DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC MODEL FOR CURRENT ULAMA'S MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ULAMA IN COMBATING BRITISH COLONIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary ulama often face challenges in uniting diverse Muslim communities around shared goals. This paper seeks to identify the strategic lessons from the past that can enhance the effectiveness of current movements led by ulama. This paper proposes a strategic model for contemporary ulama' movements and political engagement, drawing on historical lessons from the contributions of ulama during British colonization. By analyzing their mobilization strategies, community engagement, and political activism, this study aims to identify effective approaches for current ulama to address contemporary challenges while promoting unity within the Muslim community. The historical context of British colonization in India serves as a critical backdrop for understanding the role of ulama in shaping Muslim identity and political involvement. This paper examines how the ulama effectively organized communities, advocated for rights, and resisted colonial oppression, providing valuable insights for today's ulama engaged in similar movements and political activities.

KEYWORDS

Ulama's Movement, Political Engagement, British Colonization, Strategic Model.

INTRODUCTION

The participation of the Ulama during British colonization of the Indian subcontinent offers important insights on their role in politics and religion. Apart from being religious leaders, these Islamic intellectuals were also political activists aiming to preserve the Muslim identity against policies of British colonialism. Organizing the Muslim people around religious identity, the ulama significantly contributed to combat colonial dominance heart and soul. However, the complexity of identity politics shaped the Indian Ulama's activities even as they sought religious, cultural, and political self-determination. This paper explores the lessons

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acquired from their contributions as well as their relevance in understanding the dynamics of modern politics of the Ulamas of Bangladesh.

The British colonial authorities carefully undermined Muslims' political, social, and religious identity in the Indian subcontinent. The Ulama started several movements aimed to protest British control and question the erasing of Muslim identity. But especially in handling the complex horizon of identity politics, their efforts were sometimes erratic and faced both internal and external challenges. This paper tries to clarify the strategic successes and weaknesses of the ulama's activities against colonial identity politics as well as its applicability to modern Islamic or Muslim political movements.

The Motivation Of The Paper

In the current curriculum of Bangladesh Studies and History of the Emergence of Bangladesh, there is a notable absence in covering the significant contributions of ulama (Islamic scholars) and their role in resisting British colonial rule. While these subjects aim to educate students on the historical evolution of Bangladesh, they fail to adequately explore the key figures and movements led by Islamic scholars who played vital roles in opposing British colonialism and preserving the Muslim identity in Bengal and beyond. This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring the contributions of influential Islamic leaders such as Haji Shariatullah, Dudu Mian, Shah Waliullah, and others who spearheaded movements like the Faraizi Movement and the reformist ideas of Shah Waliullah. These scholars not only resisted British rule but also worked tirelessly to reform Muslim society, challenging both colonial oppression and internal social issues.

Incorporating the contributions of Haji Shariatullah, Dudu Mian, Shah Waliullah, and other Islamic leaders into the curriculum will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the anti-colonial and religious reform movements that shaped the history of Bengal and the Indian subcontinent. These figures played a crucial role in resisting both colonial and social oppression, and their legacy is essential for educating Generation Z about the intertwined struggles of religious, cultural, and political identity in this region. Including their contributions in the subjects of Bangladesh Studies and History of Emergence of Bangladesh will provide students with a comprehensive picture of the liberation struggle and the vital role Islamic scholars played in it.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of identity politics to examines how people and groups coordinate around specific aspects of their identity—such as religion, ethnicity, or nationality—helps to achieve their political aims. This inspiration is essential for understanding their political dynamics. Most importantly, it sheds light on the dynamics of British colonial control in India.

Party politics turned become a necessary instrument for both the native Indians and the British officials. Using a 'divide and rule' strategy, the British created divisions between religious and ethnic groups so maintaining their power. The ulama consequently aimed to boost Muslim identity as a means of resistance against colonial persecution. This approach helped the ulama explain the bigger dynamics of political struggle and cultural preservation (Mamdani, 2018).

At the same time was the British educational system in India serving as a control tool. Seeing Muslims as main rivals, the British East India Company gradually gave Muslims less control over their subcontinent. Therefore, the educational system was deliberately created to discredit Muslim identity. Under this strategy, the Muslim community suffered much and also produced major social, financial, religious, cultural, legal, political, institutional, legal, and legal concerns. Undercutting Islamic education and adopting a

Western-centric curriculum, the British aimed to discredit the foundation of Muslim civilization, therefore enhancing their colonial dominance (Momen et al., 2024).

Their Muslim identification drove the ulama most of the time to reject British colonialism. Activities like the Khilafat movement and the expansion of Islamic educational institutions helped the Muslim populace to maintain their religious and cultural identity in face of colonial persecution (Robinson, 2005). These programs could be considered as examples of identity politics, in which the ulama came together around religious identity to challenge government rule. But the conflict within Muslims between modernists and traditionalists undermined the unity of these activities. Moreover underscoring the limits of identity politics in realizing political objectives is the fall of the Khilafat movement, primarily resulting from internal divisions and outside political events (Zaman, 2007).

On the other hand, the British colonists weakened anti-colonial opposition by segregating Muslims and Hindus, therefore reducing their opposition by means of identity politics. Though their response was founded on religious solidarity, the *ulama's* usually failed to mend the political split generated by colonial policy. Their inability to form bigger alliances with other anti-colonial groups—especially Hindus—added more difficulty to the ulama's operations. Notwithstanding these challenges, the *ulama* founded important institutions like Deoband, which today contribute to sustain Islamic identity by means of continuous impact (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).

The battles of the *ulama* against colonialism in British India offer thorough analysis of the advantages and drawbacks of national politics. Though they were successful in motivating Muslim identity to oppose British authority, internal discord and deliberate identity manipulation by colonial authorities undermined their objectives. Their difficulties emphasize the difficulty of weaponizing identity politics in political opposition. These historical lessons should first be followed among contemporary groups aimed at controlling the junction of religion, politics, and cultural identity in a global society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on the Ulama's political and religious activity occur in articles on their role during British colonizing. Metcalf (Metcalf, 2014) emphasizes the ulama's essential participation in organizations like the Deobandi movement, which tried to protect Islamic education and traditions against colonial attack. Robinson (2003) focuses at the larger Islamic rebirth in South Asia as well as the tactics Muslim academics used to question British rule. Ali (2023) also offers analysis of how Islamic modernity and revivalism interacted with ulama political goals. Still, there is little research on how these movements may be seen through the prism of identity politics, especially with regard to their achievements and constraints.

Under British colonial control, India—especially Bengal—saw notable political, social, and cultural transformation between 1757 and 1947. For Muslims, particularly ulama (Islamic academics) and the larger Muslim community, the British policies and acts throughout this age had left major impact on the later Muslim initiatives.

Political Suppression and Control

After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British East India Company began to take control of Bengal, therefore marginalizing already established Muslim power institutions. Policies the British developed reduce the influence of the ulama in government and education and hence undermine the authority of local Muslim leaders (Ali, 2023). Adoption of English language in administrative and court institutions and British legislation further alienated Muslims, who were sometimes less fluent in English (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).

Economic Displacement

Especially the use of land revenue systems such as the Permanent Settlement, British economic policies unfairly affected Muslim farmers and landowners. Many Muslims lost their land and means of life due to exploitative levies and the incursion of non-Muslim landlords. This economic migration compounded social unrest and Bengal's Muslim elite's collapse (Ray, 1974).

Religious Conflict and Reform in Education

The Western-style educational system the British set excluded traditional Islamic education. As English-medium education gained popularity, the ulama—who kept Islamic knowledge— saw their roles reduced (Purwokerto et al., 2023). Encouragement of English and secular education further alienated Muslim communities, leading to declining madrasas and religious institutions.

Policies In Social And Religious Spheres

Often increasing community tensions between Hindus and Muslims, the British applied a divide and rule approach. Policies that offered some groups administrative responsibilities while excluding others obviously displayed this (Xypolia, 2016). The British also interfered in religious matters, supporting various Islamic interpretations that would meet colonial goals, therefore separating the Muslim population.

Reform Movement Advocacy and Opposition Movement

Reacting to British policy, several reform projects among Muslims in Bengal developed Emphasizing the value of education and flexibility to fit the new political reality, the late 19th-century Aligarh Movement under Sir Syed Ahmed Khan aimed at modernizing Muslim education and advancing social reform sought to harmonize Islamic ideals with modernism (Noreen, 2023).

From 1757 to 1947, British colonial power caused Muslims and the ulama in Bengal much hardship and usually bad effects. Their political power, steady economy, and educational systems were significantly undermined, therefore causing long-lasting disturbances in the social fabric of Muslim populations.

CONTRIBUTION OF ULAMA TO RESIST THE BRITISH CHALLENGES

The marginalization of Muslims and the ulama, Muslim leaders and intellectuals made several deliberate actions to address the challenges provided by British colonial control. These strategies aimed to keep Islamic identity, restore political power, and improve living conditions.

Shah Waliullah and His Reformist Vision

The crucial figure in the fight against British influence was Shah Waliullah of Delhi, who laid the intellectual foundation for Islamic reform in the subcontinent. Shah Waliullah advocated for a return to the original principles of Islam, emphasizing the need for social justice and the unity of the Muslim ummah (community). His works inspired later movements, including the Mujahidin Movement led by Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, which aimed to fight against British colonialism and Hindu domination. Shah Waliullah's teachings called for the revival of Islamic governance and influenced generations of scholars and activists who sought to resist foreign rule and restore Muslim political and religious authority.

Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) was a prominent Islamic scholar and reformer in the Indian subcontinent who is renowned for his efforts to revive and reform Islamic thought and practice. His influence laid the foundation for several later Islamic movements in India, including resistance to British colonial rule.

Early Life and Education
Born in Delhi, Shah Waliullah received his early education in Islamic sciences from his father, Shah Abdur Rahim, the founder of Madrasa Rahimiya. He later traveled to Mecca for advanced studies, where he was influenced by the reformist currents of the time, including the Wahhabi movement, which called for a return to the pure and unadulterated teachings of Islam. Upon returning to India, he became a leading figure in Islamic scholarship.

Reformist Vision
Shah Waliullah's reformist vision was based on the need for social justice, moral revival, and the unity of the Muslim ummah (community). He saw the declining power of the Mughal Empire and the growing influence of foreign powers as a crisis for Muslims in India. His central mission was to renew and purify Islamic practices, which he believed had been corrupted by innovations (bid'ah) and cultural influences that diverged from core Islamic teachings.

His reforms had several key aspects:

Religious Revival
Shah Waliullah emphasized a return to the Quran and Hadith, rejecting superstitious practices and deviations from true Islamic principles. He also translated the Quran into Persian, making it accessible to a wider audience.

Social Justice
He was deeply concerned with the economic inequality and oppression in society. He advocated for just governance based on Islamic principles, calling for the rulers to ensure fairness and protect the rights of the poor and marginalized.

Political Unity
Shah Waliullah believed that the fragmentation of the Muslim political authority in India weakened the community. He called for unity among Muslims, transcending sectarian and regional divisions, to resist external threats and internal decay.

Jihad and Resistance
He also encouraged Muslim rulers and scholars to wage jihad (struggle) against oppressive forces, particularly the Marathas and later the British, who were gaining power in India. He believed that a morally strong and unified Muslim society could resist foreign domination.

Legacy and Impact
Shah Waliullah's ideas laid the intellectual groundwork for later movements, such as the Mujahidin Movement led by Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, which fought against British colonialism and Hindu dominance. His emphasis on religious and political unity, social justice, and resistance to foreign rule inspired many generations of Muslim scholars and activists. His work significantly shaped Islamic thought in the Indian subcontinent, influencing movements like the Deobandi Movement and the Khilafat Movement. Shah Waliullah is also remembered as a visionary who sought to restore Islamic values and unite the Muslim community at a time of great political and social upheaval.

Haji Shariatullah and the Faraizi Movement
Another most significant figures in this context is Haji Shariatullah, the founder of the Faraizi Movement in the early 19th century. Shariatullah, after studying in Mecca, returned to Bengal and launched the Faraizi Movement, which emphasized the importance of adhering strictly to Islamic duties (farāʾiḍ). The movement sought to purify Islamic practices among Bengali Muslims and resist both British exploitation and the influence of Hindu landlords, who often oppressed Muslim peasants. By focusing on religious reforms and resisting non-Islamic practices, the movement not only provided a spiritual revival but also empowered the Muslim peasantry against colonial oppression (Karim, 2024).

Haji Shariatullah (1781–1840) was a prominent Islamic reformer and the founder of the Faraizi Movement in Bengal during the early 19th century. His movement sought to revive and reform Islamic practices among the Muslim peasantry, focusing on adherence to Islamic duties (known as faraid) and challenging both British colonial rule and the influence of Hindu landlords over the Muslim community.

Early Life and Influence
Haji Shariatullah was born in the village of Shanir Akhra, near Dhaka, Bengal. He traveled to Mecca for pilgrimage in his early years and spent nearly 20 years in the Islamic holy cities, where he was influenced by the Wahhabi reformist movement, which sought to purify Islamic practices from local customs and innovations (bid'ah). On his return to Bengal in the early 1800s, he was appalled by the widespread neglect of Islamic practices, the syncretism between Hindu and Muslim traditions, and the oppression of Muslim peasants by Hindu zamindars (landowners) and British authorities.

The Faraizi Movement: A Call for Islamic Reform
In response to these conditions, Haji Shariatullah initiated the Faraizi Movement around 1818, which urged Muslims to strictly adhere to their religious obligations or farāʾiḍ, such as prayer (salat), fasting (sawm), charity (zakat), and pilgrimage (hajj). The movement's name, 'Faraizi,' comes from the Arabic word 'farāʾiḍ,' meaning obligatory duties. It sought to eliminate non-Islamic practices that had crept into local Muslim communities, such as the celebration of religious festivals with Hindu customs, and focused on returning to the pure tenets of Islam.

Haji Shariatullah emphasized that Muslims should abandon superstitions and innovations in religious practices. They should refrain from participating in religious festivals or customs that were influenced by Hindu traditions. They must be aware of their rights and resist oppression, especially by Hindu landlords and the British colonial regime.

Social and Political Dimensions
The Faraizi Movement had a dual religious and political purpose. While it aimed to purify Islamic practices, it also became a form of social resistance against the oppression faced by Bengali Muslims. The Muslim peasantry in Bengal, especially in the Nadia, Faridpur, and Dhaka districts, were heavily exploited by Hindu landlords under the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, which imposed high taxes and led to widespread poverty.

Haji Shariatullah's movement encouraged Muslims to unite and resist this exploitation. He argued that paying taxes to Hindu landlords, particularly on religious grounds, was un-Islamic. This resistance took the form of non-cooperation and organized efforts to boycott Hindu landlords, which had a significant socio-political impact in the region. The movement also resisted the growing influence of Christian missionaries who, with the support of the British, were actively converting Muslims and Hindus.

Expansion Under Dudu Mian
After Haji Shariatullah's death in 1840, his son Dudu Mian (Muhammad Mohsin) continued and expanded the movement. Dudu Mian not only promoted religious reform but also organized the Muslim peasants into a more active resistance force against the British colonial system and the Hindu zamindars. He advocated for land reforms and tax resistance, positioning the Faraizi Movement as a political challenge to both the British and local Hindu landlords.

Dudu Mian, Shariatullah's son, continued his father's work and expanded the Faraizi Movement, organizing peasants to resist unjust taxes and the exploitation of zamindars (landowners). Under Dudu Mian's leadership, the movement took on a more socio-political stance, directly challenging British authorities and local landlords, thus becoming a critical

part of the larger anti-colonial struggle in Bengal. The contributions of both Haji Shariatullah and Dudu Mian are pivotal to understanding the early resistance movements in Bengal that combined religious reform with socio-political activism.

Under Dudu Mian, the movement became more militant, focusing on the socio-economic emancipation of the oppressed Muslim peasantry. He established a structured organization to enforce the principles of the Faraizi Movement and led several confrontations with British authorities and Hindu landlords. Dudu Mian's leadership gave the movement a broader reach, turning it into a mass peasant movement.

Opposition and Repression

Both the British authorities and the Hindu zamindars viewed the Faraizi Movement as a threat. The British were concerned about its growing influence among the Muslim peasantry, which led to increased surveillance and repression of Faraizi leaders. Haji Shariatullah and Dudu Mian were repeatedly targeted by the authorities, facing imprisonment and property confiscation.

The movement, however, succeeded in raising political awareness among Bengali Muslims and reinforcing their Islamic identity. It laid the groundwork for later political movements in Bengal, including the Muslim League and the demand for a separate Muslim state, which eventually led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

Legacy of Faraizi Movement

The Faraizi Movement is considered one of the earliest Islamic reform movements in Bengal, with its legacy influencing subsequent anti-colonial and religious movements in the region. Haji Shariatullah is remembered for his efforts to combine religious purification with socio-political resistance, empowering the Muslim peasantry to resist oppression and stand up for their rights.

His movement also helped to preserve Islamic identity in a region where Muslims were under cultural and economic pressure from both British colonial rulers and the dominant Hindu landlords. The Faraizi Movement played a crucial role in shaping the consciousness of Bengali Muslims, who later became instrumental in the struggle for independence from British rule.

Both Haji Shariatullah and the Faraizi Movement were pivotal in the religious and political awakening of Bengal's Muslim population. The movement not only revived Islamic practices but also sowed the seeds of resistance against colonial and feudal exploitation, marking a significant chapter in the history of Bengal's journey towards independence.

THE ROLE OF OTHER ULAMA IN BENGAL'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE

These movements, alongside the Deoband Movement and the Khilafat Movement, demonstrate the crucial role that Islamic scholars and activists played in resisting British colonialism in India and Bengal. The Deobandi Movement, established in 1867, aimed to preserve Islamic knowledge through traditional madrasas while resisting Western influences. Similarly, the Khilafat Movement, led by figures like Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, mobilized Muslims across the subcontinent to protect the Ottoman Caliphate and oppose British imperialism. Although the movement ultimately failed, it created lasting political consciousness among Indian Muslims.

Movements in Religious Reform and Education

The Deobandi movement (founded in 1866) was a significant attempt to preserve Islamic knowledge by means of madrassas therefore improving traditional Islamic education. This movement aimed to protect Muslims against Christian missionary activities and Western influences (Metcalf, 2014). Similarly, the Aligarh Movement established in 1875 focused on modern, English-based education to allow Muslims compete in the colonial government while

maintaining their Islamic identity. Established in 1894, the Nadwatul Ulama combined traditional Islamic education with modern disciplines to create a midway ground between religious purity and assimilation into modern society (Robinson, 1998).

The Evolution Of Muslim Political Organizations
Muslims also demand political representation. Originally founded in 1906, the All India Muslim League aimed to protect Muslim interests and so backed the creation of Pakistan under Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Originally developed in 1919, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind worked with the Indian National Congress to advance Hindu-Muslim cooperation in a secular, independent India (Zaman, 2007).

Involvement in the Anti-Colonial Movement
Rising to defend the Ottoman Caliphate, the Khilafat Movement (1919) brought Muslims opposing British policy together. Though its principal goal fell short, it increased political awareness among Indian Muslims and increased their participation in anti-colonial movements (Robinson, 2005). Many ulama also supported Gandhi's non-cooperative campaign meant for a boycott of British establishments (Metcalf, 2014).

Restitution in Islam and Social Reforms
Emphasizing moral and spiritual reform, groups like Ahl-i-Hadiths and Tablighi Jamaat drove Muslims back toward Islamic values. Though politically neutral, these projects considerably enhanced the religious identity of the Muslim minority during colonial control (Zaman, 2007).

Intellectual and Literary Movements
Allama Iqbal and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were Islamic modernists hoping to link Islam with modernity. Maintaining Islamic ideals, they emphasized the need for contemporary science and technology (Ali, 2023). Intellectuals also spread ideas of reform and political opposition via literature, newspapers, and journals, hence strengthening a feeling of Islamic identity (Robinson, 2003).

Legal and Institutional Development
Most importantly to finance social welfare and religious education, Muslim leaders fought to preserve Islamic personal law and waqf (charitable endowments). In the face of British colonial control, these institutions helped the community to keep its autonomy (Hardy, 1972).

By means of educational reforms, political organization, social movements, and participation in anti-colonial operations, Muslims and ulama in India aimed to overcome the challenges provided by British rule. These strategies will help to preserve Islamic identity and prepare the society for a post-colonial future.

ISLAMIC REVIVALISM: STRATEGIC DIFFICULTIES AND PAST AND PRESENT SUCCESS AND FAILURE
Both historical and modern Islamic revivalist movements have faced certain challenges that have led to their rise and collapse. Usually aiming at renewing Islamic principles inside Muslim countries and reacting to modernization or external threats, the Ulama have battled to be long-lasting successful. Analyzing these movements closely exposes both internal and external strategy flaws as well as an insufficient basis for mass mobilization preparation.

Failures in the Past
Islamic revivalist organizations as the Deobandi and Khilafat movements came against tremendous outside pressure. Initiated in the early 20th century, the Khilafat Movement aimed to defend the Ottoman Caliphate but British opposition and geopolitical issues primarily led to its collapse. Great Muslim participation nonetheless, the campaign lacked logical goals and cohesive leadership, which finally disappointed people (Robinson, 2005). Though the Deobandi movement was effective in preserving Islamic education, its focus on religious

revival over political strategy prevented it from meaningfully altering the greater political context of British India (Metcalf, 2014).

Modern Age Failures

Modern time Islamic revivalist movements as Salafist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood have also fought to maintain momentum. One of the reasons behind their downfall is their inability to fit the complexity of modern politics. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has alternated between opposing authoritarian governments and pursuing political power by democratic means, therefore generating both internal conflict and outside persecution (Browers, 2009). Lack of a coherent vision and strategic plan results in these movements often failing to appropriately negotiate the political terrain.

Strategic Motives for Failure

One obvious similarity between previous and contemporary movements are deliberate miscalculations of both. Both historical and modern Islamic revivalist groups occasionally not prepared for mass engagement**.** One of the most significant objections of Islamic revivalist groups is their tendency to inspire large portions of the people without appropriate preparation. Leaders can urge widespread participation in rallies, revolutions, or social movements even without first ensuring their followers are fully equipped in terms of education, political awareness, or strategic purposes (Zaman, 2007). This has led to disorderly activity easily discouraged by government officials or disintegrates in absence of guidance. Not preparing their base not only lowers the movement's effectiveness but also fuels burnout and discontent among its supporters.

overlook the importance of establishing internal cohesion and acquiring outside alliances before attempting broad mobilization. Overwhelming mass engagement without sufficient political strategy or organizational readiness has led to their collapse (Zaman, 2007). Many times, the ulama and their leaders choose ideological purity and theological disputes over the pragmatic features of government and realism.

The Continuity of Ulama in Strategic Turns or Revivalism

Most importantly, ulama either have modified their strategy or keep applying the same revivalist methods. As seen from places like Deoband and Al-Azhar, the ulama have in many aspects fulfilled their historic role as defenders of Islamic knowledge. Still, some businesses have changed on purpose. For example, whereas Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind in the past focused on non-cooperation with colonial authorities, current Islamic movements as the Tablighi Jamaat have adopted a more apolitical position, prioritizing grassroots religious renewal without direct political involvement (Metcalf, 2014). This shift can be seen as an admission of the flaws in prior programs meant for political domination without appropriate preparedness.

Problems, inside as well as outside

Both currently and historically, the internal and external challenges Islamic revivalism encounters also greatly help to explain its failure. Within movements, factionalism and ideological rigidity can lead to their incapacity to adapt to new political circumstances (Browers, 2009). Externally, considerable obstacles arise from the animosity of state apparatues against any form of Islamic political comeback as well as from the policies of world powers. Many revivalist movements, for example, have been targeted by totalitarian governments, therefore preventing their development of the political basis needed to carry out the goal of Ulama (Robinson, 1998). Mostly from strategic miscalculations and a lack of internal unity, past and present Islamic revivalist movements have failed. Ulama still help to revive the spirit of Islam, but their strategies have evolved to match political reality; others have chosen apolitical grassroots involvement. Still, these movements often inspire plenty of people without appropriate preparation, which leads to their demise. Islamic revivalists who

aspire to be successful in the future have to develop more logical and coherent strategies while handling both internal disintegration and external forces.

REASONS FOR THE POLITICAL FAILING OF THE ULAMA

Both internal and foreign reasons have been blamed for the political failure of the ulama—Islamic scholars—in the Indian subcontinent. Scholars have examined this failing in terms of political, educational, and ideological constraints.

Lack of Unity and Coordination

The ulama could not present a united political front and were often split along sectarian lines—e.g., Sunni-Shia, Deobandi-Barelvi. Their own conflicts undermined their combined political might and impact. Although some ulama opposed British colonial control, others were more concerned in safeguarding Islamic customs and education, hence generating different political agendas.

Focus on Religious Reform over Politics

Many ulama gave religious reform top importance, above political involvement. Rather than direct political opposition to colonialism, movements as the Deobandi and Barelvi schools concentrated on cleansing religious rituals, Islamic education, and moral changes. Ulama typically failed to actively participate in the nationalist movements that arose in the 19th and 20th centuries since their emphasis on religious purity over political activity.

Absence of Modern Education and Political Awareness

The ulama were mainly cut off from the British-introduced modern political and administrative structures. Their conventional education at religious madrassas lacked the knowledge or tools needed to negotiate the shifting political terrain, which was progressively shaped by Western conceptions of democracy, law, and government. Many Muslim elites left the ulama as the British colonial administration promoted Western-style education, creating a gulf between political and religious authority.

Suppression and Persecution by the British

Following the 1857 Rebellion—also known as the Indian Mutiny—which many ulama backed as a jihad against British rule—the British actively persecuted the ulama. Key religious leaders were executed, banished, or imprisoned, so reducing their political organizing capacity. Further erasing the financial and institutional influence of the ulama, the British also seized endowments (waqf) supporting religious institutions.

Failure to Adapt to Modern Political Realities

Many ulama lacked a complete awareness of the shifting political reality of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in view of the emergence of nationalism and the Indian National Congress (INC). Their orthodox posture often turned them off from the more general anti-colonial movement. Additionally cautious of working with non-Muslim political groups like the INC, which reduced their political influence.

Division of the Idea of Nationalism

The ulama disagreed over nationalism. While some ulama—such as those connected to the Deobandi movement—regardless of religion—favored the notion of a united, independent India—others, like the leaders of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), backed a separate Muslim state, hence producing Pakistan. Their general political efficacy suffered from this ideological divide since they could not show a consistent reaction to the colonial rule.

Can we Accept Political Failure of Ulama

Despite challenges the Ulama achieved a lot of success which was not for immediate gain rather for long lasting change. Whatever they achieved, could do it with limited resources though remained thankless even in the writings.

The thesis of political failure concerning the ulama in the Indian subcontinent is based on their incapacity to properly move from traditional religious authority to modern political authority. One can conceive this failure as follows:The ulama were cut off from current political, social, and economic reality. Their conventional schooling did not equip them for involvement in a political system grounded in secular, Western leadership. The British colonial government relentlessly suppressed Islamic establishments that had supported the ulama for ages. The British undermined the ulama's institutional foundation by seizing endowments and regulating Islamic education, therefore impeding their political mobilization ability.

Deep religious disagreements among the ulama prevented them from creating a unified political group. Their combined political influence was reduced by this fragmentation, which also made them useless in opposing colonial control or launching nationalist movements. The ulama were mainly barred from positions of influence in the colonial government since they insisted on preserving traditional Islamic education while rejecting the contemporary, secular educational systems. They thus lacked influence on important political choices impacting mass Muslims.

CHALLENGES FACED BY BANGLADESHI *ULAMA* IN VARIOUS MODERN MOVEMENTS

Historically, Bangladesh's ulama—Islamic intellectuals—have been very important in social, political, and religious movements. But in the present period, individuals encounter various obstacles that restrict their impact and capacity to lead or engage actively in movements. These difficulties can be classified as internal, external, and strategic ones, which have impacted their potential to solve modern society issues and remain relevant in a world going more globalized.

Internal fragmentation and ideological divisions

Internal fragmentation is one of the main issues ulama from Bangladesh deal with. Within the Islamic tradition, several schools of thought—Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-i-Hadiths, Tablighi Jamaat—often vie for dominance and authority. These ideological disagreements cause fractures among the ulama community, therefore impairing their collective capacity to handle more general society problems (Zaman, 2007). For instance, some ulama support contemporary educational changes while others concentrate on traditional religious education and rites. All ulama find it challenging to present a coherent front in social or political activities due to this lack of unity.

Political marginalization and co-optation

For the ulama, Bangladesh's political scene has also presented a great difficulty. Political parties have traditionally either excluded or appropriated ulama for their own benefit. Particularly since independence in 1971, secularism's emergence in Bangladeshi politics has constrained ulama's direct political influence. Although some ulama-led groups, like Jamaat-e-Islami, have engaged in politics. Some Ulama have been further excluded in the larger political debate by their identification with conservative or extremist components.

Loss of Relevance in Globalized Contexts

The ulama of Bangladesh today likewise fight to remain relevant in a world fast globalizing. Younger generations are turning to secular education and modern professions more and more, therefore diminishing the power of conventional religious institutions. Rising worldwide Islamic ideologies like Salafism or Islamism have also generated rivalry among Muslims in Bangladesh for influence. The ulama's conventional emphasis on local or regional religious matters sometimes restricts their appeal to a more internationally conscious and linked Muslim community (Wohab, 2023).

Inadequate Engagement with Contemporary Issues
The ulama's poor interaction with modern socio-economic and political concerns is another crucial issue. Although many ulama neglect urgent modern issues as poverty, corruption, injustice, or climate change, they are regarded as stewards of religious knowledge. Their unwillingness to include contemporary knowledge, technology, and multidisciplinary techniques into their perspective on Islam makes it challenging for them to present answers that appeal to Muslims of today. This distance from daily challenges lessens their impact in social movements (Metcalf, 2014).

Extremism and radicalization
Particularly in rural areas, a small portion of Bangladeshi ulama has been connected to radicalization and extremism. These components can center on the demand of rigid interpretations of Islamic law and resistance to supposed Western influence. Such inclinations have led to conflicts throughout the larger Islamic community in Bangladesh since more extremist elements can drown out moderate and progressive voices inside Islam. This link with extremism has resulted in more government and security agency monitoring, hence aggravating the ulama's position in contemporary movements (Talukder, 2024).

Leading or joining modern movements presents many difficulties for Bangladesh's ulama. Their impact has been restricted by internal conflicts, political marginalization, and a lack of interaction with modern concerns. Although some ulama have changed by engaging in charity work or teaching, their general influence in Bangladeshi society is still limited by both internal and outside events. The ulama have to interact more with modern socio-economic issues, heal ideological differences, and redefine their role in a globalized world if they are to participate more actively in solving the problems of modern Bangladesh.

Evaluation of Successes and Failures of the Movements of Ulama During British Colonization
From 1757 to 1947, British colonization of India fundamentally changed the political, social, and religious scene of the Indian subcontinent. Responding to British imperialism, Muslim leaders and ulama—Islamic scholars—combined opposition, reform, and adaptation. Several important Islamic movements and political challenges aiming at preserving Muslim identity, safeguarding of religious institutions, and opposition to British rule emerged during the colonial era With an eye toward their social, political, and theological challenges to British colonialism, this literature review investigates the activities of Muslim leaders and ulama. It evaluates also the achievements and shortcomings of these movements as well as their long-lasting influence on the Indian subcontinent.

Political Struggles and Movements Against British Rule
Muslim political opposition to British colonization manifested numerous ways. Notable Muslim leaders participated in military conflicts and upheavals including the First War of Independence, sometimes known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857, early in the colonial era. Muslim unhappiness over British intervention in religious rituals and their loss of political power following the fall of the Mughal Empire drove some of the uprising (Metcalf, 2014). Though their attempts were finally fruitless, leading to the further entrenchment of British rule, leaders like Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor, became iconic figures in the opposition.

The Muslim community become more ordered in their political activities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Notable people like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan turned the emphasis from military opposition to political discussion and reform of education. Emphasizing modern education for Muslims to equip them for involvement in colonial government, Sir Syed started the Aligarh Movement. Though some ulama attacked him for his pro-British posture, Sir Syed felt that Muslim survival in the new political system

depended on working with the British (Robinson, 2003). His work resulted in the founding of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, subsequently Aligarh Muslim University, which developed as a hub for Muslim political and intellectual life

Social and Religious Movements Led by *Ulama*

Resisting British cultural and religious influence and safeguarding Islamic identity, the ulama were crucial players. For many Islamic academics, the British directly threatened Islamic law, education, and customs. In reaction, they started many religious initiatives meant to revive Islamic customs and guard Muslim culture from Westernization.

Founded in the town of Deoband in present-day Uttar Pradesh in 1867, the Deobandi movement was among the most important of these ones. Opposing Western cultural influence and British policy, the Deobandis underlined the value of Islamic education and obedience to sharia, Islamic law. Training generations of Islamic academics who would continue to impact Islamic thought on the subcontinent, the Darul Uloom Deoband seminary evolved as the intellectual center of this movement (Metcalf, 2014). Reversing Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's modernist approach, the Deobandi movement aimed to restore a purer version of Islam free from British and Western influence.

Aiming to guard the Ottoman Caliphate from British intrusion, another important Islamic organization was the Khilafat organization (1919–1924). Prominent Islamic academics and political leaders like Maulana Muhammad Ali and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali oversaw the movement. Though the movement finally collapsed when the Ottoman Empire was split, the Khilafat leaders protested British policies in alliance with Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (Talbot & Minault, 1983). Though it failed, the Khilafat Movement proved the possibility for Muslim unity in political conflicts and helped create political alliances between Muslims and Hindus at least momentarily.

Social and Educational Reforms

To challenge British cultural dominance, Muslim officials and ulama also concentrated on social and educational reform. The Aligarh Movement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was instructive as much as political. His focus on contemporary education sought to enable Muslims to participate in colonial government and business. Other educational changes motivated by the Aligarh model included the founding of Muslim colleges and universities all throughout India (Robinson, 2003).

Simultaneously, Darul Uloom Deoband and other madrasas spread over the subcontinent helped to sustain traditional Islamic education. These universities concentrated on religious instruction, turning out generations of Islamic academics who would still impact Muslim opinion and opposition to British policies. But the conflict between modernists like Sir Syed and traditionalists like the Deobandis exposed the great differences among Muslims about the appropriate strategy to address British colonialism (Metcalf, 2014).

Successes and Failures

Muslim leaders and ulama's political, social, and religious challenges during British colonizing received different degrees of success. Preserving Islamic identity against British cultural and religious influence was one of the main achievements. Muslim intellectual and political philosophy was greatly shaped by institutions such as Aligarh Muslim University and Darul Uloom Deoband, therefore guaranteeing that Islamic traditions were not totally absorbed by Westernization (Talbot & Minault, 1983).

Politically, though, ulama and Muslim leaders had many challenges. The limits of Muslim political unity were shown by the fall-off of the Khilafat Movement and the incapacity of Muslim leaders to keep a long-term political alliance with the Indian National Congress. For Muslim political goals, the ultimate division of India in 1947—which resulted in the

founding of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state—was both successful and unsuccessful. While it guaranteed Muslims a country, it also led to great violence, displacement, and the official separation of the Indian subcontinent along religious lines (Zaman, 2007).

Historical Evaluation

Examining the achievements and shortcomings of Muslim leaders and ulama under British colonization reveals how complexly they sought to oppose British control and preserve Muslim identity. On the one hand, they established lifelong learning institutes and helped to preserve Islamic customs. Conversely, their political activities were sometimes scattered, with internal conflicts between modernists and traditionalists restricting their capacity to present a cohesive front.

The collapse of movements such as the Khilafat Movement emphasizes the challenges Muslim leaders encountered in inspiring the larger Muslim populace for political objectives. Furthermore, the final split of India highlighted the great cost of religious separation and the limits of identity politics in reaching long-term political stability, even as Muslims gained political autonomy.

Successes and setbacks abound in the work of Muslim leaders and ulama during British colonizing. Although they were greatly important in maintaining Islamic identity and opposing Westernization, internal strife and outside pressure frequently hampered their political efforts. Particularly in terms of the difficulties in juggling religious identification with political goals, the lessons acquired from their experiences still ring true in modern Muslim political parties.

CONCLUSION

The historical accounts of Muslim leaders and ulama throughout British colonialism offer important new perspectives on the processes of identity politics and how it affects modern Islamic movements. The historical challenges of these intellectuals expose how the mobilization of Islamic identity functioned as a double-edged sword occasionally aggravating internal conflicts within the Muslim community as well as an instrument for resistance against colonial oppression. Observed, the ulama's attempts to unite Muslims around a shared identity via movements like the Khilafat emphasized the possibility for group action but also underlined the difficulties presented by different ideological points of view and political agendas (Zaman, 2007). Applying the ideas gained from past movements to current settings, modern Islamic academics and leaders have to accept a more complex view of identity politics. To show a united front on common political agendas, they should give coalition building across religious and ideological divisions inside the Muslim community a top priority. As Robinson (2003) underlines, properly addressing modern issues such as cultural imperialism and socio-political marginalization depends on the capacity to clearly provide a vision that appeals to different Muslim communities.

Moreover, modern Islamic leaders can benefit from leveraging educational reforms and community engagement to foster political awareness and activism. Just as the *Deobandi* and *Aligarh* movements focused on education as a means of empowerment, today's scholars should emphasize modern educational initiatives that promote critical thinking, civic responsibility, and social justice among Muslim youth (Metcalf, 2014). By prioritizing inclusive dialogue and collaboration, they can effectively navigate the complexities of identity politics, ultimately leading to greater success in achieving their political demands and advancing their agendas.

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