

Madrasahs in Pakistan: Continuity and Change in State Policy under the Musharraf Regime

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Abstract

The article critically examines the policies implemented by the Pervez Musharraf government toward madrasahs, with a specific focus on their roles in post-9/11 contexts under Musharraf's leadership. The events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally transformed Pakistan's security and political landscape, shifting the status of former mujahideen from allies to adversaries. The study further explores the evolution of US-Pakistan relations and analyzes Musharraf's strategic response to 9/11, particularly his efforts to shield the Pakistani population from the adverse impacts of the War on Terror. The paper assesses the effectiveness of Musharraf's madrasah policies and the extent of his attempts at mainstream integration. In addition, it considers the political dynamics surrounding Nawaz Sharif's dismissal of Chief of Army Staff Jahangir Karamat and the subsequent appointment of Pervez Musharraf as COAS in October 1999. Although Musharraf initially managed the ensuing diplomatic challenges effectively, his efforts ultimately proved unsustainable in the longer term.

Keywords: Pre-9/11, Post-9/11, War on Terror, Madrasah, Islam

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INTRODUCTION

Pervez Musharraf was on an official visit to Sri Lanka when Nawaz Sharif attempted to remove him from power and assigned Zia ud Din Butt as the the new COAS (Nawaz, 2008). When Musharraf was returning from Sri Lanka, his plane was not permitted to land at Karachi airport. Musharraf had given a full account of the hijacked plane in his memoir. He said, “I was unaware of what was going on in his absence? He contacted his loyal Generals, commanded 111 brigades under Mahmud Ahmed, and others went to the Prime Minister's house, where they took control of the PM's house. They took control and did not allow the newly appointed Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Zia ud Din Butt, to take charge at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. The military was also deployed at the airport, and orders were given to the Civil Aviation Authority to land safely at Karachi airport. After this dramatic scene, Musharraf landed safely. After an unsuccessful attempt at failing democracy again, another military General became the ruler of the state. When Musharraf took charge of these views,

“The military has no expectation to remain in control any more than is needed to prepare for a genuinely democratic government to thrive in Pakistan.” He called himself Executive Director rather than the Chief Martial Law Administrator. It looks like he did not want to stay in power for a long time. In his (Pervez Musharraf) interview on TV in 1999, he said: “I will not perpetuate myself” (Worth & Kras, 2007)”.

In the initial stage, Musharraf could not get support from the US. The Clinton administration did not please him with the act. The same response was conveyed from Europe and the whole world -- the act of removing an elected civil government could not be satisfactory.(Nawaz, 2008) Nawaz Sharif faced the case and was found guilty. He was punished with 25 years’ imprisonment, while Musharraf let him fly to Saudi Arabia. Musharraf’s policies toward Madrassas and his role in the administrative bodies of Madrassas. At that time, the military was aware of the response from the world. An officer proclaimed that military officials were aware that the international community no longer considered a coup an acceptable means of government change, according to one coup commander. “We are intensely aware of the way that a military takeover would not be greeted wholeheartedly and could prompt further strategic and financial troubles.” Although Musharraf’s main audience was the domestic structure and rehabilitation of the nation. The military government also targeted the international community. Musharraf, looking into all this, takes calculated steps to legitimate his rule in the country. Zia-ul-Haq followed the Islamization policy to strengthen his power and politics in Pakistan. On the other hand, Musharraf did not want to continue the Islamization policy of Zia, as he commented that it led toward violence and militancy.(Nawaz, 2008) Furthermore, Musharraf, in his speech on television:

“Islam shows resistance, not disdain; widespread fraternity and not ill will; harmony and not brutality; progress, and not fanaticism. I have extraordinary regard for the Ulama [Muslim religious leaders] and anticipate that they should approach and present Islam in its actual light. I encourage them to control components that are abusing religion for personal stakes and carry an awful name to our confidence” (Worth & Kras, 2007).

Pervez Musharraf's Regime

Musharraf changed from Zia ul Haq; he did not follow Islam strictly. Alcohol is forbidden in Islam, but he occasionally drinks. (Worth & Kras, 2007) He put the constitution on hold and suspended the public and commonplace gatherings. The emergency brought the country under military rule. Musharraf changed Nawaz Sharif's Ehtasb Commission to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and he used NAB for selective accountability. He used it for political victimization and targeted the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). In August 2000, Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to life imprisonment for hijacking the plane of the COAS. 'In December 2000, Musharraf agreed to exile the former PM and his family to Saudi Arabia for ten years, and a deal was struck with the Saudi Royal family.' Musharraf legitimized his military predecessor by the Supreme Court under the doctrine of necessity. Although validation required that, within three years, elections be held. It gave the Chief Executive the authority to make necessary constitutional amendments to achieve his declared objectives. The military government further isolated itself from democracy. Pak-US relations were already worried by Pakistani sponsorships to the Taliban government in Afghanistan and military intervention in the Kashmir conflict. The May 1998 nuclear tests had triggered the US sanctions against Pakistan. The coupled further approval on Pakistan under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 boycotts a wide range of US assistance to any country whose head of government is a military upset.

Musharraf wanted to shift the power at the local level by choosing Nazims and Naib Nazims. The role of political parties and bureaucrats was curtailed. Musharraf wanted to build an impression of a corruption-free state. (Musharraf, 2006) He promised to revive the national wealth and morale of the Pakistani people, which would bring a new path for Pakistan. (Musharraf, 2006) The Musharraf government started work on the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance 2001, Madrassa Education Board Ordinance, and the Deni Madaris Ordinance (Voluntary Registration and Regulation-2002), Madrassa Reform Project (MRP). Musharraf held a referendum on 30 April 2000, a controversial referendum that brought unrest to political parties. (Kukreja & Singh, 2005) Musharraf had exiled famous politicians from the country and banned party meetings. He has given his manifesto in seven points, which he would implement after becoming the president of Pakistan. (Musharraf, 2006) No one was in opposition in the referendum, and a signal referendum was held. (Kukreja & Singh, 2005) Political parties did not accept the referendum and Human Rights reported that he had rigged the referendum. Musharraf won the referendum as the Election Commission declared that 97.5% of the votes came in favour of Musharraf. After that, Musharraf took the oath as President of Pakistan and remained in uniform. Musharraf apologized for irregularities at the local level in the referendum.

Furthermore, he introduced the Legal Frame Order (LFO) through which he abrogated the constitution; he modified its provision, as outlined in a document called LFO expanded president powers. (Musharraf, 2006) Musharraf wanted to weaken the province and strengthen center (Philip, 2004) if we look into in response to 9/11 incident occurred in the US which changed the global scenario almost all the world was at the same page. They were ready to fight against the War on Terror. The US president asked Musharraf are you either with us or against us. (Musharraf, 2006) Musharraf joined this war in no time, we were again on the brink of the next war on terror. The role of female students in madrassas was also biggest threat for Pakistan government. Female students' role in spreading militancy and violence in Pakistan. Female student's links with madrassa and the militancy organization in Pakistan raised questions on female student role in

terrorism. To what extent did female students remain away from militant groups and extremism in Pakistan? States' policies to prevent students from missionary organizations that brainwash and use them.

The World Trade Centre Attack (9/11)

Few historical events are responsible for the change in the dynamics of world affairs and, indeed, 9/11 is one of the enormous incidents which brought the world into proxy wars. The repercussions of 11th September 2001 were marked in history as a catastrophic event because it has gone beyond the Western hemisphere. When terrorists hijacked the United States plane and attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The World Trade Center was destroyed while a tiny part of the Pentagon was damaged. But it was estimated as one of the highest humanitarian losses in US history. (Ahmad, 2013) The US was testing hegemony in the world during the 21st century because the USSR was already disintegrated in 1989. So, the world was shocked at that moment. Even the CIA had not prevented that sort of event, but they identified that Al-Qaeda was behind the attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre. CIA suspected Osama bin Laden was involved in the attacks. The headquarters of Al-Qaeda existed in Afghanistan. Being neighboring to Afghanistan, the world was looking forward to Pakistan. Additionally, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia were the only countries to recognize the Taliban government in Afghanistan. In this way, at first, such conditions were not moving in the courtesy of Pakistan.

Musharraf, on September 12, goes to a high-level gathering with foreign policymakers to talk about the emergency and its suggestions on Pakistan. Up to that point, there had been no immediate contact and correspondence between the legislatures of Pakistan and the United States. (Pande, 2011) At first, it was accepted that significant forces could stretch out the company to the US to kill infamous fear mongers. Additionally, it is obviously evident that the Security Council would be more thoughtful of the US choice. Further, it was assessed that Arab Countries and Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan would likely consent to permit US troops to counter terrorists from airbases. Indeed, even bits of gossip were spread that Pakistan may be proclaimed as a 'fear-monger state' (Sattar, 2010).

Hence, they finally came up with a few components of a plan: (a) Pakistan should join the worldwide agreement, and (b) it couldn't and ought not to restrict US assaults on targets in Afghanistan. (Sattar, 2010) On the other hand, the Security Council adopted a resolution on 12th September in which they condemned the attack. Canada, the UK, Germany, France, and Denmark offered military contingents for a coalition force to attack the Taliban. Even almost all South Asian Countries assured to support the US decision to counter the Taliban. Furthermore, on 12th September, President George W. Bush spoke 'A monument to the struggle of good versus evil'. (Nawaz, 2008) These types of arguments manifested that the wounded beast would hit back. It means Pakistan had no other option but to support the US at any cost. Then, under the advice of a foreign minister, Musharraf condemned the attack and vowed to assist the US. (Musharraf, 2006).

Musharraf portrayed Pakistan as a moderate Islamic state. He launched the concept of *Enlightened Moderation* at the 2002 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference in Malaysia. (Musharraf, 2006) He also emphasized Sufi teachings to counter the extremism in the country. He wanted to reform the education sector and modernize the curriculum of religious schools/Madrasas. Until 2006, he did not reform in *Hudood Ordinance* but when Human rights

pressures to give women rights, he reformed the Hudood Ordinance with a protection bill, which became law in December 2006. Under which rape should have proceeded in the Civil Law Court? Although this bill did not protect women, it gave a soft image of Musharraf to the West that he secured the women.

Musharraf desired to reform the Madrasas, and he wanted to finance them to come under the state flag after registration. He discussed with them the change of curriculum. He gave them suggestions that you should teach English, Math, and Science as well as the religious teachings. 13000 Madras registered with the government, but no big Madras was in them. Nawaz Sharif's illness brought Musharraf into power, which was not accepted by the world. Things changed ---as earlier, Zia ul Haq came to rule the country, and he got support from the US to wage war against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But after 9/11, they wanted to remove their nest. Those who were financially supported earlier now stand with the US war against terror. We as a nation survived most since the partition, and we had been engaged in other wars. We faced many problems, both internal and external threats.

Impacts and Implementation of Madrassa 1947-1999

After independence, the first attempt to reform Madrassa was made by General Ayub Khan in 1961. Looking into the madrassa issue, Ayub Khan made a committee which presented curricula reforms under the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education has given the task of looking at that committee.(Rabbi & Habib, 2019) The committee recommends need-based curriculum changes in madrassas, as it is the need of the hour to teach other subjects along with religious subjects in madrassas. Ayub Khan also did a lot to modernize the madrassa. As Ulama's academy impacts a lot, it would work further, it could produce well-trained Ulama. The first elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also initiated Madrassa reforms in 1975, but Bhutto's reform could not provide any productive results. Finally, it brought martial law to the country. due to Bhutto's greedy nature. He called an early election, which was scheduled for 1978. The ultimate result came into martial law. When the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) (A group of religious parties) was out of control.

Education System in Pakistan

Pakistan's educational institutions are organized into four provinces—Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)—as well as three additional territories: the Islamabad Capital Territory and the Federally Administered Northern Areas. Each region is overseen by its own education minister and curriculum authority, the latter being responsible for teacher training. Provinces are responsible for publishing their teaching materials and textbooks. These institutions are further categorized into three main types: private, public, and semi-public schools. Religious institutions (Deni Madaris) operate independently and are governed by their own five educational boards. There is no standardized curriculum or teaching methodology for either students or teachers (McClure, 2009). Ulama's were content with Musharraf coming into power as they were of the view that Musharraf would be close to Zia, to them. "Strangely, the aggressor Islamic gathering was additionally blissful, yet for various reasons. Abdullah Munatzir, a representative for Lashkar-I-Taiba (Army of Pure), a strict cum-aggressor group basically working in Indian Kashmir, proclaimed that now Pakistan ought to have an Islamic framework on the example of Afghanistan's Taliban."(Abbas, 2015) But he was different from Zia ul Haq. Madrassa institution's

sole purpose was to provide knowledge and necessities to students. But since the 1979 Soviet invasion, this institution has been associated with a negative connotation. Although it may not be right, they had been sponsored to wage war against them.

Sectarian Conflicts

There are two major sects in Pakistan: Sunni and Shia. Shia has a 15% population, while the rest belong to the Suni sect. The Suni sect is further divided such as Barelvi, Deobandi. In this regard, they share commonalities, but they also have a rivalry against each other. Jamaat-i-Islami, which does not deal. Zia ul Haq imposed zakat as mandatory to all, but Shia did not accept this as they gave to their sect. So, in response, Shia got voiced as Shias in Pakistan were supported by Iran likewise Suni's were supported by Saudi Arabia. Mostly in both governments Zia and Musharraf these were the time when they utilized their services for the external cause but unfortunately, they did not for once think about the consequences of their fighting frontline would hunt internal affairs. As well as that it would damage our society. Internal and external factors have had more say in Madrassa because we delivered services for both external and internal causes. Pakistan, from its inception, had supported mujahedin.

Madrassa Finances

Madrassa, from the time of the colonial era, managed on self-help. These madrassas depended on a variety of sources to enhance their institutions. Most of the funds collected by local funding, furthermore, many madrassas own land or property endowed to them as *Waqifs* through which they earn money and provide necessities to students. (Ali, 2009) Madrassa did not collect any kind of revenue from parents, whose children got an education from the madrassa. People have an affiliation with Madrassa, so they support whatever they can do so. Zia made the payment of *zakat mandatory*, and the madrassa collected zakat (Farooq, 2010).

Teaching Methods in Madrassa

This basic question related to any educational institution is about teaching methods and how they teach their students. What new technologies and tactics have been utilized to enhance teaching? The teaching method in the madrassa is outdated, as Muhammad Arslan Raheem in his thesis mentions, "Text utilized in the madrassa prospectus dates to the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Plus, the training strategies in madrassa are conventional." (Raheem, 2015) Madrassa education boards did not arrange any training sessions for madrassa teachers. Their recruitment policy had no specifications on how to recruit teachers. Looking into this, the education minister arranged a training session for public schools' teachers. Whose sole purpose was to enhance teaching qualities and teaching methods for the public-school teacher. I witnessed this training in elementary schools.

They have been thinking about how to teach students, how to make lesson plans for the class. What are the aims and objectives of teaching? Extra-curricular activities are held at public and private schools; unfortunately, it is lacking in madrassas. Which is important for both mental and physical health. Teaching with modern equipment, such as computer acknowledgement for both, is necessary. The traditional teaching method just memorize the Quran, is not enough; we must move on to further enhance new teaching methods and tactics which will encourage students. Teaching materials also matter, such as in the Zia ul Haq era teaching materials were sponsored.

"For example, unique course books in Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto were composed at the University of Nebraska-Omaha with US government uphold and were distributed to madrassa students" (Raheem, 2015).

Taliban's Impacts on Pakistani Madrassa

The US alleged duplicity policy regarding the Taliban. The Taliban had killed many civilians but "the Taliban has not been banned by the US as a terrorist organization." (Behuria, 2007) The US and Pakistan consider the Taliban an important factor which could be utilized against Afghanistan. During the Cold War era, these Taliban facilitated both states, the US and Pakistan. Unfortunately, post 9/11, both states refused to further support them. One could understand the US duplicity toward Pakistan, as they in the times of Zia-ul-Haq, sponsored militant organisations and funded them to wage war against the Soviet Union. Bruce Riedel, in his article, defined the US duplicity policy regarding Pakistan. "Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world today" (Riedel, 2008).

President Zia provided every type of support to the US in response to the US blaming Pakistan and portraying a negative image to international viewers; an earlier sign of peace now became the sign of terrorism in the world. Since the inception of Pakistan, its geostrategic position has always brought serious challenges. Pakistan, after partition, had mostly tilted toward America and became a US ally. Pakistan fought every time on the frontline of war, but unfortunately, the US only used Pakistan. Furthermore, Bruce Riedel elaborates, "The entirety of the bad dreams of the twenty-first century meet up in Pakistan: atomic expansion, drug pirating, military tyranny, or more, all, worldwide illegal intimidation" (Riedel, 2008) keeping in view, a madrassa in Pakistan became the sign of negative activities. Madrassa will take time to come out of these things, but the Ulama's role in preventing extremism and militancy also had a big impact. They always supported the students to wage war against the enemies of Islam. So, Ulama has also made their students think positive things.

Regional Aspects of Madrassa

Post-Colonial time madrassa has assumed a significant part in "conferring Islamic schooling, expanding education, and fortifying Islamic awareness, and in particular giving training to the imminent up-and-comers of civil service." (Farooq, 2010) So, after partition, was the quality of education in madrassas taught and trained? Did post-partition, any madrassa student qualify for CSS? Of course, the answer would be no due to their traditional way of teaching and learning.

Madrassa Under Democracy (1989-1999)

New hope for democracy in the country seemed after Zia's death. Although democracy in 1989-1999 has been surviving. Since the creation of Pakistan, democracy was not acknowledged; unfortunately, this came into military hands again. On the other hand, Pakistan was one of those states that recognized the Taliban government in Afghanistan. This was alarming for the US. Nuclear sanctions were also imposed on Pakistan. Looking into these wars with India was very strange for the US, but they thought they would assist in the war both states stopped the war. But this war brought serious questions about being a nuclear state; we lost nuclear value. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the man behind making Pakistan a nuclear state. Who once said that if we eat grass,

we will eat, but will we soon make a nuclear bomb? So, then Zia also took this work into account. Because our enemy state had tested the nuclear ‘Smiling Buddha’ in 1974. After that, Pakistan needed to have this for the balance of power, as well as for our safety. Things could be made possible if our political leaders, since independence, had cooperated in a good manner. Lack of leadership was also a big factor behind the state's crisis. Indeed, being involved in all these, no one denied the importance of Pakistan in the region. Because of its geostrategic position, the US and other big powers have always had an eye on it for every purpose.

President Musharraf’s Madrassa Reforms 1999-2008

President (Gen) Musharraf indeed was the one who introduced many reform projects. Though he offered to register voluntarily for state-led reforms. While his positive sign was that he did not force anyone for this purpose, the US was not happy with him; he was directed to do more. Although security concerns were many, Musharraf himself was attacked by the Taliban. But being all these things, what factors are behind his state-led madrassa reform projects? Is lack of state interest or a lack of madrassa administrations? After the attack on the World Trade Centre, the world was divided into two blocs, ‘supportive and ‘non-supportive’ of the USA in the war against terrorism.(Afzal et al., 2012) After 9/11, the Taliban proved to be an internal security factor for Pakistan. The mass migration of Afghan refugees from Afghanistan had created an internal crisis. Although Pakistan assists Afghan refugees in these hard times, when disorder at home. Jamat Islami (JI) and Jamiat-Ulama-Islam (JUI) were busy accommodating the Islamabad administration in pre 9/11 era (Behuria, 2007).

“Pakistan can't effectively battle the Pakistani Taliban as long as certain components in the administration desire to save this aggressor network for an activity against India and the Karzai government. Neither would Pakistan be able to make progress if it doesn't address the ancestral element of this fighting effectively, since a large part of the current Taliban tasks reflect longstanding antagonised and underestimated ancestral concerns?”(Reetz, 2012).

Table 1

Annual Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan, 2003-2012.(Afzal et al., 2012)

Years	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorist/Insurgents	Total
2003	140	24	25	189
2004	435	174	244	863
2005	430	81	137	648
2006	608	325	538	1471
2007	1522	597	1479	3598
2008	2155	654	3906	6715
2009	2324	991	8389	11704
2010	1796	469	5170	7435
2011	2738	765	2800	6303
2012	2664	638	2375	5677
Total	14812	4728	25063	44603

Table 2

Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan, 2001-November 08, 2012 (Afzal et al., 2012)

Years	FATA & NWFP	Outside FATA & NWFP
2001	-	-
2002	01	-
2003	02	-
2004	06	01
2005	01	01
2006	02	05
2007	40	14
2006	45	14
2009	53	23
2010	38	11
2011	32	09
2012	23	06
Total	243	87

Pakistani society faced many challenges post 9/11, such as social, economic, political, and religious crises.(Yousafzai et al., 2017) The increasing wave of terrorism post 9/11 had affected the structure of society, damaged cultural values, and defamed the international level.(Yousafzai et al., 2017) Pakistan lacks both strong institutions and clear ideas. Talking about the unity of Pakistan society is based on religious factors.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the evolution of madrassas in Pakistan reflects the complex interplay between religion, politics, and education within the broader historical context of the subcontinent. From their origins as centres of Islamic learning, madrassas have been shaped by a series of external and internal forces, including colonial interventions, post-independence policies, and global geopolitical events. Efforts to reform madrassa education have often faltered due to mistrust between the state and religious authorities, shifting political agendas, and the instrumentalization of madrassas for broader strategic purposes, particularly during periods of conflict such as the Afghan Soviet war and the War on Terror. The competing influences of modernization, sectarianism, and national security concerns have further complicated the integration of madrassas into mainstream educational and social frameworks. Ultimately, the history of madrassa reforms in Pakistan illustrates the enduring challenges of reconciling tradition with modernity, and highlights the need for inclusive, context-sensitive approaches that address the diverse needs and aspirations of Pakistani society.

Competing Interests

The authors declared no known competing interests.

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