*

To reiterate, most literature on Kashmir imposes the India-Pakistan lens on the valley (Khan 1965; Gupta 1967; Dawson 1994; Schofield 2003); or Kashmir's internal political manoeuvrings (Menon 1956; Bamzai 1962); or the lens of historical narratives (Zutshi 2003; Kanjwal 2023); or a combination of factors (Ganguly 1997, 2003; Bose 2003, 2021; Sidhu et al 2006). Most of these texts begin their discussion from 1947. Lamb (1991) and Rai (2018) trace Kashmir from the princely state period until the insurgency. Ultimately, the scholarship is centred around the Kashmir 'conflict'. This thesis examines the conflict, but not exclusively the conflict. It comparatively examines India's exchange relations with the three regions of J&K. Unlike these other perspectives, Kashmir is analysed not just an independent entity, but as part of the larger entity of J&K. The analysis is centred on India's nation-building processes in J&K, that underline the Kashmir conflict. The conflict, therefore, becomes the consequence of failed nation building.

The outbreak of the insurgency in 1989 is an indication of the breakdown of exchange relations. But even such scenario posits the necessity of building exchanges to overturn the deteriorated political situation. Co-option of the organisations and provision of public goods, over time, would have reduced the sense of alienation in Kashmir. Bose (2003) too suggests similar pathways to peace. If a state responds to

the secessionist tendencies with brute violence instead of building inclusive political alliances, conflict escalations are inevitable (Lindemann and Wimmer 2017). In the absence of organisational or political economy aspect of exchanges, the conflict between India and Kashmir snowballed and Kashmir's nation-building failed.

Ganguly (1996) asserted that the insurgency was a result of the lack of effective institutions in Kashmir. These institutions were needed to accommodate the voices of the politically aware Kashmiris. He too urged the need for inclusive nation-building to counter insurgency. He argues that the Kashmiri problem requires nationalism that accommodates multiple loyalties, that garners loyalty to the centre 'precisely because the centre helps expand the cultural and political space available to people of diverse faiths, languages, and ethnicities' (Ganguly and Bajpai 1994: 407). Wimmer's assertion of building exchanges to undermine support for separatism (Wimmer 2019: 1) was proposed by Ganguly in the 90s itself. However, the political space in Kashmir was severely constrained for the Kashmiris. When the organisations like JKLF and APHC emerged, India didn't engage with them as well as it did with the unpopular NC. Nor were these Kashmiri organisations engaged with during the India-Pakistan talks on Kashmir. India did limitedly engage with JKLF and APHC after 2000. However, these engagements were restricted to insubstantial discussions.

Where the population is excluded from political representation, conflict ensues (Kashmiri Muslims vs Kashmiri Pandits), and the ethnic identity gains prominence over the national (Kashmiri identity acquired salience over Indian) (Wimmer 2018: 66). The insurgency further polarized and embittered relations between the Indian state and the Kashmiri population. The violence of the insurgency and the counterinsurgency became the main form of interaction between India and Kashmiris, preventing other networks. The cost of maintaining the army and managing the insurgency also took precedence over deliverance of public goods. Moreover, India put such measures in place that made Kashmir entirely dependent on Delhi for its economy. The state had to rely on the Indian Reserve Bank for its finances. This was in addition to the debt-ridden economy of the state. Thus, the absence of both organisational and political economy aspect of exchange relations led to the failure of India's nation-building project in Kashmir.

### *Reciprocal Relations: Jammu*

The lack of Indian exchanges caused the insurgency in Kashmir; whereas the presence of Indian exchanges ensured that Jammu steered away from it. More importantly, these exchanges even helped mitigate the insurgency in Jammu. As stated previously, most scholars trace the origins of the Kashmir conflict to 1947. Ironically, Kashmiri elites favoured Indian rule when Pakistan was carved out of the British India. Jammu Muslims, on the other hand, favoured joining Pakistan. Yet, after 1989, Kashmiris turned to secession and Jammuited turned to India. Jammu had reciprocal exchange relations with India through its organisations. India continued its co-option of Jammu's diverse organisations after 1989. In exchange, the Jammuited proffered their loyalty to the Indian state. Simultaneously, Kashmiri elites' continuous indifference towards Jammu increased India's stock as the better exchange partner. Even as the Hindu nationalists took over the political space of Jammu, the networks between Jammu's Hindu and Muslim organisations and people steered the region's integration.

The Indian national identification in Jammu grew stronger when the Indian exchanges spread across the ethnic divides (Dogras, Gujjars, Paharis) and became institutionalized (recognition of MF and DSS during insurgency). The ethnicity in Jammu was also un-politicized (despite some skirmishes and Hindu nationalism, Hindus and Muslims supported each other particularly during Amarnath Land row). Wimmer also contends that the political networks during the early periods of nation-state formation influences the prospects of nation-building. As seen in Chapter 4, the exchanges with Jammu's organisation had been established since 1947 itself, through the Praja Parishad, Hindu Nationalists of Congress and Jana Sangh, and other local organisations. After 1989, the co-option of Muslim Federation and Dogra Sadar Sabha by India to counter insurgency in Jammu further institutionalized these relationships. Even as the RSS/BJP replaced Congress as the primary Indian exchange partner, the established networks of inclusive exchanges couldn't hinder Jammu's nation-building process. While sections of Jammu Muslims remained apprehensive of the Hindu nationalists, their loyalty to the Indian state was evident.

### *Reciprocal Relations: Ladakh*

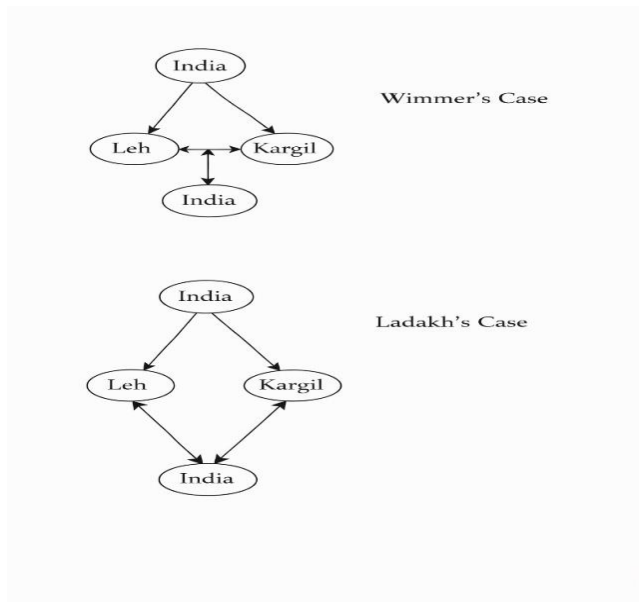


Image 7. Comparison between Wimmer's hypothesis and Ladakh's case (Chirag Ahuja 2024)

As argued previously, Ladakh's nation-building differed from Wimmer's suggested model. Wimmer's case would involve that the ethnic divides between Leh and Kargil are bridged through the ruling elites' exchanges. The ensuing reciprocal relations, thereafter, foster nation-building. Ladakh's case involved the reciprocity of exchanges. However, the divides between Leh and Kargil's ethnic groups remained. Ladakh's Bodh and Mon/Gara Buddhists were at odds with Kargil's Balti, Purig, Dards, and Brokpa Muslims. The Buddhists in Kargil were either from the Brokpa ethnic group (numbering in the few hundred) or Bodhs (approximately 15,000) (Census of India 2001). Therefore, while Buddhists were mostly Bodhs, the Muslims belonged to different ethnic groups. Since Leh's politicization was on religious lines, Kargil was also politicized on communal lines, not ethnic. Yet all the ethnic groups had some networks that connected them with Indian institutions or political parties

Scholars on Ladakh agree that Ladakh was Indianized due to the LBA's organisational exchanges and political economy exchanges. But they also attest to the widening of the gap between the Buddhists and Muslims of Ladakh. The Buddhists harboured communal prejudices against Kashmiri Muslims (Brass 1997). These perceptions were consolidated through the LBA (Van Beek 2000). This communalization influenced Leh's demand for the UT status (Bray 2007). Simultaneously, Kargil's religious

differences and identification were also heightened. Since the region was divided along communal lines, the Baltis, Purigs, and Dards, were politicized as Muslims. They were oriented towards India, without partaking in LBA's demands. The military also played a role in bringing Kargil's population into pan-Indian networks. The Leh-tilted economic development in Ladakh also furthered the differences between Muslims and Buddhists (Emmer 2007). The rivalries 'on the economic front slowly made its way to local politics, which perpetuated the ever-widening gap among the people of Ladakh' (Shafi 2013: 7).

Leh and Kargil had their share of intra-regional differences. Yet the Indian military spending and the resulting public goods were extended to the entire territory and people of Ladakh. Although Leh reaped more benefits of this expenditure due to its historical headstart, Kargil too was gradually incorporated within the Indian networks. In return, India gained loyalty from the sparse population of the largest region of J&K. India's militarization of Ladakh is a further example of the potential of exchange relations. In Kashmir, the armed forces could not ensure security for Kashmiris, improve the economic conditions of the valley, or garner popular support. The opposite outcome in Ladakh was a consequence of Indian institutions being an attractive exchange partner that provided public spending in exchange for political loyalty (Wimmer 2018: 112). These networks were established before the abrogation of Article 370. They continued in the aftermath of that event. The final chapter discusses the post-2019 developments and evaluates the uneven outcomes of Indian nation-building in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. I also evaluate the extent of 'success' and 'failure' of Indian nation-building in the three regions.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: DYNAMIC NATION-BUILDING

Previously, I stated that 5 August 2019 serves as the concluding point for this thesis. But did the process of nation-building conclude in the three regions after that date? Jammu and Ladakh's people and organisations, at least many among them, demanded the abrogation of the special status of J&K. Ladakh's organisations also demanded the UT status for decades. They wanted to be governed by governments in Delhi, not the governments in Kashmir. The Indian government, led by the BJP, accepted these demands of Jammu and Ladakh in 2019. However, there are now grave apprehensions in the two regions about the consequences of the abrogation of Article 370. The special status ensured that only the residents of the J&K could purchase land in the state. This meant that the culture and demography of the three regions was shielded from outsiders by Article 370. With the abrogation of Article 370 and granting of the Union Territory (UT) status, Jammu and Ladakh are now open to the rest of India. People from other states and UTs can purchase land in Ladakh, set up factories in Jammu, and alter the demographics of the two regions. The organisations from Ladakh have called upon Delhi to protect the cold desert (Lhaskyabs 2024). They have demanded certain autonomous measures guaranteed under the Indian constitution. The demands have also escalated to abolish the UT status of Ladakh and turn it into a state with its own legislature. People from Jammu, albeit in hushed tones, have expressed the fear that the Dogra culture would erode in the coming years due to the UT status (Interviews 2022; 2023).

This situation indicates that the role of nation-building is an ongoing process. For instance, Sonam Wangchuk, an educator-turned-activist and arguably the most prominent face from Ladakh in contemporary times, publicly thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2019 for 'fulfilling Ladakh's longstanding dream'. However, in September 2025, Wangchuk was arrested by the Modi government for 'anti-national' activities, with the presumptions that foreign actors are assisting his campaign for Ladakh's constitutional protection from Delhi (Sharma 2025). Wangchuk's demands for more autonomy in Ladakh are unanimously supported by organisations and political figures from Kargil. Like the reversals in positionalities of Kashmir and Ladakh after 1947, this is another reversal for Ladakh after 2019. This

affirms the notion that nation-building is an endless and dynamic process. Indian networks with the Ladakhi people and organisations are necessary, again, to mitigate Ladakh's situation. I expound on this assertion as the concluding point of this thesis.

In this final discussion, I distil certain points. First, I summarize the thesis and the argument. Then, I focus on the findings of the thesis. Through process tracing, I showed that the exchange relations between the Indian state and people determined the nation-building processes of the three regions. However, since it was a hoop test and not a double decisive test (Collier 2011), certain findings came forth. These findings were aligned with the proposition of nation-building through exchange relations but not entirely as per Wimmer's hypothesis. These findings have already been discussed in the previous chapters. However, another appraisal of these observations is necessary. In this light, I also discuss my contributions to Wimmer's framework, and the literature on J&K, networks, and nation-building. Finally, I conclude with the spotlight on nation-building. I offer further avenues of nation-building research within India and Ladakh. More importantly, I reiterate that nation-building is a continuous process. Despite Ladakh's 'successful' nation-building, the region is now in conflict with the Indian state.

## **6.1 Networks of Nation-Building for J&K**

The thesis answers the following research questions: *Why did the three regions of J&K have different post-colonial political trajectories? Despite initial inclination towards accession to India in 1947, why did Kashmir turn to secession from India? Why did Jammu and Ladakh eventually come to demand integration with India despite being ambivalent towards India in 1947?* I answer these questions using Andreas Wimmer's framework on nation-building networks. He defines nation-building as the process of building reciprocal exchange relations between the state and people: the state provides public goods, resources, representation in an inclusive power-sharing arrangement and in exchange, people are integrated with the state and identify as part of the national community. Exchange relations are built across three variables: linguistic, political economy, and organisational. Wimmer hypothesizes that for successful nation-building the state must provide public goods

equitably; or co-opt with the organisations of both the majorities and minorities; or be communicatively accessible to the people. India's exchanges with Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh fared differently, across the three variables, after 1947.

Despite favourable networks with the Indian elites until 1947, the absence of inclusive Indian exchanges thereafter oriented the valley to seek secession from India. Kashmir received comparatively more attention from the Indian elites, since the 1930s. Congress elites from India co-opted National Conference (NC) elites from Kashmir. The NC-Congress networks furnished the promise of plebiscite in Kashmir (no formal princely state was given such assurance) and Article 370 (no Indian state was given similar autonomous powers). Public spending also increased in the Kashmir valley. The per capita expenditure in J&K by India was the highest among all Indian states for many years (Wani 2019: 147). The public expenditure in Kashmir valley was the highest among all regions of J&K (Gajendragadkar Report 1968). The political economy exchanges even mitigated the potential impact of Sheikh Abdullah's arrest by India. However, the public expenditure declined after 60s. More importantly, Congress elites compelled the National Conference to suppress every other Kashmiri organisation. Consequently, the elections in J&K were consistently rigged, the NC often subsumed other organisations, and the detention of non-NC political workers was common. The Congress governed Kashmir through leaders who were unpopular among the Kashmiris. The continuous denial of representation to Kashmiris and their organisations drove the valley towards the secessionist insurgency. Similar repression tactics continued throughout the period of insurgency. During the decades of militancy, Indian exchanges with the Kashmiri organisations remained few, exclusionary, and repressive. The Indian state also made Kashmir dependant on Delhi for its finances (Prakash 2000). Furthermore, Indian expenditure in Kashmir was directed towards maintaining its militarized machinery. Counter-insurgency measures and managing the security apparatus was prioritized over public goods deliverance. The persistent denial of adequate exchanges concluded with the inevitable step of the abrogation of the autonomous status. Thus, Article 370 which emerged during the high point of India-Kashmir exchange relations, was abrogated at the height of Jammu/Ladakh-India exchange relations.

Organisational exchanges with the Indian elites, particularly the Hindu nationalist elites, after 1947 oriented Jammu away from Dogra chauvinism towards the Indian state. Jammu's favourable position under the Dogra princely state meant that Congress' anti-colonial networks did not reach Jammu until quite late. Immediately after India's independence, Jammu faced the consequences of the communal partition of India and Pakistan. Muslims of Jammu were killed and driven across the Indian border by the Hindus and Sikhs. Jammu Hindus then became the initial locus of Indian political networks. Non-Congress Hindu nationalist elites of the RSS and BJP and Hindu nationalists within Congress built networks with Jammu's Hindu organisations. These organisations sought contacts with the Indian elites due to discriminatory actions of the National Conference. NC's partisan economic policies for Jammu also compelled the Jammu Muslims to resume contacts with Jammu Hindus. Gradually, ties between the Hindus and Muslims improved, along with the strengthening of the Indian networks across the various ethnicities of Jammu. This was best seen when the insurgency spread to the Muslim-dominated border areas of Jammu. The Indian state was able to mobilise Jammu's people against the insurgency. Indian elites, Congress and BJP, also adopted a lenient counter-insurgency approach in Jammu, compared to Kashmir. It involved strengthening relationships with the insurgency-affected Muslims and including them within the counter-insurgency activities. Likewise, many Muslims supported the Hindus during the Amarnath Row. Even when the BJP effectively replaced Congress as the dominant Indian elite, the civil and associational networks between Hindus and Muslims ensured that they were aligned on most matters (Varshney 2002). Jammu's Hindus and Muslims collectively identified with the broader Indian identity. Although Hindus were keener on the abrogation of Article 370 than Muslims, both communities appreciated the Indian state's exchanges and governance over Kashmir's.

Like Jammu, Ladakh's Buddhists were keener on the abrogation of Article 370 compared to the Muslims, yet both communities were aligned in their orientation towards the Indian state. This orientation happened through the organisational and political economy exchanges by the Indian elites. However, beyond a shared appreciation for the Indian exchanges, Leh and Kargil could not be further apart. Leh's Kushak Bakula and Ladakh Buddhist Association were anointed by Nehru as the representative figures of Ladakh. Ladakh Buddhist Association's centrality in

Ladakh's exchanges can be likened to National Conference's centrality in Kashmir's exchanges. The demands for Article 370's removal, separation of Ladakh from J&K, and turning Ladakh into a Union Territory of India, was pioneered by the Buddhist actors of Ladakh. Congress elites engaged with the Buddhist actors on numerous occasions bringing them closer after 1947. From 1990s onwards, the Hindu nationalist RSS and BJP also entered the Ladakh's political scene. They built organisational networks with the LBA. Since 1947, however, the primary agent of nation-building in Ladakh was the Indian military. The Indian military infrastructure in Ladakh catered to the region's nation-building through public spending. The people of Ladakh gained roads, infrastructure development, and tourism through India's militarization. Ladakhis reciprocated by joining the Ladakh Scouts in large numbers. Many Indian wars in the Ladakh sector were fought through the Scouts and locals' help. Locals from Kargil were recognised by the Indian elites especially after their help in the 1999 India-Pakistan war. Until then, Kargil's Shia Muslims, sandwiched between Kashmir's Sunni Muslims and Leh's Buddhists, refrained from partaking in their respective politics. Yet the Indian elites were attuned about the region through the help to the army by the locals during the war. The military reciprocated with development efforts in Kargil thereafter. Even though Indian exchanges could not bridge the divides between Leh's Buddhists and Kargil's Muslims, per Wimmer's hypothesis, the two regions were integrated with and identified with the Indian state.

## **6.2 Findings from the Research**

The research design involved interviews and archival research, alongside the textual analysis of new and available literature. Through process tracing, I analysed if Wimmer's framework conclusively answers the research questions. As stated in the previous section, Wimmer's exchange relations explain the divergent post-colonial nation-building trajectories of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. However, the process tracing method also yielded certain observations and findings that were not entirely aligned with Wimmer's framework. I have discussed these observations in the empirical chapter. But I reiterate them again to recapitulate where the thesis differs from Wimmer's hypothesis.

Firstly, although the Dogra state was centralised as per Wimmer's propositions, the impact of the centralised state was not in accordance with Wimmer's propositions. The Dogra state was bureaucratically centralised, the Kashmiri Pandit-dominant bureaucracy controlled the taxation system, and laws like the Ranbir Penal Code and Hereditary Subjects Law served as the basis of J&K penal code and state subjects' provision under Article 370. Yet the centralised Dogra state was inequitable and preferential. Most communities were peripheral to the Dogra culture and politics. The people of J&K did not adopt one common language during or after the colonial period. The National Conference governments also rejected the Pandit-centric bureaucratic polity of J&K. Moreover, according to Wimmer, the legacy of centralised states ensures that the post-colonial networks can be stronger and inclusive. Whereas Kashmiri networks with the people were repressive and exclusionary.

Secondly, the exchanges by the Indian elites (Congress and Hindu nationalists) were also often preferential and communal, even though their exchanges validated Wimmer's hypothesis. Congress networks were preferential towards Kashmir and within Kashmir, towards the NC elites. Likewise, Hindu nationalist networks were preferential towards Jammu and Ladakh and within them, towards Hindus and Buddhists and their organisations. In Ladakh, Congress and RSS elites only engaged with the LBA in Leh until the 90s. Kargil's Muslims were excluded from the exchanges for many decades. In Kashmir, Congress prioritised networks with the NC elites than any other elites or non-elite population. In Jammu, the RSS and Jana Singh co-opted only the Praja Parishad during the 1950s and 60s. Engagement with Muslims began after the Gajendragadkar Commission of 1968. Meanwhile, the cordiality between the Hindus and Muslims in Jammu increased largely due to their own civil and associational networks (Varshney 2002). The RSS had limited engagement with the Muslim organisations of Jammu (Interview 2023). Moreover, after 2000s, Hindu nationalist BJP gained prominence over Congress as the dominant Indian elites. Although the Muslims of Jammu and Ladakh maintained a pro-India orientation, they were apprehensive of the BJP's rise. Simultaneously, the Hindu nationalist exchanges in Jammu and Ladakh fuelled hostility towards Kashmir. According to Wimmer, networks by the rulings elites ought to be inclusionary and unifying in the process of nation-building.

Third, Ladakh's integration and identification happened according to Wimmer's exchange relations, but the exchange relations did not bridge the ethnic divides between Leh and Kargil. The tensions between the two regions were amplified by the demarcation of a separate Kargil district in Ladakh in 1979, the LBA occupying the role of Ladakh's representative, economic differences pertaining to more tourism in Leh, and the legacy of the 1989 scuffle in the Leh market. Despite a shared pro-India positionality, Kargil was ambivalent towards Article 370; whereas Leh's politics centred around its abrogation and the UT status. That Ladakh's nation-building happened without bridging its ethnic gap, deviates from Wimmer's hypothesis.

There are also some other broad findings from the thesis. In the colonial era, the key mechanism of nation-building is Congress networks. This form of national integration is different from Wimmer's framework which provides for direct exchanges between state elites and individual citizens. Whereas Wimmer's nation-building model can be called the direct approach, this can be called the indirect approach. However, in the post-colonial period, Congress gained power and became the key state elite. Congress adopted dual mechanisms for J&K: repression for the Kashmiri organisations and military-led economic development for Ladakh.

The militarization of J&K also yielded some findings. The military can be beneficial or harmful depending on the position that it adopts. If it is in a conventional military mode and sees the population as a resource, like in Ladakh, then it is beneficial to national integration. If it is in a counterinsurgency mode and sees the population as the enemy, as in Kashmir, then this is invariably harmful and only escalates the existing enmity between the population and the state. Moreover, India's counter-insurgency measures in Jammu were different from those in Kashmir. The counter-insurgency approach in Jammu assisted with nation-building because both the military and the population saw the insurgents as the enemy. This shared positionality also requires some level of political integration through prior political network building. Findings from the research also yielded a contribution towards Wimmer's framework.

### **6.3 Contribution Towards the Literature**

This thesis contributes to more than one strand of literature. First, however, the thesis contributes to Wimmer's framework itself. Wimmer posits that nation-building happens via exchange relations between the state and people through one of the three suggested variables. However, I argue the probability that in certain cases, exchanges through more than one variable are necessary. Nation-building in Jammu progressed through the organisational variable. Nation-building in Ladakh progressed through both organisational and political economy variables. However, it could have progressed through either organisational or political economy variable, as I've argued previously. Nation-building in Kashmir progressed first through the organisational variable, until the incarceration of Sheikh Abdullah. Thereafter, the political economy measures under Bakshi's period assisted India-Kashmir linkages. However, both economic and organisational networks depreciated after the 60s. The Indian elites of Congress prioritized suppressing any organisation that could challenge NC's hegemony, over Kashmir's development. More importantly, public goods deliverance in Kashmir during the 60s raised a literate generation of Kashmiris that demanded representation in the government. The non-literate Kashmiris were made aware of NC's repressive policies through TVs, radios, and newspapers. Their support to the Plebiscite Front also increased during this period. Yet the Front, and other non-NC organisations, found little to no representation in the decision-making apparatus of Kashmir. Along with the public goods deliverance in Kashmir, could the organisational networks have prevented the insurgency in Kashmir? Sumit Ganguly's argument (1996) affirms this. He argues that insurgency in Kashmir was a consequence of political mobilization (which happened due to public spending in literacy and mass media) and institutional decay (suppression of NC's opponent political organisations).

Secondly, the thesis primarily contributes to the literature on Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The thesis draws extensively from the scholarship on the regions and contributes to the same scholarship with a comparative nation-building perspective. Studies of the former J&K state have focused on various themes- historical studies, international engagements, conflict studies, human rights, etc. The Kashmir valley has generally been the prominent focus of these studies, and understandably so. The valley remains an international geopolitical issue between India-Pakistan and an internal security issue between the insurgents and the Indian state. Ladakh and

Jammu, in contrast, were 'politically stable'; although Jammu and Ladakh have had their share of political complexities. Yet, that contrast between the three regions and their respective politics must be understood in conjunction with each other. The thesis contributes towards this understanding through a comparative analysis of the networks of nation-building.

Third, I contribute towards the analysis of the Indian case through networks. The modern Indian state has been formed and sustained through networks. In the colonial period, the Indian sub-continent was a collection of kingdoms and British territories. Language, dialect, religion, caste, tribe, culture, and food, changed every twenty kilometres. Much of this diversity was stitched together into a singular unit through Congress' networks (Sarkar 1983). The Congress-led anti-colonial movement became a nationalist exercise of building the Indian state through political networks. Congress networks involved co-opting the diverse community-led movements across India; reaching out to local community figures of students, teachers, and lawyers; and tapping into their local networks. Through this, Congress gained popular support for itself and the anti-colonial movement. In the post-colonial period, Congress expanded its networks in accordance with the democratic and federal structure of the Indian state (Brass 1965). Congress coalesced with local organisations, that were further a collection of smaller organisations. This pyramid of networks ensured that Congress won elections at both state and national level for many decades after independence. Other prominent colonial and post-colonial networks were that of the Hindu nationalists. The Arya Samaj, the RSS, and the Hindu Mahasabha were prominent in the colonial period. These organisations along with the Jana Sangh, the BJP, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the post-colonial period built networks with people who shared a Hindu vision for India. Jana Sangh and BJP also forayed into electoral politics and challenged Congress networks. BJP-RSS have displaced Congress in the last three decades through their networks. The Hindu nationalist political parties and organisations have offices in every town and village, hold regular public marches, and support student organisations in every Indian university (Jaffrelot 2007). Networks between Hindus and Muslims have also been prominent in the colonial period. Despite the rise of Hindu nationalism, communal peace is more likely where engagement networks exist between the two communities (Varshney 2002). Srirupa Roy (2007) has pointed to a different kind of

networks between Delhi and the citizens. Through republic day parades, visuals of the grand Indian state, and popular industrialized towns, the state intervened in the people's lives with everyday networks of nationalism in the early decades after 1947.

Similarly, I contribute to the literature of networks in India with my discussion of post-colonial nation-building networks. I explore the role of Indian elites' networks for nation-building in arguably the most contentious state of India. I also explore the networks between the Dogra elites and the people of J&K that influenced the post-colonial developments of the three regions. Moreover, the empirical discussion exemplifies that it was not just Wimmer's inclusive networks at play in J&K. Exclusionary networks of the Hindu nationalists also played a role in the three regions. As did the cordial networks between Hindus and Muslims, and their organisations. Therefore, networks have been central to understanding why Jammu and Ladakh diverged from Kashmir's trajectory in the post-colonial period.

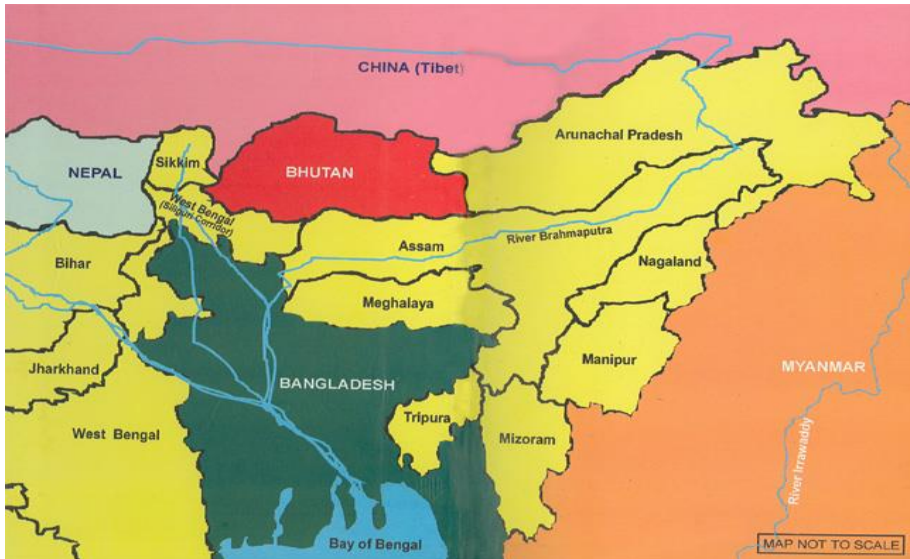
Finally, I contribute to the literature on nation-building through the empirical case of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. The scholarship on nation-building is long, evolving, and stems from the traditional approaches of nationalism rooted in western experiences and perspectives. The scholarship on nationalism generally asks why nationalism and state emerge. The reasons cited are industrialization (Gellner 1983) or print-capitalism (Anderson 2006) or transforming histories into nationalist narratives (Smith 1986). The discussions also involve debating what came first: nation or nationalism. But much of the nationalism scholarship is rooted in Western developments. This scholarship also offers deterministic hypotheses for the rest of the world. However, not every place in the world experienced the same historical progression. History has been different for different parts of the world. History has also been different for different parts of India. More importantly, the research question is not concerned with why or when the nationalist vision of India emerged or if an Indian nation existed before the colonial period. Instead, the question is: if and to what extent was the nationalist vision adopted and sustained by the people of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Therefore, I turned to the nation-building scholarship. But the research question necessitated a framework that could accommodate flexibility and reversals of positionalities; offer concrete causal explanations; and employ networks in its analysis. Wimmer's was the most suitable amongst all state-

building frameworks of nation-building, for this case. Essentially, the case of the three regions could be a useful addition to the nation-building scholarship.

I also contribute towards the scholarship with a micro analysis of nation-building. Wimmer examines nation-building across the entire country. He probes three cases of two country pairs. His quantitative surveys also pertain to countries as whole. I narrow down the analysis to a regional level. I contribute to the nation-building literature with a comparative analysis within one of the twenty-eight Indian states. Exclusive focus on J&K, however, leaves space for research on nation-building networks in other Indian states.

#### **6.4 Avenues for Nation-Building Research: Northeastern India and Punjab**

A Congress leader said that in the process of nation-building, conflicts are inevitable. 'If there were no conflicts, there would be no need to build' (Aiyar 1998). Conflicts call upon the responsibility of ruling elites to build the nation, he added. He rightly summed up the post-colonial predicament of the Indian nation-building processes. The post-colonial Indian state has dealt with conflicts in various parts of its territory at various periods of time. I briefly overview the need for researching the nation-building networks in two Indian regions. The first region being the Northeast or northeastern states of India. The other is Punjab. While the Indian nation-building scholarship has focused extensively on the Northeast, Punjab has received less attention. Meanwhile, neither region has been explored exclusively through the lens of networks, particularly through Wimmer's framework.



Map 11. Northeastern states of India (in yellow) and their respective international borders (Sinha 2017).

India's Northeast consists of 8 states- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Sikkim- that are connected to the rest of India through a tiny 25 km land strip called the Siliguri Corridor. Six of the eight states only share borders with each other and not another Indian state. Tripura is surrounded with Bangladesh on three sides while Sikkim borders India, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. Legal and illegal cross-border movement from Myanmar into Manipur and Nagaland is common (Lego 2025). Chinese claims over the territories of Arunachal Pradesh are also common which have embroiled India and China into multiple military and diplomatic standoffs (Jones 2025). Moreover, like the Kashmir valley, secessionist insurgency has reigned in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, and Assam. Manipur remains a site of conflict till date (Baker 2023). The religious, linguistic, tribal, cultural, and ethnic demography of each state further complicates the scenario. The volatility of this region, thus, has brought it to the attention of the nation-building scholarship.

A brief appraisal of the nation-building scholarship of the Northeast points to the tensed and unsettled nature of the region. Moreover, it also points towards examining nation-building in the region through the lens of networks. Sagar Boruah (2002) discusses the role of colonialism in providing the material and emotional basis for bringing the Northeast and India together into a shared national space. Like

Sarkar (1983), Boruah sees the anti-colonial national movement as the process of nation-building in the Northeast before 1947. It was through the anti-colonial movement of Congress that the Northeast became an administrative unit of India. Sanjib Baruah (2020) suggests the ruptures between the colonial and post-colonial institutions and practices of India and the Northeast as the cause of India's troubled relationship with these states since 1947. He examines the gaze of Delhi upon the Northeast, which essentially generalises the diversity of the regions. Without the recognition of the diversity of the northeastern states and their respective complexities, post-colonial nation building in the region has inevitably faltered.

Bérénice Guyot-Réchard (2013) examines the Northeast under Nehru's period. Interestingly, her argument diverges from Wimmer's (2018) proposition. Tracing the development policies in the Northeast until 1959, Guyot-Réchard argues that India's political economy measures isolated the Northeast from rest of India. The political economy measures were unaccompanied by other nation-building measures that could induce a national identification in the region, she argues. Ningthoujam Rameshchandra (2020) also shares Guyot-Réchard opinion about developmentalism being a hinderance to Northeast's integration. He relies on Brubaker's (1996) approach of nation-building by suggesting that India prioritised a blanket development approach without acknowledging the ethnic plurality and boundaries of the people of the Northeast. He also contests that the militarisation of the Northeast further created rifts between the region and the Indian state. Jugdeep Chima and Pahi Saika (2024) provide an empirically rich and theoretically comparative analysis of the failure of nation-building in four northeastern states of India. Like many authors on the Northeast (Boruah 2002; Baruah 2020) and Kashmir (Lamb 1991; Rai 2021), these authors adopt an encompassing timeline. They trace the four states during the colonial period, the impact of colonization on these states, and the resultant conflicts with the post-colonial Indian state. The authors adopt the themes of ethnic boundary construction and its intersection with the post-colonial state building. They focus largely on the identity construction in the four states that gave rise to their secessionist movements.

The texts discussed above provide but a snapshot of the plethora of literature on the Northeast. However, they also provide the gap for the research on nation-building in

the Northeast through Wimmer's exchange relations. The pre-1947 literature provides the context to examine whether the northeastern states were centralized. More importantly, to examine if the colonial and pre-colonial centralisation in the Northeast influenced nation-building in the post-colonial period. Wimmer's analysis can also provide a parallel analysis to Guyot-Réchart's work (2013). While she examines a 9-year period, Wimmer's framework would examine the political integration and identification in the Northeast over a period of several decades. Moreover, she argues that India's development initiatives in the Northeast were not effective instruments of nation-building. This provides a space for counterargument through Wimmer's framework. Perhaps, the assertion that more than one variable is needed for nation-building in certain cases can be explored in the Northeast. Besides the political economy aspect of nation-building, analysis can also be made into the extent of exchanges between India and the various organisations of the Northeast. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of nation-building through Ladakh's militarisation and the Northeast's militarisation can also be made. Analysis of the networks during the militarisation can also add to Nareshchandra's work (2020), albeit with a different approach of nation-building. Likewise, this thesis mirrors Chima and Saika's book (2024) in terms of the research design, albeit with a different approach of nation-building. Both their work and the thesis stretch from the colonial period to the contemporary times, provide a comparative analysis of the post-colonial trajectories of nation-building, and emphasize on the centrality of nation-building. In short, research with Wimmer's framework can supplement the expansive and rich scholarship of the northeast India.



Map 12. Indian state of Punjab (Light blue) and the erstwhile region Punjab including Pakistan Punjab (Pulu et al. 2019).

There is less scholarship on Punjab than on the Northeast. A nation-building perspective in Punjab is necessary because the Indian Punjab was a site of separatist movement during the 1970s and 1980s. The Indian government alleged that the separatist elements have again resumed operations in Punjab since 2020 (Vaidyanathan 2021). This separatist movement is widely referred to as the Khalistani Movement. The Khalistani Movement, of which various Sikh organisations are the key participants, seeks to establish a Sikh country, Khalistan, over the erstwhile territory of Punjab (Kinnvall 2007). Sikhs constitute around sixty per cent population of Punjab with Hindus being thirty-eight per cent (Census of India 2001). The brief demands for Khalistan arose during the anti-colonial period but the movement gained prominence in the 1970s and 80s. Punjab was a site of separatist insurgency during these decades. The insurgency included attacks against non-Sikhs, political assassinations, and hijacking of aircrafts. The Indian counterinsurgency response was equally extreme. At one point, the Indian military conducted operations inside the Golden Temple, the holiest religious place for the Sikhs. As a result, the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. Yet India's counterinsurgency measures gradually prevailed and the movement died, only to allegedly revive again in the past five years.

The Punjab case presents a puzzle that can be probed through Wimmer's networks. The first puzzle is why have Sikhs remained an integral part of the Indian institutions, parliament and army, including a two-term Indian Prime Minister? Secondly, why were Sikhs soldiers involved in the military operation in the Golden Temple? And why, despite the largely cordial relations between Punjab and rest of India, do elements of Separatism persist? Joyce Pettigrew (2008) answers the first two questions. She claims that historical networks of engagement between the Sikhs and non-Sikhs in the sphere of culture, economy, politics have influenced their continuous involvement with the Indian institutions in the post-colonial period. Moreover, she suggests that besides a tiny minority of Sikhs, most Sikhs consider themselves as one with other Indians. Pettigrew's work is thematically aligned with Varshney's work on Hindu-Muslim engagements (2002). However, the puzzle remains that why, despite networks of engagement, sections of Sikhs turned to separatism? For this, Wimmer's exchange relations are crucial. They would explain why the Sikh separatism emerged, ended, and re-emerged.

Within the scholarship, Sikh separatism in the post-colonial period has been traced to Sikh nationalism in the pre-colonial period. Wimmer's framework would trace the same timeline using networks. Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani (2021) make this argument through Anthony D. Smith's Ethnosymbolism approach. Their work critiques the western-centrism of nationalism and nation-building scholarship. Their analysis is rooted in the emergence and sustenance of the Sikh ethnic identity over the centuries. However, their work pays comparatively lesser attention to the engagement of the Sikhs with the ruling elites. This is a gap that Wimmer's framework fills. Their historical analysis of Sikh nationalism, however, is useful in drawing attention to the Khalistani movements amongst Sikhs living in UK, Canada, and US. Shinder Purewal (2011) and Andrew Milne (2025) have also studied the movements for a Sikh homeland in India amongst the diaspora Sikhs. In a similar vein, Harnik Deol (2000) and Terry Milewski (2021) have written exclusively on the domestic and international implications of the Sikh militancy, respectively. However, little has been said about the case of Punjab from the perspective of nation-building networks. Historically, Jammu & Kashmir state was carved out of the state of Punjab

and it would be productive to deploy the framework developed here to Punjab's case.

### **6.5 Avenues for Nation-Building Research: Ladakh, Jammu, and Kashmir**

Turning back to Ladakh and Jammu, the issue of nation-building remains important even after the abrogation of Article 370. In Chapter 5, I discussed the 'success' of nation-building in Ladakh and Jammu. I argued that with the abrogation of the Article 370, Ladakh's decades-old demand of direct engagement with Delhi is now in practice. Through the UT status, Ladakh enjoys the same constitutional rights as other Indian states and UTs, which were previously unavailable. The Ladakhis have exercised those rights in their engagements with Delhi since 2019. Moreover, their engagements with Delhi are for more protection and autonomy within the Indian constitutional framework, not secession. These developments indicate a successful case of nation-building. However, as Wimmer notes, nation-building is a dynamic process. Even after a 'successful' case of nation-building, new faultlines can come to fore.

The new faultlines involve political unrest in Ladakh and the anxieties in Jammu regarding the consequences of their now-fulfilled demands. New umbrella organisations in Ladakh, the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) and the Leh Apex Body (LAB) have been at the forefront of protests for autonomy. These organisations are inclusive of politicians, bureaucrats, the LBA, *Anjuman Islamia*, and numerous other associations and actors from Ladakh. These organisations, and Sonam Wangchuk, have demanded more constitutional autonomy from Delhi which would protect Ladakh's economy, resources, and demography. They demand Ladakh to be made a state with its own legislature to make laws like other Indian states. Ladakhis fear that a rule directly under Delhi could have grave and unchecked consequences on Ladakh's way of life (Radhakrishna 2024). In Chapter 5, I suggested that LBA's engagements with the RSS was to further its separation from Kashmir. Simultaneously, the LBA also wanted to keep the Hindu nationalists outside its borders (2004). Essentially, Ladakh's position has been this: the people wish to be under the suzerainty of India, not Kashmir but, simultaneously, they want to protect the region from outsiders. Until 2019, the key outsiders in Ladakh were Kashmiris

but the region was governed by the Kashmiri elites. After 2019, Ladakh is governed by the Indian elites, but its borders are now open to Indian outsiders.

Delhi has set up various committees since 2019 to address Ladakh's grievances. However, absence of any meaningful resolution of Ladakhi demands has changed the nature of Ladakhi protests. Ladakhi resistance has moved from protest marches and shutdowns of markets to hunger strikes and attack on the BJP offices (Sharma 2025). Sajjad Kargili (Interview 2023), a member of the KDA, argued that before 2019, Ladakh was protected. Ladakh is now more prone to outside influence, he said. Sunetro Ghoshal (Interview 2023), a Ladakh-based journalist, claimed that Article 370's abrogation was always a Leh demand, not a demand from Kargil. Ironically, the leaders of Leh are more vocal about the implications of Article 370's abrogation. Sonam Wangchuk too belongs from the Leh district.

Jammu has similar concerns, however, the region is yet to explode into a situation of political unrest like Ladakh. Anuradha Bhasin (2025) suggested two reasons for Jammuites not vocalizing their apprehensions. First, Jammu's Hindu majority remains aligned with the Hindu-politics of mainland India. Jammu's people do not want to rupture that shared fabric. Second, Jammu's issues with Kashmir still largely outweigh Jammu's concerns with Delhi. Gulchain Charak of the Dogra Sadar Sabha suggested that concerns regarding the entry of outsiders in Jammu prevail among the people (Interviews 2022). However, he added that Jammuites won't be as vocal as Ladakh in demanding statehood or constitutional safeguards due to their conditioning of not speaking against India. Goverdhan Jamwal (Interview 2002) expressed that India has not made good use of Article 370's abrogation. He argues that Kashmiri Pandits should have been rehabilitated in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Meanwhile, Tej Tikoo (Interview 2023) of All India Kashmiri Samaj claimed that Kashmiri Pandits 'never' demanded the removal of special status since they enjoyed its privileges. They only demanded rehabilitation, irrespective of the status of Article 370.

While the BJP government has accelerated its policy of rehabilitating Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir, the Kashmiri Muslims have perceived this as an attempt of altering the valley's demography. For instance, in March 2022, the government

claimed to have restored 600 properties in five years for housing returning Pandit families (Sharma 2022). However, only 6000 Kashmiri Pandits have been resettled in Kashmir out of the 44,167 Pandit families who have registered for settlement (Upadhyay 2022; Lateef 2022). The Pandits are concerned about the miniscule speed of rehabilitation. Simultaneously, the targeted killings of Pandits in the valley have also resumed (Sharma 2022). While the valley has not yet recovered from the impact of the abrogation of Article 370, the government efforts of rehabilitation without adequate conversations with the local stakeholders has pit the Hindu minority against the Muslim majority. The situation is also complicated because both communities, irrespective of their demographics, are in a vulnerable position. The Pandits are under threat from Kashmiri militants while the Muslims are apprehensive about BJP's demographic-altering intentions. The government also launched a housing scheme in 2021 of building 200,000 new houses. This scheme is open for both Kashmiris and Indian citizens outside J&K (Al Jazeera 2023). Meanwhile, the Kashmiri politicians hold Ladakhis accountable for this crisis (Bhasin 2025). They have critiqued Ladakh's role vis-a-vis Article 370, before and after 2019. These post-2019 tensions call for further research in the three regions through the nation-building networks.

The course of action for mitigating the situation in the three regions can be found through Wimmer's networks. More importantly, the period after 2019 can be examined for how and why the exchanges between India and the three regions faltered. Despite the fulfilment of Ladakh's demands through inclusive Indian networks over the decades, India-Ladakh relations are at their lowest. This reversal happened in less than five years. Likewise, Kashmir has been further estranged from India. Jammu too remains volatile, although comparatively lesser than Ladakh and Kashmir. Furthermore, Ladakh's top three administrative posts are under Jammu's Dogras. This has created new faultlines between Jammu and Ladakh (Bhasin 2025). The two regions, whose objectives aligned for most of the post-colonial period, have drifted apart since 2019. Hence, while the nation-building processes for this thesis end in 2019, they continue for Ladakh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

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