Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle by Tahir Abbas, London, C. Hurst & Co., 2019, 246 pp., £40.00, ISBN: 9781787382015

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Radicalisation begets radicalisation; this is both the starting point and conclusion of this elaborative and critical book. Based on this premise of mutual and reciprocal radicalisation, Tahir Abbas critically examines the hypothesis of a vicious radicalisation cycle embedded in the thinking and practice of Islamophobia. With a primary focus on Western Europe, Abbas provides us with a critique of the multiple manifestations of Islamophobia and its underlying base of economic, social and psychological displacement and discontent. Abbas' *Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle* is an important contribution to this popular field of study precisely because of its emphasis on the relational dynamics that are often overlooked in the research, policy and practice that aims to counter far-right and Islamist extremism.

Abbas has written extensively on the intersections of social policy, structural inequality, gender and different religious and cultural radicalisms. Abbas' recent work is expanding on earlier research on the effects of counter-extremism policy on ethnic relations and social conflict in Western Europe, with a particular focus on the UK's 'Prevent' policy. Drawing from postcolonial studies, Abbas conceives of far-right and Islamist extremism as 'two sides of the same coin', each responding to the social and cultural fragmentation of post-industrial society. While still maintaining the principal dichotomy between Muslims and the 'natives' of the Western lands, Abbas argues for the importance to discern the implicit mutuality and reciprocity of polarised radicalisations. Their mutual construction is telling of the wider political, economic and cultural contexts, with the disruption of social structures and mobility a prominent factor in fuelling and expressing discontent among the poor and marginalised.

In the preface, Abbas alludes to his intellectual and personal interest in the process of being and becoming, or to frame it differently, the journey of perpetual change, negotiation and reconciliation. With perpetual change the vantage point of analysis, Abbas challenges the dominant political paradigm that does not allow for a relational, fluid and heterogeneous conception of identity. By looking at the ways Muslim identity has been construed historically, Abbas is able to capture the traces of the past in the constitutive elements of the perception and reality of Muslims in the West. That is to say, Abbas' historically grounded argument gives us insight into the representation and positioning of Muslims, which in turn brings to the foreground the relational aspects that form the dual reality of Islamophobia and radicalisation.

Tracing politics and social policy in the UK of the past decades, Abbas argues British Muslims are *re-invented* as an 'immutable other' (p. 61) by narrowing their identity on the basis of religion, ethnicity and race. Muslims are the subject of racialised narratives that challenges the multicultural imaginary on the front of both the far-right and Islamist extremists. The 'immutable other' is the negated reflection of the self and has the potential to foment into widespread hatred when material conditions demand an immorality to sustain existing class relations. The category of 'the Muslim' inhibits this immorality and thus contributes to different radicalisations among the disempowered who perceive and experience this as a threat to their narrow religious, ethnic or cultural identity.

The book as a whole can be divided into two parts. The first part, chapter one to eight, provides a structural and postcolonial perspective on the racialisation of Muslims and explains the patterns of

reducing identity into single categories of race, religion and nationality. The first two chapters, *Race and the Imagined Community* and *The Racism of the Radical Right*, addresses the ambiguity and complexity of the notion of race in relation to the historical prevalence of race-thinking and racism. Abbas is suggestive of the need for racial thinking to 'hold on to the markers of nationhood' (p. 9) and defend dominant values and social norms. This racialisation, he argues, is evident in Islamophobia with the category of religion and Muslims as primary subjects the extension of colonial forms of racism. In the subsequent four chapters, Abbas explores the multiple manifestations of the racialisation of difference with respect to the figure of the Muslim in the context of the changing political landscape of the 21st century world order.

In chapter eight, *Far-Right Versus Islamist Extremism*, Abbas sets the tone for the subsequent chapters that explore what he conceives the most prominent local and global developments that have led to the 'Muslim question'. Here, Abbas integrates far-right and Islamist extremists into the broad category of vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised young people. The second part of the book has a clear focus on youth, education and masculinity, arguing the prevalence and significance of a system of rage, uncertainty and scarcity on the subjectivity of Muslims and young men more generally. In the final analysis chapter, *Fear and Loathing at the End of History*, Abbas raises questions about the vicious cycle related to negative identity formation and, drawing on the dialectical thought of G.W.F. Hegel and Ibn Khaldun, asks us to think about the prospect and transformation of civilisation. Interestingly, Abbas ends the book with an epilogue on the 13th century Sufi poet Rumi to emphasise the fundamental dialectic between self and other, and the crucial vitality to learn to love others by knowing oneself through the existence of the other.

Importantly, despite his structural perspective, Abbas does not shy away from acknowledging valid concerns about particular interpretations of Islam practiced by a minority of Muslims in the West. Yet the purpose of the book is not to engage with the political demands but rather explore the conditions that are at the heart of contemporary realities of localised and globalised exclusions of Muslims. That is, Abbas explores the historical embeddedness of Islamophobia to define the subjective and objective position of the Muslim other in the West. With constructive dialogue the ultimate means to social integration, Abbas argues that the institutionalisation and securitisation of the thinking and practices of Islamophobia has a disabling effect on opening up dialogue and reversing the cyclical dynamics of radicalisation.

Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle is a useful resource to deepen discussion on the intersections of race, religion, culture and gender in the study of Islamophobia and radicalisation more broadly. By carefully assessing how the figure of the Muslim has been constructed and applied as an object of study and a subject of scrutiny, Abbas' words are a reminder to academics, journalists, policy makers and the general public to critically assess the use of narrow categories in the analysis and dealings of complex social realities. With a primary focus on the Muslim question, future work would benefit from further empirical analysis on the chain of events that lead to the conclusion of a vicious cycle.