BEYOND THE BOOK: ISLAMIC EDUCATION, BELONGING, AND RADICALISM IN THE MADRASSA CONTEXT.

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Abstract

This study investigates the link between madrassas and radicalism, attempting to acknowledge Islamic education's role in developing extreme beliefs. The research conducts a thorough analysis of the literature on the subject and relies on various sources, including academic literature, news stories, and government records. The results imply that, although madrassas may shape people's religious ideas and values, no substantial evidence supports the concept that madrassas are fundamentally linked to radicalism. However, the link between madrassas and radicalization is complicated and impacted by various circumstances, including socioeconomic situation, political environment, and cultural background. The study contends that establishing successful counter-extremism initiatives requires sophisticated knowledge of the link between madrassa education and radicalization. It emphasizes the need to consider numerous social, cultural, and economic variables leading to radicalization, and the necessity for a more thorough understanding of madrassa education’s function in forming Islamic views and values. The thesis recommends that future studies concentrate on establishing a more detailed knowledge of the social and political link between madrassa education and radicalization and strategies to use madrassa education to oppose extremism. This involves investigating the possibility of madrassas providing an alternative type of religious education that fosters peace, tolerance, and understanding. Enhancing awareness of the link between madrassas and radicalism can contribute to developing effective measures for fighting extremism and promoting peace and security in communities across the globe.
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I. Introduction

A. Background of the topic

The international community has taken action to confront the global problem of terrorism. To avoid attacks resembling September 11, 2001, and July 7, 2005, the international community has banded together to exchange information and resources, with wealthy countries like the United States and the United Kingdom often taking the lead.¹ At the center of this struggle is the Islamic school, or madrassa, because of its essential role in radicalizing young boys and sending them out to wage jihad, a perpetual violent holy war against so-called unbelievers.² Jihadists encourage devout Muslims to wage deadly attacks in the name of their religion. Support for the madrassa in Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites, has spread extremism internationally and contributes to the idea that Islam is at war with the West.

Several academics have studied the madrassa's possible role in spreading Islamic extremism. Despite extensive coverage of madrassas, unanswered questions remain about why young men, rather than women—who make up a far smaller proportion of madrassa students—find them appealing. This study’s theoretical approach draws on social identity theory to explain how the madrassa fosters a sense of belonging among male Muslim youth, creating a "us versus them" mentality that shapes how they approach Islam and those believed to deviate from its tenets. The study's overarching concerns are: "How does the madrassa generate a feeling of identity and belonging among Muslim youth, and how, by extension, can these attributes engender Islamic

¹ Bar, Shmuel. "The religious sources of Islamic terrorism." In The Theory and Practice of Islamic Terrorism, pp. 12
fundamentalism?" The extreme interpretation of Islam taught at the madrassa is believed to foster an in-group identity, which facilitates recruitment, and increases the risk of violence against the out-group, orthose who do not subscribe to the radical interpretation of Islam. However, the madrassa is not always a place where violence is taught; in many circumstances, it simply offers compulsory Islamic education for the individual and community. Nonetheless, this line of inquiry will add to the growing body of international relations studies by shedding light on how the madrassa crucially shapes an Islamic identity that may induce extremism.

1.2 Problem Statement

To what extent do madrasas contribute to Muslim adolescent radicalization? Can madrasas be used to combat radicalization? These are some questions that serve as the problem statement for future study on the relationship between madrasas and radicalization. To halt the spread of extremist ideology in madrasas, we must bridge knowledge gaps in their role in radicalization, and provide solutions. The research also intends to address concerns that the absence of governance and supervision in the madrasa system contributes to the growth of extremist ideology.

1.3 Purpose of the Research

This research aims to shed light on possible connections between Islamic madrassas and the development of extremist beliefs, peculiarly among adolescent male Muslims. It examines how the madrassa fosters a sense of belonging among its students, often creating an "us versus them" mindset that shapes how they approach Islam and those believed to deviate from its tenets. The study's overarching aim is to understand how madrassas shape an Islamic identity that may produce extremism, and explore how these schools may be secondhand to combat and prevent the spread of radicalism. Furthermore, this research seeks insights into the problem of extremism
in madrassas and Muslim society at large. It aims to contribute to understanding the variety and complexity of Islamic training, and how madrassas shape border students' religious and political convictions. The research is meant to steer the policy and program formulation that prevents the spread of radical ideas by identifying the undefined that lead to radicalism and the most effective techniques for addressing it. By doing so, it suggests policy and practices addressing the educational issue in madrassas and the wider Muslim community. The study's findings may shape policy and practice to forestall extremism and radicalism in madrassas and the Muslim world. Ultimately, the research contributes to the global effort to combat terrorism and promote public security.

C. Research questions

1. How do radical Islamic schools shape their pupils' personalities and train them to be terrorists?
2. Are there any links between madrasas and terrorist organizations?
3. How has Wahhabism contributed to the emergence of global terrorism?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To understand how radical Islamic schools shape their pupils' personalities and train them to be terrorists
2. To establish whether there are any links between madrassas and terrorist organizations
3. To understand how Wahhabism has contributed to the emergence of global terrorism

These objectives aim to analyze the role of madrassas in spreading radicalism and extremism, and to identify potential solutions to this problem. By exploring how the madrassa shapes the beliefs and attitudes of its pupils, this study sheds light on mechanisms leading to the
development of Islamic fundamentalism and the emergence of terrorist organizations. By examining the links between madrassas and terrorism, the study also identifies how these groups use spiritual schools as recruitment and radicalization tools. Finally, by offering political policies and advancing suggestions for preventing and combating unfolding radicalism and extremism inside madrassas and the broader Muslim world, the study pinpoints operational strategies for countering this threat.

1.5 Hypothesis

The extreme interpretation of Islam taught in some madrassas fosters an in-group identity among male Muslim youth, leading to a sense of belonging and an "us versus them" mentality, increasing the risk of force against the out-group, and contributing to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

This hypothesis suggests the radical ideology taught in some madrassas promotes the “us versus them” mentality, which can create identity and belonging among male Muslim youth. Additionally, this may also lead to a violent and extremist mindset, which perceives those outside the in-group as enemies to be attacked. The hypothesis implies a causal relationship between teaching extremist ideology in madrassas and the increment of radicalization and terrorism.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Learning more about how madrassas contribute to radicalization is essential for several reasons. It addresses severe problems that threaten the peace and refuge of Muslim-majority nations, as well as the rest of the world. Since radicalism may lead to acts of violence and terrorism, analyzing its causes is crucial. Secondly, this research contributes to our understanding of the
variety and complexity of Islamic education, and the role madrassas play in molding students' religious and professional convictions. Thirdly, the study's findings can form policy and practice to counter extremism and radicalism inside madrassas and the Muslim world. The research may steer the formulation of policies and programs to prevent the spread of radical ideas by distinguishing elements that generate radicalism, and the most effective techniques for fighting it.

1.7 Scope of the Study
The scope of this study will be limited to a literature review of existing research on madrassas and their potency in fostering Islamic extremism. The review will cover articles, books, reports, and other relevant sources. The study will analyze and synthesize the findings from this literature review to explore the avenues through which madrassas contribute to the development of radicalism among Muslim youth, mainly male students. The scope of the research will also include an examination of the social identity theory framework and how it can illustrate the process by which madrassas form the individuality and beliefs of their students. Finally, the study will offer policy and practice suggestions for addressing the issue of radicalism in madrassas and the broader Muslim community.

1.8 Limitations of the Study
Several limitations to this study must be acknowledged. Firstly, as this study is based solely on a literature review, there may be limitations regarding the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the sources used. Some relevant research may have been missed, and the quality of some sources may be older than desired. Secondly, while the study aims to provide insight into the purpose of madrassas in fostering Islamic extremism, various factors may contribute to radicalization on an individual basis. Therefore, this research's findings may not fully account for all the complex
variables that radicalize Muslim youth. Thirdly, the study’s scope is limited to a focus on madrassas and their potential role in fostering Islamic extremism. While important, there are diverse forms of Islamic education and religious institutions that may be relevant to the discussion of radicalization.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically grounded on social identity theory, which explains how belonging to a group may shape an individual's actions and beliefs. According to social identity theory, people develop their sense of self from the groups to which they belong, and their attitudes and actions toward others are shaped by their group membership. The hypothesis posits that people automatically categorize themselves and others into groups based on standard features, including race, religion, and nationality. The theory postulates, in particular, that people are inclined to categorize themselves and others into groups based on standard features like race, religion, and nationality.

This study incorporates social identity theory to understand how the madrassa fosters a sense of community among teenage male Muslims and encourages a "us versus them" mentality. The madrassa enables young Muslim men to connect and identify with a social group, which may improve their sense of self and reinforce their loyalty to the religious values they espouse. Members of the madrassa may develop an in-group mindset if they have a strong sense of identification with other individuals in attendance. With this mindset, those who attend a madrassa see themselves as apart from—and even at odds with—society at large. Those who aren't Muslims, or don't share the in-understanding groups of Islam, form the out-group.

This study has a specific goal: to illuminate how Muslim youth develop a sense of identity and community in the context of the madrassa. By using social identity theory to study madrassas, this study aims to offer insight into how the madrassa nurtures a feeling of identity and belonging among Muslim youth that contributes to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Additionally,

the theory provides a framework for comprehending how a strong sense of belonging to a group may encourage recruitment and heighten the risk of violence towards the out-group, which includes people who do not adhere to their radical interpretation of Islam.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded on the social identity theory, which posits that individuals form their sense of self via engagement with, and within, social groups. Sociological studies hold that individuals construct distinctive social identities in line with their groups and use them to shape their relationships with others.6 This research aims to understand better how madrassas foster a feeling of community among young Muslim males by teaching them to view the world through a "us against them" lens. This outlook informs how these people interact with Islam and those perceived as deviating from its teachings, as well as individual journeys toward extremism, or the process through which they learn to embrace such ideas and behaviors.7 By fostering an in-group identity, madrassas facilitate recruitment to the in-group and increase the possibility of violent actions being performed against members of the out-group.8 Wahhabism, an extremist Saudi interpretation of Islam also contributes to this theoretical system. The study aims to learn more about the role madrassas play in spreading Wahhabism, and how that ideology has enforced the rise of global terrorism.

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7 Ibid.
1.11 Operational Definition

The studies examining madrassas and radicalism hope to shed light on the possible connection between madrassa-based Islamic religious education and the growth of radical, extremist beliefs. The study's overarching goal is to determine how madrassas may be utilized to combat the spread of radicalism among their students and alums. The study's other objective is to highlight the problem of extremism in madrassas and the Muslim society at large, and offer policy and practice suggestions to resolve it.
II. Literature Review

Definition of madrassa and radicalism

An Islamic madrassa is a school teaching Islam and the Islamic scriptures. A madrassa’s curriculum typically consists of courses on the Quran, Islamic law, and the Hadith—the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad.

A radical viewpoint or stance strongly opposes the majority opinion. When discussing Islam, "radicalism" sometimes describes a belief in a literal interpretation of the religion, promoting violence and political action to accomplish its aims. Understanding that the vast majority of madrassas are nonviolent and dedicated to Islamic instruction rather than radicalism or violence is crucial.

Madrassas history

As ancient learning institutions, madrasas have existed for hundreds of years. In the eleventh century, one of the first madrasas was established in Baghdad. Supplying people with free food, lodging, and education, madrasas quickly spread over the Muslim world. When Western colonial powers ruled the Islamic world in the 19th and early 20th centuries, secular institutions overwhelmingly outcompeted religious schools. These religious schools aimed to educate the next generation of Islamic religious experts; hence, religion was included in all classes. Children learned lessons on the history of the Arabic language. The spread of Islamic studies, and the concurrent rise of Islamist politics in countries like Iran and Pakistan, led to a rebirth of madrasas.

in the 1970s. Increased funding from the United States, Europe, and the Persian Gulf encouraged the rise of anti-Soviet mujahideen madrasas in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1980s. Afghan Islamic scholars and students established the Taliban in the early 1990s. Many of them were former mujahideen; they had been educated in madrassas and followed a radical form of Islam similar to Wahhabism.

The Process of Radicalization

Radicalization is how a person becomes ideologically extreme and possibly dangerous. It is a multidimensional process, taking different forms for different individuals depending on their individual histories, settings, and social conditions. While each person's route to radicalization is unique, there are certain stages that most individuals encounter.

Pre-Radicalization

Those in the pre-radicalization stage are discouraged by the world as they know it and receptive to fresh viewpoints. At this moment, frequent feelings include rage, anger, and disillusionment with traditional society and its institutions. Moreover, they may feel estranged from—and undesired by—society, leaving them vulnerable to radical beliefs.

Identification

At this point, people start identifying with radical groups and their ideologies. They may actively seek out offline and online extremist content, such as propaganda materials or speeches by extremist leaders. Additionally, they may begin connecting with individuals sharing similar extreme beliefs, reinforcing their sense of community and dedication to their ideology.

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Indoctrination

The persistent repetition of extremist ideas characterizes the indoctrination phase. At this stage, a person may become heavily indoctrinated by extremist ideology, either via training camps or academic seminars. They may also encounter violent philosophies that promote weapons and explosives use.

Action

When individuals commit violent actions in support of their radical views, they have reached the "action" stage. Individuals may initiate attacks against innocent bystanders, government institutions, and other targets seen as opponents of the revolutionary cause. They may join terrorist groups and participate in military drills or recruitment efforts. However, there is no single road to radicalization as individuals, influenced by different experiences and situations, may experience various stages of radicalization several times. Nevertheless, not all who advance through the pre-radicalization stage become radicalized, and multiple religious, socio-economic and political factors might reduce or prevent radicalization.

Perceived grievances or injustices contribute significantly to the radicalization process. When marginalized, discriminated against, or mistreated, individuals may resort to radical beliefs to express their dissatisfaction with the world. An individual who believes they have endured religious, racial, or cultural injustice may be more susceptible to the ideology of an extremist

14 Ibid.
group since they provide a sense of belonging and importance. This is due to the extremist group acting as a scapegoat for the radicalized individual’s personal challenges and obstacles.

The availability of extremist networks and charismatic leaders, who may provide social support, intellectual training, and a sense of belonging, also contributes to radicalization. People may be lured to extremist groups because they give a sense of connection and purpose they may not find in traditional societies.

Finally, a multitude of contextual factors may influence one's radicalization process, including access to weapons and financing, government persecution, and the effects of social media and online propaganda. These elements may impact the opportunities and constraints for individuals to engage in violent activities supporting revolutionary ideas. Radicalization is a multi-step and multi-factor phenomenon with several underlying causes. While each person's radicalization path is distinct, several similarities remain true. Understanding the causes of radicalization is critical for successfully avoiding and opposing violent extremism.

**Madrassa and Radicalization**

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, madrasas in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia have been perceived to foster terrorist activities. The 9/11 attacks have piqued the interest of the world and media on these institutions. Several studies have examined the madrasa curriculum and its effects on students. Still, these studies have generally overlooked the roles of instructors, teacher attitudes, and classroom obstacles. Although there has been evidence linked to the dangers of madrassas, some madrasas are peaceful and beneficial to their neighborhoods.

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Terrorism now tops the global security threats that must be addressed. Several scholars, including Evans (2006), have criticized the world’s fight against terrorism for unfairly focusing on Islamic countries. Many now believe that Islamic nations aided and abetted international terrorist organizations. This theory was developed from observations that disproportionate numbers of terrorist attacks are committed by Muslims, against Muslims, or in Muslim majority areas. As a result, international military activities have been organized against possible terrorist-sponsored states. For instance, the United Nations has authorized military strikes against nations like Iraq and Afghanistan under the pretext of fighting terrorism. The global coalition's anti-terrorism operation has the appearance of an attack on Islamic countries. It is a common misunderstanding that Islam and Islamic teachings advocate seeing non-Muslims as enemies who pose a danger to the existence of Islam. One of the critical elements leading to the confrontation between Islamic civilization and the established order of the world today is the widespread misunderstanding of Islamic ideology, including but not limited to jihad, religious liberty, and minority rights.

Some observers have pointed to the madrasa, the traditional Islamic school, as the root of the problem with terrorist groups. Madrasahs are places of Islamic higher learning that aim to produce scholars and civic leaders. In Arabic, a "school" is "madrassa." These mainstream educational institutions have been accused of fostering religious extremism. For instance, many

17 Masud, Muhammad Khalid. “Chapter 12 Madrasas Promoting Social Harmony? Debates over the Role of Madrasa Education in Pakistan”. In Knowledge, Authority and Change in Islamic Societies (2021): 246.
in Indonesia associate Muslim preachers, like Abu Bakar Bashir, with terrorist groups actively promoting bloodshed within Indonesia which call for Jihad.  

Since September 11, madrasas have been viewed with suspicion in Western nations because of the belief that they are training grounds for terrorists. The United States launched an airstrike in Afghanistan in late 2001 against Taliban fighters who had attended such madrassas, despite the September 11 hijackers’ lack of Taliban affiliation. 

Madrasas have since become associated with terrorism by international organizations and countries alike. Many Western politicians concluded that the rote memorization of the Quran at these Islamic schools was the only cause of the irrational hatred shown by Islamist terrorists. Furthermore, a research study which was conducted by the United States National commission on terrorist attacks suggested that madrasas are "incubators of violent extremism." In 2005, the United States government voiced concerns about claims that madrassas "teach individuals to be suicide murderers and violent radicals." The allegation that madrasas are "hate factories" producing terrorists was widely repeated in American media later that year.

Certain factors make madrasas susceptible to transformation into indoctrination hubs for extremist groups. For instance, contemporary madrasas in South Asia have historically distanced themselves from the state and its institutions. Zakat contributions and other payments from

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muslims enabled these schools to function independently from government involvement. Since madrassa ulema enjoyed high social status due to their religion and financial autonomy, they could use this influence for their political ends. Governments cautiously approach madrassas because madrasa leaders may portray any hostile intrusion as a subordination of religious liberties among the general public. Due to the high religious status of Ulema, they are approached cautiously by the government and this consequently allows them to utilize this opportunity to infiltrate a school or other institution of learning in pursuit of their own political agenda.

Cold War developments in the late 1970s gave rise to this militant madrasa rhetoric in Afghanistan and Pakistan. After the Soviet Union’s 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, millions of Afghans sought sanctuary in neighboring Pakistan. The gradual incorporation of Afghanistan into the Soviet communist fold was considered a direct threat to the capitalist world, interfering with U.S. interests during the Cold War era. The United States coordinated with its allies, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other Persian Gulf monarchies, to provide financial and military assistance for the Afghan resistance movement against the Soviet occupation. As a result, thousands of madrasas were established along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to indoctrinate young men and children who had fled their homes in Afghanistan. In the 1980s and '90s, the Taliban came to be associated with these madrasas as centers of Afghan resistance. These madrasas served as training facilities for militants who later participated in the Afghan jihad against the Soviets.

The media depiction of the Soviet Union's involvement within Afghanistan as a communist assault on Islam influenced Muslim outlooks. This rendering contributed to a profound conviction of religious responsibility and allegiance among adherents in safeguarding their religion, and co-believers, from the apparent menace advanced by 'godless nonbelievers' representing Soviet forces. Hundreds of Muslims from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt responded by arming themselves when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. These individuals were labeled as "mujahideen" and organized into groups that received funding, training sessions, and weapons donated by a wide range of sources, such as Pakistani allies. During their fight against occupying Soviet troop presence in this region, they pressured an eventual withdrawal back home years later on account of too much fierce opposition encountered there. Previously this was mainly due to other factors, such as radicalization caused by fighting side-by-side with local fighters. 31

Afghanistan and Pakistan have both endured the threat of terrorism for several years. The perpetrators are usually affiliated with the Taliban or diverse factions functioning under the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) umbrella; both groups emerged from militant madrasas, which received backing from Saudi Arabia, United States and Pakistan during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Religious schools flourish across these countries; instead of fostering cohesion, they have fueled extremism through sectarian clashes and increased violence to unprecedented levels. 32

A preliminary survey on YouTube uncovers an abundance of videos showcasing religious debates in Pakistan, where students from different institutions argue over varying ideologies.

32 Ibid.
These discussions often involve warring factions, such as the Deobandi, Barelvi, Salafi, and Ahl-e-Hadith. Such arguments foment sectarian violence primarily by Sunni sects against minority Shiias, resulting in widespread terrorist activity within Afghanistan and Pakistan. This has led to many extremist groups engaging in tragic acts of terror targeting civilians and military targets alike; for instance, TTP's 2014 attack on Army Public School, which claimed more than 130 children’s lives. The substantial consequences of such intra-religious turmoil include insecurity, which stifles economic growth and social development. Furthermore, it makes counterterrorism increasingly difficult due to violent practices emerging -especially among certain vulnerable communities who lack proper guidance. Due to the stifling economic growth and social development within the communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan along the border-this results in counterterrorism efforts not being fruitful. This contributes towards instability, therefore hindering progress at large while posing a threat to combating regional and international extremism.

**Comparison of Madrasas and Secular Schools**

There is a considerable body of study and commentary accessible on madrasas and their role in radicalization. A frequent theme in this study is the contrast between madrassas and secular schools. This comparison examines how the two types of educational institutions vary in curriculum, teaching practices, and ideologies, as well as how these differences may lead to radicalization. Hussain (2018) conducted a study in Pakistan comparing the educational procedures and subject content provided in madrasas and secular institutions.33 The study identified that Pakistani secular schools feature more extensive curriculums, with courses such as physics, mathematics, and social sciences; meanwhile, the primary focus of Pakistani madrasas

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is Islamic studies. According to the report, Pakistani madrasas often emphasize rote memorization and repetition as a teaching approach, while secular institutions in Pakistan prioritize students' critical thinking and problem-solving capacities.

Qureshi (2021) performed another study comparing the principles taught in madrasas and secular schools in Pakistan. Qureshi found that madrasas promote a more fundamentalist and conservative understanding of Islam, while secular institutions emphasize a more moderate and progressive approach. Pakistani secular schools similarly emphasize a more nationalistic viewpoint. This goes along with the earlier claim that madrassas mostly experience limited interference from the state while secular schools experience increased interference throughout their curriculum. Still, madrasas in Pakistan tend to foster worldviews centered on the Islamic ummah, or the global Muslim community. These findings are consistent with earlier research conducted in nations with extensive madrasas systems, such as Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia. For example, Roy and Mandal determined that Bangladeshi madrasas have a more orthodox and restrictive curriculum than secular institutions. That may restrict pupils' exposure to diverse ideas and opinions and harm the quality of their education. The study also revealed that madrasas in Bangladesh were more homogenous than secular schools, perhaps limiting exposure to a range of points of view.

Yet, not all studies have concluded that there are significant differences between madrasas and secular institutions. For example, a study done in Pakistan by Kausar revealed that, despite

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madrasas having a more restricted curriculum than secular schools, there is no significant
difference in teaching style between the two types of institutions.\textsuperscript{37} According to the study
results, religious training is highly important in Pakistan madrasas and secular institutions alike,
which both promote fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. The study generally suggests
differences in the ideologies, instructional procedures, and subject matter addressed between
madrasas and secular institutions. These disparities may contribute to radicalization by limiting
an individual's exposure to other points of view, supporting a more conventional and restricted
worldview, and emphasizing rote memorization over critical thinking and the capacity to solve
issues creatively and rationally. Yet, more research is needed to thoroughly understand the
delicate relationship between madrasas and radicalization. Comparative research should be
carried out to explore the differences between madrasas and secular schools regarding the subject
content presented, instructional technique, and ideology reinforced. This kind of study might
offer crucial insights into the function of madrasas in the radicalization process and provide
direction for confronting extremist ideologies.

**Social Identity Theory: Concepts and Definitions**

According to social identity theory, individuals self-categorize to distinguish themselves
from others. Within the identity of someone socially, One's feeling of belonging to a particular
social group, defined as "the subjective feeling of acceptance and inclusion with a group of
people" hence becomes more fixed via self-categorization or identification.\textsuperscript{38} As a result of
differentiation, two groups emerge: the in-group and the out-group. Members of the in-group
share the same values, attitudes, and beliefs as their fellow group members, while those of the

\textsuperscript{37} Lukens-Bull, Ronald, and Mark Woodward, eds. Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives. Springer,
2021: 1181.

225.
In-group members maintain cohesion by socially excluding outsiders and solidifying such exclusion via bigotry, discrimination, and even violence. Social identity theory demonstrates that, despite the complexities of individual identities, group members tend to downplay violent practices that do not conform to the broader group while highlighting those that do, such as race or religion. They tend to downplay violent practices due to the “black sheep effect” which influences deviation from in-group settings and pivots them towards the “out-group”.

Social Identity Theory and the Madrassa

Recent research has provided a new understanding of social identity theory's role in attracting students to madrassas. Delavande and Zafar (2015) discuss Pakistani madrassas, arguing that, contrary to popular belief, these institutions do not foster an in-group and out-group attitude, or create circumstances that may lead to terrorism. However, the study is limited since all four of the examined madrassas allowed students of varying levels of religiosity and socioeconomic status to enroll. This is significant because the authors did not focus on one distinct level of religiosity to study and illustrate the causes of extremist thought development. The research also does not examine whether madrassas use social identity theory concepts, like in-group identification and belonging, to sway young Muslims in their favor. Moreover, the research conducted by Delavande and Zafar (2015) does not have any disparities with regard to educational attainment, as all proponents of the study had received their undergraduate degree.

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40 Ibid.
and they were only questioned about their attitudes towards social issues, not what they identify as on the religiosity index.

Students feel inclined toward extremism, Islamic fundamentalism, and violence when they feel the outside world threatens their identity. However, social exclusion and isolation significantly contribute to the risk of violent behavior. Masood and Khan (2018) use social identity theory to demonstrate that madrassas across Pakistan foster a robust religious association in their pupils, which families prefer to the secular education offered by other schools. Yet, Masood and Khan refrain from concluding that madrassa education increases the likelihood of domestic or international terrorism, instead stressing that the harsh treatment experienced by pupils may lead to marginalization and alienation without violence. Borchgrevink (2010) arrives at a similar conclusion, rejecting the argument of madrassas as hubs of terrorist activity and instead noting that marginalization and isolation might enhance the possibility of terrorism.

**Social Identity Theory Compared to Others**

Several competing theories attempt to explain the connection between madrasas and radicalization. Although they shed light on the nature of this connection, social identity theory is often regarded as the most fruitful. Political-economic theory, religious-ideology theory, and the theory of social networks are some of the proposed explanations that account for the connection between madrasas and radicalization. Poverty, socioeconomic inequality, and political variables are potential causes of radicalization and extremism in political-economic theory. On the other

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44 Ibid.
hand, religious-Ideology theory emphasizes how religious ideology may influence people's worldviews and lead to radicalization and extremism. Individuals' social groups and the impact of their peers are examined in social identity theory as possible factors in the emergence of radicalization and extremism.

Social identity theory provides a more nuanced explanation of this complex topic by concentrating on the function of identity and elements leading to the development of extremism and radicalization. Although religious identity theory and political economic theory are helpful, social identity theory is preferable because of its holistic approach and emphasis on identity in understanding the connection between madrasas and radicalization. By taking into account the impact of identity, socioeconomic status, and the influence of peers, social identity theory offers a more comprehensive interpretation of the aforementioned connection. Furthermore, it provides a more in-depth understanding of the possibility for religious education to foster extremist identities by emphasizing the importance of identity in molding people's ideas and values. In addition, social identity theory emphasizes the need to consider elements leading to the feeling of a threatened, or marginalized, religious identity. In a nutshell, this theory is crucial in protecting people from being radicalized. While other theories shed light on the connection between madrasas and radicalization, such as integrated threat theory which posits that in-group members affect out-group members, social identity theory is the most causal explanation which illustrates how extremism functions and subsequently radicalization follows. Because of this,

48 Ibid.
Social identity theory offers a better foundation for understanding this connection and for creating counter-radicalization strategies compared to Uncertainty-identity theory. This theory is mentioned by the scholars Trip et al. (2019) which conversely argue that an individual's self-certainty skepticism leads to higher possibility of extremist ideological thoughts turning into violent action. However, this theory is flawed due to the fact it contains individualistic skepticism that varies on a case by case basis. Therefore, social identity theory is more practical for this study, and emphasizes social mechanisms towards radicalization.

**Madrasa Recruitment and Education**

Several factors contribute to a family's decision to send their child to a madrassa, including the student's interest in and perceived need for a religious education, the family's financial situation, the student's professional goals, and the quality of available alternatives. Students in madrassas are typically pious, uneducated in Islamic doctrine, economically disadvantaged, and frequently hail from rural regions. Cognizant of these factors, madrassa leaders—some of whom have links to radical organizations—try to appeal to their followers by highlighting the madrassa's emphasis on community and belonging. Approximately Fifteen percent of madrassas are connected with extremist groups within Pakistan who utilize educational settings to achieve their goals. These classes are effective in bringing people together and helping them form an Islamic-focused identity. Still, in the wrong hands, madrassas may influence young people to support extremist ideologies. Madrassa leaders are given a disproportionate amount of sway over their pupils since

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their curriculums eliminate the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Students who leave the madrassa having only been exposed to one “proper” perspective may be more prone to the indoctrination that underpins violent extremism.

The madrassas’ religious education influences identity and belonging. Students are at a higher risk for terrorist activities once they graduate and struggle to find a place in the larger community since the madrassa curricula often overlook secular training, disregarding math, science, and literature. Teaching religion exclusively limits students to a single career route, which may not be the one they choose to pursue. In other words, students educated in madrassas will face significant obstacles to their academic or professional development since the curriculum often found in madrassas is incompatible with success outside the religious domain. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the madrassa students feel inclined to resort to religious education partly because of their obstacles within society which results in turning inwards into the religious community. It produces a dedicated religious community whose members may feel inclined toward violence to disseminate their views, or protect them against those they perceive as dangerous. Sometimes the violence is aimed at foreign countries, and other times it is intended at national targets attempting to modernize, or Westernize, to establish a new secular hierarchy. Nonetheless, the identity and feeling of belonging that madrassas develop in their pupils may fuel violence. That is especially true when students are not exposed to variety in thinking, belief, and opinion.

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57 Ibid.
While attending a madrassa may significantly impact a person's sense of identity and community, it does not guarantee that they will become violent as adults. Social identity theory can show how influential the madrassa is among pupils, why so many people are drawn to it, and how its leaders attract new members. The theoretical importance of social identity theory will be highlighted, and the current gap in the literature on the issue will be addressed by the relevant implications and conclusions drawn from the study.

Role of Women in Radicalization

The multifaceted issue of female radicalization has received little attention or inquiry despite its widespread importance. Historically, Women have had a modest role in extremist organizations. Still, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of women participating in extremist organizations, particularly those affiliated with Islamic extremist groups. This trend has raised concerns about the role of women in radicalizing others and disseminating extremist ideologies. The changing nature of extremist groups may explain the increased number of radicalized women. In contrast to their more conventional predecessors, many modern extremist groups, particularly those associated with Islamic extremism, operate in a decentralized manner. That suggests multitasking is frequent, and fewer workers are allocated specialized jobs inside the group. Fundraising, recruiting, and even offensive operations are often seen as male realms; however, women may be more valued for other tasks in this situation.

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59 Hafez, Mohammed M. "The Radicalization of Muslim Women: A Comparison of ISIS and Al-Qaida." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 42, no. 6 (2019): 528
60 Mahmood, Saba. "Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War of Terror." In Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium (2013), edited by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, 199
The use of social media and other digital technologies to spread extremist views has also contributed to women's radicalization. Women, as primary caregivers and homemakers in Islamic circles, are specially positioned to apply radical ideology via these channels. Women may also manage online forums and chat rooms for recruitment and radicalization. Likewise, women themselves may be more prone to radicalization than men in specific situations. For example, women who have faced prejudice or persecution may be more amenable to the radical appeal of organizations such as ISIS, because they promise personal progress and communal integration. Also, female victims of sexual or domestic abuse may also be more vulnerable to radicalization. This is the case because due to being victims of psychological trauma from others, this makes women more susceptible to radicalization by terrorist groups as was the case with Shamima Begum from the United Kingdom who resorted to joining ISIS. This indicates how easily women can be recruited for terrorist organizations. According to Sjoberg (2009), the terrorist organizations act as a benefactor assisting women to flee from abusive household environments and conduct suicide bombings. This indicates women are recruited through a different method than men.

Women's involvement in radicalization is still poorly understood due to a severe lack of empirical research. Rather than evidence, anecdotes and theoretical frameworks are often used to support claims about women's involvement in extremism by stating that terrorists are the “Liberators” of women from domestic violence. As a result, it is critical to recognize that

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62 Mahmood, Saba. “Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War of Terror.” In Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium (2013), edited by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, 200
64 Ibid.
women's membership in terrorist groups varies substantially from one case to the next. Some women may play vital roles in radicalization, while others may be more passive or give support.\(^6\) Women's membership in extremist groups seems to be increasing, although the causes for this increase, as well as the exact nature of their participation, are unknown.\(^6\) Lastly, women's involvement in radicalization is an issue that requires additional inquiry if we are to further our understanding of this phenomenon and develop measures that successfully counteract it.

**Summary of Literature Review and Research Gap**

This research looks at multiple studies that address the issue of madrassa radicalization from various angles. Researchers have underlined the need to understand the historical and cultural backgrounds of madrassas in different regions of the world and the political and economic factors that have contributed to their development. Many studies, for example, have highlighted Saudi Arabia's emergence as a worldwide hub for Islamic education and its promotion of the Wahhabi worldview, which has been linked to terrorism.\(^6\) One of the most pressing debates in academic literature is whether madrassas are inherently radical institutions, or if they are qualified to promote moderate interpretations of Islam. Some scholars claim that madrassas are inherently conservationist and resistant to change due to their traditional subject matter, teaching methods, and narrow and dogmatic portrayal of Islam, which spur radicalization.\(^6\) Others claim

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\(^6\) Hafez, Mohammed M. "The Radicalization of Muslim Women: A Comparison of ISIS and Al-Qaida." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 42, no. 6 (2019): 530


\(^6\) Hafez, Mohammed M. "The Radicalization of Muslim Women: A Comparison of ISIS and Al-Qaida." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 42, no. 6 (2019): 530

\(^6\) Mahmood, Saba. "Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War of Terror." In Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium (2013), edited by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, 200

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that madrassas should be modified to provide a more balanced and ethical education that promotes critical thinking and tolerance.

As mentioned before, an underlying subject addressed in the existing literature is the role of women in madrasas and the radicalization process. Even though madrassas are predominantly male organizations, women are equally impacted by extremist ideology and may play a role in radicalization via their positions as mothers, teachers, and community leaders. Many studies have negatively highlighted empowering women and promoting gender equality as an epoch-making strategy for countering extremism and maintaining societal cohesion. Despite published literature on the issue, there are many gaps in our understanding of the inverse relationship between madrassas and extremism. Madrassas do not invariably render extremism; there is a lack of empirical evidence linking madrassas to violent organizations or extremism. Studies have attempted to establish a correlation between attending madrassas and support for extremist groups through a behavioral analysis; however, more detailed exploration is needed to confirm a causal association.

Another gap in the literature review is the lack of studies comparing and contrasting the many types of madrassas that can be found worldwide, and the effect these institutions have on radicalization. Even though the bulk of the research has focused on madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan, there is a need to analyze the numerous Islamic educational systems found in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Another gap within the literature includes the

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69 Mahmood, Saba. “Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War of Terror.” In Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium (2013), edited by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics, 199.


necessity for greater exploration of the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at reducing extremism in madrassas. Although several legislative measures within both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are programs that have attempted to promote a more mainstream interpretation of Wahhabism and combating radicalization in madrassas, more research to analyze the impact of these efforts is needed.

Given such shortcomings, this study adds to the existing body of research on madrassas and radicalization by comprehensively assessing previous research and emphasizing crucial areas requiring further investigation. The inquiry wishes to specifically focus on the following research questions: What are the historical and cultural settings in which madrassas were created worldwide, and how have political and economic factors led to their spread and influence? What evidence exists linking madrassas to extreme ideologies and terrorist organizations, and how do educational settings prove radicalization exists? What are the numerous types of madrassas found across the world, and how do they vary in the material they teach, the tactics employed to teach it, and the philosophies they espouse? What policy interventions and programs have been implemented to prevent extremism at madrassas, and are they effective? By addressing these topics, the research hopes to give a more nuanced and thorough analysis of the complicated link between madrassas and extremism. Moreover, by distinguishing the underlying factors, the study hopes to develop ways to foster a more inclusive and secular based type of Islamic education.

III. Methodology

Research design

Thesis: Madrasas and radicalization have a complicated and multifaceted interaction that cannot be simplified to a causal relationship. While specific madrasas may promote radicalization, this
is only one of many variables towards extremism, and it is critical to avoid generalizations and caricatures. Thus, madrasa radicalization occurs due to social identity reasons which inhibit the attractiveness of extremism and enhance the identity of madrassa students.

**Objectives:**

1. To understand how radical Islamic schools shape their pupils' personalities and train them to be terrorists
2. To establish whether there are any links between madrasas and terrorist organizations
3. To understand how Wahhabism has contributed to the emergence of global terrorism

The following questions will guide the review:

1. How do radical Islamic schools shape their pupils' personalities and train them to be terrorists?
2. Are there any links between madrasas and terrorist organizations?
3. How has Wahhabism contributed to the emergence of global terrorism?

**Data collection methods**

To gather secondary sources, I will review several databases, including JSTOR and ERIC, which both offer a collection of academic and non-scholarly materials that explain the relevant research issues. Non-scholarly materials relevant to this research include reports from international organizations concerning madrassas, policy briefs, white papers, government documents, and more. I additionally utilized Google and Google Scholar to search for more credible sources, both academic and otherwise, to supplement those found in the databases. To give a complete analysis of the link between madrasas and radicalization, the literature evaluation was
supplemented by examining key historical and policy documents and information sources, including government reports, policy documents, and news articles.

**Data Analysis**: A qualitative content analysis technique was used to assess the data gathered from the literature research and historical and policy document study. This method entailed coding the data to identify the essential themes and debates emerging from relevant sources, and integrating these themes and ideas to fully understand the connection between madrasas and radicalization.

**Organization**

I organized the content topically, including, but not limited to, pieces describing the madrassa's allure, its proclivity for radicalizing pupils, and the potential consequences of radicalization. Social identity theory will be interwoven throughout these parts, which will assist in explaining some of the concepts, grounding them in a practical approach, and enhancing the thesis's overall argument. Adopting this technique provided insight into how the madrassa fosters student camaraderie and belonging, and how it can lead to potential terrorism.
IV. Results and Analysis

Quantitative Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Madrasa-related variables</th>
<th>Proportion of madrasas in Pakistan (%)</th>
<th>Proportion of madrasas in Bangladesh (%)</th>
<th>Proportion of madrasas in India (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of madrasas</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of madrasas offering modern subjects</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of madrasas with links to political groups</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of madrasas promoting sectarianism</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of madrasas with reported extremist activities</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Madrassas in South Asia

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As per Malik’s and Thielmann’s research, there are significant differences in the number of madrasas between countries. These religious institutions have varying degrees of involvement with violent extremist activities. More Pakistani madrasas teach secular topics compared to any other country; however, this country also has an immense number of institutions promoting extremist activity. The writers suggest that Pakistani officials actively promote contemporary education within these buildings to undermine fanaticism, but too many still follow radical ideologies regardless. The authors presume that allowing secular education to take place in madrassas within Pakistan will result in less extremist views. In contrast, Bangladesh houses the most considerable madrassas affiliated with political organizations engaged in religious studies - this is due to the fact that Bangladesh houses the most privately funded madrassas. For instance, approximately 6,500 Quomi madrassas educate 1.5 million madrasa students that are privately funded. Ever since Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh has struggled to handle madrassa supervision or promote sectarian education within their schools.

On the other hand, Indian madrasas teaching denominationalism outnumbers those in other countries. The authors speculate that this is attributable to India’s history of sectarian infringements as well as the country's large Shia minority. Also, India has a history of sectarian warfare. Indian Madrasas tend to place an emphasis on the distinctions differentiating Islamic sects, exacerbating sectarianism. According to the findings of the research, madrasas that have

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been linked to the state’s government place a significant emphasis on the precept of religious
texts, while minimizing contemporary topics. 76 Malik and Thielmann attributed this to the fact
that extremist organizations are attempting to establish a "parallel" training system that places an
emphasis on their ideology and opposes modernity. In addition, political participation is often
practiced at madrasas that are connected to various political organizations. The authors speculate
that this may be the case owing to the fact that political parties use madrasas as a substance of
energizing their support base and diffusing their ideas. As a result, extremist groups are
connected to political organizations because they will use madrassas' curriculum to spread their
extremist motives. This happens through the politically aligned Ulema of the schools as a
precedent to receive funding from the political organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>Lower education levels associated with higher support for militancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Government school, religious school, private school</td>
<td>Religious schools associated with higher support for militancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Government curriculum, religious curriculum</td>
<td>Religious curriculum associated with higher support for militancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of education</td>
<td>Test scores</td>
<td>Lower quality of education associated with higher support for militancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to violence</td>
<td>Experience with violence or conflict</td>
<td>Exposure to violence associated with higher support for militancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76 Ibid 1
Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja researched whether a correlation exists between different educational settings and extremism in Pakistan. They discovered that individuals with lower education levels are more likely to hold extremist views. Yet, the authors also indicated that persons who have gotten education from both a madrasa and a secular institution are more likely to have extremist beliefs than individuals who have only obtained an education from a secular institution. The type of education was also shown to have a significant effect, according to the findings of the research, in the formation of attitudes toward extremism. According to the graph above, poor quality education through test scores is correlated with extremism beliefs within the students of the madrassas. However, the scholars found that education received in a madrassa, which typically coincides with religious education, does increase the likelihood of extremism in comparison to other forms of education. Also, there is a difference in the state sponsored institution or exclusively religious curriculum of the madrassas. For example, religious curriculum which is not supervised by the state curriculum leads to higher radicalization. According to the authors' hypotheses, elevating the standard of education in Pakistan, especially with regard to non-religious topics, might be a beneficial strategy for fighting extremism.
According to the conclusions of this research, madrasas in Pakistan place a significant focus on religious education and knowledge; while students receive minimal teaching concerning contemporary topics such as sectarian ideas regarding social studies, mathematics, and science. This trend is concerning given how essential these subjects are for navigating career paths after students leave the madrasa. Additionally, the majority of madrasa professors indicated high levels of permissiveness towards other faiths, in contrast to their less-tolerant pupils. Although children are taught a constrained worldview, instructors have more open-minded attitudes. In addition, the research could not uncover any definitive connection between education in madrasas and radicalization. This challenges the argument that madrasas are hubs for

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81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.
extremism and terrorism. Nevertheless, this research concentrated only on one location in Pakistan, and its findings may not be applicable to madrasas located in other areas.

**Findings and Analysis**

**How do radical Islamic schools build their students' characters and prepare them as prospective terrorists?**

The madrassa curriculum's treatment of Islam has contributed to the proliferation of terrorist acts rooted in the present social and political climate. The growth of Islamic education has proved to be impactful towards the spread of terrorism through some contexts, which proves to be a challenge to madrassa holding states. If Islamic teachings are restricted in education systems, religion risks losing the spiritual and moral significance that has shaped Muslim countries for millennia. If radicals are given free institutional rein over religious teachings, they might misappropriate it for their ideological goals. Presently, educators have leaned one way or the other to handle the problem without thoroughly analyzing the implications of each possible choice. To define appropriate and justifiable courses of action in Muslim education, it is necessary to conduct new assessments on the educational curriculums of madrassas and the religious practices taught within madrassas. This inquiry’s intricacy necessitates thorough analysis and critique of the challenges posed by educational systems in Muslim countries.

**Are there ties between madrasas and terrorist groups?**

The education that is provided in madrassas ranges from political Islam that is moderate or

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non-pragmatic to militant extremist doctrines along with military instruction. Madrassas that teach students a particular understanding of Islam while also encouraging identity formulation. Youth who are discontent or feel misdirected may gravitate towards these institutions to find answers in Islamic doctrines. Due to the lack of supervision on the Ulema within madrassas, this decreased state supervision leads to the prominent radicalization of the students. Authors have concluded that various radical terrorist organizations in Pakistan attempt to annex Jammu and Kashmir by using madrasas as a vehicle for their activities. These extremist-organized religious schools are a breeding ground for a new generation of militants, who learn how to build explosive devices and exploit and use the doctrine of the Islamic State of Pakistan.

**What role does Wahhabism play in the rise of global terrorism?**

When evaluating any potential linkages to violence, it is necessary to consider the development of Wahhabism. Wahhabism allied with a military power that aimed to subjugate the Arabian Peninsula while inter-tribal violence was rampant in the region. According to Delong Bas, Wahhabism is not expansionist due to the fact it has become a deterrence method. Every time, revolutionary factors from outside the Wahhabism ideology, tribal justice, and Mahdi theology contributed to the violence. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, discussion over the religious and political beliefs of Islam have soured as journalistic representations have aggressively exaggerated the religion’s mainstream ideologies. Euphemisms, which spread misinformation, have also revealed ideological animosity and deprive mutual understandings of...

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86Ibid.
issues. The argument of a "clash of civilizations" is what motivates Muslim and non-Muslim extremists. Before and after 9/11, portrayals of Wahhabi Islam were dominated by a mindset promoting a collision of civilizations, fostering prejudice and fear. However, Within Indonesia, the spread of Salafi madrasas which illustrates Saudi soft power has resulted in “transnational Islam” with members of the Indonesian madrassas volunteering to fight in Afghanistan after undergoing training within Saudi Arabia. This is a result of over 40,000 madrasas being funded by Saudi Salafi sources in order to spread the Salafi ideology abroad. It should be noted that Salafism is a form of neo-Wahhabism. Also, another fundamental example of how Wahhabism spreads terrorism is that approximately 244 million $ has been spent by the Saudi government to construct 40 mosques and 4 madrassas within the Kashmir region. It should be noted these funds were laundered by Islamic extremists to conduct terrorist recruitment within western nations for fighting within ISIS and Al Qaeda.

This study's results have several consequences for our knowledge of the link between madrassas and radicalization. The research first emphasizes the relationship's social, economic, and political intricacy. A simplified perception of madrassas as inherently radical institutions fails to capture the nuance of this issue. Data shows that madrassas are not inevitably associated with radicalism, and that Islamic education may help shape people's ideas and values. That emphasizes the

94 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
significance of alternative religious education that promotes peace, tolerance, and understanding, which can oppose extremism.

Thirdly, the research suggests that poverty and socioeconomic disparity might lead to radicalization and extremism, and addressing these concerns is critical in preventing radicalization. Finally, the results imply that future research should more thoroughly link madrassas and radicalization, and investigate the possibility of other forms of religious instruction to prevent extremism. That will aid in formulating policies and procedures to promote peace and security while combating extremism. They have significant consequences for our knowledge of the problem and counterterrorism.

**Ethical Statement**

Extremism within Islam poses a significant concern for international security. To address this issue, we must exercise caution not to fuel the concept of religious rivalry or create a terrible policy dilemma. As mentioned before, there are various factors which contribute to the rise of extremism within a madrassa. Therefore, transnational cooperation between sectors needs to occur so that policy practices between the madrassa inhabiting states could improve. Although some individuals who participate within madrassas become extremists, this should not be a generalization. The process of extremism within the madrassa students is systematically complex. Focusing on the specific mechanisms relevant to emerging extremist environments is necessary for defining the roots, moral underpinnings, and appeals of radicalism. From this study, we have attempted to solve the puzzle of madrassa radicalism and education.
V. Conclusion

A. Conclusion of the research

Madrassas play a crucial role in the spiritual and social development of some Muslims. Such institutions can provide individuals with the education necessary to practice and disseminate Islamic principles. The education provided by madrasas has been, and continues to be, crucial for millions of underprivileged people across the globe; the development of extremist teachings in these institutions is relatively recent. When discussing this topic, however, it is essential to distinguish between a madrassa with radical leanings and others since some madrassas are pacifist in their approach and are an instrument for political activism. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is undeniable that specific madrasas spread militancy. Nonetheless, the origins of these militarized madrasas can be traced back to the 1980s, when the United States and its allies supported Afghanistan in its struggle against the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the Taliban, and other extremist organizations, initially were radicalized in military camps posing as madrassas in the 1980s as part of the original Afghan jihad movement. The governments, notably Pakistan’s, have taken significant measures after 9/11 and the American invasion of Afghanistan to reform these militant madrasas including the establishment of a government entity responsible for altering the Ulema imposed curriculum. However, these madrasas are yet to be either shut down or brought within comprehensive state

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supervision.\textsuperscript{101} State control of these institutions has struggled due to foreign participation in sponsoring madrasas and mosques under the guise of zakat contributions. As a result, in 2019 Pakistan called for strict financial supervision of madrassas and their zakat contributions.\textsuperscript{102} The broader context calls on madrasas to take up reform, including updating their pedagogical practices. While foreign involvement may be tempting, governments should encourage madrasas to implement internal restructurings to lessen skepticism from ulema regarding state intentions.\textsuperscript{103} Madrassa leaders have perceived governmental supervision efforts as intrusions into their customary areas and hegemonic influence over Islamic education ever since the Pakistan madrassa ordinance was legislated in 2001 to restructure their curriculum.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig2.png}
\caption{A Timeline of Madressah Reform Efforts in Pakistan Source: Moeed Yusuf\textsuperscript{105}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{103} Bar, Shmuel. The religious sources of Islamic terrorism. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008. P 16
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
B. Implications for future research

This study's results have significant implications for future research on the link between madrassas and extremism. First and foremost, this research emphasizes the need to better understand the complicated connection between religious education and extremism. That involves investigating the function of madrassas in influencing religious ideas and values, and taking into account the larger social, economic, and political environment within which these institutions operate.

Future studies can concentrate on gaining a more nuanced knowledge of the elements leading to radicalization, such as the impact of socioeconomic situations, political environments, and cultural backgrounds. For example, research might examine the link between poverty and extremism and whether socioeconomic issues impact a person's vulnerability to radicalization. Also, studies could examine how regional differences in madrassas may lead to radical ideologies while others do not. For example, madrassas near the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Creating alternative religious education that promotes peace, tolerance, and understanding is another essential subject for future study. Studies should examine how madrassas can provide religious education stressing Islam’s peaceful and tolerant components to combat terrorism.106 Furthermore, studies can look at the possibility for madrassas to act as venues for encouraging discussion and cooperation across religious groups and building mutual understanding among various traditions.

C. Recommendations for policy and practice

First, governments must recognize the complicated link between madrassas and radicalization and avoid oversimplifying the situation. Instead of focusing on madrassas as a source of extremism, policy should address the underlying social, economic, and political problems that lead to radicalization.

Second, governments should consider investing in religious education to promote peace, tolerance, and understanding. Supporting madrassas that provide an alternate type of religious education and funding initiatives that encourage interfaith conversation and cooperation are two examples.\(^\text{107}\) For instance, according to Ul Haq (2021), “Islamic law for minorities” could be implemented in madrassas so that cross-sectoral religious dialogue could take place within Pakistan\(^\text{108}\). In order to achieve this, further Ulema cooperation must occur and this could be achieved through assuring the Ulema that their pedagogical monopoly will not be altered.

Third, authorities may address social disparities through funding social funding opportunities to improve the financial status of individuals living in poverty. Due to the fact many families are facing poverty, the children are involuntarily enrolled in madrassas as is the case in India.\(^\text{109}\) This is the case in neighboring countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, so a trilateral partnership eradicating poverty would be fruitful.

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Finally, authorities should consider investing in research and assessment to better understand the link between madrassas radicalization and guide anti-extremism policies initiatives. This could be accomplished through intergovernmental research initiatives, as was seen in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{110}

For policymakers to better combat the problem of radicalization, they must interact closely with local groups, particularly religious leaders and educators, to understand the cultural environment. Doing so has enabled policymakers to develop more effective policies that are better suited to meet the community's requirements. \textsuperscript{111}To facilitate efficient communication and collaboration, winning the local communities' confidence and cultivating solid connections with them is necessary through cooperation with the Ulema and the political organizations\textsuperscript{112} The winning of confidence can occur by assuring madrassa Ulema that secularization of madrassas is not the ultimate goal of the government, but enhancing intergovernmental cooperation is beneficial to both parties. \textsuperscript{113}Because women and children often suffer the most from the effects of extremism, policymakers should acknowledge the significance of including women and children in these efforts.

Political grievances, such as discrimination, marginalization, and oppression, cause many incidents of radicalization. It is possible to lessen the attraction of extremist ideas by addressing these concerns, which may be accomplished via political reform and inclusive governance.\textsuperscript{114}The promotion of human rights, justice, and equality needs to be prioritized by policymakers to


\textsuperscript{111} Gómez, Ángel, Mercedes Martínez, Francois Alexi Martel, Lucia López-Rodríguez, Alexandra Vázquez, Juana Chinchilla, Borja Paredes, Mal Hettiarachchi, Nafees Hamid, and William B. Swann. "Why do people enter and embrace violent groups?" \textit{Frontiers in psychology} 11 (2021): 630


resolve political complaints. This may be accomplished via the implementation of inclusive governance practices, the provision of equitable opportunities for everyone, and the encouragement of civic participation. In addition, those responsible for making policy have a responsibility to ensure that the policies and practices of the government do not contribute in any way to discrimination, oppression, or marginalization. There are barriers to this, however, such as how certain government officials are uncooperative or unwilling to have their voices heard out against madrassa education due to fear of sectarian conflict. Also, according to Hira et al. (2020), there exists a giant trust deficit between the madrassa Ulema and the government, specifically within Pakistan. This has caused there to be a decrease in cooperation between the government and Ulema. Moreover, according to the scholars Hira et al. (2020), another barrier existing within Pakistan is the “lack of political will and government resources”. This all stems from Pakistan viewing the madrassa as an complex issue related to national security and the Ulema not willing to lose their pedagogical monopoly over madrassa institutions.

The dissemination of extremist propaganda and disinformation is one of the primary factors contributing to radicalization. Politicians have a responsibility to combat the propaganda of extremist groups by discrediting false narratives and promoting facts. Education, media campaigns, and other types of public outreach are all viable options for accomplishing this goal. The production of counter-narratives that challenge radical ideologies, myths, and conspiracy theories should be prioritized by policymakers in terms of financial investment. Ensuring these

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117 Ibid.
alternative narratives are believable, persuasive, and respectful of cultural norms is essential. However, there is a lack of achievement of this solution due to a lack of coordination between the policymakers and Ulema in distributing these narratives without intruding in madrassa affairs. Due to madrassa recruiters relying on propaganda narratives to enhance their radicalization, the scholars Hafez and Mullins (2017) posit that counter extremism narratives promote integration and decrease the possibility of terrorist attacks. This is due to ideological “narratives” within Pakistan being a pivotal role towards Islamic radicalization. This indicates an inverse relationship between narrative content and extremism capability.

Upholding human rights and the rule of law is also essential to avoiding radicalization and maintaining peace and security. Legislators and policy advocates have ensured that all laws and regulations adhere to international human rights standards and are implemented equitably and objectively. In addition, those in positions of power are responsible for promoting tolerance for diversity, pluralism, and freedom of religion or belief. Access to justice, accountability, and openness in all activities taken by the government are also critical components of practical policy. Combating extremism and fostering peace and security in communities requires a sophisticated and comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the complicated link between madrassas and radicalization. Policymakers may assist in preventing extremism and develop more understanding and respect among diverse religious groups by addressing the causes that lead to radicalization and encouraging alternative forms of educational facilities such as secular education to improve career prospects.

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D. Madrassa’s Counterterrorism capabilities

Madrassas have existed for centuries and are critical to developing Islamic culture and spreading religious principles. However, their ties to violent, extremist groups has raised debate regarding the effectiveness of madrasas in averting radicalization. One technique madrasas might employ to prevent extremism is to provide a more nuanced and tolerant view of Islam. As a result, madrasas must argue for a moderate understanding of Islam that does not promote extreme viewpoints. To that aim, schools must be staffed with educated persons proficient in moderate Islamic tradition and current culture which is not presupposed to extremist beliefs and promote diversity of thought\(^ {123}\). These instructors are uniquely positioned to educate their students with a well-rounded Islamic education emphasizing the importance of cohabitation, tolerance, and peace. Also, they conduct their education in Islamic jurisprudence practices which focuses on the practical side of Islam instead of technical, as do the Ulema.

Another way madrasas might combat radicalization is by developing mutual tolerance and understanding among people of various religions. Madrasas should expose their students to subjects other than Islam and Islamic culture.\(^ {124}\) That can promote a more welcoming attitude toward persons of other faiths. Moreover, madrasas might invite religious leaders from other religions to speak to their student bodies to encourage interfaith understanding and dialogue as was done in Pakistan.\(^ {125}\) Due to the social identity theory of leadership, the students will follow the instructions of a de facto leader, in this case the Ulema seeking interfaith harmony practices.


In this regard, madrassas may be a vehicle for increasing civic awareness and involvement among their students. As a result, madrassas must teach their students the importance of critical thinking and their rights as global citizens alongside religious education. Consequently, the attraction of radical ideologies advocating violent opposition to the government and society may decrease. Madrasas should prioritize civic education to prevent the next generation of Muslims from becoming apathetic and disillusioned. Due to solely focusing on religious education, this has hindered their ability to think critically and understand real worldviews. Only from educational reformation has secular education occurred and religious tolerance could be achieved between the students.

Nevertheless, madrasas can contribute to economic progress and social well-being. That means that, besides religious teaching, madrasas should provide opportunities for students to obtain marketable skills. This has already been implemented in Pakistan but educational reforms must accelerate. This can potentially reduce the appeal of radical ideologies, which often target economically and politically disadvantaged young people. With the help of madrasas prioritizing economic prosperity and social welfare, future generations of Muslims may enjoy self-sufficiency. As a consequence, madrassas are crucial in averting further radicalization. They may do this through promoting civil debate among followers of other religions, encouraging participation in government, creating economic progress, and improving social

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
circumstances.\textsuperscript{133} These methods may strengthen mainstream Islam while weakening support for extreme beliefs. They may also pave the path for the next generation of Muslims to become engaged and empowered citizens who advocate for tolerance, harmony, and peace.\textsuperscript{134}

**E. Non-Governmental Organizations Fighting Against Radicalism**

1. The United Nations Office to Combat Terrorism (UNOCT) is the organization's main office for dealing with worldwide terrorism. UNOCT's objective includes fostering international collaboration and coordination among Member States and regional and international organizations to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism.\textsuperscript{135} The United Nations Office for Counterterrorism (UNOCT) also researches, collects, and disseminates effective measures and lessons learned.\textsuperscript{136}

2. Second, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is an international conference of 30 countries and the European Union that urges member countries to collaborate in the fight against terrorism. The GCTF intends to strengthen national, regional, and global efforts to combat terrorism by showcasing best practices, building capacity, and enhancing cooperation among states, organizations, and experts.\textsuperscript{137} The GCTF maintains several working groups to prevent violent extremism.

3. The International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) is a non-governmental organization committed to studying and combating worldwide terrorism. It intends to contribute to developing worldwide policies and methods to fight terrorism and violent extremism via

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
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research, assessment, and teaching.138 When it comes to preventing and countering terrorism, the ICCT is also available to help governments and other organizations by providing technical assistance.

4. Fourth, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) is “a public-private partnership that aids in funding local initiatives to oppose and prevent violent extremism programs.”139 It is financed by the aim to prevent and combat violent extremism in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia by strengthening community resilience, building social cohesion, and empowering civil society.

5. Hedayah is an international institution in Abu Dhabi devoted to preventing and fighting violent extremism. It was established in 2012 as the world's first international body whose aim is to prevent and reverse the development of violent extremism.140 Hedayah spends extensively researching, training, and capacity building to assist Member States in developing and implementing effective strategies to prevent and combat violent extremism.

6. The Strong Cities Network (SCN) is a global collaboration of local governments dedicated to preventing and responding to violent extremism. It encourages Member States to share best practices and lessons gained and facilitate city cooperation in

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developing and implementing effective measures to prevent and combat violent extremism.\textsuperscript{141}

Each of these organizations is critical in combating radicalization and developing violent extremism. These organizations strengthen community and individual resilience in the face of radicalization by encouraging cooperation, sharing best practices, and providing technical assistance. Also, they help to propagate a comprehensive and coordinated response to this threat, involving governments, civil society, and the private sector.

**F. Summary of the research: Madrassas Significance in International Relations**

Thus, what has been illustrated is that the social identity framework is essential in explaining the radicalization process in madrasas. When an individual feels marginalized, they feel inclined to get closer to a social group to disperse their emotions and feel a sense of community. In the madrassa context, the theory highlights that students are at most significant risk of being radicalized since they are immersed in an environment that promotes a strong sense of group identity hinged on religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{142} Therefore, comprehending the role of social identity in madrassas can enhance plans for countering extremists' recruitment process and promoting more positive forms of identity formation.

One potential recommendation for using the social identity theory in madrasas is to emphasize developing bridges between various social groups. Instead of emphasizing social disparities, religious groups, governments, and all concerned entities should prioritize highlighting shared


values and common goals to oppose extremism. Through the promotion of shared identity and purpose, there are higher chances to mitigate the appeal of extremist ideologies and reduce the likelihood of radicalization. In addition, policymakers should put more effort towards providing avenues for positive identity formation, like community service opportunities and youth groups' participation, to reduce youth membership in extremist organizations.

Thus, this thesis has discussed the social, economic, and cultural reasons that Muslim youth inhibit radicalization through social identity theory, while illustrating the complex link which foments extremism. Also, the distinct barriers to madrassa educational reformation were discussed, with practical solutions to solve them by policymakers. As a result, policymakers must mirror the efforts of Pakistan’s government of intensifying reforming the curriculum of madrassas, and secularizing them through enhanced Ulema cooperation. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan remain as the fulcrum of madrassa activity within the Islamic world and further structural reforms are needed. Therefore, within international relations, NGOs must step up their efforts to combat radicalization within the madrassas through multilateral cooperation and promote social cohesion practices between states to combat the extremist viewpoints. Only then, will radicalization decrease exponentially throughout madrassas regionally and internationally.

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