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## Global far right and imaginative interconnectivities

While reading the papers in this collection on the far right, I have found myself in wondering how to locate the newly rising far right in the non-Western world and their global connectivities to each other and to the Western far right. The emotive and imaginative connectivities matter as they often feed each other. As such, Islamophobia in the European far right is used to strengthen the anti-Western sentiments in Islamist populisms in the Middle East, and vice versa. Turkey's Erdoğan's revivalist imperial dreams are not disconnected from the rest of the world either. Therefore, the rise of the far right could better be understood as a global phenomenon.

The newly emerging literature on the far right, so far, seems to have failed to capture these interconnected imaginative forces in the formation of Islamist politics for three reasons: (i) the global interconnectivity in populist political aspirations is missed due to Western-oriented tendencies in calibrating the scholarly foci; (ii) the region does not fit into the foci employed by area studies; and (iii) rationality-oriented Eurocentric theories are limited in their ability to grasp and analyse the imaginative forces that are at stake.

In a new project that takes place in 12 countries and in which I take lead, the members of the research team aim to develop theories that will allow for nuanced accounts of the way imaginative and affective elements impact people's attitudes and opinions. For instance, although the last Islamic Empire ceased to exist almost 100 years ago, the dream of reviving Islamic Empires still haunts and even fuels political aspirations.

It is therefore crucial to examine the rising far right in Europe *vis-à-vis* the currency of current imperial Islamist revivalist aspirations. It is equally crucial to see the interconnectivities within those revivalist movements. We therefore study the homes of three of the greatest Islamic Empires (Islamdom: Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal/Timurid). This geography, recently coined as the Balkan-to-Bengal complex (BtB) (Ahmed 2015), a historically, politically and socially interconnected zone, has been the heartland of Islamist resurgences. In the West of the BtB, Erdoğan's charisma and a series of philanthropic and media projects have gained him support within and beyond Turkey, particularly among Sunni Muslims (Akdoğan 2017; Carkoglu 2014; Martin 2015). The common theme in those investments is the revivalist dreams, presenting the Ottoman legacy as a protector against non-Muslims, from the (Albanian and Bosnian) Muslim minorities in the Balkans to Sunni Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa (Çagaptay 2009; Cetin 2014; Küçük and Türkmen 2018; Ruma 2010; Tabak 2016; Walton 2010; Yavuz 1998). In the East, the charismatic leaders of Islamists and Sufi

groups (i.e. Pashtun Tahafuz movement, Jama'at-e-Islami in Pakistan and Hefazat-e-Islam in Bangladesh) (Ahmad 2009; Iqtidar 2011; Riaz 2012) enchant a large and ethnically diverse following beyond national borders, by intimately connecting them to each other through emotive elements against the colonial powers, and with dreams of just Islamic polities and futures.

The historical interconnectedness imposed by the imperial Islamic past across the BtB informs and shapes the ways these political actors tap into the imaginative capacities of their audience, their audiences' various social references, religious cosmologies, nationalist discourses, resentments, and other imaginative realms. Islamist actors appropriate those existing affective and emotive registers to further their often highly ambitious politics: including the dream of resurrecting the Islamic Empires, or of connecting them under a unified leadership for the Muslims in their region. Equally, they are able to use the elements of imperial nostalgia, post-imperial malaise and political rage not as autonomous entities, but highly calibrated to the far-right discourses taking place in the West.

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