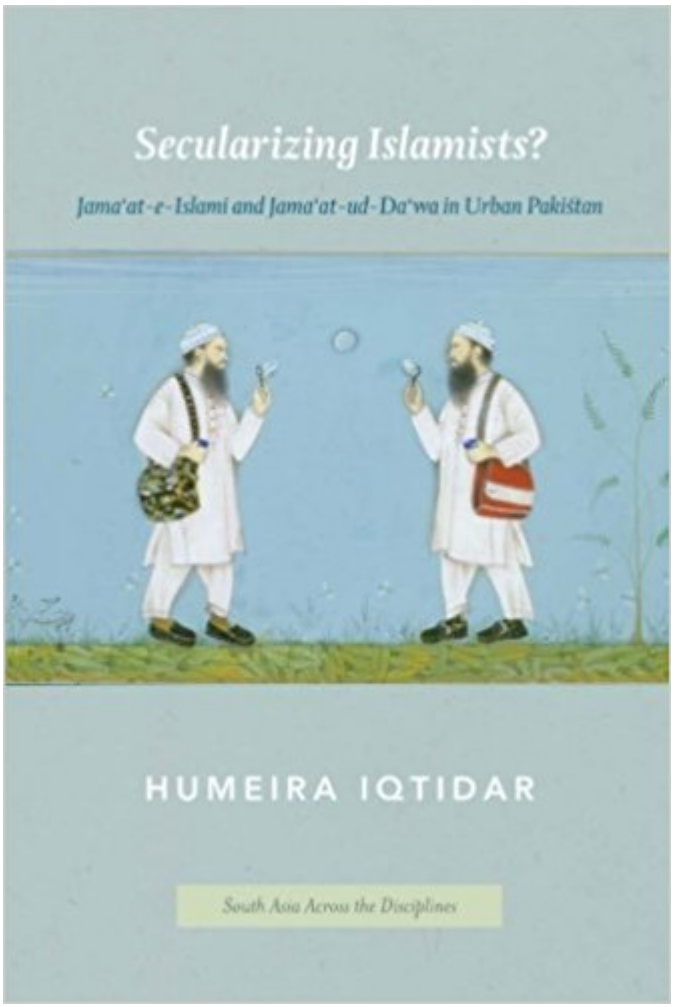
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Secularizing Islamists?: Jama'at-e-Islami And Jama'at-ud-Da'wa In Urban Pakistan (South Asia Across The Disciplines)



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Synopsis

Secularizing Islamists? provides an in-depth analysis of two Islamist parties in Pakistan, the highly influential JamaÃ¢â ¬Ëœat-e-Islami and the more militant JamaÃ¢â ¬Ëœat-ud-DaÃ¢â ¬Ëœwa, widely blamed for the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India. Basing her findings on thirteen months of ethnographic work with the two parties in Lahore, Humeira Iqtidar proposes that these Islamists are involuntarily facilitating secularization within Muslim societies, even as they vehemently oppose secularism.This book offers a fine-grained account of the workings of both parties that challenges received ideas about the relationship between the ideology of secularism and the processes of secularization. Iqtidar particularly illuminates the impact of women on Pakistani Islamism, while arguing that these Islamist groups are inadvertently supporting secularization by forcing a critical engagement with the place of religion in public and private life. She highlights the role that competition among Islamists and the focus on the state as the center of their activity plays in assisting secularization. The result is a significant contribution to our understanding of emerging trends in Muslim politics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Based on rich ethnography and written with historical and theoretical imagination, this riveting book offers a timely and subtle contribution to our understanding of the place and impact of religion in public life. Humeira IqtidarÃ¢â ¬â„¢s resonant accounts of the origins, diversity, and role of gender in PakistanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Islamist movements, and her deep insight that secularization can

be underpinned by social forces that combat secularism, force a reconsideration of long-held concepts and convictions about politics and belief.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Ira Katznelson, Columbia University)Ã¢â ¬Å“The real strength of Secularizing Islamists? is the depth of its empirical research, both historical and anthropologicalÃ¢â ¬â •there is no other work that brings such a range of materials to a study of Islamism in contemporary Pakistan. Here, Humeira Iqtidar offers a compelling historical argument that demonstrates how Islamist movements in Pakistan have long relied upon processes of social and political secularization. This important book will have a wide readership across the social sciences and humanities and will be of interest to students of South Asian history and culture, the history of secularism, modern and contemporary Islamic studies, as well as policy professionals worldwide who are concerned with Islamic radicalism.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Aamir Mufti, University of California, Los Angeles)Ã¢â ¬Å“At the heart of this book is an incongruous question: what would happen if we analyzed Islamists (who define themselves in almost polar opposition to Ã¢â ¬Ëœsecularismâ„¢) as products of a process of Ã¢â ¬Ëœsecularizationâ„¢? What happens is not a definitive new interpretation of Islamism, but rather the suggestion of a range of new questions and perspectives for looking at Islamist thinking in its political and everyday contexts. Broad, original, and interdisciplinary, this book will find an important audience among a large number of scholars who have long struggled to make sense of the Islamist phenomenon.Ã¢â ¬Â• (David Gilmartin, North Carolina State University)Ã¢â ¬Å“Iqtidar has fashioned a short but important examination of not only Islamist but religious practice in the modern world.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Anthropology Review Database)

Humeira Iqtidar is a lecturer in politics in the Department of Political Economy at Kingâ„¢s College London.

Iqtidar’s work does well in the recent literature regarding Islamist movements and the misconceptions that these movements are indeed, "traditional." Those who may not abide by Anglo-American conceptions of modernity and liberalism are labeled as traditionalists and not worthy of engaging in the discourse of modernity. The Orientalist notion of modernity and secularism as universally applied systems has been debunked with the rise of postcolonial work. Most interesting is Iqtidar’s chapter "Competing with Allies" where competing Islamist groups compete for territorial and recruits in the urban center of Lahore. Overall, an exceptional work that engages with theories of secularism, liberalism, colonialism, and social/women’s movements in a unique manner.

Humaira Iqtidar seems to contribute to further radicalisation of societies like Pakistan by presenting the militant narrative as a rationalised discourse. Her book based on interviews with women of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) is an anthropological presentation of an intensely political matter, and this is part of the problem with her narrative. Iqtidar uses the formula of certain scholars like Talal Asad in treating culture as a fixed variable in which religion, in turn, is a given. While searching for explanations to the presence of militant structures, the author of Secularising Islamists finds modern rationality in both the JI and the JuD. In doing so, she completely confuses modernity with secularisation and proffers the argument that the JI and JuD may oppose secularism but will end up secularising society. Furthermore, secularisation is the process of bringing religion in the public space. The contestation between the JI and JuD is seen as feeding the process of secularisation in the country. Based on conversations with members of these two entities, the author concludes the behaviour of these people as expressions of freethinking and hence rationality. Strangely, Iqtidar's ethnography does not include laments of JuD mothers who have unwillingly or half willingly lost their sons to jihad. Where does the story of that mother fit into her study who still hopes her son might be alive because the JuD did not return his dead body or clothes? Obviously, the author confuses the power of making a choice with the absence or presence of an environment that constraints free choice. Freedom of thought is seriously constrained when laws, even man-made, seem to have divine sanction. It is very difficult to challenge religious norms or even argue about the possibility of variation in interpreting holy text. Conditions become even more problematic when states like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia mix religion with politics or use religion to legitimise political decisions. This is akin to standing in a race ahead of the starting line. The author believes that the JuD espouses pluralism, the evidence being greater tolerance of Shias. But other organisations have done similar things like Jaish-e-Mohammed opting to deviate from Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil's Hizbul Mujahideen on the issue of sectarian violence because the state wanted it to. Nor does pursuing non-religious activities like relief and welfare by militant outfits or use of modern technology increase the space for secularisation in a society. Non-militant acts are mere tools to attract people or hide the real objective, which is to expand globally. Looking at some of the recent work produced by British academia, which now claims to understand Islam, the Islamists seem successful. Their power has grown even more due to consistent help from the Pakistani state, an issue that the author does not discuss at length. With tremendous state patronage, the question of free will does not really arise.Anthropologists risk getting entrapped emotionally by their subjects, which has happened to Iqtidar as well. Thus, she fails to discuss at

length the myth of jihad and what it does to a society. One wonders what this discourse means for the youth already on the path of radicalisation.

The author is an unfortunate victim of the post-modernists and socialists that have taken over the universities. She does not seem to grasp that you can appear modern while trying your best to re-create 9th centurty barbarism. This becomes another form of stealth Jihad. Departments of anthropology are often split between those who still support science and those who write critical/self-reflexive/conversations about how they felt "in the "field" and about how horrible the West is/was. There are much better books and ethnogrpahies to read.

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