

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Muhammad Qasim Zaman. *Islam in Pakistan: A History*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press. 2018. Hardback (\$39.50). 401 pp. ISBN 9780691149226.**

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In the wake of growing literature on various facets of Islam in Pakistan, Muhammad Qasim Zaman's book is a timely contribution not only toward synthesizing what has been said before, but also in laying the foundations for new areas of inquiry in the field of Pakistan Studies. The work is primarily focused on mapping the career of Islam in Pakistan through the study of archival materials, which have rarely been utilized before, and numerous religious discourses, mostly in Urdu, which emanated from different religious schools of thought in South Asia. This work builds on his two earlier works that were basically focused on traditionalist scholars in South Asia (who are usually seen as grounded in centuries-long Muslim intellectual tradition), *Ulama in Contemporary Islam* (Zaman 2002) and *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age* (Zaman 2012). Zaman charts here the history of the relationship between religion and the state through the lens of purportedly forward-looking modernist intellectuals, politicians, and groups who, in his opinion, were instrumental in conceiving the constitution of Pakistan and governing the nation in its early decades, and remained relevant thereafter, despite facing decline, in the religious and political landscape of the country. The other religious orientations (in their individual and institutional configurations) and their connection with the state institutions form the subjects of individual chapters. These orientations include the traditionalist 'ulama, Islamists, and Sufis. In addition, he devotes a separate chapter to the careers of the Shi'a and the Ahmadis, whom he calls "Muslim minorities." The final chapter deals with the history of religious violence and militancy in the country.

In terms of historical methodology, although Zaman has organized his data around certain key themes, his basic periodization for mapping this history is based on the early years that saw the emergence of Objective Resolution and the first constitution, the Ayub Khan Era, the Bhutto and Zia ul Huq years, and the years of "Enlightened Moderation" during General Musharraf's rule. In addition, he draws upon key events such as the 1953 Punjab riots against the Ahmadis, legal reforms in the Muslim family law, and the Afghan war in order to trace contestations and reactions over what should be the true role of Islam in public discourses and what is meant by authentic Islam and Islamic identity.

The story of Islam in Pakistan begins from the colonial period in South Asia where various religious orientations gradually emerged (chapter 1). At the end of the colonial rule, South Asia offered an Islamic mosaic where these orientations had acquired a distinct identity in relation to each other. Undergoing phases of contestation and cooperation with rival groups, modernists were “poised to govern (the new country) after successfully leading the movement for [Pakistan]” (53). For Zaman, modernists were faced with an upheaval task on the eve of Pakistan in the wake of “a fledgling polity and a fractured religious landscape” (53). In order to chart the history of the rise and fall of modernist enterprise in Pakistan (chapter 2), Zaman’s basic methodology is to focus on key modernist politicians like Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, and General Parwez Musharraf. In addition, he creatively studies the careers of key modernist scholars, who had direct or indirect connections with the state institutions. The intellectuals who figured prominently in Zaman’s analysis included Khalifa Abdul Hakim, Fazlur Rahman, Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Muhammad Shakil Auj, and Muhammad Khalid Masud. To Zaman, the focus of modernists on rather ambiguous political ethics based on public good, their connection with authoritarian regimes and an inability to answer the questions of traditionalists, who were skeptical of their intentions, were the main reasons for the decline of modernist political enterprise in Pakistan. A further impetus to this decline was brought by the Islamization policies of the late 1970s and the 1980s.

The ‘ulama and their relationship with the state (chapter 3) is dealt with by focusing on how these traditionalists found modernist initiatives in Pakistan lacking in their acquaintance with “true” Islamic positions. Despite the complexity of the careers of the ‘ulama in terms of their hybrid configurations such as “modernist ‘ulama” (who basically accepted the possibility of change in Islamic laws by giving weight to new circumstances of the modern times) and the traditionalist alliances, such as by Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, with modernist political enterprise on the eve of Pakistan, the ‘ulama’s assessment of modernist legal reforms (such as the ones initiated by the Commission on Marriage and Family Laws in 1956) viewed them as transgressing God’s limits. Moreover, the ‘ulama successfully and consistently prevented numerous government attempts, starting from 1962 onward to register and regulate madrasas. In addition, there remained a “continuing appeal of the ‘ulama’s traditionalism in the contemporary world, including among circles of Westernized educated and upwardly mobile people” (133).

While his analysis of modernism and traditionalism tends to be comprehensive, Zaman chooses to trace the history of Islamism in Pakistan through the lens of a key religious idea, that is, the sovereignty of God (chapter 4). As he notes, “More, perhaps, than most other ideas, the assertion that sovereignty

belongs exclusively to God has come to be associated with Islamism everywhere, in South Asia and the wider Muslim world” (135). One of the major contributions of Zaman is his mapping the history of evolution of this idea in South Asia in circles beyond Islamists, whose close archetype is seen in the person of Abul A‘la Mawdudi. Zaman arrives at Mawdudi’s thought after investigating the medieval tradition, the Islamist discourses of Rashid Rida and Sayyid Qutb in the Middle East, and the ideas of Abul Kalam Azad, Ahmadis, and Muhamamd Ali Jawhar in South Asia. Zaman recognizes Jawhar as having arguably influenced Mawdudi the most. Two things contributed to the eventual association of this idea with Islamists in general and Mawdudi in particular. The ‘ulama embraced this idea in their religious discourses, but never used it in a clear fashion. Moreover, Mawdudi’s ability to popularize the idea to the broader Muslim Ummah was more instrumental in projecting his image as its sole proprietor. Zaman highlights that while this idea of the sovereignty of God justified Mawdudi’s party’s participation in the political processes in Pakistan, it also prevented it from reaping successful political results for it rendered the party’s political practice “to be far more pragmatic than its ideology would seem to allow” (158). Moreover, the party’s acceptance of and participation in Western political systems in terms of cooperation and alliance with other seemingly “less godly” parties damaged its social constituency.

In the case of Muslim minorities of the Shi‘a and the Ahmadis, the subject of chapter 5, Zaman’s assessment says that the Ahmadis have “continu[ed] to undermine Islam from within while injuring Muslim sensibilities” (178), despite the fact that the events like the 1953 agitations in the Punjab, the 1974 nation-wide movement and the ordinance of 1984 made them live outside the fold of Islam in legal terms. In the case of the Shi‘a, Zaman notes that Sunni–Shi‘i tensions in the history of Pakistan show that without the Shi‘a, “there would be no grand consensus on how to define or implement Islamic law. Such anxieties are deeper than those evoked by the Ahmadis, for they go to the very heart of unresolved issues of Islamic identity in Pakistan” (194).

In chapter 6, Zaman outlines the history of the challenges that Sufism has faced from the schools of modernists, traditionalists, and Islamists. Moreover, he also highlights the ways Sufism has exerted its influence on modernist and other religious thought in addition to influencing the state and its use of Sufi symbols to buttress its legitimacy at times. For some modernists, it was Sufism’s otherworldliness that was problematic in meeting modern needs; for traditionalists, it was its proponents’ somewhat nuanced claim to prophethood that was disturbing. However, despite these misgivings, Sufism continued to exercise its influence on modernist intellectuals, politicians, and other elites. In particular, modernist emphasis on recognizing the spirit of Islam was

nuancedly based on Sufi symbolism. Even the writings of strong opponents to Sufism like Masud Azhar of the militant party, Jaish-i-Muhammad, manifested underlying Sufi ideas.

Zaman devotes the final chapter to charting the history of the relationship between Islam, the state, and religious justifications for violence. Zaman focuses on three key issues: the role of political and military establishments in shaping the contexts in which jihad has been framed; how Islamic resources have been utilized in developing narratives arguing for and against violence; and the role of modernizing elites and their counternarratives about jihad and violence. In terms of political and military contexts, religious violence emerged in varied historical contexts, including the Kashmir issue, the 1953 Punjab riots against the Ahmadis, the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Afghan jihad of the 1980s and 1990s, and General Musharraf's support of the US and the rise of the Pakistani Taliban. While traditional narratives of jihad have ample Islamic resources to draw upon, counternarratives by modernists, establishment, and literati like Qurrat al-'Ayn Hayder have been struggling to gain larger social appeal. For Zaman, these counternarratives did not gain ground due to the contradictions and problems hidden in them. For instance, Khalifa Abdul Hakim's narrative was based on the idea of jihad for social justice only. Its appeal was based on a milieu that required an already prevailing atmosphere of social justice, which was not possible in a feudal system. Moreover, in the wake of foreign aggression of Muslim lands, for instance in Afghanistan, Deobandi scholars like Zahidi al-Rashidi successfully portrayed modernists as foolishly asking people to surrender before oppressors and conquerors. Zaman's quote from Mawdudi depicts popular sentiments: "[Modernists/establishment] should know that the combined power of public opinion and of reasoned argument will eventually defeat them" (262).

The epilogue in the end attempts to identify certain concrete changes in the religious landscape of the country in the twenty-first century in comparison to the scene in the early twentieth century: traditionalist scholars as having improved their qualifications in Western and university education, Deobandis becoming prominent in public discourses, hardening of the boundaries in terms of Sunni-Shi'a and Muslims-Ahmadis, a lack of hybrid intellectuals of early years of Pakistan history who could strike a balance between modernism and traditionalism, and the decline of modernism in the wake of local and global trends.

Zaman's work is indeed a path-breaking venture, for it not only successfully charts the contestations over Islam in both scholarly circles and the state institutions, but it also paves the way for future work in other promising areas of inquiry for historians of Pakistani Islam. First, there is a need to explore how the state envisaged the program of public education on Islam in schools

and colleges and how the curriculum was envisioned and contested during different phases of the history of Pakistan. Second, there is also a need to focus on how Islam fared in different regions. For instance, we may make a historical investigation by comparing and contrasting the ways Islam, and its relationship with the state, fared in what was then known as East Pakistan and in provinces.

Alluding to the methodology of Zaman's study based on oft-repeated typologies like "modernist" and "traditionalist," I have to point out one major issue with his larger conclusion related to the question of what led to the decline of modernists in the country. He identifies one of the reasons as their evident lack of interest in answering questions posed to them by traditionalists and Islamists, or their inability to develop counternarratives to traditionalist narratives. I would say that disputes among modernists, traditionalists, and Islamists have been mostly driven by polemics rather than by epistemological concerns propelled by a critical study of Muslim intellectual tradition. Zaman differentiates between modernists and traditionalists on the basis of how each of them revere the centuries-long intellectual tradition of Islam. The former undervalues it and tends to go back to the foundational sources to excavate original Islam from its first century, and the latter privileges this tradition the most while developing its intellectual positions. This impression about modernists is flawed on a closer scrutiny of their methods of studying Islam, as Zaman's analysis of Fazlur Rahman's work itself shows. The fact of the matter is that modernists and traditionalists have a very different and contrasting assessment of Muslim intellectual tradition whenever a religious issue is debated. A majority of modernists like Fazlur Rahman and Ghamidi emphasize the diversity of opinion in legal and theological discourses in this tradition. By contrast, traditionalists, starting from the nineteenth century, consistently and continuously have been avoiding the discussion of this controversial aspect of Muslim tradition and instead stress on or imply a uniform and agreed-upon thread of belief and practice in Muslim history. Moreover, from the late nineteenth century onward, by way of polemics and contestation through their institutional platforms, traditionalists have gradually and successfully developed their social constituency as the authentic bearers of Muslim tradition. Thus, I would say that it was not the modernist inability to successfully deal with its intellectual rivals, it was the social appeal held by traditionalist scholars that ultimately led to the modernist downfall. I think the history of Islam in Pakistan is ultimately linked to the lived religion of the masses and the emergence of a public sphere in terms of how people at large came to see what is meant by authentic Islam. In addition, this religious history is also linked with how traditionalists successfully developed the popular impression that Muslim intellectual tradition has been either unanimous on or indicative of what they proposed (on legal, theological, and political issues)

at key moments in the history of Islam in Pakistan. Any new work dealing with the question of how this public perception evolved in colonial India and Pakistan can complement Zaman's brilliant work.

In pedagogical terms, it can be a very useful text as part of the curriculum for Pakistan Studies and for other courses on post-colonial Islam in the larger Muslim world.

## References

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