

Rafeel Wasif | Research Proposal

Madrassas as NGOs:

Analyzing Madrassa Resistance to Government Funding in Pakistan

Dear Colleagues at AIPS,

I am currently finishing my 1st year in the PhD Political Science program at the University of Washington, where I am preparing research for my PhD dissertation prospectus on the significance of madrassas' choices to receive or decline government funding.. I will use the AIPS summer research fellowship to do research that will form the foundation of my PhD dissertation prospectus. I intend to finish my Masters Candidacy exams by the start of my third year, and be ready to defend my PhD dissertation proposal by the third year of my PhD. The summer research fellowship will be critical in enabling me to achieve these aims as it will allow me to collect the essential primary data that forms the basis of my research. I developed my madrassa funding research concept during my Master's Degree program in South Asian Studies at the Jackson School of International Studies. However, for my PhD, I am testing my theory empirically by conducting primary text data analysis.

The Pakistani government has introduced several different Madrassa Reform Programs over the last 60 years, which, by introducing secular curricula, aim to reduce the madrassas' potential as breeding grounds of violence and improve their educational outcomes. All such programs have been rejected by the madrassas. This has led to the assumption that Faith-Based Organizations like madrassas are much less likely to show flexibility in forging partnerships with the state because of their religious beliefs.¹ However, taking a cue from Bano, I argue that Madrassas are influenced by social and political circumstances as much as secular NGOs.² My research hypothesizes that the madrassas make a rational, cost-benefit analysis and reject the government package for institutional rather than ideological reasons. They reject the government-funded reform proposal because it would force them to change their branding as they would have to introduce secular subjects, as well as accept government interference which would challenge their claim to be outside the secular government's control. By rejecting the funding, they brand themselves as religious organizations and attract funds from important donors in the Middle East and locally.

Using AIPS fellowship, I will collect primary source to test my theory and support my PhD prospectus. I will analyse newspaper archives at the Press Information Department (PID) of Islamabad, and conduct interviews with officials at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris-e-Deeniya (the body which oversees all madrassa activity in Pakistan). I want to quantitatively test my theory through text-data analysis of madrassa brochures. I already have the list of madrassas who accepted government funding, and those who did not. I will collect material from approximately 200 of these madrassas (from Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore) and use text-data analysis to see how they are branding themselves to their target audience. I have already talked to Press Information Department, and Ministry of Religious Affairs who are willing to facilitate my research. I have also made contacts with Gallup Pakistan who are also willing to facilitate my research.

Regarding my background and post-AIPS plans: I have been a Fulbright scholar for three years now. I also have previous research experience on educational institutions through my role directing the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2011), the largest survey on education conducted by a non-governmental organization in Pakistan. The AIPS summer grant will allow me to do initial testing of my theory and develop the proper methodology for conducting it on a much larger scale for my PhD prospectus. After completing AIPS, I intend to submit my pre-prospectus essay to South Asian studies and political science

¹ Gerard Clarke, "Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organisations and International Development," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 77–96.

² Masooda Bano, "Co-Producing with FBOs: Lessons from State–madrassa Engagement in the Middle East and South Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 7 (2011).

journals, as well as use it for conference presentations (e.g. the Western Political Science Association and South Asia Conference of the Pacific Northwest).

I propose to leave for Pakistan around June 15th 2015, and be back by August 15th 2015. During this time, I can conduct my research, and be able to complete my paper on madrassas in Pakistan. My research can play a big role in understanding the madrassas' work in Pakistan, and possible ways to potentially reform them in the future. Thank you very much for considering my research proposal.