

# ***Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World***

## ***Is There a Problem? What Can We Do about It?***

**by Andrew Coulson**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper describes the threat posed to U.S. national security by militant schools in less-developed nations, evaluates current policies for dealing with that threat, and suggests an alternative set of policies that would likely be more effective and also more consistent with the laws and principles of the United States.

In dozens of countries from Pakistan to Indonesia, militant Islamist schools are inculcating scores of thousands of students with an ideology of intolerance, violence, and hate. In the past, the United States abetted such schools as part of its strategy for containing Soviet expansionism. After a gradual about-face in the years leading up to September 11, 2001, the American government is now funding and cajoling the governments of several majority-Muslim nations to rein in their more militant schools.

On the basis of contemporary and historical

evidence, both past and present U.S. policies are faulty. Any U.S. strategic gains from funding militant Islamist education during the 1980s were negligible compared to the long-term harm wrought by that policy. The present strategy of subsidizing or pressuring foreign governments to draw more children into undemocratic state schools is ill-conceived and incompatible with American ideals.

Based on the consistent and multifaceted superiority of fee-charging private schools over their government-run and -funded counterparts, Americans should adopt a two-pronged strategy as an alternative to current policy: liberalize U.S. trade policy to foster a "virtuous circle" of economic and educational growth in developing countries, and redirect private U.S. aid (which dwarfs official development aid) toward expanding access to fee-charging private schools.

**The keenest threat to the modern United States comes from militant Islamism.**

## **Introduction**

American taxpayers have underwritten the construction of schools in Afghanistan and the publication of textbooks inciting holy war on Soviet troops. They have tried to arm girls in poor countries with the skills they need to succeed, and to arm young men with Kalashnikovs and an ideology of hate. The U.S. government has offered aid to the education ministries of poor countries while imposing trade barriers that depress both the value of education and families' ability to pay for it. Private individuals, corporations, foundations, and other groups have also undertaken myriad education-related projects in developing nations all over the globe.

In other words, the United States is an active player in the international education scene. Unlike U.S. diplomatic and military policies, however, its educational activities are not widely debated in the media or even widely studied within the scholarly community. That will have to change if we are to have any hope of realizing our aspirations for stable, friendly, and productive international relations.

The threat of international terrorism in particular must be addressed on an educational as well as a diplomatic and military front. Eliminating currently active terrorist organizations is a necessary but short-term solution. Cutting off current sources of terrorist funding is at best a medium-term solution. As you read this paper, scores of thousands of children are being indoctrinated into militant ideologies in extremist schools around the world. Unless we can do something to alter that fact, the ranks of terrorist organizations will be endlessly replenished.

American actions affect the education systems of less-developed countries in numerous ways. Sometimes our actions are deliberately intended to have an educational impact (e.g., programs of the United States Agency for International Development), and sometimes their educational impact is accidental (e.g., U.S. trade policy). Some U.S. actions impacting foreign education are undertaken by the

federal government (as in the preceding two examples), whereas others are nongovernmental in nature (such as the efforts of private voluntary organizations or the remittances of foreign-born Americans to their home countries). The discussion that follows touches on all of these actions. Readers should thus keep in mind that U.S. actions often affect foreign education systems unintentionally (for good or ill) and that nongovernmental activities can have as significant an impact on education as official ones.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the merits of various strategies for mitigating extremist indoctrination in developing countries. It begins by providing an overview of schooling in less-developed nations. How, why, where, and by whom are ideologies of hatred and violence being promoted? What sorts of school systems do the most effective and efficient job of serving families and of eschewing indoctrination? Following that overview is a summary and critical analysis of the U.S. government's most high-profile efforts to influence foreign education systems. Has U.S. government involvement in the education systems of foreign nations been consistent with U.S. law and principles? Has it been effective in mitigating the dissemination of militant ideologies? Are there alternative strategies that would be more effective and consistent with American ideals?

## **Weapons of Mass Instruction**

Countless religious and political factions have used schools as tools of indoctrination over the past two and a half millennia, but the keenest threat to the modern United States comes from militant Islamism. Islamists adhere to an intolerant form of Islam that regards moderate Muslims and all non-Muslims with contempt, and considers the only acceptable form of government to be a theocracy that strictly implements Sharia (Islamic law). Militant Islamists believe that it is legitimate (if not compulsory) for this form

of government to be imposed on one or more nations through violence. Islamism represents an extreme view within the Muslims community, and only a minority of Islamists actually choose the path of violence.

U.S. diplomatic and military policies currently strive to identify and thwart the efforts of militant Islamist terrorists by cutting off their funding, restricting their movements, and capturing or killing them. However effective it may be at diffusing immediate threats, this is a purely short- to medium-term strategy. As long as new generations of militant Islamists appear to replace those killed or captured, the war on terror will remain unwinnable. As it happens, those future generations of potential terrorists are being educated today in tens of thousands of Islamist schools around the world.

Most Americans received their first glimpse inside an Islamist madrasa (Muslim religious school) in the wake of 9/11. Western television reporters and journalists descended upon the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, sending back footage of Spartan classrooms in which children rocked back and forth reciting passages from the Koran. Common to most of the schools visited by the media were students' and teachers' unwavering support for Osama bin Laden, and their hostility toward the West, Jews, Hindus, and particularly the United States. One madrasa, the 2,800 student Darul Uloom Haqqania, received enough media coverage to launch a successful political campaign. In a sense, it already had, having graduated many influential figures within the Taliban regime, including its leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar.<sup>1</sup> Students of the school, whose name means "Center of All Righteous Knowledge," told reporters how they had run about celebrating upon hearing the news of the 9/11 attacks.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that all madrasas are as narrow and radical as Darul Uloom Haqqania. It would also be a mistake to conclude that radical madrasas are the only schools that foment hatred and militancy. The sections that fol-

low describe the full spectrum of militant Islamist schools that put U.S. national security at risk.

### **Pakistani Madrasas**

Pakistan's Muslim schools are privately run institutions that charge no fees and even provide free room and board in many cases. Their funding comes from varying combinations of donations from the local faithful and contributions from Muslim organizations based in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Alex Alexiev, a fellow at the Center for Security Policy, suggests that as much as three-quarters of all madrasa funding comes from abroad, and points to Saudi Arabia as by far the largest foreign contributor.<sup>3</sup> A 2002 study by the International Crisis Group also asserts that foreign contributions make up the majority of madrasa income, and adds that Pakistani expatriates are another significant source of cash.<sup>4</sup>

Madrasas attract large numbers of poor children whose parents cannot afford alternative private schooling, and who either do not have access to, or think poorly of, government schools. While the very poorest madrasa students are not likely to attend other schools, some families send their children to madrasas for a few years to learn the basic tenets and practice of Islam, in addition to sending them to academically oriented elementary and secondary schools for a broader educational experience.

The impact of financial expediency on boosting madrasa enrollment cannot be overestimated. For poor families with many children, the offer of free room and board alone is persuasive. One nine-year-old madrasa student, the seventh of nine children, emphasized this point to a visiting journalist, telling him, "I could have been like others in the refugee camp, with no clothes and no food."<sup>5</sup>

Madrasas have successfully resisted all of the central government's attempts at imposing comprehensive regulation and mandatory registration. Statistics on their numbers and enrollment are thus educated guesses rather

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than hard facts, and the guesses vary dramatically from one source to another. Published figures on the number of madrasas in Pakistan have ranged from a low of 7,500 to a probably exaggerated 39,000 or 45,000 over the past few years.<sup>6</sup> Most estimates hover around 10,000.<sup>7</sup> The number of students enrolled in these schools has been variously estimated as 600,000 to 700,000, under one million, 1.5 million, 1.7 million, and as “a third” of Pakistan’s total student population.<sup>8</sup> The one-third estimate would imply that there are 7.5 million madrasa students, given the approximately 25 million Pakistani children enrolled in primary through secondary schools. This unusually high figure is most likely an error caused by a misunderstanding of official Pakistani enrollment data,<sup>9</sup> and both the overall consensus and the most reliable individual sources put the figure somewhere between one and two million.

Determining the percentage of madrasas that promote an ideology of violent jihad involves yet more guesswork. Recent speculation puts that number roughly 1 in 10—suggesting that there could be one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand potential recruits for Islamist terrorist organizations in Pakistan’s madrasas alone.<sup>10</sup>

The core of all madrasa education is recitation of the Koran in the original Arabic and learning the Sunnah and Hadith (a collection of sayings attributed to, and traditions relating to, Mohammed). The typical curriculum deviates little from the Dars-i-Nizami syllabus set down by the Islamic religious scholar Nizamuddin Sehavi in the mid-1700s, and most of the texts had been in use long before that. Students who remain for more than a few years are taught medieval Arabic grammar, syntax, and pronunciation, and classic works of Arabic literature. Older students are introduced to more advanced subjects such as Islamic jurisprudence.

According to Tariq Rahman, professor of linguistics at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistani madrasas do not teach Arabic as a living language, but as a historic specimen, frozen in time. Few students

emerge from madrasas able to converse fluently in Arabic. The majority of students, who leave after just a few years, do not understand the Arabic passages from the Koran that they have memorized. In addition to purely Koranic studies, some (but by no means all) madrasas also teach Urdu (the official language of Pakistan) or one of the regional languages such as Panjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi, for a few years at the primary level. A very small minority of madrasas also teach modern subjects using modern textbooks.

Though the sight of automatic weapons is not unheard of at militant madrasas,<sup>11</sup> the schools themselves do not generally provide training in physical combat, the use of firearms, or military tactics.<sup>12</sup> Instead, they arm their students with an ideology that justifies and endorses violence against all who fall short of the Islamist ideal. Interpreting a popular Koranic lesson for the visiting journalist, the nine-year-old mentioned above explained:

The Muslim community of believers is the best in the eyes of God, and we must make it the same in the eyes of men by force. . . . We must fight the unbelievers and that includes those who carry Muslim names but have adopted the ways of unbelievers. When I grow up I intend to carry out jihad in every possible way.<sup>13</sup>

To understand why some madrasas are more likely than others to glorify militant Islamism, it is necessary to have at least a cursory understanding of the divisions within the Islamic faith. Modern Islam has two main branches: Shiism and Sunnism. Shia and Sunni Muslims initially split over who should succeed Mohammed as leader of the Islamic world.<sup>14</sup> Today, apart from this continuing disagreement, the Shia venerate and create shrines at the graves of key figures such as Ali, Mohammed’s son-in-law. Such shrines are seen as improper at best and heretical at worst by orthodox Sunni Muslims.

Sunni Muslims substantially outnumber Shiites, accounting for 85 to 90 percent of all the Islamic faithful (closer to 75 percent in Pakistan). Both branches, in turn, are made up of multiple sects, of which two Sunni sects of the Indian subcontinent, Barelvis and Deobandism, are the most relevant to this discussion. Barelvis make up a substantial majority of the Pakistani population, whereas Deobandis make up perhaps 15 percent.<sup>15</sup> The most important difference between these sects is that Deobandis hold to a strict and historically orthodox view of Islam, while Barelvis have allowed local traditions and mysticism to intermingle with Islamic doctrine. Militant Islamist Deobandis initiated a war against their Shia fellow citizens in the early 1980s, sparking sectarian skirmishes that took the lives of 411 Shias and 212 Sunnis in the province of Punjab alone between 1990 and 1999.<sup>16</sup> Barelvis are typically more tolerant of religious diversity and place comparatively little emphasis on the Sunni/Shia schism. Militant Deobandis, however, are less and less easily distinguishable from militant Wahhabis, given the substantial funding they receive from Saudi Arabia.

Despite their majority position in the population at large, Barelvis operate only about one-quarter of the country's madrasas. The bulk of religious schools, up to two-thirds of the total, are run by Deobandis.<sup>17</sup> It is the more militant among these Deobandi institutions that sent many of their graduates off to wage jihad on the Soviets during the 1980s, that preach violence and hate against all who do not share their views, that are associated with both domestic and international terrorist organizations,<sup>18</sup> and that provide refuge in Pakistan to Afghan Taliban fighters who are currently trying to bring down the government of Hamid Karzai.<sup>19</sup> Militant Deobandi madrasas are most conspicuous in and around the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which border Afghanistan, but they can be found all across Pakistan.

The scope and severity of the militant Islamist threat was well known internationally even before 9/11, and Pervez Musharraf's

government has been under considerable pressure from Western countries (and India) to either close down or moderate radical madrasas. In response, Musharraf has undertaken several regulatory and reform efforts over the past three years. The initial proposals have usually included mandatory measures such as government registration of all madrasas and public disclosure of their funding sources. All such proposals have roused fierce opposition from religious groups and political parties, and they have been quickly modified into voluntary programs. Subsequently, these reforms have been allowed to die altogether given the recognition that voluntary participation would be minimal.

During the summer of 2003 the government skipped any preliminary flirtation with compulsion, jumping directly to a voluntary offer to provide textbooks and teachers for modern secular subjects at government expense to any madrasa that chooses to participate. Leaders of all five of the national madrasa boards (which together oversee virtually all of Pakistan's Islamic schools) immediately declared their opposition to the program, their intention not to participate, and their determination to fight any future state pressure to make them participate.

The only significant result of Pakistan's madrasa policy pageant has been to spur the leadership of the previously factionalized madrasa boards to unite under a single umbrella organization: the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris-e-Deenia (ITMD). Since the formation of the ITMD in 2000, the five board representatives have spoken with a single voice in defiance of all regulatory and reform efforts. Even Sarfraz Naeemi, secretary-general of the less militant Barelvi madrasa board, opposes the current legislation, arguing that his board's schools already cover modern secular subjects. Also underlying Naeemi's opposition is his belief that

this project has not been initiated by the Pakistan government and the U.S. is behind this move to suppress the growing Islamic influence which is resiliently

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rising after the U.S. aggression on Afghanistan and has now gained momentum after the recent war in Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

Echoing Naeemi's assertion of foreign involvement, a recent Pakistani press report states that "the madrassa reforms being proposed now directly involve the western countries."<sup>21</sup>

Given the precedents of the past few years, it seems unlikely that militant Islamist madrasas will be deflected from their chosen path by curriculum reform. The only previous voluntary madrasa reform that was actually implemented by the government attracted just 300 schools (or perhaps 3 percent of all madrasas), and these are unlikely to have included any of the more extreme institutions. Hussain Haqqani, a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former Pakistani ambassador to Sri Lanka, contends that even if some radical madrasas did adopt modern secular subjects it would not deter them from promoting an ideology of intolerance and violent jihad. During a visit to the Darul Uloom Haqqania madrasa in the weeks after 9/11, Haqqani asked one of the *talibs* (students) if he would like to learn mathematics. The student replied, "In *hadith* there are many references to how many times Allah has multiplied the reward of jihad. If I knew how to multiply, I would be able to calculate the reward I will earn in the hereafter."<sup>22</sup>

Haqqani is not only pessimistic about the prospect of reforming radical madrasas by broadening their curriculum, he argues that Pervez Musharraf does not want to eliminate the militant Islamist threat. Haqqani contends that Musharraf is using the upsurge in Islamism to justify his continued military dictatorship. The choice Musharraf is presenting to the world, according to Haqqani, is between himself and a nuclear-armed Islamist state, a choice that has all but silenced U.S. pressure for Musharraf to reinstate democracy.

A second contention put forward by Haqqani and others is that Musharraf delib-

erately treats the Islamist parties with kid gloves because they have historically been supportive of military dictatorships in return for complete autonomy in operating their madrasas and other institutions. By giving them free rein, Musharraf thus adds to his domestic support base.<sup>23</sup>

### **Pakistani Government Schools**

This paper generally uses the terms "government school" and "state school" rather than "public school" to refer to tax-funded, state-run educational institutions. This is because many of the countries being discussed, Pakistan included, do not have elected governments but rather dictatorships of one form or another, and so the term "public school" is unsuitable.

Several Western observers have suggested shoring up the faltering Pakistani government school system as a way to lure families away from militant madrasas. P. W. Singer of the Brookings Institution made this case in 2001,<sup>24</sup> for example, and it was reiterated by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group in 2002.<sup>25</sup>

For Singer, the proliferation of madrasas over the past two decades stems chiefly from the inexorable decay of government services, particularly education. Improving and expanding Pakistan's government school network, he argues, should therefore draw students away from the madrasas and into the presumably moderate and tolerant state schools.

The presumption that Pakistan's state schools promote tolerance is mistaken. Whenever a new nation is formed, it is common for its state schools to vigorously, if not stridently, advance a sense of nationalism—to embellish its own record and villanize its real or perceived rivals. Nevertheless, over Pakistan's 50-plus year history, the state schools have actually grown more jingoistic and intolerant, not less so.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first leader and the central figure in its founding, advocated religious harmony and a democratic, secular state. In a famous 1947 speech he declared, "You may belong to any religion

or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State.”<sup>26</sup> His commitment to the separation of church and state was not always so absolute, but he was not an Islamist, and did not see it as the role of the state to Islamize the Pakistani people—whether through the schools or by other means.

Subsequent leaders took a different view, and the state schools were increasingly seized upon as indoctrination factories. Under military dictator Zia ul Haq, who took power in 1979 and actively sought the support of Islamist parties, textbooks were rewritten to fulfill a clearly stated mission:

To demonstrate that the basis of Pakistan is not to be found in racial, linguistic, or geographical factors, but, rather, in the shared experience of a common religion. To get students to know and appreciate the *Ideology of Pakistan*, and to popularize it with slogans. To guide students towards the ultimate goal of Pakistan—the creation of a completely Islamised State.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s, “Pakistan studies” textbooks were primarily concerned with the Islamization of the students, and through them, the nation. Non-Muslims, especially Hindus, were portrayed as wicked and treacherous, and science and secular knowledge were viewed with deep suspicion.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, Jinnah was mischaracterized in these textbooks as a devout orthodox Muslim who sought to implement an Islamist theocracy.

The state schools would likely have become even more extreme and thoroughly Islamized under the elected government of Nawaz Sharif, whose party was on the verge of implementing Sharia law when it was ousted by Musharraf’s military coup in 1999. Musharraf himself has often spoken on the virtues of a more moderate and tolerant society, and more modern, enlightened schooling. In March 2002 he directed the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education to embark on a major

reform program aiming to eliminate the excesses of jingoism and religious extremism from state schools.

According to a report released by the Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute in July 2003, that effort has failed.<sup>29</sup> The report, titled “The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan,” is unequivocal. “The post-reform curricula and textbooks continue to have the same problems as the earlier ones. Reform has not been substantive.” The authors of the report describe the severity of the problem in these stark terms:

Madrasahs are not the only institutions breeding hate, intolerance, a distorted worldview, etc. The educational material in the government run schools do much more than madrasahs. The textbooks tell lies, create hate, incite for jihad [sic] and shahadat [martyrdom in the name of Allah], and much more.<sup>30</sup>

Both the curriculum and the textbooks reviewed by the SDPI were also found to perpetuate, by name, the Islamist “Ideology of Pakistan” introduced to the schools by Zia ul Haq.

The present state of affairs in Pakistani government education did not come about by accident. It arose because the Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Wing bureaucracy was captured by the group that places the highest value on dictating what other people’s children will learn.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Pakistan, that constituency appears to be Deobandi Islamists, the same group that operates up to two-thirds of the country’s madrasahs while constituting only 15 percent of its population.<sup>32</sup> Acknowledging this situation, the SDPI has recommended that Musharraf abolish the Curriculum Wing and appoint a new quasi-governmental board to assume its responsibilities.

This is a dubious proposition. First, it presupposes that Musharraf really is committed to weaning his government from its jingoistic and religiously extremist educational

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**Recent terrorist activity within Saudi Arabia, particularly among youths, has been the key factor spurring government calls for a kinder, gentler Saudi childhood.**

apparatus, and introducing a more liberal and pro-democratic school system. Such a move would run directly counter to the behavior of Pakistan's previous military strongmen, and would undermine support for his own regime's suppression of democracy and suspension of the constitution. The fact that Musharraf entrusted the current Curriculum Wing to implement his 2002 reform initiative in the first place calls into question either his sincerity or his wisdom.

Second, the SDPI proposal ignores the fact that the same forces that helped Islamists to become influential within the Curriculum Wing would presumably lead them to eventual prominence on the SDPI's new board as well. Even if Musharraf chose to kick the Pakistani government habit of currying favor with Islamists and appointed a new, moderate curriculum board tomorrow, there would be nothing to prevent his eventual successors from reconstituting the board with religious radicals in the majority.

#### **Schools in Saudi Arabia**

The international security threat posed by Saudi education policy can only be understood in the broader context of the country's links to Islamist militancy and of its state religion: the Wahhabi sect of Islam. Saudi Arabia made headlines in the summer of 2003 when a congressional report on the 9/11 terrorist attacks was published with 27 pages missing. Leaks to the media quickly identified the expurgated passage as an account of Saudi private and governmental aid to several of the hijackers. One explanation for the censorship of these pages is that U.S. intelligence agencies could not agree on whether the ties were deliberate efforts to abet terrorism or were simply unfortunate accidents.

The answer to that particular question may indeed be in doubt, but it is widely accepted that the Saudi Arabian government consciously supports terrorist organizations. This support is often given, according to experts, because Saudi Arabia wishes to see militant Islamist groups around the world turn their attention away from the Saudi

royal family.

Saudi Arabia's active proselytization of Wahhabism poses a threat to U.S. national security because of the nature of Wahhabi beliefs and the ease with which those beliefs can be used to defend and endorse terrorist acts. The central tenet of Wahhabism is the seemingly innocuous *tawhid*, or belief in the oneness of God. For ibn Wahhab, all prayers and shrines to any object or person other than his singular deity represented *shirk* (polytheism), as did the elevation of prophets, saints, or clerics to a status he reserved for his deity. By this unusually strict definition, Jews, Christians, Shiite Muslims, and many Barelvi Sunni Muslims, among others, are polytheists.

*Shirk* can be a serious offense even under less orthodox interpretations of Islam, but Wahhabis regard it with a special antipathy. There are several historical cases in which Wahhabi armies razed Shiite shrines and massacred villagers in other countries (notably, Iraq) in the name of stamping out *shirk*.<sup>33</sup> Jews and Christians, who are traditionally afforded specific protection by the Koran under the designation "people of the book," have been stripped of this protection by extremist Saudi clerics on the grounds that they have become polytheistic in modern times.<sup>34</sup>

This Wahhabi interpretation of *shirk*, taught in Saudi schools (and those funded by the kingdom abroad), has become a central justification for violent, international jihad. Osama bin Laden's former deputy, al-Zawahiri, once wrote that commitment to *tawhid* (the opposite of *shirk*) "was the spark that ignited the Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad."<sup>35</sup>

With the doctrinal context established, we can now focus on Saudi schooling. Saudi Arabia has one of the most comprehensive government school systems in the Arab world, consuming roughly 30 percent of the kingdom's budget. A third of the school day is taken up by instruction in Wahhabism. Private schools exist but must follow the same Wahhabi religious curriculum as the government schools. All books entering or leaving the kingdom are subject to scrutiny

by the state and can be rejected if they are found to conflict with Wahhabist Islam. All textbooks are commissioned or selected by the central government.

Consider some examples from recent or still-current textbooks: A text titled “Pictures from the Lives of the [Mohammed’s] Companions” describes how Jews and Christians were cursed by Allah for accepting polytheism and were turned into apes and pigs. An eighth grade textbook explains that the most important duties for a Muslim are *jihad* for the sake of Allah and the spread of Allah’s religion on earth. Fifth graders are put on notice that “the whole world should convert to Islam and leave its false religions lest their fate will be hell.”<sup>36</sup>

*Geography of the Muslim World*, for eighth-grade students, makes the following observations about non-Wahhabis and current events:

There is no doubt that the Muslims’ power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of the enemies of Islam—Christians, Jews, and others—so they plot against them, gather [their] force against them, harass them and seize every opportunity in order to eliminate the Muslims. Examples of this enmity are innumerable, beginning with the plot of the Jews against the Messenger and the Muslims at the first appearance of the light of Islam and ending with what is happening to Muslims today—a malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance striving to eliminate Islam from all the continents. Those massacres that were directed against the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims of Burma and the Philippines, and in Africa, are the greatest proof of the malice and hatred harbored by the enemies of Islam to this religion.<sup>37</sup>

A Saudi ninth-grade text teaches children:

The hour [day of judgment] will not

arrive until Muslims fight Jews, and Muslims will kill Jews until the Jew hides behind a tree or a stone. A Jew will [then] hide behind a rock or a tree, and the rock or tree will call upon the Muslim: ‘O Muslim, O slave of Allah! there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him!’<sup>38</sup>

A middle-school textbook published in 2000 and titled *Explanations* (of the Koran) informs its adolescent readers:

It’s allowed to demolish, burn or destroy the bastions of the Kufar (infidels)—and all what [sic] constitutes their shield from Muslims if that was for the sake of victory for the Muslims and the defeat for the Kufar.<sup>39</sup>

Wahhabis not only categorize Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims as *kufar*; but also place in this category Muslims who do not follow the Wahhabi interpretation of *tawhid*.<sup>40</sup>

Not all Saudis emerge from school with a desire to wage an international holy war, but the government schools’ official hatred and contempt for non-Wahhabis clearly foment Islamist militancy. That militancy is further encouraged in many of the country’s mosques. In the Suleiman Bin Muqiran mosque in Riyadh, Sheikh Majed ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Firian stated in late 2002:

Muslims must . . . educate their children to Jihad. This is the greatest benefit of the situation: educating the children to Jihad and to hatred of the Jews, the Christians, and the infidels; educating the children to Jihad and to revival of the embers of Jihad in their souls. This is what is needed now.<sup>41</sup>

The message of hate, suspicion, and intolerance delivered by Saudi Arabia’s schools—a message reinforced by much of the nation’s established clergy—appears to have been internalized by a considerable segment of the population. A poll conducted by the Saudi

**The convicted field commander of the Bali bombing recruited terrorist operatives from Koran study groups held at government-run Islamic high schools in western Java.**

**Although private schools were not up to the standards of those in wealthy countries, they were vastly better maintained and equipped than their government counterparts.**

internal intelligence agency allegedly found that 95 percent of Saudi men between 25 and 41 approved of Osama bin Laden's cause.<sup>42</sup> One out of every three of the original Afghan detainees sent to Guantanamo Bay were Saudis,<sup>43</sup> as were most of the 9/11 hijackers. By mid-August 2003, thousands of young Saudi men were reportedly "flooding into Iraq" and "preparing for jihad" against coalition forces and any Iraqis aiding the democratic state-building effort.<sup>44</sup>

The Saudi education threat is substantially magnified by the country's aggressive campaign to export it around the world. An online magazine published by the Saudi royal family states, "The cost of King Fahd's efforts in this field has been astronomical, amounting to many billions of Saudi riyals."<sup>45</sup> The magazine mentions "2,000 schools for educating Muslim children in non-Islamic countries in Europe, North and South America, Australia, and Asia" that have been funded wholly or in part by the Saudi government.<sup>46</sup>

Saudi Arabia has not restricted its largess to proselytizing children in non-Muslim countries. The Saudis have built or subsidized Wahhabi schools in some 47 Muslim and non-Muslim nations around the world.<sup>47</sup> These schools are among the most radical Islamist outposts in their host countries. As noted earlier, Saudi Arabia is thought to be the largest foreign source of funding for Pakistani madrasas, and has been tied to the most unabashedly militant among them. On the wall of a classroom at Darul Uloom Haqqania, Mullah Omar's Pakistani alma mater, a plaque announces that the room was "a gift of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."<sup>48</sup> The government of Cambodia shut down a Saudi-funded Islamic school at the end of May 2003, arrested three individuals associated with it, and expelled 28 of its teachers for suspected ties to the terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah.<sup>49</sup> The Saudis have also funded *pesantren* (madrasas) all across Indonesia, and their Office of Religious Affairs in Jakarta distributes a million copies of Wahhabi texts every year to fill their libraries.<sup>50</sup>

Saudi documents summarizing govern-

ment spending on missionary and foreign aid operations put the total outlay between 1975 and 2002 at roughly \$70 billion (that's U.S. dollars, not Saudi riyals).<sup>51</sup>

It is impossible to say if the Saudi government will choose to moderate these extremist education policies. Official statements on this front have been contradictory and evidence for promised reforms is so far lacking.

In a September 9, 2002, interview, Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal stated that an investigation he had initiated revealed 10 percent of the material in Saudi textbooks to be "questionable" and another 5 percent to be "abhorrent." During that same interview he indicated that this material had already been changed.<sup>52</sup> No proof of such changes was forthcoming at that time, however, despite the fact that there are a number of organizations both willing and able to review any newly revised Saudi textbooks.<sup>53</sup>

Two days later, on the first anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks, interior minister Prince Naif Ibn Abdul Aziz was less compelling, seeming to leave the door open to the "development" of Saudi curricula, but finding no fault with it and advocating no changes. He concluded: "We strongly believe in the correctness of our education system and its objectives. We don't change our systems on the demands of others."<sup>54</sup>

The only concrete news to come out of Saudi Arabia with regard to curriculum reform is that a war is being waged on the subject between Minister of Education Muhammad al-Rashid and hard-liners within the government and the Council of Senior Ulama (official religious scholars). In the spring of 2002, al-Rashid is reported to have criticized Saudi schooling as "parrot-like" for its emphasis on rote memorization of the Koran. A leader of the CSU, Sheikh Saleh al-Fozan, responded:

Some of our own people want us to become like the infidels who want us to renounce our religious beliefs and follow in their footsteps by changing our education curricula that are based on

the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet. . . a parrot is he who repeats the demands of the enemies of Islam that we should stop teaching the Koran, in order that we abandon our faith.<sup>55</sup>

In the wake of this opposition, al-Rashid appears to have backed off. In an interview on October 22, 2002, with the London-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat*, his deputy education minister, Khaled al-Awad, back-pedaled furiously from Prince Saud al-Faisal's promises of the previous month. He told *Al-Hayat* that meetings between U.S. and Saudi officials on the Saudi education system resulted in an understanding that the

Saudi curriculum is fine and does not encourage or boost terrorism and hatred of a member of another religion or faith. This follows attacks on the Saudi curriculum, according to which it was claimed that the curricula nourished the [ideas] of terrorism in the souls of the pupils following the events of September 11. . . . These meetings yielded positive results, and since most of those present realized that the Saudi curricula were fine, they retracted their baseless accusations.<sup>56</sup>

Notice that contrary to Saud al-Faisal's acknowledgement that the curriculum contained some "abhorrent" elements, al-Awad described it as "fine." Just five days later, following a meeting with his French counterpart, Saudi minister of defense Prince Sultan declared, "We do not plan to change our educational policy and no one asked us to do so," adding that "we are not extremists, and there is no such thing as a Wahhabi sect."<sup>57</sup>

In June 2003, the Saudi press reported that curriculum reform was under way, but that it was restricted to mathematics and science<sup>58</sup>—not among the subjects that most egregiously incite hatred or violence.

More promising signs arose around the second anniversary of 9/11, with statements to the Western media that 35 textbooks had

been revised for the new school year, including some religious texts dealing with *tawhid* (monotheism). Few details are available on the nature or extent of the announced changes, and the new books have yet to be reviewed by independent organizations. It is thus too early to tell how much of an improvement, if any, has been wrought.

One thing that does seem likely is that the Kingdom's apparent renewed interest in moderating its domestic educational practices has been driven at least as much by internal concerns as by criticism from the West. Numerous commentators in the Arab world have argued that criticism in the Western media has served only to anger Saudi hardliners, making them less willing to go along with curriculum reform.<sup>59</sup> Whether or not that is the case, recent terrorist activity within Saudi Arabia, particularly among youths, has been the key factor spurring government calls for a kinder, gentler Saudi childhood.

During the summer of 2003 Saudi authorities arrested some 200 suspected terrorists on Saudi soil, many of them under the age of 18. The involvement of so many young people in violent activity within the Kingdom has provided the royal family with both a personal incentive (self-preservation) and a public justification (maintaining public order) for toning down the schools' hostile rhetoric. The minister of information has asked journalists to tell young people not to associate with terrorists, and the minister of education, al-Rashid, has pleaded with students to shun violence.<sup>60</sup> Only time will tell if al-Rashid's promised reforms are genuine and successful.

In contrast to the steady (if contradictory) flow of Saudi statements on the domestic education front, the Kingdom has been quiet regarding its policy of building and subsidizing hard-line Wahhabist schools internationally. There is no sign that this policy will be changed in the foreseeable future.

### **Schools in Indonesia**

Indonesia had, until recently, been considered the world's most tolerant Muslim-major-

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ity nation. The nearly 90 percent of Indonesians who practice Islam tended, like Pakistani Barelvis, to be relaxed toward religious minorities and fellow Muslims of different sects. Just as the Barelvis incorporated some indigenous religious practices into their faith, so did Indonesian Muslims absorb Buddhist, Hindu, and other influences. Indonesian women have historically been accorded the same rights and freedoms as men, and until recently, the state seldom interfered in matters of religion. Although Indonesia has always had a small minority of ultra-orthodox Islamists, from which a number of violent splinter groups have formed, that minority was generally held in check by secular authorities through the mid-1990s.

That traditional religious liberalism has been challenged over the past decade by the spread and increasing militancy of several Islamist groups. The Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam or FPI) regularly stages violent mass protests outside of nightclubs and gambling parlors, which they see as unacceptable outposts of vice. Their rampages have been sufficiently violent and destructive that Vice President Hamza Haz publicly pleaded with the group not to carry weapons during their demonstrations.<sup>61</sup> Laskar Jihad, the largest domestic terrorist organization, inflamed preexisting tensions between Christians and Muslims in the Maluku Islands in 2000 by sending thousands of its members to eradicate the Christians.<sup>62</sup> Before reportedly disbanding in 2002 after the arrest of its leader, Jaffar Talib, Laskar Jihad also participated in sectarian conflict in Sulawesi.<sup>63</sup> Indonesia has also been the principal home to Jemaah Islamiyah, a loose-knit South Asian terror network responsible for scores of bombings claiming hundreds of lives in the past three years alone. JI's most notable attack was the Bali nightclub bombing of 2002 that killed more than 200 people.<sup>64</sup> JI's goal is to create an international Islamist theocracy in South Asia.

The methods of militant Islamist groups enjoy little support among the majority of Indonesians, but their goals increasingly

strike a chord. According to a recent poll, 60 percent of Indonesians would not object to the imposition of *Sharia* (Islamic law). With Indonesians facing the highest unemployment rate in the region, discontent is rife.<sup>65</sup> The United States, which was favorably regarded by 70 percent of Indonesians in 2000, is now regarded unfavorably by 85 percent (due in large part to widespread hostility toward U.S. action in Afghanistan). At a September 2003 meeting of pesantren (Islamic boarding school) leaders in Central Java, Vice President Hamzah Haz called the United States the "terrorist king," later explaining to reporters that America was waging an international war of terror. Once his comments had made international headlines and jeopardized U.S.-Indonesian relations, Haz retracted them claiming that they had been taken out of context.<sup>66</sup>

Given this combination of anti-American sentiment, economic frustration, rising Islamic orthodoxy, and active terrorist organizations, Indonesia should figure prominently on U.S. foreign policy's radar. The International Crisis Group believes there are only a handful of schools in Indonesia directly tied to terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiyah,<sup>67</sup> but radical Islamist ideology and conspiracy theories are more widely preached—and learned. The convicted field commander of the Bali bombing, Imam Samudra, recruited terrorist operatives from Koran study groups held at government-run Islamic high schools in western Java. A survey conducted in the late summer of 2003 revealed that most students at pesantren associated with Muhammadiyah (one of Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations), "view America as an enemy, believe the Bali attack was organized by the U.S. to 'damage the image of Islam,' and say that they are eager to join a jihad."<sup>68</sup>

As noted in the preceding section, the Saudi government is actively abetting the radicalization of Islamic education in Indonesia, annually distributing a million copies of Wahhabi texts to the nation's school libraries through its embassy's Office of Religious Affairs in Jakarta.<sup>69</sup>

The Indonesian government has made at least one limited effort to curtail the militant ideology and dispel the conspiracy theories prevalent in extremist schools. With funding (and most likely encouragement) from the U.S. government, about 50 pesantren students per week will be offered anti-terrorism classes in the fall of 2003. The students will be selected from 141 pesantren viewed to be sympathetic to Jemaah Islamiyah. Most students will never receive this instruction. Among the schools whose students will not be offered these lessons in tolerance are Indonesia's public schools and pesantren associated with Muhammadiyah. Notwithstanding the survey results mentioned above, Muhammadiyah is regarded as a moderate organization by the government, and anti-terrorism courses in its schools are apparently viewed as unnecessary.<sup>70</sup>

The U.S. administration is not, however, the only constituency Indonesian politicians would like to please. The Indonesian government has also actively solicited the support of orthodox Muslims in the run-up to the 2004 elections, by imposing a new legal requirement on private schools. Article 13 of the National Education System Bill, passed in June 2003, states that every private school student must be provided religious instruction in his or her own faith, along with a place of worship. The law will apply whenever a school has 10 or more students of a given religion.

Because Indonesia's private Christian schools teach a full range of academic subjects and are generally highly regarded, most enroll at least some Muslim students.<sup>71</sup> Muslim enrollments of between 60 and 75 percent are not unheard of in Christian schools. Since most pesantren, by contrast, focus on Arabic, the Koran, and Islamic law, their non-Muslim enrollment is low. An inevitable (and widely understood) result of Article 13 will thus be to oblige Christian schools to hire Muslim ulema and perhaps even build mosques, whereas few of the nation's pesantren will be affected in any way.<sup>72</sup>

Another effect of Article 13, so far unmentioned in the press, will be to force the nation's secular private schools to raise

tuition to pay for religious teachers and facilities—unless they decide to risk ignoring the law. Any such additional costs will no doubt push these schools out of the financial reach of more low-income families, leaving parents with few options but to turn to the tuition-free pesantren. (Indonesian state-run high schools are academically selective and have limited places, and so the private sector serves many students who fail to gain entrance to government schools.) Research on the comparative merits of Indonesian schools has found that secular private schools provide the greatest return on a parent's educational investment after controlling for student background and characteristics.<sup>73</sup> Raising the tuition at these schools will thus have a negative impact on both the individual families affected and the nation's economy as a whole, while potentially swelling pesantren enrollment.

### **Escaping Poverty and Indoctrination through Fee-Charging Private Schools**

The education systems of the developing world are astonishingly diverse. Though virtually all developing countries operate tax-funded, state-run education systems, private schools in many of these countries also enroll a substantial share of students. In Pakistan, for example, well over a quarter of all students are enrolled in fee-charging private schools, twice as high a percentage as in the United States. Some state-run systems charge parents fees, while others do not. Private schools are sometimes financed entirely through tuition, sometimes through a combination of tuition and state subsidies, and sometimes entirely by the state. Although elite private schools usually exist to serve wealthier families, most private schools serve middle- and lower-income families. The curricula of some government schools include devotional religious instruction, whereas others are purely secular. Most developing nations have both secular and denomina-

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tional private schools. Some larger nations, such as India and Indonesia, have schools in virtually all of the above categories, and others besides.

Despite this tremendous diversity, some patterns are evident across developing nations. The most obvious of these patterns is that overall educational conditions and outcomes are grossly deficient. Academic achievement, enrollment, and attainment (highest grade completed) levels are low, basic school facilities such as clean drinking water and toilets are frequently defective or absent altogether, many school buildings are in need of major repair, and curricula are unresponsive to parental demand.

Across developing countries, private schools that are highly autonomous and are paid for directly by parents usually outperform both private and government schools that are more heavily regulated and state funded. This is true from India to Chile to Indonesia. The Indonesian evidence is particularly interesting, as it suggests that there is a consistent *but gradually diminishing* efficiency return to parental tuition payment. In other words, school efficiency rises most dramatically when parents go from paying no fees to paying some fraction of the school's cost. As the parental share of school financing increases further, so does school efficiency, but it does so to a smaller and smaller degree.

Government schools in Indonesia also receive some direct parental funding, and their efficiency also goes up with the portion of their budgets paid for by parents. Nevertheless, private schools outperform government schools for a given level of parental funding.<sup>74</sup>

**Access, Attainment, and Equity**

By even the most conservative estimates, there are well over 100 million children not in school in developing countries, and education is often unevenly distributed by sex, social group, or economic status.

In addressing these problems, the private sector shows considerable promise. Over the past decade, private-sector enrollment growth

has generally outstripped that of the public sector. The vigor of private-sector education can be seen across Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Indian subcontinent. China had roughly 25,000 private schools in 1996, and the number more than doubled to 54,000 by 2000. The Chinese government recognizes the value of its private-sector growth potential, acknowledging that "government-run schools can't meet the needs of the public due to the large population of China."<sup>75</sup>

Even some of the developing world's most intractable education problems are being effectively addressed by private schools, from lowering the gender gap to bringing education to rural areas and urban slums. In Pakistan, girls make up 43 percent of private school enrollment, but only 37 percent of government school enrollment, and most private schools are coeducational.<sup>76</sup> A World Bank project called the Quetta Fellowship Program, discussed in the conclusion of this paper, was able to narrow the gender gap still further, raising both girls' and boys' enrollment with a remarkably small investment.<sup>77</sup> Current statistics also show that most new private schools in Pakistan are being created outside the major cities, and rural schools now make up 45 percent of the total supply.<sup>78</sup> These schools aim chiefly at the middle and lower economic classes. A study of schooling in Lahore found that a slight majority of families earning less than one dollar per person per day sent their children to private rather than government schools. Similar results were reported for Karachi in 1995.<sup>79</sup>

One of the most pervasive international patterns in education, whether in the rich world or the poor, is that schools funded at least in part through tuition are more responsive to parents when it comes to setting their curricula.

**School Facilities**

The condition of schools in developing countries is often tragically poor. Hygiene, building repair, drinking water, and toilet facilities are all too often inadequate. Researchers in India found that 84 percent of

the government schools they inspected were in need of major repair, while a third needed completely new buildings. Only 44 percent had waterproof structures, 41 percent had drinking water, 11 percent had toilets, and 3 percent had electricity. Although private schools were not up to the standards of those in wealthy countries, they were vastly better maintained and equipped in these areas than their government counterparts. Half of all private schools needed no major repairs of any kind, 59 percent had waterproof structures, 78 percent had drinking water, 34 percent had toilets, and 27 percent had electricity.<sup>80</sup>

The chief causes of the inferior government school facilities were shoddy construction and a lack of care and routine maintenance. “For those in charge of construction,” the researchers wrote, “there is often money to be made by using substandard materials and taking other shortcuts.”<sup>81</sup> It is also “difficult to upgrade the school environment by providing better furniture,” and so on, the researchers add, because “a large proportion of these items become nonfunctional within a short period of time.”<sup>82</sup> This of course makes traditional foreign aid a problematic endeavor.

Pakistan’s situation is comparable. Most Pakistani government schools do not have toilet facilities, whereas 84 percent of private schools do. The country’s private schools are twice as likely to have classrooms equipped with desks and half as likely to have unusable classrooms as government schools.<sup>83</sup>

Deterioration in the infrastructure of state schools is not limited to the Indian subcontinent, but stretches from Africa<sup>84</sup> to the Pacific atoll of Kiribati.<sup>85</sup> As in India, the most frequently cited causes include the failure of school managers to feel a personal ownership responsibility for their facilities, corruption, and budgetary shortsightedness (regular maintenance is the first thing to be cut when money is tight, causing classrooms and whole schools to gradually become unusable over time).

Taking together all of these findings, we are left with a bleak picture. Despite the fact that private, fee-charging schools are generally the most desirable option in developing countries,

they are also the most expensive option since parents shoulder the entire cost. Government schools usually have lower out-of-pocket expenses for parents but offer curricula chosen by the state rather than families, sometimes engage in blatant indoctrination, are pedagogically inferior, and are often physically decrepit. The least expensive schools in many countries are the fully subsidized madrasas, which impose curricula of their own rather than catering to the demands of parents, seldom teach marketable skills, and can be among the most effective institutions at filling children with antipathy for the United States. Any effort to draw parents away from militant Islamist education and into schools teaching practical academic and job skills must respond to these realities.

## Current and Historical Educational Policies

The goals of U.S. government policy in the international educational arena have undergone a dramatic change over the past decade. Though current efforts aim to simultaneously improve basic education and discourage militancy, the strategy of the late 1970s through the late 1980s was quite different.

### How We Helped Militarize Modern Islamism

Schools have repeatedly been used as tools of indoctrination throughout human history—from the military boarding schools of ancient Sparta to the war-glorifying academies of Hitler’s Germany.<sup>86</sup> Until the late 20th century, however, it was unusual, perhaps even unprecedented, for a government to harness the schools of another sovereign nation to achieve its own ends. During the 1980s, the United States became a pioneer in this area through its manipulation of Pakistan’s Islamist madrasas.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the Carter administration decided to make “the costs to the Soviet Union of [the Afghan] operation high enough so that Soviet

**The USAID commitment rests on a false assumption: that Pakistani public schools do not promote intolerance, hatred, and Islamist extremism.**

**By helping to shore up the government schools of Pakistan's military dictatorship, we are not only failing to promote tolerance, freedom, and democracy, we are contributing to the suppression of these ideals.**

leaders [would] be deterred from thoughts of similar adventures in the future.”<sup>87</sup> A top intelligence official later put the U.S. goal in plainer terms: “The aim of the program was to cause pain. It was revenge after the series of U.S. defeats in Vietnam, Angola, the Horn of Africa, etc. It was payback time.”<sup>88</sup>

The program in question covertly armed anti-Soviet fighters (mostly of Afghan origin) through the intermediary of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, negotiated a funding deal with Islamabad in February 1980 to bankroll the program, and then convinced Saudi Arabia to match it dollar for dollar.<sup>89</sup> During the 1980s, covert Central Intelligence Agency funding rose from \$30 million to \$630 million annually, totaling roughly \$3 billion over the life of the program. The Saudis are believed to have matched this rising spending level, largely for their own reasons (i.e., checking the perceived threat of post-revolutionary Shia Iran, spreading Saudi/Wahhabi influence, and deflecting militant Islamist violence away from the Saudi royal family), but with ongoing U.S. encouragement.<sup>90</sup>

At Pakistan's behest, the United States agreed not to interact directly with the mujaheddin (Arabic for “holy warriors”), as the anti-Soviet fighters called themselves. This meant that the ISI had to assume the elaborate task of marshalling fighters, delivering U.S. weapons, and training the insurgents to use them. To secure Pakistan's firm commitment to that task, some serious inducement was in order. Jimmy Carter offered Pakistan's military dictator, Zia ul Haq, \$400 million over two years for his cooperation in January 1980. Ul Haq rejected it as “peanuts.” He was more receptive a year later, however, when the newly inaugurated Reagan administration proposed a \$3.2 billion, five-year package (over and above the ongoing covert funding). Half of that package was in the form of military assistance and the rest was conventional economic aid. Pakistan got decisively onboard.

During the early 1980s, the CIA was

extremely careful in selecting the weapons with which it equipped its proxy warriors. Only Soviet Bloc arms, or vintage (and hence internationally available) U.S. items were delivered to the ISI. This permitted the United States to maintain plausible deniability—while there were many smoking guns in Afghanistan, none of them could be traced back to the contemporary U.S. arsenal.<sup>91</sup>

This level of selectivity was not applied in recruiting mujaheddin. The White House seemed to have only one simple rule in deciding on the beneficiaries of its anti-Soviet largess: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. America's best friend, by this definition, turned out to be ultra-orthodox Islam. To ensure that the United States had a large and constantly replenished supply of mujaheddin, Zia ul Haq turned to his country's madrasas. Shia, Barelvi, and Sufi madrasa leaders generally took a pass. They resented the occupation of Muslim Afghanistan by communist atheists but decided that indoctrinating students to become jihadi cannon fodder did not fit well with their teachings. Many Deobandi madrasa leaders saw things differently. They were not averse to molding boys into holy warriors, and so leapt at the chance to receive government aid and assistance in expanding their operations.

The majority of children groomed by Deobandi madrasas to fight in Afghanistan were themselves Afghan refugees. It is estimated that Pakistan had already taken in 400,000 refugees by the start of 1980, and the number climbed to between three and five million over the ensuing decade.<sup>92</sup> Most of these displaced Afghans lived in camps along Pakistan's northern border. At Zia ul Haq's behest and with his government's funding, Deobandi Islamists populated these refugee camps with militant madrasas.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to this local ideological pipeline, the ranks of the mujaheddin were also swelled by Islamist militants from all over the world. Some came on their own initiative, whereas others were enlisted by itinerant talent scouts from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

Both U.S./Pakistani involvement and the

influx of foreign fighters shifted the nature of the war. In the immediate wake of the Soviet invasion, the leading anti-Soviet groups had been organized and driven more by tribal allegiances than by Islamism. This home-grown guerrilla opposition was also highly factionalized. The ISI decided to impose order on the chaos by insisting that any insurgent group wishing to receive U.S. arms must set up offices in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. Only seven of the factions did so, four of which happened to be ardent Islamists. This was to have a profound effect on the ideological balance of power in the region. Journalist Ahmed Rashid, author of the book *Taliban*, notes,

Prior to the war the Islamicists barely had a base in Afghan society, but with money and arms from the CIA pipeline and support from Pakistan, they built one and wielded tremendous clout.<sup>94</sup>

This reality was readily apparent at the time. The Cato Institute's Ted Carpenter observed in 1986 that Gubiddin Hekmaktyar, leader of the Hesbiz organization (one of the seven CIA/ISI beneficiaries), was "an admirer of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini," who regularly referred to the United States as the "Great Satan." According to Carpenter, Hekmaktyar spurned "capitalism and democracy, as social poisons," vowing to "create a 'pure' Islamic republic in Afghanistan."<sup>95</sup>

In addition to arming such groups for hi-tech jihad, the United States became directly involved in their indoctrination process. Between 1986 and 1992, USAID underwrote the printing of explicitly violent Islamist textbooks for elementary school children. The University of Nebraska, Omaha (UNO), oversaw this \$50 million contract with the Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA), a group jointly appointed by the seven mujaheddin organizations that the ISI and CIA had taken under their wing.<sup>96</sup>

With this money, the Peshawar-based ECA published a series of first- through sixth-grade textbooks whose recurrent theme

was the promotion of Islam through violence. Taking rather a different tack than Dr. Seuss, these USAID-funded books instructed children that, in the Persian alphabet, *Alif* is for Allah, *Jim* is for Jihad, and *Shin* is for Shakir, adding that "Shakir conducts jihad with the sword. God becomes happy with the defeat of the Russians." Third- and fifth-grade books depicted automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and tanks. A fourth-grade mathematics text noted that "the speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second," and then asked students,

If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead?<sup>97</sup>

According to Craig Davis, a doctoral student who studied Afghan education for his thesis, UNO staff "chose to ignore the images of Islamic militancy in the children's textbooks," until well after the Soviets had withdrawn from Afghanistan. In fact, revised, expurgated versions of the books were not released until 1992 (three years after the Soviet pull-out). The putative rationale for their acceptance of the jihadi imagery was concern for the mujaheddin's "religious and cultural sensitivities," and a desire not to be seen as imposing American values.<sup>98</sup>

A somewhat different picture is painted by Thomas Gouttierre, director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at UNO since 1974. Gouttierre told conference attendees at the Brookings Institution in December 2001:

There was a mandate from Congress that said that the Afghans were going to be in charge of the content of their curriculum. This was passed on to the State Department and to USAID and any of those organizations of the government that were helping various organizations, institutions like UNO.<sup>99</sup>

**Although the repair of school buildings is commendable, the U.S. government should not be encouraging Iraqis to return to a centralized state-run education system.**

**The United States should not be pressuring foreign governments to legislate what their citizens can and cannot teach their children.**

Chris Brown, head of book revision for USAID's Central Asia Task Force, told reporters in 2002, "I think we were perfectly happy to see these books trashing the Soviet Union."<sup>100</sup>

Pragmatists argue that temporary alliances with unsavory parties are unavoidable in wars both hot and cold. There are certainly some cases that support this view. We supplied Stalin, arguably the most successful mass murderer of the 20th century, with hundreds of thousands of trucks, radios, tanks, and so on, during the Second World War because that made it easier to defeat the immediate existential threat posed by the Axis powers. But whether or not the *arming* of the mujaheddin can be similarly justified, the funding by USAID of violent Islamist textbooks was clearly wrong on moral, legal, and pragmatic grounds.

The moral argument is self-evident. Whereas adult mujaheddin could freely choose whether or not to fight the Soviets, we helped them rob their children of that free will, molding them into jihadis before they were old enough to think for themselves. This put us in the company of the most wicked dictators in history, and it should have been anathema to a country whose most touted virtue is respect for human liberty and self-determination.

The mujaheddin textbooks also flagrantly violated the religious neutrality required of Congress by the First Amendment. Yet, despite a 1991 federal appeals court ruling that USAID could not fund religious schooling in foreign nations, the agency funded the publication of a series of new Afghan textbooks in 2002, including devotional books interpreting the Koran and teaching Islamic Law.<sup>101</sup> As recently as the summer of 2003, USAID had not publicly ruled out publishing religious textbooks in Iraq.

Finally, no pragmatic argument can justify our bankrolling of these textbooks. Whatever short-term benefit they may have provided in helping to halt Soviet expansionism is clearly outweighed by the generations of violent Islamists these books have helped to create. Though official USAID-funded

publication of the unrevised mujaheddin textbooks ceased in 1992, the originals continued to be used in Afghanistan throughout the 1990s by both the Taliban and the anti-Taliban mujaheddin warlords. They also remained popular with militant Islamists in northern Pakistan—so popular, in fact, that they have been unofficially reprinted there as recently as the year 2000 (though no longer at U.S. expense).

Over the course of the Afghan conflict, White House officials were aware that they were building a powerful militant Islamist movement. They reasoned, however, that this was a small price to pay to check Soviet expansionism. Zbigniew Brzezinski would later ask:

What was more important in the world view of history? The possible creation of an armed, radical Islamic movement, or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few fired-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?<sup>102</sup>

Since the necessity of aiding the mujaheddin remains debatable, whereas the threat of militant Islamism is tangible and serious, the answer to Brzezinski's rhetorical question appears to be the opposite of what he implied a decade ago.

### **About-Face: What We Are Doing to Mitigate Militant Islamist Education**

Many Americans both inside the government and out now believe that militant Islamist education poses a long-term threat to U.S. national security. State Department and USAID officials told Congress in March 2003 that madrasas remain a grave concern.<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth Cheney, deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department, told participants at the June 2003 World Economic Forum of plans to promote more moderate curricula across the Middle East to displace militant Islamist teachings.<sup>104</sup>

It is also widely recognized that even non-militant madrasas can contribute to eco-

conomic hardship and political instability when they substitute for modern academic instruction instead of complementing it, since most madrasas do not prepare their students for the contemporary labor market.

Recent USAID projects aim to address these concerns by moderating the content of madrasas and/or increasing the availability and quality of alternatives to madrasas.

**Aid to Government Schools** Improving the public school system to draw children away from madrasas is the central goal of USAID's education operations in Pakistan. Christine Rocca, the State Department's assistant secretary for South Asia, testified at a House subcommittee hearing:

President Bush, last year, committed over \$100 million to help Pakistan's education system, and the idea is to provide an alternative to the madrasas and to support the government's efforts to reinvigorate or rebuild the education system, which was badly broken. When it comes to the madrasas, [the Musharraf government has] an internal reform program whereby they want to expand the curriculum, and we want to help with that as well, but, more importantly, we are helping with building up an alternative.<sup>105</sup>

She elaborated in a follow-up written response for the record:

One key element of the education challenge in Pakistan is the lack of good, available, public education. This lack of available alternatives has fueled the growth of the madrassas. USAID and several European bilateral donors are working with the Ministry of Education to address education shortcomings. . . . It is hoped that these programs may over time provide a popular alternative to the madrassa system.<sup>106</sup>

Wendy Chamberlin, former ambassador to Pakistan and currently the head of USAID

for South East Asia, added that not all madrasas are militant, but agreed that militant madrasas are a problem and that "simply building up a stronger public school system is a good counterbalance."<sup>107</sup>

In pursuit of that goal, USAID has chosen to underwrite the government of Pakistan's Education Sector Reform strategy.<sup>108</sup> The ESR is a purely Pakistani product, having been in the works since the late 1990s, a period during which U.S. aid to Pakistan was suspended in protest over the country's nuclear weapons program. It is a typical example of bureaucratic committee planning, offering bits and pieces to countless stakeholders in the education system, but lacking a clear and empirically grounded conception of how best to fund and organize schools.

Supporters of the ESR hope that it will reduce the corruption that currently infests the government schools, improve their management and efficiency, and increase the quality of their teachers and instruction. Although the reform strategy has specific components that target most of these issues, few of its recommendations have a consistent track record of success. To improve management and academic outcomes, for example, both administrators and teachers will be offered additional training. But extra training will not alter the current incentive structure that is so conducive to "phantom schools," to patronage in the hiring of teachers, and insufficient emphasis on academic instruction.

The reason that all these problems are rife in government schools across the developing world, but less serious in fee-charging schools, is that government educators do not need to satisfy the families they putatively serve in order to get paid. It makes little difference to their financial or professional futures whether they maintain their school buildings, control costs, or achieve good academic results.

The only one of the ESR's government school improvement proposals that even addresses the problem of warped incentives is the suggestion that teachers should be

**Realpolitik may dictate that we pay Musharraf for his assistance in apprehending terrorists, but that does not mean we should help to perpetuate his military dictatorship.**

**Although U.S. government aid is often assumed to help win over the hearts and minds of its recipients, there is little evidence of this result in Islamic countries.**

hired on a contract basis, making it easier to dismiss them. But although this proposal is commendable in at least recognizing the importance of incentives, it fails to replicate the successful incentive structure of fee-charging education markets. Although it motivates teachers to please administrators, it does nothing to ensure that the administrators themselves will use their new-found power wisely. In a market environment, by contrast, school administrators who hire or retain ineffective teachers risk losing students or even their entire schools, and hence their own livelihood is at stake. This incentive structure unites the interests of school administrators with those of parents: it is necessary to serve families well in order to safeguard one's personal well-being.

Absent this market incentive structure, the interests of administrators and families diverge, leading to the problems already rampant in Pakistani government schools. As the education minister of the North West Frontier Province admitted last year that

there were problems with monitoring and supervision, lack of dedication and a sense of responsibility, and problems with top-level management.<sup>109</sup>

The United States, with all its tremendous wealth and domestic managerial talent, cannot get its public schools to produce decent academic achievement for all students, maintain buildings in good condition, or avoid corruption and mismanagement. Why then should we expect Pakistan to be able to do all these things with or without our \$100 million grant?

Even more fundamental than the above concerns is the fact that the USAID commitment rests on a false assumption: that Pakistani public schools do not and will not promote the same kind of intolerance, hatred, and Islamist extremism as is doled out by militant madrasas. The SDPI report discussed earlier reveals that even Pakistan's most recent post-ESR textbooks instill animosity toward and mistrust of Hindus and

Indians, glorify jihad and martyrdom in the name of Allah, encourage militarism, contain devotional religious instruction, and are insensitive to Pakistan's religious diversity. So, even if the ESR were to miraculously transform academic achievement, stamp out fraud, and draw students away from madrasas, U.S. taxpayers would still be paying for the indoctrination and radicalization of Pakistani children.

Here is the nub of the issue: state-run schooling has always been one of the primary tools of tyrants. One of the most common first steps of would-be dictators is to shut down or take over private schools and then infuse the education system with a curriculum that consolidates support for their regimes and agendas. Lycurgus did it in the Greek city-state of Sparta two and one-half millennia ago, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Castro, and Saddam Hussein all did it the 20th century. By helping to shore up the government schools of Pakistan's military dictatorship, we are not only failing to promote tolerance, freedom, and democracy, we are actually contributing to the suppression of these ideals.

The lessons of history and of Pakistan's current government schools are going unlearned. The Bush administration, via USAID, is trying to get Iraq's government school system back up and running as fast as possible. Although the repair of school buildings is commendable, the United States government should not be encouraging Iraqis to return to a centralized state-run education system. Such systems are notoriously inefficient and ineffective across the developing world, they are unresponsive to the specific educational needs and demands of families, and they make it far too easy to indoctrinate children on a mass scale.

Even simple aid for the construction or repair of schools becomes futile when school buildings are owned and operated by governments. As already discussed, government school systems lack an effective incentive structure to ensure that new facilities are properly maintained, so they are far too frequently allowed to fall into ruin. According

to an education report on Northern India, three-quarters of government schools built after 1986 already needed major repairs just 10 years later.<sup>110</sup>

**Public/Private Partnerships** In addition to its efforts to expand and improve government schools, the ESR also includes a smattering of projects under the banner of public/private partnerships. These include “adopt-a-school” programs in which businesses are encouraged to become involved in the operation of government schools, internship programs for government high-school students, the contracting out of unused government school buildings to private schools, and various financial breaks for private schools.

The first two programs, while potentially offering some localized benefit, do nothing to alter the flawed incentive structure of the state system that has precipitated its current shortcomings. The contracting arrangement begs the question: why not simply sell the buildings to the private sector outright? Given the Pakistani government school system’s inability to effectively maintain the facilities it owns, transferring ownership to the private sector—which has shown more success in this area—would seem a better option.

The financial breaks to be offered to private schools include making property in rural areas and urban slums available to private schools at below market rates (even free in some cases), discounts on utility bills, favorable tax treatment, and even matching grants for school startup costs. It is not clear, however, whether some or all of these benefits will apply only to nonprofit schools or will extend to for-profit schools as well. This is a key issue since the overwhelming majority of the private schools that enroll 28 percent of Pakistani children, including many low-income children, are for-profit ventures.

Should these benefits be extended to all private schools, they would certainly help to make private schools more widely accessible and affordable, and this would be the ESR’s single most effective way of improving the education of Pakistani children and of draw-

ing students away from the ideologically problematic government schools and madrasas. Regrettably, the public-private partnership component of the ESR has been allocated less than one half of 1 percent of the total ESR budget.<sup>111</sup> As a result, the scope of its impact will likely be limited.

**Moderating Militant Madrasas** As indicated by the State Department and USAID officials cited earlier, the U.S. government is backing the ESR’s voluntary plan to

[m]ainstream the madrassahs into Pakistan’s general education system . . . expanding the curriculum used by the madrassahs to encompass modern courses in science, math, economics, English, Pakistan Studies, and computer education . . . [and] training madrassah teachers to teach these subjects<sup>112</sup>

According to USAID’s Wendy Chamberlin, the administration preferred general Musharraf’s earlier mandatory madrasa registration, auditing, and curriculum diversification program to the current voluntary scheme and is still encouraging him to carry through with it.<sup>113</sup>

The United States should not be pressuring foreign governments to legislate what their citizens can and cannot teach their children. We should not have one standard of respect for human liberty for ourselves and another, lower standard for foreigners. We should not preach the virtues of political democracy one moment and then strive to impose educational autocracy the next. To do so is simply incompatible with the ideals we claim to cherish and wish so fiercely to defend.

Moreover, even if we “win” the day and Musharraf cajoles or compels madrasas to teach modern subjects, it is not likely to affect their ideological extremism. Government schools in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia teach these subjects already, and doing so does not prevent them from indoctrinating children as they see fit. With the addition of computer science instruction, schools like Darul Uloom Haqqania would be more like-

**Unlike government schools, market schools have a financial incentive to expand their services to the widest possible audience and to operate as efficiently as possible.**

**Expanding access to fee-charging private schools would likely be the most effective means of improving the educational situation in developing nations.**

ly to turn out computer savvy, Java-coding jihadis than the next Bill Gates.

The madrasas would no doubt be supplied with government textbooks for modern subjects, and those books do not exactly preach peace, love, and harmony. Even if textbook selection is devolved away from the extremist Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education and handed to the provinces, the outcome is unlikely to improve. Islamist party coalitions rule the NWFP and share power in Baluchistan, and any textbooks they produce are apt to be even less tolerant than the current crop.

Equally unpromising is our approach to militant Islamist schools in Indonesia. The current plan, under which USAID is paying for sensitivity training for selected students from hard-line pesantren, is not simply a candle in the wind, it is a candle under water. While the students will be presented with a message of tolerance during a week-long seminar, they will return to schools that immerse them in hatred for the West every day of every year they attend. Perhaps the program will touch a handful of students and cause them to think, but hopes should be set decidedly low.

## **Some Broader Concerns**

### **Funding Indoctrination for Dictators**

One of the key elements in the White House's National Security Strategy is to channel substantially more U.S. foreign aid to nations that adopt freedom, democracy, and free enterprise than to nations that are repressive and authoritarian.<sup>114</sup> The official publication "USAID—Support for Democracy" describes how much of a priority it is for that organization to promote civic education around the world. In February 2003, President Bush described as "presumptuous and insulting" any suggestion that democracy is unsuited to the Muslim world.<sup>115</sup>

In spite of these official policies and views, we are openly endorsing and funding military dictator Pervez Musharraf's plans to

draw more children into Pakistan's state-run schools—schools that do nothing to champion liberty, democracy, or the separation of mosque and state. Musharraf himself no longer shows any intention of ceding power to the people of Pakistan, asserting in July 2003 that his country "is not ready for democracy."<sup>116</sup> Since seizing power in 1999 he has suspended the Pakistani constitution and outlawed the two most popular (and secular) political parties.

In supporting Musharraf's government schools we are supporting his government, and doing so at the expense of Pakistani citizens and our own purported ideals. Realpolitik may dictate that we pay Musharraf for his assistance in apprehending terrorists, but that does not mean we should help to perpetuate his military dictatorship indefinitely through bolstering educational indoctrination.

### **Money Can't Buy Us Love, But It Can Breed Resentment**

The Japanese people recently won praise from Egyptians for financing the construction of Cairo's new opera house. Over the past 25 years, USAID has spent more than \$25 billion in Egypt, of which more than \$6 billion was used to build a new physical infrastructure for Cairo and other population centers.<sup>117</sup> Egyptians, however, are not clogging the U.S. postal service with letters of gratitude.

There are many reasons for the hostility that Egyptians and citizens of other unfree countries feel toward the United States. U.S. support for Israel is of course one key factor across the Middle East, as is a complex combination of envy and scorn of American culture, but these are by no means the only factors. A December 2001 Congressional Research Service report enumerates others. Prominent among them is our support for unpopular regimes. According to the report:

Attitudes toward the United States often differ on the governmental and popular levels. Ironically, long-standing U.S. support for various regimes in the

**A privately funded partial tuition subsidy scheme would be a promising vehicle for broadening access to fee-charging schools.**

Middle East in some cases has adversely affected the U.S. image among mainstream residents. Much of the “Arab street” is critical of U.S. support for governments that are perceived by some segments of the population as dictatorial, corrupt, narrowly based, or un-Islamic. These labels are variously applied to important U.S. allies including Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia. . . . The United States draws blame from many in the region for its role in bolstering these regimes through political support, arms transfers, or financial aid.<sup>118</sup>

Both this report and a long line of U.S. administrations have taken the view that this is a price well worth paying. As long as the world’s dictators have been perceived as benevolent *toward us*, their angry citizens, in particular the “Arab street,” could be safely ignored.

The wisdom of this view is in serious doubt, for several reasons. First, it is arguably un-American. Second, the recipient states have not always been truly friendly (e.g., Saudi Arabia). And third, 9/11 proved that when angry citizens become angry terrorists they can become grave threats that are exceedingly difficult to deal with (because international terrorist organizations cannot be defeated by seizing any particular piece of foreign real estate).

### **Dubious Qualifications**

The U.S. government is not well qualified to offer educational advice to foreign nations. Consider the situation in Iraq. According to a June 2003 report by Reuters, “poor governance, three wars in two decades and 13 years of U.N. sanctions” left 6,000 to 7,000 of the country’s 16,000 schools “with no glass in the windows, no electricity and no functioning toilets.” The education system as a whole was summed up as “very dilapidated,” “decayed,” and “suffering from a lack of investment.”<sup>119</sup>

Compare that with the condition of U.S. public schools. The United States has seen no

domestic wars or sanctions over the past two decades. Instead, we have enjoyed a period of peace—with the notable exception of 9/11—and strong economic growth. Public school spending grew by more than 50 percent in real, inflation-adjusted dollars.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, we have 17,200 schools with defective or inadequate electrical systems, 19,500 with plumbing problems, and 22,700 with inadequate or malfunctioning heating, ventilation or air-conditioning systems. In all, 39,500 U.S. public schools have at least one (but usually more than one) major building feature in less than adequate condition.<sup>121</sup> That is one-half of all the public schools in America.

This dilapidation exists despite the fact that we spend nearly \$10,000 per pupil per year on our public school systems. Like the government school systems of developing countries, our public school systems lack a reliable incentive structure to ensure that regular maintenance is carried out on schedule.<sup>122</sup>

When it comes to academics, the United States is even less qualified to dispense advice. Our children do worse on international tests of mathematics, reading, and science the longer they spend in school. By the 12th grade they are near the bottom. Of 21 countries, we place 19th in mathematics, ahead of only Cyprus and South Africa.<sup>123</sup> About a quarter of our 16 to 25-year-olds scored at or below the lowest level of literacy measured by the International Adult Literacy Survey,<sup>124</sup> indicating that they were essentially locked out of white-collar employment. Despite this fact, we are eagerly re-educating Iraq’s teachers to use the “child-centered learning” philosophy so often questioned by experimental researchers but so popular in our colleges of education.<sup>125</sup>

## **Considering Alternatives**

Developing a strategy for effectively advancing U.S. interests while avoiding moral and legal quandaries is a difficult task. We will be successful in that task only if we are

**Fostering economic growth in developing countries is at least as important as subsidizing fee-charging schools.**

able to stimulate the same kind of vigorous and empirically grounded debate over our education strategy that currently exists over our diplomatic and military policies. The suggestions that follow are offered as starting points for that debate.

**Emphasize Private Aid over Government Aid**

Although U.S. government aid, particularly in the field of education, is often assumed to help win over the hearts and minds of its recipients, there is little evidence of this result in Islamic countries. As noted above, official aid sometimes has the opposite effect because the U.S. government ends up funding the activities of unpopular, repressive, and unrepresentative regimes. Private philanthropy, with the exception of explicitly missionary endeavors, tends not to rouse the same kind of resentment. USAID itself recognizes this fact. A recent USAID publication titled *Foreign Aid in the National Interest*, points out that private voluntary organizations are better able to “operate in politically sensitive situations” than either government employees or firms working under government contracts. The same document goes on to note that private organizations are often able “to conduct programs . . . faster and more efficiently.”<sup>126</sup>

But even if private aid is more efficient and less likely to breed resentment than government aid, does it account for a large enough number of dollars to have a measurable impact? As it happens, the total value of capital and labor donated internationally by U.S. private voluntary agencies was roughly \$6.6 billion in 2000, which exceeds the \$4.1 to \$5 billion in total government aid spent by nations like France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Taking the speed and efficiency advantages of private voluntary organizations into account, their contributions are clearly very substantial. When we add to this \$6.6 billion figure the contributions of foundations, corporations, higher education institutions, and individual remittances from immigrants to their home countries, the total private assistance provided by

Americans tops \$30 billion. That is three times the \$9.9 billion spent by the federal government in official development assistance.<sup>127</sup>

If private U.S. donors took cognizance of the empirical evidence on what works and what doesn't across developing countries, their contributions could achieve vastly more than either they, or government contributions, currently do. A specific example of how private donations could dramatically improve the education available to families in less-developed nations while furthering U.S. national interests is described in the next section.

**Expand Access to Fee-Charging Academic Schools**

The single most important pattern to be found among the education systems of the developing world is that private schools paid for at least in part directly by parents are consistently more responsive to parents' demands. As a result, these schools are far less likely to try to indoctrinate children than schools paid for entirely by third parties (whether governmental or private). When choosing and paying for their own children's education, parents in these countries overwhelmingly seek out practical academic instruction and career training that will allow their children to become economically successful. Both government schools and militant seminaries tend to attract students chiefly by virtue of their low or nonexistent out-of-pocket costs to parents.

The biggest lesson of the research comparing alternative school governance structures is that fee-charging market schools outperform government schools (and to a lesser extent government-funded private schools) in academic achievement, cost effectiveness, facilities condition and maintenance, gender equity, and enrollment growth.<sup>128</sup>

The reason for these patterns is not hard to fathom. Market schools paid for at least in part by parents must be responsive to the demands of parents or they cease to exist and their employees lose their source of liveli-

hood. Unlike government schools, market schools have a financial incentive to expand their services to the widest possible audience and to operate as efficiently as possible.

Even USAID and multilateral aid agencies that are ideologically tied to universal compulsory state schooling recognize these realities, though they are unable to follow them to their logical conclusion. A USAID project aimed at improving the physical condition of schools in developing countries reported that facilities are more likely to be maintained if those charged with school maintenance and improvement feel a sense of ownership. The project description did not acknowledge, however, that the best way of instilling a *sense* of ownership is *actual* ownership by the school's management. It did not mention that fee-charging privately owned schools across the developing world—and, for that matter, across the developed world—are generally better maintained than collectively owned schools, even when they are outspent by collectively owned schools.<sup>129</sup>

The practical upshot of these observations and findings is that expanding access to fee-charging private schools would likely be the most effective means both of improving the educational situation in developing nations and of promoting the U.S. national interest by lessening indoctrination. A potential difficulty in accomplishing this goal is that subsidies to fee-charging schools would lessen parents' contributions to the cost of their children's education—a key element of the market incentive structure that underlies the superiority of these schools.

Fortunately, the large-scale study of Indonesia cited earlier suggests that direct payment of tuition by parents has a diminishing return, and that significant benefit can be obtained when parents pay only a portion of the cost of their children's education. Coupled with the previous section's recommendation, this suggests that a privately funded partial tuition subsidy scheme would be a promising vehicle for broadening access to fee-charging schools. Another plausible approach would be to temporarily subsidize

fee-charging schools so that they could build up an endowment of their own, allowing them to eventually become self-sufficient at a lower tuition fee than would be possible without the initial subsidies.

These ideas are not new. They have in fact already been put into practice in one of the most challenging settings in the world: the city of Quetta in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. Quetta is a very poor, very rough neighborhood. Not far from the border with Afghanistan, it was home to one of the weapons trans-shipment sites used by the ISI to supply the mujaheddin during the Afghan jihad<sup>130</sup> and was an international hub for the regional heroin mafia after the rise of the Taliban.<sup>131</sup> It does not have an intrinsically hospitable climate for women's rights and education. Quetta is located firmly within northern Pakistan's tribal belt and is populated mostly by conservative ethnic Pashtuns. An Afghani champion of women's rights, known as Meena, was assassinated in a Quetta refugee camp in 1987 (reportedly with the help of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Islamist Heshbiz organization, a mujaheddin group backed at the time by the CIA).<sup>132</sup>

Despite this context, urban Quetta has been the setting for a successful World Bank education project aimed at increasing girls' enrollment.<sup>133</sup> Under this project, launched in 1994, families in 11 poor neighborhoods were asked to select a manager who would open a private school. The new schools were then to be given diminishing subsidies over the first three years of their operation. The planned subsidies were 150 rupees (\$2.60 U.S.) per girl per month in year one, 135 rupees (\$2.33 U.S.) in year two, and 100 rupees (\$1.72 U.S.) in year three. After that, schools were expected to become entirely self-sufficient, receiving no further subsidies. Participating schools were required to set aside at least 30 percent of the subsidies for a school endowment to help them achieve self-sufficiency. The new schools were permitted to enroll boys as well, but received no subsidy for doing so. The subsidies for girls were considerably smaller than the 200 rupees per

**U.S. agricultural subsidies make it harder for families in poor African countries to afford fee-charging academic schools, while giving them a reason to be hostile to Americans.**

**The educational impact of freer trade with Pakistan has a substantial national security dimension.**

student per month spent by local government schools.

In any event, financial independence took slightly longer than expected, but most of the schools became self-sufficient by year five. Of the minority of schools that continued to require partial financial assistance at this point, the *largest* subsidy required was just 30 rupees (\$.52 U.S.) per girl per month—15 percent of the average expenditure of local government schools. The average monthly tuition charged per student in year five was 58 rupees. Both startup and operating costs for the new private schools worked out to about one-quarter of the costs at a government school. The Quetta project thus combined the use of temporary subsidies for those schools that eventually became self-sufficient with ongoing partial subsidies for schools that need them.

The program's effect on enrollment was dramatic. Initial average enrollment in the treatment neighborhoods was 45 percent for girls and 56 percent for boys. By the end of the *second* year, these figures had jumped to 71 percent for girls and 76 percent for boys—a substantial increase for both sexes, and a halving of the initial 11 percent gender gap. In the control neighborhoods (comparable areas that did not participate in the program) enrollment remained essentially unchanged for girls and dropped substantially for boys.<sup>134</sup>

By concentrating their funds, skills, and volunteer efforts on replicating Quetta-style programs throughout Pakistan and the rest of the developing world, private donors could dramatically raise the enrollment of girls and boys in academically focused schools while lessening the existing incentive for families to send their children to madrasas or government schools. This approach would be far less costly than trying to extend the government school sector, and less fraught with the indoctrination, corruption, and abysmal facilities maintenance associated with that sector. The use of private rather than official government funds for this purpose would also secure

the benefits and avoid the pitfalls discussed in preceding sections.

**Eliminate Trade Barriers**

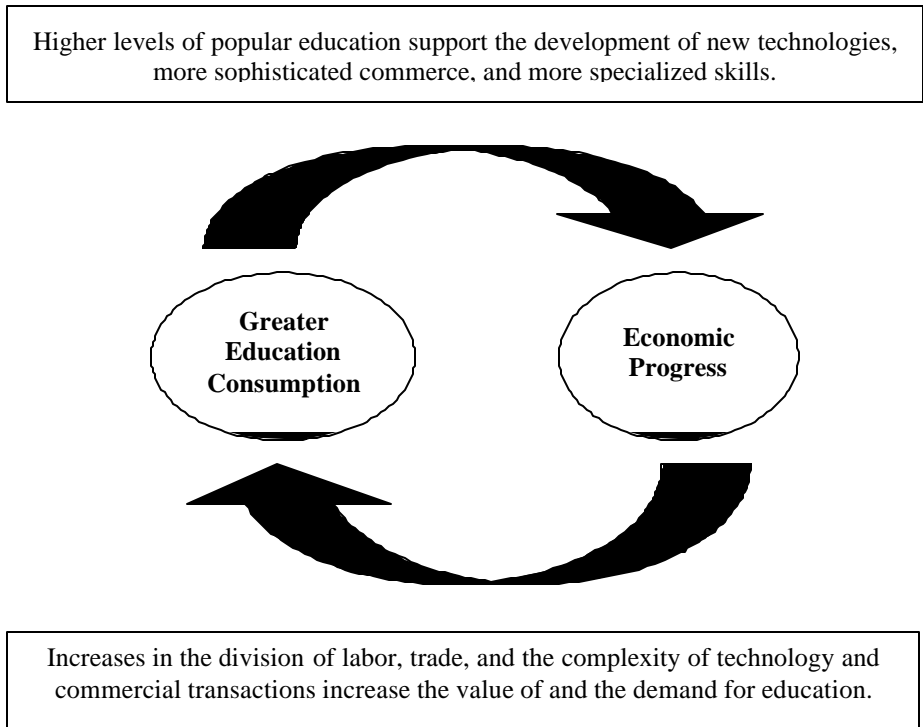
Since the 1990 United Nations conference in Jomtien, Thailand, the main thrust of the international development community has been “education for all”—the goal of getting all the world's children into school. This has been seen as *the* key to prosperity and self-sufficiency. In reality, it is only half the picture.

There is little empirical support for the notion that artificially boosting enrollment through foreign aid will lead to substantial long-term economic progress. Virtually all of the research showing returns to investment on education apply to naturally occurring rates of domestic investment, not to infusions of outside funding from donor nations. It is entirely possible that artificially boosting consumption of schooling alone will produce an educated class for which there are few appropriate jobs. Historically, societies have developed not because of isolated injections of additional schooling but through the gradual, continuous feedback loop depicted in Figure 1.

This virtuous circle has fueled the rise of world powers from classical Athens to the modern United States.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, if we want to facilitate a self-sustaining process that will steadily increase both the demand for modern academic education and the financial ability of citizens to consume that education, fostering economic growth in developing countries is at least as important as subsidizing fee-charging schools. An effective strategy for spurring economic growth would be for the United States to eliminate our tariffs and quotas on imports from these countries, and our subsidies to U.S. exporters, and to encourage other rich countries to do likewise.

Looking at the evidence of the past 200 years, researchers have concluded that unhindered trade is strongly tied to economic convergence—the ability of poor countries to catch up to rich countries in terms of standard of living. Economic historians Kevin O' Rourke and

**Figure 1**  
**The Virtuous Circle**



Jeffrey Williamson observe that “as long as they are members of the ‘club,’ poor countries tend to grow faster than rich countries, factor prices converge, and the living standard gaps between them tend to erode with time.”<sup>136</sup> Belonging to the “club” means being able to exchange labor and goods with rich countries with minimal hindrance from trade barriers. Conversely, protectionism and declining trade have been associated with divergence—the increasing impoverishment of already-poor countries with respect to rich countries. Agricultural subsidies in rich countries drive down world prices, further impoverishing already poor nations. Tariffs and quotas erected by rich countries make it more difficult for developing nations to sell their goods abroad, driving their citizens out of work, making it harder for them to afford private schooling for their children, and diminishing the value (return on investment) of that schooling by souring the labor market.

Unfortunately, our nation currently imposes substantial trade barriers. U.S. tariffs,

quotas, and subsidies dwarf official development assistance. The 2002 farm bill alone allotted \$15 billion to \$20 billion in subsidies, about double what the government spends on foreign aid worldwide.<sup>137</sup> These subsidies hurt poor agricultural exporting nations all over the world, including many Muslim ones. The international relief organization OXFAM published a report in October 2002 condemning the dumping of subsidized crops on the international market on the grounds that it destroys developing countries’ efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and build export industries.<sup>138</sup> Though this report focused on agricultural dumping by EU countries, the United States is a major culprit as well. For example, Mali (which is overwhelmingly Muslim) and Chad (which has a large Muslim population) suffer substantially because of U.S. cotton subsidies. These subsidies are estimated at just under \$4 billion in 2003, or an average of roughly \$150,000 for every cotton farmer in the United States.<sup>139</sup> The U.S. government specifically subsidizes the export of

**Any long-term strategy for fighting international terrorism must abate the indoctrination taking place in thousands of militant schools all over the world.**

**The consumption  
of modern  
academic and  
career training in  
developing  
countries will be  
constrained  
unless it is  
justified by  
increasingly  
sophisticated  
domestic markets  
and rising  
international  
trade.**

cotton, further aggravating the negative effects on Third World farmers.

In other words, U.S. agricultural subsidies make it harder for families in poor African countries to afford fee-charging academic schools, while giving them a reason to be hostile to Americans. Anyone wondering what Africa has to do with Islamist terrorism need only recall that Osama bin Laden was able to comfortably set up shop in Sudan during the 1990s, from which he

oversaw the Sudanese Islamic drive and trained radical forces in countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Chad until his Africa cells played roles in the August 1998 bombing of American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es-Salam, Tanzania, which killed 223 people and injured over 4,000.<sup>140</sup>

The infamous Somali “Black Hawk Down” episode has also been tied to Al Qaeda-trained mercenaries, and Somalia’s al Ittihad Islamist Party is on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations.<sup>141</sup>

Agricultural subsidies are of course only one aspect of the tripartite protectionist edifice of the United States. Quotas and tariffs also play a substantial role. Pakistan is a case in point. The clothing and textile industries employ three of five Pakistani workers, and the United States places substantial barriers on the import of their products. The U.S. imposes duties of more than 25 percent on cotton clothing imports from Pakistan, putting intense pressure on that nation’s economy. Though the Bush administration considered lowering these duties and raising associated quotas in the wake of Pakistani cooperation during the war in Afghanistan, it eventually elected not to do so. That decision cost many poor Pakistanis their jobs. One clothing worker, laid off for seven months, complained that “America is like poison to me. . . . I’m still bitter about it. I felt they were our friends.” Although the elimination of U.S. quotas, duties, and subsidies would not win over hearts and minds by itself, it would

avoid the creation of such bitterness. More important, it would allow this worker, and many others, to better afford tuition for his children at fee-charging schools.<sup>142</sup>

What is particularly galling about U.S. trade barriers erected against developing nations is that they hurt America’s economy as well. A recent study by the International Trade Commission found that the removal of significant import barriers would result in a welfare gain of \$14.4 billion to the U.S. economy. Liberalization of textiles and apparel would account for the vast majority of this gain. Furthermore, trade liberalization would cause a *net addition of 17,400 full-time American jobs*. In other words, the number of jobs protected by trade barriers is substantially lower than the number of jobs lost because of higher domestic prices for goods.<sup>143</sup>

The reason that quotas, tariffs, and subsidies persist despite the harm they do both at home and abroad is simple: politics. The beneficiaries of these trade barriers are few in number and they benefit substantially, giving them an incentive to organize and lobby vigorously for government welfare payments and protection from competition. The beneficiaries of free trade are very numerous, and the benefits of liberalization are thus spread more thinly. The average citizen does not have sufficient incentive to organize and lobby for free trade. U.S. trade relations with Pakistan are a case in point. The Bush administration originally intended to lower trade barriers with Pakistan considerably after 9/11, but could not get the necessary votes because of effective lobbying by the U.S. textile industry.<sup>144</sup>

At that time, however, the easing of trade barriers was seen as nothing more than an economic quid pro quo for Pakistani cooperation in combating terrorism. Protectionist legislators who opposed trade liberalization no doubt believed that their votes would at worst have a negative *economic* effect on the United States. But the *educational* impact of freer trade with Pakistan also has a substantial national security dimension. The fact that more families would be able to afford fee-charging acad-

emic schools and would thus rely less on madrasas for full-time education would be a significant positive development. This national security consideration should be stressed during all future debates over trade liberalization with developing countries.

## Conclusion

To be effective, any long-term strategy for fighting international terrorism must abate the indoctrination taking place in thousands of militant schools all over the world. Official U.S. policies in this field are either fraught with problems (e.g., beefing up Pakistan's government school system) or flatly counterproductive (e.g., trade protectionism). While no set of foreign policies or amount of foreign aid will transform world opinion overnight, there are promising alternatives to the status quo.

Promoting access to private schools paid for at least in part by parents would enable families to get the kind of practical academic and career-oriented training they seek for their children without exposing them to the ideological manipulation common in "free" schools (whether government or private). Because fee-charging schools are generally more effective and efficient than their government counterparts, a given level of financial assistance will do more good for more people at the same or lower cost. Education is a sensitive area, however, and so it would be more expedient to channel the vast private flows of aid toward this end than to pursue it through official government channels.

Another crucial step is the elimination of "beggar-thy-neighbor" trade policies. In addition to the well-known economic harm done by these policies to the U.S. economy, they cripple the prospects for self-sustaining economic and educational growth in poor nations and thereby harm U.S. national interests. Educational progress has historically been tightly coupled to economic progress, and the consumption of modern academic and career training in developing countries

will thus be constrained unless it is justified by increasingly sophisticated domestic markets and rising international trade. Every percentage point of duty we impose on poor countries, every shipment of goods that never happens because quotas have been reached, every \$100,000 of subsidies to domestic producers drives hundreds if not thousands of families in poor nations into the arms of "free" schools. Most of these schools pose little threat to the United States. Others, like Darul Uloom Haqqania and al-Mukmin, are factories of jihad. Voters and legislators should keep that in mind when next considering U.S. trade policy.

## Notes

1. Thomas L. Friedman, "In Pakistan, It's Jihad 101," *New York Times*, November 13, 2001, <http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2002/commentary/works/111301.html>.
2. Rick Bragg, "Nurturing Young Islamic Hearts and Hatreds," *New York Times*, October 13, 2001.
3. Alex Alexiev, "The Pakistani Time Bomb," *Commentary*, March, 2003, <http://members.lycos.co.uk/terrorism/pakistani-time-bomb.htm>. It is not clear on what evidence this estimate is based, however.
4. "Madrasas may be wary of government aid but foreign funding—private or state—is a status symbol. Indigenous madrasas have thus become part of a global financing network. Private charities collect alms (including zakat [an Islamic tithe]) from overseas Pakistanis in the Gulf, Britain and North America where Pakistani religious parties and jihadi groups have loyal constituencies." See the International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military," ICG Asia Report no. 36, July 29, 2002, p. 16, [http://www.intl-crisisgroup.org/projects/asia/afghanistan\\_southasia/reports/A400717\\_29072002.pdf](http://www.intl-crisisgroup.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A400717_29072002.pdf).
5. Husain Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2002, pp. 58–64, <http://www.ceip.org/files/publications/Haqqani112002FP.asp>.
6. These figures come from Friedman and P. W. Singer, "Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education Not Jihad," Brookings Institution Analysis Paper no. 14, November 2001, p. 2, respectively.

7. The International Crisis Group uses the 10,000 figure ("Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military"). Bragg gives a figure of 7,500. A special report by the *Asia Times* puts the number at 8,000 (Nadeem Iqbal, "Cynics Doubt Law to Reform Pakistani Religious Schools," *Asia Times*, June 28, 2002, <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/DF28Df01.html>). An article by CNN uses a figure of 10,000 (Ash-har Quraishi, "Pakistan's Religious Schools under Fire," CNN.com, September 13, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/09/13/pakistan.madrassah/>), as does Nadeem Iqbal in "Upgrading' Madrassas," *News on Sunday* [a publication of *News International Pakistan*], June 29, 2003, <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/jun2003-weekly/nos-29-06-2003/spr.htm>. Scott Baldauf used the figure 15,000 in 2001 ("Pakistan's Two Schools of Thought," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 03, 2001, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1003/p7s1-wosc.html>).
8. These figures come from Baldauf; Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts"; International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military"; Iqbal, "Cynics Doubt Law to Reform Pakistani Religious Schools"; and Christina Lamb, "'Nurseries of Terror' Surge in Pakistan," *Sunday Times* (of London), March 30, 2003, <http://membres.lycos.fr/tthreat/article35.htm>, respectively.
9. The Population Association of Pakistan provides the 25 million total enrollment figure, Table 5.3, <http://www.pap.org.pk/education.htm>. Close to one-third (28 percent) of Pakistani children are enrolled in private schools according to the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey of 2001-02, but virtually all of these students attend for-profit schools, not religious madrasas. See Pakistan Integrated Household Survey, Table 2.32, for the breakdown by school type.
10. A 10 percent figure is given in Nadeem Iqbal, "Upgrading' Madrassas." The figure is put at 10 to 15 percent in ICG, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military," p. 2.
11. See, for example, Lamb.
12. There are exceptions to this rule, however, such as the Al Mukmin madrasa in Solo, Indonesia, at which students are taught hand-to-hand combat. See John Aglionby, "Writing on the Wall for 'Terror School,'" *Guardian*, October 22, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/indonesia/Story/0,2763,816521,00.html>.
13. Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," pp. 58-64.
14. The Shia believe that Islam should be led by a hereditary line of imams descended from Mohammed, whereas the Sunni believe that it should be led by appointed caliphs.
15. Mandavi Mehta and Teresita C. Schaffer, "Islam in Pakistan: Unity and Contradictions," A Report from the CSIS Project, Pakistan's Future and U.S. Policy Options, October 7, 2002, p. 11, <http://www.csis.org/saprogram/islaminpakistan.pdf>.
16. Rana Jawad, "623 Fell Prey to Sectarian Killings in Punjab in Nine Years," *News International* (Pakistan), January 19, 1999. <http://www.karachi.page.com/news/sectarian2.html>.
17. Mehta and Schaffer, p. 11.
18. See, for example, B. Raman, "Punishment Terrorism: Questions & Answers—Part III," working paper no. 433, South Asia Analysis Group, <http://www.saag.org/papers5/paper433.html>.
19. See, for example, Eliza Griswold, "Where the Taliban Roam: Dodging the Jihad in Pakistan's Tribal Lands," *Harper's Magazine*, September, 2003, pp. 67-76.
20. Asim Hussain, "No Thanks," *The News on Sunday* (a publication of *The News International*, Pakistan), June 29, 2003, <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/jun2003-weekly/nos-29-06-2003/spr.htm>.
21. Iqbal, "Upgrading' Madrassas."
22. Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts."
23. See the already-cited essays by Hussain Haqqani, along with ICG, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military."
24. Singer.
25. ICG, "Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military," p. iii, Recommendation no. 9.
26. Quoted in Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy and Abdul Hameed Nayyar, "Rewriting the History of Pakistan," in *Islam, Politics and the State: The Pakistan Experience*, ed. Mohammad Asghar Khan (London: Zed Books, 1985), p. 170.
27. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 165.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 174-75.
29. One of Pakistan's most well-established think tanks, the SDPI, studies and offers policy advice on environmental and social issues. Located on the Web at: [www.sdpi.org](http://www.sdpi.org).
30. A. H. Nayyar and Ahmed Salim, "The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks

in Pakistan,” a report of the “Civil Society Initiative in Curricula and Textbooks Reform” project, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan, July, 2003, pp. 1–2. [http://www.sdpi.org/what%27s\\_new/reporton/State%20of%20Curr&Textbooks\(final-BB\).pdf](http://www.sdpi.org/what%27s_new/reporton/State%20of%20Curr&Textbooks(final-BB).pdf).

31. Consider this commentary from Pakistani writer Pervez Hoodbhoy:

Bureaucrats of the Federal Ministry of Education, and particularly the Curriculum Wing, brazenly pursue their narrow and destructive agenda, unfazed and undeterred by those seeking change. Knowing that governments come and governments go but they will stay on forever, the education bureaucracy has closed ranks to protect their mutual interests. . . . Numerous strong reform proposals for school education have been opposed, ignored, or mutilated out of recognition. In what must constitute the most brazen of practices, minutes of Advisory Board meetings have been changed at will, twisted around, and manipulated as seen fit. Not surprisingly what has emerged at the end of several months are mere platitudes.

Pervez Hoodbhoy, “What Are They Teaching in Pakistani Schools Today?” [www.chowk.com](http://www.chowk.com) (an online civic forum for South Asians), April 15, 2000, [http://www.chowk.com/show\\_article.cgi?aid=00000753&channel=university%20ave&start=0&end=9&chapter=1&page=1](http://www.chowk.com/show_article.cgi?aid=00000753&channel=university%20ave&start=0&end=9&chapter=1&page=1).

32. An alternative view is that the orthodox Islamist output of the Curriculum Wing is at least partially the result of foreign pressure. In a print interview, an unnamed government official reputedly told reporter Mohammad Shehzad:

The Curriculum Wing has been hijacked by a powerful lobby that is ultra-Islamist and follows the Wahhabi school of thought. The government of Pakistan receives huge funds from Saudi Wahhabis. Therefore it promotes the denomination practiced by the Saudis. This type of Islam has no tolerance for the Shia.

Mohammad Shehzad, “Textbook Controversy in Gilgit,” [SikhSpectrum.com](http://www.sikhspectrum.com) Monthly, no. 13, August 2003, <http://www.sikhspectrum.com/082003/textbooks.htm>.

33. Dore Gold, *Hatred’s Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2003), pp. 27, 47.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102.

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36. Steven Stalinsky, “Preliminary Overview—Saudi Arabia’s Education System: Curriculum, Spreading Saudi Education to the World and the Official Saudi Position on Education Policy,” Special Report no. 12, Middle East Media Research Institute, December 20, 2002, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=saudi-arabia&ID=SR01202>.

37. Cited in the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, “The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks,” CMIP report no. SA-03-02, February, 2003, <http://www.edume.org/reports/10/toc.htm>.

38. Stalinsky, “Saudi Arabia’s Education System.” See also PBS’s *Frontline* interview with Ali al-Ahmed, recorded on November 9, 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/interviews/ahmed.html>.

39. Background material from an investigation by *Frontline* for “Saudi Time Bomb?” November 15, 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/etc/textbooks.html>.

40. Gold, p. 13.

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51. Alex Alexiev, "Wahhabism: State-Sponsored Extremism Worldwide," Testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, Thursday, June 26, 2003, [http://www.senate.gov/~kyl/legis\\_center/subdocs/sc062603\\_alexiev.pdf](http://www.senate.gov/~kyl/legis_center/subdocs/sc062603_alexiev.pdf).
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106. Ibid., p. 51.
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