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# Reading Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist for Risk and Space**

## *Mohsin Hamid'in Gönülsüz Köktendinci Romanının Risk ve Mekân Kavramları Bakımından İncelenmesi*

**ÖZ**

Dünya Ticaret Merkezi'ne yönelik 11 Eylül saldırılarının hem ulusal hem de küresel ölçekte çeşitli etkileri oldu. Mevcut çalışma bir 11 Eylül anlatısı olarak Mohsin Hamid'in ***Gönülsüz Köktendinci*** isimli yapıtı üzerinden gündelik hayatların gittikçe artan güvenlik meselelerine endesklenmesini, medyatize edilmiş terörizm ve artan belirsizlik, kaygı ve saldırgan milliyetçilik gibi duygularla karakterize edilen bir toplumda yaşamanın sonuçlarını ele alacaktır. Bunu yaparken 11 Eylül sonrasında çok yönlü olarak üretilen farklı fakat birbirleriyle yakından ilintili risk süreçlerinin romanda nasıl temsil edildiği incelenecektir. Roman hem risk hem de mekânı ve hareketi ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Ana karakterin fiziksel ve sembolik yolculukları, kurumsallaşmış risk söylemlerinde genellikle göz ardı edilen 11 Eylül sonrası dünyada yaşamanın girift taraflarını ortaya koymaktadır. New York, Manila, Lahore ve Valparaiso gibi geniş ve birçok bakımdan farklılıklar arz eden geniş bir coğrafyada geçen yapıtın mekân ve risk perspektifleri açısından incelenmesi çeşitli risklerin tanımlanmasında ve deneyimlenmesinde bireysel ve toplumsal süreçlerin rollerini ortaya koyacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler**: fundamentalizm, mekân, risk, 9/11 anlatısı, riskscape, risk anlatısı

**ABSTRACT**

The September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center have had catalytic, diverse effects on both national and global scales. The present study will analyze Mohsin Hamid's ***The Reluctant Fundamentalist*** as a 9/11 narrative exploring the implications of living in a society characterized by the securitization of everyday lives, mediatized terrorism, and heightened senses of uncertainty, anxiety, and aggressive patriotism. To this end, it will be examined how competing riskscapes produced multifariously in the aftermath of 9/11 are represented in the novel. The novel foregrounds both risk and space. The protagonist's physical and symbolic mobility reveal the intricacies of living in the post-9/11 world that are often overlooked in institutionalized risk discourses. The novel which takes in a large narrative space including cities such as New York, Manila, Lahore, and Valparaiso will be examined from the critical perspectives of risk and space, which, in turn, will shed light on the signigicance of various roles played py individual and social processes in the definition and experience of risks of various sorts.

**Keywords:** fundamentalism, risk, 9/11 narrative, riskspace, risk fiction, space

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> The main question is: who defines the identity of a 'transnational terrorist'? Neither judges, nor international courts, but powerful governments and states. They empower themselves by defining who is their terrorist enemy, their bin Laden. The fundamental distinctions between war and peace, attack and self-defence collapse. Terrorist enemy images are deterritorialized, de-nationalized and flexible state constructions that legitimize the global intervention of military powers as 'self-defence' (Beck 2002: 44)

## Introduction

The September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center have had diverse, catalytic effects on both national and global scales. In a public lecture delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2002, the late sociologist Ulrich Beck explains the pivotal role of the 9/11 attacks as follows: this historical event "stands for the collapse of language" (2002: 10) above all. He contends that this collapse "expresses our fundamental situation in the 21st century, of living in what I call 'world risk society'" (2002: 10). Directly related to the two axes of conflict in what he terms world risk society, namely ecological conflict and global financial crises, the global terror network threat has inscribed itself as a new dynamic affecting living in the 21st century, which is largely characterized by uncertainty and insecurity that humans themselves create. Drawing on Beck's concept of risk and the theory of world risk society, the present study will analyze Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a 9/11 narrative, exploring the implications of living and coping with the risk society which can be characterized by the securitization of everyday lives, mediatized terrorism, and heightened senses of uncertainty, anxiety, aggressive patriotism, and xenophobia. To this end, it will be examined how competing riskscapes produced multifariously in the aftermath of the Twin Towers attack are represented in the novel. While the institutionalized risk discourse and its securitization politics construct New York and the United States as an enclosed, homogenous entity threatened by the invasion of the fundamentalist others, the lived experiences of the protagonist and his interaction with a diverse group of characters and spatialities offer alternative, more nuanced, and contested maps by pointing towards other processes such as America's foreign policy as a form of modern imperialism and finance capitalism. In doing so, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* captures both subjective everyday experiences and larger systemic processes that are largely overlooked in the overall public discourse, political agenda, and media representations surrounding individuals, and Muslims in particular, originating from countries that are represented in the Global North as "hav[ing] a problem with fundamentalism" (Hamid, 2007: 63). Reversing the gaze from the dominant to the subaltern, the novel exemplifies a form of epistemic disobedience: it rejects the discursively produced, staged, and multifariously communicated risk discourse surrounding the numinous other in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

## 1. Risk and Risk Discourses in the Post- 9/11 United States of America

The beginning of the 21st century has increasingly been characterized by senses of risk, uncertainty, insecurity, and a form of "dark irony" (Beck, 2006: 330) which largely arises from an attempt to control what is inherently unknown and uncontrollable. For Beck, it is not just "the accumulation of risks–ecological, terrorist, military, financial, biomedical, and informational–that has an overwhelming presence in our world today" (2009: 291), but also "the known

uncontrollability of the consequences of civilizational decisions" (Yates, 2003:68) that characterize what he calls "the world risk society". Unlike the earlier uses of the term, risks are not to be seen as uncontrollable natural disasters as in the pre-modern era, or phenomena that are calculable and manageable with the advancements in science and technology. To Arnoldi, as the "belief in the ability to calculate, to objectify, potential dangers as risk has somehow waned" (2009a: 35), risks have increasingly been seen as "potential dangers" (2009: 1). Risks today are global, incalculable, complex, relational and anthropogenic in the sense that they are not of supernatural origin or caused by nature, but socially produced. Beck's distinction between catastrophe and risk is significant: "Risk is *not* synonymous with catastrophe. Risk means the *anticipation* of catastrophe" (2009b: 9, emphasis in the original). His definition underlines that risks are constructed socially, and they become "real" only when they are mediated, "stag[ed]" (Beck, 2009b: 16) and communicated to people and it points toward discursive practices in defining certain phenomena as being risk or not. To Beck, "[r]isk definition, essentially, is therefore a power game" and "[t]his is especially true for world risk society where Western governments or powerful economic actors define risks for others" (2006: 333). Furthermore, he emphasizes that "even the most restrained and moderate objectivist account of risk implications involves a hidden politics, ethics and morality" (2006: 333).

Such characteristics of *new risks* in contrast to *old dangers* turn living in today's industrial societies into a "dark irony" because it "deals with the involuntary satire, the optimistic futility, with which the highly developed institutions of modern society —science, state, business, and military— attempt to anticipate what cannot be anticipated" (Beck, 2006: 329). This irony, in turn, often leads to "an increase in risks" (Beck, 2006: 332) and "limit[s] civil rights and liberties" (Beck, 2006: 332, 330). Therefore, in such conditions of uncertainty, the question of who defines which risks becomes of pivotal significance, for competing definitions of risks bring different social, political, and cultural consequences. This is the very reason why risks are to be defined and contested with the participation of as many actors, perspectives and disciplines as possible.

Correspondingly, literature, like other art forms, participates in the processes by which risks are represented, negotiated, and contested. Offering "varieties of risk experience" (Mizruchi, 2009: 121), literary works chart how the discourses of risk might have social, cultural, political, and economic effects on individuals and certain groups in a society. It is indeed a particularly interesting and useful interpretive framework to examine the diasporic experience mapped in/through Muslim writing, as the language of risk, threat, and conflict with the existing social order permeates the discourse on Islam and the Muslims living in Europe and North America. The allegedly homogeneous "West" and its values are often said to be at the risk of being overrun by equally homogeneous Muslims 'invader'. Especially after the 9/11 attacks, security-oriented discourses in the Global North have essentialized Muslims as threatening "others" who are neither capable of democracy and progress nor interested in internalizing the cultural values of the countries in which they reside. Moreover, such totalizing, dominant risk claims and discourses have the effect of making other types of risks, problems, and injustices experienced by Muslim individuals in their daily lives seem less significant or even non-visible. More precisely, the discursively disruptive construction of Muslim immigrants in Europe and North America has occupied center stage in public attention to Islam and Muslim diasporans especially after the 9/11 attacks, and this has posed crucial challenges to their struggle for more recognition, social

participation and self-realization. In the face of an ever-expanding climate of fear and skepticism about an allegedly unbridgeable "Muslim" status, citizens with identifiable identity markers have become part of the risk discourse as the risky others. The pundit and writer Daniel Pipes, for instance, targeted all Muslims as potential militants after the 9/11 attacks: "All Muslims, unfortunately, are suspect" (Pipes qtd in. Abdurraqib, 2006: 69 n4), and he even devised a test to be filled out and passed by Muslims to demonstrate their non-fundamentalist nature. Such claims and preemptive actions contributed to the discourse generalizing Islam and Muslims as the dangerous others posing risks to the nation.

As Ulrich Beck suggests, the narrative of risk is a narrative of irony (2006: 329), for staging and communicating risks in the name of anticipating and averting catastrophes often result in a heightened sense of risk, anxiety, and threat: "in order to protect their populations from the danger of terrorism, states increasingly limit civil rights and liberties, with the result that in the end the open, free society may be abolished, but the terrorist threat is by no means averted" (2006: 330). This "irony" that Beck points out can in fact be interpreted as one reason why risk research is to be an inclusive field of inquiry with the participation of various disciplines. Literature and literary criticism, in this regard, can play a significant and privileged role in exploring the processes in which risks are defined and experienced by individuals. Without having to be exclusively factual or fictional, literature converges real and imagined, individual, systemic, and social perspectives.

## 2. Literary Responses to the 9/11 and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Corresponding to what has been argued in the previous part, literary works have actively participated in the post-9/11 discourse surrounding Islam and Muslims. As a counter-response to the discourse situating Islam and Muslims as risks or problems to be solved, a solid number of Anglophone texts have been written by writers of Muslim origin. Such literary responses, however, can be grouped into two categories: while some of these works reiterated the institutional risk discourse by referring to the fundamental, unbridgeable gaps between Islam and values attributed to West such as democracy, secularism, and modernity, others engaged with proving the fact that Muslims are in fact capable of internalizing those values. Despite their opposing stances against the post-9/11 *Kulturkampf*, such works converge upon their common status of affirming the institutional and mediatized discourse targeting Islam and Muslim diasporans as the agents of an antagonistic, Islamist scare. More precisely, moved largely by the atmosphere of fear perpetuated by the security experts and the media, many diasporic writers of Muslim origin either condemned the religious zealotry inherent to Islam or attempted to narrativize the everyday lives of fellow Muslims who were at peace with American values.

Mohsin Hamid, neither condemning the alleged Islamic fundamentalism as a self-imposed task nor feeling obliged to present a moderate version of Islam and Muslims, questions the very discourse constructing ordinary Muslims as potential threats and thereby securitizing their everyday lives in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.[1] The novel points toward other phenomena such

[1] Likewise, Aldalala'a and Nash point toward the fact that Hamid's novel distances itself "from formative elements within the post-9/11 discourse" (2016: 237). Hai, too, affirms that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be seen as an example of counter-discursive post-9/11 fiction; however, he, in his comparison of Hamid's text with H. M Naqvi's *Home Boy*, refers to certain drawbacks, such as the ambiguity about Changez's identity, the protagonist's initial reaction to the media coverage of 9/11, and the novel's indeterminate ending.

as transnational neo-liberal capitalism and American foreign policy as being more fundamental causes of why its non-practicing Muslim, Westernized protagonist Changez feels alienated in post-9/11 USA. A solid number of studies have already examined the novel as a 9/11 narrative and offered signigicant insights into the protaganist's experiences before and after the events of September 11, 2001 and his subsequent disillusionment with the world of high finance and the U.S. foreign policy. Likewise, the issues of Islamophobia, neo-orientalism, precarity, ambiguity, cosmopolitanism and hospitality as represented in the novel have been explored in various studies. However, the interpretive framework of risk has hardly been employed in the critical examination of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Only recently has Simon van Schalkwyk's article entitled "Risky business in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland"* investigated the novel portraying "the risks associated with financial speculation and its associated threats and terrors" (2022:703). Bringing the concepts of risk and space together, the present study examines Hamid's novel charting alternative riskscapes in which the fundamentalist is not necessarily the Muslim, albeit not the practicing other but the American corporation that Changez works for and also, America's attitude towards other countries, as stated in the novel: "As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority" (2007: 190). More precisely, Changez, despite his willingness and achievements as a Princeton graduate and holding a high-paying job, cannot simply "focus on the fundamentals" (Hamid, 2007: 112) as he has been trained to do at Underwood Samson. Yet, he has been reminded of his "janissary" status fighting at the fronts of American imperialism, thereby offering an alternative account of dwelling in post-9/11 New York as well as its "peripheries" such as Manila, Lahore, and Valparaiso.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* telescopes its entire action into a single encounter between a Pakistani and an unnamed U.S. citizen in Lahore, Pakistan. Changez, whose name foreshadows the change he undergoes, is the autodiegetic narrator of the frame narrative and he recounts his life in the USA before and after the 9/11 attack. The two first share tea, then a meal in the downtown Lahore, and their meeting ends when Changez accompanies the American to his hotel in the evening. Clearly, the fact that Changez narrates his story retrospectively by asking questions to his counterpart every now and then and that this conversation takes place in Lahore, not in the United States as in many other diasporic texts, are significant narrative choices in terms of reversing gazes and claiming agency. As the narrator reveals, Changez' life in the United States is a fine example of the American dream, especially in the beginning: he leaves his well-off family for the United States, where he is awarded a scholarship at Princeton University, and continues his upward social mobility by joining a valuation firm named Underwood Samson after impressing Jim, his wealthy and equally successful boss. In the meantime, he befriends Erica, an American girl from a wealthy family. She undergoes troubling times after losing her childhood boyfriend, Chris, shortly before meeting Changez. Despite Erica's unstable emotional states and her parents' superficial remarks about Changez and his country of origin, the two develop a relationship in the summer of 2001. The "order" in Changez's diasporic life, however, gets disrupted in the same year. During a business trip to Manila, Philippines, he witnesses the 9/11 attacks on television, which triggers his controversial feelings toward the United States. He becomes more mindful of the increasing discrepancy between how he mimics his colleagues as a successful, Americanized broker and what his self-image as a Pakistani amidst escalating conflict

in Pakistan and its neighboring countries. Furthermore, the anti-Muslim strife in the aftermath of the attacks makes Changez feel "under suspicion" and "guilty" (Hamid, 2007: 85), which intensifies his disillusionment with his life in the USA. His preoccupation with world politics and the media representation constructing his home country and fellow Muslim nations as homogenously evil and terrorist territories, his random visit to Pakistan, and his subsequent encounter with Juan-Bautista during his business trip to Chile all contribute to Changez's change. He refuses to value the publisher in Valparaiso, Chile, and resigns from his job at Underwood Samson. Now a "distraught and hirsute Pakistani" (Hamid, 2007: 182), Changez finds out about Erica's disappearance from the clinic she has been hospitalized and decides to return to Pakistan, where he starts working as a politically active, anti-American university lecturer popular among students. The novel ends rather abruptly when Changez and the American come to the latter's accommodation in Lahore. Followed by a group of people whose identities remain unknown, the American gets uneasy despite Changez's assuring him that no one will harm him there. Once the waiter rapidly closes in and waves at Changez to detain the stranger, the American reaches for his jacket. It is, however, not clear whether he does so to reach his gun or the holder of his business cards, as Changez prefers to assume. The ending is thus open and requires the reader's participation one last time: The reliability of Changez as a narrator, the true identity of the American, the motivation of people following them on the streets of Pakistan, and whether the encounter between Changez and the American will evolve into a friendship or fatal conflict are just a few of the questions the reader is asked to interpret.

As this brief plot overview may already suggest, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* foregrounds two related concepts: risk and space. Drawing largely on the concept of riskscape, which captures multiple, relational, produced, and practiced aspects of both concepts, I propose that risk and space are co-constitutive in the sense that spatiality participates actively in the processes by which risk is socially defined and communicated to people, and that the discourses on risk shape individuals' socio-cultural experiences and thereby their lived spaces. My understanding of the term riskscape is partly informed by Cortiel and Oehme, who use it "to refer to the places where risk is 'staged' in fiction and to explore the spatial implications of risk in narrative" (2015: vi note). Riskscapes are socio-spatially produced, meaning humans interact with them not necessarily in their own terms but also in ways related to other people and various processes. Because of this socially produced nature of riskscapes, they are "partially overlapping, intrinsically connected and at the same time often controversial socio-spatial images of risk" (Müller- Mahn and Everts, 2013: 26). Below, I will examine how various narrative spaces in Hamid's novel represent the physical as well as the symbolic production of riskscapes. Additionally, the lived aspects of riskscapes as experienced mainly by the protagonist will be analyzed. In contrast to the dominant, institutional practices and representations of riskscapes, e.g., the riskscape of transnational terrorism, the analysis of the riskscapes in the novel narrated by the first-person Changez reveals that they are more uncertain, complex, and relational socio-spatial constructions overlapping with other, often-overlooked political and economic processes.

## 3. Narrative Spaces and Alternative Riskscapes in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* represents physical settings as being pervaded with risks of various sorts. These narrative spaces are shaped by anticipated catastrophe(s), and they, in turn, actively shape the characters' individual and social relations. Although the media and government-

promoted risk discourse purport that the nation, with all the private and public places in it, is under the ubiquitous threat of serious terrorist attack motivated by religious fundamentalism, the novel highlights the "varieties of risk experience" (Mizruchi, 2009: 121) through the characters' lived spaces and thereby the multiple, overlapping riskscapes. In particular, Changez's lived experiences reveal alternative riskscapes: the fundamentalism of transnational capitalism, finance, and foreign policy of the U.S., which often manipulate other countries.[2] Changez's trips to Manila, Lahore, and Valparaiso offer him a chance to break free from interpreting the world and politics from a distinctly American perspective; thereby, he gains an alternative episteme to define risks differently from his peers at Underwood Samson and the security discourse airing continuously on media outlets. Below, I will first examine New York as being constructed physically and symbolically, first as a land of opportunity for Changez to realize his American dream and then as a homogenously "American space" targeted by inside and outside threats of religious fundamentalism. Especially after the 9/11 attacks, the city, like the whole nation, is practiced to be pervaded by anxiety, fear, and crisis due to the institutional risk discourse and the "war on terror".

### 3.2. New York and Manila

In pre-9/11 America, Changez makes a clear difference between New York and the United States. For him, the city is the perfect setting to realize one's American dream. After graduating from Princeton University in New Jersey, he receives a generous job offer at Underwood Samson and begins enjoying the multicultural atmosphere of New York. For him, the "now" of this city is so much like the "then" of the ancient Pakistani civilization of thousand years ago marked with scientific and technological advancements. In spatial terms, both the old Anarkali and Manhattan are very similar "in their spaciousness" (Hamid, 2007: 36). Feeling himself as a "New Yorker" and being at home in New York, Changez can access Pakistani restaurants and shops, and comes into Urdu speaking cab-drivers or even a Pakistani song on the streets of New York (Hamid, 2007: 36–37). Another issue that makes him feel at home in New York is its multiculturality: "In a subway car, my skin would typically fall in the middle of the color spectrum. On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was immediately a New Yorker" (Hamid, 2007: 37). He even wears traditional dresses so that he, like other foreigners, can escape the strict etiquette there. Changez's initial enthusiasm to live in New York is "wrapped up in [his] excitement about Underwood Samson" (Hamid, 2007: 37). The company is run on the principles of meritocracy, and both his skills and "exotic foreigner" (Hamid, 2007: 153) identity are welcome there. Having an office on the forty-first and forty-second gives him "power" (Hamid, 2007: 37); it is only comparable to flying in an airplane or being at the top of the Himalayas: "This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known" (Hamid, 2007: 37). Having the same initials as the United States, Underwood Samson is a top valuation firm, where the employees are initiated into the world of high business and thus are trained continuously for more professionalism and efficiency, which, according to Changez, are the two merits defining contemporary American society. These trainings provide them with a distinctly American perspective on seeing and interpreting the world around them.

[2] For more about the alternative ways Hamid traces the concept of fundamentalism, see Perner (2010) and Kennedy (2018), and van Schalkwyk (2020).

This firm, functioning the perfect materialization of the American dream, ranks its employees every six months, and the low-ranked ones are fired. Initially, Changez enjoys this place, and seems totally self-confident and convinced that his religion, ethnicity, and place of origin are neutralized there.

Moreover, Changez is attracted to a girl named Erica, whose name is contained in the word America. They first meet in Greece on a vacation organized by a common friend from Princeton. Erica is an extremely attractive girl with many suitors around her, but she, to Changez's surprise, seems to be attracted to him. Changez's "difference" from others, especially in terms of not being too demanding on Erica, his third-world sensibility and "mannerism" (Hamid, 2007: 47), and his exotic identity are among the reasons why Erica may be attracted to him more than others. As will be discussed later, the relationship between Erica and Changez proves to be a contested and symbolic one, mirroring the transformation he undergoes in the coming months. Erica's initial intimacy with Changez means a lot to him in terms of claiming a presence and recognition in the United States, yet this relationship is a very fragile one, as Changez soon understands that he cannot be part of Erica's world on his own terms. Although Changez feels a self-imposed responsibility to integrate into American society and proves to be quite successful in the first months of his residency in New York, this vacation in Greece reveals earlier examples of not only his amiable "exotic" otherness but also his "unbridgeable" difference. For instance, Changez notices how his American peers are too extravagant, self-righteous, and impertinent "in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service" (Hamid, 2007: 23). Moreover, he even experiences a form of soft-racism when he makes a joke about his ambition "to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability" (Hamid, 2007: 33). Changez feels forced to explain that this is only a joke to the shocked others except Erica. A similar experience that highlights Changez's "different" status takes place when he meets Erica's family in their flat in New York. During their dinner conversation, Erica's father makes a shallow comment regarding Pakistan:

> "Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers. Solid people, don't get me wrong. I like Pakistanis. But the elite has raped that place well and good, right? And fundamentalism. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism" (Hamid, 2007: 62-63).

Changez hides his anger, yet explains the gap between how the American media represents the situation in Pakistan vis-a-vis the reality there: "Yes, there are challenges, sir, but my family is there, and I can assure you it is not as bad as that" (Hamid, 2007: 63). Changez admits that the remarks of Erica's father are indeed true, but the way he speaks about his roots, his tone, and "its typically American undercurrent of condescension" (Hamid, 2007: 63) upset him. Interestingly, as in his remarks about the group of friends' manners during the vacation in Greece, the manners or the question of how rather than the content and the question of what prove difficult for Changez to internalize through his Americanization process.

In a different place other than New York, namely Manila, Philippines, Changez first attempts to practice American manners and he performs being an American. The business trip to Manila is his first assignment, and he, representing Underwood Samson, compares himself to James Bond on a foreign mission, introduces himself as coming from New York, and enjoys acting more demanding and less polite like his American colleagues. However, this is a short-lived attempt. Once he receives a stare with "an undisguised hostility" from a jeepney driver while driving in a limousine with his colleagues, Changez gets uneasy and forces himself to understand the possible

reason(s) the driver looks at his avowed American identity with such anger. This incident triggers something about the reception of American people outside the United States that Changez has taken for granted until then. He takes this outsider man's stare seriously and even admits that this glaring disorients him for some time. He now finds his colleagues driving in the same limousine "foreign" and feels himself more connected to the jeepney driver: "I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside" (Hamid, 2007: 77).

A second and definitely more important incident which makes Changez re-examine his feelings about the United States takes place when he witnesses the television coverage of the Twin Towers' collapse on September 11, 2001. He admits that he initially smiles and feels pleased when the symbols of the invincible American empire get destroyed by the terrorist attacks. Being still unclear about his smile at what he sees on television, Changez finds the fact that someone has even dared to attack the United States oddly satisfying; a feeling that had not occurred to him until that very moment. Starting with his return flight to New York, Changez's lived experiences change considerably. While leaving Manila, he is escorted and questioned by airport security in an extremely humiliating way. He is the last to board the plane: "My entrance elicited looks of concern from many of my fellow passengers. I flew to New York uncomfortable in my own face: I was aware of being under suspicion; I felt guilty; I tried therefore to be as nonchalant as possible; this naturally led to my becoming stiff and self-conscious" (Hamid, 2007: 85). Likewise, unlike his American colleagues, he is taken to a secure room at the airport in New York and gets inspected about the purpose of his entrance to the United States - an experience that many Muslim diasporians and immigrants underwent in the aftermath of the attacks.

As mapped in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, New York is practiced spatially as a riskscape after the terrorist attacks. Whereas Changez differentiates America and New York from one another before the attacks, the national politics have overtaken the city after 9/11. Now, New York is "invaded" (Hamid, 2007: 90) with American flags everywhere and becomes the frontier where American people proclaim "you have slighted us; beware our wrath" (Hamid, 2007: 90) to the rest of the world. U.S. citizens are now more patriotic, angry, and "anxious" (Hamid, 2007: 94), being increasingly "gripped by a growing and self-righteous rage" (Hamid, 2007: 106). Directed at the geographically distant others, such as Pakistan and the Taliban, this rage has turned to the insiders as well: "Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (Hamid, 2007: 107). Concerning the societal changes taking place in the aftermath of the attacks, Changez notes:

> "Possibly this was due to my state of mind, but it seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time. There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as duty and honor. I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look back. Living in New York was suddenly like living in a film about the Second World War; I, a foreigner, found myself staring out at a set that ought to be viewed not in Technicolor but in grainy black and white. What your fellow countrymen longed for was unclear to me—a time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty? I did not know—but that they were scrambling to don the costumes of another era was apparent" (130-31).

To Changez, who has associated the USA with progressivism, this sense of nostalgia toward patriotism and militarism is new and dangerous. Furthermore, what lies beneath this strife is not even clear, which is why Changez, conjuring Beck's risk society thesis, marks the post-9/11 era as "a period of great uncertainty" (Hamid, 2007: 133). The source of this "great uncertainty" is not commented on explicitly by the narrator, and whether it is manufactured by the policymakers or an organic, unguided process is to be speculated by the reader. However, that the autodiegetic narrator's referring to cameras, newspaper headlines in the above quoted section is significant as it points toward the role of media in staging risks and turning the nation into a riskscape discursively. In the media and political discourse, the nation is constructed as being threatened by terrorism, which, in turn, justifies feelings of aggressive nationalism, rage, and revenge. Equally important, the impact of such heightened patriotism and securitization is uncertain and multifarious: dominance, safety, or moral certainty.

As a reflection of this public discourse, Changez's already problematic relationship with Erica gets even more complicated. Erica, standing for America, feels more depressed and devout, and she chooses to get stuck in her idealized, unproblematic past. Although the narrator does not make any explicit causal relationship between 9/11 and Erica's state of mind, he comments on how Erica gets immersed in his late boyfriend, Chris, who may be interpreted as standing for Christianity, especially in the American context. Furthermore, Changez describes both America and Erica as giving themselves to "a dangerous" and "powerful" (Hamid, 2007: 130) nostalgia in the aftermath of 9/11. Nevertheless, they once get intimate in Changez's apartment, and she lets Changez kiss her despite the discomfort she displays. Weeks later, they meet once again, and Changez suggests she think of him as Chris while having sex. Erica consents and has sexual intercourse with someone for the first time after Chris. This relieves Erica a bit, and she can sleep without any medication after such a long time. Changez, however, faces a moral dilemma: He admits that he felt like someone else during the sex, and pretending to be someone in order to be accepted by Erica initiated identity and agency questions in his mind afterwards. On a more symbolic level, Changez's mimicking Chris and Erica's consent to this in order to be connected to her late beloved suggest the fact that Changez, despite the economic stability and social status his employment gives him, cannot really get into a relationship with the United States on his own terms, especially in the post-9/11 context. Correspondingly, in the coming weeks, Changez, despite his initial thoughts, experiences direct racism at Underwood Samson. In the car park, he gets approached by a stranger who makes "a series of unintelligible noises-*akhala-malakhala,*' perhaps, or 'khalapal-khalapala'" (Hamid, 2007: 133). While leaving, the man, upon the interference of another person, calls Changez "[f]ucking Arab" (Hamid, 2007: 134). This incident reveals how the racism and Islamophobia staged continuously in the media and security discourses affect the lived spaces and everyday experiences of individuals in the post-9/11 New York.

As stories of growing antagonism towards foreigners begin to be everyday phenomena in New York, the risk discourse constructing the nation as being in danger of international terrorism gets more pervasive, shaping the lived experiences and spaces of individuals. This is not to claim that neither the danger of terrorist attacks nor an ordinary person's growing sense of anxiety to the extent that s/he yells "fucking Arab" at someone only because of his/her outer appearance or religious preference is real. As Beck argues, the response to this new phenomenon, which is more

uncertain, global, and complex than old dangers or natural calamities, requires a different way of framing and taking action. America's War on Terror and its accompanying processes such as aggressive patriotism, political populism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia have only aggravated the situation and caused an increase in ordinary people's senses of anxiety and a decline in some others' civil rights.

According to Müller-Mahn and Everts, the riskscapes are relational and overlapping, especially in what Beck calls the global risk society (2013: 26), a fact revealed further once other narrative spaces are introduced in the novel. Below, Lahore and Valparaiso will be discussed as relational riskscapes, revealing alternative perspectives on the complexities of living in the aftermath of 9/11.

### 3.2. Lahore

As a relational space to the post-9/11 New York, Lahore is of paramount significance in both understanding the transnational impacts of the attacks and tracing the change Changez undergoes. With the United States' War on Terror, Afghanistan gets bombed by American forces. Witnessing the media coverage of the so-called "daring raid on a terrorist base" (Hamid, 2007: 113) upsets Changez because Afghanistan is a neighboring Muslim country and he gains an awareness that such representation of territories as being a risk to the United States has an immensely practical effect on American society: getting even more patriotic and giving in to the governments' securitization policies and preemptive measures. The media coverage and bombings in Afghanistan and the emerging conflict between Pakistan and India occupy Changez's mind. He resorts to addictive behavior such as excessive alcohol consumption and cannot concentrate on his job the way he used to be. Changez decides to visit Lahore despite his family's warnings. The initial "Americanness of his gaze" is gradually replaced with acknowledging "the external reality of the threat facing [his] home" (Hamid, 2007: 142). In contrast to the dominant risk discourse anticipating further catastrophes that may befall to the USA, the clash between Pakistan and India is real and can turn both countries into battlegrounds. His brother affirms that "things are not good": "There is an artillery battery dug in at the country house of a friend of mine, half an hour from here, and a colonel billeted in his spare bedroom" (Hamid, 2007: 142). The possibility of war with India and the invasion of hostile troops are now part of everyday conversations: "Already, the Indian army was mobilizing, and Pakistan had begun to respond: convoys of trucks, I was told, were passing through the city, bearing supplies to our troops on the border" (Hamid, 2007: 144). His brother and other relatives begin anticipating possible conflict between India and Pakistan, Changez notes. Such insights are important because they emphasize the precarity in Pakistan and that individuals' lives are indeed adversely affected; a fact missing to a large extent in American media coverage of similar conflicts in such countries.

Once he visits Lahore and finds both the city and his family house to be shabby in direct contrast to where he currently resides, Changez admits how much American perspective he has internalized so far: "I recall the Americanness of my own gaze when I returned to Lahore that winter when war was in the offing. I was struck at first by how shabby our house appeared, with cracks running through its ceilings and dry bubbles of paint flaking off where dampness had entered its walls" (Hamid, 2007: 140). It does not, however, take long to reacclimatize his roots and realize that it was indeed not the house but himself that has changed:

> "I had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite. This realization angered me; staring at my reflection in the speckled glass of my bathroom mirror I resolved to exorcise the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed" (Hamid, 2007: 140).

This introspection helps him question the imperative of seeing and interpreting the world from a disttinctively American perspective. He witnesses the everyday lives of his immediate family members as well as ordinary people affected by American foreign policy and gets increasingly mindful of the discrepancy between the institutionalized risk discourse in the United States and the precarity of individuals in countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, which results in a more conflicted sense of self for Changez:

> "Indeed, I would soon be gone, leaving my family and my home behind, and this made me a kind of coward in my own eyes, a traitor. What sort of man abandons his people in such circumstances? And what was I abandoning them for? A well-paying job and a woman whom I longed for but who refused even to see me? I grappled with these questions again and again" (Hamid, 2007: 145).

As a visible marker of this introspection and his protest, Changez, despite the warnings of his mother and his colleagues at Underwood Samson, decides not to shave his beard upon his return to the US. Being "subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers" while traveling on the subway, Changez keeps his beard because he begins to dare to conflict the dominant, normative ways of living imposed on him and on people like him in the United States.

The reason why Changez engages with such negative thoughts about the United States is the manipulative power it exerts on non-western countries:

> "I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable. Vietnam, Korea, the straits of Taiwan, the Middle East, and now Afghanistan: in each of the major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my continent of Asia, America played a central role" (Hamid, 2007: 177).

Although Pakistan, as an ally to the USA, opens its territory to American bases in their fight against Afghanistan, the USA fails to back Pakistan against India and appears to remain neutral, which, Changez thinks, is "a position that favored, of course, the larger and—at that moment in history—the more belligerent of them" (Hamid, 2007: 165). In his conversation with the stranger, Changez clearly denounces American imperialism:

> "I wondered how it was that America was able to wreak such havoc in the world—orchestrating an entire war in Afghanistan, say, and legitimizing through its actions the invasion of weaker states by more powerful ones, which India was now proposing to do to Pakistan—with so few apparent consequences at home" (Hamid, 2007: 149).

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* presents such imperialist interferences as a relational riskscape to the post-9/11 institutionalized risk discourse back in the nation through the protagonist and his physical and symbolic journeys. A more intellectual and substantial breaking point, however, takes place in Valparaiso, Chile, which is the novel's another relational riskscape, highlighting especially financial matters.

### 3.3. Valparaiso

Mohsin Hamid has his autodiegetic narrator make a very strong and controversial claim about the place of finance in America's domestic and foreign policies: "Moreover I knew from my experience as a Pakistani—of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions—that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power" (Hamid, 2007: 177). In

addition to its military or hard power, finance is one aspect of United States' soft power, and Changez, as an employee at Underwood Samson, has become a member of "the army of clean-shaven youngsters" (Hamid, 2007: 148). Interestingly, Underwood Samson is a valuation firm, namely a risk-assessment firm determining the worth of an asset professionally for clients. That is, the company performs risk calculations based on various categories and issues. To this end, however, the employees are trained to "focus on the fundamentals" which "mandate[s] a single-minded attention to financial detail, teasing out the true nature of those drivers that determine an asset's value" (Hamid, 2007: 112). More precisely, the employees cannot afford any form of distraction, such as personal, and emotional processes. Amidst the United States' War on Terror and Changez' undergoing some serious identity conflicts, he, along with Jim and a vice-president at Underwood Samson, makes a business trip to Chile with the task of valuing a publishing company run by an old man named Juan-Bautista. Juan-Bautista, who is "symbolically named" after John the Baptist (Braz,  is the esteemed head of this publishing company for a long time without owning it, and the owners now want to sell it to a prospective client who contracts Underwood Samson to valuate the firm. Changez and Juan-Bautista build a rapport with each other, especially when the former reveals that his uncle is a poet, and the latter positions him to be "very unlike [his] colleagues" (Hamid, 2007: 166). Distracted by the media coverage of the Pakistan and India conflict, Changez is unable to concentrate on his work:

> "Pakistan and India were conducting tit-for-tat tests of their ballistic missiles and that a stream of foreign dignitaries was visiting the capitals of both countries, urging Delhi to desist from its warlike rhetoric and Islamabad to make concessions that would enable a retreat from the brink of catastrophe" (Hamid, 2007: 165).

Furthermore, both the city of Valparaiso and the executive of the publishing company, Juan-Bautista, function as "distractions" that encourage Changez to think alternatively about the finance capitalism and his role in it. The city, with its rich history and cultural diversity, seems similar to Lahore. Both of them are in decline, yet Changez is able to trace the beauty and glory behind the ruins: "I was reminded of Lahore and of that saying, so evocative in our language: the ruins proclaim the building was beautiful" (Hamid, 2007: 165). Similarly, his visit to Pablo Neruda's house in Valparaiso gives Changez a feeling of familiarity and spatial connection with his hometown. There, Changez thinks of both Erica and his lack of a "core":

> "I was not certain where I belonged—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither—and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile. But in so doing—and by being unable to offer her an alternative to the chronic nostalgia inside her—I might have pushed Erica deeper into her own confusion" (Hamid, 2007: 163).

In spatial terms, both Valparaiso and Neruda's house function as Thirdspaces, to borrow Soja's taxonomy, for they reveal how individuals experience the systemic risk discourses and the ways they actively negotiate and construct the socially produced riskscapes. More precisely, Soja defines the concept of Thirdspace as "a space of extraordinary openness and a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable" (2008: 5). Correspondingly, Changez finds solace in Valparaiso to render the precarity in Pakistan and other parts of the world and understand US capitalism's role in it. In so doing, he practices epistemic de-linking, that is, he no longer uses the perspective he has been trained to receive after his employment at Underwood Samson.

Besides, Juan-Bautista, a mentor figure, initiates Changez into embracing some alternative ways of seeing and interpreting the world. What attracts Changez to Juan-Bautista is the fact that he senses emotions and personal issues instead of concentrating solely on "realizing a financial future" like his colleagues at Underwood Samson. More precisely, Changez begins to acknowledge the significance of one's emotional present, which is a deviation from what Underwood Samson and his Princeton education have indoctrinated him so far. Juan-Bautista understands that Changez seems to be "lost" somehow. Later, during his stay in the city, Juan-Bautista offers him a lunch in his favorite restaurant and a guided tour on the streets of Valparaiso. During the conversation, Juan-Bautista asks Changez an intriguing question about whether it troubles him or not "to make [his] living by disrupting the lives of others?" (Hamid, 2007: 171). Changez slides this over by reminding him of the fact that they just "value" and it is the clients' decision to buy or sell. Juan-Bautista's question referring to the Ottoman janissaries, a group of non-Muslim boys who were taken away from their families and trained in order to serve the Muslim Ottoman army, troubles Changez substantially:

> "In any case, Juan-Bautista's words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become. There really could be no doubt: I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war" (Hamid, 2007: 173).

With such thoughts, Changez reconsiders his status at Underwood Samson and in the United States, especially at a time when finance and financial manipulation have been America's most effective weapons in manipulating non-western countries since the cold war in particular, and he decides not to be part of this "army" anymore. In Changez's words, "my blinders were coming off, and I was dazzled and rendered immobile by the sudden broadening of my arc of vision" (Hamid, 2007: 165). This is a radical break from the dominant, Americanized episteme in defining risk and embracing a wider, liminal understanding to interpret and understand socio-economic phenomena. Thanks to this trip and his acquaintance with Juan-Bautista, he connects the lived experiences in Valparaiso to the riskscapes in New York and Lahore, which in turn, offers the reader a more nuanced, real-and-imagined unSderstanding of the post-9/11 condition, shedding a light on the precarity in the relational geographies as well.

**Conclusion**

Through the first-person narration of its protagonist, *The Reluctant Fudnamentalist* affirms the catalytic effect of the 9/11 terrorist attacks not only on American society but also on the rest of the world. This new condition can be characterized by uncertainty, aggressive patriotism, anxiety, and a growing sense of risk. Taking the concept of risk as an analytical category to interpret the post-9/11 era, the present study has examined how "the *anticipation* of catastrophe" (Beck, 2009b: 9, italics in the original) has a shaping power on the characters' individual and social experiences as explored in Hamid's novel. In contrast to the "old dangers" of the past, the "new risks" are uncertain, anthropogenic, global, and socially constructed. Especially through government discourse and media representations, risks become real and they claim an increasingly strong presence in people's lives. Since they are socially, politically, and discursively constructed and experienced by individuals and social groups differently, both individual perspectives and socio-cultural processes become relevant for a comprehensive examination of risks. Correspondingly, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* charts multiple, overlapping, and relational riskscapes. In so doing,

it shows not only the multitude of riskscapes but also the diverse ways they are experienced by individuals. The novel foregrounds movement, and both physical and symbolic mobility reveal precarious situations from different parts of the world which are often overlooked in the institutionalized risk discourse dominated by transnational terrorism, patriotism, and securitization of everyday lives. To this end, Changez's lived experiences in New York and his trips to Manila, Lahore, and Valparaiso are highly revealing and enriching for a more nuanced, and complex portrayal of the post-9/11 condition. Especially, his trip to Valparaiso maps an alternative riskscape which differs considerably from New York and Lahore. In New York, the risk discourse, which is constructed and mediated through institutions such as politics and the media, represents the whole nation as being at peril targeted by transnational terrorism. This risk discourse gradually turns the city into a riskscape, which is marked by a growing sense of anxiety, patriotism, and hostility towards "the others". Conjuring Beck's concept of dark irony, the governments especially in the Global North try to solve new, uncertain risks with old methods which add to the citizens' sense of insecurity, anxiety, and uncertainty. For Ulrich Beck, "the narrative of risk is a narrative of irony" (2006: 329), and one of the "bitter ironies" is as follows: "in order to protect their populations from the danger of terrorism, states increasingly limit civil rights and liberties, with the result that in the end the open, free society may be abolished, but the terrorist threat is by no means averted" (2006: 330). Correspondingly, Changez, who is a well-educated, secular, religiously non-observant Princeton graduate with a high income, can be subjected to the security personnel's and ordinary people's racist and abusive attitudes. Therefore, his autodiegetic account of what has happened to him in the post-9/11 America contests the institutionalized risk discourse, which locates violence and fundamentalism only in the geographically distant, culturally different and politically unstable territories and justifies its politics of securitization at the expense of "an increasing readiness, even in the centers of democracy, to break with fundamental values and principles of humanity" (Beck, 2006: 341). Therefore, the novel charts alternative riskscapes and insights into the socio-spatial experiences of individuals located at the "peripheries" of the United States. In so doing, it not only reverses the gaze and educates the reader, western ones in particular, about the multiple ways risks are manufactured and experienced, but also inquires about their own assumptions by requiring them to reflect on the complex causal relationships between various political, economic, social, and cultural processess.

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