The Madrasa in Asia

Political Activism and Transnational Linkages

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Contents

2 Change and Stagnation in Islamic Education

The Dar al-ᶜUlum of Deoband after the Split in 1982

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Only very recently has the West taken any notice of Islamic schools in South Asia, where especially those following the purist Deobandi interpretation of Islam have attracted much media attention. They were accused of inspiring numerous radical Islamic movements in South Asia, including the Taliban in Afghanistan, sectarian movements fighting against dissenting Islamic groups in Pakistan, and separatist militants battling with the military and the police in Indian Kashmir.[1] While the vast majority of these schools focus on classical Islamic education and not on politics or militancy, it is the narrow theological and ideological outlook of their graduates that has repeatedly been the target of criticism.

The root of the problem is often seen in the resistance of these schools to change, as they cling to an age-old curriculum and time-worn patterns of instruction. The Western perspective of stagnation in these schools, however, appears to be biased and – worse still – frequently misinformed. While their methods of change may not conform to Western expectations, it is essential to realise that from their own perspective these institutions have undergone dramatic changes since the 1970s. The course and handling of these changes will be discussed here, using the example of one of its most prominent institutions, the Islamic seminary in Deoband, north India. The

latter has become the leading seminary in the Deobandi school network, extending its influence throughout south Asia and to other parts of the Islamic world.

Since the early 1980s, two events have been instrumental in forcing the school to reconfigure its structure and agenda, and to adapt more resolutely to the changing times. The first was the symbolic centenary celebration in 1980, a public event that attracted more than 8,000 delegates, including Deobandi scholars, students, and activists from South Asia and other parts of the world.[2] The second was the split that took place in 1982, when one faction of the school's leadership and teaching staff, was driven out because of family loyalties, and this faction subsequently set up a rival institution, an incident that culminated in violent student actions and the temporary closure of the school. This paper will focus on several paradigm shifts that occurred in the wake of these two events. By paradigm we mean a set of principles and references that guide the self-organisation, operation, and self-perception of the school. As it adjusted to various internal and external challenges, the school's mode of operation gradually evolved from a personalised, closed, academic style to a more open, community-oriented, and overtly political and ideological approach.

These shifts will be discussed in relation to the principles of the school; its major educational subjects; the role of family politics; the mode of networking in Deobandi schools; the gradual modernisation of the institution and its teaching methods; and the strong articulation of non-religious concerns in ideology, politics, and society. Most of this data is being presented publicly for the first time. The various aspects discussed demonstrate the broad spectrum of change. Integrating these aspects requires an interdisciplinary approach widening the narrow confines of sociology and political science, and complementing them with a broader analysis more akin to an anthropological approach.

To understand the parameters of change as perceived by the Deoband school system one must go beyond the Western-induced framework of modernisation and look at the shifts that have taken place within these institutions. The Western modernisation paradigm measures Islamic movements against expectations of the promotion of economic development, social advancement and liberal democracy. These groups, however, rely on their own perspective based on their own movement's objectives. Within these parameters, they not only pursue universal goals such as missionary aims, but

also reflect group-specific issues regarding expansion, control or leadership within the movement. Western analysts rarely see changes within these areas as legitimate or relevant, since they are not necessarily a reflection of modernisation in the West. But it seems wrong to conclude that such group-specific dynamics of change will only create obstacles for broader modernisation or preclude it altogether. In practice, such diverse objectives cannot be clearly separated as they become so tightly intertwined.

The principles of the school

The Deoband school has become known for its specific take on the interpretation of Islam. While it is mostly associated with a purist, Salafi-type of teaching, its philosophy presents a far more complex mix of historical, cultural and doctrinal aspects. Moreover, issues of competition and leadership within the emerging Islamic sector have also modified its message and forced it to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances.

The higher Islamic seminary, the Deoband Dar al-ʿUlum, was founded in 1866 in northern India by Muhammad Qasim Nanaotawi (1832-1879) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905). The intention was to address the supposed lack of religious education among the Muslims of British India. Religious scholars feared a loss of self-identity with the spread of Western values in society and English language instruction.[3] After the defeat of the anti-colonial uprising of 1857-58, in which many Muslim princes and scholars took part, Islamic institutions were suspected of disloyalty and sedition by the British rulers. Religious scholars decided instead to concentrate on the reconstruction of religious knowledge and religiosity. Politically, they preferred to prove their loyalty to the British during this period. A more radical section of seminary teachers emerged shortly after the turn of the century, however. The new head teacher Mahmud al-Hasan (1851-1921) and scholars like Husain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957) and Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944) presented highly politicised ideas that challenged British rule, which they saw as a major impediment to true Islam in India and the Islamic world in general. Deoband scholars, in particular, identified with Ottoman rule, defending if after WWI and together with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), they initiated the broad-based but unsuccessful Khilafat movement (1919-1925).[4]

The ideological foundations of the school were summarised in a set of seven principles that defined the school's concept (*maslak*).[5] These are: (1) conformity with Islamic law (*shari'a*), (2) Sufi-inspired self-purification and the search for spiritual perfection (*suluk-i batin*), (3) conformity to the principles that guided the Prophet and his companions (*sunna*), (4) reliance on the Hanafi law school, (5) certitude and stability in true beliefs with reference to the Hanafi theologian al-Maturidi, (6) removal of unlawful things (*munkirat*), and especially the refutation of polytheism, innovations, atheism and materialism, and (7) adherence to the principles personally embodied by the founders of the school, Muhammad Qasim and Rashid Gangohi. These are named after them and are referred to as 'a taste for Qasimism and Rashidism.'

Principles five and six form the basis of the reputed purism of the school. The interpretation of Islam by Deobandi scholars has veered over time in the direction of stringency. The school championed religious discourse in the reformist fashion of *islah* (reformation), which emerged in the Middle East in the late nineteenth century. The founders of Deoband as well as generations of students sought to spread true Islam. Deoband scholars were characterised by a marked orthodoxy, as well as by purism and asceticism. Relations between Deobandis and groups (*maslak*) representing other interpretations of Islam were burdened by controversy. The Deobandis attacked dissenting views, particularly those of the Barelwis, who represented the shrine-based culture of Sufi-Islam. The Barelwis were named after the town of Bareli, not far from Deoband, where their religious leader Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) had once resided. Relations between Deobandis and Sufi-Islam were, however, not mutually exclusive. Most Deobandi divines were themselves active Sufi *shaykhs* who followed the Sufi path, or *tariqa*, which they perceived as being in accordance with the law and word of God, or *shari'a*. As staunch followers of the Hanafi school of law (*mazhab*) they were wrongly labelled Wahhabis, with whom they shared no more than a slight bent for the radical and purist interpretation of Islamic tenets. They anxiously distinguished themselves from other sects, notably the Shi'a and especially the Ahmadiyya, whom they considered heterodox. Over time the school became the head seminary of an elaborate network of schools and activities inspired by the ideas contained in Deobandi teaching and its interpretation of Islam. It introduced religious mass education in its own seminary through hostel-based study programmes and in numerous

branches and *madaris* (schools) across and beyond the confines of south Asia.

Today's Deoband school stands out as an orthodox reference point for the rest of the Muslim world. It had spawned public activism in the form of an association of religious scholars known as the *Jam'iyat-ul-ulama-i Hind* (JUH), which had already emerged as a political party by the time of partition, and continued its political activities in Pakistan under the name of *Jam'iyat-ul-ulama-i Islam* (JUI). Its Indian counterpart, the JUH, concentrated on religious, educational and cultural activities.

While the formulated principles of the school have undergone little change, the different methods of implementation have reflected their evolution. Their practical application has repeatedly led to tension among scholars and students. During the nationalist anti-colonial movement this tension was largely played out in the polarisation between a more politically inclined faction and those who advocated scholarly pursuits as the primary objective of the school. The former group was represented by Hasan, Madani, and Sindhi, whereas the latter relied on the authority of Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi (1863-1943), the school's long-time patron, and on scholars such as Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri (1875-1933) and Shabbir Ahmad 'Uthmani (1885-1949). This last group suffered defeat, which led to the expulsion of its scholars and several students from the school in 1927.[6]

A further evolution in the implementation of these principles after 1980 was marked by the growing prominence of development and social concerns. As will be discussed below, the introduction of computer skills in 1996 and the English language in 2002, albeit on a small scale, symbolised a new direction in the school's activities. The debate on the adaptation of the school curriculum to the changing requirements of society, in which some of the school's young graduates participated, was an additional reflection of this new trend.[7] The issue centred around whether secular subjects should be introduced or whether the institution should remain the preserve of theological teachings. These developments changed the parameters of the debate about the school's principles. Whereas in the late colonial period it had experienced the polarisation of political and academic orientations, it has now shifted to accommodate the juxtaposition of orthodoxy and development and community concerns.

The main courses in Deobandi teaching

Since teaching is the principal task of the Deoband school, processes of adjustment and change should also manifest themselves. The sense of continuity is particularly tenacious, however, as a survey of the major courses and degrees will reveal.

The most notable teaching element at Deobandi schools is the education of religious scholars (*'alim*, pl. *'ulama*). The curriculum covers a standard eight-year degree programme, whereby students become scholars of religion and law (ulama). In essence, it is comparable to a graduate degree, it is still based on the *dars-i nizami*, compiled and introduced by Mulla Nizamu'd-din (d. 1748). Students study the Qur'an, the Prophetic traditions, the principles of their, i.e., Hanafi, law school, along with a large number of often arcane commentaries written mainly by traditionalists (cf. Ahmad 1985). The degree consists of a number of licenses or *sanads* to teach the major works of Islamic theology. The licenses identify the line of teachers who have given instruction in the work throughout generations. Apart from *manqulat* or transmitted science, which is related to divine sources, worldly knowledge of a somewhat dated variety is represented by *ma'qulat* or rational science, and includes subjects such as philosophy and logic, as well as various branches of mathematics. Traditional medicine (*tibb*) is taught in a separate department. Modern subjects such as English, geography and history have long been conspicuously absent. A basic five-year Urdu medium curriculum prescribed by the government is taught at the primary level that precedes the *alim* course.

The grade of *'alim* (scholar) is conferred at the end of Class Seven, prior to the final year (*daura-i hadith*) that begins when students focus on the study of the Prophetic Traditions. Upon completion of Class Eight, students are considered graduates or *fazil*. They are then free to specialise (*takhassus*) in various directions and take courses of up to two years in different departments at the school. The number of students who take advantage of this opportunity varies from two to a maximum of twenty. The relevant departments include

– English language and literature;
– computer training;
– the Shaykh al-Hind Academy, which provides training in advanced theological research and religious journalism;

- the 'Defence of the Finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad' (*tahaffuz-i khatm-i nabuwwat*), which trains graduates to write texts and preach against the Ahmadiyya sect, but also to refute rival interpretations of Islam; this department operates in conjunction with the preaching department (*shu'ba-i tabligh*);
- Legal Consultation (*dar al-ifta*), which provides training in the writing of legal decisions (*fatawa*, sin. *fatwa*) in reply to inquiries from the Muslim general public.

Formal post-graduate courses (*takmilat*) are currently offered in Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), in theology and the beliefs of the school (*ulum*), in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and in Arabic literature (*adab*), after which students can obtain the highest degree available, *kamil*, which verifies that they are accomplished scholars or doctors of theology.[8]

Larger Islamic schools become more significant because of their special training of *mufti*s. The Deoband school employs four to five *mufti*s to answer legal inquiries about the legitimacy of certain actions and types of conduct under Islamic law. While Deoband concentrates on jurisprudence in the tradition of the Hanafi law school, to which most South Asian Muslims adhere, it also responds to inquiries regarding other law schools for which specialised scholars are available. In 1423 AH (2002) the Legal Department trained an additional 37 students.[9]

Courses to train students to become a memoriser of the Qur'an (*hafiz*) or a reciter (*qari*) are available. Basic Qur'an reading (*nazara*) and writing (*kitabat*) skills are taught separately. In 1423 AH (2002), 2,502 students attended the Arabic faculty, including the eight-class *'alim* course, while 717 students attended the non-Arabic faculty, including the primary classes and minor degree courses.[10]

The predominance of orthodox theology and religious training is evident from this teaching structure. However, changes are slowly emerging at the post-graduate level. A limited number of advanced students are exposed to non-theological topics. About a quarter of them focus on ideological and political issues at the Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy and the Finality of Prophethood Department, while the rest learn English and acquire computer skills.

From family networks to family power in the name of politics

Leadership in Deobandi institutions has traditionally been influenced by clan and family loyalties.[11] Deoband shares this trait with many other public bodies and educational networks in South Asia, irrespective of religious affiliation. The long-standing grip of caste and tribal structures on the social fabric is usually held responsible. Although Islam is potentially more egalitarian in social matters, in South Asia in particular, it failed to escape the influences of tradition. Religious schools – the Dar al-ʿUlum and the *madrasas* – were also affected. Over time, key positions such as that of rector, head teacher or *hadith* teacher tended to become hereditary by default. Sons are deliberately groomed to assume the father's post at some point in time. Consequently family factions competing for control of the school and its resources emerge. Although it's a well-known fact, it is rarely discussed openly. The Muslim public in India and beyond was therefore deeply shocked when family feuds – i.e., between the Tayyib and Madani families – broke out in the prestigious Deoband school and eventually led to a split.

In hindsight, we can see that the centenary celebrations in 1980 and the concomitant preparations intensified the rivalry between these families for control of the seminary, especially as its long-time rector, Muhammad Tayyib, had by that time become increasingly frail and the issue of succession had emerged. Qari Muhammad Tayyib (1897-1983) assumed the post of *muhtamim* or rector of the Deoband school in 1929, a post he held until 1982. As the grandson of Deoband founder Qasim Nanaotawi, he embodied the classical tradition of learnedness and piety and had little interest in political manoeuvring.

The official version on the school website holds Tayyib and his advisors responsible for the debacle. It maintains that subsequent to the elaborate and highly successful centenary celebrations, Tayyib allegedly

> requested that the *Majlis-i Shura* provide assistance because his administration duties (*ihtimam*) were too much for a man of his advanced age. The *Majlis-i Shura*, as per request, elected the current *muhtamim* Marghub-ur-Rahman. Thereafter, he, [Tayyib] fell victim to the insincere policies of his close advisors. In December 1980, after returning from a trip to America, he appointed Maulana Muhammad Salim vice-rector (*na'ib muhtamim*) and Maulana Anzar Shah (Kashmiri) head teacher (*sadr-i mudarris*), all of these appointments were against school regula-

tions. After the *Majlis-i Shura* protested he revoked his decisions. He then under-took the radical step of convening an illegal meeting (*ijtima'*) in which he an-nounced the dissolution of the *Majlis-i Shura*. This incident disrupted the entire Dar al-'Ulum administration. The political turmoil within the administration left Muslims throughout the world with a sense of sorrow. In October 1981, the sad incident of the eviction of students from the Dar al-'Ulum with the help of police occurred, which led to its closure. The years 1981 and 1982 are well-known in the history of the Dar al-'Ulum because, in addition to the state of emergency, the Dar al-'Ulum closed its doors for five months (deprived of the sound of Allah and his prophet's words). The students retook possession of their Alma Mater on 23-24 March 1982 and the administration was resurrected under the supervision of the regular *Majlis-i Shura*.[12]

This account, which dominated the media and the official representation of the events at the time, seems to be at odds with the reflections of members of the defeated faction and the loyalist camp that remained at the school. Twenty-three years after these events these factions remain surprisingly unanimous in their criticism of the 'Madani faction',[13] which consisted of the offspring of Husain Ahmad Madani. Its main protagonists were Asad Madani (1928-2006), former president of JUH, and his son Mahmud Madani, general secretary of JUH. Respondents pointed out that Marghub was re-lated to Madani and appointed solely to wrest control of the administration from the Tayyib family, which was related to Deoband's founder Qasim Nanaotawi and together comprised the larger 'Qasimi faction'. They stressed that during his time in office, Marghub demonstrated little schol-arly inclination or capacity to enhance the administration. In 2004, he ap-peared frail and was on sick leave for long periods of time, during which deputy-rector Qari 'Uthman, Arshad Madani as head of the teaching depart-ment (*daftar-i ta'limat*), and another member of the Madani family steered the school through troubled waters.[14]

Respondents alleged that more scholarly and devoted teachers had left the old school as a result of the split. However, they basically agreed that they have been replaced by other teachers who are just as able. Asad Madani presented his nominees to the *Majlis-i Shura*. When Marghub was gradually judged as having failed his duties, Asad Madani was said to have laid claim to the chairmanship of the *Shura*. He remained politically active for the Con-gress Party. His son Mahmud tested the political waters for a regional party,

the Rashtriya Lok Dal. While he lost the general party elections, he was elected on its ticket to the upper house of the Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha.[15]

The 'Madani faction' still draws sharp criticism for its approach in the matter. Some of my respondents regarded the current phase as a period of decline for the 'Madani faction's' control over the Deoband school. They claimed that the scholarly tradition had been replaced by a more policy-oriented superficial activism. Numerous issues remained unsolved, such as the maintenance of school buildings and student hostels. The library and the archives (*muhafiz khana*) showed signs of decline and disorder. Staff members frequently went on leave. Debates that might have redefined the role of the seminary and Islamic teaching in today's world were avoided or deliberately stifled.[16]

However, the current leadership portrays the period since the split as a success story marked by expansion and modernisation, as will be shown below.

Both of the quarrelling factions insist that the differences have less to do with principles than with personal matters. In 1982, the Qasimi group opened a new school called the Dar al-'Ulum (*waqf*) at another location. The name is derived from the endowment (*awqaf*) land to which they had laid claim in the process of partition. The old school was associated with the 'Madani faction' and portrayed the 'Qasimi faction' as the 'defeated' party that had caused the 'split', and accused them of causing the rift by founding a new school. Maulana Salim Qasim, Tayyib's son, became rector of the new school. Maulana Anzar Shah Kashmiri was nominated head of the teaching department. He represented a separate 'sub-faction' formed by the offspring of Anwar Shah Kashmiri, who are mentioned above in connection with an earlier conflict. He served as Shaykh al-Hadith and later head teacher of Deoband from 1915 to 1927. At the new school, the 'Kashmiri faction' seemed to be gaining ground, as demonstrated by a small but telling detail. A major gate to the premises, previously known as Bab-i Tayyib, has been renamed after Anwar Shah Kashmiri.[17]

In a typical illusory manner, the 'Qasimi faction' presented its school as the only true Deoband school, especially in its students recruitment flyers and brochures. In private, however, they were forced to concede that the old school was still regarded as the standard of reference. The 'Qasimi faction' considered themselves Deobandis in terms of school of thought (*maslak*) and

beliefs ('*aqida*) and were waiting to be invited to join the network activities of the main school, an invitation they suggested would be favourably adjudged. In the meantime, they used the increased demand for religious education to consolidate and increase their own share of the market. This expansion was mirrored in the enrolment figures, which had already reached 1,500 and represented about half of the old school figure.[18] Since the new school was constructed on barren land, plans for expansion would be relatively simple. Meanwhile, the 'Kashmiri faction' established graduate training institutes for computer science and English (*ma'had al-anwar*) here. 'On principle', however, they do not provide these courses at their own Dar al-'Ulum so that students are not distracted from their religious studies.

The family networks that run the school relied on traditional forms of allegiance, while also appealing to Sufi traditions. They presented the family as constituting a line of transmission of blessing (*barakat*), which was passed down from father to son more reliably than to unrelated disciples. This argument was used when Tayyib was first appointed pro-rector in 1922 to refer to of the fact that he was a member of Deoband founder Muhammad Qasim Nanaotawi's family.[19] In the 1970s, the private privilege of family rule was replaced by a more competitive game of politics at the institution. Both the old and new school have now been placed firmly and unceremoniously in the hands of a family faction that no longer seems to advance arguments of spiritual blessing but instead exudes an attitude of sheer expediency based on political and economic survival.

From a School of Thought to a Network of Schools

Since its inception, the school has exerted its trans-local influence through its teacher, student and graduate networks, extending across a number of countries. They helped to set up a large network of school branches with a shared ideology and theological curriculum, which for the most part functioned autonomously. The joint tradition of legal thought embodied in the decisions of the school and its stalwarts, the missionary activities of school representatives, and the Tablighi Jama'at missionary movement led by Deobandi scholars were other historical bonding channels. This interaction, however, was largely personal and spontaneous, with little procedural co-

ordination or formalisation. The way in which the school co-operates has undergone significant changes since 1980.

One remarkable development was how the Dar al-ʿUlum set about formalising the influence it exerted as the head seminary of a particular school of thought. The centenary celebrations in 1980 were a welcome occasion to renew links with Deobandi schools in other parts of India, across South Asia, and beyond. Long invitation lists were compiled so that graduates from all over the world could be invited, although there had evidently been no regular contact with the majority of them prior to this. The Ayodhya controversy and the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 seem to have marked a watershed in religious elite thinking in India. Several respondents confirmed that it brought home to Islamic leaders the fact that Muslims were now on their own in matters of religion, and could no longer count on the support or protection of a more or less well-meaning liberal and secular state. If Muslims wanted to preserve their religion and their place in society they had to be more assertive and show greater sympathy for the mainstream forces of society. Attacks by Hindu nationalist forces on the *madrasa* system and their teachings strengthened Islamic resolve to defend it, and this went hand-in-hand with the vigorous resistance to change. One solution to the dilemma was discovered in the formal organisation of the Deobandi *madaris*.

In the course of two meetings of like-minded Deobandi schools held on 29-30 June and 25-26 October in 1994,[20] the Association of Arabic Schools (Rabita Madaris Arabiya or RMA) was established, with its headquarters at the Dar al-ʿUlum. As per March 2004, it had 1152 affiliated *madaris* across India. Once their rules and teaching practices had been appraised by the RMA, their certificates (*sanad*) would be ratified. The RMA regularly convened meetings with rectors and head teachers to discuss new challenges and curriculum issues.[21] By and large it served as a forum for Deobandi scholars to close ranks and resist demands for ever far-reaching changes. At the same time, changes concerning several matters were being discretely sanctioned, mainly with regard to increased computerisation and the use of English. It also contributed to the prevention of substandard religious teaching in the burgeoning market of religious education presented in the name of the eminent Deobandi school of thought. In a sense, this was like branding their product and protecting its rights in a market that was both lucrative and expansive. The Qasimi faction' school remained excluded. In

an interview, Anzar Kashmiri emphasised that they were not seeking affiliation with the RMA because they regarded themselves as the true embodiment of the Deobandi school. He pointedly added, however, that they would not object to being invited, implying that they obviously viewed the rift as a painful anomaly.[22] When Asad Madani fell ill in 2005, increased efforts were made to mend the rift between the two schools,[23] and these efforts may be accelerated now, following his demise.

Preliminary data on Deobandi schools affiliated to the RMA indicate another notable development, i.e., the expansion and diversification of the geographic impact of the Deobandi school of thought. Not surprisingly, the great majority of schools were located in northern India, primarily in the state of Uttar Pradesh (402 schools). Somewhat more unexpected, however, is the considerable number of affiliated schools in West Bengal (253), showing that Deobandi thinking has made strong inroads into a region where Sufi-oriented and ritualist Islam had a tradition of being very influential. From the same perspective, the substantial number of Deobandi schools in Jammu and Kashmir (44), in southern India, particularly Maharashtra (38) and Andhra Pradesh (23), and in Assam in eastern India (121) are also worth mentioning.

A look at the composition of students at the Deoband head seminary in 1414-15 AH (1994) confirms a similar pattern of geographical distribution. Here the preponderance of the two states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is even greater, accounting for 85% of the students in a typical year. However, the south Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are represented by 50 students each (in a total student population of almost 3,000), revealing that Deobandi thought is gaining momentum and spreading its roots in the south as well.[24]

Formalising the school's network activities continued with the foundation of a graduate association, Tanzim-i Abna-i Qadim, in 1991.[25] Its establishment had already been suggested at the centenary celebrations in 1980. The earlier efforts of Ubaidullah Sindhi in this direction in 1909 remained fruitless. The new association now seems to be working successfully and has established its headquarters in Delhi. Not only has it introduced two post-graduate training institutes, one for spoken Arabic and one for English, it also edits a regular monthly, *Tarjuman Dar al-ʿUlum*, established in 1993 with a world-wide graduate audience. The journal features debates that explore in a cautious but resolute manner, occasionally pushing the

boundaries of the Deobandi school of thought concerning the history of the school, the need to review the religious curriculum, the inclusion of worldly subjects, and relations with the West. It is particularly noteworthy that in the interests of strengthening the Deobandi school of thought, the association maintains contact with both the old school and the 'Qasimi faction'. This undoubtedly has to do with the reconstruction and updating of Deobandi ideas in the modern era, especially as it is run by a new generation of graduates aware of the need to adapt to changing circumstances. However, the more senior, conservative scholars who oversee the work of the Association as patrons try to limit and control change while, on the other hand, they do not shy away from imposing their will by disciplining insubordinate functionaries.

Although the networking of international Deobandi institutions, scholars and students clearly multiplied during this period, formal links for foreign graduates of the school in Deoband are less easy to quantify.[26] While enrolment increased impressively over the years, their significance has simultaneously experienced a sharp decline.[27] Annual enrolment has long since dropped below the all-time high of the 1950s and 1960s, and currently numbers approximately 30 to 60 graduates per year. Their composition has also undergone a radical change. Whereas numerous students from outside South Asia were enrolled here in 1980, they are now almost non-existent.[28]

The Indian government introduced formal restrictions on the enrolment of foreigner students in the late 1970s. They were initially made more stringent as a result of Hindu nationalist pressure and later anti-terrorism policies. Only students with an educational visa can be enrolled. Students have rarely been granted this visa for Deoband, as the head of the school's education department acerbically pointed out to me. The reason why Muslims are not allowed to study their own religion, he stated, is known only to the powers that be.[29]

Nevertheless, international links have not been totally discarded. Although it should be emphasised that responsibility for spreading Deobandi thought lies with the *madaris* that were established by Deobandi graduates specifically for this purpose. The organisation of a world meeting of Deobandi schools, 9-11 April 2001 near Peshawar, Pakistan as a symbolic celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Deoband Alma Mater, demonstrated the willingness of Deobandi scholars to assert themselves more forcefully on the international scene.[30] While the Deobandi politicians from Pakistan

such as Fazlur Rahman attacked the West for its policies on Islam, the Indian representatives chose to highlight the educational achievements of the school in spreading Deobandi thought. This development was severely disrupted by the aftermath of the September 11 attack in 2001.[31] The Deoband school claimed that it was at the receiving end of what it regards as malicious attacks by Hindu nationalists and the West, who are intent on proving its terrorist association with either the Taliban or militant so-called *jihadi* groups in India and Pakistan, particularly in Kashmir. At the same time, Deobandi scholars in India and Pakistan continue to argue that the Taliban's responsibility for these events has never been proved. They believe that the attack of 9/11 was at best willfully engineered by the Americans, at the worst organised by Israeli agencies.[32] The reality gap in their line of thought is compounded by the isolation of their outlook and the limited access to both secular knowledge and information in English.

A major development in the expansion of Deobandi networking concerns its interaction with the missionary movement of the Tablighi Jama'at, which was founded in India in 1926 by the Deobandi scholar Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944).[33] The strengthening of links between Deobandi activists, groups and institutions in South Asia and the rest of the world has been greatly supported by the world-wide expansion of *Tablighi* activities since the 1970s. Its national centres (*marakaz*) in India and Pakistan maintain their own Deobandi schools, where the *alim* course is taught. Numerous international students frequent these schools. Students from Islamic schools in the provinces and states attend the final year – *daura-i hadith* – to obtain a graduation certificate from the renowned Deobandi schools at the Tablighi centres. The leadership of the Tablighi Jama'at in Delhi enjoys a special relationship with the Islamic seminary in Saharanpur, not far from Deoband. Many former leaders of the Tablighi Jama'at graduated from here. This school also split along family lines, however. The offspring of Ilyas and the co-founder of the movement, Muhammad Zakariyya (1898-1982), constitute an extended family clan that controls many of the leadership positions both in the Tablighi Jama'at and the new Saharanpur school. Maulana Zakariyya and his disciples extended their influence throughout the world. They founded several new Deobandi schools, above all in South Africa and the UK, each of which maintains close links with the Tablighi movement and integrate Tablighi literature into their curriculum.[34]

Networking between Deobandi schools in India and other parts of the world has thus undergone a major change since 1980. It expanded and became much more formalised. The decline in foreign student enrolment at Deoband during this period, however, was not an obstacle to international co-operation between other Deobandi schools and graduates. Co-ordination of Deobandi institutions at the global level remains personalised, although the Tablighi missionaries and scholar networks have begun to introduce more formal elements.

From traditional to 'modern' Islamic teaching

Moreover, the Dar al-ʿUlum rebounded more formally from its moribund state after the split. Following a brief break during the crisis years of 1982 and 1983 it expanded rapidly, as reflected in its budget figures, as well as enrolment and number of teachers. The manifested increase in enrolment has become a proud feature of the school's modernity as touted by its leaders. The programme to improve the school's administration was primarily directed at streamlining the organisation. Much attention was paid to the impact of two innovations on the curriculum: the introduction of English classes at the post-graduate level and computer courses. However, these courses were only acceptable within the parameters of the school's theological objectives. The more traditional technical education, on the other hand, which has been on offer for a long time, is currently suffering from neglect.

This change in the approach of the school leadership and the shift towards quantitative growth is evident in the budget.[35] Although data available for the pre-1989 period is patchy, it nevertheless leads to several conclusions regarding the volume and dynamics of the budget. By international standards, it is modest. Full-time education programmes for more than 3,500 students are currently being run on an annual budget of $1 million. Compared to the financial situations of other South Asian educational institutions, however, its budget growth is impressive. In the 32 years from 1971 to 2003, the budget in Indian rupees has increased by a factor of almost 50. Throughout this period it had an average annual growth rate of 12% (calculated on a cost basis). The period of most rapid annual growth was between 1983 and 1989, after which it gradually declined in the 1990s and almost

stagnated after 2000, reflecting the deteriorating political environment for Islamic institutions.

Meanwhile, the administrative reports allow an educated guess regarding the number of staff employed at the Deoband school, although the reporting is inconsistent and the data frequently incomplete. Since 1989, the overall number of staff seems to have fluctuated between 240 and 280. The number of teachers was comparatively stable at approximately 50 between 1965 and 1979 but increased notably to 74 in 1997 and 92 in 2002. However, this was not enough to offset the intense growth rates in student enrolment. As a result, the student/teacher ratio increased rapidly throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but it has since shown a slight decline.

The 'Madani faction' prefers to point to the increasing enrolment, which has almost doubled since 1980 and reached 3,556 in the year 2002-03. This is regarded as proof of the school's revival since the split. Moreover, the annual number of graduates has almost doubled to 774. The rise in enrolment has put new strains on the school's administration. This in turn may have spurred greater reform efforts, which have been primarily directed at removing administrative bottlenecks. A pamphlet containing a summary of the changes brought about since 1982 lists seven administrative reforms directed at streamlining internal procedures.[36] They concern the following:

– the admission of new students, where written tests have been replaced by oral exams, allowing for the more efficient processing of applicants;
– the elimination of one of two mid-year examinations, lessening the burden on the education department;
– the introduction of anonymous code numbers for examination papers, ensuring impartial assessment;
– the supervision of teachers with regard to covering course material and supply of competent teaching staff;
– the appointment of capable Qur'anic readers (*mujawwidin*) and reciters (*qurra*) with a national reputation;
– greater efficiency at the department of memorisation of the Qur'an (*hifz*);
– the fusion of the Persian and (Urdu) religious studies departments for primary level students with a uniform course length of five years.

The report also lists six areas of expansion in the teaching department. They include improved supervision of the Class One to Class Four students of the *'alim* course, the recruitment of gifted students and trainees for

teaching positions through scholarships, the increase in the numbers of classes offered each course year, and the adjustment of the post-graduate *takmil* courses.

However, innovations were not merely limited to those of an administrative nature. A number of new departments were established: the Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy in 1982-83, the *Tahaffuz-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat* in 1986, the Computer Training Centre in 1996, and the Department of English Language and Literature in 2002.[37] The latter acquired a particular symbolic significance in the long history of the seminary, concluding a debate that lasted for more than a century. While the chief arguments for and against the learning of English had already been presented by the first decades of the twentieth century, the factual introduction of the English language as came up against a purported 'lack of funds'. Interviews with those involved in the momentous decision of the *Majlis-i Shura* to go ahead with English courses were evidence that the old inhibitions and arguments were still very much alive.

There was a fear that learning English would lead to an imitation of the West, a grave doctrinal argument with Qur'anic connotations, and one that ultimately undermines Muslim religious identity, paving the way for their Christianisation. The apprehension was particularly acute during the colonial period. Mahmud al-Hasan grappled with the consequences at the opening of the Jam'iya Milliya in Aligarh on 29 October 1920:

> Those amongst you who are well informed will know that I have never given a religious decree (*fatwa*) declaring the study of a foreign language or of the sciences and arts of other nations as *kufr* (unbelief). But I state categorically that the final impact of English education in our view is that people are influenced by (dyed in the colour of) Christianity, or mock and abuse their religion and their co-religionists with atheist taunts, or begin to worship the government of the day. It is right for a Muslim to stay aloof from such education.[38]

Badruddin Ajmal, a wealthy perfume merchant from Assam, a Dar al-'Ulum graduate and *Shura* member, had taken the introductory English course early on. Several respondents claimed that he had developed close relations with the Madani family solely to obtain access to the *Shura*. He first raised the issue of the English language in 1994 and was rebuked. He was asked to prove that its introduction would not dilute the Islamic quality of the grad-

uates, that the demand for English was genuine, and that learning the language would add a new dimension to the task of spreading the true Islam. He set up a post-graduate training institutes for ulama with his own money, the *Markaz al-Ma'arif* in Delhi and Bombay, where English was already being taught. In two-year courses they produced a small but fine batch of ulama, who were well-versed in English and made their way up the hierarchy of Islamic institutions in India as a result of the urbane aura they now exuded. One of these students, a Dar al-'Ulum graduate and today the head of a post-graduate training institute, was called to the decisive meeting in 2001, where the issue remained unresolved despite a prolonged debate.[39] Ajmal subsequently delivered the key argument that in today's computerised world, a proficiency in English was crucial to responding to the many questions on Islam raised by Muslims who do not speak Urdu, in particular those from southern India and abroad, where they frequently live in isolation without access to knowledge about the true Islam. Hence, English could and should be seen as a means of *tabligh* and *da'wa*, i.e., of spreading God's message to non-believers and the uninformed.

Missionary goals are still a significant argument in legitimising the study and knowledge of English. When in this class I asked about their motives for studying English, the students were unanimous in replying that it served to spread Islam. In private, some acknowledged that many among them watch films in English on television and in the cinema, or that they contemplate secular career options – something categorically rejected by the purist Deobandi dogma.

Some Deobandi *madaris* still reject the idea of teaching English, not to mention other worldly subjects. Not unlike the elders of the new wing of the famous Saharanpur Madrasa Mazahir al-'Ulum, which split on similar lines to the Deoband school, they argue that learning English will distract students from their religious vocations, for which the community has made sacrifices to provide them with free educations.[40] In other words, they feel the need to 'trap' students from poor family backgrounds in the religious profession by refusing them access to English. They have also argued that the number of clerics per Muslim in India was still comparatively low compared to that of Christians in the West. Another line of argument equates engineering schools with madrasas, which simply specialised in religious education. The students could choose, the curriculum came with the respective specialisation. The latter argument sounds particularly odd since

the traditional curriculum also contained the rational sciences, which were originally for secular use. The current narrow religious specialisation of the *madaris* was merely the historical result of Western and colonial influences, which in the nineteenth century had deprived religious schools of their standing as educational institutions in the secular realm.

While many ulama in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh defend the exclusively religious profile of the current *madaris*, some are hoping to regain their mainstream roles in education. It is interesting to note how a technical or economic vision of modernity is used by the ulama to advocate for change. They describe computer training, for instance, as a 'requirement of the modern era' ('*asr-i jadid ka ahm taqaza*).[41] This argument is related to an old inner-Islamic debate in South Asia about the need to update Islamic knowledge in line with the contemporary era ('*asr-i hazar*). Similar to the West's concepts of modernisation, computer knowledge is seen here as the key to obtaining an 'Islamic' view of modernity. Computer knowledge is accepted – like English – as long as it serves the school's religious objectives. In this context, the Deoband school sees the value of computers in how much easier it makes the study and reproduction of religious texts in Urdu, the most popular service offered by the computer centre. It makes the production of pamphlets and tracts for the propagation of the school's tenets (*da'wa*, *tabligh*) much easier, and thus further enhances its public religious profile. The centre charges a fee for other departments at the school that seek assistance with Urdu texts. The centre earned a total of 33,749 rupees on this service in 1423 AH (2002-03).

The computer centre also offers Internet access, but the number of computers is negligible. Students are only permitted to use the Internet for educational purpose and are closely monitored. However, students interested in using the Internet are free to use the Internet cafés in town in their spare time, although not many of them take advantage of this opportunity. The computer centre is thus expected to slowly change the graduate profile. By 2003, 152 students had been trained here. Due to the anxiety of unlimited access to uncontrolled information, and the lack of facilities and space, the number of new students is currently restricted to 20 per year.[42]

The computer department's proposals in the administrative report show that its role will continue to gradually expand in line with the increased computerisation of the school administration and its functions. The computer department requests the construction of new rooms to house sepa-

rate divisions for administration, computer teaching, and computer and Internet access.[43] The proposals pointed out that it has to process increasing numbers of e-mail inquiries from outside, no less than 1,813 in 2002-3. The more important ones are translated and sent to the respective departments for reply. 268 legal inquiries (*istifta*, i.e., requests of a *fatwa*) were received by e-mail during the year, all of which emphasised the significance of the Internet for specific Islamic purposes. These details were apparently considered conclusive proof of the legitimacy of this new means of communication for the school elders. Moreover, 51 applications from other countries were received by e-mail that year.[44]

A major function of the computer centre is the maintenance of the school website, which is a key instrument in disseminating information about the school to the outside world.[45] The centre's online publications in 2002-3 included a general introduction to the school on its Arabic-language web pages, over 300 pages in Urdu dealing with the curriculum and system of education, the school's admissions regulations, departments, services and scholars, as well as its legal recommendations (*fatawa*) and publications, the 250 pages of Rizvi's *History of the Dar al-ʿUlum* in English, and 18 news items in English, Urdu and Arabic.

New challenges for the computer department with regard to the Web site as outlined in the administrative report include the translation of more material into Arabic, English and Hindi, and the expansion of computer facilities to expedite replies to legal inquiries (*fatawa*). The department stressed that it had received numerous e-mails congratulating the school on its new online services and further encouraging its expansion. This feedback has in particular come from the UK.

The Web site illustrates the contradictory impact such technical innovations can have, which is not unlike the role of printing in religious mobilisation. The technically-minded young ulama, who do not want to be left behind by secular institutions in the presentation of Islam on the Internet, are attracted by the sense of competition. On the one hand, this has raised the ideological profile of the school and strengthened sectarian orientations. On the other hand, it has increased transparency, making religious arguments – and the inner workings of the school administration – more widely accessible, a decided move in the direction of democratisation.

Technical education at the school has long since included vocational training. The Dar al-ʿUlum introduced this department (*dar al-sanayeʿ*) in

1945.[46] Students were to be given hands-on training in crafts, a measure that would improve their chances of employment later on. The crafts taught, however, were selected entirely in accordance with the needs of the school and the scholarly disposition of the ulama.[47] Today the department has three divisions: (1) tailoring of school uniforms (*khayyati*) where four students were employed on a full-time basis and 75 part-time students in 1423 AH; (2) bookbinding (*tajlid*), where books are repaired and the registries of various departments bound by one permanent staff member assisted by four students; and (3) embroidery (*kashida kari*), where one staff member teaches students the art of embroidery, although the position was vacant at the time of the 1423 AH report.[48]

The various 'modern' changes that have been implemented by the school reveal the quantitative, technical and functional vision of modernisation pursued by the school elders in the strict interests of ideological goals. These goals are being reinterpreted in the process to make room for further improvements. This reflects a paradigm shift in the school's self-image, but also in its everyday operations.

From Religious Education to Political, Ideological and Development Concerns

The institutionalisation of non-religious concerns must be seen as a further trend in adapting to modernising influences, and refers in particular to political and ideological debate, and development issues, all of which focus on the status and perspectives of the Muslim community in India. The school maintains separate departments for these subjects, the more active and more prominent of which were established only after 1980. Other formats to propagate the political and ideological concerns of the school include its periodical, student clubs, and Deobandi NGOs founded by graduates. The NGOs introduced a 'Deobandi universe' of interrelated graduate institutions, thereby responding to the need to create jobs for graduates, but also to participate directly in development efforts. The social impact of the school can be detected in the urban life of Deoband, which has become a high-profile Islamic university town.

Ideological debate should be understood here as the promotion of a polarised and reductionist world view. In the case of the Deoband school, it

emanates from theological and doctrinal concepts showing a preference – or bias – for a specific interpretation of Islam and its practice, and of the world that surrounds it. This ideological debate contributes to the drawing of battle lines between followers and opponents, where doctrinal concerns are directly linked to internal, political, and international issues. It can be read as a consequence of purist pretensions, where prevailing worship practices and conduct are not accepted as such but assumed to be in need of cleansing.

A separate body to channel and support debate in defence of the 'Finality of Prophethood' – the All-India Majlis-i Tahaffuz-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat was created in 1986.[49] Its headquarters is run as a separate department at the Dar al-'Ulum. This organisation's name is a euphemism for a sectarian perspective on Islam, which does battle with perceived enemies that supposedly question the finality of Muhammad's Prophethood or the status of Muhammad as the 'seal of the prophets.' The first to be challenged were the Ahmadiyya, in response to claims by their founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1839-1908) and subsequent leaders to some degree of prophethood. Enemies were spotted everywhere. The publications of the Majlis targeted not only the allegedly heretical Ahmadiyya, but also Shi'a, Christians, Hindus, Barelwis, Jama'at-i Islami, and Ahl-i Hadith. The organisation has also spawned a world body of unmistakable radicalism.[50] Its local chapters, particularly those in Pakistan, regularly make news with their persecution of Ahmadis. The Pakistani branch is notorious for its links with other sectarian organisations, such as the Sipah-i Sahaba and jihadi groups.[51] The Deoband office focuses on the formulaic reproduction of pamphlets targeting the above-mentioned groups. Local chapters enjoy a wide degree of autonomy, albeit the existence of a global network and mutual support cannot be denied. The co-ordinating function of the Indian organisation appears to extend to Nepal. It conducts camps throughout India to train scholars in the rejection of Ahmadi ideas.[52] As there are few Ahmadiyya in India, the camps were mainly used to mobilise followers and help the scholars get an ideological focus.

One scholar stands out in the 1423 AH (2002) report in the context of sectarian preaching, i.e., Maulana Qari 'Uthman, who was in charge of most of the high-level attacks on Ahmadi ideas. He is the senior vice-principal of the school and practically runs it when the principal, Maulana Marghub, is either too ill or too frail to attend to his duties. From the extensive coverage

of the department's activities in the administrative report we can infer that honing the sectarian profile of the school is still a high priority. The school is thus by design a major ideological institution beyond its educational pretensions.

The *Tabligh* office is closely connected to the Finality of Prophethood department, which is much older, having been founded in 1907.[53] It continued its mission with great zeal in 2002-3. Its three full-time preachers have a gruelling schedule. Maulana Muhammad Yamin, Maulana Muhammad Irfan and Maulana Rashid each participated in two to three hundred missionary programmes, where they delivered more than 400 speeches during the year.[54]

The aim of the Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy, established in 1403 AH (1983), was to support academic in-depth studies with more sophisticated arguments for the defence and dissemination of the beliefs of the school's founders. Staff members are responsible for writing many of the public speeches delivered during the missionary work (*tabligh*), as well as those delivered by the rector and other luminaries on political issues. This function falls under the category of post-graduate specialisation or *takhassus*. The two-year course was attended by seven students in 2002-3.[55] It enables selected graduate students to practice Islam-related journalism and research. One particular case attracted public attention while I was in Deoband. A student was expelled from the Academy for publishing an article in which he supported the demand for the introduction of secular subjects in the school curriculum. He was heavily criticised for having revealed his association with the Deoband school. This demonstrates that the debate has penetrated the very heart of the school's ideological institutions, and it is only a matter of time before these kinds of debates will be conducted more openly.[56]

The school periodicals address matters dealing with ideology, politics and development, and are closely related to the above-mentioned departments.[57] The administrative reports make constant reference to their financial difficulties, stating that the subscriptions are inadequate. Besides, the school tends to give away complementary copies. As school organs, the periodicals are closely monitored. More recently, the school has begun to feature the latest issues of the monthlies *Dar al-'Ulum* and *Al-Da'i* on the Internet.[58] It also runs a printing press and its own bookshop, which stocks religious texts reflecting the school's philosophy. Many of its publications dis-

cuss the evolution of the Deoband school, including the works of its prominent ulama and its official history by Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi.[59]

Periodical	First published	Circulation
Mahinama Dar al- ʿUlum (Monthly)	1360 ah (1941)	3,081 (1423 ah)
Mahinama al-Rashid (Monthly)	1332 ah (1913)	[Discontinued]
Mahinama al-Qasim (Monthly)	1328 ah (1910)	[Discontinued]
Aʾina Dar al-ʿUlum (Bi-weekly)	1,000 (1423 ah)	
Mahinama al-Daʿi (Arabic)	1396 ah (1976)	1,000 (1398 ah)
Risala Daʿwa al-Haq (Arabic)	Discontinued (1396 ah)	237 (1394 ah)

PERIODICALS PUBLISHED BY THE DEOBAND SCHOOL

There are more than 100 student clubs (*talaba ke anjumanen*) active in the school and they deserve particular attention. Structured according to the original geographical origins of the students, their aim is to facilitate learning. Some of them reflect the interest in promoting the study of Arabic literature and language (*an-nadi al-adbi*). Office bearers are elected, albeit under the direction of the teachers, who guide the groups as patrons (*sarparast*). Those in office design the wall newspapers (*diwari parche*), which adorn the walls and trees of the inner courtyards where students learn the basics of religious journalism. Most are written in the vernacular, while some are produced in regional languages, such as Bengali, Tamil, Nepali, or in Arabic. One wall newspaper announces school events, news and special announcements, such as the arrival of guests. The clubs have their own libraries and they hold regular meetings, primarily on Thursdays, which function as debating societies. Although free speech is practised here in the manner of a prayer leader addressing a congregation, topics cannot be freely chosen, but strictly reflect doctrinal and ideological concerns. In practice, the wall newspapers serve as a powerful means of maintaining control over students' minds and sharpening the doctrinal profile of the school.

The fact that student unions were banned and have not been revived since the split is being questioned today. Loyalists point to a similar situation in the Jamiʿa Milliya, arguing that a ban on student unions and their

removal are a matter of historical tradition in India. More critical voices point out that the incident discussed above, in which a student was excluded from the Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy for his public criticism of the school has shown the disadvantage of not having a functioning student union. The demand for a student union will probably get new support at the school in the near future.

The growing number of graduates at the Deoband school and other Deobandi madrasas has now spawned a number of auxiliary Islamic institutions operating as non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

PERIPHERAL INSTITUTIONS CREATED BY OR INFLUENCED BY DEOBANDI GRADUATES

Institution	Year
All India Ta'limi wa Milli Foundation	2000
Dar al-Qazi	1994
Markazi JUH	1992
All India Milli Council (AIMC)	1992
Tanzim-i Abna-i Qadim	1991
Islamic Fiqh Academy	1989
Institute of Objective Studies	1986
Markaz al-Ma'arif	1982
Jam'iyat ul-Ulama-i Hind (JUH)	1919

It is through these institutions that the nexus with the wider society and the secular Muslim elite is being re-established. Both the Institute of Objective Studies and the JUH champion the political causes of India's Muslims and their minority rights. Education is the concern of the Milli Foundation, the Milli Council, the Markaz al-Ma'arif, and the Tanzim-i Abna-i Qadim. The Dar al-Qazi and the Fiqh Academy investigate legal issues raised by India's separate Muslim Personal Law and its reconciliation with common law and the *shari'a*. It is conspicuous that some of them, such as the Markaz al-Ma'arif and the Ta'limi wa Milli Foundation, also support the introduction of secular and non-denominational schools, where students can prac-

tice their religions unhindered. Some of these schools are attended by local Hindus, albeit in small numbers.[60]

Another option for Deobandi graduates is to continue their education at a university or at one of the post-graduate training institutes mentioned earlier. Deoband still faces the problem of having its degrees recognised by secular universities. At the Jami'a Millia and Hamdard Universities in Delhi, and Aligarh University, the *fazil* degree was recognised as the equivalent of the Intermediate graduation certificate on the condition that the respective students passed supplementary tests in English. Moreover, the *fazil* degree was recognised as the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Aligarh University, as was the case at Al-Azhar University in Cairo and the Islamic University in Medina. The Hamdard University also recognised the Deoband degree in traditional medicine (*tibb*) as the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in *Unani* ('Greek') medicine and surgery.[61]

The school and its graduates have left a lasting impression on the life and economy of the small town of Deoband, which shot to prominence as a result of the school. Several graduates and drop-outs set up their own businesses, opening bookshops, general stores, a medical clinic, a pharmacy, a hotel, and a trading outlet for the famous leather stockings worn in the madrasas and exported to other countries throughout the world.[62] In 2003, Deoband had a population of approximately 110,000. Muslims constitute about 60% of the population, with Hindus and Muslims living more or less separately in different parts of town.[63] As a result of its many Islamic schools, Deoband has become a centre of Islamic education and Islamic studies comparable to the academic towns of Oxford and Cambridge in the West. According to the latest local description of Deoband, it is home to 109 madrasas.[64]

Although diverse in character and format, these changes demonstrate that the school is increasingly pre-occupied with non-religious concerns, which both shape its activities and mobilise its students and graduates. An outstanding characteristic of the school is that it remains in close contact with society, despite its often polarised and selective views on religion and social life. The school seeks to expand its legitimacy in this dialogue and to address student concerns and their social environment.

Directions of Change

Since the split in 1982, the school has undoubtedly undergone major changes. From the multitude of school events, this paper has focused on four major directions of change:
– from a family network to politics of influence;
– from a school of thought to a well-built network of schools that is becoming more formal and cohesive;
– from a 'traditional' mode of operation to the Islamist notion of modernity that includes expansion and technical professionalism;[65]
– from religious instruction to the wider pursuit of ideological, political and development concerns.

These changes illustrate the winding course of the Dar al-'Ulum Deoband. It faces the challenges of modernity but endeavours to tackle them in the spirit of its own largely ideological mission. It is clear that it is far from being an homogenous school of thought, because it is powerless to prevent the penetration of society's mainstream concerns and perspectives into its body politics.

Its graduates play a decisive role in the creation of new Deobandi institutions, which focus to a large extent on development and education issues. Girls' education,[66] computer knowledge, and language qualifications in English and modern Arabic are among the growing demands of the students.

Its administrative operations are also undergoing adjustments. The administrative reports analysed for this paper indicate that the school is becoming increasingly more professional by the year. The growth in transparency of the school's operations has been remarkable. Nevertheless, this does not mean it is becoming ideologically more flexible, as it grows more defiant in the face of what it perceives as mounting political adversity.

Looking at the Dar al-'Ulum Deoband, it is difficult to speak of a crisis of orthodoxy in Islamic education, or of Islamic education in general.[67] The school continues to expand at a rapid rate. At the same time, its financial resources have become more strained. Sustaining the standard of support for students in terms of hostels, food, or medical aid seems more difficult. The school is currently tapping into new private resources to upgrade its infrastructure. Income from the private sector, such as Badruddin Ajmal's contribution to the running of several departments (computers, English,

Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy, Finality of Prophethood) could significantly alter how the school is run, if only on the technical side.[68]

It holds fast to its ideological mission, training students in the school's narrow theological dogma and its ideological interpretation of the world. It continues to rekindle sectarianism and polarisation among Muslim groups in India and further afield.[69] Its graduates, however, are still divided over their activist role in society. Most are guided by a contemplative mood and personal piety. The rigours of the school's training make them humble and disciplined servants of the school's cause.

Debates on the school curriculum and its teaching methods will only continue to increase, although the grip that the conservative elders have on the school's philosophy is still strong and often uncompromising. The school itself is directly confronted with the problems and demands of a broader society, particularly when it comes to such practical issues as the application of Islamic law in India and other countries. These concerns will continue to stimulate debate and exert pressure on the Deoband school to adapt to changes in society.

The political and religious impact of the school in India and the rest of the Muslim world has gathered momentum since 1982. Its diversity has likewise increased. Although it became a national institution in India, with students from every Indian state, it remains firmly rooted in the northern Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and is highly influential in West Bengal and neighbouring Bangladesh. Pakistan is still a powerful Deobandi centre in its own right, with little evidence of direct influence from the Deoband school in India.[70]

The Dar al-'Ulum will continue to be the focus of international attention as long as militant groups in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh adhere to Deobandi doctrine. Its networking in India is becoming increasingly formal and works through the Association of Deobandi Madrasas (RMA), whereas Deobandi scholars and schools are linked at the international level via public conferences, youth work meetings, and missionary objectives, but also through Tablighi Jama'at channels.

In the academic field, efforts have multiplied to understand the character and dynamics of Islamic schools.[71] However, much of it is politically motivated.[72] Detailed studies that take the concept of the schools and their approach into account, without refraining from critical assessment, are required. Measured against its long history, the Deoband school is under

enormous pressure and is experiencing change at a breakneck speed. Whether this will suffice to ensure its smooth adaptation to a new and radically changing world remains to be seen.

Notes

1 Cf. Jeffrey Goldberg, 'The Education of a Holy Warrior,' *New York Times Magazine*, 25 June 2000. For a less sensationalist but yet negative reporting on Deoband affiliated networks in Pakistan, see the International Crisis Group reports *Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military* (29 July 2002) and *Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism* (29 March 2007).

2 21-23 March 1980, see *Mukhtasir rudad – Ijlas Sadsala Dar al-'ulum Deoband mun'aqida 21, 22, 23 March 1980* [Brief minutes of the centenary congregation at Deoband University convened 21-23 March 1980]. Deoband: Daftar-i Ijlas Sadsala Dar al-'Ulm Deoband. 1980, p. 17. In fact, 1980 marked 113 years of the school's existence since 1866.

3 Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

4 Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

5 Cf. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere.* pp. 316-318.

6 Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India (1900-1947).* Delhi and London: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 180.

7 See various issues of the journal of the Old Boys Association of the Deoband school, *Tarjuman-i Dar al-'Ulum* (Organ of the Islamic university), produced in Delhi.

8 *Sana 1422-23 AH dar al-'ulum Deoband men jadid talaba ke liye zaruri qawa'id-i dakhila* [Entry requirements for the new students at Deoband University during the academic year 1422-23 AH]. Deoband: Daftar-i Ta'limat, 1422 AH (2001), pp. 15-16.

9 Administrative Report for 1423 AH (2002-3). Most of the school data refers to the Hijri calendar and the academic year, which begins annually on the first of Ramadan. For accuracy the Hijri references are preferred and converted according to the beginning of the academic year.

10 Administrative Report for 1423 AH (2002-3).

11 Reetz, *Islam in the public sphere*. pp. 182ff.

12 http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/introulema/3/g.htm, accessed 1 March 2006.

13 Author's interviews during field research in Delhi and Deoband in February-March 2004.

14 Idem.

15 *The Hindu*, 29 March 2006, http://www.hindu.com/2006/03/29/stories/2006032920401600.htm, accessed 1 July 2007.

16 My interviews with Deoband graduates in February 2004 – DR.

17 Photographs from the author's own collection, taken in December 2001 and February 2004.

18 Interviews by the author with Dar al-'Ulum *waqf* representatives from Feb-Mar 2004.

19 Cf. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere,* pp. 183f.

20 http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=rabita.gif, accessed 1 March 2006.

21 See, for instance, All-India meetings of Islamic Arabic schools on 12 November 1998 and 30 April 2002. *Khutba-i Sadarat - Kul Hind Ijtima'-i Madaris-i Islamiyyah 'Arabiyyah 21 Rajab 1419 AH = 12 November 1998* [Presidential address – All-India Convention of Islamic Arabic Schools, 12 November 1998]. Deoband: Markazi Daftar-i Madaris-i 'Arabiyyah, n.d.; *ditto* for *Kul Hind Ijlas-i Majlis 'Umumi-i Rabita Madaris-i Islamiyyah 'Arabiyyah 16 Safar 1423 AH = 30 April 2002* [General session of the All-India Convention of the Association of Islamic Arabic Schools, 30 April 2002].

22 Interview on 28 February 2004.

23 On efforts to heal the rift, see: 'Whiff of breeze from Deoband,' *The Milli Gazette* (Delhi), vol. 6, no. 6, 16-31 March 2005.

24 Numbers of students by geographical origin are taken from *Naqsha-i ta'dad-i talaba-i dar al-'ulum Deoband – Daftar-i Ta'limat* [Table of student numbers at the Islamic University of Deoband, Department of Education] for 1414-15 AH (1994).

25 *Dastur-i Asasi – Tanzim-i Abna-i Qadim Dar al-'Ulum Deoband* [Founding constitution – Old Boys' Association Islamic University Deoband]. Delhi: Tanzim-i Abna-i Qadim, 1991.

26 See, however, Dietrich Reetz, 'The Deoband Universe: What makes a transcultural and transnational educational movement of Islam?', in: Dietrich Reetz, and Bettina Dennerlein (eds.), *South-South Linkages in Islam: The Making of Continuity and Disparity in the 19th-21st centuries. Contemporary Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 139-159.

27 5,078 foreign students graduated from the school between 1866 and 2001. *Dar al-'ulum* (Deoband 2001, no. 11), 43.

28 The *Naqsha-i ta'dad-i talaba-i dar al-'ulum Deoband – Daftar-i Ta'limat* for 1979 lists 34 foreign students, including 9 from Bangladesh, 5 from Nepal, 6 from Malaysia, and 9 from Africa; that for 2002-3 lists 61 foreigners, including 32 from Nepal, 27 from Bangladesh, and 1 each from Burma and Malaysia.

29 Maulana Arshad Madani, head of the education department at the Deoband school, in the course of interviews in December 2001 and Feb-Mar 2004 – DR.

30 See the report by Maulana Ahmad Kathrada, 'An eye-witness account of the 150 year Deoband Conference', in *Al-Jamiat* (Johannesburg), vol. 4, no. 8, June 2001, at http://www.jamiat.org.za/al-jamiat/june/sreport.html, accessed 15 March 2006. In was actually the 135th anniversary.

31 Rahimullah Yusufzai, *The News*, 12 April 2001, at http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/AFGHAN%20CONFLICT/TALIBAN/deobandi_conf_2001.htm, accessed 1 July 2007.

32 Interviews with various respondents at the Deoband school in December 2001 and February 2004; also Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, JUI General Secretary, during a visit to Berlin with a Parliamentary delegation on 11-12 May 2004 – DR.

33 Dietrich Reetz, 'Keeping busy on the path of Allah: The self-organisation (*intizam*) of the *Tablighi Jama'at*,' in: Daniela Bredi (ed.), *Islam in South Asia* (= *Oriente Moderno*, 84:1). Rome 2004, pp. 295-305.

34 See the directory of Zakariyya's disciples in: Muhammad Yusuf Mutala, *Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya aor un ke Khulafa-i Kiram.* [Maulana Zakariyya and his venerable disciples]. 3 parts in 2 vols. Bury: Dar al-'Ulum al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya, 1986.

35 The following paragraphs are based on an analysis of the Administrative Reports, held in Archive of the Dar al-'Ulum Deoband. Summary data compiled by the author in February 2004.

36 Dar al-'Ulum Deoband shu'ba nashr-o-insha'at, *Dar al-'Ulum Deoband — 'Ulum-i kitab-o-sunnat ke amin, sarmayia-i millat ke pasban. Khidmat, halat, mansube.* [The Islamic University of Deoband — Guardian of Knowledge of the Quran and Sunna, Flagbearer of the Treasure of the Community. Its Service, Current Conditions and Future Plans] Deoband: Dar al-'Ulum, 1422 AH (2001).

37 After the website of Deoband school http://www.darululoom-deoband.com; Administrative Report 1423 AH / 2003

38 Miyan Muhammad, *Asiran-i Malta* [Interned on Malta]. Delhi: Al-Jam'iyat Book Depot 1976, p. 58.

39 My interviews in March 2004 – DR.

40 My interviews with Maulana Shahid and Maulana Muhammad Salman at the *Madrasa Mazahir al-'Ulum Jadid* Saharanpur on 2 March 2004 – DR.

41 http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=computer.gif, downloaded 01 March 2006.

42 Administrative Report for 1423 AH (2002-3), p. 11.

43 Ibid., p. 12.

44 Ibid., p. 12.

45 www.darululoom-deoband.com.

46 Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi,. *History of the Dar al-'Ulum.* 2 vols. Deoband: Idarah-i Ihtimam, 1980, vol. II, pp. 244ff.

47 Cf. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere,* pp. 288.

48 Administrative Report for 1423 AH (2002-03), p. 32-33.

49 http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=k-nubowat.gif, accessed 1 March 2006.

50 *Alami Majlis Tahaffuz-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat*, 35 Stockwell Green, London, SW9. (http://www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=26201&lang); see their Web site at http://www.khatme-nubuwwat.org/; see also the Web site of the US branch of the *Irshad-o-Da'wat*, a pro-Ahl-i Hadith organisation that co-sponsors its international activities: http://www.irshad.org/finality/significance.php.

51 Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organisations in Pakistan.* Lahore: Mashal, 2004.

52 These camps took place once a year in 1988, 1990-95, 1997-98. See Dar al-'Umum, *Dar al-'Ulum Deoband ... Khidmat, halat, mansube*, p. 25.

53 Reetz, *Islam in the public sphere*, pp. 153ff.

54 Administrative Report for 1423 AH (2002-3), p. 20.

55 Ibid., p. 25.

56 The student's name was Arshad Fayzee. Based on interviews by the author in Deoband, March 2004.

57 Dietrich Reetz, 'Dar al-Ulum Deoband and its Self-Representation on the Media.' *Islamic Studies* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute), vol. 44, no. 2, 2005, 209-227.

58 http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/magazine/index.php, accessed 16 March 2006.

59 For a list of its publications, see http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/publications/publications2a.htm, accessed 16 March 2006.

60 Author's interviews in March 2004.

61 Ibid. and Ahmad 1985: 28.

62 Interviews and inquiries conducted by myself and my research assistant, a Deoband graduate, from Feb-March 2004, during which we listed at least 16 businesses in Deoband.

63 Salim Ahmad, *Mustanad tarikh-i Deoband* [Authentic history of Deoband]. Deoband: Maktaba Rah-i Islam, n.d., pp. 222, 31.

64 Ibid., p. 222.

65 For a discussion of various dimensions of Islamism, see Dietrich Reetz, Aktuelle Analysen islamistischer Bewegungen und ihre Kritik. In: *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*, Stuttgart 17(2004)4, pp. 61-68.

66 Mareike Jule Winkelmann. *'From Behind the Curtain': A study of a girls' madrasa in India*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

67 A strong sense of crisis pervades such studies as: A. H. Nayyar, 'Madrasah Education Frozen in Time', in: Pervez Hoodbhoy (ed.), *Fifty Years of Pakistan: Education and the State.* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 215-250; Qamaruddin, *Hindustan ki dini darsgahen. Kul Hind sarwe* [Religious schools in India. All India survey]. Delhi: Hamdard Education Society, 1994; Kuldip Kaur, *Madrasa Education in India: A Study of its Past and Present.* Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural & Industrial Development, 1990.

68 Author's interviews in March 2004.

69 Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianwi, *Differences in the Ummah and the Straight Path.* Karachi: Zam Zam Publishers, 1999.

70 Nayyar, 'Madrasah Education'; Jamal Malik, *Colonialization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan.* Delhi: Manohar, 1996.

71 Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld (eds.). *Islamic Education, Diversity, and National Identity: Dini Madaris in India post 9/11.* Delhi, London: Sage, 2006; Yoginder Sikand, *Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India.* Delhi: Penguin, 2005.

72 Alexander Evans, 'Understanding Madrasahs', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 1, 2006, pp. 9-16.