
Book Review

Nathan Lean. *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*. Pluto Press. 2012. 222 p.

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Mehmet AKSÜRMEĒİ*

This book, written by Nathan Lean who holds a Master Degree in International Studies and a Master of Arts in Arab Studies from Georgetown University, mainly tries to find an answer to the question of “Why is it that ten years after September 11, 2001, fear, mistrust, and hatred of Muslims were at their highest levels ever?” (p. 9). The writer proposes that “the recent spike in anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States and Europe is not the result of a naturally evolving climate of skepticism but a product that has been carefully and methodically nurtured over the past decade and is only now in the second decade of the twenty-first century reaching its desired peak” (p. 13). In a more clear and direct way, the writer claims that the book is to examine “the dark world of monster making” and to peer into “the lives of a fear industry bent on scaring the public about Islam” (p. 13). His usage of “industry” and “Islamophobia” concepts together on the book’s title and in the introduction, while explaining the aim of the books, shows that he considers islamophobia similar to a product manufactured in a factory. In that sense, during the book, the reader witnesses the writer’s explanations on how this production processes are working.

The writer attempts to prove his claims in a structure composed of seven chapters. In the first two chapters, the theoretical infrastructure of this book is being constructed. I consider these two chapters as literature review chapters. The title of the first chapter is “Monsters Among Us: A History of Sowing Fear in America”. In this chapter, the history of otherization is held over various examples. Otherization processes of many different groups, like political religious or civic groups in America, since the 1700s have been presented as examples. The writer in that chapter tries to convince the reader that the propaganda to create monsters in America has a historical background. Moreover, this history is not restricted to certain groups of people, according to different authority relationships, different groups may be under the category of ‘unwanted’. In the second chapter, the internet, which is an important and new tool of otherization, is noted. The writer considers the internet as “a web of

* Arş. Gör., Gaziantep Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Din Sosyolojisi Anabilim Dalı, aksurmeli@gmail.com.

deception" that people "foment hate online" (p. 41). He points the internet's demonic power to create perceptions. The internet now is a fertile place for the ones who are "seeking to organize populist uprisings" (p. 50). While "coffee-shop gatherings and living-room meetings" were the old spaces for this purpose, now the internet substitutes such places (p. 50). The cyber-sphere provides a seat for everyone, therefore, "Shopkeepers, bureaucrats, small business owners, and even the unemployed can now transcend the traditional class divisions between them and use the Web as a way to attract a larger following and spread ideas that previously existed only within local populations to the state, national, and even international level" (p. 50).

After these two chapters, which constitute the theoretical background of the book, the writer explains the actors who use the Islamophobia industry for their benefits during the next five chapters. These four chapters shape the main body of the book. During these chapters media, the right-wing politics in America, their pro-Israel position are extensively analyzed as the actors who use Islamophobia industry. According to the writer, these actors work in coordination. He reviews numerous cases from the media, the political life of America, and religious groups' daily life to support his claims. In chapter three, the writer portrays the media as a tool serving to advertise Islamophobia. The media is not a passive tool to circulate such ideas, rather it is the indispensable part of Islamophobia industry similar to any industry in which "advertising is paramount to the success of a product" (p. 66). He points out different media channels as more responsible within these processes. In chapters four, six and five, the writer examines the relationship between the right-wing American politics and Christian groups deeply over different cases to show how they use Islamophobia industry. I should note that Ergun Caner case, presented in chapter four (p. 88-90), is important to see that how Islamophobia may be misleading for Christian groups. The discussions on right-wing politics have a core place in this book. In the subtitle of the book, the writer points out them. Moreover, during chapters six and seven, this subtitle is exemplified over the examples. In the last chapter, the topic is how the United States manufactured Islamophobia industry may have an effect on Europe in the production of Islamophobia. Although this chapter presents various cases from Europe, it mainly focuses on 2011 Oslo attack and mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik. The writer considers this attack and massacre held by Breivik as the consequence of the Islamophobia industry of United States.

Since its publication, the book has been translated and published in various languages including Arabic and Turkish. It has reached a worldwide audience of readers. This is an important indicator to see how the book is considered as a valuable one in various parts of the world to understand Islamophobia. I consider the negative point of the book as its referencing the rhetorical cases rather than the academic studies. Although this situation makes the book easier to read, it makes the book controversial in certain aspects. It may create dissatisfaction for a certain group of the reader and can be regarded as a problem in academic terms.