

Educated and Violent?: Sunni State-Formation, Education, and Sectarian Violence against Shi'a

Muslims in Pakistan

by

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Abstract:

The Pakistani state increasingly focuses on educating youth as a way to eradicate all fundamentalist violence and nurture critical thinking skills. Parroting the Western imperialist view that books can fight bombs has become a common slogan in Pakistan (Ali, 2010). While these Pakistani state discourses flatten the problem of terror and violence and convince parents to enroll their children in seemingly secular government schools, at the same time, a 2012 Pew Research Center survey showed that 41 percent of Pakistani Sunnis did not consider Shi'ites Muslims (Majidiyar, 2014). Between 2012 and 2017, there have been more than twenty-five attacks on *Imambargahs* (community spaces for Shi'a Muslims) and at least two thousand Shi'a Muslims have been killed in different sectarian related attacks (Ali, 2021). The problem of violence in Pakistan thus has a specific sectarian Sunni face.

Despite the rise in sectarian violence incidents and systematic killing of Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan, the state has been negligent about the sectarian violence against Shi'a Muslims. Significantly, a growing number of attacks are in fact carried out by highly educated youth. For example, the 2015 attacks on and killing of 43 Shi'a Ismailis in Karachi notably involved three highly educated graduates, according to the Chief Minister of Sindh province. In another event in May 2015, Saad Aziz, a graduate student of one of the most prestigious universities, The Institute of Business Administration (IBA) in Karachi also confessed to plotting the murder of human rights activist Sabeen Mahmud (sect not mentioned) (Ali, 2015).

The fact that educated Sunni youth engage in anti-Shi'a violence raises questions regarding common assumptions about modern education ushering development, peace, and prosperity and depictions of uneducated people engaging in riots and sectarian violence (Ali, 2010). In this thesis, I address the contradictions of the Pakistani state's claims to curb violence

with education by situating the current education system, laws and reforms within broader Pakistani state-formation processes. I seek to show the ways in which education constructs a national narrative which shifts from Muslim collectivity to sectarian violence over time. I demonstrate that education is a primary arena responsible for teaching and learning the state narratives of “good Muslims” and “good citizen,” and “national integration/ cohesion” which subtly but surely excludes diverse groups from the national narrative.

Relying on Frantz Fanon and Edward Said’s post-colonial theoretical framework alongside critiques by postcolonial Muslim feminists such as Nosheen Ali, Vali Nasr and Rubina Saigol, this thesis refuses the conventional tendency to study sectarian violence as either an issue of culturalism or as an issue of imperialism. Instead, I rely on a combination of secondary sources in historical research as well as discursive analysis of state curriculum, textbooks, and policies to demonstrate the importance of understanding sectarian violence locally and transnationally in its historical and contemporary complexity. My purpose is to show that sectarian violence is an urgent issue that cannot be understood without understanding the relationship between Western capitalist and Islamophobic agendas and Pakistani state-formation wherein the consolidation of Sunni supremacy has given imperial agendas historical and local traction. Ultimately, this thesis refuses the silence around anti-Shi’a politics and demonstrates that the gradual Sunnization of Pakistani state, schooling and society starting in 1970s is a transnational and constitutive feature of Pakistani state-formation.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Banazeer Yaqoob. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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Al-Hamdu l-illāhi Rabbi l-Alamin

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Introduction: Understanding Sectarian Violence in Pakistan Through a Post-colonial Approach

In January 2021, eleven Hazara Shi'a coal miners in the province of Quetta Balochistan were attacked by unidentified men.¹ The incident happened when the miners were sleeping. They were held at gunpoint, blindfolded, and later executed (Dawn News, 2021). The attack on Shi'a Hazara coal miners sparked protest in which the victims' families along with hundreds of other protesters refused to bury the dead before Prime Minister Imran Khan visited them. They demanded that the prime minister personally visit the victims and their families and form an independent judicial committee to identify and punish the killers, their facilitators and leaders who fund them to kill Shi'a Hazara Muslims (Hashim & Akhter, 2021). Ignoring multiple government officials' demands to bury the dead miners, the victims' families (children included) sat with the coffins and continued to mourn and protest night and day, refusing to leave the protest area in the harsh cold winter (Dawn News, 2021). When at last, Prime Minister Imran Khan agreed to accepting their demands to forming a committee to investigate the incident, but he refused to visit them personally until they had buried their loved ones. He said, "if you do it today then I guarantee you that I will come to Quetta today... you don't blackmail the prime minister of any country like this" (Dawn News, 2021).

In this self-centered response by a leader of a country, instead of listening and being accountable to the Shi'a Hazara communities for the continuous killing of thousands of Shi'a people in sectarian violence in recent times, Imran Khan claimed that he was being

¹ Ethnic Shi'a Hazara community make up most of the Shi'a population in Quetta city of Pakistan (around 600,000) (Aljazeera, 2021).

“blackmailed” by the victims. What explains this gaslighting of Shi’a citizens and the high-profile deflection of responsibility by the Pakistani Prime Minister? Imran Khan’s response says a lot about the state’s negligence and insensitivity towards Shi’a Muslim death in general and the Shi’a Hazara community.

Rather than viewing the Quetta incident and the Prime Minister’s response to it as an isolated case of state negligence toward Shi’a communities facing violence, in this thesis, I situate the growth of sectarian violence against Shi’a communities and Pakistani state negligence toward it as a central feature of Pakistani state-formation. Westerners and other outsiders might perceive this violence as purely a cultural matter internal to Islam out of their own ignorance and Islamophobia. In fact, the many and profound differences within Islam, the histories of divisions within Islam and the histories of violence related to these divisions do matter. However, US (and Saudi Arabian) imperialism have been crucial forces in shaping Pakistani history. In this thesis, I bring my Shi’a Imami Ismaili Muslim voice to speak to the history of sectarian violence in Pakistan to study the relationship of sectarian violence to imperialism.

Using the framework of postcolonial theorists Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, I examine the formation of postcolonial Pakistan as the consolidation of Sunni domination in alliance with US imperialism. Contributing to the study of these connections in the work of Pakistani postcolonial feminist scholars such as Nosheen Ali and Rubina Saigol, I study sectarian violence against Shi’a communities within postcolonial state-formation processes, laws, and the education system (education policies, curriculum, and textbooks). I argue that the transnational formation of Sunni domination in alignment with ongoing US imperialism explains the growing sectarian violence against Shi’a communities in Pakistan.

Educating Sectarian Violence, Refusing Silence

In the context of Pakistan, sectarian conflict refers to the violent conflict between the Sunni Muslim majority and the Shi'a Muslim minority. I follow other scholars who view sectarian conflict not as mutual antagonism but as the violence of majoritarian politics inflicted by those who control state power against those who do not (Ali, 2021). No doubt, there are notable similarities between Shi'a and Sunni interpretations of Islam. However, the major difference as Vali Nasr (2007) an Iranian scholar of sectarian conflict notes, centres on who is considered the successor to Prophet Muhammad. After the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 C. E, the followers of Sunni Islam choose Abu Bakar, a close friend of Prophet Muhammad as the successor or caliph to Prophet Muhammad. The followers of Shi'a Islam on the other hand believed the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad as a better fit to become his successor, arguing that "Prophet had chosen Ali as his successor and had made testament to that effect, telling congregation of Muslims at Ghadir Khum, during his last pilgrimage to Mecca" (p. 27).² Further Shi'a and Sunni themselves have internal differences within. Thus, Jafree (2021) notes that sub-sects in Shi'a community include the Ismailis, Zaydis, Alevis and Alawites, Twelver Shi'as also known as *Fiqa-e-Jaffriya* are the majority sub-sect constituting 85% of the total Shi'a population (p. 1). Sunni Islam also has different interpretations with the main sub-sects being Deobandi, Salafi, Wahhabi. Deobandi outfits are reported to be responsible for 90% of violence and terrorism in Pakistan (Hasan, 2010 cited in Syed, 2016).

² Even though Ali succeeded the third Caliph, Uthman became the fourth Caliph, Shi'a Muslims believe that Ali should have been the chosen leader instead of Abu Bakar (Nasr, 2007). Shi'a Muslims believe that Ali is from the family of Prophet Muhammad and the chosen one by the Prophet himself to lead the Islamic community. Moreover, the special spiritual qualities Prophet Muhammed held were immaculate to Ali and the Ali's descendants known as Imams (these Imams are not the same as the Imams who lead prayers in mosques) will carry the same special spiritual qualities (Nasr, 2007). However, Sunni Muslims believed "the Prophet's successor was succeeding only to his role as a leader of the Islamic community and not to his special relationship to God or prophetic calling" (Nasr, 2007, p. 38).

Growing up in Gilgit-Baltistan, the only Shi'a majority region in Pakistan, we frequently heard about the attacks on and killings of Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan. We would often hear about attacks on Shi'a Muslims from elderly men and the incidents of killing was covered occasionally on TV news channels for a day or two. Once the news cycle was over, the issue would remain in hiding until the next attack happened. As Shi'a Ismaili Muslims, our elders encouraged us to stay "neutral" in such times of political crisis especially when the crisis involved sectarian conflict between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan.³ For the longest time, we (Ismailis) were not encouraged by our families and community leaders to take part in political and religious discussion outside our community centers and Jamaat-Khanas (Ismaili places of worship). This is because Ismaili Muslims, being a minority Muslim sect within the Shi'a minority sect of Islam, are more vulnerable to hate and violence from the dominant Sunni groups in Pakistan. The attack on Ismaili Jamat Khana in Karachi in August 2013 while prayers were in process, killing two and injuring 28 people (Dawn News, 2013) and the brutal attack on a bus-full of Ismaili people in Karachi in May 2015, killing 43 Ismaili Muslims (Ali, 2015) are further examples of how vulnerable the Shi'a Ismaili community has been in Pakistan.

Layered into this problem of disproportionate and normalized killing of Shi'a in Pakistan is the question of education. For example, following the attack and killing of 43 Shi'a Ismaili Muslim in Karachi in May 2015, Chief Minister of Sindh province revealed names of three highly educated graduates responsible for the attack (Rehman et al, 2015). Despite the rise in the number of highly educated youth's involvement in violent attacks there has not been enough research done to understand the reasons for students to get involved in radical originations

³ The Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims also known as Ismaili Muslims belong to the Shi'a branch of Islam. The Shi'a form of the two major interpretations of Islam. Source: the.ismaili (<https://the.ismaili/global/about-us/the-ismaili-community>)

(Ahmed and Jafri, 2020). Marie Lall (2008) argues that “a large part of identity creation happens through the formal education process in school” (p. 103). Hence, the state of Pakistan like many other countries, has the power to control the national identity formation, with the help of curriculum and textbooks, as part of their larger political and nationalist goals. In Pakistan, Sunni Islamic views have always been central to the national identity and ideology, especially since 1970, under Zia-ul-Haq’s regime. Lall (2008) notes, today, the education system in Pakistan has strengthened Zia’s Sunni Islamic views across Pakistani schools through curriculum and textbooks (p. 104). The normalization of Sunni Islamic views also means to portray anyone other than Sunni Muslims as the “other” as Nosheen Ali (2008) shows “in official curricula in Pakistan, the idealized and authorized Pakistani citizens is assumed to be Sunni Muslim, while other ways of being Muslim are silenced” (Ali, 2008, p. 2). In my thesis, in order to understand the relationship between education and sectarian violence using transnational approaches rather than culturalist approaches, I ask: how do the intersections of US imperialism and Pakistan’s state-formation manifest in its educational policies and contribute to sectarian violence against the Shi’a minority in Pakistan?

In order to examine the marginalization of Shi’a Muslims in Pakistani state policies and investigate the growing number of attacks on Shi’a Muslims, some by educated Sunni youth, in this thesis, I analyse educational policies (national education policies, national curricula and textbooks) to see the connections of sectarian violence to education. The analysis of educational policies also allows me to trace the Sunni domination in Pakistan which is partly accomplished through colonial and capitalist educational visions, models, and policies.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach: Sectarian Violence Beyond Culturalism and Imperialism

While conventional thinking tends to blame violence in Pakistan on the lack of education (Ali, 2010), in this thesis I examine the content of curriculum and textbooks to consider a different relationship between education and sectarian violence. Rather than the Orientalist view that sectarian conflict is solely a cultural problem i.e., these age-old differences in belief between Shi'a and Sunni, or between Deobandi and Wahhabi (Hashemi and Postel, 2017 and Ali, 2019) and against the imperialist view that an uneducated population is prone to violence, I study sectarian violence against Shi'a communities through a transnational frame by considering its relationship to colonial capitalism and ongoing US imperialism on the one hand, and Sunni state-formation on the other.

This thesis addresses this question of sectarian violence against Shi'a Muslim minorities in Pakistan through a two-pronged approach. First, it takes a transnational approach and provides a historical explanation of gradual Sunnization of Pakistan by building toward an understanding of the formation of anti-Shi'a Sunni supremacy in the state of Pakistan since its inception in 1947. Second, this thesis relates the gradual Sunnization of Pakistani state to Pakistan's relationship to colonization, the Cold War, and ongoing post 9/11 US imperialism because examining sectarian violence in relation to colonization and imperialism is important for a transnational understanding of Pakistan's sectarian violence. Together these two approaches allow me to overcome the limits of a culturalist explanation that focuses on internal Muslim difference on the one hand, and the limits of an imperial view which sometimes rely on culturalism and at other times solely place the blame on external actors such as the US. Instead, I

take a transnational approach which considers how US imperialism has gained traction in and through a gradual but deepening Sunnization process in Pakistan.

I draw on postcolonial theorists Frantz Fanon (1953) and Edward Said (1978, 1993) to connect the dots between the gradual Sunnization of Pakistani state-formation to the context of British colonialism, the Cold War, and ongoing post 9/11 US imperialism. It is true the conflict between Sunni and Shi'a goes back in the history where "each [Sunni and Shi'a] views itself as original orthodoxy" (Nasr, 2007, p. 34). However, since the 19th century, the sectarian conflict has been drastically intensified (Hashemi & Postel, 2017, Zaman, 2018). Hashemi and Postel (2017) propose the term "sectarianization" to understand the phenomenon of rising sectarian conflict in Muslim countries. They define sectarianization as "an active process shaped by political actors operating within specific contexts, pursuing political goals that involve the mobilization of popular sentiments around particular identity makers" (Hashem and Postel, 2017, p. 3). This definition skips the mention of the power imbalance between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims which is vital in deciding who gets to operate in specific contexts to shape particular political and religious identities. Ali (2019) explains, "social dimension of Shi'a minoritization in Pakistan is better understood through the concept of "sectism" which theoretically draws upon the ways in which racism, casteism, and sexism have been understood as projects of majoritarian privilege and domination" (p. 322) rather than the conventional understanding of sectarian violence as only a religious concern.

Following Nosheen Ali's (2021) argument, in my thesis, I demonstrate that sectarianization is a transnational process in Pakistan where a specifically Sunni state-formation process has long centered alliances between the Pakistani military and US and Saudi Arabian imperial interests. Thus Chapter Three and Four of my thesis explains the co-constituted

formation of Sunni state's sectarian violence in the context of a long history of military relations between the Pakistani state and the US and Saudi Arabia, including its interventions in Iran and Afghanistan.

I use the term sectarian violence to mean both the direct and disproportionate violence against Shi'a communities, as well as the sectarianization process which constructs a hegemonic national culture and common sense against Shi'a beliefs, values, and life in Pakistan. Thus, a second approach in this thesis focuses on the analysis of educational policies, curriculum and textbooks which, following Fanon and Said, I view as significant sites of the formation of "national culture" that bear the traces of the relationship between Pakistani state formation and colonial and imperial interests. On March 4, 2022, around 62 Shi'a Muslims were killed, around 200 were wounded in an attack on Shi'a Mosque during Friday prayers, in Peshawar, Pakistan. The attack is followed by Imran Khan's statement of "zero tolerance for terrorism" and yet another "order for inquiry" into a violent incident. Soon after the attack, people in Pakistan started posting "all Pakistani lives matters" in response to "Shi'a Lives Matter" posts on social media sites. Ali (2021) writes, by "discourses of sectarianism is sometimes used to silence this reality of anti-Shi'a violence in Pakistan by claiming that all Pakistanis are dying under terrorism" (324). In response to my Facebook post about the recent Peshawar incident, where I said "state-supported sectarian violence continues in Pakistan...", people including some of my Shi'a friends started messaging and commenting on my post. One person wrote, "stop this Shi'a Sunni debate, it's about everyone in Pakistan", another concerned friend suggested that I should delete the post "as it creates problems", another Shi'a Ismaili friend asked me, what has the state to do with Shi'a killings? This goes to show the extent to which the state has been successful in perpetuating anti-Shi'a violence and dominant Sunni understanding of nationalism among people

and how it has been internalized not only by dominant Sunni Muslims in Pakistan but also by Shi'a Muslims. In my thesis, I examine national education policies, to show how the state has been using the curriculum and textbooks to propagate violent sectarian imaginaries among the students and default Sunni narratives of national culture as the true Islamic and true Pakistani culture for all.

Significance and Limitations of the Research

While it is important to understand the complexities of why Shi'a Ismailis choose to stay silent on sectarian violence, the attacks on Shi'a Muslims remind us that no matter how "neutral" Shi'a Ismailis might seem, in fact, they are aware of how the Pakistani law and the lack of minority rights are foundations of the Pakistani state and serve to silence and violate Shi'a and other minorities. My decision to write my thesis began with the commitment to understand the ongoing, complex issue of sectarian violence by reflecting on this socialized silence and explicitly connecting the dots on a subject that has immensely affected the Shi'a community for the longest time. Black feminist writer Audre Lorde (2007) noted, "your silence will not protect you" (41). I take her words to heart, and note that for Shi'a Muslims, silence is no more an option. It will not protect us.

To begin with, I hypothesize that education is a site through which there is a systematic dehumanization of the oppressed group of Shi'a Muslim minorities in Pakistan, particularly by drawing on and deepening colonial discourses in contemporary Pakistan. I relied on discourse analysis of Education policies, National Curricula and textbooks (Social Studies, Pakistan Studies, History) from grade eight to twelve which were available online because the pandemic made it impossible to travel and access all the policy documents and textbooks that I might have otherwise sourced. Consequently, in lieu of first-hand discourse analysis of the preceding

documents, I have relied on secondary sources analyzing policy documents of the time-period prior to and after Zia to trace the changes his regime cultivated and study their relationship to recent policy design. I have analysed the policy documents in relation to the scholarly literature on sectarian violence, Pakistani state-formation, imperialism, and sectarian politics to explain the relationships among these seemingly distinct social processes. Moreover, through the in-depth analysis of educational policy documents (educational policies, national curricula, and textbooks), I establish colonial continuities as transferred from British colonial to Sunni neocolonial state power and how the state has used education to construct a hegemonic common sense about Shi'a peoples as unworthy and disposable Muslims who do not belong.

Initially, I had planned to do interview with Shi'a activists, in order to bring these texts and historical contexts to life in the contemporary movements. Unfortunately, due to covid restrictions and budget limitations, I was not able to travel and conduct interviews. However, in Chapter Six "Shi'a Muslim Resistance and Activism", I have focused on experiences of Shi'a victims and their stories of resistance to show how they confront and resist the historical forces of US imperialism and Sunni Pakistani state formation in the present.

To this thesis, I also bring my own experiences of being a Shi'a Ismaili Muslim woman from Gilgit-Baltistan. However, as a Shi'a Ismaili Muslim woman, writing about sectarian violence and religious conflict in Pakistan, in a predominantly white western academia, I want to be vigilant because of the many examples of how social issues in the Muslim world are looked at uncritically to deepen the already strong stereotypical ideas about Muslims and Islamic world. Hence, I do not aim to deepen the already existing stereotypes about Islam and Islamic culture and neither do I intend to feed into Islamophobia globally.

What is also important to note, before I go into examining the role of US imperialism in Pakistan is that I am fully aware of the problem of India as a potent node of Islamophobia and its regional imperialism. Therefore, the relationship of India's regional imperialism and colonization to the formation of the Sunni state should be explored in future research to understand why the Sunni state's approach, as it currently stands is of limited value to people of Gilgit-Baltistan and Shi'a in general. However, this is something I could not pursue in my thesis and due to time and space limitations. My analysis of "external" forces in geopolitics remain focused on US and Saudi Arabia in this thesis.

I hope, my research will contribute to larger discussions on Sectarian violence and will contribute to creating more in-depth discussions about experience of Shi'a Muslims. Specifically, I hope the feminist movements in Pakistan will address the violence and inequalities of the Sunni state as they are disproportionately borne by Shi'a women and find ways to provide Pakistani Shi'a Muslims support through their activism.

Chapter Outlines

In Chapter One entitled "Theoretical and Conceptual Framework", I outline the theories that helped shape my approach to the research question of the complexity of sectarian violence and its connection with broader historical and geopolitical issues around the world which has contributed to the intensification of sectarian violence. Post-colonial theorists Frantz Fanon (1952, 1963) and Edward Said's (1978, 1993) exceptional work shapes my understanding of how state regimes and local upper-class people in colonized countries continue to form alliances with colonizers to exploit and oppress marginalized communities. Drawing on secondary sources on the historical and contemporary social context, I show that upper class, Sunni Muslims in the country have more political control which combines with their economic control over land and

capital to enable their exploitation of and violence toward Shi'a Muslims. Pakistani Shi'a Muslims who make up about 15-20% of the population of the country and have been victims of Sunni state violence in their own country. Edward Said (1978) notes that "land is central to the process of imperialism" (p. xii). In order to understand sectarian violence then, we must connect the dots between religious violence and questions about who owns the most land and capital in Pakistan and who benefits from Shi'a-Sunni conflict. As I discuss in Chapter one, in Pakistan, land-owning politicians are mostly Sunni from Punjab province with a background in the military. Thus, the powerful land and capital-owning upper-class elite have also historically had important leadership roles in the military, resulting in consistently powerful and military control over Pakistani politics. Hence, central to the religious divide between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims is Sunni accumulation of capital and power in the transition away from British colonial rule. Moreover, the Pakistani state has historically and systematically constructed Shi'a Muslim as the "other" in Pakistan through biased laws and policies, as I demonstrate in this chapter. This makes the "us" versus "them" narrative which Said (1978) emphasizes is a crucial tool of state-formation, a tool that is in turn inextricably related to the increasing manifestation of sectarian violence over time.

This chapter also discusses the transformation and adaptation of the Pakistani education system to western education models, with the Pakistani state arguing that the Western education system is the silver bullet for all the social and political problems in the country. Despite being Sunni-dominant, or as I see it, because of it, the Pakistani education system continues to focus on western education models. I attempt to demonstrate that the imperialist and capitalist educational reforms in the country work in favor of Sunni-dominant state by examining links between the Sunni control over land, capital, and military power and Sunni control over the education system.

While this is not intended as a causal argument, it is intended to demonstrate the processes of Pakistani state-formation as a gradual formation of Sunni supremacy in society and politics. Despite the political economic benefit to Sunnis, I also seek to demonstrate that what Fanon called the “inferiority complex of the colonized [Pakistani] mind” is deepened. This is particularly apparent in the ways in which Sunni state actors sell the idea of modernization and development as the magic wand that will solve all social problems in Pakistan. To debunk these discourses and interrupt the reproduction of this inferiority complex instilled in colonized people, it is important to consider the complex connections between the imperial system and normalized discourses and structures of power in developing countries (Fanon, 1952).

Chapter Two, entitled “Pakistani Sunni State-formation and US Imperialism: Independence to Zia-ul-Haq Era (1947-1988)” takes a historical approach to locating the rise of sectarianism in the formation of the Pakistani state examined through the gradual establishment of laws and shifting policies through successive governments. This chapter highlights the historical struggle for Pakistani state-formation as impacted by internal and external factors. I begin with Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s vision of secular Pakistan, through Bhutto’s tenure, and critically examine the major policy shifts that occurred during General Zia-ul- Haq’s regime and with his so-called Islamization process. Zia’s 10-year period of rule beginning in 1977 is also known as Pakistan’s shift from secularism to “fundamentalism” (Nasr, 2007). This shift is important to remember as this is the time when the state of Pakistan went against the vision of its founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah who aimed for building a secular state as mentioned in his first address to the People of Pakistan after partition in 1947 “... you may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state”. I argue that these shifts from Jinnah’s vision of secular Pakistan to the eventual Sunnization of Pakistan in the name of an

Islamization process has been central to the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan. The Sunnization process of historical and political transformation has been institutionalized over time. Over time, with the support of a specifically Sunni Pakistani state, radical Sunni Muslim groups have had immunity for the animosity and violence against Shi'a Muslims.

Chapter Three entitled, "Deepening of the Sectarian Violence by the US Imperialism and Interventions After 9/11" locates the significance of "external" forces such as the US imperialism, which intensified sectarian violence in Pakistan. Here, I argue that sectarian violence intensified alongside the Sunnization of the country which deepened exactly at the same time as the military and financial support from the US was most forthcoming. This connection between the seemingly internal conflict (Shi'a-Sunni) of the country and the seemingly external geopolitical forces is necessary for us to go beyond culturalist arguments about Shi'a-Sunni conflict toward an understanding that recognizes that Sunni state-formation gave US imperialism traction in Pakistan, and vice versa.

Chapter Three also shows the parallels between two military regimes, the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq from 1977 until 1988 and the regime of General Pervez Musharraf in 2000s, as well as their partnership with the US government entrenched Sunni hegemony allied with US imperialism as the primary state structure of Pakistan. Significantly, the US has been at the forefront of multiple wars of relevance to Pakistan's history: the Cold war (1980s), the Iran and Iraq war (1980s), and the US "war on terror" (2000s). Importantly, the US also maintains its imperial presence in the form of US "help" for Pakistan to "eradicate fundamentalism" and "develop" a capitalist economy. The education system in Pakistan is one site through which the US not only maintained imperial control but also justified US military intervention in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the name of "saving" and "helping" people (Burde, 2014). Even though,

education plays a vital role in developing intellectual capabilities in young children, I show how the educational changes the US government and Pakistani military dictators brought into Pakistan in the name of “eradicating fundamentalism” from Pakistan, was not accountable for the multi-layered damage done in Pakistan.

Chapter Four, entitled “State Pedagogies of Sectarian Violence: Analysis of Education Policy Documents and Textbooks” focuses on educational policy documents to trace the gradual and systematic othering of Shi’a Muslims. The education system in Pakistan is one major site where marginalization of religious minorities becomes clearly visible. Focusing on the analysis of National Education Policies, National Curriculum Frameworks, curriculum, and textbooks, this chapter shows how the state uses the education system as a way to “form collective national identities and a sense of collective national belonging” (Saigol, 2005, p. 1006) which, in reality, is designed to make sense of direct and indirect links to constructing shifts in a national narrative from a Muslim collective in 1947 to sectarian violence starting 1970s.

I focus on the representation of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the Shi’a founder of Pakistan) in school textbooks to show how Jinnah’s secular ideas are manipulated to fit the Sunni narratives on the “ideology of Pakistan”. I show how the textbooks misrepresent important historical events such as Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamization process (1977-1988) to erase historical struggles of religious minorities against Sunnization of the state in the name of “Islamization” process. Zia’s ruling period was a major turning point in further deepening of violence against religious minorities in Pakistan (Nasr, 2002). The chapter also analyzes the Madrassah schooling system and how over the years, since the cold war era, the system of Madrassah schools in Pakistan have been changed to make them battle-grounds through which foreign influences of states like Saudi Arabia and the US achieve their imperial goals.

Chapter Five, entitled “Shi’a Muslim Activism and Resistance in Pakistan”, despite the Pakistani state’s rhetorical claim that education brings peace and harmony, the Sunnized Pakistani state agencies, Sunni officials and actors continue to inflict violence against Shi’a Muslims. As of 2018, 140 Shi’a Muslims have been “disappeared” by the Pakistani state (Kermani, 2018). The violence against Shi’a Muslim activists, protestors, Shi’a journalists and Sunni journalists and activists who dare to talk about violence against Shi’a Muslims continues to escalate in Pakistan. However, Shi’a Muslims refuse this Sunni domination and continue to raise their voices against state negligence and violence as manifest in sectarian killings, tortures, and disappearances of Shi’a Muslims in the country. This chapter reflects on the history of Shi’a resistance as a site of counter-hegemonic politics and political education, especially focusing on the resistance of Shi’a women. Despite discrimination and patriarchy at home, Shi’a women have managed to break barriers and they have engaged in a remarkable fight for justice and equal rights for the Shi’a Muslim community. Bringing Shi’a women’s resistance work to the fore is important because they do it alongside taking care of their families and homes. Since it is rarely acknowledged, highlighted or remembered, my purpose in highlighting their resistance is to register it as a specifically Shi’a feminist resistance that counters the hegemonic common sense of the Pakistani state, alongside providing a critique of dominant Pakistani feminism, which also reproduces Sunni supremacy in some ways. This chapter foregrounds stories from Baluchistan of Shi’a Hazara women’s resilience and fight not only against patriarchal oppressions but also attends to stories of their resistance against state-sponsored sectarian violence.

Through the analysis of historical and political economic formations, ideological narratives, and educational policies, textbooks, and curriculum, I explore the connections of historical Pakistani Sunni-state formation to deepening of sectarian violence over the last 30

years. Together these chapters contribute to laying the foundation for understanding the complexity of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

Chapter I: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Where is Pakistan's Colonial Past?

I rely on the works of postcolonial theorists Frantz Fanon and Edward Said in order to understand the complexity of sectarian violence because they both theorize the relationship of colonialism to neocolonialism and imperialism. Fanon's work continues to be relevant for understanding the ongoing colonial systems of knowledge and hierarchical structures of power within colonized countries as well as in so-called postcolonial societies. Fanon's theory of post-colonialism dismantles the idea that colonialism is in the past and enables us to analyze current systems in formerly colonized societies which continue the legacy of colonial history. The colonial past is evident in many currently-existing social conflicts. Arguably, the colonial past has left a legacy of many economic and social problems such as religious conflict, poverty, class differences and so forth. As such, seemingly "internal issues" are not as timeless, age-old matters of cultural difference as colonizers have tried to portray (Hashemi & Postel; 2017 & Ali, 2010). Rather, "internal" conflicts in colonized countries are complex outcomes of the pre-colonial and colonial pasts.

Scholars like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and more recently, Ella Shohat, and others have all made the case for revisiting colonial history in order to re-read and re-write this history from the perspectives of the less empowered and those whose lives were considered less worthy. The analytical revisiting of colonial history, as part of the process of decolonization, requires debunking privilege, including class, patriarchal, and academic privilege. As Said (1978) noted, knowledge that he calls Orientalism about the colonized peoples and places of the so-called Orient was produced by Westerners who were in the Orient because they were enabled by colonial power, military might, and imperial interests to be there. Orientalism thus says more

about the Westerner than the so-called Orient itself. Moreover, he specifically notes, Orientalism is not simply a matter of political rule by colonial officials: it is “rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction...but also of a whole series of interests ...” (p.12). By this, I understand Said to mean that Orientalism is a complex, multidimensional matter distributed across sectors in society which requires tracing the colonial past in the present in a variety of fields.

The first step in tracing the residue of colonial rule in postcolonial societies is to notice the ways in which colonialism is not simply in the past. Postcolonial theorists have taught us to see that colonialism is in the present and it has various names and forms. In fact, colonialism is made desirable and valuable for people living in formerly-colonized countries. Criticizing the term “post-colonialism” Ella Shohat (1992) argues that “post-colonialism” ignores the ongoing global hegemony and forms of domination other than overt colonial rule, it ignores power relations, US military violence in different countries such as Iraq and the interests of local elites whose interests tie with colonial and imperial interests. The colonial hangover, the ongoing US imperialism in Pakistan is an example of how the west in general, and the US in particular, always finds excuses to intervene in other countries for their own benefit and as Fanon notes, imperialism like colonialism gains traction owing to the collaboration of national elites. In Pakistan’s case, as I show later, the national elite is grounded in Sunni political economic and discursive power.

Alongside Fanon and other postcolonial theorists’ recognition of the continuation of colonial history in postcolonial societies, Edward Said’s reminder about the manifestations of imperialism today in his book *Culture and Imperialism* offer key conceptual resources to

understand the relationship of state-formation in Pakistan to the power of colonial and imperial narratives in textbooks, national culture, and the media. Said theorizes how power and ideology create a system of oppression which includes military forces but also goes beyond it. He argues that central to imperial interests is the possession of land. Thus, he argues, who gets to own the land after the colonizers left and who works on the land are important questions to understand the continuation of domination and oppression in seemingly-liberated postcolonial societies. In case of Pakistan, mostly Sunni landlords and the Pakistani military control the land, and hence control power. The education system is also controlled by the Sunni state, and they use education as site to produce narratives of national culture and common sense that best represents the elite Sunni national culture in Pakistan. Fanon talks about national culture and the role of the national intellectual in confronting colonial representations of the colonized as having no culture of their own. In doing so, the national bourgeoisie, tries to reproduce a national culture of their own, which in the case of Pakistan, privileges a Sunni Islamic culture as the Pakistani national culture.

To discuss the issues of colonial and imperial interventions in the aftermath of 9/11, in relation to the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan, I rely on theoretical critiques of Vali Nasr (2002, 2007), Nosheen Ali (2010, 2019). While Said's analysis focuses on texts written by colonizers, I use his analysis to examine the texts produced by Pakistani Sunni state officials, including the military, about the kind of education that is desirable for all Pakistanis regardless of their differences of religion and culture. Said's work also discusses the complex relationship of the colonized to its colonizers and that it is impossible to make sense of one without understanding the other.

Not only does postcolonial theory allow us to understand the historical present in relation to the colonial past, but it also enables us to question and think critically about the decolonization

processes that so-called independent nations have gone through. As Fawzia Afzal Khan (2020) notes in her interview to *The News on Sunday (TNS)*, “there are ongoing continuities between the pre-colonial and the post; the post is therefore never really ‘post’...there are continuities that should not be occluded but rather acknowledged and analysed...” (Abbas, 2020). Post-colonial theorists urge scholars to examine ongoing Western imperial and capitalist visions as they inform policies and processes such as educational development, which are used to mislead and exploit people (Patel & McMichael, 2004, McEwan, 2009). As with colonial rule so with post-colonial development processes, the West pursues new and entrenches existing alliances with local elites in developing countries to trap locals into modernization and marketization processes that primarily benefit the West, and its collaborators in the postcolonial nation. With the pressures of borrowing money from the World Bank and IMF to kick-start development and the conditionalities attached to such economic need, most postcolonial societies have no choice but to follow the political economic policies preferable to former colonizers and present imperialists (Patel & McMichael, 2004, McEwan 2009). Meanwhile, “internal” conflicts such as the Sunni and Shi’a conflict provides a perfect proxy that allows the West to justify their intervention in the name of making “peace”. Postcolonial theory thus helps us understand that ongoing seemingly external imperial projects and seemingly internal problems such as sectarian conflict are interlinked in the postcolonial nation.

The Shi’a-Sunni violence in Pakistan has escalated in the last 20 years. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, since the year 2001, more than 2600 Shi’a Muslims have been killed in violent attacks in Pakistan (Chaudhury, 2021). The rising numbers of sectarian attacks on Shi’a minorities in Pakistan is alarming. This fact raises the question: what happened to Pakistan (pure land) which was formed with a promise of safeguarding Muslim rights? My aim

here is not to reproduce Islamophobia or feed into the Western narratives of violence in Muslim countries. Rather, I ask this question in order to examine the transnational formation and complexity of sectarian violence. Using a post-colonial theoretical framework, I examine sectarian violence in Pakistan as not just a one-dimensional, traditional, local history of cultural difference and conflict among Shi'as and Sunnis, but rather in relation to multiple and complex socio-economic global processes like colonialism and US imperialism as they shape the terrain and conditions of sectarian conflict between Shi'a and Sunni in any given context, in this case Pakistan.

Fanon (1963) provided important tools to theorize Pakistan's postcolonial development predicament. He notes that the process of nation-building is gripped by violence because for colonizers the demand for independence comes at a cost of colonizers "encircling the young nation with an apparatus of economic pressure" (Fanon, 1963, p. 54). As a result, for the newly formed states, as Fanon shows, the struggles do not change even after the colonizers leave because apart from recovering from the violence colonizers inflicted on colonized people, colonized people have to fight poverty, illiteracy, hunger and illness (Fanon, 1963, pp. 53-55). In circumstances like this, in the interest of their survival, the colonized agree to terms offered by colonizing countries and choose to remain part of capitalist processes. National elites who had collaborated with the colonizers in the first place take over the space vacated by the colonial bourgeoisie and hence capitalist exploitation through the national bourgeoisie but controlled by former colonizers continues. Pakistan is no exception to this kind of colonial hangover where the aspiration to follow the standards of colonial masters is normalized by a Sunni dominant state and society. For example, Western interventions in educational reforms are justified and presented to Pakistanis as if the "reforms" are beneficial to them. As I will demonstrate in

Chapters Two and Four, various educational policy documents carry text that is discriminatory against religious minorities whilst uncritically promoting the narrative that capitalism promotes development and peace.

Fanon (1963) notes, “the bourgeoisie represented the most dynamic and prosperous class” (p. 53). Following Fanon’s framework, I identify the Sunni Muslim state and military as the specific bourgeoisie/ elite in the case of Pakistan. As I outline the gradual Sunnization of the state focusing, especially during Zia-ul-Haq’s regime, Fanon’s and Said’s work contributes to examining how the largely Sunni national bourgeoisie in Pakistan used colonial patterns to oppress Shi’a Muslims and other religious minorities in Pakistan. Even though there are not enough studies to represent data on property and land ownership on Sunni-Shi’a basis, but one can extrapolate based on some proxies such as Sunni dominant population (80%-85%) in the country. For example, Punjab is the second largest province with an area of 205,344 km² the most fertile, populous province, with Sunnis as the numerical majority. Moreover, as Ian Talbot (2015) notes, “approximately 75 percent of the Army is drawn from just three Punjab districts” (p. 4). This is not to say there are no landed Shi’a elite or working-class Sunni Muslims. Nonetheless, it is true that Sunni control most state power, apparent in in the vast majority of policymakers who are landed, political and military elite from Sunni backgrounds. Thus, Sunni mostly benefit themselves and oversee the overall marginalization of Shi’a and other minorities as well as the wider working class, including poor Sunni Muslims in the country. For example, among the military landed elite and landlords who made it into the realm of politics in Pakistan, most are Sunni. Notably, in the history of Pakistan, for more than four decades, most of the prominent military leaders have been Sunni—General Ayub Khan, 1958-69; General Yahya Khan, 1969-71; General Zia-ul-Haq, 1977-88; and General Pervez Musharraf, 1999-2008.

Following Fanon and Said, I show that the national Sunni bourgeoisie deepen existing structures of colonial capitalist and sectarian violence which are in turn, inextricably linked to the processes of development pursued by the Pakistani nation-state. I also aim to demonstrate that postcolonial education policies are one site through which we can learn how colonial and imperial relations work in tandem with sectarian domination in Pakistan's state-formation. The purpose of demonstrating these connections is to substantiate the argument that education in Pakistan needs to be understood as a seemingly contradictory site which claims to deliver development whilst ultimately also producing sectarian violence. Later in this chapter, I provide examples of the erasure of the colonial past from Pakistani textbooks. The textbooks not only view colonialism as in the past, they do not even represent colonialism as part of Pakistan's national history. The erasure of colonial history altogether allows for the ideological belief that there are no colonial continuities to be considered at all. This is the kind of erasure that postcolonial theory allows me to challenge by offering tools to recognize those continuities in the present.

Critical Research Methodology

With the post-colonial theoretical framework, using a critical research methodology, I intend to interpret and understand sectarian violence against Shi'a Muslims by foregrounding a critique of dominant power relations in Pakistan with an orientation to social change. From a Shi'a ontological standpoint, I approach the study of "national" educational policy, curriculum, and textbook content with a sociology of education and critical epistemological approach that it is not as inclusive of the nation, its minorities, and its Muslims, as it ought to be. Here, a Shi'a ontology and epistemology allows me to view the Pakistani claim of inclusion from the standpoint of its marginalized, excluded and violated subjects. Based on this epistemology, my

methodological approach to this study takes a two-pronged approach to exploring the reasons for increasing violence against Shi'a Muslim minorities in Pakistan. First, I provide a historical explanation by building toward an understanding of the formation of anti-Shi'a Sunni supremacy in the state of Pakistan that focuses on the formation of the Sunni state consolidation of the national bourgeoisie and their education system. I do this by relying on secondary sources and historical analysis of Pakistani state-formation in ways that are attentive to the Sunnization and anti-Shi'a formation over the decades. I trace this post-independence historical formation through analyzing connections with Punjabi Sunni leadership and militarization of Pakistan, land ownership, power to control historical narratives through controlling development processes of education policy documents such as the National Curriculum and Schools Textbooks. I do this by relying on secondary resources that include the literature and research done by Pakistani historians and scholars like Ayesha Jalal, Akbar Ahmed, Nosheen Ali, as well as newspaper articles in ways that are attentive to the Sunnization and anti-Shi'a formation for decades. Chapter Two entitled "Pakistani Sunni State-formation and US Imperialism: Independence to Zia-ul-Haq's Era (1947-1988)" and Chapter Three "Deepening of Sectarian Violence by US imperialism and Intervention after 9/11" show the gradual historical Sunnization of Pakistan from the time-period of pre-Independence to recent times.

The second methodological approach I use, based on this Shi'a epistemology, is the in-depth analysis of educational policy documents, educational policies, national curricula, and textbooks, where I demonstrate how education articulates the intersecting violence of a distinctly Sunni Pakistani state-formation and its relationship to imperial interests and domination. I use a sociology of education approach to guide my discursive analysis of the national education system to show that its "hidden curriculum" is a Sunni curriculum which builds a Pakistani

"common sense" in ways that systemically exclude Shi'a Muslims. Chapter Four, entitled, "State Pedagogies of Sectarian Violence: Analysis of Education policy Documents and Textbooks" shows the hidden Sunni Curriculum by using National Education Policies as sites to analyze the sectarian violence which is also subtle and hidden.

Colonial Continuities: From Colonial Divide-and-Rule to Sectarian Violence

Post-colonial studies have largely focused on explaining the ways in which colonial patterns are still used for "othering" and oppressing people in neocolonial relations. One of the important ways colonizers could strengthen their power over the colonized is through policies of divide and rule (Said, 1978). The British exploited deep divisions to rule over the subcontinent for 200 years. For example, the British allied with the upper class, priestly and military castes, to animate precolonial caste hierarchies and ultimately entrench Hindu power and violence. The violence against Shi'a Muslims also has its roots in British colonial ways of othering minorities and using religion as a tool to divide people. Typically, the Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Pakistan and around the world is not looked at in relation to colonial history. Shi'a violence is often looked at as an age-old, internal Muslim problem (Hashemi and Postel, 2017).

Many American politicians have suggested the reasons for conflict in the Muslim countries is the conflict between Shi'a and Sunni. Senator Ted Cruz once suggested that "Sunni and Shiites have been engaged in sectarian civil war since 632...it is the height of hubris and ignorance to make American national security contingent on the resolution of 1,500-years -old conflict" (Cruz, 2014 cited in Hashemi and Postel, 2017, p. 2). On the other end of the political spectrum, President Barack Obama had similar thoughts, often explaining the conflict in Arab countries, he suggested "ancient sectarian differences" as the reason for the instability (Obama, 2014, cited in Hashemi and Postel, 2017, p. 2). This representation by politicians is echoed in in

the Western mainstream media. For instance, Thomas Friedman, a New York Times columnist, talked about the conflict in Yemen by emphasizing that the main issue there is “the 7th century struggle over who is the rightful heir to the Prophet Muhammad — Shiites or Sunnis” (Friedman, 2015, cited in Hashemi and Postel, 2017, p. 2). In each case, the US government and mainstream media, distance the West from the site of conflict and treat the conflict as rooted in ancient cultural conflict. Instead of taking accountability for their role they intensify internal conflicts, whilst continuing to perpetuate prejudice against Islam by portraying the Shi’a and Sunni conflict as the stereotypical imagine of a violent Muslim world.

As Said (1981) notes, the media coverage of Islam in the Western media has become a challenge due to lack of accurate and substantiated reports. For example, media studies scholars Douai and Lauricella (2014), argue that the media portrayal of contemporary issues in Muslim countries lacks attention to the political and religious context based on their research on the media coverage of Shi’a-Sunni conflict in two well-known newspapers, the US-based Washington Post and the Canadian Globe and Mail. Ultimately, they suggest that these two newspapers framed Shi’a-Sunni conflict from the perspective of “war on terror” or the “terrorism” frame (pp 19-20). Along with the negligence with regard to understanding the historical and political context to the sectarian issue, what the world also misses in these accounts is the still-operating colonial past and ongoing imperial domination which exploits cultural differences, including through contemporary media coverage of these issues that insist on a cultural explanation.

By contrast to this perception of Shi’a-Sunni as a bounded “Muslim issue” my exploration of the problem shows that sectarianism is complex, and it needs to be addressed in relation to broader transnational processes, political economic interests, which are undeniably

related to cultural contexts of conflict. As Nasr (2002) notes, “it [sectarian violence] has metamorphosed from religious schism into political conflict around mobilization of communal identity. It has found political function, and the militant forces that represent it operate in the political rather than religious arena” (p. 86). As such, in Chapter Three, using David Harvey’s (2005) conception of US imperialism, I argue that the sectarian violence is related to US imperialism which offers a lens that goes well beyond what Western media tend to argue. For example, Harvey (2005) explains how the US as the globally dominant political and economic state uses its power to kill people and extract resources like oil in the name of creating peace in Muslim countries such as Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

In his book *The New Imperialism*, Harvey (2005) argues that 9/11 gave the US further motivation to continue to sustain its imperialism to exploit people and resources in countries like Iraq and Iran. While it is crucial to think about US imperialism in relation to capitalist goals of extraction, it is equally necessary to understand the ways in which sectarian conflict has both fed and is nourished by imperial pasts and present US imperialism. Similarly, in Pakistan, the ongoing US imperialism, in the name of “eradicating terrorism”, to safeguard “world security” and to help “develop” the country economically through various projects from development aid to educational reforms are often continuations of older imperial pasts and ways to justify ongoing Western intervention in Pakistan. Yet we cannot understand the efficacy of US imperialism including its narratives about world peace and development, unless we study how and why imperialism gains traction in Pakistan itself, among and through agents of sectarian violence. My thesis attempts to bridge this divide in disciplinary approaches on the issue of sectarian violence following the work of postcolonial Pakistani Muslim feminist scholars who have charted such a path such as Rubina Saigol and Nosheen Ali.

From Colonial Bourgeoisie to National Bourgeoisie

We can understand ongoing colonialism better when we consider the state-formation processes of Pakistan. The powerful landed elite in Pakistan and elected political leaders like Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, and also Sunni military dictators like Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf, have served as the gateway to keeping imperialism alive in the country. Frantz Fanon and Edward Said do not lay the responsibility for all violence within colonialism and imperialism at the feet of Western actors. They also critique the national collaborator class among the elites and the national bourgeoisie in colonized countries who internalized colonial capitalist teachings and methods because these always work in favour of the interests of the landed elite. In his book, *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon states that although it is important to highlight the long-lasting effects of colonial oppression which continues to exploit people in formerly colonized countries even after Independence, the colonized people are further oppressed or “doubly colonized” as the national bourgeoisie replace the former colonizers and continue neo-colonial forms of oppression (pp. 152-154). Hence, even in the absence of overt colonialism, colonial domination remains through the national bourgeoisie’s work to ensure that neo-colonial relations are instituted and prevail.

Fanon explained the role of the national elite in maintaining alliances with former colonizers which facilitates ongoing exploitation and oppression of the poor. Thinking with Fanon allows me to identify the particularities of the Pakistani national elite who continue the work of former colonizers and set up neocolonial relationships. Given the predominant importance of protecting the border with India, the Pakistan military has been a significant part of Pakistani state-formation. The military is also a crucial means of constructing hegemony within Pakistan insofar as it provides widespread employment for the youth. The Pakistani

military must be considered the central allies of former colonizers and imperialists, as I will show in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

As Political Scientist Professor Ayesha Jalal's work shows, during the initial years of Pakistan when it came to "the beneficiaries of recruitment policies adopted by the colonial state for purposes of its own, Punjabis from the middle and upper economic strata not only dominated the military but also had stranglehold over most of the most important civil jobs at the center" (Jalal, 1994, p. 156). These prominent political families, military and public figures have historically had access to land, capital, and education as shown by Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal (1994, pp. 155-157). Subsequently, since the partition in 1947, the same prominent people among the landed elites have given themselves permanent positions in political leadership of Pakistan (Jalal, 1994). Fanon (1963) argued that in context after context, the national bourgeoisie follows a pattern which continues colonial relations of rule and domination. Likewise, in Pakistan, the military officials and leaders, who are mostly Sunni have always been the landed elite (Jalal, 1996). "One estimate in 1985 suggested that since 1950 some 6,150 military officers had acquired 444,024, acres of land in the Punjab alone" (Rizvi, 1986 cited in Jalal, 1994, p. 177). Ayub Khan, another military dictator, who ruled prior to Zia and Bhutto, also allotted 300,000 acres of the most productive land in the province of Sindh to former military personnel (Jalal, 1994, p. 177). The economic inequalities under colonialism were then set in stone in different parts of Pakistan by Sunni-dominant political and military power. The province of Sindh was no exception to the unequal distribution of land because "newly irrigated land in Sind [Sindh] was allotted to state functionaries, Punjabis in the main" (Jalal, 1994, p. 160).

When President Zia provided important administrative and strategic positions to the military personnel, Jalal argues, it "was not simply intended to help army headquarters keep

better watch and ward over the affairs of government. Rather, holding senior jobs within civilian administration and in public corporation was the first step to placing men with proven loyalties to the military institutions in the upper strata of key sectors of the economy” (1994, p. 177). Shi’a Muslims and other religious minorities were blatantly excluded from this strategy and this was an explicit move toward ‘Sunnization’ of the country in the name of Islamization (Nasr, 2002). Zia-ul-Haq carefully excluded Shi’a military leaders from being part of “sensitive operations” throughout the 1980’s as a strategy to limit Shi’a mobilization and influence in Pakistan (Nasr, 2002, p. 89).

With the Zakat ordinance, Zia introduced a new religious law, according to which 2.5% of Zakat was deducted from the bank accounts of all the Muslims on the first of Ramazan every year. For Shi’a Muslims the 2.5% deduction of money from saving accounts went against their faith. After strong protests by Shi’a Muslims, Zia exempted Shi’a Muslims from the new Zakat Ordinance law. However, the exemption of Shi’as from Zakat ordinance made it look like their values were being considered. In reality, exempting Shi’a Muslims from giving Zakat according to rules set by Sunnis was one more way to animate Shi’a difference within a Sunni polity, thereby excluding Shi’as from the dominant political economic culture of Pakistani society and normalizing Sunni practices as neutral. This left Shi’a more vulnerable to Sunni violence and marginalization. After all, the exemption from Zakat policy made it easier for Sunni to identify Shi’a (Nasr, 1996, p. 268). Moreover, the strong resistance against the Zakat Ordinance by Shi’a Muslims may have forced Zia to exempt Shi’a Muslims from the policy, but the exemption also angered Orthodox Sunni Muslims. Some Orthodox Sunni Muslims even declared Shi’a Muslims as non-Muslims, because of their resistance to Zia’s Zakat Ordinance. Hence, the landed Sunni

Muslim political elite and military leaders have played a major role in institutionalizing Shi'a prejudice and excluding Shi'a Muslims from mainstream Pakistani society and state-formation.

Alongside these legal, military, and landed structures of Sunni domination, systemic exclusion of Shi'a Muslims is also internalized through teaching and learning in schools to young generation to make sure the Sunni domination continues. The process of teaching and learning throughout History and Pakistan Studies textbooks and the presentation of Pakistani history as uncontested reality normalizes a political process of Pakistani state-formation that reproduces colonial relations through the Sunni national bourgeoisie's deepening control over land, political power, military power, law, and education. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, most school textbooks are developed and reviewed by Sunni writers and publishers. Here, I simply want to provide the reader with a sample of quotes and approaches from a Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 10. An excerpt from this textbook explains the collaboration of military and the landed elite domination apparent through the case of agricultural reforms that were introduced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s. It notes: "the land purchased by Govt. servants during their services of two years after retirement, was limited up to 100 acres. The surplus land would be taken over by the Govt. The army officers were exempted from this policy" (p. 7). The textbook thus offers evidence of the incentive given to Pakistanis to becoming army officers as a means to retain and maximize land-owning power in society. Significantly, the chapter does not provide an explanation or critically question why army officers were exempted from land reform policy. This would be a crucial mode of developing critical conversation in the classroom considering that historically the military in Pakistan has been the most powerful land-owning elite. Furthermore, given what I have already noted about the relative exclusion of Shi'a from holding military positions, the incentive is specifically coded for Sunni Muslims, even if

that is not explicitly stated as such. It is precisely in these kinds of unstated but evident ways that Sunni domination is normalized by the Pakistani state, political economy and society.

The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 10 also provides an overview of “major aspects of Islamization process during 1977-1988” [Zia-ul-Haq’s period] (pp. 12-13). The textbook mentions that “Shariat Benches were set up in all the High Courts on 10th Feb 1979. Ulema [religious scholars] were appointed as judges in them. Federal Shariat Courts instead of Shariat Benches were set up in 1980 which hears appeals against the decisions of their subservient courts and interprets Islam. The appeals against the decisions of the Federal Shariat Courts are heard by the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court” (p. 12). The textbooks do not provide details that explicitly state that the Ulema appointed as judges in Shariat Court were Sunni Ulema (Afzal, 2018). A necessary part of the Islamization strategy of Zia-ul-Haq was the strengthening of Sunni religious groups such as Jamat-e-Islami, Jamat-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan and the Jamat-i-ul-Ulama-i-Islami, and this impacted not only the Islamization, but his ideas of the Sunnization of the Pakistani state, economy and society (Jalal, 1994, p. 173). Again, in the textbook, no questions are asked to prompt students to consider Zia’s Islamization as Sunnization of the country. Nor are students prompted to consider how Zia’s policies were specifically discriminated against minorities in the country or how the violence against Shi’a Muslims and other non-Muslims minorities increased as a result of Zia’s Islamization policies.

The narration in Pakistani Studies textbooks is the primary way for students and citizens to learn about history and construct a view of Pakistani “national culture”. It shapes their worldview, ideology and perspective on their society and its history. The representation of historical narratives of Pakistani ideology and state-formation is crucial. As Said (1993) notes, “the power to narrate or block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to

culture and imperialism...” (p. xii). Throughout the textbook Zia-ul-Haq is represented as a “hero” rather than a military dictator who changed the constitution of Pakistan in ways that legalized the marginalization and oppression of religious minorities. The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 10 defines the “Afghan Jihad” during which General Zia most explicitly allied with the US in the Cold War thus:

“General Zia-ul-Haq adopted a firm policy with great confidence and courage and stood against the intervention of the Russian forces ... The Moral support of Government of Pakistan raised the morale of Afghan Mujahideen. The Mujahideen inflicted heavy defeats on Russian forces in every field. Russia was completely demoralized and became helpless in 1989 but the Jihad was continued. The continuous defeats disappointed the Russians tremendously.” (p. 15).

These texts support Sunni state-formation by ensuring that Sunni domination is instilled by representing Islam as a homogenous religion in alignment with Western perceptions of Islam. As Said notes, “within the context of contemporary perceptions of Islam and Muslims, Orientalism serves to conflate contrasting, ethnic, geographic, religious and linguistic groups into a singular entity. The conflation of such diverse groups results in perceiving Muslims as a homogenous group, lacking difference and the capacity to alter over time” (Said, 1978). The system of Sunni-controlled text demonstrates the ways in which the Sunni state carries on the work of colonialism and imperialism by representing Islam in the postcolonial context of Pakistan. Textbooks and Curriculum is one major way through which the Pakistani Sunni elite continues to instill the idea that Sunni Islam is the only “true” representation of Islam.

From Colonial Capitalism to Development Politics in Pakistan

Another way in which the West in general and the US in particular retains their powerful control in countries like Pakistan is through their capital investments and ideological control over the so-called development process in that country. Sunni control over land, political power, and culture in Pakistan has facilitated this kind of systemic and intentional US imperial approach to development, including and especially in the educational sphere. As Said (1978) states, “power and authority are not natural or mysterious rather, it is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from tradition, perception, and judgement it forms, transmits, reproduces, above all, authority can, indeed must, be analysed” (p. 20). In Pakistan, developmental projects are funded by foreign aid coming via the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and United Nations agencies, or bilaterally from specific governments such as the United States. However, most such aid tends to benefit the donor more than the recipient as Critical Development Studies scholars like Dip Kapoor (2004) Cheryl McEwan (2009), Philip McMichael (2010), and Nosheen Ali (2010) have long since pointed out. Similarly, US aid appears to benefit Pakistan even though most of the money actually stays in US hands, and with this capital and the image of a “helping hand,” the US controls the receiving country, its policies and politics.

The National Education Policy (2017-2025) makes the sham of aid clear when it notes that “most of the foreign assistance for education sector in Pakistan is utilized by the donors themselves with little or no involvement of the government, through their own project mode and not through budgetary support to the government” (p. 164). Furthermore, most US aid given to Pakistan supported military programs which directly benefits US policies. For instance, from 2002 to 2008, only about 10% of US aid was for developmental purposes and 75% of it was for

military aid (Khalid, 2020, p. 408). In many cases, that 10% of the aid too is reported to not be particularly beneficial to Pakistani communities. Meanwhile, US aid further enriched and strengthened the Pakistani military and gave it power to define the very terms of Pakistani state-formation. The outcomes of military control over the Pakistani state, built over decades, especially since the 1970s, can be vividly seen and felt today considering that no sector in Pakistan functions without the influence of the military.

Consider that, in recent years, especially since 2018, military officials including the retired military officials have been increasingly taking over civilian institutions (Khan, 2021). In 2003, Dawn News reported, “as many as 104 serving and retired Lieutenant Generals, Major Generals or equivalent ranks from other services are among the 1027 military officers inducted on civilian posts in different ministries, divisions and Pakistani missions abroad after Oct 12, 1999 military takeover” (Iqbal, 2003). After Imran Khan came into power in 2018, the number of military men leading civilian institutions has increased even further (Welle, 2021). To name a few, Brigadier (retired) Bilal Saeeddullah Khan was appointed as Director General of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), General Asim Saleem Bajwa was appointed as the chairman of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Air Marshal Arshad Malik serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the state-run Pakistan International Airlines since April 2019 (Welle, 2021) and finally General Asim Bajwa was appointed as the new Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for Information Broadcasting (Khan, 2020). Thus, while US aid appears to be for development of Pakistani society, in fact it has enabled the pervasive militarization of the Pakistani state, its governance, and society.

US aid must also be understood as an “investment” where the political and economic gains flow right back to the donor instead of the local communities. As The Express Tribune

notes, “US economic assistance did not benefit the finance ministry and either went into private hands or back to the US through third-party contracts” (Rana, 2017). These facts tell us that instead of helping systemic reforms in the education system, the aid helps in militarization of the state and flows back to help the West (in this case, the US). The US by the virtue of having the money to invest, gives many foreign investors leverage to decide the path for the future for Pakistanis. Even military aid, post 9/11, provided by the US to fight the US “war on terror”, was not enough to compensate for the economic damage the US war on terror has caused Pakistan. For example, “compared to the actual foreign aid of \$18.8 billion to Pakistan, the finance ministry’s statistics showed that Islamabad sustained \$123.13 billion losses on account of the war against terrorism since 9/11” (Rana, 2017). In some cases, the military aid provided to Pakistan during Musharraf’s regime to fight “war on terror” has made things worse for the poorest communities and the war fund has only benefited elite classes in Pakistan. Asifa Khalid (2020) notes that after 9/11, the US removed sanctions from Pakistan, debt was removed or rescheduled, and aid was increased from \$700 million to \$17 billion, in banking profitability, Karachi Stock Exchange was declared “best performing in the Asian market (p. 405). However, low-income people did not benefit from the temporary economic growth, even if upper-class Pakistanis with income available for investments in the stock-market did benefit greatly. In this way, the income disparities between rich and poor increased during Musharraf’s rule and through his cooperation with the US.

After the “war on terror” and after Musharraf’s era [2008-2013], the Pakistani economy collapsed, trade deficit increased, prices went up which further deepened political instability in Pakistan (Khalid, 2020, 406). What this demonstrates is the close relationship of the “health” of Pakistan’s political economy and its relation to US interests in Pakistan. In sum, development aid

and assistance primarily reinforce US control over Pakistani sovereignty and deepens the control of the Pakistani military over Pakistani state and society. The Sunni Pakistani state thus aligns to western colonization and imperial projects which also supports a form of education that is oriented to imperial and capitalist goals, as I will detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Moreover, when it comes to Pakistani people and their experiences of social issues such as sectarianism, the Sunni state's curriculum is distinctly Sunni in its normalized articulations of Islam and Pakistani history. In these ways, Sunni domination of postcolonial Pakistan has relinquished its sovereignty to Western imperialism and its intensification of militarization of Pakistani state and society.

Colonial Capitalist Values in Pakistani Education System

Education reflects these colonial continuities in postcolonial Pakistan. In the realm of education, Sunni political economic domination reproduces neocolonial power and imperial interests in Pakistan. Postcolonial theory helps identify colonial and imperial relationships in contemporary Pakistan's practices of teaching and learning (see Chapter Four for details).

Fanon (1963) argues that “colonialist bourgeoisie, by way of its academics, had implanted in the minds of the colonized that the essential values—meaning Western values—remain eternal despite all errors attributable to man” (p.11). The educational policies in Pakistan, developed by the Sunni state, which is seemingly against Western values, still uses Western educational models as the benchmark of success for students. This is apparent from the National Educational Policy of Pakistan (NEP) (2017-2025) and the National Curriculum Framework⁴ (NCF) which are lengthy documents produced by the state prescribing policies and expectations for all public

⁴ National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is drawn from the National Educational documents like National Educational Policy (NEP).

educational institutions in Pakistan. In the policy documents, the state communicates the ideal and universal expectations of education for all students. The curriculum and textbooks in Pakistan are based on the National Education Policy and National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The state controls and monitors the implementation and assessment of the curricular content in all schools across all grade levels. For instance, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) notes that the National Curriculum Council approved an outline of the NCF which covers ideological, academic and socio-cultural concerns of Pakistani society through the development of school curriculum and to oversee its implementation (p. xi). Similarly, the Education Policy 2017-2025 notes that goals of National Education Policy include “harmonizing existing education system at all grade levels” (p. 11). The implication here is that curriculum in any school context should be based on national standards. However, considering the NCF is expected to be followed across Pakistan, it is crucial that the National Curriculum represent the interests of all Pakistanis.

The National Curriculum is followed in public schools and a majority of school-going children in Pakistan are in public schools. Despite the expectations around maintaining national harmony through a commonly followed NCF, private elite schools which have A-levels, O-levels and Cambridge schooling system do not follow the national curriculum. Contradictorily, this exception to private education is permitted by the state. To do well in the annual board examinations, students in public schools strictly follow the guidelines of the national curriculum because the annual examinations are based on the content provided in the national curriculum only. In this thesis, I draw on examples from the most recent 2017-2025 National Educational Policy (NEP) of Pakistan, National Curriculum Framework (NCF), National curriculum and textbooks in order to examine the claims made by the state and the contradictory relationships

within public education in Pakistan. I have used education as a site for my analysis because most people in Pakistan see education as a silver bullet for every problem that exists in Pakistan, from corruption to violence, poverty to economic development, from peace to unity. Inevitably, this approach fails to address the relationship of education in producing the very problems that the Sunni-controlled education system in Pakistan is supposedly addressing.

The opening paragraph of the NCF states, “education plays a vital role in human resource development. It [education] is an instrument for self-reliance, social reconstruction and sustainable economic development. Education helps in reducing poverty and improving the quality of life leading to better health and survival rates” (p. v). The language and tone emphasizing human beings as “resources” bears classic and contemporary alignment with a human capital approach to education evident in World Bank discourse (Becker, 1964, World Bank, n.d.). This speaks of the capitalist agenda of the Pakistani state, demonstrating the alignment of educational policy documents and curriculum with World Bank definitions and articulating this as the primary goal of schooling across Pakistan. The NCF states, “it [national curriculum] is influenced by the nation’s ideology, national policies and socio- economic development, technological advancement, research, knowledge expansion, global changes, market demands and economic order” (p. ix). Quotes like the one above shows that the state is using education to make it appear that poverty can be addressed through technological development and fostering the individual and national capacity to compete effectively in the global market system. However, as we know, market competition never did occur on a level playing field, not in early colonial capitalist formation and nor in the present (Patel & McMichael, 2004; McMichael, 2007). Arguably, poverty in Pakistan to a larger extent can be reduced by more directly addressing social conditions such as land reforms, sectarian inequities

and violence, and providing more of the share of state leadership roles to people other than military and retired military officers in the country.

Bearing in mind Sunni control over land, military leadership, and other leadership positions in the government, we can then recognize the double-talk of the Sunni state's National Education Policy 2017-2025. This policy document claims that the reasons for revising the prior National Educational Policy (from 2009) is because "global competition demands human capital that is creative, constructive and contributing to individual and collective wellbeing" (p. 4). But how can there be collective wellbeing if the conditions that might generate wellbeing for all people in Pakistan including Shi'a Muslim wellbeing is systematically neglected by the state? It seems that the collective wellbeing referred to here is eclipsed by a greater concern with how well Pakistan is performing in terms of global competition and support for capitalist and imperialist projects for the so-called economic development of the country. The policy documents are more inclined towards promoting and naturalizing the idea that the welfare of Pakistanis rests on improving Pakistan's position in the global political economy by enhancing its human capital. While Pakistan's human capital and position in the global economy can be improved by following western models of education, Pakistani welfare is foundationally rooted in inequalities of class and Sunni domination. As such, these issues need to be addressed first and urgently.

Aspiration for English Medium Education

The emphasis on Pakistan's development understood as human capital and building competitive advantage in the global capitalist market plays a direct role in intensifying citizen aspirations for English medium education. English has long been recognized as a mode and mask of conquest in the colonies (Viswanathan, 1989). Countries like Pakistan are still chasing English

education as a foremost sign of progress and development, relatedly constructing Urdu as backward, uncivilized and orthodox. In Pakistan today, schools are divided into Urdu-Medium and English-Medium Schools. According to National Educational Policy 2009, 65% of schools are Urdu-Medium and 10.4% schools are English-Medium. Yet because of the capitalist modernization narratives embedded in educational policy, “often, English plays a gate-keeping role through being a compulsory subject in entrance exams for higher education institutions as well as those leading to the echelons [higher] of power such as the civil services of Pakistan” (Shamim & Rashid, 2019, p. 46). This gate-keeping effectively ensures that only those who can afford to access an English medium school education will be able to access higher education, and relatedly, get the specialized training for higher paying jobs to form the upper echelon of society. This is how existing class inequities get reproduced through the education system in Pakistan.

It is not surprising then that many in Pakistan think that educational degrees will provide their children employment and respect in society and English medium education is valued more compared to public education. Said (1978) notes that the danger for people in colonized countries is the “temptations of employing this structure [western cultural discourse] upon themselves or upon others” (p. 25). There is a huge influence of Western education on students and their parents because the assumption and expectation is that Western English-medium education provides higher chances of getting a good salaried job. Ways of teaching and learning oriented to preparing children to enter the workforce are thus normalized by the state and internalized by students and parents. The Pakistani state, as well as colonial and imperial projects benefit from the hope that people attach to Western education. For instance, access to quality schools is very expensive for people in Pakistan. In my own village Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan, where agriculture is the main source of income, the priority for the majority of parents is for their

children to have access to private, English-medium schools because imperial projects backed by the state sell English language and modern education as a source of high-quality jobs and opportunities while working in the farms is looked at as uncivilized work.

This is not just the case for Hunza. Indeed, this is characteristic of education in most agrarian areas of the subcontinent. Development sociologist Karuna Morarji (2010) describes views of village people in the mountainous Tehri-Garhwal region in India whose experiences fit well with the experience of local farmers and parents in villages of Gilgit-Baltistan and in agrarian Pakistan more generally. Morarji (2010) quotes a farmer from Tehri-Garhwal who says, “there is a lot of competition, so they [parents] don’t want them to work. Their attention is on naukari (job), after all, they get a service sector job they are set for life” (Morarji, 2010, p. 55). This is common thinking among parents that once their children graduate, they will be able to earn a great amount of money and respect in the community. The worst scenario that I have witnessed repeatedly in Gilgit is when a few of those graduates get good salaried jobs, the rest of the graduates are ridiculed by their families because they neither have white collar jobs they expected to get nor the skills to continue in agriculture. This outcome of unemployment and a structural interruption to the social reproduction of agrarian livelihoods and futures is increasingly likely because of the neoliberal policies that states like India and Pakistan have simultaneously been pushed into through structural adjustment programs attached to conditionalities of shrinking the public sector, which has drastically reduced the availability of good salaried jobs (Jeffrey et al, 2008).

In Pakistan, the growing competition for salaried employment is unstoppable and the simultaneously likely outcome of unemployment despite education are horrific. Pakistan is largely an agricultural country. Traditionally, young men and women in agrarian Pakistan played

an important role in farming, agriculture, and looking after livestock. Today, the priority aspiration among young people in the countryside has changed. Students who are interested in farming are forced to go to school. Working in farms and looking after livestock is now considered a symbol of “backwardness” and being “uncivilized”. This kind of negative stereotype of people in rural areas in countries like Pakistan demonstrates how “thoroughly the compulsion of development has transformed perceptions of viable options, choices, and values” (Morarji, 2010, p. 56). What Morarji asks of the Tehri-Garhwal context is equally true of Gilgit: “where does the rural educated fit?” (2010, p. 50).

Fanon (1952) talks about an inferiority complex among colonized people in his book *Black Skins, White Masks* which is still relevant today in the neocolonial context. “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative of the European feeling of superiority” (Fanon, 1963, p. 93). He argues that an inferiority complex is deeply rooted in the colonized and that it is almost impossible for the colonized to progress in life without aiming to become white. Colonizers have instilled a deep inferiority complex in the colonized in ways that still lingers among people and state policies in countries, including in ideas of what counts as development, good education, good jobs, and a good life. To top it all, despite pursuing Western models of development and education, when it comes to addressing minority religious rights and women’s rights, Sunni state officials and policies hypocritically focus on “saving” Islamic culture from western influences.

The market-oriented educational reforms are entangled with the deepening of differential value placed on English vs Urdu education. The Sunnized Pakistani state and the American imperialists hold up the reforms to Pakistani citizens as being in the best interest of Pakistanis. Yet, Shamim and Rashid (2019) argue that the English and Urdu difference is not only a matter

of language proficiency but the English-Urdu divide “also determines participants’ perception of both their own self-worth and their worth as perceived by others in different spheres of life” (Norton cited in Shamim & Rashid, 2019, pp. 56-57). The fascination with English persists deeply in Pakistani society due to a colonized mindset. People argue that English is the need of the times. It is true that English seems indispensable for accessing higher education, for functioning and for success in the globalized capitalist world. At the same time, there is a discrepancy between the expectation of fluency in English often in job interviews and entrance exams to top universities even within Pakistan and the highly limited access to English medium schooling in Pakistan. As a result, those students coming from Urdu-medium schools are left with an education that neither fits in agrarian contexts nor is it competitive within Pakistan’s employment sector for urban middle-classes (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). The gradual move toward English-medium schools will enable more to compete for the increasingly scarce good, salaried jobs available. This move will also further entrench a rural-urban divide where most are educated in a language and competency that is mismatched with the survival needs of communities. All of this demonstrates the degree to which the Sunni state has set the course of public education in postcolonial Pakistan to secure colonial continuities and imperial interests and the reproduction of class inequities. Considering most English medium schools are in bigger cities in Pakistan, it is primarily those with disposable income and are the landed elite who can afford to live in these cities and send their children to these English medium schools. Therefore, mostly upper class and wealthy people in Pakistan get highly-scarce, good salaried jobs, all of which contributes to the reproduction of class inequality and social domination of Sunni in Pakistan.

Conclusion:

Said (1978) explains that “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relation of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony...” (p. 5). In the case of Pakistan, often, these complex and hegemonic relationships are manipulated and misinterpreted by the Sunni state and projected in a different light for citizens and students. The violence against Shi’a minorities in the hands of Sunni state is complex and goes beyond Western perception of one-dimensional conflict between Shi’a and Sunni Muslims. Postcolonial theory helps us see the colonial past and understand how it shapes the Sunnization of state (i.e. landed, political and military power, policy makers) and education. Therefore, it is important to historicize and analyse sectarian violence in Pakistan in relation to colonial patterns of violence against Shi’a Muslims. Postcolonial theory helps us see these complexities of Western domination over the less privileged classes and communities in places like Pakistan where often times, these complex power relations are made hard to see and instead presented as beneficial for citizens.

Said (1978) notes this in the context of the Orient and the western portrayal of the Orient which was often shown as barbaric and negative. Said also argues that “the European gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (p. 3). On the flip side, an inferiority complex still functions and lingers to dominate (formerly) colonized people notwithstanding the continuous resistance by the colonized. The common practice in Pakistan is that the educational standards and the development standards are always measured in comparison with the west. For example, the Pakistani state’s decision to transition most Urdu medium public schools to English medium is justified on the grounds that English is considered a modern language and a primary medium of communication and access to international market whereas “our own language [Urdu] brings

orthodoxy and limits our scope and vision” (Khalique, 2006, p. 105). The idea that Urdu brings orthodoxy of course fails to consider the imperial history of English (Viswanathan, 1989) and deflects attention away from the collaboration of Sunni elite orthodoxy with imperial interests, which has been playing out regardless of Urdu and English. To debunk discourses of Urdu inferiority, it is important to understand the imperial system at a global scale because oftentimes, in developing countries, normalized discourses and structures of power make it hard to see these connections.

While holding colonial forces responsible, postcolonial theory does not absolve the entirety of the colonized people from responsibility. In fact, rather than erase the role of the incipient national bourgeoisie Fanon reminds us to attend to the colonial continuities that persist when territorial independence is gained. In these ways, these two postcolonial scholars are particularly helpful in providing a framework with which to understand the complexities of sectarian violence. For Fanon it was important to educate, debate, question and encourage revolutionary movement, it was not enough to celebrate freedom. Fanon finishes his book *Black Skin, White Masks* stating, “o my body, always make me a man who questions!” (1952, p. 206). What we learn from Fanon in the case of Pakistan is to debate and address the “othering” of minorities by the Sunni state and question why and how the Sunni state uses education to instil hate and violence among younger generations and why capitalism is presented as the solution to problems created by colonialism and imperialism, when in fact capitalism is inseparable from colonialism and imperialism. These are deeply ideological narratives that have supported the Sunnization of the Pakistani state alongside the ongoing subjection of Pakistani society to colonial and imperial relations. The aim here is to continue to question the state and hold it accountable for the violence it has been inflicting upon the vulnerable Shi’a Muslim minorities in

the country while also thinking about the broader geo-political complexities which are directly linked to the increasing violence against Shi'a minorities and other religious minorities in Pakistan.

Said and Fanon's work on the role of local elite in colonial countries and more recently Shi'a scholars like Vali Nasr (2002) and Nosheen Ali (2010, 2019) help us understand how the reproduction of imperial domination is important for Sunnis and military elite in Pakistan in order for Sunni to retain and increase their access to land and capital. This is accomplished by continuing to construct Shi'a difference as undeserving "stranger, enemy" in the Pakistani context, justifying violence against Shi'a Muslims (Ali 2021). Such constructions which I examine closely throughout this thesis, grant Sunnis greater access to opportunities and enable them to continue to hold access to land, capital and political power in the country. As mentioned before, this is not to argue that there are no elite Shi'a Muslims who own land or are part of the military elite but to show that most of the law and policy makers are Sunni landed, political and military elite and they do everything in their power to benefit themselves over the marginalization of Shi'a and poor Sunni Muslims in the country. The next chapter will show the gradual shift towards Sunnization of Pakistan from the secular Pakistan Movement, led by Shi'a Ismaili leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the Islamization period of Sunni military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. I also show there how this Sunnization interacted and colluded with US imperialism in contexts of the Cold war and 9/11 to intensify sectarian violence.

Chapter II: Pakistani Sunni State-formation and US Imperialism: Independence to Zia-ul-Haq Era (1947-1988)

Introduction: “Sectarianization” of Pakistan

Hoda Katebi, a Shi’a Muslim creative political writer regularly reflects on her experience of being Shi’a Muslim in her blogs. In a recent post, Katebi (2020) writes:

“I began to realize that many of my friends were the same way. The conversations we had together about Sunni privilege and anti-Shi’a violence felt like explaining racism to a white man lacking self-awareness and unaccustomed to exclusion and violence in everyday spaces and institutions, or Islamophobes whose eyes and ears have been sealed shut to reality despite how many times they’re told the truth. It seemed unfathomable to many Sunni men that something that seemed so perfect and pure (i.e., Sunni Muslim spaces) could possibly be weaponized — intentionally or not — to make other Muslims (Women, Shi’a Muslims, non-Arabs, queers, and other minorities) deeply uncomfortable and systematically disenfranchised.”

To the western world and many others not familiar with the diversity within the religion of Islam, all Muslims might be the same. For example, on many occasions, after I moved to Canada, I was told, I don’t look Muslim, or I don’t sound Muslim because I do not wear clothes a certain way or I do not wear a scarf/ hijab etc. While this shows their ignorance on the important differences within the interpretations of Islam, it becomes important to talk about the historical differences and interpretations within Islam. One of the goals of my thesis is to demonstrate through the example of Pakistan that Islam is diverse, with various historical

interpretations, which shape not only cultural differences but also political economic processes of state-formation and educational policies and experiences.

Anti-Shi'a feeling was captured in "a 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center [which] showed that 41 percent of Pakistani Sunnis did not consider Shi'ites Muslims" (Majidiyar, 2014). Despite the pervasiveness of anti-Shi'a feeling among Sunnis as evident from these survey results, the Sunni denial that Katebi's words represent ring true because in everyday conversations, Sunni remain reluctant to accept this anti-Shi'a reality. These are the experiences of many Shi'a Muslims and other religious minority groups living in Pakistan, including my own. For example, as an Ismaili Muslim (Shi'a Imami Ismailis Muslims are a branch of Shi'a sect of Islam), when I moved to Sunni majority cities to live in hostels for work and education, I had to hide my religious practices from Sunni fellows and acquaintances as Nosheen Ali (2021) notes, "Shia and other Muslim minorities regularly learn that the best means of survival is to pretend to belong to the Sunni sect" (pp. 229-230).

Many Ismailis like me do not pray with our Sunni friends out of fear of being judged and ridiculed. I cannot count how many times people I know asked me if we Ismailis go to Jamat Khana (Ismaili place of worship) to dance and party instead of praying. Some have declared that I am not a Muslim because I pray with my nail polish on. I never had a response to them because I grew up learning from my family and community elders that I must hide my faith and that I should not indulge in religious discussions with people from outside the Ismaili community because it is dangerous. Part of the reason why I did not have answers to my Sunni acquaintances who were questioning my faith and the way I practice my faith is because none of the religious education and knowledge I received in school or in textbooks matched with my religious practices at home or in my community. We were taught Sunni interpretations of Islam as the

only right way to practice Islam in our schools. Sadly, this is true even in schools with majority Ismaili students. I grew up not only being scared but also ashamed, because I internalized the dominant Sunni sectarian idea of what Islam was, despite practicing and knowing a different Islam at home. My experiences align with Shi'a Ismaili scholar, Nosheen Ali's (2021) accounts of the everyday experiences of Shi'a Muslims where Shi'a children and neighbors are treated like enemies, and they are taught and reminded that they do not belong.

This everyday experience as an Ismaili should not be treated as a matter of cultural relativism or marginality unlinked to broader social and state-formation processes. As I have begun to argue in the previous chapter, the history and "ideology" of Pakistan is defined by a default Sunni interpretation of Islam. In this chapter, I focus on the specific ways in which within three decades, Pakistan shifted from Jinnah's vision of secularism to Zia's Islamization which was in fact a process of Sunnization. Following Ayesha Jalal (1985), I argue that the idea of the formation of Pakistan was not based on religion but rather on the idea of Pakistan as an inclusive nation. However, by arguing that Islam was not the only basis for creating Pakistan, I do not mean to diminish the idea of struggle for Muslim self-determination in the context of Hindu fundamentalist state-formation and violence in the subcontinent. Rather I am trying to challenge the commonly believed and taught historical narratives in Pakistan which are uncritically used to strengthen Sunni-dominant political interests and manipulate citizens in Pakistan toward a politics that further divides and excludes religious minorities on a sectarian basis. After all, even though I was raised in the Ismaili faith, I nonetheless internalized a sectarian sense of Sunni Islam as the only legitimate form of Islam. This prompts me to reflect on Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's inclusive vision of Pakistan, and the ways in which it has been manipulated to make the Pakistani state a Sunni state. The historical grounding of Pakistani

state-formation allows me to show that while the formation of a new Pakistani state involved Shi'a leadership and vision, Pakistani state-formation quickly gave way to Sunni state domination. This transition particularly deepened in the course of Pakistan's growing relationship to US imperialism.

Pakistani State-formation has been Sunni State-formation

Considering the shift toward a Sunni state since Partition in 1947, it is important to reflect on the vision and leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his political struggle for Pakistan. Pakistani historians and writers like Ayesha Jalal and Akbar Ahmed argue that the historical evidence shows that "Jinnah's concept of Pakistan [was not] a theological one. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did not envisage an Islamic state, he dreamt of a secular bourgeoisie state for the Muslims" (Ahmed, 1997, p. 27). Even before the beginning of the Pakistan movement in British India, Jinnah was known to be a leader who always worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. It is commonly believed in Pakistan that the foundation of Pakistan is based on the famous "two-nation theory" presented by the Muslim leaders of 'Pakistan movement' in 1946. The "two-nation theory" states that Muslims and Hindus are two distinct religious identities and there cannot be any assimilation between Hindus and Muslims because of their distinct religious and cultural differences, and that Muslims in India would always be treated as lesser citizens. Therefore, Muslims needed a separate state to practice their religion freely and be equal citizens.

When it comes to the Pakistan Movement and the partition of India and Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding leader of Pakistan has been a central figure of leadership for Muslims. He was born a Shi'a Ismaili Muslim. He is widely known and remembered as Quaid-e-Azam which translates as "the great leader". For many in Pakistan, he is a saint and a religious leader. For some liberal Pakistanis, Jinnah is a secular modern leader, who

spoke English very well and wore a suit which made him emblematic of the possibility of a modern Pakistan. Jinnah's personality is perceived differently depending on one's religious identity. "He was like God—although we Muslims can't say God. He was on a pedestal; he was our salvation" (Zeenat Rashid in Ahmed, 1997, p. 94). Zeenat Rashid was from a political family who worked closely with Jinnah. During earlier years of Pakistan (1947-1950), she gathered a small group of teenage women to form the "caucus of Mr. Jinnah's young women contingent" and they learned first aid, self-defence, and registered people to vote. She said in an interview in 1949 that "we were a symbol Jinnah wanted to show people that in Pakistan, women would do things..." (Dawn News, 2017). The white strip on the Pakistani flag represents minorities in Pakistan. In an Interview, Zeenat says that Jinnah inspected the flag and asked the tailor to make the white strip wider and the tailor had to go back and make it again (Dawn News, 2017). This seemingly minor story speaks volumes about Jinnah's vision for an inclusive Pakistan where women and all citizens regardless of their religious differences should be free to practice their faith and collectively work for the development of the country.

Jinnah is also known as the "father of the nation" in Pakistan, the leader who led his people to victory and made their dream of creating a Muslim homeland come true (Ahmed, 1997, p. xix). Despite the pervasive and public adoration however, conversations in everyday life, or discussions in newspapers and media, about Jinnah's life and leadership, do not typically mention his family's connection to Shi'a and Ismaili sects of Islam. Relatedly, since the state represents Jinnah as a religious leader, it is hard for everyday Sunni Muslim citizens to believe he could be anything other than Sunni Muslim.

Some historians also believe that anti-colonial nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi's increased involvement of religion in politics, especially after 1920, led to Jinnah joining the

Muslim League (Ahmed, 1997, pp. 66-68). Some argue that Congress was representative of all communities in India and it was against so-called communalism (Niemeijer, 1972). However, when Gandhi joined the Congress in 1919, he asked for a revision of the constitution of Congress and started deepening Hindu nationalism (Niemeijer, 1972). He stressed the values of *Arya Samaj* which considers Vedic authority as grounds for a noble society. He often allied with Bal Gangadhar Tilak's arguments in political affairs, and Tilak was a strident Hindu nationalist leader within the Congress. While Indians grow up educated in the belief that Gandhi was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity, many historians have argued that his commitment to such unity was shallow and political motivated. After all, "he did not want Hindu-Muslim unity to include inter-dinning or intermarriage, and his language and actions he always remained a true Hindu" (Niemeijer, 1972, p. 77).

The *Khilafat Movement* provides an interesting point of contrast between Jinnah and Gandhi. "The Khilafat Movement was primarily a campaign by a particular group of Indian Muslim leaders to unite their community politically by means of religious and cultural symbols meaningful to all strata of and divisions within that community" (Minault, 1982, p. 2). Jinnah considered the *Khilafat Movement* to be "a false religious frenzy" (Minault, 1982). By contrast, Gandhi supported the movement by addressing its demands and believed the *Khilafat Movement* to be the only opportunity he had to unite Hindu and Muslims (Minault, 1982). In part, due to his support of this movement, Gandhi became known for his commitment to so-called Hindu-Muslim unity. Jinnah was opposed to Gandhi's tactic of mixing religion with politics and criticized Gandhi for "causing schism and split not only amongst Hindus and Muslims but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims ..." (Jalal, 1985, p. 8). Even though Jinnah became a contradictory figure after the partition, prior to partition, Jinnah's commitment

to secularism was arguably stronger compared to Gandhi, considering the latter seemed committed to using secularism for anti-imperial political benefit when the opportunity arose. But Gandhi's "secularism" drew the line when it threatened the caste system and Hinduism itself, as critiques of Gandhi and the Congress from Dalit leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar shows (Rodrigues, 2002). In fact, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress's hidden and not-so-hidden commitment to Hinduism demonstrates that secularism was prominent in rhetoric but not in practice.

Gandhi used his popular media appeal in the 1920s to give the Congress party confidence to project themselves as the "authentic voice of India" (Ahmed, 1997, p. 74). "Muslims complained that Congress, sensing power in 1920, was becoming arrogant. It dismissed their demands, ignored their sense of insecurity and preferred to speak on their behalf" (Ahmed, 1997, p.74). With increasing Hindu majoritarianism, Muslims felt their religion and culture would be under threat. Jinnah himself believed that, even though Gandhi and Nehru were not against Muslims, for him to live in Bombay province (the center of the right-wing Hindu fundamentalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), Muslims could be treated "like Jews in Germany" (Wolpert, 1984 cited in Ahmed, 1997, p. 74).

Even though Jinnah was known for his support for Hindu-Muslim unity, the growing Hindu majoritarianism of the Congress party meant that Hindus were gaining more power and Muslims were feeling unrepresented. This made Jinnah and other Muslim leaders work towards creation of a new state called Pakistan. The evidence of Jinnah criticizing Gandhi for mixing religion with politics is important because Jinnah's idea of an inclusive Pakistan is no longer apparent in Pakistan today. Rather, what we see in Pakistan is exactly what Jinnah did not like about Gandhi's politics which was mixing of religion with politics, considering the gradual but certain marginalization of Shi'a Muslims by politicizing Islam. In the context of the Pakistani

state, the politicization of Islam has historically nurtured a Sunni majoritarianism and the formation of a Sunni state, in which Shi'a and other religious minorities are treated as less worthy or even as outsiders.

Historical evidence shows that Jinnah's vision of Pakistan was not what Pakistan has become today. Since 1947, many religious and political parties have made Sunni Islam the basis for Pakistani ideology to achieve their personal goals. Ayesha Jalal (1985) in her book *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan* argues that the historical evidence of Partition does not support the arguments of religion being the sole reason for the separation of India-Pakistan. She argues that Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, never wanted a separate Muslim state. Rather he used the idea of uniting Muslims to gain more power to strengthen the voices of Muslims in India. She says, "the intention was to draw the links between the twin dialectics in modern South Asian history—all-India nationalism and religiously based communalism as well as centralism and regionalism" (Jalal, 1985, p. xvii). Religion was not the only driving force for the "demand for Pakistan" as the Pakistani state including the Sunni religious leaders and educational policy writers tend to convey, especially in postcolonial curriculum and textbooks for Pakistan Studies courses (discussed further in Chapter Four). Jinnah's criticism of Gandhi's tactics of using religion in politics shows he was never in favour of a "demand for Pakistan" only on the basis of Islam. Jalal (1985) notes that, prior to 1937, Jinnah did not name the "demand for Pakistan" (p. 5). Jinnah's views on religion were uncertain because he never openly spoke about his religion (Jalal, 1985). However, after the glorious Congress party win in the 1937 elections, "Jinnah decided to tap religious instead of nationalist sentiment and he did so by raising the cry of danger at the prospect of Hindu rule under Congress" (Bilgrami, 1985, p.195). However, Jalal (1985) argues that starting 1937,

Jinnah started using religion to unite Muslims, thereby using religion as a “political tactic, not an ideological commitment” for state-formation (p. 5). Based on the literature, it seems like Jinnah was never in favour of divisions, but the elections of 1937 made him realize that he needs to use religion to unite Muslims. For instance, in 1916, at the League’s Lucknow session “Jinnah confessed that had always been a staunch Congressman and had no love for sectarian cries” (Jalal, 1985, p. 7). Jinnah “considered the reproach of separatism sometimes levelled at Mussalmans [Muslims] as singularly inept and wide off the mark” (Jalal, 1985, p. 7).

Jinnah’s speeches on many occasions prior to Partition and after the independence of Pakistan indicate his stand on economic equality, freedom of faith and establishing a democratic and liberal government for his people. His very first address to Pakistani people after the partition in August 1947 is worth quoting at length because it clearly shows his views on religion and politics.

... I cannot emphasize it too much. We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shi’as, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khattris, also Bengalis, Madrasis [Madrasi is a term used for people from South India] and so on, will vanish. Indeed if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain the freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free people long ago. No power can hold another nation, and specially a nation of 400 million souls in subjection; nobody could have conquered you, and even if it had happened, nobody could have continued its hold on you for any length of time, but for this. Therefore, we must learn

a lesson from this. You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State. As you know, history shows that in England, conditions, some time ago, were much worse than those prevailing in India today. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants persecuted each other. Even now there are some States in existence where there are discriminations made and bars imposed against a particular class. Thank God, we are not starting in those days. We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State. The people of England in course of time had to face the realities of the situation and had to discharge the responsibilities and burdens placed upon them by the government of their country and they went through that fire step by step. Today, you might say with justice that Roman Catholics and Protestants do not exist; what exists now is that every man is a citizen, an equal citizen of Great Britain and they are all members of the Nation.

Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.

Well, gentlemen, I do not wish to take up any more of your time and thank you again for the honour you have done to me. I shall always be guided by the principles of justice and fairplay without any, as is put in the political language, prejudice or ill-will, in

other words, partiality or favouritism. My guiding principle will be justice and complete impartiality, and I am sure that with your support and co-operation, I can look forward to Pakistan becoming one of the greatest nations of the world.⁵

A lot of what Jinnah expressed in his speech is somewhat unrealistic and idealistic. For example, the caste system well precedes the anti-colonial nationalist movement. Moreover, there was already a divide among Muslims prior to partition. The *Khilafat Movement* was one example of divide between Muslims. Thus, for Jinnah to say that there was no discrimination or politicized division is not entirely true. Moreover, Jinnah along with other leaders of ‘Pakistan Movement’ did not seem to consider the major challenges that could possibly arise in coming years of Pakistan’s nation-state formation process. Jinnah talking from his place of class privilege states that “we are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State”. In this, he also seems to idealize difference, neglecting to consider the possible effects of class or gender inequities attached to religious differences as they would eventually come to shape the postcolonial state-formation process. However, despite these limitations, what this excerpt does show is Jinnah’s idea of an inclusive and secular Pakistan. Jinnah delivered the above speech three days before the official Independence Day (August 14, 1947) of Pakistan, after the formulation of the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Excerpts from the above-mentioned speech are widely quoted in school textbooks (see Chapter Four for an analysis of representations of Jinnah in school textbooks).

⁵ I have taken this passage of Jinnah’s speech of August 11, 1947 from www.pakistani.org.

However, even though Jinnah died in 1948, only a year after the formation of Pakistan in 1947, he remains a contradictory figure. He was highly influenced by western values, not aware of his privileges and often inspired by and working with colonial powers.

Despite preaching inclusivity in his speeches and despite being the “sole spokesperson” in Ayesha Jalal’s words, for the majority of Muslims in the subcontinent, after the partition, Jinnah seemed to be in denial of the suffering of people during the process of partition of India and Pakistan. For example, Jinnah continuously focused on “forgetting the past and starting new, as if history and experiences could be undone so easily and by an act of will” (Devji, 2013, p. 1199). This is very visible in his speeches throughout his political career after the partition, including his first address to Pakistan (quoted above on page 57), where he was constantly fixated on “one-nation” as if the religious, cultural, and ethnic differences would not come to play in the future politics of Pakistan. Moreover, after independence, Jinnah lost support and the respect of Bengali and Baloch people due to Jinnah’s regional play of power and politics (Devji, 2013). Ayesha Jalal (1985) briefly discusses Jinnah inconsistency in his idea of formation of Pakistan for Muslims. She mentions “...Jinnah was so determined on the principle of Pakistan that he was unlikely to throw away the chance of getting a limited Pakistan in an attempt to get the whole” (p. 283). This resulted in forming of “a Pakistan consisting of western Punjab, Sindh, the N.W.F.P., Baluchistan, eastern Bengal and Sylhet district [Which] was hardly the Pakistan of Jinnah’s dreams” (Jalal, 1985, p. 123). In the process of partition, instead of listening and paying attention to the demands of the regions which were going to be part of the new Pakistan as Muslim majority regions but also ethnically different from others Muslim regions in the new Pakistan, were ignored and isolated. For example, “Baluchistan's 'will' was to be determined by a mere nod of the Shahi Jirga...” (Jalal, 1985, p. 182). The conflict in Baluchistan, the human

rights violations in the hands of Pakistani state and Pakistani Army, which escalated even more over the years since partition, has its roots in the process of partition. Hence, despite all Jinnah's political struggles for the independence of Pakistan, he remains a contradictory figure in Pakistani history.

Growing up in Pakistan, I recall memorising Jinnah's speeches including Jinnah's famously Quaid-e- Azam's 14 points from Pakistan Studies textbooks, for grade 9th- 12th annual board examinations. By contrast, we learned very little about the ordinary experience of Partition and the formative moments of Pakistani state-formation from the textbooks we were taught in schools. School textbooks and literature on Partition do not include experiences and sacrifices of ordinary people of all religions who migrated to both India and Pakistan during the partition.⁶ This is despite the fact that around 15 million people migrated during Partition (Ahmed, 1997). My own experience of learning about the history of Pakistan and the partition movement in school is about the "heroes" who made the country possible and the religion of Islam. What did independence mean for those people who made the difficult decision of leaving their home to an unknown destination with no plan or certainty about what is to come, risking their lives and those of their loved ones? In his book, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic identity: The Search for Saladin*, Akbar Ahmed (1997) shares experiences of his and his parents move to Pakistan in 1947. He says, "theirs was an act of blind faith. They were losing a home but found solace in the belief that they were gaining a country" (Ahmed, 1997, p. xi). He calls it the "bloody creation of Pakistan" (p. xi).

⁶ On December 1928, during all parties meeting, Jinnah proposed 'Fourteen Points' to Nehru for protecting the rights and interests of the Muslims in any future constitution of India. Read Jinnah's 'Fourteen Points' here <https://www.indiaofthepast.org/contribute-memories/read-contributions/major-events-pre-1950/316--jinnah-fourteen-points-1929>

What is also missing from the textbook narratives on Pakistan is that the Muslim population that remained in India, was far larger than the one that made up a new Pakistan. Thus, when people in Pakistan argue that the sole reason for Indian Muslim's self-determination was religion, Pakistani textbook narratives can't reconcile the millions of Muslims who remained in India. This is not a commentary on who gained and lost from staying or leaving. This is a commentary on the absence of narratives that might complicate the kind of neat story of Pakistani nationalism available in textbooks. Historians also argue that the leadership behind the "Pakistan movement represented either feudal or middle-class interests. The two-nation theory [which argued that Muslims and Hindus were separate nations] resolution passed on 25 March 1940 in Lahore was opposed not only by the theologians but also by the Muslim masses" (Ali Asghar in Ahmed, 1997, p. 27).

Given the prevailing violence against Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadis and other religious minorities, I can't help ask, whether "independence" means the same to all Pakistanis? Many Shi'a leaders demanded the creation of Pakistan and have made substantial contributions to political movements and cultural life. In addition to Jinnah being from a Shi'a Ismaili family, Aga Khan III, the 48th Spiritual Leader of Shi'a Ismaili Muslim was also the president of All India Muslim League and advocated for Muslim rights. After partition, alongside Jinnah, two Presidents of Pakistan—Iskandar Mirza (1955-1958) and Yahya Khan (1969–71)—were Shi'a Muslims. Ahmed (1997) writes, "Pakistan meant different things to different people. For some, it was theology—*Pakistan ka matlab kia, La'illaha illallah*, 'What is the meaning of Pakistan? "There is one God [Muhammad is his Prophet]" (p. 109). To others it was sociology—a country with socialist values where various economic and social systems are owned and governed on the basis of social ownership rather than private ownership. Many Muslims, including those who had

little time for orthodox practice, were concerned about preserving their culture and language. Yet for others it meant economic rights—escaping from the powerful caste Hindu commercial and entrepreneurial control all over India. To still others, it was an inevitable outcome of the Hindu-Muslim confrontation that had been taking place for centuries. For them, Pakistan was a challenge to those upper caste Hindus who believed they could dominate Muslims and impose Ram Rajya (Hindu state) on them. Despite these differing identities and meanings, the various challenges Muslims faced and saw coming gave the Pakistan movement purpose and efficacy (Ahmed, 1997).

One would think that the country that came into being in order to provide freedom for Muslim minorities in the sub-continent will have a substantial understanding of what it is to be a Muslim and what it is to be a minority religious group. However, the dynamics of the Shi'a-Sunni conflict in Pakistan have remained opaque to Sunni-dominant state and society. Sadly, over the years, extremist Sunni groups in Pakistan have internalized the prejudice against Shi'a Muslims, especially since Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization process. In the next section, I will focus on how this diversity that Pakistan meant to various people was transformed into a steady Sunni hegemonic formation that became pronounced under Zia's regime.

Does the Freedom We Claim Really Mean the Same to All Pakistani Citizens?

Zia-ul-Haq Regime (1970-1988)

The exclusion of Shi'a Muslims, systematic marginalization, Sunni privilege and hatred against Shi'a and other religious minorities has become increasingly commonplace (Human Rights Watch, 2020). It is important to think about the political and ideological shift that followed the independence of Pakistan because Shi'a Muslims were gradually othered in their own country. Prior to Partition, the general understanding and mobilization for establishing a

new Pakistan was based on providing a safer place where all Muslims could practice their faith freely. How then did Shi'a Muslims who were part of the 'Pakistan movement' come to be so discriminated against in their own country Pakistan?

Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2018), who has written the history of Islamic laws, religious and political institutions in medieval and modern Islam, indicates that Sunni Islam took a dominant and strong shape in the late nineteenth century. Even though conflict between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims existed prior to partition, after the partition in 1947, "Pakistan has witnessed especially intense sectarian violence since the mid-1980s as well as concomitant calls [by radical Sunni groups] upon the government to declare the Shi'a, like the Ahmadis, a non-Muslim minority" (Zaman, 2018, p.165). The mid-1980's was the time when Army General Zia-ul-Haq took power over the country by overthrowing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This is not to suggest that Zia-ul-Haq was solely responsible for the rise in sectarian violence. Bhutto served the country from 1973 to 1977 as the ninth Prime Minister of Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was also a Sunni landlord. During his leadership, the sectarian and religious divide had already started becoming increasingly prominent. For instance, Bhutto oversaw the constitutional amendment stating that Ahmadi are non-Muslims—an amendment that was supported by some Shi'a religious groups. However, it was General Zia-ul-Haq's regime which strengthened the marginalization of religious minorities and sectarian divide through his Islamization process (Nasr, 2002 & Nayyar, 1998, p. 239).

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first democratically elected leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) who came into power after almost 15 years of military rule in Pakistan in 1973 (Haider, 2010). Bhutto initially started his politics with "Socialist Islam" to form a new national narrative based on the Islamic principle of justice and equity which meant for everyone to have access to

basic human needs of *Roti* (bread), *Kapra* (clothing), and *Makan* (housing) (Haider, 2010). Later (1975-1977), his party politics changed. He appointed Zia-ul-Haq, the army chief, upon which Zia changed the slogan of the Pakistan army to “*Iman* [faith], *Taqwa* [piety], and *Jihad fi Sabil Allah* [jihad for the sake of God]” (Haider, 2010, p.21). The 1971 war with East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) which is also a Muslim majority country was also framed by the [Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s] Pakistani government of that time as “a struggle for Pakistan’s Islamic identity” now [in 1971] threatened by the Bengalis who were pictured as corrupted supporters of Indian Hindus (Haider, 2010, p. 15).

In the year 1977, Zia-ul-Haq became the most powerful army general. Tariq Ali (2002) writes, in the year 1977, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq deposed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in a military coup and ruled the country for a decade starting in 1977 (Ali, 2002). In the year 1976, the US secretary state, Henry Kissinger offered material support to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for destroying Pakistan’s nuclear plan (Ali, 2002). On refusing the offer, Kissinger said to Bhutto “we can destabilise your government and make a horrible example out of you” (Ali, 2002, p. 167). Within six months of this warning from Kissinger, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by the military General Zia-ul-Haq. Bhutto was charged with murder, rigged trial and two years later he was executed (Ali, 2002, p. 167). Zia was also commissioned in the British Indian Army and got his military training in the United States in 1943. Furthermore, Zia’s military background and his support for the US in the Soviet war in 1978, right after he came to power, shows the ideological preparation he received to tie imperialism to sectarianism. Haider (2010) writes, “like his military predecessors, Zia cynically used the Islamic parties as a counter to his civilian political foes but also extended them unprecedented political patronage, initially appointing a number of *Jamaat-e- Islami* members to head key ministries” (Haider, 2010, p.21).

Jamaat-e-Islami is a strong, Sunni-dominant religious party which still holds extensive political power in Pakistan today. Zia reinforced his support to defence services rather than on civil bureaucracy. He also supported different Sunni religious groups, including those religious groups which did not want to get involved in politics previously. Zia supported religious groups and the military because he considered the Pakistani army a strong, resourceful and powerful institution that could achieve his Islamization goal. Thus, he made alliances with religious groups who were already not happy with Bhutto's secular policies. Following colonial patterns of divide and rule, Zia used Islam as a political tool to gain power in Pakistan as he aimed for "Islam as a part of a revolutionary process to overhaul Pakistan" (Haider, 2010, p. 21). He also thought his favoured Sunni religious groups and the army could mutually support each other toward his goal of so-called Islamization. Hence to make Sunni religious groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and the army stronger, he positioned army personnel in different administrative positions and provided privileged access to emerging rich people to get access to important administrative and military jobs during his Islamization process.

Appointing members of Sunni religious groups as heads of key Ministries of the government, he further brought in Sunni religious leaders into the structure of government of Pakistan (Haider, 2010). In an interview, he said, "Islam is not one part of your life, it compasses everything" (ThamesTV, 2019). From an outside perspective, Zia's statement might not sound problematic because he is proposing to rule the country through a faith-based approach which is not unique to Pakistan. However, Zia's understanding of Islam did not include all Muslims. Rather Zia believed Sharia Sunni Islam was the solution to every problem and anyone who did not agree to his orthodox Sunni understanding of Islam was considered an outsider. When he was asked about making amendments to the Pakistani Constitution and whether his plans to

institutionalize the army's role in politics is not un-Islamic, he said, "by the virtue of my being a chief marshal, I have been authorised, by the judiciary to amend the constitution by the law of necessity" (ThamesTV, 2019). He says, "the role of army forces cannot be un-Islamic, the constitution may be un-Islamic" (ThamesTV, 2019). When he was asked about the harsh punishments he introduced, he says "these punishments (stoning to death, chopping hands, lynching) are just right, they are not barbaric, they are not against the Human Rights" (ThamesTV, 2019). That is why, as Haider (2010) notes, the military rulers in Pakistan "sounded more like high priests than soldiers when they urged men to rededicate themselves to the sacred cause of ensuing the security, solidarity, integrity of the country and its ideology" (p. 14-15).

Zia's Islamization process in Pakistan was "to manifest a universal Islamic vision, but in reality, was based on narrow Sunni interpretations of Islamic theology and law" (Nasr, 2002, p. 88) bolstered by US imperial support. Although Shi'a Muslims share notable similarities with Sunni Muslims, the obvious difference is that the Shi'a "believe in twelve divinely appointed imams. The last of these imams is believed to have gone into occultation in the late ninth century and is awaited as the promised *mahdi* or messiah" (Zaman, 2018, p.18). During Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization process [1977-1988], the Sunni extremist groups claimed that Sunnism is Islam. Since Shi'a refused to accept Sunni religious laws (such as the Zakat Ordinance), they are considered outside Islam (Nasr, 2002).

As noted earlier, the birth of sectarianism and divisions based on religion was already visible under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's leadership when Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims constitutionally (Nayyar, 1998). Nonetheless, Zia-ul-Haq's distortion of the Constitution started with him adding the Eighth Amendment in exchange for lifting martial law in the country. In the name of "balancing power" in the country, Zia's addition of Eighth Amendment was meant to

empower the President “to dissolve the National Assembly, dismiss the prime minister and provincial governments, and order them to seek a fresh mandate” (Aziz, 2015).⁷ Zia initiated Eighth Amendment so that he could begin the Islamization process. Zia’s Islamization process importantly included the judicial system of Pakistan. Under the Eighth Amendment, steps were taken to make sure Islam is practiced “effectively,” including forming a new *Shariat* bench in High Court. The government formed “provincial *Shariat* benches at the High Court level and an appellate *Shariat* Bench at the Supreme Court level tasked with deciding if any parliamentary law was Islamic or not and whether the government should change them” (Haider, 2010, p. 23). Moreover, the political representation of non-Muslim minorities was removed so that non-Muslim religious minorities were not allowed to contest or vote for any seats (Haider, 2010).

Shi’a Muslims in Pakistan resisted Zia’s policies for discriminating Shi’a Muslims from the start. In 1979-80 there were some very prominent protests against the Sunni interpretation of Islam and their laws. This anti-Shi’a resistance too needs to be understood in transnational terms. Iran was a big supporter in making sure the Shi’a opposition to the new laws of inheritance and Zakat Ordinance was strong and visible (Nasr, 2002). The new generation of Shi’a in Pakistan “saw a light coming from Iran” (Zahab, 2002, p. 116). Iran provided financial support to Shi’a in Pakistan to establish Shi’a Madrassah schools and Shi’a cultural centres in major cities of Pakistan. Gradually the Shi’a protests and their power became a threat to Sunnis and Sunni interpretations of Islam and thus the existence of Shi’a in Pakistan became a problem for the Sunni Muslim majority. Despite the fact that Zia could not exclude Shi’as altogether given their Muslim identity, stark evidence that Zia’s Islamization was in fact a Sunni-dominated process is

⁷ Access the Eighth Amendment text here:
<http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/8amendment.html>

manifest in the fact that Zia made sure that the Shi'a leadership in military positions did not get to be part of "sensitive operations" such as Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan (Nasr, 2002, p. 89). The exclusion of Shi'a from important decision-making positions and from the "sensitive operations" shows that Shi'as were considered outsiders and possible threats to the Sunnization of Pakistan. The othering and marginalization of Shi'a Muslims continues until today as Ali (2021) notes, "the reduction of the Shia to being Pariah-other, and not one of us-has come to operate in ways that denies the Shia equal belonging both within Islam and within the Pakistani nation" (p. 331).

Zaman (2018) argues that despite Jinnah's vision of an inclusive and modernist Pakistan, the country changed after he died in 1948. Many scholars believe that Pakistan's famous "Objective Resolution" played a role in converting Pakistan into a theocratic state. The Objective Resolution came into being on March 7, 1949, six months after Jinnah's death. The Objective Resolution states, as the Pakistani newspaper columnist and social activist, Ardeshir Cowasjee (2000) cites in Dawn News, "...wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed" and "wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunna" (Cowasjee, 2000). The focus here is not necessarily on the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice but it is on Islam, and effectively Sunni versions of Islam. Juliana Usman Wachani and Sameena Saeed (2017), in their article 'controversial status of Objective Resolution in the form of Article 2A in the constitutional history of Pakistan' note that the 1949 Objective Resolution was "meant to provide guideline for promulgation of future constitution instead of making it an operative part of the constitution or supra

constitutional document” (p. 309).⁸ However, non-Muslim members expressed their concerns arguing that “approval of this resolution will convert the state into a theocratic state” (Wachani and Saeed, 2017, p. 309). Not surprisingly, the text from the Objective Resolution is often used by political and religious leaders in the country to remind people of the reasons why Pakistan was created in the first place. In his speech from August 11, 1947, Jinnah ensured the minorities of Pakistan that they are free to practice their religion but under Zia “using the tool of eighth amendment Article 2 and Article 2A were made substantive parts of the constitution and intentionally the words ‘freely’ was omitted as regard to the religious freedom of the minorities” (p. 310). Apart from the these changes in law and justice system, Zia-ul-Haq made significant changes to the educational landscape in Pakistan. The next section will discuss more about how Zia-ul-Haq, in collaboration with the US, used Madrassah schools to strengthen his Islamization process.

Madrassah Schools

Before I situate Madrassah schools in relation to Sunni state-formation and sectarian violence during the Cold War and the intensification of sectarian violence after 9/11, I want to emphasize that my intent here is not at all to feed into the popular stereotypical global narratives of Madrassah education as hotbeds of extremism (Mortenson & Relin, 2007). Madrassah schools in the subcontinent were historically affordable ways of educating Muslim youth not only in terms of their religious teachings but also to provide them an opportunity to get jobs in the public sector. Jinnah’s idea and intention of using Islam for democracy, freedom and prosperity was to fight discrimination against Muslims in India and that is why he brought Madrassah schools into

⁸ Objective resolution is passed on March 12, 1949 by the first Constituent Assembly under the leadership of Liaquat Ali Khan. Read full points of Objective Resolution here: <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/annex.html>

the system of general education (Bengali, 1999). Considering the complex and overlapping historical religious and political conflicts in the world and how Madrassahs are looked at uncritically and often associate them with “Islamic terrorism”, looking into Madrassah schools and how they were used to achieve imperial and political agendas is important.

While single-mindedly pursuing this Sunnization process within Pakistani state-formation, it is on the political use of Madrassah (or Islamic schools) that the interests of imperialism and sectarianism came to coincide the most. When Zia came into power, with the support of the US, he used Madrassah schools (Islamic religious schools) for his divisive sectarian purposes that went beyond religious teaching and job opportunities. The Zia regime coincided with the height of US and Pakistani “friendship” in alignment with their respective interests. The timing (1980s) was crucial for the US, as the US realized it would be difficult for them to fight the Soviet army in Afghanistan without the help of Pakistan, “literally days after the Soviet invasion, Carter [Jimmy Carter, 39th President of United States] was on the telephone with Zia offering him hundreds of millions of dollars in economic and military aid in exchange for cooperation in helping rebels” (Mamdani, 2004, p. 126).

No one was better poised to provide support to the US’s geopolitical interests in the region than Zia-ul-Haq given his interest in deepening Islamization and his vision for the militarization of Pakistan. The Zia regime benefitted not just in terms of money and military aid, but also in terms of the recruitment and training of *Mujahideen* (literal meaning: those engaged in *Jihad*). It worked out perfectly for Zia’s agenda of furthering the “Sunnization” of Pakistan. During the US-Soviet war, the US’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) maintained close relations with religious groups in Pakistan to strengthen CIA’s support in the Afghan war. The CIA and the ISI closely worked together to

recruit and train the *Mujahideen*.⁹ The Afghan war was showcased as “Islamic Jihad against the ‘infidel’ Soviet forces” (Shafqat, 2002, p. 138). Saeed Shafqat (2002), a Pakistani scholar and the founding Director of the Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG), notes “between 1947 and 1975, about 870 new Madrassah schools were set up. In 1979-1990, (14 years), 1700 new Madrassah emerged-most of these were established in 1977-1988” (Rashid cited in Shafqat, 2002, p. 138). *Zakat* money, foreign funds from the US and Saudia Arabia, and private donations were used to support the Madrassah students.

Historically, Madrassah schools have been important places of learning for Shi’a and Sunni Muslims. During the Soviet war, with the help of Zia, the US started to use the opportunity of exploiting poor people to their advantage and recruited young students from lower-income families who could not afford to go to other public or private schools. The curriculum in Madrassah schools focused on Islamic religious teaching and memorization of the *Quran*. The students in Madrassah schools were provided free meals, free books, clothes, stipends, travel money to go home on holidays. Starting in the 1980s (during the Cold war), Madrassah schools established by the CIA and ISI in Afghanistan and Pakistan, targeted poor children for recruitment. The US constructed the perfect strategy to use its power and money with the support of Zia-ul-Haq to exploit poor and young children to win the Soviet war. I am not arguing that the Islamic Madrassah schools cater to only poor children. Nor am I paralleling poverty to violence because, as Nosheen Ali (2010) rightly argues, the Western narrative of poor and ignorant and therefore, dangerous, and violent is a common misrepresentation that hides the fact that it takes the wealth of US capitalism to fund imperial violence globally. Further, “the many references to ‘poor Muslims’ makes it seem that the story can be transplanted to any Muslim context” (Ali,

⁹ *Mujahideen* (Singular *Mujahid*) is an Arabic word which translates as someone who is engaged in *Jihad*.

2010, p. 546). Therefore, it is important to note the historical importance of Madrassah schools in Islam both for Shi'a and Sunni contexts.

The Shi'a-Sunni conflict has become even more politicized and complicated especially after 9/11. It was not just Saudi Arabia (Sunni) and the US who supported Sunni groups within Pakistan. On the other side of sectarian aisle, there was Iran (Shi'a) who came to support Shi'a Muslims when Zia was making changes to the Pakistani constitution to marginalize Shi'a. Vali R. Nasr (2002), an Iranian scholar who has written on issues of conflict within Islam, Iranian democracy, Islam and state power, argues that while Zia was responsible for starting the movements to discriminate Shi'a Muslims and other non-Muslim religious minorities in Pakistan, the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and the Afghan *Jihad* are also responsible for enabling the intensification of sectarian conflict in Pakistan. The Iranian Revolution provided support to the politicization of the Pakistani Shi'as and in response, Saudi Arabia and Iraq started deepening their support of Sunnis in Pakistan (Nasr, 2002). Nasr notes, "Pakistan became a battlefield of a new proxy war fuelled by foreign money" (p.35). The Afghan war too played a role in deepening sectarian conflict in Pakistan. Pakistani Sunni Muslims provided support to the Taliban and in turn, Sunni support made Iran upset because many of the Taliban groups are also anti-Shi'a. Iran being a Shi'a country did not like the support Taliban were receiving (Zahab, 2002) and "the struggle for domination between Shi'a and Sunni coincided with competition for influence in Pakistan between Saudi Arabia [Sunni] and Iraq [30-35% Sunni-60-65% Shi'a] on the one hand, and revolutionary Iran [Shi'a] on the other" (Nasr, 2002, p. 87).

In all of the external and internal conflicts, the innocent civilians including Shi'a, non-Muslims religious minorities and even Sunni had to bear the cost of lives lost and socio-economic distress. Zia on the other hand became successful in limiting minority rights and

making minorities second-class citizens in their own country. For instance, when Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 1995, the training campus, where *Mujahideen* were once trained for the Soviet war were handed over to the Jamaat-e-Ulema-Islam (JUI), a Sunni Deobandi Party which was “a key party in the alliance behind the Afghan Jihad an important party alliance who also sponsored Taliban” (Mamdani, 2004, p. 150). JUI is also a branch of The Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP- Soldiers of the Prophet’s Companions), a violent anti- Shi’a party, born in September 1985 out of local Shi’a-Sunni rivalry which was working with the ISI under Zia’s leadership (Abbas, 2005, p. 204).

When we look back at developments during Zia’s regime, they account for some of the main reasons for the persecution of Shi’as in Pakistan (Abbas, 2010). In the aftermath of Zia’s Islamization and sectarian project, in the year 1988, a Sunni militant group from North West Frontier Province (NWFP) went to Gilgit Baltistan (the only Shi’a majority area in Pakistan) claiming to wage war against “Shi’a infidels” (Ali, 2019).¹⁰ The Sunni militant mobs, numbering as many as 25,000 to 40,000 attacked Shi’a villages, burnt Shi’a mosques, and destroyed crops and animals. Around 800 Shi’as were estimated to have lost their lives (Ali, 2019, p. 120). The attack on Shi’a in Gilgit is not an isolated event, as Ali argues (2019). It was a systematic effort to make Pakistani nationalist ideology understood to be based on Sunni teachings of Islam. Nasr (2002) also mentions that the Sunni movements in Pakistan which included establishing more Sunni *Madaris* especially in Shi’a majority areas are part of making Sunni power stronger in the country. After the attack on Gilgit by Sunni extremists, the government forcefully established a Sunni Mosque in the center of a Shi’a city, Gilgit (Nasr, 2002). The locals of Gilgit and people

¹⁰ Gilgit Baltistan is not yet an official province of Pakistan because of the dispute between India and Pakistan but it is the only Shi’a majority area in Pakistan.

who know about the 1988 incident still ask the question: how did outsider Sunni Lashkaris know the Shi'a villages so well? Why was no action taken against them? Why was curfew not imposed? (Ali, 2019).

The Sunni Madrassah schools grew in number over the years because of the continuous focus on establishing more Madrassah schools with their curriculum less focused on spiritual teachings more focused on sectarian hatred (Nasr, 2002, p, 90). Nayyar (1998) argues that most Madrassah schools were opened in recent years with a purpose to fight the opposing sect. In the last five years, more than 200 Madrassahs were established on sectarian grounds in the province of Punjab alone (Nayyar, 1998, p. 244). The curriculum and textbooks also address the sectarian difference in Madrassah schools. For example, Nayyar (1998) notes that the curriculum of the Deobandi [Sunni sect of Islam] for grade *Aaliah* [referred to as higher education] (13th and 14th years of schooling) had the following sections in the bibliography, on criticism of non-Muslim religious minorities as well as Shi'a and Ahmedi faiths: "*Abtal e Usul ush Shi'a Bid Dalael e Aqliah wan Naqliah* (Rejection of the Shi'a faith on reasons of logic as well as of the revealed knowledge) by Maulana Abdur Rahim Bijnori ... *Hidayatush Shi'a* (a polemical commentary on the Shi'a faith) by Maulana Qasim Nanotvi", etc., (p. 242). Anti-Shi'a curriculum and textbooks content was also a way to strengthen Sunni institutions in the country. In addition to external donors who supported Sunni movements in the country, the government also spent a lot of money in establishing more Madrassah schools with an anti-Shi'a curriculum. Moreover, the Madrassah students were supported by the government to take roles in political and modern economic sector. For example, Zia's government poured money into existing Madrassah schools and established new ones, Curriculum reforms were made in Sunni Madrassah schools to allow Madrassah graduates to "enter the modern sector of the economy and join government service"

(Nasr, 2002, p. 90). For Zia and his anti-Shi'a government, Madrassah graduates gaining different roles in public government institutions was an important way to enhance the Sunni identity of the government itself, and in turn this was an important step to contain Shi'a identity and activism in the country (Nasr, 2002, p. 90).

The Effects of Zia-ul-Haq's Misogyny on Women of Pakistan

“To be the other is to always feel in an uncomfortable position...” (Fanon, 1952, p. 57). Fanon talks about the feeling of being othered in society and how it brings feelings of being rejected, having no sentiment, feeling of pain and fear all of which distinctively characterize feelings of being colonized (Fanon, 1952, p. 57). Even though Fanon did not particularly address the marginalization of women in his writing, in post-colonial societies, women are the most affected by colonialism and continue to feel excluded, hurt, unsettled and always live in fear, in their own countries, and even in their own homes.

In the case of Pakistan, women have always been victims of colonial and imperial interventions. Ayesha Khan (2018) notes that “since the independence from British India in 1947, women in Pakistan have been engaged in a struggle to claim their status as full citizens of the state” (p. 7). The state laws have always been established to treat women of Pakistan like second-class citizens. The parallel between marginalization of religious minorities and women in Pakistan is striking. Just as the marginalization of minorities was deepened by Zia's Islamization process, laws were also established to oppress women and make them more vulnerable to violence during Zia's period. As Jalal (1994) notes, “the brunt of Zia's Islamization, therefore, has mainly been borne by women and religious minorities” (p. 178).

With the establishment of laws like Hood Ordinance/ Zina Ordinance by Zia-ul-Haq, “for the first time in Pakistan’s history, fornication and adultery became a crime against the state as opposed to individual husbands, fathers, or other men” (Khan, 2006, p. 8). From the year 1979-1995, one million Zina cases were filed with the police and 30,000 heard by the court (Khan, 2006, p. 5). Just like how amendments in Blasphemy laws evoked anger in religious groups in Pakistan, because of which the amendments had to be revoked. Similarly, the Zina laws are viewed as religious laws and hence repealing the Zina laws would also pose a challenge to the nation, and Pakistani nationalism which was increasingly grounded in Sunni conceptions of state, society and religiosity (Khan, 2006, p. 99).

Benazir Bhutto had attempted to enhance women’s status when she became the Prime Minister in 1994. At the time, the senate created the Commission of Inquiry for Women (CIW) with a purpose to review the existing laws that discriminated against women or affected their right to equal citizenship (Khan, 2006, p. 96). Despite the appeals, the ordinance remained in effect until 2006. In 2006, the Zina laws were amended under the then President Musharraf’s rule (Zia, 2018, p. 357). Even though Pakistan distanced itself from discriminatory laws established by Zia in 2006, nonetheless, a growing number of cases of violence against women shows that the Pakistani state’s role remains limited to criminalizing individual acts of violence rather than preventing them (Zia, 2018). For example, according to a Human Rights Watch report (2020), about 1000 women are killed every year in Pakistan in the name of honor. Between January and November 2020, in Lahore city alone, at least 83 women were killed in the name of honor (Shah, 2021).

One might expect that the current debates around women’s rights and gender equality around the world would also influence the Pakistani state to take strict actions against the

violence and marginalization against women and work on establishing laws to protect women's rights and safety, but the reality is different. Most recently, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan was asked about his government's actions on the rising number of rape and sexual violence cases in Pakistan, especially against children. Imran Khan blamed women and their dress choices, ascribing "*fahashi*" (vulgarity) as the reason for the growing number of rape cases in the country (Geo News, 2021). He further said the purpose of *pardha* (covering up) in Islam is that it is important to "keep temptation in check" (Geo News, 2021) blaming women for tempting men into rape. He also noted that divorce rates have gone up due to vulgarity in society (Geo News, 2021).

During the Pakistani Women's March of 2018, Imran Khan had accused women's organizations in Pakistan for getting funds to advocate for the spread of western values in Pakistan. Following the trend of blaming victims of rape for rape combined with blaming Pakistani women for using a "western agenda" to interpret and blame "Islamic culture" Blasphemy cases were registered by the police against the organizers of Aurat March 2021 (Women's March 2021). Hashtag #BanAuratMarch was trending on twitter, public figures, like journalist Ansar Abbasi with 1.8 million twitter followers, Muhammad Ibrahim Qazi, Chief of staff and Director Implementation University Management and Technology with 37 million twitter followers were among many who shared false information about Women's March (Rashid & Qureshi, 2021). As noted earlier, the victims of Pakistan's Blasphemy law are mostly religious minorities who are perceived to pose threats to the state. Now the Sunni state has used Blasphemy laws to discredit organizers and participants of the women's march. Accusing minorities and feminist movements of Blasphemy is extremely damaging to disenfranchised communities and feminist resistance movements. Presenting feminist movements as going

against Islamic culture contains public resistance and puts the lives of already marginalized women and their families in danger, at a moment when they are risking patriarchy in their homes to be part of a collective movement.

Conclusion:

Attention to the geopolitical dimensions of sectarianism is crucial because the literature on sectarianism has argued that sectarianism is most often used for political gains internal to the given nation (in this case, Pakistan). However, as much as understanding and unpacking sectarian violence in Pakistan is a concern, as mentioned earlier, it is equally necessary to connect sectarian violence to wider contexts such as the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Soviet war and the Middle East and 9/11. This chapter has attempted to show those wider connections and show that imperialism leaves its trace on and contributes to deepening sectarian conflict. Significantly, I ended this chapter with a brief account of the patriarchy of the Sunni state. While heteropatriarchy in the subcontinent long precedes the Sunnization of the Pakistani state, Zia's laws deepened Pakistan's path toward the present in which all claims to women's rights are projected as imperial interference by the state. This despite the state's own reliance on transnational imperial alliances to further Sunni supremacist agendas. This is why I have chosen a complex approach to the question of sectarian violence. One that allows me to engage a critique of imperialism alongside direct recognition of the fact that a seemingly-cultural Sunni supremacy is a distinct state-formation process that gives US and Saudi imperialism its local power.

Reflecting on the connected histories that are not taught in Pakistani educational institutions and not allowed within discussions in public platforms in Pakistan is important in order to appreciate the history of Pakistani state-formation and the gradual Sunnization of the Pakistani

public sphere. Such reflections prompt us to deeply consider questions about the ways in which prominent leaders who belong to the Shi'a sect of Islam, whose dreams and visions of an inclusive Pakistan, were othered and became a distant dream in their very own country. In the next chapter, I further trace the formation of the Sunni state of Pakistan alongside deepening US imperialism. I do this by showing how Musharraf's modernization plans coincided with 9/11 and secured the hold of neoliberal policies and support for US imperialism—all of which helped deepen sectarian violence.

Chapter III: Deepening of Sectarian Violence by the US Imperialism and Interventions After 9/11

Introduction: 9/11 and the “War on Terror”

In the last chapter (Chapter Two), I focused on gradual, political, and ideological shift from Jinnah’s secular Pakistani state in 1947 to the formation of a Sunni state in the 1970s with Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamization process. I discussed, how Zia used Madrassah schools to further strengthen his Islamization process. In this chapter, I am focusing on the United State’s role in using Madrassah schools to fight Cold War in Afghanistan and how this led to further deepening the Sunni supremacy in Pakistan. I discuss, how the problems created by the US during Cold War came to haunt the US, and after the 9/11 incident happened, the US came back to Pakistan, yet again, to work with another military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, to fight their so called “war on terror”.

Conventionally, onlookers assume that the United States' involvement in Pakistan started after the 9/11 incident with their new mission of “eradicating terrorism” and in the name of “war on terror”. After 9/11, “Muslims seem to have been cast in the role of 'global enemies' and 'bogeymen' out to deny the world well-deserved fruits of liberal democracy” (Malik, 1999, p. 20). The 9/11 incident made it easier for the West to explain to the world why Islam is the enemy of the “world’s security”. In this context, Pakistan became one of the main targets because it is an Islamic republic that the West claims provides “safety” to “Islamic terrorists” like Osama Bin Laden. The US would like the world to think that there are obvious reasons why they have targeted Pakistan. But it is not obvious why Pakistan was targeted considering the pilots in the 9/11 attack were from Saudi Arabia, a longstanding and close ally of the United States.

In his book *The New Imperialism*, David Harvey connects larger political shifts and events from the 1970s to the formation of global political economy. He talks about the US's financial powers, global dominance and techniques of "accumulation by dispossession" which helps to understand the past and current political events concerning the political and economic system which works together in the world to reproduce dominance. Thus, we see for instance that in the case of Zia's Islamization process, the United States backed Pakistan and that once the Soviet left Afghanistan, the US abandoned Pakistan. Harvey (2003) argues that the 9/11 incident not only gave the US political reason to maintain national solidarity inside the US, but also it allowed the US more power internationally to interfere and intervene in other countries. "Pakistan has long had an image problem on the world stage. Terror, militancy, and patriarchal Islam are the conceits of a US public obsession with reducing a complex country to over drawn stereotypes" (Rana, 2014, p. 70). As a result, "saving" Pakistan from the problem of poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism is the primary lesson people get about Pakistan from Western education and socialization. This view erases the role of the US in constructing jihadi culture and forgets the prior reality of Madrassah education as an important and affordable place of education for Muslims until the Soviet War (Ali, 2010).

In the first decade since 1947, newly independent Pakistan was struggling for survival without a well-developed government, without organized political parties and without established economic structures of production. It had taken Pakistan nine years to frame a constitution. The 1965 war with India over Kashmir and the separation of Bangladesh (East Pakistan) in 1971 resulted in Pakistan losing a vast majority of its Muslim population.¹¹ The wars

¹¹ Kashmir: Kashmir is a territory disputed by India and Pakistan but claimed as sovereign by Kashmiris.

and the loss of population put them in desperate need of financial and military support from foreign countries. Within two decades of Independence, Pakistan realised that “Muslim ideology” alone would not suffice in establishing unified territorial control and defence over a postcolonial Islamic nation-state in formation. Bearing the volatile context of struggle in mind, Pakistani historians and writers like Ayesha Jalal (1985, 2014) and Tariq Ali (2002) note that having a strong defence system to fight against external threats became paramount for Pakistan’s leaders. The President of the time, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, constantly reached out to the US for support, making the appeal look different each time to convince the US to lend money and support to Pakistan (Haider, 2010). But Pakistani leaders of the newly independent state received no help from the US prior to the Soviet war, demonstrating that, rather than altruistic motives, US support for Pakistan is reliant on the US granting support when it benefits themselves. Mamdani (2004) argues that the “American strategy provided a political opening for the intelligence agencies of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to promote exaggeratedly anti-Shi’a Sunni doctrines, chief among them the Wahabi doctrine from the Saudi Arabia and the Deobandi doctrine from Pakistan” (2004, p. 154). Hence, to say the US is involved in Muslim countries to “make peace” is an uncritical and naive analysis of the issue, as it is widely believed in the West. In this chapter, I elaborate on the US’s long historical involvement in Pakistan especially during the Cold War era and after the 9/11 attack and its repercussions on people of Pakistan.

In the Western world, 9/11 is conventionally understood as an unprecedented and unprovoked act of violence against the United States. It is not understood as an outcome of the historical relationships between the United States and countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, including through conflicts such as the Soviet war, Afghan war, Iran and Iraq war. While Zia-ul-Haq was responsible for the Islamization of the country, the US strengthened Zia’s ability to

pursue the Islamization process by funding Zia's military and financial needs, on the condition of Pakistan's involvement in a geopolitical conflict that justified such an Islamization process. US imperial benefit thus gained traction on account of Zia's anti-Shi'a agenda.

The US was so desperate to defeat the Soviet, they did not foresee that the US-backed *Mujahideen* could come back to haunt them in the form of 9/11 (Caldwell 2011). The ideological Sunnization of Pakistan, of course, started prior to US involvement in Pakistan as I have discussed. However, the Shi'a-Sunni conflict was not evident in the context of "Pakistan movement" (Zaman, 1998). It was after the Objective Resolution in 1949, and during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government in 1974 when the sectarian divide became increasingly visible and the discriminatory policies were deeply strengthened by Zia-ul-Haq (Nayyar, 1998, p. 239, Nasr, 2002). In response to Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies, the Shi'a minorities of Pakistan formed the *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafriah* (movement for the implementation of Fiqah-e-Jafreia) to safeguard their religious rights. Imam Khomeini of Iran was a significant source of support for the Pakistani Shi'a (Nayyar, 1998, p. 243).

It was in the context of the Soviet War that a growing number of Madrassah schools came to be heavily armed places where Shi'a and Sunni Muslims would fight each other (Nayyar, 1998, p. 243). These Madrassahs were generously funded by Saudi Arabia, [Sunni], Gulf state [Sunni], and Iran [Shi'a] (Nayyar, 1998, p. 243). And, as noted in the previous chapter, the US was instrumental in supporting Zia-ul-Haq in radicalizing Pakistan to fulfill the US agenda of involving Pakistan in fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. US support to Zia made the Sunnization of Pakistan possible. The growth of Madrassahs at this time may have been directly linked to US war against Soviets, but it was capitalized by others once the US left Afghanistan, since the Saudis (Sunni) backed the US, and Iran (Shi'a) came in to counteract the

Sunni influence. US imperialism used Pakistani Madrassahs for their goals and thereby entrenched sectarian conflict in the region.

Mahmood Mamdani (2004) notes, in the year 1987 alone, "...American military aid to the *Mujahideen* amounted to \$660 million" (p.141). Dan Caldwell (2011), an American Professor of Political Science states that between 1981 and 1983 the USA provided \$60 million to encourage recruitment of more *Mujahideen* and for their training in Pakistan and between 1980 and 1992 the US had spent between \$4 to \$5 billion. US aid to *Mujahideen* was channelled through the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's Intelligence agency. This amount was matched by Saudi Arabia. Some 35,000 militants from 43 countries came to Pakistan and Afghanistan to get trained and to fight the Soviet (Mamdani, 2004). In fact, after the Soviet war, the number of Mujahideen grew resulting in the patronage of a number of jihadi organizations such as *Lashkar-i-Tayyaba* (Soldiers of Islam) and Harkat ul-Ansar (Volunteer Movement) (Mamdani, 2004). The leader of Harkat-ul-Ansar was Osama Bin Laden, which was once funded by the United States. In 1997, when it was declared a "terrorist" organization by the United States, the group changed its name to *Harkatul Mujahideen* and continued to function (Mamdani, 2004, p. 151; Ali, 2002, p. 199). Many of these organizations which used to be funded by the US have been involved in sectarian attacks in different cities of Pakistan.

In mainstream news and scholarship, often Madrassah schools "were highlighted as a source of Islamist militancy" (Haqqani in Ahmad & Sajjad, 2019; Ali, 2010). As Kanwal (2015) writes, "the terms radicalism and terrorism are conflated in the post-9/11 world, suggesting further that terrorism is uniquely seen as 'Islamic terrorism' [and that] all Muslims come to be casually linked to terrorism" (p. 2-3). Due to the Soviet war, Madrassah schools are now also associated with terrorism, rather than understood as spaces of Islamic education. Many

Westerners are not aware of the fact that the role of education in Islam is considered important. Muslims believe that the first word revealed in the Quran (96.1) is *Iqra* which translates as “read”. Hence, teaching and learning, education and knowledge has a long and deep history in Islamic traditions, and is not a uniquely Western gift, despite all the discourses around “saving” and “helping” Pakistan with education, to usher a culture of “books vs bombs” (Ali, 2010). Additionally, it also helps Westerners (especially the US) justify their intervention in many Muslim countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, the stereotypical discussions on “radicalization” and “fundamentalism” on the one hand, and an ahistorical approach to “development” as necessary for peacebuilding often fails to address how US-funded jihadist programs from the 1980’s shape places like Pakistan and Afghanistan (Ali, 2010).

When the Soviet left Afghanistan and the Cold War ended, abruptly, the US stopped financial aid and military support to Pakistan and in fact the US started pressurizing Pakistan to stop its development of nuclear weapons (Caldwell, 2011). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto felt the development of nuclear weapons was crucial to Pakistan especially after fighting two wars within just 25 years of independence of Pakistan (the 1965 war with India over Kashmir and the 1971 war with then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). After the Soviet war, the US turned its back on thousands of trained *Mujahideen*, leaving them for Pakistan to deal with. When the Soviet left Afghanistan, the *Mujahideen* formed a new strong government in Afghanistan, and the *Mujahideen* emerged as a powerful force in uniting Islamic power in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s “Transition to Democracy” (1989-1999): Pakistan Under Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif

Before I go into analyzing the US’s new imperial expectations after 9/11 and their new imperial projects to their so called “eradicating terrorism” in Pakistan, in collaboration with

another military dictator, I will briefly touch upon “Pakistan’s transition to democracy” after Zia-ul-Haq’s death. After the death of Zia-ul-Haq in an airplane crash in 1988, two prominent political parties emerged as strong rivals. One was the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) which appointed Benazir Bhutto as their co-chairperson after the execution of her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The other was an influential businessman from Punjab province, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif who emerged as the leader of Pakistan Muslim League (PLM) (Khan & Ahmad, 2018). Benazir Bhutto became the first and youngest woman to become Prime Minister of a Muslim state in 1989 (Azeem, et al., 2018). Nawaz Sharif, “known as an ideological heir of Ziaul Haq” (Khan & Ahmad, 2018, p. 80) made sure Benazir’s time as the first democratically elected woman Prime Minister was not easy.

Even though the election of 1988 was the start of a democratic era in Pakistan after Zia-ul-Haq’s military regiment which lasted for 12 long years. Benazir Bhutto won the elections in 1989 with majority seats. However, Nawaz Sharif could form a strong government in Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan, by winning majority seats against PPP (Mehmood, 2002 cited in Khan & Ahmad, 2018). With a new government led by a woman, with limited power, and inexperienced members in the party, Benazir Bhutto did not have sole control over state power. Rather, she had to share power with the military and the president Ghulam Ishaq Khan who was pro Zia and came from the military as a former civil servant (Khan & Ahmad, 2018). Zia died in 1988 but his military elite made sure his power remained and the unity of anti-PPP continued under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif (Talbot, 2010). After serving only one year in office, Benazir’s first government was overthrown in 1990, by the President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, on allegations of corruption and failure to control violence (Khan & Ahmad, 2018). Even after her second term in office (1996-1999), her party struggled to usher reforms. As a woman prime

minister, Benazir Bhutto was expected to revoke the patriarchal policies Zia formed against women, but due to strong resistance from religious groups and other political parties, she could not make changes (Talbot, 2010). Hence, the PPP party led by Benazir failed to live up to the expectations of people in her first (1989-90) and second terms (1993-96).

During her second term in office, Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) became a strong opposition and PML(N) under Nawaz Sharif was already against her in Punjab. The violent crimes were at its peak in Karachi. Many people believed Benazir Bhutto did not take any steps to stop the violence in Karachi (Khan et al., 2018). It is interesting to note, how Bhutto, a woman who just started her political career and recently lost her father, was expected to fulfill unrealistic expectations to solve decades-old deeply-rooted issues caused by military dictators who remained just as powerful as they were before Bhutto came into power. After the closing of the Benazir Bhutto government and with Nawaz Sharif coming into office in 1993, Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization which was on pause since 1988 resurfaced once again (Talbot, 2010). For example, the support of Shariat bill in collaboration with Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) (right wing conservative alliance, formed in 1988 to oppose Pakistan Peoples Party's) and other religious parties. During his party rule, the US imposed trade sanctions for the alleged violation of the Missile Technology control in the supply of M-11 missile to Pakistan from China (Talbot, 2010).

The terms of Benazir Bhutto (first term: December 1989- August 1990; second term: October 1993- November 1996) and Nawaz Sharif (first term: November 1990-1993, second term, February 1997-October 1999), have been a tug of war between them, both trying to overthrow each other's governments, accusing each other of corruption and theft. Even though Sharif is considered more successful compared to Benazir (Talbot, 2012) neither of them successfully improved anything for the people of Pakistan. This includes, neglecting working on reforms in

the education system. Hence, Talbot (2012) questions the argument of Pakistan's transition to "democracy". He argues that democracy, in the case of Pakistan "may be seen as having made the transition from authoritarianism to procedural democracy, but as lacking any of the characteristics of a consolidated democracy" (Talbot, 2012, p. 291). The foundational political economic inequalities persisted in the system, and the power of Zia and the military elite remained intact. Talbot (2012) therefore notes that, "instead of two-party system, Pakistani politics had become a zero-sum game in which oppositions denied ruling parties any legitimacy and government used selective accountability to harry and intimidate their opponents" (p. 287). The Pakistani military was ready to grab any opportunity to regain political power and prove themselves to be the "saviors" of the country. Benazir and Sharif's failure to address political instability, keeping their personal animosity aside, made it possible for another decade of dictatorship to take hold in Pakistan.

Pervez Musharraf's Military Regime (1999-2008) and US Supported "Educational Reforms" post 9/11

General Pervez Musharraf's era is an important time-period to reflect on changing world politics, especially given US political interests in the region after 9/11, and to the growing sectarian violence in Pakistan. General Pervez Musharraf and Zia-ul-Haq have many similarities. Both Generals were military dictators of Pakistan for about a decade (Zia: 1978-1988 and Musharraf: 1999-2008) and both worked in tandem with the US. First, the US struck alliances with Zia-ul-Haq to fight the Soviet war and then they struck alliances with Pervez Musharraf to fight the Afghan and Pakistan wars after the 9/11 attack. Musharraf, the military general overthrew the elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to take power on October 12, 1999. In 2002, he held a referendum and appointed himself the president (Constable, 2011). People in Pakistan

believe that Musharraf won the elections but “there was widespread allegations of parliamentary manipulation to gain the necessary votes to win” (Khan, 2008, p, 15).

During the US’s “war on terror” after 9/11, alongside the Pakistani Army conflict with Taliban and other militant groups, the terrorist attacks on local religious minorities including Shi’a, Christians and Hindus also increased in the country. The violence in Pakistan escalated, and sectarian violence became even more complex. The US justified their attacks in Pakistan in the name of “war against terrorism”. As part of the US’s fight against “terrorism” process, the US also started focusing more on building schools and spending money to support the education system in Pakistan but never acknowledged that the conflict that Pakistan faced had its roots in US’s Cold War imperial interventions.

The US presented modern and Western education as the solution to the violence in other places. For example, in an interview in *The Washington Post*, President Bush mentions that “the 10 million U.S supplied books being trucked to Afghan schools would teach respect for human dignity, instead of indoctrinating students with fanaticism and bigotry” (Stephens & Ottaway, 2002). These new educational imports and reforms were happening with Pervez Musharraf’s support to the US. However, as noted earlier, it is essential to go back to 1980s when the US funded a curriculum of hate and violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In her book *Schools for Conflict or for Peace in Afghanistan*, Dana Burde (2014) demonstrates that violence and intolerance were deliberately taught to young students in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1980s through USAID funded textbooks in service of the war against the Soviets. She emphasizes that the US-funded “J is for Jihad” curriculum and text initially developed for the *Mujahideen* during the Soviet War are still in use in Taliban-controlled places in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Burde, 2014, p. 90). For example, the following is a lesson cited by Craig Davis (2002) on introduction

to Persian alphabets (most Persian language alphabets are similar in Urdu Language) in a grade one language textbook.¹²

Alif [is for] Allah. Allah is one.

Bi [is for] Father (*baba*). Father goes to the mosque...

Pi [is for] Five (*panj*). Islam has five pillars...

Ti [is for] Rifle (*tufang*). Javad obtains rifles for the Mujahidin...

Jim [is for] *Jihad*. *Jihad* is an obligation. My mom went to the *jihad*. Our brother gave water to the Mujahidin...

Dal [is for] Religion (*din*). Our religion is Islam. The Russians are the enemies of the religion of Islam...

Zhi [is for] Good news (*muzhdih*). The Mujahidin missiles rain down like dew on the Russians. My brother gave me good news that the Russians in our country taste defeat...

Shin [is for] Shakir. Shakir conducts *jihad* with the sword. God becomes happy with the defeat of the Russians...

Zal [is for] Oppression (*zulm*). Oppression is forbidden. The Russians are oppressors. We perform *jihad* against the oppressors...

Vav [is for] Nation (*vatn*). Our nation is Afghanistan.... The Mujahidin made our country famous.... Our Muslim people are defeating the communists. The Mujahidin are making our dear country free. (p. 90)

After 9/11, the US focused on Pakistan's education to supposedly modernize the system with the goal of eventually eradicating terrorism. However, as Burde (2014) notes, there is less

¹² Craig Davis in 20002 was a Ph.D. candidate and conducted his field work in 1999 to 2000 in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

understanding around the complexity of the foundation of the Taliban or Al-Qaida and the support of the US during the Cold war era. The problems created by the US in the first place were left for local people in Pakistan and Afghanistan to deal with once the war was over. Burde (2014) notes that the US's education policy shifted from "jihad literacy" in 1980s to "education for stabilization" in 2000s (Burde, 2014, p. 5). It was reported in 2002, by The Washington Post that "a US, foreign aid official said, workers launched a "scrubbing operation in neighbouring Pakistan to purge from the books all references to rifles and killings" (Stephens & Ottaway, 2002). However, as Mamdani (2004) and Burde (2014) note, the US sponsored books from the Soviet war "...which exhort Afghan children to pluck out the eyes of their enemies and cut off their legs, are still widely available in Afghanistan and Pakistan, some in their original form" (Mamdani, 2004, p. 137). Mamdani (2004) notes, "the real damage the CIA did was not the providing of arms and money but the privatization of information about how to produce and spread violence..." (p. 138.) Moreover, the imperial violence intensified internal, primarily sectarian conflicts within Afghanistan and Pakistan, with women bearing the brunt of this violence (see more in Chapter Five).

The first target of the United States in their "war on terror" post 9/11 were Madrassah schools. Although scholars argue that none of the nineteen attackers of 9/11 came from Madrassah schools or Islamic educational institutions, nonetheless Madrassah schools were projected in the mainstream western media as training and educating young people in "Jihad" against the West and the Madrassah students were "referred to as "global jihadists" (Ali, 2008, p.3, p. 20). Under huge pressure from the US, Pervez Musharraf promised to work with the US in their fight to "eradicate" fundamentalism and terrorism from the world. He pledged "zero tolerance" on terrorism and extremism in Pakistan and promised people that he would fight

extremism in the country. He declared that he has much expertise in dealing with the Taliban and Al-Qaida and he told Pakistanis that the fight against terrorism will not succeed if Pakistan is not part of it (Talbot, 2014).

In Pakistan, Musharraf too like other political leaders such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, started his political journey with a seemingly secular vision for Pakistan. However, Talbot (2002) argues that he was not different than other army Generals, “Musharraf’s coup, like Ayub and Zia’s earlier coups, was justified in the name of restoring national unity imperilled by political mismanagement” (p. 314). According to Ahmad and Sajjiad (2019), “the post 9/11 war on terror revived the hostility between Islam and the West” (p. 54). Many religious groups in Pakistan saw Musharraf on the US’s side. His partnership with the US made a bad impression of him in Pakistan among fundamentalist groups (e.g., Al-Qaeda) and among liberal thinkers who viewed “the fight against Islamic terrorism as “America’s war” (Constable, 2011, p. 107).

In alignment with the US’s new imperial expectations, Pervez Musharraf presented the idea of “Enlightened Moderation”. In the context of education, this meant adopting modern educational models to “de-radicalize” Pakistan and to promote peace in the world (Ahmad & Sajjad, 2019, p. 55). On June 19, 2002, Musharraf’s government announced that within a six-month period, Madrassah schools would have to follow “Madrassah Registration Ordinance of 2002” which meant for all the Madrassah schools to register with the “Pakistan Madrassah Education Board and provincial boards” (Riaz, 2008, p. 202). It was instructed that, not following the order of registration will result in closing down Madrassah schools. Madrassah schools were barred from accepting money from foreign sources and students who were not from Pakistan were instructed to get “No Objection Certificates” (NOC) (Ali, 2008, p. 201). To make all the changes and to implement new policies, in July 2002, the US government provided more

than “100 million dollars in the name of five-year educational development program” (Javed & Ali, 2017, p. 277). In keeping with the US “fight against terrorism,” the Pakistan military, under Musharraf’s order, started carrying out attacks on different “militant groups” characterized as such by the US. For example, in the month of December 2006, around 1000 Pakistan soldiers died tracking and killing “terrorists” in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Khan, 2008).

Alongside a series of attacks on militants, one of the disastrous highlights of Musharraf’s rule is his attack on Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), a Sunni Mosque which was located in the heart of Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. “The Red Mosque was used for inciting jihad (holy war) against the government, demanding imposition of strict Islamic law, opposing military operation in Waziristan [against Taliban], and calling for the boycott of funerals of Pakistani soldiers killed while fighting Islamic militants” (Abbas, 2007 cited in Khan, 2008, p. 146). Maulana Abul Aziz has been the leader of Islamabad’s biggest Jamia Fareedia Madrassah and Lal Masjid, built on land allotted by Zia-ul -Haq (Abbas, 2007). The Madrassah had been backing Lal Masjid by organizing seminars in different parts for citizens and providing militant fighting forces (Abbas, 2007). Adeel Khan (2008), a Pakistani Political Sociology scholar, notes that Musharraf’s government alleged that in Lal Masjid more than 1000 women and children were getting “*jihadi*” training to fight against the Pakistani military’s attacks. The women and children were described by the government as “hostages” and “human shields” (Khan, 2008). However, according to Khan (2008) “the veracity of these characterizations is unclear and open to interpretation (p. 147). The women and children “hostages” were freed. However, the negotiations between the government and Lal Masjid leaders failed. Lal Masjid leaders continued to demand the imposition of “Islamic Laws” in the country which would include

banning music and movies, and to base the Islamic and judicial system of the country on Sharia laws, rather than what they believe to be the prevalent “obscenities” (Khan, 2008, p. 146).

On July 10, 2007, the army attacked the mosque and killed around 150 militants. More than a dozen army personnel [religious sect not reported] died in the operation (Khan, 2008). Following the attack by Musharraf’s government, the militant groups, calling it a revenge, carried out many attacks on army forces, raided homes, attacked shops, and kidnapped police officials and soldiers. The army responded to the attacks using helicopter, long range guns and other weapons and the conflict spread to other places. Khan (2008) notes that “the bloodshed also spread to those places that were hitherto untouched” (2008, p. 147).

After the Pakistani government joined the US under the leadership of Musharraf, the long-standing alliance between Lal Masjid and the Pakistani military turned into overt hostility. Lal Masjid became anti-government and a centre for anti-American protests because Lal Masjid leadership believed the alliance of the Pakistani military with the US was a “betrayal of jihad” (Hussain, 2017). At this time, Lal Masjid also intensified its targeting of religious minorities. Lal Masjid already had a history of supporting anti-Shi’a propaganda and violence. For example, the first Imam, appointed by Zia-ul-Haq, Maulana Muhammad Abdullah was known for his “radical sectarian views” (Hussain, 2017). Maulana Abdul Aziz, the Sunni leader of Lal Masjid was also supported by anti-Shi’a radical groups such as the Sipa-e-Sahaba which is a banned sectarian group that is known for killing Shi’a Muslims in the country” (Walsh, 2009).

In 2016, a video message came from Maulana Abdul Aziz spreading sectarian hate (The Express Tribune, 2016). Khurram Zaki, a Shi’a activist filed an FIR against Abdul Aziz for spreading anti-Shi’a propaganda (The Express Tribune, 2016). Zaki was promptly killed in 2016 in Karachi by an unknown gunman. More recently (August 2021), Dawn News reported that

after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Maulana Abdul Aziz hoisted Afghan Taliban flag on *Jamia Hafsa* Madrassah building in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan (Azeem, 2021). Thus, religious minorities, including Shi'a Muslims had to pay the price for America's "war on terror" as militant groups led by religious leaders like Abul Aziz, targeted Shi'a minorities in addition to army forces in the name of revenge. Since the Lal Masjid incident and until today, thousands of soldiers and innocent civilians, children, many militants (sects are not verified) and their leaders have died in attacks and counter attacks and the conflict has yet to stop in 2022 under the Prime Ministership of Imran Khan. Caught in violence coming from the army and Sunni militant groups, the attacks on Shi'a Muslims increased resulting in displacement of Shi'a Muslims from their homes and land.

In addition to Sunni militant groups resisting Musharraf's alliance with the US, they also questioned his ideas to make policies "secular". For example, in 2000, Musharraf "proposed to reform Pakistan's controversial Blasphemy law which was a tool in the hands of the administration and religious groups to persecute and settle scores with the religious minorities" (Abbas, 2005, p. 192-193). Blasphemy law is part of Pakistan's Penal Code which notes that: "whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Prophet Muhammad shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine" (Shakir, 2015). Musharraf's proposal to reform Blasphemy laws was strongly opposed by religious leaders because of which Musharraf had to withdraw his proposal (Khan, 2006).

Of course, there were sectarian killings before 2002 too but there was a drastic increase in killing and attacks on Shi'a Muslims and other minority religious communities in the aftermath of 2002. "Since 1999, Sunni Sectarian groups have killed at least 1000 Hazaras [Shi'a] in Quetta

and forced more than 200,000 to relocate to other cities or migrate abroad (Majidiyar, 2014). The sectarian violence has reached places which were considerably peaceful before 2002. Khan (2008) notes that the Swat Valley in the northern areas “became a particularly bloody battleground between militants and security forces” (Khan, 2008, p. 147). In August 2012, around 10 to 12 men in army uniform stopped three buses and forced some people off the bus, checked their documents and opened fire on them. All those who were killed were Shi’a (Dawn News, 2012). A series of such incidents continued in the following years. Shi’a travellers from Gilgit Baltistan, on their way from Rawalpindi to Gilgit were pulled off from buses and shot dead by Sunni extremist groups. One of the most horrific attacks in Pakistan’s history was carried out by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan on December 16, 2014. On December 16th morning, six terrorists stormed the Army Public School, Peshawar, opened fire and killed 132 students of age eight to eighteen years old including 17 staff members. The attack was believed to be in retaliation against Pakistani military attacks in North Waziristan (Dawn News, 2019). For example, “more than 88 bombings killed 1,188 people and wounded 3,209 in the first year following the Lal Masjid siege alone” (Hussain, 2017). Most of the anti-Shi’a, Sunni religious groups are linked to Al Qaeda and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other groups that the US formed during the Soviet war but was fighting against after 9/11. Thus, US presence in the region since the 1980s through to the “war on terrorism” has been felt by every citizen in Pakistan, and resulted in normalizing violence against the most marginalized citizens. US imperialism and Sunnization have thus combined to produce the pervasive violence in Pakistan, and Shi’a have been one of the primary targets of this imperial and sectarian violence.

On December 17, 2019, a three-member bench of the special court, in Pakistan gave a death sentence to the retired Army General Pervez Musharraf, declaring him guilty of high

treason under article 6 of Pakistan's constitution (Malik & Naqvi, 2019).¹³ He was accused of going against the constitution for imposing a state of emergency in November 2007 (Bilal, 2019).¹⁴ My father, along with many other elders in my community considered Musharraf a great leader. One of my cousins even named his son Musharraf inspired by the General Pervez Musharraf. Some of my father's friends claimed Musharraf had a soft corner for Ismaili Muslims. Others believed "only Musharraf can save the country". When Musharraf won the election in 2002 and came into power for the second time, people of Gilgit Baltistan were rejoicing.

People in Gilgit-Baltistan had their own reasons for liking Musharraf, including his continuous focus on development in Gilgit Baltistan unlike previous governments. For example, when Musharraf established the very first public university in Gilgit city in Gilgit Baltistan, he received a lot of appreciation from people there. It is not an exaggeration to say then that the military can change the constitution of the country to a certain extent and still make themselves look like the "saviours" of the people by granting some development cookies in exchange for dictatorship. Ideally, in a "democratic" country, the military leaders of a country should not have the leverage to change the constitution of a country. Neither should they have power to run the country by overstepping democratically-elected leaders of the country. However, time and again, in the history of Pakistani politics, every time a military general takes charge of the country by overthrowing an elected leader, the army leaders receive tremendous support from imperial

¹³ Article 6 of constitution of Pakistan states, "any person who abrogates or subverts or suspends or hold in abeyance, or attempts or conspires to abrogate or subvert or suspend or hold in abeyance the Constitution by use of force or show force or by any other unconstitutional means shall be guilty of high treason"

¹⁴ "It is unconstitutional for a person to be the president of Pakistan while simultaneously holding another government position. According to Article 43 of the Constitution, "The President shall not hold any office of profit in the service of Pakistan or occupy any other position carrying the right to remuneration for the rendering of services" (Khan, 2008, p. 144).

countries like the US for their unconstitutional actions. This is particularly apparent during the tenure of Zia-ul-Haq and more recently, during General Pervez Musharraf's leadership. Tariq Ali (2002) writes, "Once the United States had decided to dump him [Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto], it was obvious that the instrument they used would be the army" (p. 188). This shows that the military elite have been the gateway to US imperialism and the military usually comes into power claiming that the elected leaders are incapable of solving the conflict, and by presenting themselves as the "saviours" of Pakistan.

Why Don't the US's Imperial Projects in the Form of "Development" and "Modern Education" Help People in Pakistan?

The US imperial narrative that Islamic radicalization and fundamentalism can be countered by development and humanitarian work (Ali, 2010) does not acknowledge that the education curriculum and jihadist programs from the 1980s funded, published and supported by the US authorities continue to contribute to the sectarian violence today. Burde (2014) and Ali (2008) note that the focus on education by humanitarian organizations is not benefiting the people as they claim to do. The system is corrupt, and the resources are not accessible to all the most war-torn zones of the country.

As mentioned previously, Madrassah schools have been an integral part in Muslim societies for centuries for not just the teaching and learning of Islamic education but also for the education of young Muslims oriented to economic and other worldly matters. The word Madrassah was not familiar to the West until 9/11 but the image of Madrassah schools projected thereafter were primarily as "institutions as citadels of militancy, or factories of jihad" (Ali, 2008, p.1). Burde (2014) reflects on the US history of strategic and manipulative ways of using education and educational aid as a means to control, interfere and intervene to achieve their

imperial agendas in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She says that education was used “as a strategic tool-first to inculcate the habit of war among the *Mujahideen* in the 1980s and then to support the pacification of communities...” (p. 5). Burde also argues that initially, aid that came for the purpose of educational use was not used for the purpose of peace and development rather it was employed to support different political motives (2014, p. 6). The argument here is not that aid is not going to help peace projects and educational projects in these countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rather, most aid was attached to broader imperial agendas with limited if not adverse effects on local people, in terms of education and peacebuilding (Burde, 2014).

I have experienced the ineffectiveness of developmental projects in my hometown. I want to cite an example of that to explain what development and western/ modern education has done for the communities in Hunza in Gilgit Baltistan. Arguing educational developmental projects are ineffective is not to say that education is not useful for societies. However, while using education to transition from poverty to “progress” and bringing high levels of economic productivity in communities, it is important to analyse and work on challenges that comes with economic productivity. One of the serious challenges for people of Gilgit-Baltistan is the increasing number of suicide rates among the youth in recent years. Suicide rates among young students are rising drastically every year in Hunza and in Gilgit-Baltistan in general. From the year 1996 to 2010, more than 300 suicide cases were recorded at different Police Stations of Ghizer district of Gilgit Baltistan (Ghizer Times, 2014 cited in Sher & Dinar, 2015). It is also being observed that the number of suicide cases are much higher than the reported cases (Ghizer Times, 2014 cited in Sher & Dinar, 2015). Many cases are not reported to the Police Department, especially when there is a woman involved and the question of safeguarding family “honor”

becomes primary which also means there are more girls committing suicide than is in the official record.

Regardless of the increase in education, gender discrimination and violence against women also remain a serious and neglected problem in Gilgit Baltistan. The factual reasons for the increased number of suicide rates in Gilgit-Baltistan is unknown due to unavailability of data and disregard for conducting an in-depth investigation on suicide. However, based on the series of suicides cases highlighted and discussed on social media platforms and based on my personal discussions with the families/ friends/ relatives, it is noteworthy that, in most cases, the frustration of unemployment after graduation is the biggest reason for it. In a study done by Sher and Dinar (2015) in Ghizer District of Gilgit-Baltistan on the issues of increasing suicide rates among young women and girls, they note that “idolizing material and economic success as the ultimate means of social uplift leaves huge pressure on young adults... Thus, the society has become competition-obsessed, and underachievers are ridiculed and humiliated” (p. 208).

Traditionally, young people in Hunza played an important role in farming, agriculture and in looking after livestock. Young people working in farms is very rarely observed nowadays. Increasingly in South Asia, young, educated generations are ashamed of working on their own lands because working on the land is not considered a symbol of the “progress” and “education” as per representations of modernity in textbooks and state education (Morarji, 2010). Many educated young generations and their parents pursue university degrees in the hopes of securing white collar jobs. However, the pursuit of modern education for livelihoods away from agriculture come at the same time as government jobs are increasingly limited due to neoliberal policies and structural adjustment restructuring (Jeffrey et al., 2008). In the comparable context of mountainous Uttarakhand, Karuna Morarji (2010) discusses the assumptions of people living

in rural areas and the promise of education being the catalyst for social mobility, empowerment, and prosperity. She argues that the existing education system is not preparing young people for the needs of the community and instead works to maintain colonized imaginations that continue to assimilate students into the global capitalist system and its emphasis on certain ideas of relevant work and employment that emphasize desk jobs and devalue relations to the land.

While this thesis does not ask what counts as economic productivity, this is an important question to raise in mountainous, agrarian regions. It is also important to make the connection, as I have done, that the same forces that transformed Madrassah education toward violent ideologies also subsequently promoted a capitalist modernization logic of education for development and peace, which as I have argued brings neither peace and very limited forms of development for a small fraction of the population. This is an outcome of the Pakistani state's vision of education for capitalist modernization in particular, and in South Asian states in general that seek to achieve so-called "international development goals" by focusing on increasing the number of schools, the number of children in schools without giving much attention to the societal needs which could be addressed through the right kind of education rather than focusing on a homogenous, global "uniform curriculum" and English medium education. For instance, the education available to the young generation in Pakistan today does not address urgent and serious issues like sectarian conflicts which need immediate critical attention and understanding by youth in the country.

Sustaining internal sectarian conflicts becomes integral for the functioning of the colonial and imperial goals including the imposition of market-obsessed neoliberal development projects, because the violence inside Pakistan makes it easier for the US to justify its intervention in the name of making peace in the country. Hence, the internal conflicts and violence within a state

actually contributes to deepening of economic and social instabilities and inequalities and allows “capitalism to feed upon” Pakistani society. David Harvey (2003) in his book *The New Imperialism* notes that a deliberate base was already established for the unequal growth and unequal economic development in the world. The bases for inequality in economic growth were drawn through the colonial system and ongoing imperial system to maintain unequal economic growth, social imbalance in the form of communal violence inside the state to allow the West to interfere and intervene. The US benefits from and exploits the internal conflicts among Muslim countries. For instance, Harvey (2003) explains that the US invasion of Iraq was based on their intention to control oil, but the US exploited the conflict between Iraq and Iran, and internal conflicts in Iraq, to do so.

However, what Harvey (2003) does not mention explicitly is the significance of the Shi’a-Sunni conflict in Muslim countries. The conflict between Iraq where about 45-50% population is Shi’a and Iran (Shi’a) works in favor of the US in their mission of accumulation of capital. Harvey does not look at the conflict between both the countries in terms of sectarian violence. Not identifying Iran as a Shi’a country and Iraq as (50% Shi’a, 50% Sunni) obscures the very real terms of the social conflict that provides the grounds for imperial intervention and violence via the imperial rhetoric of peace and development. The Western narrative of saving Muslims from each other is very common in the Western mainstream media. But this narrative, taken out of its relation to imperial interests and violence is just as one-sided as the idea of two Muslim countries or sects fighting each other. Thus, we need a framework that foregrounds the mutual constitution of imperial and sectarian violence, and understands its historically-shifting terms.

Conclusion:

Pakistan has long been of geopolitical interest to the US because Pakistan is surrounded by major countries that the US is interested in controlling for a variety of political economic reasons: Afghanistan, Iran, China, and India. Understanding the conflict in Pakistan with regards to its geopolitics, helps us understand how similar intervention patterns as Iraq were followed by the US to sustain power and control within Pakistan with its fluctuating partnerships and “friendships” with various Pakistani leaders like Zia-ul-Haq, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Pervez Musharraf.

Despite its orchestration of imperial violence, the US also projects itself as supporting progressive “educational reforms” for “peace building” projects. As I have shown in this chapter, Education is not a uniquely Western gift. In fact, teaching and learning is a vital part of Islamic history and traditions. Rather the Western gift to Pakistan is the collusion with Sunni forces to transform Madrassahs toward feeding violent imperial and Sunni interests. The Pakistan state also hides from its people the complex systems of power where the US provides millions of dollars to the military in Pakistan to divide, displace and kill its own people, resulting in more attacks and violence in the country. Following on similar ideas, discussed in this chapter, the next chapter will provide an in-depth analysis of education policy documents to show how state-supported discriminatory laws against Shi’a Muslims and other religious minority groups is reflected in the education system.

Chapter IV: State pedagogies of Sectarian Violence: Analysis of Educational Policy Documents and Textbooks

Introduction: Systematic Othering of Shi'a Muslims in Pakistani Education System

Thus far, I have argued that, although Pakistan owes its initial constitution to a Shi'a leadership, the Sunnization of the state progressed quickly since the 1970s and saw a sharp rise under the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. US imperial interests since the Cold War onwards provided the monetary and military support Sunni leaders needed in order to deepen sectarian violence in Pakistan. In the aftermath of 9/11, the US promotes amnesia about its historical role in fostering violence in the region while representing its ongoing imperial interventions in terms of bringing peace and development.

This chapter continues to demonstrate the gradual and systematic othering of Shi'a Muslims and Sunnization of the Pakistani state by focusing on the education system in Pakistan. Having demonstrated how the US imparted what scholars call "jihad literacy" in order to mobilize support for their war against Soviet encroachment in the region, in this chapter, I consider the regional context and manifestation of this violent and exclusionary use of education. As Pakistani feminist scholar Rubina Saigol (2005) notes, nation-states use the education system to form collective national identities and a sense of collective national belonging (p. 1006). Pakistan is no exception. However, in this chapter, I ask how Pakistani education has been the site for cultivating sectarian violence even though education is widely hailed as an institution of nation-building, peace and development within and beyond Pakistan.

Why Punjab?

In this chapter, my object of analysis is the National Curricula of Pakistan (2006), National Education Policy (2009-2017) and the current National Educational Policy (2017-

2025), as well as textbooks that reflect these policies and curricular goals to examine the ongoing sectarian violence. I show that the state-supported discriminatory laws against Shi'a Muslims and other religious minority groups is clearly reflected in the education system. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on the Textbooks published by the Punjab Textbooks Board. These textbooks are widely available and used in public schools, not only in the ethnically-dominant Sunni province of Punjab, but also in schools in Gilgit-Baltistan. As noted earlier, this is the only Shi'a majority region in Pakistan and it does not have its own textbook board, and as dominant forces would have it, Gilgit-Baltistan educational forces follow books published by Punjab Textbook Board, because these textbooks are affordable and easily available in the markets of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Even though sectarian violence is not confined to Punjab province only, Pakistan is dominated by the Sunni-Punjabi ethnicity, which influences state narratives and nationalist ideologies. The centrality of Punjab to the Sunni state is in part apparent at the level of demographics: approximately 60% of Pakistan's population lives in Punjab, of which 99% are Muslims and majority of them are Sunni Muslims (Bahadur, 2007). More importantly, as Ian Talbot (2002) argues, the historical importance of Punjab lies in the "colonial patterns of economic development, military recruitment and administration" (Talbot, 2002. P. 53), set in place during colonialism and reproduced in independent Pakistan. For example, according to the 1951 census, the Punjabi population was one-fourth of the total population of Pakistan but occupied 80% of the posts in the army (Jaffrelot, 2002, p. 16). Further, I have already accounted for the significance of the military to Pakistani state-formation, and the Sunni domination among army personnel and officials, which put together provides distinct evidence of Punjabi Sunni military power in Pakistan. As Talbot notes, Punjab province remains the "home of the Pakistani

Army” (Talbot, 2002, p. 52) and continues to dominate major state offices, developmental funds, and developmental projects (Talbot, 2002). Let us consider then how this fact manifests in the education sector.

Structure of Education System in Pakistan: Public, Private, and Madrassah Schools

There are three types of major schooling systems in Pakistan. First, private English-Medium elite schools which follow their own curriculum in accordance with Cambridge and International Baccalaureate Boards of Education. These schools are mostly attended by upper class, urban, elite Pakistani students. Second, public and semi-private school system which is what most of my analysis in this thesis focuses on. This form of schooling follows the National Curriculum of Pakistan revised in 2006 and 2010. These schools educate the vast majority of the Pakistani population. Third, the system of education in Madrassah schools which has a complex form and relationship to the state. As discussed in Chapter Two, Madrassah schools prior to partition were an important way of teaching and learning how to lead a Muslim life. However, the system of Madrassah school was drastically changed by Zia-ul-Haq with the support of the United States during the Soviet war in Afghanistan (Ali, 2010). Over the last ten years, Madrassah schools have increased in number (Nasr, 2002). As discussed, (see Chapter Two), many of the newer Sunni Madrassah schools were funded by Saudi Arabia and outnumber the newer Shi’a Madrassah schools which were funded by Iran (Hunter, 2020) and articulate the geopolitical interest in sectarian conflict within Pakistan. Nasr (2007) notes that Iranian financial support for Shi’a “activism” dried up by the year 1990 because they realized that their small numbers would not win against the Sunni. Currently in Pakistan, some of the Madrassah schools function autonomously or are affiliated with the private Madrassah education board. The majority of Madrassah school students come from low-income families. The curriculum

followed and textbooks taught in many of these schools are not evaluated and monitored by any state organizations.

These three schooling systems have unequal access to resources, facilities and serve different socio-economic classes of people in Pakistan. Elite English-medium private schools are for the elite class, the public schools are mostly for the lower-middle class and Madrassah schools cater to mostly poor children in different rural parts of the country. The elite private schools are mostly located in larger cities like Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, etc.

Sites of Analysis Within the Education System

The National Education Policy

The Education Policy documents lay out the planning and implementation for the development of education federally for all provinces in Pakistan. So far, ten educational policy documents have outlined the design for different political time-periods since Partition in 1947 (Siddiqui, 2016, p. 3). Given the way in which my research coincided with the pandemic, I have had to rely on materials available online. Out of ten, only three of these policy documents are accessible online. These are Educational Policy 1998-2010 (Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif), National Educational Policy 2009-2017 (Prime Minister, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani), and the most recent National Educational Policy 2019-2027 (Prime Minister, Imran Khan (2018-2022) Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif (2022-present). As a result, for an understanding of policy documents from other time periods, I have had to rely on secondary sources. In this chapter, I am focusing on the most recent Educational Policies because they are readily available and pandemic restrictions made it impossible for me to access the others. Beyond the restrictions of the pandemic, these are also interesting and instructive documents because they demonstrate the education in sectarian violence during a phase of recent Pakistani

history, when the US has ostensibly been invested in Pakistani education for the purpose of fostering peace and development.

National Curriculum of Pakistan

Prior to 2010, the development of the National Curriculum of Pakistan was the responsibility of the Curriculum Wing of Pakistan which was associated with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MEFP) (Hunter, 2020). After the passing of 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 and as part of the wider decentralization process (typically associated with neoliberal state policies), the Federal Ministry of Education was abolished, making each province responsible for developing their own curriculum and textbooks (Afzal, 2018, p. 81). Establishment of 18th Amendment was part of the decentralization process, which was passed on the April 8, 2010, by the National Assembly of Pakistan to reverse changes made by military leaders Zia-ul-Haq (i.e., addition of 8th amendment) and Pervez Musharraf. It includes removing of power of the President of Pakistan to dissolve the Parliament unilaterally turning Pakistan from semi-presidential to parliamentary republic. However, the provinces are yet to develop their own curriculum. Hence, all the provinces are still following the federally-developed National Curriculum 2006 (Afzal, 2018). The policy of decentralization thus exists in name, rather than in practice. With the Establishment of 18th Amendment, as part of the decentralization plan, the federal government was responsible for providing funds to provinces for education purposes (Abbas & Asim, 2018). However, the major portion of funds needed for educational development at the provincial level was fulfilled by the provincial tax revenues (Abbas & Asim, 2018) which freed federal government from their responsibility and accountability for unequal distribution of educational funds within different district levels in different provinces. While decentralization of the curriculum was in name only, decentralization

did have the neoliberal effects of putting the responsibility of funding public school education primarily in provincial hands.

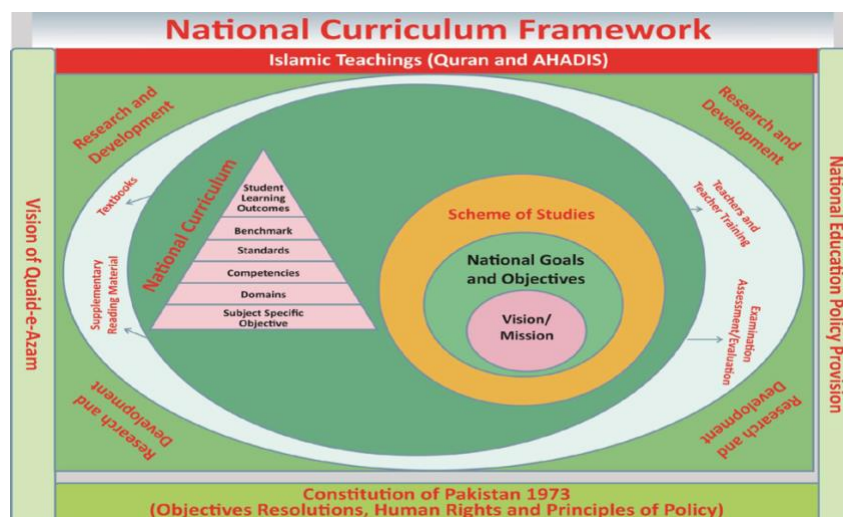
The National Curriculum of Pakistan was first written in 1970 and it is uniformly accepted and followed in all public and some private schools. There is a curriculum for each subject at all grade levels “which reflects the course of studies in terms of the content and activities to be covered within a stipulated time-period (Siddiqui, 2016, p. 203). Textbooks reflecting this curriculum and courses of study for each of the subjects are developed separately by each province.

National Curriculum Framework

Like other nation-states, Pakistan too has used its education system to foster unity in the context of diversity. Within the initial context of postcolonial nation-state formation and subsequently in the context of decentralization, the state of Pakistan felt the need to make sure there is cohesion across provinces in Pakistan.

As the Federal Minister of Education noted in the National Curriculum Framework in 2010, “after the devolution of education to provinces under 18th Constitutional Amendment, uniformity in curricula and standards has become a matter of great concern” (p. v). Therefore, National Curriculum Council (NCC) was formed by the provinces collectively which consisted of three (anonymous) members from each province to come up with ‘The National Curriculum Framework’. “The National Curriculum Framework provides broader guidelines on the development of subject curriculum, instructional delivery system, assessment and testing system and professional development of teachers” (NCF, p. v).

Following is a diagram provided in the National Curriculum Framework (page xiii) to different educational policy documents.



The given diagram is not explained in the curriculum framework document. From the pictorial representation of the diagram, it seems like the curriculum outlines student learning outcomes, standards, competencies etc., for textbooks. Scheme of Studies are developed under the broader guidance of the National Curriculum framework, National Educational Policy, and Constitution of Pakistan 1973. The NCF notes that the “curriculum framework that is developed nationally in consultation with all the federating units is the answer to all these narratives which should be based on the ideals of the founder of the nation i.e., Unity, Faith and Discipline” (National Curriculum Framework, p. 7).

School Textbooks

Pakistani school textbooks are written by provincial textbook boards. The following are the major Textbooks boards responsible for reviewing and approving of textbooks in provinces of Pakistan: Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB); Sindh Textbook Board; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board; and Baluchistan Textbook Board, Quetta. Even though Baluchistan province has its own textbook board, Maidha Afzal (2018) notes that they use textbooks from Punjab (p. 116). According to a blog post by Abul Khaliq on ‘Balochistan

Voices', Baluchistan Textbook Board (BTBB) has not been able to update their textbooks to provide to their students with updated knowledge. For instance, some of their books have not been revised since 1993. The Minister for Education for Baluchistan was quoted in *The Express Tribune* as saying, "not a single PhD or a competent officer is available to review the textbooks or carry out monitoring and evaluation and hence, we are compelled to teach the textbooks of Punjab" (Baloch, 2014). Gilgit Baltistan also does not have their own textbook board, in their case, due to political instability. They use the textbooks published by PCTB which in turn was developed based on the National Curriculum of Pakistan. Thus, there are multiple reasons from neglect to instability that demonstrate the Sunni's state's interest in ensuring that predominantly Shi'a regions are educated in Sunni-dominant textbooks written by the Punjab board in alignment with the national curriculum. In this, the structure of the state ensures that Shi'a education is also rooted in anti-Shi'a bias.

It is also important to note that the textbooks do not mention Shi'a Muslims as a religious minority nor is there a mention of Shiism as a branch of Islam that is different from Sunni Islam. Only non-Muslim religious minorities i.e., Christians, Hindu, Ahmadi etc., are referred to as minorities in Pakistani textbooks. This is the case even though the version of Islam in Pakistani textbooks is predominantly Sunni, and systematically excludes Shi'a epistemologies and ways of being. This lack of legibility of Shi'a as minority is a crucial method of making sure Shi'a concerns do not register as problems and thus remain invisible to public and policy-makers.

During the 1990s, Sunni militants demanded that Shi'a Muslims should be declared non-Muslims, saying that "they could live in Pakistan but could not call their places of worship mosques and would have to accept the laws that govern non-Muslim minorities" (Nasr, 2007, p. 168). Shi'a Muslims are thus very much treated as minorities and othered by the state, but they

do not have any of the benefits of protection that an official minority might receive. The problem with not mentioning Shi'a Muslims as a minority in textbooks allows for the state to conveniently skip over having to explain the diversity within Islam and of Muslims living in Pakistan. Not categorized as minority, Shi'a Muslims are nonetheless expected to assimilate into Sunni versions of Islam, ignoring their own differences when the textbooks provide Sunni interpretations of Islam.

For my research, I have focused on Social Studies, History and Pakistan Studies subjects from grade four to twelve because these are the grades where students are introduced to history, culture, politics, geography, and other social aspects in the country through subjects like Social Studies, History and Pakistan Studies textbooks. Abdul Majeed Abid, a Pakistani freelance journalist who writes on social issues in Pakistan notes, “textbooks for history and “social studies” (mixture of history, civics, and geography) are supposed to be the first step towards a social conscience” (2018). In the case of Pakistan, I am trying to understand, what does it mean for the kind of social conscience being taught if textbooks systematically exclude religious minorities and their ways of being and their epistemologies? The content covered in the History, Social Studies, and Pakistan Studies textbooks, the debates on social issues that are taught in these subjects in school are fundamental to students from grade four to grade twelve. Pakistan Studies is a compulsory subject to students from grade nine to undergraduate level. History is mostly included as part of Pakistan Studies, although some examination boards offer it as a separate subject. Social Studies is a compulsory subject taught from grade three to grade eight.

Educational institutions in Pakistan and Pakistani scholars like N. H. Nayyar (2013), Rubina Saigol (2005), Pervez Hoodbhoy (1998) have often debated the quality of state-published textbooks (under the PCTB) and national curricula, with some consistently arguing for

improvements and revisions to make it free of discriminatory content against religious minorities. Pakistani historians and educationists like Ayesha Jalal (1995) and Rubina Saigol (2005) have criticized the National Curricula and textbooks as a source of segregating religious minorities in the country and for distorting the Pakistan Movement and history of partition of India and Pakistan. For instance, the idea that Pakistan was formed only based on the conflict between Hindu and Muslims is common in textbooks.

Saigol (2005) believes that a predominant concern for religious minorities is that the idea of “other” [anyone except Sunni Muslim] is represented in textbooks as unworthy of being a Pakistani citizen. She argues the idea of singular self is constructed as opposed to multiple Others. The enemies of Pakistan are named as follows: “the wide variety of Pakistan’s reliable enemies includes the Hindus, Christians, Jews, Sikhs and finally the enemies within- the regional, religious and ethnic minorities which threaten to once again rupture the fabric of national oneness” (Saigol, 2005, P. 1008). The chronology of othering started with the non-Muslim other, then came the Ahmadi who were a Muslim minority sect in Pakistan prior to 1970s, and constitutionally declared non-Muslims by the 1970s, and now it is the Shi’a Other. This steady process of state-formation as Sunni-formation and consolidation is recognizable in the textbooks right from the start.

The Representation of Jinnah in School Textbooks

Khan and Yousuf (2011) note that “educational content can also be used deliberately to pursue a particular agenda or create a sense of deprivation among students. Learning material can emphasise a particular version of history a worldview that may create an exclusionary and discriminatory mindset” (p. 153). The Pakistani school textbooks present a very orthodox religious representation of Mohammad Ali Jinnah who is also known as the founder of Pakistan

and is frequently quoted in Pakistan Studies, History, and Social Studies textbooks. The context of his speeches and references to complete speeches are not provided for students to read for themselves and critically think about them. The pattern of distorting Jinnah's speeches is apparent in all History and Social Studies textbooks, across all grade levels. The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 12 published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board quotes the following three excerpts from Jinnah's speeches from different events, under the heading "Quaid-e-Azam (*Rahmatullah Alaigh*) [may Allah's blessing be upon him] and Ideology of Pakistan".

Jinnah: "What is that relation which has made Muslim a single body? What is that rock on which the structure of *millat* [nation/ community] is restored? What is that base which has secured the safety of the boat of this *millat*? That relation, rock and base is the Holy *Quran*." (p.1)

Jinnah: "I want not to see you to talk as Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi and Bengali. What is the fun of saying that we are Punjabi, Sindhi or Pathan? We are only Muslims." (p.1)

Jinnah: "What was the motive of the demand for Pakistan and a separate electorate for Muslims? What was the need of the division of India? Its cause is neither the narrow mindedness of Hindus nor the tactics of Britishers, but it's the basic demand of Islam?" (p. 2)

From these three excerpts we can readily outline three concerns. First, *Rahmatullah Alaigh* (may Allah's blessing be upon him) is used for Islamic religious leaders and Jinnah was not a religious leader and he never claimed to be one. Second, the above passages from Jinnah's speeches erase the diversity in Islam because "Muslims" cannot be a "single body" because Islam is not a unified homogenous group as this decontextualized excerpt of his words portray.

In Saigol's words (2005) not only are Muslims "different across countries [which is] patently obvious, within each country there are differences by sect, ethnicity, caste, class and language" (p. 1019).

Third, this also indicates that to be a Pakistani citizen, it is compulsory for everyone to put their religion first and forces the idea that the "single body" which brings Pakistani citizens together should be Islam, anyone who is not a Muslim is also already excluded. As Shi'a Muslim feminist scholar Shaista Patel (2019) notes, "not all people who are considered Pakistanis by the census or the government see themselves as Pakistanis." Moreover, not everyone who considers themselves Muslim Pakistanis are considered Muslim by the state or religious scholars supported by the state. If this is what Jinnah wanted, what happens to Jinnah's first important address to the people of Pakistan in 1947 which is also quoted in textbooks, where he gave the utmost importance to all religious minorities as equal citizens and to keep religion separate from state affairs?

In his study of school textbooks, Nayyar (2013) shows that the textbooks twist Jinnah's speech from August 11, 1947 to make it look like Jinnah was only asking for rights of religious minorities and that the religion of any citizens would not affect the state affairs. This misinterprets the most important point Jinnah made in his speech which was that religion itself should have nothing to do with the business of the state (Nayyar, 2013, p. 41). What we see happened after Jinnah died is the other way around where religion has become the basis for state affairs in Pakistan. As noted earlier, Ayesha Jalal (1995) argues that Jinnah's idea of Pakistan was not a theocratic one. For example, the following speech by Jinnah is also left out in textbooks:

“make no mistake. Pakistan is not a theocracy or anything like it. Islam demands from us the tolerance of other creeds and we welcome in closest association with us all those who of whatever creed, are themselves willing and ready to play their part as true and loyal citizens of Pakistan” (Jinnah quoted in Jalal, 1995, p. 181).

Afzal (2018) reinforces this point when she commenting on Jinnah’s 11 August speech on equal rights for minorities, she notes that Jinnah also emphasised on separation between religion and state affairs in the same speech, even though the latter is often left out of textbooks (p. 85).

The narrow interpretation of Islam and Pakistan in textbooks assumes an undifferentiated Islam. Given the historical context of Sunni power described in previous chapters, it is not speculation to note that it can only be Sunni Muslims holding dominant state and social power who can confidently bring in Jinnah’s perspectives to fit their own narrative of Islam as a “single body,” thereby deliberately erasing diverse Muslim groups in Pakistan. Textbooks tend to represent exclusionary interpretations of issues and historical struggles. For example, in a Grade 9th Pakistan Studies Textbook (2019-2020) the chapter on “Ideological Basis for Pakistan” focuses on religious education. On the topic of the “Basis of the Ideology of Pakistan” the text focuses on explaining “Beliefs and Prayers” (page 5-6). Even though the textbook does not explicitly indicate that the “beliefs and prayers” mentioned are referred to Sunni beliefs and prayers, but considering how religious minorities are judged and othered for practicing their prayers and belief differently and openly, it was obvious, that the textbook is insisting on Sunni ‘beliefs and prayers’. If we recall Jinnah’s words at the founding of the secular republic of this Islamic nation, he said,

“We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shi’as, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khattris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on, will vanish... Indeed if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain the freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free people long ago....”¹⁵

Considering this, the focus on religion as the ideological basis of Pakistan already discriminates against Hindus, Christians, Ahmadi and other religious groups who are not Sunni Muslims. This is the issue throughout many history textbooks for different grade levels. Focusing on Sunni Islam in textbooks without mentioning it as a Sunni interpretation of Islam, normalizes and dominates other interpretations of Islam and invalidates and excludes those who do not agree to the dominant Sunni teachings of Islam.

It is also important to note that Jinnah did not declare Pakistan a “Islamic republic”. The first constitution (1956) declared Pakistan an Islamic republic. The second constitution (1962) was not initially called an Islamic republic. It was only with an amendment to the second constitution in 1963 that the Islamic republic came into being (Rabbi & Badshah, 2018). The 1973 constitution was the only constitution to be formed by an elected assembly during Bhutto’s period which was initially a combination of British and Islamic laws (Rabbi & Badshah, 2018). When Zia came to power in 1977, he made major changes to it, including changing Pakistani criminal law by introducing Islamic laws (Rabbi & Badshah, 2018). It is also important to mention that Zia made Pakistan Studies courses compulsory for all students working towards any

¹⁵ Jinnah’s full speech appears in Chapter Two

degree (Afzal, 2018). Prior to Zia's period (1977), "no textbook contained any mention of "Pakistan ideology" (Afzal, 2018, p. 76). Hence who can be called a Muslim, to what degree and who can be excluded are issues that are grounded in the constitution of 1973, which enshrined sectarian politics of the Sunni state.

The five "pillars of Islam" are mentioned as part of the "Elements of Ideology of Pakistan" in Pakistan Studies Textbooks for grade 9 – 2021-2022 (p. 8). It states that the third pillar is Zakat, fourth pillar is Fasting, and the fifth pillar is Hajj. The Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Mecca is considered the holiest city for Muslims and Hajj, according to Sunni faith, is an obligation on every Muslims at least once in their lifetime. For Shi'a Muslims, pilgrimage to Karbala, Iraq is equally important. Shi'a Muslims visit Karbala every year in the month of Mahram, following Ashura, for the commemoration of martyrdom of the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Imam Hussain. Similarly, according to the Sunni interpretation of Islam, fasting is an obligation whereas for some Shi'a branches of Islam, it is an individual choice. As an Ismaili Shi'a, growing up in Pakistan, we had to hide if we were fasting or not due to judgements from Sunni peers in schools, colleges, and workplace. School textbooks feed and entrench these homogenous narratives of Islamic ways of life in society, thereby excluding Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadi and other religious minorities.

The 48th spiritual leader of Shi'a Ismaili Muslims, Sultan Muhammad Shah known as Sir Aga Khan led a delegation to meet the Viceroy of India, Lord Minto in 1906 in Shimla to demand separate electorate for Muslims. He was also one of the prominent leaders alongside Jinnah and Iqbal in the 'Pakistan Movement' as mentioned in Chapter Three. It is only as recently as 2021-22, that a Pakistan Studies textbook makes note of the contributions of Sir Aga Khan to the Pakistan Movement. Published by Punjab Textbook Board, a Grade 9 textbook

mentions the “Simla Deputation 1906” (page 21) where the Aga Khan’s contributions are acknowledged along with his picture. This is important as Rubina Saigol (2005) notes, “history, as taught in the middle and high schools in Pakistan, is the tool of official remembering. It determines how we remember, whom we choose to forget, how we choose to forget and what we must, for our survival in Otherness, remember” (Saigol, 2005). The Pakistan state strategically shapes students’ interest in and understanding of “Pakistani ideology” as collective national identity. All of this provides the epistemic foundation for the Sunni state to not only ignore its responsibility for and accountability to Shi’a citizens and other minorities for the discrimination and violence they face, but also to assimilate all citizens into Sunni supremacist epistemology.

As noted, the Islamization process of Zia-ul-Haq was a major turning point in the Shi’a-Sunni conflict. The Pakistan Studies Textbooks for grade 10, in the chapter “History of Pakistan” the topic of “Major Aspects of the Islamization Process during 1977-88” [General Zia-ul-Haq period] provides a list of Zia’s new laws, for example, the setting up of Shariah Courts, Zakat and Ushra Ordinance, prayers arrangement in all educational institutions and public offices, etc., (p. 12-13). There is absolutely no mention, not even in the smallest way, in these textbooks that the time-period of 1977-88 and these new laws were the beginning of the overt hatred and violence against not only non-Muslim religious minorities but also Shi’a Muslims in the country. The textbooks fail to discuss the effects of these laws altogether. Paulo Freire (1993) calls this kind of education the “banking concept of education” where students are treated as empty vessels to dump information into which prevents students from developing critical thinking skills to make their own judgements on social issues.

According to the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, “2.5% of Zakat is deducted from the bank accounts of all the Muslims on the first of Ramazan every year” (Pakistan Studies 10, PCTB, p.

13). According to Sunni interpretation of Islam, Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, according to which, for every Muslim who earns above a certain amount of income, it is a religious obligation to donate 2.5% of their income each year. Zia made Zakat legally mandatory. Textbook accounts of Zakat follow the Sunni understanding. This went against the Shi'a faith because for Shi'a Muslims the collection and distribution of Zakat is different from the Sunni interpretation. For example, Shi'a Ismaili Muslims (different from the Shi'a interpretations of Islam) in present time, give to their faith-based organizations "between 10% or 12.5% of one's net income and the South Asian Ismailis tend to use the word "dassondh" (dasond) (meaning one-tenth)" (Ismaili Gnosis, 2018). Zia decided to exempt Shi'a Muslims from Zakat Ordinance policy after strong protest from Shi'a Muslims. However, because Zia failed to institutionally recognize and validate Shi'a modes of Zakat, this made Shi'a seem non-Muslim for not upholding one of the five pillars of Islam. This contributed to further making Shi'a Muslims vulnerable to discrimination and violence because these laws made it easier for Sunni and extremist groups to identify Shi'a in Pakistan (Nasr, 1996).

Despite the significance of Pakistan Studies throughout school years, nowhere in the textbooks do children read or reflect on Zia-ul-Haq's role in institutionalizing discriminatory laws, state allocation of resources, and official positions that marginalized Shi'a Muslims and other non-Muslim religious minorities. Additionally, as we have seen previously, the central government started to strengthen different Sunni institutions, such as the Sunni Madrassahs which were provided funding to start curriculum reforms, and new Madrassah schools were established to allow more Sunni Madrassah graduates to take roles in public positions (Nasr, 2002, p. 90).

Given these widespread changes, the omission of Zia's Sunnization of Pakistan state in textbooks has the effect of normalizing the telling of recent Pakistani history from the Sunni state's perspective which also normalizes the exclusion of Shi'a, Ahmadi and other religious minorities. Instead, later in the same chapter, "History of Pakistan", it is noted that "the services of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq are praiseworthy in Afghan Jihad. Pakistan was appreciated internationally for the successful Afghan policy" (p. 14). Zia-ul-Haq's distortion of the Pakistani constitution as well as turning Jinnah's vision of an inclusive Pakistan into a Sunni state can only be praiseworthy for the dominant Sunni group, and notably for US imperial interest of the time. This kind of representation of history misleads students and erases important historical processes and transnational relationships, which enabled the move toward Sunnization of the country.

Even the interpretations of history, politics, and geography leave traces of Sunni power and Sunnization of the Pakistani state. They are not neutral. The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 12, published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board reads like a textbook on Islamic history from the Sunni perspective. Critical Muslim Studies Shi'a Muslim feminist scholar, Shaista Patel (2019) says, "like all modern nation-states, diversity is mobilized only to support the narrative of we are united and for our country but these are dangerous lies that stand over bodies and lands of occupied, dispossessed, dead, and marginalized people(s)". In the case of Pakistan, this kind of lip service only serves and strengthens the Sunni narrative of unified Pakistani citizenship, and it erases Jinnah's idea of an inclusive Pakistan. These kinds of selective speeches emphasize that the narrative of a "good citizen" cannot be the one who identifies themselves as Balochi, Punjabi, or Sindhi. Rather, the idea of "good citizen" is solely based on being a "good Muslim". It is important to note here that, the idea of a "good citizen" is also understood to be a good Sunni Muslim. As Nosheen Ali (2008) in her study of the textbook

controversy' in Gilgit Baltistan notes, in the National Curriculum "the idealized and authorized Pakistani citizen is assumed to be the Sunni Muslim, while other ways of being Muslim are silenced" (p. 3).

A second way in which the Sunnization of the Pakistani state becomes apparent in textbooks is by presenting history as something unchanged since 1947. As Saigol (2005) rightly notes "the single most important lesson that history teaches is that change is inevitable and immutable" (1032). This means when textbooks glorify Jinnah's selective speeches, it becomes important to also focus on the historical context and scenarios in which that address was made instead of selecting pieces from speeches to conveniently support a certain national ideology in the present. Yet, this is precisely what the Sunni ideology has accomplished over time, particularly since Zia. While the "motive of the demand for Pakistan" might be on the "basis of Islam", it is also true that much has changed for Pakistanis in the last 80 years, for example with the separation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), with the Soviet war, 9/11 and a host of complex and multidimensional internal issues in Pakistan. This is important also with regard to the changing geopolitics of the world, especially since 9/11, in relation to Pakistan and Islam in general. Considering Muslims are routinely seen as one homogeneous group in global narratives, it becomes crucial for Pakistani textbooks (among others) to emphasize that Islam is a diverse religion with different theological interpretations, rather than representing Islam in textbooks from the perspective of Sunni faith alone. Ultimately, this kind of Sunnization potentially feeds into problematic global narratives about Islam and Muslims, whilst entrenching sectarianism at home.

Moreover, Pakistani scholars like Rubina Saigol (2005, 2010) have also helped us consider the importance of curriculum and pedagogical processes to teach students to think about

history (e.g., Jinnah's speeches) within a given historical context opening up possible interpretations about events and speeches from the past in light of more recent contexts and transformations. For instance, what would it mean to give students an opportunity to think about and question the difference between hoping for and projecting an imagined unity of Islamic Republic in the face of Hindu domination and violence during the time of partition versus the necessity of thinking through our relationships and differences "as Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi, and Bengali" in the postcolonial state-formation process? After all, once the formation of Pakistan was accomplished, it did become important to consider the rise in marginalization and violence against many ethnic groups within Pakistan by the Pakistani state.

Related to static representations of the historical formation of an Islamic Republic, the third way in which the Sunnization of the Pakistani state is insidiously promoted through Pakistani textbooks is in the way in which violence against minorities e.g., Bengalis, Balochi, Shi'a in Gilgit-Baltistan are represented in these textbooks. Bengalis are not even considered Pakistani anymore after the Bangladeshi war of Independence, and this is apparent in Pakistani textbooks such the Pakistan Studies Textbook for grade 9 that represent the Bangladeshi war of Independence as the Indian army supporting "rebels" (p. 54). Baloch are killed and disappeared since the 1948, for standing up to the state for their rights but there is no mention of it in the textbooks. People in Gilgit-Baltistan are deprived of their basic rights, and it is hard to believe that the neglect of these issues in textbooks on Pakistani history and society is not explained by the fact of Gilgit-Baltistan being a majority Shi'a region. Nasr (2007) argues that Gilgit-Baltistan, formally known as "Northern Areas" is not made an official province by the Pakistani state, partially because this would make the region the only majority Shi'a province in the country (p. 159). Both Gilgit-Baltistan and Baluchistan are mentioned in the Pakistan Studies

textbooks for grade 9, to represent the beauty of mountain ranges, salt lakes and rivers thereby objectifying their value to Pakistan in terms of its natural landscape, as if devoid of people and their specific histories.

The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 12 published by Punjab Textbook Board (2018) views “national Integration” and “cohesion” as based in a common religion. The textbook notes: “the common religion plays a very important role in creating national integration. If the population belongs to one religion, the chance of developing common nationality increases, which ensures national unity. The religion of Pakistan is Islam, which unites the people at the national level, and ensures solidarity of the people with the country” (p. 103). These definitions from the textbook undoubtedly go against Jinnah’s vision of how national integration should be formed “to ensure national unity” in the country. Instead, this definition supports Zia-ul-Haq’s agenda of “creating a common national identity” (Rabbi & Badshah, 2018, p. 42) based on a Sunni version of Islam through his Islamization process. As Nasr (2007) also notes “mainstream Sunni fundamentalists had always preferred to treat Shiism as a misguided interpretation of Islam and had sought to persuade Shi’a to accept the truth of Sunni views of reinterpreting Shi’a narratives and doctrine in accord with Sunni readings of Islam and the ideal of Muslim unity” (p. 163). It is evident that only a Sunni dominant state can allow its curriculum and textbooks to interpret “cohesion” and “national integration” on the basis of a “common religion” (by which they mean Sunni Islam). There is no room for Jinnah’s idea of secularism here where the entire population of a country did not have to belong to one religion to ensure “national unity”.

Consider the effect of this religion-based understanding of national integration on textbook representations of the Bangladeshi war of Independence. Notwithstanding India’s role in the conflict (Murshid, 2011), the formation of Bangladesh through a war of Independence

from Pakistan in 1971 demonstrates that a “common religion” offers no default route to national integration if cultural difference within the nation provides no route to national belonging. Even though East Pakistan was a Muslim majority part of Pakistan, the freedom movement of East Pakistan started based on their resistance against the Urdu language and making Bangla their national language. The partition of East Pakistan in 1971 is an important event in the history of Pakistan which is conveniently skipped from textbooks because it does not support the state's interpretation of the "ideology of Pakistan". Islam as used by the Pakistani state failed to play a role in “national integration” in the case of Bangladesh. Instead, language took precedence. Bangladeshi war of Independence is thus an important example of how tying common religion to “national integration” promotes a false narrative, including through Pakistani textbooks.

Whilst representing violence against minorities in this way, a fourth way in which the Sunnization of Pakistan is promoted in textbooks is by providing inaccurate content to show religious minorities are protected in the country. For example, the Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 10, published by the Punjab Textbook Board mentions that “the constitution of Pakistan gives complete protection to the minorities. Along with religious uniformity in Pakistan there is religious toleration as well” (104). While the Sunni state continues to marginalize and criminalize religious minorities including teachers, students, and minors, Shi’a artists and activists (Hashim, 2020) for textbooks to claim religious tolerance in Pakistan shows the Sunni state’s hypocrisy. The Pakistan Studies textbook for grade 10 mentions, “...according to the constitution, they [religious minorities] have full rights. They have complete liberty to worship according to their religion, perform customs, transit and publish their religious principles and set up their own religious organizations” (p. 116). Even the Blasphemy law does not match this false textbook claim of religious inclusivity.

The use of the Blasphemy law demonstrates the widespread lack of tolerance of the Sunni state. In January 2021, a college teacher was sentenced to 10 years in jail for a lecture he had delivered in the classroom which the state considered “blasphemous” (Aljazeera, 2021). The details of the lecture he delivered are unknown. In Karachi city, the city known as the “financial hub of Pakistan”, in September 2020 alone, at least four large anti-Shi’a rallies were held by different Sunni groups. The fact that extremists Sunni religious groups gather in thousands, to publicly demonstrate against Shi’a Muslims in the country, chanting slogans like “Shi’a Kafir” (Shi’a infidels) without any fear of the police or the army shows that the sectarian Sunni worldview and interests are protected by the state. If Shi’a gathered in thousands to chant about the infidelity of Sunnis, it is not just speculation to say that the army and police would not tolerate that. Since August 2020, at least five Shi’a Muslims were killed, more than 30 blasphemy cases were registered against Shi’a Muslims, at least one Shi’a religious gathering was attacked by radical Sunni religious groups (Mirza, 2020). On social media, anti-Shi’a hashtags have been trending, including the hashtag “Shi’a Kafir” (Shi’a infidel) (Mirza, 2020). As reported by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), the number of blasphemy cases recorded in the year 2020 was at 200—the highest so far and of these cases, 70% were filed against Shi’a, 20% against Ahmadi, 3.5% against Christians, 1% against Hindus and the other 5% are not known (The News). While the Shi’a and other minorities are censored and terrorized by the state, for textbooks to assert that Pakistan is inclusive and religious minorities have full and equal rights shows the state’s inauthenticity, ignorance, and biases.

While studying the textbook for Pakistan Studies for grades 9 and 10 published by the the Punjab Textbook Board, I came across brief mentions of the struggles and participation of non-Muslim religious minorities like Sikhs and Hindus in the partition of 1947. The Pakistan Studies

Textbook for grade ten mentions “Role of Minorities in Pakistan” briefly lists the contributions of non-Muslims religious minorities in the development of Pakistan. However, the list does not specify who belongs to which religious community. For example, the textbook mentions the names of AR Cornelius (Christian), the chief justice of Supreme Court and helped compile the 1973 constitution, Badi-uz-Zaman Kakaos, Judge of Supreme Court for eight years, Rana Bhagwan Das (Hindu), the judge in Supreme Court, Doctor Abdus Salam (Ahmadi) who has contributed to the Physics field, alongside some military men, sports persons and doctors and others who have contributed in their respective fields in Pakistan as non-Muslim Pakistanis (Page 118). Sir Aga Khan and Jinnah are not mentioned as Shi’a Muslim leaders in the list of minorities. This inclusion without naming and positioning the groups they belong to allows the state to claim representation, without any substantial recognition for the community histories that enable such contributions. With the community remaining nameless, the Pakistani state is able to simply include a few exceptional individuals who are celebrated and tokenized as celebrity minorities. Saigol (2005) argues that such tokenistic representation of minorities in textbooks “play some role in the construction of us versus them” (p. 1008) and the separate mention of the "Role of Minorities" implies that their contributions are not of equal value to the primary contributions of Sunni Muslims in Pakistan, whilst also marking and defining the non-Muslim.

At the same time, textbooks also make it a point to differentiate minorities by addressing their role minimalistically in Pakistani history in separated sections. It is emphasized in the textbooks that the constitution of Pakistan protects the rights of minorities, “to obtain government employment, the minorities have the same rights as Muslims” (Textbook for grade 10). Some might argue that mentioning the contribution of minority religious groups separately in textbooks is an inclusive step to acknowledge the participation of non-Muslim leaders in the

partition process. However, as Saigol (2005) argues, a mere mention is inadequate compared to the chunks and chapters glorifying usually Sunni war heroes of Islam. Inclusion by adding and stirring is tokenization rather than effective inclusion, and this is especially the case in the face of foundational exclusion of worldviews, perspectives, ethnicities that are considered non-Islamic and therefore not Pakistani. Moreover, given such imbalanced representations of Sunni vs Shi'a and non-Muslim religious minority contributions, compared to the overall biased glorification of the freedom movement and Sunni-dominant Pakistani identity, the mere mention of minorities at the end of each textbook such as the Pakistan Studies textbooks for grade 9 and 10 published by the Punjab Textbook Board, with a separate heading of "non-Muslims" role in Pakistan movement and contribution to Pakistani development serves to defuse criticism and resistance rather than representing the value of differences in the Pakistani society.

The textbooks represent the Muslim self as clean and brave and all the other religious groups against them. Saigol (2010) mentions that non-Muslims supported and fought for Muslims in different events in history such as in the revolt of 1857 many non-Muslims fought alongside Muslims (Saigol, 2010, p. 1018). This aspect of historical representation of minorities is not to be seen in textbooks. In the current content, those whom the Sunni state considers enemies within (such as the Shi'a minority) are also seen as the biggest threat to the Muslim unity. Inconveniently for the Sunni state, Shi'a were also at the forefront of many historical movements as explained in Chapter Two, and yet they are practically non-existent in textbooks.

Having studied in schools that followed the National Curriculum of Pakistan, we were taught from the textbooks published by the Punjab Textbook Board, and some books published by publishing companies like Oxford University Press (OUP). Now as I gain an understanding of the colonial history and the history of the India-Pakistan partition and "Pakistan movement" for

my master's thesis research, I reflect back to the time when I was in school. Most of what we learned as history was incorporated into 'Pakistan Studies' which was full of the kinds of inaccurate, and romanticized historical events that I have recounted above. Moreover, compared to the time I was in school, the textbooks today have hardly changed. This shows the lack of effort by the state to improve the quality of textbooks in light of current debates and scholarship, or to make them more inclusive, free of discrimination, and inaccurate information. Our teachers (mostly Shi'a Ismaili) who covered Pakistan Studies would frequently point out the inaccurate representations of political leaders in textbooks, even while continuously encouraging us to write inaccurate information provided in the textbook for the annual examinations so that we would score well in the exams which would not be marked by those Shi'a teachers, but outside the school itself. This shows how the state manages to ensure that student participation and competition in a national and global economy requires subordinated citizens to reproduce sectarian views and inaccuracies serving the Sunni state.

Not unlike other parts in the world, in most public schools and some private schools which follow the national curriculum, teachers do not have the capacity to make changes to the curriculum content. Especially when it comes to enabling their students to score well in annual examinations, it is noteworthy that multiple national examination boards across Pakistan base their annual exams on the National Curriculum of Pakistan, and their students reproduce the content provided in books published under those examination boards. Added to that, not all teachers in public schools are well-trained and well-read on topics of partition and the Pakistan movement to be able to notice the inaccurate information in the textbooks. Also, based on my teaching experiences and my experiences of working with schoolteachers, while I was working in an examination board, it is even more challenging and dangerous for teachers belonging to a

minority religious group to give contrasting opinion than what is provided in the textbooks. In all these ways described above, the seemingly neutral projection of Islam in an Islamic republic, and seemingly inclusive discussion of minorities is actually contributing to the Sunnization of the state.

State Promoting Sectarian Violence

Undoubtedly, public education is important and directly influences social and political views, social understandings of citizenship and ideology. However, what is being taught in schools through curriculum and textbooks mutually shapes the kind of laws the state makes for the country because education in social norms helps make those laws acceptable. This relationship between education and the law was recently cited in a report published by the Pakistan National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) which states that the Pakistani government has failed in achieving the established goals of eradicating extremism considering they have not removed school textbooks that have readily identifiable and highly problematic “hate material” in them (Aqeel, 2016). According to a report published by the Minority Rights Group International, the general secretary of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (henceforth NCJP) for Pakistan, said “the education system in Pakistan is dominated by people having a particular religious ideology and extremist mindset. The people [dominant Sunni Muslims] desire this extremist ideology to be inculcated into the curriculum and thus manipulate the education system” (MRGI, 2014, p.128). Despite the claims around inclusivity and tolerance claimed about Pakistani ethos in the textbooks, thus far, there has been no action taken to address sectarian violence as promoted by the curriculum and textbooks. The points presented in the National Action Plan (see page 132) to work on eliminating religious extremism were not

implemented or worked on to remove “hate material” from the textbooks and curriculum and nor was strict action taken against people who spread hatred and extremism.

The state of Pakistan is not only cultivating ignorance when it comes to violence against Shi’a Muslims, but it is actively involved in deepening the sectarian divide by supporting laws that are biased towards Sunni Muslims. For example, in July 2020, the Punjab assembly passed the Tahaffuz-e-Bunyad-e-Islam Bill (Protection of Foundation of Islam), which recognizes the Sunni interpretation of Islam as the sole acceptable interpretation of Islam in Pakistan. The online news article published by *The Diplomat* noted that many members of the Punjab assembly voted in favor of the bill without even reading the bill (Shahid, 2020). This controversial bill is under debate and yet to be passed. While some opposed the bill, the Punjab government officials have argued that the bill is “a step towards the ‘PM’s vision of *Riyasat-e-Madina*” (the Islamic State of Madina) (Bangash, 2020). On January 17, 2022, Prime Minister Imran Khan wrote in *Express Tribune*, “In Islamic civilization, the manifestation of our spiritual principles happened in the Prophet’s (SAW) Madina”. Imran Khan stressed on five “guiding principles” upon which the state of Madina was built i.e., “unity, justice and rule of law leading to meritocracy, strong moral and ethical foundation, inclusion of all humans in progress and prosperity, and finally, the quest for knowledge” (The Express Tribune, 2022). He claimed he wanted to bring these principles into Pakistani society. While all the guiding principles seem ideal in theory but in reality, Imran Khan’s policies in the last four years of his government (2018-2022) have been nothing but a misleading Sunni dominant, anti-Shi’a, misogynist narrative of “Islamic culture” in the name of *Riyasat-e-Madina* which has only caused further violence and strengthened Sunni domination in the country (see Chapter Two on Imran Khan’s sexist statements regarding the growing number of rape cases in Pakistan). Unfortunately, Imran Khan’s orthodox Sunni

religious views do not only expose Imran Khan's vision of *Riyasat-e-Madina* for Pakistan, which is dangerous, Sunni dominant but also it shows his lack of awareness and his misleading ideas of Islamic culture, history and the dynamics of social change.

Imran Khan's ideas of *Riyasat-e-Madina* reminds critical onlookers so much of Zia-ul-Haq's Sunnization policies which he had successfully accomplished in the name of Islamization (see Chapter Two). In September 2020, at least 30,000 Sunni extremists marched in Karachi chanting anti-Shi'a slogans. Among the lead demonstrators were Muneeb-ur-Rehman, a representative of the government-affiliated organization named Ruet-e-Hilal, Abid Mubara, chief of Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (Shahid, 2020). The marchers carried posters of Sunni extremists to celebrate them, who were associated with the Shi'a killings in the past. They demanded the growth in applying the blasphemy law and accused prominent Shi'a leaders of blasphemy (ARAB NEWS, 2020). Prior to Zia, laws introduced by British, related to religious offence, were not specific to any religion but the Blasphemy laws post Zia's regime became important ways to underscore a Sunni version of Islam. With Zia-ul-Haq's Sunnization process, he made major changes to the blasphemy laws to make them specific to Sunni Islam and to target religious minorities. For example,

“S. 29-A: Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of holy personages. Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of any wife (Ummul Mumineen), or members of the family (Ahle-bait), of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), or any of the righteous Caliphs (Khulaf-e-Raashideen) or companions (Sahaaba) of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) shall be punished with imprisonment

of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both” (International Commission of Jurists , 2015, p. 10).¹⁶

In 2020 Muharram, about 12 Shi’a clerics were arrested, under the section 298-A, for allegedly making blasphemous statements, for reciting a prayer (Ziyarat-e-Ashura) denouncing the killer of Imam Hussain (Nayar Daur, 2020). According to a report by International Commission of Jurists (2015), during 1947 to 1977, only ten reports were made related to religious offences, of which the majority were dismissed by courts “for failing to meet the requirement of deliberately and maliciously hurting religious statement” (p. 9). However, after 1977, the blasphemy laws have become a powerful tool with which to target religious minorities for practicing their faith because they do not necessarily align with Sunni interpretations. Moreover, the current blasphemy law which is already unfair to marginalized religious minorities is also often used to achieve larger political goals (Abbas, 2005). The state is clearly aware of the growing Shi’a atrocities, yet it chooses to turn a blind eye to these injustices and silently establishes the use of laws that deliberately deepen sectarian violence and marginalization of religious minorities in the country.

When in December 2014, the Army Public School, Peshawar (Sunni majority city) was attacked by Taliban, killing 141 innocent people including 132 school children, the government established a 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) to end religious “extremism” and to ensure the protection of minorities (Saleem, 2015). However, the state defines “extremism” in ways that serves its own ideology and as I have already shown the state does not see its own Sunni domination and the ways in which that generates sectarian violence as extremism. Many of the

¹⁶ Details on Pakistan’s Blasphemy laws can be accessed at: <https://alaiwah.wordpress.com/2012/09/21/blasphemy-laws-in-pakistan-a-historical-overview/>

points mentioned in NAP are steps to end terrorism and religious extremism by introducing strict laws against those who preach and teach terrorism or are involved in terrorist activities. For instance, NAP calls for “strict action against literature, newspapers, and magazines promoting hatred, decapitation, extremism, sectarianism and intolerance” and “action against elements spreading sectarianism” (Saleem, 2015). All of these calls are important but the conditions that produce this kind of violence are not made explicit. Further, there is no mention of reforms in the public education system despite the fact that sectarian violence is common within the boundaries of educational institutions, and often scripted and sponsored by the state. Since NAP was introduced seven years ago, there has been no specific planning to bring its intentions and calls to reform the education system or change textbook materials that promote violence in the name of religion. Hence, it is unclear whose terrorism NAP will actually be able to and used to target.

One small effort to address epistemic exclusion and discrimination as a result of National Action Plan of 2014 is the introduction of the subject of ‘Ethics’ instead of compulsory Islamiyat subjects in schools for non-Muslim students. However, non-Muslim students tend not to take alternative subjects like Ethics instead of Islamiyat and Islam Studies. This is because they perceive it as easier to get good grades in these subjects rather than in Ethics. Furthermore, Ethics textbooks are also written with reference to dominant versions of Islam, there are no trained teachers available to teach Ethics as a subject, and the textbooks are not easily available in the market (Aqeel, 2016). The NCJP report also mentions that non-Muslim students should choose to study Islam instead of Ethics so that they are not further stigmatized in the classroom by their fellow students and teachers. The option may be available, but reliable access is denied through other means. These are the ways that isolated efforts at representation and inclusion of options for minorities within an uncontested overall Sunni-dominant curriculum and education

system ultimately fail to be effective in moving toward substantial inclusion for Shi'a, and non-Muslim students.

Single National Curriculum (SNC)

Currently, there is a hype about addressing educational inequalities between rich and poor students in Pakistan through the development of a Single National Curriculum (SNC) in all schools across Pakistani Schools. Prime Minister Imran Khan has raised concerns regarding the educational inequalities in Pakistan in different school systems. The three types of schooling systems (as mentioned above (on page 106) such as the private schooling systems such as (Cambridge, IB), the public school system which follows the National Curriculum of Pakistan, and the Madrassah schooling system. Imran Khan announced in the National Assembly that his government will implement a Single National Curriculum (SNC) that will be uniformly taught in “English medium, public and madrassah [seminaries]” from April 2021 for one to five grades. As I write this, the new textbooks, based on the new SNC are already in the process of being developed. He believes a uniform education system will bridge the gap between rich and poor and therefore, they will have equal and fair opportunities of employment.

This sounds like an ideal and appealing idea, but it is not clear whether and how the SNC aims to provide the opportunity to receive the same kind of quality of education across Pakistan. Nor is it apparent that Khan sees the relationship of class inequalities to Sunni-domination, which makes one wonder whether this is further policy and curriculum development towards a Single Sunni Curriculum, in the name of a national one. In one of his interviews, in March 2020, Imran Khan said, “we will, hopefully by next year, introduce a core syllabus for all schools that will be mandatory for students apart from the additional subjects each institution chooses to teach,” (Newsweek, 2020). He noted, “this is how you create a nation. This is how you end rival

cultures from developing” (Newsweek, 2020). This is a typical relativistic normative position that does not see that “conflict” is not equal on both sides because power of violence is supported by the state for one and not the other. He does not see that this is not just a matter of rival cultures. We can conclude therefore that his view of nation is about further entrenching Sunni as dominant, if not directly about annihilating the non-Muslim and Shi’a community.

Imran Khan is signalling to the private English-medium schools which he believes are the reason for the differences and competition in the education system and “western culture” and western education. Notably, Imran Khan himself studied in elite English medium schools in Pakistan and went on to studying Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Oxford. In his short-sightedness and lack of thoughtfulness, he does not acknowledge that while the state has failed to address challenges of public schools and failed to provide means to ensure quality education in public schools, the private schools on the other hand are doing a lot of that work. Therefore, it is reported “even in the poorest households in Punjab, one in five opt to pay for private schools over public schools where the option exists”... “there are 120,273 private education institutions in Pakistan, about 37 percent of the total” (Razzaque, 2021). In my own region Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan, there are hardly any public schools or colleges.

The vision of the Single National Curriculum’s (SNC) as per the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Government of Pakistan is “one system of Education for all, in term of curriculum, the medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment so that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education. Single National Curriculum is a step in that direction”. No doubt, it is the responsibility of the state to resolve issues of inequality and should provide equal educational resources to all schools. However, the inequalities should be addressed starting from making sure that students have easy and free of

cost access to schools in all areas of Pakistan. A Single National Curriculum cannot fix disparities of access that reproduce class difference in educational access across the country. According to a report published by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for the year 2016-2017, there are 22.8 million children out of school. The quality of existing schools is low and should be improved, quality learning resources should be provided to schools, and more teachers should be hired and trained. All of this can only be achieved with strong financial support (Nayyar, 2020) and the state has not announced how it is going to address all of these concerns. Scholars and education experts like Pervez Hoodbhoy (2020), N. H. Nayyar (2020) and Rubina Saigol (2020) have shown their concerns regarding the SNC and argued that it is "superficial, serves an agenda, with fake consensus, that will erase all ethnic identities and regional languages and turn out to become a holy disaster" (Dawn News, 2020).

The state's idea of eliminating inequalities looks like greater institutionalization of homogenization toward Sunni domination and it offers no signs that it will lead to any improvement in addressing class inequalities in the education system either. Given the foundation of a Sunni state's unifying agenda since 1947, deeply intensified through the Zia years, it is likely that the SNC will reproduce the hierarchies within Pakistan and deepen sectarianism further. As Pakistani scholar of education Nayyar argues, the uniform curriculum cannot produce a system of uniform education because the uniform curriculum will not ensure equal resources to rich and poor all across educational institutions in Pakistan (2020). This will further deepen Sunni dominance and social inequalities in education system and relatedly in society. As Nayyar (2020) argues, "they [state] also believe - contrary to all available evidence - that a greater dose of religious education will produce more honest and useful citizens of Pakistan. Critical thinking is central to modern knowledge, while through the SNC, policy

planners seem to be promoting influences that are antithetical to critical thinking” (Nayyar, 2020).

Furthermore, it is alarming as Pervez Hoodbhoy (2020) argues the state’s agenda of establishing a SNC looks like a step towards making the country more religious and discriminatory rather than eliminating educational challenges and inequalities in the country. Criticizing the implantation of SNC, Hoodbhoy (2020) argued that the consequences of SNC will be worse. Unlike Pervez Hoodbhoy, I do not see a problem with an Islamic/ faith based, inclusive National Curriculum that is rooted in the historical teachings and learnings of rich Islamic history and justice system. Instead, I am refereeing to issues in the new Single National Curriculum (SNC) which will further marginalize already marginalized communities in Pakistan in the name of equality. This is because class “equality” cannot be achieved with a uniform curriculum that does not name, identify or challenge Sunni domination of state power, public resources and narratives in society. It is like saying that class inequality can be addressed rhetorically whilst empowering the socially dominant and economically better off communities in practice. In this context, a uniform curriculum in the context of Pakistan will only further unite and empower already dominant Sunni Muslims and represent their dominant perspectives of “unity” and “equality” which can be clearly seen in the SNC. Educationists like Abdul Hameed Nayyar (1998), Rubina Saigol (2005, 2010) and Ayesha Jalal (1995) have dismissed the ideas of equality through SNC arguing that “the “one Nation One Curriculum”, implying that, without a single curriculum, we cannot remain one nation. This is false” (Nayyar, 2020).

The irony of Imran Khan's speech to the National Assembly emphasizing the value of the “Single National Curriculum” was that in the very same speech he blamed the current education system for the Aurat March (Women’s March) that happened on the occasion of International

Women's Day in March 2020. He said, "The 'Aurat March' [Women's March] that just happened... a different culture was visible in it... this is a cultural issue, and this comes from the schooling system," (Newsweek, 2020). Here, Imran Khan, like many other men, assumed that women coming out collectively to raise their voices against gender discrimination and violence against women was a western agenda to invade "Islamic culture". Moreover, he connects this western agenda to schooling, by implication the private schooling system, which is seen as a product of western influence, and hence projected to be promoting a "different culture" than the "Islamic culture" (i.e., Sunni culture) appropriate to Pakistan. It is very common for political leaders in decision-making positions to blame "outside" influences for the lack of the state's capability to address a social issue, especially when it is about minority rights and women's rights. It is always the outsider culture and education invading the so-called culture of Islam.

In reality, despite the inequality of access to private schools, private schools students are doing much better in helping students grasp social issues compared to those in public schools. For instance, Rahman (2004), based on his research findings, notes that students in each of these schools' systems [public, private, Madrassah] have diverse views on war, militancy, tolerance, and gender equity, where elite private school student have less support for war, militancy, religious intolerance etc., whereas Madrassah students are at the opposite end. This shows the Imran Khan government's real understanding of the meaning of "equality" and social issues. For instance, gender discrimination is not a "cultural issue" but rather an issue that affects women across the globe. Hence the women's march to address gender discrimination cannot be represented as "a different culture" or as western influence. As Pakistani Muslim feminist scholar Saadia Toor shows (2011), Pakistani women have always resisted sexist and misogynist laws that were made to belittle women in history, and they are continuing to do so. If Imran

Khan plans to resolve “cultural issues” like the Women’s March through his idea of the National Single National Curriculum, then Hoodbhoy is right in saying that the consequences of SNC will be worse for already marginalized people of Pakistan. Based on these critiques, it is accurate to note that Imran Khan’s vision of SNC is nothing but a deliberate effort to take away the little power private schooling systems have to develop their own curriculum and textbooks in order to inculcate critical thinking skills among Pakistani students.

This idea of “uniform curriculum” is not entirely Imran Khan’s idea. This Sunni state aspiration for a single curriculum has always been there especially since Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamization period. For example, similar ideas of “uniformity” for “equality” are taught currently to students in school through textbooks. For example, in the textbook, Pakistan Studies for grade 10, in the section on “Major Social Problems of Pakistan”, it is mentioned that, “different courses are taught in Pakistan in government and private educational institutes. The lack of a uniform system of education is harmful for Pakistan’s unity and solidarity” (p. 100). And the solution recommended for it is that “a uniform system of education should be implemented in the whole country” (p. 100). Moreover, “for the growth of culture, the minds of children are trained on national lines. Common cultural values are inculcated in them” (p. 107). Hence, these notions about the uniform curriculum as a means to eliminate inequalities have long been part of the Sunni state’s goals of homogenizing Pakistani society and Imran Khan’s efforts are in alignment with institutionally building upon those notions to deepen the nationalist agenda and continue the Sunni domination in the country.

Conclusion:

Indeed, education is important if it serves its purpose and adds a greater value to societies and communities. What is being taught in schools eventually reflects in our society because the

Pakistani youth forms their understanding of Pakistani ideology, culture, religion, from schools. Our education system plays a vital role in shaping narratives of citizenship and ideology. Although this study does not provide a causal analysis of direct links between school textbook content and sectarian violence, it discursively analyzes textbooks and relates them to a historical understanding of the increasing sectarianization and Sunnization of the Pakistani state to consider the effects of cultivating sectarian divisions among youth. As such, rather than a coexistence between education and peace, there is a greater coexistence between education and sectarian violence, especially since the Zia regime.

The Pakistani state uses textbooks “for its own political and ideological interests” (Ali, 2005, p. 238). Public educational institutions are not safe spaces for faculty and student to have a conversation on social issues including sectarian violence and the rights of religious minorities. The growing number of attacks, murders, blasphemy cases against teachers, students belonging to minority groups who dare to raise questions against the injustices in the country are ways the Pakistan state uses to silence dissent and critical discussion. The Pakistani state is deliberating keeping students away from indulging in political discussions. The textbook of Pakistan Studies for grade 10 criticizes student engagement in politics by criticizing “students involved in politics which affect their educational future” (p. 100). Such direct messages in textbooks that dissuade political engagement, while accepting blasphemy laws against teachers (which is not similarly discouraged considering student involvement in politics faces censure) once again demonstrates which students’ activism is acceptable to the state and which students’ activism is not. The political engagement and intervention of students are presented as “the most important educational problem”. Political awareness and participation is important for students to stay engaged as citizens of the country and the world. It is only in the context of Sunni domination

and promotion of sectarian violence in alignment with imperialism's neoliberal face that we can understand why political awareness and student participation in challenging state discrimination and sectarian violence can be called a problem. It is unfortunate that regardless of the criticism Pakistan receives from human rights organization for its failure in protecting the right of minorities in the hands of extremist Sunni religious groups, the state of Pakistan continues to actively participate in making sure the sectarian divide and violence remain in the country by making laws and educational policies in favor of Sunni Muslims. Considering the SNC has been approved for grades 1-5 to be implemented across Pakistan starting August 2021 with new textbooks in the process of development, it remains to be seen to what degree it will inculcate peaceful unity, or if rather the analysis offered in this chapter predicting greater sectarian violence and violation of rights will hold true.

Chapter V: Shi'a Activism and Resistance

Introduction: Context and Overview

“Pakistanis are alive. Sold by the governments who should save them, killed by secret agencies who should guard them, bombed by American drones, “structurally adjusted” into starvation, beaten, rendered, tortured, disappeared, and yet inscrutably, immutably, even joyously, they are still alive” (Tahir, et. al., 2014, p. xii).

In August of 2020, the Minority Rights Group reported more than 40 blasphemy cases registered against Shi'a Muslims. Around the same time, six, large anti-Shi'a rallies were carried out by different extremist Sunni groups on Karachi's major highway, MA Jinnah Road, chanting “Shi'a Kafir” (Shi'a infidel) without any disruption from the police (Mirza, 2020). The number of Sunni demonstrators according to security officials, reported by *The Diplomat* were at least 30,000 (Shahid, 2021). Some marchers carried banners of *Sipah -i-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP) (Guardians of the Prophet's Companions), an anti-Shi'a extremist, banned group which has been linked to killings of hundreds of Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan (ARAB NEWS, 2020). Yet, the state failed to stop the dangerous demonstration which continued for three days, in the biggest metropolitan city, Karachi. The state support for these demonstrations show the failure to protect its Shi'a citizens and restore even a semblance of their formal equality as Pakistani citizens. In fact, according to Dawn News, mere hours after the protest, the police arrested Bilal Farooqi, one of the very few journalists who frequently covers sectarian violence-related incidents in the country in an even more obvious effort to quash any critiques of the Sunni state's agenda (Ali, 2020). Farooqi was arrested on false accusations of “highly provocative posts” and “defaming” Pakistani Army on social media (Ali, 2020).

Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan are not only targets of Sunni extremist groups but also the target of forceable "disappearances" at the hands of state security agencies. For example, the online news article published by The Diplomat news noted that in May 2018, the number of forcibly disappeared Shi'a Muslim ranged from 140 to 300 and the reasons are mostly not known. "The abductors – presumably the security agencies – claim that the missing persons were involved in the Syrian civil war and sectarian violence in the country" (Mirza, 2021). The Sunni state thus deflects responsibility by claiming Shi'a Pakistani citizens' involvement in violence elsewhere, while terrorizing them at home. The growing number of attacks and disappearance of Shi'a Muslims by state security agencies and the state-protected Sunni orthodox groups is alarming.

In the midst of rising number of attacks on Shi'a Muslims and their disappearances, the courage and resistance from Shi'a scholars, journalists, bloggers and activists is a ray of hope for everyday Shi'a citizens in the country. In this chapter, I am using Shi'a resistance and activism as an informal site of education in and against the Sunni state's domination. Set alongside my analysis of formal education as a site through which Pakistanis are educated in normalizing the idea and reality of Sunni domination of state and society, this chapter demonstrates that such domination is not total. Through spaces and practices of resistance and activism, I argue, Shi'a Muslims, learn to and demonstrate a challenge to the Sunni narrative and violence that is increasingly pervasive in Pakistan. In this chapter, I focus on the stories of Shi'a Hazara women to show that Shi'a ethnic groups, and especially women among them bear the brunt of multiple forms of oppression. This generates the conditions for them being at the forefront of resistance against the Sunni state's sectarian violence.

Missing and Murdered Shi'a Activists

According to community activists, since 2018, 140 Pakistani Shi'a Muslims have disappeared (Kermani, 2018). The activists claim that the Pakistani state intelligence agencies are behind many “disappearances” of Pakistani Shi'a activists and people who went to Syria, Iraq and Iran for pilgrimage and came back to Pakistan (Khan, 2019), just like how Muslims, every year, travel to Mecca for *Hajj* (the yearly pilgrimage, Muslims make to Kaaba, located in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia). According to news sources, intelligence agencies explain Shi'a disappearance in terms of activists who might have gone to lend support to struggles in “conflict-ridden countries” such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran (Khan, 2019). Instead of showing concern and making an effort to find missing citizens, the agencies turn a blind eye to family demands to find their loved ones, speculating instead that these Shi'a Muslims are a threat to their own country. Moreover, by casting Pakistani Shi'a Muslims as anti-national “threats” and blaming them for cooperating with “intelligence agencies” in countries like Iran, Iraq and Syria, where Saudi Arabia and the US want their imperial interests protected, the Pakistani Sunni state is continuing to entrench its historical subjection to the Saudi Arabian Sunni state and US imperial agendas. This not only shows how the Pakistani state considers Shi'as a threat and an enemy to the Pakistani Sunni state, but it also shows how the Pakistani Sunni state's interests go hand in hand with US imperial interests.

Shi'a organizations and activists in Pakistan argue that the reasons of security threat and possible connection to extremist groups in the mentioned countries are an excuse to target Shi'a Muslims because most missing Shi'a Muslims were reported to have no connections with militant groups. A Shi'a activist, Rashid Rizvi told Dawn News that "most of the 'missing Shiites' have no militant background. I'm not ruling out the possibility that some may have gone

to Syria to fight for the regime, but some 150-160 missing persons simply went on a pilgrimage to Iran, Iraq and Syria" (Khan, 2019). In an interview, a formerly-abducted Shi'a person said he was kept in a small dark cell and "badly tortured" using electric shocks (Hasan, 2019).

The list of disappeared and murdered Shi'a journalists and activists is long. Families of missing Shi'a Muslims have protested and held month long sit-ins in different parts of the country, but the Pakistani state seems unconcerned. Few of the Shi'a Muslims who were abducted or killed in different sectarian-related attacks receive social media attention. In many cases, the missing Shi'a people do not return, and their cases are lost in the fog of sectarian and imperial violence. For example, Syed Khurram Zaki was a journalist and human rights activist. He was shot dead in May 2016 while he was dining at a restaurant in Karachi (Ali, 2016). Zaki was an editor for a website called "Let us Build Pakistan", a blog aimed at supporting inclusive and progressive Pakistan (Ali, 2016). Zaki was one of the very few journalists who stood up to the Sunni clerics and held them accountable for hate against Shi'a Muslims and other minority religious groups in Pakistan.

Zaki was the only Shi'a Journalist alongside Jibran Nasir (Sunni lawyer and activist) who filed a complaint against Sunni cleric, Maulana Abdul Aziz. Maulana Abdul Aziz, a Sunni extremist religious leader is known for publicly propagating anti-Shi'a hate. Later, a Taliban group in Pakistan said Zaki was killed because he led protests to arrest Sunni religious clerics such as Maulana Abdul Aziz (Boone, 2016). Zaki's case is one of many unfortunate cases of violence that Shi'a activists continue to face in Pakistan, and an exception in that it actually received rare social media attention. Not surprisingly, the mainstream news media outlets barely covered it. In most cases, the media outlets in Pakistan stay silent on anti-Shi'a attacks demonstrating their alignment with the Sunni state's interests and perspectives. Even though

Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), Sunni extremists religious group, took responsibility for Zaki's killing, like in many cases, the Pakistani state did nothing.

There have been several protests by different Shi'a communities. Nosheen Ali (2008) a Pakistani Shi'a Muslim scholar, discusses the protests in the Shi'a community of Gilgit Baltistan against the biased national curriculum which silences Shi'a beliefs in textbooks. In 2004, after constant appeal by the Shi'a leaders to the Ministry of Education to address the biases against Shi'a practices and beliefs in textbooks and the curriculum, they still failed to move state officials in Islamabad to commit to transformation. Thus, on May 17, 2004, more than 300 Shi'a students in Gilgit went on a three-day long hunger strike (Ali, 2008). The protest resulted in closing of educational institutions for about a year, blocking roads, food storages etc., more than hundred people died in the conflict (Ali, 2008). On January 8, 2005, the Imam of central Shi'a Mosque, Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, who was most prominent and vocal in the protest against the controversial national curriculum was gunned down. Ali (2008) argues that the Shi'a resistance against the curriculum and textbooks was not only a protest against biased curriculum but it also "challenged this silence, raising fundamental issues pertaining to religion, nation, and citizenship in Pakistan: what a Pakistani is, or should be, what a true Muslim is, or should be, and how religious communities struggle to redefine the very terms of national citizenship" (p. 2). Regardless of the Sunni state's strong control over the national and religious narratives and the silencing of Shi'a activists, Pakistani Shi'a Muslims, continue to stand strong to demand for their rights as equal citizens and for improved Shi'a representation in the education system.

History of Shi'a Resistance

Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan have been resisting violent and discriminatory state policy since the early decades of policymaking in Pakistan which went against the Shi'a faith of Islam.

For example, in 1980 Zia-ul-Haq enforced Sunni Islamic laws in the name of an “Islamization” process, which, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, was a process of Sunnization of the country. One of the laws Zia established was the Zakat Ordinance. As noted in Chapter One, Zakat refers to the 2.5% of income all Muslims are bound to give as religious responsibility. The Zakat Ordinance policy (2.5% Zakat was deducted from the bank accounts of all the Muslims on the first of Ramazan every year) was unacceptable for Shi’a Muslims because paying Zakat to the government was against the religious belief of Shi’a Muslims (Rajani, 2016). To protest the Zakat Ordinance, more than 50,000 Shi’a Muslim came out to protest in 1979 (Rajani, 2016). The Shi’a resistance against the Zakat Ordinance was also the reason why Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiq-e-Jafria (TNJF) (movement for the implementation of Islamic laws which traces back to the founder and Shi’a Imam Jafar Sadiq) was founded in 1979 with an aim to protect Shi’a Muslim religious rights in Pakistan (Talbot, 2006).

Shi’a Muslims do not simply ask for exemptions from what Zia had turned into Pakistani law based on their sectarian difference. Rather, they noticed the privileges Sunnis received and wanted to be treated equally by the state. Thus, they also demanded financial support from the government for “subsidies for pilgrimage to holy shrines, jobs for Shi’a clerics in Shariat courts and even guarantees for inviting Shi’a scholars from Iraq and Iran to visit Pakistan at government expense in the same way that visits of Saudi scholars were being sponsored” (Rajani, 2016). Zia initially rejected the demands but later agreed to the exemption from Zakat after the powerful protest from Shi’a community (started in the year 1979). The Iranian revolution which had gathered momentum through the 1970s gave Shi’a Muslims of Pakistan confidence and support to stand together to fight against Zia’s discriminatory policies (Rajani, 2016).

Shi'a Activism Under Zia-ul-Haq

Zia-ul-Haq's Sunnization process starting in 1977 and had severe implications for minorities as well as women, in addition to religious minorities in the country. Zia not only reversed the laws passed in 1951 as noted earlier, but he also added extreme policies to make women vulnerable to various patriarchal oppressions. As Pakistani feminist scholars Saadia Toor (2011) and Rubina Saigol (2016) explain, Zia's policies further intensified the vulnerability of women with laws like Law of Evidence, also known as Qanun-e-Shahadat which was introduced to lower the legal status of women to half of men's legal testimony in a Pakistani court law. Zina Ordinance, also known as, Hudood Ordinance defines laws of extra marital sex, rape, and adultery. The Hudood Ordinance made it impossible for women to prove that they had been raped while enabling women to be charged for *Zina* (adultery). The various discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinance of 1979, the Qisas and Dinyat Ordinance and the Law of Evidence of 1984 "privatized the crime of murder and saved the perpetrator of honor killing" (Saigol, 2016, p. 14). These laws reduced women's legal worth and therefore social worth, while intensifying their sexual regulations (Toor, 2011). Saigol (2016) shows that through establishment of discriminatory laws and amendments in the constitution, the entire legal system was reconstructed to institutionally discriminate against religious minorities and women in the country. These laws thus further entrenched heteropatriarchal norms and gave more power to families and communities to control "their" women (Toor, 2011, p. 162-163).

Shi'a Women's Resistance in Pakistan

Since partition in 1947, despite multiple forms of discrimination and systemic oppression, Pakistani women have always been a symbol of courage and resistance and have managed to break barriers for themselves. In the first two decades of Pakistani independence,

women's movements were resisted by religious clerks, who dismissed them by arguing that demanding women's rights is a western ideology (Saigol, 2016). In the first constituent assembly of Pakistan (1947), religious clerics and other men refused to sit with women (Saigol, 2016). But women like Jahanara Shahnawaz and Shaista Ikramullah continued to fight for the rights of women. As a result, in 1951, women received the right to inherit land, and other laws such as equal opportunities for women, and equal pay were passed (Saigol, 2016). The demand to examine marriage and divorce laws was also met with action (Saigol, 2016).

The Women's Action Forum (WAF) has been an iconic and an important source of resistance in Pakistan. WAF was started by a group of women in 1986 in Karachi city to organize and resist against Zia's newly established Hudood laws. They battled against policies like "*chaadar and chaardivari*" (laws against restriction on mobility of women's bodies). The WAF protest of 1983 was attacked by the police and women were put in prison (Toor, 2011). Despite these setbacks, WAF was an important organization which was instrumental in bringing together urban educated, middle-class women who did not have prior experience of activism. Moreover, political poetry by Pakistani women Parveen Shakir, Fehmida Riaz, Kishwar Naheed became a way of raising voices against military power and gendered laws and Zia's dictatorship and misogynistic laws. Pakistani Poets like Kishwar Naheed were fired from their government jobs for their resistance (Toor, 2010).

The following poem by Fehmida Riaz is a great example of the use of poetry as feminist resistance during Zia-ul-Haq's regime. The poem is cited and translated by Saadia Toor (2011) in her book *The State of Islam: Culture and cold war politics in Pakistan* (pp. 142-144).

"*Chaadar Aur Chaardivari*" (The Shawl and the Four Walls of the Home)

Huzoor, main is siyaah chaadar ka kya karoongi?

Ye aap mujh ko kyooñ bakhshthe haiñ, basad inaayat!

Na sog mein hooñ ke is ko orhooñ

Gham-o-alam khalq ko dikhaoñ

Na rog hooñ maiñ ke is ki taarekiyoñ mein khaft se doob jaoñ

Na maiñ gunahgaar hooñ na mujrim

Ke is siyaahi ki mohr apni jabeñ pe har haal mein lagaoñ

Agar na gustaakh mujh ko samjheñ

Agar maiñ jaañ ki amaan paoñ

To dast-basta karooñ guzaarish

Ke banda-parvar!

Huzoor ke hujra-e mo'attar mein ek laasha para hua hai

Na jaane kab ka gala sara hai

Ye aap se rahm chaahta hai

Huzoor itna karam to keeje

Siyaah chaadar mujhe na deeje

Siyaah chaadar se apne hujre ki bekafan laash dhaamp deeje

Ke is se phooti hai jo 'ufoonat

Voh kooche kooche mein haampti hai

Voh sar patakti hai chaukhatoñ par

Barahnagi apni dhaankti hai Suneñ zara dil-kharaash cheekheñ

Bana rahi haiñ ajab hiyole

Jo chaadaroñ meiñ bhi haiñ barahna

Ye kaun haiñ? Jaante to honge

Huzoor pehchaante to honge!

Ye laundiyaañ haiñ!

Ke yarghamaali halaal shab bhar raheñ—

Dam-i subha darbadar haiñ

Ye baandiyaañ haiñ!

Huzoor ke natfa-i mubarek ke nasb-e virsa se mo'tabar haiñ

Ye bibiyaañ haiñ!

Ke zaujagi ka khiraaj dene

Qataar andar qataar baari ki muntazar haiñ

Ye bacchiyaañ haiñ!

Ke jin ke sar pe phira jo hazrat ka dast-i shafqat

To kam-sini ke lahu se resh-i saped rangeen ho gayi hai

Huzoor ke hujla-i mo'attar meiñ zindagi khoon ro gayi hai

Para hua hai jahaañ ye laasha

Taveel sadiyoñ se qatl-i insaaniyat ka ye khoon chukan tamaasha

Ab is tamaashe ko khatm keeje

Huzoor ab is ko dhaamp deeje!

Siyaah chaadar to ban chuki hai meri nahiñ aap ki zaroorat

Ke is zameeñ par vujood mera nahiñ faqat ek nishaan-i shahvat

Hayaat ki shaah-raah par jagmaga rahi hai meri zahaanat

Zameeñ ke rukh par jo hai paseena to jhilmilaati hai meri mehnat

Ye chaar deewariyaañ, ye chaadar, gali sari laash ko mubarik

Khuli fizaañ meiñ baadbaañ khol kar barhega mera safeena

Maiñ Aadam-i nau ki humsafar hooñ

Ke jis ne jeeti meri bharosa bhari rifaaqat!

Translation by Saadia Toor (2011)

“*Chaadar Aur Chaardivaari*” (The Shawl and the Four Walls of the Home)

Sire! What will I do with this black *chaadar*?

Why do you bless me with it?

I am neither in mourning that I should wear it—

Announce my grief to the world

Nor am I a Disease, that I should drown, humiliated, in its darkness

I am neither sinner nor criminal

That I should set its black seal

On my forehead under all circumstances.

If you will pardon my impertinence

If I have reassurance of my life
Then only will I entreat you with folded hands
O Benevolent One!
That in Sire's fragrant chambers lies a corpse
Who knows how long it has been rotting there?
It asks for your pity
Sire, please be so kind
As to not give me this black shawl
Use it instead to cover that shroud-less corpse in your chambers
Because the stench that has burst forth from it
Goes panting through the alleys—
Bangs its head against the doorframes
Covers its nakedness
Listen to the heartrending shrieks
Which raise strange specters
That remain naked despite their chaadars
Who are they? You must know them
Sire, you must recognize them
They are the concubines!
The hostages who remain legitimate through the night
But come morning, are sent forth to wander, homeless

They are the handmaidens

More reliable than the half-share of inheritance promised your precious sperm
These are the honorable wives!

Who await their turn in long queues

To pay their conjugal dues

These are the young girls!

Whose innocent blood Stained your white beard red

When your affectionate hand descended upon their heads

In Sire's fragrant chambers

Life has shed tears of blood

Where this corpse lies

This, for long centuries the bloody spectacle of humanity's murder

End this spectacle now

Sire, cover it up

The black *chaadar* has become your necessity, not mine

For my existence on this earth is not as a mere symbol of lust

My intelligence shines brightly on the highway of life

The sweat that shines on the brow of the earth is but my hard work

The corpse is welcome to this *chaadar* and these four walls

My ship will move full-sailed in the open wind

I am the companion of the new Adam

Who has won my confident comradeship

Toor (2011) explains, this Urdu poem was among many other poems by Fehmida Riaz, written in protest against Zia's patriarchal, orthodox so-called Islamic laws. Zia made veiling compulsory for all women in Pakistan and restricted them to four walls of their home in 1980. The poem rejects the sexual objectification of women's bodies which required them to be covered by *chaadar* (Shawl). Toor (2011) further explains that the poem mocks Zia's regime and challenges his human rights violations and asks why is the woman being given the black shawl, since she is not mourning a loss and nor is she a criminal or a sinner to hide behind the black *chaadar*. Instead, Riaz suggests, it's Zia-ul-Haq who needs the *chaadar* to cover his sins.

The poem, critical of Zia's patriarchal policies, is one of many of Fehmida Riaz's rich scholarly and literary contributions. Even though the works of Fehmida Riaz and other feminist poets of that time made remarkable contributions to women's movements in Pakistan which include resisting Zia's orthodox Sunni ideologies, nonetheless, it is also true that most known women poets of that time were middle class, urban, and educated. They did not represent all women in Pakistan. The Black shawl, in Twelver Shi'a Muslims, signifies a mourning ritual. Shi'a Women wear a black Shawl during the month of *Moharram* to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. Even though the poem does not highlight the importance of Black *chaadar* for Shi'a women, the fact is that it is a symbol of power, resistance and remembrance of people who Zia othered through his policies. In Riaz's poem, coming from a Sunni feminist view, the black shawl is treated in uniformly-negative and derogatory terms because Shi'a epistemology does not inform her symbolism of the black shawl.

That said, the history of resistance against state-sponsored gendered laws became an important mode of publicly interrupting the insidious, and steady normalization of sectarianism

ushered through Islamization. These public forms of resistance and the state retaliation against them laid bare the kind of Sunni state domination that attempted wholesale transformation through changes in law and curriculum. Resistance made available a public source of learning to understand how women in Pakistan, regardless of their religion and sect, were treated like second class citizens, especially during the Zia-ul-Haq era.

9/11 and the Rise of Feminist Movements in Pakistan

My narrative in this chapter so far has highlighted the context in which women resisted against the Sunnization of the state. It is crucial to notice Pakistani women's collective resistance against the state's gendered and discriminatory laws against women and religious minorities. However, as I have just noted with Riaz's poem, the formation of this urban middle-class feminism in Pakistan, especially the elite class women who had access to education and opportunities have failed to look at diverse experiences of Muslim women from different sectarian backgrounds.

9/11 is perhaps the most recent context in global politics within which the veil gathers greater weight as a political symbol. However, among the very important discussions within resistance movements against western representation of saving women, Sunni Muslim feminists from Pakistan neglect the specificities of Shi'a Muslim women's experiences of violence and discrimination. Hence, just as Black women, Dalit women, and Indigenous women have found it hard to join white feminist movements or Brahminical feminist movements (Lorde, 2007; Maracle, 1996; Paik, 2020) because it was silent on colonialism, racism and casteism. Similarly, the Shi'a Muslim women, especially those belonging to minority ethnicities, find it hard to join the Sunni feminist movements in Pakistan (Ali, 2021). This violence on Shi'a Muslims comes

not only in the hands of the Sunni state but also in the hands of everyday Sunni Muslims of Pakistan.

A study done by Sadiqa Sultan, Maryam Kanwer and Jaffer Abbas Mirza (2020) on exploring the intersections of gender, class, religious and ethnic affiliation to the marginalization of Hazara women, show that even though the Hazara community is open to women's education, due to security reasons and fear of harm to their girls and bringing dishonor to their families, parents do not send their girls to schools. For those with limited financial resources, sending their boys to schools is preferable because sons can stay at cheaper places and are presumed to be safe, and they can travel by public transportation and this is less likely to bring dishonor to their families (Sultan et al., 2020).

Shi'a men and women are fighting for the security of their lives and survival in contexts of sectarian and imperial violence. Many of the women who have lost their loved ones are mourning and continue to live in fear of losing others in their families. Some women are still looking for their disappeared family members. In a situation like that, Shi'a women have no time and energy to fight specifically for women rights. Going back to Hoda Katebi's explanation of Shi'a experiences of explaining anti-Shi'a violence to Sunni Muslims (cited in Chapter Two). Katebi explains, the anti-Shi'a violence feels like "explaining racism to a white man lacking self-awareness and unaccustomed to exclusion and violence in everyday spaces and institutions, or Islamophobes whose eyes and ears have been sealed shut to reality despite how many times they're told the truth".

Sunni Muslim feminists, such as Ayesha Jalal, Rubina Saigol, Saadia Toor who have otherwise written important accounts of Pakistan's history, Islamic feminism, and war on terror, have nonetheless neglected the discussion of sectarianism, Shi'a women and their access to

knowledge and spaces to voice their concerns. The Shi'a Hazara women feel their voices are not heard and they are not given safe spaces to talk about their challenges (Sultan et al., 2020, p. 31). The discussion on feminism and feminist movements in Pakistan thus mirrors Sunni domination by excluding the specificity of the Shi'a experience in state and society. Whilst challenging imperial feminism it fails to challenge sectarianism. At base, Sunni dominant feminism does not counter Sunni state domination, and both imperial and Sunni feminism fail to capture the specificity of the gendered Shi'a situation because of which Shi'a women are subjected to not only extreme forms of patriarchal subordination, but an absence of political resistance representing their situation.

Zoya Rehman, a Shi'a human rights activist quoted in an online blog written by Zoya Anwer (2021) notes that "Shi'a women are on the receiving end of the hatred owing to the intersectionality of religion and gender". In her research about experiences of women of faith-based violence in Pakistan, Faiza Ali (2016), another Shi'a writer, records the experiences of marginalized women who belong to different minority religious groups in Pakistan and how they have been disproportionately impacted by sectarian violence in Pakistan. In an interview recorded by Ali (2016), a Shi'a Hazara woman says, "what is the reality? how many of you can relate to 5 dead bodies being taken out of a house- father, brothers, son. What do the women of that house go through? What is the future of these women? Of the Shi'a Hazara women?" (p. 170). Ali (2016) goes on to argue that while all women experience patriarchy, Shi'a women continue to live their lives in fear while mourning the loved ones they have lost on top of dealing with extreme emotional trauma and financial crisis. The section on 'Shi'a Hazara women activists' below, will highlight some of the unspoken issues which are ignored not only by Pakistani state

but also by imperial feminists and dominant Pakistani Sunni feminists despite the discussions of Islamic feminism, the war on terror, and 9/11.

Resilience of Shi'a Hazara Community in Pakistan

To counter this tendency to neglect Shi'a feminist voices, the rest of this chapter focuses on examples of resistance and resilience of Shi'a women. Shi'a Islam is diverse, and the followers of Shi'a Islam belong to multiple ethnicities, different languages, and varied beliefs in different interpretations of Shi'a Islam. While all Shi'a Muslims share common struggles, Shi'a Hazara community in particular, is one of the most adversely-affected Shi'a ethnic groups that lives with sectarian state violence in Pakistan. According to the Human Rights Commission Pakistan report, between 2009 and 2014, about 1000 Hazara Shi'a have been killed in sectarian violence (Butt 2014 cited in Sultan et al., 2020) Pakistani scholar Shahid Ali (2021) has written on political and religious violence and ethnic conflict in Pakistan notes that Hazara Shi'a have migrated to Pakistan from Afghanistan during different time periods and phases (1890-1893, 1970-1984 and 1996-2004). The third phase of migration of Hazara Shi'a intensified after the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 which forced many Shi'a Hazara families to migrate to Pakistan and other parts of the world (Ali, 2021, p. 199-200). Persian speaking Hazara Shi'a are the descendants of the Kushan, whose lineage also has Mongol influences (Thacker, 2014).

The population of Hazara Shi'a in Pakistan are recorded to be between 0.4 to 0.5 million, according to a National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) report from 2018 and most of the Hazara population is settled in Quetta city of Baluchistan (Ali, 2021). Ali (2021), notes that even though the Shi'a-Sunni conflict and intensification of sectarian violence started with Zia-ul-Haq's regime in 1979, the killing of Shi'a Hazara really intensified after 9/11, with Pakistan's decision to support the US in the "war on terror" (p. 202). According to a media report, between

1998 to 2009, at least 700 Hazara people were killed in Baluchistan (Ali, 2021, p. 200). The Hazara Shi'a community remain the most vulnerable Shi'a community in Pakistan. More than 150 Hazara were killed in 2013 in two suicide bombings in Quetta alone (Ali, 2021, p. 202). According to a report presented by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), in the last five years of the Shi'a Hazara community members who migrated from Afghanistan to Quetta, Pakistan, 509 were killed and 627 were injured (Valentini, 2018). Furthermore, according to the regional head of the Hazara Democratic Party, the actual number of killings and injured people is much higher than what is officially recorded and reported (Valentini, 2018). It is in this context that stories of Shi'a Hazara women's resistance and courage are powerful. Following are a few powerful examples of how Shi'a Hazara women resist state-supported gendered and patriarchal oppressions to support themselves and their community.

Jalila Haider

The first woman lawyer and activist from the Shi'a Hazara community Jalila Haider, is also known as the "Iron lady" of Pakistan. Haider joined the Baluchistan Bar Council at a young age to do her specialization in criminal litigation and human rights (Jalil, 2020). Haider said in an interview, "I am also the first female lawyer of an ethnic minority. I did earn enough respect in our Bar, but I also faced a lot of sexism, cyber harassment, and abuse for being outspoken. But I always remained firm and determined for my cause and work" (Jalil, 2020).

In March 2020, Haider won the International Women of Courage Award for her leadership and service for women and children of her community in the Balochistan province of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2020). Haider has founded a non-profit organization named "We the Humans — Pakistan", which is working to strengthen vulnerable Shi'a Hazara women and children by providing them opportunities for education and employment. Haider's specialization in law is

human rights. She provides free legal services and counselling to women who cannot afford legal fees (Ahmed, 2020). In 2018, following a series of targeted attacks by extremist religious groups, on the Shi'a community she led a peaceful hunger strike and demanded from the state and military leaders protection for Shi'a community and that they address violence against the Shi'a Hazara community (Tanzeem, 2018).

In January 2020, Jalila Haider was detained by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for seven hours when she was returning from a conference on feminism hosted by the University of Sussex (Gabol, 2020). She said to BBC Urdu, "[I was] not told the reasons behind it [placement of her name on the no-fly list], but they said that it was because of my anti-state activities. I said, 'I haven't been involved in any anti-state activity' (Gabol, 2020). Haider said, "I do not know what they mean when they say I am involved in 'anti-state activities'... What anti-state activities? I only speak for human rights and women's issues. Are these anti-state issues?" (Jalil, 2020). Haider's question pointedly identifies the Sunni patriarchy at the core of Pakistani state formation. It is precisely this Shi'a Hazara woman's ability to see the Pakistani state for what it is that the Sunni state strategizes to silence. They do so by blaming Shi'a Muslim women for speaking up and being "anti-state" and this state reaction, itself reveals the conditions that prompt Shi'a Hazara women's resistance in the first place—the disproportionate effect of Sunni state formation on Shi'a Hazara women.

Haider has been working to uplift many vulnerable communities in her role as Baluchistan's President of the Women Democratic Front and Baluchistan's branch of the Aurat March (Women's March) (Ahmed, 2020). Hazara Shi'a Muslims are already exposed to extreme sectarian hate and violence due to their distinctive physical features, which are highlighted by dominant ethnic groups in order to depict them as "outsiders," making them more vulnerable to

sectarian attacks (Thacker, 2014). As already noted, thus far, the dominant Pakistani feminist movement has been unable to address the specificity of their experience. Feminists like Jalila Haider work to give Hazara women's struggles greater profile and call for these to be viewed as state, rather than anti-state issues.

Hamida Ali Hazara

Living in fear of sectarian attacks and persecution, in addition to community norms of work and honour, it is not easy for Shi'a Hazara women to come out of their homes and do something different in their community. Hamida Ali Hazara is an inspiration and an example of strength for many. She has opened the first restaurant in Quetta run by and for women only (Sarfranz, 2017). The restaurant is a place for women to come together, work and engage in discussions while also enjoying food. Hamida thinks empowering women economically who have lost their family members in sectarian attacks and are struggling to support their families is important. She believes that for women, empowerment comes from financial independence (Sarfranz, 2017). She notes, "the idea behind this restaurant is to give a second home to women, where they can come and talk about their problems and find solutions" (Sarfranz, 2017).

Hamida Ali Hazara started her career as an English teacher at a local school. She realized she needed to do more if she plans to make a larger impact for the vulnerable Shi'a Hazara community and came up with the idea of establishing a non-profit organization named 'Hurmatty Nisawa Foundation' to help women get an education, to provide health facilities, and to support women in sports (Sarfarz, 2017). This is a context in which women do not have spaces to socialize outside their homes, and where the state's laws, allow for men to control "their" women instead of protecting women. In such contexts, it is extremely courageous Shi'a women like Hamida Ali Hazara to create safe spaces for women to socialize and discuss social and political

issues. This kind of intervention to create everyday spaces for women to interact demonstrates remarkably creative resistance by Shi'a women working against patriarchal family laws and customs, as well as against state policies and laws which make women more vulnerable to violence and lone support systems for their families.

Nargis Hameedullah

Nargis Hameedullah is from the Shi'a Hazara community in Pakistan, and she is Pakistan's first female athlete to win a bronze medal at the multi-sport competition at the age of 19 (Aziz, 2018). She grew up in hostile security conditions and has received a lot of opposition from her own Hazara community for practicing Karate, as a woman. Regardless of the multiple obstacles, she chose to practice her passion and became an example for other girls of her community (Aziz, 2018). She told Aljazeera, "as a player, I train physically, my strength has increased, but emotionally and mentally, I have really been affected [by these bomb blasts]" (Aziz, 2018). Nargis Hameedullah is referring to sectarian attacks and blasts by militants who target and kill Hazara Shi'a Muslims.

After her win at the prestigious regional international Asian Games, Nargis said she was disappointed that her win was not acknowledged by the state officials and leaders. She said to The Nation, an online newspaper article, "it wasn't my personal glory that I managed to win first-ever Karate bronze medal in Asian Games in ladies' category while I also never expected or demanded anything from them" (Ali, 2018). Typically, a nation-state always tries to claim such victories especially when it is a woman to show the world how progressive the state is. But the Pakistani state will not even claim Hazara Shi'a as their own when it comes to making Pakistan look good to the world. This shows the extreme hatred and marginalization of Shi'a Hazara

community in Pakistan and how they are seen as outsiders not worthy of being acknowledged, not even for their contributions to Pakistani society.

While these stories are of individual Shi'a women who rise to prominence their stories are crucial in understanding the kinds of everyday, institutional and legal sites of resistance that Shi'a women are engaged in. In reading these stories of individual courage, we must consider that they carve out a space for their political resistance not only against the violence of Sunni state and society, familial and state patriarchy, but against the silences and complicity of the feminist movement itself. Rather than view these stories of resistance as merely individual, these stories actually tell the history of collective violence against and disregard toward Shi'a women.

Conclusion

Regardless of the number of protests by Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan, the Pakistani state does not consider the demands of Shi'a Muslims such as Shi'a demands for protection from the state and military against the recent increase in sectarian killings of Shi'a Muslims as legitimate. This should not be interpreted as an isolated oversight by the Pakistani state. In fact this speaks to the increasingly entrenched Sunni structure of the Pakistani state. This is why instead of protecting Shi'a Muslims, state organizations use extrajudicial and illegal tactics such as torture and disappearance to silence them.

As I have discussed, the military and state agencies in Pakistan also harass and torture civil society activists and journalists who speak critically and frankly on political and religious issues in Pakistan. After the anti-Shi'a rallies in Karachi, instead of arresting protestors who chanted hateful and violent slogans against Shi'a Muslims, it was journalists who were there to report on the Sunni violence, like Bilal Farooqi, who were arrested for writing about the

sectarian attacks (Ali, 2020). It is also disappointing to note that very few Pakistani Sunni scholars and journalists have shown solidarity and support for Shi'a Muslims in the country.

Pakistani women have resisted the patriarchal oppression from Pakistani state since the very beginning of the formation of Pakistan and stood up for their rights regardless of the extreme opposition from religious leaders and other men. However, what remains missing from dominant Pakistani feminism are voices and experiences of Shi'a Muslim women. Sunni Muslims in Pakistan, even the intellectual class of Sunni Muslims, including feminist scholars, refuse to see and resist systematic, state-sponsored violence on Shi'a Muslims. They have resisted noticing how Shi'a Muslims in general and especially, Shi'a Muslim women bear the brunt of shifting moments of imperialism, patriarchies, and sectarian violence. As we have seen in the stories of Shi'a Hazara women, the commonality in all of their stories is that Shi'a Hazara women are affected in multiple ways because of imperial and colonial interventions and because of the ongoing political instability and state's negligence towards addressing sectarian issues in Pakistan. These women not only bear the brunt of deeply rooted patriarchy, but they also have to fight the disproportionate effects of sectarian attacks, trauma, and financially supporting families when their men are killed in sectarian attacks.

It is important that the feminist movements in Pakistan recognize the experiences of marginalization of Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan and apply an intersectional approach to examine the experiences of groups of women belonging to different religious, cultural, and ethnic background. This is because Sunni supremacy impacts religious minorities differently, and it particularly impacts Shi'a women and other non-Muslim religious minorities, subjecting them to intersecting sectarian violence and patriarchal violence. Shi'a Muslims have continued to raise their voices against the state brutality, killings, torture and disappearances of Shi'a Muslims and

activities. They have continued to question the state on its silence on human rights violations and sectarian killings in the hands of religious orthodox supported and protected by the Sunni state of Pakistan. The Shi'a women, regardless of the multiple state, sectarian and patriarchal oppressions have continue to break the barrier to safeguard their rights to live and work in their country. It is important that the Pakistani Sunni scholars, activists, and feminists show their support to Shi'a Muslim movements in Pakistan.

Conclusion: Significance of the Research and Hope for the Future Reforms

The quest for undertaking this research topic started with my own curiosity to understand the history of sectarian violence in Pakistan. As I progress through understanding the complex and multilayered history of sectarian violence against Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan, it became evident that central to understanding the complex sectarian violence in Pakistan is to study sectarian violence in ways that attend to cultural conflict in relation to the transnational, imperial histories of conflict. Hence, I started with understanding the relationship of sectarian violence to the history of Pakistani state-formation and the gradual Sunnization of Pakistan. Later, I show the role of capitalist and imperial history and present, especially US imperialism in Pakistan and how the capitalist imperial projects are used by the Pakistani state in the education system to uphold Sunni domination and marginalize religious minorities.

It was necessary to demonstrate the gradual Sunnization of the Pakistani state by discussing the Pakistani state formation in relation to broader geopolitical forces such as US imperialism because the 'Pakistan Movement' and the partition of India and Pakistan speak volumes about the contribution and leadership of Shi'a Muslims, especially the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Through Jinnah's speeches, I have demonstrated that the 'Pakistan movement' was inclusive in its discourse, and frequently led by members of the Shi'a community. Aga Khan III, the 48th Spiritual Leader of Shi'a Ismaili Muslim who was also the president of All India Muslim League at the time and advocated strongly for Muslim rights. After partition, alongside Jinnah, two leaders of Pakistan Iskandar Mirza (1955-1958) and Yahya Khan (1969-71) were Shi'a Muslims. The contributions of Shi'a Muslims leaderships has been skipped from history textbooks and policy documents and if ever mentioned, the Shi'a leaders

like Jinnah are represented as religious scholars and their Shi'a Muslim family backgrounds are conveniently ignored.

To demonstrate the steady formation of dominant Sunni state structures which set the foundations for deepening sectarian violence in more recent decades in Pakistan, I relied on Frantz Fanon and Edward Said's understanding of the centrality of land and the national bourgeoisie. In particular, I focus on Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization process (1977-1988), because he allowed for colonial and imperial projects to come together with Pakistani state-formation. In this Sunnization of the state, the gradually marginalized Shi'a communities, non-Muslim religious communities, and women in Pakistan bore the brunt of the intersecting imperial and sectarian projects. Even though sectarian violence and the rise of Sunni religious groups was felt after Jinnah passed away, Zia-ul-Haq's Sunnization process (1977-1988), projected and known more commonly as Islamization has in fact transformed the political and religious landscape of Pakistan into one inclined toward sectarian violence (Nasr, 2002). Focusing on Zia's Islamization process is important also because, as shown and argued by scholar like Marie Lall and Rubina Saigol, his orthodox Sunni policies and anti-Shi'a views did not go away after his death. Rather, during current times, Zia's policies continue to haunt Shi'a Muslims and other marginalized communities in Pakistan. For instance, in the biggest city of Pakistan, Karachi, there is a very important monument which was built in 1973 called the *Teen Talwar* (Three Swords). This monument depicts Muhammad Ali Jinnah's idea of Pakistan's three pillars of strength, "Unity, Faith and Discipline" and this was meant to be a political slogan. Each of three marble swords are inscribed with the three words. Distorting Jinnah's original words (Unity, Faith, and Discipline), the order of these three words was changed in the 1980s under Zia-ul-Haq's rule to "Faith, Unity and Discipline" to give ideological support to his Islamist military

dictatorship (Nayyar, 2013). Nayyar (2013) notes that, some people argue that this is such a small change, and it should not be a big issue, but small changes can have long lasting impacts. Nayyar (2013) further notes that with the change in the order of these words, the meaning of the word “faith” was also changed. “In the original meaning, the word faith was meant as ‘faith in oneself’, or self-esteem. The Urdu translation of this word until 1980 was *Yaqeen-e-Mohkam* (a firm belief in oneself). Under General Zia, and ever since, ‘faith’ has been translated as ‘*iman*’ (religious belief)” (Nayyar, 2013). All of these “small” changes continue to have larger devastating impacts on religious minorities and women in Pakistan.

The process of distortion of history especially in curriculum and textbooks continued even after Zia death. Ironically, while the education system is supposed to solve social issues like sectarian violence, conventionally controversial religious and political issues are not addressed in textbooks or the National Curriculum, even today. Therefore, through analysis of educational policy documents (National Education Policies, National Curriculum and Textbooks) I showed, that education is one institutional site through which the Pakistani state inculcates Sunni supremacy as default national ideology among the youth through which other ways of being a Pakistani are silenced. The analysis of educational policy documents is also important to understand the relationship of contemporary sectarian violence in Pakistan to its colonial capitalist and imperial history and present by showing how the Sunnization of the state has colluded with US imperialism and Sunni power in Saudi Arabia to deepen sectarian violence. Further, I have shown how imperial and state histories of development and globalization play an important role in understanding educational projects and policies since they are direct manifestations of ongoing colonization, neoliberalism and US imperialism in Pakistan.

In terms of western-centric approaches to development as explored by Nosheen Ali (2010), and other postcolonial scholars such as Cheryl McEwan (2009), there is a widespread challenge of addressing conscious and unconscious domination of western-centric approaches in development discourses in developing countries in a neocolonial world. I have explored how the Pakistani state has focused on education to prepare students to meet “global competition demands” (National Education Policy 2017-2021, p. 4) because such neoliberal and imperial projects benefit the military agendas of the Sunni State and a Sunni-dominant national bourgeoisie which seeks to reproduce its class power through these means. As such, the focus on education in Pakistan is on building human capital rather than addressing social issues and inequities within and through education. The power to see Pakistani citizens as human resources deepens the commodification of people into mere resources for enhancing a capitalist society, ultimately deepening the state’s capacity to dispossess people’s with diverse roots in places such as Gilgit-Baltistan from their connection to, survival from, and identity with the land.

Focusing on discursive analysis of the curriculum, the structurally-generated preference for English-medium schooling, and the dispossession of agrarian futures, I showed how the education system in Pakistan reflects colonial continuities. One of the main ways through which the west and in particular the US, keeps ideological control over Pakistan is through their so-called developmental initiatives and foreign aid which I show is only to benefit their own imperial interest and reinforce their control and power in Pakistan. From the time of the Cold War through to the present policies of decentralized education, imperial projects of geopolitical control and capitalist modernization define the Pakistani education system. Hypocritically, despite following western models of development and education, and despite the state’s arguments on how education can bring peace and prosperity in the country, when it comes to

addressing minority religious rights, Sunni state officials, politicians and policy makers focus on saving “Islamic culture” from “foreign influences”.

The aftereffects of Zia’s Sunnization are strongly felt by religious minorities and women of Pakistan. While I recognise the collective upper class women’s movements to fight Zia’s misogynist laws, I also question dominant Pakistani feminist movements for not speaking out enough about the multiple sources of oppression and marginalization of Shi’a Muslim women and for not accounting for their experiences of trauma and abandonment when they lose multiple male members of their families and continue to work to feed their families in the hostile, patriarchal, and in Sunni dominant societies. This shows that the predominantly Sunni feminist movement only goes so far, as it is largely unable to see or unwilling to critique Zia’s Islamization initiatives as a specifically Sunnization process that remains ongoing to this day.

This is why I conclude by acknowledging Shi’a feminist activism, especially the work of Shi’a women. And among Shi’a women, I have focused on the resistance of Shi’a Hazara women, who are the most adversely-affected due to their easily identified and stigmatized history and language. I account for their personal stories of resistance. I show that in the face of the Pakistani state’s efforts at cultivating ignorance about the marginalization and increasing violent attacks on Shi’a Muslims, Shi’a activists have managed to raise their voices against the state-sponsored sectarian violence.

Thinking Ahead

Sectarian violence has become more complex over the years due to the changing landscape of world politics, imperial capitalism, and growing Islamophobia around the world. As Nosheen Ali (2010) notes, “in order to make sense of rising sectarianism, we also need to investigate the everyday forms through which religious conflict is produced, as well as the

specific political contexts in which religious identities are created and shaped” (p. 738). For example, the state’s control over knowledge production and teaching and learning. What has been an important issue during recent years is the the debates on religious violence in educational institutions including public schools and colleges are often avoided due to fear of being killed. The rising number of blasphemy cases on teachers especially Shi’a and other religious minority teachers is alarming and witness to the fact that teachers do not feel safe to discuss religious matters. The reasons for avoiding classroom debates around sectarian violence is also structural and planned because the Sunni state unsurprisingly wishes to avoid youth and public understanding of the structural and historical roots of Shi’a discrimination and anti-Shiism. Such an education in Sunni histories of domination would allow Sunnis to understand that the system of power, the outcomes of oppression and the imperial agendas of intervention were merely rhetorically in the name of peace, whilst actually normalizing violence. I hope the literature and research on sectarian violence against Shi’a Muslims can help show the urgent need for reforms in education system and policies.

None of my experiences as a woman from a disputed territory in Pakistan or the education I received helped me understand the history of the country I was born and grew up in. The fact that it took me this long to learn a relatively unbiased, complex, multilayered history of partition, colonization and the on-going Western imperialism and its connections to sectarian violence, says a lot about the education system in Pakistan. I went to relatively good quality private schools which followed the national curriculum of Pakistan. My teachers (mostly Shi’a) were bound by the rules of National Curriculum, and they showed their concern for their students’ future because they insisted on training us in scoring well in exams that are run and controlled by the state. As a result, these teachers have limited means and choices to introduce us

to “critical thinking skills”. However, by saying this, I do not mean to say Pakistan is an exception to the system in which states often use education to teach their own narratives of nationalism through textbooks and curriculum to students. Rather I argue that the implications of colonization and western imperialism has damaged Pakistan so deeply that it has become important to address these issues especially in the recent times.

Moving forward, in order to make the Sunni state and military accountable, people in Pakistan must ask themselves and the state questions like “what are my investments in upholding Pakistan as a strong post-colonial Muslim state rather than acknowledging that it is indeed a casteist, anti-Black, powerful Sunni, militarized state in bed with Saudi Arabia and the U.S.?” (Patel, 2019). This is the kind of question all Pakistanis ought to be asking of themselves. After all, even though it might look like sectarian related issues are not impacting everyone in Pakistan, in reality, the only people benefiting from it is the upper class, Sunni Muslims in the country who have more control over land, capital and politics while Shi’a and other minorities, women and working class and even impoverished Sunni Muslims in the country suffer.

Therefore, to bring real change in the oppressive and violent system, it has become important to hold the state accountable, ask questions, recognize class, caste, gender and sectarian privilege, protect safety and spaces to marginalised population such as religious minorities and women to take part in politics and other places of power to not only fight the discrimination against the minorities but also to debunk the ideas which defines Islam as what “Sunnism”.

Furthermore, for the future research on transnational approach to understanding conflict in sub-continent, it will be important to consider thinking about India as a regional force of

islamophobia, regional imperialism, and its occupation in Kashmir, because India has been the market for the West, as it shapes transnational and sectarian histories and relations in Pakistan.

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