

Abbas, Tahir and Hamid, Sadek (eds.) 2019. *Political Muslims: Understanding Youth Resistance in a Global Context*. New York, Syracuse: University Press. 336 pp. Pb.: \$39.95. ISBN: 9780815635833.

Book review by

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This book, edited by Tahir Abbas and Sadek Hamid, comprises eleven different and colourful academic contributions depicting the various individual and collective challenges that socially and politically involved Muslim youth face in various contemporary Muslim majority and minority societies worldwide. The chapters represent an alternative portrayal of the dominant academic and public narratives on Muslim youth as “problems” and internal or external “threats”.

The first two studies focus on North American cases. The first chapter of this volume addresses the everyday experiences of fight and resistance carried out by various Afro-American Muslim youth and emerging adults versus institutionalised oppression in the USA. Ahmed and Muhammad analyse their strategies of resorting to their Muslim identity and their racial and cultural heritage and asserting their socio-political involvement through various forms of artistic expression (music, fashion, movies, comedy, writing) (p. 41).

The second chapter looks at Canada’s university campuses in the post-9/11 era as significant sites for Canadian Muslim students to articulate their being and living as both Muslim and Canadian and confront issues related to Islamophobia, terrorism, and surveillance/scrutiny. Zine and Bala frame these places as also sites creating Islamic subcultures. Furthermore, this Muslim presence on Canadian campuses enables the creation of ‘communities of faith, activism and action’ (p. 72).

The geographical focus of the following two chapters shifts to Western Europe. In the third chapter, de Konig deconstructs the mainstream perspective of the “Salafi” movement associated with “radical Islam” in the case of the Netherlands. Reacting to Dutch governmental counter radicalisation’s policies, young Dutch Sunni Muslims have developed various strategies of Muslim social and political activism through music, political messages, and participation in Dutch civil society’s local projects.

Chapter four focuses on the third generation of British Bangladeshi Muslims and their daily struggles for social inclusion in contemporary Great Britain. Aminul Hoque explores the complex ways they forge British Muslim identities as ‘a politicised sense of self’ (p. 115) through their lives and multifaceted identities. They find their own ways to express their “Muslimness” through their participation in local and national politics, social justice campaigns, and modest fashion for women (p. 116).

The fifth chapter explores the various strategies that “scouts” (Swiss Muslim youth groups) use in “rough terrain” (contemporary secular Switzerland) to combat structural exclusion and social inequality they have to go through in their daily life in Switzerland. Tunger-Zanetti and Endress stress that by engaging in Swiss social and political debates, Swiss Muslim youth groups intend to perform an active role in asserting themselves as Swiss “ordinary” citizens and improving the understanding of Islam and Muslim-related issues in contemporary Switzerland.

After Western Europe, the compass of the remaining chapters turns to the continent of Asia. Serfati’s contribution on the Islamic Left in Turkey (chapter 6) focuses on two urban Muslim youth-based movements, challenging Turkey’s dominant political party, Islamic Justice and Development (AKP). Contrary to AKP’s Islamic authoritarian liberalism, these parties and other alternative Islam-inspired political parties and groups stress an egalitarian and socially conscious perspective on Islam-inspired politics.

Young diasporic Pakistani and Afghani Pushtun women bloggers (based in the USA and Western Europe) are the focus of Haqqani’s attention in the seventh chapter. Indeed, through their blogging activities, they voice their opinions and feelings, reflect and call into question current existing patriarchal political, religious, social and cultural structures in their societies of origin (p. 174). The digital sphere empowers these women and gives them access to virtual spaces where they can reshape their religious and gender identities. Eventually, they become potential catalysts for social and political change in their communities through their digital practices.

Pakistan is again under the microscope of the two following chapters. Gill Khan's research (Chapter Eight) focuses on the emergence of a group of young musicians concerned and involved in socio-political issues through their songs and personal stances. It is well illustrated by a famous Pakistani musician who decided to go on "war" through a "rock and roll jihad" versus politicians' and religious leaders twisting of the role of music and poetry in the country (p. 196).

The image of young "radical" Muslims in Pakistan is again deconstructed by Yaqoob in Chapter Nine. Indeed, she explores the role performed by youth associations and networks and their involvement in peace-building strategies (p. 216). Eventually, their social activities oriented towards critical thinking and intercultural dialogue dismantle the general assumption that all young Pakistani are "highly religious" and "conservative" (p. 227).

Pandit's contribution (Chapter Ten) highlights the role performed by young activists in Kashmir, a place that has been marred with political unrest and resentment since the splitting of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in 1947 (p. 232). Youth have always performed a key role in the struggle for freedom in the various conflicts that took place in Kashmir's history. From armed resistance, they have turned to non-violent activism and resistance through various digital and artistic activities to fight for their dignity and honour (p. 255).

The final chapter takes place in the largest Muslim country, Indonesia. Kersten emphasises the role of the youth, which has always been essential in the country's socio-political evolution. The youth has always been divided between a pragmatic youth towards the government and a more "puritan" youth, more oriented towards religious reference. This context of youth activism has fostered many intra-Muslim debates, as well as the polarisation of positions not only between Muslims and non-Muslims but also within the different Muslim communities in the country (p. 279).

Employing various disciplinary and methodological perspectives, ranging from educational studies to the sociology of religion and culture, religious studies, political anthropology and cultural studies *inter alia*, the various contributions of this richly documented volume spotlight Muslim youth's diverse forms of empowerment and resistance versus dominant religious, cultural and socio-political narratives and through their active involvement in the arts, politics, digital sphere and society of their respective countries.

These different case studies of Muslim youth activists in Muslim majority and minority countries debunk in a relevant way these essentialist and simplistic perspectives still ex-

isting among some academic and political circles perceiving Muslim youth monochromatically through the prism of “terrorism” and “violent radicalism”. Eventually, they denote the complexity and differentiation of human and collective experiences of Muslim youth, shaping processes of contextual expression and normalisation of Islam on the one hand and transnational consciousness of being young and Muslim on the other.