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Co-Production: Do Faith-Based Organisations offer a potential?

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Abstract

Forging partnerships for development is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. While Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) are receiving growing attention as important non-state service providers, they are assumed to be less conducive to forging development partnerships with the state than secular NGOs. Analysing the dynamic of engagement between state and madrasas (the most prominent FBO in the Muslim world) in six-countries across two geographical regions of Middle East (Egypt, Syria, and Turkey) and South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh), the paper demonstrates that the assumption that FBOs are less likely to work with the state due to strict adherence to religious beliefs is misplaced. Like NGOs, FBOs respond to incentives and enter in a variety of relationships with the state ranging from cooperation to conflict. The defining feature in building a cooperative relationship is the level of trust between the negotiators on the two sides.

Keywords: Partnerships; FBOs; Madrasas; Middle East; South Asia.

1. Introduction

In early 1980s, growing disenchantment with the state-centric models of development created space for international development institutions to bring the non-state actors within the development discourse and practice (Edwards and Hulme 1995). Growing recognition of the limitations of NGOs to meet the development challenge during the past decade—such as the difficulties faced by NGOs in scaling up— has in turn given way to a new discourse on the need to forge partnerships between the two sides for effective delivery of development programmes, a process also referred to as co-production. Promoting partnerships for development is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals, and many development agencies now as a matter of routine, require government agencies to involve NGOs in either the service delivery or monitoring of the projects they support.

While FBOs have received increased attention in recent years as a distinct category within the sphere of non-state service providers, which are viewed to be more embedded in local communities (Clarke et al, 2007), projects involving FBOs as development partners remain small in number. The explanation for that primarily rests in the assumption about static nature of religious beliefs: since FBOs are assumed to be shaped in their objectives and methods of working by unchanging religious beliefs they are expected to be less likely to demonstrate the level of flexibility required in forging of partnerships between non-state providers and the state to secure secular development goals. The literature on partnerships between state and NGOs indicates many challenges to such collaboration even between the state and the NGOs as the state and non-state actors are often found to be driven by different ideological agenda

and have different ways of working¹. While contractual forms of service delivery agreements leading to a principle-agent relationship are easily put in place, forging of genuine partnership, where both sides mutually agree on the end goals and collectively design the mechanisms for achieving those goals are found to be rare (Teamey and McLoughin 2008).

This paper explores dynamics of state-FBO relationships with the focus on madrasas—the oldest and most dominant form of FBO in the Muslim world— to show that FBOs also respond to incentives and can demonstrate relative flexibility in interpretations of specific religious beliefs if they are offered attractive financial incentives to cooperate with the state in a trusting environment. Section 1 sets the context to the research study to justify why it is important to understand FBOs' potential to forge development partnerships and is followed with the section on methodology. Section 3 presents a brief review of the changing nature of state and madrasa engagement across the two regions and the six countries. Section 4 maps out the types of engagements that have evolved between the two sides across the six countries. The final section attempts to identify the underlying factors determining the nature of interaction between the two sides.

¹ For a good review of current literature on dynamics of relationships between government agencies and the non-state providers see, Teamey and McLoughin (2008).

2. Why State-FBO relationship matters?

Though a relatively new subject of analysis within development literature, the link between FBOs, state and development is an old one. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christian missionaries worked alongside the colonial state in the provision of health and education services in developing countries (Clarke et al 2007). With the rise of the nation state, religion became associated with retrogressive values and FBOs became irrelevant to popular discourse on development. For some, religion was an antithesis of development. In this view, religion is a traditional, conservative counter-development force, dominated, and primarily concerned with the regulation of individual conduct rather than the promotion of public good. Western donors in general remained ambivalent about the role of FBOs engaging primarily with a small range of FBOs associated with the mainstream Christian Churches. Further, the FBOs selected were those that presented their 'development' work distinct from their missionary activities (Clarke et al 2007).

In the last two decades, FBOs have, however, increasingly been brought into the debate for their potential to contribute towards development processes. In Tanzania, faith communities, especially within the Christian tradition, provide close to fifty per cent of the national education, health care and social provision (Clarke et al 2007). The fact that FBOs are being given increasing importance in today's planning is also noted in the Global Civil Society Report (Anheier et al 2004: 45), 'there is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South,

from Latin America to Africa and South Asia.’ What constitutes an FBO, however, remains open to discussion.

Clarke (2006; 2007) notes that the world of FBOs is complex and can consist of numerous types: faith-based representative organisations or apex bodies, faith-based charitable or development organisations, faith-based social-political organisations, faith-based missionary organisations, and faith-based radical, illegal, or terrorist organisations. He also shows that FBOs differ enormously in the way they deploy faith in their pursuit of development, humanitarian, or broader political objectives. This paper is using the term ‘FBO’ more narrowly to focus exclusively on social service organisations working explicitly in the name of a specific religious tradition, that is, the second category identified in Clarke’s typology. In arguing this, the paper maintains that to be labelled as an FBO an organisation must explicitly claim a faith-based identity. The reason for emphasising the organisation’s willingness to adopt this identity is that in the absence of this condition an overwhelming majority of secular voluntary social service organisations in South Asia and Middle East will qualify as faith-based given that most secular organisations in these contexts are also inspired by religious ethos². Green and Sherman (2002) who developed a typology of the role of faith in working of FBOs involved in service provision in 15 American states participating in government funded programmes, also make this revealed commitment to a faith critical to definition of an FBO.

² A survey of 20 largest voluntary welfare organisations in Pakistan shows that in case of 80 per cent of the organisations surveyed, the initiators were religiously inspired but they did not explicitly define themselves as faith-based nor were they viewed as such by the public (Bano 2005; 2008).

2. Methodology

This paper emerges from extensive fieldwork conducted by the author with madrasas in Pakistan over a period of eighteen months during 2006 to 2008. As part of developing a holistic account of the working of Pakistani madrasas, the research also explored the nature of their interaction with the state. This analysis of factors shaping the dynamics of state and madrasa relationship was then gradually tested in five other country contexts: Bangladesh, India, Egypt, Turkey, and Syria. The comparative analysis presented in this paper consists of two weeks of focused fieldwork conducted in each one of the five countries between 2007-2009. The emphasis was on conducting in-depth interviews, visits to selected number of leading madrasas in the given country and observations in order to gather a wide range of perspectives on the dynamics of the state-madrasa relationship. The study therefore focused on identifying and interviewing the key respondents including the government officials concerned with the madrasa reforms, the madrasa leadership, and prominent academics and journalists that have observed this interaction over time.

The fieldwork in each country started with interviews with concerned government officials. The main government institutions in which interviews were conducted included Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board in Dhaka, West Bengal Madrasa Board in Calcutta, Ministry of Minority Affairs in Lucknow, Madrasa Reform Programme in Islamabad, Al-Azhar University in Egypt, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs in Syria, and Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey. These interviews were followed by in-depth interviews with prominent ulama leading traditional madrasas, across the six countries. Interviews were also conducted with prominent academics, journalists and public intellectuals across the six countries who

specialise in study of state and its relation with Islam with the view to get a neutral view of the political, economic and social factors that have contributed to the dynamics of state-madrassa relationship across the six countries.

3. Changing dynamics of state-madrassa engagement

The madrassa is one of the oldest institutions of learning in the Islamic world. While schools for Quranic learning, normally referred to as muktabas, started in Prophet Mohammad's time itself, the evolution of these schools into proper madrasas for teaching of religious texts is a process that is argued to have started in the eleventh century in Iran (Hefner and Zaman 2007). The tradition spread to Baghdad in 1063, Damascus in the 1090, Cairo in the 1170s, and by thirteenth century had also spread to India, where the madrassa system consolidated under the Mughal Empire (Hefner and Zaman 2007). The religious subjects with which the madrasas dealt included Quranic recitation, Arabic grammar, Quranic interpretation, jurisprudence, the sources of law and didactic theology. Under the Muslim empires such as Mamluks and Seljuqs in the Middle East and Mughals in South Asia, madrasas trained officials for the court and for the judiciary. Further, Muslim rulers patronised the madrasas to win moral legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Thus, in both contexts, while some leading madrasas did choose to operate independent of the state funds (Nizami 1983), most ulama in the madrasas worked out a cooperative relationship with the state to serve a very practical role for the society, that is training officials to run the affairs of the state.

This comfortable relationship between the state and the madrasas across the Middle East and South Asia faced a serious set back with the ascendancy of the European system of education and science and technology in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As the Ottoman Empire started to crumble in late eighteenth century and many Muslim countries came under western colonial rule, the madrassa education came to be seen as irrelevant to needs of the modern society. In India, with the British displacement of Mughal rule the official sources of support to madrasas dwindled. The

British withdrew the support extended by the Mughal rulers to the Muslim institutions through the policy of *Madad-i-Ma'ash*, a policy of allocating revenue-free lands to ensure income for the working of the madrasas (Nizami 1983). More importantly, due to changes in the administration and economy, introduced by the colonial rulers, madrasa education lost its economic relevance.

The result was that whereas earlier Muslim education had relevance to both religious and secular needs, gradually it became increasingly otherworldly. Though Middle Eastern states such as Egypt and Syria had very limited exposure to colonial rule as compared to India even in these societies Islamic educational institutions got sidelined in favour of western education. Even in Turkey, which was never formally colonised, the recognition by the Ottoman rulers of their declining powers vis-à-vis the European states, especially their failure to compete with the latter's advances in military technology and warfare, by late nineteenth century had resulted in attempts aimed at replicating the western educational institutions and initiating reforms within the madrasa system. The process was dramatically accelerated under Kemal Atatürk, who in his bid to reform and modernise the Turkish state and society ordered closure of madrasas in Turkey: 439 madarsas and Quranic courses were closed in 1924 and only eight were allowed to remain open— a measure that has not been exercised in any other Muslim majority country (Agai 2007).

While colonial rule led to displacement of madrasas from mainstream society and economy in the Muslim world, the onset of colonial rule also brought changes within the internal working of the madrasas. Some Muslims, who attended modern educational institutions, transferred principles of these western institutional models to religious education. The concept of having formal classes and a fixed syllabus which

was introduced in Darul Uloom Deoband— a madrasa tradition that evolved in India under British rule and today has the largest madrasa network in South Asia— as opposed to the informal teaching practices pursued in earlier madrasas, was itself a result of the exposure of ulama of this madrasa to western educational institutions established under the colonial rule (Metcalf 1982).

In order to compete in this changed environment, the madrasas were required to dramatically reorganise themselves. The ulama who established Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband, were attempting to respond to the changed status of madrasas and Islam in general within the Indian society due to complete transformation of relationships between the colonial state and madrasas. The Deobandi ulama argued that in these changed times it was important for the Muslims to focus on individual reform, and on establishing personal religious piety. Similarly, in Turkey, Ataturk did order closure of most madrasas but the state move did not result in entirely suppressing the popular demand for Islamic learning and ulama's determination to respond to that. A tradition of informal study circles started and formalised in the years following the forced closure of the established madrasas eventually compelling the state to take over the responsibility of providing Islamic education in an attempt to regulate it (Aga 2007). This very brief overview of the changes in working of madrasas in the Middle East and the South Asia in response to exposure to western educational institutions and the different degree of experience of colonial rule shows that the state institutions play a key role in shaping the nature of activities of the FBOs. Religious ideology is not all that shapes an FBO, state policies, and social and economic conditions of the population supporting a particular FBO also play a critical role in the working of FBOs.

4.Types of state-FBO relations

In the post-colonial period in the countries under study and after the reforms introduced by Ataturk in Turkey, the popular demand for Islamic education continued though the platforms through which that demand was met varied across the Middle Eastern and South Asian states. The leaders in both the contexts, having learnt to admire the western conceptions of modernity and development, tried to regulate the working of the madrasas to lead to a renewed interpretation of Islamic text, which could prove more amicable to their modernisation agenda than the orthodox conceptions of those principles. However, they tried to regulate the religious education in different ways. In the Middle East, the state has been more inclined to bring religious education within the domain of state responsibility. In South Asia, on the other hand, the state has been more tolerant of private ownership of madrasas despite making attempts to reform them.

Accurate data on total numbers of madrasas is difficult to find for any country mainly because even in countries where governments have banned or restricted private madrasas, it has proved impossible to check the emergence of unregistered madrasas, study circles or Islamic educational movements. As noted above, in Turkey, the forced closure of madrasas by the government of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk did not result in complete surrender of popular demand for Islamic education. Neither did the ulama stop themselves from continuing to seek avenues to impart that education. Informal Islamic study circles, referred to as cemaats, replaced the madrasas banned by the Turkish state with the result that in order to retain control of religious learning, the state was forced to open state owned schools of Islamic education to train prayer leaders and Islamic scholars. Departments of Theology were

also established in Turkish universities. Later, study of Islam as one of the subjects was also reintroduced in the state curriculum. In addition, the state has been tolerant of an influential educational movement, which has grown out of these informal study circles that emerged after the state closure of madrasas. Led by Fethullah Gulen, the movement establishes elite schools for secular education but builds into the teaching a strong Islamic moral code of behaviour based on conservative Islamic discourse (Aga 2007).

In Egypt the state has also attempted to systematically control the imparting of Islamic education but unlike Turkey here the state tried to take control of the existing institutions of Islamic education rather than replacing them with new ones. In other words, in Egypt, the state from the very beginning attempted to harness the moral authority exercised by the ulama within the public by co-opting them into the state system rather than attempting to eradicate their power. One reason for this clarity in approach in case of Egyptian state was that the structure of religious authority in Egypt had overtime become centralised in one leading institution of Islamic learning, namely Al-Azhar University. Representing a long tradition of independent Islamic scholarship, the ulama of Al-Azhar had acquired a mass public following. To regulate the interpretation of Islamic texts and to ensure that religious authority is not channeled towards forces attempting to pose a political challenge to the secular Egyptian regimes, respective governments opted to gradually bring Al-Azhar within state control rather than forcing its close. The need for such measures had become particularly clear to the state after Egypt's 1952 revolution.

The state therefore nationalised Al-Azhar in 1961 and gradually established a carefully calculated relationship with the religious authorities. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar

was given the rank of a Minister in return for ensuring that his fatwas (Islamic rulings) do not dramatically compromise state interests (Zeghal 2007). However, the University was also allowed a certain level of autonomy to ensure that it retains the religious authority within the public and is not reduced to being viewed as a rubber stamp for legitimising state orders. The Sheikh of Al-Azhar thus has to constantly play a balancing act not only to protect state interests but also to ensure that he does not provide so dramatic an interpretation of the text that he loses all public credibility, which has been in question ever since the forging of alliance between the state and the senior ranks at Al-Azhar. The institution to date, however, remains the primary provider of Islamic education in Egypt. In the academic year, 2000-01, 483,981 female students and 836,753 male students attended the Egyptian Azharites institutes (Zeghal 2007).

Even in Syria, the state attempted to closely regulate the provision of Islamic education. Religious education is primarily a responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs though a selected number of private Islamic Foundations are allowed to impart Islamic education, the most prominent of which is the Al-Noor Foundation in Damascus. The Syrian state, unlike its counterparts in Egypt and Turkey, has for most part dealt with these Islamic schools more cautiously. It has neither tried to completely suppress them nor has it tried to borrow their moral authority by trying to actively co-opt them—the current Syrian President, though, is seen to be more tolerant and engaging with the Islamic groups than his father. The Syrian state has tried to regulate the public interpretation of Islam by running its own religious education programmes to train preachers and provide for higher study of theology. However, it has also allowed a selected number of prominent Islamic scholars to run their own charitable foundations for spreading Islamic education. These Foundations have traditionally had

a strong student following even from foreign countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, etc. In the post-September 11 context though the Syrian government has introduced strict monitoring mechanisms to regulate the presence of foreign students at these Foundations.

In Syria, the state also therefore established a careful model to closely coordinate with the Islamic Foundations to ensure that they are allowed certain space so that the leading ulama do not resort to extreme measures to protest but at the same time it keeps close watch over the working of these Foundations to ensure that their leaders do not pose a threat to their government or the state's modernisation agenda. To check any signs of radicalisation in Syrian Islamic schools, in recent years the state has worked to establish a unified government approved curriculum in consultations with the heads of these Foundations, removing all books that are viewed to spread sectarian discord. Since the end of 2008, the government also requires that comprehensive, detailed accounts be submitted to a government committee for audit. The government is also trying to gain greater control over school staff by bringing the teachers at these Foundations on to the government payroll. The main incentives offered to the leaders of these Foundations to accept these reforms is the promise of granting state recognition to the degree certificates issued by their institutions.

As opposed to the Middle Eastern context, in South Asia on the other hand the states have been more tolerant of private ownership of madrasas. Even in context of South Asia, the estimates of madrasas remain contested due to large number of informal and unregistered madrasas in these countries. The estimates for madrasas across the three countries range from 10,000 to 30,000 or more. The governments in all the three countries are currently trying to compile more reliable data in order to better monitor

and regulate the madrasas. Recent government estimates record 16,000 registered madrasas in Pakistan with an estimated population of 1.5 million students (Ministry of Education 2006). Another study argues that the total number of madrasa students in Pakistan constitutes less than 3 per cent of the total school age population in Pakistan (Crockcroft et al 2009; Andrabi et al 2005). Estimates for India are even less reliable.

According to the Centre for the Promotion of Science at the Aligarh Muslim University in 1985 there were 2890 madrasas in country. In 2002, the Union Minister for Home claimed the number stood at 31,857. In 2003, a leading Muslim paper claimed that there were some 1,25,000 madrasas in India, catering to around 30,00,000 students (Nair 2008). The Justice Rajindar Sachar Committee, appointed by the prime minister to study the social, educational and economic status of Muslims in the country, however, shows that only 4.3 per cent of Muslim children are studying in madrasas (Sachar 2006). Bangladesh has by far seen the most rapid spread of madrasas in South Asia. The number of secondary madrasas in Bangladesh has increased at a phenomenal pace. Today 33 per cent of all secondary level students and 15 per cent of all post-secondary students enrolled in state education system are in Aliya (reformed) madrasas (Bano 2007a).

The state's willingness to allow the private ownership of madrasas should not be interpreted to mean that the state in these countries has not attempted to regulate the madrasas or has not had the aspirations to make them a partner in the modernisation process through introduction of secular subjects. In Bangladesh in 1979, the government undertook a scheme to modernise the madrasa education system whereby secular subjects such as English, Bengali, Science, and Mathematics were to be taught along with religious subjects and languages. Another important aspect of

the reform was the replacement of Urdu with Bangla as a medium of instruction in the madrasas. Madrasas engaging with the reforms received government recognition and subsequently qualified for aid money to finance teachers' salaries (Bano 2007a). In India, the main attempt at implementing these reforms was made by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1993-1994. The focus was on introducing teaching of Science, Maths, Social Studies, Hindi and English in order to provide education comparable to the national system of education. The scheme supported appointment of qualified teachers in madrasas to teach secular subjects and assisted with funds for developing book banks and some related material (Nair 2008).

The outcome of these attempts by the state to make madrasas partners in advancing the state conception of modernity has been different across the three countries. As opposed to India and Pakistan, much larger proportion of madrasas in Bangladesh accepted the reform programme: a clear Aliyah and Qoumi madrasa system has evolved in the country. In India, acceptance of the state programme has been more restricted and has varied across the states. Today, seven states (Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) have set up state-sponsored madrasa education boards and some states, such as West Bengal, have been able to convince leaders of a noticeable number of madrasas to join the reform programme: up to 1977 there were 238 official madrasas in West Bengal and since then the number of the registered madrasas has doubled. Today there are 500 madrasas registered with the West Bengal Madrasa Board as opposed to 550 with the Karzai (traditional) Madrasa Board (Nair 2008). In Pakistan on the other hand the reforms have had least acceptance within the madrasas: as late as 2008, only 250 out of the 16,000 registered madrasas had entered in the government reform programme introduced in 2001 (Bano 2007c). The difference is revealing because the

predominant number of madrasas, across the three countries, belong to the Deoband school of thought. This shows that the differing ability of the state to make madrasas cooperate in the state modernisation agenda is not entirely a product of madrasa ideology but has strong bearing of the socio-economic context in which the negotiations for these partnership arrangements are taking place.

The six country experiences thus can be grouped into three types of relationships: co-optation (Bangladesh and Egypt), collaboration (Syria and India), and confrontation (Pakistan and Turkey). The reason for drawing these distinctions is that they reflect different level of autonomy enjoyed by the madrasas and therefore reflects different nature of relationships that are emerge between the two sides. In Bangladesh the reformed madrasas are today attempting to produce students who can compete with the children of secular schools rather than aiming to take up religious positions. The graduates of these reformed madrasas don't enjoy much religious credibility in public perception; the religious authority remains in the hands of the unreformed traditional madrasas (Bano 2007a). Given that the state has been able to establish a very large number of reformed madrasas, where the heads are willing to work within the state developed framework, the Bangladesh model can be classified as a cooptation model just as in case of Al-Azhar in Egypt, where the state ideology has become more dominant in shaping the relationship.

The same holds true in the case of reformed madrasas in West Bengal. However, in India as a whole the state has not been able to ensure this large-scale reform of madrasas. The Indian model thus sits closer to the Syrian model where the state and the religious scholars are keen to ensure that both sides stay within clearly defined limits to prevent any hostility. Madrasas in India and Islamic Foundations in Syria work

strictly within the religious education mandate staying completely clear of politics so that the state gets no excuse to tighten its regulatory framework. This model is thus that of coordination where both sides know of their underlying differences in ideological positions and engage only to the point to ensure that they can maintain smooth co-existence.

In Pakistan and Turkey, the relationship between the state and madrasas has on the other hand been marked with confrontation. In Pakistan, the main reason for that has been the lack of trust between the two sides. Since September 11, the state has tried to regulate the madrasas and has launched a programme to introduce secular subjects in the madrasas' curriculum. The programme has however failed to win cooperation of madrasa leaders because of the state's close association with the US 'war on terror'. The reform programme was even funded by the US government; further hardening the ulama's suspicions about the state intent. Thus the relationship between the two sides is that of confrontation. The Turkish experience was also marked with a highly confrontational approach under the regime of Ataturk, who closed all madrasas. However, the Turkish experience at this point in time is better classified as that of coordination. Now the state has a well-established state owned Islamic education system and at the same time allows for running of the parallel Islamic education movements as represented in the emergence of Fethullah Gulen's movement. Thus, the Turkish experience also shows that relationships are dynamic and that their complexity is better understood by studying them over a period of time rather than looking at them at one point in time.

It is clear that the above categories of relationships emerge due to different characteristics of the state as well as the madrasas in the six countries. The question

however is that is it possible to identify certain underlying factors that play a key role in shaping the nature of relationship between the state and the FBO.

5. Factors shaping the relationship

Research on the dynamics of state-NGO engagement has identified a combination of relationships that can emerge from the interaction between the two but it also shows that while partnerships are desirable there is no guarantee that interactions will actually lead to cooperation, which is meaningful enough to be called partnership. The state-madrassa engagement analysed across the six countries supports similar findings. It is beyond the scope of this research to systematically illustrate the factors that lead to establishment of certain kind of relationships; however, looking across the six countries, significance of three factors is visible.

5.1 Financial incentives matter

First of all, the experience of the six countries shows that the state's willingness to make a financial commitment to support the proposed intervention is critical for winning the cooperation of the FBO. The countries where the state has had relative success in establishing a relationship with the madrasas, such as in Bangladesh, state of West Bengal in India, Egypt, Turkey, and Syria, are the ones where the state either made serious financial investments in establishing a state-owned Islamic education programme or provided strong incentives to the leaders of the madrasas to introduce secular subjects in the madrasa curriculum. In Bangladesh and West Bengal, the state covers for all the salaries of the teachers whether teaching religious or secular subjects. In Pakistan and India (at the national government level), one major reason that the state has failed to make the programme appeal to the madrasa leadership is that the state refused to make a serious financial commitment to the programme. The states in both the context only offered to cover salaries of the secular subject teachers, leaving the main financial burden intact on the madrasa leadership.

Further, it offered lower salaries for these teachers than offered to those in secular schools. The incentives were thus not compelling enough for the madrasa leadership to engage with the state especially given that the relationship in both these contexts also suffered from an inherent trust deficit.

5.2 Trust on the state

In studies on partnership between state and NGOs, trust between the two sides has often been identified as critical to forging of a partnership where both sides willingly contribute to establishment of a desirable goal (Teamey and McLoughin 2008). The same has been found to be the case in the study of state-madrasa relationship. In Pakistan and India, apart from the fact that the state has offered weak incentives, the reason madrasas have refused to adopt reforms is that the context in which the incentives were being offered inherently had a trust deficit. In Pakistan, due to the post-September 11 context, where the government had become an active ally of the US in the 'war on terror', the ulama remained very suspicious of the reform programme. In India, on the other hand, because they represent a minority, the ulama have always been inherently suspicious of state attempts to reform the madrasas (Nair 2008). This has made the leading madrasas resistant to accepting state funding.

The primary requisite of establishing this trust is indeed a shared ideological vision. However, trust can also be evolved even among parties with competing ideologies if an interactive process is evolved. If the state can develop a consultative process and involves the officials of the FBOs in a dialogue a compromise can often be worked out. It is because of this that despite similar differences in ideology, in context of some Muslim societies, the state has been more successful in building relationship with the ulama, such as seen in the nature of engagement between the Sheikh of Al-Azhar

and the Egyptian state. The importance of developing mutually agreed-upon specification of objectives, mechanisms for combining efforts and managing cooperation, and determination of appropriate roles and responsibilities in shaping evolution of a relationship between state and a non-state service providers has also been frequently noted in the state-NGO literature (Brinkerhoff 2002; Welle 2001; Lister 2000).

5.3 Embeddedness in the community

Finally the existence of the madrasa system and demand for Islamic education despite efforts by the state to regulate it across the six countries verifies the popular assumption that FBOs rely on strong community networks. Even in Turkey despite use of force and despite evolution of a well-respected and well-funded state supported system of Islamic education, the tradition of informal study circles has continued and has led to establishment of a movement of Islamic education, which does not only operate within Turkey but also now runs 250 educational institutions internationally (Agai 2007). This deep-rooted support for Islamic education shows the need to take religion seriously in understanding development processes. More specifically, the research also shows that FBOs sacrifice their popular following if they become too close to the state and are seen to have comprised on their core principals. This is the challenge faced by the reformed madrasas in Bangladesh and West Bengal. They have adjusted so completely with the state demands that they have in the process lost their public legitimacy— a challenge also partially faced by ulama of Al-Azhar. Thus for international development agencies and the states the best way to engage in partnership with FBOs is to develop a consultative dialogue where both sides agree on a common framework. If FBOs are forced to completely rework their ideology either by provision of strong incentives or by force they lose their biggest strength, that

is, their strong community networks. A great number of interesting hypothesis need to be systematically tested if the underlying factors shaping state and FBO engagement are to be fully understood, which is beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose of this paper is not to provide the answers, but to establish that the questions about partnerships between state and NGOs for efficient delivery of development outcomes are as applicable to the FBOs as to the NGOs.

Conclusion

A systematic assessment of the factors that establish a successful partnership between state and madrasas, where both sides exercise equal power and mutually work to advance a desirable public good such as spread of basic education, requires a much closer examination of the six cases of state and madrasa engagement analysed in this paper. However, what this paper has attempted to establish by looking at experience of one specific form of FBO across six country contexts is to establish that FBOs also respond to incentives and can end up forging a number of relationships with the state. Strong financial incentives and mutual trust can ensure smooth cooperation between the two sides. Trust is most easily established if the two sides share an ideological worldview but it can also be cultivated if the state is willing to engage in a consultative process.

Finally, the paper also argues that if state-FBO partnerships are to be encouraged because the FBOs are viewed to be embedded in communities and thus are assumed to ensure higher community participation then it is critical to note that using force to make FBOs accept reforms or co-opting them by offering very strong financial incentives where they lose their core values is counter productive. FBOs, which agree to record too dramatic a shift away from the established principals of the faith they represent, such as demonstrated by the reformed madrasas in Bangladesh and West Bengal, lose their moral authority (Bano 2007a). Such FBOs become labeled as secular organisations in public perceptions making the community shift its religious allegiance to another religious based organisation. Thus, a consultative process which builds into the reforms a clearly thought out incentive structure is more likely to lead to

a state-FBO engagement capable of attaining development goals than is possible by the state pushing an agenda either by force or cooptation.

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