

The Travel Grant from American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS) was critical in enabling research and data collection in Pakistan. The purpose of my trip was to collect data in order to address the research question: *In what ways do agendas of nationalism manifest themselves through the education system in Pakistan?*

The AIPS grant was particularly helpful as I searched through hundreds of book titles and materials that are now out of print and only accessible through the second and third-hand booksellers in the market. Most of these materials are thrown away or sent for recycling but these old books carry critical information on how a “Muslim” identity in South Asian educational institutions pre-partition, and identity in Pakistani schools post-1947, has been conceived and transmitted through textbooks. The variations across different generations and governments are fascinating. These will help me address a critical aspect of my research, i.e. how are the ideals of religious nationalism expressed in textbooks, particularly of history, in South Asia and later in Pakistan.

Taking Pakistan as a case study, I seek to examine the role of the state in instilling a sense of belonging in its people. By looking at the government at the three scalar levels of federal, provincial, and classroom, I will examine the sense of nationalism that the government tries to foster in students through each of the three levels. I will also study what linkages and tensions exist across levels of government in manifesting an overarching nationalist agenda. Distinct from the ideological is the functional aspect of how political agendas compete within the education system.

This research is important because there have been isolated studies of nationalism in the education system, such as on content of history textbooks (Nayer & Salim, 2005; Aziz, 1993). However, there is no comprehensive study of the entire chain of influence across government levels, exploring the cumulative and counteractive effect on variables on each other. Furthermore, much of current development and policy literature is prescriptive in suggesting how good policy should be made without factoring in how government agendas are set. Since Kingdon’s (1985, 2003) formative work on agenda formation, only a few studies (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005; Grindle, 2004) have built on Kingdon’s (2003) theory by documenting the processes of agenda formation as they actually play out at the grassroots level.

Given the materials I have collected, my next step is to conduct an extensive literature review to examine what current literature and theory says about the conflicts and questions in history education and religious nationalism, and to what extent to these apply to the texts collected in Pakistan.