



Are Muslims Distinctive?: A Look at the Evidence

By M. Steven Fish

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Are Muslims Distinctive? represents the first major scientific effort to assess how Muslims and non-Muslims differ--and do not differ--in the contemporary world. Using rigorous methods and data drawn from around the globe, M. Steven Fish reveals that in some areas Muslims and non-Muslims differ less than is commonly imagined. Muslims are not inclined to favor the fusion of religious and political authority or especially prone to mass political violence. Yet there are differences: Gender inequality is more severe among Muslims, Muslims are unusually averse to homosexuality and other controversial behaviors, and democracy is rare in the Muslim world. Other areas of divergence bear the marks of a Muslim advantage: Homicide rates and class-based inequities are less severe among Muslims than non-Muslims. Fish's findings have vital implications for human welfare, interfaith understanding, and international relations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book is a profound achievement. Reading it has been an eye-opening experience to the point that I feel that I will never be able to approach my own work and scholarship in the same way. As far as I am concerned, this book will be mandatory reading for all of my students. This book deserves to be widely read and debated by every student of Islam, by every reader who believes that he or she knows what Islam and Muslims are about, and even by every person who might have the most casual interest in the contemporary Muslim realm."--Khaled Abou El Fadl, Professor of Law, University of California-Los Angeles School of Law

"This book constitutes a major milestone in moving beyond stereotypes and anecdotal evidence, and identifying the ways in which Muslim-majority societies actually are distinctive from other types of societies, utilizing a huge base of empirical cross-national evidence. Many of the findings are surprising. The next step is the more difficult task of explaining why such differences exist."--Ronald Inglehart, Research Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan

"There's no book to my knowledge that does what Fish accomplishes here. Using a reliable dataset, sound scientific methods, and objective frameworks of analysis--Fish puts together an extremely important and valuable book on the political orientations and behaviors of Muslims across the globe. This book should have been written at least five years ago! It provides us with the most comprehensive and scientifically rigorous study of the political, social, and religious attitudes of Muslims in cross-national perspective."--Amaney A. Jamal, Assistant Professor of Politics, Princeton University

"A refreshingly brash book. Skilled in empirical analysis, Steven Fish has avoided the temptation to define questions narrowly. Instead he investigates whether Muslim politics are systematically different in a variety of broad areas, ranging from political violence to corruption. He does find that 'Muslim' is a politically relevant category in some areas but not in others. Fish insists on following the data wherever it leads him, informed by past scholarly work but not bound by its conventions. He seeks neither to challenge nor confirm popular prejudices. As a result of this sweeping, data-centered approach, both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences will find the book by turns comforting and unsettling."--Nathan J. Brown, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, George Washington University

About the Author

M. Steven Fish is Professor of Political Science at the University of California-Berkeley. He has served as a Senior Fulbright Fellow and Visiting Professor at the Airlangga University in Indonesia and the European University at St. Petersburg in Russia. His books include *The Handbook of National Legislatures*

(coauthored with Matthew Kroenig) and *Democracy Derailed in Russia*.

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