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GLOBAL JIHAD, SECTARIANISM AND THE MADRASSAHS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, discussions on ties between Islamic religious educational institutions, namely *Madrassahs*, and radical militant groups have featured prominently in the western media. However, in the frenzied coverage of events, a vital question has been overlooked: why have Islamic educational institutions whose traditions date back thousands of years been transformed so drastically? This paper attempts to seek an answer to this question through an examination of Madrassahs in Pakistan, the second most populous Muslim country of the world. Pakistan has seen a phenomenal increase in Islamic religious schools since its independence. The paper argues that while encouragements from successive regimes, an unremitting flow of foreign funds (especially from Saudi Arabia), and the absence of governmental oversight are the principal factors in the dramatic rise in numbers, the transformation of Madrassahs into schools of militancy and the recruiting ground of 'global Jihadists' is intrinsically linked to the sectarianism prevalent in Pakistan. Sectarianism has been encouraged by various regimes over the last three decades and received substantial support from outside since 1979. The menace of sectarianism has not only made the country ungovernable but also increasingly turned it into a breeding ground for transnational terrorists.

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GLOBAL JIHAD, SECTARIANISM AND
THE MADRASSAHS IN PAKISTAN[1]

Religious education in Muslim countries has come under scrutiny after the tragic events of 9/11. In the wake of terrorist attacks discussions on ties between Islamic religious educational institutions, namely *Madrassahs*,[2] and radical militant groups have featured prominently in the media. Although none of the 19 hijackers who rammed passenger planes into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 came from Islamic educational institutions, media attention turned to madrassahs immediately after the terror attacks. The US media insist that Islamic religious schools are partly to blame, for they instil hatred in the minds of young people who later become the recruits of terrorist organizations.[3] Media discussions, especially in late-2001, relied on press reports like that of Jeffrey Goldberg (2000) who termed the Pakistani madrassahs as a means of "education of the holy warrior" and on essays such as that written by Jessica Stern in *Foreign Affairs* where she described these schools as emblematic of "Pakistan's jihad culture" (Stern 2000).

The so-called "War on Terrorism" launched by the US administration in response to 9/11 instantly identified Islamic educational institutions in general and madrassahs in particular as one of the principal battlegrounds.[4] George Tenet, then Director of the CIA, for example, commented on March 9, 2002 before the Senate Armed Services Committee that,

> "All of these challenges [the connection between terrorists and other enemies
> of this country; the weapons of mass destruction they seek to use against us;

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[1] An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 57th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, at Chicago, Illinois on March 31 2005. Research for the paper has been funded by Illinois State University under the Faculty Research Initiative Grants.

[2] The word "madrassah" means "center of learning" in Arabic. The Arabic plural form is "madaris", but for the sake of clarity I have used the English equivalent plural form "madrassahs" throughout this paper.

[3] One of the early reports on the connections between terrorism and madrassahs was broadcast by NPR on September 19, 2001 in its *Morning Edition*. Rob Gifford reported on this from Peshwar in Pakistan.

[4] Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* analyst, after visiting the now-infamous madrassah in Peshwar where Taliban leaders including Mullah Omar have been schooled, wrote on November 13, 2001 that 'the real war for peace in this region … is in the schools' (Friedman 2001).

and the social, economic, and political tensions across the world that they exploit in mobilising their followers] come together in parts of the Muslim world, and let me give you just one example. One of the places where they converge that has the greatest long-term impact on any society is its educational system. Primary and secondary education in parts of the Muslim world is often dominated by an interpretation of Islam that teaches intolerance and hatred. The graduates of these schools –"madrasas" (sic) - provide the foot soldiers for many of the Islamic militant groups that operate throughout the Muslim world."[5]

In similar vein US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, in a memo on October 16, 2003 asked, "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?"[6] Rumsfeld's concerns were echoed by his deputy Paul Wolfowitz in the same week. In a speech at Georgetown University on October 30, 2003 Wolfowitz described madrassahs as "schools that teach hatred, schools that teach terrorism" while providing free, "theologically extremist" teachings to "millions" of Muslim children.

The above comments of three prominent US officials demonstrate that the "link" between madrassahs and terrorism has become a matter of serious concern for the administration. They also demonstrate that the relationship between madrassah education and

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[5] "Worldwide Threat - Converging Dangers in a Post 9/11 World." Testimony of Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet Before the Senate Armed Services Committee,
19 March 2002. Available at http://archive.infopeace.de/msg00942.html, accessed June 5, 2004.
[6] Rumsfeld also asked "How do we stop those who are financing the radical madrassa schools?" [See http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm for full text of the memo; accessed on October 23, 2003]. Rumsfeld underscored the issue of the madrassah in an interview with Fox television on November 2, 2003. In response to a question from Brit Hume in regard to the memo, especially the lack of metrics for measuring how well the war on terror is going Rumsfeld replied, "And probably [the matrices} will always be lacking. In other words, it's probably not knowable how many people are being recruited. Somewhere in a jail in America, in a madrasa school that's taught by a radical cleric somewhere in one of 20 other countries of the world. We can't know how many there are, but what I do know, I think, is that we need to engage in that battle of ideas. We need to be out there encouraging people not to do that. Rather, they should be learning things like language or math or things that they can provide a living from." (For full transcript of the interview see http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20031102-secdef0837.html, accessed September 4, 2004).

terrorism is being viewed in a very simplistic manner drawing on perceptions derived from "generalisations (sic) and oversimplifications of a complex phenomenon" (ICG 2002: 1).

The most obvious link between terrorism and madrassah education came from then ruling regime of Afghanistan - the Taliban, who were the products of this type of Islamic education and had been providing a safe haven to Osama Bin Laden and his transnational terror network Al Qaeda at the time of the terrorist attacks on the US. The Taliban, described as followers of an extreme-conservative variation of Islamic thought, grew out of the madrassah education system in Pakistan during and after the civil war in Afghanistan (Rashid 2001).

In late 2001, as US forces were driving the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, discussions on the means to prevent a recurrence of this phenomenon became a staple of media. Reporters from around the globe descended on remote places of Pakistan and India to look for 'the birthplace' and/or the 'the spiritual home' of the Taliban (Fathers 2001) and analysts never tired of recommending actions to combat them in the long run. Both policy makers and media analysts maintained that the objectives, structures, functions and outcomes of madrassahs in Muslim countries needed [merited] closer examination. This led to extensive media reporting on madrassahs, but in similar fashion, with near-identical description of the madrassahs and their students: "Spartan classrooms in which children rocked back and forth reciting passages from the Koran" and "common to most of these schools … [are] students' and teachers' unwavering support for Osama bin Laden, and their hostility toward the West, Jews, Hindus, and particularly the United States" (Coulson 2004:3).[7] As these reports indicate there was unanimity of opinion with regard to the

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[7] For example, *Daily Telegraph* of London, September 27, 2001 [Report by Tim Boucher from Quetta]; *New York Times*, October 14, 2001 [Report by Rick Bragg]; *Christian Science Monitor*, October 18, 2001 [Report by Robert Marquand and others]; *New York Times Magazine*, October 21, 2001 [Report by Lynsey Addario]; *Nightline, ABC News*, October 25, 2001 [Commentary by Tina Babarovich from Quetta]; and *Outtherenews*, November 2001 [Report by Alex Smith].

principal cause for the emergence of these madrassahs: the Afghan War and the US support for these schools in the 1980s. This was echoed by reporters, analysts and to some extent by policy-makers, both in the United States and elsewhere. A report published in a Pakistani newspaper summarised it succinctly:

> It all started under the patronage of the United States in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Kabul. The then U.S. president, Jimmy Carter established a 500-million dollar fund for preparing mujahiden (sic) to fight against the occupying Soviet forces. Later on, 4 billion dollars were provided for this purpose and the project was given the title of "Operation Cyclone." It primarily aimed at promoting jehadi culture in Pakistan. Establishment of Islamic seminaries was an integral part of it. The results have been astonishing: the number of traditional religious schools in Pakistan rocketed from 700 in 1980 to 20,000 in 2000 (Javed 2003).

Although it is accurate to say that the Afghan War, especially the creation of the *Mujaheedin* (Holy Warriors) has played a significant role in the proliferation of madrassahs and the militarisation of these educational institutions in Pakistan, it is erroneous to suggest that this was the only cause for this phenomenon. The Taliban, the most violent products of these schools, are essentially one of the by-products of cold war rivalry between the West and the Soviet Union (Mary Anne Weaver 1998; Cooley 1999). While US policy-makers can indeed be credited as the mid-wife of this retrograde band of armed madrassah students, the Pakistani military and politicians deserve the distinct honour of being their guardian (Roy 2002).

Thus, in post 9/11, the once little known educational institutions called madrassahs, became a significant part of the public discourse, thanks to media coverage. But in this frenzied coverage the vital question as to why Islamic educational institutions whose traditions date back thousands of years (Metcalf 2002, 1982; Malik 1997, 1996) have been

transformed drastically has been overlooked and a simplistic, readymade, and already known answer has been repeated over time. It is in this context that this paper attempts to draw attention to another significant factor that contributed to the proliferation and militarisation of madrassahs in Pakistan: the menace of sectarianism.

It is my contention that the growth of madrassahs in Pakistan and the dramatic shift in their nature from seats of higher learning to citadels of militancy are caused by or related to a combination of factors beginning in 1979. The convergence of the Iranian revolution, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the CIA-ISI nexus to create a band of militant Islamist, the Islamisation program of the military regime of Ziaul Huq (1977- 1988) and the unremitting flow of external funding for ideology-based religious education have accelerated the process[8], while the sectarian nature of madrassah education in Pakistan provided the groundwork for this transformation. It is also necessary to remember that relationships between these factors are by no means one-way; instead they are symbiotic. Once they came in contact with each other, new dynamics emerged allowing mutual reinforcements, and enabling the process to gain further momentum.

Understanding the transformation of madrassah education in Pakistan requires discussions of all the above-mentioned factors within the political economy of Pakistan. However, in this paper I will discuss sectarianism and its role in the transformation process, for it has received very little attention in the media, in popular and academic discourses.

This paper is divided into three sections. In the first section I will discuss the quantitative growth of madrassahs in Pakistan since its independence in 1947. This will show that the number of madrassahs has grown not only during the Afghan War but also after the war. The second section will look at the relationship between madrassahs and various sects and sub-sects in Pakistan. This section will demonstrate how the madrassahs in Pakistan have

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[8] Encouragements from successive regimes and unremitting flow of foreign funds (especially from the Saudi Arabia) combining with the absence of governmental oversight have been cited as principal factors in the dramatic rise in numbers (European Commission 2002).

become the incubator of militancy and help us to answer to the question as to whether or not they are teaching the lessons of jihad. In the third and final section, I will draw some tentative conclusions.

The Quantity: The Known, the Unknown and the Unknowable

On March 20, 2003, Christina Rocca, US Assistant Secretary of State of South Asian Affairs, and Wendy J Chamberlin, Assistant Administrator of USAID appeared before the US House Committee on International Relations to discuss the US-Pakistan relationship. At one point of the hearing the issue of madrassahs came up and the following exchange took place between Representative Nick Smith of Michigan, Ms Rocca and Ms. Chamberlin.

> Mr. Smith: "Specifically, are there still madrasas (sic) out there? How many of them are there? How is that changing? I know it is a long process, but are we making progress?"
>
> Ms Rocca: There certainly are madrassahs out there. There are, I believe, 600, and somebody can jump on me if there are more than that.
>
> Ms. Chamberlin: Thousands.
>
> Ms. Rocca: Thousands in Pakistan? Okay. There are thousands in Pakistan, and they are still operating, and it is still a problem."[9]

This conversation, especially the huge difference between two US officials with regard to the estimated number of madrassahs in Pakistan is indicative of the problem one faces in ascertaining the exact number of Islamic seminaries in Pakistan. The number has varied widely: from an unbelievable low of 600 to a highly exaggerated 50,000.[10] Media

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[9] "The US and South Asia: Challenges and Opportunities for American Policy", Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 104th Congress, March 20, 2003. Serial No. 108-15, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2003. pp.31.
[10] The lowest figure is drawn from Rocca's statement and the highest figure is drawn from a press report in the *Financial Times* on February 8, 2003. Neither actually represents an informed guess.

reports and various studies, over the last three and a half years, have suggested a number between 8000 and 10,000. Consequently, the total number of students enrolled in these institutions and their share of the total school-going population have also varied. Reports have suggested the total number of students range from 650,000 to 7.5 million, and their share of total enrolment from 10 percent to 33 percent. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, reported the total number of madrassahs as 10,000 with an enrolment of 1.5 million students, or 10 percent of all students.[11] The most quoted numbers since 2002 have been drawn from the International Crisis Group (ICG) report which estimated 10,000 institutions and 1.5 million students representing 33 percent of total enrolment (ICG 2002:2). In a recent study, Andrabi et al have raised serious concerns about the reliability of these estimates of students enrolled. They argue that the total enrolment would be close to 1 percent of all school going children in Pakistan - roughly about 180,000 students (Andrabi et al 2005).

There are several reasons for the discrepancy in reported numbers. First, madrassahs in Pakistan are privately operated institutions. They are supervised by five boards (which will be discussed later) with very little monitoring by the government. Secondly, until recently there has been almost no academic interest in these institutions.[12] Discussions on madrassahs have been limited to Islamists and ulemas, who tend to generate polemical literature, primarily in defence of these institutions. Thus there has been very little empirical data available. Thirdly, the last government survey on madrassahs was conducted in 1988. Not only has the reliability of this data been suspect, there has been no follow-up to identify a trend. Theses shortcomings and the recent controversy notwithstanding, one can discern a pattern of growth in madrassahs from various reported figures over time. Given enormous interest in this issue post 9/11, a tendency to exaggerate the figures on the part of popular

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[11] *LA Times*, June 29, 2000 for number of students, and April 14, 2003 for the number of institutions and their share of total students.
[12] The Most notable exception to this is the seminal study of Jamal Malik (1996). Also notable are works of Tariq Rahman (2002), Qasim Zaman (2002).

media is understandable. But closer examination of various sources – before and after 2001 - reveal some consistency among these figures and a trend depicting a high rate of proliferation.

The areas that constitute present-day Pakistan had 137 madrassahs before the independence of the country. The number went up during the mid-1940s reaching 245 in 1947. Throughout the 1960s, while the country was run by military ruler Ayub Khan, who was often credited for having a secular outlook (Nasr 2001), there has been a remarkable increase in religious seminaries. The number reached 908 in 1971. However, the most dramatic increase occurred after 1979. In 1979 the total number was 1745, almost double than in 1975. Since then the rise has continued at a dramatic pace. The corresponding figures for 1988 and 1997 are 2861 and 5500, respectively. The 2003 figure stands at 7000 (Table 1).

Table 1
Madrassahs in Pakistan, 1947-2003

Year	Number of Madrassahs	Sources
Pre-1947	137	Nadhr Ahmad 1956
1947	245	IPS 2002:25, Mansoor 2003
1950	210	Ahmad 2004:107
1956	249	Malik 1996:180
1960	472	Ahmad 2004:107
1971	908	Ahmad 2004:107
1975	868	Nasir Jamal 1996, Dawn 31 Oct
1979	1745	Malik 1996:180; Ahmad 2004:107
1980	2056	IPS 2002:25
1982	1896	Malik 1996:180
1984	1953	Ahmad 2004:107
1986	2261	Ahmad 2004:107
1988	2861	IPS 2002, Mansoor 2003
1995	3906	ICG 2002:2
1997	5500	Shafqat 2002:139
2000	6761	IPS 2002:25, Mansoor 2003
2001	6870	Mansoor 2003
2003	7000	Mansoor 2003

Notes
1. IPS figures for 1960 are 464; Malik (1996:180) quoted the figure as 401

2. For 1988, Rahman (2004) stated the figure as 2801.
3. 1996 figures are reported as 8000 by Nasir Jamal (1996).
4. Ahmad (2004) states the figure for 2001 as 4335.
5. In 2002, press report suggested the number of _registered_ madrassahs is 6,582 (Ali 2002) while the Government sources claimed the number to be around 10,000 (ICG 2002:2).
6. Rahman (2004) insists that the total number in 2002 has been 9880. The figure is consistent with the government estimate.

Clearly, there has been a phenomenal increase in Islamic religious schools since independence. Between 1947 and 2001, a 2745 percent increase over 55 years, or on average 120 schools per year came into existence. From 1988 to 2000, the number has increased by 236 percent (Mansoor 2003). By Rashid's account, while 870 madrassahs were set up in the first 28 years of independence (1947-1975), about 1700 new madrassahs came into being in the 14 years between 1976 and 1990 (Rashid 2001). Nayyar (1998:232), however, provides different figures. According to his account, between 1947 and 1960, the number of new madrassahs established was 488; between 1960 and 1980 the number was 1445, and between 1980 and 1987 the number was 684 (Table 2). The regional breakdown shows that the largest number of madrassahs are located in the province of Punjab while North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan - two provinces bordering Afghanistan – have substantial numbers of madrassahs. The latter two provinces have seen more madrassahs being established between 1979 and 1988. In NWFP, the number of madrassahs has increased from 218 in 1979 to 678 in 1988. Corresponding figures for Balochistan are 135 in 1979 and 347 in 1988 (Table 3).

These figures and consequent trend confirm the conventional wisdom that the CIA-ISI nexus in support of the Afghan mujaheedin has been a major driving force in the proliferation of madrassahs in Pakistan during the 1980s. Andrabi et al, who are highly sceptical of the number of madrassah students suggested in various media, concur with this finding:

"The notion that the madrassa (sic) movement coincided with resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is supported by the 1988 data from the population census. The increase in the stock of religiously educated individuals starts with the cohort that came of age in 1979 (the year of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) and the largest increase is the cohort co-terminus with the rise of the Taliban. Combined with the fact that the largest enrolment percentage in Pakistan is in Pashtun belt bordering Afghanistan, this suggests events in neighbouring Afghanistan influence madrassa (sic) enrolment" (Andrabi et al 2005:20).

Table 2
New Madrassahs in Pakistan, 1947-1987
(Numbers in parentheses show the average number of new madrassahs per year)

	1947	**1947-1960**	**1960-1980**	**1980-1987**
Punjab	121	195 (15)	620 (31)	384 (55)
NWFP	59	87 (7)	426 (21)	106 (15)
Sindh	21	66 (5)	156 (8)	48 (7)
Balochistan	28	131 (10)	131 (5)	57 (8)
'Azad' Kashmir	4	4(.3)	39 (2)	29 (4)
Islamabad		1	26 (1)	20 (3)
Northern Areas	12	4 (.3)	47 (2)	40 (6)
Total				

Note: According to Rashid (2001), about 870 new madrassahs were set-up between 1947 and 1975, and about 1700 between 1976 and 1990.
Source: Nayyar 1998:232

Table 3
Regional Breakdown of Madrassahs, pre-1947 - 2000

	Pre-1947	**1950**	**1979**	**1982**	**1988**	**2000**
Punjab	87	137	1012	910	1320	3153
NWFP	20	31	218	572	678	1281
Sindh	19	25	380	277	291	905
Balochistan	7	11	135	59	347	692
'Azad' Kashmir	4	6	-	12	76	151
Islamabad	-	-		34	47	194
Northern Areas	-	-		32	102	185
Total	137	210	1745		2861	6561

This development was funded by the US taxpayers and the closest ally of the United States at that time – Saudi Arabia. Material support and encouragement came from the United States via the Pakistani government, especially its intelligence agency ISI (Inter Services Intelligence), and Saudi funds were disbursed through government channels and various non-governmental organisations.

But these statistics also raise two questions; firstly, why has there been a progressive growth of madrassahs in Pakistan? Secondly, how and why did the trend continue after the CIA abandoned its Afghanistan operations following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989?

The overall trend, depicting a consistent growth from 1947 through 2003, can be explained by looking at the educational sector of Pakistan. The lack of educational opportunities for the people of Pakistan is key to this steady growth. Public investment in human capital – health and education – has always been a low priority for the Pakistani ruling elites, both military and civil. Throughout the 1980s, for example, expenditure in the education sector remained below 2.5 percent of GNP. In the early 1980s, the share was significantly lower - less than 2 percent (Table 4). Owing to chronic economic crises and high defence expenditure, successive regimes have cut back on public education when the population has grown at a higher rate. Therefore, educational opportunities have remained beyond the reach of the majority of the population, especially those who live in rural areas and are economically disadvantaged. In contrast, the madrassahs, which not only provide schooling but lodging and food, have seemed an attractive alternative particularly for poorer families with a number of children. In recent years, Pakistan has seen a significant growth in

private schools. However, the cost and the location of these schools would prevent children from the poorer sections of society from enrolling.

Table 4
Public Expenditure in Education and Defense in Pakistan, 1981/82-1989/99
[as percentage of GNP]

Year	Education	Defense
1981/82	1.4	5.7
1982/83	1.5	6.4
1983/84	1.6	6.4
1984/85	1.8	6.7
1985/86	2.3	6.9
1986/87	2.4	7.2
1987/88	2.4	7.0
1988/89	2.1	6.6
1989/90	2.2	6.8
1990/91	2.1	6.3
1991/92	2.2	6.3
1992/93	2.4	6.0
1993/94	2.2	5.6
1994/95	2.4	5.5
1995/96	2.4	6.2
1996/97	2.5	6.5
1997/98	2.3	6.9
1998/99	2.2	7.1

Sources: Economic Survey of Pakistan, Various volumes

The other question as to how and why the high rate of growth of madrassahs continued throughout the country will lead us to the central issue of this paper: the role of sectarianism. I will argue that the absence of US support for the madrassahs in 1990s did not bring an end to the proliferation of madrassahs because by then they had already become the recruiting centre for various sectarian political forces in Pakistan and their international counterparts. I will also argue that this connection has been in the making for quite some time and came to fruition due to certain internal social factors. Furthermore, as I mentioned previously, once these various factors combined, a new dynamic emerged – allowing mutual reinforcements - and aided the process to gain further momentum.

Sectarianism and Madrasssahs:
Many are called and all are chosen

The sectarian divide along the Sunni – Shia line had existed in Pakistan before the partition of 1947 but did not feature prominently in socio-political life for two reasons; firstly, the Shia population was relatively small (about 15 percent), and secondly, the popular/folk Islamic tradition in the rural areas was accommodative of different rituals and practices as well as various sects and sub-sects. However, the divide acted as a major marker in the religious schooling system that began to flourish in colonial India in the 19th century, especially after the establishment of the Dar-ul Ulum Madrassah in Deoband (in present day Uttar Pradesh of India) in 1867.

Dar-ul Ulum, commonly known as Deoband Madrassah, established ten years after the "Indian Mutiny," was a calculated political response of the orthodox ulemas to the growing influence of the reformist liberal Muslim leaders who favoured English education and closer cooperation with the British colonial administration. Additionally, Deobandis were opposed to folk Islam, including Sufi traditions, and the Shia sect. The founders of Deoband, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi (1833-1877) and Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905), challenged the veracity of the Shia faith on many occasions and wrote extensively against it. The austere measures of the Deoband madrassah produced a reaction from within the adherents of Sunni Islam and by 1906, Imam Ahmad Reza Khan of Berelvi created a sub-sect called *Ahle Sunnat wal Jaamat* (commonly referred to as Berelvis). Although politically conservative they remained strong defenders of Sufi tradition. Inspired by puritan 18th century thinker Muhammad bin Wahhab of Saudi Arabia, *Ahle- Hadith* (commonly referred to as *Wahabbis*, or *Salafis*), the fourth major sect within Sunni tradition, emerged in India during the early 20th century.

Two points should be noted here: first that these divergent beliefs were propagated through madrassahs established in various parts of the country. Although these madrassahs remained organisationally autonomous, they maintained an affiliation to a central madrassah. Madrassahs of the Berelvi persuasion, for example, maintained a link with the madrassah in Berelvi. Secondly, leaders of these divergent schools of thought engaged in political activism from early on. Almost all of these groups participated in the anti-colonial movement in the early 20th century, but not on the same side. Their positions remained divergent and oppositional to each other. Deobandis, for example, opposed the Pakistan movement while Berelvis extended their support to the Muslim League. Over time the number of madrassahs increased and the networks gained numerical strengths.

These networks became institutionalised in Pakistan in 1959 as a reaction to the Ayub regime's (1958-1969) effort to reform the education sector. Ayub Khan attempted to establish government control over the sources of funding of these schools, known as *Waqf* [endowments]. Following the lead of the Ahle Hadith school of thought, who brought their madrassahs under the umbrella organization *Markaz-e-Jamiat-Ahle-Hadith* (later renamed, *Wafaq-al-Madaris-al-Salafia*) in 1955, other sub-sects organised similar boards in 1959. The Deobandis created *Wafaq al-Madaris al-Arabai*, Brelvis set up *Tanzim-al-Madaris Arabai*, and the Shias were grouped under the *Majlis-e-Nazarat-e shiah Madaris-e-Arabiah* (currently known as *Wafaq-al-Madaris (Shia) Pakistan).* By then an Islamist political party Jaamat-i-Islami (JI) under the leadership of Abul Ala Mowdudi - a prominent Islamist thinker – had become a significant political force.. Consequently, the JI began establishing madrassahs of its persuasion to popularise the ideas of Mowdudi.[13] With the exception of the madrassahs affiliated with the JI, these networks were yet to become directly involved in political activism, though they opposed the reform measures of the government.

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[13] The madrassahs associated with the JI formed their separate board in 1983 named *Rabat-ul-Madaris al Islamia*.

However, the situation changed during the Bhutto regime (1972-1977) when these networks succeeded in thwarting the government initiative to 'nationalise' the madrassahs at a time when the government took control of the entire education sector. The regime's duplicitous stance on the role of Islam in politics – declaring Pakistan an Islamic Republic, Islam a state religion, declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim and the frequent use of Islamic rhetoric on the one hand, while trying to contain political activism of the religio-political forces on the other – gave the Islamist political parties enough reason to mount a strong opposition to the regime. This created opportunities for the marginalized ulemas to return to the limelight through the political parties. The ulema - political parties' confluence became the core of the post-election anti-government alliance in 1977. The movement not only pressed for democratisation but also for Islamisation of society, as the declared aim of the alliance was to achieve *Nizam-e-Mustapha* (the system of Prophet Muhammad). The madrassah networks of the Deobandi persuasion (affiliated with the political party Jaamat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam - JUI), and those affiliated with JI, provided foot soldiers for street agitation.

These developments, especially the direct involvement of madrassah teachers and students in politics, shaped the dramatic transformation that came after 1979. Two events - the Iranian revolution in February and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in December - served as the turning point. These two external factors were matched with the on-going Islamisation efforts of Zia-ul-Huq - the new military ruler of Pakistan, who came to power through a coup d'etat in 1977, strengthened the Islamic Ideology Council in the same year, revitalised the religious ministry, appointed the leaders of JI as his advisors in 1978 and declared himself the 'soldier of Islam.' In the domestic political arena, the monopoly of the JI over Islamist politics was challenged by the JUI, an organisation of the Deobandi persuasion whose leaders were closely associated with the madrassahs.

The Iranian revolution enhanced the sectarian consciousness of the Shia population in Pakistan, helped them emphasise their Shia identity, encouraged assertiveness and emboldened their aspiration to gain political power. Both ideological and material support from Iran began to flow in and influence the activism of the Pakistani Shia community (Zahab 2002; Nasr 2002). The demonstration of the new found power of the Shia community was both a defensive act and a pre-emptive measure. Since the declaration of the Ahmadiyya movement to be non-Muslim in 1973, the Shia community feared a similar fate. Thus their show of force was an outgrowth of that fear. It was also a pre-emptive bid - to create a space for themselves in domestic politics. As the political landscape was undergoing a change, the Shia community was trying to claim a stake in it. The formation of the *Tahrik-i-Jafariai Pakistan* (TIJ, Pakistan's Shia Movement) and their militant student wing (*Ithna Ashariaya Student Organization* - ISO, Twelver Shia Student Movement) in 1979 testifies to this. Shias in Pakistan successfully challenged the Zia-ul-Huq regime on the *Zakat* Ordinance and secured a victory. The growing strengths of the Shia population irked the Sunnis as well as two regional powers − Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Iraq was at that time engaged in a bloody war with Iran with the support of the West, especially the United States. For the Saudis, the primary challenge was to contain the Iranian brand of Islamism within Iran by hardening Sunni identity in countries around Iran and through building a 'Sunni wall' around Iran (Nasr 2002:92). To do so, they began providing funds to madrassahs of the *Ahle Hadith* persuasion as a counterweight. The military regime of Pakistan, plagued with a crisis of legitimacy, chose to support the various Sunni institutions and madrassahs. Soon it became clear that the primary beneficiary of these programs was the Deobandi institutions. JI, a political force to be reckoned with, intensified its drive to recruit new adherents from madrassahs as well as other educational institutions.

The Soviet invasion, and the subsequent decision of the US to provide funds to Pakistani authorities, especially the ISI, to create a radical Islamist international brigade to fight the Soviet army worsened the already volatile sectarian relationship in Pakistan and militarised these groups. Various groups within the Sunni school of thought organized their own parties and militias. There are too many examples to be discussed at length. But a few merit mention by name. The JUI, of Deobandi persuasion, organised the *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP, the Army of the Companions of Prophet) in 1985 and later the *Lasker-i-Jhangvi* (LJ, Army of Jhangvi), while the adherents of Ahle Hadith school of thought organised the *Lashker-i-Taiba* in 1987. Shia activists organised their militia in 1991 under the banner of *Sipah-i-Muhmmad Pakistan* (SMP, Army of Muhammad – Pakistan).

Throughout the Afghan war, Islamist parties, with their bases in madrassahs, vied for state patronage and financial support (Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7 document the growth of the madrassahs by sects and regions). This resulted in the fragmentation of Islamist political parties, and enhanced the role of religious leaders who organised madrassahs to increase their support bases and political clout (Shafqat 2002). The Government-controlled *Zakat Fund* and US money was the prize they went after, but to increase their shares of the pie they had to marginalize their opponents ideologically, dwarf them numerically, and if necessary, annihilate them physically. All of these required foot soldiers and the madrassahs became the recruiting centre with these objectives in view. The end of the war removed the *cause celebre*. But by then these political leaders, their followers and the Pakistani political system have become hostage to this tendency. This is why despite the end of the Afghan war, not only have these organisations survived; they flourished. The in-fighting among the various groups in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal and the continued struggle of the Taliban for power provided these organisations with much-needed justification and lent legitimacy to their functioning.

Table 5
Regional and Sect-wise classifications of Madrassahs, 1988

	Deobandi	Brelvi	Ahle-Hadith	Shia	Other	Total
Punjab	590	548	118	21	43	1320
NWFP	631	32	5	2	8	678
Sindh	208	61	6	10	6	291
Balochistan	278	34	3	1	31	347
A.J. Kashmir	51	20	2	-	3	76
Islamabad	22	20	-	2	3	47
Northern Areas	60	2	27	11	2	102
Total	1840	717	161	47	96	2861

Source: GOP, 1988, The Report classified JI madrassahs as "other".

Table 6
Sect-wise classifications of Madrassahs, 1960 - 2002

	Deobandi	Brelvi	Ahle-Hadith	Shia	JI	Unknown	Total
1960	233	98	55	18	13	55	
1971	292	123	47	15	41	390	
1979	354	267	126	41	57	900	
1984	1097	557	76	76	107		
1988	1840	717	161	47	96		2861
2002	7000	1585	376	419	500		9880

Notes:
1. Total numbers for 1960, 1971, 1979 and 1984 may not be consistent with Table 1 for these figures are derived from the respective Madrassah Boards, and affiliation of a large number of madrassahs remain unidentified.
2. 1988 figures from GOP, 1988; and 2002 figures are drawn from the report of Sindh Police published in *Dawn* 16 January 2003.

Table 7
Sect-Wise increase in Madrassahs, 1988-2000
(In percentage)

Deobandi	8
Barelvi	90
Ahle-Hadith	93
Shia	532
Others	Not Known
Total	136

Source: Khalid 2002.

By 1996, when the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, these organisations, with the active support of the Pakistani government, became the warehouse of militant supplies for the Kashmir conflict. The success of the Mujaheedin in driving out the Soviets and the Taliban in capturing the Afghan state created an illusion among a section of the Pakistani policy-makers that similar success could be achieved in Indian-held Kashmir.

The fundamental problem was that the raison d'etre of these organisations is their sectarian identity which cannot be used as an ideology for political mobilisation 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' (Shafqat 2002:138-9).

The 'infidels' are defined, discussed, understood, and demonised in madrassahs within the global political frame and in terms of local community relations. This is where the sectarian literature becomes instrumental in Pakistani madrassahs. Examination of the syllabi and curriculum of the Pakistani madrassahs 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 madrassa (sic) students" (Rahman 2004:8). 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. "What mental space can remain for this child's innocence when he or she must learn to make speeches on jihad and martyrdom? What scope exists for being tolerant and accepting beliefs other than your own?"[14]

Conclusion

In the heyday of the Afghan war, USAID funded a project for writing and printing books for elementary schools established in refugee camps in Pakistan for Afghan children. The University of Nebraska, Omaha (UNO) oversaw the US$50 million contract with the Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA), a group approved by the Pakistani government and various Mujaheedin factions. These books were then distributed and used by the educators in Pakistan and, after the Soviet withdrawal, in Afghanistan. These books were not only replete with pictures of Kalashnikovs but also taught the children the Persian alphabet and basic mathematics; in an unusual way. The first-grade language arts books introduced the alphabet: The letter *Alif* is for Allah [Allah is one]; *Bi* is for baba (father) [Baba goes to the mosque]; …The letter *Jim* is for Jihad [jihad is an obligation. My mom went to jihad. Our brother gave water to Mujaheedin]." A fourth-grade mathematics textbook posed this problem:

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[14] This is a question eminent Pakistani educationist Parvez Hoodbhoy asked in regard to the Pakistani schools in general. They are more pertinent to the madrassahs and their subjects.

The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3200 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?(Davis 2002:90)

If one is looking for similar examples in the texts currently used in the Pakistani madrassahs, he/she may be disappointed, for the madrassah texts do not preach the jihad in this fashion anymore. But should one spend time listening to madrassah teachers' speech; it may not be too difficult to find examples akin to the abovementioned. But more importantly, one must see education in context. In a violent social context where sectarian identity has become militarised, the negative bias created through the texts used in madrassahs and vilification of other beliefs regularly through speeches is bound to produce anger and militancy. This militancy is then linked to the purification of one's faith and belief and the greater good of the Muslim community through, what is described to them as, 'jihad'.

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