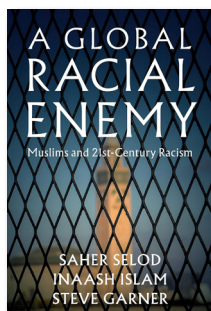


BOOK REVIEW

A Global Racial Enemy: Muslims and 21st-Century Racism.

By Saher Selod, Inaash Islam, and Steve Garner. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2024. vii + 227 pages. \$64.95 (hardback), \$22.95 (paperback), \$18.00 (eBook). ISBN 978-1-509-54021-1.



Selod, Islam, and Garner present an array of powerful examples from four national case studies—the UK, the US, India, and China—to argue that Muslims are made into a racial Other in the early twenty-first century and that this process of racialization takes place on a global scale that exceeds the logics of Western colonial imperialism. In all four cases, Muslims are constructed as threats to national security and framed as “misogynists, violent, irrational, and a population that should be watched, monitored, deported, or even detained” (4). The Global War on Terror (GWOT) that started in 9/11’s aftermath, argue the authors, reified this process at a transnational scale. Yet the volume rejects Islamophobia as an interpretive framework for Muslim racialization, arguing that the concept isolates religion from other social identities and remains too Eurocentric. Instead, *A Global Racial Enemy* champions the notion of “racialization” in order to stress the ways in which “religion is racialized” (6) as well as how religion and race intersect gender, class, and sexual orientation among other social identities. While Muslim racialization is indeed rooted in the Eurocentric Orientalist and neo-Orientalist logics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the twenty-first century it acquires a broadly transnational character; nation-states’ imperatives of securitization and expansion, especially amidst rising populism and ethnocentrism, mean that “security and surveillance practices rely on the construction of Muslims as a threat to national security and a national identity through cultural practices” (20). The GWOT’s “global charge to secure the world from terrorism” (60) must be, as a result, understood comparatively and beyond a Western-centric frame of reference.

To substantiate this argument, the body of the book unfolds over four chapters, with each chapter exploring an aspect of Muslim racialization in comparative view and featuring each national context separately. Chapter 1 supplies a brief contextualizing overview by summarizing the long history of Muslims' lives in each of the four nation-states. The chapter highlights how Muslims' struggles for recognition, visibility, and citizenship, tied to histories of "migration, colonialism, settler colonialism and slavery" (32), have been central to the developing national identity of each of the four national cases. The following chapters move to the twenty-first century and focus on the consequences of the GWOT. In the US context, these chapters often highlight the events surrounding the 2016–2020 Trump presidency, while in China the focus is on Uyghur repression and persecution. Chapter 2 explores the role of media and social media in the otherization of Muslims and sheds light on the manifold ways in which Muslims are portrayed as terrorists and threats to national security in news, television, and social media. Chapter 3 examines rising authoritarianism and ethnonationalism. Here again the authors argue for a global view, claiming that "the relationship between anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments must be understood in relation to the strengthening of national identities globally, not just in Europe or the United States" (107). In India anti-Muslim sentiment is tied in particular to a "populist-nationalist political project" (131), while in China it is an expression of settler colonial ambitions. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to counterterrorism to show how the GWOT unleashed "mass surveillance and policing of Muslims around the world" (138). The conclusion gives voices to Muslim resistance against racialization, including by spotlighting the US-based non-profit Muslim Justice League and protests held at Delhi's university Jamia Millia Islamia. The authors do not take a comprehensive approach meant to highlight every possible case of Muslim racialization in these thematic or national frameworks, but rather aim to cogently support the overall argument. The overarching conclusion is that the racialization of Muslims in each nation-state serves power and material gain, including in the name of state security and national expansion.

The cogency of the overall argument, the broad and productive applicability of the theoretical framework, and the large amount of evidence presented in each thematic area make the book a helpful contribution to the literature on the condition of Muslim lives globally. The book makes a compelling case for why the framework of racialization can address some central aspects left unattended within the literature focused on religious prejudice and Islamophobia. For scholars of interreligious studies, *A Global Racial Enemy* may then usefully broaden theoretical frameworks for engaging the phenomenon of Muslim otherization, providing a broad but

nuanced transnational perspective that can be applied cross-culturally to a variety of case studies. Because of its reliance on the theoretical literature on critical race theory and the relationship between race and religion, the book is best suited to graduate students and professional specialists in the field, yet the volume's overall argument and its broad base of evidence can be helpfully incorporated in lecture materials or used as framing for furthering conversations around the relationship of race and religion in the interreligious classroom.

Scholars working in the field can also consider ways in which their own scholarship may answer, complexify, or further extend the arguments made by the volume, specifically with regards to the lived consequences of the GWOT on the lives of Muslims around the globe and to the transnational networks that weave together the four national contexts under consideration. What are the historical, genealogical, and causal links among the different modes of racialization experienced by post-9/11 Muslims in these contexts? How do these global formations influence and interact with each other? How do Muslim communities respond to global racialization in a concerted and networked way, including in coalition with other communities? *A Global Racial Enemy* makes the case that each of these answers must be given in a global context that exceeds national boundaries—an important lesson for interreligious studies, whose scholarship is often framed within the context of a particular nation-state. For these reasons *A Global Racial Enemy* provides a well-timed addition to the growing literature on religion and race in the post-9/11 world and opens new theoretical avenues for exploring its interreligious dimensions in further literature. The book is a stimulating, thought-provoking, and well-argued volume which may encourage others to consider when the framework of “religion” itself becomes insufficient for the work of interreligious studies, and for why scholars of the discipline will find helpful answers in the literature on race and religion that is focused beyond the North American context.

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