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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS: NATIONALIST DISCOURSES, DISPUTED MEMORIES, AND EVOLVING ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The study of Pakistan-India relations is so intertwined with a diverse range of political debates, including the partition of British India, the Kashmir issue, defense and security concerns, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and diplomacy. Since 1947, historians, political scientists, diplomats, military officers, journalists, and public intellectuals have examined these issues from varied nationalist, ideological, and methodological perspectives. The political exclusiveness of Muslims, Two Nation Theory, Muslim majority in Kashmir, and India's alleged unwillingness to accept Pakistan as an equal sovereign state were the main themes of the Pakistani nationalist historiography. Geographical and pluralistic nature of Indian nationalism, legal basis of the integration of the princely states, and Pakistan's revisionist stance on Kashmir, however, were the focus of Indian nationalist and secular-nationalist scholars. International research started with diplomatic and state-centric approaches, but later on, realist, constructivist, postcolonial, feminist, subaltern, oral-history, and memory perspectives were added. The discipline has been greatly enriched by the work of Ayesha Jalal, Urvashi Butalia, Gyanendra Pandey, Sumantra Bose, Srinath Raghavan, Rounaq Jahan, Yasmin Khan, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, and others. The changes in historiography from 1947 up to 2024 are analyzed in this article. It argues that academic research has increasingly moved beyond the mutually reinforcing national narratives towards more varied, international, and methodologically informed analyses. However, archival restrictions, nationalistic education, selective memory, current territorial disputes, and the legacy of governmental institutions remain influential in the understanding of history. The present study, viewing historiography itself as an important dimension of Pakistan-India relations, delves into its thematic analysis and identification of its problems and suggests some new dimensions for future historians to work out.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, historiography, Partition, Kashmir, nationalism, memory, conflict, nuclearization, South Asia.

Introduction

Historiography is not just about history, but also the methods of researching, interpreting, organizing, recalling, and depicting history. It addresses questions such as: What makes some sources more useful to historians than others? How do political contexts affect historical questions? What are the characters included or excluded from a story and why? How can the same events be interpreted so differently across different cultures? Historiography of the relationship between Pakistan and India is an important field for historiographical research,

as it has been shaped by conflicting strategic interests as well as by divergent historical narratives.

British India was partitioned in 1947. Two independent states—India and Pakistan—emerged on the globe, whose basic narratives were in part developed as opposites. The creation of Pakistan was a result of a political movement that assumed Muslims as a distinct political entity requiring protection in the constitution and ultimately a separate state. Indian nationalism, particularly in its Congress and secular-nationalist forms, claimed that India was a diverse territorial nation in which religious groups could coexist under one political system. The eventual creation of Pakistan did not put an end to the debate on the meaning of nationalism. Instead, it consolidated different visions of nationhood which continued to influence bilateral relations and consequently pertinent historiographical discourses.

This historiographical issue gained significant attention in Kashmir research. The integration of Jammu and Kashmir into India elicited divergent opinions. The tribal incursion of October 1947 and the ensuing Indian military involvement exacerbated these accounts. United Nations' involvement and the issue of popular self-determination intensified the disparities among legal, political, and historical views. Indian scholarship has been mostly on the legal aspects of the Instrument of Accession and the circumstances of the invasion, while Pakistani and some international views have emphasised the Muslim majority population of Kashmir, political uprising, geographical proximity and the doctrine of self-determination. Studies focusing on Kashmiri agency have challenged the tendency of both the national narratives to see Kashmir primarily as an issue of inter-state rivalry (Bose, 2003; Schofield, 2000; Snedden, 2013).

The historiography of subsequent wars also shows the interaction of the writing of history and the process of national memory. The war of 1965 created parallel legacies of martial valor and national defiance, but subsequent military narratives have nuanced, jubilant accounts with an examination of strategic structures and civil-military deliberations (Nawaz, 2008). The 1971 crisis is historiographically intricate as it cannot be simplistically categorized as only an India–Pakistan conflict. All the factors—Bengali political involvement, the problems of Pakistani federalism, military oppression, the refugee situation, Bengali defiance, Indian involvement and Cold War diplomacy—combined to create the state of Bangladesh (Jahan, 1972; Raghavan, 2013). Studies on gender and memory have also shown how the story of 1971 needs to be told in the context of the experiences of women who suffered sexual abuse and the politics of their commemoration (Mookherjee, 2015).

This area of research has progressed beyond the realms of diplomatic and military history. The Partition research explores refugees, women, families, minorities, citizenship, borders, memory, and quotidian violence in a progressive manner. The undertakings of Urvashi Butalia, Gyanendra Pandey, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin on women, violence and memory, and Vazira Zamindar on the "Long Partition" had a profound impact on the scope of Partition studies (Butalia, 2000; Menon & Bhasin, 1998; Pandey, 2001; Zamindar, 2007). The outcome is a historiography that progressively links interstate relations with the social histories of communities separated by politics and border conflicts.

The research is based on three main objectives. First, it examines the dominant historiographical perspectives that have been deployed to interpret Pakistan–India relations since 1947. Secondly, it explores the development of Partition, Kashmir, war, nuclearism, nationalism and collective memory discourses. Third, it acknowledges the methodological changes that have allowed historians to go beyond state-centric narratives. The temporal scope of this study is from 1947 to 2024. The story starts with the creation of India and

Pakistan. The history of how they interacted with each other is closely connected to Partition and the competing national projects that came out of it. The end point (2024) enables the study of important developments related to the constitutional reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir after 2019, the changing perspectives on nationalism and terrorism, nuclear deterrence, digital information, and the ongoing historiographical debates.

Research Questions

Three research questions guiding this investigation are as follows:

1. How has the history of Pakistan–India relations moved from the state-centric national narrative towards more transnational, social, gender and memory-based approaches?
2. How have conflicting interpretations of Partition, Kashmir, war, nationalism and nuclearization shaped the understanding of the history of Pakistan–India relations?
3. What are the methodological limitations and historiographical gaps that continue to plague studies on Pakistan–India relations up to 2024?

The significance of the research lies in the fact that it takes into account the historiography as part of the two nations' interaction. History has influenced education, politics, war, memories, and society. Therefore, it is important to study both the diplomatic events and the construction of historical knowledge in the context of Pakistan–India relations. The main claim is that the domain has been slowly increasing in diversity and national structures, which still play a major role in the interactions of both states and nations. Modern academic discourse should therefore not be seen as a replacement for national histories, but as a set of layers of interpretation to be evaluated in parallel.

1. Nationalist Narratives and Construction of Historical Legitimacy

The initial historiography of Pakistan-India relations was extremely political in nature. Both countries needed historical narratives that could explain their origins, define their boundaries, and confirm the legitimacy of their respective nationalist ideologies. Consequently, there was a tendency to mix initial historical narratives with nation-building.

Nationalist Historiography in Pakistan

The early historical writings in Pakistan were about the distinctiveness of Muslims in South Asia and the political considerations that led to the creation of Pakistan. The Two-Nation Theory provided a theoretical framework to comprehend the Pakistan Movement as a product of a long historical process, and not just a product of late colonial constitutional debates. The first such tradition is illustrated in Chaudhri Muhammad Ali's *The Emergence of Pakistan*. Ali's background as a senior civil officer, combined with archival evidence and first-hand knowledge of the final years of British India, gave him the means to meld his knowledge into a cohesive whole. His account gave great emphasis to constitutional debates, devolution of powers, distribution of administrative and military resources, refugee problems, and the problems of the fledgling state (Ali, 1967). The author's participation in the processes mentioned makes the work important as an insider's view, but it also needs to be critically studied as a representation of early state awareness in Pakistan.

This historiographical legacy has developed into what might be called the incomplete Partition interpretation. Partition was seen as more than just the creation of two nation-states. Rather, it was observed as an agreement between both nations on unresolved issues. Allocation of resources, properties of displaced persons, sovereign territories, watercourses, and territorial demarcations were considered as interlinked issues emanating from a flawed power transition in the emerging state of Pakistan and princely states like Kashmir. These analyses helped to create a historical context that saw the subsequent security problems in Pakistan as extensions of the weaknesses of 1947. The division of Pakistan into eastern and

western parts, its relatively weak economic position as compared to India, and the uncertainty over Kashmir created a political climate of insecurity in which insecurity was associated with conditions of independence (Cohen, 2004).

Indian Nationalist and Secular Nationalist Historical Narratives

The historiography of India was based on an alternative political base. Congress nationalism depicted India as a diverse territorial entity instead of a mere assembly of religious nationalities. The creation of Pakistan has been seen as a sad consequence of the division of society, the colonial legal system, and the political manoeuvres of the Muslim League. This perspective was not an *a priori rejection* of the political issues of Muslims. It challenged the notion of religious identity as an automatic requirement for distinct sovereignty. Thus, Indian nationalist historians saw Partition as a political outcome, one that could have been different. This distinction was particularly relevant in discussions about the princely states in terms of their historical context. Indian analysts pointed out that the fall of British rule led to a complicated constitutional situation, in which the rulers of the states had to determine the future status of their states with respect to India or Pakistan. Thus, Kashmir was dealt with through the legal and constitutional process of accession. The difference between the two historiographies of Pakistan and India was therefore basically structural. In most of the Pakistani accounts, the political distinctiveness of the Muslims and the unresolved issues of Partition were used to start the account, while in most of the Indian accounts, the territorial continuity of India and the political tragedy of Partition were used to begin the account.

International Historiographic Scholarship

The early academic study mainly focused on Pakistan–India relations was carried out from a diplomatic perspective. Michael Brecher's *The Struggle for Kashmir* (1953) and Sisir Gupta's *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan Relations* (1966) are instances of such works that have given attention mainly to the state actors, diplomatic discourse, military advances, the United Nations, and global arbitration. These undertakings were significant since they sought to transcend solely national accounts. However, they were mainly concerned with the upper class. Governments, diplomats, military, international and political figures were the main actors. Kashmiris, refugees, women, border communities, and other social actors were mostly represented as peripheral actors rather than historical actors.

It was not just geographical, but methodological. The nature of diplomatic archives is that of the organizations that produce documented materials that are favored. Some evidence, such as cabinet deliberations, military communications, diplomatic letters and formal declarations, is more readily available. Others, such as oral recollections, familial experiences, informal political connections and public impressions, are more difficult to reconstruct. The first period, thus, established the basic historiographical paradox that continued to shape the historical discourses: national narratives sought legitimacy, international research sought understanding, and both tended to echo state-centric perspectives.

2. Historiography of Partition of India: From Elite Negotiation to Societal Experience

Most of the subsequent historiography on Pakistan–India relations is based on the Partition. The various interpretations of Kashmir, refugee migrations, citizenship and minority entitlements, bilateral distrust, and national identity can carry with them preconceptions about the causes of Partition.

Elitist and Political Approach

Partition studies for many decades were centered on the political personalities and constitutional debates. The historical narrative highlighted the roles of key individuals and groups, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Muslim League, the Indian National Congress, and the British administration. This approach produced a wealth of studies of constitutional debates and decisions. But its emphasis on prominent figures created a teleological tendency: Pakistan did come into existence in August 1947, but the events in the preceding political process can be easily interpreted as steps towards a goal that was not necessarily inevitable.

The elitist approach to the accounts of partition was challenged by Ayesha Jalal in *The Sole Spokesman* (1985). The book reconsiders Jinnah's political strategies and the negotiations of the Muslim League and the struggle for Pakistan in the context of the larger struggle over representation, federal power and the proposed structure of the central government. It offers a study of communalism and provincialism in the Muslim League's struggle for Pakistan. Jalal's argument was pivotal because it highlighted the distinction between the political vision of Pakistan and the actual sovereign state that came into being in 1947. The author challenged the previously accepted inevitability. Later, Jalal commented that the book has had a profound effect on academic debates and has become a new orthodoxy.

The rivalry between Congress and the League, constitutional conflicts, regional politics and the decisions of the political elites are all important aspects of the high politics which are highlighted in Anita Inder Singh's *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936–1947*. The difference between Singh and Jalal illustrates how interpretations in an elite-centred study are dependent on historians' judgements on ideology, negotiation, regional politics and constitutional frameworks.

Contributions of Marxist and Cambridge Schools

Marxist historians such as Bipan Chandra and his associates focused on the colonial political economy, community ideology, class interests and the institutional framework of British governance (Chandra et al., 1988). This approach challenged the narratives that portrayed communal conflict as an ancient and inevitable part of Hindu–Muslim relations. The historians belonging to the Cambridge School of historiography—such as Ayesha Jalal, Pippa Virdee, Joya Chatterji, Udit Sen, Anil Seal—introduced distinct methodologies and approaches to address the subject matter. They explored the themes of sponsorship, local political networks, local power, electoral competition, and the relationship between national identity and local politics in India (for instance, see Jalal, 1985; Joya, 1994; Virdee, 2018; Sen, 2020). The value of this approach was that it challenged the nationalist teleology, seeing political actors as actors in a specific institutional setting, not as representatives of a set of national ends.

The Subaltern Perspective and Partition Historiography

The Partition history has changed a lot since the 1990s. Historians are increasingly asking questions about the impact of Partition on ordinary people. In Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, the survivors' and families' memories were at the heart of the historical narrative. Butalia used oral history to piece together the stories of displacement, abduction, violence, family separation, and silence. The study represented a methodological revolution in that memory was not only used as a secondary source of information, but as a primary source of historical information (Butalia, 2000). The book is an effort to "center personal experiences and private anguish at the heart of Partition history."

The Partition experience was also highly gendered, as was demonstrated by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in their account titled *Borders & Boundaries*. Rescuing kidnapped women became entangled with the questions of national dignity, citizenship, familial power, and government involvement (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). Remembering the Partition by Gyanendra Pandey explored the dynamics of violence, nationalism, and collective memory. Pandey did not see violence as a random event in an otherwise orderly process of power change, but asked how violence was depicted in the nationalist historiography (Pandey, 2001).

The Long Partition by Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar was another challenge to the traditional understanding of Partition. She did not limit Partition to August 1947, but rather explored the subsequent evolution of citizenship, borders, refugee identities, passports, permits, property systems and state power (Zamindar, 2007). Her work highlights how the boundaries of nation-states shape and constrain the study of history, and thus how Partition was a long-term process rather than an event. In *The Great Partition*, Yasmin Khan brings together the high-level politics and everyday lives of those caught up in the uncertainty, displacement, sectarian tensions, and political decisions of the partition. Its implications for historiography are great. Partition is being seen as more than just a constitutional framework (Khan, 2007). It concurrently encompasses a chronicle of nations, boundaries, nationality, displaced persons, gender dynamics, conflict, recollection, and societal change.

3. Kashmir: Conflicting Juridical, Political and Humanist Narratives

Kashmir is the most illustrative political subject matter of Pakistan–India historiography. Kashmir dispute involves a variety of perspectives on the history of princely states and the question of their sovereignty, communal politics in India, conflict of interests, invasion and wars, right of self-determination, and bilateral diplomacy of states like India and Pakistan.

The Indian Legalist Perspective

The Indian legalist view begins with the nature of princely states after the end of British paramountcy. The Instrument of Accession to India was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh and ratified by the Governor-General Lord Mountbatten. Later, the Indian Army was deployed in Kashmir. Accession in this context was the legal basis of the association of Jammu & Kashmir with India. The October 1947 incursion by the tribesmen from Pakistan is seen as a significant forerunner, particularly because it put the Maharaja's government under severe military pressure.

Prem Shankar Jha's *Kashmir, 1947: Rival Versions of History* looked at the different versions of history up to accession and military involvement. The significance of this literature is due to its emphasis on chronology (Jha, 1996). The historiography of the Kashmir question depicts the political and territorial conflict between India and Pakistan, the history of the accession of princely states after partition, military invasion, the circumstances under which the accession was operationalized, and the relationship between the event of accession and subsequent international commitments.

Pakistani and Revisionist perspectives.

The Pakistani historiography emphasizes unjustified occupation of Kashmir on grounds such as the Kashmiris being a Muslim majority, the geographical location of Kashmir with Pakistan, political opposition to Dogra rule, and the right of popular self-determination. Alastair Lamb's *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846–1990* had a great influence on revisionist academic debates. Lamb challenged the traditional notions of the chronology and documentation of accession, and pointed to the vast geopolitical context that is the result of British rule and can be interpreted selectively. In Pakistani discourses, the principle of self-determination and the

concept of plebiscite have been emphasised and in Indian discourses, the conditional nature of the UN proposals and the issues of withdrawal, demilitarisation, security, administration and sequencing have been highlighted. Therefore, the claim of an unconditional plebiscite, without any other stipulations, or the claim of self-determination as a guarantee is not valid (Lamb, 1991). Although the results of Lamb's work may be controversial, it acquires a significant place in revisionist historiography. It demonstrates how the same historical events can be interpreted differently depending on how documentary sources are used, the chronology of events, the constitutional context, and the political situation.

The Kashmiri People as Historical Entities

A third historiographical approach attempts to overcome the binary opposition between the Indian and Pakistani claims and focuses on Kashmiri political agency. *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* by Sumantra Bose examined political developments, regional diversity, autocratic rule, rebellion and competing claims of sovereignty (Bose, 2003). Victoria Schofield also put the Kashmir war in perspective over a long period of time, starting from the Dogra period, and then the Partition and the subsequent conflict (Schofield, 2000). Christopher Snedden challenged the conventional understanding of the 1947 war as being seen only from the viewpoint of the Indian and Pakistani states, and pointed to the events that occurred in the area that eventually became Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Snedden, 2013). The intricacies of Kashmiri political ambitions were also highlighted in Radha Kumar's *Paradise at War*, which also discussed political negotiations, institutional developments, insurgency, and peace processes (Kumar, 2018). This body of research has revolutionized the way in which the historiographical inquiry is conducted. No longer is it just a question of whether Kashmir is legally part of India or Pakistan, but rather what it means for Kashmiris to live in Kashmir in the context of accession, political change, violence, militarism, displacement, and competing national agendas.

The United Nations and the Referendum Controversy, 1946–1948

The history of the UN involvement in Kashmir is particularly open to interpretation. The principle of self-determination and the idea of a plebiscite have been emphasised in the Pakistani discourses. Contingency has been a key focus in Indian discussions of UN plans, as has been the question of demilitarization. A historically accurate analysis should distinguish between the foreign presence and the question of Kashmir's political future, and the pragmatic conditions attached to it. The diplomatic documentation included questions on disengagement, demilitarization, security, governance and sequencing. So the idea that an unconditional plebiscite was completely divorced from other conditions, and that self-determination was not mentioned in the diplomatic record, does not capture the complexity of the historical process.

4. The Transformation of Military Historiography

Wars have always been a central theme in Pakistan–India historiography, as they are historical events, sources of national memory, and a measure of state legitimacy. The parallel national narratives were created by the war of 1965. National resistance, military sacrifice and successful defence were the main themes of the Pakistani public memory. Indian public memory highlighted resistance to Pakistani military operations and battlefield victories.

But professional military history is not the same as commemorative memory. Operation Gibraltar by Pakistan did not result in the desired uprising in the Kashmir region under the control of the Indian Army, and the conventional war resulted in military gains and losses on both sides, which ended through the Tashkent process. Later, Shuja Nawaz's *Crossed Swords* attempts to look at the military history of Pakistan through institutional records, interviews

and international archival materials (Nawaz, 2008). The historiographical value of this scholarship is that it is not afraid to look at planning, institutional interests, and civil-military relations, but rather to look at commemorative narratives. The case of 1965 thus illustrates the distinction between military memory and military historiography. National commemorations often portray conflict as heroic and victorious, while historical research typically uncovers uncertainty, institutional disagreement, strategic miscalculation, and ambiguous outcomes.

Three-Sided Historiography of the War of 1971 and East Pakistan Crisis

The historiography of 1971 is a subject that needs special attention, as Bangladesh is not just a place where an India–Pakistan war took place, but an independent historiographical centre. Rounaq Jahan's *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* was fundamental in that it highlighted the political structures that allowed the crisis to happen. In 1970, the Bengali people had secured a clear victory in the elections, but the handover of power was not completed. Issues of provincial autonomy, political representation, economic disparities, language, and centralization were thus central to the understanding of the crisis (Jahan, 1972).

In older versions of the history of Pakistan, the focus was on Indian interference and the dismemberment of the nation. Indian stories focused on the military repression by the Pakistanis, the refugee situation, Bengali resistance, and the Indian military intervention. More advanced scholarship incorporates these aspects. In his work *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*, Srinath Raghavan placed the conflict in the context of South Asian and world Cold War politics. Diplomacy and strategic calculations bound the United States, Soviet Union, China, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The methodological importance of this approach is that it is a way to determine the significance of the approach (Raghavan, 2013). It helps to avoid a one-causal explanation of the conflict. Bangladesh's formation was a result of internal political failure in Pakistan, Bengali nationalism, military violence, popular resistance, refugee flows, Indian strategy, and international diplomacy.

Gender and Memory in East Pakistan Crisis (1971)

The Spectral Wound by Nayanika Mookherjee took it one step further and explored public memory of women who were victims of sexual violence during the 1971 crisis. Her research shows how women were made birangonas and how their image was used to make them part of the national memory, which could be a way to both glorify and simplify their experiences (Mookherjee, 2015). This scholarship is significant in the context of Pakistan–India historiography as it shows that military history is not a genderless history of memory. Wars do not only affect states and armies, but bodies, families, communities, and future generations.

The Nuclearization of the Rivalry: Realism and Security Studies

Since the 1970s and more so since the nuclearization of South Asia, Pakistan–India relations have become a topic of international-relations theory. The main questions shifted from: Why did Partition happen? Why has the rivalry continued? And how does nuclear deterrence impact conflict?

Enduring Rivalry

The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry, edited by T. V. Paul, featured scholarship on the question of how the conflict continued in spite of the changing international situation. The volume considers the competition as territorial, institutional, power-asymmetric, international and multi-level decision-making (Paul, 2005). The rivalry started when the two

states were established in 1947, and has persisted through repeated wars and crises. This is a significant break from diplomatic history as such. The enduring-rivalry framework looks for mechanisms that explain continuity rather than each war as a separate event. Stephen P. Cohen's *Shooting for a Century* also treated the relationship as a constant struggle that was influenced by history, institutions, strategic perceptions, and domestic politics (Cohen, 2013).

Civil-Military Relations and Strategic Culture

Hasan-Askari Rizvi's *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* explored the institutional role of the military in the politics and security policy of Pakistan. This was a challenge to the explanations that saw Pakistan's India policy as a reflection of popular nationalism (Rizvi, 2000). C. Christine Fair's *Fighting to the End* is a more advanced strategic-culture analysis. Fair discusses the institutional experience, sense of insecurity, Two-Nation Theory, and professional military thinking that shaped the Pakistan Army's attitude towards India (Fair, 2014). The book offers an analysis of the Pakistan Army's ongoing rivalry with India and its strategic culture.

Strategic culture is influential but should not be regarded as a full explanation. Institutions evolve, political governments shift, and military organizations are riven with internal disagreements. Thus, institutional culture needs to be analyzed in conjunction with political, economic, ideological and international factors.

Nuclear Deterrence

The nuclearization of India and Pakistan led to conflicting theoretical explanations. Sumit Ganguly and Devin Hagerty's *Fearful Symmetry* explored crises in the nuclear shadow and how escalation was controlled. The general deterrence argument is that nuclear weapons make the costs of all-out war higher and might induce caution (Ganguly & Hagerty, 2005). S. Paul Kapur's *Dangerous Deterrent* calls into question more optimistic assumptions. Kapur believes that nuclear weapons can have a destabilizing effect due to their interaction with territorial goals, conventional asymmetries, and the incentives for lower-level risk-taking (Kapur, 2007). This narrative hits the nail on the head in describing this debate between the stabilizing and destabilizing forces of nuclear proliferation.

In *Eating Grass*, Feroz Hassan Khan offers an insider's perspective on Pakistan's nuclear program, highlighting the strategic pressures that shaped nuclear decision-making (Khan, 2012). The significance of nuclear studies in the field of historiography is that they changed the nature of military history. Conventional wars could no longer be analyzed without taking into account escalation management, nuclear doctrine, crisis signaling, and international intervention.

6. Postcolonial, Constructivist, Feminist and Subaltern Approaches

The realist and strategic approaches have addressed and explained themes such as power, deterrence, institutions and military competition, but those tend to have difficulties in explaining why certain historical symbols become so politically significant. Constructivist, postcolonial, feminist and subaltern scholarship is an attempt to tackle this problem through an analysis of identity, discourse, memory and social experience.

Social Constructivism and Formation of National Identity

Constructivist approaches stress that states do not just react to material threats, but they also produce identities by means of historical narratives. India and Pakistan have often constructed parts of their national identities by means of representation of the other. India can be a strategic and political external reference in the Pakistani discourse, and Pakistan has also been a major part of Indian security and nationalist discourse.

Accordingly, Farzana Shaikh's *Making Sense of Pakistan* significantly explores the unworked-out dynamics of Islam, political identity, sovereignty, and the meaning of Pakistan. The historical question thus is not only why Pakistan adopted specific policies towards India, but also how different visions of Pakistan's national purpose emerged (Shaikh, 2009). *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan* by Ilhan Niaz also turns the focus to the historical institutions and patterns of power. It argues that the official ideological identity of the state in Pakistan is constructed by ruling elites who, in post-1947 Pakistan, reverted the British legacy of institutional autonomy into indigenous "power culture" (Niaz, 2010). This ideological identity construction and image-building by the civil-military oligarchy significantly shaped Indian threat perception and the consequent direction of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Postcolonial Perspectives

Postcolonial scholarship highlights that political institutions and categories were bequeathed to India and Pakistan by British colonial rule. Both successor states were shaped by census categories, communal electorates, provincial boundaries, military recruitment patterns, princely-state arrangements, bureaucratic institutions, and strategic frontiers. This view challenges the notion that the India–Pakistan conflict is solely a religious issue that has its roots in ancient history. It rather asks how colonial institutions became the modern political categories of social differences.

Feminist Historiography

Feminist scholarship has played a significant role in establishing the gendered nature of national histories. Partition entailed abductions, sexual violence, forced recovery, family separations, and conflicting notions of women's honor. Women's bodies were often used as symbols of national community by the state. Menon and Bhasin (1998) showed that in the case of abducted women, there were conflicts between individual rights, family rights, citizenship and state rights. Butalia (2000) also showed the ways in which women and families lived through Partition, which were not always included in official accounts. The gendered study of 1971 adds to this insight into wartime memory. Mookherjee (2015) shows that the portrayal of women survivors was also influenced by national discourses.

Subalternity and Borderlands Perspective

Subaltern approaches are a challenge to the writing of history from Delhi, Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, or Rawalpindi. They examine the experience of people living in border regions during the transformation of political boundaries. This is a crucial view to have, as the India–Pakistan border was not just a line between states. It split up agricultural systems, trading networks, kinship groups, religious communities, and local economies. Hence, the study of the history of Pakistan–India relations is now in need of a shift from the centre to the borderlands.

7. The Politics of Historical Knowledge, Public Memory, Media, and Textbooks

Academic scholarship is not the only type of historical production. School textbooks, television, cinema, military commemorations, political speeches, museums, social media, and family narratives are the main ways in which the past is understood for many citizens.

Textbooks in Pakistan

K. K. Aziz's *The Murder of History* is one of the most important internal critiques of historical education in Pakistan. Aziz analyzed school textbooks and found mistakes, omissions, selective interpretation, and ideological simplification (Aziz, 1993). His historiographical critique is important because it shows that criticism of Pakistani historical nationalism need not come from outside Pakistan. Pakistani historians have themselves raised many doubts about the nature of national identity and its implications for history teaching. Traditionally,

the textbook has focused on the political identity of the Muslims, the Pakistan Movement, the Two-Nation Theory and the challenges of Pakistan after independence.

Indian Textbook Histories

In his work *Prejudice and Pride*, Krishna Kumar presented a comparative study of school histories in India and Pakistan (Kumar, 2001). The comparative method is especially useful for evaluating how far the historical education is relational, as each country has a different political and moral focus for describing its own history. Thus, the same historical figure can be portrayed as a nationalist, separatist, statesman, communalist or antagonist in the national textbook.

Meanwhile, it would be a mistake to view Indian historiography as permanently uniform or secular-nationalist. Nationalist, Marxist, subaltern, regional, liberal, Hindu-nationalist, feminist and postcolonial are all traditions of historical writing in India. The rise of the political salience of Hindu nationalism has led to new conflicts regarding medieval history, religion, Mughal rule, and the nature of Indian civilization. Thus, the old dichotomy of a “religious Pakistani narrative” and a “secular Indian narrative” is not sufficient.

Cinema and Popular Culture

Cinema, more specifically films, on the memories of partition, migrations, and violence have had a great impact on the popular mindset in India and Pakistan. With the diegetic content and narrative styles of individual films, a distinct genre has emerged, which is known as “Partition cinema” (Viswanath & Malik, 2009). Media such as cinema and television tend to reduce historical conflict to familiar good-versus-bad protagonists. Even films that portray real historical events can reinforce national interpretations if they are about Partition, wars, intelligence agencies, terrorism, and military sacrifice (Bharat & Kumar, 2008). Cricket is particularly fascinating as it is a sport said to have both competitive and cultural aspects (Hammaduddin et al., 2021). Sporting relations can strengthen national rivalry while also showing social familiarity between nations. Popular culture is thus a way of remembering the past. It has become even more significant in the digital media environment, where historical assertions can spread like wildfire and are not necessarily accompanied by the trappings of academic scholarship.

Memory and Commemoration

National commemorations make historical events into moral stories. Each of these occasions—Defence Day, Independence Day, Partition anniversaries, memorials to soldiers, remembrance of 1971, and commemorations of terrorism—creates its own interpretation of suffering and responsibility. It is therefore important to make the difference between history and memory. History is critically reconstructed from evidence, and in the context of methodological debate, memory is formed by identity, emotion, commemoration, family experience and political culture (Hammaduddin et al., 2021; Bharat & Kumar, 2008). Neither should be taken lightly. Memory can hold onto experiences not recorded in official archives, but it should be considered in conjunction with other types of evidence.

8. Alternative Sources, Methodological Transformation and Historiographical Gaps.

Methodological change has been the most important change in the historiography of Pakistan and India. The discipline is becoming more and more intertwined with national archives and foreign archives, oral history, memoirs, media, military records, demographic data, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Declassified International Archives

The British and American archives have played a crucial role, especially since they enable the historians to compare the Indian and Pakistani records with those of external diplomats and intelligence agencies. In his work *Forged in Crisis*, Rudra Chaudhuri illustrates the importance of analyzing the South Asian crisis based on the outside diplomatic documents when discussing the relations between India and the United States (Chaudhuri, 2014). Srinath Raghavan also proves the worth of multi-archival research. His handling of 1971 is more Indian, Pakistani, American, Soviet, Chinese, and international than just national archives of the war (Raghavan, 2013). Foreign archives are not supposed to be neutral. Diplomats used their own strategic assumptions and, in most cases, had incomplete information. Their usefulness is mainly based on triangulation.

Oral History and Memory.

Oral history revolutionized the Partition studies by retrieving experiences which could not be captured by the bureaucratic records. The methodological issue is that memory is retrospective. Recollection can be affected by trauma, family narratives, political identity, and subsequent nationalization of memory. Biases are also found in written archives (Jayagopalan, 2016). Government files are the records of what the bureaucracies deemed significant enough to record. Numerous types of violence and displacement were not properly documented. It is thus not the most fruitful method to consider oral testimony and written archives as mutually exclusive sources. Rather, historians ought to make comparisons between them.

Memoirs and Insider Sources.

The memoirs of politicians, generals, diplomats and civil servants are still good, but they need to be critically read. The participants will have information that will not be available to subsequent historians, but they also have reputational interests. Political leaders can downplay the consequences of failures, military officers can redefine the strategic decisions, and diplomats can stress their role as a supporter of moderation. Memoirs, therefore, ought to be triangulated by the use of cabinet papers, operational records, diplomatic correspondence, newspapers, and accounts by opposing sides.

The Problems of Closure Archives.

Limited access to sensitive official records in both India and Pakistan is one of the most crucial restrictions. There are historiographical implications of archival restrictions. They not only define what individual facts historians are able to prove but what questions can be researched in a systematic way. This creates a key paradox: historians can occasionally recreate the policies of Washington or London more than the secret decision-making of New Delhi or Islamabad. The politics of access to archives is in turn a historiographical problem.

Historiographical Gaps and Further Research Directions

There are a number of areas that need to be researched.

1. Scholarship is dominated by Kashmir, but the Sindh-Rajasthan frontier, Gujarat-Sindh relations, the divided economic geography of Punjab, and maritime societies are relatively understudied.
2. The 1971 studies do not see Bangladesh as the location of an India-Pakistan war. The Bengali political agency, nationalism, social mobilization, and memory are worthy of analytical autonomy.

3. The opinion of Kashmiri cannot be considered as one category. The experiences of the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, displaced Kashmiri Pandits, Gujjars, Shias, Paharis, Dogras and others are very different.
4. Partition ruined or disrupted integrated economic networks of railways, ports, markets, agricultural systems, manufacturing, and merchant communities. The economic impacts of political separation in the long term are not well researched.
5. Diplomacy and strategic studies are the common ways of studying the Indus Waters Treaty. More focus should be on irrigation, river ecology, glaciers, dams, agricultural communities, and climate change.
6. By 2024, digital media was a significant platform of historical contestation. Archives of social media include official messages, photos, videos, satellite images, fake information, and conflicting statements. The methods of digital source criticism will become more advanced in the future and will be required by future historians.
7. There are not so many long-term joint historical projects between India and Pakistan where scholars compare terms, archives, chronology and documentary interpretation systematically. There would not be a need to agree on joint research. It would be methodological in value: the scholars would be able to determine the points and reasons of the interpretations' deviation.
9. Historiography Beyond Conflict and the Possibility of Historical Dialogue

The history of the relations between Pakistan and India has evolved with the political relationship. National legitimacy was of great concern to the earliest histories. The focus of Pakistani scholarship was on the historical uniqueness of Muslims, political justification of Pakistan, and the unresolved implications of Partition. The Indian nationalist historiography highlighted territorial nationalism, continuity of the constitution, and the political tragedy of Partition. The first approach to the relationship in international scholarship was mainly through diplomacy and interstate conflict.

The field was changed by the subsequent historiographical developments. Ayesha Jalal contested teleological assumptions of the formation of Pakistan by re-creating the political strategy of Jinnah and the constitutional bargaining of the Muslim League. Historians of partition like Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, Gyanendra Pandey, Yasmin Khan and Vazira Zamindar redirected the focus of the histories of Partition to include refugees, women, violence, citizenship, memory and the ongoing effects of Partition (Butalia, 2000; Khan, 2007; Menon & Bhasin, 1998; Pandey, 2001; Zamindar, 2007). The development of the *Long Partition* by Zamindar was especially important as it proved that the establishment of India and Pakistan was a bureaucratic and social process that went on long after August 1947. The history of Kashmir also changed its focus, which was mostly state-centered conflict, to a more multifaceted discipline of constitutional history, international relations, local political agency, insurgency, identity, and memory. Bose (2003), Schofield (2000), and Snedden (2013) were part of this trend as they criticized the strategies that reduced Kashmir to a mere India-Pakistan territorial conflict.

This has been the same case with the historiography of war. Military history is becoming more focused on strategic planning, institutional organization, civil-military relations, and international relations as opposed to merely documenting battlefield successes. The 1965 and 1971 literature reveals that the results of military action cannot be isolated from political organization and the memory of people. Another historiographical field was formed as a result of the nuclearization of South Asia. Ganguly and Hagerty (2005), Kapur (2007) and Khan (2012) investigated the question of whether nuclear weapons stabilize or destabilize the

rivalry. Their disputes indicate that even seemingly technical issues of deterrence cannot be disaggregated from various assumptions concerning the history, institutions, security, and political intentions.

The discipline has thus passed through a number of general historiographical stages: national legitimation, diplomatic history, revisionist Partition studies, social and gender history, security studies, constructivist and postcolonial analysis, and more multidisciplinary approaches to the integration of archives, oral history, memory, and international relations. But historical controversy has not been swept away by the growth of more advanced scholarship. Instead, it has brought out more disagreement. Historians still debate the definition of Partition, the legal and political history of Kashmir, the reasons behind the 1965 and 1971 wars, the involvement of military institutions, the effects of nuclearization, and how terrorism is connected to interstate conflict. This conflict cannot necessarily be considered a weakness. The development of historical scholarship is achieved by evidence testing, reinterpretation of sources, and questioning of existing assumptions. The greater issue arises when the political narratives are made unassailable to evidence and self-determined historical facts. Third, foreign archives, oral testimony, local records, demographic evidence and competing accounts should supplement national sources wherever feasible.

The ethic of historiography of Pakistan-India relations thus needs a methodological ethic founded on a number of principles. To begin with, the historians are supposed to differentiate between documentary evidence and retrospective national memory. Second, they ought to distinguish between state claims and historical facts that have been established independently. Third, foreign archives, oral evidence, local records, demographic evidence, and competing accounts should be used to supplement national sources wherever possible. Fourth, historians ought to be ready to question their own historiographical traditions of their own countries as opposed to questioning the other side.

Above all, the history of Pakistan-India needs to be written on multiple levels. Diplomatic history is the history of negotiations; military history is the history of strategic choice; political history is the history of state formation; social history is the history of displacement; gender history is the history of differentiated experiences of violence; memory studies is the history of commemoration; and international-relations theory is the history of strategic competition that endures. No single one of these approaches is adequate. The development of historiography discussed in this paper thus leads to a pluralist interpretation of Pakistan-India relations. It is not aimed at producing a single historical account. Such a general agreement would, in itself, be historically unrealistic. The more fruitful goal is to develop common criteria for assessing evidence.

The history of Pakistan-India relations is thus not just a history of two states facing each other. It is also a history of conflicting memories, identities, territorialities, institutional interests and interpretations of the past. Historiography has been included in that struggle, yet it can also be a way to comprehend it. Good scholarship will not inquire which country has the past. Rather, it will pose the question of why the same historical experiences produced different national memories, the impact of the memories on political behavior, and how all rival interpretations can be held to the same standards of evidence.

Conclusion

Historiography of Pakistan-India relations has been developing as a shift from state-based national histories to more plural, critical, and multidisciplinary histories. The initial scholarship was mostly aimed at developing rival national claims over Partition, Kashmir, sovereignty and war. These teleological explanations were later criticized by revisionist literature, which

focused on political contingency, institutional structures, and alternative interpretations of historical evidence. The next step in scholarship was partition scholarship, which introduced oral history, gender, memory, displacement, citizenship, and experiences of communities that had not been included in the diplomatic histories. In the same vein, the research on Kashmir, the 1965 and 1971 wars, nuclearization, and post-Cold War crises has been more and more related to interstate conflict and domestic politics, identity, strategic culture, and popular memory.

This becomes evident from the discussion given above that no single historiographical approach can be used to explain the intricacy of Pakistan-India relations. Nationalist, realist, postcolonial, feminist, subaltern, and transnational approaches are all useful in shedding light on certain aspects and obscuring others. The main issue of future research is thus not only interpretative but methodological: historians will have to triangulate official archives, memoirs, oral evidence, diplomatic documents, and contemporary media and be aware of their respective limitations. A more mature historiography does not necessarily have to generate a common story; it should rather stimulate a critical approach to conflicting memories and evidence, allowing a more holistic interpretation of a relationship that is both conflictual, identity-making, historical, and human.

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