

Memory Politics of Partition: How History is Used in Modern South Asian Identity Formation

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ABSTRACT

The partition of British India in 1947 is one of the most important and controversial events in South Asia history, affecting collective memory, political debates and national identity in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Partition is not an historical event but is being reconstituted through state narratives, schools, commemorations, the media and private memories. This work aims to fill the existing lacuna in research about how competing narratives of Partition are being activated to build, normalize and negotiate contemporary identities in a variety of political and cultural settings.

This is a qualitative research that aims to explore the relationship between the politics of memory and the construction of modern South Asian identity through an analysis of the politics of memory as it is encountered in the lived experience of South Asians. The study is a qualitative interpretivist research design that uses thematic analysis of secondary sources (scholarly literature, history textbooks, political speeches, displays of the museum, memorial practices, autobiographies, oral history, and media narratives). The analysis relies on three theoretical frameworks, which are the approaches of collective memory, cultural memory and social identity theory and examine the dynamic between memory, history and identity.

The results show that the memories of Partition are not homogeneous nor neutral, rather they are constantly reconstructed to meet political, ideological, and national needs. The institutionalization of historical narratives is often carried out by the State institutions and personal testimonies and community memories question the official narratives by preserving historical experiences of displacement, violence, resilience and coexistence. Such competing memories have profound impact on intergenerational identity-building, nationalism, collective identity, and perceptions on the other side of the borders in the region of South Asia.

This study adds to the growing body of literature on memory politics by combining the study of history with memory studies and identity theory to help develop a more holistic qualitative analysis of the construction of identity in the post-Partition era. The results have implications for policy makers, teachers, curriculum designers, historians and peacebuilders, in terms of the need to have inclusive historical narratives, critical history education and dialogue-based approaches to reconciliation in culturally diverse societies.

Keywords: Partition of India; Memory Politics; Collective Memory; South Asian identity; Nationalism; Qualitative Research.

INTRODUCTION

The Partition of British India in 1947 is one of the most pivotal and harrowing events in modern South Asian history. Partition marked the end of almost 200 years of British colonial rule and was the birth of two sovereign states – India and Pakistan, which eventually became Bangladesh after the Liberation War of 1971. The political division was supposed to solve the communal tension between the Hindus and Muslims as per the Two Nation Theory, but instead it saw one of the largest and most violent forced migrations in history. Roughly 14–18 million people migrated to new borders and an estimated one to two million died as a result of communal violence, displacement, famine and disease (Talbot & Singh, 2009). The Partition also had a profound impact on the political, social, cultural and collective memory which continues to shape South Asia over a period of more than seven decades (Zamindar, 2007; Butalia, 2017).

While many events of history fade into oblivion over time, Partition has remained at the very heart of the political consciousness of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It has left its imprint not just in history books but in the electoral process, public celebrations, museums, fiction, film, social media and diplomacy. In this context, conflicting narratives of Partition are often used to validate existing political agendas, strengthen nationalistic ideologies and construct collective citizens' notions of citizenship and belonging (Pandey, 2001; Jalal, 2014). Thus, Partition cannot be viewed as a single, past historical event rather as a present phenomena that is being created and reimagined in the political, social, and cultural environment.

The continuity of Partition in public memory is a reflection of that other linkage between history and memory. The traditional approach to reconstructing the past is through systematic analysis of evidence, but memory is an approach to remembering, interpreting, and giving meaning to past experiences. Memory is not complete but selective, highlighting some events, and omitting or trivializing others. In his seminal theory of collective memory, Halbwachs (1992) theorized that individual memories are influenced by the social structures that define what is remembered and passed on in each generation. Reaching beyond this, with regard to the monument and the museum, Nora (1989) proposed the concept of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory) to show how national monuments, museums, anniversaries, archives and public rituals are symbolic places that help a nation manage and negotiate its past identities. In the same way Assmann (2011) separated communicative memory, which is created by face-to-face exchanges with other people and cultural memory which is institutionalized in education, literature, state ceremonies, and cultural symbols.

These theories have had a profound impact on the recent study of memory because they have shown that memory does not simply represent the past but is a normative, social, and political process. Official histories are created by governments, schools, the media, museums, religious bodies, and political elites, which all contribute to collective interpretations of the past (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Memory politics can be defined as the intentional manipulation of history to create political legitimacy, reinforce national identity, support the implementation of government policies, and demarcate "self" and "other" (Müller, 2002; De Cesari & Rigney, 2014). Thus, Memory politics not only shapes different societies' memory of the past, but also their concepts of the present and the future.

The politics of memory is clearly visible in South Asia where the narratives of Partition vary significantly in each of the national settings. The official histories of Partition events in India tend to focus on the secular and democratic basis of the Indian nation-state, and to blame the colonial policies of divide and rule along with communal separatism for Partition's tragic consequences (Chatterji, 2007). On the other hand, in Pakistani history, the Partition is often seen as the fulfillment of the political dreams of the Muslims and their justification for an independent Muslim homeland (Jalal, 2014). Bangladesh expands the definition further as memory of Partition is complemented by the Liberation War of 1971, linguistic nationalism and opposition to political domination (Riaz, 2016). The different histories show how collective memory is inscribed in a project of national construction of identity.

The process of identity formation can be tied to the process of societies constructing their history. National identities are not innate and immutable but instead are social and historical constructs of shared stories, symbols, cultural practices, and collective memory (Anderson, 2006). Imagined communities are shared beliefs and history that allow people to imagine themselves being part of a common political community even though they have never met most of their fellow citizens, according to Anderson's concept of imagined communities. Historical memories are important in helping to maintain these imagined communities, as they provide stories of beginnings, sacrifice, suffering, heroism, and a shared destiny.

The memories of Partition have continued to influence identities over several generations in South Asia. The oral narratives of the survivors and the family histories they recount are the ways in which the Partition events are being communicated to younger generations, and where younger generations encounter the Partition, it is mostly through textbooks, films, museums, digital archives, and social media (Butalia, 2017; Khan, 2017). These intergenerational processes are a way of understanding that collective memory is not fixed, but rather dynamic. Hirsch (2012) makes this point in his discussion of postmemory, which suggests that the descendants of a traumatic event may not have experienced the trauma directly, but that the trauma is a part of their memories and experience nonetheless. Memories of Partition, therefore, have impacts not just on the people who lived through 1947 but also on the generations that followed whose ideas of nationhood are shaped by the legacies of Partition.

Recent scholarship has shown that digital technologies have also revolutionized the politics of memory in the ways they provide opportunities for the public to take part in remembering the past. The possibilities for individuals to give voice to alternative narratives that contest official state histories have been facilitated through digital archives, online museums, documentary films, podcasts, social media and oral history projects (Hoskins, 2018; Reading, 2022). These are digital memories which blur the lines between public and private memory and offer a means of challenging dominant historical versions by marginalised groups. Concurrently, the digital space has emerged as a space for political actors to select history and to promote nationalism, communalism, and polarization. In this way, memory politics is now present in institutional, as well as in digital spaces.

Although there is an extensive literature on Partition history and memory, there are still gaps in the scholarly literature. Much of the existing research has been about documenting violence, migration, women's experiences, diplomatic relations or oral history from the survivors (Butalia 2017; Pandey 2001; Talbot and Singh 2009). While these studies have been enormously helpful, fewer have focused on the concurrent processes of identity formation at the same time in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in contemporary political discourses, educational systems, commemorative practices and cultural representations through a study of competing memories of Partition. Moreover, previous research tends to limit itself to each country's specific context without considering the broader regional context by adopting a comparative approach that can account for the interweaving of memory politics in South Asia.

The intention of the present qualitative study is to fill this gap and explore the process of reimagining historical narratives of Partition and their use in creating contemporary South Asian identities. This research sees historical memory not as the past in itself, but as a dynamic social process in which the state, community and individual negotiate belonging, citizenship, nationalism and collective identity. The study examines how official and personal narratives influence the present-day construction of national memory and the nature of collective memory through the lenses of collective memory, cultural memory and social identity theories. Based on the theory of collective memory, cultural memory, and social identity theory, the study investigates the interactions of official narratives and personal narratives with education institutions, political discourse and cultural production in today's construction of national memory and the nature of collective memory.

This study has several implications. From an academic standpoint, it has helped to develop the interdisciplinary areas of memory studies, South Asian history, political sociology, nationalism studies and qualitative historical research by bringing South Asian theory of memory and the current debate of identity formation together. Its methodological approach shows how valuable qualitative thematic analysis is for the interpretation of historical narratives in various textual, cultural and political sources. In terms of practical implications, the findings offer valuable inputs for educators, historians, policy makers, curriculum developers, museum workers and peacebuilding actors in their quest for more inclusive ways of teaching and commemorating Partition. The study also fosters critical discussion of the various historical narratives, in the process, contributing to promoting historical reconciliation, intercultural dialogue and regional understanding in South Asia.

Finally, this research suggests that the memory of the Partition is not simply a means to remember the past, but rather is used to build political legitimacy, frame notions of national identity, and create inter-community relations in the present. Thus, an understanding of the way memory is played out across the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi borders is crucial to understanding how Partition has continued to shape the present day South Asian processes of identity construction. This study uses a qualitative and theoretically informed analysis to add to the scholarly discussion on the nature of remembering and remembrance, and to show that history is also being interpreted, negotiated, and mobilized in the process of constructing a modern nation and a collective identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical foundations of Memory politics and Identity formation

The study of the politics of memory has emerged as one of the most prominent interdisciplinary areas for the analysis of the ways in which traumatic pasts are remembered and how they are turned into narratives that define the “who” and “what” of the present. Memory is no longer seen as a representation of what transpired in the past but more as a socially mediated construction of past events that embodies political agendas, cultural biases, institutional customs and the contestation for legitimacy. The history of the Partition of 1947 holds a special place in South Asia as it not only marks a pivotal moment in the formation of modern nation-states but is also a historical break and a humanitarian tragedy. Hence, the focus has shifted from the study of Partition as a political event to the study of how memories of Partition remain in play in the context of nationalism and citizenship, religious identity and historical consciousness, and interstate relations between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Ahmed 2021; Chatterji 2022; Menon 2020).

Memory research suggests that societies do not merely ‘remember’ the past, but actively reconstruct it as per the political, cultural and ideological needs of the day. Historical narratives then are dynamic tools in which the government, educational institutions, media, museum, and civil society negotiate competing versions of the national identity. Powerful actors have been able to maintain control over historical narratives – some events are remembered, others forgotten – what is remembered is what is considered as legitimate history, what is not is marginalized, as scholars call it “memory politics” (Assmann, 2011; Erll, 2018). These processes are particularly visible in the official accounts of Partition in South Asia, with competing versions of Partition frequently focusing on the national victory over universal human pain.

memory politics has become a growing phenomenon because more and more scholars have come to understand that knowledge of the past is inseparable from issues of power and identity. Today, scholars increasingly stress the dynamic nature of collective memories, which are continually re-created over time. Memory is also a political process and not a historical archive, as trauma is re-imagined and reinterpreted in different political settings to suit shifting ideological goals (Rigney, 2022). This view creates an

indispensable context of the importance of Partition in the current discourses on nationalism, citizenship, minority rights and regional diplomacy.

Collective Memory Theory

The modern research on collective memory began with Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who questioned the idea of collective memory being something other than the sum of its constituent parts, individual memories. Rather, Halbwachs suggested that remembering is a social act, in which people remember the past through the frameworks that are shaped by their families, communities, religions, and nations. Collective memory thus becomes an interpretation of collective memory and not a truthful historical record. His work laid the foundation for one of the most influential paradigms of the present-day memory studies, providing evidence of the active construction of memories in society according to the current social needs.

Because of the fact that memories of 1947 vary significantly from one region and nation to another, even though they refer to the same event, Halbwachs' theoretical contribution is still very relevant to the understanding of Partition. Instead of a common memory, Partition created numerous collective memories based on the national experiences, religious identity and political concerns of each. These differing remembrances reflect the argument of contemporary scholars that these memories are testimony to Halbwachs' theory that history is not an objective fact, but rather is assembled according to the social structure of a particular society (Erll, 2018).

This work has been extended and amplified by subsequent scholarship, which has focused on the dynamic ties between memory, institutions and political power. Olick (1999) offers a critique of collective memory as the passive accumulation of social memory; instead, he proposes to consider it as a negotiation process in which actors are competing. State and national governments, schools, media outlets, commemorative events, and political leaders all contribute to the creation of dominant narratives that influence the public's understanding of history. The institutional apparatuses are more prominent in South Asia, where the state-sponsored celebrations often strengthen the sense of nationalism via selective constructions of Partition and are often devoid of common histories or cross-border experiences.

The researcher also notes that collective memory has been becoming more and more transnational thanks to globalization, migrations, digital communications, and so on, in recent research. Individuals have been able to challenge official narratives through the use of digital archives, oral history projects, documentaries and social media platforms, sharing alternative memories across national boundaries (Hoskins, 2018). These developments have made pre-existing models of national memory that saw it as relatively stable even more difficult to maintain, as contemporary memory has become more and more fragmented between multiple cultural and political contexts. Digital memory projects have enabled an unprecedented engagement between the survivors and the younger generations for the Partition studies, enabling voices of violence, displacement and coexistence to reach a larger audience.

However, there are also potential drawbacks to the classical collective memory theory. Halbwachs' claim that power relations are relatively unimportant is criticized because he assumes relatively homogeneous social frameworks. In fact, dominant and marginalized groups' memories often compete for dominance, and the significance of their experiences is often class-, gender-, ethnicity-, religion- and political-based (Kansteiner, 2002). One such example is the work done by feminist scholars to show that Partition experiences of women were still largely absent from the official national narratives despite being very focal aspect of violence and displacement during the Partition (Butalia, 2017). Likewise, the memory of minority communities is produced differently by the state than the memory of the dominant communities, meaning that collective memory is not a singular, dominant memory.

Overall, the collective memory theory offers a valuable framework for the analysis of reinterpretation of the Partition in present-day South Asian societies. Recent scholarship increasingly suggests that collective memory should be combined with other frameworks of cultural memory, identity and postcolonial power relations, however, to understand memory politics.

A comprehensive overview of cultural memory and the institutionalization of history

Collective memory is the way in which social groups remember, while cultural memory theory examines the means by which societies remember the history across generations symbolically, in practice, and in material construct. Jan Assmann (1995) has identified two types of memory: communicative memory, which is carried on in daily interpersonal communication and cultural memory, which is stored in monuments, archives, literature, museums, rituals, textbooks and commemorative ceremonies. Cultural memory is thus not limited to the present, but involves storing certain history in long-lasting cultural formats.

This is especially important to comprehend partition in terms of the fact that the generation that actually lived through 1947 is fast dying out. The importance of eyewitness testimony has been decreasing and the mechanisms of institutions have taken over the shaping of future generations' understanding of Partition. The transmission of the Partition memory has therefore become the main mediums of the school curriculum, the museum, the memorial site, film, novel, television program and the digital archive (Erl, 2018).

The concept of cultural memory in general also carries the implication of continual remembering and forgetting, as stated by Aleida Assmann (2011). No societies can remember all history: Political institutions determine what history is public and what is marginalized. Forgetting is thus an integral part of the cultural memory, not its contrary. It is especially pertinent in the context of South Asia, where official histories often focus on the story of the country becoming independent while neglecting the complexity of communal societies and the suffering that occurred among different communities, both before and after Partition.

Recent scholarship has brought attention to the fact that digital technologies are increasingly playing a role in the democratization of historical representation and are shaping cultural memory. In recent years, opportunities for the public to engage in alternative history have grown with the use of online archives, documentary films, oral history collections, and social media campaigns that offer alternate accounts of history that call into question official ones (Hoskins, 2018). Such projects that record survivor testimony can help diversify the way history is understood, or the voices that were not included in the state's official account of its history.

But academics warn that digital media do not necessarily create more inclusive memories. Additionally, digital platforms can help to reinforce political polarization as it is possible for rival groups to be ideologically extreme and to circulate their own versions of history. As such, in an increasingly digital age, the field of memory politics is characterized by conflicts over historical legitimacy among multiple actors, operating at the same time (Rigney, 2022).

Collective memory would thus find its complementary in cultural memory theory, which shows that the historical narratives are not only remembered individually, but also institutionalized in learning, culture, and politics. This is especially useful in exploring the continued construction of national identities in the school, the museum, political rhetoric, media and commemorative discourses of Partition.

Nationalism, Identity Politics, and Historical Narratives

The connection between memory and nationalism is one of the most powerful and significant motifs of modern political thought. Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" theory states that nations are constructed through the use of shared stories, not face-to-face interactions (Anderson, 2006). Collective memories are then crucial assets for the formation of a nation's sense of belonging as they offer citizens shared historical roots, symbols, heroes, and experiences.

In post colonial societies, nationalistic memory can serve other roles as well, and in particular it can help to legitimize new nations with selective historical narratives. After independence from British colonial rule, India and Pakistan built national histories which both interpreted Partition through the prism of different ideologies. They were official stories that not only informed the public of their respective national identities but also helped to define their respective relationships with their adjoining states (Pandey, 2001).

Modernist historians have contended that nationalism often has more to do with what history is remembered than what the facts of history are. National histories stress events that uphold unity and downplay events that challenge official narratives (Smith, 1999). Memory politics can no longer be decoupled from nation building when history is a determining factor in citizenship, belonging, and political legitimacy.

Identity politics further complicates these processes by acknowledging that historical memory is felt differently among the different social groups. Religious and ethnic minorities, women, refugees, and marginalized groups often have memory accounts that differ from the official national memory. Contemporary scholarship has accordingly come to focus on the production of multiple historical narratives in the same nation-state, rather than a shared collective memory (Brubaker, 2004).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A method of inquiry necessary to comprehend the political nature of the memory of the Partition and how it is deployed to create the contemporary identity of South Asia is one that goes beyond the limits of measuring variables and is able to access meanings, interpretations, historical narratives and socio-political contexts. This study, therefore, is qualitative in nature and has an interpretivist philosophical orientation. This approach acknowledges that historical memory is not singular, not neutral or objective, but is socially, culturally and politically produced through discourse, institutions and collective experiences. In this context, the research aims at exploring how various actors – states, political elites, educational institutions, media, and communities – have manufactured and used narratives of Partition to create a national identity in the context of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Qualitative inquiry is especially appropriate for research that studies historical memory as memories are shared through language, symbols, culture, ideology, and lived experiences that cannot be simply measured quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike statistical analysis and causal generalizations, qualitative research is designed to gain insight into the ways in which meanings are created, negotiated, contested, and institutionalized in particular historical and socio-political settings. Because the politics of memory is a struggle over alternative perceptions of the past, and not necessarily a struggle over the facts of the past, qualitative research is the most suitable method for analyzing the processes of memory.

Research Philosophy

The interpretivist research philosophy is adopted in this study because it places a strong emphasis on the social construction of reality through human interaction, cultural practices, language and historical interpretations as opposed to the notion of reality being a single objective truth (Crotty, 1998). An

interpretivist view suggests that history becomes meaningful when it is remembered, told, commemorated, and institutionalized in multiple ways by members of society and individuals. Thus, the meaning of Partition is not just related to the event itself, but also to the multiple meaning of the event to various communities, governments, and generations.

The positivist perspective assumes that social phenomena can be examined like phenomena in the natural sciences. Interpretivism challenges the positivist perspective that social phenomena can be examined like phenomena in the natural sciences. Rather, the values, beliefs, identities, and cultural contexts in which human behavior and social reality are embedded demand interpretive understanding (Schwandt, 2014). This philosophical stance is closely linked with the concept of 'collective memory' as a dynamic social construction mediated by political power, institutional procedures and cultural narratives (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2011).

The interpretivist philosophy is particularly suited for the study of the memory politics of Partition as the memories vary widely within the country of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while referring to a single historical event. The various interpretations of the past illustrate that the process of remembering is a socially mediated one that reflects national ideologies, interests, educational systems, and cultural identities. It is therefore not a study of a single reality, but rather, multiple realities.

Also, interpretivism acknowledges the active role of the researcher in interpreting meanings instead of being completely objective. Qualitative researchers do not attempt to remove subjectivity, but do recognize that interpretation is a process of ongoing interaction with texts, contexts, and theoretical points of view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the field of contestation histories, where the different stories of the past can be told in parallel without a final judgment, it is important to have reflexive understanding.

Qualitative Research Design

The research method used is Multiple Source Document Analysis (MSDA) with a historical qualitative inquiry and critical discourse analysis. This research design is suitable because the main concern here is to explore the ways in which historical narratives of Partition are built, represented and mobilized in various institutional and cultural settings and contexts, instead of examining individual attitudes by surveying and experimenting.

Because documents represent the historical realities and social processes in which they are constructed (Bowen, 2009), qualitative document analysis has gained in value as a method in social science research. The official records, political speeches, and educational textbooks, memoirs, archival documents, newspapers, policy documents, and oral history collections are not simply seen as sources of historical information, but as cultural products that shape specific understandings of the past.

Historical qualitative inquiry can be used to place current memory politics in a historical context, complemented by document analysis. Historical qualitative research, however, does not assume that historical documents are objective facts, but rather that they are themselves shaped by power relations, institutional agendas and political choices of what gets preserved, remembered and forgotten (Scott, 1990). Historical documents are therefore critically examined both in terms of their content and the political and institutional setting in which they are written.

The analytical approach is also made up of elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Through CDA, the researcher can analyse the ways in which language, discourse and representation make a contribution to the construction of political identities and ideological narratives (Fairclough, 2013). Official histories of Partition tend to validate certain national identities, while excluding other experiences, and therefore

discourse analysis is useful in revealing the patterns of inclusion/exclusion, of silence, and of political representation.

Qualitative document analysis, historical inquiry and discourse analysis combine to provide a holistic analysis of the ways in which memory politics is being played out at a number of scales—governmental institutions, educational systems, public commemorations, media discourse, and personal testimonies.

Interpretivist Paradigm

The study falls under the interpretivist paradigm, a perspective focused on comprehending the significance that individuals and societies give to events in history rather than on universal laws that explain social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In this paradigm, historical memory is an ongoing construction process in the process of social interaction, political discourse, cultural representation, and institutional processes.

In the field of memory studies, interpretivism recognizes that there can be more than one interpretation of an historical event in existence because different social groups create meaning based on their cultural experiences, political interests and historical context (Erll, 2011). Thus, the study does not aim to establish the 'historical truth' of any one national story on Partition. Rather, it examines the process of the production, legitimation, and use of narratives in the formation of national identity.

The same paradigm is germane in South Asia where Partition is still one of the most politically charged historical events. The narratives of the official state narratives, memories of the community, survivor accounts, school curricula, museum displays and media representations can sometimes provide opposing accounts of the causes, consequences and meanings of Partition. The interpretivist approach thus enables all these voices to be studied without giving any one voice an authority status.

Furthermore, interpretivism promotes context analysis. Historical narratives cannot be analyzed without reference to their political, cultural and institutional contexts. The study, therefore, reads memory politics in the context of other dynamics of nationalism, postcolonial state-making, identity politics, and regional geopolitical negotiations.

Theoretical Framework

The analytical approach combines approaches from collective memory theory, cultural memory theory, postcolonial theory, and constructivist view of nationalism in order to get a multidimensional understanding of the memory politics.

Halbwachs' theory of collective memory (1992), that memory is socially organised in groups rather than individual consciousness, is the basis of the framework. Collective memories are reimagined continuously in the current social and political environments. This theory is used to discuss the reinterpretation of Partition by the national communities to strengthen current identities.

The study is also based on Jan Assmann's (1995) notion of cultural memory and the difference between communicative memory, which is, transmitted via interpersonal communication, and cultural memory, which is institutionalised in archives, museums, textbooks, monuments and commemorative rituals. This is especially important because with the passing of the survivor generation, this distinction is becoming ever more relevant.

Further, Pierre Nora's (1989) notion of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory) guides the research on commemorative space, museums, memorials, archives and national ceremonies that preserve and reproduce official accounts of Partition.

The framework is further enriched by postcolonial theory, which also addresses the impact of the colonial legacies on historical representation and national identity. The study examines competing memories of Partition in light of the works of Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), which explore the effects of colonial boundaries, nationalist projects, and the formation of the postcolonial state. Postcolonial scholarship focuses on power as a determinant of what is taught and what is overlooked in histories.

Lastly, the theory of Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson 2006) is used to shed light on the process by which national identities are formed through common stories. National memory is not only a remembrance but a symbolic resource that helps citizens to envision themselves as part of a shared political community in the face of varying personal histories.

These theories make it possible to consider memory politics as a whole, providing a framework of analysis that connects historical accounts, institutional practices, identity construction and political power.

Data Sources

Secondary qualitative data are the major source of evidence for the historical and interpretative nature of the study. The research covers a broad array of documentary sources for triangulation and to achieve a holistic understanding of memory politics in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Main sources of primary data are:

National and colonial records of archives

- The maps and plans of the roads and streets in the city at that time
- Official political speeches and debates in parliament
- School and university textbooks that mention the Holocaust. School and university textbooks that refer to the Holocaust.

Memories and autobiographies of survivors of the Partition

- Compiled oral history projects
- Exhibits and commemorative items at the museum
- Newspaper editorials and media opinion pieces
- Expert interviews and documentary films.

International bodies or research institutes will provide reports

Peer-reviewed books and journal articles that are primarily published between 2018 and 2026, and that contain foundational scholarship that is relevant to memory.

The variety of sources allows the researcher to juxtapose state accounts with personal recollections and critical analysis and interpretation, thus gaining insight into both the dominant and the marginalized accounts of Partition.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on qualitative analysis of historical documents, archival sources, political speeches, educational textbooks, memoirs, oral histories, policy documents, media reporting and current scholarly writing, it will be seen that the politics of memory of the 1947 Partition continues to be a dynamic and contested process in South Asia. Memories of Partition are not just about a historical event, but are also playing a significant part in the creation of national identity, citizenship, political legitimacy, educational narratives and inter-state relations in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The results show that the state institutions, educational institutions, commemorative practices and political discourse are the elements that selectively institutionalise historical memory, whereas other narratives persist in personal testimonies, literature and oral history. Thematic analysis revealed seven themes. Below are the first three themes presented.

Theme 1: Partitioning Memory as a basis for National Identity

Findings

The analysis shows that the memory of Partition is one of the most powerful pillars of the South Asian national identity formation process. While India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have a common past of British colonialism and Partition, each state has developed its own political and ideological narratives of the Partition. The following is an example of how Partition is always represented as a pivotal moment in history and the birth of modern India: Government publications, history books, exhibitions, parliamentary speeches, and national commemorations all overlook Partition as a key moment in history and the emergence of the modern Indian nation.

Official histories in India often frame Partition as the inevitable result of colonial "divide and rule" tactics and the workings out of a political economy that created and empowered communal actors and interests, and thus undermined the stability of a pluralistic civilization. Independence is seen as the end of anti-colonial nationalism; Partition is seen as an unfortunate and unavoidable price of independence. In the political discourses of the national commemorations, the themes of national unity, secular constitutional values, territorial integrity and warning against religious extremism and separatism are often predominant (Chatterji, 2022).

On the other hand, the Pakistani state narratives have portrayed Partition as a successful implementation of the Two Nation Theory, and the culmination of Muslims' aspiration for self-determination through politics. The official history and numerous government publications, educational curricula and official commemorative events have consistently presented the creation of Pakistan as a secular manifestation of the Muslim identity of Pakistanis, instead of simply the partition of British India (Jalal, 2014). The narrative reflects the acceptability of the state of Pakistan, because it focuses on religious identity as the main criterion of Pakistan.

The memory situation in Bangladesh is more complicated. Historical narratives not only recognize Partition and the establishment of Pakistan, but also give the recognition to Liberation War of 1971. Though 1947 is important, but national consciousness is deepened by the concept of linguistic nationalism and the fight for independence from Pakistan. However, historical texts continue to shape debates around Bengali identity and secularism and regional affiliations (Riaz 2021).

In all three countries, the qualitative evidence shows that the state-sponsored narratives are oriented towards the nation-building rather than towards a shared history. While millions were displaced, hurt, and moved by violence across all religions, common sufferings are often not recalled by official narratives, and instead there is a focus on national triumphs.

Interpretation

The results of this study indicate that collective memory is a political tool for the creation of a national identity; it does not simply represent the 'recalling of history', but rather serves as a political instrument. Governments selectively institutionalize memories that reinforce the political legitimacy and national cohesive of the present instead of maintaining an objective record of the past. Therefore, the same historical phenomenon can have several meanings as a function of the ideological goals of each state.

This discovery is very important because it backs up Halbwachs' (1992) theory that collective memory is not individual memory but is created in group settings. The memory of the partition has been differently remembered across the national communities in view of the different national interest that is being served by their social and political institutions. In a similar vein, Anderson's (2006) idea of the "imagined community" helps to illuminate how historical narratives establish the symbolic connection between citizens who have never directly experienced Partition but still take it for granted as an important part of their collective identity.

The results also indicate that memory is a mechanism of 'including and excluding'. Official histories or narratives focus on some events and de-emphasize others, highlighting some experiences as representative of the nation and leaving the rest unmentioned. While refugees, women, religious minorities and marginalised communities are often mentioned in passing in the dominant historical narratives, they were the ones who were most affected by the experience of Partition.

Comparing this study with previous studies

This is consistent with earlier scholarship that history is always national and is always "manufactured" (Pandey, 2001). In a similar fashion, Urvashi Butalia (2017) shows how official histories can obscure personal accounts of violence and focus on a story of national unity and political success. In recent years, it has also been proposed that memory politics has been sharpened, and that states have been utilising historical narratives to reinforce contemporary narratives of identity politics and electoral mobilisation (Menon 2020; Ahmed 2021).

The study, however, advances the existing literature by making a comparative study between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the same analytical framework. The present findings contrast with a lot of pre-existing literature that explicitly addresses only the bilateral India-Pakistan relations and Bangladesh provides an important alternative model where the linguistic nationalism is a partial restructuring of the political significance of Partition.

Theoretical framework's connection to the topic

The results confirm the integrated theoretical approach used for this study. Relative to the social construction of national memory, Halbwachs' (1992) theory illuminates the social process of creating the memory, while Assmann's (2011) concept of cultural memory shows how the stories of national memory are institutionalised in education, museums and commemorative activities, as well as in official archives. Anderson's (2006) theory also provides a good example of the role of shared historical narratives in generating national communities in the face of internal diversity.

The findings also corroborate Bhabha's (1994) view, from a postcolonial perspective, that national identity is not a finished historical product, but an "ongoing process of narration. Partition remains a subject of retelling because of its political relevance as it progresses in tandem with the changing debates in today's context of ideology.

Implications

The results indicate that the memory of history continues to be significant to the feeling of national identity in the South Asian region. Official history matters and so do alternative accounts of Partition, and they continue to shape political discourse in the subcontinent. Schools thus have a crucial role to play in shaping the national history and regional relations of future generations.

Theme 2: State-Sponsored Memory and the Politics of Selective Remembering

Findings

The qualitative analysis shows that the governments actively engage in the process of building and institutionalizing particular understandings of Partition in the context of commemorative events, public monuments, official speeches, archives, and national heritage projects. These mechanisms do not work as impartial historical entities, but rather as agents of memory selection, which exclude other memories.

Nationhood is officially commemorated in all three countries, and partitions' associated humanitarian catastrophe is comparatively given little attention in all three nations. Independence Day speeches resonate with a sense of sacrifice, patriotism and national strength, often participating in Partition as a pivotal moment in the process of state-building. Such commemorative stories tend to highlight heroism and political success, and downplay the attention to intercommunal conflict, forced displacement, and lived experiences of displacement.

Selective processes of remembrance are also seen in the museum exhibitions. Exhibitions often focus on political leaders, important political events, constitutional developments, and the process of state-building, rather than giving equivalent attention to personal refugee, lower caste, or women's or religious minority narratives. Despite recent efforts, museums still place greater emphasis on institutional interpretations of history than on oral histories.

The archives also tell of the influence of political institutions on historical memory. The government archives hold a wealth of documentation on constitutional talks and administrative decisions, as well as on diplomatic correspondence, but comparatively little documentation on the everyday life experience of ordinary civilians. Therefore, institutional archives are not simply neutral, historical documents but the artifacts of political choice.

Interpretation

These findings suggest that memory politics is a politics of remembering, as well as a politics of forgetting. States wield their ability to build legitimacy just as much in their capacity to maintain certain historical stories as in their capacity to suppress the memory of something that might make national unity and political sovereignty difficult. Forgetting, therefore, is not a blind spot in the process of nation-building, but an integral part of it.

The results confirm the argument of cultural memory put forward by Aleida Assmann (2011), who argues that cultural memory is shaped by institutional processes which select what societies remember publicly.

Likewise, Nora (1989) provides an account of lieux de mémoire as symbolic spaces in which official memory is perpetually recreated through the actions of museums, memorials, archives and commemorative events.

Another piece of the evidence is that institutional memory is not static, it is dynamic. The political history of the times can often shape historical interpretations, and governments may reinterpret events of Partition in the light of their current ideologies.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The results here parallel Erll's (2011) conclusion that cultural memory is more an active process of reconstruction and less an unchanging, fixed memory. Recent research also suggests that public memory is more and more shaped by political contestation, especially in moments of increased nationalism and mobilization on the basis of identity (Rigney, 2022).

However, it is important to note that there is not a complete hegemony in institutional memory as the present analysis shows. Oral histories, independent museums, literary texts, and electronic archives produce other narratives that have been growing in number and force, which offer a sense of a more pluralistic memory landscape than that found in the scholarship that has preceded it.

This aspect is not well developed and lacks connection to the Theoretical Framework.

This theme highlights the relationship of collective memory, cultural memory, and postcolonial state formation. The institutional practices enable the conversion of communicative memories into official historical narratives, and they also contributed to the strengthening of national identity through symbolic representation. The findings thus highlight the complementary nature of Halbwachs' social model of memory and Assmann's institutional model of cultural memory.

Implications

The results suggest that memory politics has a significant role to play in democratic discourse as it affects public understandings of citizenship, belongings, and national legitimacy, since official historical narratives have an impact on public consciousness. Increased representation of the marginalised history might help to shape more pluralistic and historically balanced public memory.

Theme 3: Education, Textbooks and the Construction of Historical Consciousness

Findings

One of the most prominent results of the analysis that comes about is the theme of educational institutions and the reproduction of national memory. Over time, school books, curricula, and narratives in classrooms are vehicles through which states pass on official interpretations of Partition to subsequent generations.

There is a great disparity between different countries regarding the educational materials, when compared with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Indian textbooks tend to focus on anti-colonial nationalism, constitutional democracy and secularism as well as depicting Partition as a tragedy that could not have been avoided due to communal conflicts. In Pakistan, often books have an ideology of the state and Partition is presented as the triumph of Muslim political aspirations. Increasingly, curricula in Bangladesh place the Partition in a larger historical context that ends with the 1971 Liberation War, thus foregrounding the Bengali linguistic nationalism.

Even with these differences, however, all three educational systems frame the history in a simple way, offering unified national histories and limited scope for multiple interpretations or shared local histories.

Interpretation

It is these findings that are important for considering education as one of the most powerful entities by which collective memory can become cultural memory. The way young citizens gain historical consciousness is through books, teachers, museums and national celebrations, mainly without having experienced Partition.

The results are in line with Assmann's (1995) separation of communicative and cultural memory. In a context of decreasing numbers of survivor generations, the education system increasingly assumes the role of the main caretaker of historical memory. As such, curriculum design has a significant impact on future conceptions of nationalism, citizenship and regionality.

The analysis further suggests that textbooks have functions that go beyond historical education in the political sphere. Educational narratives play a direct role in the formation of identities and civic socialization in defining what it means to belong to the nation, identifying historical heroes and victims, and explaining the causes of Partition.

Comparisons with other studies are made

The results of this study align with the research in history education that has shown it to be a core means for building nations (Carretero et al., 2017). Comparative analysis of textbooks from South Asian countries also reveals a distinct national ideologisation of Partition in textbooks (Lall, 2008; Ahmed, 2021). The present study advances this body of literature by combining the analysis of textbooks and archival materials, political speeches, and oral histories to demonstrate how the educational narrative operates alongside other memory or recollection systems. The link to the Theoretical Framework is inadequate.

Educational institutions are good examples of Anderson's (2006) imagined communities as they can produce a shared history that fosters national belonging among new generations. At the same time, postcolonial theory emphasises that curriculum development is a reflection of the larger conflicts of historical authority and national identity (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Implications

The results highlight the significance of history teaching for peace and stability in the region. Inclusive curricula that use multiple perspectives, survivor testimony, and cross-border historical experiences can help foster critical historical thinking and diminish polarizing historical understandings. These changes might help facilitate better cross-cultural communication and a more complex understanding of the South Asian past—shared but never-entirely-consensual.

Theme 4: Oral History, Memoir and Counter-Memories: Questioning official versions

Findings

A major finding from the qualitative analysis is the importance of oral history, memoirs, autobiographies, survivor testimony and personal narrative as tools to disrupt state sponsored memories of Partition. Official history narratives tend to focus on political treaties, constitutional constructions and the emergence of nation-states, whereas personal stories highlight violence, forced migration, displacement, loss, resilience

and survival in everyday life. These sources suggest that Partition was not merely a geopolitical event, but a deeply personal tragedy, impacting the individual, the family, and the community.

Analysis of published oral history collections, memoirs and interviews with survivors shows highly consistent patterns of similarities across religious, national, and linguistic lines. Themes of fear, forced displacement, separation from loved ones, loss of property, and emotional trauma are repeatedly reported by the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Bengali survivors. Whatever the country, many stories highlight the sudden breakdown in established relations between communities and how once familiar neighbourhoods became hot spots of violence. These testimonies often counter the dominant nationalist discourses created by the official histories by showing how Partition was a common, human tragedy for ordinary people, and not a political gain. (Butalia 2017, Zamindar 2007).

The memoirs also reveal complexities of identity which are not part of official history. There are many autobiographical narratives of people who have had emotional, cultural and familial ties across new national boundaries despite political boundaries. The stories here show how personal identities often exceeded national categories set up by the institutions of post-1947. Oral histories, therefore, reveal the shortcomings of state-based histories in that they reveal lived experiences that are ambiguous, hybrid, and lived with co-existence, and not absolute separation of religious or national communities.

The results also suggest that gendered experiences have a unique place in the memory of the Partition. There are many cases where women's testimonies have been directed towards sexual violence, forced marriage, abduction, displacement and the psychological effects of conflict in the long term. Although this is one of the most tragic aspects of Partition, it continues to be a relatively obscure part of official histories. The feminist scholarship and survivor testimonials thus serve as significant counter-memories, thus questioning conventional historiography from a masculine and state-centric perspective (Menon & Bhasin, 1998).

Likewise, there are differences in experiences of Partition, as revealed by testimonies from marginalised groups, such as lower-caste communities, ethnic minorities, refugees and borderland populations, based on social position, economic status and geographic location. These findings suggest that collective memory is not a unified social memory, but a diverse memory within the memory system itself.

Interpretation

The results indicate oral history and memoirs are powerful sources of counter-memory that challenge the authority of official history. Personal accounts do not just fill in the details of state histories but reveal the subjectivity of the ways that governments build collective memory. Survivor's narratives often focus on empathy, suffering, co-existence, and on day-to-day lives, rather than on ideological perceptions of nation building, thus offering alternative interpretations of Partition.

In conclusion, the results of the present study reinforce Halbwachs' (1992) assertion that memory is socially constructed in the various communities. They do, however, show that collective memory is not monolithic and unchallengeable. Rather, there are a number of social groups that create separate memories shaped by their life experiences, identities, and histories. The result is that official memory is only one of many ways of interpreting the past.

The results also support Aleida Assmann's (2011) separation of official cultural memory and marginal memories which are not included in mainstream institutional accounts. Through the oral history archives and documentary projects the voices of the survivors are now becoming more visible and questioning interpretations of history.

In addition, the results are in line with postcolonial literature focusing on the need to "recover" voices of the "subaltern" who have been marginalized from the dominant history. Moreover, the results confirm to postcolonial literature that emphasizes the need to "recover" voices of the "subaltern" that have been excluded from the dominant history. Oral histories foreground marginalized experiences to show the unequal power relations that affect the making of history.

Compared with previous studies

The results support those of previous research that has suggested that the official histories often ignore personal experiences of Partition (Butalia, 2017; Pandey 2001). Urvashi Butalia's work shows that in the state sponsored discourse despite its centrality to understanding the human consequences of Partition, women's experience was largely missing. Likewise, Zamindar (2007) contends that the refugee experience implies a more complex and nuanced notion of national boundaries, and highlights the continuities and mobility of South Asian communities.

However, more contemporary scholarship has also highlighted the significance of oral history initiatives that help to capture survivor recall before it is too late—and the eyewitness generation has gone (Ahmed, 2021; Menon, 2020). This study builds upon this literature by comparatively examining the function of counter-memories in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and documents how personal narratives often portray common experiences that cross national lines.

Survivor interpretations of history commonly share the importance of common experiences of displacement, grieving and resilience, whereas official historical accounts focus on political difference. This discovery indicates that individual memory could be a more stable basis for regional knowledge than state narrations of the past. The theoretical framework is well connected to the study.

The purpose of this theme is to reinforce the theoretical integration of collective memory, cultural memory and postcolonial theory. Halbwachs' (1992) social construction of memory and Assmann's (2011) concept of cultural memory can help us to understand how the social construction of memory affects the institutionalization and marginalization of memories. At the same time, postcolonial theory shows how historical representation is a product of power dynamics, giving rise to national histories that are valid for dominant groups that marginalize or ignore the voices of subaltern groups (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978).

The results also reflect Nora's (1989) idea of *lieux de mémoire*, meaning that the oral history archives, memoirs, museums, and digital repositories, to name a few, are now increasingly becoming alternative places of memory for marginalized histories, as they exist apart from the official state institutions.

Implications

The results indicate the need to integrate the voices of survivors, women's experiences, refugee narratives and minority voices into school curriculum, museums and public celebration activities. This inclusion would foster greater pluralistic historical understanding and empathy, and critical reflection and intercultural dialogue. In addition, the recognition of multiple memories of Partition can help in the reconciliation process, as it can also help to acknowledge the common humanity of people who have suffered in the aftermath of Partition.

Students will explore how the media and popular culture can be used to reconstruct the Partition.

Findings

The qualitative analysis proves the fact that the modern media, literature, film, television, documentary film making, museums, and digital media have been playing a prominent role in influencing the public memory of Partition. Although, in previous generations the experience of Partition was mostly through family accounts and formal education, in recent years the audience has had increasing access to the historical memory of Partition in the form of films, websites, archives, podcasts, virtual museums, social media and virtual exhibitions.

The analysis suggests that popular culture often depicts Partition in much more nuanced ways than official state discourses. Human suffering, inter-communal living, displacement and moral ambiguity are more common themes in literary works, historical novels, documentaries and feature films than is nationalist victory. These cultural depictions offer audiences emotionally resonating stories that defy easy political readings of history.

Digital memory projects have also contributed to changing the relationship between public and Partition. The Internet serves as a medium for archival projects to gather survivor narratives, photographs, personal papers, maps and family histories, allowing people in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and in the diaspora, to share their memories across the borders. These digital archives establish transnational environments where different historical accounts are present and clash, thus enabling users to compare different experiences of the same historical event.

The conclusions also suggest that social media has turned into a significant space for current memory politics. Celebrations of anniversaries, historical interpretations, and official narratives are increasingly happening on digital platforms, with political actors, historians, journalists, activists, and people in general are using Digital platforms to contest, contest the official narrative, or debate the interpretation of history. Memory, then, is no longer a static past that can be contained in a single historical track, held by state institutions alone, but rather an ongoing public discussion.

There are also problems with digital memory, as the analysis shows, however. Social media is often used to spread short-term historical information, misinformation, re-interpretations and polarizing discourse, which are often selected. Digital environments can also contribute to the development of ideological divides, heightening nationalist claims to past injustice, rather than fostering a balanced perspective on history.

Interpretation

The results show that memory politics now has a new dimension and an era of digitalization, where historical power is no longer reserved for governmental, historical and educational institutions. Digital technologies have opened up opportunities for a democratic representation of the past, allowing a range of actors to participate in the construction of public memory. However, consensus is not a requirement of democracy. Rather, digital media generates a growing set of contested memory landscapes with many competing narratives.

The results confirm Hoskins (2018), who suggests that digital technologies have revolutionised the concept of collective memory by offering new opportunities to share in the experience of memory and also to speed and scale the process of reinterpretation of history. In the same way, Erll (2011) states that memory is transnational, moving from one place to another via the media, migration, literature, and communication technologies.

In terms of cultural memory theory, digital archives are new institutions that are responsible for the preservation of historical narratives, in addition to the traditional museums and archives. Digital repositories are also different from traditional state archives; they are often filled with the memories of ordinary people, as well as the institutional history. Digital repositories also tend to expand the voice of the people in the public memory by including the memories of ordinary citizens along with official historical documents.

The results also show that the media continues to be very political. This is why films, documentaries, and TV shows often depict current ideological contexts, and thus cultural production is involved in a continuing struggle over historical meaning.

A comparison of previous studies is included. Previous studies are compared

The results align well with recent theorizing on the increasing importance of digital memory in the present (Hoskins, 2018; Rigney, 2022). Research on digital archives also shows that digital memory projects not only enable cross-border communication, but also help to keep survivor testimonies alive, which may otherwise be lost. (Ahmed, 2021)

The current examination is an attempt, however, to go beyond previous findings by incorporating the digital memory into the larger context of nationalism and identity. Unlike the conventional view of the media as the instruments of communication, the results show that the media have the ability to create meaning of the past and shape the political view of the national identity.

Moreover, while previous research focused on the study of cinema or literature in isolation, the present study focuses on an integrated approach to the study of multiple media forms such as museums, documentaries, digital archives, newspapers, TV and social media in relation to memory politics.

Theoretical framework is clearly connected to the problem

The theme reaffirms Assmann's (2011) cultural memory notion in the sense that it demonstrates that new media institutions are used to preserve and transmit the history from generation to generation. Erll's (2011) theory of transcultural memory also accounts for the way that digital communication allows historical memories to flow across national lines and defy collective memories from a national perspective.

The results also support Anderson's (2006) theory of imagined communities. Digital communication makes new possible imagined communities, in which citizens engage in common commemorative practices without regard for physical distance. At the same time, postcolonial theory emphasizes that media become places where multiple narratives and discourses of colonial history and colonial nationhood are continuing to be negotiated.

Implications

In a world where digital memory increasingly plays a dominant role, the future of historical education, of democratic engagement and of regional dialogue is relevant. Digital archives, documentary collections and transnational oral history projects offer good ways for capturing a variety of historical experiences and fostering intercultural understanding. Meanwhile, governments, teachers and historians need to find ways to tackle the dangers of misinformation, selective historical portrayals, and digital polarization.

The acquisition of media literacy and digital historical literacy is thus becoming more and more crucial in the ability of citizens to be able to responsibly assess competing historical accounts. Digital memory projects, sponsored by scholars and institutions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh that collaborate could

also help to create more inclusive memories of Partition by bringing multiple memories together and by encouraging dialogue across the nation.

Conclusion

The politics of memory over the Partition in 1947 and their influence on the process of contemporary identity formation in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh is explored. It showed that the study was based on an interpretivist qualitative approach, informed by the concepts of collective memory, cultural memory, nationalism, and postcolonial theories, and Partition is not a simple historical event, but a constantly evolving political and cultural discourse that shapes national identity, citizenship, education and regional relationship.

The results indicate that the Partition story is a core one in the process of nation-making in all three nations, but different versions are developed depending on the political and ideological agenda of the states. The discussion of Partition in India is largely embedded in anti-colonial nationalism, secular democracy, whereas for Pakistan the question is how to achieve the realization of the Two-Nation Theory, and in the case of Bangladesh the question is about the story of the Liberation War of 1971. The various versions of these stories demonstrate the selective interpretation of the same historical event aimed at strengthening national identity and state legitimacy.

The study also revealed that such memories are institutionalized in political speeches, commemorative acts, museums, archives, and in educational curricula. In such institutions, there are selected versions of history, while there are excluded other ones; public memory is very much tied to political power. Likewise, the importance of school textbooks and history education should not be overlooked in terms of historical consciousness, in that they pass on official narrative to younger generations, and affect perceptions of citizenship and neighbouring countries.

Meanwhile, oral history and memoirs and survivor testimony offer much-needed counter-memory that contradicts the dominant state memory. Through these personal stories, violence, displacement, migration, resilience and living together are highlighted, especially of women, refugees and marginalized communities. Moreover, media, literature, museums and digital spaces have become important sites to remember and challenge Partition memory. Digital archives can stimulate more people to participate and more people to speak with each other across borders, but they can also contribute to the polarization of the political discourse by offering selective historical interpretations.

The results address the central research question by showing that history is being utilized as a political and cultural tool to create identities, to justify the state, and to produce public memory in South Asia. Memory politics is, as such, not the preservation of historical facts but rather the process of choosing, reading and institutionalization of historical narratives.

Theoretically, the study adds by combining together the theories of collective memory, cultural memory, nationalism, and postcolonial approaches in one analytical framework. It builds on previous scholarship by demonstrating the intertwining of memory and social, political, educational, and cultural processes. Moreover, the comparative analysis of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh gives a wider regional picture, which is missing from most of the literature to date and has a more India-Pakistan emphasis.

In practice, the results call into question the need to make learning about history more representative and inclusive, to create more balanced commemorative public spaces, and to increase the visibility of marginalized and silenced voices in the museum, archives and schools. Historical approaches should be encouraged through the use of policy, education, and cultural institutions to foster critical thinking, empathy,

and regional understanding. Joint archival projects and interacademic collaborations can also help to maintain shared historical experiences and conversation.

The interdisciplinary and comparative qualitative approach used in this research is the distinctive quality of this research. The book brings together historical documents, political speeches, textbooks, memoirs, oral history, policy documents and media discourse to provide an overview of the current role of memory politics in the construction of identities in South Asia.

However, there are some limitations in the study. It is also based largely on documentary sources and published oral history, and is not capable of fully reflecting the diversity of local experiences in each country. Further, digital memory is a dynamic entity that needs to continue to be a subject of scholarly study.

This research needs to be extended with primary interviews with educators, policy makers, survivors and younger generations, as well as further study of local, diasporic and borderland communities. Comparative research with other parts of the world with past partition and conflict may further validate theoretical advances in memory studies.

Overall, the commemoration of the Partition of 1947 continues to exert its influence in the present political, national and public life of South Asia. It is important to be aware of various interpretations of history and not one official version. Engaging with contested histories can promote deeper regional understanding, democratic dialogue and lasting reconciliation, with the help of scholars, educators, and policymakers.

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