

**Back to the Wall: A Critical Exploration of Select Post-9/11
Narratives on Terrorism**

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By

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DECLARATION

I, Jency James, hereby declare that the thesis titled "**Back to the Wall: A Critical Exploration of Select Post-9/11 Narratives on Terrorism**" is a work of bona fide research carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. O. J. Joycee and Dr Sijo Varghese C., and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "**Back to the Wall: A Critical Exploration of Select Post-9/11 Narratives on Terrorism**" submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a work of bona fide research carried out by Ms. Jency James under our supervision and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.



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Keywords: Historical empathy, postcolonial, hyperreal constructs, dichotomy.

Abstract

Terrorism narratives have become a crucial aspect of contemporary discourse, offering insights into the complexities of human experience and the impact of violence on individuals and societies. The study delves into the multifaceted dynamics of terrorism narratives in literature. Each text shapes readers' perceptions according to the strategies employed by the author. The study critically analyzes the post-9/11 narratives to uncover how they depict terrorism. The examination of the causes of terrorism as represented in the narratives is included in the area of study. The thesis investigates how do terrorism narratives strategically employ narrative empathy to position and construct perspectives. The primary texts selected for the examination are *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer, *The Sirens of Baghdad* by Yasmina Khadra, *The Wasted Vigil* by Nadeem Aslam, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* by Nayomi Munaweera, and *The Association of Small Bombs* by Karan Mahajan. The investigation defines the concept of narrative empathy as outlined by Suzanne Keen and applies it in the examination of the role of discourse in mediating responses that justify or normalize terrorism in post-9/11 narratives. By giving voice to perpetrators and victims of violence, the texts engender empathy, decry ideological extremism, or expose systemic injustices. The theoretical frameworks, such as positioning theory introduced by Rom Harré, and the theory of hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard, are employed to further the study. The analytical chapters establish how the select narratives reconstruct historical events of terrorism by weaving personal narratives interspersed with collective narratives etching the aftermath of traumatic events like death, pain, and loss. The crux of the study is the significance of understanding the intricacies of representation in sentimental terror narratives.

Keywords: Narrative empathy, positioning, hyperreal constructs, dichotomy.

സംഗ്രഹം

തീവ്രവാദ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ സമകാലിക വ്യവഹാരത്തിൽ നിർണായകമായ പല കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളും മുന്നോട്ടു വെക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. സമൂഹത്തിലും വ്യക്തിയിലും അക്രമങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുന്ന അനുഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള സങ്കീർണ്ണമായ മാനസികാവസ്ഥകൾ വിശകലന വിധേയമാക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ തീവ്രവാദ പഠനത്തിന്റെ ബഹുമുഖ സാധ്യതയാണ് ഈ പഠനം മുന്നോട്ടു വെക്കുന്നത്. എഴുത്തുകാരൻ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന ഓരോ വാചകവും കൃത്യമായും വായനക്കാരുടെ ധാരണകളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നവയാണ്. 9/11 വിശകലനങ്ങൾ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നത് തീവ്രവാദത്തെ എങ്ങനെ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നു എന്നുള്ളതാണ്. ഈ പഠനം വിമർശനാത്മകമായി അപഗ്രഥിക്കുന്നതും ഈ വിഷയം തന്നെയാണ്. ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിൽ മുന്നോട്ടു വെക്കപ്പെടുന്ന തീവ്രവാദ വിഷയങ്ങളുടെ പരിശോധനയും പഠന മേഖലയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഭീകരവാദ വിവരണങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ സ്ഥാപിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതും രൂപപ്പെടുന്നതും എപ്രകാരമാണെന്നും തന്ത്രപരമായി ആഖ്യാന സഹാനുഭൂതി ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത് എങ്ങനെയെന്നും പ്രബന്ധം വിലയിരുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്.

ഡോൺ ഡിലിജോയുടെ ഫാളിംഗ് മാൻ, ജോനാഥൻ സാഫ്രൺ ഫോയറിന്റെ എക്സ്ലീംലി ലൗഡ് ആന്റ് ഇൻക്രൂഡിബിളി ക്ലോസ്, യാസ്മിനവാദയുടെ ദി സറൈൻസ് ഓഫ് ബാഗ്ദാദ്, നദീം അസ്സമിന്റെ ദി വേസ്റ്റഡ് വിജിൽ, നയോമി മൂനവീരയുടെ ആയിരം മിറേഴ്സ് ഐലന്റ്, ബോജൻ അസോസിയേഷന്റെ ബോജൻ തുടങ്ങിയ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളാണ് പഠനത്തിനായി ഉപയോഗിച്ച പ്രാഥമിക ആകരങ്ങൾ. സൂസൻ കീൻ മുന്നോട്ടു വെക്കുന്ന ആഖ്യാന സഹാനുഭൂതിയെന്ന ആശയത്തെ രീതി ശാസ്ത്രമായി സ്വീകരിച്ച് നിർവ്വചിക്കുകയും 9/11 ന് ശേഷമുള്ള ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിൽ തീവ്രവാദത്തെ ന്യായീകരിക്കുകയും സാധാരണവൽക്കരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളെ അപഗ്രഥിക്കാൻ ഈ സങ്കല്പനം പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അക്രമികൾക്കും അക്രമത്തിന് ഇരയായി മാറിയവർക്കും ശബ്ദമായി മാറുന്നതിലൂടെ പ്രസ്തുത ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുന്നത് സഹാനുഭൂതിയെ പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യലാണ്. ഒന്നുകിൽ പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രം തീവ്രവാദത്തെ അപലപിക്കുന്നു അല്ലെങ്കിലിത് വ്യവസ്ഥാപരമായ അനീതികളെ തുറന്നു കാട്ടാൻ ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. റോം ഹാരെ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച പൊസിഷനിംഗ് തിയറി, ജീൻ ബൗരഡില്ലാർഡിന്റെ ഹൈപ്പർ റിയാലിറ്റി തിയറി തുടങ്ങിയ സൈദ്ധാന്തിക ചട്ടക്കൂടുകളും രീതി ശാസ്ത്രമായി ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. മരണം, വേദന, നഷ്ടം തുടങ്ങിയ വേദനാജനകമായ സംഭവങ്ങളുടെ തുടർക്കാഴ്ചകൾ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വിവരണങ്ങൾക്കൊപ്പം വ്യക്തിഗത കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളും ചേർത്തുവെച്ചു കൊണ്ട് തീവ്രവാദത്തിന്റെ ചരിത്ര സംഭവങ്ങളെ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് പുനർനിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതെന്നും അധ്യായങ്ങളിലൂടെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്ത് സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. സെന്ററിമെന്റൽ, ഭീകര ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിലെ പ്രതിനിധാനത്തിന്റെ സങ്കീർണ്ണതകൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കാനും ഇത് പ്രയോജനകരമാകും.

കീവേർഡ്സ്: നരേറ്റീവ് എംപതി, പൊസിഷനിംഗ്, ഹൈപ്പർറിയാൽ കൺട്രക്സ്, ഡയോട്ടമി

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Chapter 1

Terrorism is one of the most pressing and complex global threats, disrupting societies, shaping political agendas, and redefining the nature of modern warfare. In its most deceptive form, it has evolved as an amorphous threat, as Jean Baudrillard observes, “like viruses” capable of manifesting anywhere, everywhere, and at any time (10). Terrorism today has transcended boundaries of geography, ideology, and even physical space. The microscopic domain of bioweapons and the macroscopic realm of global technology introduce novel forms of attacks, threats, and psychological warfare. The rapid advancement of digital technologies has expanded the terrorist arsenal, enabling the dissemination of propaganda, recruitment, and even remote-controlled attacks. Lone-wolf attacks and large-scale operations have become increasingly common, involving intense degrees of planning, coordination, and sophistication.

Understanding the concept of terrorism is essential in analyzing how different narratives construct and shape public perceptions of violence, extremism, and ideological conflicts. The representation of terrorism in literature is not merely a recounting of events but a powerful force that influences how societies interpret, justify, or condemn acts of violence. “The process of inducing consent—of normalizing the practice of war—therefore requires more than just propaganda or ‘public diplomacy’; it requires the construction of a whole new language, or a kind of public narrative, that manufactures approval while simultaneously suppressing individual doubts and wider political protest” (Jackson 1). Various literary narratives offer distinct perspectives, some humanizing the perpetrators by exploring their motivations and psychological turmoil, while others reinforce hegemonic discourses

that depict terrorism as an inherent evil, divorced from historical and political contexts. These portrayals play a crucial role in framing public consciousness, affecting everything from national policies to individual biases and fears.

Terrorism narratives have become a pervasive and potent force in shaping global perceptions, policies, and conflicts in the post-9/11 era. The ideologies constructed and disseminated through these narratives actively influence societal understandings of terrorism, security, and identity. The study of terrorism through literature, particularly in post-9/11 fiction, reveals the complexities of trauma, identity, and ideological clashes, offering a critical lens through which to dissect the intricate relationship between terrorism and global power structures. This is explicit in Richard Grey's statement in *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*, "One of the most noticeable aspects of the language surrounding the attacks of September 11, 2001 is its constant reference to tragedy, grievance and the exceptional suffering of the American people" (31). The rhetorical strategies employed in these narratives, such as fragmented storytelling, nonlinear timelines, and multiple perspectives mirror the disorientation and chaos inherent in both acts of terror and their aftermath (39-41). By critically engaging with these literary representations, one discerns how they contribute to the larger discourse on terrorism, shaping not only historical memory but also future responses to political violence. Ultimately, an exploration of terrorism in literature underscores the interplay between narrative construction and ideological conditioning, revealing how stories wield the power to define and redefine the meaning of terror in contemporary society.

This study examines the fictional portrayal of terrorism in post-9/11 narratives by focusing on how different narrative techniques shape perceptions of extremism and

its socio-political implications. The narratives selected for the study represent a diverse array of perspectives, encompassing writers of American, Afghan, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Pakistani backgrounds. Each author brings their unique cultural, historical, and political contexts to the portrayal of terrorism, providing a broad spectrum of viewpoints for examination.

Documented History of Terrorism

Terrorism has a history that predates the term itself. Terror has always been intertwined with governance, power struggles, and resistance from the earliest periods of civilization. The study of the evolution of terrorism reveals that it is a complex and evolving phenomenon that has been shaped by diverse political, religious, and ideological motivations. Jonathan Matusitz identifies the Sicarii as one of the earliest terrorist groups. Sicarii was a militant faction that waged violent protests against the Roman Empire in Jerusalem and Palestine. They rejected the Roman-imposed tax laws and believed that only through violent resistance could they bring about changes in the political realm. They cut open their targets' throats using a sica, which means a short sword. Thus, terror was deliberately used as a strategic means to accomplish political agendas (183-199). Lewis Bernard unravels the political ideology that governs men in their struggle for power in *Les Assassins: Terrorisme et politique dans l'islam medieval*.

Ideological movements are at the confluence of two series of struggles, conflicts, and aspirations. There is, on the one hand, the political dynamic, the eternal struggle for power to be found wherever there are human societies . . . and even in certain types of animal society. On the other hand, we find the no less universal aspiration to be guided in public and private life by a system of

standards and rules that spare us the never-ending task of having constantly to construct behavioral models for every occasion, of having continuously to call everything into question. We call such systems ideologies. (8)

This individual or collective aspiration, along with the intense desire to wield power or resist domination, naturally fosters political extremism and its corollary, ideological or religious fanaticism. Thus, extremism and fanaticism result in organized violence. In *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al Qaeda*, Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin expound upon the ‘Assassins’, a radical religious group that waged war against Saladin’s empire and defied the Ottoman Empire’s armies. They described the assassination of the Persian grand vizier of the mighty Turkish Seljuq sultans, Nizam al-Mulk, as one of the earliest terrorist acts in history. “The history of the Assassins prefigures to a remarkable degree the dynamic of most movements that have resorted to terrorist tactics over the centuries” (59). Thugs were a clandestine group in India, active from the 13th to the 19th centuries, notorious for strangling travelers during their journey. While the assassins exemplified state-sponsored terror in the medieval period, the Thugs represent a distinct case of non-state actors perpetrating widespread violence in India.

The modern concept of terrorism has its roots in the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, when the Jacobins, led by Maximilien Robespierre, employed systematic state violence to suppress counter-revolutionaries (Palmer 4-5). This period introduced state terrorism, where the government employed violence to maintain control. The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of anarchist terrorism, as radical groups sought to dismantle monarchies and capitalist structures through violent means. The French Revolution’s emphasis on disseminating radical

ideas and using violent acts to spread fear and garner support prefigured modern terrorism's use of propaganda by deed. Revolutionary ideologies during this period provided a framework for justifying violence against perceived enemies of the state. The twentieth century saw large-scale state-sponsored terrorism in totalitarian regimes. The dissidents of the Soviet state were executed or sent to labour camps in Stalin's Great Purge (Conquest 25). The Nazi regime's secret police, the Gestapo, and the SS paramilitary organization employed systematic intimidation and brutality to suppress civilian populations, ultimately contributing to the atrocities of the Holocaust (Evan 48). Political purges and Red Guard violence led to massive casualties during Mao's Cultural Revolution (Dikötter 33). Following World War II, terrorism emerged as a key strategy in anti-colonial movements, with various groups employing violence to achieve national independence. This phenomenon obscured the distinction between freedom fighters and terrorists (Chaliand & Blin 45). During the Cold War, ideological terrorism emerged, which was driven by leftist revolutionaries and right-wing extremists. This era saw the emergence of state-sponsored groups like Hezbollah (Levitt 25).

In *Waves of terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*, David Rapoport discusses that the first wave of terrorism began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second wave was confined within the national territories and was termed the colonial wave. The third wave commenced when terrorism crossed national boundaries. Thus, the term 'global terror' became part of the political vocabulary since the late twentieth century. The fourth wave that emerged in 1979 is characterized by international alliances, unparalleled violent tactics, dependence on modern advanced technologies, and the justification of religious fervour for

killing (8-13).

In *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*,

Laqueur posits that “the new terrorism is different in character, aiming not at clearly defined political demands but at the destruction of society and the elimination of large sections of the population” (81). New terrorism is also marked by its global reach and lack of clear boundaries. Ultimately, the shift from old to new terrorism reflects a fundamental change in the nature and objectives of terrorist acts. This concept of old and new terrorism finds parallel in Boaz Ganor’s framework, which categorizes terrorism into classical, modern, and postmodern phases, echoing the evolution from targeted, specific acts of old or classical terrorism to the more globalized, indiscriminate violence characteristic of new or postmodern terrorism. Classical terrorism involves direct, targeted attacks on specific objectives, resulting in relatively few casualties, and typically focuses on non-critical infrastructure. The limited scope of damage is intentional, as these acts are designed to achieve a clear, specific political goal. In modern terrorism, a more direct approach is used, targets are more indiscriminate, and destruction is much higher, inflicting hundreds of casualties, with conventional weapons being used to create mass fatalities. Postmodern terrorism seeks to transform the conflict landscape through extreme acts, such as employing CBRN weapons, with the aim of physically destroying the opponent’s ability to resist. The ultimate goal is to eradicate the root cause of the conflict itself (287-304).

The September 11, 2001 attacks, perpetrated by al-Qaeda, marked a watershed moment in global terrorism. The innovative use of hijacked airplanes as weapons demonstrated a new dimension of asymmetric warfare (Gunaratna 10). The attacks resulted in the U.S. War on Terror, including invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and

Iraq (2003) and the rise of ISIS leveraging both territorial control and digital propaganda to spread the influence and recruit followers worldwide. In the present day, the fourth wave of terrorism continues to evolve, with varied groups leveraging advanced technology and social media to spread their ideology globally. The present-day technology adopted by terrorists has made it increasingly challenging for nations to combat this threat. Modern terrorism has evolved to include Lone-Wolf and Cyberterrorism. Lone-wolf terrorism has been extensively examined in the works of Mark S.Hamm and Jeffrey D.Simon, who offer critical insights into its characteristics, motivations, and implications. It is a terrorist attack carried out by a single individual without material assistance from any group, but often influenced by broader ideologies or movements. Groups like Anonymous and ISIS harnessed digital platforms for propaganda, recruitment, and hacking (Weimann 41). Additionally, the blurring of lines between terrorism and insurgency has led to complex security challenges for governments worldwide.

Definition of terrorism

Terrorism studies have garnered the attention of many scholars which results in multiple definitions and frameworks. But, since the word terrorism carries an enormous emotional freight, there is “no single definition of terrorism that commands full international approval” (Carlile 47). Alen Krueger in *What Makes a Terrorist* defines terrorism as a violent and inappropriate form of political expression that cannot be tolerated (146). While the definition of terrorism by the U.S. State Department denotes calculated violence by subnational or clandestine groups against noncombatant targets, the UK Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 encompasses all activities of violence for political gain that target any section of society. Philip Herbst

discusses the impact beyond physical destruction caused by violence, foregrounding its ability to profoundly shape perceptions. The very discourse surrounding terrorism serves to “place one’s group on a high moral plane, condemn the enemy, rally members around a cause, silence or shape policy debate, and achieve a wide variety of agendas” (163). According to Laqueur, there are more than one hundred and fifty definitions of terrorism (5) which are shaped by historical, ideological, and geopolitical factors. The Revised ACDT, i.e., Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism, encapsulates the core dimensions of terrorism in the definition published in 2011.

Terrorism refers on the one hand to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and noncombatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties. (Schmid 86)

Throughout the history of organized political life, the institutions, individuals, and policies of those in power have “inspired the violent wrath of their nominal subjects” (Gurr 3). He argues that intense frustration motivates men to attack their oppressors who frustrate them (9). Mark Juergensmeyer, in *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* observes, ‘perpetrating acts of terrorism is one of several ways to symbolically express power over oppressive forces and regain some nobility in the perpetrator’s personal life’ (186). This perspective aligns with that of Baudrillard that there is a global perfusion of terrorism which accompanies any system of domination as though it were its shadow, ready to activate

itself anywhere, like a shadow (10) that cautions humanity that the more powerful the system becomes globally, establishing one single network, the more it becomes defenseless at a single point. These two definitions converge on the notion that terrorism is not an isolated act of violence, but a reactive force against any system of domination or power. Based on the ideas gathered from the works of scholars like Yonah Alexander, Alex P. Schmid, Martha Crenshaw, and Christopher Dobson, who emphasize key aspects such as political objective, tactical violence, international linkages, and trained group, terrorism is an organized, tactical act of violence or threat, employed by a trained group with international linkages, aimed at achieving a specific political objective, often through instilling fear and manipulating governments or societies. Following these interpretations, this thesis recognizes that terrorism both subverts or challenges a domination of power, and gets shaped by the very system it opposes.

Who is a terrorist?

The term “terrorist” originated during the French Revolution, a period marked by extreme violence and suppression by the Jacobins. The term then referred to the use of terror by the state to persuade, control, and terrify its enemies. The Jacobins were called “terrorists”. But later, by the nineteenth century, the term began to be associated with non-state groups, like nationalists and anarchists, who resorted to violence to achieve their goals. In the twentieth century, the term took a different connotation, which describes individuals or groups that unleash violence to intimidate people to achieve social, ideological and political objectives.

According to Cecil Anthony, a terrorist is the one who indulges in a politically committed act that is intentionally directed either at noncombatants or their properties

for instilling serious harm and fear (19). The process by which an individual is radicalized and stimulated to be involved in extremist activities is a seminal concept in terrorism studies. F J Hacker in 1976 introduced the first typology of terrorists as crusaders, criminals, and crazies. Those who were idealistically inspired and motivated to act for a higher cause were called crusaders. Criminals used terrorism for personal advantage. Crazies were motivated by unreal beliefs and perceptions produced by their unstable minds (15). This concept of typology familiarized the notion that terrorists differ from each other and that acts and actors of terrorism are not monolithic.

In the early 1980s, Jerrold Post introduced another classification of terrorists as i) Anarchic ideologue and ii) Nationalist secessionist. The individuals who belonged to severely dysfunctional families where they were abused or ill-treated developed hostile feelings towards society. Their radical ideologies were fostered by their rebellion and animosity toward the state or national authority. But Nationalist secessionists were loyal to their parents, and their extreme violent behaviours were to avenge the injustices against their parents (241-256).

In *What Makes a Terrorist*, Krueger challenges the general perception of terrorists that they are desperately poor and have nothing to live for. He argues that they are the people who care so deeply and fervently about a cause that they are willing to die for it (4). He observes that terrorists do not come from underprivileged or impoverished backgrounds. Instead, terrorists, especially international terrorists, tend to be drawn from the ranks of the relatively advanced sections in societies from which they come, in terms of family income, occupational opportunities, and education (12). According to Toro Bjorgo, the rational individual can join a collective

action even if his or her own net personal welfare is negative, as long as the perceived benefit to the group is large enough to compensate for these losses (18).

While classifications such as those proposed by Kjell Housken categorize terrorists into mercenaries, ideologues, and captive participants, alternative frameworks highlight the influence of nationalism, religious extremism, and state-sponsored violence. Group welfare perception stems from multiple external influences, including socialization, religious ideologies, cultural background, and the role of a leader, often termed a 'political entrepreneur' in scholarly discourse.

During the Cold War against the Soviet Union, Ronald Reagan and others in the White House frequently referred to the Afghan fighters as freedom fighters and mujahedin. But twenty years later, after nineteen skyjackers instructed by the late Osama bin Laden reduced key U.S. symbols into shambles, their act was labeled as terrorism by the George W. Bush administration. The distinction between a terrorist and a freedom fighter continues to be a contested issue, shaped by geopolitical narratives and the interests of state actors. The study of terrorism and terrorists must move beyond simplistic definitions to account for the evolving nature of extremist violence, the role of media in amplifying terrorist agendas, and the broader socio-political structures that perpetuate cycles of radicalization and violence. It is crucial to distinguish between a terrorist and a soldier, or terrorism from warfare, as both obscure the fundamental differences between state-sanctioned military action and the deliberate use of violence to instill fear and target civilians for ideological purposes.

In "Frameworks for Conceptualizing Terrorism", Schmid distinguishes military activity, guerrilla war, and terrorism. Military activity was bound by conventions entailing moral distinctions between belligerents and neutrals,

combatants and noncombatants, appropriate and inappropriate targets, and legitimate and illegitimate methods. Guerrilla war was a special kind of military activity, in which hit-and-run tactics to disperse the enemy's military forces were employed to wear down and gradually defeat the enemy. The traditional distinguishing characteristic of the terrorist was his explicit refusal to accept the conventional moral limits that defined military and guerrilla action. Because a terrorist knew that others did think that violence should be limited, he exploited the enemy's various responses to his outrages. The terrorist perpetrated atrocities and manipulated reactions to them (205). In its modern state-sanctioned form, war is strictly bound by international laws, for instance, the Geneva Conventions, which advocate minimizing harm to civilians and guarantee ethical conduct in war. In *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz defines war as a political strategy constrained by operational justification rather than uncontrolled violence. Michael Walzer, in *Just and Unjust Wars*, sustains that warfare must observe the principles of 'jus ad bellum', which means 'justice to war' and 'jus in bello', which signifies 'justice in war'. Terrorism is a violent and deliberate transgression of these moral and legal boundaries. According to Hoffman, terrorists intentionally target civilians to provoke political reaction, instill fear, and draw attention to their needs. Terrorists reject the moral limitations of traditional warfare, adopting what Schmid defines as a strategy of psychological manipulation through reported or publicized atrocities.

Causes of Terrorism

The varied types of terrorism with extremely distinct foundations justify the possibility of numerous levels of causation for terrorist acts. A deliberate act of terror is conceived specifically to draw the attention of the public and communicate a

message to a wider audience. The message conveyed underscores the fundamental drivers- grievances and motivations- that propel individuals to engage in acts of extremism. The causes of terrorism are complex and multifaceted, as Louise Richardson, Martha Crenshaw, and Hoffman have discussed in their works. Hoffman posits that terrorism is fostered by political grievances and is executed with strategic calculation. Crenshaw points out the importance of historical contexts and organizational dynamics in triggering extremist behaviour. Scholars like Marc Sageman and Jessica Stern highlight the convergence of personal trauma, ideological indoctrination, and social alienation as key drivers that push individuals toward terrorism.

Among the factors that drive people to commit acts of terrorism, political, ethno-nationalist, and religious motivations play significant roles. The Jewish militant groups in pre-independence Israel, the Muslim-dominated FLN in Algeria, and the Catholic IRA are a few instances of terrorist organizations that have prioritized irredentist or nationalist objectives over religious goals. While political grievances and nationalist struggles underpin terrorist activities, the belief in a divine mandate or religious ideology can intensify and justify violent action, as in the case of al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations. It was the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that led to the resurgence of religious extremism (Hoffman 82).

According to Bjorgo, the causes of terrorism can be distinguished between two concepts: preconditions and precipitants. While precipitants are immediate triggers, preconditions establish a long-term atmosphere that fosters terrorism. Modernization, globalization, and economic inequality are examples of structural factors that impact people's lives on a large scale. Facilitator factors like the media, transportation, and

lax state control increase the likelihood of terrorism. Personal grievances are the source of motivational causes, which political leaders and ideologies influence to spur action. Certain events that directly lead to terrorist acts, such as violent crimes, political upheavals, or even peace negotiations, constitute triggering causes (3).

Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, asserts that civilizations, particularly those with differing religious and cultural foundations, are likely to clash, leading to tensions and, in some cases, violent extremism. This perspective has been widely debated, with scholars such as Edward Said critiquing it as an oversimplification that fuels stereotypes and justifies conflict (11). Scholars like Gilles Kepel, Olivier Roy, and Sageman, among others, study the relationship between civilizational divides and radicalization and have contributed their insights. A few scholars, for instance, John Maszka, have expanded the study of causes onto various factors such as poverty, illiteracy, inequality, democracy, authoritarianism, and mental illness. Louise Richardson, in *What Terrorists Want* (2006), identifies three core motivations behind terrorist actions: revenge, renown, and reaction. She argues that terrorism is not merely a product of religious extremism but is often a strategic tool used to achieve political ends.

Early representations of terrorism in English Literature

The depiction of terrorism in literature has undergone substantial transformations throughout history, reflecting the shifting political, social, and ideological landscapes of each era. While early literature did not portray 'terrorism' in the modern connotation, themes of political violence, rebellion, and ideological conflicts have been explored in literature for centuries. These literary representations have helped shape public perceptions of terrorism, reflecting both historical realities

and cultural anxieties. Scholars like Peter C. Herman and Joyce Wexler among others, have studied the representation of terrorism in literature. *Beowulf* (8th-11th century) is an example that presents narratives of violent attacks by monstrous figures, symbolizing existential threats to society, yet these acts are framed within the dichotomy of good versus evil rather than political terrorism. The Renaissance and Elizabethan literature, i.e., the works of William Shakespeare, engage with political violence and assassination. *Julius Caesar* (1599) explores the moral and political implications of regicide, as Brutus and Cassius justify their act as necessary for the republic's survival. *Macbeth* dramatizes the consequences of political ambition and violence, themes that would later be central to terrorism narratives. These works, though not explicitly focused on terrorism lay the foundation for literary explorations of political violence that later became central to the literary representation of terrorism.

The Romantic period witnessed the emergence of literature reflecting the anxieties surrounding revolutionary violence, influenced by the French Revolution and its aftermath. William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850) reflects on the chaotic violence of the revolution, simultaneously depicting it as a force of destruction and renewal. Gothic literature of the time, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), incorporated fears of radical ideologies and rebellion, portraying uncontrolled scientific and political ambitions as dangerous to society. These literary responses illustrate how anxieties about political instability began influencing narratives that, in later centuries, would evolve into explicit portrayals of terrorism.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a turning point in the literary representation of terrorism, as anarchist movements and political violence became

prominent global concerns. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* (1885) and Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) engaged with anarchist conspiracies, portraying underground revolutionary movements that used violence to achieve ideological ends. Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) also explored themes of revolutionary terror, depicting the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution as a cautionary tale of mass violence and political extremism. One of the earliest direct literary engagements with terrorism came with Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), which provides a psychological exploration of an anarchist bombing plot in London. Conrad critiques both the state and the radical revolutionaries, portraying terrorism as an existential threat rooted in ideology, manipulation, and personal disillusionment.

The early-to-mid 20th century saw the expansion of terrorism's literary representation, particularly influenced by the rise of fascist and communist regimes. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934) explore state-sponsored terror and political repression. Orwell's *1984* (1949) is particularly significant for its depiction of a dystopian society where terrorism is wielded by the state to maintain absolute control through surveillance, psychological manipulation, and fear. This period cemented the understanding that terrorism is not solely the act of underground militant groups but can also be orchestrated by the state as an instrument of oppression.

With the decolonization movements of the mid-20th century, literature began to explore the violence associated with both colonial oppression and anti-colonial struggles. Postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) examine how political violence

and insurgency emerge as responses to imperial domination. These texts complicate the discourse on terrorism, presenting insurgents not merely as perpetrators of violence but as products of historical injustices and colonial subjugation.

The 21st century has witnessed a profound paradigm shift in the literary landscape in response to the September 11 attacks. The event divides the narrative terrain into two epochs: Pre-9/11 and post-9/11 narratives. Pre-9/11 narratives portray simplistic dichotomies, Orientalist stereotypes that perpetuate a monolithic understanding of terrorism. While, post-9/11 texts examine the intricate web of ideologies, motivations, and historical contexts that define terrorist acts. These narratives converge around the themes of trauma, memory, and the reconfiguration of identity in a post-9/11 world (Gray 11). The narratives that challenge Western ideology of terrorism present the protagonist's radicalization as a direct response to the repercussions of the U.S. foreign policies. These texts highlight the complexities of terrorism's representation, moving beyond simplistic binaries of good and evil to interrogate the socio-political factors that contribute to radicalization.

The representation of terrorism in literature has evolved from early narratives of conquest and revolution to complex explorations of political violence, ideology, and trauma. From Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* to contemporary post-9/11 fiction, literary works have played a crucial role in shaping and reflecting public understandings of terrorism. While earlier texts often framed terrorism as a chaotic and irrational force, modern literature increasingly situates it within broader socio-political contexts, questioning the very definitions of terrorism and resistance. As global conflicts continue to evolve, literature remains a powerful medium for

critically engaging with the causes, consequences, and representations of terrorism in the collective imagination.

Objectives

The study encompasses the post-9/11 narratives on terrorism. Each text interrogates themes of trauma, violence, and identity politics related to extremism in different yet powerful narrative styles. By giving voice to perpetrators and victims, texts can engender empathy, decry ideological extremism, or expose systemic injustices. The primary objective of the thesis is to investigate the causes of terrorism as represented in literary works, shedding light on how authors portray the root factors driving terrorism. This involves exploring the textual construction of terrorism, which reveals how literary texts shape our understanding of this complex issue. Another key objective is to analyze the discourse and rhetoric of post-9/11 terrorism, examining how language and narrative strategies are used to construct meanings and perspectives. This study will also investigate the navigation of narrative empathy, which is crucial for understanding how readers are positioned to respond to terrorism narratives.

By exploring these objectives, this thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of how literary works represent terrorism. Investigating the causes of terrorism in literary works will help identify how authors approach this complex issue. Analyzing the textual construction of terrorism will reveal the narrative techniques used to construct meanings. Examining the discourse and rhetoric of post-9/11 terrorism will provide insights into how language shapes public perceptions of terrorism. Navigating narrative empathy is essential for understanding how readers engage with terrorism narratives on empathetic level.

The works selected for the study

Falling Man by Don DeLillo portrays the collective and individual psyche of the emotionally void and desperately disoriented victims of the 9/11 attacks. DeLillo depicts the act of falling and how people get hopelessly entangled in the spectacle of falling. The novel published in 2007, spawned a condensed adaptation, “Still Life”, that was featured as a short story. DeLillo’s literary contributions are replete with seventeen novels, two plays, *The Day Room* (1986), and *Valparaiso*(1999), and the novellas , *The Bird Artist* (2001) and *Pafko at the Wall* (2001). According to Frank Lentricchia, DeLillo’s books are distinguished by their dynamic, and heterogeneous texture. They seamlessly blend disparate elements-tone, style, and narrative voice to create a complex, thought-provoking experience that juxtaposes fear and dark humour, ultimately capturing the quintessential spirit of modern America (2).

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer expounds how trauma shatters and erodes language, rendering it powerless. The novel depicts the adventurous journey of Oskar Schell a nine-year-old boy. He sets out to unravel the mystery behind an envelope labeled “Black” with a small key left by his father killed in the September 11,2001 attacks. The novel published in the year 2005, “transcends the lines of demarcation between victims, perpetrators, and witnesses of the attack and thus calls to our attention a problematic “us versus them” mentality that typically results in more violence and trauma” (Mullins 299). Jonathan Safran Foer, a significant literary voice in America is known for exploring complex themes including trauma, identity, history, and ethical responsibility in his writings.

The Wasted Vigil by Nadeem Aslam traces the connection between the violence inflicted by the rising American hegemony in Afghanistan during the Cold

War era and the resultant emergence of extremist groups, culminating in the invasion of Afghanistan, a strategy labeled as 'War on Terror'. Aslam portrays the intricate lives of Afghans caught in between the brutal armed forces of invaders and the fierce resistance of the oppressors. Nadeem Aslam is a British-Pakistani novelist known for his lyrical prose and deeply political narratives that explore themes of war, migration, and religious extremism. His acclaimed works, including *Maps for Lost Lovers*, *The Blind Man's Garden*, and *The Golden Legend*, vividly depict the struggles of individuals caught between personal loyalties and larger socio-political conflicts. Through his storytelling, Aslam intricately weaves history and human emotion, shedding light on the impact of violence and intolerance on ordinary lives.

The Sirens of Baghdad by Yasmina Khadra centers around a young Iraqi man whose life is shattered by the horrors of war, leading him down a path of radicalization as he seeks vengeance against the West. However, as he nears his final mission, he confronts the true cost of violence, ultimately questioning the justification of terrorism. Yasmina Khadra, the pen name of Mohammed Moulessehoul, is an Algerian author and former military officer known for his compelling narratives on terrorism, war, and identity. His works, including *The Swallows of Kabul* and *The Sirens of Baghdad*, explore the psychological and social complexities of extremism and conflict. By adopting a female pseudonym to bypass military censorship, Khadra challenges perceptions of gender, authority, and storytelling in contemporary literature.

Sri Lankan American author, Nayomi Munaweera's debut novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* explores the devastating aftermath of the 1983 ethnic riots, which sparked a brutal thirty-year-long ethnic war. The discourse of 'differences' and

'disparities' shapes her narrative that weaves the complexities of the double consciousness of ethnic communities. The novel published in 2012 was awarded the Common Wealth Regional Prize in 2013. Her second novel, *What Lies Between Us* won the National Sri Lankan Book Award.

The Association of Small Bombs by Karan Mahajan published in 2016 crafts a different and striking narration of a small bombing and its reverberations in India. The novel publicizes the pressing need of the hour to develop a public discourse that unequivocally condemns violent terrorism by avoiding the vilification of entire communities based on ethnicity or religion. Mahajan's debut novel, *Family Planning* was published in 2008. His writings explore the themes of identity, culture, social justice, and family foregrounding complexities of contemporary life.

Literature Review

The September 11, 2001 attacks strikingly impacted geopolitical dynamics and academic discussions related to terrorism and redefined the literary landscape of terrorism narratives. The attacks resurfaced the notion of penetrable borders which resulted in a paradigm shift in the focus of post-9/11 terrorism scholarship. Post-9/11 narratives have been extensively explored in academic literature, revealing complex constructions of identity, fear, and otherness. Scholars such as Andrew Silke, M. Sageman, Hoffman, Peter R. Neumann, and Richard Jackson have extensively contributed to this area. The focus on non-state actors, such as al-Qaeda, other jihadist groups, various manifestations of Islamist extremism, suicide terrorism, and the psychological and sociological narratives reshaped terrorism literature. The period, thus, is characterized by the advent of specialized discourse such as homegrown

terrorism, asymmetrical warfare, radicalization pipeline, Islamophobia, and securitization of fear.

Jeroen Gunning in *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* sheds light on the complex nature of Hamas' ideology. His studies examine political mobilization and contestation in the Middle East, as well as the interplay between Islamist social movements, religion, and political contestation. Scholars such as Julie Chernov Hwang, Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, and Diane Singerman provide valuable insights into Islamist mobilization, Islamist movements, and their foreign policies.

Researchers like Jackson, Alex Houen, and Jonathan Franzen have analyzed how post-9/11 narratives perpetuate isolationism and the othering of a particular community. They argue that literature can provide comprehensive insights into the complexities of terrorism, beyond the simplistic portrayals often found in media and political discourse.

Trauma and terrorism have also been explored in literary studies. Scholars like Stef Craps and E. Ann Kaplan have investigated how literary narratives can provide a platform for processing and understanding the traumatic experiences of terrorism. They posit that literature can facilitate a wider understanding of trauma, beyond the simplistic frameworks often employed in media and political discourse. Their works examine and analyze the intersection of trauma, media, and culture elucidating the construction and consumption of terrorism narratives. Roger Luckhurst in the work, *The Trauma Question* highlights the idea that traumatic experiences are unrepresentable which may lead to fragmenting the psyche that leads to latency and dissociation. He highlights the idea that it is challenging to completely narrate or comprehend traumatic events.

The intersection of identity, cultural representation, and terrorism has been another area of scholarly interest. Researchers like Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin have explored how narratives construct Muslims as problematic identities in the West. Their studies underscore the huge disparity between these stereotyped representations and the complex and complicated reality of Muslim identities. By discussing the politics of stereotyping and the ways in which media narratives normalize or alienate Muslim identities, they challenge these representations and promote a deeper understanding of Muslim experiences. In his seminal work, *The Replication of Violence: Thoughts on International Terrorism After September 11th 2001*, Suman Gupta examines how terms like “international terrorism” and “war on terror” were understood after the September 11 attack. Ruvani Ranasinha in “Hanif Kureishi: Writing the Self” explicates how one’s experiences with identity and racism shape one’s writing. She emphasized the tendency to essentialize identity in literary works, arguing that such portrayals can perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

Thesis statement

Existing scholarship on terrorism has extensively explored the causes of terrorism, providing valuable insights into the root factors that drive individuals and groups to engage in violent acts. However, a significant gap remains in our understanding of how terrorism narratives strategically manipulate empathy. This gap is crucial because empathy plays a significant role in shaping how audiences respond to and interpret narratives of terrorism. Previous studies have primarily examined the psychological and ideological functions of terrorism, analyzing why individuals might be drawn to extremist ideologies. Yet, few studies have addressed the specific narrative techniques used in terrorism narratives to position readers to sympathize

with or alienate certain perspectives. This thesis bridges the gap by analyzing how terrorism narratives employ narrative empathy to frame moral justifications, influence audience reception, and construct ideological stances in post-9/11 literature.

Research Methodology

The study of terrorism, particularly its justification and normalization through narrative construction, necessitates a rigorous and multidisciplinary research methodology. Terrorism is not merely an act of violence; it is a discursive phenomenon shaped by political, cultural, and ideological forces. As scholars such as Hoffman and Louise Richardson argue, terrorism is fundamentally communicative, seeking to influence audiences beyond its immediate victims. The narratives on terrorism- literature, media, or political discourse, play a crucial role in shaping public perception, legitimizing certain actions, and dehumanizing others.

This research, therefore, employs a methodological framework that investigates construction of empathy through various strategies adopted by the authors. The analysis is carried out in two parts. Part one of each chapter analyzes the causes of terrorism as represented in the narratives and part two examines the strategy employed in the representation of the causes that facilitate narrative empathy. The first chapter discusses causes of terrorism as resistance against capitalist or imperialist ideologies and then the analysis proceeds to the examination of representation of hyper real constructs in the works chosen for the study. The second chapter which studies how invasion leads to terrorism employs positioning theory to understand how characters are positioned to construct empathy that justifies violence. The third chapter analyzes how ethnonationalism or nationalist sentiment triggers terrorism. The chapter explores the representation of the majority/minority dichotomy to

understand how it justifies violence. By engaging with literary texts, political rhetoric, this study seeks to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which violence is justified.

Suzanne Keen's concept of narrative empathy explores how storytelling evokes emotional responses, allowing readers to connect with characters' experiences, emotions, and perspectives. In her seminal work, *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), Keen argues that narrative techniques—such as focalization, free indirect discourse, and interior monologue—enable readers to step into the minds of others, fostering compassion and understanding.

Unlike real-world empathy, which is shaped by personal relationships and biases, narrative empathy is unique in its ability to transcend distance, culture, and identity. Literature, Keen suggests, can generate emotional engagement even with morally ambiguous or controversial figures, challenging preconceived notions and broadening ethical awareness. However, she also cautions that empathy in fiction does not always translate into real-world altruism, as it may be fleeting, selective, or manipulated by ideological framing.

Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality is a critical lens through which the construction of reality in contemporary discourse can be analyzed. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Baudrillard argues that in postmodern society, the distinction between reality and representation collapses, creating a world where simulations replace the real. This concept is particularly relevant when studying the narrative construction of terrorism, as media, literature, and political rhetoric often produce hyperreal representations that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction.

For a research methodology focused on how terrorism is justified and normalized, Baudrillard's hyperreality theory offers several key insights:

1. **Media as a Producer of Simulacra** – The portrayal of terrorism in news, films, and literature often constructs an exaggerated, oversimplified, or mythologized version of events. These representations create a cycle of meaning that may detach from actual geopolitical realities, making hyperreality a crucial aspect of discourse analysis.
2. **The Illusion of Objectivity** – Political narratives about terrorism often present themselves as objective truths, when in reality, they are constructed through selective framing, repetition, and ideological biases. Researching terrorism narratives requires deconstructing these fabrications to reveal the mechanisms of control and persuasion.
3. **The Spectacle of Fear** – Post-9/11 discourse is deeply influenced by the spectacularization of terrorism, where the fear generated by hyperreal images and narratives often outweighs the actual threat. This makes it essential to analyze how fear is constructed, mediated, and used to justify counterterrorism measures or political agendas.

Positioning Theory, developed by Rom Harré, along with Fathali Moghaddam, Bronwyn Davies, and Luk Van Langenhove, is a social psychological framework that explores how people position themselves and others in discourse. It examines how identities, roles, and social interactions are constructed through language and narratives. Unlike traditional role theory, which views social positions as fixed, he argues that positions are fluid, dynamic, and context-dependent, shifting according to interactions, narratives, and power structures. At its core, positioning is

the process of assigning meaning and legitimacy to individuals or groups within a conversation or broader discourse. This positioning influences how people perceive themselves and others, shaping social roles, responsibilities, and moral judgments. It operates through three key components:

Storylines – The broader narratives that provide meaning to interactions.

Positions – The relational stances individuals or groups adopt within those narratives.

Speech Acts – The language and actions that establish and reinforce these positions.

In the context of terrorism and political violence, Positioning Theory helps analyze how terrorists justify their actions, how states frame counterterrorism policies, and how victims and perpetrators are discursively constructed. By studying how narratives assign legitimacy or condemnation, researchers can uncover the ideological mechanisms that justify or normalize violence.

Structure of the thesis

The study critically engages with literary and theoretical perspectives to explore how terrorism is constructed, justified, and contested in contemporary fiction. This study, which explores how empathy is constructed to justify violence, unravels the discursive mechanisms that legitimize acts of men of mass destruction. The thesis is structured into five chapters, each examining the complex intersections of capitalism, imperialism, invasion, ethnonationalism, and terrorism in post-9/11 narratives on terrorism. The introductory chapter discusses the research problem, objectives of the study, research methodology, and the primary works chosen for critical exploration. The narratives that depict various factors that lead to terrorism are studied in each core chapter. The chapter titled, Capitalism and terrorism

undertakes a critical examination of the relationship between global capitalist structures and the etiology of terrorist phenomena. The third chapter, Invasion and Terrorism proffers an analytical examination of the geopolitical dynamics whereby military invasion may catalyze terrorist movements. The fourth chapter, Ethnonationalism and Terrorism, examines fervors that underpin terrorist ideologies. The concluding chapter synthesizes the pivotal insights garnered from the discussions in the preceding chapters, delineating prospective avenues for further research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introductory chapter of the thesis offers a comprehensive outline of the historical evolution of terrorism. It examines in detail its origins and the fundamental concepts that have shaped its evolution from the ancient period to modern times. How modern dynamics, such as globalization and technological progress, have played a significant role in reshaping the concept of terrorism in the contemporary era has also been made the subject of analysis. Thus, offering a historical perspective, the chapter meticulously explores how terrorism has been portrayed or represented from ancient times to the present day. This necessitates an analysis of shifts in its representation across various periods. It studies how different historical contexts have influenced and shaped these discourses in cultural and political narratives. Additionally, the chapter provides a critical exploration of the term "terrorism" itself, investigating the ways terrorist identities are perceived and constructed. The main focus of the discussion is an analysis of the causes and triggering motivations behind acts of terror. The review of literature brings together significant contributions of seminal scholars in terrorism studies, identifying a notable research gap. While many existing studies focus on the causes and impacts of terrorism, limited studies have been carried out on its

representation in post-9/11 literature on terrorism. This gap foregrounds the significance of examining how narratives navigate public perception of terrorism and contribute to the development of empathy.

Chapter 2: Capitalism and Terrorism

This thesis examines how literary narratives on terrorism strategically employ narrative empathy to influence readers' emotional engagement and shape specific perspectives on trauma, violence, and their larger sociopolitical contexts. Narrative empathy refers to the emotional identification that readers gather with characters or events in a narrative, especially those involving vulnerability and suffering. By promoting such discourse, narratives subtly direct how readers comprehend the triggering thoughts and motivation behind terrorism and react to its consequences.

The thesis is structured around three seminal chapters, each focusing on a distinct thematic examination. The second chapter, "Capitalism and Terrorism", offers a comprehensive examination of two significant post-9/11 novels: DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud*. This chapter studies the complex connection between capitalism, imperialism, and terrorism. It analyzes how capitalist ideologies, by perpetuating economic exclusion, structural inequality, and global injustice, foster radicalization. Communities and individuals marginalized by these systems often become vulnerable to extreme ideologies as a reaction to enduring social and economic grievances. The second part of the analysis is focused on the narrative technique employed to evoke empathy and emotional resonance with the characters in the narratives. The use of hyperreal constructs, first-person narration, and other similar strategies adopted by the authors who construct a space where readers can inhabit the emotional and psychological landscape of the characters are examined.

Chapter 3: Invasion and Terrorism

The chapter, “Invasion and Terrorism”, inquires how literary narratives on terrorism challenge the one-dimensional representation of terrorism. It primarily studies two texts, *The Sirens* by Khadra and *The Wasted Vigil* by Aslam. The chapter explores the complex web of factors that drive individuals toward violent resistance as represented in the narratives. The novels seek to explain terrorism and its causes within the context of political, historical, and socio-economic trauma. The chapter examines how western military occupation and the destruction of a sense of identity and belongingness trigger a young man to internalize radical ideologies. How do these narratives resist dominant narratives that create a platform for marginalized voices, is studied by applying positioning theory.

Chapter 4: Ethnonationalism and Terrorism

The fourth chapter explores the roots of terrorism using ethnonationalism as its analytical framework, which emphasizes how historical grievances and identity-based conflicts contribute to radicalization. It reinforces that state repression and political neglect, combined with collective consciousness, perpetuate cycles of violence portrayed as attempts for self-determination. The narratives analyzed in the chapter highlight how systemic oppression fosters radical ideologies. Through the portrayal of these dynamics, the texts call the attention of readers to reevaluate simplistic views of extremism and comprehend its complex social and political underpinnings. The representation of the majority/minority dichotomy in these narratives challenges stereotypical depiction in the dominant narratives and promotes empathy and compassion for individuals who have been dehumanized.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study, shedding light on how capitalism, imperialism, invasion, and ethnonationalism shape the literary depiction of terrorism. It re-examines the role of narrative empathy by analyzing how the representation of hyperreal constructs, positioning of terrorists as the ones with a name and dignity, mediate the justification or contestation of violent acts. It emphasizes how post-9/11 narratives both reflect and challenge the mainstream discourse of terrorism. The chapter highlights the broader scope of the study for media, literature, and counterterrorism narratives, advocating potential arenas for future research. By critically analyzing the narrative construction of terrorism, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of how narratives shape ideological perspectives, justify systemic violence, and negotiate the politics of fear in the post-9/11 world.

The title “Back to the Wall” encapsulates the deep sense of desperation that drives existential dilemmas central to many terrorist narratives—a psychological retreat to collective identity in moments of profound disorientation. According to Julia Kristeva in *Nations without Nationalism*, when personal coherence deteriorates, individuals are drawn back into fixed, symbolic forms of collective identity. This study examines how terrorism is depicted as a defensive response to the loss of meaning, identity, memory, or place. In the metaphorical realm, the “wall” stands as a boundary of identity—a construct erected amid fragmentation, offering the illusion of protection and belonging, often serving to rationalize violence.

Chapter 2

Capitalism and Terrorism

In the chapter, capitalism serves as a metaphor for the oppressive and exploitative structures of power that create inequality, marginalize vulnerable populations, and potentially fuel radicalization and terrorism. Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership and management of property, where individuals and corporations operate in pursuit of their interests. The interplay of supply and demand determines market prices. The individuals and corporations in the quest for profit control production and distribution in capitalist economies. These capitalist economies seek to expand markets and develop new industries to increase their resources. In *The Worldly Philosophers*, Heilbroner argues that capitalism prospers through expansion, either by increasing the scale of production or extending the geographical reach of trade (107).

In the early stages of industrial capitalism, particularly during the 19th century, the need for new markets to sell goods was paramount. Industrialized nations, such as Britain, France, and later the United States, sought to establish global markets for their products. These nations have historically played significant roles in shaping global trade and market dynamics. However, these markets were not always willing to accept foreign goods unless they were coerced or controlled. The imperial conquest of new territories allowed capitalist powers to secure exclusive trade routes and markets for their goods. Similarly, the acquisition of raw materials, such as minerals, oil, or agricultural products, is a key element of capitalist growth. The Industrial Revolution created a demand for resources that could not always be met within the borders of the industrializing nations. As a result, imperial powers sought

to control territories rich in these resources. Capitalism, through the increasing demand for resources, thus created the conditions conducive for empire-building. Imperial powers, in turn, established colonies to ensure a steady supply of these essential commodities. Colonies were viewed not just as areas to exert political power, but as economic assets, offering both raw materials and cheap labour.

Noam Chomsky in *Profit for the People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* states that neoliberal capitalism is “the battle for the wealthy few to circumscribe the political rights and civic powers of the many” (12). Thus, while capitalism has led to economic growth and technological advancements, it has also been criticized for intensifying social inequalities, exploiting labor, and prioritizing profit over human welfare. Globalization, an outcome of advanced capitalism, is criticized by Chomsky as a phenomenon driven by dominant nations, particularly the United States, imposing trade agreements and economic frameworks that favour corporate interests and wealthy elites. This enables them to control national economies worldwide, often without accountability to local populations (13). Globalization has facilitated economic growth, but it has also widened economic disparities, particularly between the Global North and South. As wealth becomes concentrated among a small elite, large portions of the population in underdeveloped regions experience economic stagnation, unemployment, and social exclusion. These conditions often lead to political instability, resentment towards Western economic dominance, and, in extreme cases, the rise of terrorist movements that challenge the capitalist global order. These structural inequalities and economic disparities have created environments conducive to insurgency. David Harvey in *New Imperialism* espouses the stance that capitalism thrives on the accumulation of power and resources, often necessitating imperial strategies to secure its expansion (8-29).

Background Study

The select novels portray the sociopolitical landscape of post-9/11 America. They explore the psychological, cultural, and political consequences of the 11th September, 2001 attacks, which restructured the world order and altered the American sense of identity. The attack on the WTC and the Pentagon by al-Qaeda resulted in the loss of more than three thousand lives. This traumatic event had far-reaching consequences, profoundly impacting political discourse, societal dynamics, and global reactions.

For Americans on the morning of September 11, it was Afghanistan's storm that struck. A war they hardly knew and an enemy they had barely met crossed oceans never traversed by the German Luftwaffe or the Soviet Rocket Forces to claim several thousand civilian lives in two mainland cities (Coll 15).

The September 11 attacks were executed by 19 terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda, an Islamist extremist group led by Osama bin Laden. The hijackers took control of four airplanes, flying into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. *The 9/11 Commission Report* states that the United States confronted an altered global landscape. Instead of facing a handful of formidable state-based adversaries, the country encountered numerous challenges that transcended national borders, necessitating "quick, imaginative and agile responses" (399). According to Lawrence Wright, the attacks marked a turning point in American history, leading to heightened fears of terrorism and a reevaluation of national security policies. The strategy of al-Qaeda was to launch successive attacks to provoke a US invasion, as a result of which the Mujahideen would employ guerrilla warfare to weaken American forces through prolonged conflict. bin Laden believed this strategy would ultimately

contribute to the decline of the American empire, drawing parallels with the experiences of Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

The US government significantly boosted national security measures to prevent future terrorist attacks. According to Shirin Sinnar, one of the immediate sociopolitical effects of 9/11 was the execution of the USA PATRIOT Act, which expanded the surveillance authority of the government to prevent future terrorist attacks. Civil liberties and privacy concerns arose as the U.S. government increased monitoring of phone calls, financial transactions, and online communications. The Transportation Security Administration was created, introducing stricter airport security protocols. Muslim and Middle Eastern communities in the United States experienced heightened scrutiny, racial profiling, and suspicion, creating a divisive atmosphere of fear and xenophobia.

The US launched the 'War on Terror', with military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bush addressed the public a few days after the attacks, "On September 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. ... Our War on Terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there" (D Law 335). The Bush administration launched the Global War on Terror in response to 9/11, leading to military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and later Iraq (2003). The invasion of Afghanistan aimed to overthrow al-Qaeda and demolish the Taliban regime that harbored terrorists. However, the conflict extended for decades, raising questions about the effectiveness and ethical implications of prolonged military occupation.

In the novel by Safran Foer, the aftermath of the Dresden attack during World War II, which occurred from February 13 to 15, 1945, is discussed in detail. The bombing occurred when Allied forces, primarily British and American bombers,

conducted a series of raids on the city of Dresden, Germany. Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five* reflects on the bombing's impact. The attacks created a firestorm that devastated the city, destroying large areas and causing widespread damage.

Literature Review

Don DeLillo's exploration of media saturation, death, identity fragmentation, consumerism, technology, existentialism, surveillance, and violence collectively underscores the pervasive ontological instability of contemporary American life, revealing the fraught quest for meaning and authenticity in a hyper-complex, postmodern world. Scholars have made an extensive examination of DeLillo's works, focusing mainly on Postmodernism and its critique, exploring how his novels reflect and critique the chaotic and hyper-consumerist aspects of postmodern society. Scholars delve into themes of death, identity, and technology, examining how his works navigate the intersections of mortality, self-fragmentation, and the impact of technological advancements on human experience.

Paula Martin Salvan posits that "DeLillo's narrative strategy of leaving the originally traumatic event out of the scope of the novel illustrates the cornerstone idea of trauma studies: only through its reverberations in the form of compulsive repetition can trauma be directly accessed" (337). Peter Knight, in the essay "DeLillo, Post Modernism, Post Modernity," discusses how novels like *White Noise*, *Falling Man*, and *Underworld* engage with the fragmentation of time. Trauma triggers temporal disjunctions, recurring loops, and a collapse of chronological progression, explaining how media-mediated events and memory reconfigure narrative temporality. Mark Osteen explores how DeLillo's narratives depict trauma as a break or rupture in the continuity of time. Catherine Morley explicates the strategy followed in *Falling Man*

that resists reducing trauma to a singular defining event. The novel portrays trauma as a complex domestic aspect and emotional multiplicity beyond narrow political interpretations.

Tom LeClair introduced the terminology “system novel” to define a fiction that depicts information that reflects contemporary political, social, and technological systems. He defines the system novel as reflecting “communications loop ranging from the biological to the technological, environmental to personal, linguistic, prelinguistic, and postlinguistic” -portraying loops that are both destructive and constructive (11). He foregrounds DeLillo as a major figure in this genre. Randy Laist reflects that technology in DeLillo’s fiction actively navigates consciousness. Everyday devices- computers, TVs, airplanes, telephones, even nuclear bombs- serve as catalysts that trigger psychological processes or reactions. They shape perception, memory, and identity formation in his characters. According to David Cowart, DeLillo establishes how American identity is mediated through layered images- television, film, books, and advertisements. He examines DeLillo’s thematic architecture and linguistic strategies, particularly how narrative and language shape existential awareness.

Safran Foer’s works explore themes like memory, identity, family, and the impact of historical trauma. His writing often weaves together personal narratives and collective history to examine these themes. Scholars have analyzed his novels, *Everything is Illumined* and *Extremely Loud*, through various lenses of trauma fiction, postmodernism, and Jewish memorial studies. His works are read as significant texts in post-9/11 literature. The unconventional typography and fragmented structure in

Extremely Loud have drawn particular attention for their representation of the disorienting effects of trauma.

Kristiaan Versluys places *Extremely Loud* as one of the four canonical responses, along with *Falling Man*, shedding light on their attempts to discuss trauma as an entity that disrupts the symbolic order and language. In *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel*, he views these novels as key literary attempts to process the attacks and aftermath through narrative experimentation. In *Contemporary Trauma Narratives*, Sonia Baelo-Allué, asserts that the novel illustrates Cathy Caruth's notion of "unclaimed experience", where trauma is revealed through deferred action and not directly recollected, as exemplified by Oskar Schell's pursuit of a lock to uncover his father's final message. Anne Whitehead, in *Trauma Fiction*, offers a critical perspective, suggesting that while Foer utilizes trauma tropes, the novel ultimately turns toward a sentimentalized and emotional purging. She cautions against these trauma narratives that oversimplify events, advocating instead for representations rooted in specific historical and ethical contexts, which contrast with the raw ambiguity characteristic of trauma literature.

Scholars have undertaken numerous studies on trauma and its representation in post-9/11 narratives. However, how these narratives that follow the September 11 attacks navigate empathy with perpetrators of violence. 'War on Terror', the immediate military action that followed, can be seen as a form of state-sponsored terrorism. The narratives chosen for the study are analyzed to examine the key literature gap, which is the strategies adopted by the authors in shaping empathy and potentially legitimizing subsequent cycles of violence.

The Select Narratives

Falling Man by DeLillo, as a response to the new fragmented reality, portrays the disintegration of individual and collective consciousness that followed the 9/11 attacks. In his vivid portrayal of the “bi-millennial moment”, DeLillo is regarded as the most prominent contemporary American novelist (Coward 1). His political insights are rooted in the profound historical and cultural transformations of post-World War II America. Through his prose, he probes into the uncertainties and unsettling realities woven into the fabric of America’s recent past, illuminating the hidden tensions (Updike 1). He uniquely explores the transformative effects of media, warfare, and consumerism on the American psyche, revealing the intricate dynamics that shape contemporary culture (Laist 3).

The narrative centers around Keith Neudecker, who struggles to rebuild his life after surviving the collapse of the World Trade Centre. Badly injured and covered in ash, Keith seeks solace at the house of Lianne, his wife, and Justin, their son, in a desperate quest for comfort and peace. Haunted by trauma, Keith’s grip on reality falters and he drifts between the present and the past, becoming entangled in a complicated relationship with Florence, whose briefcase he accidentally seized during the attack. Lianne, in her attempt to manage her anxieties, works for Alzheimer's patients in a clinic. The interaction with them helps her process her feelings and anxieties. Through Justin’s character, the novel conveys the fear and vulnerability of post-9/11 America, as he is portrayed as being obsessed with the potential return of a terrorist named ‘Bill Lawton’. The brief vignettes from Hamad’s perspective provide a haunting insight into the mind of the 9/11 hijacker, tracing his path from radicalization to resolute commitment. The title “Falling Man” dualistically refers to

the indelible image of a man plummeting from the Towers, as well as the performance artist who recreates the event throughout the city, serving as a poignant reminder of the collective trauma that persists.

In *Extremely Loud*, Foer narrates the grief, anguish, and healing of the people in America through the perspective of Oskar Schell, a young boy fighting hard to cope with the loss of Thomas Schell, his father, in the September 11 attacks. Foer, a significant literary voice in America, is known for exploring complex themes including trauma, identity, history, and ethical responsibility in his writings. The sociopolitical insights of Foer have been inspired by his Jewish heritage and consciousness. His perspectives have been shaped by his ancestral history, including the Holocaust.

Oskar embarks on an attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding a key discovered in his father's closet, which he hopes will reveal a final, hidden message from his father. Oskar's quest leads him on a meandering path across the City of New York, as he pursues the owner of the key by the name "Black". On his way, he encounters a diverse cast of characters, each bearing the heaviness of resilience and loss. Through his interactions with these strangers, Oskar gains insight into the complexities of human suffering and the transformative power of connection. The narrative weaves in the story of his grandparents, who survived the bombing of Dresden during World War II. His grandfather, who was traumatized by the war, lost his ability to speak. His grandfather's crippling silence and his grandmother's persistent grief illustrate the lasting impact of intergenerational traumatic experiences. As his search reaches its climax, it is discovered that the key belonged to a stranger

who had recently lost his father, and that shattered his deeply held hope that it was a final message from his father.

Analysis -Part 1

Global Hegemony and Terrorism

The inherent drive for profit and expansion has consistently fueled imperialistic policies. “Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism” (Lenin 76). This dynamic of capitalist expansion and imperialist domination laid the groundwork for the emergence of globalization. The early 21st century marked a significant shift in global affairs, particularly in the context of neoliberalism. This period was marked by growing multiculturalism and global interconnectedness. The term ‘globalization’ was adopted to market this phenomenon (Nitzan and Bichler 1). But, there occurred a shift in the narrative, from the euphoria of globalization to a more critical examination of American imperialism (5). The growing dominance of American corporations and financial institutions, the expansion of American military presence and interventions worldwide, and the increasing influence of American culture and values, often at the expense of local cultures, are the evidence of the shift in the power dynamics.

According to Ellen Meiksins Wood, globalization is “economic imperialism of capital with the United States as its hegemon” (24). The U.S, as the dominant global capitalist power, has pursued an interventionist agenda in the Middle Eastern countries, a region of immense political and economic importance due to reserves of oil. Under the pretext of promoting security, democracy, and economic development, these interventions resulted in economic exploitation, political destabilization, and widespread human suffering. The September 11, 2001 attacks can be interpreted as a symbolic and material reprisal against American global hegemony (Chomsky 9-11).

The perspective 9/11 attacks were a direct challenge to American supremacy and imperialism is resonated when Martin in *Falling Man* articulates his thoughts on the attack. “Weren’t the towers built on fantasies of wealth and power that would one day become fantasies of destruction? You build a thing like that so you can see it come down. The provocation is obvious” (116). This suggests that the grandeur of the WTC and the symbolism of American economic domination were inherently tied to its vulnerability and potential downfall. Martin’s reflection underscores the idea that the World Trade Center was not just an architectural marvel but also a symbol of America’s economic dominance, making it a target for those who saw it as an emblem of global inequality and oppression. His statement suggests that the grandeur of the towers, built on aspirations of wealth and power, inevitably carried within them the seeds of their destruction, highlighting the paradox of imperial ambition. The phrase “fantasies of destruction” implies that the same forces that constructed such symbols of power also made them vulnerable to attack, reinforcing the notion that unchecked economic and military dominance breeds resistance. By framing the collapse of the towers as an almost inevitable consequence of their symbolic weight, the novel invites the readers to reconsider how American imperialism and its global economic reach may have contributed to the resentment that fueled the attacks. This perspective challenges the dominant narrative of 9/11 as an unprovoked assault, instead positioning it as a violent response to long-standing geopolitical power imbalances and the consequences of American foreign policy. The anti-American rhetoric, “Soon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings. It is losing its center. It becomes the center of its shit” (191). This suggests the consequences of America’s actions, implying its policies have created a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and instability. The statement suggests that U.S.

foreign policies have fostered resentment, ultimately contributing to a cycle of violence and instability. By positioning America as both a dominant force and a source of global unrest, the rhetoric reflects the broader sentiment that its interventions have led to unintended and destructive repercussions.

Florence's statement, "These are the days after. Everything now is measured by after" (138), referring to the days after the attack, shows how the event redefines America's existence and her alliance with the rest of the world. The event shatters the illusion of invulnerability and alters the trajectory of the history of America and its status as a mighty Empire. As a hegemonic power, the United States had shaped world history through its military and economic interventions, but the attack disrupted this narrative by demonstrating that even the most powerful nations are not impervious to retaliation. The trauma of 9/11 not only altered national security policies but also reshaped public consciousness, making fear and uncertainty defining elements of the post-attack era. This moment redefined America's relationship with both its allies and adversaries, as the empire, previously perceived as untouchable, was now engaged in an endless war on terror. In this way, the attack against imperialism paradoxically strengthened imperialist policies, as the U.S. responded with aggressive military campaigns, further entrenching itself in conflicts that continue to shape global politics.

Oskar Schell in *Extremely Loud* challenges the rhetoric of American supremacy and invincibility through his observation regarding the collapse of the WTC. "Everything in the history of the world can be proven wrong in one moment" (317). Foer sheds light on how the attack challenges Americans to reconsider their sense of self as a dominant world power. 9/11 was not merely an attack on American

soil but a symbolic strike against the Western dominance that had dictated global politics for decades. The moment of the attacks functioned as a historical rupture, challenging the narrative of America as an untouchable force and prompting a reevaluation of its foreign policies and ideological positioning.

Support for the Authoritarian Regime

America's support for authoritarian governments and interventionist policies contributed to an unpredictable situation of galvanizing the most violent attacks from the Middle Eastern regions. The U.S. always supported authoritarian regimes in countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, on condition that they provided access to oil resources and agreed to their demands. The support for dictators and monarchs in exchange for the materialization of their interests created widespread resentment and radicalization contributed to the rise of extremist groups. For instance, economic and military assistance to the Saudi regime was guaranteed by Americans in return for safeguarding American energy interests. The Saudi government's strict implementation of Islamic law led to the subjugation of political dissent and the denial of basic rights, especially for women and minority groups. Amidst these conditions, the U.S. continued to provide billions of dollars in military aid and diplomatic assistance. This infuriated bin Laden, who viewed the presence of US troops in the Arabian Peninsula, after the Gulf War, as an affront to Islamic land.

Washington supported Egyptian regimes due to their readiness to maintain peace with Israel and provide support for American strategies. American policies that render assistance for governments that curb civil liberties and imprison dissidents fueled opposition from Islamist groups, strengthened extremist ideologies, and solidified an anti-American stance. The United States supported Saddam Hussein

despite his brutal oppression of adversaries and the use of chemical weapons. But when Hussein invaded Kuwait, the U.S. turned against him, leading to the Gulf War.

During the Soviet-Afghan War, America's decision to fund and arm the Mujahideen had greater consequences. bin Laden was one among the Mujahideen fighters who helped to weaken the Soviet Union's grip on Afghanistan. This policy not only weakened the Soviet Union but also laid the base for the emergence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The United States, Algeria, and Egypt, among others, accused bin Laden of funding violent extremist groups across the countries in the Middle East. To improve its international relationship, Sudan, which had been hosting bin Laden, asked him to leave the country. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, his country of origin, had already revoked his citizenship (Coll 9). In the Middle East, many among the youth feel frustrated and disillusioned with American policies. Radical groups capitalize on this frustration, giving a narrative of resistance as a fight against Western imperialism.

David in *Falling Man* vehemently expresses his discontentment against America, which indirectly spurred the movement that culminated in the September 11 attacks. "We're all sick of America and Americans. The subject nauseates us" (191). "One side has the capital, the labour, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police, and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die" (46-47). David's statement critiques the vast power imbalance between the US and its adversaries, highlighting how America's economic, military, and institutional dominance starkly contrasts with the limited resources of those who resist it. His words suggest that the support of the United States for authoritarian regimes, often justified in the name of stability and strategic interests, has fueled resentment among oppressed populations who see violence as their only means of resistance. By arming

and backing dictatorial governments in the Middle East, America has contributed to widespread grievances, pushing radicalized individuals toward extremist responses. The discourse highlights the sense of desperation that drives men or groups who are devoid of access to traditional power structures to resort to extreme measures such as suicide attacks. This notion recontextualizes the attacks which brought the Twin Towers of America down as a consequence of systemic failures and diplomatic breakdowns in regions impacted by US interference.

The Global War on Islam

A central tenet in the radicalization rhetoric was the notion perpetuated by bin Laden that the US and its allies were pursuing a war against Islam. This narrative constructs violence as a justified response to perceived social, political, and religious oppression. American government consistently vetoed the resolutions of the Security Council of the UN criticizing the actions of Israel. This American disposition reinforces the stance of America against Muslims. The support of the US for Israel was seen as testimony to Western hostility towards the Muslim world that galvanized extremist attacks.

The convergence of Islamophobic policies in Western nations and the rhetoric of Muslim leaders reiterated the notion that the West was completely hostile to Islam. The Western nations utilized the media to construct a narrative that Islam was under siege. Many Western activists and policymakers framed Islamic movements, even peaceful protests, as posing great challenges to global security measures. The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s had devastating consequences, resulting in the deaths of countless civilians owing to shortages of food and medicine.

The militant groups exploited this narrative, leveraging the sufferings of civilians of Iraq to garner support for their causes.

Economic Exploitation and Political Marginalization

The 9/11 attacks were prompted by a web of complex motivations which included dogmatic and sectarian extremism, economic subjugation, and political alienation. Policies that helped the Western countries that were beneficial for global powers, often disadvantaged local populace in the Middle Eastern countries.

Economic sanctions that led to unequal distribution of oil revenues that resulted in the accumulation of oil export profits among a privileged few intensified inequality that failed to benefit population at large. This resulted in a stark economic divide, when the majority languished in poverty despite their country's vast natural wealth. The belief that while leaving local populace impoverished and disenfranchised, the Western nations reaped enormous profits from their land fueled a deep sense of resentment against the West. Thus, the factors such as exploitation of resources for Western gain, support for economic strategies that augmented economic disparity, and military invasions catalyzed the feeling of hatred and hostility towards the West. These driving motives combined to form a breeding ground for a strategic plan for the catastrophic September, 11 attacks.

Analysis Part II

This section applies the Theory of hyperreality to analyze how narratives represent terrorism and construct perspectives through hyperreal depictions. This takes away the sense of reality from the people and they tend to be carried away by the unreal depictions which alter the perceptions of actuality. The representations construct or redefine the historical narratives which are far away from the real or

actual discourses. The act of justifying or legitimizing violence through unreal discourses by inserting the images through narratives, media, and political rhetoric is a matter for analysis in this section. The art of manipulating thoughts and ideas using the narrative constructs is an area of examination in this chapter.

A thorough examination of the select narratives, *The Falling Man* by DeLillo and *Extremely Loud* by Foer reveals the process of insertion of hyperreal images which provides the readers an altered sense of reality by blurring the line between the reality and its representation. The representations become so real and factual than the actual reality that the readers are motivated to internalize the represented facts through narratives and media.

Representation of the impact of terrorism

DeLillo portrays the feeling of disoriented individuals in the wake of the attacks through the medium of simulations which challenge the real. The protagonist's inability to comprehend things and articulate the reality is mirrored in his writings where he introduces Justin. The non-linear and multiple narrative threads symbolize the impact of the attacks on American citizens. The overpowering narrative of trauma reflects the fragmented structure and facilitates the ground for mediating terror through unreal images that look like the real ones. The discontinued narrative depicts the impact of the attacks which renders the people severe inability to process trauma and face reality. Through Keith, who fails to conceptualize the divide between the present and the past DeLillo gives the wider audience a message that the people of America have been hit by the greatest tragedy in history.

The title, "Falling Man" itself is an image that disrupts the sense of reality of the attack. The real causes which led to the collapse of the American Towers are not

to be dealt with and instead, the thoughts are to be poured in the direction of the aftermath of the tragedy. Here, tragedy oversimplifies the reasons that materialized into violent acts. The whole world is confronted with the spectacle of a man falling from the towers and its very portrayal results in emotional numbness of the viewers and readers. The media telecasts of the day, which repeatedly show the plane going into the towers, are a strategy for imprinting the magnitude of violence in the collective psyche through these constructs. This was utilized for mobilizing the people against the attackers.

In *Extremely Loud*, the narrator takes the readers away from the causal aspects of the attack and makes them traverse the mental agony experienced by Oskar. The narrative voice of a nine-year-old boy provides an emotive perspective on the traumatized conditions of life. The narrative in itself is an exemplification of a traumatized path in the lives of the characters. The fragmented rhetoric and the disconnected discourses fill the pages of the novel which gives an in-depth comprehension of the mental and emotional turmoil of the characters. The narrative strategy of the inclusion of repeated words, visual images of a lock, and the graphic representation of pages covered with incomprehensible language are the medium of hyperreality employed in the novel.

The narrative empathy is facilitated when the readers traverse through the minds of characters, which is called “psycho narration”. The thought processes guiding Oskar are made known to the reader, which fosters an environment for developing a sense of intimacy and a feeling of attachment with the characters. Thus, the employment of first-person narrative, psycho narration, and the character

identification strategy, the author imprints the perspective that he wants to perpetuate in the minds of the readers.

The search for the lock in the novel unravels the unconscious effort of Oskar to regain the presentness of the present time. The divide between the past and the present is portrayed as intersecting and intruding into each other which makes the characters unable to identify the sense of time. The need for the characters to look into the self and ponder over their reflection of identity can be read as the nation's sense of loss of identity and the pause she has to deliberately take to look into herself and identify the flaws that led her to the present state of mutation.

Illusion of reality and closeness through first-person narration

The discussion of the deep interiority of Keith and Lianne in *Falling Man* renders the perspective of first-person narration by which readers can develop a closeness to the characters. This strategy blurs the line between objective description and subjective introspection. The novel's non-linear structure reinforces the psychological detachment of its characters, reflecting the fragmented and unstable nature of their sense of reality. The illusion of closeness is further subverted by the novel's intermittent shifts in perspective, particularly when the narrative infiltrates the mind of the terrorist.

Extremely Loud adopts narration in the First Person's Perspective. The narrative voice is distinguished by its stream-of-consciousness style, replete with unfiltered thoughts, exaggerated details, and an insatiable yearning for connection. This renders the emotional journey of the characters profoundly visceral and relatable. The fractured narrative style in *Falling Man* makes the reader experience the existential void left by trauma and in *Extremely Loud* the readers internalize the

struggle to comprehend and process loss through a more immediate and raw connection facilitated by the first-person narrative voice of the protagonist. *Extremely Loud* shifts between Oskar, his grandfather, and his grandmother, illustrating generational trauma and the intersection of personal grief with historical tragedy

Depiction of hyperreal constructs

Media representation of 9/11

In *Falling Man*, De Lillo highlights how the pervasive saturation of media images of the attack led to the suffusion of the event in public consciousness. The iconic imagery of the falling man becomes a symbol that is deeply real and paradoxically detached from reality.

Every time she saw a videotape of the planes, she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting spirit that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers. (134)

The media's relentless repetition of destruction creates a surreal effect, redefining the attacks as a spectacle rather than an experience of reality. Foer explains how the media plays a crucial role in the conceptualization of an event unconsciously. Oskar relives the death of his father and the loss incurred in his life through the news media and the videotape. He is pictured as having a strong inclination towards unearthing misery, the habit that makes him alive and active. The search for the key is portrayed as a means that helps him recover from his trauma. But the search by a

nine-year-old boy throughout New York City compels the reader to doubt the intention of his characterization.

The overt use of images to shape perceptions that lead to the justification of the policies of the government and media portrayal to propagate a strong sense of “us versus them” are the constructs deliberately employed by the authors. The characters are presented as being haunted by the images of falling of towers and falling of man. The characters’ minds have been captivated and controlled by the media rhetoric of America being attacked by the evil forces out of jealousy that they see the images coming out and taking larger forms in the spaces around them. The infiltration of negative images or false ideas are made possible through the narratives that follow the attacks.

Figure of the falling man

The very act of falling in DeLillo’s novel, performed by David Junaik, the performance artist, makes the reality a spectacle. The haunting image of the man suspended from the building penetrates the psyche of the people and makes trauma a reality. Instead of giving personal narration of individual grievances, the novel incorporates the collective grief to foster a sense of togetherness in the act of reconciliation. The inclusion of the pages for Hammad, the terrorist who is portrayed as having been included in the 9/11 attacks provides a different perspective of the othered individuals. The language of urgency and conviction differentiates from that of the language of the victims, who are depicted as helpless beings. The reality is altered through this construct.

Foer includes the image of a scrapbook that contains a man jumping out of the towers. That jumping act can be a call for resilience. Unlike DeLillo, Foer uses the

visual imagery of reversing the scrapbook sequence, which is to reassure the public that normalcy will be regained soon. The redemptive gesture of the man falling makes him regain his previous position of importance. The clamour for the country's regaining of the lost sense of centrality is expressed through this image.

The need for piecing together the disjointed reality and making it a fathomable whole is the very essence of the lives of the characters, bewildered by the tragedy. This fuels Oskar's investigation and his need to unravel the mysteries that led to the tragedy in his life. The estranged relationship between the family members and Oskar's quest to give a sense of meaning to the meaninglessness that pervades his life is represented. Oskar relies on the data provided to reveal the reality related to his father's death. In the same way, the narratives surrounding the attacks provide a sense of reality of the event. His reliance on machine tapes and recorded voice messages illustrates how trauma is mediated through technological means.

Thus, the novels perpetuate hyperreal situations that disconnect readers from reality. This act obscures or blurs the line of boundary between the actual and the perceived. The act that occurred in history is remembered and recollected through mediated representations that have an impact on memory and our understanding of truth. The journey of Oskar in navigating reality is an example for the mediated experience of trauma. This strategy makes the memory of the attacks alive and erode which underscores the complex interplay of trauma and reality.

Construction of new rhetoric

The mode of discourse that emerged in the United States called Nine-Elevenism encompasses all fictional texts that have represented the attacks in their narration. The rhetoric is grounded on narratives of pity and fear, which perpetuate

binary divisions of good and evil, foster national unity, and dehumanize the enemy. These rhetorical strategies significantly influenced public understanding, shaping a worldview that legitimized the War on Terror. Chomsky, in his book, *9-11*, quotes Michael Stohl who questions the usage of the term, 'War' and discusses how the great powers manipulate the usage of force against the weaker economies. When powerful nations employ coercive diplomacy, which involves the use of threat of force, it is not labeled as terrorism. However, if governments with lesser powers were to use the same tactics, they would be deemed terroristic (16). The policy of justifying the violent use of force in the name of war by the American government is reflected in the post-9/11 American narratives.

Rhetoric of pity and fear

In most of the post-9/11 narratives, the rhetorical strategy adopted is the emphasis on victimization, which intensifies the appeal to pity. In *The Rhetoric of Terror Reflections on 9_11 and the War* Marc Redfield elaborates on the virtual trauma caused by attacks which etch the date of September 11 in memory, serving as a fixed anchor that grounds all conversations and discussions (14). This phenomenon has contributed to the perpetuation of fear and pity among people outside the country, as the trauma is repeatedly invoked and re-lived through various forms of media and discourse. By keeping the trauma alive, the government shapes public opinions, influences emotions, and justifies policies to redress the grief and shock. By evoking emotions of vulnerability and shared trauma, the post-9/11 narratives on terror create a sense of collective responsibility and moral obligations to align with the policies of the government. The narratives personalize the collective trauma of the attack, rendering the event emotionally immediate to the reader.

Oskar in *Extremely Loud* confesses that he could not bear to know his mother's dreams, fearing they might be happy, which would only intensify his own anger and sadness (151). This statement of a nine-year-old boy reveals the inner turmoil and struggle to cope with the loss of his father in the attacks. This sheds light on the complex emotions and changed dynamics within families affected by the tragedy. Oskar's mother's statement that her bones were straining under the pressure of unlived lives (159) encapsulates the overwhelming burden of trauma and loss, where grief extends beyond the individual to generations who must carry its weight. This notion reflects the paralysis experienced by those affected by war and tragedy, who find themselves trapped in an existence shaped by the absence of loved ones rather than the presence of new possibilities. The phrase "unlived lives" suggests not only the life that Oskar's father was denied but also the emotional stasis of those left behind, as if their futures have been put on hold by the gravity of their sorrow. This sentiment aligns with the broader themes of *Extremely Loud*, where trauma is not merely a moment in time but an enduring condition that shapes relationships, identities, and the ability to move forward. Ultimately, Oskar's mother's words underscore how grief manifests physically and psychologically, burdening survivors with a sense of duty to the past that often hinders their ability to embrace the future. Oskar's declaration that his father died "the most horrible death that anyone ever could invent" (280) underscores the inescapable nature of trauma, where the mind compulsively replays the moment of loss in an attempt to make sense of the incomprehensible. Through Oskar's perspective, the narrative becomes a continuous act of reliving and reinscribing the horror of 9/11, ensuring that the trauma remains ever-present rather than fading into memory. This relentless repetition reflects Cathy Caruth's notion of trauma as an "unclaimed experience," where the event resists

closure and instead haunts the survivor through involuntary recall. By embedding Oskar's grief within a broader discourse of loss and devastation, *Extremely Loud* transforms personal suffering into a shared, cultural memory of catastrophe. In doing so, the novel illustrates how trauma narratives do not merely depict pain but actively shape collective consciousness, reinforcing the impact of historical violence on individual and national identity.

The constant struggle of Keith to live through the process of the attacks reinstates the inability to understand what he witnesses. This failure to cope with the trauma of reality is the central theme in such narratives. His repeated assertion, "it's hard to believe; being here and seeing it" (25) echoes the emotional and psychological rupture caused by the act. He feels the reality as fragmented and incomprehensible. This reliving of traumatic instances not only asserts his disorientation but also confirms his identity as belonging to America. The attacks force him to internalize his identity within a nation that has been altered beyond recovery to its normal prime position of power. The narrative reflects the condition of verbal impotency that is being unable to articulate the thoughts in comprehensible manner. This impels the readers to revisit the events to decipher meanings and significance, *Falling Man* illustrates the enduring impact of 9/11, that depicts trauma as a factor of force that reshapes both personal and collective consciousness.

Keith's inability to render words for his thoughts reflects the effect of trauma that paralyzes the language and thought processes that govern actions. The absence of words or the silence becomes a narrative tool that sheds light on the psychological dilemma, emphasizing the disruption of cognitive and emotional processing. This linguistic failure resonates the impact inflicted by trauma that resists articulation. The

portrayal of silence in the novel emphasizes the insulating nature of sorrow and the fight to find a sense of meaning after catastrophic event. This silence figures as both a personal and collective metaphor for the lasting psychological and emotional scars left by the event. Lianne's observation, "This is not an attack on one country, one or two cities. All of us, we are targets now" (47), encapsulates the post-9/11 shift in the discourse of global security] where terrorism is represented as a global threat rather than an isolated event. This rhetoric nurtures a sense of collective vulnerability, strengthening the idea that no nation is resistant to such acts of violence.

By framing the attacks as an assault on collective and shared values, the narrative tacitly calls for global unity in counterterrorism efforts. Thus, this view justifies the expansion of security measures, observation, and military interventions across borders. This reflects how sense of fear and moments of uncertainty reshape global geopolitics, reinforcing a narrative of lasting insecurity and the need for preventive action. The narrative structures Western countries as susceptible implicitly legitimizing alliances and interferences in Muslim countries. This discourse of vulnerability serves to construct a binary opposition between the vulnerable West and the perceived threat of Islamic extremism.

Binary opposition of good and evil

The binary opposition between good and evil gets reinforced in the post-9/11 moral framework. The dichotomy of us versus them overgeneralizes the intricacies of global conflicts and politics. The novel by DeLillo explains the way the attacks resulted in a surge in anti-Muslim feelings and the attempts to generalize all Muslims as if they are terrorists. "They're the ones who think alike, talk alike, and eat the same food... in the same prayer stance day and night following the arc of the sun and

moon”(68). The dialogue about Muslims perpetuates a simplistic and homogenized view of Islamic tradition, implying that all Muslims think and act alike. This generalization ignores the diversity and complexity within Islamic cultures and communities. This portrayal also contributes to the minoritization and othering of Muslims, which also serves to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reinforce a simplistic good vs. evil dichotomy.

“I hate you, my eyes would tell him. His eyes would tell me the same” (338). Oskar’s imagined encounter with the pilot, whom he believes to be a terrorist, reveals a deep-seated hatred and mutual animosity between two individuals of different identities. The hatred expressed here is a reciprocal emotion that perpetuates a cycle of hostility, which can lead to ostracism, elimination, and violence.

The novel’s critique of the US response remains limited there by, perpetuating the dominant binary narrative. Oskar’s understanding of the world is shaped by dominant cultural narratives. This perspective emphasizes an absolute moral contrast between victims and perpetrators, underscoring the American perception of the distinction between good and evil.

The rhetoric of national unity

The 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were positioned by the media as a decisive moment compared to historic events like Pearl Harbour. Susan Faludi in *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post 9/11 America* reflects that this narrative of recalling the nation’s memory of the tragic past aims to evoke a sense of solidarity, national unity, and patriotism (3). The rhetoric of national unity in post-9/11 narratives emphasizes a sense of cohesion in the face of external threats, creating a shared national consciousness rooted in trauma. The repeated broadcasting

of the 9/11 tragedy on television made a spectacle that imprinted visual trauma on viewers.

Planes going into the buildings

Bodies falling

People waving shirts out of high windows

Planes going into the buildings

Bodies falling. (314-317)

“Planes going into the buildings” and *“bodies falling”*, these repetitive phrases serve as a deliberate narrative strategy to imprint the image of the event onto the minds of readers. The constant replaying of the same alarming visuals in the narrative forces the readers to relive the horror rather than reflect on the causal factors behind the attack. This strategy shifts the focus from a comprehensive analysis to an emotional response, ensuring that the reader remains engaged in the immediate shock and destruction rather than questioning the larger political or historical context.

The repetitive nature of these images reflects how national trauma is constructed. By emphasizing the traumatic memory of the attacks, the collective consciousness is shaped by the texts that keep the tragedy alive as an ongoing emotional and psychological reality. The images carry away any possibility of detachment, persuading readers to experience the visceral moment rather than be involved in critical reflection. The text does not encourage the perusal into the reasons of the attacks but compels the readers to feel the emotional intensity over and over again, calling their attention to a specially motivated emotional response and perspective.

To solidify a feeling of national unity, a strategy that emphasizes the shared suffering is adopted. The image calls for the notion of an unprovoked attack that is illustrated through the repeated image of going of the planes into the Towers. The memory that should be inscribed into the collective consciousness is that of an innocent nation getting attacked by a provoked community of people who cannot stand the might of the Empire. The narrative, which is rooted in the description of destructive imagery, frames the attack as an assault on the national feeling and thus constructs a narrative of national unity that unifies the readers under the same emotional reaction.

In the narratives, American identity becomes increasingly intertwined with collective grief and resilience. The emphasis on unity suppresses dissent and justifies aggressive policies in the name of national unity. Both novels capture this phenomenon through their characters' personal losses, which reflect and reinforce the broader national experience. By portraying a unified American front against terrorism, these narratives implicitly endorse military interventions as necessary means to maintain peace and stability. This subtle rhetoric of national unity and security necessitates the suppression of dissenting voices.

The Dehumanization of the Enemy

“The view of Islam as the main ‘civilizational’ enemy, and its adherents as little better than animals, was sustained and projected in the literature of the Middle Ages and later the Renaissance”(Morey and Yakin 9). These anti Muslim sentiments resurfaced in ‘War on Terror’ rhetoric. The negative portrayal of the Muslim community in the media and literature has resulted in stereotyping all Muslims alike.

Women in the Muslim community faced criticism for practicing their faith and developed feelings of insecurity and self-doubt (Abdo 14).

Racial profiling and the dehumanization of Muslims are seen in the narratives chosen for the study. The post-9/11 America witnesses Muslims facing discrimination and severe scrutiny at airports and borders. This discriminatory treatment had a pervasive impact on the sense of identity and belonging among Muslims in America. *“Isn’t this the kind of man they would have seen as the enemy? Those men and women on the wanted poster. Kidnap the bastard. Burn his paintings” (148)* illustrates a clear dehumanizing strategy by equating a Muslim character with criminals and stripping him of individuality. The reference to “wanted posters” reinforces the stereotype that all Muslims are potential terrorists, creating a broad and dangerous generalization. By demanding to “kidnap” and “burn” his artistic expressions, the narrative suggests that his very existence and contributions are threats that must be eliminated. Such language promotes a culture of violence, where Muslims are not seen as people but as adversaries who must be subdued.

Similarly, the statement *“Those men who did this thing. They’re anti-everything we stand for. But they believe in God” (90)* reinforces the notion that belief in Islam is inherently at odds with Western values. By framing religious faith as the defining trait of those who commit violence, the narrative subtly implies that all Muslims share ideological proximity to extremism. A binary opposition of good versus evil is constructed in the phrase “anti-everything” that frames Muslims as terrorists irrespective of individual differences.

Muslims are positioned as outsiders or aliens who act irrationally and who oppose the dominant culture because of the fear of being subjugated and sidelined.

Such discourses that instill in the public a sense of fear and uncertainty help in gathering public support for the rhetoric of the War on Terror.

These are the instances in narratives that dehumanize the othered people that legitimize and justify anti-Muslim feelings. The Muslim characters are stripped of their human attributes and rendered as causing ideological threats, which reads the text as a tool for normalizing acts of violence. These strategies are adopted in the narratives that reinforce a view that Muslims are an inherent danger to perpetuate cycles of fear and alienation..

The post-9/11 narratives like *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud* help preserve the War on Terror rhetoric by positioning military interventions as an inevitable reaction to the violence incurred on America. The pity and fear rhetoric ensures support for war, while the good and evil constructs simplify and reduce the complexities inherent in the “War on Terror” strategy. The ‘us versus them’ is a construct propagated for perpetuating national unity that helps the government earn the will and trust of its people. Thus, these novels help in the construction of an ideological framework that not only justifies war but also shapes it as the only possible response to terrorism.

Conclusion

The chapter analyzes the relationship between capitalism and terrorism focusing on how the ideologies of capitalism culminate in radicalization that fosters men to indulge in acts of violence. By examining this relationship, the chapter provides insight into the socioeconomic roots of terrorism and how systemic factors can contribute to the emergence of extremist behaviors. The study comprises the exploration of various socio-economic and political factors, including imperialism and

historical grievances that permeate terrorism. The chapter unravels the specific causes of the September 11 attacks.

The concept of global hegemony positions powerful states as central authorities that shape international relations and economies. Terrorism can be seen as a reaction against this hegemony, with extremist groups targeting the perceived centers of power to challenge dominant ideologies and systems. This dynamic suggests that anti-hegemonic sentiments can drive radicalization and foster terrorism as a means to resist or overthrow dominant power structures. The support for authoritarian regimes in the Middle East by the U.S. has been cited as a major reason for anti-American sentiment. This reinforced oppressive regimes in the Middle East and fostered anger against the U.S. The Global War on Islam is a narrative that frames the 'War on Terror' as a war against Islam. This perception fuels feelings of victimhood among some Muslim communities, driving radicalization. The economic disparities created by the capitalist structures are exploited by extremist groups, and thus, terrorism is framed as a necessary reaction against systemic oppression. This dynamic suggests that structural injustices can be a significant factor in fostering violent extremism. The chapter thus examines the effects of colonialism and neo-imperial policies that alienate and infuriate marginalized communities, which make them prone to radical ideologies.

The chapter critically analyzes the narrative strategy facilitating narrative empathy. The deliberate method of instilling the illusion of reality and closeness through first-person narration makes the reader feel directly immersed in the experience. This narrative technique fosters closeness between the reader and the narrator, allowing for a more subjective and personal connection to the impact of

terrorism. The technique of deploying hyperreal constructs enhances the emotional engagement of the characters with the events that shape the readers' perspectives. The repeated media representation of 9/11, such as the plane crashing into the building, creates a vivid and lasting image in the public consciousness. By constantly replaying these visuals, the media reinforces the trauma associated with 9/11. The interaction with the simulated spectacle of trauma results in the strengthening of empathy for victims. The mediated portrayals often risk the construction of legitimizing retaliatory violence while neglecting the systemic injustices that trigger terrorism. The ubiquitous image of the Falling Man serves as a powerful symbol of the human cost of 9/11, eliciting empathy. The mediated experience of trauma allows audiences to vicariously experience the pain and suffering of those affected. This second-hand trauma can foster empathy and understanding by simulating the emotional journey of survivors and victims' families.

The chapter discusses the rhetorical frameworks or narrative tropes that emerged post-9/11. The rhetoric of pity and fear aims to evoke pity for 9/11 victims while instilling fear of future attacks, promoting a narrative of self defense and preparedness. By leveraging emotions, it justifies counter-terrorism measures and fosters a sense of vulnerability. The binary rhetoric simplifies the conflict into a moral dichotomy, casting the West as "good" and attackers as "evil", thereby justifying military actions. The rhetoric of national unity reinforces patriotism and encourages collective action against a common enemy. The dehumanization rhetoric reduces the enemy to a stereotype, often associating them with broad groups like "all Muslims", to erode empathy and justify harsh measures. This narrative facilitates the othering process making it easier to rationalize aggressive policies. Thus, the interplay between

capitalist ideologies, global hegemony, and narrative strategies creates a complex framework that fosters terrorism or extreme violence.

Chapter 3

Invasion and Terrorism

Foreign invasions and interferences disrupt the political, economic, and social fabric of invaded regions, erode national sovereignty, and incite widespread discontent. These conditions of instability foster the growth of radical ideologies that facilitate breeding grounds for terrorism in an attempt to regain control or resist perceived oppression. The Iraq War of 2003 and the Afghanistan invasion of 2001 were strategic displays of power meant to proclaim that “it has the capacity and will to defeat rogue states and confront those who threaten the vital interests of the American people” (Murray and Scales 252). The select novels, *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) by Nadeem Aslam and *The Sirens of Baghdad* (2006) by Yasmina Khadra portray the complexities of foreign interferences that affect a nation’s security and exacerbate global security challenges. By analyzing these narratives, the chapter explores the role of invasion as a catalyst for radicalization. The study examines how these narratives depict the psychological transformation of men who take up arms against foreign oppressors, revealing the motivations behind their radicalization. The application of the positioning theory investigates the narrative technique that frames the terrorists as victims of circumstances that shape the perceptions and ethical considerations.

Background Study

The sociopolitical evolutions of Iraq and Afghanistan were characterized by complex dynamics of authoritarian rule, internal divisions, external interventions, and the legacy of previous conflicts. Invasion with imperialistic motives that fragment the

walls of a nation's identity escalates violence, leading to profound and often devastating impact on the identity and culture of the invaded country.

Sociopolitical Context of the Invasion of Afghanistan

The sociopolitical history of Afghanistan is marked by internal conflicts and foreign invasions.. The British Empire, to protect its colonial possessions and annex the national boundaries, invaded Afghanistan during 1838-42, 1878-80, and 1919-21. The third Anglo-Afghan war ended with the signing of the treaty in 1919 at Rawalpindi, and the Afghan nation emerged as an independent state (Isby 42). These tumultuous events, followed by the Soviet invasion of 1979 -1989, the civil war of 1989-2001, and the American invasion of 2001-2021 made Afghanistan an unstable land. This long history of conflict has left deep scars on the nation and shaped the landscape, society, and collective memory, as expressed in the words of Aslam about Afghanistan, "Even the air of this country has a story to tell about warfare" (56).

In the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was a focal point for nearly a century of Anglo-Russian rivalry. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 added to the geopolitical tensions between Moscow and Washington. The goal of the U.S. was to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union and the control of the Persian Gulf, the oil resource of the West (Hilali 70).

The Taliban's origin dates back to the early 1990s following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. "Afghanistan was in a state of virtual disintegration just before the Taliban emerged at the end of 1994. The country was divided into warlord fiefdoms, and all the warlords had fought, switched sides, and fought again in a bewildering array of alliances, betrayals, and bloodshed" (Rashid 21). The Taliban stood for the enforcement of Sharia law, demobilization of the

population, restoration of peace and stability, and preservation of Afghanistan's Islamic identity. A 'Talib' refers to an Islamic scholar who pursues knowledge at a madrassa. The Taliban, (plural of Talib) distinguished themselves from party politics and established their aim for social reform (23).

In between the Soviet occupation and the American occupation, dozens of civil wars took place in Afghanistan. Serious violations of human rights, poor education, demolished institutions, and the collapsed infrastructure marked the Afghan society. 9/11 terrorist attacks, apart from changing the course of world politics, paved the way for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001(Barfield 57). Operation Enduring Freedom began with a bombing campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. On the ground, American and British Special Forces, supported by the Northern Alliance, removed the Taliban from power. In March 2002, American forces and their allies launched Operation Anaconda to dislodge several hundred Taliban and al Qaeda fighters; this fighting, the most violent since the beginning of the American campaign, resulted in several hundred Taliban deaths. As soon as the American troops withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban regained control of the country. The American intervention in Afghanistan, launched on October 7, 2001, a few weeks after the September 11 attacks, was the longest conflict in the history of the United States.

Sociopolitical Context of the Invasion of Iraq

The history of the invasion of Iraq started with Britain. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 led to the establishment of the British Mandate in Iraq. This marked the beginning of external influence and interference in Iraqi affairs, setting the stage for the subsequent political dynamics.

The history of Iraq begins here as the histories of all those who found themselves drawn into the new regime of power (Tripp 30). The British seizure of territory and subsequent administration brought about significant changes in Iraqi society. The British mandate not only introduced new administrative structures but also integrated Iraq into global markets, which played a crucial role in its modernization process. The British, in their efforts to control the region, exacerbated existing ethnic and sectarian divisions by favoring certain groups over others, particularly the Sunni Arab minority. The British-imposed monarchy faced significant challenges in trying to establish legitimacy among the diverse Iraqi population. The monarchy relied heavily on coercion and repression to quell uprisings, particularly from marginalized groups such as the Kurds and the Shia Arabs. The monarchy and subsequent governments utilized state resources, including jobs, development projects, and patronage networks, to co-opt and buy the loyalty of certain segments of society, particularly tribal elites and urban bourgeoisie, further deepening divisions and inequalities within Iraqi society. The discovery of oil in the 1920s exacerbated these issues, as it provided the state with significant revenue that further increased its autonomy from society. Rather than being used for the development of the country and the welfare of its citizens, oil wealth was often squandered or used to strengthen the ruling elite's grip on power.

Iraq, one of the first postcolonial states, exhibited from the beginning the instability that would come to haunt international relations in the aftermath of decolonization. After entry into the League of Nations in 1932 formal state commitments to liberal democracy were quickly dispensed with and the polity was rocked by a series of bloody coups, culminating in the Baath Party's seizure of power in 1958 (Dodge 14). Communal and ethnic divisions were not only exploited but actively exacerbated by the state as a strategy of divide and rule. This strategy,

employed by various regimes throughout Iraq's history, including Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, pitted different groups against each other and prevented the emergence of a unified opposition. In the 1970s, oil wealth and the growth of a rentier economy allowed the government of Saddam Hussein to gain unprecedented autonomy from, and power to rule over, Iraqi society. His authoritarian rule relied heavily on violence, patronage, and the exacerbation of communal divisions to maintain power.

The regime's aggression towards neighboring countries, including the Iran-Iraq War and the invasion of Kuwait, can be seen as attempts to assert dominance and distract from domestic discontent. Ultimately, it has led to the rise of the Bush doctrine of preemptive war. The undermining of postcolonial sovereignty began in the economic sphere with the rise of the "Washington consensus" in the 1980s (14). Military intervention and economic sanctions were used to promote a liberal global order in the name of protecting human rights and furthering democracy.

The Iraqi army invaded Kuwait in 1990. Kuwait was helped by the U.S. Government in Operation Desert Storm, devised to expel Iraqi forces. Before the ground assault in Kuwait, President Bush had publicly urged, "the Iraqi military and Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein to step aside (Draper 19). The rise of the Bush doctrine in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 represent the heaviest blow to date against state sovereignty in the developing world. Throughout the 1990s, despite invasion, continuous bombing, and a decade of the harshest sanctions ever imposed, Iraq continued to reject the demands of the United States and the international community (Dodge 15). The U.S. troops were widely seen as lacking in respect for the country's

people, religion, and traditions. Inevitably, this approach only enflamed resistance, which mushroomed into a potent force of up to 20,000 fighters equipped with explosives capable of knocking out even heavily armoured vehicles. America's inability to pacify the country shattered its aura of military invincibility, showing that asymmetric warfare can checkmate the strongest military power in the world (Raymond 11). The Bush administration had let the Iraqi people down. Saddam continued to be a scourge to his people and a bellicose malefactor in the Middle East (Draper 22).

The background of the Select Works

Aslam's dual cultural experiences of growing up in Pakistan and the UK deeply influence his writing, allowing him to explore themes of identity, migration, and cultural conflict. According to Frawley, while Aslam's choice of Afghanistan as a setting in *The Wasted Vigil* unavoidably renders the novel "inherently political" (442). Clements draws attention to another dimension of his political engagement in his writings by arguing that he exemplifies "a shift towards a more politically-engaged form of English-language fiction amongst South Asian Muslim (and predominantly Pakistani) writers in the years since 9/11, in part in response to media and market pressures – to a demand for explanatory stories and authentic spokespeople – but also a result of the individual authors' desire to rewrite this 'East'" (25). Aslam's works stand out as careful and elaborate commentaries on socio-political issues ranging from gender hierarchies to global politics; what makes these commentaries distinctive from myriads of fictional/non-fictional others is his process of reconstruction by means of his unique literariness. In his attempt to reimagine and revisit history, his engagement with the factual world constitutes a reality basis for his works:

History is important to me. Politics is important to me. I keep saying we've lived through an extraordinary decade, beginning with the attacks on 11 September 2001 and ending with the Arab Spring. Mohamed Atta's suicide at one end and Mohamed Bouazizi's suicide at the other. And between these two moments, we had the War on Terror, the call to Jihad, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, Daniel Pearl, the murder of Benazir Bhutto, and the murder of bin Laden. I keep saying this clash between an incomplete understanding of the East and an incomplete understanding of the West seems to have taken place. (Yaqin 39)

The Wasted Vigil depicts Afghanistan as haunted by the trauma of historical scars. The novel opens when a Russian woman, Lara, whose "mind is a haunted house" (Aslam 5) arrives in post-9/11 Afghanistan. The traumatic history of foreign settlers in Afghanistan is unraveled through each character in the novel. Lara's search for her brother, who went missing during the Soviet invasion, sheds light on the intrusion of the Soviets in 1980.

Lara finds shelter in the house of Marcus, an old English man who marries an Afghan woman, Qatrina. The house is visited by a diverse cast of characters, each with some connection to Afghanistan's troubled history. Marcus' house is represented as "an international crossroads, a global meeting point", and it is here that representatives of British (Marcus), American (David), and Russian (Lara) interference in Afghanistan are confronted with the legacy of their nations' various colonial endeavours (299). The house, filled with the relics of Afghanistan, becomes a focal point where different narratives converge. Marcus is searching for his missing grandson in Jalalabad, where he meets David, an American who was in love with

Zameen, Marcus' daughter. Zameen was abducted by the Russian soldiers. David personifies American involvement in Afghan affairs. The narrative, as the plot progresses, alternates between multiple points of view, thus offering a multifaceted picture of the inner lives of the characters. This is a strategy employed to enable readers to assimilate the significant impacts of warlike violence on their lives. Bihzad is a young boy whom Marcus mistakenly believes to be his grandson. He lets Marcus hold on to this illusion, believing that it might provide him with a better life. Bihzad's involvement with the terrorist organization and his suicide mission, along with Casa enhances the understanding of omnipresent violence and dire circumstances that define Afghan life. When Bihzad and Casa embrace a suicide mission and the truck explodes, which targets the school, the brutal reality of life in Afghanistan is foregrounded. "Elsewhere he would have thought it was thunder, but in this country he knew what it was, what it had to be" (75). Thus, *The Wasted Vigil* reveals that deeply embedded violence, sense of deprivation of justice, and loss of identities constitute the terror fabric of Afghan.

Mohammed Moulessehoul who writes under the pen name, Yasmina Khadra is an Algerian, who served in the army during a time of significant political turmoil. Algeria's political history is marked by its struggle for independence from French colonial rule, culminating in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). This brutal conflict had a lasting impact on Algerian society and politics. The Algerian Civil War (1991-2002) profoundly influenced Khadra's work. This conflict, between the Algerian government and various Islamist rebel groups, resulted in widespread violence and civilian casualties. The war's brutality, including acts of terrorism and state repression, is a central theme in many of Khadra's novels.

The Sirens portrays the transformation of a young university student in Iraq into a weapon of mass destruction. The narrator is a Bedouin from Kafr Karam, “a village lost in the sands of the Iraqi desert, a place so discreet that it often dissolves in mirages, only to emerge at sunset... a well-ordered little town.” (Khadra 8). The American occupation of Iraq puts an end to his university plans in Baghdad, and he is forced to return to Kafr Karam. He witnesses a few incidents in his village that transform him from an observer to a participant in a terrorist scheme with truly devastating potential. Sulayman, the local blacksmith’s mentally challenged son, accidentally severs two fingers and has to be taken to a hospital. When the car is stopped at a checkpoint, Sulayman, in panic, tries to run away and is riddled with bullets. “Every bullet that struck the fugitive pierced me through and through” (57). But this is only the beginning of the tragedies the narrator has to witness. He then witnesses an American missile hitting a wedding party, which kills many village elders. He is deeply disturbed by the scale of tragedy, “The force of the explosion had flung chairs and wedding guests thirty meters in all directions.... Some mutilated, charred bodies were lined up along the edge of the path... the air was full of pleas and cries and wails, mothers looking out for children called out into confusion; the more they went unanswered the louder they shouted” (103-104). After this incident, the villagers declare that the terrorists are those who murder innocent people gathered for a party rather than those who attack a foreign troops’ checkpoint. Thus, revenge through violence is legitimized by the elders in the wake of two tragedies. The narrator then desperately needs to wash away in blood the humiliation his father has suffered. After the soldiers descend into his house, he decides to leave once again for the capital to join the network led by his cousin Sayed. Driven by a desire for revenge, the hero accepts a suicidal mission to carry a toxin in his body that will cause an

epidemic in London and spread to the West. In the final moments, the protagonist experiences an epiphany. He realizes that violence and vengeance will only perpetuate the cycle of suffering and destruction. This profound realization leads him to reject the path of terrorism. Instead of going through with the attack, he decides to abandon his mission, symbolizing a rejection of hatred and a desire to reclaim his humanity.

Literature Review

Critical engagement with Khadra's work unravels a consistent focus on the ethical and political dimension of terrorism. Senoussi and Bouhassoun analyze how cultural disenfranchisement and structural violence drive radicalization in *The Sirens*, moving beyond the representation of extremism. Hassoon and Rasheed situate Khadra's narrative as a corrective to Orientalism, highlighting marginalized Iraqi voices. Von Schenck foregrounds Khadra's assertion that terrorism must be understood through political rendering, where dignity often motivates violence. Diette explores how Khadra's *Khalil* intertwines real psychological logic with fictional perspective to challenge Western assumptions about jihadist ideology.

Scholars have examined Nadeem Aslam's fiction through various lenses, to incorporate the complexities of postcolonial subjectivity and the intersection of tradition with modernity. A few scholars have examined how his novels portray identity, culture, and belonging and offer insights into the intricate ways these concepts intersect. David Waterman in "Memory and Cultural Identity: Negotiating Modernity in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lovers*" discusses the "the binary clash formula of traditional vs progressive which is revealed as a complex aggregation of competing myths" (19). Ahmed Alshuraimi, in his review of Claire Chambers' book, *Making Sense of Contemporary British Muslim Novels*, discusses the tension between

tradition and Western influences that results in alienation, cultural hybridity, and migration. The book includes a study of Aslam's *Maps for Lovers*, and she states the reason behind Aslam's representation of cultures in hybridity. "Olfaction has allowed depiction of various viewpoints through the intermixing of different scents, paralleling the co-presence of multiple regions through a kind of connective disharmony" (114). But Rehana Ahmed in "Brick Lane: A Materialist Reading of the Novel and its Reception", takes a different stance on the idea that Aslam's depiction of Pakistani culture is heavily romanticized and that it fails to represent the complexities that are associated with themes of diaspora and cultural identity.

Analysis

The analysis presented is segmented into two sections to comprehensively explore the causes and justifications of terrorism in post-9/11 narratives. The first section examines the role of foreign invasion in fueling terrorism. It examines how military interventions, occupations, and geopolitical conflicts have contributed to radicalization and resistance.

The second section focuses on the narrative construction of perspectives that justify terrorism. It explores how certain texts depict terrorism as a response to prolonged political, economic, and cultural subjugation. Through character development, storytelling techniques, and thematic structures, these narratives frame terrorist acts as acts of defiance, survival, or retribution.

Invasion as a catalyst for terrorism

An invasion is a catastrophic event that fragments and disturbs the social fabric of a society or a nation. It leads to the erosion of social trust and the destruction of infrastructure, cultural heritage, and identity of the invaded land. The select

narratives expose the conducive atmosphere to the rise of terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq following interventionist foreign policies. They also highlight the conflict between the cultural identity of Arab Muslims and the secular, modern, and imperialistic ideologies of the West. The novels portray terrorism not just as a distant and impersonal threat, but as deeply human and tragic consequences of historical, political, and personal conflicts that shape human lives.

Political Instability and Sectarian Conflict

Toby Dodge, among other critics, posits that the invasion carried out in the name of 'war on terrorism', which was believed to bring democracy and freedom, led to sectarian wars, instability, deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, turmoil, and the formation of new terrorist groups in the country rather than stability and peace. The intricate web of tensions between various ethnic and religious communities in Afghanistan, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Pashtuns, and Hazras, resulted in violent conflicts between the sects following the invasion.

The fall of Hussein's regime created a power vacuum which, combined with ethnic and religious rivalries, fueled sectarian violence and political instability. Sunni-Shia tensions, which had been suppressed under Saddam, erupted in widespread conflict and undermined efforts to form a stable and inclusive government (Al-Qarawee 4). This instability hindered attempts to establish a functioning government and perpetuated a complex and volatile situation that resulted in the regime's instability in the region. The sectarian tensions and the influence of external powers aggravated internal unrest.

The legacy of repeated invasions, the civil war, the emergence of the Mujahideen, and the subsequent Taliban regime had contributed to the widening of

sectarian divides. These conflicts fractured the cultural and social fabric that allowed extremist groups like al-Qaeda to exploit the chaotic situations. Aslam reiterates the resurgence and the atrocities by al-Qaeda: “On the run since the autumn of 2001, al-Qaeda appeared to be regrouping, to kidnap foreigners, organize suicide bombings, and behead those it deemed traitors, those it suspected of informing the Americans” (14). Casa in the novel, a young Pashtun radicalized by jihadist ideology, exemplifies the exploitation of sectarian tensions. His involvement in extremist groups reinstates how sectarian identities are manipulated for militant and political gain. The suffering of Qatrina, Marcus’s wife, who is a Hazara, illustrates the devastating human cost of sectarian violence.

A public spectacle after the Friday prayers, the stoning of a sixty-one-year-old adulteress. A rain of bricks and rocks, her punishment for living in sin, the thirty-nine-year marriage to Marcus void in the eyes of the Taliban because the ceremony had been conducted by a female. (38)

This explains how extremism is catalyzed by sectarian divides that justifies persecution based on ethnic identity. Her fate reveals the severe oppression of minority communities like the Hazara and the Shia who were targeted in Afghanistan because of sectarian violence. Thus, the novel gives instances of sectarian conflict, which fractured and fragmented society, and resulted in the erosion of social cohesion. Marcus’ house, once a treasure trove of Afghan history and culture, symbolized the catastrophic losses inflicted by sectarian violence. The house, once a hub of learning the culture and heritage, lies in ruins, suggesting the fractured society. Afghanistan’s power struggles fueled by various competing factions,

perpetuate instability. The Mujahideen, the Taliban, and other rival war lords fought for control of power, creating a dangerous and treacherous landscape.

The sectarian conflicts in *The Sirens* by Khadra profoundly impact the characters and shape the narrative. The collapse of the Sunni-dominated regime of Hussein in Iraq resulted in a seismic shift in power dynamics. As the Shia majority acquired greater political influence, sectarian tensions and violence increased tremendously, affecting daily life and political stability. “But it means a lot to me that the chosen one is a boy from my hometown Kafkaram, the forgotten will take its place in history” (237). The phrase, “the forgotten will take its place in history,” reflects a sense of exclusion as Sunnis perceived themselves sidelined in the post-2003 Shia majority government. The narrator kept himself away from the terrorist activities, but when the repercussions of conflicts gradually encroached upon his life, he found himself in the militant group. The social and political marginalization infuriates men, facilitating breeding grounds for terrorist ideologies to flourish, as individuals from these communities seek recognition and sense of importance through militant movements. The narrator reassures the act of bringing recognition to his neglected community when he speaks of his radical mission, “the mission which will bring about the unconditional capitulation of the West and return us permanently to our proper role on the world’s stage” (236).

Civilian casualties and torn-out landscape

The select narratives provide an unflinching examination of the human cost of war and casualties, laying bare the consequences and sufferings inflicted by the occupation of oppressive military forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively. Raja Anwar’s *The Tragedy of Afghanistan* details the suffering of Afghans who lost their

homes and were exiled by the invasion by the Red Army. The war claimed a million lives, left half a million disabled, and created countless orphans and widows. Nearly half of Afghanistan's population was displaced, with five million refugees out of fifteen million citizens (255).

“This country was one of the greatest tragedies of the age. Torn to pieces by the many hands of war, by the various hatreds and failings of the world. Two million deaths over the past quarter-century” (Aslam 14). This reveals how war strips people of their agency and identity. The narratives demonstrate the intense disillusionment felt by those trapped in conflict, forced to wrestle with loss, displacement, and an uncertain future. The destruction of cultural heritage, the erosion of trust, and the fragmentation of families enhanced the suffering of those caught in the crossfire. The people of Iraq after the American invasion, discredited their destiny. “What could I have done in a former life to deserve rebirth in a dirty little dump like this?” (Khadra 40). The discontentment of Afghan people in the land being controlled by the invaders is expressed through the character, Lara, in *The Wasted Vigil* when she reads thus :

Tell the earth-thieves
To plant no more orchards of death
Beneath this star of ours
Or the fruit will eat them up. (15)

War in Afghanistan and Iraq reflects a growing American propensity for intervention in failed states and risk-averse reliance on ever-more-effective air power. The emergence of weak and failed states as the primary threat to U.S. security triggers the world's superpower to wreak vengeance and havoc using new military technologies in the nations that pose potential threats to it (5-8). When the U.S.

soldiers started their military operations in Baghdad, “ the sirens echoed in the silence of the night, buildings started to explode in smoke, and from one day to the next, the most passionate love affairs dissolved in tears and blood” (Khadra 19). The invasion by the U.S in Afghanistan was answered by the regrouping of al-Qaeda for kidnapping foreigners, organizing suicide bombings, and beheading those it deemed traitors, those it suspected of informing the Americans (Aslam 14).

The two reasons for the American invasion of Iraq, according to Doc Jabir in *The Sirens*, are that the USA was extremely worried about two things that might interfere with its hegemonic projects. Iraq was very close to acquiring full sovereignty – that is, a nuclear weapon. In the new world order, only nations that have a nuclear arsenal are sovereign; the others may be “potential hotbeds of tension”. The second thing the USA knew was that Iraq was the only military force in the region capable of standing up to Israel. Saddam was nothing but an excuse (Khadra 34-35). *In the Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America’s Purpose*, Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson criticizes the American strategy of war.

The formula is a very popular one, but it is not for that reason to be approved. Its peculiar vice is that it enables us to go to war with far greater precipitancy than we otherwise might, while simultaneously allowing us to walk away from the ruin we create without feeling a commensurate sense of responsibility. It creates anarchy and calls it peace. In the name of order, it wreaks havoc. It allows us to assume an imperial role without discharging the classic duties of imperial rule. (8)

The Western, especially American intellectuals and government, seem incapable of comprehending the basic fact that in the tribal society of Afghanistan, it is

impossible to forgive an enemy or to apologize to him for past offences. Jon Lee Anderson observes in *The New Yorker*, for many Afghans, “The gun now governs Afghanistan.” This reflects the strong conviction that disputes in Afghan society are settled by violence rather than political discourse. War weariness is unfamiliar to Afghan psychology. Marcus, living in Afghanistan, experiences profound personal loss. His wife, Qatrina, and their daughter, Zameen, are both killed, symbolizing the intimate and devastating impact of war on families. Lara’s journey in search of his missing brother in Afghanistan is marked by encounters with death and violence, illustrating the personal toll of conflict on those seeking their loved ones. The physical destruction of villages, homes, and cultural sites represents the collective suffering and the numerous lives lost in the protracted conflict. Casa’s involvement in violence highlights the cyclical nature of loss and revenge. His journey represents the many young lives consumed by extremist causes and the ongoing casualties resulting from radicalization. Marcus’s home, filled with books and artifacts, stands as a testament to the lives and cultural heritage lost to war. The house’s ruined state symbolizes the broader destruction of Afghan society and the countless lives lost in the conflict. The casualties of war extend beyond death to include the displacement of millions of Afghans. The novel touches on the plight of refugees and the internal displacement caused by continuous conflict, further illustrating the human cost of war.

Loss of identity

Yousef Khan Mohammed and Masoud Kaveh observe that in Islamic societies, the youth are engulfed in a maelstrom of complex transformations that are so strong and pervasive that they fling people around like defenseless straw in a tornado, revolutions, invasions, war, mass migration of populations, vast economic and social

transformations form the backdrop to the identity crisis of the young in the Islamic world. The select novels explore the profound loss of identity experienced by individuals and communities in the face of relentless conflict and cultural devastation. They explore the complexities of how identities are formed, lost, and sometimes, painfully, reconstructed amidst the ruins of war.

In *The Wasted Vigil* by Aslam, the theme of loss of identity is a pervasive and poignant element, reflecting the devastating impact of decades of conflict on individuals and their sense of self. The characters in the novel experience profound dislocation and a sense of lost identity due to war, displacement, and the destruction of their cultural heritage. Marcus and Lara are the characters whose lives are deeply shattered by the tragedy in Afghanistan that they live their entire life bearing the brunt of losses. The deep sense of loss shapes their identities. Marcus' sense of self is altered by the tragic incidents which makes him lead a life with grief and a fractured identity. Lara's loss of her brother in Afghanistan shapes her sense of identity and redefines the relationship between the characters. Her journey to Afghanistan and the revelations she encounters force her to confront and reassess her understanding of her brother and her own identity, a self-discovery of her inner self.

The destruction of cultural legacy of Afghanistan is reflected in the library and the art that is ruined by the violent clashes. This symbolizes an intense sense of loss of national identity. The devastation caused by the extremist ideologies during war in the cultural heritage, alienates Afghan people of the anchors that ground the people into the nationalist sentiments. The struggle of the characters is very much tied to the nation's hunted history. The invasions that succeeded one after the other in Afghanistan that exacerbate the internal strife have resulted in the destruction of sense

of oneness among the people. All these factors got accumulated to contribute a sense of contribute to a sense of identity crisis and dislocation among the Afghan populace.

The interrelationships between the characters express the impact of the loss of loved ones, which shapes their identities. David's sense of identity is entangled between his sense of actions and feelings of guilt. His loss of Zameen shapes his actions and sense of self. Casa, the terrorist in the novel, represents the embodiment of the conflict between the individual self and ideological imprints imposed on him. His formation of radical ideology is the resultant action of a reaction to the sense of humiliation and loss experienced by him and the people of his community.

Memory has a significant space in moulding the characters' perception of their identities. The house of Marcus, which is filled with tragic relics of the past, can be regarded as the manifestation of physical loss and memory. Everything in the house that includes books, paintings, and demolished walls speaks of the lost way of life. The structure of the novel, that transits between the past and the present highlights the influence of historical events on the construction of personal identities.

The fragmented setting of the novel and Marcus' house, represent the disoriented sense of self and identities of the characters. The house stands as a testimony to the shattered identities of the people living in it. The Afghan landscape, with tints of war, is a reflection of the loss of collective identity. The literal and figurative illustrate the demolition of a comprehensible sense of self and nation.

The Sirens depicts how invasion, war, and vengeance contribute to a profound personal and shared sense of dislocation. This erodes national identities that push individuals toward fundamental radicalization. The narrator suffers a profound identity crisis activated by a series of humiliating events. The significant assault that

infuriates him is the intrusion of American soldiers to his house and the public torture faced by his father. This traumatic event smashes his sense of self and integrity, leading to a strong internal scuffle.

The identity of the protagonist, which is deeply rooted in the traditional cultural beliefs of his nation, is undermined by witnessing the disrespect and dishonour. This affects the sense of belonging of the narrator, which causes his fatal transformation. "Was I still myself? If so, who was I...Such a smooth transition! I had gone to bed a docile, courteous boy, and I'd awakened with an inextinguishable rage loaded in my very flesh" (134). The village community represents a traditional way of life that is disrupted by the ongoing war. The collective identity of the villagers, based on shared cultural and religious values, is undermined by the constant threat and reality of violence.

Having taken away his sense of self anchored in tradition, he becomes vulnerable to extremist ideologies. They offer a new sense of determination and belonging. "We were at a loss as to how to assess the ongoing events. We no longer knew whether a given attack was a feat of arms or a demonstration of cowardice" (Khadra 84). The reason for radicalization is presented as a frantic attempt that helps to reassert a lost sense of identity and honour. He traveled to Baghdad and was involved with terrorist groups, which illustrates how individuals are triggered to resort to extreme resolutions. The psychological suffering and traumatic experiences by the narrator and other characters mirror the deep emotional bearing of the sense of loss of identity.

Feelings of shame, anger, and dissolution overpower the emotional maturity of the individuals, so that they are driven to actions and decisions. The hero's inner

chaos is a recurring theme in the narrative. His radical evolution from a kind young man to someone capable of inducing mass violence underscores the negative effects of the crisis he experiences. The title "The Sirens of Baghdad" can be read as a metaphor for the lingering but destructive path of radicalization that the protagonist follows. The sirens symbolize both a call to arms and a warning of the dangers of losing oneself to anger and revenge.

The physical journey from his village to Baghdad mirrors the protagonist's internal journey from innocence to disillusionment and rage. This transition underscores the profound changes in his identity. The novel contrasts the protagonist's former life with his new reality, emphasizing the stark differences and the sense of loss. "A voice knocking at my temples kept repeating that the death stinking up the orchards was contaminating my soul, and that I was dead too" (Khadra 97). His memories of a peaceful village life are juxtaposed with the chaos and violence of Baghdad, highlighting the transformation in his identity. "I didn't remember ever having borne a grudge against anybody at all, and yet there I was, ready to bite something, including the hand that tried to soothe me" (97). Other characters in the novel also reflect different aspects of identity loss. For example, Doctor Jalal, who abandons his medical practice to join the resistance, illustrates the broader impact of war on professional and personal identities. "I don't care a rotten fig about what happens to me from this moment on. Nothing matters any more, not ridicule, not even lies" (106) "and as for me, I no longer recognized myself in mine. I walked along with a heavy heart, hugging the walls like a shadow puppet" (233).

Hatred for the West

“Whether communication has taken place in the preceding or recent centuries, the western part of the world maintains a continuous conceptualization of Arabs and Muslims as ‘alien’, ‘other’ or rather ‘enemy’ characters (Nydell, 8). Using Orientalists’ perspective to perpetuate their domination over Arab Muslims after the terrorist attack in the U.S., the American writers stigmatize them. As a result of creating this prejudice and hate towards Muslims, a dichotomy of “us” and “them” was established. Shortly after, Muslims were categorized as “them” and presented a threat to “us” (Ahmed & Matthes 222).

In *The Wasted Vigil* by Aslam, the theme of hatred for the West is intricately woven into the narrative, reflecting the complex and often antagonistic relationships between Afghanistan and Western powers. This theme is explored through the perspectives and experiences of various characters, illustrating how historical, political, and personal factors contribute to anti-Western sentiments. The novel is set against the backdrop of Afghanistan’s tumultuous history, marked by foreign interventions, including the Soviet invasion, the rise of the Taliban, and the U.S.-led invasion post-9/11.

The invasion by American troops and subsequent actions that follow are pictured as the causes for strife and troubles. The disrespectful and harmful presence of foreign troops fuels anti-Western feelings. Casa’s transformation into a treacherous man involved in terrorist activities is a response to the injustices and humiliations perceived. The narrative of Casa portrays what drives the youth into extremism.

David characterizes the Western participation in Afghanistan. His actions and rhetoric reveal the destructive impact of Western policies. The atmosphere of violence and destruction caused by the military actions of the West resulted in collective trauma. How bombings, strikes by drones, and raids by military personnel result in casualties, which fosters deep animosity. Western actions are perceived as radical and cultural insults that undermine the conventional values and religious beliefs. The obliteration of cultural relics and the imposition of foreign morals are seen as efforts to erase Afghan identity and inheritance, further expanding resentment. The novel's portrayal of Afghanistan's landscape, torn out by war, serves as a metaphor for the cracked relationship between the West and Afghanistan. The physical and emotional marks of the characters embody the broader national shock. Conversations among Afghan characters disclose the prevalent sense of betrayal and anger towards Western ideals, reflecting a joint sentiment shaped by decades of conflict and interference.

In *The Sirens*, the protagonist experiences deep personal embarrassment at the hands of American soldiers. The invasion of his home and the humiliation of his family in public by American troops are essential events that infuriate his hatred for the West. This personal trauma is a source of his radicalization. The violation of the honor of his family and the brutality he witnesses kindle a desire for revenge against the invaders. The novel depicts the impact of the U.S. occupation on Iraqi society. The presence of foreign armies, checkpoints, and the destruction caused by military strategies create a setting of resentment and hostility.

The loss of security, dignity, and normalcy drives the villagers towards anger and hatred. The cultural and religious values of the protagonist and his community are deeply at odds with those of the Western occupiers. The perceived disrespect for

Islamic traditions and the imposition of foreign values exacerbate feelings of alienation and resentment. To most Americans, Islam was nothing but trouble. Iraqis detested both the coalition forces set by the U.S. troops and Saddam's regime. The American invasion in Iraq in the name of liberating it from the malignant clutches of Hussein was questioned by the Iraqis, who did not prefer infidels from the other side of the world to transform their country into hell on earth.

They thought they'd find a homeland for their knowledge and fertile soil for their ambitions in Europe. And when they saw they weren't welcome, for some stupid reasons they decided just to hold on as well as they could. The West is nothing but an acidic lie, an insidious perversity, a siren song for people shipwrecked on their identity quest. (10)

The novel explores how the war is seen not just as a physical invasion but also as an assault on cultural and religious identity. This cultural clash deepens the divide between Iraqis and the Western forces. The protagonist's journey from a peaceful villager to a potential suicide bomber illustrates the process of radicalization fueled by hatred for the West. Influenced by extremist rhetoric and driven by personal grievances, he becomes increasingly detached from his previous life. The novel deliberates on how extremist groups exploit the anger and frustration of young men, offering them a sense of purpose and a means to reclaim their dignity through violence. Throughout the novel, the interactions between Iraqis and American soldiers are fraught with tension and misunderstanding. These encounters highlight the lack of communication and mutual respect, further entrenching negative perceptions. The West calls itself 'welcoming', but in fact it's just a falling point, and once you fall there, you can never get back up completely" (11). The hatred for the West is implicit in the narration of the secret

mission to be carried out by the narrator. “All I know is, what’s been planned will be the greatest operation ever carried out on enemy territory, a thousand times more awesome than the attacks of September 11” (11). The business interest of Americans in freeing Iraq from the monstrous Saddam is explained:

They’re businessmen, we’re commodities, and they’re ready to trade.

Yesterday, it was oil for food. Today, it's Saddam for oil. And what do we get out of all this? If the Americans had an ounce of human kindness, they wouldn’t treat their blacks and their Latinos like subhumans. Instead of crossing oceans to come to the aid of some poor, emasculated ragheads, they’d do better to put their own house in order. They could do something about the Indians they’ve got rotting away on their reservations, kept out of sight like people with shameful disease. (33)

The protagonist’s internal monologues and conversations with other characters reveal a deep-seated belief that the West is the root cause of their suffering and humiliation. “The West will never acknowledge our merits. As far as Westerners are concerned, Arabs are only good for kicking soccer balls or wailing into microphones. The more we prove contrary, the less they’re willing to admit it” (10). The novels familiarize how war, occupation, and cultural alienation contribute to the radicalization and deep-seated resentment towards the West.

Analysis -Part II

The chapter analyses how the terrorists are positioned as victims of circumstances and thus, how the narratives normalize the acts of terror. The close examination of the narratives explicates the strategy adopted in positioning the terrorists as men who fight against suppression and oppression. “Positioning is a

discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (Harre 37).

Positioning is of two types: Interactive positioning and Reflexive positioning. In interactive positioning, a person’s identity, role, or relationship in a social interaction is shaped by another person’s words or actions. Reflexive positioning involves how one’s own words, actions, or narratives determine one’s identity or role. Individuals position themselves either intentionally or unintentionally in reflexive positioning (37).

The authors position the terrorists as innocent sufferers rather than agents of radical change. The narratives through speech, storylines, and interactions portray them as helpless victims, which justifies their actions of terror. The rhetoric of the ‘War on Terror’, positioned as a collective global effort rather than a Western campaign in the narratives in the United States after the September 11 attacks, is challenged and subverted in the select narratives. The narratives selected for study are scrutinized for the exploration of the concepts as 1) the ideology, 2) humanizing the ‘enemy’, 3) critique of Western intervention, 4) identity and dignity, 5) cultural insight, and 6) complexity of terrorism that are employed to facilitate positioning and the construction of empathetic perspectives.

The positioning of ideology

According to C.J.M. Drake, ideology for terrorists provides “ the moral and political vision that inspires their violence, shapes how they see the world, and defines how they judge the actions of people and institutions” (146). Ideology shapes behaviour guided by a set of values, beliefs, and principles that spur individuals to react in specific ways to particular incidents. Thus, the individual is radicalized by “a

set of contingencies that link immediate behaviour to distant outcomes” (Taylor and Horgan 37-71).

The Sirens portrays the ideological convictions that challenge the representation of monolithic stereotypes of Middle Eastern societies often perpetuated in Western narratives. The protagonist states his determination to address the injustices he endured and engage in terrorist acts. “I don’t need to look behind me to advance. The horrors of yesterday are what’s pushing me on” (8). This statement is a manifestation of ideology constructed through a narrative of victimhood and the need for retaliation. The ideological resonance and the validation of existing beliefs can reinforce the conviction of an individual. “I hang on his words. His diatribes express my obsessions, reinforce my fixed ideas, and energize my mind” (10). The narrative highlights that shared ideology serves as a catalyst that drives an individual to take action in support of radical ideology. The men in Iraq are described as “good, virtuous Arabs with just enough vanity to give us a bit of guts” (36). The transformation from good-natured people into violent individuals is attributed to the belief that they had failed in erecting strong walls at the borders which let the Americans invade their nation. “And don’t try to make others wear the hat we’ve fashioned for ourselves with our own hands. If the Americans are here, it’s our fault” (37). Iraqi terrorists believe that American influence and control stifle their nation’s progress and individual aspirations. “Dreams serve no purpose when all horizons are bare” (48). These ideologies instill in Iraqi men a sense of urgency to retaliate against foreign oppression and push back Americans beyond their boundaries.

The Wasted Vigil confronts the Western propagation of the intention of the American invasion of Afghanistan. “We are here to help your country. We came to

get rid of the Taliban for you” (368). This claim is retorted by the argument, “You are not here because you wanted to destroy the Taliban for us, you are here because you wanted retribution for what happened to you in 2001” (368). The discourse of Western imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism, which shape the ideological beliefs of the people who engage in acts of violent retribution, challenge the readers to engage with the varied factors that lead to radicalization and violent conflicts.

Humanizing the Terrorist

Khadra and Aslam provide a face and voice to the characters deemed as terrorists by stressing the psychological underpinnings of terrorism. The novels posit severe rhetoric against the ideation that poverty and Islamic fundamentalism are the factors that foster terrorism in Middle Eastern countries.

In an interview by Richard Marcus, Khadra articulates his intention for his narratives, “My novels do not speak about terrorism; they talk of human brittleness, anger, humiliation, the fears, sometimes the hopes; and of this burning and fatuous actuality which spoils our life” (Blogcritics,2007). The novel details the war-torn atmosphere in Iraq, highlighting the chaos, anarchy, and injustice that pervade everyday life in Iraq. The protagonists’ story is contextualized within the tumultuous political conditions of Iraq during the American invasion. Khadra exposes how systemic injustices and external interventions compel men into terrorism

Khadra exposes the psychological turmoil experienced by the protagonist. The protagonist’s transformation from a peaceful individual into a man of violent rage and actions invites the readers’ attention to the psychological inclinations that prompt men into extremism. The narrator’s journey is punctuated by introspection and self-doubt. The moral ambiguities and intricacies of the characters are laid bare in the narrative.

“Was I still myself? If so, who was I? . . .Such a smooth transition! I had gone to bed a docile, courteous boy and I’d awakened with an inextinguishable rage loaded in my very flesh” (134). The emotional toll of this transformation is further explained in the statement, “And as for me, I no longer recognized myself in mine. I walked along with a heavy heart, hugging the walls like a shadow puppet” (233). By giving voice to the inner psyche of the characters who engage in terrorism, the narrative humanizes the terrorists and thus facilitates the evocation of sympathy for them. The portrayal of Arab Muslim terrorists as faceless villains in Western narratives is given a counter-narrative in the novels, which argue that terrorists are made and not born.

Aslam vividly depicts the devastating impact of war on individuals and communities. The constant violence and instability create an environment where radicalization can take root. By showing how external factors like war influence personal choices, Aslam underscores the idea that terrorism is often a response to larger forces beyond individual control. By drawing the lives of radicals from childhood through maturity, Aslam shows how personal losses, experiences of trauma, and negative societal pressures shape their paths. His characters invade a morally vague world where clear distinctions between anything is blurred. They are portrayed to be caught in a complex net of historical, psychological, political, and moral forces that shape their intentions. Thus, terrorists are portrayed not just as committers of violence but also as individuals whose lives have been deeply affected by forces beyond their control.

Decrying Western Imperium

The novels critically analyze the consequences of Western military involvement in the Middle East. They reveal how foreign policies and armed actions

can lead to unintentional, devastating consequences for local populations, fostering anger and radicalization.

His transformation from a passive young man into a possible terrorist is hastened by deeply embarrassing and traumatic events involving U.S. soldiers. The novel underlines the cultural misinterpretations between Western forces and the Iraqi population. Western interference is depicted as being based on a limited understanding of local customs, values, and social undercurrents. This gap not only leads to unproductive and sometimes harmful policies but also nurtures resentment and resistance among the local population. He explores the moral and ethical quandaries faced by persons in a war-torn environment. The novel inquires into the ethics of violence and revenge, even when driven by a need for justice or vengeance. This thoughtful analysis extends to the broader moral implications of Western military plans and their impact on the moral fabric of Iraqi society. The original violence perpetrated by Western forces leads to reciprocal violence by the local populace, making a vicious cycle that perpetuates conflict and unpredictability.

This recurring nature of violence underlines the uselessness of military solutions to multifaceted political and social problems. The emotional impact of the occupation on Iraqis is another serious aspect explored in the novel. The protagonist's psychological worsening reflects the wider mental health crisis facing those living under continuous threat and doubt. Khadra's representation suggests that Western intervention has overlooked psychological consequences. While offered as efforts to bring democracy and stability, these interventions are criticized for being driven by political and economic interests, often at the cost of the local population's well-being and dominion. He positions the narrative within the broader past context of

Afghanistan, stressing the continuity of conflicts that preceded American intervention in 2001. This history emphasizes that the problems in Afghanistan are rooted and cannot be attributed only to new events or foreign powers. They have worsened the situation. He portrays the suffering of Afghan civilians caught in the clash of geopolitical fights.

Characters in the novel tolerate the scars of violence, loss, and movement, underlining the human cost of military interferences. The destruction of civilian life as a dominant theme highlights how the interference disrupts daily life, destroys families, and continues cycles of violence and trauma. The novel analyses the cultural selfishness and lack of sympathetic that often convoy Western interferences. He portrays Western characters who, contempt good intentions, fail to clutch the difficulties of Afghan society and culture. The novel assesses the dependance on military solutions to address what are basically political and social problems.

Exploration of Identity and Dignity

The radicalization of the protagonist in *The Sirens* is determined by a deep sense of disgrace and loss of dignity, which offers a clarification for terrorism that goes beyond the normal depictions of ideological fanaticism. His identity is initially rooted in his community, traditions, family, and cultural beliefs. The invasion and subsequent violence disturb this stable sense of self. The disgrace and trauma he experienced, and the brutal treatment of his father by U.S. soldiers, shatter his formerly peaceful and satisfied existence. This loss triggers a frantic search for a new identity, one that can restore his sense of purpose and belonging. Self-respect is a central theme in the novel, particularly the loss of dignity as a substance for radicalization.

The protagonist's transformation begins with a series of humbling experiences, both personal and shared. The humiliating experience he observes and bears erodes his self-respect and fuels a burning desire to avenge the hurt. He illustrates how the taking away of dignity can drive individuals to severe measures as they seek to regain their honor and respect. The hero's journey underscores the issues between personal and collective consciousness. His identity is entangled with his family and village, but as the war takes place, he becomes isolated and detached from these knots. His desire for vengeance and participation with extremist groups reflect a change towards an identity defined by confrontation and retaliation against the occupiers. This change illustrates how individuals can be included by broader ideological movements when their personal identities are damaged. Khadra takes the role of cultural and religious self in shaping the protagonist's response to the intrusion.

The protagonist's identity and self are both rooted in Islamic and tribal values, which stress honor, family, and religion. The invasion and the following cultural clash intensify the protagonist's sense of solitude and aggravate his desire to defend his cultural and religious identity against perceived disparity. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist's journey takes an unexpected turn towards self-realization and improvement. After confronting the uselessness of violence and the resonating promises of extremist ideology, he commences to reclaim a sense of self that exceeds the instant desire for revenge. This shift suggests that the possibility of reinstating dignity through introspection and personal growth is still there and not through violence and hatred.

The Wasted Vigil represents a complex interplay of fragmented identities shaped by loss, rupture, displacement, and conflict. For instance, Marcus Caldwell, an

English doctor, fights with his identity after losing his wife and daughter to the violence that has spread throughout the country. His house, filled with relics of different cultures and histories, symbolizes his fractured identity and the broader disillusionment of Afghan society. He explores how cultural and sacred identities are both sources of confidence and division.

The identities are deeply fixed in their cultural and religious backgrounds, which shape their actions and thoughts. For example, Lara, a Russian woman searching for her brother, carries the density of her Soviet identity and the historical assets of her country's participation in Afghanistan. The novel reflects the tension between these identities and the forces that seek to reshape or suppress them. The characters are forced to redefine themselves in reaction to the traumas they undergo. David, a secret agent, reflects on his role in the war and the moral ambiguities that have redefined his sense of self. The novel explores how war strips away the layers of identity, pushing individuals to face their bare humanity and moral response.

The theme of dignity is expressed through the characters' struggles to maintain their self-respect in the middle of humiliation and suffering. For example, Zameen, an Afghan woman who has suffered severe hardship, embodies the flexibility of maintaining dignity in spite of being subjected to violence and social fear. He portrays dignity as a personal attribute and as a collective struggle within communities destroyed by war.

Several characters in *The Wasted Vigil* are on demand for redemption and hopefulness, reflecting their trials to reinstate a sense of dignity and purpose. Efforts of Marcus to provide a sanctuary and Lara's exploration for her brother are determined by a desire to reconcile with their past and find meaning amidst despair.

Their journeys symbolize the broader human desire to reclaim honour, dignity, and identity after great loss and suffering. Marcus's house, which is filled with books, art, and cultural artifacts, serves as a powerful symbol of the multifaceted identities and histories of the characters. Different cultures and narratives intersect, representing a miniature of Afghanistan's rich but troubled inheritance. The house stands as evidence of the enduring human spirit and the quest to preserve dignity and identity against the forces of demolition.

Complexity of Terrorism

Instead of depicting terrorists as completely evil, the novel explores the complex and complicated socio-political factors that contribute to terrorism. It shows how trauma, social disintegration, and hopelessness can lead individuals to extreme actions. The complexity of terrorism is portrayed through a complete examination of the factors that push individuals to radicalization and violence. The protagonist's journey into terrorism begins with profound personal trauma and humiliation.

Initially a peaceful student, he is deeply affected by the violence and degradation imposed upon his family and community by American soldiers. This personal insult to his dignity, the incident involving his father, catalyzes his transformation. He highlights how personal experiences of humiliation and collective loss can be powerful motivators for seeking violent revenge. He situates the character's radicalization within the broader historical context of Iraq under American invasion. The invasion and the resulting destruction create a climate of widespread anger, anger, and a sense of injustice among the Iraqi population. The novel highlights how foreign occupation, political instability, and the demolition of traditional social structures can trigger feelings of powerlessness and force individuals toward

extremism as a means of regaining activity and control. The protagonist's transformation is influenced by extremist interpretations of Islamic teachings, which are presented as a protection against the perceived cultural and religious violation by foreign forces. Khadra shows how terrorism can be mounted as a form of resistance to protect and preserve one's cultural and religious values, making it an emotionally charged factor for those who are threatened by external factors.

Khadra delves into the psychological dimensions of terrorism, drawing out the protagonist's internal struggle and the impact of incessant exposure to violence and trauma. The novel studies how lengthy exposure to violence can numb individuals and change their moral compass, making violent extremism appear as a justified and even necessary response. The protagonist's psychological journey reflects a complex interplay of anger, fear for his identity, and desire for vengeance. The protagonist's transformation is facilitated by his encounters with experienced extremists who provide ideological propaganda and a sense of belonging. These networks exploit personal grievances and socio-political frustrations, offering vulnerable individuals a sense of purpose and direction. He shows how these networks can be both compelling and manipulative, pushing individuals into a tornado of violence.

The novel portrays terrorism as part of a wider cycle of violence, where actions by invading forces and local resistance feed into each other, spreading an endless circle of retaliation and counter-retaliation. Khadra emphasizes the uselessness of violence and how it breeds more violence, endangering the self of individuals and societies in a destructive cycle that is difficult to break. This cyclical nature of violence highlights the complexity of addressing and solving terrorism. The

novel explores the human side of those who turn to terrorism, recognizing their pangs, suffering, and difficult options.

The novel shows how historical tumultuous situations and the scars of past conflicts contribute to the perpetuation of violence. The characters in *The Wasted Vigil* are deeply affected by personal traumas and losses, which play a crucial role in their relationship to terrorism. For instance, Lara, a Russian woman, is in search of her brother who fought with the Mujahideen, while David, a former CIA secret agent, fights with his role in the war. Their personal stories of loss and sorrow reflect how individual disturbances can intersect with larger political ordeals, pushing people towards radicalization or a sense of loss of identity. The novel explores how ethical manipulation is a key component of terrorism. Extremist groups exploit religious and ideological narratives to employ and radicalize persons. For example, the character of Casa, a young Taliban warrior, is dragged into extremism through a combination of sociopolitical indoctrination and the promise of a sense of feeling of purpose and belonging.

Aslam shows how terrorism grows on the manipulation of beliefs and the exploitation of diffident individuals searching for identity and meaning. The novel portrays Afghanistan as a country torn out by war, where many people are driven to extremism out of loss and the absence of practical changes for a better life. The novel details the complex interplay of cultural and religious identities in the context of terrorism. Afghan culture is shown as both a source of strength and a potential vector for radicalization when exploited by extremists. Aslam portrays the tension between the nonviolent aspects of Islam and the violent misrepresentations propagated by terrorist groups, focusing on the struggle for the soul of the religion and ethnicity. The

emotional toll of living in a war-ravaged society, the pulling force of a cause to fight for, and the impact of propaganda are all portrayed with sensitivity.

Conclusion

These literary narratives subvert the simplistic understanding of terrorism, which is framed in popular discourse as an illogical and senseless act of violence, by examining the underlying causes and the motivations of those who engage in it. By exploring the structural disparities, historical injustices, and socio-political disenchantment, authors construct multifaceted depictions of terrorists that induce empathy for men of violence.

These narratives portray how communities, when exposed to systemic oppression, develop fundamental ideologies as a means of confrontation. The texts explore how terrorism is not merely an act of individual choice but often the result of prolonged exposure to extremist rhetoric, worsened by socio-economic deficiency and political disenfranchisement. The depiction of characters wrestling with intergenerational trauma shows how historical inequalities perpetuate cycles of violence. By contextualizing terrorism within the broader framework of history, authors move beyond a moralizing lens, allowing readers to observe the perpetrators not as beasts but as individuals shaped by their particular environment.

The protagonists in the narratives experience the destruction of their families, communities, or cultural heritage. Literature frequently illustrates how grief and despair, when left unaddressed, create fertile ground for radicalization. Characters often struggle with identity crises, finding solace in extremist ideologies that provide a sense of purpose and belonging.

The authors use several literary strategies that challenge readers' insights and evoke sympathy for perpetrators of violence. Through a detailed and extensive character development, authors depict terrorists as multidimensional and complicated individuals rather than faceless villains. By providing clear access to their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and personal struggles and grievances, narratives emphasize their vulnerability, internal conflicts, and moments of doubt. The use of individual narratives and internal monologues immerses readers in the soul of characters branded as terrorists. By portraying their fears, anxieties, desires, and moral dilemmas, literature challenges the assumption that terrorists are devoid of ethics. Many literary works frame terrorisms as a reaction to imperialist aggression and economic exploitation. By shifting the focus from individual blame to systemic oppression, authors inspire readers to question popular representations of terrorism and consider the broader socio-political conditions that bear cycles of violence. This positioning allows for a richer depiction of their fights and alterations, challenging static and reductionist views of identity. By positioning and fixing their stories against dominant Western narratives, these narratives highlight the importance of varied voices and perspectives in the global system, supporting a more inclusive and assumed worldview.

Chapter 4

Ethnonationalism and Terrorism

Civil disputes and ethnic wars, the most distressing forms of conflict, can foster terrorist activities. The gush of ethnonationalist feelings provokes calls for independence, self-rule, and violent retribution against the suppressors. As individuals and groups grow more confident in expressing their ethnic and state identities, the difference between genuine resistance and illegitimate terrorism has become increasingly unclear. Thus, ethnonationalism poses an important threat to universal peace, as it encourages terrorism, enabling extreme philosophies to gain grip and consequently flourish.

Nayomi Munaweera explores the complexities and devastating consequences of the Sri Lankan civil war in *Island*. Karan Mahajan explicates the complicated effects of civil unrest in *The Association of Small Bombs* by highlighting the intergenerational impacts of violence, radicalization, societal breakdown, and psychological turmoil. This chapter examines the complex relationship between ethnonationalism and terrorism and studies how they intersect and aggravate one another. It also inspects the dynamics of representation of majority/minority dichotomy concerning internal conflicts and terrorism.

Background Study

The Sri Lankan Civil War that devastated the island for over thirty years serves as the background for *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. *The Association of Small Bombs* depicts the tumultuous atmosphere of 1990s India the Lajpat Nagar bombing. It also speaks about Gujarat riot.

The Sri Lankan Civil War

Scholars like K.M. de Silva and S.J. Tambiah through their seminal works provide a critical framework for understanding the origins of civil wars in Sri Lanka, highlighting the complex interplay of political, social, and economic factors that contributed to its outbreak. The origins of the Sri Lankan civil unrest can be traced back to the colonial period and the early years of independence. A significant groundbreaking event in British colonial governance occurred in Sri Lanka in 1931. It became the first British Empire colony in Asia to experience a significant administrative change. This event set Sri Lanka apart as a pioneer among British Asian territories. Its colonial and post-colonial trajectory was permanently impacted by the changes implemented during this time (de Silva 13).

“Sinhalese” and “Tamil” are portrayed as all-encompassing labels that categorize people into strict, distinct groups. It also suggests that there has always been an unbroken state of distrust, rivalry, and animosity between Sinhalese and Tamils. The old Sinhala Buddhist chronicles, especially the *Mahavamsa* of the fifth century A.D. depict the Tamils as non-Buddhist invaders and the Sinhalese as defenders of Buddhism (Tambiah 6).

There were three distinct phases in Sri Lanka’s descent into political instability. The first phase, which saw the first indications of unrest, lasted from 1955 to 1961. Tensions resurfaced in the 1970s after a period of relative calm in the mid-to-late 1960s, intensifying into violent altercations and culminating in the riots of 1977. Violence spiked in the early 1980s, launching Sri Lanka from a period of persistent ethnic hostility to a full-fledged civil war. The anti-Tamil riots in 1983 marked a watershed in Sri Lanka’s history and had far-reaching effects (de Silva 14).

The British colonial administration's policies, while meant to foster efficiency and stability, unintentionally planted the seeds of discord between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. The British preferred and favoured the Tamil minority in both education and employment, due to their superior command of English, the official language of the government. The Sinhalese majority became resentful and felt excluded and marginalized. Several radical Sinhalese groups vehemently opposed the transfer of power to the Tamil populace in post-independent Sri Lanka. While promoting political Buddhism, these organizations took advantage of its tenets to achieve their goals and contributed significantly to the spread of nationalist ideas. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, the Sinhala Urumaya, and the Jathika Hela Urumaya were some of the most prominent political parties connected to this movement (de Votta 24).

Sasanka Perera, in *The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: A Historical and Sociopolitical Outline*, investigates how policies exacerbated Sri Lanka's ethnic divisions, resulting in militarization and protracted hostilities. Tamils were marginalized by the 1949 Citizenship Act and the 1956 Sinhala Only Act, which restricted Indian Tamils' access to government services and rights. This legislative strategy led to widespread subjugation of the Tamil minority. Resistance was triggered by the Tamil community's sense of cultural erasure brought about by attempts to "Sinhalize" the country by making the Sinhalese language and culture the nation's identity. This resulted in the formation of the terrorist organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The late 1970s neoliberal economic reforms in Sri Lanka increased economic inequality. The reforms primarily impacted the Tamil population, widening the

economic divide by facilitating the privatization of state-owned businesses and the reduction of state social benefits. Tamil students suffered as a result of Sri Lanka's education unification policy in the 1970s, which favoured Sinhalese students and aimed to standardize college admissions. This policy increased support for militant groups and stoked widespread resentment. The island had been beset by recurrent political crises by the late 1980s. The Indian Peace Keeping Force, which controlled large portions of the north and east of the island, was regularly contested by various militant Tamil separatist groups. The government of Colombo, meanwhile, maintained control over the more populated south and west, but Sinhala militants frequently disrupted it violently (Spencer 7).

Following the deaths of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers by the LTTE, widespread violence against Tamil Civilians sparked the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, also known as Black July. It is a case of state-sponsored genocide. The conflict intensified as a result of Black July, which increased support for the LTTE. To drive the LTTE out of the northern jungles, the Sri Lankan government initiated "Operation Liberation" in 1987. Many Tamil civilians were forced to flee to Tamil Nadu due to the military's cruel tactics, which included the use of barrel bombs (Swamy 235-236).

The civil war in Sri Lanka was a complex and multi-layered conflict triggered by a combination of historical, ethnic, political, economic, and social factors. Ethnonationalism, political marginalization, economic inequality, social exclusion, and the legacy of colonial rule all played an important role in creating an environment conducive to war.

Ethnic conflicts in India

Severe internal conflicts, local rebellions, and intercommunal vehemence form ethnic conflicts in India. Ethnic tensions those infrequently turn to form violent battles have long inundated India. In “The Politics of Race, Nationhood and Hindu Nationalism: The Case of Gujarat Riots of 2002”, Tejaswi Patil discusses how Hindu separationists construct a normalized identity by combining religion and nationality, strengthening notions of ethnic and cultural dominance. This philosophy has rational foundation in Oriental studies and Indo-European concepts. The concept of a “Hindu Rashtra” estranges Muslims and Christians as outsiders or refugees (27). One of the most aggressive examples of such rigidities is the 2002 Gujarat riots that resulted in extensive devastation and loss of life. The event which catalyzed Gujarat riots was that on February 27, 2002 in which 59 Hindu travelers were burned alive in a train compartment in Godhra, Gujarat. Muslim extremists were blamed for the unfortunate happening and it triggered a wave of reactive vehemence against Muslims in India. In the following days, masses of Hindu radicals, raged through Muslim families, burning homes, and mosques, killing over two thousand people majority of whom were Muslims.

The Gujarat riots were not a secluded incident, but rather a display of deepened ethnic rigidities that exist in India. History of the country is marked by communal violence, including the Partition riots of 1947, the Sikh riots of 1984, and the Bombay riots of 1992-93. Several factors add to ethnic tensions in India. One major factor is raising of consciousness of religion, which is exploited by political parties to rally support and generate divisions among diverse communities. Another

factor is the presence of socio-economic inequalities between different ethnic groups which fuel hatred and rage among marginalized communities.

The political context of the author

Munaweera being a Sri Lankan American author, explores the socio-political intricacies of Sri Lanka that includes its civil war, ethnic rivalries, and postcolonial identity scuffles in her narratives. Her experiences and the wider context of history of Sri Lanka and politics influence her work. Munaweera's family migrated from Sri Lanka during childhood, first to Nigeria and then to America. Her diasporic experience strengthens her to explore the themes of displacement, identity, and belonging. The sociopolitical context of Sri Lanka has been formed by her colonial antiquity under Dutch, Portuguese, and British. Her writings offer global insights into the enduring trauma of violence, the cost of ethnic conflict, and the challenges of interrelated personal and collective identities. The civil war has left a permanent mark on the nation's consciousness. The trauma imposed by this struggle between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam forms the crux of her debut novel, *Island*.

Mahajan, an Indian-American writer whose works are informed by the sociopolitical arena of India and its complex histories of violence, racial tensions, and struggles of postcolonial identity. The background of Mahajan and life experiences, and his engagement with contemporary issues frame the themes in his novels, as in *The Association*.

Mahajan's writing is based on the historical context of the partition of India in 1947. The long-lasting results on Indian society, such as communal divisions, ethnic intolerance, and violence, are central to Mahajan's narratives. His novel, *The*

Association is set against the setting of modern Indian society, where religious and ethnic tensions continue and shape the lives of ordinary people. Like many other writers, Mahajan's experiences as a member of the Indian diaspora influenced his writing. He moved to the United States for higher education, and has been able to ponder on the differences between the political climates of India and the West. In his works, Mahajan engages with questions of belonging, and the difficulties of living between two philosophies. His sociopolitical background is shaped by the interplay of India's colonial history, its post-independence trajectory, and its role in the broader global context of the 21st century. This novel, Mahajan's second, is a blend of biography and fiction, focusing on the author's understandings in New York and his replications on global migration, cultural dislocation and identity.

Island by Munaweera is a novel set against the background of the Sri Lankan Civil War, a conflict that ravaged the country for nearly thirty years. It provides an intimate portrayal of the war's effect on individuals and families that offers readers a better understanding of Sri Lanka's landscape. Being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious culture, Sri Lanka is with Sinhalese and Tamil population. The novel reflects this multiplicity through its characters and their communications. Sinhalese, who are mainly Buddhist form the majority, the Sinhalese are concentrated in the southern, western, and central parts of the island. Tamils are mainly Hindu who form the largest minority and they are concentrated in the eastern and northern parts of the island. In the central highlands occupies a significant Tamil population who descended from Tamils in India who were brought by the British to labour on tea plantations.

The novel is narrated from the perspectives of two women characters, Yasodhara, a Sinhalese, and Saraswathi, a Tamil, that highlights the shared history

amidst the ethnic war. The novel begins with Yasodhara, who grows up in a working-class family in Colombo. Her family enjoys a relatively comfortable life compared to other families. The ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamil are a recurring reality. Her life is punctuated by moments of elation and despair, including her close affinity with her sister, and her friendship with Shiva, a Tamil boy. As political conflict intensifies, her family decides to migrate to America, seeking security and stability. In California, she faces an identity crisis, being torn between her new identity and her past self. The experience of her family reflects the Sri Lankan diaspora, who is caught in between displacement and the longing for the native land.

Along with Yasodhara's narrative runs the story of Saraswathi lives in the war-torn part of Sri Lanka. Her life is a completely different narrative from Yasodhara's which is marked by disillusionment, poverty, and violence. Her family encounters constant terrorizations from both the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE, the Tamil militant group which is indulged in fighting for an independent Tamil Ealam. Saraswathi aspirations and dreams of becoming a teacher and thus helping her parents are shattered when she is brutally assaulted by Sri Lankan soldiers. Her trauma infuriates her to join the LTTE, driven by a desire to avenge the assault against her. Her radical transformation from an optimistic girl to an unemotional and hardened militant underscores the distressing impact of the war.

The lives of Yasodhara and Saraswathi intersect in a tragic manner. Yasodhara returns to Sri Lanka hoping to get tied to her past identity. She finds Sri Lanka mutilated by conflict and division. Meanwhile, Saraswathi, a member of the LTTE, carries out a suicide bombing mission which kills Langa, Yasodhara's sister. This disastrous convergence of their narratives emphasizes the senselessness and absurdity

of the violence and the irreparable loss experienced by individuals on both sides of the ethnic community.

The novel, *The Association* begins with the bomb blast in which the Khurana brothers are killed, while their friend, Mansoor survives. The narrative sketches the trauma and grief experienced by the Khurana family and struggles of Mansoor with survivor's sense of guilt and the physical, emotional, and psychological wounds left by the detonation. The novel also portrays the lives of the terrorists responsible for the bombing. Mahajan reflects on the motivations and the circumstances that inspired them to commit such acts, foregrounding the complexities of radicalization and terrorism.

The Khurana family struggles with the loss of their sons. Vikas, the boys' father, is a documentary filmmaker who is obsessed with a way to frame meaning in the tragedy. His wife, Deepa, struggles to overcome the tragic fate of the boys. Their journey echoes the lasting impact of the terrorist act on their lives. Mansoor survives with severe physical and psychological injuries. trauma. He becomes increasingly disillusioned and alienated as he grows in age. He gets involved with an activist group that functions to address the underlying causes of terrorism. His involvement reaches him in a dangerous territory which explicates the cyclical nature of violence. The novel sheds light on the character named Shockie and by delving into the backgrounds of these individuals depicts them as complex characters influenced by political and social factors. This narrative thread exposes the origins of radicalization and the internal turmoil faced by those who perpetuate such acts of terror. *The Association* does not depict a traditional civil strife, but portrays a society marked by

divisions and differences. The representation suggests that these underlying factors contribute to a state of internal conflicts that affect every realm of life.

Literature Review

Scholars have critically examined Karan Mahajan's portrayal of family, identity, and political issues in his novels. In "Collective Suffering and the Possibility of Empathy in Mahajan's, *The Associations* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Babli Sinha views violence as a shared and systemic experience. She exposes how the inclusion of multiple perspectives facilitates resistance to moral binaries and how trauma diffuses across perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. Peter C. Herman in "Nothing Terrorist about Him: The Figure of the Terrorist in Karan Mahajan's *The Association*" explores how Mahajan deconstructs the stereotyped image of terrorists by depicting the terrorist as 'nothing terrorist about him', disrupting the familiar rhetoric of good/evil binary. He also examines the way this representation forces readers to reflect on the ethical complexities of radicalization. In "Bombs and Bomb Makers: Realism, *The Association*, and the Post-9/11 Novel", Sangeeta Ray analyzes how Mahajan frames the narrative around localized realities in Northern India and not around global spectacle or geopolitics, which makes his narrative depart from typical post-9/11 fiction. She studies the representation of lives affected by a small-scale bombing with ethical gravity and everyday detail.

Scholars have examined *Island* for its representation of the Sri Lankan civil war, identity, trauma, and women's agency. Extensive scholarship on *Island* illuminates its rich engagement with ethnicity, memory, trauma, and gendered identity. Critics study the balanced perspective of the novel, depicting violence from both Tamil and Sinhala viewpoints, and also explore how the narrative resists

simplistic moral binaries. A few have noted its deep psychological impression of war on civilians, the representation of women navigating between modern and traditional roles, and the lyrical exploration of civilian trauma, while broader academic deliberations touch on female agency and diaspora identity. Shashikala Muthumal reads the two female narrators as women embodiments of fragmented diasporic identity, reflecting on complex intersections of ethnicity, gender, and class within South Asian diasporic writing. Sakshi Selvanathan analyzes *Island* “reflective and sharp,” describing its feminist lens and multiple narrative structure that centers on two women from Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic communities. She explores the novel’s balance of lyrical beauty with harsh and brutal realism, noting how it renders the Sri Lankan civil war through an intimate emotional frame rather than a global spectacle. Swathy & Sudha apply the theory of trauma to analyze how rape, war, exile, and memory shape the psychological and emotional landscapes of the protagonists. Lekamge through Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, positions the narrative within postcolonial frameworks of exclusion and precarity. Islam et al. dissect the novel to examine the breakdown of ethnic and cultural identities under civil conflict, foregrounding moral and ethical disintegration across communities. Nagarajan’s review in *The Hindu* acclaims Munaweera’s narrative strategy, observing her refusal of moral binaries and her construction of a multi-perspective and multi-generational saga of survival and trauma.

Analysis

The chosen narratives are analyzed to investigate the intricate and erratic connection between ethno-nationalism and terrorism, with a specific focus on how ethno-nationalist sentiments trigger men into acts of terrorism. How the portrayal of

the majority/minority dichotomy makes the readers feel empathetic towards violent offenders.

“A rifle-toting tiger. A sword-gripping lion. This is a war that will be waged between related beasts” (Munaweera 2). This evocative discourse in *Island* lays bare the deep-seated animosities and prejudices between the Sinhala and the Tamil communities that fuel the fires of civil war. This also cautions us of the enduring power of ethnic identity in shaping the course of human conflict. The potent combination of perceived historical grievances, cultural superiority, and a sense of existential threat to one’s ethnic group can transform ethnonationalist sentiments into destructive behaviors. These ideologies are effective in rallying individuals when they frame vehemence as a necessary means of shielding or reclaiming the purity of their ethnic tradition.

When an ethnic group feels disregarded or oppressed, its leaders or influencers may summon these myths and symbols to theorize a narrative of shared sense of victimhood. This narrative depicts the group as the legal heirs of a celebrated past, unfairly subjected to inequality or harm by external forces. By emphasizing these protests, the group’s identity becomes connected to its heritage and also to a sense of fight against perceived oppressors. Benedict Anderson's “notion of imagined communities explains how ethnonationalist texts can pretend strong group identities, often leading to the demonization of perceived others” (83). This shared imagination allows individuals, will never meet one another to feel an intense sense of connection and unity based on commonness, like language, culture, or ancient narratives. Ethnonationalist narratives misuse this concept by highlighting the limited identity of a particular ethnic group as the core of the nation. These narratives glorify

the group's shared features like history, traditions, and values that promote a sense of pride and belonging. "They also draw sharp boundaries between the in-group (those who belong to the imagined community) and the out-group (those perceived as outsiders or threats)" (98).

This process of making boundaries leads to vilifying others, representing them as enemies of the country who challenge its purity, security, or future. By framing these others as the main cause of societal issues or as obstacles to the prosperity of the group, ethnonationalist narratives justify all violence and injustices in the name of exclusion, inequality, or even violent actions against them.

In *Terror in the Name of God*, Jessica Sterns critiques simplistic or stereotypical portrayals of terrorists as "evil" or "mad". Instead, she advocates for a nuanced understanding of the sense of identity and belonging that motivates individuals to join terrorist groups. She argues that many terrorists are driven by a desire to belong to a community and to defend their perceived identity (234-35). This desire to defend one's perceived identity is closely tied to the idea of ethno-nationalism. Stephen R David defines ethno-nationalism as a political ideology that emphasizes the superiority of one's own ethnic and national group. He posits that ethno-nationalism can create an "us versus them" mentality, fostering a sense of grievance and resentment among ethnic groups. Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* contends that ethnic communities seek to assert their interests, protect their culture, and achieve self-determination (42).

When a state fails to uphold equal rights for minorities, it creates a power vacuum that can be exploited by extremist elements, ultimately threatening the stability and cohesion of society. The emphasis on ethnic superiority inherent in

ethno-nationalism can lead to a heightened sense of disparity among different ethnic groups that can be a significant driver of conflict and social unrest.

Studies suggest that a perceived gap between one's actual possessions or status and their anticipated or desired positions can foster feelings of discontentment, frustration, and resentment. James C Davies in "Toward a Theory of Revolution" posits that civil unrest occurs when "manifest reality breaks away from anticipated reality" (6). Disparities in social, political, and economic realms can create an environment in which certain ethnic groups feel marginalized, excluded, or disadvantaged. This perception of disparity can foster antipathy, mistrust, and hostility towards other ethnic groups, ultimately contributing to a cycle of violent and terrorism. Systemic inequalities lead to widening gaps in education, employment, and economic opportunities, that drive individuals and groups to radicalize, seeking alternative means to assert their rights and identities.

Perception of disparity

In *Island*, Munaweera portrays the disparities perceived by ethnic minorities, illustrating how these unaddressed injustices can ultimately lead to civil war. The novel opens with a profound statement, contextualizing the intertwined histories of Tamil and Sinhala communities in Sri Lanka, marked by shared experiences of colonial oppression.

As the British departed Sri Lanka in 1948, their vessels carried more than just colonial memories. The cargo holds were filled with the treasures of a rich cultural heritage which included elephant tusks and legs, precious spices like cinnamon and cardamom, and priceless artifacts of ancient kingdoms,

including jewel-encrusted thrones of Kandyan kings, the weaponry of Chola warriors, and “priceless texts in Pali and Sanskrit, Sinhala and Tamil. (9)

This discourse establishes Sri Lanka’s Tamil-Sinhalese dynamics, and distinct cultural and linguistic identities. The Sinhalese affiliation with kings and the Tamil affiliation with Chola warriors highlight their disparity within dialogues of power. Sinhalese ancestors were the rulers, while Tamil ancestors either fought for or against the Sinhalese kings, despite being heroic warriors. The disparity of power is elaborated in the description of the new independent nation’s flag which is poised a “stylized lion, all curving flank and ornate muscle, a long, cruel sword gripped in its front paw” (10). It symbolizes Sinhala. The minorities which include Tamils and Muslims are represented by orange and green stripes respectively. The lion dominates the flag delegating the orange stripes to the margins rendering “the orange stripes inadequate” (10). The dissatisfaction with the representation resulted in the creation of an alternative flag with a snarling tiger, all bared fang and bristling whisker on its face.

Mahajan’s *The Association* examines the political and social disparities between Hindus and Muslims in India, focusing on how these tensions contribute to cycles of violence and civil unrest. Through the lens of a small-scale terrorist attack and its aftermath, the novel explores the deeply entrenched divisions that define the lives of India’s two largest religious communities. The novel begins with a bombing in a Delhi market which occurs six days after the Hindu nationalist party had come to power with a tight majority. The incident sets the intricate web of tensions and conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities in India. The complex dynamics of ethnic and religious discord that simmer beneath the surface of everyday life in India

are discussed in the novel. Sheriff's anguish and sense of disillusionment underscores the profound perception of disparity among Muslim individuals in India. His contemplation of abandoning the country, despite his arduous efforts to establish a sense of belonging, illuminates the erosion of trust and faith in the nation (22). Thus, the narratives by foregrounding the discourse of difference and disparity craft a framework for the exploration of the ethnic conflict laying bare the complex power dynamics that shape both Sri Lanka's and India's turbulent history.

Political disparity

Structured disparities in the allocation of political resources constitute political inequality. This definition states that different groups have varying degrees of access to or acquisition of resources (Ware 393-94). The resource includes social or psychological elements, such as material, ideational, personal, group-level, authority, or actions like political participation (Wall 418). When any community or a group in a state or a nation, because of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, or other identities, are underrepresented in decision-making processes or lacks equal access to resources, political disparity is perceived among people of different communities. In *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, D.L.Horowitz examines how ethnopolitical disparities accentuate tensions and conflicts, particularly in ethnically diverse societies. The dominance of a privileged elite and the marginalization of minority groups worsen social injustices and feed resentment that leads to political unrest and conflict (15).

The political divide between the Tamil and Sinhala communities has its origins in the colonial era. Favouritism towards the Tamil minority under British rule constructed a social hierarchy, with Tamils occupying positions of power. Visaka's father in *Island*, who was a judge, adopted British customs and mannerisms,

representing the expected cultural absorption of colonial rulers. Visaka's childhood experiences, described as "growing up in a garden of Eden in the middle of cold-hearted England" (19), underscore the privilege and entitlement that were enjoyed by the Tamil community. 'Sinhalization' in post-independent Sri Lanka made Buddhism, Sinhala language and culture, the nation's identity and marginalized Tamil identity. A poignant reflection of anti-Tamil sentiment can be seen in the rhetorical question of Sylvia Sunetra, a Sinhala woman, who is indignant at the Tamil boy who talks to her grandchild, "Are you teaching my child Tamil?" (62). This question embodies the anxieties of the majority community which wanted to secure its political and cultural hegemony. "It was the first time we knew without question that we were different, separate, and that this difference was as wide as the ocean" (62). This realization instilled in the consciousness of individuals from two different communities reveals the political divide between them. The policies against the Tamils constantly remind them of their inferior status within a nation that was once home to them. Sinhalese characters perceive these attempts to create a divide as necessary for the construction of national identity.

If there is discrimination in this land, which is not their Tamil homeland, then why try to stay here? Why not go back to India, where there would be no discrimination? There are your kovils and gods. There you have your culture, education, and universities. There you are, masters of your own fate. (76)

This exclusionary rhetoric by the Sinhalese politician reflects the deep-rooted ethnic animosity that fuels discord in Sri Lanka. The Tamil community is framed as outsiders with no valid claim to the land. The discourse of difference and divide highlights the sense of being unwelcome in a nation they consider their own. Thus,

the Tamil identity is delegitimized within Sri-Lanka. The denial of Tamil rights and the unequal representation resulted in a growing call for autonomy.

They [Tamils] are calling for secession, for a separate homeland. They desire a long curving slice of land along the northern and eastern coasts of the island....They are willing to kill and die for the maternal comfort of this homeland, for the possibility of belonging. (117)

The unresolved tensions, which stemmed from political inequality, ultimately led to civil war and prolonged ethnic violence, highlighting the dire consequences of keeping people out of a pluralistic society and denying them equal access to political participation.

Mahajan's novel demonstrates how the marginalization of Muslims is made worse by laws and discourse that support Hindu supremacy and foster a feeling of being othered. The colonial period and the partition of 1947 established the Hindu/Muslim divide. The introduction of Shockie in the narrative, a radicalized Kashmiri Muslim, who had killed many Indians in retaliation to military suppression in Kashmir contextualizes this historical notion (34). The societal divisions and deep-seated biases that shape responses to violence exemplify the political marginalization experienced by the Muslim community in urban India. When characters belonging to Hindu families navigate their fear and grief, Muslim characters are stereotyped and scapegoated as potential terrorists. -"You are meat eaters.", "But you are of the terrorist religion", I've lived among you bastards and you're all Pakistanis" (36).

Sharif's statement, "*I've had a lot of experience with the justice system. It's all about un-law and un-care*" (68) underscores the profound sense of political disparity and systemic injustice felt by many Muslims in India. When justice is

applied selectively, the legal system also reinforces the brunt of discrimination. Mahajan critiques the role of media in perpetuating political disparities. The statement, "*In this country, they're always accusing Muslims of terrorism*" (18) reflects the deep political disparity embedded in discourses that unfairly associate an entire community with violence and extremism. This narrative perpetuates stereotypes that stigmatize Muslims, casting them as perpetual suspects rather than equal citizens. This not only erodes their sense of belonging but also limits their political voice and participation, as they are often forced to defend their identity rather than assert their rights.

Social disparity

Social disparity refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society, based on factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, caste, religion, or other identity markers. It encompasses differences in access to education, healthcare, employment, and social mobility, often resulting in systemic exclusion and inequality for marginalized groups. Social disparity is a primary catalyst for societal stratification, perpetuating cycles of poverty, discrimination, and inequality, that have significant repercussions on individuals, communities, and society as a whole (Wilkinson 68).

Members of subordinate groups often experience a sense of double consciousness, where they perceive themselves through two conflicting lenses: their own self-awareness, attributed to them by their sense of belonging to a community, and a sense of consciousness incited by the external gaze of the dominant group (Du Bois 2-3). Beatrice Muriel's disdain towards Tamil workers and her father's insistence on keeping people of inferior caste and ethnic identity out of sight reveals

how deeply entrenched prejudices shaped societal hierarchies in post-independent Sri Lanka. The social exclusion and power imbalance force Tamils to navigate between their own cultural identity and the dominant Sinhala culture. For the Sinhalese elite, this period represented a reclaiming of power and cultural dominance after colonial subjugation, further solidifying a narrative of superiority (Munaweera 13).

The statement, *“We Sinhala are Aryans and the Tamils are Dravidians. This island is ours, given to us from the Buddha’s own hand long, long before they came”* (26), encapsulates the social disparity and exclusionary ideology that underlie ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka. By invoking the Aryan-Dravidian divide, the speaker validates a constructed cultural and racial hierarchy that elevates the Sinhalese as the rightful inheritors of the island while relegating the Tamils to the status of outsiders or intruders. This assertion of divine legitimacy, attributed to the Buddha, further underpins the idea that the island belongs exclusively to the Sinhalese, embedding a narrative of superiority and entitlement.

The violent behavior and rhetoric directed at the Tamil schoolgirl in train exemplify the deeply rooted culture of hatred and intolerance that exists within a community fueled by misconceptions and fear of the "ethnic other." The statement, *“She’s Tamil. That’s enough. They take our land, our jobs. If we let them, they will take the whole country”* (28) starkly illustrates the social disparity embedded within ethnically divided communities. This rhetoric reveals how deeply ingrained misconceptions and prejudices shape the perception of the Tamil community as a threat to the social and economic fabric of the Sinhalese majority. By attributing blame for the loss of land and jobs solely to the Tamil people, it reinforces the idea

that Tamils are outsiders who are unfairly benefiting at the expense of the Sinhalese, perpetuating social and economic divides.

"The Kashmiris have always been filthy people. All the craftsmen and weavers are Muslims. Each of them has 20 children" (25). This reflects a deeply entrenched social othering based on ethnic and religious stereotypes. The use of the term *"filthy"* not only dehumanizes the Kashmiri people but also casts them as inferior and unworthy of respect. Mansoor's reflection, *"They're brothers. They can take care of them"* (20) regarding the Khurana Hindu brothers who died in the blast, reveals a stark sense of political disparity rooted in communal affiliations. This sentiment suggests that the Muslim minority in India feels disconnected from the Hindu community, perceiving a lack of solidarity and shared social responsibility. This pervasive sense of alienation fuels feelings of exclusion among minorities and infuriates them to take arms to claim their rights, dignity, and rightful place within the societal fabric.

Economic disparity

Economic disparity entails the uneven allocation of resources, opportunities, and wealth among individuals, groups, and regions, perpetuating inequality that is often aggravated within marginalized ethnic communities. Economic disparity experienced by ethnic minorities is evidenced by disparities in income, poverty rates, education, health care, and housing (Pickett 78). Systemic inequality, geographic exclusion, and unequal distribution of resources converge to increase the perception of disparity, rendering ethnic communities disproportionately susceptible to marginalization and vulnerability (Atkinson 123). Economic marginalization often intersects with political exclusion, driving disenfranchised groups toward radical

ideologies as a means of reclaiming agency or addressing perceived grievances. Economic marginalization often intersects with political alienation that prompts disenfranchised groups to adopt radical ideologies as a means to reclaim autonomy and address perceived injustices.

Sri Lanka's colonial past bestowed a privileged status on Jaffna's Tamil population, who capitalized on educational privileges and imperial favouritism to dominate key bureaucratic posts. Yasodhara's family, despite their relatively affluent background, harboured deep-seated resentment towards the Tamils, whom they perceived had unfairly reaped advantages under colonial rule. This historical grievance fueled a fervent nationalist sentiment, driving post-independence policies aimed at elevating the Sinhalese majority, at the cost of Tamil livelihoods.

Munaweera exemplifies the economic marginalization of Tamil communities through the narrative of Saraswati, a young Tamil girl from a rural village. "The fishermen no longer go to sea because the soldiers arrest anyone found in the water: they are afraid of the sea tigers who load boats with explosives and ram into the navy boats" (131). Her family's precarious existence serves as a stark illustration of the widespread economic adversity faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka. Saraswati's father represents the numerous Tamil farmers whose livelihoods have been ravaged by coercive land acquisition, military encroachment, and limited access to markets.

The novel exposes the profound economic divide between Sri Lanka's urban and rural landscapes, often entangled with ethnic fault lines. Yasodhara's privileged existence in Colombo with easy access to quality education is portrayed in stark contrast to Saraswati's struggles in the impoverished northern regions. This urban-rural dichotomy underscores Sri Lanka's skewed allocation of resources and

opportunities, where urban centers thrive, while rural communities languish in economic insecurity. “These are roofless, bombed-out houses with bullet-splattered walls and empty eyeless rooms everywhere. I hate these houses; they look like dead bodies or like mad people, laughing through their open-mouthed doorways” (130). The erosion of stability, fueled by shattered economies, uprooted communities, and devastated infrastructure, creates a conducive atmosphere for radicalization to take its grip, as individuals seek desperate solutions to their suffering.

In *Association*, Ahmed’s dream of owning a house was shattered when he was cheated by a Hindu seller, who prioritized offers from other buyers willing to pay more. Despite having initially agreed on a price, Ahmed was disregarded. He lost his deposited amount. The financial setback had a ripple effect, impacting his plans for Mansoor’s education in the U.S. (148-53). Economic disparity associated with the marginalized ethnic identity creates a breeding ground for extremist ideologies to flourish.

Mobilization

Mobilization in the context of terrorism refers to the process of rallying individuals or groups to support and participate in violent acts, often driven by a shared ideological or identity-based grievance. In ethnonationalist contexts, mobilization is typically fueled by perceived oppression, systemic discrimination, or economic disparity affecting an ethnic group. Ethnonationalist terrorism aims to achieve political goals such as autonomy, independence, or protection of ethnic identity by mobilizing members of the ethnic group to resist perceived threats from dominant groups or states.

Social disintegration happens when the bonds that unite a community as shared values, trust, and cultural identity begin to break down. Ethnic communities are vulnerable to this phenomenon of disintegration due to systemic alienation, economic marginalization, and political disparity. When equal opportunities are denied, individuals of such communities may feel alienated and separated from mainstream society, fostering a feeling of hatred and a sense of injustice. Historical instances as the marginalization of Tamil communities in Sri Lanka or the Kurds being oppressed in the Middle East, demonstrate how social exclusion fragments communities and takes away social unity.

The breakdown of social and cultural unity within ethnic groups creates an apt ground for radical ideologies to flourish. Marginalized communities turn to extremist movements as a means of finding identity and dignity, purpose, and a sense of belongingness. In the wake of social collapse, organizations such as the Tamil Tigers or ISIS have exploited these insecurities, using narratives of victimhood and revenge to mobilize support. Diasporic communities in Western countries also exhibit this trend, as young individuals on facing racism and isolation turn to extremist groups that promise empowerment and solidarity. The erosion of social bonds can lead to terrorism because of alienation, and violence, and radicalization.

Addressing social disintegration in ethnic communities requires active strategies that promote inclusivity, equality, and cultural integrity. Governments must create opportunities for marginalized groups for a meaningful participation in economic, political, social spheres. By strengthening the social setting and addressing the basic causes of disintegration, societies can alleviate the conditions that foster terrorism and create a more inclusive future.

The second part of the analysis

The chapter also analyses how the narrative representation of violence fueled by ethnonationalism through the dichotomy of majority/minority evokes a sense of empathy towards the men of violence. The narratives on ethnic wars that portray violence as a necessary defense against perceived atrocities committed by the opposing groups have a mythical view that the opponent is inherently brutal and a normative view that retaliatory violence is morally justified. "Ethnic violence is always defined extensively, by the claim that the other group is trying to take away what is 'rightfully ours'; atrocities have to be justified by the claim that committing them is a legitimate way to defend what is 'rightfully ours'" (Kaufman 38). Ethnic wars often involve a distorted sense of morality, where violence is seen as a necessary evil to protect one's own group.

The term "dichotomy" originates from the Greek word *dichotomia*, meaning "division into two parts." It refers to a clear division or contrast between two concepts, ideas, or phenomena. *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography* (2020) states that a dichotomy is defined as a contrast or division between two phenomena that are seen as opposites or entirely different, creating a strict demarcation between them. In the realm of social influence, the dichotomy of minority and majority highlights distinct yet interconnected mechanisms by which groups shape individual and collective behavior. In social psychology, the interplay between minority and majority influence underscores distinct mechanisms of persuasion and behavior modification. According to Solomon E. Asch, Majority influence typically operates through conformity, where individuals adopt the opinions or behaviours of the majority to align with social norms and gain acceptance.

Conversely, minority influence functions through innovation, often challenging prevailing norms by introducing novel perspectives that stimulate critical thinking and gradual attitude change. Despite their differences, these mechanisms are interconnected, as the success of minority influence often depends on consistent, confident advocacy that can sway majority opinion over time, leading to collective behavioral shifts. This interplay illustrates the complex ways in which social groups impact individual and societal actions.

Minority groups are often defined by their marginalized positions within a societal framework. Blanz, Mummendey, and Otten describe minority groups as being negatively stigmatized, ostracized, oppressed, and outcast. These groups frequently experience limited access to societal benefits, power, and resources, contributing to their disadvantaged status. Minority groups are also described as counter-normative, as they challenge or deviate from the dominant norms and values upheld by the majority (Moscovici 209-215). A key feature of minority groups is their limited power within societal structures. Power, in this context, refers not only to political or economic control but also to influence over cultural norms and public discourse. This disparity in power results in systemic inequalities and reinforces the marginalization of minority communities. The experience of minority groups can also be marked by social exclusion, which perpetuates their separation from mainstream societal communication and benefits.

Majority groups are associated with positive societal assessment and high status. Tajfel characterizes majority groups as those that hold societal supremacy, benefiting from systemic privileges. The majority is not related to a numerical majority but is defined by its domination over societal principles, values, and

institutions. This control ensures the perpetuation of their status and the marginalization of minority groups.

Majority groups shape societal narratives and policies to their advantage. This control is not limited to explicit political or economic supremacy but to cultural and ideological spheres. Majority groups define what is considered normal or acceptable, relegating minority perspectives to the margins. While the distinctions between majority and minority groups are complex, they are rooted in power, numeric representation, societal valuation, and treatment. Majority groups hold substantial power and influence, and minority groups lack access to such power. While the majority groups are numerically dominant, this is not always the defining feature. Minority status can persist despite of numerical superiority if power dynamics remain unequal. Majority groups are highly valued and associated with societal norms, while minority groups are defamed and viewed as counter-normative. Majority represent leading societal perspectives, whereas the minority offer an oppositional view. The majority groups enjoy systemic benefits and privileges, while minority groups face discrimination and segregation.

The tension between the dominant majority and the dissenting minority not only defines social norms but also paves pathways for ideological resistance and radical transformation. The majority/minority dynamic is represented as a breeding ground for militant ideology, as both sides justify violence through narratives of survival, resistance, and historical grievances in the select narratives. This dichotomy is a critical sociopolitical dynamic that influences the shaping of personal ideologies, particularly in contexts of conflict and terrorism. Historical grievances, systemic

marginalization, and competing narratives often underpin this divide, creating environments conducive to ideological radicalization.

In the select narratives, sociopolitical dynamics that incubate fundamental ideologies that stem from personal and collective grievances are depicted. The narratives are examined to identify how the dichotomy of minority/majority fragments personal identities, which results in the weaponization of personal problems.. In these texts, the personal space becomes a site where broader ideological battles are internalized and redone. Mahajan portrays the Kashmiri extremists as individuals fueled by the perceived alienation of their community, transforming personal trauma into a collective one. For those in the Muslim minority in *The Association*, the constant persecution by the Hindu community often impacts their philosophies, pushing them towards extremism as a means of reaction and assertion of identity.

Similarly, for characters belonging to the Hindu majority, personal doctrines are shaped by a sense of fear, grief, and a growing disbelief in the minority community, which accelerates communal rifts and deepens the cycle of isolation and hostility. This ideological construction takes root through the justification of violence as a legal means of addressing injustices.

In *The Association*, the bombing is portrayed as a calculated assertion of identity by those secluded within the majority-dominated political framework. The perpetrators justify their actions as significant for their community's growth by blurring moral divides between victimhood and perpetration. In *Island*, the characters' personal losses and humiliations result in their participation in the Tamil Tigers' insurgency. Saraswathi's journey from a docile girl to a militant underscores how general oppression and personal turmoil intertwine to justify terrorism.

Mahajan discusses how even those who are not directly involved in terrorist acts, such as the families of victims, are driven into ideological and philosophical warfare. Their grief is discussed, perpetuating differences rather than fostering settlement. In Munaweera's novel, similar dynamics act out as the oppressive action of the Sinhala majority that dehumanizes the Tamil populace, pushing them toward extremism. By analyzing these characters' inner thoughts, both authors underscore the psychological and emotional toll of living within these majority/minority dichotomies, expressing how personal experiences of oppression and a sense of loss lead to broader cycles of ideological battles.

The Social Construction of Ideology

The construction of social ideology focuses on perpetuating "us versus them" thought that justifies violent reaction. Both novels explain how social division strengthens divisions and establishes cycles of violence. The establishment of ideology based on the minority/majority dichotomy in the social dominion comes from the systemic injustices, marginalization, and the discernment of existential dangers to cultural or political selves. In *The Association* by Mahajan, the Kashmiri conflict arises as a setting for the social construction of ideology.

The Kashmiri Muslim minority, marginalized and oppressed under the government of India, directs its collective sufferings into acts of fighting that manifest as intimidation. Shockie and his acquaintances are products of this atmosphere, where the relegation of their identity within the majority-controlled state breeds a social narrative of insubordination. In *Island*, the dominance of the Sinhala majority in Sri Lanka strengthens the estrangement of the Tamil minority, pushing them to declare their identity through retaliation. The Tamil Tigers, as represented in the novel,

symbolize the effort of a community to regain agency and attack against the erasure of the social and political realm, revealing how deeply rooted societal orders can trigger extremist ideologies.

The social realm intensifies the minority/majority dichotomy through collective experiences of discernment and systemic exclusion, creating a fertile ground for radical ideologies. In *The Association*, the story explains how societal relegation fosters hatred and spreads cycles of violence. The perpetrators of the bombing are also shown to be individuals responding to a social account that delegitimizes the identity struggles. In Mahajan's work, the social costs of the bombing extend outward which strengthens distrust and hostility between communities. The social domain becomes a battlefield where identities are solidified, and settlement becomes elusive. In Munaweera's novel, the actions of the Tamil Tigers incite retaliatory fierceness from the Sinhala community, showcasing how these social concepts escalate into extensive conflict.

Both texts reveal how philosophies of terrorism are not personal or political and are deeply rooted in shared experiences of oppression and exclusion. The working class Muslims, further highlight the complexities of social hierarchies within the minority that shape reactions to violence. In *Island*, the exclusion of Tamil minority from political authority and access to properties transforms systemic discrimination into broader and wider cultural protests. Saraswathi's recruitment into the Tigers emphasizes how social marginalization extends beyond the individual, as communities internalize and react to structural violence with conceptual militancy.

‘Construction of Political Ideology

The ideology constructed based on the dichotomy of minority/majority in the political domain emerges from the systemic subjugation of marginal groups, which accelerates resentment and validates acts of terrorism as a method of political battle. In *The Associations* by Mahajan, the Kashmiri conflict underscores that political downgrading of the Muslim marginals leads to a political ideology that constructs violence as a valid tool for regaining autonomy and stating identity.

Shockie, and the other characters in the novel are shaped by a system that prioritizes the majority's interests while quietening minority aspirations. This inequity drives an account of resistance, and acts of terror are framed as essential disturbances to an unjust political context. In *Island*, the exclusion of Tamil minority from political power and the oppressive policies of the government of the Sinhala-majority contribute to the growth of the Tamil Tigers. The militant ideology of the group reflects the political fear of a community looking for autonomy in the face of systemic state suppression.

In both novels, the political space amplifies the minority/majority divide through policies, laws, and governance that materialize inequity and provoke confrontation. In *The Association*, the counterinsurgency measures of the Indian state and the lack of impactful political representation for Kashmiri Muslims excavate feelings of disaffection and victimization.

This political elimination fosters an environment where individuals justify terrorism as a necessary retaliation against a domineering political government. In *Island*, the Tamil Tigers emerged as an answer to periods of Sinhala-centric plans, such as the Sinhala Only Act of 1956, which marginalized the Tamil-speaking

community. Saraswathi and her family experience the direct results of these strategies, leading them to perceive that the armed resistance is the only practical means of resisting the dominance of the state and safeguarding political independence for their community.

The growth of political objections into terrorism is further powered by the incapability of the majority to redress minority concerns within existing contexts. Both novels highlight that the political systems, instead of fostering the discourse of inclusion they exacerbate divisions and differences that push minorities toward radicalism. In *The Association*, the government of India's irrational approach to the political unrest in Kashmir creates a situation where moderate voices are hushed, and radical ideologies gain grip and power. In *Island*, the unwillingness of the Sinhala Government to recognize Tamil objections leads to prolonged civil war, when the Tamil Tigers adopt radicalism to demand justice and assertion of dignity. These narratives show how political alienation transforms conceptual divides into violent battles, pushing readers to reflect on the importance of impartial governance in avoiding the process of politicization of identity and the subsequent cycles of violence.

Construction of militant ideology

The construction of ideology is driven by the apparent necessity of armed resistance to address general oppression and regain agency. In *The Association*, Shockie adopts intimidation as a strategic expression of their concerns and grievances. Shockie's actions are based on an ideology that frames violence as a strategy of acquiring political and societal justice for the Kashmiri Muslim community. In *Island*, Saraswathi illustrates the process through which individual loss and collective

injustice are directed into a militant framework, where violence is rationalized as a necessary response to state-driven relegation and violence.

The militant ideology, as reflected in both texts, flourishes on the “systematic dehumanization of the other” and “the glorification of violence as a legitimate tool of resistance”. In *The Association*, Mahajan discusses how the perpetrators of violence justify their actions through ideological rhetoric, depicting bombings as acts of resistance that draw attention to their cause. This ideology creates a moral dichotomy, where acts of terrorism are viewed as sacrifices for the greater good.

In *Island*, the Tamil Tigers operate within a constructed ideology and portray themselves as protectors of the Tamil community. Saraswathi’s radical change from a civilian to a terrorist underscores how propaganda and collective accounts of victimhood feed into the militant ideology, transforming individual despair into ideological fanaticism that prioritizes the cause over personal morality.

Both narratives reveal how the militant ideology propagates cycles of violence and weakens possibilities for settlement discourse. In *The Associations*, the effects of the bombings emphasize how militant ideologies harm those within the minority group and claim to protect. The militant domain becomes a trap that perpetuates a sense of fear and alienation rather than attaining meaningful change. In *Island*, the actions of the Tamil Tigers provoke harsh state retribution, entrenching divisions and rising violence. Through the lives of their characters, both authors establish how the militant realm transforms the dichotomy into self-reinforcing actions of terror, where political constructions accelerate conflict instead of redressing the underlying issues of disparity and alienation

Humanizing perpetrators of violence

The label terrorist often dehumanizes individuals, reducing them to mere instruments of violence. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, in her seminal work, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants*, challenges the reductive perspective by going deep into the human stories related to the militant movements like the Khalistan movement in India. Her exploration reframes militancy, not as the product of aberrant evil, but as a manifestation of deeply human struggles, beliefs, and aspirations. Central to Mahmood's argument is the recognition that "we are all capable of violence," a truism that underlines the universality of human conflict and the contextual nature of violent acts (15). Corey Robin's insight that "human violence is mostly conceptual, not instinctual, emotional, customary, or blind" challenges reductive narratives about terrorists as irrational actors. Robin's argument encourages us to engage with the intellectual and ideological frameworks that underpin acts of violence, thereby humanizing the perpetrators and offering nuanced insights into their motivations and actions.

Nordstrom and Robben in *Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence* emphasize that violence is not an external aberration but an intrinsic part of the human experience, affecting both victims and perpetrators. Perpetrators often find themselves ensnared in conflicts that they may have initiated but can no longer control, leading to a spiral of destruction that consumes lives and cultures. This perspective challenges the simplistic dichotomy of "good" and "evil," urging us to examine the systemic and contextual factors that perpetuate violence (10).

In the select narratives the authors advocate for a direct engagement with violence, placing it at the center of the lives and cultures of those who endure it. This

approach demands that we confront the complexities of violence, not as a tolerable or functional aspect of society but as an inescapable reality that shapes human existence.

The perpetrators of violence are humanized through their complex personal histories and deeply entrenched grievances, revealing their motivations and struggles amid the broader ethnic conflict that shapes their actions. In these narratives we see how characters of both the communities are given equal voice in the narration and also explains how the systemic oppression of the Tamil minority leads to the radicalization of some Tamil characters, who see violence as their only means of resistance against the majority-dominated state. It shows that fear and a desire to maintain supremacy push a few members of the Sinhala majority towards political nationalist ideologies, developing a cycle of intensifying violence and mutual disbelief.

The struggles of Tamil minority in the context of Sri Lankan Civil War are portrayed as the result of continued socio-political and economic suppression by the Sinhala-majority state. Systemic injustices like the discriminatory policies, marginalization, and violent subjugation push some Tamil characters to view armed resistance as the only practical means of claiming their rights and conserving their identity.

The novels highlight the uncertainties of the majority community. Members of the Sinhala majority are shown wrestling with their fears of losing supremacy and cultural domination in a rapidly changing political arena. This fear manifests as radical chauvinism, with groups and individuals adopting exclusionary philosophies to maintain control. These reactions infuriate the cycle of violence and retaliatory actions by the Tamil minority are constructed as empirical threats to Sinhala identity

that leads to further suppression. The mutual distrust and mounting violence depicted in these narratives echo the deeply engrained divisions that spread cycles of vengeance and sorrow.

The transformation of Tamil characters to violence is pictured not as an inherent attribute but as a reply to inflexible state violence and the lack of peaceful substitutes. The actions of Sinhala majority are contextualized within their fear-driven need to maintain power. By humanizing both the communities, these narratives construct an understanding of the political and social structures and historical trauma that give rise to terrorism. The narratives challenge the readers to reflect on the wider implications of cycles of violence. The perpetrators of violence are humanized through the explanation of their psychic narration and personal histories that are firmly rooted grievances. This approach discloses their motivations and struggles, offering a wider perspective on their actions. Ayub, for instance, a character who once discoursed non-violence turns into a radicalized individual who joins a terrorist organization because of the marginalization he experiences. His transformation states how personal suffering and systemic oppression can lead individuals towards extremist philosophies. These narratives subvert the conventional dichotomy of good and evil, highlighting the humanity of those who commit acts of violence. Thus, they encourage readers to critically examine the deep rooted causes of radicalization, and not merely condemn its manifestations.

Radicalization

Radicalization is the process by which individuals or groups are inspired to adopt extreme religious, political, and social ideologies that reject or undermine the imbalanced status of power is influenced by the dynamics between minority and

majority groups. Radicalization is a complex process that transforms individual or group approaches to conflict resolution, particularly in politically polarized environments. It signifies a departure from traditional norms of dialogue, compromise, and tolerance, replacing these mechanisms with confrontational tactics. This shift occurs on one or both sides of conflicts resulting in an escalation in tensions and the potential atmosphere for violence. “This process is characterized by a progressive disengagement from the norms of the existing political order, coupled with an ideological shift that redefines the frameworks for action and mobilization” (Schmid 17).

Radicalization manifests through “a spectrum of confrontational tactics”. These range from non-violent coercive measures, such as protests, boycotts, or political pressure, to forms of political violence that stop short of terrorism, like sabotage or armed resistance. In its more extreme manifestations, radicalization can lead to acts of violent extremism, including terrorism and war crimes. The escalation to violence is not merely a tactical decision but is often deeply intertwined with ideological socialization. Rebel factions and radicalized groups frequently distance themselves from mainstream or status quo-oriented ideologies, embracing alternative frameworks that challenge the legitimacy of the existing order. These frameworks not only redefine political goals but also create new moral and ethical guidelines that justify the use of confrontational tactics, including violence. These actions are often justified within the radicalized worldview as necessary to challenge the perceived oppression or failures of the dominant political system. Wilkinson highlights that institutionalized exclusion of minorities, especially in ethnically divided societies, increases the likelihood of radicalization as marginalized groups seek redress through non-normative means (164-67). For instance, Muslim minorities in Western countries

frequently report feelings of alienation due to Islamophobia and socio-economic disparities. Such grievances are exploited by radical groups, which frame their narratives around perceived injustices.

A defining feature of radicalization is the ideological transformation that accompanies it. Individuals and groups undergo a process of socialization that shifts their perspectives from mainstream ideologies to more radical or extremist ones. This shift is materialized by ideological propaganda, charismatic leaders, and communal strengthening within the group. The newly embraced ideologies reject the validity of the dominant political order, that substitutes a focal point for political mobilization. The alternative mobilization is vital to the radicalization process that provides a sense of purpose and identity to individuals who feel marginalized or alienated within the system. By enclosing their struggle as part of a wider, moral, or existential battle against oppression, radicalized groups create a narrative that appeals and bears commitment among the members.

Radicalization poses great challenges to the constancy of political systems and societies. By deserting practices of equality dialogue and compromise, it worsens divisions and undermines efforts at conflict resolution. The adoption of confrontational tactics and violent radicalism lead to cycles of reprisal, establishing conflicts and making peaceful tenacities increasingly impossible.

Comprehending radicalization as both an individual and collective reaction is essential for fighting to alleviate its root causes and modifying its impacts. Efforts to counter radicalization should be focused on encouraging inclusivity, addressing political grievances, and creating channels for meaningful dialogue. Only by catering

attention to the underlying factors that trigger individuals and groups toward terrorism can one hope to break the cycle of violence.

Militant organizations as Tamil Tigers utilized systemic domination to recruit members from relegated communities. By portraying violence as a means of achieving justice and independence, these groups developed an ideology that reverberated with disenfranchised individuals. The process of radicalization involves re-explaining historical grievances to produce a compelling narrative of resistance.

On the majority side, militant ideologies emerge as a reply to perceived threats from minority groups. In Sri Lanka, Sinhala nationalist militants vindicated their actions as defensive measures against Tamil separatists. This reciprocated radicalization maintains cycles of violence, with both the side framing their actions as ethically and deliberately necessary. The intersection between majority and minority dichotomy promotes a cycle of violence and distrust. Violence initiated by the majority community like the state-sponsored oppression or military actions, incites the call for reciprocal violence from the minority community. This retaliation, reinforces majority fears and justifies further acts of oppression.

This pattern is vividly represented in narratives that give equal voice to characters from both the communities. By presenting the thought and ideologies of both the oppressors and oppressed, these narratives unravel the shared humanity and collective suffering of all parties involved. They also highlight how emotionally motivated and sentimental narratives of victimhood and vengeance spread and reinforce the cycle of violence.

Rhetoric of fear

In both novels, the rhetoric of fear is a central factor influencing the relationships between the majority and minority communities. In these texts, fear and mistrust are cultivated in the framework of ethnonationalism, leading to cycles of mistrust, violence, and terrorism. The minority Tamil group and the majority Sinhala community in Sri Lanka, as depicted in the novel, and the Hindu majority and Muslim minority in India, are trapped in environments where power imbalances, historical grievances, and cultural insecurities intensify into deep-rooted divisions. These divisions lead to a metaphorical and, at times, literal call for walls, which is a protective barriers to armour communities from real or apparent threats.

The rhetoric of fear in both texts stems from intense historical tensions. In *Island* the fear of the Sinhala majority of Tamil separatism fosters a narrative that casts the Tamil minority as a fierce threat to the unity and progress of the nation. The Tamil minority's fear of systemic discrimination, on the other hand, and cultural erasure intensifies their struggle for selfhood, which results in armed conflict. This mutual fear nurtures an environment of suspicion and hostility, making resolution for peaceful existence an increasingly difficult phenomenon.

In *The Association*, the fear of the Hindu majority of losing cultural supremacy to a Muslim minority is reflected by the Muslim community's fear of being marginalized and victimized. These fears are augmented by political rhetoric and acts of violence, which lead to a self-propagating cycle of uncertainty and revenge. Fear is weaponized by political actors to consolidate power and rationalize acts of violence, deepening the division between communities.

Ethnonationalism is the belief in the primacy of one's ethnic or national identity over others which plays an essential role in mounting these fears into acts of terrorism. In Munaweera's novel, the LTTE emerges as a militant reaction to decades of systemic disparity and violent conquest by the Sinhala-dominated state. Their terrorist tactics include suicide bombings and guerrilla warfare, which are framed as a frantic assertion of their right to exist and flourish in a land that has alienated them.

In Mahajan's narrative, the struggle of the Muslim community against a mainly Hindu nationalist framework is similarly marked by acts of terrorism, which is portrayed as a reaction to exclusion and persecution. The association between ethnonationalist ideologies and the use of violence highlights that deeply ingrained fears of the other can lead communities to adopt extreme measures in the absence of paths for dialogue or justice. Terrorism, in both texts, becomes the tragic climax of societies divided and polarized by ethnonationalist agendas.

The Need for Walls

In these narratives, the idea of walls, both literal and figurative, emerges as a response to the pervasive fear and mistrust between communities. For the Tamil and Muslim minorities, walls are equally significant but serve a dissimilar purpose. Whether through the creation of separatist territories, like the Tamil Eelam envisioned by the LTTE, or through tight-knit communal networks that resist integration, these walls are built to preserve identity, dignity, and ensure survival. They represent a means of shielding their communities from the systemic violence and marginalization perpetuated by the majority community.

For the majority Sinhala and Hindu communities, wall symbolizes a need to protect their cultural supremacy and physical safety from the perceived infringement

of the minority groups. These walls are apparent in policies, social discrimination, and militarized borders that strengthen their sense of control while isolating minority communities.

In both *Island* ,and *The Association* the walls created by the majority and minority communities reflect a collective vulnerability. They signify a desperate call and need for security and identity in the face of supposed threats. This chapter underlines the profound impact of ethnicity based divisions on societal stability. Ethnonationalism that emerges as a potent force, leverage historical grievances and cultural indifferences to polarize communities. By prioritizing the supremacy of one ethnic or national identity over others it creates an atmosphere ripe for marginalization, mistrust, and violence. This dynamic is particularly echoed in the dichotomy between majority and minority groups, where the rhetoric of fear becomes a powerful tool for sustaining these divisions.

The rhetoric of fear operates on both sides of the majority-minority divide, propelling the cycles of hostility and retribution. For the majority, fear centers around the need for the preservation of cultural domination and national integrity, leading to adoption of policies and practices that alienate minority groups. For minorities, fear is established as a response to systemic inequalities, discrimination, and existential threats to their identity, leading some toward radicalization and violence. This interplay of fears normalizes resentment and justifies extreme measures like terrorism for securing power, dignity, or survival. The depiction of terrorism within this framework is inherently tied to the majority-minority dichotomy. The majority groups construct terrorism as a threat to the nation's security, framing minority actions as baseless violence. Minority groups may describe their acts as a confrontation against

oppression, regaining agency in the face of systemic elimination. This dichotomy in representation reveals the subjective nature of terrorism narratives, formed by political and cultural settings that intensify existing separations.

Conclusion

Examination of the causes of terrorism through the lens of ethnonationalism constitutes the essence of this chapter. It has highlighted how historical objections, political disregard, and identity-based conflicts fuel radical ideologies. The relationship between state repression and collective memory leads to a cycle of violence, justified as a means of self-determination. Economic disparities and socio-political elimination deepen resentment, making radicalization an alternative for marginalized groups. While ideological and religious narratives may serve as mobilizing tools, the root causes remain deeply reflected in structural inequalities and contested national identities. By examining the relationship between systemic oppression, radicalization, and cycles of violence, narratives provide a deeper understanding of the factors that drive individuals and communities towards extremism. The representation of dichotomy in the narratives stimulates readers to identify the humanity of those who are often stereotyped or dehumanized.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The specificity of terrorism lies elsewhere, namely, in the fact that what is sought by the terrorist is nothing but the absence of existing reality. And it is in the context of such absence that the terrorist text emerges, as if to “replace”, so to speak, the object removed; as if there was, in terrorism, an intrinsic correlation between physical destruction and discursive production, between the sudden absence of matter and the traumatic appearance of words. (Eisenzweig 34)

Terrorism exists at the nexus of destruction and narration, where the physical act of violence converges with the discursive production of meaning. Any terrorist act intends to create an absence of the existing reality, which is made visible through the narratives that follow. Terrorism narratives perpetuate the very reality the terrorists want to alter or destroy, ironically preserving the presence of what was intended to be absent by the terrorist act. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center are rebuilt metaphorically when the public is constantly reminded of their absence through the texts and media. These narratives, whether they be manifestos, fictional or non-fictional works, propaganda, or media constructs, serve as a testimony to the impact of language in determining our perceptions of reality. Thus, terrorism narratives have the power to recontextualize reality, frame collective memory, and shape political discourse, making them a critical facet of terrorism studies.

The propagation of social media and digital platforms has intensified the reach of extremist ideologies, which help terrorist organizations to provoke violence beyond geographical limitations. Despite nations’ strenuous intelligence, diplomatic, and

military exertions to combat terrorism, its adaptability ensures that it uses insecurities in security agendas. Terrorism's manifestations triggered by religious conflicts, economic disparities, ideological extremism, and ethnic rivalries persist as important drivers of this threat.

The study uncovers the textual depiction of terrorism and the reasons that compel individuals or groups to resort to violence. The thesis aims to reveal how the sense of loss of power that stems from the awareness of injustices, cultural relegation, or socioeconomic disparity triggers men to claim power through violent and irrational strategies. The select post-9/11 narratives are analyzed to unravel how this cry for regaining control or power is represented. The thesis critically examines how post-9/11 narratives construct the causes of terrorism that potentially evoke empathy for the perpetrators of violence. This involves analyzing strategies authors use to humanize or contextualize the motivations behind violent acts. By exploring the psychological and sociological underpinnings presented in these narratives, the study unravels how authors justify or rationalize terrorism. The strategy employed by authors includes portraying perpetrators as products of systemic injustices, thereby fostering understanding of their grievances. Thus, men of mass destruction are framed as complex figures shaped by cultural relegation or socio-economic disparity. By revealing how the narratives on terrorism negotiate moral ambiguity surrounding terrorism, the thesis highlights how literature can influence and shape our perceptions of violence.

A better understanding of how terrorism is constructed is achieved by analyzing the narratives that use distinct storytelling methods to elicit sympathy and critical thoughts. The thesis undertakes a crucial analysis of the narrative

methodologies that form perceptions and develop meaning. The select texts offer a space for analyzing how grievances and conflicts are reimagined in modern storytelling. This research employs a methodological framework to investigate how authors construct empathy through various narrative strategies. The analysis is divided into two parts: the first part examines the representation of terrorism's causes in the narratives, while the second part analyzes the strategies used to facilitate narrative empathy. Each chapter follows a similar two-part analysis. The first chapter explores the causes of terrorism as a form of resistance against capitalist or imperialist ideologies. The representation of hyperreal constructs is analyzed through the lens of hyperreality theory. This allows for an in-depth examination of the interplay between hyperreality, narrative representation, and empathy. The second chapter, which studies invasion as the cause of terrorism, applies positioning theory to examine how the narratives contextualize terrorists' actions and their thoughts within sociological and psychological complexities. The third chapter analyzes how ethnonationalism fosters terrorism, exploring the dynamics between majority and minority representations. Thus, the analytical methodologies adopted to comprehend the portrayal of terrorism for the thesis are narrative empathy, theory of hyperreality, positioning theory, and majority/minority dichotomy.

Summary of the analysis

The introductory chapter of the thesis offers a detailed explanation of the evolution of terrorism. It traces the trajectory of the evolution of terrorism, highlighting the major ideologies and concepts that have shaped its development. The chapter examines how factors such as globalization and technological advancements have influenced the evolution of terrorism. By tracing this evolution, the chapter

provides a wider understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of terrorism. The chapter offers insight into the depiction of terrorism from historic times to the present day. It examines how terrorism is depicted across different historical periods. The major shifts in the representation of terrorism over time have been analyzed. This unravels how historical contexts have shaped the portrayal of terrorism in various narratives. The chapter includes a thorough examination of the concept of terrorism with a critical analysis of its definition. It critically investigates the construction of terrorist identity, exploring how it is internalized and portrayed. A key aspect of the examination is the investigation of motivating factors, recognizing the root causes of terrorism. A literature review synthesizes the major findings and perspectives of seminal scholars in terrorism studies. It identifies a gap in existing research, as most studies focus on the causes and consequences of terrorism. Only a few scholars have explored the way terrorism is represented in post-9/11 narratives. This lack of research signifies the necessity for more studies on how narratives shape and influence perceptions of terrorism and foster empathy.

This thesis that investigates how terrorism narratives strategically employ narrative empathy to position and construct perspectives contains three core chapters. The second chapter, titled “Capitalism and Terrorism,” analyzes two texts, *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud*. It studies the complex relationship between capitalism and terrorism, arguing that capitalist or imperialistic ideologies contribute to radicalization. It examines the social, economic, and political roots of terrorism, including historical grievances, imperialism, and with a particular focus on the causes of the September 11 attacks. Global hegemony is identified as a key force, where terrorism emerges as a reaction to the dominance of powerful states. The support of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East by the U.S. is highlighted as a central factor

behind anti-American sentiment. The narrative, “Global War on Islam,” deepens feelings of victimhood within some Middle Eastern Muslim communities, fostering radicalization. Economic discrepancies caused by capitalist systems are exploited by extremist groups to justify violence as a response to oppression. The chapter also links neo-imperialism and colonialism to the marginalization that makes communities vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

It scrutinizes narrative strategies such as hyperreal imagery and first-person narration, which foster narrative empathy by immersing readers emotionally in the experience of terrorism. Media portrayals of 9/11, especially the recurring image of the falling man, evoke empathy but also risk reinforcing trauma and justifying retaliatory violence. These mediated experiences of trauma facilitate a vicarious connection of the readers with the victims’ pain. Post-9/11 rhetorical tropes as fear, pity, binary moral frames, and dehumanization, serve to simplify multifaceted conflicts and justify counter-terrorism. Altogether, the chapter reveals how strategic narratives, capitalist ideologies, and global power structures work together to foster terrorism and extreme violence.

The third chapter, *Invasion and Terrorism*, dissects the literary narratives, *The Sirens* and *The Wasted Vigil* that subvert the mainstream portrayal of terrorism as senseless and irrational by exploring its deeper causes and the motivations of those involved. They shed light on structural inequalities, historical injustices, and political disillusionment that lead individuals and communities toward radical thoughts and ideologies. The narratives depict terrorists as products of systemic subjugation and continued exposure to extremist rhetoric. Characters often suffer personal and cultural losses, and literature depicts how identity crises, grief, and a lack of belonging can

fuel radicalization. Through detailed portrayals of character development and access to inner thoughts, authors humanize these individuals, revealing their doubts, vulnerabilities, and emotional struggles. These stories emphasize that terrorism is frequently a reaction to imperialist aggression and economic exploitation. By altering focus from personal blame to wider socio-political conditions, the narratives urge readers to question dominant representations. Intimate storytelling and internal monologues evoke empathy and complicate readers' understanding of violence. Western narratives promote inclusivity in global discourse. These narratives resist moral binaries and advocate a more empathetic and context-sensitive understanding of terrorism.

The fourth chapter, *Ethnonationalism and Terrorism*, explores the root causes of terrorism through the framework of ethnonationalism, emphasizing how identity-based conflicts and historical grievances contribute to radicalization. It highlights that political neglect and state repression, combined with collective memory, perpetuate cycles of violence framed as struggles for self-determination. Economic disparity and social exclusion further intensify frustration among marginalized communities, making terrorism appear as a viable response. Although ideological and religious discourse or doctrine may inspire action, the core causes are structural injustices and contested national identities. The narratives examined in the chapter highlight how systemic oppression shapes the path toward radical ideologies. By the portrayal of these dynamics, the texts invite readers to redefine simplistic views of terrorism and comprehend its complex socio-political foundations. Ultimately, the representation of binary oppositions, evil vs good, us vs them, in these narratives challenges stereotypes and encourages empathy for those often dehumanized.

Relevance and Scope of Study

The field of terrorism studies has witnessed significant growth, particularly in the wake of 9/11, as scholars seek to understand how narratives shape public perceptions of terrorism. Despite this, research on the discursive construction of terrorism in literary and media narratives remains underexplored. Scholars such as Richard Jackson and Lisa Stampnitzky have lamented the lack of critical engagement with how terrorism is framed beyond state-centric and security-driven discourses. While considerable work has been done in analyzing policy responses to terrorism, there is still a pressing need to examine how fiction, memoirs, films, and digital media construct and disseminate perspectives on terrorism and influence collective memory.

The proliferation of terrorism narratives in contemporary literature and media reflects a global preoccupation with security, trauma, and ideological conflicts. Just as post-Holocaust and post-Vietnam War literature responded to historical crises, post-9/11 fiction and film engage with the complexities of violence, victimhood, and moral ambiguity in an era of heightened surveillance and militarization. Scholars like Susan Faludi and Yasmin Naqvi have observed how narratives of 9/11 often reinforce Western victimhood while marginalizing the voices of those affected by counterterrorism policies. At the same time, non-Western and diasporic writers challenge dominant portrayals of terrorism, offering alternative perspectives that foreground colonial histories, forced migration, and political repression.

With the increasing role of digital storytelling, social media discourse, and hybrid literary forms, the study of terrorism narratives must expand beyond traditional literary analysis to include multimodal approaches and interdisciplinary methodologies. The intersection of terrorism, trauma, memory, and media studies

provides a rich framework for analyzing how narratives function as sites of meaning-making and ideological contestation. This study aims to contribute to this growing body of scholarship by investigating the representational strategies employed in post-9/11 terrorism narratives and their impact on shaping public consciousness and policy discourses.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. It primarily focuses on how terrorism narratives construct perspectives on terrorism through literary and media representations. While it examines how discourse, empathy, and ideological framing shape these narratives, the study does not engage deeply with the psychological and sociological dimensions of radicalization. Additionally, it does not extend into policy analysis or counterterrorism strategies, which could provide further insight into the real-world implications of these narratives. The study is grounded in textual analysis, limiting its engagement with firsthand accounts or ethnographic studies that could add depth to the understanding of terrorism representations.

Moreover, the research does not extensively explore trauma studies, although it acknowledges the role of memory, loss, and grief in shaping post-9/11 literature. The subjective nature of personal and collective trauma presents challenges in establishing objective conclusions about the narratives. While the study highlights the representation of victims and perpetrators, it does not analyze these texts from the perspective of refugee literature or migration studies, despite their relevance to the discourse on terrorism. Additionally, the focus on select literary and media texts means that some emerging digital narratives, such as social media activism and interactive storytelling, remain underexplored. These limitations, however, do not

undermine the study's significance but rather open avenues for further research in the field.

Platforms for Further Study

Post-9/11 terrorism narratives provide a rich ground for further research, especially in understanding how literature, media, and cultural texts construct and disseminate perspectives on terrorism through language, ideology, and power structures. Discourse analysis offers a valuable framework for examining these narratives, revealing how linguistic framing, and rhetorical strategies. Comparative studies of Western and non-Western narratives, along with digital media discourse, provide further scope for analyzing evolving representations of terrorism. Future research can examine how online radicalization, state-controlled narratives, and social media influence contemporary terrorism discourse. Additionally, studies should consider the evolving geopolitical landscape, investigating how terrorism narratives adapt to emerging forms of extremism, state repression, and shifting global security strategies.

Conclusion

The thesis that studies how do narratives on terrorism construct perspectives that justify violence is titled, "Back to the Wall". In all the narratives chosen for study, the idea of longing for a wall is depicted. The need for walls underscores the fragility of security in the post-9/11 world. The narratives permeate the idea that penetrable walls facilitate disruption of the integrity of self and the sense of identity, which results in reevaluation of our notions of power. The recurring idea of walls in all the selected narratives underlines a deep-seated sense of uncertainty, fear, and the desperate need for defense in the face of terrorism.

Oskar's desire for "enormous pockets" in *Extremely Loud* symbolizes a futile attempt to shield his loved ones from being lost. Similarly, in *The Sirens*, the narrator envisions constructing a "great wall" not just as a fence of protection but as a means of vengeance, reflecting how fear of insecurity breeds murderous thoughts. In *The Wasted Vigil*, the walls, once adorned with delicate paintings are depicted as scarred by bullets, embodying the destruction caused by cycles of war and extremism. The desire for walls represents the general human response to trauma, the desire to retreat, detach, and seek sanctuary from an ever-looming threat.

In *Nations without Nationalism*, Julia Kristeva reflects on how modern individuals, increasingly disoriented by fragmentation, globalization, and postmodern fluidity, seek psychological refuge in collective identities, whether national, religious, or ethnic. She argues that when the internal coherence of the Self is eroded, individuals are driven to reclaim meaning and structure by attaching themselves to larger symbolic systems that offer a fixed sense of belonging

The perpetual presence of this fear, this continuous need to build walls to safeguard fragile boundaries, is what transmutes men to be embodiments of violence. The narratives illustrate how the sense of insecurity dictates actions, expands divisions, and spreads violence. "Back to the Wall", therefore, summarizes the central argument of this thesis, which underscores the need for nations to secure their borders and prevent and counter terrorism.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

The realm of terrorism narratives provides an expansive terrain for future research and scholarly exploration. The present study establishes a foundational framework for investigating diverse research perspectives, incorporating theoretical approaches, multidisciplinary perspectives, and thematic analyses.

A promising area for research on terrorism narratives is the analysis of discourse of terrorism which is a vital aspect of understanding how terrorist narratives are constructed and disseminated. A comprehensive examination of terrorism discourse through the lens of discourse analysis can reveal discursive structures, ideological underpinnings, and rhetorical strategies that frame perceptions. A comparative analysis of terrorism-related discourse across various communication formats, including fictional, non-fictional narratives, media representations, and political rhetoric offers a comprehensive understanding of how terrorism is framed and contextualized.

Trauma inflicted by violence has been investigated extensively in research. But, an area warranting deeper exploration is the healing potential of writing about trauma. A detailed analysis of writing about trauma as a therapeutic outlet for victims offers valuable insights into the important patterns and strategies for coping with trauma. Future studies could explore literary, sociological, and psychological dimensions of this method to understand its significance in post-traumatic resilience and societal reconciliation.

Comparative studies of terrorism across cultures can be carried out to study how post-colonial and diasporic literature frames terrorism differently from Western

narratives. The study of trauma and empathy in digital media can be made an area of investigation to explore how digital storytelling, films, graphic novels, or video games portray terrorism. A shift in focus can be made on the examination of how gender intersects with ideology, nationalism, and the body in radical movements. An extensive study can be directed toward the representation of terrorism in Young Adult Literature, especially in works dealing with war-torn regions. Research potential can be applied to the emerging tech narratives with ideological control, rebellion, and surveillance. Thus, continued interdisciplinary exploration will deepen our understanding of how literature shapes and reflects responses to global violence.

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