

Authoritarianism and National Identity: The Legacy of Ayub Khan's Social Policies in Pakistan

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Abstract

The Ayub Khan regime (1958–1969) in Pakistan bequeathed a dual legacy, including sweeping social and economic reforms and authoritarianism. Ayub Khan's period witnessed the Green Revolution, industrialization, and the growth of infrastructure, which accelerated the economy of Pakistan. His autocratic and centralized regime stifled political opposition, excluded regional voices, and institutionalized the military's role in politics. His Basic Democracies system, intended for local self-government, centralized power and did not express the will of the electorate, as in the disputed 1965 presidential election. Ayub's policies also encouraged provincial nationalism, especially in East Pakistan, where economic disparities, political exclusion, and cultural grievances fuelled calls for autonomy and, eventually, the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. The emergence of Bengali nationalism, personified in the Six-Point Movement, underscored the failure of centralized rule to provide space for regional ambitions. Ayub's education policy, substituting traditional history with Social Studies, intended to promote national unity and Islamic identity but excluded regional histories and cultures, further marginalizing ethnic groups. Historians still argue over Ayub's legacy, with some hailing his modernization and others condemning his authoritarianism and its long-term effects on Pakistan's democratic evolution. The era established the precedent for military intervention in politics and underscored the difficulty of ruling a plural society, leaving a lasting impact on Pakistan's political and cultural life.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, Bengali nationalism, green revolution, industrialization, regional exclusion.

Introduction

The regime of Ayub Khan left mixed legacies. His regime was marked by far-reaching economic and social reforms that contributed to developing Pakistan. During his regime, the Green Revolution, industrialization, and

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infrastructural projects took place, raising the country's economic standing and providing a base for future growth. Ayub Khan's policies also gave a sense of national unity and identity through his controlled and highly centralized approach.

The regime of Ayub Khan was typical of autocracy, meaning quelling political dissent and civil liberties. At the local level, the system of basic democracies was resorted to for governance. However, at the top, it was a tool to give military control over the political process. Considerations of national security very often overshadowed Democratic principles and political freedom.

When Ayub Khan came to power in 1958, he introduced an indirect method of election through the Basic Democrats. The electorate's will is not properly reflected in an indirect method of election, which is why most of the democratic states have abandoned it in favor of direct elections - except in some cases for electing an upper house. Ayub's system of election demonstrated, in the presidential election of 1965, that there was a big gap between the verdict of the people and the actual results of the election.¹

The succeeding period's political developments also indicate Ayub Khan's lasting legacy. It is cumbersome; his regime set an example that was to be followed by military intervention into politics, and future military dictators often cited his example to justify their actions. In fact, it became a leitmotif in Pakistan's political history, regularly underlining the military's role in governance and national security issues.

Historiographical Perspectives

While reviewing this era, historians have come up with divergent views concerning Ayub Khan's regime and the military's involvement in politics. While many scholars have dubbed Ayub Khan a modernizer who imposed needed reforms and provided stability during a very tumultuous period, on the other hand, many others feel that Ayub Khan's sincerity towards the objectives he laid down remains a big question. Only some of them find his agenda about national security justified in the backdrop of regional threats and internal challenges that Pakistan was going through at that time; historians are more critical, pointing out the genuinely undemocratic nature of Ayub Khan's regime, which seriously damaged the democratic development of Pakistan with military intervention. The justification of military rule through the suppression of political opposition is what the advocates of a national security narrative are obsessed with. The scholars underline the long-term effects of military involvement in politics,

¹ W.G. Choudhury, *The last days of united Pakistan* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1974), 107.

including democratic institutions and the cycles of coups. Much of the debate in historiography with respect to this period has been polarized between its modernizing impulse and authoritarianism. Although Ayub Khan's economic and social reforms were undoubtedly very valuable, his regime's slalom into an authoritarian approach and suppression of political freedoms are widely criticized. Historians also try to discuss and analyze how Ayub Khan used state- controlled media and educational reforms to manipulate public perception as a tool in order to legitimize his military rule. Basically, the 1959-1970 period was one of the definitional periods in the political history of Pakistan. During this period, a strong role for the military in governance was firmly established, along with a narrative about national security as the justification for its intervention. Besides launching far- reaching economic and societal reforms, General Ayub Khan's regime built firm control over the political process. It underscored this idea: only a firm, centralized authority would ensure national security. An era that was to set precedence for any future military involvement in politics and deeply influence Pakistan's political historiography. The narrations developed during this period of the military as a protector of national integrity and civilian governments as incompetent have deepened to a great extent the impact on the political culture and democratic development of Pakistan. The historiographical analysis of the period brings forth all the nuances of this intricate relationship between military rule and civilian governance in Pakistan, coupled with problems of political stabilization and democratization. The forces that Ayub Khan's regime set in motion were quite a few, and the consequences remain at play in contemporary times while the country is still coming to grips with the legacies of military interventions and its quest for democratic governance. Historiography of this period, therefore, remains a critical area of study, and the roots of political dynamics in Pakistan or the present struggle between civilian and military authorities are to be understood. Still, it is from such an era that one learns that democratic institutions have to be built and a political culture that lays due emphasis on transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

Emergence of provincial nationalism

The period from 1959 to 1970 was a phase in Pakistan's political history marked by profound changes, including the entry into military rule. An important development of this period was the rise of provincial nationalism, which became, in the last phase, one of the significant challenges against the hegemonic power of the military dictatorship. At that time, the scenario was such that the upsurge of provincial nationalism was instigated through an amalgamation of economic imbalance, political

domination, and cultural and linguistic disparity. These factors seriously affected Pakistan's political scenario and historical literature.

During Ayub Khan's regime, the centralization of power and the neglect of regional aspirations led to the rise of provincial nationalism, particularly in East Pakistan. The economic disparities and political marginalization faced by East Pakistan fueled demands for greater autonomy and representation, setting the stage for future conflicts and the eventual secession of East Pakistan.²

Although they were the majority group in Pakistan, they suffered from a deep-rooted fear of domination by the minority group of West Pakistan. In a democracy, the majority should not have to ask for safeguards, such as regional autonomy, reservation of places in the civil service and the army, and guarantees that the economic development of their region would not be neglected nor their culture threatened. However, for two decades, the majority Bengali group did feel obliged to seek these guarantees, and when they were not granted, Bengali sub-nationalism gathered momentum until, ultimately, it became a national movement for the creation of a separate state.³

The provincial nationalism upsurge in Pakistan in the 1960s was a reaction to centralizing policies being pursued by a military regime led by a general, Ayub Khan. The central character was a general feeling of discontentment among people from various provinces within Pakistan, first and foremost, East Pakistan, Sindh, Balochistan, and the Pashtun in NWFP or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Economic Disparities and Regional Grievances

Another important economic factor that nourished the nationalization of provinces is the regional disparity within Pakistan itself. The central Government has always been partial toward West Pakistan, essentially Punjab, at the cost of the other provinces. So, the boom in Punjab or West Pakistan-centered development policies automatically aggravated the status of relative deprivation in areas like East Pakistan, Sindh, and Balochistan. Although East Pakistan contributed highly towards agricultural production and earned national revenue through jute exports, national revenue and investment in East Pakistan were negligible. In essence, this economic negligence fueled feelings of alienation and injustice. This marked imbalance in the economic development between

² Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 12.

³ W.G. Choudhury, *op.cit.*, 5.

the two regions became a focus of the Bengali nationalist faction, who argued that their economic environment was being used to develop West Pakistan.

The allocation of funds for the development projects, particularly from foreign resources and the export and import policy, led to a widening economic gap between the two wings. According to one source, up to 1958-59, West Pakistan received Rs. 52.58 crores from the Centre, and East Pakistan received Rs. 26.52 crores. The bulk of the revenue expenditure was on defense up to 1956-57, of which 18 crores was spent in East Pakistan compared to Rs. 480 crores in the western wing.⁴

During Ayub Khan's regime, the centralized policies led to the emergence and intensification of provincial nationalism, particularly in East Pakistan, where the sense of marginalization and disenfranchisement fueled demands for greater autonomy and recognition of regional identities. Similarly, in Sindh and Balochistan, the economic underdevelopment and lack of political representation added to regional grievances against the center. There was a general feeling that the central government was exploiting the resources of the provinces without proper compensation or development efforts. This perception impeded provincial nationalism in Balochistan, where the exploitation of natural resources like gas and minerals did not translate into local development but resulted in enhanced resentment and demands for greater autonomy.

In this context, the economic policies of Ayub Khan's government and the policies responsible for regional disparities have been explained. The Green Revolution took off in the agriculturally sound regions of Punjab in West Pakistan. Meanwhile, East Pakistan and certain other regions, which were not entirely developed at par, were lagging. It is further contended that centralized planning in economics failed to lend development fulfillment to the needs and aspirations of different regions of Pakistan that felt economically exploited and marginalized.⁵

Ethno-linguistic differences

Ethnolinguistic differences were important factors in the rise of provincial nationalisms. Pakistan was a country of multiple ethnic groups, each with its language, culture, and identity, and all had to face the utter annoyance of the central government in an effort to uplift uni-ethnic nationalism.

⁴ Zarina Salamat, *Pakistan 1947–1946: An historical review* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1992), 212.

⁵ Ayyaz Gul, 'Development of Underdevelopment: The Case of East Pakistan 1947–1969', *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, 28:1 (2015), 5-7.

The language movement in Bengali emerged as the crystallizing force behind East Pakistan's slogan against centralization and suppression of culture. The central government's decision to make Urdu and only Urdu the national language threatened Bengalis' language identity. Massive protests, with subsequent demands for linguistic and cultural recognition, finally transformed into a movement for regional autonomy.

The 1950 Interim Report of the Basic Principles Committee again emphasized Urdu as the national language. Four students died in the students-police riots of 21 February. By then, the Bengali language movement had matured into a full-blown political issue, and February 21, 1952, came to be known as Martyrs' Day (Shaheed Day).⁶

After partition and immigration, the demographic balance was changed, conflicts started between locals and migrants. The Sindhi nationalist movement was based on the anxiety created by cultural decline and economic isolationism. The same problems were there to be voiced in Balochistan; the Baloch nationalist movements aimed at maximum control over the natural resources and political autonomy. The people in the North and South of the NWFP resented cultural and linguistic marginalization in addition to its economic deprivation. The central government's official policies on recognizing cultural and linguistic peculiarities that the people were demanding also weighed heavily on autonomy. They have examined language and culture in relation to the nationalist movements that swept through these decades. It was a national integration policy, but the imposition of Urdu as the national language only led to a frenzy of insurgents in cultural imperialism among the non-Urdu-speaking parts of the country. Scholars have engaged extensively with the cultural resistance in East Pakistan when preserving the Bengali language and identity, which became the main issue of nationalist discourse.⁷

Political Marginalization and Centralization

Military rule further contributed to provincial nationalism due to the greater concentration of power at the centre. It greatly marginalized the political and administrative institutions, which completely provided no space for regional representation. This was taken as political marginalization toward regional voices that simply could not be part of any decisions.

⁶ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the 20th century: A political history* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 132.

⁷ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), 97.

These tensions were further heightened through martial law's imposition and political parties' dissolution. The military regime's authoritarian style did not encourage democratic expression and participation. The military often oppressed regional leaders and political activists, vexing the local issues and thereby increasing frustration and radicalization of regional movements. While Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies system was aimed at local self-government and development, it normally seemed applied in ways that only deepened central government control over local affairs. The result is that many regional leaders and activists, worried by the limited room created under this political participation system, became alienated. Further, the top-down approach to development he followed worried them. It would not be an exaggeration to say that historians have not been very supportive towards the Basic Democracies (BD) system. Therefore, this system was a weapon of centralization in the garb of decentralization. Its center-oriented power structure and doorstep to political participation provided no satisfaction for the provinces' political ambitions. It has also been said that the suppression of political parties and lack of regional representation created alienation and radicalized provincial movements.⁸

Rise of Bengali Nationalism

The most marked expression of provincial nationalism at this time developed into Bengali nationalism in East Pakistan. A feeling of economic, political, and cultural alienation ushered in the formation of the Awami League, a political party based on championing the rights of the Bengali populace. Led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League demanded greater autonomy for East Pakistan. In 1966s Six-Point Movement led by Mujib, popular demands included regional autonomy coupled with economic resources, trade, and defence control.

Demand for regional autonomy coupled with economic resources, trade, and defence control was popular in the Six-Point Movement. The mass base support ensured the movement received direct challenges from East Pakistan against the central government. The Bengali nationalist movement received repression and military intervention in return from the central state government. The final struggle for the secession of East Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh dates back to 1971. Events in 1971 clearly demonstrated that no central government would ever be able or capable of resolving regional grievances and that military rule

⁸ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 195-96

limits how one should govern such a diverse and divided country. According to G.W. Choudhury:

Turning to his political order, its most significant shortcoming was the lack of adequate opportunities for the Bengalis to have their share in the decision-making process. By curbing the power of parliament and making the cabinet ineffective, Ayub's political order robbed the Bengalis of their share of participation in national affairs. Nationalism or patriotism cannot develop or flourish in a vacuum. The Bengalis could not be expected to be conscious of "Pakistani nationalism" when they "could only react but not act on major national issues." The army's atrocities during the civil war in 1971 and the Indian military intervention backed by Soviet help were the immediate cause of the disintegration of Pakistan. Ayub's political order and inability to appreciate the political dynamics in East Pakistan in the late 1960s were the real factors, among others, for the rise of Bengali nationalism and the birth of Bangladesh.⁹

Historians have taken ample cues and tried to figure out exactly how East Pakistan's secession through Bengali nationalism really came about. In this context, the Six-Point Movement would be historically considered the turning point when demands for autonomy were transformed into a broader nationalist struggle. This has seen scholars document the basis of central government responses, some repressive, like the use of military force, which, however, turned out to be counter-productive and boosted the fighting spirit of the Bengali nationalist movement. Thus, provincial nationalism was born, contributing another dimension to the dimensions already extant in the historiography of politics in Pakistan and bringing forth new challenges in the governance of a heterogeneous country. Historians have tested the upsurge of provincial nationalism against the backdrop of inequalities in development and political power and even cultural obliteration of that bygone era. It is only the necessity for solitary regional dimensions in this context and also the redressing of regional grievances that historians, more often than not, have underlined. Scholars have investigated the economic and political factors that sustain provincial nationalism and how the central government has been unable to create inclusive policies.

Indeed, one of the central issues in the political history of Pakistan was the secession of Bangladesh in 1971. This represents how ignoring regional demands and the failure of centralization became a serious issue. Historians describe the forerunners of East Pakistan's secession and the effect of the military and Pakistan's sense of national identity on this result. The historiographical narratives have also been directed toward the wider

⁹ W.G. Choudhury, *op.cit.*, 43

implications of provincial nationalism for political development in Pakistan. This loss came with the grim realization of the risk of exclusion if regional aspirations were not considered and the polity was not inclusive and decentralized. Writers have brought out how the lessons were learned from this period and the importance that has to be given to federalism, regional representation, and equitable development.¹⁰ Much of this legacy of provincial nationalism in the events of this period continues to be one of the dominant features in present-day politics in Pakistan. Problems of regional management, inimical to parity between economic and political disparities, persist. Some lessons learned from this period must comprise national inclusiveness, regional empowerment, and settlement of local grievances.

Historians, however, have sought to look beyond the centralized governance model in quest of a more federal structure allowing regional representation and autonomy. Abysmal failures of military rule in dealing with regional issues only underline the need for democratic institutions and political participation in managing a diverse and divided nation. The impact of provincial nationalism on Pakistan's political historiography has carried well into contemporary governance and federalism debates. Indeed, analogies have been drawn between the experience of the 1960s and contemporary challenges to dealing with regional disparities and maintaining national integration. Loaded with historiography, the interpretation associated with each of these movements and its effect on the ensuing quest for a balanced and normal political system in Pakistan is, therefore, relevant. While narrating this period, historians have spoken at length about this process of emergence of provincial nationalism, based both on economic and political forces that increased regional grievances, but on the other hand, by cultural and linguistic processes in shaping the provinces. The political historiography of such periods ultimately reflects the strains of administrating a multicultural country and has practical limitations in controlling a centralized military-led government.

The criticist views point to the fact that problems in regional demands and the effect of authoritarian rule over regional dynamism further depress the central government's failure. There is a need to look at the root cause of provincial nationalism, hence a propaganda drive oriented to policy promotion that will ensure national unity.¹¹ The historiographical debates also stretch to the role of leadership in leading

¹⁰ Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *op.cit.*, 10

¹¹ S. Panday, 'Nationalism, provincial politics, and ethnic identity in Pakistan: The case of Balochistan' *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42:2 (2016) 149.

provincial nationalist movements.¹² Drawing on the leader provided by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in East Pakistan and G.M. Syed in Sindh, the analyses are based on articulating the regional grievances and their mobilization for autonomy. The scholars have also used these leaders to probe how they managed to steer through the political scenario and bargain with the Centre amidst repressive measures.

The political history of Pakistan may be said to have been an age of definition, 1959-1977. Two very noticeable characteristics will come to the fore: a deep involvement of the military interests in governance and the eruption of provincial nationalist forces. While bringing about wide-ranging economic and social reforms, Ayub Khan coupled them with a tight political grip. He insisted that a strong and centralized authority was necessary if national security was to be preserved. This became a landmark for the military involvement in politics to come and deeply shaped the political historiography of Pakistan. The complexities of governing a country as diverse as Pakistan through provincial nationalism brought out the inefficiencies of a centralized, militarized administration. Historiographical study in this period gives excellent insight into the intricate play between military and civilian rule in Pakistan and the continuing challenges related to establishing a stable and democratic political system.

The lessons that came out of the period underline the need at any point in time to address the grievances at the regional level, to pursue inclusive governance, and to engender regional autonomy as an important modality for delivering national unity. Indeed, it is under the banner of provincial nationalism, together with its fallout, that the political development of Pakistan remains focused on the eventual need for governance that strikes a balance between transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

New education policy

The period from 1959 to 1970 was a very important phase in Pakistan's political history, and under military rule, it saw far-reaching developments. The most important one was the introduction of the new education policy under General Ayub Khan's regime.

The Ayub administration introduced a new education policy to modernize the education system and align it with the regime's developmental goals. The policy emphasized technical and vocational education to support industrial growth while also seeking to inculcate a

¹² M.A. Khilji, Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan: The Baloch and Sindhi Movements, *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 13:1 (2001), 90.

sense of national identity and loyalty to the state.¹³ Ayub Khan's administration introduced a new education policy to modernize the educational infrastructure. However, these reforms often prioritized technical and vocational training over liberal arts, reflecting the regime's focus on economic development and industrial growth. That policy was designed to modernize the educational system, integrate nationals, and orient educational content toward the ideological goals of the ruling regime. Of the several important features of this new education policy, one important innovation was the abolition of traditional history courses and their replacement with social studies; this turned out to be an important development in Pakistan's educational scene and political historiography.

History replaced by social studies

There were several reasons behind this decision to replace traditional history courses with social studies. It is remembered that Ayub Khan's military regime tried to identify education with nation-building processes, creating a unified identity within the nation by inculcating the values and ideologies supporting its vision. Traditional history dwelt on regional and pre-colonial narratives that stood divorced from the goals of national integration; rather, it held the potential to be quite divisive in nature.

The rationale behind introducing Social Studies was to have a more integrated uniform platform from which to project the glory of Pakistan, the importance and emphasis on its Islamic identity, and the military's role in protecting the country. Other reasons for the change were also to bring about this curriculum in line with the modernization and developmental aims of the regime. Military rulers may highlight certain historical events or figures aligning with their agenda while downplaying or omitting others. This selective memory construction shapes public perception and reinforces the legitimacy of the military regime.¹⁴

Curricular Reforms

In other words, an overall package of curricular reforms was needed to transition from traditional history to Social Studies. One of the prime objectives of the reform exercise was the dire need for a curriculum that could in students the spirit of national unity, patriotism, and a sense of

¹³ Tariq Rahman, 'Language policy and localization in Pakistan: Proposal for a paradigmatic shift', *SCALLA*, Vol. 99, 2004, 100.

¹⁴ Uroosa Ishfaq, Kashif Ashfaq and Khudija Sanam, 'Pakistan's Political Shift from Martial Law towards Democracy during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Era (1970–1977)', *Global Political Review*, Vol.2, 2022, 1-6.

common identity. Their main features were:

i. National Integration: Programs of Social Studies were devised with an emphasis on Pakistan's common culture and heritage. The material was focused mainly on the Pakistan Movement, the struggle for independence, and the successes achieved by the country since it came into being. This was also aimed at instilling a sense of national pride and unity.

ii. Islamic Identity: This new syllabus placed a huge emphasis on the course related to Pakistan's Islamic identity. Some lessons included the role of Islam in state-making, the significance of Islamic values in practical life, and the contributions that Muslim leaders made to the nation throughout its history. It was, therefore, contended that this canvass of Islamic identity had been imbibed with the motive to strengthen the Islamic identity of Pakistan and to create religious and cultural glue among people.

iii. Role of Military: The military's role in safeguarding the country and preserving its sovereignty was underlined. Successes of the military in conflicts against India were brought out in a framework of the military as a protector of national integrity. This helped legitimize the regime's rule and helped ram home the message that strong defense was incumbent upon the country. Military regimes frequently invest in the creation of state-sponsored historical narratives. These narratives can be disseminated through education curricula, official publications, and public commemorations, reinforcing a particular version of history that glorifies the military and justifies its rule.¹⁵

iv. Civic Training: There had been features of civic education within Social Studies; the students were made to know their rights and duties as good citizens. That was to give them a sense of citizenship and duty toward the state, a disciplined and patriotic citizenry, which this regime was striving to bring out. The task itself was to introduce the new curricula of Social Studies. The revision required revising textbooks, retraining teachers, and developing new educational materials for teaching by the revised curriculum. Investments in teacher training programs accompanied the new content, making teachers better placed to handle it.

Replacing traditional history with Social Studies had quite a lot of effects:

¹⁵ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 296.

- i. National Identity Building: Indeed, it played an important role in shaping later generations' national identity. From such exposure to Pakistan's contributions, Islam's role, and the importance of national unity, one was expected to develop the notion of a cohesive national narrative rising above regional and ethnic differences.
- ii. Creating Ideological Conformity: The curriculum supported regime-related ideological narratives pertaining to a strong military, national security, and the central role of Islamic values. Thus, the curriculum further legitimized the military regime through its constant propagation of the vision for a modern and united Pakistan.
- iii. Marginalization of Regional Histories: Traditional history was largely replaced by the curriculum, and regional histories and identities became seriously marginalized. The emphasis on the homogeneous narrative of the nation mostly suppressed the histories of locals, and the expressions of culture, which made several regions in the country, feel alienated and resentful.

Historians have divergent views about replacing traditional history courses with Social Studies and their implications for Pakistan's political and cultural life. For many scholars, this policy was needed to modernize the education system and promote unity within the nation. They pointed out that the stress on a cohesive national narrative was needed to build a strong United States.¹⁶

Other historians remain critical, pointing to the encouragement of centralization and authoritarianism.¹⁷ Curricular reforms were a tool of indoctrination that served a narrow vision of national identity, providing no space for regional and cultural plurality. Such scholars underline this for recognition and celebration of Pakistan's pluralistic heritage as a means toward the goal of genuine national unity.¹⁸

Historians debate how these educational reforms echoed in the long term. Conversely, some historians have claimed that a unified national narrative is important to nation-building and a sense of national identity.¹⁹ They would argue that this helped forge a cohesive, stable society at times of immense challenges through the emphasis on Islamic

¹⁶ Rubina Saigol, *Knowledge and Identity: Articulation of Gender in Educational Discourse in Pakistan* (Lahore: ASR Publications, 1995), 87.

¹⁷ S.A. Khan, 'Provincial Nationalism and its Political Dynamics: Pakistan in the 21st Century', *South Asian Journal of Politics*, 34:3 (2009), 212.

¹⁸ S. Panday, *op.cit.*, 150

¹⁹ David Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57:4 (1998), 1090.

values and the role of the military.²⁰ Others have also reproached the policy for being oppressive to regional histories and identities.²¹ They contend that this centralization of education and the promotion of a standardized curriculum did indeed marginalize the country's diversified cultural and linguistic groups. To put it another way, they accentuate that the exclusion of such groups caused regional grievances that became provincial nationalism under appropriate conditions.²² The historiographical debates also connect to the broader implications that the education policy had for the political culture of Pakistan. This emphasis on unified national identity and glorification of the military's role in the long run led to effects on the political socialization of the successive generations. Scholars engaged with how these narratives shaped attitudes towards the military, national security, and the state's role in governance. The educational policy thus retains Ayub Khan's influence over contemporary Pakistan. Indeed, many current debates, particularly about education reform, national integration, and regional autonomy, find their antecedents in the policies and resultant performance during that period. What is the way to achieve a homogeneous national identity and, at the same time, due respect to regional diversity? This remains at the core of the debates on education and governance.

Only historians and education experts strike a tone for demanding reforms that would ensure regional inequalities in terms of access and quality and rich cultural diversity of the country's representative curricula. During a permanent debate about education policy, utility appears while learning from the past in attempts toward a fairer and more cohesive education system. The regime of Ayub Khan can also be looked upon as one bringing a new education policy, which would be one of the ways through which military rule would seek legitimacy. The education system was restructured to shape how young people thought about the country and its future. It was designed to instill a particular state ideology, ensuring that students absorbed values and beliefs aligned with the government's vision. Rather than simply promoting critical thinking or balanced historical understanding, the reforms aimed to guide students toward accepting and supporting a specific national direction and identity. If need be, then attention to national security, the role of the military, and Islamic

²⁰ M. A. Khilji, *op.cit.*, 85.

²¹ Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 40.

²² Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 10.

values was a means toward creating a loyal and patriotic citizenry supporting regime objectives.

This was nothing peculiar to Ayub Khan's regime. In fact, all the successive governments in Pakistan's history have used education as a device to further their ideological narratives and legitimize their rules. In this broader trend of using education to shape political and cultural identities and to reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling regime, the abolition of traditional history and its replacement by Social Studies during this period falls into this category.

This had severe consequences for the manner in which the collective memory of the succeeding generations was to be constituted. Social studies course replaced classical history courses. The stress on a standardized national narrative in the new curriculum determined the ways in which young Pakistanis would make sense of their country's history and identity. Basically, through education, the collective memory was influenced, shaping the memory of one nation into a uniform and ideologically driven perspective. Historians have also pointed out the ways in which this new curriculum worked to remember and commemorate history. The stress on national achievements, the role of Islam, and the contribution or role of the military wove a certain narrative into collective memory. This was often at the expense of regional histories and identities, thus creating feelings of alienation and resentment for many groups. The control over historiography has a lasting impact on a society's collective memory. The selective portrayal of historical events can lead to a distorted understanding of the past, affecting how subsequent generations perceive their national identity and the legitimacy of military rule.²³

The new policy on education, more so concerning the substitution of Social Studies for traditional history, bequeathed a legacy that survives to this day and duly influences Pakistan's education system and political landscape. Many educational experts, policy thinkers, and scholars debate either a centralized approach to education or emphasizing a standardized national curriculum. It is also a lesson learned from this period marked above that the process of national integration should have harmoniously been tailored with due respect paid to regional diversity. Historians underscore an integrative education policy that genuinely accepts and celebrates Pakistan's pluralistic cultural and linguistic diversities. Contrasted this, their view is almost diametrically opposite: any sense of

²³ Díaz Nieto, E. S., Contreras Medina, D. I., & Rivas, R. T. (2023). *Leadership and organizational sustainability*. In *Leadership and organizational sustainability*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003371335>

unity at the national level has to be framed within an appropriately nuanced understanding of the multiple identities and histories that make up Pakistan. The new education policy has an important historiographical bearing on the complex interrelationship among education, national identity, and political power. Historians add to this understanding only by considering how curricular reforms and ideological narratives work, carving out the base of collective memory through education and making a dent in political dynamics.

The decision to replace conventional history courses with Social Studies reached deep into the heart of Pakistan's educational landscape and political historiography. It entailed how the construction and peddling of historical narratives were supposed to occur and who could be part of it, influencing the collective memory and national identity of generations after them. This outcome often resulted in the marginalization of regional identities, as education became increasingly centralized and a standardized national curriculum was promoted. Instead of accommodating cultural and linguistic diversity, the system emphasized uniformity, which ultimately intensified feelings of exclusion and strengthened provincial nationalist movements. Historians analysing this phase have divergent views on the new education policy and its importance to Pakistan's political and cultural identity. Indeed, this legacy has continued to inform contemporary debates about education, national integration, and regional diversity. The historiographical analysis is one of the means by which valuable insights can reach the complex interplay between education, national identity, and political power in this period. Only scholarship that contributes to understanding how the new policy in education works can deepen an understanding of Pakistan's political development and continued challenges to create an inclusive and cohesive national identity.

Conclusion

Ayub Khan's period was a formative period in Pakistani history, characterized by both economic growth and political authoritarianism. While the regime's impressive achievements in industrialization, agriculture, and infrastructure cannot be overlooked, it also consolidated military rule, suppressed democratic rights, and widened regional disparities. Centralization of power and ignoring provincial aspirations, particularly in East Pakistan, sowed the seeds of the provincial nationalism that led to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Ayub's educational reforms, which attempted to forge a homogeneous national identity, pushed regional histories and cultures to the margin, further alienating ethnic groups. The legacy of his regime continues to be a determinant

factor in Pakistan's politics, indicating the ongoing contest between centralized power and regional autonomy. Historians' diverse interpretations of Ayub's regime bear testimony to the difficulty of balancing modernization and democratic governance in a divided and plural society. Lastly, the Ayub Khan period highlights the importance of participatory policies, regional representation, and democratic institutions in addressing the issues of national integration and political stability in Pakistan.