

# Preface

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There is now a substantial Western literature on governance in its many dimensions, but there are few studies that examine governance issues from the perspective of Islamic economics and fewer still that compare the Islamic and Western viewpoints on the topic. In writing this volume we sought to correct these omissions by providing a systematic analysis of certain key areas of governance from an Islamic standpoint, drawing on classical Islam and contemporary sources, to produce a framework that is then contrasted with the Western position.

The volume seeks to make a distinctive contribution in a number of ways. First, as we have said, it develops an Islamic perspective on matters widely acknowledged as being under-researched in the Islamic discipline. Second, it (hopefully) brings a fresh and contemporary perspective on these issues by drawing insights from modern theory and practice, combining them with classical and modern Muslim interpretations. There is thus an attempt to integrate East and West and merge the normative as well as the positive. Third, in order to provide a different reference point, there is abstraction from traditional terminology and a focus on the spirit of Islam. That becomes explicit in the approach to the topics on taxation and the financing of public sector organizations. Fourth, the analysis explicitly acknowledges the self-interested behaviour of major economic actors, both local and international. This adds a public choice dimension to appreciating the limitations as well as the workability of any governance arrangements.

The study has its origins in the PhD dissertation, 'An Islamic perspective on public finance', completed by the first-named author under the supervision of the second. Not only did the dissertation win the World Business Institute Best Doctoral Thesis Award for 2005, but both examiners (eminent Islamic scholars) were adamant that it should be published, and we thank Edward Elgar Publishers for agreeing with them. For this purpose, all original chapters have been thoroughly revised and rewritten and much new material added especially on governance principles generally, *sukuk* and other recently developed methods of government financing, and issues of accountability.

It would be most remiss of us to conclude these comments without thanking our wives (one of whom, Kay Lewis, did much of the typing)

for their patience and forbearance during the many hours that were spent working on the manuscript. We hope that they feel that it was all worthwhile.