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REMAKING OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: A Critique Of Aga Khan University Education Board

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Abstract

There is a great deal of interest in Washington's official, political, religious and academic circles in the subject of reforming Pakistan's educational system. Washington seems to be in a state of obsession about the education system in Pakistan. The 9/11 Commission, whose final report has become a fixture on the bestseller lists, has highlighted the links between international terrorism and Pakistan's religious seminaries, or madaris, and recommended that the United States support Pakistani efforts to improve the quality of the education it offers to its succeeding generations. For they apprehend that a reference to Islam is feeding their passions and enlivening their spirit for Jihad and preparing them to lay down their lives for the cause of God. The American government, with the U.S. Agency for International Development as the lead agency, plans to spend tens of millions of dollars this year alone on primary education and literacy programs in Pakistan. Extremism, terrorism and fundamentalism of this kind, is what they wish to "reform" and to cultivate instead "moderate", "enlightened" and "progressive" minds. But for Muslim, the answer is quite straightforward and simple, that is, if they think that they are distinct & sovereign nation, they should reject all such moves & evolve our own educational system catering to their national dreams & aspirations. If, on the other hand, they have bartered away their sovereignty for slavery, then they don't have much of a choice, for slaves are supposed to submit, not to think or act on their own!

Introduction

After 9/11 the United States is engaged in two types of battles, that is, the battle of arms & the battle of Ideas. The overriding objective of both these battles is to destroy & demolish the Muslim world & exploit its

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natural resources such as, oil, gas and similar other minerals. Rulers of the Muslim states are already beaten to servile submission and obedience. Only non-state actors or Mujahideen are putting up some resistance. In order to soften out their spirit for Jihad, the U.S. has planned two types of actions. In the first instance, they wish to kill the existing lot of Jihadists thro' the involvement of our "moderate" rulers. Whereas to prevent their future growth, they wish to change our educational system & to turn it to purely secular. Madrassah system of education is their main target because Madaris are supposed to be breeding ground for Jihadists.

In order to realize their objectives, the U.S. has envisioned the establishment of Education Boards for various Muslim countries. The role of these boards is not so much to conduct the examinations & award degrees & certificates as to banish Islam from text-books and the teachers & to make sure that Islam is not allowed to re-enter into our educational system. In our case, Aga Khan University Education Board was picked up for these services. Under the agreement the U.S. government granted $100 million & the Government of Pakistan added a matching grant of $100 million as well. So all in all, the Board has received an initial grant of $200 million to turn our system of education to a secular system & to make sure that Islam is swept out of the system. Further, the Government of Pakistan thro' a special ordinance empowered the Board to conduct its business without any interference. Subsequently, this ordinance was made an integral part of 17th amendment which in turn was made a part of the Constitution. So any change in this ordinance can be introduced only in accordance with the demands of constitutional amendments. So whatever we may say about this Board or its attendant efforts concerning the remaking of our

education system is no more than an academic exercise. We can't effect a change unless it is initiated by the present or the forthcoming national assembly. In any case, here we offer a critique of this Board in the following pages.

This critique grew in response to the circulars of the Board wherein the Board officials stated their objectives and underlined the terms & conditions of their mandate. The Board also circulated the copies of the Ordinance granted to them by the Govt. of Pakistan. Copies of both these documents can be examined in our Annexure 1& 2.

I hereby acknowledge with thanks your kind letter of March 7, 2005. Your passionate plea in defense of AKU-EB as well as the Ismaili community was read with keen interest. Let me express my deep sense of appreciation for your commendable job, even though I have my reservations on this vital issue of national concern.

In your informative & explanatory note, you have touched upon the genesis of AKU-EB & have stated that the Board under reference was established in 2002 in response to the solicitations of 16 schools of the area -- & these solicitations were further supplemented & reinforced by other quarters as well. And it was just a matter of sheer coincidence that the Board was subsequently patronized by the USAID & the government of Pakistan. Over-all objectives of this Board, in your opinion, are: -

- To design and offer high quality public examinations in English and Urdu based on the national curriculum for secondary and higher secondary education.
- To arrange for training of teachers, and for appropriate learning materials to prepare teachers and students for the new examination system.

- To evaluate higher intellectual abilities of comprehension, logical thinking and problem solving.
- And as a result of the new examination system, it is presumed, the country would move towards more competitive position in the global knowledge-based economy.
- Further, it is emphasized that the Board will follow the national curriculum; and that you have no plans to be a party to the U.S. efforts to "secularize" Pakistan by "reforming" its educational sector. In fact, you have tried to dispel any misgivings by emphasizing, "the notion of AKU-EB working against Pakistan's national interest is thus unthinkable". These sentiments are highly commendable and laudatory indeed!
- That AKU-EB has been coopted for this service on the basis of enviable "high repute" of the AKU. No hidden agenda is involved here.
- That the fee-structure of this Board (Rs. 1500 to Rs. 3000) will be higher than other Boards of the country (i.e. Rs. 350-750) while it will be lower than "O" & "A" level examinations.
- I couldn't miss one clause of the Ordinance 2002 under which you have been authorized to run the Board; it reads:

  "Indemnity & bar of jurisdiction: No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person or authority for anything done or intended to be done in good faith under this Ordinance."[1]

Your detailed statement, notwithstanding its hypnotic clarity, calls for certain observations. I hope you would allow me the privilege to hold on to my considered opinion in spite of your

reassuring commitments to the national cause. These observations are: -

i). That the system of education is an integral whole, a matter of package deal. You can't tear apart one component (out of this complex whole) & improve the quality of education by concentrating on this isolated unit. Besides physical infra-structure, such as, reasonable school building, functional library, operational laboratory, electricity, drinking water, wash-rooms, etc. there are some other vital components as well. Most important of them all is of course the curriculum. Text-books are usually inspired by the curriculum and are reflective of the ends & ideals—besides the technical know-how –that we wish to pass on to our succeeding generations. Overriding purpose of educational system is to promote the growth of well-rounded, constructive and creative individuals capable of shouldering their national responsibilities with honor & dignity. Indeed our future graduates are expected to provide intellectual, socio-moral, religio-political and technological leadership to the nation. Obviously it is the prime responsibility of the state to determine & define the essentials of the national curriculum. However, it may be underlined that this curriculum has to accommodate not only our ideological moorings but also our future dreams & aspirations. In brief, the state is obliged to formulate a uniform system of education, free from all sorts of discriminations. Access to quality-education & knowledge is indeed a basic human right, & a well-meaning state must ensure that it's made available to every child regardless of

his gender or financial background. If the state somehow fails to provide universal education to its citizens & is guilty of neglecting its human resource capital, it won't have any legitimate claim to the allegiance of its masses. It is really unfortunate that for the last so many centuries, education of our masses has never been the central concern of our rulers & the present lot is no exception.

Quaid-i-Azam in our first National Conference on Education held in November 1947 did emphasize upon the need for redressing & rectifying this pathetic situation & strongly recommended to make universal education the top-most national priority. Unfortunately, he was soon snatched away by the icy-hands of death & the poor nation was left reeling under the iron heels of the Army dictators or dishonest & incompetent civilian leadership. Misfortunes never come alone. Soon we were drawn into a war with India on Kashmir dispute. And this war brought our armed forces to the center of our decision-making process and that in turn led to the demolition of our national priorities. Ideological & educational concerns were pushed to the back-burners & were virtually replaced by our security needs. The allocation of budget for education vis-à-vis our defense was woefully poor, that is 4% for education as opposed to 60% for defense. In subsequent years it was further slashed & currently it's in the neighbored of 2% -- one of the lowest in the world. Let me emphasize that we do need to restructure our system of education. But it ought to be the product of our own deliberations, reflective of our national aspirations– not

imported from outside for catering to the needs of our enemies.

ii). The Teacher: besides the curriculum & the text-books, teacher – the real role model & architect of our future generations – is equally significant. It is the teacher who helps in the creation of new ideas & encourages the students to extend the frontiers of knowledge. It is he who cultivates in them constructive, creative and critical abilities. If teacher is brought in thro' bureaucratic & political interference & is inefficient & incompetent to fulfill his professional duties, the whole system would collapse and fail to produce the desired results. Let me borrow a Confucian expression to reinforce my contention. He holds that "a man who reviews the old so as to find out the new is qualified to teach others". Professional efficiency, moral integrity and up-righteousness should be the chief marks of his identification.

iii). The Students & their Parents: It may be highlighted that students & their parents are also the most significant stake-holders of the system of education. Parents, for instance, demand that their children should not be wasted or destroyed in educational institutions. On the contrary, they expect these institutions to help their children to determine their future & define their destiny. Likewise, the students too expect the system to develop their natural talent & ensure their harmonious growth & development. In essence, they expect the educational system to make them serviceable to themselves & serviceable to society, in fact, to humanity at

large. Their ultimate goal, of course, is to find success here and salvation in the hereafter.

iv). Supervisory & Administrative Staff: Supervision of our staff & students is no less important for if supervision is gone, our institutions would soon turn into "ghost" schools. Administration of educational institutions, however, is something entirely different. School administrator should be endowed with proper psychological acumen & be able to inspire trust & confidence amongst his staff & students. He should assign duties to his colleagues according to their talent/merit & then allow them adequate freedom & liberty so that they can put their heart & soul into their work. Repressive administration so often kills a budding scholar & a genius in the making. Ibn Khaldun has rightly observed that a repressive & punitive atmosphere, whether of a school or a state, not only destroys the individual but also destroys the whole national character. He cites the Jewish character as the most pertinent instance of it.

v). The Examination System: we do need a transparent, just & fair evaluation system that can examine the comprehension of the students and assess their ability to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical problems. Overriding objective of the whole system is to help the succeeding generations grow intellectually, emotionally, & morally so that they can resolve their own problems by their own deliberations and are not parasitic upon borrowed ideas and imported solutions.

vi). Society: The Ultimate Stake-holder: when all is said & done ultimately it is the society that conducts the final tests & examinations of our graduates. Just as a tree is known by its fruit, our schools/universities are known by its graduates. The society naturally expects that the products of our schools/universities would be capable of rendering them quality goods & services in different walks of life. They presume that besides being excellent human beings, our graduates would be highly competent professionals as well, that is, they would be humane doctors, excellent engineers, hard-core economists, benevolent & just administrators, objective historians, perceptive philosophers, innovative psychologists & so forth. If on the contrary, they find the product as less than desirable, they condemn the whole system. Naturally their hopes & expectations are shattered. They get frustrated to see the society stagnate & fall apart. They really turn sour & bitter. Strange sort of gloom prevails over the society. So truly speaking education is the back-bone of the society. Our real defense, so to say, lies in our schools & universities.

In view of what we have stated above, it seems obvious that any emphasis on the process of examination, in total disregard to other integral components, won't produce the desired results. Of course, there is a passing reference in your statement towards the preparation of the teachers &the students for the new examination system. And you have emphasized that this whole exercise would be based on existing national curriculum. But if your efforts are to be circumscribed by the existing curriculum, I am afraid, it won't produce the desired results, that is,

qualitative improvement of the graduates just by improving the examination system. My contention is that sheer improvement of examination per se, even though valuable, won't be sufficient. For examination, regardless of its format, may assess the level of knowledge or information. But what they are "informed about", that is, the substance, quality & contents of their knowledge, is a separate issue altogether. And this issue is of fundamental importance & pertains to the curriculum. For instance, a questionnaire was floating around in which teenagers were asked certain questions pertaining to their sex-life. Now this survey might have determined their level of exposure or information about sex; but whether or not such a questionnaire was morally desirable or reprehensible is entirely a different matter. And it is the moral dimension of this questionnaire that is being criticized by the concerned citizens of the state.

Besides, as we shall see a little later, the U.S. & its Western allies are urging the entire Muslim world, including Pakistan, to "secularize" their systems of education both in public and private institutions including the Madrassahs & the Mosques. They want us to sweep aside any reference to the Quran & the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). For they apprehend that a reference to Islam would feed our passions and rekindle our spirit for Jihad and prepare us to lay down our lives for the cause of God. Extremism, terrorism and fundamentalism of this kind, is what they wish to "reform" and to cultivate instead "moderate", "enlightened" and "progressive" minds. Education Boards including AKU-EB, in their view, are meant to monitor & supervise that these secularized & reformed curricula are implemented in public and private schools including the madrassas & the mosques. Further, these

Boards are supposed to make sure that Islam is not allowed to creep back to the texts or the teachers & thro' them to the succeeding generations of students.

It may be pointed out that it's essentially your sectarian persuasion & proclivities that are of special interest to the U.S. & its allies. Your "high repute" for academic excellence, is essentially incidental, if not totally irrelevant, to their cause. In fact, we would be dead wrong to presume that the U.S. & its allies are concerned about the improvement of our academic standards. To be more precise, it runs counter to the recommendations of the Jewish protocols. Jews are of the opinion that they are born to rule while the gentiles (or the non-Jews) are born to serve and be slaves. The Jewish national goal, therefore, should be to make sure that the gentiles are not allowed to be masters of their own destiny. They emphatically recommend that the youth of the gentiles should never be allowed to develop independent thinking or draw inferences from their observations. Their leadership may likewise be corrupted & enslaved through the power of the purse or the power of the press. But if they still don't learn to "behave", they may be eliminated.

It may be underlined that one of the stated goals of the U.S. & its allies are to fan the sectarian, that is, Shia-Sunni, and ethnic tensions, such as, the Arab & the non-Arab Muslims. For instance, *The Muslim World After 9/11* clearly underscores that there are "notable cleavages between Shia-Sunni Muslims", likewise in "the Arab & non-Arab Muslims"[2]. Rand analysts recommend that the U.S. will be well advised to "align its policy with Shiite aspirations in Iraq and elsewhere"[3]. Similarly, *9/11 Commission* generously appreciates the efforts of the Bush Administration to keep the Muslims divided and disunited—using

the one against the other in our war against terrorism.[4] For example, the U.S. Administration paid special attention to recruit Northern Alliance as well as the government of Pakistan in her war against Al-Qaeda & the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Likewise, the Bush Administration was successful in recruiting the Kurds & disgruntled Shia elements in Iraq. Most of the Rock-Stars – i.e. the intelligence sources – were hired from those sources and it was mainly through them that the U.S. was able to defeat & demolish the so-called Sunni government of Saddam Hussain. The same advice is vibrant in *Mapping the Global Future* [5]. Here too the U.S. & its allies are advised to fan the Shia-Sunni sectarian differences & keep them bleeding. Iran-Iraq war, it may be recalled, was also a manifestation of the same policy. The analysts contend that the U.S. interest would be equally well-served if Arab and non-Arab Muslims are kept apart & disunited. So your sectarian credentials, that is, being Ismaili, are the real source of your strength and your recognition. Now if you are really true to your words and you hold the "national interest of Pakistan" close to your heart, you should avoid being a party to their nefarious agenda – that is, fanning the sectarian differences in Pakistan. I don't recall any communal threat to Ismaili Community emanating from any source—prior to your involvement in the educational "reforms" envisioned by the U.S. and implemented by the "moderate" and "enlightened" leadership of President Prevez Musharraf.

May be you are right that AKU or for that matter AKU-EB and the Ismaili Community are two distinct entities & they should not be rolled into one and subjected to unnecessary harassment and intimidation. In principle your statement is correct & logical. But it is really unfortunate that the general conduct of the masses is seldom informed and inspired by logical considerations. There is nothing

specific about Pakistani Community though. In fact, man as a rule, has a tendency to indulge in sweeping generalizations. If he is hurt by one member of a community, he condemns the whole community. For instance, every Muslim is neither Osama nor Saddam. But unfortunately Bush & his administration treat every Muslim as Osama or Saddam: hence better dead than alive. They are engaged in merciless killing of the innocent people of Afghanistan & Iraq. May be you are totally innocent and are unwittingly driven to further the interest of the U.S. & its Western allies. But if the door of legal action is foreclosed, as is the case under the Ordinance 2002, only illegal ways of harassment & intimidation are left to the people to register their resentments. I am really saddened to see this strange turn of events. My personal advice – if I can venture to offer one – would be to refrain from undertaking this highly suspect & controversial assignment.

Let us now turn to some additional evidence that lends support to our contention that the U.S. is interested in "secularizing" our system of education in order to soften out our resistance to the Judao-Christian dreams of global imperialism. It may be recalled that George W. Bush, encircled by neo-cons & the Jewish lobby, is never tired of proclaiming that he is "born-again Christian", chosen by the Almighty for the fulfillment of a "calling" or "mission"—mission being the spread of "freedom & democracy" to the Muslim world preferably through bombs & bullets, war & violence. Bush further tells us that he consults only his "Higher Father"—(his own father, he thinks, is not the right person to talk to in moments of trial & tribulations) & seeks solely His guidance as how to advance and further his "crusades" against the "forces of evil". (For more detailed accounts of his fundamentalism, one can see two very

valuable contributions of Bob Woodward, that is, (i). *Bush At War*; [6] & (ii). *Plan of Attack*[7]. Now if the above stated pieces are juxta-posed & read together, one can hardly miss the idea that Bush indeed is a fundamentalist Christian. What makes him terribly dangerous is that his fundamentalism is fully armed with advanced & sophisticated war-technology & he has no qualms in grinding to dust any poor country that might be deemed as an obstruction to his imperialist ambitions. Still there seems to be another dimension of his character. Far from being a fundamentalist, Bush seems to be deficient even in some of the essentials of a true-Christian. True Christians, Quran tells us, are usually quite compassionate & God-fearing. On the contrary, he seems to be a follower of Machiavelli as he is seldom reluctant to flout not only the demands of religion & morality but also the international law, international public opinion, international bodies, such as, the UN Charter, UN Security Council & so forth. Interesting part of the story is that in spite of such contemptuous rejection of international law & morality he still calls himself the champion of democracy. He is indeed an intriguing character. But let us leave him aside as a person & focus our attention on his policies which are a matter of our immediate concern.

Bush has publicly confessed that at times he had to talk to President Musharraf to remind him of the need for "good education policy" that may "help counteract some of the propaganda that was being taught in some of his [religious] schools". We are told that Musharraf eventually agreed to "reform" his educational system. And since then, "*the U.S. has been spending some money to help with the curriculum*". Presumably this reformed & secularized "curriculum would really help the children of Pakistan". Stated objectives of all these endeavors are to

bring the Madrassah system of education to the mainstream of education which is predominantly secular & whatever of Islam (i.e. the Quran & the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH) is left in the curriculum is to be evacuated & swept aside in the proposed reformation plans. In order to prepare the nation for such drastic measures, Musharraf is now advising the Pakistani nation that it should move towards "greater Jihad" – Jihad against "illiteracy, poverty & hunger" – as opposed to "minor Jihad" of fighting against the crusaders occupying different Muslim lands. To oblige the Bush Administration, Musharraf has further introduced Madrassah Registration Ordinance 2002. Purpose of this Ordinance is to pressurize the religious institutions to introduce secular subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Math, English, Computer into their curriculum. They are also warned that if they fail to introduce the requisite "reforms", that is, secularize their curriculum, they will run the risk of inviting economic sanctions leading towards the eventual closure of the institutions. It may be emphasized that Pakistan alone is not their target. The Bush Administration is equally coercing the Arab World to switch-over to secular system of education – for more details see Cairo Conference on Arab World Education held in Sept-Oct. 2004. This secularized system of education, we are told, would help us to plug ourselves into the globalization process & enable the graduates of our religious schools (& other bulging youth) to reap all sorts of economic dividends. In fact, the U.S. is busy in unfolding certain inter-related strategies, such as: -

i). The ultimate goal, of course, is the establishment of an American-led global Imperialism – Jews & Hindus are the junior partners to these ambitions.

ii). Realization of this goal would obviously necessitate the globalization of the world economy.

iii). This globalization, in turn, would require that concerted efforts should be made for the development of a global pool of trained work-force for running the industrial units around the world.

iv). In order to ensure the availability of massive technical manpower, it is deemed essential to coerce the Muslims to switch-over to secular system of education. This system, besides preventing the bulging youth from rushing towards the West, would have the added advantage of cooling the spirit of Jihad amongst the Muslims.

v). Lastly, in order to ensure that socio-political & religious temperatures are kept cool & normal, the U.S. should sponsor the creation of "enlightened & moderate rulers"—virtually a class of new war-lords – in the Muslim world. Their prime duty should be to kill & control their masses & keep them under subjugation, slavery & servitude.

The Bush administration is relentlessly working for the realization of all these objectives. Its apprehensions are that in the absence of such elaborate arrangements, Muslims, inspired by the Jihadists, may oust their puppet rulers, revive the Islamic Caliphate & establish a just socio-economic and moral order in this world. An eventuality of this nature, they presume, would pose serious threat to the U.S. led New World Order. Their main interest, therefore, is to cool-down the spirit of Jihad amongst the Muslims & this they think can be realized by secularizing our system of education & detaching our

succeeding generations from the Quran & the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

Sen. Hillary Clinton has likewise reported that while coming out of Afghanistan she met with President Pervez Musharraf, and discussed with him issues of mutual interest including the "reformation" of Pakistan's educational system. She stated that it was gratifying to note that Pervez Musharraf was thoroughly committed to the non-proliferation of Madrassah system of education & wanted to drag it back to the general system of education in the country which is predominantly secular. But then, he was suffering from serious financial constraints. Sen. Hillary lamented that it was really unfortunate that the U.S. was spending only $200 million for global education. She recommended that if the U.S. could somehow boost these funds upto $500 million & urge their Western allies to make similar contributions, we could spread "real education" & eradicate the "indoctrination" of religious schools that so often serves as a "training ground for future terrorists".

Richard Clarke while discussing the role of Arab Mujahideen in Afghan war observes in his out-standing book: *Against All Enemies* that the Arab Mujahideen had brought in three things, that is, "men, money, & the Quran"[8]. With the help of these elements & in conjunction with the Afghan & the ISI trained manpower, they were able to force the Soviets to roll-back their Red Army. And while the Soviets were retreating, these Arab Mujahideen (Osama bin Ladin included) were pondering as to what they could do with the Quran, a little money and a committed manpower. "They could overthrow an infidel government. More important they could destroy a super-power. They just had".[9]

This analysis suggests that by witnessing the fate of the Soviets, the Americans too developed an anxious phobia that they might suffer

the same fate (at the hands of the Muslims) that was meted out to the Soviets. Hence they started their planning to rob us of all those elements which were presumed to be the source of our strength, that is, money, manpower (Jihadists) & the Quran. It may be recalled that Bush has frozen the accounts of several Muslim Organizations by dubbing them as terrorists. He has also harassed various charity organizations around the world accusing them of sponsoring al-Qaeda &other terrorist organizations. He is also engaged in bombing, killing, humiliating & disgracing Muslim man-power in Iraq & Afghanistan. Of course, Bush is equally busy in snatching the Quran from our succeeding generations by coercing our "enlightened & moderate rulers" to "reform" their education sector by removing all references to Islam. You can see that all the elements of our presumed strength are systemically attacked.

Richard Clarke in his Task Force Report titled: *Defeating the Jihadists*—A blue-print for action, has gone beyond just the restructuring of education. He recommends that the U.S. should evolve a two-pronged strategy to fight the Jihadists & the terrorists. Existing lot of Jihadists, he suggests, could be eliminated through a combined struggle of the "moderate & enlightened" rulers of the Muslim world on the one hand & their own agencies (empowered for the lethal action under the U.S. Patriot Act) on the other.[10]

To prevent the future growth of Jihadist, the Task Force Report recommends, that the US and its allies should coerce Muslims to "secularize" their educational system and sweep out all references to the Quran and Sunnah of the prophet. [11]

The Task Force further recommends that in order to ensure that Islam is not allowed to creep back to the text books, or the teachers, the mosques and Madrassahs, Muslims rulers should be urged to institute Boards of

Education—in our case it is Agha Khan Education Board—with the professed objectives of monitoring the education both in the public and private sector including Madrassahs.

In fact, the Report goes on to recommend that religious scholars (Ulema) should be declared as terrorists, and criminal proceedings should be initiated against them for inciting anti-Western, anti-American, anti-Indian and anti-Israeli sentiments amongst their masses.[12]

Task Force recommendations are not confined to education sector alone though it is acknowledged to be most critical field. They have evolved an elaborate plan for this "battle of ideas". To begin with, they want to induct "moderate and enlightened" rulers in the Muslim world. To support these rulers, they promote "moderate press" and "moderate journalists". Likewise, they want to sponsor "moderate Ulema" and "moderate poets" and "professors". Of course they wish to extend the same policy towards our armed forces as well and are keen to create a class of pro-US generals. Of course, they also want us to re-write our history and change our heroes.[13]

Stephen Cohen in his: *The Idea of Pakistan* goes far beyond his colleagues and co-analysts. He insists that the Quran recommends to the Muslim Ummah that it should always keep itself ready on war footing so that their own enemies and enemies of God are "terrorized" and discouraged from attacking Muslims states. Cohen contends that by implication, all Muslim states are obliged to use "terrorism" as an instrument of their foreign policy. In his opinion, Pakistan in particular is engaged in cross boarder terrorism in Kashmir with a view to driving India to come to negotiation table for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Most interesting part of the book is chapter 8 where Cohen envisions six different possible futures of Pakistan. The most forceful

under current in all these scenarios is that unless Pakistan moves quickly to secularize its system of education; & like Bangladesh comes to accept the hegemony of India & get rid of its obsession with Kashmir; & comes to accept subservient role vis-à-vis the sole super-power, it might have a bleak future.[14]

Three reports of the International Crisis Group: i). *Pakistan: The Mullah & The Military*; ii). *Pakistan: Madrassahs, Extremism, and Military*; iii). *Pakistan: Reforming Education Sector,* are of singular importance in this connection. In the first two reports, the analysts contend that there is a natural alliance between the Mullah and Military in Pakistan. Invariably all the military rulers have used the Mullahs and Militants as a vital instrument of their policy. Internally, Mullahs have been used to elbow out the mainstream secularist political parties from domestic politics. While they have been used as foot soldiers/terrorist in dealing with the outside world.[15] Given this background, they contend that Musharraf is no exception. With the help of Mullahs, Musharraf has defeated both PPP and Muslim League (N) in the general elections and also got his LFO approved (as 17th amendment) through their help and assistance. Hence, it should come as no surprise if he is found hard on Al-Qaeda manpower whereas extremely soft and accommodative of home grown militants and terrorists. These terrorists are the front line fighters of the Pakistan army. They recommend that if the US is anxious to eradicate terrorism, it should urge President Musharraf to live up to his commitment to reform and secularize the educational sector. They underscore that all the donor countries & organizations must pressurize Musharraf to implement his proposed reforms in education otherwise they should suspend their financial aid to Pakistan.[16]

Pakistan: reforming education sector, that is, the third report of the International Crisis Group offers more elaborate strategy for reforming the education sector. There are three principal recommendations:

1. In the first instance, they recommend that Pakistan should secularize its education sector. This switch-over, they think, would help minimize the sectarian tension. It would also soften out the Muslim hostility towards its religious minorities such as Hindus, Qadyanies etc.
2. Crisis Group further suggests that Pakistan should switch-over to English Language right from the first grade. Rationale offered for this move is that English would open the door of prosperity on the poorer strata of the society. Further, it would also solve the problem of linguistic disputes. We are reminded that we lost East Pakistan mainly because we tried to impose Urdu, an artificial language on a Bengali speaking community. Imposition of Urdu as a national language on the remaining Pakistan is also fraught with dangerous implications. It is, therefore, advisable to adopt English for resolving linguistic disputes. One wonders that if Urdu being an artificial language was rejected, how English, being no less alien and artificial, would become acceptable to the people.
3. Their third recommendation is that teacher should be turned from a regular job to a contractual job and be asked to work on temporary basis. It means that we are asked to destroy not only the contents (curriculum), but also the custodians of education. Now it is obvious that if the mind of our teacher

is not happy and well composed, he cannot do full justice to the students.[17]

Let me conclude this write up with the following observations, which, in my view, are pertinent in this context.

- Exclusivist vs. Pluralist Religion:

  Mostly religions are quite exclusivist in their approach. Islam, on the other hand, is highly pluralist & liberal in its outlook. For instance, Judaism refuses to acknowledge Christ (Peace be upon him) as a prophet of God & Christianity by implication is also denied as a revealed religion. Likewise, both Judaism & Christianity dismiss Muhammad (PBUH) as a prophet of God & Islam as a revealed religion. While Islam on the other hand, does insist that the faith of its followers (Muslims) would be incomplete & unacceptable unless they believe that Moses & Christ (peace be upon them) were also the chosen Prophets of God & their "messages" that is, the Old & the New Testament were indeed the revealed books of God. However, with the passage of time, human wishes found their way into the texts of these books and as such their revelational character and purity were lost; hence the need for Islam. It may be mentioned here that the Jews were allowed full religious freedom & autonomy in the first ever written Constitution of Madina introduced by the Prophet of Islam.

- No Conversion Thro' Coercion:

  Further, Islam prohibits its followers from seeking conversion through coercion, compulsion, intimidation, force or terror. In principle, Islam is committed to peaceful persuasion, & propagation of its faith & teachings. While we do witness Bush

& his allies recklessly engaged in inflicting their so-called democracy thro' bombs & bullets. In spite of such a glaring contrast, it is really unfortunate that both Islam & the Muslims are condemned as terrorists while Bush remains the champion of freedom & democracy. One can see as to what sustained propaganda can achieve for modern-day tyrants & dictators.

- Above-all it may be underscored that Jihad is not recommended against non-Muslim States; instead it is recommended against the oppressive & repressive rulers who are out to exploit the poor & the helpless nations & are subjecting them to death & destruction, war & violence without any fault of theirs.
- Islam is uncompromisingly committed to two basic principles, that is, Oneness of God & the oneness of humankind. Likewise it is committed to submission to God & service to humankind. Quran tells us that God has breathed His own spirit in man. It is this "divine" element in man that calls for respect, honor, & dignity. In other words, if we disrespect & disgrace a man, we are virtually guilty of dishonoring & disgracing the godly element in him. Humanity is indeed united in divinity. If divinity is denied, humanity will fall apart, be divided & polarized leading to endless wars & tensions. All human rights flow from this foundational principle.
- It may also be observed that the U.S. & its allies are hunting in wrong fields. Mosques & Madrassahs have never been the "breeding grounds" for terrorism. Terrorists & militants are always born in occupied lands where people are subjected to all sorts of brutalities & atrocities. This blatant, naked & arrogant expression of brute force, calls for militant response. This is the

universal principle & there is nothing specific about Islam. So if the U.S. & its allies are genuinely interested in eliminating terrorism, war & violence, all that they should do is to roll-back their forces from the occupied territories otherwise true peace & harmony would remain distant dreams. Peace, so to say, is always tied down to justice. When justice is gone, man really turns into an "armed animal". So the U.S. would be well-advised to move towards the establishment of justice rather than fighting for democracy.

- Muslims are enjoined to pray: "*O God! Grant us the best of this world & the best of the world to come & save us from the hell-fire*" (Al-Quran). The uniqueness of Islam lies in a balanced & harmonious approach to life, that is, we are urged to strive for the best of this world & the best of the world to come & are not allowed to sacrifice the one or the other. Obviously the best of this world can't be realized in slavery & servitude or deprivation & destitution. It can be realized only in a just moral order where we enjoy sovereignty, freedom & independence and can conduct the affairs of life in accordance with the teachings of Islam. It means that power & position are required so that we can translate our professed ends & ideals into living reality. Acquisition of power & position (or sovereignty, freedom & independence) would, in turn, necessitate the acquisition of science & technology, besides getting proficiency in all other natural & social sciences. In other words we should be able not only to acquire freedom and sovereignty, but should also be able to defend them.

Likewise, for the acquisition of the best of the life to come, we require piety & *taqwa* or God-fearing attitude. For this we have to be conversant with the teachings of the Quran & the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Further, Islam recommends that power (gained thro' science & technology) should be subordinated to piety & wisdom (i.e. the guidance of the Quran & the Sunnah). For if power is detached & divorced from wisdom and is exercised without the fear of God, it would lead to disastrous consequences for humanity. It means that both science (power) & religion (wisdom & guidance) must be integrally united & harmonized. We can't sacrifice the one or the other, just as we can't sacrifice the life here or the life in the hereafter. Our system of education, it may be underlined, is supposed to prepare our succeeding generations for both these ends, that is, success here & salvation in the hereafter. It means our system of education must accommodate natural & social sciences on the one hand & ethico-religious & spiritual teachings of the Quran & Sunnah on the other. In other words, we are obliged to develop a uniform system of education that can respond to both of our requirements.

Now given the background of these efforts, intents & motives for reforming our system of education, I don't think, we have much of an option. The answer is quite straightforward and simple, that is, if we think we are distinct & sovereign nation, we should reject all such moves & evolve our own educational system catering to our national dreams & aspirations. If, on the other hand, we have bartered away our sovereignty for slavery, then we don't have much of a choice, for slaves are supposed to submit, not to think or act on their own!

Annexure—I

ORDINANCE NO. CXIV OF 2002

AN ORDINANCE

to establish the Aga Khan University Examination Board

WHEREAS it is desirable and expedient in the national interest to aspire to standards of excellence in the field of education and in pursuance of such objective to draw upon all available resources;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Pakistan considers it important to offer the people of Pakistan more educational options and to improve the school examination system;

AND WHEREAS, the Aga Khan University is committed to the improvement of education in Pakistan and abroad and in pursuance thereof has established a Medical College, School of Nursing and an Institute for Educational Development in Pakistan, an institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations in the UK, and is in the process of establishing a Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Karachi as well as medical, nursing and education programmes in East Africa, Afghanistan, Syria and Central Asia and thus possesses the requisite insight, expertise and experience in the provision of education including all administrative matters connected therewith;

AND WHEREAS the Aga Khan University has agreed to assist the Government in this endeavour in the greater national interest and in furtherance of the public-private partnership;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to the Aga Khan University Order, 1983 (President's Order No. 3 of 1983), the Aga Khan University is authorised to establish an examination board;

AND WHEREAS the President of Pakistan is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary to take immediate action;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the Proclamation of Emergency of the fourteenth day of October, 1999, and Provisional Constitution Order No. 1 of 1999, read with the Provisional Constitution (Amendment) Order No. 9 of 1999, and in exercise of all power enabling him in that behalf, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance :

1. **Short title, extent and commencement**.—(1) This Ordinance may be called the Aga Khan University Examination Board Ordinance, 2002.

(2) It extends to the whole of Pakistan.
(3) It shall come into force at once.

2. **Definitions.** – (1) If there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,

(a) "Board of Trustees" means the Board of Trustees of the University;
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(b) "certificate" means certificate or diploma or other appropriate credential awarded to candidates who are successful in the examinations;
(c) "certification" means the awarding of certificates or diplomas or other appropriate credentials to candidates who are successful in the examinations;
(d) "examinations" means the examinations, tests and related means of assessment of educational achievements developed and administered by the Examination Board;
(e) "Examination Board" means the Aga Khan University Examination Board;
(f) "prescribed" means prescribed by the Rules and Regulations under Section 10. and
(g) "University" means the Aga Khan University established under the Aga Khan University Order, 1983 (President's Order No. 3 of 1983).

(2) The expressions used but not defined in this Ordinance shall have the same meaning as assigned to them under the Aga Khan University Order, 1983 (President's Order No. 3 of 1983).

3. **Establishment of the Examination Board**.-(1) The Aga Khan University Examination Board shall be established by the University from such date and in such manner, as the University shall, in its sole discretion, prescribe.

(2) The Examination Board shall be fully autonomous and self-regulatory with the freedom to achieve the objectives for which it is established.
(3) The University may, at its sole discretion, direct the Examination Board to offer the examinations to all private candidates, non-government schools and their students throughout Pakistan and abroad, in such manner, by such times and on such terms and conditions as shall be prescribed.
(4) Government schools and their students which are under the control of the Federal Government including Islamabad Capital Territory, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) and Cantonments Areas can opt for examinations offered by the Examination Board, in such manner, by such times and on such terms and

conditions as shall be prescribed.
(5) The Examination Board is authorised to administer examinations at all academic levels of education upto higher secondary level or its equivalent.
(6) The Examination Board shall follow the national curriculum and syllabi.
(7) The University may, in connection with the provisions of the Examination Board collaborate with Inter-Board Committee of Chairman (IBCC) or it's equivalent.
(8) The Examination Board is authorised to expand the provision and scope of its examinations in such manner, by such time and on such terms and conditions as shall be

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Prescribed by the University and subject to authorisation by the Federal Government or the relevant provincial governments for their respective government schools and institutions.

4. **Functions of the Examination Board.**-(1) The functions of the Examination Board shall include but not be limited to the following, namely:

(a) The conduct of the examinations in English, Urdu and such other languages as the Examination Board may prescribe;
(b) The development and administration of examinations at all academic levels of education upto higher secondary level or its equivalent to test the attainment of the objective of the national curriculum, for the purpose of enhancing student learning, and to do all such things that may be considered appropriate for the improvement of education in respect of teaching and learning institutional effectiveness and all things ancillary and incidental thereto;
(c) The assessment of educational achievement through the examination;
(d) The certification of candidates who are successful in the examinations;
(e) The doing of all acts, deeds and things to secure national and international recognition of the certificate; and
(f) The registration of the educational institutions and professional training and development of their teachers and staff for the purpose of preparing candidates for the examinations and such other services as the University shall consider necessary.

(2) The methodology and standards for achieving all of the above shall be developed and reviewed by the University from time to time.

5. **Supervision of the Examination Board.**- (1) There shall be a Board of Directors of the Examination Board, or its equivalent, which shall be subject to the supervision of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall have the power to delegate such of its powers hereunder to such persons, group of persons

or entities, from time to time, as it shall, in its sole discretion, prescribe.

(2) There shall be a head of the Examination Board to be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of the University on such terms and conditions as determined by him in accordance with a process approved by the Board of Trustees.
(3) The Chairman of the Inter-Board Committee of Chairman (IBCC) or his nominee, who is also a member of IBCC, shall be a member of the Board of Directors of the Examination Board or its equivalent.
(4) The head of the Examination Board shall be a member of the Inter-Board Committee of Chairman (IBCC).

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1 **Power to charge fees, etc.-**The Examination Board shall have the powers to charge fees, etc, within reasonable limits, for the provision of the examinations, or any part thereof, as may be prescribed by it.
2 **Efficacy of certification.-**All certification by the Examination Board shall be evidence of the successful completion by the holder thereof of the appropriate level of education and shall be accorded full credit and recognition.
3 **Indemnity and bar of jurisdiction. -**No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person or authority for anything done or intended to be done in good faith under this Ordinance.
4 **Removal of difficulties.-** (1) If any question arises as to the interpretation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance, it shall be placed before the Board of Trustees whose decision thereon shall be final.

(2) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the provisions of this Ordinance, the Board of Trustees may make such order not inconsistent with the provision of this Ordinance for removing the difficulty.
(3) Where this Ordinance makes any provision for anything to be done but no provision or no sufficient provision has been made as respects the authority by whom, or at the time at which, or in the manner in which it shall be done, it shall be done by such authority, at such time, or in such manner as the University shall prescribe.

10. **Rules and Regulations.-**(1) The University may, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Ordinance.

(2) The Board of Directors of the Examination Board may make regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance or the rules made there under.

GENERAL PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

Annexure—II

AGA KHAN UNIVERISTY EXAMINATION BOARD

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 During the past few months certain political groups in the country have been carry on a campaign against the Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) based on inaccurate and misleading statements. Although the principal target of the campaign has been the AKU-EB, unfortunately the Ismaili community, while a distinctly separate entity from the University and over whose governance it has no control, has faced threats, which has been widely reported in the press. This paper has been written to set the record straight and dispel misunderstanding by providing the facts on the background, purpose and characteristics of AKU-EB.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In 1995, 16 private schools in Pakistan wrote to Aga Khan University (AKU) to express their concern about deteriorating standards of secondary education and identified the current examination system as a major cause. They further requested AKU, being "an established educational institution of high repute in the country… to set up an examination board for holding the matric examination and awarding the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) certificates."[1]

2.2 At first the University was reluctant to undertake such a school-based activity, preferring to concentrate on higher education. However, following persistent requests of this type from several quarters, consultations with schools, students, educationists and policymakers confirmed that a critical weakness of Pakistan's education system was its examination methodology, which is designed primarily as a test of memory based on a single textbook. Combined with the need for high scores to pursue advanced education, this mode of examinations promotes rote learning in schools at the expense of comprehension of concepts and application of knowledge.

2.3 The poor quality of examinations has been documented in at least thirty-five government reports between 1959 and 1993. One such

[1] Letter dated 25 June 1995 signed by 16 private schools accompanying a paper on the standard of secondary education in the country.

report [2] stated that rote learning is reinforced by the "pattern of question papers" which in turn "defeats the basic targets of education which are acquisition, understanding and application of knowledge". These reports also highlight the erosion of the credibility of examination results due to "large scale and unhampered cheating".

2.4 Within Pakistan good public and private universities are increasingly using their own entrance tests to supplement or replace results from the current examination boards, while Pakistani school qualifications enjoy very little international recognition or repute. The result, as is well known, has been the rapid growth of the Cambridge 'O' and 'A' level system run from the UK. Although these examinations are generally reliable, they are very expensive and are based on a foreign curriculum.

2.5 In response to the concerns outlined above, the University's Board of Trustees in 1998,– appointed a task force to assess the feasibility of an alternative examination system. The membership of the task force included representation from schools using existing public Board examinations as well as national consultants who provided insights into Government policies and national curricula [3]. In 1999 the group recommended to AKU Board of Trustees (BOT) the creation of an examination service as a function of the University, with its main objective being to improve the quality of education in schools throughout Pakistan.

2.6 In 2000, AKU-BOT approved the recommendation of the task force, subject to approval of the Government of Pakistan, and emphasized the principal aim as being to offer high quality public examinations using modern methods of assessment to test achievement within the national curriculum so as to "have a significant impact on the quality of education.[4] Thereafter, with the encouragement of the Government of Pakistan, the University applied for recognition of AKU-EB and was granted the same in November 2002 through Ordinance CXIV of 2002. A copy of this Ordinance is attached to this note.

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[2] Commission for Evaluation of Examination System and Eradication of Malpractices, 1992. (Chair: M.N. Nur), Department of Education, Government of Punjab, Lahore.

[3] The two national consultants on the task force were: 1) Dr. Parween Hasan, former Director, Educational Research, Board of Secondary Education, Karachi; and 2) Mr. Abul Quasim Sheikh, former Deputy Director (Curriculum), Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Wing, Sindh.

[4] Extract of minutes of the November 2001 meeting of the Aga Khan University Board of Trustees.

2.7 The AKU-EB from the beginning was envisaged as a small undertaking, which would be able to serve as a role model. In this respect it would play the same role as the University's School of Nursing and Medical College, both of which, while remaining small, are generally recognized to have had a major and wholly positive impact in their respective fields.

2.8 The concept of an examination board under the auspices of AKU was developed at least four years before funding sources of $7.3M for the programme were identified. With the approval of the Board of Trustees in 1999, the University committed to invest a portion of these funds from its own resources. With the assistance of the Government, funding possibilities were then explored with various international development agencies, including the Asian Development Bank, the UK's DfID, the EU and Germany's DEG, but without success. USAID was considered as a potential funding source at the point when the Government of Pakistan was entering into an agreement with the USA in 2002 by which the latter would provide support for the Government's Educational Sector Reforms throughout Pakistan. Following extensive dialogue with the Government, USAID, with the concurrence of the Government, granted Rs. 270M (US $4.5M) in August 2003 toward the initial operational cost of AKU-EB. This is two thirds of the total project cost of Rs. 438M (US $7.3M), with the remaining cost of Rs. 168M ($2.8M) being borne by the University. After the initial start-up period of five years, the University expects to become solely responsible for the AKU-EB's financial affairs.

2.9 Implementation of the project began in 2003 with the appointment of the first Director and staff of AKU-EB. It was not, however, until early 2004 that statements appeared in the press that claimed that all public examination boards were to come under the control of AKU-EB. The University's stance has always been clear in that it neither had any interest in, nor the capacity to pursue such an endeavour, and furthermore for which it did not in any event, have the authority. Its objectives, as set out in 2.6 above, would be fully served by the establishment of an examination board in the private sector. The establishment of another private board, the Askari Board, has already been announced. This and other points of concern were explained to leaders of certain political parties in June 2004 when they were also assured of AKU's objectives.

2.10 Inaccurate comments have continued in the media over the past few months, directed not only at the University but more recently also at the Ismaili community. This is disconcerting since the University was formed as a statutory body by Charter granted by the Government of Pakistan as is therefore distinct from the Ismaili

community, whose members have no control over its affairs. The University is governed by its Board of Trustees and has increasingly become a national institution with intellectual and financial support for its programme coming from many diverse communities and quarters across the country.

3. GOALS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AKU-EB

3.1 **Overall objective:** The general objective of the AKU-EB is to design and offer high quality public examinations in English and Urdu based on the national curriculum for secondary and higher secondary education. *It also arranges training sessions for teachers to develop* appropriate learning materials to prepare teachers and students for the new examination system. It is intended to serve as a model of internationally recognized good practice in order to enhance the country's capacity for educational assessment and tests, and therefore to improve the quality of education in schools, and through them, the quality of education in the national universities.

3.2 **Wider range and acceptability of skills tested*:*** The assessment methods used by AKU-EB evaluate higher intellectual abilities of comprehension, logical thinking and problem solving. As a result of a secure, valid and reliable process for national and international comparability of academic achievement, Pakistani students will become increasingly able to compete on equal terms for entrance into leading academic institutions nationally and worldwide without having to opt for the 'O' and 'A' level system. Consequently, the country will evolve to a more competitive position in the global knowledge-based economy. As stated by two leading Pakistani economists in 1998, "Individuals and societies that acquire constructive learning skills grow in knowledge and progress further, realizing economic and other social benefits, while those who do not, become increasingly marginal and dependent".[5]

3.3 **Scope and voluntary nature of AKU-EB:** The AKU-EB Ordinance provides for full credit and recognition of the certificates awarded for achievement up to the level of higher secondary education. Affiliation with AKU-EB is voluntary and its creation provides an additional option to students of schools controlled by the Federal Government, and also students of non-government schools throughout Pakistan and

[5] Haq, M. and Haq, K. 1998. Human Development in South Asia 1998: The Education Challenge. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

abroad. The Ordinance provides for services to provincial government schools, but subject to approval by the provincial governments.

3.4 **Governance of AKU-EB:** The AKU-EB has a Board of Directors which includes representation from many different stakeholders, including schools, the public examination boards and the Higher Education Commission. Several senior serving and retired civil servants and educationists have accepted invitations to join the Board. The Chairman of the IBCC (Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen of the Provincial and Federal Examination Boards) is an ex officio member of the Board of Directors of AKU-EB to facilitate sharing of information on performance with other examination boards and for transparency of AKU-EB operations, while the Director of AKU-EB in turn is a member of the IBCC.

3.5 **Reasonable and graded fee structure:** AKU-EB examinations, both in Urdu and English medium are being made accessible to schools serving individuals from all walks of life through a graded fee system. The fee for SSC candidates from not-for-profit schools will be Rs. 1500 and Rs. 3000 for others. This is more than the Rs. 350-750 currently being charged by public boards (although it is unclear whether these fees will remain the same when the two-stage examination is introduced in place of the single-stage one now in use). However, it is much less than the fee for a comprehensive Cambridge 'O' Level certificate in Pakistan, which is about Rs. 26,000. Consequently, students who do not wish to follow a foreign curriculum or who cannot currently afford 'O' and 'A' level examinations are able to access similar standards through the AKU-EB system.

4. ALLEGATIONS

4.1 Many unjustified and inaccurate statements about the programme and the University have been published in numerous papers as of late. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that they are based on misapprehensions and misunderstandings of the basis on which AKU-EB has been established and will operate.

4.2 It has been stated that AKU-EB will change the national curriculum. However, the under which AKU-EB was established clearly states that it will "follow the national curriculum and syllabi" [6] the procedure by which detailed syllabi are developed begins with the text of national curriculum, and an extensive review process involving experts and

[6] Ordinance to establish Aga Khan University Examination Board, 8th November 2002, Section 3 (6).

specialists ensures that all aspects of the national curriculum are covered. The text of each syllabus document is deposited with the Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education.

4.3 It has been stated that AKU-EB's objective is to take over government examination boards. However, AKU has neither the intention nor the capacity to assume control over any other board. The government has also made it clear many times that it has no plans to hand over any examination board to AKU-EB. In 1998, the government boards served 1.2 million candidates for the SSC. At the growth rate of 2.9 percent annually, projected from the preceding 5 years, this figure would be about 1.4 million candidates today. Therefore, AKU-EB's targeted number of 27,000 candidates in 5 years is only 2 percent of the countrywide total. Therefore, the issue of taking over another Board is completely unfounded. As stated above, the Government expects AKU-EB to develop a model of high quality examinations at the secondary and higher secondary levels of education and to enhance the country's capacity for educational assessment and tests through demonstration and sharing of experience with other examination boards, in order to facilitate the improvement of education in schools.

4.4 Statements have appeared in the press that associate AKU-EB with a US agenda to secularise Pakistan via infiltration of its education system. Some of these statements have made reference to funding of AKU-EB by USAID. However, as already stated, AKU-EB was conceived and developed without any prior reference to funding sources, and will abide by the national curriculum. AKU-EB will examine students in all subjects, including Islamiyat and Pakistan Studies, according to the national curriculum and syllabi. The notion of 'secularisation' is therefore unfounded. Furthermore, for over twenty years Aga Khan Development Network agencies have utilised grants from many national and international developmental organisations for social development in Pakistan, with the full knowledge, support and approval of every Government, and have never misused such funds. Independent evaluations have confirmed the effective use of such funds for national development purposes. The notion of AKU-EB working against Pakistan's national interest is thus unthinkable.

4.5 Some media have reported claims that AKU-EB or the government will coerce schools into applying for affiliation with AKU-EB. However, the Ordinance clearly established AKU-EB in order to provide an option to the current systems in place for schools, educators and students. It lays down that affiliation to AKU-EB will be entirely voluntary. These points have been repeatedly stated by the Federal Government.

4.6 It has been claimed that AKU itself is an extraordinarily expensive institution that caters to financially upper class students and bears a favourable disposition to the Ismaili community. It is important to recall that an essential attribute of AKU's Charter is its fundamental concern for providing quality education for all persons regardless of gender, creed, religion, race, class, colour or domicile. Admission of all AKU students is based entirely on merit. This is facilitated by the University's financial assistance policy which ensures that no student admitted on merit is denied education for inability to pay the fee. Last year AKU provided financial support to 40 percent of its student body. It is also noteworthy that as a consequence of its merit-based admissions policy, far from being Ismaili focused, the overwhelming majority of the University's students in the Medical College as well as its faculty members are from non-Ismaili communities. The patients treated at Aga Khan University Hospital are also predominantly non-Ismaili, and some 74 percent of them are from lower and middle income groups, who benefit significantly from the generous patient welfare programme. Furthermore, AKU's governance according to its Charter from the Government of Pakistan is the responsibility of its 12-member Board of Trustees, a statutory body of diverse public representation, including from the PMDC, the HEC and the High Court of Sindh; only three of its members are from the Ismaili community.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The AKU-EB was created in response to appeals from schools, students and educationists throughout Pakistan, and after careful thought and analysis by AKU's Board of Trustees and the encouragement of the Government. Its sole purpose is to improve the quality of education by making examinations of reputable standard more accessible to Pakistani students. Its assessment methods will be based on the evaluation of higher comprehension capabilities and successful candidates will be increasingly recognized by leading higher education institutions in and outside the country. The AKU-EB is a national institution and will follow in all respects, as required by law, the national curriculum. The governance of AKU, including that of its Examination Board, is predicated on wide representation from many sectors including the Government, as well as on transparency and best practices. The Ismaili community does not determine the policies of the University. The Government intends the AKU-EB to be a national resource and one which will provide a role model for other examination boards. AKU has been working, and will continue to work, in that spirit.

Notes & References

[1] Ordinance to establish Aga Khan University Examination Board, 8th November 2002, Section 8.

[2] Angel M. Rabasa, *The Muslim World After 9/11*, RAND Corporation (January, 2005)

[3] Ibid.

[4] *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, W. W. Norton & Company, (July, 2004)

[5] National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project*, University Press of the Pacific (January, 2005)

[6] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, Simon & Schuster (November, 2002)

[7] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, Simon & Schuster (October, 2004)

[8] Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, Free Press (March, 2004)

[9] Ibid.

[10] Richard A. Clarke, *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*, Century Foundation Press, (2004)

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

[14] Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, Brookings Institution Press, (2004)

[15] *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, Asia Report N°49, International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium, (March 2003)

[16] *Pakistan: Madrassahs, Extremism, and Military*, Asia Report N°36, International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium, (July 2002)

[17] *Pakistan: Reforming Education Sector*, Asia Report N°84, International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium, (October 2004).

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