

Preface

Muslims live all over the world, but are in majority in 48 countries, all of which, except one, are in Africa and Asia. Most of these countries seem to be poor, burdened with debts, and are grouped as the least developed countries (LDCs). Except for 12 countries, most with exclusive dependence on oil, all countries with predominantly Muslim population have a low or medium human development index (HDI) ranks. Fifteen out of the forty heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) in the world have a Muslim majority population. Only few countries with Muslim majority have democracies. Why? Many questions but no single volume has the answers.

The idea of a book to deal with the above and many other questions related to Muslims and their countries have been with me for a long time, in particular since the work on my doctoral dissertation on voluntarism and sustainable development planning in resource poor Asia a long time ago at the University of Waterloo, Canada. The resolve increased with the distressing incidences of 9/11.

The idea of this book was crystallized by a documentary by the National Geographic based on *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond. Still two potential problems thwarted the progress: the availability of the data and the inability to conceive the whole spectrum of issues in all countries where Muslims are dominant. The recent posting of online data by the World Bank boosted my courage, and the enthusiasm from the Springer (especially Teresa M. Krauss—the then editor) and the eagerness of some possible authors to contribute got the ball rolling. I am indebted to Jared Diamond and the National Geographic (for unknowingly helping me to shape the idea and the focus of this work), to the World Bank (for making volumes of data available online), the Springer (especially the editor, Teresa M. Krauss for encouragement), and to all the authors (for contributing pieces to hold the ‘thesis’ together). I am recording my gratitude to all.

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