
How Pakistani Madrassas Contribute to Radicalization Dynamics and Religious Terrorism in Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir

Introduction

With the decline of ideologies such as anarchism, anticolonialism, nationalism and revolutionary politics, which were the foundation blocks of the terrorism phenomenon, religious extremism and faith have currently become the major triggers behind the widespread terrorism and terrorist attacks of our contemporary era (Rapoport, 2002; Walls, 2017). The Indian Administered part of the erstwhile princely State of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) has not been an exception to this rule since according to the Global Terrorism Index, as the region suffered the highest amount of deaths in 2017, namely 102 deaths committed by five different terrorist groups (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2018). To complicate matters, a cursory scan of J&K's history further uncovers the recurring cycle of violence; ethno-religious conflicts, human rights violations, horrifying loss of life, vast expenditures on security, terrorism and crimes which have continuously been committed by various radicalized groups, including Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Hizbul Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Al-Badr and Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) (James & Özdamar, 2005; Akbar, 1991; Tham, 2011; Akhtar, 2010).

Although the security situation has improved considerably over the past years, there are reasons not to be overly optimistic about the defeat of these groups in J&K. In return, the deep-rooted and ongoing religious terrorism¹ in the region has fostered scholars to attempt providing an enlightening insight in the processes of radicalization and its dynamics in J&K. However, previous and current scholarship on radicalization processes in J&K generally bears two cardinal drawbacks: (i) insufficient acknowledgement of the organic insurgency in J&K, since it merely focuses on macro level analysis which asserts that terrorism in J&K is wholly dependent on Pakistani terrorists who cross border illegally and (ii) insufficient acknowledgement of the internationalization of the ethno-religious conflict in J&K, which further maintains a state of pervasive ignorance on the complex chain of radicalization and religious terrorism. In addition to that, the majority of researches which study jihadi radicalization and religious terrorism have been often limited by simply relying on anecdotes, secondary analysis of data, archival records and a small number of interviews or case studies (e.g. McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Nesser 2006; Mazarr 2004; Bakker 2006).

For the last two decades, whenever the media has covered breaking news on yet another horrendous terrorist attack in J&K, a litany of questions many scholars ask themselves is how the Pakistan-based terrorists and terrorist groups such as LeT and JeM radicalize young people and what has actually compelled extremists to consider the region of J&K as a gangrenous appendix from a diseased body which must be removed and merged into Pakistan?

One of the most controversial and at the same time paramount answers has been the presence of '*Madrassas*'², which have appeared to be prevalent avenues of indoctrination. Although religious schools trace their traditions back to the time of the Prophet Mohammad, the 9/11 event has cropped them out from the ages of oblivion and brought them to the forefront of international attention.

¹ Religious terrorism is in this article defined as the calculated use of unlawful violence which inculcates fear with the purpose of affecting or coercing states and/or particular populations towards pursuing certain religious goals.

² Madrasa will be defined as an educational establishment where Islamic studies and jurisprudence are taught, although it might not be necessarily the only subject studied.

Therefore, the abovementioned argument encourages one to explore the role of Pakistani madrassas (religious schools) in their promotion of radicalization and provision of the necessary infrastructure for religious terrorism in J&K.

As a result, this paper will offer a preliminary examination of the discussed question by reviewing the available academic literature, newspaper articles and policy reports on madrassas as discussed in the context of terrorism. The paper is divided into three sections. By contextualizing the sociopolitical and religious setting of Indian Administered J&K, the first section briefly discusses the nature of religious terrorism in that region. The following sub-section of this chapter will explore the Philosophy of Global Sunni Caliphate in the context of J&K and differentiate the aforementioned ideology from the 'liberation' of J&K. Finally, the thematic focus of chapter three and its paragraphs will be on the role of madrassas in the promotion of religious terrorism. The evolution of these elusive educational institutions during consecutive Pakistani governments, the dynamics of radicalization throughout and their alleged linkages with extremist groups active in J&K, will be further examined in the chapter.

The nature of religious terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir

Religious terrorism, although containing common factors and characteristics of the general definition of terrorism, requires to be distinguished analytically from other forms of terrorism in order to better contemplate its mechanisms, goals and interactions with Islamic radicalization.

Some scholars like Walter Laqueur state that nationalism is the core essence of religious terrorism and that, as such, can be categorized as Right-winged Terrorism (Laqueur, 2000). While religion, like Islam, presents a path towards immortality through the belief in an afterlife and contemplation of heaven, nationalism provides a path towards symbolic immortality, which refers to being part of something significantly important that will ultimately outlive the individuals who hold a collective identity and pursuit (Azarian, 2016). In the case of J&K, this ideology coalesced, in the beginning and for a very short period, into the JKLF, which started off as a nationalist organization, but soon conducted terrorist attacks under the flag of an '*independent Kashmir*' (Wilkey, 2014; Swami, 2005). It should be noticed that the label of '*nationalist terrorism*' does not preclude one group from being described in other terms such as religious terrorism. Nationalist terrorism may overlap with religiously motivated terrorism or even evolve from radical nationalism to semi-religious one, as was the case with the JKLF. In addition, states can effectively exploit semi-religious terrorists and convert them into violent nationalists who fight proxy wars. By way of illustration, Pakistan has been using both jihadi militant groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen, LeT, JeM and nationalist separatist movements to further its dubious strategic objectives in J&K (Bajoria, 2010).

Another similar argument is that the objectives of religious terrorists are not purely religious. Respectively, religion in essence could be also considered as "*politics under a different name*" (Jameson, 2002). Mark Sedgwick (2004) adopts a different approach and argues that although the ultimate goal of religious terrorism is religiously formulated, the immediate objectives are purely political and sometimes financial (Sedgwick, 2004; Buker, 2017). For instance, Masood Azhar, the leader of JeM, is reported to have said: "*Marry for jihad, give birth for jihad and earn money only for jihad till the cruelty of America and India ends*" (Rashid, 2012). Though it is possible to find the fingerprints of nationalism in his words, still his background including fighting under the banner of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban could prove the fact that separating J&K from India is just an immediate objective (Hashim, 2019).

Some other scholars posit that religious terrorist attacks are to be differentiated from other forms of terrorism, as these acts of violence are often based on internal aspects of religion such as scriptures, sacred texts, traditions and historic examples which are not present in the orthodox definition of terrorism (Rapoport, 1990). Finally, Bruce Hoffman asserts that religious terrorism has a transcendental aspect and considers violence as a sacramental act or divine duty that is carried out in response to some theological imperative (Hoffman, 1999). In his eyes, religious terrorism has three special elements; using religious belief and scriptures to justify violence against people, considering apocalyptic images of destruction as a required and essential part of their holy mission, and existence of clerical figures in leadership positions (Odhiambo, 2014; Hoffman, 2006 & 1999).

The belief system of LeT can be considered a good illustration for this model. According to a LeT pamphlet, the group's activities in J&K are part of a broader holy goal, which is establishing Islamic State in India and other historically 'Muslim lands'; *"all of India [...] were part of the Muslim empire that was lost because Muslims gave up jihad... it is our duty to get these back from the unbelievers."* (The Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

The aforementioned unresolved and problematic debates in the academic literature regarding the nature of religious terrorism could be further clarified by looking not just at the presence of religious texts, traditions, symbols and scripture, but by concentrating on the uniquely religious aspirations these radical groups and people are striving and fighting for (Gregg, 2014). Regardless of using scripture or the presence of religious symbols, typically one could find some unparalleled religious goals in the nature of religious terrorism. The creation of a *"religious government"* (restoration of the Caliphate) and *"religious cleansing"* are two common cardinal religious goals which could unravel the quintessence of religious terrorism. These goals are most commonly associated with radical Islamic groups that typically strive to re-establish a fully independent state governed by Sharia law (Islamic law). By dint of exemplification, the entire strategy of the Islamic State was formulated on the uncompromising religious approach concerning millenarianism and the establishment of an enduring worldwide Caliphate (Oosterveld et al., 2017). Somewhat similarly, Al Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan and LeT in J&K called for the restoration of the Caliphate with the indispensable objective to unite and protect all Muslims worldwide (Bin Laden, Lawrence & Howarth, 2005; The Counter Extremism Project, 2018). Like-minded groups, such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Jemiyah Islamia in Southeast Asia also share these goals and the determined desire for a restoration of the Caliphate as part of their mission statements (Pavlova, 2007; Furnish, 2002; Byman & Wittes, 2014; Gregg, 2014; Abed-Kotob, 1995). Additionally, radical Islamic groups aim to eradicate infidels (groups from other religions or with different interpretations of Islamic faith) from their religiously pure State through various religious cleansing processes (Religious Cleansing) (Steindal, 2016; Gregg, 2014; Hoffman, 1995). To exemplify, in December 2008, Jamaad-ud-Dawa's monthly pamphlet replicated the views of its leader Hafiz Muhammad Saeed by arguing that, *"Yahood [Jews] and the Hunood [Hindus] are two sides of the same coin"*; considering Hindus the *'infidel in the East'* who must be eradicated (Al-Dawa, 2008). Based on the influence of Osama bin Laden and other members of Al Qaeda, who have laid the foundation of the religious extremist ideology of terrorist groups such as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and JeM, the annexation of the State of J&K and the establishment of a Islamic Caliphate based on Sharia law within the territory in question has been the ultimate purpose of all those groups (United States Department of State, 2017; Stanford, 2017).

Global Sunni Caliphate VS. Islamic State of Pakistan

Since the 2014 rapid onslaught of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, various extremist groups in J&K have attempted to hijack and exploit Kashmiri political narratives and transform these into a dream of establishing a global Sunni Caliphate. A plethora of illegible scribbles and posters of the '*Islamic State of Jammu & Kashmir (ISJK)*', stating '*We want IS*' and '*Welcome IS*' distributed across J&K, alongside with the intermittently waving of IS flags in certain districts were both manifestations of those attempts. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that in the case of religious terrorism in J&K, in contrast with the core idea of '*global Sunni Caliphate*', terrorist groups currently actively operating in the region such as JeM and LeT are more inclined and united towards the idea of bringing Kashmir under the control of the Islamic State of Pakistan (Siyech, 2018). Riyaz Naikoo, the commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, mimicked this doctrine by saying that, "*Pakistan's creation as the homeland for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent links us to it historically as we were a Muslim majority region whose geography was contiguous with Pakistan*" (Al Jazeera, 2018).

Therefore, although these terrorist outfits use Islamist rhetoric and a perverted religious plea for the purposes of recruitment and ideological justification, the ultimate goal is not establishing a Caliphate. The demise of the JKLF during the 1990s can prove this claim (Chowdhary, 2015). Respectively, jihadist groups like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda supporting the ideology of a global jihad have failed to cultivate a substantial presence in J&K and exploit the local insurgents, unlike conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan.³ In addition, the deep seated ethno-historical collective identity in J&K, has limited the space for the exclusivist nature of the Islamic State's ideology or the concept of global Sunni Caliphate that aim to eliminate sub-identities and merge them into an exclusionary Islamic one (Remes, 2017; Haykel, 2016; Mahood & Rane, 2017).

On top of that, in J&K the idea of Ghazwa-e-Hind (battle of India) has been overshadowing the global Sunni Caliphate. Jihadists are under the conviction that there is a Hadith (oral traditions attributed to Prophet Mohammad) prophesying a great ultimate battle in India between the true believers and unbelievers before the end of times.⁴ "*There are two groups of my Ummah (community) whom Allah will free from the fire; the group that invades India and the group that will be with Isa Ibn Maryam [Jesus]*".⁵ Abu Hurairah, the Prophet's companion, has said: "*The messenger of Allah promised us that we would invade India. Thus, if it happens in my lifetime, I should give away my life and all my belongings in it. If I am killed in it, I shall become the Best of martyrs (of Islam) and if I come back, I will be Abu Hurairah AL-Muharrar [who freed from the fire of hell]*".⁶ (Al-Mawrid Hind, 2017). Moreover, in another narrated Hadith from Abu Hurairah, fighters heading towards Sindh and Hind were promised the reward of success and freedom from hell by this quote from the Prophet who declares, "*[d]efinitely, one of your troops would do a war with Hindustan. Allah would grant success to those warriors, as far as they would bring their kings by dragging them in chains. And Allah would forgive*

³ Some scholars and politicians, by ignoring this subtle differentiation in the school of thought of IS/Al Qaeda and militant groups in J&K, put them in one list and try to contrive the same counterterrorism strategies against them. For instance, coordinator for counterterrorism at the US State Department, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, noted; "the example of David Headley indicates Al Qaeda is not the only group with global ambitions that we have to worry about... "[V]ery few things worry me as much as the strength and ambition of LeT, a truly malign presence in South Asia." (Bajoria, 2010)

⁴ Numerous Islamic scholars have questioned the veracity of the Ghazwa-e-Hind Hadith, declined its repeated contemporary citation and doubted on reliability of its chain of narrators. For extensive information, please refer to Siddique, Q. (2000). What is Lashkar-e-Taiba?. FFI (Norwegian Defense Establishment), 4.

⁵ Sunan an Nasa'i, Book of Jihad, 3175

⁶ This text has been narrated by very nominal differences through different chains of narrators like: Ahmad ibn `uthman ibn Hakeem – Zakariyya ibn `adiy – `ubaid Allah ibn `amr – Zaiyed ibn abi Unaisah – Sayyaar – Jabir ibn `abedah – Abu Hurairah . (As reported in Al-Nasa'i's "Sunan").

those warriors [by the Blessing of this Great War]. And when those Muslims would return, they would find Isa Ibn Maryam [Jesus] in Syria.” (Haqqani, 2015).

LeT, like every major Pakistan-based jihadi group, has been justifying its terrorist attacks across the border by arguing that its operations were part of the battle for India promised by the Prophet (Ibid). Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the founder of LeT, has stated various times that “[i]f freedom is not given to the Kashmiris, then we will occupy the whole of India including Kashmir. We will launch Ghazwa-e-Hind. Our homework is complete to get Kashmir.”⁷ (Saeed, 2011). Likewise, Abdul Rehman Makki, commander of LeT, stated that the Islamic State of Pakistan would “only be complete when the Muslim-majority states of India become a part of it.” (quoted in Siddique, 2000).

In addition to that, some commentators and Pakistani propagandists erroneously have actually tried to determine the nationality of those fighters who fight until liberation of Kashmir from India and the establishment of Islamic State under the Sharia of Allah in that territory. For instance, Zaid Hamid has repeatedly argued that “Allah has destined the people of Pakistan with victory [in battle of India] and Allah is the aid and helper of Pakistan.” (quoted in Haqqani, 2015).

Not surprisingly, Pakistan has promoted the idea of Ghazwa-e-Hind through its formal media outlets during the 1990s in order to motivate the jihadi fighters. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of foot soldiers of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) -supported jihadi groups were manipulated and recruited by the aforementioned Hadith (Haqqani, 2016). In addition, websites belonging to Jamaad-ud-Dawa, Harakat-ul-Mujahideen and JeM have been dedicated to the Ghazwa-e-Hind philosophy, by including various articles, speeches and ‘inspiring’ videos of Masood Azhar, Hafeez Muhammad Saeed and books like ‘Ghazwa Hind’ which vindicate the jihad against India.

Madrasahs; hotbeds for promotion of religious terrorism and radicalization

Since 9/11, madrasahs in Pakistan have been at the vortex of international studies due to their alleged linkages with extremism subsequently leading to religious terrorism. In the wake of September 11, 2001, the United States (US) pressured the then Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf to undertake new reforms of religious schools. Prompted by the US government and in exchange for financial aid, General Pervez Musharraf’s regime spearheaded an aggressive drive to reform Pakistani madrasahs. His promulgated policies aimed at maneuvering the unknowns of madrasahs’ landscape which caused a shift from Islamization to Modernization of these elusive institutions. Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamization agenda, which was a well-calculated political logic to legitimize jihad, had changed the climate in favour of those madrasahs and led to a significant increase in the total number of religious schools belonging to radicalized groups (Bano, 2007; Puri, 2010).⁸ During the years of Zia’s rule in Pakistan, the total number of madrasahs ballooned to 2,801 from fewer than 300 in 1978 (Pakistan Today, 2015). To elucidate, the Zia regime, in an attempt to gain support from religious groups and in order to take advantage of institutions deemed worthy of support, began to administer a formalized zakat (Islamic religious tithe) process. In his perspective, the foreign financial benefits of reforming madrasahs was negligible compared to the long-term gains wrought by supporting madrasahs. For the first time in early 1990’s, Mujahideen introduced military training into the

⁷ Husain Haqqani, Pakistan’s ex-ambassador to Washington, has said: “The most significant jihadi group of Wahhabi persuasion is Lashkar-e-Taiba.” (Bajoria, 2010)

⁸ At the same time, as a result of the huge influx of Afghans into Pakistan due to the Soviet-Afghan conflict, Deobandi radical madrasahs and seminaries flourished across the borders. Interestingly, attendants of those schools were not merely Afghan refugees, but also people from Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab. Over the years, tempting nature of jihadi texts for radical groups like Jami’at-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) prompted them to shift those schools from borders to Balochistan where gave birth to the new generation of Mujahideen who formed current insurgent groups in J&K (Roy, 2002; Dorransoro, 2002).

madrassa curriculum in Peshawar, Pakistan, in order to provide a new generation of holly warriors (Johnston et al., 2008).⁹ In the eyes of Pakistani politicians and policymakers, what was perceived as the Mujahideen's triumph over the Soviets in Afghanistan, could be also replicated in Indian Administered J&K.

It is well-acknowledged that supporting terrorist groups could be a double-edged sword, which might pose a threat to the national security of Pakistan itself. Therefore, Zia's regime support for madrassas was highly selective and thus not all Sunni schools experienced the same governmental financial and political aid. The military government of Zia explicitly favored Deobandi madrassas which were promoting more scripturalist interpretation of Islam that could justify jihad. In line with this multifaceted strategy of Pakistan, Bareilvis, the majority of the country's population, control only 25% of madrassas, while Deobandis, who make up approximately 15% of the population, disproportionately run 60% of the country's madrassas (Coulson, 2004). Furthermore, the ISI agency of Pakistan sought to push aside some educational institutions belonging to moderate political groups and backed more extreme ones affiliated to Islamist proxy forces such as Hizbul Mujahideen, JeM, Harakat-ul-Mujahideen and LeT, which were willing to engage in a conflict against Pakistan's old foe India. Steve Coll in his prominent book *"Ghost wars: the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001"* has presented a precise description of this high-yielding strategy;

"Every Pakistani general, liberal or religious, believed in the jihadists by 1999, not from personal Islamic conviction, in most cases, but because the jihadists had proved themselves over many years as the one force able to frighten, flummox and bog down the Hindu-dominated Indian army. About a dozen Indian divisions had been tied up in Kashmir during the late 1990s to suppress a few thousand well-trained paradise-seeking Islamist guerrillas. What more could Pakistan ask? The Jihadist guerrillas were a more practical day-to-day strategic defence against Indian hegemony than even a nuclear bomb." (Coll, 2005).

Given the respect Mujahideen fighters experience among madrassa leaders, madrassas in Pakistan have been inviting those who have been involved in the J&K-conflict in order to inspire their students and encourage them to actively participate. Further, the madrassa leaders themselves are either Mujahid or psychologically manipulated by spiritual-military leaders like Masood Azhar. In one of the training workshops for madrassa leaders conducted by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD), a question was raised whether Islam does permit contribution to violent attacks in Kashmir. Ironically, madrassa leaders who were there to supposedly take a stand against violence and intolerance in the name of religion came to a consensus that although waging war against India might be politically motivated, it cannot be sanctioned religiously (Johnston et al., 2008). Apparently in such circumstances the radicalization of malleable children, according to them, could be the only logical expectation.

The unprecedented increase in the number of madrassas after the downfall of the Zia regime proves that subsequent Pakistani governments, likewise Zia, have been mindful of the benefits that could accrue from supporting and controlling madrassas. For instance, while in April 2010, Rana Sanaullah Khan, former Law Minister of Punjab, visited a madrassa operated by the banned extremist organization Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Jamaat-ud-Dawa, another terrorist group, received nearly

⁹ Ironically, those schools were funded by US governments. For instance, the Education Center for Afghanistan, the first madrassa operated by Mujahideen, financially was supported by the University of Nebraska at Omaha under a \$50 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (Davis, 2002).

one million dollars from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government in Punjab for its allegedly educational programs (Puri, 2010). This must be further analyzed in respect to the manifested decision of Azam Tariq, former leader of SSP, to send 500,000 trained militants to J&K in order to fight Indian security forces (Siddique, 2009).

Dilemma of Madrassas

The nexus between education, religion, and terrorism has been a complex and controversial phenomenon. Some authors and governments consider Madrassas an instrument for fueling radicalization and sinisterly influencing young impressionable Muslims (Atran, Magouirk & Ginges, 2008; Magouirk, 2008).¹⁰ Emphasizing on the necessity of internal reform, the aforementioned scholars propose the strategy of *'draining the swamp'* by establishing sparkling governmental or more private schools with secular-oriented curricula alongside madrassas (Brookings, 2009). The findings of some studies demonstrate that attendance and other forms of association such as joining lectures and events, teaching, socializing etc. with radical madrassas is correlated with both supporting radical groups and participation in their attacks (Atran, Magouirk & Ginges, 2008; Magouirk, 2008). In line with the abovementioned finding, the 9/11 Commission Report termed madrassas *"incubators of violent extremism"*, to which Pervez Hoodbhoy further stated that *"Pakistani schools – and not just madrassas – are churning out fiery zealots, fuelled with a passion for jihad and martyrdom."* (Puri, 2010).

However, other commentators abide to the idea that the eradication of religious schools, considering their popularity among the general public, will be at best, barking up the wrong tree and at worst, actually fueling more radicalization and violent extremism. Sageman (2004), for example, found that only 18% of Islamist extremists have had an Islamic religious primary or secondary education; in contrast, 82% went to secular schools. Such data undermines the argument that Islamic extremism can be best viewed as a result of the brainwashing by teachers in madrassas (Silke, 2008). Similarly, Peter Bergen and Swaty Pandey (2006), with respect to the results of World Bank study about the actual number of madrassas in Pakistan, argued that *"While madrassas are an important issue in education and development in the Muslim world, they are not and should not be considered a threat [to the United States.]... We must eliminate the assumption that madrassas produce terrorists capable of carrying out major attacks"*.¹¹ Similarly, Christine Fair (2008) claims that religious schools should not be considered the most prominent recruitment venue for militancy. She argues that actually fewer than a quarter of the militants (33 out of 141) ever attended theological schools (Fair, 2008).

Acknowledging that many different internal and external extra-ordinary factors and social circumstances could transform ordinary young people into radicalized ones, one should consider the fact that learning processes such as being influenced by exclusionary Islamic studies, which provide narrow worldview could indeed sow the seeds of religious violence in the minds of students. The problems with religious schools go beyond just military training or the direct urge to reach salvation through jihad against India. Indeed, a strongly dualistic approach with the acute distinction between Pakistan and India, leading to the creation of us-versus-them mentality, has been permeated throughout religious schools and has led to the preclusion of any peaceful solution of the J&K-conflict. For graduates of those schools, destiny is depicted in only two ways: either they will survive in jihad

¹⁰ Government officials of the United States, United Kingdom and France have repeatedly voiced concerns about the probable threat to world security posed by madrassas that allegedly promote hatred and extremism (Atran, Magouirk & Ginges, 2008; Magouirk, 2008).

¹¹ Nevertheless, they have investigated the probable threat of instructed and educated people in madrassas to the United States (not to other countries). (Brookings, 2009).

against India and make J&K a fiefdom of truly believers through the assassination of all Indian dissenters, or they will have to commit suicide and die while embracing their anticipatory future paradisiacal state through martyrdom. For them, the latter option, which in essence is self-annihilating, is equally justified and acceptable as the former.

Various active terrorist groups in J&K including but not limited to LeT, JeM, Hizbul Mujahideen and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen are constituted to a large extent by the adolescents taught at radical madrassas. Such influence of madrassas on students – direct or indirect – appears to be at work. Yet, the question is how madrassas indoctrinate students and serve as a transit point for pre-radicalized people to join militant groups. In what follows, a dualistic comparative technique will be applied in order to explore the linkages between madrassas and terrorist groups.

Madrasahs and dualism; purifying Jammu & Kashmir from the so-called infidels

As the logical result of contrasting ‘good’ and ‘evil’, young people consider apocalyptic images of destruction as a required and essential part of their holy mission. This categorization of self and others, not only does provide a kind of scriptures or belief system to explain or justify violence against people (moral justification), but also let recruits perceive killing as a sacramental act or divine duty that is executed in response to a holy imperative for catharsis and destroying everything ‘bad’. Additionally, the dehumanization of victims acts as a major component of exclusionary Islamic curricula providing psychological distance between the perpetrators and victims and facilitating legitimization (Leader Maynard, 2014; Bar-Tal, 1990; Garbarino 2001). The confession of an arrested member of LeT in 2002 concerning the luring processes and justifications of violent crimes perpetrated against Kashmiris offers an important insight:

“... [I joined] Lashkar-e-Toiba, because of the speeches of one of their members, Abu Masood, during school assemblies and physical training periods. He used to tell us that thousands of Muslims were being butchered in Kashmir, and that their homes were destroyed and their women were being raped. It made me very angry.” (Frontline, 2002).

Through the course of moral exclusion, which Abu Masood implemented, adolescents are trained to situate the dehumanized targets into the category of ‘the others’, establishing them as potential enemies who deserve to be killed (Vasiljevic & Tendayi Viki, 2013; Tursunova, 2008). Nina Shea, director of center for religious freedom, has reflected the findings of some Saudi scholars regarding the religious studies curriculum claiming that, *“The Saudi Kingdom’s religious studies curriculum [Wahhabism] encourages violence towards others, and misguides the pupils into believing that in order to safeguard their own religion, they must violently repress and even physically eliminate the ‘other’.*” (quoted in Shea, 2017).

Since plentitude of new madrassas were formed and supported by foreign donations from Islamic charities belonging to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, the ideology of Wahhabism, as the core of the schools’ standardized curriculum, has continued to be reflected in the textbooks of Pakistani schools (Singer, 2001). In addition to the fact that madrassas belonging to terrorist groups have been propagating a mix of Wahhabism (a puritanical version of Islam), Deobandism, and anti-India approaches claiming that current laws of J&K do not originate from Sharia and respectively cannot be followed, have also been promulgated. Typically, such philosophy has been endorsed by epistemic terrorist leaders such as Hafiz Saeed who have been trying to provide the potential pieces of this ideological jigsaw in which Indians depicted as alien infections must be purified; *“the proper way to*

deal with [India] is the one adopted by our forefathers who crushed them by force. We need to do the same... I announce the break-up of India... We will not rest until the whole of India is dissolved into Pakistan.” (Hafiz Saeed, 1999). According to James & Özdamar (2005) those madrassas which are allegedly linked to the terrorist groups in J&K and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, not only do strengthen Islamic fundamentalism in the region through free radical religious education, but also act as orphanages for the many parentless young people, by providing also shelter, food and living supplies to children belonging to the lower social classes.

Pyramid of Madrassas, Maslak and terrorist groups

Alongside the indoctrination of students, madrassas play a significant role in the production of identities associated with adherence to particular maslak (special interpretative tradition or school of Islam). In Pakistan, there are four various Sunni masalik (pl. of maslak): Ahl-e-Hadith, Deobandi, Barelvi, and Jamaat-e-Islami. All the aforementioned masalik subscribe to the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam and are synonymous with Wahhabism. However, they can be differentiated based on their approaches vis-à-vis jihad and rationale behind establishing an Islamic state. For instance, while Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith are similar in terms of their emphasis on scripture and strict interoperation of Islam,¹² Barelvis exhibit more syncretistic and non-practical trends. In contrast, Jamaat-e-Islami is a more politically inclined branch, which circumscribes Muslim nationalist movements and supports the idea of the Islamic State of Pakistan, which encompasses the whole of India, including the region of J&K (Kepe, 2006).¹³ With respect to the specific characteristics of different masalik, various madrassas also vary in their curricula and the education that they impart, ranging from more moderate or at least non-pragmatic version of political Islam to more radical militant views with particular military training.

The abovementioned masalik have their own schools in various regions of Pakistan. Although the exact number of madrassas belonging to each maslak has never been determined, some reports estimate that in 2002, Deobandi schools have reached 7,000, Barelvi – 1,585, Ahl-e-Hadith - 376 and Jamaat-e-Islami - 500 (Pakistan Today, 2015). Nevertheless, it is highly anticipated that given the skewed spatial distribution of these schools and their unregistered status, an additional up-to-date and verifiable data, perhaps even censuses is required to achieve much more precise number.

Through such form of education, a collective identity or adherence to a particular maslak is overriding the individual ones and subsequently students are transformed into a mob and become deindividualized. Respectively, the specific values and principles of a maslak take precedence over the ordinary norms. By successfully and effectively justifying the holy objectives of a maslak, for instance, merging J&K into the Islamic State of Pakistan, and the necessity of protecting it against the so-called infidels, the moral restrains will be transgressed and subsequently gross human rights violations will no longer be considered crimes from the perpetrator’s point of view. Qari Hussain, a Taliban commander who has been given the name of “*Trainer of Suicide Bombers*” confirms that radicalization takes place in madrassas and argues that “*Children are tools to achieve God’s will. And whatever comes your way, you sacrifice it.*” (Puri, 2010). Eventually, the vacuum between maslak as a theoretical component and terrorist groups as a channel for its manifestation is filled by the presence of madrassas as conduit between the two.

¹² Typically, Ahl-e-Hadith has been having more extreme ideology but at the same time less influential one.

¹³ For additional information, please refer to Robinson, F. (1988). Varieties of South Asian Islam (No. 8). Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.

Tahir Ashrafi, a Deobandi head of the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) in Lahore, addressing the critics of madrassas argues that Deobandi ideology is *“very far from extremism and terrorism”* and 60% of students who study under the supervision of PUC will not be *“involved in any training or terrorist activities”* (quoted in Mallet, 2015). This can prompt a logical question as whether it means that the remaining 40% are involved. *“That’s the reality”* he replied (Ibid). Only Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which has been designated a *‘foreign terrorist organization’* by the US State Department, is estimated to control 300 to 500 madrassas across the country (Shahzad & Jorgic, 2019)¹⁴. The reason of proliferation and developments of Jamaat-ud-Dawa’s chain of schools lies in the ideology of Hafiz Saeed which asserts that not only there is a compatibility and complementarity between jihad and education, but also they would be rendered meaningless if they do not accompany each other. In the eyes of Saeed, military training is an indisputable part of the educational syllabi at madrassas which prepare students to deeply espouse the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of jihad. Lending credibility to the expressed desire of Hafeez Saeed to broaden the writ of Islam to New Delhi, Tel Aviv, and Washington, one should contemplate the alarming scenario of viewing madrassas as weapons of mass instruction. In an interview, Saeed himself declared that: *“Pakistan is a country for Muslims of the subcontinent. Therefore, it is incomplete without Kashmir... Pakistan is also incomplete without Hyderabad, Junagarh and Munabao... it is our duty to free these states from Hindu subjugation and assure their Muslim population that they will become part of Pakistan. This is our agenda for Pakistan’s completion. We will continue to propagate it in India through speech and writing and take these states back through jihad.”* (quoted in Siddique, 2000).

Equally important, the function of madrassas should not be confined to only generating indoctrinated clergymen, but also acting as a transit point for assembling terrorists together and providing support for terrorist groups. Therefore, the influence of madrassa students at both strategic and tactical level of implantation of religiously motivated terrorism should not be underestimated. Pakistani students have been regularly sent abroad to serve in various conflicts such as in Afghanistan, J&K, Chechnya and numerous other wars which are considered part of the global jihad against the West. For instance, in 1997, when a Taliban offensive stalled, one of the most well-known madrassas, Haqqania Madrassa, sent all its students to cross the border and fight (Singer, 2001).

Parallel educational institutions; does it matter?

Pakistan’s National Education Policy in 2009 has created three different parallel educational institutions: private schools, public schools and madrassas. Private schools have more secular-oriented curricula with special emphasis on neutral sciences. In contrast, madrassas choose Islamic jurisprudence, theology and strict interpretation of Islam over skill-oriented syllabi. In the middle of this contradictory spectrum there are state-run schools, also known as the so-called public educational sector, which provide mix-educational curricula. Some commentators argue that private and public schools, by preparing students to be law-abiding democratic citizens and providing them with more secular or neutral education, are less likely to produce students sympathetic to terrorism.

¹⁴ Jamaat-ud-Dawa has opened various branches in more than 15 cities including Karachi, Muzaffarabad, Akora, Kohat, Haiderabad, Lahore and Gujrat (Siddique, 2000).

	Language	Curriculum	Tuition fee
Private schools	English	Natural sciences with special emphasis on secular subjects	High
Public schools	Urdu/English	Semi secular subjects with some syllabi in Islamic studies	Normal
Madrassas	Urdu/ Arabic	Religious studies	Free

With respect to the high monthly fee of private schools, only wealthy families can afford to send their children to private schools which are considered far more superior owing to their position in the socio-economic sphere. For members of the lower social classes, having no better options, children attend madrassas where they can receive at least rudimentary education. Nevertheless, a closer look at madrassa's enrolment reveals that financial status is not necessarily the clear-cut reason for deciding whether to send children to public schools or madrassas, since parents often desire their children to retain religious education, thus seeking Islamic education.

According to one survey, there are 38 times as many children in private schools and 104 times as many in public schools run by the government as compared to those in religious schools (Andrabi, Das, Khwaja, & Zajonc, 2005).¹⁵ Apparently, only a tiny fraction of all students attend religious schools and madrassas in Pakistan, making those institutions obtain only a small market share in the educational market of the country. This may lead to the conclusion, as William Dalrymple has argued, that in comparison to the indoctrination taking place in a handful of notorious centers of ultra-radicalism, madrassas per se cannot be viewed as a real driving factor (Dalrymple, 2005). Similarly Andrabi et al. argued that the total numbers of students who have been affected and indoctrinated by madrassas *"are too few to have a major impact on militancy across the country"* (Puri, 2010). Yet, one should ask whether that problematic notion of the term *'handful'* is actually substantial to have a major impact on terrorism (not militancy) across the country and neighboring regions such as J&K. Based on the nature of sporadic terrorist attacks which could be carried out by a small unstructured military organization, the response will be affirmative.

Indeed, the positive strong correlation between madrassas and religiously motivated violence in the arena of sporadic sectarian terrorist activities cannot be neglected (Ali, 2009 & Fair, 2007). According to a survey conducted by Tariq Rahman in 2003, which has compared the presence of militancy and levels of tolerance among students of religious, public and private schools provides a positive indication to this claim. His findings posit that while private schools graduates are less susceptible to radicalization than those in public schools, madrassas are more likely to conduce to militancy and violence (Rahman, 2003). Although his sample was unrepresentative and respectively its results cannot be overgeneralized, the answers to the following research questions justify the abovementioned argument.

¹⁵ The report of Karachi-based policy research institute Social Policy and Development Center confirms the mentioned ratio; "of the total number of students going to primary school (grades 1 to 5), 73 percent go to public or government schools, 26% to private schools, and less than 1% to madrassas." (Bajoria, 2009)

	Whether Pakistan should prioritize taking Kashmir away from India by open war?	Whether Pakistan should support jihadi groups in order to take Kashmir away from India?
Students of Madrassas	60 % Yes	53 % Yes
Students of public schools	40 % Yes	33 % Yes
Student of private schools	26 % Yes	22 % Yes

Despite that students from private and public schools have been given the opportunity to learn secular disciplines such as mathematics and sciences, the promotion of religious violence was not confined only to the ideological sections of the curriculum; the fingerprints of the systemic fusion of violence and hatred can be traced even in subjects like mathematics. The following quote from a fourth-grade textbook of a public school stands as an example:

“The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at the distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid [fighter], and the mujahid aims at the Russian’s head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian...” (quoted in Johnston, Hussain, & Cataldi, 2008).

Accordingly, when the US provided a massive injection of funds to reform state-run schools in Pakistan, numerous scholars took sceptical approach to the initiative of developing public schools that have shown to be pro-jihad, albeit indirectly.¹⁶ Some madrassas have been ostensibly morphed into formal public schools to compete for a scarce budgetary resources allocated by the government. It has been highlighted that any attempt to reform, isolate, marginalize or even shut down madrassas and public schools has only led to their explosive growth. Yet, despite all the recent efforts that have been made by the Pakistani government to regulate and streamline madrassas, such as the establishment of the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board and the Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance 2002, such endeavours have proved futile. For instance, in June 2000, the government proposed an ordinance to register all madrassas in Pakistan. However, based on the lack of authority only one tenth of them (4,350) agreed to register and the rest ignored the ordinance (Singer, 2001). The reason for such a grave failure lies in the atmosphere of mistrust between madrassas and the government on one hand and the duplicitous policies of the government on the other. To elucidate on, as Hoodbhoy has said: *“no Pakistani leader has had the courage to implement serious reforms”* (quoted in Bajoria, 2009). It is not possible to disguise the fact that for the last few centuries, madrassas have provided education, shelter, food and even identities for young people in Pakistan who would otherwise go without. Given that madrassas and their religious leaders are at the zenith of their political power and social influence, any governmental reform program would be in shambles. The large size and rapid growth of madrassas mean that Pakistan is likely to get exhausted while running hard to keep pace with them and control them; if it runs or even intends to run of course.

¹⁶ For additional information concerning the critics, please refer to International Crisis Group. (2007). Pakistan: Karachi’s Madrassas and Violent Extremism. And also Coulson, A. (2004). Education and indoctrination in the Muslim world. Policy Analysis, 29, 1-36.

Conclusion

This paper has concentrated on illuminating the probable correlation between attending madrassas and promoting religious terrorism in J&K. The processes of radicalization could be readily implemented in madrassas where innocent children are pulled away from their parents and their normal adulthood dissatisfaction is deviated and aggravated in order to find an immediate-misleading answer in radical Islamic thought. Madrassas are well-structured and enough full-fledged, ideologically and materially, to radicalize students enrolled therein through the mentioned process. Furthermore, the results of this diverse compilation of studies and policy reports discussed show that various extremist militant groups in Pakistan attempt to exert their radical interpretation of Islam and the idea of so-called holy war for the purposes of annexing J&K through the exploitation of madrassas. Religious schools, which are run by the entire spectrum of jihadi groups are indeed breeding ground for a new generation of militants who will learn how to work out the mathematical proportions of explosive devices alongside with exploiting and using the philosophy of the Islamic State of Pakistan which wants to unlawfully take a grip over J&K. Promotion of the Ghazwa-e-Hind philosophy, the dehumanization of non-Muslim civilians in J&K, the transgression of moral boundaries, the introduction of military training into the curriculum alongside with the generation of support for active terrorist groups by providing safe havens for their lectures and recruitment process are just some of the objectives of madrassas in the religious terrorism and proxy warfare launched in J&K.

All too often, governmental efforts have been met with little success in reforming madrassas owing to their substantial influence and popularity among the general population and the duplicitous policy of Pakistan, which lacks any interest in taking concrete action against terrorist groups. Delving more into those issues reveals that the current Pakistani government not only does implement its Islamization policies through madrassas, but also tries to further its objectives in the ongoing proxy war vis-à-vis India and to further its dubious strategic objectives in J&K by taking advantage of educated and brainwashed students at those madrassas. However, madrassas should not be considered merely hotbeds for the promotion of religious terrorism and radicalization, but also an alternative (or rather probable opportunity) for frustrating sectarian violence and the securement of education for children in diverse areas across the region.

In a context in which feelings of revulsion and violence triumph, the best antidote for religious dogmatism is rationalization of the program, however, instead of reforming the syllabi of madrassas belonging to terrorist groups it might be more sensible to adopt more concrete strategies against the patrons of those schools.

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