

BOOK REVIEW**Parvez, Z. Fareen. 2017. *Politicizing Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India*. New York: Oxford University Press. 288 pp**

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Politics and Islam is one of the most popular research topics when it comes to Islam and Muslims. Since the 1990s, but mostly after the landmark date of 9/11, a huge production of publications in the West have been dealing with the place and role of politics in Islam, and most notably with what has been called as the Islamization of Western societies. Parvez, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, adds to the large existing literature on Islam and politics from a very interesting and informative perspective through the comparison of two very different societies: the French and the Indian.

The book is based on the author's extensive ethnographic fieldwork in both countries and consists of seven chapters and two appendices. Apart from the introduction, which is focused on politicizing Islam across North and South (i.e., France and India), the second chapter also plays the role of introducing the reader to secularism and Muslim marginalization in both countries. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on India, discussing the politics of redistribution and the political community in the slums of Hyderabad, while chapters 5 and 6 focus on France, on the politics of recognition and the rise of anti-politics in the suburbs (banlieues) of Lyon. Finally, chapter 7 summarizes the author's conclusions.

The book argues that four different types of movements across class are taking place in France and India: in Hyderabad (1) a middle-class politics of redistribution and (2) community politics among the poor, and in Lyon (3) a middle-class recognition politics and (4) a movement of anti-political withdrawal in the city's suburbs. Contrary to the dominant public discourse on Islamic movements, this book argues that Islamic revivals in the cities of Lyon and Hyderabad are not aimed at the Islamization of the state or the society (p. 2).

The main goal of the book is to provide insight into the everyday lived experiences of religion and politics of Muslims in Lyon and Hyderabad during the post-9/11 era. According to the author, like in many other Muslim societies, French and Indian Muslim communities have undergone a vibrant Islamic revival in the last 20 years, signified by increased women's veiling, the opening of neighborhood mosques and Islamic schools, everyday participation in informal Islamic study circles and charity activities, and greater emphasis on Muslim identity (Mahmood 2011). Parvez argues that these revivals in Lyon and Hyderabad share features with Islamic

revival movements across the globe (Roy 2004). They also have distinct social consequences based on their interactions with the state and with historically embedded class structures within each society. Parvez's book explores these interactions and describes the specific types of politics that have emerged among Muslim communities in both places under examination.

In Lyon and Hyderabad, Muslims were engaged in a struggle with the state over resources and religious rights, as well as internal struggles over political strategies and the meaning and interpretation of Islamic teachings. The question of how minority Muslims make political claims on the state and improve their situation departs from the dominant debate on how to democratize and liberalize Muslims. This question has played itself out through a struggle within Muslim communities that is closely tied to social class. At the same time, the author focuses on the local political and economic factors that have placed women at the center of Islamic movements and have made their participation personally meaningful, emphasizing this way the intersection of gender with class (p. 23).

Despite the similarities in the religious dynamics, politics diverge quite dramatically between Lyon and Hyderabad. These variations are explained by the different models of secularism in the two countries. In France, the assimilationist model of secularism stigmatizes religion in the public sphere, leading to middle-class claims for religious recognition. It also puts various barriers to cross-class identification and organization among Muslims. As a result, working-class Muslims in Lyon's suburbs feel isolated and disconnected from politics. On the other hand, in India, the pluralist model of secularism guarantees and celebrates religious liberties, leading the middle class and elites to focus their efforts on economic redistribution to the poor. That way, the recognition, or in fact the solidification, of religious communities in India allows the cross-class mobilization. Through middle-class and elite patronage, subaltern Muslims in low-income neighborhoods of India become able to work towards community autonomy, social change, and the advancement of women (p. 5).

The main theoretical tool, apart from secularization and secularism, used by the author is anti-politics. In her approach, anti-politics consist of three components. First, women struggle to defend, expand, and reconfigure the private sphere against an intrusive state that sought to 'protect' Muslim women in the French public sphere. Second, Salafist women retreat into 'unorganized private life'. Their anti-politics prioritize moral community among individuals as opposed to formal associations or institutions. On the other hand, state regulation and control of public life, from mosques to youth associations, leads to a retreat into less organized communities. Third, anti-politics emphasize spiritual conditions, truth, dignity, and inner states of being that, as argued, could avoid the heavy hand of an overwhelming state (pp. 21–22).

This book offers a refined understanding of Islamic revival movements, especially those characterized as fundamentalist, through a quite innovative and fruitful approach to the politics of Islam in secular states and disentangling this way the very common conflation of politics and Islam. By providing a cultural class analysis, it brings attention to the central role of class relations, which existing academic work has largely neglected. Middle-class Muslims and elites mobilize and politicize Islam in order to challenge state discriminatory policies, focusing on redistribution in Hyderabad and recognition in Lyon. Subaltern and poor Muslims politicize Islam in Hyderabad to promote community and women's education, while in Lyon they practice anti-politics in order to defend and reconfigure the private sphere or to protect the sacred from the profanity of politics (pp. 31–32). In the case of Lyon, Muslims withdrew from politics entirely, while in Hyderabad, they embraced a non-instrumental vision of politics through the creation of community and bonds of reciprocity as ends in themselves (p. 26).

Having the above in mind, this book contributes with three theoretical interventions. First, the contradictions of secularism determine the nature of minority religious movements,

because secularism in both countries has defined the conditions of equality and citizenship. Second, Muslim class relations influence the agendas and political potentiality of Islamic movements. Third, distinguishing between an instrumental concept of politics that takes the state as its object and a non-instrumental politics that takes community as the means and end gives greater precision to the analysis of Islamic revival movements (p. 183). As a consequence, the book offers a theoretical claim about the types of secularism and the role of ethnic minority class relations that scholars or policy makers might consider and reconstruct in other urban and national contexts (p. 193).

When it comes to criticism of the book, four minor points could be mentioned. First, the use of the terms global north and global south in chapter one (p. 21) could be avoided because they reproduce ideological divisions and stereotypes. Second, the discussion on secularization and secularism could be further expanded, elaborating on the existing theories before setting the framework in both countries. Third, although there are certain differences between France and India, a more synthesized way of presenting the findings could make the comparison more productive. Meaning that instead of two chapters focused on India and two on France offered separately, another option would have been to merge them into two chapters, for example, one on 'the politics of redistribution and recognition' and another on the 'political community in the slums of Hyderabad and anti-politics in the banlieues of Lyon'. Finally, Appendix A, which is extremely interesting and well elaborated, could be included in the main corpus of chapters as a methodological one, because it offers insights of great value on the conducted ethnographic work and would not disturb the reader at all.

Overall this is a timely, interesting, and well-structured book, which, although focusing on the politicization of Muslims in France and India, offers the reader an alternative approach to what usually dominates the Western media and politics, or even in some cases academia, with regard to Islam and Muslims. It could be a useful tool not only for all those studying the above fields of research, but also for ethnographers because of its vibrant and reflective methodological experiences and insights.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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