Silencing the Past: Role of the Army in 1970-71 Conflict and Its Depiction in Pakistani Textbooks

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If thou canst not hold fast to the thread of history
Thou shalt be blind by day and a slave by night.
From thy past emerges thy present;
Out of thy present issues forth thy future.

Muhammad Iqbal, Rumuz-i-Bekhudi

Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities.

Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture

Armed forces are one of the essential components of a modern state. They play a pivotal role in defending the frontiers of a country. However, in many of the post-colonial countries, they get deeply involved in politics and dominate all other institutions. Pakistan is one such country where army domination

has virtually become an abiding feature. Pakistan Army is approximately 600,000 strong in addition to half a million reserve personnel, making it one of the ten largest armed forces in the world. In its chequered history of 65 years, Pakistan has faced four periods of direct army rule—General Ayub Khan (1958-69), General Yahya Khan (1969-1971), General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) and General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008)—spanning more than thirty years, while its covert influence remained paramount even during the civilian governments, except perhaps for the periods 1947-1958 and 1972-1977. Army's role in Pakistan has always remained controversial. One group of intellectuals believe that army's intervention has been necessitated by the failure of the civilian institutions. As the political leaders failed to deliver goods and the political parties failed to strike roots at the grass root level and remained aloof from the masses, army in the given circumstances had no option but to intervene, as being the only viable institution in the country.[1] However, the other group of intelligentsia harbouring contrarian view maintain that army's repeated forays in the government have resulted in weakening of the democratic institutions of Pakistan. The crucial crisis of governance, coupled with socio-economic malaise, has been caused by military's defence doctrine, which necessitated a defence expenditure of about one third of government spending and glorification of the role of the armed forces at all levels.[2]

The present paper does not directly address these two conflicting viewpoints but restricts itself only to examine the role of the military as portrayed in the Pakistani textbooks, particularly with reference to army's involvement in 1970-71 conflict which resulted in the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. The paper examines the discursive practices employed by the policy makers and textbook writers in depicting the role of army. It argues that varied narrative practices are used by the writers to 'forget' the uncharitable past and 'silence' the vital questions about the role of army.

History textbooks have attracted a lot of scholarly attention in the recent years, particularly their contents as well as the text was brought under discursive scrutiny to make sense of the explicit as well as latent intentions and meanings of the policy makers, textbook writers and educational administrators.[3] Close analysis of the textbooks becomes essential because they, presumably, become the basic source of knowledge for millions of students who often come to consecrate these texts. Therefore preparation of such texts calls for a lot of care and caution and eminent researchers are generally employed to write the textbooks. However, in Pakistan, textbook analysis has received scantier attention. The ball was, however, set rolling by an eminent historian, K.K. Aziz but his analysis has largely focused on stark distortions and travesties, rather than on textual analysis of the contents.[4] Another Pakistani historian, Mubarak Ali, has also examined the history textbooks, but he restricts himself only to the analysis of ideological contents, which makes his analytical domain extremely limited.[5] Ayesha Jalal only brings to light Zia regime's efforts to Islamize the curriculum and its effects on history-writing and teaching in Pakistan.[6] Ironically, no analyst has, so far, attempted to examine the textbooks from the perspective of Pakistani nationalist and defence discourse, and by implication, to examine the portrayal of army's role in Pakistani textbooks.

Textbooks, Nationalism and Constructing the Past

Textbook is a standard work on a particular subject which is designed for classroom use with "appropriate vocabulary, illustrations, student exercises and teacher aids." It aims to provide "an orderly introduction to a discipline or subject area" which helps the students to continue their own learning independently. Current practice of many publishers is that they, besides providing the basic text, also make available certain creative packages of learning materials that may include supportive teachers' guides, charts, tests and audio-visual aids.[7]

Textbooks are, thus, an essential component of any education system. They play a significant role in the academic advancement of the students. Their influence on the young minds, however, depends on multiple factors—teachers, peer pressures, family and friends, childhood experiences, exposure to discourses other than textbooks— thus it becomes exceedingly hard to gauge their overall impact on the students. Nevertheless the intentions and motives of the textbook writers, the policy makers and the educational authorities can be made sense of.[8] Textbooks are the product of a society they therefore reflect the ideological wrangling within that society. This assertion particularly holds water regarding the history textbooks which generally play the dual role in school curriculum. First, they are instrumental in passing on officially recognized narratives of the nation to succeeding generations. As "learning one's history is part of the process by which citizens learn to position their country and the values that their country espouses within the wider international society," it, thereby, makes them responsible citizens of the state.[9] History syllabi and textbooks, with their capacity to define the nation's past, are crucial to the construction of collective memory and thus are instrumental in development of nationalism.[10] Secondly, it is generally considered that "one of the aims of the school subject of history is to inculcate in pupils patriotism and pride in the nation state."[11] The second reason, though an extension of the first, is more complex and thus has been repeatedly contested as it is fraught with dangers.

Nationalism in itself is a contested category, which stands for different meanings for different ethnic groups and nations at different times and places.[12] Thus, the selection of content for national history textbooks is often a site of fierce contestation. The choice of what to retain and what to excise is rarely easy. What material to include as relevant and important and what material to exclude as irrelevant or peripheral can sometimes generate a lot of controversy.[13] Thus most often, the history textbooks represent hybrid texts which reflect a range of

conflicting pressures within a society. It is generally accepted that "in their production and usage, school history textbooks appear as cultural artefacts that typically reveal the ideological, social, historical and geo-political forces that influence their construction." However, textbooks, though appear to be definite, are subjected to multiple uses. Neeladri Bhattacharya holds that "within the classroom, school teachers in different regions read the textbooks once again in their own ways, reworking their meanings, introducing their own interpretations, eliminating chapters, adding anecdotes, and in the process transforming the texts."[14] Analyse of the content of history textbooks and the context in which they are produced may amount to studying the nexus between knowledge and power. To explore fully the role and potential impact of history textbooks in different nations, it is important to appreciate the complex relationship between textbook production, mandated curricula and the stated educational aims of national governments.

Pakistan's national unity has always remained tenuous and a civil war in 1971 resulted into the cessation of its Eastern Wing and its majority population. Definitely this cataclysmic event has greatly influenced the policy makers and the people alike.[15] The fact that needs to be underscored is that not many Pakistanis would like to talk about the event, which has been excised from Pakistani discourse.[16] Saba Gul Khattak points out, "the sovereign voice that establishes a meta-discourse does so by discrediting and/or suppressing those that contradict its claims to truth, with the result that other discourses seldom have legitimacy, if they are able to surface at all."[17]

Historical Context

Pakistan came into existence in August 1947 after a prolonged struggle of the Muslims of South Asia against the attempt to establish a Hindu majority rule. The rallying cry in this struggle was 'Islam in danger'. Muslims from the North-East (areas

comprising today's Bangladesh) and North-West (areas comprising today's Pakistan) of South Asia, with equal zest and zeal, participated in this struggle, which culminated in the creation of a geographically unique Muslim state with two wings—East Pakistan and West Pakistan—separated by a 16000 km hostile Indian territory. After the creation of Pakistan, the relations between the East and West Wings of Pakistan began to deteriorate, which ultimately resulted in the separation of East Wing in 1971.

The scholarly works on the event clearly outline the following factors: first major issue to surface was the recognition of Bengali language as the national language of Pakistan. Central Government of Pakistan was dominated by a U.P. (United Provinces) based Urdu–speaking ruling elite who was adamant to elevate Urdu as the national language. Despite the fact that declaring any language as national language was only a symbolic gesture because for all intents and purposes English—language of the erstwhile colonial masters—was (and still is) the official language of the country. Bengalis' passionate attachment to their language resulted in language riots and ultimately in 1956, after loss of many lives of Bengali students, Bengali was reluctantly recognised as the national language along with Urdu. Bengalis erected Shahid Minar (Martyred Memorial) to commemorate those who died in language riots. Bengali identity got sharpened in the wake of West wing opposition and Bengali nationalist feelings started to simmer from that point onwards. Another factor was cultural differences between the East Bengal and West Pakistan provinces. The lifestyle of the Bengalis was fundamentally different from those of the West Pakistanis. They were austere and simple in dress and diet in contrast to the West Pakistanis, particularly to those Punjabis with lifestyle, which was essentially feudal. Music and dance was part of their life which was considered a sign of Hindu influence by the majority of West Pakistanis.

Another factor was the competition for political power. Being in majority, the Bengalis expected lion's share in the power structure but in decision-making, they were largely ignored. It was also a fact that power alternated between the Governor-General/ President and the Prime Minister according to the ethnic affiliation of the person, not by the authority inherent in the office. Centralization under the military regime of General Ayub Khan aggravated the situation as the Bengalis had virtually no share in the army which ruled the country from 1958 to 1971. Bengalis were also given a grossly inadequate share in the civil administration of the country. Their number in the superior services was unfairly small. Nearly all important decisions, even affecting East Pakistan were taken without any Bengali participation. Then there was the economic deprivation of the Bengalis from the federal funds. East Pakistan was not given adequate funds. As the decision-making was in the hands of the West Pakistanis, mostly Urdu-speaking and Punjabis, most of the development funds were spent in the West Pakistan. Even the jute earnings of East Pakistan, the largest export item of Pakistan, were mostly expended on West Pakistan.

The arrogance, impertinence and shameless audacity of the West Pakistani businessmen and civil servants who came into contact with East Pakistanis had been yet another factor, which augmented the sense of alienation among them. East Pakistanis had the perception of being treated like a colony. The defence strategy of the Pakistan army that the security of East Pakistan lies in the West Pakistan meant that for their security against any foreign invasion the East Pakistanis were made totally dependent on the West Pakistan. It was abundantly proved during the 1965 war against India. They naturally raised the question whether they were really independent and free. Finally, the mishandling of the situation in 1970-71 by the military junta led by General Yahya Khan and refusal of the West Pakistan leadership, particularly Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, to hand over power to the majority party,

Awami League, eventually forced the majority (East Pakistanis) to secede from the minority (West Pakistanis).

The ruling military junta believed that they could suppress the nationalist feelings with the coercive means. As a consequence a large scale army operation was carried out, which led to the huge loss of life. Pakistan army was accused of unleashing a reign of terror, killing nearly a million Bengalis and raping thousands of women.[18] Though it can be argued that atrocities occurred on both sides and *Mukti Bahni*—Bengali Liberation Army—was no less atrocious in its dealings with non-Bengalis, nevertheless it hardly absolves the Pakistan Army from the blame. The Indian covert assistance to Bengalis and later overt invasion ultimately resulted in the surrender of 90,000 Pakistani civil and military personnel. It was the worst humiliation faced by Pakistan in its entire history and definitely military and its top brass were directly responsible for the mishandling the whole situation.[19]

Now let us see how this whole tragedy has been depicted in Pakistani textbooks at different levels of education.

Syllabi, Textbooks and Pakistani Education System

It was under General Ayub Khan that first serious attempt was made to formulate an education policy of the country. Under Justice Muhammad Sharif, the Commission on National Education was established in 1959, and its report, generally referred to as Sharif Commission Report, is still considered as the *magna carta* of Pakistani education. It "envisioned massive and far-reaching changes," not just in the educational system, but also in 'national consciousness', which it "aimed to reconstruct along the lines of modernity, development and Pakistani nationalism."[20] The Commission laid out the following policy objectives of education in Pakistan:

1. 'The moral and spiritual values of Islam combined with the freedom, integrity and strength of Pakistan should be the ideology which inspires our educational system' (p. 11)

2. 'We must strive to create a sense of unity and of nationhood among the people of Pakistan' (p. 11)[21]

For implementing these policy objectives, Ayub Khan Government did away with history and geography and replaced them with a new subject of Social Studies. The latter is mainly a medley of history, geography and civics.

Under General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, another military dictator, major changes were introduced in education. One major policy document called *National Education Policy and Implementation Programme* declared that the foremost aims of education would be:

- To foster in the hearts and minds of the people of Pakistan in general and the students in particular a deep and abiding loyalty to Islam and Pakistan and a living consciousness of their spiritual and ideological identity thereby strengthening unity of the outlook of the people of Pakistan on the basis of justice and fair-play

Under this policy, Zia regime introduced Pakistan Studies as a compulsory subject for all the students at intermediate and degree level.

On the recommendation of the Sharif Commission, the government set up Textbook Boards in every province. Their primary task was to ensure that the government's policies were amply reflected in the textbooks. Since the early 1960s the planning, preparation and publication of all textbooks for classes

1-12 are the responsibility of the Textbook Boards. These bodies are formed and controlled by the provincial Departments of Education, and their personnel are recruited from the provincial education service. Their textbooks are generally put together by a team of authors, then corrected and supervised by another person or a group of persons, and finally edited by another individual. Then the manuscript is submitted to the National Review Committee in the Federal Ministry of Education, which checks its accuracy and approves of its "ideological" content. When the book has been published, it is prescribed by the Provincial Government as the "sole textbook" for the relevant class in all the schools of the province. Each copy of the book carries 1) the names of authors, supervisors and editors, 2) the imprimatur of the National Review Committee, and 3) the official notice that it is the only prescribed textbook. In some books there is a warning issued by the Chairman of the Board that the students must not buy or use any "additional" textbooks.

The textbooks which are relevant to our study are mainly concerned with three subjects: Social Studies, Pakistan Studies and History of Pakistan.

a. Social Studies

According to Pakistan's state sponsored educational system, social studies as a compulsory subject is introduced from class 4 and go on till class 8th. In all the books, it has been explicitly stated that the books have been prepared by the team of experts, nominated by the Punjab Textbook Board and have been approved by Curriculum Wing, Federal Ministry of Education. The objectives of the Social Studies as a subject have been laid down in the national curriculum document which are:

- To inculcate the unflinching love for Islam and Pakistan, strong sense of national cohesion, and state integrity

- To promote understanding of socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of Pakistani society, the Ideology of Pakistan and struggle for freedom. [22]

A cursory look at the contents of the social science books from class 4 to class 8, prepared by Punjab Textbook Board for use in the government and non-governmental schools of the Punjab reveal some important aspects. Pakistan's history is conspicuously absent from most of the books, except for a paragraph in class 5. From class 4 to 8, the authors try to broaden the horizon of the students by focussing on their own province—Punjab—then on their own country—Pakistan—then the on Muslim world and then on the whole world. A problem in this gradually expanding universe of the children is that the textbooks attempt to pour a lot of information down their throats and the students are unable to digest so large pieces without developing any critical insight into the real issues. A case in point is the separation of East Pakistan. From class 4 to 8th class, the students learn nothing about East Pakistan crises, except one paragraph in class 5.

An analysis of this paragraph shows that the information provided to students is riddled with certain problems of overemphasis and understatements. Students are instructed that prior to 1971, Pakistan was composed of two wings which were separated by a distance of one thousand miles. In 1970, elections were held in which Awami League got a majority but was not invited to form the government, creating a political deadlock. India capitalised on the situation and "started inciting the leaders and people of East Pakistan to rebel against the West Pakistan". Consequently, a secessionist movement was triggered in East Pakistan. Seeing opportunity India entered its forces in East

Pakistan and "Pakistani army fought bravely but due to the interference of India, a vast territory of East Pakistan was cut off from Pakistan." After ceasefire, East Pakistan declared independence and became Bangladesh. At the end of this brief description of East Pakistan episode, the authors have adopted a moralist tone in the next paragraph:

> "We should learn lesson from past incidents and events. Every Pakistani should work diligently and wholeheartedly for the safety, economic progress and prosperity of the country. Through this, our country will make progress, get stronger and prosper. If our country gets stronger, no enemy will dare to harm Pakistan. We should not forget the three golden principles: Unity, Faith and Discipline."[23]

As the narrative indicates, the focus is on the 'enemy'. Though geographical distance and political deadlock have been alluded to, the real villain of the drama is India. If it had not 'incited the leaders and people of East Pakistan to rebel' and later on had it abstained from entering its forces and 'interfered' in Pakistan, East Pakistan crises would not have happened. So, the problem was located outside Pakistan. Despite all odds, Pakistani army 'fought bravely.'

b. Pakistan Studies

In 9th and 10th classes, Pakistan Studies replaces Social Studies and it continues as a compulsory subject in colleges and universities for undergraduate (11th and 12th) and graduate (13th and 14th) classes. Despite the change in nomenclature, there is no fundamental difference between the two. *Pakistan Studies Book 9-10* includes basic information on Pakistan and it appears from the contents that political history, and particularly East Pakistan crisis has not been discussed but astoundingly, in the third chapter,

titled 'Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan', two pages have been devoted to the East Pakistan crisis.[24]

An analysis of the narrative reveals that writers are at a loss to deal with the whole issue. In the two page narrative, there is repetition of information probably because the authors believe that more information would be problematic. The focus is mainly on three factors: Bengali Hindu population of East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman or Awami League, and India. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was adamant to implement his six points. He launched the movement of non-cooperation where incidents of non-payment of taxes, strikes, boycott of courts and killing became a routine matter. He established a parallel government and hoisted the flag of Bangladesh on his residence. Thus, without explicitly mentioning it, the writers attempt to convey the inevitability of army action. India has also been made responsible for the secession. It has been repeatedly mentioned that India fully supported Awami League and sent its militia to East Pakistan. The Indian agents along with the workers of *Mukti Bahni* "killed lot of army personnel and civilians of Pakistan." (p. 27) In the eight causes mentioned for the separation of East Pakistan are, 'Control of Hindus on Trade and Services' and 'Role of Hindu teachers', have been mentioned as separate headings, thus creating the impression that the Hindu community in East Pakistan, which accounted for only 15-20 % of the population, had made hostage, the whole population. The writers claim that education sector in East Pakistan was under the control of Hindus who "under the guidance of India, fully poisoned the minds of Bengalis against Pakistan and aroused their sentiments." The other causes mentioned are: Incompetent Leadership, Economic Backwardness, Language Issue and Elections of 1970. (p. 28) However, the army action and brutal suppression of the Bengalis by the military leadership has not even been mentioned.

Pakistan Studies is compulsory course for all the undergraduate classes whether opting for arts subjects, Medical, engineering or

commerce. However, the syllabus of this compulsory course, designed by the University of the Punjab and followed by other universities of the Punjab with minor variations, makes it abundantly clear that no attempt has been made to develop a critical approach in the students. It is hardly different in content from what the students have already learnt in their previous classes. It includes such topics as Ideology of Pakistan, the Pakistan movement, Initial Problems of Pakistan, Endeavours to establish an Islamic state, the Land and the People of Pakistan and Pakistan and the Muslim World. No space has been given to political history of Pakistan and especially to such critical issues as the Separation of East Pakistan.

All said and done, in the political history of Pakistan, particularly such controversial topics as the break-up of Pakistan, is never formally taught to students. Except for a brief paragraph in the social studies of class 5, East Pakistan's separation is hardly alluded to and army's role in the political set-up of Pakistan is never critically examined. The policy makers and the educational establishment probably believe that by keeping a lid over contentious issues, the students will develop a feeling of Pakistani nationalism. However, the result is quite the opposite. Pakistan Studies is considered as one of the most monotonous, boring and rather hateful subject, which is never taken seriously by the students.[25] Ayesha Jalal has narrated the incident that, a copy of Pakistan Studies book that she borrowed from some student, whose title was changed as 'Hell Studies.'[26]

c. History of Pakistan

History as an independent optional subject is introduced at intermediate level (11th and 12th classes) only for the arts students. Those opting for science and commerce are not given the option. History is not a popular subject and only a small number of students opt for it. The same is the case in 13th and 14th year classes, where the number of students decline further. Unlike

Pakistan Studies, History does not have prescribed textbooks by the Textbook Board or the University. However, the syllabi are prescribed by the Textbook Board and the University respectively. Only private publishers publish textbooks for use by the students. Not more than a dozen textbooks are in circulation in the market. Except for one or two, all are written in Urdu, which is the medium of instruction for history from 11th to 14th classes. Most of the writers are the teachers of local colleges.

At the intermediate level (for classes 11th and 12th years), the history syllabi focus on the creation and later developments of Pakistan's history. In the first year, the students study the history of the creation of Pakistan under the caption "Tehrik-i-Pakistan" [Pakistan Movement] which covers the period from 1857 to 1947. In the second year, the students study "Tarikh-i-Pakistan" [History of Pakistan] covering the period from 1947 to 1988. While at the graduation level (for classes 13th and 14th years) generally the same historical periods are studied. As the textbook writers for both the levels, i.e., intermediate and degree are usually the same therefore the difference is that of quantity only, and not of quality. Textbooks for degree classes are more detailed than those of intermediate level. In the present research study, four most popular textbooks at degree level have been chosen for detailed examination. These books have a vast circulation and most of the students and even the college teachers of the Punjab base their knowledge of Pakistan's history on these books. These include:

Sheikh Muhammad Rafique, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-199* (Lahore: Standard Book Centre, 2011-12);

M. Abdullah Malik and Nazir Ahmad Tishna. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1988 barai Degree Classes* (Lahore: Qureshi Brothers, 2010-11);

Ahmad Riazul Huda, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1988, B.A. Saal Daum* (Lahore: Ilmi Kitab Khana, 2000-01) and

M.D. Zafar, *A Short History of Pakistan*, revised by A.S. Bukhari and S.M. Najam, 3rd rev. ed. (Lahore: Aziz Book Depot, 2007)

In their discussion and analysis of East Pakistan crisis, the above-mentioned textbooks use a tripartite schema to explain the event. These include, in the order of priority, Hindu community of East Pakistan, Indian government and Bengali politicians belonging to East Pakistan.

Optimum blame is put on the Hindu community of East Pakistan, particularly Hindu intellectuals and teachers, for making majority of the Bengalis hostage and brainwashing them against West Pakistan. Abdullah Malik informs the students that "in East Pakistan, the influence of Hindus had fully permeated and they left no opportunity to damage Muslim League, two nation theory and Pakistan. In East Pakistan, Hindu population was 14 % which was strongly opposed to the two nation theory."[27] He adds that the Hindus were quite wealthy and influential and

> "through a well-thought out conspiracy, they occupied all the educational institutions. Everywhere, headmasters and principals were Hindus. Even Islamic studies were taught by them. They exercised strong influence in Dacca University. They fanned the flames of Bengali nationalism and on the issue of Bengali language incited the Muslim youth of East Bengal. They started brainwashing the minds of the children through wrong ideas about Pakistan. When the children educated by such teachers grew up, most of them did not have strong attachment and affiliation with Pakistan and its ideology."[28]

Sheikh Muhammad Rafique also strengthens this hostage thesis when he writes that "4 % [probably a misprint for 14 %] population dominated the economy, controlled the media and was able to mould the public opinion according to its own views. It

strived hard for years to sever East Pakistan from West Pakistan and ultimately it succeeded."[29]

At the second level, India is blamed for the secession. Every attempt is made to portray it as a villain. One writer informs that "when the Indian army entered Bengal, it destroyed all the Industrial machinery, creating an industrial crisis. *Mukti Bahni* proved to be a scourge on the people of East Pakistan. The Indian army massacred pro-Pakistan elements and innumerable Muslim women were raped."[30] It was India which hatched an international conspiracy to break-up Pakistan. Abdullah Malik writes that "after the army action, many Hindus fled to India and along with them, such Bengali Muslims also took refuge in India who were involved in terrorist activities against the [Pakistani] government. India by declaring these agents and traitors as persecuted Pakistanis, incited the world powers against Pakistan and got political and financial benefits in the name of East Pakistani refugees."[31]

At the third level, Bengali politicians are made responsible for the secession of Pakistan. According to Abdullah Malik, "The politicians of East Pakistan misguided the people on the issue of declaring Bengali as the national language, [and] in the name of domination and exploitation of the West Pakistan. The masses of East Pakistan were led to believe that after separating from West Pakistan, doors of progress and prosperity would be opened to them. They were so much beguiled that they lost their nationalist feelings and patriotic emotions."[32] The fact that Awami League won an overwhelming majority (160 out of 162 seats out of a total 300 seats of national assembly in 1970 elections) of the people is downplayed. Sheikh Muhammad Rafique, by a strange logic, analyses the statistical data of the election results of 1970 and takes utmost pain to prove that Awami League represented only 17 % of the Bengali people.[33] Economic disparity between the two wings is generally ignored. One writer makes the heading "Propaganda of Bengali Politicians" and narrates that the Bengali politicians gave the impression to the Bengalis that West Pakistan

was exploiting them economically and the progress and prosperity, particularly the construction of the new capital, Islamabad, was due to the wealth of East Bengal.[34] The textbook writers generally present no statistical data to prove that it was merely propaganda and not a fact of history.

Despite the fact that military establishment dominated the decision making process at all levels in Pakistan during the period 1958 to 1971, army's role in the whole tragedy is either totally ignored or mentioned in passing. It does not occupy the central stage of the drama. The writers try to downplay the responsibility of the army. Some of the authors go so far as to out-rightly glorify the role of the army. M.D. Zafar writes that "Pakistan army and patriotic volunteers had a number of clashes with the mischief-mongers in East Pakistan. Enemies of Pakistan were dealt with severely."[35] Abdullah Malik praises General Tikka Khan that he, through his military operation, "extirpated the treacherous elements."[36] He adds that "brave army of Pakistan tenaciously fought with the Indian army but due to shortage of army personnel, vast distance and ban on airlink imposed by India, it did not get timely assistance but despite that it fought very bravely and fearlessly. It added in the annals of history a new chapter of sacrifices by shedding its sacred blood for the defence of its home land. However, when the high command decided to lay down arms, Pakistani fighters, under great duress, had to accept the decision."[37] According to Sh. Muhammad Rafique, during the 1971 war, "Pakistan army created new records of bravery and at every place on the war front, Indian army was defeated."[38]

At some places when the army action and its consequences are reluctantly discussed, the authors use different narrative tropes to balance the account. Sh. Muhammad Rafique writes that "the administration of Tikka Khan was totally unaware of the real situation" and "Tikka Khan accepted the operation in his simplicity and naivety."[39] Ahmed Riazul Huda tries to balance the atrocities at both sides and writes that

> "the atrocities of Pakistan army notwithstanding, the basic reason behind taking refuge of urban population was the terrorising attitude of the hooligans of Awami League and Indian terrorists. This attitude was condemned later by Bengali leaders themselves. The fact of the matter is that the people were compelled to leave their homes due to fear created by the soul-mutilating anecdotes and ghastly pictures of the events, concocted by the Indian media."[40]

The textbooks hardly focus on structural factors behind the event. Cultural and social differences between Bengal and West Pakistan rarely find any mention. The separate historical development of the two regions, distinct literary traditions and even different religious practices and perceptions, which played a significant role in the secession, have been totally ignored.

A close examination of the sources of information, which the textbooks rarely mention, reveals some interesting points. The three books generally used by the writers are Siddique Salik's *Witness to Surrender* or rather its Urdu version *Mein nay Dacca dobtay dekha*, Safdar Mahmood's *Pakistan kiyon tota* and G.W. Chaudhary's *The Last Days of United Pakistan*. An inquiry into the whereabouts of these writers suggests that the first one belonged to army and was serving as a major in East Pakistan in 1971. The second writer was a bureaucrat and the last one, though a Bengali, was a minister of Gen. Yahya Khan's government. Thus the three most mentioned sources, themselves belong to the establishment. Naturally they presented a perspective which supported the statist interpretation of historical events.

It is also a fact that textbook writing and production is a lucrative business in Pakistan and all the four writers are not researchers but rather professional textbook producers. The researchers and university professors have rarely ventured into the business of textbook writing and left the field open for non-

academicians. This is in sharp contrast to India where some of the most prominent and internationally acclaimed historians, like Romilla Thapar, Bipan Chandra and others, have authored most of the textbooks at school and college level. The consequence of such negligence on the part of the academicians is that the textbook writers have not made any attempt to update their knowledge. The books utilized by the writers, in most cases, have been replaced by new scholarly works, which have not been used by them.

Comparing Official and Unofficial Textbooks

It would not be out of place to compare the textbooks used by government educational institutions with the one used by elite English medium schools in Pakistan. The textbook used by the latter is titled, *The History and Culture of Pakistan* and has been compiled by a foreigner Nigel Kelly according to the syllabus of O Level exams of Cambridge University.[41] Its chapter 13 is titled "Why did East Pakistan seek and then form the independent state of Bangladesh?" and thus addresses the question directly. While discussing the One Unit Scheme, the writer exposes the latent motives of the makers of the scheme. According to the author, "in Pakistan the dominant politicians and administrators were from the West wing, in particular, from the Punjab. These leading lights in the Pakistan government feared the the East Pakistanis might soon gain influence at their expense. . . . By dividing Pakistan into two wings (West Pakistan and East Pakistan) officially and ensuring equal representation in the Assembly, the One Unit Scheme prevented East Pakistan gaining a majority in the Assembly." It also mentions that the Scheme was not only unpopular in East Pakistan but was opposed in the individual provinces of West Pakistan and to overcome such opposition the Chief Minister of Sindh had to be dismissed and the state assemblies of Bahawalpur and Khairpur had to be dissolved.[42]

It is less judgmental and provides the facts of the episode in a relatively unbiased manner. It starts with the 1940 Lahore Resolution which was presented by the then premier of Bengal, Fazl-ul-Haq and where the word "states" has been used. "This led the people of Bengal to believe when independence came there would be an autonomous state centre in Bengal. . . . So from as early as 1947, seeds of tensions were sown. Events were to make that tension grow:"[43]

While discussing the causes of separation of East Pakistan, the textbook emphasizes 3 factors. The first factor, "Social and Cultural disparity" which mentions in particular Bengali language movement. It recounts the entire story:

> "In 1952 students called 'A State Language Day' on 21 February. The government banned protests on that day but a march was still held, resulting in several deaths when police used tear gas to break it up. Furth protest, and further death, followed but it was not until the 1956 Constitutions that Bengali was recognized as one of the official languages of Pakistan."

It then mentions the differences in culture between East and West Pakistan and narrates that "much of their art, music and dance and their cultural heroes were different from those found in West Pakistan." To emphasize the point, it comments that East and West Pakistan were two parts of the same country "but divided by 1000 miles and by culture." It also mentions that West Pakistanis considered their culture to be superior to East Pakistanis.[44]

The second reason given is "Economic Disparity" which is supported by important statistics. It mentions that foreign aid and capital investment spent in West Pakistan was twofold that of East Pakistan. It also mentions that between 1949 and 1960, the per capita income increased in West Pakistan from 330 rupees to 373

rupees but in East Pakistan it declined from 305 rupees to 288. It then clarifies that in 1951, West Pakistanis were, on average 15 % wealthier than East Pakistanis. By 1970 the gap had grown to 40 %. It also gives voice to the common Bengali perception that the largest spending by the government was on defense to protect the border with India and spending on the army was really to protect West Pakistan. According to the book, the difference was also apparent in health and education sectors where during 1947-58, the numbers in primary school in West Pakistan rose by 163 %, but in East Pakistan, the increase was just 38 %.[45]

The third factor, the book mentions, is "Political Disparity," in which Bengalis' political deprivation has been mentioned. Despite being in majority, appointments to senior positions in the Armed Forces in which less than 20 % of officers were from East Pakistan and posts in the civil service were mostly filled by the West Pakistanis. Even high level posts in Dhaka were usually filled by West Pakistanis.[46]

After mentioning these 3 long-standing factors, it narrates the 1970-71 events in a matter of factor style, rarely passing judgments. It generally exonerates the Bengali leadership of inciting the trouble and alleges the ruling elite in West Pakistan for the whole episode. It says

> "Yahya Khan and the West Pakistani politicians were not prepared to allow the Six Points to be put into action. Mujib believed that they were negotiable, but he had little chance to explain this, before steps were taken against him."[47]

India's role has also not been given as much importance. It has been mentioned in passing and as only a supportive factor. On army action in East Pakistan, the book has only to say that

> "Thousands of Bengali's were killed, press censorship was imposed and all political activity throughout Pakistan was banned. Yahya ordered the Pakistan Army to take control of East Pakistan. The measures were supported by all the political parties in the West Pakistan and Bhutto claimed that '*Pakistan has been saved."* Rather than being saved the reality was millions of Bengali refugees were fleeing across the border to India and civil war now inevitable. . . . In Dhaka the Mukti Bahini carried out massacre of anyone suspected of having collaborated with the Pakistan Army. It is also alleged that, in the final days before surrender the Pakistan Army wiped out large numbers of professional Bengalis to weaken the new country and make it less of a rival to Pakistan."[48]

Why was Pakistan army defeated? The writer gives two reasons: "The main reason for the Army's failure was that the people of East Pakistan were determined to resist West Pakistan. The West Pakistan forces knew that they were trying to force East Pakistan to stay a part of Pakistan, when it did not want to. Many had little heart for such a fight in which they would have to put up armed resistance against fellow Muslims." Second reason it mentions is "little support for its allies."[49]

By this comparison, it is very much apparent that Kelly's work gives little space to external causes. It does not even mention the Bengali Hindus and gives less prominence to India factor. It ascribes the whole blame to long standing socio-economic and cultural divergence and more pointedly to West Pakistani leadership.

Conclusion

It is an undeniable fact that our conceptions of the past are structured by the frames of our narratives, and so it becomes essential that we very carefully use the words and terms through

which we describe the past and the tropes within which we cast our story. Writing school textbooks is fundamentally different from writing academic texts. The textbooks become authoritative as the students are expected to treat them as repositories of truths, facts, evidence and analysis. To challenge such tendencies, it is of paramount importance that questions needed to be presented in more open-ended ways, in which multiple perspectives should be given adequate space. There is a need that instead of being a passive recipient of knowledge, the students should be encouraged to formulate their own ideas through the study of historical sources. Only then the students may realize that the same source can be read in many different ways. The project of textbook writing should be to develop this critical historical sense.

The textbooks in Pakistan miserably fail to develop this critical sense. The authors, using their outdated knowledge, favour a tunnel vision of history which is favoured by the state. They present and reinforce the prescribed myths which become the tools of ideological indoctrination. There is no denying the fact that their version of history, particularly related to East Pakistan crisis, is distorted, biased and incomplete in which the military has been unfairly glorified. The role of the army has never been seriously questioned and Pakistani establishment has been mentioned as fair and free of any charge. With a linear view of the event, the conformist textbook authors follow the official line in order to create a binary opposition to promote the otherness for the Indian/Hindu. This narrowed construction of nationalism paralyzes the thinking process and favours militaristic hostile discourse. It definitely leads to disjointed and selected version of history which fails to create any historical consciousness among students and the general public.

Appendix

List of Textbooks Examined

Social Studies Textbooks

Muasharti Uloom 4-8. Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2011.

Pakistan Studies Textbooks

Pakistan Studies 9-10. Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2011.
Mutala-i-Pakistan 12. Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2011.

History Textbooks

a. Intermediate Level

Ansarul Hasan, Muhammad and Rehana Parveen Ayub. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1707-1973*. Lahore: Kitab Khanah-i-Danishwaran, 1987.

Ansarul Hasan, Muhammad; Ghulam Rasul and Ahmad Ali. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, Hissah Daum, 1947-1973*. Lahore: Maktabah-i-Danishwaran, 1992-93.

Bashir Ahmad, Muhammad. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan barai Intermediate Classes*. Lahore: Fahad Publishers, 1991.

Malik, M. Abdullah and Nazir Ahmad Tishna. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan Barhawin Jamat kay liye*. Lahore: Qureshi Brothers, 2002-03.

Rafique, Sh. Muhammad, Syed Masud Haider Bukhari, Ijaz Nasir Chaudhry and Asim Farooq Sheikh. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan*, 2nd Year. Lahore: Standard Book Centre, 2010.

Rafiqui, Abdul Ghafur; Abu Khalid Siddiqui and Rahman Ullah Chaudhry. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, Inshaiyyah wa Mauruzi Imtihani Tarz*. Lahore: Khalid Book Depot, n.d.

Riazul Huda, Ahmad. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1973*. Lahore: Ilmi Kitab Khanah, n.d.

b. Degree Level

Jabeen, Nusrat. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947 ta Haal, Abdullah Guide Series* (Lahore: Abdullah Brothers, n.d.)

Malik, M. Abdullah and Nazir Ahmad Tishna. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1988 barai Degree Classes*. Lahore: Qureshi Brothers, 2010-11.

Rafique, Sh. Muhammad. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1999*. Lahore: Standard Book Centre, 2010.

Riazul Huda, Ahmad. *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1988, B.A. Saul Daum*. Lahore: Ilmi Kitab Khanah, 2000-2001

Zafar, M.D. *A Short History of Pakistan*, revised by A.S. Bukhari and S.M. Najam, 3rd revised ed. (Lahore: Aziz Book Depot, 2007)

O Level

Kelly, Nigel. *The History and Culture of Pakistan* (Updated for the new Syllabus of Cambridge O Level Pakistan Studies, Paper 1) (London: Peak Publishing, 2004 (reprint 2005, new edition 2010)

Notes and References

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1 See for example, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (Karachi: OUP, 2002); Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan, 1947-86*, 4th ed. (Lahore: Progressive, 1987)

2 See for example, Mazhar Aziz, *Military Control in Pakistan: The Parallel State* (London: Routledge, 2008); Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc. Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (Karachi; Oxford University Press, 2007)

3 Christopher Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Anna

Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History* (Victoria: Melbourn University Press, 2006); Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Teaching History in Schools-The Politics of Textbooks in India," *History Workshop Journal*, 67 (Spring 2009); Janaki Nair, " 'Dead Certainties' and the Politics of Textbook Writing," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40 No. 16 (Apr. 16-22, 2005); Romila Thapar, "The History Debate and School Textbooks in India: A Personal Memoir," *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 67 (Spring 2009): 87-98

4 K.K. Aziz, *The Murder of History: A Critique of History Textbooks used in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1993)

5 Mubarak Ali, *Tarikh aur Nisabi Kotab* [History and Textbooks] (Lahore: Fiction House, 2003); also see Idem., "Akbar in Pakistani Textbooks," *Social Scientist*, 20, No. 9/10 (Sep. - Oct., 1992): 73-76; and Idem., "History, Ideology and Curriculum," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, No. 44/45 (Nov. 2-15, 2002)

6 Ayesha Jalal, "Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, No. 1 (Feb., 1995): 73-89.

7 Michael Crossley and Myra Murby, "Textbook Provision and the Quality of the School Curriculum in Developing Countries: Issues and Policy Options," *Comparative Education*, 30, No. 2 (1994): 100.

8 Tariq Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan* (Karachi: OUP, 2004) 26.

9 Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks*, 9.

10 Clark, *Teaching the Nation: Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History*, 4

11 Barnard, *Language, Ideology and Japanese History Textbooks*, 9.

12 For the complexity and contested meanings of the term, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

13 Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks*, 335.

14 Bhattacharya, "Politics of Textbooks in India," 100-01.

15 Lawrence Ziring, "Dilemmas of Higher Education in Pakistan: A Political Perspective," *Asian Affairs*, 5, No. 5 (May- Jun. 1978): 308.

16 Emma Ducan writes that "Pakistani writers today avoid the episode; phrases like 'it is unnecessary to go into the gory details . . .' explain as well as mask the horror." *Breaking the Curfew: A Political Journey through Pakistan* (London: Arrow Books, 1990), 64.

17 Saba Gul Khattak, "Security Discourses and the State in Pakistan," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 21, No. 3 (July-Sept. 1996): 347.

18 Indian and Bangladeshi officials have accused Pakistani armed forces of killing 3 million Bengalis and raping 200,000 girls and women. Pakistan has categorically denied such accusations. Hamoodur Rehman Commission, established by the government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to inquire into Pakistan's defeat in the war, accepted an approximate figure of 26,000 dead as 'reasonably correct.' A recent study, after a careful investigation of incidents of violence, gives an estimate of 50,000 to 100,000 total deaths on all sides during the East Pakistan conflict in 1971. Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War* (London: Hurst and Company, 2011), 181. She contends that Bengladeshi liberation army was aggressively involved in the genocide of Biharis and West Pakistanis.

19 The succinct narration of the events is based on some latest works on East Pakistan crises, Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War* (London: Hurst and Company, 2011); A. R. Siddiqi, *East Pakistan:*

The Endgame, An Onlooker's Journal, 1969-1971 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakistan: The Rise and Realization of Bengali Muslim Nationalism* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Kamal Matinuddin, *Tragedy of Errors: East Pakistan Crisis, 1968-1971*(Lahore: Services Book Club, 1993); Lawrence Ziring, *Bangladesh from Mujib to Ershad: An Interpretive Study* (Karachi: OUP, 1992); Richard Sisson and Leo Rose, *War and Succession: Pakistan, India and the Creation of Bangladesh* (University of California Press, 1990).

20 Rubina Saigol, *Becoming a Modern Nation: Educational Discourse in the Early Years of Ayub Khan Era, 1958-64* (Islamabad: COSS, 2003), 1-2.

21 Cited in Tariq Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan* (Karachi: OUP, 2004), 13.

22 Government of Pakistan, *National Curriculum: Social Studies for Classes VI-VIII* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, 2002) cited in Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds*, 28, Table 3.2

23 *Muasharti Uloom 5,* 1st ed. 7th printing (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2011).

24 *Pakistan Studies 9-10,* 1st ed. 4th printing (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2011).

25 The observation is based on the author's own personal experiences.

26 Jalal, "Conjuring Pakistan,"

27 Malik and Tishna, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan*, 237.

28 Ibid., 333.

29 Sh. M. Rafique, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan,* 276

30 Jabeen, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947 ta Haal, Abdullah Guide Series* (Lahore: Abdullah Brothers, n.d.), 114.

31 Abdullah Malik, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan,* 319

32 Malik and Tishna, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan, 1947-1988 barai Degree Classes*, 237.

33 Sh. M. Rafique, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan,* 262.

34 Jabeen, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan*, 112.

35 M. D. Zafar, 291.

36 Abdullah Malik, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan* 319.

37 Ibid., 324.

38 Sh. M. Rafique, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan,* 273.

39 Ibid., 281.

40 Riazul Huda, *Short History of Pakistan,* 233.

41 Nigel Kelly, *The History and Culture of Pakistan* (Updated for the new Syllabus of Cambridge O Level Pakistan Studies, Paper 1) (London: Peak Publishing, 2004 (reprint 2005, new edition 2010). It comprises of three sections: Cultural and Political Background to the Pakistan Movement; The Emergence of Pakistan 1906-1947; and Nationhood 1947-1999.

42 Ibid., 121.

43 Ibid., 128.

44 Ibid., *Paper 1*, 129.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 129-30.

47 Ibid., 131.

48 Ibid., 132-33.

49 Ibid., 133.