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# Madrassa Education in Pakistan: Assisting the Taliban's Resurgence

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Madrassa Education in Pakistan:  
Assisting the Taliban's Resurgence

by

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POL 372

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Thesis: The education received in madrassas located in Pakistan is contributing to the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan.

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On July 23, 2009 Cpl. Nicholas G. Xiarhos<sup>1</sup> was on a mission in Afghanistan<sup>2</sup> when a blast went off under his humvee. Cpl. Xiarhos died soon after the explosion. The incident occurred five years after former United States (U.S.) Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared victory in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>3</sup> However, on August 10, 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said that the Taliban has gained the upper hand over the OEF and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) (Dreazen).<sup>4</sup> Throughout 2009, cases like Cpl. Xiarhos' have become more frequent as the Taliban has enjoyed a new resurgence (Hickey).<sup>5</sup> Many have speculated why the Taliban, a strict Islamist movement that governed Afghanistan from 1994 until 2001, has re-emerged as a potent enemy. Experts have hypothesized that Pakistani madrassas,<sup>6</sup> Islamic religious school at the primary and secondary level of education for males,<sup>7</sup> have become fertile recruiting grounds for the Taliban and promote Islamic fundamentalist militant ideology. The education received in madrassas located in Pakistan is contributing to the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan.

The Taliban insurgency has sprung from a long timeline of conflict within Afghanistan. The current population in Afghanistan has rarely seen a day without conflict caused by war.<sup>8</sup> In modern history the most devastating conflict in Afghanistan was the Soviet Union led invasion lasting from December 27, 1979 to February 15, 1989.<sup>9</sup> Over 5 million Afghans fled the country as a result of the Soviet Union's invasion. A majority of these refugees sought protection in Pakistan (Ruiz).

Pakistan has been a country traditionally marked by extreme poverty, and education has often taken a back seat to other issues. Students who wish to attend public school must pay a substantial tuition. The government often cannot compete with madrassas because of their free education. Madrassas are appealing alternatives for poor families who wish their children to

receive an education or to provide a safe place for children to grow up. Many Muslim families perceive the religious education in madrassas to be of better quality than the secular education taught in Pakistani public schools. Madrassas, unlike the public schools, can often guarantee employment after graduation for their students.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the duration of the War in Afghanistan, the government of Pakistan has made efforts to regulate its madrassas, such as requesting madrassas to register and conform to government standards. This has been part of an effort by the government in Pakistan to protect against violent extremists like the Taliban. However, in many cases the Pakistan government has often lacked the ability to maintain their regulations.<sup>11</sup>

Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam that calls for charitable giving,<sup>12</sup> has been a major factor behind the funding of madrassas in Pakistan. While there are no published reports that link charitable giving from Gulf States, such as Saudi Arabia, (Blanchard 2004) to the madrassas in Pakistan some critics have alleged that these governments have long encouraged this practice (Simpson). For example, classrooms at Darul Uloom Haqqania have small inscriptions informing visitors that Saudi Arabia donated the building materials (Haqqani).<sup>13</sup> Saudi Wahhabism has been a major influence over the ideologies held by the Taliban and the teachings in madrassas.<sup>14</sup> One expert estimates charitable donations funneled from Saudi Arabia to education in Pakistan at around \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually (Winer). Through zakat donations both ideas and monetary exchanges have floated into the Pakistani madrassas. Therefore countries like Saudi Arabia have had a large amount of influence over the madrassas where they donate.

The madrassas being used to train and recruit Taliban fighters stem from an institution of Islamic learning that dates back to the eleventh century. Like madrassas worldwide, those in Pakistan offer a religious based curriculum focusing on the Quran and Islamic texts. A typical

curriculum consists of twenty subjects (Ahmad) divided into the “revealed sciences’ and ‘rational sciences” based on the Dars-i-Nizami curriculum (Haqqani).<sup>15</sup> The Dars-i-Nizami curriculum is a method of teaching that has been used since the eighteenth century, and that tends to be associated with Islamist beliefs of Islam. A typical madrassas goal is to teach their students an Islamic education and make them a productive member of the ulema.

Unlike traditional madrassas, those in Pakistan have developed an association with militancy and terrorism.<sup>16</sup> Some say that these madrassas have evolved into promoting radicalized forms of Islam that teach Muslim students to fight nonbelievers and stand against what they see as the moral depravity of the West (Haqqani). Madrassas in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region were established during the 1980s with the particular purpose of fighting against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Ahmad). A special interpretation of Islam called Deobandi, that fuels these associations, is taught at these concerning Pakistani madrassas.<sup>17</sup> The Deobandi interpretation of Islam calls for an Islamist interpretation of Islam and is highly skeptical of the West. Deobandi madrassas are the ones most closely allied to the Taliban.

The same madrassas that are now the source of the Taliban resurgence were also the birth place of the Taliban movement in the 1990s. Mullah Mohammad Omar,<sup>18</sup> along with ninety percent of the Taliban leadership, had been a student at Darul Uloom Haqqania. The Taliban, who were mainly Afghan refugees, arose as a group wishing to be a solution to Afghanistan’s instability. These individuals were from a generation who had never seen their country at peace. The Taliban members had no memories of their tribes, their elders, their neighbors or the complex ethnic mix of peoples that made up their villages and their homeland. Instead of holding on to the traditions of Afghanistan’s tribal system, the Taliban with their theological

indoctrination and military training received in Pakistani madrassa embraced a new Islamist vision for Afghanistan.

In the early 1990s after the Soviet Union withdrew Afghanistan was in anarchy. By 1994, the Taliban gathered enough strength to capture the city of Kandahar.<sup>19</sup> They were able to occupy Kabul by September 1996. By the end of 1998, the Taliban occupied 90 percent of the country. Once gaining a substantial control of Afghanistan, the Taliban installed a new Islamist vision for the country. Under their leadership, a strict interpretation of Sharia Law, advocated by the Islamic interpretation of Deobandi, was installed as the governing structure of Taliban occupied Afghanistan. Despite the criticism the Taliban received for human rights, the citizens of Afghanistan were relieved to finally have some sense of stability. U.S. Senator Hank Brown stated: “The good part of what has happened is that one of the fractions at last seems capable of developing a new government in Afghanistan” (A. Rashid 2001).<sup>20</sup> Another U.S. diplomat in 1997 said: “The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis. There will be Aramco ..., pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that” (A. Rashid 2001).

However, the Taliban formed a coalition with al Qaeda, a terrorist organization. Under the Taliban’s protection, al Qaeda operated terrorist camps and planned worldwide attacks. On September 11, 2001, al Qaeda attacked the U.S which resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon building, and the death of 2,975 individuals (AP). On October 7, 2001, the U.S. aided by the United Kingdom, Canada and NATO coalition forces, began military actions in Afghanistan that ousted the Taliban from leadership. By early December of 2001 the Taliban lost their last stronghold in Kandahar.

Nevertheless, despite what many officials believed, the Taliban was far from a defeated enemy.<sup>21</sup> After the Taliban had been expelled from Afghanistan they sought sanctuary in Pakistan. Quickly, the Taliban established a presence and stronghold in areas of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> The Taliban also stationed itself in three main Pakistan cities (Quetta, Peshawar, and Karachi) and created an “inner shura”<sup>23</sup> that is divided into “a series of functional committees: military, propaganda, finance, religious, political, and administrative” (Jones 30). Quetta is headquarters for “the political, military, and religious committees”, Peshawar is the Taliban’s base for their “propaganda and media committees,” and Karachi is home to the “the Taliban’s financial base” (Jones 30).<sup>24</sup>

In all three of the Taliban’s main cities of operations in Pakistani madrassas have provided safe havens for the Taliban’s organization. The Taliban has gained a strong amount of influence in education in these areas. The final report produced by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission) cited “poor education” in Pakistan as “a particular concern” (9/11 Commission). Madrassas in Pakistan were singled out as “actual or potential terrorist sanctuaries” that are being used by the Taliban “as incubators for violent extremism” (9/11 Commission). The U.S. Department of State’s annual report for religious freedom from 2007 concluded that madrassas in Pakistan were important for the Taliban’s re-grouping and new recruitment. The report found that madrassas are teaching, “extremist doctrine in support of terrorism” (United States Department of State).<sup>25</sup> As of 2008, Pakistan hosts an estimated 12,000 madrassas (Blanchard, *Islamic Religious Schools, Madrassas: Background*, 2008) with an estimated 1.7 to 1.9 million students in total (Candland).<sup>26</sup> Fifteen percent of these madrassas have some type of connection to the Taliban (Johnston). Thus, according to these



statistics nearly 300,000 young individuals are possible recruits for the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. In comparison, as of 2009, only 87,000 combined OEF and ISAF coalition forces are in Afghanistan (DeYoung). OEF and ISAF have underestimated the strategic and ideological capabilities of the Taliban through their connection to Pakistani madrassas.

The madrassa system's strength is being reinforced by a negative correlation that is undermining the leadership in Afghanistan's tribal system and central government by an increase influence of religious authorities. Religious leaders, such as Mullahs,<sup>27</sup> are highly respected in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. These religious leaders try to trump the authority of the tribal system and central government. Mullahs have a large amount of influence over social and political affairs. In Afghanistan and the sections of Pakistan that the Taliban has infiltrated, the majority of the population is illiterate and villages are isolated from the outside world. Mullahs are often the most trusted source of information. The United States Agency of International Development (USAID) concluded that "extremism is more likely to flourish where governments are too weak politically to risk alienating radical Islamic leaders, and are therefore less inclined to take strong actions against extremist groups" (USAID). Majorities of the Taliban leadership are Mullahs and Mullahs are also the teachers at the Pakistani madrassas that are of concern.

Mullahs at these Pakistani madrassas have been teaching a radicalized curriculum that combines indoctrination and military training. Some believe that the emphasis in these madrassas has been shifted away "from the standard pillars of faith" and has focused on "the obligation and rewards of violent jihad" (Kapisthalam).<sup>28</sup> Students are taught to achieve a utopian state through any means necessary. Some syllabi indicate that teachers go "to great lengths to make students aware of Western domination, the exploitative potential of Western political and economic ideas, and the disruptive influence of Western liberty and individualism on Muslim societies" (Rahman

313). For example, students are told that the events of September 11, 2001 were not conducted by al Qaeda but were a conspiracy between the U.S. and Jews against the Muslim world (Haqqani 61).

Most madrassa instructors will never admit to coercing their students into joining the Taliban.<sup>29</sup> However, Muaulana Samiul Haq, headmaster of the Darul uloom Haqqania madrassa, was quoted as saying, “Young minds are not for thinking. We catch them for the [madrassas] when they are young, and by the time they are old enough to think, they know what to think” (Haqqani 63). Lal Masjid’s madrassa is a rare case where the madrassas managers publically support the Taliban and “encourage their students to join the anti-Western jihad in Afghanistan” (Ahmad). At Darul uloom Haqqania’s commencement ceremony in 2003, “in their speeches, teachers and religious scholars urged the students to put defending their faith before everything else” (H. Rashid 2003). Even if the madrassas in Pakistan do not make militants, “they create a worldview that makes militancy possible” (Tavernise). The mindset established by a madrassas is that it “wants to stop music, girls’ schools and festival,” and “their message is that this is not real life. Real life comes later – after death,” a social researcher in Southern Punjab claims (Tavernise).<sup>30</sup> Compared to other types of schools surveyed in Pakistan, madrassas and their students were found to be the most intolerant.<sup>31</sup> In these surveys, the madrassas are described as “the most supportive of an aggressive foreign policy, the most intolerant of religious minorities, and do not support equal rights for men and women” (Rahman 313).

Support for the Taliban in madrassas is not only enforced by the indoctrination but also by the provision of military training. Some have called these madrassas “Islamic West Points” for the Taliban. At a madrassa, the students become well versed in how to wage jihad. By the time student’s graduate from a madrassa, they are knowledgeable in militant activities that can

be used to help support the Taliban's insurgency. For example, students are taught how to use a gun and build improvised explosive devices (IEDS). Madrassa students are taught how to develop "or acquire new commercial communications gear and new field equipment" and given "tactical, camouflage, and marksmanship training" (Jones 36). During the summer of 2009, ISAF captured a madrassa in Khost, Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> At the madrassas, coalition forces found evidence that a military training camp had been set-up at there. Coalition troops found an "array of bunkers, tents and lean-to structures that indicated an active training site," ISAF reported. Soldiers found materials to make roadside bombs, as well as assault rifles, RPGs, heavy machine guns, hand grenades, and communications equipment at the site (Roggio). The madrassa was known to be run by the Haqqani network which has a close affiliation with the Taliban.<sup>33</sup> However, exact information about the details of military training that goes on in madrassas is hard to come by because madrassas are secretive about their operations.

Madrassas have been historically known to be supported by the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).<sup>34</sup> The ISI has helped in aiding military training to madrassas. While the ISI cannot come out and directly support the Taliban's insurgency in Afghanistan, the agency can help Taliban recruits in Pakistani madrassas learn techniques that can benefit the Taliban on the battle field in Afghanistan. Organizations like NATO, United Nations (UN), Afghan government, and the Pakistan government have accused ISI of providing assistance to madrassas and the Taliban's insurgency, including providing "intelligence to Taliban insurgents at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels" (Jones 32).<sup>35</sup> Sharing radical religious and political views, ISI and the Taliban have been long term allies. Over the past year though, the relationship between ISI and the Taliban has changed. The Taliban's increasing threat to the security and stability of Pakistan has caused ISI to question their alliance. However, as ISAF success in

Afghanistan falters and the U.S. contemplates withdrawal ISI may still wish to maintain friendly relations with the Taliban.

A combination of an education in madrassas that focuses on indoctrination and militancy has led to a strong connection between the students and the Taliban but the politics taking place in Afghanistan have influence as well. Before the Taliban's government, tribal identity had been at the center of Afghan identity for centuries. Where a strong central government had failed to persist, tribes filled the gap by providing basic needs, security, culture, and socializations for tribal members. Tribes have led to the creation and preservation of diversity among Afghans. When the Taliban took over, their government was dominated by a new Islamist vision for Afghanistan which undermined the tribal system. Young Afghans who attend madrassas in Pakistan saw their tribal identities begun to blur or become unknown. Youth, like the members who formed the Taliban, were educated out of their tribal basis in favor of a religious basis. When the youth who had been educated in madrassas returned to their native Afghanistan they were no longer accustomed to the tribal system. Instead of the Taliban government enforcing tribal elders as a source of authority the Taliban placed themselves at the center of authority.

Following the fall of the Taliban, insecurities and a weak central government led by the current president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has furthered the undermining of the tribal system.<sup>36</sup> The Karzai government dominated by corruption and inefficiencies, has been unable to fill the void left by the Taliban. Karzai's government cannot provide the youth with security or belonging.<sup>37</sup> Social and economic inequalities have combined to produce an atmosphere of despair among youth. One South Asia expert points out that the strongest "potential supporters" of the Taliban are those who see no other opportunity for them after graduating from school due to a "stagnant" economy and a "population" that is "growing out of control" (Peri 87). The

Afghan central government's philosophy, which advocates secularism, is one that is not easily understandable to the youth of these madrassas because they are being educated in a religious environment that is indifferent to secularism.

The Taliban appeals to the youth for two interlocking reasons. First, "the tribal system [in Afghanistan] is in crisis and that it can no longer provide 'peace, income, a sense of purpose, a social network' to the local youth" (Giustozzi 39), and the Karzai government has failed to successfully replace the Taliban's former government. Taliban insurgents are taking advantage of the weak tribal and Karzai government structures by assuming state like functions. The Taliban can "provide security, collect taxes, set up administrative structures, and seek to perform other government functions for the population they control" (Jones 17). State building is at the central of the Taliban's insurgency. Seeing the governance failures of the tribal system and Karzai's government enforces much of the local Afghan population in rural areas outside of Kabul to support the Taliban. Many locals believe the Taliban will return to governance of Afghanistan once coalition forces leave. These beliefs legitimize the Taliban. If the Taliban will regain to power in Afghanistan than that can be seen as the will of Allah, and will consequently reinforces the Taliban's goal to create a pure state of Islam.

The youth who are being educated in Pakistan have grown up in an environment where the tribal system of Afghanistan is not socialized. Tribal identities for older generations raised in Afghanistan matter significantly. For the youth being educated in Pakistani madrassas, a tribal identity does not matter. Emphasis is placed on a person's religious background in the Pakistani madrassas, which then again reinforces communication with the Taliban because of the shared Deobandi background. According to survey data "lower- and lower middle- class children are

more likely to attend a madrassah than their wealthier counterparts” and “the highest [madrassas] enrollment tends to be along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border” (Fair 62-3).

Secondly, being educated in the radicalized Deobandi Pakistani madrassas the youth already hold many linking qualities to the Taliban (Ahmad). The Taliban, having adopted an extreme version of Deobandi, and the youth sharing a Deobandi background likely plays an increased role of homogeneity making political communication easier. For their insurgency, the Taliban wants smart people to help with their cause and their recruitment has focused in on educated individuals (Fair 55). A religious background is preferable for Taliban recruits. Combined with the education and religious background madrassas students receive, they are ideal Taliban recruits.

For young men coming out of madrassas, the Taliban offers a sense of adventure to rise up against the evil Western invaders. Due to socioeconomic factors the Taliban is an appealing job opportunity for madrassa graduates. The youth being impressionable and deprived of opportunities are any easy prey for the Taliban wishing to propagate their ideological agendas (Fair 56). In madrassas students are reinforced with the idea that Western countries are infidels and are out to destroy Islam. The Taliban is seen as a heroic force out to stop the West’s corruption of Islam. Young men are given the chance by fighting a noble fight with the Taliban in honor of protecting their religion. By fighting with the Taliban these young men can become martyrs for their religion and achieve happiness in the afterlife (Ali). These are the two reasons why the Taliban has been appealing to the youth of the Pakistani madrassas.

In the past few years the Taliban insurgency has strengthened as a result of the recruits coming out of the madrassas. Out of the roughly 300,000 possible Taliban recruits from madrassas an estimate ten percent actually join the Taliban (Fair 25). The Taliban has run an

extensive network within madrassas to recruit young men for their insurgency. OEF and ISAF officials have noticed a notable increase in the Taliban's size and capabilities over the years. Taliban members that have been captured by coalition forces have been young fresh blood, and received some type of religious education in a Pakistani madrassa. Even before graduating from a madrassa the youth can be manipulated into aiding the Taliban militarily. The Taliban has been known to use still enrolled madrassa students as suicide bombers. Police in the Punjab region of Pakistan estimate around two thirds of the suicide bombers in that region have been educated in madrassas (Tavernise). Studies of suicide terrorist "found that generally suicide terrorist tend to have educational levels exceeding the societal man" (Fair 67).<sup>38</sup>

Not only are students supporting the Taliban militarily but they also help the Taliban by gaining political connections that aid their insurgency. Madrassas have a tradition of holding political significance through political parties. This connection between madrassas and political parties has helped the Taliban to gain a greater footing in establishing an insurgency throughout Afghanistan. Many madrassa officials are ranking members of their national or provincial chapters of religious parties. Their students serve as an important source of street power that can be mobilized in the service of their political benefactors. There is evidence that links students to involvement in demonstrations and rallies that aid the Taliban's efforts in Afghanistan (Fair 65). Madrassa students have military and political strength to their resurgence in Afghanistan.

There is a direct connection between Pakistani madrassas and the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. Many of the madrassas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region promote an education of indoctrination and military training that fosters a relationship between the Taliban and students. Due to the madrassa education, the Taliban is legitimized among the students and has become a prominent place for the Taliban to recruit within. Coalition forces have been

abruptly taken aback by the Taliban's increase in strength. Experts estimate that part of this increase in strength has been from all the new recruits that the Taliban has received from Pakistani madrassas. Madrassas in Pakistan have given new life to the Taliban's insurgency in Afghanistan. This madrassa and Taliban connection has broad implications for coalition forces fighting in the War in Afghanistan. Rising casualties, like the death of Cpl. Xiarhos, are why the connection between Pakistani madrassas and the Taliban is so important. The education received in madrassas located in Pakistan is contributing to the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Cpl. Nicholas G. Xiarhos was a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment stationed in Afghanistan. On July 23, 2009 Cpl. Xiarhos, along with fellow comrades Cpl. Trevor Paar, Cpl. Dominic Divila, and Lance Cpl. Jeremy S. Lasher, set out to recover a mine-resistant vehicle that had become stuck in a canal earlier during the day. The four Marines were returning from getting chains to tow the vehicle when a blast went off under their humvee. As a result of the incident, both Cpl. Xiarhos and Lance Cpl. Lasher lost their lives. Cpl. Paar suffered a severe head injury but survived. Cpl. Divila lost both of his legs and also survived. (Tyson)



<sup>2</sup> Please see Appendix A for a map of Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> On May 1, 2003, a few hours before former U.S. President George W. Bush declared “mission accomplished” in the War in Iraq, Rumsfeld held a press conference declaring that major operations in the War in Afghanistan were over.

<sup>4</sup>ISAF is a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led security and development mission in Afghanistan. It was established by the United Nations (UN) Security Council on December 20, 2001 (Security Council Resolution 1386) as envisioned by the Bonn Agreement under Annex I.

<sup>5</sup> The total number of casualties in 2009 has been greater than 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 combined (York). Please see Appendix E for a chart that compares casualties in the War in Afghanistan throughout the war’s eight years.

<sup>6</sup> These experts include Hussain Haqqani, Antonio Giustozzi, Nasreen Akhatar, and Mumtaz Ahmad.

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix B for a map of Pakistan

<sup>8</sup> Please see Appendix L for a detailed outline of conflict in Afghanistan.

<sup>9</sup> The Soviet led invasion of Afghanistan was one of the worse catastrophes to the country in modern history. This conflict resulted in a massive Afghan refugee crisis and a practically nonexistent educational system in the country. During the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan over 1 million Afghans were killed and another 5 million fled to Iran and Pakistan. In the 1980s, one out of two refugees in the world was an Afghan (Ruiz). In the 1990s only 650 schools were set in place throughout the country for every student in the country (Afghanistan Education).

<sup>10</sup>By the time a student graduates from a madrassa they are almost guaranteed employment. Students are offered job opportunities in a variety of religious settings, like mosques and madrassas. Graduates of madrassas are valuable comities to the Islamic faith and employment in the religious sector is easy for them to find after graduation.

<sup>11</sup>Before leaving power General Pervez Musharraf made many efforts to reform the madrassa system in Pakistan to appease the U.S. In 2002, Musharraf's government promised to reform madrassas by prosecuting the ones that preach violence, pushing the remaining ones towards moderation and integrating them into the public school system. By making these initiatives Pakistan would comply with the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 as an anti-terrorism measure. Musharraf announced an initiative called the Deeni Madaris Ordinance (Voluntary Registration and Regulation) of 2002, which aimed at dealing with the extremist influence over madrassas. The reform of this ordinance included (1) a five year, \$1 billion plan introduced in 2003 aimed at including modern, secular subjects, such as mathematics, on syllabi and bringing madrassas under scrutiny of the Education Ministry. (2) A USAID commitment of \$100 million to rehabilitate public schools. (3) A 2002 law requiring madrassas to audit their funding and foreign students to register with the government. The number of foreign religious students has since dropped from thousands to hundreds as the government has been issuing and renewing fewer visas to religious students. (4) Established model madrassas that would provide modern, useful education without promoting extremism.

However, many of Musharraf's commitments to reforming the madrassa system failed. Many madrassas simply refused to register with the government and remained at large within Pakistan. No one knows exactly how many madrassas are located throughout Pakistan. Even though the Pakistan Government claims to have stopped foreign students from attending school

in Pakistan there is little evidence to support this claim. Students who have been refused a visa can easily sneak over the Afghan-Pakistan border.

The new government of Pakistan, led by Asif Ali Zardari, has been faced with many of the same difficulties Musharraf's formed government encountered. Faced with perceived greater problems and internal strife within Pakistan the new government has once again allowed the priority of madrassa reform to appear near the end of its list. No new measures have been taken to deal with the madrassa problem.

<sup>12</sup>Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. This pillar calls for the giving of a small percentage of an individual's surplus wealth to charity. Typically Zakat is distributed among poor and needy Muslim individuals and causes. Zakat is namely distributed through organizations and not directly given to the needy.

<sup>13</sup> Darul Uloom Haqqania "one of the most popular [madrassas] (it includes most of the Afghani Taliban leadership among its alumni) – has a student body of 1500 boarding students and 1000 day students, from 6 years old upwards. Each year over 15,000 applicants from poor families vie for its 400 open spaces" (Singer). Please see appendix D for a more detailed profile on Darul Uloom Haqqania.

<sup>14</sup> Wahhabism is a sect of Islam founded by Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, an 18th century scholar from what is today known as Saudi Arabia, who advocated to purge Islam of what he considered innovations in Islam. It is often referred to as a sect within Sunni Islam. It has developed considerable influence in the Muslim world through the funding of mosques, schools and other means from Persian Gulf oil wealth. The promotion of Wahhabi has been due in large part to the government of Saudi Arabia (Murphy).

<sup>15</sup> Madrassas around the world follow a similar tradition as one another. In his book Pervez Hoodbhoy describes the daily routine of a madrassa for students. He states:

A daily routine is generally among the following pattern. A day starts with the Fajr prayers, followed by recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Regular classes commence soon after breakfast and continue until lunchtime. There are one or two classes after the Zohr prayers. Some institutions allow a siesta period after that. Students are allowed playtime of an hour or so after Asr prayers. The Maghreb prayers are followed by a lesson and dinner. The students are required to revise the day's learning after the Isha prayers before they go to bed around 11 p.m. (Hoodbhoy 230).

Students attending madrassas are said to be given modest meals. Hoodbhoy says the "students live, study, and sleep on the floor together in the same hall" and the students pack "off their bedding in a corner during the day" (Hoodbhoy 230). Teachers are described to have separate quarters than the students.

There are a variety of subject areas taught in madrassas that aim at focusing a student's understanding around the Islamic religion. Teachings are divided up into the revealed and rational sciences. Revealed sciences include the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, Qur'anic commentary, and Islamic jurisprudence (Haqqani). Rational sciences includes the study of the Arabic language and grammar to help understand the Qur'an, logic, rhetoric, and philosophy (Haqqani). Curriculum has a balanced emphasis on learning Arabic and Persian. Arabic is

deemed necessary to follow the original Islamic sources, and Persian is seen as necessary for statecraft (Hoodbhoy 223).

The majority of madrassas in Muslim South Asia teach a curriculum known as Dars-i-Nizami which was created in the eighteenth century. The Dars-i-Nizami curriculum has been “expunged by the more fundamentalist” (Hoodbhoy 223) beliefs. Deobandi thought has had the greatest influence in effecting the development of the Dars-i-Nizami curriculum. The complete Dars-i-Nizami curriculum runs from seven to nine years after the completion at the elementary level.

A madrassas private education offers free tuition, room and board contrary to public education which can be expensive for a family that wished to send their child to school. This madrassa system is traditionally supported by the community through Zakat contributions (Ahmad).

<sup>16</sup> “The vast majority of [madrassas] in Pakistan are associated with one of five wafaq” and “each wafaq represents one of five masalik” (Fair 56). The Maslak being referred to in this sentence is Sunni-Hanafi-Deobandi. For a detailed breakdown of the organization of madrassas in Pakistan please see Appendix M.

<sup>17</sup>Deobandi is widely practiced in Pakistan. The interpretation of Islam arose in response to British colonial rule in India. Derived from the Sunni tradition of Islam, followers are not strictly Sunni. Deoband is a town about 100 miles away from Delhi, India. While the Deobandi Tradition is much older, in 1867 a madrassa, named Dar-UI-Ulum, was formed in the town Deoband. The madrassa brought together “Muslims who were hostile to British rule and committed to a literal and austere interpretation if Islam” (Global Security). The Deobandi

school of thought has long sought to purify Islam by discarding supposedly un-Islamic accretions to the faith and reemphasizing the models established in the Qur'an and the customary practices of the Prophet Mohammed.

The Deobandi school of Islamic thinking believes that the reason why Islamic civilization has fallen behind western civilizations is because Islamic civilization have been seduced and corrupted by the West. Islam has stayed away from the "original pristine teaching of the prophet" (Global Security). There are three facets to the Deobandi Islamic tradition. Firstly, the Deobandi interpretation of Islam holds that a Muslims first loyalty is to their religion and secondarily to the state in which they are a citizen. Secondly, a Muslim follower can only recognize the religious frontiers of their ummah and not the national frontiers. Thirdly, Muslims have a sacred right and obligation to go to any country and wage jihad to protect the Muslims of that country.

The fundamentalist appeal of Deobandi inspired the Taliban movement. Most of the Taliban leadership was educated in Deobandi-influenced madrassas. Deobandi madrassas follow the Nizami Standard. For example, the Taliban shares similar views on the treatment of women, wariness of Western civilization and regarding Pakistan's minority Shi'a as non-Muslim (Global Security). According to the Taliban's version of Deobandi the adoption of local customs has lead to the dilution of the original laws laid down by the prophet. The Taliban places great emphasis on the Umma. A Muslim in Pakistan is the same as a Muslim in Afghanistan and the Umma should be defended in areas where they are the minority often leading to jihad to establish pristine Islam.

Gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia, who have propelled a Wahhabi worldview, have increasingly "co-opted the Deobandi movement in South Asia" (Global Security). Wahhabi

supporters have found similarities between Wahhabi and Deobandi traditions that have directed them to sustaining Deobandi influence.

<sup>18</sup> Please see Appendix F for a profile on Mullah Mohammad Omar

<sup>19</sup> Kandahar is the second largest city in Afghanistan.

<sup>20</sup> Senator Hank Brown was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs at the time of this comment.

<sup>21</sup>As of December 2008, according to the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), the Taliban has an estimated “presence” of “72%” in Afghanistan. For an enemy previously believed to be terminated, the Taliban is proving to be resilient against ISAF. A large part of their comeback has been due to the connection between the Taliban and madrassas in Pakistan.

<sup>22</sup> Please see Appendix G for a map of Taliban presences and strongholds along the Afghan-Pakistan border

<sup>23</sup> Shura in Arabic means “consultation.”

<sup>24</sup> There is limited consensus in Pakistan on how to deal with the Taliban. Several factions dominate politics in Pakistan and most have different views of the situation. The civilian government tends to be opposed to the Taliban and in favor of measurements to halt their advancements in Pakistan. Another major player in Pakistani politics is the military and it has traditionally has been inconsistent over its support for the Taliban. Most recently the military has been opposed to the Taliban’s participation in Pakistan. A third important fraction is the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and the organization has been a strong supporter of the Taliban. However, ISI has a stronger alliance with the military and is more likely to choose the military over the Taliban. Lack of consensus on how to deal with the Taliban among the different

fractions throughout Pakistan has allowed for the furthering of the problematic connection between the Taliban and madrassas.

<sup>25</sup> The areas identified of particular concern were the “Deobandi-controlled madrassas in the [FATA],” “Northern Balochistan” madrassas, and “Dawa schools run by Jamat-ud-Dawa”<sup>25</sup> as the main areas of specific distress (United States Department of State).

<sup>26</sup> There some unofficial figures that estimate the number of madrassas around 40,000.

<sup>27</sup> A Mullah is a Muslim man educated in Islamic theology and sacred law. It is the name given to local Islamic clerics or mosque leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many members of the Taliban hold the title of Mullah. One example is Mullah Mohammed Omar.

<sup>28</sup> One observer recounted a visit to a madrassa where the students were taught,

that the world was divided into believers and unbelievers in a black and white setting. Jews, Hindus and Christians were portrayed as evil up risers. The curriculum started to emphasize the need for Islamic warriors or jihadis to ‘liberate’ regions dominated by unbelievers as well as ‘purify’ Islamic nations in order to establish a single Islamic caliphate where pure Islam would be followed (Kapisthalam).

<sup>29</sup> An interview conducted by Imtiaz Ali, of the Jamestown Foundation, with Maulana sami ul-Haq is one such example. Ali asked “There were reports that the Taliban leadership had called for fresh reinforcements in connection with its spring offensive in Afghanistan. Is this true?” In response Maulana sami ul-Haq said:

These are just baseless reports. Had they called upon the madrassa students, they would have called us for the reinforcements or at



least we would know. The Taliban are not that organized. They are living in caves. They lack proper communication and logistics systems, and that is why they do not want new recruits. The Afghans themselves have risen up and they are fighting against American and NATO forces (Ali).

<sup>30</sup> Author Hussain Haqqani writes about an account he had with a student in a madrassa. He discloses:

In a basement room with plasterless walls adorned by a clock inscribed with 'God is Great' in Arabic, 9-year old Mohammed Tahir rocked back and forth and recited the same versus of the same verse of the Qur'an that had been instilled into my memory at the same age: 'Of all the communities raised among men you are the best, enjoying the good, forbidding the wrong, and believing in God.' But when I asked him to explain how he understood the passage, Tahir's interpretation was quite different from the quietist version taught to me. 'The Muslim community of believers is the best in the eyes of God, and we must make it the same in the eyes of men by force,' he said. 'We must fight the unbelievers and that includes those who carry Muslim names but have adopted the ways of unbelievers. When I grow up I intend to carry out jihad in every possible way (Haqqani 60).

Haqqani also elaborates that “Tahir does not believe that al Qaeda is responsible for September 11 because his teacher told him that the attacks were a conspiracy by Jews against the Taliban” and Tahir “considers Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden great Muslims, ‘for challenging the might of the unbelievers’” (Haqqani 60).

<sup>31</sup> Please see Appendix H and I for two tables of comparative student and teachers opinions between all the educational groups in Pakistan.

<sup>32</sup> The city of Khost is located on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan where many of the Taliban controlled madrassas are located.

<sup>33</sup> Haqqani Network is an independent insurgent group in Afghanistan and Pakistan that is closely allied with the Taliban. The group is led by Jalaluddin Haqqani. Haqqani, during the Taliban’s years in power, served as the Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs and governor of the Paktia Province. In 2001 he was named the Taliban’s military commander.

<sup>34</sup> ISI began funding and teaching military training at madrassa in an effort to help with Pakistan’s problem with India. Others also believe, like author Jones, “by the end of 1990s” when “the Taliban had established control over most of [Afghanistan]” they “received strong backing from Pakistan’s Directorate of [ISI], which assisted in the recruitment of members, and providing weapons, training, and technical assistance” (Jones 19).

<sup>35</sup> An example of this behavior from ISI has been tipping off Taliban forces about the location and movement of coalition forces, which undermine many anti-Taliban militant operations.

<sup>36</sup> A study conducted on civil wars and insurgencies between 1945 and 1999 by James Fearon and David Latin concluded, “that financially, organizationally, and politically weak central government rendered insurgencies more feasible and attractive due to weak local policing

or inept counterinsurgency practices” (Jones 15). Another study conducted by Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis of 151 cases over a 50 year period “found that effective governance is critical to ending civil wars” (Doyle 5). This study also argued that success “requires the provision of temporary security, the building of new institutions capable of resolving future conflict peacefully, and an economy capable of offering civilian employment to former soldiers and material progress to future soldiers” (Doyle 5) which is a lot along what the Taliban is trying to do for the youth coming out of madrassas. Many in Afghanistan still remember that the Taliban was able to succeed in establishing law and order throughout most of the country.

<sup>37</sup> Two separate public opinion poll conducted by the Asia Foundation in 2004 and 2006 found that Afghans were most concerned about governance failures (Jones). Poor governance increases the likelihood of an insurgency because the state’s security forces lack legitimacy and are unable to establish law and order.

<sup>38</sup> A societal man refers the average person in Afghanistan and Pakistan who is typically less educated versus a student who receives an education in a madrassa.

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