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**PAKISTAN'S MADRASSAS – WEAPONS OF MASS
INSTRUCTION?**

by

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PAKISTAN'S MADRASSAS – WEAPONS OF MASS INSTRUCTION?

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ABSTRACT

Since September 11, 2001, Pakistan's madrassas have come under scrutiny as sources for the interpretation and propagation of militant versions of Islam. The madrassas are not unique to Pakistan, but are found throughout the Muslim world. However, Pakistan is a particularly interesting case since it was the staging ground for the C.I.A.-led opposition to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. During this period, from 1979–1989, the C.I.A. worked closely with Pakistan's I.S.I. to provide arms and training to holy warriors or mujahideen who crossed the border into Afghanistan to engage Soviet troops. This proxy war was funded by the United States and the Persian Gulf countries, most notably Saudi Arabia. In the years since this war ended, the madrassas funded by Saudi Arabia have continued to promote an austere interpretation of Islam called Wahhabism that has a tendency to produce graduates with few marketable skills and an anti-Western worldview. This thesis attempts to analyze these madrassas from a historical perspective in order to understand their character, purpose and influence, and then offers recommendations for both the United States and Pakistan in dealing with this complex and delicate phenomenon.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	PURPOSE.....	1
B.	IMPORTANCE.....	3
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	5
D.	METHODOLOGY	8
II.	HOW PAKISTAN’S MADRASSAS HAVE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS..	11
A.	THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE MADRASSAS.....	11
B.	GENERAL ZIA’S INFLUENCE (1977–1988).....	12
C.	SUPPORTING THE AFGHAN WAR (1979–1989).....	13
D.	THE SAUDI ARABIAN INFLUENCE AND THE SPREAD OF WAHHABISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.....	16
III.	THE MADRASSAS TODAY.....	23
A.	THE STUDENTS: HOW POVERTY AND ECONOMIC NECESSITY FUEL ATTENDANCE	23
B.	THE CURRICULUM: INDOCTRINATION OF XENOPHOBIA	29
C.	THE TEACHERS: A PYRAMID SCHEME	32
D.	THE GRADUATES: LIMITED OPPORTUNITY AND INADEQUATE SKILLS.....	33
IV.	WHY THE WEST IS CONCERNED ABOUT PAKISTAN’S MADRASSAS....	35
A.	THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001	37
B.	THE LONDON UNDERGROUND BOMBINGS JULY 7, 2005	39
C.	MADRASSA GRADUATES FIGHTING TODAY.....	40
D.	PAKISTAN’S INEFFECTIVE MADRASSA REFORMS	42
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	45
A.	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN.....	45
1.	Bridging the Gulf Between the Madrassas and the Public Schools.....	45
2.	Communication with the Mullahs—Dealing with the Opposition.....	46
3.	Education Reform and the Private School Model	48
B.	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES.....	51
1.	Saudi Arabian Influence	51
2.	Financial Assistance.....	53
3.	Perception Management.....	55
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	59
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	65

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Going Global.....	56
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Literacy Rates in Pakistan 2004–2005.....	24
Table 2.	Pakistan’s expenditure on Public Education, 2000–2006.....	25
Table 3.	Pakistan’s Unemployment Rate 2005–2006.....	25
Table 4.	Pakistan’s Population Growth 2005.....	26
Table 5.	Schools without Basic Facilities in 2004–2005.....	29
Table 6.	Student and Teacher Responses to Survey, 2003.	31
Table 7.	External Development Assistance in the Education Sector.....	49

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I. INTRODUCTION

In any society, education is a major vehicle for the transmission of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. This means that control over educational content and access to classrooms can become valuable commodities in a conflict. Education – and especially the teaching of history – can perpetuate negative judgments about the “other,” engendering hostility and aggression among the young, and firing up the fever to go to war.¹

A. PURPOSE

According to P. W. Singer, the extremist madrassas described by President Musharraf run a curriculum where,

Hatred is permissible, jihad allows the murder of innocents, and the new heroes are terrorists. Martyrdom through suicide attacks are also extolled, and anti-western speeches are committed to memory. The students are uneducated, young, dependent on the schools, and cut off from contact with their parents for years at a time, and thus highly susceptible to being programmed toward violence. These students from this minority of madrassas are regularly sent abroad to serve in conflicts in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and a number of other wars decided by the school leaders as part of the jihad. In addition, the foreign students of the madrassas return to their home states with a violent outlook and sow the seeds for conflict elsewhere.²

The madrassa system is not unique to Pakistan, but actually exists in most Muslim countries ranging from Mali to Malaysia. The graduates of these schools all face a similar obstacle - how to use their superb knowledge of the Koran in a modern world which expects a more rounded education. This is the one of the problems facing new madrassa graduates. The traditional madrassa, teaching a deep understanding of the Koran, provide the graduate with few valuable job skills sought after in a modern world. The individuals must then turn to their network of cohorts, other unemployed or underemployed graduates, for assistance. The lack of opportunity, and perception of

1 Pamela Aall, “Education in the Muslim World,” USIP, Apr 2005, 1.

2 P. W. Singer, “Pakistan’s Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad,” Foreign Policy Studies, Analysis Paper # 14, Nov 2001 <http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/singer/200111.htm> (accessed 21 Feb 2007).

being left behind as the world marches on, only increases their collective frustration and anger with modernity in general, and the West in particular.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Pakistan's educational institutions known as madrassas.³ These schools operate outside the government sponsored public school system, and the elite private schools. There has been much speculation as to the linkage between these schools and terrorism, yet the alleged link has been little studied. The Global War on Terror (GWOT) aims to capture or kill terrorists who threaten the national interests of the United States, yet very little resources are being expended to stem the indoctrination of students and their subsequent recruitment into terrorist organizations. The evidence in the media and even from President Musharraf indicates that some of the madrassas impart a radical view of Islam.⁴ These schools teach their students to kill non-believers, including fellow Muslims, in order to promote their intolerant brand of Islam. Therefore the GWOT is destined to be an interminable battle since the cadre of militants is constantly being replenished by the madrassas.

There has been much confusion in academic circles as to the exact number of madrassas operating in Pakistan. A recent study at Harvard University indicates that the madrassa system in Pakistan is not cause for concern and claims that madrassa enrollment figures cited in the popular press are inflated and do not use any verifiable data.⁵ This is a central problem when examining the madrassa system. A World Bank report by Tahir Andrabi et al., estimates that the actual number is a mere 1 percent of all students enrolled in Pakistan.⁶ With regard to the number of madrassas in Pakistan, President Musharraf believes that,

Of Pakistan's 150 million Muslims, only a small fraction are extremists. The problem is that they are so vocal they receive a disproportionate share of attention, whereas the peace-loving, moderate majority is so silent and meek that it gives the impression of being a minority. There are many

3 In contemporary Arabic, the word *madrassa* means center of learning; the Arabic plural form is *Madaris*, but for the sake of clarity I will use the English equivalent plural form – madrassas.

4 Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, New York, Free Press, 2006, 313.

5 Reuters, "Madrassa Maths," *The Economist*, 19 May 2005
<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~akhwaja/media/madrassa/Economist.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007)

6 Tahir Andrabi, Das Jishnu and Khwaja I. Asim, "Private Schools in Pakistan: Catering to the Elite?" The World Bank, Washington D.C. 2003.

countries around the world that intertwine religious and public schools successfully, and there is no reason why Pakistan cannot do the same.⁷

B. IMPORTANCE

To understand the underlying causes and motivations of terrorists, one must understand the background of the perpetrators. What chain of events leads an individual or group to turn to violence or to harbor a deep hatred for the freedoms of the West? The United States cannot expect to win the Global War on Terror (GWOT) by simply eliminating the terrorists on the “battlefield”. The recruitment of terrorists must be cut off at the source. The key to resolving the scourge of terrorism is to address the philosophical, economic, and cultural forces driving the phenomenon. The madrassa educational system in Pakistan is one such institution that requires change in order to provide its students with a viable future, and prevent them succumbing to the lure of terrorism. Additionally, it is important to understand the reasons behind the explosive growth in the madrassas in Pakistan in the last 20 years. The madrassa system is not unique to Pakistan, and theoretically, a similar mushrooming in the numbers of schools could occur in other Muslim countries, leading to an increased chance of militancy by virtue of the numbers alone. With regard to the educational sector reforms currently under way in Pakistan, it will be useful to ascertain the success or failure of these reforms in crafting future reform packages for other nations facing similar challenges.

The debate over the impact of Pakistan’s madrassas in producing extremists has been ongoing, particularly since September 11, 2001. The following thesis is a contribution to this continuing debate. Like any issue, the spread of terrorism cannot be attributed to any one single cause. It is tempting to point to the Islamic schools as the source of militant Islam, and surmise that shutting down these schools will resolve the madrassa problem and ultimately stem the flow of terrorists. However, the issue is extremely complex and must be considered carefully by both the United States and Pakistan.

⁷ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, New York, Free Press, 2006, 313.

The preponderance of information available on the madrassas indicate that some of them are, in fact, a major problem and require substantial reforms in order to update their respective curriculums, broaden their outlook, and abolish the tendency toward militancy. The view of the Pakistani Government is interesting and highlights the challenges it faces when dealing with the madrassas.

There is absolutely nothing in the Madaris curriculum that can be deemed as promoting or encouraging militancy, not to mention terrorism. [The] radicalism that we see in some Madaris in Pakistan today is an extraneous phenomenon brought into Madaris by some international and domestic political actors who want to use the religious capital and manpower of these Madaris for their own objectives.⁸

It is clear then, that the Government of Pakistan readily admits a problem with the madrassas, though it emphasizes the fact that the overwhelming majority are simply involved in traditional Islamic studies. The statement on international actors referred to as responsible for using the madrassas to further their own political and religious agenda is a thinly veiled reference to Saudi Arabia.

The radical minority of madrassas, estimated by multiple sources at 10–15 percent of all madrassas, teach an extremist interpretation of Islam. While it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of schools teaching militancy, the estimate of one in ten is widely accepted. In these schools, hatred is permissible, jihad allows the murder of innocents, and the new heroes are terrorists.⁹ Martyrdom through suicide attacks are also extolled, and anti-western speeches are committed to memory. The students are uneducated, young, dependent on the schools, and cut off from contact with their parents for years at a time, and thus highly susceptible to being programmed toward violence. These students from this minority of madrassas are regularly sent abroad to serve in conflicts in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and a number of other wars decided by the

⁸ Embassy of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, “Education Sector Reforms (ESR),” 2002. <http://www.embassyofpakistan.org/pb6.php> (accessed 3 Oct 2006).

⁹ Arthur MacMillan, “Schools Hijacked to Teach Hatred,” *Scotland on Sunday*, 17 Jul 2005. <http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1641432005> (accessed 5 Jan 2006).

school leaders as part of the jihad. In addition, the foreign students of the madrassas return to their home states with a violent outlook and sow the seeds for conflict elsewhere.¹⁰

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed thus far lends itself easily to stratification based on where the various authors' analysis believes the blame lies for the current situation and, consequently, where the Government of Pakistan's efforts should focus. All three schools of thought on the subject of Pakistani madrassas agree that some of the schools teach militancy. The first group clearly sees Saudi Arabia's sponsorship of Islamic Fundamentalism as one of the main sources of the problem. The second group asserts that the problem lies with the poor state of the curriculum and the political persuasion of many Ulema —religious scholars—leading these institutions. Finally, the last group argues that the key issue is the dismal socioeconomic situation many of the underprivileged poor find themselves in modern Pakistan. To address the phenomenon of Pakistan's modern day madrassas, one must understand the root causes of the problem of militancy in these schools. The Government of Pakistan has taken some steps to rectify the madrassas issue, but it is unclear whether these reforms have had any major impact. This is one of the questions this thesis seeks to answer.

The first school of thought regarding the madrassas argues that they are indeed a problem and that in some cases they do promote sectarian thought, but that the problem stems from the Saudi Arabian funding of these schools, more than with the socioeconomic environment created by the Pakistani Government. For example, the noted scholar Vali Nasr believes "Saudi Arabia has been the single biggest source of funding for fanatical interpretations of Islam, and that the embodiment of this interpretation in organizations and schools has created a self-perpetuating institutional basis for promoting fanaticism across the Muslim world." He further believes that "there is no other state that spends as much money at ensuring conservatism and fanaticism

¹⁰ P. W. Singer, "Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad." Analysis Paper # 14, Nov 2001, 3.

among Muslims.”¹¹ Therefore, to resolve the problem of alleged militancy in the madrassas, one must focus on the root cause: the spread of Wahhabi extremism from Saudi Arabia. The argument is that the current educational reforms and the Government of Pakistan’s other efforts are misguided and should in fact be tailored towards stemming the external funding of these schools and not in changing the curriculum or registering the schools. Ultimately, this thesis will find that this school of thought is the most compelling argument, particularly since five years have passed since Pakistan’s Education Sector Reforms were enacted, and little has changed on the ground.

The second school of thought asserts that the problem of the Pakistani madrassas lies with the evolving curriculum and political persuasion of the Ulema in recent years. For example, Professor Hussain Haqqani of Boston University examined the change in the teachings at the madrassa he attended, from when he was a child, to the present day. He was taught that the farangi (Europeans) are evil, and behaving like them is the beginning of the journey to Hell. He was taught that the Communists are evil because they denied the existence of God. He had a verse instilled in his memory that his religion was the best and that the belief in God was his salvation. Haqqani revisited the site of his childhood education as an adult and found that the lesson had continued to teach a hatred of the ways of the West but now advocated changing the West by force or Jihad.¹² The spread of madrassas around the world and the prospect of year upon year of militant graduates is cause for alarm. To address this issue, the Government of Pakistan has the onerous task of censoring or replacing the Ulema, and creating an atmosphere conducive to learning by promoting tolerance vice instilling the students with a hatred of the West and a willingness to resort to violence in the cause of Islam. Professor Akbar S. Ahmed, former Pakistani Ambassador to London, addresses this harsh, intolerant view of Islam and the intolerance toward women. He states that the Taliban, which are a product of the Sunni madrassas funded by Saudi Arabia, has a distorted zeal for Islam, which

violated two basic tenets of Islam in a manner calculated to cause offence to many in and outside the country. Firstly, their discrimination against women and the beatings that they administer, contrast with the gentleness

¹¹ Vali Nasr, “Saudi Time Bomb?” PBS, 25 Oct 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/interviews/nasr.html> (accessed 27 Jan 2006).

¹² Hussain Huqqani, “Islam’s Medieval Outposts,” *Foreign Policy* No. 133 (Nov – Dec 2002), 58–64.

and kindness of the Prophet of Islam towards women. His famous saying that 'heaven is under the feet of the mother' sums up the traditional attitude of Islam to women. Secondly, the harshness of the Taliban towards minority groups ... is also against the spirit of Islam which encourages tolerance. The minorities ... have been discriminated against and treated with violence. This suggests an ethnic attitude rather than a religious one, although it may come under the guise of religion.¹³

With regard to the madrassas, he believes that they use Islam as a vehicle to drive change locally, but also try to change the entire world order. This issue highlights the need for a better understanding of the driving force behind this aggressive stance. Professor Ahmed believes that this aggression is an indication of the crossroads facing Muslim leaders today—the choice between modernity and militancy.

While the often Westernized nationalist leaders of the post-independence period sought to hold on to the state and consolidate it; the new leaders hope to destroy it as a legacy of the West and then re-create it in an Islamic mold. The former sought survival in a transitional world; the latter demand purity in an impure one.¹⁴

The final school of thought argues that the source of the madrassas problem lies with the socioeconomic situation many of the underprivileged poor find themselves in modern Pakistan. They suggest that the madrassas are not the main source of the "Jihadi culture" in Pakistan and blame the dismal state of the education system in general. According to official figures, 60 percent of the population of Pakistan cannot read or write, due mainly to the fact that Pakistan devotes just 2 percent of its GNP to education.¹⁵ Some authors believe that the madrassas do in fact play a role in militancy and violence, but also point out that the madrassas have a key place in Pakistan's religious and social life.¹⁶ Robert Looney provides a clear economist's view of the direction ahead. He believes that educational reform is the key to remedy the current

¹³ Akbar S. Ahmed, "Islam's Crossroads — Islamic leadership," <http://www.islamfortoday.com/akbar02.htm> (accessed 10 Feb 2007).

¹⁴ Professor Akbar S. Ahmed, "Islam's Crossroads — Islamic leadership," <http://www.islamfortoday.com/akbar02.htm> (accessed 10 Feb 2007).

¹⁵ International Education Projects: Pakistan, "Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) Program, RTI International," <http://www.rti.org/page.cfm?objectid=57EBAC2E-38F1-4CBF-8E4E4574F9DDA7CC> (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

¹⁶ "Pakistan: Madrassahs, Extremism and the Military," ICG, 2002, *Asia Report* 36.

situation and that this reform could be financed by the international community.¹⁷ Gene Sperling also touts this goal of universal education, when he notes that in 2000, 180 nations committed to the goal of universal education by 2015. He notes, however, that this goal will not be reached because the goodwill and the financial support are unbalanced and would need an additional \$9.1 billion each year to reach the goal set for 2015.¹⁸ The solution of this school of thought is clear: to resolve the madrassas issue, the Government of Pakistan must create a viable and more attractive alternative to the free schooling offered at the Madrassas.

D. METHODOLOGY

This thesis will begin by examining the rapid change that has occurred in Pakistan's madrassas since the 1970s. Several major events, both domestic and international in nature, caused the madrassas to change from their initial mission of imparting Islamic knowledge to that of becoming training grounds for holy warriors or mujahideen, as was the case during the Soviet-Afghan War. This thesis will trace this evolution and describe how these changes had a direct impact on where the madrassas are today. Following this historical overview, the thesis will then examine the madrassas in Pakistan today in order to ascertain whether they are indeed "hotbeds" of Islamic terrorism. This examination will look at the students and teachers, the curriculum, and the opportunities available to the graduates upon completion of their schooling. Once this has been addressed, the thesis will then investigate why the United States is concerned about the madrassas and what has been done thus far to reform them. This section will look at the recent reports on militancy in Pakistan's madrassas, particularly since the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, and the underground bombings in London in July 2005. In addition, the thesis will examine reports of madrassa students currently involved in the Kashmir conflict and the ongoing War on Terror in Afghanistan.

Of particular interest is the funding of the madrassas. This thesis will examine the sources of funding coming from states beyond Pakistan's borders. This section will

¹⁷ Robert Looney, "A U.S. Strategy for Achieving Stability in Pakistan: Expanding Educational Opportunities," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. I, Issue 7, Sep 2002, 257.

¹⁸ Gene Sperling, "Educating the World," *New York Times*, 22 Nov 2001. A39.

cover the ideological and political driving forces behind this funding stream, particularly in the case of Saudi Arabia. How much money is being funneled into Pakistan, by whom, and for what ultimate purpose? What steps have been taken to eliminate this funding, and how much of an impact will this have on the madrassas? The final portion of this section will look at the reforms enacted by Pakistan since 2000 and investigate whether they have achieved their objectives. To conclude, the thesis will recommend prudent courses of action for both the United States and Pakistan with regard to madrassa reform specifically, but also will propose a new policy direction for international cooperation with shared allies in the region.

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II. HOW PAKISTAN’S MADRASSAS HAVE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS

A. THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE MADRASSAS

The original intent of the Islamic schools in the tenth century was to educate the population on Islam, but also to impart knowledge of the sciences. This religious education also served to groom the next generation of religious leaders. The traditional madrassas in Egypt, for example, had curriculums which included religion, but also courses in linguistics, rhetoric, logic, mathematic, medicine, astronomy, and chemistry. Pamela Aall of the U.S. Institute for Peace explains how this changed over the centuries.

For centuries, Islamic religious institutions considered “revelation” the ultimate source of knowledge, hence bringing Ijtehad, or human interpretation, to a close. The devaluation of “reason” and the subsequent exclusion of religious scholars and institutions from the process of modernization during the last century turned madrassas into fervent guardians of religious dogma and anti-modernism.¹⁹

The madrassas were not always this way and have unfortunately strayed from the unique centers of learning they once were. For example, with regard to the recitation of the Koran, often seen as typifying this type of school, Uzma Anzar eloquently explains that,

For Muslims, the Koran is the perfect word of God, sacred and therefore cannot be changed. It should be memorized from start to finish. Once a person has memorized it, he/she must reflect on these verses and have a detailed understanding of its meaning and interpretation over the lifetime. A person who has mastered it would carry the knowledge of Islam in his/her heart and spread the word to the ones who encounter him/her.²⁰

The first madrassa was established in Egypt around 1000 A.D. In many ways it resembled modern educational institutions with a diverse curriculum and teachers for different subjects, including astronomy, philosophy, and architecture.²¹ These madrassas flourished in the Golden Age of Islam, yet began to decay due to political infighting

¹⁹ Pamela Aall, “Education in the Muslim World,” USIP, Apr 2005, 10.

²⁰ Uzma Anzar, “Islamic Education. A Brief History of Madrassas,” Mar 2003, <http://www.uvm.edu/~envprog/madrassah/madrassah-history.pdf> (accessed 10 Feb 2007).

²¹ Ibid.

among Muslim rulers and, of course, the Crusades. This loss of power by the Muslim elite resulted in the Ulema of the madrassas shunning the pursuit of knowledge, since it had not achieved the desired result, and a decision to return to the basics of learning.²² Centuries later, the Muslim world was further incensed by the colonial Europeans encroaching on Muslim lands, and their imposition of a European style of teaching. Uzma Anzar describes this phenomenon as the dichotomy of the education system, where the elite were chosen to attend these schools and run the machinery of the colony, and the poor were relegated to a curriculum devoted to religious education.²³

B. GENERAL ZIA'S INFLUENCE (1977–1988)

The recent spread of “modern” madrassas in Pakistan began under General Zia Ul-Huq. Zia came to power through a military coup on July 5, 1977, by removing the man who appointed him Chief of Staff of the army, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In his first address to the nation, Zia asserted, “Pakistan, which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of [the] Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country.” His 11-year rule was to change the face of Pakistan, and return the country to its original design as an Islamic state as envisioned by its founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

The Islamization of education under General Zia and the levying of Islamic taxes had broad-reaching effects on the political landscape of Pakistan. The funds raised by the zakat (taxes), one of the five pillars of Islam, were used to finance the traditional madrassas. This funding enabled the government some level of control over the curriculum of these institutions. The funding, coupled with the state policy of making courses in Islam obligatory for students in all schools, caused a rapid growth in the number of madrassas during the 1980s. The influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan and the government funding caused a mushrooming in the number of madrassas. This growth afforded the Ulemas greater power and importance in Pakistani society, particularly the strict Deobandi sect that had originated in Northern India. General Zia quickly recognized that he was losing control over the madrassas and began requiring support

²² Uzma Anzar, “Islamic Education A Brief History of Madrassas,” Mar 2003, <http://www.uvm.edu/~envprog/madrassah/madrassah-history.pdf> (accessed 10 Feb, 2007).

²³ Ibid.

from the madrassas in return for government funding. The Ulemas realized that this would limit their authority and independence, and began relying on other sources of finance to continue to operate without government assistance and oversight.²⁴ In an attempt to gain support from religious groups, President Zia began to administer a formalized zakat (Islamic religious tithing – 2.5 percent) process which was a departure from the tradition of leaving the donation of money to the individual. Money was now automatically deducted from bank balances and dispersed at the local level to institutions deemed worthy of support by religious leaders, creating new incentives for opening religious schools.²⁵

C. SUPPORTING THE AFGHAN WAR (1979–1989)

The U.S. also had a large part to play in the spread of the madrassas in Pakistan. Under President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. established a \$500 million fund to prepare Mujahideen to fight against the occupying Soviet forces in Kabul. This figure eventually increased to \$4 billion and the project was given the title “Operation Cyclone.” It primarily aimed at promoting Jihadi culture in Pakistan, and the establishment of Islamic seminaries was an integral part of the operation.²⁶

The impact of the Afghan War cannot be underestimated in the rise of the madrassas. Zia’s international popularity had never been high, particularly with the United States. Washington had a cyclical friend–foe relationship with Pakistan since 1947. Following the Iranian revolution, the U.S. looked toward Pakistan as a potential ally to replace the Shah of Iran as a bulwark against Soviet regional expansion. However, Zia’s execution of the former president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, brought him international condemnation. Before Zia’s popularity could slip any further in Washington, the Soviet Army marched into Kabul and changed the equation entirely.

²⁴ Gilles Kepel, 2002. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 102–103.

²⁵ P. W. Singer, “Pakistan’s Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad,” Analysis Paper # 14, Nov 2001, 3.

²⁶ Ali Riaz, “Global Jihad, Sectarianism and the Madrassahs in Pakistan,” IDSS, Aug 2005.

With increased concern at Soviet proximity to the Persian Gulf, Pakistan was considered one of the guarantors of free access to the energy resources of the Gulf.

In 1979, the U.S. began pouring aid into Pakistan to train Mujahideen to fight the occupying Soviets in Afghanistan. The madrassas became their vehicle for this education, and hundreds of these schools were established along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to train young Afghans to fight the Soviets. Not all in Washington were onboard with this initiative. Some looked at the long-term implications of providing weapons to guerrillas as tantamount to creating a future problem, one larger than the threat of Soviet expansion. Some argued that the United States should adopt a lower profile and let Zia obtain his own weapons and funding from the Islamic countries, China, or Western Europe.²⁷ In retrospect, he was incorrect in the assumption that the possibility of Indian aggression was more dangerous to Pakistan than the reality of a Soviet threat to Afghanistan and, by extension, Pakistan. Interestingly, many of these recommendations from 1980 are applicable today, particularly his conclusion that Pakistan must be encouraged to liberalize its internal political system and move toward rapprochement with India.

Unfortunately the repercussions of this policy are still being felt in the region today—the militants, who were trained and funded by the U.S. are now the very ones that reside on the “most wanted” lists of the U.S. military. As an example, on May 4, 2006, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the founder and leader of Afghanistan’s Hizb-e-Islami and a former Afghan prime minister, pledged support for Al Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and promised to carry on the fight alongside them against the “infidels.” It is ironic that he was the beneficiary of \$600 million in U.S. aid during the Afghan war against the Soviets during the 1980s.²⁸

President Zia understood that Washington would agree to any terms in order to fight a proxy war against the Soviets. He recognized his position of strength in the 1981 negotiations, and demanded a high price to achieve the mutual goal of forcing the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Zia wanted Washington to stop badgering Pakistan on the nuclear

²⁷ Christopher Van Hollen, “Leaning on Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy*, 38 (Spring 1980), 35–50.

²⁸ Octavia Nasr and Peter Bergen, “Afghan Militant Vows to Fight On,” CNN, 8 May 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/05/04/afghan.insurgent/index.html> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

issue, cease its insistence on a return to democracy, and funnel all training funds through the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). In response to these demands, President Reagan agreed to all three items and pushed through a \$3.2 billion aid package to be spread over five years.²⁹ In addition, in May 1981, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a six-year waiver on sanctions barring aid to Pakistan. This was a dramatic about-face from two years previous, when all aid to Pakistan had been cancelled as a result of its nuclear ambitions, and stands to underscore the pendulum-like relationship between the two countries.³⁰

There was unprecedented financial cooperation between the United States and Pakistan during the Afghan War. President Reagan funneled more than \$2 billion (of the \$3.2 billion aid package) to the Afghan Mujahideen via General Zia's ISI. This amount was matched by another \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia, China, and the Gulf States. At the time, the policy of supporting the Islamic militants against Moscow's forces was obviously proving to be an effective strategy—at least in the short term. Indeed, the effectiveness of the strategy was also its undoing, since the madrassas it established continued to inculcate students in the efficacy of jihad long after the Soviets had retreated.

During the war, the flow of money through the ISI ensured that it was channeled to the appropriate Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan, but it also ensured the preeminence of the ISI on the Pakistan political stage. In 1971 there were 900 madrassas in Pakistan, but by 1988 this number had increased to 8,000 with an additional 25,000 unregistered religious schools clustered along the Pakistan–Afghan border.³¹ President Reagan wanted the Soviets out of Afghanistan as part of his “roll back Communism” pledge, but for Zia, the goal was less well defined. He wanted the Soviets out of Afghanistan, but only if the future government of Afghanistan was thoroughly pro-Pakistan and would allow for the immediate repatriation of the millions of refugees that were crippling Pakistan's ailing economy. President Zia recognized that the flow of money would cease

²⁹ Leonard Weiss, “Turning a Blind Eye Again?” *Arms Control Today*, Mar 2005, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_03/Weiss.asp (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

³⁰ “Pakistan Nuclear Weapons — A Chronology, Federation of American Scientists,” <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/nuke/chron.htm> (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

³¹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 89.

as soon as the conflict ended, and so was not eager for a swift victory for the Afghans fighting the Soviets. By the end of the 1980s, Pakistan had become the third-largest recipient of aid, after Israel and Egypt.³² The \$3.2 billion U.S. military and economic aid program to Pakistan in 1982 was followed by another \$4 billion for the period from 1988 to 1993.³³

The number of Afghans seeking refuge in Pakistan, in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, was staggering. By December 1990, UNHCR estimated that there were over 6.3 million Afghan refugees in neighboring countries, including 3.3 million in Pakistan, and three million in Iran. By this time, Afghans had come to constitute the largest refugee population in the world.³⁴ After 20 years and a massive repatriation effort, the Afghan refugee situation still defies a solution.³⁵ A census conducted in 2006 by the Pakistani Government with assistance from UNHCR showed that more than 3 million Afghans are still living in Pakistan. Some 280,000 Afghans returned home from Pakistan so far in 2006, bringing to more than 2.5 million the number that has gone back to Afghanistan from Pakistan since early 2002.³⁶ Many of these refugees populated the classrooms of the madrassas located along the border, and given the dire situation in the camps, most likely considered themselves lucky to have access to any form of education.

D. THE SAUDI ARABIAN INFLUENCE AND THE SPREAD OF WAHHABISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

The increase in the number of Pakistani madrassas has been shown to be a product of U.S. and Saudi funding during the Afghan War. However, the responsibility for the continued flourishing of these schools in Pakistan and around the world can be laid squarely at the feet of the Saudi Arabian Government's active efforts to spread of

³² David Morris, "Reaping What we Have Sown," 4 May 2004, <http://www.alternet.org/story/18598/> (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

³³ Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan after Reagan," *Middle East Report*, No.155, Nov – Dec. 1988, 30–33.

³⁴ UNHCR, "Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran," <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3ae6a6040> (accessed 17 Jan 2007).

³⁵ UNHCR, 15 Dec 2000 Press Briefing, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3ae6b82118.html> (accessed 15 Jan 2007).

³⁶ UNHCR, "Pakistan, Afghanistan, UNHCR Agree to Extend Deal on Afghan Return," 30 Aug 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/431473254.html> (accessed 14 Jan 2007).

Wahhabism. David Kaplan of U.S. News and World Report wrote in 2005 that the Saudis are estimated to have spent up to \$75 billion since 1975 to expand Wahhabism, worldwide. His investigations revealed that

The Kingdom has funded hundreds of mosques, schools, and Islamic centers abroad, spreading the once obscure sect of Islam widely blamed for preaching distrust of non-believers, anti-Semitism, and near-medieval attitudes toward women. Saudi-funded charities have been implicated in backing jihadist movements in some 20 countries.³⁷

This promotion of Wahhabism by Saudi Arabia is not limited to Pakistan and Afghanistan, but actually is a worldwide phenomenon. For example, the noted historian William Dalrymple observed that in 2005, Saudi Arabia stepped up funding of madrassas in Africa, and in Tanzania alone they have been spending \$1million a year building new madrassas. In Mali, about a quarter of primary school-aged children attend madrassas.³⁸ Lee Wolosky, Co-Director of the Independent Task Force on Terrorism Financing, also agrees. In a recent Senate testimony, he stated that

a sizeable portion of these madrassas are financed and operated by Pakistani Islamist political parties such as Jamaat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI, closely linked to the Taliban), as well as by the Pakistani expatriates and other unknown foreign entities, many in Saudi Arabia.³⁹

In all these instances, it appears that the money trail leads to Saudi Arabia as the main external source of funding for these schools. The harm in all of this can be synopsised in the following comment made by Professor Vali Nasr of the Naval Postgraduate School in a PBS interview following the September 11 attacks,

In order to have terrorists, in order to have supporters for terrorists, in order to have people who are willing to interpret religion in violent ways, in order to have people who are willing to legitimate crashing yourself into a building and killing 5,000 innocent people, you need particular interpretations of Islam. Those interpretations of Islam are being propagated out of schools that receive organizational and financial funding from Saudi Arabia. In fact, I would push it further: that these schools

37 David E. Kaplan et al., "Hearts, Minds, and Dollars" U.S. News & World Report, Washington, 25 Apr 2005. Vol. 138, 15: 22.

38 William Dalrymple, "Inside Islam's 'terror schools,'" 28 Mar 2005, 3. <http://www.newstatesman.com/200503280010> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

39 Lee Wolosky, An Assessment of Current Efforts to Combat Terrorist Financing, 15 Jun 2004, http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing1/witness_wolosky.htm (accessed 26 Feb 2007).

would not have existed without Saudi funding. They would not have proliferated across Pakistan and India and Afghanistan without Saudi funding. They would not have had the kind of prowess that they have without Saudi funding, and they would not have trained as many people without Saudi funding.⁴⁰

Clearly, Saudi Arabia bears a large part of the responsibility for the continued survival of Pakistan's madrassas. Despite President Musharraf's efforts, the Government of Pakistan has no means to monitor precisely how much money is coming from external sources, since the majority of madrassas are not registered with Islamabad. The clerics are obviously unwilling to divulge the magnitude or sources of funding they receive. On the domestic side, recent estimates conclude that however substantial the funding, it seldom exceeds the 25 percent of the total needed to operate these schools; thus three-quarters of madrassa funding comes from abroad.⁴¹

The United States and Saudi Arabia appear to be locked in a diametrically opposed strategy with regard to Pakistan's madrassas. The U.S. has currently pledged \$100 million to Pakistan as part of the Education Sector Reforms that began in 2000. Although commendable in its goals, the amount does little to resolve the issue. Yes, schools have been opened to compete with the madrassas, and improvements have been made to the public school system infrastructure to wean students from the madrassas, but the underlying cause has not been addressed. The problem is one of funding, not the comparatively meager amount dedicated to education reform in Pakistan's fiscal budget, nor the \$100 million pledged by the United States. The problem lies on the other side, in the massive funding of madrassas coming from remittances and, on a much larger scale, from the Gulf countries, most notably Saudi Arabia. U.S. policy makers must address how much money is flowing into the system before deciding on an appropriate plan of action to limit the influence of the madrassas in Pakistan. It appears counterproductive to spend U.S. taxpayer money to reform these schools, while at the same time other nations are spending vastly more money to ensure the madrassas remain unchanged. Something

⁴⁰ Vali Nasr, "Saudi Time Bomb?" PBS Interview 25 Oct 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/interviews/nasr.html> (accessed 27 Jan 2006).

⁴¹ Alex Alexiev, "The Pakistani Time Bomb," <http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/index.jsp?section=static&page=alexievpakistan> (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

has to change, either the U.S. policy of financial aid, or the Saudi policy of financial support, otherwise the madrassas will continue to have a radical element that produces extremists.

The people of Saudi Arabia adhere to the Salafist tradition of Islam, also known as Wahhabism. This is a blinkered and intolerant view of Islam that promotes violence, even against other Muslims. The Wahhabists have been linked to the takfiris, those who follow an exclusivist view of Islam and therefore brand other Sunnis, and especially Shias, as unbelievers and hence viable targets for attack. A primary function of this belief is the need to export it to other parts of the world and encourage the mirroring of the Saudi Arabian system elsewhere. It is enlightening to examine the Saudi educational system briefly, in order to understand the potential direction of those madrassas in Pakistan linked to extremist ideology. In a recent letter to the Saudi daily newspaper, Al-Watan, a senior Education Ministry official declared that

There is an organized ideological stream that includes key [Education] Ministry members, and that it poses a concrete danger to the ideological security in the educational environment. The danger of this extremist stream lies in its distortion of the perception of nationalism, in its dissemination of ideas supporting violence, and in its sabotage of the plans of the moderate national leadership within the Ministry.⁴²

This official was clearly concerned about the extremist leanings of teachers in Saudi Arabia's schools, and it is logical to infer that the same lessons are being taught in Pakistan's madrassa since they are funded directly from the Kingdom.

The question of Saudi funding of educational institutions worldwide, in order to spread its form of Islam, is a difficult one to answer categorically; however, some numbers do exist. For example, during the 1975 to 1987 timeframe, the Saudi Arabian Government spent \$48 billion, or \$4 billion per year, on "overseas development aid," which grew to over \$70 billion by the end of 2002. These sums do not include private

⁴² Al-Watan (Saudi Arabia), 9 Sep 2004, from MEMRI Report No. 840, 2.

donations that are also distributed by state-controlled charities.⁴³ The magnitude of the effort can also be seen in a report by the Saudi Government from 1999, which proudly commented that

The Al Haramain Foundation had founded 1,100 mosques, schools, and Islamic centers in Pakistan and elsewhere, printed 13 million Islamic books, and employed 3,000 callers (proselytizers). Over the same period, IIRO [International Islamic Relief Organization] had completed the construction of 3,800 mosques, spent \$45 million on Islamic education, and employed 6,000 teachers and proselytizers, while World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), for its part, provided \$26 million in aid to students and founding mosques.⁴⁴

Much of the money leaving the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does so under the guise of charitable organizations, thereby giving the Saudi Government plausible deniability when it comes to questions of terrorist financing. This funding obviously runs counter to many of the interests of the United States in the region, and clearly undermines any reform efforts driven by the governments of both Washington and Islamabad.

Indeed, the issue is such that in a report to the United Nations a year after the September 11 attacks, the conclusion reached was that,

In the case of al-Qaida, surviving myths such as the absence of money in terrorist organizations, the belief that money could extensively be transferred using informal or offshore procedures, or the unwillingness to face the Saudi ideological and financial source of fundamentalism, turns the war against terrorism financing into an equivocal fight that may elude or undermine its long-term objectives.⁴⁵

Naturally the foreign policy of the United States towards Saudi Arabia is extremely complex and has implications for continued domestic energy sources imported from the region. In the broader context, the ongoing war in Iraq and Iran's nuclear ambitions also complicate the equation when considering future policies. Consider that Vice President Cheney flew 18,000 miles round trip to Riyadh in November 2006 for a

43 "Saudi Aid to the Developing World," Nov 2002, www.saudinf.com/main/1102.htm (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

44 Alex Alexiev, "The Pakistani Time Bomb."

45 Jean -Charles Brisard, "Terrorism Financing, Roots and Trends of Saudi Terrorism Financing," For United Nations Security Council, 19 Dec 2002, <http://www.nationalreview.com/document/document-un122002.pdf> (accessed 26 Feb 2007).

brief meeting with King Abdullah, only to be warned that should the U.S. withdraw from Iraq, “the Kingdom will find itself forced to interfere.”⁴⁶ But, according to the Iraq Study Group (ISG), a bipartisan examination of the situation in Iraq published in November 2006, Saudi Arabia is already involved in Iraq:

Funding for the Sunni insurgency comes from private individuals within Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, even as those governments help facilitate U.S. military operations in Iraq by providing basing and over-flight rights and by cooperating on intelligence issues.⁴⁷

The War on Terror has made some great strides in combating terrorism thus far. Yet these victories are tactical in nature and in most cases do not impact the strategic level battle that has yet to be fought. Alex Alexiev, a senior fellow at the Center for Security Policy, puts it like this:

We have attempted to come to terms with the psychology behind the terrorists’ murderous fury, yet refuse to examine systematically, let alone do something about, the effect and implications of daily indoctrination of hundreds of thousands if not millions of Muslims around the world into a hate-driven cult of violence. Similarly, we have tried and often succeeded in disrupting the terrorists’ tactical organizational structures and communications networks, but have paid scant attention to the huge world-wide infrastructure of radical Islam which breeds and nourishes violence.⁴⁸

Some have argued that the reason the Saudi Arabian government spend such vast sums of money on exporting Wahhabism is to draw the attention of militant Islamic groups away from the Saudi royal family.⁴⁹ The establishing of militant schools at a great distance from the Kingdom, insulate the royal family, and cause madrassa graduates to feel obliged to their benefactor for the free room, board, and education provided. For example, in the birthplace of the Taliban, the “Darul Uloom Haqqania, Mullah Omar’s

⁴⁶ CNN, “Official: Saudis to back Sunnis if U.S. leaves Iraq,” CNN, 13 Dec 2006.

⁴⁷ James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, 25.

⁴⁸ Alex Alexiev, *Wahhabism: State-Sponsored Extremism Worldwide*, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, 26 Jun 2003.

⁴⁹ Andrew Coulson, “Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World,” *Policy Analysis* No. 511, 11 March 2004, http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1369 (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

Pakistani alma mater, a plaque announces that the room was *A gift of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*⁵⁰

Therefore, the United States must address Saudi support of education worldwide and not simply in Pakistan. The expansion of the concept that all who do not believe in the Wahhabi brand of Islam are enemies and must be killed is a cancer that is spreading worldwide. The United States must demand that Saudi Arabia cease and desist from all future funding of these schools and provide full access to data regarding their funding of these institutions. Unfortunately, given the current climate, this is unlikely to occur. In fact, the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia is so heavily entrenched in oil holdings that even when fifteen of the nineteen perpetrators of the September 11 attacks were known to be Saudi citizens, the U.S. did nothing to censure the Kingdom. As a matter of fact, following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, one out of every three of the original 300 detainees sent from the battlefields of Afghanistan to the confines of Guantanamo Bay were Saudis.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, "In Pakistan, It's Jihad 101," *New York Times*, 13 Nov 2001.

⁵¹ Scott Peterson, "Saudi Radicalism Springs from Deep Source," *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 Jun 2002, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0607/p08s01-wome.html> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

III. THE MADRASSAS TODAY

There are 200,000 jobless degree-holders in this country [Pakistan]. Mark my words—a more extreme form of the Taliban is coming to Pakistan. The conditions are so bad. The people are so desperate. They are waiting for a solution that will rid them of the feudal-army elite. The people want radical change. We teach them in the madrassas that only Islam can provide the justice they seek.

—Javed Paracha , founder of the two largest madrassas in NWFP⁵²

A. THE STUDENTS: HOW POVERTY AND ECONOMIC NECESSITY FUEL ATTENDANCE

The number of students enrolled in these schools has been estimated at 1.5 million of Pakistan's total student population.⁵³ Many scholars believe that roughly one in ten of these madrassas are linked to extremism, which suggests that there could be one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand potential recruits for Islamist terrorist organizations in Pakistan's madrassas alone.⁵⁴

No country better exemplifies the vicious cycle that poverty causes illiteracy and illiteracy causes poverty better than Pakistan.⁵⁵ With regard to education, Pakistan finds itself in a Catch-22 situation. The high poverty rates provide the madrassas with a steady stream of students, eager for a free education, and in some cases the food and lodging provided. The schools, in turn, graduate students with little to offer, and a very limited skill set. And so the cycle repeats itself. P. W. Singer aptly compares the madrassas to a pyramid scheme, whereby the schools graduate individuals who are almost unemployable, and therefore dependent on others for support. The only jobs they are qualified for is at a mosque or another madrassa. This is one of the factors that explains why the madrassas continue to spread across Pakistan. Singer explains, "Either more

⁵² William Dalrymple, "Inside Islam's 'terror schools,'" 28 Mar 2005, 1, <http://www.newstatesman.com/200503280010> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁵³ International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism, and the Military," 2.

⁵⁴ Andrew Coulson, "Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World," *Policy Analysis* No. 511, 11 March 2004, http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1369 (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁵⁵ Robert Looney, "Reforming Pakistan's Educational System: the Challenge of the Madrassas," *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Vol. 28.3, Fall 2003.

schools must open, thus expanding the problem, or the young men are sentenced to perpetual unemployment, or even worse. Many of the radical schools unsurprisingly encourage students who cannot find jobs to fulfill their spiritual obligations instead by joining radicalized conflict groups.⁵⁶

This poverty cycle is very difficult to break. The low literacy rates in Pakistan are a major problem, as is evident in the table below. In 2005, one out of every two Pakistanis was illiterate. This situation does not auger well for continued economic expansion and development, and highlights the need for educational reform at both the madrassas and public school levels.

Province/Area	1998-99 PIHS			2001-02 PIHS			2004-05 PSLM		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	45.0	59.0	31.0	45.0	58.0	32.0	53.0	65.0	40.0
Rural	36.0	52.0	20.0	36.0	51.0	21.0	44.0	58.0	29.0
Urban	65.0	73.0	56.0	64.0	72.0	56.0	71.0	78.0	62.0
Balochistan	36.0	54.0	16.0	36.0	53.0	15.0	37.0	52.0	19.0
Rural	33.0	51.0	12.0	32.0	49.0	11.0	32.0	47.0	13.0
Urban	56.0	72.0	39.0	54.0	71.0	36.0	60.0	74.0	42.0
NWFP	37.0	56.0	20.0	38.0	57.0	20.0	45.0	64.0	26.0
Rural	34.0	54.0	16.0	35.0	55.0	16.0	41.0	61.0	23.0
Urban	53.0	66.0	40.0	56.0	70.0	41.0	61.0	75.0	47.0
Punjab	46.0	57.0	34.0	47.0	57.0	36.0	55.0	65.0	44.0
Rural	38.0	52.0	24.0	38.0	51.0	26.0	47.0	59.0	35.0
Urban	64.0	71.0	58.0	66.0	71.0	60.0	72.0	78.0	66.0
Sindh	51.0	65.0	35.0	46.0	60.0	31.0	56.0	68.0	41.0
Rural	35.0	53.0	15.0	33.0	51.0	14.0	38.0	56.0	18.0
Urban	69.0	79.0	58.0	64.0	74.0	54.0	72.0	80.0	62.0

Source: Pakistan Social & Living Measurement Survey 2004-05

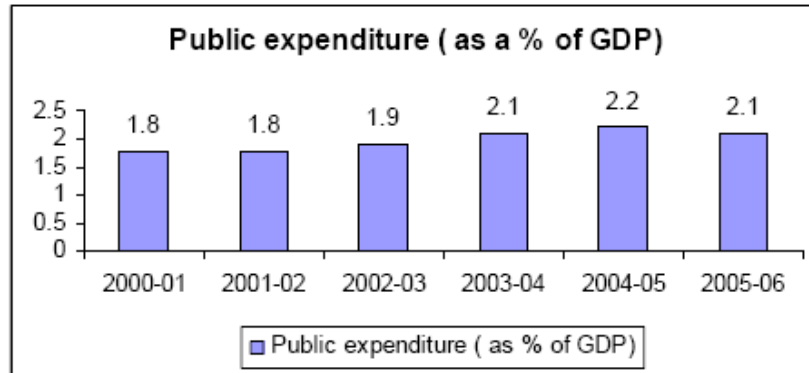
Table 1. Literacy Rates in Pakistan 2004–2005
From: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006.⁵⁷

A large investment in human capital is required for Pakistan to continue its current economic growth. Pakistan spends very little on education compared to other countries in the region. In 2000–2001, Pakistan’s educational funding was below 2 percent of the national budget and rose to a mere 2.2 percent in 2004–2005. These

⁵⁶ P. W. Singer, “Pakistan’s Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad,” Analysis Paper # 14, Nov 2001, 5.

⁵⁷ “Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006,” http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/sur_chap_05-06/11-education.PDF (accessed 10 Jan 2007).

figures indicate the level of priority Pakistan assigns to education and do not compare favorably with other expenditures, particularly defense, which is estimated at 3.9 percent in 2005.⁵⁸



Source : Ministry of Education

Table 2. Pakistan’s expenditure on Public Education, 2000–2006
From: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006.⁵⁹



Table 3. Pakistan’s Unemployment Rate 2005–2006
From: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *CIA World Fact Book*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pk.html#Military> (accessed 14 Jan 2007).

⁵⁹ “Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006,” http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/sur_chap_05-06/11-education.PDF (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Pakistan’s rising population should also be considered when examining the future of the country’s education system. As evident in the tables below, Pakistan, like other countries in the region, has undergone a population explosion. Pakistan’s population has increased fivefold in the last 50 years; bringing it to the sixth largest population after China, India, the U.S., Indonesia, and Brazil.⁶¹ The table below indicates that in 2005 nearly three million people were added to this population. In order for Pakistan to absorb this large population and create an environment of continued economic development, it is clear that education must become a higher priority.

Table13.5: Net Addition in Population			
	Births	Deaths	Addition
In one year	4,210,000	1,320,000	2,890,000
One month	350,833	110,000	240,833
One day	11,534	3,616	7,918
One minute	8	3	5

Source: National Institute of Population Studies

Table 4. Pakistan’s Population Growth 2005.

From: Economic Survey 2005.⁶²

The issue of poverty reduction is a complex one. Education specialist Andrew Coulson points out an interesting facet of international economics when he states:

Every percentage point of duty we impose on poor countries, every shipment of goods that never happens because quotas have been reached; every \$100,000 of subsidies to domestic producers drives hundreds if not thousands of families in poor nations into the arms of “free” schools.⁶³

⁶¹ “Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005–2006,” http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/sur_chap_05-06/11-education.PDF (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Andrew Coulson, “Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World,” *Policy Analysis* No. 511, 11 March 2004, http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1369 (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

This is the crux of the madrassa problem. Due to a combination of history, geographic location, and limited resources, many poor rural Pakistani students have few viable options in the quest for a meaningful education and therefore cannot break the cycle of poverty which haunts them.

An ethnographic study in 1994 indicated that nearly half the students joined madrassas for economic reasons, 41 percent for social reasons, and only about 6 percent for religious pursuit.⁶⁴ The distinguished Dr. Tariq Rahman of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, conducted a study of madrassa enrolment in December 2002 and January 2003. He found that three-quarters of the students belonged to the poorer sections of society. In addition, he found that 61 percent of the teachers belong to the same socio-economic group.⁶⁵ The report therefore concurs with P. W. Singer's analogy to the pyramid scheme referenced earlier. Dr. Rahman concluded,

In essence the madrassas seem to provide sustenance to these economically weak individuals. They are performing the role of providing welfare in a country which does not have a social security net. This being so, the influence of madrassas on rural people and the poorer sections of the urban proletariat will continue to increase as poverty increases.⁶⁶

The madrassa problem in Pakistan is tied to the uniquely intertwined political, economic, and religious factors of that nation. It therefore cannot be resolved until the underlying poverty is reduced, so as to reduce the flow of students by providing viable alternative educational opportunities.

Many have argued that the solution to the madrassa problem, and by extension—curriculum reform—is to wean the students from the madrassas back to the mainstream public school system. The idea is that this would solve the madrassa registration issue and give the government much-needed oversight of the education sector. Unfortunately, this plan, albeit well-intentioned, also has serious flaws. One of the main reasons so many students are forced to attend the madrassas is the failure of Pakistan's school

⁶⁴ Fayyaz Hussain, Lahore 1994, from Tariq Rahman, "The Madrassa and the State of Pakistan," Feb 2004, <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/february/essay.htm> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Tariq Rahman, "The Madrassa and the State of Pakistan," Feb 2004, <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/february/essay.htm>, (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

system to provide an adequate number of teachers and schools, particularly in the rural areas. Hence, with little alternative available, parents send the children to the madrassa to get some semblance of education. As has been discussed before, the lure is increased by the fact that many of the madrassas provide free room and board the student body—an enticement for large, low-income families.

Furthermore, Pakistan’s public school system uses a curriculum that is also questionable in its content. In a watershed publication entitled The Subtle Subversion—the State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan, the authors found that “the curricula and the officially mandated textbooks ... have contained material that is directly contrary to the goals and values of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan.”⁶⁷ In addition, the analysis found that the seven most significant problems in the current curricula and textbooks were:

- Inaccuracies of fact and omissions that serve to substantially distort the nature and significance of actual events in our history.
- Insensitivity to the existing religious diversity of the nation.
- An incitement to militancy and violence, including encouragement of Jihad [sic] and Shahadat.
- Perspectives that encourage prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination towards fellow citizens, especially women and religious minorities, and others toward nations.
- A glorification of war and the use of force.
- The omission of concepts, events, and material that could encourage critical self-awareness among students.
- Outdated and incoherent pedagogical practices that hinder the development of interest and insight among students.⁶⁸

Recall that this is Pakistan’s public school system curriculum, not the madrassas that is under discussion. This indictment appears to undermine the USAID effort to wean students from madrassas into the public school system, since it also is apparently in need

⁶⁷ A. H. Nayyar and Salim Ali, (eds.) “The Subtle Subversion,” SDPI, Jul 2003, 9. http://www.sdpi.org/whats_new/reporton/State%20of%20Curr&TextBooks.pdf (accessed 26 Feb 2007).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

of reform. Consider the public school system’s infrastructure problems delineated in the table below. It is therefore apparent that both Pakistan’s public schools and Pakistan’s madrassas are in desperate need of reform.

Table 11.5: Schools without basic facilities in 2004-05	
Facilities	Number of schools
Shelter less Schools	17,935
No Electricity	107,564
No Drinking Water	68,211
No toilet for Students	82,200
Without Boundary wall	80,086

Source: Ministry of Education

Table 5. Schools without Basic Facilities in 2004–2005.
From: Economic Survey 2005–2006 ⁶⁹

B. THE CURRICULUM: INDOCTRINATION OF XENOPHOBIA

It is instructive to examine some of the textbooks historically used in the madrassas to understand the type of lessons being taught there today. During the Afghan conflict, millions of refugees were housed and received a rudimentary education at madrassas in Pakistan. These schools were located throughout Pakistan, but the more militant among them were located close to the Afghan border, where incursions against the Soviets were successful due to the ability to retreat to the relative safety of Pakistan. Today, the madrassas strung along the mountain villages from Waziristan in the south to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the north, provide similar access and retreat for militants fighting with the Taliban against NATO forces.

Ironically, the textbooks used by these schools in the past and possibly still to this day, were written and printed in the United States at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Center for Afghanistan studies. These schools were funded by USAID originally, and later were funded by UNOCAL, and indoctrinated thousands of young

⁶⁹ “Economic Survey 2005–2006,” 6, http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/sur_chap_05-06/11-education.PDF (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

Muslims on the importance of Jihad.⁷⁰ One of the more notorious examples of a math problem for fourth-grade children was the following question:

The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second.... If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead.⁷¹

Pakistan's own Sustainable Development Policy Institute's (SDPI) 2005 report on curriculum also found numerous references that created a positively xenophobic atmosphere in the classroom. For example, one textbook reads, "The religion of the Hindus did not teach them good things"; another teaches the child that the "Hindu has always been an enemy of Islam"; yet another reads, "the Hindus lived in small and dark houses," and, as a final example, consider the story used in an Urdu textbook that has a Hindu character explain that "Hindus please the goddess Kali by slaughtering people of other religions at her feet."⁷² Clearly, this message could not be expected to engender an open outlook and a willingness to understand and accept the differences between religious faiths. The authors of the SDPI report also noted that as recently as 2004, the Curriculum Wing expressed its disapproval of a class IV textbook on Social Studies because the book did not contain enough material on *jihad*.⁷³

Table 6 below indicates Pakistani student and teacher responses to critical questions regarding Islam and Pakistan's future. The madrassas exhibit a much higher inclination towards resolution of the Kashmir issue and Pakistan's longstanding animosity toward India through violent means.

⁷⁰ "Windfalls of War," University of Nebraska at Omaha, <http://publicintegrity.org/wow/bio.aspx?act=pro&ddIC=61> (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

⁷¹ Abigail Cutler and Saleem Ali, "Madrassah reform is key to terror war," *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 Jun 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0627/p09s02-coop.html> (accessed 13 Jan 2007).

⁷² Dr. A H Nayyar, "Twisted truth: Press and Politicians Make Gains from SDPI Curriculum Report," Vol. 11, No. 1 Jan–Feb 2004, http://www.sdpi.org/help/research_and_news_bulletin/nbjanfeb04/articles/pdf/jan-febpercent2004.pdf#search=percent22thepercent20subtlepercent20subversionpercent20ahmedpercent20saleempercent22 (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁷³ Ibid.

Table 5. Student Responses (Teacher Responses Given in Parentheses)

Question: What should be Pakistan's priorities	Percent Responding	<i>Madrasah</i>	Urdu Medium	English Medium
Take Kashmir away from India by an open war	Yes	60 (70)	40 (20)	26 (26)
	No	32 (22)	53 (70)	65 (65)
	DK	8 (7)	7 (10)	9 (9)
Take Kashmir away from India by supporting Jihadi groups to fight the Indian army	Yes	53 (59)	33 (19)	22 (38)
	No	32 (27)	45 (68)	60 (51)
	DK	15 (11)	22 (13)	17 (11)
Support Kashmir cause through peaceful means only (i.e. no war or sending jihadi groups across LOC)	Yes	34 (30)	76 (85)	72 (60)
	No	55 (67)	18 (10)	19 (34)
	DK	11 (4)	6 (5)	9 (6)
Give equal rights to Ahmedis in all jobs, etc?	Yes	13 (4)	47 (27)	66 (43)
	No	82 (96)	37 (65)	9 (37)
	DK	5 (NIL)	16 (8)	25 (20)
Give equal rights to Pakistani Hindus in all jobs, etc?	Yes	17 (15)	47 (37)	78 (62)
	No	76 (85)	43 (58)	14 (26)
	DK	7 (NIL)	10.00 (5)	8 (12)
Give equal rights to Pakistani Christian in all jobs, etc?	Yes	18 (19)	66 (52)	84 (82)
	No	73 (78)	27 (42)	9 (11)
	DK	8 (4)	9 (6)	8 (8)
Give equal rights to men and women as in Western countries?	Yes	17 (4)	75 (61)	91 (78)
	No	77 (97)	17 (33)	6 (14)
	DK	6 (NIL)	7 (6)	3 (8)

Source: Tariq Rahman, 2003, p. 29.

Table 6. Student and Teacher Responses to Survey, 2003.

The majority of the 11,000 madrassas in Pakistan caters to the poorer segment and offer education in the Koran, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) and Arabic, the so-called Dars-e-Nizamia curriculum.⁷⁴ This curriculum is outdated, limited in its reach, and badly in need of an overhaul. For example, each year, thousands of Pakistani children learn from history books that Jews are tight-fisted money-lenders and that Christians are vengeful conquerors—one textbook tells kids they should be willing to die as martyrs for

⁷⁴ Hassan Zaidi, "Over to the General; Monitoring madrassas-potential breeding grounds for extremism is as serious challenge for Musharraf as reining in militants," *India Today*, New Delhi, 1 Aug 2005. 58.

Islam.⁷⁵ In another case, this time in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), which is governed by supporters of the ousted Taliban regime in neighboring Afghanistan, the federally approved Islamic studies textbook for eighth grade teaches students they must be prepared “to sacrifice every precious thing, including life, for jihad.”⁷⁶ The textbook for adolescent students says Muslims are allowed to “take up arms” and wage jihad in self-defense or if they are prevented from practicing their religion. “When God’s people are forced to become slaves of man-made laws, they are hindered from practicing the religion of their God,” the textbook reads. “When all legal ways in this regard are closed, then power should be used to eliminate the evil.”⁷⁷ These references further underscore that reform is required at the public level of education as well as at the madrassas.

C. THE TEACHERS: A PYRAMID SCHEME

In Pakistan’s education system, access to schools is limited in remote areas, especially for girls and post-primary students. Facilities often are minimal or inadequate, and the quality of education is poor, primarily relying on rote memorization and repetition led by many teachers with little more than an elementary education themselves. Limited pre- or in-service training is available for teachers, whose salaries are low and who enjoy little prestige.⁷⁸

Clearly, the curriculum reforms have to face the major obstacle of winning over the teacher cadre at these schools in order to enact the reforms. Simply put, the teachers receive Saudi funding to teach a Wahhabist-like curriculum, and if that curriculum changes, thousands of teachers with little other employment opportunities will be out of work. So it is fair to say that the level at which the Ulemas embrace what is widely considered to be an American-influenced curriculum is directly linked to their livelihood and will therefore be greeted with staunch disapproval. This does not even begin to take into account the larger dimensions of the problem.

⁷⁵ Paul Watson, “In Pakistan’s Public Schools, Jihad Still Part of Lesson Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, Calif.: 18 Aug 2005, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ “International Education Projects: Pakistan, Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) Program,” RTI International, <http://www.rti.org/page.cfm?objectid=57EBAC2E-38F1-4CBF-8E4E4574F9DDA7CC> (accessed 26 Jan 2007).

A recent joint study by Harvard University and the Academy of Education Planning and Management in Pakistan revealed that math scores for students in grades four and five rose with the level of their teachers' level of education.⁷⁹ As such, it is critical to improve teacher training through regulation and government oversight. Standardization requirements and certification processes also need to be established before improvements will be evident. The current efforts of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Center for Afghanistan Studies appear to provide a solid foundation for teacher-training in Afghanistan. Perhaps the training of teachers from Pakistan could be modeled on this same structure.

D. THE GRADUATES: LIMITED OPPORTUNITY AND INADEQUATE SKILLS

It appears that the new generation of madrassas has become more concerned with religious indoctrination than imparting any meaningful skills to the student body. The curriculum is a good starting point in understanding the evolution that has occurred from the traditional school to the new, more dangerous iteration. Needless to say, there are larger factors at play than simply addressing the curriculum of these institutions. The preponderance of evidence suggests that a madrassa graduate will find difficulty in obtaining meaningful, gainful employment and will be forced to remain within the madrassa system as an aide in a mosque or, at the extreme end of the spectrum, as a militant modern-day mujahideen. As P. W. Singer bleakly points out, "despite going to school for eight years, the graduates of most madrassas have no acquaintance with needed subjects like economics, science, or computing. Consequently, most madrassa students graduate school outside the mainstream of the twenty-first century."⁸⁰ In addition to the continued strain on Pakistan's economy, the limited opportunities available to the

⁷⁹ "The Challenge of Teacher Training in Pakistan," http://www.yespakistan.com/education/teacher_training.asp, (accessed 20 Jan, 2007).

⁸⁰ P. W. Singer, "Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad," Analysis Paper # 14, Nov 2001, 4.

madrassa graduate also create animosity and social division by highlighting the increasing gulf between those in the private education system and those taught the blinkered madrassa worldview.⁸¹

⁸¹ Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007)

IV. WHY THE WEST IS CONCERNED ABOUT PAKISTAN'S MADRASSAS

The CIA World Fact Book describes Pakistan as “an impoverished and underdeveloped country, [which] suffered from decades of internal political disputes, low levels of foreign investment, and a costly, ongoing confrontation with neighboring India.”⁸² Aside from these problems, or in some cases, as a result of them, Pakistan’s education sector is one of the poorest funded of any country in Asia. In fact the U.N. Development Program’s 2004 Human Development Report assigned Pakistan the lowest “education index” of any country outside Africa.⁸³ Pakistan’s private school system is the most efficient in the education sector in producing students with a viable skill set for the modern world, but is beyond the reach of the majority of Pakistanis. The public school system, funded by less than 2 percent of Pakistan’s GNP, is in a dismal state and is responsible in part for the 50 percent literacy rate among men and even lower figure among women.⁸⁴ The third educational institution is the madrassa, which operate, by and large, outside the regulation of the Islamabad government.

The difficulty presented by the madrassas in Pakistan is that we know so little for certain about their inner mechanisms. Each school outwardly appears the same regardless of what is being taught inside. Neither the U.S. Government nor the Government of Pakistan are adequately equipped to answer the questions on what is being taught in each madrassa, and cannot simply rely on calculated guesswork to provide the answer. President Musharraf addressed this concern during a visit to the United States and had the following to say,

There are hundreds of thousands of mosques in Pakistan and it is very difficult to check all of them. Yet we are using every possible means including law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies and locals to monitor the activities of mosque preachers. Friday sermons are being

⁸² *CIA World Fact Book*, Online at <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pk.html> (accessed 14 Jan 2007).

⁸³ K. Alan Kronstadt, “Education Reform in Pakistan,” CRS Report for Congress, 24 Dec 2004, <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RS22009.pdf> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

⁸⁴ CRS Report RS 22009, 23 Dec 2004, <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RS22009.pdf> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

observed and those found guilty of spreading hatred are being arrested and charged in the anti terrorist courts.⁸⁵

As many madrassas are collocated with a mosque, it is reasonable to suggest that the President Musharraf's words can be extended to the seminaries.

The number of madrassas teaching a distorted view of Islam is unavailable. In fact, the number of madrassas in operation at any given time is also unknown since registration with the government has not occurred. However, in the words of President Musharraf,

We have approximately 14,000 madrassas in Pakistan with about 1 million poor students. Eighty percent of these madrassas fall under the Wafaq ul Madaris ("trusts for madrassas"). Their strength lies in the fact that they generally provide free board and lodging to their students. In that sense they are strong providers of human welfare. Their weakness, however, is that they generally impart religious education only, and a few of them get involved in terrorism and extremism. In general most are characterized by religious rigidity and intolerance of other sects. Such a system generates thousands of young men annually who can become only clerics in a mosque. The government has decided to fund only those madrassas that register and teach all the subjects specified by the board of education.⁸⁶

This is all very well for President Musharraf to say, but as discussed earlier, the madrassas of Pakistan receive much of their funding from sources outside the country. So the plan not to fund those madrassas teaching a curriculum restricted to the Koran and the Hadith would largely have no effect.

It is clear that the madrassas became a problem once they were hijacked by the Pakistani Government and the United States as a political tool to provide foot soldiers in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. However, the question remains, why did these schools continue to survive long after the fall of the Soviet Union and well into the twenty-first century? The events of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, coupled with the London Underground Bombings of 2005, have caused many to look to the madrassas of Pakistan for answers. Even today, there are Pakistani madrassa students

⁸⁵ President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan's Address to the Coalition, Headquarters, US Central Command, 19 Sep 2005.

⁸⁶ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, New York, Free Press, Penguin Books, 2006), 313.

and graduates fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan's ineffective madrassa reform contribute to the West's concern about these religious institutions in Pakistan.

A. THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Pakistan's madrassas have received much media coverage following the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, and many policy makers questioned whether the madrassas could be responsible for producing militant graduates with an anti-Western outlook ripe for terrorist recruitment. Perhaps the most famous graduate of Pakistan's madrassa is Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and still a hunted man for his association with Osama Bin Laden. Mullah Omar was seen as the epitome of the worst-case scenario for madrassa graduates, and the United States continues to offer a \$10 million reward for information leading to his capture.⁸⁷ The debate over whether the madrassas continue to misguide young impressionable Pakistanis, and lead them toward militancy, is still ongoing. Some have countered the argument that the madrassas have anything to do with terrorism against the West, and believe that at most the students in the madrassas in Pakistan may hold an anti-American viewpoint, but are unlikely to threaten America directly.⁸⁸ Many have argued that the madrassas are not the crux of the problem with Pakistan's education system, and that they have received undue attention primarily as a result of the September 11 attacks on the United States.⁸⁹ The argument is that since the madrassas constitute only 1 percent of the education establishment in Pakistan, perhaps the focus should be on the dismal state of public education, which constitutes the other 99 percent. This reasoning is logical since there have been no direct ties between the 9/11 attacks and the Pakistani madrassas in and of themselves, but in the eyes of many Westerners, they are guilty by association. However, it is generally recognized that the Pakistani madrassas were the institutions which spawned the Taliban. Since the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, and Osama bin Laden, the man responsible for the horrors of September 11, was sheltered and assisted by them,

⁸⁷ "WANTED Mullah Omar Up to \$10 Million Reward. Rewards for Justice," <http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/index.cfm?page=MullahOmar> (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

⁸⁸ Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Myth," *The New York Times*, 14 Jun 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/14/opinion/14bergen.html?ex=1276401600&en=b6badbe6f72adb9b&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss> (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

⁸⁹ Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat," http://www.twq.com/06spring/docs/06spring_bergen.pdf (accessed 14 Jan 2007).

many saw the link between the madrassas and Al Qaeda. Since the attacks, there has also been much speculation as to the link between the madrassas of Pakistan and international terrorism. The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan caused some U.S. policy makers to blur the lines in analyzing the source of the problem.

In October 2003, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Donald Rumsfeld asked his senior staff, “are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?”⁹⁰ The SECDEF’s concerns are valid and based firmly in the reality that many of the Taliban leadership were graduates of the madrassa system. Much of the Taliban leadership was trained at just one madrassa: the Haqqaniya at Akora Khattak, between Islamabad and Peshawar. The director, Sami ul-Haq, still proudly boasts that whenever the Taliban put out a call for fighters, he would simply close down the madrassa and sends his students off to fight.⁹¹

The allegations that some madrassas covertly teach a militant form of Islam, training the students to interpret jihad as a spiritual path diametrically opposed to Western values, is accurate in some cases. The difficulty of the problem and critical importance lies in determining which madrassas are bona fide educational institutions and which are involved in spreading militancy. The complexity of the madrassa phenomenon is also affected by the tendency to consider a madrassa graduate “ripe” for recruitment by Al Qaeda or other terrorist organization. This intuitively logical step is an inaccurate portrayal of the facts on the ground. Although none of the September 11 terrorists were members of the Taliban, the madrassas became linked with terrorism in the months that followed, and the association stuck. For Western politicians, a certain type of education, such as the exclusive and rote learning of the Qur’an that some madrassas offer, seemed to be the only explanation for the inculcation of hate and irrationality in Islamist terrorists.

⁹⁰ Donald Rumsfeld, Internal Memo, 2003.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/rumsfeld-d20031016sdmemo.htm> (accessed 10 Oct 2006).

⁹¹ William Dalrymple, “Myths and Madrassas,” *Asia Times Online*, 24 Nov 2005,
http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GK24Df01.html (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

B. THE LONDON UNDERGROUND BOMBINGS JULY 7, 2005

Following the terrorist attacks on the London underground system, three of those arrested were found to have spent a short time at a madrassa in Lahore, leading investigators to again question the linkage between Pakistan's madrassas and terrorist attacks.⁹² However, the differentiation between a strategic level international terrorist and a tactical level potential recruit must be made. A recent study found that it was the rare terrorist who studied exclusively at a madrassa and only one terrorist (in a study of the five worst terrorist attacks against the West) managed to transition from madrassa to university, suggesting that madrassas should not be part of a profile of a terrorist capable of launching a significant anti-Western attack. Masterminding a large-scale attack thus requires technical skills far beyond those provided by a madrassa education.⁹³

As recently as January 2, 2006, Pakistan had to back off from its hard-line approach regarding madrassa reform. The connection between one of the perpetrators of the suicide bombings in London in 2005 and a madrassa in Pakistan has brought renewed interest in reforming the schools. New York Times journalist Salman Masood points out that after the 9/11 attacks, President Musharraf pledged to reform the madrassas in return for generous aid packages and debt relief from the United States and other Western allies. He has been unable to deliver because the religious radicals can use the requirement to register the madrassas to depict the President of being a stooge for the West. According to the Minister for Religious Affairs, Ijaz ul-Huq, 5,000 of the estimated 12,000 schools have not registered with Islamabad.⁹⁴ This highlights the delicacy of dealing with political Islam and President Musharraf's almost untenable position regarding the issue of madrassa reform. The two assassination attempts on President Musharraf in 2003 indicate that the extremist factions are willing to go to any length to ensure their independence and continued survival.

⁹² *USA Today*, "Pakistan arrests 'important' suspect in London bombings," 20 Jul 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-07-20-london-bombings_x.htm (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

⁹³ Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* 29.2, 2006, 121.

⁹⁴ Salman Masood, "Pakistanis Back Off Vow to Control Seminaries," *New York Times*, New York, N.Y. 2 Jan 2006, A.6.

C. MADRASSA GRADUATES FIGHTING TODAY

Hamid Gul, the former Chief of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) believes that it is unreasonable to expect Pakistan to successfully close the border with Pakistan.⁹⁵ In a recent interview he noted,

This border is impossible to seal. The Russians could not seal it. The British could not seal it in 98 years of their rule over this area. The Russians stayed there for 11 years and they could not seal it. How can you seal a border that is 2,400 kilometers long? And it is very difficult geography, very difficult terrain.⁹⁶

He is most likely correct in his assessment. He is joined in bleak outlook for the Afghanistan conflict by Aslam Beg, Pakistan's military chief of staff between 1988 and 1991. In a recent interview, Beg explained that he saw the jihadists fighting what they believe to be a worthy cause, to protect the sovereignty of Muslim states occupied by foreign troops. He believed that the West is fighting a war they just do not understand. He concluded that "there is nothing more that the NATO or the ISAF or the Americans can do in Afghanistan. NATO will be defeated. The time has come to cut a deal."⁹⁷

The cross-border incursion of fighters from Pakistan into Afghanistan is not a new phenomenon. In October 2006, a madrassa in Bajaur Agency, Pakistan, was hit in an air strike, killing 82 people. The Director General of Inter Services Public Relations, Major General Shaukat Sultan, said that the madrassa in Bajaur was imparting suicide attack training and that the administration had been warned before the operation to stop its activities.⁹⁸ Following three days of protests in Islamabad, President Musharraf called the attack on Bajaur Agency an attack on militants, which further infuriated the protestors. In one instance, an American flag was burned to oppose perceived U.S. involvement in the attack.⁹⁹ Hamid Gul is convinced the Americans bombed the

⁹⁵ Bruce Edwards, "Afghan border: Pakistan's struggle with the Taliban," CBC News, 5 Dec 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_edwards/20061205.html (accessed 28 Jan 2007).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Bruce Edwards, "Afghan border: Pakistan's struggle with the Taliban," CBC News, 5 Dec 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_edwards/20061205.html (accessed 28 Jan 2007).

⁹⁸ *Pak Tribune*, "Bajaur Madrassa was imparting suicide attack training," 3 Nov 2006, <http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?158755> (accessed 28 Jan 2007).

⁹⁹ *Pak Tribune*, "Musharraf statement on Bajaur agency incident insulting: Political, Religious leaders," 2 Nov 2006, <http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?158643> (accessed 10 Feb 2007).

madrassa in order to stop the signing of an agreement that Musharraf brokered with local militants in the Bajaur district.¹⁰⁰ This agreement would have been similar to a previous agreement President Musharraf signed in North Waziristan in September 2006, which was widely viewed as a capitulation by Islamabad to the pro-Taliban militants responsible for the deaths of 350 Pakistani Army troops over the past five years.¹⁰¹ According to Declan Walsh of *The Guardian*,

The Bajaur madrassa was run by Tehriq-e-Nifaz Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM), a jihadist group with strong al-Qaida links that considers Dargai a stronghold. During the 1990s TNSM tried to impose Taliban-style rule in pockets of the province and sent thousands of tribesmen to fight American troops in Afghanistan in 2001. After being banned by the Pakistani government in 2002, the group became an underground host organization for al-Qaida.¹⁰²

Three months later, in January 2007, 42 Pakistani soldiers were killed in a suicide bomb blast that was later claimed to be revenge for the Bajaur attack.¹⁰³ This attack may be the beginning of a wider conflict emerging in Pakistan and will most likely be in direct proportion to Musharraf's attempts to reign in the frontier regions to the west.

Much of this violence is due to the Afghan refugee problem that still haunts the region. In a recent U.N.-sponsored meeting on refugees in Islamabad, Pakistani and Afghan authorities announced that four refugee camps holding 300,000 people and located in Pakistan's border provinces will be closed by 31 August 2007.¹⁰⁴ This closure is intended to reduce the number of refugees coming under the influence of the Taliban, while using Pakistan's Afghan refugee camps as a safe haven. However, a U.N. survey reported in January 2007 its finding that 57 percent of Afghans did not want to return to their traditional homeland.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Bruce Edwards, "Afghan border: Pakistan's struggle with the Taliban," CBC News, 5 Dec 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_edwards/20061205.html (accessed 28 Jan 2007).

¹⁰¹ Arthur Bright, "Pakistan signs peace deal with pro-Taliban militants," CSM, 6 Sep 2006.

¹⁰² Declan Walsh, "42 Pakistani soldiers killed in revenge attack on camp," *The Guardian*, 9 Nov 2006.

¹⁰³ Global Issues Report, "Pakistani Taliban" Claim Responsibility for Suicide Bombing in Pakistan," 15 Nov 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Night Watch, dNovus RDI, 7 Feb 2007, http://nightwatch.afcea.org/NightWatch_20070207.htm (accessed 26 Feb 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

D. PAKISTAN'S INEFFECTIVE MADRASSA REFORMS

Enlightened moderation is all part of the sound bites used by Pakistan's military government to appease the Americans. It tries to pretend that the Musharraf government is holding back the hordes of fanatics and terrorists, and if his government was not there, the country would be overrun. All Muslim dictators and autocrats are supposedly fighting terrorists and automatically when they are fighting terrorists then they become moderates. So this term is really part of this whole propaganda to propagate themselves as some sort of liberals and moderates. How can a military dictatorship be considered liberal and moderate? ¹⁰⁶

—Parliamentarian Imran Khan

Pakistan's reforms thus far have yielded little change in the operation of madrassas in Pakistan, particularly those bordering Afghanistan. The 2002 Education Sector Reforms (ESR) program, aimed at reforming the country's ailing education system is a comprehensive framework for improved literacy, school access, curriculum development, and of course, madrassa reform. However, almost five years later, these reforms still face numerous obstacles, among them; money, bureaucracy, and religious influence. In the case of funding, Pakistan has pledged to increase the budget for education to 4 percent of GDP from the current 2 percent. To reach this goal, the government will need an additional \$7.9 billion, of which it expects \$4.4 billion to come from foreign aid.¹⁰⁷ The recommendations of the Education Sector Reforms cover both the madrassas system and the formal education system. They provide a broad range of solutions to the education woes of Pakistan and will be funded both domestically and through international aid. The recommendations specific to the madrassas are as follows:

- Begin teaching formal subjects at the madrassas
- Help the madrassas join the education mainstream through the provision of grants, salaries to teachers, cost of textbooks, teacher training and equipment.
- Formal subjects, English, Math, Social/Pakistan Studies and General Science should be introduced at the primary, middle, and secondary

¹⁰⁶ Ayesha Khan, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty "Pakistan: Islamabad Totters Between Moderation and Extremism," 22 May 2006.

¹⁰⁷ Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007).

levels, while English, Economics, Pakistan Studies and Computer Science will be introduced at the intermediate level.

- Incentives to madrassas have been provided to 140 at secondary level and 200 at intermediate level.
- The Government of Pakistan, from its own budget resources, is implementing this plan.¹⁰⁸

Regardless of these reform plans, Pakistan's education system is teetering on the brink of collapse. It is incredible that Pakistan is one of only twelve world countries that spend less than 2 percent of its GNP on education and yet it is one of the few countries with nuclear weapon technology. The World Bank reports that the average Pakistani boy receives only five years of schooling and the average girl just 2.5 years. The U.N. Development Program's 2004 Human Development Report assigns Pakistan the lowest "education index" of any country outside Africa.¹⁰⁹

In a recent testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Dr. Samina Ahmed, South Asia Project Director, International Crisis Group, stated that the Musharraf government has publicly acknowledged the problem and made education reform a centerpiece of its modernization drive, but has failed to follow through. In January 2002, the government launched its Education Sector Reforms (ESR) program, aimed at reforming the education system. She believes that there are three main obstacles remaining. First, that the government of Pakistan is reluctant to divert more of its own resources to education. To meet its commitment to raise education funding to 4 percent, the government will need an estimated \$7.9 billion. However, the government expects 55 percent of this, an estimated \$4.4 billion to come from foreign donors, symbolizing an unwillingness to invest its own resources in education reform. Secondly, Pakistan's public education bureaucracy is both highly centralized and inefficient. As in many developing nations, appointments are based on politics rather than merit within the sector,

¹⁰⁸ Embassy of Pakistan, "Education Sector Reforms (ESR) 2002," <http://www.embassyofpakistan.org/pb6.php> (accessed 10 Oct 2006).

¹⁰⁹ "UNDP Human Development Report 2004," at <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

thereby severely impairing the quality of teaching. And finally, the government has repeatedly yielded to political pressure from religious parties that have openly opposed education and madrassa reform.¹¹⁰

Christine Fair, of the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), takes an equally insightful look at the current reform efforts, and concludes that Islamabad's efforts to counter militancy have been effective to the degree that Pakistan has enforced its own restrictions.¹¹¹ She believes that there is no evidence to suggest that Pakistan has made a strategic decision to abandon militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and, by extension, unlikely to take the necessary steps to reform the madrassas and stem the flow of militants onto the battlefield. The streams of young madrassa graduates, with little alternative careers available, often find themselves involved in a proxy war against India in Kashmir. This enables Musharraf to maintain the current forces in Kashmir, augmented by proxy fighters from the madrassas, which keeps the Indian Army occupied without major resource expenditure. She argues that Islamabad will attempt to maintain this reserve capability while seeking to restrict their activities to a threshold that will not prompt Indian, U.S., or other international response.¹¹²

110 Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007).

111 Christine C. Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27: 492.

112 Ibid.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

1. Bridging the Gulf Between the Madrassas and the Public Schools

Regardless of its ultimate intentions, the Government of Pakistan remains outwardly committed to ensure improved access to physical assets, education, vocational skills, training, and other education services that enhance the human capital of the poor and enable them to generate income through asset utilization and gainful employment. The Ministry of Education has taken a close stock of the implementation of the Education Sector Reforms (ESR) aimed at bringing improvement in all aspects of education.¹¹³ Some of the critical targets of the ESR are listed below:

- 10 percent increase in primary school-aged children in target districts.
- 37,000 teachers and education administrators trained.
- 60 percent of teachers trained will meet the standards.
- Approximately 10 percent improvement in student performance/year.
- 49,500 people completing USAID sponsored literacy programs.¹¹⁴

Although the madrassas clearly need reform, the dismal state of Pakistan's public education system, which educates the majority of children, should be overhauled first, otherwise madrassa reform is analogous to rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. Any effort to even address the madrassa syllabus to bring it in line with the mainstream curriculum is premature without a comprehensive review of the public education system.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Embassy of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, "Education Sector Reforms (ESR)," 2002. <http://www.embassyofpakistan.org/pb6.php> (accessed 10 Oct 2006).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007).

2. Communication with the Mullahs—Dealing with the Opposition

In September 2004, President Musharraf came together with the heads of five main madrassa boards under the Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deenia (ITMD). He persuaded them to register the madrassas and to introduce “secular” subjects.¹¹⁶ This was considered a breakthrough at the time and the government hoped that this would break the cycle of ignorance, poverty, and unemployment that pushes students to extremism. In turn, the government conceded that the madrassas’ degrees would be made equivalent to those of the formal education system and they would come under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, rather than the Ministry of Education. However, as is often the case, the ground truth reflects a different reality. “Jihad,” says Qari Hanif Jullundhari, the Multan-based general secretary of the Wafaqul Madaris, “is a central tenet of Islam and we will never shy away from teaching it.” The Wafaqul Madaris is the largest and most influential of the five madrassa boards and follows the strict Deobandi school of thought.¹¹⁷ There are actually three Sunni madrassa boards—Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadees, and Bareilvi, one for the Shia, and the supra-sectarian Jamaat Islamia (JI).¹¹⁸

The highly centralized bureaucracy in Pakistan’s education system is also problematic. Appointments are based on politics rather than merit, which impair the quality of teaching and inhibit change. In addition, this centralized control further prevents effective monitoring over public school teachers and administrators. The South Asia Project Director of the International Crisis Group (ISG), Dr. Samina Ahmed, cited the most damning evidence in the April 2005 Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing. She claims that the Pakistani government has repeatedly yielded to political pressure from political parties that have openly opposed education and madrassa reform. At this time it appears that Pakistan is attempting to restrict the activities of the religious

¹¹⁶ Kanchan Lakshman, “Madrassa Reform: A Habit of Deception,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 4, No. 9, 12 Sep 2005, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/4_9.htm (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

¹¹⁷ Hassan Zaidi, “Over to the General; Monitoring madrassas,” *India Today*, New Delhi, 1 Aug 2005. 58.

¹¹⁸ Christine C. Fair, “Islamic Education in Pakistan,” USIP, 21 Mar 2006.

factions operating within its territory only to a threshold that will not prompt an Indian or U.S. response, and that will ensure continued funding of reform programs by U.S. non-governmental organizations.¹¹⁹

The Government of Pakistan's capitulation to the religious right on education reform stems from its reliance on them to counter its civilian secular opposition.¹²⁰ The MMA presently controls the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) government and governs Balochistan in alliance with the Muslim League. MMA officials head the provincial education ministries of both these provinces and have publicly opposed the reform of the public school sector.¹²¹ Even domestically, many view Musharraf's rhetoric against extremism and his promises to stamp out militant groups merely as a façade—a veneer for the benefit of its Western sponsors. The President of Pakistan's Federation of Journalists, Mazhar Abbas, believes that President Musharraf is not targeting groups fighting in Kashmir, because tomorrow he may need them. That is why, he believes, neither Hafiz Saeed, Chief of Lashker-e-Taiba, Masood Azhar, Head of Jaish-e-Mohammad or Commander Mohammad Salahuddin, Chief of Hizbul Mujahideen have been arrested.¹²²

Not only are the reforms unwelcome at the local level, but they are undesirable at the political level also. Hussain Haqqani, the former Pakistani Ambassador to Sri Lanka, offers this insight,

Musharraf is using the upsurge in Islamism to justify his continued military dictatorship. The choice Musharraf is presenting to the world, is between him and a nuclear-armed Islamist state, a choice that has all but silenced U.S. pressure for Musharraf to reinstate democracy. [In addition] Musharraf deliberately treats the Islamist parties with kid gloves because they have historically been supportive of military dictatorships in return

¹¹⁹ Christine C. Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27: 489–504, 2004.

¹²⁰ Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007)

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mazhar Abbas, "Pakistan: No Quick Fix on Islamic Schools, Say Experts," Global Information Network, New York: 29 Jul 2005. 2.

for complete autonomy in operating their madrassas and other institutions. By giving them free reign, Musharraf thus adds to his domestic support base.¹²³

This is a clear example of the complexity of the issue. President Musharraf has often be castigated for his country's support in the war on terror, many contending that he could do far more to combat extremism and also be more forthcoming in intelligence matters related to the location of senior Al Qaeda leadership. However, as Haqqani implies, the President walks a tightrope between domestic political reform and domestic religious reform; both at the behest of the United States.

3. Education Reform and the Private School Model

Thus far we have established that the state-run public schools (as opposed to the fee-charging private schools) are also in need of curriculum reform to change textbooks and bring them more in line with the more efficient private schools. So perhaps the elusive solution is to expand Pakistan's private school sector in order to graduate students ready to engage the global economy in a meaningful way. Obviously, sending all of Pakistan's students to private school is a non-starter, and some form of reform will be necessary at the madrassas and public school system level in order to cater to the poorer echelon of Pakistani society. However, expanding the fundamentals of the private school system may resolve many of the issues discussed. For example, if the millions of dollars spent by the governments of Pakistan and the United States are used to establish schools that operated under the same principles as private schools (i.e., a broad curriculum, contract teachers, and so on) the ramifications would be very positive. In fact, these schools would be far less likely to promote extremism than government public schools or madrassas, since these would tend to attract students by virtue of their low or nonexistent out-of-pocket costs to parents.¹²⁴ President Musharraf could expect resistance to these measures, most notably from the clerics; however, the increase in popular support on the street would most likely offset this loss if support. The total external developmental aid for education in Pakistan was more than \$1.5 billion dollars in recent years (see table below). The suggestion to mirror the private school system instead of revamping the

¹²³ Hussain Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," *Foreign Policy* 133, Nov 2002. 58–64.

¹²⁴ Andrew Coulson, "Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World," *Policy Analysis*, 511, 11 Mar 2004.

public and madrassa systems, which are rife with jingoism and extremist elements, might be feasible, given a redirection of the resources described below.

Table 11.12: External Development Assistance in the Education Sector

Donor	Year	US\$ million
The World Bank	2004-07	650.000 (Credit)
ADB	2002-09	338.580 (Credit)
IDB	2002-06	35.240 (Credit)
USAID	2002-06	100.000
EC (European Union)	2001-08	85.566
CIDA (Canada)	2002-06	75.447
NORAD (Norway)	2002-08	49.600
JICA (Japan)	1997-06	43.700
GTZ (Germany)	2004-08	43.358
DFID (UK)	2001-04	13.936
AusAid (Australia)	2003-06	2.400
WFP	2004-08	52.000
UNICEF	2004-08	14.600
ILO	1999-05	11.427
UNDP	2004-08	9.300
UNFPA	2004-08	1.600
UNESCO	2005	0.353
Total		1527.107

Source: Ministry of education

Table 7. External Development Assistance in the Education Sector.
From: Economic Survey 2005–2006.¹²⁵

The poor economic situation in Pakistan lies at the heart of most of the country’s internal problems. Improvements in the domestic economy would alleviate many of the reasons poorer Pakistanis send their children to madrassas. Economic progress would also provide alternatives for the young school graduates and enable them to avoid the draw of extremism, which is preached as a panacea for all the country’s ailments. Dr. Looney of the Naval Postgraduate School believes that the losses to Pakistan’s economy associated with the September 11 attacks and the Afghan crisis are estimated at \$2.5 to \$3 billion.¹²⁶

Another alternative is to develop technical or trade schools as an alternative to the madrassas. This option would give the graduates a skill with which they could earn a living, support a family, and most importantly stay out of the clutches of militant recruiters preying on those with few life skills and even less hope for the future.

¹²⁵ “Economic Survey 2005–2006, 12,” http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/sur_chap_05-06/11-education.PDF (accessed 27 Jan 2007).

¹²⁶ Robert Looney, “A U.S. Strategy for Achieving Stability in Pakistan: Expanding Educational Opportunities,” *Strategic Insights*, Volume I, Issue 7, Sep 2002.

A U.S. policy approach to improve the human capital of young Pakistanis would have the long-term effect of enhancing the economy of Pakistan. This in turn would yield better relations with India, since the number of fighters in Kashmir would diminish as a result of better opportunities in the cities. Improved relations with India could allow the Government of Pakistan to spend less on defense, and more on education. Islamabad spent nearly \$16 on defense for every \$1 spent on education in 2004.¹²⁷ Even a slight change in this ratio would yield a dramatic result for the young people of Pakistan.

The short-term goals of the GWOT, to capture or kill the Al Qaeda senior leadership, have been rather successful in Pakistan. In a visit to CENTCOM in September 2005, President Musharraf described the efforts Pakistan has made in the War on Terror and drew an important distinction between terrorism and extremism for his U.S. audience.

Terrorism and extremism are two separate issues. While terrorism can be dealt with military force, extremism has to be confronted with a strategy to change the hearts and the minds of the people. So there is the requirement to evolve a strategy suitable to the environment in which we are operating.¹²⁸

This statement highlights two important issues. One, that the President actively recognizes that the problem of extremism is fundamentally different in nature from that of terrorism and two, that the immediate goals of the War on Terror are twofold—to address terrorism first, and then the causal extremism second. The point is, eliminating terrorists in Pakistan, and elsewhere, is a short-term solution to the linked problems of terrorism and extremism. For example, when the Al Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed in June 2006, he was quickly replaced by one of his “lieutenants,” Abu Hamza al-Muhajir.¹²⁹ It is not unreasonable then, to expect that once bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri are captured or killed, they will quickly be replaced and the War on Terror will march onwards. In this sense, the War on Terror cannot logically ever end. There

¹²⁷ Alan K. Kronstadt, “Education Reform in Pakistan.” CRS Report for Congress, RS22009, 23 Dec 2004.

¹²⁸ President Pervez Musharraf, US Central Command, 19 Sep 2005.

¹²⁹ “Al Qaeda in Iraq names Zarqawi replacement,” CTV, 12 Jun 2006, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060609/abu_musab_060612/20060612?hub=TopStories (accessed 28 Jan 2007)

will be triumphs and failures, but the recruiting process of Al Qaeda is such that there appears to be a boundless pool of willing “jihadists” ready to take up arms against the West in general, and the United States in particular.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

1. Saudi Arabian Influence

From a strategic perspective, any madrassa reform by Pakistan, with or without American assistance, should address the Saudi Arabian financial backing prior to instituting any reorganization. Yes, it is necessary to reform the madrassas in Pakistan, but without addressing the continued funding from Saudi Arabia and to a lesser extent, the Gulf Countries, any reform effort is doomed to failure. Unfortunately, this issue is politically treacherous since the United States and Saudi Arabia are so closely linked economically. America is dependent on Saudi Arabia for oil, but in return, the House of Saud is reliant on America for protection and continued arms supplies. Since 1979, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has spent more than \$50 billion on U.S. military purchases, including five airborne warning and control systems (AWACS) and a \$5.6 billion “peace shield”—a state-of-the-art command and control system for the Royal Saudi Air Force with six underground command centers linking 147 defense-related sites.¹³⁰

Indeed, some have argued that an international conglomerate known as the Carlyle Group, with senior advisors including George Bush Senior and former British Prime Minister John Major, has a key role in maintaining close ties with Saudi Arabia regardless of the political cost.¹³¹ Also noteworthy, former C.I.A. officials have even claimed that the war in Iraq was a diversion to draw public attention from the true financiers of terrorism, Saudi Arabia. This seemingly outlandish claim has certainly brought ex-C.I.A. operative-turned-author Robert Baer much media attention; however, his twenty-plus years of experience in the Middle East and Central Asia lend him some credibility and make his claims difficult to disregard out of hand. Incidentally, he also claims that the Saudi Royal Family, the House of Saud, continues to fund violent

¹³⁰ “U.S. Military Sales to Saudi Arabia,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/etc/cron.html> (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

¹³¹ Oliver Burkeman and Julian Borger, “The Ex-Presidents' Club,” *The Guardian*, 31 Oct 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,583869,00.html> (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

fundamentalists through Islamic charities to avoid the wrath of these extremists.¹³² These conspiracy-like theories are very difficult to evaluate for accuracy, yet his statement that 15 of the 19 hijackers on September 11, 2001, hailed from Saudi Arabia, not Iraq or Afghanistan, is undeniable.

The October 2002 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Report on terrorist financing concluded that, “For years, individuals and charities based in Saudi Arabia have been the most important source of funds for al Qaeda; and for years, Saudi officials have turned a blind eye to this problem.”¹³³ The Saudi Arabian Government’s response is interesting. According to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Kingdom’s Ambassador to the United States: “Government officials who are privy to current law enforcement efforts know and appreciate the close cooperation the United States and Saudi Arabia have in the War on Terrorism. The Task Force is clearly out of touch with current activities.”¹³⁴ The CFR updated their report in 2004, and addressed the Saudi response to their previous findings:

The Task Force appreciates the necessary delicacies of diplomacy and notes that previous administrations also used phrases that obfuscated more than they illuminated when making public statements on this subject. Nevertheless, when U.S. spokespersons are only willing to say that “Saudi Arabia is being cooperative” when they know very well all the ways in which it is not, both our allies and adversaries can be forgiven for believing that the United States does not place a high priority on this issue.¹³⁵

With regard to the madrassas issue, the Task Force concluded that:

Foreign funding of extremist madrassas in Pakistan alone, for example, is estimated in the tens of millions, much of it historically from Saudi

¹³² Robert Baer, “Sleeping with the Devil,” <http://www.thinkingpeace.com/Lib/lib048.html> (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

¹³³ Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, “Top Ten Reasons To Change The Saudi–U.S. Relationship,” http://lautenberg.senate.gov/documents/foreign/saudi_report.pdf (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

¹³⁴ “Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia,” 2002 Press Release Response to CFR report, Washington D.C., 17 Oct 2002, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/2002News/Press/PressDetail.asp?cYear=2002&cIndex=54> (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

¹³⁵ “Update on the Global Campaign against Terrorist Financing,” 15 Jun 2004, http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Revised_Terrorist_Financing.pdf (accessed 19 Jan 2007).

Arabia. Saudi patronage has played an important role in promoting jihadi culture in Pakistan, including through extensive assistance to Ahl-e Hadith (Salafi/Wahabi) madrassas. More than a million young Pakistanis are educated in these madrassas, according to a recent report cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society.¹³⁶ Islamic religious schools in Afghanistan, India, Yemen, Africa, Central Asia, the Balkans (particularly Bosnia and Kosovo), North America, Chechnya, and Dagestan are also significantly financed by Saudi sources.¹³⁷

Since this report was published in 2004, the governments of Saudi Arabia and America have increasingly worked together to deal with the terrorist financing emanating from the Saudi Arabian Kingdom. These efforts have reduced the flow of money to organizations like Al-Qaeda, but much remains to be done in reducing the funding of international madrassas that focus on and teach the narrow-minded Islamic views of Wahhabism.

2. Financial Assistance

The United States should increase its commitment to the future of Pakistan by increasing the monetary assistance provided to the government of Pakistan to reform the country's education system. The madrassas remain a lightning rod for criticism, and allegations of U.S. meddling in the internal affairs of an Islamic country fuel the fatwas issued against the West. Perhaps the solution is to draw the students away from the madrassas by enhancing the public education system to such a degree that the madrassas no longer hold any allure to the poor in Pakistan. This approach could be introduced and advertised in such a manner as to maximize the perception of U.S. policies in Pakistan and may counter much of the negative press encountered as a result of the war on terror.

The root problem of the madrassas system is not the extremist element pushing a message filled with hatred for the West; the root of the problem lies with the students and the lack of a viable alternative available to their parents. The decision to send one's child to an institution that will not prepare the child for the future is driven by poverty, not an urge to enhance the child's spiritual development. The vast majority of Pakistanis must

¹³⁶ "Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism and the Military," International Crisis Group, *Asia Report* No. 36, 29 Jul 2002.

¹³⁷ "Update on the Global Campaign against Terrorist Financing," 15 Jun 2004, .27, http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Revised_Terrorist_Financing.pdf (accessed 17 Jan 2007).

choose between a deteriorated public school system that can be physically difficult to access, and religious schools that will feed, clothe, and oftentimes house their children for free.¹³⁸ To tackle the madrassa problem in Pakistan, the underlying poverty must be addressed. The assistance provided by the United States, currently \$100 million for education reform, must be dramatically increased. The aid to Pakistan's public education system will eventually yield better schools and more graduates more prepared for the global marketplace. The opening of hundreds of new public schools, and the refurbishment of existing schools, will draw potential students away from the madrassas, and back into the mainstream where English, science, and mathematics take precedence over rote memorization of the Koran. Those students wishing to pursue a religious education could attend any number of state-sponsored, state-registered madrassas, with appropriate oversight of curriculum, funding, and accreditation.

The power of the country's religious conservatives would naturally be diminished under such a proposal and, as such, they could be expected to be united in opposition to any major educational reforms. This is perhaps the basis for the perception that President Musharraf is unwilling to deliver concrete results in his education reforms. Should the president enact many of the ESR proposals, the religious conservatives may well oust him from office through the electoral process or otherwise. A potential solution here is to co-opt the opposition to education reform by giving them a stake in the new institutions in the public realm.

Currently, USAID has allocated \$100 million over five years to Pakistan's education sector, aimed at teacher training, engendering democratic ideas, improving the quality of exams, and enabling greater access to schools. The U.S. government has a stake in the direction and outcome of educational reform and should adopt a more proactive approach.¹³⁹ This amount is not nearly enough to attain these lofty goals. As an example, the United States spent upwards to \$4 billion in the proxy war against the Soviets between 1979 and 1989. The more nebulous threat facing the United States in

¹³⁸ David Rohde, "A Dead End for Afghan Children Adrift in Pakistan," *New York Times*, 7 Mar 2003, A3.

¹³⁹ Samina Ahmed, "Combating Terrorism through Education – the Near East & South Asian Experience," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 19 Apr 2005, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2005/AhmedTestimony050419.pdf> (accessed 21 Feb 2007).

the region today requires an equal commitment in order to stabilize the country and reassure the people of Pakistan that America's pledge is strategic and long-lasting.

The United States should avoid the most direct approach—that is, to urge the Pakistan government to close the madrassas linked to propagating violence. The religious factions would obviously see the United States as behind the effort and may attempt to use it as a catalyst for a holy war that would risk toppling the existing regime. Closure of the schools, at the behest of the Washington, would be seen across society as a move on Islam.¹⁴⁰ As the noted historian William Dalrymple comments, attempting to shut down all the madrassas would be tantamount to instructing Muslims to stop educating themselves about their religion—hardly the best strategy for winning hearts and minds.¹⁴¹

3. Perception Management

During the Islamic Golden Age, philosophers, scientists, and engineers of the Islamic world contributed enormously to technology, both by preserving earlier traditions and by adding their own inventions and innovations. Scientific and intellectual achievements blossomed in the Golden age.¹⁴² The United States could advance its educational reform support in conjunction with the government of Pakistan to promote a return to the Golden age of Islam, a desire much espoused by Islamic fundamentalists. This “fundamental” reform should pledge to lessen the disparity between the West and the Islamic world by a mutually agreed-upon framework for development of Pakistan's scientific and technological institutions in order to propel Pakistan from its current state into the twenty-first century.

To this end, the White House has reportedly approved a new secret strategy dubbed the Muslim World Outreach. This program marks the first time that the U.S. Government has indicated that it has an interest in influencing what happens within Islam, and obviously raises questions, such as the Constitutional separation of Church and State. Be that as it may, the plan is intended to promote shared values of democracy,

¹⁴⁰ P. W. Singer, “Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad,” *Analysis Paper* #14, Nov 2001, 6.

¹⁴¹ William Dalrymple, “Inside Islam's ‘terror schools.’” 28 Mar 2005, 7, <http://www.newstatesman.com/200503280010> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

¹⁴² “Muslim History,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_history (accessed 2 Sep 2006).

women's rights, and tolerance, and as such, calls for moderate Muslim nations and reform groups to act as intermediaries. This war of ideas is being managed by the CIA and aims to actively "target" Islamic media, religious leaders, and political parties. According to reports, the CIA is receiving "an exponential increase in money, people, and assets" to help it influence Muslim societies, says a senior intelligence official.¹⁴³ Figure 1 below provides a clear depiction of the scope of Washington's ambition.

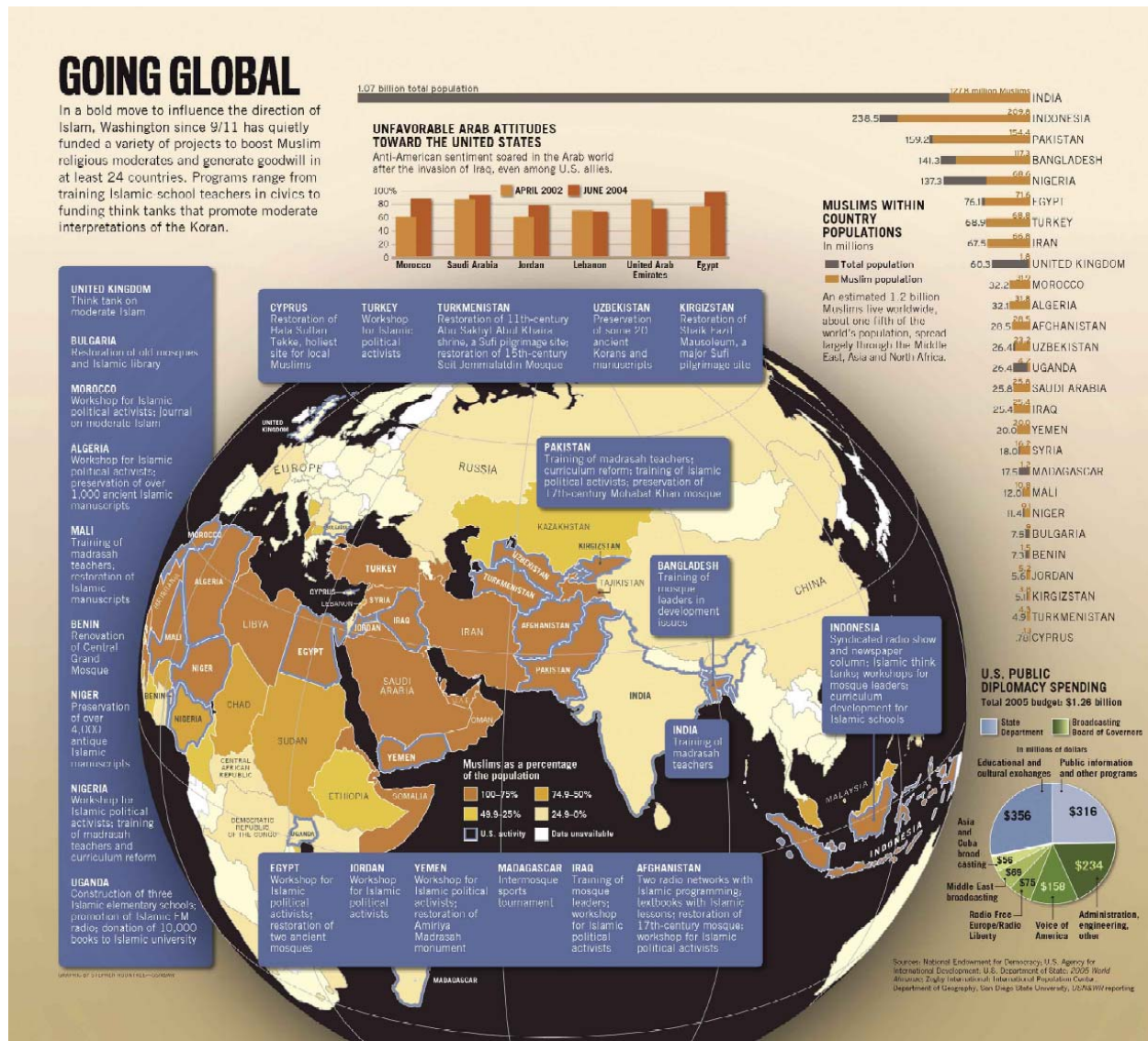


Figure 1. Going Global
From: U.S. News & World Report, 25 Apr 2005.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ David E. Kaplan, "Hearts, Minds, and Dollars," *U.S. News & World Report*, 25 Apr 2005, 2, http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050425/25roots_2.htm (accessed 28 Jan 2007).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Understandably, this endeavor is viewed with suspicion by many Muslims and confirms previous distrust for U.S. foreign policy and the activities of the CIA. In reference to the Muslim World Outreach program, an Al Jazeera article recently concluded “it confirms that discrediting Mohammed PBUH has become a top priority and a pre-requisite of the so-called war on terrorism. Such clear admissions from the anti-Islam fascists cannot be interpreted in any positive way.”¹⁴⁵

Pakistan is at a turning point in its history. Should President Musharraf decide to make the tough choices and reform the entire educational system, not just the madrassas, Pakistan has a chance of catching up with the globalized world. Conversely, a poorly administered education reform policy, regardless of intentions, will relegate Pakistan’s youth to a future void of meaningful opportunities and pave the way for the downward spiral into further radicalism.

The War on Terror is a noble effort to rid the world of those who, in the words of President Bush, “cannot stand freedom ... [and] do not believe in free speech, free religion, free dissent, do not believe in women's rights, and have a desire to impose their ideology on much of the world.”¹⁴⁶ But the terrorism we seek to destroy is a symptom of a greater ailment that is Islamic extremism. Al Qaeda and other Islamic groups could not survive were it not for the continued financial support of Saudi Arabia. As one noted scholar put it, “Washington’s failure even to acknowledge this problem, [Saudi support] is the greatest failure of our anti-terror campaign to date, one that not even the removal of Saddam Hussein will repair. No lasting progress in the war on terrorism can be expected unless and until we deny the fanatics their lifeline.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Abid Ullah Jan, “Determined to change the very face of Islam,” Al-Jazeera, 27 Apr 2005.

¹⁴⁶ David Anthony Denny, “Bush Explains U.S. Goals, Methods in War on Terror,” 12 Jan 2006. <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Jan/12-505911.html> (accessed 20 Jan 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Alex Alexiev, “The Pakistani Time Bomb,” Center for Security Policy, Mar 2003.

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