

Have Pakistanis Forgotten Their Sufi Traditions?

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Have Pakistanis Forgotten Their Sufi Traditions?

The institution of madrasas or Islamic schools have a long history in undivided India going back to the sixteenth century as tolerant progressive schools. Their degeneration is a reflection of historical events, US foreign policy in need of reform, and also a lack of institutional alternatives for free public education in Pakistan. Rohan Bedi, author of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Singapore publication Money Laundering Controls and Prevention and senior AML implementation manager of a leading international bank explains.ⁱⁱ

In the sixteenth century during the Mughal emperor Akbar's time the curriculum in Indian madrasas blended the teachings of Islam and Hinduism. Hindu and Muslim students would together study the Koran (in Arabic), the Sufi poetry of Sa'adi (in Persian), and the philosophy of Vedanta (in Sanskrit), as well as ethics, astronomy, medicine, logic, history and the natural sciences.

Historically, 'many of the most brilliant Hindu thinkers, were the products of madrasas.'

Many of the most brilliant Hindu thinkers, including, for example, the great reformer Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), were the products of madrasas.ⁱ

1. Historical Shift in Approach

In 1858, after the deposition of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, the self-confidence of the Muslim community in India was shaken.

Disillusioned scholars founded an influential but Wahhabi-like madrasa at Deoband, a hundred miles north of the former Mughal capital in Delhi. Isolated and dejected, the founders reacted against the perceived degenerate ways of the old elite and went back to Koranic basics.² The new madrasa rigorously purged all Hindu/ European influences from the curriculum. Unfortunately it was these puritanical Deobandi madrasas that spread throughout north India and Pakistan in the twentieth century. The Pakistani madrasas particularly benefited from *the patronage of General Zia ul-Haq and his Saudi allies in the 1980s.*

Ironically, the US also played an important part in spreading these Deobandi madrasas in order to use the students as soldiers in the Afghanistan jihad (Islamic holy war) against the Soviets. It is reported that the CIA financed the production by the USAID (US Agency for International Development) of some notably bloodthirsty madrasa textbooks filled "with violent images and militant Islamic teachings." Estimates

¹ The Week, 11 December 2005

² The Week, 11 December 2005

suggest that the US spent over US\$7 billion to create an effective Mujahideen (Islamic guerrilla warriors or jihadists) force. Osama bin Laden the Saudi Billionaire, and the United States shared a common objective, in fighting the Soviets. While the Americans were concerned only with winning the war in Afghanistan and defeating the Soviet Union, the Saudis had ideological and sectarian aims. *The seed for 9/11 had been planted by the US themselves.*

In a sub-continent where most of the Muslim population are converts from Hinduism, the mental and cultural gap between the two communities was enhanced through the Deobandi madrasas. Fortunately, the Deobandi school did not take a violent turn in India and evolved under the secular traditions of India unlike Pakistan where the schools were used to recruit anti-Soviet fighters.

2. Pakistani Madrasas

The number of Pakistani madrasas has grown from 250 in 1947 to around 10,000 in 2002 with over 1,500,000 students attending them.³ Currently there are 13,000-15,000 madrasas with the highest concentration and highest rate of growth in number of schools in Southern Punjab.

The Saudi Angle

The primary reason for the exponential growth of Pakistani madrasas has been the access to foreign funding, primarily from Saudi Arabia but other foreign sources such as the US have also been common. The Saudi largess had more to do with domestic politics than altruism. The internal regimes stability and legitimacy rests in part on supporting local Mullahs (clergy) by funding their projects through the use of Islamic charities. The regimes support rests on one key pillar - the support and propagation of Wahhabi Islam, a fundamentalist form of Islam, both internally and externally. After the oil price

boom of the 1970's the Saudis were able to support this effort, spending between US\$3 and US\$4 billion a year to support radical Islamic activities, The Saudis admit that the cumulative support has reached as much as US\$70 billion.⁴

A fellow at the Center for Security Policy, suggests that as much as three-quarters (75%) of all madrasa funding comes from abroad, and points to Saudi Arabia as by far the largest foreign contributor.⁵ The support for radicals is not confined to Riyadh. Teheran has also been spending its monies to spread its interpretation of Shiaism across the world, which has lead to a virtual proxy war between Teheran and Riyadh in Pakistan. Funds have also come from Libya, Iraq and several other Gulf countries, creating an intricately nuanced web of conflict. A 2002 study by the International Crisis Group (ICG) adds that Pakistani expatriates are another significant source of cash.

Starting in the 1980's, the four largest Wahhabi front organizations⁶ - the World Muslim League (WML), the Al Haramain Foundation, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) - became the main sponsors of Deobandi seminaries and jihadist organizations in Pakistan, as well as of the most extreme of the Afghan resistance groups and later of the Taliban and al Qaeda (al Qaeda was also funded by private donors). The growth in Wahhabi groups in Pakistan continues today, at a very rapid pace.⁷

'In Pakistan, so much Saudi money poured in that a mid-level Pakistani jihadist could make seven times the country's average wage. Jihad had become a global industry, bankrolled by the Saudis. US intelligence officials knew about

⁴ 'The Pakistani Time Bomb', Alex Alexiev, Center for Security Policy, *Commentary*, March 2003

⁵ "Education and Indoctrination in the Moslem World" Andrew Coulson, Policy Analysis, March 2004

⁶ "Contrary to Saudi propaganda and Western reporting, these foundations are not "private and charitable" but invariably state-controlled and-financed." Reference – 'The Pakistani Time Bomb' (Foot Note 5)

⁷ 'The Pakistani Time Bomb', Alex Alexiev, Center for Security Policy, *Commentary*, March 2003

³ Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

Saudi Arabia's role in funding terrorism by 1996, yet for years Washington did almost nothing to stop it. Examining the Saudi role in terrorism, a senior intelligence analyst says, was "virtually taboo." Saudi largess encouraged US officials to look the other way, some veteran intelligence officers say. Billions of dollars in contracts, grants, and salaries have gone to a broad range of former U.S. officials who had dealt with the Saudis: ambassadors, CIA station chiefs, even cabinet secretaries.⁸

Finally, the Wahhabi/Deobandi symbiosis extends beyond Pakistan. With the help of Saudi money, Deobandi and Jamiat Ahle Hadith clergy and supporters have increasingly taken over the mosques of Great Britain's 750,000 Pakistani Muslims and steered them in an extremist direction. As a result, the United Kingdom has become a major source of funding for terrorist Pakistani groups.⁹ In Indonesia, the Bali bombings were the work of the Lashkar-i Jihad movement that emerged from a group of Saudi-funded madrasas. Saudi-funded charities have been implicated in backing jihadist movements in some 20 countries¹⁰.

Sect in Pakistan	Population %	Madrasa Numbers ¹¹	Madrasas % & Brand of Islam
Shia (Shiite)	20	500	4 (Mixed tending to Puritanical)
Sunni- Ahle-Hadith (Salafi)	4	400	3 (Puritanical)(12)
Sunni(Deobandi)	15	8351 (incl. branches)	64 (Puritanical) ¹²
Sunni Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) ¹³	Not known	700	6 (Extreme) (12)
Sunni (Barelvi)	60	1700	13 (Moderate)

⁸ The Saudi Connection - How billions in oil money spawned a global terror network, David E. Kaplan, U.S. News, December 2003

⁹ 'The Pakistani Time Bomb', Alex Alexiev, Center for Security Policy, *Commentary*, March 2003

¹⁰ 'Hearts, Minds, and Dollars', David E. Kaplan, U.S. News, 25 April 2005

¹¹ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

¹² Around 10-15% overall preach violent Jihad/ a few provide military training

¹³ The Sunni Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) avoids sectarian tags; its madrasas are the pioneers of jihad

Independent (not affiliated to any clergy union)		1349	10 (Unknown)
TOTAL		13,000	100

While the Wahhabis make up only 2% of the world's population, they have used their oil revenues to suppress/eradicate the moderate and tolerant Sufi philosophy. The Saudis now dominate as much as 95 per cent of Arabic-language media and 80 per cent of the mosques in the US are controlled by Wahhabi Imams (clergy). Saudi oil wealth has both promoted the theological environment that has allowed the ideas of groups such as al Qaeda to flourish, *while also funding them directly*.¹⁴

As a direct result of this Saudi influence, a growing number of Muslims internationally have been taught a story of Islamic tradition which completely excludes Sufism, justifies violence and breeds a strong dislike towards non-Muslims.

Quality of Education

The madrasas are today a parallel education system catering for a significant proportion of Pakistani children. While there are some madrasas in Pakistan that are well-run schools teaching both Western and Islamic subjects side-by-side, a large number have an outdated curriculum. The emphasis is on rote learning rather than a critical study of the Koran. Considerable prestige is still attached to

becoming a *haiiz* ie, knowing the Koran by heart. These madrasas do not teach the philosophy of Islam, nor the literature but focus on the

Some 60% of Pakistanis are 'Barelvis' who have a moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam with only 13% of the madrasas

Over 70% of the madrasas preach the brand of the 19% 'Deobandi-Salafi-JI'

¹⁴ 'The terror the West cannot face', William Dalrymple, 3 July 2004

rules/traditions of Islam and the life/sayings of the Prophet (the Koran, hadith (sayings of the Prophet and his companions) and fiqh (Islamic law)). In many the world view propagated is of a Zionist-Christian-Hindu conspiracy to undermine the Islamic world. These conspiracy theories are used to explain away problems without carefully analysing the real roots of the problems, and thereby absolving Muslims of any responsibility in the matter. Most ulema (Muslim Islamic jurists responsible for interpreting the Sharia (Islamic law)) imagine that if a student internalises the Koran and the teachings of the sect, all the personal and social problems would be automatically solved. In some madrasas, the ulema may be blindly translating the Fatwas of a Saudi cleric without taking the social context into account, which would require different responses on a range of issues. These factors, along with the lack of exposure to the social sciences and to the sciences, allows these madrasas to graduate simple minded students, unable to fit into a modern, plural society.

Those that do teach some non-religious subjects rely on ancient sources. In some Pakistani madrasas, for example, medicine is taught through a text written in the eleventh century.

There are some Sunni-Barelvi madrasas – the Minhajul Qu’ran schools that have dropped the emphasis on religious studies and students can opt for this only after ten years of normal modern education. This is a good model that the government should consider making other madrasas adopt.

After the events of September 11, President Musharraf has commenced a reform process of the madrasas backed by US funding, albeit this is a long-term project and for now the Pakistani government is not taking the hard road on many issues.

3. Indian Madrasas

While India was originally the home of the Deobandi madrasas, such colleges in India have

no record of producing violent Islamists, and are strictly apolitical and quietist. The leader of the campus of Darul Uloom in Deoband, India, said in a 2002 interview ‘We are Indians first and then Muslims’. However, their educational agendas are in need of reform and the approach of the ulema in ‘looking at all questions and offering solutions simply in terms of theology and jurisprudence, divorced from empirical social realities’¹⁵ is very much prevalent in most of the puritanical Indian madrasas.

Some Indian madrasas can be forward-looking and dynamic. In Kerala, there is a chain of educational institutions run by the Mujahid group of professionals and businessmen that aims to bridge the differences between modern forms of knowledge and the Islamic worldview.

4. Sectarian Violence

Sectarian conflict in Pakistan is the direct consequence of state policies of Islamisation and marginalisation of secular democratic forces¹⁶. Pakistan is a land of strife between the Shias (20%) and Deobandi/Salafi Sunnis (19%) and also another small sect called the Ahmedis who were declared non-Muslims in the 70s. The 9/11 Commission Report, July 2004 states “The Baluchistan region of Pakistan (KSM’s ethnic home) and the sprawling city of Karachi remain centers of Islamist extremism where the U.S. and Pakistani security and intelligence presence has been weak.” Other regions include the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Waziristan.

With 68 per cent of its population living in rural areas, Pakistani Punjab is still an agrarian society. Except for some rural pockets in southern Punjab and around industrial towns such as Gujranwala and Faisalabad, militant sectarianism has not taken root in the villages.

¹⁵ ‘Madrasa Reforms in India’, The South Asian, January 06 2005

¹⁶ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

But urban areas are hard hit by sectarianism and awash in jihadi movements.¹⁷

Roughly 75% of all members of al-Qaeda captured by the US and its allies since 2001 have been seized in the borderlands through a series of Pakistani military operations.

Geographical Concentration

Deobandi-Sunnis are generally found in the Pashtun belt from northern Punjab, across the NWFP, and into northern Balochistan, and also have a significant presence in urban Punjab and Sindh. Ahle-Hadith (Salafi) adherents are concentrated in Punjab. Sunni Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) adherents are generally found in urban centers.

Rural Punjab and Sindh are the domain of the shrine and saint culture represented by the Barelvi-Sunnis where they are dominant.

The Shia population is more moderate than the Sunni-Deobandis. Large Shia communities are found in Karachi, Southern Punjab and the Northern Areas (a part of the undivided state of Jammu & Kashmir, annexed by Pakistan in 1947-48. The Shias are dominant for now.) and parts of Balochistan.

History of Sectarian Violence

Some of the sectarian conflict can be seen as a class problem. Shias are a landlord community and the poor landless workers on their farms are mostly Sunnis. The Shia's are not a single community - the Athna Ashari sect (the Twelvers) dominate Pakistan's Shia minority. Smaller variations of the Shia school include the Ismailis, Daudi Bohras and their rivals Sulemani Bohras.

The sectarian violence began with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the transformation of the secular Pakistani state by General Zia ul-

Haq. The previously apolitical Shia community was galvanized by the events in Iran, while the Sunni community was empowered by events in Pakistan as well as foreign influences, Afghanistan and the US support for anti-Iranian Sunni groups. Iran has tried to counter Saudi influence through the funding of Shia madrasas in Pakistan.

Since most of the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan were Sunni's from Saudi funded madrasas, this has led to sectarian violence against the Shia community that built up after the Afghanistan war was over - in Punjab, in Sind (Karachi) and Balochistan (Quetta). This is because the end of the war created bands of ideologically motivated and armed fighters looking for a cause.

While there is an anti-American element in the Shia community, most of the militancy and political activism is primarily a defensive response to Sunni-Deobandi militancy. More than 70 per cent of those killed in sectarian violence since 1985 have been Twelver Shias, whose religious rituals and gatherings are prime targets of terrorist attacks.

The sectarian violence in Pakistan is not due to any inherent intolerance, but is a form of foreign proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, led by *some extreme clergy/ followers funded respectively by the regional champions of their respective brands of Islam.*

Religious minorities like Hindus and Christians also complain of discrimination and have periodically been subjected to violent attacks by extremists. The extremist violence is beginning to impact intra-Sunni factions such as the Deobandis and Barelvis. This may also be a result of the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) policy of divide and rule in the Sindh.

Hence, sectarian violence is rooted in a complex web of social, political and economic factors, which are both internal and external.

¹⁷ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

An Experts View

Yoginder Sikand, a leading Islamic scholar, states “To say it like it is, much of the responsibility for fanning intra-Muslim sectarian strife rests with the traditional ulema of the madrasas. Unlike Christianity, Islam has no place for an official priesthood that can lay down the official doctrine. The ulema of the different sects can easily use the absence of a central religious authority that lays down the official doctrine in order to promote sectarian rivalry to advance their own vested interests. By dismissing other Muslim sects as aberrant they put forward their own claims of being the authorities of the sole authentic Islam tradition. Much of the focus of the fatwas (legal pronouncement in Islam issued on a specific issue) and the literature (eg, in the curriculum in the madrasas) that the ulema of the different sects produce is also geared to branding other Muslim groups as virtually un-Islamic.”¹⁸

The financial aid given by Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries, to madrasas (based on sectarian considerations) has proved to be the key in fuelling the process of sectarian violence. In some Sunni-Deobandi madrasas jihad (Holy War) against Shias is as much a religious duty (if not more) as jihad against non-Muslims. A culture of dialogue simply does not exist in such madrasas.

5. Fatwas – Controls Needed

Islamic law (Sharia) is not a monolithic body of rules and regulations. There are four Sunni schools of law (Hanafi (Barelvi, Deobandi); Maliki; Shafi; Hanbali (Wahhabi)) classed together as *Ahle-fiqh*. Although the Barelvis and the Deobandis follow the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, their interpretations of it radically differ. Barelvis represent oral orthodoxy cushioned by devotional practices; Deobandis represent literate orthodoxy with a strict

adherence to the classical texts of Islam.¹⁹ A later development is the *Ahle-hadith* school that believed that it is not Fiqh but the sayings of the Prophet which should be enforced as they are, since they contained fundamental and unchangeable law ie, after scrutiny, the *Hadith* occupies the same position and authority as the Koran. The Shias are also divided into sub-sects. Because Islamic law is based upon the hadith, rejection of some Sunni hadith (sayings of the Prophet and his companions) means that the Shia version of the law differs somewhat from the Sunni version. The Shia Hadith also includes the sayings of the Shia Imams who are considered to be divinely inspired. Shia legal interpretation, in contrast to Sunni interpretation allows more space for human reasoning.

The absurdity²⁰ of some of the Fatwas issued by the ulema in South Asia suggests that there is a need to reform the process of such Fatwas being issued and who is eligible to issue them. The Fatwa system concentrates power with the ulema who, depending on their background and the madrasa they were educated in, can issue Fatwas which in many cases are not based on the facts of the case, and do not reflect a modern view of situations. *Depending on whether Islamic law is in force or not, the controls on issuance of Fatwas differ across countries.* In Europe, the recent Fatwas issued after 7/7 reflect a modern approach in condemning the acts of violence, this should continue.

The Pakistan Ulema (scholars) Council is currently the top mainstream religious body that includes senior clerics from all branches of the majority Sunni sect. Its earlier Fatwas include jihad against America and its allies if they attacked Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, some Fatwas are reported to be issued under governmental pressure and direction, for example the Fatwa of May 2005

¹⁸ 'Ecumenism and Islam's enemy within', Himal South Asian, March 2004

¹⁹ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

²⁰ The book 'The World of Fatwas' by Arun Shourie, 2005 highlights the absurdity of many Fatwas

against suicide attacks on Muslims in Pakistan. However, the decree did not apply to those waging jihad and running freedom movements in places like Palestine, Iraq and Kashmir.

Without proper controls on the quality of Fatwa's being issued, to ensure a modern and moderate Islamic viewpoint, there is the obvious danger that orthodox and radical Islamic ideas get perpetuated.

6. Madrasa Graduates - Masterminds or Foot Soldiers?

Not Masterminds

The 7/7 bombings in London were widely thought to be a result of brainwashing of the three Pakistani bombers in madrasas. However, according to news reports quoting sources at the Prime Ministers offices in Downing Street, there is no evidence that any madrasa was visited by any members of the cell at any point on their journey. So it may not be the case that madrasas are responsible for “brainwashing” the trio. There is considerable proof that the trio were radicalized in Yorkshire through the Islamist literature and videos that were available beneath the counter of their local Islamic bookshop. When they arrived in Pakistan, they were probably fully brainwashed and used their time making contact with al Qaeda and Pakistani militant groups to train in explosives. *“Indoctrination” also occurs at local mosques and not just at madrasas.*

A number of recent studies have emphasized the point that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between madrasa graduates – who tend to be pious villagers from impoverished economic backgrounds, possessing little technical sophistication – and the sort of middle-class, politically literate global jihadis who plan al Qaeda operations around the world. Neither Osama bin Laden nor any of the men who carried out the Islamist assaults on America or Britain was trained in a madrasa or was a

qualified alim, or cleric. The French scholar Gilles Kepel says that the new breed of global jihadis are not the urban poor of the third world so much as the “privileged children of an unlikely marriage between Wahhabism and Silicon Valley, which al-Zawahiri (bin Laden’s chief of staff) visited in the 1990s. They were heirs not only to jihad and the umma (‘family’ of believers) but also to the electronic revolution and American style globalization”.

There are also other similar viewpoints. A fairly sophisticated analysis of the global jihadis is: Understanding Terror Networks by a former CIA official, Marc Sageman. Sageman examined the records of 172 al Qaeda-linked terrorists. His conclusions have gone against the conventional wisdom about who joins jihadi groups: two-thirds of his sample were middle-class and university-educated; they are generally technically-minded professionals and several have a PhD. *Islamic terrorism, like its Christian and Jewish predecessors, is a largely bourgeois enterprise with professionals spearheading it.*

David Leppan the CEO of World-Check states - “A review of our suspected terrorist database underscores that the al Qaeda-type terrorist is very much an educated professional with a sophisticated network, including links with some Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) in certain countries, to support their operations.”

Peter Bergen of John Hopkins University recently came to similar conclusions when he published his study of seventy-five Islamist terrorists involved in anti-Western attacks. According to Bergen, 53 percent of the terrorists had a university degree, while “only 52 percent of Americans have been to college.”

The above analysis underscores some key points. By and large, madrasa students simply do not have the technical expertise necessary to carry out the kind of sophisticated attacks we have recently seen led by al Qaeda. Instead the concerns of most madrasa graduates remain more traditional: the correct fulfilment of rituals, how to wash correctly before prayers, and the

proper length to grow a beard. In contrast, few al Qaeda agents seem to have more than the most basic grasp of Islamic law or learning. *In reality, al Qaeda operatives tend to be highly educated and their aims, explicitly political.*

The men who planned the September 11 attacks

The events of September 11 can be traced back to a few key Pakistani terrorist figures as the masterminds to the evil idea.

were not products of the traditional Islamic educational system, even in its most radical form. Instead, they are graduates of Western-style institutions. *They are confused but highly educated middle-class professionals.* Mohamed Atta was an architect; Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's chief

of staff, was a paediatric surgeon; Ziad Jarrah, one of the founders of the Hamburg cell, was a dental student who later turned to aircraft engineering; Omar Sheikh, the kidnapper of Daniel Pearl, was a product of the London School of Economics. Faisal Devji of the New School, New York points out just how deeply unorthodox bin Laden is, with his cult of martyrs and frequent talk of dream and visions, all of which derive from popular, mystical, and Shia Islamic traditions, against which the orthodox Sunni ulema have long struggled.

Foot Soldiers

While the above is true of the al Qaeda leadership, it is not true of the foot soldiers that made up its ranks especially in the Taliban movement. Many of the Taliban who took control of Afghanistan in 1996 had emerged from Pakistan's madrasas. The 9/11 Commission report highlighted Pakistan's deep involvement with international terrorism. The history of modern day al Qaeda terrorism can be traced back to the training camps of the Pakistanis in Afghanistan to fight in the Kashmir cause. This was fuelled by the Soviet occupancy of Afghanistan which led to the US funding of the jihadis.

The recent 2005 National Geographic Channel program 'Inside 9/11' leads to the undeniable conclusion that this process along with the climate of extremism bred in madrasas in Pakistan created the atmosphere for a few key terrorist leaders to emerge causing the events of September 11. While 15 of the 19 suspected hijackers (the implementers) were Saudis, the events of September 11 can be traced back to a few key Pakistani terrorist figures as the masterminds to the evil idea.

Whether the new lot of terrorists who are graduates of Western universities actually attend a madrasa is not very important, they are certainly influenced by the ideas of radical Islam bred in these institutions that are then exported/ publicized through the media/ mosques. The ranks and officers of the Pakistan army are also under a similar influence.

The export of the ideas of radical Islam through the media has proved critical in fostering the growth of al Qaeda leaders.

More directly, the *Haqqania*, one of the most radical of the madrasas in the NWFP was the training ground for many of the Taliban leaders, including Mullah Omar. Whenever the Taliban put out a call for fighters, the Director would simply close down the madrasa and send his students off to fight. In 1994 many of the Pakistan fighters in Afghanistan were religious students of the madrasas in Balochistan and NWFP, both lawless areas. A significant proportion of the madrasas in existence in Pakistan today are run by, or connected to, the radical Islamist political parties such as the MMM of the NWFP. 'It is estimated that as much as 15% of Pakistan's madrasas preach violent jihad, while a few have been said to provide covert military

With 10-15% of madrasas preaching violent jihad, Pakistan is a virtual factory for producing Islamic extremists.

training'²¹. Other estimates put the figure at 10%²². In any case with 100,000-200,000 students being educated at madrasas with links to Islamic militants, Pakistan is a virtual factory for producing Islamic extremists. *Arabinda Acharya* of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, IDSS Singapore says "Many of these schools may not be open in preaching violent jihad and do so in small groups out of the limelight."

The madrasa system is in need of reform as in Pakistan it is perhaps the only means by which much of the poor can get a free education.

7. Religious Beliefs – The Barelvi Angle

There is a tendency to view the Muslim community (and its segment of radicals) as a monolith, acting as a common unit with a common agenda and little dissent. This is far from the truth even though all sects follow the five pillars of Islam and believe in the six pillars of faith.

In Pakistan, the tenor of religious belief has been radicalized: the tolerant Sufi-minded Barelvi form of Islam is now out of fashion, overtaken by the sudden rise of the more hard-line and politicized reformist Deobandi, Wahhabi, and Salafi strains of the faith – propagated through their madrasas and through media reporting on their activities. For example, in late 2000 young religious students encouraged by radical madrasa teachers and local mullahs ordered the burning of television sets, video players and satellite dishes in a number of villages in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). 'This is an ongoing process,' said one mullah who helped organize a

²¹ 'A Largely Bourgeois Endeavor: Al Qaida-Style Terrorists are not the Type Who Seek out Madrasas', William Dalrymple, Guardian UK, July 20 2005

²² 'Can Pakistan Reform?', Robert T. McLean, FrontPageMagazine.com, January 5 2006

TV bonfire. 'We will continue to burn TV sets, VCRs and other similar things to spread the message that their misuse is threatening our religion, society and family life.'

However, General Musharraf has never shown any sympathy for the Deobandi mindset. His claim that only 10 to 15% of the Pakistani people opposed his decision to align Pakistan with the US rested on the fact that some 15 per cent of Pakistan's population who are Sunni Muslims consider themselves part of the Deobandi tradition.

Compared to the Deobandis, a far greater number some 60% are the Barelvis who have a moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam based on Sufi beliefs.

The Philosophy of Sufism

Sufism has historically provided Islam with an alternative to orthodoxy and has won it most of its converts.

The Sufi Islamic traditions evolved over history with a degree of interaction with Hinduism on the sub-continent. It is a school that includes philosophers and mystics. Sufism embraces the Koran and most of Shia and Sunni Islam's beliefs. Sufis believe that Sufi teachings are the essence of every religion, and indeed of the evolution of humanity as a whole. The teachings of Sufis prohibit taking the life of any innocent human being.

Sufis generally feel that following Islamic law or jurisprudence (or *fiqh*) is only the first step on the path to perfect submission; they focus on the internal or more spiritual aspects of Islam, such as perfecting one's faith and fighting one's own ego (*nafs*). *Jihad, according to Sufi beliefs, is purging one's mind of evils and fighting against them by controlling material desires.*

Sufism is a moderate open-minded philosophy that does not reject non-Muslims. To quote the view of a staunch Barelvi "The Prophet stressed

the rights of one's neighbours, and these include non-Muslims, and said that he who gives unnecessary sorrow to his neighbour would go to hell". Another Sufi says "No religion, properly interpreted, allows for killing innocent people". A Barelvi Islamic scholar says 'Killing an innocent Hindu just because he isn't a Muslim is certainly not a jihad'. In a legitimate Islamic jihad non-combatant non-Muslims must not be harmed. Rather, he says, they must be protected.²³ In Pakistan with the spread of Deobandi madrasas, this sort of world-view is being negated.

The Sufis focus on personal spirituality. They believe that God can be found in the human heart, an intuition shared by both Muslim and Hindu mystics, that paradise lay within - if you could find it. As the great mystic Jalaluddin Rumi put it:

"The heart is nothing but the sea of light...
the place of the vision of God."

The Sufis believe that all existence and all religions were one, merely different manifestations of the same divine reality. What was important was not the empty external ritual of the mosque or temple, but simply to understand that divinity can best be reached through the gateway of the human heart- that we all have paradise within us, if we know where to look.

The central concept in Sufism is "love". Sufis believe that, love is a projection of the essence of God to the universe. God desires to recognize beauty, and as if one looks at a mirror to see oneself, God "looks" at itself within the dynamics of nature. Since everything is a reflection of God, the school of Sufism practices to see the beauty inside the apparent ugly, and to open arms even to the most evil one. This *infinite tolerance* is expressed in the most beautiful way

perhaps by the famous Sufi philosopher Mevlana:

"Come, come, whoever you are. Worshiper,
Wanderer, Lover of Leaving; ours is not a
caravan of despair. Though you have broken
your vows a thousand times...Come, come
again, Come."

The Sufis succeeded in bringing together Hindu²⁴ and Muslim in a religious movement which spanned the apparently unbridgeable gulf separating the two religions. For Sufism with its Holy Men and visions, healings and miracles, and its emphasis on the individual's search for direct knowledge of the divine, has always borne remarkable similarities to Hinduism, and from the beginning the Sufis acted as a bridge between the two religions.²⁵

One of the greatest Sufis Ibn Arabi, who lived more than 700 years ago expresses the universal spirit of the journey:²⁶

"My heart has become capable of every form:
It is a pasture for gazelles
And a convent for Christian monks
And a temple for idols
And the pilgrim's Ka'ba
And the tables of the Torah
And the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of love:
Whatever way Love's camels take,
That is my religion and my faith"

The Barelvis versus Deobandis

The Sufi-minded Barelvis believe that there is no contradiction between practicing Islam and drawing on the subcontinents ancient religions practices.

For the Barelvis, the holy Prophet is a superhuman figure whose presence is all around believers at all times. Barelvis emphasise a love of Muhammad, a semi-divine figure with unique

²⁴ Even today many Hindus worship Sufi saints like Sai Baba of Shirdi

²⁵ 'The Real Islam', William Dalrymple, TimeAsia Magazine 2004

²⁶ The Mystics of Islam, by R. A. Nicholson, first published in 1914, is a classic and definitive introduction to the message of Sufism

²³ 'Hindu-Muslim Relations in Jammu: Alternative Ways of Understanding Islam', Qalandar, March 2005

foreknowledge. The Deobandis, who also revere the Prophet, argue he was the perfect person, but still only a man, a mortal. The Barelvis follow many Sufi practices, including use of music (*Qawwali*) and intercession by their teacher. A key difference between Barelvi and Deobandi is that Barelvis believe in intercession between humans and Divine Grace. This consists of the intervention of an ascending, linked and unbroken chain of holy personages, *pirs*, reaching ultimately to Prophet Mohammad, who intercede on their behalf with Allah. The Barelvis regularly offer prayers to holy men or *pirs*, both dead and alive. It is a more superstitious - but also a more tolerant - tradition of Islam in the Indian sub-continent. Their critics claim that Barelvis are guilty of committing innovation and therefore, they are deviated from the true path - the path of *Sunnah* (the way the Prophet lived his life).²⁷ Deobandis reject Sufi approaches and many are likely to describe this school as ‘Mumbo-Jumbo’.

The Shias and Sufism

The Shia's also have a Sufi tradition (though not as strong as the Sunni-Barelvis because of the influence of the conservative Iranian Shias). The founder of Pakistan Muhammed Ali Jinnah was a moderate Ismailia-Shia. Ismalis are clearly identified with esoteric and gnostic religious doctrines associated with Sufism.

Barelvi Sunnis are generally more tolerant of Shia rituals (than the puritanical Deobandi Sunnis) and even participate in their ceremonies.²⁸

The Northern Areas in Pakistan have an ancient Sufi culture (Shia and Barelvi-Sunni) which is under threat by radicals.

The Best Bet

*Since Pakistan's creation, Barelvis, who make up 60% of the population, have been the most effective obstacle against Islamic radicals. Richard Kurin, an American academic, studied life in a Pakistani village and provided some interesting insights into the lesser known and more liberal/tolerant side of the population. Mainstream Sunni Barelvis have been conspicuous by their absence from militant organisations. With rare exceptions, Barelvi groups, as a matter of rule, are non-violent*²⁹

The Governments Approach to Sufism

The post-colonial Pakistani government put Sufi shrines under the control of the Auqaf Department (the government department of religious endowments) seeking to weaken the powers of the spiritual heirs of the saints.

- The pamphlets published by the department expunged the miraculous from the legends, repainting the lives of Sufi saints in a conservative light. The powers of the department were expanded over time and the same policy remains today..
- The Auqaf Department, under then President Zia, preferred graduates of the Deobandi-Sunni school and hundreds of mosques that were being run by Barelvis thus fell into Deobandi hands.
- Similarly Deobandis were given preference as preachers in the military.
- Distribution of *zakat* funds were lopsided in favour of Deobandi, Ahle-Hadith and JI madrasas (*Zakat*, according to Qur'anic injunctions, cannot be used for mosques or educational projects like madrasas)

The Auqaf Department and puritanical Deobandi-Salafi-JI Sunni movements have considerably weakened Sufi Islam and its Barelvi component; despite this effort it still has the largest following.

²⁷ Globalsecurity.org on Barelvi Islam

²⁸ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

²⁹ Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

*The Governments Approach to Minorities*³⁰

The US Department of State's 'International Religious Freedom Report', November 2005, provides a grim picture of Pakistan's treatment of minority faiths. The extracts below highlight that a serious problem of discrimination against minorities exists in Pakistan perpetuated by the Government itself:

- "The Government fails to protect the rights of religious minorities. Discriminatory legislation and the Government's failure to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith fostered religious intolerance and acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities."
- "Sunni Muslims appeared to receive favorable consideration in government hiring and advancement. All those wishing to obtain government identification documents as Muslims have to declare an oath on belief in the finality of the Prophethood, a provision designed to discriminate against Ahmadis."
- "Religious minorities, including Shia, contended that the Government persistently discriminated against members of their communities in hiring for the civil service and in admissions to government institutions of higher learning. Promotions for all minority groups appeared limited within the civil service."
- "Members of minority religions volunteered for military service in small numbers, and there are no official obstacles to their advancement. However, in practice non-Muslims rarely, if ever, rose above the rank of colonel and were not assigned to politically sensitive positions."
- "A chaplaincy corps provided services for Muslim soldiers, but no similar services were available for religious minorities."
- "The blasphemy laws were routinely used to harass religious minorities and liberal Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries." [In spite of this the

government has not had the will to push through reforms albeit an attempt was made.]

The above opinion is the official view of the US Government, which regards Pakistan as a key ally in its global war on terror. It is an unbiased view underscoring that the government of Pakistan needs to set a better example of '*enlightened moderation*'.

Besides the above, the Pakistani administration has run a ruthless programme from 1988 to turn the Shias into a minority in the Northern Areas through resettling Sunnis from Punjab and the NWFP. *The Shia revolt of 1988 was brutally crushed by Musharraf himself purportedly with help from Osama bin Laden*³¹.

8. Other Key Issues

Nationalism – Punjabi Domination

Importantly, the history of Pakistan suggests that most of the secessionist/ autonomy movements whether the Bengalis (Bangladesh), Sindhis, Balochis, Mohajirs, Seraikis or the Pukhtoons are a reaction to the attitude of Punjabi Muslims who have dominated the political landscape and the army. Even Kashmiri Muslims are now wary of Pakistan for the same reasons. This trend needs to be reversed as this environment breeds extremist Islamic parties.

ISI – A Key Player

The ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) is a very powerful Islamic institution that is often accused of being "rogue". However, its efforts to back the Taliban and to foster the Kashmiri insurgency were state-approved. In neither case was the ISI proceeding without the sanction of the military and political leadership. The fact that many of the senior officers do not work in the organization on a permanent basis, but are seconded from the army, clearly works in

³⁰ International Religious Freedom Report, US Department of State, November 2005

³¹ Musharraf's Ban: An Analysis, South Asia Analysis Group, 18 January 2002

Musharraf's favour and limits the growth of an institutional 'ISI view'. Since the ISI was supplying and training Islamic radicals who had been active in Kashmir, there are bound to have misgivings with regards to Musharraf's current policies though there is no indication that they are attempting to overturn these policies.

Islamic Army

The Pakistani army is a significant Islamic institution that needs to be de-Islamised. To quote an editorial in the armed forces weekly journal Hilal in 1996:

"By Allah's grace no other official, semi-official or non-official institution of Pakistan has been so attached and devoted to Islam in thought and action as the armed forces of Pakistan. Throughout the whole world, yes throughout the world, no armed force is so irrevocably devoted to Islam as the Pakistani armed forces."

In March 1996, for example, Hilal ran an item that described the proper role of the 'The Soldiers of Allah'. It was clear to all those who read Hilal that while some elements of the army remained as modernist as ever, others had the passion and the confidence to advance a radical Islamist agenda. Furthermore, without the support of the top generals, it would be impossible to publish such articles in the Hilal.

The Pakistani army is a significant Islamic institution that needs to be de-Islamised.

The 'beard counts' at annual ceremonies inducting new officers into the army has been steady at 15 per cent, though many say that at the top of the army only a tiny percentage could be described as having strong religious views and this would remain the case through

the process of elimination. The radical Islamist sentiment of some former Pakistani soldiers is plain for all to see in the Tanzeemul Ikhwan movement (Islamic movement to introduce Muslim law throughout Kashmir and to prevent Hindu *Kafirs* from resettling in Kashmir). Based in a madrasa 90 miles from Islamabad, the organization is made up of retired Pakistan army

April 2006

personnel. Furthermore, since General Zia's time, the students of Deobandi madrasas were favoured over the Bareilvis in the recruitment of preachers in the military and this trend is still visible.³² The implications of such trends are profound. Should there ever be an Islamic-based challenge to Pakistan's existing system of government the attitude of the army would probably be decisive. If it were ever faced with mass Islam-inspired street protests in Pakistan, some men may not obey an order to fire on the masses and the army might split in this event. This can be a disaster if these factions turn rogue and join the fundamental Islamic groups.

9. However...History May Support Reform

General Musharraf is well aware that throughout Pakistan's history no religious leader had been able to translate the possibility of a mass-based Islamic revolutionary movement into reality. Although some religious parties have participated in elections they have never done well. It is often said that they have never won more than 5 per cent of the vote albeit in 1970 the three main religious parties won the support of over 14 per cent of the electorate in the areas that now make up Pakistan (excludes Bangladesh) and in Punjab they won no less than 20.5 per cent of the vote. In 2002, against the backdrop of the American-led offensive in Afghanistan, the radicals achieved 11 per cent and formed the local government in the NWFP and Baluchistan.

However, the religious parties have never come close to winning power in Pakistan on a national level and, in terms of their influence on national politics they have consistently punched above their electoral weight. Nonetheless, the religious parties, especially Jamaat-e-Islami, have always had a reputation for being able to organize impressive displays of street power even if this

³² Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

has not translated into significant electoral power.

10. Pakistani Education Reform Agenda³³

Under international pressure, Pakistan has taken several steps on education reforms albeit with weak enforcement, and much remains to be done. The Islamic philosophy being propagated is untouched:

- The Pakistan government's National Plan of Action for education is projected to cost about US\$7.2 billion over the period 2001-2015.
- In December 2001, the government launched an Education Sector Reform (ESR) with seven main goals, among them significantly increasing the national literacy rate; providing universal education with increased completion rates and reduced gender disparity; improving education quality through curriculum reform, teacher training, and assessment reform.
- An "Education for All" project was launched in 2001 and funded with about US\$20 million in 2003. English language classes are now compulsory in all of Pakistan's public schools. Also among the stated ESR goals is bringing madrasa curriculum into the mainstream of Pakistan's general education system through the inclusion of "secular" subjects such as science.
- In August 2001, the government created a Pakistan Madrasa Education Board to establish a network of "model madrasas" and regulate others. The official statement is that admission to the model madrasas would not be on sectarian grounds, nor would the

teachers and the administration belong to one school of thought.³⁴

- A 2002 law requiring madrasas 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 issued and renewed fewer visas to religious students.
- A five-year, US\$1 billion plan introduced in 2003 aimed at putting secular subjects on syllabuses and bringing madrasas under the purview of the Education Ministry. Under the madrasa reform program, a special committee will be constituted, headed by a government functionary, which will oversee education, financial matters and policies.
- The government states that the five madrasa education boards (madrasa wafaqs) made up of senior clerics have agreed (albeit with much resistance) to the mainstreaming plans, though the program is being rolled out slowly as a pilot project in 320 schools. The message (for right or for wrong) that the government is giving is that "we are not touching religious education, but your child needs to be educated in modern subjects to see the other side of the world as well." While the wafaqs agreed to introduce the proposed courses, the President of the ulema's united front stated "But we'll develop our textbooks and syllabus and will not follow the government prescription blindly. *Secular and atheist views cannot enter the madrasa.*"³⁵
- The government had banned direct foreign aid for madrasas ie, private donors and charities were to route monies through the interior ministry and the Pakistan Madrasa

The madrasa system is perhaps the only means by which much of the poor can get a free education today.

³³ 'Cohen speaks on Pakistan', The Nation, September 17, 2005; 'How charity begins in Saudi Arabia', Asia Times, Jan 2004; 'Pakistan, US take on the madrassah', The Christian Science Monitor, August 24, 2004

³⁴ The official Pakistan Government fact sheet on madrasa reforms can be found at: <http://www.embassyofpakistan.org/pb7.php>

³⁵ Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

Education Board (PMEB). *However, the actual implementation was a much watered-down version.*

- The USAID is implementing a five-year, US\$100 million bilateral agreement (signed in August 2002) to rehabilitate public schools, with an emphasis on the Balochistan and Sindh provinces.

The reform process is a difficult one and the issues require time as there are no quick fixes. Change will not come without stiff resistance. The madrasas believe that in the entire Muslim history, they have always remained free from government intervention and have functioned independently. Muslim charities, the main component of Islamic economics, have been the financial source for the institutions, never government funding. The institutions argue that it is this financial and political freedom that has allowed them to keep Islam's jurisprudence free from the whims of political rulers. The secretary-general of the Wafaq-ul Madaris, the largest education board charged with overseeing 8,000 Deobandi madrasas asks "When they cannot run their own educational institutions properly then how can they run madrasas?"³⁶

*Corruption-free and proactive institutional capacity has always been difficult to create in South Asia, especially in Pakistan.*³⁷

Correct Direction?

There are critics to above education reform program. *Prof. Anita Weiss* of the University of Oregon, who has visited Pakistan several times to study madrasas, says that Pakistan should invest in mainstream public schools rather than reforming madrasas "Numbers are important; every dollar spent on modernising madrasas should be invested in mainstream education."³⁸

³⁶ 'Pakistan, US take on the madrassahs', The Christian Science Monitor, August 24, 2004

³⁷ Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2005 ranks Pakistan in the 144th band, scoring better than only 9 countries of 159 total

³⁸ 'Madrassa statistics based on unscientific surveys: speaker', Daily Times, April 06, 2005

Prof. Weiss believes that the focus should be shifted from "wasting Pakistan's resources and the US taxpayers' money" on madrasa reforms, to providing quality and affordable education to all. The author of this paper sees merit in Prof. Weiss's line of thought; however, given the fact that madrasas are part of Islamic culture, they will continue to exist. This focuses the issue on the kind of madrasa being funded. Preference should be for the Sufi-minded Sunni-Barelvi sect as the belief system of the 60% majority. The current funding demographic anomaly needs correction.

Mudassir Rizvi, a political analyst who has worked extensively on madrasas, also takes a dim view of the government's cautious approach to reforming the seminaries. "The introduction of only elementary subjects in madrasas cannot make them models. Now, terrorists speak English fluently and can use the computer very well. The main issue is to remove sectarian tinges and extremist views from the syllabi of madrasas and to hold clerics accountable for the massive funding they use to run madrasas. Unfortunately the key issue has remained on backburner due to the pressure of the clergy."³⁹ The author of this paper agrees with this view. It is not enough to remove the violent jihad messages. *It is also important to propagate a moderate and tolerant philosophy – one that does not breed dislike for non-Muslims in its world view. The Barelvi Sufi tradition is exactly this.*

International Crisis Group (ICG)⁴⁰ - Evaluation of Madrasa Reforms

The ICG 2002 review is quite harsh "The madrasa reforms in Pakistan make registration voluntary and there is no effective enforcement mechanism. The reforms reflect the military's patron-client relationship with the Pakistani clergy and are cosmetic and lack substance, legal

³⁹ 'Pakistan, US take on the madrassahs', The Christian Science Monitor, August 24, 2004

⁴⁰ Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

muscle or an intent to institutionalise long-term change.”

“This ordinance lacks specific measures to check foreign funding for militant madrasas. Moreover, foreign funding is rarely routed through formal channels and requires more *intrusive methods* if it is to be traced and controlled. *Does the government seriously expect private donors and charities voluntarily to send donations through the interior ministry and the PMEB?*” [Comment: ultimately a much watered-down version has been implemented]. The ICG believed that to control financing a *compulsory audit* was needed.

The ICG clarifies that it is not recommending imposition of a blanket ban on Islamic charities and is instead in favour of making distinctions “between funding for educational, development and philanthropic causes and for terrorism. Moderate Muslims run most Islamic organisations, mosques and charities based in Western countries. They can be educated on this score.”

*In July 2005, ICG came out with another harsh review “Musharraf’s promises came to nothing. His military government never implemented any program to register the madrasas, follow their financing or control their curricula. Although there are a few “model madrasas” for Western media consumption, the extremist ones account for perhaps as many as 15 percent of the religious schools in Pakistan and are free to churn out their radicalized graduates.”*⁴¹

Supporting the ICG view, the Pakistani press uncovered that a deal has been struck between the Musharraf government and the fundamentalists on the issue of regulating madrasas. *It now appears that financial reports will have to be submitted annually, but the sources of their finances will not have to be*

*provided.*⁴² *News reports in September 2005 had quoted umbrella organizations as declining to provide details of their income and expenditures.*⁴³

US Evaluation of Madrasa Reforms

However, a recent US Department of State report⁴⁴ seems to exonerate the Government on the registration issues stating that “Out of an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 madrasas, only a few hundred are not registered [Comment: see ICG July 2005 review given above that says the opposite; news reports in Sept 2005 quote umbrella organizations that continue to resist registration and the official deadline is December 2005 ie, the US statistic appears incorrect⁴⁵] with one of the five independent madrasa boards and/or directly with the Government. The Government and the independent madrasa boards have agreed to a phased introduction of modern subjects, including math, English, and science at all madrasas. Wafaqs also mandated the registration of foreign students with the Government and restricted foreign private funding of madrasas [Comment: the much watered-down version has been the program that was actually implemented].”

It also adds some criticism:

- “No unregistered madrasas have been shut down.
- While the boards have required their affiliated madrasas to move forward, disbursement of promised government funding (for modernization) to support the process has been slow.
- Registration and examination issues (eg, compulsory registration; audit of the actual financing) remained under active discussion with the Government.

⁴² ‘Can Pakistan Reform?’, Robert T. McLean, FrontPageMagazine.com, January 5 2006

⁴³ ‘Pakistan: Madrasahs Reject Government Crackdown Efforts’, RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, 13 September 2005

⁴⁴ International Religious Freedom Report, US Department of State, November 2005

⁴⁵ ‘Pakistan: Madrasahs Reject Government Crackdown Efforts’, RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, 13 September 2005

⁴¹ Pakistan: Still Schooling Extremists, By Samina Ahmed and Andrew Stroehlein of the ICG, Washington Post, July 17 2005

- Some unregistered and Deobandi-controlled madrasas in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and northern Balochistan continued to teach extremism.
- Similarly the Dawa schools run by Jamat-ud-Dawa continued such teaching and recruitment for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization.”

The US is putting forth the relationship between religious schools and state authorities in the US, as a possible model for Pakistan.

*SDPI Islamabad 2003 Report on the Public Education System*⁴⁶

Pakistan's public education system has an important role in determining how successful it shall be in achieving the goal of a progressive, moderate, and democratic Pakistan. However, a close analysis by a group of independent scholars at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) shows that for over two decades from the 80s, the curricula and the officially mandated textbooks in these subjects have contained material that is directly contrary to the goals and values of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan. On the March 2002 revision of curricula undertaken by the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education, the report states – “The post-reform curricula and textbooks continue to have the same problems as the earlier ones. Reform has not been substantive.” The curriculum wing is controlled by Deobandi Islamists.

The SDPI Report notes "four themes emerge most strongly as constituting the bulk of the curricula and textbooks of the three compulsory subjects (Social Studies/ Pakistan Studies, Urdu and English).

- that Pakistan is for Muslims alone;
- that Islamic teachings, including a compulsory reading and memorization of Koran, are to be included in all the subjects,

- hence to be forcibly taught to all the students, whatever their faith;
- that Ideology of Pakistan is to be internalized as faith, and that hate be created against Hindus and India; and
- students are to be urged to take the path of *Jihad* and *Shahadat* (martyr's death).”

The 'Ideology of Pakistan', the Report notes further, is Islam, and curricular policies insist, is to "be presented as an accepted reality, and never be subjected to discussion or dispute" or to "be made controversial and debatable." Furthermore the reports states: "Associated with the insistence on the Ideology of Pakistan has been an essential component of hate against India and the Hindus. For the upholders of the Ideology of Pakistan, the existence of Pakistan is defined only in relation to Hindus, and hence the Hindus have to be painted as negatively as possible.”

The report prescribes “Experience shows that attention to detail, clear milestones and independent oversight will be needed to achieve successful reform of the Ministry of Education, The Curriculum Wing, and the Textbook Boards.”

*The SDPI report stirred up a huge controversy in Pakistan albeit SDPI never diluted its position.*⁴⁷

Furthermore, Professor Pervez Hoodbhoy's searing indictments of Pakistan's higher education system clearly reflect the congruence between education and fundamentalist Islam in Pakistan's universities, as well as the incompatibility of fundamentalist teachings and modern education.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ 'The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan', www.sdpi.org, July 2003

⁴⁷ See 'Twisted truth: Press and politicians make gains from SDPI curriculum report', Dr A H Nayyar, SDPI Research and News Bulletin, Jan-Feb 2004

⁴⁸ 'Can Pakistan Reform?', Robert T. McLean, FrontPageMagazine.com, January 5 2006

11. The Indian View of Pakistan and Pakistanis

KPS Gill, India's leading former cop who fixed the Sikh insurgency, says in his book 'Freedom from Fear' - "The 'footprint' of every major act of international Islamist terrorism invariably passes through Pakistan, right from 9/11 – where virtually all the participants had trained, resided or met in, coordinated with, or received funding from or through Pakistan (*The 9/11 Commission Report, July 2004 states "Almost all the 9/11 attackers traveled the north-south nexus of Kandahar–Quetta–Karachi"*) – to major acts of terrorism across South Asia and South East Asia, as well as major networks of terror that have been discovered in Europe." Gill says that Pakistan has chosen the pathway of nuclear escalation to secure incremental aid from Western donors and this strategy is "at the heart of Pakistan's case for concessions, aid and a heightened threshold of international tolerance for its sponsorship and support to Islamist terrorism. Pakistan has made a big case out of the fact that some of the top line leadership of the al Qaeda has been arrested in the country with the 'cooperation' of the Pakistani security forces and intelligence. The fact, however, is that each such arrest only took place after the FBI and US investigators had effectively gathered evidence to force Pakistani cooperation, and little of this evidence has come from the Pakistani agencies."

Some Western media reports support the above view⁴⁹ - "The enormous Islamic extremist infrastructure that the military maintained before September 11 to fight its wars in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and Indian Kashmir have not been broken up, only put to temporary sleep while clandestine training camps still spring up at new locations." On the arrests of militants and Musharraf's speech asking the public to join him in a "jihad against Islamic extremism", the

media's comments are "Pakistanis now respond to such speeches with a wave of the hand and a bored look, commenting that it is all for the gallery of Western onlookers. Madrasas controlled by militant Pakistani groups who work for al Qaeda continue to function freely. One of the largest extremist groups in the country, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, has members who have helped al Qaeda. It now operates under a new name and has even changed the look of its largest madrasa complex to become a model it can show to the Western press."

While in fact 600 al Qaeda operatives and foreign militants have been apprehended (around 300 killed) since September 11 and transferred into US custody, including some important leaders, the vast majority of those captured - nine out of ten, are reported to be non-Pakistani. Nonetheless, the government has cracked down on domestic terrorism with full vigor including the few jihadi Kashmiri groups also linked with domestic violence. However, its broader approach to other jihadi Kashmiri groups has been "hesitant" with arrests followed by quick releases.⁵⁰ Media reports state "...those arrested are invariably freed after 90 days in jail. Other reports suggest that most detainees are low-level organization members. Also, the government does not present enough evidence in court resulting in the release of any key leaders arrested⁵¹. Furthermore, the extensive madrasa system has been left untouched.

India has a larger Muslim population (total 170 million) than Pakistan and Kashmir combined, second only to Indonesia. Interestingly, there are no Indian Muslims in al Qaeda or the Taliban. "The two probable reasons are firstly the assurance of a level-playing field for all citizens in India because of the success of the democratic system. India's 'noisy democracy' ensures that all segments of public opinion — anti-US, pro-US, neutral — are routinely aired. The second is the absence of American influence on Indian policy

⁴⁹ 'Nothing will change until Musharraf closes Pakistan's militant madrasas', Ahmed Rashid, Telegraph UK, 22 July 2005

⁵⁰ 'The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan', SIPRI Policy Paper No. 11, September 2005

⁵¹ 'The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan', SIPRI Policy Paper No. 11, September 2005

all through the Cold War years and, to a large extent, even now. A majority of the terrorists come from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt and some of the North African countries. What is common about these countries is the lack of a genuine democracy, despite the adherence to form, and longstanding virtual patron-client links with the US. These two factors are interconnected. The result was that while the governments of these countries were pro-American, most of their people were not.”⁵²

A review of online Blogs further underscores the difference in the psyche of Indian Muslims and Pakistani Muslims today. It is apparent that the more extreme-minded educated middle-class Pakistani's are interested in befriending/ influencing/ patronising Indian Muslims. But the Indian Muslim is increasingly mistrusting of Pakistani motives. The middle-class educated Indian Muslim is increasingly secular and content in a robust democracy/ economy, proud to be called an Indian, and treats the Pakistani approach with suspicion. This is not something the more extreme minded Pakistani Muslim likes, or even understands, as it contradicts with the Islamic concept of the umma ('family' of believers). In fact, in many of the Blogs, there is a clear expectation by extreme-minded Pakistani Muslims from Indian Muslims that their loyalties should be towards Pakistan and not India because of the brotherhood of Islam. *The total lack of involvement of any Indian Muslim (outside of Kashmir) in the Kashmir struggle provides a clear answer.*

‘Historically, the Indian Muslim's perceived sentimentality for Pakistan (eg, at cricket matches) was seen as vindication of the concept of Pakistan. However, today, to the Pakistani hard core jihadi, Indian Muslims have become too nationalistic and India-centred, as against the Pakistani archetypal of a Muslim fundamentalist first and foremost, and a Pakistani merely by accident of geography. The Indian Muslim has been tethered, for all these five decades, to the

concept of democracy and secularism in its fullest sense. The Pakistani, by contrast, has been raised on militarism which sees democracy as an aberration at best. *The Pakistani mind, dulled in its senses due to a relentless barrage of religious sermons castigating nationalism for being hostile to Islam, cannot simply understand, much less appreciate, that a shared democratic and secular experience cuts across religious divide as much as any.* And much as the Jihadis and their militant ilk may remonstrate, the Indian Muslim has not, to an iota, compromised or diluted his basic religious values by being moderate and non-fanatical.’⁵³

From the Sikh insurgency to the repeated terrorist attacks in India across the years - the role of the Pakistani ISI in instigating, sponsoring and training fringe Indian Islamic radicals; has been both alleged and in many cases proven.

The desecration and destruction of sacred Sufi shrines and religious artifacts has been an objective for sectarian Sunni terror groups in Pakistan. In the Indian Jammu & Kashmir state, Sunni Muslims are in majority (60%) and Shia-Sunni tensions exist in the Kashmir valley aggravated by Wahabbi influences on the Sunni community. Kashmir has historically had a rich tolerant Sufi Islamic culture developed over the last one thousand years. Indians believe that if Kashmir is allowed to fall into the hands of the Deobandi-Sunnis who dominate Pakistan today, this Sufi culture and heritage may not be allowed to survive. The impact of militancy on this culture of tolerance is already being experienced in the valley.

Having said all the above, many educated Pakistanis live abroad; they are little different from educated Indians and many are moderate in their approach. But these are just a handful and do not accurately reflect the masses being

⁵² 'Why no Indian Muslim is in Al-Qaeda', Amulya Ganguli (IANS), Hindustan Times, July 31, 2005

⁵³ The Muslims of India and Pakistan- two different peoples, By Karamatullah K. Ghori, The Milli Gazettee, 1 Sept 2001

indoctrinated through the public education system and the madrasas into a puritanical Islamic viewpoint.

12. Way Forward

In conclusion, any effort to fight terrorism in Pakistan must be broad based and must focus on a number of fronts:

Education Reform

- Significantly reform the agenda of the madrasas to bring in a modern pluralist worldview besides reforming the educational content.
- Correct the ratio of the madrasas to represent the demographics of the population. The Barelvi Islamic tradition needs to be propagated as this is the belief system of the majority of 60% of the population (with Shias also being influenced by Sufism). The Pakistani government is taking the middle road of removing extreme messages but not going beyond this to relook at the basic philosophy which actually only represents 19% of the Deobandi-Salafi-JI population propagated through over 70% of the madrasas.

The US would have to fund Barelvi madrasas to propagate the moderate Sufi traditions of the majority in Pakistan/ correct the demographic anomaly.

In line with the above demographics argument, the Saudi charities need to be replaced as the source of funding madrasas so that more madrasas of the tolerant sufi-minded Barelvi sect can be setup. The key countries that can provide such funding is of course the US and its allies. *The reality is that like the Saudis, the Americans can only control what they fund.* Iranian funding

would similarly need to be reviewed. US strategists have also talked of “backdoor” US

support to reformers tied to Sufism⁵⁴ - the author does not like this approach at all. The US has got itself into this mess in the first place through such backdoor approaches in Afghanistan. *A forthright and transparent approach is needed.*

- The controls on the process of setting up new madrasas including a pre-screening process and registration of the madrasas need focus on as does the control on foreign donations through compulsory audits of madrasas. The more extreme of the puritanical Deobandi – Salafi – JI madrasas should be closed down. The current registration process is a voluntary one and there is no mechanism of enforcement or punishments for violations. Direct and permanent oversight, rather than occasional raids and crackdowns, is required if the madrasa system is to be kept free of militancy. Furthermore, madrasa reform should not be confined to urban areas but also cover small towns and villages.⁵⁵
- Invest more in mainstream public schools. The madrasa system should not be thought off as a replacement for public schools and are only a system for educating Islamic clerics. The USAID project will hopefully help in this direction by offering the poor an alternative. Girls are largely out of the madrasa system and focus needs to be put on their education and empowerment. While in India 65 percent of the population is literate, and the number rises every year; in Pakistan only 42 percent are literate and the proportion is falling. Instead of focussing on education, the Pakistani government is preoccupied with the Kashmir issue/ defence spending.
- Successful reform of the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education, and the Textbook Boards is needed in line with the SDPI 2003 Report. Textbooks need to be purged of sectarian material that promotes or undermines specific sects. Importantly

⁵⁴ 'Hearts, Minds, and Dollars', David E. Kaplan, U.S.News, 25 April 2005

⁵⁵ Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, ICG Asia Report No 36, 29 July 2002 as amended on 15 July 2005

change must be genuine and not just cosmetic; controls should be there to ensure sustainability/ transparency. As the founder *Muhammed Ali Jinnah* said "the importance of education and the right type of education cannot be over-emphasised". "This is also particularly important considering that while two-thirds of the al Qaeda leadership has been captured or killed, diminishing their organizational capacity, this has not done anything to diminish their global following. The struggle against violent extremism starts with the battle of ideas"⁵⁶. Once a man has grown into a terrorist, reversing this process may prove impossible – eventually they would probably be either captured (and locked up) or killed – this is a stark reality.

Control Jihadi Propaganda

- The government must be more effective in limiting jihadi propaganda and ability to disseminate such ideas through newspapers and other publications.

Renounce Terrorism

- Though many welcome changes in Pakistan's strategic direction under General Musharraf have been made since September 11, they have not extended to completely renouncing terrorism as an instrument of national policy. Hence, it is critical to consider a solution for the Kashmir problem as part of the Global war on Terror in order to remove the cause from the root rather than just treating it superficially. The solution is difficult to see but economic dependencies and free travel/work rights (for pre-screened persons fulfilling economic criteria) between India and Pakistan may yield results.

Minorities Rights

- While the government has taken various steps to bring in the minorities and women

into the main political stream, the Punjabi bias in the political sphere and in the army needs to be focused on to better represent the ethnic communities so as to give them more equity/power and thereby stop exploitation by the Punjabis.

- The government should provide constitutional and political rights to the FATA and the Northern Areas⁵⁷.
- The government should 'repeal all laws, penal codes and official procedures that reinforce sectarian identities and cause discrimination on the basis of faith, such as the mandatory affirmation of religious creed in applications for jobs, passports and national identity cards'⁵⁸.
- The government should take firm action against abductions and forced conversions of non-Muslim women to make a credible public statement that the world can hear. The standard used to prosecute such cases should be "*reasonable grounds to believe*" rather than the prosecution standard of "*knowledge*". Harsh criminal sentences and fines are the only way to stop this.

Armaments and Army

- Regulate the arms industry in FATA to prevent the proliferation of weapons countrywide⁵⁹.
- De-Islamise the armed forces by changing the kind of person being recruited and change the armed forces preachers to the more moderate Sufi-minded Barelvi's to ensure that the forces of radical Islam do not have an opportunity to take over the government through the support of the army.

Repeal Certain Laws

- Propagate religious tolerance, including removal of blasphemy laws by which non-

⁵⁶ 'The Global Response to Terrorism', International Crisis Group Lecture, University of New South Wales, 27 September 2005

⁵⁷ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

⁵⁸ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

⁵⁹ The state of sectarianism in Pakistan, ICG, Asia Report No 95, 18 April 2005

Muslims could easily be imprisoned on fictitious charges of anti-Islamic behaviour.

- Islamic laws propagated in Pakistan are those of the Sunni-Deobandi sect. In line with a progressive approach, repeal Islamic laws that are not modern/moderate or wrongly interpreted. (For example, rape is to be punished by the public flogging of the woman as well as the man. This anomaly is because the legal definition of *zina* (*sex outside marriage*) blurs the distinction between *zina* and rape (Hudood ordinance).⁶⁰ The government has taken some cosmetic action on this issue although activists are not satisfied – “Pakistan has not only systematically failed to implement and enforce laws to protect women from violence, but the system that is in place re-victimizes victims of violence rather than delivering justice.”⁶¹

Controls on Terrorist Financing

- Both jihadist fund raising from Pakistani citizens and also their travel/networking eg, with the Saudis, need focus on. The latter appears unlikely with the current policy on Kashmir. In the absence of proper madrasa controls, monies can also be taken by these groups directly from the donations to the madrasas they control.
- ‘A nexus of private, unregulated charities has also emerged as a major source of illicit funds for international terrorist networks. In light of the role that private charities have played in terrorist financing, Pakistan should develop a system to regulate the finances of charitable organizations and to close those that finance terrorism.’⁶²
- ‘Smuggling, trade-based money laundering and physical cross-border cash transfers are prevalent methods used to launder money

and finance terrorism in Pakistan. The proceeds of narcotics trafficking and funding for terrorist activities are often laundered by means of the alternative remittance system called hawala. Pakistan needs to exert greater efforts to track and suppress cash couriers and trade-based money laundering. Pakistan should become a party (*both sign and ratify*) to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing, and the UN Convention Against Corruption. (62)

Controls on Fatwa Issuance

- As part of the agenda, reform the process of Fatwas being issued across all sects, to ensure proper controls and balances so that there is adequate debate on issues. Fatwas issued should reflect a modern and moderate viewpoint. [This point needs a separate paper to come up with a workable model specific to Pakistan’s circumstances.]

Political Will

Of course the whole package is not an easy one to implement and needs political will along with significant financial support. *Terrorism has become an industry with powerful vested interests in sustaining it.* When General Musharraf took over in 1999, he underestimated the task ahead. In spite of his Indian agenda, Musharraf remains the best bet for the US and its allies in his professed belief in a progressive Islamic state. The issue is whether the system will allow him to survive? And how genuine is he really?

US Focus

The US is working with many Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia on reforms. Importantly, US foreign policy has to focus more on the cause side of the cause and effect relationship. ‘In Pakistan over the next five

⁶⁰ *Zina*, rape, and Islamic law: An Islamic legal analysis of the rape laws in Pakistan, KARAMAH: Muslim women lawyers for human rights

⁶¹ Pakistan Must Protect Its Women, Yasmeen Hassan, Washington Post, October 6 2005

⁶² International Narcotics Controls Strategy Report, US Department of State, March 2006

years, the US will provide more than US\$3 billion in security, economic, and development assistance to enhance counterterrorism capacity and promote continued reform, including of the education system'.⁶³ While funding the public education system, it must proactively replace Saudi Arabia charities as the source of funding madrasas so as to be able to legitimately control the Islamic philosophy being advocated in these

Accountability for US grants for education reform is a key control.

institutions to bring it in line with majority beliefs. *Just as important is the whole issue of accountability for funding monies to ensure that there is no misuse and leakage.* Of course, the US should also

continue to work with Saudi Arabia to enhance the functioning of the Charities Commission to regulate all charitable donations leaving the Kingdom/ bring in better anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing standards.

Correct the focus. The US must take a firm stand to ensure that the Wahhabi philosophy does not get propagated disproportionately in Muslim countries around the world particularly in Pakistan. The US must ensure that the philosophy of Sufism is given the share of voice that it deserves as the belief system of the majority. 'In a 2004 study 80% of Pakistanis held an "unfavourable view" of Jews and 62% on Christians. The new education minister, a former ISI head has stated on record "The Jews are the worst terrorists in the world." Osama Bin Laden is viewed favourably by 65%.⁶⁴. *This sort of world view must be corrected.*

Rohan Gunaratna Director of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, IDSS Singapore adds "When critical, the US government engaged other governments

like Pakistan but not their people. Pre-2003, the US government was reluctant, unable, and unwilling to engage in public diplomacy in the Muslim World albeit this changed with the need for propaganda to support the Iraq war. American leaders have understood that future threats to the US are primarily from non-state actors spawned, strengthened and influenced by virulent ideologies preached by non-governmental leaders. The future will see more public relations campaigns addressed to the Muslim world."

There is also work back home in the US and the UK: "Since the London bombings there has of course sprung to centre-stage the notion of a sense of hopelessness or alienation, combined with the impact of particular religious mentors or role-models, as a significant cause of terrorist commitment among young, second generation immigrants who have not succeeded in their new world but who have lost the cultural moorings of their old. *We are dealing with a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, which demands a complex, multi-layered response.*"⁶⁵

Broader Reforms in Pakistan

More broadly, for anti-terrorism measures to be effective in Pakistan, there is a need for wider reform such as significant land reforms to reduce the powers of feudal landlords, empowerment of the judiciary, reform of the civil service, literacy, education and empowerment of women, and a long-term phased democratization process that puts emphasis on anti-corruption measures and institutions. The ICG underscores that "Ultimately, terrorism can only be eliminated through pluralistic democratic structures".

The 9/11 Commission report states "Economic openness is essential. Terrorism is not caused by poverty. Indeed, many terrorists come from relatively well-off families. Yet when people lose hope, when societies break down, when

⁶³ 'Fact Sheet: Progress on the 9/11 Commission Recommendations', White House, December 2005

⁶⁴ 'Can Pakistan Reform?', Robert T. McLean, FrontPageMagazine.com, January 5 2006

⁶⁵ 'The Global Response to Terrorism', International Crisis Group Lecture, University of New South Wales, 27 September 2005

countries fragment, the breeding grounds for terrorism are created. Backward economic policies and repressive political regimes slip into societies that are without hope, where ambition and passions have no constructive outlet... Economic growth expands the middle class, a constituency for further reform.”

Ultimately, the fruits of modernity and economic progress need to be more widely available for the benefits of a progressive Islamic state to be transparent to the masses.

Conclusion

In spite of this paper’s overall critical review of Pakistan, the researcher must add that no leader in Asia, perhaps in the world, has survived the number and magnitude of political crises and threats to his life that General Musharraf has endured in his tenure in office. To not acknowledge that he has perhaps the toughest job in the world would be unfair. His personal bravery as a soldier has clearly reflected in his role as the President of Pakistan. However, the world is counting on Musharraf to help steer South and Central Asia from local chaos to regional security. His role is that of a world leader in a world war. Whatever his past may have been, whatever his personal views and agenda on Kashmir, he has to cast these aside and rise to the occasion. *It’s not about Islamic Pakistan, it’s about humanity.*

The Pakistan government has done a lot for the US in its fight against al Qaeda and has also cracked down on domestic violence. However, Kashmir remains as the national core issue as a result of which very little has been done to curtail jihadi Kashmiri groups, or to reform the ideology being propagated through the education system – whether public schools or madrasas. *Enforcement has been weak.* There is much *misrepresentation* with statistics being used to project a half-truth while keeping the Kashmiri jihadi movement alive on the side.

Without a complete resolution of the Kashmir issue, the author of this paper does not see any final solution to the problem of world terrorism which has a key supplier in Pakistan. In the current scenario, peaceful Sufi type philosophies will surely be slowly eradicated from Pakistan in order to keep up the jihadi Kashmiri movement.

The US must act fast with a focus on the correct issues including reform of the education system to bring in Sufi type Islamic thinking. *India also needs to necessarily get involved* including being open to new approaches on Kashmir, even if they tilt to what was unthinkable a decade ago. More than India and Pakistan, *the people of Kashmir deserve a solution.*

In summary, while the symptoms of global terrorism are being treated, a key root of the problem remains in the unresolved Kashmir issue.

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Disclaimer

The opinions in this article are the authors own and does not represent the organisation in which he works and is/was associated with.

ⁱ Rohan Bedi is closely associated with the ICPVTR and has co-authored a July 2005 paper “AML/CFT – New Policy Initiatives” with Arabinda Acharya, Associate Research Fellow and Manager Strategic Projects, ICPVTR, IDSS, Singapore.

ⁱⁱ References - this paper is based on facts from the book ‘Pakistan – Eye of The Storm’ (2002) by *Owen Bennett Jones* and other sources credited separately in the footnotes. The book is a detailed account of the history, politics and religious beliefs of Pakistan and is an excellent and riveting reading.

The author of this paper makes no claim on being an Islamic scholar and has used the different sources attributed in the paper to construct an agenda for reform. He believes that the problem of terrorism in Pakistan must be viewed in a historical context with an in-depth understanding of the religious sects and the philosophical beliefs of the majority of Pakistanis.