



## Vying for Allah's Vote: Understanding Islamic Parties, Political Violence, and Extremism in Pakistan (South Asia in World Affairs)

*By 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 been thrust onto the world stage.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"While others are content simply to label Pakistan 'the world's most dangerous place,' Haroon Ullah has patiently studied the political groups behind the headlines and written a book that explains them cogently and clearly. Those who want to see a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan, and to face its many problems head on, must read Ullah's work; understanding its complex politics is the first step toward building the Pakistan its people--and its friends--should want."--**Cameron Munter**, former US Ambassador to Pakistan

**"Haroon Ullah has vividly humanized the challenge Pakistan faces in the explosive mixture of religion and politics. Ullah brings to the expertise of a scholar with first-hand knowledge of the country and culture and the perspective on U.S. policy of a diplomat who was a member the late Richard Holbrooke's 'AfPak' team. The result is authoritative, insightful, and timely."**  
--**Strobe Talbott**, President of the Brookings Institution

Haroon Ullah has done us all a great service by writing a deeply reported, fluidly written account of how these parties work and the effects of Islamists on Pakistan's body politic and how they effect the geopolitics of South Asia. And he considers what lessons Pakistan's Islamists might have for the Islamists in the Arab world who have been thrust into the real world of politics. *Vying for Allah's Vote* is an important study for all serious students of Islamism."

--**Peter Bergen**, Director, New America Foundation, author of *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden-from 9/11 to Abbottabad*

"We finally have a senior U.S. diplomat commenting on the explosive interaction between the state, democracy, and religion--and Haroon Ullah delivers. He offers an insightful and nuanced perspective that benefits from his deep knowledge and experience in the field. As nothing can be more important to the US than building bridges with the Muslim world, this book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand Pakistan and the challenges it faces today."

--**Akbar Ahmed**, Professor, American University and former Pakistan High Commissioner to the United Kingdom

"The beauty of Dr. Ullah's thesis lies in his ability to distinguish between those Islamists in Pakistan and elsewhere who are interested in governing in a modern emerging world democratic setting as opposed to those who rely purely on ideology buttressed upon little apparent interest in governing unless they control all the reins of power. The former approach is pragmatic and positive. The latter is a delusion."?*Huffington Post*

"Deftly written and superbly presented, *Vying for Allah's Vote* should be considered mandatory reading for anyone (especially U.S. congressional and administrative international relations policy makers) needing to understand the exploitation of Islamic fervor and fundamentalism to share and control political power in a fractured and conflicted contemporary Islamic state. Enhanced with the inclusion of illustrations, two appendices, extensive notes, a select bibliography, and an index . . . especially recommended for academic library Pakistani and Islamic contemporary reference collections."?*Midwest Book Review*

"A valuable study of Islamic parties in Pakistan, based on extensive research and informed by much theoretical literature."?*Choice*

"Contains important analyses from an impressive collection of interviews and survey data, and forces a rethinking of the problems facing Pakistani political stability."? *Patterns of Prejudice*

## Review

"Pakistan is a rare case where unresolved issues about relations of Islam to politics intersect with democratic development. *Vying for Allah's Vote* provides a valuable glimpse into how Islamic party politics in Pakistan has influenced the development of political platforms and how Islam and democracy are likely to impact one another. Insightful and informative."? Vali Nasr, dean of The John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and author of *The Shia Revival and Forces of Fortune*

"An insightful study of the complexities of Islamic parties in Pakistan with useful and clear recommendations for American policy."? Bruce Reidel, director, The Brookings Intelligence Project

"While others are content simply to label Pakistan 'the world's most dangerous place,' Haroon Ullah has patiently studied the political groups behind the headlines and written a book that explains them cogently and clearly. Those who want to see a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan, and to face its many problems head on, must read Ullah's work; understanding its complex politics is the first step toward building the Pakistan its people?and its friends?should want."? Cameron Munter, former US Ambassador to Pakistan

"Soon Pakistan will be fifth-largest country in the world by population. It is, of course, also a nuclear-armed nation which has fought three major wars with India as well as a host of other more minor skirmishes. Though they are relatively small in size, Pakistan's Islamist parties play an outsize role in the policies and politics of one of the globe's most important countries. Haroon Ullah has done us all a great service by writing a deeply reported, fluidly written account of how these parties work and the effects of Islamists on Pakistan's body politic and how they effect the geopolitics of South Asia writ large. And he considers what lessons Pakistan's Islamists might have for the Islamists in the Arab world who have been thrust into the real world of politics by the uprisings of the Arab Spring. *Vying for Allah's Vote* is an important study for all serious students of Islamism."? Peter Bergen, director of the national security program at the New America Foundation, The New America Foundation, author of *Manhunt: The Ten-Year Search for Bin Laden?from 9/11 to Abbottabad*

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#### About the Author

**Haroon K. Ullah** is a staff adviser to the US State Department and was a member of the late Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke's policy team on Pakistan and Afghanistan. His work focuses on democratization, security studies, and political party dynamics. He has a master's degree in public policy and international development from Harvard University and holds a joint PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan.

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