

**T.R.
POLICE ACADEMY
INSTITUTE OF SECURITY SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

THE USE of *TAKFİR* in EXTREMISM

**MASTER'S THESIS
Osman TÜRK**

Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Uğur EKİNCİ

ANKARA- 2020

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ONAY

Osman TÜRK tarafından hazırlanan The Use of Takfir in Extremism başlıklı bu çalışma, 07/05/2020 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda (oybirliği / oyçokluğu) ile başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Uluslararası Güvenlik Anabilim dalı İngilizce programında Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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OSMAN TÜRK

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'O. Türk', located below the printed name 'OSMAN TÜRK'.

ABSTRACT

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The Use of *Takfir* in Extremism

Student's name: Osman TÜRK

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Uğur EKİNCİ

2020, 83 Pages (Excluding Appendices)

The concept of *takfir*, which means to declare an individual—and particularly one who self-identifies as a Muslim—to be an infidel (*kāfir*) and outside the fold of Islam, is widely employed by violent extremist groups like Al-Qaeda and DAESH.

This study, which deals with the use of *takfir* in extremist discourse, shows how an originally theological concept is employed for political and ideological purposes. Furthermore, in an effort to elucidate the link between *takfir* and violence, this study examines the common and different points in the *takfirī* discourses of violent and non-violent extremists. In order to do so, this study compares the content of the *takfirī* discourses employed by violent and non-violent extremist in reference to Turkey.

As a result, the analysis concludes that the reasons and references cited by both violent and non-violent extremists when declaring someone as infidel significantly overlap. The main difference between the discourses of violent and non-violent extremists is about how an excommunicated person should be treated. By demonstrating the identically exclusivist and marginalising discourse employed by both violent and non-violent extremists, this result reveals that the distinction between these two forms of extremism may be misleading.

Key Words: Al-Qaeda, DAESH, Extremism, Salafism, *Takfir*, Violence

ÖZET

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Tekfir, yani birini kâfir olarak görmek ya da özellikle kendisini Müslüman olarak tanımlayan bir kişiyi küfre girmekle suçlamak, günümüzde El-Kaide ve DAESH gibi şiddete varan aşırılıkçı gruplar tarafından yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmaktadır.

Tekfirin aşırıcı söylemlerde kullanımını konu edinen bu çalışma, temelde fihri bir kavram olan tekfirin nasıl bir siyasi ve ideolojik söyleme dönüştüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun yanısıra, tekfirin şiddetle ilişkisini aydınlatmak amacıyla şiddeti benimseyen ve benimsemeyen aşırılıkçı grupların tekfir söylemlerindeki ortaklık ve farklılıkları araştırmaktadır. Bu amaçla şiddeti benimseme bakımından farklılaşan aşırılıkçıların Türkiye hakkında kullandıkları tekfir söylemleri incelenmiş ve bu söylemlerin içerikleri birbiriyle karşılaştırılmıştır.

Çalışmada sonuç olarak, şiddet içeren aşırılık yanlıları ile şiddet içermeyen aşırılık yanlılarının bir kişiyi kâfir ilan ederken kullandıkları gerekçe ve referansların birbiriyle önemli ölçüde örtüştüğü tespit edilmiştir. Şiddeti benimseyenler ve benimsemeyenlerin söylemleri arasındaki esas fark, tekfir edilen kişiye nasıl muamele yapılması gerektiği konusunda ortaya çıkmaktadır. Şiddet içeren ve içermeyen aşırıcılığın kullandıkları dışlayıcı ve ötekileştirici söylemler bakımından birbiriyle özdeş olduğunu gösteren bu sonuç, iki tür aşırıcılık arasındaki ayrımın yanıltıcı olabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aşırılık, DEASH, El Kaide, Radikalleşme, Selefilik, Şiddet, Tekfir

THE USE of *TAKFĪR* in EXTREMISM

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INTRODUCTION

Takfīr, namely regarding an individual—and generally an individual who openly self-identifies as a Muslim—as an infidel (*kāfir*) or accusing him of blasphemy (*kufr*), is an Islamic concept with theological, political and ideological underpinnings. Having gained traction in Islamic thought for various theological and political reasons, *takfīr* has recently witnessed a surge in use as a political and ideological tool among religiously motivated extremists. Violent extremist organisations like al-Qaeda and DAESH legitimate physical and psychological violence against Muslims through the use of their particular understanding of *takfīr*.

The preservation of life, intellect, religion, wealth and lineage, which are collectively conceptualised as the five higher objectives of Islamic law and which stem from the fundamental principles of religion (Esen, 2011), are easily violated by the sword of *takfīr* in the name of religion. Declaring a Muslim as infidel deprives him of any ties to family and society. Considering themselves judge, jury and executioner, Al-Qaeda and DAESH use the doctrine of *takfīr* to judge the beliefs of other Muslims and justify the use of violence against them. In other words, radical groups affirm their right not only to criticise the faith of other Muslims through the *takfīr* but also to declare jihad against any Muslim they label as infidel.

Beyond being discussed solely on the theological level, *takfīr* is a concept with political and ideological connotations and implications. A person theologically considered an apostate is:

- Given the jurisprudential ruling of killed (political),
- One with whom a Muslim is not to perform his prayer (social) and
- One whose goods are distributed among the Muslims as spoils of war (economic) (Esen, 2011: 106).

Declaring someone to be an infidel is a serious matter in Islamic law (*sharia*) because it accuses the person of a grave sin that entails severe punishment in this life and the next. In this sense, *takfīr* implies serious consequences for both the accuser and the accused (Naimi 2019). Before going further, however, it must be clearly stated that *takfīr* certainly does have a wide range of legitimate uses in the

theological domain. However, by expanding its sphere of jurisdiction beyond the theological realm, *takfīr* has emerged as a political tool used to eliminate political opposition.

Throughout the history of Islam, actors known for their use and over-use of *takfīr* have exemplified the extremist and fundamentalist side of Islamic ideology. Extremists have resorted to *takfīr* in an effort to impose their extremist views on the rest of the Muslim and non-Muslim world. With the rise of radical Islamic movements during the modern era, the discourse of *takfīr* has become a central problem throughout the Islamic world, and extremist discourse shaped around *takfīr* has become increasingly prevalent among *takfīrī* groups. Moreover, the widespread use of social media has been instrumental in aiding these expressions to penetrate into historically inaccessible regions and communities. *Takfīrī* actors produce complex discourse to exclude communities and societies from the Muslim world and then use this exclusion as a means to implement violent change.

Historically, *takfīr* has been conceived of and used differently by diverse schools of thought and creed emerging in the Islamic world. Despite having a central role among extremist actors, the notion of *takfīr* is used in different ways and for to achieve different ends even by groups feeding off the same extremist ideology.

However, the distinction between non-violent and violent extremists may be an illusionary one since extremism is inherently violent. *Takfīrī* thought is generally related to extremists or those who exaggerate certain aspects of their religion. Both forms of extremism have convinced themselves that they are the sole holders of and adherents to absolute truth. In this respect, it is discussing whether or not made that religious extremism is a uniform phenomenon in terms of exclusion and othering and that violent and non-violent extremism are two sides of the same medal.

Research Question

This study aims to explore how *takfīrī* discourse is employed by extremist groups. To this end, the research question seeks to investigate how both violent and non-violent extremists use *takfīr* in their discourse. Doctrines based on *takfīr* frequently appear in the media, newspapers, magazines and academic studies. That this concept is mostly

addressed from a Salafist understanding and is even sometimes used as an equivalent to violence and killing underlines the need for detailed analyses to provide a proper understanding of *takfīr*.

Accordingly, two secondary questions should be asked to help elucidate the research question, namely:

- What are the main grounds and references for excommunication? Do they differ among violent and non-violent extremists?
- Do violent extremists employ a particular type of *takfīrī* discourse? In other words, what are the similarities and differences between the *takfīrī* discourse of violent and non-violent extremists?

This thesis aims to answer these questions by analysing the discourse used by violent and non-violent extremists with regard to the same object, namely Turkey (including its government, institutions and political leader). It will explore both the shared and unshared dimensions of the *takfīrī* language utilised by violent and non-violent extremists. The concepts, themes and religious references to religious sources used in *takfīrī* discourse will be analysed in-depth and points of convergence and divergence will be laid out.

Literature Review

Since this study focuses on the use of *takfīr* in extremism, a wide spectrum of studies pertaining to Salafism, radicalisation, religious terrorism, Islamic terrorism, Salafist-*jihādism*, *jihādist* mobilisation and *jihādist* extremism have been reviewed. This section aims to shed light on some of the studies and literature that delve into the issue of *takfīr*.

Studies have approached *takfīr* from different angles. The most salient themes in the literature can be categorised under four domains:

- 1) *Takfīr* in Salafism;

Many studies address *takfīr* as an element of Salafism. The word Salafism, which derives from the word *salaf* and which means to come prior to and to remain in the past, is used to indicate a current of thought that exalts a specific understanding of Islamic figures who preceded them in virtue and knowledge. Moreno asserts that

Salafism has entered a period of profound transformation especially in the last century after having been influenced by different currents and groups, such as Islamism, Wahhabism, and jihadism. Current interpretations of Salafism can range from a purely personal religious conviction that emphasises purifying one's heart and way of life to a complete adoption a *jihadist* narrative, like al-Qaeda and DAESH (Moreno, 2017). In his study on *Dabiq* magazine, Moreno discussed the arguments made by DAESH to legitimise the killing of people they had declared infidels and found that the Salafist approach is easily exploited by radical terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda and DAESH. Also in this study, Moreno (2017) found that the doctrine of *takfīr* was used as an argument to legitimise the violent actions perpetrated by extremist groups.

Naimi (2019), on the other hand, analysed the pattern of violence, Salafism, and *takfīr* by adapting it to the Taliban in Afghanistan, finding that religious fundamentalism has led to the widespread adoption of a *takfīrī* doctrine and that this approach has in turn led to violence. In his study, Naimi examined the phases of dogmatism in religion and the process of radicalisation. Indeed, a number of prominent ideologists (e.g., Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam) and historical connections (e.g., Kharijites, Wahhabism) related to this process have emerged over the course of history. In this study, the transformation process of the Salafist approach and its dogmatic structure into an institution that adopts violence is discussed in detail. Concepts such as infidels, apostates and *shirk* (i.e., an act of idolatry such as worshiping someone or something other than Allah) have been evaluated as arguments underpinning the doctrine of *takfīr*. According to Naimi, *takfīr* is a justification tool for violence and though he admits that there is a valid theological application of *takfīr*, he states quite adamantly that it is not a source of violence according to Islamic law.

Treating the doctrine of *takfīr* as a product of the Salafist understanding of Islam, Demir (2016) does not consider Salafism to be an Islamic *madhhab*, and instead describes it as a *takfīrī* movement. Demir also claims that since Salafism manifests in a variety of different forms, any theory of radicalisation seeking to explain the process of religiously-motivated radicalisation must take into account the diverse forms of Salafism. Indeed, although the divergent manifestations of Salafism

transcend national and ethnic boundaries, infighting among different Salafist groups is not uncommon. Accordingly, a more proper definition describing organisations identifying themselves as Salafist (e.g., al-Qaeda and DAESH) would be radical Salafism or *takfīrī* Salafism.

Similarly, Apak (2013) has discussed the definition and scope of Salafism in detail. In terms of Islamic law, he addressed the issue of *takfīr*, where he specifically emphasised the impact of both Salafism and Ibn Taymiyyah on *takfīr* and distinguished between violent and non-violent Salafism with regard to how they approached *takfīr*.

- 2) *Takfīr*- in Contemporary Violent Extremist Movements

Offering a nuanced understanding of concepts, Büyükkara deals with how the *takfīr* has transitioned from a theological concept to a political doctrine. In his book, Büyükkara delineates between classical and contemporary movements that have adopted a *takfīrī* doctrine. Whereas he categorises the Kharijites and Wahhabism under classical movements, he considers al-Qaeda and DAESH to be contemporary movements (Büyükkara, 2015). With his study, Büyükkara shows how the *takfīrī* approach experiences a shift from the theological to the political area. Büyükkara emphasises that every Islamic sect has a different understanding of *takfīr*, claiming that while *takfīr* remained at the theoretical level in some groups, it has led others to embrace violence.

In parallel with Demir, Fawaz Gerges (2016) defined al-Qaeda and DAESH as a collective ideology rather than as individual organisations. According to Gerges, al-Qaeda is a reflection of *takfīr* as it pertains to the Salafist-Wahhabi ideology that legitimises the use of violence.

Likewise, Roy (2009) claims that the success of al-Qaeda is not that it has established a modern, efficient Islamist *jihadi* organisation but that it has developed an umbrella ideology under which all *ihadists* may congregate. Deriving their legitimacy from a Salafist perspective, its members therefore consider themselves to be fighting in the name of Islam. In fact, *takfīr* is proposed as a foundational rule of the religion in this ideology, which has served to normalise *takfīr*, religion, *ihad* and patterns of violence by extremist groups like al-Qaeda and DAESH. Indeed, it has

been suggested that *takfir* constitutes a core creedal principle in Islam that transcends its wide-spread use among Salafist groups (Cockburn, 2014).

- 3) *Takfir*- as a Source of Violence

Although from a theoretical creedal understanding, an infidel is one who has denied some or all aspects of the Qur'an, Sunnah and/or applications of Islamic law, *takfir* is extended beyond mere theory in the hands of radical groups to encompass physical and psychological violence, which includes worldly punishment and even execution. Seen through this lens, *takfir* is a complex term filled with ideological, religious and social connotations that have serious legal, social and cultural repercussions.

Using documents published by DAESH to investigate the scope of *takfir*, Haniff Hassan asserts that nearly every system implemented in the modern world may be included in the scope of *takfir*. These documents classify various categories of Muslims as apostates, namely, (i) all groups whose ideological foundation is based on communism, secularism, nationalism and liberalism, (ii) proponents of democracy and those who participate in democratic processes, (iii) all governments that do not rule by the Islamic law and members of their militaries, police forces, intelligence organisations and both executive and judiciary apparatuses and (iv) all those who seek to rule by civil laws (Haniff Hassan, 2017). Linking the source of violence to punishment imposed on apostates by Islamic law, Hassan argues that there is a direct relationship between *takfir* and violence.

Likewise, Rhodes (2014) asserts that it is clear that *takfirī* groups are sympathetic to and both co-operative and aligned with al-Qaeda's ideology in their fight around the world, exhibiting a threat to international security and stability. This concept of *takfir*, which is rooted in Salafist ideology, has thus become a source of religious violence.

- 4) *Takfir* as a Tool of Justification

Simultaneously addressing Salafism and the *takfirī* approach towards religion and violent extremism, Alkan (2016) defines the Islamic terminology used within *takfirī* discourse while emphasising that these concepts are fundamentally exclusionist arguments used by radical terrorist organisations. Since he considers *takfir* to be a tool used to justify violence, he claims that extremist groups like al-Qaeda and

DAESH have weaponised *takfīr* and continue to use it to legitimise acts of violence. In doing so, Alkan cites case studies and scholars who have appeared throughout Islamic history, stating that the most frequently cited scholar by radical groups is Ibn Taymiyyah and his famous Mardin *Fatwā* issued during the Mongolian invasions.

In parallel, Badar and Nagata (2017) assert that these groups justify their words and works using direct quotations from the Qur'an and *hadith* literature, the two most important sources of Sharia law, as well as by citing historical precedents like the Wahhabi movement and Ibn Taymiyyah's Mardin *fatwā*.

Welch (2018) analyses the types of messages and narratives circulated in DAESH propaganda, including their magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. In his analysis, he addresses DAESH's attempts to disseminate theological justification legitimising violence, the methods DAESH has used to inspire its members to engage in violence, descriptions of community, accounts of heroism, the establishment of an enemy (e.g., infidels and apostates) and inspirational arguments extolling radical violence. In his study, Welch suggested that there is an important link between violence and Salafist radicalisation, emphasising that *takfīr* is considered a legitimisation tool.

The doctrine of *takfīr* comes to the fore in the works on religion and violence by Esen (2011) and Gündüz (2005). Esen asserts that the concept of *takfīr* morphed into a political tool over the course of history. In a similar vein, Gündüz emphasises that *takfīr* is used by modern radical organisations as a religious reference to justify violence.

Methodology

Academic studies discuss *takfīr* in the context of Salafism, jihadism, terrorism, *takfīrī* movements, radicalisation and extremism. Still, the differences in how divergent extremist groups use *takfīr* have yet to be comparatively analysed, meaning that how violent and non-violent extremist groups approach and regard the same phenomenon remains undiscussed. As such, this study will conduct a qualitative content analysis on how *takfīr* has been weaponised and used against Turkey and Erdoğan in an effort

to showcase the similarities and differences between the discourse of violent and non-violent extremists.

While examining propaganda arguments made by extremist groups, we observe that concepts with religious connotations shaped around *takfīr*, such as jihad, blasphemy and apostate, come to the fore. Although *takfīr* has a theological dimension, this study focuses on how it is handled ideologically by violent and non-violent extremist groups.

This study will analyse how the discourse of violent and non-violent extremist groups approach the same phenomenon. Comparatively analysing how two groups that have adopted a *takfīrī* doctrine approach the same case will be useful in demonstrating the relationship between *takfīr* and violence. The similarities and differences between the two groups will help shed light on whether *takfīr* is a source of violence or a justification for violence. Turkey and her president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have been chosen as subjects for analysis referred to by extremists in their *takfīrī* discourse. Publications, social media posts and YouTube videos produced by violent extremist groups will be used to gather examples of their statements. The data will then be subject to a qualitative content analysis for examination.

Systematically analysing written and oral materials, content analysis focuses on the patterns in communication while simultaneously giving attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Shannon & Hsieh, 2005: 1278). Content analysis is used to provide an objective, measurable and verifiable description of the clear, overt content contained in messages communicated (Fiske, 1996: 176).

According to Prasad, content analysis conforms to three basic principles of the scientific method, namely:

1. Objectivity: The analysis is pursued based on explicit rules that enable different researchers to obtain similar results from the same texts or messages.

2. Systematises: Content is included or excluded according to specific rules that are applied consistently in order to eliminate the possibility of including only material that supports the researcher's hypothesis.

3. Generalisability: The results obtained by the researcher can be applied to other similar situations (Prasad, 2008: 2).

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278), qualitative content analysis ‘focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study’.

Accordingly, the textual analysis in the last chapter will be completed as follows:

- First, the *takfīrī* discourse of extremist groups concerning Turkey and Erdoğan will be selected from various sources (i.e., print resources, Internet resources, magazines, and the social media).
- These statements will then be classified by content with reference to:
 - i) The concepts used in framing the *takfīrī* discourse,
 - ii) The religious references used while forming the *takfīrī* discourse (e.g., Qur’anic verse, *hadith*),
 - iii) Statements linking *takfīr* with practice (e.g., how infidels should be treated) and
- Similarities and differences in the *takfīrī* discourse of violent and non-violent extremists will be identified and interpreted using the above classification.

Outline of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis will present the theological dimension of *takfīr*. To facilitate an understanding of this concept, the chapter will first define the important theological concepts associated with *takfīr*. This will then be followed by a summary of how main Islamic sects, including Salafism, have historically understood this concept.

Chapter Two will handle how *takfīr* has been used as a political discourse. In addition, it will discuss the emergence, causes and effects of *takfīr* in addition to how extremist groups employ it to advance their objectives.

The third chapter will subject the *takfīrī* discourses of violent and non-violent extremists regarding Turkey to a content analysis in the aim to elucidate how the discourse of these two currents overlap and diverge in terms of framing, references and their practical extension. The findings in this chapter will be summarised and discussed in the conclusion.



CHAPTER ONE

TAKFIR AS A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT

Takfīr is commonly translated as excommunication. *Takfīr* is a culture of exclusion, coercion and alienation. This exclusionary culture is a result of a shift that occurred in how *takfīr* was understood. While initially being a theological concept, it eventually morphed into a doctrine with ideological and political ramifications. *Takfīr* means to regard one as infidel and to accuse one of blasphemy (Badar & Nagata, 2017: 1). In other words, *takfīr* is to regard a person or group of people who claim to be Muslim as being outside the fold of Islam based on certain ideas (Dünya, 1992: 46-47). *Takfīr* is a serious matter in Islam because it has serious consequences for both the accuser and the accused (Hannif Hassan, 2017:1).

Takfīr is a historical phenomenon that emerged in Islamic thought especially in the history of *kalām*. The theological and ideological characters of *takfīr* are so complex that they cannot be separated from each other. *Takfīr*, whose starting point was dominated by ideological and political attitudes, transformed into a theological structure to maintain its legitimacy because ideological and political debates acquire their legitimacy primarily from theological sources, and the easiest way to legitimise *takfīr* is with primary Islamic sources (Esen, 2011:102). On the theological base, we see that *takfīr* has a wide range of uses able to address issues pertaining to every dimension of faith.

1.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From a theological standpoint, *takfīr* is a concept whose scope encompasses all aspects of belief. In this section, the theological ground of *takfīr* will be addressed. A number of theologians found it necessary to use this term while constructing a comprehensive conceptual framework. Since this thesis deals with security and since a number of religious terms and concepts are used in the statements analysed, basic terminological information will be provided in order to facilitate readers' comprehension. As such, we will begin by examining how various Islamic schools of

thought have addressed *takfīr*. Considering the central role of *takfīr* in Salafism, we will address, in depth, how the Salafist understanding has shaped and influenced the concept of *takfīr*'s conceptual evolution.

Since Salafist organisations prefer to use religious concepts in an exclusionist manner, divulging how the concepts to be used throughout this thesis are interpreted by organisations like al-Qaeda and DAESH will be useful in gaining a proper understanding the subject. Salafist motivated organisations are not limited solely to al-Qaeda and DAESH; Boko Haram in Central Africa and Al-Shabaab in Somalia are two further important examples of religiously motivated terrorist organisations. However, although these organisations have their own local practices, since they generally act as representatives of al-Qaeda, they will not be subject to a separate evaluation.

1.1.1. Kufr

An excommunicated person or a group is called as a *kāfir*. The word *kufr* / *kefr* derives from the Arabic root *k-f-r* that means covering something, hiding and concealing, closing, coating and darkness (Ibn Manẓūr, 1997: 144). A declaration of *kufr* is a theological ruling implying that a Muslim has become an apostate, that a person is an infidel or that an act or idea constitutes disbelief in Islam (Hannif Hassan, 2017: 1).

Kufr is also used for a person who covers the faith in his heart, for a farmer because he conceals a seed in the soil, for the night that hides everything in its darkness and for the sheath that hides the sword. *Takfīr*, a word derived from the same root, means to 'count as an infidel, to accuse someone with blasphemy' (Ibn Manẓūr, 1997: 145). In Islamic culture, these concepts are generally used in cases of labelling, exclusion and rejection.

1.1.2. Murtad

Murtad (apostate) is the nominal form of the Arabic infinitive *irtidād*, which means to turn back, to request back and to revert to a former state. By connecting the word to its usage in religious texts, Ibn Manẓūr gives it the meaning of apostate, or one who has renounced or left the fold of Islam (Ibn Manẓūr, 1997: 172).

An important point here is the difference between an apostate and an infidel. An infidel has been blasphemous from the beginning and has never formally entered Islam. An apostate, however, is a person who leaves Islam and deviates to that which is invalid after having lived as a Muslim for a period of time (Al-Zuhaylī, 1994: 463). The term apostate is one of the rhetorical devices frequently heard and even used during one's period of ideological radicalisation (Demir, 2017: 13). In general, extremist groups use this concept for ideological and political, as opposed to religious ends, and as a result, this concept frequently appears in publications by al-Qaeda and DAESH.

The person who abandoned Islam was generally considered potentially more dangerous than external enemies because such a person has broken the unity of the in-group (Bauman, 2013: 54-56).

1.1.3. Taghūt

Taghūt, which means a thought, system or ideology that contravenes the limits drawn by Allāh for his servants despite knowing the truth (Qutb, 1991: 465), is mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following verse 'And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allāh and avoid *taghūt*"' (Al-Nahl 36). All systems, thought, institutions and ideologies that do not base their norms and principles on Islamic law fall under the scope of *taghūt* (Qutb, 1991: 466).

In modern times, extremists have extended the use of this concept into a wide political, social, and economic realm. *Taghūt* can thus refer to political systems and actors (Abduh, 1947: 40-41). Since this concept is found in authoritative religious texts, DAESH aims to undermine the legitimacy of secular states in the eyes of

Muslims by associating secularism with *taghūt* and by including it in their discourse as an instrument to legitimise acts of violence.

1.1.4. Jihad

A very serious misconception assuming that *jihad* is synonymous with war prevails in the media and the common psyche. However, when primary Islamic texts are examined, we observe that *jihad* has a myriad of different uses (Maulana, 1992: 1). While its literal meaning is to make every effort to achieve specified goals (Beki, 2017:86), *jihad* is further defined as the physical, material and mental sacrifices one makes in the way of Allāh. Ibn Qayyum (751/1350) includes all forms of material and immaterial struggles that a believer puts himself through in the way of Allāh against enemies, the Satan and his own self (*nafs*), whether they be good acts, words or intentions, to be *jihad* (Karadeniz, 2016: 151). Wars in the name of Allāh are called *jihad* because they involve a struggle against an enemy (Bouti, 1993: 19). However, one who wishes to study *jihad* in Islam must read the verses in which these words appear in the Qur’ān holistically, as *jihad* can be reflected differently into practice as a result of an atomistic reading (DİB, 2018: 2).

From the early periods of Islamic history, a distinction has been made between the great and small *jihad*, which became widespread by *kalām* scholars. Specifically, *jihad* with one’s self is considered more valuable and more difficult than *jihad* with a physical, human enemy (Maulana, 1992: 5-6). Upon his return from the Expedition to Tabuk, the Prophet declared that they had finished the small war and that it was now time for the great *jihad*, to which soldiers asked him what the great *jihad* was; his response was, ‘it is *jihad* with the self’ (Tirmidī, *Jihad*, 2).

There are two principle reasons for regarding the fight against one’s self as being greater than facing one’s enemy on the battlefield, or, to put it in a different way, why struggling against an internal enemy is considered more important than struggling against an external one. The first reason is that people who have succumbed to their own personal caprices have the potential to use whatever opportunity and power they have at the moment against both themselves and the

greater society. The second reason is that in the event of war, a person who has succumbed to his own whims is likely to disregard war ethics (DĪB, 2018: 1-2).

In both cases where self-interest prevails, it is only inevitable that social and human values will be harmed. As such, *hadith* scholars emphasise that one of the reasons why the first Muslims were forbidden from fighting in Mecca during the early years of Islam was so that they could receive a monotheistic education and tame their selves (DĪB, 2018: 5).

Jihad is an important point that should be included under the prophet's life in books of jurisprudence. The reason for this is to determine the modus operandi of that the Prophet during the military expeditions that occurred during his life, as doing so is a means to follow the Prophetic method in both daily and religious life. Accordingly, having a look at the *Sunnah* of the Prophet reveals that *jihad* is not an individual event; it is bound to state permission and approval because the Prophet, as the head of the Madinah state, either personally commanded or appointed a commander to lead the army into battle (Zuhaylī, 1994: 417). Roys defines *jihad* as follows:

The necessity to take action against threatening enemies must be declared only by religious authorities and is never referred to other Muslims: '*jihad*' means combating non-Muslims. Therefore, in its classical interpretation, '*jihad*' has always been associated with the community, it was considered a duty of the state, not of the individual (Mezzetti, 2017: 16).

Al-Ma'idah 38 states 'O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allāh, you adhere heavily to the earth?' The phrase 'when you are told to go forth' emphasises that *jihad* may only be declared by the head of the state. For this reason, participation in *jihad* without the permission of the head of the state is ruled to be religiously reprehensible (*makrūh*). In addition, killing enemy soldiers on the battlefield in self-defence constitutes a legitimate justification is not considered murder. However, the killing of non-combatants is still considered murder during war even if the war itself is fought on legitimate grounds. Islamic law strictly prohibits and takes measures to prevent the killing of non-combatants in a war environment; those whose blood is forbidden to

be shed include children, women and the elderly who have neither directly nor indirectly participated in the war (Al-Zuhaylī, 1994: 417-418).

Similarly, Islamic law strictly forbids the shedding of blood in cases where there is no environment of war, to instil terror or for retribution to petty crimes, especially when done in the name of religion. Indeed, primary religious texts state that there are both worldly and otherworldly punishments for perpetrating such acts. The purpose of *jihad* is to remove *fitnah* and chaos from the Earth and to raise the standard of truth and morality. In Islam, war is not done to seek vengeance, to kill haphazardly, to loot or to oppress but to eradicate oppression. Accordingly, the aim of *jihad* is to save people from tyranny, oppression and violence in addition to providing the necessary environment for the realisation of Islamic moral values (Salmazzem & Bingöl, 2016: 238-240).

Today, it would be no exaggeration to state that *jihad* has become an ideological weapon that serves to legitimise terrorism among Salafist groups. Indeed, *jihad* is used to legitimise, and thereby to persuade target masses to engage in violence and terrorism, the preferred method of these groups. It is important to underline that although some Salafist groups use religious references to present terrorism as *jihad*, other *kalām* schools have vehemently opposed this depiction. With this in mind, the very origin of this problem is entirely related to how Islam is interpreted (Arpacı, 2018: 264-265).

Sayyid Qutb puts a similar point of view forward. Qutb claims that it is necessary to fight against all systems, individuals and societies that impede the invitation to Islam (Qutb, 1991: 350). It is believed that attacks carried out under the name of *jihad* have a radical effect on Muslim identities (Arpacı, 2018: 264).

1.1.5. Martyrdom

A martyr (*shahīd*) is one who gives unequivocal news, who says what he knows, who is ready, and who witnesses an event. In religious terminology, it is the name given to a Muslim who sacrifices his life for the sake of Allāh (Ibn Manzūr, 1997:242).

The Qur'ān states that martyrs do not die spiritually and that they should not be called dead: 'And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allāh as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision' (Al Imran: 169-170-171). For a Muslim to become a martyr, he must engage in *jihad* through ways deemed permissible in Islam. Under Islamic law, acts of terror/violence in which non-combatants and innocent people are harmed are not considered *jihad*. Since in many organisations the process of radicalisation culminates in suicide attacks raising one to the ranks martyrdom, suicide attacks in particular should be examined with this in mind. The religious element is used to legitimise this otherwise heinous act and to motivate other potential acolytes. Interpreting acts of suicide to be a form of martyrdom is a very powerful means of religious legitimisation for those who resort to this action. Using religious rhetoric to explain away the killing of non-combatants during suicide attacks, giving *fatwās* and expressing opinions in this direction serves to legitimise this action and to promote greater societal acceptance (Aydinalp, 2009: 141-142).

1.1.6. Dār al-harb

Dār al-harb literally meaning the house of war refers to lands where Islamic law has not been actualised or where Muslims do not enjoy the freedom to practice their religious obligations such as pray and fasting (Uberman, 2016:16). Islamic jurists and scholars have produced a number of definitions for *dār al-harb*. One group of Islamic scholars, including Imam Abu Hanifa—the founder of the Hanafī School of jurisprudence—states that:

Labelling a territory or a country as *dār al-harb* depends on the safety and religious freedom of Muslims in that place: if Muslims living in a non-Muslim state are not allowed to practice their religion freely and do not enjoy safety in a certain territory, then it is described as *dār al-harb* (Sadek, 2012: 2).

The Egyptian Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qardawi includes non-Muslim countries that attack or colonise Muslim territories as *dār al-harb* (Sadek, 2012: 3). The concept of and discourse on the *Dār al-Islam* constitute an important dialectical

element and it is often found in written and verbal statements of radical organisations.

1.1.7. Fatwā

The word *fatwā* is derived from the word *fatā*, which means brave, young and strong and whose dictionary entry is ‘a powerful answer that explains and reveals the provision of an event and resolves difficulties’ (Eliaçık, 2011: 108). In the field of Islamic law, a *fatwā* is the answer given either verbally or in written by an Islamic scholar to a person’s question on a jurisprudential issue (Bilmen, 1995:246). Both *fatwās* and muftis are important concepts in the field of Islamic law. A scholar with the authority to issue *fatwās* is called a *mufti*. He is a jurist authority who notifies the decision of the law, in or respecting cases submitted to him for the guidance of the Qādī and others in matters relating to the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* (Al-Rashed, 2006: 316). *Fatwās* and muftis play a very significant role in radical groups. As an example, contemporary Salafist movements, and especially al-Qaeda, have referred to the Mardin *Fatwā* by Ibn Taymiyyah to legitimise their actions. At the request of the population of Mardin who were under Mongol rule, Ibn Taymiyyah issued a *fatwā* calling for *jihad* against the Tatars. Asked if it were permissible to fight the Mongols upon the Mongols’ invasion of Mardin, he stated in his *fatwā* that it was permissible for Muslims to fight them against the Mongols’ invasion and persecution (Özel, 2012: 32):

(Ibn Taymiyyah) was asked: Is Mardin a harb/non-Muslim town or an Islamic town. Is it wajib/obligatory for the Muslim residents of Mardin to immigrate to the Islamic lands or not? When immigration is wajib, would the person who did not immigrate be counted as having helped the enemies of the Muslims with his property and his soul and committed a sin? In this case, would anyone accuse him of hypocrisy and insult him with such qualities fall into sin?

Answer: Praise be to Allāh. Whether in Mardin or elsewhere, the attack on the property and lives of Muslims is haram/forbidden. It is haram to help those who do not follow the Islamic Sharia, whether they are the people of Mardin or elsewhere. As for anyone residing there, if he is incapable of fulfilling the requirements of his religion, it is necessary for him to immigrate. Otherwise, it is not wajib but mustahab. It is haram for Muslims to help their enemies with their goods and lives. It is wajib for them to avoid this situation by whichever means, such as by disappearing, eluding and cheating. If it is only possible to avoid this, then immigration becomes taayyun (necessary). It is not halal to insult and accuse them in a general manner. The accusation of hypocrites is true for those who bear the attributes

mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Some people of Mardin or elsewhere are included in this category.

As for whether Mardin is Dar al-Harb or Dar al-Islam, there are two aspects. It is neither Dar al-Islam, which is practiced by the Islamic Ahkam because its army is made up of Muslims, nor Dar al-harb, which is non-Muslim. On the contrary, it constitutes a third category. The Muslims there are treated as they deserve. Those who leave the fold of Islamic Sharia are also to be fought under the terms and conditions they deserve (Özel, 2012: 32).

This *fatwā* by Ibn Taymiyyah has become the mainstay of many radical *takfīrī* movements that succeeded him. Al-Qaeda in particular is known to have used this *fatwā* justify their attacks in many countries. Therefore, a conference was organised by Artuklu University in 2010 during which a study was conducted to interpret this *fatwā* in a peaceful manner. This *fatwā* is used by organisations that adopt Islamic rhetoric to legitimise their bloody actions. With his *fatwā* in the early 1300s, Ibn Taymiyyah called on Muslims to fight non-Muslim administrations using *takfīr* as a weapon (www.mepanews.com, 2010).

1.1.8. Salafism

The concept of Salafism has existed for centuries, and varying doctrinal and dogmatic contributions from different Islamic scholars have produced a myriad of interpretations over time (Mohie-Eldin, 2015: 43). It is, therefore, pertinent to distinguish where this concept traces its roots and who may be called a Salafist. Whereas the word Salaf literally means predecessor, or the one who comes earlier, it is defined in *kalām* literature as scholars who had developed their own methods and techniques and who lived during the early periods of Islam. The word Salafism, which derives from the word Salaf meaning to come first and to stay in the past, actually means people in the past or who have come before them in terms of virtue and science (Kavas, 2014: 39).

There are several uses of this concept in the literature. It is also given as a name to reformist religious thought movements that try to purify Islam from what they consider to be religious innovations (e.g., prayers and practices added to the religion afterward) and represent a return to the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Koçak, 2006:

27). Salafism generally believes that the Qur'ān and *hadith* constitute the ultimate religious authority in Islam as opposed to the subsequent commentaries produced by Islamic scholars that interpret these and other religious texts. Salafism is not a unified movement, and there exists no unique Salafist view (Blanchard, 2008: 2).

It is emphasised that there are serious uncertainty and complexity regarding the period and content with which Salafism is connected. Onat emphasises that it has often been ignored that Salafism is primarily a mentality and has never gained a sectarian identity throughout Islamic history (Onat, 2013: 536).

Syrian *kalām* scholar Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Bouti also stated that Salafism is not a sect and that such an understanding consists of a predication of something that does not exist in history. He thus underlines that Salafism is not a *kalām* or jurisprudential sect that has emerged within the history of Islamic thought but rather that it is an approach and way of thinking observed while interpreting the Qur'ān and extracting legal rulings (Al-Bouti, 1993 223-224).

Today Salafism is considered strict traditionalism, while it is sometimes seen as religious devotion and purification from religious innovations, such as modernism and innovations in jurisprudence. Accordingly, Salafism considers itself to be rebuilding Islam and purifying it from any number of principles subsequently added to religion. Historically, reducing everything pertaining to religious life to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* was considered absolute literalism (Mohie-Eldin, 2015: 49).

This being the case, Salafism considers human behaviour and social life to constitute an indivisible whole within religion. Another admission is that anything added directly or indirectly to the Salafist tradition is seen as a religious innovation. In the same vein, this so-called pure Islam is equated with the first interpretation of religious texts, meaning that according to the Salafist ideology, any successive interpretation is perceived as a betrayal to the authentic meaning of the scriptures and of what Allah has prescribed. Consequently, non-Salafist groups such as the Māturīdī, Shiites and Sufis are considered people of innovation or even infidels who must be informed of their religious deviance, repent and be invited to what they consider authentic Islam (Büyükkara, 2015: 58).

In other words, Salafism can be classified as a counterculture founded on uncompromising, ultra-conservative and fundamentalist religious norms that disavow mainstream modern societies' values, cultures laws and codes of behaviour. Given that the Salafist understanding of Islam claims to be grounded in an absolutely literal reading of religious texts, Salafists have are apt to depict themselves as the custodians of the correct and pure religious norm (Mezzetti, 2017: 16).

In a similar vein, extremists who have adopted a Salafist perspective, by advocating the unity of faith-works, led them to consider themselves to have a strict monopoly over the truth. In short, Salafist groups sought a complete union between works and faith in all political, social, cultural and economic areas of both individual and social life, and when this union was not found, they used the weapon of *takfir* against their unsuspecting foes (Esen, 2011:103).

In this respect, since Salafism is a modern movement with a religious and political foundation, its manifestations differ by region and diverge in which political tactics and strategies they adopt. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Turkey all have very diverse manifestations of Salafism with different network organisations and ideological structures. The basic principle to be considered in this respect is that Salafism is a modern movement with its own unique methodology and that there is no one type of Salafism (Büyükkara, 2015: 63-64).

Salafism has been used to describe political-religious ideological movements emerging during the eighteenth century onwards. Today, many radical groups and terrorist organisations, such as al-Qaeda and DAESH, define themselves as Salafist in ideology and faith. Salafism manifests in a variety of forms, such as Saudi Salafism, *jihadist* Salafism, classical Salafism and radical Salafism (Demir, 2016: 3-4). For example, although classical Salafism's most important advocates resorted 'to a somewhat freewheeling interpretation of the Qur'ān and *Hadith*'; contemporary extremist Salafists advocate the study of sacred texts in a more literal, atomistic and traditional sense (Kepel, 2006: 220).

The academic literature on the topic of violent radicalisation corroborates that it is difficult to identify a specific typical profile of would-be Salafists because of its adoption of different forms. Any theory of radicalisation seeking to explain the

process of religion-referenced radicalisation must take into account these different forms of Salafism. The different forms of Salafism are transitional within themselves, and infighting is witnessed among different Salafist groups. As such, the most appropriate definition to describe organisations identifying themselves as Salafist, such as al-Qaeda and DAESH, is either radical Salafism or *takfīrī* Salafism (Demir, 2016: 3-4).

When Salafism is understood to be a radical version of Islam that has only recently emerged on the scene, then the impression left by Ibn Taymiyyah, by far one of the most influential ideologues of this system of thought, is certainly indisputable. Ibn Taymiyyah took his Salafist approach to a higher level in the face of fundamental branches of Islamic thought, such as *kalām*, Sufism and philosophy, with various analyses and criticism of how they were practiced during his period. His views on life, religion and philosophy have been a constant point of interest both during his own time and after. Ibn Taymiyyah has profoundly influenced the Islamic world of thought and Islamic movements. The greatest reason for this enormous impact is undoubtedly that he was not simply a man of knowledge but a man of action who practiced what he preached despite the hardships and restrictions placed on him. In addition to being from the Hanbali School of jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiyyah is also regarded as a great scholar in the Salafist world. That said, he never considered himself to be absolutely bound to this school often opposed the relied opinion of the Hanbali School because of his own studies (Uludağ, 1986: 7-8).

During a period of political and ideological upheaval in the Islamic world, Ibn Taymiyyah adopted the idea that the sole way to escape this situation was by returning to the creed and lifestyle of the *salaf*. Ibn Taymiyyah considered every method, thought and practice that was introduced later to be a religious innovation since the first three generations of Islamic scholars would openly discuss every issue related to religion. This methodology put forward by Ibn Taymiyyah to understand and practise religion has influenced many groups that came after him and continues to influence modern Salafist creed (Alkan, 2016: 91-92). The above Mardin *fatwā* issued by Ibn Taymiyyah following the Mongol invasion is still used today as a source of reference by many Salafist currents. At the request of the inhabitants of Mardin who had come under Mongol rule, Ibn Taymiyyah issued a *fatwā* calling for

jihad against the Tatars. Asked if it was permissible to fight the Mongols after their invasion of Mardin, he issued the following *fatwā* stating, ‘It is permissible for Muslims to fight against the Mongols’ invasion and persecution’ (Özel, 2012: 32). The religious arguments used by radical Salafist organisations, and especially by al-Qaeda, to legitimise their actions are based in this specific *fatwā*, as it calls for Muslims to fighting against non-Muslim governments.

This *fatwā* issued in the 1300s by Ibn Taymiyyah calling for Muslims to fight non-Muslim administrations has become the mainstay of many radical *takfīr* currents that succeeded him (www.mepanews.com, 2010). Al-Qaeda in particular is known to have referred to this *fatwā* to justify its attacks in many countries. In fact, many extremist groups have used the Mardin *Fatwā* as the grounds to issue their own *fatwās* calling on *jihad* against both Muslim rulers and the elite. As a result, a seminar was organised by Artuklu University in 2010 where a study was conducted to interpret this *fatwā* in a peaceful manner. The Mardin *fatwā* is one of the arguments employed by organisations using Islam to justify their bloodshed. The effective role of *takfīr* in Muslim communities has given rise to an attempt to legitimise a myriad of heterodox doctrines using a variety of different reasons.

1.2. ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF TAKFĪR

Since the conditions that cause *takfīr* are not the same in all sects, analysing *takfīr* by sect is important to gain an understanding of patterns of violence. *Takfīr* is a historical phenomenon that emerged in Islamic thought especially in the history of *kalām*. The theological and ideological characters of *takfīr* are so complex that they cannot be separated from each other. *Takfīr*, whose starting point was dominated by ideological and political attitudes, transformed into a theological structure to maintain its legitimacy because ideological and political debates acquire their legitimacy primarily from theological sources, and the easiest way to legitimise *takfīr* is with primary Islamic sources. On the theological base, we see that *takfīr* has a wide range of uses that addresses issues pertaining to every dimension of faith.

1.2.1. *Takfīr* in the Ash'arī and Māturīdī Schools

Although the concepts of faith and blasphemy are clearly defined in the sacred texts, there is a nuance of complexity as a result of methodological differences. Since the legitimacy of *takfīr* is directly related to the concept of faith, the Ash'arite and Maturidī understanding of faith must first be examined.

In Arabic etymology, faith (*īmān*) means 'to confirm, verify and accept what a person says, to adopt with peace of mind, to trust the other person, to be safe, to believe in the heart and in a way that does not place doubt' (TDV, 2000: 212-214). Ibn Manzūr, also has defined faith as being opposite to *kufīr* and truth that contravenes falsehood. In other words, Ibn Manzūr defined faith based on its root as 'to trust, to be sure, to trust and to affirm/to believe' (Ibn Manzūr, 1997: 107).

Considered as the two main orthodox schools of Sunni creed, the Ash'arite and Māturīdī schools define faith as the affirmation of the heart and the admission of the tongue. The being the case, Abu Hanifa did not include works to be a segment of faith. According to Māturīdī himself, (Māturīdī, 2002: 477) who based his views on those of Abu Hanifa and who delineated his own understanding of faith, a believer is not disqualified from having faith by abandoning required works because they are not a condition of having faith. The Māturīdī School also holds that attesting with the heart alone is enough for one to have faith (Māturīdī, 2002: 496).

When the issues necessitating *takfīr* are considered in the Ash'arī and Māturīdī schools, we see that *takfīr* is not related to works but to belief itself. A declaration of *takfīr* is made for consciously and wilfully rejecting those things that are obligatory to be affirmed in the religion of Islam. Accordingly, the reasons for *takfīr* in these schools are as follows:

- To associate partners with Allāh,
- To worship or pray to anyone other than Allāh,
- To attribute omission, need, cruelty, lack of wisdom, betrayal and/or deceit to Allāh,
- To deny prophethood and to disbelieve in the prophets,
- To disbelieve in the hereafter, the apocalypse, heaven and hell,

- To deny all or part of the Holy Qur’ān,
- To deny beliefs and acts that are definitively known to be a part of religion and
- To consider that which Allāh has forbidden to be permissible and that which Allāh has permitted to be forbidden (Sifil, 2016).

However, according to Islamic law, declaring a person to be a disbeliever is a very serious matter. The issue of *takfīr* pertains both to *kalām* and to jurisprudence. *Kalām* deals with the content of faith and *kufr* whereas jurisprudence deals with the sanctions to be applied in this world to the apostate. The following items should be taken into consideration in any discussion of *takfīr*:

- He who openly professes his faith can never be declared an infidel (Dünya, 1992: 86),
- Ahl al-Qibla can never be declared infidels (Dünya, 1992: 86),
- Disputed matters between scholars do not constitute a valid grounds for *takfīr*,
- One who has adopted false beliefs out of ignorance cannot be declared an infidel (Sifil, 2016: 214) and
- One who is under forced to recant his belief under pain of harm or death cannot be declared an infidel (Al Nahl 16:106).

According to Al-Qardawi (2005: 8), one who is to issue, a *fatwā* on whether a Muslim has indeed apostatised should be well versed in Islamic sciences, sufficiently specialised to distinguish between (i) definitive and ambiguous evidence, (ii) strong and cognate and (iii) possible to interpret figuratively or not. However, the most important thing is that the person be a *mujtahid*, or one who is able to exercise personal jurisprudential discretion.

1.2.2. *Takfīr* in Salafism

There is consensus among Salafist groups regarding what necessitates *takfīr*. Specifically, Salafists, who consider using one’s faculty of reasoning to interpret the

Qur'ān and Sunnah to be a religious 'innovation', base their declaration of *kufr* on verses' apparent meaning. Accordingly, Salafists apply *takfīr* to those who:

-deny any principle of Islam, specifically subjects that are unambiguously stated in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* to constitute a part of the Islam (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005: 525),

-worship the Prophet, a king, a saint, idols, graves, the sun, the moon or anything, as doing so is considered to attribute partners in divinity with Allāh (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005: 357),

- show extreme respect to sheikhs and saints (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005: 357),

-abandon the daily prayers and paying alms.

- adopt a *taghūt* (which is everything that is worshipped besides Allah. This includes removing every (false) god that is worshipped besides Allah, such as a tree, a stone, the sun, the moon, an angel, a human and so on and so forth) system and not to reject infidel society. Since every kind of political system is no more than an idol, it is a necessity of faith to reject it and any other *taghūt* (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005: 358),

- act as a representative in the administrative system of a secular state since both it and its society are part of the *kufr* system (Kocaoğlu, 2017: 338).

One who performs any of the above acts is first invited to repent and if he/she refuses to do so, is killed. Moreover, according to certain extremist Salafist groups like DAESH, it is not required to invite one to repent in the first place (Büyükkara, 2015: 62).

These principles, which were developed by Ibn Taymiyyah, form the fundamental ideologies of modern-day Salafists. Eschewing reasoning over religion, this ideology has expedited the emergence of radical religious understandings (Kocaoğlu, 2017: 340).

CHAPTER TWO

TAKFĪR AS A POLITICAL DISCOURSE

2.1. TAKFĪRĪ MOVEMENTS

Takfīr discourse in the Islamic world has gradually been accompanied by extremist movements. The promotion of *takfīr* is historic, undergoing transfiguration in recent times, but still maintaining a strong link to its origins. Having evolved from being an academic subject discussed on a theological plane, *takfīr* has become a tool to achieve political ends. As a result, *takfīr* has emerged as a weapon used to eliminate the very notion of an opposition in the ruling/opposition relationship. Seeking refuge in the political realm, *takfīr* discourse, by eliminating the possibility of change or development in this field, has caused dogmatism to reign supreme. The theoretic *takfīr* in the field of theology has not remained restricted to this field; it has made its way into the political, social, and legal spheres as well (Esen, 2011:104).

Takfīr takes multiple forms, including the early arguments against Shiites, the Wahhabi conflict with Ottoman Islam, and the Sufis and the Shiites. Ultimately, many modern *jihādists* may also be included in this group as well (Schwartz, 2008). In this process, *takfīr* groups have developed different discourse and have interpreted religious texts using their unique methodology. Therefore, it is important to re-examine the ideology of *jihād*-Salafist groups in terms of their beliefs, understanding of the core Islamic texts, methods of worship and piety.

2.1.1. Classical *Takfīr* Movement

It is already established that *takfīr* is not an act of the contemporary extremist actors, but one that is historic. The exclusivist current that emerged towards individuals deprived of their political, social and economic rights within Islamic culture eventually developed a dogmatic character as a result of various *kalām* and jurisprudential rulings. The theoretic *takfīr* in the field of theology has not remained

restricted to this field; it has made its way into the political, social, and legal spheres as well. One of the most salient examples of this transformation is seen in the political realm.

Extremist groups reject the mere possibility of there being differences in interpretation in religion, claiming themselves to be the sole advocates of religion because they believe themselves to have a monopoly on truth.

Being the first manifestation of this exclusionist attitude and of Islamic fundamentalism, the *Kharijites*, together with displaying a very strict attitude in their religious lives, were the first to engage in sectarian violence in Islamic history (Al-Shammari, 2013:37).

Islamic fundamentalism is a social and ideological movement created by individuals aspiring to change prevailing political and social conditions. In this sense, Islamic fundamentalism is a movement that renounces modernity and that includes technological, political and social domains (Hafez, 2010: 89). The reason for having adopted this *Kharijite* understanding of Islam stems from their extremist approach to everything; there is only one view and one unique way, meaning all other ideologies and works are deemed wrong and sinful. Anyone who makes a mistake in religious life without repenting or seeking forgiveness deviates from the path of Allāh and becomes an infidel, who must be killed (Saleh, 2018: 21).

The first example of religious fanaticism in the history of Islam was the *Kharijites*, who, in the first century of Islamic history, emerged as a political faction with extremist beliefs that they put into practice. The negative image of *takfīr* left in the psyche of Muslims stems from their historical experiences with the *Kharijites*. Emerging after the Battle of Siffin in 657, the *Kharijites* declared the Fourth Caliph Ali and most scholars and government administrators to be infidels, eventually killing the Caliph Ali himself (Büyükkara, 2015: 14).

Though it initially sought purely political ends, this movement shortly began citing Qur'ānic verses or interpretations to verses along the lines that 'none other than Allāh has the right to rule', making them into slogans that they used as tools to legitimise and to galvanise support for themselves. This way the *Kharijites* found

themselves to be the first religion-political faction in Islamic history. Despite remaining a marginal movement during this initial period, their existence has continued under different names and forms nearly every century (Al-Hariri, 2010). Composed mostly of Bedouin Arab tribes who were under the influence of various forms of fanaticism and whose harshness was based on insisting on the apparent meanings of religious texts, the *Kharijites* were unable find a common ground with other similar factions, let alone their opponents, and resorted to *takfīr* against each other.

Using the principle ‘command the good and forbid the evil’ emphasised in Islam, the *Kharijites* would even go so far as to murder Muslims under the name of Islam. They were able to justify their actions by considering themselves to be the only true Muslims and all others to be infidels.

According to the *Kharijites*, faith is a combination of belief and works, or to put it differently, works are a part of faith itself. Those who are lax in their worship or who commit sins have a deficiency in their faith. Since they consider acts of worship and religious rituals to be a part of faith, a Muslim who does not fully perform all required acts of worship has become an apostate. Moreover, *Kharijites* claim that sinful individuals are in fact infidels. Their strict literalist attitude has resulted in extensive factionalisation. The *Kharijites* were the first to have systematically raised the issue of *takfīr* (Abu Zahra, 2006: 74-75), meaning that the radical/ideological actions of violent ideological movements such as Salafism and Wahhabism may be considered as ideological siblings with the *Kharijite* movement.

Considered an extension of this *Kharijite* understanding, the Wahhabi movement has been instrumental in spreading the *takfīrī* approach in the present era. Wahhabism was founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia in the eighteenth century and has held a central position among so-called radical/political Islamist currents that frequently emerge today (Büyükkara, 2016: 60). The Wahhabi movement first emerged seeking to purify Muslim practices and lacks universal recognition as being a distinct Islamic school of thought (Alrebh, 2017: 279).

Since its emergence, the fundamentalist and radical philosophies of Wahhabism have set it on a collision course with other Muslim groups; Wahhabism

opposes many popular Islamic religious practices, such as celebrating the Prophet's birthday, Shiite traditions, and some practices associated with the mystical teachings of Sufism (Blanchard, 2008: 2). The exclusionary attitude adopted by the Wahhabi movement is ideologically based on a religious concept, in this case *takfīr*, because of the need to legitimise an ideological, political or religious view. Accordingly, Alrebh claims that:

The modern position of political organisations rests on the prestige bestowed upon them by a specific belief held by their members in a special consecration, namely, in the 'legitimacy' of the social action prescribed by these organisations (Alrebh, 2017: 283).

The Wahhabis claim that the only way to be a real Muslim is to adopt the true interpretation of Islam. They weaponised *takfīr* and used it against other Muslims. The Wahhabis found ideological and theological legitimacy by basing their exclusionary attitude on religious texts, such as the following *hadith*:

'My *Ummah* will split into 73 sects: one will enter Paradise and 72 will enter Hell'. Someone asked, 'O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), who will they be?' He replied, 'The main body of the Muslims (*al-jamā'ah*)' (Alrebh, 2017: 286).

Considering themselves to be true monotheists (*mūwahhīd*), the Wahhabis employed terms like infidel, *kufr*, *taghūt* and polytheism when describing others. Putting Kharijite principles into practice, Wahhabism gave precedence to observable behaviours over adherence to the accepted belief system. Considering faith and works to be inseparable, Wahhabism sought to impose their fundamentalist ideas through force (Tunç, 2018: 121).

In line with the Kharijite understanding, the Wahhabis also engaged in an armed struggle against the Ottoman state under the pretence of *jihad*. Despite initially being an obscure politic movement in the Hejaz region, Wahhabism eventually began making outward declarations of *takfīr* and became an important threat for the Ottoman Empire. The ideology of is also draws a great deal from a fundamentalist 18th century religious doctrine Wahhabiyya, founded by Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1791) (Badar, 2016: 389). The rhetoric of Wahhabis would eventually find political and religious traction and develop into rebellions that

refused to recognise Ottoman authority in the Hejaz region. Reaching an agreement with the House of Saud, whom they saw to be ideologically close to them, the Wahhabis eventually declared their independence after extensive fighting against the Ottoman Empire to take over the religious administration of Mecca and Medina, otherwise known as the Haramayn (Büyükkara, 2015: 63-65).

The Ottoman state described the Wahhabis as *Kharijites* because they considered members of other religions to be *people of the book* and regarded the Ottomans as polytheists and infidels for their beliefs. This attitude of the Wahhabis towards the Ottoman state is a result of the religious extremism. Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı associated the Wahhabi movement to the Kadızadeli movement emerging in Istanbul during the seventeenth century (Uzunçarşılı, 1982: 608). The Kadızadeli movement bases some of its doctrines on Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573), who was influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah and who gained renown for his catechism written in Turkish. The principle objective of the Kadızadeli movement was to purify Islam from anything they considered to be a deviation from the Qur'ān and Sunnah—and therefore to be a religious innovation—and then to propagate this understanding in every echelon of the government. By forcing them to declare war on a wide number of cultural elements of civilisation, this attitude led them to deviate from their original objective, which then caused them to become a source of serious agitation to greater society (Bilkan, 2005: 122). After Kadızade Mehmed Efendi's death, members of the movement became increasingly aggressive and became accusing members of *tariqas* and those attending Sufi lodges with *kufir* (Bilkan, 2005: 130).

Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, on the other hand, defined Wahhabism as a political *takfirī* movement rather than a theological one. In fact, Cevdet Pasha asserted that Wahhabism was not merely a movement struggling to root out religious innovations but a revolt against the central government basing its legitimacy in *takfir*. More specifically, the Wahhabi movement sought to legitimise the rebellion against authority by accusing many Islamic sciences from Sufism to *kalām* to be religious innovations and *shirk* (Cevdet, 2018: 193). Here, it should be noted that Ibn Taymiyyah and his understanding of *takfir* played a central role in nurturing this attitude of the Wahhabis against the Ottoman Empire. More broadly, however, is that

many extreme groups and scholars throughout history have referred to Ibn Taymiyyah to legitimise their beliefs and actions.

It is interesting that both the Wahhabis, which were a reactionary movement, and the later scholars Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1938/1987) and Muhammad Abduh (1849/1905), who pioneered a reformist movement, were broadly united in exploiting Ibn Taymiyyah. The Muslim Brotherhood, following the death of Hassan al-Banna, in Egypt would also become a supporter of Ibn Taymiyyah. Syed Abul A'la Mawdūdi and Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi both took Ibn Taymiyyah as an example in their ideological and social reform. This way, Ibn Taymiyyah gained prominence in the Salafist world and became the centre of *takfīr* discourse (Esposito, 2003: 64).

2.1.2. Contemporary *Takfīrī* Movements

Modern *takfīrī* movements refer to any group advocating for the return to primary Islamic sources and a strictly literal reading of the Qur'ān and *hadiths*. In fact, these movements are an extension of the *Kharijites*, who were at the centre of a period of religious violence in Islamic history. Referred to as modern *Kharijites* (Esen, 2011) in some circles, religiously-motivated extremist groups seek to provide religious justification to the claim that they are on the Salafist path. Using a Salafist perspective, these groups seek to reconstruct universal Islam, devoid of any social or cultural anchoring in their quest to establish their understanding of a traditional, pure religion (Mezzetti, 2017: 14). Following this methodology, modern extremist movements seek to legitimise their attempts to impose their own understanding of Islam on other groups practicing different, and in their view, invalid understandings of Islam.

Every movement with ideological and political aims is in need of a valid justification instrument. For religious extremist groups, religious texts constitute the basis for legitimising acts of violence. Terminologically legitimisation means legal, suitable with the law, religious and divine order, valid and justified actions and behaviours. (Haldenwang, 2011:1).

Max Weber defines the concept of legitimation as ‘the fact that an order is generally consented to and accepted as binding by its members’. According to Weber, there is a foundation of faith on which legitimisation is based. (Wæraas, 2018: 2). Bernard Lewis addresses legitimisation from a political position of power, stressing that powers have an innate need for psychological authority to ensure obedience to them. This psychological authority is, according to Lewis, the cornerstone of legitimacy, as, through this, one gains social legitimacy. As such, political powers without psychological authority inevitably use violence and force to justify themselves (Lewis, 2017: 50-51). Here it must not be forgotten just how powerful a justification the religion can offer. For instance, in order to perpetuate their own existence and to justify their beliefs and actions in the eyes of the masses, authorities have even used force of law to prove religion (Okumuş, 2003: 464). In the modern period when religion turned into a legitimisation tool in the process of radicalisation, al-Qaeda and DAESH stand out in the spiral of legitimacy and violence with the *takfir* concept it has adopted.

Radical groups that adopt a Salafist understanding are most likely to consider *takfir* as a legitimisation tool. Just as *takfir* has caused grave tragedies throughout Islamic history, it continues to plague the Muslim world today with the rise of such extremist groups as al-Qaeda and DAESH, both of which kill Muslims on a large scale in the name of Allah (Badar & Nagata, 2017: 6). DAESH specifically detailed the scope of *takfir* in its own literature, classifying various categories of Muslims as apostate. Those groups that DAESH deems to be apostate include all groups whose founding principles are based on communism, secularism, nationalism and liberalism; proponents of democracy and those who participate in its process; all governments that do not rule by Islamic law and members of its military, police force, intelligence agencies, executive offices and judiciary apparatuses; and all those who seek to rule using civil laws (Hannif Hassan, 2017: 3).

This process is a result of the faction policy in religion. In this specific vein, religious fanaticism is a leading factor that broadens the scope of *takfir* discourse. Naimi considers religious fanaticism to be the stage following religious dogmatism. Naimi asserts that religious fanaticism, which eventually leads to *takfir*, takes advantage of all forms of violence and coercion to ensure that another individual

believes in the same values he does. Consequently, extremist groups do not refrain from resorting to violence to impose their own ideas and beliefs (Naimi, 2019: 33). While defining religious fanaticism, Hoffer points out that radicalised individuals in extremist groups believe themselves to be the sole faction following the correct interpretation of religious texts (Hoffer, 2019: 97), which naturally leads to their declaration of others as infidels.

2.1.2.1. Leading Ideologists of the Contemporary Takfīrī Approach

Suggesting that social movements cannot be created by the masses, Hafez argues that these movements are formed by elites who build an established identity and represent a specific political attitude. Although the lower and middle classes are generally instrumental in breeding fundamentalism, the current manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism is largely influenced by academics and intellectuals. As such, important figures have been integral in shaping radical groups during the modern period (Hafez, 2010: 90). Leading ideologists such as Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam and al-Maqdisi are of great importance in understanding the ideological framework of radical *takfīrī* formations, which is an advanced dimension of Islamic fundamentalist movements (Antunez, 2017: 13).

Not only is Sayyid Qutb a central name during the transition from political to radical Islam, he has strongly influenced the following generations of Islamic thought. According to Graham E. Fuller, Qutb has played an important role in establishing the modern vision of radical Islam. Influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah, he interpreted the present status quo, creating a shockwave throughout the entire Islamic world (Clarke, 2006: 23). Although some members of al-Qaeda disregard his commentary on the Qur'ān because they consider him not to be a religious scholar, Qutb's influence on radical Islam is constant. In Egypt, Sayyid Qutb is associated with the rise of radical Islam against the moderation of Hassan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood (Esposito, 2003: 76-76).

The social and ideological world of Sayyid Qutb was shaped at the beginning of the 20th century during a period of momentous upheavals affecting both Egypt and world politics (Esposito, 2003: 22). The political developments connected with the

Muslim Brotherhood in addition to the social and economic realities of the period had a strong influence in shaping the thoughts of Sayyid Qutb. He remained in prison for years for his alleged assassination of and attempted coup against Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, during which period his philosophy was solidified by the influence of extremist religious interpretation. In fact, Qutb authored his most significant works, *In the Shade of the Qur'an* and *Signs on the Road*, during his time in prison (Esposito, 2003: 23-24).

Sayyid Qutb's most prominent feature is that he has both directly and indirectly influenced the currents of Islamic thought that emerged after him. Dökmeciyan emphasises that Qutb, in addition to being an intellectual and prolific man, exhibits three important features that continue to affect today's radical movements:

- (i) The role that he played in transforming Islamist ideology into a radical one,
- (ii) The organisational continuity he provided by establishing a link with the Muslim Brotherhood,
- (iii) The challenge that he posed to the state (Dökmeciyan, 2003: 124).

The concept of ignorance of divine guidance (*jāhiliyyah*) (akin to the period in Arabia prior to the revelation of Islam), its relationship with the modern nation-state paradigm, and the concept of *takfīr* that developed in connection with it—ideas that Qutb developed during his period in prison—would become a reference point for radical groups. According to Qutb, if the political system does not allow the Muslims the freedom to implement their ideology, resorting to physical *jihad* becomes a right. This ideology is reflected in the ideology of many modern Islamic groups. In this sense, his death has also been a model for various violent extremist groups (Büyükkara, 2014: 505). While explaining the characteristics of a society, Qutb focused on the concept of sovereignty and defined its limits. According to Qutb, the concept of sovereignty means that Allāh has absolute control in all circumstances and conditions. In this respect, a Muslim society should demonstrate behaviours showing that sovereignty belongs uniquely to Allāh in social and political relations. Accordingly, he divided society into two groups, namely Muslim and ignorant

(*jāhil*). Any administration and system whose legitimacy does not stem from religion is the biggest monumental obstacle to Muslims' acceptance of society, as such society's exhibit elements of *jāhiliyyah* instead of Islam (Qutb, 2011: 22-24).

Qutb detailed the characteristics of *jāhil* societies in his book *Signs on the Road*. In this definition, he included such notions of sovereignty as secular, democratic, socialist and similar administrative systems to fall under *jāhiliyyah*. Although these societies may not deny the rules of religion, they seek to confine religion to the private sphere instead of enforcing the provisions of religion. According to Qutb, such societies have neglected practicing Islam as a full-fledged way of life. Since they do not enforce the laws set out by Allāh when determining the rules that will govern society, they implicitly seek to override Allāh's rule on earth. Asserting that these communities are in a state of *jāhiliyyah* and that the systems they have established are blasphemous (Qutb, 2011: 138-139), Qutb uses Yusuf 40 to provide justification for his assertion:

You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allāh has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allāh. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most people do not know.

An important point to note here is that the *jāhiliyyah* is neither simple ignorance (without knowledge) nor feverishness in Qutb's works. Instead, it is a concept that includes all kinds of man-made systems that point directly to an attitude relevant for regulating life. Human systems and lifestyles that eschew revelation when devising societal rules and laws are referred to as *jāhiliyyah*. In this respect, the concept of *jāhiliyyah* in Qutb is the main reason leading to *takfīr*. According to Qarādawi, the concept of *jāhiliyyah* in Qutb: "the people of *jāhiliyyah*, meaning they are Mushriks and *kuffar*, they do not have any share of Islam, even if they pray, fast, give *zakah*, and make the pilgrimage. It is as if all the Muslims are equivalent to the *Mushriks* of *Makkah* at the time of the sending of Muhammad (as a Messenger)" (Al- Qarādawi, 1990). The obvious use of this concept was to declare secular regime, leader, or any Muslims that opposed the Islamist agenda a *kāfir* thereby justifying assassinations against them (Zenn & Pieri, 2017:288).

Syed Abul A'la Mawdūdi (d. 1979), founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami movement in Pakistan who shared the ideology of Sayyid Qutb, considered any activity that people do by abandoning the rules of Allāh to be a rebellion against His greatness. For example, socialism harms people with its system whereas capitalism subjugates both individuals and societies to imperialist colonialism by subjecting them to the oppression of capital. Mawdūdi claims that all of these measures are to usurp the rule of Allāh and to violate Islam's principle of protecting the dignity of man (Mawdūdi, 1986).

Since Mawdūdi argue that democracy is contrary to the Qur'ān and Sunnah because it places man-made laws above the commands of sharia, Salafist scholars consider the principle of national sovereignty to be *kufur* because it contravenes the fundamental principle of *tawhīd*, which is based on the sovereignty of Allāh. Moreover, according to sharia, the highest source of law is Allah, and people have no authority to make laws contrary to the command of Allah (Yusof & Latiff, 2014: 3). While it is generally accepted in Salafist doctrine that secular and democratic systems of government are blasphemous, there is a difference of opinion when it comes to declaring individuals to be infidels.

One of the concepts referred to by Mawdūdi when trying to construct his philosophical paradigm is that he envisioned for them to lead Muslims into a new awakening is the concept of *jāhiliyyah*. In this manner, *jāhiliyyah* is the exact equivalent of Islam's basic principles and method of life (Mawdūdi, 1986).

Sharing the same ideology as Sayyid Qutb and Mawdūdi, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, took the concept of *jāhiliyyah* one-step forward to form a later stage of Islamic fundamentalism. Born in Palestine, Abdullah Azzam was one of the most important intellectual fathers of global *jihad* (Gerges, 2016: 53). After Israel's invasion of Palestine in 1967, he joined the radical wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and in 1984; he left university and moved to Afghanistan. In addition to influencing many people, especially Osama Bin Laden, with his unrelenting attitude and expertise of religious literature, Azzam played a major role in founding al-Qaeda and in constructing its ideological paradigm and rhetoric (Gerges, 2016: 53).

The reason Azzam's name is mentioned along with al-Qaeda and other religiously motivated acts of violence and terrorism is that was also influenced by the views of Ibn Taymiyyah in addition to Mawdūdi's and Sayyid Qutb's notion of global *jihad*, adding a practical dimension to it (Fishman, 2016: 75). Accordingly, Azzam's lectures, *Under the Shades of At-Tawba I and II*, in which he speaks at length about *jihad*, is the most referred-to book by terrorist organisations seeking religious motives to carry out terrorist activities on a global scale. Azzam developed the concept of *jihad* as used by Sayyid Qutb into a more radical, operative type of fighting. By declaring many leaders in the Middle East to be infidels, for instance, he called on Muslims living in such societies to rise up against their administrations (Fishman, 2016: 96).

When asked whether it was permissible to kill those Muslims who recite the *adhan* and who perform prayers in the centres of non-Islamic ideologies that his followers have attacked, Azzam responded, 'That it is necessary to fight against those Muslims in non-Islamic ideological centres because they are infidels', which reveals his thoughts on the subject. Azzam bases his response on Ibn Taymiyyah's Mardin *Fatwā*, in which he warned Muslims who were hesitant to fight against the Tatars because they were fasting and praying, 'If you see me among them in a state where I find my nose buried in the Holy Qur'ān, kill me too' (Azzam, 1997: 15).

Another instrument that Azzam uses to justify acts of violence is another concept of Ibn Taymiyyah, the concept of *dār al-harb*. This term is a polity whose rulers must be fought until it submits to Islamic rule. The number of Muslims living in the area is inconsequential for Azzam because for him, a polity is in a state of blasphemy unless it is governed by Islamic law (Azzam, 1997).

Azzam has made comments legitimising the violence and terrorist attacks frequently used by al-Qaeda and DAESH as part of their doctrine of *takfir*. Even more shocking is that unlike the vast majority of Islamic scholars, Azzam argues that non-combatants, such as the elderly, clergy, women and children who do not have the ability to fight in a battle environment, can be targeted and killed in the name of religion (Azzam, 1997: 16).

One of the most referenced names by Salafists in modern-day *takfīr* (Büyükkara, 2016: 19), al-Maqdisi, like Azzam, considers Muslim-majority nation-states to be in *dār al-harb* as per his understanding of *takfīr*. In addition to his central role in developing the ideology of al-Qaeda and DAESH, al-Maqdisi has become one of the most pre-eminent names in modern-day *takfīr* by extremist Salafist groups. Al-Maqdisi is very sensitive about the ascendancy of Islamic monotheism (*tawhīd*). Following a strict Salafist line, al-Maqdisi considers democracy to be its own religion, describing it as the ‘*kufr* of the century’. As a logical consequence of this, he further holds that people who voluntarily adopt and use democratic methods have also fallen into *kufr*. Whereas he has indirectly declared those who have participated in democratic elections to be infidels, he has directly declared those who are in administrative or law-enforcement positions to be infidels for having implemented man-made laws instead of those dictated by Allāh (Al-Maqdisi, 2014: 48).

According to al-Maqdisi, fighting against rulers who, because of their actions, have rejected religion and apostatised takes precedence over fighting others because apostasy is more severe than *kufr*. In accordance with Al-Tawbah 123, ‘Fight those near you from among the infidels’, engaging in *jihad* against infidels who are in close geographical proximity takes precedence over fighting those farther away. In fact, even a single person should revolt against them (Fishman, 2016: 24-25).

Takfīr, therefore, is an approach that espouses othering and exclusion and whose origins extend back to the post-prophetic period. Modern manifestations of this approach can be seen in *jihadist* groups like al-Qaeda and DAESH, both of which are considered contemporary *Kharijites*. In conjunction with the rise of *jihadist* groups, there have similarly appeared a network of scholars providing ideological substance to the *jihadist* movement. Influenced more by Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood early on, these scholars adopt a radical Salafist orientation focusing on the more violent aspects of Salafism (Bunzel, 2015).

2.1.2.2. Al-Qaeda

Qaeda is an Arabic word that literally means a base, camp, top, norm, rule, principle, doctrine, formula and method. The term al-Qaeda was first used to

describe a terrorist organisation during the FBI's investigation into the 1998 double bombings targeting U.S. embassies in Africa (Burke, 2004: 10). After being labelled a terrorist organisation, al-Qaeda continued to evolve into a powerful network whose ranks are filled with thousands of educated people and whose leaders reside in every country and continent, waiting to carry out bin Laden's orders to kill and pursue their cause (Burke, 2004).

Fawaz Gerges, however, states that it would be inaccurate to evaluate al-Qaeda as a modern, radical organisation with a penchant for violence. Instead, he has defined al-Qaeda as an ideology rather than an organisation. According to Gerges, al-Qaeda is a projection in the present-day conditions of the well-established Salafist-Wahhabi doctrine of *takfīr*, which legitimises the use of violence and incorporates it into religious life (Gerges, 2016: 53). Defining al-Qaeda in a similar manner with Gerges, Oliver Roy drew attention to the ideological makeup of the organisation:

The success of Osama bin Laden is not to have established a modern and efficient Islamist political organisation, but to have invented a narrative that could allow rebels without a cause to connect with a cause (Roy, 2009: 1).

Considered as the modern manifestation of the *Kharijites* (Alkan, 2016), al-Qaeda has adopted the othering policy with its *takfīrī* approach. As an extremist branch of Salafist Islam known for its selectively literal interpretation of the Qur'ān and *hadith* literature, al-Qaeda unequivocally rejects all types of religious innovations and interpretations as is required of the Salafist perspective (Bartolo, 2012: 2). Al-Qaeda, the modern embodiment of the Salafist-Wahhabi ideology regards *jihad* to be a necessary individual obligation. In the following statement, Bartolo defines the ideology of *takfīr* at it pertains to al-Qaeda:

[Al-Qaeda] see[s] terrorism as a legitimate and necessary means of struggle in a campaign aiming to re-Islamise the Muslim world by toppling local regimes they accuse of having become too secular and too dependent on the West, and, rid Muslim lands of Western influences (Bartolo, 2012: 3).

With the fundamentalist approach it has adopted, al-Qaeda has expanded the scope of *takfīr* and applied its policy of othering to everyone who does not fall in line with this approach.

Despite excommunication being a grave issue, al-Qaeda has taken misused the concept by declaring various categories of Muslims as infidels as enumerated below:

- Muslims who commit sins,
- Rulers who do not rule according to the Quran and Sunnah,
- Muslims who are not members of their group,
- Muslims who refuse to label others extremist groups consider as infidel and
- Muslims who live in *dār al-harb* society and do not migrate (Haniff Hassan, 2017: 4).

Religiously-motivated extremist organisations like al-Qaeda legitimise violence and consider it a sacred action or duty in the face of theological demands and imperatives. Religiously-motivated extremists recognise violence not only morally legitimate but also a necessary means to achieve their goals (Crone, 2016: 588). In this regard, al-Qaeda implements a policy of complete marginalisation against those it deems outside its belief system. A look at the conflicts in the history of Islam reveals that Muslims have been separated into factions, marginalised and even characterised other factions as apostates. Frequently used by al-Qaeda, this concept holds a very integral place within Islamic law and carries with it serious consequences (Göksun & Salihi, 2018: 51).

According to Bernard Lewis, there are two traditions within Muslim societies: moderates and activists. Although both traditions adopt the Qur'ān and *hadith* as the main sources to determine fundamental beliefs, they differ tremendously in their political approach. The moderate tradition has adopted a political approach that aims to use peaceful, as opposed to violent means to gain power. Activist Muslims, on the other hand, base their rebel identity on the Prophet's opposition to the pagan oligarchy of Mecca before becoming the head of state. Prior to the Prophet's emigration from Mecca to Medina, he established the rules of engagement and returned to his native land to establish an Islamic State, where, by doing so, he laid the groundwork for active Muslims to adopt concepts such as opposition and rejection and to establish the paradigm of political revolution (Lewis, 2005).

As seen above, radical groups with religious motives have to employ fundamental religious values to convince the masses to accept the validity of their ideology. Since it is important to that extremist groups legitimise their actions and discourse in order to construct their own identity, they seek recourse to an external dynamic to consolidate their internal dynamics. Extremist groups also take the necessary care to set the stage for their own legitimacy by creating their own set of intellectual concepts and jargon to instil a sense of us. This way, extremist groups determine and indoctrinate the position they are to take against those they consider to be the other (Al-Shammari, 2013).

2.1.2.3. DAESH

The organisation, known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (in Arabic, *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-'Iraq wa-sh-Shām*), used different names throughout its existence (Gerges, 2016: 1). It was first established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi under the name *Jamaat al-Tawhīd al-Jihad*. In October 2004, the name *Tanzīm Al-Jihad fi Bilād al-Rafīdayn* or al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was used (Erdem & Erdem, 2016: 278).

Similar to al-Qaeda, the ideological background of DAESH is radical Salafism with its political basis in the Ba'athist regime implemented in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's rule. Here, Barrett asserts that DAESH devised its own framework by synthesising the basic ideas of Ba'athism with radical Salafist thought (Barrett, 2014: 18).

Since individuals do not adopt the goals or have the determination to commit acts of violence promoted by extremist organisations overnight (Borum, 2003: 9), DAESH's policy of establishing hegemony over the masses using religious discourse resembles that of al-Qaeda. As a radical Islamic organisation, DAESH identifies with *takfīrī*-Salafism for short. The group explicitly adheres to this ideology (Bunzel, 2015: 7). DAESH have resorted to religious texts and enforcement tools to make declarations of *kufr* and to implement rulings of *takfīr* (Badar & Nagata, 2017: 10).

DAESH's approach on *takfīr* is publicly enumerated and classify various categories of Muslims as an infidel; they include;

- Muslims who commit sins,
- All parties based on communism, secularism, nationalism, and liberalism,
- All governments that do not rule by the Shari`ah and members of its military, police officers, intelligence, executive and judiciary apparatuses and
- All those who seek to judge by civil laws (Haniff Hassan, 2017:6).

According to DAESH's narrative, Islamic laws have been destroyed because of the administrative systems in Muslim countries and religious life had been weakened. Therefore, similar to other extremist views, the holy war against the enemy must continue against other states after the task must be initiated against those whom DAESH has declared them as apostates in their territory. As a result of this understanding, DAESH did not respond to Israel's blockade of Gaza in 2013. When criticised for their behaviour, they responded that Israel would be dealt with only after the polytheists and infidels among Muslims had been eliminated and an Islamic State established. According to Büyükkara, this explanation is a sign of the *Kharijite* mentality reflected in DAESH. As a matter of fact, the most important feature of the *Kharijites* was that they constantly targeted and declared Muslim societies to be infidels. Consequently, DAESH believes that internal problems must first be solved. In the hands of DAESH, *takfir*, on the other hand, emerged as the most effective weapon of religious legitimisation. Distinguishing between *us* and *the other* as a tool to convince Muslim societies to partake in the same acts of violence, DAESH declared the places they controlled as *dār al-Islam* and encouraged other Muslims to migrate to this land where 'the provisions of Allāh are applied' (Büyükkara, 2016: 16-18).

CHAPTER THREE

VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT EXTREMIST DISCOURSES

Takfīr is no longer confined to the representation and condemnation of ‘disbelief’, but is an extremely narrow view of the sectarian polemics that simply divide the Islamic world into ‘us’ and ‘them’ and gives the Islamic world, as viewed by those holding such beliefs, the right to fight against those who adhere to a different opinion. (Zenn & Pieri, 2017: 288-289). *Takfīr* is a useful way for extremists to communicate their social resentment, to charge the ideological conflict with fervour, and to add fuel to the existing extremist controversies (Ruthven, 2006). In this context, it can be said that *takfīr* and extremism are two intertwined and complementary concepts.

In the literal sense, extremism in Islam refers to shaping religious beliefs and behaviours based solely on the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* while limiting Islamic thought and making social life difficult in the name of Islam. For the extremist, ‘their beliefs, whether religious or political, are entirely correct and unquestionable, and they believe themselves to have a duty to impose those beliefs on the rest of humanity—if necessary using violence—in order to bring about a more perfect future state’ (Al-Shammari, 2013: 17-18).

Violent and non-violent manifestations of extremism have led to conceptual confusion in understanding religiously-motivated terrorism (Carlos & Moreno, 2017: 6). Extremism is manifested in a myriad of forms, such as violent or non-violent extremism, the latter of which eschews violence. Some researchers regard religious extremism as a uniform phenomenon, so violent and non-violent extremism as the two sides of the same coin (Schmid, 2014: 20).

Religiously-motivated violent extremism adheres to the methodology of fundamentalism and engages in violence or espouses a set of beliefs that explicitly or implicitly advocate for violence to advance those beliefs in the short term (Beutel, 2017: 2). Violent religious extremism prioritises politics and ideology instead of religiosity and good conduct, meaning that it is a marginal attitude concerned with

the political order rather than with faith and seeks to operate as a totalising entity (Bonino, 2018: 48).

Today, violent forms of Islamist extremism is a global phenomenon that is exacerbated by several factors including *takfīr*. The radical attitude espoused by violent extremist groups like al-Qaeda and DAESH is realised not only through armed coercion but also through effective propaganda strategies. *Takfīrī* propaganda is disseminated through social networks, videos and other platforms.

In addition, the regularly used term ‘non-violent extremists’ in the context of Islam which adopt similar methodology with violent extremists is covering members of political Islam, lobby (interest) groups, including some Salafists (Schmid, 2014: 17). They, instead of integrating into their host societies, work towards the establishment of a worldwide Islamic caliphate and *sharia* rule. Although non-violent extremists do not openly advocate violence, they are to varying degrees, extremists when compared to the mainstream of their host society (Schmid, 2014: 2). Non-violent extremists can be found in many Muslim foundations and missionary societies worldwide. The fundamental difference between violent and non-violent extremism rests in the actor’s use of violence to advance an agenda. That is, while non-violent extremists use the pen and the tongue strategically, violent extremists use the gun and the bullet (Schmid, 2014: 17).

Another shared point among non-violent forms of extremism is the belief that the salvation of the Islamic world may only be achieved by returning to the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. In general, their struggle has remained at the theoretical level (Koca, 2015: 18-19). Non-violent extremist views are based on the three general principles below:

- To reduce everything to the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*,
- To accept the belief that if something is not in tradition it is bad and
- To interpret verses based on their apparent meanings and to eschew using one’s faculty of reason to interpret verses (Kocaoğlu, 2017: 336).

The objective sought by extremist groups in using a *takfīrī* discourse is important in understanding the relationship between *takfīr* and extremism. Discourse, which is defined as the expression of emotions, thoughts and ideas to a target audience using language in a systematic structure (Wodak, & Meyer, 2001: 10), emerges as an important source for understanding the ideological and/or political messages of the extremist groups.

In order to understand how different forms of extremism use *takfīr* as a discourse, this chapter will examine the content included in the discourses of violent and non-violent extremist groups towards Turkey and compare them with each other.

3.1. TAKFIR DISCOURSE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISTS

When the written and verbal discourses of violent extremists is analysed, statements incorporating *takfīr* come to the fore. For instance, terms like infidel, apostate, and *taghūt* have become standard vernacular in violent extremist publications. It is also possible to see similar statements in DAESH publications. Counting the occurrences of certain keywords in the first four issues of the *Kostantiniyye* magazine, which is published by DAESH, reveals which concepts are used in association with *takfīr*.

Kostantiniyye has an important place in terms of *takfīr* discourse. The name of the magazine derives from the word used by old Arabs for Istanbul. With this title, DAESH implies its desire to conquer Istanbul, and the reason behind this desire is the *takfīr* doctrine. According to DAESH, because the Ottoman Empire was a heretic state, its conquest of Istanbul was invalid, and thus Istanbul is still under the occupation of infidels (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 56). DAESH has made the *hadith* concerning the conquest of Istanbul their motto. *Kostantiniyye* magazine was published in Turkish only in seven issues. The magazine mostly contains information about the attacks planned by DAESH and there are also articles, news, and interviews with DAESH members.

In every issue of *Kostantiniyye*, references to concepts such as violence, *kufir*, apostate, and *taghūt* are frequently used in relation to Turkey. Table 1 shows how many times such key words are repeated in the first four issues of the magazine.

These words reinforce the extremist ideology that DAESH follows, and support their arguments based on alienation. Frequent emphasis on exclusionary concepts (e.g., infidel and apostate) reflects DAESH's policy of *takfir*, as these concepts are the product of the marginalising attitude shaped around *takfir*. Employing these terms against Turkey was further legitimised by referring to particular Qur'ānic verses and *hadiths*.

Table 3.1: Keywords in *Kostantiniyye*

Keywords	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4
Infidel	29	38	79	25
<i>Kufr</i>	35	38	49	56
Apostate	29	18	12	21
Polytheist	22	35	45	1
<i>Shirk</i>	46	37	37	27
<i>Taghūt</i>	49	36	44	67
Total	242	230	272	229

Source: (ORSAM, 2016:15-16)

The verses and *hadiths* used by violent extremists in their discourse also revolve around the concept of *takfir*. In other words, verses and concepts are used in a complementary manner. In the verses cited by *Kostantiniyye*, a striking, systematic internal consistency is visible (see Table 2). Choices of words are handled in a coherent manner within the scope of causality and reference relationship. First, Al-Ma'idah 44 was used against the Turkish system of government. With this verse, the first stage of the *takfir* was realised and Turkey was declared to be heretic for its secular system. Al-Anfal 39 was used in other articles to legitimise *jihād* against Turkey. Finally, with Al-Tawbah 111, those who fought in line with this ideology were promised the rank of martyr (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 9-10).

Table 3.2: Verses in *Kostantiniyye*

Verses Number	Al-Tawbah 111	Al-Anfal 39	Al-Ma'idah 44	Al-Tawbah 5	Al-Nisa 76
Frequency	5	5	4	3	5

Source: (ORSAM, 2016:15-16. See Appendix for the texts of the verses.)

The title of the fourth issue is ‘You Think Them Together, Whereas Their Hearts are Shattered’ with Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin printed on the cover page. The first article of this issue, titled ‘*Kufr* and Haram in Turkish Schools,’ is placed under a picture of the Turkish flag. The Turkish National Education Law, No. 1739, is addressed under 14 separate subsections and everyone who has accepted this law is declared to be an infidel. The verses cited in this article are Al-Ma'idah 44, 49 and 51, Al-Mujadilah 22, Al-Nisa 51 and Al-Baqarah 165.

Violent extremist groups such as DAESH and al-Qaeda have often referred to Al-Ma'idah 44 when declaring someone to be an infidel and to justify their acts of terrorism (ORSAM, 2016: 16). These verses are taken at their literal, apparent meaning by Salafists in particular.

3.1.1. Reasons for Using *Takfir* against Turkey

3.1.1.1. Secularism

Secularism, or the separation between religion and the state, means that ‘everyone should be free to practice their faith, change it or not have one, according to their conscience’ (Phillips, 2011: 9). Turkey does not have a state religion and does not officially favour any religion over another, and this important principle of the Turkish legal system is stressed in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1982). Secularism is one of the concepts most frequently referred to by violent extremist groups when declaring Turkey to be infidel.

Kostantiniyye, DAESH’s Turkish-language magazine, has maintained that secularism is incompatible with Islam:

The *taghūt* of every century implement their desires by keeping up with contemporary theories to exploit and enslave people. Secularism is a religion, and a Muslim can enter another religion only by abandoning his own religion. Those who have accepted secularism have rejected Islam (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 8).

As in the example above, in mentioning secularism, violent extremist discourse often resorts to the concept of *taghūt*, which is both directly and indirectly associated with secular political regimes. The concept of secularism is the basic feature and the definitive element of *takfīr*. Secularism is the main reason for extremist organisations to dictate their radical views.

The concept of *taghūt* has also been used as an exclusionary term against Turkey's political leaders, including those who are recognised by their piety and religious conservatism:

Every Muslim should know that Necmettin Erbakan and Tayyip Erdoğan are infidels and *taghūts*. Those who vote and support them are also infidels who worship them. And a person cannot be a Muslim without declaring them and those who worship them infidels. Every Muslim must show hatred and anger towards them and show as much hostility to them as he can. They are *taghūts* who see in themselves the property of Allah's dominion, and they transgress by trying to make the servants of Allāh into their servants. (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 5).

Employing words like infidel and *taghūt*, this statement about Erbakan and Erdoğan illustrates the radical Salafist mentality, which considers itself the sole owner of truth and declares all those who do not share the same religious views as infidels. The following passage asserts further that no relationship between secularism and Islam can exist:

Always advocating a secular regime, the infidels have separated religion from the state and have gone against the orders of Allāh. All of these systems are directly opposed to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Do you not have any knowledge of Allāh's verses? (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 5).

This statement further demonstrates that DAESH fully rejects any understanding of Islam other than its own. In fact, Erdoğan and Erbakan in particular are declared infidels for having accepted the secular order despite their Muslim identities being so pronounced. According to DAESH, their claim to being Muslims became invalid upon accepting secularism.

In the same way, the prominent ideologue of Al-Qaeda Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi condemned the Turkish army for being part of a secular system. He described the secular Turkish army as an occupying force in Muslim lands and accused it of *kufr*. He also regarded Erdoğan as the head of the secular system and a supporter of the *taghūt* (Ibn Nabih, 2015). Based on this view, al-Maqdisi claimed that fighting against rulers who have rejected religion and apostatised for their actions took precedence over fighting other states (Fishman, 2016: 24-25).

Abu Haris, one of the representatives of radical Salafists in Turkey, declared in a YouTube video that he would never accept the secular order in Turkey:

I say that those who support this system [i.e., Turkey] are infidels. I am saying that the soldiers of this system will not be martyrs. I am saying that the children and their families educated in the secular system will become apostates. According to [the Qur'ānic verse] Al-Ma'idah 76, 'Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of *taghūt*. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak'. They are supporters of a heretic system (Abu Haris, 2019).

As can be clearly seen from these statements, Abu Haris considers secularism to be a valid reason for *takfīr*. In fact, by doing this, he has further expanded the scope of *takfīr* as, he included in his declaration of *takfīr* the students educated by the secular order and the soldiers fighting for this order. Abu Haris's *takfīr* approach is therefore identical to Qutb's in terms of the sovereignty of the sharia, an approach which can also be regarded as a modern projection of the *Kharijites*.

Sharing the same views as Abu Haris, Abu Hanzala (a representative of DAESH in Turkey) declares the people of Turkey to be infidels with similar statements:

Just like every secular person is a polytheist, every polytheist is secular. Secularism is the separation of religious and state affairs. This means that religion will not interfere with the government and the government will not interfere with the state. Go to whatever infidel you have taken secularism from. This land is the land of Islam; it has just been occupied by infidels (Abu Hanzala: 2018).

Abu Hanzala unequivocally defines secularism as *kufṛ*, declaring government administrators as infidels who have occupied the lands of Muslims. According to

him, restricting religion to specific acts held to be between oneself and Allāh, like prayer, fasting, hajj, alms giving, supplication and remembrance (*dhikr*) and restricting Islam in one's heart, conscience, home and mosque so that it has no application in people's daily lives is equivalent to shredding the very fabric of monotheistic religion and creating an entirely new religion. According to the Qur'ān, Abu Hanzala claims, this type of religion is polytheism and its followers are polytheists.

3.1.1.2. Beliefs and Rituals

Another central argument used by violent extremists in declaring Turkey to be an infidel country is the predominance of Sufi (mystic) traditions. DAESH considers many aspects of Sufism to be *shirk*. DAESH has specifically explained why it declared Turkey to be a land of infidels for the following reasons:

- Asking for help from the Prophet,
- Respecting Sufi sheikhs,
- Going to shrines to pray and
- Showing respect to special days and nights (*Kostantiniyye*, 2015).

DAESH has especially targeted the tradition of mysticism in Turkey, and accused leading Sufis of *kufir*. For DAESH, Islamic rituals must be primarily the performance in accordance with *sharia*. Many, though not all, Sufis share these concerns but are also concerned with the cultivation of spiritual emotions and the development of an experiential relationship with Allah. Many Sufis approach Allah through the intercession of religious leaders and saints. DAESH maintains that nothing should stand between believers and Allah (Woodward & Rohmaniyah, 2013: 60).

DAESH describes the practices conducted by Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs on special days and nights (e.g., Raghā'ib) to be polytheistic ceremonies, claiming that participating in these ceremonies is sufficient for one to be declared as infidel (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016).

In every era, demons try to cause Muslims to deviate from the right way. The best method to do so today is to instil doubt in their hearts. Sufis pervert the right way by stirring the hearts of the people in Turkey. They conduct swearing ceremonies everywhere. These practices deviate from Islam and amount to nothing more than baseless claims made by polytheists (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016:34-35).

Many rituals of Sufism, such as mystical worship and special *dhikr*, are criticised and even considered non-Islamic by Salafists. In fact, Salafists often refer to Sufis as *ahl al-bid'ah*. Forming the basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's thought these ideas constitute the foundation of modern extremism. Similarly, extremists, who consider using one's faculty of reason to interpret the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* to be a religious innovation, base this judgement on the apparent meaning of various Qur'ānic verses.

Abandoning worship is yet another reason for *takfīr*. That there is no distinction between deeds and faith is particularly emphasised in the statements made by members of al-Qaeda. One of the most significant consequences of the notion that there can be no faith without deeds is that a person who abandons acts of worship is deemed an infidel and made into an enemy. Not only are faith and works considered to be an unbreakable whole in the Salafist mentality, works are made into a part of faith itself. Referring to the relatively low percentage of people who perform the five daily prayers in Turkey, Abu Hanzala says the following:

According to a *hadith* stated by the Prophet: The only thing between a person and both *kufīr* and polytheism is abandoning prayer. This means that a person falls into polytheism upon abandoning prayer. Whoever abandons prayer is without a shadow of doubt an infidel. Allāh declares in the Qur'an to pray and not to be polytheists (Al-Rūm 31). As can be seen, the person who does not pray leaves Islam (Abu Hanzala: 2018).

As understood in the statement above, the abandonment of worship automatically results in *takfīr*. This approach shares the same methodology as *Kharijites*, who also accepted prayers as part of the faith. If a person leaves the prayer intentionally or unintentionally, he/she will be declared an infidel.

3.1.1.3. Co-operating with non-Muslims

Another important point used by violent extremist groups is Turkey's co-operation with non-Muslims. Co-operation with non-Muslims is forbidden in the extremist approach whether or not it is done within the framework of Islamic rules.

The third issue of *Kostantiniyye* illustrates this point. The issue is titled 'You Think Them Together Whereas Their Hearts are Shattered', and both Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin are featured on the cover page. By juxtaposing Erdoğan next to Putin in the cover photo, the magazine gives the impression that Erdoğan co-operates with infidels. Inside the issue, the following lines are written:

Whether Jewish or Christian, infidels are partners to one another against Muslims. Co-operation with them for whatever reason is to betray Islam. 'And those who disbelieved are allies of one another. If you do not do so, there will be *fitnah* on earth and great corruption' (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 28-29).

In these sentences, co-operation with a non-Muslim state is entirely opposed. This claim is linked to the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara*. *Al-wala'* means to be friends with believers whereas *al-bara* means to disassociate with polytheists and oppose them (Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu, 2015: 23). In Salafist literature amicability towards believers and hostility towards infidels is presented as a requirement of the *kalimah at-tawhīd*. In other words, any sort of co-operation, whether economic, commercial, political, or cultural, with any non-Muslim country is a sufficient ground to be declared infidel.

After Turkey allowed the US military to use its airbases, DAESH began to target Turkey. *Rumiyah* wrote, 'The Turkish *taghūt* revealed its prepared role by opening his airspace and letting [the enemy] enter the battlefield to fight against the soldiers of the caliphate' (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 2). In this statement, DAESH refers to itself as the caliphate, and since Turkey opened its air space to the American army, it becomes a *taghūt* state. In response to Turkey's political collaboration with the USA, DAESH cited Al-Ma'idah 51, which forbids forming friendships with Jews or Christians, to charge Turkey with allying with infidels. Clearly, DAESH considers all forms of political, economic, cultural, and strategic partnerships to fall into the description of this verse.

Another particularly salient example of this is Abu Hanzala's declaration of Erdoğan and Turkish diplomats as infidels:

You cannot be friends with the Americans because the sharia clearly states that anyone who becomes friends with an American has in fact become an infidel himself. As Allāh has clearly ordered in the Qur'ān, 'Oh believers! Do not take Jews or Christians as your friends' (Abu Hanzala, 2018).

Collaborating in any way, be it in the form of political, diplomatic, or economic partnerships with any non-Muslim state is considered to become friends with infidels. By interpreting Qur'ānic verses following in this manner makes declarations of *takfīr* inevitable.

3.1.1.4. Fighting against 'true Muslims'

DAESH has also targeted Turkey because of its cross-border armed operations in Syria, such as Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch. DAESH claims there to be only one valid ideology and that all other ideologies and actions are deemed wrong and heretic. Anyone standing against the 'true' ideology is therefore declared infidel.

Erdoğan and his vile state attempted to wage war on the Islamic State. Then, as the battle intensified, the Turkish *taghūt* revealed his prepared role and opened his airspace and then let [the enemy] enter the battlefield against the soldiers of the caliphate (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 2).

In this statement, DAESH stated that the 'infidel' Turkish army had attacked the 'caliphate'. Erdoğan is described as a soldier of the *taghūt* while DAESH militants are qualified as representatives of the caliphate. As can be understood, since DAESH claims to represent the caliphate and the caliphate centre to represent *dār al-Islam*, whoever is against the 'Islamic State' and attacked DAESH is declared infidel. This approach is linked to the concept of *dār al-harb* and *dār al-Islam*. *Dār al-harb*, which literally means the house of war, refers to lands where Islamic law is not implemented or where Muslims do not enjoy the freedom to practice their religious obligations like praying and fasting (Uberman, 2016: 16).

Making frequent reference to an Islamic state, DAESH issued another *fatwā* in response to Erdoğan's support to the international coalition against DAESH. This *fatwā* stated, 'The apostate Erdoğan has declared war on the Islamic state by supporting the international coalition under America's leadership' (www.aljazeera.net, 2015).

As shown above, DAESH had denounced Turkey because of its secular regime, Sufi beliefs, and co-operation with Jews and Christians. When Turkey began military operations against on Syrian and Iraqi soil, DAESH reaffirmed that Turkey was an infidel country.

3.1.2. Arguments on How Infidels Should be Treated

As discussed earlier, religiously-motivated violent extremism adheres to the methodology of fundamentalism, and engages in violence or espouses a set of beliefs that explicitly or implicitly advocate for violence to advance those beliefs in the short term (Beutel, 2017: 2). Violent extremist ideology uses *takfīr* as a means to destroy the other. While *takfīr* implies the acts which individuals perform against certain (e.g. religious) principles, violent extremists go further and impose a punishment or pass a verdict on those whose acts or utterances manifest such disbelief (Skelly, 2010).

When the discourses of the violent extremists are examined, the linkage of *takfīr* with violence is evident. As shown below, violent extremists use specific Qur'ānic verses and *hadiths* not only to legitimise the accusations levelled against Turkey but also to order their readers to fight infidels, who are, in this case, Turkish citizens working to maintain the secular regime of Turkey.

In *Kostantiniyye*, when Turkey is declared an infidel state for its secular system, the verse Al-Anfal 39 is used to legitimise *jihad* against Turkey (*Kostantiniyye*, 2017).

Equating secularism with irreligion, DAESH defines the secular system as *taghūt*. Accordingly, DAESH invites its supporters to wage *jihād* against the Turkish government referring to the Qur’ānic verse Al-Nisā 76 (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 66).

Then secular Atatürk came and imposed irreligiousness on the Turkish people. Later, Erdoğan sold Turkey to the crusaders and racists. O, Turkish people, you must rise up and fight against these unbelievers who have taken you from your religion (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016: 65).

Similar statements are encountered in the magazine *Rumiyah*:

O soldiers of the caliphate in Turkey! You must fight the Turkish *taghūt* and his infidel followers because they are the supporters of a secular, infidel system. Attack the police, judges, the military, the scholars and the supporters of the Justice and Development Party. Do not forget to kill the citizens of the crusader nations wherever you find them (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 3).

With this statement, DAESH took *takfīr* from the theological/theoretical realm and moved it into practice. The Turkish army, police and diplomats were directly targeted because of Turkey’s secular regime. After secularism is labelled as an infidel system, Al-Tawbah 5 is employed to call for violence. This verse is further supported by certain verses and *hadiths* to accentuate that this type of violence is legitimate.

The actions taken by DAESH illustrate how they executed the punishment for *takfīr*. Articles published in Issue 13 of *Rumiyah* include attacks on the Turkish police with the following statement: ‘In Turkey, a lion of the Islamic State carried out an attack, stabbing and killing one of the policemen of the *taghūt* Erdoğan’ (*Rumiyah*, 2016: 6). The term infidel was prominently displayed over a picture of Turkish soldiers followed by Al-Baqarah 191 (*Kostantiniyye*, 2016:7). The important issue here is the meaning that DAESH imposes on the concept of *taghūt*; is it being used simply as a theological reference or to describe an enemy that must be fought and destroyed? Indeed, DAESH associates *takfīr* with violence, as this concept is repeated 196 times in the first four issues of *Kostantiniyye* in addition to many references to Ibn Taymiyyah. As can be seen, violent extremist groups decree that a person is to be killed after having been declared as infidel. Qur’ānic verses referenced are employed in this context.

3.2. TAKFIR DISCOURSE OF NON-VIOLENT EXTREMISTS

3.2.1. Reasons for Using *Takfīr* against Turkey

When their discourses regarding Turkey are examined, non-violent extremists' use of *takfīr* is primarily shaped around two theological themes. One of these is that non-violent extremists have adopted a classical Salafist understanding in their criticism of the secular order in Turkey. The other is regarding the religious life-style, belief system, and special Sufi rituals in Turkey.

3.2.1.1. *Secularism*

Secularism is generally a justification for *takfīr* in Salafist schools of thought. Extremists adopting Salafism naturally reject secular regimes. Following the recommendation of secularism made by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his visit to Egypt in 2011, Sheikh Mustafa Al-Adawi, a *hadith* scholar at Al-Azhar University, declared him as infidel. In his condemnation of Erdoğan, Al-Adawi made frequent references to the *taghūt* system and secularism, which is common in extremist discourse.

Erdoğan has embraced secularism and advised it to us ... However, we completely reject systems of *kufīr* like secularism. Erdoğan should have come to a Muslim country with recommendations that are not in opposition to Allah's commands. Unfortunately, however, he came advising secularism. We act only in accordance with the book of Allah. We are commanded never to accept infidel secular models. Unfortunately, the administration of Turkey is trying to persuade people towards this heretic power of secularism (Al-Adawi, 2011).

While referring to Turkey, Al-Adawi used the terms 'secular' and 'infidel country'. During his speech, he referred to Al-Ma'idah 44 several times. The *takfīr* methodology used by extremist groups is applied here in exactly the same manner. Espousing the classical Salafist understanding, Al-Adawi defines secularism as a system of *kufīr*. He vehemently rejects Erdoğan's call for secularism and declares him as infidel for that.

Equating the secular order with the Qur'ānic concept of *taghūt*, Ahmet Kılıçkaya, a representative of the academic Salafist school of thought in Turkey, made the following statement in response to Erdoğan's emphasis on secularism:

In the face of the truths of beliefs, we clearly see that secularism is *taghūtism* and that the secular system is the *taghūt*. The words of the person who says 'this is the public domain, the word of Allah has no authority here' in regard to Allah's dominion are nothing but arrogant, delirious and perverse. This is secularism. If this is the *taghūt*, then what is? A person who calls himself a Muslim has only one opinion toward the *taghūt*, and that's to denounce the *taghūt*, to reject secularism. No way is it to believe in, trust in, and embrace secularism! If the misguided and misleading leaders and so-called scholars did not cover up the *kufr* and *taghūt* nature of secularism and try to make it look pretty, not a single Muslim would accept the secular system. Not one would be secular (Kılıçkaya, 2016).

Explaining why secularism is an infidel regime, Kılıçkaya said:

Every system except sharia serves to *taghūtism* such as secularism and democracy. A person can either become a Muslim or secular, that is, two beliefs cannot coexist. In this context, it is not enough to declare that he is a Muslim, he must deny and fight against *taghūtism*. Rejecting the call to be governed by Allāh's religion, taking the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as one's reference, is a sign of hypocrisy and *kufr*. Even if such an individual outwardly claims to believe in Allāh and His messenger, he is, in reality, a hypocrite (Kılıçkaya, 2016).

As can be seen in the arguments above, since the secular system does not take religion as reference, believers are obligated to denounce and reject the secular system.

Mehmet Emin Akın, a Salafist religious leader in Turkey, adopted the classical Salafist position similar to Kılıçkaya. In one of his speeches, he targeted the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, saying, 'Oh! Apostate, you are using God to deceive people'. He strongly criticised the Turkish society with the expressions below:

The real role of secularism in Islamic countries is to provide a soft and appropriate basis for the transition to Christianity. Do you think the secular regime in Turkey can protect Islam against Christianity? Of course, this will not happen. When joining the European Union, the process of Christianisation will accelerate further. Whoever votes for the infidels and supports the constitution will have left the religion (Akın, 2015).

During his speech, Akın referred to Ibn Taymiyyah and declared the Turkish government to be infidel because of its secular nature. He particularly focused on the concept of secularism and democracy. According to him, supporting the secular system is sufficient for a person to be declared as infidel. In his speech, Akın, similar to violent Salafists, referred to Al-Maida 44 several times. Yet, Akın's criticism remained at the theoretical level and included no incitation or justification to participate in acts of violence.

For some non-violent Salafists, there is a nuance between declaring a system infidel and declaring individuals to be infidels. According to them, living and working in a non-Islamic system does not automatically make individuals infidels. For example, after al-Maqdisi had declared Erdoğan as infidel for his embrace of secularism Moroccan Salafist scholar Hassan Kettani issued the following response (See Appendix II for the original text):

Many jihadists consider Erdoğan and Morsi to be secular as a result of some of their statements. I want to say that secularism will never be my way and that it is a blasphemous system. Yet, I consider Erdoğan a Muslim and it is very difficult for me to declare him as infidel (www.arabi21.com, 2018).

Here, although Kettani regards secularism as *kufir*, he refrains from declaring Erdoğan as infidel. In a similar vein, Abu Said, one of the pioneers of the Salafist movement in Turkey, considers secularism as an entirely separate religion. Yet, while describing democracy and the secular system to be *kufir*, as does classical Salafism, he does not accuse the Turkish people or President Erdoğan of committing *kufir*. In fact, he even supported Erdoğan in Turkish elections because he considered him as the lesser evil (www.sputniknews.com, 2018). That is, although *takfir* is theologically present, certain limitations based on the principle of ignorance preclude its being put into practice.

Another example of this approach is found in that of Haitham al-Haddad, a UK-based Salafist scholar. Al-Haddad discusses the Islamic legitimacy of the leadership of Erdoğan and why he believes Erdoğan to be a modern-day *mujahid*. In this statement, al-Haddad states that the system and individuals should be evaluated separately with regard to issuing *takfir*.

Yes, secularism does not interfere with worshiping. Worship is between you and Allah. However, when it comes to sovereignty, secularism claims that sovereignty does not belong to God. This is clear *kufir*. There is no doubt about that. Because Allah explained this in many verses [cited Al Maida 44]. God's judgment is above everything, even economy, trade, education and all other our transactions are included in this sovereignty. As for Erdoğan, he has exhibited the best example of secularism. Yes, secularism is *kufir*, but Erdoğan is a *mujāhid* who uses this system in the best way possible for the benefit of Muslims. Unless a person denies the judgment of God, we cannot declare him as infidel because Erdoğan was chosen in accordance with sharia. As such, it is haram to declare Erdoğan as infidel (al-Haddad, 2016).

Looking at all these statements, it is clear that non-violent extremism considers secularism to be *kufir* in the same way as violent extremism. However, some non-violent extremists, while declaring systems as infidel, refrain from declaring individuals as such.

3.2.1.2. Beliefs and Rituals

Takfīr is a multi-faceted concept with both theological and ideological dimensions. Extremist groups advocate the unity of faith and deeds, which is a fundamental principle of classical Salafism. Thus, extremists have sought a complete union between deeds and faith in all political, social, cultural and economic areas of both individual and social life. When they are unable to find this union, they employ *takfīr* (Esen, 2011:103).

Question: What is the provision of one not performing basic religious rituals such as prayer and fasting, although the person does not deny Allah?
Answer: According to Ahmed bin Hanbal, he is infidel. Most scholars are afraid in Turkey. They say that if we read the *hadith* stating that whoever abandons the prayer becomes infidels, it would entail condemning all of society to be infidels. You have read this *hadith*. If he is a Muslim, he must perform the prescribed prayers. Otherwise, it means to deny the Qur'ān (Akin: 2014).

The *hadith* in the question above states, 'The covenant between us and them is the prayer (*salah*), so whoever abandons it he has committed disbelief. Therefore, the one who does not pray becomes an infidel' (Tirmidhi: 2621). The main reason for this discussion stems from the classic Salafist approach that considers works to be an integral part of faith. As a result, non-Salafist groups such as the Maturities and Sufis

are considered infidels or people of innovation who need to be invited to religion and repent (Büyükkara, 2015: 58).

An example for those who publicly criticised the religious life-style in Turkey is the Saudi Arabian Salafist scholar Abdullah Muhaysini, who became famous with his speeches where he invited young Muslims, particularly those in Turkey, to Syria for jihad during the civil war there. In one of his videos where he specifically targeted Turkish audience, he criticised not only the religious life-style of Turkey but also Turks themselves for their less-than-strict attitude toward the five daily prayers.

Your link to your Lord is prayer. If you abandon prayer, you'll break this link. Do not forget that the Prophet stated in a *hadith* that the difference between belief and disbelief is prayer. If you abandon just one prayer, your link with Allah will be cut and you will become infidel. I call my brothers in Turkey! You are slacking in your prayer. By abandoning prayer, you are causing yourself to enter into disbelief. O my brothers who have abandoned prayer! Repent and renew your belief. Become the leaders of the Ummah again just as your ancestors the Ottomans were (Muhaysini, 2020).

Muhaysini's statement here reveals that he considers deeds to be an integral part of faith. It is this very understanding that considers acts of worship to be an essential part of faith that finds the religious rituals in Turkey to be inappropriate. Delivering a speech on the religious rituals of the Turkish people, Abdullah Yolcu (founder of *Guraba Yayıncılık*, the first Salafist publisher in Turkey) claimed that performing prayers on special days and nights (e.g., Ragā'ib), visiting tombs and performing special Sufi rituals are all reasons for *takfīr* (Yolcu, 2018). While evaluating the belief system of Turkish people, Yolcu drew the attention of his audience to the following points:

- Abandoning innovation (*bid'ah*),
- Perceiving each added innovation to be a perversion,
- Whoever abandons the prescribed prayers becomes a disbeliever and
- Whoever does not rule in line with the judgment of God is an infidel.

Here, the concept of innovation (*bid'ah*) comes to the fore. The issue of innovation is currently one of the most widely discussed issues in Islamic studies. In Islamic literature, it means for something 'to emerge-appear later, the opposite of the

old, innovation' (Ibn Manzūr, 1997: 75). The concept of innovation is generally described in Islamic terminology as everything (e.g., beliefs, thoughts, and methods behaviours) that has been added after the Prophet Muhammad. The concept of innovation has been perceived differently over time. To consider everything that has emerged later and to devalue the system or the target concept are directly associated with ideological and political concerns. When we look at innovation through the lens of Islamic law, we see that this concept is mostly addressed in jurisprudence, especially with regard to prayer. Over years, the subject of innovation has preoccupied Islamic scholars, resulting in lists of what constitutes an innovation in the field of worship (Çelik, 1997: 134-135).

The *hadith* 'Everything that is concocted in the name of religion is an innovation, every innovation is a perversion and every perversion leads to hell' (Muslim, Jumu'ah: 43; Sunan Abi Dawud, Sunnah: 6) is a fundamental source of the Salafist understanding of innovation. In a video where he addressed President Erdoğan, Abu Said (2018) referred to this *hadith*:

President Erdoğan's main concern is not Islamic law. Updating religion is absolutely unacceptable and a religious innovation. The president must recant, and doing so is a great virtue. The president has no right to interfere in the religious sphere. However, the president can intervene in the event of violence (Abu Said: 2018).

Here, the important point is that this discussion remains at the theological level. Moreover, Abu Said argues that violent groups should not be allowed to thrive.

Founding a monotheist think tank that likens religious rituals in Turkey with the *jāhiliyyah* life-style of Mecca prior to the Prophet's coming, Ali Küçük declared individuals espousing a Sufi life-style to be infidels. He cites the following reasons for targeting Turkish people for *takfīr* in his video discussions:

- Asking for help from the dead,
- Placing intermediaries between oneself and Allāh,
- Performing *dhikr* accompanied by music and
- Giving special importance to specific nights (Küçük: 2012).

Accusing the dominant religion in Turkey not to be aligned with Islam, Ali Küçük states that people who perform these rituals, which he claims to belong to a Sufi life-style, have left Islam. Another reason for his declaration of *takfīr* is that Turkish people follow a Hanafi-Maturidī methodology, as Imam Maturidī considered reason to be a central tool in interpreting the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. This specific issue has led to a large number of disputes between the Islamic schools of thought and has become a justification for *takfīr* in Salafism (Onat & Kutlu, 2018).

3.2.1.3. Co-operating with non-Muslims

Co-operating with non-Muslims in the literal sense is considered an act of religious infidelity by non-violent extremists. Since co-operation with Islamic enemies is considered a major sin and a transgression against religion, those who claim that they work for Islam while simultaneously co-operating with non-Muslims may not be considered as Muslim.

With this approach, an Egyptian Salafist scholar Abu Muhammed declared Erdoğan as infidel for his participation in the Astana peace process. In a Friday sermon, Abu Muhammed stated:

As everyone knows, Erdoğan prays the five daily prayers. However, by collaborating with infidels like Iran and Putin, he has opposed the people of Sham. This is the greatest betrayal to the Islamic *Ummah*. His prayers mean absolutely nothing. Allah commands us not to make friends with Jews or Christians in the Qur’ān (Abu Muhammed: 2017).

Abu Muhammed vehemently criticised Turkey’s diplomatic partnership with non-Muslim countries and her policies regarding Syria, and, as a result, declared Erdoğan as infidel. One more important issue revealed in this statement is that Iran is also declared as an infidel country, as Shiites’ religious views are rejected by Salafists.

According to this understanding, both co-operating with a non-Muslim state and having amicable relations with those who adopt a *taghūt* system are also grounds

for *takfīr*. In this context, Tercanlı, ¹who is Salafist scholar and writer in Turkey, in the article he wrote in 2015 criticized Turkey's economic, diplomatic and regional cooperation with non-Muslims. He even considered these collaborations as a reason for *kufir*:

Not only do the soldiers, police officers and law enforcement members within the *taghūt* army refrain from renouncing and forsaking the *taghūt*, they even take them as their friends. Taking *taghūts* and infidels as one's friends is not only an act that subverts Islam, it also makes the one who does this action an infidel (Tercanlı, 2015).

Believers must not abandon other believers and make friends with infidels. O, believers! Do not abandon the friends of Allah and make friends with His enemies. There's nothing rational about a person loving both Allah and His enemies. Al-Zamakhshari states that believers should be prevented from making friends with infidels because doing so would impede them from living together and engaging in social intercourse in a friendly, familiar manner. There is no place in Allah's religion for those who make friends with infidels (Tercanlı, 2015).

These statements illustrate economic, political and diplomatic co-operation with non-Muslims is considered among the acts that remove a person from the fold of Islam altogether.

3.2.2. Arguments on How Infidels Should be Treated

Al-Adawi's statements regarding Erdoğan are a typical example for a non-violent scholar's advice on what attitude should be adopted towards infidels:

Erdoğan has embraced secularism and advised it to us. If only he had never come to Egypt, as secularism is a system of *kufir*. Egypt is a Muslim country and not a secular state like Turkey. I invite Erdoğan to repent. If he says something useful to us, we will accept it and use it. Nevertheless, we completely reject systems of *kufir* like secularism (Al-Adawi, 2011).

Al-Adawi declared Erdoğan as infidel for being a part of Turkey's secular regime. This is a natural consequence of the Salafist approach. However, even in making such a declaration, he invited Erdoğan to repent as per the verse 'But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed,

¹ See: <https://www.tevhidgercegi.com/author/mahmudebumuaz/>

Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (Al-Tawbah 5). The context in which these verses are used is important in understanding the relationship between *takfīr* and violence from a non-violent standpoint. In his statements regarding Erdoğan, Al-Adawi makes no reference to violence whatsoever.

Similar to Al-Adawi, Eyad Qunaibī, a Jordanian Salafi scholar, referred to the *hadith* in question when he declared the Turkish government infidel. In a sermon, Qunaibī followed the classical Salafist line and criticised the secular system in Turkey:

Economic growth in Turkey is a positive development for the Turkish people. But theologically, these are irrelevant. If the state is governed by a secular regime, economic developments are inconsequential. According to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, secularism is, without a doubt, *kufīr*. First of all, Erdoğan should abandon this idea (Qunaibī, 2011).

What distinguishes his statement, however, is that he deals with the system as opposed to individuals. While appreciating the social and economic developments in Turkey, he emphasises that these are inconsequential for an Islamic system of governance. Criticising the current secular system in Turkey from a theological standpoint, he refrained from inciting killing, fighting or from destruction against Turkey and her people (Qunaibi, 2011).

Qunaibi's statements above are in line with classic *takfīrī* ideology. He referenced the *hadith* 'Allah also strengthens this religion by the hand of the disbelievers' (Bukhari, *Jihad*, 182) when discussing Erdoğan's work. After unequivocally declaring Turkey's secular regime infidel, he read Al-Tawbah 11 and invited Erdoğan to repent. In other words, despite declaring the Turkish political system to be blasphemous, he adopted the same attitude as Al-Adawi and invited Erdoğan to disavow these beliefs. This specific point is essential in flushing out the different nuances among extremist groups, as it represents the general attitude of non-violent extremism.

Shaikh Salih Al-Suhaymi displays an attitude similar to the classical Salafist approach regarding what to do after declaring a person as infidel. In fact, this attitude epitomises the general attitude of the so-called academic Salafist school of thought.

Regarding Turkish people's Sufi life-style, Shaikh Al-Suhaymi declares them infidels while simultaneously inviting them to repent:

Yes, people performing Sufi rituals are deemed polytheists. It is impermissible to eat the meat they slaughter and to marry them. If they're ignorant of the *sharia* rulings concerning this issue, this may keep them from being declared infidels. In fact, they may even be treated as people who came between prophets in the afterlife because they haven't learned sharia. If they repent and renew their faith, they will receive Allāh's mercy. (Al-Suhaymi, 2017).

This declaration illustrates how non-violent extremists approach those they declare to be infidels. A person declared as infidel is invited to repent without any calls for violence against him/her.

CONCLUSION

Takfīr, meaning to regard an individual as an infidel or to accuse one of blasphemy, has developed into its own doctrine over the course of Islamic history for both theological and political reasons. Although originally a theological concept, *takfīr* has morphed into a political concept in the hands of extremists, who have weaponised beliefs, ideas, and ideologies attributed to Islamic sacred texts. As a result, they consider themselves justified in using religion to violate the fundamental Islamic rules of preserving life, intellect, religion, wealth, and lineage.

Takfīrī doctrine has evolved over the course of history and continues to be prominent in Islamist extremism today. The first historical example of this doctrine was the *Kharijites*, who became a matter of security after they began terrorising the inhabitants of Medina in the name of religion. This *takfīr* ideology later re-emerged in the form of Wahhabism during the eighteenth century.

Though the intertwined theological and ideological nature of the *takfīr* complicates the understanding of this concept, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate how *takfīr* is used by extremists and how its use among violent and non-violent extremists overlap and differ. In the analysis, a content analysis was conducted on the statements of the two types of extremists to identify and compare the reasons and justifications within their *takfīr* discourses.

Upon examination of the statements of violent extremists regarding Turkey, including its institutions and leaders, it is observed that they base their *takfīr* discourse on mainly four grounds, namely, (1) secularism, (2) Sufi beliefs and rituals, (3) co-operating with non-Muslims, and (4) fighting against those they consider to be true Muslims (e.g., DAESH). Frequently used words and concepts by violent extremists while discussing Turkey are infidel, *kufr*, *taghūt*, polytheists, apostate, innovation (*bid'ah*), and soldiers of the *taghūt*. The verses frequently referred to by violent extremist groups while discussing Turkey and Erdoğan include Al-Ma'idah 44, 49, and 51, Al-Baqara 165, and Al-Rum 31. In addition, particularly Al-Tawbah 111 and Al-Anfal 39 and Al-Nisa 51 and 76 are emphasized to justify violence against the infidels in the first four editions of *Kostantiniyye*, published by

DAESH.

Non-violent extremists, cite mainly three reasons for declaring Turkey to be an infidel country. These are (1) secularism, (2) Sufi beliefs and rituals, and (3) cooperating with non-Muslims. All these overlap with the reasons and justifications given by violent extremists, however, unlike violent extremists, they do not cite fighting against those they consider to be true Muslims as a reason for *takfīr*. Frequently used expressions by non-violent extremists while discussing Turkey also overlap with those used by violent extremists. These expressions include infidel, *kufr*, *taghūt*, polytheist, apostate, innovation (*bid'ah*) and soldiers of the *taghūt*. The verses that non-violent extremists frequently cite in reference to Turkey are Al-Ma'idah 44, 49 and 51.

Violent and non-violent extremist groups reference common verses in their discourses while declaring Turkey as infidel. In general, both types of extremists show a common attitude toward the secular regime and religious rituals. Especially they use similar verses for the secular regime. This is because both types of extremists adopt the Salafist doctrine, which refers to the early years of Islam to understand how Muslims should practice their religion. Defending the strict implementation of *sharia*, they both reject secularism and democracy as well as any sort of religious innovation (*bid'ah*). Therefore, both violent and non-violent extremists often reference the verses of *surah* Ma'idah.

However, an examination of both groups' discourse reveals that violent extremists consider a slightly greater range of actions and beliefs to fall within the scope of *takfīr*. This difference is also observed in the additional verses used as reference. The larger scope of *takfīr* stems from the claim made by violent extremist groups like DAESH that they have established the true Islamic state, that they are its primary defenders of Islam, and that any attack on them is, in essence, an attack on Islam itself. Using declarations of *takfīr* against other Muslim actors was in fact part of DAESH's propaganda for its caliphate. Declaring Turkey's military operations in Syria as an attack on Islam, DAESH sought to justify its position in the eyes of Muslims and thus receive their support. DAESH The claim that DAESH established the so-called Islamic state naturally broadened the scope and borders of *takfīr*. Since non-violent groups do not make any claims to having established an Islamic state and

they do not adopt the current so-called Islamic State, however, they make no similar declaration of *takfīr* for this reason.

Regarding secular and democratic regimes, violent extremists label all of them as manifestations of the *taghūt* and make no allowances for individuals holding up these systems, meaning that every individual working in the secular and democratic regime regardless of intention is declared infidel. Among non-violent extremists some scholars adopt a similar view while others, while declaring the system as infidel, do not extend this verdict on individuals.

The findings demonstrate that the major difference in the discourse of these two currents does not lie in who they declare to be infidels. Indeed, both violent and non-violent extremists employ similar arguments and cite similar references while declaring Turkey to be an infidel country. The main reason for this large overlap is that the discursive practices of both extremist currents revolve around a Salafist ideology. Many Salafist ideologists agree that being a democratic or secular regime, following a Sufi life-style, and co-operating with non-Muslim countries and organisations are legitimate grounds for *takfīr*. In doing so, both extremist currents interpret religious sources in a way that fits their ideological needs. This attitude is comparable to a *Kharijite* approach, whose members are considered the first representatives of extremism in Islam. At the same time, the *takfīr* discourses of both forms of extremism resemble the ideas of modern ideologues like Mawdūdi, Sayyid Qutb and Abdullah Azzam. Qutb's definition of ignorance is very frequently used to justify *takfīr* in both currents of extremism.

As expected, violent extremists differ from non-violent ones in establishing a connection between religious infidelity and violence. Violent extremists resort to *takfīr* as prior to actually engaging in violence, which, they claim, is the only way to achieve salvation. After declaring someone infidel, violent extremists proceed to cite verses that contain references to violence and killing. After using the verses Al-Ma'idah 44 and 45 to declare both Turkey and its president Erdoğan as infidel, violent extremists seek to legitimize declaring war on infidels by referring to Al-Anfal 39. They also use Al-Tawbah 111 to motivate militants to fight under their ideology and call for violence to enforce their understanding on to people. In non-

violent extremism, however, although the *takfīr* discourse is identical to that of violent extremists, it concludes with an invitation to repentance instead of violence. However, the reason explaining why violence is absent in their discourse is not immediately clear. Do they truly not embrace violence, or are there no appropriate political, economic or social conditions to resort to violence? This can be an interesting research question for further study.

The large overlap between the *takfīr* discourses of these two currents of Islamist extremism indicates that both violent and non-violent extremists claim to possess the sole proprietors of and adherents to absolute truth as if they were the sole defenders of religion and others have been led astray. Since extremists hold the belief that they are the sole representatives of the truth and that other understandings are in falsehood, they see no need to enter into any sort of discussion with others. In extremists' opinion, there are two types of people: friends or enemies. Unless they yield their stance, the 'enemies' deserve, in the eyes of extremists, exile and elimination. *Takfīr* is therefore not a purely theoretical or theological form of the labelling those adopting different beliefs and actions. It is also a political act dividing society into 'them' and us'.

The main conclusion is that the distinction between "non-violent extremists" and "violent extremists" is a false and illusionary one since extremism is inherently violent. Non-violent extremists also divide society by using similar arguments as violent extremists do. Thus, they prepare the religious ground for the justification of violence.

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APPENDICES

Quranic Verses Referred to in *Takfīrī* Discourse

Al-Ma'idah 44: And he who does not judge according to that (law) which Allah has revealed, it is these who are the real disbelievers.

Al –Ma'idah 51: O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

Al-Tawbah 5: “And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

Al-Tawbah 111: Surely Allah has bought from the believers who fight in the Way of Allah, so they kill and are killed, their lives and their property for that they will have Paradise. It is a promise in truth which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in your bargain, which you have made with Him. That is the Supreme Reward

Al Anfal 39: And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah; but if they desist, then surely Allah sees what they do.

Al Nisa 76: Those who believe, they fight in the way of Allah; and those who disbelieve, they fight in the way of the Taghūt (false deities). So fight against the friends of the Shaytan.”

Al Baqarah 165: And of the men there are some who set up equals (idols, partners) with Allah. They love them (what they take for partners, associates) as they love Allah. (Yet) those who are âmenû (who believe) are stronger in love for Allah. If only those who tyrannise could have seen that during the torment, the Power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is Severe in torment (punishment).

Al Roum 31: Turn ye back in repentance to Him, and fear Him: establish regular prayers, and be not ye among those who join gods with Allah,

Yusuf 40: You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.



APPENDIX II

The Declaration of Hassan Kettani:

وقال أبو قتادة في وقت سابق: "فمتابعة الكافرين في دينهم ولو قليلا، ولو لبعض ما في دينهم، هو نقض لأصل الدين، وأردوغان يوافق أهل الإسلام في أمور أكثر من غيره من حكام المسلمين المرتدين ولا شك، لكنه يوافق المشركين في بعض دينهم، فهذا وإن جعله أقل كفرا منهم، لكن لا يخرجهم من دائرة الكفر كما هو حكم الله تعالى".

من جهته، أوضح الداعية السلفي المغربي، الحسن بن علي الكتاني، أن "كثيرا من الجهاديين يؤاخذون أردوغان على تصريحاته بأنه علماني، ونصحه للرئيس المصري محمد مرسي باتخاذ العلمانية منهجا، فيقولون هو شهد على نفسه وأقر بالعلمانية، كذلك فإن حزبه يصرح بأنه ليس حزبا إسلاميا، وليس من مشروعه تطبيق الشريعة الإسلامية".

وأردف قائلا لـ"عربي21": "لكن مؤيدي أردوغان من الإسلاميين يرون غير ذلك، ويرون أن الرجل يعمل ضمن النطاق المتاح له، ويشبهونه بالنجاشي الذي كان مسلما ولم يستطع تطبيق الشريعة، ويحتجون على ذلك بكلام لشيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية في الموضوع ذاته، وأن أردوغان قرب الأتراك للإسلام بشكل كبير"، لافتا إلى أن "التكفير صعب"، وأنه يميل للرأي الأخير.

Source: www.watanserb.com:(2016)

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