

**Title—Colonialism and the Call to Jihad in British India**  
**Author—Tariq Hasan**  
**Year—2015**

Categories: Islam, Colonialism, Religion, British Empire

Place: (Post)Colonial India

Time: 1750-2000

Argument Synopsis:

Hasan attempts to chronicle the inevitable confrontation between British imperialism and the Muslim clergy in nineteenth century India. He highlights the importance of these accounts by noting their continued relevance today because they mirror the larger story of imperialism and its victims. The colonial era continues to cast its shadow over the modern world, which Hasan takes time detailing in both the introduction and conclusion. The era of independence in India revealed that India's historiography had been deliberately tampered with to serve the political interests of the British rulers. He argues that nineteenth century British historians had divided Indian history into Hindu and Muslim periods, laying the foundation for the two-nation theory while also aiding in the British's hold on power. While Hasan agrees that it is understandable that prejudiced colonial historians would tamper with history, he cannot explain the failure of professional historians in the modern period in giving the Muslim clergy their due in the fight against colonialism. Hasan aims to deal with the 1857 rebellion, but specifically the role of the Muslim clergy in the clash against nineteenth century colonialism, which has not been as extensively covered by historians as the event in general. He covers the roots of the conflict beginning with the Mohammadia movement, known by the British as the Wahhabi movement, through the subsequent war in the North-West frontier province. His narrative includes the entire trajectory of the clash between the colonial West and radical Islam and seeks to distinguish between radical Islam and the militant strain of twentieth century Islam.

Hasan examines the role of Muslim clergy, or ulema, in India's freedom struggle through seven main protagonists. These are: nineteenth-century cleric Syed Ahmad Bareilvi, mystic revolutionary Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, Maulana Mahmud Al-Hasan, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Maulana Barkatullah, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, and Hindu prince Raja Mahendra Pratap. He reveals that the Hindu prince had a close association with three of the above clerics transcending all commonly accepted barriers of religion and interpretations of jihad.

Hasan's book is not just focused on the colonial period and details the continuation of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and violence in independent India. He brings in his own personal life story and memoirs of growing up the period immediately after independence. He identifies two events of Hindu-Muslim in the postcolonial period, the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1981 and the 2002 riots in Gujarat and compares the differences in the attempts to heal after these events. He argues that there was no attempt to heal after 2002 which had led to the Indian Muslim community feeling increasingly isolated and persecuted in a state ruled by an ostensibly secular government.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- The roots of the Deobandi anti-imperialist movement (a revivalist movement focused on the Hadiths) was politically anti-West as opposed to anti-Christian
- The Muslim clergy played a distinct and important role in the 1857 rebellion
- British historians have intentionally tampered with history to underplay and blur the role played by the Muslim clergy in shaping Indian nationalism