Critical Pakistan Studies (2025), 1–3
doi:10.1017/cps.2025.10003

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BOOK REVIEW

The Islamic Welfare State: Muslim Charity, Human Security, and Government Legitimacy in Pakistan. Christopher Candland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024). Pp. 337. USD 110. ISBN: 978-1-009-26843-1.
doi:10.1017/cps.2025.10003

According to Christopher Candland, Pakistan is the "ideal place to study" how religious charity potentially impinges on government legitimacy (p. 11, 33, 87). While generosity and hospitality among Pakistanis is often seen as a point of pride, Candland highlights the dark reality behind this façade. He starkly states, "Millions of people experience life in Pakistan as if they are under assault, not by militants but by a society that prevents them from securing their basic human rights" (p. 95). In the absence of reliable government services and safety-nets, Candland argues that private religious associations draw upon Islamic giving practices to fill in gaps left by the Pakistani state. The resulting study utilizes religious charity as a lens to problematize the tensions between state, society, and faith. Yet, in an effort to provide an exhaustive compendium of charitable giving in Pakistan, many pertinent questions remain unanswered.

In order to untangle Pakistan's dense giving landscape, the book is organized into five parts. Part 1 provides a broad review of Islamic charity and charitable giving in Pakistan, a brief discussion of methods, and a summary of the five major inferences gained from the study. These inferences range from considering the impact of state intervention on "traditional Islamic associations" to interrogating the utility of public/private distinctions and the diverse visions of an Islamic welfare state.

Part 2, titled "Piety and Public Goods," consists of two chapters. In Chapter 2, Candland utilizes political theory to explore the purpose of government vis-à-vis public goods. He states, "only governments can create, provide, and maintain public goods" (p. 26). One of the most foundational public goods the state can provide is security. However, as often seen throughout Pakistan's history, national security often overshadows human security. The consideration of public goods is extended into Chapter 3. Here, Candland considers Muslim approaches to social welfare. The writing meanders between debates on terminology (Islamic charity vs. Muslim philanthropy vs. Muslim charity) with no clear resolution, before providing an overview of specific mechanisms of reciprocity and wealth redistribution.

In Part 3, Candland engages in a detailed description of Pakistan's political, religious, and development history. Chapter 4 serves as an introductory primer to Pakistan's founding as an Islamic republic, the development of religious identities, and an overview of prominent Islamic political parties. This succinct summary provides necessary context to non-specialists. However, the discussion on Muslim identities would have benefitted from a more substantial engagement with recent

literature in intellectual history, religious studies, and the social sciences.[1] Chapter 5 offers additional context on Pakistan's demographic and developmental indicators. Drawing from numerous reports, surveys, and indices, Candland paints a stark, yet familiar picture. With development indicators on par with active war zones, Candland states: "Even more during the most intense period of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, the most dangerous activities in Pakistan were drinking water and giving birth" (p. 109).

With this context in mind, Part 4 shifts in form and content to provide brief accounts of charitable associations across Pakistan. In Chapter 6, Candland describes the short-term, qualitative research methods utilized to visit, observe, and record his experiences at each organization. A political scientitst, Candland's observations are based on "more than 300 conversations with individuals at more than 150 venues in over 100 towns, cities, and villages in Pakistan" over the course of 16 months from 2010–2019 (p. 118). Chapters 7–10 provide short, encyclopedic descriptions of 90 of the 185 charitable organizations Candland observed. These entries are divided into a convenient organizational taxonomy: traditional, professional, partisan, and state.

"Traditional Islamic charities," namely *dargah* and *madāris*, are described in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 features "professional Islamic charities," such as the Pakistan Red Cross/Crescent Society, Edhi Foundation, and Aga Khan Development Network. "Partisan Islamic charities" associated with political parties are the subject of Chapter 9. These include: The Imran Khan Foundation, Alkhidmat Foundation, Khidmat-i-Khalq Foundation, and Minhaj Welfare Foundation. Finally, Chapter 10 explores the Pakistani state's interventions into charitable giving though madrasa reform, the Ministry of Zakat and Ushr, Pakistan Bait ul Mal, and other redistribution initiatives that explicitly invoke religious concepts.

In the final part, Candland reflects on the implications of religious charity on the Pakistani state's legitimacy. In Chapter 11, he asks: "What is the good of a government that does not provide essential public goods to its citizens? . . . Is that [religious charity] not detrimental to principles of universal access to quality public services?" (p. 236) In order to answer these pertinent questions, Candland considers both the arguments against the private provision of public goods and those in favor. Though comprehensive, this discussion muddles the author's original argument. And so, although Candland argues that the "Provision of social welfare by government and by private religious associations . . . are not antithetical, nor even necessarily in competition," neither appears to adequately strengthen Pakistan's glaring weaknesses (p. 250).

The concluding chapter offers an eclectic discussion of comparative politics, Islamization, and moral sentiments. Following a comparison of Pakistan's failed welfare state to Indonesia, Candland cautions against a sectarian Islamic state. Yet, it is unclear why the Islamic welfare state mentioned by Candland's interlocutors is necessarily sectarian. In fact, despite mention of differing visions of an Islamic welfare state, no direct quotes or ethnographic evidence illustrating these claims is offered.

[1] For example, see Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A Contemporary History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Alix Philippon, "Sufi politics and the 'War on Terror' in Pakistan: Looking for an alternative to radical Islamism?," in *Modern Sufis and the Shadow of the State: Rethinking Islam, Scholarship, and Politics in South Asia and Beyond*, eds. Katherine Pratt Ewing and Rosemary Corbett (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2020), 140–160.

https://doi.org/10.1017/cps.2025.10003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Instead, Candland describes "moral sentiments" found among Muslim charities that contrast "the official sentiments of 'faith, unity, and discipline'" (p. 271). Once again, this discussion could have benefitted from deeper engagement with the anthropology and history of Pakistan that explores affect, belonging, and governance.[2] As a result, the moral sentiments described by Candland in the final pages (*ākẖūwat*, *shukrānā*, *wafā dārī*, *itāt*) are compelling but under-developed.

The Islamic Welfare State is an important contribution to the study of charity, humanitarianism, and development in Pakistan. Candland rightfully pinpoints the fascinating contradictions between religious charity and state legitimacy, while leaving ample room for further inquiry. The book is a useful guide for scholars seeking a broad overview of Pakistan's developmental context and prominent welfare organizations. It serves as a catalyst to provoke further discussion on the politics of charity in Pakistan and beyond.

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[2] Pakistan's political and social history have often lent towards studies on emotion and affect. See Naveeda Khan, *Muslim Becoming: Aspiration and Skepticism in Pakistan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Noreen Ali, *Delusional States: Feeling Rule and Development in Pakistan's Northern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Asim Sajjad Akhtar, *The Struggle for Hegemony in Pakistan: Fear, Desire and Revolutionary Horizons* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

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