

BEYOND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: THE NEW GLOBAL POLITICS OF RELIGION. By Elizabeth Shakman Hurd. Princeton, USA, and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2015. Pp. xvi+200. ISBN: 9780691166094.

In modern times, the interplay of religion and politics has posed a daunting and puzzling dilemma to political analysts worldwide. While religion is considered to be the main governing factor of violence in most of the cases, ironically, the solutions proposed for combatting religious persecution are also crafted and projected in religious guise. The book under review is a fascinating and sensitizing account of the dilemma created by the advocacy of religious freedom in new global politics in terms of patronizing *some* forms of religion while discriminating *other* forms of 'belief, being, and belonging.' Thus, it 'explores the politics of singling out religion as a basis from which to make foreign policy, international public policy, and conduct human rights advocacy' (p. 2).

The author, Elizabeth Hurd, Associate Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, has concerned herself with finding answers to certain thought-provoking questions: What are the consequences when the category of religion becomes an object of international law and international public policy? What are the effects, on both religious and political practices, of religions acting as "shadow players" in global politics? etc. The author has done a commendable job in finding answers to these questions and relied on rich empirical data. In a crisp manner, the author engages the reader in understanding how different global powers have got involved in the promotion of a moderate religion as a public policy. She brings to the fore how state intervention to promote religious freedom has actually contributed in creating a gulf between the religious forms sanctioned by these global actors and the broad multi-faceted religious forms lived by a multitude of people but alienated by these advocates of religious freedom. The author has labelled both these forms of religion with the catchy titles of 'expert religion' and 'lived religion.' These titles undoubtedly open new avenues for thinking on religion and its relationship with global politics. In the introductory chapter of the book, the author has efficiently set the background of her book and effectively contextualized her discourse both theoretically and empirically.

The second chapter of the book is devoted to an introduction and analysis of the discourse of the "two faces of faith" ('good' religion that is tolerant, peaceful, and free; 'bad' religion that is allegedly intolerant, sectarian, and inclined to extremism). How this discourse shapes contemporary international politics and policy has been well explained by the author on the basis of sound argumentation and appropriate illustration. This chapter also presents a case

study focusing on the Sahrawi refugees in South Western Algeria. For the author, it represents 'one of the many contexts in which the global dynamics of good religion-bad religion have materialized' (p. 22). Whatever the case study, this chapter provides a probing analysis of the programme of US foreign policy establishment of bifurcating the religious actors into good and bad ones and prescribing different treatment to both: identifying and empowering peaceful moderates, and marginalizing or reforming fundamentalists.

The third chapter of the book, "International Religious Freedom", is a critique of the promotion of religious freedom by the global powers, especially USA, to eradicate religious persecution in the target countries. Through rich empirical data based on the case studies of Rohingya in Myanmar, Central African Republic, Guatemala, India, and South Sudan coupled with the theoretical insights of the author, the chapter leads us to a new way of thinking about the religious freedom projects. The author is sceptical of religion and religious freedom as a stable, fixed parameter that can be used as a dependent or independent variable. The author argues that 'the global promotion of religious rights and freedoms, like sectarianism, is a discourse of expert religion and governed religion, *defined by those in power*' (p. 41, emphasis added). She is of the opinion that the global promotion of religious freedom is a resultant of what it presumes to eradicate by creating new forms of social friction on the basis of religious difference.

The following chapter, titled "Religious Engagement", is concerned with exploring the US foreign religious engagement. The author brings to the fore in a stimulating way how US imposed its agenda on foreign countries in the guise of a 'free' or 'reformed' version of religion. The author is critical of "religious freedom" that is actually tantamount to conforming to American standards of what it means to be free, both religiously and politically. In this chapter, the author has successfully situated the contemporary religious engagement programmes on a longer historical timeline and integral to a larger American project. Towards the end of the chapter, she contends that 'the instability of the category of religion makes it impossible for governments to engage in religious outreach without privileging particular authorities and communities over others' (p. 83).

The next chapter is devoted to a study of the US policy for the protection of minorities' rights. After a brief overview of the genesis of US policy regarding minorities, the author goes on to explore 'the implications of adopting religion as a category to draw together individuals and communities as corporate bodies that are depicted as in need of legal protection to achieve their freedom' (p. 86). It specifically focuses on a case study of the Alevi in Turkey. Besides a short

introduction to the Alevis, it evaluates Alevism as defined in legal terms differently by the Turkish state and the European Court of Human Rights. An exploration of the relations between the examples of “governed religion” exemplified here by the two different legal constructs of Alevism and the broader and multi-faceted aspects of being and belonging, that they shape and constrain, is the connecting thread of the different sub-sections of this chapter. The last chapter provides a gist of the whole book summing up the main arguments as well as contextualizing the findings. It puts a question mark on the use of religion as a category for international foreign policy.

In sum, the book is a fascinating critique of the advocacy of religious freedom on the part of global political actors. It raises certain stimulating and thought-provoking questions about the implications of the selective approach adopted by the protagonists of religious freedom regarding particular forms of religious life which they seek to promote while ignoring the broader aspects of being, believing, and belonging. It is a useful source book for students and scholars of global politics, religion, and political sociology as it opens new avenues of thinking on the otherwise noble ideal of ‘religious freedom.’ Hurd’s invitation to think ‘beyond religious freedom’ will hopefully generate a rich and ground-breaking debate on the nexus between religion and global politics.

Aligarh Muslim University, India

Gowhar Quadir Wani

AL-BRITANNIA, MY COUNTRY. By James Fergusson. London: Bantam Press, 2017. Pp. 400. ISBN: 9780593077375.

This book is a refreshing addition to the burst of literature currently being published on Muslims in Britain. Written in an engaging yet lucid manner, the author, a journalist who has spent more than twenty years reporting on Muslims in some of the most troubled parts of the world, turns the gaze on Muslims at home. Acknowledging that the sheer complexity of the Muslim population is impossible to capture, and that there exists much negativity surrounding Muslims, the author undertakes a personal journey of discovery. This book is a must for everyone with an interest in understanding Muslims in modern Britain, especially those involved in policy making.

The author begins his search for the oft-repeated non-violent extremist by visiting Dewsbury, a town renowned for producing a disproportionate number of terrorists. The town is not far from the site where the Labour MP for Batley and Spen, Jo Cox, was stabbed and shot to death by someone who