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Extremist Islam vs the Free World: The Reproduction of Imperialist Discourse in John Updike's *Terrorist*

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Since the attacks of 9-11, many writers have put their pens to write about this horrible incident, with different writers responding differently to this event. Many works published during this period echo imperialist thinking and depict Muslims, especially Arabs, who were the perpetrators of these terrible attacks, in a stereotypical way. Crucially, these works assert the superiority of western values over their non-western counterpart and help reinforce and legitimize the imperial discourse. Most of the works on this topic show the perspective of the American victims but John Updike's *Terrorist* tells the story from the point of view of the Muslims. This paper intends to explore *Terrorist* as an imperialist text to show that, despite its nuances, this novel is reproducing and reinforcing an imperialist discourse, supporting the stance that western intervention is necessary for the betterment of the undeveloped, unstable and dangerous world. This exploration will be aided by a discussion on the process of radicalization of Muslim youth, and its relation to post 9-11 western foreign policy decisions. This task is accomplished by using Kenan Malik's thesis of radicalization and Pankaj Mishra's critique of imperialism placed in a larger theoretical framework embodied in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* and it will have educational implications.

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11 were epoch-making in their impact, not just in geopolitics and foreign policy but also in literature. What is often dubbed as "post-9/11 literature" is an attempt to grasp and represent subjects operating in the global political context of the West responding to extremist Islam. In this genre, a further category of literature seeks to explore the reasons behind the extremist tendency exhibited by Western-born Muslim youth, who are often second or third generation immigrants and apparently fully integrated into the host societies. John Updike's *Terrorist* is one such novel that falls in this category and takes up this task.

The plot of the novel revolves around a Muslim character, Ahmad, who in spite of belonging to a family that is not very religious, adopts Islam as his religion and while trying to follow the "straight path" [15] of Allah gets trapped in the plot of a suicide attack. The novel shows Islam as an ideology that nudges Ahmad towards extremists and violent thoughts. His imam, Shaikh Rashid, is shown inciting the youth, with the help of Quran and Hadiths, towards radical thinking and jihad. [15]. However, if the Quran is read carefully, it can be observed that it encourages its followers on virtuous acts and prohibits any kind of immoral acts and violations. Besides, a Jewish-American character, Jack Levy, who is the complete opposite of Ahmad's character and a representative of western values, intercepts Ahmed when he is on his way to blast himself and tries to convince him to abandon his plan. Eventually, Ahmad realizes that God wills life and not destruction, and in this way gives up his idea of self-immolation. So, the plot can be summarized as a Jewish guidance counsellor and Christian government colluding to dissuade a Muslim youth from going down the path of violence.

This article seeks to demonstrate that *Terrorist*, despite its undeniable nuances, ultimately blames Islam as an ideology responsible for violent extremism and presents western liberalism as a cure. The novel shows that all the Muslim characters,

who are representing the whole Muslim world, are in darkness and Islam is eventually blamed for this darkness. Conversely, all the Jew and Christian characters, who represent the western world and its values, bear the light to bring these strayed people back onto the right path. This paper will demonstrate that this narrative supports the US foreign policy and fits neatly into the post-9/11 foreign policy narrative advanced by the West wherein benign western intervention is supposed to bring democracy, stability and prosperity into violence-ridden Muslim countries. In other words, this study will find traces of this imperial discourse in the fictional realm of John Updike's novel using Kenan Malik's thesis of radicalization and Pankaj Mishra's critique of imperialism placed in the larger theoretical framework embodied in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*.

Literature Review

Terrorist is John Updike's 22nd novel, published in 2006 during the last period of his life. This novel is considered as one of his most powerful works. The critics have mixed reviews on this novel. Some appreciate his effort but there are many who are of the view that it has many limitations. A lot of research has been done on this novel. Here is a detailed discussion on some of these works to understand what kind of work has been done on this novel and how this study is going to be different.

In the article, *Threatening "the Good Order": West Meets East in Cecil B. DeMille's The Cheat and John Updike's Terrorist*, Bradley M. Freeman [5] asserts that any contact between the eastern and western spaces will result in destruction. These results incorporate the potential disintegration and inevitable decimation of American efficiency, surveillance, and regional integrity. Both DeMille's film (1915) and Updike's novel (2006) point to the issues of interracial America and imagine the eastern world as a threat to the security of America. Both of these works, though written in different historical times, present east as the space that endangers the utopian possibilities of American society. However, this article only presents east and especially Muslims as a threat to the west and completely neglects the reasons and the historical context that why Muslims have become a threat to the west and what are the causes of Muslims' hatred towards the west. This study will explore these reasons and explain how such depiction of Muslims helps in getting higher purposes.

Exploring John Updike's Terrorist as a Neo-Orientalist Narrative of the Arabo-Islamic World by Dr. Muhamad Shahbaz Arif and Maqbool Ahmad [1] argues that the orientalist representation of Muslims is still prevalent in the contemporary world, now known as neo-orientalism, which came to the front especially after 9/11. This paper demonstrates that despite trying to present a sympathetic view of the Muslim protagonist, Updike could not keep his biases at a side. He tries to criticize the American capitalist society but falls prey to his own ideological biases and preconceived knowledge about Islam and Muslims and gives us a neo-orientalist narrative of Islamic world. He presents a stereotypical view of Muslims as terrorist and source of all violence and anarchy in the world. This study differs from Arif and Ahmad's in that it establishes that Updike not only gives us a neo-orientalist depiction of Muslims but he is also helping in legitimizing the imperial policies by pushing the narrative of west (or Western characters) i.e. saving Muslims from radical Islam, through his fictional work. Besides, it looks deep into the causes that urge the people especially Muslims in adopting terrorism in first place.

In their paper *Islam and Modernity: A Study of John Updike's Terrorist (2006)*, H. Pirnajmuddin and M. Salehnia [13] examine Updike's *Terrorist* as a text supporting the dominant political discourse that focuses on Muslims as the 'others' and Islam as an authoritarian and regressive religion which urges its followers to be violent against the non-believers. They claim that this novel presents Islam as intolerant of western democracy and modernity. They posit that in *Terrorist* Islamic fundamentalism is presented as a product of supposedly anti-modern nature of Islam. Islam is constantly used in contrast with the western modernity in the novel. They criticize such anti-modern representation of Islam. However, they criticize the depiction of the anti-modern nature of Islam as the main cause of Muslims' radicalization and Muslims' hatred towards western society and culture. But they do not see into the other causes that may be responsible for Muslims extremism and how such a depiction is creating a particular discourse that helps the west in its wider propaganda. The subject of this paper by the two authors is depiction of Islam, whereas the subject of this research is depiction of the radicalization process and how it lends to imperial discourse.

Most works about 9/11 approach the event from the perspective of victims, survivors and observers. However, there are a few that try to look it from the point of view of the terrorists. In *Close Neighbors to the Unimaginable: Literary Projections of Terrorists' Perspectives (Martin Amis, John Updike, Don DeLillo)*, Birgit Däwes [3] studies three works, including *Terrorist* by John Updike that attempt the imaginative construction of the terrorist perspectives. He suggests that these texts perform a number of cultural, political and psychological functions which diversify the memory of 9/11. In this article, he tries to understand the motives of the terrorists. Birgit asserts that in *Terrorist* the main motive of the protagonist Ahmad to join the radical path is the ideological indoctrination. For Ahmad, Jihad is not just war but it is an internal struggle to keep on the path of God. Here, we see that Birgit very much agrees with Updike's own perspective. This present work builds a counter-argument to this perspective and explains that ideological indoctrination is not the only cause of Ahmad's radicalization and

explores the various motives behind such representation of Muslims in western fictional works.

Peter C. Herman [9] in his essay *Terrorism and the Critique of American Culture: John Updike's Terrorist* observes that though Updike is accused of racial profiling in *Terrorist* yet in this novel he breaks away with the convention which mainly focuses on the victims of terrorism and tells that terrorism is the illegitimate violence of the 'Other'. Thus, by empathizing with the suicide bomber Updike goes against the tradition and refuses to "participate in the national triumphalism that underpins much post–9/11 reflection in the US." [9] Herman argues that in *Terrorist,* Updike uses the Muslim characters to show that what kind of view radical Islamists have of America. Herman look at this novel as a criticism on American materialism and consumerism and a fundamental denial of human dignity in American society. He postulates that though Updike endorses the view that Muslims do not occupy a very comfortable place in America and he seems to support Ahmad and Imam's view on the American society yet the book never endorses Muslim's view that America consciously seeks destruction of Islam. Herman describes how Updike uses this novel to criticize the American society and its values but he does not pay much heed to the fact that how these issues cause the radicalization of Muslims. This research appropriates some of Herman's criticism on American values and delve deep into these issues to find out the causes of Muslim Radicalization other than religious indoctrination.

In his review *The Good Terrorist*, Eugene Goodheart [6] argues that no character in the novel is compelling enough to present an intellectual argument on the theme of terrorism. Eugene observes that there is only explanation and no justification of Ahmad's deeds. The novel suggests that if the destroyer needs to be redeemed, America needs to be destroyed. He points that there is no discussion about the issues of death and life that are at stake. Instead what we see is a parallel between Ahmad's dream of paradise and spiritual filthiness of American consumerism. It is presented that Ahmad's desire for paradise is no more different from the hedonism of American society. Moreover, Eugene posits that we are not told how Ahmad turned into a terrorist and hatred towards America is not enough reason or explanation for his becoming a monster. Eugene does not try to look into other causes that are responsible for his becoming a monster. This research highlights such reasons that may be responsible for the heinous acts like 9/11 and how representing Muslims as extremists and terrorists helps in strengthening the imperial discourse.

Anna Hartnell [8] in her essay *Violence and the Faithful in post-9/11 America: Updike's Terrorist, Islam, and the Specter of Exceptionalism* argues that in *Terrorist* Updike attempts to confront the intricacies in the relation of Islam and America and marks a departure from the predominated stereotypical depiction of Muslims in the wake of 9/11. Anna argues that Updike rejects to consolidate the assumption of American solidarity and innocence that has shaped the popular discourse in the understanding of 9/11 attacks. She asserts that no doubt the people died on 9/11 were innocents but this cannot be said about Americans as a nation who cannot be "absolved from possible involvement" in the roots of the attacks. [8] She pronounces that in spite of Updike's apparent attempt to write from the perspective of the perpetrators, Islam ultimately appears as the other in the novel. She says that "Updike's novel fails to conceive of a meaningful relationship between faith and politics, and thus Ahmad's Islam is ultimately repudiated as a religious position irremediably contaminated by politics. In this sense Islam is measured against an implicitly Christian model of religion and is found wanting" [8]. She suggests that it is the contamination of inner self by external factors that leads a man towards violence and it is case with Ahmad who is influenced by external forces like the social system in the form of political Islam. Updike also criticizes the American society and its exceptionalism but in the end all the Americans appear innocent, as all the conspirators who lure Ahmad in the suicide attack plot are foreigners and speak Arabic as their first language. So, at certain points in the novel, Islam undeniably assumes the form of a hollow stereotype. Anna talks about the involvement of Americans as a nation in the 9/11 attacks but she does not explain how they play their part in this tragedy. In this research, I try to elucidate the circumstances and reasons in American society that causes the increase in Islamic extremism that ultimately result in the tragedy like 9/11. Besides, this research refers to the influence of literature in strengthening the dominant discourse in America against Muslims.

Methodology and Theoretical Perspectives Adopted

This is a qualitative research work. The methodologies to be employed in this work include close reading of the text, application of theoretical frameworks, contrast with real-world political events and textual analysis. Textual analysis is one of the most appropriate approaches to expose the tacit assumptions and hidden intentions in any text or speech. So, using these methodologies, this study will analyze the selected passages from the original text to support the basic argument that *Terrorist* is actually an imperialist text and is helping to reproduce and strengthen the imperialist discourse. This task will be accomplished by using Kenan Malik's thesis of radicalization and Pankaj Mishra's critique of imperialism placed in the larger theoretical framework embodied in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*.

Updike's *Terrorist* shows the protagonist of the novel, Ahmad, as a radical Muslim from the very start. He hates the American society of infidels due to its materialism, consumerism and faithlessness. It is shown that Islam is the main cause of

his radicalism and the imam of the mosque, with whom Ahmad has a very close relationship, urges him to adopt the path of Jihad with the backing of Quranic verses. However, Kenan Malik's thesis of radicalization suggests that many of the want to be jihadists do not have any particular love for any religion but it is their disengagement from the society that is the cause of their adopting the black and white values of Islam as an alternative. So, only blaming religion as the source of radicalization is not enough. Using this thesis of Kenan Malik, this study will explore how an individual's relationship with society and many other related factors also play an important role in the radicalization of youth.

Pankaj Mishra is of the view that the West always sees the East through the narrow perspective of its own interests and considers that its intervention is necessary for the prosperity of the East and other backward areas. This is what *Terrorist* is suggesting by showing all the Arab-Muslim and African-black characters as wanting in civilization and moral values and showing the white Americans as eagerly worried to help these people to choose the right path, as is shown in Jack trying to help Ahmad get out of the darkness. Mishra criticizes such representations in the fictional works which are helping to reproduce an imperialist discourse. Besides, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said also discusses this function of culture, particularly in the novel form, to promote imperialistic thinking. So, using Said's work as the basic framework, this paper will show that *Terrorist* is reproducing and reinforcing the imperialist discourse. Besides, this study will use Mishra's critique on imperialism to argue that there is no need of western intervention for the prosperity and stability of the east.

Statement of Problem

Over the past few decades, several studies have examined the various works which depict Muslims in various ways as radical and extremist people. These studies illustrate that Muslims are often portrayed in a stereotypical way as extremists and violent people and as the significant "other" of the Western society which are a constant threat to the Western utopian values. These works try to illustrate the process of Muslims radicalization but often these works are biased by the prevalent media and literary discourse about this process and hence implicitly reinforce the predominant imperialist discourse. This study will interrogate the role of literature in the oppression of Muslims and will explore how fictional works are helping to create a neo-imperialist discourse against Muslims as terrorists, and are asserting the superiority of the West over the East. This study will help to create a counter argument against the existing attitude towards Muslims and will have educational implications.

Radicalization and the Western Society in *Terrorist*

The responses to the question why Muslim youth is prone to radicalization can be divided into two broad categories: those that locate the problem in Western foreign policy, and those that find it in Islam itself. Updike's novel favors the latter one and though he aligns himself with the Muslims yet this novel blames Islam as a system that is the cause of extremism in Muslims. However, it is seen that many members of these radical groups are Europeans or Westerns who belong to good families and apparently have no connection with Islam throughout their lives. So, it can be posited that it is not only Islam as a religion that is the reason of radicalization of youth but there are many other factors that can be counted in for such attitudes. Discussing radicalization in his article "Radicalization is not so Simple", Kenan Malik says that:

When I was growing up, 'radical' in a Muslim context meant being secular, 'Westernized', leftwing. Today, it means almost the opposite; it describes someone who is a religious fundamentalist, anti-Western, hostile to secularism and to traditional leftwing politics." [10].

Such changes occurred specifically after the 9/11 incident which not only changed the life of Americans but also of Arab-Americans, who were also traumatized by this tragedy. Muslims were already coping with the issues of belonging and displacement, trying to make their place and establish themselves in the American Society, but after the incident of 9/11 these issues took a severer shape. The lives of Muslims came under intense scrutiny which aggravated the miseries of their lives. They had to face many challenges due to their cultural, religious and national backgrounds. They were treated as the other and were presented negatively in different ways through TV programs and news coverage of Muslims in a biased manner. They have to confront a discriminative behavior based on their race and ethnicity.

Muslim students are the more severe victims of such circumstances. Muslim students lost their friends and were bullied and victimized in different ways by the locals. They had to deal with multiple identities as immigrants, teenagers and Muslims. Muslim students often have a very challenging environment in these countries while growing up. They had to deal with resentment, harassment and discrimination. They were always tied to their motherlands due to their ethnicity, appearance and religion. Similarly, Updike's protagonist Ahmad also suffers from and is victim of such circumstances. He has no friends in high school and is regularly bullied by his fellows especially by Tylenol. Tylenol calls him "Arab" and humiliates him and

makes fun of him among other fellows. Many critics and reviewers question the portrayal of Ahmad as illogical. From the very start, we are presented with a radicalized version of Ahmad. He hates every secular or worldly thing and is full of so called anti-Americanism. The novel opens with the line "These devils seek to take away my God". [15]. We are not told of the reasons or the circumstances that led him to extremist Islam or fanaticism and his hatred towards America. Instead we are shown that Shaikh Rashid is constantly inciting Ahmad towards extremist thoughts with the help of Quranic verses and the whole novel is full of such verses which is helping in creating the discourse that Islam is a violent religion and a danger to world peace. Updike presents Islam before us as a religion or ideological force which is the cause of Ahmad's hate against America. Obviously, only Islamic teachings are not strong enough reason for a young person, in a prosperous society like America, to turn towards radicalism. Updike does not try to evaluate the other reasons that may have caused Ahmad's inclination towards fundamentalist Islam and ultimately towards radicalization and hatred towards America. We are not told whether there were any social, economic or political reasons which caused Ahmad to be radicalized but instead Islam is presented as the sole force behind all of his fundamental views.

In most cases, when we hear or read about a fundamentalist, he has already been radicalized. We are not told about those historical moments that turn a Muslim into a jihadi. Kenan Malik in his thesis on radicalization tries to look at the reasons that causes the youth, particularly western Muslims, to adopt the path of violence. In his article *Radicalization is not so simple,* he suggests that the narrative about the reasons for radical thoughts may consist of four major elements:

First, the claim that people become terrorists because they acquire certain, usually religiously informed, extremist ideas. Second, that these ideas are acquired in a different way to the way people acquire other extremist or oppositional ideas, such as, say, Marxism or anarchism, or mainstream ideas such as conservatism or liberalism. Third, that there is a 'conveyor belt' that leads from grievance or personal crisis to religiosity to the adoption of radical beliefs to terrorism. And, fourth, the insistence that what makes people vulnerable to acquiring such ideas is that they are poorly integrated into society." [10].

However, there is not much evidence to prove any of these as completely true. But there are a lot of studies that suggest those who go for Jihad are far removed from being religious fanatics. Malik quotes Olivier Roy who suggests that "the 'leap into terrorism' is not religiously inspired but better seen as sharing 'many factors with other forms of dissent, either political… or behavioral."[10].

In *Terrorist*, we can see that almost all the above factors are working in one way or the other. Ahmad does acquire certain religious and extremist ideas from his imam, he is indoctrinated with these ideas in different ways such as Charlie, an undercover CIA agent, trapping him in his plot and urging him to do Jihad against this infidel and materialist American society. This fits nicely to the ways the FBI and CIA were working after 9/11. Craig Monteilh, an ex-FBI agent, revealed this in an interview where he said "The way the FBI conducts their operations, it is all about entrapment … I know the game, I know the dynamics of it. It's such a joke, a real joke. There is no real hunt. It's fixed"[7]. These agencies used to send their agents in Muslim communities pretending to be Muslims with radical thoughts in order to find the real jihadists. But in most cases innocent people were arrested and convicted. All this also increased the hatred for America in Muslim community. Moreover, due to his mother's negligence and wantonness, Ahmad misses his father and makes him his ideal. He has no friends or family. So, he tries to find a companion in Allah, to whom he believes to be "closer to him than his neck vein." [15]. Finally, he takes the shelter of religion to at least have some feeling of belongingness. Besides, their family is not socially, economically or politically well integrated in the society. The situation is worse for Ahmed due to his ethnicity and religion. He cannot identify himself either with the Americans or Arabs due to his mixed ethnicity. As Jack Levy talking about Ahmad says to Teresa, "and your boy, what with his self-elected religious affiliations, and, and pardon me saying it, his ethnic mix, is a kind of minority's minority" [15]. Due to his ethnicity, he has to face discrimination and resentment. He feels himself voiceless and has no one to represent himself. Even in the Muslim community among other Arabs, Ahmad considers himself as "an outsider among outsiders" [15]. Due to above mentioned reasons, when Ahmad is provided with an opportunity to belong to a group, where he is treated as equal and even with greater respect as he is going to be a martyr, he accepted it whole heartedly. All these reasons are neglected by Updike in this novel and he puts all the blame on Islam as the source of radicalization of youth.

There is not much evidence available that any of the above factors are real causes of youth extremism. Kenan Malik discusses three persons in his article who were well integrated in the society but still opted for Jihad. So, integration is also not the major factor in the radicalization. It is observed that many of those who want to be jihadists in the west actually belong to good families and have education in some cases even to the university level. Malik quotes Marc Sageman in his article who challenged the idea that "terrorism comes from poverty, broken families, ignorance, immaturity, lack of family or occupational responsibilities, weak minds susceptible to brainwashing – the sociopath, the criminals, the religious fanatic". His database suggested, to the contrary, that terrorists are among the 'best and brightest' from 'caring, middle class families' who 'can speak, four, five, six languages', and 'three-quarters of whom were 'professionals or semi-professionals', 'engineers, architects… scientists.'" [10]. Besides, many critics in the West suggest that it is not religion but politics that is responsible for present day extremism. "Western intervention in the Middle East and in Muslim-majority countries elsewhere, they suggest,

from the war in Iraq to the support for Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, has radicalized many Muslims and pushed them into the hands of the jihadists." [10]. These interventions are among the basic reasons of Muslims gathering under the umbrella of 'Muslim community' to show solidarity against western interferences. So, these factors and many others are responsible for emergence of Muslim communities and their radicalization and hatred towards America.

Muslims have been in Europe since decades but have not shown this kind of resistance to western policies before, so what has happened now? Similarly, the West has been intervening in eastern Muslim countries but todays Islamic opposition has not been seen before, what has produced this kind of opposition? Obviously, their hatred for western imperialism has an Islamic view but religion and politics both are very important factors in the creation of this kind of violent opposition. Updike and many other authors who write about the jihadists look at them when they are at the end of their journey. If they look at the start of their journey, they will find that no doubt religion and politics are significant elements but first step is rarely taken for these reasons. Instead it is the search for identity, meaning and belongingness that cause them to choose this path. Similar is the case with Ahmad. He feels himself marginalized in American society and cannot associate himself with anyone. Even in his school, he is treated like an alien and called by his fellows as "Arab". Moreover, when he has his first session with Jack, Jack uses the expression "under the counter" and asks him whether he knows it or not, to which he responds, "of course. I know. I am not a foreigner." [15]. So, Ahmad adopts Islam to identify himself with something and have a sense of belongingness. Ahmad feels disengaged from the main stream social institutions and hates the American infidel society which is mired in materialism and consumerism. According to Kenan Malik, "the real starting point for the making of a homegrown jihadi is not 'radicalization' but social disengagement, a sense of estrangement from, resentment of, Western society." [10]. Like Ahmad, many of the jihadists either find their faith late or are new converts to Islam. After being disillusioned by the society where they have no voice and representation, they see Islam as an alternative with its black and white moral code.

What Islamism provides to the likes of Ahmad is not religion in any old-fashioned sense, but identity, recognition and a sense of belonging. According to Kenan Malik, "Detached from traditional religious institutions and cultures, many adopt a literal reading of the Quran and a strict observance of supposedly authentic religious norms to mark themselves out as distinct and provide a collective identity. Leaving the social norms, finding their identity within a small group shaped by black and white ideas and values, driven by a sense that they must act on behalf of all Muslims and in opposition to all enemies of Islam, it becomes easier to commit acts of horror and to view such acts as part of an existential struggle between Islam and the West." [10]. *Terrorist* does not consider all these aspects that may be the reason behind Ahmad's adopting for a 'Radical Islam' but it suggests that the teachings of Quran and hadiths and lessons with imam Sheikh Rasheed are the main reasons for Ahmad to join the path of jihad against the faithless American society. Thus, it can be suggested that through such depiction of the Muslims and of the motives due to which they accept the radical and extremist ideas, the novel is conveying some hidden intend and contributing in creating a particular discourse against Muslims.

Updike's *Terrorist* and Imperialism

Pankaj Mishra, a respected voice in the Indian, British and American intellectual circles, in an interview published in Al-Jazeera, posits that "The West has seen Asia through the narrow perspective of its own strategic and economic interests, leaving unexamined - and unimagined - the collective experiences and subjectivities of Asian peoples..." [4]. He is of the view that the Europeans have always seen themselves as the world's teachers and thought that the European Enlightenment was the light that would pull the entire world out of the tunnel. Like many other writers, Updike in his Novel *Terrorist* takes the stance that western intervention is necessary to bring democracy, stability and prosperity in Asia and especially in primitive and violence ridden Muslim countries. In this novel, Updike presents a fanatic Muslim character Ahmad who has become a suicide bomber and is going to ruin his life unless a white American stops him and shows him the right path. Hence, the novel strengthens the narrative that western involvement is necessary for a peaceful and prosper East. Through this novel, he is trying to assert the superiority of western modern ideas over the Islamic values and ideologies and encouraging an imperialistic thinking.

Mishra challenges this West-centric and imperialistic narrative. In his view, such ideas as equality, freedom, and dignity are not just the values of the Enlightenment, and people all over the world, not just in Europe, have been fighting for these ideas and rights for centuries. These are the rights that are supposed to be universal. No one can claim a monopoly on them. And yet today it is difficult to demand these rights without including the whole package that the West thinks is needed to secure them i.e. modernization through free markets, economic growth, the creation of nation states etc. We know that these factors, considered so indispensable by the West, have only brought dignity, freedom, and equality to a very small minority of people. He criticizes such writers as Niall Ferguson, who claims to be "a fully paid-up member of the neo-imperialist gang." [12] Moreover, novelists like Martin Amis, Don DeLillo and John Updike also reach for some widely circulated clichés in their fictional accounts of terrorists. They rely only on the received notions from media and other sources about Muslim rage and

extremism for the formation of their character. Mishra also criticizes such stereotypical depiction of Muslim characters. In one of his articles in *London Review of book*, Mishra quotes Ferguson saying that "America should now follow Britain's example neglecting to ask why it needed to make the modern world if Britain had already done such a great job. Moreover, Ferguson agreed with the neocon Max Boot that the United States should re-create across Asia the 'enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets'." [11]. Mishra criticizes such attitudes of the well-known writers who think that America should adopt the imperial role of Britain. In an interview he said,

> How such a wide range of politicians, policymakers, journalists and columnists could re-embrace the delusions of empire - those you thought had been effectively shattered by decolonization 50-60 years ago; how they could bring themselves to believe that the Afghans and the Iraqis were just longing to suck on the big sticks proffered to them by American soldiers. [4].

He argues that no doubt, British 19th century empire undeniably pioneered free trade, free capital movement and abolition of slavery. But every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism and ravages which include the impoverishment of peasants and artisans, the collapse of living standards and the devastation of local culture. And due to this, the freshly minted movements such as revolutionary communism and Islamic fundamentalism, which promised to immunize the Asian countries against western imperialism, have begun to look attractive as they provide an alternative to the people. For Mishra, the emergence of terrorist organizations can be traced to a larger collective pathology and to the Western promise of human rights and economic progress that has not been delivered to many parts of the developing world and it is in the basic quest for dignity and equality and release from humiliation, are grounded all the events like Arab Springs, rise of china and Al Qaeda etc. [12]

Terrorist also seems to be following the tradition of those works which proclaim the superiority of the West and white people over the rest and is appeared to be supporting America's imperialist policies. "Imperialism is the extension of power, whether through military forces or through some other elusive forms of oppression, particularly to gain some other territories or to gain the economic or political control of other areas." [16]. Talking about imperialism in an interview to *Reuters,* Mishra said "Imperialism was all about occupation, invasion, war, appropriation and constructing racial hierarchies in which darker-skinned peoples were treated abominably." [2]. Previously, the control of neighboring lands was gained by military interventions and was very closely related to colonialism and its main purpose was to gain the financial control. But now the arguments supporting it are based on the moral grounds and often seem to have missionary purposes. Imperialists think that they are liberating people from oppressors and blessing them with stability, civilization and democracy etc. Nowadays, imperialism is taking the shape of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism. Neo-imperialism is the practice of using culture as the source of imperialism. Edward Said explains this form of imperialism in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

In this book Said argues that culture plays a vital role in the institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism. By "culture" Said means "all those practices, like the arts of description, communication and representation, which have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms, and which often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure" [14]. In its most general sense, imperialism refers to the formation of an empire by extending the domination of a nation over one or several neighboring nations. However, Said's definition of "imperialism" is one that specifically invokes the active effects of culture. For Said, imperialism is "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory", a process distinct from colonialism, which is "the implanting of settlements on a distant territory". Said maintains that Imperialism distinguishes itself from empire, because while the formation of empires by the colonization of territories has ended, "imperialism lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural, political, ideological and social practices" [14].

Said wants to show us how culture helps the imperial states to achieve their purposes. He posits that imperial discourse continuously establishes and support the assumption that empire has "almost a metaphysical obligation to rule the subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples" [14]. Said believes in the universal impact of the text and this leads him to conclude that literature itself has a very crucial role in the expansion of empires. Literature helps to create a 'structure of feeling' in people that helps them to support the causes and practices of empire. Novel is very important in Said's analysis of cultural imperialism because he thinks that without empire "there is no novel as we know it" [14]. In his view, "it is not that the novel or the culture in the broad sense caused imperialism, but the novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other – imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without in some way dealing with the other" [14]. Though novel does not participate actively in the colonization yet it hardly shows any resistance or proved to be a hurdle in the way of imperialism. Instead, we have several instances e.g. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where novel is helping to strengthen the imperialist discourse. According to Said, novel never challenged the status of empire but it helped to "keep the empire more or less in place." [14]. Though Conrad was an anti-imperialist yet his belief that imperialism was unavoidable made him an accomplice in all this. Conrad does not have any real experience with Africans but the way he depicts them in *The Heart of Darkness* as primitive helps to underpin the imperialism. Similarly, Updike does not seem to have any real experience of facing any real jihadi or radical. Though, he is writing from a

Muslim perspective yet he merely presents what he hears from media and political representatives and instead of venting Muslims out of the charges on them he is indirectly supporting those charges, thus representing a collective stance of the Americans on the foreigners, and especially on Arab-Muslims, and giving a jaundiced eye view of reality and promoting a specific imperialist discourse.

In spite of its nuances, Updike's *Terrorist* is helping to keep the imperialism more or less in its place and showing no resistance against it and there are several instances in the book referring to it. Islam and Muslims are shown as the enemy of the state and the world's peace. They are represented as violent, barbaric, primitive and haters of the modern value, thus considered as inferior to their western counterparts. The novel upholds the stance taken by the US government after 9/11 attacks. When Hermione asks her sister Beth that why do they hate us? She replies "they hate our freedom" which is exactly what G. Bush said in his speech after 9/11. Moreover, through the narrative the novel asserts that Muslims hate westerns and supports the meta-narrative that Muslims are a violent nation and a threat to the US and world peace. Hermione tells her sister, "There are some imams, if I am pronouncing it right, that distinctly bear watching. They all preach terrible things against America, but some of them go beyond that. I mean, in advocating violence against the state." [15].

Although this novel is written from the perspective of the Muslim character, but all the Muslim characters are shown in a stereotypical and orientalist way. Almost all the Muslim characters in the novel, belonging to different ethnicities, are presented as anarchist and intolerant and Islam is presented as a religion promoting violence. The novel is full of such dialogues that show Muslims as barbaric and violent nation serving a specific purpose of creating a discourse against Islam in the modern world. We are not told that whether there were any social, economic or political reasons which caused Ahmad to be radicalized but instead Islam is presented as a force behind all of his fundamental views. Thus, the depiction of the reasons that draw the youth towards extremist thoughts and radicalization is biased. This novel seems to be promoting a certain purpose and view of America towards Middle Eastern Muslim countries especially in the context of the 9/11 incident. Novel appears to be asserting the superiority of western believes over the fundamental ideas of Islam and showing Islam as the ultimate source of all violence and barbarism, and western liberalism or secular ideas as the cure, thus ultimately reinforcing an imperialist discourse.

Comparing to Ahmad, we have Jack Levy, a non-practicing Jew of broadly liberal tendencies, who is the complete antithesis of Ahmad's character. At the age of eleven when Ahmad joined mosque for his religious learning, by this age Jack was not as much devoted, he gave up his religion completely because the "life in books and streets meant more to him". [15] However, Ahmad gave up his studies at school because he thinks that it "might take away his God". Jack is not much satisfied with his life and has a skeptical bend of mind and questions everything. Whereas, Ahmad never questions his beliefs, if ever this happens he suppresses his all doubts and keeps on following his straight path. The correspondence between Jack and Ahmad provides the contrast between worldly liberal and extremist religious ideas. Opposing to other fundamentalist and extremist characters, jack is presented as a moderate, liberal and progressive man and represents the western culture and civilization and secular ideas. Moreover, Ahmed guidance counsellor's original name is Jacob, who has made "Jack of Jacob", this name is a reference to the prophet Jacob, or Yaqoob, and this Jack is, like a prophet, trying to bring the people to right track. [15]. Jack thinks that Ahmed has lost his track and considers this his obligation to bring him back. In their first appointment after meeting Ahmad, "Jack sighs again and thinks ahead to the next appointment – another needy, surely misguided teen-ager about to float away in the morass of the world" [15]. Ahmad lets himself be guided, taking the left turn. The path is straight." [15], this quote is from the last portion of the novel and suggests that Ahmad has always been guided by someone and seems to have no will of his own, first by the imam and now by Jack and this path on which he is guided by Jack is the right and straight path. So, emphasizing that it is only western intervention that can keep you on the right track.

Updike is certainly creating binaries of 'us' and 'them' or more vividly of 'east' and 'west'. Moreover, both Ahmad and Jack are immigrants but both are represented in different tendencies showing America's own interests in supporting a certain group and their relationship with the Jewish state of Israel. Besides, all the western white characters are shown civilized and worried about the health of the world and all the vices are assigned to the African-Americans, Joryleen and Tylenol, and Muslim characters, who are considered barbaric, uncivilized and culturally inferior, thus giving a stereotypical depiction of them. Besides, all the Muslims and their ideas or values are related with darkness and western values are the light that can remove the darkness. This can be seen in the dialogue between Hermione and the Home Secretary:

The secretary muses aloud, "those people out there… why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What's to hate?" "They hate the light" Hermione tells him loyally. "Like cockroaches. Like bats. The light shone in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not." [15].

At the end of the novel Updike writes "The tunnel's bright mouth grows to swallow him and his truck and its ghosts; together all emerge into the dull but brightening light of another Monday in Manhattan." [15]. This scene depicts as if after giving up his idea of self-immolation, he has rejected that darkness and has accepted the light of western values and has born anew.

So, according to Said's *Culture and imperialism*, it can be observed that *Terrorist* is also supporting the imperialism and indirectly putting this in the minds of the people that without western interference east cannot attain civilization, stability and prosperity. But Pankaj Mishra negates this narrative and criticizes those writers who think that it is the moral obligation of westerns to take the 'White Man's Burden' for the righteousness of the rest of the world. He is of the view that eastern countries have their own civilizations which are even older than the western civilization. Instead of crediting western influence for the recent spate of uprisings in the Middle East, he traces the foundations of democracy in Muslim countries back to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a nineteenth century Persian who advised leaders in places from Egypt to the Ottoman Empire to India. [2].

Conclusion

This study establishes that *Terrorist*, despite written from the perspective of the Muslims, presents them in stereotypical way and helps to support and strengthen the imperialist discourse. Due to the deep influence of 9/11 incident on the Americans, many writers tried to write about that incident and about the mental condition and motives of the terrorists who commit such horrible acts. Most of the writers wrote from the perspective of the victims or survivors of those attacks but Updike's *Terrorist* is written from the perspective of the perpetrator. But despite its nuances, this representation of the motives seems biased with a specific intend.

Terrorist explores the reason behind such heinous acts and tries to depict the mental condition of a would-be terrorist through his character Ahmad. But his representation of the feelings of Ahmad is very illogical and irrational. Throughout the novel, Ahmad is voiceless and it is the narrator that is talking on his behalf and most of the views of Ahmad seem to be narrator's own. The novel does not pay any attention to the reasons in the society that cause the radicalization of Muslims. Instead it blames Islam as the ultimate source of violence and extremism. It seems that Updike has visited some pseudo-Quranic website, as the novel is full of Quranic verses that are mostly about the violent nature of Islam. He's promoting the narrative that Islam is a violent religion and is a threat to the world's peace. This research explores the different causes and motives behind the radicalization of youth other than Islam like the search for identity, meaning, a sense of belongingness, alienation and disengagement from the society. Moreover, it explains how *Terrorist* is indirectly reinforcing the imperialist discourse i.e. without the help and intervention of west, east is drowned in darkness. This is shown in Jack, acting as a prophet, saves Ahmad, the Arab-American character, from the darkness of his religious unconsciousness and leads him to regain his lost freedom and in this way consolidates the so-called claims of imperialists for bringing freedom, civilization and democracy to the world. ∎

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