

## Pakistan, Anti-Americanism and Talibanization In “Three Cups of Tea”

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the portrayal of Pakistan and Talibanization in American writer, Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea* (2006). The study reveals how Mortenson treated Talibanization and anti-Americanism in Pakistan during his travel and stay in Pakistan. The text was analysed thematically through Braun and Clarke’s model, using Edward Said’s concepts of Orientalism as a basic framework. The selected work depicts that Talibanization and anti-Americanism as depicted by Mortenson do not correspond with the timeline of the travelogue. Moreover, unlike his claim of Pakistan is a dangerous place, he has been welcomed by the public and left totally unharmed. The only instance of hostility (his abduction) was unrelated to his nationality and Talibanization. To make his work more relatable to the time of its publication, the author has been involved in overstating as well as deliberate additions of events.

**Key Words:** Talibanization, Anti-Americanism, Pakistan, Western Rescuer, Three Cups Of Tea by Greg Mortenson, Travel Writings, Western Hero

## Introduction

Western travel writers tend to present the West as a saviour of the East in need. Mortenson presents himself as a saviour and begins building an argument by telling the story of his father who was a saviour of Africans (38). In this way, his discussion befits his narrative of helping underprivileged Pakistanis thus validating his role as a hero. Furthermore, Mortenson presents himself as a solo hero in the land of the Taliban and depicts the anti-American sentiments of the native population in his travelogue.

Afzal (2013) concludes in her article that there is an increase in anti-Americanism in Pakistan making it one of the top countries

with the most anti-American sentiments. Such sentiments have not arisen precisely with the drone strikes but have a history. Since *Three Cups of Tea* was published in a post 9/11 world. Therefore, Anti-Americanism and Talibanization have been recurrent themes throughout his text. The author's presuppositions, actual encounters and the level and truth of anti-Americanism have been analyzed and discussed in detail. Similarly, the theme of Talibanization runs throughout the text therefore, its effects on Mortenson's visit to Pakistan as well as on the local population have been analysed descriptively. The analysis includes the response shown by Pakistanis as well as Americans to Talibanization.

## Literature Review

### Talibanization and Pakistan

Taliban roughly refers to the military organization cum political movement waging an insurgency within Afghanistan. Talibanization is the social process of following the political system and lifestyle of the Taliban, which they claimed to be based on shariah laws. Being a neighbour and allegedly involved, Talibanization has affected Pakistan too especially after 9/11.

The Taliban emerged as a small force of religious students in the 1990s in Afghanistan immediately before the withdrawal of Soviet Troops, in the aftermath of the war (1978-1992). Murphy (2012) writes that war-torn Afghanistan was not in control of the new government, corruption of the local warlords and civil unrest made the Taliban gain popularity among the public. The centre of the Taliban were Islamic schools or madrassahs located in southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Pakistan, managed then by Zia ul Haq, became more Islamic as his regime was greatly supported by religious political parties particularly the Jamaat e Islami(JI) in the 1980s. The JI and Zia governments both reinforced the establishment and growth of madrassahs in Pakistan, which later during the war against the Soviets propagated *Jihad* with the ISI and CIA's aid. Murphy (2012) calls the Taliban *Frankenstein Monster* for Pakistan as the alliance with the Afghan Taliban led to the sectarian crisis in the late 1980s and Talibanization in the early 2000s.

### Anti-Americanism

In the present day, Anti-Americanism is one of the most seriously debated issues among academics and politicians. Chiozza defines anti-Americanism as "an ideational phenomenon, an attitude, and a political belief that can be measured through answers individuals give to survey items" (p.37). Anti-Americanism is not a phenomenon of total

rejection but a loose system of negative or merely low opinions of American society, American democracy and American values. It can take the form of political behaviour such as demonstrations, protests and other fierce acts against the American people (Chiozza 37, 38).

Anti-Americanism was absent during the early decades of Pakistan's independence and became prominent after the Afghan War. Until the 1970s, the two nations had a friendly mutual relationship, which was based on Cold War politics to influence south Asian politics. Pakistan even had a visa-on-arrival facility in the United States until the 1970s and in other European countries till 1983 (Khan, 2022). The instability of security dynamics gradually changed the scenarios.

Paracha (2014) quotes Muniruzaman (1971) that America had been viewed by the majority of the Pakistani public positively in the 1950s. Until the indo-Pak war of 1965, Pakistan saw America as an ally because India had close relations with India. Aziz & McDonough as quoted by Paracha (2014) write that anti-Americanism was not rampant during Ayub Khan's dictatorship despite the movement led by leftists of that era. Paracha (2014) attributes anti-Americanism to the media used by the religious and conservative parties.

### Literature Review

Chiozza (2009) believes that foreign countries see America from two different perspectives. One of them is Anti-Americanism as a syndrome, which refers to an absolute rejection of the US, and the other view is the possibility of a multidimensional attitude of negativity and positivity towards the United States. Therefore, anti-Americanism cannot be defined as a simple phenomenon of cultural identity rather it is a complex and multifaceted notion. Chiozza (2009) includes data from recent surveys from eight countries including Pakistan,

which shows that the war on terror may have been responsible for ruining America's image, however it cannot cause hatred or anti-American sentiment among the masses. Disliking the American president does not necessarily mean disliking the US (Chiozza, 2009). Chiozza explains that foreigners have different perceptions about the US and only minority groups show opposition and detest American politics and sometimes values.

According to Afzal (2013), anti-Americanism stemmed largely from American foreign policy as well as a 'strategic operationalization of anti-American sentiment for political gain' in Pakistan. She mentions four categories i.e. radical, socio-religious, sovereign nationalist and liberal anti-Americanism as specified by political scientists Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane. The radical category likes al Qaeda and the destruction of America for what it did to achieve global power. The socio-religious people dislike the non-Muslim powerful country influencing the Muslim world and have, therefore, the us vs them dimension. This can be an explanation of the reluctance commonly observed while blaming the terrorists emerging from "us" and of the Pakistani approach of identifying themselves with the Muslim world, especially Muslim causes like the Palestinian cause being supported by political religious parties.

The sovereign nationalists emphasize American policies which are harmful to Pakistan. liberals focus on American hypocrisy of doing differently from what they say. Afzal (2013) claims that anti-Americanism can unite an otherwise divided country.

## Previous Research

Much research has been done on the rise of Talibanization and anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Daud Khan Khattak (2013) has written a chapter describing how Swat, Pakistan saw the rise of the Taliban and

eventually its destruction, making hundreds of people internally displaced after being gunned down, slaughtered and kidnapped in 2007-2008.

Bukhari (2015) in his doctoral thesis investigates the reasons for Afghanistan's Talibanization and its influences on Pakistan, shedding light on 9/11, Al Qaeda and its aftermath. Afghan Taliban had inspired the local Pakistani tribesmen through their ideology of jihad, side-lining the local administration. However, Talibanization failed outside the FATA region. Bukhari (2015) concludes that the constitutional status of FATA and the nature of its institutions are different from the rest of the province. Bukhari (2015) has studied the reasons why Talibanization is a threat to Pakistan. and concluded that the geography and constitutional nature of FATA make it more vulnerable to Talibanization.

Bari (2010) has worked on the perception and impact of the war on terrorism through a gendered perspective. Her study deals with gender differences in the destruction of socio-economic, cultural and political life due to the Talibanization of FATA and Afghanistan. Many works have been published on Talibanization for example, *Talibanization of Pakistan: From 9/11 to 26/11* (2009) by Amir Mir, but the Talibanization of Pakistan reflected through literary works has not been studied a lot. A doctoral thesis with the title

*Terrorism, Islamization, and Human Rights: How Post 9/11 Pakistani English Literature Speaks to the World* by Shazia Sadaf writes about human rights, their violation and effects in 9/11 trauma writings in contemporary Pakistani literature. Post-9/11 literature and War on Terror studies are an area of scholarly interest in today's times. A significant number of researches have been published on anti-Americanism too, for instance, *Anti-Americanism and the Rise of World Opinion: Consequences for the US* by

Monti Narayan Datta (2014), *America Embattled: 9/11, Anti-Americanism and the Global Order* by Richard Crockatt (2003), *Anti-Americanism and the American World Order* By Giacomo Chiozza (2009), *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* by Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane (ed.) **etc.** Another study *Anti-Americanism in European Literature* by Jesper Gulddal (2011) deals with fictional European literature from the early nineteenth century, especially those pieces produced in Britain, France and Germany. Resentful hostility and anti-American sentiments can be observed in 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature through a figurative and narrative picture of the US. Moreover, many articles have been written to study the growing sentiments of anti-Americanism in the world and particularly Pakistan.

### Method of Analysis

The method of analysis for the current research is based roughly on Edward Said's concepts from *Orientalism*; his magnum opus. Nevertheless, the discussion has taken into account the later works done in a similar field, both by Said and by other scholars. Thematic analysis was driven mainly by adapting Said's epistemological divisions of 'us' and 'them', as he was the first one to write about the concurrence of travel writing and colonialism and also, about the representation of the Orient in western texts. However, sometimes the discussion might have gone beyond his work.

Said believed that information about a country in a travel book has more authority than actuality (102) and the travel narratives have reinforced the divisions established by the Orientalists (99). The logic of identity is operated through the general coding of East and West. Therefore, the travel writer was often constructed as a typical Western scholar, adventurer and explorer, and contrastingly, the natives were constructed as uncivilised, dangerous, mysterious, and untrustworthy. Said explains that the

authority of the travel writer was enabled principally by their exteriority. This moral disengagement allowed travel writers to categorise and know the people and places of their journey through an already accepted understanding of Oriental inferiority (426-444). Therefore, this research will point out how *Three Cups of Tea* has depicted Talibanization and anti-Americanism in Pakistan, and how Mortenson has dealt with these themes.

### Thematic Analysis

The process of thematic analysis begins with the identification of the patterns of potentially interesting issues in the data. Braun and Clarke (86) provided six phases of thematic analysis with details. The data from the travelogue was read thoroughly to search for meanings and organize them to find the themes and patterns relevant to the research question. The data was analyzed by keeping the presupposed notion of the traveller and the way he has dealt with Talibanization and anti-Americanism in Pakistan. The identity construction of Pakistan and Islam in the wake of Talibanization has been debated.

### Analysis

Mortenson had been visiting Pakistan since 1993 and he was present in Pakistan in September 2001. So he mentions the Taliban in his narrative, however, since their role in Afghanistan is beyond the scope of this research, therefore, the focus is an analysis of Pakistan and its representation only. After 9/11, the US embassy sent messages to all Americans in Pakistan including Mortenson.

It ordered all American civilians to immediately evacuate the country the embassy called "the most dangerous place for American nationals on Earth." (Relin and Mortenson 2006 273)

Living with the natives since 1993, Mortenson trusted them so he remembers pacifying McCown and narrates,

"I told George, 'You're in the safest place on Earth right now.'" Mortenson says. "These people will protect you with their lives. Since we can't go anywhere, why don't we stick to the original program until we can put you on a plane?" (256)

McCown was afraid that they might end up as hostages and therefore was anxious to leave Pakistan as soon as possible through any route. He thought Pakistan was a scary country where his life was in continuous danger, but his views altered after his experience.

Thinking back on all of it," McCown says, "no one in Pakistan was anything but wonderful to us. I was so worried about what might happen to me in this, quote, scary Islamic country. But nothing did. The bad part came only after I left." (Relin and Mortenson 2006 259)

The above-quoted text shows that Mortenson was not frightened by the situation; rather he had trust in the locals and he calls Pakistan the safest place on earth. He quotes McCown explaining that his prejudgment about Pakistan was cleared upon his visit. These quotations from the text also reveal that Mortenson has not faced/seen any anti-Americanism in Pakistan, otherwise, he would never have trusted the natives in such a dreadful/horrific situation.

### A Made Up Anti-Americanism

Nonetheless, this objectivity is not found everywhere in the text. Mortenson writes and portrays a totally made-up anti-Americanism which will resonate with his readers in the west and foster the media representations. However, his encounter with Pakistanis (both Baltis and even Pushtoons) does not prove it. When in Waziristan, he writes (161)

Many of the Wazir men had fought alongside American Special Forces in their crusade to drive the Soviets from Pashtun lands in Afghanistan. Five years before B52s

would begin carpet-bombing these hills, they still greeted some Americans warmly.

Additionally, the day before 9/11 occurred, Mortenson along with McCown (a member of the CIA) and his family was welcomed warmly by the locals in Zuudkhan. At 4:30 am in the morning, Mortenson was woken up by Faisal Baig, his local bodyguard as they had heard the news of New York being bombed on the radio. Baig's brothers and some other local people had provided armed protection (with the old rifles they had) to Mortenson until the army helicopters arrived.

Faisal Baig raised his hands to Allah and performed a *dua*, thanking him for sending the army to protect the Americans. See how Pakistanis guarded Americans (254).

Had Mortenson's portrayal of anti-Americanism been so realistic, he should have been handed over to al-Qaida in Afghanistan as he was sleeping without any safety measures or weapons near Afghanistan's border.

Another local, the watchman of the Khyaban hotel Abdul had volunteered and helped Mortenson buy construction material from the most reasonable market with personal efforts of bargaining (65), though it was not his duty. The chapter entitled *Rawalpindi's Rooftops at Dusk* has details of how Abdul makes puts his heart into the shopping. No matter how trivial it looks, Mortenson would never have achieved his goal without the help of local people.

### Anti-Americanism and Western Heroism

The American author also presupposes and provides no background to his claim that Pakistan is a place 'where Americans are... misunderstood, and more often feared and loathed' praising Mortenson's success (5). Mortenson's visit to Pakistan mentioned in this text was around 1993. N.F. Paracha

writes in his article on anti-Americanism in Pakistan with references to multiple historians that Pakistan and America had great ties from 1947 (Pakistan's birth) to 1971. In the post-1970s, anti-Americanism could be observed in the leftists while right-armed religious groups were more threatened by the horrors of communism. This trend continued in toll 1980s and the public in general and the Zia government, in particular, was pro-American. In the 1990s, anti-Americanism receded in Pakistan, which was now busy tackling the pitfalls (ethnic and sectarian conflicts) of the Afghan war. This continued until anti-Americanism returned to the country in the post-9/11 era (Paracha).

Therefore, Relin's claim here about anti-Americanism in the given time and location seems like an over-generalization and a presupposition. He has co-authored his visit in retrospection, almost a decade after his actual visit. Therefore, he tries to make his work more relevant to the times of publication of his book, which will provide him with more readership as well as applaud as an American.

Moreover, he does not give even a little credit to people helping Mortenson either in America or in Pakistan claiming that Mortenson had singlehandedly brought change to thousands of lives, presenting him as a heroic figure though people like him are apparently not welcomed in 'that part of the world' (5). Although reading from the beginning of the book, it is clear that Mortensen did not intend to portray a soft image of America during the media propaganda as shown by the author in the introduction rather he wanted to help people. His help was due to the fact that local people had helped him. At the very beginning of the narrative, Mortenson recounts his first meeting with the people when he reached Korphe after being lost for days. He had been part of a team of five climbers attempting to

climb the world's most dangerous and second-highest mountain K2, located in the Karakoram range of Northern Pakistan. Weak and exhausted, Mortenson lost his ascent during his expedition. Therefore, instead of Askole where he had planned to return, he arrived at Korphe. Despite having no previous familiarity, he was welcomed by the local chief Haji Ali in his poverty-stricken household with the utmost possible hospitality (24). Seeing Mortenson weak and feeble after his precarious survival, Haji Ali had 'ordered one of the village's precious chogo rabak, or big rams, slaughtered' (29). In a village, where they ate *chapatis* with *chai*, the sacrifice of a ram for a stranger was something Mortenson could not take for granted. It is strange that the narrator of the book still presumes the anti-American sentiments in the local population despite knowing these details of sacrificial hospitality.

Therefore, Mortenson's help was primarily a goodwill gesture returned during hours of his trouble rather than anything to do with anti-Americanism. Moreover, how native people welcomed him and shared their share of a meagre amount of bread and butter with a stranger does not reveal any negative emotion attached to his nationality. In chapter 3, Mortenson's familiarity with the Balti life has been revealed as he spent more time in Haji Ali's house. He came to know that the simple life away from hustle and bustle of modern life is not as exotic and enjoyable as mentioned by some of the westerners in their books. For example, Maraini (1958) as quoted by Mortenson claims that Baltis enjoy their lives and he considers it a 'bliss' to live without roads, vehicles, and television, breathing 'an air of utter satisfaction' (30). Mortenson, on the other hand, while walking briefly in Korphe with local kids thinks contrary to this. He hears stories of children who died due to ordinary and curable diseases, women who

died during delivery and elderly men with old wounds that could be easily treated by using a simple antibiotic. Relin writes,

Mortenson couldn't imagine ever discharging the debt he felt to his hosts in Korphe. But he was determined to try. He began distributing all he had. Small useful items like Nalgene bottles and flashlights were precious to the Balti, who trekked long distances to graze their animals in summer, and he handed them out to the members of Haji Ali's extended family. To Sakina, he gave his camping stove, capable of burning the kerosene found in every Balti village. He draped his wine-coloured L.L. Bean fleece jacket over Twaha's shoulders, pressing him to take it (30).

The above passage proves that Mortenson felt an ethical duty to give something in return to his benefactors. Korphe's children, their struggles, and determination reminded him of his sister as mentioned in the chapter (3).

"They reminded me of the way Christa had to fight for the simplest things. And also the way she had of just persevering, no matter what life threw at her." (Relin and Mortenson, [2006](#) 30)

The thought of doing something to honour memory of Charista made him decide that 'he wanted to do something for them' (31). Mortenson was 'appalled' to see the children studying under an open sky, some 'fortunate' ones writing with mud liquid on slate boards and the rest copying multiplication tables by scratching dirt using sticks. Astonished Mortenson compares these children to American kids in the following words;

"Can you imagine a fourth-grade class in America, alone, without a teacher, sitting there quietly and working on their lessons?" (32).

In addition, the scene made him feel so emotional with 'his heart in his throat', therefore he decided to do something for

them. These examples have presented and proved the reason why Mortenson decided to build schools in Pakistan. Moreover, before 9/11, there was no or very little misunderstanding or media propaganda as mentioned by Relin, which could possibly contribute to the anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Perhaps, Mortenson's narrator changes his intentions according to the outcomes. The consequences might be true outcomes yet only due to luck as the text was published post-9/11. Mortenson did not help them with intention of cleaning up the American name as mentioned above clearly since it was the early 1990s.

Relin portrays Mortenson as solely responsible for the schools. Exhibiting this portrayal, his writing becomes highly exaggerated as he mentions that

Former Taliban fighters renounced violence and the oppression of women after meeting Mortenson and went to work with him peacefully building schools for girls (3).

Although, later on in the text, readers cannot find such an event, account or encounter in detail. However, this claim that Mortenson had 'drawn volunteers and admirers from every stratum of Pakistan's society and from all the warring sects of Islam' is quite true (3). As, in the chapter (15), Relin writes the details mentioning Mortenson's companions who belonged to different sects.

Mouzafer and the Korphe men were Shiite Muslims, along with Skardu residents Ghulam Parvi, and Makhmal the mason. Apo Razak, a refugee from Indian-occupied Kashmir, was a Sunni, as was Suleman. And the fiercely dignified bodyguard Faisal Baig belonged to the Ismaeli sect (189).

Working in an area, which had incidents of sectarian crisis, Mortenson expresses his delight in saying that he, the infidel, and representatives of conflicting sects of Islam laughed together while enjoying tea peacefully. He also says,

And I thought if we can get along this well, we can accomplish anything. The British policy was 'divide and conquer.' But I say 'unite and conquer (189).'

The above statement shows another type of deliberate Othering where Mortenson differentiates himself from Muslims on the basis of his religion, calling himself an infidel. An infidel, who does not believe in their religion, has brought the men to share some yet conflicting other beliefs of the same religion. Moreover, he differentiates his identity as an American too by differentiating him from the British that who used to believe in dividing and conquering and Mortenson's motto is uniting and conquering.

### Response of Locals and Americans

At this crucial time, the locals had played the role of a protector and tried to share the Americans' grief. Mortenson writes about the sadness and worry of his guard Faisal Baig, who had sworn to protect his life, in the following words

When Mortenson took his bag from his bodyguard, he saw Baig's eyes were brimming with tears... "What is it, Faisal?" Mortenson said, squeezing his bodyguard's broad shoulder.

"Now your country is at war," Baig said. "What can I do? How can I protect you there?" (273,274)

During the inauguration ceremony of Kuardu's school, the local religious leader Syed Abbas had spoken to the crowd, showing his gratitude to Mortenson for his contribution to the local education system. He also speaks for the whole community offering his condolence to the Americans in the following words (Relin and Mortenson 2006, 257).

"We share in the sorrow as people weep and suffer in America today," he said, pushing his thick glasses firmly into place, "as we inaugurate this school. Those who have

committed this evil act against the innocent, the women and children, to create thousands of widows and orphans do not do so in the name of Islam. By the grace of Allah the Almighty, may justice be served upon them.

Syed Abbas apologizes for a mistake he or his people have never done and have no connection to. Moreover, he requests his people to protect the Americans calling them brothers.

"For this tragedy, I humbly ask Mr George and Dr Greg Sahib for their forgiveness. All of you, my brethren: Protect and embrace these two American brothers in our midst. Let no harm come to them. Share all you have to make their mission successful. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 257)

Mortenson acknowledges Syed Abbas' effort and praises him. He expresses his emotions in the next few lines,

I wish all the Americans who think 'Muslim' is just another way of saying 'terrorist' could have been there that day. The true core tenants of Islam are justice, tolerance, and charity, and Syed Abbas represented the moderate centre of the Muslim faith eloquently." (257)

Mortenson informs the western world that few terrorists cannot define Pakistanis or Muslims. He understands that Islam shares the same beliefs of "tolerance, justice, and charity" and wants the world to know that a mullah is not necessarily what the west supposes.

Syed Abbas was an advocate of education unlike the expected western media propagating Talibanization and Islamization of Pakistan in an exaggerated manner. Not every mullah or religious leader is against education in Pakistan; rather, Syed Abbas is an example of those who even appreciate the westerners helping their people.

"These two Christian men have come halfway around the world to show our Muslim children the light of education,"



Abbas said...Fathers and parents, I implore you to dedicate your full effort and commitment to seeing that all your children are educated. Otherwise, they will merely graze like sheep in the field, at the mercy of nature and the world changing so terrifyingly around us." (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 257)

The commoners try to share their grief and offer condolences to them. The poor people had less material to propose yet they had offered generously, assuming that life on the other side of the world will be similar for the grievous widows.

After the ceremony, Kuardu's many widows lined up to offer Mortenson and McCown their condolences. They pressed eggs into the Americans' hands, begging them to carry these tokens of grief to the faraway sisters they longed to comfort themselves, the widows of New York village. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 258)

However, the common Americans did not have such emotions for Pakistanis in the very beginning. Mortenson mentions that he used to receive a pile of mail discouraging him as many Americans thought he was helping Pakistanis in harbouring terrorists. He quotes a line from one of the letters (275).

"I wish some of our bombs had hit you because you're counterproductive to our military efforts."

The hatred carried by their words had discouraged and depressed him. He expresses his disappointment at being called a traitor in these words.

"That night, for the first time since starting my work in Pakistan, I thought about quitting," he says. "I expected something like this from an ignorant village mullah, but to get those kinds of letters from my fellow Americans made me wonder whether I should just give up." (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 275)

It continued until an American journalist and former editor for the *Outside* magazine visited Pakistan with Mortenson. He

witnessed a graduate from Mortenson's school, Jehan, asking Mortenson to fulfil his promise of providing her financial assistance in further studies. This made the journalist wonder how fruitful the result Mortenson's efforts had produced. Impressed by a girl speaking for her right in the middle of a "conservative village", the journalist covered Mortenson's story with a caption, "He Fights Terror with Books" (301) This brought a change as Mortenson's notion of fighting terror through books instead of military "hit a national nerve". Mortenson claims that this notion had divided the nation's approach towards the war on terror. Editor-in-chief of the magazine that covered his story, Mr Lee Kravitz considers it one of the most powerful stories, calling Mortenson a real American hero with the school as his weapon instead of guns and bombs.

Leslie (5) believes that, unlike the early colonial writers, travel writers today frame the encounters with natives in a positive manner stressing instances of empathy, the realization of difference but equality and insights into the values shared among cultures and religions. Mortenson has done the same by focusing positively on the harmony globalization could bring, presenting the positive, peaceful and non-violent side of Americans as well as Pakistanis. He quoted the mullah, the religious Muslim Pakistani who is always expected to be a fundamentalist propagating violence and ignorance.

"I request America to look into our hearts," Abbas continued, his voice straining with emotion, "and see that the great majority of us are not terrorists, but good and simple people. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 257)

Here, Mortenson has debunked the western idea of a religious Pakistani leader. He gave the readers an insight into the real identity of the Pakistani mullah, which can make many of the audience rethink the imagined identities or sketches, instilled

perhaps by media in their minds. When his story reached the audience through the journalist, he received more letters but this time there was no hate mail.

“I felt like America had spoken. My tribe had spoken,” Mortenson says. “And the most amazing thing was that after I finished reading every message, there was only one negative letter in the whole bunch.” The response was so overwhelmingly positive that it salved the wounds of the death threats he’d received soon after 9/11 (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 302).

### Islam and Pakistan as Terror

Thompson (133) writes that a traveller portrays foreign people and places in an ideologically motivated way, in an effort to justify and propagate a particular policy. At some points, Mortenson had portrayed the situation in Pakistan by moulding and overstating it, which justified his claim (and the claims of people he quoted) of building schools with an intention to fight the root cause of terrorism. However, Mortenson did not visit Pakistan with such intention. He was a mountaineer and had been to Pakistan to climb its highest peak K2. Moreover, he mentions his plan of honouring his deceased sister Christa

He brought it (necklace) to Pakistan with him, bound in a Tibetan prayer flag, along with a plan to honour the memory of his little sister. Mortenson was a climber and he had decided on the most meaningful tribute he had within him. He would scale K2, the summit most climbers consider the toughest to reach on Earth, and leave Christa’s necklace there at 28,267 feet (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 9). Additionally, he writes, He’d climb to the summit those of his avocation respected most, and he’d dedicate his climb to Christa’s memory (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 45).

At that point, building schools was not even on his to-do list. Later on, during his

stay in Korphe, the children reminded him of Christa. This reveals that although it might, later on, helped fighting terrorism, this was not what Mortenson had expected and planned. It seems as if things took a turn naturally and supported his cause. Moreover, 9/11 and Talibanization supported his narrative, which made his claim and travel book a success.

According to Thompson (29), modern travel writers make use of certain specific rhetorical techniques, in order to establish the trustworthiness of their narrative. Mortenson’s story has been written retrospectively, giving him a chance of adding fictive colours to it. Fictionality is inherent to the genre of travel writing, so even after a genuine journey, chances of fabricated accounts or exaggerated events are possible. This capitalises on the public’s hunger for curiosities and adventures. Mortenson had also used this strategy as he had added an incident of Shia-Sunni conflict in the narrative, claiming to have read that in the newspaper during his second visit to Pakistan.

A few months earlier, Mortenson had read in the Islamabad papers about Pakistan’s latest wave of Sunni-Shiite violence. A Skardu-bound bus had passed through the Indus Gorge on its way up the Karakoram Highway. Just past Chilas, a Sunni-dominated region, a dozen masked men armed with Kalashnikovs blocked the road and forced the passengers out. They separated the Shia from the Sunni and cut the throats of eighteen Shia men while their wives and children were made to watch. Now he was praying like a Sunni at the heart of Shiite Pakistan. Among the warring sects of Islam, Mortenson knew, men had been killed for less. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 142)

However, the incident called the Kohistan Shia Massacre 2012 took place in 2012 and Mortenson visited Pakistan in the early 1990s. The point in the narrative where

he quotes the incident occurs during his second visit (roughly 1994-1995) with exactly the same details as the Kohistan Massacre 2012, while in 1994 or 1995, there was no such event reported. It seems as if Mortenson has used the Kohistan Massacre's details to present Pakistan as a dangerous place in terms of religious intolerance. This might have been a deliberate attempt to add some spice to the narrative.

Additionally, throughout the narrative, events are presented in such a manner that propagates Mortenson's role as a hero. On one occasion, when Shias of Korphe, two Sunnis and one Ismaili had been enjoying tea together, he writes

"We all sat there laughing and sipping tea peacefully," Mortenson says. "An infidel and representatives from three warring sects of Islam. And I thought if we can get along this well, we can accomplish anything. The British policy was 'divide and conquer.' But I say 'unite and conquer.'" (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 189)

Northern areas are a region of Pakistan where conflicting sects of Islam live together for centuries. Mortenson has not mentioned any sectarian conflict or violence (apart from the Kohistan Shia Massacre in 2012). So mentioning having tea together as something special can raise questions.

Edward Said's analysis of the western portrayal of the orient shows their routine depiction as sensual and cruel, having a tendency towards violence and despotism (Thomson, 134). Mortenson has followed the same path here, yet he is a master of neutralizing the effect as he praises the Balti people's respect towards the Bhudists' symbols.

If the Balti respected Buddhism enough to practice their austere faith alongside extravagant Buddhist swastikas and wheels of life, Mortenson decided, as his eyes lingered on the carvings, they were probably tolerant

enough to endure an infidel praying as a tailor had taught him. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 142)

The use of the adjective *austere* with *faith* here also indicates Mortenson's presuppositions and the tendency of depicting Islam as a grim religion. In the era, where Islamophobia is hitting the world more than ever before, it is very irresponsible on the part of a travel writer to portray Islam and Muslims this way. People of Korphe had been kindest to him before he could provide them with schools and they never disrespected his religion. Yet, his presentation of their religion is always opposite to kind, peaceful and friendly. On another occasion, he fears the mullah's response about an infidel-making school for girls in Korphe. The mullah had never called him infidel, yet he uses this derogatory term for himself.

Mortenson was unsure how the mullah felt about having an infidel in the village, an infidel who proposed to educate Korphe's girls. Sher Takhi smiled at Mortenson and led him to a prayer mat at the rear of the room...He led the men in a special *dua*, asking Allah's blessing and guidance as they began work on the school. (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 142)

The use of a pejorative word for himself, while referring to the mullah has revealed that Mortenson had an image of a mullah in his mind, even before meeting him. Contrary to what Mortenson had expected, the religious leader had exclusively prayed for his success seeking Allah's guidance.

Not every mullah was welcoming and friendly like Sher Takhi. Sher of Chakpo declared a fatwa (religious ruling) against Mortenson. Nevertheless, the mullah was not doing that for Islam or Muslims, as Ghulam Parvi calls him a crook concerned with fortune, having nothing to do with Islam. After meeting Mortenson, a more powerful

religious leader Syed Abbas Rizvi concluded that although an infidel, Mortenson was a nobleman who had "dedicated his life to education"(193). He contacted the Sher of Chakpo for fatwa withdrawal but he refused, yet Syed Abbas's letter of support made the Sher of Chakpo's fatwa unreliable. Another fatwa was declared by Agha Mubarek in 2003, supported by a local politician. Mubarek used religion just like Sher of Chakpo telling people that kafir school is not good for local people. On contacting them, Parvi told Mortenson that all they wanted was a bribe. On not receiving any money, they tried to break Hemasil's school with hammers during the night. The case reached Shariah court where witnesses had testified that

Agha Mubarek collects money from my people and never provides any *zakat* for our children," Mehdi Ali says. "I told them Agha Mubarek has no business making a *fatwa* on a saintly man like Dr Greg. It is he who should be judged in the eyes of Allah Almighty." (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 307)

The court declared the fatwa illegitimate and ordered Agha Mubarek to pay for the damage his men had done to the school building. This reveals that religious scholars had never stopped him rather they had supported him in his welfare activities. Like all other professions/institutes, the custodians of religion can be corrupt too. Mortenson acknowledges the role of the shariah court as he writes (308),

"It was a very humbling victory," Mortenson says. "Here you have this Islamic court in conservative Shia Pakistan offering protection for an American, at a time when America is holding Muslims without charges in Guantanamo, Cuba, for years, under our so-called system of justice."

Even during his eight-day abduction in Waziristan, he had thought probably the reason was his infidelity. Maybe it was him trespassing on their land with the intention to bring damage to their religion or they

wanted ransom money. However, it was just a dispute between two parties and as soon as it was settled, they dropped Mortenson unharmed back to Peshawar.

The above analysis shows three things; firstly, Greg Mortenson did not start building schools to fight the root cause of terrorism. With the passage of time, Talibanization in Pakistan grew after Afghanistan was attacked by the US, which made him appear as a hero against terrorism rooted in the madrassah system. Secondly, the concept of the Taliban is exaggerated by Mortenson and especially the media flattering him, despite that he never had an actual dangerous encounter with them. He has not provided any clear identity of his abductors in Waziristan, so there is no evidence that they were actually the Taliban. The idea of the Taliban resonates with the readers' expectations of a foreigner in Pakistan, which could increase the readership of his book. Thirdly, the western concept of Pakistan as a dangerous country because of its religion is proven wrong by Mortenson's account. Most of the religious scholars had supported him in his cause and those who did not were not doing it for religion but for their corruption.

This small number of people having a corrupt reputation was not liked, appreciated, or supported even by the native population. After the Talibanization of Afghanistan, Mortenson was praised by people and media in the US that "he fights terror with books", which could not be very wrong, but this was not his aim (301). Thompson (159) discusses the possibility of travel writers othering foreign people and cultures by making them appear as primitive and atavistic in comparison to their homeland i.e. west. This might be done in order to generate exoticism and sometimes, even danger, where the author tries to construct their image as an intrepid adventurer or heroic traveller. Mortenson has implied the same strategy, which in turn has fostered his image of a hero and saviour.

Mortenson has made it clear at various points that contrary to western constructions of Pakistan as a dangerous country in terms of terrorism, the real danger was on the roads.

A decade later, in the post-9/11 era, Mortenson would often be asked by Americans about the danger he faced in the region from terrorists. "If I die in Pakistan, it'll be because of a traffic accident, not a bomb or bullet," he'd always tell them. "The real danger over there is on the road." (Relin and Mortenson, 2006, 81).

Thompson (148) argues that indigenous cultures are presented as uniform, static and unchanging with a set of core beliefs followed by everyone in the society. Moreover, it is often considered that these behaviours have always existed without any development over the passage of time. This is quite a generalization but is true in Pakistan's case. It has been constructed as a dangerous country in recent times, with religious fanatics who oppose education. The use of the word *mullah* for an Islamic cleric is not very appreciable, as it has been termed as a derogatory and offensive remark for a gnostic or conservative Islamic cleric with a low level of Islamic education (203). The better alternative is *moulana*, *imam* (prayer leaders) or *alim*. Despite his presuppositions at the beginning of his journey, Mortenson had learnt through his experience with religious leaders that they support peace and education, even for girls. He writes,

"I wish Westerners who misunderstand Muslims could have seen Syed Abbas in action that day," Mortenson says. "They would see that most people who practice the true teachings of Islam, even conservative mullahs like Syed Abbas, believe in peace and justice, not in terror. Just as the Torah and Bible teach concern for those in distress, the

Koran instructs all Muslims to make caring for widows, orphans, and refugees a priority" (219).

## Conclusion

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The most prevalent is the theme of Talibanization and anti-Americanism, which seems unrealistic since it does not correspond to the time Mortenson had spent in Pakistan. Chiozza (2009) deduces that anti-Americanism is shallower than what most scholars presume. Instead of being an outright opposition, it is a multifaceted form with negative and positive elements co-occurring. Transitory periods of opposition occur against a particular policy. The time of certain crises like during the Iraq war, anti-American sentiments gain prominence. This makes the anti-American sentiments (if any) comprehensible for post-9/11 Pakistan but not 90s Pakistan as mentioned by Mortenson. Contrary to his depiction of Pakistan as a dangerous place for Americans, he is welcomed by all Pakistanis, especially in the northern areas. The only instance of hostility (his abduction) was unrelated to his nationality as explained in the analysis. Mortenson makes his work more relatable to the time of its publication in order to get more applause with conscious and deliberate additions of events. This made him appear as a hero fighting terrorism through the propagation of moderate education in a country that breeds terrorists in its little nurseries called *madrassahs*. Mortenson's account portrays a lot of presuppositions and perceptions about Pakistanis and Islam in the minds of Americans including his family and co-workers. He does not pass sweeping statements generally yet the picture of Islam and Islamic Clerics he carried to Pakistan on his first visit is different from the one he took with him back after ten years.

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