



Vying for Allah's Vote (South Asia in World Affairs)

Haroon K. Ullah

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What is driving political extremism in Pakistan? In early 2011, the prominent Pakistani politician Salmaan Taseer was assassinated by a member of his own security team for insulting Islam by expressing views in support of the rights of women and religious minorities. Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister, was killed by gunfire and explosive devices as she left a campaign event in December 2007; strong evidence links members of extremist organizations to her slaying.

These murders underscore the fact that religion, politics, and policy are inextricably linked in Pakistan. In this book, Haroon K. Ullah analyzes the origins, ideologies, bases of support, and electoral successes of the largest and most influential Islamic parties in Pakistan. Based on his extensive field work in Pakistan, he develops a new typology for understanding and comparing the discourses put forth by these parties in order to assess what drives them and what separates the moderate from the extreme. A better understanding of the range of parties is critical for knowing how the US and other Western nations can engage states where Islamic political parties hold both political and moral authority.

Pakistan's current democratic transition will hinge on how well Islamic parties contribute to civilian rule, shun violence, and mobilize support for political reform. Ullah's political-party typology may also shed light on the politics of other majority-Muslim democracies, such as Egypt and Tunisia, where Islamist political parties have recently won elections.

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