

## **Political Development: An Islamic Perspective**

*Zeenath Kausar, ed.*

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*Political Development: An Islamic Perspective* is divided into two broad parts: the conceptual foundations of political development and its case studies. Part One contains seven chapters that deal with the conceptual foundations of political development, thereby signifying the importance of clarifying the concept so that an Islamic alternative to political development can be found. Part Two contains three chapters, each a case study of the political development experience in Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Sudan.

Khurshid Ahmad, a central figure in the London-based Islamic Foundation, provides the much-needed position from which an Islamic perspective on political development should begin. His chapter, "Islamic Approach to Development," outlines the philosophical foundations of an Islamic approach to development and the goals of a development policy. He begins by uncovering the flaws of western thinking on development,

which have resulted in what he calls “de-development.” The West’s various development strategies are actually designed so that the developed countries can exploit the developing countries.

In terms of development’s philosophical foundations, Ahmad emphasizes *tawhid* (God’s unity and sovereignty), *rububiyah* (the divine arrangements for nourishing, sustaining, and directing things toward their perfection), *khilafah* (human beings’ role as God’s vicegerent on Earth), and *tazkiyah* (purification plus growth). Hence, Islam’s position takes into account humanity’s role vis-à-vis its Creator and fellow human beings. The objectives of development transcend this world, for they also have an eye on the Hereafter.

Based on the philosophical foundations outlined earlier, Ahmad suggests that Muslims give due priority to six goals when designing a development policy: developing human resources, expanding useful production, improving the quality of life, undertaking balanced development between different regions within a country and different sectors of the society and the economy, applying new (indigenous) technologies, reducing national dependence on the outside world, and achieving greater integration within the Muslim world. Although he does not explicitly label the goals as either socioeconomic or political development, some of them are directly concerned with political development (e.g., the distributional aspect of balanced development, and a greater unity and integration within the Muslim world). Thus he has set the scene for a lively debate on political development in Islam.

Other authors approach political development from different angles. For Zeenath Kausar, it means promoting Islamic political culture and building Islamic political institutions, structures, and administration. Fathi Osman focuses on political development from the viewpoint of political participation, as understood in the context of *shura* (consultation). Abdul Rashid Moten observes that the attempt to export democracy to the Muslim world is just another instance of western cultural imperialism, while Louay Safi opines that political development is a civilizational transformation requiring sociopolitical preconditions. But science, the most important precondition, must be accompanied with a scientific spirit if Muslims are not to remain as mere consumers and become materialistic. Political development is also about improving the bureaucracy, which Abdel Rahman Ahmad, who writes on administrative efficiency from an Islamic perspective, discusses.

The case studies presented in Part Two look at political development in practice in the Muslim world. They represent three different polities: mili-

tary intervention and the use of Islam as a symbol of legitimacy in Bangladesh (Syed Serajul Islam); national development planning, political stability, and Islamization in Malaysia (Zeenath Kausar); and the Islamization process in Sudan, where the people are divided along religious and ethnic lines (El-Fatih A. Abdel Salam). One commonality among the three case studies is the importance placed by the governments on Islamization and Islamic symbols as a source of their legitimacy, although the three polities were originally founded on secular principles. Perhaps this suggests that the worldwide Islamic resurgence of the late 1970s may have a significant impact on Islam's place in the governance of a Muslim state.

In general, this book is a good first attempt at presenting Islamic alternatives to the question of political development as understood from the Islamic perspective. The book is also a fine contribution toward the Islamization of knowledge. It presents western ideas and concepts of political development, and identifies their weaknesses and flaws before putting forward the Islamic perspective and alternative. If the book needs some improvement – and it does – for an expanded volume, then it needs more case studies (especially from the Middle East) and a concluding chapter. Other than that, the book is a noteworthy contribution to the field of knowledge and political science by Muslim scholars and will be a good source for both undergraduate and graduate students. More importantly, in my opinion, it also inculcates a sense of mission in Muslim readers to achieve Islamically oriented political development.

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