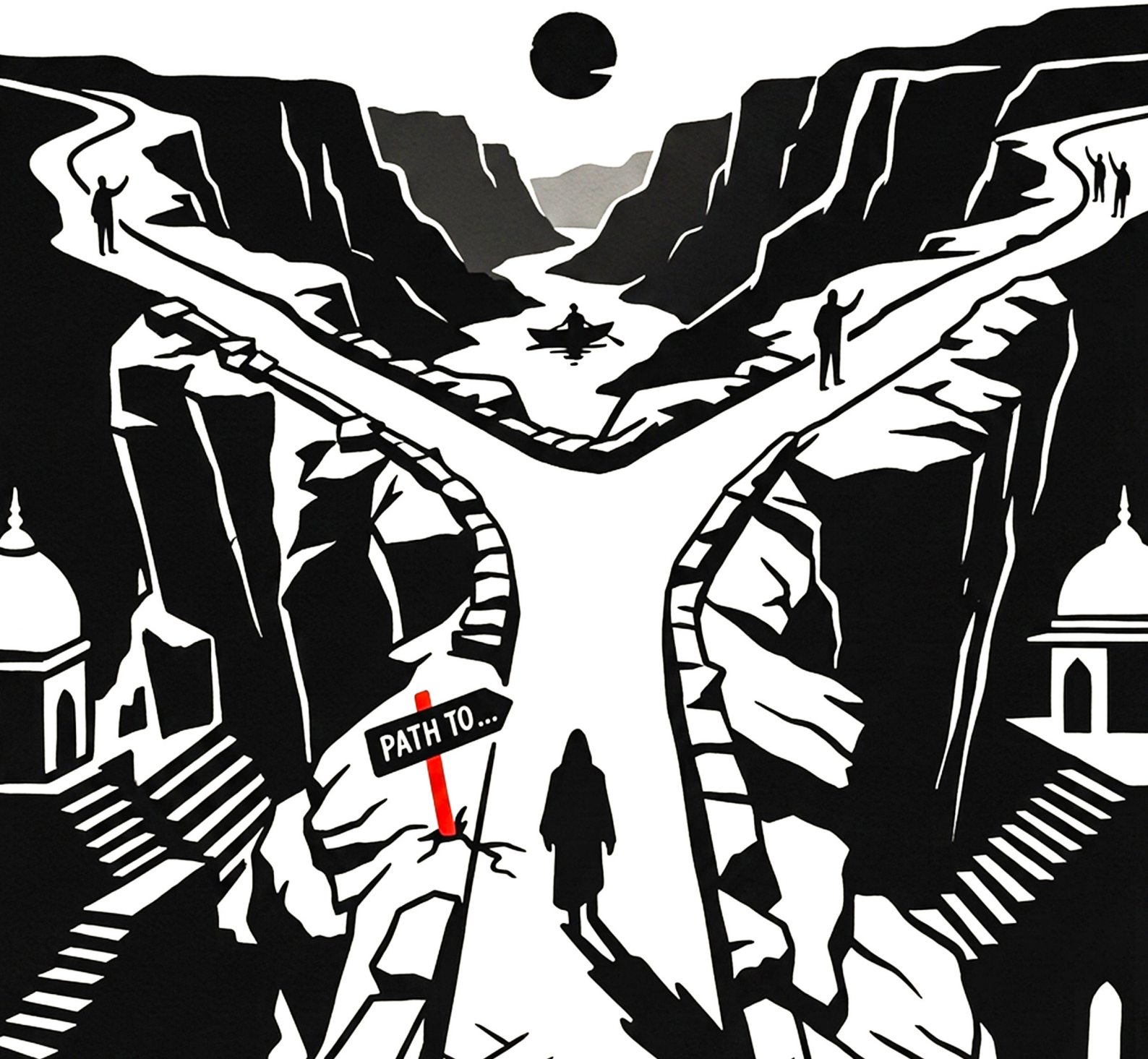




SAT STUDY

# KHARJEEYAT

AND THE IDEOLOGICAL GRAMMAR OF  
EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN





# **KHARJEEYAT**

## **AND THE IDEOLOGICAL GRAMMAR OF EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN**

*Understanding the Roots of Extremism,  
Not Just Its Outcomes*

**SAT Study | 02 | May 2026****Authors**

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## Preface

*The subject of Kharjeeyat, takfir, and religious extremism has remained a focal point of scholarly concern for centuries, occupying the minds of classical Islamic jurists, contemporary ulema, and modern researchers alike. While substantial literature exists examining the historical emergence of the Khawarij and their misuse of religious texts to justify violence, much of this discourse remains confined within either highly technical theological circles or purely security-oriented policy debates. Consequently, there is often a conceptual gap in understanding how historical doctrinal deviations transform into the repeatable patterns of modern extremism that we witness today.*

*In the contemporary landscape of Pakistan, extremism is frequently analyzed through the lens of kinetic operations, incident mapping, and body counts. However, this study rightly identifies that such an approach addresses only the outcomes of extremism rather than the ideological architecture that sustains it. By introducing the concept of the "ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat," the authors provide a vital framework for understanding extremism not merely as a series of disconnected events, but as a recurring interpretive structural pattern.*

*One of the most critical findings of this study is the examination of how takfir has been detached from its classical jurisprudential conditions and redeployed as a tool for political exclusion and mobilization. The danger arises when this authority is usurped by non-state actors and individuals operating outside the traditional scholarly consensus.*

*In the modern context, we see movements such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), and Al-Qaeda utilizing "political takfir" to label the state as taghut (un-Islamic/tyrannical) and its institutions as illegitimate. By reframing governance issues and political disputes as matters of faith and apostasy, these groups expand the circle of excommunication to justify violence against both the state and civilians. This process does not merely represent a difference in policy but a theologically compromised order that seeks to fragment society and weaken political institutions.*

*Pakistan's experience over the last two decades has demonstrated that the threat of Kharjeeyat is both operational and conceptual. While military operations disrupt networks, they cannot entirely dismantle the underlying doctrinal & ideological narratives that allow extremist thought and discourse to regenerate in the digital age. The study highlights that the persistent use of a specific vocabulary—branding the military as a "NaPak army" or framing democracy as a "religion against Islam"—points to a deliberate claimed doctrinal lineage.*

*To counter this, a layered response is necessary, one that combines state policy with rigorous independent scholarship. Significant milestones in this regard include the 2010 academic contribution by Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, which provided a comprehensive cross-sectarian refutation of terrorism and suicide bombings by identifying contemporary groups with the historical Khawarij. Furthermore, state-led initiatives like Paigham-e-Pakistan (PeP) and the National Action Plan (NAP) have been instrumental in building a unified national consensus against armed rebellion and the misuse of religion.*

*A comprehensive response to Kharjeeyat must be rooted in the historical precedent set by Al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra (RA), who engaged the early Khawarij not only with force but through the realm of intellectual warfare as well. It is through this tradition of scholarly engagement and the clarification of misinterpreted texts that we can hope to reintegrate those who have been misled by emotional rhetoric and selective religious interpretation.*

*I recognize the immense value of this study in providing students, researchers, and policymakers with the intellectual tools needed to safeguard our society against confusion and polarization. By analyzing the "ideological grammar" of extremism, the authors have made a serious contribution toward informed discussion and greater awareness. It is my sincere hope that this work serves as a foundational resource for those seeking to understand the roots of extremism and as a catalyst for continued scholarly inquiry into the preservation of our doctrinal and social order.*

*Justice Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwer*

*Aalim Judge, Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan*

**Author's Note**

*Extremism in Pakistan has rarely suffered from a shortage of attention. Analysts, policymakers, and security establishments have spent decades documenting its incidents, mapping its networks, and measuring its body counts. What has received far less serious attention is the question that precedes all of these — the ideological architecture that makes extremism not merely possible, but repeatable.*

*This study is an attempt to address that gap.*

*The question that kept coming back to me, and to my co-author Haleema Khalid, whose research and intellectual rigour are as much a part of this work as my own, was not who these groups are. It was what keeps producing them. That is a different question entirely. And it demanded a different kind of inquiry.*

*The consultations SAT organised in February 2026, bringing together scholars from multiple Islamic traditions, were among the most serious conversations I have sat through in this space. No grandstanding, no political point-scoring, just scholars engaging an old and difficult question with the honesty it deserves. Those conversations gave this study much of its spine.*

*Kharjeeyat, as we examine it here, is not a historical footnote or a theological slur. It is a recurring pattern; an ideological grammar that keeps reassembling itself when the conditions are right. TTP, ISKP, Al-Qaeda — the names change. The underlying structure does not. Until that structure is understood and engaged on its own terms, security operations will keep solving yesterday's problem while tomorrow's is already being built.*

*There is an old lesson worth remembering. When Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) went to the Khawarij, he did not only go with force. He went with argument. And a significant number came back. That is not a call for naivety, it is a call for seriousness. A sword without an idea is incomplete. So is an idea without the courage to defend it.*

*This study is offered in that spirit, as a serious contribution to a conversation Pakistan cannot afford to keep postponing.*



Salman Javed  
Director General  
South Asia Times (SAT)

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## Executive Summary

- Extremism in Pakistan is often analysed through terrorist incidents and security operations, rather than the ideological frameworks that sustain such movements. This study examines *Kharjeeyat* as a recurring doctrinal pattern that historically precedes and enables terrorist violence.
- The analysis presented in this study is informed by historical research and insights emerging from scholarly consultations organised by South Asia Times (SAT) earlier in February 2026, involving scholars from multiple Islamic traditions. This includes cross-school engagement that draws on diverse Islamic jurisprudential traditions, reflecting a broad scholarly consensus rather than a single doctrinal lens.
- *Kharjeeyat* is approached not merely as a historical sect but as a recurring ideological and doctrinal phenomenon that manifests across different periods and movements.
- In this study, the term *Kharjeeyat* is defined both descriptively and normatively: descriptively as a recurring ideological pattern, and normatively as a doctrinal deviation recognised within the Islamic scholarly tradition. In this framework, *Kharjeeyat* refers to a pattern of deviation in which rigid interpretation, rejection of scholarly authority, and the expansion of takfir transform political disagreement into theological confrontation and ultimately enable and then legitimise violence.
- The study introduces the concept of the “*ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat*,” referring to a recurring interpretive structure characterised by unauthorised takfir, rigid literalist readings of religious texts, rejection of established scholarly authority, delegitimisation of political authority and the sanctioning of violence in the name of religion.
- A central feature of this grammar is the reduction of complex religious texts, concepts, and historical incidents to singular and absolutist interpretations despite the existence of broader juristic, contextual, and interpretive traditions within Islamic scholarship.
- Classical Islamic sources also describe identifiable behavioural and doctrinal signs associated with the Khawarij, including excessive rigidity, unauthorised takfir, rebellion against Muslim authority, outward displays of religiosity combined with shallow understanding, and the tendency to kill Muslims while sparing external enemies.
- A recurring feature of such movements is the conflation of action with faith, where political positions, governance issues, or perceived sins are transformed into questions of belief and disbelief, enabling the expansion of takfir and the justification of violence against Muslim societies. These signs also reveal an identifiable interpretive pattern in which literal or isolated meanings of Qur’anic verses, hadith reports, and religious concepts are treated as absolute, while broader juristic method, context, scholarly mediation, and interpretive plurality are ignored.
- Historical analysis demonstrates that these patterns have appeared repeatedly, from early Khawarij rebellions to modern terrorist movements. Contemporary organisations such as *Al-Qaida*, *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)*, and *Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)* represent modern manifestations of this ideological pattern despite differences in structure and operational tactics.
- A central mechanism enabling modern insurgency is political takfir, through which social marginalisation, political disputes and governance issues are reframed as matters of faith and apostasy. This process allows terrorist groups to delegitimise the state, expand the circle of excommunication and justify violence against institutions and civilians.
- Pakistan’s experience shows that extremist movements expand through an ecosystem combining grievance exploitation, recruitment networks, and narrative engineering, reinforced by modern propaganda and digital communication platforms.
- Pakistan’s sustained counter-terrorism efforts, including military operations and national frameworks such as the *Paigham-e-Pakistan (PeP)* and *National Action Plan (NAP)*, reflect not only a security imperative but a defence against the ideological threat of *Kharjeeyat*, which seeks to delegitimise the state and justify violence against Muslim society itself.
- The dangers of *Kharjeeyat* extend beyond individual movements, posing a broader threat to the Muslim world by normalising intra-Muslim violence, fragmenting societies, weakening political institutions, and creating conditions for prolonged instability and external exploitation.

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- A comprehensive response must therefore combine security operations with sustained intellectual engagement. A historical precedent exists in the engagement of *Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA)* with the early Khawarij, where doctrinal debate, clarification of misinterpreted texts and reintegration of misled followers were pursued alongside enforcement against those who persisted in rebellion.
  - Modern scholarly efforts reinforce this position. For instance, the 2010 fatwa by Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri unequivocally condemned terrorism and suicide bombings as un-Islamic, explicitly identifying contemporary extremist groups with the historical Khawarij and presenting a comprehensive cross-madhab theological refutation of their ideology.
  - Recognising Kharjeeyat as a recurring ideological pattern has important policy implications. Preventing future terrorist insurgencies requires not only dismantling violent networks but also addressing the doctrinal narratives, recruitment pathways and information ecosystems that allow extremist ideologies to regenerate.

# 1. Framing the Problem

## 1.1. Introduction

Over time, a familiar vocabulary has been used against Pakistan by militant and Taliban-linked ecosystems. Pakistan is described as a taghuti state. Its military is branded NaPak army. It is portrayed as an extension of the Royal British Army. Democracy is framed as a religion against Islam. Cooperation with the United States and other Western powers is presented as an act of allyship with kuffar. The state itself is accused of betraying the Muslim ummah and waging war on Islam under a Muslim name.

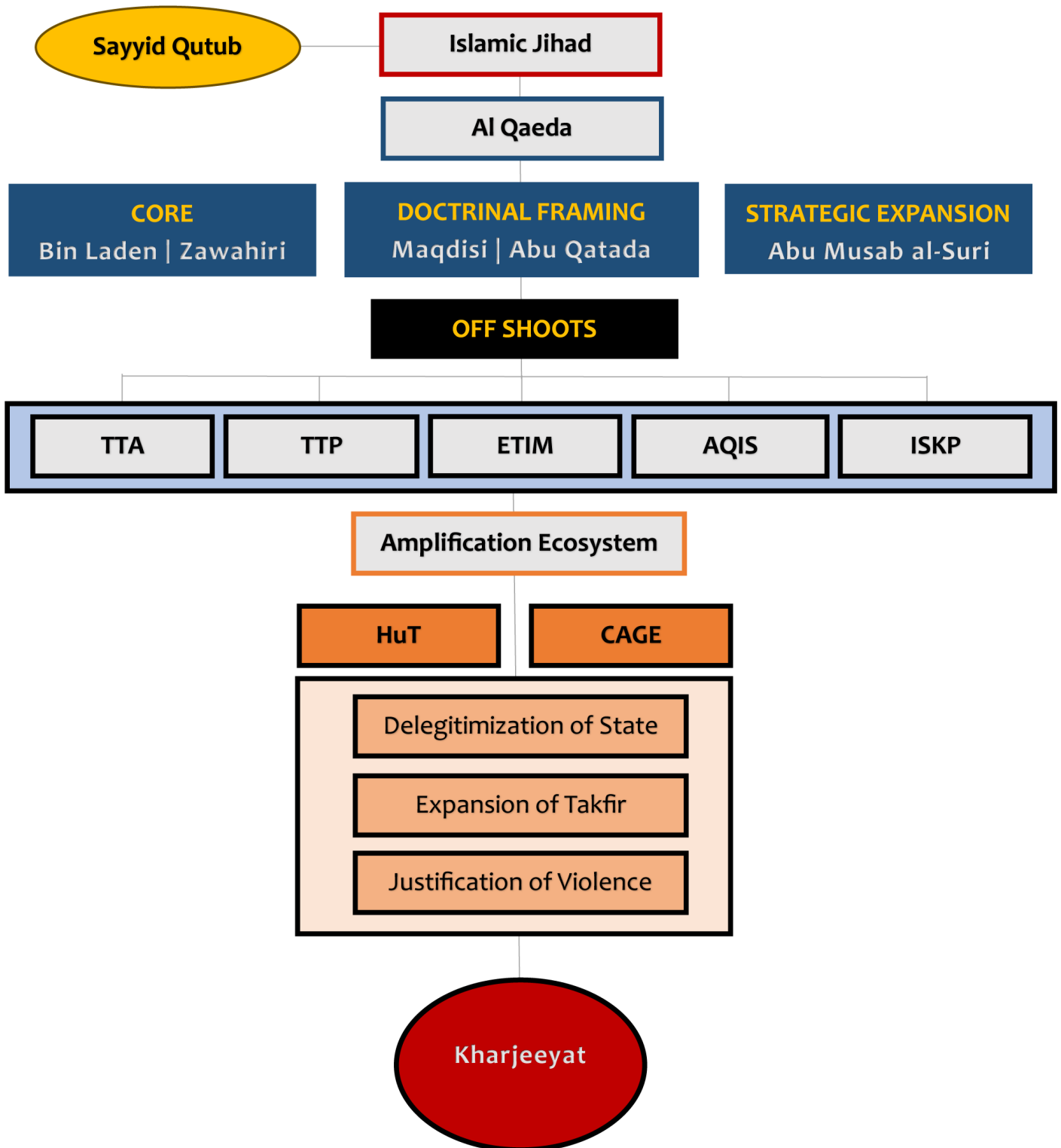
These are not new formulations. Nor are they random slogans.

They represent a doctrinal line that runs from earlier jihadist ideologues to contemporary militant and Taliban-linked discourse. The same problem definition of Pakistan appeared in Al-Qaeda's language in the early 2000s, shaped by figures such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, and Abu Qatada al-Filistini, drawing on earlier strands associated with Sayyid Qutb<sup>1</sup>.

Strategically, this trajectory was further systematised by Abu Musab al-Suri, whose emphasis on decentralised, networked jihad enabled these ideas to spread across regions and actors rather than remain confined to a single organisation. The same framing later appeared in Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and is now visible in rhetoric emerging from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA), while Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) advances it in a more extreme form. The language varies in tone, but the primary accusation remains consistent that Pakistan is not treated as a flawed Muslim state but as a theologically compromised order, which is to be opposed.



# Ideological Lineage of Contemporary Militant Narratives

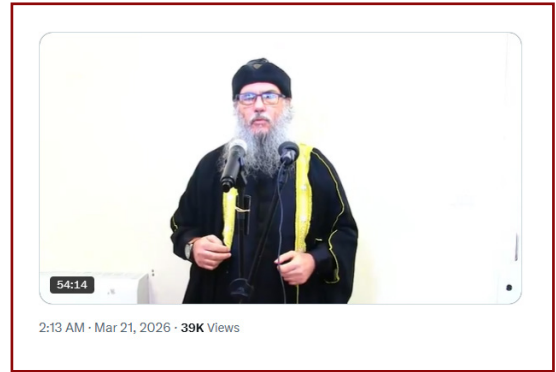


*Note: The ideological patterns examined in this study are not unique to Pakistan and find expression across numerous movements in the Middle East, Africa and beyond. However, this study is specifically focused on Pakistan's context and does not purport to offer a comprehensive global survey of these manifestations.*

### A recent episode illustrates this continuity clearly.

On 22 March 2026, Qari Saeed Khosty<sup>2</sup>, a Taliban-linked figure and former spokesman of the Taliban Ministry of Interior, circulated on a social media platform, X (formerly Twitter), an Eid sermon by Sheikh Hani al-Sabai<sup>3</sup> in response to Pakistan's Kabul strike<sup>4</sup>. The sermon framed Pakistan's actions not merely as a policy dispute but in theological terms, including implicit delegitimisation of the state and its institutions.

This is not an isolated instance. It reflects a wider continuity in how religious language is used to frame political conflict.



Sheikh Hani al-Sabai is an Al-Qaeda-linked ideologue associated with Egyptian Islamic Jihad, later integrated into Al-Qaeda under Ayman al-Zawahiri. His invocation within Taliban-linked discourse is therefore not incidental. It points to continuity between earlier jihadist ideologues and contemporary Taliban-aligned narrative production.

This continuity is supported by wider evidence. Al-Qaeda's allegiance to Haibatullah Akhundzada predates the Taliban's return to power; it was first pledged in 2016 when Akhundzada assumed leadership of the movement<sup>5</sup>. Following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, Al-Qaeda publicly reaffirmed this allegiance, with Zawahiri and regional Al-Qaeda branches treating Akhundzada as the Emir ul Momineen and celebrating the victory as a shared ideological milestone<sup>6</sup>. The renewal was therefore not a new development but a reaffirmation of an existing and enduring relationship, now operating from a position of greater strategic confidence.

United Nations monitoring reports<sup>7</sup> since then have described Afghanistan as a permissive environment for Al-Qaeda's reconstitution, including training facilities, safe houses, and facilitation networks. The presence and killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul in 2022 further demonstrated that this relationship was not symbolic alone but operationally embedded.

Zawahiri's presence in a safe house linked to Sirajuddin Haqqani was not a minor anomaly. It indicated that senior Al-Qaeda leadership could still find shelter at the highest levels of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, despite public commitments under Doha to prevent Afghan soil from being used by international terrorist entities.

The same pattern extends regionally. United Nations reporting in 2024 and 2025 continued to point to Al-Qaeda's permissive use of Afghan territory, including its overlap with Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the wider militant ecosystem around Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Afghanistan under Taliban rule has thus functioned not merely as a refuge but as a rear base for a militant current that treats Muslim states as suspect, grievances as instruments, and takfir as a gateway to violence.

These developments suggest that Al-Qaeda should not be understood merely as one actor among many, but rather as a central ideological source within the region's contemporary militant ecosystem.

Across different formations, whether Egyptian Islamic Jihad<sup>8</sup>, Al-Qaeda<sup>9</sup>, Afghan Taliban (TTA)<sup>10</sup>, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)<sup>11</sup>, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)<sup>12</sup> or Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)<sup>13</sup>, organisational structures and operational methods may differ. Yet they exhibit a recurring doctrinal framework. This framework expands takfir, reframes political disputes as questions of belief and delegitimises existing Muslim political authority.

Importantly, this is not confined to armed groups alone. It extends in varying degrees across a broader ecosystem that includes transnational movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir<sup>14</sup>, advocacy spaces like CAGE<sup>15</sup> and wider Taliban-sympathetic media and activist circles. While these actors differ in structure and methods, elements within these spaces reproduce similar narratives about legitimacy, betrayal, alliance with kuffar, and the insufficiency of existing Muslim states.

In this sense, Al-Qaeda functions less as a single organisation and more as an ideological progenitor whose interpretive framework has shaped multiple militant trajectories.

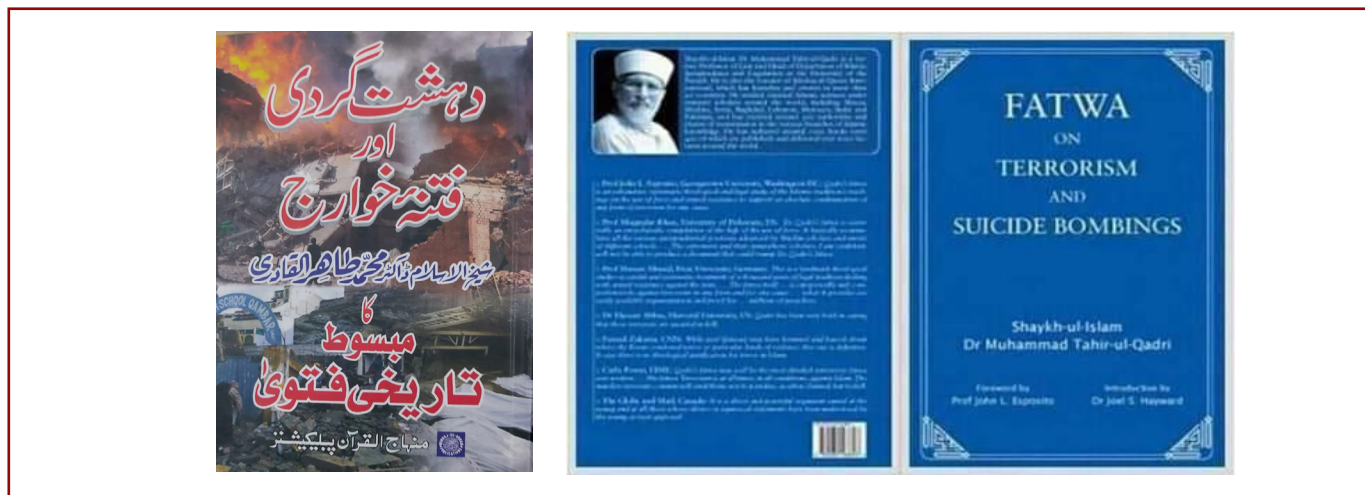
The persistence of this framework is evident in how concepts such as bay‘ah, Amir al-Mu‘minin, Sharia, democracy, taghut and allyship with kuffar are used. In contemporary militant discourse, these terms are detached from their classical legal and political conditions and redeployed polemically. Political disagreement is recast as theological deviation. Statecraft is reframed as betrayal. Democracy is presented not merely as a political system but as a rival creed. A Muslim state can then be reclassified as taghut, its institutions delegitimised, and violence against it justified.

This is the doctrinal mechanism that requires closer attention.

It is best understood through the concept of Kharjeeyat.

Kharjeeyat, in this study, is not treated as a historical sect but as a recurring ideological and doctrinal phenomenon that manifests across different periods and movements. It is within this framework that takfir emerges and expands, following the prior step of delegitimising authority and redefining political disagreement as a matter of belief. Its manifestations differ across time, but its internal logic remains consistent.

Pakistan’s experience over the past two decades reflects this challenge clearly<sup>16</sup>. Independent scholarly interventions, most notably Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri’s 2010 fatwa on terrorism and suicide bombings<sup>17</sup>, preceded and later complemented Pakistan’s state-led measures, including the National Action Plan (NAP, 2014) and the Paigham-e-Pakistan initiative (PeP, 2018)<sup>18</sup>, collectively reinforcing doctrinal boundaries around takfir, rebellion, and violence against civilians.



They disrupted networks, built consensus, and pushed back against the misuse of religion. Yet the persistence of cross-border ideological linkages and digital propagation shows that the underlying doctrinal structure remains intact. The gap, therefore, is not only operational but conceptual.

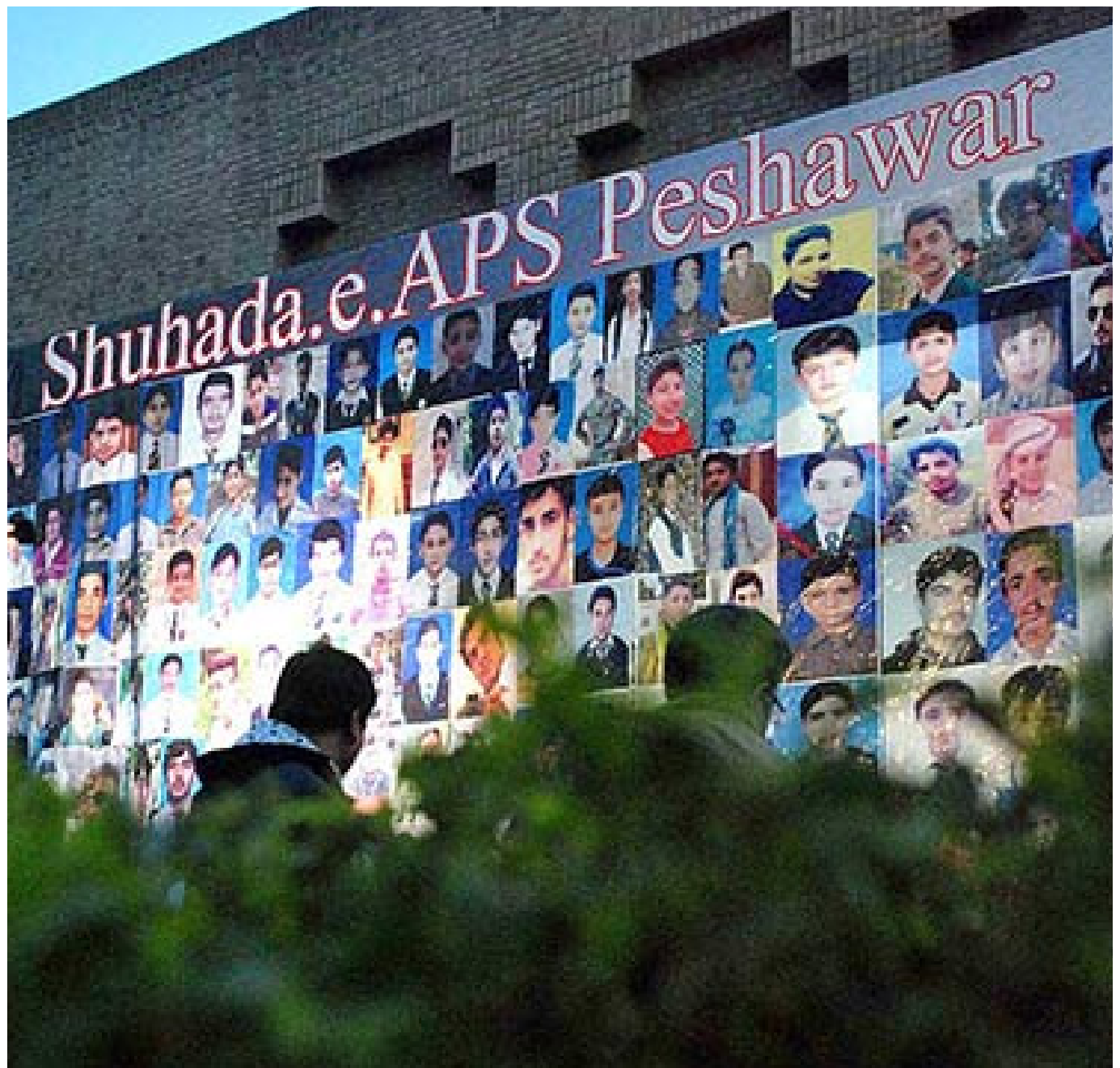
This study proceeds from that premise.

Rather than treating militancy as a series of disconnected events, it examines Kharjeeyat as an underlying ideological pattern that informs contemporary extremist movements. The focus shifts from incidents to ideas, from outcomes to the frameworks that produce them.

Kharjeeyat is often conflated with terrorism in contemporary discourse. This study separates the two. Terrorism is treated as an operational manifestation, while Kharjeeyat is examined as the doctrinal condition that precedes and enables it.

Understanding this distinction is essential. Without examining the ideological foundations that sustain extremist movements, responses remain reactive rather than preventive.

The following sections build on this foundation by tracing the historical emergence of Kharjeeyat, its evolution across different periods, and its manifestation in Pakistan's contemporary security environment.



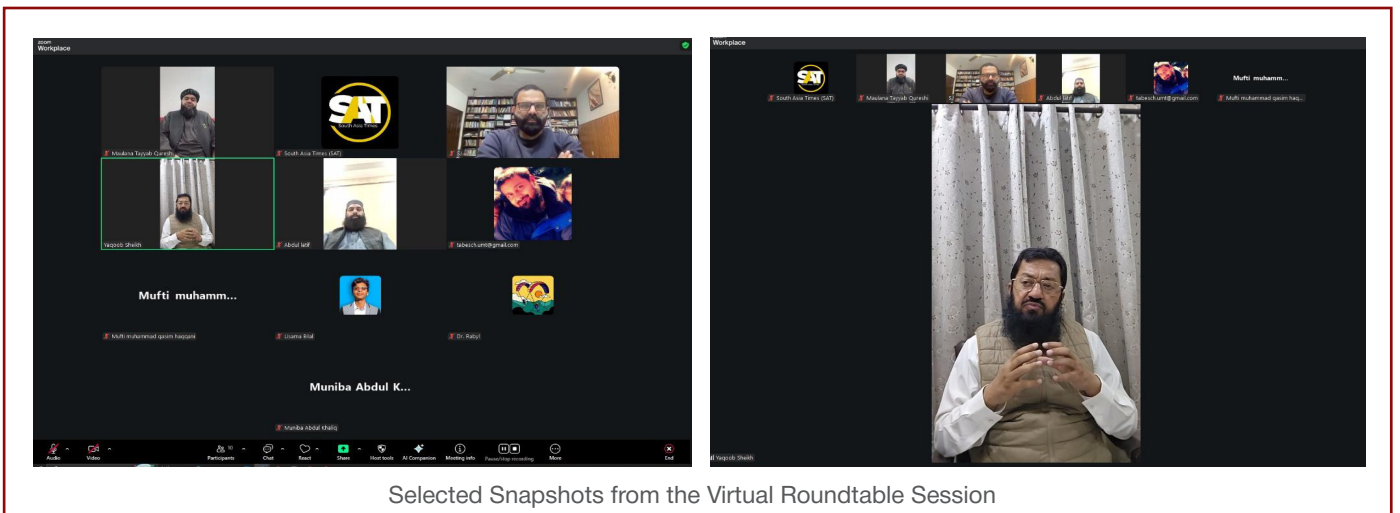
## 2. Roundtable Context & Methodological Note

The analytical foundation of this study is anchored in a dedicated SAT roundtable convened on February 14, 2026, to explore the evolving contours of Kharjeeyat within contemporary militant and religious discourse. The session was transitioned to a virtual format due to road blockages in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which restricted physical access to Islamabad for several participants. Despite these constraints, the roundtable sustained full participation, with all invited scholars joining online for a nearly two-hour, focused and candid exchange.

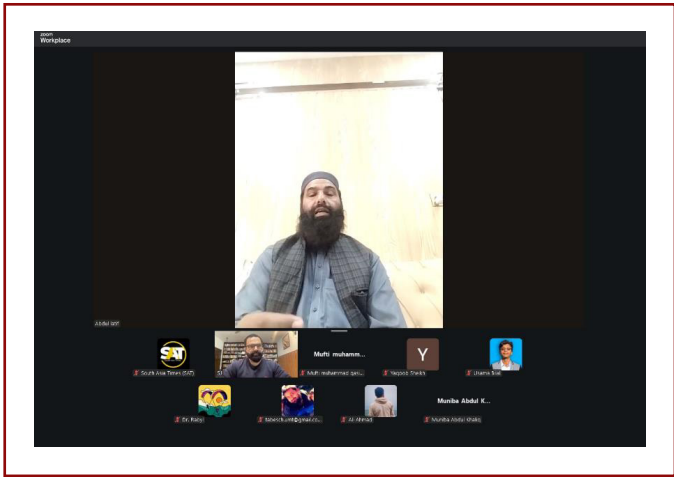
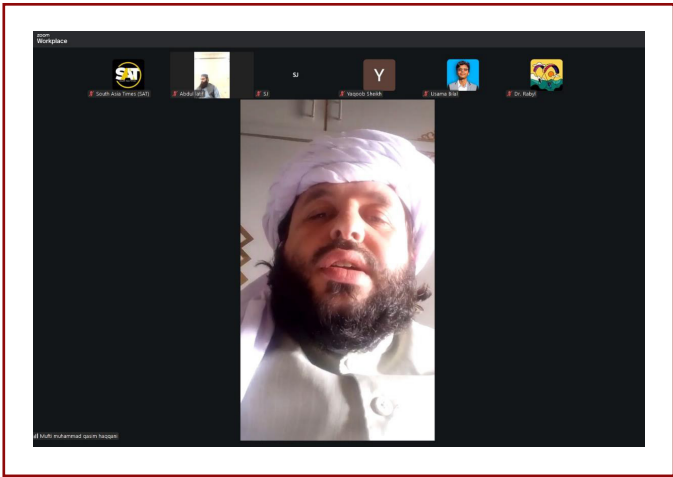
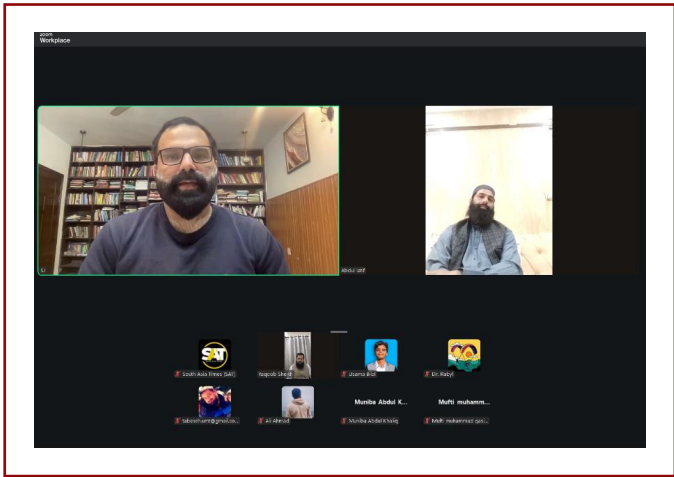
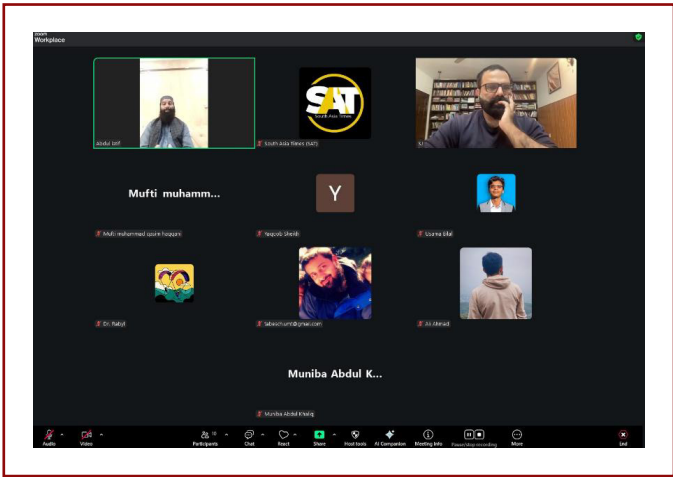
The roundtable brought together a diverse group of religious scholars, practitioners, and research voices representing multiple schools of thought and regional perspectives. Participants included figures affiliated with established religious institutions, mosque leadership, academic research, and public office. The discussion was moderated by Salman Javed, ensuring a structured yet open exchange.



SAT Roundtable Poster – “Kharjeeyat: Jurisprudential Responses to Contemporary Extremist Narratives”



Selected Snapshots from the Virtual Roundtable Session



Methodologically, the roundtable functioned as a qualitative input mechanism, designed to capture live scholarly reasoning, intra-sect variations, and points of convergence on sensitive doctrinal questions such as takfir, khuruj, and the boundaries of legitimate dissent. Rather than serving as a platform for declaratory positions, the session was structured to surface patterns of argumentation, interpretive tensions, and emerging areas of consensus across different scholarly orientations.

The discussion engaged with both classical jurisprudential frameworks and their contemporary reinterpretations, particularly in relation to groups such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Attention was also given to the shifting regional context, including Afghanistan's post-2021 landscape and its implications for ideological transmission and security narratives within Pakistan.

This study draws on the roundtable as a primary discursive layer, treating it not as an endpoint but as a structured intervention informing the subsequent thematic analysis and findings.

## 3. Conceptual and Doctrinal Foundations

### 3.1. What is Kharjeeyat?<sup>19</sup>

Understanding Kharjeeyat requires moving beyond theory and examining how it appears across different periods. While the concept refers to an ideological pattern, its manifestations can be traced from early sectarian rebellions to modern militant movements.

In simple terms, Kharjeeyat refers to a pattern of deviation in which religious interpretation becomes rigid, authority is rejected, and political disagreement is cast as a matter of belief. In this environment, takfir<sup>20</sup> begins to expand and is then used to justify confrontation.

Historically, the Khawarij emerged during the early period of Islam and developed into a group that placed itself outside the mainstream scholarly tradition.

Yet, an important clarification is needed.

#### **Not all takfir is radical or violent.**

In classical Islamic jurisprudence, takfir is a technical determination regarding belief. It has always been treated with caution by scholars and applied under strict conditions.

The problem begins when this authority is taken over by individuals or groups outside established scholarly structures. At that point, takfir is no longer used as a careful legal judgment. It is used to label, exclude and mobilise.

This is where the shift happens.

Kharjeeyat is not created solely by takfir. It emerges when authority is rejected, interpretation becomes absolute and takfir is then used to justify positions and actions.

Kharjeeyat, therefore, should not be understood only as a historical sect. It is better understood as a recurring pattern that reappears in different forms across time.

### 3.2. Jurisprudential Boundaries of Takfir and Contemporary Scholarly Reassertions

Classical Islamic jurisprudence treated takfir as one of the most serious legal and theological determinations. It was never understood as a casual accusation, political slogan, or tool of mobilisation. Its application required recognised scholarly authority, strict evidentiary standards, examination of intent and context, and the removal of doubt. This caution was rooted in the understanding that reckless excommunication fractures Muslim society and opens the door to bloodshed.

The modern misuse of takfir reverses this entire method. Contemporary terrorist groups detach legal concepts from their juristic conditions and redeploy them as instruments of political exclusion. Governments are labelled taghut, state institutions are declared illegitimate, and ordinary Muslims associated with these institutions are gradually pulled into the circle of accusation. In this way, takfir is transformed from a guarded jurisprudential judgment into a mechanism of rebellion and violence.

Contemporary scholarly interventions have sought to reassert these boundaries.

#### 3.2.1 Contemporary Doctrinal Reassertions

One of the most comprehensive contemporary examples is Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's 2010 Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings. This extensive juristic work, spanning over 600 pages in Urdu and more than 500 pages in English, constitutes a systematic doctrinal rejection of terrorism, suicide attacks, and violence against civilians.

The fatwa categorically declares that acts such as suicide bombings, targeting of non-combatants, and indiscriminate violence are not merely unlawful but constitute acts of disbelief (kufr) when justified in the name of religion. It explicitly refutes the ideological arguments advanced by groups such as Al-Qaeda and

Taliban-linked formations, addressing their claims point-by-point through Qur'anic evidence, Prophetic traditions, and classical juristic reasoning.

A central feature of the fatwa is its identification of modern extremist groups with the historical phenomenon of Kharjeeyat. Drawing upon Prophetic narrations that describe the Khawarij as a deviant group characterised by outward piety and internal extremism, the fatwa situates contemporary militant movements within a recurring doctrinal pattern rather than treating them as isolated political actors. This framing is significant because it shifts the debate from security alone to legitimacy, placing such movements outside the boundaries of accepted Islamic thought.

The methodological strength of the fatwa lies in its breadth of scholarly engagement.

It draws upon all major Sunni schools of law, including Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali traditions, as well as Shi'i jurisprudential sources, establishing a cross-sectarian consensus against the misuse of takfir, rebellion against legitimate authority, and violence against civilians. Classical authorities such as Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Ghazali, and Ibn Taymiyyah are cited extensively, alongside later scholarly interpretations, to demonstrate continuity in juristic reasoning.

Particular emphasis is placed on the conditions governing takfir. The fatwa reiterates that excommunication cannot be issued without clear proof, proper authority, and the removal of ambiguity, and that wrongful takfir itself constitutes a grave sin. It further reinforces the prohibition of rebellion (baghy) against a recognised Muslim state, arguing that political grievances do not justify armed insurrection or the breakdown of public order.

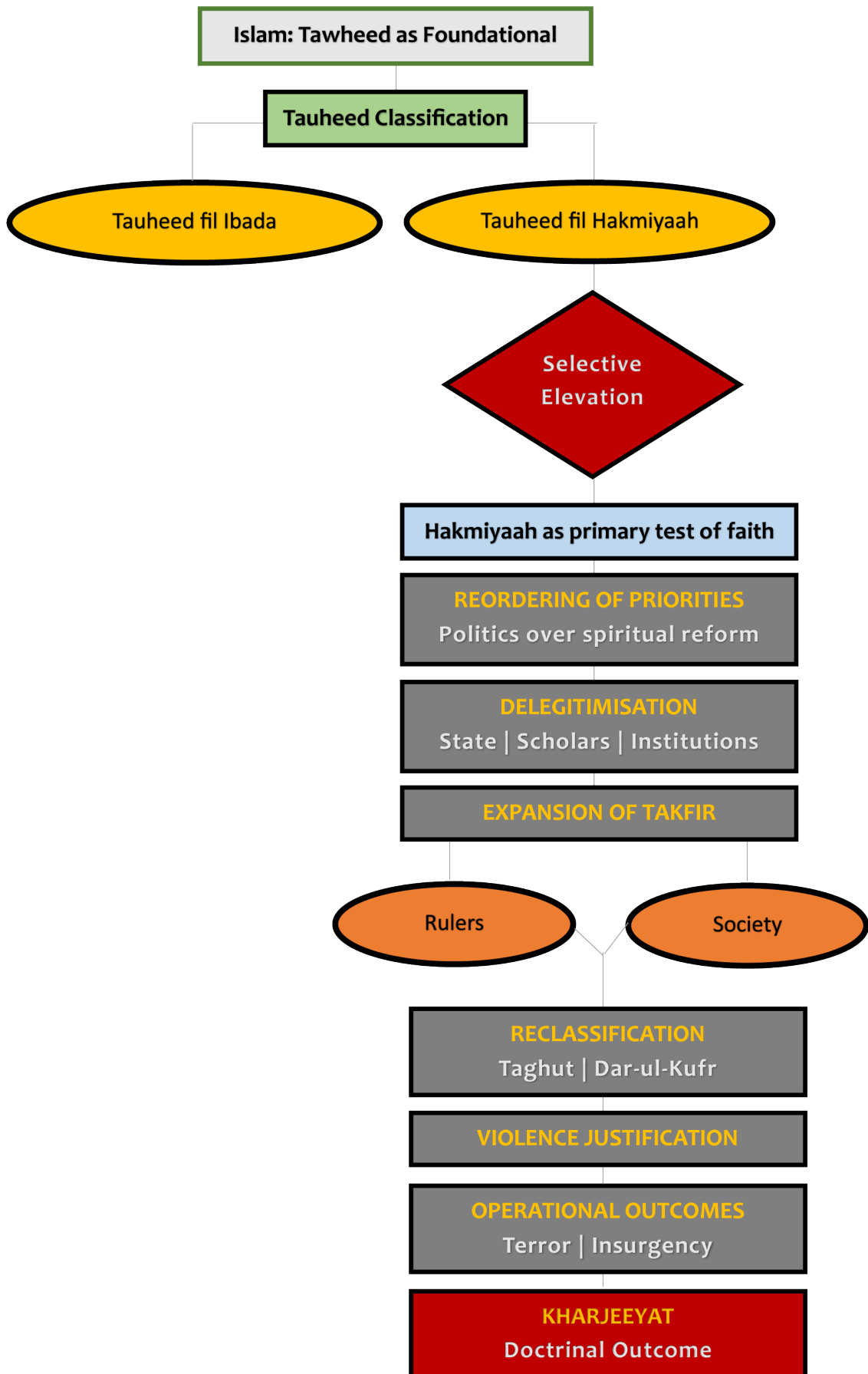
In addition to doctrinal clarification, the fatwa addresses the misuse of religious texts. Verses and hadith often cited by extremist groups are contextualised within their proper interpretive frameworks, demonstrating how selective quotation and decontextualisation are used to construct misleading religious arguments. By restoring interpretive discipline, the fatwa challenges not only the conclusions of extremist ideology but also the methodology through which those conclusions are reached.

The significance of this intervention lies not only in its conclusions but in its attempt to reclaim scholarly authority. It represents a structured effort to reassert the boundaries of legitimate interpretation and to deny extremist actors the ability to monopolise religious discourse.

This doctrinal effort was later reinforced at the state level through initiatives such as the National Action Plan (2014), which combined kinetic, legal, and regulatory measures following the Army Public School attack (2014), and the Paigham-e-Pakistan (PeP) declaration (2018), endorsed by over 1,800 religious scholars, which provided a unified religious consensus against terrorism, suicide bombings, and armed rebellion within Pakistan. Together, these interventions reflect a layered response in which independent scholarship and state policy converge to counter both the operational and ideological dimensions of extremism.

This study does not treat any single fatwa or initiative as sufficient to eliminate extremist ideology on its own. Rather, such interventions are important because they demonstrate that the challenge of Kharjeeyat is not only military or political but also doctrinal. The central problem is not simply that extremist groups use violence, but that they construct a religious argument to legitimise it. That argument must be dismantled at the level of method, authority, and interpretation.

# Ideology of Khawarij and its Goals



### 3.3. Prophetic Warning and the Earliest Mindset

Early Islamic sources record an incident that many scholars regard as the earliest indication of the mindset later associated with the Khawarij.

Once, when the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) was distributing spoils of war among his companions, a man appeared and criticised the Prophet for being unjust in distribution. The Prophet responded:

“Who else will do justice if not me, the Messenger of Allah?”

He then warned his companions that people would arise from the descendants of this individual who would appear extremely devoted in their worship.

The Prophet stated that:

“You will see people from his descendants whose prayer and recitation of the Qur’an will make your worship appear insignificant in comparison. Yet they will kill Muslims and spare the idol worshippers.”

(Bukhari Hadith 3344, Muslim Hadith 1063)

This warning described a phenomenon in which outward piety would coexist with doctrinal deviation.

The individual in this narration appeared outwardly devout and confident in his own moral judgment, to the extent that he publicly questioned the Prophet himself. Such an attitude reflects a pattern later associated with extremist ideological movements: a belief that one's own interpretation represents the pure form of religion, even when it contradicts established authority.

The Prophet described this as a fitnah that would emerge within the Muslim community.

The warning suggested that these individuals would display intense devotion but would direct their violence primarily against fellow Muslims rather than external adversaries.

### 3.4. The Inception of the Khawarij

The ideological pattern described above manifested fully during the political turmoil following the era of the Prophet.

The crisis reached its peak during the caliphate of Uthman (RA), the third Caliph of the Muslim community and the Prophet's son-in-law. A campaign of propaganda and accusations was launched against him. These allegations gradually inflamed sections of the population and ultimately led to the martyrdom of Uthman (RA).

This act of sedition became one of the earliest major internal crises within the Muslim community.

Following these events, the phenomenon associated with the Khawarij expanded further during the caliphate of Ali (RA). The Khawarij eventually declared even Ali (RA) himself to be an apostate.

One of their members, Abdul Rahman ibn Muljim, pledged to assassinate Ali (RA) in the name of religion while sitting at the Ka'bah. After the assassination, reports describe him reciting Qur'an, reflecting the paradox that had been predicted earlier: outward religiosity combined with violent deviation.

This pattern illustrates how individuals deeply engaged in religious practice could simultaneously adopt ideological interpretations that justified intra-Muslim violence.

## 4. Historical Emergence and Major Insurgencies

The ideological pattern associated with Kharjeeyat did not remain confined to a single historical moment. Over the centuries, similar dynamics have repeatedly emerged in different political environments. Periods of instability have often produced movements that combine moralistic religious discourse, accusations against rulers, the premature and unrestrained use of takfir, and armed rebellion justified as a religious duty.

### Concept Box: Premature Use of Takfir

Premature use of takfir refers to the declaration of a Muslim individual, group, or authority as a disbeliever without fulfilling the established legal, evidentiary, and procedural conditions recognised in classical Islamic jurisprudence.

In the classical tradition, takfir was:

- Highly restricted and exceptional
- Subject to strict evidentiary standards
- Dependent on scholarly authority and due process
- Conditioned upon intent, context, and removal of doubt (shubha)

Premature *takfir*, by contrast:

- Bypasses scholarly process and legal thresholds
- Expands from specific acts to entire systems and societies
- Converts political disagreement into a matter of belief
- Functions as a tool for legitimizing rebellion and violence

#### Analytical Note:

In Khariji and contemporary militant formations, takfir is not the conclusion of a legal process but the starting point of an ideological pathway that leads to exclusion, delegitimisation, and ultimately violence.

Although the organisational forms and political contexts have changed over time, the underlying doctrinal grammar has displayed remarkable continuity.

For analytical clarity, the historical manifestations of Kharjeeyat can be broadly understood across three phases:

- Classical Phase** – The emergence of doctrinal rebellion during the early centuries of Islamic political history.
- Modern Ideological Phase** – Twentieth-century reinterpretations that revived revolutionary readings of religion.
- Contemporary Militant Phase** – Transnational militant movements that operationalised these doctrines in the modern geopolitical environment.

Each phase reflects a different stage in the evolution of the same ideological pattern.

This longer arc also helps explain why the question cannot be reduced to a matter of sectarian identity. Across Islamic history, doctrinal contestations have emerged within multiple theological and juridical traditions, including Sunni, Shi'i, and other interpretive schools. While the doctrinal boundaries, legal methodologies, and theological premises differ significantly between these traditions, the phenomenon under discussion does not originate from any one sect alone. Rather, it emerges when religious authority is detached from its juristic discipline and instrumentalised for political exclusion.

The phenomenon under discussion is therefore not the property of any one sect, school, or region. It is better understood as a recurring ideological tendency that may manifest across different contexts wherever political grievance, absolutist moral reasoning, selective religious interpretation, and a willingness to delegitimise the wider Muslim order converge. Across different historical settings, similar patterns of moral absolutism, excommunication, and rebellion have emerged in various forms, even when

articulated through distinct theological vocabularies.

In this sense, takfir is not a sect. It is a method of exclusion that can be weaponised in different theological and political environments. Its misuse reflects a breakdown of scholarly restraint and legal process, not the doctrinal position of any particular school. This distinction is essential to prevent analytical conflation and to ensure that the study of Kharjeeyat remains grounded in methodology rather than sectarian attribution.

However, the movement from one phase to the next was neither linear nor sudden, nor historically empty. Between the early doctrinal rebellions of Islamic history and the contemporary militant formations of the post-colonial period lies a long intervening history in which similar tendencies repeatedly resurfaced under changing political conditions. These included periods of imperial centralisation, dynastic contestation, juridical fragmentation, colonial disruption, anti-colonial mobilisation, and finally the emergence of the modern nation-state. The historical significance of these intervening centuries lies in their preservation, reshaping, and transmission of certain patterns of rebellion, moral absolutism, selective scripturalism, and political excommunication, even when those patterns did not always appear in identical organisational forms.

For that reason, the three phases identified here should not be read as isolated compartments, but as analytically distinct stages in a longer civilizational trajectory.

The doctrinal grammar associated with Kharjeeyat persisted across changing political orders. What changed over time were the vocabulary, targets, institutional settings, and technologies through which it was expressed. In one period, it appeared in the language of revolt against rulers; in another, in the language of purification, restoration, and revolutionary vanguardism; and in the contemporary period, in the language of transnational jihad, post-colonial rupture, and immediate claims to sovereignty.

#### 4.1. Phase I - Classical Insurgencies

The earliest manifestations of Kharjeeyat appeared during the political turbulence that followed the era of the Prophet. These crises occurred within the Muslim community itself and often emerged in moments of leadership transition, political dispute, and administrative dissatisfaction.

##### **The Assassination of Uthman (656 CE)**

The crisis reached its peak during the caliphate of Uthman (R.A.), the third Caliph of the Muslim community and the Prophet's son-in-law.

Over time, a sustained propaganda campaign comprising accusations and grievances was mobilised against him. Complaints concerning administrative decisions, allegations of favouritism toward members of the Umayyad clan, and political tensions in provinces such as Egypt, Kufa, and Basra gradually inflamed sections of the population.

These developments culminated in the siege of Uthman's residence in Madina and ultimately in his assassination in 656 CE, while he was reciting the Qur'an.

This act of sedition became one of the earliest major internal crises within the Muslim community and marked the beginning of the **First Fitna**.

Although the rebels of this stage were not yet organised as a distinct doctrinal movement, the episode revealed a pattern that would later become central to Khariji ideology based on the invocation of religious discourse to justify rebellion against the established authority.

##### **The Khawarij Revolt during the Caliphate of Ali (38 AH)**

The Khawarij first organised themselves as a distinct faction during the conflict between Ali (R.A.) and Muawiyah (R.A.).

During the **Battle of Siffin**, when both sides agreed to arbitration to resolve the dispute, a group rejected

the process and raised the slogan:

**“Legislation belongs only to Allah.”**  
(إِن الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ)

They declared both Ali and Muawiyah disbelievers for accepting arbitration. This marked one of the earliest explicit instances of the **premature use of takfir**, in which political disagreement was elevated to a question of belief.

Ali (R.A.) attempted to resolve the matter through dialogue and sent Abdullah ibn Abbas (R.A.) to debate them. His discussions succeeded in persuading many to abandon their position, but a large faction persisted.

The situation eventually escalated into an armed confrontation. The famous **Battle of Nahrawan** followed, where the Khawarij were defeated after Ali (R.A) exhausted diplomatic options.

The conflict drained the strength of the Muslim community and deepened internal divisions.

The post-Rashidun and early imperial periods are especially important because they demonstrate that the issue did not end with the first Khawarij. Rather, the political consolidation of Muslim rule generated repeated tensions between authority and opposition, piety and power, juristic restraint, and moral insurgency.

The Umayyad and Abbasid eras saw multiple uprisings in which political grievances were clothed in religious language, and in which questions of justice, legitimacy, impiety, and rebellion were increasingly argued in doctrinal terms. Not every revolt in this period was Khariji in the strict theological sense, yet these insurgencies collectively show how easily political contestation could acquire a religious grammar.

The period associated with Hajjaj ibn Yusuf is particularly significant in this regard.

His governorship has remained a reference point in Muslim political memory because it illustrates how severe state centralisation, coercive administration, and political repression can intensify oppositional currents.

The revolt of Ibn Ash'ath did not simply emerge from a military disagreement; it grew within an atmosphere in which state power, moral outrage, and religious legitimacy had become deeply intertwined. This is analytically important because later militant tendencies would repeatedly draw upon similar environments: harsh rule, a claim of moral crisis, the denunciation of political authority, and then the movement from dissent to armed rebellion.

What followed over subsequent centuries was not a continuous Khariji movement, but a recurring pattern of doctrinally framed contestation.

Different rebellions arose under different dynasties, often driven by distinct motives. Yet, they reveal the persistence of a dangerous transition: from political dissatisfaction to moral absolutism, from moral absolutism to accusations against rulers, and from accusations to violence. This continuity is what bridges the apparent historical gap between early Islamic insurgencies and much later ideological movements.

### **The Revolt of the People of Medina (63 AH)**

Following the death of Muawiyah (R.A.), the caliphate passed to Yazid.

In 63 AH, a revolt emerged in Medina under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Hanzalah. Despite attempts by respected companions such as Abdullah ibn Umar and Nu'man ibn Bashir to prevent violence, the rebellion escalated.

An army sent by Yazid confronted the rebels in a brutal confrontation that resulted in large-scale casualties, including hundreds of companions and thousands of others.

The incident severely damaged the unity and stability of the Muslim community.

### **The Revolt of Abd-ur-Rahman Ibn Ash'ath (81 AH)**

In 81 AH, the governor of Iraq, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, sent a large army under Ibn Ash'ath to campaign against the Turk ruler Ratbeel.

After military successes and winter delays in campaigning, tensions between Ibn Ash'ath and Hajjaj escalated. Ibn Ash'ath eventually rebelled and returned with his army against the Muslim state.

Initially successful in numerous battles, the rebellion eventually collapsed due to internal divisions and strategic manoeuvres by Hajjaj.

The suppression of the revolt resulted in the deaths of more than 130,000 people, including thousands of scholars and civilians caught in the conflict.

### **The Rebellion of Yazid ibn Muhallab (101 AH)**

Yazid ibn Muhallab, previously appointed governor of Khurasan, rebelled against the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik.

Despite efforts by respected scholars such as Hasan Basri to prevent the uprising, the rebellion escalated into armed conflict.

The revolt was eventually crushed and resulted in the destruction of the Muhallab family and further internal weakening of the Muslim political order.

### **The Abbasid Movement and the Fall of the Umayyads (126 AH)**

Following the death of the Umayyad ruler Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, internal dissent intensified.

Yazid ibn Waleed revolted against the caliph Waleed ibn Yazid, leading to his assassination and widespread unrest.

These divisions weakened the Umayyad state and ultimately facilitated the Abbasid revolution that ended Umayyad rule.

Historical accounts suggest that during the transition, more than 600,000 Muslims died in internal conflict.

### **The Revolt of Nafs Zakiyah (145 AH)**

Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Hasan, known as Nafs Zakiyah, launched a revolt against the Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far Mansur.

Claiming legitimacy through descent from the Prophet's family, he attempted to establish an alternative caliphate.

The rebellion ultimately failed, and both he and his brother Ibrahim were killed in separate confrontations with Abbasid forces.

Over time, the political map of the Muslim world changed profoundly. Caliphal authority weakened, regional dynasties multiplied, and the juristic tradition increasingly had to navigate a fragmented political reality in which idealised political theory and actual governance often diverged.

Classical scholars generally responded to this fragmentation with caution, prioritising order, legal method, and the avoidance of mass bloodshed. This is a critical point. The mainstream scholarly tradition did not deny political decline or the normative significance of the Khilafah; rather, it treated these questions within a framework of reform, jurisprudential discipline, and public order. The methodology remained one of restraint rather than revolutionary acceleration.

That distinction becomes even more important in later centuries, because modern militant movements would inherit many of the same themes, such as justice, decline, loss of Islamic political authority, and the

aspiration for restored Muslim power. Still, they would detach them from the classical juristic method that had historically governed them.

## 4.2 Phase II - Modern Ideological Recasting

The colonial period marks one of the most important turning points in this historical evolution. European colonial expansion did not merely conquer territory; it reordered political authority, legal institutions, educational systems, and the very conceptual language through which Muslim societies understood sovereignty.

The collapse or weakening of older Muslim polities, followed by direct or indirect colonial domination, generated a deep crisis of political meaning.

Questions that had once been debated within a broadly shared civilizational framework, such as rule, legitimacy, Dar al-Islam, loyalty, law, and political obligation, were now forced into a radically altered world structured by foreign occupation, imposed borders, secular bureaucracy, and new forms of state power.

It is in this context that anti-colonial revivalist thought, reformist activism, Islamism, revolutionary ideology, and later militant doctrines begin to intersect. The post-colonial order inherited many of these fractures.

Muslim societies formally emerged from colonial rule, but often into nation-states whose institutions, borders, legal frameworks, and strategic dependencies were deeply shaped by the colonial experience. This produced a new contradiction.

Many modern Islamist and militant actors viewed themselves as living not in an authentically Islamic political order. Still, within post-colonial states, they were regarded as derivative, compromised, and sustained by foreign power. From this perception emerged new arguments about jahiliyyah, hakimiyah, Dar al-Islam, apostasy, loyalty, and obligation.

The classical categories of Dar al-Islam and Dar al-harb were also drawn into this modern crisis, often in reductive ways. Historically, jurists treated such categories within complex legal and political contexts. Modern ideologues, however, increasingly recast them as rigid civilizational binaries. The result was not merely a theological debate, but a political reimagining of the Muslim world in which the modern nation-state itself could be treated as suspect, colonial borders as illegitimate, and existing governments as obstacles to an imagined restored order.

In this way, colonialism and post-colonialism did not create Kharjeeyat, but they profoundly altered the environment in which its modern ideological recasting became possible.

After centuries in which similar patterns appeared intermittently, the twentieth century marked a critical shift. The phenomenon associated with Kharjeeyat was no longer expressed primarily through fragmented rebellions, but through systematic ideological reinterpretation. In addition, it laid the ideological groundwork that would later be operationalised.

Certain modern thinkers reframed political authority, society, and governance in theological terms. Contemporary Muslim societies were increasingly described as having deviated from Islam or fallen into Jahiliyyah, while rulers were portrayed as illegitimate or apostate. This marked one of the earliest explicit instances of the premature use of takfir, in which political disagreement was elevated to a question of belief. This intellectual shift created the conditions in which political opposition could be transformed into religious obligation.

### The Juhaiman Uprising in Makkah (1979)

In the modern era, the ideological pattern resurfaced dramatically in 1979 when Juhaiman al-Utaibi and his followers seized the Grand Mosque in Makkah.

They proclaimed Juhaiman's brother-in-law Muhammad al-Qahtani as the awaited Mahdi and demanded allegiance from worshippers.

The militants fortified the mosque and engaged in armed confrontation with Saudi forces.

The siege resulted in heavy casualties among security forces and militants before the mosque was eventually retaken.

The group was later tried and many members, including Juhaiman, were executed.

The incident represented one of the most dramatic examples of extremist rebellion within the sacred sanctuary of Islam.

The modern ideological phase, therefore, cannot be reduced to a single organisation or country. It was an age in which several overlapping currents took shape: anti-colonial Islamic revivalism, revolutionary Islamism, post-colonial disillusionment, sectarian polarisation, and, later, the militarisation of transnational jihad.

These currents did not all produce the same outcomes, but together they created the intellectual and political environment from which contemporary militant formations would emerge.



### 4.3 Phase II - Modern Ideological Recasting

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the ideological patterns associated with Kharjeeyat were fully operationalised.

Unlike earlier periods, these manifestations assumed transnational, networked, and media-driven forms, becoming increasingly structured and ideologically systematised. Militant organisations combined doctrinal absolutism with modern tools of recruitment, propaganda, and warfare, allowing the same ideological grammar to scale across regions. At this stage, the premature use of takfir becomes normalised and operational, moving from isolated declarations to a structured ideological tool.

This development, however, should not be understood as a sudden rupture with the past. The transition from early Khawarij rebellions to contemporary militant movements was not a direct leap across centuries. Throughout Islamic history, episodes of doctrinally driven rebellion, sectarian militancy, and political takfir continued to emerge in different forms, particularly during periods of political instability and social fragmentation. While these manifestations varied in scale and structure, they reflected the persistence of an underlying ideological tendency.

What distinguishes the contemporary period is not the emergence of a new phenomenon, but the expansion, organisation, and technological amplification of an existing one.

A defining feature of modern militant discourse is the selective appropriation of classical Islamic scholarship. Figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah are frequently invoked, yet their works are often decontextualised, selectively quoted, and detached from the jurisprudential frameworks within which they were originally articulated.

Classical scholars operated within a disciplined legal tradition that placed strict limits on takfir, emphasised procedural rigour, and treated rebellion as a matter of grave consequence subject to stringent conditions. Contemporary militant interpretations invert this methodology. Rather than drawing conclusions through established scholarly processes, they begin with predetermined political positions and then cite religious texts to legitimise them. In doing so, they transform a tradition rooted in restraint into an instrument of mobilisation. In this inversion, takfir is no longer treated as a guarded legal judgment but as a starting point for mobilisation.

This distortion extends beyond individual scholars to the broader use of Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, and juristic opinions. Texts are frequently isolated from their interpretive context and redeployed as absolute political slogans. This mirrors earlier Khariji tendencies, where scripture was used not as a source of jurisprudence but as a tool of accusation and exclusion. The issue, therefore, is not the textual tradition itself, but the manner in which it is reinterpreted and instrumentalised.

The contemporary militant phase developed within the post-colonial order. This point is central. Many of the organisations discussed in this phase do not merely oppose particular governments; they reject the broader political architecture inherited from colonialism and sustained by the modern state system. Their discourse is built around the claim that Muslim societies were divided into nation-states, governed by man-made law, tied to foreign alliances, and cut off from a unified Islamic political authority. From this perspective, the modern order itself becomes evidence of religious deviation. The consequence is that political dissatisfaction is converted into theological accusation, and theological accusation into militant obligation.

At this stage, the aspiration for Khilafah is not in itself the distinguishing issue. Mainstream Muslim scholarship has long maintained that the unity and moral order of the ummah are normatively valuable.

The decisive difference lies in manhaj and methodology. The mainstream tradition treats reform as a disciplined, gradual, and juristically governed process.

Contemporary militant formations, by contrast, convert the aspiration into an immediate political command, detach it from the conditions laid down by scholarship, and seek to achieve it through takfir, rebellion, and organised violence.

It is this shift in method, not merely the invocation of Khilafah, that marks the transition from reformist discourse to contemporary Khariji-type militancy.

### The Rise of Al-Qaeda<sup>21</sup>

Within this environment, contemporary militant organisations transformed these ideological patterns into structured insurgencies.

Groups such as Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, and Islamic State Khorasan Province did not introduce entirely new doctrines; rather, they inherited, systematised, and operationalised existing distortions across different contexts.

What differentiates them is not the substance of their ideology but the scale and sophistication of its application. Through global networks, digital propaganda, decentralised recruitment, and continuous narrative production, these groups have enabled the ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat to persist and expand in the modern era.

In 1928, Hasan al-Banna founded al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, also known as the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt amid the social dislocation and political humiliation produced by foreign domination and domestic decline. The organisation began as a movement and later became one of the most influential political entities in the Arab world. By the end of the Second World War, the Muslim Brotherhood had an estimated two million members across the Arab world.

Starting from Egypt, it soon spread to Bahrain, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait, Somalia, Indonesia, Oman, Yemen, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, and elsewhere in the non-Arab world through sister organisations inspired by the ideology and methodology introduced by Hasan al-Banna and later

taken to new heights by Sayyid Qutb.

The history and evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood can be discussed separately.

What concerns us here is the evolution and birth of takfir and Kharjeyat from within the intellectual and organisational space associated with this movement in the postmodern era.

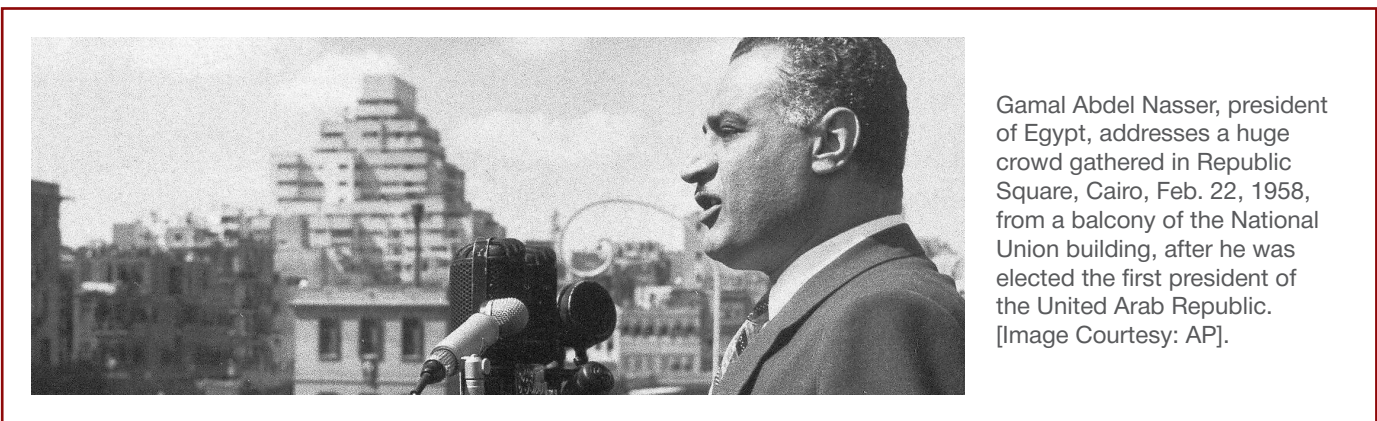
During its initial phase, the Muslim Brotherhood was like many other Islamic revivalist organisations, mainly concerned with reform within Islamic societies and with mobilisation against Western colonialism. However, over time, its methodology evolved, and violence began to appear within Muslim societies themselves.

In 1948, a student member of the Muslim Brotherhood assassinated Egypt's then Prime Minister, Mahmoud an-Nuqrashi Pasha. Following this assassination, along with a series of bombings and other violent incidents, the Brotherhood was banned by the Egyptian government. In retaliation, Hasan al-Banna himself was assassinated in 1949. This left the Brotherhood in a vulnerable condition and made it a magnet for new entrants and emotionally charged young men who viewed these events as proof of the brutality of their rulers.



In 1952, members of the Brotherhood were accused of involvement in the Cairo Fire, which destroyed some 750 buildings and caused heavy human and material losses. Many of the buildings targeted included hotels and entertainment venues frequented by foreigners. In the same year, nationalist military officers overthrew Egypt's monarchy, and it is widely believed that the Brotherhood and its activists supported this development at that stage.

However, relations between the Brotherhood and the nationalist regime later deteriorated, widening the gap between the two. In 1954, it was alleged that the Brotherhood was involved in an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, which was followed by another ban and a severe crackdown on the organisation.



Hasan al-Hudaybi became the second leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and remained in that role until 1973. Although he attempted to steer the organisation back toward mainstream political activity, it was during his period that a figure such as Sayyid Qutb rose to prominence within its ranks.



Hasan al-Hudaybi. [Image Courtesy: Getty Images].

Sayyid Qutb was an educator and a self-styled Islamic thinker who challenged the traditional authority of established scholars and imams and, in doing so, transformed the methodology of the Brotherhood and its affiliated organisations. Here, takfir was no longer confined to carefully bounded theological judgment; it became part of a wider ideological escalation.



Sayyid Qutb. [Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons].

It was Sayyid Qutb who became the face of the Brotherhood's ideological influence around the globe. His literary work spread rapidly through Brotherhood-linked networks across the Arab and African worlds and through sister concerns in other Muslim countries. His writings were later translated into several Western languages.

His most important work remains *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones). This book profoundly transformed the ideological outlook of many Brotherhood-influenced circles and contributed to the emergence of a new formation of Kharjeyat in the modern world.

The crux of Qutb's argument in this book lies in his claim that Islam had effectively disappeared from contemporary Muslim life, that so-called Muslim governments were no longer truly Islamic, and that Muslim societies had reverted to a state of Jahiliyyah, the pre-Islamic age of ignorance. He argued that this condition should be abolished through physical jihad and revolutionary struggle. He also raised the question of Muslims committing major sins, and his broader framework opened the door to viewing not only rulers but eventually societies themselves as having departed from Islam. In this way, individuals were first seen as sinners, then as apostates, and eventually entire governments and societies were placed outside the fold, with activists urged to overthrow the prevailing order altogether.

Although al-Hudaybi wrote *Preachers, Not Judges*<sup>22</sup>, a work widely considered a refutation of *Milestones*<sup>23</sup>, it never gained the same popularity or influence.

This intellectual trend is widely believed to have provided the ideological nourishment for organisations that later emerged in the 1970s, such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, Jama'at al-Takfir

wal-Hijra, and other smaller outfits. Many of these groups were founded by direct or indirect students of Qutb or were deeply shaped by his writings.

Even Anwar al-Awlaki, who later inspired many Western-born Muslims who joined or supported Al-Qaeda, was heavily influenced by Qutb. During his imprisonment, he reportedly immersed himself in Qutb's work and remarked that he felt as though Sayyid Qutb were in the cell speaking directly to him.

Osama bin Laden, too, was influenced by Qutb's thought. Those close to him have pointed out that Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb's brother, who moved to Saudi Arabia, was among the key channels through which Osama came into contact with Qutbist literature.

Egyptian Islamic Jihad was the organisation that planned and executed the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981, in coordination with al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya. These two organisations became among the most lethal militant formations of the postmodern era. Cleric Omar Abdel Rahman, regarded as a prominent guiding figure for both al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad, was later captured and imprisoned in the United States for conspiring in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing.

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya was widely seen as the Egyptian wing operating in tandem with Egyptian Islamic Jihad. After Sadat's assassination, Ayman al-Zawahiri fled to Afghanistan, where Mustafa Ahmed Hassan Hamza and Ahmed Refai Taha joined him. Zawahiri later appointed Mustafa as the emir of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya in Egypt.

During the 1990s, particularly between 1990 and 1997, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya used terror as a tool against the Egyptian state and deliberately targeted tourism, which formed a backbone of Egypt's economy. In those years, they killed more than 1,000 people, including the head of counter-terrorism police Major General Raouf Khayrat, parliamentary speaker Rifaat al-Mahgoub, dozens of European tourists, and many bystanders. This campaign reached its brutal climax in the Temple of Hatshepsut massacre, where 71 tourists were killed, including a five-year-old British child and four Japanese couples who were on their honeymoon.

Zawahiri later surrounded Osama bin Laden with Egyptian ideologues and militants during their time in Afghanistan and became a mentor to him. Zawahiri understood the influence, organisational reach, and financial resources that Osama could bring to the cause he was pursuing.

In February 1998, Osama bin Laden announced his notorious declaration of war against Americans and Jews and their interests worldwide. At that stage, Zawahiri was both a member of that front and the emir of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Later, in June 2001, he merged Egyptian Islamic Jihad into a new entity called Jama'at Qa'idat al-Jihad. This organisation became known as Al-Qaeda, which spread terror across the globe, in general and particularly in this region. To understand the phenomenon of Al-Qaeda, it is important to note that during this merger, a dominant share of Al-Qaeda's central command was held by members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an organisation whose ideological roots trace back to the Qutbist current of the 1970s.



Zawahiri during a 1998 news conference with Osama bin Laden, in Khost, Afghanistan. [Image Courtesy: AP].

Al-Qaeda is best understood as a movement of long war rather than immediate sovereign realisation. It frames itself as engaged in a protracted struggle to exhaust the existing order, expel external influence, delegitimise ruling elites, and prepare the ground for an eventual Islamic polity.

In this sense, it does not usually claim that the caliphate has already been fully established. Rather, it presents itself as fighting to restore such an order through gradual, cumulative, and transnational jihad. This remains radically at odds with mainstream scholarship, which does not authorise takfir and revolt. Still, it nevertheless differs from the methodology later adopted by the Islamic State.

This distinction emerged repeatedly in the SAT Focus Group Discussion with scholars, who emphasised that the issue is not simply the stated objective of Khilafah, but the method by which that objective is pursued. In their assessment, mainstream scholarship speaks in the language of reform, tarbiyah, jurisprudential process, and moral reconstruction.

Al-Qaeda, by contrast, places takfir and armed confrontation at the centre of political change within the post-colonial order. It therefore moves from a normative aspiration to a militant methodology.

In a different intellectual setting, Ali Shariati also contributed to the revolutionary politicisation of Islam, though from within a Shi'i framework shaped by anti-imperialism, martyrdom, and social transformation rather than the Sunni militant genealogy discussed here.

The relevance of mentioning such figures is not to collapse their ideas into one category, but to recognise that the modern age witnessed a wider ideological turn across parts of the Muslim world, in which Islam was increasingly framed not only as a faith and civilisation, but as an urgent political project requiring total societal transformation.

This is also where a limited but important Shi'i perspective may be noted. The problem of takfir is not reducible to one sectarian lineage alone. Although the doctrinal mechanics, theological boundaries, and historical expressions differ substantially across Ahl-e-Hadith, Sunni, Deobandi, and Shi'i traditions, the broader phenomenon of weaponising sacred authority for political exclusion can emerge in multiple settings. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran represented a revolutionary recasting of Islamic politics within a distinct Shi'i idiom and cannot be read through the same doctrinal lineage as Khariji or contemporary takfiri militancy.

Yet its historical importance lies in showing that the modern Muslim political imagination across sectarian boundaries had entered an age of ideological totalization, revolutionary statecraft, and the sacralization of political struggle. This reinforces the broader analytical point that takfir and absolutist exclusion are not the property of a sect, but manifestations of a wider phenomenon when theology is instrumentalised for uncompromising political ends.

### Global Diffusion of Contemporary Militant Ideology

The emergence of Al-Qaeda marked the consolidation of a transnational militant framework, but its significance extends beyond its own organisational structure. Rather than remaining confined to a single entity, its ideological model diffused across multiple regions, giving rise to affiliated movements and localised insurgencies.

Across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, various groups emerged that drew upon similar doctrinal foundations while adapting to local conditions. These included Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Shabaab in East Africa, Boko Haram in West Africa, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). While differing in their operational environments and strategic priorities, these movements shared a common ideological grammar: the expansion of takfir, the delegitimation of state authority, and the framing of political conflict in religious terms.

This phase represents the globalisation of militant ideology, in which doctrinal patterns were no longer tied to a single geography but circulated through networks, training pipelines, and, increasingly, digital communication. The result was not a unified structure, but a dispersed ecosystem of ideologically aligned actors.

Moreover, the pathway from Al-Qaeda to the Islamic State also passed through Iraq. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's organisation, Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, became a critical transitional node in this evolution. It later aligned with Al-Qaeda and came to be known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq, before subsequent organisational transformations produced the Islamic State of Iraq and eventually the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham. This lineage is important because it shows that the Islamic State did not emerge from nowhere. It developed out of earlier jihadist networks, but intensified several of their tendencies, especially sectarian brutality, theatrical violence, and the expansion of takfir.

### The Islamic State as a Doctrinal and Strategic Mutation

The rise of the Islamic State marked an important mutation within this broader contemporary militant field. While it inherited much from earlier jihadist traditions, it differed from Al-Qaeda in both strategic orientation and doctrinal intensity.

Where Al-Qaeda generally framed itself as fighting for the restoration of Khilafah through a long war, the Islamic State claimed that the caliphate had already been realised. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's declaration was therefore not merely symbolic. It transformed the question from aspiration to asserted fact. In the Islamic State's doctrinal framework, allegiance was no longer directed toward a future possibility but toward an already existing caliph. This greatly intensified the logic of excommunication. Those who did not accept the claim could be treated not merely as political opponents or strategic rivals, but as rebels against the caliphate itself.

This is one of the key methodological differences between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Al-Qaeda's manhaj is revolutionary and takfiri, yet it generally situates itself within a preparatory or long-war paradigm. The Islamic State moved further by asserting immediate sovereignty, immediate caliphal legitimacy, and immediate obligation of allegiance. In doing so, it weaponised an even more totalizing interpretation of obedience, dissent, and apostasy. The result was a more accelerated and more exclusionary form of militancy.

Al-Qaeda generally operated through a long-war model that prioritised decentralised insurgency, gradual expansion, and calibrated global confrontation. The Islamic State, by contrast, foregrounded immediate territorial control, overt claims to statehood, and the declaration of a caliphate. Its political project was not simply insurgent but performatively sovereign. It sought not merely to fight states, but to replace them through an immediate and absolutist claim to authority.

Doctrinally, the Islamic State also pushed takfir further than Al-Qaeda had generally done. It expanded the category of disbelief more aggressively, not only toward states and institutions but also toward rival militant actors that refused to accept its authority. In this sense, the Islamic State did not introduce a new ideological grammar, but intensified existing tendencies into a more exclusionary and totalizing form.

Its use of media also differed in scale and method. Where Al-Qaeda had built ideological influence through statements, sermons, and selective propaganda, the Islamic State fused military action with high-volume, visually aggressive, digitally optimised messaging designed for instant global circulation. This made it especially potent for recruitment, symbolic projection, and rapid ideological spread.

### South Asia as a Regional Theatre of Localisation

Within this wider global context, South Asia became a key regional theatre in which these transnational ideological currents were localised, adapted, and operationalised. The region did not produce these doctrines in isolation; rather, it became one of the spaces where global militant frameworks intersected most deeply with local grievances, conflict environments, and cross-border networks.

This wider diffusion was not limited to Arab theatres. Militant formations in Central Asia and the China–Afghanistan–Pakistan arc also intersected with these currents. The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), for example, developed linkages with transnational jihadist networks and maintained ties with the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and allied militant environments. While shaped by its own regional context, it forms part of the broader story of how local grievances, cross-border sanctuaries, and transnational ideological frames merged within the contemporary militant ecosystem.

### The Rise of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)<sup>24</sup>

Keeping in view the emergence of Al-Qaeda in the Arab world and its later shift into Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Afghan war of the 1980s, one can observe that Al-Qaeda found a new environment in which to evolve, nurture, and operationalise its ideology. These two countries were Afghanistan and Pakistan, societies more conservative in orientation and therefore more vulnerable to ideological penetration wrapped in religious language.

After 9/11, President General Pervez Musharraf altered Pakistan’s policy and chose to make Pakistan a frontline ally of the United States, which later invaded Afghanistan. There remains a large debate over that decision, and arguments continue to be made both in favour of and against it. However, there is no doubt that this policy shift had consequences in a region already populated by Al-Qaeda activists and affiliates who had been living for nearly two decades in Afghanistan, the tribal belt of Pakistan, and even in major Pakistani cities.



US President George W. Bush (left) with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad in March 2006. [Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons].

Because of this major shift in state policy, and because of the use of liberal slogans such as “Enlightened Moderation,” Al-Qaeda activists found a new and easy target for agitation and recruitment. This was further fuelled by the operations in Wana and Waziristan, and later by the operation against Lal Masjid in the heart of Pakistan’s capital.



An aerial view of the Jamia Hafsa madrasa, inside the Lal Masjid compound. [Image Courtesy: Inter Services Public Relations/AFP/Getty Images].



Arms, ammunition, and jihadi literature seized from the mosque premises. [Image Courtesy: White Star].



Maulana Abdul Aziz, centre, then the chief cleric of Islamabad’s Red Mosque, during a news conference in February 2014. [Image Courtesy: Aamir Qureshi/AFP/Getty Images].

During the Waziristan operation, a peace deal had been reached with Naik Muhammad, who was later killed in the first American drone strike in the region. That development undermined the peace process for many tribesmen and deepened local anger. It created an ideal opening for Al-Qaeda to exploit the situation.



Nek Muhammad Wazir. [Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons].

Baitullah Mehsud, who had reportedly been captured during the Afghan war and taken to Guantanamo Bay, was later released and returned to his homeland. Instead of moving back into Afghanistan, he turned toward targeting Pakistani interests, especially Chinese and other foreign engineers and tourists, to spread terror and fear. He emerged as the first major leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and was backed in full by Al-Qaeda.



An undated photo from 2004 shows Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud. [Image Courtesy: AFP].

At the same time, the public was angry and confused, and the media environment amplified that confusion. This anger was then pushed to even greater extremes by clerics who openly supported the Lal Masjid's methodology across Pakistan. Approximately 500 clerics from the same chain of seminaries and networks reportedly signed a verdict against the Pakistani state, declaring it apostate and calling upon people to wage physical jihad against the state machinery.

This was a clear instance of the premature and generalised use of takfir translating into organised insurgent mobilisation. It became one of the key factors that led many young men across Pakistan to join the ranks of TTP and its parent ideological network, Al-Qaeda.

Pakistan then witnessed major military operations in South Waziristan, Bajaur, Swat, and, more recently, Tirah. The country suffered heavy human, social, and economic losses in this prolonged campaign to eradicate the menace. To understand how these groups managed to infiltrate Pakistani society, it is necessary to examine their ideology and methodology. Only then can meaningful policy input be developed for legislation, institutional action, and a practical work plan to confront this threat in its true sense.

The case of Baitullah Mehsud is especially important in understanding how global militant doctrine was localised in Pakistan. TTP did not emerge in an ideological vacuum. It drew upon the doctrinal escalation associated with Al-Qaeda, but embedded that escalation within tribal, frontier, post-2001, and post-colonial grievances specific to Pakistan's security environment.

The language of jihad against the state was therefore amplified by local conflict, external

intervention, military operations, media confusion, and the wider narrative that Pakistan's ruling order had aligned itself with an American-led war. In such a context, takfir became not only a doctrinal claim but a recruitment mechanism.

This process reflects a broader pattern of post-colonial militant mobilisation. Existing Muslim states are represented as illegitimate because they are seen as inheritors of colonial borders, administrators of secular law, or strategic partners of non-Muslim powers. Once this framing is accepted, rebellion can be presented as a religious duty rather than a political insurrection. This is one of the central mechanisms through which contemporary Kharjeyat operates.

### The Rise of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)<sup>25</sup>

The emergence of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) represents the latest evolution in the region's transnational jihadist lineage. In many ways, it builds upon the militant ecosystems that previously produced organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). While earlier groups emerged from regional conflicts and ideological movements, ISKP reflects a more globalised phase of jihadist insurgency, one that combines transnational ideology with localised operational networks.

ISKP was formally announced in January 2015 by the central leadership of the Islamic State (IS). The group declared the creation of its "Khorasan Province," invoking the historical term Khorasan, which traditionally refers to a vast region encompassing parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia. By adopting this designation, the organisation deliberately framed its project not as a localised insurgency but as part of a broader global caliphate vision connected to the Islamic State's worldwide network.

The nucleus of ISKP initially consisted of defectors from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), disgruntled Afghan Taliban commanders, and militants from smaller regional groups operating along the Afghanistan–Pakistan frontier. One of the key founding figures was Hafiz Saeed Khan, a former TTP commander who pledged bay'ah (allegiance) to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, providing early leadership and organisational direction.



The ISK founding emir, Hafiz Saeed Khan (second from the left), pledging bay'a to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi [Source: "Bayah from the leaders of the Mujahideen in Khurasan to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," Land of Khurasan Media, January 2015].

Unlike earlier militant formations whose primary focus remained national or regional, ISKP adopted the borderless ideological framework of the Islamic State movement. It emphasised the establishment of a transnational caliphate and rejected existing state boundaries altogether. This doctrinal orientation made the group not only hostile toward governments but also aggressively intolerant toward rival militant organisations that refused to recognise its authority. Through the widespread use of takfir, ISKP declared competing movements, including the Afghan Taliban, religiously illegitimate.

From its early stages, ISKP established operational bases in eastern Afghanistan, particularly in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, regions characterised by difficult terrain, porous borders, and long-standing militant networks. Over time, the organisation expanded its reach through recruitment, infiltration, and propaganda campaigns aimed at marginalised and vulnerable populations across the region.

A defining characteristic of ISKP has been its extreme sectarian violence and indiscriminate targeting of

civilians. The group has repeatedly attacked mosques, educational institutions, marketplaces, and public gatherings, often targeting religious minorities in order to provoke sectarian conflict and destabilise fragile social environments. Among its most notorious attacks was the 2022 suicide bombing at a Shia mosque in Peshawar, which killed more than 100 worshippers, demonstrating the group's willingness to carry out large-scale sectarian massacres.

In August 2021, ISKP carried out one of its most high-profile operations during the chaotic withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. A suicide bombing outside Kabul International Airport killed more than 170 civilians and 13 United States service members, highlighting the group's capacity to conduct sophisticated attacks even amid intense international security operations.

ISKP has also positioned itself as a direct ideological challenger to the Afghan Taliban, accusing the Taliban leadership of abandoning "true jihad" by entering negotiations with international actors and assuming responsibilities of governance. This ideological rivalry has resulted in repeated armed clashes between ISKP militants and Taliban security forces inside Afghanistan.

This also helps explain why ISKP's hostility toward the Afghan Taliban is not merely organisational rivalry. It is rooted in the clash of manhaj. The Afghan Taliban, after taking control of Kabul, established a governance structure in which militant groups, including Al-Qaeda, issued allegiance to an Emir-ul-Momineen and framed the outcome as a shared ideological milestone.

For ISKP, however, this arrangement constitutes a deviation, a compromise, and a betrayal. In its doctrinal framework, the question of caliphate is not aspirational but already resolved. With the declaration of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph, sovereignty is understood to be singular, absolute, and already established. Any parallel authority that does not recognise this claim is not merely a political competitor, but a usurper of divine legitimacy. This transforms disagreement into a theological violation. As a result, the Afghan Taliban are not viewed simply as rivals, but as actors standing outside the legitimate Islamic order.

This distinction produces a clear operational logic. If the caliphate already exists, then refusing allegiance is equivalent to rebellion against it. Under this framework, armed confrontation is not only permitted but framed as necessary to eliminate competing claims to authority. ISKP's attacks against the Afghan Taliban, therefore, follow a doctrinal rationale: to delegitimise, fragment, and ultimately replace a rival structure that challenges its claim to exclusive sovereignty.

In this sense, ISKP represents the most radicalised extension of the same historical pattern. Al-Qaeda has generally framed its struggle as a long-term project aimed at the eventual restoration of Khilafah. The Islamic State, by contrast, asserted that the caliphate had already been established and that allegiance to it was an immediate obligation. This distinction is not merely strategic but methodological. It intensifies the scope of takfir and accelerates the transition from ideological disagreement to violent confrontation. This methodological escalation is central to understanding why Islamic State affiliates direct extreme hostility not only toward states and civilians, but also toward rival militant actors, including those otherwise committed to armed Islamist struggle.

The organisation increasingly relies on digital propaganda, encrypted communication platforms, and decentralised operational cells to maintain its presence. Its messaging often targets younger audiences, presenting global jihadist narratives while exploiting local grievances, political instability, and sectarian tensions. This hybrid model, combining territorial footholds with dispersed transnational networks, has enabled ISKP to remain resilient despite sustained counterterrorism pressure.

For Pakistan and the wider region, ISKP represents a particularly adaptive and evolving threat. Unlike earlier insurgent formations that remained geographically concentrated, ISKP operates through a flexible structure that enables it to influence events across borders. Its operational footprint and propaganda ecosystem allow it to inspire or claim attacks beyond Afghanistan. For example, ISKP affiliates were linked to major international incidents, including the 2024 Moscow concert hall attack, in which 144 people were killed, underscoring the group's global reach.

In essence, ISKP reflects the enduring ideological patterns discussed throughout this study: the expansion of takfir, the dismissal of established authority, rigid interpretations of religious texts, and the justification of violence against Muslim societies in the name of ideological purification. While the

organisational names may change, from early Khawarij to modern militant groups, the doctrinal grammar remains strikingly consistent.

Understanding ISKP within this historical continuum is therefore essential. It illustrates how extremist insurgencies continue to mutate across generations, adapting their structure, propaganda, and operational methods while preserving the same underlying ideological foundations.

Seen across the full historical arc, the evolution is clearer. In the classical period, doctrinal rebellion emerged amid disputes over authority, justice, and arbitration. In the long intervening centuries under Muslim rule, similar tendencies reappeared within dynastic crises, coercive state formation, and struggles over legitimacy.

Under colonialism, the political order of the Muslim world was shattered and reorganised, creating new crises of sovereignty, law, and identity. In the post-colonial age, these unresolved fractures were inherited by nation-states that many ideologues regarded as religiously compromised and externally dependent. It is from this environment that modern militant movements drew much of their force.

The contemporary insurgent is therefore not simply the descendant of the early Khariji in a direct chronological sense. He is the product of a much longer historical evolution in which old patterns of excommunication and revolt were successively reframed through imperial decline, colonial domination, anti-colonial activism, post-colonial disorder, revolutionary ideology, and transnational jihadist organisation. The names changed. The political vocabulary changed. The media environment changed. But the underlying doctrinal grammar remained recognisably similar.



## How did the Islamic State come to be?

**1999**

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi founded Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad

The direct precursor to the entire Islamic State movement

**October 2004**

Zarqawi pledges to al-Qaeda and renames it al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

The group's first major identity

**October 2006**

AQI merges with other militants and declares itself the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)

The first official use of the "Islamic State" name.

**April 2013**

Under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISI expands into Syria and rebrands as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) / Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Same Arabic name, two common English acronyms

**June 29 2014**

Baghdadi declares a caliphate and drops the Iraq/Syria reference, renaming the group simply Islamic State (IS)

The final core branding is still used today.

**January 2015**

IS Central announced its Khorasan Province branch (ISKP / ISIS-K) in Afghanistan/Pakistan

The main regional affiliate uses the "Islamic State" name outside Iraq/Syria.

#### 4.4. Comparative Observations Across the Three Phases

Despite the vast historical distance separating these movements, several patterns remain consistent.

Across the classical phase, rebellion was often triggered by political disputes but quickly adopted religious justification.

During the modern ideological phase, revolutionary thinkers reframed these tendencies in intellectual terms, portraying contemporary societies as having abandoned Islam and legitimising revolutionary struggle.

In the contemporary militant phase, these doctrines were operationalised through transnational organisations that combine ideological absolutism with modern recruitment networks and militant infrastructure.

The actors, political contexts, and organisational structures have changed across centuries. Yet the core doctrinal elements remain outstandingly similar:

- Premature use of takfir
- Rejection of established scholarly authority
- Absolutist interpretations of religious texts
- Moral delegitimisation of rulers and institutions
- Justification of violence against fellow Muslims

Takfir, as explained earlier, is a strictly regulated jurisprudential matter, not a political instrument. Its contemporary use by militant actors reflects not its legitimate application, but its systematic abuse and expansion beyond established scholarly limits.

Understanding these continuities is essential for recognising that contemporary militant organisations are not isolated anomalies but rather modern manifestations of a recurring ideological pattern.



## 5. Practical Manifestations and Propagation Mechanisms

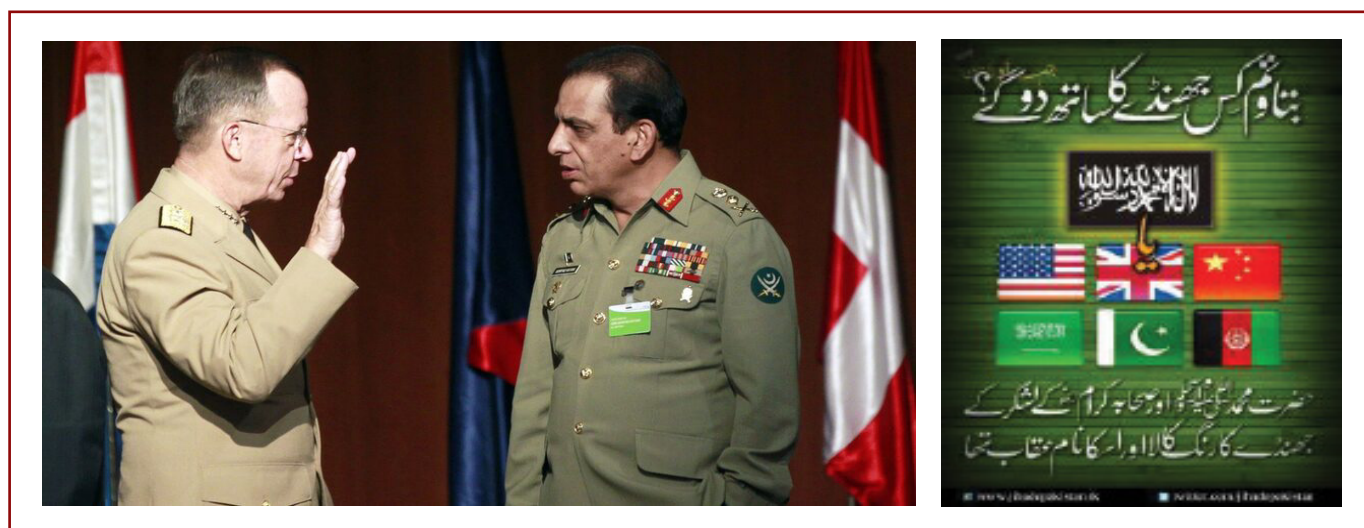
While the doctrinal structure of Kharjeyat provides the ideological foundation, its real impact is evident in its practical manifestations. These are not abstract ideas. They are actively disseminated through imagery, literature, sermons, digital platforms, and social networks, shaping perceptions and influencing individuals across different segments of society.

Some illustrative examples are outlined below.

### Example 1: Visual Framing and Psychological Conditioning

In one instance, imagery is used to construct a binary choice. A picture of General David Petraeus alongside General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani is juxtaposed with images of black flags bearing the Kalimah. The viewer is then implicitly asked to choose between national symbols and a religiously framed alternative.

The messaging is subtle but powerful. It associates religious legitimacy exclusively with one visual symbol while portraying state institutions as aligned with external forces. For an average viewer, particularly one without context, such framing can have a strong psychological effect and reinforce simplified, emotionally driven conclusions.



### Example 2: Digital Platforms and Narrative Seeding

Online blogs and websites dedicated to “Jihad-e-Pakistan” serve as repositories of ideological material. These platforms target individuals affected by grievances such as injustice, corruption, or social marginalisation.

By framing violence as a corrective or religiously justified act, they convert personal frustration into ideological alignment. The process is gradual, beginning with exposure and evolving into acceptance.



**Example 3: Core Texts and Ideological Anchors**

Publications such as “Jihad-e-Pakistan” function as foundational texts within this ecosystem. These works compile arguments, fatawas, and narratives that collectively construct a case against the Pakistani state.

They serve as what can be described as “ideological anchors,” providing a structured narrative that can be reused, referenced, and circulated across platforms.



**Example 4: Militant Messaging through Video Content**

Video sermons titled “Jihad in Pakistan” feature figures such as Ismatullah Muawiya. The image referenced is a snapshot from one such video, where the preacher shown is Ismatullah Muawiya himself.

Muawiya has a documented background involving kidnapping, ransom activities, killings, and the looting of civilians. He later joined the ranks of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), where he rose to the position of a commander.

In the video, he is seen delivering a speech advocating “jihad” within Pakistan.



### Example 5: Institutional Media Production

Al-Qaeda's media wing, As-Sahab, plays a central role in producing and distributing content. Another snapshot from a video titled "Jihad and Its Importance in Pakistan" shows a speech delivered by Ustad Farooq, a senior figure associated with Al-Qaeda. He is often described as a key operative within the network in Pakistan, acting as a close aide to the group's leadership.

The image also clearly features the monogram of the channel. Notably, the video is produced by As-Sahab, the official media wing of Al-Qaeda. This reflects an organised communication strategy rather than isolated efforts.



### Example 6: Online Infrastructure

A network of websites and forums has historically been used to distribute ideological content. These platforms host articles, translations, forums, and multimedia material, enabling continuous dissemination.

Although many of the legacy websites mapped during the 2000s and 2010s have since gone offline, the ecosystem has not disappeared. It has instead migrated toward more resilient and harder-to-disrupt digital spaces, particularly encrypted messaging applications, mirror-based distribution channels, and supporter-driven social media amplification. Telegram has emerged as a primary dissemination tool, while WhatsApp groups, file-hosting services, and repost networks on X and Facebook have become central to sustaining circulation after takedowns. In this sense, the periodic removal of websites has not ended dissemination; it has pushed the ecosystem into more adaptive formats.

Although many such sites are periodically taken down, similar platforms reappear, reflecting the adaptability of the ecosystem.

A network of websites and online forums has historically been used to distribute ideological material, including articles, translations, discussion threads, and multimedia content. These platforms enabled sustained dissemination and audience engagement over time.

Although many of these websites are periodically taken down, similar platforms often re-emerge under new domains, reflecting the adaptability and persistence of the ecosystem.

#### Websites and Platforms

- Ar-Rabat Center for Information: <http://www.ribatmedia.co.cc>
- Ghazwa tul Hind Blog: <http://ghazwaehind.blogspot.com>
- Maktaba Tauheed wa Jihad: <http://toj.hostoi.com>
- Babul Islam Urdu Forum: <http://bab-ul-islam.net>
- Al Mulhima: <http://www.malhamah.110mb.com/>
- Al Mawhideen: <http://www.muwahideen.co.nr/>
- Ansar Urdu Blog: <http://www.ansarullah.co.cc/ur>
- Maqatil Media: [www.m0qatel.tk](http://www.m0qatel.tk)
- Azzam Media: [www.azaammedia.tk](http://www.azaammedia.tk) ; [www.azaammediacell.tk](http://www.azaammediacell.tk)

- Dalbadeen Online: <https://daaljan.wordpress.com>

**Forum Networks**

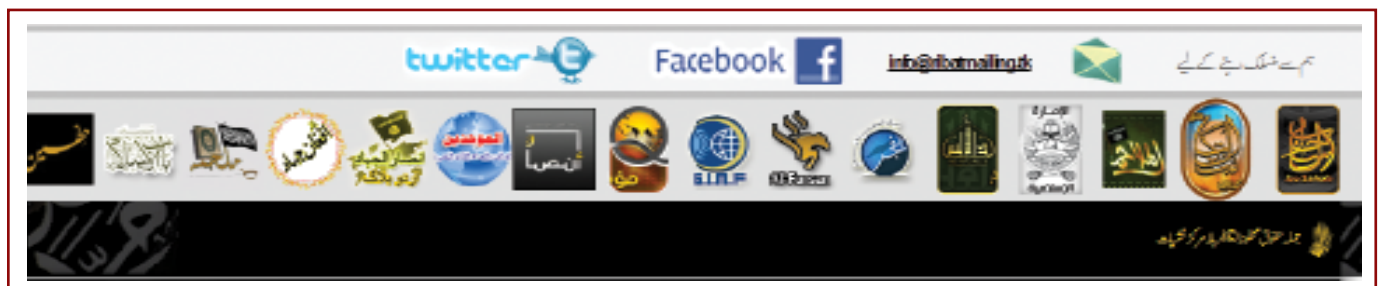
- Jamia Hafsa Urdu Forums:  
[www.jhuf.net](http://www.jhuf.net) ; [www.aqbrigade313.net](http://www.aqbrigade313.net) ; [www.aqbrigade313.info](http://www.aqbrigade313.info) ; [www.behan-ki-pukar.com](http://www.behan-ki-pukar.com) ;  
[www.behan-ki-pukar.net](http://www.behan-ki-pukar.net) ; [www.behan-ki-pukar.info](http://www.behan-ki-pukar.info) ; [www.kuffar-humiliated-in-khurasan.info](http://www.kuffar-humiliated-in-khurasan.info)

**Arabic Websites**

- <http://as-ansar.com>
- <http://www.tawhed.ws>
- <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb>
- <http://www.alfaloja.biz/vb/index.php>

**English Websites**

- <https://ansar1.info>
- <https://www.ansarullah.co.cc/en>



**Example 7: Volume and Translation of Material**

A substantial body of ideological literature has been translated into Urdu, significantly widening its accessibility and local penetration. This includes works by figures such as Anwar al-Awlaki, whose writings have been adapted for Urdu-speaking audiences.

Material distributed through these networks reflects both scale and intent. Translations span classical and contemporary takfiri and khariji texts, including roughly 100 major books, as well as a large volume of leaflets, brochures, and articles made available online. This points to a sustained effort to localise and normalise these ideas.

Publications like Nawa-e-Afghan Jihad further demonstrate this pattern. Despite its framing, the journal primarily focuses on narratives of attacks within Pakistan, particularly against security forces, with minimal substantive linkage to Afghanistan.

Visual content circulating within this ecosystem often includes Urdu editions of widely known ideological works, reinforcing their reach and continuity across linguistic contexts.





### Example 9: Physical Distribution and Institutional Penetration

A particularly concerning aspect is the degree of formalization achieved by parts of this network. Certain publications, such as *Al-Ahiya* and *Rasail-e-Eman*, have reportedly been registered and circulated in physical form. These journals are distributed in mosques across the country and further disseminated through informal networks that extend into corporate environments, educational institutions, and, in some cases, government spaces.

Field observations during data compilation also revealed the continued use of offline distribution channels, including CDs, DVDs, and large volumes of digital material shared via portable media and peer-to-peer transfers.

One notable indicator of their operational confidence was the organisation of an “Open Seminar” in Faisalabad in 2012, where themes related to “jihad” within Pakistan were discussed publicly, reflecting both outreach intent and a willingness to operate in visible settings.

#### 5.1. Penetration Across Social Segments

One of the most concerning aspects of this phenomenon is its reach across different segments of society.

Cases have emerged involving professionals, students, and even individuals from within state institutions. These include doctors, engineers, and officials who, despite educational and professional backgrounds, became influenced by such narratives.

What makes this penetration particularly significant is that the appeal is not uniform; it adapts to different social segments. Among educated individuals, the narrative presents itself as intellectually coherent, morally urgent, and framed as a corrective to perceived injustice. Among youth, it offers identity, purpose, and a sense of belonging. Among unemployed, uneducated, or semi-educated segments, it simplifies complex realities into binary moral categories, offering certainty, empowerment, and a sense of agency.

A few examples of ideological penetration in our society, based on cases primarily from the 2000s–2010s, include:

##### 1. Dr. Arshad Waheed and Ahmad Farooq

Dr. Arshad Waheed, a kidney specialist, was reportedly linked to operational activities alongside Ahmad Farooq, a senior figure associated with Al-Qaeda. Their involvement highlights the presence of highly educated individuals within militant networks.

##### 2. Dr. Umar Kundi

An MBBS graduate from Punjab Medical College, Faisalabad, he was implicated in major terrorist activities, including planning and executing the attack on the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) office in Lahore. He was later killed in a security operation.

##### 3. Engr. Adnan Ahmad

A graduate of the University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore, and son of a serving colonel, he reportedly left for Waziristan to join militant ranks after exposure to extremist propaganda.

##### 4. Dr. Shujah Ullah

A Doctor of Pharmacy based in Lahore, he has been described as an ideological facilitator, allegedly contributing to the online spread of extremist narratives through blogs and forums.

##### 5. Brigadier Ali Khan

A serving officer of the Pakistan Army, he was detained over alleged links with Hizb ut-Tahrir. His case stands out due to the level of institutional penetration it suggested.

##### 6. Dr. Shafiq ur Rahman

A pharmacist associated with Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur, and reportedly connected to networks involved in ideological dissemination.

This demonstrates that the issue is not confined to any single demographic group, indicating the scale of the challenge. Even a partial mapping of such profiles would be sufficient to raise serious concerns for policymakers.

The process of ideological persuasion also differs in method. Among educated individuals, arguments are framed through the selective intellectualisation of religious texts, presenting radical interpretations as analytically superior or more “authentic.” For younger audiences, messaging is emotionally charged, often tied to identity, grievance, and perceived global injustice. For less formally educated segments, the narrative is simplified and delivered through authoritative religious language, making it appear unquestionable.

Taken together, these examples highlight a structured ecosystem rather than isolated incidents. The process typically follows a pattern:

- Exposure through media or literature
- Emotional or ideological alignment
- Gradual acceptance of delegitimisation narratives
- Expansion toward takfir
- Justification of violence

From a religious standpoint, this narrative is often advanced through selective citations of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions, along with references to classical scholars, all detached from their interpretive contexts. Complex jurisprudential debates are reduced to simplified slogans, allowing militant interpretations to appear both accessible and authoritative.

This sequence reflects the operational side of Kharjeeyat as discussed earlier and helps explain how ideological pathways translated into structured militant recruitment within Pakistan.

Following the scale of militant penetration revealed through such cases, the Pakistani state gradually adopted a wider counterterrorism and counter-extremism response. This included large-scale military operations, legislative and regulatory measures, institutional reforms, and a combination of hard and soft interventions aimed at shrinking the operational and ideological space available to such networks. After the Army Public School attack in Peshawar in December 2014, this response acquired far greater urgency and coherence. The National Action Plan was approved as a statewide framework that combines kinetic, legal, administrative, financial, and narrative measures.

Over time, these efforts significantly constrained the domestic operating environment for many militant organisations and disrupted recruitment, facilitation, and propaganda channels within Pakistan. The ability of such groups to operate openly, mobilise at scale, and sustain visible infrastructure was substantially reduced.

After APS, Pakistan combined hard and soft measures to shrink the domestic space for militant networks, significantly disrupting recruitment and operational capacity.

This does not mean the threat disappeared. Rather, it changed shape. As pressure increased inside Pakistan, militant actors found it more difficult to sustain internal networks, leading to displacement, fragmentation, and partial externalisation of their activities.

The issue did not disappear; its centre of gravity shifted.

In analytical terms, the centre of gravity increasingly moved across the border, where permissive spaces, safe havens, and surviving networks enabled these groups to regenerate, coordinate, and project violence back into Pakistan. As a result, the contemporary threat environment is no longer confined to domestic radicalisation alone, but is closely tied to cross-border militant ecosystems.

The challenge in Pakistan is no longer only one of internal recruitment. It is also one of the external sanctuaries, cross-border regeneration, and ideological continuity sustained from Afghanistan.

The persistence of such narratives also points to gaps within existing religious discourse. In many cases, there is insufficient engagement with contemporary ideological distortions, limited access to nuanced scholarship, and a lack of structured counter-interpretations that resonate with modern audiences.

The role of religious institutions and clerical networks is also significant. While many scholars actively oppose extremism, inconsistencies, silence on critical issues, or the presence of fringe voices within religious spaces can create openings through which distorted interpretations gain legitimacy or remain unchallenged.

At a broader level, societal conditions contribute to this dynamic. Weak critical engagement, normalisation of polarising narratives, and the tendency to treat complex political and social issues in purely religious terms create an environment in which such interpretations can circulate and take root. In this sense, the phenomenon is not only ideological but also social, reflecting the interaction between narrative, institutions, and audience.



## 6. Ideological Mechanics and Doctrinal Mutation

The historical survey presented earlier illustrates an important point: the phenomenon associated with Kharjeeyat has repeatedly resurfaced across centuries, appearing in different political environments and organisational forms. Although the actors, contexts, and methods changed over time, the underlying doctrinal grammar displayed remarkable continuity.

Understanding this continuity requires examining the ideological mechanics that sustain such movements. These mechanisms involve specific doctrinal interpretations, rhetorical strategies, and psychological patterns that enable extremist ideologies to transform theological deviation into organised political violence.

At its core, Kharjeeyat functions not merely as a historical sect but as a recurring ideological framework that reappears whenever certain doctrinal distortions and political conditions converge.

In other words, Kharjeeyat is less a fixed historical group and more a recurring ideological pattern. Whenever religious interpretation is severed from scholarly tradition, political grievances are framed as matters of faith, and authority is delegitimised through takfir; similar patterns of extremism tend to re-emerge.

### What Is Wrong With This Ideology?

To understand the behaviour of such movements, it is necessary to examine the ideological foundations that sustain them.

#### Definition of Kharji

The term Kharji derives from the Arabic root kharaja, meaning “to depart” or “to leave.”

In Islamic terminology, it refers to individuals who depart from established religious principles and construct their own interpretations of governance and religious authority.

Classical scholars used the term not merely to describe physical rebellion but to describe a pattern of doctrinal deviation in which individuals separate themselves from the scholarly consensus of the Muslim community while claiming exclusive religious authenticity.

#### Definition of Khurooj

Khurooj refers to armed rebellion against a Muslim ruler.

Islamic scholars historically established strict conditions under which rebellion could be justified, because uncontrolled rebellion often leads to widespread bloodshed and societal collapse.

The emphasis placed by classical scholars on restricting rebellion reflects a historical awareness that internal conflict among Muslims tends to produce far greater destruction than the injustices it initially claims to correct. This concern is visible throughout early Islamic jurisprudence and political thought.

### 6.1. Takfir: Authority, Limits, and Misuse<sup>26</sup>

A critical part of understanding Kharjeeyat lies in understanding the jurisprudential concept of takfir.

Contrary to modern assumptions, takfir itself is not inherently negative. Islamic jurisprudence recognises that a person may commit kufr-e-bawah (clear disbelief) by explicitly rejecting foundational principles of Islam.

However, classical scholars established strict procedures before any such conclusion could be reached.

These include:

1. Clear evidence of deviation
2. Scholarly consensus
3. Opportunity for clarification and dialogue

4. Establishment of hujjah (proof and argument)
5. State-level adjudication

In other words, the authority to declare takfir has never historically rested with individual scholars acting independently, and certainly not with laypersons or militant groups.

The process historically involved dialogue first, clarification second, and judgment only after consensus and verification.

A relevant example in Pakistan's own history is the Qadiyaniyat debate.

The matter was not decided through street agitation or unilateral declarations. It was debated extensively in Pakistan's parliament. Muslim parliamentarians engaged in prolonged deliberation. Scholars presented theological arguments. Only after this process did a consensus emerge that certain foundational beliefs had been denied, leading to a constitutional decision.

This process illustrates an important point that Takfir in Islamic jurisprudence is institutional, deliberative, and cautious.

In the classical Islamic legal tradition, takfir was treated as one of the most serious legal judgments. Scholars repeatedly warned that careless excommunication could fracture the Muslim community and open the door to bloodshed. This caution explains why the threshold for declaring disbelief was intentionally kept extremely high.

Kharjeeyat reverses this entire method.

## 6.2. Takfir as an Ideological Weapon<sup>27</sup>

Takfir, declaring another Muslim an unbeliever, becomes central to the ideology of Kharjeeyat. And once takfir becomes the centre of the worldview, the logic of violence becomes easier to sustain.

Takfir in Khariji-style thought usually begins as a response to the perceived wrongdoing of rulers or to objectionable policies and practices. But this is precisely where the ideological illness becomes intense. What begins as criticism of rulers gradually mutates into the declaration that sinful Muslims are unbelievers. From there, takfir becomes a sword wielded blindly, no longer distinguishing between right and wrong, guilt and innocence, ruler and ruled. Once that sword is unsheathed, it keeps spilling blood until it is stopped by force, strategy, or intellectual defeat.

Therefore, initially framed as a reaction to perceived injustice by rulers, it gradually expands to label entire societies as apostate.

Once this threshold is crossed, intra-Muslim violence becomes justified in the minds of its adherents.

## 6.3. Political Takfir: A Modern Doctrinal Mutation

Another important dimension of contemporary Khariji-style movements is the emergence of what may be described as political takfir. While classical discussions of takfir primarily concerned doctrinal deviation and creedal matters, modern militant movements increasingly deploy takfir as a political instrument to delegitimise rulers, state institutions, and entire political systems.

In this framework, political disagreement is gradually reframed as a theological problem. Policy disputes, governance failures, or perceived injustices are no longer treated as matters of political critique or reform. Instead, they are reinterpreted as evidence that rulers have abandoned Islam itself. Once this step is taken, the authority of the state is no longer challenged merely on political grounds but declared religiously illegitimate.

The logic of political takfir typically unfolds in stages. Initially, rulers are accused of failing to implement divine law or of cooperating with non-Muslim powers. These accusations are then expanded to portray state institutions, such as the military, judiciary, or civil administration, as instruments of disbelief. Finally, individuals who support or cooperate with these institutions may themselves be labelled apostates or

collaborators.

Through this escalation, the boundaries of takfir expand from rulers to institutions and eventually to society itself. What begins as criticism of governance gradually transforms into a theological justification for rebellion and violence.

Discussions during the SAT's consultation with scholars from multiple schools of thought highlighted how this process has become increasingly visible in contemporary militant discourse. Participants noted that the language of apostasy is often used not merely to condemn specific policies but to delegitimise the very structure of the state and its authority. In such narratives, rebellion is no longer framed as political resistance but as a religious obligation.

This development is significant because it illustrates how extremist movements convert political grievances into theological confrontation. Once political disputes are redefined as matters of faith and disbelief, compromise becomes impossible, and violence becomes easier to justify.

Understanding the mechanism of political takfir is therefore essential for analysing how doctrinal deviations evolve into insurgent movements. It reveals how extremist ideologies transform ordinary political tensions into existential religious conflicts, thereby creating the ideological environment in which militant organisations can recruit followers and sustain violence.

#### 6.4. Grievance Narratives and Their Limits

Extremist propaganda frequently claims that rebellion emerges as a natural response to injustice, oppression, or corruption by rulers. While grievances may create frustration or alienation, classical Islamic scholarship historically rejected the idea that perceived injustice automatically justifies rebellion.

Historical precedents illustrate this caution. Reports preserved in early Islamic sources describe people approaching the Companion Anas ibn Malik (RA) to complain about the harsh rule of the governor, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Despite acknowledging the severity of the situation, Anas advised patience and warned that rebellion would only intensify instability and bloodshed.

Similarly, the Companion Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa (RA) strongly condemned the Khawarij and rejected the argument that oppression justified revolt. When asked about unjust rulers, he emphasised that rebellion against Muslim authority was not the prophetic method and that internal conflict among Muslims ultimately produces greater harm.

These precedents highlight an important principle that grievance alone does not produce rebellion. The transition from complaint to insurgency occurs when grievances are filtered through extremist interpretations, transforming political frustration into religious condemnation.

#### 6.5. Manipulation of Religious Texts

A defining feature of this ideology is its manipulation of Qur'anic verses and hadith reports. From early Khawarij to postmodern militant movements, their literature repeatedly shows the same pattern: isolated texts are extracted from their jurisprudential context and then turned into absolute political slogans.

Three clusters of verses are especially prominent in their advocacy:

##### a) The Verse of Tehkeem (How to Rule)

*“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers. (Surah al-Ma'idah 5:44)”*

Takfeeri readings often treat this verse as an unrestricted license to declare any government unbelieving if it does not rule according to their own interpretation of divine law. From there, they may also classify those who do not actively oppose such governments as participants in disbelief. That move is precisely where jurisprudence is replaced by ideological absolutism.

## b) The Verse of Ally-ship

*“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.” (Surah al-Ma'idah 5:51)*

This verse is similarly isolated and politicised to construct rigid notions of loyalty, betrayal, and apostasy, often without regard for interpretive tradition, legal nuance, context, or statecraft.

## c) Verses of Friendship and Enmity

These include verses such as Surah Aal-e-Imran 3:118, Surah al-Nisa 4:144, Surah al-Ma'idah 5:57, Surah al-Mumtahanah 60:1, and related passages invoked to enforce absolutist binaries of alliance and hostility.

The problem, then, is not the text itself but the method by which scripture is stripped of scholarly mediation and transformed into agitational material.

## 6.6. Tawheed al-Hakmiyaah and Jurisprudential Distortion

Another doctrinal shift associated with modern Kharjeeyat is the elevation of Tawheed al-Hakmiyaah.

Classical Islamic theology traditionally emphasised Tawheed al-Ibadah, the unity of worship directed toward God. In contrast, modern extremist interpretations elevate the question of governance and legislation as the primary marker of faith.

This reinterpretation allows militant ideologues to declare political systems or governments unbelieving, solely on the basis of legislative arrangements. From there, entire societies may be labelled illegitimate.

This doctrinal shift transforms political disagreement into theological confrontation.

### Behavioural Characteristics of Takfir-Driven Movements

Certain patterns appear consistently among movements shaped by takfir-driven ideology:

- readiness to declare Muslims apostates
- lack of remorse in shedding Muslim blood
- claims of moral superiority
- rigid and literalist interpretation of texts
- attraction of young recruits with limited theological training
- persuasive rhetoric that sounds scriptural but lacks scholarly grounding

The hadith literature associated with the Khawarij repeatedly describes these features. The Prophet is reported to have warned that they would kill Muslims and leave idolaters, that they would be young in age and foolish in thought, that they would recite the Qur'an but it would not pass beyond their throats, and that they would pass out of religion like an arrow passing through its target.

Another narration states that those slain by them are among the best of the slain, and the Khawarij are described as the “dogs of Hell” by none other than the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. himself.

### Apparent Righteousness

A recurring feature of such movements is their outward religious devotion. The Prophet warned that their prayer, fasting, and recitation would appear so intense that others would regard their own worship as light in comparison.

Historical reports describe Khawarij fighters reciting the Qur'an continuously, even during conflict. The broader lesson drawn by the classical tradition is unambiguous that visible piety is not a safeguard against deviation when understanding is corrupted. Outward rigor can coexist with inner extremism. That is precisely why such groups are often able to recruit the religiously sincere but intellectually unguarded.

### Historical Warning Signs

The warning signs in the hadith literature are extraordinarily consistent with the ideological pattern

discussed above. These include:

- killing Muslims while sparing other enemies
- shallow but persuasive speech from the young and inexperienced
- recitation that does not penetrate understanding or conscience
- a rapid exit from the moral substance of religion while retaining its language and symbolism

## 6.7. Method of Sabotage

In view of the wider chronology of takfiri movements in Islamic history, a broader pattern becomes visible. These movements often emerge at moments of political strain, military pressure, or social uncertainty. They mobilize slogans of “Shariah,” “purity,” and “Islamic rule,” present rulers as apostates, and gradually widen the circle of condemnation until ordinary Muslims also fall within the radius of takfir. What follows is not reform but internal war.

Historically, such insurgencies have not produced stable implementation of Islamic order. Instead, they have weakened Muslim polities, fragmented social cohesion, wasted military and economic resources, and created openings for foreign exploitation. In that sense, Kharjeeyat functions not as a civilizational corrective but as a mechanism of sabotage from within.

The process usually begins with half-understood religious arguments and emotionally charged propaganda. People are presented with selective and incomplete narratives that fuel anger and create a sense of moral urgency. What initially appears as a call for religious purity and reform can gradually escalate, step by step, into accusations of disbelief, the declaration of others as apostates, and ultimately the justification of violence against them.

## 6.8. Kharjeeyat and the Ladder of Escalation

The relationship between Kharjeeyat and terrorism can best be understood through what may be described as an ideological escalation ladder.

The stages typically unfold as follows:

### 1. Doctrinal Absolutism

A rigid interpretation of religion emerges, often based on selective exploitation of jurisprudential texts.

### 2. Premature Takfir

Other Muslims are declared deviant or unbelievers without fulfilling the necessary scholarly, evidentiary, and procedural requirements.

In classical Islamic jurisprudence, takfir is a highly restricted judgment, subject to strict conditions, the competence of scholarly authority, and due process. It is not an individual or political tool.

As a general principle in Muslim societies, a person who professes Islam is to be regarded as a Muslim unless a clear, legally established, and unanimously recognised basis exists to rule otherwise.

### 3. Delegitimisation of Authority

Religious scholars, governments, and social institutions are labelled illegitimate.

### 4. Moral Isolation

Society itself is portrayed as corrupt or apostate.

### 5. Justification of Violence

Violence becomes framed as a religious duty.

### 6. Operational Terrorism

At this final stage, Kharjeeyat produces militant organisations and terrorist campaigns.

Thus, the ladder of Kharjeeyat escalation and the ladder of terrorism are interconnected.

Taken together, these doctrinal distortions, premature takfir, rigid literalist readings of scripture, rejection of established scholarly authority, and the justification of violence against Muslim societies, form what may be described as the ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat.

This grammar represents a recurring interpretive pattern through which theological deviation evolves into political rebellion and militant violence. While the actors, technologies, and geopolitical contexts have changed across centuries, the underlying doctrinal structure has remained strikingly consistent.

Understanding this ideological grammar is essential for recognising how movements separated by centuries can nevertheless reproduce similar patterns of radicalisation and insurgency.

**From Doctrine to Insurgency**

The ideological mechanics discussed above explain how the ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat transforms doctrinal deviation into organised militant movements. Groups such as Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) represent different organisational expressions of the same underlying interpretive framework.

Although these organisations differ in structure, geography, and operational tactics, they remain grounded in the same doctrinal pattern that expands takfir, privileges rigid textual interpretation, and legitimises violence against Muslim societies.

Understanding these doctrinal mechanisms is essential for recognising how extremist movements recruit followers, sustain ideological commitment, and justify acts of violence.

Only by addressing these intellectual foundations can societies develop effective strategies to counter radicalisation and prevent the recurrence of similar movements



## 7. Comparative Continuities Between Classical and Modern Khawarij

The doctrinal mechanics discussed earlier demonstrate how Kharjeeyat functions as a recurring ideological framework. These patterns did not remain confined to early Islamic history. Similar interpretive tendencies can be observed in modern militant movements, making a comparative examination between classical Khawarij and contemporary extremist organisations essential for understanding the persistence of this ideological grammar.

A comparison between the early Khawarij movements and contemporary militant organisations reveals notable continuities. Although separated by centuries and operating in vastly different political environments, both groups rely on similar interpretive methods, rhetorical strategies, and patterns of rebellion. The ideological grammar that defined the early Khawarij, marked by literalist interpretation, premature declarations of disbelief, disregard for established scholarly authority, and the sanctioning of violence against Muslim communities, reappears in modern extremist movements with remarkable consistency.

These similarities demonstrate that contemporary militant organisations are not entirely new ideological formations. Rather, they represent modern manifestations of a doctrinal pattern that has resurfaced repeatedly in different historical contexts. While the organisational structures, technologies, and geopolitical conditions have evolved, the underlying interpretive logic remains largely unchanged.

The following comparisons illustrate the continuity between the classical Khawarij and their modern counterparts, highlighting how similar doctrinal positions and behavioural tendencies continue to shape extremist movements today.

### 7. Distortion of the Concept of Tawheed al-Hakimiyah

#### **Olden Day Khawaarij**

The foundation upon which the Takfeeri and Khaariji groups of the past created chaos against Muslim rulers was the concept of Tawheed of Haakimiyat (Legislation). Adopting an extremely rigid, literalist stance, they misinterpreted the Qur'anic verses on legislation superficially, disregarding the Ahaadeeth (Prophetic sayings) and the understanding of the Sahaabah (Companions of the Prophet).

The verses which they misinterpreted and upon which they built their extremist views, declaring rulers as Kaafir (disbelievers) and rebelling against them, include the following:

إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ﴿40﴾ (سورة يوسف)  
 "Legislation is not but for Allah."  
 وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿44﴾ (سورة المائدة)

*"And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the disbelievers."*

#### **Modern Khawaarij**

The rebellion and havoc created by the Takfeeri and Khaariji elements of the modern era against contemporary Muslim rulers are also founded upon the misinterpretation of these same verses. The ideological basis for both the olden Khawaarij and the modern Khawaarij lies in unjustifiable extremism regarding Tawheed of Haakimiyat and a disregard for the correct interpretation of the above-mentioned verses.

A leader associated with Al-Qaeda and TTP, Maahir bin Thaaafir Al-Qahtaany, states:

"أفتى بن لادن شيخ المفتين أم تروا أنهم حكموا غير شرع أحكم الحاكمين فكانوا به من الكافرين"  
 ( حوار مع أهل التكفير قبل التفجير : ص 2 )

“The Grand Mufti, Usama bin Laden, has issued a fatwa stating: Do you not see that the Saudi rulers have passed judgments contradicting the rulings of Ahkam-ul-Haakimeen? Therefore, they are Kaafir (disbelievers).”

(A Discussion with Those Who Commit Takfeer before Bombings, p. 2)

### Moral Framing of Rebellion as Justice

#### *Olden Day Khawaarij*

The Khawaarij of earlier times claimed that their rebellion was merely against the oppression, injustice, and tyranny of rulers. They argued that they were defending themselves, attempting to remove turmoil created by corrupt rulers, and striving to replace them with pious leadership.

According to them, the degradation of Muslim society was caused by corrupt rulers, and therefore, removing such rulers was considered a religious obligation.

#### *Modern Khawaarij*

The charter and manifesto of the modern Khawaarij follow the same narrative. Declaring Pakistani rulers as enemies of Islam and Muslims, they list alleged crimes of the state and present their own movement as a defensive struggle, thereby attempting to justify their initiation of war.

### Ritual Rigidity and Superficial Piety

#### *Olden Day Khawaarij*

The Khawaarij of the early period were extremely rigid and obsessive in matters of worship.

#### *Modern Khawaarij*

The modern Khawaarij also display similar fanaticism regarding worship. At the same time, they punish Muslims whom they consider negligent in religious practices and destroy property belonging to those whom they accuse of moral compromise, for example, occasional bombings of barbershops and CD shops in Pakistan.

### Expansion of Takfir from Individuals to Society

#### *Olden Day Khawaarij*

A core belief of the early Khawaarij was that anyone who committed a major sin became a Kaafir (disbeliever) and would remain eternally in Hellfire.

#### *Modern Khawaarij*

Modern Khawaarij outwardly deny holding this belief in the same form, yet in practice, they arrive at the same conclusion.

Just as the early Khawaarij declared a Muslim committing a major sin to be a Murtad (apostate), modern Khawaarij often adopt similar reasoning, though expressed slightly differently.

For example, they argue:

“If a person makes a habit of committing a major sin and insists upon it despite repeated warnings and advice, he becomes a Kaafir.”

Or:

“If a Muslim commits a major sin while considering it insignificant or trivial, he becomes a Kaafir.”

## Rejection of Established Scholarly Authority

### Olden Day Khawaarij

The Khawaarij of the past rejected the understanding and interpretation of the Sahaabah (Companions), particularly the interpretation of Mufassir-e-Qur'an Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him).

When Ibn Abbas debated the Khawaarij and answered their objections with clear evidence, the majority of them stubbornly rejected his arguments. Only a portion of them returned to the mainstream community, while approximately two thousand persisted in their deviant views.

### Modern Khawaarij

Modern Khawaarij adopt the same attitude. They reject the Tafseer (interpretation) of Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) and refuse to consider it authoritative evidence, often dismissing it through various arguments.

The leader of the organization Qaedat-ul-Jihaad, Dr. Aiman Zawahiri, writes:

“It is narrated from Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that legislating by other than what Allah has revealed does not constitute such kufr as would expel a person from Islam. We mention these narrations to clear up the doubts of the scholars of the courts... The narration of the Tafseer of Abdullah bin Abbas is not authentic; it cannot be taken as evidence. Even if we accept its authenticity, it still cannot be considered definitive evidence because, according to the correct opinion, the statement of a Companion cannot be treated as conclusive proof.”

(Al-Muwahideen Website)

## Literalism Without Jurisprudential Context

### Olden Day Khawaarij

The early Khawaarij interpreted literally the verse warning those who do not rule according to the law revealed by Allah:

(وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿44﴾ (سورة المائدة)

“And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then they are the disbelievers.”

They applied this verse universally and declared anyone who did not rule by Islamic law a Kaafir, regardless of circumstances.

However, the Sahaabah, Mufassirun (Qur'anic commentators), Muhaddithun (Hadith scholars), and the pious predecessors reached a consensus that the verse refers to major sin in certain contexts, not necessarily disbelief that expels a person from Islam.

### Modern Khawaarij

Modern Khawaarij demonstrate the same obstinacy regarding this verse. Based on their deviant interpretation, they declare Muslim rulers and judges to be outside the fold of Islam. They also declare those who assist such rulers as apostates and consider their blood lawful.

## Legitimization of Violence Against Muslims

### Olden Day Khawaarij

The early Khawaarij considered the blood, life, and wealth of Muslims other than themselves to be lawful. They declared Muslims to be disbelievers if they did not agree with the Khawaarij's takfir of rulers, if they maintained relations with rulers, or if they supported them in any way.

One of the most brutal incidents illustrating this mentality was the murder of Abdullah bin Khabbab (may

Allah be pleased with him) and his pregnant wife.

Imam Tabari, Imam Ibn al-Atheer, and Hafiz Ibn Kathir narrate:

“They laid him down and slaughtered him, and his blood flowed into the water. Then they approached the woman. She said: ‘I am a woman—do you not fear Allah regarding me?’ They slit open her abdomen and killed her. They also killed three women from the tribe of Taiy who had shown sympathy.”

(Ibn al-Atheer, *Al-Kaamil fi al-Taareekh*, 3:219; Tabari, *Taareekh al-Umam wa al-Mulook*, 3:119; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, 7:288)

When Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) learned of the martyrdom of Abdullah bin Khabbab, he sent Harith bin Murrah al-Abdi to investigate the incident. When Harith reached the Khawaarij and asked them about the murder, they killed him as well.

(Ibn al-Atheer, *Al-Kaamil fi al-Taareekh*, 3:219)

## Selective Targeting and Distorted Priorities

### *Olden Day Khawaarij*

Another defining characteristic of the Khawaarij of the early period was their readiness to shed the blood of Muslims while sparing others whom they did not consider immediate enemies. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warned about this phenomenon when describing the Khawaarij. It is reported in the books of Hadith that they would kill Muslims while leaving idol worshippers, demonstrating a distorted sense of priorities and a deeply flawed understanding of the objectives of religion.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) described them as a people who would recite the Qur’an extensively but whose recitation would not pass beyond their throats, meaning that its true meaning and spirit would not reach their hearts. He further warned that they would leave the religion like an arrow through its target, emphasising the severity of their deviation despite their outward religious devotion.

(Bukhari Shareef no. 3344; Muslim no. 1063)

This pattern became evident in numerous historical incidents where the Khawaarij targeted Muslim communities and individuals whom they declared to be apostates, while ignoring or avoiding confrontation with other adversaries.

### *Modern Khawaarij*

A similar pattern can be observed among the modern-day Khawaarij represented by militant organisations such as Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). These groups frequently justify attacks against Muslim populations, mosques, educational institutions, and public spaces by declaring their victims to be apostates or collaborators.

Through the doctrine of takfir, they extend the category of disbelief beyond rulers to encompass soldiers, police personnel, civil servants, scholars, and, eventually, ordinary citizens who do not support their ideology. In doing so, they legitimise violence against the very societies they claim to defend.

Numerous attacks across Muslim-majority regions demonstrate this phenomenon. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, these groups have targeted mosques, markets, schools, and religious gatherings, often resulting in mass casualties among Muslim civilians. Similarly, ISKP has repeatedly carried out attacks against Muslim communities, including sectarian attacks on mosques, in order to provoke instability and deepen internal divisions.

This pattern reflects a continuation of the same ideological logic that characterised the Khawaarij of earlier centuries: declaring fellow Muslims as apostates and legitimising violence against them under the pretext of religious purification.

The resemblance between the old and modern Khawaarij, therefore, lies not merely in their rhetoric but in their methodology. Both rely on rigid literalism, the broad application of takfir, dismissal of traditional scholarly mediation, and a readiness to employ violence in pursuit of ideological goals.

## 8. Behavioural Patterns, Radicalisation, and Recruitment Dynamics

The similarities discussed earlier indicate that the ideological foundations of Kharjeeyat have persisted across historical periods. These doctrines do not remain confined to theological debate. Once internalised by individuals and small groups, they begin to shape behaviour, social relationships, and political attitudes. Over time, such convictions can translate into organised movements capable of violence and insurgency.

This transformation occurs through identifiable behavioural patterns and recruitment mechanisms. Extremist movements rarely emerge spontaneously; rather, they develop through gradual processes of persuasion, social influence, and ideological conditioning that reshape how individuals interpret religion, authority, and the legitimacy of violence.

Historically, movements inspired by Khariji-style doctrines have relied on a combination of psychological appeal, selective religious narratives, charismatic leadership, and social isolation to attract and retain followers. Through these mechanisms, doctrinal arguments move from abstract theological claims into organised militant activity.

Across different historical periods, from early Khawarij factions to contemporary organisations such as Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), similar patterns of mobilisation can be observed. These patterns illustrate how extremist interpretations of religion evolve into movements capable of sustaining insurgent violence.

### 8.1. From Ideological Continuity to Radicalisation Dynamics

The similarities between classical and modern Khawarij demonstrate that extremist movements across different historical periods share a common doctrinal foundation. However, ideology alone does not automatically produce insurgency. For such doctrines to evolve into organised militancy, they must pass through identifiable stages of psychological conditioning, social isolation, and recruitment.

Understanding these stages is essential for explaining how theological arguments develop into operational extremist movements. Through emotional, intellectual, and social processes of radicalisation, ideological doctrines move from abstract belief systems into organised networks capable of violence.

The following patterns illustrate how extremist groups translate ideological narratives into recruitment, mobilisation, and ultimately insurgent activity.

#### Psychological Appeal of Absolutism

One of the most powerful attractions of extremist ideology lies in its simplicity and certainty.

Complex political, social, and economic problems are reduced to a single explanatory framework: the claim that Muslim societies have deviated from “true Islam.” Within this narrative, every crisis, whether political corruption, foreign intervention, economic inequality, or social fragmentation, is attributed to the abandonment of divine law.

This simplification provides recruits with a sense of clarity and moral certainty. Instead of navigating complicated realities, individuals are offered a clear division between good and evil, belief and disbelief, purity and deviation.

Such binary frameworks are psychologically appealing, especially to individuals experiencing frustration, marginalisation, or an identity crisis.

In some contexts, however, this appeal does not emerge from deep theological engagement but from simplified religious justifications that are easily overlaid onto existing grievances, cultural patterns, or local conflict dynamics.

## Role of Selective Religious Narratives

Extremist movements rarely begin recruitment with explicit calls for violence. Instead, they introduce recruits gradually through religious narratives that appear legitimate and familiar.

Initial discussions often revolve around:

- Moral decline in society
- Perceived injustice by rulers
- Global suffering of Muslim communities
- The obligation to revive Islamic values

These topics resonate deeply with many believers and create a shared emotional foundation.

Only after trust is established do recruiters introduce more radical interpretations that frame existing institutions and governments as illegitimate.

## Targeting Youth and Inexperienced Audiences

Historically and in contemporary settings, extremist movements have shown a consistent tendency to recruit young individuals with limited theological training.

Youth are particularly vulnerable because of:

- Limited exposure to traditional scholarship
- Strong emotional responses to perceived injustice
- Desire for identity and purpose
- Susceptibility to charismatic leadership

Recruitment networks often focus on informal study circles, local networks, and increasingly digital platforms.

## The Role of Charismatic Authority

Extremist movements frequently revolve around charismatic ideological figures who present themselves as defenders of authentic Islam.

Their authority often derives not from recognised scholarly institutions but from revolutionary rhetoric, militant credentials, or opposition to established power structures.

Such figures create personal loyalty among followers by portraying themselves as courageous truth-tellers confronting powerful enemies.

## Outward Piety and Moral Legitimacy

A striking characteristic repeatedly observed in Khariji-style movements is their intense outward display of religious devotion.

Members often engage in extended prayers, fasting, and Qur'anic recitation. Historical accounts describe Khawarij fighters reciting the Qur'an continuously, even during military operations.

This visible devotion can create a powerful psychological impression on observers. However, history repeatedly demonstrates that outward piety does not necessarily guarantee sound interpretation or ethical conduct.

However, this pattern is not uniform across all contemporary manifestations. In several localised insurgencies, particularly in South Asia, ideological justification may coexist with limited personal religious discipline. In such cases, religious language functions more as a tool of mobilisation than as a reflection of comprehensive religious practice.

## Variation in Levels of Religious Indoctrination

It is important to note that the relationship between extremist ideology and personal religious conduct is

not uniform across all movements. The degree of religious indoctrination varies significantly, and this variation directly affects behavioural outcomes and operational patterns.

In some transnational movements, such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, ideological indoctrination extends beyond political narratives into personal religious conduct. Members are often expected to conform to strict interpretations of ritual practice, discipline, and doctrinal alignment. In such cases, ideological commitment reshapes both belief and behaviour.

By contrast, in several regional militant formations, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Tehrik-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA), and affiliated groups such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), the pattern appears different. Here, religious justification is often layered onto pre-existing social, tribal, or political dynamics rather than fully restructuring individual religious conduct.

In these contexts, doctrinal elements such as takfir are selectively adopted to legitimise violence, particularly against Muslim targets. However, this does not necessarily correspond to a broader transformation of personal piety or adherence to religious discipline. Acts such as violence against fellow Muslims are normalised and framed as religiously permissible, even where broader religious obligations may not be consistently observed.

This suggests that, in certain environments, extremist ideology functions less as a comprehensive religious system and more as a justificatory framework applied to existing grievances, power structures, and conflict dynamics. In such cases, religion is instrumentalised rather than internalised.

Understanding this distinction is critical. It highlights that not all extremist movements are driven by the same depth of doctrinal commitment, and therefore cannot be addressed through a single counter-narrative approach.

### Escalation Through Moral Isolation

As recruits become more immersed in extremist ideology, a gradual process of moral isolation occurs.

Individuals are encouraged to distance themselves from scholars, institutions, and family members who question the movement's ideology. Critics are often portrayed as collaborators or enemies.

This isolation reduces exposure to alternative viewpoints and reinforces ideological commitment.

### Transition from Ideology to Violence

The final stage of radicalisation occurs when ideological conviction is translated into operational action.

This process often involves:

- Moral justification of violence
- Labelling opponents as apostates
- Portraying violence as a defensive obligation
- Glorifying martyrdom and sacrifice

At this stage, participation in militant activity is perceived as a religious duty rather than criminal behaviour.

### Propaganda and Information Warfare

Modern extremist organisations have expanded recruitment through sophisticated propaganda campaigns.

Digital platforms allow militant groups to distribute ideological materials, training guidance, and recruitment narratives globally.

This creates decentralised radicalisation in which individuals may adopt extremist ideology without direct contact with militant leadership.

### The Role of Political Instability

Extremist movements flourish in environments characterised by weak governance, social fragmentation,

and political instability.

Periods of conflict, economic hardship, or foreign intervention create conditions in which militant narratives gain traction.

### Strategic Use of Violence

Violence is rarely random in such movements. It serves strategic purposes:

- Intimidating governments
- Provoking sectarian conflict
- Attracting media attention
- Demonstrating ideological commitment

Through carefully selected attacks, relatively small groups can exert influence far beyond their numerical size.

### The Cycle of Radicalisation

The ideological, psychological, and operational elements described above form a repeating cycle of radicalisation.

The process begins with doctrinal absolutism and selective interpretation of religious texts. It progresses through moral isolation and ideological escalation, eventually leading to militant participation.

Once violence occurs, it reinforces the movement’s narrative of persecution, attracting recruits and perpetuating the cycle.

Breaking this cycle requires not only security measures but also intellectual engagement, institutional credibility, and social resilience.

### Key Patterns and Implications

The behavioural and recruitment patterns examined demonstrate that extremist insurgencies are not spontaneous phenomena. They emerge through identifiable ideological pathways, psychological mechanisms, and social conditions.

From early Khawarij rebellions to contemporary organisations such as Al-Qaeda, TTP, and ISKP, the same patterns continue to reappear.

However, these patterns operate across a spectrum from deeply internalised ideological systems to selectively applied religious justifications layered over local grievances. Recognising this variation is essential for designing differentiated and effective policy responses.

Recognising these patterns is essential for developing effective responses to extremist movements. Without understanding the processes that produce radicalisation, societies risk addressing only the symptoms of militancy while leaving its underlying causes untouched.



## 9. The Pakistan Context: Political Takfir, Grievance Narratives, and the Contemporary Threat Matrix

Pakistan's encounter with Kharjeeyat in its contemporary form cannot be understood through theology or security analysis alone. Rather, it emerges from the interaction of ideology, geopolitics, militant adaptation, state policy, grievance narratives, and information warfare; the dynamics that operate within what this study describes as the ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat.

Kharjeeyat is not only a Pakistani security concern. Its dangers extend across the Muslim world because it attacks the very foundations of Muslim political and social order.

### 9.1 Kharjeeyat as a Structural Threat to Muslim Societies

The dangers of Kharjeeyat extend beyond isolated acts of violence. At its core, it represents a systematic breakdown of religious, social, and political order within Muslim societies. Expanding takfir transforms internal disagreement into existential conflict, in which opposing views are no longer debated but declared illegitimate. This shift erodes the possibility of coexistence within a shared religious framework.

Such movements also undermine the authority of established scholarship. By bypassing traditional juristic processes and promoting self-authorized interpretation, they weaken the institutional structures that historically regulated religious discourse. In their place, simplified and absolutist narratives gain traction, often detached from context and method.

The result is fragmentation. Communities are divided along doctrinal lines, violence is internalised, and religious identity becomes a tool of exclusion rather than cohesion. In this environment, the distinction between political disagreement and theological deviation collapses, allowing conflict to be framed as a religious obligation.

At a broader level, this pattern destabilises Muslim states by delegitimising governance structures and portraying them as inherently un-Islamic. This creates a continuous cycle in which political authority is challenged not through reform or accountability, but through rebellion justified in religious terms.

### 9.2 Why Pakistan Is Fighting Kharjeeyat

Pakistan's confrontation with this phenomenon is therefore not incidental but structural. Over the past two decades, the country has been directly targeted by groups that deploy takfir-based narratives to justify violence against the state, its institutions, and its population. This includes attacks on mosques, educational institutions, markets, and security forces, reflecting an attempt to destabilise both the physical and ideological foundations of the state.

For Pakistan, the challenge operates at multiple levels. It is a security threat, as terrorist groups seek to erode state authority through sustained violence. It is a doctrinal challenge, as these groups attempt to appropriate religious legitimacy. It is also a societal challenge, as their narratives aim to reshape public perception, particularly among youth and vulnerable segments.

This is why Pakistan's response has combined military operations with legal reforms, strategic communication, and scholarly engagement. The objective has not only been to eliminate immediate threats, but to prevent the regeneration of the ideological framework that produces them. In this sense, Pakistan's approach reflects an understanding that Kharjeeyat cannot be countered through force alone; it must also be addressed at the level of ideas, authority, and interpretation.

In Pakistan's case, extremist violence has not emerged in a vacuum. It has evolved through successive waves shaped by the Afghan jihad, post-Soviet disorder, the post-9/11 security environment, the rise of Al-Qaeda, the formation of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and later the emergence of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP).

What makes the Pakistani case especially complex is that militant organisations have not merely fought the state militarily; they have also sought to delegitimise it religiously. In this sense, one of the most

significant contemporary developments is the use of political takfir.

### 9.3. Political Takfir and the Delegitimisation of the State

As discussed earlier, the concept of political takfir represents a modern mutation of classical takfir, in which political disputes are reframed as matters of faith and disbelief. In Pakistan's contemporary security environment, this doctrinal mechanism has moved beyond abstract ideological debate and into the operational strategies of militant movements. Groups such as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have repeatedly employed political takfir to delegitimise the Pakistani state and construct a religious justification for insurgent violence.

Discussions during the SAT's multi-sect scholarly consultation highlighted that this transformation has become increasingly visible in Pakistan's contemporary militant discourse. Political disagreements, military operations, governance failures, or strategic alignments are gradually recast in the language of disbelief, apostasy, and betrayal of Islam. Once this shift occurs, opposition to the state is no longer framed merely as dissent or grievance; it is presented as a religious obligation.

This dynamic represents one of the defining features of the contemporary threat. The logic typically unfolds in stages. First, rulers are accused of failing to implement divine law. Second, state institutions are portrayed as guardians of an un-Islamic order. Third, those who cooperate with those institutions, whether soldiers, police personnel, judges, civil servants, scholars, or even ordinary citizens, are gradually drawn into the expanding circle of takfir. At that point, insurgency becomes easier to justify, because violence is no longer directed at fellow Muslims in the minds of the perpetrators, but at declared apostates or collaborators.

This mechanism helps explain why groups such as TTP and ISKP can present attacks on Muslim civilians, mosques, schools, and security institutions as ideologically legitimate within their own doctrinal framework.

#### Beyond Reductionist Explanations

Another major concern raised during the SAT consultation was the weakness of reductionist explanations. In Pakistan's public discourse, the issue of extremism has often been oversimplified in two ways. On the one hand, some circles reduce the problem to specific sectarian or madrasa identities. On the other hand, some explain militancy almost entirely as a reaction to state oppression or heavy-handed policy.

Both explanations are incomplete.

Participants in the consultation emphasised that while extremist tendencies may emerge within particular religious circles, the phenomenon cannot be reduced to a single madrasa network, sect, or school of thought. Nor can it be explained entirely through grievance. Real or perceived injustice may serve as a mobilising factor, but it does not, by itself, produce Kharjeeyat. The decisive shift occurs when grievance is filtered through deviant interpretive frameworks that convert anger into takfir, and takfir into rebellion. This distinction is essential. Not every grievance becomes militancy. It becomes militant when moral outrage is fused with ideological distortion.

### 9.4. Pakistan's Security Experience: From Al-Qaida to TTP to ISKP

Pakistan's modern extremist threat has evolved through layered phases rather than a single wave.

The first major phase was shaped by the broader environment created by the Afghan jihad and later by Al-Qaeda's entrenchment in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre. After 9/11, Pakistan became a frontline state in the global War on Terror, and this produced a sharp internal realignment. Existing militant infrastructures, ideological networks, and local discontent created the conditions for a localised insurgent mutation.

That mutation became most visible in the rise of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). TTP was not merely a militant formation; it became the clearest Pakistani expression of political takfir translated into insurgency. It weaponised anti-state sentiment, drew energy from local grievances, exploited clerical and tribal

spaces, and constructed a narrative in which the Pakistani state was no longer simply criticised but religiously delegitimised.

A later phase emerged with the rise of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which introduced a more globalised, sectarian, and media-savvy version of the same ideological grammar. Unlike TTP, whose insurgency was more directly tied to local state conflict, ISKP combined transnational symbolism, digital propaganda, sectarian polarisation, and decentralised recruitment. The Pakistani case, therefore, demonstrates not a single fixed form of Kharjeeyat but an evolving militant ecosystem.

### **Grievances, Reaction, and the Social Battlefield**

One of the most useful contributions of the SAT scholarly discussion was the insistence that public alienation and militant exploitation must be studied together in areas such as former FATA, Swat, Dir, Bajaur, and other conflict-affected zones, military operations, insecurity, displacement, and prolonged instability shaped public sentiment in significant ways. In such environments, some segments of the population became vulnerable to anti-state narratives, especially where militant propagandists could present themselves as defenders of dignity, religion, or local rights.

This does not mean that grievance justifies extremism. It means that grievance creates openings. Extremist groups enter those openings with selective scriptural arguments, emotional narratives, and identity-based messaging.

In this sense, the battlefield is not only territorial. It is also social and psychological.

## **9.5. The Kharjeeyat Paradigm: Sentiment, Supply Chains, and Narrative Engineering**

The SAT consultation also pointed toward a practical analytical model for understanding how extremist movements expand in Pakistan. Their growth often depends on the interaction of three elements:

### **Sentiment Exploitation**

Religious emotions, perceptions of injustice, political anger, and identity-based anxieties are activated and directed toward a militant narrative. Extremist groups rarely begin with open calls to violence. They begin by cultivating emotional readiness.

### **Organisational Supply Chains**

No militant movement survives on sentiment alone. It requires networks of recruitment, facilitation, funding, communication, media production, preaching, and local influence. If these supply chains remain open, tactical operations alone cannot permanently resolve the problem.

### **Narrative Engineering**

Militant movements work constantly to produce and refine narratives. They fuse religious symbolism, victimhood, anti-state rhetoric, selective history, sectarian grievance, and calls for authenticity into a persuasive ideological package. This is one reason extremist messaging often outperforms fragmented state responses.

Together, these three elements help explain how doctrinal ideas become insurgent ecosystems.

### **The State–Scholar–Society Gap**

A particularly important insight from the SAT discussion was the repeated observation that scholars, researchers, and institutions have often worked against extremist ideologies, but not in a sufficiently coordinated way. The issue was not total silence. Sermons, publications, khutbas, lectures, and initiatives such as Paigham-e-Pakistan did emerge. The deeper problem was fragmentation, limited amplification, and weak continuity.

Several participants stressed that religious scholars had been warning about Khariji-style fitna long before the issue entered formal state discourse. Yet there remained no consistent coordination mechanism linking scholars, the state, counterterrorism institutions, researchers, universities, think tanks, and media

platforms.

This gap has strategic consequences. Extremist groups communicate continuously. Their messaging is adaptive, emotional, and persistent. By contrast, anti-extremist messaging has often been episodic, reactive, or poorly synchronised.

### Youth, Media, and the Information Battlefield

Another recurring theme in the consultation was the role of media and communication. Participants pointed out that modern extremist movements, especially ISIS/ISKP, have used sophisticated media ecosystems to recruit and radicalise audiences. The appeal of symbolic projects such as the “caliphate,” cinematic propaganda, high-quality videos, online magazines, encrypted communication, and social media circulation has had a particular influence among youth.

The point is not merely that extremists use technology. It is that they understand information as a weapon. They shape identity, produce spectacle, and create an illusion of power, purpose, and belonging.

In Pakistan’s case, this means that counter-extremism cannot remain confined to sermons, policy papers, or annual conferences. It must also operate in the information space, continuously and at scale.

### A Tiered Understanding of the Threat

A final important point emerging from the SAT discussions was the need for differentiation. Not everyone drawn into extremist narratives belongs to the same category. Some are ideologically hardened. Some are politically alienated. Some are socially aggrieved. Some are merely misled. Some operate under external influence. Some are propagandists rather than fighters.

This distinction matters greatly. A credible national response must separate:

- those who require refutation and reintegration,
- those who require containment and monitoring,
- and those who represent hardened militant threats.

Without such distinctions, the response becomes blunt and strategically inefficient.

### Strategic Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan’s contemporary threat matrix is therefore not simply a matter of terrorism in the narrow operational sense. It is the contemporary expression of an underlying ideological and political problem. Kharjeeyat in Pakistan operates through political takfir, grievance exploitation, sectarian polarisation, anti-state narratives, and adaptive propaganda ecosystems. Its modern manifestations, whether in the form of Al-Qaeda-linked networks, TTP insurgency, or ISKP’s sectarian-media model, differ operationally but share a common doctrinal grammar.

For that reason, Pakistan’s response cannot remain purely kinetic. The challenge is simultaneously ideological, social, informational, institutional, and geopolitical.

## 10. Policy Implications: Toward a Comprehensive Response

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that contemporary manifestations of Kharjeeyat cannot be addressed through security operations alone. Militancy emerges from the interaction of ideological narratives, the exploitation of grievance, organisational networks, and information ecosystems. As a result, effective responses must operate simultaneously at multiple levels.

Pakistan's experience over the past two decades illustrates both the successes and the limitations of existing approaches. Military operations have significantly degraded militant infrastructure and disrupted organised insurgent networks. However, the ideological and recruitment dynamics that sustain extremist movements have proven more resilient. Addressing these deeper drivers requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates intellectual engagement, institutional coordination, and strategic communication alongside conventional counterterrorism measures.

### 10.1. Strengthening the Intellectual Response

One of the most consistent observations emerging from the SAT consultation was that ideological confrontation has often remained fragmented. Individual scholars, institutions, and platforms have produced refutations of extremist doctrines, but these efforts have rarely been coordinated into a sustained national movement.

Initiatives such as Paigham-e-Pakistan, which brought together a large number of scholars to reject militant interpretations of jihad and takfir, represented important steps in this direction. However, participants noted that such initiatives require continuous reinforcement through publications, educational programs, media outreach, and scholarly engagement rather than remaining isolated declarations.

Extremist ideology spreads through persistent messaging. Counter-ideological efforts must therefore operate with similar persistence. This includes the systematic production of research, sermons, public lectures, digital content, and educational materials that clarify the doctrinal errors underlying takfiri movements.

### 10.2. Contemporary Jurisprudential Debates: Madkhaliyat and Maqasidiyyat

Contemporary discussions on extremism have also generated important jurisprudential debates within Muslim intellectual circles. Two concepts that frequently appear in these discussions are Madkhaliyat and Maqasidiyyat, both of which relate to how scholars interpret questions of authority, rebellion, and social stability in the modern political environment.

Madkhaliyat is commonly associated with a current of thought that places strong emphasis on obedience to rulers, the rejection of political agitation, and strict opposition to rebellion against Muslim authority. Supporters of this approach argue that preserving order and preventing internal conflict must take priority over emotionally driven calls for confrontation. In contemporary debates, however, the term is often used polemically to dismiss any anti-rebellion position, even when that position reflects the broader classical consensus of Islamic scholarship regarding the dangers of khurooj (armed rebellion). Analytical clarity is therefore essential. While Madkhali discourse represents one contemporary articulation of this principle, opposition to takfiri rebellion historically predates modern ideological labels.

Alongside this debate, a growing number of scholars emphasise the framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, the higher objectives of Islamic law. These objectives traditionally include the protection of religion, life, intellect, property, and social order. From a Maqasid-based perspective, one of the strongest refutations of Khariji-style ideology is that it systematically violates these higher aims. Rather than preserving Muslim society, extremist movements destroy life, fracture social cohesion, weaken institutions, and normalise violence under the banner of religious purification.

The Maqasid framework, therefore, provides an important intellectual corrective to extremist reductionism. By emphasising the broader objectives of Islamic law, it redirects attention away from

isolated textual slogans and toward the ethical and civilizational purposes that Islamic jurisprudence seeks to protect. In the context of Pakistan, integrating such frameworks into scholarly discourse, educational curricula, and public communication can strengthen society's ability to challenge takfiri narratives at both the intellectual and moral levels.

### 10.3. Engagement with Religious Institutions and Curriculum Reform

Long-term prevention requires sustained engagement with religious institutions, particularly madrasa networks and local preaching structures.

The objective is not to stigmatise religious education but to strengthen doctrinal clarity and prevent the spread of distorted interpretations. This may involve reviewing curricula where necessary, strengthening instruction in classical jurisprudence and interpretive methodology, and ensuring that students are exposed to balanced scholarly perspectives regarding governance, rebellion, and the limits of takfir.

Equally important is engagement with teachers and preachers themselves. In many communities, local scholars serve as the primary interpreters of religious guidance. Providing them with research materials, training programs, and scholarly resources can significantly strengthen society's resilience against extremist narratives.

### 10.4. Closing Ideological and Organisational Source Points

Participants in the SAT consultation emphasised that counterterrorism cannot focus solely on eliminating militants. It must also address the environments that produce them.

A frequently cited analogy during the discussion captured this problem clearly: repeatedly eliminating militants without addressing their sources resembles killing snakes while leaving the hole open. If the source remains intact, new actors will continue to emerge.

Effective prevention, therefore, requires disrupting the ideological, financial, and communicative channels that sustain extremist ecosystems. This includes monitoring recruitment networks, restricting the circulation of militant propaganda, and preventing the institutionalisation of extremist narratives in informal preaching spaces or on online platforms.

### 10.5. Strategic Communication and the Information Battlefield

Modern extremist movements have demonstrated an advanced understanding of information warfare. Groups such as ISIS and its affiliates expanded their influence through carefully crafted propaganda ecosystems that combined religious symbolism, visual spectacle, and digital distribution.

Participants in the consultation stressed that counter-extremism messaging must become equally persistent and sophisticated. Sporadic statements or isolated conferences cannot compete with the continuous propaganda cycles maintained by extremist networks.

State institutions, scholars, educators, and media organisations must therefore develop sustained communication strategies. Television programming, documentaries, digital media campaigns, and educational initiatives can play a critical role in explaining the dangers of takfiri ideology while exposing the destructive consequences of extremist movements.

In this environment, information itself becomes a strategic instrument in preventing radicalisation.

### 10.6. Coordination Between State, Scholars, and Research Institutions

Another structural weakness identified during the consultation is the limited coordination between different actors engaged in counter-extremism work. Religious scholars, academic researchers, think tanks, counterterrorism agencies, and policymakers often operate in parallel rather than in partnership.

A more integrated framework is required. Establishing formal platforms that connect scholars, universities, policy institutions, and security agencies can facilitate the exchange of research, early warning indicators, and intellectual resources.

Such coordination would allow scholarly insights to inform policy responses while enabling research institutions better to understand the evolving dynamics of extremist recruitment and propaganda.

### 10.7. Cross-Border Scholarly Engagement

The transnational character of militant networks operating across the Afghanistan–Pakistan region also requires cross-border intellectual engagement.

Participants suggested that delegations composed of scholars representing multiple schools of thought could engage with religious authorities across the region to establish shared positions rejecting cross-border militancy and delegitimising extremist narratives.

Joint scholarly conferences, dialogue forums, and collaborative declarations could strengthen a unified religious stance against militant violence, reducing the ideological space in which extremist groups attempt to operate.

### 10.8. The Ibn Abbas Model: A Classical Framework for Countering Extremism

Historical experience also offers valuable guidance for modern counter-extremism strategies. One of the most instructive precedents comes from Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) 's engagement with the early Khawarij during the Caliphate of Ali (RA).

When segments of the Khawarij rebelled, Ibn Abbas was sent to engage them intellectually before military confrontation was pursued. Rather than treating all members of the movement as irredeemable enemies, he entered into dialogue, addressed their doctrinal arguments, and exposed their misinterpretation of the Qur'an. Through reasoned debate and scholarly clarification, a significant number of individuals abandoned the rebellion and returned to the broader Muslim community.

This episode illustrates an important principle: extremist movements often contain different categories of participants. Some individuals are ideologically hardened and committed to violence, while distorted interpretations or emotional narratives mislead others.

The Ibn Abbas approach, therefore, provides a layered model for responding to extremist movements:

- **Intellectual engagement:** confronting doctrinal distortions through scholarly debate and clarification.
- **Ideological refutation:** exposing the misuse of religious texts and correcting misinterpretations.
- **Reintegration:** allowing individuals who abandon extremist positions to return to society.
- **Security enforcement:** confronting those who persist in violence and rebellion.

This model demonstrates that effective responses must combine intellectual engagement with institutional authority. Ideological confrontation and security measures should function as complementary strategies rather than isolated approaches.

### 10.9. Differentiating Categories of Radicalisation

A key implication of the Ibn Abbas model is the importance of differentiation. Individuals involved in extremist ecosystems do not all occupy the same position.

Some are hardened militants committed to violence. Others are politically alienated actors, socially marginalised youth, or individuals misled by propaganda. Recognising these distinctions allows policymakers to design more precise responses that combine ideological refutation, community engagement, rehabilitation programs, and targeted law enforcement where necessary.

Without such differentiation, counter-extremism strategies risk becoming blunt instruments that fail to address the complexity of radicalisation.

### 10.10. Toward a Whole-of-Society Approach

Taken together, these observations suggest that countering extremist movements requires a whole-of-society approach. Security operations remain essential for neutralising active militant threats, but they must be complemented by intellectual engagement, institutional coordination, educational reform, and strategic communication.

Extremist movements thrive when ideological confusion, social grievances, and institutional fragmentation intersect. Conversely, societies that combine credible scholarship, effective governance, and coordinated public communication are better equipped to resist radicalisation.

Pakistan’s long experience confronting militant insurgencies demonstrates both the scale of the challenge and the importance of sustained, integrated responses.



## 11. Conclusion: Kharjeeyat as a Recurring Ideological Pattern

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that Kharjeeyat cannot be understood merely as a historical sect or as a label for contemporary militant violence. Rather, it represents a recurring ideological pattern that has repeatedly appeared across different historical periods whenever doctrinal distortion, political grievance, and social instability converge.

From the earliest manifestations during the political crises following the era of the Prophet, through later insurgencies in Islamic history, and into the modern period shaped by revolutionary ideological movements, similar interpretive tendencies have consistently re-emerged. These tendencies include the premature use of takfir, rigid literalist interpretations of religious texts, rejection of established scholarly authority, and the legitimisation of violence against Muslim societies in the name of religious purification. Taken together, these elements form what this study describes as the ideological grammar of Kharjeeyat.

The persistence of this pattern helps explain why movements separated by centuries can nevertheless display notably similar doctrinal and behavioural characteristics. While the political contexts, technologies, and organisational structures of militant movements have evolved, the underlying interpretive logic has remained unusually consistent.

The contemporary militant landscape in Pakistan shows this continuity. Organisations such as Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) differ in their operational strategies and geopolitical ambitions. Yet each reflects key elements of the same ideological framework, particularly the expansion of takfir, the delegitimisation of established authority, and the presentation of violence against fellow Muslims as a religious obligation.

Pakistan's experience over the past two decades demonstrates that this challenge cannot be reduced to a purely security problem. Military operations have disrupted militant networks and significantly degraded organised insurgent capacity. However, the ideological narratives that sustain extremist movements have proven more resilient. As long as the interpretive frameworks that legitimise rebellion, excommunication, and violence remain active within segments of the intellectual and informational environment, new movements can emerge even after older ones are defeated.

In the current regional environment, these dynamics are increasingly shaped by cross-border ecosystems that provide terrorist movements with continuity, depth, and regenerative capacity. The consolidation of permissive spaces, coupled with ideological production and organisational linkages, has enabled the doctrinal patterns associated with Kharjeeyat to persist beyond immediate theatres of conflict, adapting to environments that allow both survival and expansion.

For this reason, the most effective responses must combine security measures with sustained intellectual engagement. Countering extremist movements requires not only dismantling militant organisations but also addressing the doctrinal distortions, propaganda ecosystems, and recruitment dynamics that allow such movements to regenerate.

The historical precedent of Abdullah ibn Abbas' engagement with the early Khawarij illustrates that ideological confrontation has long been an essential component of preserving social stability. Intellectual refutation, scholarly clarification, and reintegration of misled individuals must function alongside security enforcement against those who persist in violence.

Ultimately, the study suggests that Kharjeeyat should be understood not as an isolated historical episode but as a recurring ideological challenge. Recognising their patterns allows policymakers, scholars, and institutions to anticipate how extremist narratives evolve and respond before they mature into organised insurgency.

In the context of Pakistan, this recognition carries particular importance. The country occupies a strategic position within a region where militant networks, geopolitical competition, and ideological contestation intersect. Preventing the resurgence of Khariji-style movements, therefore, requires a coordinated national approach that integrates credible scholarship, institutional cooperation, strategic communication, and

social capacity.

Only by addressing both the ideas that inspire militancy and the environments that enable their spread can societies prevent the resurgence of extremist movements shaped by the ideological grammar of Kharjeyat.

As established, it is not a group but a recurring phenomenon; it does not end with elimination, it endures in the ideas that outlive actors and the environments that allow them to reorganise. States that confront the violence without dismantling the doctrine that legitimises it do not resolve the threat; they merely postpone its return.



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