

book tills new ground. It should be part of all library collections and will also work well as a textbook for undergraduate and graduate courses on Hinduism.

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Faithful Education: Madrasahs in South Asia. By ALI RIAZ. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008. 289 pp. \$59.95 (cloth).
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Even though none of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers ever studied at a *madrasah*, American officials opine that *madrasahs* are incubators of Islamist militancy and vitriol against the West. Armed with many suspicions, little data, and no understanding of these institutions, the United States government strongly focuses its resources on undermining *madrasahs*—particularly in places like Pakistan. It is into this empirical void and political morass that Ali Riaz steps with his book *Faithful Education*. Ali Riaz, who is most known for his superb work on political Islam and militancy in Bangladesh, tries to inform this impoverished discussion about *madrasahs*, principally in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

After identifying the shortcomings in the dominant discourses about *madrasahs* in the first chapter and historicizing South Asia's *madrasahs* in the second, in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, he seeks to describe the *madrasah* systems of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India in turn. The task is daunting given the space of the exposition and the results are uneven.

His Pakistan findings overlap with other contemporary products, including my own *Madrasah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: USIP, 2008) and that of Saleem H. Ali, *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrasahs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). While much of this retelling is well executed, Riaz makes a number of problematic assertions. First, he facilely dismisses the incisive study by Andrabi et al. (Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, Asim Khwaja, and Tristan Zajonc, "Religious School Enrollment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data," John F. Kennedy School of Government Working Paper, no. RWP05-024, March 2005) on household utilization of *madrasahs* and other schooling in Pakistan. Andrabi et al. focus exclusively on full-time *madrasah* enrollments. Most scholars, including Riaz, fail to distinguish between full-time and part-time enrollments. This is a huge flaw as *madrasahs* are not substitutes for other kinds of education but rather are complements to the same. To misunderstand this is to misunderstand the education market fundamentally.

Second, Riaz focuses upon the absolute numbers of *madrasahs* and enrollments. But, the best measure of *madrasahs*' popularity is the market share that they enjoy, which is defined by the number of full-time students enrolled in

madrassahs divided by all children who are enrolled full-time. Andrabi et al. reports that the market share of *madrassahs* is stable or declining at less than 3% since 1991.

Third, Riaz repeats the assertion that *madrassahs* are the resort of the poor and a response to the state's failure. However, there are more wealthy children in *madrassahs* than in public schools (11.7% vs. 3.4%) and only somewhat more of the poorest students (43.0% vs. 40.4%) (Andrabi et al. "Religious School Enrollment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data;" Social Policy and Development Centre in Pakistan, *Social Policy and Development Centre in Pakistan: Annual Review 2002–03: The State of Education* (Karachi, Pakistan: SPDC, 2003)). Andrabi et al. also observe that of the small numbers of households who use a *madrassahs* for one child, nearly 75% use other schools for their other children. Poverty cannot explain these household choices.

Unfortunately, many of these flawed questions, assumptions and data analysis persist across the chapters on India and Bangladesh as well.

In his chapter on Bangladesh, Riaz reaches his stride. It is evident that this is where Riaz is empirically most at home as this chapter is the most granular in its analysis. Riaz carefully tweezes the connections between *madrassahs* and domestic and international Islamist militants. Riaz's conclusions are stark: some of Bangladesh's *madrassahs* "have become a menace to society: the nature of Bangladeshi society is under threat, as well as the security of the state" (p. 160).

In the fifth chapter on India, Riaz attempts to provide some concept of how *madrassah* education is structured across India but the results tantalize rather than satisfy owing to the diversity of India. As with Bangladesh and Pakistan, there has been speculation that *madrassahs* may be tied to terrorism. This discussion tends to hinge upon political atmospherics rather than data and will likely remain so.

In Chapters 6 and 7, Riaz retrospectively and prospectively assesses *madrassah* reform. Riaz argues that "Reform cannot be merely for its own sake; instead it should be linked to the intrinsic role of *madrassahs* in the contemporary world" (p. 223). Since the role of *madrassahs* is to produce religious scholars, the most germane question is not should *madrassahs* teach math or science but rather does the current systems of *madrassah* education in South Asia train future Islamic scholars who are capable of dealing with and adjudicating issues in the contemporary world? Riaz answers "Barring a few exceptions, the answer is indisputable negative" (p. 224). Riaz prescriptions are a first start but the barriers to reform are enormous.

In short, Riaz book is an important first attempt at examining this important phenomenon across the region of South Asia but it is not the final word. Much work remains to be done.

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