Politics of Desecularization

Over time the Pakistani state has moved from accommodating the Ahmadiyya community as full citizens of the state to forcibly declaring them non-Muslim and eventually criminalizing them for their religious beliefs. Politics of Desecularization deploys the “Ahmadi question” to theorize a core feature of modern public Islam – its contested and unsettled relationship with the nation-state form. It posits that our current understandings of modern religious change have been shaped by a highly limited number of national cases in which states have been successful at arriving at stable ideologies about religion. Pakistan, however, epitomizes polities that are undergoing protracted political and cultural struggles over religion’s proper place in the state. The book’s gripping account shows that these struggles are carried out in social sites as diverse as courts, legislative assemblies, and newspapers. The result in Pakistan has been the emergence of a trajectory of desecularization characterized by official religious nationalism.

Sadia Saeed is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of San Francisco.
The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late nineteenth-century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, various South American, Southern African, and South Asian liberation movements, the Christian Right in the United States, and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing upon classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically grounded, comparative empirical studies that raise “big” questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

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Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan

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To my parents
Contents

Acknowledgments  xi

Introduction: Rethinking Desecularization  1
1 Colonial Genealogy of Muslim Politics  45
2 Democratic Exclusions, Authoritarian Inclusions  77
3 Politics of Minoritization  107
4 The Nation-State and Its Heretics  145
5 Courts and the Minority Question  178
Conclusion: After Secularization  209

Appendix A: Text of Objectives Resolution, Preamble to the Constitution of Pakistan  235

Appendix B: Text of Anti-Islamic Activities of the Qadiani Group, Lahore Group, and Ahmadis (Prohibition and Punishment) Ordinance, 1984  237

Bibliography  239
Index  265
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