Partition of History in Textbooks in Pakistan: Implications of Selective Memory and Forgetting

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Abstract: This article seeks to study the post-partition and especially post-1971 experimentation with history writing in Pakistan and focuses on how the revisiting of the partition has led to a reinvention of history by the selective contraction, misinterpretation and even omission of certain periods believed to be detrimental to the process of nation building in Pakistan. The article seeks to selectively apply the Hegelian approach and make a case for a common history, which it is hoped will facilitate better relations and greater mutual understanding between the nations of the sub-continent.

The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice. (Mark Twain)

The job of a historian, as Hegel famously wrote, was to ‘translate an external phenomenon into an internal concept’, or alternatively to transfer ‘what was passing in the world around him/her, to the realm of representative intellect’. 1 This corresponds with the way in which a poet projects the world that is perceived through the emotions as an abstraction. The historian thus identifies the fleeting elements of an event or story and treasures them for posterity in the temple of Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory). Hegel identified three separate methods of treating history—original, 2 reflective 3 and philosophical. 4 In the case of ‘original’ history, the historian is witness to history and a product of it and seeks to portray it more or less as it is. In the case of ‘reflective’ history, the historian may or may not be part of history and may employ didactic, critical and fragmentary approaches and is free to manipulate facts of history. In the case of ‘philosophical’ history, the historian adopts the teleological approach to understand the rationale of history. Analysed from the Hegelian standpoint, history writing in Pakistan, after the secession of Bangladesh in 1971, has been speciously ‘philosophical’ and the approach of the textbook historians in Pakistan has been to pick up historical facts and personalities selectively to reinforce the idea of Pakistan. 5

This article focuses on the manufactured and manipulated history in Pakistan, but is optimistic that an unprejudiced history of the sub-continent with a common perspective on the various strands of the historical processes is a distinct possibility. This way, the separate histories (of different states) can be rescued from the assault of political engineering unleashed by historians in the sub-continent, especially in Pakistan, who have been busy fashioning ‘ideologies’ that emphasise exclusivity and to an extent drive the impulses that make the relationship between India and Pakistan so problematic.

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Advent of history writing in the sub-continent
Taking their cue from colonial historians like James Mill (1773–1836)\(^6\) and Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859),\(^7\) and their partial, often disingenuous and designed histories, many home-grown historians started writing their own histories and thus an essentially new tradition of sub-continental history writing emerged—very much like the imagined and invented nationalist histories in Europe and the Americas, which were infused with the passion for liberty and freedom. There was an inevitable telescoping of civilisational memory, which gradually and quite forcefully asserted itself, buttressed by the critical reading of ancient texts that began in the 18\(^{th}\) century and the archaeological findings of the early 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^8\)

It was clear that history, as in the West, was to be employed as an ongoing and reliable tool for an intensive yet extended process of the ‘nationisation’ of a people who were also, through a nascent cartographic imagination, delimiting their historical habitat and making a bid for freedom. As soon as the spirit of India was imagined (or rediscovered, as nationalists would argue), its metaphysical or conceptual trappings that drew upon the vast reserves of literary imagination readily available in epics and literature of the yore reinforced the geographical and cultural unity of India. The Indologists from Europe also contributed to this wave and very soon the nationalist imagination developed perceptible Hindu reflexes.

History writing in the sub-continent sought to sublimate such nationalist imaginings and promoted an ‘ideological’ view of the different phases of history, i.e. ancient, medieval and modern. This chronological fragmentation of history revealed the co-terminality between the medieval and the so-called ‘Mohammedan’ (Muslim) period of Indian history and there was a tendency to project Muslim rulers as intolerant and oppressive.\(^9\) However, on the whole, the native historian in India more or less stood with the anti-colonial liberal and libertarian leadership and wove the disparate trends of history together into a purposeful tapestry that endorsed the idea of tolerance and diversity, which were regarded as crucial to the survival and development of the people and civilisation that was trying to take its place in the comity of nations. Thus for the native historian and anti-colonial leadership, Akbar and Dara Shikoh were more important than Aurangzeb, because they were symbols of tolerance.

Soon afterwards, the liberal political leadership of India encountered the antithesis of this process which apparently favoured a particular community (Hindus) and adopted its symbolism. This created the dread of the legitimacy of a ‘majoritarian’ representative rule among the leaders of the minority community. The more the anti-colonial leadership in India pressed for democracy, the more the Muslim elite felt endangered. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the factors that led to the success of the movement for partition, or the Pakistan movement. However, the apprehensions relating to the marginalisation of the minority community in a democratic set-up, and the resultant competition for power between the two communities, inevitably led to partition and the establishment of Pakistan.

Before analysing history writing in Pakistan, one must mention that the same exercise in independent India is also not free from blemishes. In a book published in 2001, historian and educationist Krishna Kumar analysed how the shared history of ‘the freedom movement’ is dealt with in history textbooks in India and Pakistan and argues that the story of freedom is presented in such a manner that there is an ‘uninterrupted continuity of the present with the past’.\(^10\) In this process, the history textbooks in both
countries tend to mention specific incidents, events and characters and ignore others to reinforce the ideas of ‘nation’ they associate with India and Pakistan. Moreover, as Rubina Saigol, a perceptive observer from Pakistan, has articulated:

In cases where the new state is carved out of an existing one, the national remembering on each side is divergent—the Parent state mourns the loss and remembers the event as [a] wound in the body politic, and the emerging state celebrates its creation with a sense of pride and triumph achieved through suffering and pain.\textsuperscript{11}

A recent study on history and nationalism in India also suggests that the whole process of ‘construction, elaboration and negotiation of the narratives’\textsuperscript{12} that formed the basis of official history in India has been contested in India, to this day, and the moves by non-Congress governments during 1977–1979 and later during 1998–2004 to add a Hindu nationalist dimension to official history exemplified the tensions between historians divided along ideological lines, i.e. the left-leaning liberal historians and those who endorse a revisionist Hindu nationalist version of history.

Partitioning history in Pakistani textbooks

God cannot alter the past, but historians can. (Samuel Butler)

The authors of this article were warned by a friend from Pakistan\textsuperscript{13} that the term ‘partition’ should be used with caution because it has a pejorative resonance for the people of Pakistan. He argued that the term has a distinct ring of ‘undesirability’. It is as if revisiting partition would be an excuse for re-imagining a ‘lost unity’ (echoing \textit{Akhand Bharat}, Undivided India) and would undermine the very logic of partition that lies at the very heart of Pakistan—which is still struggling to become a nation. It would be like delegitimising the very underpinnings of its existence.\textsuperscript{14}

Does this argument make any sense? Is it a representative opinion especially in the backdrop of the peace process now being pushed forward by the leadership and sections of the media (in the shape of \textit{aman ki ash}, hope for peace) in both countries? Or can we deem it a consequence of the years of indoctrination through imagined history? Or is the imperfect socialisation process that the state of Pakistan has undertaken to emphasise irreconcilable differences—cultural, ideological and otherwise—responsible for all this?

Some other observers in Pakistan, who expressed their views through a dialogic process of interpreting the history of partition with the authors, would argue that the inter-communal animus/difference that was isolated by Al Beruni (973–1048), Ibn Batuta (1304–1368) and others has affected the inter-state (India–Pakistan) relationship in the sub-continent. They hold that the virus of hatred and suspicion has afflicted the Pakistanis and has proliferated over time because of the elite-driven erroneous strategy for nation building followed by Pakistan over the years. A sense of sibling jealousy continues to dog Pakistan to this day, even after Pakistan has secured its territorial frontiers through nuclear assertion.\textsuperscript{15} It is in this context that some of them mention the flawed history being taught to impressionable young minds in Pakistan, especially since the ‘vivisection’\textsuperscript{16} of Pakistan in 1971.
Enter Pakistan Studies: from ‘Two Nations’ to ‘Ideology of Pakistan’

It is a fact that the decision to introduce ‘Pakistan Studies’ as an alternative to ‘social studies’\(^1\) in Pakistan was taken after the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, by the elite in Pakistan who had until then promoted the ‘Two Nation’ theory to legitimise the establishment of the Pakistani state. But the secession of East Pakistan gave a big jolt to their self-confidence and the leadership in Pakistan rejected the ‘Two Nation’ theory and adopted the ‘Ideology of Pakistan’ which was tentatively defined as ‘Islam’\(^2\) with a pronounced anti-India bias. During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government, ‘Pakistan Studies’ was made a compulsory subject, to be taught even in vocational institutes like medical and engineering colleges. Thus the 1970s marked the beginning of the process which is termed the ‘partition of history’ in this article.

Ever since Pakistan came into being, the history being taught to students at school and collegiate levels was clearly the antithesis of that taught by majority historians in India. A cursory example would suffice to prove this point. As mentioned earlier, it clearly highlighted the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims as being the basis for the formation of the Pakistan nation; this argument was also used by Jinnah in his 1940 presidential speech at the Lahore meeting of the Muslim League:

> ... they [Hindus and Muslims] belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions ... Hindus and Muslims derive their inspirations from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and they have different episodes. Very often the hero of one is foe of the other, and likewise, their victories and defeats overlap.\(^3\)

The process of deliberate differentiation began at the dawn of independence. According to Mubarak Ali, a noted Pakistani historian, Pakistani historians were told ‘from the very beginning’ to develop their historiography ‘under the framework of the “Pakistan Ideology”, which is based on the idea of a separate Muslim nationhood and justifies the partition of India’. However, he admits that Pakistan has also had problems regarding ‘how to reconstruct its history in order to legitimise its creation’.\(^4\)

This led historians to privilege or discredit particular phases of history and, as Ayesha Jalal argues, conjure up and invent a past by means of ‘tendentious imaginings’,\(^5\) officially sanctioned and upheld across the years. The first conference\(^6\) on education in Karachi, held between 27 November and 1 December 1947, laid down the guidelines for education and emphasised the need to reorganise the entire educational system on the basis of Islamic ideology, and made religious instruction ‘compulsory for Muslim students in schools’; attendance for the same was also made ‘compulsory’.

The subsequent conferences in 1951, 1959, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992, 1998 and 2007 more or less reaffirmed that education must ensure that Muslims in Pakistan lead their lives in accordance with the essential principles of Islam.\(^7\) Until 1979, the policy pronouncements favouring a ‘deep and abiding loyalty to Islam’ were more rhetorical than real, but the education policy that evolved during Zia-ul-Haq’s military rule (1977–1988) aimed to adopt ‘a truly National educational policy’, by harmonising education ‘with the concepts of Islam and ideology of Pakistan’ and to be ‘conversant with the Pakistan movement’.\(^8\)

The failure of the nation-building process in Pakistan was attributed, during this time, to the reluctance of the rulers of Pakistan to implement the Islamic ideology. Overall, as Tariq Rahman concluded in his study in 2004, the fundamental features
of educational policy in Pakistan were ‘Islamisation, emphasis on the two-nation theory with its concomitant hatred for India, glorification of war and the military’ and ‘increased control of the military and private sector over education’. 25

It was not a mere emphasis on Islam that characterised such history writing. Through a careful revision of the curriculum, the history of Pakistan drew upon selective memory. The periods that were privileged in the textbooks focused on the ascent of Islam and personalities that supported puritanical Islam—which clearly ran counter to a syncretic and eclectic tradition that the Sufis championed in India. Certain periods were entirely forgotten, for example the non-Islamic periods of history (especially when the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms dominated) in the region now called Pakistan, some of which formed part of the syllabus after partition.

Selective memory and forgetting

As per the textbooks, the history of Pakistan effectively began after the collapse of the pre-historic Indus Aryan civilisation, with the invasion of Muhammad Bin Qasim (695–715), who was (and still is) depicted as a brave and benevolent ruler who brought the light of Islam to the sub-continent. It thus became fashionable to celebrate Yum-ul-Babul-e-Islam (the day of advent of Islam) in the 1980s. 26

In fact, Bin Qasim was depicted as the first Pakistani citizen in Pakistani textbooks in the 1980s. The textbooks at the primary level also emphatically state that Muslims ruled the sub-continent for nearly 1,150 years, throughout which the Hindus, despite the fact that the Muslim rulers were very kind to them, always conspired against the Muslims. In addition to this, during Zia-ul-Haq’s presidency it became a routine affair on the part of teachers covering ‘Pakistan Studies’ to malign the Hindus in their lectures. 27

In the course on ‘Pakistan Studies’, especially at the junior level (Class IV–Class VIII), the history of Pakistan jumps from one phase of history to another and overlooks the intervening period. Thus from the death of Bin Qasim the student is taken straight to the period witnessing the rise of Mahmud (979–1030) in the early 11th century. Mahmud’s 17 raids on Hindustan are depicted as a response to the attacks by Hindu kings against his kingdom in Ghazni,28 so much so that the temple of Somnath is described as ‘the headquarters of political intrigue’ of Hindu kings who conspired against Mahmud, thus forcing him to attack Somnath. 29 The discussion then revolves around Al Beruni who adorned Mahmud’s court and wrote the Kitab-ul-Hind, which is considered to be an important source of knowledge regarding the history and society of South Asia in the early 11th century. The textbooks (especially at the very early stage, i.e. in Class IV) emphasise the differences between the Hindus and Muslims ad nauseam and gradually, in higher stages (Classes VIII and IX) quote Al Beruni:

[Al Beruni’s] research convinced him that there was a marked difference between Hindus and Muslims and that they were two different nations that have almost nothing in common. ‘In all manners and usage they differ from us (Muslims) to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs. They declare us to be the devil’s breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper’. Al Beruni, to many, is the real founder of the two-nation theory in South Asia. (emphasis added)

History takes another leap of more than one and half centuries (from the 1020s to 1170s) to the time of Muhammad Ghori (1160–1206), who is depicted as an ambitious empire builder, determined to extend his territory southward into Hindustan.
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His encounter with the Hindu king Prithviraj Chauhan finds detailed mention and he emerges from the discussion as ‘the founder of the Muslim Empire’ in the sub-continent.30

The next ruler who receives detailed attention (especially in the textbooks for Classes IX and X) is Balban (1200–1287) who believed that ‘the king should be very powerful so as to frighten everyone around him’.31 He is shown as a strict administrator and regarded as the first among the slave rulers to have consolidated Muslim rule in India. The textbooks read: ‘... Balban put the Muslim rule on a firm footing ... He made Muslim rule in India so strong that it lasted in one form or the other till 1857’. In between, there is mention of Amir Khusrau (1316–1320), who is described as a lowborn Hindu slave. It is written that Khusrau gave the administration of the kingdom into the hands of Hindus who ‘openly insulted Islam, dishonoured mosques and used copies of the Quran as pedestals for idols’. The textbooks claim that this situation was very difficult for the Muslims of South Asia to digest. They gathered around a Tughlaq noble, popularly known as Ghazi Malik (Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah), who defeated and killed Khusrau.

Akbar (1542–1605) is described as a great Mughal ruler, but with the caveat that during his rule Islam was in decline. If Aurangzeb (1618–1707) in India is deemed an orthodox tyrant, in Pakistan his name is mentioned with awe and reverence, for here was an emperor who lived the life of an ascetic within regal pomp and luxury which he could have easily afforded himself and under his rule the so-called ‘Pakistan spirit’ gathered in strength.

The writers of history highlight the frailties of Akbar as a Muslim ruler.32 The Pakistan Studies textbooks (for Class IX) assert that Akbar was actually influenced by the Bhakti Movement that began during the Sultanate period, and propounded Hindu–Muslim unity. In fact, the textbooks state that ‘in the 16th century, during the reign of Akbar, Islam faced overwhelming threats’ and ‘many Sufis, including Qazi Mulla Muhammad of Jaunpur and Qazi Mir Yaqoob of Bengal, condemned his religious innovations’. However, the person who finally took it upon himself to revive Islam was Sheikh Ahmad of Sirhind (1564–1624), commonly known as ‘Sirhindi’ or Mujaddad Alif Sani (the reformer of the second millennium). Sirhindi, it is argued, opposed all plans to bring Islam and Hinduism together, because that would loosen the Muslim grip on the sources of imperial strength.33

While Bin Qasim is portrayed as the first Pakistani, and Al Beruni is projected as the founder of the ‘Two Nation’ theory, the textbook of ‘Pakistan Studies’ for the Bachelor of Arts/Science, in the chapter ‘Two Nation Theory’, portrays Mujaddad Alif Sani as the real exponent/champion of the ‘Two Nation’ theory. The book tells students that the foundation of Pakistan was laid when Sani refused to bow his head before Akbar and challenged his new religion, Deen-e-Elahi.

It is interesting that during the course of the Pakistan movement, the image of Akbar as a tolerant Muslim ruler, whose court had representatives from all communities, was not well appreciated, even by Jinnah, even though he emphasised a democratic and secular Pakistan later in his celebrated speech to the constituent assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947. It is interesting to note that after Pakistan came into being, Jinnah snubbed Mountbatten—when the latter suggested that Akbar ought to be the ideal for the Pakistani state—by saying that the tolerance Mountbatten was alluding to was displayed in an even more exemplary way by the Holy Prophet himself, 800 years before Akbar assumed the throne in Mughal India.

If Sirhindi finds detailed mention in the textbooks, Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) of Delhi cannot be far behind. He is eulogised for awakening in the Muslim community
the desire to ‘win back [Islam’s] moral fervour and maintain its purity’. It is also mentioned with pride that it was Shah Waliullah who invited Ahmad Shah Abdali (1726–1773) to invade India to crush the Marathas, who were a constant threat to the crumbling Mughal Empire. Haji Shariatullah (1781–1840) and his son Dadhu Mian are also credited with carrying the puritanical Faraizi movement (1830–1857) of Islam to Bengal. It is mentioned that during Shariatullah’s stay in Arabia he came in close contact with Wahabism and on his return to Bengal he sought to purify Islam, which had been corrupted by the Hindu influence.

Interestingly, in the Pakistan Studies textbook for Class IV, after emphasising the irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims, and portraying the Hindus as eternally conspiring against the Muslim rulers, there is also mention that the Hindus and the Muslims together fought against the British in 1857. However, without explaining why the Hindus chose to side with the Muslims in what has been variously called the ‘sepoys mutiny’ or the ‘first war of independence’, the narrative takes an about turn and says that the Hindus teamed up with the British and inflicted untold oppression and suffering on the Muslims. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 is portrayed as a move by the Hindus to extract concessions from the imperial authorities. However, the formation of the All India Muslim League is hailed as a move by Muslim leaders to safeguard the interests of the Muslims in this unfavourable historical context.

In a perceptive analysis of the history textbooks in Pakistan, Rubina Saigol notes that over the last six decades ‘a number of rhetorical and narrative devices [have been] used to construct a particular picture of the past’, ‘to perpetually reiterate the dominant state ideology which has been resistant to change’. She rightly suggests that the ‘story of the two nations, Hindus and Muslims, as two eternally opposed, inimical entities incapable of ever reconciling is the most prominent feature of Pakistani official textbooks’. According to Saigol:

> It appears that Pakistani public school textbooks were not written to serve the pedagogical imperatives of intellectual development and the inculcation of critical thinking. Rather, they were written to perpetually justify a divisive ideology of rupture which had to be continually reiterated in the construction of national memory.37

The manipulation of history is not limited to the non-Islamic periods and personalities. The biases of the official historians become very clear even in the history books relating to post-partition Pakistan. The various phases of military rule in Pakistan are given minimal space while the wars with India are used to promote the people’s confidence in the Pakistani armed forces. Similarly the democratic experiments in Pakistan receive scant attention. The secession of East Pakistan is not even mentioned in the lower class textbooks and the India–Pakistan war of 1971 has been interpreted as basically a war over Kashmir. In higher classes, the war of 1971 and the formation of Bangladesh received little attention until 2004, when some textbooks introduced a special section on the fall of Dhaka where the Hindus and the Indian state were held primarily responsible for the vivisection of Pakistan. The following quote from a Class IX textbook is representative of this:

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman [developed] secret relations with India. The All India Radio, through its programmes, created hatred in the hearts of Bengalis against the people of West Pakistan . . . A large number of Hindu teachers were teaching in educational institutions in East Pakistan. They produced such literature which created negative thinking in the minds of Bengalis. About
10 million Hindus were living in East Pakistan. India stood at their back to protect their interests. Many Hindus acted as spies for India.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Revision of the curriculum}

This interpretation of history that is constantly fed to students shows that the effort is not only to partition history but to attribute historicity to Pakistan and legitimise it within Pakistan. The basic argument—that Hindus and Muslims could not have stayed together with their diametrically opposed world views and interests—recurs throughout most of the textbooks and the history of Pakistan has been tailored to prove this fundamental view. If one were to go by the tone and tenor of the textbooks, one would presume that even though Pakistan came into being on 14 August 1947, it (Pakistan) had existed as a more or less single ideological and territorial entity for centuries.

In this context, a report by a Pakistani non-governmental organisation, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad, published in 2003, made a bold attempt to critique the proposed reform process to revise the textbook curriculum in Pakistan. The title of the report, \textit{The Subtle Subversion},\textsuperscript{39} is indicative of the findings of the report. The report says that ‘[s]tate-sponsored textbooks illustrate how history has been appropriated to reinforce a national philosophy or ideology’ and the students are ‘forced to read a carefully crafted collection of falsehoods, fairy tales and plain lies’.\textsuperscript{40} The SDPI report compiled certain extracts from the Urdu texts which demonstrated the blatant disregard of facts by the official historians who denigrate non-Islamic religions, interpret the Muslim rule in the sub-continent as a golden era and project the partition and establishment of Pakistan as a gift of the Almighty.

In fact, Ayesha Jalal writes that when officials are given the freedom to write history, for a captive market, history gets hooked onto the official national ideology and a sort of ‘amnesia descends’\textsuperscript{41} on the consciousness of the nation. K.K. Aziz, who has written extensively on the misrepresentation of history in Pakistani textbooks, calls it in plain and simple terms the ‘murder of history’.\textsuperscript{42}

Despite the fact that the 18\textsuperscript{th} amendment to the constitution made education a provincial subject, and Textbook Boards at the provincial level have also reviewed school curriculums in the recent past, history of the sub-continent as it obtains today in Pakistani textbooks does not make any significant departure from the past. The same prejudices, the very same tainted views, an overwhelming emphasis on Islam as the prism through which all disciplines need to be refracted persists. However, even though the overall guidelines of the textbooks are developed by the federal government, theoretically speaking there is now some scope for shifting the emphasis on different issues at the provincial level. For example, a textbook prepared by the Balochistan Textbook Board may be more critical of the Pakistani army than one prepared by the board in Punjab. Some observers have termed this dangerous from the point of view of preserving national unity.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, it has been observed so far that as far as the history of the pre-partition era is concerned, which the present article focuses on, there is little difference in the textbooks prepared by different boards, especially with regard to Hindus and India.

\textbf{Perpetuation of prejudices through policies}

The National Curriculum Document (2006)\textsuperscript{44} issued by the National Curriculum and Textbooks Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, framed in the
light of the objectives of the latest National Education Policy (1998–2010), emphasised that school curricula should be designed to ‘inculcate among the students the sense of gratitude to Almighty Allah’ and ‘the sense of patronizing behaviour patterns of national character’ (emphases added). Its other objectives are to promote the unity of Muslim Ummah in the world and to develop and practise the spirit of the ‘Ideology of Pakistan’ and Islam, as well as the aim ‘to inculcate a strong sense of gratitude to Almighty Allah for His blessings providing us an independent state’.

It clearly mentions that ‘the philosophy underlying National Curriculum is Islam and Ideology of Pakistan as set by the Parliament Act X, 1976. The objectives of the National Curriculum are framed in the light of the objectives of the latest National Education Policy (1998–2010)’. The main aim of the new education policy captures it all:

Education and training should enable the citizens of Pakistan to lead their lives according to the teachings of Islam as laid down in the Qur’an and Sunnah and to educate and train them as a true practicing Muslim. To evolve an integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni Madaris and modern schools closer to each stream in curriculum and the contents of education. Nazira Qur’an will be introduced as a compulsory component from grade I–VIII while at secondary level translation of the selected verses from the Holy Qur’an will be offered.

In the guidelines for teachers there is an interesting mix of the need for ‘continuous awareness [of] the modern concepts introduced in the educational field’ and for a ‘proper orientation to establish commitment with the Islamic beliefs and principles as enunciated in Quran and Sunnah’. The most important guideline, however, for teaching civics to grade IX–XII students is the ‘Islamic Polity Approach’. Such over-emphasis on Islam has had an enormous impact on history writing and has led to a reconstruction of history in which neighbouring religions and cultures are either disregarded or derided; it also becomes imperative to discuss the formation of Pakistan as a gift from Allah, the Almighty, because the Muslims of the sub-continent were being unfairly treated by non-Muslims and were facing subjugation at their hands. In the school textbooks on Islamiyat (Islamic Studies), Pakistan is referred to as the citadel of Islam because it is a nuclear power.

The road ahead

Thus a deep anti-Hindu bias and over-emphasis on Islam characterises the non-madrassa system of education in Pakistan. The deliberate misrepresentation of facts has had its effect on the way history is being constructed and disseminated in Pakistan. In fact, the primacy given to Islam and the credit given to orthodoxy and aggressive zeal in historical texts has created a combative Pakistani nationalism which revels in invented and imagined glory.

During Musharraf’s rule (2001–2008), because of his emphasis on ‘enlightened moderation’ there was hope that some sanitisation would take place. However, as is well known, he could not have taken any revolutionary step forward as it would have been extremely difficult to revert to the pre-1970 curricula, because of the overwhelming orthodoxy propagated in the intervening decade of the 1980s.

Musharraf signed an executive order (the Presidential Ordinance of November 8, 2002; CXIV/2002) inducting the Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKUEB) into the national education system. The AKUEB was given this task due to its
outstanding record in the field of education. But Musharraf had to withdraw this initiative under pressure from the right wing and jihadi elements who launched a smear campaign against the Aga Khanis. Qazi Hussain Ahmad, then leader of the radical Jamaat-i-Islami (who narrowly escaped an attack by a suicide bomber from an even more radical Islamist outfit in November 2012, and died subsequently), launched a direct attack on Prince Karim Aga Khan. The weekly *Ghazwa*, a publication of the defunct Lashkar-e-Taiba, in its 6 May 2004 issue, quoted Qazi as saying: ‘If the Prince Karim Aga Khan tried to interfere in our curriculum, I will make his end miserable. In fact, his end would be even worse than the Ahmadis’. 

The Musharraf administration’s move to revise the curriculum and purge it of the hate factor did not succeed, primarily because the decades-long hate campaign has created a mindset so immune to reason that it is almost impossible to redeem the process of history writing in Pakistan, despite repeated demands from a small but vocal group of intellectuals in Pakistan to develop a rational and objective approach to history.

History is described by Carl Sandburg as ‘a box of tricks with a lost key’, something ‘that you cannot bet on for sure’, something which is ‘written anew in every generation’. But borrowing from Hegel’s philosophical approach to history, one can say that the fundamental values of humanism, freedom and liberty that are central to the idea of human progress cutting across all cultures, religions and philosophies should guide a historian while interpreting events, personalities and phases in history even when the final aim is to reconstruct a nationalist past. Such an objective analysis and representation of history will go a long way towards ensuring the unity of history or, as Hegel called it, ‘the universal history’. This is especially urgent in the case of India and Pakistan where there is a temptation to use history as a tool of indoctrination to convert young minds to a particular ideology, nationalist or otherwise.

The hopes of a better future lie in a positive relationship between India and Pakistan. The process that is bringing the two Punjabs closer is generating much enthusiasm in both countries at the popular level. Approaching thorny issues with patience and in incremental ways may go a long way in dispelling the partition-induced insecurities in Pakistan and encouraging the people of both countries to revert to a common history—very much like the one that France and Germany jointly produced in 2006—and to study history in a more objective way. Only then can the partitioned history make room for a unified history of the sub-continent. A more objective history that situates Pakistan as a geo-cultural unit in the comity of the nations, without the pressing need to define itself in relation to India, is therefore imperative.

Notes

2. Annalistic, where the historian is a product of the times he seeks to portray and the possibility of misrepresentation of facts or adulteration is minimal.
3. Where the spirit of the historian is not a product of the times he seeks to portray and which can be sub-categorised into universal, didactic or pragmatic (the materials are patent to every writer; each is likely enough to believe himself capable of arranging and manipulating), critical (history of history; a criticism of historical narratives and an investigation of their truth and credibility) and fragmentary (history of ideas, i.e. art, law, religion, etc.).
4. The thoughtful consideration of history, introduces reason into historical contemplation taking a cue from Anaxagoras who was the first to enunciate that reason governs the world and was described by Aristotle as one who was sober among the drunken.
5. History writing during the anti-colonial struggle in India revealed a clear penchant for philosophical history. But after partition there were efforts towards a rational interpretation of history in India and Pakistan, which even attributed a ‘teleological’ motive to the separate movements that accorded India and Pakistan their separate state-national identities. It is equally true that the manipulations of history writing did have a political (as opposed to historical) purpose.

6. James Mill published *History of British India* in 1818. He took 12 years to complete this work, which was described as a work of Benthamite philosophical history.

7. Mountstuart Elphinstone’s book *History of India*, was published in 1841.

8. As Hegel emphasised in his famous treatise, *Philosophy of History* (no. 1), it was as if the deity of politics (Jupiter) had suddenly restrained the God of time (Chronos)—who had been devouring his offspring leaving no trace of them—and rescued events from the labyrinth of forgetting and made the progress of time more visible and recordable.

9. It is still a matter of debate whether the process of colonial historiography contributed to the characterisation of rulers like Mahmud, Muhammad Ghori, Balban and Aurangzeb as orthodox, intolerant and oppressive, and Akbar and Dara Shikoh as tolerant and liberal.


13. The authors make use of the observations of some of their friends from Pakistan, with whom they interacted while working on this article, to either underscore or substantiate their viewpoints. However, these friends wished to remain anonymous. Most of them have been educated in government schools and belong to the post-partition generation (in the age group of 25–40) and come from urban centres of Pakistan.

14. In the opinion of another Pakistani friend, ‘the haunting nostalgia of partition, mostly visible in India, is an obsessive pathological complex that needs to be shed and exorcised’.

15. This is according to one of the friends with whom the authors discussed the theme being taken up in this article.

16. Ironically, this is the same word that Gandhi and other Congress leaders had used to characterise the demand for Pakistan at the height of the Pakistan movement in the 1940s.

17. Interestingly, history as an independent subject was replaced by ‘social studies’, which was introduced in Pakistani textbooks in the 1960s at the suggestion of the American experts, who played an influential role in revising the school curriculum in Pakistan during Ayub Khan’s rule (1958–1969).


24. For details see Tariq Rahman, no. 21, pp. 7–33, and excerpts from various educational policy documents of the Pakistan government (from 1947 to 2007) excerpted in the special issues of Bargad Magazine, January–March and April–June 2007.

25. Tariq Rahman, no. 21, pp. 18–19.

26. This echoes Jinnah’s address to Aligarh students in March 1944 during which he linked the advent of Islam to Pakistan: ‘Pakistan started the moment the first non-Muslim converted to Islam in India long before the Muslims established their rule in India. As soon as a Hindu embraced Islam he was outcast not only religiously but also socially, culturally, and economically. As for the Muslim, it was a duty imposed on him by Islam not to merge his identity and individuality in any alien society. Throughout the ages, Hindus had remained Hindus and Muslims had remained Muslims and they had not merged their entities—that was the basis for Pakistan’. Jamiludin A. Ahmad (ed.), Speeches of Qaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Vol. II) (6th edition), Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1958, p. 2.

27. One of the authors of this article (Mohammad Shehzad) recalls his Zoology professor (a PhD in Zoology from France) telling his students in a lecture that they should always remember that a Hindu can never be ‘our’ (meaning Muslims of Pakistan) friend. When the author challenged him, saying that his forefathers migrated from Delhi and his entire family was saved by a Hindu family during the riots, he stopped talking to the author for the rest of the term.

28. The quotations used here are translated from the textbooks at both the primary and secondary level (Class VI–Class XII). One representative line says: ‘Jab hindu rajaon ne Afghanistan ki mussalman hukumat ke khilaf sazishain kyin tau Mahmud Ghaznavi ne 1001 mein rajah Jaipal ko shikasht di aur hindu rajaon ka jor taud n ek liya hindistan par satrah hamley kiya’. [When the Hindu kings conspired against the Muslim rulers in Afghanistan, Mahmud of Ghazni defeated Hindu king Jaipal, and to teach a lesson to other Hindu kings attacked Hindustan 17 times.] See ‘Hamara Watan Islami Jumhuriya Pakistan’, Pakistan Studies Text Book, Grade IV, Quetta Printing Press, Quetta, 2010, pp. 3–4.

29. For example, the history textbook for Class VIII states: ‘According to most historians, Mahmud invaded India seventeen times to crush the power of the Hindu Rajas and Maharajas who were always busy planning conspiracies against him . . . After the fall of Punjab, the Hindus assembled at Somnath—which was more of a political centre than a temple—to plan a big war against Mahmud. He took all the Rajas and Maharajas by surprise when he attacked Somnath and crushed the Hindu headquarters of political intrigue. With the destruction of Somnath he broke the backbone of the Hindus in the region and thus had no need to attack India again’.

30. In order to emphasise the value of unquestioning obedience to power, the discussion swivels around his personality as a loyal brother, for he was a deputy and vassal of his brother and never revolted against him; and as a kind person who treated his slaves as his children. In a ploy to emphasise the point that Shias conspired against him, it is also mentioned that he was killed at a place called Daimak while praying, on his way back to Ghur from Lahore where he quelled a rebellion of the Ismaili Shi’a.

31. In fact he is shown to have had such a grave and serious demeanour that many foreign diplomats would faint if he cast his eye upon them.

32. For a detailed study of the unsympathetic portrayal of Akbar in history textbooks in Pakistan, see Mubarak Ali, ‘Akbar in Pakistani Textbooks’, Social Scientist, 20(9/10), 1992, pp. 73–76.

33. It is also emphasised that he contributed to the swing from Akbar’s heterodoxy to Aurangzeb’s vigorous orthodoxy instead of a return to Babur and Humayun’s policy of laissez faire. Iqbal rightly regarded him as the ‘Spiritual Guardian of the Muslims’ of the sub-continent and one whom God had alerted to the great perils inherent in the syncretism of Akbar.
In 1761, Abdali, in response to Waliullah’s call, invaded Delhi and defeated the Marathas at Panipat.

35. Wahabism is an orthodox and puritanical form of Islam which advocates purging of all innovations and heretical influences and restoring Islam to its pristine pure form. It was started by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (1703–1792) of Arabia, and enjoys the patronage of the Saudi government today.


40. Ibid. p. 73.

41. Ayesha Jalal, no. 21, p. 77.

42. K.K. Aziz, no. 21.


49. Ibid., p. 23.

50. The books teach readers that Pakistan best qualifies to be the leader of the Muslim Ummah. Those students who memorise the Qur’an are given an additional 25 marks in the FA/FSC (12th grade) exam. The Pakistan army is described as a divinely ordained army and the textbook of Class X tells readers that during the war of 1965, angels from heaven protected Pakistani soldiers from the bombs hurled at them by Indians. The same book also tells students that the siege of Mecca was foiled by the brave Pakistani army—which is a complete lie.


52. The Qazi was the first to spearhead the campaign against the Ismailis, linking them to the Ahmadis, the most persecuted sect in Pakistan.

53. A diplomat chastised Qazi at a social gathering for this threat. See The Friday Times, 3–10 June 2004, p. 5.