

## Foregrounding the construction of hybrid identity after the 9/11 incident in

### Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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#### Abstract

The present research explores the Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), in the backdrop of the 9/11 incident. The research focuses on how the hybrid identity transformed after the 9/11/2001 attacks. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* negotiates diverse identities resulting in the transformation of the protagonist. This novel attempts to portray the resultant multiple and conflictive identities in the post-9/11 chaotic world. The postcolonial theory featuring cultural hybridity, presented by the renowned postcolonial theorist Homi K Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), is used as a theoretical framework. The current research in the selected text reiterates disengagement for greater self-reliance and autonomy. Cultural hybridity and transitional transformation are the dominant discourses in this research, focusing on Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the post-9/11 socio-political and literary milieu. In a nutshell, this research conceptualizes the philosophy of hybrid identity in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

**Keywords:** Cultural Hybridity, Fundamentalism, Islamophobia, Orientalism.

#### Introduction

This article accentuates that how the conflated identity of the protagonist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is transformed in the context of post 9/11 tragedy. Thus, this hypothetical article serves as the foundation to justify and explain the issue of cultural hybridity and cultural transformation in the post-modern world. The inadequacy of fiction in the English language is

elaborated critically by highlighting its limitations, scope and significance, and global projection and implications. In the light of the analytical views of the post 9/11 critics and reviewers, it is observed that fiction produced after 9/11 miserably lacks what it tried to claim and contain. The substance of the post 9/11 fiction says the least about the event itself; it instead projects traumatic and stressful narratives, perplexing the reader between the myth and reality. The reality of the 9/11 event is undesirably mythologized. The actual representation of the fact is yet to be discovered and discussed. Trauma, personal accounts, marital relations, dehumanization of individuals and institutions, and filial-familial relationships sway the said fiction. Likewise, the language used is inadequate to accord with and justify the 9/11 vision. The fusion of language with prospects of representation distance it from the 9/11 reality, thereby preventing its faithful narration. Therefore, this chaos of content and representation confounds the 9/11 literary purview. Dominic Head is of the view that “the illusiveness of the terrorist’s psyche implies an alien and resistant otherness that seems to make the novel out belonging to a very different camp” (Head 106). The post-9/11 novel does not live up to the extent of the event and succumbs to surrender. The historical significance of 9/11 appears relatively assured. It provides us with a convenient starting date for the twenty-first century in that so many of the decade’s most important events have been triggered by the attacks. Digvijay Pandya and Mohammad Bashir Mohammadi writes that “the narrative explains the presence of cultural hybridity and mimicry in the diaspora” (Pandya and Mohammadi 5849).

Nonetheless, no telling and evocative expression comes up, except terror, trauma, and tension in post-9/11 fiction. Martin Randall further observes and clarifies that “if art is to continue to wrestle with the implications and meanings of 9/11, perhaps one must look beyond already familiar discourses of tragedy, mourning and redemption and acknowledge less conventional

representations (Head 93). Muddasir Ramzan states “Hamid’s observations place writing at the locus of a complex web of social, cultural, and economic relationships” (Ramzan 24). The analysis communicates that post-9/11 fiction does not fulfill the purpose assigned to or expected of it.

David Holloway while referring to early 9/11 novel(s), states that the 9/11 novel replicates history as a traumatic acquaintance and spins around narcissism, individual self-reflection and narrative internalization, rerouting, and suppression. The diagnostic judgment reveals that the 9/11 fiction is, by and large, disoriented and disordered recurrently and brooks no laxity.

Christina Rickli goes beyond what Holloway views as traumatic and differentiates between three subcategories. The texts include 9/11 as a destabilizing component that is never unambiguously represented but plagues the texts as an engraved memory. The texts refer to 9/11 as a constituent of narrative misrepresentation without allowing it to enter a larger narrative space. And those texts that immediately focus on 9/11. All the three subsections vex the situation and partake the least in the meaning-making process of the 9/11 fiction. Reminiscences of the 9/11 disaster and disorder are misrepresented without permitting the fiction to participate in any meaning-making process. This paper also examines the 9/11 vision with a critical approach for an all-inclusive grasp and comprehension. This research highlights hybridity and transformation in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It investigates how this novel is discernibly distinct from other works of fiction in English.

The protagonist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (willingly) merges into the American system and society with the hope to secure a stable future. However, in the latter part of the novel, after the 9/11 attacks, the main character disengages himself from the neoliberal and neo-imperial system. Furthering his repugnance and reverting to his indigenous Pakistani identity, the

researcher concentrates on his transformed character traits in the existing context. In a nutshell, this article highlights how the story under argument is different and definitive from the corpus of 9/11 fiction in the English language regarding focusing identity crisis and, consequently, the following transformation.

### **Construction of hybrid identity after 9/11 incident in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* drives that no experience is as poignant as a homecoming. As though Changez (the interlocutor) had a safe and secured economic future in the U.S., but he could not manage to sustain the psychosocial injustice and humiliation of those who were serving America after the crucial event of 9/11. Without objective evidence and reasonable proof, Muslims were put to torture and torment and were forced to rethink their true identity and bona-fide habitat. But somehow, it was a blessing in disguise as well. The Muslim immigrants have conferred an opportunity to reinvent their social conscience as the ‘Other’. Revisiting and retracing his social, political and cultural transformation, or more precisely, the Pakistani cultural renaissance, Changez compares the ancient civilization of Pakistan and its neighbouring countries with that of contemporary America. While sitting in a local hotel in the bustling street of Lahore, he takes pride in having an innate connection with Pakistan when talking to the American visitor (the addressee). He says that “four thousand years ago, we, the Indus River basin people, had cities laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers” (Hamid 34). And the most acculturated and technologically sophisticated Indus Valley Civilisation wrapped up the region now called Pakistan (Hamid 38). Emotional and psychological agitation ever haunts Changez’s memory that he witnessed and experienced right after 9/11 when “Pakistani cab drivers were being beaten...the F.B.I. was raiding mosques, shops, and even people’s houses” (107). Such physical abuse of Muslims, especially Pakistanis, offended him severely and made

him reconsider his diasporic disposition.

The entire story is in a flashback narrative technique that recollects the rise and fall of his American dream and his homecoming. Four parallel threads constitute the dynamic plot of the novel: interaction with presumably an American tourist; Changez's schooling in an elite American educational institution (Princeton University); and his professional career at Underwood Sampson; and his passionate love for Erica (an emotionally and psychologically disrupted maniac). The latter three (as narrated to the American) are responsible for his radical restructuring. His disillusionment with the American cosmopolitan lifestyle begins after 9/11, the news of which he heard while he was in Manila on an official trip. He was relentlessly enraged and exasperated at the maltreatment of Muslims at airport receptions and in other public places. His fury and frustration also intensified Erica's ill-treatment, as she was now hospitalized because of her psychological derangement and reportedly committed suicide. His distrust and want of passion for his particular job contributed to his estrangement from America. The American dream becomes a horrific interpretation. His unshaved appearance is another kinaesthetic expression of his annoyance with America. Everything happening in and around him compels him to rupture the cocoon of dual identity and develop a renewed zest to know his past and present self. Returning to Pakistan and taking up a job as a university lecturer in Lahore refuels his activism against the American foreign policy and the war on terror rhetoric. Over time, his transformation is fulsome and duly justified, as well.

The novel under review attempts to smash the offensive stereotypes of radicalism, reductionism, and fanaticism, which Muslims are linked with, in the post-9/11 American society. Thus far, such anti-American sentiment was either overlooked due to cultural fusion or was of marginal magnitude. The frustration came into view after 9/11, with heightened annoyance over the abuse

of Muslims. The novel encapsulates the intensity of fending off the vile typecasting and the explicitness of aversion to America.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is the “historical experience of resistance against [the American] empire”—as applied to the post-9/11 period (Said xii). Edward Said argues that historically, cultural and political agitation against colonialism and imperialism was frequent for self-reliance and geo-ideological independence. Socio-political and cultural issues are the leading traits of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* for acquiring an indigenous identity and cultural transformation.

However, the novel goes beyond the traditional narrative of resistance to a more nuanced critique of the American politico-cultural hegemony across the globe, which does not spare individuals as well as communities. The novel counteracts the American perspective of Orientalism and properly projects socio-cultural prominence of the Pakistani national identity.

Maligned, abused, and subjugated factions have their distinct outlook contrary to the Western debate on Orientalism, which influences the discourse of historicity evolved by the West. In this context, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores the loud and clear voice of the conflictive identities who, over time, challenge the American Empire to squeeze through the ordeal of cultural transformation. Changez tells the American interlocutor about one’s identity: “it is the thrust [and momentum] of one’s narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one’s detail” (Hamid 118). Ambivalence and fluctuation between love-hate relations is the primary feature of such resistance tales, certainly against the neo-colonial American Empire. Apart from serving the American Empire, the novel’s protagonist pursues personal growth and professional career development. Richard Gray (2011), while talking about imperial America, is of the view that “imagination (of Changez) has now been colonized by the United States”, as he had cultivated a relationship with America, liaising the bridge between the practical and imaginary (Gray 21).

Such a romantic rapport simultaneously attracts as well as repels. Being the nucleus of the neoliberal economy, America is “everything...that people both hate and long for” (Buruma & Margalit 14). In return, America, too, scares away those ethnic and racial others and the outsiders, who decline its political, economic and cultural superiority and unforgivingly spite her.

Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) identifies the loftiness of the twin towers with the immensity of the American military, economic and political might and democratic autonomy. Their tragic targeted demotion is naturally regarded as a punishable provocation: “weren't the towers built as fantasies of wealth and power that would one day become fantasies of destruction?... The provocation is obvious” (DeLillo 116). Thus, symbolically, the ascent of the towers is the rise of America as a superpower, and their fall causes reactive confusion and revenge. Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays* (2003) reinforces this reaction when he says that the coercive and “definitive order” of the American Empire, embodied by the World Trade Centre (W.T.C.), inflamed a chauvinistic and xenophobic response to it (Baudrillard 6). 9/11 fiction and its critics have frequently mentioned the New World's “definitive order” against the Third World. Such a picture of exploitative America is portrayed in Deborah Eisenberg's *Twilight of the Superheroes* (2007), where people are exposed to “the dark world that lay right behind it, of populations, ruthlessly exploited, inflamed with hatred, and tired of waiting for change to happen” (Eisenberg 32-33). However, that remains undiscovered by the American Empire until the 9/11 event. Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006) has a telling association with the theme of suppression by the American material empire, which it deems necessary in “terms of investment and vacation opportunities” (McInerney 50). The oppressive domination of the U.S. in the unipolar world after the fall of the U.S.S.R. seems to be essential to maintain its

socio-cultural, political, and economic supremacy over the globe. Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (1967), as motivated by Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, speaks of the same exploited world when he outlines the image of absurdity after discovering it through human dignity. "The moment when the stage sets collapse. We discover that the human is fundamentally artificial and absurd" (Camus 22). Zizek's argument ratifies the deliberate oppression inflicted on the weaker nations in the manner that "took place in New York on September 11" (Zizek 3), which invited "the substantial fact of the persecution of the Third World, that was so far, secreted at the back of the "digital Third World" affluence (5). Thus, for the U.S., the 9/11 event justified its present persecution project (of the Third World) and, in turn, explained its plan for invasions.

By Contextualizing the American cultural capitalism, the novel under examination exhibits its indifference to the American imperial mania after 9/11. An example of such apathy is witnessed in Changez's work at the library of Near Eastern Studies. He works to pay for his education, which he hides from his friends, as he had shown himself to be well-off and could afford the expenses of his teaching. He has chosen the job in the library, thinking that it is a safe place where he would rarely be disturbed by his friends. Brain drain is a well-known fact about America. Thus, it is only interested in collecting educated minds and working-class skills to serve its own economic goals to secure its capitalist designs of dominant ascendancy. American slogans of global peace, interfaith harmony, civil liberties and justice are merely empty promises by which the consumeristic economy of America operates. Changez, the victim of this oppressive system, as he was an integral part until 9/11, was dismayed by its impact and is now indulging in excessive resistance.

Being Pakistani, he was concerned about the economic aid given to his country at the expense of



compromising its integrity and autonomy. Changez was bitterly aware of the fact that “finance was a primary means by which the U.S. empire exercised its power [and hegemony]” (Hamid 156). He was also aware of this truth even before deciding to resist the lure of the manipulative Empire. It had taught him the interpersonal skill “to recognize another person’s style of thought, harness their agenda, and redirect it to achieve our desired outcomes” (36). Since the overall American economic system aims to fortify its wealth at the cost of misusing the natural and human resources of the Third World countries, it has earned the hatred of those nations, of which Changez is the epitome. Frantz Fanon states that capitalistic consumerism has gone to the end to “increase its wealth, its gold or diamond reserves, and to establish its power” (Fanon 101). Changez’s employer at the Underwood Samson informs him that “you’re blood brought from some part of the body that the species doesn’t need any more” (Hamid 97). Paradoxically, the reference is made to the brain drain from developing countries (like Pakistan) by America to strengthen its financial structure and, thereby, assert its hegemony everywhere.

America’s economic dominance impacts its socio-political dynamics and cultural framework. It influences the mindset of even ordinary Americans, as seen anywhere around the world. Changez recognizes the American interlocutor in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from his “bearing and apparent demeanour”. However, his external identity is yet to be discovered as an emissary of the American Empire (Hamid 2). The outward appearance of the American is tantamount to arrogance, which makes him different from others. That reminded the readers of Changez’s experience of the Americans’ arrogant attitude towards the Greeks when they were on their study trip from Princeton to Greece. The Princetonion’s overbearing interaction with the Greeks exposes them as if “they were its ruling class” (Hamid 21). In Chapter 4, Changez had to put on the guise of self-conceit because of his merger with the imperial culture. However, later

on in Pakistan, he felt reassured by his home to point out the “entitled and unsympathetic American (glance)” (124). He was transformed and not from the place from which he had come. Oddly enough, he would have felt privileged if he were deemed an American in the past. On the other hand, he felt displeased, seeing himself in an American persona. Unhesitatingly, he was critical of the problems Pakistan was passing through, but he had little tolerance for similar criticism by an American. He felt irritated when Erica’s father reminded him of the political problems in Pakistan. He resented the “American undercurrents of condescension” and haughtiness (Hamid 55).

While on an official trip to the Philippines, Changez felt honoured and superior to be called an American. To impress the Filipinos, he pretended to be an American. While doing so, he had to hide his Pakistani identity for receiving due prestige and stature. The reason is that they revere and idolize the American Empire for its economic assistance and aid. Therefore, they welcomed the imperial class as “members of the officer class of global business” (Hamid 65).

Nonetheless, some distressing incidents in Manila altered instead, transforming his perception of America and Americanness. The bus driver who took him and his colleagues on a tour trip kept staring at him contemptuously for a long time. That made Changez confused and perturbed, and he started thinking of the disdainful stare to infer the intention of “an undisguised hostility in his expression” (Hamid 67). After much thought, he concluded that the driver did not accept him as a natural American citizen but only as a travelling companion of the imperial gentry while pretending to look like them. This impression was traumatizing for Changez, and he felt as if he had lost everything, including the precious Pakistani identity in which he was born. Annoyance caused by the driver is evocative of the collective fury of the Third World against the Empire and its wrong policies. Edward Said while speaking in Franco- the Algerian context, calls such a

stare a natural phenomenon when the subjugated class empathize with asserting together their collective “native resistance” against imperialism (Said 218). Third World countries consider that America is bullying them for her ulterior motives, without respecting their national ethos, autonomy, and law. Their present persistent economic plight, they believe, is mainly due to the interventionism and universalism of America (Moore-Gilbert). The weaker states are continually demeaned and exploited by the “state of plenty that characterizes” the U.S. (Hamid 47).

Aggravatingly, Euro-America is callously heedless of the “humiliation experienced by most of the world’s population” (Pamuk 10). He was, having “shared a Third World (sense and) sensibility”, Changez instinctively interpreted the facial expression and body language of the driver (Hamid 67). Resonating with Edward Said, Changez, on that very day in Manila, relates intuitively to the driver by realizing that he is employed and engaged by the Empire to serve its economic purpose. Changez recalls and regrets that, in his extreme infatuation with the American dream, he got blended with his professional associates to pursue the principles of the free-market economy. The Americans say to Changez: “you are so foreign”,—which is reminiscent of his foreignness and a compelling impetus for acquiring his indigenous identity (67).

Changez was in Manila when the 9/11 event happened. As he watched television, he saw the World Trade Centre collapsing and turning into scattered rubble, to his surprise. Initially, the news was utter disbelief to him. However, churning through different media channels, the information got confirmed, which was too tragic to understand for him. With its tumbling towers, vast plumes of fire and smoke and frenzied folks, the chaotic cataclysm made him unconsciously grin, as his “initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased” (Hamid 72). He could not resist and justify his joy at the loss of scores of harmless people who had nothing to do with

such devastation. Also, Changez testifies to his smug pleasure at the misfortune of America. Because the American empire insatiably pursues her neurotically individualistic policies and practices. He failed his basic humanity by ignoring the people as distinct from the typical structure's collapse. Dominic Head (2009) argues that, similar to the unveiling of the Islamic countries, Changez's "mask of the subaltern slips" and falls apart (p. 143). That is the turning point in the narrative which confounds the readers, by and large.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalists* supposed 9/11 strikes as a reaction to the arrogant hubris of America. Changez feels euphoric that "someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" because of her baleful domestic policy and international stance and strategy (Hamid 73). The novel despises America's course of action, as it "(humiliates and then threatens) that's what makes it insufferable" (Perlez 15). That is why she had to face up to her demonic actions. It is beyond Changez's understanding how the U.S. would first grieve at losing its citizens. And after that, he rejoices at seeing the films "so prevalent these days of America munitions laying waste the structures of your enemies" (Hamid 73). Such explicit projection persuades him that even the American Empire is not "completely innocent of such feelings [of seeing others in pain and enjoying it]" (73). The narrative covers all these frustrating queries that remind America of her cruel contribution to global aggression by breaching the U.N. legislation on peace. The execution of innocent people and extermination of their geo-ideological reality and socio-cultural identity cannot be justified by any means whatsoever. If this is the yardstick of justice for ensuring global peace, then America is not above the law of equality and equity. However, September 11 provoked the violent impulse against the cultural and racial "Others" (Moore-Gilbert 292). Therefore, stalking the event, America encroached upon countries of geostrategic importance like Afghanistan, rich in natural resources like Iraq, to pursue its imperial ambition of grabbing

and controlling at a “time of unquestioned dominance” worldwide (Hamid 115). Such geographical occupation of the countries mentioned served the imperialistic design of the U.S. and, at the same time, paved the way for future hegemonic expansion.

The novel analyses the American justification of the Western War on Terrorism, which later turns out to be the War of Terrorism. Although the warmongering cartel is not revealed overtly, the role of the M.I.C. (Military Industrial Complex) and its terrible sale of W.M.D. (Weapons of Mass Destruction) around the globe for proxy wars by terrorists are highlighted. Thus, the crimes of subversion, sabotage, and terrorism are executed through the “organized and politically motivated killings of civilians by killers not wearing soldiers’ uniforms” (Hamid 178). The American Empire formulates and enacts violence strategies, under the pretext of war against terrorism, for ransacking G.O.D.: gold, oil, and drugs, wherever they are discovered. Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan have instantly been on the head list after the 9/11 incursions. In the “war on terror”, nations lost hundreds and thousands of innocent people. At this point in the novel, the situation intensifies when the description of affliction enforced by intelligence agencies in torture cells is linked with the incidence of a lost boy. The missing boy, accused of being an accomplice in killing an American official, was supposed to have been “whisked away to a secret detention in some lawless limbo between America and Pakistan” (Hamid 182). Hamid argues that the rhetoric of the “war on terror” is merely a lame excuse for America. Though broadly classified as state, inter-state and non-state terrorism, its core cause has been side-lined conveniently, like its correct definition.

Changez’s mobility from the centre to the periphery always embitters his taste for America and its foreign policies about Third World nations. In this regard, another turning point in transforming his perception of the American Empire is his official visit to appraise a book

publishing firm in Valparaíso, Chile. The company's publisher, Juan- Bautista, contributed to altering his mindset and affiliation with the Empire. The publisher believes that Changez represents the American capitalist Empire that unsettles and spoils people in the Third World at the decree of the U.S. Such pungent yet accurate remarks agitate his mind to rethink his syncretic identity in favour of transformation. Changez is criticized for playing the role of the present-day janissary. Janissaries were teenage Christians taken captive by the Ottomans in the fourteenth century and were detained and brainwashed against their fellow citizens. The implication of mentioning the janissaries is that the American Empire hires people worldwide to train and use them against their people for achieving their goals, as many foreign fabricated N.G.O.s. Similarly, as referred to by Juan-Bautista, Changez too is recruited by the Empire for economic exploitation of his people. His eyes are opened to that fact after realizing his position as a henchman working for Western imperial ambitions against the sovereignty of his own country and compatriots. This realization subsequently triggers off his ultimate transformation. The perception of his endemic identity discerns its ultimate identification with the "inward transformation that began when he realized he was half- gladdened by the World Trade Centre attacks" (Lasdun 1). Having been through the dilemma of identity crisis and now acquiring a transformed identity, Changez abandons everything and gets back to Underwood Sampson to quit the job. Anna Hartnell (2010) identifies the abbreviation of the U.S. with Underwood Sampson. Hence, renouncing Underwood Sampson is equivalent to saying goodbye to America. Returning to Pakistan, Changez feels liberated from the imperial clutches. Now, he can explicitly express the facts he had understood all this time. He was ambivalent because of his inner assertions about cosmopolitanism and cultural heterogeneity and could hardly say anything because he served the American economy. However, by the time Changez is emancipated, he

goes to every credible extent in raising his voice against America's "constant interference in the affairs of others" (Hamid 156). He says so publicly and candidly to the mass media and his students and colleagues at the university where he now teaches. He expresses his dissatisfaction over American trespassing of the international law of justice and peace by invading sovereign states and societies, including Iraq and Afghanistan. His outrage exacerbates by the news of the occupation of Afghanistan, which shares its geographical borders and socio-cultural mores with Pakistan. Any despicable incident in Afghanistan instigates the destabilization of peace in Pakistan. American intrusion in and occupation of "Pakistan's neighbour...friend and a fellow Muslim nation [makes Changez] to tremble with fury", as Afghanistan also shares Islam as its religion with Pakistan (Hamid 100). He reproves the U.S. for her aggressive foreign policy that tempts other economic powers for waging wars with small countries without any justification. Contextualizing the appetite for invasions and occupations in South Asia, Changez brings to light the hegemonic outlook of India, as she follows the footprints of America while dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Changez concurs with Osama bin Laden by saying that September 11 "united" (168) Americans with the perpetrators of 9/11; that is to say, that the attackers wanted America to be exposed to torture as she had been inflicting on "others" (as cited in Morey & Yaqin).

America had been safe and sound from terrorism at the time when "others" were suffering from the pain of it. As Žižek argues, extremism and radicalism for America were the trouble that "happens there, not here". It remained safe and unscathed until 9/11 happened (Žižek 13). Violence, aggression and terrorism had hit the weaker nations while America remained disengaged from their social perception of social reality. America not only proliferates violence around the world but also tries to establish the terrible update that "rocked the entire planet"—

the news that shocks the world (Hamid 168). Edward Said response to the unspeakable actions of the U.S. as “crimes of violence, crimes of suppression (that disorientates and frightens the world—regrettably)” (Said 195). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers a solution to the unjustified unstable conditions created by America by suggesting that the U.S. should be intercepted and halted in pursuing its vile imperialistic aims for ensuring global peace and prosperity. Leerom Medovoi calls this recipe of a remedy the commencement of a “terminal crisis” as if it were to meddle with the hegemony of the New World Order (Medovoi 644). Giovanni Arrighi observes that the “terminal crisis” in the American global order has set in because it had pre-emptively encroached upon Iraq in 2003 (Arrighi 57). He keeps on expounding on the waning sway and supremacy of America for the reason that the “world [has] rejected American leadership to the extent that had no precedent in the annals of U.S. hegemony” (58). Because the American military-strategic, socio-cultural and political-economic influence outreaches peripheral spaces, change is essentiated in the “turn from the study of a national literature to the literature of an empire” (Medovoi 649). For that reason, Medovoi explores that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* participates in “America’s shifting global position”, typically antithetical to American notable domestic voices in fiction (644). This “shifting global position” corresponds to a colossal imperial standing and stance that reinforces its authoritative control over the globe.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* tells the tale of despair and defiance against American callousness, harassment and mass murder in the countries suspected to have links with terrorism. The U.S. has, of course, targeted all alleged crimes without any convincing evidence, thereby breaching the Universal Human Rights Charter, Conventions, and Laws. Therefore, Changez dissociates himself from his imperial imprint of recognition and eschews his acquired identity of



a “modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire” (Hamid 152). He relieves himself from the clutches of rich American life, both privately and professionally, which had rarely allowed him to dissect and examine the corporate capitalist system and society he worked. Things have changed now, and he can see happenings around him with eyes wide-opened. He compares America with the history of past empires to infer that the U.S. is not different from other ancient empires. She is bent upon imposing subjugation, grinding the subservient class, and always watching over the oppressed masses as racial “others”. Changez was cursed with offensive language by being called a “fucking Arab” (Moore-Gilbert 295). The current derogatory curse word for Arabs is identified with the racial “others”. In rejecting such humiliating abuse, he discarded all that was associated with America and began to teach at a university in Lahore, the heart of Pakistan. Together with that, he led an active campaign against American imperialism.

### **Conclusion**

Although Changez was surrounded by acute peril to his person because of his driven passion, he believed that the solution lies in both personal and national liberation from the American imperial system, which drains the blood of Third/Muslim world countries like Pakistan to strengthen itself. His pupils received his words well as the gospel truth because he had been part of the American capitalist corporate economy, deeply embedded in exploitative doctrines. To highlight Pakistan’s sovereignty and promote its moral stand on national and international issues, he mobilizes not only the people around him but also coordinates mass meetings to register his reservations about the double-faced American policies. Consequently, he discovers himself “rather like a Kurtz waiting for his Marlowe” to bring him down (Hamid 183). Even though Changez is trying to lead a routine life, he is possessed by the obsession that someone is

watching him. The analogy of Kurtz, who is acclimatized to the Congo as an indigenous being and had little hope of recovery, expected Marlow to retrieve him from the *Heart of Darkness*. He discloses to the American speaker, who is already aware of his negative sentiments towards America, by saying “that America might react to my admittedly intemperate remarks by sending as an emissary to intimidate me or worse” (183). Referring to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and its principal characters also implies that American neo-imperialism has replaced the jargon of traditional colonialism and has resurfaced in new-fangled terminology. Changez’s estrangement depicts turmoil stimulated by disruptiveness and divergence enacted by an implied debate established on falsehood. According to Edward Said, control and authority are the twin factors responsible for creating discord in relations between people, which could otherwise proceed peacefully.

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