Minds of the madrasa

Islamic seminaries, the State, and contests for social control in West Bengal and Bangladesh

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Abstract

This qualitative study analytically compares State-madrasa and inter-madrasa relations in Hindu-majority West Bengal and Muslim-majority Bangladesh. It uses Migdal's State-in-Society approach to explain the nature and bases of these interactions as expressed in three interrelated arenas: educational, organisational, and political. The central question addressed in the educational arena is why some madrasas (recognised madrasas) respond positively to State-initiated incentives for reform while others (unrecognised madrasas) reject the same. In resolving this puzzle, the study seeks also: 1) to classify madrasas in each setting according to their relative thresholds for engagement with the State; and, 2) to identify how, and to what extent, the State can extend the appeal of its reform scheme to unrecognised madrasas.

In the organisational arena, the study focuses exclusively on those madrasas that reject State-initiated reform, asking how they organise independently of the State. A key objective here is to determine how inter-madrasa relations vary between Muslim-minority and –majority contexts, and which specific aspects of the State's policies most encourage such variation.

The study's third empirical section examines State-madrasa relations as expressed through two phenomena in the political arena. The first phenomenon involves the politicisation of recognised madrasas by the State (represented by political parties and their student wings). The study explicates the mechanisms through which this politicisation occurs, identifies the factors facilitating/impeding such politicisation, and assesses the impact of this politicisation on the political allegiances of individual students. The second phenomenon sees representatives of unrecognised madrasas (attempting to) reach into the State complex by launching madrasa-based political parties. The study focuses on this phenomenon to gauge the relationship between a madrasa man's careers in the educational, organisational, and political arenas: To what extent can madrasa-based political entrepreneurs leverage influence wielded in the educational and organisational arenas towards success in the political arena? And do those who succeed in entering the State complex use this opportunity to promote the societal interests they represent in the educational arena, or in pursuit of increased authority in the organisational realm?

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Introduction

South Asian madrasas (Islamic schools) constitute an intriguing tradition. Older than Mughal India, their history juxtaposes the ability to adapt to drastic political upheaval with a tendency to stagnate amidst rapid modernisation. In medieval times, madrasas enjoyed royal patronage as an important source of religious scholarship and government personnel. To prepare students for a wide variety of professional functions, madrasas imparted both religious as well as secular education. The advent of British rule, however, led eventually to the relegation of religion to the private realm, severely curtailing the public role of the madrasa. With the Muslim nobility removed from power, the Muslim clergy [*ulama*] sought to establish their hegemony over what had become a much more private Muslim religious sphere.[1] As part of this effort, ulama ultimately came to raise the importance of the revealed sciences (Quran and Hadith) over rational subjects, resisting any efforts on the part of the colonial government to interfere in Muslim religious affairs. This insular attitude towards the State has continued to the present. The madrasa's evolutionary course (from the pre-Mughal through the colonial period) also had implications for the institution's conceptualisation. Corresponding with the institution's original character, the term "madrasa" simply referred to a school, irrespective of the purpose of its curriculum or the profile of its student body. More recently, however, a madrasa has come to denote to an Islamic

[1] The word alim (pl. ulama) refers to a Muslim religious scholar.

seminary – a theology-oriented institution focused (often singularly) on preparing students to become ulama.[2]

Since the partition of India in 1947, madrasas have increasingly come to be regarded as out-of-sync with the "modernising" beat of the post-colonial State. Building on the momentum of British efforts to modernise the madrasa system, states in the subcontinent have thus tried to engage with the ulama towards mainstreaming Muslim religious schools. In Bangladesh, this project has been executed by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, which was founded in 1978 and began operating the following year. In India, several state governments have made piecemeal efforts towards madrasa modernisation since the 1970s. The exercise of madrasa modernisation in India remains under the jurisdiction of individual states, but it is reinforced by a central initiative – the Area Intensive and Madrasa Modernisation Programme – implemented in 1994.[3] While the specific details of modernisation schemes tend to vary temporally and geographically, some features are typical: the State provides salaries for teachers in English, mathematics, and science to those madrasas that opt to participate; the State further aids the madrasa in fulfilling infrastructural needs; and, the madrasa accepts to be recognised, monitored, and perhaps even directed by the State. The logic of this

[2] Chapter one will describe in more detail the specific types of madrasas examined in this study.

[3] The Area Intensive and Madrasa Modernisation Programme forms part of the Indian State's larger effort to provide all students access to education of comparable quality. The programme offers madrasas infrastructural support and also introduces to them modern subjects for inclusion in their syllabus. It supplements earlier schemes already in place in individual states. Though the central government offers equal support to madrasas across the country, reform efforts vary significantly from one state to another depending on the presence and activities of state-specific boards.

exchange is fairly clear: A participating madrasa agrees to surrender some autonomy in return for financial and material support.

1. The puzzle

This study launches its investigation from an elementary empirical puzzle: State-led efforts to "modernise" madrasas in South Asia are characterised by mixed success. Some, but not all, madrasas respond positively to the State's engagement. This puzzling yet easily observable variation is expressed at two closely related levels: 1) cross-contextual, and 2) intra-contextual. Analysis at the cross-contextual level suggests that efforts to modernise madrasas vary across settings, in turn rendering dissimilar outcomes. As Bano's research in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan indicates, for instance, "[State-led] reforms have […] had different levels of success across the three countries."[4] The unit of analysis at the cross-contextual level is the State and the modernisation programme it administers. The cross-context puzzle asks: "Why is one modernisation programme more successful than the next?" But the relative "success" of each state's modernisation drive cannot be understood independent of the intra-contextual level. State "A" can only be more successful than State "B" if the former exhibits a higher recognised to unrecognised ratio. In other words, within each setting, some madrasas will accept recognition by signing up to the State's programme; others will not. This intra-contextual variation thus treats the individual madrasa as the unit of analysis. The puzzle within each context asks:

[4] Masooda Bano, "Madrasas as partners in education provision: the South Asian experience," *Development in Practice*, 20, 4-5 (2010): p. 557-8.

"Why do some madrasas accept the State's terms of recognition, while other madrasas prefer to operate independently?" Sikand illustrates the difference (and interrelatedness) of these two levels of analysis:

> In some […] states, […] the [modernisation] scheme seems to have achieved considerable results, and several madrasas have come forth to cooperate. In 2001, some 3,500 out of a total of 6,000 madrasas in Madhya Pradesh, with some 1,75,000 students on their rolls, were receiving modest financial assistance from the state government for teaching secular subjects through the Madhya Pradesh Madrasa Education Board. By 1999, some 600 madrasas in Rajasthan out of a total of 5,000-odd in the state had received recognition from the state government, and several of them had received some sort of government funding.[5]

At the cross-contextual level, Sikand tells us that modernisation efforts in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh were more successful than those in Rajasthan. Insofar as the intra-contextual level goes, Sikand points to the variation between the 3,500 madrasas that accepted recognition in Madhya Pradesh and the 2,500 that did not. In Rajasthan, Sikand's observation similarly prompts investigation into the differences between the 600 recognised madrasas on one hand, and the 4,400 unrecognised madrasas on the other.

[5] Yoginder Sikand, "Madrasa Reform and the Indian State," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38, 43 (2003): p. 4505.

This study concerns itself with both the intra-contextual and cross-contextual realms of this puzzle. It focuses on madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh, towards explaining the varied propensities for recognition noticeable in each setting – an intra-contextual exercise. Simultaneously, however, it seeks to learn the extent to which this intra-contextual variation is context dependent. Might the same madrasa behave differently if transported from context "A" to context "B"? Such a contextual shift can be geographic (e.g. the incentives to accept recognition may vary across countries), but also temporal (e.g. within the same geographic entity, the implications of accepting recognition can change over time). This cross-contextual exercise differs from those adopted by other scholars, including Bano and Sikand. Instead of comparing State "A" and State "B" to establish the relative success of their respective programmes, the purpose of comparison here is more diagnostic. This study seeks to understand profoundly how similar madrasas in two different settings respond to their respective States – each characterised by its own unique yet fluid offering of incentives and disincentives.[6] This juxtaposition of settings allows us to artificially broaden the scope of our intra-contextual analysis, identifying how madrasas in context "A" might respond to stimuli and conditions associated with (distinct yet comparable) context "B" (e.g. madrasas in West Bengal might respond more favourably to the State if it adopted relatively agreeable policies on display in Bangladesh).[7] Cross-contextual analysis is thus employed to

[6] The similarities between sampled madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh are conveyed in chapter one's presentation of this study's case selection methodology, but also in chapter three, which conveys sampled madrasas' ideological profiles.

[7] Chapters two and three compare the behaviours of ideologically similar madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh. These chapters use two means to establish how a madrasa in context "A" might respond to conditions in context "B": 1) by studying the demonstrated response in context "B" of madrasas that are similar

identify the measures States can take to transform the (intra-contextual) landscapes over which they preside.

It is important to emphasise that this study remains agnostic about the wisdom of accepting recognition. It does not seek to appraise the quality of the State's modernisation efforts, steering clear of several important questions: Does the State's scheme provide secular education of a standard comparable to that offered in mainstream schools? How are recognised madrasa students performing on state- and national-level examinations? Does the State's recognition of the madrasa's degree translate into the employability of pupils? How proficient are recognised madrasa students in religious subjects relative to their unrecognised counterparts? It is true that the full implications of the State's modernisation scheme cannot be assessed without capturing its substantive content and impact. Given its focus on State-society relations, however, this study views the modernisation scheme in notional terms, as a transaction between State and societal elements. It synonymises the words "modernisation" and "reform" with recognition – the decision to accept or reject the State's scheme. The substantive component of the State's modernisation efforts is discussed only briefly, from the perspective of unrecognised madrasa men, as a consideration in their recognition decisions.

Even if we assume that the State's modernisation programme does not effect any real modernisation, and that it fails to supply students with the skills necessary for

(ideologically) to madrasa "A", and 2) by examining how madrasa "A" anticipates behaving if transported (hypothetically) to context "B" with its attendant conditions and policies.

employment, the unravelling of the recognition puzzle serves to inform several theoretical and empirical concerns. For one, it allows us – based on madrasas' varied propensities for recognition – to disaggregate the madrasa landscapes in West Bengal and Bangladesh. Instead of assigning societal lead roles before the investigation begins, this study works backwards, allowing empirical observation and analysis to inform the makeup of Bengali Muslim society, including the fault lines separating constituent groupings therein.[8] Importantly, how madrasas decide (for or against recognition) also determines the nature of subsequent State-society and intra-societal relations. Indeed, the State's success in alluring recognised madrasas to its scheme represents a prerequisite for its subsequent politicisation of these institutions (the subject of chapter five). For the State to politicise a madrasa, the latter must first accept recognition.[9] The State's conduct in the context of its modernisation scheme also influences the subsequent behaviours of unrecognised madrasas, particularly how they organise and whom they are willing to challenge in the pursuit of social control (the subject of chapter four). Solving the recognition puzzle thus unveils the chief societal protagonists occupying West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasa landscapes, and informs us about the manner in which they interact with the State and with one another. The following section introduces the conceptual framework guiding this study, showing how the latter's three empirical parts – covering State-madrasa interactions in the educational realm, inter-madrasa relations in the organisational sphere, and State-madrasa interactions in the

[8] As the following section explains, this study conceptualises Bengali Muslim society narrowly, focusing on its constituent community of Hanafi ulama.

[9] As chapter five explains, the acceptance of recognition represents a necessary but insufficient condition for politicisation.

political environment – are tied together in a theoretically meaningful manner. Note that recognised madrasas are henceforth referred to interchangeably as "sarkari" or "alia" madrasas, corresponding to their popular appellations in West Bengal and Bangladesh, respectively. Unrecognised madrasas are instead called "khariji" in West Bengal, and "qaumi" in Bangladesh.

2. The conceptual framework

This study uses Migdal's State-in-Society approach to narrowly connect its empirical purpose to the literature on State-society relations. Migdal's framework directs our attention to the "blurry" boundaries separating State and societal actors, encouraging "a deliberate analytical sensitivity to both the ubiquitousness and the variety of state-society linkage."[10] Translated into this study's empirical concerns, it thus offers the conceptual tools required to explore the sites, mechanisms, and outcomes of State-madrasa, and inter-madrasa relations in West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Migdal's framework portrays "society as a melange of social organizations" in which the State represents one amongst a broad range of contestants for social control.[11] Importantly, the phenomenon of State-society relations is characterised as the

[10] Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue, "State power and social forces: on political contention and accommodation in the Third World," in State Power and Social Forces: domination and transformation in the third world, ed. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 294.

[11] Joel S. Migdal, State in Society: studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 49.

interaction between one social force (the State) and other social groupings that exist within the larger space that is society. Despite his explicit effort to depart from a State-centric notion of State-society relations, Migdal acknowledges that "some parts [of society] have been obviously more important than others."[12] To reconcile the State's "simultaneous embeddedness in and relative autonomy from other operational social forces," Migdal offers his first conceptual tool – a disaggregated State. Migdal defines the State as "a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) *the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory*, and (2) *the actual practices of its multiple parts*."[13] By "image," Migdal refers to the "perception" of the State "by those inside and outside its claimed territory" – that of "a single entity that is fairly autonomous, unified, and centralized."[14] While the State's "image" accounts for its "separated" and "elevated" status, the State's practices represent the real day-to-day interactions of its "various fragments […] with one another, as well as with groups outside."[15] This dual notion of the State is evidently expressed in West Bengal and Bangladesh, where madrasas' attitudes and behaviours towards the State are shaped by the State's malleable practices, but also by their perception of its stickier image. Importantly, the component of "practices" accommodates the State's simultaneous disaggregation along another dimension –

[12] Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 37.
[13] Migdal, State in Society: studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another, pp. 15-6.
[14] Ibid, pp. 16-7.
[15] Ibid, pp. 17-20.

into its "loosely connected parts or fragments."[16] The State is indeed represented by its constituent segments when it palpably meets and interacts with other social forces. In West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasa sectors, these constituent representatives mostly take the form of political parties and their student wings.

This study selectively employs both forms of disaggregation associated with Migdal's definition of the State. The study begins by probing madrasas' attitudes towards the State's "image" and "practices," and assessing the degree to which each component influences a madrasa's recognition propensity. Since the State-initiated recognition schemes on display in West Bengal and Bangladesh are administered by bureaucracies, and characterised by considerable cross-partisan policy continuity, it is possible – for the purposes of solving the recognition puzzle – to treat both the State's image and practices as those of a single entity. Once madrasas decide for or against recognition, however, they either open or close the door to a future of more sustained and real meetings with the State's multiple representatives. The specific sites and mechanisms governing such interactions can only be explored by disaggregating the State's practices into those of its constituent segments.

In order to fully grasp the complexity of its interactions with other social forces, suggests Jefferey, one must go beyond simply disaggregating the State, and also disaggregate State-society relations.[17] This function is effectively achieved through

[16] Ibid, p. 22.

[17] Jefferey M. Sellers, "State-Society Relations Beyond the Weberian State," in The Sage Handbook of Governance, ed. Mark Bevir (London: Sage Publications, 2010), p. 136.

Migdal's second conceptual tool – the arena. Migdal defines arenas as "those environments […] where various social forces engage one another over material and symbolic issues, vying for supremacy through struggles and accommodations, clashes and coalitions."[18] Migdal presents the arena as the venue where "all sorts of social organizations, including components of the [S]tate, engage one another, attempting to impose their own stamp on ordinary life, everyday social relations, and the ways people understand the world around them."[19] The "patterns of domination" characterising society as a whole are in turn determined by the summation of "struggles spread through" these disparate but interconnected arenas.[20] If any one social grouping succeeds in "establish[ing] broad power" and "act[ing] in a coherent fashion," society approaches what Migdal terms "integrated domination."[21] If "the conflicts and complicities in the multiple arenas" fail to endow any one social force with "countrywide domination," society instead comes to be characterised by "dispersed domination."[22] This study analyses State-madrasa relations as they are expressed in three different arenas in West Bengal and Bangladesh: the educational arena, the organisational arena, and the political arena. Insofar as it focuses on the educational arena, the study is concerned with unravelling the recognition puzzle introduced above: why do madrasas respond differently to the State's madrasa modernisation scheme? Once we accept that some

[18] Joel S. Migdal, "The state in society: an approach to struggles for domination," in State Power and Social Forces: domination and transformation in the third world, ed. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 21.

[19] Ibid, 11.

[20] Ibid, p. 9.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

madrasas reject the State's incentive-based offer, a look at the organisational arena allows us to explore how these unrecognised madrasas organise, and how their organisational behaviours vary across contexts. The political arena finally offers insight into madrasas' propensities for politicisation, explicating the mechanisms through which they are politicised. This arena-by-arena approach thus serves to divide the study into three separate but closely related empirical sections.

In using Migdal's concept of the arena, however, this study seeks to refine the tool in two important ways. First, though it treats the arena as the general setting where State and other social forces meet, it also zooms in further, searching for specific sites of interaction within the arena. This intra-arena enquiry allows us to explore the possibility that different sites within a given arena conduct State-society interactions through different mechanisms.[23] While this refinement relates to process, the second enhancement to Migdal's concept of the arena lies in the study's treatment of outcomes. As noted above, Migdal uses "integrated" and "dispersed" domination to characterise the summative outcome of interactions across a society's multiple arenas. This study instead focuses on patterns of domination within arenas, asking how power is distributed and why.[24]

While it relies on Migdal's disaggregation of the State, and of State-society relations, this study departs from Migdal's conceptualisation of society. Migdal presents

[23] That different sites within a given arena lend themselves to different types of State-society interaction is revealed in chapter five, which focuses on State-madrasa relations in the political arena.

[24] This focus forms the subject of chapter four, which examines how madrasas relate to one another in the organisational arena.

societies, particularly in the developing world, using the analogy of "an intricate spider's web," in which spiral and radius threads combine to ensure that the condition of one part of the web cannot be divorced from the tension and adhesive quality of contiguous parts.[25] The implication is that the behaviours of one social grouping cannot be fully understood without accounting for the influence exerted by other social forces to which its members may be intimately tied. Acknowledging the web-like connections binding social forces, this study looks exclusively at one part of this web. It focuses on the collective of Hanafi ulama running madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh. This narrow conceptualisation of society inevitably leaves out important societal constituents – e.g. students, parents/guardians, and donors – some of whom may indeed exert an influence on the decisions ulama make on behalf of their institutions. At the same time, their exclusion is justified on the grounds that this study is specifically situated at the boundaries of State and society, and that members of these social groupings have few opportunities to directly meet or interact with the State in the context of the madrasa sector.[26] Insofar as State-madrasa relations are concerned, it is the alim who meets most frequently and intimately with the State. Notwithstanding the potentially incomplete picture it provides, an exclusive focus on ulama thus offers considerable insights into the nature of interactions between State and societal actors. Expressed in terms of Migdal's spider web, this study confines its attention to those threads where State

[25] Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World, p. 37.

[26] To the extent that societal elements other than ulama do interact directly with the State, such instances are acknowledged and explored in chapter five.

and social actors meet, leaving out (potentially influential) threads that are farther removed.

Interestingly (perhaps ironically), the study's narrow conceptualisation of society offers an optimal means of exploring the diversity of social groupings residing within it. This is because ulama in West Bengal and Bangladesh do not constitute one united social force selected at the exclusion of others. It is more accurate to view them as a diverse collective of representatives from various (often rival) social segments. The only quality uniting them at the outset of the study is the potential intimacy of their interactions with the State. The study makes no further assumptions regarding the nature and extent of disaggregation of the community of ulama, allowing empirical evidence to determine how this "society" is fractured. Note that the remainder of this study generally speaks of the State's relations with "society" despite acknowledging that the observed interactions are in fact those between (segments of) the State and representatives of a narrow range of other social groupings. In order to harmonise its empirical and theoretical purposes, the study expresses its findings in terms of the following three propositions emerging from Migdal's state-in-society approach.

Proposition one: State forces reach into society and societal forces reach into the State

This proposition – representing a prominent theme in Migdal's approach – encourages researchers to "focus precisely on those moments when the [S]tate

reaches into society through policy implementation and, conversely, where society […] reaches into the [S]tate, government, and administration."[27] The phenomenon of State and societal forces reaching or attempting to reach into one another's respective turfs is abundantly expressed in the educational as well as the political arenas in West Bengal and Bangladesh. This study seeks to deepen our understanding of these "moments" of reaching in by asking where, how, and to what effect, they occur. The focus is thus on the sites, mechanisms, and outcomes of State-madrasa interaction. Though this proposition encourages us to speak in terms of "meeting," "interacting," and "reaching in," it is important to note that State and society's relations are not always as proximate as this language may suggest. In the educational realm, for instance, we can say that the State is simply requesting to meet with the representatives of various social forces through the madrasa modernisation programme. The real meetings only transpire if and when madrasas respond positively to this offer (by accepting recognition). In the political arena, on the other hand, the instances of "reaching in" involve concrete interactions between State and societal representatives. With this caveat in mind, the remainder of the study uses "reaching in" to refer to both the instance of and the attempt at interaction.

This proposition is explored in the context of the educational and political arenas. The study's focus on the educational arena asks what outcomes can be expected

[27] Beverly Thaver and Lionel Thaver, "State-in-Society: the Mutual Constitutiveness of the Developmental State and Higher Education in South Africa," African Sociological Review, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2009), p. 58.

when the State reaches into society through the educational arena. It presents a recognition-centric typology of madrasas, classifying them according to their responses to the State's efforts at engagement. While the literature tends to speak of the outcomes of State-society relations at a national, society-wide level, this study shows that – even if we limit our analysis to one specific arena within one geographic context – State-society interactions simultaneously result in different outcomes.[28]

The educational arena also allows us to take a step backwards, exploring the makeup and identity of a central player in this proposition. While the literature generally tells us that the State reaches into "society," this study asks how the latter is most appropriately defined in the context of West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasa landscapes. How far must we disaggregate the entity? Does the State really interact predictably and uniformly with elements of any one social grouping? Or should we instead view State-madrasa relations as the untidy summation of the State's diverse interactions with individuals across and within societal groupings? This study relates madrasas in each category of the recognition-centric typology to existing categorisations of madrasas, demonstrating that patterns of State-madrasa interaction in the educational arenas of West Bengal and Bangladesh do not comport with established notions of "society." In these specific contexts, one's

[28] This tendency is expressed by Stepan in his analysis of authoritarian regimes in Latin America. See, Alfred Stepan, "State Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America," in Bringing the State Back In, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 318-9.

ascribed social affiliation is only weakly associated with one's interactions with the State.

Chapter five explores the phenomenon of "reaching in" as it is expressed in the political arena. In this arena, State forces reach into the recognised sector by constantly re-arranging madrasas' managing committees. These re-arrangements are carried out each time a new party comes to power, through the replacement of committee members of one partisan tint with those of another. In madrasas permitting student politics on their campuses, State forces are additionally invited to politicise the madrasa through a lateral mechanism. These political activities are characterised by a recursive relationship in that madrasas (and their teachers and students) are able to access benefits associated with political participation. From the perspective of the State, the political party in power also benefits by showcasing its appeal through the membership of a madrasa's managing committee and/or the political activity of the madrasa's students. This study thus advances Migdal's framework, by elucidating the specific routes and meeting points of State-madrasa interaction, and identifying institutional factors that might be capable of activating or deactivating these mechanisms.

As recognised madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh receive the State's entry into society in the educational and political arenas, ambitious khariji/qaumi men have launched madrasa-based political parties towards reaching into the State. Migdal would view this instance of "reaching in" as the societal element's attempt at

"becoming" a part of the State complex.[29] This study traces more closely this process of "becoming," investigating the extent to which khariji men in West Bengal and qaumi men in Bangladesh can retain their societal identities as they (attempt to) reach into the State. It shows the State's boundary walls to be permeable only to those societal interests demanded by the electorate. Entry into the State complex is thus characterised by a trade-off: khariji/qaumi entrepreneurs can maximise their chances of entry by transforming their societal interests, or they can retain their societal identities at the risk of exclusion.

Proposition two: Specific qualities of the State are capable of influencing the decisions and behaviours of societal players

The second proposition represents one half of Migdal's insistence on "a greater degree of self-consciousness, in both […] descriptive and analytical work, of the *"recursive, that is, the mutually transforming nature of [S]tate-society relations."*[30] The exclusive focus on the transformative effects of the State on society is not to suggest that madrasas do not exert reciprocal transformative influences on the State. As the concluding chapter acknowledges, ulama (by virtue of their responses to the State's madrasa modernisation scheme in the educational arena) indeed compel the State to consider recalibrating its practices.[31] But the fact is that the

[29] Migdal, State in Society: studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another, p. 23.

[30] Kohli and Shue, "State power and social forces: on political contention and accommodation in the Third World," p. 294.

[31] As the concluding chapter shows, the Indian and Bangladeshi States have considered engaging unrecognised madrasas beyond the contours of operative madrasa modernisation schemes. By responding negatively to the

State remains the salient transformative force in State-madrasa relations in West Bengal and Bangladesh. Studying this one side of the transformational equation thus offers considerable insight into the phenomenon of behavioural change, as expressed in the educational and organisational arenas of our two chosen settings.

The proposition is addressed by exploring the "so what" of the contextual shift from West Bengal to Bangladesh. To what extent does it affect how madrasas respond to the State's invitation for future interaction? And how does it influence madrasas' behaviours towards one another? The literature trains us to expect madrasa communities in India and Bangladesh to behave differently owing to the different qualities of their respective States – one dominated by Muslims, the other by Hindus.[32] Yet a thorough explanation of contextual variation requires us to move beyond this simplistic assumption. It is imperative that we understand what changes and what remains the same in moving from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context.

This study first visits this proposition in chapter two, assessing the implications of the contextual transition in the context of the educational arena. Do madrasas with similar ideological profiles reserve different responses to State-led modernisation efforts in Muslim-minority West Bengal and Muslim-majority Bangladesh? If so, are

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State's modernisation scheme, unrecognised madrasas have thus forced the State to consider engaging khariji/qaumi madrasas through alterative policies.

[32] The claim that the minority status of Muslims in India impedes recognition is articulated by several scholars, including Imtiaz Ahmad and Yoginder Sikand. See Imtiaz Ahmad, "Urdu and Madrasa Education." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, 24 (2002): p. 2287, and Sikand, "The Indian Madrassahs and the Agenda of Reform," p. 241. Their positions are discussed in more detail in the concluding section of chapter two.

these differences prompted by the State's image or by its practices? Can a non-Muslim State more successfully attract madrasas to its scheme by recalibrating its practices, or is the State's success held hostage by its less malleable image? The study finds that the shift from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context does not significantly reduce the threshold for engagement exhibited by unrecognised madrasas. Instead, such a shift sees the State's increased willingness to entertain the demands associated with the madrasa's (unchangingly) elevated threshold. This finding complicates the view expressed in the literature that the reluctance of most madrasas to engage with the State in India is primarily due to a deficit of trust in the State.

In the organisational arena, this proposition is explored by focusing on non-State madrasa boards and their patterns of organisation. The literature acknowledges the presence of non-State madrasa boards catering to madrasas of each maslak [school of thought]. Riaz suggests that the activities of such boards are directed towards both educational and non-educational ends:

> These educational boards are meant to design curricula and syllabi for affiliated institutions, to conduct examinations, and award the sanads (diplomas) to the graduating students of these madrassahs, but these are often treated as secondary responsibilities. In practice, their primary responsibility lies with representing the interests of the madrassahs at the national level, particularly in relation to state policies

> that may have a bearing on them, and fostering denominational or sectarian interests within society.[33]

Bano agrees that "these collective platforms have been instrumental in strengthening the bargaining power of madrasa leadership vis-à-vis the state in [Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan]."[34] The literature thus conveys the general observation that these regional boards play a key role in standardising a particular denomination's ideology, and in articulating it to the State. The literature says very little, however, about the manner in which this organisational behaviour is variedly expressed across contexts. It also does not reveal much about the relationship between different madrasas within any such organisational umbrella at the intra-contextual level. The present study addresses this gap, asking whether khariji/qaumi boards might lend themselves to different purposes in each of our settings, and if so, why. Do madrasas' targets of organised bargain change in moving from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context? How exactly can the State alter the landscape in which societal entities contest social control? The study finds that the relative security associated with a Muslim-majority context deflects madrasas' attention from an almost exclusive focus on the State towards the domain of inter- and intra-denominational contestation. The State – by virtue of its perceived distance from the khariji/qaumi landscape – is thus able to stimulate the

[33] Ali Riaz, Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), p. 80.
[34] Bano, "Madrasas as partners in education provision: the South Asian experience," p, 556.

ostensible fusion (evident in West Bengal) and fission (displayed in Bangladesh) of societal identities.

Proposition three: Resources garnered in one arena can be used to promote one's interests in other arenas

Migdal tells us that "a social force can use the resources it garners in any one arena to dominate in other arenas."[35] But even if we accept that resources are generally transferrable across arenas, several questions persist: Is a particular resource more readily and/or usefully transported to one arena than another? Is it possible that some resources might promote social forces' pursuit of one objective while simultaneously constraining their pursuit of another? Might structural factors influence the receptivity of an arena to a given resource? This study covers these questions by looking at the collection, transfer, and harnessing of resources across the educational, organisational, and political arenas. It focuses on two resources in particular: *prestige/influence,* which is inevitably dependent on one's wealth, and additionally backed by the alim's academic contribution in the educational arena; and, *organisational strength*, which corresponds to the organisational sophistication of one's school of thought as expressed in the organisational arena.

The study's exploration of this proposition begins in chapter four, which analyses the transfer of resources from the educational to the organisational arena, and vice

[35] Migdal, "The state in society: an approach to struggles for domination," pp. 22-3.

versa. It shows that the most prominent ulama in the educational arena carry their influence over into the organisational arena, where the resource allows them to preside over non-State madrasa boards. If influence/prestige is an exclusive resource in the educational arena, it remains exclusive in the organisational arena since it does not trickle down to the "member" madrasas affiliated with each non-State board. We can thus say that prominent ulama are able to expand their prestige horizontally by transferring it from the educational into the organisational arena. The opposite direction of traffic (from the organisational to the educational arena) sees a different resource (organisational strength) transferred in a relatively more inclusive manner. As chapter four demonstrates, affiliation with a well-organised non-State madrasa board can embed madrasas in a tight-knit network, making it easier for them to resist recognition. Conversely, madrasas affiliated with a weakly organised board lack organisational strength, and are unable to transfer and exploit the resource towards avoiding recognition in the educational arena. While organisational strength is generally presented as a beneficial quality, chapter four's discussion of this proposition also shows that one's access to the resource is inversely proportional to one's possession of another potentially useful resource - anonymity. A madrasa with access to organisational strength can effectively use the resource to resist recognition if that is indeed its objective. But being part of a well-organised board also makes it difficult to hide one's decisions and actions from fellow affiliates. Assuming the same madrasa instead prefers to affiliate with the State, its embeddedness in a close-knit network might deprive it of the anonymity required to express this preference without fear of ostracism.

The study proceeds, in chapter five, to explore the transfer of resources to and from the political arena. It introduces politically inclined madrasa men in West Bengal and Bangladesh, and compares their abilities to translate influence in the educational and organisational arenas into electoral success. It then focuses exclusively on those madrasa men who have successfully reached into the State, asking to what extent they used their presence in the State complex to promote the interests they represent in the educational and/or the organisational arenas.

To summarise, the study is thus broken up by arena, towards addressing the following key empirical and theoretical questions:

Educational arena:

- Why do some madrasas accept recognition while others choose not to?
- What do madrasas' varied responses tell us about the "society" they represent?
- Do madrasas' responses vary in moving from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context? If so, how and to what extent?

Organisational arena:

- How do unrecognised madrasas organise independently of the State?
- Do these organisational behaviours vary in moving from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context?

- How, and to what effect, are resources (influence and organisational strength) transferred between the organisational and the educational arenas?

Political arena:

- Where (at which specific sites within the political arena) does the State politicise recognised madrasas?
- How (through what mechanisms) does this politicisation take place?
- How do politically inclined madrasa men enter the State?
- How effectively are they able to transfer the resource of influence from the educational/organisational arena into the political arena?
- To what extent does their entry into the State benefit the interests they represent in the educational/organisational arena?

As is evident, the study's ability to analyse inter-madrasa and State-madrasa relations in the organisational and political arenas, respectively, depends on its prior unravelling of the recognition puzzle. To facilitate this exercise in the educational arena, the study merges Migdal's approach with a novel analytical tool: a recognition-centric typology of madrasas.

3. A recognition-centric typology

The literature presents numerous formal and informal typologies to make sense of the diversity characterising madrasas in South Asia. Madrasas are variably categorised on the basis of size, school of thought, location, endowment, and militant affiliation. While scholarship acknowledges recognition-based distinctions, it does not tread beyond the recognised versus unrecognised divide. This study fulfils the need for such a classification of madrasas, building a typology on the basis of their varied propensities for engagement with the State. Such a recognition-centric typology will inevitably overlap with other classifications contained in the literature – particularly school of thought, which (as chapter three explains) correlates with a madrasa's recognition status. That said, understanding how madrasas engage with the State in the educational arena (and consequently with the State and one another in the political and organisational arenas) requires a more profound investigation, uninhibited by conventional analytical categorisation.

The typology proposed in this study appears in Figure 1.1. Based on their varied responses to the State's madrasa modernisation scheme, it distinguishes between three types of madrasas: recognition-seekers, opposed madrasas, and fence-sitters.

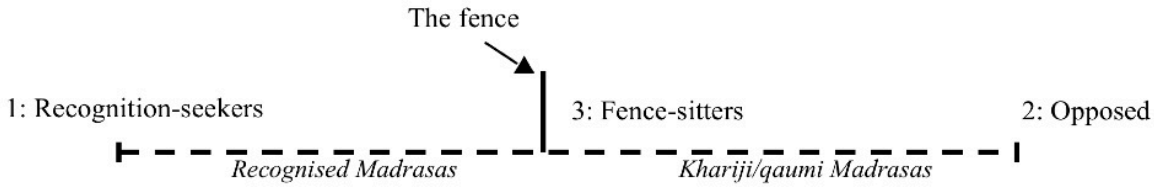


Figure 1.1: Recognition-centric typology of madrasas

The first category of madrasas (recognition-seekers) consists of madrasas that actively pursue recognition. They mimic the State-prescribed curriculum from the outset – before attaining recognition – hoping this practice will expedite their formal affiliation with the State. The second category of madrasas is that of the "fence-sitters." As their name suggests, "fence-sitters" consist of indecisive elements that remain on the fence because they could use benefits associated with State support, but are unwilling to invite certain consequences associated with recognition (e.g. dilution of their religious character). This group of madrasas exhibits a willingness to become sarkari subject to certain conditions, and may jump to the recognised side of the fence as and when the State alters the terms of its engagement. While recognition-seekers and fence-sitters are both concerned with the practices of the State, they can be distinguished by their contrasting thresholds for recognition. Within a given context, recognition-seekers are generally willing to accept recognition under the prevailing circumstances. Some might defer their acceptance of recognition, but only when the State assumes an exceptionally aggressive posture. Fence-sitters are characterised by a higher range of recognition thresholds. They are open to the prospect of accepting recognition, but momentarily

exhibit discontent with its details. Some fence-sitters might take issue with specific (conceivably alterable) details of the State's package, while others exhibit significantly higher recognition thresholds – characterised by heftier and more rigid demands. As subsequent chapters illustrate, the State cannot engage these higher threshold fence-sitters without digressing from its purported objective of madrasa "modernisation."

The third category of madrasas consists of those elements that are fundamentally opposed to recognition, and can reasonably be called "opposed madrasas." These khariji/qaumi madrasas oppose the image of the State and derive their very identity from the quality of existing and functioning outside the realm of government recognition. While opposed madrasas are characterised by immobility, there is more movement between the other two types of madrasas – fence-sitters and recognition-seekers. This movement depends on the position of the fence. A leftward shift of the fence (signifying an increasingly intrusive recognition package) will likely cause more recognition-seekers to join the club of fence-sitters. Similarly, a rightward shift of the fence (representing more amenable terms of support) will prompt many fence-sitters to accept recognition. One might ask why recognition-seekers and fence-sitters should deserve separate categories when they simply assume different positions on the recognition continuum. As the following section suggests, however, the separation of recognition-seekers and fence-sitters into analytically distinct categories allows us to perceive the relative effects of moving from one context (with its unique composition of practices) to another.

3.2. Accounting for context

To ensure that this typological model accommodates empirical evidence across contexts, it must exhibit sufficient pliability. The elastic quality and inter-contextual readiness of the model is clearly conveyed in Figure 1.2.

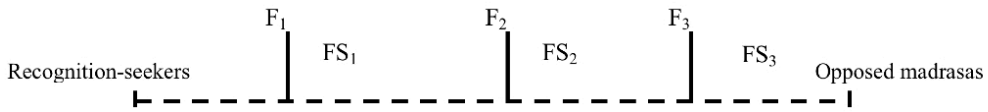


Figure 1.2: Context-accommodating quality of madrasa typology

This figure captures three contexts represented by fence 1 (F_1), fence 2 (F_2), and fence 3 (F_3), respectively. While such inter-contextual variation can be induced temporally within a given setting, visible changes in context are more reasonably expected in moving across geographic jurisdictions. To illustrate how the model captures (in this case hypothetical) inter-contextual variation, consider context F_1. While the State has succeeded in attracting recognition-seekers to its modernisation scheme, Fence-sitter 1 (FS_1) is apprehensive, employing a cost-benefit analysis to decide whether or not threshold F_1 is surmountable. In the context of this threshold, other madrasas (represented by FS_2 and FS_3) constitute fence-sitters of the higher threshold variety. Moving to context F_2, we can now imagine a situation where some madrasas that exhibited indecision (FS_1) in the previous context are securely

recognised. This new fence also approaches (without meeting) the thresholds of the more demanding fence-sitters (FS_2). Similarly, context F_3 succeeds in recognising FS_2, but has to contend with its own class of higher threshold fence-sitters (FS_3). In each of these contexts, opposed madrasas remain anchored at the far right end of the recognition spectrum.

The ideology characterising a madrasa within a given context is assumed to be relatively sticky – approaching a constant. So even if a fence-sitter is pulled closer to the fence, or a fence-sitter becomes a recognised madrasa, these positions only change relative to the shifting location of the fence (in turn represented by a different State, or changes in the terms of one State's support). Though the term recognition is used consistently, it is important to note that the more the fence shifts to the right, the more the state compromises (the less the madrasa compromises), and the more devoid the term recognition becomes of any reform-oriented steps. In other words, a madrasa that agrees to become recognised only in response to fence 4 or 5 is likely to sign up for a package that involves minimal compromise, and equally little modernisation.

The difference between fence 1 (threshold 1) and fence 2 (threshold 2) can involve both quantitative changes (e.g. in the amount of financial support extended) and qualitative changes (e.g. the extent of interference implicit in the State's modernisation package, and any consequent loss of autonomy). Combined, the typological models in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 offer immense methodological value,

allowing the recognition decision to be deciphered through simultaneous analysis at the intra- and cross-contextual levels. More importantly, these tools allow us to move from one context to another without exiting the sphere of micro-level analysis. In other words, this approach ensures that cross-contextual analysis amounts to a comparison of two intra-contextual analyses, rather than the macro-level juxtaposition of two cases.

4. Chapter outline

Chapter one begins by presenting a historical overview of State-madrasa relations in erstwhile Bengal. It chronicles the convergences and divergences in West Bengal and Bangladesh's respective experiences, describes the colonial antecedents to present-day madrasa modernisation efforts, and introduces the different types of madrasas residing in each of our chosen contexts. Relying on this historical narrative, the second half of the chapter lays out this study's research methodology. It justifies its use of the case study method, as well as its choice of the two contexts (West Bengal and Bangladesh) being analytically compared. It further describes the different case selection approaches employed to study State-madrasa and inter-madrasa relations in the educational, organisational, and political arenas.

Chapter two studies how madrasas respond when the State reaches into society through the educational arena. Focusing on West Bengal, it presents a recognition-centric typology categorising madrasas on the basis of their varied propensities for

recognition. Using Migdal's disaggregated definition of the State, it finds that West Bengal's madrasas principally fall into three categories: those that seek recognition; those opposed to recognition; and, those with a less than certain stance on the issue. The chapter further develops this typology by applying it to the Bangladeshi context to determine what changes and what remains the same in this contextual transition. The chapter concludes by relating its findings to the theoretical propositions introduced above.

Chapter three remains focused on the educational arena, gauging the utility of the recognition-centric typology by comparing it (and its potential to decipher the madrasa landscape) to existing typologies of madrasas in Bengal. It begins by reviewing the process of Islamisation in Bengal, a process that generated two divergent strands of Islam in Bengal: one adhering to, and striving for, a Book-based practice of Islam, and the other inheriting customs and practices reflective of a more syncretistic Islamic tradition. The literature tells us that individuals (and groups) associated with each strand express different views on a range of ideological indicators, of which this study looks at three: 1) attitudes towards the correct language of instruction in the madrasa (Urdu or Bengali?), 2) tolerance towards the practice of coeducation, and 3) attitudes towards the practice of venerating religious intermediaries or pirs. In order to determine the extent of overlap between the recognition-centric typology and qualities associated with these historically generated strands, the next section of this chapter gathers madrasas' views with respect to each of these indicators. This comparative exercise also serves to enhance

the recognition-centric typology by augmenting the ideological profiles of madrasas in each of its categories. The chapter then goes on to compare the recognition-centric typology to the maslak-based typology, exposing the latter's inability to predict or explain the recognition decisions of West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasas. The chapter recommends the combined deployment of these complementary typologies and concludes by relating its key findings to the theoretical propositions.

Chapter four focuses on inter-madrasa relations as they are expressed in the organisational arena. It zooms in on madrasa men initiating and/or heading the various non-State madrasa boards in West Bengal and Bangladesh, and seeks to understand how they succeed in attracting affiliates. Fully understanding the choice of a madrasa to remain apart from the State requires us to also investigate the other choices it makes. If the madrasa in question is unwilling to affiliate with the State, what specific incentives does it have to lend itself to the legitimacy and power of another node of social control? In a bipolar setting where the choice is simply between the State and a societal contestant, the latter becomes an obvious non-state ally. In multipolar settings, however, the choice to reject the State invites a subsequent choice of alternatives: with which non-State madrasa board should a madrasa affiliate and how does this affiliation practically differ from affiliation with other societal contenders? This latter question is explored in the Bangladeshi context, where signing up for one board involves rejecting others of the same school of thought. This chapter thus introduces the phenomenon of intra-maslak

contestation – one absent from the contemporary literature. The chapter further seeks to understand how and why inter-madrasa relations (and the organisational behaviours to which they give rise) vary in moving from one context to another. It argues that the Muslim-majority context in Bangladesh affords unrecognised madrasas there the space and comfort required to activate non-religious interests that remain latent in the Hindu-majority context that is West Bengal.

Chapter five transports us to the political arena. The first section of this chapter explicates the mechanisms through which the State enters madrasas through the political arena. It shows that the State politicises recognised madrasas in two ways: 1) in a top-down manner, by re-altering the managing committees of sarkari/alia madrasas in favour of a particular political party, and 2) in a lateral manner, through the student wings of political parties. This section also introduces the structural factors allowing a small minority of madrasas in Bangladesh to withstand political interference. The latter part of this chapter examines how and why unrecognised madrasa men enter the State through political outfits of their own. It also seeks to understand the relationship between this political activity and their simultaneous pursuits in the educational and organisational arenas. To what extent are these men able to exploit the influence they wield in other arenas towards electoral success? And, if they do succeed in "becoming" part of the State in the political arena, to what extent, if at all, do they use this success to further their pursuits in the educational and/or the organisational arenas?

The concluding chapter revisits this paper's findings in question-answer form. It spells out the key empirical and theoretical takeaways, and offers policy advice, recommending ways in which madrasa modernisation efforts in West Bengal and Bangladesh can be made most effective. It argues against one-size-fits-all programmes in favour of a flexible approach that acknowledges the tremendous diversity of opinions and objectives characterising madrasas within and across our contexts. It also urges policymakers to adopt a student- rather than a madrasa-centric approach to recognition to ensure students have choices irrespective of those made by their principals.

Chapter One: Historical Overview and Research Methodology

This study's methodology relies on two acknowledgments. First, despite West Bengal's status as an administrative sub-unit of the Indian polity, and Bangladesh's existence as an independent country, these two contexts were – until the early twentieth century – parts of a united entity, governed by the same rulers, and witness to the same process of Islamisation. This shared history makes West Bengal and Bangladesh a very comparable pair. And second, State interference in the madrasa sector (particularly during the colonial period) contributed to the fragmentation of Bengal's madrasa landscape along two dimensions: 1) on the basis of one's theological orientation, and 2) on the basis of one's willingness to engage with the State. Since this diversity persists, it is possible to compare madrasas that agree on one dimension (they are theology-oriented) while disagreeing on the other (they exhibit varying thresholds for engagement with the State). This also means it is possible to exclude from the study those madrasas exhibiting little theological purpose.

In order to support these two assertions, the first section of this chapter offers a historical overview of State-madrasa relations in erstwhile Bengal. It begins in the Mughal period, describing the system of patronage that made ulama and their madrasas eminent institutions. It then moves to the colonial era, introducing the

State's initiatives to encourage modernisation of the madrasa curriculum. These efforts would shape the present-day madrasa landscape, and inform the incentive schemes post-colonial States have employed to manage it. The section finally focuses on the post-partition period, suggesting that State-madrasa and inter-madrasa relations in West Bengal and Bangladesh invite comparison despite the divergent trajectories pursued by these States.

Building on this purposeful historical overview, section two provides a detailed description of this study's context selection, case selection, and data collection methodology. Combined, the chapter's two sections serve the crucial purpose of introducing the different types of madrasas included in (and excluded from) this study.

1. A historical overview of State-madrasa relations

1.1. Madrasas under Mughal patronage

Muhammad Bakhtiyar's conquest of Bengal in 1204 actuated a yet unfolding process of Islamisation in areas that constitute today's Bangladesh and West Bengal. Taking its course from the political and economic interests of successive rulers – Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi sultans, Afghan chieftains, Mughal emperors, and British colonial administrators – this process was shaped also by the charisma and entrepreneurship of pious men [pirs], and the agrarian opportunities presented by

fateful geological changes.[36] Though madrasas accompanied Islam's early days in Bengal, the notion of interaction between madrasas and the State developed for the first time during the Mughal period. While the extent and nature of state patronage of education fluctuated during the Mughal era, a net consequence of Mughal rule was the emergence of ulama as a respectable social class, and thereby the progressive expansion and consolidation of the maktabs and madrasas they administered. Conveying the ulama's eminent status during this period, Metcalf notes, "it was they who were responsible for the education of the entire nobility, who staffed the various levels of judiciary; and who oversaw the whole charitable establishment of the empire."[37] While the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir were characterised by a significant emphasis on the rational sciences, Aurangzeb presided over official efforts to shift the madrasa's curricular weight in favour of revealed or transmitted knowledge. As Riaz notes, however, Aurangzeb's plans towards scripturalism were offset by his own willingness to sponsor the establishment of an innovative and influential approach to Muslim education – Farangi Mahal.[38] Despite the occasionally imperfect correspondence between the curriculum prescribed to madrasas of the Mughal era and that which they administered, the active receipt of State patronage during this period ensured that the emperor and the Muslim clergy were, for the most part, on the same page. More

[36] For a detailed account of Islamisation in Bengal, and the factors facilitating this process, see Richard M. Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Eaton suggests that an eastward shift of the major river systems to the eastern part of Bengal allowed Mughal administrators to make large tracts of forested land available for rice cultivation. In order to anchor communities to these nodes of agricultural production, Mughal policy provided tax-free grants to religious figures, thereby creating a religious, land-holding gentry. Through this mechanism, the move away from pre-agrarian economic production facilitated the creation of an Islamic society.
[37] Barbara Metcalf, Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 18-9. Cited in Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 61.
[38] Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 64-5.

profound changes to the region's madrasas would await the advent of colonial rule, when a loss of patronage and prestige compelled the ulama to assume a most insular character. Unwittingly, colonial authorities would come closest to reifying Aurangzeb's ideal typical madrasa landscape – singularly concerned with the revealed and stripped of worldly purpose.

1.2. The colonial era

Much like the Mughals, the British were also intent on patronising a system of education aimed at staffing institutions of the State. An early step in this direction was the establishment of Calcutta Alia Madrasa in 1780. In the words of Warren Hastings, this madrasa would "qualify the sons of Mahomedan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state [and] produce competent officers for Courts of Justice to which students of the Madrassah on the production of certificates of qualification were to be drafted as vacancies occurred."[39] Calcutta Alia Madrasa could comfortably fulfil this purpose so long as its students – then educated in the Dars-e-Nizami tradition – were expected to execute their subsequent professional duties in Persian. But the madrasa's relevance was ensured only by the vestigial practices of the Mughal State. In 1835, colonial authorities declared English the official language of the courts. Nine years later, western-style

[39] Quoted in Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 68.

education was made a prerequisite for government jobs, all but ensuring that "madrassah-educated youth became" unemployable.[40]

Notwithstanding piecemeal changes to the curriculum of Calcutta Alia Madrasa and similar institutions established in its footsteps, it was not until 1915 that the British extended a grant-in-aid scheme aimed at mainstreaming Bengal's madrasas. While patronage was by now a well-tested practice, the grant in aid scheme was novel in that it

> "required adoption of a curriculum focused on math, science, and language, and removal of all reference to religion to a discrete 'religion' class. It also required that educators receive formal teacher training, which gradually shifted teaching from respected local figures, often religious authorities who did not teach as a primary occupation, to full-time educators with teaching certificates issued by colonial authorities."[41]

This unprecedented formula of conditional, incentive-based madrasa reform would inspire the various madrasa modernisation schemes on display in South Asia today. These inaugural reform efforts would also contend with the persisting fact that "incentives" are subjective. Riaz conveys the mixed response they elicited from Bengal's ulama:

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[40] Ibid, p. 70.
[41] Vickie Langohr, "Colonial Education Systems and the Spread of Local Religious Movements: The Cases of British Egypt and Punjab," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2005), p. 162. Cited in Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 70.

> "[T]he reform of 1915 […] created a rift between the Calcutta Madrassah and the madrassahs in eastern Bengal. While the Calcutta Aliya Madrassah was exempted from these changes, other madrassahs had to make the choice, and 240 madrassahs in eastern Bengal accepted the changes […] Many ulama, however, decried this as the colonial administration's machination to isolate the Calcutta Madrassah from the Muslim community at large, and remove the religious disposition of the madrassahs. Ulama who opposed these changes founded new madrassahs that would follow the old curriculum. Consequently two streams within the Aliya madrassah tradition emerged – new-scheme madrassahs, and the old-scheme madrassahs."[42]

The incentives inherent to this offer of grant-in-aid thus underscored extant preferential differences between (new-scheme) madrasas that agreed to reform their syllabi in exchange for monetary support and (old-scheme) madrasas that placed a higher "price" on submission. Since the distinction between new- and old-scheme madrasas only concerned their preferred degrees of theological orientation – not their (un)willingness to affiliate with the State – madrasas of both streams ultimately accepted colonial patronage, albeit under different terms. To standardise the syllabi and examinations of both types of madrasas, the Board of Central Madrassah Examinations, Bengal, was established in the late 1930s – a precursor to its present-day counterparts in West Bengal and Bangladesh. Thus, a flexible colonial policy aimed at modernising Bengal's madrasas simultaneously succeeded in accommodating and affiliating institutions run by Bengal's more theology-oriented and reform-averse ulama. Yet, further afield in the Gangetic plains, the

[42] Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 209.

incipient Deobandi movement would challenge the colonial State's ability to wilfully control the path and direction of Islamisation.

The mother institution of the Deobandi network, the Darul Uloom Deoband, was founded in 1867 in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. From its inception, explains Barbara Metcalf, the madrasa was "able to serve the daily legal and spiritual needs of [Muslim society] apart from government ties."[43] In Robinson's reading, "what Deoband offered was a way of being Muslim with as limited a relationship as possible with the state."[44] Grounding their aversion to government support in practical yet ideological terms, the founding members of the madrasa stressed the potential liabilities of dependence: "As long as the madrasa has no fixed sources of income, it will, God willing, operate as desired. And if it gains any fixed income . . . then the madrasa will lose the fear and hope which inspire submission to God and will lose His hidden help . . . In matters of income . . . let there be a sort of deprivation."[45] "In its organization and its policies," explains Robinson, "the Deoband movement was geared to sustaining Islamic society outside the colonial state."[46] As these accounts suggest, "the Islamic theological school called Deoband served as a historical manifestation of ulama's [...] religio-political activism, resisting colonial power and working to regain the lost pride of Muslims in

[43] Barbara Metcalf, "The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies* (1978): 112.
[44] Francis Robinson, Varieties of South Asian Islam (Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 1988), 4.
[45] Maulana Mohammad Qasim, quoted in Metcalf, "The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India," 115.
[46] Robinson, "Varieties of South Asian Islam," 5.

colonially occupied India."[47] If its ideological tenor was reminiscent of earlier reformist movements indigenous to Bengal, Deoband differentiated itself through its deft adaptation of colonial administrative practices[48]:

> "The ulama of Deoband early tried to establish a system of branch schools which were to follow the pattern of British universities with their affiliating colleges and be subject to control of both curriculum and administration. The ulama were familiar with examples of such institutions […] and they, in turn, set up a somewhat similar system of education. They founded many schools, particularly in the Doab and Rohilkhund which had much the same goals as the mother school: the propagation of reformed religious knowledge and the training of young men for professional religious careers. The schools often submitted their records to Deoband for inspection, sought its approval of major decisions, and received its ulama as both external examiners and distinguished visitors."[49]

Effectively employing British methods of organisation towards their own means, Deobandis succeeded in creating a parallel educational system beyond the immediate legibility of colonial authorities – an educational State within a State. While the Deobandi movement's opposition to the colonial State was most obvious, the former's insistence on autonomous sustenance also served as an oblique

[47] Kabir, Replicating the Deobandi model of Islamic schooling: the case of a Quomi madrasa in a district town of Bangladesh, p. 415.
[48] The most notable reformist movement in 19th century Bengal was the Faraizi movement. See, Shamim Akhter, Faith and Philosophy of Islam (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2009), p. 141.
[49] Metcalf, The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India, p. 133.

dismissal of individuals and ideologies associated with, or generally more favourable towards, the colonial apparatus.

The most prominent target of Deobandi polemic was (and remains) the Barelvi movement, a Hanafi school of thought that "crystallised in the late nineteenth century around the scholar and polymath, Ahmad Riza Khan of Bareilly."[50] Robinson explains how Barelvis set themselves apart – in terms of their religious practice – from fellow-Hanafis of the Deobandi variety:

> The origins of the Barelvis […] are to be found not so much in the movement of revival and reform as in the resistance to it. [Ahmad Riza Khan] used his Hanafi legal scholarship to justify Islam as it had been handed down – a custom-laden Islam which was closely tied to the sufi world of the shrines where believers sought the help of saints to intercede from them with God. If the Deobandis wanted to conserve Islam as they found it in the Hanafi law books of the Islamic middle ages, the Barelvis wished to conserve it as they found it in nineteenth century India. In the manner of the time they proselytised their position, regarding themselves as the true Sunnis, 'Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamaat'.[51]

Robinson suggests that Barelvis additionally differentiated themselves through their relatively favourable attitudes towards the colonial State: "In politics the movement

[50] Robinson, "Varieties of South Asian Islam," p. 7.
[51] Ibid.

was, if anything, pro-British, supporting them during World War One and actually organizing ulama to resist the Khilafat non-cooperation movement of 1919."[52]

By encouraging the emergence of a reformist Islamic ideology, and its rival counter-reformist movement, British rule dramatically altered India's (and indeed Bengal's) madrasa landscape. If the madrasa landscape the British inherited from the Mughals exhibited as its primary fault line the preferential divide between new-scheme and old-scheme madrasas, the British Raj blurred these differences, bequeathing to its post-colonial successor States a landscape characterised overwhelmingly by a new schism: between those willing and unwilling to affiliate with and legitimise a modernising, reform-oriented State.

The concluding phase of Bengal's history was defined by British efforts to divide the province along religious lines. The eastern and western wings of the province were partitioned in 1905 only to be reunited six years later. A second (and permanent) split occurred in 1947 when Bengal's western wing joined India as the state of West Bengal while its eastern wing merged with Pakistan as the province of East Pakistan.[53] The province of East Pakistan would subsequently secede from Pakistan to become a sovereign State – Bangladesh – following the liberation war of 1971. The partition of Bengal presented a critical juncture. The societal products of a shared history were divided between two newly emergent states with diverging

[52] Ibid, p. 8.
[53] For a detailed account of the conditions prompting these events, see Joya Chatterji, Bengal Divided: Hindu communalism and partition, 1932-1947 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

trajectories. Each State would henceforth direct its own sequel to the – more than eight century-old – process of Islamisation.

1.3. West Bengal

Since communal divisions inspired the subcontinent's bloody partition, independent India's founding fathers appreciated the need to forge fraternity amidst diversity. Amongst measures taken to make a Muslim minority at home in a Hindu-majority polity, the right to religious freedom was enshrined in the constitution. Article 26 (a) guaranteed minorities the right to "establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes."[54] Article 30 (1) further ensured minorities "the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."[55] Muslims in India were thus free to establish madrasas towards the "practice and propagation of [their] religion."[56] At the same time, however, the leaders of independent India sought to modernise Indian society by "fostering rational and empirical ways of thought and life."[57] This modernising purpose signified an endorsement of – and continual need for – certain colonial practices, not least those aimed at mainstreaming "outmoded" educational institutions. In 1950, West Bengal took the lead amongst Indian states in reviving British attempts at madrasa reform. The West Bengal Madrasah Education Board was constituted to resume the grant-in-aid system that was earlier orchestrated by the Central Madrasah Education Board.

[54] Constitution of India. Available on the web (http://www.india.gov.in).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Bhikhu Parekh, "Nehru and the National Philosophy of India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26, 1/2 (1991): p. 39.

When the new board commenced its activities, it had only 99 affiliates (97 new-scheme and two old-scheme madrasas) passed down from the colonial era. Administering the grant-in-aid package for another three decades allowed the board to increase its strength to 237 madrasas (163 new-scheme and 74 old-scheme) by 1978.[58] In 1994, the West Bengal state legislature passed the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education Act, giving the state's madrasa board statutory authority along with a slightly revised name: the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education (WBBME). Around the same time, the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the Area Intensive and Madrassa Modernisation Scheme to augment the madrasa reform initiatives of individual states. The original version of this central scheme focused on "provid[ing] basic educational infrastructure and facilities in areas of concentration of educationally backward minorities [and] financial assistance for introduction of [mainstream subjects] in the curriculum of Madrassas and Maktabs […] to initiate the process of modernisation of these traditional institutions."[59] Subsequent variants of the scheme additionally sought to "provide opportunities to students of [madrasas] to acquire education comparable to the National Education System, […] to provide opportunities for vocational training, […] to enhance their opportunities for entering the job market, [and to support] training of teachers appointed under the scheme, for teaching

[58] These numbers are based on data provided by the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education, and are available on the Government of West Bengal Directorate of Madrasah Education website (http://www.wbmadrasahdte.gov.in).
[59] Kameshwar Choudhary, Dilemma of Secularism: State Policy Towards Education of Muslims in India after Independence, in ed. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, Education, Society, and Development: National and International Perspectives (New Delhi: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 2003), p. 178.

modern subjects of science, mathematics, social studies, Hindi and English, to improve their pedagogical skills."[60]

While the State in West Bengal has reformed its recognised madrasas gradually through sporadic interventions, the overall trend has been towards increased State control. Today, WBBME presides over a recognised madrasa landscape that includes three types of sarkari madrasas: junior high madrasas, in which students are taught up to class eight; high madrasas, most of them providing education up to class ten, but some running up to class 12; and, senior madrasas, where students are taught up to class 12. While they can be distinguished on the basis of educational level, the real difference between high (including junior high) and senior madrasas lies in the relative extent of their theological orientation. WBBME acknowledges that "the syllabus and subjects taught in High [and junior high] Madrasahs are the same as [those taught in the] Madhyamik [mainstream secondary education] system, except two subjects – Arabic and Islam Parichay [Introduction to Islam]."[61] Though the system's senior (old-scheme) madrasas have also experienced an incremental (though less severe) dilution of their religious curriculum, these institutions still manage to retain much of their original theological intent. Apart from its role in refashioning recognised madrasas' syllabi, the State has also interfered in the selection and appointment of their teachers – a right the State accorded itself through the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008. Through its

[60] The most recent variant of the scheme is the Scheme to Provide Quality Education in Madrasas, launched by the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development. The scheme's objectives are listed on the ministry's website (http://www.mhrd.gov.in)
[61] West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education website (http://www.wbbme.org).

cumulative efforts in the educational arena, the State presently claims authority over 609 madrasas of which 102 are old-scheme while the remaining 493 exhibit a heavily reformed new-scheme character.

If the State's progress in controlling and redirecting West Bengal's recognised madrasas is characterised by a gradual upward slope, its track record with respect to West Bengal's khariji madrasas is less impressive. Exploiting in full the constitutional provisions for religious freedom and autonomy, Deobandis have succeeded in consolidating and organising their opposition to the post-colonial Indian State. Today, approximately 710 Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal are able to sustain their educational activities independently of State support, and largely under the State's radar. Most of these Deobandi madrasas have chosen to affiliate with Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia, a non-State madrasa board representing the Deobandi maslak in West Bengal. In addition to these madrasas of the Deobandi variety, the pool of khariji madrasas in West Bengal includes several hundred Barelvi madrasas that continue to resist recognition. These khariji Barelvis are simultaneously affiliated with two non-State madrasa boards: with the All India Ulema and Mashaikh Board at the national level, and with a West Bengal-specific body called Majlis Ulema-e-Islam.

1.4. Bangladesh

Between 1947 and 1971, Bangladesh transitioned from being the eastern half of the erstwhile province of Bengal to become the eastern wing of a newly established Pakistan before ultimately achieving sovereign statehood in 1971. While the partition in 1947 was characterised by religious fault lines, Bangladesh's liberation in 1971 resulted from an ethno-linguistic tussle between East Pakistan's Bengali-speaking Muslims and a Punjabi-dominated western wing. Though Bengalis constituted a majority of Pakistan's population, Punjabis monopolised the State's coercive apparatus and effectively dominated all State institutions – a cause for disenchantment amongst the country's Bengali population. The growing appeal of language as a basis for social identification and mobilisation (in place of religious solidarity) was further encouraged by a perceived West Pakistani practice of denigrating East Pakistanis' religious credentials: "West Pakistanis viewed their East Pakistani co-religionists as inferiors and converts from low-caste Hindus […] During the liberation war, the Pakistani junta played up its Islamic image and branded the Bengalis (Bangladeshis) as kafirs (infidels)."[62] Additionally, the ability of the liberation struggle to "[open] up a space for a modernist interpretation of Islam within an otherwise ardently Muslim population," derived from the behaviour of Islamic parties (most notably Jamaat-e-Islami) which actively colluded with the Pakistan army against pro-liberation forces.[63] To forestall future manipulation of

[62] Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and Muhammad Yeahia Akhter, "The Ubiquity of Islam: Religion and Society in Bangladesh." Pacific Affairs, Vol. 60, No. 2 (1987), p. 202.
[63] Bano, The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrasas of Pakistan, p. 50.

religious identity, the leaders of an independent Bangladesh thus adopted secularism as a State principle and prohibited "the abuse of religion for political purposes."[64]

Though significant in shuffling the identities of Bangladeshi Muslims, the impact of the liberation struggle on madrasa reform efforts should not be overstated. Yes, the post-liberation climate conduced to the continuance of madrasa reform efforts, but it also benefited from an expansion of the Alia madrasa system achieved during the twenty-four years of Pakistani rule. In 1952, there were 590 Alia madrasas in East Pakistan. A decade later, their tally increased to 1,091. By 1967, the eastern province had a total of 1351 Alia madrasas – 86 new-scheme and 1265 old-scheme.[65] These statistics reveal a balance of old-scheme to new-scheme madrasas that contrasts with the one seen in West Bengal, where new-scheme madrasas were numerically superior. But Riaz downplays the real difference between the two types of Alia madrasa in Bangladesh:

> In some ways, by the mid-sixties the differences between old- and new-scheme madrassahs [in Bangladesh] became blurred, because by then a large number of the old-scheme madrassahs had adopted many facets of curriculum reforms, and few new-scheme madrassahs were established. Besides, a large number of reformed madrassahs were converted into schools.[66]

[64] The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Article 12. Available on the web (http://www.bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd).
[65] Riaz, Faithful Education, p. 214-5.
[66] Ibid. 214.

Apart from the narrowing gap between the old- and new-scheme varieties, however, this account also conveys a gradual extinction of the relatively few new-scheme madrasas left behind in East Pakistan following partition.

Endowed with a predominantly old-scheme landscape, Bangladesh began its own madrasa reform efforts soon after its liberation. In 1978, the Madrasah Education Ordinance was promulgated to establish the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board with "powers of regulation, supervision, control, development and improvement of Madrasah education in Bangladesh."[67] This board would subsequently manage the gradual mainstreaming of a State-run madrasa system comprising of five progressively theology-oriented levels of education: ebtidayee (primary level from class 1 through 5), dakhil (secondary level from class 6 through 10), alim (higher secondary level from class 11 through 12), fazil (two-year post-secondary level), and kamil (two-year post-graduate level).[68] In 1985, the government of Bangladesh made the dakhil certificate equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) offered in the general education system. Two years later, the government rendered the alim certificate equivalent to the general system's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). The process of mainstreaming Bangladesh's Alia system was completed in 2006, when Bangladesh's parliament passed the Islamic University Amendment Act,

[67] The Madrasah Education Ordinance, 1978. Chapter II. Available on the web (http://www.bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd).
[68] For a more detailed overview of each level and its curriculum, see Amr Abdalla, A.N.M. Raisuddin, and Suleiman Hussein, Bangladesh Educational Assessment: Pre-primary and Primary Madrasah Education in Bangladesh, Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, United States Agency for International Development, July 2004.

making the fazil and kamil degrees equivalent to BA and MA degrees, respectively. With a current strength of 16,551 madrasas, the Alia system employs 220,000 teachers and educates up to a third of Bangladesh's school-going population.[69]

Much like its counterpart in West Bengal, the Bangladeshi State has failed to extend these successes to the large body of Deobandi (qaumi) madrasas over which it has no influence. While estimates vary, at least 5,000 and possibly in excess of 10,000 qaumi madrasas operate independently without the State's support or oversight. But Bangladesh's qaumi landscape differs from West Bengal's khariji sector in two important respects. First, while unrecognised (khariji) madrasas in West Bengal include madrasas of the Deobandi and Barelvi varieties, unrecognised (qaumi) madrasas in Bangladesh are represented exclusively by Deobandis. In other words, unlike its counterpart in West Bengal, the post-colonial State in Bangladesh has succeeded in affiliating all non-Deobandi Hanafi madrasas. The second factor differentiating Bangladesh's unrecognised landscape from West Bengal's relates to qaumi madrasas' organisational behaviours. While unrecognised Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal affiliate with a single non-State board (Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia), Deobandi madrasas in Bangladesh spread their loyalties across a range of competing qaumi boards – a phenomenon explored in greater detail in chapter four.

[69] The number of madrasas in, and teachers employed by, Bangladesh's alia madrasa system were provided by Sheikh Abu Zafar Ahmad (curriculum specialist at Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board), interviewed by author on January 11, 2012. The student enrolment estimate was obtained from Bano, The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrasas of Pakistan, p. 47.

The brief historical overview presented above establishes the shared historical experience of our two chosen settings, introducing the different types of madrasas active within them. It shows that madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh can be classified according to their recognition status (sarkari/Alia or khariji/qaumi), educational level, and school of thought. Madrasas in West Bengal include sarkari madrasas (junior high, high, and senior), and khariji madrasas (Deobandi and Barelvi), while Bangladesh's madrasa sector is occupied by Alia madrasas (ebtidayee, dakhil, alim, fazil, and kamil) and qaumi madrasas (only Deobandi). It also suggests that qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh can additionally be classified on the basis of the non-State board with which they choose to affiliate. This section also tells us how these contemporary madrasa types relate to the old- and new-scheme categories prevalent during the colonial period: the old-scheme prefix applies to senior madrasas in West Bengal, and to all recognised madrasas in Bangladesh; and, the new-scheme label corresponds to junior high and high madrasas in West Bengal, without any present-day equivalent in Bangladesh.

The following section lays out the study's research methodology, revealing which amongst these madrasa types are represented in each of the empirical chapters that follow, and how their representatives were selected.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Context selection

Before introducing the specific types of cases (individual madrasas) selected for comparison, it is important to justify the selection of contexts within (and across) which these madrasas are studied and compared. Though it may seem unusual to compare a country (Bangladesh) to a sub-national unit (West Bengal), three factors make these contexts fit for comparison. Two of these factors – discussed in section one above – represent commonalities while the third involves points of divergence.

The first factor encouraging the pairing of our chosen contexts is their common history, illustrated in section one above. Particularly relevant here is their shared exposure – since the beginning of the thirteenth century – to Islam and Islamisation. As chapter three reveals in more detail, this process of Islamisation bequeathed to the entirety of Bengal an ideologically diverse Muslim population. This diversity is most visibly expressed through the different schools of thought with which madrasas affiliate. It is also represented by two ideological strands specific to Bengal: one exhibiting syncretic religious practices, and the other guided by a more scripturalist reading of Islam. Though West Bengal and Bangladesh have operated as separate administrative entities since the early part of the twentieth century, they host similarly diverse madrasa landscapes shaped by the same historical process.

Second, both contexts are home to the puzzling variation displayed in the educational arena. In West Bengal, the State's ability to recognise 609 (sarkari) madrasas coincides with its inability to interest more than 710 unrecognised (khariji) madrasas in its scheme. In Bangladesh, the State's success in recognising 16,551 Alia madrasas is offset by its failure to engage the more than five thousand qaumi madrasas dotting the landscape.[70]

The third factor justifying our context selection relates to their divergences. Despite their historical commonalities, West Bengal and Bangladesh are characterised by two important differences associated with their divergent post-colonial trajectories. The first concerns their demographics. In West Bengal, Muslims constitute a minority (25 percent) of the Hindu-majority population. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, Muslims form a majority (90 percent) of the population and control the institutions of State.

The second difference between our contexts involves their varying degrees of electoral competition. West Bengal stands out amongst Indian states for its long history of single-party rule. This quality is revealed most convincingly by the ability of a single political party (the Indian National Congress) to govern the state for the two decades from 1947 to 1967 and of another party (the Communist Party of India – Marxist) to better this feat by winning seven consecutive assembly elections in the

[70] The precise number of qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh remains unknown. Fieldwork findings – discussed in more detail in chapter five – suggest that their population is at least 5,500. But some respondents place their numbers in excess of 10,000.

34 years from 1977 to 2011. Bangladesh presents a very different political landscape. Though the first two post-liberation decades were dominated by military coups and martial law, the subsequent period has been characterised by vibrant (albeit polarising and destabilising) electoral competition. Dictated by the anti-incumbency cycle, the country's two most prominent leaders – Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh National Party and Sheikh Hasina of the Bangladesh Awami League – have rotated the prime ministerial seat since 1991. In their ongoing effort towards political one-upmanship, these leaders and their parties routinely seek to establish and secure their influence by politicising a broad range of institutions, including madrasas. These two distinctions thus allow us to learn how madrasas with similar ideological repertoires and historical antecedents behave in different contexts.

2.2. Case selection

This study relies on the case study method, which offers the distinctive advantage of helping to capture "the detail, richness, completeness [and] wholeness" of explanation that only in-depth analysis can provide.[71] This quality is particularly important in the context of this project, since the decision to accept or refuse recognition can only be understood by looking closely at the individual madrasa and the people there with associated. The primary data presented in this study derives primarily from elite interviews conducted with madrasas personnel. In order to

[71] John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49.

situate this data in an informed context, however, the study also relies on the insights of (and/or data provided by) government officials, NGO workers, and journalists with knowledge of the madrasa sector. Wherever possible, the study also draws upon publications circulated by individual madrasas. These sources proved helpful in capturing characteristics explicitly transmitted through writings and appeals of a madrasa and its representatives. Though an initial effort was made to separate the fieldwork process into an exploratory round consisting of open-ended semi-structured interviews, and a subsequent confirmatory round of closed-ended interviews, a neat division was difficult to sustain. Since confirmation of one detail often encouraged exploration of another, the exploratory objective was never exhausted, accompanying the confirmatory exercise throughout the course of fieldwork.

Though it uses the same data collection method throughout, this study employs a slightly different case selection formula for its exploration of each arena. These approaches are described in detail below.

Educational arena (West Bengal)

Our concerns in the educational arena revolve around this question: why do some madrasas accept recognition while others do not? Answering this puzzle requires us to collect the attitudes and opinions of madrasas that have accepted State support, and to contrast these views with those exhibited by our counterfactuals –

unrecognised madrasas. In West Bengal, ten cases were examined to analyse the views and decisions of recognised madrasas. This sample comprises senior madrasas located in five districts of the state.

As noted in the previous section, senior madrasas are not the only type of recognised madrasas in West Bengal. Madrasas recognised by the State also include high madrasas and junior high madrasas. These latter two categories, however, were excluded from this study for good reason. Amongst sarkari madrasas in West Bengal, senior madrasas have most in common with private khariji madrasas. Both types of madrasa are initiated by a local community-based initiative, and both are characterised by an emphasis on religious education. In fact, it is correct to say that senior madrasas are khariji madrasas until the time they acquire recognition by the State. High and junior high madrasas, on the other hand, are unfit for comparison with khariji madrasas. The former two categories of recognised madrasas are madrasas only in name. They are established by Muslims, for the purpose of educating Muslims, in predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods. But they differ from other madrasas in one very important respect. High and junior high madrasas are normally intended, from the outset, to function as mainstream secular schools. Their contribution to religious instruction is limited to the inclusion of just one elementary subject – "Introduction to Islam." Though some high and junior high madrasas did in fact exist as private khariji madrasas prior to the partition of the subcontinent, such cases are few. Moreover, since they modernised gradually, over many decades, their experiences are difficult to examine in the context of the State's

more recent madrasa modernisation efforts. This protracted evolution also makes it difficult to locate individuals who were associated with these institutions at crucial points, and who would be capable of providing reliable accounts of their trajectories. Focusing solely on these high and junior high madrasas, many observers have tended to exaggerate the success of West Bengal's modernisation efforts. The president of the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education proudly points out that four madrasas in West Bengal have more Hindu than Muslim students.[72] In reality, however, these madrasas are largely synonymous with mainstream secular schools and unfit for comparison with unrecognised khariji madrasas. Golam Rasul, the headmaster of Khajutty High Madrasa in Howrah, convincingly articulates this point: "This school is the same as any regular government school. Calling it a madrasa only helps it attract minority welfare funds. This is all eyewash."[73] Soharab Hossain, the former president of the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education also acknowledges that West Bengal's 507 high [and junior high] madrasas have "the same curriculum as mainstream schools."[74]

If high and junior high madrasas represent the body of new-scheme madrasas that tend towards the mainstream, senior madrasas are carriers of the old-scheme tradition. West Bengal's 102 senior madrasas were established with, and continue to be guided by, a religious purpose. It is no surprise that madrasas of the new-

[72] The four schools are the Chandrakona Islamia Junior High Madrasa, the Ekmukha Safiabad Junior High Madrasa, the Orgaam Chatuspalli Junior High Madrasa, and the Kasba Mahasa Makhdumia Junior High Madrasa, located in Midnapur, Coochbehar, Bardhaman, and Uttar Dinajpur, respectively.
[73] Golam Rasul (headmaster, Khajutty High Madrasa), interviewed by author, July 30, 2009.
[74] Soharab Hossain (former president, West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education), interviewed by author, July 20, 2009.

scheme variety, with their attendant enthusiasm for secular education, should embrace a State-led modernisation scheme. What is more puzzling is the willingness of old-scheme madrasas with a predominant, perhaps even exclusive, concern for deeni talim to partake in this programme. This study thus limits its examination of recognised madrasas to the 102 (or 17 percent) that exhibit(ed) theological purpose. These old-scheme madrasas are (or were) not dissimilar to khariji madrasas in terms of their theological orientation, yet a lower threshold for engagement with the State placed them on the opposite side of the recognition puzzle.

The ten senior madrasas sampled in West Bengal were drawn from five districts – Howrah, Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, and Hooghly.[75] While Kolkata is an urban centre with a population of over 15 million, the other four districts include a mix of suburban towns and rural villages. These combined qualities make it easier to control for urban-rural differences that could potentially surface. Selecting cases from these five districts also allows one to control for proximity to an international border. North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas are border districts on the India-Bangladesh border, while Kolkata, Howrah, and Hooghly are inland districts.[76] The inclusion of Hooghly was important also because the district houses Furfura Sharif, a popular Sufi shrine visited (and venerated) by many of West Bengal's Muslims. To control for size, an effort was made to include,

[76] Articles in the Indian media have often (albeit casually) suggested that border districts in West Bengal and Nepal house madrasas with different ideologies than those further inland. Without seeking to endorse such arguments – which find no support in any empirical work – this study includes madrasas in border and inland districts only to ensure the representativeness of its sample.

amongst both recognised and unrecognised categories, a mix of large, medium, and small madrasas.

One could argue that a sample size of ten is small, and potentially unrepresentative of West Bengal's 102 senior madrasas. It is important to note, however, that Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, and Howrah together house only 42 senior madrasas. This means our sample represents 24 percent of senior madrasas in our chosen districts – not an insignificant proportion.

One may also question the representativeness of the five chosen districts. But these five districts are not characterised by any special qualities that should make their individual madrasa landscapes very different from those in the fourteen remaining (excluded) districts of West Bengal. Table 1.1 conveys the general representativeness of the chosen districts using three indicators: 1) the proportion of Muslims in the district's population, 2) the proportion of recognised madrasas in the district that are theology-oriented (senior), and 3) the proportion of theology-oriented madrasas in the district that have accepted recognition.[77]

[77] A fourth possible indicator – the concentration of government schools in each district – was left out as it is not particularly relevant here. This indicator would be more useful if the objective was to determine why parents/students choose government-run madrasas over mainstream government schools. The total number of theology-oriented madrasas was calculated as the sum of recognised senior madrasas and unrecognised Deobandi madrasas in each district. Since Deobandis represent the large majority of unrecognised madrasas in West Bengal, we can exclude unrecognised Barelvi madrasas for the purpose of these estimates without misrepresenting the unrecognised madrasa landscape. The proportions of Muslims in each district are based on data from the 2001 census (http://censusindia.gov.in/). Statistics relating to senior madrasas in each district were obtained from the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education. The number of khariji (Deobandi) madrasas in each district was obtained from Siddiqullah Chowdhury (president of Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia), interviewed by author, October 2, 2009. There are no senior madrasas in Darjeeling. The district also does not have any unrecognised (Deobandi) madrasas. Darjeeling does however have five government-recognised madrasas (two high and three junior high) of the new-scheme variety. Midnapore district was divided into two districts (East and West Midnapore) in 2002. Since Siddiqullah Chowdhury was only able to provide the number

SELECTED DISTRICTS			
District	**Muslims (% of population)**	**Senior Madrasas (% of recognised madrasas)**	**Senior Madrasas (% of theology-oriented madrasas)**
Hooghly	15%	23%	26%
Howrah	24%	9%	13%
Kolkata	20%	11%	17%
North 24 Parganas	24%	33%	30%
South 24 Parganas	33%	23%	9%
Average	23%	20%	19%
EXCLUDED DISTRICTS			
District	**Muslims (% of population)**	**Senior Madrasas (% of recognised madrasas)**	**Senior Madrasas (% of theology-oriented madrasas)**
Bankura	8%	7%	6%
Bardhaman	20%	9%	4%
Birbhum	35%	13%	5%
Coochbehar	24%	9%	4%
Dakshin Dinajpur	24%	21%	12%
Darjeeling	5%	N/A	N/A
Jalpaiguri	15%	9%	5%
Malda	50%	14%	36%
Midnapore	11%	14%	8%
Murshidabad	64%	16%	20%
Nadia	25%	18%	8%
Puruliya	7%	20%	6%
Uttar Dinajpur	47%	17%	17%
WEST BENGAL	25%	17%	14%

Table 1.1: District-wise madrasa landscape in West Bengal

Insofar as the first indicator goes, the average proportion of Muslims in our five districts is 23 percent, which is very similar to the statewide average of 25 percent. Approaching the state average on this indicator also means that we fail to represent the two outlier districts – Murshidabad and Malda – where Muslims constitute a majority of the population. Yet, since the decision to accept or refuse recognition involves a contract with a statewide authority, there is little reason to suggest that

of khariji madrasas in Midnapore as a whole, the district is represented above in its pre-2002 form. The district's division has not changed much in terms of the second indicator. Senior madrasas make up 11 and 16 percent of all recognised madrasas in East and West Midnapore, respectively.

the demographics of these two excluded districts should significantly impact their recognition landscapes. This point is borne out through the next two indicators.

The second indicator concerns the extent of theological purpose demonstrated by recognised madrasas in each district. It tells us that 20 percent of recognised madrasas in our five selected districts are theology-oriented. This is slightly higher than the statewide average of 17 percent. Malda and Murshidabad are by no means exceptional on this indicator, with senior madrasas in these districts representing 17 and 14 percent of recognised madrasas, respectively.

The third indicator speaks directly to this study's central puzzle, conveying the general willingness of theology-oriented madrasas in each district to affiliate with the State. As the table illustrates, the proportion of theology-oriented madrasas in these districts accepting recognition ranges from 9 percent in South 24 Parganas to 30 percent in North 24 Parganas, with an average of 19 percent. This number is again slightly higher than the statewide average of 14 percent. This average is also reflected in Murshidabad, where 20 percent of theology-oriented madrasas are willing to accept recognition. This proportion is much above average in Malda (36 percent) but not significantly higher than the proportion in our included district of North 24 Parganas.

Table 1.1 thus conveys the fact that our chosen districts host madrasa landscapes that are generally representative of West Bengal's larger madrasa landscape. It also

shows that the recognition statistics expressed in the excluded districts – including Muslim-majority Malda and Murshidabad – are by no means exceptional. If our five chosen districts are representative, they are also fairly inclusive, accounting for 37 percent of West Bengal's total population and 36 percent of its Muslims.

The senior madrasas sampled in West Bengal are listed in Table 1.2. Ideally, these cases would have been randomly selected from a list of madrasas in the state.[78] But this option was ruled out for two reasons. First, certain variables (such as the relative size and wealth of recognised madrasas) could only be determined, and controlled for, by consulting the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education (WBBME). Second, the board requires that its permission be sought before visiting madrasas under its jurisdiction. This next-best method of case selection had obvious down-sides. Despite an explicit request to allow as broad a range of recognition dates as possible, the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education only granted access to madrasas that received recognition in or before 1982. This constraint introduced four potential problems.

Madrasa Name	Location	Setting	Date of Recognition
Amdanga Kendriya Siddiquia Hamidia Rahana Senior Madrasa	North 24 Parganas	Rural	1975
Aminpur Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Senior Madrasa	North 24 Parganas	Rural	1973
Ghutiarisharif S.S.G.M.N.S. Senior Madrasa	South 24 Parganas	Rural	1975
Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa	Howrah	Rural	1961
Majaherul Ulum Islamia Senior Madrasa	Howrah	Rural	1975
Kushadanga Anwarul Ulum Siddiquia Senior Madrasa	Howrah	Rural	1971
Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa	Kolkata	Urban	1973
Cheragram Hejbullah Darul Ulum Senior Madrasa	Hooghly	Rural	1982
Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa	Hooghly	Rural	1909
Kalubati Bhagatipur Siddiquia Senior Madrasa	Hooghly	Rural	1982

Table 1.2: Senior (recognised) madrasas sampled in West Bengal

[78] Such a list is provided on the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education (WBBME) website (http://wbmadrasahboard.org). It lists each recognised madrasa's name, location, and date of recognition.

First, owing to the time that has lapsed since the 1970s, none of the headmasters who made the decision to opt for recognition are currently present in these recognised madrasas. Consequently, this study was forced to rely on the recollections of other madrasa representatives who were closely acquainted with the goings on immediately prior to recognition. These representatives include teachers who have been affiliated with the madrasa since the time of recognition, and current headmasters who became observers to the recognition proceedings by virtue of their residence in the madrasa's neighbourhood. In this respect, the close-knit nature of the rural setup was of significant help in ensuring that respondents provided input of reasonable accuracy.

A second potential problem presented by this sub-optimal method of case selection is that the majority of senior madrasas sampled in this study were recognised during the Congress era. As fieldwork findings illustrate, however, this constraint is less problematic than it might seem. Interviews with madrasas that accepted recognition suggest that these institutions viewed recognition as a contract with the State; not with a particular political party. Moreover, the distribution of madrasas accepting recognition reveals that these institutions are more concerned with the specifics of the package on offer than with the offering entity. Out of the 102 senior madrasas under the State's jurisdiction, sixty-nine accepted recognition under Congress rule while twenty-seven did so in the post-1977 CPI-M era. As subsequent chapters illustrate, this relative decrease in madrasas' propensities for recognition

lies in a gradual evolution in the meaning (and relative appeal) of recognition. Though a madrasa's decision is made in a given context, which reflects the policies of a particular political party (in this case the CPI-M), this decision remains uninspired by any political affiliation or preference. The khariji madrasa's perspective further suggests that the Congress to CPI-M transition in West Bengal is relatively unimportant in the larger recognition puzzle. Each khariji madrasa representative interviewed in this study agrees that the decision to accept or refuse recognition is completely independent of the political party in power. Furthermore, all khariji madrasas that were active during the Congress era refused recognition then as they do now. The more recent political transition from the CPI-M to the Trinamool Congress is equally unimportant in the context of our recognition puzzle. The last senior madrasa to accept recognition signed up for the scheme in 1998, suggesting that the madrasa landscape has remained more or less intact since then.

A third potential problem associated with this case selection method is the possibility that WBBME only made available those madrasas that held favourable views towards the State and its recognition programme. As chapter two explains, however, this concern is resolved by the fact that three out of the ten senior madrasas sampled in West Bengal exhibit relatively unfavourable views towards recognition. They regret the recognition decisions made by their predecessors many years ago, and claim they would decide against recognition in the present context.

Going through WBBME also introduced a fourth issue: the predominantly rural presence of our sampled senior madrasas (conveyed in table 1.2). While the sample may appear to neglect senior madrasas in urban quarters, the fact is that West Bengal's senior madrasas are overwhelmingly located in rural settings. This rural bias is evident from Kolkata's madrasa landscape. This district – West Bengal's most developed and unequivocally urban – houses only one of West Bengal's 102 senior madrasas.[79]

The khariji madrasas sampled in West Bengal appear in table 1.3. Our khariji sample includes fourteen madrasas located across five districts. Four of these districts – North 24 Parganas, Howrah, Kolkata, and Hooghly – are the same as those used for our recognised sample. In place of South 24 Parganas, however, our khariji sample visits Bardhaman. The latter is an important district to enlist as it is home to West Bengal's largest khariji madrasa and also includes a madrasa run by Siddiqullah Chowdhury, West Bengal's most prominent madrasa-based political entrepreneur. Bardhaman's inclusion does not make our chosen set any less representative in terms of the three indicators in table 1.1.[80] Moreover, our khariji set of districts is similar to our sarkari set in terms of inclusiveness, accounting for 37 percent of West Bengal's total and 31 percent of the state's Muslim population.

[79] The lone senior madrasa in Kolkata is Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa.
[80] The averages for West Bengal on indicators one, two, and three were 25%, 17%, and 14%, respectively. The corresponding numbers for our new set of five districts are 21%, 17%, and 18%.

Madrasa Name	Location	Setting	Maslak
Maheshgodi Islamia Madrasa	North 24 Parganas	Rural	Deobandi
Jamia Islamia Madania	North 24 Parganas	Urban	Deobandi
Madrasa Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya	North 24 Parganas	Urban	Deobandi
Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Sr. Madrasa	North 24 Parganas	Rural	Other Hanafi
Madrasa Salimia Faizul Islam	North 24 Parganas	Urban	Barelvi
Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom	Bardhaman	Rural	Deobandi
Jamia Islamia Arabia Kharajgram	Bardhaman	Rural	Deobandi
Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom	Bardhaman	Rural	Deobandi
Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia	Howrah	Urban	Barelvi
Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam	Howrah	Urban	Barelvi
Jamia Qasim-Ul-Uloom	Kolkata	Urban	Deobandi
Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya	Kolkata	Urban	Barelvi
Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia	Kolkata	Urban	Other Hanafi
Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa	Hooghly	Rural	Other Hanafi

Table 1.3: Khariji (unrecognised) madrasas sampled in West Bengal

There are more than 170 khariji madrasas in our five chosen districts.[81] To make our relatively small sample of fourteen madrasas representative of this larger khariji universe, every effort was made to ensure it reflects diversity of maslak (Deobandi, Barelvi, and other Hanafi), size (large and small), and financial endowment (wealthy and less so). Guided by this requirement for diversity, and in absence of any comprehensive list of khariji madrasas in West Bengal, this study had to rely on a top-down approach to select its khariji candidates. This method involved locating prominent ulama associated with each school of thought, and then expanding the khariji sample by progressively approaching each interviewee's contacts in a process of snowballing.[82] Initial contact with Deobandi representatives was made by approaching Siddiqullah Chowdhury, the president of Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia, an umbrella representing Deobandi madrasas across West

[81] According to Siddiqullah Chowdhury, there are 170 Deobandi madrasas in these five districts. One can therefore expect the total number of khariji madrasas (including Barelvis) in these districts to be slightly higher.
[82] In addition to the contacts of madrasa representatives, this process also relied on the personal contacts of NGO (namely Vikramshila and Banga Education Society) representatives.

Bengal.[83] Influential Barelvis were contacted through the All India Ulema and Mashaikh Board, a Lucknow-based organisation representing Barelvis throughout India.[84] As chapter three explains in more detail. West Bengal also hosts Hanafis who consider themselves neither Deobandi nor Barelvi. Most of these "other" Hanafis affiliate with a family of saints [pirs] in Hooghly's town of Furfura and can suitably be called Furfura Hanafis.[85] Representatives of this school of thought were located in Furfura, in madrasas attached to the pir's shrine. Although this top-down method is non-random, there are two reasons to consider the khariji sample adequately representative. First, the snowballing process was concluded only when the sample included a mix of maslaks, with each maslak's representatives varying in wealth and size. And second, as chapters two and three indicate, these fourteen khariji madrasas exhibit considerable diversity in terms of their ideologies and thresholds for recognition.

Educational arena (Bangladesh)

In order to decipher the thoughts and decisions of Bangladesh's recognised madrasas, this study samples ten Alia madrasas spread across three districts. As in West Bengal, our recognised sample in Bangladesh focuses only on the most theology-oriented madrasas in the Alia sector – kamil madrasas. As explained in

[83] Contact with Siddiqullah Chowdhury was established with the help of scholars/researchers (Masooda Bano and Padmaja Nair) who have previously conducted fieldwork on West Bengal's madrasas
[84] Shahnawaz Varsi (interviewed by author, April 25, 2013) is based in All India Ulema and Mashaikh Board's Delhi office. He provided contact details of Barelvi madrasa representatives in West Bengal.
[85] Fazlur Rahman, the headmaster of Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatiya in Kolkata also identifies as Hanafi without subscribing to any further division (Deobandi or Barelvi). He also does not affiliate with Furfura's pirs, and prefers to be called "Islami." His maslak and views are discussed in greater detail in chapters three and four.

section one above, Alia madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh evolved somewhat differently. In West Bengal, to focus on senior madrasas is to single out theology-oriented madrasas of the old-scheme variety and to exclude new-scheme madrasas. In Bangladesh, however, new-scheme madrasas were assimilated into the mainstream schooling system, leaving a body of Alia madrasas that was predominantly old-scheme in character. While most of these old-scheme madrasas began at elementary levels – ebtidayee, dakhil and alim – a minority expanded to include higher levels of education – fazil and kamil. Despite the old-scheme origins of Alia madrasas across the board, it is possible to single out kamil madrasas as the most theology-oriented in the Alia system. Students at kamil madrasas are able to develop religious specialisation by pursuing a master's degree in one of four tracks: Hadith [Prophetic traditions], Tafsir [Quranic commentary], Arabic literature, and Fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence]. In terms of their extent of theological orientation, kamil madrasas are thus comparable to Bangladesh's unrecognised qaumi madrasas.

Our sample of ten kamil madrasas accounts for a small minority (five percent) of the 194 kamil madrasas across Bangladesh. It is more representative in the narrower context of our chosen districts, however, accounting for 31 percent of the 38 kamil madrasas in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet. Each of these three districts was selected for convincing reasons. Dhaka is the country's capital city and the administrative centre of the Alia system. It houses the headquarters of the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board, as well as the country's oldest Alia madrasa – Dhaka Government

Alia Madrasa. Dhaka is also home to Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh – an umbrella organisation with a membership of more than 3,700 qaumi (unrecognised) madrasas – making it an equally important location in the context of our counterfactuals. Dhaka's inclusion is also relevant in the context of the political arena. As the country's political nerve centre, it is the site where political entrepreneurs – including those from the madrasa sector – are most visibly active. If Dhaka is an urban sprawl, Chittagong – organised as a patchwork of villages – blends urban and rural localities. Chittagong is home to several Alia madrasas, including one of Bangladesh's largest and most prominent – Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa. But Chittagong is best known for its unrecognised madrasas. In fact, the largest and second largest qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh are located in Chittagong's suburbs of Hathazari and Patiya, respectively.[86] The district is also home to a regional qaumi madrasa board – Ittehad ul Madaris. Sylhet's inclusion in this study is meaningful as the district is home to the dargah [shrine] of Hazrat Shahjalal, Bangladesh's most venerated pir [saint]. The setting thus allows us to study how kamil and qaumi representatives view this Sufi tradition, and how the latter relates to their recognition decisions. Like Chittagong, Sylhet also hosts its own regional qaumi madrasa board – Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh.

These three districts are not particularly representative when viewed in terms of numbers alone: they represent only five percent of the country's 64 districts,

[86] Since these two madrasas are affiliated with rival qaumi boards, Chittagong also informs our analysis of the organisational arena, allowing us to understand why madrasas in a given locality choose to join one board over another.

accounting for 16 percent of Bangladesh's population, 20 percent of its kamil madrasas, and an unknown minority of the country's 5,000 to 10,000 qaumi madrasas.[87] Yet, as mentioned above, these districts are representative in that they present three distinct landscapes in which to explore the recognition decisions, organisational behaviours, and political proclivities of sampled madrasas: one is home to the headquarters of the State-run madrasa board, the second hosts Bangladesh's most influential qaumi madrasas, and the third is characterised by a longstanding Sufi tradition. Moreover, since the three largest qaumi boards are headquartered in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet, including these districts allows us to cover three of Bangladesh's five prominent qaumi boards in our discussion of inter-madrasa relations in the organisational arena.[88]

The ten sampled kamil madrasas (listed in table 1.4) were selected from a comprehensive list of Bangladesh's Alia madrasas. This list – obtained from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) – includes madrasas' contact information and location details, allowing them to be contacted directly without reliance on intermediaries.[89]

[87] According to preliminary results of Bangladesh's 2011 Population and Housing Census, the three districts have a combined population of 22,788,000 while Bangladesh's total population is 142,316,000. These statistics are available on the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics website (http://www.bbs.gov.bd)
[88] The two excluded boards are Tanzeem ul Madaris located in Bogura (North Bengal) and a regional board (also called Befaqul Madaris) located in Gopalganj (South Bengal).
[89] This direct contact eliminates the constraints faced in West Bengal, where madrasas were contacted through the State-run madrasa board. With the exclusion of one madrasa, all kamil madrasas contacted in Bangladesh responded favourably to interview requests. There is therefore no reason to believe the sample is biased in favour of responsive madrasas.

Madrasa Name	Location	Setting	Date of Recognition
Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa	Chittagong	Urban	1980
Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa	Chittagong	Urban	–
Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa	Chittagong	Urban	1954
Wajedia Kamil Madrsa	Chittagong	Suburban	1939
Baitush Sharaf Adarsha Kamil Madrasa	Chittagong	Urban	1985
Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa	Dhaka	Urban	1977
Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa	Dhaka	Urban	1978
Modinatul Ulum Model In Boys Kamil Madrasa	Dhaka	Urban	1977
Mohakhali Darul Ulum Hossainiah Kamil Madrasa	Dhaka	Urban	1977
Hazrat Shajalal Darussunah Yaqubia Kamil Madrasa	Sylhet	Urban	1985

Table 1.4: Kamil (recognised) madrasas sampled in Bangladesh[90]

Table 1.5 lists the 13 unrecognised [qaumi] madrasas sampled in Bangladesh. Since this sample was subject to the same constraints encountered in West Bengal – a small number of madrasas must adequately represent an enormous qaumi universe – it was selected in a similarly top-down manner. Unlike West Bengal, where unrecognised madrasas are divided along maslak lines, Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas are uniformly Deobandi.[91] The diversity of the qaumi landscape was instead conveyed by representing the views and voices associated with each qaumi board. The representatives of Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh were contacted at the board's office in Dhaka. Ulama in charge of Ittehad ul Madaris were located at the board's flagship madrasa – Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya in Chittagong. Initial contact with the Sylhet-based board – Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh – was established through Abdul Basit, the board's secretary and the principal of Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees. Starting with these first points of contact, a process of snowballing ensured that the qaumi sample was progressively expanded to include

[90] Representatives of Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa were unsure about the madrasa's year of recognition.
[91] As chapter four explains in more detail, all non-Deobandi Hanafi madrasas in Bangladesh have accepted recognition. There are unrecognised madrasas of the Ahl-e-Hadith maslak, but these fall outside the Hanafi fold.

affiliates of each board. As in West Bengal, this process was guided by the additional objective of maximising diversity of size, wealth, and location (urban and rural).

Madrasa Name	Location	Setting	Board
Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya	Chittagong	Rural	Ittehad ul Madaris
Madrasa Rashidiya	Chittagong	Rural	Befaqul Madaris
Al Jamiatul Islamia	Chittagong	Urban	Ittehad ul Madaris
Jamiah Darul a'arif Islamiah	Chittagong	Urban	Ittehad ul Madaris
Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam	Chittagong	Rural	Befaqul Madaris
Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh	Dhaka	Urban	Befaqul Madaris
Jamia Nooria Islamiya	Dhaka	Urban	Befaqul Madaris
Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana	Dhaka	Urban	Iddara
Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin	Dhaka	Urban	–
Jamia Qasimul Uloom	Sylhet	Urban	Iddara
Jamia Madania Islamia	Sylhet	Urban	Befaqul Madaris
Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat	Sylhet	Urban	Iddara
Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj	Sylhet	Urban	Iddara and Befaqul Madaris

Table 1.5: Qaumi (unrecognised) madrasas sampled in Bangladesh[92]

Since the cases used in the educational arena also feature prominently (albeit with minor alterations) in the analysis of chapter four's exploration of the organisational arena and chapter five's visit to the political arena, they are henceforth referred to as follows: standard senior sample (table 1.2), standard kamil sample (table 1.4), standard khariji sample (table 1.3), and standard qaumi sample (table 1.5).

Organisational arena (West Bengal)

The study's investigation in the organisational arena (the subject of chapter four) follows on from its exploration in the educational arena, asking how madrasas that reject recognition organise themselves independently of State support? It is unconcerned with recognised madrasas, working instead with slightly tweaked

[92] Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin has yet to affiliate with a qaumi board. Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj's dual affiliation is explained in chapter five.

versions of the standard khariji and standards qaumi samples. In West Bengal, the purpose is to understand how Deobandis organise, and how their organisational behaviours contrast with those of the state's unrecognised Barelvis. This exclusive focus on Deobandis and Barelvis is achieved by relying on a variant of the standard khariji sample: the three "other" Hanafi madrasas are removed and one Deobandi madrasa – Mahad-e-Sumaiya for girls – is added in their place.[93] Mahad-e-Sumaiya was left out of the standard khariji sample due to its part-time status, but its membership in the Deobandi umbrella – Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia – adds a voice to the pool of respondents in our organisational arena sample. The revised version of the standard khariji sample used in chapter four thus includes eight Deobandi and four Barelvi madrasas.

Organisational arena (Bangladesh)

Unlike West Bengal, where unrecognised madrasas are organised along maslak lines, Bangladesh's unrecognised madrasas – all Deobandi – are divided into rival qaumi boards. Moreover, since each board – Befaqul Madaris, Ittehad ul Madaris, and Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim – is headed by prominent Deobandi ulama, it is analytically helpful to further divide qaumi respondents into board initiators and board joiners.[94] Board initiators can tell us how their boards are organised, and what specific incentives they offer to attract affiliates. Joiners, on the other hand, can

[93] Hanafi madrasas in West Bengal that are neither Deobandi nor Barelvi tend to operate independently, without access to any organisational network. This absence of formal organisation is likely due to their small presence in numerical terms.
[94] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the conceptual distinction between group joiners and group initiators is taken from Bano, The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrasas of Pakistan.

help us understand why they choose to join one qaumi board over (very similar) others. In order to represent a broad range of joiners affiliated with each qaumi board, chapter four relies on the standard qaumi sample (from table 1.5) plus two additional "joiner" madrasas – Madrasa Darus Salam in Sylhet, and Rahana Islamiya Madrasa in Chittagong. Table 1.6 shows how the qaumi sample looks when reorganised for the purpose of chapter four's study of the organisational arena.

	Befaqul Madaris	Ittehad ul Madaris	Iddara
Initiator(s)	• Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam • Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh	• Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya	• Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana
Joiners	• Madrasa Rashidiya • Jamia Nooria Islamiya • Jamia Madania Islamia • Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj	• Jamiah Darul a'arif Islamiah • Al Jamiatul Islamia • Rahana Islamiya Madrasa	• Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat • Madrasa Darus Salam • Jamia Qasimul Uloom • Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj

Table 1.6: Qaumi boards in Bangladesh, their initiators and joiners[95]

Political arena (West Bengal)

Our explorations in the political arena are concerned with two phenomena in particular: 1) the process through which State representatives reach into senior/kamil madrasas, and 2) the (attempted and achieved) entry of khariji/qaumi madrasa-based political entrepreneurs into the State. To examine the first

[95] Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin is excluded from this table as it is not affiliated with a qaumi board. Chapter five does however rely on this madrasa's input towards understanding the perceived similarities and differences between these three boards. Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj is listed twice in this table – once as an affiliate of Befaqul Madaris and once as an affiliate of Iddara.

phenomenon in West Bengal, this study initially sought to rely exclusively on the input of madrasas in the standard senior sample. Since many madrasa administrators were reluctant to speak about the politicisation of their madrasas, however, this sample was expanded to include two high madrasas in Kolkata: Madrasah Tus Sabaya High Madrasa, and Maulana Mohammed Ali High Madrasa. Though high madrasas are unfit for inclusion in the standard senior sample, their inclusion here is more appropriate. As chapter five reveals in more detail, high madrasas and senior madrasas that are (admittedly) politicised, offer the same mechanisms through which State forces can reach into the madrasa. These high madrasas can thus assist their responsive senior madrasa counterparts in shedding light on these mechanisms.

The second phenomenon is also visibly expressed in West Bengal through the efforts of Siddiqullah Chowdhury, the chairman of the All India United Democratic Front's West Bengal chapter. Several interviews were conducted with Chowdhury to understand the motivations for his political activity. But this study is also interested in the correspondence between Chowdhury's societal and political careers. To what extent, if at all, does he represent his societal madrasa-based interests when attempting to reach into the State? This question is answered by Chowdhury's input but also by that of his fellow Deobandis in the standard khariji sample. The Barelvi perspective – provided by the standard khariji sample's Barelvi respondents – also informs this analysis.

Political arena (Bangladesh)

For a general understanding of the extent to, and manner in, which Bangladesh's Alia madrasa system is politicised, chapter five relies on responsive interviewees in the standard kamil sample. In order to explain in detail the top-down and lateral mechanisms in which this politicisation occurs, this general overview is supplemented with two in-depth case studies. The first focuses on an individual with close associations to Islami Chhatra Shibir, Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing. The second narrative is based on a senior student leader in Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of Bangladesh Awami League.[96] Stationed at a meeting point of State and society, both interviewees are well placed to comment on the strategies political parties (and their student wings) employ to reach into kamil madrasas, and the factors allowing some madrasas to resist such politicisation. Importantly, the madrasas featured in each of these case studies were established using different procedures, which in turn determine whether their managing committees are constituted directly by the government or by members of a private trust. As chapter five reveals in greater detail, recognised madrasas in Bangladesh can belong to one of three categories: 1) government-run madrasas, 2) non-government madrasas headed by a government-constituted managing committee (government governing

[96] The interviewee describing Islami Chhatra Shibir's activities is Mohammad Abdullah Al Jubaer (IT engineer, Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 19, 2013. Since he is also a former student of this politically active madrasa, Jubaer has observed student politics for many years. Further contributing to his understanding of the organisation is the fact that his grandfather was a senior leader in Jamaat-e-Islami. The representative of Bangladesh Chhatra League is Shafiqur Rahman Sarkar (president, Bangladesh Chhatra League at Dhaka Alia Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 28, 2013. Access to these interviewees was obtained in the course of the snowballing process.

body, or GGB, madrasas), and 3) non-government madrasas where the managing committee is appointed by a private trustee board (trustee board governing body, or TGB, madrasas). These differences shape the manner in, and extent to, which the State is able to politicise each institution.

Our discussion of Bangladesh's madrasa-based political entrepreneurs revolves around three political parties – Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. Interviews were conducted with ulama heading each party to understand what these individuals sought to achieve by supplementing their educational duties with political activity. These interviewees include the late Fazlul Hoque Amini (chairman of Islami Oikya Jote), Ahlullah Wasel (joint secretary of Islami Oikya Jote), Humayun Kabir (secretary general of Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish), and Mohammad Waqqas (general secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam).[97] To provide a broader context, and to gauge the perceived extent to which these qaumi entrepreneurs have represented their societal interests in the political arena, chapter five further relies on responsive elements in the standard qaumi sample.

This chapter has introduced the different types of madrasas existing in present-day West Bengal and Bangladesh, and explained why only some were chosen to inform the analysis in the empirical chapters that follow. In West Bengal, this study excludes from its recognised sample new-scheme (high and junior high) madrasas, focusing instead on (non-Deobandi) senior madrasas of the old-scheme variety. To

[97] Fazlul Hoque Amini (former chairman, Islami Oikya Jote, and former principal, Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh) was interviewed by the author on February 5, 2012, and passed away several months later (in December 2012).

decipher West Bengal's khariji landscape, the study samples unrecognised madrasas of Barelvi, Deobandi, and Furfura Hanafi affiliation. In Bangladesh, the study visits old-scheme (non-Deobandi) kamil-level madrasas (government-run, GGB, and TGB) to represent recognised alia madrasas, and samples Deobandi madrasas spread across several non-government madrasa boards to shed light on the country's qaumi madrasa sector. In both contexts, the study samples a minority of politically ambitious (Deobandi) madrasa men who have shown an interest in entering the State through the political arena. Having presented this case selection methodology, it is now possible to turn to the first empirical chapter.

Chapter Two: Towards a Typology of Madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh

This chapter examines how madrasas respond when the State reaches into society through the educational arena. It presents a typology to categorise the varied propensities for recognition madrasas exhibit within and across contexts. The first section builds this recognition-centric typology in the context of West Bengal. Section two transports our investigation to the Bangladeshi context to assess how madrasas behave when the State's image and practices are altered. Section three juxtaposes our observations from West Bengal and Bangladesh in terms of the recognition-centric typology, demonstrating the latter's ability to accommodate and explain contextual shifts. In conclusion, this chapter relates its findings to the theoretical propositions outlined in the introductory chapter.

1. West Bengal

1.1. The first type: recognition-seeking madrasas

The first category of madrasas in West Bengal consists of madrasas that are either unopposed to, or actively in pursuit of, recognition. Some organised madrasas model their curricula on that of the State's recognised madrasas even before attaining recognition. By engaging in such acts of self-imposed modernisation, these

madrasas try to convince the State of their determination, thereby hoping to expedite the recognition process. The Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Senior Madrasa in North 24 Parganas is a case in point. Established in 1980, this madrasa has voluntarily mimicked the State-imposed madrasa curriculum from its founding.[98] A look at the evolution of the madrasa's curriculum thus gives an indication of the extent to which the State has reformed the curricula of (senior) madrasas under its jurisdiction. Initially, the madrasa's curriculum, like that of the State, gave more weight to religious subjects. In 1989 the curriculum was modified, reducing the religious content, and introducing secular subjects such as science and geography. The 1,000-mark syllabus contained 350 marks of language study (150 marks Arabic, 100 marks Bengali, and, 100 marks English); 200 marks for the study of science (100 marks mathematics, 50 marks physical sciences, and 50 marks life sciences); 50 marks for Islamic history; 50 marks for geography; and, 350 marks devoted to the study of Islamic texts (100 marks Tafsir [Quranic commentary], 100 marks Hadith [Prophetic traditions], 50 marks Fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence], 50 marks Usool [Rulings on, and interpretation of, Islamic jurisprudence and Prophetic traditions], and 50 marks Faraid [inheritance law]). In 1995, the syllabus was further diluted – in the case of this madrasa, voluntarily. 100 marks of the Islamic texts were eliminated, and history was increased to 100 marks with the inclusion of 50 marks for modern history. In 2005 the Arabic component of the curriculum was reduced from 150 to 100 marks, leaving the overall religious component of the curriculum at just 350 out of 1,000 marks, excluding 100 marks for Arabic. While

[98] Hossain Mohammad Ebrahim Laskar and Mohammad Khabir Hossain (teachers, Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Senior Madrasa, North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, October 1, 2009.

this gradual (but drastic) dilution of the once religion-heavy curriculum presents a major disincentive for many madrasas considering recognition, the Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Senior Madrasa voluntarily subjected itself to these changes in the hope of attaining recognition. This type of madrasa, which one may suitably call "recognition-seeking," is not uncommon in West Bengal. Nair, based on her own research of West Bengal's madrasas, acknowledges the presence of many such "interested madrasas."[99]

This "interest" is encouraged, inter alia, by the financial incentives on offer. The Majaherul Ulum Islamia Senior Madrasa in Howrah was set up with the intent of educating children in the village. Like most madrasas in West Bengal, it started as an organised madrasa – established, administered, and entirely funded by the immediate community, without reliance on outside support. "But this pattern was difficult to sustain," explains Taj Mohammad, the current headmaster.[100] Faced with inadequate funding from the community, the madrasa had submitted its request for recognition by the early 1970s, and officially became recognised in 1975. At the time, the terms of recognition in West Bengal had not evolved to include salaries for teachers. Instead, support was limited to a monthly sum of Rs. 50-60 for each recognised madrasa. Taj Mohammad gives this amount some context: "Back then that was enough." The average sarkari madrasa's story features this element of financial allure. It starts as an organised madrasa; it experiments with self-reliance

[99] Nair, "The State and Madrasas in India," p. 61.

[100] Taj Mohammad (headmaster of the Majaherul Ulum Islamia Senior Madrasa, Howrah), interviewed by author, July 29, 2009.

for a few years; and, as obtaining the required finances becomes increasingly difficult, the madrasa decides to approach the State for support.

Until 1997, the recognition process was quite straightforward. Recognition, once successfully obtained, led to immediate monetary rewards – initially in the form of modest financial support for the madrasa as a whole, and later by way of salaries for all its teachers. In 1997, however, West Bengal's state parliament passed a bill whereby the teachers of a recognised madrasa became the responsibility of the State. A Service Commission was established to appoint teachers to madrasas through a centralised system. One reason why the Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Senior Madrasa is a senior madrasa only in name is that the madrasa's teachers fear being replaced by government-appointed substitutes. As Soharab Hossain, former president of the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education, explains, "an attempt is underway to make an additional 200 madrasas in West Bengal recognised. These madrasas are willing to accept the recognised curriculum but are not willing to let the Madrasah Service Commission choose their teachers."[101] That this provision represents a significant deterrent to recognition is obvious, since it threatens to replace the very individuals (madrasa principals and teachers) who decide to sign up for recognition with government-appointed substitutes soon after this decision is made. The West Bengal School Service Commission Act of 1997 thus presents a critical juncture in the state's madrasa reform efforts. After 1997, madrasas formerly keen on accepting recognition were

[101] Soharab Hossain, Interviewed by author, July 20, 2009.

forced to recalibrate their position.[102] Owing to the drastic shift in the nature (in qualitative terms) of support offered by the State, only one (senior) madrasa in West Bengal accepted recognition in the post-1997 period.

To fully understand the recognition puzzle, however, one must look beyond a simplistic action-reaction model involving the State's stimulus and the madrasa's subsequent response. The process of acquiring recognition involves a number of steps subsequent to the formal request. Once an application is submitted, the State inspects the madrasa to make sure it meets a number of prerequisites. These include requirements of syllabus, student strength, and infrastructure. But even when these minimum standards are met, the State is often slow in granting recognition. According to A. K. M. Farhad, the recognition process can at times be characterised by red tape and nepotism.[103] Knowing a politician or senior bureaucrat significantly brightens one's prospects. Conversely, not having such connections could mean rejections in perpetuity. Thus, infrastructural inadequacies combined with inefficiency (on the part of the State) have often kept willing madrasas from obtaining recognition. Iman Ali, headmaster of the Aminpur Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Senior Madrasa, has strong views on this matter. "Many private madrasas are co-ed and follow the State-imposed syllabus," says Ali, "but they still

[102] The significance of this critical juncture (in the context of this study) should not be overstated. The post-1997 shift in the terms of recognition is of concern only to recognition-seeking madrasas. Other types of madrasas (discussed below) are guided either by firm opposition to recognition (making the critical juncture completely irrelevant) or by a threshold (for acceptance of recognition) higher than that exhibited by recognition-seekers (also making the critical juncture unimportant so long as other pre-1997 concerns are unmet).

[103] A. K. M. Farhad (teacher, Ghutiarisharif S.S.G.M.N.S Senior Madrasa, South 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, August 27, 2009.

fail to get approval for recognition." The reason for this refusal, Ali believes, is the government's "allergy to senior madrasas." Given the relatively significant (depending on one's vantage point) theological component of the senior madrasa, "the government is much more willing to accept high madrasas," where religion is present only in the highly reduced form of a single subject: "Introduction to Islam."[104]

Amongst the senior madrasas sampled in West Bengal, eight exhibit recognition-seeking tendencies. They generally approve of the State's recognition package, and are unfazed by the progressive dilution of the syllabus's theological component. Only the most intrusive measures (such as implementation of the School Service Commission Act) keep these madrasas from seeking recognition. Indeed, seven of the eight recognition-seekers sampled in West Bengal were recognised while the eighth – Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Sernior Madrasa – struggled to reconcile itself to the post-1997 terms. Using Migdal's terminology, recognition-seeking madrasas in West Bengal display no opposition to the State's *image*, and are concerned only with its *practices*.

1.2. The second type: opposed madrasas

The second category of madrasas in West Bengal consists of those elements that are fundamentally opposed to recognition, and can reasonably be called "opposed

[104] Iman Ali (headmaster, Aminpur Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Senior Madrasa, North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, October 1, 2009.

madrasas." These khariji madrasas derive their very identity from the quality of existing and functioning outside the realm of government recognition and are unwilling to display any thappa [stamp] that bears the State's authority. For them, any State support – financial or otherwise – is completely unacceptable.

Qari Fazlur Rahman runs the Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia. With its main building in central Kolkata, this madrasa has another eight affiliated madrasas spread across West Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar. The Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia was established by Rahman's grandfather in 1898. With a presence in the city for over a century, Rahman and his family have become exceptionally well-respected for their contribution to Quranic learning. Every year, the madrasa graduates around 80 students who have adequately memorised the Quran, earning themselves the title of "hafiz". These students enter the madrasa at about ten years of age, and typically take three years to memorise the Quran in Arabic, a language they do not understand.[105] After graduation, they then migrate elsewhere to translate the Book into their mother tongue – Urdu or Bengali. But Rahman may be best known in another capacity. Each year Rahman leads Kolkata's largest Eid congregation near Red Road, which attracts no less than half a million people. This role has earned him the title Imam-e-Eidein [Imam of the Eids]. With regard to the State's modernisation scheme, Rahman finds that people fail to appreciate the purpose driving khariji madrasas. "We are neither concerned with jobs, nor with business," Rahman

[105] At the Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia, students are encouraged to memorise the Quran without paying too much attention to its understanding. Arabic is not taught as a language of instruction and students tend not to speak it prior to their arrival.

explains. “People ask us ‘why don’t you teach this and why don’t you teach that?’ But tell me one thing. If an engineering student graduates from an engineering college, and then decides that he would rather become a doctor, do people blame the engineering college for failing to teach the student biology and medicine? No. So do not come to us telling us we should be teaching secular subjects. Our function is to teach deeni talim [religious education], and we do just that.”[106] Conveying the non-negotiable character of his mission, Rahman says that “it is the responsibility of every Muslim to strengthen his religion, and it is this duty we are fulfilling.” Rahman further believes that those madrasas approaching the State for recognition do so because it is convenient. “Such people have the comfort of feeding themselves without lifting a finger [with regard to the collection of zakat]. These madrasas do not benefit their students. They only benefit the individuals who seek support.” The thought of seeking recognition has neither occurred to Rahman in the past, nor is it likely to cross his mind in the future. With great pride he announces his position: “We do not leave the [khariji] boundary within which we have been operating. It has been this way for a hundred years.”[107]

Faqrul Islam Qasmi at the Jamia Qasim-Ul-Uloom is in agreement. Asked why some madrasas have chosen to accept State support, Qasmi lays out what he considers the fundamental difference between private madrasas that accept and those that refuse State support. “Some people study for economic reasons, so they can succeed in

[106] Qari Fazlur Rahman (headmaster, Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia, Kolkata), interviewed by author, October 3, 2009.
[107] Ibid.

business endeavours. Others, like us, are more concerned with learning how to live a good life."[108] He then goes on to say that while a "sarkari madrasa is made to fill one's stomach, a khariji madrasa is made in service of religion." Qasmi maintains resolute opposition to recognition: "The path towards recognition is unknown to me. All I know is this [the khariji way]."[109]

Sheikh Atahar Ali of the Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa also exhibits opposition: "We do not accept recognition because we want autonomy in teaching deeni talim [religious subjects]. If you want to teach primarily religious subjects, it is not good to go to the State. The State does not teach deeni talim."[110] On the basis of this partial rationale, one can reasonably expect Ali to accept recognition should the State refrain from interfering in his madrasa's syllabus. But Ali's opposition has a part two: "Accepting recognition in India is also impossible because it is governed mostly by Hindus while Muslims are in a minority. We could potentially accept recognition in a Muslim-majority country." Ali exemplifies the opposed madrasa man. His opposition is certainly focused on the (malleable) practices of the State. Even if the State altered its practices to make them more acceptable, however, he remains opposed to the State's image. In Migdal's terms, simultaneous opposition to the State's *practices* and to its *image* thus defines the opposed madrasa.

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[108] Faqrul Islam Qasmi (headmaster, Jamia Qasim-Ul-Uloom, Kolkata), interviewed by author, September 30, 2009.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Sheikh Atahar Ali (headmaster of Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa, Hooghly), interviewed by author, November 21, 2012.

Since Rahman, Qasmi, and Ali run well-known madrasas, it is possible that their confident opposition to the State is afforded in part by their ability to seamlessly mobilise required funding. Ali's Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa, for instance, succeeds in collecting the Rs. 22,32,000 it spends annually on educating 272 students and employing 14 teachers. But empirical data suggests that these men are joined in their opposition by less wealthy individuals. Abdur Roufe of the Maheshgodi Islamia Madrasa in North 24 Parganas represents a less wealthy opposed madrasa. Asked whether his madrasa is ever faced with a financial shortage, Roufe says "Of course, that happens all the time."[111] Nonetheless, Roufe is adamantly opposed to recognition. "Going to the State is impossible," he exclaims. "Teacher salaries may be an incentive to accept government support, but that is not our primary goal. We want to teach deeni talim [religious education]. If salaries were our goal we'd be in a different business." Tasked with the non-negotiable purpose of imparting religious education, opposed madrasas – rich or poor – are unwilling to barter their priorities for an easy income.

1.3. The third type: fence-sitting madrasas

The final category of madrasas in West Bengal is that of "fence-sitters." As the name suggests, "fence-sitters" consist of indecisive elements that remain on the fence because they could use benefits deriving from State support but are unwilling to invite certain consequences associated with recognition (such as the dilution of

[111] Abdur Roufe (headmaster of the Maheshgodi Islamia Madrasa, North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, October 1, 2009.

their syllabi). Madrasas of this category may jump to the recognised side of the fence as and when the State alters the terms of its engagement. Most fence-sitters teach primarily deeni [religious] subjects and do not give much weight to secular subjects like mathematics, English, and science.

A. K. Abdul Khaleque of the Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom in Bardhaman is a fence-sitter. He has a clear sense of the advantages accompanying recognition, and would readily trade his current salary of Rs. 3,000 per month for a government salary of Rs. 18,000 per month. Before doing so, however, he wants an assurance that his acceptance of State support will not lead to the dilution of his syllabus. "We want the benefits of recognition," says Khaleque, "but not by selling our beliefs."[112]

Mohammad Shahidul Qadri runs a small madrasa in Kidderpore, a neighbourhood in Kolkata's Urdu belt. Like Khaleque, he is willing to cross the fence if it means he can enjoy financial support without having to endure interference. "If the madrasa modernisation programme in West Bengal functioned more as it does in other states," says Qadri, "I would be inclined to accept recognition."[113] Qadri relies on two important sources of income – zakat which is collected during Ramadan and fitra which is obtained on the day of Eid ul-Fitr. If these sources are depleted before Ramadan returns and the academic year ends, as is often the case, Qadri is forced to

[112] A. K. Abdul Khaleque (headmaster, Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom, Bardhaman), interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.

[113] Here Qadri refers to Uttar Pradesh, where he believes state governments have often assisted khariji madrasas without imposing any reductions in their curricula. Mohammad Shahidul Qadri (headmaster of the Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya, Kolkata), interviewed by author, August 17, 2009.

take loans from Muslims in the area. He then repays these loans during the next collection cycle. Though Qadri finds it difficult to sustain his school in this Ramadan-to-Ramadan fashion, he has not considered going to the State for recognition: "State support can only be a solution of last resort. I look first for funding from Muslim sources."[114] A classic fence-sitter, Qadri will continue to chase funds from non-state sources so long as the State's terms of support are insufficiently agreeable.

Fence-sitters like Qadri focus their opposition on the State's practices, represented by the changing qualitative and quantitative incentives and disincentives on offer. They are not concerned with the image of the State. That said, however, the specific mix of State practices that a madrasa finds acceptable varies considerably within the category of fence-sitters. Indeed some fence-sitters exhibit recognition thresholds so high that they blur any distinction between themselves and opposed madrasas.

Qazi Mohammad Yasin supervises what at first appear to be two incompatible institutions. The first is the Jamia Milia Madinatul, one of West Bengal's grand khariji madrasas. Housing 1050 students, this madrasa administers the same master's level courses taught at Darul Ulum Deoband – i.e. the MA in Arabic Literature [Adab-e-Arabi] and MA in Islamic Jurisprudence [Takmeel Ifta]. It also imparts vocational training in motor wiring, tailoring, electrical wiring, and air conditioner and refrigerator repair.[115] According to Yasin, the latter option is particularly helpful to

[114] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri, interviewed by author, August 17, 2009.

[115] Qazi Mohammad Yasin (president of managing committee, Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom), interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.

students as there is a high demand for these repair services in Gulf countries. Making Jamia Milia Madinatul most progressive amongst khariji madrasas is the blind section it established in 2009. Intended to give blind students access to the Quran, Jamia Milia Madinatul's blind section imports Braille books in Arabic from South Africa. It also relies on the Ramakrishna Mission in West Bengal to provide Braille books in Mathematics, Bengali, and English.[116]

Yasin's second institution, sharing the same compound as Jamia Milia Madinatul, is Mamoon National School, a non-government secular school. While the khariji madrasa is devoted primarily to the inculcation of religious training, the secular school was established as an Islamic alternative to mainstream secular education. Though its 425 exclusively male students are conditioned to Islamic manner and custom (owing both to the theological component included in the syllabus, and the proximity to the neighbouring madrasa), Yasin's secular school is not very different in form and function from a government-operated secular institution. But the fee structure of both these schools suggests that Yasin's dual project of imparting religious and secular education may not be a straightforward response to social demands. Jamia Milia Madinatul and Mamoon National School cater to different socioeconomic categories. The former provides free education to 85% of its students, charging the remaining students anywhere between Rs. 300 and Rs. 700 per month in boarding fees. Mamoon School is more expensive, charging 55% of its students the full fee amount of Rs. 2000 per month. For the 30% of students who

[116] Qazi Mohammad Yasin (president of managing committee, Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom), interviewed by author, November 16, 2012.

cannot afford these full fees, Yasin offers discounted "token" rates of Rs. 200 per month. The remaining 15% of students pay somewhere between the token and full fees.[117]

Further complicating Yasin's status as a khariji man is the fact that in addition to these two institutions, he also manages a sarkari high madrasa – Memari High Madrasa. Like all sarkari madrasas, the Memari High Madrasa is fully funded by the government. It has 690 students, of which 25 are non-Muslim. Unlike the other two institutions Yasin patronises, Memari High Madrasa also receives government recognition, which means that students' coursework and degrees are recognised by other schools and universities as legitimate academic programmes.

Yasin is a realist. He takes seriously his duty to strengthen Islam by providing religious training to over a thousand students at Jamia Milia Madinatul. At the same time he acknowledges that the propagation of religion constitutes only one demand within the larger Muslim society. A demand also emanates from parents in Memari intent on preparing their children for the job market, which requires that they receive the widely recognised degree provided by a high madrasa, which is a mainstream secular school in all but name. An unmet demand also emanates from those who desire jobs, but are reluctant to enter an educational mainstream where

[117] This fee structure tells us that a small proportion (up to 15%) of students at the khariji madrasa could afford the discounted rates at Mamoon School. It is unclear whether these students (or their parents) were given a choice between religious and secular education, or whether circumstances reserved for them only the religious option. Confirmation of the latter possibility would suggest that the men running khariji madrasas encourage/feed at least some proportion of the demand for the religious education they themselves supply. Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, November 16, 2012.

neither Urdu nor Islam receives much coverage. It is this void that Yasin is able to fill through Mamoon School. Here Yasin exhibits selective opposition. He is unwilling to make any compromise on his provision of religious education, but is ready to engage in the simultaneous supply of secular education.[118] Insofar as acceptance of financial support is concerned, he is willing to accept the State's complete involvement in Memari High Madrasa, and is open to any contributions the State might offer Mamoon School – possibly through the MP (Member of Parliament) and MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) funds reserved for minority welfare. But Yasin wants no such support in the case of Jamia Milia Madinatul.

Yasin's odd collection of schools is nothing short of unusual. To the opposed madrasa man, this parallel pursuit of the religious and the secular presents an impossible clash of interests. To Yasin, however, it represents the inevitable coexistence of mosque and market.[119] If the demand for various types of secular education cannot be extinguished, it is better provided for. But Yasin's prominence in the community does not derive from innovative thinking alone. It is backed by adequate proportions of ambition and organisational strength. Without the first he

[118] Forced to retain just one of his three schools, it is reasonable to assume that Yasin would choose Jamia Milia Madinatul. After all, this was the first institution his family established in 1968 and the only one it ran for well over a decade. Today it is West Bengal's largest khariji madrasa, and the primary engine behind his respect and stature in the community.

[119] For a more detailed overview of the relationship between religious (represented by the mosque) and economic (represented by the market) activities, see Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 66-8.

has little incentive to supplement his religious duties with any other; deprived of the second, he can hardly attract the money he receives from the Gulf.[120]

Yasin is literally a fence-sitter in that he supervises madrasas on either side of the recognition divide. Even if we study his behaviour with respect to Jamia Milia Madinatul alone, however, Yasin exhibits fence-sitting characteristics. He is willing to engage with the State in a most limited capacity: "If the State recognises the degrees of my students, if it vows not to interfere at all in my religious curriculum, and if it allows me final say with regards to any changes it wishes to introduce in my non-religious subjects, then I can accept such recognition."[121] While Yasin suggests nothing about his ideology or beliefs forbids him from accepting financial support in theory, practical considerations keep him from doing so: "If I accept money from the State, my current sources of societal support will come to an end. And how much can the State possibly provide? 20 lakhs, maybe 30 lakhs. Well I need more than one crore per year to keep this madrasa running."[122] What separates Yasin from opposed madrasas in West Bengal is the fact that he does not oppose the image of the State, concerning himself only with its practices. Though the State may never alter its practices enough to meet Yasin's threshold for recognition, the fact that he exhibits a threshold within the contours of his current context makes him a fence-sitter.

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[120] Yasin received $160,000 from the Saudi Arabia Islamic Development Bank in 2004 towards Mamoon School. Yasin, interviewed by author, November 16, 2012.

[121] Qazi Mohammad Yasin (president of managing committee, Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom), interviewed by author, July 18, 2013.

[122] Ibid.

Yasin is honest about the fact that he does not need the State's financial support (and that it can only damage his income), but he also contends that no madrsasa "needs" the State's financial help: "madrasas accepting monetary support from the State are more concerned with easy money that does not require any running around."[123] Yasin believes that money is available to any madrasa that wants it and is willing to invest the effort required to obtain it. "Madrasas that accept government recognition [in the form of financial support] are opportunists," claims Yasin. "They know that the character of their school will be lost but still go to the government." Yasin in effect endorses the proven practices of fellow fence-sitters and of opposed individuals who manage to get by without State support. Mohammad Shahid Qasmi of Madrasa Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya in North 24 Parganas shows how self-sufficiency can be practiced sustainably. At Rs. 2,00,000 per year, his madrasa has the lowest recorded expenditure amongst all madrasas sampled in West Bengal, As Qasmi explains, however, the madrasa's limited budget by no means compels him to seek State support. Instead, Qasmi operates within his means by teaching fewer students, employing fewer teachers, and increasing the ratio of day scholars to boarders.[124]

Based on the sampled fence-sitters that divulged financial details, this study finds expenditure per madrasa per annum ranging from Rs. 2,00,000 at Darul Ulum

[123] Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.

[124] Mohammad Shahid Qasmi (headmaster of Madrasa Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya in North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.

Mahmoodiya in North 24 Parganas to Rs. 10,300,000 at the Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom in Bardhaman, with an average annual expenditure of Rs. 2,816,878 per madrasa.[125] Expressed in terms of expenditure per student per year, it finds an average of Rs. 10,711 with Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia in Howrah and Madrasah Hussainiya Ghausiya in Kolkata representing the lower and upper limits of the range at Rs. 7,083 and Rs. 16,000, respectively. Anywhere between 30% and 51% of this expenditure can be reserved for teacher salaries, the latter typically ranging from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 5000 per teacher per month. Md. Mukhtar Alam Razvi of the Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam suggests that only Rs. 4,00,000 (or 31%) of his madrasa's annual budget of Rs. 13,00,000 is spent on feeding and lodging his madrasa's 90 students.[126] Of the remaining expenses, 30% are reserved for teacher salaries. The madrasa's above average expenditure per student per year of Rs. 14,444 is largely due to the fact that the madrasa is in expansionary mode. Once the construction of two additional floors is complete, the institution's absolute (and per student) expenses will likely reduce significantly. Table 2.1 lists expenditure details for seven khariji madrasas in West Bengal (five fence-sitters and two opposed madrasas), showing how much money they require to operate.

[125] Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom in Bardhaman did not provide expenditure data. Based on the small scale of its operations, however, it is reasonable to assume that its expenditure is well below the observed average for fence-sitting madrasas. Our real average annual expenditure for fence-sitters might thus be lower than the reported figure of Rs. 2,816,878.

[126] Maulana Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi (headmaster, Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam, North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.

Madrasa	Students (#)	Teachers (#)	Total Annual Expenses (Rs.)	Annual Expenses per student (Rs.)	Annual Expenses on teachers (Rs.)
Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia	120	12	8,50,000	7,083	432,000
Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam	180	16	2,000,000	11,111	960,000
Jamia Islamia Arabiya Kharajgram	500		4,268,146	8,536	
Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom	1050		10,300,000	9,809	
Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya	50	6	8,00,000	16,000	360,000
Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam	90	10	13,00,000	14,444	3,90,000
Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya	25	3	2,00,000	8,000	72,000

Table 2.1. Fence-sitting Madrasas in West Bengal: Expenditure on Students and Teachers[127]

2. Bangladesh

2.1. The first type: recognition-seeking madrasas

Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa in Chittagong was established in 1978 and received Alia status in 1980. "We did not go to the government for money," says the madrasa's former principal Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain. "We went for recognition of our degrees."[128] Consistent with this stated purpose, the madrasa

[127] This data is based on the following interviews: Mufti Shahroz Alam (teacher, Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia, Howrah), interviewed by author, November 15, 2012; Maulana Wafaul Mustafa (headmaster, Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam, Howrah), interviewed by author, November 15, 2012; Maulana Siddiqulla Chowdhury, interviewed by author, October 2, 2009; Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, November 16, 2012; Maulana Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi interviewed by author, November 18, 2012; Mohammad Shahidul Qadri (headmaster, Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya), interviewed by author, November 13, 2012; Md. Shahid Qasmi (interviewed by author, November 18, 2012)

[128] Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain (former principal of Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 2, 2012.

"tried from the beginning to mirror the government-proposed curriculum." Since the madrasa had connections to then Prime Minister Shah Azizur Rahman, it succeeded in securing recognition of each of its degrees – from ebtidayee up to the fazil level – at a time when Alia madrasa degrees were not yet considered equivalent to those of mainstream schools. Baitush Sharaf Adarsha Kamil Madrasa similarly began seeking recognition since its establishment in 1983. "There is nothing wrong about going to the State for support," says the madrasa's principal Syed Mohammad Abu Noman. The madrasa relies on the government for the salaries of its teachers and charges each of its 3000 fee-paying students Tk. 200 per month. The madrasa's trust (Anjuman-e-Ittehad Bangladesh) additionally collects donations for orphans and poor students who are not charged any fees. Hazrat Shajalal Darussunah Yaqubia Kamil Madrasa in Sylhet is also a recognition-seeking madrasa. Like most kamil madrasas in Bangladesh, the institution began as an ebtidayee madrasa (in 1983) and progressively expanded to include higher levels – dakhil (1985), alim (1992), fazil (1998), and finally kamil (2004). While many madrasas were pursuing this expansionary process, the State responded by sporadically granting equivalence to each successive degree level: dakhil certificates were made equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) in 1985, and alim certificates were made equivalent to the general education system's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) in 1987.[129] In 2006, the fazil and kamil degrees were made equivalent to BA and MA degrees, respectively, when Bangladesh's parliament passed the Islamic University Amendment Act.

[129] This information was provided by officials of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. It is also available on the board's website <http://www.bmed.gov.bd>

Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa in Dhaka's Jatrabari neighbourhood was founded as a recognition-seeking ebtidayee madrasa in 1963. The madrasa's principal and chairman of the Bangladesh Masjid Mission, Mohammad Zainul Abedin, explains the madrasa's purpose: "Our religion does not provide duniyabi talim [worldly education] and government schools don't teach deeni talim [religious education]. So we started with the purpose of combining both. The purpose of the Alia system is that a Muslim should know the Quran, and know the Hadith, but should also be equipped to function and flourish in the real world."[130] In Ta'mirul Millat's case, the motive for affiliating with the State was two-fold: "When we went to the government, we did need the money and also sought the government's recognition of our syllabus." Ta'mirul Millat's financial requirements have grown significantly with the madrasa's expansion to the kamil level: "In 1985, we needed around 2 lakh Taka per month for teacher salaries. Today, we need 10-15 lakh Taka per month just for teacher salaries."[131] In addition to the development of its Jatrabari branch, the madrasa's trust established a branch in Tongi in 1997 and a women's madrasa in Mir Hazaribagh in 2000. The joint student body of these three branches currently stands at 9000. Ta'mirul Millat's astronomical expansion since 1978 cannot be explained by the continued availability of State support alone. It has much to do with the fortunes of the madrasa's principal benefactor – Ta'mirul Millat Trust (an entity that receives further coverage in Chapter five).

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[130] Mohammad Zainul Abedin (principal of Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 16, 2012.
[131] Ibid.

Amongst the most prominent Alia madrasas in Bangladesh is Chittagong's Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa. Established in 1954, and recognised during the East Pakistan era, the madrasa currently has a 4000-strong student population. The madrasa has received the award for "best [Alia] madrasa in Bangladesh" and its principal – Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery – proudly announces that he is a three-time winner of the gold medal award for "best principal in Bangladesh." "The government helps us a lot," says Al-Quadery. "It gives us funds for building construction and renovation and provides salaries for 40 teachers. We give salaries to the remaining 60 teachers."[132] But, Al-Quadery's praise for the State derives as much from his status as the Khatib [one delivering the Friday sermon] of Jamiatul Falah National Mosque – a government-appointed post reserved for individuals with an Alia background. Conventional wisdom (reinforced by Yasin's claim in section 1.3 above) suggests that the magnitude of funds a madrasa is able to collect from the community decreases significantly (and sometimes disappears altogether) post-recognition.[133] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, the fence-sitting principal of Dhaka's Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa, explains the thought process of the donor: "Many rich people want to give money towards the path of Allah. They choose to give to qaumi [Deobandi] madrasas as they are perceived to be purely

[132] Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery (principal of Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 24, 2012.

[133] In empirical terms, the large majority of Alia madrasas sampled in Bangladesh and all sarkari madrasas sampled in West Bengal relied exclusively on State-provided funding after affiliating with the State. Moreover, Qazi Muhammad Yasin in West Bengal and Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla in Bangladesh explicitly posit a negative correlation between a madrasa's affiliation to the State and its capacity to attract donations from the community.

Islamic and not related to the government and its policies."[134] Though Molla's observation accurately describes the large majority of cases, Al-Quadery's Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia (which is non-Deobandi, and unequivocally related to the government) presents an exception to the rule. Pointing to one corner of the madrasa's compound, Al-Quadery conveys his madrasa's financial clout: "Allah showers us with money. We don't need to seek donations. Donations come to us. A designated person sits in the trust office just to collect funds from the community. The madrasa receives anywhere between 15 and 20 crore Taka annually in donation money."[135] Chapter three describes in more detail the factors making Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia a recipient of such large donations. Suffice it to say that the occasional recognition-seeker might seek recognition without needing (or craving) the financial incentives on offer.

At first glance, recognition-seekers in Bangladesh appear identical to recognition-seeking madrasas in West Bengal. Each is generally interested in including duniyabi talim, and each is happy to accept the State's financial support. Yet, our two settings are characterised by important differences. Insofar as the State's practices are concerned, the recognition scheme in Bangladesh is far less intrusive than West Bengal's. In West Bengal, acceptance of State support is often perceived as an instance of selling out, as a betrayal of one's religious cause. This perception is fed by the gradual yet significant dilution of the syllabus's religious component

[134] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla (principal of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, February 4, 2012.
[135] Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery, interviewed by author, January 24, 2012.

(described in section 1.1. above). In Bangladesh, on the other hand, accepting recognition does not signify a departure from religious commitment. The Alia system's fazil and kamil levels permit students to focus almost exclusively on religious subjects.[136] Moreover, completion of the Alia system's higher degrees can prepare one for the high profile religious functions assumed by men like Al-Quadery and Abedin. In terms of the State's image, there is the obvious difference that the State in West Bengal (and India) is primarily populated by Hindus representing a Hindu-majority electorate while the State in Bangladesh is predominantly run by Muslims towards the interests of a Muslim majority. With these contextual differences in mind, how can we reasonably expect recognition-seekers in Bangladesh to behave when transported to West Bengal?

Of the ten recognition-seeking madrasas in Bangladesh, three – Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa, Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa, and Wajedia Kamil Madrasa – would retain their recognition-seeking characteristics in India. "If India became our country," says Wajedia Kamil Madrasa's vice principal, "we would take recognition there too."[137] Most recognition-seekers in Bangladesh, however, would temper their enthusiasm for State support in the Indian context. Indeed, six of the ten Bangladeshi recognition-seekers would prefer joining the fence-sitting population in

[136] At the fazil level, students choose one of two streams: 1) General Fazil (which includes civics, political science, Islamic history, etc.); and 2) Honours Fazil. The second stream further allows students a choice between Al-Quran in Islamic Studies and Al-Hadith in Islamic Studies. At the kamil level, students specialise in one of four streams: 1) Hadith, 2) Tafsir, 3) Arabic Literature, and 4) Fiqh (jurisprudence).

[137] Jahed Hossain Khan (vice principal of Wajedia Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 25, 2012.

West Bengal. Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa describes his expected change in character:

> If our madrasa was in West Bengal, we would have to very carefully analyse the government's curriculum and see if it agrees with Islam. Then we would have to decipher the government's motivation for helping out. Only if we are sure that [the State] genuinely wants to support our goals will we accept. After all, we do not want to become a normal school.[138]

Molla focuses on the State's practices, with little concern for the image of the State: "Obviously the question of who governs is important. But it is not a question of leadership – are the leaders Muslim or non-Muslim? It is a question of policy – are the policies pro-Islamic or anti-Islamic." Molla further suggests that any Alia madrasa taking issue with the image of the State is hypocritical: "The first 15 principals of Alia Madrasa were Christian."[139] Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa's Mohammad Zainul Abedin reinforces Molla's view: "The truth is that our own ministers, though Muslim, are no better than Indian governments towards Muslim education."[140] "If I could teach my curriculum, and my students could learn the Quran and the Hadith without interruption," says Abedin, "I could accept State support even in India."

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[138] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, interviewed by author, February 4, 2012.

[139] Without altering the implication of Molla's statement, it should be noted that Molla understates Alia Madrasa's foreign antecedents. The first 26 principals of Alia Madrasa were European and that the madrasa was headed by European Secretaries for 70 years before the post of principal was formally introduced in 1850. The first Muslim principal of Alia Madrasa was Shamsul Ulama Kamaluddin Ahmad, who assumed the post in 1927. This information was obtained from Dr. Yakub (Principal of Alia Government Madrasa, Dhaka), interviewed by author on February 7, 2012.

[140] Mohammad Zainul Abedin, interviewed by author, January 16, 2012.

Of the ten recognition-seekers observed in Bangladesh, only one expressed any concern with the State's image. Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa's Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery would rather convert to the opposed genre if transported to the Indian context: "In India, those giving recognition are non-Muslim and those accepting recognition are Muslim. Here in Bangladesh, those giving and those accepting recognition are both Muslim. We would not accept State support in India."[141] Unwilling to affiliate with the image of a non-Muslim State, Al-Quadery thus views opposition as his only viable option in West Bengal.

This discussion suggests that most (70 percent) of Bangladesh's recognition-seeking madrasas exhibit a recognition threshold higher than that of their recognition-seeking counterparts in West Bengal. If the recognition scheme in Bangladesh were as intrusive as the one in West Bengal, we could reasonably expect at least six (60 percent) of the ten recognition-seekers in Bangladesh to embrace fence-sitting characteristics. As a corollary, the State in West Bengal can increase the catchment area of its modernisation scheme by adjusting its practices. If West Bengal emulated Bangladesh's practices, the same six recognition-seeking madrasas focused exclusively on the practices of the State would readily accept recognition without sensing a change in context. If West Bengal instead continued on its current course, it would succeed in attracting only three (30 percent) of the ten Bangladeshi recognition-seekers. Finally, irrespective of its practices, West Bengal will fail to

[141] Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery, interviewed by author, January 24, 2012.

allure the small minority (10%) of Bangladeshi recognition-seekers who concern themselves with the image of the State.

2.2. The second type: opposed madrasas

Jamia Qasimul Uloom in Sylhet is an opposed madrasa. Located within the mazar [shrine] complex of Bangladesh's most revered Sufi saint – Hazrat Shahjalal – the madrasa is more popularly known by its nickname – Dargah Madrasa. "My personal opinion," says the madrasa's principal Abul Kalam Zakaria, "is that we should remain independent of the State, irrespective of demographics or who runs the government."[142] Like the large majority of Deobandi madrasas in Bangladesh, however, Zakaria's madrasa is affiliated with one of several Deobandi boards (described in greater detail in Chapter four). Since the final decision to accept or reject recognition often rests with senior members of these boards, Zakaria's personal opinion may be of little practical consequence. Zakaria acknowledges as much: "If Iddara [our affiliating board] decides tomorrow that we should accept recognition subject to certain conditions, I will not oppose this despite my personal opinions."[143] But, Abdul Aziz – the principal of Madrasa Rashidiya in Chittagong's Hathazari upazila – is less willing to outsource his decision:

> We do not want to accept recognition from any government; not even from the Bangladeshi government. We do not even want them to recognise our degrees since

[142] Abul Kalam Zakaria (principal of Jamia Qasimul Uloom in Sylhet), interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.
[143] Ibid.

> we don't care for government jobs. We are only focused on producing religious scholars. If Befaqul Madaris [our affiliating board] accepts recognition tomorrow, we will strongly consider leaving the board."[144]

To pose a purely academic question: how can one expect opposed madrasas in Bangladesh to behave in the Indian context? Since these madrasas are concerned with the image of the State, the specific nature of incentives or disincentives on offer should have no bearing on their decision to accept or reject recognition in India. We can expect them to reject recognition regardless of the State's practices. Moreover, since these madrasas oppose the image of the State in Bangladesh, they will certainly oppose the image of the State in India. Might the Indian context, however, elicit an increased intensity of opposition? According to Aziz, the image of the State does not change in moving from Hathazari to West Bengal: "accepting [recognition] in India is also not possible for the same reasons. Only if there is an Islamic government could we consider accepting."[145] While Aziz views the conditions in Bangladesh and India as equally undesirable, Zakaria reserves variable degrees of opposition for each context: "In India, I would not accept recognition since the government is not even run by Muslims. So if Iddara [our board] were in India, and it decided to accept recognition, I would refuse to toe their line. I would oppose recognition and operate independently."[146] Zakaria thus exhibits tiered opposition to several distinct images of the State. While he opposes the image of a Bangladeshi

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[144] Abdul Aziz (principal of Madrasa Rashidiya in Hathazari), interviewed by author, January 31, 2012.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Abul Kalam Zakaria, interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.

State run by Muslims in a less than Islamic manner, he prefers this context to one where Muslims have a less prominent role in controlling State institutions. It is further likely that Zakaria – like Aziz – most prefers the image of an Islamic State.

Though they may concern themselves with different images, or with different aspects of the same image, opposed madrasas in Bangladesh are defined – like their counterparts in West Bengal – by a primary focus on the image of the State. In Bangladesh, however, the practical significance of the opposed madrasa's opinions is easily overstated, Notwithstanding Aziz's claims to independent thought and action, the personal opinions of affiliated madrasa men of the opposed variety are overwhelmed by the interests of affiliating boards. The latter, in turn, are controlled by influential maulanas of the fence-sitting variety described below.

2.3. The third type: fence-sitting madrasas

Founded in 1985, Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah is unusual amongst Deobandi madrasas in Bangladesh. Inspired by the reformist spirit of Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow (India), the madrasa seeks to "devise an integrated syllabus to meet the demands and fulfil the requirements of modern life and infuse vibrancy in Islamic thinking."[147] Rejecting the rote memorisation characteristic of the Dars-e-Nizami system, Darul Ma'arif' emphasises the need to understand the Quran. "Our syllabus is different from other madrasas," explains Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, Darul

[147] Brochure obtained from madrasa's principal Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.

Ma'arif's principal. "Here we constantly teach Hadith and Tafsir [Quranic commentary] along with the Quranic verses so that students understand all along."[148] In order to facilitate this progressive method of understanding, the madrasa also places a heavier emphasis on the study of Arabic. Nadwi sees benefits in certain aspects of the State's recognition package:

> We want the government to give our Hadith course equivalence to its M.A. in Islamic Studies. If the government accepts, our students will get more opportunities. To become an imam or khatib of a mosque you currently need a government certificate. Some mosques even require an Alia madrasa certificate. We don't want a grant from the State. We only want recognition of our curriculum.[149]

According to Nadwi, such an arrangement is mutually beneficial: "It does not harm us in any way. It also benefits the government, which can increase employment without spending any money."[150] With an annual expenditure (and income) of Tk. 1,13,21,895, Nadwi neither wants nor needs the State's financial support. But fellow fence-sitters with similarly large endowments suggest that accepting financial help from the State is by no means unacceptable.

With 5,000 students and an annual expenditure of Tk. 6,40,85,000, Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya is the second largest madrasa in Bangladesh (after Hathazari

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[148] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

Madrasa). That also makes it the second most prominent Deobandi madrasa in Bangladesh, and amongst the country's most influential fence-sitters. "There is no conflict between our beliefs and our possible acceptance of recognition," says Obaid Ullah Hamzah, a teacher at Patiya Madrasa.[151] Articulating his madrasa's fence-sitting status, Hamzah suggests any decision his madrasa makes will be guided first and foremost by reference to holy scripture:

> We believe you can take recognition, even monetary support from the State. Deoband discouraged people from taking financial support from the State. But Deoband's message is not a divine rule. It is not contained in the Hadith or the Quran. We would accept funding so long as it does not have any strings attached. As qaumi madrasas, we take money from the community to sustain our operations. If the government gives us money, it would still come from the people as it will be taxpayers' money.[152]

A similar version of this fence-sitting stance is shared by Mufti Abdus Salam, a teacher at Bangladesh's largest madrasa – Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam (popularly known as Hathazari Madrasa):

> There are two ways of engaging with the State – in the deeni line and in the duniyabi line. We do not want any role for the State in the deeni line so long as the State is not built on Islamic principles. We engage with the State in the duniyabi line. We deal

[151] Obaid Ullah Hamzah (teacher at Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya), interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[152] Ibid.

> with government officials when buying land, when looking for jobs, etc. We are also willing to take the government's funding and certificate so long as these don't have any impact on our deeni matters. So long as the government does not harm our religious education we can consider going for support.[153]

By separating his willingness to engage with the State in the duniyabi realm from his unwillingness to do so on deeni matters, Salam essentially disaggregates the State into its image and practices. Like opposed madrasa representatives, Salam explicitly opposes the image of a non-Islamic State. Unlike these opposed elements, on the other hand, Salam does not allow his dislike for this image to impede his potential engagement with the State. He can engage with a dislikeable State, so long as the State's practices are agreeable.

How would Bangladesh's fence-sitters behave if transported to West Bengal? Would they resort to resolute opposition, strengthening the argument that madrasas in India are repelled from a State they cannot help but distrust? Or do they take their fence-sitting characteristics with them? Of the twelve fence-sitters observed in Bangladesh, a small minority of two (17 percent) said they would oppose recognition in West Bengal. Noor Ahmed Qasimi of Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa in Sylhet's Shibganj neighbourhood is a fence-sitter in Bangladesh: "We can accept recognition in Bangladesh if the government does not interfere in our religious

[153] Abdus Salam (teacher at Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam), interviewed by author, January 31, 2012.

subjects and permits us to operate as we currently do."[154] But the predominantly non-Muslim religious affiliation of those running the Indian State would elicit Qasimi's latent tendency to oppose: "In India, we would not accept. We would not accept in any non-Muslim country as we cannot indebt ourselves to a non-Muslim government."[155] Ahmed Kabir of Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat agrees: "a Sate run by Muslims is a necessary precondition for recognition."[156]

But the remaining ten (83 percent) of our Bangladeshi fence-sitters would continue exercising their fence-sitting skills following a contextual shift to West Bengal. Though Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi of Darul Ma'arif believes "that the Indian government wants to take qaumi [khariji] madrasas under its grip," he extends to any Indian State the same terms of engagement he displays in Bangladesh: "If the Indian government issued us certificates without imposing any preconditions, I would accept recognition even there."[157] In fact, Nadwi's practice-centric terms are universal, blind to the specific image of the State: "We adopt the same position in an Islamic State. We would not accept recognition anywhere if we have to accept someone else's syllabus or control."[158] Abdus Salam of Hathazari Madrasa is also willing to sit on the fence in West Bengal: "I can accept recognition in India too so long as the government does not use this as a tool to harm Muslims and Islam. In theory, I can accept recognition from any source – be it Hindu or Christian – so long

[154] Noor Ahmed Qasimi (chief education officer at Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa in Sylhet), interviewed by author, May 14, 2013.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ahmed Kabir (Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat), interviewed by author, May 14, 2013.
[157] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[158] Ibid.

as this help is not harmful to our religion."[159] As Abu Jaffar – the fence-sitting principal of Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin – explains, Salam's view (one he shares) derives from a Hadith:

> If non-Muslims want to help Muslims, we are allowed to accept. During the time of the Prophet, several companions [of the Prophet] escaped persecution in Mecca by migrating to a location ruled by a Christian king. The Prophet accepted this help for his fellow Muslims because the king was honest and helpful. This means we are allowed to accept support from non-Muslims so long as this help is perceived as harmless.[160]

Jaffar refers here to the first Hijra [migration] of Islam, one undertaken by the Prophet's companions in 615 AD, at the Prophet's behest, from Mecca to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia). Known by his title Negus, the Abyssinian king referred to was Ashama bin Al-Abjar.[161]

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[159] Abdus Salam, interviewed by author, January 31, 2012.

[160] Abu Jaffar (principal of Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin), interviewed by author, May 18, 2013.

[161] Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), p. 63, 221.

3. The fence: the dividing line between recognised and unrecognised madrasas

3.1. The fence within a given context

In order to establish the dividing line between khariji/qaumi and sarkari/Alia madrasas, it is necessary to locate the fence on which fence-sitters are perched. The fence is represented by the common denominator defining all madrasas that refuse recognition at any given time within a given context. As is evident from the preceding discussion, the opposition of khariji/qaumi madrasas to recognition is driven by a number of factors, each of which seems sufficient (yet short of necessary). Some madrasa representatives are unwilling to affiliate with a curriculum that runs counter to their imaan [beliefs], others are additionally hesitant to receive money from the State, and yet others are unwilling to bear the stamp of the State on their sleeve. At any given time, however, only one such concern is shared by all khariji/qaumi madrasas within a given jurisdiction (since those madrasas that do not share this concern are expected to cross the fence and accept recognition). This common concern defines the fence. Though this fence may be characterised by periods of relative stasis, it is equally capable of movement in response to changes in the terms of the State's support. For most of West Bengal's history in madrasa reform, the fence has moved gently as the consequences of accepting recognition evolved (in consonance with the gradual dilution of the senior madrasa's religious curriculum). The critical juncture presented in 1997, on the

other hand, induced a more noticeable shift in the fence. The increased intrusiveness of the State in 1997 led to a displacement of the common concern (amongst khariji madrasas) from "*dilution of the syllabus*" to "*a loss of say in teacher selection*." This displacement was in turn accompanied by a leftward shift of the fence (with respect to its position in Figure 2.1).

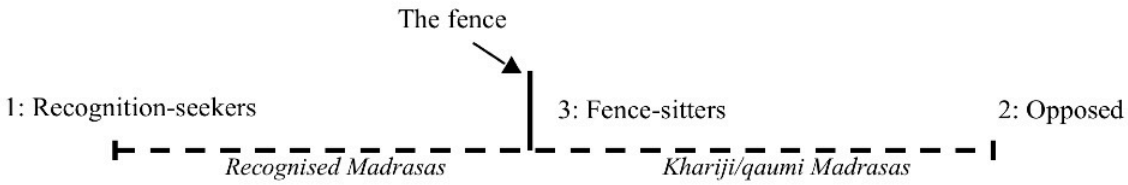


Figure 2.1. Recognition-centric typology of madrasas

In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the fence has remained relatively static. While the curriculum of the Alia system's lowest level – ebtidayee – is comparable to that of general schools, the religious orientation of the higher levels – dakhil through kamil – has been preserved. Unlike West Bengal's senior madrasas – where religious subjects constitute a mere 35 percent of the curriculum – Bangladesh's kamil level is focused almost exclusively on religious education. If at all the fence has moved in Bangladesh, it shifted to the right each time the State declared Alia degrees equivalent to those awarded in the mainstream system. In the context of kamil madrasas, this shift occurred when the Islamic University Amendment Act was passed in 2006, formally equating the kamil degree to a MA.

Notwithstanding the gradual shifts mentioned above, the fence in West Bengal has traditionally separated madrasas that permit the State significant interference in their religious curriculum from those tolerating only minimal interference. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the fence separates madrasas that permit the State even the mildest interference in religious education from those unwilling to tolerate any changes to their deeni talim and willing to accept only feedback and suggestions regarding the content of their duniyabi talim. In other words, the fence in West Bengal separates those who accept significant State control from those who can accept some State control while the fence in Bangladesh separates those who accept some degree of State control from those who accept none.

There is another way of saying that these non-monetary aspects of the State's practices define the fence in each context: a madrasa's financial need is a poor predictor of its recognition decision. Though the majority of recognition-seekers in West Bengal and Bangladesh factored the State's provision of financial incentives in their decision to accept recognition, several accepted recognition despite an abundance of funding. Insofar as unrecognised madrasas go, it is true that many fence-sitters and opposed madrasas refuse the State's financial support for fear of losing (larger) community donations. At the same time, however, a significant proportion of khariji/qaumi madrasas refuse financial support despite their manifest ability to use extra funds. As wealthy khariji/qaumi madrasas argue, and poorer ones demonstrate, any madrasa willing to manage without State support can do so by adjusting the scale of its operations. If sarkari/Alia madrasas allow "need"

to guide their recognition decision, khariji/qaumi madrasas allow their recognition decision to guide their "need."

3.2. The fence across contexts

The contextual shift from West Bengal to Bangladesh is conveyed in Figure 2.2. The leftmost fence (F_{WB}) in the figure represents the terms of recognition in West Bengal. As illustrated, these terms succeed in attracting West Bengal's recognition-seeking madrasas, but are of interest neither to West Bengal's fence-sitters (F_{WB}) nor to those madrasas residing along the opposed extreme of the recognition spectrum.

Moving slightly further to the right, we encounter Bangladesh's fence (F_{BD}). This revised context is characterised by a different image of the State (one predominantly run by Muslims instead of Hindus) and by more agreeable terms of recognition. As the empirical accounts in sections 2.1 through 2.3 reveal, these contextual changes also bring with them different results. In Bangladesh, the State's madrasa modernisation efforts have attracted a considerable number of madrasas that would have preferred to sit on the fence in West Bengal. Of the ten recognition-seeking madrasas (RS_{BD}) sampled in Bangladesh, 60 percent said they would join the category of fence-sitters (FS_{WB}) in West Bengal, while 10 percent said they would forego this category altogether to join West Bengal's opposed madrasas. Only 30 percent of Bangladesh's recognition-seekers would continue to behave as

recognition-seekers (RS_{WB}) in West Bengal. Interestingly, out of these ten madrasas, only one's decision (the one opting to oppose recognition in West Bengal) was guided by a concern for the image of the State. The remaining 90 percent were concerned only with the practices of the State in the revised context.

Beyond these differences, however, the contextual transition has a limited effect on madrasas' appetites for engagement with the State. Like its counterpart in West Bengal, the State in Bangladesh also has to contend with the presence of fence-sitters (FS_{BD}) and opposed madrasas on its soil. Its Muslim-dominated image and the relative agreeability of its practices have failed to convince these residual minds to sign up for recognition. Though they consider it an improvement on the Hindu-majority makeup of the Indian State, Bangladesh's opposed madrasas are unimpressed by the Muslim-dominated nature of the Bangladeshi State. The latter represents an image they choose to oppose. Insofar as Bangladesh's fence-sitting madrasas are concerned, the contextual transition from Bangladesh to West Bengal would only alter the categorisation of the small minority (17 percent) opposed to the image of the Indian State. The remaining 83 percent would operate in West Bengal, as they do in Bangladesh, with rigid demands and a keen eye on the fence.

This comparison tells us that – in the case of madrasas concerned exclusively with the State's practices – we can expect a gradual shift of the fence across contexts to stimulate a gradual shift in a madrasa's response (e.g. from recognition-seeking to fence-sitting tendencies). When a madrasa concerns itself with the State's image,

however, a small change (or no change at all) in the State's practices can stimulate a drastic shift (e.g. from fence-sitting to opposed tendencies).

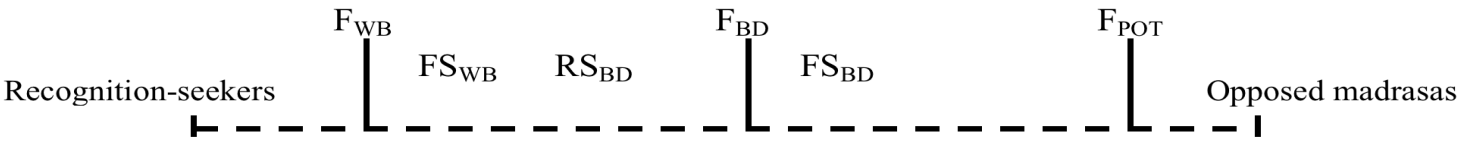


Figure 2.2. The recognition-centric typology across contexts

In theory, the full recognising potential of the State (represented by F_{POT} in Figure 2.2) is equal to the body of madrasas that do not oppose its image.[162] Clearly, the States in West Bengal and Bangladesh have both fallen short of this potential. By altering its practices to effect a rightwards shift of the fence, each State can come closer to meeting its potential. If West Bengal mirrored the practices currently displayed in Bangladesh, for instance, it could easily prompt several fence-sitters to accept recognition. Yet – as the increasingly elevated thresholds of the more demanding fence-sitters reveal – the State's quest to recognise madrasas is characterised by a trade-off. The more madrasas the State seeks to recognise, the less ambitious its modernising goals must be. If the State wants to recognise a large number of madrasas, it must accommodate the preferences of many and administer a mild reform programme. If the State instead prioritises significant modernisation, it must accept that its desire to shape preferences will limit its catchment area to a minority of madrasas willing to accept such measures.

[162] A State could potentially increase its potential yet further by adjusting its image, but even this adjustment will likely arise as an ultimate consequence of the temporally prior adjustment of its practices.

4. Conclusion

The empirical findings presented in this chapter speak to proposition two of the theoretical framework.[163]

Proposition two: Specific qualities of the State are capable of influencing the decisions and behaviours of societal players

This chapter has juxtaposed the State's efforts to enter society in the educational arenas of two different polities – one characterised by a Muslim-minority context, the other by a Muslim-majority context. But how, and to what extent, does this shift from minority to majority status influence the behaviours of madrasas? The literature suggests that minority status causes madrasas to embrace insularity and conservatism in response to the perceived threat of a non-Muslim State. Imtiaz Ahmad explains this defensive strategy, and its relevance to Indian ulama:

> What appears to be clinging on to traditionalism, conservatism and narrowness of outlook is the only choice open to a community whose traditions and identity are seriously threatened. Whether they are actually threatened is not the question. What matters is the perception and on this point the view of the clerics, who manage the madrasas and act as the guardians of faith, is that such a threat exists. Indeed, it has existed since power slipped out of the hands of Muslims. Under the

[163] This chapter's findings also hold implications for proposition one. Since an adequate discussion of this proposition incorporates themes covered in the following chapter, however, it is dealt with in the concluding section of chapter three.

> circumstances, the only way that the traditions and identity of their believers can be preserved is by orientating them to the faith in as traditional a mould as possible."[164]

The concerns Ahmad describes and justifies relate to the perceived image of a non-Muslim State. But Sikand suggests that the practices of a non-Muslim State might compound this threat scenario yet further:

> Further hampering efforts to reform the madrassah system is the widespread and growing perception among the 'ulama, and the Muslim community in India more generally, of a grave threat to Islam and Muslims from militant anti-Muslim Hindu chauvinist forces. This fear naturally dampens enthusiasm for reform and only serves to further strengthen the forces of Muslim conservatism and opposition to change.[165]

While these conditions are easily portrayed as ominous constraints to recognition, this chapter's findings suggest that their true impact is just as easily overstated. Yes, the image of the Indian State and its intrusive practices repulse opposed madrasas and fence-sitters, respectively. It is also true that many madrasas accepting recognition in Bangladesh would think twice before engaging with the Indian State, while a handful would refuse to engage altogether. But any expectation that the Muslim-majority image of the Bangladeshi State, along with its significantly more agreeable practices, and the absence of "Hindu chauvinist forces" will wash away all

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[164] Imtiaz Ahmad, "Urdu and Madrasa Education." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, 24 (2002): p. 2287.
[165] Sikand, "The Indian Madrassahs and the Agenda of Reform," p. 241.

distrust and allow mass recognition is seriously misplaced. Despite the presence of a Muslim-majority and the fact that power has not "slipped out of the hands of Muslims," a significant proportion of madrasas in Bangladesh refuse recognition. While the theoretical extents of their opposition may vary slightly, the practical significance of an opposed madrasa in Bangladesh is identical to that of an opposed madrasa in West Bengal – each madrasa opposes the image of its respective State enough to rule out engagement. Similarly, the recognition thresholds of Bangladesh's fence-sitters are identical to those exhibited by the more rigid fence-sitters in West Bengal. The real practical dividend resulting from the transition to a Muslim-majority context is thus represented exclusively by the less rigid fence-sitters in West Bengal who exhibit a recognition threshold similar to that of recognition-seekers in Bangladesh.

The image of the State in Bangladesh does not change enough to attract opposed madrasas, the practices of the State in Bangladesh do not change enough to attract the more rigid practice-focused madrasas, and the recognition thresholds of madrasas in Bangladesh do not change at all.

The following chapter explores the relationship between the recognition-centric typology and the doctrinal component of a madrasa's ideology. It enriches the ideological profiles of sampled madrasas and demonstrates how our recognition-centric typology differs from, and meaningfully supplements, existing typologies of madrasas.

Chapter Three: Recognition Propensities and Ideological Profiles

The previous chapter presented a typology of madrasas on the basis of one ideological component: their attitudes towards the State. This chapter further populates the ideological profiles of sampled madrasas giving a fuller picture to their religious beliefs and practices. By so doing, it expresses the recognition-centric typology in terms of existing typologies of madrasas and determines how the former relates to and supplements the latter. Section one introduces a typology of Bengali Muslims – ashraf-atrap – resulting from the historical process of Islamisation in Bengal. Section two analytically compares our recognition-centric typology to the ashraf-atrap binary using three ideological indicators: tolerance for the practice of coeducation, views on the "correct" language of religious instruction, and adherence to the custom-based ritual of pir veneration. Section three further compares the ashraf-atrap binary to the maslak-based typology, exposing limits in the latter's explanatory potential. Section four concludes by summarising key findings in the context of the theoretical propositions presented in the introductory chapter.

1. Introducing the ashraf and the atrap

An extensive body of literature speaks to the extent of congruence between faith as prescribed and faith as practiced. Muslims the world over – though followers of the

same religion – display little uniformity in their observance of Islam. This section explores such variation in Islamic practice, first generally, and then specifically in the context of Bengal. It touches upon matters of belief, custom, and identity to establish the different strands of Islam that exist in Bengal as a consequence of the ongoing process of Islamisation.

Perfection and deviation in Islamic practice

The process of Islamisation is often presented as a contest between the Islamic ideal, on the one hand, and everything thwarting its realisation, on the other. The success of the Islamising project depends, in part, on the characteristics of the terrain it seeks to conquer. Moving "into an essentially virgin area," suggests Geertz, obviates encounters with an extant "high culture," thereby facilitating the establishment of religious practice in line with the prescribed ideal.[166] If instead, the Islamising effort is exported to an area with well-entrenched endogenous customs and traditions, it is unlikely that these latter practices will wholly succumb to the new entrant's agenda. In Geertz's view the success of Islamisation thus depends in large part on whether this force is able to "construct a society," or whether it is forced to "appropriate" one.[167] Given that parts of the world had already embraced some or another high culture before the advent of Islam, the easy transportability of the Islamic ideal was severely constricted. In order to survive its intrusion into other societies, Robinson reasons, Islam had to accommodate itself to the local

[166] Geertz, "Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia," p. 11.
[167] Ibid.

beliefs and practices that were already in place.[168] This reality causes Geertz to conclude that Islamisation is hampered by "the central paradox of religious development:" "Because of the progressively wider range of spiritual experience with which [religion] is forced to deal, the further it proceeds, the more precarious it gets. Its successes generate its frustrations."[169]

But what outcome can one expect in an area where, because some prior culture preponderates, Islam is imported in a manner divergent from prescription? The literature holds diverse views on this matter. It agrees that some elements in society represent, and are actively in pursuit of, the Islamic ideal, while other elements correspond in their religious practice to a more intermediate tradition. It disagrees, however, on the nature of interaction between these two societal tendencies. Imtiaz Ahmad argues that these two traditions "co-exist as complementary and integral parts of a single common religious system."[170] In his view, both forces live in equilibrium. More typically, however, the distinctions between idealist and custom-centred tendencies are presented in polarising terms: orthodox versus heterodox; sharia [those who live in accordance with Islamic law] versus basharia [those who may follow practices not prescribed by Islamic law]; pan-Islamic versus regionalist;[171] religious versus religious-minded;[172] those who hold religious views

[168]Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45.
[169] Geertz, "Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia," 14.
[170] Imtiaz Ahmad, *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), cited in, Robinson, "Islam and Muslim History in South Asia," 46.
[171] For a list of polar adjectives used in this context, see Joya Chatterji, "The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity," in *Islam, Communities, and the Nation: Muslim Identities in South Asia and Beyond*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1998), 265-6.
[172] Geertz, "Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia," 18.

versus those held by religious views.[173] This view – of two antipodean forces in constant competition – implies a continual process of Islamisation in which the prize of legitimate authority is always contested but never fully won. Robinson supports this position, asserting that "some form of traffic is always taking place between visions of the ideal Muslim life and the lives which Muslims lead."[174] But not all scholars agree with the specifics.

Chatterji questions the central assumption that Islam has "an unambiguous, fixed meaning." Instead of presenting the idealist as one with an unalterable mission, she suggests it is more useful to accept that "true Islam is itself a social construct" and that the assertion of an idealist Islam is little more than a strategy for "shutting out alternative readings."[175] This argument is consistent with Imtiaz Ahmad's insistence that "changes in theological and religious education" are context-dependent. "As historical exigencies change," Ahmad explains, "theological orientations are transformed and [the] religious learning process is reoriented."[176] "True Islam," says Chatterji, "has always been a matter of dispute." To the extent that an "authentic" Islam exists, she believes, it seeks only "to standardize, essentialize and sentimentalize a past which has been characterized by plurality, multivocality, and bitter conflict." Chatterji and Ahmad suggest that the process of Islamisation is characterised by context-induced reassessment and redefinition. They also imply that the idealist himself remains unaware, or neglectful, of the constructed nature of

[173] Ibid., 17.
[174] Robinson, "Islam and Muslim History in South Asia," 57.
[175] Chatterji, "The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity," 273-4.
[176] Imtiaz Ahmad, "Urdu and Madrasa Education," p. 2285-2287.

his goals. But these arguments by no means detract from the salience due to the idealist's goal. Whether real or imagined, the pattern of perfection presents now, as it often has in the past, a powerful rationale for Islamisation.

The Products of Islamisation in Bengal

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the unfinished business of Islamisation in Bengal. Unfinished, some argue, because Islam, in a near-perfect form, never made its way to the eastern end of the subcontinent. Islam was adopted by Bengalis, from the outset, in a manner far removed from "prescribed" practice. Roy explains this occurrence in terms of a hitherto occupied cultural space: "In Bengal [. . .] Islam is not a primary but a secondary culture, [being] exogenous and not endogenous to the particular region." According to Roy, in "a land which was not culturally virgin," Islam was unable to establish itself as "the only great tradition." Instead, he explains, Islam "confronted the long-established endogenous Hindu great tradition."[177] Such were the circumstances of this process that Islam neither displaced, nor assimilated into, the home culture. Instead, explains Sarkar, the new tradition entered into "some sort of compromise with the [existing] local beliefs and customs."[178] The outcome: "Islam and Kufr [disbelief] had been mixed up like khichri [Indian rice and lentil porridge]."[179] One observer describes the situation as follows:

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[177] Asim Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," p. 4.
[178] Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)* (Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1985), 65.
[179] Ibid.

> Islam in its simple and austere aspect does not appear to have characterized the life of the people, although literary and epigraphic sources indicate that offering prayers regularly, keeping the Ramadan fast tenaciously, reading the Koran together with other religious scriptures, paying the poor rate and going on pilgrimage to Mecca, were quite common practices … but the popular Islam does not seem to have been free from accretions of an amazing nature. [180]

"Bringing their old superstitions into their new faith,"[181] Bengal's Muslims thus adopted religious practices that were only nominally Islamic. "While the number of people labelled 'Muslim' increased dramatically," says Rafiuddin Ahmed, "their spiritual orientation did not demonstrate the same degree of change."[182] The new converts assumed a status that baffled even demographers. A census report published in the early twentieth century included a category for Indians who were "neither Hindus nor Muslims but a mixture of both."[183] Endowing this phenomenon an element of permanence, Schimmel says that "the customs, rites and rituals that crystallized in the first centuries of Islamic rule in India were to remain more or less unchanged for the centuries to come."[184] Quite naturally, this state-of-affairs prompted scholars to ask "Who are the Bengali Muslims?"[185]

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[180] Momtazur Rahman Tarafdar, cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 50.
[181] Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 163.
[182] Rafiuddin Ahmed, "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment," in *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam*, ed. Katherine P. Ewing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 119.
[183] Sarkar, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)," 65-6.
[184] Schimmel, "Islam in the Indian Subcontinent ," 106.
[185] Ahmed, "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment," 118.

The process of Islamisation in Bengal encouraged the emergence of two strands of Muslims. The first comprised of immigrants who brought with them Islam, and the hope of its propagation. This group, referred to in the literature as ashraf, came to be recognised as the nobility. The second strand of Muslims consisted of proselytes who, torn between the appeal of a recent import and the stickiness of deep-rooted cultural traditions, occupied a more intermediate status. This group is often referred to as atrap.[186] This ashraf versus atrap classification separates the Muslim immigrant, in origin and religious orientation, from the local convert. As Chatterji explains, the literature assumes that one can quite reliably ascribe certain attributes to each of these categories: "If one were told that a certain group of people were of atrap origin, it would be considered safe to assume that they were also Bengali-speaking, pir-worshipping, heterodox in religious practice, and in all more 'Bengali' than Muslim."[187] An-Na'im further suggests that ashraf and atrap Muslims differ in terms of the role and conduct expected of women in the household:

> The division […] between the ashraf, who claim Arab and Persian origins, and the atrap, who descend from Indian converts, is accentuated by the differing roles women play in their families. The ashraf ideal is for women to confine themselves exclusively to the work of being a wife and mother […] Atrap women, on the other hand, are expected to contribute to the income of the family and therefore cannot conform to the strict purdah of ashraf women. Further, although atrap women are

[186] For a detailed description of this classification, see Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," 50.
[187] Chatterji, "The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity," 266.

> expected to be virtuous, the requirements are not as strict as those for ashraf women, nor are infractions punished as severely.[188]

Though this chapter relies on the literature's ashraf and atrap labels, it does so avoiding some of their more problematic aspects. For one, the ashraf-atrap binary implies a division between immigrant Muslims and those of local ancestry. As some scholars argue, however, this assumption lacks a firm basis. Instead, they suggest, these two forces – the ashraf and the atrap – are both endogenous, but while one clings to custom, the other prefers to mimic a more scripturalist, kernel-based, form of Islam.[189] If this is true, as Chatterji explains, the task of distinguishing one strand from the other is complicated. It would indeed be difficult, for instance, to ascertain whether the practices of the ashraf arise as a function of his believed, desired, or true identity. If the origins of ashraf and atrap Muslims are debatable, so are their assumed (non-)syncretic personalities. Much of the literature uses the term "syncretic" to refer to the tradition adopted by the indigenous Muslim.[190] But Mayaram is uncomfortable with this term. In her view, it too easily relegates intermediate identities to the status of "aberrant little traditions."[191] Instead, Mayaram prefers the term "liminality," which "implies an ability to switch between

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[188] Abdullahi A An-Na'im, *Islamic Family Law in a Changing World: A Global Resource Book* (London: Zed Books, 2002), 208.
[189] Ibid., 275-6.
[190] Asim Roy and Rafiuddin Ahmed are among a handful of scholars who liberally employ the term to describe the Islamic tradition that has existed in Bengal. See Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," and Ahmed, "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment."
[191] Shail Mayaram, "Rethinking Meo Identity: Cultural Faultline, Syncretism, Hybridity or Liminality." In *Islam, Communities, and the Nation: Muslim Identities in South Asia and Beyond*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1998), 287.

identities."[192] She contrasts this term with others that are often used to denote intermediate identities: "If hybridity is read as heresy by fundamentalism and in metropolitan contexts is desacralized by the author and the critic, liminality denotes a peculiar combination of reverence and irreverence to the gods."[193]

This chapter uses the ashraf and atrap labels as analytical markers – to distinguish the ideological tendencies of sampled ulama on three very specific indicators – without making any assumptions regarding the alim's origins or social status.[194] Instead of recording ulama's self-ascribed identities – a potentially futile exercise, as Chatterji might suggest – this chapter looks at the correspondence between the ashraf-atrap binary and one's recognition propensity in a less direct, two-step, manner: 1) by matching ulama's expressed positions vis-à-vis language choice, gender segregation, and pir veneration to the ashraf or atrap categories based on the tendencies the literature associates with each strand; and 2) by exploring – for each of the three indicators – the extent of correspondence between one's tendency towards the ashraf or atrap categories, and one's propensity for recognition. Importantly, this approach allows us to study the relationship between the ashraf-atrap binary and recognition propensity through the ideological tendencies ulama exhibit, without (problematically) labelling the individuals exhibiting them. In other words, instead of comparing the recognition propensities of "ashraf Muslims" and "atrap Muslims," this study looks at the correspondence between ashraf or atrap

[192] Ibid., 288.
[193] Ibid., 289.
[194] As Sikand notes, the ashraf and atrap appellations carry implications regarding one's perceived social class, and also offer an indication of one's assumed affinity for caste-related practices. See, Sikand, "Islam and Caste Inequality Among Indian Muslims," *Countercurrents.org*, February 15, 2004.

tendencies on one hand, and recognition propensity on the other. This is made possible by the fact – conveyed in sections 2.1 through 2.3 – that a single alim can tend towards the ashraf category on one indicator, while exhibiting tendencies associated with atrap Muslims on other indicators. To recap, then, this chapter: 1) borrows the ashraf/atrap binary – and the qualities associated with each grouping – from the literature; 2) acknowledges the problems associated with these labels; 3) tries to sidestep these problems by ensuring that the ashraf and atrap labels are not (inappropriately) used to characterise sampled ulama; and 4) analytically employees these labels only to categorise the tendencies sampled ulama exhibit on each of three ideological indicators.

2. Comparing two typologies using three indicators

This section juxtaposes the ashraf-atrap typology introduced above with our recognition-centric typology. It does so using three indicators: the preferred language of religious instruction, the degree of tolerance towards coeducation, and attitudes towards the practice of pir veneration.[195] This comparative exercise also

[195] The first and third indicators were selected directly from the list of "attributes" Chatterji offers to distinguish Ashraf and Atrap Muslims. See Chatterji, "The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity," 266. While the first – language preference – represents a theme specific to Bengal, the third indicator – tolerance towards pir-veneration – is familiar to Muslims across South Asia. The second indicator – attitudes towards coeducational practices – was selected based on An-Na'im's observations, and represents a universal barometer of Muslims's views. Since it is neither exclusive to Bengal, nor the only indicator on which Bengal's Muslims diverge, one can reasonably substitute it with alternative indicators – e.g. attitudes towards democracy, secularism, or human rights. Acknowledging the salience of these alternatives, this study adopted the coeducational variable as it is more relevant in the context of the recognition decision, and more helpful in populating the doctrinal profiles of sampled madrasas. For a more detailed account of Muslims' attitudes towards democracy and secularism, see John L. Esposito, "Retreat from the Secular Path: The Democracy-Secularism Debate in the Muslim World," Le religioni nelle relazioni internazionali, No 12, (2010): p. 50-68.

serves to deepen the ideological profiles of madrasas in each category of the recognition-centric typology.

2.1. Language preference and recognition

Which languages constitute appropriate media for the dissemination of Islamic learning? And which languages are unfit for this purpose? Prompting uneasy answers, these questions have formed the subject of much debate amongst Bengal's Muslims. As the narrative typically suggests, the ashraf and the atrap are wedded to separate linguistic traditions. While the former finds in Urdu a reminder of Islam's Arabic and Persian antecedents, the latter's use of Bengali speaks to the persistence of a non-Islamic past. Bengali, as a medium of religious propagation, caused discomfort as early as the medieval period. "Tainted by its associations with the local culture," Bengali was despised by the more outward-looking strand of Muslim thought.[196] Such was the stigma against its use that even local Muslims began to believe in its shortcomings. Convinced "that their tongue was not really Bengali," explains Rafiuddin Ahmed, "they found pleasure and pride in discarding their links to the local culture."[197] Whatever they did write in their language, was prefaced "with a long apology lamenting their local birth."[198] One sixteenth century Bengali poet expressed his regret as follows: "I am afraid in my heart lest God should be annoyed with me for having rendered Islamic scriptures into Bengali."[199]

[196] Ahmed, "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment," 122.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.

Despite the adverse climate, some local Muslims continued to write in their mother tongue. They saw in this practice the best means of taking Islam to the masses. Sayyid Sultan put it thus: "The Almighty knows that I mean it all for the best, Him alone I am to answer."[200] These efforts, Roy suggests, were aimed at those locals "who were found ill-grounded in their [adopted] religious tradition."[201] Rafiuddin Ahmed seconds this view, arguing that the "popular persistence in the study of Hindu religious scriptures" was blamed on "the absence of Muslim works in Bengali."[202] Though some individuals were willing to place the propagation of religion above linguistic pride, realism did not give way to wholehearted compromise. Innovative solutions were sought to deal with the inaccessibility of foreign tongues, without conceding too much ground to the local language. One nineteenth century Bengali Muslim, Nawab Abd al-Latif, resolved to create a hybrid Bengali language. Subjecting Bengali to "the wholesale incorporation of Arabic and Persian terms," he introduced what came to be known as Musalmani Bangla [Muslim Bengali].[203] This episode speaks less to any real confluence of Urdu and Bengali, than to the piecemeal rapprochement between ashraf and atrap tendencies. While past rivalries have waned, the Bengali Muslim remains enmeshed, perhaps imperceptibly, in linguistic discomfort. As late as 1962, one scholar heard a Muslim boy ask his father "Does God understand Bengali?"[204] Salient though it may be, to

[200] Ibid., 123.
[201] Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," 58.
[202] Ahmed, "Conflict and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment,"126.
[203] Ibid., 130-1.
[204] Schimmel, "Islam in the Indian Subcontinent," 148.

what extent, and in what manner, does this linguistic factor correlate with a madrasa's inclination towards recognition?

Language Preference and Recognition in West Bengal

The assertion is often made – and often casually – that sarkari madrasas teach in the vernacular while khariji madrasas prefer to educate their students in Urdu. One guilty in this hasty oversimplification is Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla. Heading the Amdanga Kendriya Siddiquia Rahana Senior Madrasa in North 24 Parganas, Molla subjects West Bengal's madrasas to a "neat" division: "Senior madrasas in the state translate the Quran from Arabic into Bengali, while khariji madrasas translate the Quran from Arabic into Urdu."[205] But fieldwork findings point to a more complex reality.

The common position expressed amongst senior recognised madrasas is one of pragmatism. Though many interviewees associated with these recognised madrasas were themselves taught in Urdu, they consider the State's emphasis on Bengali well-suited to the realities on the ground. As Iman Ali of the Aminpur Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Senior Madrasa suggests, the language of instruction in the recognised madrasa complements the needs of local children. He considers it reasonable that students should be able to "take exams in their mother tongue [Bengali]."[206]

[205] Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla (headmaster, Amdanga Kendriya Siddiquia Rahana Senior Madrasa, North 24 Parganas), interviewed by author, July 30, 2009.
[206] Interviewed by author, October 1, 2009.

Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla of the Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa agrees that "Bengali makes it easier for students to comprehend" the taught material.[207] To these men, the "correct" language of instruction in the madrasa is that language which is most easily understood by the incoming student.

Many khariji madrasas take different views on the matter. Qazi Mohammad Yasin of the Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom supports the use of Urdu, arguing that "it makes sense" given that "most theological books are written in Arabic or Urdu."[208] Qari Fazlur Rahman shares this view. Though his students do not translate the Quran, they are taught Urdu in an effort to prepare them "to understand religious books" they are likely to encounter in their subsequent religious education.[209] Faqrul Islam Qasmi of the Jamia Qasim-ul-Uloom takes a more compromising stance. Echoing the senior madrasa's view, Qasmi accepts that successful madrasa education requires an element of pragmatism: "Which language the Quran is translated into depends largely on the language spoken in the village where the madrasa happens to be located." Based on this village-dependent formula, two of eight madrasas under Qasmi's watch teach in Bengali while the rest use Urdu. But Qasmi's willingness to impart religious training in the vernacular is only half-hearted. Preference alone tells him that "the Quran is best translated into Urdu."[210] According to people like Qasmi, the preferred language of instruction in the madrasa is Urdu. The

[207] Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla (headmaster, Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa, Howrah), interviewed by author, July 30, 2009.
[208] Qazi Mohammad Yasin, Interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[209] Qari Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, October 3, 2009.
[210] Faqrul Islam Qasmi, interviewed by author, September 30, 2009.

employment of any other language for this purpose must be the result of pragmatism.

In some cases, the use of Urdu relates to the background of the individual running the madrasa. Mohammad Shahidul Qadri of the Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya hails from Uttar Pradesh. Though Qadri gets by in broken Bengali, he prefers teaching in a language he is comfortable speaking. Qadri is one of many Muslim immigrants who come to West Bengal in search of religious or professional opportunities. These immigrants play no small part in ensuring that "madrasas [remain] a vehicle for the preservation of Urdu" both in Kolkata's Urdu belt, and in the state at large.[211] He rationalises the use of Urdu by pointing to the demographics of his neighbourhood: "We only translate the Quran and Hadith into Urdu because ours is an Urdu speaking area [Metiabruz]. Everyone in Metiabruz speaks Urdu. In fact, many (including myself) live here since birth but can't speak proper Bangla. Those people in the neighbourhood who have office jobs learn Bangla. Others generally do not."[212] While Qadri maintains that he reserves no particular affection for Urdu, apart from its status as his mother tongue,[213] his use of the language correlates strongly with his maslak. Indeed, each of the four Barelvi madrasas sampled in West Bengal employed Urdu as the medium of instruction.[214] Other respondents, like A. K. Abdul

[211] Imtiaz Ahmad argues that madrasas play this language-preserving role in the Indian context. See Ahmad, "Urdu and Madrasa Education," 2285-2287. Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla of the Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa expressed the view that Muslim immigrants contribute to the prevalence of the Urdu language amongst *khariji* madrasas.
[212] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri (headmaster of the Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya, Kolkata), interviewed by author, November 13, 2012.
[213] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri, interviewed by author, August 17, 2009.
[214] This Barelvi affinity for Urdu (and Urdu-speaking localities in and around Kolkata) may have to do with the origins of the men running these madrasas. It might also have to do with the fact that the Urdu/Hindi-speaking

Khaleque of the Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom, are genuinely indifferent towards the language one chooses to employ in the madrasa, so long as the message gets across. This position is consistent with the view that "religion has no language."[215]

Despite the fact that Urdu and Bengali are used in both sarkari and khariji quarters, one can perceive general patterns of overlap between one's recognition propensity and one's expression of ashraf or atrap tendencies. On the issue of language preference, each recognition-seeker in West Bengal showed atrap tendencies. Opposed madrasas were almost exclusively ashraf in outlook, with only one opposed madrasa exhibiting a position the literature would associate with the atrap category. Fence-sitters in West Bengal showed more diversity with 64 percent displaying ashraf tendencies. The observations of some respondents that linguistic tensions exist are reinforced by the strong positive correlations of recognition-seekers and opposed madrasas with atrap and ashraf tendencies, respectively. At the same time, the divided affiliation of fence-sitters suggests that the choice between Urdu and Bengali is not made in a clearly predictable manner.

state of Uttar Pradesh houses the most influential amongst Barelvi madrasas – Jamia Razia Manzir Islam in Barreily, and Al-Jamia Ashrafia in Azamgarh – to which these men maintain close ties.

[215] A. K. Abdul Khaleque, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.

Language Preference and Recognition in Bangladesh

If the madrasa landscape in West Bengal evinced a mild correlation between language preference and recognition propensity, the same relationship in Bangladesh is characterised by a correlation of zero. In fact, only one of the 23 madrasas sampled displayed ashraf tendencies; the other 22 were unequivocally atrap in orientation. Moreover, contrary to expectation, this lone subject exhibiting ashraf inclinations runs a recognition-seeking madrasa.

Unlike their khariji counterparts in West Bengal, Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas seem perfectly comfortable imparting religious education in Bengali. Shah Momshod of Jamia Madania Islamia in Sylhet convincingly articulates this fact: "We translate the Quran and Hadith from Arabic into Bangla. Here we Muslims feel that Bangla is our language. We don't have the 'paani' [Urdu for 'water] versus 'jal' [Bengali/Hindi for 'water'] culture here. We are proud to be Bangla speakers and this doesn't clash with our beliefs or religious teaching."[216] Momshod further dismisses any practical justification for clinging onto Urdu: "We have published so much religious material in Bangla now that we no longer need Urdu."[217] Some qaumi individuals – like Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi of Darul Ma'arif – believe it is yet too early to completely move away from Urdu: "We translate most material into Bangla, but we also teach Urdu as a language so students can understand textbooks on Tafsir

[216] Shah Momshod (teacher at Jamia Madania Islamia in Sylhet), interviewed by author, May 13, 2013.
[217] Ibid.

[Quranic commentary]."[218] "We still have a need," says Nadwi, "to translate many Urdu textbooks into Bangla."[219] This is a need fellow Deobandis – including Ahmed Kabir of Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia – are committed to fulfilling. "Insha'Allah [God willing] in 20 to 25 years we will be able to teach exclusively in Bangla. We are working towards this."[220]

One can reasonably attribute the uniform embrace of Bengali to the realignment of identity accompanying the Liberation War of 1971. Intent on unshackling themselves from a Punjabi-dominated Western wing, and from the homogenising tendencies of the Urdu lingua franca, East Pakistan's nationalists promoted the Bengali language as a basis for social identification and mobilisation. By severing religious identity from linguistic identity, this ethno-linguistic struggle ensured that Muslims in Bangladesh could henceforth employ the Bengali language without compromising their religious credentials.

That one recognition-seeker should defy this logic is easily explained by its founding patron. Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Kamil Madrasa in Chittagong is patronised by Taher Shah – a living pir based in Pakistan's province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Section 2.3 (below) describes in more detail the madrasa's relationship to this Urdu-speaking saint.

[218] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ahmed Kabir, interviewed by author, May 14, 2013.

2.2. To mingle or not to mingle: gender relations and recognition

The second characteristic distinguishing one strand from the other concerns issues of gender. As noted in the previous section, An-Na'im associates with ashraf and atrap women different norms of public conduct. Sikand further tells us that a scripturalist reading of Islam can limit the social participation of women:

> Central to Islamic scripturalist assertion […] is the notion of the ideal Muslim woman, whose status, roles and functions are defined by rules and norms deriving from a narrow, restrictive and patriarchal reading of the Islamic scripturalist tradition. The 'ideal' Muslim woman […] is to be carefully controlled and monitored, at all times, by patriarchal authority.[221]

Sikand's observation invites several questions relevant to this section. Should a woman have access to knowledge? If so, what should be the nature, duration, and venue of her training? Is it permissible for her to be educated in the company of men? Might recognition-seekers, fence-sitters, and opposed madrasas respond differently to these questions?[222]

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[221] Yoginder Sikand, Review of Velvet Jihad – Muslim Women's Quiet Resistance to Islamic Fundamentalism, by Faegheh Shirazi, *Countercurrents.org*, July 24, 2010. Available on the web: <http://www.countercurrents.org>

[222] It is important to note that a tolerance for coeducation does not constitute a prerequisite for recognition in West Bengal or Bangladesh. While the Bangladeshi government has incentivised coeducation at lower levels of the alia system – ebtidayee, dakhil, and alim – coeducation is neither expected, nor rewarded at the fazil and kamil levels. Similarly, while central government schemes in India have incentivised coeducation up to class 8, senior madrasas are free to exclusively teach boys (or girls). That said, the recognised madrasa sector – particularly in West Bengal – has traditionally attracted madrasas tolerant towards coeducational practices. This trend has resulted in the fact that a majority (roughly 65 percent) of students in West Bengal's sarkari madrasa system are girls. Apart from its role as an interface between the recognition-centric and ashraf-atrap typologies, the purpose of including "tolerance towards coeducation" as an indicator here is thus to understand how and why ulama differ on the subject, to explore possible overlap between their recognition propensities and

The Prophet Muhammad reportedly declared that "knowledge is the duty of all Muslims." In delivering this injunction, however, the Prophet used the word "muslim" in its masculine form, not in its feminine "muslimah." Despite this specificity, it is generally understood that the Prophet intended for all Muslims, irrespective of gender, to partake in the acquisition of knowledge.[223] In theory, such an interpretation derives considerable support from the many Quranic commentaries, Hadith reports, and jurisprudential and scholarly contributions rendered by the Prophet's female contemporaries, the most celebrated amongst them being Ayesha, the Prophet's youngest wife.[224] But the emphasis on women's education that this early evidence provides is very quickly offset, or so it seems, by other Quranic and Prophetic teachings.

As Syed Jalaluddin Umari explains, "Islam assigns man and woman different spheres of activity."[225] Wahiduddin Khan provides the basis for what he considers a well-reasoned division of labour: "Islamic precepts for men and women are based on their respective, natural constitutions. It is now an established biological fact that there is a difference in their physiological structure, a difference which gears men to work which is external to the home, and women to a life led mainly indoors within

attitudes towards coeducation, and to learn if these patterns vary across our chosen contexts. The purpose is not to assess whether sampled ulama qualify for recognition. Though they may be deterred by the prospect of affiliating with a sector dominated by female students, khariji/qaumi madrasas opposed to coeducation have the option of accepting recognition as boys-only or girls-only madrasas.

[223] Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Woman in Islamic Shari'ah* (New Delhi: The Islamic Centre, 1995), 58.

[224] See Yoginder Sikand, Issues in Madrasa Education in India (Gurgaon: Hope India Publications, 2008), 58-60. Also see Syed Jalaluddin Umari, *Woman and Islam* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 2007), 64.

[225] Umari, "Woman and Islam," p. 11.

their home."[226] Ill-equipped to "bear the hardship and strains" of more "tedious" endeavours, the woman is thus described as manager of domestic affairs, responsible for all caretaking duties towards her home, children, and husband.[227] But, is a woman's capacity to fulfil these responsibilities enhanced by an education?

The woman's overarching domestic role is often cited as a rationale for the provision of women's education. As Jeffrey, Jeffrey, and Jeffrey observe from their visits to Uttar Pradesh, the prevailing sentiment amongst madrasa personnel was that a woman can only pass on to her children knowledge that she herself possesses: "As future mothers, girls should be enabled to become competent [first madrasas] for their children and play an effective role in disseminating knowledge about Islamic doctrine and practice."[228] This view is reinforced by the contention that "a boy's education benefits him alone [whereas] a girl's education benefits everyone in the house."[229] But what sort of education is appropriate? Where is this training to be imparted, under what conditions, and for how long? As the following sections demonstrate, these fundamental questions elicit varied responses within West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasa landscapes.

[226] Khan, "Woman in Islamic Shari'ah," p. 39.
[227] Umari, "Woman and Islam," p. 13.
[228] Patricia Jeffrey, Roger Jeffrey, and Craig Jeffrey, "The First Madrasa: Learned Mawlawis and the Educated Mother," in *Islamic Education, Diversity, and National Identity: Dini Madaris in India Post 9/11*, ed.Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 248.
[229] Ibid., 235.

Coeducation and Recognition in West Bengal

Fieldwork data suggests that the "correct" management of gender relations constitutes a significant point of dispute between recognised and khariji madrasas in West Bengal. The average recognised madrasa was run (prior to recognition as it is today) by individuals who endorsed coeducation. Only two of the ten recognised madrasas sampled were boys-only institutions before acquiring recognition. The average khariji madrasa, by contrast, is unfailingly opposed to coeducation. Apart from the recognition-seeking Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Senior Madrasa, all khariji madrasas sampled abide by the virtues of single-sex education.

Though none of the interviewees – recognised or khariji – opposed the provision of women's education, they disagreed considerably on the rules of the game. Khariji madrasas are adamantly opposed to coeducation. Qazi Mohammad Yasin of the Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom explicates the khariji position: "Below twelve years of age boys and girls can stay together. But it is against Islamic law to teach boys and girls together after puberty."[230] This opinion found resonance in all other khariji madrasas of the opposed and fence-sitting types. Qari Fazlur Rahman insists that "there is no question of educating boys and girls together."[231] Partially echoing the aforementioned division of labour argument, Rahman says that "according to Islam [boys and girls] need to stay separately, and are not permitted to work together." He further adds that "sarkari madrasas co-educate in violation of Islam." Mohammad

[230] Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[231] Qari Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, October 3, 2009.

Shahidul Qadri seconds these views: "We educate according to Islamic law. Boys and girls must study separately."[232] But the argument goes further. According to A. K. Abdul Khaleque, "girls are not allowed even to enter this madrasa. For them to study here is completely out of the question."[233] Mohammad Yasin expresses a similar sentiment. "We do not [willingly] entertain women," says Yasin. "Should this madrasa accept recognition," he suggests, "the State may respond by sending a woman. What can we do then? We cannot even tell her to wear a hijab." But given the size and domestic repute of Yasin's madrasa, female visitors (most typically NGO representatives) are not uncommon. To accommodate them, Yasin explains, "they are provided separate places to sit."[234]

The attitude towards coeducation expressed by khariji madrasas is born of a number of Quranic and Prophetic injunctions addressing the need for women to exercise discretion in their public behaviour.[235] The Prophetic traditions also impose restrictions on a woman's visible conduct. According to one account, the Prophet asked his daughter Fatimah "What is the best thing for a woman?" When Fatimah replied that "the best thing for a woman is that neither she should see a stranger nor a stranger should see her," the Prophet approvingly embraced her. The most recognised means of respecting these injunctions is the pardah [veil]. As Bismillah Hir Rahma Nir Rahim suggests, pardah is "the remedy provided by Islam"

[232] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri, interviewed by author, August 17, 2009.
[233] A. K. Abdul Khaleque, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[234]Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[235] Ahmed Ali, *Al-Quran* (Karachi: Akrash Publishing, 1984), pp. 300-301.

to counter the ills of co-education.[236] But the khariji individual does not believe the ills of coeducation can be countered by anything short of its prohibition. If girls are to be educated, he would suggest, they should either attend a maktab close to home, or a madrasa-t-ul banaat [girls-only madrasa].[237]

Mohammad Ashraf Ali Qasim is the imam of a mosque in the Kidderpore area of Kolkata. In 2007, Qasim established Mahad-e-Sumaiya, a maktab where girls study on a part-time basis, supplementing education they receive elsewhere – in schools or colleges. Qasim says he started the institution since he felt providers of religious education did not adequately target women.[238] Like every other khariji respondent, however, Qasim opposes coeducation. Faqrul Islam Qasmi of the Jamia Qasim-Ul-Uloom also runs two girls-only madrasas, one in North 24 Parganas and the other in South 24 Parganas. Despite Qari Fazlur Rahman's observation that "girls' madrasas are increasing in number, especially in rural areas," they remain a rarity.[239] By one headmaster's assessment, "the district of Bardhaman has more than 100 khariji madrasas for boys but only six or seven for girls."[240] Faqrul Islam Qasmi explains the khariji system's gender preference by pointing, again, to the division of labour: "In Islamic culture, we do not send girls outside of the home much."[241] Siddiqullah Chowdhury offers a different explanation: "boys have a priority and we do not

[236] Bismillah Hir Rahma Nir Rahim, *Education and Veil* (Karachi: Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, 1975), 115.
[237] Though the word "maktab" broadly refers to an Islamic primary school, maktabs typically take the form of rooms, attached to mosques, where students are imparted Quranic education as an aside to regular schooling or household duties.
[238] Mohammad Ashraf Ali Qasim (headmaster of Mahad-e-Sumaiya in Kolkata), interviewed by author, November 20, 2012.
[239] Qari Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, October 3, 2009.
[240] A. K. Abdul Khaleque, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[241] Faqrul Islam Qasmi, interviewed by author, September 30, 2009.

currently have the capacity to educate girls in madrasas."[242] Chowdhury implies that the project to set up girls' madrasas will gain momentum as and when the prior project of educating boys reaches its completion. But if the past is a reliable indicator of the khariji system's future trajectory, it seems unlikely that there exists any intention amongst these individuals to cap the number of khariji madrasas catering to boys' education.

The other permissible option for educating girls is the maktab. Usually attached to a mosque, the maktab provides a setting for the inculcation of Quranic learning. Boys and girls who stay at home or attend secular schools visit maktabs to obtain fluency in the Quran without having to attend a madrasa. By Siddiqullah Chowdhury's count, there are about 10,000 maktabs in West Bengal, many coeducational. The large proportion of female attendees (60 to 70 percent) in these maktabs helps achieve what, in Chowdhury's view, is "a fulfilment of the need for girls' education."[243]

The average khariji madrasa is thus characterised by an aversion to coeducation. Of the fourteen khariji madrasas sampled in West Bengal, only the recognition-seeking madrasa contradicted this position. The rest shared an unyielding intolerance towards any arrangement that permits the mingling of boys and girls post-puberty. Only two khariji madrasas expressed a qualified tolerance for coeducation. Md. Mukhtar Alam Razvi of Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam in North 24 Parganas

[242] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, October 2, 2009.
[243] Ibid.

suggests that coeducation can be accommodated under certain conditions: "We don't mind coeducation so long as we can create facilities to teach boys and girls in separate classrooms. And girls will have to study wearing the veil [pardah]. We are expanding our madrasa to create this bandwidth for coeducation."[244] Sheikh Atahar Ali of Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa in Hooghly exhibits a similar, slightly more permissive, position: "Coeducation is not a problem so long as they [boys and girls] sit separately, on different sides of the same classroom. The pardah [veil] is also necessary. We do not have [plans for introducing] coeducation though it is acceptable."[245]

These tendencies are very different from those associated with recognised madrasas. In most of the recognised madrasas sampled, the number of girls currently outweighs the number of boys. In stark contrast to their khariji counterparts, the majority of these madrasas provided for coeducation even before acquiring recognition. Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla of the Amdanga Kendriya Seddiquia Hamidia Rahana Senior Madrasa believes "one cannot accomplish anything by educating boys alone."[246] According to A. K. M. Farhad of the Ghutiarisharif Senior Madrasa, educating girls is important "to ensure that they can become competent housewives while also remaining aware of religion."[247] Farhad further suggests that the khariji madrasa's resistance to coeducation does not derive from Islam per se: "Islam itself is not conservative. Khariji madrasas are

[244] Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi, intervewed by author, November 18, 2012.
[245] Sheikh Atahar Ali, interviewed by author, November 21, 2012.
[246] Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla, interviewed by author, July 30, 2009.
[247] A.K.M. Farhad, interviewed by author, August 27, 2009.

conservative. Islam does not prohibit boys and girls from learning together. If a khariji madrasa wants, it can easily educate girls in the pardah [veil]. There is no need to restrict them access to the madrasa."[248]

To justify their comfort with coeducation, individuals associated with recognised madrasas point to Islam's role in "liberating" women.[249] Surely one can locate Prophetic traditions that countenance the recognised madrasa's tolerance for coeducation. For instance, it has been reported that in the time of the Prophet, women were allowed to attend congregational prayers so long as they were seated in separate rows.[250] Consistent with this dictate, recognised madrasas do ensure that boys and girls are seated separately, on opposite sides of the classroom.

But not all recognised madrasas are characterised by this mindset. The Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa did not admit girls prior to the acquisition of recognition. The madrasa's headmaster, Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla shares the khariji madrasa's view that "Islamic law prohibits girls and boys from studying together after puberty."[251] While the 436 boys in his madrasa can study up to the fazil level (equivalent of 12th grade), the 35 girls can only attend up to class 8. The recognition-seeking Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa in Hooghly also exhibits an anomalous position with regard to coeducation. It opposed coeducation at the time of its founding in 1902, and continues to operate as a single-sex institution even

[248] Ibid.
[249] A. K. M. Farhad of the Ghutiarisharif Senior Madrasa expressed the view that Islam (especially through the traditions of the Prophet) lays much emphasis on the liberation of women.
[250] Aftab Hussain, *Status of Women in Islam* (Lahore: Law Publishing Company, 1987), 195.
[251] Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla, interviewed by author, October 5, 2009.

today, housing 1200 boys from class 1 up to the postgraduate level.[252] Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa presents an exceptional case as it is the only boys-only institution amongst the ten senior sarkari madrasas sampled in West Bengal. This anomaly is discussed further in section 2.3.

Out of eight recognition-seekers in West Bengal, seven displayed tendencies the literature associates with the atrap label, while one assumed an anomalous intermediate position. Four out of five opposed madrasas displayed ashraf characteristics while one assumed an anomalous position. Fence-sitters proved the most diverse lot, represented by eight madrasas with ashraf-tending, two with atrap-tending, and one with anomalous views.

Coeducation and Recognition in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's madrasas – Alia and qaumi – exhibit relatively less tolerance towards coeducation than their sarkari and khariji counterparts in West Bengal. Both opposed madrasas, and all eleven fence-sitters in Bangladesh exhibited ashraf tendencies vis-à-vis coeducational practices. While recognition-seekers in West Bengal were overwhelmingly in favour of coeducation, Bangladesh's recognition-seeking madrasas are less enthusiastic about such practices: 60 percent display ashraf tendencies, 30 percent atrap tendencies, and an anomalous 10 percent are neither here nor there. Making the ashraf-atrap binary especially unhelpful is the

[252] Mohammad Rafiqul Islam (teacher in charge, Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa, Hooghly), interviewed by author, November 11, 2012.

fact that the distribution of madrasas with atrap-tending and ashraf-tending positions amongst Bangladesh's recognition-seekers does not generate any intelligible patterns. Two of the three respondents tending towards the atrap category would seek recognition in the Indian context while one would prefer sitting on the fence. Four of the six ulama displaying ashraf characteristics would behave as fence-sitters in the Indian context while one would seek recognition and yet another would oppose. Moreover, each of Bangladesh's ten recognition-seekers – represented by ashraf-tending, atrap-tending, and anomalous views – subscribe to the same maslak.

Despite their resolute opposition to coeducational practices, some amongst Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas are wholeheartedly committed to girls' education. Abdul Basit runs Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana in Sylhet. The madrasa has an all-girls student body of 400, of whom 270 are in boarding. "Ideally," explains Basit, "we want women to teach in madrasa-t-ul banaat because as men we cannot teach older girls without some form of pardah."[253] In what is a rather innovative arrangement, classrooms in the madrasa are set up so that each room has an alcove. With enough room to seat a male instructor along with reading material, this alcove is separated from the rest of the classroom by an opaque curtain. This curtain allows the instructor's voice to penetrate into the classroom while he remains invisible to his female students. The ceiling portion of the alcove is left uncovered, further improving the instructor's audibility. Basit hopes that this

[253] Abdul Basit (principal of Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana), interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.

model of religious instruction is temporary. He believes that by educating enough girls in the ways of Islam, he can produce a next generation of (all-female) madrasa-t-ul banaat teachers, rendering Basit and his alcove unnecessary.

2.3. Pir veneration and recognition

The practice of saint worship is a well-established tradition in Bengali Muslim society. Primarily associated with Sufism, this custom accompanied Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest of Bengal in the early thirteenth century. Despite its foreign origins, the tradition quickly earned the acceptance of the local masses, turning Bengal into "a powerful Sufi stronghold [by] the early medieval period."[254] To the local proselyte, any discomfort with Islam's alien origins was offset by the easy compatibility of Sufi traditions with those already in place. For instance, the veneration of the pir closely resembled "a similar concept known as the guru-chela relationship" with which local Hindus were "already familiar."[255] Owing to its adaptability, "the veneration of pirs" thus evolved into "an integral part of Bengali Islam."[256] In Sarkar's opinion, pir worship constitutes "the most important element of popular Islam in Bengal."[257]

[254] Sarkar, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)," 19
[255] Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 59.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Sarkar, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)," 66.

Though the Sufi concept of pir was laden with mystical connotations, in Bengal, the term came to encompass a much broader range of meaning. Asim Roy throws light upon the word's liberal use:

> At the level of the Bengali Muslim folk the frame of reference to pir extended far beyond the range of the mystic guides, saints, and holy men, and this amorphous label came to cover a vast motley of popular objects of worship and supplication, not all of them being saints, or sufis, or religious personages, or Muslims, or even human beings.[258]

Eaton suggests that in some parts of Bengal the emergence of pirs was, much like the success of Islamisation, accidental. According to Eaton, parts of the eastern delta were Islamised as a function of Mughal land policy. Mughal authorities customarily extended land grants for the cultivation of rice. Any person willing and able to cultivate forested land was eligible for such a grant provided he also agreed to build on this land a temple or mosque. Quite inadvertently, "many pioneers who had obtained the land grants, mobilized labour, and founded these institutions passed into subsequent memory as powerful pirs."[259]

The clearing of forest tracts was not the only accomplishment allowing an individual to assume the recognition of a pir. A pir could derive his status by performing any one of a rather wide range of extraordinary feats. Some pirs attained repute by

[258] Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," 50-1.
[259] Richard Eaton, Essays on Islam and Indian History (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 264-5.

virtue of possessing "the magical formula to avoid the wrath of the tiger,"[260] others succeeded in "effect[ing] miraculous cures,"[261] and yet others "[attained] martyrdom in battles against infidel local chiefs."[262] The tradition of pir worship in Bengal thus came to acquire a character and rationale of its own. In Sarkar's view, the reverence for pirs found a disproportionate place in the daily lives of Bengali Muslims: "The Muslim populace was more zealous for the worship of saints and pirs than in the obligatory religious functions, as a result of which the dargahs [shrines] of the pirs were gradually transformed into places of pilgrimage."[263] Roy concurs, terming these dargahs "the nerve-centres of the Bengali Muslim society."[264]

But not all Muslims in West Bengal acquiesced in the veneration of intermediaries. In the nineteenth century, Bengal witnessed the emergence of a succession of religious reform movements. These movements were aimed principally at "the reformation of the Muslim society and the restoration of its past glory."[265] Some of the most severe criticism of the reformists," suggests Rafiuddin Ahmed, "was directed against the pirs . . . for their un-Islamic activities."[266] Commenting on his travels in Hooghly district, D. G. Crawford in 1903 expounded the ideological basis for the reformist's opposition to the institution of the pir:

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[260] Sarkar, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)," 70.
[261] D. G. Crawford, *A Brief History of the Hughli District* (Calcutta: Bengal Secratariat Press, 1903), 66.
[262] Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," 54-5.
[263] Sarkar, "Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal (Medieval Period)," 70.
[264] Roy, "The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal," 55-6.
[265] Ahmed, "The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity," 32. The main parties involved in these reform efforts were the Faraizis, the Taiyunis, the Rafi-yaddains, and the Ahl-i-Hadith.
[266] Ibid. 59.

> There are said to be a few Wahabis in the district. The Wahabis are a sect of reformed Musalmans, who call themselves Muwahhid or Unitarians. They have been compared to Protestants in the Christian religion, one of their chief tenets being that the Quran requires no interpretation, but that each man can interpret its teachings for himself.[267]

Some reformists condemned the practice of pir worship as a polytheistic sin. One individual inveighed against the practice as follows: "[The] first shirk [sin] is to worship someone as equal of God, the second is to regard anyone as similar to God, [and] to pay obeisance to him; third, is to ask for favours, in times of troubles, from prophets, saints, pirs or angels, all these are shirk [sins]."[268] Others went yet further labelling anybody reverent before a pir an unbeliever. Munshi Samiruddin argued along these lines: "There is none other to ask help from but God. Those who put explicit trust in pirs instead of God not only waste their own means, but turn infidels."[269] In addition to this prohibition on the visitation of live pirs, reformists also discouraged Muslims from paying their respects at shrines, regarding this practice as idolatrous.[270] Notwithstanding the forcefulness of these anti-pir campaigns, the practice of venerating "saints is still a living part of popular Islam" in Bengal.[271] Rafiuddin Ahmed explains the resilience of this institution:

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[267] Crawford, "A Brief History of the Hughli District," 66.
[268] Ahmed, "The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity," 60.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] For a description of the enduring practice of pir veneration, see Schimmel, "Islam in the Indian Subcontinent," 138.

> Despite all the rhetoric and invectives directed against pirism, the institution and the associated practices survived; and it is extremely doubtful if the reformist onslaught had any effect at all on the system as a whole. The emotional attachment of the average Bengali Muslim to his pir, living or dead, and his faith in his immense miraculous powers was so deep and pervasive that no amount of denunciation could undermine his devotion.[272]

As the following sections illustrate, the practice of pir veneration remains a contentious issue that visibly separates recognised and unrecognised madrasas. This paper will henceforth use the term "veneration" instead of "worship," recognising the validity of Robinson's observation that an important distinction exists between "worshipping the saint," as many ulama are accused of doing, and "praying to God in the presence of the saint," as they claim to do.[273]

Pirism and Recognition in West Bengal

Pir-revering individuals ran each of the ten recognised madrasas sampled in West Bengal. Moreover, nine of these recognised madrasas sought State support under the influence of a pir, either directly, at the pir's behest, or indirectly, sensing that the pir would approve of such a decision.[274] Many of West Bengal's Muslims pay their respects at the dargah [shrine] of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique in Hooghly

[272] Ahmed, "The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity," 61.
[273] Robinson, "Islam and Muslim History in South Asia," 48.
[274] Representatives of Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa suggest that its founders respected Furfura Sharif without necessarily drawing any influence or encouragement from the latter towards their decision for recognition. Mohammad Sabir Alam and Tariq Ahmed Molla, Interviewed by author, November 10, 2012.

district's village of Furfura Sharif. In addition to this prominent figure, there are a number of local pirs, also sources of advice, but seldom influential beyond the bounds of the immediate village.

The Amdanga Kendriya Rahana Senior Madrasa's decision to opt for recognition in 1975 was less than straightforward. As the former headmaster, Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla explains, "there existed a division in the village between those keen on accepting recognition and those more sceptical of State support." To arbitrate between these two sides, a few individuals intimately involved with the madrasa took the decision to Furfura Sharif. "There," suggests Molla, "the pir encouraged them to seek recognition, suggesting it was in the best interest of the madrasa."[275] Coming from such a respected man, everybody in the village happily went along with this decision. This example provides an instance of the pir's direct role in influencing the reform decision. But personal consultation with the pir is not always necessary.

Abu Bakr and his descendants at Furfura Sharif were quite active in setting up madrasas in different parts of West Bengal. The earliest and most acclaimed amongst these institutions is the Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa in Furfura Sharif, which became a sarkari madrasa as early as 1909. According to Taj Mohammad, these efforts emanating from Furfura Sharif were also responsible for the origins of

[275] Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla, interview with author, July 30, 2009. The pir consulted here was likely one of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique's sons or grandsons. Abu Bakr's descendants have retained much respect, lending endurance to the institution beyond its role as a shrine.

his own madrasa – the Majaherul Ulum Senior Madrasa. "In fact," Mohammad goes on to explain, "most of the madrasas that have gone to the State for support were started on Pir Sahib's initiative."[276] Mohammad claims that "Pir Sahib [at Furfura Sharif] has a following in a total of 52 districts in West Bengal, Assam, and Bangladesh."[277] Given Furfura Sharif's longstanding affiliation with the State, it comes as no surprise that many of the pir's followers – such as Taj Mohammad and his predecessors – espoused recognition with minimal deliberation. But the pir's advice (and the consequent acceptance of recognition by many madrasas) was dependent on the terms of State support.

Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla's madrasa also became recognised as a consequence of pirism. Like many others in West Bengal, his madrasa – the Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa – was founded by one of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique's sons. As Alam Molla proudly proclaims, his madrasa is allegiant "to the laws of Furfura Sharif." Alam Molla's madrasa acquired recognition in 1961. "Back then," suggests Alam Molla, "Pir Sahib found the terms of recognition agreeable." As illustrated in the previous chapter, however, the character of the senior madrasa has subsequently experienced considerable transformation. Alam Molla describes Pir Sahib's views on the issue of recognition:

> Pir Sahib approved of State support so long as it was of the type originally extended to senior madrasas. Initially, senior madrasas gave more attention to deeni talim

[276] Taj Mohammad, interviewed by author, November 20, 2009.
[277] Ibid.

> [religious education] so it was not so much of a problem for Pir Sahib to accept the terms of recognition. The dilution of the syllabus only happened afterwards . . . If Pir Sahib were to see the present ratio of deeni talim [religious education] to duniyabi talim [secular education], he would not encourage anybody to go to the State. [278]

Sharing Pir Sahib's views on the matter, Alam Molla fits the fence-sitter's mould. Asked how he would act if he were confronted with the reform decision today, Alam Molla expresses a sense of regret: "Given what I know about the dilution of the religious component, it would be difficult for me to opt for State support. I would not accept recognition today. It happened in 1961."[279] This account suggests that at least some of the madrasas that formerly sought recognition would exercise their choice very differently in the current climate.

In addition to the pervading influence of Furfura Sharif (Pir Abu Bakr and his descendants), many local village pirs have also encouraged the acquisition of recognition. A. K. M. Farhad is the grandson of a pir in Kolkata's suburban township of Rajarhat. Farhad's grandfather, Ahmad Ali Hamid Shah Zalali was a priest, and attracted a local following through his service in a range of social welfare activities. In this role he also founded a number of madrasas in North 24 Parganas, which tend towards the category of recognition-seekers. Farhad clarifies the often confounding difference between worshipping and venerating pirs: "The pir communicates to us God's instructions. He is not a God himself. Allah is our God." Farhad understands

[278] Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla, interviewed by author, October 5, 2009.
[279] Ibid.

that most khariji madrasas do not share his regard for such intermediaries: "*Unke toh alag hi tariqey hain* [They have ways of their own]."[280] Farhad, like all other respondents who venerate Furfura Sharif, considers himself Hanafi without further disaggregating this designation into Deobandi or Barelvi. These men follow Pir Abu Bakr Siddique's Furfura silsila [path] and are best classified as Furfura Hanafis.[281]

Interestingly, as section 2.2 revealed, the sarkari madrasa most closely affiliated with Furfura Sharif – the Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa – is averse to coeducation. Why is it that the large majority of Furfura-affiliated madrasas embrace recognition (with the attendant acceptance of coeducation) while the one senior sarkari madrasa founded by Pir Sahib himself remains unwilling to accept recognition as fully? In describing Pir Sahib's network of institutions, the madrasa's teacher-in-charge Md. Rafiqul Islam, suggests that Pir Sahib betrayed a preference for single-sex education. After establishing this madrasa in 1902 along with a khariji institution of the same name (Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa, also boys-only), Pir Sahib established a new scheme madrasa (present-day equivalent of high madrasa) for boys in 1919, and a girls-only high madrasa (West Bengal Siddiquia Girls Madrasa) in 1967. The boys-only high madrasa introduced coeducation only after 1980. Pir Sahib's late embrace of coeducation notwithstanding, it is reasonable to conclude that many of his Furfura Hanafi followers viewed his family's early efforts towards West Bengal Siddiquia Girls Madrasa as an endorsement of girls' education.

[280] A.K.M. Farhad, interviewed by author, August 27, 2009.
[281] Sheikh Atahar Ali of Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa suggests that the Furfura Hanafi designation appropriately describes the Hanafi identity and practice characterising himself and Furfura Sharif's following more generally. Interviewed by author, November 21, 2012.

When a neighborhood's resources only permit the establishment of a single madrasa, this endorsement is quickly extended to one for coeducation. Suffice it to say that Furfura Hanafi madrasas reserve much reverence for Furfura Sharif, and that the (ideal typical) precedent set by its pirs has been followed widely, albeit more blindly and loosely by some than others.

A. K. Abdul Khaleque of the Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Azharul Uloom explains the khariji position vis-à-vis pir veneration: "Although our religion is the same, we disapprove of some of their practices. For instance, [pir venerating Muslims] wear round caps and offer a chaadar [holy cloth] to the grave. We [khariji madrasas] regard such an offering to the grave as sinful."[282] Qari Fazlur Rahman of the Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatiya takes issue with another practice associated with the veneration of pirs. "Urs [the death anniversary of a pir] is a recent phenomenon," argues Rahman. "Where was it in the early days of Islam?"[283] According to Faqrul Islam Qasmi, "it does not matter what Sufism says or what Furfura Sharif says. All that matters is what is communicated in the Quran and the Hadith."[284] As per Masud Nasir of the Jamia Islamia Madania in North 24 Parganas, the Hadith leaves no room for the primary venue of pir veneration – the dargah [shrine]: "Graves made of mud are fine, but finished [pakka] graves are not allowed. If the Hadith disallows the construction of finished graves, how can you even think of building a dargah [shrine]?" "We too venerate pirs" adds Nasir, "but for us a pir means an old man, one

[282] A.K. Abdul Khaleque, phone interview with author, November 20, 2009.
[283] Qari Fazlur Rahman, interview with author, October 3, 2009.
[284] Faqrul Islam Qasmi, phone interview with author, November 20, 2009.

who knows the shariat, and one who respects the Sunnah. Some people make a pir of just about anybody."[285] Our belief is that you cannot communicate with the person in the grave. If this buried person cannot hear you, how can he possibly be of any use to you in the context of your worship?" Beside their disapproving stance towards the institution itself, khariji elements also like to downplay the significance and prevalence of its following.

Khaleque believes that "only the less educated in the Muslim community tend to follow Furfura Sharif."[286] Consistent with his love for analogy, Qasmi puts it as follows: "those who are unfamiliar with their destination feel the need to seek directions, and are likely to ask somebody for guidance. Those who are clear about the direction in which they are headed do not need to ask anybody where to go."[287] Though cognisant of the pir venerating Muslim's penchant for recognition, Rahman perceives geographic limits to the pir's influence. "Not all Muslims in West Bengal practice Islam in the manner of the pir," argues Rahman. "Furfura Sharif and its following are active only within a certain territory."[288] According to Siddiqullah Chowdhury, this territory principally includes four districts in West Bengal: North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, and Howrah. "Outside these districts," Chowdhury suggests, "their influence is more limited."[289] Qazi Mohammad Yasin further imposes temporal limitations on the pir's clout. "Forty to fifty years ago,"

[285] Several Deobandi respondents in this study redefined the word "pir" to synonymise it with "alim" and to delegitimise its Barelvi and Furfura Hanafi interpretations. This practice of redefinition was most commonly expressed in Bangladesh.
[286] A. K. Abdul Khaleque, interviewed by author, November 20, 2009.
[287] Faqrul Islam Qasmi, interviewed by author, November 20, 2009.
[288] Qari Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, November 20, 2009.
[289] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, October 2, 2009.

Yasin explains, "the pir had much influence amongst Bengal's Bengali speaking Muslims. But this has lessened with time."[290]

These attitudes against Pirism are reflective of the Deobandi mindset. Barelvi respondents assume a more ambiguous stance. Shahroz Alam of Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia in Howrah venerates pirs but not the one at Furfura Sharif: "We have some issues with the followers of Furfura."[291] Md. Mukhtar Alam Razvi of the Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam in North 24 Parganas lists one issue: "Furfura's followers go to the shrine but they do not offer the holy cloth [chaadar] to the grave. We believe that the practice of offering the holy cloth is correct [drust]."[292] Wafaul Mustafa of Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam more elaborately portrays the Barelvi view of Furfura Hanafis:

> We believe that the Prophet hears what we say. Followers of Furfura Sharif do not believe that the Prophet hears us. They believe he is dead, like any normal human being. The followers of Furfura Sharif are neither here nor there. They believe that day is also fine and night is also fine [din bhi achhi hai aur raat bhi]. They neither follow Deobandis nor Barelvis. They do not have a relationship with anyone. They violate Deobandi ways by going to the shrine [dargah]. They violate our beliefs [aqidah] by claiming that the Prophet was just a regular human being. We believe that the Prophet was a person, but also the Light of Allah [noor]. We believe that the

[290] Qazi Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, August 18, 2009.
[291] Mufti Shahroz Alam, interviewed by author, November 15, 2012.
[292] Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi, interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.

> Prophet took the form of a human when he was born in Medina to reach out to us humans and convey the word of God.[293]

Md. Shahidul Qadri of Madrasah Hussainiya Ghausiya in Kolkata suggests that Barelvis extend their beliefs regarding the Prophet to pirs (albeit not those associated with Furfura Sharif): "We believe that pirs remain alive in the grave, just like the Prophet. This is why we can go to the grave and be heard when asking for their blessings."[294]

The strong (in some cases causal) correspondence between the practice of pir veneration and the acceptance of recognition is evident in the case of West Bengal's recognition-seekers. With the exception of one anomaly, each recognition-seeking madrasa was run by pir venerating individuals tending towards the atrap category. Moreover, out of these seven pir venerators, six followed the pir's precedent blindly, while one was more discerning of context. Four of the five opposed madrasas in West Bengal deployed their ashraf tendencies towards opposing the practice of pir veneration. One opposed madrasa – founded and still run by the pirs at Furfura Sharif – naturally exhibited pir-veneration. But the ashraf-atrap binary's relatively good performance ends there. Of the eleven fence-sitters, four exhibited ashraf tendencies while seven expressed pir-venerating characteristics the literature associates with the atrap label. Out of these seven ulama with atrap-tending views,

[293] Maulana Wafaul Mustafa, interviewed by author, November 15, 2012.
[294] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri, interviewed by author, November 13, 2012.

four (Barelvis) venerate pirs (other than Furfura Sharif) without consulting them on matters relating to recognition.

Pirism and Recognition in Bangladesh

On the issue of pir veneration, the ashraf-atrap typology also performs relatively well in separating Bangladesh's Alia and qaumi madrasas. That also means it fails to distinguish fence-sitters from opposed madrasas – the former and latter uniformly expressed ashraf tendencies with respect to pir veneration. Insofar as recognition-seekers go, eight out of ten expressed atrap qualities, while one tended towards the ashraf label and another assumed an anomalous position.

So as not to repeat the expressed arguments for and against pir veneration – which largely echo those voiced in West Bengal – this section contrasts an unusual recognition-seeker (with atrap-tending views) with an equally peculiar opposed madrasa (with an ashraf-tending position). Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shah – a living saint from Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – founded Chittagong's Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa in 1954. After his death, the madrasa passed into the hands of his son, Tayyeb Shah. When the latter died in 1993, his sons and the current patrons of the madrasa – Syed Muhammad Sabir Shah (former chief minister of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province) and Taher Shah – took over. Taher Shah attracts thousands of followers in Chittagong each year, when he arrives to lead the Milad un Nabi [birthday of the Prophet Muhammad] congregation. The

madrasa's unusual ability to amass wealth post-recognition (alluded to in the previous chapter) has everything to do with its high profile association with this family of pirs.[295]

Jamia Ahmadia Sunnia's principal, Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery, proudly conveys his madrasa's Sufi credentials: "This madrasa is fully based on Sufism. We follow the Qaderi Sufi tariqa [order] but all tariqas get along. We are like different rivers that flow into the same sea"[296] Al-Quadery dismisses the qaumi contention that Urs is a recent invention with no place in Islam:

> You, me, this building – these are all recent inventions. That does not mean they don't have a place in our lives. The pir is wasilah [a means of approach]. Allah is Khaleque [Creator] and Maalik [Master]. You need a wasilah for everything. If you are sick, you need a doctor. To study, you need a teacher. To be born and to develop, you need parents. Similarly, to be shown the path to Allah, you need a pir. Allah has made each of these wasilah.[297]

In addition to the regular Alia syllabus, Al-Quadery's students are taught specifically about the Qaderi tariqa on a designated day once a month. But Al-Quadery suggests that the strength of Sufi traditions does not depend on his madrasa: "Madina-t-ul Awlia [Chittagong – the city of saints] and Madina-t-ul Masjid [Dhaka – the city of

[295] That direct patronage by a pir offers the best guarantee of wealth post-recognition also finds evidence in Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa, by far the wealthiest amongst West Bengal's sarkari madrasas.
[296] Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery, interviewed by author, January 24, 2012.
[297] Ibid.

mosques] are Sufi strongholds that ensure Sufism flourishes independently of the madrasa system."[298]

If Chittagong is the city of saints, Sylhet is home to the dargah [shrine] of Bangladesh's most revered Sufi saint – Hazrat Shahjalal. The dargah complex houses the dargah itself along with a mosque and a madrasa. The latter is called Jamia Qasimul Uloom, but more popularly known by its nickname – Dargah Madrasa. Based on its location adjacent to the pir's shrine, one can only expect Dargah Madrasa to be amongst the more Sufi-oriented madrasas. But the madrasa was founded and continues to be run by individuals with ashraf-tending views towards the practices associated with pir veneration. The current principal, Abul Kalam Zakaria is the latest representative of this mindset: "We respect those pirs who follow the correct path, who follow the Shariat. We respect Hazrat Shahjalal. We also maintain contact with him. To maintain contact simply means to live one's life with similar devotion to God; to follow the pir's precedent."[299] Ironically, however, Zakaria does not agree with the construction of the very dargah with which his madrasa is intimately associated in the mind of every visitor: "We don't agree with the building of dargahs. We respect the pir and the life he leads while alive. Once he dies, there is no need to build a dargah for him. We believe that even Hazrat Shahjalal would not approve of his own dargah."[300] While there is nothing unusual about Zakaria's statement from a Deobandi perspective, that a man with such views

[298] Ibid.
[299] Abul Kalam Zakaria, interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.
[300] Ibid.

should come to occupy the very dargah complex he denounces is surprising to say the very least.

Mohammad Abdul Musabbir is an Assistant Professor in Arabic Literature and Language at Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa, located within a short distance of Dargah Madrasa. Familiar with the goings on in the nearby shrine, Musabbir explains how Deobandis managed to establish a madrasa within the complex:

> Hafiz Maulana Mohammad Akbar Ali founded the Dargah madrasa. He was a student here [at Sylhet Government Alia] and later went on to study at Darul Uloom Deoband. From his time in Sylhet, he had close ties to members of the mazar [shrine] committee. Since they knew him, they asked him to become the imam of the dargah complex's mosque upon his return from Deoband. They subsequently allowed him to establish a madrasa within the complex as well. The other members of the mazar committee were not Deobandi and did not know that the madrasa would be run along Deobandi lines.[301]

As ideological differences developed, individuals managing the mazar committee distanced themselves from the madrasa. "Today, explains Musabbir, "the madrasa committee and the mazar committee are separate. The mazar committee is run by Deobandis and the madrasa has no relationship to the mazar."[302] But Musabbir is convinced that the madrasa continues to benefit from its strategic location: "The

[301] Mohammad Abdul Musabbir (assistant professor of Arabic literature and language at Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.
[302] Ibid.

'Dargah Madrasa' nickname and its location adjacent to the mazar give the madrasa an apparent association with the dargah, one that is potentially lucrative." Since "the Dargah Madrasa benefits from the Sufi practices of visitors," he adds, "the madrasa will not oppose these practices openly."[303] Musabbir also cites evidence to make his case: "There are two donation boxes in the mazar complex: one for the mazar and another for the madrasa. While the mazar donation box receives more donations, many visitors also donate to the madrasa, viewing it as an extension of the dargah."[304]

[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.

RECOGNITION-SEEKING MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**Syllabus**	**Concern**
🟢 Ghutiarisharif S.S.G.M.N.S Senior Madrasah	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Majaherul Ulum Islamia Senior Madrasah	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟥 Majerhat Pirdanga Bakhtiari Faizi Jalali Sr. Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Cheragram Hejbullah Darul Ulum Senior Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	(A)	→Atrap**	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Kalubati Bhagatipur Sidiquia Senior Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Kushadanga Anwarul Ulum Siddiquia Sr. Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap*	✓ Accept	Practices
🟢 Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Atrap	(A)	✓ Accept	Practices
OPPOSED MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**Syllabus**	**Concern**
🟥 Jamia Qasim-Ul-Uloom	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Image
🟥 Maheshgodi Islamia Madrasa	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Image
🟥 Jamia Islamia Madania	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Image
🟥 Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia	Islami	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Image
🟥 Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa	Furfura	→Atrap	(A)	→Atrap**	× Reject	Image
FENCE-SITTING MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**Syllabus**	**Concern**
🟥 Mosagaram High Madrasah	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Jamia Islamia Arabiya Kharajgram	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Madrasa Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya	Deobandi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Madrasah Hussainiya Ghausiya	Barelvi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Atrap***	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia	Barelvi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Atrap***	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam	Barelvi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Atrap***	× Reject	Practices
🟥 Madrasah Salimia Faizul Islam	Barelvi	→Ashraf	(A)	→Atrap***	× Reject	Practices
🟢 Amdanga Kendriya S. H. R. Senior Madrasah	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap**	× Reject	Practices
🟢 Aminpur Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Sr. Madrasah	Furfura	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap**	× Reject	Practices
🟢 Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Sr. Madrasah	Furfura	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Atrap**	× Reject	Practices

🟢 Recognised (sarkari) madrasa
🟥 Private (khariji) madrasa
✓ Quality favours Recognition
× Quality does not favour recognition
→Ashraf – Tending towards Ashraf Strand
→Atrap – Tending towards Atrap Strand

(A) Exhibiting an ambiguous position with regard to both strands
* These madrasas blindly follow the pir's precedent, independent of context
** These madrasas analyse how the pir would respond to a given context, deciding accordingly
*** These madrasas do not follow Furfura Sharif. Their veneration of other pirs has no implications for recognition

Table 3.1. Madrasas in West Bengal: their ideological tendencies, maslaks, and propensities for recognition

RECOGNITION-SEEKING MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**If in India**	**Concern**
● Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap	✓ Seeker	Practices
● Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Atrap	✓ Seeker	Practices
● Wajedia Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap	✓ Seeker	Practices
● Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	(A)	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
● Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	(A)	! Fence	Practices
● Baitush Sharaf Adarsha Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	(A)	! Fence	Practices
● Modinatul Ulum Model In Boys Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Atrap	! Fence	Practices
● Mohakhali Darul Ulum Hossainiah Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Atrap	! Fence	Practices
● Hazrat Shajalal Darussunah Yaqubia Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Atrap	→Atrap	→Atrap	! Fence	Practices
● Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa	Hanafi	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	→Atrap	× Opposed	Image
OPPOSED MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**If in India**	**Concern**
■ Madrasa Rashidiya	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Opposed	Image
■ Jamia Qasimul Uloom	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Opposed	Image
FENCE-SITTING MADRASAS						
Name of Madrasa	**Maslak**	**Language**	**Coeducation**	**Pirism**	**If in India**	**Concern**
■ Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Al Jamiatul Islamia	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamia Madania Islamia	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamia Nooria Islamiya	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	! Fence	Practices
■ Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Opposed	Image
■ Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj	Deobandi	→Atrap	→Ashraf	→Ashraf	× Opposed	Image

● Recognised (Alia) madrasa
■ Private (qaumi) madrasa
✓ Inclined towards recognition
× Inclined towards opposition
! Inclined towards fence-sitting behaviour

→Ashraf – Tending towards Ashraf Strand
→Atrap – Tending towards Atrap Strand
(A) – Exhibiting an ambiguous position with regard to both strands

Table 3.2. Madrasas in Bangladesh: their ideological tendencies, maslaks, and propensities for recognition

3. Maslak-based typologies only reveal so much

Table 3.1 lists West Bengal's madrasas by their maslaks, showing what the latter can and cannot tell us about a madrasa's ideological repository (as expressed through its attitudes towards coeducation, language use, and pir veneration) and about its propensity for recognition.

This table shows that a maslak-based typology of madrasas is useful in generalising about the likely attitude of a madrasa towards coeducation, language of instruction, and pir veneration. Deobandis are generally opposed to pir veneration, relatively inclined towards Urdu medium instruction, and intolerant towards coeducation. Barelvis generally show an affinity for Urdu, venerate pirs (other than those affiliated with Furfura Sharif), and display discomfort with coeducation. Furfura Hanafis are generally comfortable imparting education in Bengali, tolerant towards coeducation, and characterised by immense reverence for pirs. Yet a disproportionate focus on school of thought blinds us to ideological nuance, which in turn lends itself to interesting exceptions. For instance, Yasin's Deobandi affiliation tells us nothing about the interaction between his ideology and his entrepreneurship. While he is unequivocally Deobandi in the context of Jamia Milia Madinatul, ambition causes him to behave less predictably in the context of his other two institutions – Mamoon School and Memari High Madrasa. Similarly, the Furfura Hanafi comfort with coeducation is nowhere to be seen at the two institutions most closely affiliated with Furfura Sharif. Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa and Furfura

Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa are both boys-only institutions despite the fact that their common founder is generally cited as the reason why many Furfura Hanafi madrasas actively sought and embraced recognition. The Furfura Hanafi tag also fails to reveal the manner in, and extent to, which a madrasa follows Pir Sahib's precedent – irrespective of context as was the case with Howrah's Majaherul Ulum Islamia Senior Madrasa, or as discerningly as Md. Anisul Alam Molla of Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa. Insofar as Barelvis go, the Barelvi maslak alone tells us nothing about the specific conditions under which Md. Mukhtar Alam Razvi might be willing to accommodate some segregation-based version of coeducation, while other men affiliating with his school of thought continue to cling to a boys-only setup.

A madrasa's maslak also presents a less than adequate indicator of its propensity for recognition. At the most simplistic level one can claim that all Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal are khariji madrasas opposed to recognition. But their Deobandi status tells us little about the nature of their non-participation. Are they consistently and uncompromisingly opposed to recognition, like Qari Fazlur Rahman? Or might they exhibit a threshold that can be met by recalibrating the State's practices? Moreover, might financial hardship make some Deobandi fence-sitters desperate enough to accept recognition under sufficiently welcoming conditions? A.K. Abdul Khaleque of Al-Jamiatul Faruqiyah Uloom would suggest so. The fact that all four Barelvi madrasas sampled in this study are khariji madrasas ostensibly strengthens the determinative salience of a madrasa's maslak. Again, however, the khariji status of

these Barelvis keeps us uninformed about their distance from a decision for recognition. Moreover, Md. Shahidul Qadri's suggestion that half of West Bengal's Barelvi madrasas have already accepted recognition immensely complicates any attempt at linearly linking a madrasa's maslak to its propensity for recognition. The strongest evidence for the maslak variable comes from Furfura Hanafis. Only one out of the eleven Furfura Hanafi madrasas sampled in West Bengal exists as a khariji madrasas. The other ten are recognised sarkari madrasas. Yet closer examination reveals that three of these ten would avoid accepting recognition if they could make the decision today. They may have sought recognition many years ago, but it would be incorrect to call them recognition-seekers with respect to the present location of West Bengal's recognition fence. Today, they oppose the intrusive nature of the State's support and would much prefer to join the club of fence-sitters.

Table 3.2 analyses the explanatory potential of a maslak-based typology in the Bangladeshi context. The prevalent maslak-based identifiers in Bangladesh are somewhat different from those expressed in West Bengal. If Hanafi Muslims in West Bengal avoid Deobandi affiliation by assuming Barelvi or Furfura Hanafi identities, non-Deobandi Hanafis in Bangladesh are interchangeably referred to as "Sunni" or simply "Hanafi."[305] Note that these appellations are extremely misleading as Deobandis subscribe no less to the Hanafi mazhab [school of law] within the Sunni branch of Islam. Yet, given the prevalent usage of the Sunni-Deobandi dichotomy in

[305] The observation that the "Barelwi" appellation is used in India and not in Bangladesh was expressed also by Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla of Dhaka's Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa, interviewed by author, February 4, 2012.

Bangladesh, one can borrow it to distinguish between non-Deobandis and Deobandis without downplaying the latter's Sunni and Hanafi affiliations.

In Bangladesh, a madrasa's maslak tells us very little about its ideological repository. Yes, all Deobandis oppose coeducational practices. But this ashraf-tending behaviour is shared by six of ten Sunni madrasas. On the issue of language preference, Deobandis are practically indistinguishable from Sunni madrasas in their embrace of the Bengali language. The only issue that clearly separates Deobandis from Sunnis is the practice of pir veneration. While Deobandis were uniform in their ashraf-tending stance towards the practice, seven of ten Sunni madrasas expressed atrap-tending positions vis-à-vis pir veneration.

Compared to West Bengal, a Bangladeshi madrasa's maslak represents a far more persuasive predictor of recognition status. Each of Bangladesh's ten Sunni madrasas sought recognition. Conversely, each of the 13 sampled Deobandis refused recognition in favour of qaumi status. The maslak-based typology tells us less, however, about a madrasa's recognition potential. It cannot separate Deobandis opposed to the image of the Bangladeshi State from those concerned only with its practices. This neglect towards the target of a madrasa's opposition also means that the maslak-based typology fails to separate madrasas (recognition-seekers as well as fence-sitters) that would surely oppose recognition in a non-Muslim context from those willing to give the fence a try.

On the basis of these observations, we can conclude that when a Muslim-dominated State presents sufficiently agreeable practices, it might succeed in effecting a neat separation between non-Deobandi (exhibiting a lower recognition threshold) and Deobandi madrasas (exhibiting a higher threshold, if any). Irrespective of the State's practices, however, the maslak-based typology's inability to tell fence-sitters from opposed madrasas reaffirms the value of the recognition-centric typology.

4. Conclusion

Combined with those presented in chapter two, this chapter's empirical findings hold implications for proposition one of the theoretical framework.

Proposition one: State forces reach into society and societal forces reach into the State

Based on his analysis of authoritarian regimes in Latin America, Stepan concludes that State-society interaction can manifest itself in four ways: a zero-sum equation might ensure that State power is accompanied "by a diminution of the power of civil society;" State and society might benefit mutually in a positive-sum environment; both entities could experience declining fortunes in a negative-sum context; and, societal actors may acquire power as that of the State diminishes. Stepan employs these outcomes to characterise entire polities: "from 1979 to 1981 [Argentina] moved in the direction of a negative sum interaction in which the power of civil

society and the state declined simultaneously."[306] But our findings suggest that the State's forays into society simultaneously produce each of Stepan's observed outcomes, and all within the confines of one specific arena – the educational arena. One can reasonably attribute a positive-sum equation to the State's interactions with recognition-seekers. The former succeeds in establishing its social control, while the latter obtain benefits including financial support and degree recognition. In the case of opposed madrasas, the outcome can only be zero-sum as the State gains nothing from the non-participation of target madrasas while the latter by definition get what they want – autonomy from the State. The State's interactions with fence-sitters are always negative-sum, though the degree to which the target madrasa loses out will vary depending on its individual circumstances. For the less resourceful fence-sitter intent on obtaining recognition, the State's inability to control equals its inability to appease. For the wealthier fence-sitter who is receptive but only mildly interested in the benefits of recognition, the State's losses outweigh those of the non-participating madrasa.

The fact that the recognition-centric typology captures different outcomes of State-society interaction within the educational arena also encourages us to take a step back and ask how this "society" is constituted. As this chapter's findings suggest, the responses elicited by the State's madrasa modernisation scheme are expressed by societal groupings that do not comport with any existing typology of Muslim society.

[306] Alfred Stepan, "State Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America," in Bringing the State Back In, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 318-9.

The maslak-based typology fails to distinguish between opposed and fence-sitting Deobandis in Bangladesh. It also fails to tell West Bengal's recognition-seeking Furfura Hanafis apart from fence-sitters and opposed madrasas of the same maslak. The ashraf-atrap typology proves equally if not more inadequate. On the issues of linguistic preference and coeducational practices, it completely veils the diversity of recognition penchants exhibited by Bangladesh's recognition-seekers, fence-sitters, and opposed madrasas. While faring relatively better on the pir veneration indicator, the typology fails to perceive the slightest difference between fence-sitters and opposed madrasas. In West Bengal, the ashraf and atrap labels perform worse still. They fail to distinguish between recognition-seekers and fence-sitters, cannot confidently perceive the differences between fence-sitters and opposed madrasas, and would never predict that fence-sitters exhibiting a mixed bag of atrap, ashraf, and anomalous tendencies can behave quite similarly vis-à-vis the recognition decision.

While the recognition-centric typology separates West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasas according to their propensities for engagement with the State in the educational arena, it also gives rise to two underlying questions. First, what factors explain why some madrasas oppose the image of the State while others perceive this image in more agreeable terms? Before attempting to answer this question, it is important to acknowledge that opposed madrasas represent a minority of madrasas in each context. In West Bengal, they represent 21 percent of all sampled, and 36 percent of sampled khariji madrasas, while they represent nine percent of our total,

and 15 percent of our unrecognised sample in Bangladesh. The large majority of sampled madrasas (79 percent in West Bengal and 91 percent in Bangladesh) are unopposed to the State's image, instead placing themselves in the practices-focused fence-sitting or recognition-seeking categories.

As our observations in chapters two and three demonstrate, those madrasas exhibiting the minority characteristic of opposition to the State's image possess one of two qualities: 1) they are Deobandis who have institutionalised that Deobandi principle nudging madrasas towards enduring autonomy from the State; or 2) they are non-Deobandi Hanafis with intimate ties to a (dead or living) pir. Opposed Deobandis represent the large majority of opposed madrasas sampled in this study. What sets these madrasas apart from Deobandi fence-sitters is the fact that the former have institutionalised Deoband's founding principle stressing the virtues of autonomy from the State. Importantly – as evidenced by Maheshgodi Islamia Madrasa in West Bengal and Madrasa Rashidiya in Bangladesh – opposed Deobandis uphold this directive irrespective of financial need.[307]

Non-Deobandi opposed madrasas are represented only by Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa in West Bengal, though (for the purpose of analysis) we can also include Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa in Bangladesh, given its principal's potential to express opposition in the hypothetical scenario that he (and his

[307] Though Qari Fazlur Rahman of West Bengal's Darul Quran Madrasa Azmatia considers himself "Islami," without officially embracing the Deobandi maslak, he does affiliate with the Deobandi maslak in the organisational arena and believes that "the Deobandi ideology approaches the truth." It is therefore reasonable to assume that his preference for enduring opposition is inspired, at least in part, by his subscription to the Deobandi recommendation towards autonomy from the State.

madrasa) are shifted to Muslim-minority West Bengal. What both these madrasas have in common is an intimate and direct relationship with a pir – dead in the case of Furfura Fatehia Kharijia and living in the case of Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia. Since these opposed madrasas of the non-Deobandi variety do not have any institutionalised basis for opposition, and since the overwhelming majority of their fellow pir-venerating ulama have accepted recognition, it is reasonable to view their opposition as a luxury afforded by their close proximity to the dargah – a relationship allowing Furfura Fatehia Kharijia and Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia the exceptional ability to mobilise donations despite their recognised status. While it may represent an ideological preference, the absence of any poor pir-venerating madrasas in our opposed sample (in West Bengal and Bangladesh) suggests this opposition derives from, depends on, and is unlikely to outlive, these madrasas' financial endowments.

This brief discussion tells us that opposed Deobandi madrasas differ from Deobandi fence-sitters in one very specific respect. While both are similar insofar as the doctrinal dimension of their ideologies is concerned, the former follows the Deobandi principle towards autonomy in a more literal manner, thus exhibiting a less favourable attitude towards the State. In the case of opposed madrasas of the non-Deobandi variety, they set themselves apart from pir-venerating fence-sitters only by their ability to amass donations post-recognition, which derives from their intimate ties to the pir. In the event that opposed madrasas are stripped of their riches, we can thus expect opposed Deobandis to maintain their opposition to the

State's image, while opposed non-Deobandis may feel compelled to adopt a softer stance. Notwithstanding their ideological steadfastness, there are conceivable scenarios in which opposed Deobandis – like those in charge of Chittagong's Madrasa Rashidiya and Sylhet's Jamia Qasimul Uloom – may be forced to loosen their opposition in favour of the fence-sitting tendencies held by the majority of madrasas subscribing to their maslak. These scenarios – shaped by inter-madrasa relations in the organisational arena – are briefly presented in the concluding chapter.

The second unanswered question emanating from the recognition-centric typology is prompted by Mohammad Yasin's ability to simultaneously associate with both the sarkari and khariji sectors. While Yasin's grand khariji madrasa – Jamia Milia Madinatul – places him firmly within the fence-sitting category, his concurrent (albeit remote) supervision of a sarkari madrasa – Memari High Madrasa – suggests he also has a foot planted on the recognised side of the fence. What explains Yasin's ability to straddle the divide between the fence-sitting and recognition-seeking categories? And why is it that ulama – faced with a choice between sarkari and khariji status – do not prefer some version of "both" more often? It may be possible to briefly explain this phenomenon of straddling using another of Migdal's concepts – that of "belonging."[308] Migdal suggests "belonging […] has both a formal, instrumental sense attached to it – that is, one's status – and an informal, affective

[308] Joel S. Migdal, "Mental Maps and Virtual Checkpoints: Struggles to Construct and Maintain State and Social Boundaries," in Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 15.

component – that is, one's sense of identity."[309] While Yasin belongs to, and derives his identity from, the Deobandi community, he has the resources to additionally express his ambition by belonging (instrumentally) to another (more exclusive) community – that of educationalists. Although his active role in Jamia Milia Madinatul contributes to his educationalist status, the latter also derives from Yasin's willingness to simultaneously patronise Memari High Madrasa, and his third institution – the non-government secular Mamoon National School. Importantly, the extent to which madrasa men can differentiate themselves through such instrumental pursuits has limits. These limits are imposed by the necessity of belonging to one's identity-endowing community. While Yasin may consider his instrumental pursuits perfectly consistent with his status of belonging to the Deobandi community, his membership in this community does not depend solely on his own assessment of compatibility. Whether Yasin's instrumental occupations allow him to continually belong to the Deobandi community also depends on others' perceptions of the compatibility or incompatibility between his multiple pursuits.

Yasin is not alone in his willingness to differentiate himself from fellow Deobandis. All Deobandi fence-sitters are pragmatic, and many – particularly in Bangladesh – express ideological nuance. Obaid Ullah Hamzah's potential willingness to accept the State's monetary support contrary to Deobandi principles is a case in point. Yet, most wealthy Deobandi ulama would prefer to (more safely) express their ambition within the contours of the Deobandi landscape – most commonly by establishing a

[309] Ibid.

network of branch madrasas in addition to their flagship khariji institution. Amongst "innovative" Deobandis, Yasin is likely testing the limits to which pragmatism can be expressed more than others. This exclusive privilege cannot be divorced from the fact that he runs West Bengal's largest khariji madrasa.

The next chapter sheds more light on the manner in which different maslak-based communities are organised by transporting us to the organisational arena. It focuses on non-State madrasa boards in West Bengal and Bangladesh, exploring the nature of inter-madrasa relations in each context.

Chapter Four: Madrasas and their Patterns of Organisation

The previous two chapters focused on the organisational arena, asking how madrasas respond when the State reaches into society through the educational arena. This chapter moves our discussion to the organisational realm by studying the organisational networks enabling madrasas to operate without State support. The first section of the chapter focuses on the patterns of organisation exhibited by fence-sitters and opposed madrasas in the Hindu-majority context of West Bengal. Section two transports our investigation to the Muslim-majority Bangladeshi context. A key finding emerging from this comparative exercise is that the insecurities associated with minority status mute any propensity for intra-maslak contestation, while a Muslim-majority context affords madrasas the space to fully express their intra-maslak rivalries. Unlike West Bengal – where one board represents the interests of all Deobandis – Bangladesh houses a relatively divided landscape: at least five quami boards compete for influence amongst the country's Deobandi madrasas. To unravel this complexity, section two seeks to answer three questions: First, why do Deobandi entrepreneurs initiate rival qaumi boards? Second, how do these boards differ in terms of their ideologies, their attitudes towards the State, and their proposed terms of recognition? And third, how and why do affiliating madrasas choose one board over other alternatives? In conclusion, this chapter summarises its findings in terms of the theoretical propositions presented in the introductory chapter.

1. West Bengal

1.1. Barelvis in West Bengal

Despite possessing state- and national-level boards to represent and promote their interests, West Bengal's Barelvis remain poorly organised. The national umbrella holding India's Barelvi madrasas together is the All India Ulema and Mashaikh Board (AIUMB). According to AIUMB's Shahnawaz Varsi, there is an inverse relationship between Barelvis' numerical and organisational strengths:

> We have numbers but our structures are weak. 90 percent of madrasas have names like Qadri, Hazrat, Izhar-ul Uloom, Ghausiya, etc. All these names correspond with our maslak. But we don't have money to organise or to disseminate our message. Nothing we say at a rally gets media coverage. They [Deobandis] can say something in a closed room and it will make it to the front page.[310]

Though Barelvi madrasas in West Bengal are affiliated with AIUMB, they tend to identify primarily with the regional Barelvi board – Majlis Ulema-e-Islam (henceforth MUI). Mohammad Shahidul Qadri of Madrasa Hussainiya Ghausiya is MUI's Assistant Secretary. He tells us that the inverse relationship Varsi observes at the national level is equally expressed at the level of the state:

[310] Shahnawaz Varsi (Delhi office representative, All India Ulema and Mashaikh Board), interviewed by author, April 25, 2013.

> AIUMB is only five years old. It is new and its activities are only getting started. In West Bengal our Barelvi madrasas are affiliated with MUI, which is much older – it has been around for twenty years. There are 800 to 900 Barelvi madrasas (and 10,000 to 15,000 maktabs) in West Bengal of which approximately half have accepted recognition. All unrecognised Barelvi madrasas are affiliated with MUI. Though there is no real effort towards standardisation, they all follow the same syllabus [...] We don't have a mechanism to support madrasas affiliated with our organisation.[311]

That MUI's network is poorly organised is evident from the fact that Qadri (one of its key office holders) speaks in approximates without an exact tally of Barelvi madrasas (or maktabs) in the state. While much of this organisational weakness has to do with the lack of resources alluded to by Varsi, procedural shortcomings also play a role. "We are Barelvi so we are automatically part of MUI," explains Shahroz Alam of Darul Ulum Qadria Habibia. "MUI does not require you to fill out an application."[312] Wafaul Mustafa runs Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam, the oldest Barelvi madrasa in West Bengal. "Though MUI is run by ulama of West Bengal's Barelvi madrasas ," says Mustafa, "it does not play a significant role in madrasas' affairs."[313] "MUI's real objective," he suggests, "is to attend to problems affecting the community."[314] Mohammad Mukhtar Razvi of Madrasa Salimia Faizul Islam provides some examples of MUI's problem-solving function: "When an American filmmaker made a film against the Prophet, we organised a meeting of 313 ulama and

[311] Mohammad Shahidul Qadri, interviewed by author, November 13, 2012.
[312] Shahroz Alam, interviewed by author, November 15, 2012.
[313] Wafaul Mustafa, interviewed by author, November 15, 2012.
[314] Ibid.

submitted a memorandum to the American consulate in Kolkata. MUI also provided relief to Muslims who suffered violence in Bodoland."[315]

These accounts suggest that Barelvi madrasas in West Bengal are held together by a common sense of belonging to the Barelvi maslak; not by any formal effort to document their affiliation, to standardise their curricula, or to regulate their activities. Given the weak organisational network with which they affiliate, it is hardly surprising that a relatively large proportion of Barelvi madrasas in West Bengal have come to accept recognition. It is likely that a stronger organisational presence could have avoided at least some of this drift by facilitating the meeting of a madrasa's willingness to avoid State support and its ability to do so. This possibility finds additional support from the counterfactual case of West Bengal's Deobandi madrasas.

1.2. Deobandis in West Bengal

The large majority of Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal are affiliated with Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia (henceforth Rabate), a national umbrella representing the interests of India's Deobandi seminaries. Siddiqullah Chowdhury – the principal of Jamia Islamia Arabiya Kharajgram – presides over Rabate's West Bengal unit and is thus responsible for the Deobandi network in the state. Chowdhury is proud of his organisation's accomplishments:

[315] Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi, interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.

> Deoband is the most prominent Muslim force in South Asia. India has 6,000 Deobandi madrasas and more than 100,000 maktabs. In West Bengal alone we have 710 Deobandi madrasas and 10,000 maktabs. Even the poorest madrasas in the Deobandi system do not go to the government. Not one Deobandi madrasa in West Bengal has sought recognition.[316]

Table 4.1 depicts the distribution of Deobandi madrasas across West Bengal. It confirms Chowdhury's claim that "Rabate has a strong presence in each of West Bengal's districts except for Darjeeling, which doesn't have many Muslims."[317] Rabate successfully ties Deobandi madrasas to one another and to Deoband's mother institution Darul Uloom Deoband by performing three interrelated functions. First, it follows a formal procedure in affiliating new madrasas to ensure that the constantly growing network of Deobandi madrasas remains perfectly legible. Each madrasa intent on joining Rabate is required to complete an application which records the following information: name of the madrasa, its address, year of establishment, land holdings, number of students, number of teachers, lodging/boarding facilities, curriculum, and annual budget.[318] After processing the application, Rabate's state unit transmits the joining madrasa's statistics to the organisation's headquarters in Deoband. The second manner in which Rabate strengthens its organisational ties is by partially standardising the curricula of its member madrasas. Masud Nasir of Jamia Islamia Madania in North

[316] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, October 2, 2009.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, November 14, 2012.

24 Parganas conveys the nature of Rabate's involvement in the context of his madrasa: "Rabate prescribes a syllabus for deeni talim up to year six and also conducts exams to assess students' progress at these levels. But after year six we have our own syllabus and we conduct our own exams for higher classes."[319] By delivering a standard curriculum and conducting centralised examinations only at elementary levels, Rabate strikes a careful balance: it involves itself sufficiently to maintain its influence but not enough to contradict Mohammad Yasin's view that "affiliated madrasas are largely self-run."[320] The third factor contributing to Rabate's organisational strength is its authority to award degree certificates. When students graduate from an affiliated madrasa, their Rabate-issued degree certificates are recognised by all Deobandi institutions in India. In absence of a government-recognised degree, this pan-Deobandi recognition is a useful quality for graduates seeking employment in the madrasa sector or admission to postgraduate courses at Darul Uloom Deoband. Siddiqullah Chowdhury suggests that his organisation's influence also derives from a fourth function: "If ever a member madrasa needs financial support because it doesn't receive enough donations, then Rabate and Deoband help by providing from their own nationwide collection."[321] In theory, this rescue function should play a most significant role in promoting intra-Deobandi solidarity. In practice, however, it does not appear to feature prominently in the madrasa-to-madrasa relations underlying Rabate's network. As evidenced in chapter three, Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal generally achieve self-reliance by

[319] Masud Nasir, (representative, Jamia Islamia Madania) interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.
[320] Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, November 16, 2012.
[321] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, October 2, 2009.

adjusting their scale (annual expenses) in accordance with their means (annual collections); not by borrowing. The rescue function's salience is further challenged by the fact that the madrasa with the lowest budget in our sample – Madrasa Darul Uloom Mahmoodiya – is amongst the small minority (no more than five per cent according to Chowdhury) of Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal that choose not to affiliate with Rabate. "We have an informal relationship with members of Rabate," says the madrasa's headmaster. "But we haven't filled out the application since we don't need affiliation. It won't help us in any way."[322]

District	Deobandi Madrasas (#)
Bankura	15
Bardhaman	70
Birbhum	75
Coochbehar	50
Dakshin Dinajpur	30
Darjeeling	0
Hoogly	25
Howrah	20
Jalpaiguri	20
Kolkata	10
Malda	25
Midnapur	60
Murshidabad	65
Nadia	45
North 24 Parganas	40
Puruliya	15
South 24 Parganas	120
Uttar Dinajpur	25
State Total	710

Table 4.1: District-wise distribution of Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal

As this discussion indicates, West Bengal's Barelvis and Deobandis exhibit contrasting degrees of organisational strength. These differences notwithstanding, both groups are similar in that each represents the only choice available to

[322] Mohammad Shahid Qasmi, interviewed by author, November 18, 2012. Madrasa Darul Uloom Mahmoodiya is the only unaffiliated Deobandi madrasa in our sample. All other sampled Deobandi madrasas are formally affiliated with Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia.

madrasas intent on affiliating with a maslak-based organisation. A Deobandi madrasa reluctant to affiliate with Rabate (or a Barelvi madrasa unwilling to join MUI) has only one realistic alternative – to avoid affiliation altogether. This rather uneventful unitary arrangement is remarkably different from the multipolar setup in Bangladesh, where several organisations of the same maslak vie for authority.

2. Bangladesh

As the previous chapter revealed, Bangladesh's non-Deobandi Hanafi madrasas have overwhelmingly accepted recognition. Understanding the organisational behaviours of Bangladesh's unrecognised "qaumi" madrasas thus requires us to look only at the Deobandi sector. Despite their common Deobandi identity and beliefs, and their very similar propensities vis-à-vis recognition, qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh form a highly competitive multipolar landscape. In fact, five prominent boards compete for authority in the Muslim-majority country: Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh, Anjuman-e-Ittehad ul Madaris, Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris, and Befaqul Madaris Gohardanga. Amongst these, Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh has a national presence while the other four represent Deobandi madrasas regionally in Chittagong division, Sylhet division, North Bengal (Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions), and South Bengal (Khulna and Barisal divisions), respectively. The following sections selectively focus on three of these boards to explain why they were constituted, what interests they represent, and how they succeed in winning over affiliates at the expense of rival qaumi boards. This

comparative exercise helps elucidate the tussle for authority guiding qaumi madrasas' organisational behaviours.

2.1. Three qaumi boards in competition

Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh:

The largest amongst Bangladesh's qaumi boards is Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh (henceforth Befaq). Headquartered in Dhaka, Befaq is the most ambitious qaumi board in Bangladesh and the only one with a demonstrable national presence. Though a precise tally of qaumi madrasas in the country remains elusive, Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, Befaq's Assistant Director, claims that his organisation represents a plurality of Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas:

> The government estimates that there are some 15,000 qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh, but nobody really knows. All the qaumi boards put together have around 10,000 affiliated madrasas. This includes the large boards and also several less prominent ones. Out of these, 3,600 madrasas are affiliated with Befaq. These 3,600 madrasas are spread across the country giving us a nationwide presence. The other boards are regional with influence limited to one or two administrative divisions.[323]

[323] Mohammad Fazlur Rahman (Assistant Director General, Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh), interviewed by author, February 6, 2012. Since this interview, the number of Befaq-affiliated madrasas has increased to more than 3,700.

But Rahman does not gauge Befaq's strength exclusively in terms of absolute membership. In his view, an equally important factor setting Befaq apart from its rivals is the relative prestige of its affiliates: "In Bangladesh, 700 to 800 madrasas have masters level education. Out of these, 550 are affiliated with Befaq. Each of the other boards only has 10 or 20 such madrasas."[324] And amongst these 550 Befaq-affiliated jamias, none has quite the cachet of Hathazari Madrasa – Bangladesh's largest and most prominent qaumi madrasa.

Rahman suggests that Befaq's raison d'être, since its founding in 1978, "has been to provide a standardising and uniting board for all qaumi madrasas."[325] It has (partially) achieved this objective by performing a few simple functions:

> Befaq conducts madrasas' exams and issues students' degree certificates. All madrasas affiliated with Befaq have the same curriculum and the same exams. We conduct one exam each year at every educational level. We collect exam papers and distribute them for assessment to various madrasas in our network. Typically exam papers of students in one division are sent for assessment to madrasas in other divisions. Befaq does not offer any financial support to affiliated madrasas. Each has to take care of its own fund raising.[326]

Like West Bengal's Deobandi umbrella, Befaq has ensured the legibility of its network by instituting a formal application process, which in turn lends itself to a

[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid.

constantly updated directory of Befaq-affiliated madrasas. Table 4.2 captures Befaq's presence (as of May 2013), showing how its member madrasas are distributed across the country's divisions and districts.[327]

District	Madrasas	District	Madrasas	District	Madrasas	District	Madrasas
Dhaka	520	Comilla	212	Jhalokati	8	Pabna	28
Gazipur	111	Brahmanbaria	101	Faridpur	48	Sirajgang	39
Narsingdi	99	Chandpur	45	Shariatpur	32	Rajshahi	21
Narayanganj	91	Noakhali	50	Madaripur	29	Naogaon	92
Munshiganj	59	Feni	12	Gopalganj	6	Natore	34
Manikganj	32	Lakshmipur	24	Rajbari	4	Bogra	23
Mymensingh	276	Chittagong	58	Khulna	74	Nawabganj	3
Sherpur	55	Rangamati	1	Bagerhat	29	Joypurhat	2
Netrakona	137	Bandarban	6	Satkhira	22	Rangpur	13
Kishoreganj	132	Khagrachhari	4	Jessore	73	Lalmonirhat	6
Tangail	53	Cox's Bazar	45	Jhenaidah	22	Kurigram	9
Jamalpur	55	Barisal	56	Magura	28	Gaibandha	4
Sylhet	248	Bhola	19	Narail	32	Panchagarh	8
Moulvibazar	120	Patuakhali	14	Kushtia	35	Thakurgaon	11
Habibganj	147	Barguna	15	Chuadanga	29	Dinajpur	27
Sunamganj	86	Pirojpur	32	Meherpur	9	Nilphamari	9

Total: 3724

Table 4.2: District-wise distribution of Befaqul Madaris-affiliated madrasas

Though chapters three and four focused on the attitudes and ideologies of individual madrasas, in practice Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas have largely subjected their recognition decisions to the qaumi boards with which they affiliate. Each of Bangladesh's qaumi boards seeks recognition. Yet each has its own demands, its own version of terms and conditions that might make recognition agreeable. These demands can in turn be divided into three separate concerns: those relating to the madrasa's curriculum, those concerning the characteristics of the proposed recognised quami board, and those relating to the distribution of authority (amongst qaumi competitors) post-recognition. Mohammad Fazlur Rahman spells out Befaq's curricular demands as follows:

[327] This data was obtained from Abdul Jabbar (secretary, Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh), interviewed by author, May 7, 2013.

> We have told the government that we will not accept any changes to our religious curriculum. We are happy to include duniyabi subjects (like science, geography, mathematics, Bangla, and English) in our syllabus but even there we will decide the content of our textbooks. We will establish a committee to prepare textbooks for duniyabi subjects.[328]

The second concern stems from the State's insistence that any recognised qaumi board should operate as a government entity, under government control, and in parallel to the presently recognised Alia system.[329] This is a demand to which Befaq is adamantly opposed: "Befaq wants the [proposed] madrasa board to function autonomously post-recognition. Khaleda Zia's BNP-led government offered qaumi madrasas recognition, but one condition was that the government would run the resulting board. We will not accept this. It is a useless offer."[330] The third concern – how authority should be distributed amongst the qaumi elite in a post-recognition scenario – is the source of much intra-qaumi disagreement. Playing to its strengths, Befaq wants the State to recognise a single board for qaumi madrasas across the country. Given that other boards only have a regional presence, this proposed arrangement would all but ensure Befaq's monopoly over qaumi authority in a post-recognition environment. As the following sections illustrate, Befaq's rivals have competing visions of a recognised qaumi landscape.

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[328] Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, February 6, 2012
[329] That recognition cannot be extended to qaumi madrasas without this condition was explicitly expressed by M. Osman Faruk (former Minister of Education in Khaleda Zia's BNP-led government, 2001-2006), interviewed by author, June 11, 2013.
[330] Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, interviewed by author, February 6, 2012

Anjuman-e-Ittehad ul Madaris:

Anjuman-e-Ittehad ul Madaris (henceforth Ittehad ul Madaris) was established in 1959 at Chittagong's Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya. According to Obaid Ullah Hamzah, a teacher at Patiya Madrasa, "Ittehad ul Madaris has around 600 affiliated madrasas, the large majority of which are located in Chittagong division."[331] To today's observer, the competition between Bangladesh's largest and second largest qaumi board (Befaq and Ittehad ul Madaris) is an extension of the individual rivalry between the country's largest and second largest qaumi madrasa (Hathazari Madrasa and Patiya Madrasa). But this was not always so. As Hamzah explains, Befaq and Ittehad ul Madaris were founded – both by individuals associated with Patiya Madrasa – to serve complementary functions:

> Befaq was founded much after Ittehad ul Madaris. While Haroon Islamabadi [former principal of Patiya Madrasa] was working at the Shariah Court in Abu Dhabi in the 1970s, he envisioned Befaq as a central board for madrasas across Bangladesh. He thought it would work best if located in the capital Dhaka. Maulana Islamabadi was from this locality [Patiya] and a member of the Patiya shura [advisory council]. So Befaq is essentially a brainchild of Patiya Madrasa. Though Befaq was headquartered in Dhaka, they selected people from Patiya Madrasa to run it. Maulana Haji Yunus [Maulana Islamabadi's predecessor as principal of Patiya Madrasa] was made the first president of Befaq and Maulana Islamabadi succeeded

[331] Obaid Ullah Hamzah (teacher, Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya), interviewed by author, May 27, 2013.

> him in this role. As principals of Patiya Madrasa, Maulana Haji Yunus and Maulana Haroon Islamabadi were also presidents of both boards [Befaq and Ittehad ul Madaris]. The Daura-e-Hadith exam was conducted under Befaq, and for everything else Patiya had its exams conducted by Ittehad ul Madaris. The two boards were thus complementary.[332]

It was only after Haroon Islamabadi's tenure ended in the late 1990s that the presidency of Befaq shifted away from Patiya – first to Nooruddin Goharpuri in Sylhet and subsequently to Ahmed Shafi of Hathazari Madrasa.[333] This shift would prompt Patiya Madrasa to upgrade Ittehad ul Madaris to the Daura-e-Hadith level, as a stand-alone alternative to Befaq.

Abdul Halim Bukhari, the vice chancellor of Patiya Madrasa, has served as secretary of Ittehad ul Madaris for more than thirty years. He was also on Befaq's committee when the presidency shifted from Haroon Islamabadi to Nooruddin Goharpuri and thus privy to the details of this transition:

> When Maulana Haji Yunus was the president of Befaq, he observed that the paperwork at the Befaq office was not in order. When Maulana Islamabadi took over as Befaq's president, he made it a point to check all paperwork carefully to ensure there were no irregularities. The secretary of Befaq at the time [and still], Abdul Jabbar, was not too happy with this oversight. When the next elections were held for president, several members of the committee lobbied support to remove Maulana

[332] Ibid.
[333] Maulana Safiullah (principal, Jamia Nooria Islamiya), interviewed by author, May 18, 2013.

> Islamabadi and hand over charge to Maulana Goharpuri. All this happened despite the fact that Maulana Islamabadi made great efforts to make Befaq a success. He even took personal loans to set up its office.[334]

Bukhari recalls several specific issues that concerned Haji Yunus (and later Haroon Islamabadi): "The contents of Befaq exams were leaked by members of the editing committee which is responsible for finalising the contents of the papers students take. We eventually found out when the questions landed in our laps. They were selling the exam questions and passing them on.[335] Bukhari suggests also that Befaq was drifting towards the political domain: "Some members of Befaq's committee were dealing with political parties. This politicisation prompted some big madrasas like Brahmanbaria Madrasa to leave Befaq.[336] But not all of Yunus and Islamabadi's concerns involved "irregularities" per se. As Bukhari's tenor reveals, some points of contention had as much to do with power dynamics:

> Befaq's office was initially located in Faridabad Madrasa. The people heading the madrasa said: 'let the clerk here work in the Befaq office on a part-time basis'. Then they said: 'our clerk cannot get anything done with the clerk title so let us promote him to assistant secretary'. By the time Maulana Haroon became president the clerk had become secretary. And when Maulana Islamabadi became president, the clerk had grown to dislike any interference in his work.[337]

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[334] Abdul Halim Bukhari (vice chancellor, Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya), interviewed by author, May 27, 2013.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid. Bukhari refers here to Jamia Islamia Yunusia Brahmanbaria, a reputable qaumi madrasa located in Chittagong division.
[337] Ibid.

Bukhari's opinion of this clerk betrays the personal nature of differences amongst Befaq's office bearers at the time. Since the clerk Bukhari refers to is Abdul Jabbar, Befaq's current secretary, one can reasonably assume that these personal rivalries also play a part in driving the enduring competition between Befaq and Ittehad ul Madaris.

In terms of the day-to-day affairs of their affiliates, the differences between Ittehad ul Madaris and Befaq are hardly perceptible. As Obaid Ullah Hamzah explains, the educational curriculum prescribed by each board is very similar: "Madrasas affiliated with Ittehad ul Madaris teach mantik [logic] in four or five classes while Befaq-affiliated madrasas only teach mantik in two classes. We may also choose different books to teach the same subject. For example, we use different books to teach Arabic literature. But there is no real difference in our deeni talim."[338] Insofar as its stance vis-à-vis recognition goes, Hamzah suggests that Ittehad ul Madaris shares Befaq's view with respect to the first two concerns: "We will teach secular subjects but want final say regarding the specifics of the syllabus. We will accept government recommendations so long as we are allowed to decide which of those recommendations we implement … To accept recognition, the qaumi board will also have to be led and run by qaumi individuals."[339] But Ittehad ul Madaris's representatives disagree with Befaq on the third concern relating to the "ideal" distribution of authority amongst qaumi players. Hamzah conveys Ittehad ul

[338] Obaid Ullah Hamzah, interviewed by author, May 27, 2013.
[339] Ibid.

Madaris's desired alternative to Befaq's proposal: "Befaq wants government recognition and they want to be the sole representatives of all qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh. We also want recognition but we want regional boards where each board looks after the madrasas currently under its control."[340] Ittehad ul Madaris thus favours the status quo to ensure that each board's claim to authority within the Deobandi sector remains unaltered. Interestingly, this demand has a precedent in the mainstream education system where a separate board is "responsible for conducting the public examinations" at the intermediate and secondary levels in each of Bangladesh's divisions.[341] Hamzah is optimistic that a qaumi board, if realised, will reflect this preference: "I do not think the government will recognise only one qaumi board. The government knows well that there are separate qaumi boards. When the government speaks with individuals from the qaumi sector, it invites representatives of all boards."[342] At the same time, however, he fully appreciates the implications of an unfavourable decision: "Supposing the government gives recognition only to Befaq, then it will be difficult for us to maintain our current position. If we do, madrasas currently affiliated with us will inevitably drift towards Befaq in order to secure the benefits of recognition."[343]

[340] Ibid.
[341] For more information on the manner in which Bangladesh's education system is organised at the intermediate and secondary levels, see the Ministry of Education website (http://www.moedu.gov.bd).
[342] Obaid Ullah Hamzah, interviewed by author, May 27, 2013.
[343] Ibid.

Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh:

Established in 1941, Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh (henceforth Iddara) is Bangladesh's oldest qaumi board. It currently has 517 affiliated madrasas across Sylhet division. The board standardises the educational curricula of these affiliates by setting and conducting exams at six educational levels: Ebtidayee, Mutawasita, Sanuviya, Fazeelat, Taqmeel and Hadith, and Tahfeez ul Quran. It also awards certificates to students completing each of these levels. As Iddara's secretary Abdul Basit explains, "some [affiliated] madrasas are big and have all six levels of education while others are smaller and only teach up to the ebtidayee level."[344] Basit attributes Iddara's repute to its relative age and to its association with a highly respected Islamic scholar:

> Our board was the first of its kind in undivided India. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, Darul Uloom Deoband's Sheikh-ul-Hadees, came to Sylhet from Deoband in 1924 and spent four years here. During this time he founded a madrasa called Darul Hadees. Before returning to Deoband in 1928, he told people in Sylhet to form a board to strengthen qaumi madrasas in this region. This board was formed thirteen years later – in 1941 – in line with his vision. Sylhet was still a part of Assam then. The qaumi madrasas that are in present-day Assam [those parts of Assam that were part of undivided Sylhet] were also affiliated with us at the time.[345]

[344] Abdul Basit (principal of Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana and secretary, Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh), interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.
[345] Ibid.

According to Basit, Iddara is willing to implement limited curricular reform in exchange for recognition: "I spoke with the education minister [Nurul Islam] Nahid. I said: 'We are willing to teach English and secular subjects from the primary level up to class 10. But after that we will only teach the religious subjects in which we specialise'. He did not agree."[346] Like most Deobandis in Bangladesh, Basit believes that qaumi men must run any recognised qaumi board, free from government control. Insofar as the third concern goes, Iddara shares Ittehad ul Madaris's preference for a decentralised arrangement. In Basit's view, this is the only viable setup as attempts to realise the centralised and unified alternative have never succeeded in the past:

> We established a regional board as we did not know how many madrasas there were in Noakhali or Chittagong. Similarly when Ittehad ul Madaris formed after Bangladesh's liberation, they did not know how many madrasas there were in Sylhet. Befaq formed in the late 1970s and tried to unite the different boards, but these efforts failed … Mufti Abdur Rahman of Islamic Research Centre in Dhaka also tried to unite all the qaumi boards more recently. He wanted to form a federation of all five boards, including Befaq. This federation would be called Somelito Shikhya Board. But Befaq refused to become a part of this federation. It instead demanded that all madrasas unite under the existing Befaq banner. So Mufti Rahman's efforts did not succeed.[347]

[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid.

That the rivalries between Bangladesh's qaumi boards are dictated entirely by a zero-sum competition for authority is revealed most convincingly by Basit's presentation of their "other" differences:

> In Chittagong [Ittehad ul Madaris and also Befaq] there is an emphasis on teaching Farsi alongside Arabic. Here we teach Arabic and Urdu. We do not teach Farsi. The people in Chittagong also believe that you need to master mantik [logic] in order to become an alim. We do not give much importance to this subject. Our aim is to make students experts in Islamic studies (Quran and Hadith). There is no need for logic and Farsi to gain this mastery. We do not want to teach these outdated subjects. If we have to teach extra subjects, we would rather focus on computers and English – subjects our students can use to express themselves and their beliefs. In this regard, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris [the qaumi board in North Bengal] is most similar to Iddara.[348]

"We have no religious differences," Basit acknowledges. "But to form one board for all qaumis, everybody will have to do some give and take – some compromise will have to be made." "For starters," he proposes, "boards in Chittagong will have to do away with Farsi and logic." Notwithstanding its positive implications for general progress, the resolution of these trivial peripheral concerns is unlikely to bridge the fundamental divide between Bangladesh's qaumi strongmen. This pessimism is largely reinforced in the following section.

[348] Ibid.

2.2. Affiliates and their choices

The previous section studied qaumi boards from the perspective of their initiators. This section focuses instead on the individual affiliates who give these boards their numbers and legitimacy. It seeks primarily to understand how these group joiners process the divisions within the Deobandi landscape, and why they choose one board from a range of very similar alternatives.

Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh:

Of the fifteen qaumi madrasas sampled in Bangladesh, six are affiliated with Befaq. Out of these affiliates, two (Hathazari Madrasa in Chittagong and Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh in Dhaka) are run by individuals with leadership positions on the Befaq committee while the remaining four are joiners. For Abdul Aziz of Madrasa Rashidiya in Hathazari, the choice of a board did not result from careful planning or deliberation: "In the beginning we were not affiliated with any board. Three years after I started the madrasa, Befaq representatives came to me and said: 'We have thousands of madrasas in Bangladesh. You should join us'. I thought it would be good to join a big body of madrasas since it is not as easy to operate alone."[349] After he joined the board, Befaq provided Aziz with its standard curriculum and began conducting the exams of his madrasa's students. "Befaq does not help out at all when it comes to the collection of funds," says Aziz. "That we have to take care of on

[349] Abdul Aziz, interviewed by author, January 31, 2012.

our own."[350] Aziz also suggests that the rivalry between qaumi boards does not generally trickle down to the level of affiliates: "There is no real difference between madrasas in Chittagong that are affiliated with Befaq or Ittehad ul Madaris. They all get along."[351]

Maulana Safiullah runs Jamia Nooria Islamiya in Dhaka. Safiullah joined Befaq as soon as he established his madrasa in 1998. In his mind, it was an easy decision since "Befaq is the main qaumi board in the country."[352] Safiullah believes the differences between rival qaumi boards are difficult to overcome:

> I do not think there is any possibility that one united qaumi board can be formed. There are several disagreements. Ulama in Chittagong [those of Ittehad ul Madaris] remain separate from ulama in Dhaka [those of Befaq]. There are also specific disagreements relating to the syllabus. Ittehad ul Madaris focuses more on Farsi and Urdu and less on English and Bangla. Befaq gives less importance to Farsi, teaching it only at the ebtidayee level.[353]

In the previous section, Basit pointed to minor differences in the curricula administered by Iddara on one hand, and by Befaq and Ittehad ul Madaris on the other. Interestingly, Safiullah's account suggests that yet more minute (though no less noticeable) differences in curriculum exist between Befaq and Ittehad ul

[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Maulana Safiullah, interviewed by author, May 18, 2013.
[353] Ibid.

Madaris. But Safiullah acknowledges that a more fundamental problem underlies these curricular disagreements: "Generally, ulama want to maintain influence in their own regions. All big madrasas want that people should join their board and come under their influence."[354] In addition to their stated reasons for joining Befaq, Aziz and Safiullah's decisions make sense also because of their locations. Aziz's madrasa is situated a short distance from Befaq's most prominent member – Hathazari madrasa – while Safiullah's madrasa is located in Dhaka, home to Befaq's headquarters. It is thus helpful to look also at Befaq-affiliated madrasas lying further afield from these two landmarks.

Madrasa Darus Salam is a Befaq-affiliated madrasa in Sylhet. Apart from the fact that "Befaq representatives go around the country to draw madrasas to their board," the madrasa's principal Waliur Rahman cites three pull factors motivating his madrasa to join Befaq. "Since Befaq is a national board," says Rahman, "it makes it easier for us to maintain relations with madrasas across the country."[355] Rahman also believes the value of a Befaq certificate carries more cachet than those of rival boards: "The value of the Befaq certificate is greater since it is a national board. Even in Darul Uloom Deoband and Al Azhar [in Egypt] they recognise the Befaq certificate. If you have a degree from a regional board, it is harder." Rahman's third reason points to the superior competitive environment fostered by the Befaq network: "Since Befaq has more madrasas and more students, the board offers our students a more

[354] Ibid.
[355] Waliur Rahman (principal, Madrasa Darus Salam), interviewed by author, May 13, 2013.

competitive environment in terms of exams. This encourages students to perform better."[356]

Shah Momshod teaches at Jamia Madania Islamia, also a Befaq-affiliated madrasa in Sylhet. Asked why his madrasa chose to affiliate with Befaq as opposed to the regional board Iddara, Momshod repeats Rahman's first two reasons and offers two more:

> The big madrasas [Jamias] of Bangladesh are affiliated with Befaq. For example, Hathazari Madrasa, Lalbagh Madrasa, Jamia Rahmania in Dhaka, Jamia Malibagh, and Jamia Faridabad. We want to interact with these madrasas. We want that their ulama can come here to speak to our students. We also want to go visit them. If a madrasa from Iddara wants to interact with one of these big madrasas, it will find it harder as it falls outside the [Befaq] board.[357]

Momshod's second reason for affiliating with Befaq has to do with its relative head start in terms of self-initiated curricular reform: "Befaq was the first qaumi board to introduce science, English and mathematics in its exams."[358] Momshod shares Safiullah's pessimism regarding the potential for Bangladesh's qaumis to unite:

> Our curricular differences are very small. We still have mantik [logic] in our madrasas but Farsi has all but disappeared from the Befaq curriculum. The problem

[356] Ibid.
[357] Shah Momshod (teacher at Jamia Madania Islamia in Sylhet), interviewed by author, May 13, 2013.
[358] Ibid.

> is that there is latent tension between representatives of different boards. Since they are headed by individual maulanas with their own ambitions, one will not want to surrender influence to another. A maulana with influence in Sylhet will say: 'Why should I be subject to madrasas in Dhaka?' Our nisaab is one. Our nazariya [viewpoint] is also one. We all subscribe to Deoband's eight usool [principles]. The difference is only that of leadership. So if leaders put their egos aside, we should have no problem in forming one board for all qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh.[359]

In Momshod's view, an external stimulus may be required to disturb the current equation and to compel Bangladesh's big maulanas to shed their differences: "It will become easier for different boards to unite when they face a common threat, like accusations of terrorism, or aggressive efforts [by the State] to reform [qaumi] madrasas."[360] This opinion suggests that the qaumi elite will only change course when they perceive a direct and shared threat to their legitimacy and/or authority. So far, this section has focused on the views expressed by Befaq's affiliates. To fully appreciate Befaq's appeal relative to competing boards, however, it is useful to also look at the future plans of a madrasa that has yet to join a qaumi board. Abu Jaffar heads Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin in Dhaka. Established as a maktab in 1994, Jaffar's institution was upgraded to a madrasa in 2012. "We presently teach Hifz-e-Quran and ebtidayee," says Jaffar. "But we plan to expand and include Mutawasita and other levels as well."[361] Though Jaffar is in no hurry to seek affiliation, he is clear about the choice he will eventually make: "We are not yet affiliated with any board

[359] Ibid.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Abu Jaffar (principal of Jamia Islamiya Shahabuddin), interviewed by author, May 18, 2013.

as we are a relatively new madrasa. But we will go to Befaq. Befaq has the most madrasas so we can maintain relations with madrasas across Bangladesh." Also weighing on Jaffar's decision is the element of prestige: "Befaq is closely associated with Hathazari Madrasa. This is the most prestigious madrasa in Bangladesh. It is commonly known as Um-ul-Madaris [mother of all madrasas]. So it will be good for us to also join this board."[362]

Anjuman-e-Ittehad ul Madaris:

Four of the fifteen sampled qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh are affiliated with Ittehad ul Madaris. Out of these, one (Patiya Madrasa) constitutes a group initiator while the remaining three are group joiners. Abdullah Faridpuri teaches at Chittagong's Al Jamiatul Islamia, a madrasa affiliated with Ittehad ul Madaris. According to Faridpuri, the "choice of board is based mostly on proximity."[363] Since Al Jamiatul Islamia is equidistant from Patiya Madrasa and Hathazari Madrasa, however, its representatives could not have been concerned with physical proximity alone. The proximate ties they enjoyed with Patiya Madrasa's leadership likely influenced their choice.

Indeed such personal ties played a key role in Sultan Zauq Nadwi's decision to join Ittehad ul Madaris. Nadwi runs Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah, one of Chittagong's more reputable madrasas. "I was a student at Patiya Madrasa,' says Nadwi, "and I

[362] Ibid.
[363] Abdullah Faridpuri (teacher, Al Jamiatul Islamia), interviewed by author, January 26, 2012.

even taught there for seventeen years."[364] As Nadwi explains, his decision to set up Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah was motivated by his disapproval of Patiya's syllabus:

> My views on Patiya Madrasa's syllabus evolved while I was there so I decided to set up my own madrasa in 1985. Our syllabus here is different from other madrasas affiliated with Patiya in that we place a heavier emphasis on Arabic texts. We also teach Hadith and Tafsir progressively along with the [Quranic] verses so that students understand as they go along. Despite our differences regarding the syllabus, I affiliated this madrasa with Patiya. We could have operated without affiliation but our students benefit from the certificate provided by the board. So affiliation is beneficial despite our differences.[365]

While it is easy to misread Nadwi's account as an exclusive critique of Ittehad ul Madaris, his statement is targeted at qaumi boards more generally: "Befaq's presidency was initially held by Patiya Madrasa. I was the vice president of Befaq when Maulana Islamabadi was its president. This was while I was a teacher at Patiya Madrasa."[366] When Nadwi left Patiya Madrasa to establish his own madrasa in 1985, he thus affiliated the latter with Befaq, which was still under Patiya's control. In fact, he remained with Befaq so long as it remained in Patiya Madrasa's hands: "Patiya eventually lost its relationship with Befaq. One big reason why we separated from Befaq was that most of the people responsible for its functioning had political ambitions. And I do not do politics. So in 1996 [when Patiya Madrasa lost control

[364] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, (principal, Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah), interviewed by author, May 26, 2013.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.

over Befaq] we left Befaq and affiliated with Ittehad ul Madaris."[367] Nadwi's story of affiliation has thus been subject to his loyalty to Patiya Madrasa, which has endured in spite of Nadwi's individual views on the madrasa syllabus. Since Nadwi's students have received degree certificates from both Befaq (1985 to 1996) and Ittehad ul Madaris (1996 to present) he is suitably placed to comment on the relative merits of these competing boards. "Though there are slight differences in their syllabus," he says, "they are more or less identical in terms of deeni talim." In Nadwi's opinion, "the certificates these boards issue are also practically the same."[368]

The third of our sampled affiliates was also driven to Ittehad ul Madaris by the strength of personal relationships. Rahana Islamiya Madrasa is a small madrasa located in Rahana village near Patiya. Conveying the longstanding and intimate nature of the madrasa's ties to Patiya Madrasa is Khurshid Chowdhury, the son of its founder:

> After my father retired with spare money, he decided to spend on people's welfare. So he discussed his plans with Maulana Hafiz Mehboob who was the eldest son of Mufti Abdul Aziz – Patiya Madrasa's founder. Dedicated just like his father, Hafiz Mehboob was running another madrasa in Dohazari at the time. He had set this up himself. My father wanted to contribute his money to Dohazari Madrasa. But Mufti Mehboob said 'if you want to do service, why don't you set up a madrasa in your own village and educate the local children.' So my father followed his advice. This

[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.

> madrasa was set up with a governing body of maulanas from various madrasas. This was called the shura committee. Haji Yunus (the principal of Patiya at the time) was one member. Mufti Mehboob was also a member. But these people were not directly involved in the madrasa's affairs. My father mostly handled the day-to-day running of the madrasa.[369]

For more than a decade since its founding in 1988, Rahana Islamiya Madrasa functioned without affiliation.[370] As Chowdhury explains, however, this independent mode of operation became difficult to sustain:

> Over time, some shura members passed away, leaving our madrasa with less guidance. My family had longstanding ties with Mufti Abdul Aziz since the time he established Patiya Madrasa. I later became involved with Patiya Madrasa in my own capacity, offering them engineering advice. Maulana Haroon Islamabadi was the principal when I first began advising them. So while helping them out with various engineering issues, I sought their advice regarding the management of our madrasa. I said 'help me out.' They suggested that I bring it under Ittehad ul Madaris. Affiliation meant that we handle our own finances, but they handle exams, auditing, syllabus content, and degree certificates.[371]

But Rahana Islamiya Madrasa is not a typical Ittehad ul Madaris affiliate. "We wanted the madrasa to drift closer to Patiya than other madrasas affiliated with its

[369] Khurshid Chowdhury (founding representative, Rahana Islamiya Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 26, 2013.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.

board," says Chowdhury. In order to achieve this objective, Chowdhury asked Patiya Madrasa's representatives to take Rahana Islamiya Madrasa under their direct control: "The madrasa does not have a formal managing committee anymore. Instead, we asked Patiya Madrasa to handle the madrasa's affairs through its own committee. So in practical terms you could say that our madrasa is a branch or campus of Patiya Madrasa; not just an affiliate."[372] According to Chowdhury, this special status has special benefits: "Patiya Madrasa has a development fund. If they have surplus money, they sometimes share with our madrasa as well."[373]

Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh:

Four of the fifteen qaumi madrasas sampled in Bangladesh are affiliated with Iddara. Amongst these affiliates, one (Madrasa-t-ul Banaat Darul Hadees Barutkhana) represents an initiator while the remaining three represent joiners. Abul Kalam Zakaria is the principal of Sylhet's Jamia Qasimul Uloom. Despite his contention that "there aren't any differences between Bangladesh's qaumi boards," his madrasa is affliated with Iddara. "We went to Iddara not only because it is located here," says Zakaria, "but also because it is the oldest board." "In fact," he adds, "we have relations with Iddara since before Befaq was even established."[374] Ahmed Kabir runs Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat, another Iddara-affiliated madrasa in Sylhet. Kabir's madrasa has been affiliated with Iddara since

[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Abul Kalam Zakaria (principal of Jamia Qasimul Uloom), interviewed by author, May 12, 2013.

the former was established in 1986. Interestingly, however, Kabir's madrasa is also affiliated with another smaller board: "We are also affiliated with Rabate Madaris-e-Islam (henceforth RMI), a qaumi board with its main office in Sylhet city. This board has 70 to 80 madrasas all of which are also affiliated with Iddara."[375] According to Kabir, the relationship between Iddara and RMI is collaborative:

> Iddara conducts exams from ebtidayee up to the Daura level. [RMI] only conducts interim Mutawasita and Hifz exams. Mutawasita has four levels: Mutawasita-1, -2, -3, and -4. Iddara conducts exams for Mutawasita-4. [RMI] conducts exams for Mutawasita-2. And our madrasa conducts internal exams for Mutawasita-1, and -3. Iddara conducts a Hifz exam of the whole Quran (thirty chapters). [RMI] conducts a Hifz exam of only the first fifteen chapters. [RMI] was formed in 2006. It plays a supportive role to Iddara. In fact, the secretary of Iddara, Maulana Basit, has also been an office holder in [RMI]. There is thus a very close relationship between the two boards.[376]

Kabir tells us that Sylhet houses a third qaumi board in addition to Iddara and RMI: "There is a small qaumi board located in Kanaighat. It is called Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim East Sylhet (henceforth Iddara East). They have a few affiliated madrasas and are unrelated to Iddara. They have operated separately since the very beginning."[377] Kabir acknowledges that a larger board allows "students to compete with a larger pool of candidates" in their exams. Yet, he is content with his current arrangement:

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[375] Ahmed Kabir (Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat), interviewed by author, May 14, 2013.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.

"We do not need membership of Befaq. Our current setup is sufficient. Sylhet Muslims consider Sheikh-ul-Islam Hussein Ahmed Madani a pir. Since he encouraged Iddara's formation, we want to affiliate with this board."[378] Kabir thus implies that there is a sentimental basis for his decision to affiliate with Iddara, and that his choice is not driven by pragmatism alone. As the following case indicates, however, one can act pragmatically without compromising these sentiments. Asrar ul Haque and Noor Ahmed Qasimi teach at Sylhet's Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj. Like Kabir's, this madrasa has dual affiliation. Unlike Kabir's, however, it is simultaneously affiliated with two rival boards: Iddara and Befaq. Haque and Qasimi explain how this dual membership came about:

> We have been affiliated with Iddara since 1970. We joined Iddara because it is located in Sylhet and because it was the vision of Sheikh-ul-Islam Syed Hussain Ahmed Madani to establish this board. We have great respect for him so we wanted to be part of this board. Befaq did not exist at this time, but we would have joined Iddara even if it did … Though we primarily consider ourselves members of Iddara, we also joined Befaq later on since membership of Befaq allows us to maintain contact with madrasas across the country.[379]

According to Haque and Qasimi, this dual affiliation also benefits students: "We send some students to take the Hifz exam under Befaq. Other exams (ebtidayee and Mutawasita) are conducted by Iddara. Students who go to Befaq for the Hifz exam

[378] Ibid.
[379] Asrar ul Haque (principal, Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj) and Noor Ahmed Qasimi (chief education officer, Jamia Hakimia Hafizia Madrasa Shibganj), interviewed jointly by author, May 14, 2013.

also take the Hifz exam under Iddara. By taking the same exam under two boards, students are exposed to more competition and practice."[380] The respondents say that qaumi boards permit dual affiliation: "Each board knows that we are simultaneously affiliated with the other."[381] Though they consider both boards "very similar in terms of their deeni components," Haque and Qasimi readily perceive differences with respect to secular subjects: "At the ebtidayee level, mathematics, English, Bangla and Geography are better taught by Befaq while Arabic and Urdu are better taught by Iddara. The same holds true at the Mutawasita level."[382] Apart from these curricular differences, the respondents suggest that Iddara and Befaq differ only in their administrative styles:

> Both Iddara and Befaq issue manuals for their madrasas instructing them how to run their managing committees. These manuals explain how the madrasa committee should be constituted and what specific duties each member should assume. Iddara's manual says that a third of the madrasa committee's members should be ulama. Befaq has no such requirement. The Iddara manual also gives the madrasa's muhtamim [principal] more responsibility than the rest of the committee. Befaq's manual gives the committee more power than the principal. The chairman and secretary of Iddara are automatically members of each Iddara-affiliated madrasa's managing committee. In Befaq's case, the board appoints a Befaq person from the locality to represent the board on the managing committee of each madrasa. But since there are so many Befaq madrasas, often one person represents the board on

[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.

> the committees of several (20 to 25) madrasas in his locality. In the case of our madrasa, we only have Iddara representatives on our managing committee. Befaq has not pressured us to include a person from their board. They probably think that since we are affiliated, slowly we will drift closer and closer to their sphere of influence even if they do not push us.[383]

Though they represent a meeting point between two rival boards, Haque and Qasimi remain pessimistic about the prospect of qaumi unity: "There are different boards because regional boards were established before the national board [Befaq]. So when Befaq was formed, many madrasas were already affiliated with regional boards like Iddara."[384] In their view, the evasive objective of qaumi unity requires a sequential reordering of these events: "If Befaq had been established before the regional boards, perhaps we might have had a united qaumi board today without regional resistance."[385] But the existence of Iddara East in Kanaighat warns us that this temporal logic cannot assure unity. Even when a large board (Iddara) predates a small board (Iddara East), the latter may choose to remain apart.

3. Conclusion

The empirical findings presented in this chapter hold implications for propositions two and three of the theoretical framework.

[383] Ibid.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.

Proposition two: Specific qualities of the State are capable of influencing the decisions and behaviours of societal players

Chapter two studied the manner in which the State (through its image and practices) influenced the recognition decisions of recognised and unrecognised madrasas. Based on the empirical evidence provided there, we concluded that the shift from West Bengal to Bangladesh effected only minimal changes in madrasas' attitudes vis-à-vis recognition. The move did not significantly alter madrasas' thresholds for engagement. This chapter has demonstrated that the shift from a Muslim-minority to a Muslim-majority context does produce noticeable changes in the organisational behaviours khariji/qaumi madrasas exhibit. In Muslim-minority West Bengal, madrasas continue to view the State as the primary competitor in the contest for authority within the khariji landscape. This concern with an external protagonist encourages them to organise in the form of a united maslak-based front. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, qaumi madrasas are relatively secure in the Muslim-majority context they inhabit. The State's perceived distance from the qaumi landscape has shifted the venue of this contest for authority from the State-society theatre to the intra-qaumi battleground.

The available evidence does not permit us to ascertain the relative extent to which these contrasting patterns of organisation are prompted by the State's image and/or

practices.[386] Suffice it to say that when the State is perceived as a non-participant (or weak participant) in the contest for social control, qaumi men are able to redefine the fault lines of this contest in their own material terms. Expressed in terms of Migdal's State-in-Society approach, we can conclude that the organisational behaviours of madrasas are defined primarily by the perceived extent to which the State reaches into society.

These findings echo Donald Horowitz's observation in Sudan of a "fairly stable and coherent southern loyalty" that veils the "substantial tribal and religious differences among the southern Sudanese" when the latter interact with northerners.[387] Horowitz witnessed the fusion of subgroups in response to the "great chasm between them and others."[388] In the present case, we observe the reverse: the fission of identities when an external character is removed from the scene. Importantly, we find that this fission takes place even when the resulting division has no ideological basis: the State, by virtue of its absence from the scene, can encourage contestation and division amongst societal entities on purely material grounds.

But how might one explain these processes of fission and fusion as they are expressed in the madrasa landscapes of West Bengal and Bangladesh? How do one's

[386] In contrast to chapter three, where a deliberate effort was made to distinguish madrasas' responses to the State's image and practices, respectively, here it is not possible to determine the extent to which madrasas' contrasting organisational behaviours are prompted by the State's practices and/or its image. That said, it is likely that the different organisational behaviours exhibited by by khariji/qaumi madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh are influenced, in part, by the practices of their respective States.
[387] Donald Horowitz, "Three Dimensions of Ethnic Politics," World Politics, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1971), p. 239.
[388] Ibid.

multiple identities interact in these processes of division and amalgamation? What happens, for instance, to qaumi madrasas' religious identities when only their material instincts are on display? "The construction of identities," in Brenner's view, is best "conceptualized as a system of transformations located within a broader socio-political process."[389] As Brenner sees it, "identities […] are formulated through the appropriation and reassortment of various elements or building blocks which may be religiously significant, but are also socially, politically and economically motivated."[390] To understand the ability of one entity to interchangeably express religious, sub-religious, and non-religious interests requires complication of Brenner's "building blocks" concept. Though Brenner tells us that the transformations of identity we observe may be guided by the "reassortment" of "building blocks," he stops short of revealing the relationship between these blocks. Reading this chapter's findings in conjunction with those from chapter two, we offer to arrange Brenner's religious, sub-religious, and non-religious building blocks as they appear in each of our observed contexts.

The pyramidal structure in Figure 4.1 depicts the organisational behaviour of qaumi madrasas in Bangladesh. In absence of an external contender for authority, the relatively secure religious core encourages the progressive expression of sub-religious and/or non-religious material interests. In terms of Brenner's building blocks, the firm foundation of "R" blocks (religious interests) affords qaumi

[389] Louis Brenner, "Constructing Muslim Identities in Mali," in Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa, ed. Louis Brenner (London: Hurst & Company, 1993), p. 59.
[390] Ibid, p. 59.

madrasas the space to freely furnish their pyramid with “S” blocks (sub-religious interests), which in turn provide stable footing for the subsequent layer of “N” blocks (non-religious interests). The religious core in this Muslim-majority context remains latent, hidden beneath an exposed (expressed) outer layer of non-religious building blocks. The ability of Bangladesh’s Deobandis to mask their religious core is encouraged by the State’s absence from the qaumi space. Their willingness to further cover their sub-religious “S” blocks with material “N” blocks is permitted by the fact that non-Deobandi Hanafi madrasas in Bangladesh have overwhelmingly vacated the non-State space by signing up for the State-recognised Alia system.

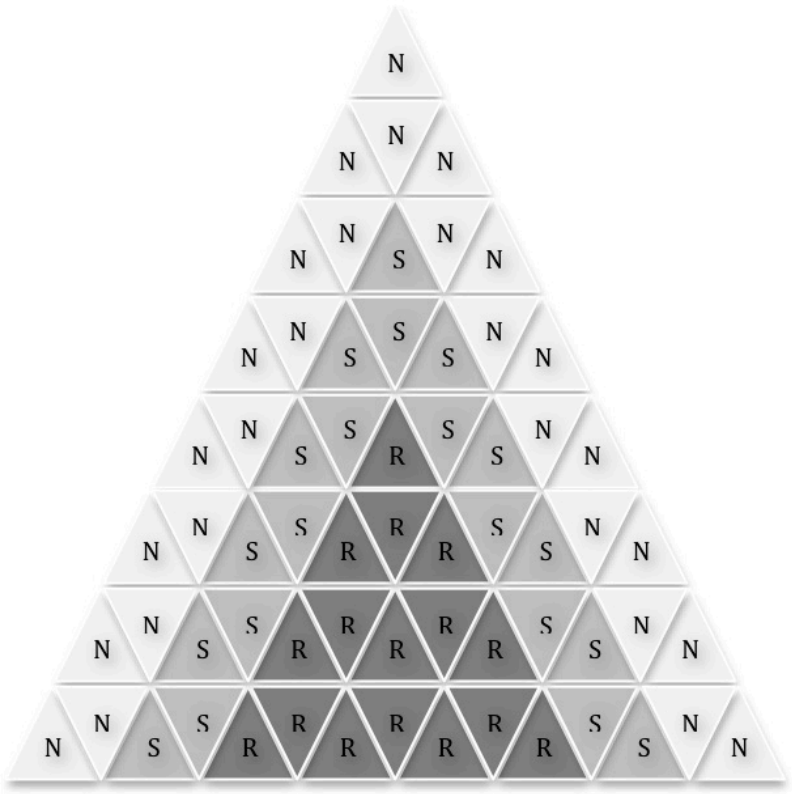


Figure 4.1: Building blocks of manifest and latent identity in Bangladesh

While the Bangladeshi context naturally encourages upward construction through the progressive placement of "S" and "N" blocks, the Muslim-minority context in West Bengal houses a different pyramid (Figure 4.2). As this figure reveals, the perceived presence of external contenders for authority in the khariji landscape keeps societal entities from furnishing their pyramid beyond the core of "R" blocks. To the extent that West Bengal's khariji madrasas exhibit inter- and intra-maslak interests, they do so unassertively. "S" and "N" blocks occur, but only precariously on a shaky foundation of "R" blocks. Though Deobandis and Barelvis populate the unrecognised space with their competing ideologies and quests for legitimate authority, this tussle is subordinated to their shared objective of withstanding the State's perceived incursions into the religious sphere. What results is a khariji landscape wherein inter-maslak competition remains relatively subdued and intra-maslak differences are unexpressed.

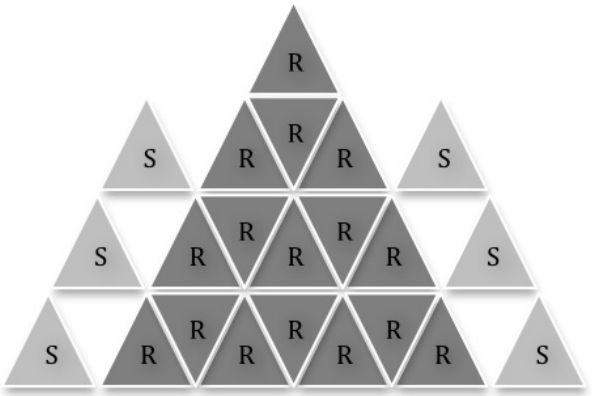


Figure 4.2: Building blocks of manifest and latent identity in West Bengal

Our analysis of khariji/qaumi madrasas across Muslim-minority and –majority contexts suggests that the State (through its image and/or practices) possesses little ability to alter the core identities of madrasas. It simply allows (or disallows)

madrasas the "security" to supplement these core identities with the expression of other layers of identity through the rearrangement of "S" and "N" blocks. By increasing or decreasing the extent of its reach into society, the State can alter the types of building blocks on display.

Proposition three: Resources garnered in one arena can be used to promote one's interests in other arenas

This chapter has shown that one resource – organisational strength – might influence the decisions Deobandi and Barelvi ulama make for or against recognition in the educational arena. Deobandi ulama (in West Bengal and Bangladesh) have established non-State madrasa boards to forge close ties to one another, and to Deoband's mother institution – Darul Uloom Deoband. The boards provide this organisational glue through three key functions: by following a formal procedure to affiliate new madrasas, by standardising (fully or partially) affiliates' curricula, and by awarding students' degree certificates. Though West Bengal's Barelvi madrasas affiliate with their own versions of khariji madrasa boards, the latter place far less emphasis on formal procedure and standardisation. The result – the community of Barelvi ulama in West Bengal is characterised by relatively weak organisational ties.

The fact that none of West Bengal's more than 700 Deobandi madrasas have accepted recognition, while roughly half of the state's Barelvis have, suggests that inter-madrasa bonds – fostered in the organisational arena – represent a salient

resource madrasas can leverage towards making the decisions they want in the educational arena. By making it possible for khariji/qaumi madrasas to embed themselves in a close-knit community outside the sarkari realm, organisational strength facilitates the unadulterated translation of the alim's desire to operate independently from the State into his ability to do so.

But it is important to also acknowledge that the alim's access to organisational strength inevitably deprives him of another crucial resource – anonymity. Since khariji/qaumi boards derive their strength by registering affiliates' particulars and keeping a close eye on their behaviours, there is little scope for the affiliate to stray noticeably from the board's policies. In the hypothetical scenario that a Deobandi madrasa experiences a change of heart and considers affiliating with the State, it would be difficult to express this desire without attracting the contempt of fellow Deobandis. In the case of Barelvis, on the other hand, the weak organisational ties characterising their community allows each alim considerable space to act on one's wishes, in relative anonymity, and without fear of ostracism.

It would appear then that the strong correlation between organisational strength and recognition status (not to be mistaken with recognition propensity) arises primarily from the ability of unrecognised (Deobandi) madrasas to enjoy a sense of community beyond the ambit of the sarkari landscape, but also – to an admittedly lesser extent – from their inability to break from this community's established practices and behaviours without fear of social boycott.

This chapter also showed how ulama transfer resources in the opposite direction – from the educational to the organisational arena. The fact that the resource of prestige travels seamlessly from the educational to the organisational arena is evident in our distinction between board initiators and joiners. Those ulama initiating khariji/qaumi boards belong to an exclusive club, with access to prestige garnered through one's cumulative efforts in the educational arena. Once prominent ulama succeed in transferring their influence into the organisational arena, they can further promote it in a zero sum manner by competing (for affiliates) with rival ulama. Though membership in a khariji/qaumi board gives group joiners opportunities to mingle with, and learn from, the influential ulama at its helm, it does so without redistributing the element of prestige. Each khariji/qaumi board is led by men with most prestige, and derives its legitimacy from the willing membership of affiliates with far less access to the resource.

Our discussion of organisational strength also allows us to reflect on the differences between Deobandis and Barelvis, as expressed in the educational arena. To identify the extent and possible source of these differences, it is helpful to focus on the most similar madrasas within the Deobandi and Barelvi maslaks – fence-sitters of each type. As chapter two revealed, the most apparent distinction between Deobandi and Barelvi fence-sitters (insofar as their responses to the State's modernisation scheme are concerned) is that the former exhibit a higher recognition threshold than the latter. Yet, these differences alone cannot explain why Barelvi recognition-seekers

have willingly acted on their fence-sitting status (by occasionally drifting towards the recognised side of the fence), while Deobandi fence-sitters remain firmly on khariji terrain. As this chapter explained, the resource of organisational strength gives ulama considerable leverage in the educational arena. Since Barelvi fence-sitters value autonomy (from the State) no less than their Deobandi counterparts, one could reasonably expect at least some of these Barelvi ulama to elevate their recognition thresholds if they had access to organisational strength of the Deobandi kind.

If we attribute madrasas' recognition decisions exclusively to their ideologies, we risk exaggerating the differences between Deobandis' and Barelvis' attitudes towards the State – or at least the practical significance of these differences. Once we acknowledge that recognition decisions are informed by the interaction of one's recognition propensity (one's attitude towards the State) and one's access to organisational ties, it becomes more difficult to draw confident boundaries between fence-sitting ulama of one maslak or the other. This is not to suggest that genuine ideological differences do not exist between Barelvis and Deobandis. Chapter three demonstrated that ulama of both maslaks show little agreement insofar as the doctrinal component of their ideologies is concerned. It simply means that we cannot rely on Deobandis' and Barelvis' expressed responses to the State's modernisation scheme to gauge the magnitude and/or quality of their ideological disagreements, since the ideological bases for their varied thresholds interact with a variable degree of organisational strength.

The next chapter transports us to the political arena. It explores the specific mechanisms through which the State reaches into recognised madrasas, and also studies the efforts of khariji/qaumi entrepreneurs to launch madrasa-based political parties towards entering the State complex.

Chapter Five: State Actors and Madrasa Men in the Political Arena

This chapter focuses on the mechanisms through which State and societal entities penetrate each other's spheres in the political arena. Section one explicates the routes through which political parties (and their student wings) enter recognised madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh. It demonstrates that madrasas often benefit from the State's entries, giving rise to a positive-sum equation. In the case of Bangladesh, this section further seeks to identify the specific factors separating those madrasas that readily permit such politicisation from those able to resist it.

While chapters two and three disaggregated the State into its image and practices, the State's efforts to reach into society in the political arena are best understood by disaggregating the State complex somewhat differently. Thaver and Thaver tell us that "the [S]tate is in fact fractured along a number of lines one of which is at the level of the political party vis-à-vis other contesting parties."[391] Indeed these parties are the State's chief representatives when it reaches into the recognised madrasa sector. Unlike the State's attempts to reach into the educational arena – which often represented a tussle for social control between the State on one hand and madrasas on the other – the State's entry into madrasas in the political arena represents a struggle for authority between competing constituents of the State. To the extent

[391] Thaver and Thaver, "State-in-Society: the Mutual Constitutiveness of the Developmental State and Higher Education in South Africa," p. 63.

that societal entities (recognised madrasas) feature in this equation, they serve mostly as a passive medium in which this contest is expressed. Though this chapter uses constituents of the State to describe the latter's behaviour in the political arena, it is careful to avoid conflating the gestalt ("State") and its parts (individual political parties).[392]

Section two reverses our equation, looking at the manner in which khariji/qaumi madrasa men have reached into the State complex by forming madrasa-based political parties. It focuses on madrasa-based political entrepreneurs to answer a series of related questions: why do these men choose to supplement their predominantly educational profiles with political duties? How do they process the relationship between their society-based educational roles and their State-based political roles? Are these men really entering (reaching into) the State as societal entities? Or is it more accurate to view them as dual characters, assuming societal functions in society and purely political personas upon entering the State?[393] This chapter will demonstrate that entry into the political arena often compels madrasa men to leave their societal interests behind. And that these men, when they do have opportunities to promote societal interests in the political arena, reveal the type of societal interests they are most eager to advance.

[392] The disaggregation of the State into constituent actors with different, sometimes overlapping, interests is consistent with Migdal's state-in-society approach. Though Migdal encourages the disaggregation of the State complex into its image and practices, he also views the State as a collective of actors and entities with differing interests.

[393] An answer to this question holds implications for Migdal's state-in-society framework, which views the movement of societal entities into the State as an opportunity for them to advance their societal interests. It also addresses our third theoretical proposition, shedding light on the transferability of resources to and from the political arena.

In conclusion, section three relates this chapter's findings to the theoretical propositions presented in the introductory chapter.

1. The State reaches into society

1.1. West Bengal

The mechanism: how State actors reach in

Each recognised madrasa in West Bengal has at its helm a managing committee. This committee has the power to appoint and suspend teachers, to grant them leave, to manage the madrasa's funds, and to acquire land, buildings, and other resources the madrasa requires.[394] Since its makeup is routinely re-constituted through a three-yearly election process, the managing committee represents an institutional inlet through which political parties in West Bengal can (and do) infiltrate recognised madrasas towards advancing influence and authority relative to that of political rivals.

While the managing committee is constituted slightly differently in the case of high and senior recognised madrasas in West Bengal, it generally consists of fifteen to eighteen elected and/or nominated individuals. These include a founder member

[394] Rules for Management of recognised non-Govt. Madrasahs (aided and unaided), 2002, published 5 July 2002 by Government of West Bengal School Education Department. A copy of this notification was obtained from Syed Nurus Salam (Secretary, West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education), interviewed by author, November 21, 2012.

representing individuals who established the institution, a life member chosen amongst the madrasa's donors, six guardians representing the body of students' parents and/or guardians, three (four in the case of kamil-level senior madrasas) members of teaching staff, one non-teaching staff member, a person from the locality with an interest in education, two individuals with knowledge of Islamic studies (only in the case of kamil-level senior madrasas), one person nominated by the director or district inspector of schools, and finally an ex-officio member (typically the madrasa's headmaster or principal).[395] Amongst these categories of members, three (guardians, and teaching and non-teaching staff) are elected while the rest are appointed – on a systematic rotational basis in the case of the founder and donor, automatically in the case of the ex-officio member (principal), and arbitrarily in the remaining cases.

The arbitrarily appointed positions on the committee are most easily politicised. This is hardly surprising in the case of the lone member nominated by the district inspector of schools since the latter is an employee of the government of West Bengal's Department of School Education.[396] But often politics tends also to determine who is "interested in education." Though the government leaves it to "the elected, nominated, ex-officio members as well as founders and [the] life member" to choose the person occupying this seat, it offers one exception to this convention: "In case of a Madrasah situated within the jurisdiction of a panchayat, the person

[395] Ibid.
[396] The district inspector of schools is a senior official within the Department of School Education, reporting only to the commissioner and the deputy director.

interested in education shall be nominated by the local panchayat samiti."[397] Since this condition applies to most rural madrasas, the "person interested in education" is more commonly referred to as the "panchayat nominee."[398] Given their political nature, Mir Mohammad Ibrahim of Hooghly's Kalubati Bhagatipur Sidiquia Senior Madrasa believes it is easy to predict these arbitrary appointments: "the panchayat nominee and the government nominee from the education department tend to be most directly linked to the party in power."[399] One can understand that the ruling party wants to populate these committee seats with its loyalists. What is more perplexing, however, is the fact that the political affiliations of elected committee members also tend to align disproportionately with the party in power.

The rules guiding the nomination and election of guardians, teachers, and non-teaching staff are fairly simple. According to procedures stipulated by the government of West Bengal, "persons whose names are entered in the register of eligible voters as guardians shall elect from amongst themselves six […] representatives."[400] One of these six seats on the committee is reserved for a female parent/guardian.[401] The madrasa's larger body of teachers and administrative staff members similarly elects from amongst itself the committee's teaching and non-teaching staff members. Consistent with these provisions for freedom and fairness, the rules permit any person on the register of eligible voters to submit nomination

[397] Rules for Management of recognised non-Govt. Madrasahs (aided and unaided).
[398] Representatives of most madrasas sampled in West Bengal's rural areas used "panchayat nominee" to refer to the "person interested in education."
[399] Mir Mohammad Ibrahim (Arabic teacher, Kalubati Bhagatipur Sidiquia Senior Madrasa), interviewed by author, November 9, 2012.
[400] Rules for Management of recognised non-Govt. Madrasahs (aided and unaided).
[401] In the event that voters fail to elect a female guardian, the district inspector of schools nominates a female member from the register of eligible voters to fill this seat.

papers and contest these elections. In practice, however, these rules are seldom followed.

Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla of Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Madrasa in Howrah contends that the proper election of guardian members is compromised only when the number of candidates is inadequate: "The managing committee members are elected but often there are no contestants so members are selected instead."[402] But there is sufficient evidence to suggest that elections are politicised regardless of candidate turnout. Abu Bakr Shabbir Ahmed is the headmaster of Maulana Mohammed Ali High Madrasa in Kolkata and previously spent sixteen years teaching at Manirul Ulum High Madrasa in Uttar Dinajpur. His observations of (and participation in) managing committee elections during this period left no doubt in his mind that "these elections are highly politicised."[403] According to Ahmed, local politicians decide not only who wins, but also who contests these elections: "Parties contact neutral guardians and tell them to contest in elections. Then they give them money to fund their campaign. The local MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly] or ward councillor [in the case of urban municipalities] is usually the person who contacts guardians towards this purpose."[404] Tariq Ahmed Molla, the secretary of Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa in Kolkata's Bartala neighbourhood agrees that "guardian member elections are purely political" and sees a similar mechanism at work:

[402] Mohammad Anisul Alam Molla (headmaster, Haji Ishaque Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa, Howrah), interviewed by author, July 30, 2009.
[403] Abu Bakr Shabbir Ahmad (headmaster, Maulana Mohammed Ali High Madrasah), interviewed by author, November 19, 2012.
[404] Ibid.

> Under normal circumstances, it is impossible for one party to win all guardian seats. But the ruling party ensures that it is able to determine the outcome of these elections. Metiabruz and Bartala are Congress strongholds and the local councillor here is a Congress person, so all six of our guardian members belong to the Congress. The local MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly] from Metiabruz and the local Congress councillor are the ones who influence the outcome of guardian elections in madrasas within their constituency. These party representatives go to the homes of guardians telling them to vote for so and so guardian candidates.[405]

Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla is the former headmaster of Amdanga Kendriya Seddiquia Hamidia Rahana Senior Madrasa in North 24 Parganas. Molla recalls the manner in which politicians manipulated one of the many elections he witnessed during his tenure:

> I one election in Amdanga Senior Madrasa, local CPI (M) representatives (who had won the State assembly elections days earlier) organised a meeting in which they invited people from the locality, including guardians of our students. They also invited Dr. Abdus Sattar who was the minority affairs minister at the time. Those guardians who attended the meeting stood in the elections and said that since they had established contact with Dr. Abdus Sattar they were best placed to serve on the

[405] Tariq Ahmed Molla (secretary, Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa), interviewed by author, November 10, 2012.

committee. In those elections, we only had guardian members from the ruling CPI (M).[406]

Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa's Mohammad Rafiqul Islam believes it is hard to win without the support of the ruling party: "Typically the ruling party will nominate all six candidates. If only six [guardians] contest elections, all will be voted in. If more contest, the ruling party will still ensure that its six candidates are elected."[407] Mir Mohammad Ibrahim gives this view empirical backing: "When the CPI (M) was in power, most committee members [at Kalubati Bhagatipur Sidiquia Senior Madrasa] were CPI (M) loyalists and some were Congress loyalists. Now that the Trinamool Congress is in power, there are only Trinamool loyalists on the committee."[408] Oddly, Ibrahim tells us that some old committee members were re-elected after opportunistically redefining their political loyalties: "In this madrasa, some members who were re-elected in the last elections used to be CPI (M) loyalists and now support Trinamool.[409] Such instances of opportunism suggest the madrasa might benefit from welcoming the State's attempts at politicisation.

[406] Mohammad Abdul Hakim Molla, (former headmaster, Amdanga Kendriya Seddiquia Hamidia Rahana Madrasah), interviewed by author, January 7, 2013.
[407] Mohammad Rafiqul Islam (teacher in charge, Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa, Hooghly), interviewed by author, November 11, 2012.
[408] Mir Mohammad Ibrahim, interviewed by author, November 9, 2012.
[409] Ibid.

A win-win scenario:

So how does the political party benefit from its politicisation of the madrasa's committee? According to Tariq Ahmed Molla, political parties politicise the committees to convey their competence and relative appeal within the community: "The politicisation of the committee is primarily for the personal happiness of local politicians. If they succeed in planting six Congress guardians, they can say their nominees won. If the committee does a good job, they can even say their candidates managed the madrasa committee well."[410] Abu Bakr Shabbir Ahmad of Maulana Mohammed Ali High Madrasa similarly believes that political parties meddle in these elections towards showcasing their "popularity":

> The main motive of party men is to establish their political supremacy. If in one locality Trinamool men win elections in four madrasas, then people sense that the party is successful. It is basically to make a statement of influence in the particular locality. By establishing their visual appeal through these elections, local politicians hope that other people in the locality will support them as well thinking that theirs is a potent political force. They simply try to create a wave of enthusiasm.[411]

These accounts speak to the benefit political parties derive from their interference in the election process, but what incentives do madrasa representatives have to play along? According to Abu Bakr Shabbir Ahmad, recognised madrasas have good

[410] Tariq Ahmed Molla, interviewed by author, November 10, 2012.
[411] Abu Bakr Shabbir Ahmad, interviewed by author, November 19, 2012.

reasons to permit the State's interference in their affairs: "If the MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly] is of the ruling party and the guardians are encouraged to contest by the same person, then automatically relations are established and the madrasa has a better chance of tapping into the MLA fund."[412] The MLA fund refers to the allowance each legislator receives from the State for the development of his/her constituency. Funds distributed for minority welfare or other development purposes at the local level typically come from this fund, or from a similar, albeit larger, allowance given to the MP [Member of Parliament] representing the constituency in question. "The MP has a fund of Rs. 2 crore per year," says Ahmad. "If he gives to a madrasa, he will probably give one or two lakhs for every institution he supports."[413] Ahmad thus suggests that strong monetary incentives guide the readiness of guardians and other madrasa representatives to mold their affiliation and interests in accordance with those of local politicians, ideally the MLA and MP. Mohammad Rafiqul Islam of Furfura Fatehia Senior Madrasa echoes Ahmad's observations: "It becomes much easier to get resources if committee members belong to the same party as the local MP. The local MP gets Rs. 2 crore every year for the development of his locality and can choose how to distribute these funds."[414] Islam further suggests that it is not enough to establish ties to these individuals. The key is to ensure that one's relations with the politician are better than those enjoyed by other madrasas in the vicinity: "There is no rule that a madrasa can only get so much money under the minority welfare scheme, so if the managing committee

[412] Ibid.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, interviewed by author, November 11, 2012.

members are well connected to the local MP, then the madrasa will get a larger share of the two crore pie."[415] Ahmad and Islam focus on the potential value of good relations between the madrasa's managing committee and local politicians – the MP and the MLA. But Tariq Ahmed Molla of Kolkata's Bartala Ainul Ulum Senior Madrasa tells us that, ideally, the madrasa's managing committee should also have ties to politicians at one more level:

> The madrasa board also has a managing committee, the membership of which changes in accordance with the party in power in the state. If the madrasa's guardians belong to the ruling party, it is easier to get the government's attention when it comes to repairs, infrastructural improvements, purchasing of items for the school, etc. So if all our guardian members belong to the CPI (M) and the Trinamool is in power in the state, we might have trouble getting a quick response from the board, which will be run by the Trinamool.[416]

Read along with Ahmad and Islam's accounts, Molla's thus tells us that strategic politicisation of the madrasa's managing committee has implications at two levels: at the level of the political party that is in power in the state and in control of the madrasa board, and at the level of the local MP and/or MLA who have at their disposal desired funds. Since the madrasa cannot dictate electoral outcomes, it can only hope that the political affiliations of the local MP and MLA agree with one another and with those of the party in power at the state level. Failing this ideal

[415] Ibid.
[416] Tariq Ahmed Molla, interviewed by author, November 10, 2012.

outcome, the madrasa inevitably has to prioritise which politicians it pleases. According to Molla, it makes sense to focus first and foremost on the madrasa's ties to local-level politicians: "The membership of the committee does not matter too much in the case of the madrasa board. The board has an obligation to respond even if guardians affiliate with the opposing party."[417]

Despite the significant political interference in the managing committee elections, there is no indication that political parties influence the educational affairs of recognised madrasas in West Bengal. "Political parties are concerned only with demonstrating their influence through the elections," says Ibrahim, "not in running the madrasa."[418] Molla agrees that "there is no politics in the functioning of the madrasa": "Politics is limited to the committee elections. The politics of the managing committee lasts only for the duration of the elections. After that we do not have politics for three years."[419]

1.2. Bangladesh

As one might expect, Bangladesh's vibrant electoral competition is prominently expressed in the country's Alia madrasa sector. While most respondents claim their own madrasas are "free from politics" they also acknowledge that a proportion of Bangladesh's Alia madrasas are indeed politicised. The difficulty in establishing the

[417] Ibid.
[418] Mir Mohammad Ibrahim, interviewed by author, November 9, 2012.
[419] Tariq Ahmed Molla, interviewed by author, November 10, 2012.

precise extent of this politicisation is exemplified by the widely divergent estimates respondents provide. Ahmadur Rahman of Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa claims that "only around five percent of recognised madrasas have political influence," while Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery believes this figure hovers in the significantly higher range of "50 to 60 percent."[420]

This section does not seek to establish the true extent of politicisation. It simply accepts that an unknown yet sizeable proportion (perhaps a minority) of Bangladesh's Alia madrasas are subject to political influence and elucidates the means through which this politicisation occurs. In the process, this section identifies and explains the differences between madrasas that are politicised as per the incumbent's will and those exhibiting enduring loyalties to one political party, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami (henceforth JI). While Bangladesh's political parties influence madrasas in the *top-down* fashion evident in West Bengal, their student wings enter madrasas through an associated *lateral* mechanism. The Bangladeshi context thus offers State entities two complementary avenues through which they can politicise recognised madrasas. Each is explored in detail below.

The top-down mechanism

Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla is the principal of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa. In this capacity, Molla has closely observed the top-down process by which

[420] Ahmadur Rahman (principal, Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 25, 2012. Mohammad Jalaluddin Al-Quadery, interviewed by author, January 24, 2012.

political parties infiltrate Alia madrasas, and the structural factors facilitating (or impeding) such transgressions. According to Molla, "it is customary in Bangladesh for the incumbent party to try to establish its influence in different educational institutions through their [managing] committees or boards."[421] In the case of fazil- and kamil-level recognised madrasas in Bangladesh, this managing committee is called the "madrasa governing board."[422] "Though our committee does not change," says Molla, "generally speaking the government tries to change the constitution of the governing body in order to control the madrasa."[423] A political party's ability to successfully exploit this top-down mechanism depends on the specific nature of the target madrasa. As Molla explains, Bangladesh has two types of Alia madrasas: 1) government-run madrasas, and 2) non-government recognised madrasas. The first type most readily lends itself to incumbent control as the government is directly and solely responsible for the appointment of its teachers and the constitution of its governing body.[424] This means that each of Bangladesh's three government-run madrasas – Dhaka Government Alia Madrasa, Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa, and Bogura Government Alia Madrasa – consistently and unequivocally represents the interests of the political incumbent.

But the remaining 16,448 Alia madrasas in Bangladesh are of the non-government recognised variety. Whether these institutions serve the incumbent's interests or JI's

[421] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla (principal of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 20, 2013.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] Mohammad Abdullah Al Jubaer (IT engineer, Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 19, 2013.

depends on structural factors: "Non-government recognised madrasas can also be divided into two types – those with a government governing body [GGB], and those with a trustee board governing body [TGB]. In madrasas with a [GGB], the government plays a significant role in constituting the madrasa's governing body."[425] The governing body of an Alia madrasa consists of a chairman, a founder, a donor, three teaching representatives, three guardians, and three people interested in education. In madrasas with a GGB, the ruling party decides (albeit indirectly) who is "interested in education": "Out of the three members interested in education, one is appointed by the Ministry of Education, one by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, and the third by the Islamic University [a public entity]."[426] According to Molla, the chairman of the governing body also tends to be a government appointee:

> If the madrasa is in the district headquarters, then the district commissioner (DC) automatically becomes the chairman of the madrasa's governing body. If the madrasa falls outside the district headquarters, then the additional district commissioner (ADC) is the chairman of the governing body. And if madrasas do not apply for one of these two options, then the governing body's chairman is nominated by the vice chancellor of Islamic University. This latter option requires the recommendation of the local MP [Member of Parliament], ensuring that it is always a political decision. Our madrasa has chosen option one so the person occupying the office of DC is always the chairman of our governing body. This is also

[425] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, interviewed by author, May 20, 2013.
[426] Ibid.

> political since the DC is a bureaucrat, but less directly than having the MP choose your chairman.[427]

While madrasas with GGBs cannot avoid this political interference, Molla suggests that many madrasas go a step further to ingratiate themselves with the ruling party. Like his counterparts in West Bengal, Molla believes "it makes sense to elect people from the ruling party": "Some madrasas consider it beneficial to place those loyal to the incumbent in the committee to facilitate access to government resources."[428] Unlike those in West Bengal, however, Molla also perceives a downside to this practice:

> It can also be detrimental. If the committee is populated with loyalists of the ruling party, it becomes difficult for the madrasa to operate autonomously. For instance, some influential man in the party may use his contacts on the committee to get undeserving students admitted to the madrasa, or to demand that a failed student is given passing grades.[429]

Suffice it to say that non-government recognised madrasas with GGBs are powerless to avoid government interference and likely to assume a character that is neutral, if not supportive, towards the ruling party.

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[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.

The situation is different in the case of non-government recognised madrasas with TGBs. "In such madrasas," says Molla, "the madrasa is run by a welfare trust with an associated trustee board whose members decide the constitution of the madrasa's governing body."[430] Importantly, "the government cannot influence the membership of this trustee board."[431] According to Molla, only "a small minority of Alia madrasas are run by trustee boards."[432] But those that are can very effectively withstand the ruling party's attempts at political interference. Molla tells us that this quality of having a TGB distinguishes consistently pro-JI madrasas from those with less enduring political loyalties:

> For a madrasa to be completely and consistently Jamaati, it has to be run by a trustee board. Only this can ensure that the madrasa can successfully resist government interference. You may find a principal or founder with partisan affiliations even in some madrasas with [GGBs], but he will not be able to politicise the madrasa in favour of any one party since the ruling party will play a significant role in constituting the governing body.[433]

According to Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain of Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa, "there is a group of Alia madrasas with JI influence," and their identity is no secret: "We know which madrasa is Jamaati and which is not. Even common people know

[430] Ibid.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.

this."[434] Hossain conveys a recognised madrasa landscape populated by JI and non-JI madrasas. As Molla's account suggests, this perceptible divide between JI and non-JI madrasas is also one between TGB- and GGB-run madrasas.[435]

This discussion tells us that amongst Bangladesh's Alia madrasas, only TGB-run madrasas are capable of resisting political interference, and that these TGB-run madrasas are largely run by welfare trusts allegiant to JI. At the same time, the overwhelming presence of GGB-run madrasas upholds the widely voiced opinion that a politicised madrasa's affiliation generally "fluctuates depending on which particular party is in power."[436] Also dependent on this distinction between GGB- and TGB-run madrasas is the ability of political parties to influence madrasas through the lateral mechanism to which we turn next.

The lateral mechanism

If the top-down mechanism offers political parties an inlet through which to influence Alia madrasas, an associated lateral mechanism allows these parties (through their student wings) to capitalise on this foothold by recruiting madrasa students towards political activism. According to Syed Mohammad Abu Noman, "only those Alia madrasas at or above the alim level can host student politics on

[434] Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain (former principal of Chattagram Nesaria Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 2, 2012.
[435] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, interviewed by author, May 20, 2013. That TGB-run madrasas are predominantly (if not exclusively) run by JI men has to do with Molla's claim that other political parties (the Bangladesh Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party) have a less pronounced presence in the madrasa sector, investing more attention and resources in university- and college-based politics.
[436] Amongst respondents making this point was Ahmadur Rahman (principal, Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 25, 2012.

their campuses."[437] Radaul Karim of Hazrat Shajalal Darussunah Yaqubia Kamil Madrasa agrees that "student politics happens in alim, fazil, and kamil madrasas" but "not in lower levels."[438] Noman and Karim imply that students in ebtidayee- and dakhil-level madrasas are too young to politicise. If true, this condition would automatically shrink the pool of madrasas in which the lateral mechanism can exist to 2,912 or 18 percent of Bangladesh's Alia madrasa sector. Assuming that only a third of these alim, fazil, and kamil madrasas permit student politics on their campuses, we approach Molla's claim that "no more than five percent of Alia madrasas" feature student politics.[439]

Each of Bangladesh's main political parties has a student wing. Representing the Bangladesh Awami League (henceforth AL), the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (henceforth BNP) and JI on the country's college, university, school, and recognised madrasa campuses are the Bangladesh Chhatra League (henceforth Chhatra League), the Bangladesh Chhatra Dal (henceforth Chhatra Dal), and Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (henceforth Shibir), respectively. According to Abdul Razaq of Modinatul Ulum Model In Boys Kamil Madrasa, student politics inevitably favours the ruling party: "Students tend to align with the ruling party since it is best placed to offer the financial inducements required to mobilise students."[440] But Molla suggests that incumbents have failed to translate this potential advantage into real

[437] Syed Mohammad Abu Noman (principal, Baitush Sharaf Adarsha Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 31, 2012.
[438] Radaul Karim (lecturer in Arabic, Hazrat Shajalal Darussunah Yaqubia Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 13, 2013.
[439] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, interviewed by author, February 4, 2012.
[440] Abdul Razaq (principal, Modinatul Ulum Model In Boys Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 16, 2012.

influence: "Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal are almost non-existent in the Alia sector, except in the fully government-run madrasas."[441] Molla instead believes that student politics in the Alia sector is dominated by JI's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir.

The following case studies explore the lateral mechanism in depth, first from the perspective of an individual associated with Shibir, and then in the context of a Chhatra League representative. These detailed accounts highlight the tactics student wings of political parties employ to reach into society, and the mutual benefit accruing (to parties and students) from these lateral entries. They also complicate Noman and Karim's observations regarding the age at which students become susceptible to politicisation, and lend nuance to Razaq and Molla's disagreement on the relative influence of incumbents and non-incumbents.

Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir

Mohammad Abdullah Al Jubaer is an IT engineer at Ta'mirul Millat Kamil Madrasa in Jatrabari, Dhaka. Jubaer's grandfather, Yusuf Ali, founded the madrasa in 1963 and also served as JI's assistant secretary general. Because of his family's longstanding ties to the JI network, and his own participation in student politics during his student days, Jubaer is well acquainted with Shibir's modus operandi. The fact that the madrasa continues to be run by senior JI officials (the current principal

[441] Mohammad Anwar Hosain Molla, interviewed by author, May 20, 2013.

Mohammad Zainul Abedin is a member of JI's working committee) also means that Jubaer's insights are up-to-date.

Jubaer tells us that Shibir adopts a multipronged strategy to reach into Alia madrasas:

> Shibir members invite students of Ta'mirul Millat to various events outside the madrasa. For instance, Shibir might organise a general knowledge quiz, or poem recitations, or essay writing contests [..] Shibir also organises career-building programmes for students [...] It also offers them scholarships to draw them closer to the organisation. Shibir also hands out educational material to draw students to its cause. This material is generally educational, but the organisation invests much effort in ensuring that it also serves to attract students and their parents to Shibir. Parents might see this material and ask: 'where did you get these books'? The student will say, 'so and so bhai [brother] gave it to me'. Impressed, the parents might then contact the same Shibir members to see if they can also provide their children tuition classes after school. These tuition sessions will further ensure that Shibir can interact more closely with students, influencing them and drawing them closer to the organisation."[442]

According to Jubaer, Shibir targets students much before the alim level, at which Noman and Karim consider them fit for politicisation:

[442] Mohammad Abdullah Al Jubaer, interviewed by author, May 19, 2013.

> Shibir does not only target older boys. In fact, it begins targeting students after class five. At first, Shibir will invite these young boys to events without revealing their political nature and purpose. Nor will Shibir reveal the political identities of its activists. But slowly, as students grow older and closer to the individuals organising these events, Shibir will influence them more directly and more openly [...] Since these Shibir leaders are generally intelligent and charismatic individuals with strong personalities, young students look up to these brother figures and treat them as role models.[443]

Jubaer says that once students are on board, "Shibir also gives hostel seats, tuition support, and money for books, to students who actively support the party."[444] This account conveys an involved recruitment process in which Shibir arms itself with compelling pull factors, including material benefits and services promoting the student's development. In addition to these purposeful steps, Shibir's success in attracting recruits also derives from the appeal of its parents organisation: "Many parents send their children to madrasas knowing that JI has influence there, and hoping that their children will participate in the party and become disciplined."[445]

But the lateral mechanism is highly dependent on the top-down mechanism. In fact, these two mechanisms intersect in the Student and Teacher Affairs Department

[443] Jubaer. Though Jubaer tells us that Shibir activists target madrasa students before they reach the alim level, it is still possible that they only do so in madrasas that have higher levels of education (alim and above). This would complicate, without contradicting, Noman and Karim's observations.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid.

(STAD), which is a student-run governing body within every Alia madrasa. Jubaer explains how the STAD is constituted in the case of Ta'mirul Millat:

> Since the madrasa's principal is the president of the STAD, the highest position a student can hold is that of VP [vice president]. The next highest student post is that of GS or general secretary. These individuals are elected in an annual or biannual election process. Shibir arranges cultural programmes outside the madrasa and nominates its representatives for STAD VP and GS, and tells students to vote for them. There are also elections for class presidents and section representatives. Typically the class and section representatives tend to automatically be students who stand first in their respective classes and sections. But if the class representative is not from Shibir, then Shibir will nominate its own unofficial class representative to liaise with the organisation. This individual is usually more influential than the elected class representative. In madrasas where men of a political party do not run the managing committee, it is easier for STAD elections to be divided since the managing committee does not influence the outcome. Since Ta'mirul Millat has strong JI influence at the top, it is practically impossible for Chhatra League or Chhatra Dal to run the STAD here.[446]

Here, Jubaer clearly reveals that the JI loyalists at the madrasa's helm ensure that the lateral mechanism is only available for the furtherance of their own party's influence. So long as a political party succeeds in controlling the top-down mechanism, it is also guaranteed ownership of the associated lateral mechanism.

[446] Ibid.

Since Ta'mirul Millat is managed by a TGB, which is in turn controlled by the JI-affiliated Ta'mirul Millat Trust, the madrasa's allegiance to JI is characterised by an element of permanence. Jubaer explains how the madrasa's leadership ensures that allegiance to Shibir (and JI) remains an attractive proposition for students even when the party is not in government:

> The madrasa's students place demands before the STAD. They may want hostel seats, cleaner boarding facilities, or a decrease in tuition fees. The STAD then communicates these demands to the principal. Generally, in madrasas that do not have strong ties to a particular party, the principal will usually have to meet STAD demands by relying on the help of somebody linked to the incumbent party. This is because the ruling party will find it easier to occupy some nearby building to provide additional hostel facilitites for students. But in our case the principal arranges to provide whatever he can using the support of Shibir and JI. Since Shibir and JI and the party's loyalists have enough infrastructure to meet students' needs, this madrasa never needs the help of the ruling party, even in times of opposition.[447]

Jubaer tells us that "student politics has been a mainstay of Ta'mirul Millat since the very beginning, as the political affiliations of the madrasa's management have trickled down to the student body."[448] The inability of incumbents to displace the madrasa's TGB-appointed leadership has further ensured that this affiliation has remained stable in JI's favour. Despite Ta'mirul Millat's reputation as a prominent JI stronghold, however, Jubaer claims most of its students do not participate directly

[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.

in student politics: "This branch of Ta'mirul Millat has around 5,000 students. While the majority of students affiliate with the party [JI], only a small minority are active in politics."[449] For those who are, says Jubaer, "it is easier to find jobs since they become part of JI's professional network."[450] And wherever they go, these "Ta'mirul Millat graduates continue to strengthen this network by encouraging JI activity."[451]

This account described the manner in which Shibir successfully exploits the lateral mechanism to recruit students towards its political activities, the dependence of this process on the top-down mechanism, and stability of allegiance afforded by a TGB setup. The following narrative changes a few aspects of this context. For one, it focuses on an individual with a less positive opinion of Shibir's policies. It also shows how Shibir members irreversibly politicised an apolitical student, but this time in favour of the rival Chhatra League. Since this case is situated in the fully government-run Dhaka Government Alia Madrasa, it allows us to observe how the top-down and lateral mechanisms function in the absence of a TGB. One can understand why students choose to remain allegiant to one political entity when the supply of their interests remains uninterrupted by changes in government, as in the case of Ta'mirul Millat. What should we expect, however, when the student body remains the same but the affiliations trickling down from the top, and the influences entering laterally, change in accordance with the ruling party? Is it possible under such circumstances for a student to exhibit stable allegiance to one political party?

[449] Ibid.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.

Bangladesh Chhatra League

Shafiqur Rahman Sarkar is the president of the Bangladesh Chhatra League at Dhaka Alia Government Madrasa. This essentially means that he won the STAD's presidential elections as a Chhatra League nominee.[452] As Sarkar explains, he had little interest in (student) politics when he first arrived in Dhaka in 2002:

> I am not from [Dhaka]. My home is in Netrokona district. I completed my studies at Hathazari Madrasa in Chittagong in 2002. Since the certificate I received was not government-approved, it was difficult to get a job. So I thought I would enrol in Dhaka Alia Madrasa and possibly proceed to a university afterwards. Before doing this, I spent a year studying Arabic at Jamia Madania Jatrabari, another qaumi madrasa in Dhaka. I lived in this madrasa for a year and actively looked for a seat at the Dhaka Alia hostel for the next year. Dhaka Alia's hostel is called Allama Kashgari Hall. I befriended a student at Dhaka Alia and told him to look for a seat in the hostel so I could live there the following year. He said that since his roommate was finishing his studies, I could simply take his place without officially applying for a seat. While I was busy securing this seat, I also got admission to Dhaka Alia, at the alim level, for the following year. And so I moved there after finishing my course at

[452] Shafiqur Rahman Sarkar (president, Bangladesh Chhatra League at Dhaka Alia Madrasa), interviewed by author, May 28, 2013. Unlike Ta'mirul Millat, the position of STAD president at Dhaka Alia Government Madrasa is reserved for a student, not for the principal. This does not, however, diminish the principal's influence over the STAD's affairs.

> Jamia Madania. In 2002, I was not the Shafiq I am today. I was a normal student without the slightest political ambition or inclination.[453]

As JI was in power at the time as part of the BNP-led four party alliance, the madrasa's STAD was controlled by Shibir. It did not take long for these STAD members to influence Sarkar. In contrast to the largely successful recruitment efforts Jubaer reports, however, Sarkar recalls an early and unpleasant exchange with Shibir that repelled him from the organisation's politics and encouraged him to join its rival:

> Shibir was strong at Allama Kashgari Hall. A few days after I settled into the hostel at Dhaka Alia, the secretary of STAD (a Shibir representative named Habib Bin Anwar) came to my room. He came along with ten or twelve other Shibir activists. He introduced himself and spoke to me nicely. He said to the other students: 'This is Shafiq. Help him if he has any problems'. Later, I learnt that his purpose for meeting me and making me feel special was to recruit me into student politics. But I was only at the madrasa to study. Students affiliated with Shibir were required to document their 24-hour daily activity in a little book called rozana ka kitab [daily notebook]. They would go to new students and hand them a rozana ka kitab, demanding 25 Taka in exchange. They tried to sell one to me several times too, but I refused. One day, at night, a student named Enamul Haque called me to his room on the second floor. I lived downstairs. He was the secretary of STAD. He sent a student to call me. I was eating dinner at the time so I said: 'how can I go? I am eating'. Two minutes

[453] Ibid.

> later, he sent another student to call me. I said: 'I am eating dinner.' Then a third student came to call me. I do not know what they reported to Enamul Haque. Finally, he sent a friend of mine, a classmate named Noman. He said: 'Please go. He is a senior student leader. You should go'. I told him I would go after finishing dinner. And so I went after dinner. Enamul Haque was fed up with me and said: 'You will leave this hall at 10 AM tomorrow'. I asked what my fault was. He said that either I would leave or he would make me leave. The next day, I went to class as usual and returned to my room at 1 PM. Again there were ten or twelve Shibir members in my room. They said: 'Leave now'. I said: 'I will not go. What have I done wrong'? I had a stack of books sitting on my desk. On top of that was a copy of the Quran. They tied my things together and threw them on the floor – everything including the Quran. I said: 'What is this? You call yourselves Shibir members and you are throwing my things on the floor'? Then they threw me out of my room. They even called me suar ka bachcha [son of a pig]. Although this happened in 2002, I remember it vividly as it had a huge impact on me and made me who I am today. The incident saddened me because I was thrown out just because I was not an activist. Just because I refused to take the rozana ka kitab.[454]

Implicit in Sarkar's account is the difficulty of remaining apolitical at a highly politicised institution. The madrasa's hostel was only open to those who were willing to commit to the party, actively enough at least to populate the rozana ka kitab. This reality forced Sarkar to search for other patrons:

[454] Ibid.

> This event woke me up to the fact that there is no room here for a normal student. I realised that to survive here it is necessary to get involved in student politics. I searched for a political party other than JI and BNP since I could not possibly join these parties after what had happened. So I found the Chhatra League office in South Dhaka. I also met two of its student leaders in Tongi. One was Sagar Ahmed Shaheen and the other was Ghulam Sarvar Kabir. I told them my story and asked what I should do. They told me to join them. They provided me with a place to stay and I joined Chhatra League. But I did not disclose my affiliation in the madrasa. I only used to participate in Chhatra League activities outside the madrasa. When the Awami League came to power, I could openly take my Chhatra League activities into the madrasa campus and the residential hall.[455]

This story of Sarkar the recruit tells us that positive inducements are not the only factor drawing students to politics. When representatives of a party behave in a coercive manner, they might induce the target student to join politics, albeit under the banner of a rival party. In his more recent role as STAD president, Sarkar is responsible for recruiting students to Chhatra League's cause. Sarkar claims he is mindful of his own experience as a recruit when targeting new students: "I tell people at the madrasa: 'If you want to study, no problem. But if you decide to do politics, then it can only be for Chhatra League."[456] At the same time, he offers potential recruits the same incentives Jubaer associates with Shibir membership: "We offer them hostel seats, we help them out with their studies, we help reduce their tuition fees if they have financial hardship, and generally we make it easier for

[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid.

them to find jobs."[457] Insofar as they benefit the party, Sarkar and other senior Chhatra League representatives on the STAD also gain from their recruitment efforts: "If AL holds a rally or event, we mobilise madrasa students to show support. By bringing students to rallies, I highlight my contribution to senior leaders in Chhatra League and AL. This helps me personally."[458]

Thus while students have immediate incentives to support the incumbent, it is also beneficial in the longer term to remain committed to one party so as to ingratiate oneself with its leaders. This tension between short- and long-term inducements may partly explain why Sarkar says it is not uncommon for students to identify with non-incumbents despite his belief that "it is impossible for the STAD to be run by any party other than the incumbent": "Out of our madrasa's 10,000 students, around 5,000 are Chhatra League supporters. We have some Shibir and Chhatra Dal activists in our hostel, but they cannot do politics in the hostel."[459] In fact, Sarkar says that the leaders of each political party's student wing have an understanding that their students should not be targeted for their political leanings: "Senior leaders of Chhatra League, Shibir, and Chhatra Dal get along. When we are in power, they ask us not to unfairly target their activists who might live in our hostel. Similarly, they might return the favour when we are no longer in government."[460]

[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.

Sarkar's account complicates Razaq's claim that "students tend to align with the ruling party."[461] Yes, the student body (represented by the STAD) most visibly aligns with the incumbent, but it is possible for individual students to remain allegiant to another political entity despite changes in government. While the perceived shift in loyalty is thus accurate when one treats the STAD as the unit of analysis, such shifts in loyalty may not occur when focusing on the individual student. Sarkar instead suggests that Chhatra League students take a backseat when Shibir controls the STAD, and vice versa. In other words, while the madrasa's student body as a whole appears opportunistic, its individual students may exhibit more stable political loyalties. It is indeed reasonable to assume that one can benefit more over the long term from exercising consistent loyalty to a political outfit, even if this requires one to limit one's political activity to locations outside the madrasa. By constantly shifting one's loyalty, it is difficult to earn the trust and respect of those student leaders who decide your promotion and rewards.

The fact that all of Ta'mirul Millat's students affiliate (to differing degrees) with JI while only half of Dhaka Alia's student body supports the incumbent suggests it may be more difficult for students at a TGB-run madrasa to exhibit political allegiance diverging from that of the STAD (and welfare trust). In government-run and non-government (GGB) madrasas, on the other hand, the routine reconstitution of the STAD makes it easier for students to maintain loyalty to a party that may return to power in the next elections. Though students in government-run and TGB-run

[461] Abdul Razaq (principal, Modinatul Ulum Model In Boys Kamil Madrasa), interviewed by author, January 16, 2012.

madrasas are equally allegiant, the latter simply exhibit greater homogeneity in their political affiliation. In either case, to affiliate with a party that is not currently represented in the STAD is challenging as it requires one to carry out all political activity outside the madrasa and, as Sarkar's experience demonstrates, possibly restricts one's access to the madrasa's facilities, including its residence halls. Table 5.1 shows how the top-down and lateral mechanisms operate, and depicts the identities of the STAD and individual students in each madrasa type. In government-run and non-government (GGB) madrasas, the STAD, and the top-down and lateral mechanisms favour the incumbent without dictating the political affiliations of individual students. In non-government madrasas with TGB's, the STAD, and both mechanisms remain enduringly aligned with the party favoured by the madrasa's welfare trust, and a largely homogeneous student body expresses similar political loyalties.

Madrasa Type	Top-down Mechanism	Lateral Mechanism	STAD	Individual Students
Government-run	Variable (incumbent)	Variable (incumbent)	Variable (incumbent)	Constant (mixed)
Non-government (GGB)	Variable (incumbent)	Variable (incumbent)	Variable (incumbent)	Constant (mixed)
Non-government (TGB)	Constant (welfare trust)	Constant (welfare trust)	Constant (welfare trust)	Constant (homogeneous in favour of welfare trust)

Table 5.1: The top-down and lateral mechanisms across madrasa types

2. Madrasa men reach into the State

This section analyses the track records of khariji/qaumi entrepreneurs who have launched or joined madrasa-based political parties towards entering the State complex. It seeks to establish why they supplement their educational (and organisational) roles with political careers, the extent to which they can remain societal men upon entering the State, and which, if any, societal interests they represent when reaching into the State.

2.1. West Bengal

Chapter two introduced Siddiqullah Chowdhury as the principal of Jamia Islamia Arabiya Kharajgram, a madrasa in Bardhaman district's town of Katwa. Chapter four subsequently discussed his role in organising West Bengal's Deobandi madrasas under the banner of Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia. This section completes his profile by looking at Siddiqullah Chowdhury the politician. Chowdhury stands out amongst West Bengal's khariji men for his demonstrated political ambition. Though his political activity dates back to the 1980s, Chowdhury rose to prominence via the much-publicised Nandigram controversy. In 2007, Nandigram, a town in West Bengal's Midnapur district became the site of a land acquisition dispute. When the ruling CPI (M) government decided to set up a chemical plant in the area, villagers protested with active backing from several opposition leaders. As the secretary of

the West Bengal chapter of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JUH), an organisation made up of Deobandi ulama across India, Chowdhury was amongst those most vocally invigorating the issue.[462] Arguing that "the state government wanted to take over land in Nandigram only because it belonged to Muslims," Chowdhury joined forces with Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee to block the project.[463] While remaining at the helm of JUH's West Bengal chapter, Chowdhury subsequently launched his own political party – the People's Democratic Conference of India (PDCI) – in 2008. In 2012, he merged PDCI with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), an Assam-based political party run by another popular madrasa man – Badruddin Ajmal. PDCI would henceforth function as the West Bengal chapter of AIUDF, with Chowdhury serving as the latter's chairman.

Chowdhury says he joined politics because "democracy was in crisis."[464] "If good people do not enter politics," he adds, "the country will be ruined."[465] Though he began his political career with the Congress party, the political platforms he has recently represented – PDCI and AIUDF – emerged from the khariji madrasa sector. One might thus expect Chowdhury to apply his political activity towards advancing the societal interests he and his madrasa-based supporters represent in the educational arena. But Chowdhury says there is little convergence between his

[462] Founded in 1919, the Jamiat Ulama-i Hind is amongst the more recognised and well-organised Muslim organisations in India. For a more detailed overview of its history and work, see the Jamiat's website (http://www.jamiatulama.org). Since JUH is a Deobandi organisation, its membership and following converge with those of Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia.
[463] Jaideep Mazumdar, "All Their Pins, In One doll." *Outlook* , December 3, 2007.
[464] Siddiqullah Chowdhury, interviewed by author, November 14, 2012.
[465] Ibid.

political and his educational roles: "My politics is not for madrasas."[466] He instead treats his political role as a supplement to his other commitments: "My duties in Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia and Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind overlap as they are both Deobandi organisations. But the [political] work I do for AIUDF is entirely different."[467] Chowdhury explains the ease with which he separates his political, educational, religious, and domestic duties:

> In the political sphere we talk politics, in the masjid we perform our prayers, and at home we discuss issues of relevance to family members. I keep an eye on madrasas affiliated with Rabate so all the men running those [affiliated] madrasas are doing their duty. So long as they do their jobs, I can afford to dedicate myself to politics. The men running these Deobandi madrasas in West Bengal have supported my entry into politics.[468]

This account suggests that Chowdhury may view himself as a member of the State when operating as a politician, and as a societal entity when representing West Bengal's Deobandi madrasas. That Chowdhury's societal identity finds only minimal expression in his attempts to reach into the State complex is further revealed by AIUDF's most recent mission statement. Of the party's fourteen objectives, only two reflect Chowdhury's religious or educational concerns. One applies specifically to West Bengal's madrasas, demanding that the government stops interfering in "minority religious institution[s]," and the other recommends reservations for West

[466] Ibid.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.

Bengal's Muslims.[469] The remaining points are more general, ranging from demands to "stop corruption" to those aimed at ensuring "the safety and honour of women," and removing "political violence."[470]

Chowdhury's fellow madrasa administrators suggest the lack of convergence between his State-based and societal roles is inevitable. Masud Nasir of Jamia Islamia Madania in North 24 Parganas believes Chowdhury's merger with AIUDF will help him politically: "AIUDF will do well because its representatives are not after material gain. They have been successful in Assam, and I think they will be successful in West Bengal as well."[471] But Nasir does not believe Chowdhury can succeed on the basis of his Deobandi credentials alone: "They need everybody's support because West Bengal's electorate houses many Muslims who affiliate with Furfura Sharif. Just appealing to Deobandis does not work. They do not represent the Deobandi maslak when in politics. They take up more general social issues."[472] Another fellow Deobandi, Ashraf Ali Qasim of Mahad-e-Sumaiya, goes a step further, arguing that Chowdhury must transcend not only his Deobandi, but even his Muslim identity if he desires success at the polls: "I do not view PDCI or AIUDF as Deobandi parties. I would not even call AIUDF a Muslim party. It will have to appeal to much broader social interests to have any electoral success."[473] As the supervisor of West Bengal's largest khariji madrasa – Jamia Milia Madinatul Uloom – Mohammad Yasin claims he was also approached to carry his influence into the political arena:

[469] AIUDF's mission statement is available on the party's website (http://www.aiudfwb.org).
[470] Ibid.
[471] Masud Nasir, interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.
[472] Ibid.
[473] Mohammad Ashraf Ali Qasim (headmaster, Mahad-e-Sumaiya), interviewed by author, November 20, 2012.

"Badruddin Ajmal also approached me asking me to take an active role in his party [AIUDF], but we said 'no'. We will support AIUDF by supporting the issues it raises, but we will not take an active part in politics."[474] According to Yasin, one's prominence in the madrasa sector has few implications for one's electoral success:

> Politics is completely separate from the madrasa system. It involves raising broad social issues. You cannot run your politics depending only on madrasas, since there are only 700 or so in West Bengal. This is why Siddiqullah Chowdhury only wins a few thousand seats in elections. If madrasas had a larger presence, maybe he would win.[475]

Nasir, Qasim, and Yasin thus tell us that Chowdhury cannot rely on his traditional societal base to sustain his political career. These views find much empirical support in Chowdhury's electoral experience.

Chowdhury entered the electoral scene as early as 1984, when he unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha seat from Katwa constituency on a Congress (INC) ticket. He contested the same seat in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, and subsequently left the Congress party to fight three more elections: the 2006 state assembly elections as an independent candidate from Bhangar constituency, the 2009 Lok Sabha elections as an Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) candidate from Basirhat constituency, and the 2011 state assembly elections from Domkal constituency on a

[474] Mohammad Yasin, interviewed by author, November 16, 2012.
[475] Ibid.

PDCI ticket. Though Chowdhury was unsuccessful in each of these electoral campaigns, his electoral performance has varied considerably across elections. In fact, his relative success at the polls has correlated closely with his political affiliation. He won 46.65 percent of votes polled as a Congress candidate in the 1984 election, 4.05 percent as an independent candidate in the 2006 election, 3.99 percent as an AUDF candidate in the 2009 election, and only 2.84 percent as a PDCI candidate in the 2011 election.[476] This record suggests that Chowdhury performed best when his political activity was associated with the symbol and inclusive manifesto of a national party.[477] He performed less impressively in his post-Congress career, when forced to translate his madrasa-based prominence into electoral success. This translation is particularly difficult when one's traditional popularity is limited to no more than 710 institutions, which are in turn spread across 42 Lok Sabha and 294 legislative assembly constituencies.

In addition to his party's mission statement, Chowdhury's acknowledgment of these constraints is evidenced by his efforts to reach out to Barelvis in West Bengal. According to Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi, the headmaster of Madrasa Salimia Faizul Islam, Chowdhury has tried to broaden his base by co-opting West Bengal's Barelvis: "Initially, Deobandi politicians contacted the secretary general of Majlis

[476] These results are available on the Election Commission of India's website (http://www.eci.nic.in).
[477] Interestingly, Muslim candidates won each of the five electoral seats Chowdhury contested. This suggests that even in constituencies favouring Muslim candidates, the latter must demonstrate credentials beyond madrasa-based popularity. Foremost amongst the credentials voters appear to reward in the constituencies Chowdhury contested is one's affiliation with a prominent political party. Saifuddin Choudhury of the CPM won the Katwa seat in the 1984 Lok Sabha election, Mahboob Zahedi of the CPM secured the same seat in the 1998 Lok Sabha election, Arabul Islam of the Trinamool Congress won the legislative assembly seat from Bhangar constituency in 2006, Haji Nurul Islam of the Trinamool Congress won the Lok Sabha seat from Basirhat in the 2009 elections, and Anisur Rahman Sarkar of the CPM secured the legislative assembly seat from Domkal in the 2011 elections.

Ulema-e-Islam, Qasim Alvi, asking him to join hands with them in politics. Alvi said ' okay, but only if we change your party name and banner and replace it with something new'. But Deobandis continued to use their own banner so we refused."[478] Despite the refusal of Barelvi ulama to partake in Chowdhury's politics, however, Wafaul Mustafa of Darul Ulum Ziaul Islam believes AIUDF may succeed in drawing support from non-Deobandis amongst the masses: "When somebody tries to mobilise Muslims in response to a particular issue, for instance when a film was made insulting the Prophet, nobody will ask 'is this person Deobandi or not?' They will simply support him as he raises an issue that touches their sentiments."[479]

Far from permitting Chowdhury to advance the societal interests he represents in the educational arena, prevailing electoral conditions demand that he redefine his notion of "society" to include constituents outside of his traditional khariji base. The extent of this redefinition may vary, depending on whether he affiliates with a national party (such as the Congress) or a madrasa-based entity (such as AIUDF). Yet enough redefinition will occur to ensure that Chowdhury reaches into the State as Siddiqullah Chowdhury the politician, not as the principal of his madrasa, nor as the president of Rabate.

[478] Mohammad Mukhtar Alam Razvi, interviewed by author, November 18, 2012.
[479] Wafaul Mustafa, interviewed by author, November 15, 2012.

2.2. Bangladesh

Madrasa-based political entrepreneurs in Bangladesh differ from their counterparts in West Bengal in three important respects. For one, they have achieved relatively more success in their attempts to reach into the State. Siddiqullah Chowdhury's willingness and ability to take his societal interests into the political arena were assessed on the basis of his (failed) attempts to enter the State complex. In the case of Bangladesh's qaumi politicians, we can additionally observe their behaviour once they are securely within the State complex as elected members of parliament. The second factor differentiating Bangladesh's qaumi entrepreneurs from those in West Bengal is the former's ability to reach into the State without shedding or tweaking their societal interests and identities. The third difference between madrasa-based political entrepreneurs in our two contexts is that those in Bangladesh are divided between several parties while Siddiqullah Chowdhury and his PDCI-AIUDF combine represent the only madrasa-based political entity in West Bengal.

Bangladesh's electoral landscape hosts several madrasa-based political parties. These parties initially existed as a coalition under the banner of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ). When it contested the country's 2001 elections as part of the BNP-led four party alliance, IOJ's constituents included Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish (henceforth BKM), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (henceforth JUI), Khilafat-e-Islam, Nizam-e-Islam,

Ulama Committee, and Firaizi Andolan.[480] IOJ fielded seven candidates, of whom four secured seats in Bangladesh's parliament. These IOJ-affiliated members of parliament (MPs) were Fazlul Hoque Amini (chairman of Khilafat-e-Islam), Mohammad Waqqas (general secretary of JUI), Shahinur Pasha (JUI), and Shahidul Islam (vice president of BKM). By the time the next parliamentary elections took place in 2009, however, BKM and JUI had exited the IOJ coalition, shortening its list of constituents to just four parties.

According to Ahlullah Wasel, IOJ's joint secretary, BKM and IOJ's other constituents grew apart soon after the 2001 election:

> In 2001, after elections, when it was time to form IOJ's majlish shura [central committee], Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish was dragging its feet. All other parties agreed to a rotation system. This meant that the amir [leader] of one political party would be chairman of IOJ initially. Then the amir of another party would succeed him. Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish did not want this rotation system. Their amir (the late Sheikh ul Hadees Alama Aziz ul Haq) wanted to be the chairman. In the event that a non-rotating system was adopted, other parties within IOJ favoured [the late] Mufti Amini as IOJ's chairman.[481]

[480] IOJ earlier had two more constituent parties – Khilafat Andolan and Bangladesh Islami Andolan. Khilafat Andolan left the coalition prior to 2001, registering and contesting elections as an independent political party. Bangladesh Islami Andolan was part of IOJ in the run-up to the 2001 elections, but exited the coalition when the latter joined the BNP, JI, and Jatiya Party (Manju) as part of the four-party alliance. According to IOJ's joint secretary, Ahlullah Wasel, Bangladesh Islami Andolan's representatives refused to ally with the BNP as its leader, Khaleda Zia, was a woman. Ahlullah Wasel (joint secretary, Islami Oikya Jote), interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.

[481] Ahlullah Wasel, interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.

BKM's secretary general, Mohammad Humayun Kabir, explains the split from his party's perspective: "Mufti Amini became the leader of IOJ. He wanted to be the leader despite the fact that Sheikh ul Hadees Maulana Aziz ul Haq was his ustad [teacher]. Maulana Aziz ul Haq had taught Mufti Amini at Lalbagh madrasa."[482] But BKM's displeasure with Amini was compounded by another concern, which they shared with JUI's leaders. JUI left IOJ in 2008 when Amini sought to register IOJ as a political party. JUI's leadership took the view that IOJ was a coalition of willing members, and that registration of IOJ as a party would make the constituent parties (including JUI) irrelevant. It insisted that Amini should only be allowed to register his own constituent party—Khilafat-e-Islam; not the coalition as a whole. His failure to comply with this condition compelled JUI and BKM to exit the coalition and operate as independent political parties.

Notwithstanding these personal differences, IOJ's original constituents are guided by common political objectives. Wasel claims IOJ's purpose is "to bring about an Islamic State." "Since the majority of Bangladesh's population is Muslim," he says, "this is our religious responsibility."[483] According to Wasel, religion and politics should go hand in hand: "The concept of separating religion and politics is Western. In Islam, religion and politics should go together. Politics without religion is against religion."[484] BKM's Mohammad Humayun Kabir says his "party is not very different from other Islamic parties" in Bangladesh: "Our purpose is to establish an Islamic

[482] Mohammad Humayun Kabir (secretary general, Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish), interviewed by author, June 9, 2013.
[483] Ahlullah Wasel, interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.
[484] Ibid.

State for the benefit of our religious community."[485] This objective of redrawing the Bangladeshi State along Islamic lines is one JUI's representatives share.[486]

But how do these qaumi men view the relationship between their societal and State-based activities? Wasel suggests his political activities, like his madrasa-based educational duties, are intended to strengthen his religion: " We use politics against governments perceived to be enemies of Islam. We consider the madrasa and IOJ separate endeavours. But I primarily consider myself a madrasa teacher because the madrasa contributes to Islam more significantly than any political party can."[487] By portraying his educational and political activities as complementary components in the larger project of defending Islam, Wasel implies that he uses both arenas to promote the same societal interests. IOJ's former chairman, and Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh's former principal, the late Fazlul Hoque Amini also perceived agreement between what he sought to supply in the political arena, and what qaumi men demanded in the educational realm: "Though [qaumi] madrasas are largely free from politics, all ulama and students support the creation of an Islamic State. That is why lakhs [hundreds of thousands] of people congregate whenever I go out."[488] Despite this claimed convergence of purpose between madrasas and madrasa-based parties, Wasel, Amini, and their IOJ colleagues represent a small minority of qaumi entrepreneurs willing to supplement their educational roles with political careers.

[485] Mohammad Humayun Kabir, interviewed by author, June 9, 2013.
[486] Mohammad Waqqas (general secretary, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam), interviewed by author, June 9, 2013.
[487] Ahlullah Wasel, interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.
[488] Fazlul Hoque Amini (former chairman, Islami Oikya Jote, and former principal, Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh), interviewed by the author, February 5, 2012.

As in West Bengal, the large majority of qaumi madrasa administrators in Bangladesh choose to maintain a safe distance from the political arena.

Obaid Ullah Hamzah of Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya says qaumi madrasas do not tolerate political activity on their campuses: "Student politics is strictly prohibited on campus. If someone is found to be involved, he will most likely be expelled. This is true of all qaumi madrasas."[489] Yet, Hamzah believes "most men associated with qaumi madrasas are favourably inclined towards IOJ's politics, and by association towards the BNP, which is seen as a lesser evil than the Awami League."[490] In Hamzah's opinion, "the men running IOJ are generally good at separating their political activity from their role in the madrasa."[491] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi of Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Islamiah explains his distant support for madrasa-based political parties: "We support ulama in IOJ who keep the government from operating against the interests of Islam. We do not participate in politics ourselves."[492] Ahmed Kabir of Jamia Mahmoodiya Islamia Sobhanighat also supports madrasa-based political parties, but he has doubts regarding their effectiveness: " Islamic parties have the potential to be beneficial to madrasas and to Islam in Bangladesh. Their efforts are good. But these parties are largely ineffective because they only bag a few seats in elections."[493]

[489] Obaid Ullah Hamzah, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Mohammad Sultan Zauq Nadwi, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[493] Ahmed Kabir, interviewed by author, May 14, 2013.

Kabir's opinion is informed by empirical evidence. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, madrasa-based parties – IOJ and Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan – combined to win only 389,815 (or 0.7 percent) of votes polled, and only four of the 37 seats they contested in the 300-member parliament.[494] In the 2008 parliamentary elections, madrasa-based parties – IOJ, JUI, BKM, and Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan – failed to win a single seat despite fielding 51 candidates.[495]

Moreover, their entry into the electoral arena has not been without compromise. In fact, IOJ's readiness to join the four-party alliance was itself an act of compromise as Deobandis have significant ideological differences with a key coalition member – JI. As several qaumi respondents explain, JI's founder Abu A'la Maududi held views regarding the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions that go against Deobandi belief. Abdullah Faridpuri of Al Jamiatul Islamia cites two such Maududian views with which Deobandis take issue:

> Maududi said that the Prophet cannot be perfect because he apologised. There are several Hadith that narrate instances of the Prophet apologising. But we claim that the Prophet was perfect, and that he apologised only for illustrative purposes, to teach us humans how to show humility. Maududi made another error. He said that one cannot blindly follow the Companions of the Prophet as they are fallible. But we believe that the Companions are incapable of sin.[496]

[494] Detailed results of these and other elections are available on the Bangladesh Election Commission website (http://www.ecs.gov.bd).
[495] Ibid. The number of candidates fielded by each of these parties was: IOJ 4, JUI 7, Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan 32, and BKM 8.
[496] Abdullah Faridpuri, interviewed by author, January 26, 2012.

For these reasons, says Faridpuri, "each qaumi madrasa is against Jamaat-e-Islami."[497] Obaid Ullah Hamzah of Al-Jamiah Al–Islamiah Patiya also has strong views on Maududi:

> We have major differences with Maududi; not minor ones. These differences concern beliefs and are of the type that could even impel us to consider him non-Muslim. But we do not consider him a kafir or outside the faith of Islam since according to the Hadith every person is a Muslim who acknowledges until the Day of Judgment that there is only one God Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet.[498]

Fazlul Hoque Amini was naturally keen to downplay these ideological differences in the interest of IOJ's electoral prospects: "We have a political alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami. But we made it clear to Khaleda Zia that we are not on the same page as Jamaatis when it comes to beliefs."[499]

Notwithstanding the limits to (and compromise demanded by) their electoral success, Bangladesh's qaumi entrepreneurs have fared better than their counterparts in West Bengal. Not only did four IOJ representatives succeed in entering the State complex in 2001, but they did so without shedding or diluting their qaumi credentials.[500]

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[497] Ibid.
[498] Obaid Ullah Hamzah, interviewed by author, January 28, 2012.
[499] Fazlul Hoque Amini, interviewed by the author, February 5, 2012.
[500] IOJ uses its manifestos to honestly express its desire to re-craft Bangladeshi society along Islamic lines. In the party's 2013 manifesto, for instance, three "Goals and Objectives" clearly communicate this purpose: 1) "The

At the same time, Bangladesh's qaumi men know well that their popularity is more freely and audibly expressed through mass demonstrations, where one's capacity to mobilise support is unconstrained by electoral constituencies or competitors. This alternative route has presented itself as a particularly attractive one when qaumi men have failed in their efforts to reach into the State. In fact, since 2010, qaumi men representing the entire spectrum of madrasa-based parties and qaumi boards have united under the banner of Hefazat-e-Islam (henceforth Hefazat) to oppose any government initiative they consider antithetical to Islam. The first target of Hefazat's agitation was the National Women Development Policy, launched by Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government in 2011 towards empowering women.[501] But Hefazat's most notable rally took place on May 5, 2013, when over 500,000 demonstrators occupied Dhaka's Shapla Chattar, pressing the same government to implement Hefazat's 13-point charter of demands.[502] These demands included "a ban on erecting sculptures in public places," declaring "Ahmadiyas as non-Muslims," "a ban on mixing of men and women in public," a demand for "exemplary punishment to all bloggers and others who insult Islam," and the "enactment of an anti-blasphemy law with provision for the death penalty."[503]

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nation and society should be built on Islamic ideals," 2) "The entire education system should be structured according to Islamic teachings," and 3) "Women's rights should be based on Islamic law, and any system that violates sharia law should be resisted." IOJ's 2013 manifesto was obtained from Ahlullah Wasel, interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.

[501] "Islamists protest women's rights in Bangladesh," CNN, April 6, 2011.

[502] "Bangladesh's radical Muslims uniting behind Hefazat-e-Islam," Guardian, July 30, 2013.

[503] "Hefazat-e-Islam: Islamist coalition," BBC, May 6, 2013.

Wasel, who serves as Hefazat's media chief in addition to his IOJ- and Lalbagh Madrasa-related duties, explains the basis for Hefazat's appeal: "Hefazat-e-Islam has the same purpose as the Islamic political parties, but it is purely non-political. Most Bangladeshis have a negative image of politics and political parties, so it is easier to mobilise a large number of people under an apolitical platform."[504] Abdullah Faridpuri of Al Jamiatul Islamia in Chittagong rephrases Wasel's statement from a supporter's perspective: "Mufti Amini cannot mobilise qaumi people for political purposes. But if the government makes a move that is not in the interest of Islam, each of Bangladesh's qaumi madrasas will rally behind him immediately."[505] Apart from enabling it to draw large crowds of supporters, Hefazat's apolitical character also allows its various constituents (who have a demonstrated capacity to disagree and compete in the organisational and electoral realms) to unite. "Splits within IOJ are political," says Faridpuri. "When it comes to defending the faith, these fissures disappear."[506] If Hefazat's unity depends on its apolitical nature, the latter is ensured only so long as the organisation is not used to promote one qaumi entrepreneur over another.

This discussion tells us that qaumi men have been able to make a limited entry into the State, and that they have done so without diluting or misrepresenting their societal interests. When entry into the State has not been possible, on the other hand, they have comfortably expressed their societal interests through mass

[504] Ahlullah Wasel, interviewed by author, June 7, 2013.
[505] Abdullah Faridpuri, interviewed by author, January 26, 2012.
[506] Ibid.

demonstrations. This limited account would suggest that qaumi entrepreneurs are mostly concerned with advancing sincerely held religious interests, and that they would rather operate outside the State than defile their manifestos. Yet, a closer look at the behaviours of qaumi politicians reveals that they have indeed used their limited presence in the State to promote interests that are not at all religious and only narrowly "societal."

The previous chapter explained in detail the different versions of a post-recognition qaumi landscape favoured by each qaumi board. Befaq, Ittehad ul Madaris, and Iddara are all open to some degree of curricular reform, and they uniformly insist that qaumi men (as opposed to government appointees) must staff and control any government-recognised qaumi board. Their disagreement concerns the manner in which authority is distributed amongst the qaumi elite in a post-recognition scenario. Befaq hopes to leverage its countrywide presence, thus favouring establishment of a single national qaumi board. Its regional rivals conversely expect the State to recognise region-specific entities, respecting the currently decentralised nature of the qaumi landscape.

In 2006, the BNP-led four party alliance (of which IOJ's elected representatives were a part) toyed with the idea of recognising the Daura-e-Hadith degrees of qaumi madrasas. Mohammad Waqqas conveys the specific interests he and his fellow IOJ MPs sought to advance in their discussions with the prime minister and education minister on the subject:

> We spoke with the prime minister [Khaleda Zia] about the qaumi board. She got the education minister [Osman Faruk] involved as well. Even when we were MPs, we met and dealt with the government under the Befaqul Madaris banner. Mufti [Fazlul Hoque] Amini, myself, and Mufti Shahidul Islam, we all represented Befaq. We told the PM that there should be one qaumi board and it should be Befaqul Madaris, since this is the board with the most madrasas and the only one with a countrywide presence. The government gazette resulting from these talks proposed the establishment of one qaumi board.[507]

But these talks failed to make any headway as the gazette also stipulated that the proposed qaumi board would be run as a government entity – a condition all qaumi men oppose. Osman Faruk, the education minister at the time, explains his government's stance: "They want to run their own board. But why would any government certify something over which it has no oversight? The board will have to run as per the rules of existing government boards. And its chairman and staff will have to be employed by the government."[508] Notwithstanding their failure to achieve their desired objectives, Waqqas and his fellow IOJ MPs demonstrated a willingness to use their position in the State to elevate Befaq relative to its social competitors. In other words, these ulama used their limited presence in the State complex to promote material interests associated with their activities in the organisational arena, showing less concern for the interests they claim to promote

[507] Mohammad Waqqas (general secretary, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam), interviewed by author, June 9, 2013.
[508] M. Osman Faruk (former Minister of Education in Khaleda Zia's BNP-led government, 2001-2006), interviewed by author, June 11, 2013.

in the educational arena. Waqqas and his colleagues were primarily concerned with power and authority, and only secondarily so with issues relating to religion, or madrasa-based education.

3. Conclusion

The empirical findings presented in this chapter hold implications for propositions one and three of the theoretical framework.

Proposition one: State forces reach into society and societal forces reach into the State

This chapter has studied closely the mechanisms underlying both directions of this proposition. It allows us to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the capacity of State representatives to reach into madrasas through the political arena, about the manner in which they do so, and to what effect. It also elucidates the manner in which khariji/qaumi entrepreneurs have entered, or tried to enter, the State, and the impact of these (attempted) entries on the societal interests and identities with which these men are traditionally associated.

In the case of West Bengal, we have seen that when State representatives reach into recognised sarkari madrasas, madrasa personnel actively encourage such politicisation. Yet, they do it only for immediate material benefit, and are equally willing to demonstrate such temporary allegiance for the next incumbent. As much

as the madrasa's representatives (guardians, teachers, etc.) provide a medium through which State representatives can politicise the madrasa in a top-down manner, this politicisation does not significantly impact the madrasa's affairs beyond the managing committee elections. Moreover, the absence of a lateral mechanism (and the associated activity of student politics) ensures that this brief politicisation does not involve students. When State representatives reach into West Bengal's sarkari madrasas through the political arena, they elicit the madrasa's cooperation without providing madrasa men or students any opportunity to reach into the State.

In Bangladesh, State representatives have similarly reached into society by altering madrasas' managing committees in a top-down manner. In institutions where student politics is permitted, this top-down politicisation has additionally activated a lateral mechanism through which State representatives can further constitute the madrasa's STAD in their own favour. In the case of government-run and non-government GGB-run Alia madrasas, the top-down and lateral mechanisms service the incumbent. Each time the incumbent changes, so does the STAD's affiliation. These frequent changes give rise to a heterogeneous student body where politically active students exhibit diverse, yet equally enduring, political loyalties. In non-government TGB-run madrasas, the STAD, and both mechanisms remain aligned with the party favoured by the madrasa's welfare trust. The relative permanence of this allegiance ensures that students are more homogeneously politicised in favour of one party. Since the presence of a TGB keeps incumbents from reaching into the

madrasa, one might conclude that State forces cannot reach into madrasas with TGBs. As these TGBs are intimately tied to political parties, however, it is more accurate to say that State representatives are permanently embedded in TGB-run madrasas. They reach in, and stay in, precluding any subsequent instances of reaching in by other State representatives.

Notwithstanding the differences between government-run and GGB-run madrasas on one hand, and TGB-run madrasas on the other, there is every indication that the political affiliations of individual students remain largely constant across Alia madrasas. We can thus say that when State representatives reach into Alia madrasas through the political arena, they encourage (politically active) madrasa students to enter the State by committing to and actively representing a particular party.

In both West Bengal and Bangladesh, the State's politicisation of madrasas yields what Stepan would term a positive-sum outcome.[509] The political party is able to establish and showcase its influence by altering madrasas' managing committees. And madrasas in turn draw benefits (e.g. access to MP and/or MLA funds) from their association with the incumbent. In madrasas where the lateral mechanism is actively exploited, political parties are further able to mobilise students towards political activism while students enjoy material benefits, hostel accommodation, and a larger network they can use towards their educational, professional, and/or political development.

[509] Stepan, "State Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America," p. 318

As State representatives have exploited the top-down and lateral mechanisms to reach into sarkari madrasas, khariji/qaumi men have pursued their own mechanisms to reach into the State complex. These efforts simultaneously shed light on propositions one and three of the theoretical framework.

Proposition three: Resources garnered in one arena can be used to promote one's interests in other arenas

In West Bengal, electoral conditions have not permitted Siddiqullah Chowdhury to enter the State (or to attempt to do so) without transforming his apparent identity and interests. He is compelled to shed his khariji identity in favour of a broader plank that appeals to an electorate in which Deobandis constitute a small minority. Though we can view him as a "societal" entity when he attempts to reach into the State, it is clear that he seeks to represent a far more inclusive society than the one he speaks for as a madrasa administrator in the educational arena, or in his organisational duties as the president of Rabate-e-Madaris or secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. The societal interests he traditionally represents as a madrasa man do not survive his (attempted) entry into the political arena.

Unlike Chowdhury, Bangladesh's qaumi entrepreneurs have been able to reach into the State with manifestos that honestly reveal their ideologies and objectives. In fact, one may even argue that their electoral success is limited by their

unwillingness to embrace broader platforms, which would in turn require them to publicly play down their Deobandi credentials. When the State complex has not been welcoming, these qaumi men have readily expressed their ideology through mass demonstrations. Here we see that qaumi men in Bangladesh are able to transfer resources – influence/prestige – from the educational and organisational arenas into the political arena more effectively than khariji ulama like Chowdhury can in West Bengal. Occasionally, Bangladesh's Deobandis have shown they can translate this resource into (limited) electoral success. And when this success has been elusive, they have instead used this influence to mobilise followers towards its second best application – street noise. Chowdhury has been unable to transfer the influence he wields in the educational and organisational arenas to the political arena – neither towards securing electoral success, nor towards the orchestration of mass demonstrations.

The ability of qaumi men in Bangladesh (and the inability of Chowdhury in West Bengal) to effectively transfer influence toward achieving demonstrable results in the political arena comes down to structural factors. While winning electoral seats requires a concentrated support base within a particular constituency, staging disruptive demonstrations requires one to effectively mobilise one's more scattered loyalists. Both objectives, however, require a critical mass of support. In Muslim-majority Bangladesh, even a minority following can yield electoral dividends, or at least a disruptive street presence. In Hindu-majority West Bengal, on the other hand, influence amongst a subsection of the state's Muslim minority population does

not allow men like Chowdhury to achieve the same kind of success in the political arena.

The apparent unwillingness of Bangladesh's qaumi entrepreneurs to contest elections on a platform that is untrue to their religious beliefs can easily be read as an expression of sincerity, especially when contrasted with Siddiqullah Chowdhury's readiness to shed his khariji persona towards entering the State complex. However, it may be more accurate to say that qaumi ulama in Bangladesh can afford to be "sincere" since they have the fallback option of mass demonstrations, while khariji ulama in West Bengal – forced to make do with a numerically less significant following – do not have access to such a plan B.

The sincerity of Bangladesh's qaumi entrepreneurs also comes into question when we look at the transfer of resources in the opposite direction – from the political to the educational and organisational arenas. This chapter has demonstrated that qaumi entrepreneurs have sought to advance relatively narrow objectives upon entering the State complex. As Waqqas's account reveals, IOJ politicians sought to leverage their status as MPs towards promoting Befaq over its regional competitors, Even after the ruling government took the initiative to address ulama's concerns in the educational arena, Waqqas and his colleagues exerted their political capital to ensure that any madrasa policy be geared towards promoting their authority in the organisational arena. It is reasonable to conclude that IOJ politicians were keener to

promote (material) interests relating to their status within the Deobandi community over those concerning questions of religion or religious education.

In terms of the theoretical proposition, we see that while Bangladesh's qaumi ulama successfully transfer influence from the organisational to the political arena, they are less able to directly transfer resources (political capital) in the opposite direction – from the political to the organisational arena. Since the authority of Deobandi madrasa men in the organisational realm is pegged to the nature of State-society relations in the educational sphere, and since the State lacks the leverage and motivation to directly influence the outcomes of inter-madrasa relations in the organisational arena, Deobandi ulama are forced to transfer resources from the political to the organisational arena through policy changes in the educational arena. While Migdal's framework – stressing the interconnectedness of different arenas – tells us resources can be successively transferred across several arenas, it does not explicitly acknowledge the possibility – observed here – that social actors might strategically funnel resources through one arena for ultimate use in another. Despite their failure to execute such a transfer, this chapter has shown how Waqqas and his fellow IOJ politicians intended to carry it out.

Conclusion

This concluding chapter aims to achieve two objectives. First, it seeks to present this study's main findings along with their corresponding theoretical and practical implications. It does this in section one, by revisiting – in question answer form – the key takeaways emerging from our analysis in the educational, organisational, and political arenas. The chapter's second objective is to acknowledge the unfinished nature of this thesis. As always, future work is required to increase both the scope and sophistication of the present study. Section two proposes several ideas for such a sequel.

1. Findings and their implications

1.1. Educational arena

Why are some madrasas willing to accept recognition while others are not?

The findings presented in chapter two suggest that ideological factors determine the receptivity of a madrasa to State-initiated reform. Based on their varied attitudes towards the State, madrasas in West Bengal and Bangladesh are divisible into three categories: 1) recognition-seeking madrasas that willingly seek the State's support, 2) opposed madrasas refusing to accept the State's terms of recognition, and 3) fence-sitting madrasas that are willing, in principle, to accept recognition but

uncomfortable with the "current" terms of this transaction. As chapter two explained in detail, this typology is based almost entirely on qualitative differences exhibited by target madrasas. *Opposed madrasas are opposed to the image of the State, expressing little concern for the State's practices.* Even if the State recalibrates its practices – by adjusting the monetary and non-monetary incentives and disincentives associated with its scheme – it will fail to bring these madrasas on board. Conversely, *recognition-seeking and fence-sitting madrasas are unopposed to the State's image, concerning themselves exclusively with the State's practices.* Unlike their opposed counterparts, recognition-seekers and fence-sitters are indeed interested in the specifics of the State's package. As and when the latter changes, so may a madrasa's movement from one side of the recognition fence to the other.

Since they are both concerned with what Migdal terms the State's practices, it is easy to mistakenly view the "fence" between recognition-seekers and fence-sitters as a quantitative divide. Common sense (reinforced by several accounts in the literature) might suggest that an increase in financial incentives will draw a larger number of madrasas towards recognition.[510] In practice, however, a State cannot allure fence-sitters by increasing the magnitude of financial support alone. Fence-sitters are primarily concerned with their religious purpose, as expressed through the contents of their syllabi – a purely qualitative matter. To the extent that they

[510] In her comparison of madrasa reform efforts in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and West Bengal, Bano observes a strong correlation between the financial incentives offered by the State, and its success in effecting recognition. See, Bano, "Madrasas as partners in education provision: the South Asian experience," p. 559.Riaz similarly suggests that West Bengal's general success in modernising madrasas within its jurisdiction is related to the fact "the amount spent by the West Bengal government on madrassah education is greater than that spent by the central government for madrassah modernization of the entire country." See Riaz, Faithful Education, pp. 162-89.

remain on the fence, they do so out of fear (reinforced by the State's former and current practices) that the acceptance of recognition will introduce "unacceptable" changes to their curriculum. In West Bengal, the fence presently separates recognition-seeking madrasas permitting significant changes in their curricula from fence-sitters permitting only minor interference. In Bangladesh, the present location of the fence separates recognition-seekers willing to accept minor interference from fence-sitters tolerating none.

Given the predominantly qualitative nature of madrasas' concerns, one can conclude that a madrasa's financial need (and the State's willingness to meet it) is a poor predictor of its recognition decision. To the extent that the financial variable appears salient, this impression is upheld only by West Bengal and Bangladesh's recognised madrasas. The majority of recognised madrasas in each context have indeed allowed the quantum of financial incentives on offer to influence their recognition decisions. Even then, several recognition-seekers (e.g. Jamea Ahmadia Sunnia Alia Kamil Madrasa) accepted these financial inducements without needing them. The financial variable seems far less important when we look at West Bengal and Bangladesh's fence-sitting madrasas. Irrespective of their sizes and financial endowments, fence-sitters in both contexts have refused to allow the State's financial inducements to extinguish or offset their syllabus-related fears. In fact, many (particularly Deobandi) fence-sitters consider the State's provision of financial support an additional deterrent to recognition. The quantum of financial incentives on offer is completely irrelevant to West Bengal and Bangladesh's

opposed madrasas as the latter are unconcerned with this and other dimensions of the State's practices. Khariji/qaumi madrasas that remain unrecognised despite their poor endowments show not only that it is possible to function without State support, but also how it is done. As evidenced by West Bengal's Madrasa Darul Ulum Mahmoodiya, any madrasa determined to manage without State support can do so by tempering its ambitions and downscaling its operations. If recognised madrasas allow financial "need" or "want" to guide their recognition propensities, unrecognised madrasas ensure that their recognition propensities guide their "need."[511]

What is the need for a recognition-centric typology?

Chapter two presented the recognition-centric typology as a one-dimensional tool, informed exclusively by madrasas' attitudes towards the State. In order to assess the typology's contribution relative to other categorisations, however, it was necessary to supplement this context-specific ideological component – attitudes towards the State – with more transportable and comparable doctrinal content. Using three ideological indicators – tolerance for the practice of coeducation, views on the "correct" language of religious instruction, and adherence to the custom-based ritual

[511] The concluding section of chapter three suggested that opposed madrasas of the non-Deobandi variety may present an exception to this statement. It argued that – unlike other Furfura Hanafi madrasas in West Bengal – Furfura Fatehia Kharijia Madrasa can likely afford to exhibit opposition because of its intimate and direct ties to the pirs at Furfura Sharif. Lacking any institutionalised basis for opposition to the State's recognition package, it is reasonable to view this madrasa's opposition as a luxury afforded by its proximity to the dargah. In the hypothetical scenario that its relationship to the dargah is severed, and its financial endowment is weakened, it is unlikely that this madrasa will be able to sustain its opposition to the State's scheme. Given that non-Deobandi madrasas represent a tiny minority of opposed madrasas, however, their presence does not contradict the conclusion that opposed madrasas are generally uninterested in the State's practices, including its provision of financial support.

of pir veneration – chapter three expressed the recognition-centric typology in terms of two existing categorisations of madrasas: 1) the maslak-based typology which categorises madrasas according to the school of thought to which they subscribe, and 2) the ashraf-atrap typology, which classifies Bengali Muslims according to the relative syncretism characterising their beliefs and practices. The litmus test for analytical utility was represented by a simple question: Does the recognition-centric typology offer vital information and insights that elude existing categorisations of madrasas?

In West Bengal, the maslak-based typology is fairly good at predicting a madrasa's general recognition status (recognised versus unrecognised). If we know that a madrasa is Deobandi, for instance, we can conclude with certainty that it is also unrecognised. If a madrasa is associated with Furfura Sharif, we can instead conclude (with 91 percent certainty) that it is recognised. The maslak-based typology presents a yet more persuasive predictor of recognition in the Bangladeshi context. Each of Bangladesh's ten Sunni madrasas sought and accepted recognition, while all thirteen Deobandi madrasas sampled shunned recognition in favour of qaumi status. Beyond these merits, however, the maslak-based typology struggles to decipher West Bengal and Bangladesh's madrasa landscapes. The maslak variable tells us that Deobandis uniformly reject recognition, without telling us anything about their varied recognition thresholds and potentials. It fails to separate Deobandis opposed to the image of the State from those concerned only with its practices. It fails also to distinguish fence-sitters near the fence from those with

higher recognition thresholds. The maslak-based typology's inability to perceive nuance extends also to West Bengal's recognition-seekers. Since it treats all of West Bengal's Furfura Hanafis as an ideologically identical lot, the maslak variable cannot explain why three of them exhibit fence-sitting characteristics – they accepted recognition many years ago but take issue with the intrusive nature of State support on display today. The maslak-based typology is least helpful in the case of West Bengal's Barelvis, which are divided equally between the recognised and unrecognised sides of the fence.

The ashraf-atrap binary also correlates poorly with madrasas' recognition decisions. In West Bengal, the ashraf-atrap binary is capable of separating recognition-seekers (predominantly exhibiting atrap tendencies) from opposed madrasas (mostly tending towards the ashraf label). But the typology fails to separate recognition-seekers from fence-sitters with atrap tendencies and cannot distinguish between opposed madrasas and fence-sitters with ashraf tendencies. Moreover, the ashraf-atrap binary would fail to predict that fence-sitters with ashraf-tending, atrap-tending, and anomalous views can behave quite similarly vis-à-vis the recognition decision. The ashraf-atrap binary performs yet worse in the Bangladeshi context. Insofar as the first two indicators are concerned, it completely veils the diversity of recognition penchants exhibited by Bangladesh's recognition-seekers, fence-sitters, and opposed madrasas. All sampled madrasas exhibit atrap tendencies with respect to the preferred language of religious instruction, and most exhibit ashraf tendencies with respect to their tolerances for coeducation. While the third

indicator – tolerance for pir venerating practices – is slightly more informative, it also fails to distinguish Bangladesh's opposed madrasas from its fence-sitters.

It is clear that we cannot explain madrasas' behaviours towards, and interactions with, the State on the basis of existing categorisations alone. There is ample room for a supplementary tool that encourages madrasas – irrespective of maslak or doctrinal orientation – to classify themselves according to their varied propensities for recognition. The value of the recognition-centric typology lies precisely in this complementary purpose. It fully exploits and expresses the rich ideological content of the maslak-based and ashraf-atrap typologies, while replacing their debilitative blind spots with a keen eye for behavioural nuance.

What does the unravelling of the recognition puzzle tell us about "society" and its interactions with the State?

Migdal's State-in-Society approach tells us that the nature of interaction between the same State and societal entities varies across arenas. While this observation is abundantly expressed in the course of this study, chapters two and three suggest it is also possible to disaggregate State-society interactions within a given arena. Even within the very narrow context of West Bengal's (or Bangladesh's) madrasa landscape, we see that the State's efforts at engagement in the educational arena simultaneously prompt multiple patterns of State-society interaction – each resulting in its own outcome. The findings presented in chapter two suggest that the

State's attempts to reach into the madrasa landscape produce Stepan's positive-, negative-, and zero-sum outcomes, all at once. The State's interactions with recognition-seekers produce a positive-sum outcome, as the former successfully establishes social control while the latter secure material and non-material benefits associated with recognition. Opposed madrasas respond to the same State's initiatives to produce a zero-sum outcome: the State gains nothing from the non-participation of opposed madrasas while the latter continue to enjoy autonomy from the State. The State's interactions with fence-sitters always yield negative-sum outcomes, though the extent to which a fence-sitter loses out varies depending on its circumstances. In the case of less resourceful fence-sitters, the State's inability to control the madrasa equals its inability to appease the madrasa. For wealthier fence-sitters who are receptive to, but less enthusiastic about, the benefits of recognition, the negative-sum balance tilts in favour of the non-participating madrasa.

This intra-arena disaggregation also holds implications for our notion of "society" and the latter's role in State-society relations. Surely it would seem inconceivable to study State-society relations without a strict definition of "society." Yet the recognition-centric typology suggests an inordinate focus on the contours and contents of society hides more than it reveals. The recognition-centric typology categorises madrasas according to the nature of their interactions with the State. And it does so effectively despite the lack of correspondence between its constituent categories and existing notions of "society." Only a tenuous link exists between one's ascribed "society" and the nature of one's interactions with the State. In fact, no

"society" – however broadly or narrowly one chooses to define it – in West Bengal's educational arena is characterised by predictable State-society relations. If we define "society" in terms of the Hanafi madhab [school of law], West Bengal's Hanafis are characterised by positive-sum, negative-sum, as well as zero-sum equations. Society is equally unhelpful when defined on the basis of a madrasa's maslak: Deobandis variably engage in negative- and zero-sum relationships with the State; the interactions of Barelvis are characterised by positive- and negative-sum equations; and Furfura Hanafis deal with the State in positive-, negative-, and zero-sum terms. Ascribing madrasas societies on the basis of the ashraf-atrap binary is also unhelpful: madrasas with unequivocally atrap tendencies can engage with the State in positive- and negative-sum terms, while the State's interactions with madrasas exhibiting unequivocally ashraf tendencies are variably subject to zero- and negative- sum equations.

This is not to say that one's societal affiliation is completely irrelevant to one's interactions with the State. In societies characterised by strong organisational ties, a societal member's actions may indeed be driven as much by social norms as his individual attitudes or beliefs. "Society" may also assume greater significance in contexts and/or arenas where the State approaches society in a top-down manner, through legitimate social representatives. But there are cases – exemplified by the madrasa modernisation programmes in West Bengal and Bangladesh – where the State seeks to engage societal members individually and directly. When such institutionalised opportunities exist for independent thought and action, an

inordinate focus on the societal entity may obscure the diversity of opinions and State-"society" relationships flourishing therein.

How can State-led madrasa modernisation schemes be made more "successful"? Are there limits to success?

In West Bengal, the State has been particularly aggressive in its madrasa modernisation efforts. Between the mid-1960s and early 1980s, many fence-sitting madrasas accepted recognition, considering its terms favourable. Since then, however, the State has dramatically altered their syllabi and diluted their religious character. Though the State's intrusiveness has allowed it to rapidly transform yesterday's fence-sitting madrasa, it has also shifted the fence for today's fence-sitter.

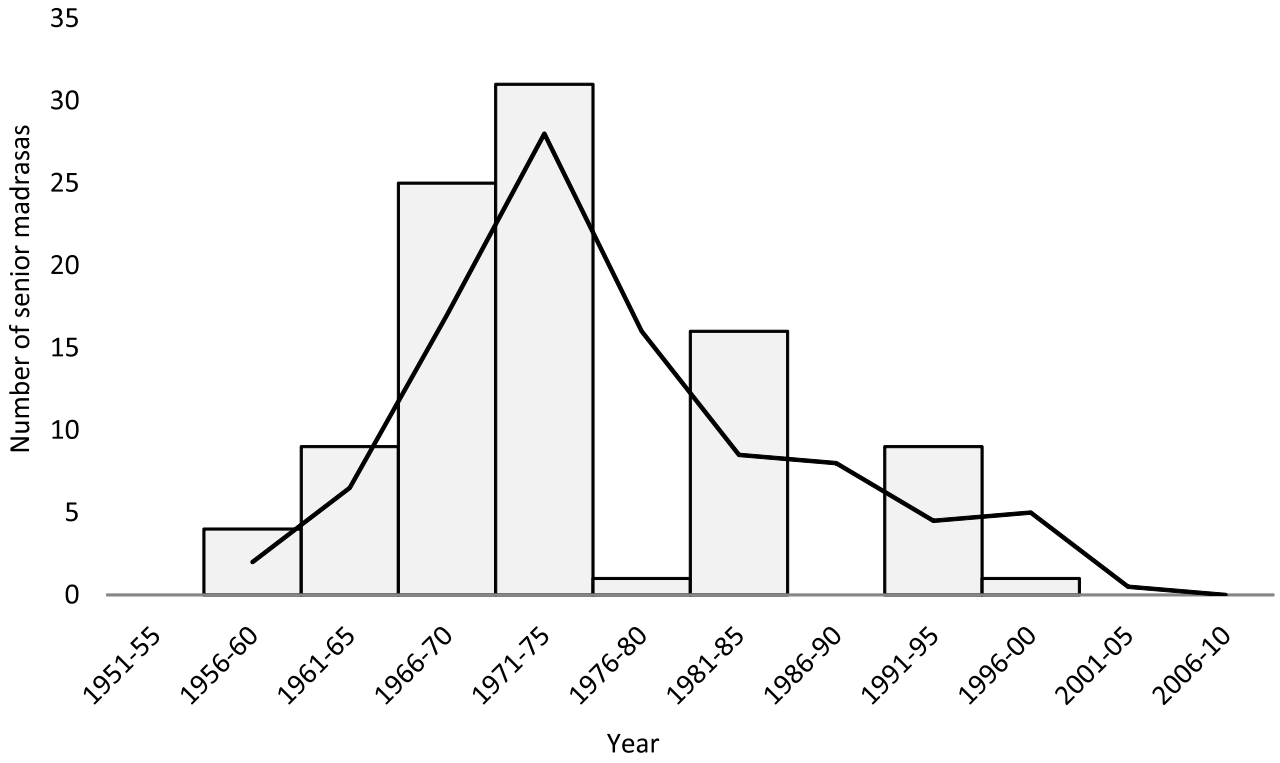


Figure 6.1: Trend of recognition acquisition by senior madrasas.[512]

As Figure 6.1 illustrates, the number of senior madrasas acquiring recognition has declined steadily since the late 1980s. Only ten (out of 102) senior madrasas acquired recognition after the State began encroaching on the senior madrasa's curriculum in 1988. West Bengal's increasingly aggressive reform efforts have failed to attract a single senior madrasa in the fifteen years since 1998. Today's recognition-seeker and fence-sitter are all too well aware that the State is reluctant to accommodate their religious focus, preferring to create a homogeneous landscape of quasi-secular institutions.

[512] This graph is based on data obtained from the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education (WBBME).

In theory, the full recognising potential of the State is equal to the body of madrasas that are concerned with its practices and do not oppose its image.[513] It is clear that the States in West Bengal and Bangladesh have both fallen short of their recognising potentials. Yet, in Bangladesh – where the terms of recognition are relatively agreeable – the State's madrasa modernisation efforts have attracted a considerable number of madrasas that would have preferred sitting on the fence in West Bengal. Indeed 60 percent of Bangladesh's recognition seekers said they would rather join the category of fence-sitters if transported to West Bengal. A corollary of this finding is that West Bengal can prompt a significant proportion of its fence-sitters to accept recognition by taking a leaf from Bangladesh's book of practices. It is possible that the Bangladeshi State might also succeed in recognising some of its own fence-sitters by altering its practices to shift the recognition fence even further rightwards.

The notion of recognition potential may give the impression that "success" increases linearly until the State's modernisation scheme has failed to recognise only those madrasas opposed to the State's image. But the State's "success" is limited by a more fundamental trade-off. In fact, a State can be successful horizontally or vertically, but not both. If the State wants to recognise a larger number of madrasas towards achieving horizontal success, it must accommodate the preferences of many (including those with highly elevated recognition thresholds) and administer a nominal reform programme. If the State instead prioritises significant

[513] A State could increase its potential yet further by adjusting its image, but even this adjustment will likely arise as an ultimate consequence of the temporally prior adjustment of its practices.

modernisation, it must accept that its desire to shape preferences towards vertical success will limit its catchment area to the minority of madrasas willing to accept such "intrusive" measures.

It is easy to misrepresent a programme's success by focusing on one of the latter's components without regard for the other. Observers – captivated by the vertical component of success – routinely laud West Bengal's madrasa modernisation programme. In one of its brochures, the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education conveys the attention such praise has drawn to its efforts: "States such as Tripura, Bihar and Orissa have chosen to adopt the West Bengal model of Madrasah Education. Neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan have also shown interest in the West Bengal model."[514] A more balanced appraisal of success would acknowledge that West Bengal is less worthy of emulation in horizontal terms.

1.2. Organisational arena

How do unrecognised madrasas organise? Do patterns of organisational behaviour vary across contexts?

Chapter four examined the organisational behaviours of unrecognised madrasas in each of our chosen settings. Employing comparative analysis, it found that the

[514] "Uniqueness of West Bengal Model of Madrasah Education," a handout received from Soharab Hossain (president, West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education, Kolkata), interviewed by author, July 20, 2009.

patterns of organisational behaviour vary significantly in moving from Muslim-minority West Bengal to Muslim-majority Bangladesh. In West Bengal, insecurities associated with minority status – reinforced no doubt by the State's aggressive modernisation efforts – have crafted a bipolar khariji landscape in which unrecognised madrasas organise along maslak lines: khariji Barelvis organise under the umbrella of Majlis Ulema-e-Islam, while khariji Deobandis unite under the banner of Rabate-e-Madaris-e-Islamia. These organisations are characterised by contrasting degrees of organisational strength. Barelvis are weakly organised, held together only by a common sense of belonging to the Barelvi school of thought. Rabate conversely lays considerable emphasis on formal procedure, ensuring that its network of Deobandi madrasas remains legible even as it continues to expand. Also contributing to the Deobandi network's organisational glue is the fact that Rabate partially standardises the curricula of its 710 affiliates.

Notwithstanding their varied organisational strengths, Majlis and Rabate are similar in that each represents the only choice available to unrecognised Barelvi/Deobandi madrasas looking to affiliate with a khariji board in West Bengal. A Deobandi madrasa reluctant to affiliate with Rabate (or a Barelvi madrasa unwilling to join Majlis) has only one realistic alternative – to go it alone, avoiding affiliation altogether. To summarise this khariji landscape, one might say that the demands of contesting social control with the State allow societal elements little room to vigorously engage in intra-societal contestation for authority. Intra-societal contestation in West Bengal is thus limited to a tepid inter-maslak tussle between

Barelvis and Deobandis. Any propensity for intra-maslak contestation within these groupings remains latent.

Conversely, the nature of State-society relations in Bangladesh – shaped in a Muslim-majority context with relatively unintrusive recognition efforts – affords qaumi madrasas sufficient confidence and space to contest authority at the intra-societal level. Ironically, however, the qaumi landscape is characterised not only by the relative absence of the State, but also by the absence of non-Deobandi Hanafis (the latter have overwhelmingly accepted recognition). One may wonder how (and with whom) then Bangladesh's Deobandis can possibly contest authority in a landscape they essentially monopolise. Yet, influential Deobandi ulama have allowed their (overlapping) personal ambitions to create fault lines where there were none. Despite their shared ideology, Bangladesh's Deobandi madrasas – some 10,000 in number – are a divided lot with loyalties spread across five rival boards. Among these boards, Befaqul Madaris al Arabia Bangladesh claims to represent Deobandi madrasas across the country, while Ittehad-ul-Madaris, Azad Deeni Iddara-e-Talim Bangladesh, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris, and a fifth board in Gopalganj wield influence over madrasas in Chittagong, Sylhet, North Bengal, and South Bengal, respectively. Occupying a landscape well beyond the state's control, ambitious and prominent clerics have traditionally used these boards to outdo one another in a zero-sum contest for authority. This authority is measured, won, and lost in one standard currency: the number of madrasas affiliated with each qaumi board. As chapter four explained in detail, madrasas have various motivations to

join one qaumi board over another. Though personal ties appear to be the most salient determinant of affiliation choice, other factors – including location, respect for a board's founders, the reputation of larger madrasas (jamias) affiliated with a particular board, and the relative networking opportunities each board provides – also matter.

Expressed in terms of Migdal's State-in-Society approach, our juxtaposition of the unrecognised landscapes in West Bengal and Bangladesh tells us that the organisational behaviours of khariji/qaumi madrasas are defined primarily by the perceived extent to which the State reaches into society.

What do these contrasting organisational behaviours tell us about the manner in which societal entities' identities and interests are assorted and transformed?

Our findings from chapter four echo Donald Horowitz's observation that "the substantial tribal and religious differences" exhibited in southern Sudan give rise to a "fairly stable and coherent southern loyalty" when people from Southern Sudan interact with northerners.[515] While Horowitz witnessed the fusing of subgroups, Bangladesh's qaumi landscape is characterised by the opposite phenomenon: the fission of identities when an external character is absent (or removed from) the scene. When the State is (perceived as) a relative non-participant in the contest for social control, qaumi men are able to redefine the fault lines of this contest.

[515] Horowitz, "Three Dimensions of Ethnic Politics," p. 239.

But it is not enough to simply report the occurrence of fusion or fission. In order to understand how a madrasa reorients its (visible) interests, it is further necessary to explain the mechanisms underlying these transformative processes. Chapter four undertook this exploratory exercise using Brenner's "building blocks." We learn from Brenner that observable transformations of identity occur through a "reassortment" of "building blocks." Brenner tells us little, however, about the relationship between these building blocks. If madrasas' identities are represented by a pyramidal assortment of religious, sub-religious, and non-religious building blocks, how is one block situated with respect to another?

In West Bengal's Muslim-minority context, the perceived presence of an external contender for authority keeps societal entities from constructing this pyramid beyond the core of religious blocks. Though the temptation to pursue sub- and non-religious interests may express itself from time to time, the foundational layer of religious blocks remains fragile and unable to durably carry these supplementary concerns. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the absence of an external contender for authority allows societal entities to bury their sturdy religious core under sub- and extra-religious concerns. Since non-Deobandi Hanafis are overwhelmingly recognised, the layer of sub-religious blocks is also concealed beneath the exposed layer of non-religious "taken" building blocks.

If the perceived extent to which the State reaches into society can alter the organisational behaviours of unrecognised madrasas, this comparative analysis of the evolving pyramids in West Bengal and Bangladesh helps explain the processes underlying such changes.

What is the relationship between one's access to organisational strength (in the organisational arena) and one's recognition decision (as expressed in the educational arena)?

If chapter two told us that an alim's propensity for recognition is guided by his attitude towards the State, chapter four suggested that the variable of organisational strength informs the extent of consistency between his recognition propensity and his recognition decision. In other words, one's expressed decision for or against recognition results from interaction between one's access to the resource of organisational strength and one's attitude towards the State. It is thus reasonable to conclude that Deobandis' pronounced organisational strength explains, in part, why they have enduringly and uniformly succeeded in resisting State control. Conversely, the weak organisational ties characterising West Bengal's Barelvis might partly explain why they have more readily drifted towards recognition.

As chapter four illustrated, however, organisational strength does not always represent a beneficial resource vis-à-vis the recognition decision. While our empirical findings suggest it mostly facilitates the meeting of one's desire to remain

independent from the State and one's ability to do so, there exist (admittedly hypothetical) cases in which the "resource" might compel ulama to act against their preferences. Assuming a Deobandi alim experiences a change of heart (or circumstance) and considers seeking recognition, the strong organisational network in which he remains embedded would make it extremely difficult for him to act on this preference without attracting the disapproval of fellow Deobandis. This is because the alim's access to organisational strength – which requires that khariji/qaumi boards keep a relatively close eye on their affiliates – deprives him of the anonymity needed to freely seek recognition. As a corollary, we can expect Barelvis – with poor access to organisational strength – to act on their wishes in relative anonymity, and without having to pay a significant social cost.

There is a second hypothetical scenario – alluded to in the concluding section of chapter three – in which organisational strength might compel ulama to act contrary to their preferences. Chapter two suggested that two of Bangladesh's opposed madrasas – Madrasa Rashidiya in Chittagong and Jamia Qasimul Uloom in Sylhet – acknowledged that their ability to express opposition to the State was complicated by their affiliation to qaumi boards. Madrasa Rashidiya's principal, Abdul Aziz, claimed he would consider severing ties with his board – Befaqul Madaris – if those at its helm opted for recognition. But Jamia Qasimul Uloom's principal, Abul Kalam Zakaria, instead desired to remain affiliated with his board – Iddara – even if the latter opts to have its affiliates recognised. Without contemplating whether Aziz might ultimately feel compelled to behave similarly, we can conclude that in some

conceivable cases, opposed madrasas may be forced to mute (or revise) their opposition in order to continually enjoy membership in a qaumi board.

We thus find that access to organisational strength can interact with an alim's attitude towards the State to result in a range of possible outcomes. It can facilitate the desire of Deobandis to operate independently, and keep Barelvis intent on avoiding State control from doing so. At the same time, it can (potentially) compel ulama to make recognition decisions (for or against) that do not honestly convey their attitudes towards the State.

How can States practically navigate the organisational patterns on display in West Bengal and Bangladesh towards engaging khariji/qaumi madrasas beyond the contours of their present modernisation schemes?

In the educational arena, this study has examined the State's incursions into society by looking at operative madrasa modernisation programmes. But the Indian and Bangladeshi States have also considered engaging unrecognised madrasas in a more targeted manner – through the creation of khariji/qaumi madrasa boards. These efforts are essentially propelled by the acknowledgment that current modernisation programmes have failed to attract unrecognised madrasas, and by the belief that the latter might respond more positively to separate schemes tailored specifically to their demands and interests. In India, these efforts culminated in the Central Madrasa Board Bill, 2009, a plan that failed to take off as it blatantly disregards the

realities of the khariji landscape. Two fundamental defects make the bill particularly unworkable. First, it incorrectly assumes that all khariji madrasas are characterised by the same interests, neglecting the distinction between fence-sitting and opposed variants of the khariji madrasa. The bill presents itself as "an act to provide for the coordination and standardization of the non-theological education in certain madrasas."[516] Yet, its explicit commitment to effect modernisation "without interfering in any manner in the theological content of madrasa education," can appeal only to fence-sitters. Opposed madrasas are unmoved by such (institutionalised) changes in the State's practices. But a second shortcoming ensures that the bill repels even West Bengal's potentially reconcilable fence-sitters. Chapter four explained that khariji madrasas in West Bengal organise according to their respective maslaks. Despite the demonstrated incapacity and unwillingness of khariji madrasas to cooperate with members of rival maslaks, the bill naively expects ulama to spontaneously shed their stubbornly entrenched differences towards collaboration. This assumption is clearly conveyed in the composition of the proposed board:

> The Board shall [include] (a) A renowned Muslim religious scholar of Deobandi school of theology; (b) A renowned Muslim religious scholar of Barelvi school of theology; (c) A renowned Muslim religious scholar of Ahl-i-Hadith school of theology; (d) A renowned Muslim religious scholar of Imam Shafaee's sect; (e) A renowned Muslim religious scholar of Shia sect; (f) A renowned Muslim religious

[516] Central Madrasa Board Bill, 2009. Available on the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions website (http://www.ncmei.gov.in).

scholar of Dawoodi Bohra sect; (g) A renowned Muslim religious scholar in the field of traditional Madrasa Education.[517]

This bill is thus premised on a mix of terribly unrealistic expectations: that Deobandis will collaborate durably with their Barelvi rivals, that Deobandi and Barelvi Hanafis will agree to work with non-Hanafi representatives of Ahle Hadith, and that each of these Sunni groups will willingly share power with men of Shia allegiance. Even if one assumes – for the sake of argument – that these expectations are met, members will take issue with the "unfair" representation of each community. Barelvis, for instance, argue that Deobandis and Shias are minorities within the country's Muslim population and that the board – by allocating one seat for each sect/maslak – amplifies their voices.[518]

In Bangladesh, governments have similarly tried devising a qaumi board to operate in parallel to the country's Alia system. Khaleda Zia's BNP-led government proposed establishing a qaumi board in August 2006, and Sheikh Hasina's AL government followed suit in 2013 with the proposed introduction of the Qawmi Madrasa Education Authority Bill.[519] But the Bangladeshi State also faces challenges in the creation of a qaumi board – irrespective of its specifics. In fact, there are four conceivable versions of a qaumi bill – each with its associated winners and losers.

[517] Ibid.
[518] This view was expressed by Shahnawaz Varsi, interviewed by author, April 25, 2013.
[519] Supriya Singh, Bangladesh in 2006: Teetering Political Edifice and Democracy, IPCS Special Report, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, No. 35 (2007). Available on the web (http://www.ipcs.org).

The first possible version of the bill subjects qaumi madrasas to the same control that currently applies to the country's Alia madrasas. A central State-run board staffed by bureaucrats will supervise qaumi madasas' educational affairs, standardising their syllabi, publishing their non-religious textbooks, awarding government-recognised degrees to their students, and possibly even appointing (directly or indirectly) their teachers and non-teaching staff. On paper, this option would seem to favour the State, which earns considerable influence over a sector in which it currently has none. In practice, however, this bill can never become a law. As detailed in chapter four, clerics associated with each Deobandi board insist that a qaumi board can and should only be run by qaumi men. Though they want the State to recognise their students' degrees, these clerics are unwilling to offer much in return. This version of the bill will thus cause Deobandis of all stripes to shed their differences and unite against its implementation.

The second version of the bill sees the creation of a central government-recognised but qaumi-run board. This version inevitably favours Befaqul Madaris since it is the only qaumi board with a national presence. In this scenario, madrasas currently affiliated with regional boards will migrate towards Befaqul Madaris in order to benefit from its government-recognised curriculum and degree. By promoting Befaqul Madaris at the expense of its regional rivals, this version of the bill thus eliminates all intra-Deobandi competition. Guided by minimal government input, Befaqul Madaris is free to decide how it runs its madrasas, without any incentive to innovate towards outperforming other Deobandi competitors.

Version three of the bill involves the devolution of powers to government-recognised but qaumi-run boards at the regional level. Though it would involve some level of central oversight, this version allows regional boards to retain influence over madrasas within their respective jurisdictions. This arrangement has a precedent in the mainstream education system where a separate board is responsible for conducting examinations at the intermediate and secondary levels in each of Bangladesh's divisions. Since Befaqul Madaris has a nationwide presence, this version would likely limit its powers to Dhaka division, forcing it to surrender its affiliates in other divisions to its regional counterparts. Befaqul Madaris, with its expansionist agenda, will most certainly veto this bill and deploy its 3,700 affiliates towards non-cooperation.

The fourth version of the bill is most cognisant of the qaumi landscape's realities, and has the best chance of success in the long term. Instead of establishing a qaumi board (run by the State or by qaumi clerics), this version adopts a student-centric approach. The State simply recognises the degree certificates issued by Befaqul Madaris and its regional rivals, on the condition that they introduce secular subjects on their own terms and at a reasonable pace. Since it requires the State to reach out with few conditions, one may dismiss this hands-off option as foolish or naïve. One may further argue that it makes little sense to recognise the degrees of students who are by all accounts "unemployable."

In the long run, however, this version has a compelling upside. Withdrawn from the scene, the State gives rival qaumi boards the confidence and security to compete amongst themselves. Since these boards have few disagreements and differences in the religious domain, one can reasonably expect this competition to play out visibly in the area of secular education. The larger madrasas in each board have already begun differentiating themselves by teaching secular and vocational subjects. With the right incentives and support from the State, these measures could eventually trickle down to the level of their affiliates. Moreover, as the State can no longer be blamed for its reluctance to recognise students' degrees, and employers are under no obligation to hire students just because their degrees are government-recognised, the burden of providing quality education and translating the student's degree into employability shifts to the clerics.

Most importantly, this version is unconcerned with the contest for social control, empowering neither the State, nor societal strongmen. It simply acknowledges that the qaumi landscape's rival constituents have a demonstrated capacity for healthy competition, and exploits the latter towards the benefit of the student.[520]

There are three good reasons to believe this student-centric model may work even in West Bengal: 1) It does not involve the creation of a khariji board, and can therefore target rival constituents (Deobandis and Barelvis) without requiring them

[520] The State will struggle to attract opposed madrasas to its scheme even if it pursues this student-centric model. Yet, the latter has a fair chance of success in bringing fence-sitters (even those exhibiting high thresholds) on board.

to cooperate; 2) Since the State engages khariji madrasas in a relatively sincere and hands-off manner, ulama can freely express their (hitherto) latent tendencies towards inter- and intra-maslak competition, and 3) Khariji entrepreneurs – e.g. Muhammad Yasin (discussed in chapter two) – show that the desire to set oneself apart from fellow ulama through educational innovation already exists in West Bengal.

1.3. Political arena

How (through what mechanisms) do State forces reach into recognised madrasas? What do these mechanisms tell us about the meeting points of State and society?

Chapter five explicated the mechanisms through which the State reaches into madrasas in the political arena. In the case of West Bengal, State representatives reach into recognised madrasas in a top-down manner, by influencing the makeup of their managing committees. This top-down politicisation is of obvious benefit to the politicising party: a party's influence in a given locality receives a visible boost when its "loyalists" succeed in populating the madrasa's managing committee. But madrasa representatives also benefit by encouraging and playing along with the State's efforts to politicise: indeed the madrasa finds it easier to secure the State's goodwill and assistance when parent/guardian representatives on the managing committee are connected to the party in power. Though this top-down mechanism is expressed in many of West Bengal's sarkari madrasas, its implications should not be

overstated. For one, this mechanism fails to induce in madrasa representatives (guardians, teachers, etc.) any enduring allegiance to a particular party. As much as the madrasa's representatives offer a medium through which the incumbent can politicise madrasas, these representatives are equally ready to demonstrate such temporary allegiance to the next incumbent. Since this top-down mechanism is unaccompanied by its lateral counterpart, students also remain insulated from the State's political activities. One may thus conclude that the top-down mechanism in West Bengal allows State and societal elements to benefit mutually without effecting any lasting politicisation beyond the managing committee elections.

In Bangladesh, this top-down mechanism has more pronounced effects since it is accompanied – in madrasas permitting student politics – by a lateral mechanism. If the top-down mechanism allows political parties to influence the makeup of the madrasa's managing committee, the lateral mechanism further allows these State-based entities (through their student wings) to establish influence amongst the madrasa's student body (represented by the STAD – Student and Teacher Affairs Department). Chapter five explained in detail the structural factors dictating whether, and to what effect, the political incumbent can exploit these two mechanisms. In government-run madrasas and non-government GGB-run madrasas, the top-down mechanism is unfailingly controlled by the political party in power. Control of the top-down mechanism in turn allows the incumbent to reserve the lateral mechanism exclusively for its own student wing. This access ensures that the madrasa's STAD is also aligned with the political incumbent. An exclusive focus on

the STAD would tell observers that Alia madrasa students are opportunistic, conveniently revising their political affiliation each time a new party wins power. If one focuses on the individual student, however, it becomes clear that government-run and GGB-run madrasas are characterised by politically heterogeneous student bodies. Though students exhibit loyalty to one particular party, only those favouring the incumbent are free to express this loyalty on the madrasa campus. Others must limit their political activity to areas beyond the madrasa until their party of choice returns to power.

In non-government TGB-run madrasas, both mechanisms, and the STAD, remain aligned with the party favoured by the madrasa's welfare trust. Since these trusts overwhelmingly (if not exclusively) favour JI, TGB-run madrasas are able to deploy the lateral mechanism towards the homogeneous politicisation of their student bodies in favour of Shibir. In the case of TGB-run madrasas, one may conclude that State-based entities (represented by JI loyalists) are permanently embedded in the madrasa. They reach in, and stay in, precluding subsequent entry by non-JI incumbents.

As in West Bengal, the State's efforts to reach into Bangladesh's political arena are subject to a positive-sum equation. The political party exploits the top-down mechanism towards showcasing its influence, and the madrasa in turn seeks to capitalise on its close associations with the incumbent. Where the lateral mechanism is operative, this symbiotic relationship has an added dimension:

political parties mobilise students towards political activism, and students enjoy the benefits resulting from their demonstrated allegiance.

This attention to mechanisms allows us considerable insight into the process of politicisation. While it is common to speak of politicisation in quantitative terms ("the extent" of politicisation) this study has shown that politicisation varies also by virtue of its nature ("the type" of politicisation), means (top-down only or top-down and lateral mechanisms) and implications (homogeneous versus heterogeneous politicisation of the student body). The nature of politicisation may depend on institutional factors (e.g. the presence of a GGB or TGB).

Our focus on underlying mechanisms also sheds light on the meeting points of State and societal actors. Without adequately defining the concept, Migdal generally recommends that we examine State and society's "junctures" by visiting individual arenas of State-society interaction.[521] Notwithstanding the arena's analytical utility, it is not enough to say that State and societal actors meet in so and so arena. It is necessary to zoom in further – within a given arena – to the multiple specific sites of interaction. As revealed in chapter five, even within the narrow context of a single madrasa, State and societal players are simultaneously engaged in more than one meeting. Tweaking our lens to perceive this detail inevitably invites new questions: How do the proceedings of one meeting impact the minutes of another? Does the meeting's venue influence its outcome? When do State and societal actors really

[521] Migdal, State in Society: studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another, p. 129.

meet, and when do they employ intermediaries – e.g. parent/teacher representatives – to interact remotely? More refined analysis is thus required to fully understand the nature of State-society interactions at the micro level. Through chapter five, this study has offered a preliminary step in this direction.

How do madrasa-based political entrepreneurs reach into the State? How do their political efforts relate to their pursuits in the educational and organisational arenas?

Chapter five described the phenomenon whereby khariji/qaumi entrepreneurs reach into the State (or attempt to do so) by establishing political parties. In West Bengal, Siddiqullah Chowdhury has attempted to reach into the State on multiple occasions. He contested Lok Sabha elections in 1994, 1998, and 2009, and state assembly elections in 2006 and 2011. His failure to win any of these electoral campaigns makes it impossible to judge Chowdhury's behaviour as an official representative of the State. Yet, it is possible to analyse his journey from the educational to the political arena. As evidenced by the inclusive manifesto of his current political party (AIUDF) and his efforts to co-opt West Bengal's Barelvis, Chowdhury has had to redefine his persona to appeal to constituents beyond his traditional Deobandi base. The fact that Chowdhury performed best when his political activity was subject to the inclusive manifesto of the Congress party (INC) further attests to the difficulties of honestly representing one's khariji interests in West Bengal's political arena.

Political entrepreneurs in Bangladesh's qaumi sector have found it easier to express their societal interests in the political arena without adjusting or diluting them. Focusing on three qaumi political parties (Islami Oikya Jote, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, and Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish), chapter five showed that qaumi madrasa-based politicians have successfully entered Bangladesh's parliament with manifestos that honestly portray their Islamic credentials and objectives. When their Deobandi platforms have not been welcome in the electoral system, these entrepreneurs have instead expressed their ideology through mass demonstrations. Unlike Siddiqullah Chowdhury in West Bengal, they have refused to increase their limited electoral success by compromising their Deobandi credentials.

At first glance, Chowdhury may seem less sincere than his Bangladeshi counterparts. Yet, a closer look reveals that his behaviour (the moulding of his identity and the broadening of his interests) is compelled by structural factors. Chowdhury has indeed earned support through his activities in the educational and political arenas, but it is too scattered to secure him an electoral victory at the polls and too scant to showcase strength through street noise. He is thus forced to broaden his support base beyond his traditional Deobandi constituency. While a small number of qaumi ulama in Bangladesh have occasionally managed the concentrated support required to enter the State through elections, their more frequent failures have not compelled them to redefine their interests, as a ready fallback option is available. Though these individuals wield influence over a scattered minority of Bangladesh's population, it is a much larger minority than the

one Chowdhury has access to, and certainly reliable enough to deliver bold demonstrations. The real difference between Chowdhury and his Bangladeshi counterparts thus lies in their varying abilities to leverage influence wielded in the educational and organisational realms towards some form of success in the political arena.

Insofar as the transfer of resources in the opposite direction – from the political to the educational and organisational arenas – is concerned, chapter five showed that qaumi men in Bangladesh used their entry into the State complex to represent those interests associated with their pursuits in the organisational arena. As members of the BNP-led four party alliance, IOJ representatives leveraged their status as MPs to promote madrasa policies that would elevate their qaumi board – Befaqul Madaris – over its regional rivals. These efforts demonstrated that they were most eager to promote their status within the Deobandi community, and only secondarily concerned with questions of religion or religious education. It also showed that Bangladesh's qaumi ulama sought to transfer resources associated with their political success to the organisational arena, but that they could only do so indirectly, by lobbying for specific policy changes in the educational arena.

Our exploration of the political arena has shed light on the mechanisms through which ulama reach into the State – what Migdal would call processes of "becoming." As the experiences of khariji/qaumi men reveal, the process of reaching into the State consists of several discernible stages: establishing influence within one's

traditional society, broadening (or possibly narrowing) this social base towards entering the State complex, and pursuing certain (possibly societal) interests once this entry is achieved. Disaggregating the process of "reaching in" also encourages us to think more profoundly about the boundaries between State and society. Migdal tells us that societal men enter the State, but he fails to locate the line between one's attempt to reach in and one's success in doing so. Does a man enter the State only when he succeeds in winning elections? Or is he sufficiently State-based once he begins – like Siddiqullah Chowdhury – to redefine his societal interests according to the demands of the electorate? Offering these open-ended questions, chapter five has sought to complicate the process by which societal elements are perceived to reach into the State.

2. Future research agenda

This final section proposes three ways in which future research projects can build on limitations and rectify weaknesses associated with the present study.

The transportability of our findings to other contexts

A sequel to the present study might seek to establish if, and to what extent, the latter's findings are replicable in other contexts. How do State-madrasa relations – their underlying mechanisms and outcomes – vary when we switch key variables in the educational, organisational, and political arenas? Our juxtaposition of the

madrasa landscapes in West Bengal and Bangladesh showed that similarly crafted societies respond differently to different States (with their attendant images, practices, and penchants for politicisation). Future studies may consider adjusting other aspects of the puzzle. Scholars interested in identifying nuanced variation in State-society relations may consider applying this study's questions to comparable contexts – e.g. Assam, Bihar, and Rajasthan – where States have used similar madrasa boards to modernise their respective madrasa landscapes. Those intent on complicating our findings more dramatically might additionally visit settings – e.g. Kerala and Pakistan – where the State-society dyad is either missing an actor or accompanied by external players.

Kerala offers an interesting case study of the first type, housing a mix of "modern" and "traditional" madrasas even in the absence of a government-run board.[522] Since it flourishes without a prior stimulus from the State, one can reasonably attribute this variation to factors specific to Kerala's Muslim society.[523] The Kerala case also promises to deepen our understanding of madrasas' organisational behaviours. Its madrasa landscape – divided amongst six private boards – exhibits both inter- and intra-maslak fault lines, allowing us to either confirm or complicate the building block model presented in chapter four.[524]

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[522] Sushma Jaireth, Shiraz S., and Khadija Siddiqui, A Study of Madrasas of Kerala: An Overview, National Council for Education Research and Training (2010). Available on the NCERT website (http://www.ncert.nic.in).
[523] These may be shaped, in turn, by the Malabar coast's early and unique encounters with Islam.
[524] The six madrasa boards in Kerala, and their corresponding maslaks, are: Majlissu Taalimul Islami Kerala (Jamaat-e-Islami), Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen Vidhyabhyasa Board (Ahl-e-Hadith), The Council for Islamic Education and Research (Ahl-e-Hadith), Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board (Shafi), Samastha Kerala Sunni Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board (Shafi), and Dakshina Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board (Deobandi). See, Jaireth, Shiraz, and Siddiqui, A Study of Madrasas of Kerala: An Overview.

Pakistan also presents an interesting case study for two reasons. First, the country's civil-military dynamic compels us to further complicate Migdal's disaggregated notion of the State. To the extent that they respond to the State, societal elements in Pakistan must not only separate the State's image and practices, but also distinguish the image and practices of its military from those of its civilian versions. The Pakistani case is potentially complicated by a second factor – the country's intimate role as an American ally. Foreign involvement in the region – first during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequently post-9/11 – makes it difficult to view State-madrasa relations in Pakistan exclusively as the interactions between the State and societal actors. Surely madrasas' attitudes (towards the State) and decisions (for or against reform) are influenced also by the presence and actions of foreign players.

Each specific case is likely to demand a re-drawing of our diagram. That said, this study – by diligently applying Migdal's State-in-Society approach, proposing a recognition-centric typology, and drawing attention to underlying mechanisms – presents a useful template for future work on State-madrasa relations.

The influence of madrasa education's beneficiaries on the decisions of its providers

This study has analysed State-madrasa relations by canvassing the attitudes and behaviours of ulama. In order to deepen this enquiry, future studies could consider looking also at the extent to, and manner in, which individuals in the community –

founders, donors, parents of (prospective) students, etc. – influence the decisions ulama make on behalf of their madrasas. In the case of smaller madrasas – e.g. Rahana Islamiya Madrasa in Chittagong – run by inexperienced ulama with few connections, one can reasonably expect founders and/or donors to keep a close eye on (or possibly even dictate) the activities and decisions of the madrasa's headmaster and teachers. But the influence of the larger community – represented by beneficiaries of madrasa education – also applies to ulama associated with prominent and well-endowed madrasas. As revealed in chapter two, Muhammad Yasin's simultaneous supervision of three very different institutions – a recognised high madrasa, an unrecognised khariji madrasa, and a non-government secular school – is a direct response to the varied demands of Muslim parents in West Bengal's Bardhaman district. It is possible Yasin's fellow ulama are guided equally (albeit differently and less visibly) by the felt needs of their respective communities.

To the extent that it has visited intra-societal relations, this study has focused only on the interactions between rival ulama, and on the relationships between initiators and joiners of various khariji/qaumi boards. Its examination of society-society relations thus remains limited to interactions between ulama (providers of religious education). Future studies may weigh the relative roles ulama and their social beneficiaries play in determining a madrasa's attitudes towards the State, its choice of organisational patron, and its tolerance to political interference. In other words, one could devote a project exclusively to intra-societal relations of another kind –

those between the providers and beneficiaries of madrasa education – and their impact on the State-society relations covered in the present study.

The impact of migration on the ideologies and behaviours of ulama

The phenomenon of migration has an important place in the life of an alim. While all ulama strive to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, many experience migration in other contexts: a large proportion have studied at India's Darul Uloom Deoband, some have worked in Gulf countries, and many (particularly those in Sylhet) have close relatives living in the United Kingdom.[525] A sequel to this study might investigate the influence of these migratory experiences on ulama's ideologies. Can migration for educational and/or professional purposes introduce changes in the ideologies return migrants ultimately transmit in their madrasas? One might pose this question in terms of Levitt's work on "social remittances": do migrating madrasa men contribute to the diffusion of "ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities?"[526]

Comparing West-bound emigration from Morocco and Turkey to Gulf-bound emigration from Egypt, Fargues finds that West-bound migration "from high to low birth-rate countries […] has been accompanied by a fundamental change of attitudes

[525] Amongst the respondents sampled in this study, Muhammad Anwar Hosain Molla of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa and Obaid Ullah Hamzah of Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiah Patiya spent time living in Saudi Arabia. Several respondents in Sylhet had close relatives working in the UK.
[526] Peggy Levitt, "Social Remittances: Migration-driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1998).

regarding marriage and birth, while the opposite holds for Egyptian migration."[527] "Since migrants typically adopt and send back ideas that prevail in host countries," says Fargues, "they are potential agents of the diffusion of demographic modernity to their country of origin."[528] Subjecting ulama to a similar comparative exercise, it should be possible to determine how different host societies (e.g. Saudi Arabia, India, and the United Kingdom) influence the views held by a visiting alim. Might Saudi Arabia's scripturalist traditions rub off on a visiting product of Bangladesh's Alia system?[529] Do Deobandi ulama "take" from their (or their relatives') experiences living in Western societies? And how might the experience of engaging with host States alter one's assessment of the image and practices of the home State?

Answering important questions, each of these proposed sequels will serve to deepen our understanding of madrasas and State-society relations. Yet – much like the concluded study – each is likely to leave its own trail of unknowns, reminding us that we have plenty to learn about the minds of the madrasa.

[527] Philippe Fargues, The Demographic Benefit of International Migration: Hypothesis and Application to Middle Eastern and North African Contexts, Policy Research Working Paper, The World Bank (2006). Available on the web (http://www.worldbank.com).
[528] Ibid.
[529] This question might find superficial evidence in Muhammad Anwar Hosain Molla of Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasa. Having studied in Saudi Arabia, As chapter four revealed, Molla exhibits anomalous views – particularly on pir veneration – with respect to those held by other respondents in the Alia sector.

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