



Surveying the Historiography of Sectarianism in Pakistan: Trends, Patterns and Challenges

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Abstract

The historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan is a significant field of study; however, a deeper examination of available literature reveals that it has rarely been the core focus of historians. Conversely, most of the studies have been carried out by scholars pertaining to different fields, such as, social scientists, political scientists, security analysts and journalists. Notably, very few works fully or even partially meet the standard need set for historiography; rather, each tends to represent its own peripheral framework to construct a particular discourse. To contextualize the subject matter, this paper examines the major historical narratives and approaches employed by different scholars to understand the trends, patterns, and challenges of this phenomenon within a historical framework. The research employs qualitative content analysis of secondary sources, with the literature review serving as both the foundation and method of inquiry. Although it is not possible to cover all available works, however, the most significant and relevant studies have been highlighted, with particular focus on Shia–Sunni divisions. It is one of the core limitations of this research. This study is the first attempt in Pakistan, or elsewhere, to present an integrated, chronological account aimed at furnishing both historical and contemporary understandings of historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan. The finding of this study reveals that the historiography of sectarianism is fundamentally a multidimensional field of study.

Keywords: Historiography; Sectarianism; Sunni; Shia; Religious Extremism; Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Sectarianism in Pakistan is a longstanding menace that has deeply affected not only its past but also its present. It remains one of the major traditional security threats to Pakistan's national integrity and has left profound imprints on the collective psychology of both the nation and the state.

The historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan is a significant field of study; however, a deeper examination of available literature reveals that it has rarely been the core focus of historians. Consequently, no major historiographical work has yet been produced on the subject

From 1947 till 1990s, hardly any historical research attempted to contextualize sectarianism as a subject matter. Conversely, most existing studies have been carried out by social scientists, political scientists, security analysts, and journalists who examined its origins, nature, trends, dynamics, and patterns. Yet, none of these works fully or even partially satisfy the standards of historiography; as each tends to remain confined within its own disciplinary framework. They offer particular discourses that vary in scope and orientation.

Research on the historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan is continuously evolving. This paper aims to explore how scholars have studied the subject matter by employing particular sources, theoretical approaches, research techniques, and methodologies. In doing so, it identifies major trends and patterns in the historical writing on the development of sectarianism in Pakistan. Moreover, it contextualizes the narratives employed by political and social scientists, security analysts and journalists to explain and interpret the phenomenon. This research adopts a historiographical approach, in which the analysis of existing scholarship is both the primary object of study and the methodological framework. The focus is not on generating new empirical data but on examining how sectarianism in Pakistan has been represented, interpreted, and problematized in the existing body of literature. Although it is difficult to cover all such studies, therefore, the most significant and relevant ones have been delineated. Furthermore, this paper specifically focuses on research addressing the Shia–Sunni divide in Pakistan.

The paper is divided into five parts. Part One provides the introduction. Part Two elucidates the origins and development discusses the major issues and challenges in the historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan. Part Three outlines the major narratives and potential hypotheses related to sectarianism. Part Four elucidates a literature review in light of the hypotheses proposed by various scholars. Finally, Part Five offers concluding remarks.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To examine how sectarianism in Pakistan has been studied within a historiographical framework and identify the extent of historians' contributions compared to other disciplines.
2. To outline the major narratives, trends, and methodological approaches employed by scholars in studying the historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan.
3. To contextualize the challenges and issues in the current historiography of sectarianism.

1.2 Problem Statement

Since 1947, sectarianism has posed a major threat to Pakistan; however, there is a dearth of valuable historiographical work that contextualizes it as a problem or phenomenon. Moreover, most studies on the subject have been conducted by social and political scientists, security analysts, or journalists, rather than historians, to examine its origins, nature, and development over the years. Lack of professional historians and negligence of history as a discipline are the main reasons.

1.3 Significance of The Research

As far as significance of the research is concerned, it presents an integrated study on this theme based on chronological (linear) order. It is being done to understand evolving dynamics and trends that gradually penetrated into the sectarian milieu of Pakistan. It is expected that the study will contribute to contemporary understandings of the phenomenon.

2. Historiography of Sectarianism in Pakistan

Before discussing academic works pertaining to sectarianism in Pakistan, it is essential to discuss the concept of historiography and its significance. Writing history has been remained an uphill task for historians in all ages, however it is considered as a great service to humanity and academia to know about historical facts from historians' perspective. Diversity of opinions and disputations further motivate historians to uncover or discover new facts. It is generally held that historiography breeds from historian's craft, which is based on apt analysis of historical events and phenomena on the eve of sources and methods. Storey and Jones (2019) assert, "Historiography is both the writing of history and the study of how history is written" (n.d.). Broadly speaking, historiography refers to the study of historical writing, with particular reference to its philosophical underpinnings, approaches, and methods. Historiography may further be defined as the study of the methodology of history as a discipline. It examines the methods employed by historians in developing history as an academic field. According to another perspective, historiography refers to the study of the principles, theories, and methods underlying historical writing. It can, thus, be described as the history of historical writings (Socratica, n.d.). The study of historiography does not involve a direct investigation of the past; rather, it examines how interpretations of past events have evolved through the perspectives of historians (Saleavouris & Furay, 2015).

Therefore, historiography is often referred to as the historian's craft. In pursuing historical inquiry, historians draw upon selected sources, methodological tools, and interpretive perspectives to analyze documents and make sense of past events and processes. Rana (2015) writes, "Historical events can be seen as biased by the particularities of their recording and presentation. The historiographer acts like a history detective, seeking to unravel the logic of the production of history" (Rana, 2015). As E. H. Carr (1961) notes, "The facts of history never come to us pure, since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder" (p. 24). Moreover, historiography also deals with the evolution of historical thoughts, elucidates how different schools of thought and historical narratives emerge and change over time. In short, historiography is significant to increase historical literacy in the society.

3. Theoretical Framework & Methodology

The study employs a historiographical approach, based on the analysis of existing scholarship. It examines how sectarianism in Pakistan has been interpreted, represented and problematized in the existing literature. The methodology is based on literature review, while using two strategies. Firstly, the study surveys books, research articles, Phd dissertations, and policy reports. Secondly, by comparative analysis the study identifies key issues and challenges, dominant narratives, and scholarly perspectives. It is worthwhile to note that the above mentioned methodology is qualitative and interpretive in nature.

4. Literature Review

The following literature examines academic works in the light of historical narratives and key findings. To illustrate the changing dynamics and patterns of sectarianism in Pakistan over time, the existing material is evaluated in chronological (linear) sequence.

The first scholar who has conducted a comprehensive research on sectarianism in Pakistan was Musa Khan Jalalzai. He is a prominent social scientist and journalist. Jalalzai's preliminary study, *Sectarianism in Pakistan*, published in 1992, examines the rise of sectarian violence in the country in the context of Sunni-Shia tensions. The study examines underlying historical, social and

political factors that escalated sectarian conflict and its broader implications for Pakistan (Jalalzai, 1992).

To highlight new dynamics and patterns of sectarianism, Jalalzai contributed another worth reading study entitled *Sectarianism and Politico-Religious Terrorism in Pakistan* in 1993. As an extension of his earlier work, the new study explores the link between sectarianism and terrorism with hypothesizing that religious ideologies are often been politicized to justify violence. Jalalzai discusses underlying causes about ideological confrontations between various sects and their efforts to ignite terror. In short, the study analyzes the Sunni–Shia conflict and the strategies used by both parties to gain dominance (Jalalzai, 1993).

The prominent political scientist Iftikhar Malik has extensively written on the role of state in exacerbating religious extremism, sectarianism, and ethnicity in Pakistan. Published in 1997, Malik's study, entitled *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity*, examines the complex relationship between political Islam and religious orthodoxy. Malik argues that political elites exploit socio-religious and sectarian divisions to maintain control over governance. Throughout his work, Malik provides detailed references illustrating the interplay between religion, politics, and security in Pakistan, showing how political actors have frequently intensified social, religious, sectarian, and ethnic tensions (Malik, 1997).

Being victim of sectarian conflict and violence, Pakistan became one of the important case studies for scholars to explore new aspects of this issue. In 1998, Jalalzai contributed two other valuable works that include *The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Pakistan and the roots of Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan*. The former study of Jalalzai deals with different topics, such as, communalism in Pakistan, the influence of Islam on politics, and Sunni-Shia sectarian violence and tensions. It includes insights into patterns and organizations associated with sectarian conflict in Pakistan. As an in-depth exploration of Pakistan's internal communal dynamics, Jalal Zai's work stands out for its detailed and locally grounded analysis. The study provides historical and socio-political context while documenting firsthand developments from the 1980s and 1990s (Jalalzai (a), 1998). Jalalzai's latter study is a focused inquiry into the foundational causes and developments of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistani society. The study elucidates how communal politics, madrasa networks, state Islamization policies, and transnational flows contributed to the rise of Islamist and sectarian movements in Pakistan (Jalalzai (b), 1998).

In 1998, another significant contribution was made by the political scientist Muhammad Qasim Zaman. Zaman's study, *Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shia and Sunni Identities*, investigates the origins and development of sectarian conflicts and violence in Pakistan. He focuses on the majority Sunnis and the minority Shias as the principal actors in sectarian conflict, emphasizing the sharp divisions rooted both in Islamic history and in the socio-political context of South Asia. Zaman characterizes Pakistan as a so-called "Islamic state", where religious identity has been deeply contested and politicized (Zaman, 1998). Key findings of his research can be summed up as follows:

- (i) Sectarian disputes are not isolated occurrences; rather, they are intimately related to discussions concerning the place of Islam in society.
- (ii) Sectarianism plays a significant role in bringing about religious transformation in Pakistan.

As a security threat to Pakistan's national integrity, the menace of sectarianism has received great attention over the years. A prominent political scientist, Mumtaz Ahmed's study entitled *Islamization and Sectarian Violence in Pakistan* examines the complex relationship between political Islam and the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan. It was published in 1998. Ahmed categorically

identifies and discusses socio-political dynamics of sectarian divisions with reference to religion and politics. He contends that sectarian divisions and violence in Pakistan were exacerbated by the state's support of a more politicized and orthodox version of Islam and its leaning towards particular religious groups. One of the key findings of his research is:

- (i) Instead of being only motivated by doctrinal religious differences, sectarian violence in Pakistan is mostly caused by the political instrumentalization of Islam.

In support of his arguments, Ahmed refers the General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies. He opines that Islamization policy, under state patronage, exacerbated sectarian conflicts and violence between Sunni and Shia cults (Ahmed, 1998).

In 1999, Vali Nasr contributed a thorough work, *Sectarianism and Shia Politics in Pakistan, 1979–Present*, which offers a new perspective on Shia politics and its relationships with foreign powers. The study looks at the relationship between Iran and Pakistan's Shia community and makes the case that Pakistan's religious and political landscape was significantly impacted by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Nasr claims that Iran supported Shia organizations in an effort to establish regional hegemony, which sparked an increase in Sunni opposition and fueled sectarian strife within Pakistan. The geopolitical competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia became entwined with the hostility between Shias and Sunnis. It aimed to fight for ideological dominance and regional influence in South Asia. As a result, radicalized identity politics gave rise to a new type of Islamist activism that deepened sectarian tensions on a national, regional, and global scale (Nasr, 1999). following are the key findings of Nasr's research:

- (i) By empowering, organizing, and mobilizing Shias in Pakistan, the Iranian Revolution increased sectarian consciousness.
- (ii) At the same time, the Revolution heightened Sunnis' sectarian feelings, which encouraged the rise of violent sectarianism.

A few academics have examined this theme from both historical and contemporary prospects. Among them is renowned Islamic studies expert Akbar S. Ahmed, whose research is based on the anthropological study of Islam and the Muslim world. Published in 1999, Ahmed's study, *Islam Today: A Short Introduction to the Muslim World*, examines an analytical perspective on the socio-cultural and political dynamics of the Muslim world. The study also covers Shia- Sunni splits in Islam and the long-standing distinctions between the two sects. Ahmed's core research findings can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Despite the fact that all Muslims follow the core principles of Islam, there are differences among them due to historical and political factors. These distinctions are mostly social and cultural in character rather than solely theological.

In the continuation of his previous work, Nasr contributed another significant work entitled *international politics, domestic imperatives and identity mobilization: Sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979-1998*. The study unveiled in 2000. It posits that sectarianism in Pakistan is an organized and militant religio-political activism, serves and promotes the socio-political interests of particular sectarian groups like Shias and Sunnis. Its discourse of power is based on two aims. Firstly, it promises empowerment to that community through mobilization of sectarian identity. Secondly, it focuses on the marginalization of the rival sectarian community. This process is generally being done by using violence (Nasr, 2000).

A seminal research by Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy entitled *Islamist Networks: The groups, many of which started operating in Pakistan*. The study's focus on the

relationship between militant jihadists and their sectarian activities, emphasizing how Deobandi groups encouraged anti-Shia violence. Moreover, the study also explores Pakistan's sectarian war within the larger geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, considered as a proxy war (Zahab and Roy, 2004).

The dynamics of sectarianism in Pakistan underwent a significant shift following 9/11. With a focus on sectarianism, Hassan Abbas, a scholar of South Asian politics and security, investigates the relationship between religion, politics, and violence in Pakistan. Published in 2004, Abbas's study *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror*, charts the development of Islamic extremism in Pakistan from its beginnings to the time of General Pervez Musharraf. Besides examining the links between U.S.-Pakistan ties, Pakistan Army policy, and religious extremism, the study also provides profiles of major Pakistani jihadi groups, their origins, and operational capacities (Abbas, 2004).

In a similar vein, a prominent political analyst Hussain Haqqani wrote *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* in 2005. The study explores Pakistan's continuous search for identity and security as well as the relationship between Islamist organizations and the armed forces. According to Haqqani, Pakistan's identity being an Islamic ideology state is directly related to its political elites' worldview and the military's aspirations (Haqqani, 2005).

In addition to localized perspectives, some scholars like Ali Raza tends to understand sectarianism within the regional and global framework. Published in 2005, Raza's seminal research *Global Jihad, Sectarianism and Madrasa Education in Pakistan* explores the reasons for the growth of madrassas in Pakistan and their conversion from reputable educational institutions to havens for militants. The study contends that this process was accelerated by the confluence of various factors like the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion on Afghanistan, the nexus between CIA and ISI in the formation of militant Islamist networks, General Zia's Islamization program, and the ongoing flow of outside funding for ideology centred religious education. Additionally, this change was facilitated by the sectarian focus of Pakistani madrasa education (Riaz, 2005).

The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future, is another significant account produced by Vali Nasr, published in 2006. The study offers a comprehensive examination regarding the emergence of Shia political and religious identity in the post-1979 period. Nasr contends that sectarianism evolved from a localized conflict to a major axis of Middle Eastern and South Asian politics as a result of the Iranian Revolution, Saddam Hussein's downfall, and changing regional power balances. He emphasizes how sectarian conflict has been made worse for Pakistan by regional conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as the use of Sunni and Shia identities by state and non-state actors. The study explores how regional disputes are intertwined with global struggles for dominance and power. The study is useful for framing sectarianism as a defining division of the contemporary Muslim world and for connecting Pakistan's sectarianism to broader Shia- Sunni geopolitics (Nasr, 2006).

Zahid Hussain, a well-known journalist, is an authority on the themes of religious extremism, political Islam and sectarianism. Hussain's thesis, which published in 2007 *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* examines Pakistan's many problems, from the nuclear crisis to Islamization. His main argument is that Pakistan is at odds with itself. Although it covers a wide range of subjects, the main emphasis is on Islamic extremism and how it affects Pakistani modernity. Besides government efforts to counter-radicalization, the study also examines literature on counter terrorism. Hussain assesses how several military regimes, such as those of Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Pervez Musharraf, have influenced national policies. Hussain argues that Zia is greatly responsible for the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan as compared to Ayub Khan

and Pervez Musharraf. In this regard, he indicates that Zia's pan-Islamism and sectarian policies strengthened the power of ulema, caused terrorist and militant groups to spread throughout the country. Arguing Pakistan is at war with itself, Hussain highlights internal factionalism proving dangerous to country's survival. He observes that Pakistan's jihad was two-pronged, one against India and the West, and another against minority religious groups, particularly the Shias. In both phenomena, ideology is central to these conflicts and Pakistan functions as a proxy state within the broader intra-Islamic struggles of West Asia (Hussain, 2007).

Pakistan under Siege: Extremism, Society and the State is another valuable contribution of Iftikhar Malik, published in 2008. Malik's thesis entails the impact of religious extremism and sectarianism on Pakistani society and the role of state in overcoming these challenges. The study also pinpoints the way political patronage, electoral competition, and the lust of power have fueled the rise and development of sectarian violence in Pakistan over the years (Malik, 2008).

A prominent foreign scholar, Frédéric Grare, has also contributed to this significant field of study. Grare's work, published in 2009, *The Evolution of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan and the Ever-Changing Face of Islamic Violence*, explores the origins and development of sectarian conflicts and analyzes its current and future ramifications for Pakistan (Grare, 2009). The key findings of his study include:

- (i) Sectarian organizations are likely to incorporate into the larger global jihadi cause since the Shia-Sunni dimension is becoming less relevant owing to changing regional dynamics. It is anticipated that more radical extremist groups would emerge as a result of this growth.
- (ii) It is anticipated that various forms of Islamic violence would replace sectarianism, which has been prevalent in Pakistan since the early 1980s.

Another prominent foreign scholar, Mariam Abou Zahab highlights the regional dynamics of sectarianism in Pakistan while focusing on Pakistan's Tribal Areas. Zahab's study, published in 2009, *Unholy Nexus: Talibanism and Sectarianism in Pakistan's Tribal Areas*, explores the evolution of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, with special reference to Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. To examine the intersection of Talibanization and sectarianism, Zahab terms it as an "unholy nexus". Zahab's study elucidates how this convergence has intensified sectarian violence, thereby adding a new dimension to the broader conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Key findings of the study posit that the escalation of sectarianism in FATA is a direct result of Talibanization, al-Qaeda operations, and militant activities in Punjab and FATA (Zahab, 2009).

Hassan Abbas investigates the comparatively unexplored subject of Shi'a militancy in Pakistan, in contrast to earlier studies. His research, *Shi'ism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: Identity Politics, Iranian Influence and Tit-for-Tat Violence*. The study, published in 2010, explores its ideological foundations, historical origins, and regional and national security implications. The study emphasizes how militant groups, geopolitical rivalry, and sectarian identity interact to sustain violent cycles. Abbas offers important insights into the ongoing problems with peace and social cohesion in Pakistan by examining the combined effects of internal policies and outside pressures on sectarian dynamics (Abbas, 2010).

Taking local dynamics of sectarianism in Pakistan into account, Hamza Hassan's study *From Pulpit to AK-47: Sectarian Conflict in Jhang, Pakistan*, examines the Shia-Sunni conflict in Pakistan from an anthropological and primordial perspective. Unveiled in 2011, the study focuses on the Jhang area of Punjab. Hassan contends that sectarian identities are the main causes of sectarian conflict and the establishment of communal boundaries in Pakistan to highlight the regional dynamics of sectarianism.

To understand and investigate local dynamics of sectarianism, Hamza Hassan conducted a research entitled, *From Pulpit to AK-47: Sectarian Conflict in Jhang, Pakistan in 2011*. Hassan employs a primordial and anthropological approaches to examine the Shia–Sunni conflict in Pakistan, with special reference to the Jhang district of Punjab. Hassan contends that sectarian identities are the main causes of sectarian conflict and demarcating of communal boundaries in Pakistan (Hasan, 2011). The main findings of Hassan’s thesis is as follows:

- (i) Sectarian identities have been a major factor in creating sectarian conflict in Pakistan, which led to the creation of clear communal boundaries.

A prominent journalist and a writer Khalid Ahmed believes that sectarianism in Pakistan is the result of conflict transformation process. Ahmed’s study, *Sectarian War: Pakistan’s Sunni-Shia Violence and its Links to the Middle East* published in 2011. The study elucidates how the Shia-Sunni conflict was transformed from the Middle East to Pakistan after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The role of Pakistan’s ruling elites and the rapid growth of religious seminaries, funded by Saudi Arabia, are the main factors. The state of Shia populations in the Middle East and its historical connections to South Asia are also examined in this study. Additionally, the study also explores the origins and development of sectarian terrorist groups in Pakistan, emphasizing their ties to Al-Qaeda (Ahmed, 2011).

One significant policy brief on sectarianism and violence in Pakistan has been produced by Arif Rafiq in 2014. Rafiq’s study entitled *Sunni Deobandi–Shi’i Violence in Pakistan: Explaining the Surge*, offers a clear and insightful explanation of the rise and surge in sectarian violence in Pakistan. Rafiq traces the history of sectarian violence from the Sunni-Shia split of early Islam to its localized intensity in Pakistan during the 1980s. The study sheds light on both historical legacies and regional geopolitical considerations in the wake of this phenomenon. The study highlights how the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet- Afghan War, and the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran turned sectarian conflicts into proxy battle, fought on Pakistan’s territory. More importantly, author argues that Deobandi militant organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan are the main forces behind sectarian divisions in Pakistan. In short, the study discusses a security and policy oriented perspective while explaining implications of sectarian violence for Pakistan’s survival (Rafiq, 2014).

Contrary to Hassan Abbas’s discourse on Shia militancy in Pakistan, Andreas T. Rieck’s conducted a study on *The Shias of Pakistan: An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority* in 2015. The study provides a historical and contemporary politics of the Shia community in Pakistan. Rieck argument is quite mirror image of institutional perspective when he asserts that the Shia-Sunni divide has never been a defining issue in Pakistan’s mainstream politics. Shias have been always integrated into political, social and professional spheres without any discrimination. He notes that extremist Sunni groups pose the real threat for the Shia community and target it with sectarian hostility and violence. The study points out that since 1949, Shia clerics and their followers have been actively participating in communal organizations and continuing to enjoy the same status in newly born country like pre-partition India. Moreover, Rieck explores three key aspects of Shia life in Pakistan. Firstly, the development of communal institutions and religious leadership, secondly, the tactics used by Shia organizations to influence successive governments; and thirdly the intensification of Shia-Sunni conflict, which is exacerbated by the state's failure to curb Sunni militancy (Rieck, 2015).

In addition to political and security-oriented studies, scholars have also attempted to examine the phenomenon of sectarianism through the lens of cultural inquiry. In 2017, Muhammad Yasir’s conducted a study on *Sectarian Discourse in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang 1979–2009*. The study explores sectarianism through cultural performances and discursive practices specific to Jhang. These

performances include textual, oral, and customary expressions, which possess notion of cultural scripts to interpret sectarian practices within a cultural framework. Yasir argues that cultural underpinnings of sectarianism are often overlooked in favor of religious, socio-political, and economic explanations (Khan, 2017).

Some foreign scholars have adopted a holistic approach to examining the major causes of sectarianism in Pakistan. Eamon Murphy is one of them. In 2018, he produced a study on *Islam and Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: The Terror Within*. Murphy examines root causes of sectarian based terrorism in the country. Murphy states that Pakistan, as a Muslim majority state, has been greatly affected by sectarian violence since its inception. The study presents an empirical and critical case study of Pakistan, which explores the relationship between religion and sectarian terrorism. It argues that theological differences between Islamic sects are not the sole cause of escalation of sectarian violence in Pakistan rather that political, social, economic, demographic, and cultural transformations are more responsible. It is therefore, Murphy declares sectarianism as a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon. One of the distinct features of this study is that it examines both inter-sect (Sunni-Shia) and intra-sect (Barelvi, Deobandi, Ahl-i Hadith) relations (Murphy, 2018).

The in-depth survey of historiographical literature on sectarianism in Pakistan reveals that the phenomenon is the outcome of both internal and external factors. Scholars believe that these factors collectively played a vital role in shaping the sectarian identity of Pakistan.

5. Major Issues and Challenges

Following are some major issues and challenges related to historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan. Firstly, evaluation of available scholarships reveals that this theme has been mainly covered by social scientists, political scientists, security analysts and journalists rather than historians; therefore, material is mainly devoid of primary sources. Moreover, readers get confused how to decipher between works of historians and social or political sciences theorists. Secondly, like terrorism studies, sectarianism studies is also a new and evolving field of study to scholars in Pakistan. They need to develop or craft new approaches and theories that properly cover trends and address conceptual gaps. Thirdly, the existing studies mainly focus on individual approaches rather than integrated models, as discussed earlier that historiography of sectarianism is a multifaceted field of study. Fourthly, many of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks applied to Pakistan's sectarian dynamics have been borrowed from Western scholars. These frameworks often fail to align with, and at times directly contradict, the local socio-political and historical realities of Pakistan.

6. Major Narratives on Sectarianism in Pakistan

The prevalence of sectarianism in Pakistan has been examined by scholars through diverse trends and discourses, which have contributed to the development of historical narratives over time. The major perspectives are summarized as follows:

1. It is argued that sectarianism in Pakistan stems from the longstanding religious and ideological antagonism between Sunnis and Shias, originating in the early Islamic era (Nasr, 2006; Rafique, 2014; Zaman, 1998).
2. Some scholars contend that sectarianism in Pakistan was a creation of British colonial power, intended to advance its strategy of "divide and rule" (Jones, 2011; Shaikh, 2009; Zaman, 1998).
3. Simultaneously, contributors of narrative two also maintain that sectarian conflicts were relatively minor in pre-partition India due to the coexistence fostered by shared cultural and social harmony between the two major sects (Jones, 2011; Shaikh, 2009; Zaman, 1998).

4. Another scholarly opinion suggests that in the early decades following the emergence of Pakistan, sectarian tensions remained largely dormant, as the national leadership was primarily focused on state-building and development (Nasr, 2006; Rieck, 2015; Shaikh, 2009, Zaman, 1998).
5. Certain scholars argue that sectarianism in Pakistan has been shaped by regional influences such as the Soviet-Afghan War (1979) and the Iranian Revolution (1979), which intensified sectarian tendencies among Sunnis and Shias. These developments soon evolved into a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran during the 1980s and beyond (Abbas, 2010; Nasr, 2006; Rieck, 2015, Zahab & Roy, 2004).
6. Some scholars are of the view that sectarianism in Pakistan was significantly reinforced by General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies, which favored the Sunni school of thought and led to the marginalization of Shias.
7. It has also been argued that madrassas (religious seminaries) serve as breeding grounds for orthodox ideologies, thereby contributing to sectarian divisions in the country (Nasr, 1994 & 2001; Rieck, 2015; Zaman, 1998).
8. Another perspective emphasizes that militant jihadi groups and organizations act as both protectors and promoters of sectarian divisions and tendencies in Pakistan (Abbas, 2010; Zahab & Roy, 2004).
9. Contemporary studies suggest that sectarianism can be understood as a manifestation of identity conflict, exploited by the elite class and reinforced by historical, religious, ideological, and economic factors (Abbas, 2010; Zaman, 1998).

Above discussed narratives show that sectarianism in Pakistan is the result of several interconnected factors that collectively account for the phenomenon's complexity. Additionally, scholars have used a range of premises in their arguments; some rely on a single hypothesis, while others mix several hypotheses to support their discourse.

7. Conclusion

A significant obstacle to the advancement of historical research in this area is the lack of a comprehensive historiography on sectarianism in Pakistan. The literature review indicates that most of the studies provide contemporary perspectives with brief historical background. Despite the bulk of research on the socio-political, cultural, and economic aspects of sectarianism, there is still a dearth of authentic historiographical investigation. Due to this gap, there is a conceptual discontinuity and the subject matter is not properly contextualized historically. The theme itself illustrates the intricate interactions between politics, religion, socio-economic development, and local geopolitics. Scholarship now frames sectarianism as a profoundly ingrained socio-political phenomena molded by historical conditions rather than as a merely theological conflict.

During 1980s and 1990s, the influence of the Pakistani state on sectarianism had become a major area of scholarly attention. Many scholars point to General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies as a pivotal moment when the state supported particular religious interpretations, especially Sunni orthodoxy. This policy marginalized minority sects, and institutionalized sectarian divisions in the country. Political scientists and historians contend that the state's conflicted, and occasionally cooperative, role in endorsing or tolerating sectarian groups has had long-lasting effects on social cohesiveness and governance. Moreover, ethnographic and sociological methods have been used in more recent historiography to study the local construction, negotiation, and resistance of sectarian identities. This corpus of work presents sectarianism as a contested and contingent phenomenon, which challenges the notion that it is inevitable violent. It also shows how everyday coexistence

patterns frequently run counter to prevailing narratives of unending conflict. Additionally, sectarianism is being reframed as a component of larger structural crises as interdisciplinary research increasingly links it to more general problems like class, urbanization, education, and media. According to this viewpoint, sectarianism is more indicative of institutional deterioration, youth marginalization, and poor governance rather than it is of religious intolerance.

In conclusion, it can be said that the historiography of sectarianism in Pakistan has evolved from narrow theological centered approaches to more multi-dimensional explorations of the socio, political, economic, security, regional and international dynamics. Keeping in view underlying gaps, it is suggested that historians and scholars of other fields can also include neglected and marginalized voices in historical enquiry on sectarianism in Pakistan to highlight people's perspectives also.

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