

THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIETAL DIMENSIONS OF TAKFIR: AN ANALYSIS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF PROPAGANDA AND HATE SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

Root fracture detection in CBCT images is vital for precise dental treatment planning. This study aims to evaluate the performance of an artificial intelligence (AI)-driven decision-making system utilizing a VGG19-based convolutional neural network (CNN) for automated root fracture identification. A dataset comprising 50 CBCT images was used, split into 25 fractured and 25 non-fractured cases. The model achieved an overall accuracy of 92%, with sensitivity and specificity rates of 90% and 93%, respectively. These results underscore the potential of AI in enhancing diagnostic accuracy, efficiency, and reliability in dental radiology, paving the way for its integration into clinical workflows.

ABSTRACT

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the concept of takfir within the framework of Islamic thought, focusing on its religious, political, and social implications. It investigates the historical foundations of takfir-oriented ideologies, the underlying factors that have facilitated their expansion, their modern-day expressions, and the significant risks they entail. The central aim of this research is to critically examine takfirism through the lens of key propaganda concepts such as —fear appeal and —hate speech, both of which play a pivotal role in influencing public perception. Through this approach, the study aims to reveal the current consequences of takfir-driven ideologies and their potential long-term effects and inherent risks. Importantly, this subject has not been comprehensively studied from this angle, leaving its risks insufficiently explored. Thus, this research aspires to address a critical gap in the scholarly literature.

Methodologically, the study employs data obtained through an extensive literature review, positioning this information within the most rational points of key concepts in communication sciences. Meaningful connections are established among the various elements of the broader picture, enabling a clearer understanding of the existing and potential dangers posed by Takfir-oriented ideologies.

Takfirism refers to the act of declaring an individual or group as disbelievers (kuffār) and expelling them from the fold of Islam. Historically, the Khārijite (Khārijī) movement, considered the root of Takfirism, emerged during the first century of Islam, particularly in the aftermath of the conflict between Caliph ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Mu‘āwiyah, the governor of Damascus. The Khārijites, rejecting the arbitration (taḥkīm) following the Battle of Ṣiffīn as un-Islamic, accused Alī and other Muslims of disbelief and developed their radical doctrine. By focusing solely on specific rulings of Islam and disregarding contextual interpretations, the Khārijites adopted a fragmented and rigid approach to Islamic teachings. Questioning the relationship between deeds (amal) and faith (īmān), they deemed Muslims who committed sins as apostates, legitimizing violence as a means of enforcing their beliefs. This interpretation transformed religion into a tool for violence, resulting in destructive consequences for both individuals and social structures.

The Khārijite movement predominantly attracted individuals from uneducated and rural backgrounds, suggesting that sociocultural deficiencies played a significant role in their radical interpretations. Understanding the Khārijites necessitates a thorough grasp of their social and cultural contexts. They selectively interpreted certain Qur’anic verses in isolation from their

context and resorted to violence against other Muslims who did not adhere to their strict interpretations. This extremist perspective is not merely a historical phenomenon but is also reflected in certain contemporary Salafist groups.

The study highlights the parallels between modern Salafist groups and the Khārijites. Salafist ideology, characterized by rigid literalism in interpreting Islamic rulings, often leads to the marginalization of Muslims with differing views and the proliferation of hate speech. This dynamic fosters divisions and conflicts, particularly within Muslim societies. Takfir-oriented ideologies extend beyond questioning individual faith and declaring apostasy; they also threaten social peace by fostering hate crimes and potentially physical violence. Like the Khārijites, some Salafist groups seek to impose religious rulings as a model for governance, thereby politicizing religious principles.

Conversely, many prominent Islamic scholars, including Imām Abū Ḥanīfa and Imām al-Māturīdī, have firmly argued that deeds are not a component of faith and that sinful individuals do not exit the fold of Islam. The issue of takfir, long debated in the Islamic world, remains a critical problem that requires resolution. However, the majority of Muslim intellectuals maintain that takfirism contradicts the spirit of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad's method of preaching.

The study also investigates Takfirism as a tool of propaganda. From this perspective, takfirism can be defined as a propaganda strategy that employs the —fear appeal technique to intimidate, marginalize, legitimize violence, and disseminate hate speech. This form of propaganda overshadows Islam's peaceful and inclusive message, fueling societal polarization and conflict. Supported by digital communication technologies, takfirī rhetoric manipulates public perception, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood. Such rhetoric contradicts Islam's foundational principles of love, tolerance, and justice, instead promoting a language of hatred and hostility.

By emphasizing the socio-cultural foundations of takfirism, the study underlines that these movements predominantly gain support among impoverished, uneducated, and marginalized communities plagued by injustice. In the absence of justice, love, and peace, hate speech and exclusionary discourse become alluring to disadvantaged and uneducated masses. In this context, it is essential to recognize that takfirism functions as both a form of hate speech and a hate crime with serious theological and legal implications. It is a theological issue and a profound social and legal crisis. Consequently, Takfir-oriented ideologies have never achieved widespread acceptance in the Islamic world, consistently remaining marginal movements. This reality underscores that Islam's core message—rooted in love, justice, and peace—serves as the most powerful barrier against the spread of takfirism.

Keywords: Islam, Takfir, Kharijism, Salafism, Violence, Communication, Propaganda, Hate speech, Hate crime

Introduction

Takfir, an extremely sensitive subject, must be approached with utmost caution. Many Islamic scholars believe that unjust or erroneous declarations of disbelief (takfir) will inevitably return upon the one making the accusation. Therefore, if a declaration of takfir becomes necessary, it is imperative to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of the individual in question, reflect deeply, and take great

care to avoid falling into error. This necessity arises from the severe consequences of takfir in Islam. When a Muslim accuses another Muslim of disbelief, they are effectively claiming that the individual has left the fold of Islam, thereby making their blood and property permissible.

However, both the Qur'an and authentic hadiths emphasize that the life and property of a Muslim are sacred and

inviolable to other Muslims. The words of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on this matter are unequivocal: —A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not betray him,

lie to him, or forsake him. Every Muslim's honor, wealth, and blood are sacred to another Muslim. Piety is here

(pointing to his chest). It is enough evil for a Muslim to look down upon his brother¹ (Tirmidhi, Birr, 18). Based on this, it can be asserted that a Muslim's life is sacred. Unless there is clear evidence from the Book of Allah, no Muslim is permitted to shed another Muslim's blood.

However, personal

interpretation becomes a critical factor here. No individual or group may absolutize their interpretation and declare others who do not follow their views as disbelievers, thereby legitimizing harm against

them. Anyone who engages in such behavior bears a tremendous burden before Allah.

In Islamic intellectual history, Kharijism is regarded as the origin of the takfiri ideology. This movement, known for its radical stances on religious and political matters, emerged in the first century of Islam after a series of tragic events. The earliest representatives of the Kharijites initially supported Caliph Ali following the assassination of Caliph Uthman. However, during the conflict with

Muawiyah, the governor of Damascus, they withdrew their support after condemning the arbitration process as un-Islamic and began declaring both sides as disbelievers. It appears that this process began as a political stance but later evolved into a blend of religious and political ideology.,

Although Kharijism has been relegated to the pages of history, the takfiri interpretation of Islam has occasionally re-emerged from the same roots. It is important to underline that in the modern Islamic world, particularly in the last half-century, the takfiri approach is not exclusive to Salafi groups. This mindset, to varying degrees, has been present across many Islamic communities, from Sufi orders—renowned for their compassionate and inclusive interpretations—to more rigid Salafi structures.

Limiting the takfiri attitude solely to overt declarations makes it harder to comprehend.

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on implicit forms of takfir, which are far more widespread, insidious, and dangerous among Muslims.

Considering the broader historical context, it appears that the socio-cultural environment nurturing takfiri movements has remained largely unchanged. In other words, such movements primarily thrive among impoverished, uneducated, or under-educated segments of society. Where justice and equality are absent, speaking of love, brotherhood, and peace becomes meaningless. In such circumstances,

hate speech may resonate more appealingly with the masses. Thus, the takfiri approach has always found space to exist and grow in various parts of the impoverished and unjust Islamic world. However, despite these conditions, such movements have largely remained marginal and have never reached mass influence. The fundamental reason they remain on the fringes is that collective human instincts generally reject the language of hatred. In a civilized world where love and respect are upheld, and rational, sophisticated methods of persuasion gain more acceptance, it is unsurprising that an ideology based on radical, mechanical, and destructive hate speech has struggled to gain mass support.

This multidisciplinary study, blending communication sciences with theology, has been conducted through a literature review. Its objective is to analyze the takfiri approach through the lens of Islam's original sacred texts and the general views of Islamic scholars. Additionally, the study aims to form a comprehensive intellectual perspective by exploring critical concepts from communication studies,

such as —propaganda,² —perception management,³ —hate speech,⁴ and —hate crimes.⁵

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, questioning belief systems and declaring individuals or groups as outside the fold of Islam has been a deep-rooted and controversial issue. In this context, the concept of takfir refers to declaring a Muslim a disbeliever due to their beliefs or

actions. Takfir is not merely an individual accusation but a serious phenomenon with far-reaching social and political consequences. Historically, various Islamic movements and groups have employed takfir, especially during periods when radical religious ideologies were widespread.

The central aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of takfir within the frameworks of propaganda and hate speech by analyzing its historical origins and its impacts on contemporary societies. Through an extensive literature review, the study primarily explores the theological, historical, and sociological dimensions of takfir, focusing on movements like Kharijism and Salafism.

While the Kharijites radically implemented the concept of takfir in early Islamic history, various extremist groups—especially Salafi factions—continue to use takfiri rhetoric today. However, the examination of takfir as a propaganda tool and a form of hate speech remains underexplored in the literature.

This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how takfir functions as an instrument of propaganda and hate speech, tracing its historical development and contemporary manifestations. The primary goal

is to reveal how takfir is intertwined with fear appeals and hate speech techniques and to demonstrate its detrimental effects on social order and peace. Analyzing takfir through the frameworks of propaganda and hate speech is essential to understanding its profound impact on social structures. This study particularly focuses on concepts such as fear appeals and how takfir is legitimized through these tactics, supplemented by case studies and contemporary examples to assess its societal consequences.

The findings reveal that when takfir is used as a tool for propaganda and hate speech, it poses a severe threat to social peace. Takfiri discourse deepens social polarization and incites violence and hate crimes, leading to severe legal and social repercussions. Therefore, comprehensive measures in

education, media, and legal frameworks are necessary to prevent the misuse of religious rhetoric for hate speech and propaganda. The principles of justice, equality, love, peace, and tolerance—core

elements of the Prophet Muhammad's life and teachings—should be emphasized more effectively, especially on social media, to raise awareness about the importance of social harmony and peace.

In this respect, the study offers a significant and original contribution to both Islamic thought and communication sciences by comprehensively analyzing the theological, sociological, and communicative dimensions of takfir, highlighting that it is not only a religious issue but also a hate speech phenomenon that threatens social cohesion.

1. The Concept of “Takfir”

Takfir is a religious term signifying the act of attributing kufr (heresy) to an individual or group based on a particular statement, action, or belief. When done carelessly, arbitrarily, or capriciously—beyond what the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the Muslim community (ijmā') require—takfir can function as a form of oppression or a weapon. This tendency is often called —takfirism‖ (Büyükkara, 2016: 13).

The appropriate stance is to refrain entirely from calling anyone a kāfir (disbeliever), as such a label constitutes a form of emotional violence inconsistent with both Islam and the way of life exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. This is a problem; yet an even greater problem is the widespread

occurrence of takfir among Muslims themselves. Despite an individual openly declaring his or her faith, it has become relatively common to accuse that person of being —irreligious‖ or —a kāfir‖ merely because of certain interpretations of Islam, sins committed, or specific statements made.

Often equated with Muslims in the —Salafist‖ vein, takfīr involves labeling another as a disbeliever. The Arabic root of kufr is —kafara,‖ meaning —to cover,‖ —to hide,‖ or —to be ungrateful.‖ Similarly, takfīr in its technical sense entails associating someone with unbelief (Ibn Manzūr, 1997: 118–123). From a sociological perspective, takfīrī ideology can be defined as a religious counterculture and an attempt to construct an alternative Islamic identity against traditional mainstream interpretations of the faith (Aydınalp, 2015: 162). The main issue with takfīrī ideology is that it regards outward deeds (‘amal) as an integral component of faith (īmān). By contrast, in general terms, Ahl al-Sunnah—especially the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī lineage—has historically exhibited a more understanding and tolerant position aligned with the spirit of the Qur‘an and Sunnah, opposing the Kharijites‘ expansion of takfīr discourse (focused on —grave sins‖) by placing extreme emphasis on deeds. This tolerant and inclusive perspective has made takfīr more difficult, compelling individuals to adopt caution in assessing statements and actions through faith and unbelief. A key point is that the traditional approach to al-fāz al-kufr (expressions of unbelief) is predominantly legal (fiqhī) in character. However, modern social realities are significantly more complex, occasionally requiring flexibility beyond even that found in Māturīdī fiqh. In Christianity, excommunication lies within the authority of the Church; however, within the Islamic world, it functions as a widespread mechanism of —othering‖ that can be wielded at will by virtually anyone. Indeed, many Muslims—explicitly or implicitly—declare those who do not think or live like them to be unbelievers. By all appearances, the practice of takfīr (declaring someone an unbeliever) has become extremely prevalent across the Islamic world. In Christian history and theology, the counterpart to —excommunication‖ in Islam is takfīr. In Christianity, excommunication falls under the authority of the Church, whereas in Muslim society, takfīr has become a convenient instrument by which many Muslims arbitrarily label or ostracize other Muslims whose views or lifestyles they deem incompatible with their own. Even more striking is the prevalence of both explicit and covert takfīr within the Islamic world. Within Islamic communities, takfirism manifests in two principal forms: explicit takfīr and covert takfīr.

1.1. Explicit Takfīr

Explicit Open takfīr refers to labeling or accusing groups and large segments of society outside one’s circle of being —kāfir‖ (unbelievers), solely because they do not share the same beliefs. At the core of the takfīrī mindset lies the claim of having discovered the single, absolute, and correct path, accompanied by the conviction that other groups‘ perception of Islam contradicts the Qur‘an. A closer look suggests that the sharp rift between the takfīrīs and —the others‖ begins with—and centers around—the notion that —an Islamic state must be established based on a strict demarcation between God’s rulings and human rulings.‖ It appears that radical and Salafī groups, who believe public administration must be defined and governed by the fundamental principles outlined in the Qur‘an and Sunnah, feel quite at ease in excommunicating anyone who does not accept—or only partially accepts—this view. It is well-known that takfīrī groups, present in almost all Muslim countries today, regard all other Muslims as having —left the faith‖ and, consequently, label them as —murtad‖ (apostates) who must be killed. The principal issue with takfīrī groups is their tendency to brand as —kāfir‖ anyone who does not interpret the divine message of the Qur‘an exactly as they do, as well as anyone who continues sinning despite professing faith. Consequently, they universalize the jihād (war) verses—which

were revealed for wartime circumstances—applying them to all periods and locales. In their view, given current world conditions, the jihād verses in the Qur‘an encompass every era and setting. Because they believe everyone outside their ranks is —kāfir,|| they see the entire world as a Dār al-Ḥarb (abode of war). In

Islamic literature, this term designates a —battlefield|| or —war zone.|| Once a region is deemed Dār al- Ḥarb, the normal legal system is annulled and the laws of warfare take effect.

From takfīr statements, it is clear they believe themselves to be perpetually under the laws of war. For this reason, they consider anyone not aligned with them—including Muslims—as —enemy

combatants,|| making it permissible, in their view, to capture or kill them, seize their property, enslave their sons, take their wives as concubines, and buy and sell them in the marketplace.

According to their interpretation of Islam, these acts present no theoretical problem—provided the circumstances allow

them that opportunity. Even more troubling is how such a perspective pushes ethical considerations into the background. Deceptions, lies, profanities, insults, incitements, and the full force of hateful

rhetoric may appear to ordinary people as extreme measures valid only under extraordinary conditions, yet for takfīrs, they constitute the normal routine. This is not a transient situation for them, but an

integral element of life.

In global practice, war often renders many actions permissible, but takfīr thinking treats this both as a theoretical command and a practical necessity. It is even more troubling that they frequently cite the

hadith —War is deception|| as justification for their brutal mind and actions because this statement emphasizes the strategic dimension of warfare rather than a legitimization of fraud, duplicity, falsehood, slander, or immorality. In other words, strategic mind games are very important in warfare.

Indeed, the Prophet Muḥammad never opted for war unless he had no other choice; and even when compelled to fight, he consistently upheld principles of justice and ethics. He did not permit harm to befall the elderly, women, children, or non-combatant civilians, and he would even grant amnesty to his fiercest enemies when they were taken captive. Thus, both in word and deed, he was the first to introduce a code of —war ethics|| to the battlefield, marking a pivotal moment in history.

1.2. Implicit Takfīr

Implicit takfir is characterized by indirect speech, actions, insinuations, and assumptions that suggest individuals, groups, or masses who do not share the same beliefs or perspectives are in disbelief (*kufr*). As a more insidious and perilous form of excommunication, implicit takfir reveals profound signs of a significant disconnect between the conscious and subconscious realms of devout individuals who

belong to specific religious groups and possess a relatively higher level of spiritual knowledge.

Many who engage in implicit takfīr (excommunication) theoretically uphold the belief that anyone who affirms tawḥīd (the oneness of God) is a Muslim and will eventually attain Paradise.

However, they

simultaneously harbor strong misconceptions about those who do not understand or practice Islam

exactly as they do. These misconceptions include the belief that such individuals have left the fold of Islam, are distanced from God’s mercy, are subject to His wrath, will be denied entry to Paradise, and are destined for punishment in Hellfire. At the very least, there is a pervasive notion that they are not

—true Muslims.|| In this context, it must be emphasized that implicit takfīr is far more prevalent than explicit takfir. Alarming, even within Sufi communities—known for their compassionate

and inclusive interpretation of Islam—words and actions that could be regarded as implicit takfir are widespread. Indeed, a careful observer will notice that particularly in Türkiye over the past twenty years, the differences between Salafi groups—traditionally considered ideological opposites—and Sufi communities have gradually faded. These two groups have increasingly converged in both appearance and mindset, becoming significantly similar to one another. This convergence not only challenges long-standing assumptions about their oppositional identities but also highlights the subtle yet pervasive nature of implicit takfir across diverse Islamic groups. The primary distinction between explicit and covert takfir is that in explicit takfir, the intention behind declaring unbelief is openly verbalized, whereas in covert takfir, the accusations are voiced indirectly, through insinuation, sarcasm, and subtlety. The second difference is that covert takfir is more prevalent. Technically and substantively, there is no fundamental discrepancy between the two forms of takfir. Put succinctly, takfir is not necessarily a textual or verbal attack; it often manifests as emotional violence conveyed through gestures, facial expressions, or insinuations. Nevertheless, both forms of takfir share a common feature: both can rapidly escalate into physical violence and coercion.

2. The emergence and development of takfirism and its distance from the teachings of the Quran

The problematic dimension of the takfirī approach fundamentally derives from the historical experiences of Kharijism. Following the Battle of Şiffin in 657, the Kharijites, who regarded deeds as an indispensable part of faith, accused numerous officials and scholars—including ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib— of unbelief. Subsequently, on similar grounds, they declared ‘Alī to be an apostate (murtad) and assassinated him (Bulut, 2009: 46-49), igniting centuries of civil strife, discord, chaos, and anarchy. A closer look at the Kharijite profile reveals that they were uncultured and ignorant Bedouins, lacking the capacity for nuanced reflection. According to Ibn Ḥazm, the Kharijites’ proclivity for labeling other Muslims unbelievers stemmed from their ignorance (cited by Maarooḥ Al-Huseeini, 2016: 59). Despite being Arabs, they had little grasp of the Sunnah of the Prophet. The pivotal incident that gave rise to their takfirī stance was the Kharijites’ denunciation of the arbitration committee—appointed to resolve the conflict between the warring parties—as shirk (polytheism) and kufr (unbelief). In their view, only God had the authority to legislate, and attributing such legislative authority to humans was tantamount to shirk and kufr. Citing the Qur’anic verse —Judgment belongs only to Allah,|| they deemed even minor sins sufficient to place people under the sway of ṭāghūt (satanic oppression), thereby rendering them disbelievers. Mostly from sparsely populated rural areas and deserts, the Kharijites lacked a comprehensive understanding of the teachings of the Qur’an. Their deep religiosity—evidenced by copious Qur’an recitation, abundant prayer, and frequent fasting—did not shield them from grave errors in interpretation. Historical evidence shows that their piety did not vindicate them, nor did it absolve the crimes and atrocities they committed; ultimately, they were recorded in history with a profoundly negative legacy. They advocated that al-amr bi-l-ma’rūf (enjoining the good) ought to be conducted —by the hand,|| that is, through physical intervention, which they used to justify brutally persecuting other Muslims they had declared unbelievers, deeming their blood, property, and dignity as lawful

spoils in the name of

—fighting in the path of Allah (jihād). Convinced of the absolute righteousness of their cause, they were consumed by fanaticism and were nearly impossible to dissuade. Moreover, the Kharijites

excelled in demagoguery: they formulated robust theological arguments based on select verses and hadiths, thereby attracting fervent followers from among those with a superficial or incomplete understanding of Islam.

According to their worldview, only those who shared their beliefs were legitimate, while all —others— were collectively excluded. More alarming was that among these —others— were also Muslims who did not share the same beliefs or modes of worship. Essentially, the Kharijites saw themselves as true

believers and everyone else as outright disbelievers. Another one of their hallmark traits was targeting primarily Muslims rather than engaging with actual disbelievers. Their rationale was that Muslims first needed to address internal deficiencies before being of any benefit to non-Muslims. Thus, takfīr

emerged as their most potent tool.

Historical accounts indicate that they labeled the territories they controlled as Dār al-Salām, zones where God's ordinances prevailed while branding all other lands as Dār al-Ḥarb (regions under non-Islamic governance). Consequently, populations in the other areas became targets for Kharijite terror (Yıldız and Demircan, cited by Büyükkara, 2016: 14-16).

Many scholars draw comparisons between the Khārijites of 'Alī's era and certain contemporary Salafī groups that are sometimes labeled —modern Khārijites. As briefly noted above, the earliest Khārijites did not possess profound knowledge or understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Their focus on a select few Qur'anic verses and their literal meanings caused them to fixate excessively on those

points, leading to an overtly superficial—indeed, ignorant and coarse—approach to comprehending, interpreting, and assessing the totality of Islamic teachings. They had cultivated a literalist and fragmented hermeneutic of the Holy Book, assigning inordinate weight to the outward wording of verses while disregarding the broader contextual framework of divine revelation. Their perspective faintly resembles today's slogan, —The Qur'an alone suffices, insofar as they placed extreme

emphasis on a literal reading of the text, to the detriment of understanding its deeper significance. In short, rather than engaging with the spirit and substance of the Qur'an, they occupied themselves with its literal dimension, highlighting the most immediate connotations of a handful of verses while

neglecting both the overall context and the deeper essence of divine teaching. Consequently, the interpretation of Islam they arrived at stood in stark contrast to the religion's spirit and its inherent

coherence. As a result, they harbored animosity toward all Muslims who did not mirror their views, categorically declaring them apostates. Ibn Ḥazm notes that even though the early Khārijites were

Arabs, their ignorance, intellectual shallowness, and boorish manners severely hindered their grasp of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. Nevertheless, they were utterly convinced that they understood and mastered the Qur'an better than anyone else. They harbored no doubt about the correctness of

their path. This state of affairs is highly instructive in showing the —magical power— of propaganda and perception management, which can render black white, and white black.

Propaganda and perception management—forms of collective —sorcery— as old as human history—owe their very existence to

deceit; if falsehood had never arisen, these social mechanisms that lure people toward damnation under the illusion of joyous salvation could never have been engineered.

There is considerable discussion regarding similarities between the Khārijites of the time of ‘Alī and certain contemporary Salafī groups sometimes termed —modern Khārijites.¶ As briefly noted above, the early Khārijites did not possess substantial expertise in or deep comprehension of the Qur‘an and the Prophetic Sunnah. Their fixation on the literal (zāhir) meanings of a limited set of Qur‘anic verses led them to overemphasize those specific points, resulting in a markedly superficial—or more precisely, ignorant and coarse—approach to understanding, interpreting, and evaluating the totality of Islamic teachings. They adopted a literalist and fragmented hermeneutic of the sacred text, assigning considerable importance to the outward wording of verses, all the while neglecting the broader context of divine revelation. In a manner somewhat reminiscent of the notion that —The Qur‘an alone suffices,¶ periodically voiced in our time, these early Khārijites elevated a literal reading over deeper content. In sum, they focused on the Qur‘an’s wording rather than its spirit and overall meaning, centering their attention on a small number of verses—indeed, their immediate connotations—while ignoring the overarching spirit and context of divine guidance, thus formulating an interpretation contrary to the holistic essence of Islam. This explains why they harbored animosity toward all other Muslims who differed from them, indiscriminately declaring such individuals unbelievers (takfir). Ibn Ḥazm notes that even though these Khārijites were Arabs, their ignorance, shallowness, and crudeness prevented them from truly understanding the Qur‘an and the Sunnah. Yet they believed with absolute certainty that they grasped the Qur‘an more thoroughly than anyone else, and they entertained no doubts about the rightness of their path. This phenomenon underscores the —magical power¶ of propaganda and perception management, mechanisms that can present black as white and white as black. As forms of collective —sorcery,¶ propaganda and perception management are as ancient as human history. It must be added, however, that had falsehood itself never existed, such social manipulation—driving people toward Hellfire under the pretense of joyous entry into Paradise—could never have been devised. When one looks to the present day, it is striking how much the worldview and understanding of modern Khārijites resemble that of their predecessors. Contemporary adherents similarly assert that governments and officials who do not rule by Allah’s laws are unbelievers (kāfir), evildoers (fāsiq), and oppressors (zālim). They pronounce working in state institutions, receiving an education in state schools, paying taxes, engaging in any form of collaboration or employment with the state, and even voting, to be acts of unbelief (kufr). Uncompromisingly and severely, they insist that so-called systems of unbelief and —ṭāghūt¶ must be overthrown and that withdrawing from existing structures is a necessary precondition. By persuading their followers that they alone constitute the community firmly bound to tawḥīd, they alienate them from broader Muslim society and its scholars, even distancing them from their parents and siblings. Given their simplistic, mechanical mode of reasoning—coupled with an ideological dependence that leads them to equate such narrow- minded logic with genuine knowledge—it becomes easier to appreciate their aptitude for rapidly classifying people into —truly monotheistic (tawḥīdī) Muslims¶ and —unbelievers and ṭāghūt.¶ This probably explains why many scholars and writers in the Islamic world have referred to the Khārijite movement as the first terrorist organization in the history of Islam (Cirhinlioğlu and Bulut, 2014: 303- 307). At this point, it may be worthwhile to delve more fully into how a —piecemeal reading¶ of the sacred text can be misleading. When one reads an entire anthology of essays spanning a variety of subjects, one gains a general understanding of the author’s mindset, character, emotions,

thought

process, and personal preferences. Consequently, one acquires two key capacities: first, to offer sound analyses and judgments regarding the author's personality and the substance of the work, and second, to form well-grounded views on topics that the text itself does not explicitly address, based on one's understanding of the author's nature and philosophical outlook. If one is thoroughly familiar with the writer's personality and worldview, one is also able to evaluate whether criticisms leveled against

them align with the writer's fundamental perspective. When revisiting any section of the book, a reader equipped with such comprehensive insight interprets that part in light of the work's overall framework, thus arriving at a more accurate assessment. By contrast, it is impossible to make the same claim for a person who has read only two chapters of a book containing dozens of distinct themes.

Having only engaged with one or two sections of the text, such an individual cannot gain an overall grasp of the author's mindset and worldview, cannot properly contextualize the content, and—more critically—cannot evaluate external subjects from the standpoint of the author's underlying

philosophy. Attempting to do so inevitably leads to flawed interpretations instead of accurate commentary. From this perspective, it becomes quite evident that the Khārijites—who, because 'Alī accepted the appointment of an arbitration committee (ḥakam) to resolve a dispute with Mu'āwiyah,

accused him of associating partners with Allah (shirk) and later issued (and carried out) a ruling for his execution—had neither studied nor understood (or simply disregarded) the following verses of the Qur'an, as will be discussed subsequently:

—If two groups of believers come to fight one another, then make peace between them. If one of them transgresses against the other, then fight the one that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. Then if it returns, reconcile them with justice, and be fair. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly¹ (al-Ḥujurāt 49/9).

—If one fears wrongdoing or sin on the part of a testator and brings about reconciliation between the parties, there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful² (al-Baqarah 2/182).

—And if you fear a breach between the two (husband and wife), appoint an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both wish for reconciliation, Allah will cause harmony

between them. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware³ (al-Nisā' 4/35).

—There is no good in much of their secret talk, except him who enjoins charity or kindness or reconciliation between people. Whoever does that, seeking the pleasure of Allah, We shall give him a great reward... So make peace between them in all fairness and act justly. Surely, Allah loves those who act justly⁴ (al-Nisā' 4/114-129).

—Indeed, the believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy⁵ (al-Anfāl 8/10).

Despite multiple Qur'anic passages encouraging the designation of arbitrators to halt the conflict, promote humane and peaceful social structures, and attain just resolutions, the Kharijites declared the act of arbitration an affront to —judging by God's law,⁶ initiating insurrection, takfīr, discord, and

slaughter. Their refusal to recognize a procedure advised in many parts of the Qur'an as legitimately Islamic is attributable not to profound philosophical intricacies but simply to their ignorance and inability to grasp the Qur'an's sophisticated teachings in their totality. If delegating a mediator in a

dispute is, according to them, shirk, what of the explicit Qur'anic injunction to conduct shūrā (mutual consultation)? In that sense, shūrā would be an even greater shirk. Such contradictions reflect the core harm of fragmentary, literalistic exegesis: focusing exclusively on a few verses

while overlooking the Qur'an's holistic spirit and context.

This tendency is not unique to the Kharijites or their modern offshoots among Salafist groups. Alarming, the same problem of —reading the Qur'an in a partial, literalistic, or obsessional manner has also permeated certain Sufi communities, known historically for emphasizing love and compassion. Indeed, these —distorted interpretations, which risk altering the very perception of Islam, have become more prevalent across many Islamic communities over the past two decades. The

consistent pattern in all religions is that textual corruption or distortion typically emerges when some precepts are exaggerated and showcased—often those aligning with local political power or traditional culture—while conflicting precepts are sidelined. Ultimately, once a fragmentary approach to the

sacred text settles into the collective consciousness, it ceases to matter how frequently individuals recite their holy books. The communal religious schema has already taken shape, and any new information is swiftly assimilated into that preconceived structure.

Interestingly, contemporary Salafist and radical Islamist groups categorically deny similarities with the Kharijites. Yet the parallels between the historical Kharijite profile and modern Salafists are apparent to the naked eye—resembling identical twins. Both are confined to a literalistic reading of the Qur'anic text, neglecting context, the broader framework of the divine revelation, and the life of the Prophet, who stands as the most authoritative and knowledgeable interpreter of the Qur'an. Had they properly understood the Prophet's biography, they would realize that even though they cite the same

verses for justification, his comprehension of those verses differed drastically from theirs. Thus, if they deny any connection to Kharijism, they must explain why they begin almost every discussion by citing verses like —Judgment belongs only to Allah and —Whoever does not judge by what Allah has

revealed, such are disbelievers/sinners/oppressors. Why does the notion that establishing an Islamic state is Islam's singular priority so thoroughly dominate their perspective? Does Islam ask nothing of the individual and society beyond —state-building? Muslims seeking to seize the state and compel

people to be religious by law is incongruent with the Prophet's *sīrah* (biography) and methodology. Coercing women into veiling or forcing men to perform prayer and fasting contradicts the essence of Islam and the Prophet's approach since these measures are fundamentally inhumane. It is evident that humans instinctively resist any external compulsion; if powerless, they at least recoil in disgust and

strive to remain hidden. The only form of authority a person can freely obey without resentment is the prompting of their conscience. For this reason, the Prophet refrained from tyranny or violence and instead strove to invigorate conscience and moral awareness.

Many *takfīrīs* complain about secular or oppressive regimes, yet they are themselves more than willing to adopt even harsher repressive policies against the populace if they come to power. Contemporary

examples of governments in Iran and Afghanistan reflect this reality. From Salafist movements to Sufi orders, most Islamic communities share the core assumption that an —Islamic State is warranted to use coercion to enforce religiosity. Indeed, the slogan of —judging by Allah's law remains a principal justification for today's *takfīrī* Salafists in challenging the faith of individuals or entire communities.

In this context, the famous statement of 'Alī to those who excommunicated him is relevant:

—This is a word of truth by which falsehood is intended (Al-Minkarī, 2017: 29-30). The phrase —judging by Allah's law is doctrinally accurate; however, the interpretations and sweeping generalizations these groups derive from it lead them astray.

In modern times, political factors have played a significant role in the emergence and spread of

takfīrism. Starting in the mid-twentieth century, secular or non-Islamic regimes in many Muslim-majority countries imposed policies that suppressed calls for an Islamic government, employing repressive measures against religious communities. Under these conditions, some Islamic groups radicalized, and their inclination to label governments as disbelieving oppressors intensified (Qaradāwī, 1994: 1415). Over time, such takfīrī views began to include not only the supposedly —infidel and tyrannical political authorities but also Muslim communities and organizations accused of either tacitly approving or colluding with these governments.

3. Takfīrism as a propaganda technique

Although figures such as Lord Northcliffe in Britain and Joseph Goebbels in Germany seem to belong to the distant past, they continue to exert influence as pioneers of modern political propaganda. They serve as enduring role models for the strategies and tactics of propaganda. Yet with the rapid

expansion of digital communication technologies, contemporary forms of propaganda have evolved into more sophisticated vehicles and methods.

Even when determining right from wrong is straightforward through simple reasoning, the situation can become far more convoluted once propagandists intervene. In many social conflicts and violent episodes, propaganda is a crucial factor that merits scrutiny, as people's values, statements, actions, and reactions have become increasingly vulnerable to manipulation. Recognizing the fundamental principles of crowd psychology helps explain why propaganda materials often forgo nuanced meaning in favor of high-impact emotional fervor and clichéd formulations, rarely inviting critical thinking.

Propagandists tend to obscure deeper dynamics behind social problems and focus solely on immediate, visible events. Disagreements over specific incidents often stem from divergent accounts broadcast by various interest groups and communication channels. Each party begins by declaring, —Everything is crystal clear! and then offers contrasting interpretations. Contemporary propagandists often refrain from blatantly lying; instead, they highlight a specific fragment of an event—removing it from its original context—to substantiate their purportedly —factual argument. This effectively severs the

incident from its complete context, reshaping it into a tool for bolstering the propagandists' viewpoints. Consequently, the real meaning of the event is stripped away, paving the way for falsified or manipulated narratives. Over time, repetitive confirmation of the distorted version erodes the

public's link to reality, making it increasingly difficult for them to rediscover the truth. Such propaganda techniques, among others, are frequently employed particularly in politics and commerce (Ateş, 2000: 122-123). Over time, propaganda's image has become considerably tarnished, and in the past few decades, its core principles have increasingly clustered around the notion of —perception

management. Consequently, propaganda has not only gained richer and more sophisticated content. Still, it has also begun to carry out more effective activities in practice, under relatively benign and appealing labels such as —advertising, —promotion, —public relations, and —political public

relations. When one seeks to identify the inventors of propaganda—understood here as taking certain words and phrases from a text out of their original context and thereby altering their meanings—it

appears possible to point to pre-Islamic Jewish scholars. This is because the Qur'an recounts how they treated the prophets and the sacred scriptures revealed to them in sufficient detail. For instance, their relationship with the Torah is depicted in the following passage, which is highly significant:

—But because of them breaking their covenant, We have cursed them, and made their hearts hardened; they take the words out of context; and forgot much of what they were reminded of. And you will still discover betrayal in them except for a few; pardon and overlook them. God loves the

gooddoers!! (al- Maidah, 5/13).

The accusation here is explicit: the Jewish community, to whom these prophets were sent, treated them merely as —messengers and continually sought various means to render them ineffective. They

repeatedly plotted against these prophets—most recently Jesus (‘Īsā) the Messiah—setting traps, abandoning them at critical moments, ridiculing them, complaining about them to rulers, and in some cases even killing them. Worst of all, in what seems like a prototype of today’s

—propaganda, they

extensively removed numerous verses and words from the Holy Scripture’s original context.

They reinterpreted them, thus greatly altering their divine teachings.

Likewise, just as in the example of the Children of Israel, it would be remiss not to mention the negative impact of —propaganda when evaluating the takfirī approach, known for —ignoring context, adopting —fragmentary methods, and engaging in —negative reinterpretation. Consciously or

otherwise, whether naturally or professionally, public relations strategies operate within every political or ideological community, including religious ones. The takfirī message employs —fear appeals as part of an organizational PR policy and propaganda framework. Indeed, it is safe to say that no PR strategy or propaganda approach is as detrimental to a religious community’s institutional image as takfirism.

Hence, examining takfirī rhetoric in contrast to the humane and gentle method of da‘wa (religious outreach) visible in the Prophet Muhammad’s life—and analyzing it primarily as a —propaganda phenomenon—appears to be a more accurate perspective.

The prophetic language was pure compassion and benevolence, whereas takfirī factions adopt a frightening, exclusionary, belittling, and contemptuous tone toward their target audiences. From the outset, labeling everyone else as disbelievers—an act of psychological aggression—demolishes any potential channels of communication and reconciliation. By inciting terror, denigration, humiliation, and exclusion, these groups effectively foreclose the possibility of establishing genuine human

relationships, setting up a massive barrier to successful da‘wa and meaningful representation. In this sense, takfirism is far removed from modern persuasion techniques and far closer to archaic forms of propaganda that repel people. Although contradictory to basic human nature, it stands in even starker opposition to the profile of a sophisticated modern person. Here, group propaganda and public

relations strategies pivot on a language of hatred that can rapidly escalate into violence and terror, rather than building upon humane, benevolent, or conciliatory persuasion. The primary reason radical or —Salafist groups in the Muslim world have remained on the margins without achieving widespread popularity is undoubtedly the repellent nature of this worldview.

4. The general stance of Islamic theology and Muslim scholars on the takfirī approach

At the outset of this section, it is beneficial to examine the views of some prominent Islamic scholars, who have played pivotal roles in Islamic thought, regarding the relationship between faith (iman) and actions (amal).

According to Abu Hanifa, faith (iman) consists of two components: the affirmation of the heart and the verbal declaration of belief. These elements, however, are not intrinsically inseparable; for instance,

the faith of a mute person is considered valid. Thus, affirmation (tasdiq) is the essence of faith, while verbal declaration (iqrar) is a secondary component that may accompany it. Actions (amal), though not a fundamental requirement for establishing or maintaining faith, are not entirely disconnected from it. Rather, they serve as binding obligations (fara'id) decreed by divine commands (nass) in the Quran.

The situation of believers who died during the Meccan period, when many obligatory acts had not yet been prescribed, and the differing legal systems of various prophets are cited as evidence

for this perspective. Imam Maturidi also emphasized that affirmation of the heart is the sole essential principle of faith. Verbal declaration, being an expression of affirmation, is connected to it, while actions are not considered part of faith. Accordingly, in their definitions of faith, tasdiq (affirmation) is the

fundamental principle, iqrar (verbal declaration) holds secondary significance, and actions do not feature in the definition at all. Consequently, both scholars argue that deficiencies or failures in actions do not expel an individual from Islam (Saribulak, 2023: 55-79).

This understanding leads to the conclusion that, according to Abu Hanifa and Imam Maturidi, actions are not intrinsic to faith. In other words, faith and actions are distinct from one another. A person who believes in Allah and the other pillars of faith does not leave Islam due to committing sins, even if these sins are grave. While some theological scholars have argued the opposite, the prevailing view

aligns with the stance of Abu Hanifa and Maturidi. Interestingly, those who frequently engage in implicit takfir through various insinuations and remarks are not unfamiliar with the views of Abu Hanifa and Imam Maturidi on faith. This raises critical questions about the disconnect between their

theoretical knowledge and practical attitudes, as their actions contradict the inclusive understanding of

—iman¹ espoused by these renowned scholars.

Additionally, it is instructive to recall a fundamental principle in Islamic law: —Doubt invalidates the application of ḥudūd (legal punishments)² (Ibn Ḥazm, 2010: 63-66). If even the slightest uncertainty exists regarding the accused's guilt, no sentence can be carried out. Another core legal principle holds

that —It is better to err by pardoning than to err by punishing.³ Hence, if there is any uncertainty, Islam encourages leniency and forgiveness. This rationale extends to how devout Muslims should approach issues of takfir.

Additionally, numerous Qur'anic verses support the idea that da'wa (peaceful invitation and communication) is more central to Islam than takfir. From the outset, takfir disrupts lines of communication between the dā'ī (the one who calls others to Islam) and the intended audience, causing a form of —representational pollution.⁴ Consider verses such as:

—There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right guidance has become distinct from error. Whoever rejects tāghūt and believes in Allah has grasped the firmest handhold, which shall never break. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing⁵ (al-Baqarah, 2/256).

—If Allah had willed (to impose faith upon them), they would not have associated any partners with Him. We have not made you their guardian, nor are you accountable for them⁶ (al-An'ām, 6/107).

—Even if We let you witness a part of the punishment We have prepared for them before your passing, or if We take your soul without showing any of it, it makes no difference. Your duty is only to convey the message; Ours is to decree the outcome and to grant every soul what it deserves⁷ (al-Rād, 13/40).

—Yet, if they turn away, know that your only responsibility is to make a clear proclamation (of the truth)⁸ (al-Nahl, 16/82).

—Upon the Messenger is only the notification, and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal⁹ (al-Maidah, 5/99).

When it comes to the legal consequences and drawbacks of takfir, an even graver situation emerges. From this perspective, takfir is so risky that Islamic scholars from both the early (salaf) and later (khalaf) periods have delineated its boundaries extremely clearly, identified its principles explicitly, and additionally called on Muslims to be careful, cautious, and prudent regarding *takfir*. The

seriousness of the matter is tied to the automatic outcomes in Islamic law once a person is declared a non-believer. This is presumably why pronouncements of *takfir* have traditionally

been viewed as an extremely serious issue in the world of Islamic thought and legal teaching. For instance, if a Muslim is declared a non-believer, this is taken to mean they have apostatized—in other words, they are regarded as a —murtadl (apostate). Unless they repent and re-embrace Islam, all of their previously accumulated righteous deeds are considered null and void, and they are believed to be destined for

Hell. From that point on, because they are no longer under the legal protection granted to Muslim citizens, they are deprived of many standard rights. Depending on the case, they may also face a judicial process that can include the death penalty. Their marriage contract with a Muslim spouse is nullified. Their testimony is not accepted in court. The meat from animals they slaughter is deemed

impermissible to eat. They lose their inheritance rights. Upon death, no funeral prayer is performed for them, and they are not buried in a Muslim cemetery (Büyükkara, 2016: 13–14). In Aḥmad Ziyā'uddīn Gümüşhānevī's renowned work, *Elfāz-ı Küfür* (—Expressions of Unbelief), we find the following principles emphasized:

1. If a person intentionally utters *alfāz al-kufr* (expressions of unbelief), there is scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) that they have entered into a state of unbelief. If they thus fall into *kufr*, they are expected to repent, renounce the utterance, and renew their marriage contract.
2. Expressions of unbelief spoken by mistake or under torture/coercion do not lead a person into *kufr*.
3. If a person uses *alfāz al-kufr* in jest or playfully, and believes in what they are saying, they are considered a *kāfir*.
4. People of *ta'wīl* (those who present interpretive justifications) are not to be declared *kāfir*; however, one who offers interpretations conflicting with established principles and the agreed-upon meanings of Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīths* may be ruled as *kāfir*.
5. Declaring *ahl al-qibla* (those who pray facing the Ka'ba) to be *kāfir* is not correct.
6. Those who belittle or ridicule matters deemed religiously obligatory and established (*shar'ī masā'il*) can be judged as *kāfir*.
7. Whoever denies, or expresses doubts about, any divinely mandated ruling known by *tawātur* (mass transmission) and unanimously accepted—such as the obligation of prayer, fasting, *zakāt*, or *ḥajj*—may be ruled as *kāfir*. One of the most striking points Gümüşhānevī highlights is the necessity for caution in matters of *takfir*. Citing various sources, he stresses the dangers of being too rash in declaring *takfir* and refers to an important principle:

If some utterance appears to constitute *kufr* in many respects, yet it does not require *kufr* in at least one respect, it is better for the jurist (*muftī*) who is issuing a *fatwā* to incline toward that single

—preventive aspect. In other words, the presumption of *kufr* is outweighed by even a single possibility that counters it.

Quoting from the work *al-Ṣughrā*, Gümüşhānevī elaborates in his commentary:

—*Kufr* is a grave matter. Therefore, as long as there is a report or indication (*amāra*) that *takfir* should

not be pronounced, it is not right to label a believer as a *kāfir*. If a person's statement may point to *kufr* in many ways but at least one interpretation spares them from *kufr*, the *muftī* must choose that

interpretation out of charity (*ḥusn al-ẓann*) toward the Muslims. If the person's intention aligns with the interpretation that does not require *kufr*, then they remain a Muslim; if, however, their inward

intention was such that it implied *kufr*, then the *muftī*'s ruling does not benefit them anyway.¶

This underscores that an individual's intention (*niyya*) is the essential determinant of belief or disbelief and that only Allah—Knower of the Unseen—can fully discern a person's true intention. Hence, the jurist or *muftī* can only rule based on outward, observable evidence.

Gümüşhānevī further clarifies:

—If the words uttered can be understood favorably—even if only by a weak interpretation—or if it is disputed whether those words qualify as kufr, then it is impermissible to endorse the takfīr of a Muslim.¶

Accordingly, under this principle, there is essentially no path for a fatwā to declare a Muslim kāfir based on expressions falling under the category of alfāz al-kufr if there exists any plausible explanation—however weak—that does not entail unbelief. Personally, Gümüşhānevī states that he adheres to a policy of refraining from issuing fatwās of takfīr merely based on such utterances. In his commentary on other cited works, we read:

—Tanwīr al-Abṣār says: ‘As long as a Muslim’s utterance can be interpreted in a positive sense, no fatwā of takfīr should be issued.’ According to Ṭahāwī, declaring a Muslim as an apostate is incorrect unless it has been definitively and indisputably established that he has renounced Islam. Indeed, Islam is not negated by doubt. A scholar who rules that someone forced into Islam under duress is still Muslim should be even more reluctant to declare someone who voluntarily embraced Islam to be a kāfir. Subkī likewise warns that no one should hastily or recklessly declare takfīr on a person who pronounces the formula of divine oneness (kalimat al-tawḥīd). He advises caution because statements or expressions may have different uses, such as metaphor, figurative speech, or personification. Only someone who explicitly and unequivocally utters a statement of disbelief with no other reasonable interpretation could be declared kāfir. Baḥr al-Rā’iq (another jurisprudential work) rules similarly. For instance, if someone is told, ‘Fear Allah!’ and responds, ‘I do not fear (Him),’ this might be considered kufr. However, if the person had some other intention or meaning in mind, then it may not be kufr. The main factor is indeed the intention¶ (Güllüce, 2013: 464-466).

When one examines the technical and procedural dimensions of takfīr, an entirely different scenario

appears. Just as, in a worldly examination, the examiner remains silent while the examinees are free to answer, so too in the divine test, human beings are left with free will. Since this divine trial

necessitates freedom, any form of emotional coercion, accusation, or pressure—such as takfīr—unavoidably undermines the integrity and results of that test. Moreover, it renders healthy communication between the one calling people to Islam (the dā’ī) and the audience impossible. One

cannot effectively convey the message (tablīgh) to someone labeled a kāfir; even if one attempts to do so, it is unlikely to be persuasive. Above all, it is a behavior that is neither humane nor consonant with human dignity.

Indeed, at the end of the Ottoman Empire, when the Islāḥāt (Reform) policies prohibited offensive language toward non-Muslims, someone asked, —Why should we not call a kāfir ‘kāfir’ if he is one?¶ In response, Said Nursī famously answered:

—Just as we do not shout ‘Hey, blind man!’ at a visually impaired person, for it is an act of harm and annoyance, and annoyance is forbidden in Islam¶ (Nursī, 2018: 396).

Many Islamic scholars have pointed out that certain ḥadīths that say —Doing such-and-such is kufr¶ or

—Whoever does such-and-such is not one of us¶ do not necessarily mean that the doer has definitively left the religion. Instead, these texts indicate that the act in question shares some quality (sha’n) with unbelief. If it is explicitly known that the action arose from a place of genuine disbelief in the heart, the judgment changes. However, where a person is known to be a believer, it is impermissible to pronounce that they have left the faith. When we consider other possible explanations for their action, the threshold for takfīr becomes even higher. As a general legal maxim states,

—Something known with certainty is not negated by mere doubt¶ (Nursī, 2014: 29-31).

From this we gather that declaring someone a kāfir, calling them a —kāfir,¶ or addressing them as such constitutes a form of psychological violence against that individual. Hence, it can be

concluded that takfīr is indeed a reprehensible act. Along the same lines, Nursī remarks:
 —The refined (civilized) person is to be approached through persuasion (iqnāʿ) and persuasion alone—compulsion and coercion are for the barbaric who do not heed words^{||}
 (Çetin, 2021: 1544).

Thus, he puts up a barrier against takfīr as a means of guiding non-Muslims, underscoring the vital importance of consistently using a positive approach in calling others to Islam.

It should also be noted that takfīr poses theological (ʿaqīdī) risks. According to a well-known and authentic ḥadīth,

—If a person says to his fellow Muslim, ‘O kāfir!’ then one of the two will indeed bear the burden of

unbelief. If the accused individual is actually as described, the accusation stands; if not, then the label returns to the accuser^{||} (Müslim, 1/319).

In other words, if a Muslim declares another Muslim a kāfir when that individual is not, the accuser

himself is in grave danger of disbelief. This makes it abundantly clear that both explicit and covert acts of takfīr involve a doctrinal pitfall so serious that a person could end up in Hellfire just because of it.

Takfir is not, as some modern salafī movements might consider, a simple or trivial accusation; it carries profound consequences both in this world and in the hereafter.

5. The cognitive background of takfīrism and its potential risks

Takfīrī thought rests on an interpretation of Islam marked by literalist and superficial readings, isolating certain divine precepts from their broader scriptural and ḥadīth contexts, and adopting a mechanistic, radical, and exclusionary perspective. Worse still, it is an approach lacking in humane sentiments and suffused with the potential for extreme violence.

As already noted, this interpretive tendency is traced back in Islamic thought to the Khārijīte (Khārijī) movement during the era of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him).

Although today’s takfīrī salafīs deny significant resemblance to the Khārijītes, there is, in fact, a striking affinity—

indeed, almost an identification—between them. The core problem is not simply that takfīrīs hold a particular view of Islam; differences in religious rulings and interpretations do not necessarily lead to takfīr. On the contrary, diversity in interpretation can generally enrich the tradition. The essential issue arises when takfīrīs insist that their interpretation is the sole and absolute truth, thereby accusing all

other Muslims of kufr. Hence, —erroneous interpretation^{||} (tafsīr or taʿwīl) appears to form the foundation of takfīrism.

However, the interpretive methods that give rise to a takfīrī mentality emerge from a dynamic interplay of internal and external factors (Aydınalp, 2015: 162). To fully grasp the emergence of takfīrism, we must consider not only historical determinants but also cognitive processes. Like any religious view inconsistent with the authentic spirit and context of Islam, the takfīrī approach should be seen as a humanly contrived interpretation of the religion—essentially, a —communication

breakdown^{||} between the Divine and humankind stemming entirely from human limitations.

Although widely acknowledged to be finite, the human intellect can interpret boundlessly.

Meanwhile, human desires, needs, ambitions, and inclinations know no limits. Inevitably, then, individuals may find it

challenging to correctly comprehend a divine revelation that surpasses all limitations, and may even find it advantageous to interpret religious teachings in ways that suit personal or political agendas.

Historical experience testifies to how the —ruling class^{||} has often co-opted religion for its purposes, rewarding those who submit and punishing or torturing dissenters. It is commonly known—and corroborated by historical disclosures—that the collusion of political and clerical

elites has been the dominant force in corrupting many religious traditions. From a purely methodological viewpoint, we observe that in flawed approaches to religion, certain scriptural rulings are taken out of context and exaggerated, some are effectively disregarded, while yet others are placed at the pinnacle of importance. When the usual scale of religious priorities is inverted, the result is as incongruous as wearing one's clothing inside out. Worse still, once a fragmentary and decontextualized interpretation of the sacred text implants itself in the collective consciousness, it hardly matters how extensively the people read the text thereafter. A deep-seated —religious schemal already exists in their communal psyche, and all subsequent knowledge is assimilated under that schema. Takfirī beliefs must be appraised within this broader interpretive distortion.

From a communication perspective, takfir is an exclusionary, accusatory, belittling, and inflammatory stance that manifests as verbal and emotional violence—in other words, hate speech—and can amount to a hate crime. The most evident risk it poses is the high intensity of potential violence it directs both at its adherents and those it targets. By sharply demarcating an —other,¶ it opens the door wide to

coercion and violence, for once certain people are deemed kāfir by those who see themselves as guardians of the sacred order, the latter can feel justified in humiliating and ostracizing the former; indeed, they may seize any —opportune moment¶ to destroy them. What makes takfir as hate speech

and hate crime, especially pernicious is how it segments a Muslim society into —true Muslims¶ versus

—unbelievers¶ with rigid boundaries, thus creating a cauldron of dissension (fitna) primed to boil over into hostility and conflict. Since it draws upon the authority of revelation, this strategy to incite hatred and violence is far more potent than equivalent secular or political narratives. Among Muslims

themselves, takfir is a hyper-aggressive, divisive, accusatory, degrading, and alienating weapon— indeed, the most perilous form of provocation. Each takfirī group is like a bomb planted within

society, the fuse lit and ready to explode. Wherever a takfirī group exists, the potential for violence, tyranny, conflict, and chaos remains a lurking reality.

Summarizing the primary underlying factors behind takfirī attitudes reveals seven main roots:

- General ignorance (jahāla)
- Ignorance specifically concerning Islam
- Distance from the Qur'ānic context
- A fragmented approach to Qur'ānic teachings

- Superficiality stemming from simplistic —straight-line reasoning
 - An interpretive inclination driven by the baser self (nafsānī) rather than genuine scholarship
 - Excessive emotional radicalization triggered by perceived injustices
- Finally, we may identify five key outcomes precipitated by takfirī attitudes:
- It displaces the language of love and kindness exemplified by the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) with a language of hatred and warfare.
 - By claiming Islam as their exclusive privilege, takfirīs —narrow God’s mercy and assert a de facto monopoly on the religion.
 - It retards the spread (or —popularization of Islam, as outsiders and even many Muslims are put off by hostility and negativism.
 - It can cause theological aberrations so grave that the perpetrator risks exiting the fold of Islam themselves.
 - Taken together, these points show that, in direct contradiction to Islam’s ethos of love and peace and its prohibition of spreading —corruption and strife on earth, takfirī groups alienate anyone who differs in belief or practice, ultimately fueling an environment that fosters anarchy, chaos, and violence, thus constituting an extreme form of hate speech and incitement.

6-Measures to Counteract Takfiri Attitudes at Various Levels

Takfiri attitudes and approaches pose a significant threat to social harmony and peace. Preventing this threat requires more than just security measures; it necessitates comprehensive strategies encompassing education, economic development, legal regulations, and initiatives to raise social awareness. Governments must develop multifaceted policies, while individuals should adopt a conscious and tolerant way of life to minimize the influence of takfiri ideology within society. However, this process demands long-term and sustainable efforts. Considering that takfiri attitudes constitute a form of hate speech and crime, the following measures and policies should be adopted by all societal components—from individuals, social groups, and non-governmental organizations to governments:

- **Educational Policies Promoting Critical Thinking:** Educational reforms, particularly in religious education, are essential. Curricula should emphasize critical thinking, tolerance, and respect for diverse viewpoints. Religious education must be grounded in principles of love, compassion, and justice.
- **Training of Religious Leaders:** Imams, preachers, and religious leaders should undergo specialized in-service training to understand the harms of takfiri ideology and to promote Islam's peaceful message.
- **Strengthening Official Religious Institutions:** Judicial and administrative actions should be taken against groups spreading erroneous religious interpretations for personal gain. Authentic religious knowledge must be disseminated under the supervision of official religious institutions such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs.
- **Reinforcement of Laws Preventing Hate Speech and Violence:** Legal regulations must be enacted to criminalize takfiri discourse and hate crimes, effectively preventing their spread.
- **Strict Supervision of the Internet and Social Media:** Radical content should be rigorously monitored on social media platforms and the Internet. Hate speech must be swiftly identified and removed.

- **Close Monitoring of Individuals and Groups Encouraging Violence:** Security forces should closely monitor radical groups and prevent propaganda that incites violence.
- **Socioeconomic Development Programs for Social Justice and Economic Balance:** Development projects should address issues such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, which are fertile grounds for radicalization.
- **Youth Support Programs:** Supportive policies should be implemented in education, employment, sports, and social activities to prevent youth from being drawn to radical ideologies.
- **Individual Efforts for Conscious and Critical Religious Knowledge Acquisition:** Individuals should seek authentic religious knowledge from credible sources and develop a critical perspective. Emphasis should be placed on learning messages of tolerance, love, and peace.
- **Promotion of a Culture of Love, Respect, and Tolerance:** Respect for different opinions and beliefs must be encouraged within society. Families should instill values of love, peace, and empathy in children, emphasizing the importance of social harmony.
- **Strengthening Communication Among Religious Sects and Communities:** Platforms for communication and interaction between different Islamic sects and religious communities should be established to foster mutual understanding.
- **International Cooperation:** Islamic countries should organize joint projects and international conferences to promote religious tolerance and peace.
- **Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGOs should organize awareness campaigns, seminars, and social projects to combat radical ideologies. Youth participation in social activities and volunteer work should be encouraged to strengthen social bonds.
- **Positive Role of Media:** Media outlets must produce content that promotes peace and tolerance instead of spreading hate speech. Expert voices in religious matters should be prioritized to prevent misinformation.
- **Enhancing Digital Literacy:** Especially among the youth, critical thinking skills regarding online content must be developed, and digital literacy education should be expanded.
- **Long-Term Peace Education Programs:** Peace education should become a mandatory part of school curricula, fostering a generation that is non-violent, conciliatory, and tolerant.
- **Long-Term Psychological Support and Rehabilitation Programs:** Psychological support programs and reintegration projects should be implemented for individuals influenced by radical ideologies.
- **Long-Term Family and Women's Education Programs:** Families, especially mothers, should be educated and supported in guiding their children toward acquiring accurate religious knowledge.

Conclusion and Suggestions

It is evident in the realm of Islamic thought that —takfīr (the act of declaring someone an unbeliever) stems from an interpretation incompatible with the contextual framework of the Qur'ān's universal proclamation. Historically, this approach found expression in the Khārijī experience, characterized by a fragmented reading of the revealed text—one that is rigid, infused with hatred, and exclusionary.

Although this perspective continues under various names and structures in the modern period, it is difficult to attract human nature, given that Islam emphasizes love and tolerance as its principal ethos.

It is well known that propaganda and perception management function as contemporary forms of —sorcery. These methods of influence and persuasion—coeval with the notion of falsehood—restructure a person's or a community's mind to reverse the perception of certain events. In other

words, they can lead people to see events in a different form and color, and if necessary, even to perceive white as black and black as white. In this study, takfīr—or takfirism—has been analyzed as a form of propaganda technique, demonstrating its hazardous side effects such as marginalizing certain individuals or groups, legitimizing violence, and proliferating hate speech. Within the framework of classical propaganda, this study meticulously underscores the dimension of hate speech and hate crimes as they relate to takfirism, revealing that a takfīr posture constitutes a form of social —magical arts‖ nurtured by propaganda and perception-management mechanisms. The core issue here is an approach to —making others Muslim‖ that is predicated not on da_wah (invitation to Islam) and persuasion, but on othering, demeaning, accusing, and inciting hostility. This condition undermines communal harmony, human communication, and a culture of coexistence, thereby fueling hatred and enmity. In contrast, Islam’s priority is —tablīgh‖ (conveying the message), not —takfīr.‖ As was evident in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, a proclamation that places human dignity foremost and is grounded in love, compassion, and understanding appeals to the mind and conscience of the modern individual; meanwhile, the crudity, ignorance, and propensity for violence inherent in takfirism is met with revulsion, especially among educated segments of society. Consequently, an approach faithful to the essence of religion will diminish the influence of takfīr notions rooted in hate speech and facilitate the accurate representation and comprehension of Islam’s true intent. Within this context, the article concludes that takfirism—an attitude that impairs the message of love and mercy— is incompatible with the core of the Qur’an. Historically first observed among the Khārijīs, takfīr

practices today are found in certain Islamist groups that identify themselves as —Salafī.‖ This religious reading is rooted in a fragmented and excessively literalist hermeneutic.

Considering all of the above, it becomes clear that takfīr is not merely an —issue of creed (‘aqīdah)‖ or

—jurisprudential (fiqhī) matter‖ but also, due to its nature as hate speech and a hate crime, constitutes a legal offense. Branding the other side wholesale as an —enemy‖ or —infidel‖ eradicates any possibility of dialogue and reconciliation among different viewpoints and communities, thereby paving the way for all forms of violence. Hence, in every historical period, Muslim scholars have advocated an approach grounded in —invitation rather than exclusion, and mercy rather than violence,‖ underlining the need for utmost caution in matters of takfīr. The mingling of classical propaganda and perception- management techniques with the Prophetic methodology of tablīgh risks distorting the religion’s foundational teachings and hindering its reach among the masses. As is well known, Islam’s principal message is one of love, compassion, mercy, and forbearance. Takfīr, by contrast, stems from an

exclusionary and violence-prone stance that is disconnected from the holistic spirit of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. When examined through the lenses of propaganda and hate speech, it can yield profoundly destructive outcomes in terms of communication and communal harmony. Leading scholars in Islamic intellectual history have issued stern warnings against takfīr, insisting that accommodating differences through a discourse of tolerance and love is more consistent with both faith and human dignity.

Accordingly, from the perspective of both historical experience and present-day reality, the radical line championed by takfirism has never occupied a central or widely accepted position in the Muslim world. On the contrary, the Qur’anic message of mercy, compassion, and brotherhood has always

circumscribed and relegated takfīr ideologies to the margins.

Given that the takfīr approach relies on intimidation and hostility rather than a compassionate invitation, and chooses exclusion over friendship and empathy, it becomes clear why the broader Muslim community has not embraced it. The fact that the takfīr method opts for intimidation and hatred over a humane invitation, and exclusion over friendship and affection, clarifies why it has

not been accepted by the wider Muslim community.

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