



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 1: HISTORY

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### History as battlefield — the perils of reversing the past

#### Rising Historical Revisionism in 2025

##### 1. Textbook Revisions and Symbolic Actions

- In **March 2025**, several school and college textbooks were **revised** to:
  - Criticize or downplay the contributions of certain historical figures.
  - **Glorify native rulers**, often with regional or religious undertones.
- This was accompanied by public outrage demanding:
  - **Renaming or removal of Mughal-era tombs and monuments.**
  - Destruction or vandalism of historical sites seen as symbols of oppression.

##### 2. Public Campaigns and Polarisation

- Viral social media campaigns pushed for **aggressive actions against historical monuments**, such as:
  - Demolishing tombs or renaming roads associated with Mughal or colonial rule.
- These movements often portrayed history in a **black-and-white, 'us vs them' manner**.
- Supporters claimed they were correcting **biased colonial or post-colonial narratives**, but:
  - The outcome was increased **polarisation** and **division in society**.

#### Why History Needs Nuance and Context

##### 3. Understanding Historical Complexity

- History must be studied with a **balanced perspective**, considering:
  - **Causes and effects**
  - **Context of the times**



- **Multiple viewpoints**

- Oversimplifying or glorifying only one part of history **distorts the truth** and misguides society.

#### 4. Danger of Using History as a Political Weapon

- Political actors often use **history to reclaim perceived lost glory**, which:
  - Fuels **resentment**.
  - Creates **division** between communities.
  - Undermines efforts for **national integration and development**.
- Instead of understanding history, such approaches attempt to **“undo” the past**, which leads to **conflict**.

#### 5. Past Wrongs vs. Present Responsibility

- While it's important to acknowledge **historical injustices**, they must not be used to:
  - **Justify modern revenge**.
  - **Reclaim lost territories** or **enforce new borders** based on historical control.

#### Revisionism vs. Reinterpretation

##### 6. Genuine Reinterpretation

- Based on **new evidence**, academic debate, and critical analysis.
- Aims to **expand understanding**, challenge established views, and reflect changing historiographical methods.
- Example: New archaeological findings changing our view of ancient trade routes.

##### 7. Political Revisionism

- Alters or twists historical facts to **support current ideologies or political narratives**.
- Often linked with **nationalism, religious identity**, or **ethnic pride**.
- Used to **rally public sentiment**, but erodes academic integrity and historical truth.

#### Historical Consequences of Weaponising the Past

##### 8. Religious Wars in Europe (16th–17th Centuries)



- Conflicts like the **Thirty Years' War** stemmed from:
  - Groups seeking to **restore lost religious dominance**.
  - Deep-rooted **grievances over earlier historical wrongs**.
- Resulted in:
  - **Millions of deaths**.
  - **Economic devastation**.
  - Lasting **sectarian hatred** and **political fragmentation**.

## 9. 20th Century Examples of Destructive Revisionism

- A major European power in the 1930s:
  - Used **mythical ideas of national glory** and **distorted history**.
  - Led to **World War II**, **genocide**, and **widespread suffering**.
- In India, **Partition in 1947** was shaped by:
  - **Selective historical memories**, religious propaganda, and emotional manipulation.
  - Resulted in **mass killings**, **forced migration**, and **deep communal scars**.

## 10. Current Examples: Middle East and Eastern Europe

- Ongoing conflicts often fueled by:
  - **Competing historical claims**.
  - **Attempts to reverse colonial boundaries** or revive old empires.
- These disputes show how **historical grievances continue to spark violence**.

## Towards a Constructive Use of History

### 11. History as a Teacher, Not a Weapon

- The true role of history is to:
  - Help us **learn from past mistakes**.
  - Build a **more inclusive and peaceful future**.
- Using history to justify **hatred or revenge** ensures that the **cycle of violence continues**.



## 12. Forward-Looking Nationalism

- Healthy nationalism should:
  - **Acknowledge all facets** of our history—glorious and painful.
  - Promote **unity**, not division.
  - Focus on **development and cooperation**, not retribution.

## 13. Values Required in Historical Understanding

- **Humility**: Recognizing that no past was perfect.
- **Mutual respect**: For all cultural and historical narratives.
- **Critical thinking**: To separate fact from propaganda.
- **Empathy and inclusion**: To build bridges between communities.

## Conclusion

### 14. Key Takeaway

- India's rich and diverse history should be **studied to build wisdom**, not to **stoke conflict**.
- Nations must **look forward**, not backward.
- Only through **balanced, honest, and respectful engagement with history** can societies progress and heal.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/history-as-battlefield-the-perils-of-reversing-the-past/article69449858.ece>