

Preface

This book examines Islamic views of some major political issues and investigates the political ideological dimension of Islam. As a historical case study, it deals mainly with predivided Pakistan (1947–1971).

The character of the study is defined by its two attributes. First, it employs, simultaneously, a social scientific approach, as well as a humanistic perspective. Departing somewhat from the standard practice of examining mainly the published writings of Muslim intellectuals, this work includes the findings of a survey I conducted in Pakistan in 1969. It studies the survey's empirical findings vis-à-vis Muslim political ideas reflected in Islamic texts, both traditional and contemporary. Second, despite its relative brevity, the work aims to provide answers to most major political ideological questions. It probes pointedly, yet broadly, the major Islamic positions on critical issues.

The discussion is organized around three major topics: the attitudes toward national identity, the polity, and the economy. Following a brief introduction, chapter 2 discusses the first major topic. It describes the three types of “nationalistic” orientations—Islamic, secular, and “Islamic-cum-patriotic”—that the survey indicated and discusses their association with the sociocultural background of the respondents as well as with the recent historical experience of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Chapter 3 discusses the contemporary Muslim understanding of the purpose of the state, the form of government, the process of legislation, and the relation between Islam and democracy. Chapter 4 assesses the relative popularity of the three types of economy (free, socialist, and mixed), describes their various Muslim conceptualizations, and explores the cultural and historical reasons for the appeals of socialistic and free economies. Chapter 5 highlights normative pluralism in contemporary Islam and concludes the study with a review of some notable approaches in the current literature concerning issues treated in this work.

