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# Madrasas, Religious Education, and Militancy in Afghanistan

Hafiza Yazdani





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# Dr. Hafiza Yazdani

Dr. Hafiza Yazdani is a scholar, women and peace activist with more than 10 years work experience with international organizations in Afghanistan. She has remarkably contributed to programs implementation for promoting human rights, gender equality and women empowerment in Afghanistan.

Dr. Yazdani graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Kabul Educational University in Afghanistan and a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies from International European University in Austria. In December 2020, she completed her research project on Peace Education to attain PhD at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago in New Zealand.

In addition, Dr. Yazdani has written research-articles on Education in Afghanistan, Peace Education, and Gender & Peace education.

Her published articles titles are the following: ·

- Peace Education in Afghanistan, published in Factis Pax journal, December 2020. <https://openjournals.utoledo.edu/index.php/infactispax/article/view/988>
- History of Formal Education and Influence of Politics in Afghanistan, published in Factis Pax journal, July 2020 <https://openjournals.utoledo.edu/index.php/infactispax/article/view/984>
- Gender & Peace Education in Afghanistan, published in Factis Pax journal, May 2021 <https://openjournals.utoledo.edu/index.php/infactispax/article/view/977>
- Afghan Women and Taliban: an individual experience and story, published in Women Talking Politics journal, September 2021, <https://nzpsa.com/resources/Documents/WTP/Women%20Talking%20Politics%20--%202022%20Issue.pdf>



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# Executive Summary

Madrasa education has been an important source of knowledge for thousands of students in many Islamic countries, including Afghanistan. However, Madrasas are being discussed internationally in terms of their role in sectarian violence and militancy and the worsened security landscape of the South Asian region.

**This study explores the relationship among Madrasa education, militancy, and insecurity, focusing on Afghanistan.** Based on a desk review and analysis of existing literature, as well as original interviews conducted with education experts and former students of Madrasas, this study explores the role of Madrasa education and particularly its connection to militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s. The research aims to address the question of whether there is a connection between Madrasas and militancy in Afghanistan that contributes to historical and current insecurity in the region, and what might be the impact on student learning today.

**This study will provide analysis useful for policy development and academic research involving Islamic nations and insecurity.** It also invites further research and a deeper exploration of Madrasas as educational centers and the impact of a Madrasa education on students' learning and knowledge.

# Introduction

*“Education is one of the most important tools for human development and the means by which successive generations develop the values, knowledge and skills for their personal health and safety as well as for future political, economic, social and cultural development. This is one of the reasons for the global emphasis on achieving universal, free and compulsory primary education” (UNICEF 2011, 17).*

The effectiveness of education for the growth of individuals and society depends on how the education system in a country develops and directs students’ growth towards progress both within and beyond the country (UNICEF 2011). It is generally accepted that education’s function is positive and essential for transmitting knowledge and skills from generation to generation (UNESCO 1996; Bajaj and Chiu 2009), but scholars also argue that education can play a negative role as well, particularly in conflict areas (Davies 2010; Jeaniene 2005; UNICEF 2011). Scholars have considered the role of education in creating or sustaining conflict (Davies 2010; Jones 2008; Jones 2009; Jeaniene 2005; UNICEF 2011; Cardozo 2008). Davies, for example, discusses education’s differing functions in conflict situations as either supporting political interests towards conflict or maintaining peace with no messages of harm. He argues that conflict can be maintained through education reproducing the status quo, but also that attention to the school curriculum can help solidify a culture of peace (Davies 2010).

Afghanistan as a country with a history of conflict has been experiencing education’s dual roles (negative and positive). In a conflict zone, political groups try to utilize the education system and train students to speak or act against opposition ideologies. Jeaniene argues “Once an ideology has been instilled in the minds of the youth, it cannot be simply ‘switched off’ when the war ends” (Jeaniene 2005, 204). Afghanistan has a long history of conflict and manipulation of its education system by internal and external powers for political purposes (Jeaniene 2005).

Since 1979, Afghanistan has experienced several different power regimes, each of which has dominated the country’s education system to reflect its preferred political ideology and to provide preferred information for students, including formal and informal education, schools and Madrasas (Husham 2015; Yazdani 2020).

**In a conflict zone, political groups try to utilize the education system and train students to speak or act against opposition ideologies.**

Madrasas have been widespread educational institutions in Afghanistan, providing instruction and Islamic information to pupils throughout the country, even in remote areas. In fact, Madrasas are the main Islamic education institutions throughout South Asia and have a long history of transmitting scholarly knowledge to religious scholars and academics. A review of literature reveals the contribution of the Madrasas and

their significance in training scholars and learned men in Islamic theology, culture, and literature. In Afghanistan people value Madrasas as an important place for Islamic education (Jabeen 2022; Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018).

While acknowledging the Madrasas' significant role in Islamic schooling and education, scholars also contend that these institutions had been exploited for political purposes, particularly during the decades of war and political chaos in Afghanistan in 1980s and 1990s. Scholars state that Madrasas trained Muslim radical militants, and many identified Madrasas as a threat to the country of Afghanistan and in the region (Malik 2008; Siddikoglu 2018; Farooq 2013; Ismail et al. 2020; Reetz 2009; Zaidi 2013). This concern increased with global attention, particularly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States (US) started questioning and debating any possible links between Madrasas and terrorism, notably, some accusing Madrasas of being centers for training radical religious terrorists. Since then, many studies have been conducted on Madrasas in Pakistan and Afghanistan from different perspectives and viewpoints, and the relationship between Madrasa, militancy and insecurity in Afghanistan and in the South Asia region is a recently intensified concern following the Taliban's taking authority and power in Afghanistan since August 2021. The Taliban support Madrasas and the number of Madrasas in Afghanistan have increased during their administration since 2021 (The Centre for Information Resilience Report 2023).

In summary, this study provides a brief on the history of Madrasas in South Asia and in Afghanistan and discusses its role in the country of Afghanistan. It also describes how Madrasas shaped the political agenda in Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, it provides a reflection on the role of Madrasas since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, and how its

education program will impact students' future acquiring knowledge in Afghanistan. Some recommendation points are given for policy and decision makers to work for a better change in Afghanistan's education system.

## Research Method

In attempting to explore the link between Madrasas and militancy and to analyze how these educational institutions, once the centers for rational and religious education and valued by the people, became places of militancy training, a qualitative method was employed. Based on research articles on Madrasas from scholars in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the author's interviews with education experts from Afghanistan and former Afghan students of Madrasas in Pakistan, this study also benefits from valuable research articles and books by regional and international scholars.

Secondary sources relevant to the study include research articles by scholars in Pakistan and Afghanistan on Madrasa education during the 1980s and 1990s, and books and research information by international scholars on Madrasa education in South Asia generally. Interviews were conducted with two former high-level officials of the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan and one education expert from United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Afghanistan, and two former Afghan students who studied in Madrasas in Pakistan during the 1990s. The interviews were conducted during July and August, 2024, via e-mail communication as well as telephone calls. Due to the limited availability of academic work on Madrasas after August 2021, some media reports have been used for recent Madrasa development in Afghanistan during the Taliban administration.

# Overview: Madrasas in South Asia

Madrasa is an Arabic word that means “School”. The word comes from the same Arabic root as “dars”, which means a lesson or an instruction (Siddikoglu 2018; Wijaya 2021). In the South Asian context, Madrasa means more specifically an education institution that offers instruction about the Quran, the sayings (Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), jurisprudence and Islamic law (Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018; Wijaya 2021). In other words, schools that promote Islamic curricula are called Madrasas. Madrasas generally provide free religious education and students primarily learn to read, memorize and recite the holy book the Quran. Madrasas also provide higher religious education and issue certificates at various levels which include subjects such as: Arabic Language, mathematics, philosophy, metaphysics and grammar, as well as Hadith (communication) and Fiqh (law) (Wijaya 2021; Choudhury 2017; Jabeen 2022, Ahmad 2021). Madrasas are affiliated with mosques and religious institutions and may share teachers and education materials in formal and informal settings. Many Madrasas are residential and often these institutions play a significant role in shaping the values and ideologies of the students (Choudhury 2017; Ahmad 2021).

The Madrasa as an educational institution has been a feature of Muslim societies for centuries, beginning to play an important role between the 8th and 9th centuries. During this time, Muslim theologians and philosophers worked on different analyses and interpretations of the Quran and Sunna. Islamic scholars and theologians who interpreted Quran and Sunna “under distinct schools of thoughts influenced Muslim scholars all over the

world predominantly in the Middle East, and North Africa” (Siddikoglu 2018; Reetz 2009). From the 8th Century onwards, “Madrasas presented legal diversity in Islamic law, dividing Muslims politically, socially and religiously under distinct sects” (Siddikoglu 2018, 94). During this time many schools of thoughts or sects were established, such as Deobandi, Bareilvi, Shia or Ahl-e-Hadith, and Jama’at-e Islami (Zaidi 2013; Choudhury 2017) and Madrasas would tend to be associated with to a particular sect.

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Scholars specify three different phases of the establishment and expansion of Madrasas. The first phase included the organization, reproduction and transfer of knowledge in the service of dynastic Muslim empires in the 11th-15th centuries such as the Safawids in Persia, the Moghuls in India and the Turkish Ottomans (Kousary 2018). The second phase was marked by the multiplication of Islamic schools in response to the penetration of western education and colonial rule into the lands under Muslim governance. The third phase set in during the 17th and 18th century when Muslim scholars, politicians and militants started pursuing the politics of Islamic revival. In several Muslim countries, not only efforts but also resources multiplied to create new Islamic institutions. They aimed at reviving Islamic teaching to strengthen knowledge and practice of the religion. In the later period after the 17th century, Muslims of different schools of thought, tribes and backgrounds





Courtyard of Muhammad Aminikhon Madrasa, Khiva, Uzbekistan. (Wikimedia Commons)

fought for political power.

The decline of the Islamic world and the emergence of a powerful West was a sign of a paradigm shift in international politics starting in the early 18th century (Reetz 2009; Kousary 2018). The establishment of British colonial rule in India dramatically changed the role of Madrasa education in South Asia. This led to a major shift in the curriculum in Madrasas toward a strict focus on religious aspects. In this period, many Madrasas started functioning in South Asia, but the first institutionalized Madrasa was established in Deoband, India, in 1867, running on donations from internal Muslim communities (Siddikoglu 2018; Reetz 2009). The Deobandi introduced an institutionalized delivery of Islamic education characterized by paid staff, a full library, a set curriculum, formal examinations, and certification upon graduation. The Islamic scholars of the Deoband Madrasa emphasized a puritanical school of Islamic thought,

which soon led to the emergence of sister Madrasas and today this school of thought has the largest number of Madrasas in South Asia (Siddikoglu 2018). According to Reetz “the Deoband approach was innovative and fairly radical” (Reetz 2009, 112), but its major contribution to Islamic teaching was the introduction of regular degree courses and graduate religious scholars with over 8 years of regular classes. The degree consists of teaching the Quranic and the Prophetic Traditions as well as related theological and ‘worldly’ subjects. The ‘worldly’ subjects encompass logic, philosophy, arithmetic, geometry, and traditional medicine (Reetz 2009). During the 18th century many schools of thought had been contributing to Islamic education and building Madrasas, but Deoband continued to be one of the most institutionalized and influential in South Asia (Siddikoglu 2018; Reetz 2009).

# Focus: Madrasas in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a predominantly Muslim country composed of many different ethnic and religious groups. Islam represents the social, cultural and political identity of Afghan society (Kousary 2018; Choudhury 2017). Besides Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism also have a long history in Afghanistan (Baiza 2014).

The majority of the country's population adhere to the Sunni Hanafi School of jurisprudence, followed by the Shia interpretation of Islam. Religious education in Afghanistan is based on these two sects. For both sects – Sunni and Shia - Madrasas in Afghanistan have been the foundation of Islamic learning and centers for Islamic education in formal and informal settings, for centuries. Madrasas remain the most widespread educational institution in Afghanistan, providing Islamic instruction to pupils throughout the country, particularly in remote areas. Madrasas in Afghanistan might be located in a classroom inside a Mosque, in a separate small building for about 50 students, or in a big university-size building for over 5000 students (Choudhury 2017; Kousary 2018; Siddikoglu 2018). Madrasas exist in both rural and urban areas, and in areas where the Afghan government has failed to provide state run education in schools. These Madrasas have attracted thousands of students, mostly children. Where Madrasas are the only available centers for education, there is a strong association between communities and madrasas (Fair 2012; Kousary 2018). Traditionally, across Afghanistan, families have sent their children to Madrasas before they attend the formal education system (school), to get basic education and

specifically religious education in cities and villages. It is common practice for young children to go to the village mosque or madrasa for informal religious education from a local Mullah. In cities families send their young age kids to nearby Mosques or Madrasa to learn Quran and basic religious information. It is a practice as part of Islamic culture. Every village in Afghanistan has a mosque. The Mosque Madrasas are deeply embedded in Afghan local culture and provide basic religious learning for all children in its community (Kousary 2018).

Historically speaking, Madrasa education has been dominated by men including students, teachers, and staff. Most Madrasas students are male as well the teachers (Mullahs) or religious leaders are men, and presence of women and girls have not been visible (Kousary 2018; Farooq 2013). However, most children, both girls and boys, from age 6 to 10 in Afghanistan have been able to attend a Mosque Madrasa. Children may stop studying at Mosque Madrasas to attend either primary school or a Madrasa with a more advanced religious curriculum. Many students also attend Mosque Madrasas outside the hours of primary school. The education offered at the Mosque is strictly basic religious education, including recitation and memorization of the holy book Quran, learning how to pray, and basic tenets of religion. Madrasas at advanced level provide classes on the Quranic and the prophetic traditions, related theological subjects as well as logic, philosophy, arithmetic, geometry, and traditional medicine (Kousary 2018; Reetz 2009).

Ulema, Sufis, Mullahs and religious scholars run the Madrasas, playing important roles in the community and receiving respect from people. Mullahs, particularly in the rural areas, are chosen by the local villagers based on the Mullah's piety and traditionally belonging to a Mullah's family for Mosque Madrasas. The Mullahs perform many tasks, such as

leading the five times daily prayers (Imam), acting as arbitrators whenever there is crisis, conducting marriages, performing burial prayers and imparting Islamic education. Advanced level madrasas are generally well-appointed with professional highly skilled Ulema or scholars of Islamic education. (Kousary 2018).

## History of Madrasas and Political Development in Afghanistan

Madrasas have gone through different political development stages in Afghanistan's history. Prior to the establishment of formal education (government schools) in 1904, Madrasas were only education centers in Afghanistan. People valued Madrasas as important sources of knowledge and Madrasa staff were respected as knowledgeable persons in the society. Formal education started with the inauguration of the first school, called "Habibia", in Kabul, with a general curriculum that promoted liberal ideas (Kousary, 2018, Yazdani 2020).

The development of the new formal education system was rapid and substantially supported by the government, and remarkable education developments occurred during the reign of King Amanullah Khan between 1919 – 1929. The King brought a significant change in the education system, with a huge reform in school curriculum which was not in favor of Islamic education scholars in Madrasas. King Amanullah Khan introduced a new constitution in 1923 and in it, presented the concept of freedom of religion to the

Afghan nation, bringing education under the control of the central government. A new curriculum, heavily based on science along with certain Islamic subjects, was introduced into the newly established schools and he ordered that these schools be expanded across the country. However, the Afghan religious scholars perceived the educational reforms to be aimed at transferring power from Islamic scholars to the state, and this created a big political issue in the country. The Islamic religious leaders strongly opposed King Amanullah Khan's administration, disagreeing with the overall government reform, including the education system. Ultimately King Amanullah Khan was forced into exile in 1929 (Missbahullah 2008; Baiza 2014; Kousary 2018).

Following Amanullah's efforts at reforms and the reaction from the religious leaders, educational reforms resumed cautiously during the subsequent regimes of Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah (1930-1970s). Many of the educational reforms instituted during this period did not receive the same reaction as against King Amanullah Khan. Succeeding governments implemented the reforms with cooperation from the international Islamic religious scholars, and more importantly the government did not implement these reforms coercively. The reform was gradual and Madrasas maintained substantial influence. In 1936, Zahir Shah established a Madrasa, named Abu Hanifah, to serve as a bridge between the government and religious leaders. At the same time, the government expanded formal education all over the country through the 1960s with little reaction by the religious scholars and Madrasas (Missbahullah 2008; Ahmad 2021; Baiza 2014; Kousary 2018).

However, when the Afghan Communist Party took over power in the 1970s, the education system was transformed again, this time based on communist principles. This Afghan government identified

Madrasas as places of ideological opposition to their rule, and issued a direct challenge to Madrasas and their religious values. Consequently, the Madrasa leaders became vocal in the denunciation of government schools and deemed them responsible for indoctrinating students with Communism against Islam religious values. The Afghan-Soviet War (1979 to 1989) affected not only Madrasas but all schools and universities<sup>1</sup>. Religious leaders used Madrasas for supporting the Islamic movement (Jihadi<sup>2</sup>) against the government, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Both used education centers, including madrasas and schools, for their political propaganda (Yazdani 2020; Baiza 2014; Kousary 2018; Burde 2014).

Following the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the Afghan Communist regime and the Mujahideen, the Taliban came to power in 1996 for the first time. Religious education was an important priority for the Taliban and extremist values were inculcated into Madrasa education. The Taliban banned all schooling for girls and introduced an almost completely religious curriculum in schools between 1996 and 2001 (Saragih & Afriandi 2024; Kousary 2018).

After the Taliban was defeated in 2001, education in Afghanistan became the center of attention for the new government, the Afghanistan Islamic Republic. The Afghanistan government, with support of the international community, undertook a significant re-establishment of the education system and development of education material. The revival of the state education system, which had almost completely collapsed during the war from 1978 – 2001 in Afghanistan, involved immense effort from 2002 – 2021 (Yazdani 2020). In the revival of Afghanistan's education system, government public

schools and universities, private schools and universities were developed in parallel to the Islamic Madrasa. Many schools and education centers were built throughout the country, and the number of students increased significantly, with education for girls again becoming available (Yazdani 2020, Kousary 2018). Islamic education via Madrasas was supported by the Afghan government and also by Islamic countries. Many Madrasas were built for both sects – Sunni and Shia. A Shiite religious scholar with help from Iran established the Madrasa “Khatam al Nabiyeen” in Kabul, which is Afghanistan's biggest Madrasa, with capacity for over 5,000 students including boys and girls with separate classes (Kousary 2018).

**The majority of Madrasas across the country, especially in rural areas, were run without any support or regulation from the government.**

The curricula for some Madrasas were regulated by the Department of Islamic Education under the Ministry of Education in certain areas, mostly in cities, while the curricula of a larger number of them (particularly outside cities) were not regulated. The government formed the Islamic Education High Council in 2007 to supervise some Madrasa activities as well. However, the majority of Madrasas across the country, especially in rural areas, were run without any support or regulation from

<sup>1</sup> There were two political movements that fought against each other, the Islamic movement Jihad and the communist political party, the Afghan government People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

<sup>2</sup> Jihadi were the groups of Afghan people who came together and fought against the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan for the purpose of protecting Islam from 1979 to 1992.

the government.

During the Afghanistan Islamic Republic Government, from the period 2001- 2018, according to Kousary, Madrasas were divided in three categories: In the first category, madrasas that were run by the government, the curriculum was 40 percent scientific and 60 percent Islamic. The government provided these madrasas with teaching facilities and students' accommodation, textbooks, teachers' salaries, management support and other operational costs. Afghanistan has a small number of these madrasas and the biggest of them in this category is Abu Hanifah Darul Uloom, located in Kabul. The second category of madrasas, registered with but not directly run by the government, did not receive any financial support from the government.

Their curriculum, however, was recognized by the Department of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Education. Teaching a mixed curriculum, to include scientific subjects such as mathematics and science, was a condition for registration with the government. The third category, Madrasas that were not registered with the government, were mostly located in rural parts of the country where the government had no presence. Most of these madrasas did not want to be registered with the government and they did not accept the government approved curriculum. (Kousary 2018). In 2018, there were 1,200 public and 200 private madrasas registered with the Ministry of Education across the country. The unregistered madrasas were run without any oversight of the government and therefore the number of these are unknown (Kousary 2018).

## Current Status of Madrasas in Afghanistan

In August 2021, the Taliban took over power for the second time, and since then the education sector in Afghanistan has undergone significant changes, including the closure of secondary schools and university education for female students across the country. The Taliban have focused heavily on promoting religious education. In April 2022, Taliban's Ministry of Education announced plans to establish three to ten new religious schools in all districts of the country, and the Ministry currently seeks to bring all Madrasas, both registered and unregistered, under its control. According to Tolo News, in Feb 2024 "18,000 schools and over 17,000 Madrasas are operating across the country" (Shinwari 2024). Madrasas primarily focus on religious studies, encompassing the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic law; however, since the Taliban's takeover, an increased emphasis has been placed on the group's interpretation of Islamic teachings, with subjects such as Jihad gaining prominence (The Centre for Information Resilience Report 2023). The Taliban are not only aiming to expand the number of Madrasas in the country, but also introducing Jihadi Madrasas which will maintain a separate curriculum and operate independently from other registered private or public madrasas. The Centre for Information Resilience (2023, November 7) reports that "These Jihadi madrasas are the newly established religious schools aimed at teaching students about Islamic Jihad as interpreted by the Taliban. The group views Jihad as a military and political fight against those the Taliban consider Islam's enemies". The Taliban's Ministry of Education approves the curriculum, which is designed to align

with the Taliban's religious and ideological beliefs (The Centre for Information Resilience Report 2023).

This change is a significant setback for Afghanistan's education system overall, particularly for women and girls' education. The Taliban closed girls' schools, but allow girls to attend Madrasas and receive an Islamic Education. Amu TV reported that some of the private girls' schools in Kabul and Herat turned into Madrasas and have female students. These schools removed some science subjects from the curriculum such as physics and chemistry, and focus more on religious subjects, Arabic, Quranic recitation, and logic. Therefore, the girls in these schools are only permitted to have a religious education (Amu TV Report 2024).

## Madrasa, Politics and Militancy in Afghanistan

Madrasa education retains a unique influence and control over Afghanistan's educational, political, and social landscape. Many of Afghanistan's political leaders emerged from Madrasa education, and this underpins a strong relation and strong influence of Madrasas on politics and vice-versa in Afghanistan (Ahmad 2021; Baiza 2014).

Madrasas and politics have had a strong relation from the nineteenth century in Afghanistan and it became more obvious when the Deobandi movement, described previously, influenced Madrasas in Afghanistan. Given Deobandi concerns about the impact of British rule, they found a significant audience among religious leaders in Afghanistan. The Deobandis' conservative teaching received both

resistance and support from governments of Afghanistan at that time. The Deobandi curriculum focused on religious education and rejected the teaching of sciences and philosophy. Deobandi scholars found a unique opportunity to take full control of Madrasa curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods in Afghanistan (Kousary 2018; Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018; Semple 2024).

**Resistance groups and their international supporters transformed Madrasas into centers of religious extremism, in order to train and supply new generations of jihadists in the fight against the Soviet army and communist government.**

Over time, religious leaders in Afghanistan became more powerful and showed a strong influence in the country during the reign of King Amanullah Khan (1919 – 1929). As previously noted, when King Amanullah Khan introduced a scientific curriculum for schools and wanted to control the Madrasas education in Afghanistan, the political disagreement between the religious leaders and government strongly contributed to forcing King Amanullah into exile in 1929 (Kousary 2018; Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018; Semple 2024). Religious leaders retained their political influence in the country until 1978, when the Communist political party took over Afghanistan's government and actively

sought to weaken Madrasas.

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Afghan Islamic Movement started functioning actively and called on the Afghan people to join them for Jihad to stand against the Soviet invasion and the Afghan Communist government in Afghanistan. A big population of Afghanistan joined the Islamic Movement under the names of Mujahideen Group or Jihadists (religious fighters), and they received support from countries such as Pakistan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia (Baiza 2015; Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018; Burde 2014). These resistance groups and their international supporters transformed Madrasas into centers of religious extremism, in order to train and supply new generations of jihadists in the fight against the Soviet army and the Afghan communist government. This was the time that Madrasas forged a strong connection with politics and militancy and encouraged students in Jihad and to fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan (Ahmad 2021). Abbas Zaidi states:

... initially, madrasas got involved in militancy during the Soviet Afghan war, when some madrasas were used to educate and recruit the Mujahideen to fight with the Soviets. At that time, new madrasas sprouted, funded and supported by Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, where students were encouraged to join the Afghan resistance (Zaidi 2013,12).

The Soviet Afghan war forced thousands of Afghan families to leave Afghanistan and migrate to other countries particularly Iran and Pakistan. Afghans who migrated to Pakistan were attracted by Madrasas education and encouraged to fight

against the Soviet Army. Misbahullah claims:

*the number of madrassahs [sic] increased significantly during 1979-1990. This was the time of the Jihad against the invading Soviet Union. The organizations involved in or supporting the resistance movement funded madrassahs both inside Afghanistan and outside, wherever Afghan refugees were situated (Misbahullah 2008, 133).*

In fact, the number of Madrasas increased tremendously in Pakistan with support of the United States and Saudi Arabia from 1980 to 1990. The United States used this opportunity to exploit its own Cold War interests, namely weakening Soviet power. According to Ahmad, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided large budgetary support for education programs on the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region geared at indoctrinating Madrasa students with jihadist ideology (Ahmad 2021). These new Madrasas worked hard, inviting Pakistani students, students from inside Afghanistan and students from refugee camps in Pakistan. According to Siddikoglu:

*The government of Pakistan, with the help of its Deobandi religious circles, particularly under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Raham, leader of the Jamiat – e – Ulema Islam party, set up thousands of madrasas along the Afghan border. The number of madrasas rose from nine hundred in 1971 to eight thousand registered and about twenty-five thousand unregistered private madrasas in 1988. In these madrasas, tens of thousands of Afghans and Pakistani students were religiously radicalized and trained to fight in Afghan Jihad (Siddikoglu 2018, 105).*

In contrast to historical Islamic Education, during the 1980s and the 1990s Madrasas taught children how to use weapons and guns, to kill Russian and Afghan government soldiers, and view them as infidels, and developed in students a narrow understanding of religion and Islam (Yazdani 2020; Baiza 2015). Education materials that supported violence and radicalism were reportedly also developed in the USA for Madrasas and schools. Scholars from Pakistan claim that:

*the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets in December 1979 and the anti-Soviet jihad not only caused devastation in Afghanistan but also adversely damaged the fabric of Pakistani society. In order to support the US, 5000 madrassas were approved and the syllabus of private schools was written with an emphasis on jihad and Islam. Moreover, the US provided millions of dollars to the University of Nebraska, Omaha to develop books based on jihad, and these books were distributed in madrassas, schools, and refugee camps both in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Ismail et al. 2020, 4).*

The linkage between Jihad and Madrasas has been well developed and the role of Madrasas in recruiting Mujahideen during this time was obvious. It was certain that some Madrasas along the Pakistan and Afghanistan border were closely connected with militancy and insurgency in Afghanistan (Ahmad 2021; Siddikoglu 2018). Most of the Afghan refugees in camps in Khybr Pakhtunkhwa on the border where the Afghan youth were trained solely for the purpose of sending them to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Army (Ahmad 2012).

By the time the Jihad against the Soviet Army and the Afghan Communist Government reached an end, these Madrasas had started focusing on recruiting students for the Taliban<sup>3</sup> group. Ahmad reports that Deoband Madrasas in Pakistan are proud of their role in Jihad in Afghanistan and have direct connection with the Taliban leadership.

**Madrasas are considered to be centers for the manpower of the Taliban. Therefore, the role of Pakistan Madrasas in producing the Taliban was very significant.**

The Deoband Madrassahs and some religious political parties for example Jami-at-i-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) were very active players of Jihad in Afghanistan and proudly they accept and recognize their role to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Dur-ul-Uloom Haqania in Akora Khattak, one of the most well-known Madrassah has direct links with Taliban and its leadership (Ahmad 2021, 117).

Ahmad also asserts that Madrasas were recruiting centers for Afghan Jihad and Taliban. Madrasas in Pakistan played an essential role in Taliban's education, growth and political development. Most of the Afghan Taliban leadership studied in these Madrasas in Pakistan (Malik 2008). Furthermore, according to Ahmad,

<sup>3</sup> The Taliban Movement (militant group) led by Mullah Mohammad Omar, one of former mujahideen commanders around the southern Afghan city of Kandahar in Afghanistan represents an ultraconservative Islamic front with an ideology derived from the Deobandi madrasa. Taliban, the fundamentalist political and extremist movement in Afghanistan, took control of the country from 1996 to 2001 first time and returned to power in August 2021.



Madrasas from tribal areas to the federal capital in Pakistan were involved in violence and have had close links with militants, Jihadis, Taliban and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan<sup>4</sup> (TTP) (Ahmad 2021,117). This means that Madrasas on the Afghanistan/Pakistan's border played a role in militancy, not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan, providing human resources for Jihad and militancy in the region. Some of these Madrasas provide training that can be a threat for Pakistan and to the world (Ahmad 2021; Malik 2008).

## **The Taliban arrived on the Afghan scene in 1994 with little warning and vowed to install a traditional Islamic government and end the fighting among the Mujahideen.**

Madrasas are considered to be centers for the manpower of the Taliban. Therefore, the role of Pakistan Madrasas in producing the Taliban was very significant. "Many Afghan Taliban leaders who were proud to add Haqqani to their names because they study in Darul-ulum Haqqania, Okora Khattak" (Ahmad 2021. 120). Darul-ulum Haqqania, Okora Khattak is a famous Madrasa in Pakistan with a direct connection to the Taliban and Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban who had an honorary degree from this Madrasa (Ahmad 2021).

The Taliban, however, took Deobandism to extremes that the school's founders

would not have recognized (Semple 2024; Saragih & Afriandi 2024). In Afghanistan, the Taliban recruited primarily from Madrasas near Ghazni and Kandahar and consisted mainly of rural Pashtuns from the Ghilzai confederation with some support from the Kakar tribe of the Ghurghusht confederation.

The Taliban arrived on the Afghan scene in 1994 with little warning and vowed to install a traditional Islamic government and end the fighting among the Mujahideen. Taliban fought with Mujahideen, and eventually took over the power in Afghanistan for five years (1996 – 2001).

The Taliban promoted itself as a new force for honesty and unity and was seen as the desperately needed peace and stability by many Afghans, particularly fellow Pashtuns (Johnson & Mason 2006; Semple 2024; Saragih & Afriandi 2024). Afghan people who were tired of the war between the Soviet Army and Mujahideen and also among the Mujahideen group themselves, welcomed the Taliban with hope for peace in the country. Unfortunately, the people's optimism soon turned to fear as the Taliban introduced a stringent interpretation of sharia, banned women and girls from education and public work, and introduced punishments such as death by stoning and amputations, abuses against humans' rights and discrimination (Semple 2024; Johnson & Mason 2007; Kousary 2018). The Taliban returned to power for a second time in August 2021 in Afghanistan. After 20 years fighting with NATO Troops, US military and Afghan Government, Taliban once again is ruling with very tough regulation, particularly against women's rights. As noted above, the Taliban have strongly focused on promoting Madrasa education and have increased the number of new Madrasas throughout the country particularly Jihadi Madrasas (Gul 2024; Gonnella-Platts 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is an alliance of militant networks formed in 2007 to unify opposition against the Pakistani military.

## Personal Experience From Madrasas:

To gain some insight into the personal experience of Madrasa education, several former students were approached. However, only two felt ready to share their views:

**First respondent<sup>5</sup>**, *"I was 14 years old when my father sent me with one close family member to a madrasa in Pakistan to study. I stayed in madrasa for four and half years from 1998 to 2001. When I reached Pakistan, I was enrolled in a madrasa in Punjab, and I started reading the holy book Quran. I did not know Urdu Language and they were teaching in Urdu; it was so difficult for me to understand. On other hand, the weather was so hot that I could not tolerate it, and the food was not good at all (I did not eat enough for the first three to six months). So, it was very hard for me till I got used to it. I was in Punjab for 10 months and then I went to Karachi and enrolled in a new madrasa. I began with reading holy book Quran and continued memorizing Quran and learning Tajweed. I studied 5 books in total. The teachers were very harsh, if there was a little problem with my learning, they beat me. Personally, I don't have a good memory from madrasa. There were no specific lessons about Jihad in my class, but there were people in the madrasa who encouraged students to go to Afghanistan for Jihad. They sent students to Waziristan<sup>6</sup> for special training. In 2001 when the US Army started fighting Taliban in Afghanistan, the lessons and classes were reduced day by day. The madrasa staff made a big noise in the madrasa against US Army, and insulted us Afghan students that why we did not participate in Jihad against Masoud<sup>7</sup>. With these offensive words they kicked us out of madrasa. It was the time that I came back home. Since 2016, I am teaching Quran in a Mosque in Kabul".*

**Second respondent<sup>8</sup>**, *"I was 8 years old when my father sent me with one close family member to madrasa in Pakistan to study. I was in the madrasa in Punjab for three months. I could not tolerate in the madrasa, so I escaped and came back home in Kabul. I learned recitation of holy book Quran and also calculation. We had lessons from 4am to 4pm and after we had free time till evening time. Our teachers were good, but students who were not good in their lessons got beaten".*

## Experts' View on Madrasas:

Two education professionals who worked in high level management roles with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan during the Islamic Republic Government and one education expert who is working with the United Nations Agency in Afghanistan answered the interview questions and shared their information about madrasas as below.

**Third respondent<sup>9</sup>**, *"generally the madrasa education focuses on religion information and subjects. Those who study in madrasas seem to have close relations with God and have more spiritual information. Madrasas use longstanding traditional curriculum which is not suited for today's education standard. It is also true that madrasas have functioned for different political purposes and agendas in different countries in South Asia. Some of the madrasas in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Mujahideen time applied the curriculum and textbooks encouraged students towards militancy, and these education materials supported by the USAID program. Columbia and Nebraska*

<sup>5</sup> A former student of madrasa in Pakistan who went to Pakistan from Kabul to study Quran and about religion. He studies in Pakistan for more than 4 years, and he lives in Kabul now.

<sup>6</sup> Waziristan is a mountainous region covering the North Waziristan and South Waziristan districts of the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<sup>7</sup> Masood was one the Mujahideen leader who fought with Taliban during 1996 - 2000.

<sup>8</sup> A former student of madrasa in Pakistan who went to Pakistan from Kabul to study Quran and about religion. He studies in Pakistan only for 3 months and he could not resist more in the madrasa and came back home in Kabul. He lives in Kabul now.

<sup>9</sup> Expert worked in high management role in the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan prior Taliban regime.

*Universities in USA developed education materials for madrasas and schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan that encouraged violence and killing people. It was a clear political interference and misuse of madrasas in that period. After 2021, the Taliban need to train people who support their ideology, and it is the best opportunity for them to start with madrasas. The numbers of madrasas have been increased, thousands of Mullahs<sup>10</sup> have been hired, and a strong network of Jihadi madrasas has been developed. Of course, the consequence of these Jihadi madrasas and its students can be threats for the country and to the world. Students with madrasa education will not be connected with the world and may not receive the necessary knowledge and information aligned with today's teaching. Madrasas train Mullahs who can be only good with religious information. They train students to be a good person and go to paradise. Afghanistan education needs a reform that brings connection, harmony and understanding between the school setting education and madrasas education, and is aligned with today's knowledge and information”.*

**Fourth respondent<sup>11</sup>** focused on madrasas supported by the government during years 2004 to 2020, and did not answer about the madrasas' connection with militancy.

*“The Afghanistan Ministry of Education during the Islamic Republic Government supported the madrasa education and increased the number of new madrasas during 2004 to 2012 with the purpose of encouraging more students for schooling. The main purpose was to increase literacy rate in the country by encouraging more students to learn and enroll in education centers, particularly in remote areas. In Afghanistan there was a lack of schools in districts and remote areas during the 1990s and beginning of 2000s. It was also parents' request from Ministry of Education in that time to launch madrasas for their children in residential area. The madrasas education focused on Islamic subjects such as reading Quran, Tajweed, Fiqh and etc. Later on, in 2007 a committee including Islamic experts with support of Islamic scholars from other Islamic countries worked on a curriculum for madrasas under control of government or registered with Ministry of Education. I want to see the connection of madrasas and militancy from a different angle; what is the rationale behind that parents send their children to madrasas that boost militancy. First the unending war and conflict for decades in Afghanistan affected the people's lives economically. Families do not have enough food for their kids and when they find education centers provide schooling and food for students, they see it as an opportunity to enroll their children. The second reason, the families' education and level of information is low to monitor what children learn from school or madrasas. If the families monitor their children's learning content and environment, the madrasas may not function well to teach towards militancy”.*

**Fifth respondent<sup>12</sup>**, “Madrasa education has political linkage in Afghanistan and most of the Taliban administration including managers, directors, and ministers are the madrasas' graduates and they are the religious and political leaders in the country. In fact, the number of madrasas has been increased in Afghanistan since Taliban took over the country, and students, teachers, and lecturers in schools and universities are exposed to the madrasa's curriculum. This method of education leads students to graduate as Mullahs with limited knowledge of science subjects. This is a sign of setback for the country's development”.

*Note: All the interviews were conducted in confidentiality and names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.*

<sup>10</sup> Mullah is the teacher that teach in madrasa.

<sup>11</sup> Expert worked in high management role in the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan prior Taliban regime.

<sup>12</sup> Education expert worked with Education Department in United Nation Agency in Afghanistan.

# Madrasa Education and Student Knowledge Acquisition in Afghanistan

The educational process in all its forms is associated with human development, from individual learning to collective achievement towards the betterment of society. Education is a positive assumption for any societies and religions. In the Islamic religion, education has an important value and meaning for Muslims. Learning sciences and disseminating knowledge have been considered important duties for Muslims, and schooling has been given a special status in Islam (Wijaya 2021; Ahmad 2021; Kousary 2018). The places such as Madrasas, schools and Mosques where knowledge is imparted are highly regarded by Muslim communities around the world (Reetz 2009; Malik 2008; Wijaya 2021). In fact, Islamic education is seen as not merely the transmission of knowledge, but is also aimed at the molding of the character of the student, who is expected to follow as closely as possible the pattern of the Prophet and his companions. Islamic education covers all aspects of life, by teaching and expecting students to follow the pattern of the Prophet and his companions, the aim is to educate students towards peace and to contribute to peaceful society. The most important source of Islamic education is the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Madrasas provide this knowledge and information to the Muslim community particularly to the young generation (Wijaya 2021; Siddikoglu 2018; Ahmad 2021). Therefore, throughout the

history of the Islamic education Madrasas have been considered a very important institution in the society.

In Afghanistan, like other Muslim countries, Madrasas have been central institutions for transmitting Islamic knowledge from generation to generation (Kousary 2018). “Madrasas play peaceful roles in society; like, increasing literacy rate, spreading religious morality and human values, giving space to marginalized classes of society, discouraging criminality, and thus, maintaining a social order” (Ahmad 2021, 117). The interviewee (fourth respondent), also mentioned about Madrasa’s role in increasing literacy rate in the community particularly in remote areas in Afghanistan. The respondent also stated that marginalized groups of the society, the people who live in poverty in remote areas and could not afford their children’s schooling, benefited from Madrasa’ education. Considering these points, the government of Afghanistan increased numbers of Madrasas during the years 2004 to 2012, in response to people’s requests from the government (Kousary 2018).

**Generally, people value Madrasas’ function, but the prolonged war and conflict have affected the Madrasas’ role in educating students and spreading essential knowledge in Afghanistan.**

Generally, people value Madrasas' function, but the prolonged war and conflict have affected the Madrasas' role in educating students and spreading essential knowledge in Afghanistan. The prolonged war and political dilemmas in Afghanistan directed education to a negative role particularly during the 1980s and 1990s (Ahmad 2021; Malik 2008). Afghanistan's education system was manipulated by the country's internal power and the external powers for political purposes (Ahmad 2021; Jeaniene 2005; Yazdani 2020).

The education environment and education materials including curriculum and textbooks were utilized to support the political interests' agenda of militant groups in the country and externally outside during the 1980s and 1990s. The two opposition powers in Afghanistan; the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) supported by Soviet Union influenced the schools towards Communist ideology, and the Mujahideen Group supported by United States of America, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan used Madrasas in Afghanistan and in Pakistan to train more combatants (Ahmad 2021). The United States of America opposed the Soviet Union and therefore invested in Madrasas in Pakistan to train combatants and overthrow the Soviet Army in Afghanistan (Zafar 2022). Therefore, the number of madrasas increased tremendously in Pakistan with support of the United States and Saudi Arabia between 1980 to 1990 (Zahid 2009; Zafar 2022). A new wave of madrasas was established and the linkage between Jihad and madrasas and militancy became well developed and negatively affected regional security. The connection of madrasas and militancy and insecurity not only in Afghanistan and the region but became a threat to the world (Zahid 2009; Zaidi 2013; Zafar 2022).

Scholar Ahmad stated that

“madrasas are the important source of human resource for

Afghan Jihad, Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and other religious militants' groups.... and almost all of the leadership of the Taliban and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, including Mullah Omar and Hakeemullah Mehsud, were educated in Pakistan madrasas—most of them linked of Jamia Darul-e-Uloom in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Subsequently, madrasas as jihad factories having less to do with education and more to do with political indoctrination; incubators of Muslim terrorists; origins of conservative violent ideologies, and thus, a security threat to the modern world” (Ahmad 2021, 117).

These Madrasas educated a generation to behave and act violently. Davies discusses education's different functions in conflict situations: supporting political interests towards conflict or maintaining peace with no messages of harm. He argues that conflict can be maintained through education reproducing the status quo. In a conflict zone, political groups try to utilize the education system and train students to speak or act against opposition ideologies (Davies 2010). Jeaniene argues “Once an ideology has been instilled in the minds of the youth, it cannot be simply 'switched off' when the war ends (Jeaniene 2005, 204). Educational materials were developed to support violence and militancy. As the first interviewee reported, students were encouraged to go to Afghanistan for Jihad, and some were sent for special training. Students unwilling to be involved in fighting were ridiculed. It was confirmed by the third respondent that students were encouraged towards militancy, and educational material encouraged violence and killing.

As educationalists point out, identification with powerful fighters, and

either supporting jihadi or opposition groups against them affects the whole school environment (Jeaniene 2005; Davies 2005). According to Young, “curriculum as a ‘social fact’ is never reducible to the acts, beliefs or motivation of individuals; it is a structure that constrains not only the activities of those involved – primarily teachers and students, but also those who design curricula or attempt to achieve certain goals with them. However, curricula are not only constraints on our actions. They make some things possible to learn that most of us would find impossible to learn without them; at the same time, they set limits on what is possible to learn in schools or other educational institutions. In this way curricula are like other ‘specialized’ institutions – families and businesses, for example – they have particular purposes.” (Young 2014, 7).

Madrasa education with curriculum supporting Jihadism prepared students for conflict and war (Davies 2005). Such an educational environment is likely to have a lifelong psychological impact on students and the whole community, and leads student learning towards a culture of violence rather than peace. The “culture of violence involves aspects of cultures that legitimize either or both direct and/or structural violence” (Young 2010, 1). By this means both direct and structural violence were legitimized and adapted as cultural norms in Madrasa books and students’ mindsets. The learning outcomes can have a negative effect on students’ behavior. For years, students in Afghanistan have learned about gangs, bullets, fighting camps, killing enemies, causing disunity. This mindset has affected the lives of a generation and remained with them for years. In fact, a generation received education towards violence as legitimate fact. The explicit reference to violence in the madrasa textbooks encouraged students to accept violence and aggressive behavior, both within the family and society (Jeaniene 2005).

During the 1980s and 1990s, Mujahideen and Taliban were educated in madrasas with a curriculum focus on Jihad and Jihadism, and currently the Taliban are increasing numbers of Jihadi madrasas in Afghanistan. The effectiveness of education for the growth of individuals and society depends on how the education system in a country develops and how it directs students’ growth towards progress both within and beyond the country (UNICEF 2011). So now a new generation in Afghanistan is receiving education on Jihadism and how to fight against those the Taliban consider Islam’s enemies. Continuing with Madrasa and Jihadism education, the linkage between Jihad and Madrasas and militancy will be constant and affect the security in the country, and in the region. As scholar Ahmad mentioned, it will be “a security threat to the modern world” (Ahmad 2021, 117). Thus, Madrasa and Jihadism education lead students towards war education (Davis 2005).

## **Taliban rule also forces the extremist’s structural discrimination in the education system now by banning girls’ schooling.**

In any country political power has influence on a country’s education system and particularly countries that are in conflict situations (Kelly 2011). Kelly distinguished between direct and indirect political influence on the education system. Kelly says, “we must, however, distinguish direct political intervention from influences of an indirect, less overt and thus possibly less effective kind”



Sidiqzai/UNESCO

(Kelly 2004,162). In Afghanistan there was direct political influence on the education system during the 1980s and 1990s, but after 2021, it got worse. Afghanistan's education system experiences the extremists' political influence and structural discrimination. Amu TV reported on August 10, 2024 "Taliban inaugurates nine jihadi madrasas in one month", and according to the 2023 Human Rights Report by the U.S. Department of State, "Jihadi madrasahs focus on teaching the Taliban's interpretation of "violent jihad," with the purported aim of maintaining control of the country through violent means if necessary". This direct political influence on the education system that Taliban imposed in Afghanistan is now towards militancy and insecurity. This Jihadi education prepares students for conflict and war (Davies 2005) that leads students towards violence and can be threats to Afghanistan, the region and to the world.

Taliban rule also forces the extremist's structural discrimination in the education

system now by banning girls' schooling. Taliban have prohibited girls from attending school beyond sixth grade since August 2021. The Taliban banned girls' education including school universities, and education centers throughout the country (Gul 2024; Gonnella-Platts 2022). Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls cannot go to school after 6th grade, and this is extremist structural discrimination against girls' education. Education is a fundamental and primary human right for everyone, but the Taliban restricted education rights for girls in Afghanistan (Gul 2024; Gonnella-Platts 2022).

Madrasa education for girls, the only option that is available for girls over the age of 12, cannot replace the school education that provides diverse subjects, particularly science. In Madrasa, students will not learn today's necessary information and knowledge. In other words, in Madrasas students will not be prepared for higher level education and professional training

to join the effective workforce (Akmal Dawi 2024), and this will have long-term implications for Afghanistan's socio economic development. Exclusion of girls from secondary education and university could significantly impact the country's progress, exacerbating existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for half of the country's population.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In Afghanistan, like other Muslim countries, Madrasas have been central education institutions and have had an essential role in transmitting Islamic knowledge particularly to young generation, spreading religious morality and human values by giving space to marginalized people of the society, discourage criminality in society, and teaching the young generation about unity and peace. People value Madrasas and across the country families have sent their children to Madrasas before they attend formal education (school) to learn Quran and religious education in cities and villages. Madrasas also play a vital role in increasing literacy rate particularly in remote areas where there are no schools.

However, four decades of war and conflict in the country have affected the Madrasas' role in educating students essential Islamic knowledge. Afghanistan's education system, particularly related to Madrasas, has been manipulated by internal and external powers for political purposes during the decades of war and political turmoil (Jeaniene 2005). In fact, as studies confirmed, it is the prolonged war and political insecurity in Afghanistan that has impacted negatively on education to a negative role particularly during the 1980s

and 1990s (Malik 2008) and since August 2021. The Taliban continue to influence the Madrasa education with an emphasis on Islamic Jihad as interpreted by the Taliban. Continuing with this sort of education, Afghanistan students will value militancy and war, which will not only challenge Afghanistan's education system, but will continue to be a threat to Afghanistan and regional security.

Considering the current Afghanistan's political situation under Taliban's authority few points as recommendations noted below:

1. Islamic education encourages peace and harmony and respecting diversity. Therefore, it is very important to have a voice from independent Islamic scholars (non-political scholars) in regard of Jihadi madrasas and its curriculum in Afghanistan. Developing an impartial network of Islamic scholars is key with coordination of civil society and media to advocate for students' Islamic education in the madrasas instead of Jihadism. With nonviolence approach, an Islamic scholars' network can undertake some main activities under an advocacy program;
  - Islamic scholars in the country may coordinate with Islamic Scholars from other Islamic countries and raise a stronger voice against war education in madrasas from Islamic perspective, and against internal and external political interference in education centers particularly Madrasas. The Islamic Scholars network could also put pressure or contribute as pressure on Taliban to implement a neutral education for girls and boys without discrimination and stop Jihadi madrasas.



- Islamic scholars, civil society and media may collaborate publishing reports/information about madrasas and particularly about Jihadi Madrasas in Afghanistan and maybe in the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This will help bring public awareness about Jihadism and madrasas among ordinary people in Afghanistan.
- Islamic scholars and civil society coordinate with any possible program for public awareness on Jihadi Madrasas and war education, considering the current security restriction, if people receive accurate information about the madrasa's curriculum and environment, Jihadi madrasas may not have enough students.

scholars and international education programs can advocate that external support should not result in violence and insecurity in Afghanistan and instead should be based on security and peace. 🌐

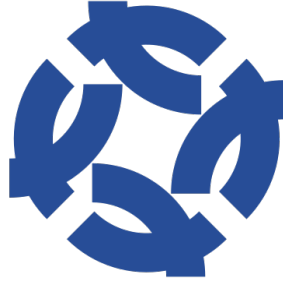
2. This study serves not only to help with information on Madrasas' connection with militancy and to add on the subject in academic discourse, but also invites a deeper exploration and research on Madrasas as education centers and their programs for students' future learning. There needs to be more empirical evidence-based research on the Madrasa curriculum, the learning environment and students' personal experience learning from Madrasa programs. This study strongly encourages more studies about Madrasas and their education program.
3. This study highlights the involvement of external political actors such as the United States of America, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan using Madrasas in Afghanistan and in Pakistan to train more combatants (Ahmad 2021). The value of peace education needs to be promoted to guard against external political interference encouraging violence. So, civil society, Islamic

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