

Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati as an Islamic Social Movement

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the formation of Salafi identity in Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, an Islamic group that was founded by Halis Bayancuk aka Ebu Hanzala in 2007 in Turkey, by focusing on the role of culture in mobilizing and motivating individuals. This study analyzes Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati within the framework of social movements theory. The research emphasizes three focal points that are practices, text and materiality. To reveal how collective identity shapes individuals and is shaped by them through these three focal areas, a field research was conducted in Bağcılar where the group's main setting is located. Participant observation and informal interviewing were used to highlight how particular religious doctrines are interpreted by the group adherents and put into practice in their daily lives. In this regard, the doctrine of al-wala' wa-l-bara is a significant concept since it separates the outside world as us and them. The doctrine, concerning the perception of reality, encourages believers to show loyalty to Muslims only and disavowal to non-Muslims. This thesis also argues that the group adopts various tactics and strategies in changing circumstances, and targets existing moral/cultural values, political regimes by producing frames and counter-frames depending on its Salafi identity.

33,000 words

Özet

İslami Bir Toplumsal Hareket Olarak Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati

Mehmet Özgün Özkul, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2021

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Doktor Öğretim Üyesi Seda Altuğ Bulut, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, 2007 yılında Türkiye’de, kamuoyunda Ebu Hanzala olarak bilinen Halis Bayancuk tarafından İslami bir cemaat olarak kurulan Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati’nde, kültürün bireyleri mobilize ve motive etmedeki rolüne odaklanarak Selefi kimliğinin oluşumunu incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati’ni toplumsal hareketler teorisi çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Araştırma, pratikler, metin ve materyalite olmak üzere üç odak noktayı vurgulamaktadır. Kolektif kimliğin hem bireyleri nasıl şekillendirdiğini hem de bireyler tarafında nasıl şekillendirildiğini bu üç odak alanı üzerinden ortaya çıkarmak için, cemaatin Bağcılar semtinde bulunan merkezinde bir saha araştırması yapılmıştır. Metinlerde yer alan dini öğretilerin, cemaat mensupları tarafından nasıl yorumlandığını ve günlük yaşamlarında nasıl uygulamaya konulduğunu anlamak için katılımcı gözlem ve informal görüşme metotları kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, dış dünyayı biz ve onlar olarak ayıran el vela vel bera doktrini oldukça önem teşkil eden bir kavramdır. Gerçekliğin algılanmasına ilişkin olan bu öğreti, müminleri, sadece Müslümanlara dostluk gösterilmesi ve gayrimüslimlere ise düşmanlık gösterilmesi için teşvik etmektedir. Bu tez, aynı zamanda, cemaatin değişen koşullar karşısında çeşitli taktik ve stratejiler benimsediğini ve Selefi kimliğine bağlı olarak çerçeveler ve karşı çerçeveler üreterek mevcut ahlaki/kültürel değerleri, siyasi rejimleri hedef aldığını savunmaktadır.

33.000 kelime

To my mom and dad

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Glossary of Non-English Terms

Al- salaf al-salih	Ancestors or predecessors. Refers to the first three generations of Muslims who are the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (the sahabah), their successors (the tabi'un) and the successors of the successors (taba tabi'in).
Al- wala' wa-l-bara'	Loyalty to God, Islam and Muslims alone and disavowal of other religions and non-Muslims.
Aqida	Arabic word that literally means creed. <i>Salafis'</i> understanding of creed is based on <i>Tawhid</i> .
Bid'a	Any religious innovation that has no roots in Islam.
Da'wa	A non- violent form of spreading Islam. Calling or summoning people to Islam.
Dar ul islam	The concept refers to the countries where Islamic law prevails and rulers govern according to the Islamic law.
Dar ul kufr	The concept refers that the countries whose rulers do not govern according to the Islamic law, hence, Muslims cannot fulfill the obligations of Islam, are called non-Muslim state.
Fitna	It refers to chaos and upheaval.
Halal	Any act that is permissible in Islamic law.
Haram	Any act that is forbidden in Islamic law.
Hisba	(<i>al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar</i>) commanding good or forbidding wrong.
Ijma	The term refers to the consensus or agreement of Islamic scholars that constitutes one of the sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

Ijtihads	Islamic legal term that refers to the independent or original reasoning of problems not precisely covered by the Qur'an, Hadith and scholarly consensus.
Jahiliyya	It is an Islamic concept that refers to the era of pre-Islamic Arabia. However, modern use of the concept was developed by <i>Abu A'la Maududi</i> and <i>Sayyid Qutb</i> . Today, some Islamic armed groups refer to the concept to justify armed struggle against non-Islamic regimes.
Kufr	Disbelief or denial of Allah or pillars of Islam.
Manhaj	Arabi word that literally means methodology or praxis. The term refers to the practical aspect of <i>aqida</i> .
Masjid al- dirar	While <i>masjid</i> is a place of worship for Muslims the term <i>masjid al-dirar</i> means a mosque built by hypocrites.
Shari'a	Islamic law. <i>Salafis</i> consider all system that are not based on Islamic law are non-Islamic.
Shirk	It is the sin of idolatry or polytheism. <i>Salafis</i> consider regimes that are not based on Islamic law are <i>shirk</i> systems.
Sirah	The biography of the prophet Muhammad.
Sufism	A mystical form of Islam. Practitioners of <i>Sufism</i> are called <i>Sufi</i> .
Taghut	The term refers to false idol or God in the Qur'an. However, it is mostly used to define rulers and regimes that are not based on Islamic law in today's world.
Takfir	Proclaiming someone as an unbeliever and non- Muslim. <i>Takfir</i> is used as a political tool and a pre-condition for waging war against non- Islamic regimes and non- Muslim leaders.
Taqlid	In Islamic law, it is the unquestioning imitation of jurisprudence.
Tawhid	The oneness of God. <i>Salafis</i> give particular importance to the concept and claim that they build their creed and method on the doctrine.

Tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat The oneness of the divine names and attributes.

Tawhid rububiyya The oneness of God's lordship that refers to creation, bringing into being, providing sustenance, giving life, and causing death.

Tawhid uluhiyya The oneness of worship that refers to asking help, fear, hope, reliance and all other forms of worship.

Ummah It means the Islamic community.

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NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.

Introduction

While I was going up the stairs in the *masjid* to get to the floor where the *halaqa*¹ -called seminar by the group- takes place, I felt both stressed and excited at the same time since it was my first day in the field. When I walked into the hall, I experienced a highly dynamic atmosphere that around 100 people were involved in different discussion circles and debating on various topics while waiting for the seminar. The seminar was announced to be about *sirah*², but it lasted 30 minutes- much shorter than I expected- and during this 30 minutes the topic was, unexpectedly, why *Muslims* should not send their children to the schools of *T.C.*³, why praying in the official mosques that are subject to the Religious Affairs Administration is *haram*⁴ and why *Muslims* should not serve in the Turkish military.

This research project investigates *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat*⁵ as the most popular and hotly debated *Salafi* group in Turkey. The leader of

1 Religious gathering or meeting

2 Prophetic biography

3 Abbreviation of the Turkish Republic and usually evokes a pejorative meaning.

4 Forbidden by religion.

5 *Tevhid* or *Tawhid* refers to the oneness of God while *Sünnet* or *Sunnah* refers to the traditions and practices of the prophet Muhammad. In this thesis, I will use “*Tevhid Cemaati*” when I mention the group.

the group *Halis Bayancuk*, aka “*Ebu Hanzala*”, who is in jail due to alleged terror charges, was affiliated with the *Kurdish Hezbollah*⁶ before. Indeed, his father, *Hacı Bayancuk*, was a prominent and high-ranking figure- a member of the *shura* council⁷- in the *Kurdish Hezbollah*. *Ebu Hanzala* was introduced to the *Salafi* creed by *Salafi* networks during his religious study in Egypt. When he returned to Turkey, he presented his new doctrine to the *Kurdish Hezbollah*. However, he was not appreciated by the group, hence, he decided to found his own movement based on *Salafi da’wa*⁸ in 2007 (Tevhid Dergisi, 2015).

This thesis adopts a social movement perspective to understand a *Salafi* group, based on both sociological and anthropological accounts of identity. Culture, as an essential component of identity, is discussed with regard to practices, text and materiality. In this regard, the main aim is to reveal how particular *Islamic* doctrines are perceived and carried out by individuals in daily life, and how setting-*masjid* in this case- plays a crucial role in the construction of *Salafi* identity and the sense of belonging among the group members. Emotions, cognition and morality are also significant concepts that provide insight and hints indicating how the *Tevhid Cemaati* interprets the outside world and produces frames and counter frames.

Salafism has been a topic of hot debate since 9/11 in academia, but most of the research regards *Salafism* only as a security matter. This seems to be changing in recent years as many researchers begin to examine different aspects of *Salafism*. New studies focus on the questions that why *Salafism* attracts people, what its doctrine and ideology is, how it is related to politics, why it reflects a heterogenous characteristic although it claims a universality and so on (Meijer, 2009, p. 3).

The term *Salafism* comes from the concept of “*al-salaf al-salih*” (forefathers) that refers to the first three generations of *Muslims* whose

6 A predominantly Kurdish Sunni Islamic armed organization that was active during 1990s in Turkey. For a more detailed information. Mehmet Kurt, *Kurdish Hezbollah in Turkey: Islamism, Violence and the State*, 2017.

7 Highest decision-making body

8 Islamic preaching or missionary activity (inviting to Islam)

understanding and practicing of *Islam* serve as a model for *Muslims*. *Salafism* claims a puritanical interpretation of *Islam*, thus it suggests returning to the main sources of *Islam* that are the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*⁹. Also, it requires rejecting "*bid'a*"¹⁰ and "*taqlid*"¹¹. Therefore, *Salafism* is regarded as a literalist perception of *Islam*.

Despite *Salafism* claims purity and clarity in "*aqida*" (creed), it contains many tensions seen in the notions of pioneering scholars such as *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, *Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyya* and *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab*. To what extend is *Salafism* quietist or activist? What is the arbitrament for a ruler who does not follow the "*shari'a*" (*Islamic law*)? How should a society be treated? These are the main tensions that have been challenging *Salafism* for centuries (Meijer, 2009, p. 4).

Meijer states that the success of *Salafism* in constructing a strong identity lies in six dimensions. First, it does not call for revolution and uprising directly, but rather, claims to be superior to its opponents in terms of morality. Second, it claims superiority not only in morality but also in the knowledge of *Islam* as adherents of *Salafism* emphasize much on the study of essential sources of *Islam* (Meijer, 2009, p. 13). Third, *Salafism* also distinguishes itself from others with its adherents' appearances as part of building a *Salafi* identity. Fourth, it promises a universal and transnational identity that underlines the *ummah* (Muslim community). Thus, its supporters believe to belong a much larger community. Fifth, it calls its followers to take action even in its quietists forms by spreading "*da'wa*", implying "*hisba*"¹² and "*wala' wa-l-bara*"¹³. That turns its adherents into strong social actors. Sixth, it provides a set of flexible actions that make it easy to act depending on circumstances and conditions. This flexibility lies in the tensions and fragmentations exist in *Salafism* (Meijer, 2009, p. 14).

9 Tradition or saying of the prophet Muhammad.

10 Illegitimate or reprehensible innovation.

11 Four canonical law schools.

12 Commanding good and forbidding wrong

13 Loyalty to God, Islam and Muslims alone and disavowal of other religions and non-Muslims.

Studies focusing on *Salafism* have increased recently and consist of an interdisciplinary perspective from historical, political to sociological and anthropological. Meijer (2009) examines various currents within *Salafism*, compares *Salafi* movements in different regions, but also provides common fundamentals of *Salafism*. Lauzière (2015) discusses *Salafism*, based on genealogy, as a recent phenomenon that could be traced back to the history of decolonization. Wagemakers (2016) examines *Salafi* movements in Jordan and provides diversity among the *Salafi* community in the country, while Thurston (2016) presents insights from *Salafism* in Nigeria by drawing on interviews with prominent *Salafi* figures. Østebø (2011) highlights the sharp increase of *Salafism* in Ethiopia during the 1990s, following the rapid political transition in 1991 when the Marxist period (1974-1991) ended. Hegghammer (2017) illustrates daily life and cultural dimensions such as music, poetry, weeping and dream interpretation in *Islamic* movements, especially militant-armed groups. Pall (2018), based on extensive fieldwork, investigates the dynamics of *Salafism* in Lebanon and transnational links in shaping the movement in the country.

However, in Turkey, a little academic attention has been paid to *Salafism*. It has been understudied because *Salafi* networks and groups are a relatively new phenomenon in Turkey. According to a 2015 security report, the number of people who support *Salafism* in Turkey is about 20.000 (Çetingüleç, 2020). Furthermore, traditional *Islamic* branches, particularly *Sufi* brotherhoods and orders backed by the regime have deep-rooted tradition and history in Turkish society. Since *Salafism* has been attracting attention in Turkish public opinion for a while, this has triggered disputes among *Islamic* movements in Turkey, especially since the civil war erupted in Syria in 2011. This tension seems to be escalating when Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü- a famous *Sufi* preacher- recently claimed that *Salafi* movements are taking up arms (duvaR.english, 2020).

Salafism's appeal can be seen much better in places where *Salafism* is a latest incident, where existing values are being eroded and where rapid changes are being observed. In these cases, people, particularly youth seek for a new value system and *Salafism* may provide them

what they need (Meijer, 2009, p. 14). Turkey has been facing dramatic social, economic and political transformations in recent years such as high level of unemployment (OECD, 2021)-particularly among young people (ILO, 2021) (Habitat Derneği, 2020), the civil war erupted in 2011 in Syria and 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey (Göç İdaresi, 2021), urban warfare took place between the PKK and law enforcements in 2015-2016 (Crisis Group, 2021), failed coup attempt in 2016 and its heavy consequences that shook the country (Middle East Eye, 2018). These are some of the major incidents took place in Turkey in the last ten years.

While I was thinking on how this social phenomenon occurred, I came across with an interview published on an internet newspaper (Eroğlu, 2018). This interview was covering *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat's*, which is a *Salafi* movement, declaration on their political and religious views in the following days of a series of police raids that ended up with some members –including the leader, *Ebu Hanzala*- of the group taken into custody. As Hammersley and Atkinson mention that sometimes, social events may trigger a research, in my case too, both my academic and personal interests coincided with social events (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). However, then, the question turned into “how to” since I was wondering on the methodology to conduct this particular topic in one way or another. I was already interested in how people coming from different backgrounds perceive religious text and how religion shapes and is shaped by people’s daily life. At that point, I heard that an ethnography class would be opened at my institute and I did not think twice to register in the class.

Della Porta states that different research methods are being used in the field of social movements as methodological pluralism is popular among social movements researchers (Della Porta, 2014, pp. 1-2). The main reasons for scholars to adopt pluralist methods are: First, most of the social movement researchers are problem-oriented than method-oriented. Therefore, researchers are very pragmatic for collecting and analyzing data that makes them to adopt different approaches. Second, there are many social movements researchers from different disciplines,

scholars tend to develop eclectic methodological and theoretical approaches to the field of social movements (Della Porta, 2014, p. 3). Third, researchers are likely to emphasize meso level approaches to social movements which enables researchers to adapt interdisciplinary methodologies and theories (Della Porta, 2014, p. 4).

Although methodological pluralism is considered as a positive characteristics of social movement studies, it is also regarded as an absence and a limitation with regard to the methodological debates in the field (Della Porta, 2014, p. 4). Each method has both some strengths and weaknesses that researcher should be aware of and consider the link between research question and the toolkit to examine the question. While conducting a quantitative research is more strict, qualitative research tends to be more flexible in terms of research questions, theory and approaching to the field (Della Porta, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, whereas the separation is also strict between observer and observed in quantitative analysis in which researcher usually poses as an outsider; qualitative analysis leaves much more space for observer to interact with observed (Della Porta, 2014, p. 7). Therefore, I adopted frame analysis and participant observation as the main methodology to examine *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati*.

In 1980s, criticism showed up in the field of social movements against resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) as it had too much focused on rational calculation. Critics claimed that scholars should emphasize on cognitive process in social movements to understand how collective identities are formed through interpretation of emotions, grievances and ideology (Klandermans, 1984). Frame analysis attempted to examine by providing similar analytical frameworks on how these mechanisms such as ideology and culture work in building collective identity. How ideas, emotions and culture are understood and trigger people to participate or mobilize are the questions which frame analysis tries to answer (Lindekilde, 2014, pp. 199-200). Frame analysis tends to embark on participation and mobilization in movements that how ideas trigger participants to act and outsiders to participate. It emphasizes how movements utilize ideas and ideologies strategically to frame a particular topic (Lindekilde, 2014, p. 200).

Participant observation provides chance for researchers to see how movement identity is constructed and how discourse and framing built with regard to identity. This only happens if researcher conduct an ethnographic study (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, pp. 144-145). Participant observation allows researcher to figure out if there is a contradiction between what they say and what they do. Although movements frame their ideologies and claims publicly, in fact, the reality might be different (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 146). Participant observation is also very essential to see different levels of dynamics and tensions in the movement such as ethnicity, gender and status (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 147).

Participant observation provides much deeper data than observation only. It triggers one to ask various questions: "Who is on the stage and who isn't? Who do the leaders thank and who not? What kind of leisure activities are coupled with political activities?" (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 148) Participant observation showed by shifting the focus towards individual actors that social movements are very heterogeneous places in which different participants have different motivations and backgrounds (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 148). Participant observation also gives very useful insights on the unseen processes taking place in a social movement. It helps researchers to examine the decision-making process, strategy and tactics adopted by the movement as well as how these matters are debated among the participants (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 149).

To conduct participant observation, I determined Bağcılar location of *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* as my setting. Although the *Tevhid Cemaati* has three locations in Istanbul which are in Bağcılar, Sultangazi and Avcılar, in the beginning, I did not know that Bağcılar was the centre. However, after the first visit, I thought it is the right setting for me as more people significantly with different and various backgrounds come to the "*masjid*"¹⁴. Social movements researchers usually conduct a multi-sited ethnography. However, multi-sited ethnography may bring some

14 Place of worship or a building for Islamic religious activities.

difficulties in terms of time and place. It is not possible to conduct participant observation at the same time in all locations (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 152). Therefore, I conducted my fieldwork only in Bağcılar due to the time constraint and limitations of the MA thesis.

In my case, setting played a significant role and shaped my research in a positive manner as it provided me chance to observe many people, socialize and to have conversation with them. The setting, where around 100-150 people gather in every Saturday, also helped my sampling process. I considered three major dimensions of sampling: time, people and context (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). I paid attention to special occasions and events such as *Ramadan* when people gathered and had meal in the evening together during a month that made it easier for me to know many people and build rapport. Also, I figured out that I should pay attention to people with different demographic characteristics such as ethnicity and age as well as people's behavior and attitude when they are alone, together or when the preachers are around them.

Going to the field requires negotiation for access in the first phase of the research. It is important to think about the questions before requesting access to the field: Whom should we contact? To what extent do we get contact with the field? How do we introduce ourselves? It is significant to be careful while negotiating and getting contact in the field as there is always not cohesion among the participants but tension and conflict that the researcher might not be aware in the beginning (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 154). After I decided to conduct a fieldwork on *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati*, I was dealing with the issue of how to gain access to the group for a while. I was trying to find gatekeepers and sponsors who might help me to gain access. Thus, at first, I pushed my classmates from Arabic course where there were some theology students and Islamists I knew. However, all my attempts remained inconclusive.

Then, one day while I was surfing the internet, I realized a tweet on the *Tevhid Cemaat's* Twitter account stating that they have “seminars”¹⁵ on every Saturday at 9 pm which are open to the public. At the moment, I decided to go to the “seminar” and negotiate to gain access to the setting on my own. Also, I decided to send an e-mail to their contact address before going to the setting which could help me to build rapport and I sent an e-mail specifying my interest and my will to participate in the “seminar”. Thereafter, I received a positive answer stating that I could attend the “seminar” on Saturday and the volunteers would help me in any issue if I requested. I was surprised with the language which was like from a media department of a corporate company then a religious movement. In the end of the mailing process, I was highly motivated for going to the setting.

Before going to the setting, I went shopping to buy some loose trousers as I remember from the readings that personal appearance is an important issue in the context of impression management and dressing similar to the people being studied might be significant (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). I was more comfortable about the issue after the first visit when I realized that I had some presuppositions about them. Although the group's adherents had distinctive appearance, there was no certain dress code among the visitors. I put on casual and relax clothes for the following visits.

On Saturday, I took the metro from Taksim to Bağcılar for reaching to the setting and after a while I got to Bağcılar around 20 minutes before the seminar. I walked to the main street and I was surprised when I first saw the setting, that was much bigger than I imagined which was a small and isolated *masjid*. However, the setting was more like a complex that has a wide area for car wash, and places around it, a building facing to the street that consists of a bookstore (*Tevhid Kitabevi*) on the ground floor and a magazine (*Tevhid Dergisi*) in the upstairs. On the left of this building, there was a small cafeteria serving food-drink for the visitors and

15 Although it is literally written seminar on their Twitter account, it is more like a religious conversation.

providing a space for socializing. And there was one more building near to the bookstore that is being used as *masjid* where all the seminars, circles and classes take place.

I walked into the bookstore to buy some books and asked where the seminar will be held. I seemed like an “outsider” or “stranger” and introduced myself in the bookstore to the employee¹⁶, told him about my e-mail and research. He responded that they could help me and told that the seminar will be held in the *masjid* which is next to the bookstore. He also gave me three books expressing their religious thoughts. While I was talking to the employee, I figured out that two people were standing near to me, observing and paying attention to my conversation with the employee. I moved to the *masjid* and stopped in the porch to take off my shoes before going to the upstairs for the seminar. At the very moment, two people – guys in the bookstore- appeared and introduced themselves. They told me that they listened my small talk in the bookstore and they could assist me if I wish as it was my first seminar. The two people I met at first were brothers. While the older one was “Akif”, 29 years old, I don’t know the younger ones – “Arif”- age. They were from Rize but grew up and live in Istanbul.

“Arif” gave me a book as a gift and we went to the upstairs together, they told me to sit anywhere I like. When we got there, people had already come in the *masjid*, sitting on the ground and talking to each other. I found a bevy of people who were mostly young. “Akif” told me that there is no time for joining the circle, but we could sit and talk after the seminar. I sit somewhere close to the preacher and listened the seminar. As I mentioned before, the seminar was a bit surprising for me since I was expecting a standard religious speech on the early history of Islam drawing attention to some anecdotes and the life of Prophet Muhammad.

When the seminar ended, I thought I could talk to some volunteers or preachers and negotiate them to gain access for the following period, because I knew that “there’s a difference between being a place and having access to the social relations take place there” (Atkinson &

16 Employees are not paid but working as volunteers.

Hammersley, 2007, p. 44). However, “Akif” with his brother “Arif” came to me and told that there are “conversation circles”¹⁷ that are formed spontaneously before and after the seminars and I could join one of them. I felt a bit nervous and stressed as I did not expect to meet people from the first day, but it was an important chance for me to introduce myself, gain access and build rapport at the very early stages of the research. I joined the “circle” along with “Akif” and “Arif” and people in the circle introduced themselves as they say a couple of statements such as how old they are, where they are from and what they are doing. It was remarkable that some of them were from Black Sea Region like Rize and Trabzon and, most of them were from Kurdish- populated cities such as Van, Bingöl and Adıyaman. To be honest, I did not expect that much, and I was very glad to have this information in my first day. It gave me very useful insights about the profiles of the people in the *Tevhid Cemaati*.

When it was my turn, I introduced myself and explained briefly what I wanted to do and why. While some of them responded positively, others remained silent and I felt being under suspicion. I was expecting that due to the sensitivity of the topic and the ongoing crackdown they have been facing for a while. There was “Derviş” as preacher in the circle, he smiled and asked me “So are you going to write about us?”. At this point, I faced the problem how much self –disclosure is appropriate. I felt being tested and pushed towards disclosure by being asked why I want to write a thesis on the topic, where I know the community, what I think about them and so on (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

In my first day, I tried to listen and observe mostly, but when people were aware of me as a researcher, they mostly remained silent and the circle turned into a dialogue between me and “Derviş”. At the end, “Derviş” told that they are a transparent community, if I want, I could join their seminars, come and talk to him. He also underlined that they want to express themselves properly and since I am conducting a fair research

17 In circles group members have chance to socialize each other and talk about a variety of subjects from daily life, religious issues to politics. There are around 8-10 people and there is always a preacher who leads and moderate the conversation in each circle.

I am welcomed. He also stated they will be glad if at the end of the research, I become a member of the *Tevhid Cemaati*. It was obvious that they were aiming to convert me in this manner. In order to deal with the issue, I tried to find a balance between being a “complete participant” and a “complete observer” for the analytic work (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 82).

It is not possible to distinguish participating and observing since the researcher needs to be both an insider and outsider. Researchers in the beginning wish to be accepted by the group as one of them. However, this acceptance sometimes requires spending time with the group and sometimes depends on external factors such as age, ethnicity, race and religion (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 158). It is crucial to seek for balance between being an outsider and insider for analytical analysis of the research. If one engages too much with the group, it is difficult to think critical about the subject. On the other hand, it makes one unavailable to examine the subject deeply in which the researcher steps backs (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 159).

In my following visits, I tried to get there early before the seminars in order to socialize with “ordinary” members of the *Tevhid Cemaati* and I tried to put an effort to build rapport. On Saturdays, I usually found people having tea, talking to each other and some of them eating on the tables in front of the cafeteria. The place was providing a great opportunity for socializing. People were more welcoming towards me in the following weeks. Every week, I met new people and had chance to communicate with different people from those who had already been a member of the *Tevhid Cemaati* for years to new visitors. For instance, I met “Selman” working at the airport and we often talked about life. I told him what I am doing besides my master study, what I am planning to do after I graduate and he said that he applied for a job at IOM. Also, I met “Furkan” who was a 41 years-old shoe trader, flying to abroad for his job frequently. Daily conversations, in my opinion, are better to build rapport and maintain a stable and honest communication.

Also, I want to mention the methodological difficulties I faced as well as what methodologically went well. During my field research,

“Derviş” was always there to take care of me. In the beginning, I was glad of his efforts and leading that he was listening to me, answering my questions and so on. And I was talking about the reason why I chose the subject and wanted to conduct a fieldwork rather than writing a thesis by using only written and visual materials of the *Tevhid Cemaati*. I think we both put an effort to build rapport. As a result, “Derviş” started to talk about himself and gave a brief background about his life. He was 30 years old, married and had a son. He grew up in a conservative family and at the age of 19, he met with “Ebu Hanzala” – arrested founder of *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* – so he had been part of the community for 11 years at that time. He was arrested once while he was giving a speech in open public space. As he told me a “*muhtar*”¹⁸ called the police and told there was a terrorist meeting. After our informal interviews that usually lasted more than an hour, I always asked to leave before the praying time as I tried to maintain my role in the field.

However, then, I realized that after the seminars, “Derviş” used to ask me to go down and talk in the cafeteria rather than staying in the *masjid* and joining one of the circles. To some extent, this situation limited my research since, sometimes, it prevented my chance to socialize with others. Although I did not know his intention beyond his attitude, that reminded me of the situations in which gatekeepers may want to control and influence the research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

While “informal interviewing” was also one of the methodological difficulties I dealt with, it also contributed my research in a very positive way. Firstly, “informal interviewing” requires lots of jotting and typing away. It is hard and tiring to remember conversations. I often found myself recording my observations to my mobile phone as soon as I leave the setting and writing my notes, feelings and every detail in my mind when I get the metro. Moreover, when I got home, I used to sum up and summarize the field notes from my voice records and notes. Although, it has difficulties, it is a very useful method at the beginning of a participant

18 Official/elected neighborhood representative.

observation in order to decide the “themes” and then turn the methodology into unstructured interviewing in the next stages of the research. I also find it very useful to build rapport at the beginning (Bernard, 2011, pp. 156-157).

Another difficulty I encountered is “managing marginality” as I mentioned before. Sometimes I experienced stress and tension as I tried to keep some social and intellectual distance for the research. I tried to remind them the “distance” and my individual position by not joining their prayer and leaving the setting when pray time came. Also, it is required to underline the term “reflexivity” while talking about participant observation. It helps the researcher to understand that he or she is part of the social world of being studied. Before going to the field, since there is a limited literature on *Salafism* in Turkey, I focused on research conducted in different countries and I was mostly exposed to the literature on French Salafism. Then I noticed in my first touch with the field that I was looking for bunch of young men lost their ways in this life, suffered from socio-economic inequalities and radicalized to find a meaning which would get them out of this miserable situation. However, reality was quite different. Therefore, it is not possible to eliminate the effect of the researcher on data, but one should be aware of the situation (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p. 146).

Last difficulty I want to mention was the sensitivity of the topic that made me feel stress and tension during my fieldwork. Sometimes I found the situation pressuring due to the security concerns. The place was under surveillance, some group members were arrested because of terror related charges and the police was raiding the *Tevhid Cemaat's masjids* and its adherents' houses. Also, there was always uniformed and civil police officers running GBT (criminal record check) on the way from the exit of the metro to the *masjid* in Bağcılar. Thus, in the beginning, I was not sure if I could conduct my research without any trouble.

Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati identifies Turkey's political system as “*taghut*”¹⁹ and produces frames and counter-frames to delegitimize the regime. The *Tevhid Cemaati* also encourages its adherents not to vote, send their children to schools, do compulsory military service, and not pray at official mosques. In this sense, the doctrine of “*al-wala’ wa-l-bara*” has a significant role in the formation of collective identity and sense of belonging since the principle regulates the relationship between the believers and non-believers both on individual and social levels.

The group has non-official *masjids* and bookstores in Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Konya, Van and Diyarbakir. Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* has a YouTube channel including various visual materials, Twitter and Instagram accounts as well as a website that contains lectures, online books, and a monthly magazine.

Although much work has been done in examining social movements and Islamism separately, there appears to be little literature (Wiktorowicz, 2001, 2004; Bayat, 2005) approaching *Islamism* through a social movement perspective. This study attempts to fill this gap and investigate culture as a significant element of identity since it impacts social movements from recruitment and mobilization to adopting tactics and strategies from among the repertoire of contention. I could also contribute to the literature on *Islamism* in Turkey since there is not much research done on *Islamism*, *Islamic* thought and movements, particularly on *Salafism* except for a limited number of theologians and journalists such as Kara (1986; 1987; 1994), Büyükkara (2015), Demir (2016) and Çakır (1990). Moreover, most of the mentioned studies only focus on main currents, doctrines and texts within Turkish *Islamism* and do not pay attention to *Islamic* practices, rituals, religious experiences and the role of religion in people's daily lives.

The more distinctive studies examining *Islamism* in Turkey emerges from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Tuğal (2009) investigates how *Islamic* politics have transformed and been integrated

19 “Has different meanings. Originally means idol and is condemned on the principle of tawhid as shirk, but the term has also acquired the political meaning of an oppressive or unjust ruler who does not rule according to revelation” (Meijer, 2009).

into capitalism in the Justice and Development Party era through a Gramscian framework of hegemony. Also, he deploys a structuralist analysis and mostly focuses on the mainstream interpretation of *Islam* in Turkey, reducing political *Islam* to the rise of neoliberalism. While Kurt (2017) provides a unique anthropological analysis of the *Kurdish Hezbollah* in Turkey and ethnographic research comprised of interviews with the group members, he neglects contextual features such as socioeconomic and sociopolitical circumstances.

This thesis aims to explore the role of culture in forming collective identity and decision-making process for the group's tactics/strategies and how the group frames particular topics regarding its collective identity. I try to answer three research question 1) What is *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat's* collective identity 2) How is collective identity related to *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat's* political and social opinions 3) How *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* motivates and mobilizes individuals.

I will briefly provide an outline of the thesis' chapters. In the second chapter, firstly, I will describe Hegghammer's model discussing theology and preference-based approaches on how to distinguish *Islamic* movements. Then, Wiktorowicz's and Wagemakers's categorizations of *Salafi* movements based on *Salafis'* political orientations will be discussed. In the second part of this chapter, social movements literature will be submitted. I will continue to clarify why *Islamic* movements could be understood better through social movements perspective, hence, the application of social movements theory to *Islamic* groups will be illustrated. Lastly, new social movements theory with a focus on collective identity and framing will be elaborated since *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* is examined within the framework of new social movements in the following chapters.

In the third chapter, I will display *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat's aqida* (creed) and *manhaj* (method) since these concepts have crucial roles in formation of the group's identity. Also, framing analysis will be furnished for examining how various tactics and strategies, with regard to the concepts mentioned above, are adopted by the *Tevhid Cemaati* in different

contexts. Therefore, I will try to depict the findings of participant observation and informal interviews as well as examples from the *Tevhid Cemaat's* texts and social media accounts to point out the group's different framing approaches.

In the fourth chapter, I will analyze the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* as the concept plays a significant role in determining relationship between believers and non-believers. Thus, a brief historical background of the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* will be introduced to reveal how the concept has been used in different historical contexts. Then, I will show how *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* articulates the doctrine in the group's written and visual materials in addition to the empirical results of the fieldwork which investigates that to what extent the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* is shaped by and shapes the group's adherents' attitudes towards others.

As concluding remarks, finally, I will present an overview of the thesis by underlining the main results and findings of my research. Also, I will highlight the limitations and missing pieces in this research. Lastly, I will try to discuss how this thesis could be extended for future research.

Islamism as a Social Movement

This chapter discusses different explanatory models to identify *Islamic* movements and outlines *Islamism* within the theoretical framework of social movements. Firstly, main approaches and theories in the social movements literature will be introduced. Particular attention will be given to new social movements, collective identity and framing theory as these approaches mostly used in analyzing the phenomenon for this research. Secondly, the chapter will continue by discussing why *Islamism* could be understood better through social movements perspective. Moreover, the paradigm shifts that both disciplines (social movements and *Islamic* studies) faced in the last decades will be explained. Lastly, I will try to illustrate Hegghammer's (2009) approach towards *Islamic* movements in addition to Wiktorowicz's (2006) and Wagemakers's (2016; 2020) categorizations of various *Salafi* movements based on *Salafis'* political views.

§ 2.1 What is a Social Movement?

What does motivate individuals to mobilize? Why do individuals decide to take action? How do individuals come together and form a movement? Social movements scholars, attracted by such questions, have attempted to examine the dynamics of collective action. Thus, scholars developed

various theories depending on different analytical questions and preferences. For instance, Diani and McAdam emphasize “networks” to display “complexity” and “heterogeneity” of social movements (Diani, 2003, p. 1). While Tarrow scrutinizes four concepts which are “collective challenge”, “common purpose”, “social solidarity”, and “sustained interaction” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 9), Jasper, standing for a more culturalist approach, embarks on three concepts to define social movements that are “sustained”, “intentional” and “foster or retard” (Jasper, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, Della Porta and Diani investigate four distinctive characteristics of social movements as “conflictual collective action”, “dense informal networks” and “collective identity” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 21).

It is important to identify the notion of social movement before explaining diverse approaches within the theoretical framework. Despite there has been an ongoing debate on the very nature of social movements, it has been compromised that social movements are sustained, rational, non-institutional challenges against established system such as social values, political regime, elites and other groups. In this regard, social movements differentiate from demonstrations, strikes, riots and rallies. Yet, all could be regarded as continuous collective action.

The social movement theory aroused as an attempt to understand how, why and in which conditions individuals engage in continuous collective action against authorities. Therefore, a variety of models endeavored to reveal the complex and multidimensional nature of social movements. Early thinkers who were mostly elites, regarded almost every form of “collective behavior” as a threat to the authority and feared of its “destructive” characteristic, discussed social movements by underlining three aspects: extremism, deprivation and violence. In consequence of the French Revolution and Industrialism, theorists particularly with Durkheim’s influence, considered social movements by virtue of anomie and social disorganization (Tarrow, 2011, p. 8).

Since this thesis mainly focuses on new social movements, framing and collective identity approach which represents more of a cultural framework, I will track Jasper’s (2014) categorization of theoretical orientations within the social movement theory. Consequently, I will review

“structural and structural-historical theories”, “psychological theories”, “cultural- historical theories” and “cultural theories”. There are two main traditions in social movement theory that have different level of focus as macrosocial and microsocial (Jasper, 2014, p. 21).

Table 2.1 Four major theoretical orientations

Level of focus	Images of human motivation	
	Restricted incentives	Diverse cultural meanings
Macrosocial	Structural and structural-historical theories: Resource mobilization, political process, Marxism, Tilly	Cultural-historical theories: Touraine
Microsocial	Psychological theories: Crowd theory, grievance theory, Freud, rational choice theory	Cultural theories: Framing, narrative and emotion theories; social psychology

SOURCE Jasper (2014).

Grievance theory focused on psychological deprivation of individuals that trigger their angers and complaints and make them to hit to the streets. Grievance theory -also known for “collective behavior” theory - mostly approached social movements from a social-psychological perspective as exceptions and abnormal. Collective behavior theorists developed a mechanical and functionalist understanding of society in which dysfunctionality and anomies provokes a variety of collective behavior. This theory also known as crowd theory, tends to consider people who join a movement are isolated and alienated individuals (Jasper, 2014, p. 22; Tarrow, 2011, p. 22).

Another psychological theory occurred as a response to the crowd theory is rational choice theory. Olson (1971), influenced by microeconomics, tried to find an answer to the question of what attracts people who act for collective good. This theory stresses that people are rational individuals, in response to the crowd theory, who seek to maximize their

interests. Rational choice theory, derived from economics, can only highlight a very limited part of mobilization since its main focus is on incentives and interests (Jasper, 2014, p. 23; Tarrow, 2011, p. 23).

In 1970s, structural theories replaced with the psychological theory and mostly abandoned its approaches to social movements. Structural theories claim that it is external factors and institutions which push individuals to join social movements. Structural theories also regard resources as crucial for social movements. Resource mobilization theory, developed by McCharty and Zald (1977), underlines how resources such as money, site, time skills, etc. play important role particularly for social movement organizations in order to exist. Today, this theory is regarded in explaining interest groups which are mostly formal, well-structured organizations rather than social movements. McCarthy and Zald contributed to Olson's theory by underlying the resources which are available for social movements. While they mentioned the importance of formal organizations, they missed the fact that many movements occurred in 1960s and 1970s, emerged without a formal organization (Jasper, 2014, pp. 24-25; Tarrow, 2011, p. 24).

A more political approach developed for social movements is known as political opportunity structure or political process theory. This theory is also considered within the structural theories that draw attention on external factors such as tension between elites, building alliances with different groups. Tilly (1978) was one of the early and pioneering scholars played an important role in developing the theory. Tilly provided some useful concepts to illustrate the condition for mobilization which are "opportunity/threat to challengers and facilitation/repression by authorities". Tilly assumed national social movements as natural result of nation states in which strategy, structure and success depend on. While resources mobilization theories stress on money, political opportunity theory stress on coercion. Both these theories ignore motivations and cultural dynamics for protests. Furthermore, political process model failed to reveal the dynamics and mechanisms that bring different actors and elements together or how participants interact with each other and with others (Jasper, 2014, pp. 25-26; Tarrow, 2011, pp. 26-27).

Moreover, there are historical theories which can exist as structural or cultural forms. These are: Marx's structural interpretation of history that is determined by technologies of production; Alain Touraine's (1981) cultural perspective emphasizing post-industrial society in which the main struggle is not labor vs capital but over meanings; Tilly's approach on modernization which brought institutions and transformations that led to the emergence of social movements (Jasper, 2014, pp. 27-28).

Since this thesis does not focus directly on the theoretical and methodological debates and discussions on social movement theory, there is no need to elaborate the literature anymore. Yet, main approaches mentioned above will be presented in a contextual relationship in the following chapters. Before addressing the collaboration between social movement theory and *Islamism*, I like to indicate that this research embarks on a cultural approach concentrating on more observable facts than big picture like history and society. It claims that it is hard to make an inference on unobservable things. Thus, cultural approach examines how individuals act and how their interactions impact a social movement in micro social level. A mechanisms approach, suggested by Jasper, includes culture but also looks for other factors and does not ignore non-cultural theories. It considers them as a whole rather than distinct theories since both psychological and structural factors play an essential role for social movements (Jasper, 2014, pp. 29-30).

On the following pages in this chapter, I will draw attention to the three concepts which are essential for this research. These concepts are new social movements, collective identity and framing analysis. I will demonstrate how the *Islamic* movement studied in this thesis, "*Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati*", fits in the theoretical framework shaped by these three concepts. On the one hand, mentioning these three concepts does not amount the neglect of structural approaches mentioned above like "resource mobilization theory" and "political opportunity structure". Even though my main focus is on cultural approach, non-cultural factors interact closely with culture as they reflect cultural understandings (Jasper, 2014, p. 9).

§ 2.2 New Social Movements, Collective Identity, Framing

In response to psychological and structural approaches to social movements, 1960s witnessed a new form of collective action that has focused on culture and identity since then. The characteristic of the conflict would be shaped by “postindustrial” and “post-Fordist” era in which the divide is not class-based anymore but identity-based (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, pp. 6-7-8). Indeed, resource mobilization theory and political process model examined how social movements benefit from resources rather than why social movements emerge. New social movements theorists take account of the identity construction process and how macro historical developments such as urbanization, industrialization shape the identity construction process (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, pp. 286-287). Moreover, new social movements have shifted from targeting the state to targeting the society and everyday life (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1981).

In this regard, *Islamic* movements that seek to build an *Islamic* identity in order to reshape society in the long term, resemble new social movements. While identity formation is the main goal, reshaping state and society is linked to this long-term strategy. Thus, everyday practices are targeted by *Islamic* groups very often (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 423-424). Whereas new social movements are considered non-political as they do not target state directly, *Islamic* movements’ utopia of a society based on *Islamic* identity can challenge state.

New social movement theory provides a useful perspective focusing on culture and society which are driving forces for social change. It also helps to build a bridge between society-based and state-based approaches to social movements (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 423-424). Furthermore, new social movement scholars have enriched the literature in two ways. First, they put the agency in the center and, they distinguished the creative aspects of new movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 10).

Culture, as a significant element of identity, reflects a key role for new social movements. Furthermore, it impacts social movements from recruitment and mobilization to adopting tactics and strategies from among the repertoire of contention. Culture consists of shared values,

ideas and feelings and the ways we express them. We interpret the world and others through cultural process. Culture includes three dimensions: “cognition”, “emotion” and “morality”. “Cognition” refers to the mental process of understanding and meaning the world through ideas, experiences and beliefs. Framing is also part of cognition. Then, it is important to consider “cognition” in terms of how ideas motivate individuals, what impacts experiences and beliefs have on them (Jasper, 2014, pp. 6-7).

At that point, “emotions” play an important role for us to filter “cognition” and lead us for processing information and taking action. Therefore, “cognition” and “emotions” should be considered together as part of culture. The last component of culture is “morality” that consists of two parts as principles (do’s and don’ts) and intuitions (more likely felt). Intuitions are key for driving people into action (Jasper, 2014, pp. 7-8).

Since identity politics has become an attractive area of interest, social movements scholars have considered “collective identity” as a useful model to highlight social movements’ dynamics beyond structural factors. In this sense, collective identity is defined “as an individual’s perception of shared status or relation” in terms of cognitive, emotional and moral that compose culture. Collective identity can be constructed through imagination or experience and, is represented in symbols, narratives and rituals (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285).

As collective identity focuses more on the question of “why” rather than “how” with regard to the issue of mobilization, scholars tried to answer four questions (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, pp. 283-284). The first one was why individuals decide to mobilize. Collective identity model suggests looking at the process of formation of collective identities to understand why individuals come together. The second one examines individuals’ motivations for mobilization as identity represents a crucial role for people to act. The third question attempts to highlight the rationale behind choosing tactics and strategies by movements. The last question emphasizes how movements consider reality, themselves and are considered by others (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, pp. 284-285-286).

Researchers have started to examine the role of culture and meaning in social movement studies since 1980s that how movements construct themselves through interpretation of social reality. The term “framing” addresses to the process of meaning construction (Goffman, 1974). In the process of meaning construction, three framing tasks perform for social movements. These are “diagnostic framing”, “prognostic framing” and “motivational framing” (Benford & Snow, 2000). While “diagnostic framing” refers to the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality, “prognostic framing” refers to the solution of identified problem that includes tactics and strategies. Lastly, “motivational framing” indicates the reason for collective action. “Frame resonance” is another significant concept used to illustrate the capacity/availability of a movement to transfer its message to potential participants and broader audience for actual mobilization (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 15-16-17).

§ 2.3 Approaching Islamism through Social Movements Perspective

Islamism has been at the center of highly charged debates for a long time. Although Islamism has attracted much attention, to define what Islamism is or if *Islamism* is equated to political *Islam* is a challenging and complicated task. A variety of terms used to describe the phenomenon such as “*Islamic* fundamentalism”, “political *Islam*”, “*Islamic* activism” and “*Islamic* revivalism”. There is not an explicit definition of *Islamism* or political *Islam*, yet, while a number of scholars investigate *Islam* as a distinct category and others focus only specific interpretations of *Islam* like policy-oriented perspectives. Despite political *Islam* is relatively a new phenomenon as mass politics emerged in the 19th century, *Islamism* regarding to the political and social aspects of the faith is an old trend. Thus, Volpi argues that generally *Islamism* refers to that how individuals consider the role of politics and religion in terms of *Islamic* faith (Volpi, 2013, p. 1). It is important to treat *Islamism* as a historical process in order to define what *Islamism* refers to. Indeed, there are fundamentals of *Islam*

such as rules and norms, nevertheless, meanings and values are constructed and re-constructed by individuals in different historical contexts.

Identities -like *Islamic* identity, present in multidimensional and flexible forms that contain ethnicity, religion, gender, class etc. Dominant perspective in Western thought regards *Islam* as the most explicit element of *Muslim* identity in which class, ethnicity and gender play a secondary role (Ismail, 2013, pp. 16-17). Furthermore, many studies on *Islamic* movements tend to focus *Islam* as the only determinant factor that leads to account *Islamic* movements as irrational and static. However, *Islamic* movements are highly dynamic, heterogenous and adopt tactics and strategies in changing circumstances. Thus, social movements theory draws a more comprehensive perspective on *Islamic* movements as it provides a neutral, objective and analytical set of tools to examine the phenomenon. One of the very first attempts approaching *Islamic* movements through social movement theory came from Wiktorowicz (2004). He discusses that *Islamic* activism¹ shares many similarities with other social movements across the globe in terms of framing, political structure and mobilizing resources. However, social movement studies ignored *Islamic* activism as a research area for a long time since *Islamic* activism was regarded with essentialist perspectives emphasizing descriptive analysis of ideology, particular actors, etc. (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 3).

From an essentialist perspective, *Islamism* is seen as a fixed, determined identity that motivates its adherents out of historical context. It lies on an ontological assumption that being *Muslim* is different to other social beings (Ismail, 2013, p. 18). Modernity and postmodernity debates also affect the discussion of *Islamism*. While the first perspective regards *Islamism* as an anti-modern phenomenon, the latter embarks the relation between *Islam* and modernity. Ernest Gellner's (1983) famous study on *Muslim* society briefly claims that "High *Islam*" (urban, egalitarian) has overcome "Folk *Islam*" (Bedouin) through modernization, particularly

1 The term is used to define a variety of forms of contention that is emerged under the name of Islam, from armed militant groups, political parties to social organizations and spiritual orders.

with the rise of communication technologies and literacy. Later studies modified Gellner's approach and stated that *Islamism* is a reaction to postmodernity. While modernization failed, *Islamism* emerged as a defense mechanism in the era of postmodernity in which rapid transformation of everyday life takes place. This perspective depends on an essentialist view of *Islam* which draw a transhistorical characteristics outside "temporality" and "spatiality" (Ismail, 2013, pp.20-21-22; Bayat, 2006, p. 894).

Both social movement theory and *Islamic* studies faced a paradigmatic change in 1970s when the objects turned into subjects and begun to show up in academia. Collective behavior theory in social movement studies and Orientalism in *Islamic* studies were criticized harshly by the new subjects. Old perspective seeing people of being studied as irrational masses was replaced by a new perspective regarding the observed as rational actors that could think strategically and develop tactics for changing circumstances (Kurzman, 2004, pp. 289-290-291-292). By considering *Islamic* movements rational and dynamic, social movement theory also diverges from French scholars such as Roy (1994) and Kepel (2002) who claim that "*Islamist* movement has failed to achieve its goals because it does not have a political program" (Meijer, 2005, p. 289).

As mentioned before, early perspectives developed from psychological point of view stressing social movements as a dysfunctionality that occur when political system is not able to respond to new political demands. Theories of mass society lies on those structural strains such as economic crisis, industrialization and modernization that cause anxiety and social anomie, thereby, people seek for a comfortable zone and join social movements. Although mass theory, structural strains and grievances approaches are no longer addressed in social movement studies, sociopsychological perspective still dominates studies examining *Islamism*.

This mainstream approach that attempts to reveal the dynamics of *Islamic* activism, is inadequate. Studies, mentioned above that are based on this classical approach, tend to explain *Islamic* movements as a result of

structural strains such as rapid social, economic and political transformations, Western intervention and lack of democracy (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 6-7-8-9). While social movement theorists agree that psychological and structural factors should be taken into consideration, further study is needed to understand the emergence and dynamics of *Islamic* movements. Social movement theory (SMT) demonstrates three ways that *Islamic* movements imply in their decision-making processes. These are “resource mobilization theory”, “opportunities and constraints” and “framing”.

“Resource mobilization theory” (RMT) appeared in response to psychological approaches to social movements which tended to identify individuals as irrational actors suffering from social anomie and anxiety (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 9-10). In contrast to mass theory, RMT considers individuals as rational actors thinking strategically and well-planned. RMT examines why and how social movements emerge in some countries while grievances are almost common in countries across the world. RMT points out resources and mobilizing structures are required to canalize these grievances into social movements. RMT is mostly used to explain organizational and mobilization aspects of social movements in Western countries. However, RMT highlights strategic usage of organizational resources for *Islamic* activism as well. For instance, the mosque plays a crucial role as a mobilizing structure for *Islamic* movements commonly. Mosque provides various opportunities for *Islamist* movements to hold meetings, study groups, courses and an environment for recruitment as well as an organic network (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp.9-10).

Another example is *Islamic* NGOs which are utilized for resources and mobilization as they supply basic needs such as food, health, education and accommodation for *Muslims*. Furthermore, NGOs easily serve the purpose for propagation and recruitment. *Islamic* activists also compete over the control of professional and student associations as they are organizational structures offering many resources and benefits for various *Islamic* movements. In addition to formal organizations, RMT also lays stress on informal institutions and social networks. Social networks and

informal institutions are crucial particularly in authoritative and oppressive regimes. In contrast to formal organizations, informal ones provide much more flexibility in terms of decision making, membership and hierarchy. Strict networks empower collective identity and solidarity while providing informal structures and resources (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp.11-12-13).

Social movements operate in a setting which is limited by external factors such as economics, politics, society, culture etc. These factors also known as “political opportunity structures.” In this regard, *Islamic* activists think and act strategically in changing political, economic and social conditions. As opposed to popular belief, *Islamic* movements are flexible that they adapt a tactic and carry on an action plan from among others (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp.13-14-15).

Islamic movements usually agree on the identification of social, economic, political and cultural problems -diagnostic framing- as West and Western values/practices spreading in *Muslim* countries and undermining *Muslim* society in various aspects. However, competition and contest over framing takes place not only between different groups but within the movements as well. While *Islamic* movements often agree on the responsibility of a problem, they tend to struggle over tactics and strategies -prognostic framing- that they adapt. In addition to the contest over framing between or within movements, *Islamic* movements struggle over meaning and values with official frames since regimes in *Muslim* countries often embark on *Islam* as a way of legitimation. While regimes attempt to sustain dominant discourse and interpretations of symbols and institutions -both formal and informal-, *Islamic* groups produce counter frames to challenge established values and meaning in the society (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp.18-19).

§ 2.4 How to Categorize Islamic Movements?

2.4.1 *A preference-based approach*

Since *Islamism* has aroused as a prominent phenomenon, it is crucial to think on how to conceptualize and label different actors and currents within *Islamic* movements. Many researchers and analysts, both academic and non-academic, have tried to develop a categorization considering different priorities. Thomas Hegghammer (2009) suggests a model with a focus on *Islamic* movements' political agenda and attitudes towards violence. Firstly, Hegghammer examines theological approaches towards *Islamism* and makes criticism about it. Theology based approach attempts to pick up categories from the discourse of *Islamic* actors themselves such as "*Jihadi*", "*Takfir*²", "*Salafi*" and "*Jihadi-Salafi*" (Hegghammer, p. 245). However, he claims that these terms do not provide a clear definition every time and includes ambiguity.

Therefore, Hegghammer states, there are two questions to be asked before the conceptualization of the *Islamist* movement. First is to think of the role of religion and politics in determining the behavior of *Islamist* actors. Second is to think of *Islamism* as substantially different from other religious and political phenomena. To classify *Islamic* actors and currents, using of theological categories are confusing in the analysis of political behavior, rather an alternative approach is more useful based on revealed political preferences (Hegghammer, p. 245).

Hegghammer discusses widely used terms to categorize *Islamic* movements and attempts to underline the problems of this categorization. Using the term "*Jihadism*" is a common trend among Western academy and media, particularly since 9/11. Although the term *Jihadism* is a holy concept in *Islam*, it usually refers to violence in frames produced by

2 Proclaiming someone as unbeliever and excommunicating him/her outside of Islam.

Western media and academy. Thus, *Muslims* have an unfavorable approach towards the term *Jihadism* and prefer rather using other concepts such as “*irhabiyyun*”³, “*khawarij*”⁴, “*muharifun*”⁵ (Hegghammer, p. 246).

Takfirism is also a term used mostly by the Arab states to delegitimize *Islamic* groups which oppose to the regimes since the term *takfir* has a negative association for the majority of *Muslims*. Therefore, the practice of *takfir* is restricted by religious authorities as it could cause *fitna*⁶ otherwise. Despite any *Islamic* group calls themselves as *takfiri* and they are labeled as so, *takfir* is practiced in three circumstances (Hegghammer, p. 247). The first, when an *Islamist* group calls to wage *jihad* against a ruler or regime, it is a pre-condition for use of violence. The second, when conservative majority seeks to dominate minority. The third, when a small *Islamic* group identifies *Muslims* around them *kuffar*⁷ and disavows rest of the society (Hegghammer, p. 247).

Furthermore, Hegghammer points to that the term *takfirism* fails to provide answers for such questions: “who exactly do they excommunicate, for what reason and for what purpose? Those who consider other *Muslims* as *kuffar* do it to different extents (individuals, regimes or societies), for different reasons (moral or political) and for different purposes (revolution, intimidation or isolation)” (Hegghammer, p. 248). In this regard, ongoing civil war in Syria can show that how the term *takfirism* is being used from various *Islamic* groups against each other including both *Shia* and *Sunni* armed factions. However, unless the reason is revealed beyond these armed groups’ attitudes towards each other, the term *takfirism* does not clarify anything by itself.

In contrast to *takfiris* there are many *Islamic* groups that define themselves as *Salafi* since it is a puritan understanding of *Islam* that gives supremacy to *Salafis* over other *Islamic* movements such as *Sufi*⁸ orders.

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- 3 Terrorists
 - 4 A radical early Islamic sect (Kharijites)
 - 5 Deviants
 - 6 Heretical uprising
 - 7 Infidels or non-Muslim people
 - 8 A mystical branch within Islam

However, there has been a debate going on what Salafism is. Although being *Salafi* is considered as legitimate identity for many *Muslims*, *Salafism*, in fact, is a heterogenous community which consists of actors from quietist, overtly political to non-violent and violent activist groups. Therefore, Hegghammer indicates that the main issue regarding to the term *Salafism* is that it is a theological category not political one (Hegghammer, pp. 248-249-250).

Another highly popular term in recent years is *Jihadi-Salafism*. However, Hegghammer also draws attention to the problematics of the concept. It is hard to trace how the term occurred at first. It is thought that al-Maqdisi invited the term *Jihadi-Salafi* for the first time, then it gained popularity by al-Filastini, al-Maqdisi's follower. According to the reports and texts, the term occurred as a popular trend among the London based *Islamic* community during 1990s. However, it was Gilles Keppel who introduced the term to Western academic literature for the first time in 1998 (Hegghammer, pp. 251-252).

Although the term *Jihadi-Salafism* has an appeal, there is still ambiguity about the clear definition of it. Moreover, the existing definitions do not provide any political content highlighting political behaviors and preferences of the actors. Yet, there are still some attempts by scholars and researchers outside the academy to examine *Jihadi-Salafism* in terms of its political characteristic stressing on three points. First, *Jihadi-Salafi* groups are thought to be standing for a more radical and extremist understanding. Second, they tend to adopt a *Salafi-Wahhabi* religious tradition and discourse in contrast to the ideology of Sayyid Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood. Third, they represent a more anti-Western and internationalist characteristic (Hegghammer, p. 253).

However, Hegghammer indicates, first, it is not always easy to identify an actor as radical since there are many theologians who are labeled as *Salafi-Jihadi* but oppose militant *Islamism* and the use of violence. Second, enouncing a dichotomy between *Salafism* and Qutbism does not seem adequate while concrete facts show that all the alleged differences are neglectable. Third, it is also doubtful to claim that *Salafi-Jihadists* are

more anti-Western and internationalist since many groups and theologians labeled as *Salafi-Jihadist* focus on “near enemy” than “far enemy” which refers to the West (Hegghammer, pp. 254-255).

After examining theology-based categories, Hegghammer provides his own model-preference based- to identify different *Islamic* movements. The model suggests five main categories of *Islamist* activism depending on their political strategy and agenda. These categories are “state-oriented” that attempts to redefine the social and political characteristics of the state; “nation-oriented” that aims to establish a territorial authority; “umma-oriented” that regards all *Muslims* as a whole and dedicated to defending the ummah; “morality-oriented” that tends to construct a strict *Muslim* identity in the society; “sectarian” that is characterized by its hostile attitude towards other sects (Hegghammer, p. 258).

Moreover, all these five categories have violent and non-violent forms of activism. Violent form of “state-oriented” *Islamism* is socio-revolutionary activism, while non-violent form of it is reformism (Hegghammer, p. 258). “Nation-oriented” *Islamism* also is divided into two as non-violent and violent irredentists. “Umma-oriented” *Islamism* has either soft or extreme pan-*Islamism* as classical *Jihadism* and global *Jihadism*. “Morality-oriented” *Islamism* has violent and non-violent forms of activism particularly depending on the interpretation of hisba⁹. “Sectarian-oriented” *Islamism* also includes two types of activism as violent and non-violent (Hegghammer, p. 258).

There is a flexibility between these categories and some actors may fit to more than one category, but *Islamic* movements usually emphasize a specific political strategy and agenda that dominate others in a given time. Also, it is crucial to mark actors’ behavior and discourse to determine which category they fit in. Furthermore, this categorization provides three analytical opportunities for researchers. First, it is easier to examine the political agenda carried out by *Islamic* actors as well as to predict and understand their strategies and tactics. Second, it allows to

9 Commanding good and forbidding wrong

analyze the roots of specific *Islamic* activism and how it is shaped by internal and external factors in terms of its particular identity and agenda. Third, it gives an opportunity to conduct a comparative approach with non-*Islamic* movements as it primarily focuses on political behavior (Hegghammer, pp. 259- 260-261-262).

There is also criticism for preference- based categorization underlining three points. First one claims that *Islamism* could be understood best by its own terms, so implementing Western categories is not relevant. However, this argument is essentialist and regards *Islam* as a distinct phenomenon that prevents developing an analytical perspective. Second one argues that categorization limits the understanding of complex and dynamic phenomenon. However, scientific research requires analytic categories while keeping in the mind flexibility and fluidity of actors (Hegghammer, pp. 262-263).

Lastly, third one assumes that preference-based categorization stresses political intent too much that ignores social and theological dynamics of *Islamic* activism. While the third criticism of the preference-based categorization has many right points, it is crucial to acknowledge that *Islamic* ideology includes both theological and political dimensions which the preference- based approach highlights its political aspect more (Hegghammer, pp. 263-264).

2.4.2 *Categorization of Salafi movements*

Salafism has been also a much -debated topic, particularly since 9/11 for journalists, security experts, political analysts and scholars. Yet, there is still not a consensus on what *Salafism* is and who *Salafis* are. One of the first attempts suggesting an analytical category for *Salafism* was Wiktorowicz's famous article "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" published in 2006. Wiktorowicz claims that *Salafis* unite for *aqida*¹⁰ but split up with each other on *manhaj*¹¹ that to what extent they should engage

10 Creed

11 Method

with politics and what steps should be taken. Different solutions proposed by *Salafi* movements regarding to current problems, lead to three main categories within *Salafism*: “purist”, “politicos” and “jihadis” (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 208).

Wiktorowicz defines ‘purists’ as a branch aim to summon people to *Islam* (*da’wa*) and educate people in the doctrine of *tawhid*. They reject any kind of activism and regard politics as *bid’a*. Therefore, they do not involve in neither violent nor non-violent opposition. As stated above, their primary concern is education and dissemination of *Salafism*. The prominent *Islamic* scholars within this categorization are Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Abd al-Aziz b. Baz, Muhammad b. Salih al-Uthaymin and Rabi b. Hadi al-Madkhali (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 217).

The second branch of *Salafism*, Wiktorowicz categorizes, is ‘politicos’ who engage with politics and seek to redesign social and political life according to the religious doctrine. They involve in different forms of political activism to implement the *Salafi* doctrine to the political arena. Wiktorowicz states that the roots of ‘politicos’ are based on generational conflict and international developments took place in during the 1980’s and the beginning of 1990s. *Salafism* falls under this branch is also known *Sahwa*¹² and the pioneering figures of ‘politicos’ are Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali (Wiktorowicz, 2006, pp. 221-222).

Third and the last branch in Wiktorowicz’s categorization is ‘jihadis’ that are the most popular and well-known branch in contrast to the other typologies of *Salafism*. The ‘jihadis’ support and legitimize use of violence to change the social and political reality. Wiktorowicz underlines that this branch occurred during the war in Afghanistan where *mujahids* mobilized from all over the world to wage a war against the Soviet Union. The most famous names of this category are Osama bin Laden and Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi (Wiktorowicz, 2006, pp. 225-226).

Wagemakers (2016; 2020), based on *Salafis’* political and social opinions, expands Wiktorowicz’s categorization which divides *Salafism* into three, as indicated above: ‘purists’, ‘politicos’ and ‘jihadis’. Wagemakers,

12 Islamic revival or awakening movement occurred in Saudi Arabia.

firstly, starts with renaming Wiktorowicz's 'purists' as 'quietists' since the first concept does not identify *Salafis'* political views and all *Salafis* claim that they purify *Islam* (Wagemakers, 2020, pp. 33-34). Also, Wagemakers emphasizes on the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* that is interpreted and applied to the political and social arena differently by *Salafis*. Thus, the doctrine could be benefited for categorizing *Salafis* (Wagemakers, 2016, pp. 19-20-21-22-23).

Wagemakers' model distinguishes *Salafis* into three with sub-groups as 'quietists' (loyalists, aloofists and propagandists), 'politicos' (politicians and activists) and 'jihadis' (revolutionary *jihadis*, global *jihadis*, caliphate *jihadis*) (Wagemakers, 2020, pp. 34-35-36) (Wagemakers, 2016, pp. 15-16-17-18). First sub-branch of the quietists is loyalists who do not engage with any kind of politics, but are obedient to the regimes in *Muslim* countries where they live in. Yet, they help these regimes to justify themselves in the eyes of *Muslims*. Most of the *ulema* in Saudi Arabia is considered as part of this sub-branch (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 35).

Second sub-group within the quietists is aloofists who also do not involve in politics. Moreover, they do not support or legitimize any kind of regimes or political systems. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani is usually regarded in this category. Third sub-group of the quietists is propagandists who both back and protect the political regimes. They are almost voice of the political authorities that their role is much more than loyalists in this manner. *Madkhali Salafis* are known to be representing propagandists (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 35).

Wagemakers also divides *politicos* into two: politicians and activists. Politicians are openly interested in political activism. They are involved in parliamentary politics and seek to be represented in from local councils, unions to legislative bodies. *Salafi* political parties in Egypt, Kuwait and Lebanon are examples of these politicians. The other sub-group, activists, does not engage in politics or participate in election, but takes part in social and political issues such as economics, justice, international affairs. *Sahwa* scholars who are mostly from Saudi Arabia like Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali are related with this group (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 35).

Last category of Wiktorowicz's *Salafis* is *jihadis* that consist of three sub-groups according to Wagemakers: revolutionary *jihadis*, global *jihadis* and *caliphate jihadis*. Revolutionary *jihadis* consider use of violence imperative against the *mushrik* rulers in *Muslim* countries, hence, they wage *jihad* to overthrow them. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi is the most famous ideologue of this interpretation. While global *jihadis* that are mostly associated with al-Qaida, usually adopt guerilla warfare and carry out attacks against Western targets, *caliphate jihadis*, as the name implies, aim to revive *Islamic* caliphate. The ISIS is known as the representative of the latter one in recent years (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 36).

To conclude, main theoretical orientations, following Jasper's categorization, in social movement theory were portrayed in this chapter at first. It was followed by demonstrating three main concepts -new social movements, collective identity, framing- as they generate the main analytical perspective for this research. Also, the similar paradigmatic changes both social movement theory and *Islamic* studies faced in the mid of the 20th century were emphasized. Then, Hegghammer's preference-based model as well as Wiktorowicz's and Wagemakers's categorizations of *Salafism* with an emphasis on *Salafi* actors' preferences were introduced. These notions and the theoretical framework will be referred more closely in analyzing the phenomenon in the following chapters.

Aqida (creed) and *Manhaj* (method) of Tevdit ve Sünnet Cemaati

By all manner of means, it is only a Salafi aqida, a Salafi manhaj and a Salafi moral sentiment that leads one to salvation.

– Tevhid Dergisi

One of the objectives of this thesis is to understand the role of collective identity in the decision-making process for the group's tactics/strategies and how the group frames particular topics regarding its collective identity. Therefore, I will first give a brief background about the categorization of *Salafism* and which branch of *Salafism*, *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* fits in. Then, I will introduce the group's *aqida* (creed) and *manhaj* (method) which are two significant concepts in shaping the group's identity. Throughout this chapter, I will imply framing analysis to reveal how the movement chooses from among the various methods, with support of the informal interviews and the observations I conducted during my field research.

In recent years, *Salafism* has been an interesting term for both *Muslims* and non-*Muslims* as well as academics and non-academics. It is

also a controversial concept that while some perceive *Salafism* in a positive way, some consider it as equal to radicalism (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 22) This is why maybe “Derviş”, the preacher dealt with me during my visits, as being aware of the common view about *Salafism*, underlined that they want to express themselves properly on my first day.

There are, in general, two major trends with regard to generalization of *Salafism*. The first major trend generalizes *Salafism* as Sunnism since the term “*Salafism*” refers to the Arabic word “*al-salaf al-salih*” (forefathers) whom the majority of *Muslim* community remembers with gratitude (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 22). Yet, admiring forefathers, loving the Prophet Muhammad and his companions are not sufficient characteristics for one to be identified as a *Salafi* today. The second major trend tends to perceive *Salafism* as a form of extremism which is being fueled by fear (Wagemakers, 2020, p. 24). It is particularly a common opinion among non-*Muslims* and the perspective equating *Salafism* to radicalism mostly lies on the media coverage of *Salafism*.

Wiktorowicz (2006) claims that *Salafis* have common *aqida* (creed), but different *manhaj* (method) and solutions for contemporary issues, particularly politics. The different interpretations among *Salafis* regarding to current problems, lead to three main categories within *Salafism*: “purist”, “politicos” and “jihadis”. Wiktorowicz (2006) discusses different dimensions within *Salafism* based on their views towards politics: purists are a-political, politicos are political and *jihadis* are anti-political (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 208). Wagemakers, based on Wiktorowicz’s model, categorizes *Salafism* as: quietists (loyalists, aloofists, propagandists), politicos (politicians, activists) and *jihadis* (revolutionary *jihadis*, global *jihadis*, caliphate *jihadis*).¹ *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* fits in Wagemakers’s category of activists, sub-group within politicos, who do not participate in party politics or parliamentary politics but engage in social and political activism (Wagemakers, 2020, pp. 33-34-35-36).

1 For a more detailed information about the categorization of *Salafism*. Joas Wagemakers, “*Salafism: Generalisation, Conceptualisation and Categorisation, Contextualising Salafism and Salafi Jihadism*, 2020, p.21-37

One of the most controversial aspects of *Salafism* is its relation to politics. Its ambiguity lies in the dilemma of being non-political in a political world. Also, it appeals more as it calls to take action more (Meijer, 2009, p. 17). *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* seems to be interested in building an *Islamic* individual and social identity through challenging the hegemonic discourse. Some movements influence mobilization by creating an alternative hegemony. Hegemonic movements attempt to influence both state and society as they create an alternative everyday life (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 423-424).

In my second visit, one of the preachers was complaining that *Islam* is being explained in a narrow sense by the traditional *Islamic* groups. However, in contrast to these groups, he said *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* emphasizes that *Islam* covers all aspects of life. Then, he stated that because the *Tevhid Cemaati* evokes “*tawhid*” must be carried out in daily life both as a faith and practice, they are being targeted by the authority. It can be said that the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* goal to construct an *Islamic* identity may bring political and social consequences.

Everyday interactions seem to shape members’ identity and challenge their bonds with state, society and culture. Sometimes this reorganization of everyday life practices achieve success for mobilization more than going to the streets or holding demonstrations (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 423-424). Moreover, unofficial mosques or *masjids* play a key role not only as a resource mobilization but also as sites for building *Islamic* identity and producing *Islamic* subjects (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 423-424).

The first “seminar” in the masjid that I attended was about why *Muslims* should not send their children to the schools. Schools are seen as sources of “*shirk*”- where secularism is “imposed” to children. Also, it was stated that it is “*haram*” to pray in the mosques because they are subject to Religious Affairs Administration as the institution was founded by the “*qafir*” (infidel) regime. It could be said that once the *Tevhid Cemaati* justifies and legitimizes its opinion by *Salafi* ideology, this contributes to the formation of the group’s political identity.

While secular regimes attempt to sustain dominant discourse and interpretations of symbols and institutions -both formal and informal-

Islamic groups produce counter frames to challenge established values and meaning in a society. Moreover, regimes try to limit access to resources and public sphere for preventing alternative frames to be produced and to challenge regime legitimacy. Therefore, regimes regulate and control mosques, formal/informal religious institutions and religious social networks (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 12-13).

As stated in the previous chapter, the term “framing” addresses to the process of meaning construction. In the process of meaning construction, three framing tasks perform for social movements. These are “diagnostic framing”, “prognostic framing” and “motivational framing”. (Benford & Snow, 2000). “Diagnostic framing” refers to the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality. “Prognostic framing” refers to the solution of identified problem that includes tactics and strategies. “Motivational framing” indicates the reason for collective action (Wiktorowicz, 2004, pp. 15-16-17). The *Tevhid Cemaat’s* frames are based on-but not limited- *Qur’an* and other *Islamic* texts. Sidney Tarrow states that “because it is so reliable a source of emotion, religion is a recurring source of social movement framing. Religion provides ready-made symbols, rituals and solidarities that can be accessed and appropriated by movement leaders” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 112).

§ 3.1 Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat’s Aqida

Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati relies on that *al-salaf al-salih* should be followed in order to understand the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah* as the only *Islamic* resources (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 48). As one can see, the *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes on the *Qur’an*, the *sunnah* and the *ijtihads* of the first three generations as the main sources to interpret *Islam*. In this sense, its approach towards *Islam* could be considered as literal. While the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* epistemology is based on “*nass*”² and “*naqil*”³,

2 Canonical text

3 Testimonial

it rejects any kind of interpretation, opinion and sources other than mentioned above, rather regards them as *bid'a* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 53).

Aqida has literal meaning of tying two sides, so, the reason that *Islamic* faith is called *aqida*, it refers to a contract which ties creature and Allah each other (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 16). There are six pillars of faith in *Islam* accepted by all *Muslims* beyond doubt: belief in Allah as the one and only God, belief in angels, belief in the holy books, belief in the prophets, belief in the Day of Judgement, belief in predestination. It is clear that the basic articles of faith mentioned above underpin the fundamentals of *Islamic* belief and are concurred by all *Islamic* movements.

Despite there are other characteristics that distinguish *Salafism* and other *Islamic* movements, *tawhid* occurs as a crucial concept in building and shaping of *Salafi* identity. *Tawhid* refers to the oneness of God that the doctrine forbids any associates to God (*shirk*). An important tension between *Salafism* and politics occurred in its doctrine of *tawhid*. Worshiping to only God requires to legitimize God as the only authority that provokes a challenging situation for *Salafism*. The duty of obedience of the subject to the ruler, particularly in countries which are not ruled by the *Islamic* law (*shari'a*) is questioned (Meijer, 2009, p. 4).

As mentioned above, there are some distinctive points of *Salafi* theology. These are: 1) understanding and practicing of *Islam* as the first three generations did; 2) a specific interpretation of the doctrine of *tawhid* (*tawhid al-rububiyya*⁴, *tawhid al-uluhiyya*⁵, *tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat*⁶); 3) *Islamic aqida* should be defended against *shirk*; 4) the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* are the only and essential sources of *Islam*; 5) Fighting against *bid'a* both in practices and beliefs of *Muslims*; 6) Claiming that *Muslims* can find their way for all time through literal and scriptural account of the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* (Haykel, 2009, s. 38-39).

4 The Oneness of Lordship

5 The Oneness of Godship

6 The Oneness of the Names and Attributes

3.1.1 *Politicizing the Tawhid*

In recent years, official discourse has adopted two concepts native/local and national as part of an increasing emphasis on anti-western, national and *Islamic* rhetoric in Turkey. The government legitimizes or delegitimizes parties, groups, movements and activities through these concepts. In an effort to delegitimize the government and its discourse based on nationalism, the *Tevhid Cemaati* produces counter frames attacking the concepts of native/local and national.

“As we reject ancestry’s religion and Arab *Jahiliya*, we also reject native/local and national *Jahiliya*” (Bayuncuk, 2019, July 12).

On the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* targets the political system in Turkey by producing counter frames against democracy, parliamentary politics and the official discourse. On the other hand, as part of this strategy, the *Tevhid Cemaati* also targets other *Islamic* groups since they play a key role in legitimating the regime. Thus, existed *Islamic* groups and communities, particularly *Sufi* groups, are also framed as non-*Islamic*.

One day, I was in a “circle” in the *masjid*, we talked about the other *Islamic* communities and groups in Turkey, how corrupted and degenerated they are, while *Islamic* movements had been opposition against the establishment then how they have become a part of the establishment. Also, we agreed on that the present *Islamic* groups in Turkey are not able to satisfy the people’s problems, particularly the youth’s. I had chance to meet people who had broken off relations with more traditional *Islamic* groups such as *Menzil*, *İsmailağa* and, became part of *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati*.

Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati constructs its own collective identity through these principles. While the *Tevhid Cemaati* claims that it represents the only true form of *Islam*, it blames regimes and other groups who do not share the same *aqida*, as non-*Islamic*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* also emphasizes on the concept of *tawhid* and its interpretation since *tawhid* constitutes the essential element in the movement’s collective identity. The *Tevhid Cemaati* details the concept of *tawhid* in three dimensions:

tawhid al-rububiyya, tawhid al-uluhiyya, tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 19-20-21-22).

Tawhid al-rububiyya refers to the “unity of lordship and the affirmation of God’s unique qualities and powers; reference to God’s possession of absolute power over heaven and earth, life and death” (Meijer, 2009). The *Tevhid Cemaati*, based on this, states that Allah puts in order the earth with his physics and social laws. *Qur’an*, like a constitution, accommodates every aspect of life and from this point of view, *shari’a* is a regulatory law including all the orders concerning the relations between human-human, human-society and human-nature. The reason behind social, political and economic problems is that *shari’a* is not followed by people. Moreover, if there is no *shari’a*, there is chaos (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 18).

Rabb has another meaning for issuing authority and disciplining. The cosmos is beyond approach, impeccable and perfect. In the same way, Allah has organized the world with his *shari’a*. As mankind turns away from His laws- the finest organizer- , depravedness, obscenity and persecution have occurred in the world (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 51). As seen in both examples, the *Tevhid Cemaati* frames the concept beyond divine order and associates it with the world order in terms of politics.

Tawhid al-uluhiyya refers to the “oneness of divinity, the oneness of the object of worship, total submission to God alone. Usually seen as personal submission to God and the rule that all forms of worship are meant for God alone” (Meijer, 2009). Despite the concept is articulated in the *Qur’an* as the only authority, it also stands for worshipped (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 23). If one presents any of the practices considered as worship, such as pray, oblation, salaah, circumambulation and the right to legislate, to any creature or institution except Allah, it means that one believes in a god but not Allah (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 17).

Kalima al-Tawhid is considered as the symbol of *tawhid al-uluhiyya* by the *Tevhid Cemaati*. They divide *Islamic* belief into two, as denials and acceptances and mention that *kalima al-Tawhid* starts by denying. It is required to refuse the societies and the people who do not adopt *Salafi aqida*, if one wants to embrace the only true creed

(Bayancuk, 2019, p. 16). The interpretation of the doctrine urges on the *Tevhid Cemaat's* identity and how it is constructed.

Tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat refers to “affirmation of the unity of his names and his attributes. Assigning God’s characteristics to human beings even if they are kings, is forbidden and constitutes a violation of God’s uniqueness” (Meijer, 2009). The *Tevhid Cemaati* underlines the importance of that they believe in every attribute articulated in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Moreover, they do not interpret and so falsify the attributes since they do not try to rationalize (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 20). They accuse those who follow the schools of *kalam*⁷ and philosophy, of being blasphemers since they emphasize on reason.

In other words, the concept is to approve and single Allah’s names and attributes as articulated in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* attitude against philosophy and *kalam* lies in its claim that there is no other way than following the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* since the creature they want to define is Allah. They state that it is not possible to be able to understand an invisible creature by using mind, because reason is only able to perceive observable things (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 52).

At this point, it is significant to examine the *Tevhid Cemaat's* diagnostic framing that identifies the targets to blame and the problems that cause everything going wrong. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* diagnostic frame targeting the political system in Turkey aims to delegitimize it by calling the regime as “*taghut*”. The pamphlet published by *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* titled as “Who Are We and What Do We Want?” (2016), underlines that the states which are not ruled according to *Islamic* rules are *taghuti*, while politicians and political parties are *taghuts*.

Moreover, the pamphlet states that there is no difference, in terms of *shari'a*, between those who embark on democracy and secularism and who use democracy as means of struggle with reference to *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 32). On the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* seems targeting the regime by categorizing it as non-*Islamic*, thus, struggle against the system and the regime becomes rightful. On the other

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hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* presents a more “revolutionary” position by rejecting parliamentary politics and calling it illegitimate.

“Whatever leads people from the enlightenment of divine inspiration to the darkness of *kufi* is *taghut*. One cannot be a *Muslim* without rejecting *taghut*. For instance, in the enlightenment of divine inspiration, authority belongs to Allah. However, in democracies, the darkness of *kufi*, authority belongs to the nation. Political parties are *taghuts* since they lead people to *shirk* and *kufi*” (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 33).

Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati uses this framing tactic frequently in order to undermine the established discourse in the society. The *Tevhid Cemaat’s* “success”- just like other social movements- lies in its capability to spread its discourse to a broader audience. Hence, while the *Tevhid Cemaati* attempts to produce counter framing and counter discourse, social media is being used actively to respond to the current issues from homicide and violence against women to pollution and black Friday. Below, I tried to provide three examples from the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* twitter account as part of its diagnostic framing illustrating the lack of *shari’a* as the cause for today’s problems.

Unless the society is being regenerated by tawhid and justice (divine) which is the only way to come through social amok caused by shirk, peace and tranquility will remain as a sweet dream (Bayuncuk, 2019a, November 15).

The rulers who have abandoned the holy Qur’an are the main reason of social amok. Divine retribution for abandoning the ruling based on divine inspiration is social unrest. Thus, one section of society persecutes the other segment- like homicide, domestic violence etc. The reason is that, while the society is not ruled according to shari’a, people have abandoned worship. Human being has lost tawhid at first, then his mind and now himself (TevhidEkipYeni, 2019, September 15).

The unique solution for the crimes committed against human and nature is an awareness based on tawhid. And, an Islamic community revives with tawhid, understands things through foresight of the Qur'an." (Bayuncuk, 2019b, September 6)

Another position taken by the *Tevhid Cemaati*, reflects on its framing of democracy. The *Tevhid Cemaati* frames democracy as a religion (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 9) and, as in the seminars I attended, current situation is discussed with historical references comparing today's rulers with the era of "pharaohs" (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 9) when believers were persecuted. The *Tevhid Cemaati* attempts to underline the inconsistencies in the system and to reach a broader audience by using frame resonance⁸. Democracy is being blamed as a system that is not able to ensure even minimum requirements. The group claims that they are subject of anti-democratic treatments and seeks for a strategy to frame its discourse combined with demands that can resonate with a large segment of the society. Therefore, while the *Tevhid Cemaati* tries to delegitimize democracy as a regime, the group emphasizes on lawlessness and injustice that its adherents experience in a "so-called" democratic regime.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* produces counter frames against the famous motto of "authority, without any condition and reservation, belongs to the nation" to attack legitimacy of the regime and frames democracy based on the principle, as a human-made religion. Moreover, they state that as every religion has a worship and religious service, in democracy, it is turnout at elections (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 32). While democracy is blamed as a non-Islamic system by the majority of *Salafi* community, further, in the *Tevhid Cemaati's* frames, it is regarded as a religion and its institutions, traditions etc. are identified with *shirk* as a whole. Thus, it is clear that every kind of involvement in legal basis in a democracy, is framed as a sin of practicing idolatry.

8 "Frame resonance" is a term used to illustrate the capacity/availability of a movement to transfer its message to potential participants and broader audience for actual mobilization.

Once I attended a lesson on *aqida* in the *masjid* before the general seminar. In the lesson, a preacher said that *Salafi* imams used to pray behind the rulers and *ulema* whom the *imams* considered as *kafir* in the *Abbasi* and *Umayyad* period. The preacher stated the reason behind *Salafi imams'* attitude was that the regimes, at that time, were *Islamic* and *shari'a* was in force. Thus, they had adopted this kind of manner for the sake of *ummah* and to prevent *fitnah*. He, however, stressed that it is not relevant to refer to *Salafi imams'* attitude in today's regimes which are clearly *taghuti*. It was mentioned that some *ulema*, today, try to maintain their positions and titles by referring to a historical case.

I will suggest that *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* seems to be capable in choosing successful frames that resonate with the current political, social and economic issues, as perceived by a major part of the Turkish population. As I addressed before, the *Tevhid Cemaati* is up to date and responds real fast in finding different frames in changing circumstances. When protests, for example, emerged against the Alamos Gold's - Canadian mining company- construction work in western Turkey⁹, the *Tevhid Cemaati* took a stand and produced frames targeting the government, multinational corporations and imperialism for exploiting others' natural resources.

Muslim defends himself/herself against two heresy emerged in history. While the first one is worshipping the nature (early *Jahiliya*), the other one is considering the nature as a system of exploitation. Mankind has not unlimited authority over the living creature (Bayuncuk, 2019a, September 6).

Another example is the *Tevhid Cemaat's* attitude towards black Friday. While the *Tevhid Cemaati* criticizes capitalism since it impacts on people's behavioral patterns and is the reason of consumption society, it frames global capitalism and market-oriented economics as slavery making people suffer in terms of economical, psychological and social.

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<https://www.duvarenglish.com/environment/2020/05/09/environmentalists-protesting-kaz-mountains-mine-imposed-a-fine-of-8000>

People are becoming unhappy and exhausted as they are buying. Nothing makes them happy, satisfied and peaceful. The only salvation for mankind who consumes but gets exhausted at the same time, is to break its chains and to become servant to the only god-Allah (Bayuncuk, 2019, November 26).

Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* puts work accidents on the agenda strikingly and compares the number of people who lost their life while working and, in the attacks carried out by different political armed groups. It directly challenges the political system and produces counter frames targeting the official discourse.

The number of people killed in April by the groups designated as terrorist organization by Turkish Republic:

PKK:8 DHKP-C:0 ISIS:0 Al-Qaeda: 0

The number of people killed in work accidents by those designated as terrorist by Allah: 145! (Bayuncuk, 2019, May 28).

As seen in the examples mentioned above, the *Tevhid Cemaati* is successful in producing frames concerning various political, economic and social issues. Furthermore, the *Tevhid Cemaati* seeks for frames that have chance to resonate with different segments of the society who are normally beyond the *Tevhid Cemaat's* sphere of influence.

The superiority of *Salafism* over other forms of *Islam* relies on its puritan understanding of *Islam* that bases on the *Qur'an* and *hadith* in which every *Muslim* should believe. This purity and clarity are crucial to understand why *Muslims* choose *Salafism* over other alternatives. One should look at the theological and legal debates that have shaped *Salafism* to understand today's debates around the issue (Haykel, 2009, s. 36-37).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* states that they do not refer to the opinions of *ulema* while explaining the main principles of its *aqida* and *manhaj* as well as in calling people to these principles (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 73). During a conversation with "Derviş", I told him that I read the book on *aqida*, then, he asked me if the arguments had satisfied me. And he said that they do not refer to any *imam*, theologian or *sheik* but the

verses from the *Qur'an* and *hadiths* from prophet Muhammad directly. This purity, particularly in arguments derived from the *Qur'an* and *sun-nah*, strengthens the *Tevhid Cemaat's* hand over other *Islamic* groups. Since the *Tevhid Cemaat's* arguments are based on the *Qur'an* and *sun-nah*, other *Islamic* groups cannot object easily.

Salafism attracts many people, particularly the youth among the world with its puritan creed. *Salafism* challenges hegemonic discourses and provide a counter discourse/discourses both locally and globally such as parents, the state, the tradition and culture etc. It builds a strong identity by rejecting the established ones (religious, cultural and political) and suggesting an alternative system (Meijer, 2009, p. 13).

The *Tevhid Cemaati*, like other *Salafi* movements, stresses on the universal identity of *Islam* and rejects any other identity apart from *Islam*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* considers all the modern and pre-modern identities such as tribal bonds, class, ethnicity, sectarian identities as *bid'a*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* adopts a framing tactic to undermine the established identities as a priority in order to build a new identity based on its particular ideology.

A Muslim should be afraid of Allah and should not fall behind the Islamic cause because of his/her family or something else. Muslim should respond to the call, learn his/her religion, call people to the cause and involve in the Islamic struggle actively (Bayuncuk, 2019, December 10).

3.1.2 *Tawhid al-hakimiyya and the legitimate authority*

Jihadi-Salafism and non-violent political activist *Salafism* influenced by *Muslim Brotherhood* to some degree in terms of political action, organization and so on (Meijer, 2009, pp. 24-25). Also, especially *Qutb's* concepts of "*hakimiyya*" and "*jahiliyya*" contributed to these *Salafism* in many aspects and they developed the concept of "*tawhid al-hakimiyya*" under "*tawhid al-uluhiyya*" (Haykel, 2009, s. 47-48) Therefore, this concept has become a very useful political tool in different circumstances.

Many *Salafi* movements have inspired from *Qutb's* concepts of “*hakimiyya*” and “*jahiliyya*” which identify legitimate and illegitimate regimes (Haykel, 2009, s. 49-50). *Tawhid al-hakimiyya* refers to the “sovereignty of God. Usually regarded as a political concept of the complete application of the *shari'a*. Directed against rulers, it implies that rulers who do not apply the *shari'a* commit a grave sin and should be regarded as *kafirun*” (Meijer, 2009). In this regard, to the *Tevhid Cemaati*, *al-hakimiyya* belongs to Allah. The doctrine includes the attributes of creator, provider, master as well as sovereign who legislates and decides on anything either *haram* or *halal* as the only authority (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 28). The concept of *al-hakimiyya* is being explained in a politicized way. Although it is a theological concept, the *Tevhid Cemaati* attributes a new meaning to it and they frame the concept with regard to the political issues such as legislation, voting and participation in elections.

In today's modern world, the greatest *shirk* is regarded as “*shirk al-hakimiyya*” by various *Salafi* groups which refers to the governance or rule that are not based on *shari'a* (Haykel, 2009, s. 49-50). The *Tevhid Cemaati* underlines four points in order to strengthen its position on this matter. First, one is obliged to the principle that Allah is the only sovereign authority. Second, rulers are required to govern according to *shari'a*. Third, ruled should only authorize Allah for right to govern. Fourth, one should not apply to courts which do not rule according to *shari'a* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 28-29-30-31). Each points mentioned, illustrate that while the *Tevhid Cemaati* claims to be out of political life or anti-political, it adopts rather a political position and has an attitude against the established system. Both collective and individual identity is being constructed on this particular ideology by giving theological references.

The concept of *al-hakimiyya* is related with the doctrine of *tawhid* and its divisions *al-rububiyya*, *al-uluhiyya* and *al-asma' wa-l-sifat*. All three dimensions of *tawhid* give particular importance to it. *Rububiyya* is to single Allah in His rule making power; *uluhiyya* is to single Allah in His

sovereignty and authority; *al-asma' wa-l-sifat* is to single Allah in His attributes of *al-hakeem* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 84).

In this sense, the doctrine of *hakimiyya* plays a significant role in shaping collective identity and the *Tevhid Cemaat's* views on politics since it approves only Allah as an authority for law making in the universe. The *Tevhid Cemaati* considers systems in which life-style and rules are not based on shari'a but institutions, individuals and establishments, as *shirk* systems. Moreover, those who have consent on these *shirk* systems are *mushriks*. No matter what the legislative authority is whether majority like in democracies or an individual like a dictator, an emperor or a clan leader, that whoever legislates except Allah, is *mushrik* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 86).

In democracies, parliament members who are elected by people, have legislative prerogative and exercise this power on behalf of people. The *Tevhid Cemaati* states that this is a deviant case as authority and sovereignty which belong to Allah only, are assumed by a human-made system. In this case, there two group of people who offend against the doctrine of *tawhid al-hakimiyya*, are elected and elector (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 86). Once again, *Salafism's* puritan understanding emphasizes on belief and identity is seen clearly.

After a couple of weeks, in *Ramadan*, when I arrived at the *masjid* later than I expected, people were having a talk, drinking coffee/tea and eating dessert just after *iftar*. I came across to "Bekir" who is from Eskişehir but has Balkan origin and 31 years old. He had worked as an executive officer at ships. After he talked about himself, "Bekir" asked me questions about my research, my opinions on society, religion and politics. Then, he emphasized on that Allah is the only law maker and He has the sovereignty over the whole universe. I was surprised that how he associated every topic we discussed with *tawhid al-hakimiyya* concerning the issues. For him, all the issues were clear as black and white.

Iman (faith) is also an important concept interpreted by the *Tevhid Cemaati* distinctly. *Salafis* claim that belief consists of two parts: faith and practice which can increase and decrease. Moreover, *Salafis* suppose that *takfir* is a requirement against *Muslims* who do not perform

the obligatory duties of the faith (Haykel, 2009, s. 50). This is concerned with the levels of faith that are indicated as: *sihhat al-din* (the soundness of the religion), *wajib al-din* (the compulsory of the religion), *kamal al-din* (the perfection of religion) (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 68).

Iman has literal meaning of approving, while in *shari'a* it is to confess with one's tongue, to believe with one's heart and to demonstrate in one's physical actions. One should perform all these three conditions mentioned above, otherwise one is not considered as *Muslim*. Although *ulema* usually agrees on the conditions to confess with one's tongue and to believe with one's heart, the third condition is controversial (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 65). While orthodox opinion towards the issue is that if one does not demonstrate in his/her physical actions then one is *fasiq* (unreliable) but belongs to the *Islamic* community, majority of the *Salafi* community evaluates practice as part of creed.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* lays stress on that in *Islam*, *iman* and *kufr* are the two significant factors to develop an attitude towards individuals, societies and institutions. *Mu'min* and *kafir* are treated differently.

In *Islamic* societies, one is considered as *Muslim* unless *shirk* is seen in his/her belief. However, in *kufr* societies, one is treated as *kafir* unless conditions of being a *Muslim* are clear for him/her (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 69).

According to the *Tevhid Cemaati*, the essence of *Islam* is embedded in *kalima- al tawhid* and it has been the common call for all prophets from Adam to Muhammed (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 23). *Islam* consists of main principles such as: to single Allah in worship; to avoid *shirk* in one's belief and practice; to reject all the worshipped *taghuts* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 26). As it is understood, faith is not a sufficient condition to be considered as a *Muslim* per se, one is obliged to practice the principles in his/her life. And these principles require highly activist attitude in terms of political, can be observed in every aspect of life.

While we were having a conversation with "Derviş", I stated that some theologians claim that practice is not a prerequisite for *iman* and *iman* neither increases nor decreases. In response, "Derviş" told me, then,

this means that one can do whatever he/she wants and one's faith is not affected, neither increases nor decreases. In this case, he said, it is the levels of faith that should be concerned while deciding on one's situation in terms of *shari'a*. Faith consists of three dimensions: *sihhat al-din*, *wajib al-din*, *kamal al-din*. The level of *sihhat al-din* is associated with the doctrine of *tawhid* and it directly affects one's faith to do or not to do particular practices in issues regarding *tawhid*. He went on, as for one to send his/her child to school, to vote in elections and to do military service are regarded *shirk*, to not performing the *salaat* (prayer) is also against the doctrine of *tawhid*. He distinguished the difference between the *Tevhid Cemaati* and *Kharijites* is that while *Kharijites* claim every inappropriate action may affect faith and make someone unbeliever, to the *Tevhid Cemaati*, this is directly related to the levels of faith.

§ 3.2 Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat's Manhaj

As it was mentioned before, while *Salafi* movements mostly agree on the basis of *aqida*, one of the most significant distinction is their *manhaj*. The concept of *manhaj* refers to the method *Salafis* follow in their daily life that how they live and practice their belief and spread the "*da'wa*". Most *Salafi* group's understanding of *manhaj*, particularly "quietist" *Salafis*, mostly based on *al-Albani's* view derives from the *Qur'an*, chapter *al-Ma'ida* 5:48. *Al-Albani* suggested that *Salafis* should avoid taking part in any kind of political life. However, not all *Salafis* agree with *al-Albani's* idea on politics, yet more, many of them believe that *Muslims* are obliged to struggle against any kind of *shirk* (Haykel, 2009, s. 47).

In other words, *manhaj* is crucial for a *Salafi* movement since the concept indicates particular tactics and strategies adopted by a specific group. *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* differentiates from other groups which only focused on narrow issues within limits shaped by state, as a social movement that emphasizes on constructing an identity, forming an organization, resource mobilization, framing and opportunity structures. The *Tevhid Cemaati* is mostly organized around informal networks including study circles without an organizational bound. The *Tevhid*

Cemaati spreads through informal study circles and networks particularly among the youth with its puritan approach towards *Islam*.

Once “targets of blame” are determined that reflects on the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* diagnostic framing, prognostic framing illustrates actions to be taken. In this sense, prognostic framing offers solutions for the problems identified by the diagnostic farming. Despite prognostic framing attempts to offer solutions for the problems, they are usually hypothetical offerings rather than concrete plans. The *Tevhid Cemaat’s* success lies in its capability to portray its ideas for political change as religious beliefs. *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* impresses on a prognostic framing that supports the establishment of an Islamic society.

The group states that the true *manhaj* in *Islamic* struggle is clearly presented. The measure in determining the *manhaj* is the *Qur’an* and *sunnah*. According to the sources, the *Tevhid Cemaati* indicates that three phases of *Islamic* struggle are “*da’wa*”, “preparation” and “*jihad*”. Therefore, the group rejects all other ways of struggle beyond these three ones (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 75-76-77). However, in the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* texts and seminars, while *da’wa* is articulated and mentioned much, the phases of *preparation* and *jihad* are not clear. In fact, in seminars and texts, *da’wa* is described as a way of *jihad*, but here *jihad* is categorized as another title.

The main goal of the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* activities as a whole is described: to identify, educate and lead *Muslims* who will serve in the way of *Islam* as dedicated; to solve the issue of education in Turkey where *Muslims* have troubles due to their sensitivity to *tawhid*; to spread the principles of *tawhid* and *sunnah* to all Turkey in a planned way; to be qualified professionally to use legitimate instruments that serves for spreading the cause; to contribute *da’wa* to circulate around the world, particularly Europe by translations of books, courses etc. ; to establish joint activity groups with *Muslims* who share the same *aqida*, to practice being a united *ummah* and to be in solidarity; to advise with different movements and groups in order to correct our deficiencies; to endure all the phases as will of Allah and to interlock with *Muslims* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 82-83).

Thus, the *Tevhid Cemaati* calls for action and being organized under a single banner as part of its prognostic framing. *Islamic* struggle is framed possible by only gathering under a *jamaah*. Also, it is stated that coming together under a *jamaah* or participating in, is a command of *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 57). It is important to underline that *Islamic* cause cannot be achieved by individual efforts but a collective struggle. In this regard, creating a *jamaah* is a moral imperative. Thus, in my opinion, *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* should be investigated as a social movement. The call for gathering under a single banner by the *Tevhid Cemaati* is different than organizing of traditional and pacifist religious groups. In this case, invitation aims to form an organized *Islamic* social movement which has unity of purpose for the cause of *Islam*. Two examples from the *Tevhid Cemaat*'s twitter account show its use of prognostic framing successfully that both aim to delegitimize other options and offer an alternative at the same time.

Modern Jahiliya imposes three things: individualism, comfort and greed. We can overcome individualism by organizing (forming *jamaahs*); comfort by sharing and aiding; greed by helping each other and pioussness (Bayuncuk, 2019, March 15).

Social problems are not and cannot be solved by the statements of tyrant politicians as we watch in the news; by hypocrite media's crocodile tears; by academic studies carried out in ivory towers; by the efforts of the religious affairs administration whose kiblah is politics; by the deviants' dishonorable proposals emphasizing on gender equality. The only solution is to return to Allah, Islam, to nature and self. The solution is shari'a! (Bayuncuk, 2019b, November 15).

Islam is considered as a religion of struggle and *Islamic* struggle is believed to be carried out with an understanding of servitude than a political organization (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 57). In contrast to pacifist and apolitical interpretations of *Islam*, the *Tevhid Cemaati* stands for an *Islamic* understanding that takes an action according to the facts

with *Islamic* reflexes. Two significant points are described by the *Tevhid Cemaati* as a basis for coming together. One is unity of *aqida* and other one is unity of *manhaj* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 58). While it is an obligation to be organized, it is mentioned that a *jamaah* should be based on two principles as ideological and methodological unity. Controversy and dispute in these principles can harm and undermine *Islamic* struggle. It is declared that every group should be sincere and transparent as an *Islamic* requirement in terms of *aqida* and *manhaj* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 59).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* declares that *bid'a*, either practical or belief related, requires the implementation of *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy'an al-munkar* (*hisba*) (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 54). *Hisba* is a crucial concept for mobilization and calling to action. However, while *hisba* is emphasized in struggling against *bid'a*, its content is not clearly defined by the *Tevhid Cemaati*. Because *hisba* includes both violent and non-violent forms, the *Tevhid Cemaati* states on the issue indicating which form should be adopted. They lay stress on that the issue of which form of *hisba* is logical against *bid'a*, requires a comprehensive analysis of society by qualified opinion leaders and *ulema* who know society. They also say individual approaches towards the concept of *hisba* may bring unfavorable consequences (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 54-55).

In this respect, the *Tevhid Cemaati* remarks on an important point and presents its position on adopting the *manhaj*. The group states that the current affairs started with the invasion of Afghanistan, went on with the invasion of Iraq and take place in Syria, Egypt, Libya at present, should be taken into consideration. Moreover, they believe conflicts in the region do not provide any advantage for *Islamic* movements, in contrast, this situation prevents *da'wa* and *jihad* that cannot be carried out concordantly. However, the group says that analyzing of circumstances and adopting tactic/strategy suits to the situation requires *ijtihad*¹⁰. Therefore, every group is responsible to find a relevant way of struggle based

10 Individual interpretation of the two sources of Islamic law, Qur'an and hadith.

on its capacity and calculating of its own power (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 77).

Furthermore, the *Tevhid Cemaati* states that it is aware of waging a struggle in a such complicated region as Middle East. It states: "While intelligence services have a free hand and global *taghuts* have agendas, there are people among us who speak and act like us but support *taghuts*. *Muslims* should pay attention to this reality while organizing activities and establishing relations both in individual and group levels" (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 78). While the duty of *Muslims* is framed as to be servant to Allah and to call people to be servitude to Allah as well as to be patient against all the odds when they face, the *Tevhid Cemaati* underlines that hurrying and attempts in immature circumstances cause *Muslims* to lose available advantages (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 78-79).

As mentioned before, *siyar* (prophetic biography) seminars aim to understand and interpret today's affairs with reference to *Islamic* history and the life of prophet Muhammed. It was mentioned, in a seminar, that prophet Muhammed's advice on patience is still valid. The leader of the movement (Ebu Hanzala) is in jail, Muslims are in captivity with unfair accusations. In this situation, the only way is to be patient. In this seminar, the issue of patience was underlined and repeated for a couple of times by giving examples from prophet Muhammed's life when Muslims endured although they faced many difficulties. In my opinion, this issue should be considered carefully as it reflects the *Tevhid Cemaat's* understanding of *manhaj*. However, I am not sure if there is a debate on the issue among its adherents or the issue of patience was just mentioned to avoid impulse behaviors.

The *Tevhid Cemaat's* understanding of *da'wa* based on the fundamental principles of *tawhid* and *sunnah* that reflects on the *Tevhid Cemaat's manhaj*, aims its message to reach the masses clearly and transparently. While priority in *da'wa* emphasizes on calling people one to one, the *Tevhid Cemaati* believes that all the legitimate ways in terms of *shari'a*, for spreading the cause should be utilized. Thus, the *Tevhid Cemaati* uses different social media devices- textual and visual- actively

for *da'wa* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 69). In this regard, the preacher cited from a famous *hadith* and told that, in *Islam*, there are three ways of struggling. These are: “*bil-yed*”, “*bil-lisan*” and “*bil-qalb*”. He suggested that one should struggle in all the ways If he/she is capable. This particular position illustrates how the *Tevhid Cemaat*’s understanding of *manhaj* is based on political opportunity structure in which the *Tevhid Cemaati* chooses the most suitable, though it is a subjective interpretation of conditions, repertoire of actions in changing circumstances.

3.2.1 *Stages of struggle and understanding of Jihad*

The *Tevhid Cemaati* elaborates that there are two significant aspects for rejecting and struggling against *taghut/qufr* and becoming distant from them. While the first one is related with belief, the other aspect is more practical. Also, all *Muslims* are required to know the both aspects of struggling against *taghut* and *kufr*; it is regarded *fard al-Ayn*¹¹ (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 38). The belief aspect includes, becoming distant from *taghut* and those who worship it; proclaiming *takfir* against *taghut* and those who do not release themselves from it; carrying a grudge against *taghut* and its worshippers (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 39). Whereas the practical aspect emphasizes the phases after building a strong creed and becoming distant from *taghut* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 40).

The practical aspect, firstly, requires a preparation phase which is organizing in a *jamaah* with people sharing the same *aqida* and getting ready both in terms of faith and physical. After the preparation phase, *Muslims* are obliged to start struggling against *taghuts*. If struggling *taghut* remains a theory only and is not transferred into practice, then swerving begins among *Muslims* (Bayancuk, 2019, pp. 40-41). This explanation of its *manhaj* is open-ended and shows flexibility of the *Tevhid Cemaati* in terms of tactical and strategical. Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaat*’s emphasis on the practical aspect is ambiguous and can be in-

11 In Islamic law, refers to legal obligations that must be performed by each individual Muslim.

interpreted easily as a step towards a more violent form of activism. In relation to the issue, *jihad*, like *zakat*, *fasting* and other religious duties, is framed as an obligation on *Muslims* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 76).

Although diagnostic and prognostic frames are very crucial for recruitment and mobilization of individuals, yet they are not alone enough for adherents to take action. At this point, motivational frames play key role to encourage individuals to join and take action. If motivational frames are circulated sufficiently, collective action has chance to be successful. Also, motivational frames suggest selective incentives needed for recruitment and mobilization. The group's elaboration on the doctrine of *jihad*, framed as a religious duty for individual *Muslims*, is an important source of motivation to evoke its adherents that their involvement and association is vital to overcome obstacles.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* adverts that *Islamic* cause cannot be limited by a single way of struggle and underestimating other aspects of the struggle is an obstacle against *Islamic* cause. The *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes that *Islamic* struggle, in general, is named as *jihad*. While *jihad* can be fighting in the name of Allah, sometimes it is to tell *Islam* to people, to serve as a model with one's life or to aid for *Islamic* good with one's goods (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 74). *Jihad* is considered by the *Tevhid Cemaati* in broad terms and claimed that it has different dimensions. Political opportunity structure is an important concept for choosing different tactics and strategies among others as well as provides a background information for movements in this regard. The *Tevhid Cemaati* adopts the way of struggle concerning current circumstances in terms of social, political and economic. Its main focus on *da'wa* is- as stated by the group- calling people to *Islam* by telling them the truth and essence of the doctrine of *tawhid* and *sunnah* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 75).

In a seminar took place in *Ramadan*, the concept of *jihad* was discussed. It is said that the *Tevhid Cemaati* does not consider *jihad* in a limited sense but in a broad sense. The preacher examined the concept in three categories. The first one is *jihad* with tongue (*da'wa*) that refers calling people to *Islam*. Second one is *jihad* with goods that refers aiding

in the sight of Allah. Third one is *jihad* with hand and body that refers fighting (*qital*) in the name of Allah. However, it was mentioned in the seminar that the concept of *jihad* is usually covered by media in a narrow sense and only *qital* (*jihad* with hand) is mentioned. Furthermore, the *Tevhid Cemaat's* priority as the preacher mentioned is *da'wa*, they identify themselves as inviters summoning people to *Islam*. The preacher also emphasized on the *jihad* with goods. Moreover, "*fitre*" and "*zekat*" were underlined and adherents were encouraged to aid either individually or by collecting money from their relatives and friends. The money collected is told to be used for helping the *Jamah's* supporters in jail, building new *masjids* and the needs such as publishing, new tools and devices etc.

As part of its motivational framing and puritan ideology, the *Tevhid Cemaati* states that its adherents are part of *Islamic ummah* firstly, then members of any *Islamic* group or community since *Islamic ummah* is superior to any group identity (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 61). The *Tevhid Cemaati* aims to mobilize *Muslims* and other *Islamic* factions around the world by framing *Islamic* identity as universal. "All *Muslims*, struggling for *tawhid* and *sunnah* in different areas of struggle around the world, are our brothers" (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 75). The group frames unity of *Muslims* as being a single *ummah* sharing the same *aqida* and struggling for *Islamic* cause (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 75). Existing of different groups and movements - united on the principles of *tawhid* and *sunnah*- struggling for the blessed cause of *Islam* to spread around the world, is articulated as useful for *Muslims* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 76). Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* tries to attract members by framing itself as a true *Islamic* group. While group and community identities are considered sub-identities, *Islamic* identity is regarded as a supra- identity. However, *Islam* is interpreted in a strict sense, hence many groups, individual and sect within *Islam* are defined non-*Islamic*.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* tells its most important goal is to educate the youth as an inviter calling (*da'wa*) people to *Islam* within the scope of *Tawhid Madrasah* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 63). On the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* builds its own human resource by educating its

supporters that helps it to transform into a grassroot movement. On the other hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* provides selective incentives for its adherents to realize themselves. This process is significant in strengthening the sense of belonging and in building both individual and collective identity. The purpose of education activities provided by the *Tevhid Cemaati* is articulated as: one to learn *Islamic aqida*, to swear off the *Jahiliya* belief which society believes in and to surrender to Allah; to learn moral aspects of *Islam* and to put into practice; to participate in social activities in order to socialize with *Muslims* and to establish relationship with *Muslims* both inside and outside the *Tevhid Cemaati* based on understanding of *Islamic* brotherhood (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 63).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* seeks to build an alternative *Islamic* education system to spread its ideology among the society. It is also important to provide an alternative *Islamic* education by challenging the establishment in terms of resource mobilization. While the *Tevhid Cemaati* identifies mosques and other places subject to the religious affairs administration as non-*Islamic* by producing counter frames targeting the official religion, it attempts to form social networks and to mobilize people through its non-official *masjids*. I believe it is a remarkable strategy for a social movement to spread and take root in a society. Furthermore, in this period of taking root and spreading, people educated based on a movement's ideology play a crucial role.

The group also aims to educate those who will take part in the *Tevhid Cemaat's* decision making process by *Islamic* education process. It is stated that those who go through the *Tevhid Cemaat's* education program, be patient, put the principles into practice and participate in activities, can provide their suggestions and complaints and advise on various topics (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 69). Nevertheless, I doubt whether the *Tevhid Cemaat's* alternative *Islamic* education can become widespread in Turkey where the state's security apparatus imposes tight controls and restrictions on any kind of activity which it perceives as a threat. Yet, as I mentioned above, the *Tevhid Cemaati* adopts various tactics and strategies successfully according to the conditions.

3.2.2 *How to organize: the process of decision-making and participating in the Tevhid Cemaati*

The *Tevhid Cemaat's* hierarchy, organizational structure, and decision-making procedure are also important elements to comprehend the social dynamics, tensions and coherence in the group. Attending the *Tevhid Cemaat's* activities and participating in its decision-making bodies play an important role in creating identity and sense of belonging both in individual and group level. The construction of identity is essential for such groups that have a puritan understanding of the world as black and white, to mobilize its adherents and to recruit new members.

Operation of the *Tevhid Cemaati* based on three principles: administration, *manhaj* and followers. The *Tevhid Cemaati* underlines its opinion that one leader and method laying emphasis on activities carried out by advising among adherents are more fruitful (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 60). While the *Tevhid Cemaat's* administration and decision-making mechanism are indicated, it is not clear who participate in decision making process and how the process is carried out. It is claimed that advising is one of the ways followed in decision-making process, but it is not covered which adherents are part of these processes and mechanisms.

The most significant elements framed by the *Tevhid Cemaati* are cohesion and obedience (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 60). Although the *Tevhid Cemaati* claims that it has a flexible model organized like a network, the emphasis on obedience and harmony illustrates that the two elements are considered as a prerequisite to maintain its activities. Yet, the group insists on that being part of the *Tevhid Cemaat's* activities is based on voluntariness (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 62).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* does not embark on an organizational hierarchy and thinks that an understanding of *Islamic* decency and obedience is essential for its activities (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 62). One more time, it is stressed that the *Tevhid Cemaati* does not have a vertical hierarchy and involving in its activities based on a volunteer basis. While every *Muslim* is identified as an inviter calling people to *Islam*, the *Tevhid Cemaati* specifies that the issues beyond *da'wa* such as *fiqh*, politics and

relations between different groups should be discussed by qualified ones only (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 68). Indeed, during my fieldwork I observed that there was horizontal hierarchy and it seemed like a network rather than a strict organization. Nevertheless, I assume, based on my observations, preachers and senior adherents play a key role in monitoring conversations and activities, particularly in the circles. In this sense, an informal hierarchy and a control mechanism can be mentioned.

The *Tevhid Cemaat's* all activities are accessible to the general public. Being part of and taking charge in the *Tevhid Cemaat's* activities require attending regularly. However, first of all, one should embark on *Salafi aqida* and put the principles into his/her life to be actively participate in the *Tevhid Cemaat's* decision making process. The minimum requirement is unity in terms of *aqida* and *manhaj*. The group tells while participating in the *Tevhid Cemaat's* activities based on voluntariness, so cutting loose from the group. Since one who leaves the movement, maintain his/her *aqida* and *Islamic* ethics, is considered and treated in terms of *Islamic* brotherhood and fidelity. Whereas a *Muslim* can cut loose from the *Tevhid Cemaati* willingly, one can be suspended from the *Tevhid Cemaati* because of problems such as *aqida*, *mahnaj* and moral (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 66-67).

For instance, during my field research, I observed both the preachers' in their speeches and senior members in the circles were warning those who were close to any *Islamic* armed faction not to come to the *Tevhid Cemaat's* *masjids*. Another example is *Ebu Hanzala's* famous speech (Tevhid Mühendisi, 2020) exists on the group's YouTube channel. In this speech, *Ebu Hanzala* states that those who have sympathy for ISIS should stay away from the *Tevhid Cemaat's* activities, and relations with this kind of people should be cut.

The *Tevhid Cemaat's* stance about *Muslim* women's position in the group and *Islamic* cause shows up as an attention-grabbing characteristic. "*Da'wa*, organizational and scholarly activities include other half of the *ummah*, *Muslim* women, without whom *Islamic* struggle cannot succeed" (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 66). The *Tevhid Cemaati* states that *Muslim* women should take part in *Islamic* struggle not as a wife of

a man, but with their self-identities, characters and conscious existences (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 68). The *Tevhid Cemaati* attributes a strong subjectiveness to *Muslim* women in *Islamic* struggle. However, I did not have chance to obtain information how these principles reflect on practice since it was impossible for me to access to women's activities. Yet, in contrast to many *Islamic* movements, women are defined as subjects who take responsibility and take the lead of *Islamic* cause like men.

This chapter suggests that *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* can be investigated as a social movement in which collective identity has an essential role since it is shaped and shapes various tactics and strategies adopted by the group. In this regard, the *Tevhid Cemaat's aqida* (creed) and *mahnaj* (method) are two curial concepts in the process of identity construction. Framing theory also provides a useful framework to understand how the *Tevhid Cemaati* spreads its messages to selected audiences. Framing interprets the complex social reality, explain it and by this way, makes individuals' lives meaningful. Also, it provides a rationale for individuals to join a movement and mobilize for it. *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* uses framing successfully in constructing and disseminating its message, building collective identity, recruiting and mobilizing individuals. Framing clarifies targets, the group's agenda and the legitimate reason for mobilization. Moreover, while frames can reflect a movement's identity, they can also help in constructing a new one.

Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara': Construction of individual and collective identity in Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati

Brave men who set their heart on the cause did not ask anything for wealth in this world. While studying, they left the universities which people go after for life and abandoned their gained titles. They rejected strictly their eye-brightening businesses that Allah is not pleased and tempting estates that they could have had. They have become a living interpretation of the verse of the Qur'an, "So flee to Allah" They became freed of all the bonds that are obstacles on the way to Allah.

– Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, *Biz Kimiz ve Ne İstiyoruz?*

This passage shows that how powerful is the formation of both collective identity and individual identity in the *Tevhid Cemaati*. While the *Tevhid Cemaati* aims to create the sense of belonging, it states that how one should abandon some valuables like titles, status and money. Moreover, it indicates that for one, it is a requirement to renounce one's

prior identities and belongings such as ethnicity, social, cultural and political boundaries in order to create a new identity.

Despite there are briefly three main branches (“purist”, “politicos” and “*jihadis*”) within *Salafism* as defined in the previous chapter, it is preferable to consider these different currents more like fluid categories than quite disparate ones. Indeed, some concepts distinguish *Salafism* from other *Islamic* movements clearly and reflect *Salafism’s* interpretation of *Islam* (Wagemakers, 2016, pp. 19-20). Thus, this chapter discusses an essential principle in formation of identity and belonging in *Salafism*. This principle is called as *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*. The doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* regulates the relationship between the believers and non-believers both in individual and social levels (Meijer, 2009, p. 10).

This doctrine is considered as a more radical concept, particularly by activist and political Salafi movements (Meijer, 2009, p. 18). Firstly, I will give the historical background of the doctrine shortly to illustrate how the concept has been constructed and evolved through centuries and is being adopted today depending on different social and political contexts. Then, I will try to show how this principle is articulated in the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* mind map and ideology as well as being implemented in its adherents’ daily life targeting both institutions and individuals. While I will investigate how the principle is articulated in the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* text and discourse and, in this regard framing analysis will be illustrated, in the meantime, field observations will also be presented in order to show how the group’s adherents life are shaped by the doctrine.

§ 4.1 History of the Concept

Although there are various arguments about the origins and historical background of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*, widely accepted opinion claims that it existed in the pre-Islamic Arabia. The origins of the concept, specifically the term *bara’* could be traced back to the tribal culture of pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 82). These tribes had strong bounds inside but the relation between them was usually conflicting. They used to declare war at each other, form alliances and break them

easily in changing circumstances. They tended to act pragmatically to protect their interests. Thus, they sometimes expelled their members who were called *bara'* to declare that particular member is not under protection of the tribe (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 83).

Other sources in which signs of the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* could be found is early heterodox *Islamic* sects. The first *Islamic* group implied the concept was *Kharijites* known as an extremist and a radical sect. They adopted a very radical interpretation of loyalty and disavowal in every aspect of life. Another group that used the concept was *Ibadites* who split from the *Kharijites*, but *Ibadites* stayed as a small group (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 84). The largest and most important branch of *Islam* that still use the concept as part of its doctrine is the *Shi'a*. In *Shi'a* doctrine, the first three caliphs and their followers are treated in terms of *bara'*, whereas Ali, Hasan, Huseyn and their successors are regarded in terms of *wala'* (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 84-85).

Sunni views of the principle of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* is controversial and there is not a consensus of opinion regarding to the concept. Approaches towards the concept by *Sunni Muslims* is usually negative. While the concept has been ignored by *Sunni Muslims*, a very few views -such as *Ahmad ibn Hanbal's* writings and famous *Hanbali* scholar *Ibn Batta-* occurred on the concept considered it as *bid'a* (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 85). After several centuries *Ibn Taymiyya* examined the concept and emphasized that *Muslims* should shrink away from *Christian* and *Jewish* customs, traditions and festivals. However, *Taymiyya* never used the actual phrase and his main goal was to defend *aqida*. Although *Hanbali* scholars regarded the concept as *bid'a*, *Ibn Taymiyya* used the concept against *bid'a* and his main focus was to avoid un-*Islamic* practices to insert *Islam* (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 86).

The grandson of '*Abd al-Wahhab*, *Suleyman ibn 'Abdallah Al al-Shaykh* leveled up the concept and used it against *kufr* which in contrast to *bid'a*, makes the person unbeliever (*kafir*). *Ibn 'Atiq*, a *Hanbali* scholar, even carried the concept one step further and regarded it as part of *tawhid*. *Ibn 'Atiq* states that if one doesn't show loyalty and disavowal, the person is not a *Muslim*. His thoughts on the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*

influenced today's *Salafi* scholars and movements. Two branches occurred with regard to the concept (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 87-88-89). The first one is Saudi state backed *ulema* and their followers, while the second started with *Juheyman al-'Utaybi* who led a group of rebels to occupy the Great Mosque in Mecca in 1979. *Juheyman's* thoughts on the concept was crucial for the following *Salafi* generations as he was the first one who formulated the concept in a political way to overthrow the Saudi regime. Also, he used the concept of "*millat Ibrahim*"¹ and three phases one should go through: disavowal to *shirk* and *mushriks*; *hijra* (emigration) to a safe place; and *qital* (fighting) (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 89-90).

Al- Maqdisi, a prominent *Salafi-Jihadi* ideologue, has contributed to the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* substantially. His ideas on the doctrine have both continuity and change. *Al- Maqdisi's* ideas on the concept, like his predecessors, based on two aspects of the concept as *tawhid* and *millat Ibrahim*. He was greatly influenced by *Juheyman* in the process of redefining the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*. Although *al-Maqdisi's* ideas on the concept are found in his predecessors' writings, he contributed to the concept in two ways: politics and *takfir*. *Al-Maqdisi* emphasizes on the relation between two terms (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 91-92).

Al-Maqdisi defines *millat Ibrahim* and takes the concept a step further in terms of political obedience. He radically adopts *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* by regarding political obedience same with un-*Islamic* worship and condemning today's *Muslim* politicians as being *kuffar*. As *al-Maqdisi* declares one should show disavowal to un-*Islamic* practices such as politicians ruling not according to *shari'a*, all *Muslims* are required to stand against *kuffar*. (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 92-93). He refers to a *hadith* and illustrates the ways which *Muslims* can show their disavowal to *kufir*. He emphasizes *jihad* as the third way and the strongest form of faith in showing *bara'*. He transforms the concept from a tool to increase religious rigidity in terms of *aqida*, into a revolutionary ideology (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 94-95).

1 The religion of Abraham

Al-Maqdisi's efforts to justify *takfir* and to develop concepts in a more pragmatic way provided by previous *Islamic* figures could be considered as a significant change for the interpretation of the concept. It is important to understand why and how *al-Maqdisi* considers political obedience to man-made laws as *kufr* but not *fisq* (sinfulness) or *zulm* (injustice) (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 95). Although *Sayyid Qutb* and *Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj* illustrated concepts emphasizing *kufr* and *takfir*, *al-Maqdisi* connects *kufr* and the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* and provides a detailed explanation to justify *takfir* (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 96).

Al-Maqdisi indicates three levels of faith that are: *sihhat al-din* (the soundness of the religion), *wajib al-din* (the compulsory of the religion), *kamal al-din* (the perfection of religion). The first one refers to the essences of *iman* which if one violates is not considered as a Muslim anymore. The second refers to the rules that if one violates is not considered as *kafir* but sinner. And the third one refers to the actions that are applaudable and violation of them is not considered a sin. First two categories are taken account for deciding someone's belief (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 97-98).

Al-Maqdisi argues that the violation of *wajib al-din* can turn into the violation of *sihhat al-din* if one knows that Islam forbids but still commits the sin; or support by conviction; or render something haram as halal. In the cases of *i'tiqad* (conviction), *istihlal* (permission) or *jahd* (negation) the person committed sin is not regarded as just *fasiq* but *kafir* (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 98). *Al-Maqdisi* also stresses that *kufr akbar* (major disbelief) referring to the violation of *sihhat al-din* and the violation of *wajib al-din* supported by *i'tiqad*, *istihlal* or *jahd*, whereas *kufr asghar* (minor disbelief) refers to the sins committed by mistake. He implies these categories to politics and underlines if a ruler follows un-Islamic laws as being aware that are against *shari'a*, he/she becomes *kafir* without the need of *i'tiqad*, *istihlal* or *jahd*. *Al-Maqdisi* places such sins as *kufr akbar* and the violation of *sihhat al-din* (Wagemakers, 2009, p. 99).

However, not all scholars and ideologues agree with *al-Maqdisi's* ideas regarding to the using of *takfir*. There was a famous debate that occurred between *al-Maqdisi* and *al-Albani* on the issue of *takfir*. While

al-Albani argued that the sura 5:44 is on *Jews* and their beliefs, *al-Maqdisi* stated that their unbelief is regarded a form of *kufr akbar* and it does not require to be supported by *i'tiqad*, *istihlal* or *jahd*. Therefore, *al-Maqdisi* claimed that there is no need of declaration of unbelief by politicians in order to excommunicate them (Wagemakers, 2009, pp. 99-100-101).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* - based on the doctrine- makes a sharp distinction between “us” and “them” and encourages individuals to break ties with the “other” in every aspect of life. On the one hand, this attitude obliges individuals to be committed the *Tevhid Cemaati* and consolidates the sense of belonging and collective identity. While on the other hand, this concept can build a strong collective identity among the members of a *Salafi* movement, it can also isolate its adherents from everything considered oppose to *Islam* since the concept stresses us and them categories directly.

§ 4.2 Living in Dar-ul Kufr: Imagining society, state and politics

The concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* has a considerable role in strengthening a universal and transnational identity that underlines the *umma* in *Salafi* doctrine. Thus, its supporters believe belonging to a much larger community (Meijer, 2009, pp. 13-14). Also, the concept urges its followers to take flexible actions depending on circumstances and conditions, even in a pacifist way by abstaining from political participation such as not voting in the elections. That emphasis on subjectivity turns its adherents into strong social actors (Meijer, 2009, pp. 13-14).

At this point, political *takfir* shows up as a tool used by many *Salafi* movements from quietist to violent as a way of taking position in a political world. However, political *takfir* also serves as a tool for contesting *Salafi* movements not just taking position against *kuffar* and leads fragmentations in *Salafism* (Meijer, 2009, p. 18). This concept is used by almost all *Salafi* movements as an essential concept for *Salafi* “*aqida*”. However, some *Salafi* movements adopt a more political interpretation of the

concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* and separate the world into “us” and “them” strictly.

4.2.1 *Takfir*

Once I asked “Derviş” about ongoing debates around the issue of *takfir* and wondered about his ideas on the issue. He told me that despite others call the *Tevhid Cemaati* as *takfiri*, they do not proclaim *takfir* because of their greed or ego. Also, he said that they do not go out and call people walking in the street *Muslim* or *kafir*. Otherwise, they would not adopt *da'wa* and call people to *Islam* as their *manhaj*. However, he stated that *takfir* is not arbitrariness but *fard*² and religious obligation. Moreover, he mentioned, how it is possible to treat someone without identifying this person's situation in terms of *Islamic* belief.

After a seminar, I had a conversation with “Derviş” and he asked me about my ideas with regard to the *Tevhid Cemaat's* books on *aqida* I read and my feelings about my visits. He was wondering about my considerations and expecting my interest in the *Tevhid Cemaati* will go beyond my research. I told him that I found out the *Tevhid Cemaat's* understanding, and interpretation of *Islam* was much different than those I met before. In this regard, I told that the *Tevhid Cemaat's* ideas were embarrassing and a bit shocking that challenge one's existed values. And “Derviş” confirmed that the group has such impact on those who meet with the doctrine of tawhid for the first time.

Then I talked about family, friends and social relations that how it is a difficult decision for a person to abandon these ties. At this point “Derviş” talked about the principles of *takfir* and *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*. He mentioned that it is easy to judge and determine for cases that are far from us or do not affect us directly. Indeed, he said that it is easy to proclaim *takfir* against someone and call one *kafir* who is not related to us. However, the main point is, for one, to start identifying one's social circle. Moreover, he went on, everyone has a test that while some are tested with

2 Religious obligation

their titles and status, others are tested with their friends, relatives and family such as children, parents and so on.

While “Derviş” was talking about his own experience about the subject his phone rang. After he talked on the phone for a while he hung up and said that it was his father. Then he told me that despite they have different *Islamic* faith they still have a dialogue as father and son. Moreover, he said that he had clash with his parents and even was threw out of the house during his first years in the *Tevhid Cemaati*. This is not a discrete and separate example, but a highly common experience many faces, particularly among those who have just met the *Tevhid Cemaati* as far as “Derviş” told me. He even told that new members have a bitter understating of the concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* that makes them keen and may cause a problem.

This case has two significant points in terms of both construction of collective identity and sense of belonging in the *Tevhid Cemaati*. Once life is categorized as us and them, in order to protect *aqida*, you need to severe your relations and boundaries with your social circle including your family. Moreover, a new identity and sociality is being constructed in the *Tevhid Cemaati* when previous ones are abandoned. The principle of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* has a crucial role not only in the formation of identity but analyzing reality and attempting to change it as well. However, it also has a controversial aspect in its relation with violence since more radical currents among *Salafism* tend to examine reality in contrast to quietist and classical versions of it (Meijer, 2009, pp. 24-25-26-27).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes surah *al-Kafirun* as a foundation for the steps that one should take. Main point by referring to the *surah* is to mention *shirk* since the *surah al-Kafirun* provides conditions for one to beware from *shirk* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 26). These conditions are articulated as: to proclaim *takfir* against *mushriks*; to believe in that the gods worshiped by *mushriks* are invalid; to declare that *mu’mins* do not pray to the gods as *mushriks* do; to impress on the difference and to disavow the religion which is full of *shirk* that *mushriks* are subject to (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, pp. 27-28). These princi-

ples are stated as requirements for one to have an *Islamic* identity. It indicates a strident distinction that being a member of the *Tevhid Cemaati* or participating in the group's activities is not sufficient. However, it is essential for the construction of an individual within the *Tevhid Cemaati* to identify and disavow the other.

Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* frames *takfir* as an *Islamic* verdict existed in the *sharia* such as *zakat*, *salaat* and *fasting* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 39). In this case, *takfir* appears as a way of confronting with the others, especially in challenging regimes and opponents by delegitimizing them politically. In a way, *takfir* is considered as a tactical tool to take action against possible targets since it is a prerequisite to engage with the illegitimate. Once an actor is identified as non-*Islamic* and *takfir* is proclaimed against it then contestation is approved. Moreover, *takfir* does not only serves as legitimation but also obliges the *Islamic* struggle.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* divides individuals who disclose action, belief or statement that requires to be proclaimed *takfir* into three: those who pray to anything or anyone other than Allah as well as those who do not disavow *taghuts* and practice *shirk*; those who regard *halals* as *harams* or vice versa that are part of *wajib al-din*; those who practice or act that is identified as *kufir* in the issues that are not required to be known (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 40). In addition to this categorization, the group highlights that there is no excuse for actions that violate *wajib al-din* other than coercion and mistake (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 41). The *Tevhid Cemaati* also criticize those who state that people violating *wajib al-din* are ignorant -comparing to the era of *Jahiliya*, hence, they cannot be identified neither *kafir* nor *mushrik* before the right of *hujja*³ is accorded to the person (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 43).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* lays a powerful stress on the role of religion in individuals' life that shapes every aspect of life. The group indicates that it is an obligatory to surrender to Allah, not only in cosmological issues, but also in daily life, education, criteria of true and wrong, clothes and appearance, evaluating people and societies, whom to show loyalty

3 Argument or proof.

and disavowal. Majority of people are keen to act upon their desires and pleasures that is not possible for a *muwahhid*⁴ (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 51). The principle of *al-wala' w-al-bara'* is at the center in daily life of a *muwahhid* that plays a substantial role regarding to the issues mentioned above. A *muwahhid* perceives others, the world and develops an attitude based on the concept since the concept forms the group's adherents' semantic world.

4.2.2 Society

The concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* is essential to understand the *Tevhid Cemaat's* perception of the society and analyze the formation of the group's collective identity based on this perception. Because the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* serves in identifying the society as well as leading the group members how to treat "others". While "Derviş" and I were discussing on various topics after a Saturday seminar, I tried to learn what the *Tevhid Cemaati* thinks about Friday prayer as I had already heard that some *Islamic* groups refuse to attend the prayer on Fridays. "Derviş" told me that they consider Turkey as "*Dar al-Kufi*"⁵, hence, they do not participate in Friday prayer in such a country where *Muslims* are not safe and do not have power.

This conversation provides explicitly that how the *Tevhid Cemaati* understands the society and how the group's interpretation of the faith is distinctive. The *Tevhid Cemaati* defines the society as non-*Islamic* in which people are not aware of *taghut*, thereby do not disavow it that leads them to shirk. Therefore, the society is thought to be lost the essence of *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 37). Analyzing the society seems to be a pre-condition in order to determine the possible ways of struggle and to what extent the group's adherents could establish a relationship with "others". Once the society is diagnosed *kuffar*, then for a *muwahhid*, it is a requirement to break all kind of ties such as social, economic and political with them. A new identity is being constructed

4 A Muslim who is focused on the concept of tawhid.

5 It is a land which is governed by the laws of Kufr (non-Islamic).

through a new socialization following the period of breaking ties with “others”.

It is stated that signs of *Islam* show a change in different historical contexts in which distinctive characteristics of being a *Muslim* are accepted as prognostics of *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 38). Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* argues that while signs of *Islam* could differ depending on space, time and society, a religious service that used be regarded as an indicator of being a *Muslim* in the past, might lose its validity. For instance, while *hajj* is one of the fundamentals of *Islam*, it was not a sign of being *Muslim* in the early *Islamic* era since *mushriks* also performed the duty of pilgrimage as a religious service (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 70).

As this approach presents clearly, the *Tevhid Cemaati* does not concern that how individuals identify themselves while deciding the society could be described either as an *Islamic* one or not. It is only adjudged according to the *Salafi aqida*. Also, the *Tevhid Cemaati*-based on this understanding- suggests that today, to decide if one is *Muslim* that one should not vote, not do military service, not go and send his/her children to the schools and disavow *shirk* as well as human ideologies such as democracy (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 70).

Furthermore, the *Tevhid Cemaati* discusses whether ignorance- in terms of *Islamic* understanding- is an excuse or not on issues regarding to *shirk*, *kufr* and *iman*. The group claims that *ulema's* opinion on the subject is clear. It is a religious duty for every *Muslim* to know and believe in Allah, learn *tawhid* and *Islamic* knowledge that is essential for *iman*. Whoever is not interested in these issues or does not learn although he/she has the chance is equal to those who do not practice despite knowing. There is no excuse according to *sharia* in this case. Excuse is only accepted for people who do not have chance to reach *Islamic* knowledge or find someone to teach them although they are willing to request (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 74).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* describes the society as unconcerned and stood away from *Islam* rather than ignorant based on the opinion of *ulema*. Thus, the group supports that there is no excuse for the society

since they turn away from the *Islamic* knowledge although they have chance to know the *Quran* and Allah. This analyzing of the society distinguishes *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* from other activist Islamic movements, even the Salafi ones, because many of them consider Turkish society as ignorant but not unconcerned.

4.2.3 Democracy

The *Tevhid Cemaati* frames democracy as a separate religion and mentions that *Islam* is not a religion of majority which is an important determinant in democracy. In *Islam*, there is only one truth and even if most of the people are on the wrong track that does not change the truth since majority and consensus are asked in the religion of democracy not in *Islam*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* supports this framing and refers to the life of *sahaba*⁶ who did not consider and care majority of those apostatized the religion and did not hesitate to wage a war against them. However, today the reason that *shirk* and *kufr* are widespread is people that stay quiet on *shirk* and *kufr* because the many practices and so legitimizes this situation (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 83).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* divides the elements of democracy into two as voters and legislators. Legislators' main role is law making and they participate in decision making process which aim to make people's life easy. Therefore, the *Tevhid Cemaati* frames parliament as the center of *kufr* and members of it are *kuffar* without any expectations (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 87). Moreover, features of legislators are classified as such: they do not rule according to *sharia*; they are *kuffar* because they take part in legislation; they attempt to change religious principles determined by Allah; parliaments are places where verses of the *Qur'an* are denied and ridiculed; parliaments are subject to international superior courts; they make friends *kuffar* (Bayancuk, 2019, pp. 91-92-93-94).

While legislators are regarded *kuffar* because of their roles in legislation that violates the doctrine of *tawhid* and that is a clear sign of *shirk*, voters are also considered to be responsible by the *Tevhid Cemaati*

6 Companions of the prophet Mohammad

as much as legislators. Since voters approve democracy by participating in the elections, they are the object of treatment like legislators and should be considered like them. The *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes that one who gives a power of attorney to someone to make law in the parliament, shares all responsibility of the legislator's disposals (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 95).

As seen in this example, the *Tevhid Cemaati* provides justification for showing disavowal (*bara'*) to democracy since it is a regime that violates the doctrine of *tawhid* and *sharia*. The group first frames democracy as a non-*Islamic* regime and attempts to delegitimize it in the eyes of *Muslims*. Then, not only democracy as a regime is identified as non-*Islamic*, but also those who vote and are elected that are framed *kuffar*. Therefore, once they are declared *kuffar*, *Muwahhids* should show then disavowal.

Parliamentary system is also condemned because democracy is regarded as *shirk* since entering parliament is equated to recognizing the legitimacy of the secular system. In addition, *Tevhid Cemaati* provided frames covering political corruption, the state of emergency, human rights etc.

§ 4.3 Being a Muwahhid: Separating “us” and “them”

The *Tevhid Cemaati* states that the lexical meaning of the Arabic word of *wala'* is to aid, to care for and to subject to, while the word of *bara'* means to abandon, to be far and to bear enmity (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 107). It reflects the most common understanding of the concept. However, to investigate the *Tevhid Cemaat's* interpretation of the concept, a more comprehensive perspective illustrating the *Tevhid Cemaat's* attitudes towards society and politics is required to be presented.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* mentions that it is articulated in the *Qur'an* that it is a requirement for *Muslims* to show loyalty to *mu'mins* and disavowal to *kuffar*. Moreover, the group underlines that in the first years of *Islam*, people's attitudes towards loyalty and disavowal were based on tribal, kinship and racial bonds that *Islam* rejected and explained this kind of

relations as *Jahiliya*. *Islamic* law has proposed its own order in which loyalty is based on *iman* while disavowal is based on *kufir*. Thus, any kind of ties such as kinship and race are worthless for *Islam* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 107).

Islam is a universal religion, what is native/local cannot be *Islam*. Moreover, *Islam* is *millat Ibrahim*, everything beyond this principle cannot belong to *Islam* (Bayuncuk, 2019, May 20).

As seen in the example, the *Tevhid Cemaati* directly attacks existed discourse produced by the government, frames it as illegitimate and produces its own counter frame based on an *Islamic* concept which is *millat Ibrahim*. Moreover, *Salafism* seems to be attractive in so far as it has ability to solve modern identity and generation crisis. It provides tools to struggle against local and cultural customs as well as traditions (Meijer, 2009, p. 15).

This emphasis on *Islamic* identity which is superior to all identities and boundaries such as nation, kinship, ethnicity and race, could be regarded in two ways in identity formation. Firstly, it plays a significant role for group solidarity since “loyalty” to *mu’mins* is encouraged by the *Tevhid Cemaati* that identifies the limits of “us”. Secondly, it facilitates the sense of belonging to the group and explains the notion of “them” by stressing “disavowal” to *kuffar* which is an obligation that makes one to break ties with one’s previous boundaries. The universal characteristic of the *Salafi* identity which suggests a supra-identity, can make it attractive particularly in such a period that identity crisis is at the center of or intertwined with current cultural, social, economic and political problems globally.

“Bekir” who was born in a migrant family from Balkans, grew up in a secular neighborhood of Istanbul, told me that he found *Islam* in 2015. As he told me, his father had been an army officer who served in air forces command and then worked as a pilot in a private flight company. He had been always in search and questioning until he met with the *Tevhid Cemaati*. When he was child, he had a basic knowledge of *Islam* at a level

of “*elif, ba*”⁷ that means he had no previous *Islamic* education and was not part of any *Islamic* group in the past. While he was Kemalist⁸ for a period, then he was interested in leftist ideas with his own words. He stated that he was questioning the system and did not want to be part of it while he was studying.

He was always telling all around that was not truth despite he did not know what truth was at that time. He told me that he often considered people insincere in the past. Thus, his profession of executive officer in long distance ships and his hobby, climbing, provided him a chance to stay away from the society. He quit both his work and hobby after he met with the *Tevhid Cemaati* which leads him towards the only true path. Moreover, he complained about corruption and degeneration in the society. He stated that present system and political parties do not have the capability to fulfill people’s expectations.

He seems to have suffered existential anxiety during his youth. He had been through some steps to find himself and he was interested in discovering various things. However, nothing satisfied him except *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* in his way to realize himself. The concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara* appears to be playing a crucial role in this process. While his identity is constructed as a *muwahhid* by taking place in the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* activities, socializing with other members of the group and volunteering in the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* working that are exact signs of *wala’*, on the other hand, he deploys the concept of *bara’* in order to break away from his old habits including his job, hobby and social life.

In his famous speech in 2015⁹ which caused public resentment, *Ebu Hanzala* cited sura 60:40 from the *Qur’an* which states “We are quit of you and that you serve apart from God. We disbelieve in you, and between us and you enmity has shown itself, and hatred for ever, until you believe in God alone.” This example is mentioned many times by the *Tevhid Cemaati* to emphasize the importance of the concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*. *Ebu*

7 Basic knowledge of Arabic alphabet and Islam.

8 Follower of Kemalism which is a secularist and nationalist modernization philosophy occurred in Turkey after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zgKCa2hpEY&ab_channel=TevhidEhli

Hanzala, in the same speech, addresses to his supporters as well as the government and says that they are trying their best to stay away from this system. Therefore, he says that they reject sending their children to the school, serving in the army and voting in the elections as the concept *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* oblige them to act in this way.

Moreover, it is underlined that people who rebel against Allah and practice *shirk*, damage *Muslims* and all the living creatures. Their damages should be prevented and warded off. Those who form a friendship with this kind of defacer people are also responsible for continuity of the damage (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 112). People who form friendship with *kuffar* are described as *munafiq* in the *Qur'an*. *Munafiqs* always seek to profit from all situations since they do not have *iman* in their hearts. Thus, *munafiq* tries to take advantage as standing by both *kuffar* and *Muslims* under different circumstances (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 113).

4.3.1 *What and Who to Disavow:*

4.3.1.1 Military Service

"We do not serve in the military, do not ask us such stupid questions that if we reject serving in the military due to the memo declared by *al-Qaeda*. We do not serve because "The believers fight in the way of Allah, and the disbelievers fight in the way of *taghut*¹⁰. So, how is it possible to serve in your military once we call you *taghut*. We are not *munafiq*."¹¹

As seen in *Ebu Hanzala's* speech, he cites *Surah An-Nisa* (4:76) from the *Qur'an* and according to his interpretation, in *Islam*, there are two different armies like black and white that are antipodes. *Hanzala* elaborates this verse and points out that the verse illustrates that there are two paths and two armies. While the first one is full of people who have *iman* and believe in Allah, the other one is full of *kuffar* who fight for anything apart from Allah such as nation, homeland, flag and democracy (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 36). One of the most distinctive interpretation of the concept by the *Tevhid Cemaati* is to use the doctrine to proclaim *takfir*

10 Surah An-Nisa- 4:76

11 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zgKCa2hpEY&ab_channel=TevhidEhli

against not only institutions but also individuals. Therefore, every policeman and soldier is thought to be lifelong defender of the rules based on *shirk* and *kufr* against *Muslims* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 124).

While military is regarded as one of the well-respected institutions by many in Turkey, the *Tevhid Cemaati* publicly attacks the military's legitimacy in an *Islamic* way. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* opinions on the issue could be found clearly in the group's written and visual materials. The group states that those who are law enforcement and soldier in the regimes- like secularism- which declare war against Allah and fight against Allah with their militaries, are thought to be showing loyalty to these regimes, hence, they are considered *kuffar* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 37). The group underlines, by looking at the concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, that it is not possible for a *muwahid* to be part of security forces in a regime which is identified as *taghuti* and at war with *Islam*.

This attitude attacking and delegitimizing military and law enforcement through an *Islamic* perspective in such a country like Turkey where there is compulsory military service and military is described as "*Peygamber Ocağı*"¹², appears for a powerful anti-system frame. The *Tevhid Cemaati* encourages both its adherents and a broader audience not to serve in the military as an obligatory of *bara'*. While the *Tevhid Cemaati* produces anti system frames and calls people not to serve in the military, this call also serves in the formation of collective identity and the sense of belonging to the *Tevhid Cemaati* since the group's adherents follow a non-legal path for struggling and even renounce some of their legal rights by rejecting military service.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* indicates that there are many ways of showing loyalty to *kuffar* and helping them in their struggle against *Islam*. One can help them with one's hand, tongue and goods. The criteria for a person whether this person helps or not to *kuffar*, is not intention or declaration of will but depends on a concrete evidence. Fighting alongside

12 A conservative portrayal of the Turkish Armed Forces that refers to historical and Islamic characteristic of the army.

kuffar in their armies is a clear way of such help. Serving in *taghuti* armies is an apparent sign for showing loyalty to *kuffar* as it is a choice of being part of an army that aims to defend *kufir* and to fight against *Islam* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 115).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* often refers to the history of *Islam* to legitimize its ideas and compares different historical periods. The *Tevhid Cemaati* frames current politicians as renamed “pharaohs” and accuse them of dividing people into races, classes, and status and weaken them. Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* states that “pharaohs” used to benefit from weakened and powerless people and force them into their own agenda by ignoring people’s will. This historical context is reinterpreted and adapted today’s world where it is claimed that existed regimes steal people’s most efficient years under the name of compulsory military service. The *Tevhid Cemaati*, based on this historical example, suggests that there is no difference between the two historical eras (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 116).

4.3.1.2 Supporting kuffar with tongue

“Generally, in the world, particularly in our geography, the archenemy to *tawhid* is those who speak the same language with us, is considered one of us but stand with *taghuti* systems. Their titles in this world are *ulema*, but they are described in the *Qur’an* as *Bel’ams*¹³ and donkeys that are carrying books” (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 126). A striking definition by the group, of people who are regarded as supporting *kuffar* with tongue. The *Tevhid Cemaati* accuses mostly *ulema* since they are representatives of existed and institutive religion in the public sphere.

As defined in the previous subtitle, supporting *kuffar* with tongue is explained as serving in *taghuts’* military and police forces. The point that the *Tevhid Cemaati* wants to stress is to fight physically in any way apart from Allah, hence, to fight against Him. However, it is emphasized that supporting *kuffar* with tongue is the worst way of helping *kuffar* in terms of its damage to *Islam*. Those supporting *kuffar* with tongue are

13 Apostatic.

mostly journalists, scholars, *ulama* who, normally, are required to tell the truth to people (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 126).

The group targets and attacks those mentioned above as enemies of *Islam* and produces counter-frames to delegitimize their authority in the society. Bayancuk mentions in his book that *taghuti* systems' power is based on institutions such as media and politics as well as armies. In these regimes, people are controlled and manipulated by mass media, education and religion. Therefore, if one supports these kinds of *taghuti* regimes or any kind of *kufir* with pen or word and stand by them including excusing *taghuts'* *kufir*, then one is taught to be showing loyalty to *kuffar*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* benefits from diagnostic framing to blame *ulema*, journalists, intellectuals and describes them as major source of problems in the *Muslim* societies since this kind of people are considered propagating against *Islam*, undermining *Muslims'* *aqida* and sowing discord among *Muslims*, hence, waving war against *Islam* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 126).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes that *taghuts* legalize their authority by exploiting sacred values believed by the society since *taghuti* regimes are built upon "serving someone slavishly." Today, the regime in Turkey is also identified as *taghut* by the *Tevhid Cemaati* and the system is framed as a secular regime that is famous for its enmity to *Islam* such that wearing headscarf is even not tolerated despite it is not related with *Islam* for the *Tevhid Cemaati*. Yet, the regime authorizes the Religious Affairs Administration to organize religious rituals, ceremonies and declare fatwa on Friday prayers. The reason lies behind this attitude is the aim to control the religious life in the country and more importantly, for the regime, to seek for legitimacy since the majority of the population is regarded *Muslim* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 127).

The group targets state's *ulema* and *imams* who attend official ceremonies, pray to the state and army, thereby justify institutions in terms of *Islam* in the public eye. Also, the *Tevhid Cemaati* interestingly calls them *haham*¹⁴ because they are civil servants in the Religious Affairs

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Administration. This situation is underlined in a given example by the *Tevhid Cemaati*, in which a mother sends his son to the army for his military service since she believes that the army is “*Peygamber Ocağı*”, while the same army inhibits this mother’s daughter due to her headscarf. Moreover, the group puts an effort to reveal the contradiction and states that if this son dies during his service in the army that wages war against *Islam*, he is announced as martyr by the state to comfort the society (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 127).

The *Tevhid Cemaati* produces both frames and counter-frames to shake the state’s *ulema*’s authority in the society. The group attacks *ulema* very harshly and tries to disgrace them that the *ulema* is described as playing a major role in *taghut*’s project called “religion against religion” which attempts to laicize and democratize the society (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 127). The *Tevhid Cemaati* seems to be trying to prevent the *ulama*’s impact on the society and to spread the group’s own ideology while silencing its most powerful rival in producing religious knowledge. To this end, the *Tevhid Cemaati*, first, frames them as nurturing enmity towards *Islam* to delegitimize the *ulema*’s religious authority and then, encourages its adherents and other *Muslims* to disavow them.

4.3.1.3 Interfaith dialogue and supporting kuffar with goods

The *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes that any attempt to establish a dialogue with an idea requires to recognize its legitimacy. Thus, while the group calls those who have different beliefs other than *Islam* as *kuffar*, any kind of dialogue with non-*Muslims* is not possible (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 131). On the contrary, *Muslims* are obliged to decline and show enmity towards this kind of people as a necessary result of the concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*.

Interfaith dialogue is based on the idea that a common ground for dialogue is possible between *Abrahamic* religions since the belief in god and eternity are fundamental elements for all these religions. However, the *Tevhid Cemaati* highlights that despite *Christianity* and *Judaism* are

considered as “*Ahl al- Kitab*”¹⁵ in the *Qur’an*, both of them are also identified among *kuffar* by the *Qur’an*. Therefore, all the verses of the *Qur’an* related with *kuffar* involve *Christians* and *Jews* as well. Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* claims that the *Qur’an* commands *Muslims* to wage *Jihad* against *kuffar*, treat them as an enemy and prevent their creed to be spreading on the earth that makes a dialogue impossible in terms of *shari’a* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 132).

Only way for those called “*Ahl al-Kitab*” to live in safety among *Muslims* in an *Islamic* country is to pay *jizya*¹⁶ and not to betray *Muslims*. As long as they follow the rules and show loyalty to *Muslims*, their rights (right to live and own property etc.) are granted. If a *Muslim* violates their rights, he or she is condemned by the *shari’a*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* also indicates that when the *Islamic* empires and states in the history are examined, it could be said that “*Ahl al-Kitab*” lived safely unless they betrayed (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 134). It is obvious that for the *Tevhid Cemaati* non-*Muslims* should be treated according to the concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*. Thus, *Muslims* are not allowed to establish any kind of relation with non-*Muslims*.

Moreover, the *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes that those who do not practice *takfir* against people that believe in another religion than *Islam* or are tolerant of non-*Muslims*’ beliefs and practices, are regarded *kuffar* in terms of “*ijma*”¹⁷. The reason behind this is that this kind of people are thought to be rejecting *nass* that points to kufr for those who practice of other than *Islam*. For the groups, *Judaism*, *Christianity*, democracy, communism, secularism, humanism and other forms of *shirk* are examples for this case (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 134).

Another issue that *Muslims* should disavow from is supporting *kuffar* with goods. It is indicated that any kind of financial aid strengthening *kuffar* is a clear *kufr*, particularly in today’s world in which financial power is significant and much more effective than anything (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 130). Despite this attitude could be seen common

15 People of the Book who have monotheistic scriptures such as Jews and Christians.

16 A yearly paid taxation paid by non-Muslims to their Muslim rulers.

17 Consensus or agreement of Islamic scholars.

within *Islamic* movements, the *Tevhid Cemaati* takes a step further and positions itself to engage with politics in an activist way. The group states that this kind of a *kufir* also includes voluntarily paying tax to *kuffar* and donating organizations spreading *kufir* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 130).

The emphasis on taxpay and encouraging its adherents not to pay tax is really crucial in constructing identity, especially in formation of political ideology of the group. The *Tevhid Cemaati* once more produces counter frames by categorizing paying tax in a *taghut* governance as a *kufir* in order to delegitimize the regime. On the one hand, the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* urges the group members to confront with the “enemy” which is political regime in this case and promotes its adherents to disavow from the system. On the other hand, this moving away from the legitimate system parallels with strengthening of collective identity as well as group solidarity.

4.3.1.4 Resembling kuffar

Salafi movements pay particular attention on outlook by far the most within the *Islamic* movements. This insistence lies on *Salafism's* effort to distinguish itself from others with its adherents' appearances as part of building a *Salafi* identity (Meijer, 2009, p. 14). However, *Salafism's* emphasis on separating a *muwahhid* from others is far going than only appearance and includes a wide range of subjects.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* states that resembling *kuffar* is a way of showing loyalty to them, but in *Islam*, it is essential to oppose the *kuffar*. The reason that appearance has importance is resembling in looks prompts one to have a strong liking and admiration for *kuffar* in the long term. Thus, looking alike the *kuffar* is forbidden (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 135). The *Tevhid Cemaati* seems to be benefiting from this interpretation and seeks to consolidate its members. Underlining of appearance is part of a much bigger perceiving of the reality as us and them.

The group indicates its ideas on opposing the *kuffar* and elaborates this interpretation with reference to the historical examples from *Islamic* history. Opposing the *kuffar* in every possible way is appreciated

and silent hostility towards the *kuffar* is considered as a must for the correctness of *iman* (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 136). The *Tevhid Cemaati* separates silent opposition and open opposition based on the circumstances that could be investigated with reference to political opportunity structure in which the *Tevhid Cemaati* operates.

Open opposition is defined with regard to the power of the *Muslims* by giving examples from the time of *Prophet Mohammed* when *Muslims* were weak in *Mecca*, but strong in *Medina*. Therefore, *Prophet Muhammed* laid stress on silent opposition in *Mecca* while he had declared open opposition in *Medina*. The *Tevhid Cemaati* compares the first era of *Islam* with today's world and states that some *Muslims* still do not oppose the *kuffar* openly because they utilize this historical case mentioned above as an opportunity. However, today, majority of the *Muslims* live either in their countries or in the West where individual rights and freedoms exist (Bayancuk, 2019, p. 136).

As I addressed before, the attention on not looking like *Christians*, *Jews* and other non-*Muslims* is visibly crucial for both traditional *Islamic* movements and *Salafi* movements-mostly. Thus, wearing cross, celebrating Noel, participating in non-*Islamic* rituals and ceremonies are not approved by the majority of *Muslims*. However, while more traditional groups aim to protect *aqida*, *Salafi* movements' attitude based on the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*. This is the most distinctive point in this case that divides life into black and white. The *Tevhid Cemaati* seeks to build an *Islamic* identity that embraces every aspect of life, hence, disavows the *kuffar*-based on the doctrine- not only in *aqida* but in practice as well by following the *Quran*, *sunnah* and *al-salaf al-salih*.

4.3.1.5 Education and Schools

Competition taking place over the organized education has a significant importance in constructing identity and designing the society in Turkey. It has been always a field of contestation since the foundation of the Turkish Republic as various groups with reference to their ideological background attempts to impact on this field. The *Tevhid Cemaati* also considers formal education as a threat to its ideology articulated in the group's

aqida (creed). Thus, the group – based on the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*– calls its adherents not to send their children to the schools and targets the formal education described in the law on organization and duties of ministry of national education.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* produces frames and counter frames to illustrate why *Muslims* should disavow the compulsory education in Turkey. The group indicates that *taghut* regimes have always tools to deceive and manipulate people in different historical periods (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 33). Schools are framed as the most important tools in enslaving people for the sake of *shirk* in today's world (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 34). Therefore, the *Tevhid Cemaati* stimulates its audience that being in this kind of schools where *shirk* and worshiping *taghut* are imposed on people is incompatible with *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 35).

On the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati*, as a new social movement, attaches particular importance to produce counter hegemonic discourse against the legitimacy of the regime which formal education is based on as a substantial “ideological state apparatus” that could be regarded as a challenge against the state authority. On the other hand, summoning its supporters to disavow the organized education could be analyzed as an attempt by the *Tevhid Cemaati* to eliminate a major threat that can pose an obstacle for the formation of collective identity and sense of belonging of the group's members.

4.3.1.6 Sufism

Sufism is one of the oldest rivals of *Salafism* in *Muslim* societies. Although *Salafism* is comparatively a new phenomenon in Turkey, hostility between *Sufi* and *Salafi* movements is also observable in public sphere. This tension has escalated when *Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü*– a famous *Sufi* preacher– recently claimed that *Salafi* movements are taking up arms (duvaR.english, 2020). The *Tevhid Cemaat's* increasing popularity and visibility is related with its attack on the *Sufi* movements in Turkey where *Sufism* has been a deep-rooted and state backed strand of *Islam* for centuries.

Both *Salafi* and *Sufi* movements have adverse interests and are competing over the control of the religious life in Turkey. Despite *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaat*'s main rebuttal to *Sufism* is based on *Salafi aqida* with an emphasis on the doctrine of tawhid, this is an also tactical choice against a main obstacle for the *Tevhid Cemaat*'s potential recruitment and mobilization. Thus, the *Tevhid Cemaati* directly targets the *Sufi* movements and produces counter frames to undermine their legitimacy.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* divides *Sufism* into two branches and states that the first one is an understanding of *Islam*'s moral and spiritual aspects which prioritize eternity and afterlife greater than temporary wealth of the world. Also, this perspective on *zuhd*¹⁸ encourages to beware some basic needs -although they are regarded *mubah*¹⁹- such as sleeping, food and beverage within limits specified by *Prophet Mohammad* and his *sunnah*. However, the second understanding of *Sufism* is described as a religion of *bid'a*, *shirk* and superstition based on the teachings of *Buddha* and *Christian* priests that are cursed by Allah. Also, the second branch of *Sufism* is based on the concept of "*wahdat al- wujud*"²⁰ and full of people who attribute divine skills to their *sheiks*, *shrines* and tombs; consider magic and hallucination as miracle (*Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati*, 2016, p. 55).

The group mentions that the *Sufi* movements in Turkey usually fit in the second branch of *Sufism* which is identified as another religion based on *kabbalah* and *pagan* religions but not *Islam*. In my field research, I usually met many people who used to be part of major *Sufi* orders and cults but then broke their ties with them. Most of them were complaining about the corruption, degeneration among these communities as well as their engagement with politics. Also, they had common opinions on the role of the *Sufi* movements which are believed to be used by the state to pacificate, control and manipulate people.

18 Asceticism

19 Permitted in Islamic jurisprudence

20 Sufi metaphysics that literally means the Unity of Being.

§ 4.4 Masjid: A place for the formation of identity and mobilization

The *masjid* usually plays a crucial role as a mobilizing structure for *Islamic* movements. *Masjid* provides various opportunities for *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* as well, to hold meetings, study groups, courses and an environment for recruitment as well as an organic network (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 10). Moreover, it is not only a physical space where rituals, seminars and other events are held, but it has a significant role for socialization and the formation of collective identity. In the case of the *Tevhid Cemaati* which encourages its adherents to disavow the religious affairs administration based on the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, hence, not to go to the official mosques, *masjid* becomes even more important.

Therefore, at many Saturday seminar, I witnessed that various preachers referred to the importance of *masjids* with emphasis on *Islamic* history and why building a *masjid* is indispensable for the *Islamic* cause based on the *da'wah*. I realized that *masjid* is seen more like a party building than a religious place only and its importance lies on its capacity to mobilize resources. Once, at the end of a seminar, I heard that a preacher called its supporters to provide financial assistance for rebuilding of a *masjid* in Esenyurt that was small and not enough anymore.

As I stated above, since the *Tevhid Cemaati* contests with the official interpretation of *Islam* recognized by the state, it is important to understand how the group frames the religious affairs administration. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* opinion on the issue could be seen clearly in its text in which the religious affairs administration and all the official mosques subject to the administration are described as "*masjid al-dirar*"²¹ since the group states that their main function is to damage *Islam* (Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati, 2016, p. 69).

It is not only official mosques that the *Tevhid Cemaati* calls "*masjid al-dirar*", but also non-official *masjids* that are affiliated to different *Islamic* movements could be regarded in this categorization. In a seminar,

21 A mosque built by hypocrites.

a preacher pointed out a report published by the religious affairs administration indicating the number of official mosques recognized by the state and argued that the *Tevhid Cemaati* needs to build *masjids* against these official mosques which are thought to be spreading *kufir*. After the seminar, I asked “Derviş” to confirm which mosques and *masjids* are “*masjid al-dirar*”. He told me that in addition to official mosques, they also consider *Sufis’ masjids* and other places where Friday prayer is being held are “*masjid al-dirar*”. He also mentioned that looking mosques/*masjids* where Friday prayer is organized is sensible to detect places called “*masjid al-dirar*” since most of the *muwahhids* do not participate in Friday prayers.

Moreover, as mentioned before, *masjid* can not only be regarded as a physical space for religious seminars, study circles and various events, but it is also a social environment in which human interaction takes place. In *masjid*, group members socialize, familiarize with each other, share a common culture that serves in the formation of a collective identity. I had chance to observe this dimension of the place during *Ramadan* when the *masjid* in Bağcılar was much more dynamic and mobile. The place was more like a complex – similar to a gas station or a small rest area- includes a building facing the street that consist of a bookstore in the entrance, a monthly magazine and a *masjid* in the upper floors, a little food court/cafeteria near to the building on the left and a huge yard for car wash. There were always plastic tables and chairs in front of the cafeteria where the group’s adherents were sitting and chatting there while sipping their drinks- mostly tea and snacking.

During *Ramadan* number of visitors almost doubled alongside with the plastic tables and chairs that it was a ritual to break the fast all together before the religious seminar. It was also another social activity to attend the *tarawih* prayer.²² On a Saturday seminar, when I arrived a little bit late after iftar, some had already moved inside while some were about to finish their meal. I went to the second floor of the building and saw “Derviş” playing with his child. Then, I realized that also other men

22 Ritual prayers performed by Muslims during Ramadan.

were playing with their children on the second floor of the *masjid*. “Derviş” noticed that I was surprised and told me before I asked that during *Ramadan*, men and women decided to participate in the tarawih prayer in turns. My experience in the field, particularly during *Ramadan* contributed to me a lot to consider place more than a physical space and focus on human interactions taking place there.

Masjid seems to be playing a crucial role for the *Tevhid Cemaati* in terms of recruitment, mobilization and the formation of collective identity. The *Tevhid Cemaati* seeks to take advantage of the political opportunity structure to attack the religious affairs administration and other *Islamic* movements to undermine them. It could be regarded as a tactical option for the *Tevhid Cemaati* to undermine its rivals in such a political environment in which political polarization is increasing as well as trust in the religious affairs administration and *Islamic* groups is decreasing. Therefore, on the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaati* produces frames and counter-frames to carry out a discursive struggle against the targets mentioned above. On the other hand, the group builds its own *masjids* to organize alternative religious classes, study and reading groups and social events. All in all, the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* tactical and strategic choices, both for the short and long term, illustrate its rational capacity in adopting various ways to struggle.

In this chapter, I attempted to show how the doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* has a prominent role in the construction of a new identity that is called *muwahhid*. The doctrine suggests a clear categorization of the world as believers and non-believers. Then, based on this perception of the reality, a new member is required to take action and show loyalty to believers and disavowal to non-believers. At this point, the religious doctrine turns into a concrete position and the identity of the new member is being constructed as he/she applies the text to his/her life. While the new member break ties with his/her previous life, ideas, relations, he/she is exposed to a new kind of socialization, cognitive process and experiences that lead to the construction of *muwahhid* identity at the end.

Conclusion

This thesis mainly dealt with the key questions concerning how *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* motivates and mobilizes individuals. Examining the formation of *Salafi* identity in the *Tevhid Cemaati* draws a useful frame to understand this reason beyond the sense of belonging and mobilization among the *Tevhid Cemaat's* adherents. The *Tevhid Cemaati* approves the *Qur'an*, the *sunnah* and the *ijtihad*s¹ of *al-salaf al-salihi* (the first three generations of *Muslims*) as the only sources of *Islamic* knowledge. In this matter, it could be said that the *Tevhid Cemaat's* understanding of *Islam* is highly literal.

On the one hand, the *Tevhid Cemaat's* interpretation of *Islam* is rooted in *nass*² and *naqil*³. On the other hand, the group dissents from any other epistemological perspective and argument such as *Sufism*, *kalam*⁴ and *taqlid*⁵, and identifies all of them bid'a⁶. Yet, it is essential to understand how text is interpreted and shaped by individuals as well as

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- 1 Islamic legal term meaning "independent reasoning," as opposed to taqlid (imitation)
 - 2 Canonical text
 - 3 Testimonial
 - 4 Islamic theology. Sometimes called speculative.
 - 5 Conformity to legal precedent, traditional behavior, and doctrines.
 - 6 Innovation in religious matters.

how text shapes people. Thus, I both conducted a field research and analyzed the written and visual materials produced by *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* since culture, as an inseparable element of identity, could be revealed by focusing on practices, text, and materiality all together.

In this research, culture -composed of “cognition”, “emotion” and “morality”- is considered as a significant part of identity (Jasper, 2014, pp. 6-7). Also, culture plays a pioneering role for social movements in terms of decision-making, choosing a variety of tactics and strategies as well as mobilization and recruitment. Cultural process helps us to understand the outside world. I tried to illustrate all these three elements of culture in the *Tevhid Cemaat's* collective identity. Moreover, exploring the role of collective identity highlights why the *Tevhid Cemaati* emphasizes on particular tactics and strategies. *Tevhid ve Sünnet Cemaati* could be regarded as part of Wagemakers's category of activists, sub-group within politicians, that while the group does not participate in party politics or parliamentary politics, it is highly involved in social and political activism.

Therefore, I adopted a theoretical perspective based on new social movements to reveal how the *Tevhid Cemaati* operates in the political arena to recruit, motivate, and mobilize people, and produces frames and counter-frames in changing circumstances to disseminate its message. Framing analysis provided me a useful perspective to analyze how the *Tevhid Cemaati* interprets social reality and narrates to its adherents. “Cognition” is associated with the mental process for perceiving and interpreting the world with the help of ideas, experiences, and beliefs. Framing is also an important element of cognition. In this matter, “cognition” should be considered in terms of how ideas, beliefs and experiences motivate and impact individuals. In this research, I utilized three framing categories: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings.

Diagnostic framing refers to the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* diagnostic frame targeting the political system in Turkey aims to delegitimize it by calling the regime as *taghut*. Prognostic framing refers to the solution of the identified problem that includes tactics and strategies. *Tevhid ve Sün-*

net Cemaati impresses on a prognostic framing that supports the establishment of an *Islamic* society based on *shari'a*. Motivational framing indicates the reason for collective action. The *Tevhid Cemaat's* elaboration on the doctrine of *jihad* (considered by the *Tevhid Cemaati* in broad terms and claimed that it has different dimensions), framed as a religious duty for individual *Muslims*, is the most explicit example of motivational framing that leads its adherents to take action - *da'wa*.

Moreover, specific *Islamic* doctrines and concepts derive from *Salafism* that the *Tevhid Cemaati* refers to, are highly important to understand the relationship between the elements of culture and collective identity. In this matter, *aqida* (creed) and *manhaj* (method) stand for two distinctive concepts in the process of identity formation. *Aqida* and *manhaj* suggest principles of the *Tevhid Cemaati* that instruct people what to do and not to do. Principles are vital along with intuitions to mobilize people since they generate "morality" which is an important element of culture.

The *Tevhid Cemaati* pays particular attention on the doctrine of *tawhid* as the group's *aqida* and *manhaj* based on the concept. The *Tevhid Cemaati* elaborates the doctrine and claims that *tawhid* has three dimensions: *tawhid al-rububiyya*, *tawhid al-uluhiyya*, *tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat*. Although all these concepts are theological, the group attributes a quite political meaning to the concepts and frames a wide range of issues from economic crisis to homicide in this regard. Also, the *Tevhid Cemaati* compounds the doctrine of *tawhid* with the concept of *al-hakimiyya* and interprets politics. The group's tactics and strategies targeting democracy, secularism, the state *ulema* are mostly based on this interpretation of social reality.

Another crucial *Islamic* concept serves in the formation of identity is the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* since the relationship between *Muslims* and non-*Muslims* is based on the doctrine. Although the roots of the concept are controversial in terms of theological genealogy, the doctrine has a vital importance for modern-day *Salafi* groups. The strength of the doctrine lies in its role for individuals to filter "cognition". An ordinary individual turns into a *muwahhid* and develops a new identity within the

Tevhid Cemaati as the doctrine illustrates whom to show loyalty and disavowal. “Emotions” play a key role in this process of constructing a new identity due to the relationship between “emotions” and “cognition” in shaping identity through culture.

“Emotions” and “cognition” together have a significant impact in processing information, hence, taking action in the next step. The doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*, first, divides the world into two as believers and non-believers. Then, a *muwahhid* is required to show loyalty to *Muslims* and disavow from non-*Muslims* through this perception of reality. When text – the doctrine- is put into practice, a new member of the *Tevhid Cemaati* should abandon his/her old habits, break ties with his/her past and social life. During my field research, I had chance to meet people who had stopped talking to their friends, relatives and even parents because the doctrine orders to do so. People living in Turkey are called *kuffar* unless they show a sign of iman since the *Tevhid Cemaati* frames Turkey as *Dar al-Kufr*. Thus, a *muwahhid* is obliged to show disavowal to *kuffar*.

The doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* does not only encourage the *Tevhid Cemaat’s* adherents to take action in individual level, but also in other aspects of life. In this sense, it brings an activist characteristic both socially and politically. As a result, the *Tevhid Cemaati* calls its adherents not to serve in the army, vote in the elections, send their children to schools and pray at the official mosques. This is a direct challenge to the state and official interpretation of *Islam* in Turkey. The concept of *takfir* is another serious issue that should be considered together with the doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*. It could be argued that *takfir* serves as a political instrument for the *Tevhid Cemaati*. Proclaiming *takfir* is a pre-condition to imply the doctrine of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* against an identified target.

Since the *Tevhid Cemaati* calls the official mosques and many other *Islamic* groups’ *masjids* as *masjid al-dirar*⁷, the group’s adherents

7 A mosque built by hypocrites.

disavow from those places. In a such situation, the *Tevhid Cemaat's masjids* play a highly important role. *Masjid* does not serve only as a place where people meet only for praying, but as a material culture that contributes to the formation of identity. *Masjid* also provides an environment for recruitment of new members through social events, seminars, religious conversations, in addition to its capacity for mobilization of current members. By suggesting a chance for socialization and interaction, *masjid* strengthens the sense of belonging among the *Tevhid Cemaati* members.

As this study presents all these results and findings, some limitations should also be noted. This study is based on a limited field research carried out in Bağcılar where the *Tevhid Cemaat's* main setting exists. However, there are two more *masjids* and bookstores in Istanbul and five more in Ankara, Bursa, Diyarbakir, Konya and Van. For further studies, the research can be enriched by extending the field scope, investigating the group's supporters' different motivations and incentives to join the movement. Moreover, it can be examined whether the adherents' collective memories and identities (Kurdish and Turkish) shape their perceptions and attitudes towards the state and society.

Also, a further research can attempt to discuss how Arab Uprisings and particularly civil war in Syria started in 2011 have impacted the formation of *Salafi* identity in Turkey and how social networks have played a role in mobilization. Drawing inspiration from the studies that explore multiple dimensions of *Salafism* in different countries, other research can highlight and provide a chance to compare local dynamics, social/political context, transnational networks, and similarities and differences of *Salafism* in Turkey with various *Salafi* movements around the world.

Lastly, a further research can question the preference-based approach that neglects the social dynamics and theological dimension of *Islamic* movements. Also, it can challenge the categorization of *Salafism* since activists can also consider *da'wa* – a non-violent form of *manhaj* (method/praxis) – as jihad. Yet, the doctrine of “*hisba*” could be regarded as a more useful concept to identify violent forms of *Salafism*.

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3-) Toplumsal sorunlar; müstekbir siyasetçilerin demeçleriyle, sorunun kaynağı yüzsüz medyanın timsah gözyaşlarıyla, fildişi kulelerinde toplumsal çözümleme yapan akademi çalıştaylarıyla, siyaseti kible edinmiş Diyanet'in çabalarıyla, cinsiyet eşitliğini savunan sapkınların onursuz teklifleriyle... çözülmez, çözülemez... Çözüm Allah'a (cc), İslam'a, fitrata, insanı insan yapan değerlere dönüşle mümkündür. Çözüm şeriattır! [Tweet]. Twitter.

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