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It's not about security, it's about racism: counter-terror strategies, civilizing processes and the post-race fiction

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ABSTRACT Using a range of international examples, this article examines the ways in which members of the black and minority ethnic population continue to be viewed as problematic and deviant, challenging the claim that we are now living in a post-race state. The article considers how race and racism are still in reality, used to socially order society—and specifically criminalize those black and minority ethnic groups of (real or perceived) Muslim background—what I call “brown bodies”. Turning its focus to the United Kingdom, although offering an analysis applicable to other countries with similar racialized conditions, the article discusses how sub-measures under current counter-terror discourse not only serve to control and regulate Muslim populations, but more so, the civilizing undertone of its Western (or, British) values and national security narrative continue to normalize and perpetuate anti-Muslim sentiment and construct Muslims as “suspect” communities at every possible opportunity. This process draws on a “post-colonial fantasy” and re-uses established practices of “race-consumption” to control brown bodies. This ensures that anti-Muslim racism remains a key feature of contemporary British society. The article ends noting its support for that body of literature that critiques the claim that we are now living in a post-race state. This article is published as part of a collection on racism in counter-terrorism and surveillance discourse.

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the claim that we are now living in a post-race society where racial equality has been achieved and anti-discrimination measures have become redundant. The article uses the case of the UK counter-terror context and some of its widely adopted sub-measures, to illustrate how “brown” members of the black and minority ethnic (BME) population, continue to be viewed as problematic and deviant, within a post-race era. To test the claim of a post-race state, the article begins by drawing on international examples to illustrate the continued use of a racialized narrative that constructs some BMEs as problematic, deviant and undesirable. Far from achieving a post-race state, it is argued that race and racism are in reality, still used to socially order society and now more than ever is being used to specifically criminalize those BME groups of (real or perceived) Muslim background—what I call “brown bodies” (Patel, 2012). This is a term I use to refer to all those of real or perceived membership of the Muslim faith, who (regardless of any evidence of illegal behaviour) are marked out as members of a “suspect community” (Patel, 2012: 212). It is important to note here that use of the term “brown body/ies” takes from wider discussions of “browning” processes (Patel, 2017). It is a term used to describe racialized processes, that is, socially constructed racial categorizations informed by socio-political conditions. The term includes, but is not restricted to those of middle Eastern appearance, or of South Asian or Arabic heritage, as well as others outside of this phenotypical category, that is, white converts to Islam. Therefore, although informed by phenotypical features, it is not solely confined to this feature.

With a focus on the United Kingdom, or more specifically, Britain, although offering a comment on other countries that also claim a post-race state, it is argued that counter-terror sub-measures control and regulate brown bodies, and does so effectively with support from mainstream society, because of use of a civilizing undertone based on colonial ideas about civilized society, Western (or, British) values and democracy. Combined with a narrative about national security and the urgency of taking extreme action, these narratives normalize and perpetuate anti-Muslim sentiment and construct Muslims and other brown bodies, as “suspect” communities at every possible opportunity, and certainly from an earlier age than was previously the case.

Anti-Muslim racism in a post-race state

Racism and its associated discriminations are not individual biases. Neither are they practices of past eras. Racism is varied, wide-reaching, normative and thriving in contemporary society. Despite their differences, both Critical race theory and Post-colonial theory have played an important role in advancing our social scientific understanding of how “race” and racism is constructed and used to sustain a hierarchy of social order and associated practices of racial oppression. Critical race theorists, such as Derek Bell and Kimberle Crenshaw, and earlier scholars aligned with the perspective, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth and W.E.B. Du Bois, suggested that society is full of anti-black racialized meanings, which operate at all levels of society. These racialized meanings are not only found in individual minds, but in social relationships and structural practices. There is therefore a more systematic operation of racism that is being delivered through social, economic and political means. This is still a valid point that is often ignored when examining instances of race-hate in contemporary society.

In addition, Postcolonial theorists, (see Said, 1979 and Fanon, 1967) have sought to understand the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, especially for those native

populations who were subjected to “civilizing” control measures and economic exploitation. Said (1979) argued that “the West” (or “Occident”) had for centuries defined itself through portraying the Eastern “Orient” as its polar-opposite (1–3). In his analysis of material produced in the West during the colonial period, Said found a disturbing and fantastical geography of West vs. East, one in which the West’s depiction of itself as “civilized” and “advanced” depended on the degradation of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures as “barbaric” and “backwards.” (1979: 72). In this article, I argue that the West vs. East fantastical representation continues to be used to control and regulate “brown bodies”. There is though, a very specific way in which this is done in the post-race era.

The claim that we are now living in post-race times attempts to devoid claims of race-making and racism. It is a claim that is based on the view that society has progressed so far with race equality, that specific considerations of racialized discrimination are now obsolete. To support this claim, BME presence and progress in a variety of areas have been highlighted, with the ultimate illustration being the inauguration of Barack Hussein Obama as the President of the United States of America in 2009—ironically, the country that in recent years has witnessed an increase in the number of BME deaths at the hands of the police and others claiming to undertake “policing” work, for example, Michael Brown, Deravis “Caine” Rogers, Terence Crutcher, and Trayvon Martin, to name a few—with the death of the last triggering the Black Lives Matter movement (Black Lives Matter, 2012). Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old African American who was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, an armed neighbourhood watch volunteer, in Sanford, Florida in February 2012. Zimmerman was later acquitted of manslaughter and second-degree murder, although allegations were rife of him being motivated by racism and having racially profiled Martin. Barack Obama inadvertently added to this suggestion in his comment to reporters following the shooting: “When I think about this boy, I think about my own kids, and I think every parent in America should be able to understand why it is absolutely imperative that we investigate every aspect of this ... If I had a son, he would look like Trayvon.” (President Obama, cited in *The Guardian*, 2012). The Martin case and others like it, challenges the idea of a non-racially biased state. It demonstrates that structural racism remains a key feature of society, and that race not only matters, but for many, it remains a matter of life and death (Lee, 2013).

This article discusses how the claim to a post-race state is not only incorrect, but it is in fact more damaging for BME populations, who are still at greater risk of discriminatory practices. As I have argued in other work (Patel, 2017), society not only remains marked out by racialized processes, but claims to a post-race state have allowed racially biased practices to unapologetically and unashamedly thrive. It does this by first presenting discriminations as something emerging from naturally occurring segregation practices. However, this article contests the idea of “natural segregation”, and instead refers to the work of Bonilla-Silva (2003: 277) who noted that there is a “white belief” that “residential and school segregation, friendship, and attraction are natural, raceless occurrences”, yet social scientific research has found that in fact all these issues are affected by race. Although legally abolished, racial-segregation is still encouraged and enforced through a range of “informal” means, that are micro, organized and systematic (Dixon and Durrheim, 2003: 19). It is suggested here that although a small percentage of individuals may hold this “white belief”, it is more likely that claims of “natural segregation” are used as a convenient way to socially exclude and victimize BMEs.

Also, occurring in the post-race state is the increased categorization, surveillance and control of some populations using the claim of “a measured response” to increased security concerns. This claim suggests that although there may be a heavier focus on members of the Muslim population, this is proportionate to the threat, and that aside, this level of response does not even constitute actual racism, given that Muslims are not perceived to be a “race”. Here there emerges a denial of racism by making distinctions between Islamophobia and racism, and misinterpreting the category of the latter. Islamophobia is considered to be a fear of the religion of Islam (ideas and practices), rather than hostility towards a racial group per se (racism) (Halliday, 1999, cited in Garner, 2010: 165). And, given that Muslims are not considered to be a group defined by race, the perception is that they cannot experience racism. As Sayyid (2008: 1) writes: “The figure of the Muslim is vital for this racism without racists. Because Muslims are not a race, any and all forms of discrimination and violence disproportionately directed at them is thinkable and doable. Because Muslims are not a race the systemic violations directed against them cannot be racially motivated”. A by-product then of the “measured response” claim is the suggestion that it is somehow acceptable to be Islamophobic on the basis that the (ir) *fear* of a religion is genuine, logical and non-racial. This not only deflects accusations of racism, but also situates Islamophobes in a more favourable position.

To overcome this conceptual flaw, this article uses the term “anti-Muslim racism”, which is different to Islamophobia, to more accurately describe the discriminatory dynamics of this context. Here, the term “anti-Muslim racism” is used to describe a type of hostility towards Muslims that uses cultural racism (Modood, 1997: 4). This is a particular type of discrimination against all those perceived to be Muslim, which is itself determined by ideas about physical appearance (wearing of the hijab or burqa), religious custom (prayer or observation of Ramadan), and biological features (brown skin), which result in a sense of post-colonial superiority over all those considered to be Muslim. The term “anti-Muslim racism” emphasizes that racism is not exclusively biologically determined, but that it is something which is a socio-politically produced experience (Sayyid and Vakil, 2010; Tyrer, 2013). Cultural racisms such as anti-Muslim racism reproduce the idea that there are a hierarchy of cultures, which in Western society means that “our” Western (or, British) culture is superior to “their” Islamic (or, non-British) one. This was most recently illustrated with the massive increase in reports of anti-Muslim racism following Britain’s “Brexit” vote in 2016. From the very start, the “leave” campaign relied heavily on a convergence of anti-immigrant xenophobia and anti-Muslim racism (despite the latter not having a logical relation to EU membership). The first simultaneously drew on and legitimated the latter. Within the “socially fabricated distinctions between Europeaness and non-Europeaness” (Sayyid, 2008: 1) lives the persistent presence of the postcolonial fantasy!

In drawing on historical feelings of *disgust* towards Muslim populations (Said, 1979), along with ideas about failed multiculturalism, a lack of community cohesion, and the need for tighter border controls and national security (prevention of terrorist activity¹), nations have used “a narrative which connects race with culture with multiculturalism with national identity with community cohesion with wider social relations” around crime and security (Patel, 2017: 3). This “logic” has resulted in attempts to further control brown bodies at every possible level, including the wearing of clothing often associated with Muslims. For instance, in 2011, France banned the wearing of the Islamic veil in public places. Punishable with fines of up to 150 Euros, the 2011 ban added to the 2004 ban on hijabs in France’s state schools. Later, in 2016, a number of French towns banned the

wearing of a “burkini” (the term used in the media to refer to a swimsuit that covers most of the body and which is mostly worn by Muslim women). Reasons for the ban cited health concerns, security issues, assimilation agendas, as well as gender equality issues. Unsurprisingly, there has been a rise in the number of reported racist attacks, which have specifically used visual markers of Muslim-ness as a focus of hate, for example, bearded men being attacked and (women especially) having clothing forcibly removed or torn off (Allen, 2004; Mythen and Khan, 2009; Carr, 2014). More recently, in March 2017, the European Court of Justice ruled that companies could ban its staff from wearing visible religious symbols whilst at work. Although the ruling covered the wearing of symbols of any religion, it was openly welcomed by those of the right of the political spectrum who had been pre-occupied with women wearing Islamic headscarves in the work place (The Guardian, 2017).

In the post-race state, visual markers (such as items of customary dress) are seen as active choices, and this view allows for victimization blame to be firmly laid at the feet of Muslims, with the premise that they are responsible for actively choosing to wear markers of difference and in doing so reject and offend mainstream society. In other words, they are choosing to remain uncivilized. Another consequence of this logic, is the rise of far-right groups “from ‘street’ through ‘quasi-legitimate’ to ‘mainstream’ [who have] found a greater platform from which to publicize their views, messages and arguments” (Allen, 2004: 8). Indeed, a number of newer emerging far-right groups have specifically focused on the “Muslim threat”, for example, Pegida (*translated from German: Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West*). The visibility of Muslim-ness has now come to be presented as incompatible and in contrast with the “norms” of Western society (Allen, 2004: 12). Western society taken here to mean civilized society. Furthermore, the perception of Muslims as hostile and resistant to change further presents them as *the enemy within* who pose a threat to *our liberal way of life* (Fekete, 2004). This has allowed for debates about counter-terror, immigration and citizenship to become blurred, with policy on one being used to support the other. It has also allowed for a revised narrative of the “white man’s burden” which presents such attempts to control brown bodies as “a humanitarian intervention...[which] only wants to spread democracy...to domesticate unruly Muslims (Sayyid, 2008: 1).

Criminalizing muslims through counter-terror measures

For clarity, it is important I declare that this article does not dismiss the fact that in recent years there have been a number of terrible incidents in the United Kingdom and elsewhere which have been carried out by groups and individuals declaring themselves to be acting in the name of Islam, for instance, the attacks in America in 2001, on London’s public transport system in 2005, the Bali bombing in 2002, Madrid train bombings in 2004, Charlie Hebdo in 2015, and, the Tunisian beach attack in 2015. What this article challenges though is the use of anti-Muslim racism to construct all or the majority of Muslims as terrorists—either actual, potential or supporters of.

Counter-terror measures have been criticized for their over-focus on all Muslims, and for their simplistic, generic and one-dimensional notions of Islam (Kundnani, 2009; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Bonino, 2013; Patel, 2017). This has presented the commonsensical view that extremism and radicalization is inherent within Muslim culture. It is a logic that presents all Muslims as extremists, rather than problematising the extremist mind-set of individuals themselves. Anti-Muslim racism has seen the state and its allied services construct Muslims through a language of disobedience, deviance and criminality, which is itself

considered to be built on anti-Western hostility and a history of Orientalism (Said, 1979). Within the “war on terror” context, this means that there is an easy acceptance in lay society of “the dangerous brown man”—an adaptation of earlier racist mythologies around the “dangerous black man” (Bhattacharyya, 2008: 96), which is used to both represent and sustain racialized anxieties. Rooted in these anxieties is the idea that Muslims are uncivil, inferior and inhumane. This logic not only helps to justify their unequal treatment in society, but also helps to ensure that accusations of abuse and torture by the state are viewed with relatively little sympathy. As Kundnani (2007: 126) notes, “to be a “Muslim” in the “war on terror” is to belong to a group with common origins, a shared culture and a monolithic identity that can be held collectively responsible for terrorism, segregation and the failure of multicultural Britain”. Muslims are not just seen to be deviant or even criminal, but they are considered to be the worse type of criminal—the fundamentalist terrorist, different to comparatively humanistic terrorists of yester-year. The “Islamic terrorist” indiscriminately targets all Western-civilians, including its most vulnerable and precious: women and children.

Underpinned by older (immigration) concerns of “civilizing” Muslim populations, newer counter-terror measures have allowed for a wider-reaching remit of control of Muslims. It has done so though, in a way that exudes a sense of urgency for extreme deprivation measures and the enhanced surveillance of Muslims. A number of legal measures have been introduced, which by capitalizing on popular anti-Muslim sentiment, have over-focused on Islamic terrorism. For instance, in the United Kingdom, there was the extending of the 2000 Terrorism Act (Home Office, 2000), which actively designated Muslims as dangerous, suspect and in need of control (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009: 652). The 2000 Act criminalised a range of activities associated with a number of proscribed organizations, which included supporting or attending meetings of said organizations. Subsequent amendments to the 2000 Act increased the number of proscribed organizations, with most newly added organizations being associated with countries where Islam is the main faith. There was also an extension of stop and search powers under sections 44 and 45, allowing for practice to be undertaken without the need for reasonable suspicion. Unlike the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Home Office, 1984), the police officer did not need to have “reasonable suspicion” for the stop and search². The Act was later followed by the anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (Home Office, 2001); the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 (Home Office, 2005); the Terrorism Act 2006 (Home Office, 2006); the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (Home Office, 2008); and, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015a). In combination, these Acts have over-criminalized Muslim populations, and have made “legal” their enhanced status as sources of risk and consequently their vulnerability to victimization by the state, especially in relation to police stop and search practices (Medina Ariza, 2013).

However, counter-terror measures allow for the criminalization of Muslims to occur more widely and at a much earlier age. For instance, consider the UK’s CONTEST strategy (Home Office, 2011). Launched in 2003, and since revised, CONTEST claims to work with “mainstream Islam” to “undermine extremist ideologies, identify and support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, increase the capacity of communities to resist violent extremists, and understand real and perceived grievances” (McLaughlin, 2010: 105). CONTEST is split into four workstreams: (i) Prevent—to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; (ii) Pursue—to stop terrorist attacks; (iii) Protect—to strengthen our overall protection against terrorist attacks; and (iv) Prepare—to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack (Home Office, 2011: 6). This article argues that CONTEST,

and other measures like it, are underpinned by a “civilizing” narrative, for example, in its commitment to British values and national security. This civilizing narrative draws on anti-Muslim racism to perpetuate the idea of Muslims as a “suspect” community—even in these post-race times! For instance, in theory, CONTEST is directed at tackling all forms of radicalisation and extremism, including far-right activity, but in practice it has heavily over-focused on the Muslim population (Coppock and McGovern, 2014: 245).

This is most clearly illustrated under CONTEST’s Prevent workstream. In consideration of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015a), the Revised Prevent Duty Guidance (Home Office, 2015b) states that educational settings in the United Kingdom have a legal duty to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism. Part of this involves an expectation that educational settings will promote the “fundamental British values”, which are “... values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs ... Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviour in school that are contrary to fundamental British values” (Department for Education, 2014: 5). The problem here is that there is an over-emphasis on national and cultural supremacy, which brings with it the danger of a biased and inaccurate education. The teaching of “values” is not the point of contention, rather it is the packaging of “democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance” as being essentially British (white Western European) values. In addition, it reinforces the perception of young Muslims being susceptible to extremism, which counter-terror approaches then equate with susceptibility to radicalization and terrorist activity, meaning that young Muslims are “constituted as “vulnerable” in politically powerful ways, as the “would-be terrorist” (Coppock and McGovern, 2014: 242). Their “Islamic” and “child” selves are both dangerous and in need of saving, and they become marked as “appropriate objects for state intervention and surveillance” (Coppock and McGovern, 2014: 242).

Rights Watch UK (2016) argues that Prevent’s effect on education and the human rights of students, especially young children, raises serious concerns³. This is because a by-product of Prevent has been to create a generation of young British Muslims who are fearful of exercising their rights to freedom of expression and belief, which in turn impacts on the risk of forcing children to discuss issues related to identity, religion and terrorism in unsafe and problematic spaces, that is, the internet (Rights Watch UK, 2016: 4). Worse still, in the classroom and on campus, those with very little training or background in crime prevention work, let alone counter-terrorism work, have been tasked with the duty of identifying and reporting on students expressing so-called extremist views (Rights Watch UK, 2016: 4). It is not surprising then that there have been claims that teachers have been “over-enthusiastic” with this duty, leaving some children feeling as if they have been targeted because of their faith and treated unfairly in comparison to their white peers⁴. For example, data on Prevent school referrals shows that between 2012 and 2013, 57.4% referrals involved Muslims, despite the fact that (according to the 2011 Census) they make up only 5% of the national population (Qurashi, 2016). Those educators who openly criticize Prevent’s counter-terror measures come to be presented as problematic and unhelpful to the national security agenda—for instance, consider the backlash against the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and Universities and Colleges Union’s (UCU) criticisms of Prevent (NUT 2016; UCU, 2016).

In combination, these and other counter-terror measures draw on somewhat normalized notions of the “Islamic terrorist” to justify and gather support for discriminatory practices. They

continue to construct Muslims as suspicious bodies with criminal tendencies, in need of increased surveillance, control and regulation, and thus “legitimise a pre-emptive, interventionist and securitizing approach” (Coppock and McGovern, 2014: 242). As Ansari (2004: 31) notes, this then serves to “terrorize the Muslim community in Britain”. Each day, the Muslim community have their social, religious and political activities observed, interrogated and stigmatized, presented as suspect terror networks (Ansari, 2004: 31). Having “relegitimised state racism” (Bhattacharyya, 2008: 75), counter-terror measures have also “involved derogation from human rights provisions and established elements of due process” (Rowe, 2012: 160). Any negative impact that they may have on the Muslim population is considered to be relatively justified, almost as collateral damage in comparison to the perceived wider threat. In this sense, Muslims are not considered worthy of human rights, they are after all goes the civilizing logic, rejecting attempts to assimilate and be part of Western civil society. This logic is not unique or new to Muslims in post-colonial Britain. Recall for instance the use of this logic in the treatment of other BMEs around the world, for instance, Australia’s Aborigines, Native Americans, New Zealand’s Maori, and the African Slaves transported across the Atlantic. In all these cases, attempts were made to excuse and justify exploitative behaviour on the basis that the (exploited) subjects were naturally positioned, either biologically, intellectually or in accordance to (the Christian) God’s plan, as inferior. Thus, legitimized, morally at least, that the control of BME bodies was necessary and good for society as a whole.

Civilizing, consuming and controlling brown bodies

Surveillance and control measures under counter-terror strategies have without doubt drastically redefined the lives and experiences of Muslims. Under counter-terror measures, Muslims in particular are presented as posing a crime and security threat. In addition, the anti-Muslim rhetoric that underpins the counter-terror logic presents Muslims, and brown bodies more generally as incompatible and a threat to civil society, both morally and legally. Consider for instance, the popularity of Donald Trump’s Presidential campaign (illustrated not least with his win) in the United States, which ran with the tagline of “Make America great again”—a sentence which forces the voter to feel shame at having lost a status of greatness, seemingly awakening them from their zombie-like acceptance of *overly liberal* policies, and finally delivering a rallying-cry for them to take action and regain their status of greatness (by voting for Trump, in the first instance). Key parts of the campaign were delivered with such enflamed anti-Muslim rhetoric that was never before seen in American politics, not even in George W. Bush’s style of “cautious Islamophobia”, or Barack Obama’s reference to Muslims within a national security context. For example, Trump called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims” entering the country (Trump, 7 December 2015)⁵ and fought publicly with the Gold Star Khan family (whose son Captain Humayun Khan died while serving in Iraq in 2004), suggesting that Mrs Ghazala Khan was not “allowed to speak” by her husband at the Democratic convention because of their Muslim faith.

Within the counter-terror narrative runs a logic that presents brown bodies as unable or unwilling in the least, to attain a civilized state. They are seen as a threat to the social, moral, religious and political order of Western society. This is the basis of anti-Muslim ideology. This logic remains steadfast in the wider imagination due to the persistence of a “post-colonial fantasy”. This fantasy was created during imperial and colonial encounters, and remains long in its de-colonized aftermath. During this time, the “black Other” was seen as savage, sub-human and uncivilized.

Presenting the colonized subjects in this way, reaffirmed the colonizers’ self-perception as morally and intellectually superior—God-like almost, which allowed them to embark on rescue missions to lift colonized subjects, usually through forced removal and re-allocation of subjects, as in the case of Australia’s Aboriginal children (the “Stolen Generations”) or African slavery in America and its colonies. Of course, the “lifting” was never to an equal or higher state, and always resulted in advancing the economic position of the colonizers.

The post-colonial fantasy remains a form of institutionalized power and systematic control over subjects of ex-colonies. Some have argued that the fantasy, taken from a scholarly and artistic perspective, evidenced an evolutionary movement because it signified the West’s positive interest in other countries and cultures. However, this form of *exoticism* has been critiqued given that the interest was in reality superficial and selective, not least because it focused on the female colonial subject (Gindro, 2003: 112–113). Therefore, there remained a selective *othering* of the post-colonial subject which was filtered through a Western Imperialist gaze and misrepresented for its own satisfaction. Hooks (1992) argues that such *exoticism* was especially applied to lighter-skinned BMEs who are seen as being able to more safely satisfy the Western male’ sexual desire and colonial fantasy, in comparison to their darker-skinned, and thus animalistic and savage counterparts. Unsurprisingly, male BME bodies, especially the darker-skinned ones, have been constant victims of colonial rule.

This article argues that male BME post-colonial subjects are consumed in far less favourable ways. For instance, Boskin (1986, cited in Moody-Ramirez and Dates, 2014: 17) notes how the use of the “Coon”, “Jim Crow” and “Sambo” images in America, especially as objects of laughter, sought to strip the black African American male of his masculinity, dignity and self-respect—qualities that would otherwise present him as a sexual competitor, warrior and economic adversary. Similarly, consider the use of sexual stereotypes about “the black man and his mythical penis” which not only served to ridicule, but more actually indicated “the insecurities of the powerful” (Bhattacharyya, 2008: 87–88). Still, today there remains other examples of race-consuming which highlights the persistence of the post-colonial mindset, for instance, consider the “Black Pete” (*Zwarte Piet*) celebration in the Netherlands, which despite criticisms have remained a core celebration of Dutch culture (see van der Pijl and Goulordava, 2014). Indeed, artist and political activist, Spike Lee (quoted in Ebert, 16 October 2000) argued that elements of “gangsta rap” music videos, with their reference to “my ho’s” and “my bitches”, can be held up as contemporary popularized examples of race-consumption performance, namely minstrel performance, despite their BME/black African-American artists and producers, because there is an over-exaggerated, stereotypical, crude and ignorant performance of blackness for the purpose of entertainment and socio-political commentary.

Specifically, under the counter-terror pre-occupation, the post-colonial mind-set re-uses established practices of “race-consumption” to control brown bodies. Race-consumption within counter-terror strategies occur in very much the same way, by stripping the brown body of its human qualities. They are presented by the media, politicians and news outlets as sexually deviant, insular and intellectually limited. This representation permits brown bodies to be consumed, that is for them to be stripped in the white (Western European) imagination of their threatening status, and for hierarchies of inferiority/superiority to remain in place. The consuming of race in this sense then remains focused on alleviating white fears and presenting BME populations as (physically, intellectually and morally) inferior. As pre-colonized subjects, brown bodies are rendered powerless through a

continued colonial narrative, that is a representation and a forced performance of colonial ideas about a supposed passive, immature and animal-like character, and a “backwards” and “oppressive” culture (Patel, 2017). For instance, consider the presentation and discussion around brown families and communities, with presentations of them as abusive fathers/husbands and subservient daughters/wives who come from insular and backward cultures supposedly steeped in anti-Western views (see Sian, 2012). Now, they have come to be represented as Muslim radicals, Islamic extremists and terrorists, or at least sympathizers of this ideology. Brown bodies are once again openly popularized as unruly. Within the terrorist narrative, brown bodies are seen as more dangerous, given that they are presented as an even more dangerous type of terrorist, in comparison with the terrorist of previous eras (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009). According to this logic, Muslims need to be more closely watched, scrutinized and controlled, even if this is at the sacrifice of their fundamental human rights.

The race-consumption practice and post-colonial fantasy are important features of the counter-terror narrative. In her analysis of Muslim men and processes of deviant labelling within the “war on terror” context, Bhattacharayya (2008) argues that popularized racialized mythologies about “the dangerous Muslim man” have come to embody “a dangerous hypermasculinity and a mutilated deviation from proper manhood...portrayed as impenetrable, secretive, enmeshed in an alien culture that inhabits the secret places of an unsuspecting host society” (89). A variety of outlets are used to construct the brown body in these ways. For instance, the entertainment industry has a long history of locating the brown body (or brown space) as villainous, who threatens national security, freedom and civilization itself—a space only to be neutralized by the white saviour/hero, for example, consider the popular (1998) American film, “The Siege” which relies heavily on Muslim/Arab stereotypes of them as violent and ready for martyrdom, and presents Islamic ritual practices within close context of violent (terrorist) behaviour (Ameli *et al.*, 2007: 36). These images are found in more recent films, whether it be subtly such as in “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” (2014) with the evil Foot Clans’ wearing of the Palestinian Keffiyeh scarf as part of their military uniform, despite their original Japanese heritage and non-Muslim/Arab connection, or more openly as in “American Sniper” (2014) where not only are the American soldiers the glorified heroes, but all the Iraqis are militant fighters, with the only non-militant civilian Iraqi being one family ... who are killed by Iraqi militants. Various news outlets, especially those located in the centre-right of the political spectrum, have delivered a constant barrage of “news stories” that have situated the brown body in a dangerous position. Consider for example the “Asian sex gangs” and “Asian groomer” stories that dominated the British press in 2015 and 2016 (Patel, 2017), where rather than presenting the abuse as an interplay between gender and power, stories focused on the “Asian-ness” of the abusers: “Vulnerable schoolgirl raped by at least 60 men after being preyed upon by Asian grooming gang”, reported one tabloid newspaper (*Mirror*, 18 May 2015), and “All white girls are s**gs: Asian sex gang found guilty of raping and sexually assaulting three teenage girls in Rotherham”, reported another (*The Sun*, 17 October 2016). These headlines were typical of references made throughout the reporting of the child sexual exploitation cases. More recently, social media has been used to host anti-Muslim racism to a scale unimagined only 10 years ago, for example, consider the voluminous anti-Muslim rage that dominated social media during Britain’s “Brexit” vote and America’s presidential elections. This character-construction (or, character-assassination) of the post-colonial subject has ultimately justified the heightened surveillance and restrictions on

the human rights of those marked out brown. Society has gone full-circle (again): having had a state of multiculturalism and equality of opportunity, the narrative presented is that these have been thrown back in our generous faces—we (by which I mean white bodies) are the ones who have been exploited, and the result is a state where the enemy lies within, unable to devoid itself of its inherent and/or cultural dark traits, waiting to strike at the heart of (Western and thus, natural) civilized order. Although conceptually basic and proven to be problematic by a volume of scholarly work, this narrative remains constant and dangerously powerful.

It is important to recognize that within the counter-terror context, attempts to consume and control the brown body have not gone unchallenged, especially by those experiencing first-hand anti-Muslim racism and the curtailed freedoms resulting from counter-terror strategies. Consider for instance, one British case, “Project Champion”, where a CCTV camera surveillance system, funded by the Government’s “Terrorism and Allied Matters Fund”⁶, was erected in neighbourhoods in the city of Birmingham which were predominantly populated by Muslims. Having been told that the system of 200 CCTV cameras was part of a general crime-reduction strategy, in particular to protect residents against vehicle crime, drugs offences and anti-social behaviour, residents challenged the use of the cameras, noting its negative impact on their human rights, as well as their broader Islamophobic underpinnings (Awan, 2012; Iskajee and Allen, 2013; Patel, 2017). By June 2011, all the cameras had been dismantled, and the case can be held up as an excellent example of how community-level challenges in response to Islamophobic over-surveillance measures can heighten instances of victimization as well as hold officials accountable for their discriminatory behaviour. However, the case also highlights the power and lived reality of contemporary counter-terror logic that all Muslims are terrorists or, at the very least, potential terrorists, as one resident said: “Whether we like it or not, we are the 7/7 bombers. We are the ones who brought down the twin towers. We are Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. That’s how people see us. We’re the new Jews and we’re the new blacks” (Young Muslim female interviewed in the aftermath of Project Champion, cited in Iskajee and Allen, 2013: 752).

Concluding comments

The ready association of Muslims with terrorism has been developed within a particular context largely emerging from “War on Terror” propagated by President Bush in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 attacks, co-joined by Blair, and continued in practice, if not on political rhetoric, by their respective successors” (Rowe, 2012: 159). This has resulted in “an uncritical and simple-minded acceptance of the notion of a ‘new’ kind of ‘religious terrorism’” (Jackson, 2009: 177), which has in turn allowed for the closer scrutiny of all Muslims and an acceptance of limited human rights. It is argued that the presentation of the “Muslim-terrorist”, or “Muslim super-villain” (Sayyid, 2008: 1) has been so readily digested because of the civilizing narratives found in the old-racism of previous-eras, that is, Said’s (1979) *Orientalism*. The re-presentation of brown bodies as problematic draws on firmly established practices of “race-consumption”, popularized in recent history during imperialism and colonialism, where brown bodies were presented as uncivil, inferior and inhumane, and thus in need of enlightenment and governing.

In drawing on a post-colonial fantasy and established practices of race-consumption, this article critiques the claim that we are now living in a post-race state. Rather it argues that the fallacy the post-race condition actually serves to perpetuate and excuse anti-Muslim hostility. Anti-Muslim sentiment has once again become

popularized, fashionable almost, and certainly considered an acceptable basis upon which the political agenda can be shaped. It is clear that aside from not living in a truly post-race era, there is currently the normalization of anti-Muslim racism and a range of formal measures that victimize members of the Muslim population are commonplace. This supports the idea that what we have is actually a *not yet* post-race state. More so, the ease with which anti-Muslim racism powerfully permeates society suggests that there will never truly be a post-race state.

Notes

- 1 The counter-terror strategy has been widely supported and is often used to galvanize support for restrictions on human rights of Muslim populations. This is despite the fact that “the evidentiary narrative of this popular [counter-terror] narrative” is poor—death from Islamic terrorist activity is still relatively low in comparison to say deaths caused by state repression, global warming, disease, small arms (Goodin, 2006, cited in Jackson, 2009: 175).
- 2 In January 2010, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that stop and search powers within section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000, were in violation of Article 8 (regarding privacy rights) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court also noted the potential for discriminatory abuse under section 44.
- 3 In particular: “The right to freedom of expression, which holds the freedom to hold, receive, and impart information and ideas without interference”; “The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion”; “The right to education”; “The right to privacy”; “The right to enjoy other rights free from discrimination on grounds such as religion, or political or other opinion”; and “The right, for children, to have their best interests as the primary consideration where any public body takes any action concerning them” (European Convention on Human Rights, 1953: section 1).
- 4 At time of writing, the National Union of Teachers had backed a motion to reject the Prevent strategy, citing that it targets Muslim students, despite the government’s claim that the strategy targets all forms of extremism (Qurashi, 2016).
- 5 Following Trump’s inauguration as President of the United States of America in January 2017, he introduced an Order which barred for 90 days people from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The order also banned all refugees for 120 days, and Syrian refugees indefinitely.
- 6 This fund provides grants for projects that seek to deter or prevent terrorist activity or help to prosecute those responsible for terrorism.

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Data availability

Data sharing not applicable to this paper as no datasets were generated or analysed.

Additional information

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