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Christian Indonesia Respond of Deobandi Religious Education for New Taliban Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Background: Since the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban has regained control, ushering in a new era shaped by its Deobandi-based ideology. This transition highlights the role of Deobandi religious education in shaping Afghan society and governance.

Purpose: This paper examines the role of Deobandi religious education in the new Taliban regime and its potential impact on Afghanistan's future, particularly in terms of multiculturalism, economic development, and human rights.

Methods: A qualitative analysis is conducted through a historical review of the Deobandi movement, coupled with a comparison to Indonesia's multicultural education system. The study evaluates the application of these teachings in the context of contemporary Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

Result: The findings suggest that while the Deobandi tradition emphasizes conservative religious principles, it also holds the potential for fostering greater tolerance and economic development if adapted to modern needs. However, the Taliban's current approach often conflicts with broader ideals of pluralism and gender equality.

Contribution: This study provides insights into how Deobandi teachings might evolve in a modern context, contributing to debates on the reform of religious education in Afghanistan. It also offers policy recommendations based on Indonesia's experience with integrating religious and cultural diversity into national education systems.

Keyword: Christian Indonesia; Deobandi theology; Taliban Afghanistan

History of Deobandi Islam

The Deobandi school of Islam was founded in the latter half of the 19th century. It was part of a series of revivalist movements that were sweeping British India during the time. After the 1857 revolt against the British colonialists, Muslims in British India were the primary targets during the ensuing British crackdown because

the revolt was fought under the leadership of the Muslim Mughal emperor. As part of the crackdown, the British occupied religious sites in Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire for several centuries. Muslim clerics in Delhi enjoyed the patronage of the Mughals, but this changed once the British occupied the city. The last Mughal emperor was exiled to Rangoon, Burma, and the British occupied the mosques in Delhi. This caused many ulama (religious clerics) to migrate to various locations, such as the northern Indian town of Deoband, to preserve their religious life and culture. Deoband was a natural choice because it was a center of Muslim culture, and many families from Deoband had served in the Mughal Empire. Moreover, it was only 90 miles away from the former Mughal capital of Delhi. In 1867, Darul Uloom was founded in the town of Deoband as one of the first major seminaries to impart training in Deobandi Islam. In addition to being close to other Muslim cultural centers in northern India, the founders of Darul Uloom believed that the decision to establish the seminary had divine sanction. By 1967, Darul Uloom had graduated 3,795 students from present-day India, 3,191 from Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh, and 431 from multiple other countries, such as Afghanistan, China, and Malaysia. By 1967, there were 8,934 Deobandi schools worldwide (Puri, 2009).

When the school was founded, Deobandi scholars were cognizant of the religious diversity within India, and they made an effort to engage in dialogue with India's non-Muslim population. In 1875 and 1876, for example, Deobandi scholars participated in religious debates with Christian and Hindu scholars.[6] They jointly fought with non-Muslims against the British during India's colonial resistance, and they also participated in non-violent struggles against colonial rule. Even the town of Deoband itself is located in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, where Hindus form 62.7% of the total population of approximately 452,000 people.(Puri, 2009) Moreover, during the initial period of Darul Uloom's establishment, Hindus reportedly contributed to its operating expenses.

The Deobandi movement became the most popular school of Islamic thought among Pashtuns living on both sides of the Durand Line. Many prominent Pashtun community leaders established Deobandi seminaries in these areas. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, a prominent Pashtun leader, was instrumental in establishing several schools based on Deobandi curriculum in the Pashtun belt. In other parts of British India, however, they faced competition from other Islamic schools, primarily Barelvi

Islam. Barelvi Islam, for example, remains the most popular Islamic school in what is now Pakistan's Punjab Province.

As in other South Asian schools of Islam, such as Barelvi and Ahl-e-Hadith, Deobandi places particular emphasis on the importance of religious education. It is committed to a "correct" interpretation of Shari`a (Islamic law). Deobandi students become alim (religious scholars) after an eight-year-long course in various aspects of Islamic learning such as logic, Islamic jurisprudence, the Qur'an, the history of literature and the hadiths. Deobandi scholars are opposed to certain Barelvi practices, such as visiting the tombs of saints. Their opposition to these practices, however, is not as rigid when compared to Ahl-e-Hadith, which follows a narrower interpretation of Islam. In that respect, Ahl-e-Hadith is similar to Saudi Wahhabism, although it remains of South Asian origin (Puri, 2009).

The Deoband movement is now one of the most significant strands of Sunni Islam in the world. The loosely affiliated grassroots network of schools has become synonymous with traditionalist resurgence and resistance to Western cultural dominance and its accompanying knowledge economy. Metcalf's study of the school's 1866 inception has stimulated continuous academic interest, and this has been strengthened by more recent work like those of Zaman and Ingran. To understand such developments, we must first place the movement against the backdrop of religious revivalism in pre-partition India. We will see that although formal allegiance to Suf tariqa-s has decreased among the Ahle Sunnah wal jamat, both the Deobandi and Barelvi schools carry forward the central elements of tasawwuf and the underlying theological assumptions. In this light, the Deobandi continue to thrive as post-tariqa expressions of Suf Islam: they are Sufs reforming Sufsm (Ramsey, 2004).

The story of the Taliban begins with the madrasas of western Pakistan and the interference of foreign powers in the affairs of South Asia. The dominant Sunni school of law in South Asia is the Hanafi *maddhab*. This would suggest that the Sunni Muslims of Pakistan and their institutions of religious learning are also associated with the Maturidite school of theology, or at least its creedal manifestation. That would include the Sunni Muslims of the modern reform indeed Deobandi madrasa movement. But the turbulent events of the last forty years dramatically changed the religious landscape of the region and displaced the

normative Hanafi Sunnism that had been dominant there for centuries (Halverson, 2010).

Since the Taliban rolled into Kabul on September 26, 1996, Western media have grappled with the question of the nature of Islamic radicalism and its relation to religious education (Hefner, 2010). One recent development in the Islamic world which has caught the eye of Western reporters is the increasing prominence of institutions of religious education, usually known as madrasas, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but also in India, Egypt, and indeed throughout the Islamic world. Journalistic attention to this topic has been remarkable. A Lexis-Nexis search of newspaper reports for the year following September 11, 2001, reveals hundreds of separate articles devoted to the new madrasas. These institutions, we are told, have spread like wildfire in the Muslim world, particularly in South Asia. Their rise is linked, inevitably, to the political movement known loosely as "Islamism," and to the popularity of groups such as the Taliban and the emergence of new Muslim leaders such as Usama bin Ladin. It is not clear that these madrasas represent a uniform type. According to Hassan Madni, Director of Islamic Studies Department at Jamia al-Islamia in Lahore, The Taliban achieved power in Afghanistan through their individual struggle and enforced an ideal Islamic system there. Our religious scholars fully supported it. In contemporary Islamic history if we see Islam enforced anywhere and peace achieved it was in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime (Sial 2012, 88; Charles, 2004, 16).

Religious Education System

The Deoband movement is now one of the most significant strands of Sunni Islam in the world. The loosely affiliated grassroots network of schools has become synonymous with traditionalist resurgence and resistance to Western cultural dominance and its accompanying knowledge economy (Ramsey, 2004, 104). The word madrasa in Arabic simply means "school," and can be applied to a wide variety of institutions. The madrasas at issue here are schools, many of them independent of government control, that in some way have an ex-plicitly Islamic character. Not infrequently, these institutions are caricatured as "medieval." And indeed, the madrasa was one of the central institutions of religious life in much of the medieval Islamic world. Strictly speaking, there is no question of any direct institutional

continuity between any of the contemporary madrasas and those which figured so prominently in medieval life. The great al-Azhar mosque in Cairo is some-times spoken of as the oldest university in the world; unfortunately, for all its sentimental appeal, the assertion has little historical meaning. But in more general terms, to what extent can a historian of Islamic education recognize in these new schools' institutions related to or descended from the medieval Islamic madrasa?

According to Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are over 18,000 registered madrassas in the country, although the actual number of Islamic schools could be as high as 40,000. Madrassas are run on a strictly sectarian basis and, thanks to the inflow of Saudi funding in the 1980s, the network of Deobandi madrassas has expanded most rapidly: in 2002, out of a registered total of 10,000 madrassas, 7,000 were Deobandi, 1,585 Barelvi and 419 Shia.11 In 2002 the government launched a voluntary madrassa registration programmed that sought to improve the state's oversight of madrassa curricula and activities, but according to the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy, only 10% of previously unregistered madrassas have complied. Mushrooming madrassas intensify sectarian divisions by highlighting theological differences, denouncing the beliefs and practices of rival sects, and disseminating propaganda materials that fuel cycles of sectarian violence (Huma, 2012, 7).

The *madrassa*, that provided the ideological inspiration for the vast majority of *madaris* in the Af-Pak border region later on, was established with two main goals in mind: a) to provide a more puritanical (and hence rigid) interpretation of Islam that would purge and protect Islam from any contemporary innovations; and b) to organize a religious education movement against British occupation. The puritanical *Deobandi*'s were fiercely against all innovations and departures from orthodox Islamic beliefs. They also opposed any activity relating to a reinterpretation of the canon law (*ijtihad*) and considered the minority *Shi'a* Muslim community as heretical (Ashraf Sarah, 2012, 9).

Religious education in Afghanistan can be divided into the public i.e., government schools known as the 'official madaris' (rasmee madaris) and the private unregistered ones (khusoosi madaris). Private madaris in Afghanistan grew out of the traditional teaching circles (halaqa) that imparted religious education informally, via a network of teacher-student relationships. The first private madaris in

Afghanistan were thus institutions funded by affluent elders of society and operated without any government influence. The majority of private madaris even today remain independent and unregistered with any government or private body in AfghanistanThe most common institutions of religious education in Afghanistan are the *Dar ul Hifaz,* like the *maktab* in Pakistan, where the students focus on memorization (*hifz*) and recitation (*tajwid*) of the Quran; and the *Madaris,* responsible for imparting Islamic knowledge via a religious syllabus at secondary and higher-level studies. Many *madaris* also offer basic religious classes and Quran studies for younger students. Since then, the public administration of Islamic education in Afghanistan has been dealt with by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Hajj and Endowment.

According to a Ministry of Education survey, there were some 336 Islamic schools in Afghanistan in 2007, accounting for only 1.54% of the total students studying in public and community-based schools, and not including private schools (Ashraf Sarah, 2012, 17). The curriculum in most Afghan Sunni madaris is also based on the Dars-i-Nizami and affiliated with the Dar ul Uloom Deoband. However, Afghan madaris still lack the formalized system of religious education that could award degrees and confer higher levels of recognized qualifications upon their students. Afghan students seeking religious instruction travel to Pakistani madaris due to a combination of factors including the availability of higher-level religious degrees, the reputation and quality of educational institutions as well as access to well-reputed Islamic scholars. Some Afghan universities do offer the bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies; however, students need to go abroad for any higher degrees.

In addition, students from private madaris find it difficult to gain acceptance in Afghan universities if they wish to take the bachelor's degree, and travel abroad for that reason. Formal degrees from known Pakistani madaris such as Jamia Uloom Islamia Binori Town in Karachi and the Dar ul Uloom *Haqqaniya* are often recognized as a sign of quality amongst Afghan clergy.[1] Thus, the quality and prestige associated with well-reputed religious scholars and particular institutions remain the most significant factors accounting for the movement of Afghan students into Pakistani *madaris.* These *madrassa* graduates then return to Afghanistan as

teachers, religious leaders, scholars, judges, and even on occasion as recruits for militant groups operating in Afghanistan. The movement of people in the religious education sector is therefore mainly from Afghanistan to Pakistan and explains the infiltration of religious ideologies, curricula and teaching methods from Pakistan into Afghanistan.

The anthropologist Olivier Roy calls such movements "neo-fundamentalist" to distinguish them from what can be seen as a different set of Islamic movements, often called "Islamist." Limited, as he puts it, to "mere implementation of the *shari`a*" in matters of ritual, dress, and behavior, "neo-fundamentalist" movements are distinguishable from Islamist parties primarily because, unlike them, they have neither a systematic ideology nor global political agenda. A more precise label for them is, perhaps, "traditionalist" because of their continuity with earlier institutions, above all those associated with the seminaries and with the *`ulama* in general (Barbara, 2001).

Deobandi Theology from its inception the school at Deoband made a sharp distinction between ‘revealed’ or sacred knowledge, and ‘human’ or secular knowledge. The school excluded all learning that was not obviously Islamic by firmly rejecting other religious traditions (the Hinduism of India and the Christianity of the British missionaries) and forbidding Western style education and the study of any subjects not directly related to the study of the Quran. The school was also highly critical of Islam as it was practiced in the modern world, especially India. They felt the established religious order had made too many compromises with its foreign environment and therefore Islam needed to be purified of these foreign elements. To live out the pure Islamic tradition they embraced Taqlid (acceptance of the old interpretations) and rejected ijitehad or reinterpretation of Islamic precepts to accommodate the changing times. It should also be noted that they are strict adherents to the Hanafi school of thought. This last point is critically important in understanding Deobandi (and by extension, Taliban) reasoning.

When putting the Hanafi legal code into practice two fundamental principles are always considered. First, the eventual outcome of an act must be considered before that act can be judged to be ethically permissible. For example the fact that a woman does not cover herself completely in public may not, in itself, be haram (forbidden). However, because it is likely to lead to a forbidden act, i.e., immorality,

the activity is not permitted. The same can be said for women being treated by medical doctors or measured for clothes by a tailor. Medical examinations or proper fitting clothes are not forbidden. However, the fact that a doctor (or tailor) may entertain sexual thoughts while performing their duties makes this a forbidden practice. The second principle revolves around Ruskhah (what is permissible) and azeemah (what is honorable). The practice states that what is honorable should take precedence over what is permissible. For example, it is “permissible” to take a life for a life but the “honorable” thing to do is to forgive.

In the Afghan context it is difficult to arrive at a consensus when using this principle because often ethnic and tribal norms become factors in deciding what is permissible and what is honorable. Thus, the above example would be true in an Indian context but because of long-held tribal beliefs the Taliban in Afghanistan reaches the opposite conclusion. In short, it is sometimes impossible to sort out what is ‘Islamic’ from what is ‘tribal’ in Afghan society.

The Afghan Muslim response was to declare a jihad to cast out the infidel from their borders. Afghans were spirited fighters because they saw their cause as a holy mandate. Madressas produced young men who were primed to be fierce anti-Communist fighters. These new madressas were financed in part by the U.S., Britain, and Saudi Arabia, as part of their humanitarian programs to increase the literacy level in Pakistan. It is no accident that these schools sprung up in Pakistan along the Afghanistan border. Young men streamed back and forth across the border to these institutions which provided the spiritual motivation to resist the Soviet threat. The madressas indoctrinated its students with a love of Islam and a hatred for un-Islamic influences. It is important to note that military and/or terrorist training was not part of the madressas’ curriculum. This was conducted elsewhere in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Military training, however, was often pursued both during and after studying at a madressa. For Afghans, involved in a jihad against an atheistic communist invader, it seemed that some form of military training was a natural and logical extension of the education that was received through the madressa system (Mahdi, 2021).

Reflection on Indonesia as Largest Muslim in the World.

Indonesia is a country with a high diversity in various cultural background, ethnicity, language, and religion diverse. Thus, strategic approaches and instruments that can be utilized as a national movement to realize the national unity and integrity toward a sovereign and dignified nation are required. One of the instruments is the multicultural education. Based on the field analysis, the diversity implementation of current multicultural education in Indonesia can be explained from several aspects: diversity in the concept dimensions, diversity in the meaning dimensions, diversity in the content dimension, diversity in the cultural dimensions, diversity in primordial dimensions, diversity in egocentric dimensions, and diversity in the religious dimension (Suyahman, 2016).

Education is at the core of Islamic teachings leading the preachers of Islam, *'ulamā',* and Muslim rulers since the early history of Indonesian Islam to employ mosques and *langgar* as well as to adopt existing local institutions such as *surau* and *pesantren* or *pondok* as the places for Muslims to study Islam. A new momentum in the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia has taken place in the last three decades at least. There are two historical courses that have been adopted: firstly, by fully integrating Islamic educational institutions into national education which are run and financed by the government and, secondly, by making standardization of Islamic education in accordance with national standards while the ownership and administration remain mostly in the hands of Muslim organizations and communities (Azra, 2018). Religion, in the context of Indonesia, appears even more frequently than culture as one aspect of multicultural reality (Parker and Hoon 2013; Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta 2003). Therefore, leaving out religion in the discussion of Indonesian multicultural education will have a consequence of missing out one of the central points of diversity in the country. In this context, multicultural education is also meant as education for religious diversity (Raihani, 2017).

Multicultural education is really conduct of care and understanding toward the politics of acknowledgment for the minority bunches. Within the setting, multicultural instruction perceives a wider public. Based on the fundamental see that the separation and non-recognition are not only rooted in racial awkwardness, but the worldview of multicultural instruction also incorporates the subjects of injustice, poverty, persecution, and backwardness of the minority bunches totally different

places, social, culture, financial matters, instruction. Multicultural Education Concept based on al-Quran We need to muse some lessons said Allah through his messengers found in al-Quran. We need to optimize religion role as integration and unifier factor. al-Quran, for the example, there are some verses which can be based to respect and reconsolidate between human being, as stepping to do fair and wise in understanding the difference - al-Hujurot, verse: 13: “O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware (Miftah, 2016).

CONCLUSION

As Taliban new era is start and make statement that they say there will be no revenge attacks on those who worked for the government or its security services, and that “life, property and honor” will be respected. They are urging Afghans to remain in the country and have pledged to create a “secure environment” for businesses, embassies, and foreign and local charities. the Taliban leadership says it is open to women’s education, but rights groups say the rules vary depending on local commanders and the communities themselves (Akhoar Tameem & Krauss Joseph, 2021*)*. Reflecting from the complex development of Indonesian society and recent development of its interethnic and interreligious relations, multicultural instruction is imperative to nurture fitting and strong values to social and devout differences. In this paper, we have appeared the political readiness of the Afghanistan government to create, though not as comprehensively as they ought to be, arrangements of multicultural education.

Based on the reflections multicultural education implementation in Indonesia, we would like to give the recommendations for the new era of Taliban for education system:

1. Religious leaders, community leaders, traditional authority, should make fatwa or religious law to support multicultural education, minorities, and women.
2. The Government should establish the assimilation of schools abstain from discriminatory treatment for any race, religion, and culture.
4. The Government should promote the multicultural activities, to build economy of nations.

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