ISLAMOPHOBIA IS NOT A FREEDOM

Hateful and aggressive speech is not freedom of speech

Prophet Muhammad Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him

La nostra testimo...

il Profeta M...

ARTICLES

Islamophobia, Neoliberalism, and the Muslim 'Other'

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ABSTRACT *Muslim communities have been racialized as 'Other' for over 1,400 years.[1] The manner in which the figure of the Muslim has been invoked as a threat across the centuries demonstrates the importance of recognizing the ideological context if we are to fully understand the nuances of Islamophobic 'thinking.' The aim of this paper is to situate the Islamophobia of today within neoliberalism as the globally dominant, hegemonic ideology of our time.[2] As is discussed below, Muslim communities are today racialized as the uncivilized 'Other,' embodying dispositions of how not to be neoliberal. Constructing Muslim communities as such serves to legitimize the neoliberal, neo-colonial project 'over there' and at home in the metropole. This paper details the manner in which contemporary neoliberal civilizing missions operate from above, akin to a form of hard-power, and below, winning hearts and minds, through 'a full-blown social program'[3] to create neoliberal citizens, while penalizing those that refuse to participate.[4]*

Introduction

Muslim communities have been constructed as 'Other' for over 1,400 years.[5] Whether earlier phases of 'Othering' can be classed as examples of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism as we know it today is a point for debate.[6] However, the manner in which the figure of the Muslim has been invoked as a threat across the centuries, albeit to suit different ends, demonstrates the importance of recognizing the ideological context if we are to fully understand the nuances of Islamophobic 'thinking' and the role of power. Across the centuries, anti-Muslim discourses and imaginaries have been deployed to justify the Crusades, the *Reconquista*, the colonial 'enterprise' right up to the so-called 'War on Terror' and the neo-colonial context that we live in today. The aim of this paper is to situate the Islamophobia of today within neoliberalism as the globally dominant, hegemonic ideology of our time.[7] As is discussed below, Muslim communities, resonating with the past, are today racialized as the uncivilized 'Other,' embodying dispositions of how 'not' to be neoliberal. Constructing Muslim communities as such serves to legitimize the neo-liberal, neo-colonial project 'over there,' and also at home.[8] Utilizing the work of Kabel, this paper details the manner in which contemporary neoliberal civilizing missions operate from above, akin to a form of hard-power, and below, winning hearts and minds, through 'a full-blown social program'[9] to create neoliberal citizens; while penalizing those that refuse to participate.[10]

It is important to note that it is not argued here that Islamophobia, its roots and all its complexity, is entirely reducible to neoliberalism, despite it being the hegemonic ideological position of our time. As Kalmar reminds us, in the context of the *Visegrád* Four, it is important to avoid reducing the causes of Islamophobia to 'one or two factors.'[11] The manner in which Islamophobia manifests is of course informed by local histories and political idiosyncrasies, which also draw from a globally circulating repository of Islamophobic tropes.[12] What is argued here though is that analyses of Islamophobia, as with all forms of racism, must take cognizance of power dynamics and the broader context that they are set in.[13] Today, as will be demonstrated below, neoliberalism provides the dominant, 'common sense,' ideological context upon which Islamophobia manifests. The following section will outline the manner in which anti-Muslim discourses as a function of power have manifested throughout the ages. From here, neoliberalism will be defined as understood in this paper before moving on to discuss the relationship between this hegemonic ideology and Islamophobia and its effects.

The Importance of Context Through the Ages

Islamophobia has been referred to as a "new word for an old fear."[14] Whether understood as a neologism or otherwise, the concept of Islamophobia illuminates

histories of anti-Muslim thought, representations, and experiences of hostility and discrimination as lived by Muslim people across time and space.[15] Importantly, I do not argue here that the manner in which Islamophobia has manifested across time and space represents a sort of continuity, each historical phase building on the other reverberating uniformly across space. Indeed, it is moot whether or not these manifestations of anti-Muslim thought and practice can actually be considered as Islamophobia is contemporarily understood.[16] However, what is argued here is that, throughout the periods under discussion, anti-Muslim discourses and practices have been deployed by those with power to legitimize political projects, with the effects still resonating today. For current purposes, what follows will trace some key 'moments' in the creation of Muslim as 'Other,' with each of these moments evidencing the importance of context and the role of power therein.

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The period spanning the 7th to the 16th centuries is replete with imaginaries of Muslims as infidels, heretics, and Islam as an existential, civilizational threat to Christendom. In the context of the Crusades, Muslims were depicted as "evil and depraved, licentious and barbaric, ignorant and stupid, unclean and inferior, monstrous and ugly, fanatical and violent."[17] Such depictions of Islam as an existential threat and of Muslims as "enemies of God" were deployed to legitimize the Crusades, and justify the political ambitions of ruling elites in Europe of the day both abroad and domestically, cementing their own positions of power through the creation of a common European Christian identity.[18] At the latter end of this timeframe, the *Reconquista* of al-Andalus, and the year 1492 in particular, are also referred to as key moments in the historical construction of the Muslim as 'Other' to be excised from the then incipient imagined European, 'us.'[19]

In terms of understanding Islamophobia as racism, Grosfoguel argues that the late 15th century marks the beginning of a process wherein Muslims and Jews come to be no longer marked out as different on the basis of religion that is as a "people with the wrong religion," to being racialized as sub-human and inferior on racist terms.[20] According to Grosfoguel, during this period, indigenous communities in the Americas, previously "people without God" are also subjected to such racializing processes, constructed as 'savage' and sub-human; processes that were extended to other non-European peoples soon thereaf-

ter.[21] As such, while Muslims are not the only group subjected to racializing processes during this time, this period marks the commencement of a shift in the construction of Muslims from being a 'people with the wrong religion' or 'wrong God,' to a racialized sub-human 'people without civilization,' as discussed further below.[22]

The Renaissance period witnessed the emergence of nationalist challenges to the idea of Europe as Christendom unified under the authority of the Catholic Church.[23] Europeanness in this context, while Christian, was associated with classical Greek civilization; Islam and Muslims were associated with barbarity, despite the role played by Islamic societies in maintaining and developing classical knowledge.[24] The image of the barbaric Muslim was maintained in the Enlightenment period, and was added to with assertions of the 'unreformability' of Islam, a religion deemed to be 'afflicted with fanaticism and bigotry.'[25] Representations of the Prophet Muhammad across this period depicted him as an 'imposter,' a tyrant, a fanatic, a pagan;[26] with Muslims and Islam deemed antithetical to constructions of Europeanness. Importantly, during this period, Islam was frequently depicted as the 'Turkish threat' of the Ottoman Empire, with the terms Turk and Muslim synonymous at this point for centuries.[27]

In the 19th century context of colonialism by Western powers, tropes around Muslimness and Islam presented Muslims as "violent by nature, sexually im-

Today, Muslims continue to be presented as a homogenized monolith, with all deemed to be associated with innate proclivities toward barbarity, misogyny, violence, atavism, etc.

moral and primitive, and 'fatalistic' in their dependence on Allah, making them lazy and dishonest."[28] Orientalism and representations such as these, serving "as the handmaiden of colonialism,"[29] were utilized to legitimize the colonial enterprise. Here the 'superior' West, associated with ideals of progress, liberalism and rationality, was juxtaposed to Muslim majority societies characterized as "pre-modern, backward, primitive, despotic, static, undemocratic, and rigid;"[30] the anti-thesis to all things Western. Muslim people were presented as atavistic, indolent, intellectually inept, and deceitful, characteristics allegedly derived from their faith.[31] Such depictions of Muslims and Islam served the colonial enterprise by, on the one hand, legitimizing colonialism domestically through ideas of the so-called '*mission civilisatrice*;' that through colonialism, so-called enlightened, progressive European powers would bring civilization to the otherwise benighted, backward, and uncivilized; Grosfoguel's "people without civilization."[32] At the same time, the colonial construction of the 'Other' also served to affirm notions of the 'us' at home in empire, and what it meant to belong; the ramifications of which clearly resonate in the contemporary.[33]

More recently, key moments over the past fifty or so years have also had further profound effects on Muslim communities and the representation of the same, particularly in the West. For example, the oil crisis in the early part of the 1970s; the revolution in Iran in 1979, the Iran-Iraq Wars of the 1980s, the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie issued by Ayatollah Khomeini, *inter alia*, have also fed the Western imaginary and perceptions of Muslims and Islam.[34] The events of September 11, 2001, have been described as a "watershed moment in the intensification of negative stereotypes about Islam."[35] Building on previous moments, the end of the Cold War bipolarity and claims of an alleged 'clash of civilizations,' Islam is now depicted as 'the new threat' in the post-9/11 'War on Terror' context.[36] In the years 9/11, terrorist attacks in Brussels, İstanbul, London, Madrid, and Paris to name but five cities, claimed by groups such as ISIS, a group that have served, or have been utilized, to further amplify negative characterizations of Muslim communities as 'suspect communities.'[37] Further, despite migrating in the main to neighboring countries such as Turkey and Lebanon, Muslim men, women, and children fleeing decades of conflict in the region have been held as emblematic of an alleged 'Islamic' civilizational threat to the West. The word 'Muslim' has become synonymous with the terms migrant, asylum seeker, and refugee;[38] presented by some as representative of

While there are differences over time and across space, what remains constant is the manner in which Islamophobia manifests as a function of power

an organized 'cultural replacement' of European people.[39]

As argued elsewhere, today, as in the past, Muslim communities are racialized communities.[40] As outlined above, this process of racialization can be traced across centuries, albeit taking different forms to suit differing ends as demonstrated above.

While at times drawing on the past as a sort of racialized repository, it is important to understand the deployment of Islamophobic tropes in context, and not conclude that there is a neat linear development of this phenomenon. Today, Muslims continue to be presented as a homogenized monolith, with all deemed to be associated with innate proclivities toward barbarity, misogyny, violence, atavism, etc.[41] Contemporary securitization policies and practices maintain an image of the 'Muslim threat' but this is in a different context to the threat of the past vis, for example, Christendom. Political and media discourses also maintain this image of Muslims and Islam as a threat, in terms of security but also in what it means to belong in the West, deemed incompatible with some form of 'our values.'[42] In this context, notions of civilizational threat abound, but unlike the past, this now manifests as an existential threat in the form of a 'great' population 'replacement' of European nations. In sum, it is important to note that, while there are differences over time and across space, what remains constant is the manner in which Islamophobia manifests as a function of power.

Before moving to discuss Islamophobia in the specific hegemonic ideological context within which it manifests today, it is important to make some clarifications. First, it is important to understand the ideological context in which actors with, or those with aspirations towards power, utilize Islamophobic tropes if we are to understand what exactly their ambitions are, and how they aim to capitalize on the backs of Muslims as 'Other.' Secondly, racialized characteristics ascribed to Muslims and Islam historically and today reveal more about power and the ambitions of the powerful as opposed to revealing anything in terms of innate qualities in Muslim people or inherent in reductive understandings of Islam. This brings me to the final point, as the scholar Farid Hafez recently reminded me, that is, Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobes than it does about Muslims and Islam.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism as an ideology, and indeed as a historical era, emerged in the 1970s.[43] In the contemporary context, neoliberalism is the dominating, "glob-

ally hegemonic ideology."[44] As the "hegemonic form of political economy,"[45] neoliberalism serves to underpin and maintain the dominance of global capitalism.[46] According to David Harvey, "neoliberalism is a political project."[47] As such, over the past four decades, neoliberal thought "has engendered new forms of 'common sense' associated with new parameters and limitations of politics, and the possibilities associated with democratic political deliberation and decision-making."[48] As an ideology, neoliberalism is "inconstant, differentiated, unsystematic, and impure."[49] A range of different perspectives inform neoliberal thinking in terms of governmental styles and rationales across different settings.[50] The effects of neoliberalism are also asymmetrical and differentiate across time and space, racialized communities, and arguably most clearly between the global North and South.[51]

At its core, neoliberal thought holds that government intervention in socio-economic life should be reduced to a bare minimum, and any such involvement should be premised on a cost-benefit analysis.[52] In the economic space, key elements of neoliberal thought espouse the privatization of otherwise social assets, reduced public spending, market deregulation, the prioritization of free trade, and the market-knows-best principles.[53] At the level of society, in the context of a reduced state as the underwriter of the social services, individualism is valorized with the individual held up as a free, responsible actor.[54] Individuals, as rational actors, should be free to make their own decisions, their own choices in terms of how they wish to live their lives, with individual freedom best protected by minimal government intervention.[55] Neoliberalism then, as an ideology, extends the principles of the *laissez-faire* capitalist market and 'freedom' into all the areas of socio-political life.[56] As such, despite aspirations to the contrary, the neoliberal state 'is' de facto interventionist in that it represents a realignment of governmental priorities and objectives vis-à-vis regulating the populace in accordance with neoliberal rationalities.[57]

As a hegemonic ideology, neoliberalism is taken for granted in the social 'common sense.' Neoliberal market-based principles inform how people see the world around them through a lens that idealizes individualism, self-responsibility, and competition.[58] There is a "taken-for-granted by those it governs," that this is the way things are and can only ever be.[59] As such, there is a perceived 'inescapability' of neoliberalism that is both a symptom of its dominance (for example, the presumed impossibilities of collective organization in an atomized societal context) and an instrument in maintaining its dominance.[60] Drawing on Bauman, Scharff notes that refusing participation in the neoliberal project and its "relentless process of individualization"[61] is not an option. But why would individuals or nation-states alike, not want to participate? After all, "neoliberalism professes itself to be the ideology of the so-called civilized world."[62]

Neoliberalism and 'Race'

As the preceding sections have inti-
mated, analyses of 'race' and racisms
have to be understood in the context
of the historical moment that they are
in.[63] In the contemporary era, 'race'
and processes of racialization are at
the core of the neoliberal project.[64]
This context of racial neoliberalism
is characterized by the invocation of
racializing processes abroad, all the
while restricting 'race' and racism
as issues domestically to the private
sphere of individual responsibility.[65]

Abroad, the racialized neoliberalizing
project can be understood as a form
of what Goldberg refers to as historic
racism, wherein advanced neoliberal

Banners containing Islamophobic expressions like "Stop
Islamization," were hung in and around the Grand Mosque
of the Dutch Religious Foundation in Ede, the Netherlands
on November 24, 2018.

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powers are willing to 'intervene' to help those under-developed, read as yet to
be neoliberalized, to become more like the advanced, free, civilized 'us.'[66] Reso-
nating with previous colonial practices, racialized constructions are repeatedly
invoked to legitimize such interventions into the world of the un-neoliberal,
therefore uncivilized, 'Other' to 'aid' their development through neoliberalis-
ing processes.[67] As will be demonstrated below specifically in relation to Islam-
ophobia, such interventions are not restricted to 'over there' but also manifest
in the neoliberal metropole.

In the domestic context, 'race' and experiences of racism, from a neoliberal
post-racial perspective are something for the private sphere of individual re-
sponsibility.[68] This allows the neoliberal state to abrogate itself from any respon-
sibility when it comes to challenging racism 'at home.'[69] After all, the recogni-
tion of 'race' and racism is contrarian to the neoliberal ideals of meritocracy
and individual success through 'hard work.' As such, logics of 'race' blindness
and notions of a race-less society fill the discursive space while experiences of
racism and the impacts of structural inequalities are denied.[70] This denial of
the importance of 'race' in the neoliberal state serves to maintain the power of
the dominant societal group in increasingly diverse societies. In this context
the state presents itself as neutral, a champion of diversity, wherein reality the
aim is to maintain the dominance of the racial in-group at the expense of all
racialized 'Others.'[71] Through denials of the import of 'race,' "the neoliberal
state exacerbates inequality [by] further privileging the already privileged,"[72]
and reinforcing the dominance of those with power in society.[73] If you fail, the

neoliberal discourse goes; it is your own fault and has nothing to do with the racialized structure of society.[74]

Neoliberalism and the Muslim 'Other'

The preceding paragraphs have outlined the relation between 'race,' racism, and neoliberalism. In the context of Islamophobia, it is important to discuss the relationship that this phenomenon has with neoliberalism before moving into more detail in the following sections. In keeping with the tenor of the argument thus far, it is worth underscoring that Islamophobia is a form of racism. Muslims of course are not a 'race.' Yet, despite their incredible diversity, Muslim communities around the globe are constructed as a homogenous group through processes of racialization, as in previous eras but also unique to the contemporary, that present all Muslims as holding innate characteristics and proclivities toward certain behaviors.[75] As Alexander argues, the term 'Muslim' in this context comes to represent "a naturalized category linked to an assumed 'mode of being.'"[76] This 'mode of being' encapsulates a whole range of ascribed and deemed innate characteristics including atavism, misogyny, barbarity, and tendencies towards violence, religious fanaticism; being uncivilized, and as such Muslim majority societies being in need of help from others to civilize; whether as a majority or minority in society, Muslims and Islam are presented as alien to and incompatible with the 'Western' values associated with progress and modernity, the latter read as neoliberal.[77] It does not matter who you are as a Muslim individual or where you are from "…all Muslims however they look… however they practice, where they come from, how they dress, whatever their political views, they are all part of this phantom imaginary group."[78]

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As has already been detailed, neoliberalism is the hegemonic ideology of our time. Nonetheless, it is important to note that if we are to understand Islamophobia we need to remain cognizant of the different histories and geographies of this phenomenon and how it manifests locally and has done across time. This discussion of Islamophobia in the context of neoliberalism should not be understood as presenting the latter as the only factor in contemporary experience; such understandings would be immensely reductive. In order to locate Islamophobia in this context, one of its functions if you will, I want to draw on the work of Hatem Bazian and a definition of Islamophobia that can provide clarity for the contemporary political economy setting. For Bazian, "Islamophobia is a structural organizing principle that sits at the present global crossroads, and is employed to rationalize and extend the dominant global

power alignment while embarking on a project for silencing the collective global other."[79] The following sections will provide evidence of Islamophobia as an organizing principle in the neoliberal context.

Muslims and Islam as Antithetical to Neoliberalism

In the contemporary context, there is to quote Kabel, an entanglement of "Islamophobia as both a racialized and a neo-orientalist discourse and neoliberalism as an economic and ideological orthodoxy."[80] In terms of conditions that have at least in part facilitated this entanglement, in the post-Cold War context, with Western powers in a dominant position internationally, efforts have been made to shore up and indeed advance their position. As such, "Western states' have sought to organize international institutions, international norms, and international law to be reflective of their neoliberal values."[81] According to Waikar, proclaimed to be the "ideology of the free," for neoliberalism to sustain itself and indeed expand further, there is a need to "locate and chastise belief systems as ideological others that are in need of liberation;" that to maintain its dominance, neoliberalism needs to "stand against a constitutive other." [82] This inferior 'Other' itself becomes the target of the neoliberal impulse to neoliberalize all in the name of 'progress and modernity.'[83] After all, "neoliberalism proclaims itself to be the liberating ideology of the civilized world…" as such "…non-neoliberal states and belief systems are… uncivilized."[84] As the hegemonic ideology of our time, drawing on history as a repository of racialized tropes, neoliberalism positions Muslims and Islam as the uncivilized 'Other,' in order to legitimize neoliberal expansionism.[85] To be neoliberal then is to be 'civilized,' whereas a rejection of neoliberalism is deemed emblematic of a rejection of "modernity, human rights, democracy, and the 'rule of law.'"[86] The neoliberal project is then the "neo-white-man's burden to produce 'Neoliberal Man,'" to civilize the uncivilized abroad and at home. [87]

The following sections will elaborate on the above by focusing on the manner in which neoliberalism interacts with Islamophobia in the international and domestic contexts. For current purposes, a framework provided by Kabel will be adapted and utilized to demonstrate the manner in which Muslims, as majority and minority populations, are subjected to the neoliberal 'civilizing mission.'[88] Kabel's framework describes the manner in which neoliberalism is spread from above and from below. Neoliberalism from above is spread through "hard power, military invasions" or 'interventions' with "imperial ambitions" shrouded under a "thick veil of high-sounding moral ideals," powerfully resonating with colonial discourses of the past.[89] Neoliberalization from below, "forms the centerpiece of the ideological war for hearts and minds… to de-radicalize young Muslims," here neoliberalization is more than economic

dogma, it is a socio-cultural project, "a full-blown social program predicated on a set of 'values' and predispositions congruent with the broader neoliberal project."[90] Building on Kabel's framework, for current purposes, I want to add that 'neoliberalization from above,' a sort of hard power imposition of 'civilization' is not something that happens only 'over there,' i.e. in

With neoliberalism as the hegemonic ideology, racialized Islamophobic tropes present "Islam, the Muslim world, and Muslims as irrevocably antithetical to neoliberal values"

Muslim majority societies. As will be demonstrated below, similar patterns can also be observed in neoliberal practices at 'home.' Furthermore, and perhaps obviously, in contexts where neoliberalism predominates and Muslims are in the minority, they along with the majority population are also subjected to the inculcating processes of neoliberal ideals and values, which, as noted above, form an inescapable common sense.

Islamophobia and the Neoliberal 'Civilizing Mission'

In the international context, neoliberalism from above, as noted earlier, is in the first instance at least, brought to the uncivilized 'Other' through mechanisms of hard power, underpinned by discourses that legitimize military intervention. [91] Such discourses claim to herald the dawn of democracy for the otherwise undemocratic, civilization for the uncivilized, modernity for the backward and undeveloped; racialized constructions continually and opportunistically invoked to justify imperial incursions into the world of the savage 'Other.'[92] Characterized as such, non-neoliberal nations abroad, frequently those with resources to exploit, are presented as the last bastions of atavism in need of 'our' help to neoliberalize;[93] resonating profoundly with the colonial enterprise which, to quote Bazian "sought to negate and dehumanize the Muslim subject to rationalize and embark upon a civilizational program and domination."[94]

In the post-9/11 context, Iraq was deemed the ideal candidate as a starting point to create a new, read as neoliberal, Middle East.[95] Despite the intervening years, the experiences of Iraq and the Iraqi people are particularly telling as a critical exemplar of the neoliberal, neocolonial enterprise. In terms of context, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was set as part of the broader 'Global War on Terror.' Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, it was alleged, was hording/developing 'weapons of mass destruction' and acting as a state sponsor for terrorist groups such as ISIS.[96] 2003 was, according to Kabel, an *"annus horribilis,"* one of many in recent times, for the Iraqi people:[97]

It was the year civilizational apocalypse fatefully descended on this much in-jured country. From the war crimes in Fallujah to targeted assassinations, from the thuggery of mercenaries to the torture and rape chambers of Abu Ghraib, Iraqis saw their lives, histories, dignity, and indeed their humanity lurch from disaster to disaster as a new chapter of colonial history was beginning to unfold.[98]

Beyond the impact of horrific violence, the Iraqi people and State were also to find themselves as participants in an "experiment in social-economic, po-litical and cultural… annihilation."[99] In terms of the economy, the Iraqi State was subjected to a complete overhaul to fall into line with neoliberal ideals.[100] In 2003, the then head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer, announced mass economic liberalization: all publicly held enterprises in Iraq were to be privatized; the ownership of Iraqi companies was to be opened to international businesses; profits made in Iraq repatriated to the states that these foreign firms were domiciled in; similarly, Iraqi banks were to be opened to foreign control. Indeed all barriers to international trade were to be elimi-nated almost in full.[101]

The 'Freedom Agenda' for Iraq was more than just economic.[102] At a political level, aligned with the civilizing mission, a White House statement in late 2005, noted that Iraqi's were "learning that democracy is the only way to build a just and peaceful society."[103] All part of the neoliberal man's burden. In addition to the economic and political, building Iraq in a neoliberal likeness "also required cultural cleansing, […] the degrading of a unifying culture and the depletion of an intelligentsia…"[104] So, while the invasion enabled the imposition of neo-liberalism from above, the aforementioned cultural cleansing would act as a reset for the Iraqi populace. The 'introduction' of neoliberalism from below would take place through educational reforms that espouse neoliberal ideals of individualism, of freedom to choose, the development of personal responsi-bility, and of the entrepreneurial self *inter alia*. In short inculcating ideals that would create good neoliberal citizens; with neoliberal also read civilized.[105]

(Un)Neoliberal Subjects?

The civilizing inculcation of neoliberalism from below is not something that just happens 'over there' but also in the metropole. In the contemporary con-text, with neoliberalism as the hegemonic ideology, racialized Islamophobic tropes present "Islam, the Muslim world, and Muslims as irrevocably antithet-ical to neoliberal values."[106] The cultural, read as traditional, practices of the Muslim 'Other' and the alleged behaviors that such traditions promote are held as being the reason for socio-economic exclusion of these groups; as holding people back from conforming to a "'meritocratic' neoliberal subjectivity."[107]As

the bearers of identities contrary to the neoliberal norms of individualism, Muslims are held as a threat to 'our' security and 'our' ways of being.[108]

The myriad diversity of Muslim subjectivities is reduced to the reductive binary of the good and bad Muslim,[109] the former is the position to be aspired for if one is to fit into the neoliberal *zeitgeist*. The good Muslim is secular, not 'obviously' or ostentatiously Mus-

Neo-colonial discourses of 'patriarchal' Islam and associated representations of 'oppressed' Muslim women reinstate in the neoliberal context "colonial modes of talking about and knowing the other"

lim, the bad Muslim is devout, practicing, and possibly but not necessarily, conservative.[110] Those classed as the good Muslim are Westernized, liberal, those classed as the bad Muslim are held to be fanatics, against liberal values, and atavistic.[111] The good Muslim is 'non-Islamist' the bad Muslim is an Islamist.[112] The good or moderate Muslim is the one the state prefers to engage with; they are the acceptable Muslim, unlike the bad Muslim held to be an extremist.[113] To be accepted then, one has to prove that one is the 'good' Muslim with Western values internalized, that one has 'learned' neoliberalism.[114] The good Muslim thus discards "all cultural and religious markers of otherness."[115]

Through the neoliberal gaze, the good/bad Muslim dichotomy represents an example of how one is or is not to live. In this context, the figure of the Muslim woman is particularly critical to this regulatory gaze and project of inculcating neoliberal individuation. The veiled Muslim woman is antithetical to the idealized neoliberal subject citizen, she, to draw from Razack, is a "non-citizen… trapped within group-based identities."[116] Identifiers of Muslimness exemplify a group of collective affiliations that are contrary to the neoliberal goal of making all rational, responsible individuals, "one-man [sic] archipelagos."[117] Deemed representative of collective identities contrarian to neoliberal ideals, the Muslim woman finds herself at the center of discourse of how or how not to be. Invoking colonial 'civilizing' tropes, the contemporary racialized construction of the Muslim woman positions her, *inter alia*, as oppressed by her male co-religionists, devoid of intellect and agency.[118] Neo-colonial discourses of 'patriarchal' Islam and associated representations of 'oppressed' Muslim women reinstate in the neoliberal context "colonial modes of talking about and knowing the other."[119]

The image of the oppressed female Muslim is juxtaposed with that of the liberated, emancipated, empowered western woman, read as modern, civilized, and embodying neoliberal ideals.[120] To modernize then, to be free requires one to cast off anything, including communal traditions and belief systems that will only hold one back from becoming neoliberal. Despite claims of "oppression

> ## Through the neoliberal lens, experiences of Islamophobic hostility and discrimination are simply the result of a 'failure' of the Muslim individual to be more like the neoliberalized 'us'

fatigue"[121] resultant of racialized imaginaries of Muslim women and incessant calls for their 'liberation,' her image operates discursively in the delivery of neoliberalism from above, legitimizing the neo-colonial enterprise abroad;[122] and below by representing how not to be neoliberal in the metropole.

Responsible Subjects

Internationally, over the past twenty years, a range of prohibitions have been implemented at the national, supra-national, and devolved/local authority levels that directly restrict practices associated with Islam and an alleged 'Islamization' of the West. These include prohibitions on the building of mosques, minarets, the production of *halal* food, and the wearing of Islamic dress, particularly impacting therefore on Muslim women.[123] Restrictions on the wearing of Islamic head coverings for Muslim women have been implemented at the national or local levels in a number of European states.[124] The implementation of such restrictions has been underpinned by the aforementioned discourses of Muslims as oppressed and in need of assistance if they are to be liberated and claims that the covered Muslim woman represents a refusal to integrate.[125] International research evidence demonstrates outputs of discourses of what the Muslim woman is held to represent, while various studies have evidenced the manner in which Muslim women experience higher rates of Islamophobic hostility and discrimination when compared to Muslim men.[126]

Through the neoliberal lens, experiences of Islamophobic hostility and discrimination are simply the result of a 'failure' of the Muslim individual (men and women) to be more like the neoliberalized 'us.' The individualizing drive of neoliberalism demands that collective, communal identities contrarian to neoliberal aims of an atomized 'society' are broken.[127] If one tries to maintain these 'Other' identities and associated practices, it goes such experiences of hostility and discrimination should be expected. While legislative measures deliver neoliberalism from above at home, the associated discourses utilized to justify such restrictions also serve to legitimize the policing of the Muslim body from below to society *en masse*, privatized in true neoliberal fashion.[128] From the neoliberal perspective, if you experience Islamophobic hostility and discrimination it is your own fault for not casting off symbols that associate

you with communal identities contrarian to neoliberalism. Your failings are yours and yours alone, and emanate from your 'faulty character.'[129] Furthermore, it is your responsibility to resolve your 'failings' and to engage in a form of risk management.[130] So, if you are the bearer of racialized signifiers that jar with what it means to belong in the neoliberal era, then 'simply' remove them, risk averted. Through this neoliberal 'logic,' the Muslim women should 'rationally' choose not to veil if this is going to expose her to anti-Muslim hostility and/or discrimination, disregarding the deep significance that such items of religious dress hold for those who wear them. If as a member of a racialized community, one is able but unwilling to minimize their risk of exposure to racism they should not look to the neoliberal state for assistance. The neoliberal state governs through "responsibilization,"[131] when it comes to living with Islamophobia one has to be the responsible Muslim and care for the self.

'Civilising' UnNeoliberal Communities

In the Cold War period, the enemy of the West was, albeit at times shifting, territorially demarcated. In the contemporary context, the 'non-West' has become a de-territorialized entity.[132] Spatially ambiguous, the non-West does not just exist 'over there,' understood through the lens of 'Global War on Terror,' the non-Western "enemy can also appear within the nation itself," located in the racialized bodies of Muslim individuals.[133] In this context, Muslim communities are suspect communities, firmly in the cross-hairs of state securitization policies and practices wherein all Muslims are presumed to be a terror threat identifiable through their religious identities and/or practices.[134] As noted

It is important to understand the manner in which neoliberal thinking impacts how Islamophobic tropes are constructed and also their effects on Muslim societies and people

above, vis-à-vis good/bad dichotomy, the more Muslim one is the greater the assumed risk one holds.[135] Nevertheless, in the contemporary securitized context, 'all' "Muslims are… a policing and social policy problem, in requirement of state intervention."[136] The impacts of such interventions include the over-representation of Muslim people in securitization programs designed to prevent or counter-extremism; a greater likelihood that one will be subjected to police profiling; and relatedly, random checks at ports and airports *inter alia* when identifiable as Muslim.[137]

Connecting the past to the neoliberal, neo-colonial present, Fekete argues, in the so-called 'War on Terror' and associated securitization practices, "repression has been ratcheted up, primarily through the imposition of emergency measures once practiced in the colonies (house arrest, detention without trial, special courts, exclusion orders, deportation, suspension of civil liberties, and so on)."[138] Moreover, and arguably of increasing import, "an all-pervasive narrative of national security serves to isolate critical voices."[139] From the outset of the 'War on Terror,' a range of Muslim civil society actors have acted as critical voices and advocates for the rights of Muslim communities.[140] However, despite the neoliberal valorization of 'freedom,' community-based civil society actors that criticize securitization policies, challenge Islamophobia, and support those affected, have increasingly had their ability to do so curtailed as they too have been classed as 'extremist' as the definition of what extremism is broadened to include 'non-violent' forms.[141]

Recent cases of such curtailments of Muslim civil society actors include the high-profile dissolution of the renowned Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF). The CCIF actively campaigned for the civil rights of Muslim communities, offering support to those who were the victims of Islamophobia as well as being critical of State policies that they claimed to be Islamophobic.[142] The CCIF was framed, to quote the French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, as an "enemy of the republic" and that it "had consistently carried out Islamist propaganda."[143] In the context of increasingly nebulous definitions of what exactly constitutes extremism, the dissolution of the CCIF and similar groups reduces the ability of "legitimate activity to address structural racism" to be undertaken.[144] Furthermore, and from the position taken in this paper in particular, the closure of community-based civil society organizations serves to further the neoliberal ends of dissolving notions of communal solidarity. At an official level, it becomes almost impossible to make claims in the name of the community. At a grassroots level, in addition to feelings of fear and dis-

trust, it reinforces the process of individuation valorized in the neoliberal *zeitgeist*; if you have problems with state securitization policies, address them as an individual; if you experience Islamophobic hostility and/or discrimination, deal with it yourself, as a good, neoliberal individual citizen. In such instances, it is possible to see neoliberalism being enforced from above at 'home' through securitization policies, and also from below, through the indoctrination of individualism and self-care in the absence of community-based supports. In short, the neoliberal civilizing mission at home.

Conclusion

As has been argued above, Islamophobia today is set to a context wherein neoliberalism is the hegemonic ideology of our time. To reiterate, it is not argued here that neoliberalism is 'the cause' or central driving factor underpinning contemporary Islamophobia; as noted above, to do so would be to ignore the factors relatively unique to certain settings. What is argued here though is that it is important to understand the manner in which neoliberal thinking impacts how Islamophobic tropes are constructed and also their effects on Muslim societies and people.

To draw again from Waikar, Muslims, Muslim majority societies, and the faith of Islam are constructed to bring "irrevocably antithetical to neoliberal values."[145] 'Over there,' Muslim majority societies are racialized as un-neoliberal and are therefore in need of neo-colonial civilizing interventions. Such constructions of the Muslim societies as 'Other' serve to legitimize the neo-colonial enterprise, cast as bringing freedom, democracy, and civilization to the otherwise benighted. Neoliberal nation-building ensues with socio-economic and political structures reoriented towards the neoliberal *zeitgeist*. At a societal level, the values of how to be a good neoliberal individual are inculcated throughout the citizenry.

At home in the metropole, Muslim communities are racialized and deemed to represent the antithesis of what it means to be a civilized neoliberal citizen thus they too are also in need of intervention. While a range of Islamic structures and practices are targeted for restrictions, the figure of the veiled Muslim woman is particularly critical in this regard. She is constructed as oppressed by her religion, as a security threat, and also as symbolic of 'separate communities' that refuse to integrate into neoliberal society; as such the neoliberal state justifies restricting her ability to manifest her faith freely, 'in the name' of 'freedom.' In addition to official restrictions, the discourses that accompany the introduction of legislative measures that restrict practices associated with Islam also legitimize anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination at a broader societal level. True to neoliberalism though, if you experience such exclusions,

as a responsible individual you have to manage your experiences of racism yourself. Do not look to the state for assistance and certainly do not look for support within Muslim communities. Embodiments of collective support too are targeted by the neoliberal state, have had their freedoms of expression and association restricted, and are in no position to support those impacted by Islamophobia. To conclude, as has been argued throughout, whether as 'civilizing missions' abroad or indeed at home, the lens of neoliberalism provides important understandings of Islamophobia as a function of power in the contemporary era. ●

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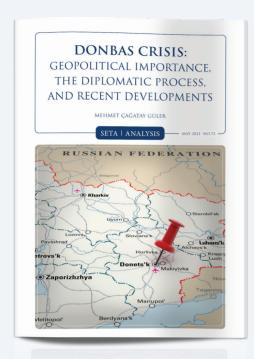
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