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POLITICO-RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS OF SHAH WALIULLAH (1703-1762) AND ABUL AALA MAUDUDI (1903-1979): A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Author 1:	SYED RAFAQAT HUSSAIN, PhD Scholar, Department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.
Corresponding & Author 2:	DR. MAZHER HUSSAIN, Associate Professor, Department of History, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: dr.mazher@iub.edu.pk

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Abstract

The research in hand holds significant importance for several reasons because both Shah Waliullah and Abul Aala Maududi were influential Islamic thinkers whose ideas continue to shape political discourse in Muslim-majority countries. Studying and comparing their political thought provides insights into the development of political scholarship in the South Asian context. Envisioning the multifarious acumen of these scholars offers a deep understanding of the historical context in which they lived. Shah Waliullah's ideas emerged during the heyday of Muslim rule, later captured by the British colonizers. Nevertheless, Maududi's thoughts were influential during the decolonisation and the partition of India. Understanding their ideas in these contexts enriches studying Indian and Islamic history. Both scholars had a profound impact on political and social movements. Shah Waliullah's ideas influenced reformist movements within the Indian Muslim community, while Maududi's thoughts laid the foundation for Islamist movements, not only in India but also in other parts of the Muslim world, understanding their influence helps in comprehending the trajectory of political movements in the region. Studying their political thought provides insights into how these scholars perceived relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. The methodology employed here helps in establishing a discourse that the works of both personalities lead to the establishment of a cosmopolitan Islamic state in the light of Islamic injunctions.

Key Words: Islam, Subcontinent, Empire, Caliphate, Political

Introduction

The ideas of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi continue to be relevant in contemporary discussions about the role of Islam in politics. Scholars, policymakers, and researchers can learn from the nuances of their thoughts to address current challenges related to governance, political ideology, and interfaith relations. The topic fosters academic inquiry and encourages scholars to delve deeper into the political philosophies of these thinkers. (Hafiz, Zaneera, 2023), Comparative analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of their similarities, differences, and the broader intellectual traditions they represent. There are exhaustive studies on the political thought of Islamic scholars of the classical period, especially on Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Mawardi, etc. Shah Waliullah Dehlavi is a well-known Islamic scholar of India. His intellectual contribution and successful attempts at reformation brought him great recognition in academic circles. His contribution to Islamic political thought is coherent, comprehensive, and valuable. Abul Aala Maududi is another well-known Indian scholar who presented a coherent system of Islamic political thought relevant to his times. (Rizvi, 1980) Both, as the great contributors to Islamic political thought in the Indian Subcontinent, belonged to different periods, but their major concern was reforming the prevalent conditions of their society since their thought was oriented according to traditional sources of Islam, and reason, it probably shares several similarities, hence a comparative study is relevant.

Significance of the Study

The study aims to delve into the ideologies propagated by these thinkers, exploring their historical contexts, core principles, and lasting influences on Indian politics. To comprehend the political ideologies of Shah Waliullah and Abul Aala Maududi, it is imperative to understand the historical context in which they lived and worked. This research offers

valuable insights into the diverse ideological currents that have shaped India's political landscape. While rooted in Islamic principles, their ideas reflect nuanced approaches to governance, social justice, and religio-political interaction. As India navigates different complexities on pluralistic social lines, understanding these historical perspectives becomes crucial. (Bhat, 1996) The enduring legacy of Waliullah and Maududi serves as a reminder of the intricate interplay between religious thought and political ideologies in shaping the destiny of nations, making their study indispensable for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in the multifaceted tapestry of Indian politics. (Enayat, 2001) For students of political science, history, religious studies, and Middle Eastern studies, this topic provides a valuable case study for understanding the intersection of religion and politics, particularly in a diverse and complex society like India and Pakistan. (Gilani, 1984) In summary, a comparative study of Shah Waliullah and Abul Aala Maududi's political thought offers insights into Islamic political philosophy, historical contexts, interfaith relations, and contemporary political challenges, making it a topic of significant scholarly and practical importance.

Scope of the Study

First of all, this study analyzes the progression of religio-political contemplation in India, to examine whether it has evolved through the course of Muslim history by updating itself with the changing context. There is no precise structure for the Islamic political system in the Quran and *Sunnah*; rather they provide only its fundamental principles. The Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and scholars of Islam developed their thoughts by pondering over these principles. This study also compares the political thought of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi. Their thought originated from their deep understanding of the Quran, *Sunnah*, and

the writings of early Muslim scholars. Both of them lived in India but in two different contexts. Hence there may be points of convergence as well as divergence between them. A close examination of the political thoughts of both personalities has revealed that the political acumen of Abul Aala Maududi exhibits a continuity of the ideas of Shah Waliullah.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the main components of Islamic political thought, and on what lines did it evolve.
2. To explain Waliullah Dehlavi's perspective on Islamic political thought.
3. To identify and elaborate on Maududi's political thought.
4. To find and compare similarities or dissimilarities between the thoughts of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi.

Research Questions

1. What are the main components of Islamic political thought, and on what lines did it evolve?
2. How did Shah Waliullah Dehlavi explain his perspective on Islamic political thought?
3. What is Abul Aala Maududi's political thought and how did he elaborate it?
4. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the thought of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi?

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research is theoretical and conceptual which has been based on both primary and secondary sources of Islamic political thought in India, especially that of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi. A thorough library literature survey has been undertaken to locate and survey relevant materials. Maximum effort has been made to consult sources. Preference has been given to scholarly articles while tapping journals and online resources. Materials collected through different sources have been analyzed systematically to get more refined outputs.

Innovation/Research Gap

The study in hand is based on the endeavors and services of two religious scholars and reformers of two different periods and here an effort has been made to establish a comparative discourse to highlight the very fact that how the efforts of one person can be operated to develop a knowledge base in progression. Maulana Maududi established his discourse on the politico-religious deliberations of Shah Waliullah—an 18th-century visionary this aspect has rarely been addressed in today's research and this addition to the existing body of knowledge is the benefiting feature of this piece of research.

Literature Review

(Aldahadha, Al Dwakat, 2024), The very preliminary literature on the theme under discussion can be found in the letters of Shah Waliullah who wrote a large number of letters to his pupils, friends, and notable persons. Two hundred and eighty-two of them were compiled by Shah Muhammad Ashiq, his close friend and cousin. They were edited by Shah Abd al-Rahim, son of Shah Muhammad Ashiq and pupil of Shah Waliullah, who also added some more letters to the collection, increasing their number to three hundred and fifty-two. Prof. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami culled a section of political letters from the collection and published them in Aligarh in 1951. Later, in 1969, he edited the work with an introduction, calling it *Shah Waliullah Dehlavi ke Siyasi Maktubat (Political Letters of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi)*. (Nizami, 1969), Shah Waliullah had addressed, in these letters, the rulers, kings, and other notable personalities including Shah Muhammad Ashiq, their first compiler. Some of them describe the prevalent administrative structure of the Mughal Empire, its economic status, the military power of the Marathas, Sikhs, and Jats, and the inability of the Mughal army to prevent their attacks. It also encourages Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah of Hyderabad, Najib al-Dawla, the Rohilla chief, and Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan ruler, to

strengthen and save Muslim rule in India. Along with other works of Shah Waliullah, these political letters are also important. Another notable work that provided the base for religious and political stability and helped in minimizing socio-political dichotomies and rifts in the Muslim community of 18th century India was *Izalat al-Khifa 'an-Khilafah al-Khulafa' (Removal of Ambiguity about the Caliphate of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs)* is an extraordinary book of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. The work attempts to demonstrate the importance of the *Khilafah* of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and explains the notion of *Khilafah* as a cardinal principle of Islam. Through a historical analysis, the book elucidates the authentic character and normative value of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate and develops a conceptual framework for the theory of the *Khilafah*. (Wali Ullah, n.d., pp.234-252). *Izalat ul-Khifa 'an-Khilafah al-Khulafa'* consists of a brief preface and two parts. Part one discusses the basic concepts and constitutional and legal framework of the *Khilafat*, its different categories, the validity of the succession of the four pious companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the salient features of their *Khilafat*, various modes of appointing the *Khalifat*, his responsibilities and the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Producing certain testimonials from the Quran and the *Sunnah*, the book coins the term *al-Khilafah al-Khassah* for the rightly guided caliphs. It also analyzes the major characteristics of *al-Khilafah al-Khassah* with a historical analysis of the role of the caliphate in the growth and advancement of the mission of Islam. (Jalbani, 1984), In *al-Badar al-Baziga* (the Moon in Full Bloom), Shah Waliullah explains the teachings of the Quran and *Sunnah* in sociological terms. He characterizes man as an ethical being and tries to trace the roots of his ethical traits. He discusses his role as a preserver of the ethical values that he has acquired through different stages of human development (*al-Irtifaqat*). The book is an

extraordinary academic contribution of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi, yet it does not receive enough attention in academic circles. Perhaps this work is overshadowed by *Hujjah Allah al-Baligha*, the other epoch-making and comprehensive contribution of the author. (Dehlawi, 1985), *Hujjatullah al-Baligha (Conclusive Proof of Allah)*, the *magnum opus* and outstanding contribution of Shah Waliullah, is a combination of his rationalism and traditional Islamic knowledge. The book consists of a profound analysis of theology, *tasawwuf*, ethics, psychology, law and jurisprudence, sociology, economics, and the philosophy of statecraft, which the author discusses from different dimensions, including the Islamic. The book has two parts; the first consists of seven discourses which are subdivided into seventy chapters. This part provides a theoretical framework for the rules and injunctions which are discussed in the second part. In both *Al-Budur al-Bazigha* and *Hujjah Allah al-Baligha* Shah Waliullah's political thought begins with his idea of *al-Irtifaqat* which he elucidates in the third discourse. According to him the four stages of human development are part of a natural process. (Maharsi, 2023), The primary stage of the political organization consists of city-states wherein people elect a leader to rule over them. The plurality of city-states demands a universal leader under whom all of them can be united. Among the writings of Abul Aala Maududi *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam (Jihad in Islam)* is an important scholarly contribution. It deals with one of the most controversial elements lying within the religio-political domain. It analyses the subsequent nature of war in other religions and civilizations and compares them with Islam. Its arguments are based on sound facts and weighty logical reasoning. Thus it proves that the notion of war in Islam is a guarantee of peace and a source of protecting the oppressed against the oppressors. (Mawdudi, 1980), *Khilafat-o Mulukiyyat (Caliphate and Monarchy)* is a historical and

scholarly analysis of the political teachings of Islam. The content of the book is similar to *Izalat al-Khifa 'an-Khilafah al-Khulafa* of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. It inquires into the basic principles of religiopolitical contemplation and the reason behind the downfall of the Caliphate Institution and the difference between caliphate and kingship, discourses of early Muslim scholars on Islamic political thought. (Mawdudi, 1967), Abul Ala Maududi's *Khutbat (Fundamentals of Islam)* explains that Islam is a comprehensive faith that does not separate *Din* and *Dawla* (religion and state). It compares religious worship to a training that prepares man for struggle in the path of Allah and for the establishment of His religion on the earth. (Mawdudi, 2014), Abul Ala Maududi's *Quran ki Char Bunyadi Istilahein* (Four Basic Concepts of the Quran) redefines four basic, interrelated Quranic terms: *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *Ibadah*, and *Din*, which are also the basic postulates of Maududi's thought. The author tries to prove his arguments by analyzing verses from the Quran. For him, *Uluhiyyah* and *Rububiyyah* imply that Allah is the only Creator, Preserver, Master, and Sovereign and therefore He is the only Law-giver. *'Ibadah* indicates the position of man on earth and his responsibilities to his Master. Further, the author defines *din* as a complete system that man has to follow in his entire life. (Mawdudi, 2012), Abu Aala Maududi's *Islam aur Jahiliyyah (Islam and Ignorance)* recognizes that there is a curiosity in man concerning his existence and role on earth. However, it is not easy to find answers to these questions, and hence he ponders over them and develops his point of view, leading to a variety of opinions. In *Islam aur Jahiliyyah*, the author analyses these opinions and compares them with revealed facts. The book concludes by affirming that all unIslamic beliefs and practices are *jahiliyyah* (ignorance). Hence the author urges everyone, including non-Muslims, to renounce *jahiliyyah* and submit to Islam. (Mawdudi, 2013), Abul Aala Maududi's *Tafhim al-Quran* is a commentary on the Quran.

The political thought of Abul Aala Maududi is derived from his deep study of the Quran. Consequently, in his commentary, he interprets several verses from a political point of view. In its preface, he says that the central theme of discussion in the Quran is man. According to the author, everything is described in the Quran in the most adequate style, and all the explanations are directly or indirectly linked to the life of man. The Quran does not discriminate between the individual, social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of life, rather it is the guidance of Allah for all aspects of human life. (Mawdudi, 1967, 2011 & 2017). The works mentioned above are produced by both personalities related to the main premises of the theme under discussion. Besides these, a great deal of literature is available on the development of Muslim political thought in the Indian subcontinent which highlights the endeavors of these personalities. Apart from primary works, there are several secondary works on Islamic political thought in India. *The Languages of Political Islam in India* by Muzaffar Alam regarding the changing nature of Islamic political thought. The author analyzes different ideas developed by Muslim political thinkers, through the zenith of Muslim Power to its decline. (Alam, 2004) He appreciates the role played by Persian writers and thinkers in the progression of religio-political contemplation. The title of the book *Political Islam* represents a modern phenomenon that is quite different from the medieval understanding of Islam in India. The author neither attempts to define the term nor does he distinguish its use for the medieval period from its modern usage. The work is a remarkably well-researched one. *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration* of Haroon Khan Sherwani is a scholarly analysis of significant thinkers of Islam. The book not only describes their political thought but also compares them with prevalent political notions of other civilizations. Its selection begins with the thought of Ibn Arabi and ends with Sir Syed

Ahmad Khan, a Muslim modernist of the 19th century. (Sherwani, 1945). *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present* by Antony Black is a comprehensive overview of Islamic political thought, its linkages, and significance. It provides a brief survey of the initiation and development of Islamic rationalism all through the Prophet's life in Madina, the Rightly-Guided Caliphate, in classical Islamic discourses, and the administrative principles of various Muslim dynasties including the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods. The book covers the political thought of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Nizam al-Mulk Tusi, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, Diya al- Din Barani, and Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. (Black, 2011), *The Socio-Political Thought of Shah Waliullah* by Muhammad al-Ghazali examines the influence of earlier Muslim thinkers, like al-Mawardi, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi on Shah Waliullah, but the author does not examine the influence of Ibn Khaldun whose three-stage theory of rise and fall of civilization is similar to the *irtifaqat* of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. The book is confined to the theoretical sphere of Shah Waliullah's thought. Hence it paves the way for a serious examination of his role in shaping the future of the subcontinent, and the Muslim community. (Al-Ghazali, 2009), *Shah Wali-Allah and his Times, A Study of Eighteenth Century Politics and Society in India* by Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi deals with Shah Waliullah Dehlavi's religious, social, and political thought. The author believes that Shah Waliullah's role in the seventeenth century cannot be properly understood unless a reader of the book knows the condition of the Indian subcontinent during the late Mughal era. Hence he devoted the first half of the book to a survey of history in the post-Aurangzeb era. Further, he deals with Shah Waliullah's religious and socio-political thought, but the author does not attempt to critically analyze it. The book consists of interesting information on the lifetime of Shah Waliullah. (Rizvi, 1980), *Teachings of Shah*

Waliyullah of Delhi by G. N. Jalbani is a major work on Shah Waliullah, but it has all the deficiencies of mode and style of expression as it has been first translated to Sindhi, further to Urdu, and then to English. Sometimes, it also excludes the signification of Shah Waliullah's terminologies. (Syed, 2020) The book covers a variety of subjects, i.e. perspective of Shah Waliullah on the Quran, *hadith*, jurisprudence, *tasawwuf*, theology, economics, and politics. The book is mostly based on the original works of Shah Waliullah, but at times also includes perspectives of Ubaidullah Sindi (d. 1944) on Shah Waliullah's ideas. (Jalbani, 2009), *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* by Seyyed Vali Nasr deals with the life and thoughts of Abul Aala Maududi. The book provides several details which are not accessible elsewhere in English, especially about his family. It is a standard source for a study of Abul Aala Maududi. (Nasr, 1996), *Mawlana Maududi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* by Roy Jackson attempts to contextualize Abul Aala Maududi's political thought into the framework of political Islam. The book covers diverse topics, such as Abul Aala Maududi's life in India and Pakistan, his intellectual background, the establishment of Jamaat-i Islami, concepts of the-democracy, *jihad*, etc. The author says that Abul Aala Maududi was highly influenced by the *Salafiyya* movements which assert the necessity of returning to a pure religion of the past. Further, he declares that inspired by Abul Aala Maududi, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutub of Egypt adopted the same stance. (Jackson, 2011) In the book, whenever the author quotes an opinion of Abul Aala Maududi, he provides a counter idea derived from his rationale. Jackson appears to not have consulted Abul Aala Maududi's original works in Urdu, but only some English translations of his works and secondary sources. Reviewing all these works I found a knowledge gap of a comparative study between the political thought of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi.

Discussion and Comparative Analysis

This analytical study is based on both primary and secondary sources of Islamic political thought in India, especially that of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and Abul Aala Maududi. Besides the introduction and conclusion, the research in hand compares the works of both personalities in four phases:

Development of Politico-Religious Thought in Subcontinent

At this stage, the research in hand has examined major components of Islamic political thought and the way it evolved in India. Many scholars pondered over Islamic political thought in India. (Nizami, 1969) The most prominent among them were Zia uddin Barani, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawi, and Shah Waliullah Dehlawi. These scholars emphasized various aspects of Islamic political thought. For instance, justice was emphasized by all scholars as the most important function of the state, but they elucidated different methods for guaranteeing it. On ideological lines, both Shah Wali Ullah and Maulana Maududi were concerned about the moral corrosion of Muslims and stressed abiding by the Quran and *Sunnah*. They both wanted to bring about dynamic change in the socio-political and ethical order by aligning Islamic principles with contemporaneousness and modern-day needs.

Fascinating Envisions about Politico-religious Thought

Shah Waliullah Dehlavi's political thought is very coherent and based on his four-stage theory of development, i.e. *al-irtifaqat* which traces the evolution of man from individual life to a cosmopolitan state. Shah Waliullah believes that *al-irtifaqat* is a natural phenomenon, but trying to integrate Islamic values and principles into all the stages of *al-irtifaqat* is a collective religious obligation (*farḍ al-kifayah*) in the Muslim community. (Nizami, 1969) Thus, he presents a complete system of Islamic political thought which includes

requirements for a ruler, methods of his installation, mutual responsibilities of rulers and subjects, and functions of the state. He wanted to bring to the notice of both the rulers and the subjects their respective responsibilities in the state, preparing them to gradually transform the existing Mughal rule into an Islamic one. (Alam, Ahmed, 2016) On a continuum, one can estimate that the reformatory approach and constructive criticism adopted by Shah Waliullah can be seen in the works of Maulana Maududi. Like Shah Waliullah he had a critical approach towards prevailing unhealthy socio-political norms and strived hard to find a viable solution. The prevailing dogmas of secularism, nationalism, and democracy were dealt with handily by him, and in his analysis, Maulana Maududi found that modern civilization, on the whole, is based on the aforementioned three dogmas. He worked hard and presented the supremacy of Islam over all these man-made ideologies through his writings. The political thought of Abul Aala Maududi is based on his understanding of the four Quranic terms, *ilah*, *rabb*, *'ibadah*, and *dīn*. The terms imply that Allah, who is the Creator, Provider, and Sustainer, is the absolute Sovereign of everything including man. He is the only object of worship, obedience, and submission. Maududi calls the Islamic state a theodemocracy as it allows for the partial sovereignty of people under the suzerainty of Allah. (Smith, 1957) He envisions the establishment of a cosmopolitan state where everyone enjoys equal liberty and opportunities. He affirms the process of an Islamic revolution as a peaceful struggle. He presents a comprehensive theory of Islam which covers both theoretical and practical aspects. It covers the requirements of a candidate to rule the state, rights, and duties of Muslim and non-Muslim citizens in the Islamic state, mutual responsibilities between ruler and ruled, etc. (Ikram, 1964)

Critique of Waliullah and Maududi's Politico-

Religious Thought

This episode of research analyzes their views and finds similarities and dissimilarities. Both affirm Islam as a comprehensive code of life. (Syed, 2020) They believe that the institution of the Islamic Caliphate is the ideal political system because they were the transmitters of everything related to Islam including the interpretation of Quranic verses, the *Sunnah*, details of civil and political matters, etc. to later generations. Maududi appears highly influenced by Shah Waliullah's theory of *irtifaqat*. The former's proposal of a commonwealth is analogous to the latter's theory of confederacy. He remarks that there should be a confederacy that binds all states based on equality and fraternity. Thus, instead of one nation competing over another, all states and people would work together for the welfare and prosperity of their states as well as others. (Hamidullah, 1996), Both Shah Waliullah and Abul Aala Maududi believe that the establishment of an Islamic state is a *farḍ al-kifayah* (collective religious obligation) and have similar opinions about its objectives. The only difference among the objectives is that while the former describes the implementation of ordained punishments (*ḥudud*) as the function of the state, the latter includes it in the obligations of the judiciary. (Nasr, 1996) Both remark that the executive of the Islamic state including the ruler ought to attain religiousness and piety. Both scholars also affirm similar qualities and functions for the executive and legislature, but Shah Waliullah combines them while the other separates. (Engineer, 1994) They believe that judicature and *jihad* are two major functions of the state, but point out certain minor differences regarding the former. They also have similar views on the requirements of the *khalīfah*, judges other officials, etc. (Ahmad, 1971 & Fuller, 2003)

Conclusion

The research in hand has indubitably established that the development of religio-political thought in the Indian subcontinent is

not the result of one day; rather it took centuries of hard work and entailment. Several thinkers provided their services and played a due role. Resultantly, a great body of knowledge was developed. However, two significant personalities under discussion worked as a movement as they influenced a great number of scholars in due course of time. Hence, the endeavors of Shah Waliullah and Abu Aala Maududi are historic in nature and demand time-to-time evaluation in the light of new sources discovered. Both of them have presented Islam as a complete code of life with solutions to all problems faced by mankind. In line with Shah Waliullah's thought, Maulana Maududi chalked out a strategy to establish an Islamic State and initiated a powerful movement to translate Islamic ideology into a realizable term for the reconstruction of socio-political life by Islamic ideology. Furthermore, Maududi did not accept every thought of Shah Waliullah uncritically. He disagreed with Shah Waliullah on several issues including Islamic mysticism. Yet, the similarities in their thoughts are overwhelming. Both initiated a process of socio-political change in their respective times, inspired by Islamic ideals. Both asserted that Islamic principles on state and society are unquestionably valid in their contemporaneous and scope. The socio-political issues that were burning and addressable in the times of Shah Waliullah continue to have resonance for our world today including such questions as the role of women in Islam, the possibilities for social cohesion in an Islamic state, the importance of *jihad*, and the moral and religious responsibility of the individual were the main ingredients of Maulana Maududi's socio-political compendium which he reshaped into his most famous stance on 'political Islam'. In this way, it can safely be concluded that Maulana Maududi developed a new body of thought based on the outcomes of Shah Waliullah Muhadith Dehlavi.

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