

# Lessons Learnt

Religious Education and Training  
Provided by Madrassas



Sarah Ashraf

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Research Council

# Religious Education and Training Provided by Madrassas in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Boundary Area

**Report for the 'History of British Intelligence  
and Security' research project**

December 2012

**Sarah Ashraf**



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# Background

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The 'Lessons Learnt' project was originally funded by a grant from King's College London. In May and June 2010 Robert Dover and Michael Goodman, with AHRC funding, ran a series of 5 policy seminars on *Lessons Learnt from the History of British Intelligence and Security*. These were held in partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Cabinet Office, King's College London and The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). Just under 180 people attended the seminar series in total, from both academia and government. The output from these has subsequently been published in a book called *Learning from the Secret Past: Cases in British Intelligence History* (Georgetown University Press, 2011). The rationale for this initiative and the current one have come from the 2004 Butler Report into the Iraq war (and the intelligence situation that contributed to it), which concluded that the historical lessons had been forgotten, and that a regular review process should be instigated.

## The Current Project

This current project aims to build upon the 2010 seminars, improving and developing the relationship between researchers and government via the production of research and briefing papers, and seminars held in Whitehall. The primary impact is on improving national security, achieved via academics contributing to the development of the government's analytical capability.

The project is split into two halves:

- Highlighting historical examples of good analysis.
- Improving understanding of regions of current interest.

Leading academics have been specially commissioned to produce research and briefing papers for a Whitehall audience. This publication series reproduces the reports.

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(May 2012) – Dr Aaron Edwards

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## Executive Summary

Madrassas have played an important role in shaping the spiritual thought of Muslims in South Asia for centuries. In an investigation of religious education and training provided by madrassas in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region it is therefore essential to first understand its regional context and background. The socio-economic challenges of life in the tumultuous area, having had direct bearing on the popularity of these religious seminaries, also need to be outlined in order to understand the 'how' and 'why' of their proliferation.

The first part of this report is a historical overview of the Afghanistan-Pakistan tribal belt. This includes a consideration of the demographic features of the region, the traditional organization of Pashtun civil society, as well as the role of religion in tribal culture. The porous nature of the fiercely contested 'Durand Line' (demarcated by the British Imperial forces in 1894), the inability of Pakistan to establish effective governance on their side of the 'border' and the fierce determination of the Pashtun tribes on both sides to consistently flout the rules of this forced division reflects their socio-economic similarities and cultural affinity. This section sets the background against which the evolution of the madrasa and its social impact can be analysed pertinently.

The second part of this report focuses on the impact of international events and foreign policy in the region – particularly during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s and the subsequent Afghan resistance organized under the auspices of the American (CIA) and Pakistani (ISI) intelligence services. The deliberate introduction and thereafter intensification of a militant *jihadist* culture, to fortify the Afghan resistance, formed a core part of the American anti-Soviet strategy, for which Pakistan (particularly the ISI) served as a conduit. American and Pakistani contributions (economic and military as well as psychological) to the conflict therefore held far-reaching consequences for the restructuring of traditional tribal community as well as the development and evolution of the conventional religious education system. This section therefore also looks at the dynamics of socio-economic change and extensive militarization of the Pashtun society that occurred as a result of the Soviet-Afghan war and its implications for madrasa education.

The final section of the report examines the evolving role of the mullah, his masjid (mosque) and madrasa in the region within this historical framework. This is followed by a detailed look at the network of madrassas in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, their organizational structure, social and demographic features, core leadership and doctrinal affiliations, curriculum and practical training, funding and sponsorship sources, links with local and international bodies and overall impact on the socio-

cultural environment of the region. An important element of this report, therefore, is to understand the historical evolution of traditional religious education and training in the light of drastic changes in socio-economic conditions and regional stability and subsequently analysing its impact on society in turn.

## Series Editors' Notes

This paper tackles a much discussed but frequently misunderstood subject: the role of madrassas in the troublesome Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. Researching madrassas is notoriously difficult, especially the loose way in which they are administered regionally and nationally. Sarah Ashraf, a PhD student in the Department of International History at the LSE, is an expert on the region. Her grasp of the various regional languages and abilities to collect primary source material is commendable and make this the first serious study. Her conclusions make for interesting reading:

1. Madrassas in Pakistan provide essential educational and religious services, covering the failure of the Pakistani state to establish an adequate public education and social welfare system.
2. Perceptions of direct links between Islamic education in Pakistani madrassas and militancy have been based mainly on anecdotal evidence and personal observations rather than concrete empirical research. Previous speculative estimates of the number of madrassas and their student populations in Pakistan have also proved to be largely exaggerated.
3. Most madrassas in Pakistan do not engage directly in militant activities or with terrorist organisations. It is therefore important to distinguish between the interests and activities of militant organisations and legitimate *deeni madaris* (religious schools) in Pakistan.
4. Militant organisations may utilise the facilities and/or students of particular madrassas sympathetic to their cause, indirectly to support their activities.
5. Regional and international events from the 1980s onwards facilitated both the genesis and the evolution of militant organisations in Pakistan, whilst simultaneously serving to exacerbate sectarian differences amongst Pakistani madrassas.
6. The flow of *madrassa* students is decisively from Afghanistan into Pakistan for secondary and post-secondary Islamic education. After attaining religious qualifications, Afghan students may return to their home country and partake religious services.

**Robert Dover & Michael S. Goodman**



# Introduction

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Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and then the 7/7 bombings in the UK, Western governments and scholarship demonstrated a heightened interest in the proliferation and impact of *madrassas*, or more accurately *deeni madaris* (religious schools) in Muslim countries. Despite no evidence being uncovered to link the 9/11 attackers or the London subway bombers to *madaris* or even formal Islamic education<sup>1</sup>, Islamic *madaris* have increasingly been perceived as 'jihad factories'<sup>2</sup> or 'weapons of mass instruction'. Donald Rumsfeld, then US Secretary of Defence issued a memorandum to his Deputy Defence Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff stating:

Today, we lack the metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists everyday than the *madrassas* and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?<sup>3</sup>

Since it was revealed that three of the four future British Muslim suicide bombers visited Pakistan in the year preceding the July 7<sup>th</sup> attack, British press towed the US line on *madaris*, basing the perceived links between radical Islamic education and militant behaviour, particularly against Western interests largely on anecdotal evidence or personal observations, accounts and opinions rather than concrete empirical research. The Sunday Telegraph translated the Arabic word *madrassa* as terrorist "training school", while The Daily Mirror also confidently asserted over a double-page spread that the three bombers had all enrolled at Pakistani "Terror Schools"<sup>4</sup>

Illustrating the range of opinion regarding *madaris*, the influential 9/11 commission called them 'incubators of violent extremism'<sup>5</sup>, Coulson called them 'weapons of mass

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<sup>1</sup> Dalrymple, William, 'Inside the Madrassa' *New York Review of Books*, Volume 52, Number 19 (December 1, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> Sareen, Sushant., *The Jihad Factory: Pakistan's Islamic Revolution in the Making* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt Ltd., 2005)

<sup>3</sup> Confidential memorandum written by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and leaked to the news media as published in entirety by *USA Today* on October 22, 2003 (Retrieved October 10, 2011) from [www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Dalrymple, W., (2005) op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report can be found at the website for the *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* ([www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm](http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm))

instruction<sup>6</sup>, Goldberg referred to them as 'education of the holy warrior'<sup>7</sup> and Ahmad believed *madaris* are the 'cheaper more Islamic alternative to education'.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, revisionist accounts cast doubt upon the paranoia linking *madaris* to acts of transnational terrorism. For instance, Pandey and Bergen authored a report titled 'The Madrassa Scapegoat'<sup>9</sup>, based on a study of 79 terrorists responsible for five of the worst anti-Western terrorist attacks in recent times (World Trade Center bombing in 1993, Africa embassy bombing in 1998, September 11 attacks, Bali nightclub bombings in 2002, and London bombings of July 7, 2005). Their findings concluded that only in rare cases were *madrassa* graduates involved, and none of the masterminds of the five major terrorist attacks had actually attended a *madrassa*, in fact they all held university degrees.<sup>10</sup>

In order to understand the function of these religious educational institutions and their perceived role as 'terror schools' therefore it is necessary to examine the curriculum and training they provide to their students. The findings of this paper reveal that *Madaris* in Pakistan provide essential educational services, covering the inadequacies of the state's public education system, and the vast majority of Pakistani *madaris* remain committed towards this goal of providing accessible Islamic education to the masses. It is important to remember however that the ideological grooming of students at *madaris* may take place in multiple informal and indirect ways, for example due to close geographical proximity to external militant organisations, via exposure to radical or sectarian literature and propaganda, influence of changing socio-cultural and demographic trends as well as the impact of regional and international political events. This paper therefore aims to look at the evolution of *madrassa* education and training in Pakistan in three ways, starting initially with a look at the historical evolution of *madrassa* education in the region, leading to an examination of the curriculum and training provided at *madaris*, and finally a brief overview at the impact of regional and international political events on religio-political mobilisation among *madaris* in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

## The *Madrassa*

The word '*madrassa*' is derived from the Arabic word *darsun* meaning 'lesson'. In contemporary Arabic *madrassa* means 'centre of learning'. The *madrassa* connotes a school, usually referring to an educational institution offering instruction in Islamic

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<sup>6</sup> Coulson, Andrew., 'Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World', in *Policy Analysis* No. 11, March 11, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Goldberg, Jeffery., 'Inside jihad University: The Education of a Holy Warrior' *New York Times Magazine*, June 25, 2000

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad, Akbar S., 'Ibn Khaldun's Understanding of Civilizations and the Dilemmas of Islam and the West Today' in *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 56, No. 1 (2002)

<sup>9</sup> Pandey, Swati., and Bergen, Peter., 'The Madrassa Scapegoat' in *The Washington Quarterly* Spring 2006

<sup>10</sup> Sageman, Marc., *Understanding Terrorist Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

subjects including the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an, sayings and deeds (*Hadith* and *Sunnah*) of the Prophet Mohammad, Islamic jurisprudence and law etc.<sup>11</sup> In recent years the *madrassa* has been used as a general term to mean any school – primary, secondary, or advanced – that promotes an Islam-based curriculum. In many countries, particularly in the Arab world, *madrassa* refers to any educational institution (state-sponsored, private, secular, or religious). In Pakistan, India Bangladesh and other South Asian countries however the *madrassa* implies an Islamic religious school, usually providing boarding and lodging facilities for its students. For the purpose of this study, the term *madrassa* will be used to denote religious schools providing instruction in Islamic education at the primary and secondary levels.

## **Madaris in the Indian sub-continent**

Early *madaris* in the Indian sub-continent (beginning with the Madrasa Firozi, established in Multan around 1226 AD) were designed to educate people for state employment as well as to prepare future religious scholars (*Ulama*). *Madrassa* education initially comprised of ten subjects, taught via seventeen books. Students were introduced to the study of the Qur'an and the Persian language. In later years, they were taught Arabic grammar (*Sarf* and *Nahwa*), Arabic Literature, *Tafseer* of Qur'an (commentary or exegesis), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence or law), and *Usul-e-Fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), *Mantiq* (logic), *Kalam* (scholasticism), *Tasawwuf* (mysticism) etc. Over the centuries more books and subjects were added to the curriculum to include *Balaghat* (figure of speech) Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy and Medical Science (*Tib*) etc. However, it was Mullah Nizamuddin Sehavi (d. 1748) of *Madrassa Firangi Mahal*<sup>12</sup> (Lucknow) who formalized the foundations of contemporary *madaris* by establishing the *Dars-i-Nizami* curriculum.<sup>13</sup> With its emphasis on the study of logic, philosophy, mathematics and linguistics using recent texts, and religious education through classical texts, *Dars-i-Nizami* soon became the most popular curriculum used in *madaris* across the sub-continent and remains so to this day.

Traditionally *Madrassa* education incorporated two parallel streams of education: the revealed knowledge (*Manqoolat* or *Uloom-e-Naqaliya*) and the intellectual sciences (*Ma'aqoolat* or *Uloom-e-Aqalia*). According to the original curriculum devised by the

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<sup>11</sup> Ali, Saleem H., *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009) pp. 15

<sup>12</sup> Firangi Mahal was a Dutch Building (*firangi* means foreign in Hindi) in Lucknow that was awarded to Nizamuddin and his brothers by Mughal king Aurangzeb as compensation for the murder of their father in Bihar. Firangi Mahal became one of the oldest and most important religious schools in Northern India.

<sup>13</sup> See the details of the original *Dars-i-Nizami* in Hoodbhoy, Parvez., (Appendix I)

famous Arab historiographer Ibn-e-Khaldun (1332-1406 AD) the former i.e. *Uloom-e-Aqaliya* included *Tajweed* (knowledge and application of rules of recitation), *Qir'at* (melodic recitation), *Hifz* (Memorization) and *Tafseer* (Interpretation) of the Qur'an; *Hadith* and the ancillary knowledge of ascertaining the authenticity of *Ahadith*; *Fiqh* and *Usul-e-Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence and its principles); Philosophy of Religion (*Ilm-ul-Kalaam* or dialectics); and *Tasawwuf* (Mysticism). On the other hand the *Uloom-e-Naqaliya* belonged to the realm of intellectual knowledge including Linguistic Sciences i.e. *Nahw* (Grammar), *Lughat* (Etymology), *Bayan* (Rhetoric), *Adab* (Literature); *Mantiq* (Logic); *Hisaab* (Arithmetic); *Ilm-e-Hindsa* (Geometry); *Ilm-ul-Hae'at* (Astronomy); *Ilm-ul-Tabiyaat* (Physics, Chemistry, and Medicine); and *Moosiqi* (Music).<sup>14</sup>

As the social, economic and political influence of various Muslim empires deteriorated, some *ulama* began to disparage earthly i.e. *Aqali*, rational sciences, abandoned the practice of independent thinking and reasoning (*ijtihad*) and concentrated exclusively on the preservation of the teachings of Islam. This radical shift in priorities was particularly noticeable in the Indian subcontinent, where many *madaris* removed all secular and earthly subjects from their curriculum to focus solely on Islamic religious education, aiming to counter the influence of British colonialism.<sup>15</sup> After the Revolt of 1857, and the subsequent persecution of Muslims by British rulers, Indian *ulama* began to demonstrate increasing political activism with regards to the role of *madaris* in Indian society culminating in the establishment of the influential Dar-ul-Uloom at Deoband in 1867.

## Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband

The *madrasa*, that provided the ideological inspiration for the vast majority of *madaris* in the Af-Pak border region later on, was established with two main goals in mind: a) to provide a more puritanical (and hence rigid) interpretation of Islam that would purge and protect Islam from any contemporary innovations; and b) to organise a religious education movement against British occupation. The puritanical *Deobandi's* were fiercely against all innovations and departures from orthodox Islamic beliefs. They also opposed any activity relating to a reinterpretation of the canon law (*ijtihad*)<sup>16</sup> and considered the minority *Shi'a* Muslim community as heretical.

<sup>14</sup> Hoodbhoy, Parvez., (Eds.) *Education and the State: Fifty Years of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 217

<sup>15</sup> International Crisis Group. "Pakistan: *Madrasas*, Extremism and the Military" *ICG Asia Report No. 36* (July 2002), pp. 5

<sup>16</sup> Smith, W. C. *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis* (Lahore: Sh. Mohammad Ashraf Publishers, 1946) pp. 336

In addition to its ideological traditionalism Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband also manifested the emergence of a new system of Islamic education. Whilst still following the *Dars-i-Nizami* curricula, these new *madaris* could be distinguished from earlier ones due to their methods of teaching, organisational structure, regularisation of the curriculum, introduction of examinations on the pattern of the British system, and a system of awarding formal certificates and degrees (*asnad*, plural for *sanad*). They prescribed Prerequisites for qualifications, introduced a combination of written and oral examinations, and defined the award of certificates and degrees. The *madrassa* was thereby administered by a board of governors (*Majlis-i-Shura*), a rector (*sarparast*), a chancellor (*muhtamim*), a principal (*sadr mudarris*) and other staff. In a departure from the traditional dependence on state patronage, the new *madaris* were established and run using donations from private sources and community funds collected by both teachers and students.

At the time of partition (1947) there were approximately 137 *madaris* in Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> Whilst the exponential rise in the number of *madaris* thereafter is a generally accepted fact, there are disputes regarding the number of *madaris* in Pakistan and their penetration in the educational market According to Stern, there were 40,000-50,000 *madaris*<sup>18</sup> in Pakistan by the year 2000; in 2001 Singer accepts that there may be approximately 45,000 *madaris*<sup>19</sup>; the 9/11 commission report claims there are 859 *madaris* educating more than 200,000 young men in Karachi alone. The influential ICG report in its original form<sup>20</sup> in 2002 claimed that nearly one-third of all Pakistani students attend *madaris*, a gross miscalculation that was later corrected to 'over one and a half million children' being trained in 'over 10,000 *madaris*'.<sup>21</sup> In contrast official Pakistani sources estimated fewer than 7,000 *madaris* across Pakistan in 2000.<sup>22</sup> According to the most recent record (dated May 15, 2011) of the Department of Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are now 3,402 officially registered and approximately 809 unregistered *madaris* in KPK and FATA.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Rahman, Tariq., *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Survey of the Education System of Pakistan*, pp. 11

<sup>18</sup> Stern, Jessica 'Pakistan's Jihad Culture' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79 Issue 6 (November-December 2000), pp.115

<sup>19</sup> Singer, Peter. 'Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education Not jihad' *Brookings Institute*, Analysis Paper No.14 (November 2001), pp.2

<sup>20</sup> For more details on the inaccuracy of the ICG report please see Fair, C. Christine. 'Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: A New Look at the Militancy-Madrassah Connection', *Asia Policy*, No. 4 (July 2007), pp. 113

<sup>21</sup> *International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia Report*, No. 36 (29 July 2002), pp. i

<sup>22</sup> Khaled, Saleem Mansoor. *Deeni Madaris Mein Taleem* (Education in Religious Schools), Institute for Policy Studies, Islamabad (2002), pp. 145

<sup>23</sup> Official communication from Secretary Higher Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, September 18, 2011

## Madrasa Profiles in Pakistan

The vast majority of *madaris* in Pakistan are associated with one of five distinct *wafaq* (religious educational boards) distinguished by sectarian affiliation. Each *wafaq* represents a *maslak* (singular for *masalik* meaning 'paths' or 'ways'). *Maslak* refers to the particular interpretive and sectarian tradition of the board. Four of these boards i.e. *Deobandi* (*Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Arabiya Pakistan*), *Barelvi* (*Tanzeem-ul-Madaris-al-Arabiya*), *Ahl-i-Hadith* (*Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia*), and *Jamaat-i-Islami* (*Rabita-tul-Madaris-al-Islami*) follow the *Sunni* tradition and one (*Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Shi'a*) belongs to the minority *Shi'a* sect in Pakistan.<sup>24</sup>

*Deobandi* schools comprise the majority of *Sunni madaris* found along the Afghan-Pakistan border and are also found in most of the larger Pakistani cities e.g. Lahore, Karachi etc. Doctrinally affiliated with the original *Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband* in India, *Deobandis* in Pakistan also oppose Western-style secular education and reject any effort to liberalise or modernise Islamic thought and practice. *Deobandis* are known for their strident opposition to mystical practices, the notion of saint intercession and other Sufi tendencies (such as those of the *Barelvis*) still prevalent in parts of Pakistan. They are considered the most conservative of Pakistan's *Sunni* sub-sects as well as the most anti-Western. Significantly, one of the two most influential Islamist political parties in Pakistan, the Jamiat-Ulema-Islam (JUI) is a recognised *Deobandi* sectarian organisation, with high-level political leaders receiving their education from *Deobandi madaris*. Many of the JUI politicians are *Deobandi-trained ulama*.<sup>25</sup> In fact the two factions of the *Deobandi* political party, JUI-Fazlur Rehman and JUI-Samiul Haq, now reportedly run over 65 per cent of all *madaris* in Pakistan.<sup>26</sup>

The second major *Sunni* sub-sect within Pakistan is formed by the *Barelvis*. The *Barelvi Sunni* sub-sect originally emerged in reaction to the puritanical conservatism and austerity of the *Deobandis*. More inclined towards Sufi mystic ways, *Barelvis* are diametrically opposed to the puritanical beliefs of *Deobandis*, believing in saint intercession and thus embracing heterodox practices. Their beliefs are aggressively opposed and widely condemned by the *Deobandi* and *Salafi Ahl-i-Hadith ulama*.

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<sup>24</sup> Anzer, Uzma., pp. 15

<sup>25</sup> Fair, C. Christine. *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: United Institute of Peace Press, 2008), pp. 57

<sup>26</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military* Asia Report No. 49, (Islamabad / Brussels , March 2003), pp. 12

The third *Sunni* sub-sect in Pakistan, closer to *Deobandis* in their focus on Islamic puritanism, is the *Ahl-i-Hadith Salafi* sect. Closely linked to the strict Saudi Wahabi creed in their beliefs i.e. confining the interpretation of Islamic doctrine to its earliest traditions, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* are sometimes referred to as the Wahabis of South Asia, allegedly having links with the Saudi Harmain Islamic Foundation, which is believed to have provided them with funding and other resources to make them more powerful in the region.<sup>27</sup>

The *ulama* of *Ahl-i-Hadith madaris* lay heavy emphasis on the necessity of continuing the core purpose of *jihad* in both physical and intellectual terms against what they refer to as *batil* (Arabic for injustice or falsehood). This *jihadist* tendency made *Ahl-i-Hadith madaris* important to the Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

The fourth group of *madaris* are run by the oldest religio-political party of Pakistan, the *Jamaat-i-Islami* (JI) founded in 1941, by one of Pakistan's most influential Islamist thinkers Syed Abul ala Maududi. True to Maududi's Deoband-inspired, anti-Western thinking, the JI still focuses on opposing Western culture and intellectual domination, combining traditional Islamic beliefs with the study of modern history, politics and economics in its *madaris*, in order to empower its followers to confront Western ideas.<sup>28</sup> Whilst it has never been a *madrassa*-based party, the JI nonetheless also showed a marked increase in the number of its *madaris* along the Afghan-Pakistan border regions during the Afghan *jihad* of the 1980s.

The fifth group of *madaris* populating Pakistan's complex sectarian landscape belong to the minority *Shi'a* Muslim sect. Pakistan's *Shi'a* community accounts for roughly 20% of its total population and cater for 4-10% of the total *madaris* in Pakistan. The vast majority of *Shi'a* in Pakistan belong to the *Athna-Ashri* (believing in twelve imams) sub-sect. The Twelver Pakistani *Shi'a* belong to the dominant strain of *Shi'ism* found in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and around the Persian Gulf.

## **Madrassa Education Demystified**

Interestingly the traditional curriculum of a *madrassa* did not include *jihadi* texts or militant literature. Even more intriguing is the fact that all Pakistani *madaris*, including *Shi'a* ones, still use the conventional *Dars-i-Nizami* curriculum as a foundation for their syllabus. The original *Dars-i-Nizami* was based on the idea that all useful and truly Islamic knowledge was perfected in the past 'Golden Age of Islam' and has therefore already been written. Continuing the same tradition, *ulama* believe that their role in the present age

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<sup>27</sup> Rahman, Tariq., *Madrassah and the State of Pakistan: Religion, Poverty and the Potential for Violence in Pakistan* pp.2

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3

is to preserve this sacred knowledge, including its obscure linguistic content and archaic texts, and to save it from modern innovations. The texts they use however vary according to their particular interpretation of Islam (*maslak*), explaining and rationalizing the beliefs of their own sects (*Sunni* or *Shi'a*) and sub-sect (*Deobandi*, *Barelvi*, *Ahl-i-Hadith*) and refuting all others.<sup>29</sup>

Pakistani *madaris* including the ones along the Af-Pak border are associated with one of the five *wafaq* mentioned earlier. These *wafaq* prescribe the curriculum and textbooks for their affiliated *madaris*, prescribe the courses to be taught, conduct examinations and award their own degrees and certificates. In order to qualify as an *alim* (possessor of *ilm* or knowledge) a student has to gain proficiency in three areas of Islamic study i.e. theology, *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *sharia* (Islamic Law). An *alim* certificate from a bona fide *madrassa* has the equivalence of an MA degree in Arabic or Islamic Studies in Pakistan. After graduating from the tenth grade, *madrassa* students qualify as *Muftis*, able to pass *fatawa* (plural for *fatwa* or religious edicts concerning Islamic Law). Generally the *alim* course in *Sunni madaris* spans an eight-year duration, if the students come into the system with an eighth or tenth-grade qualification.<sup>30</sup>

The primary (*Ibtidai*) levels of Islamic instruction are usually offered at a *Maqtab* (Qur'anic Schools) or feeder schools of larger *madaris*. *Maqatib* (plural for *Maktab*) in Pakistan are normally informal and ubiquitous, catering for basic Islamic instruction for children between ages five and nine. They are usually local schools, smaller than *madaris*, and without provision of hostels and other residential facilities. Children are instructed in the reading of the Qur'an (*Nazira-i-Qur'an*), its melodic recitation with correct pronunciation (*Qirat*) and its memorization (Hifz-i-Qur'an) only. They do not impart any element of the *alim* course – that is the remit of the *madaris*, and the most obvious difference between the two.

*Madaris* generally provide secondary, higher secondary and even post-secondary Islamic instruction to hundreds, sometimes thousands of students. Most of the programmes offered at larger Pakistani *madaris* are full-time and many have residential facilities for foreign students. The daily routine of a *madrassa* student generally starts with the *Fajr* prayers at daybreak, followed by routine recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Regular classes and lessons begin soon after breakfast and continue until lunch-time. In the afternoon, students have one or two more classes after the *Zuhr* (mid-day) prayers, after which some *madaris* allow students an afternoon siesta. The *Asr* prayers are then offered in the late

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<sup>29</sup> Ali, Saleem H., pp. 39

<sup>30</sup> Fair, C. Christine., *The Madrassah Challenge*. pp.51



afternoon, then *Magreb* prayers at sunset followed by another lesson and dinner. The *Isha* prayers are then offered at night after which students are expected to revise their day's learning before they go to bed around 11pm. *Madaris* generally provide modest meals and students live, study and sleep on the floor together in the same hall, packing off their bedding neatly in a corner during the day.<sup>31</sup> Most *madaris* have their own libraries, stocked with texts approved or recommended by their sectarian parent bodies.

Most of the *madaris* found along the Af-Pak border region belong to the *Sunni Deobandi* sub-sect and teach the curriculum prescribed by the *Wafaq al-Madaris al-Arabia*. Many of these incorporate an elaborate structure of Islamic instruction, spread over seventeen years, from primary level to the postgraduate (Masters) level.<sup>32</sup> A typical model of the curriculum in a *Deobandi madrassa* is as follows:<sup>33</sup>

First Year: Biography of the Prophet (*Syrat*), Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Chirography, Chant illation (*Tajvid*)

Second Year: Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Logic, Chirography (*Khush-navisi*), Chant illation (*Tajvid*)

Third Year: Qur'anic Exegesis, Jurisprudence: (*Fiqh*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Hadith, Logic, Islamic Brotherhood, Chant illation: (*Tajvid*), External study (*Tareekh Millat* and *Khilafat-e-Rashida* i.e. Indian Islamic movements).

Fourth Year: Qur'anic Exegesis, Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Principles of Jurisprudence (*Usul-i-Fiqh*), Rhetorics, Hadith, Logic, History, Chant illation, Modern Sciences (sciences of cities of Arabia, Geography of the Arab Peninsula and other Islamic countries)

Fifth Year: Qur'anic Exegesis, Jurisprudence, Principles of Jurisprudence, Rhetoric, Beliefs (*Aqa'id*), Logic, Arabic Literature, Chant illation, External Study (History of Indian Kings)

Sixth Year: Interpretation of the Qur'an, Jurisprudence, Principles of Interpretation & Jurisprudence, Arabic Literature, Philosophy, Chant illation, Study of Prophet's traditions

Seventh Year: Sayings of the Prophet (*Ahadith*), Jurisprudence, Belief (*Aqa'id*), Responsibility (*Fra'iz*), Chant illation, External Study (Urdu texts)

Eighth Year: Ten books by various authors focusing on the sayings (*Ahadith*) of the Prophet.

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<sup>31</sup> Hoodbhoy, Parvez., pp.230

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 227

<sup>33</sup> Taken from Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband website [www.darululoom-deoband.com/english](http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english)  
– *Deobandi madaris* in Pakistan teach the curriculum prescribed by this parent organization.

Beyond the eighth year students can choose to specialize in subjects such as *Fiqh*, *Tafseer*, *Hadith* or *Iftah*. These high level courses can only be studied after a student has completed the *Dars-i-Nizami* curriculum and can take two years or more depending on the subject and level of qualification they aim to achieve.<sup>34</sup>

Even though many Pakistani *madaris* include subjects of mainstream education such as Mathematics, History, Pakistan studies, Geography and General Science etc<sup>35</sup> in their curriculum, the majority of texts used in *madaris* are ancient and may even predate the creation of the *Dars-i-Nizami*.

Books used in philosophy and logic, for example, were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Medicine is taught through an eleventh-century text that is still considered an authentic study of human anatomy and pathology. In what we have described as purely religious subjects, the books used date back to the seventeenth century at the latest and eleventh century at the earliest. Books prescribed for astronomy, mathematics and grammar are more than five to seven-hundred-year-old texts.<sup>36</sup>

The teachings of Arabic and Persian are stressed in Pakistani *madaris* but not for their linguistic value. These languages are taught due to their necessity in attaining mastery over religious texts and thus obligatory for an *alim*. Since the lack of fluency in these languages impairs students' ability to understand important concepts many *madaris* in Pakistan use supporting texts in local languages e.g. Pashto in KPK, Sindhi in Sindh etc., while Urdu remains the language in which most *madrasa* students gain proficiency. The canonical texts used to teach the *Dars-i-Nizami* are taught through commentaries (*sharh*), glosses or marginal notes (*hashiya*) and super-commentaries (*taqarir*).

There are commentaries upon commentaries explained by even more commentaries. For the South Asian Students, they no longer explain the original text being themselves in Arabic. They have to be learned by heart, which makes students use only their memories not their analytical powers.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the pedagogic methods used in *madaris* include rote memorization, repetition and focus on oral fluency. Students are made to memorise rhymed couplets from ancient texts as well as their explanations. Since the explanations in a number of texts is also

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<sup>34</sup> Fair, C. Christine., *The Madrassah Challenge*, pp.54

<sup>35</sup> Hoodbhoy, Parvez., pp. 235

<sup>36</sup> Ahmad, Mumtaz., "Madrassa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh," *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia* (2004), pp.103

<sup>37</sup> Rahman, Tariq., *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Survey of the Education System of Pakistan*. pp.13

in Persian, which the student is made to memorise, the application of this knowledge usually eludes the student. Similarly some texts are explained in Arabized Urdu, whereby the explanation is scholastic and difficult to understand for a person unfamiliar with the special branch of medieval Islamic philosophy on which it is based.<sup>38</sup>

*Radd* i.e. Refutation constitutes an important component of the training students at most sectarian *madaris*. Special attention is paid towards training *madrasa* students to counter or refute the theological worldviews of other sub-sects, beliefs they consider heretical and even Western alien philosophies. Having gained extensive currency during the Soviet War, and used to perpetuate *jihadist* zeal against communists, this practice intensified sectarian divisions and sowed the seeds of intolerance in Pakistani *madaris* for years to come. Also called “comparative religion” by *madrasa* administrators, students are schooled in comparing and contrasting one interpretive school vis-à-vis another, for example *Sunni* vs. *Shi’a* or *Deobandi* vs. *Barelvi*.<sup>39</sup> *Radd* forms an essential component of this training whereby students learn to defend the legitimacy of their own sectarian beliefs by countering the arguments of their religious rivals through debates and discussion.

The training of *Radd* comprises three main parts: the refutation of other sects and sub-sects, the refutation of heretical beliefs and the refutation of alien/western philosophies<sup>40</sup> taught through supplementary texts used during the interpretation of *maslak* and passed on to the students. In some cases students are trained in *Radd* through question-answer sessions, via selective interpretation of texts and supplementary reading materials recommended specifically for the refutation of the doctrines of other sects and sub-sects.<sup>41</sup> In other cases journal and article publications of only the preferred school of thought are allowed into the *madrasa*. The views of a particular *maslak* are thereby internalized and made predominant when the teachers of the *madrasa* refer to the pioneers of their *maslak* in writings, sermons and conversations.<sup>42</sup> Despite denials, several *Deobandi madaris* use books to refute other sects and sub-sects in their curriculum<sup>43</sup> stating for example “There is no doubt about the infidelity of *Shi’as* and they are excluded from Islam. *Shi’a*-ism is a religion contrary

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<sup>38</sup> Anzar, Uzma., pp. 16, drawing heavily from Rahman, Tariq “Language, Religion and Identity in Pakistan: Language Teaching in Pakistani Madrasahs” in Ethnic Studies Report, Vol XVI, July 1998

<sup>39</sup> Fair, C. Christine., “*The Madrasa Challenge*” pp. 77

<sup>40</sup> Rahman, Tariq., “Denizens of Alien Worlds” pp. 14. This section borrows heavily from this work, since there are limited external studies available on the subject.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Including *Hadiyat ul Shi’a* by Maulana Mohammad Qasim, which is still in circulation.

to Islam.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, *Shi'a madaris* list books on comparative religions, in which *Shi'a* beliefs are taught as the only true ones. Polemical pamphlets as well as oral discourses on cassettes/CD's are also found in both *Shi'a* and *Sunni madaris*, in which *Shi'a* declare themselves the victims of conspiracies and Sunnis warn against *Shi'a* deviations from the correct interpretation of Islam.<sup>45</sup>

The refutation of heretical beliefs and alien philosophies were traditionally designed to counter heresies within the Islamic world and the impact of outside influences threatening to change or dilute Islam. In Pakistani *madaris* this translates into refuting the beliefs of the *Ahmadi* or *Qadiyani* Muslim sect. Almost all *Sunni madaris* (*Deobandi*, *Barelvi*, *Ahl-i-Hadith* and *Jamaat-i-Islami*) include the refutation of *Ahmadiya* beliefs, and prescribe books written in a polemic style and in widely understood Urdu language. Other beliefs, deemed heretical or alien are also refuted. This includes the refutation of alien philosophies such as Western capitalism, communism and socialism. In early *madaris* Greek philosophy was seen as an intellectual challenge to Muslim ideologies, hence a focus of refutation. Following the age of European colonialism, the *madaris* in South Asia in particular, began to focus on refuting ideas associated with Western imperialism. *Jamaat-i-Islami's* founder Maulana Maududi, was one such revivalist leader who wrote prolifically about resisting Western domination and protecting the pristine Islamic identity. In keeping with this tradition, *Jamaat-i-Islami madaris* continue to prescribe books that make students conscious of domination by the Western world, exploitative potential of their political and economic ideas and the disruptive influence of Western liberty and individualism on Muslim societies.<sup>46</sup>

## **Madaris in Afghanistan**

In contrast to the *madrassa* system in Pakistan, *madaris* in Afghanistan constitute an informal and non-uniform system, characterized by the presence of a variety of educational institutions offering religious education at different levels. There still exist some larger *madaris* such as the Dar ul Uloom Arabia in Kabul, and the Noor ul Madaris in Ghazni, reminiscent of the once-great centers of Islamic learning that were based in Afghanistan during the Timurid Dynasty (1363-1506 CE). However most of the *madaris* in the country are small, fairly modest structures, usually comprising classrooms

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<sup>44</sup> Yusuf Ludhianvi's *Ikhtilaf-i-Ummat aur Sirat-i-Mustaqeem* (Dissent in the Ummah and the Right Path) quoted in ICG Group Asia Report No. 130, March 29, 2007, pp. 15. This critique of Barelvi, *Shi'a*, *Ahl-i-Hadith* Salafi, and *Jl's* religious ideologies is considered a masterpiece of Deobandi theology and still in wide circulation.

<sup>45</sup> Rahman, Tariq., pp.15

<sup>46</sup> Rahman, Tariq., Pp.16

and dormitories. They may also be based in quarters belonging to mosques and the residences of local religious leaders. The most common institutions of religious education in Afghanistan are the *Dar ul Hifaz*, similar to the *maktab* in Pakistan, where the students focus on memorization (*hifz*) and recitation (*tajwid*) of the Quran; and the *madaris*, responsible for imparting Islamic knowledge via a religious syllabus at secondary and higher-level studies. Many *madaris* also offer basic religious classes and Quran studies for younger students.

Religious education in Afghanistan can be divided into the public i.e. government schools known as the 'official *madaris*' (*rasmee madaris*) and the private unregistered ones (*khusoosi madaris*). Private *madaris* in Afghanistan grew out of the traditional teaching circles (*halaqa*) that imparted religious education informally, via a network of teacher-student relationships. The first private *madaris* in Afghanistan were thus institutions funded by affluent elders of society and operated without any government influence. The majority of private *madaris* even today remain independent and unregistered with any government or private body in Afghanistan.

Official government *madaris* were established in Afghanistan during the 1930s and 1940s in order to formalize higher religious education and train the judiciary in *Sharia*. Since then the public administration of Islamic education in Afghanistan has been dealt with by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Hajj and Endowment. According to a Ministry of Education survey, there were some 336 Islamic schools in Afghanistan in 2007, accounting for only 1.54% of the total students studying in public and community-based schools, and not including private schools.<sup>47</sup> The curriculum in most Afghan Sunni *madaris* is also based on the *Dars-i-Nizami* and affiliated with the *Dar ul Uloom Deoband*. However, Afghan *madaris* still lack the formalized system of religious education that could award degrees and confer higher levels of recognized qualifications upon their students.

Afghan students seeking religious instruction travel to Pakistani *madaris* due to a combination of factors including the availability of higher-level religious degrees, the reputation and quality of educational institutions as well as access to well-reputed Islamic scholars. Some Afghan universities do offer the Bachelors degree in Islamic Studies, however students need to go abroad for any higher degrees. In addition students from private *madaris* find it difficult to gain acceptance in Afghan universities if they wish to take the Bachelor's degree, and travel abroad for that reason. Formal degrees from known Pakistani *madaris* such as Jamia Uloom Islamia Binori Town in Karachi and the *Dar ul*

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<sup>47</sup> Borcgreivink, Kaja *Beyond Borders: Diversity and Transnational Links in Afghan Religious Education* (PRIO Paper) pp. 18

*Uloom Haqqaniya* are often recognized as a sign of quality amongst Afghan clergy. Thus the quality and prestige associated with well-reputed religious scholars and particular institutions remain the most significant factors accounting for the movement of Afghan students into Pakistani *madaris*. These *madrassa* graduates then return to Afghanistan as teachers, religious leaders, scholars, judges, and even on occasion as recruits for militant groups operating in Afghanistan. The movement of people in the religious education sector is therefore mainly from Afghanistan to Pakistan and explains the infiltration of religious ideologies, curricula and teaching methods from Pakistan into Afghanistan.

## Madrassa 'Boom' in the Af-Pak Border Regions

When Sir Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, drew the boundary that separated Afghanistan and British India in 1893, he also divided the Afghan-Pashtun tribes that lived in the region. Nearly all Afghan tribes had relatives that continued to live within Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (then called the North West Frontier province) and the semi-autonomous FATA region.<sup>48</sup> Populated mainly by *Sunni* Muslim Pashtun tribes that fiercely resisted foreign invasions over the years, this area became the frontline for the US-sponsored *jihad*, against Soviets in Afghanistan (1979-89).<sup>49</sup>

Occurring at the height of the Cold War between two global super powers, the Soviet invasion presented a perfect opportunity for the US to create a much-desired 'bleeding wound' for Soviets in Asia, in alliance with the ruling military government in Pakistan. The Americans utilised this opportunity to rally Muslims all over the world in a '*jihad*' (Holy War) against the 'Godless communists'. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) used over \$51 million between 1984 and 1994 at the University of Nebraska Omaha to develop and design textbooks, to be printed in Pakistan, that were designed to provide religious endorsement for armed struggle in the defense of Islam. Over 13 million of these textbooks were distributed at Afghan refugee camps and *madaris*

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<sup>48</sup> Bordering Afghanistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province can be broadly split into two areas, the KPK and FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas). Whilst KPK itself is constitutionally a part of Pakistan's Federal Government, the tribal belt adjacent to the Afghanistan border that constituting FATA have a semi-autonomous status within Pakistan. FATA has seven Tribal Agencies and six Federal Regions. The tribal agencies of FATA maintain local governance through their own *jirga* system (i.e. gathering of tribal elders for important decision-making and dispute resolution). The Government of Pakistan tries to maintain contact with FATA areas through its own representatives (referred to as 'political agents'), the administrative head of each tribal agency. Interestingly FATA comes directly under the Federal Government's remit and the KPK Provincial assembly has no powers in these areas, except in PATA (Provincially Administered Tribal areas i.e. the Frontier Regions that form a part of KPK). More importantly the jurisdiction of the Pakistani judicial system (Supreme and High Courts) does not extend to FATA and PATA, and they maintain their own tribal systems for governance and justice.

<sup>49</sup> Borchgrevink, Kaja, 'Beyond Borders: Diversity and Transnational Links in Afghan Religious Education' *Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)* Report (September 2010). pp.39

in Pakistan 'where students learnt basic math by counting dead Russians and Kalashnikov rifles'.<sup>50</sup> These textbooks remained in circulation in Afghan schools and Pakistani *madaris* even after the end of the Soviet occupation, and thereafter provided inspiration for countless *jihadi* publications issued by militant *tanzeems* (e.g. the Markaz al-Dawa al-Irshad<sup>51</sup>), *madaris* and even extremist political parties. By cloaking the Afghan conflict in religious terms, the US successfully mobilised Muslim sensibilities to support its Cold War strategy and provided both the impetus and the resources<sup>52</sup> for the unprecedented growth and politicization of *madaris* in the region.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Revolution had also served to accentuate sectarian identities of Pakistan's *Shi'a* populations, which combined with the ideological and material resources flowing in from Iran, served to promote socio-political activism amongst the Pakistani *Shi'a*.<sup>53</sup> As part of its intention to export the *Shi'a* revolution Iran provided money to the Pakistani *Shi'a* community, built cultural centres, sponsored the education of Pakistani *Shi'a* in Iran and even funded *Shi'a madaris* in Pakistan.<sup>54</sup> As a result the number of *Shi'a madaris* in Pakistan increased from around 70 in 1979 to 116 in 1983-84.<sup>55</sup>

The growing strength of the *Shi'a* was a cause of serious concern not only amongst the *Sunni* Muslim sub-sects of Pakistan, but also amongst the then regional powers of Saudi Arabia and Iraq.<sup>56</sup> Threatened by the growing influence of Iranian brand of *Shi'a* Islam, Saudi Arabia aimed to challenge the spread of the competing Islamic ideology by fortifying *Sunni* identities in countries neighbouring Iran. To build the intended ideological "*Sunni Wall*"<sup>57</sup> money began pouring in from Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern NGOs to the *Sunni Salafi Ahl-i-Hadith madaris* in Pakistan, expanding their presence in both number and influence.

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<sup>50</sup> Stephens, Joe., and Ottaway, David, B., "The ABC's of jihad in Afghanistan", *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2002, citation in ICG Asia Report No. 36, pp 13

<sup>51</sup> *Markaz al-Dawa al-Irshad* is an Ahl-i-Hadith organization, headquartered in central Punjab (Muridke). It is the parent organization for the Kashmir-based militant organization *Lashkar-i-Tayiba*.

<sup>52</sup> Coll, Stephen., *Ghost Wars* (Penguin Books, 2004). In this book Coll elucidates how the US Government allocated over \$2 billion of resources and funds through the CIA to support the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan between 1980-89. In 1984, the 'petro-dollar' agreement was formed between US President Ronald Reagan and the Saudi Royal family – where Saudi's pledged to match US contributions to the Afghan jihad (pp. 65). CIA also estimated that by the mid-1980s another \$25 million were being sent by NGO's situated in various Arab Gulf states.

<sup>53</sup> Zahab, Mariam Abou., "The Regional Dimension of Sectarian Conflict" in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*, Jaffrelot, Christophe (Eds.) 2002

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116

<sup>55</sup> Malik, Jamal. (Editor) *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* (London: Routledge, 2007) pp. 198

<sup>56</sup> Iraq, at the time engaged in a bloody war with Iran was supported heavily by the United States.

<sup>57</sup> Jaffrelot, Christophe (Eds.) pp.92

However, since the puritanical *Deobandi* sect was more in line with Pakistani President General Zia's orthodox beliefs, their expansion significantly exceeded the rest. According to a government estimate in 1988, out of a total of 2,891 *madaris* 717 belonged to *Barelvis*, 47 to Shi'a, 161 to the *Salafi Ahl-i-Hadith* and the rest were all *Deobandi*.<sup>58</sup> General Zia encouraged the proliferation of *madaris* in Pakistan along the Afghan frontier to amalgamate and 'educate' young Afghan refugees as well as Pakistanis in Islamic precepts and to inject the extremist religious fervour needed to fuel the anticommunist *jihad*. Upon Zia's urging Saudi charities built and funded hundreds of *madaris*, providing social outlet and religious instruction, along with free food, shelter, some military training and a small stipend for their students to send back to their families. Zia's government even created organisations such as the *Jamaat-i-Islami's Rabita-ul-Madaris* specifically formulated to produce *jihadi* literature, mobilise public opinion and to recruit and train *jihadi* forces.<sup>59</sup>

It is important to note that many of the so-called '*madaris*', such as Maulana Sami-ul-Haq's infamous *Deobandi madrasa (Haqqania)* at Akora Khattak<sup>60</sup> in KPK, created during this period were from their very inception conceived and created as militant training camps. These paramilitary groups were specifically designed for providing manpower and religious legitimacy for *jihadist* operations and soliciting funds from all over the Muslim world, rather than functioning as pure religious, educational institutions.<sup>61</sup>

## Curriculum of *Jihad*?

*Jihadi* organisations and training camps continued to operate after the Soviet-Afghan war and established their networks deep into Pakistan's major urban centers such as Karachi and major cities in Punjab.<sup>62</sup> Thus, when the US performed a speedy exit from the region, having attained its strategic goals with the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, it did so without the foresight to dismantle the militant infrastructure or discourse of *jihad* that it had helped spawn. Some militant organisations served as a tool for Pakistan's strategic interests and were diverted to the disputed Kashmir territory to wage a *jihad* against

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<sup>58</sup> Deeni Madaris Report (1988) citation in *ICG Asia Report No. 36*, pp. 9

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10

<sup>60</sup> Sami-ul-Haq's *Haqqania madrasa* in Akora Khattak, near the Pakistani city of Peshawar, was one of the largest and most important *madaris* during the Afghan-Soviet War. More recently it has gained notoriety due to its support both in the creation and ascendancy of the Taliban in Afghanistan. It houses approximately 2,500 students and has links to other radical *Deobandi madaris* in Pakistan such as the powerful Dar-ul-Uloom Binori Town in Karachi.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmad, Mumtaz., "Madrasa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh", pp. 115

<sup>62</sup> *ICG. Asia Report No. 36*, pp. 11



Indian forces<sup>63</sup> as soon as the Afghan *jihad* had ended. Other splinter groups such as the *Deobandi Sipah-e-Sahaba-Pakistan* (SSP) that had emerged during the Afghan *jihad*, now turned to fight another *jihad* against sectarian rivals (particularly the *Shi'a* groups) within Pakistan.

The transformation of a benign tradition of *Radd* into the institutionalization of refutation and extremist rhetoric during the war, contributed towards creating a "violent social context where sectarian identity has become militarized, the negative bias created through the texts used in *madrassas* and vilification of others' beliefs regularly through speeches bound to produce anger and militancy."<sup>64</sup> The politicization of religion in *madaris* during the decades following the Soviet war, made these institutions susceptible to influences from their patron religio-political parties within Pakistan (such as the JI, *Deobandi* JUI, *Barelvi* JUP etc), having gained centre-stage in Pakistani politics due to their contribution, both ideological and physical, during the Afghan resistance. At the same time militant organizations (*askari tanzeems*) created by various sectarian parties to partake the Afghan *jihad* were also able to utilise the material and human resources present at *madaris* sympathetic to their causes.<sup>65</sup>

Afghan students began to attend Pakistani *madaris* along the border as refugees, along with their Pakistani counterparts due limited educational or socio-economic opportunities in the region during and after the Afghan-Soviet War. Their motivations for enrolment included gaining higher *madrassa* qualifications and studying under particularly distinguished religious teachers, rather than militant training. The continued popularity of *madaris* could be attributed therefore largely to the failure of the Pakistani state to establish an accessible educational infrastructure and to provide essential social welfare services for its rapidly growing population, particularly along the beleaguered Afghan border regions.

The Pakistani *madaris* provide free basic literacy skills and training for students in theological studies, jurisprudence and polemics thorough Islamic instruction. They produce Islamic scholars and clergy able to conduct essential functions in a Muslim

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<sup>63</sup> Deobandi Kashmir-oriented militant organizations include *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JM) and *Harkat-ul-Ansar/Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* (HUA/HUM) and their splinter groups. These "Kashmiri groups" have operational and personnel linkages with *Deobandi* anti-*Shi'a* groups as well as the *Deobandi* Islamist political party *Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam* (JUI). Groups operating in Kashmir under the *Jamaat-i-Islami* (JI) banner include *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*, *al Badr*, and related factions. Similarly the *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba* (LeT), which began its operations in Kashmir in 1986, is affiliated with the *Ahl-i-Hadith* sub-sect.

<sup>64</sup> Riaz, Ali., "Global Jihad, Sectarianism and the *Madrassas* in Pakistan". *Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies*, Working Paper No. 85, (Singapore, August 2005). pp.21

<sup>65</sup> Borchgrevink. Kaja., & Harpviken, Kristian Berg., "Teaching Religion, Taming Rebellion: Religious Education Reform in Afghanistan", *Peace research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Policy Brief No. 7* (2010)

society such as conducting religious ceremonies and practices, running mosques as well as providing social welfare services by way of both manpower and fundraising (particularly during times of natural disaster). Major *madaris* also play an important role in religious guidance and counselling, and issuing edicts on important personal matters such as divorce and inheritance etc.

The general lack of credible information on even facts such as the number of *madaris* and percentage of *madrassa* students let alone their specific activities and goals underlines the necessity of regulating this parallel stream of education in Pakistan. Policy makers need to be mindful of the dangers of basing their conclusions on previous speculative estimates of the number of *madaris* and their student populations, proved to be largely exaggerated according to recent studies. According to the findings of the World Bank-commissioned 2005 report on religious school enrolment in Pakistan<sup>66</sup>, *madaris* in the country account for less than 1% of all children enrolled in full-time education, whereas nearly 70% of school-going students attend public schools and nearly 30% attend private schools full-time.

## Furthermore

Even in the districts that border Afghanistan where *madrassa* enrollment is the highest in the country, it is less than 7.5 percent of all enrolled children. Even among the less than 1 percent of families who have children enrolled in *madrassas*, more than 75 percent send their other children to private and public schools.<sup>67</sup>

Our findings also conclude that most *madaris* in Pakistan do not seem to be directly linked to militant activities or terrorist organisations.<sup>68</sup> For militant training and activity in Pakistan, *tanzeems* (organisations) or more appropriately *askari* (military) *tanzeems* such as *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP) or *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM) need to be distinguished from legitimate *deeni madaris* (religious schools) and considered separately.

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<sup>66</sup> The 2005 study "Religious School Enrolment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data" commissioned by the World Bank and the Islamabad-based Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) and led by Tahir Andrabi provided solid evidence regarding the penetration of *madaris* in the educational market for full time student enrolment and the variations of *madrassa* market share over time and across Pakistan.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> According to ICG Asia Report No. 36. pp. 2, Pakistani Ministry of Religious Affairs officials speculate that only 10 to 15 percent of all *madaris* in Pakistan have links with sectarian militancy or international terrorism, at the same time confessing to the unreliability of this data.

# Appendix I

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## Askari Tanzeems in Pakistan – Some Examples

### *Askari / Jihadi Tanzeems in Pakistan*

The military experience rendered by the conflict in Afghanistan and then Kashmir, the ideological impetus provided by the Pakistan, Arab, Iranian and US governments, and the patronage of local religio-political groups in Pakistan facilitated the diversification and multiplication of numerous militant organisations operating in Pakistan. The earliest *jihadist* movement in Pakistan, the *Jamiat-ul-Ansar* (Society of the Partisans) started in support of the Afghan Resistance movement in 1980, and converted into the *Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami* (HJI) in 1988. Students from the large Deobandi, Binori Town *madrassa* in Karachi (*Jamiat-ul-Uloom-ul-Islamia*) actively engaged in the Afghan resistance and subsequently developed connections *jihadist* groups such as the *Hizb-i-Islami* of Younis Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani (of the infamous *Haqqania* network).

Pan-Islamist in orientation the HJI aimed at combating the perceived oppression of Muslims by 'infidels' worldwide by waging a global *jihad*. It placed special emphasis on liberation of occupied Muslim territories such as Palestine and Kashmir, and also the struggle for Muslim rights in countries such as Philippines, Burma, Bosnia and Tajikistan etc. In 1991, the HJI saw an organisational split that resulted in the creation of the *Harkat-ul-Ansar* (HuA) later known as the *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* that devoted itself to the armed struggle in Kashmir. Following another split in the organisation, this time along ethnic lines in 2000, the Punjabi faction of the group splintered into the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM), which then began sectarian terrorist activities across Pakistan. This pattern of splintering has been a characteristic of militant organisations in the country and explains the proliferation of numerous breakaway *jihadi* groups. Following are some examples of the larger, more prominent militant *tanzeems* in Pakistan.

### *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT – Army of the Pure)*

Formed in 1990 in Afghanistan, the LeT (also known as *Jamaat-ud-Da'awa*) is based in Muridke, near Lahore in Pakistan. Initially created with the tacit support of the Pakistan government and military leadership in order to wage the Kashmiri *jihad*, the LeT was eventually banned as a terrorist organisation by Pakistan (2002). It continued its operations however under the banner of the *Jamaat-ud-Da'awa* and *Pasban-i-Ahl-i-*

*Hadith*. The LeT's professed ideology is in line with the *Wahabi Ahl-i-Hadith* school and includes the unification of all Muslim majority areas in regions neighbouring Pakistan (e.g. Jammu and Kashmir, Chechniya and other parts of Central Asia) as well as the restoration of Islamic rule over India. The LeT considers India, Israel, and the US as its primary enemies, and their interests as worthy targets for its militant operations. Most notably the LeT has been held responsible for the November 2008 Mumbai attacks in India. After the 1999 Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan, the LeT adopted suicide missions (*fidayeen*) as part of its tactical strategy.

LeT headquarters in Punjab reportedly house a *madrassa*, a hospital, market, a substantial residential area for 'scholars' and faculty members and agricultural tracts. The LeT also allegedly operates 16 Islamic institutions, 135 secondary schools, an ambulance service, mobile clinics, blood banks and several seminaries across Pakistan. At times of natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods in Pakistan in recent years the LeT has often been first at the scene establishing relief and welfare camps for the affected and gaining potential recruits. The LeT disseminates its views and propaganda through numerous publications, including an Urdu monthly journal – *Al-Dawa*, with circulation of 80,000, an Urdu weekly – *Gazwa*, a English monthly – *Voice of Islam*, the *Al-Rabat* monthly in Arabic, *Mujala-e-Tulba* – Urdu monthly for students, and the Urdu weekly *Jihad Times*. The LeT reportedly operates several training camps in Kashmir as well as in various other parts of Pakistan.

The LeT is considered a transnational *jihadist* organisation with an extensive network of personnel spread across various countries and recruits coming in not only from Pakistan and Afghanistan, but also Sudan, Bahrain, Turkey, Libya, Bosnia, Chechnya, Philippines etc. Its activities are primarily funded by donations from Pakistani expatriates resident in the Persian Gulf, NGOs in the Middle East, and private donors in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The LeT has been linked to Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* and even the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

### ***Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP – Movement of the Students of Islam Pakistan)***

The TTP is an umbrella organisation made up of various militant groups based in the FATA regions along the Af-Pak border. Most of the Pakistani Taliban groups are incorporated within the TTP brand, however there are some that maintain their separate identity. TTP emerged in December 2007 as an amalgamation of 13 militant groups, united under the leadership of Baitullah Masud (reportedly killed by a US drone strike August 2009). The rise of the TTP is attributed to the combined affect of US war in Afghanistan (2001-present), the US missile strikes in FATA and the consequent rise of tribal militancy

in the region. Many of the TTP leaders are veterans of the Afghan conflict and have supported the fight against NATO forces in Afghanistan by providing manpower, logistical and tactical support to local insurgent groups. Their resistance towards the state began when the Pakistan Army conducted operations into the FATA to root out suspected *Al-Qaeda* (Arab and Central Asian) militants taking refuge in Pakistani tribal areas from the war in Afghanistan.

The TTP includes in its stated objectives resistance to the Pakistani state, enforcement of their interpretation of the *Sharia*, and plans to mount operations against NATO-led forces in Afghanistan. Thus far their operations have exclusively targeted elements of the Pakistani state, and civilian groups such as the *Shi'a*, Sufi and *Ahmadi* communities within Pakistan. The Pakistani military launched offensives against the TTP in FATA areas (i.e. South Waziristan) in 2009, whilst suspecting that TTP may be supported by militant groups based in Afghanistan and possibly even the Afghan government. The organisation was banned by the Government of Pakistan in 2008, which also placed bounties on some of the more prominent TTP leaders to assist their capture. In September 2010 the US also designated the TTP as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO).

Not to be confused with the Punjabi Taliban or Tehrik-i-Taliban-Punjab (formed by a loose network of banned militant outfits from Punjab including LeJ, SSP, and JeM) or the Afghan Taliban, which comprises a totally different agenda and organisational structure, the TTP has nonetheless had links with these militant organisations particularly in the FATA areas. These links include significant collaboration between the leadership cadres, movement of foot soldiers across groups and sharing of safe havens. The TTP has been closely linked to *Al-Qaeda*, allegedly sharing a symbiotic relationship whereby *Al-Qaeda* provides ideological inspiration and TTP provides sanctuaries and foot soldiers in its areas as well as sharing operational experience and access to transnational networks (e.g. links with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan).

### ***Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP – the Army of the Companions of the Prophet)**

The SSP was founded in September 1985 at Jhang (interior Punjab), with the backing of the military government in Pakistan, to counter the rising influence of Iranian *Shi'ism* and allegedly had financial support from both Saudi Arabia and Iraq at the time. Its principal goal was to affirm the apostasy of the *Shi'a* community and to transform Pakistan into a Sunni Muslim state following the *Sharia* system. The SSP emerged from the activist ranks of the religio-political party JUI in Pakistan, which publically agreed with their aims but not with their methods, thus keeping the relationship ambiguous. The SSP is strongly anti-*Shi'a* and anti-Barelvi and often accused the Pakistani government of gratifying Iran

by persecuting *Sunnis*. The socio-economic rationale behind the emergence of the SSP lay in the feudal structure of interior Punjab, where the majority of landholdings belong to *Shi'a* families, thereby ensuring their political and economic dominance in the region. Due to the increase in the number and power of *Sunni* traders, shopkeepers and transport operators in the region however the contest for access to resources, social status and political power became framed in terms of confrontationist sectarian identities rather than class divisions.

The SSP fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan against Massoud and the *Shi'a* Hazaras, and has been held responsible for the massacre of ethnic Hazaras and Iranian diplomats in northern Afghanistan in 1998. It was banned by the Musharraf government in January 2002 but continued to operate its affiliated *madaris* in KPK since the students there had been given no options for relocation. The outfit has reportedly been renamed *Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan* after its proscription.

### ***Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ – Army of Jhangvi)**

Particularly active in instigating acts of sectarian violence in Pakistan, was the specifically militant wing of the SSP, the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, split off from its parent organisation in 1996 due to ideological differences. Led by Riaz Basra, an SSP veteran said to have lived in Kabul till 2001, the LeJ comprised an extremely decentralised and compartmentalised group believed to have been responsible for terrorist activities involving massacres at *Shi'a* mosques. The LeJ also claimed responsibility for numerous assassinations and target killings of high profile individuals, diplomats, military personnel, doctors, lawyers, high-ranking police officers and *Shi'a* preachers. The leadership of the LeJ consists of *jihadis* who fought against Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The majority of its cadres are drawn from *Sunni* Deobandi *madaris* in Pakistan. The success of LeJ's terrorist operations can be attributed to its multi-cellular structure, whereby the outfit is divided into small groups that are not in constant contact with each other and may even be unaware of other cells or their structure of operations. It has established militant training camps in interior Punjab and even one in Kabul. Branded a terrorist organisation by the government of Pakistan in 2001, the LeJ has reportedly maintained its links with other militant organisations in the country such as *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM), the Kashmir-based *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* (HuM), and even the *Al-Qaeda* network. Both LeJ and SSP have had close links with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP). It is reported that many hardcore LeJ terrorists wanted by the Pakistani authorities have been given sanctuary in Afghanistan by the Taliban regime in the past.

## ***Shi'a Tanzeems***

In response to the rise of *Sunni* sectarian movements, *Shi'a* paramilitary groups also arose in Pakistan during the 1990s. Militant organisations such as the *Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan* (SMP – Army of Mohammad Pakistan) splintered out of the politically-oriented *Shi'ite Tekrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan* (TJP) in 1994. Banned in 2002, the TJP later began functioning again under the name of *Tehrik-i-Islami* (TI – Islamic movement). In reaction to the inability of the TJP to protect the *Shi'a* community from persecution by militant *Sunni* groups such as the SSP, the SMP recruited members from the rural areas of Punjab to conduct violent attacks against *Sunnis*. It was reportedly financed by the Iranian government till 1996. However by 1998, the SMP (banned by the Pakistan government in 2001) was unable to withstand infiltration by Pakistan intelligence services and fragmentation due to leadership differences and castes, and disintegrated as an organised group. It did however leave behind a scattering of uncontrolled and extremely violent elements from its militant ranks, which continue to conduct independent reprisals for anti-*Shi'a* attacks in Pakistan.

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