

ISAS Public Lecture Series



Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan

a talk by

Sadia Saeed

**Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of
Sociology, University of San Francisco**

Talk by Sociologist Sadia Saeed on her new book, *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan*, an examination of how the contentious relationship between Islam, nationalism, and rights of religious minorities has been debated and institutionalized in colonial India and Pakistan. This book was awarded the 2016-17 Book Award prize by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS)

The movement away from secularist practices and toward political Islam is a prominent trend across Muslim polities. Yet this shift remains under-theorized. Why do modern Muslim polities adopt policies that explicitly cater to religious sensibilities? How are these encoded in law and with what effects? Sadia Saeed addresses these questions through examining shifts in Pakistan's official state policies toward the rights of religious minorities, in particular the controversial Ahmadiyya community. Looking closely at the 'Ahmadi question', Saeed develops a framework for conceptualizing and explaining modern desecularization processes that emphasizes the critical role of nation-state formation, political majoritarianism, and struggles between 'secularist' and 'religious' ideologues in evolving political and legal fields. The book demonstrates that desecularization entails instituting new understandings of religion through processes and justifications that are quintessentially modern.

Speaker Bio: Sadia Saeed is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of San Francisco. She is a historical sociologist with substantive interests in sociology of religion, political sociology, human rights, and international law. *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan* is her first book. Her current research focuses on the emergence and evolution of minority rights in international law. She is also developing a comparative and historical project that analyzes how anticolonial movements in twentieth century Asia and Africa shaped subsequent political, socioeconomic, and constitutional developments. Saeed received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Previously, she held postdoctoral fellowships at the Maurer School of Law and Indiana University, Bloomington and Yale University.)

Tuesday, April 09, 2019

5-7 pm

**10 Stephens Hall, (For directions look up "Institute for
South Asia Studies" on Google Maps)**