



The politics of Madrassa Education in Pakistan: Nexus with Militancy

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ABSTRACT

Madrassas play a very important role in an Islamic society. Besides imparting education, these religious seminaries also provide basic necessities to the deprived sections of society in Pakistan. However, since 2001, the credibility of madrassa education has been put into question since it has been alleged that Madrassas have links with militant organizations. Though, small in number as compared to private and public educational institutions, madrassas do perpetrate intolerance and hatred towards other sects and religion. However, the other side of the argument perceives this as oversimplification and overgeneralisation of a complex phenomenon. According to them, madrassas do not necessarily perpetrate terrorism since they play a very important role in Pakistan's religious and social life.

Keywords: Madrassas, education, educational institutions, Pakistan's religious and social life

Madrassa education is an indispensable part of a Muslim society and it forms a foundational basis of Islamic education. It is a significant contributor in imparting education to a large section of society and an important social institution across the Muslim world and is often described by proponents as the Muslim world's largest network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The term Madrassa has been derived from an Arabic word "darasa" which means to study. Madrassa in contemporary South Asia refers to a school that imparts Islamic knowledge¹ (Ali 2009). The word generally has two meanings in the South Asian context. "In its more common and colloquial usage, it simply means "school" and in its secondary meaning, a madrassa is an educational institution offering instructions in Islamic subjects, including, but not limited to Quran, the sayings (Hadith) of the Prophet Mohammed, jurisprudence (fiqh) and the law"² (Blanchard *et al.* 2008).

There are three categories of religious schools, firstly,

madrassa teaching from first to 10th grade, the *dar al-ulum*, the eleventh and twelfth, while the Jamia has university status³ (Malik, 2008: 1). The government of Pakistan uses "Madrassa" as a generic term for higher level Islamic institutions including Madrassa '*darululoom*' which means house of knowledge or high schools and Jamia university (NOREF, July 2011). The education system is organized in terms of the following levels and grades: "*ibtidaya*" which consists of the first to the fifth grades of primary education; "*mutawasitah*" consisting of the sixth to eighth grades of middle school; "*thanviyahe-ammah*" consisting of the ninth and tenth grades; "*thanviyah-e-kassah*" comprising the 11th and 12th grades; "*aliya*" refers to the university Bachelor's degree (consisting of the 13th and 14th years); "*alimiyah*" is the Master's degree (being the 15th and 16th years); and "*takmeel*" refers to advanced postgraduate education. The madrassas differ from the "*darulhifaz*" commonly called "*Quran schools*", teaching children elementary lessons in Islam, as well

as memorization and recitation of the Quran⁴ (NOREF, June 2011).

Role of Madrassas

The function of madrassa education has historically served a dual role in Pakistan. Firstly, it trains the next generation of Islamic scholars and clergy and secondly, apart from providing religious education, it often functions as a safety net for impoverished children or orphans by providing free room and board, along with religious education⁵ (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2011). Pakistan has been a country traditionally marked by extreme poverty and education has often taken a backseat to other issues. The government often cannot compete with madrassas because of their free education. Madrassas, in fact, provide an appealing alternative 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 religious education of better quality as compared to secular education⁶ (Warren, 2009). Homeless and displaced people are given sanctuary. Madrassas house thousands of poor people who otherwise lack access to formal education, also addressing the needs of their communities and serve an important communist role⁷ (ICG, 2002). According to the State Minister for Education's statement in February 2007, the number of religious institutions in Pakistan was almost equal to the total number of those run by the government. "Low quality formal education at state run institutions and poverty were major reasons for people sending children to religious seminaries, where free food and shelter were incentives"⁸ (HRC, 2008). According to George Looney (2012), "the major reasons for the popularity of madrassas in Pakistan include the fact that the country's public education is in shambles and many families cannot afford even the small fees that are charged. Expensive private schools are out of question for these families. Madrassas offer an attractive alternative free education, free meals, free school textbooks and even in some cases stipend. Though some middle class and rich families also send their children to madrassas for Quranic lessons and memorization, they are usually day students."⁹

Christine Fair however argues that the "poverty argument" holds little weight; while madrasas attract many students from low-income families, madrasa students are "not generally poorer than those students in public schools". Fair also finds that both those from the wealthiest and the poorest families are slightly overrepresented in the madrasa. For some, madrasa education is the preferred choice. "Madrassa education is valued because it teaches not only religious subjects, but also values and codes of conduct that are appreciated and sought after. We also often see that one child is enrolled in a madrasa, while their siblings are enrolled in state-run or private schools"¹⁰ (Fair, 2007). According to Z.S. Ahmed, "the appeal of madrasas lies not only in the low costs involved, but also in their pedagogy. Most madrasas go beyond theory and involve youngsters in action, such as protests, lectures and sermons." This differs a lot from the knowledge students obtain in other educational institutions, where pedagogy is limited to classroom teaching. This practical methodology of training influences students very quickly and gives them a sense of purpose; a feel for 'doing'. In doing this, radical groups are following the successful model used in communist revolutions across the world, from China to Cuba. As people become increasingly dependent on and integrated within the private social service system provided by these groups, the motivation to remain loyal to the State is diminished¹¹ (Ahmed, 2009).

Madrassas which were associated with conservatism, ossification and stagnation of Islam earlier are now seen as hotbeds of militant activities in the wake of 9/11 attacks. The series of terrorist attacks which have followed have their roots somewhere in the madarasas. Eg, 26/11, attack on Indian parliament, peshawar attack or the recent pulwama attack. It has been argued by various scholars that the type of education these religious seminaries impart generate intolerance and hatred for other religions and sects. According to International Crisis Group Report, The crux of the problem comes down the type of education the madrasa imparts. Education that creates barriers to modern knowledge, stifling creativity and breeding bigotry, has become the madrasas' defining feature. It is this foundation on which fundamentalism militant or otherwise is built. In

the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, Pakistani madrasa system of Islamic education has come under intense scrutiny. "The debate evokes images of jihad, warfare training, terrorism and an archaic system of education"¹² (ICG, 2002). While the earlier critiques of madrasa curriculum focused on its out-datedness, its lack of socio-political concerns and its failure to provide religio-intellectual leadership for Islamic revival, the primary emphasis of the post-9/11 debate has been on its alleged relationship with the rise of extremism and militancy. It has become conventional wisdom among a circle of scholars, journalists and policymakers to believe that there is an inherent relationship between madrasa curriculum and religious extremism, militancy, Talibanisation and terrorism.¹³

The Nexus between Madrasa and Militancy: Are they breeding Terrorism?

A lot of controversy has been surrounding over the madrasas on whether they are radicalizing and recruiting youth for militant groups ever since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Madaris have been blamed for all sorts of ills. Critics have denounced them as dens of terror, and as hatcheries for suicide bombers, and repositories of medievalism. These criticisms have focused on the few dozen Pakistani madaris that served as training grounds for jihadists fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Many of these jihadists went on to become foot soldiers in later campaigns, including those against Indian rule over Kashmir and against Shiite Muslims within Pakistan. "They also helped forge the Taliban and gave succor and support to Osama bin Laden. From this record, critics have put together a seemingly convincing charge sheet against madaris across the Muslim world. They extrapolate from this relatively small number of problem madaris in Pakistan and conclude that madaris breed fanatics."¹⁴ (Creative Associates International, 2008). Research has been done into the attitude and beliefs of students from madrasas and it has revealed the extent of harm these institutions have inflicted on the minds of many young Pakistani and Afghani boys. A study that gathered the views of madrasa students from Pakistan revealed that a fifteen-year-old Afghan refugee

expressed his desire to fight against infidels. Another student expressed hatred against USA and his eagerness to fight against Americans. His classmate articulated a similar sentiment: "I will dedicate my whole life for jihad. It is compulsory for Muslims. I will kill enemies of Islam"¹⁵ (Ahmed, 2009). However, according to many scholars like Saleem Ali, the militant madrasas that are involved in international jihad operations are relatively few as compared to sectarian madrasas¹⁶ (Ali, 2010). Marie Lall states that the western understanding of madrasas in Pakistan evokes 'terrorist schools' as they were set up (and supported by US money) to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan and which later provided the backbone to the Taliban regime. She says that this highly oversimplified description does not apply to 90 percent of the madrasas across Pakistan as most of them teach at primary level. There are different types of madrasas, most focusing on basic literacy and religious education and very few serve as religious universities which are divided along sectarian and political lines. She gives the example of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) "which is non sectarian and maintains madrasas distinct from the sectarian ones"¹⁷ (Lall, 2010: 106).

A survey conducted by Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies elucidates the fact that the Pakistani madrasas disagree with the notion that they are encouraging extremism in any form. Asked whether madrasas are a source of extremism, more than 79 percent replied in negative. They emphasized making a distinction between militant seminaries and 'normal' madrasas. "Eight percent of the respondents believe that some madrasas play a role in promoting extremism but also point out that such seminaries were close to the government of Pakistan and even received support from the West. Even those madrasas that identified extremism as a real problem refused to acknowledge that madrasas play a role in promoting it. On the contrary, they accused the United States, Israel and other western countries of terrorism and promoting extremist ideologies. Shia madrasas see terrorism at two levels, intra-sect militancy and global terrorism"¹⁸ (Rana, 2009). According to Z.S. Ahmed, the definition of Jihad has been distorted by extremists to manipulate young students for their own agendas. This has aggravated

conflicts not only between Pakistan and other countries, but also within the country; and has resulted in violence against minorities and conflicts between various sects of Islam. "Shia-Sunni differences in Pakistan have also been accentuated due to the training youth receive at sectarian madrasas. Pakistani madrasa students with an extremist mission have become primary soldiers in the internal sectarian conflicts that are increasingly turning violent"¹⁹ (Ahmed, 2009).

Salim H. Ali has categorized "jihad" into three possible categories: firstly, Domestic jihad which is against oppression and the reluctance of the state to allow for implementation of Islamic law. Secondly, Pan-Islamic jihad which is about helping fellow Muslims in need and preserve the vitality of the Ummah (Islamic body of adherents). Thirdly, he talks about Jihad to establish theological purity and prevent adulteration of Islamic doctrine. This form of jihad is mostly linked to madrassas in Pakistan because it is the primary motive of sectarianism. He gives the example of two concepts in Islamic tradition that are often misused and manipulated to motivate this form of jihad and indoctrinate the madrasa students. These are *murtad* and *fitnah*. He says that "usually, the indoctrination is not directly through the curriculum but peer interaction and mosque sermons"²⁰ (Ali, 2010: 80, 81).

Pakistan's madaris have attracted the attention of policymakers in the United States and elsewhere. "Pakistan's madaris are posited both to be incubators of militants in Pakistan and to be responsible for creating communities of support for militancy in Pakistan, South Asia, and beyond"²¹ (Christine, 2007). Searching for the roots of terrorism after 9/11, the world's attention inevitably and automatically turned to Pakistan, and to the religious schools in Pakistan, the "madrasas". There are strong historical as well as etymological links between the students of certain madrasas and the Taliban movement. The word Taliban, which literally means 'the seekers of knowledge' is also commonly used for the students of Islam. The movement emerged from a network of madrasas in Afghanistan and Pakistan which has contributed to madrasas being portrayed as 'terrorist factories'.

Several reports by think tanks and in the media claimed firm links between madrasas and militancy. Madrasas for many are the symbol of radical Islam and a central focus in a much broader debate on the relationship between Islam and militancy. According to Noref Report, the Taliban movement developed from a network of madrasas in Pakistan, and certain schools are known to have recruited directly for the Taliban. This has contributed to the portrayal of madrasas as institutions which pursue political agendas and are firmly linked to political parties and sectarian groups. "Based on the finding that Osama bin Laden had supported and recruited from madaris along Afghanistan-Pakistan tribal border area, the media characterized these schools as dangerous breeding grounds for terrorism; fanatical in their teachings; funded by wealthy Muslim conspiracies in the Middle East; opposed to rigorous scientific education; and resistant to participation in the modern world"²² (NPBRC, 2011). While there are instances to support these characterizations and the armed insurgency in Kashmir, it has been argued that they are misrepresentations (Creative Associates International, 2008). In this context, a survey conducted by Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies states that none of the madrassas said that they offered practical supporter of the Taliban movement, but 43 percent expressed moral support for Afghan Taliban, who they said were fighting against occupation forces. Only 19 percent agreed with the Taliban ideology. Support for Pakistani Taliban and militant groups was as high as 29 percent. Forty-nine percent of the respondents said that they did not support any militant organization, whereas 25 percent did not offer an opinion. Support for militant groups was higher among Deobandi madrassas as 57 percent admitted moral and ideological support for them but most of them were reluctant to admit any direct link with or practical support for them. None of the Shiamadrassas said they supported militant groups and only seven of the 30 Ahle Hadith madrassas admitted their support for militant group²³ (Rana, 2009).

According to International Crisis Group Report, recruited from the Deobandi seminaries in the Pashtun phenomenon, "the Taliban has drawn international community attention to the madrasa phenomenon.

Madrassas were already seen as “supply lines for jihad” in the Soviet Afghan war during General Zia-ul-Haq’s rule in the 1980s. Jihadi organisations, recruiting students from a section of these schools, are also held responsible for sectarian killings in Pakistan.” The report is of the view that violence in the name of religion neither originated at madrasas nor is their defining characteristic. Madrasas associated with jihad and sectarian and international terrorism are easily recognisable and must not be confused with those that are a normal part of Pakistani life. “Both types, however, pose different degrees of threats to Pakistan’s stability and international security. Militancy is only a part of the madrasas problem. The phenomenon of jihad is independent of madrasas and most of jihadis do not come from these schools. Projihad madrasas only play a supporting role, mainly as a recruiting ground for militant movements. Most madrasas do not impart military training or education but they do sow the seeds of extremism in the minds of the students. In the foundations of the traditional madrasa are the seeds of factional, political, religious, and cultural conflict”²⁴ (ICG, 2002).

Saleem H. Ali argues that the noble purpose of education and enlightenment for which madrassas were originally intended, has been challenged by various sectarian elements within Pakistan. There is very limited regulatory oversight of madrassas²⁵ (Ali, 2009). He conducted various interviews in this context. One of his papers have highlighted an interview with a ten year old Sunni Bareilvi sect in Pakistan in which all the answers given by the child reflected high degree of inclination towards his sect and hatred towards the other sect that is the Deobandi sect²⁶ (Ali, 2010: 77, 78). Similarly, Tariq Rahman also conducted same kind of research in which he highlighted the jihadi and violent approach of madrassa teachers towards other groups and religion²⁷ (Rahman, 2004). According to International Crisis Group Report, the jihadis of these madrasas also look inwards, fighting a jihad against sectarian rivals in Pakistan. “Splinter Deobandi groups, such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba, emerged during the Afghan jihad. With the spread of jihadi madrasas throughout Pakistan and a massive increase in their students, sectarian strife

has become endemic and increasingly violent”²⁸ (ICG, 2002). The Report says that as far as promotion of sectarianism is concerned, it was in the Zia years that Sunni-Shia divisions assumed an even more militant form. While Sunnis gained recruits from Saudi patronage and the Afghan jihad, Pakistani Shias were inspired by the 1979 Khomeini revolution. As Pakistan became a battle field for Arab-Iran disputes, Shia madrasas increased significantly. In 1983-84, there were 116, up from around 70 in 1979. The Ahle Hadith, the sect closest to the official Saudi creed, registered similar growth. From an insignificant minority, they established hundreds of madrasas in important commercial centres of the Punjab during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Since, the Ahle Hadith share with the Deobandis a deep hostility towards Shias, sectarian conflict has become more violent and intricate, posing a challenge to the stability of the Pakistani state²⁹ (ICG, 2002). According to the ICG report, “like all other Pakistani military governments, the Musharraf administration has also weakened secular and democratic political forces. Administrative and legal action against militant organizations has failed to dismantle a well-entrenched and widely spread terror infrastructure. All banned extremist groups persist with new labels, although old names are also still in use. The jihadi media is flourishing, and the leading figures of extremist Sunni organizations are free to preach their jihadi ideologies. The banned groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Jash-e-Mohammad appear to enjoy virtual immunity from the law. They have gained new avenues to propagate their militant ideas since the chief patrons of jihad, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and the Jamaat-e-Islami, have acquired prominent and powerful roles in Musharraf’s political structure.” The ICG report blaming the state of Pakistan of promoting sectarian violence is contrary to the claims made by Islamabad that the Musharraf regime is deadly against sectarianism and has taken numerous measures to cut various sectarian groups to their size.

Particularly since September 11, 2001, the government has launched a massive crackdown on various religious extremist groups, including sectarian groups and is pursuing a policy of ‘enlightened moderation.’ Have the

policy makers of Pakistan took any notice of the findings of IGC's report, its deliberations were ignored by them because "to a large extent the state structures of this country are not receptive to ideas and suggestions which can bring qualitative change in the society. Following a policy of divide and rule is their age-old practice and any deviation from such type of an approach is considered by the people at the helm of affairs as detrimental to their interests"³⁰ (Ahmar, 2012).

Madrasas are, by their very nature, mutually exclusive and based on sectarian identities. They are motivated by a duty to outnumber and dominate opponent sects. Students are educated and trained to counter arguments of opposing sects on matters of theology, jurisprudence and doctrines. The report argues that promoting a particular sect unavoidably means rejection of the others. "So, 'Radd' literature, the 'logical' refutation of the belief system of other sects, aimed at proving them infidels or apostates, is a main feature of the literature produced by madrasa-based parties.

In short, madrasa education and upbringing aim to indoctrinate with intolerance of other religious systems"³¹ (ICG, 2002). Ali Riaz and Tariq Rahman explain how and why madrasa education is linked to militancy and sectarianism. They discuss the various factors responsible and throw light on the curriculum of the madrasas. A.H. Nayyar says, "the madrasas have not surprisingly become a source of hate filled propaganda against other sects and the sectarian divide has become sharper and sharper." However, it appears according to Tariq Rahman, there was much more acrimonious theological debate amongst the shias and the sunnis themselves during British rule than is common nowadays. The militancy in sectarian conflicts cannot be attributed to the teaching in madrasas though of course the awareness of divergent beliefs does create the potential of negative bias against people of other beliefs"³² (Rahman, 2007).

Ali Riaz says, "the *raison d'être* of these organizations is their sectarian identity which cannot be used as an ideology for political mobilization domestically and earn legitimacy from Muslims elsewhere. Thus their appeal needed to be defined and articulated in a fashion

that could appeal to the greater Muslim population both domestically and internationally. A radicalised Islamism, presented as an anti-Western, anti-American ideology, was therefore constructed. Thus, for motivation and mobilization, jihad has been propounded as a legitimate concept to wage war against infidels"³³ (Ahmed, 2009).

A study conducted by Saleem H. Ali found evidence of a link between a large number of madrasas and sectarian violence, particularly in rural Punjab. Links with international terrorism were found in a few madrasas which were politically charged. However this is not as systematic a problem as the sectarianism fostered by madrasas. Analysis of police arrest data for sectarian attacks between Shias and Sunnis clearly shows that sectarian activity in areas of greater madrasa density per population size was found to be higher, including incidents of violent unrest. The number of madrasas has increased over a ten year period by around 30%, and in some areas they are competing with government and secular private schools for enrollment"³⁴ (Ali, 2009).

The curriculum used in madrasas instills a sense of superiority in the minds of students about Islam. This happens at the cost of the converse, inculcating respect for different belief systems. This results in generating hostility towards people of other religions"³⁵ (Ahmed, 2009). Institution of Defence and Strategic Studies states, "The 'infidels' are defined, discussed, understood, and demonised in madrasas within the global political frame and in terms of local community relations. This is where the sectarian literature becomes instrumental in Pakistani madrasas. Examination of the syllabi and curriculum of the Pakistani madrasas show that in the name of refutation, (what is called Radd in Urdu) pungent criticism of the other sects, hatred towards other sect members, and a siege mentality are imparted from the very beginning of the schooling. Texts, chosen either as mandatory or supplementary readings, disseminate opinions against other sects, sub-sects, views seen as heretical by the ulema, Western ideas may be the major formative influence on the minds of madrasa (sic) students. These discourses are then mingled with the concept of jihad and militancy." Children are taught that Muslims all around the world, especially in Pakistan, a country which has been created as the home of the

Muslims- are under siege from sinister forces which they must fight to the death"³⁶ (IDSS, 2005).

Regarding perpetration of jihadi culture and terrorism, International Crisis Group Report has been extremely vocal about the role of madrassas in Pakistan. The Pakistani officials deny any links with madrassas and militancy. The International crisis group says that the truth lies somewhere in between. It says that two types of madrasas took an active part in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. The first included those created specifically to produce jihadi literature, mobilise public opinion, and recruit and train jihadi forces, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami's Rabita madrasas. The second consisted of independent chains of madrasas, including those of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), which opposed Zia politically but were a partner in the Afghan jihad. The Pakistani military, especially the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), funnelled American and Arab money and was responsible for training the jihadis at camps inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan's tribal areas. Located in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan, which have close cultural, linguistic and sectarian affinity with Afghan Pashtuns, the schools of these predominantly Deobandi chains quickly espoused jihad. "Their numbers increased rapidly with the influx of Afghan refugees, patronage of the Pakistani military, and Arab financial aid. These madrasas did not necessarily conduct military training or provide arms to students but encouraged them to join the Mujahideen inside Afghanistan. Madrasas affiliated with the Haqqaniya chain and the JUI faction led by Fazlur Rahman also established networks for jihad in Pakistan's major urban centres"³⁷ (ICG, 2002).

Jihadi madrasas have served a dual purpose for the Pakistani military: as a tool in domestic politics and a strong, active support base for its defence policy, especially against India. The Kashmir jihad began as soon as the jihad in Afghanistan ended. As in Afghanistan, the credit for pioneering the campaign for the Kashmir jihad in Pakistan goes to the JI, the modernist ally of the military³⁸ (ICG, 2002).

The bloodshed at Islamabad's Lal Masjid in the year 2007 again turned the attention towards Pakistan's

madrassas which were accused of links to the militants within the country, in neighbouring Afghanistan and overseas in London. *Burqa*-clad students from a school within the mosque compound together with those from a male seminary in another part of the city initiated the confrontation with the government with an anti-vice campaign. Many male students linked to the mosque were believed to be militants and were killed when commandos stormed the mosque³⁹ (HRC, 2008).

There has been considerable disagreement amongst scholars about the role of educational institutions such as madrassas in perpetrating terrorism. In 2005, Peter Bergen and Swaty Pandey, in an influential series of articles, stated that concern over Islamic education was all a 'madrassa myth.' Basing their analysis on a controversial World Bank study about the actual number of madrassas in Pakistan, Bergen and Pandey had argued that "while madrassas are an important issue in education and development in the Muslim world, they are not and should not be considered a threat to the United States." This is because of their relatively small number and since terrorists who attacked the West had largely not been educated in madrassas. However, since many of the Swat militants and their minions have been traced back to madrassas, we can say that madrassas perpetrate militancy. As NATO supply lines are targeted by such militants in Pakistan, analysts are now also discovering that civil strife in the Frontier region of Pakistan can be just as dangerous for Western interests. According to Salim H. Ali, "madrassas are indeed a significant part of the conflict equation that needs to be considered dispassionately." He contests this viewpoint saying that though the absolute number of madrassas is a fraction of the total number of schools in Pakistan, their impact is still large in the most isolated parts of the country that have the highest potential for radicalization. He also adds that even though a vast majority of madrassas are not linked to any international terrorist organizations, they tend to perpetuate an exclusionary worldview both within Islamic sects and with reference to other Faiths⁴⁰ (Ali, 2009).

Violence and militancy are not only contributed by madrassas in Pakistan which only form a fraction of the education sector there, according to Rebecca

Winthrop and Corinne Graph. They argue that contrary to popular beliefs, madrassas have not risen to fill the gap in public education supply and have not been one of the primary causes of the rise in militancy. According to their analysis, they pose a fresh look at the connection between schools, and religious seminaries or the "madrassas," and the rising militancy across the country. Poor school performance across Pakistan would seem an obvious area of inquiry as a risk factor for conflict. Still the focus has been almost exclusively on madrassas and their role in the increasing violence. Outside Pakistan, relatively little attention has been given to whether and how the education sector as a whole maybe fueling violence, over and above the role of the minority of militant madrassas.

The analysis builds on the latest, cutting-edge research on the education sector in Pakistan, as well as on risk factors for conflict and militant recruitment and support. Madrassas are not nearly as prominent on Pakistan's educational landscape as previously thought, and due to their small numbers and conflicting data on militant recruitment, cannot be considered the primary source of militancy across the country. The report highlights robust international evidence that low enrollment rates, including primary and secondary, are a risk factor for violence. "While there is a lack of in-country empirical data on education and militancy, this research suggests that the potential to mitigate the risk of continued militancy in Pakistan through investments in education aimed at expanding access is real. Scholars of conflict agree that education is one of the few areas in which development policy can mitigate violence"⁴¹ (Winthroff and Graff, 2010).

The overarching conclusion that emerges from the analysis is that, although hard data on education and its links with militancy in Pakistan are limited, a thorough review of the evidence indicates that the education sector and low attainment rates most likely do enhance the risk of support for and direct involvement in militancy. Because education is a factor in militancy and is one of the few areas in which policy can have an impact on violence, policymakers should prioritize education reform as part of a strategy for promoting security and stability⁴² (Winthrop and Graff).

According to Christine Fair, contrary to popular belief, madrasah students are not all poor and madaris are not categorically tied to militancy. Madaris along with mosques and public proselytizing events (*tabligh*) are, however, "gathering" places where militant groups, religious ideologues, and potential recruits can interact. Religious leaders of some madaris issue edicts or fatwas that justify the use of violence, and a small number of madaris are used for militant training. "Limited evidence suggests that madrasah students more strongly support jihad than those of public or private school but public school students, who comprise 70% of Pakistan's enrolled students, also have high levels of support for violence"⁴³ (Fair, 2007). She argues that most authors likely have overestimated some risks associated with Pakistan's seminaries while underestimating or even failing to identify more empirically supportable threats associated with Pakistan's educational landscape. This disparity has arisen in part because analysts have tended to ask the wrong questions which focus narrowly upon the disputed connections between madaris and militancy and have failed to discriminate adequately across different militant organizations which have their own personal requirements. She seeks to reframe the policy debate surrounding the role of madaris in the production of militants in Pakistan and elsewhere. The main argument is that "analysts must examine the human capital requirements of specific tanzeems, taking into consideration the objectives, tactics, theatres, and "quality of terror" produced, as well as the preferred "target recruitment market" of each particular group in question. Necessarily, this implies that some groups pose more risks than others, based on the scope of their operations, ties with other organizations (e.g., al-Qaeda, Taliban), reach (local vs. global), and lethality of operations pursued (suicide terrorism vs. bazaarattacks)"⁴⁴ (Fair, 2007).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, having analysed various aspects of madrassa education in Pakistan, it can be indisputably said that madrassa education constitutes an inevitable sector of education in Pakistan. As discussed in the chapter, madrassas have been perceived as a crucial

medium for promoting extreme religious, sectarian, social and political views. Madarsa Reforms in this context do stand as an imperative need of the time. Education is a crucial factor which influences and shapes people's outlook towards society. It is both constructive and destructive if it inculcates hatred towards other communities and generates violence. In the context of Pakistan, there is dire need to reform the madrassas after so many successive terrorist attacks. Infact, after the recent Pulwama attack in India, which killed around 42 CRPF jawans of India, Pakistan has once again come under widespread condemnation by the international community and the terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad has claimed to be responsible for the attack. Simultaneously, madrassa education again is in question after such a horrendous incident which has shook the soul of India. India retaliated by striking back after few days in the Balakot region of Pakistan where the Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist camp was settled. It claimed to destroy the jihadi nest which also included madarsas which was nurturing the future terrorists.

However, Pakistan has denied any casualty and destruction by India by stating that the operation was a failure and has said that India has dropped bomb on the empty hillside. There has been no damage to infrastructure and human life as a result of Indian incursion. After much international pressure and criticism, Pakistan has taken control of a madrasa in Punjab province's Bahawalpur area, which is said to be the headquarters of terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad. However, having said all this, the major question is whether madrassas breed militancy. The reports published by the International Crisis Group have established a nexus between madrassas and militancy. However, these reports do not take a simplistic view of militancy among Muslims and do point out that Pakistan's military has strengthened the religious lobby in Pakistan of which madrassas are a part in its own political interests. It has been argued by ICG that most of these perceptions are a result of generalisations and oversimplification of a complex phenomenon. "Madrassas do indeed play a role in violence and conflict but they also have a key place in Pakistan's religious and social life"⁴⁵ (ICG, 2002).

The debate whether madrassa education is responsible for perpetrating militancy and jihad amongst students is partially true and partially untrue as most of the scholars argue since only few madrassas preach sectarian hatred and jihadi culture and they don't have any direct links with political, sectarian and militant organizations. Most scholars also argue that madrassa education is only a fraction of the total education structure in Pakistan so it cannot be a responsible factor. However, in this context, Salim Ali gives a highly convincing view," though the absolute number of madrassas is a fraction of the total number of schools in Pakistan, their impact is still large in the most isolated parts of the country that have the highest potential for radicalization. Besides this, even though a vast majority of madrassas are not linked to any international terrorist organizations, they tend to perpetuate an exclusionary worldview both within Islamic sects and with reference to other faiths"⁴⁶ (Ali, 2009).

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