Fear and Othering in Delhi: Assessing Non-Belonging of Kashmiri Muslims

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This contribution aims at assessing to what extent does the fact of living in New Delhi influence the Kashmiri Muslims' sense of a national belonging to India. Non-belongingness is appraised through the study of Kashmiri Muslims' emotions and perceptions towards New Delhi, that is to say the territory and the inhabitants of the capital city of India. Living in New Delhi nurtures an othering process between Kashmiri Muslims and the non-Kashmiri Muslim Delhite society. The contribution analyses this process as a two-way dynamic wherein both the groups are at stake. In the same vein, non-belongingness also appears to be an ambiguous process. But ultimately, the feeling of non-belonging prevails among Kashmiri Muslims. Eventually, Kashmiri Muslims' feelings towards New Delhi coalesced with their feelings regarding the Indian state. Informed by the socialization to state-led violence that they experienced in Indian-Administrated Kashmir as well as their actual experience of New Delhi, Kashmiri Muslims convert their non-belongingness to the city into a perception of national disaffiliation towards what they name 'India'. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in September and October 2016 in New Delhi among twenty Kashmiri Muslims who had lived in the capital city of India from six months to ten years prior to the interviews.

Keywords: non-belonging, emotions, Kashmiri Muslims, New Delhi

Introduction

In January 2016, I landed in New Delhi barely a few hours after an attack on the Indian military camp of Pathankot, in Indian-Administered Kashmir (IAK). IAK, nested inside the 12.5 million inhabitant-strong state of Jammu-and-Kashmir (J&K), on the border with Pakistan, is the only majority-Muslim Indian territory: 99% of its inhabitants are estimated to be Muslim, most of them Sunni despite an important Shia minority. In the wake of this event, the casual conversations that I had with a Kashmiri friend of mine, A., took a special turn. A., a Muslim who grew up in IAK, travelled to the Indian capital at eighteen to pursue his studies in one of India's most prestigious universities. He had been living in Delhi for five to six years at the time of our conversation, during which time he had continued to pay regular visits to his family in IAK. As I myself studied India's Muslim minority as a political scientist, we frequently discussed both the general situation of Indian Muslims and the specific case of Kashmiri Muslims (KMs). In 2016, I asked A. what the local reaction to this attack was, in the knowledge that, on the ground, the Indian state could face a severe curtailment of civil liberties upon the population for a potentially lengthy span of time in order to stop the perpetrators of what authorities were calling a 'terrorist attack,' and/or their accomplices. I asked for specifics when A. told me that the population of IAK accepted, and sometimes celebrated, actions that could 'damage' the Indian state, despite any grim consequences they might face. With mixed emotion, anger, despair, and sorrow, my friend eventually elaborated on the effects on IAK's population of two laws, the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 (PSA) and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1990 (AFSPA), which allow arrests, detainment, and arbitrary prosecution, officially for the purpose of "maintaining law and order" (Rabbani 2011; Duschinski and Ghosh 2017: 319-321). Heavy military presence, disappearances, torture, rapes, harassment, censorship, and curtailment of civil liberties constitute daily life for IAK's inhabitants (UNHCHR 2018).

Through scientific literature, I was fully aware of these abuses, but this was the first time that I was hearing an account from a 'real person' as to how this state of affairs impacted Indian Kashmiris. Unsure of how to empathize with my afflicted friend, I innocently suggested that living outside IAK must provide him with an appreciated, albeit temporary, relief. In New Delhi, neither PSA nor AFSPA apply whilst the police presence can be deemed democratically 'acceptable' and the army is not deployed. As a friend, I was slightly bewildered by A.'s reply. To him, "living in India," as he called it–detaching IAK from the rest of the country–actually acts as an incubator for rejection of the Indian state. My interest was triggered by this apparent contradiction, since in Delhi, Kashmiris are at least able to experience more of the Indian state's 'left hand,' i.e. public services such as health and education, as opposed to only its 'right hand,' i.e. the state's diffraction into military and police institutions (Bourdieu 1993). Naively, I thought, this might have balanced the perception of the state as a pure oppressor. As a political scientist, I thus decided to return in 2016 to question the dynamic depicted by my friend. By September, I was back in New Delhi for two weeks[1].

Underlying A.'s bitter remark was the question of belonging to the national body that he epitomized as India, a question which, as we shall see, has different implications for Kashmiris, be they Muslim or Hindu–my focus being on the former. Inspired by A.'s remark, the research question that thus structures this contribution could be enunciated as follows: to what extent does the fact of living in New Delhi shape KMs' sense of a national belonging to India? An overview of the social science literature about India shows that belonging or belongingness (two interchangeable terms) to the nation remains poorly documented. Studies deal with identity dynamics or politics rather than with belonging per se. These works contribute to understanding belongingness, but belonging only appears in the background of these studies, not at the crux of them. Other scholars adopt a macro-sociological angle to analyze the production of 'Indianness' in the colonial or postcolonial context (Merrill 2009; Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001). In the same macro-sociological vein, Arjun Appadurai questions belongingness in the age of globalization and in relation with the influx of (communal) violence Appadurai (2009). Where they address a more limited group, studies mostly deal with identity dynamics of ethnic (Menon and Karthik 2019; Rycroft and Dasgupta 2011; Longkumer 2010) or gender groups (Thapar-Björkert 1996) sometimes by adopting an intersectional approach (Kirmani 2013; Vijayalakshmi 2004). Outside of India proper, the production of 'Indianness' has also been documented in diasporic groups (Eisenlohr 2006; Mankekar 2002). However, national belongingness of religious-ethnic minorities such as Christians and Muslims has barely been addressed: identity again overshadows belonging. Academics, meanwhile, account for the inception of a secularist India, and what this means for the Muslim minority as regards their 'Muslimness' (Sherman 2015; Hasan 2008b; Talbot 1995; or in relation with identity politics (Blom Hansen 2000). Muslimness itself is seldom thought of in relation to the ethnic 'Other,' except in few micro-localized ethnographic accounts (Thomas 2018;

Kirmani 2008), being more commonly explored reflexively, inside the minority itself (Jairath 2011; Alam 2008; Hasan 2008a; Engineer 2008), in works which aptly deconstruct the *pre-notion* of a homogenous Muslim 'community' but remain tight-lipped on the national belongingness of Muslims.

A specific review of scholarship relating to Indian Kashmiris[2] reveals the same deficit in terms of belongingness. The most striking aspect of this literature is its two opposing tendencies: in one, Kashmir is mainly approached as a "disputed territory" (Zutshi 2012: 1034). Framed in terms of International Relations, contributions pay scarce attention to IAK inhabitants beyond their instrumental importance in maintaining the so-called safety of India. The identity or belonging of Kashmiris are not delved into. These studies are thus of little interest in accurately documenting the local dynamics prevailing in IAK. The second tendency, although scant, is of no small interest, and since 2000 has obviously undergone a renewal in Indian Kashmiri scholarship (Behera 2000). Authors in this current, who do explore the identity maze of Kashmiris, rely on anthropology or sociology, and base their studies on more consistent fieldwork. Questions of national belongingness are again approached through the question of identity or ethnicity, itself explored in two main directions: one is the notion of *Kashmiriyat*, the other the role of violence. Studies on *Kashmiriyat*, that is, the "sense of Kashmiriness," (Ellis and Khan 2003: 524) mainly appear in works dedicated to Pandits (KPs), i.e. Hindu Kashmiris. KPs present themselves as the torchbearers of *Kashmiriyat*, depicting it as the Hindu-Muslim syncretic identity of a romanticized pristine Kashmir, dealt fatal blows by the insurgency and forced migrations of the 1990s. In fact, KP's identity has always been tied to their migration (Bhat 2012; Datta 2016) and related to their remote "homeland", IAK (Evans 2002; Duschinski 2008). KMs and KPs are never considered together, however. This state of Kashmiri scholarship is telling about the two's conflicting political aspirations for IAK, and the antagonistic identities both groups attribute to it. With a view to providing consistent perspectives as to what national belongingness to India embodies, KM and KP could not be interviewed in the frame of the same study[3]. When it comes specifically to the notion of *Kashmiriyat*, contributions are mainly theoretical (Punjabi 2018; Ellis and Khan 2003), and are seldom confronted to the various uses of *Kashmiriyat* on the ground. Moreover, several studies are policy-oriented, a perspective that distances them from purely scholarly research (Evans 2002). I therefore follow Aggarwal in considering *Kashmiriyat* to be "an empty signifier" (Aggarwal 2008).

Violence is the second area in which Kashmiris' identity is directly or indirectly explored. Scholars have documented the combined effects of security laws on the KM, as well as daily life under the insurgency, adopting different angles: the judicial perspective (Cottrell 2013; Duschinski and Ghosh 2017); that of political mobilizations (Robinson 2013; Duschinski et al. 2018); and the examination of their social impacts on the Kashmiri population (Dabla 2011; Malik 2019). Historians' accounts are also of importance as they give long-term depth to contemporary dynamics (Snedden 2013; Zutshi 2004). This renewed scholarship is of great interest: in documenting identity, it eventually touches upon belongingness. Two shortcomings can nonetheless be noted. Firstly, belonging is never addressed as such, theory- or methodology-wise. One study did attempt to do so, but its theorization of belonging, as well as its articulation with fieldwork could be strengthened (Bouzas 2016). Related to the first shortcoming, identity is always documented in a positive way–namely "who I am" – but never negatively–"who I am not". Secondly, contrary to the IR approach, the works cited above isolate KMs by disconnecting them from the broader national and territorial body they legally belong to (Behera 2000: 11-18). KMs and Indians, for instance, are seldomly put in relation. As such, scholars pay less attention to the interactionist dynamic that actually frames identity and (non-)belonging alike. KMs seem merely to be reacting to the power that is exerted on them[4], and their agency capabilities are less visible. Documenting national belongingness by and of itself therefore appears of crucial importance.

A. The conceptual frame: othering, as a result of emotions and perceptions

In the wider social sciences, meanwhile, belongingness is a thoroughly explored topic. As Tuuli Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) indicated while stimulatingly assessing its use in contemporary research, belonging has tended to replace identity in a growing number of studies. The authors follow Elspeth Probyn (1996) in considering belonging to be a more relevant tool than identity when it comes to grasping dynamics of affiliation. To them, identity posits a rigid, unidimensional, and linear process, whereas "the strength of belonging as an academic concept lies exactly in its flexibility and adaptability" (Lähdesmäki et al. 2016: 242), a statement from which I distance myself. Rather, I consider identity to be a notion that could be used as smoothly as belonging is (Martin 2010). Belongingness is simply the name of another process. The two can be distinguished in a nearly tautological fashion: identity addresses the process of identification, while belonging addresses the process of belonging. 'Being' and 'being part

of' relate to two intertwined yet different dynamics: 'being' *versus* 'feeling'. Probyn, followed by Bell, has highlighted the dimension of longing inherent in the former (Probyn quoted in Bell 1999: 1).

1. (Non-)belonging, music *à Quatre Mains*

Since I intend to evaluate how Indian, or not, KMs feel– that is, their 'national affiliation,'–I framed my fieldwork with the concept of belonging. While I disagree when Lähdesmäki et al. oppose belonging to identity, I otherwise follow them when they stress its epistemological merits. Belongingness offers separate yet linked perspectives: synchronic and diachronic; static and dynamic; individual and collective Lähdesmäki et al. (2016: 242). Affiliation is understood as a shifting and multi-layered, sometimes antagonistic but always complex, web of belongingness. Lähdesmäki et al. then identify five intertwined topics wherein belongness is mainly discussed, one of them being non-belonging (ibid: 236). After my conversation with A., I hypothesized that living in New Delhi nurtures a sense of non-belonging to India. I therefore focused on the production of dynamics of non-belonging among Muslim citizens from IAK who live in New Delhi. Interestingly, unlike in many studies, non-belonging here concerns a national group (as defined by law) in a social and spatial context in which the policies informants experience are objectively less discriminatory than those in their home state. Despite my analytical focus being non-belonging, I begin from a definition of its reverse: belonging. 'Non' here has no negative connotation, it simply expresses the opposite feeling to belonging.

For a definition, I refer to Lähdesmäki et al., who offer one encompassing both theoretical and methodological tools to assess (non-)belongingness: "[belonging] comprises of situational relationships with other people and social and cultural practices stemming from these relationships, which are fundamentally political and include emotional and/or affective orientations" Lähdesmäki et al. (ibid: 242). The "political" dimensions of "relationships" and "emotions" are three methodological components of specific interest for this study, since I intend to show that relationships and emotions inform national (hence political) disaffiliation. Dynamics of non-belonging can be observed through the reconstitution of the "othering" process, that is to say practices and narratives that separate "those who are 'not us', and who in not being us, endanger what is ours" Ahmed (2004: 1). Like (non-)belonging, othering is a tango that cannot be danced alone: KMs faced it whilst living in New Delhi, while being actively engaged in it themselves.

2. Emotions and the city

Following the call of Lähdesmäki et al. for a context-specified use of belonging, I combined the first definition with one that emphasizes the role played by emotions (Ahmed 2004; Fortier 2000; Bell 1999). Belonging is thus defined as an "emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and (...) about feeling 'safe'" (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197)[5]. "*Feeling* at home [and] safe" (ibid) is at the core of my examination to assess non-belonging and the way informants feel otherized in New Delhi, it being established that a 'city' alludes to a physical and a sociological component, i.e. a territory and its inhabitants. My raw material to substantiate the othering process are informants' emotions and perceptions: how they feel and how perceive the city and its inhabitants, as well as, in a reversed manner, how they think that they are perceived by New Delhi' inhabitants. Nonetheless, practices of the city *per se* are not thoroughly explored. Rather, the city acts as the frame of dynamics of non-belonging to New Delhi, and, beyond it, to India, as I will show later.

Emotions refer to affective feelings towards a situation, while perceptions are cognitive representations stemming from physical senses. Both are cognitive interpretations and sensorial codifications of reality, the methodological use of which in qualitative research is less devaluated than it once was (Ahmed 2004: 3), and their socially- and spatially-informed nature is now acknowledged enough for emotions and perceptions to be deemed telling of social reality (Flam and Kleres 2015: 2; Weber 2009: 207-209). Both affect informants' agency capabilities and evidence the relational dimension of social facts, inasmuch as informants' thoughts, emotions and perceptions are all equally shaped by socialization. This contribution therefore analyzes KMs' perceptions of and emotions towards the city as indicative of the othering process through which non-belonging is revealed. It is important to note that 'belonging' to India was not put in balance with belongingness to IAK or to Pakistan. Despite Pakistani interferences in the insurgency (through ideological and logistical support to armed groups), the core question of the study was the perception of the national frame KMs are legally a part of.

B. *Investigating the KMs of Delhi*

In terms of fieldwork, the choice of New Delhi was firstly driven by the fact that I knew people there who could help to make this study feasible, especially in the charged context during which it took place. This concrete aspect notwithstanding, Delhi was not a default option: the city is inhabited by people from different parts of India who settle there to earn their living, and as such offers a restricted yet

somehow representative glimpse of 'India.' Also, being the political capital of the country, Delhi epitomizes the power of the central government, a crucial component of the KMs' perception of 'India.' Over two weeks of fieldwork, I interviewed fourteen men and six women, all KMs settled in Delhi, aged nineteen to forty at the time of interview. All were met through the 'snow-ball effect' that started from two personal acquaintances who were both from IAK but did not know each other (and still do not). One was A., the male friend whom I referred to above, and the other was B., a female journalist. Their professional backgrounds explain why informants with highly qualified educational or professional occupations are over-represented in my sample despite my tries to broaden its scope. Because of the socio-economic profile of informants, this contribution thus accounts from, and for, a specific perspective. Informants were pursuing their studies at university, from Bachelor level to PhD degrees, or worked in intellectual professions. The youngest informants had been settled in New Delhi for six months, while the oldest had been living there for up to ten years. All came for a professional or educational purpose. New Delhi was one option among others in India and this destination was chosen for the opportunities it offered. For all, staying in J&K was not possible because of a lack of opportunities there. Meanwhile, going abroad was deemed impossible because of the cost to bear. Informants all had regular physical or phone contacts with their family. Interviews were unstructured and unrecorded. Except for one, interviews never took place at informants' homes but in public places. All were undertaken in New Delhi, none in Old Delhi. Names have been changed, and age at the time of interview is indicated in brackets, as is occupation. Locations remain purposely vague in order to preserve informants' safety.

Ultimately, I demonstrate that the (micro) 'Delhi experience,' namely the combination of KMs' perceptions and emotions towards the city and its society, coalesces into a (macro) national disaffiliation. For this purpose, fieldwork is firstly contextualized (1). I then show that othering arises from informants' relation to the urban territory of New Delhi (2) and its inhabitants (3). In these two sections we will see how informants expressed the "unsafety" that they felt regarding New Delhi. Hence, we will analyze the othering process that they undergo. Regarding our definition of belonging, we shall see that othering eventually nurtures a sense of non-belonging to the Indian state (4).

Long-run patterns of a conflictual relationship

This first section aims at defining KMs' relationship to the Indian state at the time of their moving outside IAK. Being

part of the Indian nation has been a long-standing question for the Kashmiri people, even before Independence (Rai 2004; Zutshi 2004). Partition in 1947 marked the beginning of a protracted twofold war for the inhabitants of J&K: the one *inside* their territory, regarding which political option they would choose[6] (Varshney 1991; Tremblay 1996-1997); the other *about* their territory, between Pakistan and India, both aiming to integrate the whole of Kashmir, or at least what they deemed to be their share, into their respective nations (Schofield 2003; Ganguly 2016). Due to the turbulent process that eventually led to the accession of J&K to the Indian Union[7] as well as the proximity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the latter's interferences in the insurgency, the national affiliation of Kashmiris to the national body of India has always been scrutinized. In 1953, providing Kashmiris with acknowledgment of their specific rights was the raison d'être of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in order to nurture the sense of belonging to the Indian Union (Chandra Pal 1953). Despite these legal arrangements, "in reality Kashmir never effectively enjoyed anything like the autonomy that Article 370 seemed to promise" (Cottrell 2013: 166) irrespective of the political affiliation of the central or local government.

A. Socialization to violence

PSA and AFSPA resulted in a disregard for the legal rights of J&K's people (Mathur 2013). Fearing secessionism, the central government along with mainstream local political parties like the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) continuously eroded J&K's autonomy[8]. 1987 was a turning point in that respect, with rigged elections propelling the armed insurgency that started two years later (Chowdhary 2016: 28). On the ground, the episode led to Kashmiris engaging in large-scale political violence (militancy and stone-pelting)[9], and IAK soon became one of the world's most militarized zones, controlled by 500,000 soldiers and 100,000 intelligence officers (Rabbani 2011: 260-261). Civilians, caught between insurgents and security forces, were the first victims of the conflict. Since 1990, over 70,000 civilians and militants have been killed by armed groups or state armed forces, and more than 8,000 others have disappeared (JKCCS 2016). Violence aside, social life in public spaces has also been dramatically reduced: Kashmiri society's daily routine revolves around the conflict (Hassan 2018) giving rise to a situation that can be evaluated as "the fall of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir" (Widmalm 1997, title of the article).

PSA and AFSPA allow for authoritarian and arbitrary power: authoritarian because contesting is barely allowed; arbitrary because of the indiscriminate use of force on civilians

(Mathur 2016). Contesting Delhi's rule over IAK is considered a threat to national security. Official state narratives reduce opponents to 'terrorists' whenever they use violence (be it armed violence or not, like stone-pelting), while political demands for self-determination or for the proper administration of Art. 370 are disqualified as 'anti-national' demands emanating from 'Pakistan's puppets.' For this reason, intelligence agents put Kashmiris under constant surveillance, giving birth to what can be called a system of general institutionalized suspicion wherein Kashmiris live under continuous oppression. In terms of belonging, those contemporary developments had intertwined effects, each cultivating the other. Firstly, under the combined effects of the militancy and, more importantly, of the State armed forces, Kashmiri society has been socialized to violence since 1990[10]. Violence is now so entrenched in daily life that it is part of IAK 'normality' (Devadas 2018; Dabla 2011). Crucially, relationships to the state have been gradually reduced to physically or symbolically violent encounters with armed forces. Secondly though, as the renewed scholarship mentioned above shows, KMs are nowadays more likely to encounter the right hand of the State than its left.

Every KM I interviewed had a story to tell about personal interactions with this right hand. Beyond their own experiences, each one knew someone who had been killed by the army. Tales about the conflict are the common narrative of KMs. Abadeen (twenty-eight, journalist)[11], whom I met at her office's coffee house, settled in New Delhi in 2013. While evoking her childhood, her face marked by sadness, she said in a stony voice:

> I remember the green color of the [military] shoes, the helicopters above my head, the five to ten people in army fatigues all the time. My father used to read the newspaper every day to check if he knew names of dead people. I don't know what freedom is.

Childhood memories also featured in Hifza's (twenty-one, student) interview. Also a Bachelor student, she gave me an appointment on university grounds. Unlike Abadeen's, her narration was fast and rushed. Her eyes gazed at me, bold and upset. She recalled her early years as tainted by "harassment from army and militants". When she detailed what she perceived as her "denied normal childhood," both anger and sorrow transpired:

> I knew guns. I knew cousins who were shot at. I knew bloodshed. I know that at 7pm we shut off the lights because of army or militancy and we didn't want them to know we were there. This is what I knew. Violence came to our psyche as a child. This shapes you.

Born out this violent childhood, "fear" is the main emotion referred to when describing relations with the state. Abadeen became angry when she expressed "the fear [the Army] puts in" [her], "the fear the uniform puts in [her]". Beyond this, fear breeds "a dormant anger" that permanently lies inside her. Abadeen's and Hifza's memories sum up the emotions of my informants: fear and anger were shared by all.

B. Vis-a-vis the state: fear then anger

Michel Foucault's relational theorization of power can be called upon to conceptualize the consequences of this state of affairs in terms of national belonging. According to Foucault, power relations between the State and the people are not antagonistic but *agonistic*, that is to say they are based on "a relationship which is both of reciprocal incitement and of struggle, (...) a permanent provocation" Foucault (1994: 238). Along the agonistic scale, the relationship varies from peaceful to conflictual according to reciprocal interactions. Coupled with his methodological approach of power, Foucault considers that "events"[12] are crucial moments that render a given long-term process more blatant. For Kashmir, we can hence assume that the state's actions in 1947-1948, 1953-1955, and 1987-1990 were decisive episodes in the long run, negatively impacting KMs' sense of belonging to the Indian state. More recently, episodes such as the Gawarkadal Massacre of 1990, the Kunan Poshpora collective rape of 1991, as well as severe repression in 2008 and 2010, were also detrimental. Gradually, the conflictual aspect of the agonistic relationship seems to have become widespread and predominant within KM society, the state's actions reciprocally nurturing KM anger. As for KMs themselves, this does not prevent "lull periods"[13] between episodes of repression, but the overall conflictual dimension has increased, especially among young people born from around 1990. Hifza's opinion was telling in that respect: "That's why we can't feel for this country. This country can't do anything about the damages that have been done [to the Kashmiri population]". The 2014 election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the central level, with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister, and of a PDP-BJP ruling coalition in J&K, has added an ethnic component to the longstanding hostility. Modi is considered a staunch Hindu nationalist with a strong anti-Muslim stance (Vanaik 2017). Framed in the current context, suspicion against KMs can therefore be compared, while not fully equated with, the discrimination that Indian Muslims face. For the latter, suspicion and discrimination have not been translated into a body of law.

Legal aliens in New Delhi

Analyzing the emotions and perceptions of the physical territory of New Delhi is the first way to render the othering process visible, along with the active role played by the "others" themselves, i.e. the KM, in that process. We start by very briefly contextualizing the fieldwork in order to better embed the informants in contemporary social and political dynamics. Then the territorial experience of New Delhi is examined.

A.   The events of 2016

The repression that took place in summer 2016 was a Foucaldian event: it was in the complex context described above that a massive repression took place in IAK in the summer of 2016. 135 civilians were killed (alongside 145 militants and 100 members of the armed forces) and 15,000 more were injured, mostly following soldiers' misuse of so-called "non-lethal" pellet guns, with 1,178 civilians receiving pellets in the eyes (JKCCS 2016: 4, 8). The configuration of the protests (Rai and Dutta 2017; Mehta 2016) shows that the state's polymorphic[14] repression in 2016 nurtured the conflictual relationship between Kashmiris and the state. Beside qualitative inputs, quantitative data shows a massive recruitment increase in militancy against the Indian state since the BJP's election in 2014 and even more since 2016 (Bhatt 2017). Regarding non-armed violence, 2016 was the first time that men and women from the upper-middle class joined the demonstrators as massively as they did, some even became stone-pelters (Rai and Dutta 2017). Outside IAK, the mainstream narrative about the demonstrations there took a usual turn: economic ("'rioters' are unemployed") and religious ("'rioters' are Muslims, hence against India") claims were used to negate the political dimension of mobilizations (Naqash 2018). Living in New Delhi, informants were thus constantly immerged in this narrative and had to face it. Between my two journeys in India in 2016, the context had therefore become dramatically tenser, as had the relation between KMs and the Indian state[15]. As a matter of fact, interviews systematically started with informants mentioning the on-going repression.

B.   The ambivalent insecurity of Delhi

2016 did not radically change the informants' perceptions of and emotions about the long-run process at stake, but we can assume that it might have vivified them. "Fear" was the main word chosen by informants to depict their feelings towards New Delhi. Drawn from this emotion, an acute sense of insecurity pervaded informants' accounts of their daily lives in New Delhi. This perception bolsters the othering process KMs undergo, by strengthening their feeling of being different. Questioned on which place they consider to be the safest, KMs deemed that "threats are different," as Saajid and his friends, Baasha, Irfan, and Maazin, put it. Like him, they were twenty-six-year-old PhD students who had settled in New Delhi a few years beforehand. Two were housed in the university's hostels; two others were renting a shared-flat in a Muslim area. The four PhD students most vehemently claimed their anger and rejection of the Indian state.

Other accounts elaborated on these different threats, as they are perceived by KMs. I met Ifrah (twenty-six, student) at the university where she was preparing her MPhil. She had been in IAK from May to August. For her: "It is safer here, but I can hardly express my point of view". Asif, thirty-nine, was a photographer working for a newspaper, whom I met at his office. He was calm even when recounting the numerous harsh verbal attacks he suffered as a KM. Asif did indeed have identifiable features, such as a beard and a prayer bump on forehead (*zebibah*; Arabic), and his visual work identified him as a KM. Paradoxical as it may sound, his account was marked by a vibrant yet cold emotion–a state somehow close to resignation. He said: "It is very different here and there. There you have to manage the security and the army but here Kashmiris can never express their mind". Abdul (nineteen, student) had settled in New Delhi a few months prior to the interview, studying at the same university as Saajid and his friends. Both interviews took place in roughly the same conditions. Abdul was with two other friends when we talked. He balanced the physical security of New Delhi with the curtailment of free speech that he felt here. He expressed it in a bitter way: "Of course it's safer here. If you don't contradict, if you comply, it's ok. So, actually you are not free when you cannot say what you want. There, you can shout '*azadi*' (Urdu; freedom), your only risk is to be killed! [laughs]". An exchange between Irfan and Saajid (both twenty-six, PhD students) summarized informants' feelings about Kashmir: "The danger to be killed doesn't impede the fact that this is home", said Irfan. "Yes", Saajid continued, "the idea of home is not diluted despite fear [he smiled]. In fact, idea of home gets strengthened by all of that". By contrast, New Delhi seemed more repellant for KMs. Fear and the sense of security are the two feelings at the core of the definition of belonging that I retained. We can see that informants weighted, and expressed, the two fears differently: the fear engendered by Indian security forces in IAK was less harshly felt than the fear generated by inhabiting a non-Kashmiri milieu, the latter vanishing before the sense of security provided by the ethnic *entre-soi* (French; homogeneity) of IAK. The words

of Faida (thirty-nine, communications officer) mirrored those of several other informants. She lived in posh area of New Delhi and we met in classy café. She was upset, but she smiled when she summarized: "I feel more secure in Kashmir, without any hesitation! That's my home".

Some accounts involuntarily expressed an ambivalent relation to New Delhi[16]. Strict rejection was balanced by a willingness to, in a way, rely on the (formally) democratic rule of law prevailing in New Delhi, and the ability to refer to law was the main positive aspect that informants mentioned. Compared to the two friends he was with, Saab (eighteen, student) was more talkative and vocal about his feelings. A Bachelor student, Saab had settled in New Delhi a few months earlier, as had his two companions. They were housed in the university's hostels. Saab said: "Outside Kashmir, a Kashmiri doesn't endure AFSPA. He cannot be killed or disappeared without any reason". In the same vein, Wahid (twenty-six, PhD student) considered that leaving Kashmir meant becoming a citizen with full rights. Enrolled in a different university, when I met him at a coffee house Wahid was depressed by the on-going repression. Despite his despair regarding the situation in IAK, his words displayed a level of trust in Indian institutions or at least, the willingness to trust in them: "Here we have rights and the state has responsibilities towards me, not as a Kashmiri, but as a student". In a close, but slightly different way, Baasha and Saajid (both twenty-six, PhD students) expressed what, according to the agonistic approach of power, I framed in terms of "strategical use" of the state resources such as educational institutions. For instance, Saajid declared: "We don't expect freedom from these institutions. We know how they work. We take only our advantage from them". To a very low extent, the will to use state's resources contrasts with the strict rejection as worded by informants.

C.   (Self-)restriction

Fear of New Delhi is based on concrete acts of rejection against KMs. First and foremost, KM students living in India suffered physical assaults (Kumar 2017), and harassment increased in the tense context of 2016. Several informants recalled the case of a Kashmiri student of Aligarh Muslim University who was expelled for publishing what was deemed an 'antinational' post on Facebook (Saaliq and Stevens 2016; Press Trust of India 2016a). Saadia (twenty-three) was a Master's student, whom I met through Gafar (twenty-eight) her teacher. We talked in her university's canteen. She linked her apprehension to a similar event: "My fear is increasing because of the house of Kashmiri students that was recently raided [in

New Delhi]"[17]. Faida (thirty-nine, communications officer) linked her fear to the lack of critical thinking of non-KMs, which impacts her freedom of movement: "Here people don't think. If someone starts chasing you, everyone will do the same. [In Kashmir] you know who your enemies are whereas here you don't know". The same was true for Maazin (twenty-six, PhD student) who said, while we were sitting at a tea stall, "Here you don't have to face shootings and you don't have to show your I.D. all the time, but you never know when an Indian wants to kick you out".

Self-restriction from New Delhi's public space did not solely arouse from interactions outside IAK. On the contrary, a "psychosis of fear", as Abdul (nineteen, student) called his perception of moving about the city, results from the aggregation of two geographically separated experiences: informants' perceptions of New Delhi on the one hand, and their past socialization in IAK on the other, the latter influencing the former. Accounts of primo-residents (KMs who had settled recently in New Delhi) do indeed shed light on the dynamics of exclusion, and the performative role of perceptions, hence of (non-) belonging. Concrete events and fear coalesced to inform KM mobility patterns in New Delhi. It was for instance striking to note that all informants reported increased fear on two specific dates: 26 January, Republic Day, and 15 August, Independence Day, on which KMs refrain from moving within New Delhi. Abdul (nineteen, student) told: "On the 15th [of August 2016] we were afraid, we thought we would be arrested by the police and sent to jail". When asked why, Abdul, Parviz and Saab were surprised. After a short pause, Abdul answered: "Because in Kashmir, on every 15th of August we endure curfews, arrests, people are killed. This is our experience of 15th of August".

Despite the lack of the restrictions on mobilizations that prevail in IAK, informants also chose to engage neither in political mobilizations nor in associations specifically aimed at advocating for KM claims: protesting outside IAK is deemed "dangerous" by informants. Asif (thirty-nine, photographer) made a reference to a past protest: "Members of RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and BJP physically assaulted us, and the police didn't do anything". Instead of organizing by themselves, Kashmiris therefore develop alternative strategies. Maazin (twenty-six, PhD student) explained: "We join leftist organizations, we don't organize anything on our name". Generally speaking, informants referred to their "fear" of moving "outside" their neighborhood or their campus. But, here again, ambivalences appeared. Three women who on the one hand discussed the fear of going "outside" nevertheless identified their campus as a place where, in terms

of clothing, make-up, and relationships with men, they enjoyed a greater freedom than in IAK. On the other hand, informants described higher overall fear in roaming widely through New Delhi than in their own neighborhoods or universities, which they deemed "safe". Although fear and insecurity mostly prevailed in determining KMs' experience of New Delhi, a close examination of their accounts therefore tells a slightly more balanced story. Ultimately though, the sense of insecurity nurtures KMs' feeling of being different which, in turn, fuels their non-belongingness to New Delhi.

A reciprocal lack of trust

The social component of the Delhi experience will now be examined in order to assess the interpersonal dimension of the othering process, and of (non-)belonging. If 'insecurity' characterized the physical experience of New Delhi, its social experience was worded in terms of the untrustworthiness of its people–hereafter the 'non-KM Delhite society'. We shall see that stigmatization from non-KM Delhite society, and how informants perceived it, leads to the social marginalization of KMs. But, their role is also active, albeit sometimes unconsciously, in this dynamic.

A.   The perception of disloyalty

The events of 2016 reactivated more or less dormant stereotypes about KMs, the same that lead to mobs sometimes attacking students from IAK. Stereotypes evolved around the supposed 'disloyalty' of KMs, as they themselves qualified it while discussing Delhites' perception of them. On-going repression at the time of interviews further crystallized already polarized opinions. Lack of compassion for civilians being killed by security forces was omnipresent in the discussions I had. Faida's (thirty-nine, communications officer) conversations with her colleagues are telling in that regard:

> [My colleagues] refuse to understand what is going on. Until July [2016], it was more or less ok, but since then on things have dramatically evolved. They think that I am a traitor. Last day, one of my colleagues said: "Let me introduce you to the separatist" before adding, "but why don't you leave Kashmir to settle in a friend country?" He was referring to Pakistan. Now some of my colleagues don't even say "hello!"

Madhat (forty-four, journalist) settled in New Delhi in the early 2010s. His face marred by anxiety, his sentences were sharp as knives and punctuated by the numerous cigarettes he smoked over our meeting at a coffee shop.

He bitterly considered that "the gap is also with the Indian society [not only the state]". A generation younger, Parviz (eighteen, student) thought that: "In India, people are brainwashed about Kashmir" whereas Abdul (nineteen, student), a new settler, had already assimilated the stigmata of suspicion: "Indians don't trust us".

Disloyalty is perceived as the most common stereotype projected onto KMs and the main bias that restrains interactions with non-KM Delhite society. While this perception mainly informed KM's social interaction patterns, as we will see, it has to be confronted with more nuanced experiences–even for those informants quoted here. Two students and one journalist considered that they had the chance to freely debate about IAK with their colleagues, while stressing that this uncommon freedom of speech should be related to the "open-minded" or "leftist" social milieu that prevails in their respective institutions. Moreover, past socialization to violence also informs informants' perceptions of non-KM Delhite society as Parviz (eighteen, student) blatantly, but unconscientiously, expressed it when he mentioned his impossibility of freely expressing his mind because of his "fear to be tortured": torture here is a clear reference to IAK, where the Indian army uses it as a strategy to curb insurgency. For Parviz and the others, perception of disloyalty triggered a common feeling of frustration linked to a mixed emotion of anger and fear as to the impossibility, both real and perceived, of interacting with non-KMs.

B.   (Self-)exclusion

The social dimension of the othering process will now be examined, and through it how the relations with non-KM Delhite society participate in the non-belongingness of KMs, as patterns of social interactions with non-KM Delhite society are driven by concrete facts of exclusion. These generate, then substantiate, informants' resolve to voluntarily refrain from contact. The discrimination that KMs face from landlords in New Delhi can be cited as an example: suspicions of disloyalty prompt many landlords to refuse to rent their properties to KMs. Almost every informant told me of their difficulty in finding a place to rent. Asif's (thirty-nine, photographer) story is emblematic in this regard. When he arrived in New Delhi in 2012, he struggled to find an apartment: "Landlords kept telling me 'we don't want to have problem,' because I was from Kashmir. I had to live in a hotel for two months with my wife". Although younger and of a different gender, Hifza (twenty-one, student) had a similar story. She was looking for a flat in 2014. Everything went well, until Hifza's father showed his identity documents to fill

out the renting papers. At that point, the landlord's wife said: "Oh you are from Srinagar? Ok, so I'll have to check with my husband. I call you back tonight". The call never came. Despite this rejection, and based on the fieldwork I conducted[18], difficulties in finding rental accommodations did not seem to generate ethnic enclaves. Apart for those staying on campus, informants would rather merge into broader Muslim clusters, such as Jamia Nagar, in order to stay "undercover". Two chose to dwell in ethnically mixed localities. Without contradicting it, this nuances the general segregation as perceived by KM: while the majority did, some members of non-KM Delhite society did not exclude KM. However, the general perception of being 'different' from non-KM Delhite society, be it Muslim or not, massively dominates the experients of the participants.

Repeated, unpleasant experiences pushed informants to opt for a strategy of avoidance. Abadeen (twenty-eight, journalist) decided to drastically minimize interactions after a traumatic interaction that she recounted with sadness and anger:

> In 2008, when I arrived, I was answerable on many questions about Kashmir. One day, during a con-ference, someone gave me his visiting card while asking where I was from in India. When I answered "Kashmir," he took his card back and told me, "I don't want to have any kind of relation with a ter-rorist". I started crying amid everyone. From that time on, I decided not to speak ever again about Kashmir. People here, they judge without knowing anything. They hear you, but they do not listen to you. They don't empathize for us.

Ultimately, lack of empathy nurtures frustration and then withdrawal for many KM. Irfan (twenty-six, PhD student) explained: "I have no Indian friends because they negate what is going on [in Kashmir]".

Avoiding interactions consequently provides a sense of relief to informants but meanwhile widens the gap between them and non-KM Delhite society. Informants mostly characterized their social experience of New Delhi in terms of fear, insecurity, rejection, and angry frustra-tion. Put simply, KMs do not feel at home in New Delhi. We shall see now, to conclude, how this non-belonging to a city is converted into national disaffiliation towards the state.

From localized interactions to national disaffiliation

Living outside IAK did not soften the perception of the Indian state. On the contrary, the othering dynamic that was born out of informants' Delhi experience encouraged their national disaffiliation. Before I myself theorize the two in terms of non-belonging on the one hand, and national disaffiliation on the other, the bridge between New Delhi (hence non-belonging) and India (hence national disaffiliation) was made naturally by informants. All of them were met only once and as above-mentioned, interviews were unstructured. It is hence telling that infor-mants themselves systematically linked feelings towards New Delhi to their personal belief of not-being Indian. It is in that respect that the New Delhi experience is considered to be an incubator of national disaffiliation for the people who were interviewed in 2016. We shall now see that in New Delhi, the violation of constitutional rights appears even more blatantly. Ultimately, this state of affairs deepens the conflictual aspect of the relationship between the state and its Muslim citizens from IAK.

A.   Devolution of rights in perspective

Dwelling in New Delhi put the lack of liberties and the "abnormal," as they put it, life that informants endured in IAK into perspective. Wahid (twenty-six, PhD student) related: "Even though I am in Delhi and I get some rights as an Indian citizen, I lose all of them once I enter Kashmir. There is a complete violation of human rights there". When Ifrah (twenty-six, PhD student) arrived in New Delhi she was indeed struck by the functioning of state institu-tions: "State functions very differently here. Kashmir is a military camp". For Abdul (nineteen, student), living in a more politically open context is a Copernican revolution: "This is the first time I came in contact with India. There is indeed a contradiction with what I believed in the past: before I only saw their guns, their tanks. Here it's different". Hifza (twenty-one, student) discovered what it is to live in a non-military context: "It's only when I came here that I realize what a normal life is: no identity checks, no guns".

Untold (because unperceived as such) ambivalence remained at the background of several accounts. For some, New Delhi could sound like a shelter protecting informants from violence (be it from the state or militants). Although they were disillusioned, this very idea in itself shows an ambivalent relationship to New Delhi. For instance, Abadeen (twenty-eight, journalist) initially thought that leaving IAK would help her to move away from violence; she now realized that: "Even if you leave Kashmir, Kashmir doesn't leave you". Wahid (twenty-six, PhD student) told of a similar ambivalence, albeit with a different dynamic. To him, the situations in Delhi and in IAK contrast too harshly to be bearable. He therefore limited his visits to IAK, and

favored staying in New Delhi. But, beyond ambivalences, rejection prevailed even for Abadeen and Wahid: living in the more open context of Delhi makes the right hand of the state all the heavier in IAK.

B. An impossible citizenship

This last section examines how deeply the rejection of the Indian citizenship is felt among KMs[19]. 'Felt' has a double meaning: KMs feel rejection by the state, along with a strong disaffiliation from their side. However, disaffiliation is mostly phrased as a result of non-KM Delhite society's behavior, especially regarding KM's supposed 'disloyalty.' Hifza (twenty-one, student) said: "Even if we wanted to feel Indian, they don't trust us". She clearly considered the state responsible for this dynamic of disaffiliation: "The Indian state never lets me feel [Indian citizen]". In the same way, asked whether they consider themselves Indian citizens, not a single informant gave a positive answer. I met Faali (twenty-seven, journalist) at his home in New Delhi, where he was stopping between two stays in IAK. His manner was determined when he stressed the violence exerted on KMs: "Even if [the Indian State] says that Kashmir is a part of India, they don't treat us as Indian citizens. I can't feel as if I belong to this country". Summarizing the relationship to both Indian society and state, Abadeen (twenty-eight, journalist) ended her interview by stating that: "It's difficult to even think that you are a part of them, it's just difficult to say we are one people". Informants shared a common metaphor to express their national disaffiliation: their passport is a mere administrative document devoid of sentimental belonging. Going a step further, Wahid (twenty-eight, PhD student) evoked the forced dimension of his national affiliation: "I don't consider myself Indian. I am forced to be an Indian but emotionally and mentally I am not". Within the peculiar context of 2016, accounts of informants therefore showed that living in New Delhi nurtures an acute sense of national disaffiliation towards India.

Conclusion

This contribution aimed at assessing how living in New Delhi influences the belongingness of Kashmiri Muslims to the state. In that respect, we saw that their emotions and perceptions of the city, i.e. their 'Delhi experience', re-asserted their feeling of 'being different' to Indians. Emotions and perceptions are informed by informants' past socialization to violence, as well as by the concrete acts of discrimination that KM face in New Delhi, and how they reinterpret them. Hence, patterns of national disaffiliation that arouse from the Delhi experience differ from those prevailing in IAK two reasons. Firstly, in the present case though, disaffiliation did not occur in the face of the military presence deployed in IAK. It developed within a de jure and de facto open context, in relation with a given territory and its inhabitants. In addition, it grew in a city which was chosen by informants in order to grasp fruits from India's left hand. Secondly, being an ethnic minority has no impact on this national disaffiliation: whether in the majority (in IAK) or not (in New Delhi), KMs did not consider themselves as Indian citizens. It is worth noting, in that respect, that a growing share of young KMs join the insurgency after having lived in 'India' (Tikoo Singh 2018). In the immediate context of 2016, the othering dynamic was heightened by the reactions of non-KM Delhite society. This being established, the methodological driver based on the study of emotions and perceptions shed a light on informants' agency in that process: othering drives KMs away from non-KM Delhite society, and it from them, albeit to a lesser extent.

New Delhi is never worded as 'home'. This does not prevent informants from feeling a certain ambivalence to the city that, to some extent, remains a political and institutional resource to exploit. In addition, reading between the lines in interviews, we can see that non-KM Delhite society is actually not entirely perceived as hostile. Still, non-belonging prevails, these ambivalences showing how complex and labile a process (non-)belonging is. Ultimately, non-belonging to the city is equated to national disaffiliation (with certain ambivalences as well). Documenting the micro (city) level thereby informed us about the macro (state) level.

National disaffiliation is established as being a two-way process as far as the agonistic relationship of power is concerned. In our case, the intransigent repression of the central state against demonstrators in IAK during the summer of 2016 further polarized Kashmiri Muslims against the Indian state. A ray of hope remains in considering that, conversely, a smoother and more inclusive power over IAK could soften the feeling of national disaffiliation of Kashmiri Muslims. Unfortunately, since 2016, Modi's government has not seemed to aim for a more peaceful relation to the state.

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Endnotes

1. The first version of this contribution was penned before the scrapping of Art. 370 on the 05 August 2019. To respect the times of fieldwork and writing, I chose not to integrate this dimension in the conceptual frame of this contribution.

2. This contribution aims at exploring Indian Kashmiris' belongingness towards India. For that reason, I intentionally restricted my state of the literature to the legal national territory at stake. Despite some claims of a 'Kashmiri nationalism' encompassing Pakistan and Indian Kashmiris alike, I consider that national borders do matter to understand belonging dynamics. Scholar Nasreen Ali does the same in denying a 'Kashmiri identity' in her analysis of Kashmiri Muslims (Ali 2009).

3. That is not to say that KM are a homogenous group. They are of different sects, social classes, professional milieus, and/or political affiliations, but the vast majority share a 'political fate' while living under the same conditions. In addition, IAK is also populated by a small share of Sikhs and Christians who are not considered here.

4. See the very stimulating chapter by Saiba Varma: "From 'Terrorist' to 'Terrorized': How Trauma Became the Language of Suffering in Kashmir" (Duchinksi et al. 2018).

5. I unfortunately do not follow Yuval-Davis's incitation to adopt an intersectional approach of belongingness. In the present study, the complex interplay between ethnicity, caste, and gender will not be thoroughly examined, since only ethnicity will be studied. This is one limit of this contribution that will have to be addressed in the future.

6. In 1948, in the aftermath of first Indo-Pakistani war, Resolution 47 of the United Nations Security Council recommended holding a self-determination plebiscite. Two options were to be proposed to Kashmiri people from both sides of the border: either merging with Pakistan or merging with India. Independence was never an option, and the plebiscite never took place.

7. The accession of the erstwhile princely state of J&K to the Republic of India was legally codified by the Instrument of Accession, 26 October 1947.

8. For a subtle approach of the role of the KMs themselves in this process, see Hafsa Kanjwal (Kanjwal 2018).

9. Pakistan also plays an important role in the insurgency, having offered ideological as well as logistical support to the insurgents from IAK. Nevertheless, the role of Pakistan in the insurgency is not documented as indicated in the body of the article.

10. Census 2011 reported that 25.6% of the population is aged between the ages of zero and fourteen. This figure indicates the large share of IAK's population that was born after 1990 and whose sole experience of the Indian state is violent (Census 2011).

11. Names were changed for security.

12. Events are referred to in their Foucaldian approach (Revel 2004: 30-32).

13. The word "lull" was used by all informants to describe calm periods.

14. Besides violence, authorities used curfew, arrests of activists, closure of newspaper, suspension of Internet, and collective punishment.

15. Another attack took place, targeting the military camp of Uri, IAK, in September 2016, just after I reached India. We can assume that this attack also had a strong impact on New Delhi's inhabitants' perception of KMs. Since this event was not mentioned by the KM themselves however, I do not elaborate upon it.

16. They sometimes expressed mixed feelings towards IAK as well, but addressing these ambivalences is not the purpose of this article.

17. For more information on this occurrence, see the article of the *Economic Times* (Press Trust of India 2016b).

18. The situation seems different for Indian Muslims (Gayer 2012) and for Northeasterners (McDuie-Ra 2013).

19. The purpose here is to assess the non-belonging of KMs. For this reason, positive dimensions of belonging to IAK are not mentioned, at the expense of the expression of national disaffiliation. Nevertheless, potential further studies must bear in mind that assertion of the two often went hand-in-hand during interviews.

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