



A WAR WITHOUT BOMBS: CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES AGAINST RADICALIZATION IN PAKISTAN

Shehzad H. Qazi

On December 22, 2012, a Pakistani Taliban suicide bomber assassinated Bashir Ahmad Bilour, a senior member of Pakistan's secular Awami National Party (ANP) and a vocal opponent of the Taliban. Just three months before, the Taliban in Swat had attempted to assassinate Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old female activist who opposed them and advocated for women's right to education. These incidents illustrate how Pakistan has become the hub of Islamist militancy, featuring local and transnational militant groups who have killed thousands of civilians in suicide bombings and assassinated politicians, tribal elders, and activists opposed to them.¹

Moreover, in recent months, the country has fallen once again into the grip of sectarian violence. In 2012 alone, 507 people were killed and almost 600 were injured in 173 incidents of sectarian violence.² Furthermore, as confirmed by the 2011 assassinations of former Governor Salman Taseer and Minister of Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, the space for advocates of secularism and the rights of religious minorities has been violently constrained. Pakistan also faces the challenge of radicalization within society as illustrated by the outpouring of popular support for the man who murdered Taseer because of his support for a Christian woman accused of blasphemy.

The good news, as revealed by survey data, is that most Pakistanis do not support militancy and generally have negative perceptions of militant groups. Nevertheless, a *sizable minority* does hold radical views

and support militancy. While the Obama administration is searching for an exit in Afghanistan, Pakistan will continue to face the dual challenges of insurgent conflict and radicalization beyond 2014. Dealing with these issues will remain vital to American regional policy as well because of the "pivot" to East Asia, the importance of India (also threatened by Islamist terrorism) as a country central to realizing that strategy, and the United States' economic plans (e.g., the New Silk Road) to integrate Central and South Asia.

Radicalism in Pakistan, therefore, will require a sustained countering effort from both countries, as well as a fresh approach that looks beyond reliance on hard power tactics, such as drone strikes, or outsourcing the job to the Pakistani military in exchange for foreign aid. With the exception of the military's deradicalization centers in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, Islamabad has made little progress against radicalization. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), however, have launched programs in Pakistan to combat extremism. In fact, a new study has found over 100 organizations working in this area.³ Three such programs, the Sabaoon Center for Rehabilitation, the Madrasah Enhancement Project (MEP) and Training Workshops for *Khateeb* and *Deeni* Teachers on Elections in Islamic Perspective, are analyzed in this policy brief.

These programs represent a much-needed local ownership of the problem and offer American and Pakistani policymakers a new direction in combating indigenous radicalization through partnerships between

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the public and NGO sector and collaboration between international and Pakistani NGOs and civil society groups. As the Obama administration begins its second term, it should revise its counterterrorism and relevant development policies in Pakistan in order to integrate the country's civil society groups in combating Islamist radicalism.

DEFINING THE TERMS

Given this issue's contentious nature, defining the terms of reference is essential. The definition of *radicalization* used herein is borrowed from the Institute for Strategic

Dialogue: "the process through which an individual changes from passiveness or activism to become more revolutionary, militant or extremist, especially where there is intent towards, or support for, violence."⁴

Counter-radicalization refers to "social, political, legal, educational and economic programs specifically designed to deter disaffected [and radicalized] individuals from [...] becoming terrorists." *Deradicalization*, on the other hand, refers to programs "directed against individuals who have become radical with the aim of reintegrating them into society or [...] dissuading them from violence."⁵ The key is that deradicalization seeks a "complete shift in the prisoner's mindset, sympathies and attitudes."⁶ In contrast, *disengagement* seeks changes in behavior, such as leaving a terrorist group, as opposed to ideological change.⁷

RADICALIZATION IN PAKISTAN

Radicalization and religious extremism is deeply intertwined with the institutionalized Islamization of Pakistan, which took place via changes in its school curricula and legal system, was promoted through the media, and propagated by religious scholars, clerics, and seminaries.⁸ Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's (d. 1979) Islamization policy in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which was designed to counter Pashtun nationalism, featured the establishment of seminaries, safe havens, and training grounds for such Afghan militants as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Ahmad Shah Massoud from 1974 onwards. Islamic religious seminaries (*madaris*, sing. *madrasah*) with direct links to militancy were formed in FATA during this same period.⁹

General Zia-ul-Haq (d. 1988) expanded this policy by pursuing the agenda of Islamizing Pakistan and supporting Islamist rebels in Afghanistan far more vigorously. For over a decade Pakistan received billions of dollars of covert American assistance to train and arm various Afghan factions to fight the Soviet army and the Afghan

communist government in Kabul. Afghan and Pakistani children were enrolled in Pakistani seminaries not only as students, but also as soldiers to be trained in guerrilla warfare and indoctrinated with militant ideas of jihad. Textbooks promoting such ideas were specially designed for such students under a \$51 million USAID grant.¹⁰

Domestically, Zia promoted the concept of offensive jihad. Pakistani course syllabi rewritten under the New Education Policy emphasized the importance of jihad and Islamization, thus introducing agents of radicalization within public schools. As content analysis has revealed, many social science textbooks written under the new guidelines, which remain in use, present perspectives that support prejudiced and intolerant views toward women and religious minorities, are hostile toward different ethno-religious groups (especially Hindus), glorify war, and encourage jihad and martyrdom.¹¹ Moreover, Zia's political allies, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman) (JUI-F), all produced militant Islamist literature, mobilized public support for the Afghan mujahidin, and created networks to recruit fighters for the anti-Soviet insurgency.¹²

At the end of the Soviet-Afghan war, the Pakistani army redirected much of this effort to launching a covert war inside Indian Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). During the 1990s tens of Islamist militant groups, among them the Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HeM) and the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), mushroomed. Many were led by Pakistani veterans of the Afghan insurgency, and thus a new chapter in creating militant networks involved in generating funds for the new war, spreading radical literature, and recruiting soldiers was soon underway.¹³

These factors have created a complex challenge of radicalization in Pakistan, one requiring policymakers and other stakeholders to approach the problem in quantifiable ways. In doing so, three key questions must be asked:

1. What is the extent of radicalization within Pakistani society?
2. What indicators are used to measure it?

3. Who are the radicalized and/or at-risk groups?

This brief uses the Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) opinion surveys and a set of experiments conducted by Princeton University scholars to investigate the extent of radicalization and extremism. Two indicators used to measure radicalization are level of popular support for Islamist militancy and support for militant organizations.

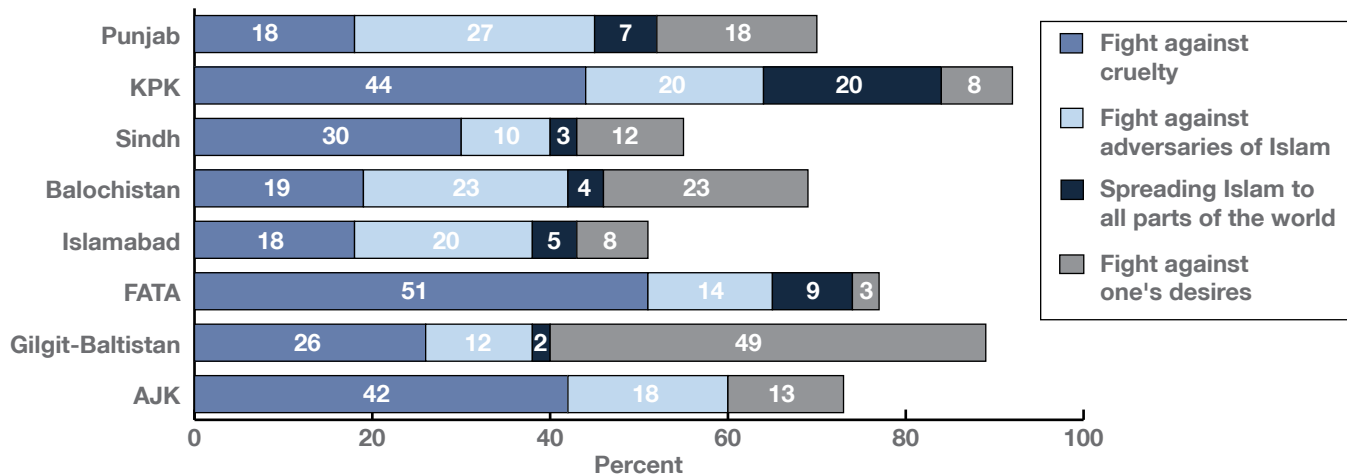
SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIST MILITANCY

This brief focuses on three main issues explored in the PIPS national survey: respondents' understanding of the meaning of jihad and attitudes toward the Pakistani Taliban and the wars in Afghanistan and Kashmir. When asked about the meaning of jihad, 31% of participants said it meant fighting cruelty, 17% said it meant fighting one's desires, 8% believed it meant fighting Islam's enemies, and 5% said it meant spreading Islam worldwide. These responses indicate that a minority (13%) of respondents has a clearly radical and militant understanding of jihad.

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Nevertheless, even the more benign response of "fighting against cruelty" is of concern because its vagueness makes it vulnerable to radical interpretation, especially when 14% prefer offensive armed jihad to defensive jihad. This point is illustrated by the fact that the highest percentage of respondents who chose this meaning came from the FATA (51%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) (44%) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK; 42%) regions, all of which have served as major staging grounds for the Islamist insurgencies in Afghanistan, J&K, and Pakistan.¹⁴

Figure 1 Understanding of jihad: What does jihad mean to you?

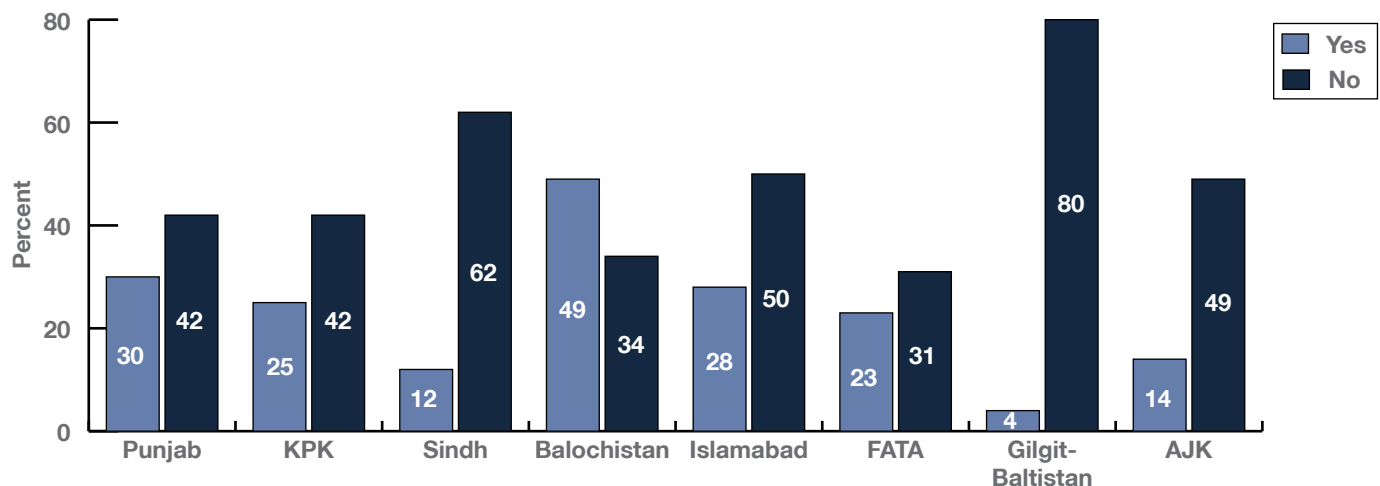


Interestingly, while three-fifths of respondents believed that fighting to implement the Sharia—a major objective of the Pakistani Taliban—was jihad, 46% of the respondents disagreed that the Pakistani Taliban were fighting for Islam.¹⁵ Of the 26% who agreed that the Taliban were fighting for Islam, three-fourths were either madrasa graduates or had had some education at a madrasa.¹⁶ Furthermore, 38% condemned the Taliban’s attacks on such civilian targets as girls’ schools and cinemas, whereas 8% supported them.

The survey also reveals important findings at the regional level (figure 1). A significant number of people in Punjab (27%), Baluchistan (23%), the KPK (20%), and Islamabad (20%) believe that jihad means fighting the enemies of Islam.

However there is also some regional variation in support for militant extremist movements like the Taliban. More people in Baluchistan (49%), Punjab (30%), and Islamabad (28%) think that the Taliban are fighting for Islam, than in KPK (25%) and FATA (23%) (figure 2).¹⁷

Figure 2 Attitudes toward the Taliban: Are the Taliban fighting for Islam?



Finally, attitudes toward the wars in Kashmir and Afghanistan are not uniform and seem to reflect Islamabad's official narratives. For example, 56% think that fighting in Kashmir is "the real jihad," as opposed to the war in Afghanistan, which 19% classify as a jihad and 55% consider a "political war."¹⁸

Four major points emerge from the preceding analysis. First, there is a sizeable minority in Pakistan that has sympathetic views toward militancy. Second, citizens of Punjab express more radical views than those of KPK, Baluchistan and FATA. Third, since only 2.2% of the respondents had been educated *only* at a madrassa, while nearly 67% were pursuing undergraduate or graduate education, radicalization is found among madrassa graduates as well as students of public and private schools.¹⁹ Previous opinion surveys of urban *Urdu-medium* public school instructors and students have confirmed the prevalence of intolerant views also.²⁰

Finally, while this survey helps delineate macro-level trends, it does not help us understand which segments of society or local areas, for example at the district level, are more radicalized and/or are at a higher risk of radicalization. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct surveys with larger sample sizes to more accurately assess radicalization at the micro-level.

SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS

Survey experiments conducted in Pakistan by a set of American researchers to gauge political support for particular militant groups resulted in five key findings for policymakers:

1. A large majority of urban Pakistanis see Islamist organizations as a threat;
2. Religiosity, including support for Sharia law, does not explain support for militant organizations (except for militant groups operating in Kashmir);
3. Support for Islamist politics does not explain support for militant groups²¹;

4. No direct relationship exists between support for democratic and representative regimes and a lack of support for militant organizations;²² and
5. Poverty is a poor predictor of support for militants.²³

The last finding was also confirmed in a 2009 national survey experiment that found poor Pakistanis to be 23 times more negative toward militants than middle-class Pakistanis, with the urban poor disliking militants more than the rural poor and urban middle-class.²⁴ Moreover,

Local political attitudes are the key determinates of support, as illustrated by the finding that militant groups are less popular in areas where they have carried out most attacks.

an additional analysis of the same 2009 survey revealed that except for a higher level of education correlating with a low support for al-Qaeda and the Taliban, there is no relationship between demographic trends or individual-level variables (e.g., income and education) and support for specific militant organizations. Local political attitudes are the key determinates of support, as illustrated by the finding that militant groups are less popular in areas where they have carried out most attacks.²⁵

RADICALIZATION AND MADARIS

Since the 9/11 attacks, *madaris* (Islamic religious schools, pl. *madrasah*) have come under immense scrutiny, being seen by many as factories of Islamist terrorism. While links undoubtedly exist between some *madaris* and militant networks, it is crucial to specify the extent of the problem.²⁶

First, only some of these establishments have direct links to militant groups. Two estimates put the figure at 10 to 15 percent.²⁷ Yet the reliability of these estimates is

uncertain, because how they were derived is unknown. A third estimate (based on self-reporting) reveals that 18% of the *madaris* were affiliated with militant groups involved in sectarian and non-sectarian violence (in Urdu, these groups are collectively referred to as *firqwarana tanzeemain*) and the Islamist insurgencies in Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Pakistan. This can translate into as many as 4,500 *madaris* with militant/sectarian connections.²⁸ Second, only 7% of Pakistani villages host a madrassa and madrassa enrollment makes up less than 1% of national school enrollment. Despite this limited enrollment, *madaris* can impact radicalism and militancy in important ways, as will be addressed below.²⁹

Surveys of *madaris* reveal the prevalence of sympathetic attitudes, especially among the JUI-F and other groups

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belonging to the Deobandi movement, toward the Afghan Taliban. Forty-three percent of respondents offered moral support to them, despite the fact that only one in five actually agreed with the Taliban's ideology. Just under a third also supported Pakistani militants, including the Pakistani Taliban.³⁰ Almost all (90%) agreed that suicide attacks inside Pakistan were not justified (only 2% said they were justified). Almost 90% supported a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute; only 9% said jihad was the only solution. A full 73% of them also supported democracy, many viewing it as a vehicle for bringing about Islamic reform in Pakistan.³¹

While any sympathetic attitudes toward militancy and the sizeable number of respondents who agree with the Taliban's ideology are troubling findings, this survey does not paint a picture of extreme crisis within *madaris* in regards to militancy. Nevertheless, it is their promotion

of ideologies justifying Islamist militancy, sectarianism, and intolerant worldviews that makes some *madaris* a challenge to security and stability, and therefore, a central concern of those charged with formulating effective counter-radicalization policies.³²

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN COMBATING RADICALIZATION

This brief highlights Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGO programs for four main reasons. They can:³³

1. Play important roles in counter- and/or deradicalization efforts due to their local knowledge and access to civilians and militants;
2. Help states pursue a grassroots approach and overcome political obstacles by acting as a bridge among the state, civilians, and militants;
3. Help address the conflict's political, economic and, social drivers by facilitating employment for former terrorists and providing welfare services for those interested in disengaging from terrorism; and
4. Assist in countering radical narratives by running advocacy campaigns.

THREE CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMS

Currently, Pakistan hosts six known deradicalization programs: the Sabaoon Center for Rehabilitation, Mishal, Sparley, Rastoon, Pythom, and Heila. Sabaoon, the only civilian-run project, is the focus of this paper. Over a hundred CSOs also conduct on-site projects in Pakistan that contribute towards counter-radicalization. Their activities range from arranging inter-faith dialogues to promoting tolerance and establishing moderate *madaris* to counter militant Islamist ideologies.³⁴ Two programs that are engaged with *madaris* to promote tolerance and peace initiatives are the Madrasah Enhancement Project (MEP) and the Pakistan Institute of National Affairs' (PINA) Training Workshops for *Khateeb* and

Deeni Teachers on Elections in Islamic Perspective. While counter-radicalization is not the primary objective of these projects, the nature of their activities nevertheless contributes to such efforts. At this time, there are no publicly known disengagement programs.

These programs have been selected mainly for five reasons:³⁵

- They show that some groups in Pakistan recognize that Islamist radicalization and militancy are a problem and are committed to working against it, thus representing a much-needed local ownership;
- They appear to demonstrate effectiveness in accomplishing their objectives;
- Two of the three cases offer alternative methods of engaging the madrassa community on issues of reform;
- All three programs illustrate the importance of using Islam's emphasis on peace as a credible counter to the militants' radical narrative; and
- The programs offer American and Pakistani policymakers new directions in countering radicalization based on partnerships between the public and NGO sectors and collaboration between international and Pakistani NGOs and civil society groups. (These topics are now gaining considerable attention in the literature on American aid and development in Pakistan.)

The documentation and data used here was gathered during the author's field visits to Pakistani deradicalization centers and obtained from the three organizations' project reports and presentations, as well as from interviews with program personnel.

THE SABAOON CENTER FOR REHABILITATION

The Hum Pakistani Foundation (HPF) operates the Sabaoon Centre for Rehabilitation in close coordination with the Pakistan army in Swat, KPK. The United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) provides financial assistance to the Center. Sabaoon's overall goal is to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate under-age militants who worked with the al-Qaeda-aligned Tehreek-e-Taliban Swat. Up to 1,200 boys, many of whom had been training to become suicide bombers, fell into the military's custody during its 2009 counterinsurgency operations in Swat.³⁶ Insurgents had recruited them through coercive and incentive-based tactics such as kidnapping and forced conscription,³⁷ offers of food, and opportunities to ride with militants in trucks and hold weapons. These "opportunities" conferred social prestige and authority upon them.³⁸ Alternatively, some families gave up their children for monetary compensation (around \$93 a month)³⁹ and, in at least two documented cases, turned in boys who were involved in alcohol and substance abuse.⁴⁰

The army launched a rehabilitation center for these boys during September 2009 and handed the project to the HPF. Dr. Mohammed Farooq Khan, an Islamic scholar, led the educational program until the Pakistani Taliban assassinated him during October 2010. Initially the center consisted of only 22 child soldiers; by May 2010, there were 97 in all. From this group of 97, 40 were categorized as "low-risk," 45 as "medium-risk," and 12 as "high-risk."⁴¹ As of October 2012, 186 former Taliban had been enrolled.⁴²

Risk levels are assigned to the child soldiers after Sabaoon's psychologists examine them. After determining the children's emotional, psychological, and intellectual development through cognitive tests, the psychologists evaluate their personal narratives to investigate how they were recruited, their role within the organization, the nature of their relationship with the militants (e.g., community-based links or family ties), and their continued inclination toward militancy.⁴³

Thus, an abductee who served for a short time and did mostly menial tasks would be considered "low-risk." A medium-risk inmate may be one who only provided logistical help, such as transport and access to food. In contrast, "high-risk" boys trained in weapons use

and combat, executed attacks, guarded Taliban checkposts, or worked as spies. Finally, someone who joined voluntarily, trained as a suicide bomber, and firmly believes in the Taliban's ideology would be considered very "high risk."⁴⁴

Importantly, a majority of these boys were attending public schools at the time of conscription, and less than one-third reported spending any time at *madaris*.⁴⁵ Their ages ranged between 12 and 17 years, most had been physically and sexually abused, many belonged to extremely poor families and were missing a father or a father figure, and most were middle children in their families. The significance of the last three factors can only be judged, however, when compared with the average income levels, family sizes, and household characteristics of Swat's residents.⁴⁶ Finally, many had only heard the Taliban's version of Islam and believed jihad to be the sixth pillar of Islam. According to Sabaoon's psychologists, many young men were driven to reach heaven because they saw it as a better alternative to their existing circumstances. This was the outcome of the Taliban's indoctrination that preceded training for suicide missions.⁴⁷

Sabaoon's eighteen-month program has four components: formal education, including corrective religious education; vocational training; counseling and therapy; and a social module to discuss social issues and hold sessions with the beneficiaries' families.⁴⁸ Sabaoon, which follows the Provincial Education Commission's education system and curricula, also offers classes between Grades 1 to FA or FSc (high school). The curriculum is liberal in nature, trying to teach students about tolerance and religious pluralism.⁴⁹

Students are reeducated on issues related to the Sharia, jihad, and democracy. Key points include the following lessons: suicide attacks are un-Islamic, only states can declare

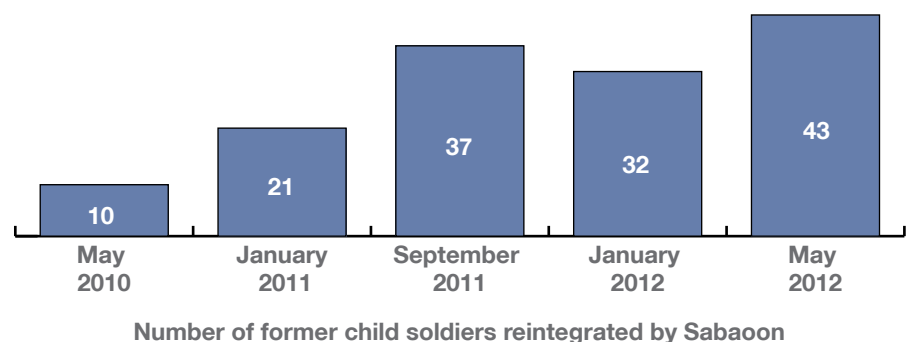
armed jihad, individuals can only engage in non-violent jihad, democracy and Islam are compatible, militancy has been destructive for Muslims, and Pakistan's constitution accords with Islam. The list, however, also includes some lessons that are historically and empirically untrue, such as "The only way to oust occupant forces is through democracy" or "suicidal attackers have never succeeded in achieving their goals."⁵⁰ In addition, several of the school's walls have been covered with posters of Qur'anic verses (with Urdu translations) to convey the message that the Taliban's brutal and oppressive tactics are un-Islamic.

Students are provided with vocational training (e.g., computer skills, appliance repair, basic electrician skills, masonry, and poultry farming) so they can support themselves if they are academically weak or unable to find employment. They also have access to such recreational activities as sports, arts, and television.⁵¹

Psychological services are central to Sabaoon, as many boys have psychological, health, and emotional problems. These include post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, and sleep disturbances or anger issues, along with such neurological problems as seizures and epilepsy. Students diagnosed with these conditions receive therapy, counseling, and medication. Counselors are also available to discuss students' concerns about their personal life or social and ideological issues. Similar services are offered to the families.⁵²

Since 2009, Sabaoon has educated over 200 former child soldiers and reintegrated 143 (figure 3).⁵³

Figure 3 Sabaoon Centre for Rehabilitation's reintegration statistics



Reintegration criteria include educational performance, vocational skills, expert psychosocial assessment, and the family's level of engagement with the child. "Low-risk" children are reintegrated earlier if they and their families do not have militant connections and there is no militant presence in their community. Teams visit villages or communities to investigate this. Furthermore, Sabaoon ensures that their beneficiaries either transition into a school or are employed at the time of reintegration.⁵⁴

To counter the risk of recidivism, a major challenge for deradicalization programs, a parole-like monitoring system has been created. Military officers check in with reintegrated children once every week or month, depending on the child's risk level, to assess their activities. This monitoring process lasts for two years.⁵⁵

Sabaoon assesses its program's success through several criteria. Pre and post outcome assessments are a major tool, and, according to the program's psychologists, results show that reintegrated children have undergone attitudinal and behavioral shifts. Regular monitoring has verified that they remain engaged in such constructive activities as attending school or staying employed; some have even become local teachers. Finally, so far there have been no known cases of recidivism.⁵⁶

While these results appear impressive, it is important to point out that no independent assessment of Sabaoon's performance or impact has ever been conducted or publicly released. Moreover, the absence of recidivism may be attributable to factors other than program effectiveness, such as the army's strong presence in Swat, which has caused insurgents to flee and thus made overt recruitment structures prohibitively difficult to maintain.

ENHANCING MADRASAH CURRICULUM

One of the central concerns that many policymakers have with *madaris* is the belief that their graduates hold intolerant worldviews and sympathize with Islamist militancy. Given

this belief, the Madrasah Enhancement Project (MEP), a two-week pilot workshop program launched in 2004 by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD), deserves close attention. Based on Islamic principles of human rights and tolerance, MEP seeks to help enhance the education they offer so that the *madaris* themselves can create economic opportunities for their graduates and play a greater role in peace building. The core reasoning here is that educational enhancement will enable madrasa leaders and students to play a pivotal role in building a peaceful and prosperous society and become an effective counter to those who exploit religion to pursue violence.⁵⁷

As of 2012, ICRD has worked with over 2,700 administrators and instructors from over 1,600 *madaris* across Pakistan's five major Muslim religious movements.⁵⁸

The MEP has six major objectives:

1. Encourage the inclusion of social and scientific disciplines within the *madrasah's* curriculum, with a particular emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights;
2. Encourage pedagogical transformation to increase students' critical thinking skills;
3. Teach conflict-resolution and dialogue-facilitation skills;
4. Facilitate discussions between leaders of the five major sects on educational enhancement, including how to incorporate Islamic principles of peace and tolerance into the curriculum;
5. Help selected workshop graduates become master trainers and thus qualified to conduct workshops with others; and
6. Help madrasa leaders take ownership of the enhancement process.⁵⁹

Moreover, the program is grounded in four major principles: (1) developing personal trust-based relationships, (2) respecting madrasa leaders, (3) grounding all projects upon Islamic principles, and (4) drawing upon past Islamic educational accomplishments. ICRD also tries to keep the program transparent, selects local partners carefully, seeks participation across

sectarian lines, and builds participant consensus on critical issues.⁶⁰

Larger core project workshops bring madrassa administrators and instructors from Pakistan's major areas together for ten days.⁶¹ Typically, the first session sets the stage by discussing past achievements of Islamic civilizations and *madaris*, especially their promotion of tolerance and human rights, and how they can again achieve such progress through pedagogical and curricular change. Session two informs participants about bias formation and how intolerance is taught, helps them discover their own biases, and discusses ways to build tolerance and respect for members of other sects and religions.⁶²

Session three focuses on identity-based conflicts by encouraging participants to learn about identity and its impact on madaris and teaching methodology. Session four frames the discussions on human rights using Islamic principles and emphasizes integrating human rights principles into madrassa curriculum.⁶³ Session five discusses pedagogical enhancement by introducing such topics as educational and child psychology, interactive learning, developing critical and analytical thinking skills, and the ill effects of shaming or intimidating students. Exercises help participants assess how their methodology can become more effective.⁶⁴

The last five sessions feature activities geared towards implementing learned skills and lessons through pedagogical and curricular changes. In some workshops participants also interact with “non-traditional” educators and speakers (e.g., Muslims of other sects, Christians, or women [in male madrasah workshops]), which introduces them to diverse perspectives and offers the opportunity to practice tolerance and respect for the “other.”⁶⁵

ICRD has conducted specialized workshops on conflict resolution; peace education; and Islam, democracy, and elections. It has also worked with madrassa and mainstream educational partners to create Madrasa Teacher Training Programs (MTTPs) at key Pakistani universities that will provide teacher certification for

madrassa faculty members. As of 2012, over 270 male and female teachers had graduated from these programs.⁶⁶

Reforming madaris is a sensitive undertaking, one that remains an incredibly challenging task even with the madrassa leaders' cooperation.

To gauge MEP's impact, this brief uses two key sources of data from ICRD: their evaluation surveys and opinion polling surveys. Performance and impact evaluations are important tools in assessing how well a program accomplishes its objectives and what changes result from its activities, respectively. ICRD's evaluation surveys gathered participant assessments of the workshops and the opinion polls gathered their attitudes toward issues such as human rights, violence, tolerance, et cetera. The main metrics/indicators that ICRD uses to evaluate the program's performance and impact are:⁶⁷

- The project's quality,
- Effectiveness in achieving the project's stated objectives,
- *Attitudinal* shifts among participants, and
- *Behavioral* shifts among participants.

While the metrics provide an opportunity to collect and critically evaluate program data, it is important to

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note that such information should be seen as a starting point for further analysis. Given the absence of baseline surveys, any changes in opinion are difficult to gauge.

Most (93%) madrassa teachers and instructors involved in the MEP rated the project as “high quality,” and 91% liked the workshops' interactive style. Nearly all felt that the program enhanced their knowledge. Based on evaluation surveys, however, only 21% of respondents were interested in modernizing the syllabus

and pedagogical methods.⁶⁸

In terms of attitude, participants normatively agree on the importance of making MEP-introduced reforms yet remain resistant to implementing them. For example, while 97% of evaluation respondents agreed that their *madaris* needed more MEP-like programs, only 39% of opinion survey respondents said they would like to improve their teaching methodology. Furthermore, while in opinion surveys almost all agreed that mainstream disciplines should be included in the curriculum, in the evaluations only 8% said they would like to include modern subjects. Attitudinal shifts toward the “other” paint a more optimistic picture, with 90% or more agreeing that regardless of the victim’s religion, helping the oppressed is obligatory and killing the innocent is terrorism. Eighty-five percent also supported sectarian cooperation. Nevertheless, respondents remained divided on the desirability to establish social relations with non-Muslims.⁶⁹

ICRD offers only anecdotal evidence for behavioral changes. The key shift is requests from *madaris* for more programs and resources for instructors to teach new disciplines. This includes several *madaris* that are linked with militancy and sectarian violence. Master trainers conducting workshops in *madaris* is another example. Other notable breakthroughs include reforming a former Lashkar-e-Taiba commander who disengaged from terrorism after attending the workshops and began preaching concepts of peace in Islam; leaders of an al-Qaeda-linked madrassa who began thinking of ways to reduce militancy among their graduates in the aftermath of a workshop; and leaders of the Ahle-Hadith movement who organized a series of Muslim-Christian interfaith workshops to promote peace and reduce extremism.⁷⁰

Finally, ICRD continues to face several challenges. Primary among them is gaining the madrassa teachers’ trust. There is often a general distrust of the program and at least initial suspicion of ICRD’s intentions. Even workshop participants often have reservations about continuing to work with an American NGO. There is also resistance to the idea of reform, a reaction grounded in

not only in ideological outlook but also in such pragmatic concerns as the fear of unemployment due to the inclusion of modern disciplines. In addition, the program faces various capacity and resource constraints, among them requests for programs that exceed ICRD’s capacity and the lack of resources to measure the workshops’ impact on participating *madaris* a few years after the program.⁷¹

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN *MADARIS*

During 2006-08, the Pakistan Institute of National Affairs (PINA) launched two democracy-promotion programs in Punjab’s *madaris*. The first set of workshops (2006-07) concentrated on voter education and targeted madrassa teachers and administrators, whereas the second set (2007-08) discussed elections within the Islamic framework and targeted *khateeb*s (those who deliver Friday congregational worship sermons) and instructors. After both waves, the instructors conducted workshops with their students.

The key objective of both programs was to make *madaris* part of the mainstream political process by getting them involved in the national elections. The 2008 workshops focused on countering the view that elections, voting, and women’s participation in the electoral system were un-Islamic. The underlying assumption was that engaging and then bringing *madaris* into mainstream political processes would end their isolation and create a more “open atmosphere (intellectually within the minds of *madaris* leaders)” that would enable future reforms.⁷²

Thus, in 2006 PINA created a “First-Time Voter Training Program.” After an initial consultation with scholars from different movements, PINA brought together nineteen leading Islamic scholars from different sects and schools of thought at its May 2007 consultative forum. The meeting’s proceedings, released as “The Ulama Declaration,” explained that democracy is consonant with Islamic principles of governance, stated that the Qur’an orders Muslims to take part in democratic processes, and

urged madrasa students to register as voters.⁷³

The three training workshops subsequently organized in Lahore, Bahawalpur, and Multan attracted over 150 male and female madrasa instructors. A local specialist in the Pakistani elections process led the workshops, familiarizing instructors with the procedural elements of registering and voting and equipping them with the skills needed to train their students. Over the next three months, these teachers conducted workshops with 120 students each. Within this, female instructors conducted training in seven *madaris* with approximately 2,800 female students. These sessions covered the election process' core philosophical ideas, the Islamic perspective of democratic elections, and the procedural issues of registering and voting. PINA also distributed over 20,000 books on these subjects and organized follow-up activities (e.g., a radio discussion, youth meetings, and inter-*madaris* debates on the importance of voting to reinforce lessons from the workshops).⁷⁴

In late 2007 PINA launched a program to train *khateeb* and madrasa teachers on the compatibility of Islam and elections along with the importance of participating in elections. Training workshops consisting of two phases were organized in seven Punjabi cities. Led by a local election specialist, they were attended by *khateeb*s, imams, and madrasa teachers. In December 2007, workshops organized in Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, and Khanpur were attended by 200 *khateeb*s and imams.⁷⁵

PINA also distributed a booklet on the democratic principles of Islam, contemporary methods of practicing Islam's consultative form of government, women's importance in Islam, and the key role that scholars and *khateeb*s could play in promoting the importance of voting. It then convened a provincial-level forum with 50 Islamic scholars from different sects and schools of thought who approved the booklet and also strategized ways to encourage *khateeb*s and imams to support people's participation in elections.⁷⁶

In the second phase, workshops conducted in Lahore,

Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi in December 2007 were attended by 50 male and 25 female teachers, all of whom were then sent back to train their own students. As many as 10,000 students (30% of them women) are believed to have been reached. Follow-up activities were similar to first program.⁷⁷

According to PINA, the two programs convinced a large number of madrasa students, as well as their families, to register and become first-time voters. Nevertheless, no data is offered to verify this claim or assess the impact on electoral participation. PINA also reports that voter turnout in areas where the 2007-08 set of workshops were held was 60% and above, and that a survey conducted in major Punjabi cities revealed that almost all of the

The other major challenge is the security threats that participating scholars and madrasa teachers and students face from militants and non-militant radical groups.

*khateeb*s who had participated in the workshops were vociferously advocating voting as a religious duty during the Friday sermons. Moreover, religious leaders were also said to be advocating women's participation in elections. The survey questionnaire or results were not, however, available in the reports.⁷⁸

PINA was successful in both encouraging increased electoral participation among the madrasa community as well as, more importantly, helping to introduce a counter-discourse that challenges conventional views regarding elections and women's rights issues. Nevertheless, PINA continues to face several persistent challenges. Like ICRD, the most significant challenge was—and remains—gaining the trust of madrasa leaders and students. Despite the organization's long association with Pakistan's Islamist parties and religious scholars, madrasa students and administrators initially viewed its project with suspicion. The other major challenge is the

security threats that participating scholars and madrassa teachers and students face from militants and non-militant radical groups. For example Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi, one of Pakistan's leading scholars who was working with PINA, was assassinated in 2009 by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Those involved in the voter education campaign have also complained of threats and harassment from Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT).⁷⁹

Finally, PINA has limited capacity and technical skills. The two projects were run by a very small staff that featured only one expert on Pakistan's electoral system; he led all of the voter-education workshops. PINA also lacks the necessary technical skills to rigorously monitor and evaluate its projects and offer a more concrete assessment of its impact. But most importantly, the organization still faces financial challenges. After the 2008 elections, it has been unable to secure funding to continue its educational programs in other *madaris* or to carry out workshops in advance of the 2013 elections.

CONCLUSION

Islamization, an outcome of Pakistani state policy, has been interlinked with radicalization and militancy among certain segments of society. Despite this, most Pakistanis do not support radical views and have negative attitudes toward militant groups. Nevertheless, a significant radicalized minority does exist, and the strong presence of militant and non-militant extremist groups makes radicalization a serious challenge.

In addition to the military-run deradicalization centers, several Pakistani and foreign NGOs have sought to counter extremism by creating a feeling of local ownership and helping to build local capacity, both of which are key for the projects' continued effectiveness and sustainability. The programs detailed in this paper offer policymakers a successful model of deradicalization and the reintegration of child soldiers into society. They illustrate that an alternative program based upon dialogue and respect, rather than forced change, effectively engages *madaris*

on the sensitive issues of curricular and pedagogical reform as well as support for democracy. In addition, they showcase examples of successful partnerships between Pakistan's public and NGO sectors and between foreign and local NGOs.

The declining presence of American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) soldiers in Afghanistan will dramatically change the nature of the insurgency in FATA, as well as increase the United States' reliance on

...Islamabad should develop institutions and policies that integrate the military, civilian law enforcement, and civil society to fight radicalization and militancy.

Pakistan to continue fighting terrorism and extremism. Given the Pakistani government's limited success on this front and the myriad American-Pakistan complications, American policymakers should think about increasing partnerships with Pakistan's civil society sector and giving it a stake in promoting and preserving peace in the country. Moreover, Islamabad should develop institutions and policies that integrate the military, civilian law enforcement, and civil society to fight radicalization and militancy.

For the Government of Pakistan

1. **Investigate the drivers of radicalization and militant recruitment.** There is currently a dearth of rigorous analyses in this field. Islamabad must commission studies that investigate the underlying causes and agents of this phenomenon—studies that focus on subnational and cross-militant group variations.
2. **Devise counter-radicalization, disengagement, and deradicalization strategies.** The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), created in 2009 to shoulder this responsibility, has yet to begin operations due to bureaucratic wrangling. As advocated by Tariq

Parvez, its former national coordinator, Islamabad should seek a swift compromise and enact legislation so that NACTA becomes operational.⁸⁰ NACTA should then:

- a. Devise a national counter-radicalization strategy, with special campaigns for areas with high-level of radicalization and militant presence, as well as a national deradicalization strategy aimed at imprisoned militants who pose the threat of radicalizing prisoners.⁸¹
 - b. Develop robust disengagement programs, as large-scale deradicalization programs may one day become unaffordable and unnecessary.
 - c. Develop reliable indicators to measure the programs' impact and effectiveness.
3. **Reform current deradicalization programs** so they will better suit Pakistan's political conditions and financial capacity, can be expanded beyond low-level cadres, and work toward a complete denunciation of extremism and terrorism without being limited to replacing inmates' anti-Pakistan ideologies with strong nationalism.⁸²
4. **Increase partnerships between the public and NGO sectors.** Such partnerships with credible and accountable non-profits can fill the public sector's various capacity gaps as well as help programs gain local legitimacy and reach a wider audience.
5. **Abandon short-term approaches toward madrasa reform.** Pakistani (and American) policymakers should realize that reforming *madaris* is a slow and delicate process. ICRD and PINA's programs offer some important lessons for future strategies:
- a. Engaging *madaris* is more effective than marginalizing them.
 - b. Trust is key.
 - c. Madrassa leaders should be approached as partners, and their positions and reservations should be respected throughout the reform process.
 - d. Ground reform within progressive Islamic prin-

ciples rather than concepts of secularism and modernity (as interpreted in the West).

For the United States Government

1. **Better policy needs better research.** Washington must rely on thoroughly tested explanations of the drivers and agents of radicalization and militant recruitment in Pakistan prior to developing policies to counter them. This will avoid the problems associated with allowing conventional wisdom and incorrect assumptions to inform policymaking, as has happened in the past.
2. **Increase partnerships with CSOs and NGOs in combating radicalization.** Washington cannot solely rely on Islamabad to tackle radicalization and extremism, as it lacks the necessary institutional capacity and, at times, political will and legitimacy to do so.
 - a. The United States must increase partnerships with Pakistani NGOs that have a record of effectiveness, transparency, and accountability.
 - b. Research shows that foreign aid to NGOs is effective in reducing terrorism if the size and strength of the country's NGOs sector is large. With an estimated 100,000 NGOs operating in Pakistan and hundreds working on countering radicalization, increasing American aid for the NGO sector can prove an effective means of reducing radicalization.⁸³
3. **Increased collaboration between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and Pakistani NGOs must be promoted.** As seen in PINA's case, local NGOs, while having access and legitimacy, can still lack the capacity and resources required to implement programs in the most optimal manner. Enhanced partnerships between United States-based INGOs and Pakistani NGOs can help fill this gap and build local capacity. ICRD projects, which are done in cooperation with local partners, offer a successful model of such collaboration.

4. Help Pakistan's deradicalization and counter-radicalization programs and bolster its attempts to create disengagement programs.

- a. Military and civilian assistance packages should include increased financial and technical resources for deradicalization and counter-radicalization efforts, as well as an increased focus on strengthening indigenous civilian law enforcement agencies, instead of just concentrating on the military.⁸⁴
- b. USAID should conduct training programs, like the 2010 KPK workshops, with federal and provincial governments on devising policies for rehabilitating militants.

ENDNOTES

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