

# تأثير هجمات ١١ سبتمبر الإرهابية على الحياة الاجتماعية في أمريكا: دراسة نقدية لرواية جوزيف أونيل: نذرلاند

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## الملخص:

كان لأحداث ١١ سبتمبر ٢٠٠١ الإرهابية تأثيرات سلبية على الحياة الاجتماعية والعلاقات العائلية في أمريكا. ويهدف هذا البحث العلمي إلى توضيح هذه التأثيرات من خلال دراسة تحليلية لرواية جوزيف أونيل: نذرلاند (٢٠٠٨). لقد حولت أحداث ١١ سبتمبر العالم إلى مكان غير آمن من خلال تهديدات الإرهابيين المستمرة بتنفيذ هجمات أخرى على الأراضي الأمريكية. ورداً على تلك الهجمات المرعبة؛ قامت الإدارة الأمريكية باتخاذ سياسات جديدة من أجل تعزيز الأمن القومي. لذلك فإن رواية أونيل توضح أن تلك الهجمات كان لها تأثير كبير ليس فقط على المسلمين والعرب وإنما على المسيحيين الأوروبيين، والتي يمثلها في الرواية شخصيات مثل هانز وراشيل. علاوة على ذلك؛ أشارت الرواية إلى أن رياضة الكريكت ذات قيمة اجتماعية وسياسية رمزية، حيث إنها أظهرت وحدة الفريق متعدد الثقافات في نيويورك من خلال مظاهر الاحترام والتسامح فيما بينهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: هجمات ١١ سبتمبر، إرهاب، مهاجرين، أمريكيين.

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15. Ibid., P. 96.
16. Ibid., P. 66.
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26. O'Neill, P. 251.
27. Ibid., P. 15.
28. Ibid., P. 35.
29. Ibid., P. 35.
30. Ibid., P. 183.
31. Ibid., P. 160.
32. Ertuna-Howison, P. 116.
33. O'Neill, P. 160.
34. Reinold, T. 'State Weakness, Irregular Warfare, and the Right to Self-Defense Post-9/11', *The American Journal of International Law* 105.2 (2011) 244-86, P. 244.
35. O'Neill, P. 13.

The horrible scene in the novel that describes the cemeteries full obliquely refers to the large number of innocent people who started to fall as a result of terrorism. In reply to Chuck's desire to be buried in Brooklyn, Anne says: "The graveyard in the city all full up. It full up in Brooklyn, it full up in Queens. You want to be buried in this country, you be buried in Jersey".<sup>33</sup> This gloomy picture shows that even finding burial place becomes impossible with the existence of terrorism. Theresa Reinold reads the events of 9/11 as a "threat to international peace and security",<sup>34</sup> especially when the attacks revealed the fragility of the American security system that transformed the life of people into a life of terror and depression.

The decision that Hans takes by leaving New York and returning to London shows his failure to reform the relationship between people through creating a multinational cricket team. Hans realizes that even a cricket game that is expected to be a peaceful game fails to bring reconciliation between the multinational players. Hans says: "I made a move to get involved, but Umar, my Pakistani batting partner, held me back. 'You stay here. It's always the same with these people'".<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the impact that the attacks of 9/11 had on the relationship between people made it appear to be a futile exercise to bring relationships back to where they were before the attacks. As a result, Hans finds that his life would be better far from this post-9/11 gloomy atmosphere in New York.

In conclusion, O'Neill's political novel *Netherland* remains a response to the threat of terrorism regardless of the failure of Hans in his project to unite immigrants in post-9/11 New York. Hans has great aspirations to save the world through making people play cricket and respect each other. It also portrays that the world has become vulnerable with the attacks of terrorists on civilization

and humanity. The tragedy of 9/11 has brought the American Dream of Hans of happiness and success to an end, forcing him to move back to London. Therefore, terrorists aim to bring nothing but destruction and untimely death to thousands of people and it would be erroneous to associate the anarchist actions of these terrorists with a particular religion or ethnicity.

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12. Ibid., P. 24.

how it offers a template in how to behave respectfully to each other. Furthermore, the cricket game in New York, which is only played by immigrants from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, makes people broad-minded and cosmopolitan who show respect to one another because cricket reflects the values of culture.

The fact that Hans plays cricket with immigrants and attempts to promote the game in America reflects the social value of the game in promoting feelings of love and respect between people of different cultures. Furthermore, Hans seems to be aware of the destructive role that wars can play in the life of peoples by creating feelings of disrespect and misunderstanding. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 caused some American people to fear socializing with strangers and this fear was intensified with the negative media portrayals of immigrants, particularly Arabs and Muslims.

In O'Neill's story, Taspinar, a Turkish character, was asked by the landlord to evacuate his apartment because the tenants were scared of him. Hans tells the story as follows: "Taspinar sat very still on the edge of his chair, his feet and knees properly pressed together. He stated that he'd been asked to leave his last apartment by the landlord on the grounds that he was scaring the other tenants, 'I think he believed I might be a terrorist'".<sup>28</sup> The fact that O'Neill telling the story of Taspinar and how he was marginalized and unwelcome after 9/11 reflects the negative effects of terrorism on the social life of peoples. Furthermore, by calling Taspinar "Angel",<sup>29</sup> O'Neill seems to be highly critical of the stereotypes constructed against immigrants by the media through the social involvement of the reader and drawing his attention and sympathy to the story of Taspinar.

*Netherland* examines the fact that people became uncertain about their life after the horror attack on the World Trade Center. People started to feel that the expansion of terrorism may put all their lives into danger. Hans says:

I've heard it said that the indiscriminate nature of the attack transformed all of us on that island into victims of attempted murder ... I'm tempted to place myself closer to those events – and, perhaps because I work in the financial world and am easily to be imagined in a high tower, some people have assumed I was closer to them – I only have to think of the waving little figures who were visible for a while and then not.<sup>30</sup>

The expansion of terrorism shows the horrible situation in which death has become a scene of everyday life that causes many innocent people to die in large numbers. The scene that describes Hans and Chuck talk about arranging funerals demonstrates how the life of people became indefensible after the trauma of 9/11 in which death became part of the everyday talk. Chuck explains to Anne the arrangements that should be taken after his death. He says: "I want to rest here. In Brooklyn. Not Trinidad, not Long Island, not Queens ... A cremation, and then an interment of the ashes. Actual burial, I'm saying. Not columbarium, no urn garden. I want a real headstone, rising from real turf, with an appropriate inscription".<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, "the event of 9/1 causes, above all else, a devastating encounter with death ... the reader cannot help but remember the ghastly images broadcasted live".<sup>32</sup> This talk about death indicates the great effects that terrorism has had on the psyche of people that made them concerned with new topics that they did not care about before the tragic events of 9/11.

the remoteness that politics created between people, especially the attitude that the American administration took against some countries after the 9/11 events. In her review of the novel, Irmak Ertuna-Howison explains the social importance of the cricket game: "Through Hans's eyes New York becomes a space in which boundaries are crossed for a better understanding of social and individual reality. In the end, it is a book with a happy ending because despite their failures, the characters fulfill themselves, and once again New York becomes the coveted city it used to be".<sup>23</sup> However, it would be important to notice here that Hans's departs to London to join his wife and son there because he failed to assimilate in the American society. Ultimately, the failure of the cricket game suggests that our world will never be the same as it was before 9/11.

*Netherland* also questions the possibility of achieving world peace with the continuous wars that the American administration started after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. This leads us to question if the war on Iraq succeeded in bringing peace to the American society. Hans says:

Would American security be improved or worsened by taking over Iraq? I did not know, because I had no information about the future purposes and capacities of terrorists or, for that matter, American administrations; and even if I were to have such information, I could still not hope to know how things would turn out. Did I know if the death and pain caused by a war in Iraq would or would not exceed the miseries that might likely flow from leaving Saddam Hussein in power? No. Could I say whether the right to autonomy of the Iraqi people – a problematic national entity, by all accounts – would be enhanced or diminished by an American regime change?<sup>24</sup>

O'Neill suggests that in the war of the American administration on terrorism, many innocent Iraqi people died just as many innocent Americans died in the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. This shows the destruction and pain that wars may cause for innocent people all around the world.

The scenes of dead people that became common after 9/11 represent the gloomy atmosphere that perpetuates the trauma of people for the rest of their life. Juan Cole affirms that the attacks on the World Trade Center and the decision of the American administration to pursue terrorists epitomize a clash of policies that continues to our day. He says: "The attacks on the United States were neither a clash of civilizations nor an unqualified success for al Qaeda. They were, however, a clash of policy that continues to this day. As al Qaeda struggles to strike again, the United States wrestles with a confused war on terror that won't end until Americans are forced to choose between Medicare and missiles".<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the cricket game in *Netherland* seems to be a revolutionary game against the horror that spread in the world as a result of terrorism. Of Chuck, Hans says: "Look, he wanted to take the game to the Americans. He wanted to expand the operation, get them watching it, playing it. Start a whole cricketing revolution".<sup>26</sup> Therefore, *Netherland* introduces cricket as a game that teaches people civility. Chuck explains: "'Winning isn't everything. It's only a game.' Now, games are important. They test us. They teach us comradeship. They're fun. But cricket, more than any other sport, is, I want to say ... a lesson in civility".<sup>27</sup> The context of this quotation is that during the cricket match, one of the audiences walked on to the field wielding a gun when the umpire, Chuck, forced him to leave the field. Accordingly, this citation is about civility, the way in which cricket teaches people manners and

securitized policy, immediately after the attacks of 9/11, affected the life of immigrants in America.

In response to the terrorist attacks, Hans starts to play cricket game with a marginalized team of immigrants in New York that aims to spread peace and love between people of different origins. Chuck says:

All people, Americans, whoever, are at their most civilized when they're playing cricket," ... "What's the first thing that happens when Pakistan and India make peace? They play a cricket match. Cricket is instructive, Hans. It has a moral angle. ... I say, we want to have something in common with Hindus and Muslims? Chuck Ramkissoon is going to make it happen. With the New York Cricket Club, we could start a whole new chapter in U.S. history. Why not?<sup>18</sup>

Hans says that his team is of different ethnicities and origins: "My teammates variously originated from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. That summer of 2002, when out of loneliness I played after years of not playing, and in the summer that followed, I was the only white man on the cricket fields of New York".<sup>19</sup> The fact that cricket, like every sport, has ethics and establishes tolerance among the players, unites this multinational team in New York by sending a message to the world that the terrorists who committed the horrible attacks on the World Trade Center do not represent any country or religion. Furthermore, it questions the possibility of people continuing to have friendly relationships regardless of their origins or religions.

The 9/11 attacks were committed by terrorists who aimed to spread animosity and hatred between people of different countries and religions. As a result, some people started to use these attacks as a pretext to attack other religions and nations.

Richard Cimino claims that "Muslims worship a false god distinctly different than the God of Christianity and Judaism".<sup>20</sup> In response to the claim of Cimino, Cynthia Tindongan says: "The Muslim immigrant community ... in the United States is a population that experiences misunderstanding based on what they look like, how they dress, where they come from, and confusion about their religion".<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, it would be erroneous to ignore the great impact of 9/11 events on the life of Muslim immigrants who are misunderstood and socially marginalized. Therefore, the cricket game in *Netherland* aims to reform the relationships between people of different countries and religions and remove the misunderstanding between them. Consequently, the scene that describes the multinational cricket team members examines the possibility of continuing to have the same friendly relationships that people used to have before 9/11. *Netherland* presents the cricket game players as one team who follow the same regulations and work for the same purpose. Chuck informs Hans about the political and social value of the game:

They [British missionaries] taught them cricket. They took these Stone Age guys and gave them cricket bats and cricket balls and taught them a game with rules and umpires. You ask people to agree to complicated rules and regulations? That's like a crash course in democracy. Plus – and this is key – the game forced them to share a field for days with their enemies, forced them to provide hospitality and places to sleep. Hans, that kind of closeness changes the way you think about somebody. No other sport makes this happen.<sup>22</sup>

This quotation by Chuck refers to the time of British missionaries who invaded the East under the pretence of teaching the people Western culture and values. However, the cricket game aims to eliminate

far from home, as during these last weeks".<sup>11</sup> Therefore, *Netherland* describes the precarious situation in New York after the attacks because any terrorist may explode a bomb that would result in the misery of innocent people. O'Neill tells the story as follows:

Apparently any fool could build a dirty bomb and explode it in Manhattan. How likely was this? Nobody knew. Very little about anything seemed intelligible or certain, and New York itself – that ideal source of metropolitan diversion that serves as a response to the largest futilities – took on a fearsome, monstrous nature whose reality might have befuddled Plato himself.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, the relationship of Hans and Rachel represents the feelings of isolation and detachment between members of the same family after 9/11.

Terrorism united all people, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, in their expressions of grief. Perrin explains that there are "high occurrences of symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following the attacks".<sup>13</sup> The horrible circumstances that spread in New York after the attacks on the World Trade Center made Rachel believe that raising her child in New York would affect his life negatively. She berates her husband: "You want Jake to grow up with an American perspective? Is it that? You want him to not be able to point to Britain on a map? You want him to believe that Saddam Hussein sent those planes into the Towers".<sup>14</sup> Hans replies that he would not allow his son to grow up with the "American perspective" that he gets from the media. He says: "Of course he wouldn't grow up in ignorance. We wouldn't allow it".<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, we can conclude that terrorists are enemies of peace and justice that made the world

less safe. Rachel presents herself as a protector of Jake from constructing extremist ideologies as a result of living a risky life in New York, and she believes that London will provide him with a more peaceful life than New York.

Although Rachel returns to London with Jake after the trauma of 9/11, Hans resolves to stay in New York with the hope of assimilating himself into the American society. Hans resolves to get an American driver's license, which represents his unique personal identity. However, Hans encounters difficulties to get an American driver's license because of his inability to provide a proof of identity that is identical to the name on his passport. Despite the fact that Hans has more than one proof of identity with his picture on some of them, they all get rejected as invalid unless he gets a new one. Hans says: "I can't take the credit card. It's got somebody else's on it'. I looked. My name, which by a miracle of typography was fully spelled out on my social security card, is Johannus Franciscus Hendrikus van den Broek. My credit card, for obvious reasons, identified me merely as Johannus F. H. van den Broek – exactly as my green card did".<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Hans starts to realize the changes that occurred in post-9/11 America when he finds it difficult to assimilate in the American society. Robin Rodriguez explains the new policies of the US government by referring to the Patriot Act that was taken to boost national security. He says: "The USA Patriot Act is among the most significant of these legislative initiatives. Signed into law on October 26, 2001, just weeks after the bombing of the Twin Towers, the Act enhances the surveillance of immigrants living in the United States and allows officials to track down and deport those suspected of having terrorist links ... Moreover, the Act exempts these cases of deportation from processes of judicial review".<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the emergence of a highly

European Christians, represented in the novel through Hans and his wife, Rachel, and describes their failure to assimilate in the American society because of 9/11.

Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland* (2008) examines the consequences of the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 on the social and economic life in America. It also examines the security measures that the American administration started to take as a reaction to these horrible events and the influence of these attacks on the relations between Americans and non-Americans. Throughout his novel, O'Neill portrays its negative effects on family and social life because of the terror attacks on the World Trade Center. He also talks about the social value of the cricket game that is played by multicultural immigrants in New York in an attempt to create better understanding between people of different cultures. Hans, who is originally from Holland, moves with his wife, Rachel, and their son, Jake, from London to New York in 1998 and starts his life as a cricketer. However, the events of 9/11 resulted in Hans's separation from his wife and son when Rachel decides to go back to London along with Jake because life in New York has become unsafe for her child. Accordingly, the separation of Hans and Rachel demonstrates the fact that even familial relationships have become threatened by terrorism.

Before the attacks on the World Trade Center, New York was the dream of any person to build a future there and live an extravagant life. Bernadette Hanlon asserts, "The American Dream ... has attracted millions of immigrants to the United States in search of prosperity and a new life".<sup>5</sup> However, after the events of 9/11, life in New York became unsafe as people, especially those who work in high buildings, started to fear any more attacks that may cause them to lose their life. Andrew Perrin affirms

the fact that after the 9/11 attacks "the world has become a more dangerous place".<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, *Netherland* describes the failure of the American dream of living a happy and peaceful life as Irmak Ertuna-Howison affirms, "*Netherland* might possibly be communicating a sense of the American dream's failure, but it certainly communicates the idea that failure is internal to that dream itself".<sup>7</sup> As a Dutch stockbroker, when Hans decided to move from London to New York, his co-workers in London thought that it would be easy for him to make a fortune in New York and continue his life there. When Hans announces that "we won't be gone for very long",<sup>8</sup> one of his friends replies: "You say that now ... but New York's a very hard place to leave ... I still miss it, and I left twelve years ago".<sup>9</sup> However, after the events of 9/11, New York was transformed into a place susceptible to terrorism with the continuous threats of terrorists to commit more attacks on the American soil. Erik Dahl explains that in days following the 9/11 attacks, the Intelligence community warned in a report of foreign terrorist threats in the United States: "Should terrorists launch new attacks, we believe their preferred targets will be US Government facilities and national symbols, financial and transportation infrastructure nodes, or public gathering places".<sup>10</sup> As a result, terrorists have become a source of the world's violence and the epitome of evil.

The decision that Rachel takes by leaving her husband alone in New York and returning to London because of the events of 9/11 reflects the great effects that the attacks have had on the psyche of people and the fears that their life was under threat in New York. Hans describes how life in post-9/11 America influenced his marriage: "We had lost the ability to speak to each other. The attack on New York had removed any doubt about this. She'd never sensed herself so alone, so comfortless, so



# The Impact of the Terrorist Attacks of 9/11 on the Social Life in America: A Critical Study of Joseph O'Neill's Novel *Netherland*

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## Abstract

The terrorist events of September 11, 2001 had negative effects on social life and family relationships in America. This research paper examines these effects through an analytical study of Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland* (2008). The 9/11 events have transformed the world into an unsafe place with the continuous threats of terrorists to commit more attacks on the American soil. In response to the horrible attacks, the American administration started new policies to enhance national security. O'Neill's novel *Netherland* illustrates that the attack had a great impact not only on Muslims and Arabs, but also on European Christians, represented through the characters of Hans and Rachel. Furthermore, the cricket game has symbolic social and political values in the novel. It foreshadows the unity of the multicultural team in New York, who show respect and tolerance to one another.

**Keywords:** 9/11 attacks, terrorism, immigrants, Americans.

The attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon epitomize a turning point in the history of America that has had a great impact on the life of Americans and non-Americans alike. Many novelists, such as Jonathan Safran Foer, Jay McInerney, John Updike, Don DeLillo, Ian McEwan and Joseph O'Neill portray the trauma that people have had as a result of the terrorist attacks. Richard Falk announces that attacking the "symbols of American power"<sup>1</sup> established America as vulnerable. He says: "The World Trade Center and the Pentagon were the prime symbols of American power, economic and military, and by striking them so effectively in a manner suitable for TV, the terrorists shockingly and undeniably established America's vulnerability".<sup>2</sup> Immediately after the

attacks, President Bush waged "a global war on terror ... President Bush looked upon that war as something of a crusade and he himself as something of an agent of divine will".<sup>3</sup> The change that took place in post-9/11 America was so enormous that created the feelings that "homeland was no longer secure, to that extent, no longer home".<sup>4</sup> In novels like *The Breezes* (1996), *Netherland* (2008), *The Dog* (2014), the Irish novelist Joseph O'Neill was concerned with global issues that changed our world, such as politics, security systems and capitalism. *Netherland* explores the impact of 9/11 on the American cultural, social and political life. Furthermore, it examines that these horrible attacks had influence not only on Arabs and Muslims, but also on