

**Religious Education in Pakistan's Madrassas & the Facilitation of Child Trafficking: A
Flaw in Western Perceptions**

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Introduction

From the late 70s to 80s, a critical phenomenon was triggered by the military ruler, General Zia-ul-Haq, in his objective to achieve the Islamization of Pakistan: religious education became the prime source of education in Pakistan. It was integrated into the armed forces; graduates of seminaries, or the *madrassa*, were granted diplomas that held the same value as university degrees; and the civil service was opened up to those with a strictly religious educational background (Dilip 2012). The number of opening madrassas—which varied among religious sects—shot up as General Haq provided state funding and free land (Dilip 2012: 162-63). These were madrassas registered as charitable organizations—thus exempt from all taxes—and they were staffed by well-qualified and passionate clerics (Dilip 2012). As funding boosted the growth of madrassas all over Pakistan, with its impassioned sect leaders, the numbers leapt from 181 madrassas in 1947, to 2,801 after General Haq’s 11 years of Islamic rule (Dilip 2012). According to Dilip Hiro, author of *Apocalyptic Realm: Jihadists in South Asia*, enrollment in madrassas increased due to the deteriorating state school system and Pakistan’s stagnant economy (Dilip 2012). The madrassas were concentrated mostly in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the metropolis of Karachi—today, all locations stocked with non-state militant group members (Dilip 2012).

As the number of madrassas continues to rise in Pakistan, in more recent years, particularly since 9/11, a widely accepted controversy linked to the Pakistani madrassa has begun to develop within the world’s Western hegemon—the United States. The Western conceptualization of ideas such as freedom, liberalization, and humanitarianism is manifested in the United States’ pride in being a democracy where church and state are independent entities—a purely religious education cannot go hand-in-hand with liberal thought. The U.S.’ main concern

regarding freedom has to do with their belief that freedom is violated without religious tolerance. Although Pakistan's political leadership is structured secularly, it is an Islamic republic that still includes elements of *sharia*, or Islamic law, in its penal code, with Sharia courts still taking charge of criminal cases.

Yet, just because church and state have converged in Pakistan, freedom is not necessarily at stake, and religious intolerance is not omnipresent—something Western thought might challenge in the context of madrassas. The United States' views on child agency, choice, and informed consent within the context of child trafficking has conjured up its “rescue culture” alongside the rise of soft imperialism, ever since the United States began its hunt for non-state militant groups engaging in acts of terror in Pakistan. To the West, in a place where religion could be a possible tool of carrying out child trafficking—in the madrassa—that is where the militants lie.

This paper will argue that although the U.S. is not wrong in being concerned about recruitment in madrassas, there isn't a direct correlation between the madrassa as an institution and militancy, although militants do take advantage of some madrassas, which will be discussed in a later section. As an American-Pakistani, I made the error of making an uninformed, quick leap of logic and assuming that there is a linear connection between madrassas and militancy in Pakistan, and therefore “child trafficking” as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in the United States, must be rampant within madrassas—militant magnets. While many political fronts in Pakistan that are allies of larger networks, such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, do employ ideological indoctrination through misconstrued teachings of jihadism in madrassas to radicalize children, and then proceed to recruitment or child trafficking, this is not the case with all madrassas, and there is not always a linear correlation between the two. That is, as the number

of students attending madrassas increases, militancy does not increase with it (Bergen and Pandey 2006: 118). In fact, among the well-known Islamic militants who have contributed to carrying out attacks, only 11% attended madrassas, and the majority attended universities (Bergen and Pandey 2006: 118). Instead, a crucial question must be posed by not only myself, but academic scholars and politicians in the United States to challenge their perception: Is the madrassa an institution that fosters the teachings of Islamic radicalism to young minds through indoctrination, recruitment and coercion, or can it serve as a reasonable alternative to the lack of education provided by the Pakistani government? This question will be answered through the following structure:

1. The definition of child trafficking and policies in both the West and Pakistan
2. The non-state militant groups currently active in Pakistan
3. An analysis of the madrassa as an institution
4. The West's imperialist propensity to link all religious education through the madrassa in Pakistan to terrorist recruitment
5. The region of southern Punjab as an outlier for madrassas
6. Cases that constitute child trafficking
7. Rehabilitation for child victims

Trafficking Policies in the US & Pakistan

The United States and Pakistan are both signatories of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Article 3 of the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, especially Women and Children." It defines child trafficking as the following:

1. "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons."
2. "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (UNODC 2005: 42-43).

'Debt bondage' and 'involuntary servitude' are terms defined in the United States' Trafficking Victims' Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), and may pertain to students in southern Punjab's

madrassas because of radical Islamic groups who offer payment and debt relief to families who agree to send their children to the madrassas (Horgan 2015).

Section 103, Part A of the United States' Trafficking Victims' Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), under "involuntary servitude" mentions any "scheme, plan, or pattern" intended to have an individual believe that there are severe repercussions for not entering or continuing with the condition (U.S. State Department 2000). The schemes that these political groups use is emotional manipulation, or even direct threats—if the madrassa student does not participate in their concept of jihad, that is, they fail to fulfill their religious "duty", they are told that they will be sent to Hell for eternity. Although the "serious harm" or "physical restraint" here is more vicarious, as it has to do with the afterlife, it instills just as much fear and distress in the individual; it is coercion.

Taking a look at the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report can be useful. Pakistan is not a party to the 2000 TIP Protocol, but is listed as a "Tier 2" country, recently graduated from "Tier 3." The difference between the two tiers has to do with the amount of effort that is being put to address the issue of all categories of trafficking—Tier 2 implies some effort, whereas Tier 3 implies none at all. Within the report there is mention of non-state militant groups coercing families into giving up their children to "spy, fight, or die as suicide bombers in Pakistan and Afghanistan" (TIP Report 2000); the results of abuse, and rehabilitation of child victims that comes out of such trafficking and coercion is an area with a lot of potential for development in Pakistan today.

Although Pakistan is not a party to the 2000 TIP Protocol, Pakistan passed the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002 (PACHTO) as a response, which aims to prosecute any who are involved in transnational trafficking crimes, such as people smuggling;

Pakistan's penal code also includes punishments for domestic violations such as slavery, selling of a child for prostitution, and unlawful, compulsory labor. Pakistan's national policy, however, is notorious for weak implementation, sustainability, and effectiveness with poor documentation (TIP Report 2014).

Before moving further it is key to clarify the smuggling-trafficking dichotomy in the context of the madrassa. In the UN Protocol, smuggling has to do with *migrants* being entered into a state transnationally, of which the individual is not a citizen or resident; although there is room for it to be consensual, and is more ambiguous compared to trafficking, it is not applicable in this context (UNODC 2014).

Radical Parties Involved

There has been a rise of activity among terrorist networks in Pakistan such as Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Northwest Frontier Province, and southern Punjab—areas where the national government has a weak foothold and recent attacks have occurred. The four major militant groups involved the most in recruitment are Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Lashkar-e-Janghvi (LJ), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), that are selective in their recruitment processes, with a preference for “better-educated militants” from public sector schools and universities (Siddiqa 2015). The figure below is a map of areas in Pakistan where these groups hold the most power (Majidyar 2011).



Majidiyar, Ahmad. "Could the Taliban Take Over Pakistan's Punjab Province?" *Middle Eastern Outlook: American Enterprise Institute for Policy Research 2* (2010): 1 - 8. © American Enterprise Institute for Policy Research. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <http://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Figure 1: Area with high concentration of non-state militant groups

SSP is a group that was founded in Punjab in 1985, a time of rising tensions between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan. They received support from Zia-ul Haq's regime for standing firmly against growing Shia solidarity in Pakistan (Stanford University 2012). Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is also an anti-Shia Islamist organization, while Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed are Kashmir-based organizations that were involved in attacks against India (Afridi 2009).

The majority of madrassas in Pakistan are more helpful than damaging in providing some form of education, as well as non-radical and non-militant in nature (Winthrop and Graff 2015). However, those madrassas that *are* controlled by local militant groups are a huge threat to Pakistan's youth. The presence of SSP, LJ, LeT, and JeM in the southern Punjab region of Pakistan is expanding immensely, as they use madrassas as hubs for youth exploitation.

It is the strategy employed by these groups to benefit monetarily through such exploitation in madrassas located in areas like southern Punjab that has led the U.S. to mistake it for a fault in the madrassa itself. Given that the U.S. possesses a fear of religious education being the main source of education for over 2 million students, even if the religious education being

conveyed doesn't oppose the Western idea of religious tolerance (Delavande and Zafar 2013), the fact that recruitment by radical parties is also taking place through public sector schools and universities, is disregarded (Siddiqi 2015).

The Madrassa as an Institution

Pakistani defense analyst and civilian military scientist, Ayesha Siddiqi, recently published an article, "The Madrassa Mix: Genesis and Growth," where she elaborates on four generations during which the madrassa, as an institution, has grown and evolved. Madrassas in Pakistan today are often referred to as "modern" or "contemporary" madrassas, and make up the fourth generation of madrassas in Pakistan (Siddiqi 2015). The first generation dates all the way back to the end of the 10th century, when they were seminaries that were more than schools just for religious education—in addition to "Quranic" sciences they excelled in teaching various other subjects such as math, literature, and science (Siddiqi 2015). It was "institutionalized education" that didn't appear in Europe until the 13th century (Siddiqi 2015). The second generation of madrassas underwent a reform by Deobandis in India, in the mid-1800s, focusing more on the teachings of *hadith*, or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, rather than rational sciences (Siddiqi 2015). The evolution of the madrassa to one that confined itself primarily to religion was purportedly a reaction to British colonialism at the time, and "colonial policy" of separating religion from education; fortunately, in the fourth generation of madrassas, referred to by Siddiqi as the "hybrid-madrassa," can hardly be differentiated from a secular state school because of its expansion of teachings (Siddiqi 2015).

Today, the term "Madrassa" is used by the Government of Pakistan to refer to an Islamic education institution that starts at the primary level, and goes up to the twelfth grade; hybrid-madrassas even offer O' and A' levels (Siddiqi 2015). The madrassa continues on to the

university level where a Bachelor's, Master's, and postgraduate degree can all be attained. Students who pursue advanced study become Islamic scholars or teachers, also known as *Alims*, and often look for work in the religious sector in Pakistan. (Borchgrevink 2011) Some research claims that students attending madrassas typically come from modest socio-economic backgrounds, and others claim that madrassas also cater to both the middle and upper classes of society (Siddiqi 2015). At the same time, some claim that students who study at madrassas have very limited exposure to Western thought in their education, and all of their course content is studied in Urdu based on religious texts (Delavande and Zafar 2013: 2). The madrassas have no admission or age requirements, and the students are taught to read and memorize the Qu'ran at the earlier levels (Delavande and Zafar 2013: 9). The controversy claimed by the West is that the majority of madrassas "do not impart any secular or vocational training, but they have rigid curricula emphasizing rote memorization...[and] they deliberately educate their students in narrow worldviews and rejection of Western ideas" not training them for the real world (Delavande and Zafar 2013). The concept of the hybrid-madrassa, however, conflicts with this argument. A study carried out by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on public schools and madrassas, claimed that like public school teachers, there were isolated cases where "madrassa teachers even specified a religiously-based rejection of suicide bombing and other violent techniques. Madrassa teachers also demonstrated a stronger sense than their public counterparts that other 'Religions of the Book' were acceptable..." (Hussein and Naveed 2011: 16).

The critical allegations made by the U.S. against madrassas also have to do with the idea of them harboring religious fundamentalists in the making. These allegations include linear links between madrassas and militancy; that is, students are socialized into adopting a "jihadi" mindset

due to the “strategic placement” of madrassas in socioeconomically underdeveloped locations, with an overall poor quality of education offered in the madrassa itself. But, the majority of madrassas are not in any way institutions conducive to producing “jihadists,” as some madrassas are even willing to add regular subjects that are not religiously affiliated into the curriculum, but claim that it is the Pakistani government that is not willing to trust them with that responsibility (Borchevink 2011: 2).

Government officials, popular press, and other sources of mainstream media in the United States have created a nexus between poverty, the madrassa, and militancy. However, according to the World Bank’s data on religious school enrollment in Pakistan, “There is weak evidence to support the hypothesis that poorer and less-educated families are more likely to send a child to a madrassa, and somewhat stronger findings that poor children in settlements without a school use madrassas more often. There is *no* evidence for explanations based on household preferences such as religiosity” (Andrabi 2004). Rather, there are even high-income families that prefer to send their children to religious schools, and sometimes as a supplement to their other forms of schooling. Interestingly, the World Bank discovered that it is more complex than that—“families who are not interested in madrassa education abandon the education system altogether rather than sending their children to a religious school” indicating that the parents who *do* choose an Islamic education for their children do so because it offers a different, Islamic alternative (Borchgrevink 2011: 2).

Further, when assessing the potential of certain madrassas facilitating trafficking, it is key to acknowledge that not all major terrorists were educated in madrassas. In a study by Bergen and Pandey, *The Madrassa Scapegoat*, it is revealed that the most renowned terrorists in the world were high profile and secularly educated individuals. That is, “missions undertaken by Al

Qaeda and its affiliated groups are not the work of impoverished, undereducated madrassa graduates, but rather of relatively prosperous university graduates with technical degrees that were often attained in the West” (Bergen and Pandey 2006: 117-25). This argument is further strengthened by Winthrop and Graff who concluded, “the majority of madrassas have neither a violent nor an extremist agenda,” and “contrary to popular belief, madrassas have not risen to fill the gap in public education supply and have not been one of the primary causes of the recent rise in militancy” (Graff and Winthrop 2010: 18). An American academic, C. Christine Fair, asserted that since 9/11, there has actually been “a growth in private schools, while madrassa growth has stayed relatively flat” (Fair 2009).

In her article, Siddiqi mentions a study carried out by C. Christine Fair, who found that out of her sample of 141 jihadis, the majority had not been trained in madrassas (Siddiqi 2015). In fact, only 12 percent had been trained in madrassas. In regard to recruitment to militancy, 35 percent were instated in radical groups due to family and friends, 19 percent through an Islamic religious movement called “tableegh,” and the rest from mosques (Siddiqi 2015). A scholar, Masooda Bano, also conducted a similar study, where she found that in her sample of 50 jihadis, 60 percent belonged to relatively affluent social groups, and 30 percent having studied abroad (Siddiqi 2015).

A valuable research study conducted by the *Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff* on the behavior of madrassa students involved madrassa students who were presumably staunch in religious practices, and exposed to teachings condemning Western ideas of religious tolerance, interacting with students from “Liberal” and “Islamic” universities who came from more diverse religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. The study results showed that compared to groups of students from Islamic and Liberal universities, “while there is a high level of trust among all

groups, students enrolled at Madrassas exhibit the most trusting behavior compared to all other groups.” This is deduced through an experiment that included renowned trust games in psychology. The study rules out any chance of madrassa students promoting distrust or anti-social behavior, which counters the claim made by numerous political scholars that madrassas preach hatred and ideological extremism as a part of their default curriculum, not including those madrassas that are controlled by non-state militant groups.

Professor Christopher Candland, a Political Science professor at Wellesley College, estimates that nearly two million students in Pakistan attend madrassas. He admits, however, that the numbers are always ambiguous because not all madrassas are registered, but continue to run (Delavande and Zafar 2011). For example, in 2009, half of Pakistan’s madrassas, roughly 6,000, were purportedly in Punjab, but experts estimated even higher numbers because one-fifth of the province refused to register their madrassas (Tavernise 2009). By the end of 2010, the number of registered madrassas leaped to roughly 19,500, with the overall total including non-registered madrassas, at 30,000 (Borchgrevink 2011: 2). Despite these numbers, it is important to acknowledge that scant data is available on the students that actually attend the madrassa, making reliance on quantitative data not ideal when attempting to accurately gauge their national and international influence; qualitative data is more useful. Further, in a 2005 report, the World Bank analyzed current available data on madrassas, and concluded that it is in mainstream media—such as newspapers and television news networks—that the same headlines and content based primarily on interviews and secondary sources are circulated. It goes on to claim that the *actual* percentage of Pakistan’s students that attend madrassas is less than 1% of all enrollments in Pakistan (Andrabi 2004).

Relating Western Thought on Freedom & Agency to Flawed Perceptions

What if pursuing a religious education in a madrassa offers a sense of security and escape for children? Do these children in particular need rescuing? Laura Agustín, an anthropologist and author, discusses in her article on soft imperialism how military actions in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were all “morally convenient exceptions” made by the United States. “The exception says *This Time It’s Different. This time we have to go in. We have to step up and take the lead, show what real democracy is.* In the name of freedom, of course” (Agustín 2012). In 2006, one of the worst incidents of the US’ drone strike campaign in FATA took place: sixty-nine children under the age of 17 were killed in a drone strike on a madrassa—the youngest being seven years old (Woods 2011). The target was the headmaster of the religious seminary, who may have been a militant.

Soft imperialism has multiple forms of function: in this context, because of the United States’ view of religious education in madrassas as a threat, it has taken on two forms—“The Rescue Industry” (carried out by a variety of American constituents, such as journalists) and militarized humanitarianism (enforced by both State and activist). The Rescue Industry was born and raised in the past ten years, framed around U.S. policy on human trafficking. This industry is often reinforced by worldwide renowned journalists, like Nicholas Kristof, whose career is based on investigating cases of human trafficking in developing nations and justifying the rescue of people for a chance at a better life (Agustín 2012). In one case, he physically raided a brothel in India to save young girls, after which he published an article documenting his account of the experience (Kristof 2011). The recruitment and coercion of children in madrassas carried out by terror groups like LJ and SSP, is without a doubt a case not only of trafficking and exploitation, but also often physical abuse that should be prevented. However, the United States’ concept of

militarized humanitarianism, “a mode of activist intervention,” as regarded by Elizabeth Bernstein, is not the answer (Bernstein 2010: 47). In her research it has become clear that the West is a “carceral state” predisposed to using a very punitive, rather than redistributive, approach when dealing with threats of trafficking; it is a part of a military culture within the United States. Likewise, neither is The Rescue Industry an appropriate approach, which Agustín claims, “relies on an image of the barbaric Other” (Agustín 2012). Rather, it feeds the West’s view of a previously colonized country in need of soft imperialism. A parallel can be drawn to a commentary by Chinua Achebe made on Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: Africa was used as a “metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril... The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world (Agustín 2012).

To mention The Rescue Industry in the context of Pakistan, without acknowledging the prevalence of Orientalism—an idea created by author Edward Said in 1978, that an overly cohesive and condescending understanding of Islam, South Asia, and the Middle East was a result of “invested interests of European colonial powers”—would be leaving out a crucial part of the flawed perception (MacDonald 2010). It is, again, a presumption that Pakistan, as a part of South Asia, can be molded to be “corrected” and fit an ideal model created by the West: one where religious institutions seemingly contradict the concept of freedom, and thus should not thrive.

If madrassas in Pakistan deserve a chance to be expanded back to the madrassa from the past that used to include all subjects and provide more than just religious education, then acceptance of the United States’ self-righteous and well-intentioned credence that the actual

much-needed madrassas must be shut down, would be disastrous for Pakistan's education sector, especially when a correlation between the madrassa and militancy has yet to be made.

Because madrassas are legal institutions in Pakistan, the United States views them as contributing to structural violence in the country. The problem with the United States' anti-trafficking law, TVPA, is that it is a legal structure affecting people on the ground in other countries, lower tier countries being mostly Muslim countries like Pakistan (Class notes 2015).

Further, according to a study carried out by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, the United States' feels that there is a lack of religious tolerance in madrassas, and that it must be instated if there is to be development in Pakistani society—one that values religious freedom and diversity. Although increased religious tolerance in Pakistan would certainly lead to a decrease in sectarian violence, the United States sounds very much condescending in its description of Pakistani society; again, as the barbaric and backward "Other."

Masooda Bano, a Pakistani scholar, contributes to clearing of the West's perception of the madrassa: "in the emphasis on the political outcomes of the madrasas, their social milieu is completely ignored. In fact, even today the madrasa remains primarily a spiritual and social entity in which the Alim builds his authority through continual interaction with the community: there are substantial checks on that authority since the community's support for a madrasa is not motivated by blind ideological conviction, but by very rational calculations about his efficiency and personal commitment (Bano 2007).

Contextualizing Southern Punjab as an Outlier

madrassas existing in southern Punjab cannot be linked to the militant presence in the region, although militants do seek out support from families by offering free education with boarding and lodging for their children, as well as cash transfers for the entire family. There is speculation that strong anti-U.S. sentiment due to counter-extremism activities carried out by both the U.S. and Pakistan government in the region is affiliated with rise in militancy in the area, while it could also have to do with militant groups decoying families with their offering of community services and political activism (Mehboob 2011: 5). What makes southern Punjab an outlier compared to other regions in Pakistan that also have a high concentration of militant groups—such as Swat, KP, and FATA—is that many members of Pashtun groups and Al-Qaeda have been fleeing ever since the U.S. began its drone campaign.

“Last year, the police attempted to arrest a JeM commander in a Bahawalpur hospital after he had been wounded in a U.S. predator strike, but they backed down after his fighters threatened to blow up police stations and schools if the arrest went ahead. A JeM madrasa in Bahawalpur then offered him safe haven. He had many madrasas from which to choose: the district has the largest number of religious seminaries in Pakistan, housing over eighty thousand students” (Majidyar 2011: 4).

Despite the Pakistani government’s attempts at putting in large investments to improve access to public education, a focus on higher education has nonetheless been missing from the system. This is a province of Pakistan where large amounts of both army and militant recruitment takes place due to the state-created anti-India militant groups that initially were under state patronage, such as LeT, and JeM (Perlez 2010, Laub 2013). The CSIS claims that to prevent recruitment in these areas, the Pakistani government can strategize to create a system where there is widespread placement, counseling, and career advice for youth to increase job opportunities, therefore lowering the need for families to give in to militant groups in the area. There has yet to be a link between social welfare groups, education programs, and local civil society organizations—all of which can guide families away from falling victim to the alluring

offers of politically driven militant groups. “The Islamic schools are also seen as employment opportunities. ‘When someone doesn’t see a way ahead for himself, he builds a mosque and sits in it,’ said Jan Sher, whose village in southwestern Punjab, Shadan Lund, has become a militant stronghold (Tavernise 2009).

Sabrina Tavernise, a journalist for *The New York Times*, claimed that out of 12,000 registered madrassas in Pakistan, roughly half are located in Punjab. However, “Experts estimate the numbers are higher: when the state tried to count them in 2005, a fifth of the areas in this province refused to register” (Tavernise 2009). Southern Punjab is apparently also very rural—Tavernise claims that “Though madrassas make up only about 7 percent of primary schools in Pakistan, their influence is amplified by the inadequacy of public education and the innate religiosity of the countryside, where two-thirds of the people live” (Tavernise 2009).

Still, because southern Punjab and some provinces in the Northwest are outliers, the issue of madrassas flourishing in southern Punjab needs to be addressed by the government, without completely shutting down the model of the madrassa. They need to work on getting rid of the stigma attached to them in the international community, such as generalizing the madrassa as a place where intolerance is taught and glorification of a false interpretation of jihad or “holy war” takes place. That is, the assumption that a strictly extreme interpretation of Islam is taught in all madrassas.

Cases that constitute child trafficking

In an article published by *The Guardian*, four Afghani children raised in Pakistan attended what is referred to as the “hate madrassa” that is described as a place that bred in them a hatred for American soldiers in Afghanistan (Boone 2011). This serves as an example of one of the strategies employed by non-state militant groups: the grooming technique. Grooming is often

used in the context of child sexual trafficking, to reshape a child's definition of what is normal, and morally acceptable, through processes of violence, and often degradation; it is a full systematic process (Class notes 2015). Grooming occurs from a young age, and also can be applied to those madrassas at which recruitment takes place. "All the time in Friday prayers the maulavi talked about the Americans in Afghanistan and he told us that we should do jihad, especially on Fridays," said one of the nine year-old boys (Boone 2011). This is how it happened: after being coerced into joining the Taliban through threats of violence and failure to become martyrs, the boys were supposedly told to travel to Kabul by Maulavi Marouf, a mullah in charge of a madrassa, and told to unload a delivery of car batteries—manual labor which for some reason demanded "physically weak children" (Boone 2011). The fear is that the indoctrination that allegedly takes place at these 'hate madrassas,' can turn children into bombers. However, one of the boys stated his reason to be financial: "Our family is very poor...when I was promised 50,000 rupees to go to Afghanistan, I went immediately" (Boone 2011). Essentially, it is being conveyed that their recruitment is carried out through both physical and emotional coercion, and it can lead to their recruitment into the Taliban to participate in suicide bombing.

Further, Owais Tohid, a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, wrote about a sixteen year-old boy named Arshad Khan who, after surviving a drone strike in North Waziristan, was sent home to Karachi by the Taliban. It turns out that Khan was a "former *madrassa* student-turned-suicide-bomber" who was "recruited by a network of Taliban commanders from the country's many unregulated religious *madrassas*" (Tohid 2011). When interviewed at the age of eighteen, Arshad Khan explained how he had wanted to become both an engineer and a "good Muslim" by going to *both* a school and a madrassa; but, it was the

Taliban that “shattered my ambitions and changed my life” (Tohid 2011). A suicide bomb-recruiter himself was arrested in Karachi in 2011: Abdur Razzaq, after his arrest, led the police to an “Islamic militant ring involved in the recruitment of teenage *madrassa* students...to be trained as suicide bombers in North Waziristan” (Tohid 2011).

An article from CNN by John Horgan provided reason as to why actions like these constitute child trafficking: younger children are easily influenced by terrorists and lack the capability to say no out of fear for their safety or the punishment of their families. Given that marijuana grows throughout Swat in Pakistan, children who suffer from drug abuse are perfect occasions for Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) members to approach their families with offers of a promising future, even a safe haven, filled with opportunities to find belonging, purpose, and most importantly: work. This kind of deception would constitute a “scheme,” by the TVPA (U.S. State Department 2000). In other situations, the Taliban are more aggressive and use forms of financial pressure, such as debt bondage, to coerce families into virtually selling their children to the group. According to Horgan, families had the choice of either surrendering the child, or paying a financial tax that equated to double the annual wage (Horgan 2013).

Child trafficking can include physical abuse—Horgan reported that beyond the madrassa, and into the training camp, children “were locked in a 4x5 meter room” after a day filled with performing menial tasks for TTP members. Some recalled being beaten and sexually assaulted repeatedly by senior figures. Interestingly, others had positive experiences with the TTP because of entire families being drawn in; “For them, adventure, camaraderie, and a sense of purpose proved all too real. Terrorism was the family business...” If the UNODC were to try and pin down an age for these children, it would be a challenge, as they don’t have birth certificates and can’t provide an age themselves (Horgan 2013).

Rehabilitation for child victims & Solutions

Consequentially, for those children who have experienced trafficking in more conflicted areas like Southern Punjab, FATA, KP, and Swat, rehabilitation programs are vital. I have observed such programs developing, particularly after the recent Peshawar shootings. There is a strong stigma attached to mental disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) depression, and schizophrenia in Pakistan, so rehabilitation for children who were trafficked via extremist recruiters is accompanied by a challenge to face countless families and organizations in Pakistan. Fortunately, many Pakistani non-governmental organizations aimed solely at assisting children with overcoming their trauma have been launched in locations such as Swat Valley. One particular rehabilitation school, Sabaoon, or “New Dawn” located in Malakand, has treated at least 180 young men since 2009 (McCarthy 2011). Here, they share stories of how they were trafficked through techniques of grooming, coercion, and kidnapping. One boy said that the “terrorists” kidnapped him and beat him very badly, ultimately showing him “the way of suicide bombing” (McCarthy 2011). The school is staffed by child psychologists and receives funding from UNICEF and the Pakistani government (Coughlin 2012). One clinical neuropsychologist at Sabaoon, Feriha Peracha, posed the following question:

"An adolescent, libido high, and you tell him, 'Look, to kill a Pakistan army guy, you are going to get 70 beautiful women immediately. Immediately, you do it and there they are, waiting for you. And there is milk and honey.' ... So why should he not do that?"

Sabaoon then provides mainstream academics, rather than a strictly religious education, which aims to provide the boys with a high-school level degree and eventually vocational training for a job as an electrician or repairman, and after the “de-radicalization program” they are closely monitored in jobs or local schools (McCarthy 2011). Reporter, John Horgan, with CNN interviewed one particular child who attended Sabaoon and has set an example for the others—

now eighteen years old, he has excelled academically at Sabaoon, received a scholarship to a university, and returns to Sabaoon to speak with boys currently undergoing rehabilitation (Horgan 2013). The Pakistani military also continues to run a rehabilitation program for children who have been exploited by extremist groups in Swat. However, there is little information available on the number of trafficking victims assisted, whether the government encouraged victims of trafficking to launch investigations against their traffickers, or pursue retribution for their exploitation (Mehboob 2011).

What is the role of the West in finding a solution? Do we need more Greg Mortensons traveling to Pakistan to build schools rather than madrassas? A controversy that arose against the author of *Three Cups of Tea*, and founder of the Central Asia Institute, was that a lot of his claims and experience—of being kidnapped by the Taliban, finding refuge in a village, and offering to build schools for residents—were fabricated and filled with exaggerations (Court, Livelli, and Usman 2011). In an interview by *60 Minutes*, the host asked a man from the village in which Mortensen claimed to build schools, “Why do you think Mortensen would write this?” The man responded, “To sell his book.” This exhibits what Agustín suggests to be the crux of the issue of *The Rescue Industry*: the motivation behind the acts of American writers, philanthropists, and journalists is a skewed perception of what it means to be altruistic and rather unproductive. This is not to say that schools that are not madrassas should not be built, as they should, but this is a role for Pakistan to take on. Rehabilitation after trauma is a sensitive area, and those who could be the most helpful would most likely be native Pakistanis who are familiar with the culture, language of Urdu, and current political and socio-economic conditions. Assessing the need for “de-radicalization” is something that should be left to Pakistanis like Paracha—whether they were radicalized in the madrassa, or whether it was post-trafficking.

Expert Responses with Opposing Views

A previous employee of the US Institute of Peace stated, “the phrase ‘madrassas are not a problem’ has become the politically correct answer in the West. There was research, I think by a woman named Rebecca at the Brookings Institute who backed it up by saying that madrassas constitute just 1% or so of schools in Pakistan. Liberal elites in Pakistan do perceive that madrassas are a problem and they are prevalent, but it’s hard to go against data collected by US think tankers by using popular perceptions.¹ She explained that what many American professors are looking at is solely the religious education aspect while it’s taboo in the US to say it is violent, despite the fact that many people in Pakistan believe it is—especially in southern Punjab.

In a personal conversation with Ayesha Siddiqa, she made the assertion “that there is no black and white.” She claims that patterns of recruitment are very nuanced, even in southern Punjab. From her perspective, although militants do recruit from public and private schools, “madrassas are an important stop over.” She also stated, “Madrassas are very central to radicalization of the community, which could later lead to encouraging violent extremism. My own research showed that they were closely tied. Madrassas may not be central to recruitment, but are critical to indoctrination.²

Concluding thoughts

The United States’ perception of the madrassa existing as an institution that only fosters the transfer of extremist ideology from one generation to the next is a flawed one. It is rooted in the West’s conceptualization of freedom as being the separation of religion and public education, thus trumping child agency in Pakistan. A U.S. drone attack in 2006, killing sixty-nine children

¹ Personal conversation with a previous member of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), April 15, 2015.

² Letter to author, May 4, 2015.

under the age of seventeen, goes to show that both ideas of militarized humanitarianism and the Rescue Industry are being employed relentlessly to act against an institution that is a scapegoat for inducing terror. The children being educated in madrassas do not need saving by the West; rather there should be a focus on the militant groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-i-Janghvi, and Jaish-e-Mohammed, which are gaining stability and power in Punjab through structural underdevelopment, allowing them to radicalize provincial madrassas. The United States' concept of religious freedom is undermined especially because it feels the need to intervene in the running of religious seminaries in Pakistan.

There are clearly conflicting views among scholars in both Pakistan and the U.S. regarding the relationship between militancy, recruitment, and religious education in Pakistan. There is a plethora of worthy sources and qualitative evidence comprised of personal stories to holistically defend the role of the madrassa as a crucial source of education in a country with structural conditions mitigating the possibility of better access to a public education. Although child trafficking by non-state militant groups certainly takes place, research shows it is mostly concentrated in southern Punjab and provinces in the Northwest making them outliers. The madrassa is therefore an institution that teaches through religious education, not one that facilitates child trafficking, but one that can be manipulated and used as a tool to recruit and coerce children into working for terror organizations.

Within Pakistan, the issue of madrassas flourishing in southern Punjab needs to be addressed by the government without completely shutting down the model of the madrassa itself. Instead, it must work towards eliminating the stigma attached to madrassas within the international community, and generalizations of the madrassa as a breeding ground for intolerance and glorifier of the false interpretations of jihad, or "holy war." Accountability and

dialogue are needed for religious seminaries to be distinguished from those controlled by the radical—Pakistan simply does not have the infrastructure to cope with the consequence of them all shutting down, especially when they are advantageous for socioeconomic development, and do a better job of providing food, shelter, and activities for children who would otherwise be on the streets. U.S. military intervention in campaigns active in areas like FATA, aimed at militant groups exclusively, is a different discussion in and of itself. If the U.S. wants to carry out the “humanitarian” act of assisting Pakistan, the best route for them is to provide organizations based in Pakistan with the funding they need to further develop and continue campaigns for education and rehabilitation for children. At a time like this, there is no room for Western bias, skewed altruism, and the imperialistic imposition of Western models for structural development.

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