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The Deoband Universe: What Makes a Transcultural and Transnational Educational Movement of Islam?

Dietrich Reetz

When the inspiration of Deobandi thought for purist Islamic groups and radical militants across a number of countries in Asia and Africa became sensational news in the wake of 11 September 2001,¹ it was felt that both the forms and objectives of the Deobandi educational movement as well as its potential and weakness needed to be ascertained and reassessed in a more factual and realistic manner. This article explores how the influence of the Daru'l-'ulum, the Islamic school of higher learning in Deoband, North India, radiates across the countries of South Asia and beyond. It seeks to understand the ingredients of its religious school of thought, how it functions across cultural and political boundaries, and what institutions it has spawned. It looks at various forms of interaction, which extend from foreign students and teachers at Deoband, to Deobandi institutions abroad, and to the eternally expanding network of Deobandi graduates and the manifestation of their local and translocal influence in other Islamic groups and organizations. In this it focuses on the functional aspect. The historical evolution is treated in passing only where it is necessary to understand the functioning of the Deobandi network.

The higher Islamic seminary, the Daru'l-'ulum of Deoband, was founded in 1866 in north India by Muhammad Qasim Nanaotawi (1832–79) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829–1905). Teaching first started at the local mosque, which is still preserved today (fig. 1). The initiative was meant to rectify the perceived lack of religious education among 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 anticolonial 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 such as Husain Ahmad Madani (1879–1957) and 'Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872–1944) represented a highly politicized thinking that wanted to challenge British rule, which they saw as a major

1. See Rick Bragg, "Nurturing Young Islamic Hearts and Hatreds," *New York Times*, 14 October 2001, www.nytimes.com/2001/10/14/international/asia/14SCHO.html?pagewanted=1; John F. Burns, "Afghans Stall but Show Little Willingness to Give Up bin Laden," *New York Times*, 19 September 2001; Celia W. Dugger, "Indian Town's Seed Grew into the Taliban's Code," *New York Times*, 23

February 2002; Judith Miller, "Holy Warriors: Killing for the Glory of God, in a Land Far from Home," *New York Times Magazine*, 16 January 2001, www.nytimes.com/2001/01/16/world/16AFGH.html%20; Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Education of a Holy Warrior," *New York Times Magazine*, 25 June 2000, www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20000625mag-taliban.html.

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Figure 1. Inscription in Chhatta Mosque, where teaching started in 1866

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 World War I together with Mahatma Gandhi in the broad-based but unsuccessful Khilafat movement.

At the same time the school championed religious discourse in the reformist fashion of *islah*, where its founders and generations of students were seeking to spread the true Islam. Its views were characterized by a marked orthodoxy but also by puritanism and asceticism. Its relations with other Islamic schools of thought, what they called *maslak*, were troubled by controversy. Deobandis attacked dissenting views in Islam, particularly the Barelvis, representing the culture of the shrine-based Sufi Islam. Yet most Deobandi divines were themselves active Sufi sheikhs, following the path, or *tariqa*, where they saw it in consonance with the law and word of God, or Sharia. Being staunch followers of the Hanafi school (*mazhab*) they were wrongly labeled Wahhabis, with whom they shared only a certain bent for the radical and puritan interpretation of Islamic tenets. They anxiously marked themselves off from other sects, notably the Shia and especially the Ahmadiyya, which

was 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 Deobandi 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 madrassas across South Asia and beyond.

The Deoband curriculum consists of a normally eight-year course conferring on students the degree of an *'alim*, or scholar of religion and law, roughly comparable to a graduate degree. The degree consists of teaching licenses, *sanads*, for major works, not failing to mention the venerable line of succession in which the respective teacher stands. Students study the Koran, the Prophetic traditions (hadith), and the principles of the Hanafi law school, along with a large number of often arcane commentaries written mainly by traditionalists. Special emphasis is put on the hadith traditionally taught to the final-year students at the prestigious building of the Dar al-Hadith (fig. 2). Beside the *manqulat*, or transmitted sciences, related to divine sources, the curriculum also includes the *ma'qulat*, or rational sciences, comprising subjects such as philosophy, logic, and various branches of mathematics. Modern subjects such as English, geography, or history have long been conspicuous by their absence. The teaching is still based on the *dars-e nizami*, a course program compiled long before the emergence of the Deoband school by Mulla Nizamuddin (d. 1748). Considered ultraconservative, stifling, and outdated today, it was very modern in its time by giving considerable room to rational contemplation and nonreligious subjects such as logic, Greek arithmetic, geometry, and philosophy. This to some extent reflected the need of worldly knowledge for graduates to be employed in the Moghul administration as judges or other functionaries. Yet even then the worldly subjects did not reflect the knowledge of the day but were based on the ancient Greeks, whose knowledge was incorporated into Islamic teaching during the Middle Ages.

The Deoband school exerted its influence through India's independent existence as a learned reference institution of normative and orthodox Islam. It also became the center of an



Figure 2. Dar al-Hadith, where prophetic traditions are being taught

international educational and political movement of purist Islam. Recent developments raised much speculation about the influence of the Deobandi educational movement and its role in the formation of international radical and militant Islamic thought. The reference of the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan to their Deobandi theological moorings contributed to this as much as the active role that the Pakistan-based religious parties wedded to the Deobandi school of thought, the two wings of the Jam'iyyat-e 'Ulama'-e Islam, played in the organization and support of militant religious opposition groups in Afghanistan, the mujahideen.

These references have created some confusion in the public mind as to the character of the Deobandi educational movement, which cannot simply be equated with militant Islam,

although its ideological thrust is marked by strong anti-Western radicalism and theological puritanism. From a theoretical, conceptual point of view questions arise as to what makes an international educational movement of Islam, what ingredients does it require, and how does it translate successfully across national political and cultural boundaries to maintain its consistency and coherence.

Historical Roots of Its Internationalism

The Deoband school was not considered to be a radical or politicized educational institution well up to 1909, when the British governor Sir James Meston (1865–1943) visited it to participate in the grand convocation ceremony in which turbans were conferred on successful graduates. It was held after an interval of twenty-six years.²

2. Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Daru'l-'ulum* (Deoband: Idara-e Ihtimam, 1980), 1:173–74, 197.

But after a period of prolonged study and loyalty the ulema began looking toward the nationalist mainstream. The nascent anticolonial movement led by the Indian National Congress had raised the political temperature in India. Radical leaders emerged and mass demonstrations appeared on the scene. Pan-Islamic ferment started spreading in India with the Tripolitan and Balkan wars in 1911–13, in which Ottoman Turkey lost Macedonia and Tripolitania. Indian Muslims saw Western powers, notably Britain, supporting Turkey's enemies and were galvanized into action by anticolonial sentiment. The issue was used for anti-British agitation, which soon moved to religious issues such as the famous Kanpur Mosque controversy in 1913, leading to mass agitation and indiscriminate firing by police at demonstrators.³

The entry of the Ottomans into World War I on the side of Germany and even more so their defeat by the Allies caused much anxiety and frustration among Indian Muslim activists. They looked at the Ottoman caliphate as the last anchor of Muslim state power and military might while facing in India a Christian colonial power, Britain, and a non-Muslim majority, the Hindus, who, as Muslims perceived it, would be the main beneficiaries of Western-style democratic constitutional reforms that Britain was seeking for India.

While the Deoband school was not alone in hosting pan-Islamic activists, their emergence at the Daru'l-'ulum was a significant and radical break with the past. The three Deobandi clerics Mahmud al-Hasan, Husain Madani, and 'Ubaidullah Sindhi pulled the seminary in the direction of international political activism. It was strongly resisted by other clerics and did not gain the upper hand until the late 1930s.

The most radical pan-Islamic scheme hedged by the three became famous as the "silk letter conspiracy" in 1914–16. It was named after a bunch of letters written on yellow silk and later intercepted by British intelligence. The conspira-

tors hoped to raise an Islamic army (*Hizb Allah*) with the support of the Turkish sultan. They received the backing of the sultan's military governor in the Hejaz, Ghalib Pasha. The army headquarters was to be based at Medina, the Indian contingent at Kabul, and the Deobandi head teacher, Mahmud al-Hasan, was to be its general-in-chief. Other local centers were to be established at Constantinople and Tehran.⁴ The conspirators connected with radical nationalists (Raja Mahendra Pratap, 1886–1979) and Islamic socialists (Maulwi Barkatullah, 1870–1928) who shuttled between the Frontier Province and Kabul.⁵ But another, more problematic destination of their travels was Wilhelminian Berlin, where they hoped to receive support for the overthrow of British rule over India. With this intention they also contacted a German-Turkish military mission, which had arrived in Afghanistan in 1915.⁶ Some of the radicals had established a "provisional government" of India, which was led by Pratap and hoped to rule over India in the event of a successful battle.

The Deobandi clerics also maintained their pan-Islamic outlook from the rostrum of the Association of Religious Scholars (Jam'iyat-e 'Ulama'-ye Hind; JUH), cofounded by them in 1919 and virtually appropriated by the Deoband school later. Islamic campaigns directed against British rule as part of the ongoing nationalist movement always reflected concerns about the position of Indian Muslims in the wider Islamic world. The caliphate movement in 1919–25 sought to defend the Ottoman caliphate against allied plans to dismember its empire and to abolish its spiritual and temporal powers. The Indian Muslim activists looked at the developments mainly through the prism of their aspirations, often refusing to accept the ground reality in Ottoman Turkey. As they pinned their hopes for the resurrection of the caliphate on Mustafa Kemal, they were severely disappointed by the radical secular bent in his politics. In 1925 Maulana Naqshbandi demanded to draw the right

3. Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

4. Government of India, Department of Political and Security Affairs, *Afghanistan: The Silk Letter Case, 1916–1918* (1918), British Library Oriental Collections (BLOC), file L/P&S/10/633.

5. Rizvi, *History of the Daru'l-'ulum*, 2:138 nn. 1, 3; Mahendra Pratap Raja, *My Life Story of Fifty-Five Years* (Dehradun: World Federation, 1947); Mushirul Hasan, ed., *Knowledge, Power, and Politics: Educational Institutions in India* (Delhi: Lotus, 1998), 194–95.

6. Werner Otto von Hentig, *Von Kabul nach Shanghai (From Kabul to Shanghai)* (Constance: Libelle-Verlag, 2003).

Table 1. Historical Deobandi Institutions Facilitating Networking

Institution	Year of Foundation
Daru'l-'ulum Deoband	1866
Legal Department— <i>dar al-ifta'</i>	1892
Department of Preaching— <i>sh'oba-e tabligh</i>	1907, 1934

Source: Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Daru'l-'ulum* (Deoband: Idara-e Ihtimam, 1980), 1:118, 156, 175; 2:243.

lessons from the downfall of the caliphate. He saw the main reason in the doubting attitude of Western-educated Muslim intellectuals. To counter this development, he proposed the introduction of an Islamic system in India and throughout the Muslim world (*nizam-i Islam*) that would properly educate Muslims in a religious spirit. But there was no agreement on such a system. Because the JUH saw itself in the avant garde of the Muslim world, it sought to bring about such a system through mutual consultations among Muslim leaders of various countries. For this purpose, it was first necessary to select the correct religious principles and to order them by priority and sequence for maximum implementation. These principles were to be based not only on opinions of religious scholars but also on public interest (*usul istislah*), taking into account modern requirements of the day.⁷ From these they developed a system of Islamic self-government for India's Muslims, who were regarded as an autonomous yet integral part of the Muslim world. An Islamic authority was envisaged headed by an amir for all Indian Muslims who would pledge allegiance to a new caliph as soon as one was installed.⁸

The Deobandis had also taken an early interest in the transnational networking of Islamic institutions. Through the JUH, Deobandi clerics actively participated in the Islamic World Congresses of the 1920s and 1930s.⁹

At the time the Deoband school was already recognized as a reference institution of reformist Islam in the regions bordering India.

Deobandi clerics assisted the rulers of Afghanistan and of the orthodox Muslim principality of Qalat in devising a model curriculum for religious education.¹⁰

Historical Channels of Its Influence

The foundation of the school and its various departments provided the institutional bedrock for its future networking (table 1). The graduates of the school were the main channel of its translocal and transnational influence. Many opened new schools in the tradition of Deobandi thought wherever they went. Their travels were assisted by flows of migration from India to other countries, mainly parts of the British Empire and pockets of British influence. Muslims formed a visible part, for instance, of Gujarati Indians in South and East Africa. The East and South African branches proved already strong enough to be capable of donating a considerable sum of money to the head seminary at Deoband in 1910 (AH 1328). The occasion was the same convocation ceremony of 1909 mentioned above.¹¹

Legal rulings, or fatwas, were another important channel linking the various branches of the school inside and outside India. It was particularly the rulings by Gangohi, which were treated as legal reference by followers of this school of thought. His collection of legal decisions, the *Fatawa-i Rashidiya*, has been till this day a standard reference material for various Deobandi groups across the Islamic world.¹² More recently the Deoband school started publishing

7. Parvin Rozinah, *Jam'iyyatu'l-'ulama'-i Hind: Dastawezat-i markazi ijlas ha-yi 'am 1919–1945* [in Urdu] (*Association of Religious Scholars: Session Documents of the Central Organization for the Years 1919–45*), 2 vols. (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1981), 1:271.

8. *Ibid.*, 6:309; discussed in detail in Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India (1900–1947)* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

9. Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Islamischen Weltliga (Islamic Internationalism in the Twentieth Century: Studies of the History of the Muslim World League)* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 82.

10. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, 283–84.

11. Rizvi, *History of the Daru'l-'ulum*, 1:197; also 1:173–74.

12. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, *Fatawa Rashidiyya* [in Urdu] (*Legal Decisions [fatwas] by Rashid [Ahmad Gangohi]*) (Deoband: Muhammad Ishaq and Sons, [1906]); see various issues of the publications *Al-Mahmood* (no. 2 [December 1999]; no. 8 [March 2000]) and *Al-Jamiat* (May 1998) of the Jamiyyatu'l-'ulama' (Kwazulu-Natal), Durban, South Africa, available on their Web sites: www.jamiat.org.za and www.msapubli.com.

its own legal decisions in a series of books meant to become a new standard of sorts.¹³ Also the teachings and writings of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1863–1943) proved influential in determining the outlook of the school's thought. While he was valued for his reformist writings, he personified another important bond, the Sufi oath of allegiance, *bay'a*. As a reformist Sufi sheikh, he was at the center of a vast network of disciples that spanned much of Muslim India and reached beyond.

Similarly, preaching was and is an important bond for Deoband graduates and scholars alike. The propagation of the right and correct Islam is a major task of its education program, a major objective of following the Deobandi *maslak*. The task of Da'wa and Tabligh, under which preaching is known, was directed as much at non-Muslims to spread the faith as at Muslims to correct their behavior in the tradition of religious reformation, or *islah*. This led the Deobandis to take issue with what they considered as deviant concepts and practices of Muslims who had supposedly degenerated in their faith.

The numbers symbolizing these traditional channels of influence are impressive. The Daru'l-'ulum is one of the largest religious schools in Asia, with 3,556 students enrolled in 2002–3 (AH 1423–24) and 774 graduates for the same year.¹⁴ According to its own data, the school during its existence prepared 25,457 graduates, out of which about 20 percent originated from countries other than India (see table 2). Islamic schools following the Deobandi thought are estimated to number several thousand in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh each. If only the madrassas are considered that are teaching the full '*alim* course, the estimate might be lower—around two thousand in each country. The term *madrassa* is often used very broadly, including also many small schools teaching basic knowledge of the Koran and Islam to children.

Also, the fatwa writing assumed enormous proportions: between 1911 and 1976 (AH 1329–96) the Deoband school issued 439,336 decrees serving as guidelines for correct religious practice not only for adherents of the Deoband tradition but also for many orthodox and conservative Muslims of other orientations.¹⁵

Organized preaching activity on behalf of the seminary started as early as 1907 but was at its height during the 1920s and 1930s. It was a contest over the allegiance of so-called neo-Muslims among the Malkana Rajputs in Agra and neighboring districts who had converted to Islam either in the present generation or in previous ones. Many of them retained non-Muslim local customs, largely of Hindu origin, in matters of dress, food, or shrine worship. The school then joined other Islamic groups to oppose the reclamation efforts of the Hindu reformist sect Arya Samaj. It opened a field office in the Agra area and in 1934 started a separate department of preaching, which employed a limited number of preachers. Today there are three full-time employees working in the preaching department of the Deoband school.¹⁶ They visit different parts of India, largely on invitation, to address public religious meetings of local Muslims and explain the fundamentals of the Deobandi school of thought. Preaching has been infused with new life by more recent additions to the list of departments at the school, but also by the activities of the missionary movement of the Tablighi Jama'at. The latter was started in 1926 by a Deobandi scholar, Muhammad Ilyas (1885–1944), and is still considered to be a main propagator of Deobandi reformist thought.¹⁷ The Tablighi Jama'at also took strong inspiration from the Deobandi scholar and sheikh Ashraf Ali Thanawi. In the beginning it used his writings, later to be replaced by the books of Muhammad Zakariyya (1898–1982). Over time the Tablighi Jama'at selected mainly Deobandi madrassas to become its centers (*marakaz*) from

13. See *Fatawa-e Daru'l-'ulum (Legal Decisions by the [Deoband] Islamic School)*, vols. 1–12; also see the Web site of the Deoband school at darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/publications/publications1.htm (accessed 20 March 2006).

14. Daru'l-'ulum Deoband, *Riport-e Intizamiyya babit 1423 AH (Administrative Report for 1423 AH)* (April 2003) (cyclostyled), 15; Daru'l-'ulum Deoband, *Daftar-e Ta'llimat* (Education Department); data provided during my field research, February–March 2004.

15. Rizvi, *History of the Daru'l-'ulum*, 2:242.

16. *Riport-e Intizamiyya babit 1423 AH*, 20.

17. Khalid Masud, ed., *Travellers in Faith: Studies of Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Dietrich Reetz, "Keeping Busy on the Path of Allah: The Self-Organisation (Intizam) of the Tablighi Jama'at," *Oriente Moderno* 84 (2004): 295–305.

Table 2. Graduates of the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband by Country of Origin, AH 1283–1414 (1866–1994)

Country of Origin	Number of Students	Country of Origin	Number of Students
India	20,379	Thailand	8
Bangladesh	2,154	Lebanon	6
Pakistan	1,524	Sudan	6
Malaysia	518	West Indies	4
Africa	237	Iraq	2
Nepal	119	Kuwait	2
Afghanistan	118	New Zealand	2
Burma	160	Saudi Arabia	2
Russia (Soviet Union)	70	Cambodia	1
China	44	Egypt	1
Britain	21	France	1
Turkistan (Central Asia)	20	Indonesia	1
Sri Lanka	19	Maldives	1
United States	16	Muscat	1
Iran	11	Yemen	1
Fiji	8		
Graduates from outside the country	5,078		
Graduates from inside the country	20,379		
Graduates total	25,457		

Source: *Daru'l-'ulum*, no. 11 (2001): 43.

where the Tablighis organized their preaching activity. Today the Tablighi Jama'at has a strong presence in the town of Deoband, and also in the environs of the school, but it is somewhat less visible on the campus, where the school pursues its own preaching activities.

One should remember that all three institutions—the hostel-based education at the Daru'l-'ulum, the institutionalized fatwa writing, and the departmental coordination of preaching—were considered radical innovations in their time, placing the seminary on the edge of modernity not only in respect to religious instruction and indoctrination but also in terms of forming an educational movement.

The Deoband school remained prominent throughout the anticolonial movement in India by virtue of its increasingly close association with the Association of Religious Scholars (JUH). The latter sided with the Indian National Congress in the growing conflict with India's Muslim minority elite over the future rights for Indian Muslims. The JUH favored a nonterritorial solu-

tion based on religious rights and opposed the creation of a separate state of Pakistan. It evolved into a regular political party shortly before independence, when it participated in elections, without much success though. Because it could not help solve the political conflict between the congress and the Muslim League, it was sidelined at the hour of partition.¹⁸ A section of its scholars split off in the name of the Jam'iyyat-e 'Ulama'-e Islam (JUI; Association of Religious Scholars of Islam) in 1945. It was led by Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani (1885–1949), who supported the creation of Pakistan and laying the foundation of organized Deobandi activity there. In India the JUH focused on social and religious activity, supplementing the Deobandi school network. It joined other Muslim groups in giving up any formal political pretensions. Together with the Deoband school it resumed political intervention more strongly in the late 1970s, when India's political landscape was jolted by the first loss of power for Congress, the major political ally of Deobandi scholars until then.

18. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, chap. 4.

New Institutions and Their International Reach

The Deoband school did not escape unhurt from this process of reorientation. In 1982 it split over a dispute between two families for control of its affairs. The defeated faction comprised relatives of the longtime rector Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyib (1897–1983), who descended from one of the founders, Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi. They moved out of the school and set up a rival institution by the name of Daru'l-'ulum Waqf on new premises. It is headed by Tayyib's son, Maulana Muhammad Salim Qasmi. Until now it has had fifteen hundred students of its own.¹⁹ The separation also caused havoc in the old seminary, which came under the control of the descendants of Husain Ahmad Madani. Yet the old seminary also recovered from this shock and has grown considerably since then. New departments were introduced that also enhanced the capacity of the school for international networking (see table 3).

The Shaykh-ul-Hind academy and the Khatm-e Nabuwwat department signified a period of heightened ideological emphasis in the early 1980s. The former looked into the application of religious knowledge to new issues and provided the leadership of the school with academic-type backup research. It also offered opportunities for postgraduate specialization, or *takhas-sus*. The latter brought into being an all-India organization centered in this school. The issue of the defense of the “Finality of Prophethood” (*Khatm-e Nabuwwat*) was raised against the Ahmadiyya sect. Its leader was accused of claiming for himself a prophetic status, which was seen as irreconcilable with the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, being considered the last and final Prophet of God's message. The issue was used not only to confront Ahmadis but also to rally

Sunni clerics behind radical reformist school teaching. It fed into an international movement that preached hatred against dissenters in Islam. In some countries its followers started persecuting Ahmadis, who became victims of intimidation and violence. Particularly the Pakistan chapter of this movement became associated with sectarianism and tension. The general secretariat of the world organization of the Khatm-e Nabuwwat movement was located in Pakistan and led by prominent Deobandi clerics.²⁰ It closely interacted with some Deobandi schools, notably in Binuri town, Karachi, and Chiniot, Punjab.²¹ Some of its leading stalwarts themselves became victims of the spiraling sectarian violence in Pakistan pitching Sunni against Shia militants.²²

As far as can be understood from the records and news items published, the Khatm-e Nabuwwat movement in India and in the Deoband school kept its distance from militancy. It basically organized activities to give training to scholars in preaching the “correct” (Deobandi) Islam. The head of the department at Deoband maintained when interviewed that they only engaged Ahmadis in peaceful debates, as the latter also relished such encounters. Such accounts tally with the well-known Ahmadi penchant for conducting controversial debates themselves as they heavily engage in missionary activities to spread their own sect. Yet it cannot be denied that the Khatm-e Nabuwwat activities directly contributed to heightened religious and social tension not only in Pakistan, and to a lesser extent in India, but around the world wherever Muslims live. The Khatm-e Nabuwwat activists came to the notice of the German security agencies when Ahmadi asylum seekers in a hostel were attacked and wounded.²³

19. Author interviews with Daru'l-'ulum Waqf representatives at their school in Deoband, February–March 2004.

20. 'Alami Majlis-i Tahaffuz-i Khatm-i Nabuwwat (AMTKN) (World Organization for the Defense of the Finality of Prophethood); their former Web site, www.khatme-nabuwwat.org, is currently not working; their U.K. address is 35 Stockwell Green, London, SW9 (www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=26201&lang). See also the Web site of the U.S. branch of the Irshad-o-Da'wat, a pro-Ahl-i Hadith organization, cosponsoring its international activities: www.irshad.org/finality/significance.php/ (accessed 7 January 2007).

21. Maulana Manzur Ahmad Chinioti (1931–2004) hailed from Chiniot and was the longtime general secretary of the international Majlis Khatm-e Nabuwwat, *Daily Times*, 28 June 2004, www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_28-6-2004_pg7_7 (accessed 7 January 2007).

22. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianwi, teaching hadith at the Binuri town madrasa and heading the AMTKN in Pakistan, was shot dead on 18 May 2000; “Maulana Yousuf Ludhianvi Shot Dead,” Dawn Wire Service (DWS) [by e-mail], no. 06/19, 20 May 2000, www.dawn.com (accessed 20 May 2000). Maulana Mufti Nizamuddin Shamza'i, rector of the Binuri town madrasa, was gunned down on 30 May 2004; Arman Sabir, “Religious Scholar Shamzai Shot Dead,”

DWS, no. 08/23, 5 June 2004, *ibid.* (accessed 15 August 2004). Shamza'i was not a regular TKN functionary, but he closely cooperated with the body; see their joint statement on the need to wage jihad against the United States after the invasion of Iraq, in “Karachi: Ulema Call for Jihad against US,” *Dawn*, 25 March 2003, www.dawn.com/2003/03/25/local21.htm. An earlier rector of the Binuri town madrasa, Habibullah Mukhtar, was killed in a similar attack on 2 November 1997; Mohammed Riaz, “Two Religious Scholars Killed in Bomb Attack,” DWS, no. 03/45, 8 November 1997.

23. See Frank Nordhausen and Ahmet Senyurt, “Militante Pakistani sind in Deutschland aktiv” (“Militant Pakistanis Operate in Germany”), *Berliner Zeitung*, 18 May 1998.

Table 3. New Deoband School Departments and Institutions Started after 1982

Institution	Date
Department of English language and literature	7 February 2002 ^a
Computer department	30 August 1996 ^b
Rabita Madaris 'Arabiya (RMA; Association of Arabic Schools)	25–26 October 1994 ^c
Tanzim-e Abna'-e Qadim (TAQ; Old Boys' Association)	1991 ^d
Tahaffuz-e Khatm-e Nabuwat (TKN; Defense of the Finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad)	31 October 1986 ^e
Shaykh-ul-Hind academy	AH 1403 (1982–83) ^f

^a *Riport-e Intizamīyya babil 1423 AH (Administrative Report for 1423 AH [2003])*, Darul-'ulum Deoband (cyclostyled), 2004, 31–32.

^b darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=computer.gif (accessed 7 January 2007).

^c darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=rabita.gif (accessed 7 January 2007).

^d *Dastur-e Asasi-Tanzin-e Abna'-e Qadim Darul-'ulum Deoband (Founding Constitution—Old Boys' Association Islamic University Deoband)* (Delhi: TAQ, 1991).

^e darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=k-nubowat.gif (accessed 7 January 2007).

^f darululoom-deoband.com/urdu/departments/show.php?dept=academy.gif (accessed 7 January 2007).

Even more, the activities of Tahafuz-e Khatm-e Nabuwat (TKN) in Pakistan directly feed into militant sectarianism and into the mujahideen culture that was related to militancy in Afghanistan and Kashmir and to the Pakistani branches of the al-Qaida network. Maulana Shamza'i was a well-known associate of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, conducting negotiations with them on behalf of the Pakistan government after 9/11 in the hope of averting the war that was to topple the Taliban. He publicly broke ranks with bin Laden and took issue with his statement that denied responsibility for the attacks but said he admired those who carried them out. "It's wrong to kill innocent people," Mufti Shamza'i said, "It's also wrong to praise those who kill innocent people."²⁴ He presided over meetings of the Pak-Afghan Defence Council comprising most mujahideen groups fighting in Afghanistan and Kashmir and oversaw efforts to unite and streamline them.²⁵

The organizations founded in the early 1990s—the Association of Arabic schools (Rabita Madaris 'Arabiya; RMA) and the Old Boys' Association (Tanzim-e Abna'-e Qadim; TAQ)—gave new impetus to the administrative and organizational strengthening of the Deobandi move-

ment. Feeling the pressure from various forces in India attacking the role of religious seminaries, it was decided at a joint conference of affiliated seminaries in 1994 to create a separate organization of Deoband schools, the headquarters of which were located at the Deoband school. This body gave the affiliation of Deobandi madrasahs a formal shape and the recognition that had been lacking so far. The debates over the curriculum of Islamic schools were its main topic. In 2004 the Deoband school through its rector, Maulana Marghub-ur-Rahman, for the first time decided to make this list of affiliated madrasahs available for research.²⁶ The international reach of the RMA is very limited so far. Only some Nepali schools and very few from Bangladesh have gone for formal affiliation. But this may not necessarily remain so.

The Old Boys' Association finally started functioning in 1991 after many earlier attempts failed to get it running. Its famous but short-lived predecessor was organized by 'Ubaidullah Sindhi in 1909—the Jam'iyyat al-Ansar. That scheme had a highly political dimension in hoping to set up branches all over India to serve as a springboard for the introduction of an Islamic system of governance.²⁷ The current

24. John F. Burns, "New Push to Get bin Laden to Agree to Quit Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 28 September 2001, www.nyt.com/2001/09/28/international/asia/28STAN.html.

25. *Darb-i Mumin*, no. 20 (September 2001) (Taliban newspaper published on the Internet from Karachi, Pakistan), www.dharb-i-mumin.com/English/English+main.htm (accessed 26 September 2001; this site is no longer active).

26. Author interview with Maulana Marghub at Deoband school, 4 March 2004.

27. Rizvi, *History of the Darul-'ulum*, 1:172, 176.

organization TAQ looks more like a modern networking endeavor. Interviews with some of its functionaries revealed the desire of young graduate ulema to improve the teaching at their alma mater, to give answers to the new times, to open up to other knowledge, and to remove inner-Islamic differences. Also the desire to prepare themselves better for the fast-changing job market partly guides their efforts of debate and networking. Its socioeconomic aspect becomes clear from their starting two training institutes for young ulema to improve their spoken Arabic and to learn English. The TAQ has issued since 1991 its monthly journal *Tarjuman-e Darul-'ulum*, which, while remarkably open to new points of view, is very much within the limits of Deobandi thought. It has an international impact in that it is being sent to graduates the world over, as now every graduate automatically becomes its member. But financial problems with subscriptions and postage obviously limit its international distribution.²⁸

After much hesitation and controversial internal debate the Deoband school finally opened departments providing teaching in computer applications and in English, signaling a new opening around the turn of the century. At present this scheme extends only to a small number of graduate students in the course of their specialization (*takhassus*). One key argument that won over the conservative clerics in the school to support the change was the prospect of enhancing the international reach of the school and its thought. It is now possible for the school itself to provide more information about itself via the Internet to Muslims scattered in India and also to those who do not speak Urdu or Arabic. Computer and English-language teaching were accepted only on the condition that they would contribute to the schools Da'wa activities, its missionary efforts. Yet interviews during research for the project confirmed that these departments have the potential to open up the minds of those involved and make it easier to connect with the world at large, both in the interest of

the school and for personal or career purposes. The Internet site maintained by the school has grown substantially since it was first started, providing more and detailed information about the school itself, significantly increasing the transparency and publicness of its working.²⁹

Graduates: The Role and Share of Foreigners

Foreign students have been present in Deoband throughout the history of the school. Yet so far detailed data were not available in the West on the strength and geographic reach of the Deoband graduate community. The data used here are not fully consistent, but they still allow for making some trend analysis. According to the school's own data (table 2), 5,078 students from outside India graduated from the school between 1866 (AH 1283) and 1994 (AH 1414). They largely hailed from the wider South Asian region surrounding India, with 2,154 coming from Bangladesh and 1,524 from Pakistan. The graduates from Nepal (119), Afghanistan (118), Burma (160), and, to a lesser extent, Sri Lanka (19) have to be considered here as well. Pakistani graduates are obviously fewer in number than expected because of the large number of recognized Deobandi institutions there, which in size and number of students surpass those in India. Students from other countries are now largely barred because of the restrictions on educational visas introduced by various Indian governments for Islamic schools since the 1990s.

Outside South Asia the largest contingents came from Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia (518), and Africa (237), particularly from South Africa. Graduates from the latter have been very much connected with the Indian migrant community and the network of Indian madrassas in South Africa. In contrast, the Malaysian graduates stand out as Muslims of non-South Asian origin seeking religious knowledge in Deoband. They share this trait with Muslims from Thailand (8), Russia (70), Central Asia (20), and Iran (8). They reflect culturally independent local trends

28. Interviews with some Deoband graduates in Malaysia, Indonesia, and South Africa in 2005 suggested that most of them did not receive the graduates' magazine.

29. See Deoband school's official Web site, www.darululoom-deoband.com.

of Islamic reformism beyond Indian community networking, looking to the Deoband school for religious inspiration and guidance because of its high theological reputation. Another factor that attracted students from outside South Asia was the affordability of studying Islam at Deobandi schools in India and Pakistan in comparison with studies in the Middle East or in the West. Interviews with graduates in Malaysia and Indonesia revealed that they often used to come from more humble social origins and had earlier attended nonstate Islamic schools such as the traditional *pondoks*. Because higher school access is limited with such educational background, the Deobandi schools in India and Pakistan provide a viable career option. This is even more attractive because it allows students to go on to the Islamic universities of Egypt (al-Azhar) and Saudi Arabia (Medina), where several of them go for the final year to take the graduation certificate from there.³⁰

Figures on the composition of the foreign student body at the Deoband school by year for 1970–2003 and of foreign graduates by year for 1911–79, obtained for the first time for research, suggest some additional structural aspects for qualitative assessment.³¹ While the South Asian influence of the Deoband school appears to be the most important in terms of regional graduate groups, there have been significant variations by year. Student numbers for Nepal and Bangladesh, but also for Afghanistan, have peaked in the 1990s and 2000s. Rising and declining Afghan student numbers reflected the interest in the Deoband school stimulated by the ascent and descent of the Taliban there. Nepal and Bangladesh students have been coming with renewed vigor for the past couple of years. Their current presence reflects easy conditions of travel and immigration, both legal and illegal, in India for citizens of those countries. The annual presence of Bangladeshi students surpassed 100 between 1990 and 1995 but has since fallen off again.

In contrast, the Nepali presence has been rising rather continuously since 1982 (14), reaching 20 in 1988, 27 in 1994, and surpassing 40 between 2000 and 2003. Burmese students started graduating from 1927 with a slight increase from 1948 (6) and a high of 16 in 1959. After a break in 1965 they are counted again since 1991, though in small numbers only (1–2). The Russian and Afghan presence was nominal but steady (1–7) right from the early years of 1911 (–1948) and 1920 (–1954), respectively. After a break Afghan students reemerged in 1984 with an all-time high of 11 in 1991–92, disappearing again after 1997. One likely reason in their case may again have been the easy availability of Deobandi madrassas in neighboring Pakistan. Muslim students from China maintained a small presence of 1–5 from 1922 till 1955. Individual students from Iran graduated between 1931 and 1951.

The presence of a large group of Malaysians at the school in the range of 37 students was mainly a phenomenon of the 1970s. They started graduating from the Deoband school in larger numbers (14) after 1968 (AH 1388) only. The number of African graduates has slowly but steadily increased since 1953. The South African presence fluctuated around 10 during the 1970s—with a peak of 25 in 1977–78—and fell off after 1981. Students from Fiji, the West Indies, and South America represent new interesting additions to the international student community at Deoband. They most likely reflect the ever-growing reach of the global Muslim Indian migrant network. There is also a nominal presence from Arab countries, although in single digits only (Lebanon, Muscat, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan). Western countries in recent years are generally more represented than before although data are not available as to the identity of these students and their connection to Indian descent or other Muslim communities, with numbers ranging between 1 and 4 at a time (England, Australia, New Zealand, America, and France).

30. Author interviews with Deobandi graduates in Malaysia and Indonesia, September–October 2005.

31. See the charts provided by the school's office: *Naqsha ta'dad-e talaba daru'l-'ulum Deoband sal 1390–91 ... 1423–24 ah* (Table of Number of Students at Islamic University of Deoband for the Year AH 1390–91 ... AH 1423–24) (Deoband: Daru'l-'ulum, Daftar-e Ta'limat 1970–2002, AH 1390–1423); *Fazila-e dar al-'ulum berun*

hind az 1328 AH ta 1399 AH (Foreign Graduates at Islamic University Deoband, 1910–1979 / AH 1328–1399) (Deoband: Daftar-e Ijlas Sadsala Daru'l-'ulum Deoband [Centenary Celebration Office], 1980).



Figure 3. Office of the student organization (*anjuman*) for Arabic language and literature al-Nadi al-Adabi; bookshelves of various *anjumans* to the left and right

Foreign Students at Deoband: Forming an Internationalist Outlook

The foreign students at Deoband seem to be very much integrated with the local students. This is as true for the perception of the students themselves as for the perspective of the administration of the school. Except for passport formalities and related applications there is no separate arrangement for their study, such as an office of foreign students. Throughout the statistics they are treated as students from just another state or district. The student study associations (*anjumans*) also show this pattern. Students from Bangladesh did not form a separate association but joined either the West Bengal or Bihar groups. Native Arabic-speaking students would mostly join the student association devoted to the study of Arabic language and literature, al-Nadi al-Adabi (fig. 3). The Nepalese did form a separate group, but the basis was also their separate language. Because one of the functions of the student associations is to prepare wall papers on theological and religio-political issues, they bring out their own wall paper in Nepalese. For these wall papers, students write articles on topical issues, which are compiled on large poster-size paper sheets and hung on the walls of the school's buildings. In this way

the Nepalese are to be compared more with the Tamil-speaking students forming a separate association. They also bring out their own wall paper in Tamil. Also in other matters, the Deobandi institutions in Nepal and Bangladesh are sometimes treated as part of the Indian setup. Deobandi madrassas in Nepal and Bangladesh are the only non-Indian ones that show up in the list of 1,152 formally affiliated madrassas as per 1 March 2004.³² It was also related to me that the Nepalese activities of the Khatm-e Nabuwat movement were financed and organized by the headquarters of this group at the Deoband school, whereas the same activities in Pakistan and Bangladesh were independent.³³

The religious outlook of the foreign students at Deoband is formed in full consonance with the general school teaching. They participate at par in all activities—curricular as well as extracurricular. The ideological profile of students is particularly shaped through the student associations mentioned above. Their monthly wall paper articles discuss not only theological issues but also political questions. One of the wall papers, *al-ziya* (fig. 4), for instance, displayed articles such as “You Also Stand for Elections!” (upper left), calling on the ulema to give up their reservations about participating in elections and

32. I received the RMA office list in March 2004.

33. Author interviews at Deoband, February–March 2004.

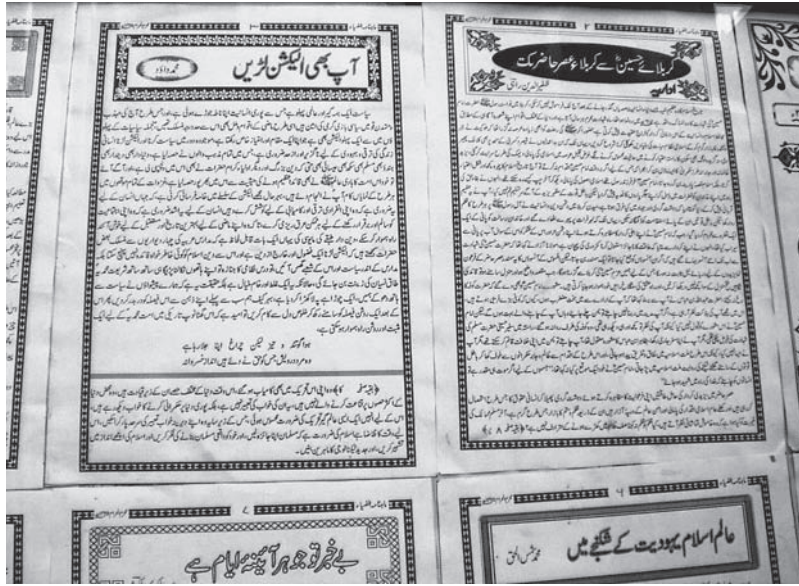


Figure 4. Monthly wallpaper of student anjuman “al-ziya”

Dietrich Reetz
The Deoband University

not leave the field open to the (secular) candidates from the professional classes. Other articles in this wall paper were “The Islamic World in the Grip of Jews” (lower right) and “From the Karbala of Husain to Today’s Karbala,” which attacked American policy on Iraq. The associations also provide training to students through their weekly debating meetings. Students take turns in delivering a short talk of five to ten minutes so that they learn how to speak freely in front of an audience—a skill required for addressing congregations and leading prayers. The topics are devoted to theological and political-religious issues. The talks, as I witnessed them, can become rather passionate and fiery and serve as an effective instrument of indoctrination of the young students with the school’s principles and beliefs both in religion and politics, not only recounting and relating religious sources and positions but also attacking perceived enemies both inside and outside Islam.

Other foreign students not accounted for in the statistics come on a short-term basis or as visitors. Their number can vary substantially. The temporary presence of large groups from the Gulf countries and from Malaysia in this

way was related to me. They are usually well-off, renting separate houses in the city and keeping servants. Others stay at the relatively modern guesthouse of the school, for which as a matter of point charges are not made. Many of them regard visiting the Deoband school as auspicious and an act of worship in itself, like a pilgrimage, *ziyarat*. This was conveyed to me by Malaysian madrasa students from the Madrasa’ Arabiyya at the Ra’ewind center of the Tablighi Jama’at in Pakistan. Another typical case was the student from Tashkent (Uzbekistan) I met who had come for six months without formal enrollment because of visa problems. He attended specific courses and wanted to brush up his Arabic.³⁴

International Events Radiating the Deoband Influence

The Deoband school symbolically celebrated its centenary in 1980, although it had been in existence for 114 years by then. On this occasion it collected data regarding the composition of its graduates, who were all to be invited to this event. The centenary was celebrated in grand style. All in all eight thousand delegates from India and abroad were reported to have participated.³⁵ Be-

34. Ibid.

35. Mukhtasir Rudad—Iljas Sadsala Daru’l-‘ulum Deoband mun’aqida 21, 22, 23 March 1980 (Brief Account of the Centenary Celebration Meeting of the Islamic University Deoband Convened 21–23 March 1980) (Deoband: Daftar-e Iljas Sadsala Daru’l-‘ulum Deoband, 1980), 17.

side Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, governmental and academic delegations from all over the Islamic world addressed the congregation. The well-known Deobandi *'alim* and politician Mufti Mahmud, chief of the right-wing Pakistan National Alliance, was present, along with Maulana Abdul Haqq, from the Akora Khattak madrasa in the Frontier Province of Pakistan, which later was to play a key role in connection with the war in Afghanistan (12–13).

The six delegations from Saudi Arabia representing the government and various academic institutions played a highly visible role. It was also an occasion for one of the few grand convocation ceremonies where turbans were bound on past graduates. The 1980 convocation was as much as the one in 1909 a welcome occasion to strengthen and mobilize the Deoband graduate network. But the difficulties in collecting the data and tracing the graduates suggested that no systematic efforts had earlier been undertaken to work with them on behalf of the school.

However, the usefulness of the international congregation for projecting the strength of the Deobandi school of thought was clearly understood. That the school was conscious of its role became obvious from the address made by the rector of the institution, Maulana Tayyib. With reference to the presence of numerous delegates from all over the world he emphasized that “the service offered by the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband was not limited to any particular area. This institution fulfilled its duty by providing religious leadership on every occasion and at every juncture and provided leadership and service to the community according to its means and resources. It fulfilled its duty of spreading the true Deobandi thought [*maslak-e haqq*] and pure religion [*din-e khalis*]” (23).

The meeting was also seen as an occasion to increase Islamic unity and solidarity as del-

egations from various countries represented not only Deobandi institutions but various Islamic organizations and educational institutions such as the universities of Riyadh and Medina and the World Muslim Congress (Rabita al-'Alam al-Islami) located in Saudi Arabia (23). Representatives of other Islamic groups in India also participated, including the Nadwa seminary in Lucknow, the Tablighi Jama'at, the Ahl-i Hadith, and the Jama'at-i Islami, but also Sufi scholars such as Hasan Thani Nizami (23). The minutes of the celebrations quoted various speakers as having stressed the hope that this meeting would contribute to greater inner-Islamic unity.

The next international congregation of the Deobandi school of thought took place at the town of Taru Jabba near Peshawar in Pakistan on 9–11 April 2001.³⁶ It was organized by the religio-political party JUI, led by Maulana Fazlur-Rahman. The declared objective of the meeting was to review the achievements of the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband during the past 150 years—again marked more symbolically in conjunction with its 135th anniversary. By convening this congregation, Fazlur-Rahman also implemented the wish of his father, Mufti Mahmud, who at the 1980 congregation in Deoband had expressed the wish that such a gathering may also be held in Pakistan and Bangladesh, reflecting the spread of the Deoband school of thought that was originally set to work for a united India.³⁷ The huge congregation held in the open field attracted tens of thousands of followers. International participants attended from India and Afghanistan—each represented by a thirty-member delegation, from Iran—led by the advisor to the president, Maulana Mohammad Ishaq, and delegations from the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Libya, and Saudi Arabia.³⁸ Delegates such as Maulana Kathrada from South Africa represented the expanding international network of Deobandi schools.³⁹

36. See “Radical Islamists Rally in Pakistan,” *BBC News*, 9 April 2001, news.bbc.co.uk/ (accessed 10 April 2001); “Deoband Moot Flays West,” *Nation*, 10 April 2001, www.nation.com.pk (accessed 10 April 2001); Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Muslims Suffering Due to West’s Conspiracies,” *News* (Karachi), 10 April 2001, www.jang.com.pk/thenews/ (accessed 10 April 2001); these Web pages are no longer active.

37. Maulvi Muhammad Qasim, “World Ulama to Deliberate upon Making Muslim Conditions Better,” *Darb-i*

Mumin, 2:44 (4–10 Muharram AH 1421/3–5 April 2001), www.dharb-imumin.com/English/English+main.htm (accessed 15 June 2001; site is no longer active).

38. Among the attending religious scholars, the press particularly mentioned Maulana Mohammad Ishaq Madni, advisor to the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Hafiz Mohammad Akram and Maulana Asad Mian from Great Britain; JUI general secretary Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri; JUI provincial Amir Maulvi Amanullah; Jamiatul Ulema Pakistan’s

Maulvi Syed Ameer Shah Geelani; former member of National Assembly Maulana Hassan Jan; Maulana Mohammad Amir Bijlighar; Maulana Lutafur Rehman; Maulana Abdul Majeed Nadeem; and others. *Nation*, 10 April 2001, www.nation.com.pk (accessed 11 April 2001); Web page no longer active.

39. Maulana Ahmad Kathrada, “An Eye-Witness Account of the 150 Year Deoband Conference,” *Al-Jamiat* (Johannesburg), 4 (2001), www.jamiat.org.za/al-jamiat/june/sreport.html (accessed 15 March 2006).

The Indian delegation was led by the rector of the Deoband school, Maulana Marghub-ur-Rahman; his deputy, Qari Muhammad Uthman; and the president of the JUH, Maulana Asad Madani. The underlying motive of the meeting was no doubt a political show of strength of the religious seminaries and of the JUI in particular. It was meant to give moral and political support to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and to the principle of Islamic government. The Afghan delegation comprised ministers and high-ranking Taliban officials. The meeting deliberately demonstrated defiance toward the West, notably because of its politics of sanctions against the Taliban, and Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on the Western world to revise its negative and unrealistic policies toward the Muslim *umma*. Otherwise, he warned, the Muslims had every right to defend themselves and respond to foreign aggression. "In the recent past, the Western world has been engaging itself in aggression against the Muslims which would not be tolerated at any level."⁴⁰ The meeting was also seen as a political strategy by the conservative but mainstream political party JUI to regain some of its influence over the Islamic sector, the control over which had slipped into the hands of sectarian and militant organizations. According to local observers the JUI achieved this objective at the expense of catering more strongly to a regressive ideological agenda than before.⁴¹

The speeches of different Deobandi scholars showed there was no unanimity on such a politicized approach. Clerics from Pakistan and India emphasized different agendas. Taking a more combative approach, Fazlur-Rahman from Pakistan said the "achievements and contribution of the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband . . . are not only confined to the liberation of the Indo-Pak subcontinent from the colonial rulers but also create[d] awareness amongst the Muslims throughout the world." He maintained that "now the followers of Shah Waliullah, Shaykh al-Hind

Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan and other freedom fighters are prepared to foil the Western world conspiracies." He recalled that "British colonial rulers are no more in the world but followers of the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband are spread all over the region."⁴² In contrast, the current rector of the Daru'l-'ulum Deoband in India, Maulana Marghub-ur-Rahman, and JUH chief Maulana Asad Madani put forward the plea for a "moderate Deoband school" of Islam.⁴³ Their contrasting speeches pointed to the growing internal differentiation and diversification of Deobandi thought and its political application.

International Branches and Networking

The largest networks of Deobandi institutions outside South Asia can nowadays be found in South Africa and in the United Kingdom (see table 4). They are primarily driven by thriving Muslim communities of Indian and Pakistani descent. Religious revival of recent years and the desire of parents to provide their children with religious and culturally compatible education in a religious minority environment have also contributed to their spreading. A growing number of private Islamic schools offer both religious and secular education in South Africa and Britain.

The longest interaction between the Deoband school and foreign Deobandi networks exists perhaps with its branches in South Africa, as mentioned above. The development of Deobandi thought and institutions there has been discussed in some academic studies.⁴⁴ Goolam Vahed narrated how Indian Islam arrived through indentured labor and Muslim traders, mainly from Gujarat, but also from the Memon community. Figures for Muslims among the Indians hovered around 14–15 percent. Deobandi Islam was represented by the Natal Association of Religious Scholars, established in 1952.⁴⁵ Indian Sufi Islam, which arrived with Soofie Saheb from Ratnagir, near Bombay, in 1895, was orga-

40. *Nation*, 10 April 2001, www.nation.com.pk (accessed 15 April 2001; Web page no longer active).

41. See Imtiaz Alam, "JUI Stands to Gain a Lot after Deoband Moot," *News*, 11 April 2001, www.jang.com.pk/thenews/ (accessed 12 April 2001; Web page no longer active).

42. "Deoband Moot Flays West," *Nation*, 10 April 2001, www.nation.com.pk (accessed 11 April 2001; Web page no longer active).

43. Alam, "JUI Stands to Gain."

44. Goolam Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy': The Tablighi-Sunni Conflict among South African Muslims in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23 (2003): 313–34; Abdulkader Tayob, *Islam in*

South Africa: Mosques, Imams, and Sermons (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Ebrahim Musa, "Muslim Conservatism in South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 69 (1989): 73–81.

45. Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy,'" 317.

Table 4. International Deobandi Institutions Outside India (Selected)

Institution	Web Site	Founded
Deobandi Madrassas		
Jami'a Daru'l-'ulum, Karachi, Pakistan	www.darululoomkhi.edu.pk/	Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, 1951
Jami'a Binuriyya Karachi, Pakistan	www.binoria.org	Mufti Muhammed Naeem, 1978
Jami'a-tul-'ulum al-Islamiyya Allama Binuri Town, Karachi, Pakistan	No Web site	Allama Yusuf Binuri and Maulana Mufti Mahmud, 1947
Daru'l-'ulum Haqqaniya, Akora Khattak, Pakistan	No Web site	Maulana Abdul Haqq, 1948
Jami'a Ashrafiya Lahore, Pakistan	www.al-islam.edu.pk/	Mufti Muhammad Hasan, 1947
Daru'l-'ulum Dewsbury, UK	No Web site	Hafiz Muhammad Ishaq Patel, 1981
Daru'l-'ulum Holcombe, Bury, UK	No Web site	Maulana Motala, 1975
Jami'atu'l Imam Muhammad Zakariyya, Bradford, UK (for girls)		1987
Madrassa Saulatiyya, Mecca, Saudi Arabia	www.islam4all.com/introduction2.htm	Maulana Muhammad Rahmatullah ibn Khalil al-Rahman Kairanawi (1818-91), 1873
Daru'l-'ulum Zakariyya, Lenasia, South Africa	No Web site	1983
Daru'l-'ulum Azadville, South Africa	No Web site	1982
Daru'l-'ulum Newcastle, South Africa	No Web site	1973
Madrassa In'aamiyyah, Camperdown, South Africa	www.alinaam.org.za/	1993
Daru'l-'ulum Sri Petaling (Tablighi Markaz), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia		1995
Daru'l-'ulum al-Madania, Buffalo, NY, USA	www.madania.org	1991
Darul Uloom Institute, Pembroke Pines, Florida, USA	www.alhikmat.com/darululoom.htm	1995
Daru'l-'ulum Al Qasimia, Shamokin (near Harrisburg), Pennsylvania, USA	www.sunlink.net/~alqasim/	
Daru'l-'ulum London, Chislehurst Kent, UK	www.darululoomlondon.co.uk/	1991
Daru'l-'ulum Trinidad and Tobago, Cunupia Trinidad, West Indies	www.duloom.org/index1.htm	1984
Nur Ul Islam Academy, Cooper City, Florida, USA	www.nuia.org	
Religious Deobandi Institutions		
'Alami Majlis-e Tahaffuz-e Khatm-e Nabuwat (World Organization for the Defense of the Finality of Prophethood), London	www.khatme-nubuwwat.org/home.htm (not operative)	
Islamic Tarbiyah Academy, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, UK	www.islamictarbiyah.com	
Nida-ul-Islam Center, Teaneck, New Jersey, USA	www.nidaulislam.org	
Political Deobandi Institutions		
Jam'iyat-ul-'Ulama-i Islam, Pakistan (political party)		1944
Jam'iyat-ul-'Ulama-i Islam, Bangladesh		1972
United 'Ulama Council of South Africa	www.jamiat.org.za/uucsa/home.html	1994

Table 4. continued International Deobandi Institutions Outside India (Selected)

Institution	Web Site	Founded
Political Deobandi Institutions		
Jamiatul 'Ulama Kwa-Zulu Natal (Council of Muslim Theologians), South Africa	www.jamiat.org.za/ and www.islamsa.org.za/	1952
<i>Al Jamiat</i> , newspaper published by Jamiatul 'Ulama Kwa-Zulu, South Africa	www.jamiat.org.za/al-jamiat/aljamiat.html	
Jam'iyyatu'l-'Ulama, Canada	www.jucanada.org	

Sources: Interviews with respondents in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa, Sudan, and the United Kingdom in 2004–5; Internet research.

nized in the rival Barelvi tradition through the formation of the Sunni Jamiatul Ulema of South Africa in 1978 (314, 319).

Deobandi thought and institution building in South Africa as elsewhere outside South Asia received a strong boost from the activities of the Tablighi Jama'at. Often it was a particular scholar, cleric, or holy man who started to spread the movement in countries outside India and Pakistan, and who is still revered for that. Goolam Mohammed Padia, a businessman from Umzinto on the south coast of KwaZulu Natal, popularly known as "Bhai" (brother), started its activities in South Africa in the early 1960s (317).

The intensification of Tablighi activities outside South Asia from about the 1960s seems to have promoted the foundation of new Deobandi mosques and schools that could serve as local centers (*marakaz*) for the Tablighi Jama'at. The battle of control over mosques between Deobandis and Barelvis that started in Pakistan, and partly in India, in the late 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the Islamization politics of the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, was replicated in countries such as South Africa. There it was fought in the name of the Tablighi versus the Sunni paradigm, signifying the growing influence of the Tablighi Jama'at and the counter-vailing activities of the "Sunni Jama'at" representing the Barelvis.⁴⁶

The descendents of the Jama'at's founders, Muhammad Ilyas, who was its amir, and Muhammad Zakariyya, who was the latter's nephew and wrote its major reference book on doctrine, *Faza'il-e A'mal*, directly control several of the Deobandi madrassas outside South Asia. In a way, they form a sect-like network that resembles a wider family clan. Maulana Muhammad Shahid Saharanpuri of the Deobandi madrassa in Saharanpur (Mazahiru'l-'ulum Jadid) revealed how the two families consciously started intermarrying when two of Zakariyya's daughters married two future amirs of the Tablighi Jama'at, the maulanas Yusuf and Inamul Hasan on 7 April 1935.⁴⁷ But it is the network of disciples of the more spiritually inclined Maulana Zakariyya that stands at the back of much of Deobandi activity outside India. The longest such connection exists with the Madrassa Saulatiyya in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Zakariyya was the spiritual follower (*khalifa*) of Maulana Khalil, who founded the Mecca madrassa in 1873.⁴⁸ After Zakariyya's visit to Lenasia in South Africa in 1983 a new madrassa was founded, which today is known as the Daru'l-'ulum Zakariyya. Others such as the one in Azadville were founded by his disciples. Until recently, Tablighi activity was part of the curriculum there. The school in Lenasia is also the national center of Tablighi activity.⁴⁹ It needs also to be mentioned here that many

46. Tayob, *Islam in South Africa*, 88–93.

47. Shahid Saharanpuri, *Hazrat Shaykh ki tin (marhuma) sahibzadiyan (The Three [Deceased] Daughters of Sheikh [Zakariyya])* (Saharanpur: Kutukkhana Isha'atu'l-'ulum, 1991), 10, 31; author interview, Saharanpur, 2 March 2004.

48. Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy,'" 322; Christine Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners: Christlich-muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (With the Adversary's Weapons: Christian-Muslim Controversies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)* (Berlin: Klaus-Schwarz Verlag, 1992), 112.

49. Author interviews at the Deobandi schools of Zakariyya Park and Azadville, 23 and 24 February 2005.

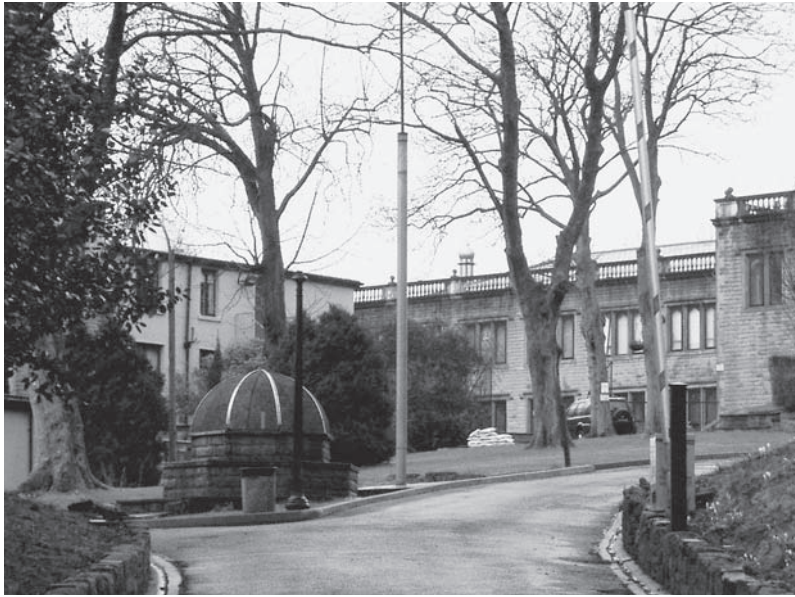


Figure 5. Daru'l-ulum
Holcombe in the
United Kingdom

of the associates of Zakariyya hail from Gujarat and belong to Muslim trading groups there. This is true for South Africa as much as for Britain.⁵⁰ Their relative prosperity in both countries (as compared to other Muslim migrants) gives the Islamic schools there a certain middle-class flavor mostly absent from the South Asian subcontinent's madrassas.⁵¹

In Malaysia, the Islamic school at the national headquarters of the Tablighi Jama'at in Kuala Lumpur, Sri Petaling, was established by Deobandi graduates from South Asia. It started functioning in 1995, teaching the *'alim* course on the basis of the Deobandi curriculum, where for the legal subjects the Hanafi code was replaced with the local Shafi code. The first batch of students was about to graduate in 2005. When the author visited the school, they were on the obligatory four-month Tablighi tour (*chilla*). The Tablighi Jama'at is planning to set up Deobandi schools at all regional centers in Malaysia.⁵² If implemented, this scheme would undoubtedly influence the equation between orthodox normative Islam and popular Sufi-ori-

ented practices in the whole country. While in Indonesia no formal Deobandi-style madrassa has been established so far, Deobandi thought is implemented through the fairly large number of graduates of South Asian madrassas individually. Here also the Tablighi center (*markaz*) is instrumental, as it serves as a meeting point of these Deobandi graduates. Tablighi tours from Indonesia to South Asia also gave many participants the idea of joining one of the Deobandi madrassas there.⁵³ A similar pattern applies to the Deobandi schools in the United Kingdom. One Daru'l-ulum in the name of the Institute of Islamic Education is located at the Tablighi center in Dewsbury. The center is also in charge of Tablighi activity in the whole of Europe.⁵⁴ The Daru'l-ulum al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya in Bury, Holcombe, in the United Kingdom, seems to be equally involved in the Zakariyya network and in Tablighi activities (fig. 5). It was here where one of the closest disciples of Zakariyya was based, Maulana Motala, who compiled an endorsed list of his disciples.⁵⁵ He is said to have founded that school in 1974 at the "order" of Zakariyya.⁵⁶

50. Tayob, *Islam in South Africa*; Sophie Gilliat-Ray, "Educating the Ulama: Centers of Islamic Religious Training in Britain," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17 (2006): 55–76.

51. Author interview with Maulana Mohamed Ashraf Dockrat, Johannesburg University, 24 February 2005.

52. Author interview with Abdul Hamid Hashim, principal of the madrassa, 28 September 2005.

53. Author interviews at the Tablighi center in Jakarta, 4 and 6 October 2005.

54. Author interview at the Tablighi center in Dewsbury, 11 March 2006.

55. Muhammad Yusuf Motala, *Maulana Muhammad Zakariya aor un ke Khulafa-e Kiram* [in Urdu] (*Maulana Zakariyya and His Venerable Disciples*), 3 pts. (in 2 vols.) (Bury: Dar al-'ulum al-'Arabiya al-Islamiyya), 1986.

56. See the Web site of the school on the two "historical" visits of Zakariyya to the school on 24 June 1979 and 25 August 1981, "One Historical Day In Britain," www.inter-islam.org/Pastevents/Historical.html (accessed 7 January 2007).

Figure 6. Poster from South Africa

ISLAAHI IJTIMA

1425/2004

You are cordially invited to a Spiritual upliftment programme which will be held for very first time in the history of South Africa and is dedicated to every sincere seeker of Truth

Leading Khalifas of Hazrat Sheikh Hadith Moulana Mohammed Zakariyyah (Rahmatulahi Alaih) and Hazrat Mufti Mahmoodul Hassen Gangohi (Rahmatulahi Alaih) foreign and local Ulema will Insha Allah Grace this Mubaraak gathering

Some of the Ulema and Khalifa's include ...

Hazrat Dr. Ismail Memon (America)
 Maulana Abdul Hafeez Makki (Makkah Mukaramah)
 Maulana Abdur-Raheem Molala (Zambia)
 Mufti Basheer Amod (Stanger)
 Maulana Latifur-Rahman (Pakistan)
 Maulana Ebrahim A. R. Mia (Lenasia)
 Maulana Ibrahim Memon (America)
 Hazrat Maulana Radhaul Haq Saheb (Darul-Uloom Zakariyyah)
 Mufti Shabeer Saloojee (Darul-Uloom Zakariyyah)
 Mufti Mohammed Saeed Motara Saheb (Darul-Uloom Azaadville)
 Maulana Ibrahim Pandor Saheb (Elsburg)
 Moulana Junaid Hassim (Mayfair) and many others

Date: Sat 7th to Mon 9th August 2004

Venue: Quwwatul Islaam Musjid, Verulam, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa

Time: Programmes begin Saturday after Asr till Monday after Ishraak.

For Further Inquiries Please Contact

Maulana Imtiaz Mahomed 083 786-0112
 Maulana Junaid Hassim 084 555-9888
 Hajee Yunus Seedat 082 928-8658
 Hajee Ebrahim Amla 083 786-1645
 Hajee Mukhtar Mohammed 082 786-0568

- Meals will be provided

- Accommodation provided
(carry your bedding)

All are Welcome

The school has created its own networks, with five other schools affiliated to it.⁵⁷ Its close connection with Tablighi activity can also be gauged from its Web site, its various congregations, and its conferences, which are held in the style of Tablighi meetings (see below).

Zakariyya's legacy is reflected in various ways. Schools such as the madrassas in Lenasia, South Africa, and in Bradford are named after him (table 4). Public speakers at Deobandi meetings identify themselves by their spiritual association (*khalifas*) with Zakariyya, as confirmed in a poster (fig. 6).

The Tablighi connection brings up two other channels of Deobandi networking: (1) the visiting scholars and (2) the conferences, lectures,

or meetings with international participation. Zakariyya himself created a great stir when he visited South Africa in 1981 and attracted about one hundred thousand visitors, giving Tablighi activities a strong boost.⁵⁸ He seemed to use his visits in a structured way for introducing new institutions, practices, and projects that would benefit both Deobandi teaching and Tablighi mobilization. Another such personality is Maulana Abdul Hafiz Makki, who served as professor of hadith at the Madrassa Saulatiyya in Mecca. He is part of the Zakariyya network, as one of his close spiritual followers, confirming the special status of that school. His name also figures in a number of other public activities, throwing an interesting light on the nature of such cross-

57. Gilliat-Ray, "Educating the Ulama," 58.

58. Vahed, "Contesting 'Orthodoxy,'" 325.

networking. He was one of the top speakers at the Islaahi Ijtima (Meeting on Religious Reformation) in Verulam, South Africa, on 7–9 August 2004 (fig. 6).⁵⁹ This meeting obviously followed a reformist agenda (*islah*), as its title suggests. Yet he is also known as an important Sufi sheikh. His book *Mawqaf al-a'immah al-haraka al-salafiyyah fi al-tasawwuf wa al-sufiyyah* (*The Position of the [Leading] Scholars of the Salafi Movement toward Sufi Thought and Sufism*) was seen as a strong contribution to Islamic thought, “proving *tasawwuf* from the writings of Ibn Taimiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim etc.”⁶⁰ In another public talk Makki was reported to have defended the emergence and role of the Sufi hospice—the *khanqah*.⁶¹ He assisted Maulana Zakariyya during his last visit to Britain at the Daru'l-'ulum Holcombe in the traditional turban-binding ceremony for graduates on 6 September 1981.⁶² At one time he was even the president of the radical International Khatm-e Nabuwat Tahrik.⁶³ Newspaper reports also linked him to extremist groups in Pakistan. In 1993 he was reported to have participated in efforts to unite various mujahideen factions to create the Harkat al-Ansar, which later sided with Osama bin Laden.⁶⁴ In 1997 he flew in from Saudi Arabia especially to attend the funeral of the head of the Binuri town madrassa in Karachi, Pakistan, who had been killed in an extremist attack.⁶⁵

As noted in the examples of Maulana Zakariyya and Maulana Abdul Hafiz Makki, conferences and congregations (*ijtima'*) have long been used to unite various sections of the international Deobandi movement. It seems that specific Tabligh and Tarbiyat conferences, particularly in Britain and South Africa, have become more popular recently for this purpose.

The Islamic Academy in Leicester, in the United Kingdom, conducts an annual youth conference. The audio material of these events is put onto its Web site.⁶⁶ A regular youth Tarbiyat conference is being held at the Daru'l-'ulum Bury, Holcombe, United Kingdom. It is also documented in detail.⁶⁷ With their religious lecturers and the concluding prayer (*du'a*) their agenda very much resembles the Tablighi congregations. The Islaahi Ijtima in South Africa referred to above falls in the same category of missionary and educational events (see fig. 6).

Conclusions

The international reach of Deoband over the years has largely grown thanks to its graduate network encompassing ever more countries. Graduates have been creating new branches and joining existing institutions. The expansion of the geographical scope of the Deoband school appears to correlate not with any particular plan or intention on behalf of the school but with the vicissitudes of political and religious life in the countries concerned. It has also been furthered by cultural and geographic proximity or the presence of Indian Muslim migrant communities.

Currently the transnational network of Deobandi institutions seems to have evolved from a largely Indo-Pakistani background into a cross-cultural religious revival and missionary movement that is just starting to increasingly harness also modern resources for its ends. The international Deobandi institutions have become strong enough that they no longer seem to require a significant input of Deoband graduates in order to function. The network has reached the stage of an independent self-propelled mode of operation and growth.

59. For reports on other lecture tours of South Africa, see the introduction by an interpreter to Makki's book *'Majalis-e Zikr' (The Meritoriousness of Loud Zikr in the Masjid)*, trans. Mufti Zubair Bayat, 6 February 2000, www.direct.za.org/Pdfs/Loud_Zikr.pdf.

60. Discussion thread on Makki at list server of MSA-EC Internet discussion group, 14 November 2000, www.mail-archive.com/msa_ec@listbot.com/msg01587.html (accessed 20 August 2004; page is no longer active).

61. Saykh Abu Usama, “Religious Efforts and the Prophetic Era,” Questions and Answers at Sunni Path, www.sunnipath.clm/Resources/Questions/QA0000893 (accessed 20 August 2004; page is no longer active).

62. See note 56.

63. See the report on the Web site of the group Irshad-o-Da'wat about his comment on the renunciation of Ahmadi beliefs by the secretary of the Ahmadiyya chief, www.irshad.org/info_m/news/hbmaura/php (accessed 7 January 2007).

64. Background report of *Pakistan Daily News* on Harkat-ul-Mujahidin in 2001, quoted in B. Raman, “New Crop of Afghan Returnees,” South Asia Analysis Group, Paper No. 402, 30 January 2002, www.saag.org/papers5/paper402.html (accessed 7 January 2007).

65. Riaz, “Two Religious Scholars Killed.”

66. Audio files for the Fourteenth Annual Youth Conference were available at www.idauk.org/audio/ayc.html (accessed 25 March 2006; page is no longer active).

67. For the 2004 event, see the audio links documenting the program, at www.inter-islam.org/Audio/ytc2k4.html (accessed 14 August 2004).

Yet efforts at transnational institutional collaboration have been significantly stifled since the late 1990s. Personal connections and inner-Deobandi networking outside South Asia seem to have become more important again. The Deobandi institutional network here overlaps with the traditional Sufi relationship of spiritual guide and disciple (*shaykh-khalifa*). As discussed elsewhere,⁶⁸ the Deobandi network seems to resemble a reformist order put to new and innovative uses in pursuing the spread of “correct” Islam.

The independent but related network of Tablighi centers seems to feed into Deobandi networking more strongly since the 1980s. Public meetings, Da’wa, and Tarbiyat conferences with international participation appear to play a growing role. Academic representations of Deobandi institutions on the Internet have become more sophisticated. The urge to maintain a presence on the Internet seems to contribute to increased transparency and a gradual modernization of Deobandi institutions and their presentation. In some cases there is growing interaction with the widening market of educational institutions offering worldly education. On the basis of common doctrine, individual scholars and institutions remain entangled with radical organizations and activities, although such links come under increasing pressure.

The Deobandi networking can also be read as reflecting an alternate Islamist globalization. Again, this is not unidirectional. While it grows along ethnic and migratory lines, it also transports ideological concerns with specific interpretations of religious beliefs and practices across cultural and political borders. It creates a culture of its own clearly marked by a “South” as opposed to a “North” identity and by its domination of capital-driven globalization. Yet it also links up with markets and trading groups and seeks to create opportunities for emancipation and intervention in global circulation, often on a South-South trajectory. As such it partly represents the “outside” world to those staying “behind” in the South Asian subcontinent. And it helps the South to link up with groups in the North that by descent or choice embody the South inside the North. It shows that the South

and the North have long intermingled without necessarily diluting the South. The Deobandi networking proves how adaptable the channels of the South are to the new ways of globalization and to what extent they also drive it ahead, that globalization has strengthened alternate approaches side by side with the dominating ways of the West.

The bewildering variety of international Deobandi activities makes it difficult to ascribe to this network a singular homogeneous quality. The impact of its activities is clearly felt across the Islamic world and everywhere where Muslims live, and also in the West. But the academic description and analysis of its transnational functioning and conceptualization are only beginning now. S

68. Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*.