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Constructing Muslims in France: discourse, public identity, and the politics of citizenship

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struggle for minimum wages and in the process suffered extreme atrocities at the hands of the industrialists supported by the state agencies.

These kinds of suppressive actions of hegemonic forces are not limited to the largest province of Pakistan; they are also evident in the smaller provinces. Hafeez Jamali describes how fishermen in the strategic port of Gawader (Baluchistan) have questioned the state encroachment of sea and land under its neo-liberal development and modernity project. These fishermen have organized a struggle that is based in their fisherfolk and ethnic identities. A similar kind of intrusion into local space is reported by Shafqat Hussain in the Shishmal village of Gilgit Baltistan, where the locals have challenged the state decisions of making grazing grounds a national park. Mahvish Ahmad argues that the ethno-nationalists of Baluchistan also believe that the Pakistani state has been exploiting their natural resources and have consistently betrayed the Baluch people.

These grievances of Baluchistan and other smaller provinces are often linked with condescending and exploitative behaviour of the larger province of Punjab. However, Humaira Iqtidar challenges the idea of the monolithic, homogeneous dominant Punjab. Sultan-i-Rome and Iqbal Khattak, reporting on militancy from the north western parts of the country, identify the complexity of the militancy in the region and highlight the historical failure of the state to provide good governance to the people in the region. Amina Jamal in her study identified a very different kind of struggle initiated by the Jamat-i-Islami women in Pakistan. These women strive in the domain of culture and identity by challenging the dominant narrative of modernity represented by elite feminists. Interestingly, Jamal argues that their activism is the product of the economic neo-liberalization and globalization (rise of non-governmental organizations) in Pakistan. In the northern parts of Pakistan, the poets of Gilgit Baltistan are striving to create harmony and challenge sectarianism through poetic expressions. Hamad Nasr shows that despite violence, militancy and political unrest, young artists in Pakistan are finding new ways of producing art that reflects the themes of identity, nationhood, cultural and political contestations.

These diverse dimensions of the book are highly commendable for their insights and empirically rich details. They will also inform a reader who would like to study the dynamics of Pakistani society beyond security studies. The only limitation is the lack of any analysis on the endeavours carried out through virtual spaces such as the Internet and social media to challenge the hegemonic discourses and power structures in Pakistan.

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Constructing Muslims in France: discourse, public identity, and the politics of citizenship, by Jennifer Fredette, Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 2014, xiv + 214pp., US\$29.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1439910290

In *Constructing Muslims in France*, Jennifer Fredette sets out to investigate the construction of the French Muslim identity. She raises an elite-driven argument,

according to which a small yet highly influential group of people in France has framed and constructed an identity for the Muslims in the country. Central to that argument is the French elites' disregard for the diversity of the French Muslim communities, and the complexity of their experiences.

The book elaborates this argument by outlining who the French elites are, and how, though few in number, they have been able to influence the whole of French society. At the core of that outline are the organization of the French media and the societal notions of French republicanism: in France, the media is highly centralized. Local news sources are weak. Several major newspapers and television stations dominate all media. This centralization gives a small circle of people exclusive privilege to reach the French nation. These individuals are politicians, media personalities and/or intellectuals with similar educational and ideological backgrounds. More specifically, they are graduates of *grandes écoles*, they subscribe to French republicanism, and they are highly sceptical of multiculturalist ideas. They also read and reference each other's works on a regular basis, discuss issues on television panels frequently, and in so doing, construct and maintain an intersubjectivity for themselves and the rest of France.

This intersubjectivity involves an exclusionary view of French Muslims, the book argues. In very brief terms, the French elites define French Muslims solely by their religious background, and claim that Islam dominates all aspects of their lives. They further argue that Islamic values and traditions are largely antithetical to French republicanism, and thus conclude that it is Islam that keeps France's Muslims from becoming fully French. Often accompanying these arguments are degrading generalizations that characterize French Muslims as sexually aberrant people – that is, they are either virgins or sexual predators. Altogether, that discourse reduces French Muslims to 'religious beings' (81) who segregate themselves from the larger French society, and hardly feel any concern for the common good of the people outside their communities. As a result, although French Muslims are no longer immigrants, they are not fully French either (35). In a way, they are the 'undeserving citizens' of France (29–30).

Jennifer Fredette is highly critical of that discourse. Employing an interpretivist methodology, she demonstrates that the elite depiction of French Muslims is out of touch with reality. She underlines that French Muslims are so diverse in their ethnic background and religious practice that they do not even constitute a religious group to begin with. She thus questions the appropriateness of the phrase 'French Muslims', and suggests that it is a product of discursive framing. By doing so, she treats the elite discourse in France almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy that, on the one hand, constructs the French Muslim identity, and on the other, marginalizes it socially, politically and legally.

Fredette's investigation is primarily 'a constructivist analysis of meaning production' (13) that involves a critical examination of written and verbal sources of elite discourse. She also conducts semi-structured interviews with Muslim activists and elites, and analyses various examples of activist Muslim literature. The investigation is largely exploratory. Fredette acknowledges that she does not make any causal claims. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the very claim of elite influence on public discourse potentially constitutes a causal claim. Immediately relevant in that context is

John Zaller's (1992) major work. However, Fredette does not really integrate into her book the insights of scholars who do more systematic research. She mentions neither Zaller nor others, although their inclusion would probably enhance her analysis. For example, when discussing discrimination in hiring, Fredette quotes one of her interviewees whose CV is treated differently when he strategically does not use his Arabic name on it (115). Although important, this is nonetheless the experience of only one person. Reference to research with larger sample sizes would add to this single experience. Claire Adida and her colleagues, for example, have used identical CVs that differ only in applicants' names to test how ethnic background would impact the chances for a job interview in France. Citing results of such complementary research might provide the readers with more encompassing insights into the French case.

Despite such occasional shortcomings, Fredette's analysis offers an illuminating examination of the French case, especially in that she devotes an entire chapter each to the three realms that are central to integration debates: education, employment and housing. In these chapters, Fredette presents striking examples of widespread discriminatory practices, and demonstrates some wide discrepancies between the elite discourse and the facts on the ground. At the end of the analysis, the reader has a very different picture of 'French Muslims' from what the dominant discourse in France depicts. Fredette then turns to discuss the dominant views of citizenship in France in order to assess the outlook for Muslim integration. She finds that three of the four dominant views exclude Muslims in some way. What is perhaps even worse is that critical republicanism, the only view with an aim to include Muslims, has the weakest support among the four. The book thus concludes with a tone of uncertainty regarding the future of French Muslims.

Overall, *Constructing Muslims in France* offers a striking account of the problematic issues that migration and citizenship scholars have been pointing out about France especially since the riots of 2005. More importantly, the book does not fail to convince the readers that the problems regarding the integration of French Muslims are much deeper and more complex than the dominant discourse in France frames and describes them.

Reference

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Flip-flop: a journey through globalisation's backroads, by Caroline Knowles, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, xiii + 216 pp., £17.00 (paperback), ISBN 9780745334110

Caroline Knowles' provocative, engaging new book about globalization challenges conventional wisdom. It brings us down from the 'commanding heights of