

Post-9/11 Surveillance, Displacement and Trauma in “*The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*”

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Abstract

This study explores how post-9/11 surveillance, displacement, and trauma are represented in Fatima Bhutto's novel The Shadow of the Crescent Moon. It captures the effect of global politics and security measures on ordinary people living in a small tribal area of Pakistan. This research aims to explore the psychological trauma that arises under intense state surveillance. Moreover, it aims at unfolding how internal and external forces shape the character's experiences and identities. This paper also utilizes Jasbir Paur's theory of "Terrorist Assemblage" to showcase how the novel reflects the harsh realities of constant monitoring, leading to displacement of communities and deep trauma. It also explores how characters in Bhutto's novel are subjected to both visible and invisible forms of control, examining its correlation with PTSD and C-PTSD. The purpose of this study is to show that in the novel, surveillance goes beyond mere observation and becomes a tool of power for the state and external forces, especially in conflict zones like Pakistan. So, this study will provide a critical lens on how surveillance and trauma are intertwined in the novel, contributing to broader discussions on identity, trauma, and resilience in Pakistani fiction.

Keywords: Bhutto, Surveillance, Terror, Trauma, War.

Introduction

Bhutto is a descendant of the widely known political family of Pakistan. She has a troublesome political legacy. In 1979, her grandfather and former prime minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged. Then, her father, Murtaza Ali Bhutto, was murdered, for which she accused her aunt Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto's own experience with exile, then returning to Pakistan and navigating family politics, is also reflected in her works. Her major works include "Songs of Blood and Sword" and "Whispers of the Desert." *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is her first fictional work, a debut novel in 2013 and 2014. The story is set in a small Pakistani tribe named "Mir Ali." It is one of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. This area, because of being close to the Afghan border in Pakistan, is considered the hub of terrorism and is ruled by the Taliban. The town is also considered a home to internal sectarian conflicts, particularly between Sunni and Shia factions.

The Shadow of the Crescent Moon is a story of three brothers: Sikandar, the eldest brother; Aman Erum, the middle brother; and Hayat, the youngest brother. They are the sons of Inayat Mehsud, who is portrayed as a freedom fighter fighting for the freedom of Mir Ali. Sikandar is a doctor and married to Mina, and they have lost their son in a bomb blast. Aman Erum has recently returned

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from America, where he was on a student visa granted to him by intelligence agencies in return for spying. Hayat is showcased as a descendant of his father's legacy, and he dreams of free Mir Ali. He is also romantically involved with Samarra, a rebel woman who is the former love of Aman Erum. The novel begins one Friday morning when all three brothers leave to offer Eid prayer. They all decide to go to different mosques because of fear of the blast erasing the entire family, as "no one prays together, travels in pairs or eats out in groups" (Bhutto, 2014, p. 16).

Bhutto's fiction draws a picture of how the 'war on terror' affects the ordinary life of the commoner in third-world countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan. This research is aimed to explore the broader themes of post-9/11, surveillance, displacement, and trauma. The outcome of the attacks in 2001 marked a significant turning point in global politics regarding security measures and surveillance practices. "The legacy of 9/11 lives on: the advent of advanced surveillance and digital tracking measures has become firmly rooted in place around the world" (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2021). Pakistan, being a key figure in the global war on terror, experienced harsh realities due to the intervention of both internal and external forces. "Counter-terrorism became the justification for new security laws and monitoring by governments - ranging from mass data collection to the growing use of artificial intelligence tools" (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2021). These dynamics ultimately resulted in widespread displacement and psychological trauma. Through the life of characters in *Mir Ali*, Bhutto illustrates the profound impact of surveillance on individual identities and communities, disclosing how the threat of constant violence and control forces prompts feelings of fear, mistrust, and alienation. "At least 37 million people have fled their homes in the eight most violent wars the U.S. military has launched or participated in since 2001 - including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, according to the Costs of War project" (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2021). Using Jasbir Paur's theory of terrorist assemblage as the guiding framework, this research will examine how surveillance operates in the novel not only as a tool of observation but also as a mechanism of control and categorization. Her theory reveals how surveillance intertwines with power, race, and identity, particularly in conflict areas in the context of counter-terrorism. Surveillance in this novel is not merely an external force but also a psychological one, inducing a state of paranoia, helplessness, and trauma. This connects to contemporary studies on PTSD and C-PTSD, which suggest that continuous exposure to surveillance, especially in conflict zones, can lead to long-term psychological disorders. "Captivity traumas occur in circumstances, under which a prisoner of war cannot escape, is deliberately traumatized and often aggressively tortured by his or her captors. Prisoners of war are often subjected to harsh interrogations, mock executions, and protracted periods of solitary confinement" (Zerach et al., 2019, p.3). For the characters in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*, the trauma of being watched and controlled gets internalized into their relationships, sense of identity, and ability to feel safe in their homes. The research will provide a deeper understanding of how the novel reflects the personal and collective struggle of those living under the constant watchful eyes of the state.

Literature Review

Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is a multifaceted novel exploring various realistic aspects of society, including instability, identity crisis, human resilience, etc., and provides a profound evaluation of socio-political structures that eternalize the concept of marginalization and violence. "Violence, in both latent and visible forms, is depicted as a tool in perpetuating patriarchal norms and systemic discrimination" (Asl & Hanafiah, 2024). Bhutto's fiction is deeply rooted in the political upheaval and social turmoil of North Waziristan, specifically Mir Ali. A

small town poorly impacted by the intense aftermath of 9/11 is highlighted: "They'll be watching every movement of the house, the family, the driveway, the phones. Hayat? They are the liaisons" (Bhutto, 2013, p.53). Scholars emphasize that the novel encapsulates the political complexities and violence in tribal regions where sectarian conflicts and insurgencies rule. The continual marginalization of Pashtun identity and the region discloses how these dynamics initiate a cycle of trauma and instability. Showcasing Mir Ali as a hub of terrorism reveals the struggle of its inhabitants, who feel alienated from their own country and global narratives. This feeling of alienation makes inhabitants experience both public and private trauma. Public trauma originates from overarching insecurity, surveillance and violence in Mir Ali as is quoted: "Doors were broken down in the dead of night, men were kidnapped from their streets, women were widowed and children were orphaned to teach the town its most important lesson: there was no match for the ruthlessness of the state" (Bhutto, 2013, p.13), while private trauma emerges in characters like Mina and Sikander, who suffer from the loss of their only son, Zalan. "Throughout the novel, the manifestation of direct violence, which is "intended to insult the basic needs of others," can be observed through female characters like Samarra and Mina who are frequently subjected to physical abuse, beating, and sexual assault" (Galtung, 1969, as cited in Asl & Hanafiah, 2024). Besides this, Aman Erum's desire to flee from Mir Ali portrays his yearning desire for freedom from the violent and oppressive environment as is quoted, "Aman Erum had applied, quietly, to the army. It was a secret attempt to flee" (Bhutto, 2013, p.11). This novel perfectly depicts the dual-layered psychological toll that inhibited the citizens of conflict-ridden zones. The personal longings of inhabitants are overshadowed by external chaos. As is evident, Aman Erum was ridiculed for his desire to be selected into the army: "Two things happened. First, he was turned down. The army didn't want men from these parts; they did not even have a recruitment office in Mir Ali then. The officer Aman Erum had spoken to; the lone man in khaki on duty at the base had laughed in his face" (Bhutto, 2013, p.11).

Moreover, the novel delves into another significant aspect of the intersection of sectarianism and ethnicity. The conflict between Sunnis and Shias amplifies the struggle of people, making the region even more ethnically complex. "The faith-based identity has intensified rivalry" (Khan et al., 2023, p.1187). As Sikander is asked, "Are you Sunni or Shia?" (Bhutto, 2013, p.135). With this rise of sectarian oppression, especially during the period of post-Cold War and Taliban insurgency, communities felt even more alienated and isolated. "Thus, religious sentiment has been exploited in Pakistan, which consequently witnesses sectarian violence. Pashtuns, especially after the Cold War, have been affected due to a rise in sectarian violence and militancy in the form of Mujahideen (during the Cold War) and now Taliban" (Khan et al., 2023, p.1187). Bhutto emphasizes how faith-based identity is used politically for manipulation, which gives rise to divisions, mistrust, and an eternal cycle of violence. In addition, female characters depicted by Bhutto are stronger and resistant despite all the sufferings and hardships. For instance, Samara is actively involved in resistance; she fights the opposition without fear. "Samarra is also one of the bold activists who have nothing to lose for their cause, for which she has been picked up, interrogated, and tortured by the authorities" (Zaidi et al., 2022, p.5). As Samarra asserts, "They made our fathers old. They robbed our fathers of their youth, of their strength. They had no freedom to make their own rules. We are something stronger, Hayat. We cannot be broken" (Bhutto 2013, p.153). "She speaks of the misplaced identities of a generation lost in the politics of war, which is usually associated with the qualities of the male revolutionary characters" (Zaidi et al., 2022, p.5). However, Mina becomes the embodiment of the lasting grief and silent suffering of women in conflict-ridden areas. Their stories examine the sacrifices of women dealing with personal loss and societal pressure.

The novel evaluates Pakistan's socio-political policies, which have marginalized various regions like FATA (federally administered tribal areas). "People of Fata are not only quelled by Pakistani forces but also by American and NATO forces and by their drone attacks. Drones always fly in the air of Fata and hit whenever they want, devoid of thinking about any innocent deaths. When Aman Erum is in the USA embassy, he listens to the news, "Fourteen killed as USA predator drones strike in North West Frontier Province village of Bannu (Bhutto, 2016)" (Farhan et al., 2023, p.1259). Bhutto has showcased how systemic exclusion or exploitation of certain areas gives rise to insurgencies and social injustice. For instance, the lack of basic health care, education, and infrastructure in Mir Ali is pictured as a failure of state governance. As is noted, "the state lies while promising autonomy – more than autonomy – and decentralization so that each province can regulate its affairs" (Bhutto, 2013, p.16). The novel proficiently juxtaposes the deprivation and injustice faced by the residents of a local town with glaring technological advancements, as they are of no use to this place and these people. This targeting is evident from these lines extracted from the novel, perfectly showcasing how the rest treated locals of Mir Ali of the country, "the faster you cowards leave, the quicker we will have everything sorted out" (Bhutto, 2013, p.21). Furthermore, the novel mirrors society, considering the inseparable relationship between literature and politics. Scholars argue that *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is not just an exploration of individuals' lives from a conflict-ridden local area; instead, it is a commentary on the socio-political fabric of Pakistan on a broader and aggravated scale. While advocating for acknowledgment and reformation, Bhutto has attempted to reveal the harsh realities of life in neglected regions where lives are taken for granted. In the novel, the shadow of global politics portrayed by Bhutto is precisely in the context of post-9/11. The militarization of the region, foreign interference, and drone warfare shaping the daily lives of characters make them internalize monitoring, suspicion, and the oppressive atmosphere. They become habitual of their messed up lives, and the persistent strain becomes normalization. As is pointed out, "This was standard, typical. They had endured a lifetime of this abuse in Mir Ali – from government school teachers, the national media, police officers, soldiers – especially the young men. Aman Erum had learned to say nothing. He knew to look down and listen only to the drumming beat of his heart" (Bhutto, 2013, p.21). So, by employing the storytelling technique, the novel provides a critical lens on themes like nationalism, racism, and sectarianism. It has also been widely studied for its portrayal of trauma and struggles of individuals trapped in the crossfire of global and regional conflicts, making it a significant literary work in contemporary South Asian literature. While this novel has been widely examined and studied, some critics argue that it simplifies the complexities of regional politics for an international audience. Others note the lack of proper understanding and explanation of systemic issues like surveillance or governance, leaving these themes open to interpretation. Nonetheless, the novel is recognized as a significant contribution to contemporary Pakistani literature, especially for its subtle exploration of post-colonial and post-9/11 themes.

Theoretical Framework

Jasbir k. Paur is a professor and graduate director of women's and Gender studies at Rutgers University. She is best known for her influential work, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007). This research paper aligns Paur's "Terrorist Assemblage" with Bhutto's fiction, as both engage with the theme of the war on terror. In her theory, by introducing the concept of 'assemblage,' Paur suggests that on a global scale, identity is not a fixed attribute of an individual but is constructed through political, social, and cultural factors. While exploring the

idea of Homonationalism, a process where specific LGBTQ+ identities were embraced, and others were marginalized. This happened mainly in the US, which labeled Muslim-majority countries as homophobic and regressive in front of the progressive and inclusive West. This ultimately resulted in the marginalization of Muslims and Sikhs in the US, naming them as "unacceptable queer" identities. This situation gave rise to islamophobia and xenophobia. At this time, the incident of 9/11 added fuel to the fire, and as a result, after 9/11, Paur observed that Muslims and Sikhs were subjected to aggravated surveillance, profiling, and violence on a grander scale in the United States. This surveillance constructed certain bodies as "terrorist threats," further oppressing and subjugating queer Muslims. Sikhs were also mistaken for Muslims due to their turbans and beards, which became the marker of their identity. Paul writes, "The turban is not a hat" (Towghi, 2011, p.104), reflecting how wearing a turban placed Sikhs under scrutiny. Muslim practices, such as the denial of homosexuality as part of religious identity, were targeted in the US on a much grander scale.

As is quoted, "Paur argues that 'queer secularity' views religious observances, participation in religious public spaces and rituals, devotion to faith or spiritual practices and simply residence within an Islamic-nation state as marks of subjugated and repressed sexuality void of agency" (Towghi, 2011, p.104). Consequently, deviation of Muslims and Sikhs from America's ideals of modernity, both Muslims and Sikhs got labeled as forms of "queerness" in the state and society. Homonationalism was used as a bio-political tool to define the "modern" West against "backward", "misogynistic" and "terrorist" Muslim communities. So while reflecting on the relationship between representation and affect, Paur elaborated her view of "queerness as not an identity nor an anti-identity, but an assemblage that is spatially and temporally contingent" (Towghi, 2011, p.104). In *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*, a similarly charged atmosphere is portrayed. In a small town in Pakistan near the Afghan Border Sunni Muslims experience similar violence and oppression as Sikhs. But this targeted violence and forced displacement is not from any foreign country but from within their society from an opposing faction. Shia factions who dominated certain areas and politics attempted to limit the identity of Sunnis just to a stereotype—"a threat". This act of labeling places Sunnis in their own "terrorist assemblage," where they are being judged by the parameters of external notions and hostility. As Paul states, "queerness is always already installed in the project of naming the terrorist, who is constructed as a perverse subject" (Towghi, 2011, p.101). So, in both worlds, lives were haunted by parallel fears. For Sikhs and Muslims in the US, this parameter was defined by Western assumptions about Islam and Middle Eastern identity; however, for Sunnis in Pakistan, it was implanted in the history of sectarian politics, war, and religious conflicts. It is quoted in the novel, "Mir Ali pays the price for the comfort of those strangers; Mir Ali and its men have paid for decades" (Bhutto, 2013, p.161). "In the decades since the towers fell, a constellation of electronic eyes has risen: the dark glass orb on a city lamppost, the sleek silver cylinder mounted above a store's doorway, the hidden cameras that escape our gaze but can always see us" (Cahn, 2021). The experience of being judged constantly becomes an internalized aspect of self-perception for both Sikhs and Sunnis. This eventually led to severe psychological fragmentation.

Displacement is another critical point in Bhutto's and Paur's work. Emphasizing how individuals are often labeled as "un-nationalized" by global terrorism. In Bhutto's fiction, characters experience an existential form of displacement, confronting a sense of belonging within their territory encouraged by political chaos and unending conflict. Paur asserts that this leads to entire communities transforming into "threats," resulting in ideological exile, which proves profoundly destabilizing. "And we found that, in total, at least 37 million people have been displaced in just

eight of the most violent wars that the United States has either launched or participated in since 2001. That's Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Syria and the Philippines. Moreover, that's a very conservative estimate. We found that the total could be 48 to 59 million" (Now, 2020).

In addition to this, the psychological toll that Bhutto's characters experience aligns with Judith Herman's theory of trauma. Herman explains how prolonged exposure to violence or oppression leads to C-PTSD (complex post-traumatic stress disorder). In 1992, Dr. Judith Herman, a psychiatrist and trauma expert, explained the concept of PTSD and C-PTSD in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. PTSD stands for post-traumatic stress disorder, and C-PTSD stands for complex post-traumatic stress disorder in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. "Herman (2015) focuses on the psychological impact of trauma, particularly in the context of sexual violence and abuse. She emphasizes how trauma can disrupt an individual's sense of safety, trust, and intimacy. She can lead to long-term psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (Nawaz et al., 2023, p.166). The concept of trauma-related disorders has existed long before with terms like "shell shock," that was used to describe the effect of war on soldiers especially during World War 1 and World War 2. General symptoms of PTSD include traumatic flashbacks, severe anxiety, troubled thoughts, and nightmares. C-PTSD results from prolonged PTSD, or we can say it is chronic as compared to the acute nature of PTSD. "as compared to the PTSD class, the CPTSD class reported significantly higher levels of functional impairment, dissociative tendencies, worsened self-reported physical health, and lower scores on an objective measure of cognitive assessment (MoCA), among ex-POWs" (Zerach et al., 2019 p.8). This interpretation aligns Herman's work with the novel's portrayal of trauma's far-reaching psychological effects in conflict-ridden environments as characters in the novel strive for safety amid intense violence and constant surveillance.

So, by incorporating Puar's theory of 'terrorist assemblage' and Herman's concept of 'trauma and recovery,' this research paper provides a systematic examination of how an environment patterned by war and surveillance invokes displacement and aggravates unrecoverable trauma.

Discussion and Analysis

9/11 marked an aggravated political upheaval on a global level. The attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon executed by Al-Qaeda led to a worldwide "war on terror." As a result, Islamophobia and Xenophobia spread significantly. Pakistan became a central focus in the US-led war because of its ties with the Taliban and its strategic locations. This shift led to increased surveillance and targeting of communities, specifically of Muslims and South Asians, as race, religion, and culture became markers of identities. "For Puar, the *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas* legal decision is racialized as it relies on a public-private dichotomy that requires the intense and disproportionate surveillance of non-white bodies by the state in private and public spaces as evinced by the controlling tactics of the U.S. war on terror" (Towghi, 2011, p.103). Turban and beard became the identity and created a misunderstanding of seeing Sikhs as Muslims mistakenly. "Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in chapter four, 'The turban is not a hat', (Towghi, 2011, p.104), Puar demonstrates how Sikh turbans are construed as potential weapons, akin to the use of bodies by suicide bombers. As such, bodies and weapons are discursively merged, whereby weapons are no longer external objects but rather assemblages, and thus imagined as an essence or essential part of the terrorist body" (Towghi, 2011, p.104). This is how they became an instant target for hatred and suspicion on a much grander scale. They were trapped in a web of suspicion by a dominant culture reshaping their sense of belonging. Sikh turbans, Islamic male head

coverings, and women's veils were marked as deviations and disruptions to the nation's idea of security. "She examines the public confusion between the Sikh turbans and Islamic male head coverings. According to Puar, this confusion reflects a broader popular Western imaginary between physical attire, religious symbols, and the sexualized and masculinized dimensions of homonationalism. The turban poses problems to counter terrorist measures such as in airports where men have been forced to remove their turbans" (Towghi, 2011, p.104). "There has been more xenophobia and an increase in anti-refugee sentiment globally since 9/11, said Sameer Patil, a fellow at Gateway House, a think-tank based in Mumbai." (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2021). In *Shadow of the Crescent Moon*, characters are experiencing identical scenarios. Extremist groups were rooted in Sunni ideology; in Pakistan, Sunni militant groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Lashkar-e-change (LeJ) attacked government forces and Shia communities. As a result, the Pakistani government, in cooperation with the US, started targeting extremist ideologies and Sunni groups. So, Bhutto's Fiction provides a compelling characterization of surveillance's implications on ordinary people's lives. As the setting of the novel is a tribal area near the Afghan border where the "war on terror" impacted directly, it intensified state security on the population. It is showcased through the life of the three brothers in the novel. As the story unfolds, we learn that their actions are monitored and observed by local authorities and foreign powers, and the individuals are sure of them. "The army was both an invisible and omnipresent force in Mir Ali town by town, civil wars were lit by the wide-scale violence of the army – a violence that spanned decades and finally reached its zenith in the war on terror" (Bhutto, 2013, p.28). Moreover, Sikander, a doctor, confronts checkpoint and patrols frequently because of increased security protocols. As is quoted "there were eyes everywhere in Mir Ali; people watched you even as you slept, as you dreamed. No conversation was safe from listeners who intruded upon every listening thought" (Bhutto, 2013, p.142). One day, he is caught by a group of Shia fighters and is asked questions about his identity, either Sunni or Shia and the physical markers of his identity. Aware of the violent consequences, he attempts to hide his identity. It is quoted as follows: "Sikander is not a religious man. He does not have the mark of prostration on his forehead like many Shias do. He does not believe in the second coming and long-awaited prophets; at the very last he does not think too much about it" (Bhutto, 2013, p.146). "The Talib wants to see his back, wants to check if he has the marks of Ashura on his flesh" (Bhutto, 2013, p. 148). This is a faithful representation of how a global political upheaval, ignited by the war on terror, disrupted the lives of local communities. "Mir Ali is directly controlled by the centre and laws are made and enforced by the federal government which is a clear evidence of illiberalism" (Farooq & Ahmad, 2021, p.286).

This led to the displacement of individuals and communities. "The major push factor that is involved in migration is violence and crime" (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.432). In the words of Bhutto, "Some of the elders were able to escape across the border to Afghanistan; some of their sons joined them and were eventually hunted down- killed and left to bleed on faraway soil and buried in no-man's-land" (Bhutto, 2013, p.13). As surveillance forced them into a state of rootlessness, they decided either to flee or live in a territory that felt like a prison. For instance, Aman Erum, the eldest brother in the novel, gets fed up with his constrained life in Mir Ali. As is quoted, "He wanted to go out, to be free, to make money, to move without checkpoints and military police" (Bhutto, 2013, p.8). Paur also demonstrates how American norms made Muslims and Sikhs, and also other marginalized identities appear as not only queer but distant too. As is quoted, "She demonstrates that the construction of Islam and homosexuality as incommensurate subject positions has had a wide-ranging deleterious impact on the lives of Muslims and queers of color

in the United States" (Towghi, 2011, p.104). Limited freedom and continual pressure of being observed became a part of their life. Those who could not flee or move were trying hard to fit in with the standards of Americans, but all were in vain. As is evident through the character Aman Erum, "he had been trying all day to fit in, to sound the part, to look like an insider here, and now he realized there had been no point. He would never look or sounds like them. But America was too important. He would work harder to fit in, to remove what was alien about him" (Bhutto, 2013, p.28).

This attempt to survive in the lingering tension of surveillance led to intense psychological fragmentation. Judith Herman, in her book "Trauma and Recovery," emphasizes trauma caused by violence, which extends from personal abuse to the violence of war and terrorism. Trauma often interrupts and disturbs one's sense of self, potential to trust, and capability to feel safe. "Freud (1895) talks about a similar experience while studying the traumas of soldiers who suffered from a phobia of war after coming back to their homes from the battlegrounds. He has discovered a terrible link between survival and trauma, answering to why soldiers of war are never satisfied with the title of 'survivor' after returning from the war" (Nawaz, Qasim, and Qasim, 2023, p.164). She explored the concept of PTSD and C-PTSD. PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is often confined to a single, shocking event, leading to various acute symptoms such as flashbacks, hypervigilance, and emotional numbness.

In contrast, C-PTSD (complex post-traumatic stress disorder) is a chronic state and develops from ongoing trauma such as inflicted by war or domestic abuse. "In 'Trauma and Recovery' Herman wrote that the trauma response of soldiers to war, and the trauma response of women and children to domestic terror, were fundamentally the same" (Kenneally, 2023, p.2). Herman's framework of trauma and recovery gives an understanding of intense trauma and the journey of healing. Her theory is divided into three main stages (Wheelock, 2012).

The first stage of recovery involves a sense of stability and safety. Placing it in the context of Mir Ali, we know that establishing safety is challenging as the atmosphere of surveillance makes it impossible. Characters like Aman Erum leave Mir Ali to seek a safer life; however, his attempts are in vain. "Recovery cannot be simply a private, individual matter" (Kenneally, 2023, p.2). It involves supporting family, friends, and society and close relationships. First, we have physical safety, then establishing a "safe" therapeutic relationship. Both facilitate healing. The second stage might take longer depending on the trauma span the individual has experienced.

Considering the characters in Bhutto's novel, we see that memories of violence and loss haunt them. For instance, Sikander and Mina mourn the death of their young son, who was killed in a bombing. As is quoted, "their grief made him dumb" (Bhutto, 2013, p.105). The desire to live freely and on their terms remained an unrealistic dream for Mir Ali. As is evident from the words of Inayat Ali at his death, "come to my grave and tell me Mir Ali is free. Whisper it to me, even when I'm gone" (Bhutto, 2013, p.106). In the final stage, Herman advises the survivors to reconnect with life and relationships to redefine their identity and sense of belonging. However, in Bhutto's fiction, we find it impossible. The people of Mir Ali are not even allowed to discuss anything together. Bhutto quotes, "The citizens of Mir Ali were not permitted by federal order to gather in groups of three or more in any public space, but the Islamic republic could not ban people from sending off their dead with a Muslim prayer. Funerals, burials, and prayer evenings became the meeting ground for the resistance" (Bhutto, 2013, p.38). This perpetual state of displacement and unresolved grief is evident from Inayat's saying, "Everything we in Mir Ali know about our lives will have to change; we will teach our children to live with curfews and midnight raids, prepare the elderly for moves at three in the morning, abandoning our homes and processions.

Each and every member of the household will know that pains of no consequence when fighting for the collective" (Bhutto, 2013, p.17).

So, the complex dynamic of surveillance probed by Paur where bodies are examined not as individuals but rather as part of a particular racial, religious, and national assemblage and rendering of analogous concepts in Bhutto's fiction where characters are forced into constant security jolting their daily lives and consequently altering their identities; is an exceptional revelation that surveillance is not just limited to military and governmental watch but extends to the psychological and personal realm where trust is fragmented and suspicion pervades relationships.

Conclusion

This research brings into focus the intertwined experience of surveillance, displacement, and trauma suffered by individuals in the post-9/11 socio-political landscape. This paper examines *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* by Bhutto through the framework of Jasbir Paur's terrorist assemblage: homonationalism in queer times. Paur's concept of "terrorist assemblages" offers a comprehensive lens for understanding how global power's engrossment with terrorism has led to reinforced racial, religious, and sexual profiling. This directly impacts marginalized groups within the broader concept of homonationalism. Moreover, it also frames how communities are labeled as "others." They become subjected to systemic discrimination and forced adaptation. Bhutto's novel exemplifies these theories on the local level, portraying the cultural and psychological costs endured by those who live in war-conflicted regions or Western powers deemed regions.

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