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Realistic Group Conflict Dynamics in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: A Psychological Perspective

[1]Laraib Arshad , [2]Dr Taimur Kayani and [3] Dr. Hafiz Kamran Farooqi

1. MPhil Scholar, Department of English, GIFT University Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Professor, Department of English, GIFT University Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor (VFM), Department of English, GIFT University, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan

| ***Corresponding Author** | kamranfarooqi10@gmail.com |

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the socio-psychological tensions inherent in the colonial dichotomy in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, concentrating on the characters Changez and Erica. The study aims to investigate how the novel challenges misrepresentations of Muslims, particularly after the 9/11 incident, biases of the West, and stereotypes encountered by immigrants, especially Muslims, illustrating global dynamics through the protagonist, Changez's personal experiences. The research employs Muzafer Sherif's Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) to analyze identity crises, resource competition, and the viewpoints of marginalized groups, especially post-9/11 occurrences. An interpretative approach was used to examine the conflicts shown in The Reluctant Fundamentalist using the RGCT framework. This included examining the text to discern and elucidate the socio-psychological conflicts between the two portrayed realms. The results underscore how the text contests Western assumptions about immigration and depicts conflicts as means for resolution via zero-sum or superordinate goals. The research illustrates the importance of literary texts in challenging preconceptions and promoting immigrant rights from a socio-psychological viewpoint. This study augments comprehension of identity and conflict in modern society. It underscores the importance of engaging with literature to gain insights into the complexities of human experiences and to promote empathy and understanding.

Introduction

The research examines the conflicts between Eastern and Western nations, highlighting how rivalry may emerge from unanticipated attitudes, threats, actions, disparities, or calamities. A comprehensive analysis of conflicts may use the September 11, 2001, attacks to exemplify their influence on Asian nations and international relations. The 9/11 attacks were a series of orchestrated terrorist acts perpetrated by the Islamic extremist organization al-Qaeda against the United States. On that day, 19 extremists commandeered four commercial aircraft, two of which were directed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, resulting in their collapse. A third aircraft collided with the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, while the fourth descended in a field in Pennsylvania as passengers attempted to subdue the hijackers. The assaults caused the deaths of 2,997 individuals – 2,750 in New York, 184 in the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania – comprising 400 police officers, and led to roughly 3,000 further injuries. These occurrences signify one of the most lethal terrorist episodes in U.S. history (Doherty, Hartig, & Carroll, 2021).

During that period, the United States, led by President George W. Bush, aimed to initiate military operations against Muslim nations to propagate the notion that Muslims are terrorists. Through this ideology, Americans want to disseminate Islamophobia and bigotry globally. In this reaction, the United States conducted assaults against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The conflict spanned the longest duration in American history, lasting "nineteen years, eleven months, two weeks, and two days," from October 7, 2001, to August 30, 2021, resulting in the deaths of about 120,000 individuals. Ultimately, America said, "It was an error." Additionally, it is noteworthy that at the fall of the two towers, all Muslims were on duty whereas all Europeans were on holiday (Witte, 2024).

The global scenario was peculiar and terrifying, resulting in severe physical and psychological repercussions on individuals, often referred to as PTSD. The research addresses stereotypes and prejudice, notions of superiority or inferiority, and unfavorable views related to the 9/11 incident, which precipitated significant socio-political transformations globally, especially within Muslim communities. The research aimed to illustrate the importance of Pakistani authors who endeavoured to depict the representation of Muslims in the post-9/11 context, particularly focusing on Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. He aims to demonstrate to the global audience that Muslims are not extreme extremists and should not be regarded as terrorists, as shown in the book (Khan & Elahi, 2021, p. 72).

Mohsin Hamid is regarded as a prolific and talented author who wrote the novel to illustrate the consequences of the 9/11 events, drawing on his vast experience to address several themes. He is a Pakistani-born internationally famous author, brand strategist, essayist, and novelist known for works such as *Moth Smoke*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, *Exit West*, *The Last White Man*, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Mohsin Hamid was born in Lahore on July 23, 1971, making him 53 years old. He spent his formative years in America. His father had a professorship at Stanford University, USA. He returned at nine and enrolled at Lahore Grammar School for his primary studies. Subsequently, he went to America to further his studies and obtained his bachelor's degree in finance in 1993 from Princeton University. He has been nominated for "The Man Booker Prize" on two occasions, most recently for *Exit West* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Hamya, 2021).

In reading his novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, one cannot avoid the multiple conflicts that revolve around the binary antagonism between Western and Eastern nations, which constitutes the central theme of the work. The tale starts on a historic street in Anarkali, Lahore. The protagonist of the story, Changez, converses with a stranger at a hotel about historical conflicts and his experiences with American society, highlighting his academic prowess and the scholarship he received from Princeton University. Subsequently, he secured employment at the esteemed firm Underwood Samson and developed an affection for Am-Erica, striving for her contentment; nevertheless, she consistently rejected him, fixating on her former partner, Chris. Here, she represents the American state, which can never be genuine towards Muslim nations. He said, "I had diminished my self-worth; perhaps I was humiliated by the persistent dominance…." In four and a half years, I was never an American (Hamid, The Reluctant Fundamentalist, 2007, pp. 121-37).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist explores diverse dimensions of social, political, cultural, historical, and linguistic issues, employing a complex structure and third-person narration that allows for interruption while examining themes of identity, hybridity, and Western hegemony over Eastern nations from multiple viewpoints. This study employed Muzaffer Sherif's "The Realistic Group Conflicts" framework to elucidate the origins and effects of realistic group conflicts on individuals. It will analyze the escalation of

disputes and their management through superordinate or zero-sum mentalities, concluding that intergroup conflicts emerge among groups and can precipitate warfare, exemplified by the "war on terror" and the events of 9/11.

The global scenario was peculiar and terrifying, resulting in severe physical and psychological repercussions for humanity. A poll conducted one month after the 9/11 disaster revealed that 50% of those residing near the WTC reported experiencing discomfort in the nose, throat, or eyes due to health difficulties. Hospital admissions rose markedly among inhabitants of lower Manhattan. Further analysis reveals that 50,000 pregnant women residing at least five miles from the WTC site give birth to preterm and underweight infants owing to PTSD, since a child's development may be more significantly affected by maternal mental health than by the direct consequences of the event. Likewise, individuals' mental health was adversely affected as they faced the distressing prospect of losing their loved ones.

The paper provides two critical perspectives: it highlights social injustice, political disputes, economic disparity, and identity crises that precipitate tangible group conflicts worldwide. Secondly, it will illustrate the deplorable and distressing circumstances of outsiders, Asians, people, and "labeled" nations. It also emphasizes the experiences of immigrants who faced negative labeling or master status that overshadowed their other characteristics and categorized them as outsiders. This research illustrates the persistent divide between Western and Eastern nations; even Muslims who want to integrate and get citizenship often remain classified as an "other group." The dissatisfied protagonist, Changez, exemplifies how diverse circumstances generate worldwide conflicts, compelling individuals to confront their identities and histories.

Literature Review

The present section comprehensively examines existing literature, including articles, theses, dissertations, and relevant contents, to analyze the conflicts present between the East and the West. This section delineates and assesses the principal issues addressed in the chosen work while juxtaposing prior studies with contemporary studies and prevailing circumstances. In the first phase, I will analyze prior studies, interconnected theories, and research about group disputes. The next portion deals with the investigation of various aspects of Mohsin Hamid's novels and his contribution, accompanied by a review of prior pieces that provide an in-depth discussion of the chosen novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Conflicts emerge from societal disparity, which may be socio-economic, political, and religious. Conflict theories are social science frameworks that highlight the disparities across social groupings concerning social, political, or economic dimensions. These theories emphasize power disparities, including class struggle, and often challenge historically prevailing ideas. This paper examines the perspectives of many conflict theorists, including Marx, Weber, Mills, Simmel, Mead, Tajfel, and Kurt Lewin, and analyses their societal implications (Mishra p. 26).

Realistic group conflict arises when groups or countries perceive threats, such as controversy, resistance, disagreement, struggle, argument, or conflicts, from others and fight for the same limited resources, including employment, power, money, political influence, social status, and economic stability. This notion has been examined by several authors and psychologists, such as Hood, Harvey, Tajfel, Simmel, Lewin, and Muzafer Sherif, a Turkish-American social psychologist who formulated this thought between 1954 and 1966. Sherif's Robbers Cave experiment demonstrates how intergroup and outgroup conflicts result in aversion, prejudice, intolerance, revulsion, xenophobia, and stereotypes. This results in a zero-sum scenario in which several organizations vie for a singular

reward. Ultimately, one faction prevails and receives the prize from a communal pool. This dynamic promotes secondary objectives and collaboration, eventually resulting in reciprocal understanding (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1954/1961).

Furthermore, an examination of Kurt Lewin's field theory enables readers to comprehend the origins of conflicts, as it elucidates how individual conduct is shaped by a group's norms, objectives, structures, and regulations. The cumulative effect of these forces and effects may profoundly affect an individual's behavior, including situational, cultural, and societal factors. This encapsulates a person's distinct experience and reality, including their emotions, thoughts, perceptions, aspirations, and encounters. Lewin's Field Theory posits that behavior arises from the interplay between the person and the environment. This theory significantly influences social psychology, reinforcing the notion that individual characteristics and contextual elements interact to determine behavior. Lewin posits that group conflicts emerge from causes including mental conflicts, inferiority or superiority complexes, terrorism, and divisions within this 'field' of influences (Lewin, 1935).

From a psychological point of view, Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT) emphasizes the value of social identity. Tajfel wrote that every person gets a prominent part of ideas from his group members and develops favoritism for the ingroup and hostility for the outgroup. This theory demonstrates how ingroup identities and favoritism can cause conflict because everyone wants to enhance his group's status by using different tools and money from others (Mcleod, 2023). Similarly, Farooqi & Jamil emphasize the psychological impacts of colonialism, racism, and migration on Zanzibar society (p. 1041).

To George Herbert Mead, just as Seminal, conflict and collaboration are correlative to one other, and no community can thrive without both. He adds:

> A highly developed and organized human society is one in which the individual members are interrelated in a multiplicity of different intricate and complicated ways whereby they all share several common interests…. and yet, on the other hand, are more are less in conflict relative to numerous other interests which they possess individually, or else share only small and limited groups. (Mishra 27)

Consequently, people are interconnected through the sharing of shared interests. However, they are in opposition when they do not possess common interests. In summary, group conflict dynamics may arise from the intricate interaction of psychological, social, and cultural norms, and structural elements. The perspectives of many theorists, including Sherif, Lewin, Tajfel, Turner, and Georg Simmel, may be complex regarding the generation, emergence, and resolution of group conflict. These findings help formulate successful solutions for conflict management in many social circumstances.

In the 1998 journal article "Intergroup Competition and Attitudes towards Immigrants and Immigration: An Instrumental Model of Group Conflict," Victoria M. Esses, Lynne M. Jackson, and Tamara L. Armstrong examine the instrumental model of group conflict. Perceived rivalry for resources substantially influences intergroup attitudes and actions. The authors contend that resource scarcity and the presence of a competitive outgroup foster a sense of intergroup rivalry for resources. This perceived rivalry elicits defensive responses, including negative attitudes and discriminating actions, intended to neutralize the danger. The model addresses modern perspectives on immigration, suggesting that talented immigrants, seen as rivals for employment and resources, may be viewed as threats.

Theorists assert that intergroup conflict has emerged as a social phenomenon, serving as a fundamental aspect of social psychological discourse. Preliminary research reveals several instances of disputes arising from group differences, leading to avoidance and animosity. Various scenarios and techniques may emerge to resolve complexity, including legal action, moral persuasion, and collaborative efforts. Superordinate aims emerge as a compelling strategy within legal and moral frameworks. Certain objectives of superordinate goals need collaborative efforts that have shown a reduction in prejudice and the promotion of collaboration and unity, hence alleviating tensions between conflicting groups (Sherif M. , 1958).

The paper analyses numerous perspectives, papers, and journals about the work that addresses several themes, including 'The Conflict in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*,' published in 2022. Mohsin Hamid's oeuvre examines the issues of identity, displacement, cultural discord, and collective conflicts on both global and societal scales. His books often use a first-person narrative, enabling an in-depth exploration of his characters' thoughts and feelings. Hamid's upbringing in two civilizations provides a unique viewpoint for evaluating both cultures. His characters navigate several cultures and identity dilemmas, shown by his renowned book, The Reluctant Fundamentalist, which narrates the tale of Changez, a Pakistani individual who was employed on Wall Street before repatriating to Pakistan after 9/11. The narrative illustrates the sudden transformation of the world and its impact on every Muslim, particularly a bearded guy. It elucidates Muslim ideals as seen by Americans and how Muslims seek to reconcile their own identities (Qizi & Qizi, 2022, p. 1).

In the article "Identity Crisis in Pakistan," Muddasar Nazar analyzes the post-9/11 situation by illustrating the repercussions of the 9/11 tragedy on the global Muslim community, with a special focus on Muslims in the United States:

> The post-colonial state of Pakistan is faced with identity-related challenges and is struggling to define its identity, particularly from the onset of the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Parallel movements are running across the landscape of Pakistan, as some demand an Islamic state, some a multinational state, some fight for a secular one, and some a democratic Islamic republic, and if Islamic state, again beset with complexity as to what type of Islamic state – Shia or Sunni – Pakistan should be and to what degree. (Kiran1, 2013, p. 35)

This excerpt highlights the splits and challenges across many cultures due to the persistent clashes between liberalism and fundamentalism. Divisions similarly occur among other groups, including American, Pakistani, Eastern, Western, South Asian, and European. Division engenders strife since one group cannot acknowledge another as equals.

Hamid examines in "Nostalgic Impact on Characterization in The Reluctant Fundamentalist" identity crisis, identity preservation, dualism and irony, conflicts, global identity, and the repercussions of 9/11. This article emphasizes international problems, with Hayati's (2018) exploration of global identity, contending that "the novel depicts the cultural conflicts stemming from globalization." He asserts that anti-American attitude originates from political, economic, and cultural factors, rather than only from religion. Changez identified a profound nostalgia as the cause of Erica's downfall, asserting that it is within her discretion to recover from it, as he questions: "I never discerned what precipitated her decline – was it the trauma from the assault on her city?" The endeavor of submitting her manuscript for publication? The reverberations elicited in her by our intimacy? All of these items? None of these options? – However, I believe I saw even at

that moment that she was succumbing to a profound nostalgia, from which only she could decide whether to emerge (Ahmad, Khan, & Rehman, 2022, p. 117).

Edward Said's notion of Orientalism provides a vivid depiction of the book. Said examines several methods by which Western civilizations formulate the concept of the "other," elucidating how people encounter preconceptions, bigotry, and animosity while emphasizing the degrading consequences of orientalist discourse on figures such as Changez. This notion compels readers to reevaluate their preconceptions about fundamental rights, Islam, self-esteem, terrorism, and the immigrant experience. Through the juxtaposition of the narratives of both Pakistani-American characters, Hamid provides a compelling depiction that has been neglected in the post-9/11 discourse (Que, p. 19).

Critics, academics, and scholars have examined several aspects of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through numerous theoretical lenses. Their perspectives are undeniably significant, although no one has approached it from a 'practical group conflict' standpoint. This research has sought to examine the effects of intergroup disputes across various societies, including their origins, escalation, and potential resolutions.

This paper examines disputes arising in actual life, so it is termed realistic group conflict. This method is better suitable for elucidating participants' perspectives of the experience or for examining their involvement in the event, as shown by this research. The study employs a thorough reading of texts, papers, and journals while addressing the worldwide topic of 9/11 via a case study methodology. This study explores the field of social psychology, using Muzaffer Sherif's theoretical framework known as 'realistic group conflict theory,' exemplified by the Robbers Cave Experiment conducted in Oklahoma, USA. We choose *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a key source to analyze the experiences of immigrants in other nations, where they are seen as "Others" and confront many challenges. Utilizing a qualitative methodology and a case study, we aim to elucidate the underlying importance concealed within the text, uncovering profound meanings and insights.

Material and Methods

This study analyzes the implications of the 9/11 incident, using psychological perspectives from Muzaffar Sherif's Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT). Utilizing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as the primary text, we examine the many prejudices that arise and their effects on the worldwide Muslim population, particularly with their manifestation in the West. Utilizing RGCT as a theoretical framework, we want to illuminate the discrimination levelled toward Muslims, notably through the experiences of the protagonist Changez and other significant characters. This study relies on certain words, phrases, and excerpts from the work. Secondary sources include academic journals, non-fiction literature, and South Asian literature. Employing a qualitative approach, we conduct an exhaustive examination of the text, emphasizing its stylistic methods to provide a thorough evaluation. Through interpretative analysis, we reveal concealed levels of significance and profound insights inherent in this story.

In the premises of research design, there are two resources for its design: primary, including first-hand interactions and observations, and secondary, involving existing literature or prior studies. This study chooses observations from journals, articles, and the Pakistani metafictional novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by well-known author Mohsin Hamid. The text's content reflects the writer's Western background because he spent more time there than in his native land as he explored both Eastern and Western cultures; he was hanging between both lands. Despite its global reach, a group conflict analysis,

particularly regarding conflict ideals, is unexplored conflicts. This invites further examination and exploration by scholars.

Theoretical Framework

The paper employs the perspectives of Turkish-American psychologist Muzaffar Sherif, specifically his Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), formed in 1966. RGCT elucidates how competition for few resources engenders prejudice, discriminatory conduct, and intergroup conflict. Sherif's seminal Robbers Cave experiment well exemplifies this hypothesis, when 22 boys were segregated into two groups inside a summer camp environment. The experiment occurred in three phases: group creation, intergroup conflict, and conflict resolution. A significant discovery was the efficacy of superordinate aims in mitigating conflict since collaboration reduced bias and promoted favorable relations among groups. Sherif notably said, "When two or more groups compete for the same finite resources, it results in conflict, adverse stereotypes, and discrimination among the groups" (Sherif, et al., 2023).

This research aimed to examine the origins of bias in intergroup rivalry, positing that antagonism escalates when many groups vie for the same objective. He delineated three levels for this elucidation. He contends that rivalries escalate in contexts of negative interdependence when opposing interests emerge because only one group can attain a goal that is important to many parties. In the second phase of the research, the camp counsellors established a "zero-sum situation" by orchestrating a tournament in which the boys competed, with the victorious team awarded trophies and pen-knives. By Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), this competition heightened animosity, resulting in derogatory remarks and violent altercations. The rivalry escalated when the counsellors intentionally deceived one group about the picnic time, resulting in a scarcity of food - a tangible resource. These manipulations enhanced group cohesion and partiality, with males within the same group being commended as courageous and resilient, while those in the opposing group were characterized as cunning or "smart alecks." The boys underestimated their performance in a bean search activity and identified relatively few members of the opposite group as buddies, with just 6.4% in one group and 7.5% in the other.

Antagonism towards the outgroup intensified, as seen by physical altercations, derogatory remarks, and the incineration of the other team's flag. These results are noteworthy as they underscore how competitiveness may incite bias and discrimination. Nonetheless, Sherif also showed that this animosity may be mitigated in the third phase of the research by implementing common objectives, such as repairing a malfunctioning water pump or extricating the camp vehicle from the mire. This collaboration resulted in a significant rise in friendships between the two groups, with percentages increasing to 36.4% and 23.2% respectively. The lads expressed a desire to coordinate a campfire and return home on the same bus. This is significant as it demonstrates that Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) offers effective strategies for mitigating bias across groups by establishing common objectives that necessitate collaboration, perhaps fostering more harmonious and cooperative relationships in the future (Evaluate Realistic Conflict Theory).

Additionally, the investigator of this study examines Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT) alongside Social Identity Theory (SIT), positing that biases emerge from group classification rather than competition. Social Identity Theory posits that people get self-esteem from their group affiliations and preferentially support their ingroup to preserve a favourable social identity. RGCT highlights competition for real resources, while SIT focuses on the psychological dimensions of group identification. This article

delineates the merits and limits of RGCT, noting its empirical backing and practical applications. The idea has been used in several contexts, including international disputes and educational environments. Competition over scarce resources, such as a calculator in the classroom, may result in student conflict. The Kashmir valley, situated between India and Pakistan, is a source of strife; conversely, the gas pipeline serves as a point of contention between Russia and Ukraine. Nonetheless, RGCT has some restrictions. In some instances, conflict may endure despite attempts to attain shared objectives. In summary, realistic group conflict theory offers a significant paradigm for comprehending intergroup conflict and prejudice. Sherif's Robbers Cave experiment exhibits the ideas of the theory. RGCT elucidates the significance of resource competition and the prospects for conflict resolution via cooperation, providing essential insights for the management of intergroup conflicts (Hope & Delecce, 2023).

In her book, *The Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, Saera Khan elucidates that when individuals see their freedom curtailed and their autonomy jeopardized, they get agitated and are compelled to resist to reclaim their rights, a phenomenon known as psychological reactance. She suggests that if an individual is unable to enrol in a prestigious class, pursuing entry may be a pragmatic strategy. Another significant factor that might lead to conflicts between groups is competition for the same resources. This concept is termed realistic group conflict theory, since the perception of competition for identical resources or against one another may engender antagonism between groups. When individuals see external forces exerting control over them, it may result in adverse actions and feelings (Realistic Group Conflict Theory, 2007). Conflict is fundamental to existence. This statement articulates the concept of conflict as an inherent aspect of existence. Humanity will always confront the potential for violence. Conflict is an inherent aspect of existence that cannot be eliminated by human civilization (Siregar p. 11).

Conflicts arise out of inequality in the society. Inequality may be social, political, or economic. Conflict theories are perspectives in social science that emphasize the social, political, or economic inequality of a social group. Conflict theories draw attention to power differentials, such as class conflict, and generally contrast historically dominant ideologies. In this article, the author describes the views of various conflict theorists such as Marx, Weber, Mills, Simmel, Mead, Tajfel, and Kurt Lewin and their social significance (Mishra p. 26).

Results and Discussion

This portion aims to analyze the effects of conflicts on immigrants on their lives and identities, as well as their effort to fight against oppressive rules and the concept of superiority, and reveal the structures of domination in societies and their specific effects on women. There are seven major key assumptions of the theory. Through them, Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be analyzed for unveiling hidden conflicts. Competition for limited resources, competitions breed negative attitudes, Zero-sum competition, Western superiority over Eastern inferiority, ingroup favouritism and outgroup hostility, threat intensifying group conflicts, ethnocentrism and the clash of cultures, and global connections.

Through all these assumptions it can be uncovered how conflicts originate and can be compromised by super-ordinate goals. For example, the first chapter of the novel opens in a Lahore café. The unnamed American stranger and protagonist of the book both have a conversation that explores the theme of group conflict and his competition for the same resources. As he said to the stranger, "Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible. I have access to this beautiful

campus, I thought, to professors who are titans in their fields and fellow students who are philosopher-kings in the making" (Hamid, pp. 1-3). This extract portrays a competition among students, particularly foreigners, to compete for something better than others; it may be for a prestigious job or study at a higher level, and everyone wants to exist in a meritocratic environment. He feels like a twinkling star when called a "New Yorker." Initially, there is a sense of belonging in America. Still, he does not realize that he is a "Pakistani" and always considers them like "Others." Nico and Amy discuss the same concept in 'Neither East nor West': Chicken Tikka in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) Changez's life in the United States was just like Odysseus' mermaids or the ancient Mariner of Coleridge's ballad (Amy & Nico, 2016).

Secondly, as a result of competition, we can examine how competition for the same and scarce resources breeds negative attitudes towards groups and causes of conflicts. It is also defined in these words "Conflict is inevitable due to competition. Because we do not think and act the same, disagreements will occur", and "Competition is a rivalry between two groups or two individuals over an outcome that they both seek. In a competition, there is a winner and a loser. Parties involved may or may not view the situation as a competition for resources" (Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter, & Thweatt, 2021).

Changez initially meets a competitive Princeton, Underwood Samson, and then a spirit in America. These three competitive spirits finally reveal their dark side as Changez faces different challenges. We can explore some more competitive views that have caused negative stereotypes for each other, as he picked out prejudice and speaks:

But at that moment, my thoughts were not with the victims of the attack – death on television moves me most when it is fictitious and happens to characters with whom I have built up relationships over multiple episodes – no, I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees. Ah, I see I am only compounding your displeasure. I understand; hearing someone gloat over one's country's misfortune is hateful. But surely you cannot be completely innocent of such feelings yourself. (Hamid, 2007, pp. 83-84)

Through this passage, the study highlights the protagonist's feelings when he sees "America to her knees." Here, he considered that, ultimately, power is not generated for one side; it may be transformed, and he realizes that the misfortune of one nation may be a victory of another, as America's fall was a victory for him. The character's lack of realization, emptiness, and preoccupation with their misery exemplify his negative attitudes. As the last line of the passage elaborated, he thinks that he is not innocent he cannot believe in them again in his life.

Thirdly, we can resolve these crucial attitudes to create a zero-sum mentality in which one's misfortune is a victory for others. In this situation, people realize that resources are limited and gains are exclusive. In post-9/11, some people in America began to see immigrants, especially Muslims, as a threat to the country's safety and economy. This feeling of competition and staring at one another made it harder for immigrants to succeed. People were suspected and did not trust them, especially a man with a beard who was considered a terrorist. To eliminate, this type of competition the zero-sum mentality can be the best option, as it is the only way to create superordinate goals, as Changez tells him:

'Have you heard of the janissaries?' 'No,' I said. 'They were Christian boys,' he explained, "captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that

time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to. (Hamid, 2007, pp. 171-172)

In this passage, the protagonist shows his services to his adopted country and how he fought against his own culture when he was there in an authoritative country, America. Similarly, an American writer writes about it and examines that competitive situations can harm any state. As an American writer states, "Competition may be as American as apple pie, but it's poisoning us. The struggle to defeat each other turns all of us into losers. Rather than building character, competition sabotages self-esteem and ruins relationships" (Scott, 2015).

Furthermore, American superiority prevails over the whole world because she is a superpower and asserts herself as a mother of "others", and Am-Erica always tries to call Winer than Pakistani Changez and considers him a loser by reminding him of his economic worth. To support this point, we can examine George Orwell's discussion, in his writing by name "Animal Farm" (1945) in which he states, "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others" (Orwell, 1945). To understand this concept, we can review Changez's interview location, where he was called for a job at Underwood Samson (US) Company. He said, "On the day of my interview, I was uncharacteristically nervous. They had sent a single interviewer, and he received us in a room at the Nassau Inn – an ordinary room, mind you, not a suite; they knew we were sufficiently impressed already" (Hamid, 2007, p. 6).

In this passage, Hamid highlights the nervousness and discomfort of his unfamiliar environment as he says, "I was uncharacteristically nervous." This statement emphasizes he was uncomfortable because he knows American superiority. The next choice of Nassau Inn was a sign of inferiority for Pakistanis, and through these readers can easily understand how Pakistanis are perceived and treated there. Thus, this setting serves as a microcosm contrast of cultural and socio-economic disparities between Pakistan and America. Kipling illuminates this concept, the concept of slavery's acceptance, and elaborates that even though immigrants accept their slavery and do their best for them, they cannot mingle with them, as he stated in his poem "The Ballad of East and West" (1889), A Most Exploited Line of the Year. It's like a commentary made by a critic or scholar that the East cannot accept the West; there will always be a mental and geographical difference and a sense of slavery between them, as he noted, "East is East and West is West" (Kipling, 1889, p. 1).

In the next step, readers can also learn about the partiality of groups and their discrimination against others, as he elaborates, "My team did not wait for me; by the time I entered the customs hall, they had already collected their suitcases and left. As a consequence, I rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone" (Hamid, 2007, p. 46). In this passage, when his team has gone and did not wait for him, it shows a state of "otherness" and hostility towards a person who does not belong to their nation. His solo travel to Manhattan shows his isolation; this separation reflects the emotional distance created by teams because he considers that they cannot accept him as their native. Another example of ingroup favoritism is, as Erica proclaimed in front of Changez. "I think of Chris a lot," she said, "and I think of me. I think of my book. I think some pretty dark thoughts, sometimes" (Hamid, 2007, p. 118).

Additionally, there is a vivid description of the time post-9/11 when he received threats of attacks from European countries to Asian countries; he feels there is only a lack of power in them. That's why, without any humiliation or destroyed World Trade Center, they are grinding as his rumoured words proved that,

Such as he cried, but I worried. I felt powerless; I was angry at our weakness, at our vulnerability to intimidation of this sort from our – admittedly much larger – neighbour to the east. Yes, we had nuclear weapons, and yes, our soldiers would not back down by being threatened; nonetheless, there was nothing I could do about it but lie in my bed, unable to sleep. (Hamid, 2007, p. 144)

This passage showcases the psychological underpinnings of how external forces attack. Despite having national military "nuclear weapons" and "soldiers," he is not satisfied and has complexities of perceived threats. The speaker's disrupted sleep highlights the intense mental pressure caused by external threats because his brain is filled with anxiety and fear, which can escalate conflicts. Effectively maintaining anxieties and addressing threat perception is critical in managing stability and continuity conflicts from spiralling out of control.

On the other hand, he also shows America's ethnocentrism and superior culture, which is more highly and well decorated than Pakistan, as he gives descriptions: "The setting was superb, the wine was delicious, the burgers were succulent, and our conversation was for the most part rather pleasant" (Hamid, 2007, p. 62). This passage emphasizes the "superb setting", "delicious wine," and "succulent" showcase of American culture. This focus suggests an ethnocentric point of view where one culture is considered superior. For a Pakistani, it shows a desire to assimilate, but it could also lead to internal conflict and a sense of disconnection from their heritage. This passage demonstrates the complexities of navigating cultural clashes, ethnocentrisms, and maintaining one's identity in a multicultural world and how ethnocentrism can manifest in everyday interactions (1994, p. 346).

He further highlights Erica's character and explains the duplicity of the American quality how she is considered worldly but inward she has cheap qualities as he describes Erica's physical appearance and says, "her tanned skin seemed to glow with health I had forgotten how stunning she was, and at that moment … I was forced to lower my eyes. "wow" (Hamid, 2007, p. 57). In this, he elaborates that no doubt she has "tanned skin" but seems glowing with perfect health; at that time, he forgot her past glory but was forced by power and cannot speak according to his wish and just says "Wow."

The preceding content elucidates the factors that precipitate conflict and how they manifest as tangible and perilous in contemporary society. The implications may also be seen as a contribution to literature, given that this idea remains inadequately addressed.

Conclusion

The study has investigated realistic group conflict dynamics in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This study is about the socio-psychological roots – roots that keep the soil firmly intact. These roots hold together the historical background and strength of group dominance that can neither be denied nor erased from memory so easily. This dissertation uncovers the profound complexities of post-9/11 characters' issues from the selected novel through the lens of 'Realistic Group Conflicts' by Muzaffer Sharif. Although the basic theme of the study is competition for scarce resources, identity crisis, and transcultural issues, the researcher has examined critically and found that Pakistani writers always highlighted the struggle and oppression of individuals they have faced in their diverse cultural backgrounds (another group) through the selected novel. The study highlights the originating causes of stereotypes and hostility among nations. In this dissertation, the researcher has tried to tackle the incompatibility causes of groups' conflicts with a Western or non-Western point of view and how conflicts generate feelings

of superiority and inferiority. For brief discussion, this research comprises five parts: introduction, literate review, research methodology, data analysis, and conclusion.

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