

## HOW THE ENEMY HAS CHANGED: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND POST 9/11 SYNDROME IN JOHN LE CARRÉ'S NOVEL; *A MOST WANTED MAN*

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### Abstract

9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA have completely changed the core of fear in the west and the western intelligence services have found their new enemy that will help them to legalize their activities against Eastern countries. In this context, John Le Carré's novel, *A Most Wanted Man* gives a clear portrait of the Post-Cold War world. The protagonist, Issa, is a Muslim Chechen prisoner who flees from jail in Istanbul and wishes to study medicine in Europe has caused a war among western intelligence services. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse Islamophobia and Post 9/11 syndrome by focusing on the activities of intelligence services through specific examples quoted from the novel.

**Key words:** Islamophobia, Le Carré, Post-Cold War, Post 9/11, Terror, Fear.

## DÜŞMAN NASIL DEĞİŞTİ: JOHN LE CARRÉ'NİN ARANAN ADAM ROMANINDA İSLAMOFOBİ VE 11 EYLÜL SONRASI SENDROMU

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne yapılan 11 Eylül terörist saldırıları batıdaki korku kaynağını kökünden değiştirdi ve batılı istihbarat servisleri doğu ülkelerine karşı yürüttükleri aktiviteleri meşrulaştırmaya yardım edecek bir düşman bulmuş oldular. Bu bağlamda, John Le Carré'nin *Aranan Adam* romanı Soğuk Savaş sonrası döneme ışık tutmaktadır. İstanbul'da hapisten firar etmiş ve Avrupa'da tıp okuma hayalleri olan romanın başkarakteri Çeçen asıllı Müslüman İsa, batılı istihbarat servisleri arasında büyük bir mücadeleye sebep olur. Sonuç olarak, bu makalenin amacı, romandan verilecek alıntılar ışığında istihbarat servislerinin aktivitelerine yoğunlaşarak İslamofobi ve 11 Eylül sonrası sendromunu incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslamofobi, Le Carré, Soğuk Savaş Sonrası, 11 Eylül Sonrası, Terör, Korku.

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It is not hard to state that there is a parallelism between the fear of communism and Islamophobia in the west. Both fears were born from the ashes of war and attacks and used as political tools. Fear-generated hate and hate-caused violence in society started just after the World War II and the last shape of this phenomenon in society is called Islamophobia in the west. In his *A Most Wanted Man*, John Le Carre reflects this type of social fear and the novel is a perfect basis to study the change of enemy in western culture in the post cold war period.

After a war and catastrophe like World War II, international system and politics were razed. Throughout the war, people witnessed devastation and casualties. As Thomas G. Patterson notes; it was a war that “*a world was overturned*” (Patterson, 1974: 6). As US Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson said; “*The whole world structure and order that we had inherited from the nineteenth century was gone*” (McMahon, 2003: 12). Approximately 500 year old Eurocentric international system was torn to pieces and it was so clear that this fallen system would be replaced by a new one. As McMahon points out, “*As the war moved into its final phase, even the most casual observer of world politics could see that the United States and the Soviet Union held most of the military, economic, and diplomatic cards.*” (Mc Mahon, 2003: 3)

The results of the World War II and the Cold War were not only political or military but also sociological. One effect of this international conflict is apparently the feeling of insecurity. Therefore, the two big superpowers, which emerged from the ashes of World War II, tried to dominate a new world order primarily for their

national security. However, the need of security was not the only cause of the Cold War period, ideological, economical and sociological differences all formed a basis for rivalry and conflict which would last 40 years and effect the entire international system. As the British wartime leader; Winston Churchill stated, “*From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent*” (McMahon, 2003: 26)

There are several propositions about the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Post Cold War period but the most common and prominent one is the fall of Berlin Wall. It was a euphoric event for not only Germans but also the entire world since Berlin Wall was a symbol of the “iron curtain” of the Cold War. It emerged as a hope that a new and democratic international system would replace the insecure atmosphere of the Cold War period. As Laidi suggests; “*The assumption was that everything could be explained in terms of the cold-war; it stood to reason then that once it came to an end everything would get resolved automatically*”. (Laidi, 1994: 2067)

The fall of the wall and the end of the Cold War was regarded also as the fall of ideological conflicts. It was thought that international co-operation and better relations would be possible when ideological disagreements finished. People started to imagine a globalized world that would develop civilized relations among nations. “*Deideologisation and globalisation would mutually reinforce each other, heralding in a world government which, through the UN, would manage the common fund of mankind*” (Laidi, 1994: 2067). Deideologisation and globalisation are so-called the aims of that “new world” after the Cold War.

Gulf crisis ended with a great dominance of the west and the disappearance of the USSR. The western international principles and domination were accepted globally and the USA was regarded as the so-called “victor” of the post-cold war period. It is easy to say that the USA had ruled the international system without any serious opposition until September 11, 2001\*. 9/11 terrorist attacks reshaped American policy and international relations. “The dominant image of fear” becomes “the Islamic terror” and “systematically, the public’s fear of terrorism has been enhanced and manipulated which renders the increasing government authority plausible” (Taniyan, 2012: 348). Consequently, the USA and the western civilization got a new enemy after a short break. Fear of communism replaced with the fear of Islam that would be called Islamophobia after 9/11.

Islamophobia is a controversial concept and used in various fields. It is possible to say that the term has two major usages that one is sociological and the other is psychological. Sociologically, the term, Islamophobia refers to the intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. It can be inferred from here that this is an attitude against a social group and is also behavioural. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) defines the term as ‘*an irrational or very powerful fear or dislike of Islam*’ (OIC Observatory, 2008). This definition shows that while Islamophobia is regarded as a subject of hate in literature and often explained as racism or a sociological problem, it is also seen as a psychological defect that can be explained with the help of the common indications of some phobias such as acrophobia or arachnophobia. Moten states that:

Its manifestations include prejudice, stereotyping, hostility, discriminatory treatment, denigration of the most sacred symbols of Islam, and non-recognition of Islam and Muslims by the law of the land. (Moten, 2012: 156)

These manifestations of Islamophobia describe two dimensions of the problem. The first one is related to ‘different’ physical appearances of Muslims including their skin colours to dress codes and the second one is the intolerance of their cultural background and religious beliefs. These are the physical and cultural aspects of Islamophobia.

It is clear to say that this islamophobic consideration also forms the basis of collective western unconscious about and against Islam. This extremist attitude against Islam is a great cause of concern in the Muslim world. According to the former Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan; ‘*Islamophobia is at once a deeply personal issue for Muslims, a matter of great importance to anyone concerned about upholding universal values, and a question with implications for international harmony and peace*’ (Annan, 2004).

This extremist attitude formation which causes racism or Islamophobia is completely about one’s search for a social identity. To define ourselves within a social group, we unconsciously develop negative attitudes towards other out-groups. The source of these negative attitudes is not only about developing a self-identity but also deeply related to social surrounding.

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\*To be referred to as 9/11 from this part on.

Some negative messages derived from one's social surrounding including friends, family and the mass media also shape person's opinions and help him or her develop a set of negative attitudes and behaviours towards Muslims. John Le Carre states this situation by using classical music a metaphor which stands for the western identity:

A further good reason to ignore the boy was the classical music that the station authorities boom at full blast over this section of the concourse from a battery of well-aimed loudspeakers. Its purpose, far from spreading feelings of peace and well-being among its listeners, is to send them packing. (Le Carre, 2008: 2)

Hate crimes and prejudice against Muslims have also increased in Europe and America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Muslim institutions have been attacked in many countries and even bombed. Especially, these kinds of crimes have increased by 600 percent after London Bombing on July 7, 2005 (Moten, 2012: 158). Muslims are also isolated from the society especially in America. They are not wanted as neighbours or colleagues by Americans. This prejudice and racist attitude towards Muslims are so strong that Barrack Obama, the President of the USA, was even attacked by this racist ideology. The New Yorker magazine illustrated Barack Obama in a Muslim robe and his wife, Michelle Obama, with a machine gun and Usama Bin Laden on the background on its cover page in July, 2008.

Le Carre points out to that prejudice against Muslims by referring to Hamburg mosques. The quotation below clearly shows the paranoia which is created by differences and fear of conspiracy. Trying to keep other ideologies and

religions under control causes hatred and fear among people of both sides. Post 9-11 western psychology can also be seen here:

Since 9/11, Hamburg's mosques had become dangerous places. Go to the wrong one, or the right one and get the wrong imam, and you could find yourself and your family on a police watch list for the rest of your life. Nobody doubted that practically every prayer row contained an informant who was earning his way with the authorities. Nobody was likely to forget, be he Muslim, police spy or both, that the city-state of Hamburg had been unwitting host to three of the 9/11 hijackers, not to mention their fellow cell-members and plotters; or that Mohammed Atta, who steered the first plane into the Twin Towers, had worshiped his wrathful god in a humble Hamburg mosque. (Le Carre, 2008: 4)

The growing population of Islam in the West is also another important reason of Islamophobia. For centuries, Muslims have been living in Western countries but the sudden increase of their population was in 1960's economic boom. They settled in big cities as migrant workers. Different from western families, Muslims have a high birth rate and constitute a large percent of the society.

With that increase in population, Muslims have gradually built their own way of life inside Western societies. They built their mosques, schools, restaurants and even cemeteries. While they were regarded as minority and guest, they had a permanent part inside the society. However, many Western countries have not recognized Islam as a religion. It means that they are not regarded as an ethnic group.

On the other side, Muslims are conservative about their way of life and religion and cannot integrate into Western culture. As Moten states; “*Muslims are resisting assimilation into secular societies and are willing to integrate without losing their Islamic identity and practices*”. (Moten, 2012: 162)

Growing Islamic population in Europe results in a fear, namely Islamization of Europe. Europeans are afraid that Europe will lose its secular identity. Muslims are seen as a demographic bloc gaining power against the native population and a threat for the future of the civilization. In *A Most Wanted Man*, this fear, generated by the growing population of Muslims, is portrayed apparently. According to Le Carre, illegal immigrants are the one of the major problem in western countries. Migration provokes racism and paranoia in society and mostly results with deportation:

Yet the boy's air of desperation need not have troubled Melik all that much since the travel shop was situated at the edge of the main railway station concourse, where every variety of lost soul—German vagrants, Asians, Arabs, Africans, and Turkish like himself but less fortunate—hung around all day long, not to mention legless men on electric carts, drug sellers and their customers, beggars and their dogs, and a seventy-year-old cowboy in a Stetson and silver-studded leather riding breeches. Few had work, and a sprinkling had no business standing on German soil at all, but were at best tolerated under a deliberate policy of destitution, pending their summary deportation, usually at dawn. (Le Carre, 2008: 2)

Undoubtedly, media has also a vital contribution to Islamophobia in the west. According to Organization of Islamic Conference 2011 report, Western media serves as a propaganda tower against Islam and Muslims. Islam is portrayed as a global threat for humanity and the source of terrorism. Even entertainment programmes such as talk shows in America have islamophobic attitudes and messages as shown below:

[...] on Fox & Friends on the following day, co-host Brian Kilmeade said, “Not all Muslims are terrorists, all terrorists are Muslim.” [...] Another American talk show host, Glenn Beck, said he thought ten percent of all Muslims were terrorists, Beck's estimate would mean that roughly 157 million Muslims in the world were terrorists. (OIC, 2011; 23-24)

The media in the West has created an Islamophobic atmosphere not only textually but also visually. A well known example of this is a Danish caricature of the Prophet Muhammad with a bomb in his turban published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. The prophet of the religion is shown as a terrorist and it means that Islam is the source of terrorism. This hate-filled image of Islam was advocated as ‘freedom of speech’ whereas it symbolizes Islamophobia and racism. This polarization of Muslims and western culture is referred in John Le Carre's novel as well:

They were pissed off by a couple of very bad Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed that some German newspapers reprinted because they thought they were being brave and setting us free, okay?” [...]

What pulled their triggers doesn't matter a fuck. What does matter is the threat we are dealing with doesn't see the difference between personal and collective guilt. It doesn't say: 'You're good and I'm good, and Erna here is no good at all.' It says: 'You're all a bunch of no-good apostates and blasphemers and murderers and fornicators and God-haters, so fuck the lot of us.' For those guys, and all the guys we'd like to meet who share their perceptions, it's the western hemisphere versus Islam, and no stops between. (Le Carre, 2008: 75)

Hollywood also supports this negative attitude of media. Many Hollywood films show Arabs and Muslims as alien and violent strangers. Especially after 9/11 incidents, Hollywood acted quickly to embrace this '*new enemy of the west*' and Islam, terrorism and heroic war films have increased dramatically (Moten, 2012: 168). This quick move of Hollywood has an important reason in detail.

With the death of the cold war, the West lost its enemy; Soviets. Hollywood acted quickly to announce the brand new enemy of the west; Islam. These hate-filled images produced by media and Hollywood have created a second stereotype of enemy after Soviets and legalize racist attitudes against Muslims and Islam.

This change of the enemy provoked anti-western ideology among Islamic communities and western intelligence services had to overcome this new enemy. During Cold War period, especially American and British intelligence services

worked actively against communist threats and gained valuable experience on espionage. However, they soon realized that the enemy was completely different from the former one and the same espionage strategies were not valid for radical Islamic groups. These intelligence services with their post 9/11 syndromes failed to adapt their skills and techniques to their new enemy; terrorism. They continued to gather information by using their Cold war techniques and they soon realized that they didn't work on terrorism. This is illustrated in *A Most Wanted Man* in the following words:

You think everything changed after 9/11?" he demanded, furious with them, or himself. "You think that on 9/12, our fine foreign intelligence service, fired by a global vision of the terror threat, put on their kaffiyehs and went down to the souks of Aden and Mogadishu and Cairo and Baghdad and Kandahar and bought themselves a little retail information about where and when the next bomb would go off and who would be pushing the button? Okay, we all know the bad joke: you can't buy an Arab, but you can rent one. We couldn't even rent one, for fuck's sake! [...]But they're not live sources. They're not venal, disenchanted, radical imams, or Islamist kids halfway to the bomb belt. They're not Osama's sleepers, or his talent spotters, or his couriers or his quartermasters or paymasters, not even at fifty removes. They're just nice dinner guests. (Le Carre, 2008: 71-72)

Islamophobic discourse has become popular in political surroundings especially after 9/11 incidents. It was seen as a perfect tool to legalize and idealize American intervention to Iraq and Afghanistan. Politicians and newspaper editors insisted on claiming that Muslim terrorists were completely opposed to all Western existence. The most remarkable insistence about this was President George W. Bush's speech about '*Good versus Evil*' on September 11, 2006.

Since the horror of 9/11, we've learned a great deal about the enemy. And we have learned that their goal is to build a radical Islamic empire where women are prisoners in their homes, men are beaten for missing prayer meetings, and terrorists have a safe haven to plan and launch attacks on America and other civilized nations. The war against this enemy is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century, and the calling of our generation (...). This struggle has been called a clash of civilizations. In truth, it is a struggle for civilization. We are fighting to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations. (The White House, 2006)

Islamophobic discourse is a very useful tool to gain support from the society by managing and manipulating their fear of terror. Some political parties in Europe increased their seats in parliamentary elections with the help of their anti-Islamic discourse. In the Netherlands, the anti-Islam Freedom Party became the third largest party in the 2010 Dutch elections

by winning 24 seats. (Moten, 2012: 171) However, this political tool is also dangerous for the society since it causes social unrest and racist violence.

Finally, it can be noted here that American obsession of national security haunted in September 11, 2001 after 60 years from Japanese Pearl Harbor attack of 1941. The feeling of invincibility of Americans was damaged harshly for the second time and Islamophobia emerged as a social, political and even an economical need in the Western civilization. Fear of Islam was exploited by various social groups and even governments. All these reasons of Islamophobia increase violence and hatred against Islam and Muslims. Eventually, Islam emerged as a new common enemy of the Western civilizations after Communism and Usama Bin Laden replaced Iosif Stalin as the leader of the brand new enemy of imperialism. Le Carre summarizes this change of enemy concept in the west in the quotation below:

We thought we could charm them across the line to us. We thought we could lure them with our good faces and fat wallets. [...] Nobody showed up. We trawled the airwaves to break their codes. They hadn't got any fucking codes. Why not? Because we weren't fighting the Cold War anymore. We were fighting off-cuts of a nation called Islam with a population of one and a half billion and a passive infrastructure to match. We thought we could do it the way we'd done it before, and we were plain, stupid, fucking wrong. (Le Carre, 2008: 72)

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