Re-Building American Self-identity through the "Muslim Other":

A Study of Positioning the Muslim as the "Terrorist" in Post 9/11 American Cinema

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September 11 2001 was the date that the United States of America was plunged into a state of cataclysm. Given the magnitude of the September 11 attacks, a noticeable emergence of a distinctive cinematic category, centered on this attack and its consequences and affiliations, is discernible in the post September 11 era. In this particular context, a considerable number of post–September eleven American films are observed to bedepicting the Muslim as a "violent other". This study focuses on three such films from American cinema; *The Kingdom* (2007) by Peter Berg, *Body of Lies* (2008) by Ridley Scott and *Traitor* (2008) by Jeffrey Nachmanoff. The intended outcome of the study, through a meticulous analysis of the above cinematic works, is to discover the socio-political reasons and rationales behind the ideological distortions of the image of the Muslims in the abovementioned cinematic works. While this discourse is mainly substantiated by Edward Said's theoretical study of Orientalism, it highlights how the previous ethno-religious identity of "the Muslim" is now re-structured through a political identity; the "terrorist other". In the global political arena, having the United States' identity of "supremacy and authority" jeopardized after September 11, these cinematic works stand – even though they are fantasies – as a "fictional remedy" or a "ideological foundation" of re-building the globally lost self-identity of America. Thus, the new ideology perceives the Muslim through cultural and religious components, which are a blend with a negative undertone. In contrast to the "vehement Muslim other", America is depicted as the "savior" nation with the overarching idea that the humanity, peace and order are the "American's Burden". Further observations through a theoretical scope reveal how America subtly engages in a task of politically re-mapping and re-defining the world in relation to the "terrorist others".

Keywords: Fantasy, Ideology, Self-identity, Terrorism, the Muslim, America