

# CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ‘NARRATIVES’ IN RELIGIOUS RHETORIC (FATAWA) IN PAKISTAN: STRATEGIZING LOCAL SOLUTIONS AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

*Pakistan, being a Muslim-majority country, has been the victim of religious extremism for decades, and this problem exists at present as well, posing a big challenge to the state. Religious extremism is an extensively researched area by experts. Still, earlier studies have lacked in critically studying the manifestation of extremist narratives in religious discourse through speech acts (fatawa) by the extremists. This research explores the suspected relationship between fatawa (a religious decree in Islam issued by a religious scholar) and religious extremism and explains how religious speech acts (fatawa) construct social realities and function as a major mechanism for actualising distinct religious narratives. This research develops a methodological approach guided by critical discourse analysis (CDA) grounded in the scholarship of speech act theory to analyse the selected cases of fatawa in Pakistan. A three-step analysis model is applied to analyse selected fatawa in three steps: (1) Actor Description Analysis, (2) Action Attribution Analysis, and (3) Socio-Cognitive Imprint Analysis. The fatawa are used (abused) through the application of discursively formulated narratives by different stakeholders for the construction of social realities like identity formation (in-group vs out-group), ‘Us’ (positive), and ‘Them’ (negative), conditioning actions as securitisation moves (extending to de-humanisation); and imparting socio-cognitive imprints on the audience. This research explains the mechanism of sacralization through the use of words in fatawa. It concludes that the institution of fatawa should be mainstreamed and regularised to avoid misuse in the hands of extremists for the sake of enhanced community resilience as a policy option. Mainstreaming the fatawa (both their texts and issuing institutions) is destined to curb their misuse.*

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Religious Extremism, Pakistan, Community Resilience, Fatawa

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## Introduction

Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country, having gained independence from the British in 1947 and being the first country after World War II to gain independence in the name of religion.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan, as an ideologically Islamic state, has deep-rooted connections with the religion inspired by the Islamic teachings, and the same can be witnessed in the national emblem that mentions guiding principles as 'Faith, Unity and Discipline' for the nation. Pakistan's philosophy was embedded in brotherhood, peace and tolerance by its founding fathers. In a message, Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the founding father of Pakistan) is quoted as emphasising religious liberty for the nation as *"You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state"*.<sup>3</sup> This message clearly envisages the vision of the founding father of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, this religious factor has been compromised and jeopardised on many occasions by malicious manipulations of religious doctrines in the hands of a few extremists for their own vested interests, like ingress in power corridors and dominance over the popular narrative. Pakistan faces the serious challenge of violent extremism, as studies suggest that the religious factor is among the leading causes of extremism in the country.<sup>4</sup> There are specific accounts of religious extremism, discussed and explained with specific reference to Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Pakistan in studies where these states have been the victim of religious extremism by either a group or an individual who advocated hatred and encouraged terrorism.<sup>5</sup> A study has analysed Islam and its influence on political values and behaviour in the Muslim world, using the criterion of 'modernity'.<sup>6</sup> Another study argues that power is the common greed shared by politicians and religious radicals, hampering modernisation in society.<sup>7</sup> In this discussion on religious extremism, Pakistan is no exception, despite being the second-largest Muslim country and the only nuclear-capable state among Muslims. Pakistan stands victim to religious extremism, and this phenomenon poses a massive threat to the peace and security situation in the country, destabilising the state by challenging the state's writ through violence and militancy, for which the state has to initiate military operations.<sup>8</sup> A study has mentioned that Pakistani society has been the victim of extremism and radicalisation for decades, mainly due to the sectarian divide, whereas this fault-line is exploited by the religious extremist groups contemporarily by the application of misrepresentation of Islam as a terrorist narrative.<sup>9</sup>

This situation points to the possibility of a religiously indoctrinated and sacralized manifestation of discourses causing extremism in society and demands further investigation into the matter. However, the mechanism explaining religion and religiously motivated extremism, particularly through religious interpretations in the form of speech acts characterised by distinct words, remains unclear. Towards this end, this research analyses the discursive formation of narratives and discourses through distinct interpretations in the form of religious speech acts, exploring their suspected role in both probable scenarios: either to cause or to cure religious extremism in the country. This research is mainly focused on the analysis of distinct religious discourses in Pakistan, to explore the discursive formation of narratives and their subsequent use (abuse) through religious speech acts. The prime concern of this research is to probe the discursive formation of narratives using the distinct word "كافر"<sup>10</sup> whose literal meaning is an infidel (non-believer, apostate, etc.) in the religious speech acts from the lens of rationality, seen as a phenomenal abstract associated with social action in a societal context through the religiously sacralized discourses.

This study is inspired by Max Weber's scholarship on the role of religion in a society in which human behaviour is ultimately rooted in normative value systems, often religious. These normative value systems provide human beings with an ontology (what is the world, what is our position in the world?) and with moral standards (what is appropriate behaviour in a given situation? What must be done to improve our world? What is forbidden, etc.). The normative value system shapes human beings' behaviour both as individuals and as groups. Religions are supposed to construct social realities through the discursive formation of narratives as speech acts.<sup>11</sup> Speech act theory assumes that utterances shape social reality. Studies discuss the expanded scope of social reality through the multitude of inanimate objects, like humanly constructed artefacts, that obtain 'social identities through being socially positioned in various ways'.<sup>12</sup> Thus, an utterance is not only a communicative tool but has the potential to change social realities. In this context, this study analyses the role of fatawa (plural of the word 'fatwa') in constructing social realities through their dissemination in response to general public queries in society. Fatwas are not only utterances, but they are supposed to define who is a believer and who is an infidel. In this context, this study attempts to unfold the construction (actualisation) of distinct narratives regarding the definition of an individual's basic belief and faith in Pakistan through the use of fatawa.

This definition of basic belief and faith of an individual in society is one of the main suspected causes for violent religious extremism. It needs to be investigated to develop community resilience to extremism.

The word 'extremism' comprises extreme characteristics and specifications, considered to be out of the normal range of majority accepted norms and conditions. Extremism is defined in a variety of conceptual underpinnings, tossed around for varied meanings. In simple, extremism means adherence to extreme means and values. The term 'extremism' is highly contested in literature and argued in a variety of meanings by researchers because the definition of extremism is subjective to the construction and control of the narrative that explains what extremism is and what is not in the societal context.<sup>13</sup> Extremism is a concept defined as a quality of being far from ordinary in beliefs, values, attitudes, actions, cognitive approach, or decision-making, characterising the phenomenon as a transition from rational to irrational (Coleman & Bartoli, n.d.; Rizvi, 2015).<sup>14</sup> In Pakistan's context, the term 'extremism' materialises mainly in political, ideological, religious, social, and geostrategic spheres.<sup>15</sup> Religious extremism is also a type of extremism that has attracted social scientists and researchers to ponder upon solutions to prevent and end it. Religion holds one of the most significant positions in its followers' lives. Religious extremism is a recurring historical phenomenon. Religious extremism is described as having two distinct features: as a process and as an institution.<sup>16</sup> Religious extremism as a process opens up the debate on the tactics employed by extremists to advance their interests and ideologies, whereas institutions refer to such religious establishments that promote extremism. Religious extremism is marked by intolerance towards dissenting and varying beliefs and is often manifested in violent conflicts within and between religions in society. In a societal context, people tend to live and behave in a certain manner, and that very manner is characterised by some distinct ideological beliefs derived from a variety of sources, and religion stands prominent among the sources, exercising legitimacy and power through sacralisation.<sup>17</sup> The notion of power is very complex and demands a comprehensive understanding to study society. Weber's definition of power is defined in terms of the ingress of an individual or group in a society to have its own will despite opposition.<sup>18</sup> To sensitise the local and international community on extremism, the White House under the Obama Administration organised a summit on Countering Violent Extremism in 2015 and defined violent extremists as "individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals" and focused on religious extremism.<sup>19</sup>

A study has analysed various communication mediums of religious extremists, including recruitment videos and recorded speeches, literature (leaflets and pamphlets), jihadi anthems, and press releases to local media, and concluded religion plays various roles to justify armed conflict by such groups in the name to defend, neutralise and defeat an object as a perceived threat.<sup>20</sup> The available scholarship on religious extremism suggests text (written or oral) as the key to discursive formation of extremist narratives, as explained by Austin in his "Speech Act Theory" in his seminal work titled "How to do things with words?"<sup>21</sup> Religious extremism is also examined for its relationship concerning religious education and highlights the importance of text, symbols, and ritual in the perception building, as well as from religious educators' point of view, and the importance of the use of text and textual authority in Islam cannot be ignored in understanding the significance of the relationship among texts, readers, and moral community.<sup>22</sup>

Among different sources of text-based carriers (discursive moves), fatwa are significant as an instrument of Islamization in a society that indicates the way fatwa can play its role in imparting the Islamic teachings and interpretations.<sup>23</sup> It can be said that a fatwa is a source of Islamic Legal Theory. Fatwa in its nature and kind is further explained as the established "Q & A" exercise in the Islamic tradition, the consultation for a fatwa (*Istiflā'*) is the mundane activity through which Islamic norms, ethics, and jurisprudence are spread whereas *Iftā'*, the giving of a Fatwa is the simple formulation of a point of revealed law as understood by the scholarly tradition and the *Mustafil* known as Mufti is the authority of religious knowledge and scholarship. Mufti has the authority to issue a fatwa. Another explanation defines *Fatāwā* (the plural of fatwa) as legal opinions or verdicts on any point of law.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the authority, a fatwa seeks its legitimacy and acceptance based on the force behind its issuer (as an individual) and the institution (affiliation) in the shape of reverence, loyalty, and influence whereas a Mufti (one who issues a fatwa) as a mediator between the complex institutional system of Islamic legal-religious knowledge (*fiqh*) and the ordinary follower of the religion through the interpretive transmission in simple language.<sup>25</sup> A study discusses the prevailing approaches to the fatwa, which construe it primarily as an instrument of Islamic doctrinal change and reform, bridging the constant gap between a settled doctrinal past and a future of continual novelty.<sup>26</sup>

An interesting insight is provided by a study, explaining that how the use of religious text (verses) during worship (sermons) plays its instrumental role in establishing the status of the exponent, his authority and power to define the meaning-making worldview of the public, sacralised due to the application of verses regardless of the fact the public fully understands and comprehend the text language (Sanskrit) or not. This study has pointed out Friday prayer (that includes Friday sermon as well) in the mosque as the key driver of ideological indoctrinations in recent times, rather than parliament or any other forum. Fatawa are also quoted and mentioned in these sermons to explain and interpret theological doctrines in Islam.<sup>27</sup> Contemporarily, fatawa have become more accessible due to technological advancements, especially after the advent of the 4th Industrial Revolution. This technological advancement (internet) has contributed towards the enhanced circulation and subscription of followers towards fatawa.

The literature is evident that fatawa are among the key sources of religious interpretations in Islam, and likewise in the case of Pakistan. Fatawa are referred to and consulted to seek clarity on almost all aspects of Muslim's life and their orientation to the others (non-Muslims), ranging from basic beliefs to rituals. There is evidence that fatwas have been used by the religious extremists as well to validate and legitimise their acts of violence. Fatawa were used as key discursive moves by several Barelvi clerics against Pakistan's largest province, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer (he was assassinated by his official guard), labelling him arguably as a blasphemer due to his support for minority rights and victims of minority oppression by mainstream religious extremists.<sup>28</sup> This characterisation of an individual due to his act was instrumental in instigating dehumanisation sacralised with the help of issued fatwas. Likewise, an Indonesian religious scholar (Saiful Anam who belonged to Jemaah Islamiyah-a religious group) indiscriminately used the term 'takfir' (meaning the practice of declaring a Muslim a 'kafir' (an infidel, an unbeliever) by another Muslim through a discursive move either oral or written) in his book titled "Hukum Anchor At Thagut" (Legal Rulings for Supporting the Transgressors of Boundaries) in 2013.<sup>29</sup> In his book, Saif labelled all government officials of law-enforcing agencies (Indonesian Army and Police personnel) as infidels. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Saiful Anam, Mulla Fazal Ullah, Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi, and Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai are a few prominent figures in the literature discussed for their alleged use of varied religious interpretations for their own interests.<sup>30</sup>

Given the overview of available scholarship on the subject, it is important to understand how a meaning-making worldview is imparted to the audience (reader) by the speaker (writer) through the discursive formation of distinct words and jargon, especially when someone with a certain stature (designation) does so to the public. The same phenomenon becomes sacralised when performed by a religious scholar. It is necessary to explore how the text in fatawa is used (abused) for the discursive formation of extremist narratives in Pakistan, and it is found to be a serious research gap in the existing scholarship on the very sensitive topic. This research aims to fill this gap while attempting to explain the construction of narratives through fatawa using the CDA methodology, which are used (abused) by different actors in society.

## **Methodology**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is adopted as a research methodology for this study to analyse the discursive formation of distinct narratives through speech acts in religious rhetoric. Speech act theory is consulted for the necessary guidance to understand the phenomenal underpinnings of the text and its relationship with the intended consequences in society. For this purpose, fatawa are selected for analysis to determine how they are deemed instrumental in the development of distinct behaviours and values in society.

To develop a robust analytical framework for analysing the religiously motivated constructs in distinct narratives through fatawa, this study deliberates on the philosophical corpus of 'Speech Act Theory'. Speech act theory dominates the research related to the relationship between words and actions that how words are instrumental in defining the course of certain actions. Speech act theory discusses in detail explaining how utterances (words) matter as a speech act, conveying the performative connotation to the audience. A study sheds light on the meaning dynamics of words because the use of words in text or speech disseminates both descriptive understanding on one hand and emotive expression on the other.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the debate on the use of words does not end with just literal meaning, rather it encompasses the intended actions as well through the emotions embedded in the words (words). In line with the discussion extended on the actions as a product of words, a study also introduces the 'Social Acts' as discussed in the theoretical debate by Thomas Reid in his work and relates it to the speech act theory's notion of action as a result of an utterance (Schumann & Smith, 1990).

Research has stressed the need to understand the use of language and its purpose in a social context, raising the question of the underlying linkage between the speaker's utterance and its influence on the hearer.<sup>32</sup> Another study examines the connection between speaker and audience where speech acts convey emotions, opinions, and attitudes to the audience.<sup>33</sup> Studies have explained the ability of speech act theory to perform an action powered by the use of language, further boosting the motivation to perform certain acts besides shaping the meanings of words in literal and emotive terms.<sup>34</sup>

CDA addresses two major areas of concern while analysing discourses, the first one is the descriptive analysis of text focusing on the linguistic characteristics of the text, and secondly, explaining the findings of the descriptive analysis, contextualising it in a societal context with certain implications or effects.<sup>35</sup> CDA is particularly relevant to how religious texts are embedded in their contexts of production, distribution, and reception within a societal and cultural framework. CDA helps understand the relationship between fatawa (religious texts) and social conditions, as in Pakistan. CDA serves as a tool to gain a proper understanding of how language (fatawa) operates in terms of representing and transmitting selected narratives or knowledge, regulating social groups, and enacting power. In a further refinement to the analysis, this study later incorporates a socio-cognitive approach under the CDA to analyse the fatawa in their discursive utility in society. On the practical side, a three-level analytical framework proposed in a study by researchers suggests a textual analysis of the representation of social groups, dividing this analysis into three distinct domains: social actors, social actions, and argumentation.<sup>36</sup> In doing so, a three-level analysis is designed to explore the selected speech acts (fatawa): actor description analysis, action attribution analysis, and socio-cognitive imprints resulting from a speech act performed by an individual to an audience. It attempts to explain the discursive construction of identities, actions, and cognitive imprints left behind for future conditioning of events by individuals based on distinctively conditioned narratives in religious speech acts. The intended research is applied in nature and sensitive at the same time, as the topic is of vital importance for the peace and stability in the country and would be an addition to the existing knowledge base. The involvement of religion in research as a case for analysis makes it more delicate, as the study advises that researchers have to be prudent and careful by adopting a non-judgmental attitude while attempting to "find our way to the hearts and minds" of those whom this research intends to study.<sup>37</sup>

Given the time constraint, an effort is made to collect the fatawa of leading schools of thought among Muslims in Pakistan. It is pertinent to mention here that the fatawa of renowned scholars within a school of thought are referred to and taught by the religious schools (Madrasahs) that follow that specific school of thought. These fatawa are published by the issuing seminary in the shape of books, comprising many chapters in multiple volumes. All of the selected fatawa are in the Urdu language and are transcribed<sup>38</sup> by the author in English. This study is based on the analysis of fatawa issued by leading scholars, as tabulated in Table 1.

**Table – 1: Details of Fatawa**

Sr	Title	Author (Issuer)	Affiliation	City
1	Fatawa Darul Uloom Karachi (فتاوی دارالعلوم کراچی)	Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani (مولانا مفتی محمد رفیع عثمانی)	Grand Mufti of Deoband School of Thought	Karachi
2	Tafheem ul Masail (تفہیم المسائل)	Prof Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman (پروفیسر مفتی منیب الرحمان)	President Sunni (Barelvi) School of Thought (صدر تنظیم المدارس اہلسنت پاکستان)	Lahore
3	Fatawa Haqqania (فتاوی حقانیہ)	Maulana Sami ul Haq Shaheed (مولانا سمیع الحق شہید)	Deoband School of Thought	Nowshera
4	Fatawa Ashab al Hadith (فتاوی اصحاب الحدیث)	Abu Muhammad Hafiz Abdul Sattar Al-Hammad (ابو محمد حافظ عبدالستار الحماد)	Al-Salfiyya School of Thought (وفاق المدارس السلفیہ)	Faisalabad
5	Fatawa Usmani (فتاوی عثمانی)	Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (مفتی محمد تقی عثمانی)	Deoband School of Thought	Karachi
6	Fatawa Darul Uloom Naemia (فتاوی دارالعلوم نعیمیہ)	Allama Mufti Muhammad Abdul Aleem Sialvi (علامہ مفتی محمد عبدالعلیم سیالوی)	Sunni (Barelvi) School of Thought	Lahore
7	Khair ul Fatawa (خیر الفتاوی)	Maulana Khair Muhammad Jalandhri (مولانا خیر محمد جالندھری)	Deoband School of Thought (وفاق المدارس العربیہ ملتان)	Multan

Keeping in view the research scope and limitations, this study is based on the analysis of selected fatawa using CDA. For this purpose, chapters titled 'Belief and Faith' from each fatawa compilation are selected as mentioned above. In these chapters, queries related to belief and faith are discussed, where further selection is specified on the distinct use of words like 'infidel, apostate and non-believer, etc. in the text. The analysis is limited to the answers (explanations) of the religious scholars (Muftis) only and does not include any references to the Quran and Hadith in the very same fatawa. This study is limited to the exploration of the discursive formation of distinct narratives in the way of fatawa dissemination by the Muftis in their fatawa and does not intend to entail or justify any religious point of view or stance.

The practice of declaring an individual as kafir (an infidel, or a non-believer) is termed as 'takfir' (Sultan, 2014). There can be many types of this practice, like the one where one Muslim labels (accuses) another Muslim as an infidel or a Muslim defines a non-Muslim as an infidel, depending upon the situation and gravity of the accusations, in contrast to the religious beliefs and faith. To ascertain the Islamic legal opinion, fatawa are sought and issued by the muftis to clarify the inquired situations that justify the infidelity of an act concerning the Islamic Legal Jurisprudence, declaring one to be a sane believer or an infidel. Infidel is a term that is being used for those accused of non-belief in the central tenets, according to their religious affiliation, for members of another religion or atheists. These fatawa addressing queries related to belief and faith define the 'In-group' and 'Out-group', relationships and treatment of groups within groups and with out-groups, 'Us (Positive)' vs 'Them (Negative)', Humanisation (De-humanisation), and value-based rationality.

In order to explore the role of fatawa, this study applies the three-step analysis approach that includes actor description analysis, action attribution analysis, and socio-cognitive imprints on the selected fatawa. In the first phase, actor description analysis identifies the presence of any actor in the fatawa text regarding its social existence in society. In simple words, this portion of analysis investigates the selected fatawa (text) to find that either these fatawa create or address some actor (identity) because by doing so, there are leads to study the construction of identities by the fatwa issuer. It also helps to ascertain how a speech act (fatwa) creates actors (individuals) in a text that is further developed, creating in-group and out-group identities.

These identities are instrumental to learn more about the discursively constructed in-group and out-group labels. This explains the conditioning of identities by using certain words in the desired manner of interpretation and message dissemination to the audience. This phenomenal creation of identity is the first step of the investigation in the actor description analysis phase, where selected fatawa (speech acts) are being analysed. In doing so, the genesis of the infidel world is traced in the selected fatawa that how this discursive representation is embedded or understood in the fatwa trajectory.

In the second phase, action attribution analysis is carried out to understand the associated social actions with certain identities, and how actions are (are not) attributed to the different identities as mentioned in the first phase. It explains the process of linking certain actions to certain actors as conveyed through the speech act. In simple, this action attribution explains that how certain acts are labelled to certain communities, conditioned as their traits or customs. In the case of fatawa, the text plays an instrumental role in conditioning certain actions, as coined by the text, just as explained in the speech act theory, "how to do things with words". For example, an infidel is the one who commits infidelity. Given the securitisation theory's scholarship, this section further explains the role of the fatawa, analysing their role as either the securitising moves by the securitising agent with certain mandates and authority of power to execute the appropriate actions in due course or the mandate is limited to merely a religious opinion. This phase is critical for identifying any attempts at humanisation (dehumanisation) in the process.

In the third and final phase of analysis, this research analyses the evolution of socio-cognitive imprints through the fatawa in the cognisance of an individual that is imparted while processing the two distinct products of a speech act (social actors and social actions). It is the culmination of the thought process in the human cognitive that how one relates the formation of a social actor and its actions, spelt out in the due course of a speech act (fatwa). It further depends on the individual's cognitive orientation on how he processes the given information in making a decision or choice on routine life issues in the community. The speech acts (fatawa) provide the basis for constructing the whole narrative and meaning-making world view.

In the backdrop of the above-mentioned analysis approach, selected fatawa are critically analysed that how the discursive use of infidelity is sensitive in religious

discourses and how these distinct words can be exploited to achieve vested interests by certain stakeholders.

## Analysis and Discussion

In light of the proposed research design, this section analyses the fatawa issued by leading scholars from various schools of thought to investigate how speech acts are discursively applied in the religious discourses and why distinct speech acts result in forming identities (in-group and out-group), conditioning actions and marking socio-cognitive imprints in society.

## Actor Description Analysis

Table -2: Actor Description Analysis

	Extracted Text from Selected Fatawa with translation	Reference
Fatawa Darul Uloom Karachi	One who believes and confesses truthfully to the teachings of the Prophet (Prophet Muhammad PBUH) is a <b>Muslim</b> and one who denies any of these teachings is an <b>infidel</b> .	Vol 1, pg. 91, Line 5-6
	A <b>non-Muslim</b> is in fact an <b>infidel</b> and <b>infidel</b> must be pronounced as an <b>infidel</b> although he belongs to divine religions.	Vol 1, pg. 93, Line 1
	As per Shariah, a person is pronounced as an <b>apostate</b> (مرتد) who was a <b>Muslim</b> but later became <b>infidel</b> . An <b>infidel</b> is a person who negates any one of the basics of the religion.	Vol 5, pg. 311, Line 5-6
Tafheem ul Masail	Hence, the subject questioned person became <b>infidel</b> due to his cynic words...	Vol 4, pg. 19, Line 18-19
	It is unlawful and unjustified for a <b>Muslim</b> to call another <b>Muslim</b> as an <b>infidel</b> or hypocrite.	Vol 5, pg. 468, Line 16
	Although I am a <b>Muslim</b> , I do not, nor I have I ever believed in Shariah.	Vol 7, pg. 47, Line 10-11
Fatawa Haqqania	In any <b>Muslim State</b> , <b>Non-Muslims</b> have the right of protection for <b>their</b> lives and capital, and religious freedom but if they opt to mislead <b>Muslims</b> through their writings and speeches then <b>they</b> must be forbidden from doing so.	Vol 5, pg. 318, Line 13-14
Fatawa Ashab al Hadith	Given the stated situation, <b>we</b> advise <b>our fellow friends</b> that the <b>subject person</b> (Sermonizer) possesses dangerous thoughts, <b>he</b> should be guided, if <b>he</b> agrees to quit wrongdoings, then fine otherwise <b>he</b> should be deposed of giving sermon. The referenced verse in the question was earlier used against the <b>government</b> and pleaded to declare <b>them infidel</b> . Now this thought has further developed and is used to declare the <b>general public</b> as <b>infidel</b> .	Pg. 38, Line 9-12
Fatawa Usmani	<b>One who</b> has called <b>singers</b> (musicians) as <b>infidels</b> , he has committed a grave mistake, <b>he</b> should seek forgiveness.	Vol 1, pg. 72, Line 10-11
	The sentence "I am not a <b>Muslim</b> , I am a <b>Hindu or Sikh</b> " is a word of infidelity and if it is meant by the pronouncer as it means by words then by saying so, <b>one</b> qualifies to be an <b>infidel</b> .	Vol 1, Pg. 79, Line 19 Pg. 80, Line 1

This section analyses speech acts to find out the discursive formation of different actors in the text. This identification helps understand how a fatwa issuer (mufti), through speech acts (fatawa), discusses identities (such as creating, subjecting, or depicting one actor). This analysis discusses the critical role of the actor's identity in the text, explaining how these actors are subjected to various connotations in the broader meaning-making process by the audience.

This research focuses on the description and construction of identities using the distinct word (infidel) in addressing individuals based on their beliefs and faith as per the religious indoctrinations.

Fatawa construct identities based on belief and faith, thus segregating the in-group and out-group based on conformity to the religious norms and commandments. In this way, fatwa dissemination creates or points to the classification of identity, based on certain criteria (like religious belief and faith, adherence to religious norms and values). This study unfolds the process of the discursive formation of in-group and out-group identities in the selected fatawa as shown in Table 2. In the selected fatawa, the speech act is performed by *naming* an individual or a group of individuals with distinct words such as 'infidel' or 'non-believer'. The word 'infidel' and its similar connotations like 'non-believer, apostate, etc.' prove to be instrumental in constructing the social identities in the due course of fatwa issuance. In general, infidels are considered as an out-group identity by the in-group who depict themselves as believers in religion. This division is common among all divine religions in defining the believers and non-believers as per the subject religious norms and commandments, but the deliberate use of such words other than religious explanations can be fatal and crucial. To further explore the identity formation phenomenon and its consequences for violent religious extremism, this study also explores the notion of "Us" vs. "Them" based on religiously constructed identities. It extends the analysis to probe the probable notions of "Us (Positive)" and "Them (Negative)" in the selected fatawa. It is found that fatawa and their issuers have remained neutral in the extracts with reference to the 'Us' (positive) and 'Them' (negative) labelling conditioned by any inferiority or superiority discourse while disseminating the religious decree on the belief of an individual. These fatawa are prudent in their language and restricted to the scope of the query only, rather than conditioning the out-group with any inferiority or derogatory remarks.

### **Action Attribution Analysis**

The second step of the analysis discusses the actions attributed to and directed towards the social actors, as defined in the previous section (actor description analysis), through fatawa. Speech acts are destined to do something with words, and likewise, selected fatawa are analysed to see how the text of fatawa prompts certain actions or conditions certain actions.

Table 3: Action Attribution Analysis

	Extracted Text from Selected Fatawa with translation	Reference
Fatawa Darul Uloom Karachi	One who <b>abuses</b> Allah SWT (God) in all his senses <b>becomes</b> an infidel. His wife is no longer in a marriage contract with him. It is not permissible to <b>deal (treat)</b> him like Muslims. If he does not <b>seek forgiveness</b> and there is Islamic Law in the country, then he would be <b>executed</b> . He should be <b>guided</b> and <b>preached</b> gently to <b>seek forgiveness</b> and <b>fear</b> the wrath of hell. If he does so, then it's good; otherwise, if he dies without repentance, his funeral will not be offered, nor will he be buried in a Muslim graveyard. Till he repents, he should be <b>boycotted</b> .	Vol 1, pg. 206, Line 19-22 pg. 207, Line 1-2
	The authority to <b>issue</b> the <b>punishment</b> for an apostate is only with the ruler of Muslims, either he himself <b>issues</b> the verdict or through his delegation of power to someone else. No one else can <b>declare</b> the verdict for apostates.	Vol 5, pg. 314, Line 4-5
Tafheem ul Masail	One who <b>says</b> and <b>disrespects</b> (by saying that the words of his father are no less than those of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), <b>becomes</b> an infidel by saying so; he should <b>renew</b> his belief and marriage contract.	Vol 4, pg. 20, Line 12-13
Fatawa Haqqania	One who <b>pronounces</b> blasphemous words for Allah (God) commits infidelity and becomes an apostate.	Vol 1, pg. 152, Line 6-7
	One who <b>pronounces</b> blasphemous words for the Quran (Holy Book) becomes an apostate due to their bad <b>deed</b> .	Vol 1, pg. 153, Line 1-2
	One who <b>abuses</b> the word of faith (Kalima Tayyiba) in Islam commits infidelity and becomes an apostate.	Vol 1, pg. 153, Line 8-9
	One who <b>calls</b> the Islamic System (Religion) outdated becomes an infidel from a Muslim.	Vol 1, pg. 154, Line 1-2, Line 8-9
	One who <b>disrespects</b> the Holy Prophet (Prophet Muhammad PBUH) is out of Islam.	

	One who <b>disrespects</b> and <b>utters</b> blasphemous words for the Prophets becomes an infidel.	Vol 1, pg. 155, Line 1-2
<b>Fatawa Usmani</b>	If one <b>declares</b> (mentions) itself as a Qadiyani <sup>39</sup> intentionally on the passport or on any other form to <b>get</b> a visa or some other worldly benefits, this intention towards an infidel religion is the reason for <b>committing</b> infidelity.	Vol 1, pg. 74, Line 21-23
	It is a serious sin to <b>call</b> a Muslim an infidel; the one who does so is a sinner, but the one who commits this mistake cannot be <b>pronounced</b> an infidel.	Vol 1, pg. 78, Line 11-12
<b>Fatawa Darul Uloom Naeemia</b>	In <b>declaring</b> a Muslim as an infidel, there must be precautions <b>taken care</b> of 100 times.	Pg. 78 Line 16

In the securitisation context, the extracts of the selected fatawa do not constitute an infidel as a threat to religion or society that must be securitised through means of power or coercion; guidance and recourse to forgiveness are advised in general. Whereas in some exceptions, fatawa do perceive infidels as a source of disturbance (distortion) to society if they opt to mislead the Muslims. Fatawa restrict themselves to explaining the query rather than securitising any threat perception, hence the text is drafted in a manner to avoid going beyond the scope of the query, being to the point in their approach.

On the notion of humanisation (dehumanisation), the extracts of fatawa seem to treat an infidel in a normal and neutral way, without taking a position towards humanisation or dehumanisation. There is no such evidence that the extracts have been found to emphasise the humanisation of the in-group and the dehumanisation of the out-group. Certain actions and their consequences do attribute to one's belief and faith as explained in the extracted fatawa, and constitute the affiliation of one to a certain group. It is found that there is repeated advice, commonly found in the majority of the fatawa, warning individuals to abstain (refrain) from pronouncing and declaring others as infidels and to avoid this act to the utmost level. Almost all the fatawa agree on providing a fair chance and opportunity to deviating individuals and groups (those who commit infidelity intentionally or unintentionally) to seek forgiveness, show repentance for their act (wrongful deed), renew their belief and faith, and live a normal life.

This finding is very significant in terms of promoting tolerance and patience for building community resilience towards violent extremism in the name of religion.

In rare cases, there is a discussion of punishment for the infidels and apostates, but the right to punish is categorically defined and established, where the government is the only legitimate power to exercise this right. It is explained that no individual or group is entitled to punish anyone for the charges of infidelity. This punishment is subject to the non-utility of repentance or forgiveness by the infidel (apostate) and will be administered by the government (state) only.

### **Socio-Cognitive Imprints**

Given the description of a social actor and social action, fatawa are believed to leave a socio-cognitive imprint on their audience (followers). A person who consults or seeks a fatwa on a specific issue is exposed to a socio-cognitive imprint because of a speech act performed by the fatwa issuer, where it depends on the speech act that what kind of imprint it imparts on the mind of its audience and their subsequent imagination of world-view, thereby resulting in a form of tolerance or extremism among the individuals.

Regarding the concept of rationality as discussed in the theoretical debate of this research, extracts seem to justify value-based rationality while elaborating the Islamic Legal point of view on an issue (query), providing logic and rationality to the audience that, according to the religion, the identity of the subject is conditioned as an *infidel (apostate)*. There is a clear classification of distinct identities based on beliefs and faith as rendered by the fatawa. These fatawa also clarify that unnecessary arguments or labelling should be avoided in declaring others as infidels, especially in the case of declaring infidelity (Takfir) towards Muslims by other Muslims. This scenario provides an opportunity to Pakistan to have its Muslim population with enhanced resilience against the violent extremism rather invoking takfir on every small or minor issue of ideological confrontation of difference.

For non-Muslims, state is responsible to provide them security and religious freedom as defined by Islam. An individual is not allowed to punish or intervene in others' religious affairs based on his own rationality (logic). Religious extremism is invoked when one tries to ingress others' space and to dominate its ideology and

understanding through the use (abuse) of distinct interpretations of the religious commandments.

## **Conclusion**

This research explains the mechanism by which religious narratives are actualised through religious speech acts in the form of fatawa, by the discursive use of distinct words. The findings of the research elaborate on the way of doing things with words as defined in the scholarship of speech act theory. The analysis of selected fatawa shows that there is a clear demarcation of identity (group identity). Findings of the research demonstrate the construction of identities (Ingroup and Out-group) in the fatawa, and it does not condition any obvious notion of 'Us (positive) vs Them (negative)' or any further assertion and denial related to the identity in the fatawa. The construction of group identities is limited to 'Us' vs 'Them' (In-group vs Out-group) and does not go beyond the level of dehumanisation in the name of securitisation. The analysis shows that fatawa are very prudent in their use of language and do not trespass the limitations to unnecessary provocation of dehumanisation or denial of basic human rights for non-Muslims (infidels). As a result of the interplay between social identity formation and social actions, fatawa are instrumental to impart the socio-cognitive imprints in the society, both for an individual and the group. Identities based on religious interpretations and their subsequent conditioning for their actions do mark imprints and provide the criteria for 'value-based rationality' for the meaning-making worldview to an individual.

Besides, this research explains how religious speech acts (fatawa) are instrumental in constructing social realities and function as a major mechanism to actualise religious narratives. Fatawa provide an opportunity to policymakers to strategise local solutions and policy options for the development of community resilience to violent extremism. A well-informed population on the very basics of religion can prove a powerful force to negate and disown the sacralised misinterpretations encapsulated in the extremist narratives by the religious extremists. Language is the key to promoting understanding and the capacity of the public to play a positive and constructive role in enhancing peaceful coexistence and tolerance in society. Lack of familiarity and acquaintance with the very basics of the religion results in the form of vulnerable masses in the hands of extremist minds who abuse the very same institution of Islamic Legal Jurisprudence (*Fatawa*) for their own vested interests (both ideological and monetary benefits) in the name of

religion. Given the analysis of the selected fatawa, there is hardly any direct or indirect provocation of violent extremism towards the in-group or the out-group; rather, the state (government) is mentioned as the only legitimate and lawful power to prosecute and punish any violation if found.

The primary goal of this study has been to critically analyse the discursively embedded distinct words in the religious decrees (fatawa), which are performed by religious scholars as speech acts routinely. This study does not try to justify any religious norms or beliefs rather it explains that how these religious narratives are disseminated by the way of sacralisation by the concerned stakeholders. The analysis of the three-step approach provided an in-depth insight regarding the manifestation of religious narratives in Pakistan through the use of fatwa-issuing institutions.

Based on the analysis, five critical recommendations are postulated to promote the community resilience against the religious violent extremism: 1) against the majority of fatawa, in rare cases fatawa can be used (abused) for vested interests by some religious scholars (more appropriately by the religious extremists) to disseminate their own version of the ideology through the distinct and repeated use of certain words encapsulated in the fatwa text, which demands serious attention of policy-makers as these are need to be checked and banned to prevent their dissemination in the print and electronic sphere; 2) it is identified that religious extremism is manifested systematically by the extremists just like the ordinary fatawa - first by constructing an identity (like infidel, apostate) on religious basis, and then acts (infidelity) by that identity are labelled and stigmatized as wrong (sinful). The confinement of the explanation and interpretation through fatwa is not adequately performed in some cases that leaves behind margin for individuals to formulate their own meaning-making worldviews, thus state needs to issue policy guidelines in consultation with the leading religious scholars and Muftis to have a check on Takfir at very local level; 3) majority of fatawa have nothing to do with religious extremism (as in the case of selected fatawa) whereas the connotations used in these fatawa are exploited through misinterpretation in extreme cases by certain religious groups and individuals, hereby Muftis should take care of this aspect and state should also sensitize the probable exploitation by the extremists; 4) interestingly, the institution of fatawa is a blessing as well, and may be used in a constructive manner to counter the extremist narratives; and 5) fatwa stands as a respected and trusted source to seek guidance in matters of confusion so it needs to

be formalized under certain policy framework or legislation to stop its exploitation in the hands of the extremists.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>38</sup> For translation, Oxford Urdu-English Dictionary is referred and necessary reference is provided.
- <sup>39</sup> **Qadiyani** or Qadiani (Urdu: قادیانی) is a religious group who also introduce themselves as Ahmadi Muslims, primarily in Pakistan whereas as per the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan (through second amendment to article 106 & 260), Qadiyani are declared as non-Muslims (infidels) (Uddin & Anjum, 2013).