

An Editorial Note to Readers

Understanding Islamophobia in Asia: The Cases of Myanmar and Malaysia

Mohamed Nawab Bin Mohamed Osman
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract: In June 2013, Alvin Tan, a prominent Malaysian blogger, posted on Facebook a picture of his girlfriend and himself eating bak kut teh (pork) with the caption “Selamat Berbuka Puasa” (Happy Breaking Fast). The duo had described the dish as “wangi, enak, menyelerakan” (fragrant, delicious, appetizing) and also included a “Halal” logo. During the same month, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar faced one of the community’s worst persecution acts, with several hundred people murdered by Buddhist religious zealots inspired by extremist Buddhist monks. These are but some examples of Islamophobia in Asia. Buddhist nationalist groups such as the Bodu Bala Sena in Sri Lanka and the 969 Movement in Myanmar have encouraged the anti-Muslim violence. In India, the rise of the Hindu nationalist movement has seen the forced conversion of Muslims and increased incidences of violence against Muslims. Despite this endemic rise of Islamophobia, there has been little academic research conducted on Islamophobia in Asian countries. This is contrasted by the trends of Islamophobia as a phenomenon being well-documented in the West. The rise in terror attacks within Europe, the refugee crisis on the same continent, and the strengthening of the right-wing nationalist parties has resulted in the rise of Islamophobia in Europe and North America. This article seeks to better understand Islamophobia in the Asian context through the case studies of Myanmar and Malaysia. It argues that Islamophobia in these countries is largely the result of domestic socio-economic and political issues, rather than the international narrative against Islam and Muslims. There are three parts to this article: first, the discourse against Islam in both countries will be examined. Second, the factors that caused the rise of Islamophobia in both Myanmar and Malaysia will be looked at. Historical ethnic tensions, economic gaps between different communities, state-initiated religious persecution and the rise of right-wing religious organizations will be discussed in this regard. This section will postulate the view that Islamophobia can occur within countries such as Malaysia, especially when the minority groups are dominant in the economic sphere. The article will conclude by analyzing whether the manifestation and *raison d’être* of Islamophobia in Asia is different from the West. The outcome of the inquiry will provide useful analytical tools in studying Islamophobia within the Asian context.

Keywords: Malaysia, Islamization, Buddhist extremism, 969 Movement

Surveillance, Islamophobia, and Sikh Bodies in the War on Terror

Katy P. Sian
University of York, Heslington

Abstract: In the aftermath of 9/11, there has been a wave of intensified surveillance throughout Western democracies in the moral panic surrounding national security. This article will explore the way in which Sikh bodies have become problematized against the backdrop of harsher profiling and

policing measures directed at racialized populations. Based upon empirical data, including a series of semi-structured interviews with Sikh respondents carried out in Canada and the US, the article will examine the experiences of Sikhs post-9/11 through critical race and postcolonial conceptual frameworks, as a way to understand the processes by which they have been governed and regulated in the landscape of an obsessive monitoring of 'suspicious' brown bodies.

Keywords: Sikhs, 9/11, surveillance, Islamophobia, racialization, orientalism

Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland: The Burqa and Minaret Bans

Vista Eskandari

Université de Genève, Switzerland

Elisa Banfi

Université de Genève, Switzerland

Abstract: This article aims to analyse the legislative processes leading to forbidding the wearing of burqas and the building of minarets in Switzerland by a postcolonial approach. In 2009, a federal popular initiative amended the Swiss constitution by forbidding the construction of minarets across the Helvetic territory. At the same time, several right-wing parties have attempted to pass a general prohibition of the burqa in public spaces since 2006. As a consequence, in 2013, the canton of Tessin has adopted an article prohibiting the face covering in public spaces and, in 2016, a popular initiative for the ban of the burqa in the whole country was launched. Starting from the content analysis of parliamentary debates and legislative documents concerning these bans, hegemonic and Eurocentric narratives excluding Muslims from the national community will be examined. The article also aims at casting a new light on the interlinkages between Swiss direct democracy, populism and Islamophobia. Furthermore, the exploitation of gender aimed at reinforcing Islamophobic narratives will be analysed. In both the minarets and the burqa ban cases, the image of women has played a crucial role in justifying the right-wing discourse on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland. On the one hand, the minarets ban has occupied the Swiss public space by a propaganda poster showing a woman wearing a burqa in front of minarets erected like missiles on top of a Swiss flag. On the other hand, the burqa ban articulated its campaign around the defence of freedom and women's right as Swiss traditional values. By deconstructing political and legislative arguments against burqa and minarets, the article shows how they have encouraged the legitimacy of public Islamophobic discourses and fostered a crystallised and undifferentiated representation of the Muslims' presence in Switzerland.

Keywords: Islam, Islamophobia, burqa, minaret, Switzerland

Can Muslims Fly? The No Fly List as a Tool of the "War on Terror"

Uzma Jamil

Dawson College, Canada

Abstract: The securitization phenomenon is based on a racialized logic that predates 9/11 and has roots in the discourse of Orientalism, the practices of European colonialism and, in the more recent times of the 20th century, the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. This article analyzes the “no fly list” as a counter-terrorism tool used by the Canadian government in the “war on terror.” It situates the analysis in the political context of the securitization of Muslims, the social and political processes that construct them as threats to the nation. It examines the evolution of the “no fly list” since 2001 and analyzes its impact on Muslims in Canada, drawing on well-publicized cases. It critiques the list’s effectiveness based on the distinction between information and knowledge as tools to fight the “war on terror.” The “no fly list” contributes to Islamophobia through disproportionately profiling racialized Muslim and Muslim-looking passengers as members of a suspect community.

Keywords: Muslims, war on terror, securitization, racial profiling, Islamophobia

Racializing “Oriental” Manliness: From Colonial Contexts to Cologne

Zuher Jazmati

University of Marburg, Germany

Nina Studer

University of Zurich, Geneva

Abstract: We propose a co-authored, interdisciplinary paper examining the durability of Islamophobic stereotypes connected to men from the MENA region and their specific forms of “manliness”. We argue that European notions of “Oriental” manliness – covering all ethnic and religious groups from this region – were strangely homogenized and static: the colonized “Oriental” manliness was constructed as the “primitive” counterpart to an idealized form of European masculinity. The significant markers of “Oriental” manliness, as defined in the 19th century, were still essentially the same in the 1960s, when Frantz Fanon wrote that his contemporaries had solidified (but not founded) the idea of North African men as “born slackers, born liars, born thieves, born criminals”.¹ The events in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015 went viral worldwide. Right-wing groups felt vindicated when the public discourse seemed to confirm their narrative of North African, sexually uncontrolled men. A lot of the media coverage following the events in Cologne overlapped with right-wing (and colonial) notions of wild North African men, who are in Europe in order to sexually threaten the white female body. Following the assaults in Cologne, this anxiety was not just limited to women in Germany, but extended across much of Europe. To analyze this alleged durability, we propose to divide our paper into a historical part, which will give a short overview over the formulaic metaphors, images and knowledge production of colonized “Oriental” manliness. In our contemporary analyses, we will trace the harmful longevity of these colonial stereotypes, from the Victorian epoch to the sensationalist reports following the recent incidents in Cologne. We will use pictures from German (and other European) public media depicting the incidents in Cologne and analyze how they reproduced the longstanding anti-Muslim-racist stereotypical image of and knowledge on the North African masculine subject.

Keywords: colonialism, media studies, gender, violence, critical masculinity

From Orientalist Sexual Object to Burkini Terrorist Threat: Muslim Women through Evolving Lens

Sana Tayyen

University of Southern California, USA

Abstract: Muslim women in Western societies have found themselves caught in a discourse that politicizes them or depicts them through twisted narratives. Crafters of these narratives utilize media, literature, political rhetoric and government policies, to portray Muslim women through lenses that aim to define who they are, not by their own definitions as Muslim women but by the definitions of those who intend to shape society for political or social gains. These lenses have evolved through time, particularly since in the context of historical events and societal realities such lenses cannot seemingly be true for all Muslim women, at all times. Hence, with new images and information that shape our realities, the lenses by which Muslim women have been defined have also shifted and evolved with the changing of historical events. In this article, I outline four historical lenses: (1) lens of sexual objectivity; (2) lens of backwardness and ignorance; (3) lens of domination and subjugation; and the most current lens which we can analyze today in the here and now, (4) the lens of fear and threat. This final lens entails unwarranted associations made between the evil of ISIS terrorism and the innocent play of Muslim women on French beaches. This lens feeds into the greater attitude of Islamophobia. The fear which is broadcast through the media is a fear against a Muslim encroachment that subverts Western values and ways of living. Muslim women voices are silent in these perceptions. Hence, the dominating voice comes from those who hold power through media, government, or education. They are the ones choosing and crafting the narratives and perspectives, defining Muslim women, and Muslims in general, as a threat to Western Democracy and Liberalism.

Keywords: Muslim women, colonial feminism, Western representations, Islamic veil, empowerment

Reading History into Law: Who Is Worthy of Reparations? Observations on Spain and Portugal's Return Laws and the Implications for Reparations

Jinan Bastaki

School of Oriental and African Studies, UK

Abstract: In 2015, both Portugal and Spain passed similar laws offering Sephardic Jews their respective citizenships to redress the historic wrong of their persecution and expulsion under the Inquisition. Portugal and Spain are now the only other countries in the world to have a return law for the Jewish people, in addition to Israel—albeit limited to Sephardic Jews. Given the underlying reasons for the passing of this law, it is notable that Iberian Muslims, who were also expelled, have no recourse for redress—not even symbolically. While remedies can be limited under international law, this article explores the relationship between the historical narrative of the Arab/Muslim occupiers, the current popular portrayal of Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, and the relationship between the absence of reparations and current discrimination against groups.

Keywords: reparations, historic injustice, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism, Moors, inquisition

Islamophobia as a Deterrent to Halal Global Trade

Barbara Ruiz-Bejarano

UNESCO-UA Chair “Islam, Culture and Society”

University of Alicante, Spain

Abstract: Islamophobia continues to be on the rise in Europe and other regions, such as Australia, Canada and the United States. It is now a global phenomenon which has multiple manifestations and is generated at different layers of society, and does not only affect citizens¹ in non-Islamic countries, but has recently shown a new expression: the target has shifted towards Islamic economies, and more specifically towards the halal trade. Emerging economies in the region of Asia-Pacific and the Gulf are net importers of halal products (particularly foodstuff), which, paradoxically, are produced in non-Islamic economies. A report commissioned by the Dubai government, and researched and written by Thompson Reuters and Dinar Standard,² valued the halal food and beverage (F&B) market at US\$ 1.37 trillion in 2014. That represented 18.2% of the total global F&B market. In addition, the youthful population of the Muslim world – with 60% under the age of 30 – indicates that demand for halal products and services is likely to continue its upward growth curve and become an increasingly influential market over the next decade. This tremendously attractive market niche, combined with the slow growth of the economies of Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States, has prompted many industries to seek halal certification and to adapt their products and services to the requirements of Muslim consumers worldwide, including the significant minorities already living outside Islamic economies.³ However, some newcomers to the halal global market have found that there is another obstacle to overcome, apart from those already present in global trade: Islamophobia. In this article, I will explore the many expressions of Islamophobia aimed at stopping the growth of the halal market, and the different policies and attitudes of governments and institutions when confronted with the need to balance economic growth with cultural misunderstandings and hatred. I found systematic attempts to undermine the halal food industry made by some European Members of Parliament, claims of animal cruelty sparked by animal rights groups, bans on halal sacrifice in the meat industry, the “boycott-halal” on-line campaign, alleged funding of terrorism, threats and other expressions of hatred that have managed to prevent many businesses from accessing the emerging halal market.

Keywords: Islamophobia, trade, halal, boycott