



Shenila Khoja-Moolji

Sovereign Attachments:
Masculinity, Muslimness, and Affective Politics
in Pakistan

Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021
ISBN: 9780520336797 (hbk), xii, 270 pp

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Sovereign Attachments: Masculinity, Muslimness, and Affective Politics in Pakistan by Shenila Khoja-Moolji examines nuanced and complicated imbrications of masculinity and Muslimness and affective politics in Pakistan. She unravels how the nexus of patriarchal/masculinist interpretations of Islam, patriotism, nationalism and politics is designed and used against each other by the state of Pakistan and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the banned terrorist outfit in the country. Situated in the Western academic and socio-political context, Khoja-Moolji, a postdoctorate fellow in America and a Pakistani diasporic writer/researcher, views the situation between Pakistan's military and TTP with a focus on the strategic religio-gender similarities between them. This book reveals how both the Pakistani state and the Taliban reiterate the practice to govern their sovereign ambitions by fostering their attachment to Muslimness and masculinity. Without the support of masses, the idea of sovereignty is reduced to illegitimacy and leads to coercion in a country. Thus, the Pakistani state and aspirants of sovereignty imbibe the emotions of gender and religion in order to adjunct with the public culture of Pakistan. The emergence of terrorism and Talibanisation in the aftermath of 9/11 produces particular scripts that invite the scholars of political literature to decipher how sovereignty can be gendered and normative understandings of Islam, memories and kinship metaphors nurtured by both the state and the Taliban.

The book revolves around the idea that sovereignty is not given, 'Instead it is a relationship that has to be cultivated, as claimants hope to convince an audience of unknown others about their legitimacy' (2). How do pseudo actors of sovereignty continue to challenge the sovereign state and which methods are used by the defendant state? Which groups work in Pakistan to challenge the sovereign state? To what extent does Muslimness prevail in Pakistan to foster religious attachments in public? How do memories rework to stimulate a nation? How is gender implanted in the texts used by the Taliban and the Pakistani state to govern affective politics? This book remarkably provides answers to these questions in a more focused way. The book is divided into two parts. Part One entails sovereign Islamo-masculinities with the subheadings of Narrating the Sovereign, Identity, Alterity, Competing Sovereigns. Part Two deals with stylising political attachments with the subheadings: Subordinated Femininities, Kinship Metaphors and Managing Affects.

Chapter One warrants particular focus on State-Taliban relationship for a number of reasons. First, the Taliban have widespread legitimacy; second they are violent actors, and third, they

aspire to control territory, mimic the state in many different ways and even provide an alternate version of a system of government while resisting the state and proving themselves as de facto sovereignty. Furthermore, the author distinguishes between different factions of the Taliban including Afghan Taliban and Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and seeks to ascertain how both TTP and the state use political texts and speeches in rallies, posters, slogans, marches, media productions, journals, anthems, music, plays, movies, newspapers and public protests to cast each other as anti-Islamic while holding themselves up as the true exponent and followers of Islam. Critical analysis of these texts by the author reveals how political attachment and attachment to masculinity and Muslimness are intertwined and figurations of *jawan*, (soldier, it is usually used for an army soldier in Pakistan) and *ummah* (Muslim community) are used as examples. Moreover, the author also celebrates the figuration of Pakistani state leaders and military men who elaborated Islamo-masculinity through their performative actions, That is: dress, linguistic behavior, athletic body valorisation, moderate version of Islamic ideologies, using *jawan* as a proxy and system of governance in order to legitimise themselves in the public culture of Pakistan. Even, Benazir Bhutto also portrayed herself in a masculine role by privatising her feminine emotions and putting emphasis on masculine physicality by wearing a coat and cap on different occasions in public as an affective public glue. Besides, the identity of *jawan* and *Talib* (student of a religious seminary, singular of Taliban) are presented differently in the archives of The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) and the Taliban. The ISPR depicts the *Taliban* as cowardly, deficient, fanatical, homosexual, anti-Islamic, undeveloped and sexually perverted whereas *jawan* is depicted as *Ghazi*, a brave male warrior, protector, heterosexual, *shaheed* (martyred), *mard e mujahid* (holy warrior/soldier of Islam), *Islam ka spahi* (soldier of Islam), *Mard e Muslamaan* (a true brave Muslim) to denote the manhood of Islam. In this way, the attachment of people is extended to *jawan* and weaned away from the Taliban.

Contrary to the discourse of the state, the counter narrative of Taliban against the state again seeks its roots in Islamo-masculinity. *Ihya e Khilafat* (Revival and safety of classical government system of old Muslim rulers), *Sunnat e Khola* (Following the Prophet's way) and *Azaan* (The call to prayer), all publications by the Taliban, suggest the state is anti-Islamic and a fake version of Islam and instead claims themselves as the true guardians and protectors of Islam and *sharia* and against *kufar* (the condition of being non-Muslim). Even the Taliban's use of kinship metaphors from the Holy Quran is an expression of attachment. Taliban adherents also show their moderate behaviour through the use of a softer masculinity; They perform intense Islamo-masculinity through piousness, by claiming patience, by wearing a beard, calling for *jihad* and prayers, *tasbih*, depicting the killing of Muslims by the army and concepts of *shadat*. This hyper-reality by Taliban engenders ambivalence among people as they also have a global readership.

Part two of the book, *Stylizing Political Attachments* explores how the archives of both the State and Taliban connect sovereignty and public culture through gendered labour, the contribution of female authors through first person narrative accounts, the depiction of women as active warriors who promote Islam, engendering kinship feelings of state, linking Taliban and people with legendary females of Islam and Pakistan, and the depiction of memories of mourning mothers in public protests. For instance, the army provokes women as fashionable and athletic but Taliban's women wear the *hijab*. The selected texts by the state attempt to expose TTP women as deprived whereas sisters, wives and mothers of soldiers are hailed as heroes and invited to join the army for a greater cause. Likewise, the book reveals how women misled by the other military/militant groups are welcomed back to join the army/Taliban to build the territory of Islam and to help their husbands, brothers and sons to develop familial structures and emotional labour during war. Khoja-Moolj quotes from a magazine *Hilal for Her*, 'Where do these soldiers derive this strength and resolve? ... mothers, wives, sisters and daughters' (135). Thus, through women's emotional narrative they can feel themselves proud sisters of *shahid*; bravery and martyrdom are honoured

and such scripts have a specific place in the state/Taliban literature. Such a patriarchal role fortifies the Islamo-masculinity by both claimants of sovereignty. Besides, Khoja-Moolj puts much emphasis on the attack of the APS (Army Public School) to discover how it produced an affective atmosphere for politics, the grieving public, melancholic mothers and ambivalent feelings of mourning mothers towards the state. This book effectively explores how in the archives of the Taliban, kinship metaphors are used to exercise a de facto sovereign role in Pakistan and justify their terrorism.

To conclude, the book is a remarkable contribution on how sovereignty is maintained by the Pakistani state and challenged by the Taliban through the performativity of Islamo-masculinity, kinship metaphors and memory in the public culture of Pakistan. Religion serves as a basic tool with both warring sides. Khoja-Moolj does not merely provide deep insights into the interplay of gender and sovereignty as a useful political apparatus, but she also explains how the masses are pushed and dodged in their attachment to the Pakistani state and TTP. Interestingly enough, this book is a profitable investment into the world view of the Taliban and how the organisation foregrounds their political and terroristic agenda and how the Pakistani state tightens their circuit and redirects the attachment of people towards the state.

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Published with the support of Gender and Cultural Studies, School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

URL: http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue46/khalid_safdar_review.html

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Last modified: 9 Jan. 2022 1838