The Teaching of Pashto: Identity Versus Employment

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Working Paper Series # 46
1999

A publication of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Sustainable Development Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit research institute on sustainable development.

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Tariq Rahman

Historical Background

The first book of Pashto which is extant is Bayazid Ansar's (1526-1574) *Khair ul Bayan*[1]. It was written in the *Nastaliq*, the Arabic-based script as adapted for writing Persian, which itself 'began to be recognized as an independent form in the second half of the fourteenth century' (Hanaway & Spooner 1995: 3). It has been called a textbook by recent writers (Haq 1986: 143; Guide 1990: 8). It does, indeed, have passages about the rudiments of Islam which may be understood by ordinary people. Thus, there is a strong likelihood that it was part of the curricula of *madrassas*. However, Bayazid Ansar's opinions were considered objectionable, and some even outright heretical, by Akhund Darweeza (1533-1615) who countered them in his own book *Makhzan ul Islam*[2]. The *Makhzan* (or treasure) was a collection of famous Arabic religious texts in Pashto translation. Moreover, the language of explication was Pashto. This book is said to have been taught both in the madrassas and at homes. It was also read out to those who could not read it themselves. After this, the poetic collections of Rahman Baba (1653-1809) and Khushal Khan (1613-1689), both of whom appeal even now to Pashto-speaking people, were available for readers. However, even if couplets from these poets were quoted by educated people, there is no evidence to suggest that their works were formally taught anywhere.

The next book which is said to be part of the curricula, especially for women, is Mulla Abdur Rashid's *Rashid-ul-Bayan* (1717). It was read by women in their homes and was a kind of sermon in verse. The following lines from it will serve as illustration of the whole. The nature of the deity, for instance, is described as follows:

> *Na e naqs shta pa zat ke*
> *Na e aeb shta pa sifat ke*
> (neither has He any defect in His Being
> nor has He any fault in His qualities)

There were also a number of other books, as in the other languages of the Muslims of South Asia, which purported to explain religion and the moral system contingent upon it, to readers in these languages rather than the elitist Persian. Among them are *Nafe al Muslimeen* by Sheikh Akhwan Gada (1874); *Rabqat ul Islam* by Maulana Moizuddin; *Majmua tul Khutab* by several poets and a number of booklets called *Nur Nama*, *Jang Nama* and *Lahad Nama*. The latter are about the well known stories of Imam Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala, common beliefs about the questioning in the grave and so on. Such booklets were common in Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi as well and common people's beliefs about religion must have been greatly influenced by them. *Nafe al Muslimeen* and *Rabqat ul Islam* are both about the rudiments of Islam in verse. Their purpose seems to be a practical one: to make people behave in a recognisably Islamic way or, at least, to make them aware of such a

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1 The only manuscript dated 1611 is at the Tubengen Library, Germany.
2 The manuscript of 1592 is in the Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar.

code of behaviour. For instance the *Rabqat ul Islam* enjoins upon all readers to begin everything with *bismillah* (in the name of Allah) as follows:

Har sa kar che momin kandi
Bismillah boea pare bandi
(Everything the Muslim does – In the Name of Allah he says first)

The *Majmua tul Khutab* must have been really popular. It is a collection of versified sermons. It is said to have been read out at occasions such as the *Eid ul Fitr*. Some of the lines commemorating the departed Ramzan are:

Ajab daur voo Ramzan
La mung teer sho pa yovan
Ae momina lar zaman
Ghuara fazal da sufhan
(strange and wonderful were the days of Ramzan which we passed together
O good Muslims everywhere always desire the grace and blessings [of God])

This book is said to have been especially significant as a textbook in the Pashto-speaking areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan (Guide 1990: 11).

Moreover, the well known Persian book of tales, *Anwar Suhaili*, is said to have been taught in the Pashto translation also. While on the subject of translations, it may be worth noting that Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's *Bahishti Zewar* [the jewellery of paradise], perhaps the most famous Urdu book on the rules and regulations of Sunni Hanafi Islam, had also been translated in parts by Syed Tasneem ul Haq as *Da Jannati Kale*. Later another translation, this time a complete one, was made by Gulbar Khan under the same title. These translations, it is said, were read by both men and women like textbooks (Guide 1990: 11).

Pashto Books and Their Readers

According to some researchers, such as Sayedul Abrar, there were 'two classes of readers who read Pashto books: village women and story tellers in *Hujras*' (Abrar 1979: 90). Moreover, students from the *madrassas* where Pashto was a medium of instruction, also read them. The village women were not formally educated. They were, however, taught the Quran and some of the rudiments of religion by an older woman known respectfully as *Bibi* (lady). The Bibi generally used a Pashto textbook, often a versified one for interest, to teach the basics of Islam. From their exposure to the Arabic script of the Quran some of them also picked up literacy in the Pashto script which, being in *naskh*, was more similar to Arabic than to Persian. The women did not, however, confine themselves to religious texts. They also read story books, also in verse, which they bought from vendors. These were inevitably romances, notably of Adam Durkhani, Jalat Mehbooba, Musa Khan Gul Makai and so on, and were already part of the oral folklore since time immemorial. Professional story tellers sang them in the *hujras* (men's common rooms) in Pashtun villages and they too purchased the same books to which the women found access (Abrar 1979: 91). These popular books were very cheap. They had to be – after all, neither village women, *madrassa* students or story tellers had much income. As Abrar says:

> *The value of the books was always in pennys. The books generally used to be very short for the same reason. The very sight of these books was such that any person with a taste for beauty and get-up would not like to look at them or keep them with himself. Taste for study of Pashto books was almost at zero point among the educated class (Abrar 1979: 91).*

When Samandar Khan Samandar, a Pashto poet, spent his own money on printing his book *Da Quran Jara* on good paper he found that the books were not sold anyway (Samandar 1947: K). The reason for this is not far to seek. The British had made Urdu, not Pashto, the medium of instruction in non-elitist schools while the elitist ones used English. Jobs too were available in the lower domains of power in Urdu and in the higher ones in English. Thus neither money nor time were invested on Pashto by educated Pashtuns.

The British Teaching of Pashto

The importance of Pashto in British eyes can be gauged from the report on it which states that, in addition to being spoken in Afghanistan it is also spoken by 1,200,000 people in India. The report then goes on to say:

> *Pashto is all important as the lingua franca on the Indian North West Frontier. If there is any trouble there, a knowledge of Pashto is indispensable. Its political importance can be gauged from the fact that it is studied in both German and Russian Universities. It is also the language of our Pathan troops (Committee 1909: 117).*

This being its importance in British eyes, it was supposed to be learned by Englishmen. The order about this clearly states:

> *All the Indian Frontier officers and Missionaries in the frontier must know Pashto. These are many in number. At present they have to learn the language on the spot, and some who are good linguists know a good deal about it, but once they leave their duty their accumulated knowledge is lost. The arrangements for teaching on the frontier are imperfect (Committee 1909: 117).*

These arrangements were generally private ones. Englishmen generally hired private tutors, crammed grammars and lists of words written by English authors or took lessons from tutors hired by their organizations.

Among the linguists, there were many who wrote grammars and dictionaries. The most well known among these are Captain H.G. Raverty; H.W. Bellew; George Morgenstierne and, of course, George Grierson. Raverty's dictionary, completed in July 1860, must have been written before the British government had started showing much interest in teaching Pashto to its officers for political reasons. Thus, in his 'Preface' Raverty refers almost entirely to the military, and political, significance of the language. Among other things he says that Indian Pathans, or go-betweens of Afghan origin from India, should not be sent to Afghanistan to mediate between the Afghans and the government. 'But we can only free ourselves from dependence upon them, by sending as agents into the country men practically acquainted with the language spoken by the people, or, at least, with the language in general use at the court of the ruler to which they may be accredited' (Raverty 1860: iii). After that he says that the Pashtuns sided with the British during the upheaval of 1857 and, 'henceforth we should enlist Afghans, as well as Sikhs and Gurkhas, into every regiment' or, even better, create regiments of each ethnic group (ibid, iv). Another reason is that the Russians, who teach Pashto at St.Petersburgh, would be advantaged by their knowledge of the language whereas the British, who actually rule over the Pashtuns, would not be able to influence them (ibid, vi). Thus, argues Raverty, schools should be established 'for the express study of Pushto' and the government must make it compulsory for its officers (ibid, vii). His own

dictionary; textbook called *Gulshan-i-Roh;* and grammar; he says, are meant to facilitate the learning of this important language.

Raverty's complaint about British indifference to Pashto gains support from the fact that a German scholar, H. Ewald, rather than an English one, pioneered the study of Pashto. His article appeared in the second volume of the *Zeitschrift fur die kunde des Morgenlandes* in 1839 i.e during the British-Afghan wars and ten years before the British had annexed the Punjab (Ewald 1839). Dorn's *Chrestomathy of the Pushtu or Afghan Language* was published in 1847 from St. Petersburg and was known to both Raverty and Trumpp. Indeed, Ernest Trumpp, the great German linguist, whose grammar of Pushto which appeared in 1873, dedicated his work to Dr B. Von Dorn 'the Ingenious Pioneer of Pasto Studies in Europe' (Trumpp 1873: Dedication page). Wilhelm Greiger, another German linguist with interest in Pashto, also wrote articles on the sound system and a grammar of Pashto from 1893 onwards. Indeed, as Annemarie Schimmel in her extremely useful study of the German linguists who have studied Pakistani languages puts it, 'Geiger's contribution gave the study of Pashto a new, firm ground on which the coming generation could work' (Schimmel 1981: 154). The work of these 'coming generations', which has been described by Schimmel, is not relevant here (for details see Schimmel 1981: 154).

These German works provided material for the study of Pashto to British officers. However, since they were meant for linguistic study, they had less specifically pedagogical material than the works of British linguists. Indian tutors too wrote primers to help their British pupils learn Pashto. Indeed, the very first grammar of Pashto, entitled *Riyaz al-mahabba* was written by Mahabbat Khan, son of Hafiz Rahmat Khan Rohila, in 1806-7 'for a British officer' (Schimmel 1981: 140). One of the first such books was *Tutor to Pushto* and it was published in 1896 by Moulvi Ismail Khan as 'a perfect help to the lower and higher standard Pashto examination' (Khan 1896).

Some of the tutors of Pashto (or Munshis), such as Qazi Najamuddin Khan and Qazi Behram Khan, both father and son made this into a family profession. Behram's son Qazi Abdul Khaliq too became an 'officers language teacher' in Peshawar and wrote *Fifty Lessons to Learn Pashto* in 1970.

Pashto for the Pashtuns

Despite Raverty's recommendation about teaching Pashto to the Pashtuns, the British authorities did not do so – at least, not at a grand scale nor as a general rule. They did not because they believed that it was politically more expedient for the Pashtuns to become Indianised. Thus, the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Cis-Sutlej states wrote that he had introduced Pashto because of 'the political advantage of hastening the amalgamation of our provinces' (Letter of 17 June 1862 to the Secretary of the Punjab Government in Chaudhry 1977: 43) and the Director of Public Instruction confirmed that 'political motives' had 'a great share in giving the superiority to Urdoo over Persian' (Letter to the Secretary of the Punjab Government in Chaudhry 1977: 38). However, Pashto was tolerated in the primary schools as the unofficial medium of instruction and was even used for translation. Thus the *Education Report of 1861-62* tells us:

> *At present, in many of the border schools, all that the best a scholar can do is to translate the Goolistan into Pushtoo after his own fashion; but the teachers are being gradually brought under training in the Derajat and Peshawar Normal Schools, where they soon pick up a knowledge of Urdu, which they will on their return communicate to their pupils (RPI: P 1864: 3).*

Sometime later in the 1860s, however, the education authorities of the Frontier Circle did initiate an experiment to teach Pashto for schools in the Pashto-speaking areas of the Frontier circle (roughly what came to be known as the N.W.F.P). In the lowest class, the letters and numerals of Pashto were taught through a textbook known as *Nisab-i-Afghani*. This book contained both Persian and Pashto words and H.B. Beckett, the officiating Inspector of Schools, wrote to the DPI in Lahore:

> *This will enable the pupils to gain a gradual knowledge of Persian; as the book is a vocabulary of both languages in verse, compiled on the same principle as the Khaliq-bari (Letter to Major Fuller, DPI, dated 3 October 1866 in Punjab Records 1866: 343).*

After this *Saadat Nama* and *Qawaid-i-Afghani* were used. The former was said to be a collection of stories and the latter is an elementary grammar of Pashto. In the next class the Pashto translation of *Kulela-Dumnah* or *Anwar Suhaili*, as its Persian translation was called, was taught. This translation, by Afzal Khan son of the poet Khushal Khan Khattak, seems to have been part of popular Pashto reading. In class 5, however, Pashto was dispensed with and the students would learn only Persian and Urdu (*Punjab Records* 1866: 343-44). The education department had already prepared and circulated the *Tacheeloo-Tahleem da Pukhto* and *Nisab-i-Afghani* by 1866. The other books were in preparation. This experiment was to be carried out only in the Pashto-speaking areas which were mentioned.

The fate of this experiment, modest as it was, is not clear. However, individual British officers did initiate such experiments time and again. For instance, the political Agent of the Kurram Agency in the late 1920s, introduced Pashto for children. An education report of 1922-27 tells us:

> *An interesting feature of the Kurram schools is the prominence given to Pushtu, which forms part of the school course for primary classes. The subject is said to be well taught (RPI-F 1927-89).*

The schoolboys here seem to have learned Pashto well enough to write articles in it for the Urdu-Pashto magazine called the *Frontier Boy Scout*. Indeed, they even brought out a Pashto newspaper, the *Kurram Times* in the late 1930s. All this was possible, as were most things in colonial India, by bureaucratic blessing – in this case that of the political agents of the agency (PRI-F 1939: 107).

It appears that, despite the fact that Urdu and English were in demand because jobs were available in them, some Pashtun intellectuals did initiate a language movement – or, rather, the precursor of one – by the end of the nineteenth century. Such movements, as we know, are started by educated members of the intelligentsia who feel that their mother tongue should be promoted. One such person was Meer Ahmad Rizwani (1866-1934). Among other works in Urdu, Persian and Arabic he also wrote *Da Shakaristan-e-Afghani* (1905) and *Baharistan-e-Afghani* (1898). Although he taught Pashto to British officers and later served in the education department in various capacities, the fact that he was a Pashto poet and that he need not have compiled Pashto textbooks only for the purpose of teaching basic Pashto, suggest that he had the kind of emotional commitment to the promotion of Pashto literacy which the activists of language movements have. According to Humayun Huma, writing in an issue of the monthly *Pashto* devoted to Rizwani, the two books mentioned above were written to teach Pashto as a subject. They contain poetry and prose texts from ancient till modern times and Rizwani has added his own simple Pashto prose to the book also. His own prose is modern in that it has deviated from the established pattern of highly ornate, formal and ostentatious prose which was written earlier (Huma 1996: 35-36).

While in British India Pashto was patronised only by private enthusiasts among the British or in fits and starts; it was given the status of a written language, used in the domains of power, in the Swat state. This state existed from 1915 but the British recognised it in 1926. Earlier, Persian was the language of the state but Miangul Abdul Wadud, the ruler or Wali of Swat, changed it to Pashto (Husain 1962: 117). Since Pashto was now taught in schools, the Wali ordered the printing of books in Pashto (like the *Anwar Suhaili*) and the translation of new books. Even after the state was taken over by the government of Pakistan in 1969, Pashto continued to be taught in schools better and more thoroughly than in other parts of even the Pashto-speaking parts of the N.W.F.P (Mashal 1971). A report of 1991 about Swat tells us that out of the six government schools which were visited by the researchers, all used Pashto as the medium of instruction. The report tells us that 'about 80% of the students were able to read fluently from Pashto textbooks' and could also do mathematics in it. The writers of the report go on to report that:

> *Almost all the teachers and students were in favour of Pashto as medium of instruction, even in Kalam where the local language of the inhabitants is Kohistani, yet they have adopted Pashto as medium of instruction (Report 1991: 2).*

Teaching Pashto and Ethnicity: British India

With the advent of British colonialism, Pashto became a marker of Pashtun identity in a process which has already been described earlier (Rahman 1996: 137-138). Thus, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of Pashtun nationalists in British India, promoted its teaching as part of defying the British policy of teaching Urdu to the Pashtuns. This resistance, or ethnic, language-teaching was restricted to a few nationalist circles. Thus Ghaffar Khan was reported to have reopened 'the old schools in the tribal areas' which were called 'Azad' (free) schools since they accepted neither state aid nor the prescribed curricula (Ghaffar 1969: 57).

> *In these schools, according to Ghani Khan, Pashto was the medium of instruction (Ghani Int: 2 November 1993).*

Ordinary Pashtuns, going through the process of formal education mostly because it led to jobs, did not think it made pragmatic sense for them to burden their children with Pashto. Thus, when Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan (1864-1937), often called the Sir Syed of the N.W.F.P (because as a chief minister he opened educational institutions teaching English) carried out a survey of Pashtun opinion about medium of instruction in 1929-30, he found that:

> *The Pushto-speaking population was practically unanimous in favour of instruction throughout in Urdu. Accounts and every day conversations are usually in Urdu and never in Pushto (LAD-F 12 October 1932: 132).*

The real opposition to Pashto came, however, from the speakers of Hindko. Since a large number of Sikhs and Hindus, all speaking Hindko, lived in the cities of the N.W.F.P and had a voice in the legislative assembly, this was often perceived as the non-Muslim opposition to Pashto. In 1935, however, Qayyum Khan tried to please everyone by adopting a policy which was reported in the *Khyber Mail*, the only English newspaper from the N.W.F.P, as follows:

> *Pushto is henceforth to be the medium of instruction in primary schools in the N.W.F.P but only in the 1st and second classes – and in the Pushto speaking areas only. In Hindko speaking areas Urdu will continue to be the medium of instruction.*
>
> *Even in areas where Pushto will be enforced as the new medium in the 1st and 2nd classes, Urdu alone will be the sole medium of instruction in the 3rd and 4th primary classes (Khyber Mail 15 Sept 1935).*

This was, as the newspaper commented, an attempt to conciliate both the pro- and the anti-Pashto lobbies. However, the anti-Pashto lobby was not conciliated. The Hindu and Sikh members observed a 'Black Day' on 7 August 1936 and the teaching of Pashto became a political issue. Although Dr. Khan Sahib, the elder brother of Ghaffar Khan and Congress candidate, was not against Pashto but political expediency made him promise that the circular would be repealed (LAD-F 28 Sept 1937: 674). Both his Congress and Qayyum Khan's Muslim League government did not insist on teaching Pashto till 1938 when Dr. Khan Sahib's government did manage to make it a medium of instruction only for Pashto-speaking pupils (LAD-F 25 March 1939: 582). Even this order seems to have been observed more in the breach than otherwise in most schools. There are reports, however, that Pashto was taught as an additional subject in primary schools in Pashto-speaking areas in the 1940s (RPI-F 1942: 61).

Teaching Pashto and Ethnicity : Pakistan

If Pashto was associated with Pashtun identity in British times, this was seen as an anti-British and anti-non-Muslim tendency. It was anti-British because the British official policy was to favour the teaching of Urdu. It was anti non-Muslim, at least in the eyes of Hindus and Sikhs, because they felt that their language and culture would be under threat. This was the gist of the arguments given by Lala Ladha Ram, Rai Bahadur Ishar Dass and Rai Mihr Chand Khanna in their speeches in the legislative assembly (LAD-F 28 September 1937: 674; 610-614). After the birth of Pakistan, however, Pashto came to be associated with Pashtun ethnic identity. Since this came sharply into focus through the Pakhtunistan issue – Ghaffar Khan's demand for an independent or autonomous Pashto-speaking area – the government of Pakistan was highly suspicious of Pashto and all demands for teaching it. The story of this suspicion, and Afghanistan's activities on behalf of Pakhtunistan, are given in police reports, legislative assembly debates and newspapers of the 1950s and 60s (see Rahman 1996: 145-146). The gist of the matter is that Pashto was not taught much by the state for political reasons, nor was it demanded except by the ethnic nationalists like Wali Khan's National Awami Party (NAP), in Pakistan. By the 1970s, however, Pashtun ethnicity had declined in stridency. In 1972 the NAP did not insist on Pashto being made the official language of the N.W.F.P even while it was briefly in power. Indeed, quite pragmatically it accepted Urdu as the official language of the N.W.F.P. For pragmatic reasons, too, as Feroz Ahmed tells us, separation from Pakistan is not an attractive option for the Pashtuns. Indeed, according to Feroz Ahmed:

> *The integration of Pakistan, therefore, has definite advantages to the Pushtoon working class which derives its sustenance in other provinces. Since their peasant relatives in the Pushtoon areas depend upon this income, they can also be considered to be directly economically integrated with the rest of Pakistan (Ahmed 1998: 206).*

Moreover, the Pashtuns had also been co-opted in the state machinery. Both in civil bureaucracy and the military, but more in the latter, they got a fair share of jobs (Amin 1988: 141-144). Thus Pashto became

less threatening for the ruling elite. Instead of being a separatist ethnic symbol it merely remained an ethnic identity-marker. Possibly for these reasons the state promoted its teaching in 1984.

Pashto was introduced as the medium of instruction in some schools in the Pashto-speaking areas of the N.W.F.P at the primary level. The Primary Text-Book Pashto Translation Project, which was not meant only for translating textbooks in Pashto as its name would suggest, also supervised the process of the introduction of Pashto in schools. The project ran for four years and an Evaluation Committee was appointed in 1988 to report on its performance.

The gist of the report of this Committee was that Pashto had not been introduced simultaneously in all schools. Of course, nobody ever contemplated introducing it in the English-medium schools run by the armed forces and rich private entrepreneurs. Nor was it supposed to be introduced in the areas where Hindko, Khowar or a language other than Pashto was spoken by most people. But, what came to light was that it had not even been introduced in all Pashto-speaking areas, such as Bannu and the other big cities. In general, the area which proved to be most positive towards Pashto was Swat where 'about 80% of the students were able to read fluently from Pashto textbooks' and almost all teachers and students were in favour of Pashto as a medium of instruction. Indeed, it was reported that 'even in Kalam where the local language of the inhabitants is Kohistani, yet they have adopted Pashto as medium of instruction' (Cyclostyled Report 1991). The Kalami-speaking people, in the opinion of this author, identify with Pashto because it is a dominant language of the area (Survey 1998) and the Pashtuns favour it more than in other areas of the N.W.F.P because they are more used to it since the time when it was the language of official work.

In Bannu, the evaluators visited 7 schools and found that Pashto was taught as a subject in all schools except one but was not the medium of instruction in even one of them. Only 65% students could reach from Pashto textbooks and were of the opinion, along with their teachers, that Pashto need not be used as a medium of instruction. In Mardan too the feeling for retaining Pashto was weak though most teachers complained against the new orthography rather than the language as such. In Kohat, out of all the six schools visited, the medium of instruction was Urdu and only 50% students could read Pashto fluently. In boys' schools Pashto was taught as a subject but in girls' school even this was not done. Most teachers were against using Pashto as a medium of instruction (Cyclostyled Report 1991).

In pedagogical terms Pashto was not a failure because achievement tests showed an improvement in Pashto medium schools as compared to Urdu medium ones (Edn Dept. F 1991: 1-4). However, even the USAID reports about the tribal areas, which are totally Pashto-speaking, show that Urdu tended to be taught rather than Pashto. In the Kurram and South Waziristan agencies, for instance, the medium of instruction remained Urdu (USAID 1991a: 82 and 1990: 69). Reasons given for this reluctance to use Pashto are many: there are two major dialects of the language and official textbooks are in the northern dialect which the speakers of the southern dialect find alienating; many teachers are not Pashto-speakers; teachers themselves were educated in Urdu and so on. The real reason, however, is that Pashto is not used in the domains of power. Thus, no jobs are available in it. Parents know that after a few years their children will have to learn Urdu and will lag behind those who have been taught that language from the beginning. Thus they are reluctant to overburden their children in the matter of language-learning. Simply put, the tension is between investing on the language of utilitarian value and the language of identity. Not surprisingly, most people opt for the former while hankering for the latter.

Pashto and Islam

Pashto is the medium of instruction in the Islamic seminaries, the *madrassas*, in the Pashto-speaking areas. The *ulema* deliver lectures, sitting on the floor which is covered with mats, rugs or carpets, to their students in Pashto. All explanations of religious texts is also in Pashto. The present author visited madrassas in Mingora (Swat), Akora Khattak and Peshawar and found very few books in Pashto but the teachers used Pashto while teaching all the books. However, since madrassas have a central certificate awarding authority, students cannot write examination papers in Pashto. Maulana Mahbub Ilahi of the Madrassa Mazharul Uloom (Mingora) told the present author that the Wafaq ul madaris, to which his institution was affiliated, allows only Urdu and Arabic as languages of examination. Hence, students must learn these languages, which are taught to them anyway, in addition to Pashto (Ilahi Int: 20 June 1998). Although Pashto has been the language of the *madrassas* even before Pakistan was created, it has been associated in Pakistani public opinion with Pakhtun ethnicity rather than with Islam. The reason is that in Pakistan Urdu and Islam have always been presented as the symbols of Pakistani nationalism and national integration.

This image may, however, be changing. The main reason for this change is the Islamic resistance to the Soviet Union and the rise of Islamic movements among the Pashtuns of Afghanistan (the Taliban) and Pakistan (*madrassa* students and Soofi Mohammad of Swat). The Afghan military resistance to the Soviets brought a large number of Pashto-speaking Afghans to Pakistan. They settled down in camps, mostly in the NWFP, and started a number of activities which increased the use of Pashto in several domains. For instance, they initiated a number of publications giving news of the Afghan war in Pashto. A number of pamphlets such as *Soor Khamar*, *Da Rom Muzalim* and *Khoonre Toofan* etc were written for such purposes. Since this resistance was justified as a holy war (*jihad*), revivalist Islamic literature was referred to in order to provide a theoretical base to it. Thus Jamat-i-Islami's founder, Abul Ala Maudoodi's, *Tafheem ul Quran* and other works were translated from Urdu to Pashto. Other works from revivalist sources, such as the Akhwan ul Muslimeen, were also made available in Pashto translation. Apart from such religious works, a number of literary works on the theme of *jihad;* Soviet outrages against innocent people; and the necessity of supporting the Afghan struggle against oppression; were published and distributed in Peshawar in the 1980s. Among such works the monthly *Qalam* and the novel *Da Dor Boran*, *Saughat* and *Barood o Iman* may be mentioned. In short, the Afghan wars made more reading material of a religious and nationalistic kind available to readers of Pashto. Moreover, Pashto was also the medium of instruction and a subject of study in the camp schools for Afghans (Taj 1989).

In Afghanistan, with the military victories of the Pashto-speaking Taliban, Pashto rather than Persian became the dominant language at least in Taliban-controlled areas. In short, the process of the Islamisation of Afghanistan coincides with the process of the Pashtunization of the country. What effect this will have on Pakistan is not clear yet. However, the mere fact that a large number of religious, especially revivalist and revolutionary, texts are available in Pashto in Pakistan and many madrassa students, either having the experience of the Afghan *jihad* or having been inspired by it, are present in Pakistan helps to link Pashto with Islam. This link will remain weak in Pakistan but will get strengthened in nearby Afghanistan as the Taliban consolidate their hold on that country.

Conclusion

Pashto has been taught either as a religious auxiliary language among the Pashtuns of Pakistan or as an ethnic, identity-marker by Pashtun nationalists. It has also been taught in Islamic seminaries and, since the Afghan jihad, it has been associated with the Afghan fighters and Islamic students (Taliban) fighting in the name of Islam in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, however, the state has never used Pashto in the domains of power nor has it been taught in elitist institutions. The Pashtuns, who are well integrated in the power structure of Pakistan, acquire Urdu and English for their utilitarian value. However, they consider Pashto as an identity-marker and often demand that it should be taught more than it is at present. This is probably an expression of their desire to maintain their distinct identity rather than a considered preference for Pashto. Indeed, as long as Urdu and English remain the languages of the domains of power, which they will in the foreseeable future, the Pashtuns will choose to acquire these languages to empower themselves rather than Pashto.

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