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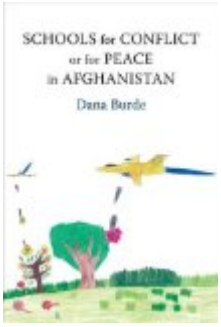

Dana Burde. *Schools for Conflict or for Peace in Afghanistan.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. 231 pp. $24.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-16928-8.

Reviewed by Paul Clemans

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

Dana Burde provides rare insights into the potential for Afghanistan's educational system to advance either political violence or peace. While this book represents her first sole authorship, she has contributed professionally to this subject's development for well over a decade. This includes two supporting field studies she conducted in Afghanistan. She examined Panjshir Valley's education in 2006 in the first study. For the follow-up study in 2012, she went to Ghor province at the other end of the country. Burde is one of the few who have bridged the gap between education and violence, especially in book form. Most treatments related to this topic remain in journals even after nearly fifteen years of fighting. As she aptly described it, "scholars who study violence and politics do not consider education, while scholars who study education typically do not analyze its possible relation to violence" (p. 167). Her work pushes the education discussion from the number of schools built and the number literate students to how educating those students can move the nation towards peace.

Burde methodically argues that "community-based schools increase equitable access to neutral education and thereby contribute to the underlying conditions for peace across the country" (p. 128). She introduces her argument naturally with a discussion of the few pieces of literature available on the subject, including the popular ***Three Cups of Tea*** by Greg Mortenson (2007). The book follows with a description of Afghan education and its effect on modern Afghan history. Within this context, Burde outlines four historic approaches to Afghan education during conflict as far back as the Soviet occupation. These four approaches form the framework for the subsequent chapters from 2 through 5. The introduction concludes with the foundational relationships that Burde explores throughout the book such as educational paths to peace or conflict, educational access and government legitimacy, and education and militancy.

The first approach considers the reasons why humanitarian organizations generally neglect education. Burde starts with their adherence to the

International Committee of the Red Cross principles of emergency relief (i.e., food, clothes, shelter, and medicine) and neutrality. Traditional relief organizations resist government, anti-government, and population attempts to leverage humanitarian aid to their political advantage by self-assessing needs and providing only emergency aid. While new humanitarian relief organizations resist politicization of their aid as well, they recognize immediate emergency aid is not enough to stop suffering. They educate themselves on a conflict's politics and engage in long-term development efforts. While both types of organizations believe aid should be apolitically distributed, their response to politicization differs. Burde questions whether aid can really be apolitical and whether it should be limited to emergency aid. She suggests their position contains three critical issues. First, the exclusive focus on emergency relief prevents them from addressing the educational desires of the population. Second, organizations cannot understand how education promotes conflict without a political perspective. Lastly, relief organizations must have a political perspective to understand education's ability to mitigate conflict.

US support to Afghan refugees during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s affords Burde the opportunity to view a second approach, the educational pathway to violence. The United States supplied educational materials to Afghan refugees in madrassas built in Pakistan. The curriculum indoctrinated a whole generation using illustrations such as rifles and tanks to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. It advocated violence to expel the Soviet invaders. Burde notes while there is no conclusive proof to directly implicate education as responsible for violence, there have been too few studies on the subject to discount the liklihood. This particular approach provides an instance where education was manipulated, politicized, and militarized in support of political goals. Burde uses the subsequent effect on the country to suggest the possibility that education may be a pathway to facilitate violence.

The work presents a third educational approach when the United States began exploring education as a pathway to stability and peace in Afghanistan over the last decade. Instead of using education to incite violence, the United States politicized the educational system to help legitimize the government. Burde examines the burdens legitimacy places on a governmental education system such access, equitable access, educational materials, and independence. She explores many of the difficulties and suggests the educational implementation was flawed in three areas she calls: unintended weaknesses, program-designed flaws, and community response. When the United States delivered the educational supplies to the Afghan government, the unintended weakness of corruption crept in to amplify the inequality of access felt across the country. The implementation problems were compounded when the United States decided to deliver education to the Pashtun in the South and East who were violently opposed to the Afghan government. This program-designed flaw deeply offended the Northern and Western tribes who were fighting the insurgency. Finally, Afghans believe access to education is their constitutional right. When government-sponsored education programs were not strong enough to reach many rural communities, the community response was to perceive the national government as flawed in ways which detracted from government legitimacy.

The stabilization program did obtain some measure of success and this success forms the basis for Burde's fourth educational approach. She argues that a community-based schools program using existing village buildings (or mosques) to teach children lowered a school's visibility and thereby increased its security. In addition, since the schools were located within the village, most students' travel was reduced, providing them with greater safety. Burde contrasts this program with

the formal government schools which offered high-visibility targets to insurgents and expose children to greater danger as they traveled longer distances to school. She also suggests that quality, positive textbooks may offer a peaceful influence, in the same way as the textbooks in the 1980s provided a violent influence. The new Afghan textbooks are examined in contrast to the earlier versions. To support her claims, Burde examined the community-based school efforts of the Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) from June 2006 to September 2011. In this case, the villages provided classrooms, teachers, and administrative support and in return, the relief organizations provided teacher training, classroom materials, and progress checks. Her research supports the idea that positive textbooks taught in local community-based schools will increase educational access, increase local ownership, reduce local grievances, and promote national unity and social cohesion.

Burde's epilogue and conclusion pick up after the PACE-A program. The US government suddenly moved the program's administration from the relief organizations to the Afghan government. Several factors affected the government's effectiveness and degraded the program's performance. First, the Afghan government did not possess the capacity to deliver supplies, train teachers, or monitor progress. In addition, deteriorating security conditions began to affect student access and attendance. Lastly, many of poor rural villages did not have the resources to support a community-based school. Burde ends the book with several policy recommendations. Two of those recommendations are to encourage relief agencies to embrace a "rights-based" aid approach and to establish an Afghan teacher training program, such as existed at Columbia University in the 1960s.

Burde's work could serve as a foundational text for those who want to understand the issues surrounding education and conflict. She surveyed the breadth of available sources, including journals, studies, research reports, and her own field research, to provide a cohesive picture of education. While the introduction is a slow read as she lays out the foundational concepts, the chapters addressing the four approaches are very engaging. Her clear outline in the beginning and subsequent chapter summaries provide good waypoints for the material along the way. Most importantly, Burde provides a very persuasive argument that community-based schools using positive, neutral curricula can promote stability and peace in the midst of a conflict. The only peripheral issue I wish she would have expanded upon a little more was the relationship between US government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the Afghan government within educational programs. That notwithstanding, she presents numerous nuggets of insight and wisdom within this work that policymakers, relief workers, and military members would find very valuable. In the end, I believe she has hit upon a promising concept in education and hope it takes root in Afghanistan.

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