Facing the challenges:
Old and new trends in the Dāru'l-ʿUlūm Deoband after the split in 1982

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Abstract

The prominent and traditional Islamic school of Deoband faced its most difficult, even existential crisis in recent years when in 1982, due to family feuds, the control of the *madrasa* was taken over by one section while the other was forced out, opening another very similar school on new premises. As the new administration was facing the fallout of these cataclysmic events, it also had to respond to growing political pressures from Hindu-nationalist forces in India as well as from the west that were targeting the school. It had to position itself on issues of Islamic militancy and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which referred to its Dēobandī antecedents, but also on the reform of its century-old teaching curriculum, on the integration of secular knowledge and computer technology, on the coherence of its own education movement across India and beyond. The result is a mixed picture of sometimes dramatic evolution where influences of change are battling with inertia, stagnation and conservatism.

This paper seeks to question some of the common assumptions we make about *madāris*, particularly with regard to their supposed lack of or resistance to change. After a brief introduction of the background of Dēobandī learning for those unfamiliar with the seminary, I will try to make the argument that the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* Deoband went through significant changes and upheavals partly not of its own choosing but partly also by intent reflecting compulsions and objectives with which western academics and politicians are still insufficiently familiar.

The higher Islamic seminary, the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* of Deoband, was founded in 1866 in North India by Muḥammad Qāsim Nānaotawī and Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī. It was meant to rectify the supposed lack of religious education amongst Muslims of British India as religious scholars feared a loss of identity in the wake of the spread of English-language education and western values in society. After the defeat of the anti-colonial uprising of 1857-58 in which many Muslim princes and scholars participated Islamic institutions faced suspicion of disloyalty and sedition on the part of British rulers. Religious scholars decided to concentrate on the reconstruction of religious knowledge and religiosity and preferred to prove their loyalty to British rule. A more radical section of the seminary's teachers formed after the turn of the century. The new head teacher Mahmud al-Hasan (1851-1921) and scholars like Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī (1879-1957) and ʿUbaidullāh Sindhī (1872-1944) represented a highly politicised thinking that wanted to challenge British rule which they saw as a major impediment to the profession of true Islam not only in India but in the Islamic world at large. They particularly identified with Ottoman rule and mobilized against its defeat after WW I together with Gandhi in the broad-based but unsuccessful Khilafat movement.

At the same time the school championed religious discourse in the reformist fashion of *iṣlāḥ* where its founders and generations of students were seeking to spread the true Islam. Their views were characterized by a marked orthodoxy but also by Puritanism and asceticism. Their relations with other Islamic schools of thought, what they called

maslak, where troubled by controversy. They attacked dissenting views in Islam, particularly the Barēlwīs, representing the culture of the shrine-based Sufi-Islam. Yet most Dēobandī divines were themselves active Sufi shaykhs, following the path, or *ṭarīqa*, were they saw it in consonance with the law and word of God, or *sharīʿa*. Being staunch followers of the Ḥanafī school (*maḏhab*) they were wrongly labelled Wahhabis with whom they only shared a certain bent for the radical and puritan interpretation of Islamic tenets. They anxiously marked themselves of from other sects notably the Shia and especially the *Aḥmadīya* whom the considered as heterodox. Over time the school became the head seminary of an elaborate network of schools and activities inspired by the thought of the Dēobandī teaching and interpretation of Islam. They introduced religious mass education within their own seminary through the innovative approach of hostel-based study and through a large number of branches and *madāris* across South Asia and beyond.

Their curriculum consists of a normally 8-year course conferring on students the degree of an *ʿālim* or scholar of religion and law, roughly comparable to a graduate degree. It is still based on the *dars-e niẓāmī*, compiled and introduced by Mullā Niẓāmu'ddīn (d. 1748). Students study the Qurʾān, the Prophetic traditions, the principles of their, that is the Ḥanafī law school along with a large number of often arcane commentaries written mainly by traditionists. The degree consists of teaching licenses for major works, *sanads*, not failing to mention the venerable line of succession in which the respective teacher stands. Beside the *manqūlāt*, or transmitted sciences, related to divine sources, worldly knowledge of a very dated variety though is represented by the *maʿqūlāt* or rational sciences including subjects such as philosophy, logic and various branches of mathematics. Modern subjects such as English, Geography or History had long been conspicuous by their absence.

The Deoband school exerted its influence through India's independent existence as a learned reference institution of normative and orthodox Islam. It had spawned public activism in the shape of Associations of Religious scholars, the *Jamʿīyat-ul-ʿUlamāʾ-e Hind* (*JUH*), which turned into a political party by the time of partition and continues political activity in Pakistan under the name of *Jamʿīyat-ul-ʿUlamāʾ-e-Islām* (*JUI*). Its Indian variant concentrated on religious, educational and cultural activities.

The centenary celebrations[1] in 1980 marked a watershed in the evolution of the seminary. It was a huge effort with a separate office to organize the celebratory functions. A large number of Indian and foreign guests was entertained representing Dēobandī *madāris*, religious and government institutions from Muslim countries and India. In addition a huge number of graduates were invited for the traditional turban-binding ceremony. With hindsight it can be assumed that the festivities and concomitant preparations intensified the rivalry between scholar families for control over the seminary, especially as its long-time rector Tayyib had become increasingly frail and the issue of succession clearly materialized.

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[1] 21-23 March 1980, see *Mukhtaṣir rūdād, Ijlās-e ṣadsāla, Dar al-ʿUlum Deoband*. Deoband 1980.

From family networks to family power in the name of politics

Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib (1897-1983) assumed the post of *muhtamim* or rector in 1929, a post he held until 1982. Himself being the grandson of Deoband's founder Qāsim Nānaotawī he embodied the classical tradition of learnedness and piety with little interest though in political manoeuvrings.

Deoband's official website maintains that after the elaborate and highly successful centenary celebrations were over, Ṭayyib allegedly 'requested the *Majlis-e Shūrā* to provide him with assistance as the duties of the administration (*ihtimām*) weighed heavily upon him due to his advanced age for which the *Majlis-e Shūrā* as per request elected the current *muhtamim* Marghūb-ur-Raḥmān. After that, he fell victim to the insincere policies of his close advisers. After returning from a trip to America he appointed Maulana Muḥammad Sālim vice-rector (*nāʾib muhtamim*) and Maulana Anẓar Shāh (Kashmīrī) head teacher (*ṣadr-e mudarris*) in December 1980 which was against the rules. After protest from the *Majlis-e Shūrā* he cancelled his decision. Then he undertook a radical step by convening an illegal meeting (*ijtimāʿ*) in which he announced the dissolution of the *Majlis-e Shūrā*. This incident disrupted the whole administration of the *dāru'l-ʿulūm*. The political turmoil in the administration filled the Muslims of the whole world with sorrow. In October 1981 there was also the sad incident of the eviction of the students from the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* with the help of police and its closure. In the history of the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* 1981 and 1982 are those two years well-known in which beside the emergency situation the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* remained closed for five months (deprived of the sound of the words of Allah and his prophet). The students took again possession of their *alma mater* on 23/24 March 1982 and the administration was resurrected under the supervision of the regular *Majlis-e Shūrā*.'[2]

This account which dominated the media and the official representation of these events appears at odds with reflections of members of both the defeated faction and of the loyalist camp that stayed with the school. 23 years after these events they are surprisingly unanimous in their criticism of the Madanī faction.[3] The latter was formed by the offspring of Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī. Its main protagonists were Asad Madanī, president of the *JUH*, and his son, Maḥmūd Madanī, secretary of the *JUH*. They point out that Marghūb was a relative of Madanī and only appointed to wrest control of the administration from the Qāsimī family. During his time in office, respondents stress, Marghūb neither demonstrated much scholarly inclinations nor capacity to strengthen the administration. Currently he appears to be rather frail and stays away from office on sick leave for long periods of time during which the deputy rector Qārī ʿUṯmān and Arshad Madanī, head of the teaching department (*daftar-e taʿlīmāt*) and another member of the Madanī family, steer the school through its troubled waters.

In interviews the Qāsimī faction is called the 'defeated' party. They opened the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* (*waqf*) on new premises. The name derived from endowment (*auqaf*) land to which they laid claim in the process of partition. Maulānā Sālim Qāsim mentioned in the report above is the son of Ṭayyib and became the rector of the new school. Maulānā Anẓar Shāh Kashmīrī was nominated head of the teaching department there. He represents another faction formed by the offspring of ʿAllāma Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (1875-1933) who had

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[2] http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/introulema/3/g.htm
[3] My interviews during field research in Delhi and Deoband in February-March 2004 – DR.

served as *Shaykh al-Ḥadīṯ* and later head teacher of Deoband from 1915 till 1927. He also then was opposed to Madanī and his followers so much that he left the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* in 1927. He was part of a group of teachers and students who in the major rift of the time temporarily were expelled or left the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* because of their opposition to the pro-Congress, pro-JUH politics of the school. The group embodied the pietist, scholarly, and politically more conservative faction led by Shabbīr Aḥmad ʿUṯmānī (1885-1949) who later founded the pro-Pakistan wing *JUI*. The Kashmīrī faction seems in the ascendancy now in this school as demonstrated in a small but typical detail were a major gate to the premises earlier called *Bāb-e Ṭayyib* has now been renamed in the name of Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī.

Respondents pointed out that with the split the more scholarly and devoted teachers left the old school although most agree that they have now been replaced by other able teachers. Madanī went on to place his nominees in the *Majlis-e Shūrā*. Now when Marghūb is seen increasingly failing in his duties Asad Madanī is said to lay claim to the chairmanship of the *Shūrā*. He remains politically active for the Congress party, so does his son Maḥmūd.

Both factions stress that differences do not concern principles but personal matters. The Qāsimī faction is presented by the old school as the 'splittist' faction accusing them of manifesting the rift by the foundation of the new school. They are ignored in most network activities of the school. The Qāsimī faction presents its school outside in a typically illusory fashion as the real and only school, especially when attracting intending students in their fliers and leaflets. But in private they have to concede that the old school is still regarded as the reference institution. They consider themselves as D ēobandī in terms of school (*maslak*) and doctrine (*ʿaqīda*). They are waiting to be invited to their network activities which they give to understand they would consider positively. In the meantime they use the ever expanding market of religious education to consolidate and increase their own share. They have already expanded so much that their student number has reached 1.500 which is about half of the old school. As they had built on barren land there are no limits to expansion plans. The Kashmīrī faction develops training institutes for graduates in computer sciences and English which they keep excluded in principle from the school curriculum.

From a school of thought to a network of schools

Some of my respondents considered the current phase of the rule of the Madanī faction over the Deoband school as a period of decline. They stressed that the scholarly tradition has been replaced by a more action-oriented superficial activism. The quality of the teachers and the teaching they maintain has not been restored. Many issues are not solved such as the maintenance of the buildings and the student hostels. The library and the archives (*muḥāfiẓ khāna*) show signs of decay and disorder. Staff are frequently absent on leave. Debates about a new role for the seminary and for Islamic teaching in today's world are being avoided or stifled.

This view, however, does not seem to take full cognisance of other trends. In this regard a number of developments have to be pointed out which may help understand how the role of the school has been evolving.

One remarkable development concerns the formalisation of the ways in which the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* exerts its influence as the head seminary of a school of thought. The centenary celebrations were a welcome occasion to renew links with Dēobandī schools in other parts of India, across South Asia and beyond. Long lists were compiled to invite graduates from all over India and the world after a long break indicating that no regular links seem to have been supported with the majority before. It was the mental disposition and the voluntary association with the tenets of the Dēobandī school that had counted, the recognition of major scholars, their works, views and legal decisions (*fatāwā*) that characterised the followers.

The Ayodhya controversy and the demolition of the Babrī Masjid on 6 December 1992 seem to have been a watershed in the thinking of the religious elite in India. Several respondents confirmed that it brought home to Islamic leaders the fact that Muslims in matters of their religion were now on their own and could no longer count on the support or protection from a more or less well-meaning liberal and secular state. If Muslims want to preserve their religion and their place in society they have to act in different ways more in consonance with mainstream forces of society and market capitalism. Attacks by Hindu nationalist forces on the *madrasa* system and their teaching strengthened the resolve to defend it going hand-in-hand with an inclination to resist change more forcefully. One way out of the dilemma was seen in the formal organisation of the Dēobandī *madāris*.

During two meetings of like-minded Dēobandī schools in 1994, on 29-30 June and 25-26 October,[4] they founded a new body, the *Rābita Madāris ʿArabīya* (RMA) with its headquarters in the *dāru'l-ʿulūm*. As per March 2004 it has affiliated 1.173 *madāris* across India.[5] After investigating their teaching practices and rules their certificates (*sanad*) have been endorsed. The RMA regularly convenes meetings of rectors and head teachers to discuss new challenges and problems of the curriculum.[6] By and large it serves as a forum to close ranks and to resist demands for more far-going change. At the same time, changes on several matters are being entertained and endorsed on the quiet, mainly concerning computerisation and the use of English. It also serves as a means to prevent substandard religious teaching in the burgeoning market of religious education being offered in the name of the prestigious Dēobandī school of thought. In a way this is branding of their product and protecting its rights in a lucrative and expanding market. The Qāsimī faction school remains excluded. Anẓar Kashmīrī in an interview stressed they are not seeking affiliation as they regard themselves as embodiment of the same *alma mater*. But he pointedly added they would not object if invited meaning that they apparently regard the rift as a painful anomaly.

The formation of a formal graduates' association, the *Tanẓīm-e Abnāʾ-e Qadīm*, in 1991[7] presents another similarly interesting development. Its central office is in Delhi and it has founded two post-graduate training institutes, one for spoken Arabic and one for English. It successfully edits a regular monthly, the *Tarjumān Dāru'l-ʿulūm*, started in 1993 with a

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[4] http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=rabita.gif.
[5] RMA office list.
[6] See for instance All-India meetings of Islamic Arabic schools on 12 November 1998 and on 30 April 2002. Speeches and documents in my collection – DR.
[7] Founding constitution.

worldwide audience of graduates. It features debates carefully but decidedly exploring, and sometimes crossing, the limits of the school thinking with regard to the history of the school, the need to review the religious curriculum, the inclusion of worldly subjects, or relations with the west. It is particularly noteworthy that the Association maintains contact with both the old school and the Qāsimī faction in the name of strengthening the Dēobandī school of thought. This Association no doubt contributes to the reconstruction and updating of Dēobandī thinking in the modern era, especially as it is run by a new generation of graduates feeling the need to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Dēobandī networking also included links with international students who had come to the school and graduated from there. While their number has impressively accumulated over the years,[8] their significance has gone into sharp decline. Their annual enrolment has long dropped past the all-time high of the fifties and sixties and hovers around thirty to sixty at present. Their composition has also significantly changed. Students from outside South Asia were still present in 1980 but are hardly visible now.

Role of international students
AH 1399-1400: 34 foreign students: Malaysia: 6, Bangladesh: 9, Britain: 2, Nepal: 5, Masqat: 1, Africa: 9, South America: 1, Fiji: 1[9]
AH 1423-24: 61 foreign students: Nepal: 32, Bangladesh: 27, Burma: 1, Malaysia: 1[10]

The Indian government put formal restrictions on the enrolment of foreigners in the end of the seventies. They have been made much more stringent under Hindu nationalist pressure first and anti-terrorism demands later. Nobody without educational visa is allowed to be enrolled. Students for Deoband have almost never been granted this visa as acidly pointed out by the schools representatives to me. They stressed why Muslims are not allowed to study their own religion remains best known to the powers that be.[11]

But international links have not been fully discarded. Although it is stressed that responsibility for the spread of Dēobandī thought lies with the *madāris* founded for this purpose by Dēobandī graduates, the organisation of the first world meeting of Dēobandī schools near Peshawar, Pakistan, in April 2001[12] demonstrated the willingness of Dēobandī scholars to assert themselves more forcefully also on the international scene. This development has now been severely disrupted by the aftermath of the September 11 attack in 2001. The Deoband school feels to be at the receiving end of what it regards as malicious attacks by Hindu nationalists and the West wanting to prove its terrorist association either with the former Afghan Ṭalibān or militant so-called *jihādī* groups in India and Pakistan, particularly in Kashmir. At the same time Dēobandī scholars in India and Pakistan keep on arguing that the responsibility of the Ṭalibān government in Afghanistan for those events was never proven and the attack by the Americans was

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[8] 5.078 foreign students have graduated since its foundation until 2001. *Dāru'l-ʿulūm* (Deoband 2001, No. 11), p. 43.
[9] *Naqsha-e taʿdād-e ṭalabāʾ-e dāru'l-ʿulūm Deoband – Daftar-e Taʿlīmāt.*
[10] As in fn. 9.
[11] Arshad Madanī in interviews in 2001 and 2004 – DR.
[12] *The News*, Karachi, 10 April 2001.

wilfully engineered at best, or organised by US and Israeli agencies at worst. The gap of reality in their thinking is compounded by the mental isolation of their outlook and the limited access to English-language information and worldly knowledge.

From traditional to modern Islamic education

The *dāru'l-ʿulūm* also in more formal ways rebounded from its rather moribund state immediately after the split. Facilities were slowly but steadily improved which still is a daunting task as the school inherited many old buildings. Living conditions remain humble for both students and teachers but are comparable with other old provincial schools in north India. The Madanī faction prefers to point to the growing number of students – which have almost doubled since 1980 and reached 3504 last year – as the main proof of its revival and reassertion after the split. Also the number of graduates per year has almost doubled and reached nearly 800.

Number of students	Number of graduates
AH 1399-1400: 1822	AH 1400: 406
AH 1424 (2002-03): 3504[13]	AH 1424: 774[14]

A pamphlet with a summary introduction to the changes brought about after 1982 lists seven administrative reforms concerning the admission of new students, the entry exams and the annual examinations, the teaching load and performance, the departments of learning and reciting the Qurʾān, and also the Persian and religious studies departments from the middle school level.[15]

Of two major innovations that entered the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* in the intervening period – English and computer training – it is the former that has acquired a symbolic significance in the long history of the seminary, concluding a debate that lasted more than a century. While the main arguments for and against learning English had already been exchanged in the first decades of the twentieth century the actual introduction of English teaching stumbled over the supposed 'lack of funds' for this purpose. Interviews with those involved in the momentous decision of the *Majlis-e Shūrā* to go ahead with English teaching made clear that the old inhibitions and arguments were still very much alive.

Opening of new departments	Date
Department of English language and literature[16]	7 February 2002
Computer Department	30 August 1996
Taḥaffuẓ-e Khatm-e Nabuwwat	31 October 1986
Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy[17]	AH 1403 (1982/83)

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[13] As in fn. 9.

[14] *Daftar-e Taʿlīmāt.*

[15] *Dāru'l-ʿulūm Deoband*: *khidmat, ḥālāt, manṣūbē*, Deoband: *shʿobā-e nashr wa ishāʿat* 1982, pp. 39-41.

[16] *Administrative Report* for Shūrā session 30th April-2nd May 2003 (Urdu – computer printout), p. 31.

[17] http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=academy.gif.

The fear was that learning English would lead to the imitation of the west, a grave doctrinal argument with Qurʾānic connotations, and ultimately undermine the religious identity of Muslims, pave the way for their Christianisation. This fear had been particularly acute during the colonial period. Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan had grappled with this argument when opening the Jamʿīya Millīya in Aligarh on 29 October 1920:

> Those amongst you who are well informed will know that I have never given a religious decree (*fatwā*) considering the study of a foreign language or of the sciences and arts of other nations as *kufr* (unbelief). But without doubt I've said that the final impact of English education is such that according to our observation people become 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. For a Muslim to stay aloof from such education will be good.[18]

Badruddīn Ajmal, a wealthy perfume merchant from Assam, *dāruʾl-ʿulūm* graduate and *shūrā* member, had early taken course on the introduction of English. He developed close relations with the Madanī family to get access to the shūrā as was alleged by some respondents. First he raised the issue in 1994 and was rebuked. He was told to show and prove somehow that this will not lead to a dilution of the Islamic quality of graduates and that there is a real requirement for English, that learning the language will add a new dimension to the task of spreading the true and correct Islam. With his own money he set up a post-graduate training institute for *ʿulamāʾ* where he taught English, the *Markaz al-Maʿārif* in Delhi and Bombay. In two-year courses he produced a small but fine batch of *ʿulamāʾ* well-versed in English who made their way up in the hierarchy of Islamic institutions in India due to their urbane aura they now exuded. One of these students, a *dāruʾl-ʿulūm* graduate today heading a post-graduate training institute himself, was called for the decisive meeting in 2001 when after prolonged debate the issue could still not be decided.[19] He than made the decisive argument that learning and knowing English will help in today's computerised world to answer many questions from Muslims on Islam who do not speak Urdu, in particular those from South India, but also from other countries, sometimes living in isolation where they have no access to knowledge about the correct Islam. Thus English can and must become a means of *tablīgh* and *daʿwa*, of spreading God's message to the uninformed and unbelievers.

It is therefore still a significant argument to legitimise the study and knowledge of English that students when asked in class by this author what their motive was unanimously answered to spread Islam. That many though might look for better worldly career options or even go and watch English-language movies in cinema and on TV – something decidedly rejected by puritan Dēobandī dogma – is acknowledged only in private.
Some Dēobandī *madāris* still reject the teaching of English as of all other worldly subjects. They would say as did the elders of the new wing of the famous Saharanpur *madrasa Maẓāhiruʾl-ʿUlūm*, which split on similar lines as in Deoband, that learning English would wean the students away from the path of religious vocation for which the

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[18] Miyān, Muḥammad. *Aṣīrān-i Māltā* (Urdu: Interned on Malta). Delhi: *Al-Jamʿīyat Book Depot* 1976, p. 58
[19] My interviews – DR.

community makes sacrifices to provide them with education free of cost. In other words, they feel the need to 'trap' students from a poor family background in the religious profession by not granting them access to English. They argue that the number of clerics per head of Muslims in India was still comparatively low as compared to Christians in the west so that it was against the maintenance of religion and identity to put curbs on Madrasa education. Another argument was that they would specialise on religious education much as did those schools educating engineers. It was for students to choose and the curriculum came with the specialisation. The latter argument sound particularly odd since the classical curriculum also contained rational sciences originally destined for worldly uses. In fact the ʿulamāʾ in India and Pakistan pressed to allow for the teaching of modern subjects in retrospect justify the current narrow religious specialisation of the *madāris* that was the historical result of western and colonial influences only which in the nineteenth century had deprived the religious schools of their standing in the secular realm as educational institutions.

It is interesting to note how a technical and perhaps commercial or economic vision of modernity takes hold of today's ʿulamāʾ arguing in favour of change. Computer training is described as a 'requirement of the modern era' (ʿaṣr-e jadīd kā ahm taqāẓa).[20]

What is very attractive for the school though are the facilities that computers offer for composing Urdu texts and reproduce them easily, the most sought after service of the computer department at Deoband. It makes the production of pamphlets and tracts much easier thus helping the sharpening of the public religious profile of the school. Although internet facilities are offered the number of connected computers is very small and can be used only for specialised purposes strictly in consonance with learning and teaching purposes. However students interested to consult the net are free to go into town in their spare time to use one of the internet cafes which they do avail of, though not extensively.

The contradictory impact of innovations can also be watched on the website of the school.[21] There is a race going on that particularly attracts the technically minded young ʿulamāʾ not to be left behind in the presentation of Islamic content on the internet. The school has put a large amount of content in Urdu on its website. This has not only raised the ideological profile of the school. It has also I would argue increased transparency making religious arguments but also the inner workings of its administration more public and more widely accessible which is decidedly a move in the direction of democratisation.

Striving to retain ideological, social and political control

Another trend of adapting to modernising influences must be seen in the institutionalisation of intellectual and ideological debate.
A separate body channelling and supporting debate in defence of the 'Finality of Prophethood' was created in 1986 – the All India *Majlis-e Taḥaffuẓ-e Khatm-e Nabuwwat Majlis*.[22] Its head office functions from the premises of the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* as a separate department.

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[20] http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=computer.gif.
[21] www.darululoom-deoband.com.
[22] http://darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=k-nubowat.gif.

This organisation is a euphemism for a sectarian perspective on Islam battling with perceived enemies that supposedly question the Finality of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, an accusation, first of all thrown at the Aḥmadīya for they claims of their founder and subsequent leaders to some degree of prophethood. Enemies are spotted all around. Publications target not only the supposedly heretic Aḥmadīya, but also the Shīʿa, the Christians, the Hindus, the Barēlwīs, the Jamāʿat-i Islāmī and the Ahl-i Ḥadīṯ. The organisation has also spawned a world body of noted radicalism.[23] Its local chapters particularly in Pakistan make occasionally news by their persecution of *Aḥmadīs*. The Pakistan chapter is notorious for its links with other sectarian organisations such as Sipah-e Sahaba and *jihādī* groups. The Deoband office focuses on the formulaic reproduction of pamphlets against the groups mentioned. Local chapters enjoy a wide degree of autonomy. But the existence of a global network and their mutual support cannot be denied. The coordinating function of the Indian organisation seems to include also Nepal. The body held camps to train scholars in the rejection of Aḥmadī thought across India.[24] As the prevalence of the Aḥmadīya in India is a miniscule minority the camps are used to streamline the scholars ideologically.

The Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy created in AH 1403 (1983) was meant to support academic in-depth studies that also give more sophisticated arguments in defence of the believes of the school founders and for their dissemination. Staff members are responsible for writing many of the public speeches on *tablīgh*, but also those held by the rector and other luminaries on political issues. It falls within the realm of post-graduate specialisation or *takhaṣuṣ*. There it offers selected graduate students a practice in Islam-related journalism and research. While I was in Deoband one case attracted public attention where a student[25] was rusticated from the Academy for publishing an article with his official affiliation where he accepted the need to include worldly subjects in the curriculum of the school. It showed that such debated has penetrated the very heart of the school's ideological institutions and that it seems only a matter of time before such debate becomes more open.

The last institution to be mentioned here are the student clubs (*ṭalabāʾ kē anjumaneñ*). There are more than 100 in operation at the school. They are meant to facilitate learning and study. Their structure replicates the geographical areas of origin. Others reflect interest in promoting the study of Arabic language and literature (*an-nādī al-adabī*). Office bearers are elected. They prepare wallpapers (*dīwārī parchē*) adorning the walls and trees of the inner courtyards where students learn the basics of religious journalism. They are written in the vernacular, some in the regional languages of the areas of origin such as Bengali, Tamil, Nepali, but also in Arabic. One of the wallpapers keeps track of school events communicating announcements and news such as the arrival of guests etc. They have their own libraries and hold regular meetings, mostly on Thursdays, where they function as debating societies. While it is free speech which is practiced here to fulfil

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[23] *ʿĀlamī Majlis Taḥaffuẓ-e Khatm-e Nabuwwat*, 35 Stockwell Green, London, SW9. (http://www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=26201&lang); see their website at http://www.khatme-nubuwwat.org/; also the website of the US branch of the *Irshād-o-Daʿwat*, a pro-Ahl-i Ḥadīṯ organisation, co-sponsoring its international activities: http://www.irshad.org/finality/significance.php.

[24] Such camps were held once every year in 1988, 1990-95, 1997-98. *Dāru'l-ʿulūm Deoband*. *Ibid.* 1982, p. 25.

[25] Arshad Fayzee – my interviews in Deoband, March 2004.

the duties of a prayer leader addressing a congregation, the subjects are not free to chose but reflect strict doctrinal and ideological concerns. In practice they seem to serve as an influential means to retain control of the brains of the students and sharpen the doctrinal profile of the school.

The fact that students unions were banned and not revived since the split, no longer goes unquestioned. While loyalists point to a similar situation in the Jamʿīya Millīya arguing that student unions are on and off in India as a matter of historical tradition, critical minds point out that the rustication of the student of the Shaykh-ul-Hind Academy showed the disadvantages of not having a functioning union. This issue is sure to return to the school very soon.

These influences show the meandering ways of the *dāru'l-ʿulūm* Deoband. It faces the challenges of modernity but tries to tackle them in the spirit of its own largely ideological mission. Yet it is clear that it is far from homogenous and cannot prevent the penetration of mainstream concerns and perspectives of society in its body politics. Measured against its long history the school is under enormous pressures and undergoing change at neck-breaking speed. If this is enough to ensure its smooth adaptation to a new and radically changing world, only the future can tell.