

[Review] Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (2019) Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies

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Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (Editors), *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies*, New York, NY : Routledge, 2019. Hardcover (£120). 218 pp. ISBN 9781138613003.

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With the systematic rise of anti-Muslim racism over the past decades, especially but not exclusively since 9/11 and 7/7, the study of Islamophobia as a form of racism has grown significantly. In this respect, with both academic and public interest, a number of scholars and projects have sought out to document, analyse and theorise various forms of institutional and interpersonal exclusion and discrimination faced by Muslims. Yet, in this literature, a focus on the west powerfully dominates as questions of ethnic and cultural difference, of migration and refugeeness, of citizenship and of governance consistently figure (Modood 2019, Fekete 2009, Kumar 2012).ⁱ

Providing various insights across academic fields, this western-centric attention has nevertheless tended to suggest Islamophobia as a phenomenon mainly faced in the geographies of Europe, North America, and Australia and exercised by non-Muslims on Muslim communities and individuals. Consequently, experiences of anti-Muslim racism outside of the west, especially within the 'Islamic world' and by Muslims, have gone largely erased.

Pursuing a conversation addressing this significant gap, *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies* collects a series of articles around Islamophobia as a form of racism within Muslim communities and nations to document and evidence this racism, as well as comparatively explore its functioning. Covering both historical and contemporary analyses, this multidisciplinary book eventually sketches a structural, systematic, and aggressive phenomenon across various geographies, building on both grounded empirical explorations as well as theoretical elaborations.

The first chapter by Bayraklı, Hafez, and Faytre begins with a discussion of a theoretical framework for the analysis of Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies. Inspired by the Latin American decolonial studies collective's theorisation of coloniality as a global phenomenon, it poses questions of epistemic racism, of secularism, and of 'self-orientalization' through an engagement with world-systems analysis as developed by decolonial scholars. In the second contribution, Hatem Bazian then offers an analysis of Islamophobia's entwinement with post-colonial nation-state's 'religion building' efforts in a time of global anti-Muslim policy and imperialism. In this respect, Bazian argues that Islamophobia in Muslim nations can be understood as an 'engine' pursuing a 'pristine Islam' begotten in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in 'an attempt to embrace modernity in a rapidly shifting world order' (p. 39). Pivoting Islamophobia around modernity, Bazian consequently argues that Muslim elites are the prime agents in establishing the global order of Islamophobia as they bring about 'self-inferiorisation' where Islamophobic conceptualisations are internalised within Muslim communities.

The third and fourth contributions, taking the cases of Albania and Pakistan, build on this argument and further empirically evidence the centrality of 'westernised elites' in the production and reproduction of Islamophobic discourses through nation-state building and the formation of imagined identities. In Albania, a reclaiming of Christianity and Europeanness forms the basis of an exponentially growing exclusion of Muslims and Islam. In Pakistan, the pursuit of a secular liberal order manufactures 'disdain' and a rejection of Muslim habits,

practices, symbols, beliefs, normativities and politics in the pursuit of a westernising modernity.

Chapter five then turns to Turkey to historically explore how Islamophobia formed the foundational project of the modern Turkish state-building project. Focusing on the period from the last decade of the nineteenth century until 1990, Aslan argues that the Ottoman empire was replaced by a western-centric structural and institutional model spearheaded by a westernised elite that produced Islam as its abject Other across spheres of life. Chapter 6 further explores the Turkish case through a study of a satirical magazine *Penguen* compared to *Charlie Hebdo* to argue that Islamophobic 'satire' produced in Europe is mimicked in the Turkey with aggravated and amplified consequences.

Chapters seven, eight and nine all explore the Egyptian context to sketch out an Egyptian Islamophobic political and cultural scenes beginning with the invention of the modern Egyptian republic. In chapter seven, questions of nation-state building and post-colonial nationalism re-emerge where Kosba showcases the liminality of 'Egyptian identity' in relation to a 'civilized whiteness and an inferior blackness' to argue that a powerful Islamophobia in the construction of Egyptian identity has long been devised through a measurable 'civility'; measured in relation to proximity to the west (p. 107). In chapter eight, Abdelkader pursues a similar line of reasoning to focus on secularism as an ideology of subjugation as modernity and a secular westernised elite are evidenced as central agents of subalternisation. In chapter nine, El Zahed then focuses on Egyptian media to showcase the demonization of Muslims and Islamic practices where narratives of violence, terrorism and fear are continuously utilised to render the Islamic subject an impossibility in line with Sayyid's (2014) theorisation of Islamophobia.ⁱⁱ In this, a 'self-fashioned' elite of 'secular liberals' is argued to be a channel reproducing western discourses and, at times, amplifying them to produce a reality of a Fanonian wretched nonbeing.

Chapter ten exits the Arab world to explore the case of Malaysia and the Malaysian state where religion and 'race' intersect to produce a structure of complex discrimination and inequality. There, Islamophobia is analysed as a structure explicitly planted under colonial administration and propagated in continuity with a war on terror that now needs to be fought outside the west. In this battle, westernised elites again emerge as key. Chapter eleven then moves to the African continent to explore Islamophobia and analyse Islam's securitisation in the African nation. There, Muhamed argues that an intersection of global, regional and local factors have led to the production of Islam as intolerable politics where extraordinary means are mobilised to control the Islamic threat and render an Islamic form of being an impossibility. Comparing this to the securitisation of Islam in the west, the paper argues for both similarities and differences as it further showcases the impossibility of the Islamic subject and the amplified effect of Islamophobia within Muslim communities. In this respect, the subjugation of Muslims is argued to unfold through political discourses and institutional practices that circumvent established norms, legal codes, and constitutional rights as varied as the constitutional right to religious freedom and the 'universal' right to education.

Chapter twelve closes by offering the only case-study in the book geographically located in the Global North. Iner and Nebhan present various forms of racism and subjugation within Muslim communities in Australia. Through a bottom-up analysis with Muslim Australian women, the chapter offers a rich exploration of stereotypes, judgments, and discrimination experienced

within the Muslim community in a mimicking of wider discourses circulating in the Australian space. Here, questions of terrorism and fear, as well as questions of civility and modernity, appear foundational as both micro-aggressions and institutional forms of discrimination subjugate the practicing Muslim woman. In this respect, the authors contrast this Islamophobia to the one faced by hijabi women in the west to argue that Islamophobic aggression from Muslims is especially wounding as hijabis find themselves in a state of complete secluded subalternisation.

Historical and contemporary, incarnating in various forms and at various social scales and spheres, Islamophobia is presented and strongly evidenced throughout the book as a powerful and pervasive form of racism within Muslim societies. Focusing on the role of post-colonial nation-states and nation building as well as westernised elites and institutions, the book invites new research agendas to re-think the ‘Arab and Islamic worlds’, social inequalities, and racism itself through research in and from the Global South.

While the book begins with two chapters with a significant focus on theorisation, a number of key concepts running throughout, including those of racism itself and of westernised elites, nevertheless remain ambiguous. Specifically, a conceptualisation of these concepts, and their distinct (or indistinct) functioning as compared to their functioning in the west remains unclear. Further, a number of important variables structuring how Islamophobia is both produced and lived – including class, gender, ethnicity, as well as geography (especially in terms of urban-rural differences) – remain unacknowledged and unexplored. Alongside this, the ‘how’ of Islamophobia’s functioning in Muslim majority societies or countries remains underdeveloped as significant parts of the book are confined to the abstract where a focus on macro-analysis dominates as the subaltern are seldom directly voiced.

Further, at many points, the book seems to suggest that Islamophobia is largely an echo, a mimicry, of western colonial imperial discourses and structures reproduced by an (unspecified) demographic minority of a given population. In this respect, insufficient attention seems to be given to Islamophobia among the masses of Muslim communities across educational, class, and geographic divides. In other terms, ‘homegrown’ Islamophobia, its complex entanglement with Eurocentrism, and the production of these structures in the contemporary moment remain underdeveloped in the volume. Alongside this, the important role of non-Muslims within Muslim nations and communities, both for and against Islamophobia, remains unaccounted for. Eventually, the book offers itself as an exploratory collection opening a conversation that is yet to be had, raising questions and calling for urgent research and scholarship alongside and with Muslim communities.

ⁱ Fekete, LIZ. *A Suitable Enemy*. Pluto Press, 2009; Kumar, Deepa. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire: The Cultural Logic of Empire*. Chicago, UNITED STATES: Haymarket Books, 2012; Massoumi, Narzanin, Tom Mills, and David Miller, eds. *What Is Islamophobia?* Pluto Press, 2017;

Modood, Tariq. *Essays on Secularism and Multiculturalism*. London: New York: ECPR Press, 2019.

ⁱⁱ Sayyid, S. *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and World Order*. 1st ed. London: Hurst, 2014.