

A short-term fellowship from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies allowed me, in March 2014, to gain critical perspective on my nearly complete book manuscript on the politics of Islamic charities in Pakistan. During my time in Pakistan, I organized and conducted two one-day workshops. The first was held in Islamabad at the Akhter Hameed Khan Resource Centre, at the invitation of the then Director, Mr. Fayyaz Baqir. The second workshop was held in Lahore at the offices of Akhuwat, an interest-free microfinance organization, at the invitation of Dr. Amjad Saqib, the Founder and Director of Akhuwat. The title of each workshop was “Religious Charity and Everyday Human Security in Pakistan.”

Approximately one dozen people, the leadership of several Muslim charities and leading scholars of politics in Pakistan, attended each seminar. For example, in attendance were the directors of both the Khidmat Welfare Foundation (affiliated with the Jamaat-i-Islami) and of the Imran Khan Foundation (affiliated with the Pakistan Tehriq-i-Insaf). Also in attendance were the General Director of the International Strategic Studies Islamabad and the former Chair of the Islamic Ideology Council and former Director-General of the Islamic Research Institute Islamabad. I was very pleased that these professionals made time to attend the workshop and thereby to support my work.

I distributed a summary of the argument made by the book manuscript in advance of the workshop. The discussion, in which a variety of perspectives were expressed, focused on motivations for charitable giving in Pakistan and the difficulty of transforming the good will that charitable organizations can create into the votes that political parties need to win elections.

The key outcomes were (1) refinement of the book manuscript in preparation for the workshops; (2) preparation for the workshops of a 5,000-word summary of each chapter of the manuscript; (3) collection of comments on the manuscript from the most knowledgeable scholars and practitioners in the field of Muslim charity in Pakistan; and (4) a meeting and promising discussion with the Managing Director of Oxford University Press Pakistan, my preferred publisher, Ms. Ameena Sayid. In the process of making individual invitations to the workshop, I was also able to have (5) discussions about my work with approximately two-dozen individuals who could not attend either workshop but who did read and comment on parts of the manuscript. Shortly after returning to the United States, on April 16, 2014, I presented (6) a paper at the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists’ convention held this year in Washington D.C. The perspectives gained in Pakistan in March 2014 greatly enhanced the paper. The title of that paper was “First Responders: Muslim Charities and Human Security in Pakistan.”

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