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Jerome Drevon (2024). *From Jihad to Politics:
How Syrian Jihadis Embraced Politics*.
Oxford University Press. pp. 261.

ISBN 9780197765159.

Reviewer: *Mohamed Fouz Mohamed Zacky*

759

Zouhir Gabsi (2024). *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia: From Misconceptions to Reason*.
Palgrave Macmillan.
Reviewer: *Arief Arman*

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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ، اِ، اُ	a		آ، عَ، يَ	an
وُ	u		وُ	un
يَ	i		يَ	in
آ، اَ، اِ، عَ، يَ	ā		وُ	aw
وُ	ū		يَ	ay
يَ	ī		وُ	uww, ū (in final position)
			يَ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

ahead, one of the significant limitations of the book is that it addresses the politicisation of *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS) to a lesser extent than that of *Ahrar al-Sham*. As a result, readers seeking to understand HTS after its rise may find the content somewhat lacking. However, the author seems to acknowledge this limitation, as he will be publishing a follow-up book exclusively focused on HTS in July 2025. The new title will be '*Transformed by the People: Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham's Road to Power in Syria*,' to be published by Hurst. It seems that the book would be an in-depth study on HTS's role in governing Northern Syria and its impact on their politicisation and experience in statecraft.

Zouhir Gabsi (2024). *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia: From Misconceptions to Reason*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Reviewer: Arief Arman, Research Fellow, Peace, Dialogue and Xenophobia Studies Centre (PEDIXS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Email: 705243@alumni.soas.ac.uk

In the context of a post 9/11 world and increased immigration into the Global North by Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim, there are bound to be clashes between the hosts, and the unwelcome guests. Such hate pertains to the notion of 'Islamophobia,' a term recently coined, but with historical antecedents. *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia: From Misconceptions to Reason* by Zouhir Gabsi of Deakin University is a timely exposition of the origins of Islamophobia, and the many ways it is actualised in both politics and praxis.

The book contains nine chapters which is broken into four parts. Chapters I, II, III, and IV pave the way for the conceptualising and contextualising of the term 'Islamophobia.' Citing Āli 'Imrān āyah 120, Zouhir hits the ground running with a bold statement that intolerance towards Islām has been predicted by both the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth (Prophetic tradition). Such a statement sets the stage for a convincing engagement with the dichotomy between the East and West, where Samuel Huntington's (in)famous 'Clash of Civilizations' is referenced. Historically, Islamophobia is rooted in colonialism and amalgamates

around a specific idea of ‘religion.’ It is deployed as a political tactic and serves to silence Muslim voices, especially in the public discourse during election cycles. Chapter II sees the author discussing the need for an internal Islamic perspective on Islamophobia. This emic approach – looking at the beliefs, practices, and values of a particular culture from the perspective of the people who live within that culture – allows a shift from Orientalist methods in perceiving Islam, and the associated hate that might ensue from it. This shift allows Muslim academics to scrutinise the notion of ‘Islamophobia’ on their own terms.

Zouhir highlights the fact that if one examines the various interpretations of ‘internal’ versus ‘external’ views of Islamophobia, *one finds no common ground between the two*. He contends that Muslim perspectives on Islamophobia ought to avoid apologetic narratives, and that conversations of the faith must be conducted through less emotive and reactionary bases. Next, Zouhir assesses how language is used in the global discourse on Islamophobia. Citing numerous scholars, the author points out how the Western narrative on Islam is very different to that of the narrative formed in the Arab world – both through speech and the written word. The example provided is the so-called ‘War on Terror’ where words have been chosen over others to hide their ‘real’ meaning – ‘insurgents’ used instead of ‘freedom fighter’, ‘collateral damage’ instead of ‘dead civilians’, and so on. Against this backdrop, it is imperative for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike to question how language is applied to construct reality.

Zouhir then discusses the fascinating Orwellian term ‘unperson’ – “*describing anyone who does not exist in the sense that they are not seen, or valued, or may be excluded, scapegoated, and unworthy*” (Gabsi, 2024: 274). Zouhir mentions that history is filled with examples of aggression towards Muslims (which also touches on the idea of the ‘unperson’), with ‘Islamophobia’ being an updated version of such animosity. Providing the example of the Crusades, the European attitude towards Islam seems to be set in stone, that is of a perpetual enemy that needs to be destroyed. In its modern guise, what strikes the author most is how Western governments – through their cadre of academics and policymakers, have focused almost entirely on Muslims, studying their behaviour and ‘religiosity,’ which appears almost voyeur-like. Numerous deradicalisation programs by Western governments are also

introduced in regions like Southeast Asia,¹ while conveniently forgetting the threat posed by supremacists of an Anglicised form.

Further chapters see Zouhir delving into the narratives surrounding Islamophobia, which are often peddled based on myths and misrepresentations of Islam's various tenets and philosophy – including *'ibādah* (worship), *mu'āmalāt* (transactions, relationship with the other), jihad, and the *Sharī'ah* (Sacred Law). What underpins such misrepresentations is the simple fact that Islam is seen as unreasonable. The perception that Islam is 'suffering from a reason deficiency' drives the point of an assumed backwardness inherent within all Muslims. This is of course such a simplistic take, since Muslims (generally speaking) are respectful of the boundaries that come with the acquiring of knowledge. Zouhir argues that 'the everyday Muslim' is able draw a demarcation between the application of intellect and the counter-intuitiveness of argumentation for the sake of argumentation. As such, Islamophobes are of the belief that Islam is a closed and dogmatic system; the perfect enemy of free speech (Gabsi, 2024:157).

A surprising theme found in the text is an elaborate explanation of Sufism and how it could be viewed as an 'alternative face of Islam.' The author makes the link between Sufism and Islamophobia by mentioning that the former can reduce the latter by debunking the myth that Islam is devoid of spirituality, unlike other monotheistic traditions. The argument goes that if Islam is stripped off its spiritual dimension, rigid literalism would take place – a literalism applied by Islamists in their battle against Western institutions and ideologies. In their concerted efforts to establish their notion of Sharī'ah, one just needs to observe how the Islamic State (IS) has misappropriated Qur'ānic verses in legitimising their actions. Zouhir's argument is that Sufism as a practice, allows the believer to be at peace with himself and those around him. The theme

1 Nanyang Technological University (NTU) houses the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), a centre for counterterrorism research and analysis in the region that has a close relationship with The National Bureau of Asian Research – which works closely with the US government on matters of security. If we are to call a spade a spade, 'espionage' is the term to be used – a pursuit which undermines the security of ASEAN itself, while emboldening US influence in the region and shaping the narrative of 'Islamophobia'.

of tolerance in Islam is significant, and the move towards Sufism is appreciated as it opens the conversation on love, peace, and tolerance within the Islamic faith. In the final chapter, Zouhir summarises his findings, highlighting the shift in focus from the micro-level analysis to the macro-level analysis, which includes its idiosyncrasies and challenges. According to him, there needs to be a constant awareness of how bias and prejudice inform decision-making processes in the West. This point also relates to how counter-terrorism operations are conducted. Unlike war – which has traditionally been understood to have a starting point and an end – counter-terrorism measures embody a paradox that is both ‘abiding’ or ‘continuing’ (necessitating constant surveillance) and ‘imminent’ (necessitating urgent action), creating perpetual, self-justifying violence with no clear endpoint. It must be noted that Muslims of different skin tones and denominations have been on the receiving end of such violence.

If there is any criticism of the book is that a few of the chapters are too detailed, and the examples offered do not add much to the argument. There is also a tendency to digress from the topic engaged with, which causes the reader to be perplexed by elaborate details that could be used as content for another publication instead. When one engages from a ‘Muslim perspective,’ what kind of Muslim is the perspective being derived from? From here, we see a lack of representation of the Shi’i point of view on Islamophobia.² The same can be said of the Ibadi perspective. An engagement with the perspectives of such different denominations, would have provided for a more diverse engagement with Islamic history and *siyāsah*, making the argument from a ‘Muslim perspective’ more compelling.

Overall, *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia: From Misconceptions to Reason* is a text worthy of praise for its originality. It is indeed a valiant effort in combating prevalent misconceptions of the Islamic faith and the concomitant phobia that follows from such false impressions. This text is recommended for those who are interested to explore the origins of hate, and how it manifests in both thought and action.

² The author clarified this omission was only a matter of editorial constraints during a webinar discussing the book, organised by the PEDIXS (Peace, Dialogue and Xenophobia Studies) Centre.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Intellectual Discourse is an academic, refereed journal, published twice a year. Four types of contributions are considered for publication in this journal: major articles reporting findings of original research; review articles synthesising important deliberations related to disciplines within the domain of Islamic sciences; short research notes or communications, containing original ideas or discussions on vital issues of contemporary concern, and book reviews; and brief reader comments, or statements of divergent viewpoints.

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1. Original research and review articles should be 5,000-8,000 words while research notes 3,000-4,000 words, accompanied by an abstract of 100-150 words. Book review should be 1,000-1,500 words.
2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with a 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins. Use 12-point Times New Roman font.
3. Manuscripts should adhere to the *American Psychological Association* (APA) style, latest edition.
4. The title should be as concise as possible and should appear on a separate sheet together with name(s) of the author(s), affiliation(s), and the complete postal address of the institute(s).
5. A short running title of not more than 40 characters should also be included.
6. Headings and sub-headings of different sections should be clearly indicated.
7. References should be alphabetically ordered. Some examples are given below:

Book

In-text citations:

Al-Faruqi & al-Faruqi (1986)

Reference:

Al-Faruqi, I. R., & al-Faruqi, L. L. (1986). *The cultural atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Chapter in a Book

In-text:

Alias (2009)

Reference:

Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article

In-text:

Chapra (2002)

Reference:

Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10, 214-232.

The Qur'ān

In-text:

(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth

In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible

In-text:

Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:

The new Oxford annotated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Transliteration of Arabic words should follow the style indicated in ROTAS Transliteration Kit as detailed on its website (http://rotas.iium.edu.my/?Table_of_Transliteration), which is a slight modification of ALA-LC (Library of Congress and the American Library Association) transliteration scheme. Transliteration of Persian, Urdu, Turkish and other scripts should follow ALA-LC scheme.

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