



## RESEARCH PAPER

### The War on Terror and the Fiction of Agency: A Critical Analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)

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## ABSTRACT

The present study examines how Mohsin Hamid foregrounds the agency of Pakistanis and Pakistani writers in challenging and reshaping the dominant Western discourse. During the war on terror, Pakistan and the United States maintain an ambivalent relationship. Pakistan, supposedly a key ally, was always accused of pursuing conflicting interests and double game. Consequently, the Pakistani narrative was not heard in the West and the Pakistani agency often ignored or unnoticed. The present study employs Ambreen Hai's (2009) three-dimensional model of human agency for textual analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). The model is based on three-sided nature of agency as argued by Hai in her book, *Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. The study concludes that although Changez, the protagonist, as an agent of change tries to reclaim agency, however, his agency is used by the dominant western discourse against him. In addition, Changez remains a non-agent at the end of the novel the way he had been denied agency by American discourse in the beginning of the novel. The researchers recommend that other novels or literary texts may also be explored to understand how other writers tackle the issue of Agency in the wake of post 9/11 socio-cultural and Geopolitical scenarios.

**KEYWORDS** | *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Agency, The War on Terror, Textual Analysis

## Introduction

Pakistani novel in English traditionally focused on themes such as partition, political upheavals, dictatorship, economic disparity, middle-class problems, and postcolonial issues such as identity and diaspora. The historical moment of "crisis" in Pakistani novel in English, according to Khan (2011), "was marked on a date that is now legendarily termed 9/11" (p. 84). As a result, the scope of Pakistani novel in English shifted to the intervention on subject of '9/11' and the subsequent 'war on terror.' The global war on terrorism or the war on terror is a term used to describe American-led counterterrorism military campaign launched in October 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks on the United States of America in September 2001. Although the war had been waged by America and NATO (America's western allies) mainly against al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist organization based in Afghanistan, it, however, had devastating impacts on Muslim countries in the East. Assumed to last for not more than two years, it lasted in Afghanistan till 2021 disrupting the political, economic, and cultural outlook of Pakistan. It gave rise to talibanization (militancy) and terrorism in Pakistan, which led to Pakistan's own war on terror which is being fought till this day. America's war on terror had physical, political, cultural, emotional, and psychological impacts on the lives of Pakistanis. Pakistan as an ally in the war has badly suffered and is suffering till this day as a result of America's or

the West's war on terror. According to a study conducted by a group of international physicians' organizations, at least eighty thousand Pakistani citizens have died in US-led war on terror (*Body Count*, 2015). This paper hypothesizes that Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) challenges the marginalized position of Pakistan as an ally in the War on Terror through its protagonist, Changez, as an agent character. Robbins (1984) states in this regard that novels have agents, as well as being agents in themselves. By producing and propagating fictions of agent characters and of agency, they play their role as agents. It can have worldly consequences by "encouraging or discouraging various forms of action" (Robbins, 1984, p. 10).

Agency in everyday use is anyone's ability to perform any action as an autonomous human being. According to Ashcroft et al. (2000), in postcolonial theory, agency refers to the power and ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in such a way as to engage or resist imperial power. Similarly, Alidou (2005) employs the concept of agency to mean a wide range of small or large "conscious actions and initiatives" (p. 4). Ambreen Hai (2009) presents a three-dimensional model of human agency based on the three-sided nature of agency in her book, *Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. The first dimension of human agency, according to Hai (2009) is that an agent can be an autonomous and independent individual who can choose to act independently. The second dimension is that an agent may act for another, in another's interests. Such an act is subject to another's will or intentions, and the agent functions as a tool or an instrument. The third dimension is that someone who is denied agency is also an agent. Such an agent is acted upon and made into a non-agent. They are left with no choice. This paper analyzes the reclaim of agency by applying Hai's (2009) three-dimensional model of human agency on Changez as an agent of change.

Changez has been portrayed in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as an agent of change who is trying to reclaim his agency as marginalized individual. Marginalization is the process of making someone feel as if they are not important at all and cannot influence decisions. It is the fact of putting someone in a position in which they are not given any power (Oxford Dictionary, 2005). Ashcroft et al. (2000) defines it as "limitations of a subject's access to power" (p. 121). Changez has been portrayed in the novel as denied agency, and is seen by the prevailing discourses as 'other' on the basis of his nationality and religion. Changez's 'othering' lead to his social and political marginalization. However, being agent character, he is not passive victim of 'othering.' As active agent of change, he tries to reclaim agency by resisting American discourse. Through Changez's agency, Hamid has tried to reclaim Pakistan's voice against the West's allegations accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorism.

## Literature Reviews

George (2003) in *Relocating Agency: Modernity and African Letters* seeks to unravel the agency of African literature by situating it within the context of Anglo-American and postcolonial theory. The book highlights that the epistemological implications of African literature cannot be understood in the predominant way in which the idea of agency is being framed in the contemporary postcolonial theory. The author concludes that in order to understand modernity in context of African letters, the current postcolonial theory is conceptually limited. It does not offer an adequate conceptual space within which the peculiar inflections of modernity contained in African letters can be fully appreciated.

Alidou (2005) in *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* focuses on conscious actions and initiatives as agency of Muslim women in Niger to respond to their condition of subordination in light of multiple legacies like

traditions, the Western impacts, and misuse of Islam. The book explores the role of religion, ethnicity, class, and citizenship in the interplay between Muslim women and agency in Niger. Political Islam, education, popular culture, and war are seen as four domains for the intersections of vectors of agency. The author concludes that previously dominated by men, Muslim women have begun to inscribe their agency in these domains in more visible manner than in any other sphere of society.

Ahmida (2005) in *Forgotten Voices: Power and Agency in Colonial and Postcolonial Libya* focuses on rethinking the history of modern Libya in the light of colonial and nationalist analyses. By highlighting contradictions of modernity, genocide, and alienation faced by Libyan society under colonialism and postcolonialism, the author critiques the current scholarship on Libya which has ignored Libyan society and culture. The book examines social processes that produce and condition the voices of ordinary Libyan people like peasants and tribesmen in response to pressures and opportunities. The book concludes that social history can be captured by analyzing both power and agency, as though power affects people, yet, human agency matters.

Hai (2009) in *Making Words Matter: Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* examines 'literary agency' as a preoccupation with the capacity to act and to act for others or in other words to affect and be affected by their world. Focusing on the works of Kipling, Forster, and Rushdie, the book highlights the connection of this preoccupation with human body. The author concludes that the selected authors have the power to claim political agency because their writings evoke distinctive and complex relations between words and bodies. They make human body central to the imagining of the text because of the three-dimensional instability of human agency as the site of autonomy, instrumentality, and subjection.

Bignall (2010) in *Postcolonial Agency: Critique and Constructivism* believes that agency is shaped by ontology, while thoughts are provoked by practice. The book focuses on theories of action and capacity inflected as a result of the nature of selfhood and worldly reality. The corresponding effects of these theories upon the material and communal practices is also investigated in this work. The author concludes that postcolonial engagement helps in the process of reconciliation between indigenous and settler communities through modes of positive social bindings, acts of kindness, and practices of genuine care and concern. In this way, postcolonial agency can enable selves and communities to begin to understand how they can combine well with others.

Jabri (2014) in his article, "Disarming Norms: Postcolonial Agency and the Constitution of the International," asserts that in international politics on one hand agency is attributed to colonial subjects and on the other hand the presence of agency is denied. The article focuses on the mobilization of postcolonial thoughts in terms of Bhabha's and Fanon's concepts of agency as a response to this challenge. The researcher also emphasizes on an alternative conception of the transformative potential of the postcolonial agency.

Iheka (2018) in *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* focuses on literary representation of Africa's environmental crisis such as oil pollution in the Niger Delta, war devastation in Somalia, and deforestation in Kenya. By highlighting the paucity of scholarship on environmental crisis in Africa, the author notes that the little African studies that existed focused primarily on effects of environmental tragedies on humans ignoring the nonhuman world like plants, animals, forests, soil, and water. Iheka links the question of agency and resistance in African studies as well as in postcolonial studies to the relationship between humans and nonhuman world as represented in African literature. The book concludes that the relationship between

human and other forms of life has significant implications for rethinking question of agency and resistance.

### Material and Methods

The present study is qualitative in nature. The concept of agency is analyzed in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) through textual analysis. Textual analysis is a research methodology that involves interpreting text data and addressing various research questions. Textual analysis can be applied to different types of texts, including written, visual, audio, and digital. The methods used for textual analysis vary depending on the type of text and research question. The process involves selecting the text, coding the text, analyzing the text, and interpreting the text. The first step is selecting the text, which may involve choosing a specific text or collecting a corpus of texts. The next step is coding the text, identifying key concepts or themes, assigning codes, and analyzing the text. The final step is interpreting the text, explaining its meaning and implications. Textual analysis is a valuable and versatile research methodology that can explore a wide range of research questions, identify patterns or themes, explain the meaning of the text, and explore social, political, or cultural implications. The present study employs Alan McKee's (2003) *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide* as methodological framework for textual analysis. Textual analysis of the novel can reveal the ways in which the novel challenges stereotypes about Pakistan. Research questions that can be explored using textual analysis include the various alternative perspectives and counter-narratives offered by the novel to subvert the dominant western discourses. Through textual analysis the reclaim of agency will be analyzed as employed in the novel to contest the post-war stereotypical representation of Pakistan.

### Results and Discussion

Changez, a young Pakistani man, is the protagonist in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). He narrates his experience of living in America before and sometime after 9/11 to an unnamed American at a café in Lahore. Being denied agency by American discourse in the beginning of the novel, he enjoys living in a false freedom as an employee of a prestigious American company. He is on summer holidays to Greece with group of other university fellows including Erica, who later becomes his girlfriend. While on the island of Rhodes he notices a part of wall built to guard against the Turks separating the East and the West. Being a Princetonians, and considering himself an American citizen, he is unable to digest this division of the East and the West. It is very difficult for him to associate himself with the East as he expresses that it was very strange for him to think that he grew up on "the other side" (Hamid, 2007, p.14). He is living a life of false freedom where there are no boundaries and no difference between the East and the West. That's the reason it is 'strange' for him to accept this division.

Similarly, at the end of analyst training program at Underwood Samson, Changez has been placed "number one" among the newly recruited analysts. Living in a false freedom, he doesn't feel any kind of marginalization from any angle. Hartnell (2010) notes in this regard that during his visit to the Phillippines, he is living in a false impression as he is somehow the ambassador of America and that his "Pakistaniness" is not visible (p.339). He is enjoying a warm sense of accomplishment as he expresses that nothing troubled him and he felt like he was a young New Yorker with the city at his "feet" (Hamid, 2007, p.27). His living in a false freedom is also evident when he feels nobody is taking much notice of the white *kurta* he is wearing on the way to meet Erica's parents. He praises New Yorkers that it was a proof that the people of New York are open minded and New

York is a “cosmopolitan” city in the true sense of the word as he felt completely comfortable on the subway wearing his traditional dress i.e. *kurta* (Hamid, 2007, p.29).

Changez’s mimicry in following the western ways and life style is also an example of his denied agency. Mimicry is an important term in postcolonial theory taken from Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994). According to Fay and Haydon (2017), mimicry is the act of a person’s or a group’s adopting an idea or style from another culture. Sometimes it is as simple as a direct attempt to imitate or copy that culture. At other times it can be in a more complicated or ironic ways when a person or group reassert their own beliefs or ideas by using “another culture” (p. 11). In case of Changez, he is not reasserting his own beliefs or ideas, but, too impressed with the West to imitate their culture. He seems to be the victim of western discourse giving the impression that he has got as much freedom in the West as the westerners do. During his interview at Underwood Samson and Company, his mimicry is highlighted when Jim, the president at Underwood Samson, remarks that he is well dressed and polished. He further remarks that he has got a sophisticated accent making other believe that he is “rich” where he came from (Hamid, 2007, p.5). Fay and Haydon (2017) maintain that in this regard that “adopting a different accent might be an attempt to present a higher social status (mimicry)” (p.11). His social position is far low from his master’s he is trying to mimic. By dressing like them and speak in their accent, he is trying to reach to their status. At some points he even feels to be one among them. At Erica’s home, his American girlfriend, Erica’s father lifts a bottle of red wine and offers it to him asking whether he drinks or not. Erica’s mother responds on his behalf that “he’s twenty-two” which suggests that of course he drinks. The father then tell her that I had a Pakistani working for me once and he never drank. Changez, however, replies, “I do, sir” (Hamid, 2007, p.32). Although it is forbidden in his religion but he is trying to make his master happy by following their ways.

Similarly, Changez’s mimicry is evident during his air travel to Philippines on an official assignment. He expresses the experience that they had flown first-class and that he will never forget the feeling of reclining in his seat. He further says that he was clad in his suit as he was “served champagne” by an attractive flight attendant on the plane (Hamid, 2007, p.37). In the same way, according to him, the American officer who was investigating him at New York’s airport was a strongly built woman who had a mastery of English language “inferior” to his own (Hamid, 2007, p.45). It also suggests his compromised agency by mimicking the Americans language and culture. He seems to have gone ahead of his masters by mastering their language. Changez’s living a life of false freedom, however, is short lived, as the incident of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror turned his life upside down.

A true face of America can be instantly seen in the novel after the 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers in New York as Changez was instantly seen as ‘other’ in the American society. ‘Other,’ according to Ashcroft et al. (2000), is the excluded members or “mastered” subject which are created by the discourse of power (p. 156). Changez, who was enjoying a sophisticated life style as a New Yorker and an employee of a prestigious American firm, starts facing humiliation on the basis of his religion and nationality after the 9/11 attacks. Coming back from Philippines, he is separated from the group at the airport for physical checkup. Consequently, he was the last person allowed to board their airplane. Narrating his humiliation at the airport in his dramatic monologue, he asserts that he was escorted by armed guards and was taken into a room where he was asked to “strip down” to his shorts (Hamid, 2007, p. 44). When he enters the aircraft, the fellow passengers started looking at him with concern which make him uncomfortable and he starts “feeling guilty”. America can so easily make one ‘feel guilty’ for doing nothing; just like American discourse made one third of the world’s population (Muslims) ‘feel guilty’ after the 9/11 attacks. The

Muslims around the world started facing 'othering' and were stereotyped as extremist and terrorist after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent war on terror. He suffers more humiliation and 'othering' on reaching the New York's airport. When they arrived at New York airport, he was separated from his team at immigration. The other team members joined the queue for American citizens, while he was asked to join the one for "foreigners" (Hamid, 2007, p.44). After much investigation and humiliation, when he is finally allowed to leave, he found out that his team has already gone. His team members did not wait for him. When he entered the customs hall, his team members had already collected their luggage and "left" (Hamid, 2007, p. 45). He was of great worth to the company just few months ago; but, as soon as the American discourse portrayed him a suspect on the basis of his religion and nationality, he has been abandoned.

After a short lived false freedom, Changez, however, realizes his state of 'being other' from a Third World. He not only started feeling alienated but he was also ultimately drawn to the "isolationist and exceptionalist" wave of the American national narrative in those days (Hartnell, 2010, p. 336). While riding with his colleagues in a limousine during their business trip to Philippines, he notices a jeepney driver looking at him. He feels that his expression revealed an "undisguised hostility" the way he was looking at him (Hamid, 2007, p. 39). Later, he thinks about the many possibilities of hostility in the expression of the jeepney driver. It makes him think about it longer than he should have and he remained "preoccupied with this matter" (Hamid, 2007, p. 40). Finally he realizes that perhaps the hostility in his expression was because they shared a kind of "Third World sensibility" (Hamid, 2007, p. 40). On that occasion he looks at one of his American colleagues to answer his question, and something strange took place. He articulates his experience of that moment by saying that when I looked at the fair hair and light eyes of my colleague I felt so foreign. At that moment I started feeling much closer to the Filipino driver than to my American colleague. I realized that I was "play-acting" when in reality I should have been on my way to my own country (Hamid, 2007, p. 40). This is his first realization of being in the wrong world; a world that does not accept him as a human being with equal rights and privileges. He realized that even if that world privilege you sometime is at the cost of a lot of humiliation. He finally understands that his place lies on the other side of the earth which has been named and 'made' 'The Third World' by the Western World. It's then that he tries to reclaim his agency as an agent character.

Changez's first case of reclaiming agency can be noticed upon his return from Pakistan. Shortly after facing humiliation in America after the 9/11 attacks, he leaves for Pakistan to spend Christmas vacations with his family in Lahore. He goes back to America after two weeks with a grown beard; at a time when 'beard' was internationally taken as a symbol of 'terrorism.' After his return from Pakistan he suffers racism and discrimination in his workplace and outside on the basis of his looks, nationality, and religion. Not only Arab Americans but a range of ethnic groups who were taken as "Muslims" were under attack from hostile American citizens in the weeks after September 11 (Hartnell, 2010, p. 338). However, he is not a passive victim, but can be seen as an active agent of change after his return from Pakistan. His agency is prevalent in his resistance of the set American standards. His two-week-old beard at a time when 'beard' was a symbol associated with terrorism in America and in the western world is his first instance of agency to resist the American empire. He is fully aware of resisting the set American standards, and knows that it can create difficulty for him at immigration, yet, he doesn't hesitate in reclaiming his agency as a human being with freedom to exercise his will. Talking about his beard, he tells the unnamed American at a café in Lahore that "it was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part (Hamid, 2007, 78).

Western discourse is built in such a way that it does not give a right or an opportunity of protest to the oppressed and exploited subjects. People from the Third-World countries are given the impression that by following the set standards of the West, they are being civilized. Changez, however, is no more a victim of the prevailing Western discourse as he decides to resist the American standards. This protest on part of Changez is his reclaim of agency as an autonomous being to have the right of his own identity instead of being molded in a different identity. He further tells the unnamed American that he did not want to “blend in” with the many clean-shaven youngsters who were his coworkers” (Hamid, 2007, p. 78). Clean-shave was the set American standard at work places in those days. His resistance of America and the West is evident in his resistance of the set American standard. Talking about his beard and America’s public reaction to it, he reminds his American audience in an ironic tone that the mightiest civilization feared but just ‘a hairstyle.’ He articulates it in his monologue that keeping the physical significance of beard in mind as it is just a hairstyle I am astonished at the “impact” of beard on Americans when it is worn by someone of my complexion (Hamid, 2007, p. 78). He reminds the American that your claim of being the mightiest civilization is not significant if you can be so easily challenged and scared with just a hairstyle. He uses beard as a tool of his agency to challenge America as he knows the impact a beard could have on the American. He has been advised by Wainwright, his colleague at Underwood Samson, to shave his beard – though Wainwright himself doesn’t know what is wrong with beard – but he does not compromise on his tool of reclaiming his agency. Talking about his friend’s advice and his stance, he states that he appreciated his friend’s “concern” but did not act upon his suggestion (Hamid, 2007, p. 78).

Changez’s second case of reclaiming agency is his resign from his prestigious job at Underwood Samson and Company. When he realizes that he is contributing to an economic growth which is working against his country, he resigns from his position as he is already an active agent of change by then. In chapter 10 of the novel, Changez along with his team is on official trip to Chile for valuation of a publishing company. After his meeting with Juan-Bautista, the chief of the publishing, he realizes that he is a modern-day janissary working against his own country. Janissary according to Juan-Bautista were Christian boys who were caught by the Ottomans and trained them to be soldiers in Muslim army which was the greatest army in the world at that time. When they grew up, they were ferocious warriors and were utterly loyal to the Muslim army during their fights with Christians. In a way their fight meant destruction of their own civilization. He starts feeling compassion for people like Juan-Bautista whose lives are overturned by the American Empire for its own gain. Immediately he becomes an active agent of change and resigns from his post as he tells the vice president that he “refused” to work at Underwood Samson any further (Hamid, 2007, 92). These words creates panic in the team, and a conference call is hastily arranged with Jim. Jim tries his best to convince him not to quit at such critical moment, but he is not willing to change his decision. He exercised his agency at such a critical moment that Underwood Samson had to face great financial loss as a result of his resign. It is his revenge for all his previous contributions to the American economy. He seems to have well calculated the financial loss of the American company as he expresses that the deadline for their valuation would be missed by the time they manage his “replacement” (Hamid, 2007, 92). His resign at such a moment that can have great financial loss for an American company shows his resistance of America. His agency is not only evident in his quitting job at Underwood Samson, but in leaving America too.

Changez decides to leave America too as he asserts that without his job his visa would expire, and he would be compelled to “leave the United States” (Hamid, 2007, p. 92). He was well aware of the situation but he does not feel any regret in leaving America.

Leaving America is also a form of resistance on part of Changez as America was represented by dominant discourse as the center of civilization in those days and even today. He breaks the shackles of being a silent victim of American discourse and prefers to move back to his homeland, Pakistan, which had been labelled by America as a terrorist state. Pakistan had time and again received allegations of harboring and helping the terrorists (Caldwell & Williams, 2011). While moving to America for studies four years back, he was victim of a narrative; by leaving America he reclaims his agency as an active agent of change by resisting that narrative.

Changez's third instance of reclaiming agency is his anti-American activities upon his return to Pakistan. After revelation of the true face of America as a modern-day colonial empire on mission to control resources of the world, he does not stay as a silent victim but involves in activities to resist and stop America. He starts teaching at a university in Lahore after his return from America. He makes it his mission to mobilize youth to resist Pakistan's support of America's war on terror as he states it in his monologue to the unnamed American that the advocacy of Pakistan's disengagement from America became "my mission" on the campus (Hamid, 2007, 108). Such resistance by Changez is Hamid's prediction back then that Pakistan's support of America is not in favor of Pakistan. If seen from today, this prediction has come true as Pakistan faced severe consequences of America's war on terror. In 2004, Pakistan sent in almost 80,000 military troops to Waziristan region of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for military operations against militant groups, who had infiltrated into FATA after United States invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. As a reaction to military campaigns and Pakistan's support of the United States, militant groups started attacking Pakistan's armed forces, security enforcing forces, and civilians. Pakistan's support in the United States' war on terror introduced militancy in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2010).

Similarly, according to Rabbi (2012), Pakistan's support in war against terrorism and extremism resulted in creation of many economic and security problems for Pakistan. Suicide attacks, bomb blasts, and killing of civilians and security forces became routine activities almost on daily basis. Similarly, Pakistan's support resulted in damage to public and private property, law and order situation, and clashes between the security forces and militant groups as continuous activities almost on daily basis in Pakistan (Kronstadt, 2008). Hamid also felt that Pakistan had lost its independence in domestic and international affairs following the war on terror. Changez resists this notion too by convincing the youth for participation in demonstration for Pakistan's independence in internal and foreign affairs. He asserts that it was not difficult to convince students of the advantages of taking part in protests for the independence of Pakistan in "domestic and international affairs" (Hamid, 2007, 108).

Changez's fourth instance of reclaiming agency as portrayed in the novel is by involving the youth of Pakistan. Changez makes it clear that his agency to resist the America is shared by the talented youth of his country. It means that the youth of Pakistan were not happy with Pakistan's support of America. All they needed was an ignition to light the fire, which they got in form of Changez. That's why he says in the earlier passage that 'it was not difficult to persuade them.' The youth of Pakistan do not remain silent victims of American control, but play their role as an active agent of change. They are not just ordinary youth, but students of universities who cannot be easily be-fooled by western discourse. Changez tells the American intelligence agent about the brilliance of students he attracted that the students who wish to participate in his demonstrations are all bright students with idealistic beliefs who possessed "both civility and ambition" (Hamid, 2007, 108). It shows that the students who want change are not ordinary students, but bright scholars who have a different plan of prosperity for their country. He further tells the



American that they call each other comrades the way like-minded people call each other, but the term he personally likes for each other is "well-wishers" instead" (Hamid, 2007, p. 109). The term 'well-wishers' can mean they had no other purpose but the prosperity and welfare of their country.

Changez's fifth and final instance of reclaiming agency is his statement to the international media that America is spreading terrorism. As stated by Changez, when the international television news networks came to their campus, he told them that no other country inflicts death so readily upon the citizens of other countries and frightens people in other far away countries "as America" (Hamid, 2007, p. 110). According to Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs' Cost of War (2023) report, an estimated 432,000 civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia have been killed, and 38 million people have been displaced, as a result of fighting in the war on terror from 2001 to 2021. This report is a testimony to Hamid's statement in 2007, calling America a terrorist country.

Applying the second dimension of Hai's (2009) model of human agency i.e. an agent functioning as a tool or an instrument is to see whether Changez reclaimed agency or served as a tool or an instrument in hands of dominant discourse. Ironically, Changez's reclaim of agency as an agent of change for the freedom and prosperity of his country was labelled by the western press as 'anti-American.' Talking about his agency used by the western media against him, Changez claims in the novel that they started demonstration that the foreign press later started to label "anti-American" when their gathering grew to a size which was newsworthy (Hamid, 2007, p. 108). 'Anti-American' was such a strong western discourse built in those days that it would straight away place a person, a country, or a nation in the list of terrorists. President Bush's infamous statement to the nations of the world – You are either with us or you are with the terrorists – is a good example in this case. Western media appreciates the raise of voice for one's country in the West, but Changez's agency for the welfare of his country was called 'anti-American' by the foreign press. Hence, being labelled as 'anti-American' Changez can be seen as denied agency at the end of the novel by dominant discourse of the West. This is the third aspect of Hai's (2009) model of human agency. According to Hai (2009), agents can also "be denied agency and be acted upon, made into non-agents, left with no choice" (p.15). Changez has been portrayed as a non-agent at the end of the novel because his protests are covered by western media, which was and is controlled by America.

## Conclusion

Using Hai's (2009) three-dimensional model of human agency based on three-sided nature of agency, Changez's reclaim of agency was analyzed in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). Hai's notion of human agency represents agent from three dimensions: being an autonomous individual in his/her actions, being used as a tool or an instrument by someone else, and, being denied agency to act or speak. An agent can reclaim agency through acts of resistance, protest, speech, and writing as autonomous individual. The analysis of Changez's reclaim of agency – Hamid's protagonist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* – revealed that Changez lives in a false freedom in the beginning of the novel. After 9/11, he starts facing social and political marginalization in America on the basis of his nationality. However, he is not a passive victim of marginalization; rather, being an agent of change, he tries to reclaim his agency. Being agent character, he starts resisting the American empire. He tries to reclaim agency by quitting his job, leaving America, mobilizing youth of Pakistan against Pakistan's support of the United States in the war on terror, and ultimately staging protests against America as a terrorist state. However, the western media label him as 'anti-American' which was a word synonymous

to 'terrorist' in those days. Being labelled as 'anti-American' Changez's reclaim of agency is used by the West against him making him an instrument in hands of dominant American discourse. He can be seen as denied agency at the end of the novel marking his reclaim of agency remain in the process of 'reclaiming.'

**Recommendations:**

The researcher recommends that other novels or literary texts may also be explored to understand how other writers tackle the issue of Agency in the wake of post 9/11 socio-cultural and Geopolitical scenarios.

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