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# The Diaspora Intellectual In The Age of New Media: The Case Of Tarek Fatah

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The Diaspora Intellectual In The Age of New Media: The Case Of Tarek Fatah

by

Zahida Perveen

A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how Diaspora intellectual Tarek Fatah has breached the boundaries of traditional media by using his Facebook profile to reach his audience in Pakistan and around the world. He challenges the religious and political discourse in Pakistan and the Islamic world in general. I have used qualitative content analysis to explore the structure and style of his themes which first appeared in his books and then on his Facebook profile. The purpose is to investigate the role and limitations of Facebook for a Diaspora intellectual as a way to transmit his messages. The study has also probed the audience reaction to some of his posts by using British scholar Stuart Hall's theory of Coding/Decoding (1980). It is concluded that Tarek Fatah is successful in challenging the religious dogmas but the interactive nature of Facebook and his rabid style blur the logical discussion found in his books.

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## **Dedication**

To my lovely father, for his unconditional love and support!

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## Chapter One: **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Late 20<sup>th</sup> century Public intellectual Edward Said considers culture as a reconstruction of religious thoughts based on moral values. He explains that religious discourse relies on moral grounds rather than scientific facts. To Said, the intellectual's role is to criticize dogmatic religious discourse, which requires that the intellectual be essentially detached from the power structures of society in order to freely express himself and speak "truth to power" (Said 1994: 97). Said believes that unlike common people, an intellectual living in exile will have an understanding of more than one culture without fully assimilating in either of them, and will have an "awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (Said 2001: 186). Exile will help him play his role as an "outsider" (Said 1994: 53). The physically and geographically displaced intellectual living in a Diaspora, who doesn't necessarily have any physical access to his homeland, will be beyond any power circles of society and therefore have a better chance to criticize the cultural and pseudo-religious dogmas prevailing among the people of his country of origin.

Said differentiates the authoritative, narrow, specialized religious-based analysis of texts from 'secular criticism' (Said, 1983). He argues that the discourse of religious texts aims at providing an absolute truth and doesn't allow any other possible interpretation of the text. The purpose behind such discourse is "either to compel subservience or to gain adherents" (Said 1983: 290). These discourses shut off any room for "human investigations," and "criticism." On the other hand, 'secular criticism' allows the deconstruction of established notions by rejecting such narrow and absolute commentary (Said 1983: 3).

## 1.2 Contextualizing the Study

Tarek Fatah (born November 20, 1949) is a Pakistani born Canadian activist, writer, critic of radical Islam, and radio broadcaster. Fatah grew up in Pakistan in a traditional Muslim family. He graduated from the University of Karachi, Pakistan in the 1960s. Before immigrating to Canada in 1987, he worked in Saudi Arabia and lived there with his family for many years. His book *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* was shortlisted for the \$35,000 Donner Prize for 2008–09. His other book *The Jew Is Not My Enemy: Unveiling the Myths that Fuel Muslim Anti-Semitism* (2010) won the 2010 Annual Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Book Award in Politics and History. Fatah hosts *The Tarek Fatah Show* on NEWSTALK 1010 on Sunday afternoons. He is also a weekly columnist in the *Toronto Sun*.

Fatah's unconventional writings have not only physically displaced him from his home country but also turned him into a Diaspora intellectual defined as an intellectual living outside his country and whose voice is heard both in his country and across continents. Fatah doesn't identify himself with the power structure of a specific society. He calls himself "an Indian born in Pakistan; a Punjabi born in Islam; an immigrant in Canada with a Muslim consciousness, grounded in a Marxist youth" (Fatah's online blog: About Me). On his Facebook profile, blogs, Twitter account, his interviews and in his books, *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* (2008), and *The Jew Is Not My Enemy: Unveiling the Myths that Fuel Muslim Anti-Semitism* (2010), he deals with the religious and cultural discourse in his homeland and among Muslims generally.

Fatah calls himself a 'secular Muslim' and aims at providing a 'secular criticism' of religious and cultural discourse. He deconstructs the cultural influence that "furnishes us with system of authority" (Said 1983: 192). He believes that he is "scared stiff at the rise of politics

based on race and religion and the widespread acceptance of mediocrity as a cultural trait” (Fatah’s Facebook page: About Me). His commentary appeared first in TV shows, then in books, and then in the new media. He challenges ‘dominant ideologies’<sup>1</sup> of Islam by contesting contemporary cases such as the Shafia honour-killing incident in Toronto. Based on his core ideology of separation between religion and the state, he founded the Canadian Muslim Congress (CMC) in December 2001. The CMC not only opposed John Tory’s proposal<sup>2</sup> to publicly fund religious schools in October 2007 but also campaigned to ban the burka (face covering) as a religious symbol. He believes that wearing the burka is part of a religious discourse based on cultural practices that marginalize women.

Fatah highlights the authoritative religious discourse about social issues, which, he believes, is the root cause of the social and political distortion of the image of Islam around the world. He focuses on certain historical and ideological positions by Moslem clerics and highlights the possible impact of their religious dogmas.

Fatah’s criticism of religious discourse and religious dogmas is strongly discouraged in Pakistan. His books and online blogs are banned. When, for example, I went to Pakistan in late 2012, neither his books nor any of his online media (other than Facebook) were accessible there. However, he gains access to the Pakistani public through Facebook, which makes him a particularly interesting case of a Diaspora intellectual making use of new media today.

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall (1980) defines *Ideology* as the mental frameworks that we use to make sense of our world view, such as language, imagery of thought, concept, and system of representation. He argues that the ideology and power fixes meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Conservative leader John Tory proposed to extend the public funding to faith-based institutions. *National Post* (September 5, 2007) <http://www.canada.com/topics/news/politics/story.html?id=470a8301-c0ef-40e3-872d-355399bfcf85&k=8163>

## **1.3 Operational Definitions of the Terms**

### ***1.3.1 Traditional Media vs New Media***

By traditional media I refer to TV, books, and radio programmes whereas, by new media I refer to online blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites that are available on the Internet.

Fatah's TV and radio programs, online blogs and books are not accessible in his country of origin. The authorities decided to ban access to the traditional media he uses without any public consent. However, social media have drastically overcome such bans by providing an opportunity for him to get his messages across wide audiences. The growth of online media has overturned a trend that Russell Jacoby lamented about the professionalization and academization of public intellectuals in his book *The Last Intellectual* (1987). New media have brought multiple intellectual voices such as Tarek Fatah's to the global public sphere.

The Pakistani public has access to Fatah's Facebook and Twitter profiles. People follow him all around Pakistan, even if they do not necessarily agree with what he shares. They sometimes agree, sometimes disagree and sometimes engage in discussions. The new media have catalyzed the importance of his Diaspora position, increased his visibility and gave him accessibility to the Pakistani public which discusses, debates, and engages in his ideas beyond national boundaries (McLaughlin, 2007). Thus, it is important to analyze his use of new media. The question arises how the Diaspora intellectual converses with his audience/readers on social media. Is Facebook helpful in creating forums for more or less independent thinkers who could discuss and possibly change religious and political dogmas? The present study provides a partial answer to this question by comparing the nature of Fatah's arguments in traditional and new media, i.e., in books and in his Facebook pages, allowing us to observe how the interactive

nature of the new media changes the nature of the discourse. I show how Fatah, as a Diaspora intellectual, uses Facebook to effectively criticize accepted religious and cultural discourses without getting influenced by the power circles of Pakistani society.

The reason for choosing Facebook over other forms of new media is based on the popularity of Facebook among Pakistani youth and the fact that Fatah's books and his blogs are banned in Pakistan, only his Facebook and Twitter profiles are accessible, but research on a focus group of Pakistani students showed that the majority of them frequently use Facebook but do not use Twitter very often. The study conducted among students of the Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Pakistan in June 2012 showed that 48 out of 50 students had Facebook accounts, while only five students had Twitter accounts. Google trends also show similar trends around the world (see Appendix 1), in Canada (see Appendix 2), and in Pakistan (see Appendix 3). Another reason to focus on Facebook is that it usually is more open than Twitter. It allows to share views more easily. It provides a medium to connect with family members, friends as well as people around the world.

The following study compares the themes that appear in Fatah's books to his Facebook posts. When writing a book, an author has full control over how to convey his messages to the readers. The reader is a passive receptor of the messages. Thus, the author has the responsibility to build a logical argument to convince his readers. However, on Facebook, readers get a chance to comment back and forth. Facebook provides something like a real interaction in the virtual world. Thus, the writer doesn't get much chance to think and rethink, edit and re-edit his argument and once the argument is made, it will remain there for a long time to be viewed and discussed.

Facebook is a social networking site that was founded in 2004 by a college student

Mark Zuckerberg to connect with college friends. However, it has become a powerful medium of interaction and plays a vital role in what we think and how we react to certain social issues. A Facebook *profile* refers to the combination of personal details, preferences, photos, videos, posts, friends and followers in the virtual world. People share information on their profile wall through status updates. The *Wall* is a section of the profile where one could see different Facebook activities of their friends. People can set their privacy settings and control who and how much one can access the things they share on their Facebook wall. Lists of *Friends* refer to the people who are approved by an individual as their “friends” and with whom they share their postings. However, *Followers* do not necessarily need approval of the person who is being followed. These *pages* allow each follower to see the updates on their wall that are made publically available. *Timeline* is similar to the wall but it arranges the sharing of wall postings, photos and other life events in a chronological order. Facebook profiles also allow users to *like*, *report* (for offensive behaviour, spam), and *comment* on posts from their friends.

Habermas’s notion of the public sphere can be seen as the contextual framework for the use of Facebook as a medium to discuss social issues. In his book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962, reprint 1989), Habermas defines the public sphere as a community, which is “made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state” (Habermas 1989: 176). Habermas traces the historical transformation of the public sphere from the 18th Century and shows how with the advent of social welfare and privatization, media became commercialized and turned into “the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere” in the 19th century (Habermas 1989: 185). He refers to this transition as “manipulative publicity” (Habermas 1989: 178) resulting in the decline of the public sphere, in which “arguments are translated into symbols to

which again one cannot respond by arguing but only by identifying with them (Habermas 1989: 206),” thus forming “authorized opinions (Habermas 1989: 245).” He further argues that social sub-ordination in terms of gender, ethnicity or any other forms doesn't allow large publics to equally participate and share their points of view. The interactive medium of Facebook may be seen as an idealized public sphere in that it has empowered a Diaspora public intellectual like Tarek Fatah to highlight issues of concern to the general public and to get his ideas beyond the narrow and controlled boundaries set for traditional media in Pakistan.

An important aspect making Facebook the focus of study is the opportunity of participation by the audience/readers. In analyzing audience reactions to Fatah's posts, I rely on the British Cultural Studies (BCS) approach, specifically the work of Stuart Hall, who explains how to deconstruct the audience reaction based on what they say and how they approach certain issues. Hall (1980) believes that people tend to attach meaning to certain things according to their own social, cultural, environmental, religious and political understanding. The analysis will thus not only focus on the role of Fatah as a Diaspora intellectual challenging the ‘common-sense’ or ‘preferred readings’ (Hall: 1973) or in other words ‘religious dogmas’ (Said: 1983) but also on how his audience is reacting to those messages according to their own (similar or different) ‘conceptual maps’, and their distinct social position.

Hall (1973) highlights the concept of the active audience in his theory of Encoding/Decoding. He believes that audiences tend to analyze and interpret messages they receive in the media on the basis of their economic, socio-cultural, and political status. He talks about *preferred readings* of the texts and provides a way for their interpretation through the use of certain codes and symbols. Hall believes that meanings are powerfully represented in the media so that the audience could interpret them correctly, but audiences are not passive

receivers. They rather interpret media texts according to their own conceptual maps. Hall referred to three interpretative positions for the reader of a media text, which is *dominant* (or *hegemonic*) *readings*, *negotiated readings*, and *oppositional* ('*counter-hegemonic*') *readings*.

*Dominant reading* is one in which the reader decodes the text's code – seemingly transparent – by reproducing the *preferred reading*. *Negotiated reading* is one in which the reader broadly accepts the preferred reading but sometimes resists because of his different socio-political stance. *Oppositional* (or *counter-hegemonic*) *reading* is one in which the reader does not share the text's codes at all having a totally different conceptual framework, and thus understands but rejects the preferred reading (Hall 1973; Hall 1980). Based on that theory, I checked how Fatah's audience reacts to his messages on Facebook, hypothesizing that,

*Unlike books, the interactive medium of Facebook makes it more challenging for Tarek Fatah to get the messages across.*

#### **1.4 Literature Review**

Researchers such as Walther (1995), Jones (1999), Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, (2008), Bryson, Gomez and Willman (2010), Sheldon, Abad, and Hinsch (2011), and Zeitouns (2013) have studied online social media such as Facebook as means of communication for personal, entertainment and professional matters. Researchers such as Livingstone (2003), Thompson (2003), Lister (2003), Farrell (2005), Brooks (2006), Cammaerts (2008), Drezner (2009), and Keren (2010) have highlighted the importance of blogs and the nature of intellectuals who are writing blogs.

Keren (2010) analyzed the online political discussions of public intellectuals on the basis of the structure, style, and content of their arguments. The categories for each mode of expression are discursive or intuitive, moderate or rabid, and introspective and vacuous,



respectively. Keren characterizes a civilized public intellectual as one who not only expresses his views logically but also engages in self-reflection. He refers, for example, to American intellectual Alan Bloom as described in Saul Bellow's novel *Ravelstein* as an "egghead" who is logical, prudent and self-conscious but lacks the ability to critically self-reflect.

In order to systematically analyze the structure and style of Fatah's argument, along the above lines, as well as his followers' response and his reactions to those responses, I will use Keren's typology of the mode of expressions. I will analyze, using qualitative content analysis, the structure and style of Fatah's argument in *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* (2008), and in his Facebook entries. As all his work is presented in the form of self-reflection, I am not considering the third variable in the typology, as it cannot be expected to vary significantly.

### **1.5 A Comment on my use of the Method**

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, content analysis was used for analyzing the number of the occurrences of defined codes. Later, researchers started to think about more sophisticated ways to deal with content. Ithiel de Sola Pool (1959) used content analysis to understand semantic relationships by focusing on concepts rather than only on words. In my study, I follow this shift from a word-based analysis to an analysis based on the relational understanding of concepts. My purpose is to get a deeper understanding of the themes and the concepts used by Fatah in traditional and new media. I am less concerned with frequencies of themes in the content. I rather use qualitative content analysis by analyzing direct quotations, phrases, thematic words, and graphical presentations even when they occur fewer times than others in the discourse. Frisbie (1986) maintains that some critics consider content analysis to produce quasi-evaluations of subjective experiences. He justifies those critics and differentiates between an

analysis based on values and analysis based on everyday knowledge. This study is a descriptive analysis mainly of everyday knowledge that is being circulated through traditional and social media.

There are certain limitations to the use of content analysis because it is time consuming, and there is the potentiality of subjectivity of the researcher while interpreting the codes and drawing the relations because of his different ‘conceptual map,’ i.e., the perception of individuals based on their values system (Hall, 1980). Another limitation of content analysis mentioned especially by Marxists is that it diverts the researcher’s attention from highlighting bigger issues such as observing the impact of social media on alienation of people from society. To avoid or overcome such potential limitations, I pay special attention to the context in which the texts I content analyze are being produced. I am aware of the limitations of the analysis but my theoretical model, presented by Hall (1980), leaves room for several other possible interpretations. The analysis within a clear context keeps the doors open for other possible interpretations of the texts.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Tarek Fatah is an influential person in Canada. He is a voice against extremism. Keeping in mind that his books are not available in Pakistan, it is important to see how he uses Facebook to overcome censorship there.

### **1.7 My Hypothesis**

The whole process of writing a book from initial draft to writing, rewriting, editing, proofreading, and publishing involves special attention to minor details from contents to the style and structure of the argument. Thus, we may assume that what we read is a well organized and grounded discourse. We may expect the style to be mostly moderate, and the structure

discursive. On the other hand, in the virtual world of Facebook, what really matters is what we get across and how we perceive it in a short span of time while we are browsing through different posts by different people, friends, or even intellectuals. The posts may thus be expected to be intuitive in structure, because of the short time everyone gives to one post. Style could be moderate or rabid, depending on the person who shares or the intensity of the message. In a comparative study of different themes in Fatah's books and then on Facebook, looking at how he has dealt with the same themes across these two different media, I will investigate this hypothesis. Not only will I discuss whether he has continued to talk about the same themes (or has forgotten what seems to be really significant in his books) but I will check whether the structure and style are indeed shifting from the old to the new medium. I focus particularly on *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* (2008) because in that book Fatah differentiates between two very critical streams of Islamic practices throughout history, the 'State of Islam' and the 'Islamic State,' two themes which broadly define and explain his social, political, religious and cultural stance, and his scattered criticism found throughout his books, interviews, radio programs, talks, blogs, and, as we shall now see, on Facebook.

### **1.8 Mode of Analysis**

As I said before, to systematically analyze what Fatah is conveying and how he does so in offline and online media I am using two categories of the typology proposed by Keren for the classification of offline and online messages. The two variables are operationalized as follows (Keren 2010):

#### **a. Structure**

1. Discursive structure: we may ask whether the writer of the text proceeds by reasoning or argument rather than by intuition.

2. Intuitive structure: we may ask whether the writer proceeds by direct, immediate, habitual statements.

**b. Style**

1. Moderate style: restrained, temperate, and prudent.
2. Rabid style: aggressive, uncompromising, and bigoted

## Chapter Two: Fatah's Themes Offline and Online

### First theme: The Islamic State

#### 2.1 Introduction to the Theme

In *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* (2008) Fatah refers to the concept of the Islamic State on two levels. First, with the perspective of an average Muslim and non-Muslim, “any country with a Muslim majority population” is generally viewed as an “Islamic State.” Second, with the perspective of Islamists, “a country can be labeled an Islamic State only if it is governed by the laws of sharia<sup>3</sup>” (Fatah 2008: 8). With this definition, only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran are Islamic countries. Therefore, countries like Turkey or Indonesia which have majority Muslim populations but are keeping religion and state separate are not Islamic States in the eyes of the Islamists.

Fatah criticizes political manipulation of Islam for the establishment of Islamic State. He is critical of the fact that this concept of establishing separate Islamic state as a pre-requisite to follow Islam, has been used as a tool to govern and exploit the masses for political purposes in the name Islam. He writes that the “Islamic State is a political entity: a state, caliphate, sultanate, kingdom, or country that uses Islam as a tool to govern society and control its citizenry” (Fatah 2008: XIII). His criticism of the Islamic State is based on his strong belief about wrong interpretations of Islamic history. He argues that Saudi Arabia was the first country to manipulate and politicize Islamic history to build an Islamic state. Their ideology was adopted by Indian Muslims in 18<sup>th</sup> century to build a separate Islamic State.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sharia* Laws means the moral codes and laws based on Islamic teachings.

In his book, he criticizes Islamic history and argues that in the late 1920s Egyptian scholar Ali Abdel al-Razik was declared as an apostate for suggesting that Muslims do not need a separate state in the name of Islam. He suggested that all they need is a nation state, where people sharing a certain geographical area should have a sovereign political setup, and religion should be kept aside from politics. He stresses that Islamic theology as well as Islamic history should be re-read and re-interpreted without any preconceptions and without any fear of prejudices and allegations. He argues that Islamic teachings were disregarded. To him, prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not interested in political sovereignty but rather his message was one of religious unity. Islamists has been trying to convince the Muslims that their first caliph, Abu-Bakr (632-634 A.C.) has established first Arab state, which is now Saudi Arabia, as the first Islamic state, after the death of the prophet. He argues that this Arab state “found its legitimacy in Arab identity and Quraysh tribal ancestry (Fatah 2008: 22).” He highlights that it had nothing to do with an Islamic state and it overlooked the basic principles of universalism and equality for non-Arab Muslims. Even in present times, the three prime Islamic states, Pakistan, Saudi Arab and Iran govern by completely ignoring the Islamic principles and oppressing their citizens for political purposes. So, it is very clear that states based on religious ideologies do not follow the state of Islam. Therefore, Fatah clarifies; it is actually Muslims who need to be reformed by depoliticizing Islam and addressing their “relationship with their faith” (Fatah 2008: XIX).

Fatah strengthens his argument through evidence that Muslims do not like to live in so called Islamic States. He refers to a Facebook poll asking about the preferred country to live in among countries with dominant Islamic ideology such as Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Indonesia. The results showed that 78% of the participants indicated that they would prefer

to live in Islamic countries that are relatively liberal or secular, such as Turkey and Indonesia (Fatah 2008: 24).

To further understand the concept and criticism of the Islamic State, Fatah calls proponents of the Islamic State ‘Islamists.’ He explains in his book that Islamists are those who have forgotten the prophet’s teachings about equality and justice and they deploy the glorious past of Islam to trap young generations and use them as a means to achieve their political goals. He writes that they are heading backward and fail to embrace the challenges of the present and future but rather indulge in their mythological past.

## **2.2 Structure**

I shall now look at the above theme of the Islamic state in terms of the structure of the argument, namely, whether Fatah proceeds by reasoning rather than by direct, immediate, habitual statements.

### **2.2.1 In the Book**

In *Chasing a Mirage*, Fatah deconstructs the notion of an ‘Islamic State’ through historical evidence. He makes his argument by reminding his readers of the five basic pillars of Islam, “the declaration of faith in the oneness of god; prayers; fasting; paying the charitable tax of Zakat; and the hajj pilgrimage” are non-political (Fatah 2008: 254). The prophet never suggested the structure of an Islamic state in his lifetime, rather he preached in favour of adoption of equality and justice. Fatah brings four examples of Islamic states:

1. Saudi Arab as a sponsor of an Islamic State
2. Iran as an Islamic State
3. Pakistan as a failure of an Islamic State

4. Palestine as the future of an Islamic State, “where Islamists are trying to create such a state” (Fatah 2008: XIX).

He explains each of these examples of Islamic States in detail. By taking the example of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic State, the structure is based on reason. The basic fact he highlights is that Saudi Arabia used Islam merely as a “cover under which a single family of five thousand princes and princelings rule over a conquered territory that is occupied by force and kept under control by means of racism, terror, and torture” (Fatah 2008: 44). In the book, Fatah’s criticism is based on facts; e.g., that till 1920 “the al-Saud family and their Wahhabi allies” were only rulers of the “Sultanate of Nejd” not of all Arabia. However in 1924, they invaded the neighboring Kingdom of Hejaz and occupied it by force to establish the new kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Fatah laments this historical move and says, “the land where Prophet Muhammad had once walked as a voice of the dispossessed was now ruled by a king” (Fatah 2008: 51).

The structure of Fatah’s criticism of Saudi Arabia revolves around two factors. First, they have established a monarchic state by using the nametag of Islam. Second, they have been spread this ideology of the Islamic State by sponsoring their interpretations of Islam all around the world (Fatah 2008: 44). Fatah believes that due to its oil wealth and the abundant support of USA, it was guaranteed to rule over the Muslim world and spread the “harshest and most barren interpretations” of Islam (Fatah 2008: 45). He elaborates how Saudi Arab sponsors the Ideology of an Islamic state by using the oil money to put the Wahhabist Saudi strain of Islam into prominence. Without the money, Wahhabism might have been limited to a small desert tribe. Saudi Arabia with its cash infusions to Muslim groups and mosques across the globe is trying to promote its fundamentalist version of Islam. He refers to news about how Saudi Arabia is using its funds to spread religious interpretations. He shares news by Robert Fife in the Ottawa Citizen



in July 2004 titled, “Saudis Fund Radicals in Canada,” (Fatah 2008: 310). Likewise, he shares a report in ‘The Globe and Mail’ published in November 2005 saying, “in 2002, the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information announced that King Fahd gave \$5-million (U.S.) and an annual grant of \$1.5-million to the Islamic Centre in Toronto” (Fatah 2008: 311). As a result, he says, “these well-oiled, foreign-inspired, politically driven machines ... have their hooks in every corner of Western society. He concludes by bringing an excerpt from an essay on Wahhabism by Hamid Algar of the University of California–Berkeley, “Some Muslim student organizations have functioned at times as Saudi supported channels for the propagation of Wahhabism abroad” (as quoted in Fatah 2008: 313).

He justifies his criticism of today’s Saudi backed Taliban and other extremist groups by highlighting the history of Saudi Arabia. He explains: “when Islamist extremists kill innocent civilians and invoke Allah to sanctify their terrorism, they are only following in the footsteps of their 18th-century teacher, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-92) (Fatah 2008: 46). Wahhab was born to a religious family and at the age of 12, he memorized Quran, the holy book. At that time, “the practice of Islam in Arabia was relatively lax” (Fatah 2008: 47). Wahhab “developed a particular appreciation of the works of Ibn Taymiyah, a scholar of the 13th century who exploited the vacuum created after the Mongol destruction of the Abbasids to propagate a harsh and extremist interpretation of Islam, suggesting God had punished the Muslims because of their lax attitude towards matters of faith (Fatah 2008: 46). Ibn Saud, who was the ruler of Nejd at that time, took manipulated Wahabist interpretations of Islam for his own political purpose. Fatah explains that at that time, both Nejd and Hejaz were independent entities following the ideology of the ‘nation state’ based on “tribal allegiances, not Islamic principles” (Fatah 2008: 46). The proof Fatah provides is that, “Ibn Saud of Nejd is even said to have sent the Sharif of Hejaz a gift

of camels and horses to aid the Hejazi war effort against the Turks (Muslims). Fatah mentions that when Wahhab started to preach a strict version of Islam, his fellowmen in the town didn't accept it and he had to flee. In 1744 he met the tribal chief, Muhammad Ibn Saud, "who took a liking to the radical preacher's message. The two agreed to lead a militant reform movement in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>4</sup> in the 1740s and 1750s." (Fatah 2008: 47). Soon afterwards, "while Ibn Saud took on the title of emir of Nejd, to look after matters of state, Wahhab [...] would take on the even grander title of Sheikh ul-Islam (Fatah 2008: 47). As the Sheikh ul-Islam Wahhab called all Muslims who disagreed with his interpretations of Islam apostates, "which in his eyes justified the declaration of jihad on the neighboring Arab tribes and towns inside Nejd" (Fatah 2008: 47). Wherever Ibn Saud went, Muslims were asked to submit to Wahabist version of Islam, or die (Fatah 2008: 48).

To further explain how Saudi Arabia is the sponsor of this ideology of the Islamic State he refers to the roots of the establishment of Pakistan as a separate Islamic State. He writes that when Wahhab joined hands with Ibn Saud, an Indian Muslim scholar Shah Waliullah came to Arabia to perform the pilgrimage of hajj. He spent around fourteen months in Hejaz and Nejd, and meanwhile he joined forces with Wahab. Waliullah returned to Delhi in 1732, "laid the foundation of what was to become Political Islam in the subcontinent" (Fatah 2008: 49). Fatah explains that Shah Waliullah was more concerned with the political disorder and fading of Muslim power at that time. However, he "blamed it on the lack of Muslim resolve to deal harshly with the Hindu majority of the country. His objective was to re-establish the Islamic cultural hegemony in the Indian subcontinent. Waliullah also supported Wahhab's rigidity

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<sup>4</sup> This reform movement in the Arabian Peninsula is also known as "Wahhabi" movement.

concerning the strict compliance with sharia” (Fatah 2008: 49).

After describing Saudi Arabia as a sponsor of the Islamic State, he takes the example of the ruling structure of Iran (Fatah 2008: 56). He criticizes Iran for declaring itself the only Islamic State that wasn’t influenced by “American hegemony and neo-liberalism” (Fatah 2008: 56). Fatah is critical of the fact that French scholars like Michel Foucault (1926–84) and Roger Garaudy (b. 1913) were impressed by that ideology. He quotes Foucault, “one thing must be clear. By ‘Islamic government’ nobody in Iran means a political regime in which the clergy would have a role of supervision or control” (*Nouvel Observateur* 1978, as quoted in Fatah 2008: 57). Fatah also mentions that Foucault accepted their anti-feminist stance that women are naturally different from men. However, Foucault’s naivety was underscored on March 8, 1979, when Iranian women were attacked by Islamists asking them to cover themselves, threatening that otherwise they would be beaten during a march on International Women’s Day.

He highlights the political structure of Iran, which is based on injustices and racial segregation that totally ignore the Islamic teachings. He mentions that in order to become the supreme leader of Iran, one has to prove his roots to the lineage of the prophet’s daughter Fatima and her husband. Fatah brings historical evidence of such racial segregation by showing that in the first presidential elections in Iran, Jalal-uddin Farsi was rejected because his father was born in Afghanistan. Fatah ironically states that Afghan blood “sells a bit cheaper in the market of racial hierarchies” than Arab blood (Fatah 2008: 67). In such a way, the very foundations of the “Islamic State” are the basis of racial segregation. He concludes that, “Iran under the ruling of the Ayatollahs is the quintessential Islamic State whose main victims have been the people of Iran; the Persian spirit; and, tragically, the very state of Islam” (Fatah 2008: 69).

Fatah extends his criticism of the Islamic State by mentioning Pakistan as an example of the failure of that ideology. He criticizes the establishment of Pakistan in the name of Islam. He writes that Pakistan is an example of the failure of an Islamic state (Fatah 2008: 24), which results in a constant fight between Islam and Islamists throughout its history. He states: “the experiment of an Islamic State in Pakistan has shown clearly that such an entity is only a medieval dream that cannot live up to the standards of democracy, ethics, universal human rights, and the rule of law” (Fatah 2008: 40). To further elaborate his stance, he gives the following reasons:

1. After the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Hindus and Sikhs started to flee Pakistan for India, and millions of Indian Muslims started to migrate to Pakistan. Half a million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were killed during the riots that followed the partition. Another one million people were killed in 1971 during the Bangladesh war of liberation. (Fatah 2008:29)
2. The majority of Sikhs migrated to India but the holy shrines are in the Pakistani cities of Lahore and Gujranwala, Nankana Sahib and Rawalpindi. Thus, during the creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan, the Sikhs lost absolute access to the following holy sites. (Fatah 2008:29)
3. Likewise, for the millions of Muslims who refused to migrate to Pakistan from India, “Pakistan became a curse word and a burden that they and their future generations would have to carry through no fault of their own. After partition, Indian Muslims, despite their enormous sacrifices and contributions to Indian culture and civilization, would be regarded with suspicion by the Hindu nationalists of the country. The Jan Sanghis of the 1950s and 1960s, the Shiv Sena of today, and elements of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have spared

no occasion to cast doubt on the patriotism of Indian Muslims, at times taunting them to “Go to Pakistan”” (Fatah 2008:40).

4. To gain the power circle of society, people were being segregated on the basis of religion, status, and region throughout the history of Pakistan. The Pukhtoos, the people of the NWFP,<sup>5</sup> were treated like the riff-raff of society. This alienated them and in the 1970s this resulted in Pukhtoon nationalism. Later, Islamists exploited the spirit of nationalism and created the Pukhtoon Taliban of today (Fatah 2008:32). Likewise, the “pro-US armed forces of Pakistan” (Fatah 2008: 34), Jamat-e-Islami and other religious parties have used religion as a tool to control the masses.
5. Furthermore, people were being victimized for having different religious views than what the Islamists believed to be true. Fatah gives an example how Ahmadiya Muslims were declared heretic and how practicing their faith in public was considered blasphemous. The law, which imposed a three year imprisonment and a fine for blasphemy led to mutual hatred among different religious sects and to assassination of 62 people since 1990.<sup>6</sup> Fatah mentions that in 2006, ninety cases of blasphemy were reported. Among them, only 48 were registered with the police, in which 27 were against Muslim, 10 were against Christian, and 11 were particularly against the Ahmadiya Muslim community. (Fatah 2008:32)

By concluding his criticism about the foundation of Pakistan in the name of Islam, Fatah writes that “a state which claims to take inspiration from the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad can mistreat its minority citizens while trampling over their rights indicates that Islam is once again being used merely as a tool of power, not as an instrument of faith.” (Fatah

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<sup>5</sup> One of the 4 provinces of Pakistan, now known as ‘Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21635070-pakistans-blasphemy-laws-legitimise-intolerance-bad-mouthing>

2008:42)

Fatah elaborates the tools used to brainwash Muslims and young generations of Pakistanis to misguide and alienate them from their regional history and then use them as political dupes. From his Diaspora position, he seems concerned about his Pakistani fellow beings. He explains how they are being manipulated and misguided about their history and about their ancestry. He explains that 'Islamists' have used religion to create an 'identity gap' among younger generations, by isolating them from their roots. As a result, the present day Pakistanis are ignorant of their true heritage of 'Indianness.' They are being misguided about their identity. Fatah laments the ignorance about the rich tradition, the geography, culture, cuisine, language and clothing caused by the efforts to deny Indian roots. He quotes K.K. Aziz, who writes in his book *The Murder of History* about the upbringing of Pakistanis for 50 years with "myths disguised as truth" (quoted in *Chasing a Mirage*: 16). He explains that the word 'India' is derived from the river Indus, which is part of present day Pakistan. India (neighbouring country of Pakistan) has not only taken this name but also the rich heritage that is associated with this name. On the other hand, Pakistanis, who are the custodians of the rich ancient civilization of Harappa<sup>7</sup> and Mohenjo-Daro<sup>8</sup>, are dumped into an identity crisis.

This 'identity gap' has trapped Muslims into the make-believe ideology of the Islamic State. Arabs, he claims, see themselves as the guardians of Islam and relegate non-Arab Muslims to a second-class status. This is one of the reasons why Indo-Pakistani Muslims live in a state of a persistent identity crisis. Based on this historically created alienation, Fatah explains that these

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<sup>7</sup> Harappa is an archaeological site in Punjab, eastern Pakistan. It has its earliest roots in cultures such as that of Mehrgarh, approximately 6000 BC.

<sup>8</sup> Mohenjo-daro is an archaeological site in the province of Sindh, Pakistan. Built around 2600 BC, it was one of the largest settlements of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, and one of the world's earliest major urban settlements, contemporaneous with the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete.

young generations in Pakistan have even adopted Arab names to fill the identity gap. As a result, Islamists took advantage of the second generation in the West, and have been successfully using them for political purposes (Fatah 2008: XVII). He highlights how Islamists have spread rumours that lead to anti-Semitism.

Fatah believes that literature and media blame everything bad that happens in Pakistan to the “Jewish Lobby.” He mentions that during his visit to the tribal areas of Pakistan in 2006, he was surprised to see that “Bird Flu” and “Tsunami” were also considered the outgrowth of a Jewish conspiracy. He mocks such rumours and ventures to provide the historical and factual content of Muslim - Jewish relations. He clarifies the theological and historical division of Muslims and Jews in his book *The Jew is Not My Enemy: Unveiling the Myths that Fuel Muslim Anti-Semitism*. In that book, he challenges Muslim myths, which are behind anti-Semitism, as well as Israeli policies that further contribute to hatred of Jews in the Muslim world.

As a result of such political manipulations and of the identity gap, there has been a constant fight between Islamists and secular politician throughout the history of Pakistan. It has become a failed Islamic State because of the resulting bloodshed. Two politicians, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (d. 4 April 1979) and his daughter Benazir Bhutto (d. 27 December 2007) were targeted because they “wanted to build a modern social democracy free from Islamic extremism” (Fatah 2008: 4). Fatah refers to the political agenda of an Islamist, Zia-ul-Haq, who imposed Martial law and the end of Bhutto's government after becoming the chief of staff. Fatah deconstructs his criticism of Zia-ul-Haq as an Islamist and asserts that Zia-ul-Haq mixed the “Islamist ideology” and “service to US regional interests” in Pakistan. He explains that US backed Jamat-e-Islami's Zia-ul-Haq implemented Adul Ala Mudoodi's so called Islamic Law as an ultimate version of Islam. He is largely responsible for the destruction of “Pakistan's cultural and historic heritage,”

yet he is still the darling of the now anti-US Islamists (Fatah 2008: 39).

Another argument Fatah gives to explain the failure of Pakistan as an Islamic State is the siege of the Lal Mosque<sup>9</sup> of Islamabad in the summer of 2007, which “was a creation of Pakistan’s intelligence services,” to recruit armed jihadis. It was US-backed Zia who had allowed the Red Mosque jihadis a free hand in spreading their hateful doctrine of extremism under the name of Islam. (Fatah 2008: 39)

In his criticism of Pakistan in the book, Fatah is very clear that the Pakistani people do not accept the Islamists’ political ideology. He refers to the million men and women who gathered to greet former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007, when she returned after eight years in self-imposed exile, which proved to him that “the people of Pakistan reject Islamic extremism and yearn for a liberal progressive Islam” (Fatah 2008: 40). Likewise, in the elections of February 18, 2008, Pakistanis “categorically rejected the ideology of the Taliban, snubbed the forces of Jihadi extremism, and sent a message of no confidence against the regime of General Pervez Musharraf” (Fatah 2008: 43).

Another important argument of Fatah’s criticism of Pakistan as a failure of an Islamic State is based on the territorial exploitation of Baluchistan, which is a province of present-day Pakistan. Fatah writes that on August 11, 1947, “the British protectorate of Baluchistan declared

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<sup>9</sup> The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) was built in 1965 on the land allotted by Capital Development Authority (CDA). It was named as Lal Masjid which means ‘Red Mosque’ for its red walls and interiors. With the passage of time, the mosque administrations illegally encroached the surroundings and build a fort. Until early 2007, the land remained in their possession and CDA could not evacuate the land because of the strong connections of Lal Masjid’s administration with the government’s high officials. It has been historically a training hub for militants. During the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989), the Lal Masjid was used as a recruiting and training center for militants. In early 2007, CDA strongly persuaded and issued a vacation notice. However, students were motivated in the name of religion to stand and fight against the CDA officials. This conflict resulted in bloody gun battles in which more than twenty people were killed and over one hundred people were injured.



its independence.” After three days on August 14, 1947, Pakistan got independence. However, these two states coexisted till March 1948 only, when the Pakistani army seized Baluchistan. The traditional Baluch leader, the Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, signed a treaty of integration under threat of imprisonment (Fatah 2008: 42-43). He writes that Baluchistan is immensely rich in natural resources, yet it is economically one of the poorest regions in Pakistan. Based on these arguments, Fatah concludes:

It is time to learn a lesson from the experience of Pakistan and come to the conclusion that the myth of an Islamic State can only serve the interests of Islamists and not its citizens, or Islam, and definitely not its non-Muslim populace (Fatah 2008: 40).

In conclusion, Fatah firmly believes that religion and the state should be separated from each other. Fatah is concerned with the negative impact of the establishment of a state in the name of religion. He shares his stance as a responsible, knowledgeable intellectual who aims at highlighting social, religious and cultural evils in order to cure society.

### ***2.2.2 On Facebook***

In his book, Tarek Fatah gives reasons to differentiate the concept of the Islamic State, followed by Islamists in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan. He logically elaborates the political mindset of Islamists in these so-called Islamic States, who have used Islam merely as a nametag to establish their political hegemony. Moving to Facebook, Fatah continues to highlight the tragic illusion of Muslims about the establishment of the Islamic State. He highlights the consequences of what he has already elaborated in his books. But on Facebook, he is not going through the details shared in his books. The structure of the status updates, posts and photos is direct and immediate.

By categorically following the same order on Facebook as in his book, about the construction of an Islamic State in Saudi Arabia, and then in Iran and Pakistan, I will demonstrate the structure of Fatah's argument in this medium.

In his book, Fatah explains that Saudi Arabia has used the ideology of the Islamic State for territorial expansion and to gain control in the Muslim world by using its oil money. As soon as he moves to Facebook, he does not discuss as much as he has discussed in his books about Saudi Arabia as an Islamic State. There are, however, some counter-comments in response to his audience's comments on his posts, in which he resonates the same theme as in his books, and the personal memories of his life in Saudi Arabia before immigrating to Canada. But his criticism on Saudi Arabia is limited to the criticism of male chauvinism. He doesn't discuss the religious and political influence of Saudi Arabia, which he believes exploits the masses in the name of an Islamic state. Likewise, in none of his posts he directly highlights the theme of Iran as an example of an Islamic State. However, there are certain comments in which he criticizes the Iranian ayatollahs' extremism and ignorance. For instance, On February 7, 2008, in response to criticism by one of his followers for his highlighting every small action of Muslims while ignoring the casualties caused by non-Muslims, Fatah further highlights the racial segregation and human casualties in Iran caused by Islamists. He then asks, 'does this mean that the outrageous behaviour of these Islamist doctors be tolerated because somewhere else something worse is happening?' (Facebook: February 7, 2008)

On Fatah's Facebook page, his criticism of Saudi Arabia and Iran is so direct but very limited. On Facebook, Fatah shares around 47 status updates about the theme of the 'Islamic State,' out of them 38 are about Pakistan, 2 about Saudi Arabia and 7 posts are about Turkey, Tanzania and other Islamic countries. The numbers show that for Tarek Fatah it is more

important to highlight the character of Pakistan as an Islamic State. He feels very comfortable to mock, to criticize and to share whatever is happening in Pakistan. Fatah criticizes almost every aspect of the Pakistani Islamists' political mindset as an example of the failure of an Islamic State through either photographs, caricatures or by sharing direct and short status updates. Starting from the establishment of Pakistan as a separate state in the name of Islam, he shares the traumatic photographs of the partition of India and Pakistan on Facebook (on August 13 2012) and condemns the very act of a separate Islamic State. This is contrary to his books, where we see a detailed elaboration of the partition of India and Pakistan, and its consequences on Muslims, Sikhs, Hindu and other minority religious groups in both countries. On Facebook, his post includes traumatic photographs of human bodies with a caption stating, "[...] in an orgy of hatred unleashed by a selfish and arrogant ego-maniac called MA Jinnah<sup>10</sup>," and "black history of Pakistan." He gives the one side of the picture and without much description, with a direct and immediate structure; these pictures instill the hatred for Pakistan in general and for Pakistani people in particular. He highlights the political and religious exploitation in Pakistan by tracing its historical roots as well as the present circumstances. However, short status updates with visual images convey an intense and powerful message to his followers on Facebook. He has recently (on 14 August 2014) updated the same album by adding a little description, explaining his anti-partition sentiments because of the brutal history it involved, and the on-going occupation of Baluchistan, as well as the genocide in Bangladesh in 1971. He shares certain traumatic pictures of the Baluchi people on Facebook and highlights the territorial exploitation of Baluchistan. This

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the founder of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

direct criticism, with powerful messages, seems to be intended to justify his criticism of Pakistan and his followers on Facebook, who are commenting against Pakistan.

To highlight the impact of the Islamist agenda in Pakistan on the lifestyles of people, Fatah shares the pictures of girls wearing sleeveless dresses in the 1960s, with a caption ‘unimaginable sight’ in today’s Pakistan (July 22, 2013). Such instances are unique to his Facebook, because in his books, it seems irrelevant to describe the lifestyle of people in such a direct and immediate manner when discussing the political and religious scenario. In comparison to these fashionable photographs from the 1960s, he shares news excerpts about the “pro-American jihadi general” Zia ul Haq on July 5, 1977 when he overthrew Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), accompanied by a very short and immediate statement, the “darkest day in the Pakistan’s history,” which started from the Islamisation and Arabisation of Pakistan to the current jihadi judiciary. The readers are left to wonder what does it have to do with the judiciary in particular? However, his followers who have access to his books in Canada or anywhere in the world except Pakistan, can easily understand this direct and immediate structure of his posts on Facebook, but this would be hard for those who have no access to his books, i.e. the Pakistanis. He has mentioned in his book how Zia-ul-Haq's government changed the constitution of Pakistan and added Blasphemy Laws, which directly victimized the Ahmadiya Muslims and other minority groups.

Fatah continues on Facebook to admire the Pakistani People’s Party (PPP), and shows sympathy towards the politicians of the Bhutto family. On the death of Nusrat Bhutto, wife of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, on October 23 2011, he shares a photo of her family mentioning the tragic execution of her husband Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, their sons Shahnawaz Bhutto and Murtaza Bhutto, and their daughter Benazir Bhutto. Though the structure of his post is very short and immediate,

it clearly shows his appreciation for the Bhutto family and their secular political agenda. Unlike his criticism, this direct and immediate structure of his posts about the appreciation of Pakistani Politics or a particular political group doesn't seem incomplete or nonfactual to hid followers.

Fatah wrote his book in 2008, so his criticism of Islamist politicians is primarily focused on Zia-ul-Haq and another army general turned politician Pervez Musharraf<sup>11</sup>. However, Facebook is an up-to-date medium. Moving to the present era, Fatah not only criticizes Zia-ul-Haq but he also adds on his Facebook page his criticism of the Pakistani cricketer turned politician Imran Khan carrying the pro-Islamist agenda of Zia-ul-Haq which is pro-Taliban and pro-Jihad. In the given timeframe of my analysis, he has comparatively shared the second highest number of around 24 posts out of 38 posts about Imran Khan. This number shows that how much Tarek Fatah is critical of the continuation of pro-Jihadi politics in Pakistan.

Fatah shares a historical picture of American Governor Jimmay Carter<sup>12</sup> and Pakistan's UN representative Iqbal Akhund exchanging views about Pakistan's nuclear ambitions in 1975. Fatah criticizes Carter's presidency in which the USA helped the 'Islamist' political leader Zia-ul-Haq to topple Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) of PPP (dated February 1975). Fatah has discussed in detail, in his book, how Pakistani politician Zia-ul-Haq with the aid of the US funded jihadi Islamists' organizations in Pakistan for the war against the Soviet Union in the late 1970s. Though the statement is of an immediate and direct structure, it conveys the message of continuity of the US aid to train these Jihadi Islamists in Pakistan in the era of the US President Ronald Reagan, starting in 1981, through Zia-ul-Haq. Moving to the present political setup in

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<sup>11</sup> He was the 10<sup>th</sup> president of Pakistan from 20 June 2001 to 18 August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Jimmy Carter, Jr. (born October 1, 1924) was the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. In 1975, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Carter was the Governor of Georgia.

Pakistan, he strongly condemns Imran Khan for ‘peace talks’ with the Taliban. Though the structure of his argument is direct and immediate but with a repetitive term of ‘Taliban Khan,’ for ‘Imran Khan,’ he clearly shows how much he is critical of Imran Khan’s political agenda about the peace talks with the Taliban, as the only way to deal with extremism.

In conclusion, his book includes more well written and in-detail discursive structure of the argument. However, on Facebook he has used a direct and immediate structure of the argument. In case of Pakistani politician Imran Khan, he has used the habitual statement of calling him as a ‘Taliban Khan’ in every post about him. This intuitive structure of his posts on Facebook may create a powerful imagery in the minds of his Facebook followers and readers about the concept of the Islamic State. On the other hand, this intuitive structure of the posts about Pakistan makes it seem as if every Pakistani is a Muslim and every Muslim is an Islamist, as if every Pakistani citizen is carrying the same mentality of using Islam merely as a nametag to build an Islamic State. He doesn’t elaborate on it even when his followers interpret his posts in which he generalizes about Muslims in a negative and derogatory way. Stuart Hall's theory perfectly fits this scenario when he argues that the absence of something is as important as the presence of something. Considering the medium of Facebook, the absence of Fatah’s explanation even in the counter arguments adds nothing but hatred and victimization of the Pakistani people on one hand and merely encourages hatred toward him among the Pakistani people.

### **2.3 Style**

I shall now look at the above theme of the Islamic state in terms of the style of the argument, namely, whether Fatah proceeds by restrained, temperate, prudent, instructive, persuasive, inquisitive, statements or by aggressive, uncompromising, bashing, scornful, mocking, contradictory, sarcastic, haughty, coarse and bigoted statements.

### **2.3.1 In the Book**

In *Chasing a Mirage*, Fatah elaborates his argument and provides the factual evidence about the Islamic State by using the first category of style mentioned above. The moderate choice of his words is carefully embroiled within his argument. Each and every word makes me as a reader to critically rethink and reevaluate my political understanding of Pakistan and other 'Islamic States.' Being in a Diaspora, with a moderate style, Fatah has been able to achieve the position of a Public intellectual who, as Edward Said believed, is able to highlight situations without getting influenced by the power circles of the society he lives in. His criticism of 'Saudi Arabia as a Sponsor of the 'Islamic State,' and 'Pakistan as a failure of an Islamic State' not only provide additional facts, and provides another perspective to what we have studied in our textbooks in Pakistani schools; his refraining from making any illogical statements gave him the reputation of a public intellectual who highlights themes of utter importance.

Starting with the core ideology of an Islamic state, he doesn't just say aggressively that he doesn't accept the ideology of the Islamic state; rather he thoroughly educates his readers with facts and historical evidence about how Islamists have been playing with words to isolate Muslims from the rest of the world and to exercise their political agenda. In highlighting Pakistani history and the political setup, he makes, for example, statements such as the following: "today we are paying the price for opportunities wasted in the past. Let us learn from these mistakes and start building for the future" (Fatah 2008: 332).

In criticizing the Islamic State, his style is very temperate. He avoids any kind of subjective statements and keeps himself out of his writings. He explains very logically and moderately why he propagates separation of religion and state in every aspect of public policy. He believes that "a separation of religion and state is a prerequisite to building democratic

societies where all religious, ethnic, and racial minorities are accepted as equal citizens enjoying the full dignity and human rights” (Fatah 2008: 355).

In his criticism of the Pakistani mindset which blames every malaise on a Zionist-US conspiracy, he explains in a methodic style that it is “the inability of the Muslim leadership to realize that the days of emirs and caliphs belong to the past. It is a failure of our scholars and clerics to reconcile Islam with modernity, individual freedom, and liberty. As long as we continue to blame others for our own shortcomings, we will continue to stagnate” (Fatah 2008: 339).

Whatever he says in his book, he justifies logically without being aggressive. He does not just highlight ‘what’ is wrong rather he explain ‘why’ and ‘where’ it went wrong and then he explains ‘how’ we can correct it.

### **2.3.2 On Facebook**

Moving to Facebook, there is a drastic shift in the style of his discourse. On Facebook, as I wrote before, everyone is supposedly free to discuss issues of common concern. However, in the case of Tarek Fatah, he occasionally discourages the readers who don’t agree with the dominant messages conveyed in his posts. Some of his readers try to argue that Fatah provides only one side of the picture. Surprisingly, the readers/followers who try to refer to the other side of the picture are not only bashed by other readers but also by Fatah himself on his Facebook page.

There is one part about Pakistani history when he doesn’t get aggressive toward his audiences even if they don’t agree with what he shares. Fatah appreciates Pakistani Politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and pre-1970s secular Pakistan. In the response, his audience shares sympathies with Fatah for the Bhutto family of PPP. However, there are some people who asks



Fatah not to overlook the actual history in his appreciation for the Bhutto family. For instance, Mahmood, one of his followers on Facebook, adds a comment that one should not romanticize the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's era because history should be evaluated on the basis of facts and not opinions. One of his followers on Facebook, Mahmood refers to the factual evidence and calls Zulfikar Ali Bhutto an "opportunist," blaming him for the "biggest blunder" he has done by adding Article 2 in the constitution that "Islam will be the religion of Pakistan" (January 29 2012). So, it was actually Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who laid the foundations of the political segregations by excluding the other religious minorities in Pakistan.

On the other hand, in response to Fatah's posts criticizing the Islamic State, some of his followers try to take part in the discussion in the comment section. On 6 November 2011, for example, one of his followers tries to challenge his criticism of the Islamic State, and differentiate between bad governance and religion; Fatah's response becomes rabid and bigoted; he comments back to him by saying, "your medieval magical world of ignorance is fit for the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Facebook: 6 November 2011).

Likewise, in criticising Pakistan as an example of the failure of an Islamic State, he not only criticizes the political agenda of Imran Khan but also mocks Imran Khan's personal life by sharing the news articles, caricatures, and photographs depicting Imran Khan as a Taliban. In his book, he doesn't criticize or mock how Islamists look like but his criticism is based on what they are doing and how they have exploited the masses. On Facebook, he becomes aggressive, for instance, when he says about Imran Khan "Who is your daddy now, Taliban Khan" (Facebook: November 2, 2013), "the man we know as Taliban Khan" (Facebook: November 3, 2013), "Tough guy, Taliban Khan" (Facebook: November 2, 2013), "pro-jihad Pakistani politician" (Facebook: October 27, 2013). He posts a picture of Imran Khan hypnotizing the Pakistani

people by misrepresenting the facts and relating the root causes of terrorism to a US conspiracy (see Appendix 5).

Fatah's post about Imran Khan as the Taliban Khan got a mixed reaction. For instance, Abdullah requests him not to mix up the Pashtun cultural traditions of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa<sup>13</sup> with the Taliban by comparing Imran Khan's way of living with the Taliban (Facebook: 4 November 2012). Ali appreciates Imran Khan's policies of dealing with the Taliban issue. He appreciates him for his logical and practical approach because the Taliban are killing both NATO forces and Pakistani civilians. He adds, "no sane person" could possibly be pro-Taliban. Likewise, one of Fatah's followers on Facebook asks him to show the other side of the picture, referring to the creation of the Taliban in Pakistan as a result of the US imperial mindset against the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Despite the fact that Fatah himself mentions this in his book, he becomes arrogant and aggressive with the follower. He responds by referring to his "unbelievable ignorance" (October 31 2012) for believing in a US conspiracy to create the Taliban. Fatah has resonated the same stance about the US conspiracy in a newspaper, the Globe and Mail in which he wrote that Islamic radicalism, as a result of "the empowering of Saudi based Jihadi groups (in Pakistan)... were funded and backed by the U.S. and the CIA throughout the Afghan war against the Soviet Union (Globe and Mail. July 13, 2007)." Being a researcher, I wonder why is he being contradictory on Facebook to what he has shared in his book as well as in a newspaper? A possible answer could be that he is intentionally using the intuitive structure with habitual statements and bigoted style to instil hatred among his followers for Islamists! The problem,

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<sup>13</sup> A province in Pakistan.

however, is that Fatah's books are not accessible in Pakistan and reading his Facebook posts alone, makes him a pseudo-intellectual in the eyes of people who are living in Pakistan. In this way, his Facebook page becomes a source of propaganda and doesn't necessarily educate them about the political and religious exploitation, they are going through.

## Chapter Three: **Fatah's Themes Offline and Online**

### **Second theme: The State of Islam**

#### **3.1 Introduction to the Theme**

In *Chasing a Mirage*, Tarek Fatah explains that the ‘state of Islam’ is the way one governs his/her personal and moral values according to the teachings of Islam. It is the “condition of a Muslim in how he or she imbibes the values of Islam to govern personal life and uses faith as a moral compass” (Fatah 2008: XIII). He believes that this is the only way Muslims can accept and face the challenges of this millennium. He argues that Muslims who tried to achieve the intellectual and pious pursuits of Islam contributed to the glorious past of human civilisation.

Fatah writes that throughout history, whenever Muslims believed in their faith and practiced the ‘state of Islam,’ they were glorified. On the other hand, whenever they tried to be defensive and obsessive about their religion and rituals by protecting and projecting Islam just like a brand with a sense of ownership, they brought damage to their own societies. He writes that, “Muslims who have striven to achieve a state of Islam have invariably stepped away from using Islam to chase political power, opting instead for intellectual and pious pursuits” (Fatah 2008: XIII). Fatah calls upon his fellow Muslims to walk away from pursuing an Islamic state and to try instead to create a state of Islam within them.

Fatah highlights the social evils implied by not following the state of Islam, which he believes derive from the “medieval Sharia laws from the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Fatah 2008: 280).” He highlights the social issues, which are part of the state of Islam but are actually manipulated by Islamists in one way or another. These issues are the following:

1. Sharia Laws<sup>14</sup> are human laws, which are interpreted to be God's laws.
2. Hijab, the covering of the head, is propagated as a religious piety but has been used as a tool to segregate females.
3. Jihad, which is the struggle against those who do not adhere to Islam, is propagated as a religious devotion but is another tool by Islamists to politicize Islam.

Both in the book and on Facebook Fatah doesn't just focus on the 'state of Islam' in Islamic States but also on how propaganda has been used in the west to exploit the young generations of Muslims in the West. He criticizes Canadian multiculturalism for accepting immigrant laws, such as the Sharia Law, which institutionalize gender segregation. He opposes the acceptance of the sharia law in the Canadian legal system because it benefits a particular group. He believes that acceptance of such 'human laws,' as 'divine laws' is totally intolerable. Fatah refers to the Islamists' mindset and strongly affirms that they use Sharia Law to advance their political agenda. Across both mediums, he strongly believes the Sharia Law is biased and based on Islamists' interpretations according to their own benefits.

### **3.2 Structure**

I shall now look at the above theme in terms of the structure of the argument, namely, whether Fatah proceeds by reasoning or argument rather than by direct, immediate, habitual statements.

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<sup>14</sup> Sharia Law is compilation of laws based on Islamic teachings.

### **3.2.1 In the Book**

In *Chasing a Mirage*, Fatah clearly explains that Islamists are using Sharia Law to impose their ways to practice the ‘state of Islam.’ Before criticising widely accepted codes to achieve that ‘state of Islam,’ he spells out Sharia Law in order to explain that to consider it as a guideline given by God to people how to live their lives was never commanded in the Quran<sup>15</sup> or the Sunnah.<sup>16</sup> Fatah mentions that the word “sharia” appeared in the Quran only three times: “once as a noun in chapter 45, and twice as a verb in chapters 5 and 48. The term sharia means “way” or “path to the water source” (Fatah 2008: 249). Fatah explains that in Islamic religious vocabulary sharia stands for the body of Islamic law and he rejects the premise that the sharia law is the Islamic way of life. He explains that the interpretations of the sharia laws are based on ten different sources (Fatah 2008: 249). Among them, nine are man-made. Fatah strongly affirms that some of these laws are so barbaric and manipulated that they can’t be defined or categorized as divine or Quranic. He gives an example of a law based on Sharia Law, “The Head of an Islamic State cannot be punished under Islam’s Hudood laws<sup>17</sup> that govern acts of murder, rape, and thievery”(Fatah 2008:240). How could it be divine’s law to protect an adulterous head of state and imposing these laws on the rest of the people who don’t have that much power in society? Fatah goes in the detail into the human interpretations of Sharia Laws. He states that the Quran to be the book of divine guidance revealed from God to Muhammad (PBUH) during the time period of 610 to 632 AD. Fatah doesn’t challenge what is in the Quran but he explains, “except for the Quran, sources of sharia are human” (Fatah 2008:250). Fatah pinpoints the

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<sup>15</sup> The holy book of Muslims.

<sup>16</sup> Sunnah is the way of life prescribed on the basis of the teachings and practices of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

<sup>17</sup> In Sharia Laws, Hudood laws are defined as the laws for the crimes for which God has fixed the punishments in Quran.

possible reasons for the compilation of the Sharia Laws in the time period of the Muslim kings (caliphs) from 700–850AD. He writes that these Muslim kings first compiled Sharia Laws “to give Islamic legitimacy to their un-Islamic rule” and then, for the next hundred years, from 800 to 900 AD, the books on the hadith<sup>18</sup> were written “to legitimize sharia as Islamic law” (Fatah 2008: 251). Fatah writes that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) died in 632 AD, and the compilation of his sayings, which is an essential part of Sunnah, was accomplished two hundred years after his death (Fatah 2008: 250). So, the chances of human flaws in the compilation of the Sunnah are high. Likewise, Sharia laws were codified by the five major imams/jurists<sup>19</sup> and their disciples in 700-850 AD. The fact is that it was not only these original jurists who wrote these laws but their disciples also contributed and wrote under their masters’ name. There is no clear indication what parts did the disciples codify in their master’s name. Moreover, there are huge contradictions among all of these imams and it shows that they cannot be God’ laws and these are not the absolute truths.

In *Chasing a Mirage*, Fatah shows how a political mindset has been constructed through religious interpretations of different sources throughout history. He refers to another source for the compilation of the Sharia Law, which is known as ‘Ijtehad,’ defined as the mutual consent of Islamic scholars about social issues for which one does not find clear directions from the Quran or prophet’s life. So, the compilation of laws based on Ijtehad is totally relied on human interpretations and how they could be considered as the absolute way to achieve the state of Islam.

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<sup>18</sup> Sayings of prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

<sup>19</sup> These five imams are as following: Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767), Imam Jaffer Sadiq (702–65), Imam Shafi ‘i (767–820), Imam Malik (712–95), Imam Hanbal (778–855).

Fatah goes on to highlight the different sections of Sharia Law, which clearly contradict with Quranic verses. He quotes Hasan Mahmud, author of the book *Islam and Sharia*, for highlighting the contradictions between Sharia Law and the Quranic verses.

- i. According to the sharia law, the punishment of an adulterer is ‘stoning to death,’ which violates chapter 24, verses 2 and 3; chapter 4, verses 15, 16, and 25 of the Quran. These verses do not prescribe a death sentence for adulterers, but accept repentance for such an act.
- ii. The sharia law requires a woman to provide four eyewitnesses of adult males to prove her allegations of rape against someone, which makes it impossible for her to get justice. It is against Islamic teachings and a means to oppress the woman.
- iii. Likewise, the sharia law rejects women eyewitnesses in Hudood or criminal cases, which violates chapter 24, verses 4 and 11–20. These verses require “not the accused” but “the accuser to produce four adult male eyewitnesses to prove adultery or fornication.” The verses were revealed to stop men from unjustly accusing women of adultery.
- iv. The sharia law permits men unrestricted polygamy, which violates chapter 4, verses 3, 4, and 127 of the Quran. “Polygamy is admissible only in case of vulnerable orphans in specific circumstances and restricted by behavior codes.”
- v. The sharia law allows the death penalty for an apostate, a person one who forsakes his religion or faith. In the life of the prophet, three persons were recorded as apostates and none of them faced the death penalty.
- vi. “The sharia law allowing a Muslim husband to issue an “instant” divorce to his wife violates chapter 2, verses 228 and 229, and chapter 65, verses 1 and 2.” According to these verses the couple shall wait for three menstrual periods of woman, and they both



can reconcile meanwhile, if they wish to.

- vii. The sharia law makes it difficult for a divorced Muslim woman to re-marry her former husband. The law requires her to marry a complete stranger, have sexual intercourse with him, and then obtain a voluntary divorce from this stranger. And only then is she permitted to remarry her former husband. (Fatah 2008: 257)

All laws in the list above are brutal and violate the Islamic spirit. These unjust laws are clearly meant to suppress women as well as minorities. The structure of Fatah's argument is very discursive. He explains how sharia laws are human laws but propagated as the 'state of Islam'. This explanation in his book justifies his opposition of the sharia law and its acceptance in Canadian legal system. Fatah also writes that the introduction of the sharia laws in Canada has been for two reasons. First, the Islamists wanted "an Islamist toehold in North America in order to establish an Islamist agenda for the Muslim community." Secondly, they wanted "to keep an iron grip on the Muslim communities of North America, especially the large South Asian Muslim population," (Fatah 2008: 241) who are caught in an 'identity crisis,' as I have already discussed earlier.

Fatah continues to highlight other tools, propagated by Islamists as the Islamic way to achieve religious piety. He mentions that females are being made by inculcating fear in them to wear the hijab (head covering) as a token of their faith and piety. How could wearing a hijab "end up as the most defining symbol of Islam," even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran? (Fatah 2008: 282) Fatah is very critical of the creed of wearing hijab for women in Islam. For him, it is a means of Islamophobia. It is being culturally constructed to make hijab a symbol of Muslim identity.

For Fatah, hijab is the most oppressive way to exercise the possession and submission of women, referring to the infamous tae kwon (a kind of martial art) controversy in Montreal in the spring of 2007. In a tournament, the Muslim Community Centre of Montreal mosque sponsored a team of young Muslim girls. But they refused to participate in the tournament “unless they were allowed to wear the hijab under their helmets” (Fatah 2008: 282). The organizers tried to convince them that “the helmets covered the girls’ hair more than the hijab, there was no need for the hijab.” These young girls went home without participating in the tournament. He writes that what went unreported was the fact “that even under the harshest interpretation of the sharia, Muslim girls below the age of puberty are not required to cover their heads.” He mentions that the mosque posted a message on its website, declaring that if these young girls do not observe hijab, they will end up getting raped and having ‘illegitimate children’ (Fatah 2008: 283). Fatah wonders how could it be their own ‘choice’ to wear or not to wear hijab. They were made to believe so by inflicting fears into their young hearts. He mentions that Islamists wrote on their website, “by removing your hijab, you have destroyed your faith. Islam means submission to Allah in all our actions. Those who refuse submission cannot be called Muslims” (Fatah 2008: 284). Fatah argues that hijab should be a matter of choice and just as Muslims protest against a ban on hijab in France, they should also protest against Saudi Arabia and other countries, where it is obligatory to wear hijab (Fatah 2008: 298). He writes that the forceful implementation of such religious practices does not leave any room for the free will of women.

Fatah explains that as a result of the fear instilled by Islamists in the young hearts of females, they are convinced that there is no room left for their own choice; it is so much in their psyche that the only choice they are left with is to wear the hijab. Women are being told to

follow that dress code since their early age. In this way, their dress code is culturally, racially, ethnically and religiously constructed. As a result, they have affirmed and embraced this identity as a source of pride. Fatah quotes Meshal's research (a PhD student at the University of Toronto) about the reasons of women wearing hijab. She concludes that most women who wear hijab do not have any familiarity with the religious text, they rather only follow what they are told by their families or in their mosques (Fatah 2008: 295).

Fatah concludes that justifications based on Sharia Law are themselves an instrument of gender oppression by presenting women as sexual objects. He focuses on the fact that the Islamists' agenda is to inculcate fear and guilt in the minds of young girls so that in any case of sexual abuse, they blame themselves. He mentions an incident at Carleton University in Ottawa. A young Muslim student who was raped not only went through physical, psychological and emotional torture because of the rape but she also felt guilty for something she had not done (Fatah 2008: 285). He mentions a Moroccan sociologist and feminist Fatima Mernissi, who argued in her book *The Veil And The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation Of Women's Rights In Islam* that wearing Hijab as a compulsory Islamic trait is the manipulation of the prophet's sayings and the Quranic verses by men elites (Islamists) to restrict women's participation in Islamic societies (Fatah 2008: 292).

Fatah goes on to disentangle the history of hijab in his book and argues that covering the head is part of Muslim social customs but Islamists have used it as a political tool. He clarifies that it was after the 7<sup>th</sup> century when "Muslims conquered Persia and the Byzantine territories," that head covering and veiling were viewed as an Islamic practice. Fatah explains that Arab women used to wear 'Khimar,' a headscarf that pre-dates hijab. The Quranic verse was about modifying their dress by covering their bosoms with khimar, which were only covered by

ornaments at that time. For Fatah, that stems from a male-dominant Islamist society, and any effort on behalf of suppressed women should be banned. (Fatah 2008: 302).

The structure of Fatah's argument is discursive. He shares in detail the incidents where young women had to pay the price of this fear. He compares the status of head covering as a symbol of modesty in Islam versus other religions such as Christianity and Judaism. He explains why wearing the hijab is not a symbol of high moral values by citing, for example, Nawal Al-Suadawi, an Egyptian feminist, who says that hijab has nothing to do with moral values because lots of young women wear hijab and go for dancing and wear tight jeans, high heels and make-up (Fatah 2008: 302).

Another phenomenon he discusses is the phenomenon of Jihad. As I mentioned earlier he believes that Saudi kings used 'jihad' as a justification to invade their neighbours. He criticizes, for example, Abul Ala Maudoodi (d. 1976), the father of modern Political Islam and one of the main proponents of the ideology of the Islamic state, for misguiding people in this matter of Jihad. The latter uses strong words to call for jihad in his book *Islamic Law and Constitution* where he writes that the Islamic state will "eradicate and crush with full force all those evils from which Islam aims to purge mankind (as quoted in *Chasing a Mirage*, 9)." Fatah concludes that Islamists blindly follow what he wrote, and all the evil agenda of the Islamists is being summarized in these few words: urging to "eradicate," "crush," and "purge." According to Fatah, in such a way Islamists have turned upside down the Quranic injunctions from "enjoin good and forbid evil" to "enjoin evil and forbid good."

Fatah argues that the concept of 'jihad' does not have any relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He compares it to slavery which used to be part of Muslim history but now Muslims distance themselves from it. He writes: "like the institution of slavery, [...] the doctrine of jihad as an

instrument of war and violence is no longer applicable.” Fatah refers to the Muslim leaders in North America, who translate the word ‘Jihad’ as ‘to strive or struggle’ not as ‘holy war.’ However, “the word is not so innocent.” (Fatah 2008: 268).” Fatah says that Saudis have funded North American Muslim organizations and also sent translations of the Qurans “that promote jihad as war.” He quotes the reproduction of a Quranic verse in a Saudi publication,

Jihad (Islamic holy fighting) is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you.” The Saudis repeatedly say that the word “jihad” does not mean holy war, yet they go out of their way to ensure their Muslim target audience in North America is told exactly what jihad means, that is, “Islamic holy fighting.” (Summarized Sahih al-Bukhari, as quoted in *Chasing a Mirage*: 269)

Fatah explains that Saudi-funded books stir the concept of jihad through the Sharia, the legal medieval texts, their own interpretations and translations of Quran, the hadith, and the Islamic books preceding the hadith to “justify their jihad against not just the West, but also against their own fellow Muslims who stand in their way” (Fatah 2008: 269). He also discusses in his book how Islamists have used the tool of ‘Islamic banking’ to take control of the Muslims in the West. He writes that sharia banking or Islamic banking is “promoted by well-heeled Muslim bankers and investment lawyers, who are driven not by teachings of the Prophet but the lure of profits” (Fatah 2008: 258). He believes that Islamists have deliberately misguided Muslims and the world with the concept of interest-free Islamic banking. He clarifies that Islam has forbidden ‘usury<sup>20</sup>’ but not ‘interest.’ He argues that the translation of the Arabic word ‘ribba’ in English is ‘usury,’ not ‘interest.’ However, Islamists have translated the word ‘ribba’ as ‘interest.’ In this way these Islamists are using verses from Quran about ‘usury’ (but they

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<sup>20</sup> Usury is defined as the charging of an exploitative interest rate. It “can be defined as interest above the legal or socially acceptable rate (Fatah 2008: 262).

translate it as ‘interest’) to instil fear among Muslims. According to the Quran, ‘ribba’ is one the greatest sins.

Fatah concludes by stating that the Muslims are from all parts of the world, “with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds,” and they should be proud of their heritage and the contribution of Islam to human civilization, “but we need to move beyond that pride. We need to focus our strategies and build for the future, without having to compromise on the spirit of Islam as represented by its five pillars. We need to look to the future and not to the past for the best days of the Muslim community—a community that needs to integrate and participate with other people on Earth to be a beacon of hope, peace, prosperity, and joy for the rest of the world” (Fatah 2008: 335).

### ***3.2.2 On Facebook***

Moving to Facebook, Fatah not only discusses the sharia laws, hijab and jihad but also adds more themes such as female education (in Pakistan), and homosexuality. By posting different status updates, pictures and news, he highlights how Islamists are trying to confine females to their homes and forbid them from participating in social and political activities. He shows that Islamists are using the sharia laws to inculcate fear in order to stop females from getting education. In the context of present day Pakistan, he shares posts showing not only how Islamists have gone beyond the religious texts but also how they are using physical violence and terrorist activities to stop female education.

By expanding his theme of the ‘state of Islam’ on Facebook he criticizes sharia law as a guideline for it and exposes the mindset of Islamists behind it. On Facebook he is specifically concerned about the propaganda of Islamists to promote the sharia law as a way of life in the west. There is a difference in the structure of his argument in the book and on Facebook. On

Facebook, the structure of his argument is intuitive, as he uses short, direct and habitual statements in his status updates. For instance, he shares a video link with a short description, “Egyptian Cleric freaks out on live TV, mocks Christianity and vows to impose Sharia law whether people like it or not” (October 24, 2012). Likewise, he campaigns against the visit of “Indian pro-Taliban Islamist” Dr. Zakir Naik and delivering lectures in Canada (April 18, 2012).

Moreover, he shares the classroom pictures of Pakistani Islamic scholar Dr. Farhat Hashmi in Toronto. In the photograph all women are covered to the extent that they seem like a pile of clothes. Fatah calls them a “flock of sheep with no uniqueness of identity (December 21 2012).” With such short status updates, and strong images, he highlights the worst consequences of the sharia laws in Canada. Likewise, he shares news articles about banning hijab in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. He also hopes that the Canadian government will “gather the courage to shed White guilt and move against this medieval and highly offensive attire that enslaved Muslim women, at times with their brainwashed consent (4 October 2011).”

On Facebook he continues to deal with the issue of hijab. However, unlike the book where he talks about the Islamists’ narrative about the hijab, he directly criticizes the females wearing hijab although he also criticizes the representation of women as sexual objects. He strongly rejects the sharia law, which imposes hijab on women, oppresses them and makes men the ‘guardians of virginity’ in the Islamic state.

On one Facebook page, Fatah shares a news article about Muslim medical students who refused to comply with the “bare below the elbow” rule to stop the spread of deadly superbugs. The short status update is titled: “Sharia-Medicine? Female Muslim medics 'disobey hygiene rules” (February 06, 2008). In that case, female medical students refused to go with the “bare

below the elbow” hygiene rule because of the religious obligation of covering their full bodies, as inculcated by Islamists in their minds. Fatah also posts an album with photographs of women all covered from head to toe, under the title: “Faceless slaves owned by their men” (April 18, 2007).

Fatah ventures to expose the mentality of Islamists leading them to oppress females. In a video titled, “Musical: Saudi-Arabia” (March 22, 2009), presenting a female voice against the oppression of women in Saudi Arabia by covering women in hijab and not allowing them to talk about their basic human needs. He highlights the Islamist attempt to promote hijab as a way to protect women's virginity and protect them from getting raped while being ignorant about female sexual needs. In the video, a cartoon figure of a female talks about her sexual organs and men in the surroundings are surprised and ask ‘what is that?’ As if they have no idea about the female's sexual pleasure.

By taking advantage of Facebook as a medium dealing with everyday occurrences around the world, he gives voice to another important issue of female Education. In Pakistan, the Taliban targeted a young activist, Malala Yousafzai,<sup>21</sup> for her encouragement of female education. Fatah shares around 30 posts about Malala Yousafzai showing her campaign for education and her nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. This is the highest number of posts by Fatah about an issue on Facebook. Through these posts, he conveys the strong message of how Islamists are offended by Malala for supporting female education. On October 20, 2011, for example, he posts a picture of Malala holding a book in her hand, and as a result, the Taliban

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<sup>21</sup> She was born on 12 July 1997. She started to write blog for the BBC about her struggle to get education in her native valley of in Pakistan under the rule of local Talibans who are strictly against female education. On 9 October 2012, she was targeted by a gunman, but luckily she survived. After that, she got national and international support. She was announced as the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.



are so frightened (see Appendix 6), as if it is a “weapon of mass destruction.” He also highlights through graphical presentations how Islamists were spinning an anti-Malala narrative by relating her life’s incidents to the US conspiracy. He shares a cartoon picture of a girl with a banner saying, “I pray for Malala” which is responded to by an Islamist telling her, “someone is using you” (October 13, 2011). To highlight the Islamists' mindset, Fatah shares a CNN news report about a Pakistani Taliban member threatening innocent girls with acid attack to stop them from getting education (6 November 2012).

### **3.3 Style**

I shall now look at the above theme in terms of the style of the argument, namely, whether Fatah proceeds by restrained, temperate, and prudent statements or by aggressive, uncompromising and bigoted statements.

#### **3.3.1 *In the Book***

To highlight the ‘consequences’ of the Islamists’ struggle to establish an ‘Islamic State’ in the form of a ‘state of Islam,’ Fatah uses a very moderate style in his book. He justifies it by writing that he does not want to “delve into the specifics of Islamic beliefs and practices or pass theological judgments.” His purpose is rather to raise the issues of the mixing of Islam and politics (Fatah 2008: XX). He believes that it is his duty to highlight the evils if the Islamists in Canada where he now resides. He writes: “my passport is not for rent. My country is not a parking lot and neither is it a port of convenience. It is my adopted home and I am not willing to let it decay at the hands of parasites” (Fatah 2008: 279).

Fatah engages in a logical discourse by referring to both the historical evidence and to present day realities. His style is moderate while analyzing the notion of the ‘state of Islam.’ He refers to the Maudoodi's religious interpretations of the doctrine of jihad as a duty of Muslims.

He quotes his interpretations as follows: “Jihad is as much a primary duty as are daily prayers or fasting. One who avoids it is a sinner.” He then asks whether that means that the state of Islam that prophet Muhammad (PBUH) preached, i.e., the five pillars of Islam are worthless (Fatah 2008: 274). He is concerned that such texts will make Muslim youth in the west “feel guilty if they do not commit to jihad. They are being told they are sinners if they don’t take up arms and join the jihad” (Fatah 2008: 277). He asks why these Islamists do not preach to young Muslim Canadians to achieve the state of Islam in the way they are supposed to by being “true to their soil, their neighbors, their community, and their country. Is anyone asking them to dedicate themselves to becoming ambassadors of Islam serving Canada rather than undermine the very values that have made Canada the best country on Earth in which to live?” (Fatah 2008: 277)

Through this style, he expounds that no one should die in the name of God and every Muslim should be treated as a Muslim without being tagged or stigmatized on the basis of his appearance or his beliefs. Everyone should have “freedom of religion as well as freedom from religion” (Fatah 2008: 335). Fatah doesn’t deny the fact “that covering the head is a cherished part of Muslim social custom, tradition, and heritage for women.” However, in an instructive style, he explains that Islamists have spread it as a “compulsory attire and that women who do not wear it are not Muslims at all.” He believes that in such way, it has “become more of a political statement than an act of piety” (Fatah 2008: 290). At a very young age, girls are being told by mothers and religious institutions that they have to cover themselves in order to protect themselves from men and in this way they are being socialized so that “their place in society is one of submission; submission, not to God, but to Man (Fatah 2008: 281). He writes that there is no explicit command in the Quran to cover a woman’s head. He questions how it could “end up as the most defining symbol of Islam” (Fatah 2008: 282).

Talking about the Saudi agenda, he explains that in countries like Somalia and much of sub-Saharan Muslim Africa, where Saudis haven't yet spread their version of Quranic interpretations and Sharia law, "the term 'hijab' did not exist and the head cover was colorful attire, more a fashion statement than a symbol of piety" (Fatah 2008: 290).

### ***3.3.2 On Facebook***

Moving to Facebook, Tarek Fatah has used visual images, which are most of the time offending to groups of people, along with a strong choice of words while criticizing the state of Islam. He sarcastically makes fun of every woman who wears hijab by comparing the Hijab to garbage bags (May 18, 2012), calling the women 'faceless slaves' (April 22, 2008). The photographs as well as the images he shares vary from the iconic picture of Mona Lisa (Cover photo, May 20, 2012) covering her face with a hijab to Snow White all covered with hijab as if protected by seven Taliban dwarfs. Another picture shows the hijab to be an "evolution into darkness" by more and more clothes being added with the passage of time until they cover a person to the extent that she cannot be identified in darkness (April 27, 2012). He posts another picture of a couple, with the woman wearing the 'hijab' compared to an ancient couple with the women covered with leafs (April 12, 2012). He captions the picture with, "you have come a long way baby." He also mocks a picture of 24 couples, all brides wearing the hijab, by saying: "How [w]ill they know if they take the right bride home?" (July 13, 2010).

In his book he clarifies that he is aware that covering the head is a "cherished part of Muslim social custom" (Fatah 2008: 290) but on Facebook, he makes fun of every female who is covering her head even if she is skating (April 12, 2014) (See appendix 5). Though he tries to

add an element of humour he actually makes fun of woman wearing the hijab by calling it, 'sharia approved Halloween costumes' (October 29, 2012).

Likewise, he sarcastically shares a picture of a couple with the woman in hijab with a description of the possible advantages of wearing it:

“HE: God likes us Rabia, Allah O Akbar!

SHE: Abdullah, my forever love, God certainly loves us. My husband just walked by, but he could not recognize me.” – May 13, 2012

His audience and followers on Facebook disagree with the strong and hateful choice of language. Fatah's audience is very critical about what he shares with his rabid style of argument. They differentiate between religious teachings and the lack of education. Criticism does not come only from Muslims or from his Pakistani fellows but also from across the world. For instance, One of his Facebook followers, Seager, who is a white Canadian calls him “an ass” on 08 November, 2012 for his rabid style on Facebook. Likewise, in a heated debate with one of his readers, Ayesha, who asks him for respect of things he doesn't like in addition to what he likes, Fatah stands solid on his stance and considers hijab as an acceptance of slavery imposed by men. One of Fatah's readers on Facebook, Rizvi, tries to bring in a balanced picture about the hijab and says, “wearing hijab [is a] choice, just like it's a choice for a woman to be an exotic dancer in a strip club. Both choices assume that women are sexual objects - in the first case, they should be hidden from view, and in the second, displayed.” Amina questions why he keeps silent about the covering of faces for the “protection” against swine flu, dust or the presence of dangerous gases in the atmosphere. She adds that this is how human beings are. Men are naturally attracted towards women and how should one expect a man to control his urge by seeing a woman in bikini (May 9, 2012 at 9:26pm). She also adds that if this is not the case then why the prostitutes

wear provocative dress to allure men? Nawab, (on 5 November 2012) called him a “dustbin of information” based on the choice of his language and his rabid style when talking about hijab. Moreover, Fatah is asked to reconsider his religious beliefs shared on Facebook. On 7 November, 2012, one of his followers responds to his post: “by (yo)ur deeds you (seem) to be a good secular but 0% Muslim.” On May 22, 2012 Syed asks Fatah to see the reality about the ratio of Islamists among Muslims. He adds that most of his friends are “believing Muslims, but very few, may be just one or two percent of them, are Islamists.” He adds, “I would personally not like Muslim women to wear even scarves, but ridiculing them for that is probably the same thing as asking them to wear it.”

Likewise, Fatah also mentions some incidents of honour-killing in the name of Islam. However, his tone is generalized and coarse and his style is aggressive. Fatah’s choice of language insinuates that every Muslim and every Pakistani is killing his daughter in the name of honour killing. He shares a videos about honour killing of Muslim girls stating, “Islam continues to kill, oppress women, rape women... (7 November 2012).” Particularly, he also mentions, “Pakistani parents kill their daughter” (6 May, 2012).

Trying to highlight the mindset of the Pakistani nation, Fatah posts an edited photograph of Barack Obama with the ceremony of dumping Osama bin Laden’s dead body into the Ocean. Fatah picked this photograph from the Facebook page of a university student in Pakistan. The caption in the photograph was in Urdu language. Fatah translated the caption wrongly. The caption actually says that by dumping Osama’s dead body into in the ocean, the ocean has become a terrorist too (in the form of Sandy hurricane). However, Fatah translates, ‘Sandy is a protest (against America) from Ocean for throwing Osama’s body.’ His audience highlights the wrong translation. For example, Tauqir writes, “Tarek, I am sorry to say it is not the correct

translation. It actually says 'it was a mistake to throw Osama in the ocean, even the ocean has become a terrorist (October 31 2012).’

Fatah also shares a tweet from a CAIR (Council on American–Islamic Relations) official that God has sent Sandy to humble us. Yet, Fatah generalizes, applying such settings to every Pakistani as if all of them are fundamentalists. One of his followers, Tauqir, writes that he was in Pakistan at the time of Hurricane Sandy in America. He mentions, “ [I] would like everyone to know that every Pakistani is not only concerned but also praying for the Americans who have been effected by the storm” (October 31, 2012).

To highlight the moral values of Islamists, Fatah shares some posts to show how much they are sexually and morally deprived. The style of his posts is uncompromising and many of these posts are based on false information. For instance, he shares a funny photograph of Muslims praying in front of a bikini shop in Riyadh, posing a question whether those Muslims are bowing their heads in front of Allah or in front of those semi-naked girls. No wonder he is strongly criticized and condemned for sharing this fake picture. As one of his readers, Baber, mentions, “time (on the photograph) is 8:43 AM. No prayer is offered at this time.” El Aooiti adds “Tarek wakes up at 7 in the morning to search up articles online of Muslims doing bad things” (7 November 2012). His audience's reaction is quite justified based on the fact that there is no prayer time at 8:43 AM.

Likewise, his followers criticize him for sharing posts making fun of someone’s facial features. He shares a picture of a Muslim man with long beard by adding a short caption that he must be pissed off because someone ran away with his suicide jacket which he won as a first price in a beauty contest (November 3 2012). Fatah is also criticized for sharing a “cheap pot-shots against Islam” (November 3 2012).

Likewise, when Fatah shows a Swedish clergy criticizing Muslims in the west as a “welfare cheaters,” one of the Facebook users, Hansenator, argues that the scholar Fatah mentions is from his country, Sweden. He adds that this particular scholar is not popular at all in Sweden. He asks Fatah to show some responsibility and provide a proper reference before sharing anything. Another reader highlights that the Swedish clergyman is a holocaust denier. In this case, Fatah is promoting a holocaust denier. In reaction to the criticism, Fatah was outraged and asked him not to comment on his wall. He wrote: “I post these news items on my FB page, not yours. You are free to avoid me or block me if you desire so” (4 November 2012).

## Chapter Four: **Discussion**

Being a diaspora intellectual, Fatah uses Facebook as a medium to convey his messages not only to people who have access to his ideas in traditional media but also to those living where his books and his newspaper articles are banned. However, comparing Fatah's messages on Facebook with his messages in the books shows a clear difference between his approaches. In his books, he substantially explains his themes and his ideas with a very moderate style. Fatah's moderate style leads to thoughtful and introspective contents. His books leave the readers with a prolific knowledge of facts and critical thinking about the cultural influences on religious dogmas. However, on Facebook he tries to prove what he said in his books by going beyond his moderate style of argumentation. He goes way beyond his factual and logical arguments which he shared in his books. By reading his books as well as his Facebook posts, it seems as if two different people are talking on the same issues with totally different approaches. On Facebook, he gets criticism for "always provoking anti-Islamic sentiments (7 November 2012)." As one of his Facebook readers, Mr. Tahir, writes, "I am disappointed though to see the contradictions in what he writes and what he says [on Facebook]" (8 November 2012)."

On the basis of his themes in his book and being a Diaspora intellectual who is beyond the power circle of society, who could educate people in his country of origin about religious dogmas, a question arises about what could be the purpose of his posts on Facebook. If they are intended to highlight the evils within the Pakistani society for the sake of improvement, then he should let his Pakistani audience freely discuss without bashing them from his Facebook page. However, Fatah's rabid style and intuitive structure not only adds hatred among his Pakistani followers for him but also segregates any woman in Hijab and any Muslim with a beard as a sexually frustrated and extremist Islamist.



Fatah's criticism of Imran Khan's political stance is shared by many of other Pakistani citizens. However, he does not just talk about Khan's political strategies but also about his personal life, his facial features, and his cultural values. Without going into the details of Imran Khan's political agenda, his personal life doesn't prove him as a fanatic Islamist, as depicted by his Facebook style. Imran Khan's lifestyle is that of a secular person. He has spent his life more like an ordinary secular young man living an extra-ordinary life of a celebrity.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, his love life is always in the limelight. Khan was in a relationship with Sita White, the daughter of billionaire industrialist Lord Gordy White. He was married to Jemima, daughter of the late tycoon Sir James Goldsmith. As far as his political career is concerned, Khan is politician after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the history of Pakistan, who involved youth in politics. Khan came into the limelight at a time when common people in Pakistan were so frustrated with the political setup that they were alienating themselves from the political scene. Young generations follow Khan because unlike other politicians Imran Khan freely meets with common people, and stands in line with them. Imran Khan left his luxurious life behind as soon as he came into politics. Every human being has some follies but Imran Khan is appreciated for providing an awareness of the equal rights every citizen should have. There is a difference of opinion about Imran Khan in Pakistan as well, but Tarek Fatah doesn't seem to accept a difference of opinion. Unlike his book, his style is bigoted and he strongly criticizes those who somehow supported or tried to justify Imran Khan's political stance on his Facebook page.

On Facebook, Fatah shares videos, news and articles about religious extremism rooted in the philosophy of the Islamic states which cause economic, political and social uncertainties in

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<sup>22</sup> He was the captain of Pakistani cricket team in 1992. Under his captaincy, they won the world cup championship, which is always remembered as one of the nation's prides.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Tanzania, etc. It is interesting to analyze how his Facebook messages are loaded with certain interpretations. Fatah controls the discussion in the virtual world of Facebook and presents a 'hegemonic reading' of the 'Islamic State' as a root cause of political, religious and social discrimination. He expresses hatred rather than concern towards the Islamic state.

In criticizing the Islamic State in his book, Fatah clarifies that he is not against Islam; rather he is against the Muslims who are following the mythical past. According to Fatah's differentiation between Muslims and Islamists in his book, the Taliban are Islamists who have a certain political mindset. However, Fatah's Facebook posts do not differentiate between the two. His audience does indeed question him for the contradictory posts. For instance, on November 1, 2012, Fatah compares bull fighting in Spain with people running after a bull in Bangladesh (the bull was suppose to be slaughtered on Muslims' Eid festival). This opens up a debate about the concept of animal scarifies in Islam and Hinduism. Fatah's post adds to the hatred for Muslims in this example. One of his followers, Beniwal, strongly criticizes Islam for slaughtering animals. Though aware of the practices of sacrifice in Hindu religion, more and more readers condemn Islam for animal slaughtering. Herman adds, "Humans have been consuming meat for ages... Your burgers at McDonalds are not made by potatoes either (November 1, 2012)." However, anti-Islamic sentiments dominate the discussions and thus convey the dominant reading of his posts as if Islam is the reason for all such turmoil.

For a Diaspora intellectual like Tarek Fatah, whose books, blogs and YouTube videos are not accessible in Pakistan, the only way people in Pakistan will know him is either through the way Pakistani traditional media propagates him or through what he himself will write on Facebook and Twitter. His Pakistani followers who are living in Pakistan are not aware of his

arguments about the Islamic state or the state of Islam in his books. Unfortunately, Fatah doesn't explain anything on Facebook even if his audience asks him to. For instance, his post about a video titled "Saudi Arabia: The Musical," highlights gender segregation and other ways of oppression in an Islamic State like Saudi Arabia. The video was funny but it was criticized for the lack of knowledge about the setting of the video, specially the use of two humped camels, which are usually found in Central Asia not in Saudi Arabia. One of his Facebook followers, Squires mentions that the setting of present day Saudi Arabia is really posh and should have shown that way in the video. Squires explains that it is only their mentality that is medieval, not their life style. Fatah doesn't say anything in response. Likewise, when he shares the photograph of Muslims offering their prayer in front of a bikini shop, and he was asked to clarify his point as no prayer is being offered at the time mentioned on the photograph, Fatah doesn't explain anything to his Facebook audience.

Fatah's criticism of the western media as propagating the pro-Taliban mindset was criticized for being an illogical argument. He highlighted the role of 'Toronto Star' as a 'Taliban Star.' He justifies his criticism of the 'Toronto Star' because they did not highlighted the news of the killing of 24 Arab civilians by the Muslim Egyptian Army on the one hand just because they were Muslims against Muslims. On the other hand, the same newspaper would have highlighted the killing of Muslim Gazan by Israelis, on their front page. One of his followers on Facebook, McLaughlin argues with Fatah to be more careful when stigmatizing someone publically. He adds that he defends Fatah because one should not exclude anyone from legitimate debate but Fatah's credibility as a reasonably objective judge of the Toronto Star is undermined for defaming someone without knowing the circumstances. Hardeep also disagrees with Fatah for calling the Toronto Star the 'Taliban Star.' He explains that he has just visited the website of the newspaper

and on the very front page they have highlighted the anti-gay and anti-Semitic remarks of Muslim scholars in a conference (10 October 2011). These news highlights prove that Toronto Star doesn't ignore any wrong doings among Muslims. So, it is illogical for Fatah to call Toronto Star the 'Taliban Star'.

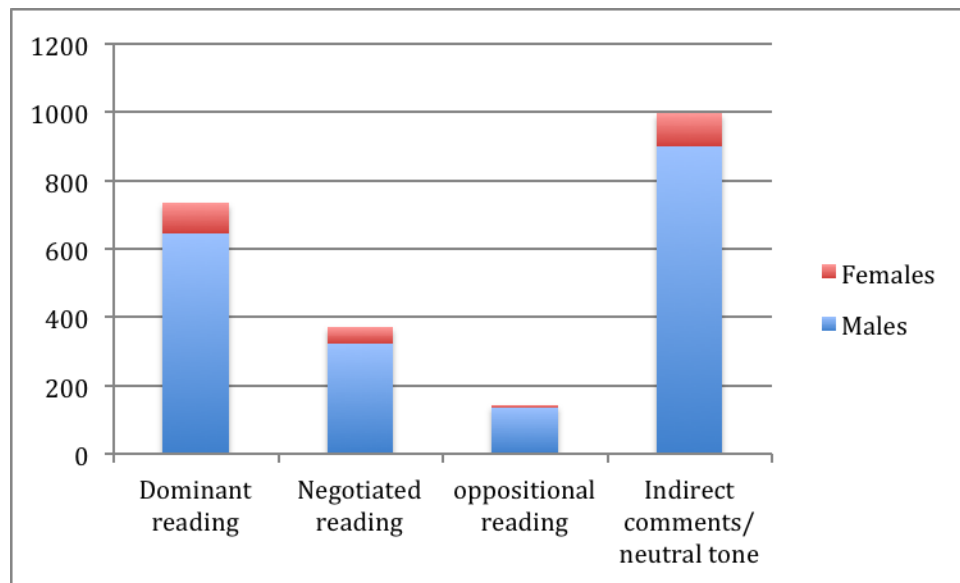
Fatah's criticism of Muslims and Islamists as an 'outsider' by considering them 'others' makes him a Diaspora intellectual on one hand. However, Edward Said is critical of such criticism of 'others,' which are "full of consequences for the rest of the human race" (Said, 2002). Being an intellectual, Tarek Fatah doesn't take responsibility for the consequences of his Facebook posts on 'others.' Edward Said has criticized Bernard Lewis (*What Went Wrong?*, 2002) for generalizing about "all of Islam," not just the mad militants of Afghanistan, Egypt or Iran." Like Lewis, Fatah is generalizing in his Facebook posts. His audience often criticizes him for his generalizing. By reading his generalized status updates on Facebook, I question, if every Pakistani is a militant Islamist, then how can Tarek Fatah, being a Pakistani, be so secular?

## Chapter Five: **Conclusion**

Tarek Fatah cleverly uses Facebook to reach both Canadian and Pakistani audiences. He publishes news, pictures, and other related material about radical Islam from all around the world on his Facebook page. His voice is being heard across boundaries. People follow him on Facebook from all around the world and share their standpoints on whatever he posts. He has around 10,572 fans on Facebook from Tanzania, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, India, Canada, USA, UK, Belgium and Pakistan. Most followers include Canadians with Pakistani roots, and Pakistani atheists. His Facebook profile seems to provide a platform for the people of the Muslim Diasporas. Fatah highlights the atrocities in Baluchistan and has a huge number of Bloch followers speaking against the established government of Pakistan.

In the selected timeframe, 2,245 comments were shared on Fatah's facebook posts. Among them only 244 comments were shared by females, which is only 10.86 % of the total comments. Among 10,572 followers of Tarek Fatah, only 86 females (0.81 %) participated in commenting about different posts; one woman accounts for 55, which is 22.54% of total comments shared by females.

It is interesting to see how audiences have played an important role in educating the readers by using interactive medium of Facebook. The results show that 32.96% of his followers on Facebook agree with his messages and support Fatah's arguments. Whereas 16.61% of his followers on Facebook try to open up the discussion with the supporters and refer to the facts, which Tarek Fatah doesn't mention on his Facebook page. However, only 6.32% of his followers reject and debate the themes conveyed by Fatah on Facebook. Interestingly, 44.36% of his followers on Facebook neither opposes nor accepts what is being presented through those posts.



**Graph 5.1 Analysis of the Readers' comments**

These results prove Facebook to be a perfect example of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, at least in Tarek Fatah's case. Facebook is distinguished from propaganda-oriented blogs by its interactive nature. Despite Fatah's rebuke to some of his followers who disagree with him, his audience doesn't hesitate to disagree with him. Thus the interactive medium of Facebook provides an idealized public sphere where general people have an opportunity to raise their concerns and problems and participate in open public discussions. It is interesting to see that in early 2013, one of Fatah's posts was banned from Facebook because of the disapproval from the Facebook community.

Interestingly, I never met with Tarek Fatah in person. However, I was discussing my intentions to do research on the role of Tarek Fatah as an intellectual, with one of my fellow students at University of Calgary, earlier in 2012. Whatever she said about Tarek Fatah was surprising for me. She mentioned that she was among the organizers of a conference in Calgary, where Fatah was a guest speaker. She mentioned that he seemed so confused and he changed the

whole agenda of his speech at eleventh hour and gave a really tough time to the organizers. For his personality, she mentioned that he was very rigid person and didn't tolerate the difference of opinion during question answer session in the conference. Though an individual's opinion is not enough to judge someone but some of Fatah's posts and counter-comments with his audience on Facebook page also show that he really doesn't tolerate the difference of opinion. Facebook seems to presents a more realistic image of Tarek Fatah's personality because Facebook also provides the real world challenges to the intellectuals with debates engaging people from different walks of life and having difference of opinion too. We could clearly see that the style of Fatah's argument is rabid whenever he is engaged in debates with his followers having difference of opinion on Facebook. Facebook provides an opportunity for freedom of speech. Everyone might not like what one has to say but there is a degree of acceptance of the difference of opinion. Fatah is an intellectual who accepts religions other than for those who preach for an "Islamic State" but on the other hand, he does not have tolerance for the difference of opinion on Facebook. There, Fatah seems very rigid in his approach. Contrary to his own approach about the possibility of human error in compilation of religious texts, he portrays his findings as an absolute truth and does not accept any other point of view. Interestingly, he wrote a whole book about differentiating religious and cultural values, but on Facebook he criticizes cultural amalgamations as the personification of religion. For him, Hijab is a cultural means to subjugate women and Quran does not ask for Hijab in the same way as people take it. On the other hand, On Facebook, he criticizes Hijab and criticizes Islam, not Islamists, for forcing women to wear it.

Facebook is a powerful medium that has helped to differentiate between the roles of Tarek Fatah as a pseudointellectual and a public intellectual. For most of his arguments, he never

gives any source or solid background for any of his criticisms about sharia laws. Fatah proves himself on Facebook to be an extremist against radical Islam. Fatah criticizes the religious dogmas in his books, but on Facebook he presents another dogmatic version of criticism against radical Islam. If Fatah was not an extremist, he could have provided a solid view of the “state of Islam,” and the ways to improve it, as he does in his books. His tone is harsher and derogatory for Muslims in general. He never leaves behind any chance to smear Islam and Muslim communities. As highlighted by Said in *Impossible Histories: Why the Many Islams Cannot be Simplified*,

the worst part of this method is that it systematically dehumanizes peoples and turns them into a collection of abstract slogans for purposes of aggressive mobilization and bellicosity. This is not at all a matter of rational understanding. The study of other cultures is a humanistic, [...] In fact, as even the most cursory reading of his book shows, he succeeds only in turning Muslims into an enemy people, to be regarded collectively with contempt and scorn. (Said, 2002)

Likewise, Fatah criticizes Imran Khan for his policies towards the Taliban. However, the way he presents his ideas on Facebook, it shows a myopic version and overlooks realities. The Pakistani political and social situation is a mess at this moment. No one has security and basic freedom of speech in the turmoil of the war against terror. Civilians are suffering the aftermath of the war against terror and are the victims of Taliban extremism. In such a context, people question the silence of Pakistani and world media over the murder of millions of people and on the other hand, highlighting only Malala’s issue that further led to the increased Pakistani military operations and drone attacks of America in Pakistan, causing more civilian deaths. Likewise, the way the Malala Yousafzai issue was highlighted by traditional Pakistani media, as well as on Pakistani social media, made it controversial with respect to the present economic, political and social turmoil in Pakistan. Traditional news media updated minute-to-minute news



about her progress. At the same time, people started to ask questions about highlighting her 24/7 but ignoring other thousands of innocent victims of drone attacks as well as civilians killed by the Taliban. Tarek Fatah criticizes the people who are raising such questions as being ignorant of the hypocrisy of the government, the media and other institutions.

On his Facebook page, as long as he talks about historical incidents he is quite logical, but when he criticizes the ‘state of Islam’, he becomes dogmatic. He shares fake pictures and frequently overreaches and makes claims beyond the actual facts and statistics. He assumes many things on his own and then keeps on weighing and proving them with negativity. According to Said (2002), the best way to deconstruct any dogmas is “not to think like governments or armies or corporations but rather to remember and act on the individual experiences that really shape our lives and those of others. To think humanistically and concretely rather than formulaically and abstractly.” On the other side, Tarek Fatah doesn’t take any responsibility of the consequences of his generalized criticism. He presents the mindless criticism without considering the consequences by using a rabid style on Facebook. Such criticism could come up with dangerous consequences to the human races. For instance, a recent incident of stripping off a 9-month pregnant Muslim woman for wearing hijab, in France, is the consequences to the world.<sup>23</sup>

The powerful role of Facebook in our everyday life to build opinions regarding some issue could be very positive as well as negative. It could be dangerous when a pseudointellectual gives directions to those who follow him thus forming different communities and pages where some of these baseless discussions are increasing day by day. In the case of Tarek Fatah, he

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<sup>23</sup> Buchanan, E. *International Business Times*. (2015, March 26).

criticizes the sharia law, authenticity of hadith, even compilation of the Quran. But for his followers, who do not have access to his books, the question arises what is actually the 'state of Islam' according to him. His Facebook page is full of negative comments about the 'state of Islam,' the Quran, and the Prophet. He does not clarify any hateful comments about the basic practices of Islam; rather, he mocks the basic religious practices. His silence over certain issues makes him even more vulnerable, as Stuart Hall contends. In such context, his Facebook page seems to challenge the authenticity of every possible Islamic religious text. There are instances when his posts on Facebook seem to agree with his followers who do not believe in God at all. If atheism is what he is promoting, in that case I would refer to the seventeenth-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662). Pascal believes that if God really exists then a believer will only lose finite losses and non-believer will gain infinite losses.

Tarek Fatah's move from books to Facebook is significantly different in the way he approaches different themes. I would have agreed with his way of thinking in his books where he uses traditional media based on a discursive structure and historical evidences. But on social media, there is totally a different Fatah. In his books, he is arguing historically and he contextualizes the evidence about radical Islam. However, on Facebook there is a shift from logical arguments to unsubstantiated statements. In his books, he is very factual, critical, composed, moderate, properly historically grounded and realistic. However, as soon as he moves from books to the social networking website such as Facebook, his arguments are non-factual, extremists, noncritical, vague, and mindless. Fatah leaves his followers in a chaos which is why he has been criticized by the Canadian Muslims as well.

In conclusion, it is obvious that books are more important but we cannot overlook the reality that people rely more on media and social media than on books. In a fast paced life, young

generations who follow Fatah on Facebook will not go back to see a cross reference to his book to see what he means by "Islamist." However, the discussion of the audience and followers on Facebook provides some additional and sometimes more accurate information about certain issues. Public intellectuals should take responsibility for what they share on Facebook. Their posts can influence the masses as well as establish their credibility as intellectuals. Books create God-like figures. We love writers for their well-composed ideas. We are influenced. However, we are also influenced on Facebook. The 44.36% of Tarek Fatah's followers on Facebook, who are the silent followers, are a huge number. They get up-to-date information about Fatah's posts on a daily basis. They neither oppose nor accept what is being presented through those posts. However, they also get a chance to read those 16.61% of Fatah's followers on Facebook who try to negotiate with the supporters as well as those 6.32% of Fatah's followers on Facebook who reject what is being presented. In this way, unlike books, Facebook allows, even to those silent followers, to get the other side of the picture and think rationally before getting an image of authors and intellectuals as God-like figures.

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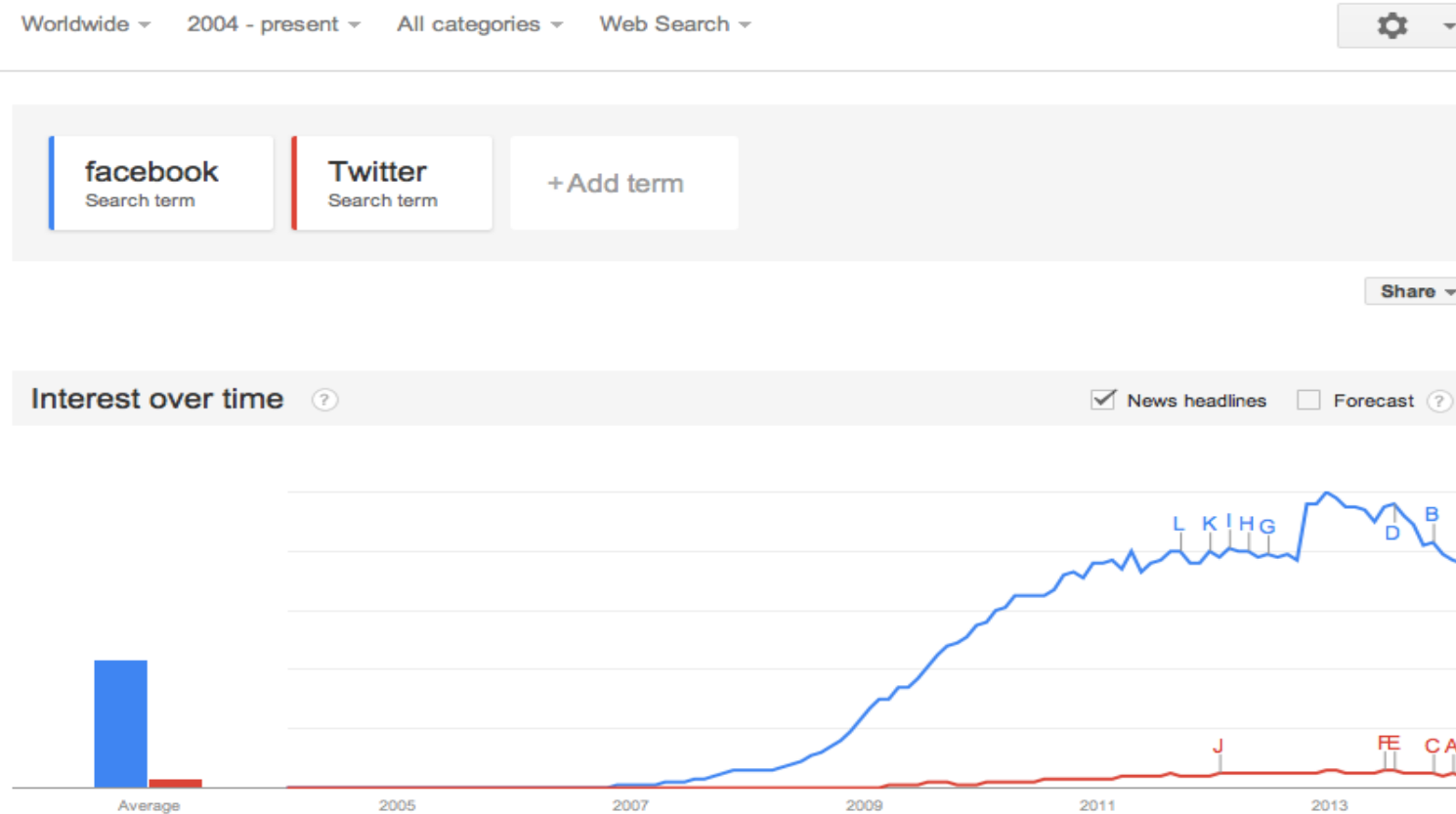
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## Appendix 1

### Google trends around the World (Facebook vs Twitter)

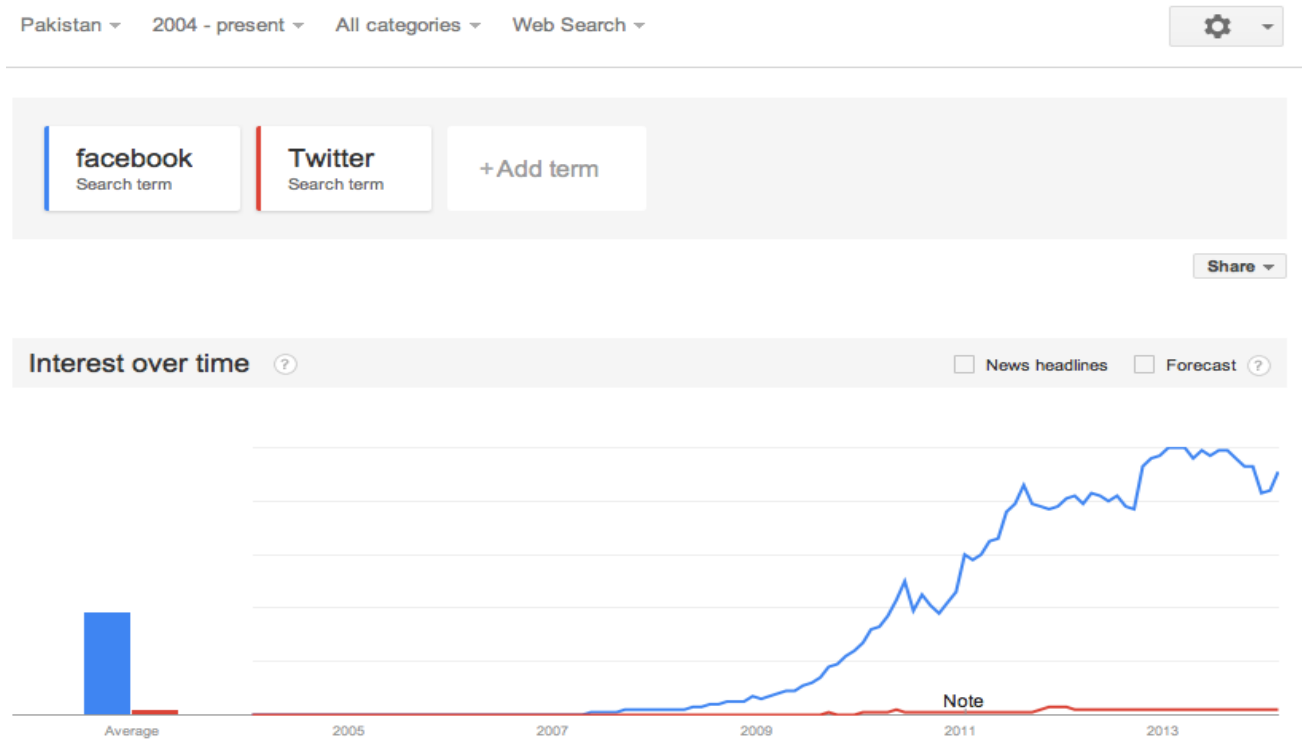


<http://www.google.ca/trends/explore#q=facebook%2C%20twitter&cmpt=q>



## Appendix 2

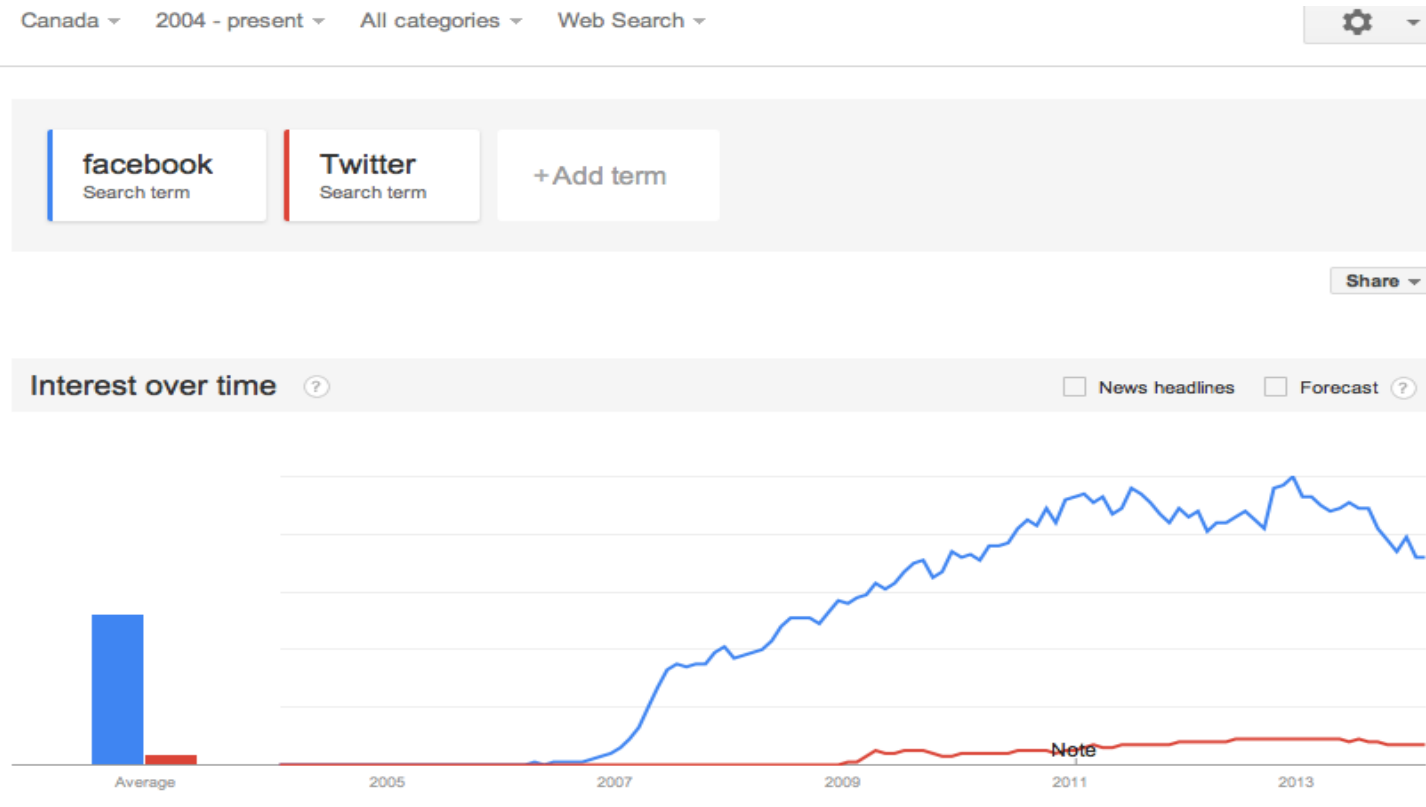
### Google trends in Pakistan (Facebook vs Twitter)



<http://www.google.ca/trends/explore#q=facebook%2C%20twitter&geo=PK&cmpt=q>

## Appendix 3

### Google trends in Canada (Facebook vs Twitter)



<http://www.google.ca/trends/explore#q=facebook%2C%20twitter&geo=CA&cmpt=q>

## Appendix 4



Like Comment



Tarek Fatah

My friend Sabir Nazir's cartoon depicting the attempt by the pro-Imran Khan Taliban of the world trying to induce Pakistanis into believing they kill and pillage Pakistan because US 'occupation' of Afghanistan. –

Album: Tarek Fatah's Photos in Cover Photos

Shared with: Public

## Appendix 5



**Tarek Fatah**

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Hijabis giving a new twist to the word 'modesty'.

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## Appendix 6

