

Abstract

Binding Deoband and the Muslim League: Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Muslim Politics in Late Colonial India

One of the important assumptions underpinning Partition historiography is that the ulama – especially the Deobandi ulama- were steadfast in their opposition to the idea of Pakistan. Given the hostility of these ulama towards the ML, it is further claimed that a few ulama who finally did come over to the side of the Muslim League did so rather late in the day when Pakistan was almost in the bag. This paper challenges both these assumptions. In the first place it charts a longer engagement between the two groups by focusing on the developing relationship between Ashraf Ali Thanawi and the ML elites in the aftermath of Congress victories in the 1937 elections. It presaged a split among the Deobandi ulama and the Jamiatul Ulama –i-Hind by the mid-1940s, and also explains the close relationship between the Deobandi ulama and ML elites in Pakistan's early days.