Introduction

Pakistan's madaris (plural of madrassah or seminary) have attracted the attention of policymakers in the United States and elsewhere since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Even though none of the attackers studied in madaris in Pakistan or elsewhere, madaris are alleged to be incubators of militants in Pakistan and responsible for creating communities of support for militancy in the region. Consequently the United States, the United Kingdom, and other nations have strongly encouraged Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf to reform these institutions and close down madaris that may have links to militant groups. An ever-expanding body of literature continues to concentrate upon the importance that Pakistan's madaris supposedly have to the security of South Asia and beyond.[1]

Despite this proliferation of analysis and the security threats allegedly posed by madaris, numerous fundamental questions persist regarding the number of madaris in Pakistan, their share of the educational market, the socioeconomic background of madrassah students, the connections between madaris and militancy, Islamabad's sincerity in reforming the madrassah system, and the support among madrassah leadership, educators, and students for such reform.

This study aims to address these questions in considerable detail, synthesizing several different kinds of data, including information obtained from interviews with madrassah officials, teachers, and students in Pakistan; discussions with U.S., British, French, and Pakistani governmental and nongovernmental analysts; and numerous survey data and opinion polls.[2] It draws on secondary literature, recent scholarship on terrorist recruitment preferences and terrorist labor supply, and analyses of educational economics and school choice in Pakistan. I have also used the longstanding literature on Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan.

The first chapter situates religious education in Pakistan in the larger context of the country's educational system. The premise is that a complex appreciation of religious education in Pakistan requires a more comprehensive understanding of how education takes place generally

and the various venues besides madaris in which religious education takes place. This chapter describes and, where appropriate and possible, enumerates the different kinds of schools in Pakistan and identifies where religious education is available in the schools. It also provides data on educational enrollment and attainment in Pakistan's various educational sectors, including variations across time, geography, and student socioeconomic background. I present available information on educational funding generally, and religious education in particular, and conclude with a discussion of family preferences with respect to education and the ways in which the educational market is innovating to keep pace with these evolving preferences.

The second chapter covers the variety and organization of both formal and informal religious educational institutions, with particular focus on the formal institutions (the madaris). It presents available information about madrassah faculty and students and their activities. For instance, it has been alleged that madaris constitute "vote banks" and "street power" for Islamist parties. In this chapter I try to address the veracity of these and other claims and counterclaims made by madrassah officials and educators.

The third chapter presents empirically grounded arguments that cast doubt about unqualified and sweeping claims that madaris writ large produce militants in Pakistan. Instead, this monograph argues that madaris are less relevant for recruiting militants for the Kashmir and Indian theaters, where better qualified recruits seem to be preferred. However, some madaris in the border areas and in the Pakistani hinterland may have a limited role in transnational terrorism and may play a critical role in the insurgency in Afghanistan, especially with respect to suicide attackers operating there. A few madaris also appear to be important for the recruitment of suicide attackers within Pakistan, and there is evidence that some madaris are implicated in sectarian violence inside Pakistan.

The scale of sectarian violence in Pakistan is staggering, with hundreds of people killed or injured in such attacks each year. In 2006 alone, the New Delhi–based Institute for Conflict Management recorded thirty-six sectarian attacks in Pakistan that claimed the lives of 201 persons and injured another 349.[3] The Islamabad-based Pak Institute for

Peace Studies puts the number of sectarian attacks at forty-one.[4] This chapter also presents limited evidence linking madaris and *support* for militancy (jihad)—even if madaris have only limited involvement in the recruitment of militants writ large. That is, madaris may help create an atmosphere conducive to jihad in the region, even though madrassah students are not well represented across the ranks of all militant organizations.

In the fourth chapter I discuss Islamabad's efforts to reform madaris. Drawing extensively from fieldwork, I present a complex set of reform-related issues from the viewpoints of the government, the madaris' administrators and educators, and Islamic scholars.

The final chapter lays out the most important conclusions and policy implications and suggests a number of policy initiatives that might address some of the fundamental concerns emanating from ostensible ties between education and security inside and outside Pakistan. Analyses of nationally representative household surveys find that the public school sector educates about 70 percent of Pakistan's full-time enrolled students. Because the problems within Pakistan's public educational sector also present daunting challenges with clear security implications, this study offers a number of policy options that cover the entire educational market—not just the religious educational sector.

The Literature on Pakistan's Madaris: A Critical Appraisal

Before 2001 few American policymakers had heard of Pakistan's religious schools or madaris. Because madrassah means "school," some writers and analysts use the adjective *deeni* (religious) to make it clear that they mean religious schools rather than schools generally. Jessica Stern's writings have advanced the belief that Pakistan's madaris are factories of ideological indoctrination and even military training for terrorist organizations throughout Pakistan and South Asia.[5] Following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the accompanying scrutiny of Pakistan, the attention of state and international nonstate entities alike increasingly focused on these educational institutions. The popular press was rife with varying estimates of the numbers of madaris in

Pakistan, the numbers of students enrolled in such schools, and their purported links to terrorism. Apart from press reports, a number of scholars, research institutions, and advocacy organizations advanced the notion that Pakistan's madaris posed a serious threat, not only to the stability of the South Asian region but also to U.S. national security interests. Stern's writings were crucial in encouraging this fixation upon madaris. Other scholars, including Peter Singer and Robert Looney, also took up the issue, albeit with greater skepticism about both the links between madaris and militancy and the prevailing estimates of the number of madaris.[6]

The International Crisis Group (ICG) issued a report in 2002 that advanced debate on the dangers posed by madaris. It claimed that about a third of all students in Pakistan were enrolled in them.[7] Perhaps more than any other, this finding brought the weight of the international community down upon these institutions. The import of this report is reflected by the fact that the director of ICG in Pakistan, Samina Ahmed, was asked to testify before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee in April 2005 about the connections between madaris and terrorism.[8]

The timing of the report was important for at least two reasons. First, its publication followed the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States and resulting concern about Pakistan as a frontline state in the war on terrorism in light of the country's problematic history with terrorist groups and the Taliban. Second, it was released during the 2001–02 military confrontation between India and Pakistan. This standoff was precipitated by a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament, allegedly executed by Jaish-e-Muhammad, a Pakistan-based militant organization associated with al Qaeda. This attack demonstrated that Pakistan-based groups were a menace domestically, as well as to regional and even global security interests.

Since 2005 several scholarly articles and editorials have sought to contribute an alternative view of madaris. In the *New York Times Book Review* in December 2005, William Dalrymple summarized the conclusions of several scholars who argued that the links between madaris and militancy had been greatly exaggerated. Nonetheless, he contended that madaris constitute an "education system running parallel to the mori-

bund state sector," and few "make any effort to prepare their students to function in a modern, plural society."[9] It is difficult to understand how a system that claims perhaps less than 1 percent of the full-time educational market share can meaningfully be termed a parallel educational system.[10]

Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey examined the backgrounds of seventy-nine terrorists involved in five of the worst anti-Western terrorist attacks (the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa, the September 11, 2001, attacks, the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing, and the London bombings in July 2005). They found madrassah involvement to be rare and further noted that the masterminds of the attacks all had university degrees.[11] Bergen and Pandey's findings are consistent with earlier conclusions by Marc Sageman and others who have studied terrorist characteristics and concluded that madaris are less correlated than institutions of higher learning with production of terrorists.[12] Alexander Evans also wrote a lucid analysis of the varied roles of madaris in the Muslim world and presented compelling evidence against the popular notion that they constitute threats to regional and international security.[13]

Why do analyses of security and madaris present such contradictory findings? Part of the problem is that with few exceptions, scholars have tended to rely predominantly on one kind of data or one analytical lens to interpret these data. Most of the current works on the subject (nearly every popular press account, Stern, Singer, the ICG) have relied almost exclusively on interview data from inside or outside Pakistan.[14] Few of these studies have utilized the well-developed literature on madaris in Pakistan and South Asia, including the works of Mumtaz Ahmad, Jamil Malik (one of the first scholars of madaris), Muhammad Qasim Zaman, J.K. Kran, Barbara Metcalf, and Francis Robinson, among others.[15]

Regrettably these research efforts fail to utilize various quantitative studies to corroborate their interview data. This is unfortunate because quantitative data for Pakistan's madaris are numerous and include surveys conducted by Saleem Mansoor Khalid of the Institute of Policy Studies, Tariq Rahman, several surveys of madaris in Pakistan carried out by the government of Pakistan in 1979, 1988, 2000, and data from national household surveys (such as the Pakistani Census and the Paki-

stani Integrated Household Survey, or PIHS) that collect information on household school utilization.[16]

The work of Saleem Ali is commendable because it seeks to combine interview data with other forms of survey data (some collected by Ali's research team).[17] Using incident data in two districts (Ahmedpur and Islamabad), Ali found that sectarian violence correlated strongly and positively with madrassah penetration. The primary weakness of his study is that it does not reflect significant knowledge of the operations of militant groups in Pakistan. The data he collected and analyzed contain inherent sample biases that limit the generalizability of the results.[18] Nonetheless, Ali's work makes great strides in incorporating different kinds of data with which to analyze the apparent madrassah problem.

Data Caveats

Tahir Andrabi's study (commissioned by the World Bank) and the Islamabad-based Social Policy and Development Center (SPDC) provide solid evidence about the penetration of madaris in the educational market for full-time enrollments and the variations of madrassah market share across much of Pakistan and over time. Using household data from the 1998 census and the Pakistani Integrated Household Survey, both the Andrabi team and the SPDC determined that full-time madrassah enrollments may be less than 1 percent nationwide.[19] Although the Andrabi and SPDC efforts—as well as those of other quantitative analysts—yield numerous insights about the determinants of family choice with respect to religious, public, and private schooling options, they do little to illuminate the lingering policy questions about the connections between madaris and militancy. Nor do these studies of school choice adequately acknowledge that religious education is not confined to the madrassah and other religious educational institutions. Thus, although the majority of full-time enrolled students may study in public schools, this does not mean that they are not studying religious subjects.

Because the quantitative findings of Andrabi and SPDC are used extensively in this study, it is worthwhile to note their limitations as well as their strengths. First, they rely on household-based surveys, which may exclude some potential madrassah students (such as orphans or

homeless children) and are somewhat dated (The most recent data are from 2001). Recognizing that household surveys underestimate madrassah utilization, the Andrabi team adjusted their estimates to account for excluded groups and population growth. Their adjusted figures suggest generously that 475,000 children—less than 3 percent of all full-time enrollments—might attend madaris *full time*.[20]

Another limitation of the studies using household surveys is that these data do not include the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) and protected areas of the Northwest Frontier Province, where madrassah enrollment could be much higher.[21] The Andrabi team presents evidence that this may be the case: Intensity of madrassah enrollment was highest along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, reaching 7.5 percent in the district of Pishin. This raises the possibility that intensity of madrassah utilization could be just as high, if not higher, in all or part of FATA. For these reasons estimates of madrassah utilization could be underestimated, particularly in areas such as FATA and restricted areas of NWFP. The Andrabi team could not correct estimates to account for this exclusion because of the scant empirical bases for such correction.[22] The lack of visibility in this critical area is deeply problematic. Pakistan's madaris in FATA—especially in North and South Waziristan—are deeply implicated in the recruitment of suicide attackers in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.[23]

Finally, the 1998 census itself is the subject of much controversy, apart from the sampling issues noted above. Despite a long history of census taking—dating to the census system introduced by the British in the mid-nineteenth century—successive governments delayed the 1990 census until 1998. The government cited security-related reasons for the delay. In fact, its motivations were related more to domestic political concerns. The government resisted enumerating the population because numerous demographic changes (population growth, age structure, literacy, ethnic composition, and so forth) were anticipated. These could have important implications for the allocation of government representation, resources, and social privileges and would encourage the political mobilization of minorities whose numbers had increased.[24]

The state also feared that a population growth rate above 3 percent would draw adverse attention from the international community and

indicate inadequate efforts to invest in Pakistan's women.[25] In addition, millions of ethnic Pashtun refugees from Afghanistan were still in Pakistan. At least partly because of longstanding concerns about Pashtun nationalism and even separatism, the government had hoped that some of the Afghan refugees would have been repatriated before the election. Because of the various controversies surrounding the conduct of the 1998 census, its data have attracted numerous critics. For that reason this study does not rely exclusively on findings from the 1998 census. However, as will be shown, findings from the census are similar to those obtained using other data sources.[26]

Because of these data limitations and because of the tendency in some disciplines to devalue survey data, scholars such as the Andrabi team who have relied upon these data have been criticized. While the caveats noted above are necessary to note, it is also important to underscore the value of these data and to address some of the criticisms made about their use. Whereas SPDC has used their data without generating controversy, the work of Andrabi came under fire even though his results with the PIHS were identical to those of the SPDC. These critiques problably were fueled by those ideologically commited to the notion that madaris are vehicles for mass instruction. The Andrabi team also pointed out a critical arithmetic error of the ICG report, which immediately subjected their report to widespread criticism that often was not scholarly in nature or tone.

However, these survey data and the Andrabi study are valuable for numerous reasons. First, notwithstanding the various limitations of the PIHS and the census data, analyses of these data yield comparable results despite their different sampling methodologies and questionnaire designs. Those results suggest that the data allow analysts to agree on a stable, and thus defensible, result regarding full-time madrassah utilization. Second, and related to the first reason, both the PIHS and census instruments are clear about the data elements they collect: household utilization of different educational institutions for children studying fulltime. Thus one can speak clearly about full-time enrollments in madaris and other schools. Most interview data do not make any effort to disaggregate intensity of utilization, partly because it is impossible to do so by relying upon interlocutors' accounts.

Third, the Andrabi team embraces the various sample biases and other limitations of the data and seeks to use sophisticated corrective measures to account for them. One of the means by which they sought to address the various sample biases included sampling all households within several villages of districts in the Punjab. This was necessary because in the household surveys madrassah utilization was a rare event. To understand how madrassah utilization differs across households, one needs a solid sample size of households that use madaris for at least one child.

Several commentators criticized the reliance on Punjab-derived data to correct for undercounting in the household surveys and to determine differences between and among households in their schooling choices. Such critics wrongly claim that the Punjab is unusually low in madrassah utilization and therefore unsuitable for such analyses. Unfortunately these arguments are empirically impoverished. The Punjab has the largest concentration of madaris in Pakistan, at least partly because it is the country's most populous province, as shown later in this monograph. Thus madrassah utilization in Punjab accounts for a large proportion of Pakistani madrassah customers; indeed, it is entirely defensible to use these data to cast light on undercounting of madrassah students in household surveys and on inter- and intra-household variation in school choice.

The tendency of scholars of the madrassah policy problem to apply one kind of data and one analytical lens no doubt results from academic specialization. But the variegated findings in the various treatments of madaris and their concomitant policy implications underscore the fact that a holistic understanding of Islamic education in Pakistan and its security implications demands a multidisciplinary analytical approach that integrates several kinds of data. For these reasons, to the greatest extent possible this monograph incorporates and synthesizes different kinds of data and different interpretative frameworks to illuminate whether madaris pose a threat to regional and extra-regional security—and if so, how and what specific kind of threats. This effort to disaggregate the different kinds of threats and their connections to madaris should inform the continued policy discussions about Pakistan's entire educational system. The reader alone will judge the success or failure of these attempts.

Preview of the Findings

Scant evidence supports popular claims that madaris educate a large proportion of Pakistan's full-time enrolled students. The most generous estimates put full-time madrassah enrollment at well below 10 percent, and the most conservative estimate suggests it is below 1 percent.[27] Of course, the number of children who use informal mosque schools in addition to their public or private education is certainly much higher. Unfortunately, no data provide insights into part-time utilization of religious schools. Nor does any evidence suggest that full-time madrassah market share is expanding: Andrabi et al. found that it has remained very stable since 1991 and may even be declining. Again, no data are available to illuminate trends in part-time religious school utilization. Similarly, while poorer students do make up a larger percentage of the student body at madaris than at other kinds of schools, madrassah students' socioeconomic profiles are very similar to those of students in public schools overall. Notably, madaris have a somewhat higher proportion of wealthier students than public schools: Nearly 12 percent of madrassah students come from Pakistan's wealthiest families.[28]

Studies disagree about the direct ties between madaris and militancy. My study of 140 families of slain militants in Pakistan and preliminary analysis of these data suggest that madaris were not the most important places for recruitment of militants who operated in Kashmir.[29] Less than a quarter of those militants had a madrassah background. These findings are consistent with those of numerous analysts—including Sageman, Berrebi, Bueno de Mesquita, Krueger and Malekova, Evans, and Bergen and Pandey, among others—who find little evidence that *international* terrorists have madrassah backgrounds.[30] However, suicide attackers in Afghanistan and Pakistan do seem to come from Pakistan's madaris in FATA, and sectarian militants in Pakistan are also tied to sectarian madaris.[31]

Although there may be fewer madrassah students than suggested by the popular press and they may have weak connections to militant groups, there *are* reasons for concern. A recent survey of students and teachers by Tariq Rahman suggests that madrassah students, relative to students in public and private schools, are less inclined to support equal rights for Pakistan's religious minorities and women, more likely to support mujahadeen activities in India and Kashmir, and more likely to

support open war with India to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Madrassah teachers, compared both to their students and to other teachers in public and private schools, are even more inclined to support war with India and jihadi groups in Kashmir, less likely to support resolution of Kashmir through peaceful means, and generally less likely to support equal rights for Pakistan's minorities and women. Notably, public school students are more intolerant toward minorities and women and more inclined toward violent resolution of Kashmir than private school pupils, but less so than madrassah students. Public school teachers, in contrast to madrassah teachers, were more moderate than their students on Kashmir. However, with respect to minorities' and womens' rights, teachers were more intolerant than their students. Private-school students and teachers were the most moderate of the three sectors.[32]

These findings may suggest that madaris might not simply *produce* intolerant students; rather, intolerant families might *choose* madaris because they believe that madrassah teachers and administrators espouse worldviews similar to their own. (Of course, both may be true: Madaris contribute to the formation of specific norms, and parents who value those norms choose madaris for their children.) As with schoolchildren everywhere, student opinions probably reflect their home environment as much as the school environment. Switching students from madaris to private or public schools might simply result in data that suggest that public or private school students embrace values similar to those of madrassah students.

This self-selection concern is somewhat mitigated by the work of Andrabi et al., who found that madrassah utilization is less ideological than private school utilization. As mentioned above, the team found that most families (three in four) who use a madrassah for one child tend to use private or public schools for their other children. Nonetheless, research on this issue is urgently needed, because encouraging parents to opt out of the madrassah system (for example with incentives) could help discourage the production of intolerant worldviews that seem to thrive in the madaris. Or at least it could attenuate such views, holding constant the values of their families. However, before resources are devoted to this policy option, a clearer understanding is required of parental choice and the connections between educational environment and opinion formation.

A second problem associated with madaris is sectarian violence. Policy analysts, religious scholars, and Pakistani governmental officials alike share the fear that the inherently sectarian nature of madaris contributes to Pakistan's internecine strife, which claims hundreds of lives each year. The data for this assertion are limited but important. Given the gravity of sectarian violence in Pakistan, more sustained and empirically defensible analyses of such a connection are necessary.

Government officials and religious scholars suggested a third potential problem associated with Pakistani madaris: They are not producing *ulama* competent to guide a modern Islamic state. This belief has motivated support for some kinds of madrassah reform. But these interlocutors stressed that this issue is of internal importance to Pakistan and does not involve the international community.

This study found evidence that the government is making limited strides in its efforts to reform this educational sector. This success may have less to do with Islamabad's willpower than with the interests of key religious scholars. Progress has not been as fast or as comprehensive as the international community would like and has no doubt slowed because of Musharraf's domestic problems, ever-rising hostility to the United States, and the belief that Musharraf acts on behalf of the United States, not Pakistan. Notably, President Musharraf sought to implement madrassah reform *before* the events of 9/11, in recognition that doing so was in Pakistan's own interest. Those efforts have intensified—albeit episodically—since 9/11, with undulating waves of international pressure precipitated by specific regional events (the 2001–02 Indo-Pakistan military crisis, the sanctuary the Taliban enjoy in FATA and Baluchistan, and the 2006 Mumbai transit attack).

Pakistan's recent experience with a violent antigovernment madrassah in the heart of Islamabad (a women's madrassah called Jamia Hafsa associated with the radical mosque, Lal Masjid) has also underscored the need to do something about madaris that pose a threat to the country. Male and female militants of the Jamia Hafsa and the Lal Masjid rampaged through Islamabad, engaging in vigilantism for some six months before Pakistani security forces launched Operation Silence in July 2007. In the resulting confrontation as many as several hundred students died, and the madrassah was leveled in the conduct of security operations.[33]

Significant resistance to madrassah reform is coming from some madrassah administrators and educators, stemming from their financial concerns, their commitment to their madrassah's particular sectarian tradition, and their entrenched (and often valid) views about equitable treatment by the state and respect for their primary educational mission. Madrassah administrators contend that madrassah education is a specialization (no different from medical or legal education) and that they primarily produce religious scholars and others who will work in the religious educational field or with Pakistan's numerous religious political parties. They question any requirement to introduce subjects outside their specialty when, according to them, no one is asking medical schools to introduce Islamic studies into their curricula. They question why they are forced to be registered and regulated when no comparable requirement exists for private schools.[34] Increasing resistance to madrassah reform is tied to domestic politics and growing displeasure with Musharraf's domestic actions and his alliance with Washington, which spawns ever deeper acrimony. It is important to keep in mind that some within the madrassah establishment do continue to support madrassh reform. However, they want control over the process and they deny that they are undertaking these initiatives at the behest of Islamabad or Washington.