

Defining the “Enemies” of God: Muslim Extremists Perception of the Religious Other

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Abstract

One of the issues in contemporary Islamic thought which has attracted much attention amongst Muslim scholars and within the Muslim community is the valid and appropriate attitude of Muslims to relationships with non-Muslims. A major source of confusion and controversy with regards to this relationship comes from the allegation that Muslims must reserve their love and loyalty for fellow Muslims and to disavow people of the Religious Other. This allegation is manifested through the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* (Loyalty and Disavowal). This paper explores the conception of the Religious Other by contemporary Muslim extremists. It highlights how Muslim extremists justify their hatred and enmity of the Religious Others in the name of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. To understand their perception, the paper looks at the contents of *Surah* or Chapter of *Al-Mumtahanah*, the sixtieth chapter of the Quran and shows how the Quran, particularly this chapter and the concept of *Millat Ibrahim* (Religion of Abraham) play an important role in formulating Muslim extremists' perception of the Religious Other. The paper will conclude with some debates by contemporary Muslims on the notion of loving and hating the Religious Other.

Introduction

The Quran is a revelation of God. Muslims in general believe that the Quran regulates not only matters related to the faith and religion, but also on social issues. The Quran instructed Muslims to respect fellow human beings regardless of their faith and background. This is evident in verses such as Quran 17:70 and 49:13. While majority of the Muslims worldwide believe that non-Muslims or people of the Religious Other should be respected and treated with dignity and just, there is a small number of Muslims who believe otherwise. These Muslims (referred to here in this paper as Muslim extremists) hold an extreme position with regards to the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslims or people of the Religious Other. This extreme position ranges from a spectrum of hating and disavowing the Religious Other to declaring war on them and justifying their killings.

Muslim extremists' sense of hatred and enmity to the Religious Other can be acutely observed in their strong belief in the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* (Loyalty and Disavowal). Using this concept, Muslim extremists claim that Muslims can only give their loyalty and associate with their co-religionists and perform disavowal of the Religious Other. Hence, in the name of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*, they identify who are their friends and foes.

Muslim extremists believe that the Quran provides the instruction for Muslims to hate and disavow people of the Religious Other. Verses of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet have been skewed to justify their hatred and even their killings. This paper attempts to show how the Quran and Prophetic tradition play an important role in conceptualizing the extremists' perception of the Religious Other. In particular, it looks at the sixtieth chapter of the Quran known as *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* (literally: Chapter of “The Woman Who is Examined”) which is often used by Muslim extremists to justify their hatred of the Religious Other.

A comprehensive understanding of this *surah* is vital to comprehend how disavowal and elimination of the Religious Other by Muslim extremists is theologically legitimized and formulated. The *surah* exposes the characteristics of the “enemies of God and Muslims” whose alliance with them is forbidden.

In addition, it is also from this *surah* that the concept of *Millat Ibrahim* (The religion of Abraham)¹ is believed to be taken by Muslim extremists to illustrate the importance of disavowing the Religious Other. They refer to *Millat Ibrahim* to show the urgency of following the footsteps of Prophet Abraham in disavowing non-Muslims.²

This paper illustrates how *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* and the idea of *Millat Ibrahim* in the *surah*, contribute significantly to the formulation of Muslim extremists' perception of the Religious Other. It attempts to show how the extremists reading of the *surah's* text and their interpretation of its context has transformed these particular Quranic injunctions, which seems to warn the early Muslims of the dangers of forming alliance with their hostile enemies into the foundation of a radical ideology. In particular, it highlights how violent Islamists interpret verses from this *surah* in light of the current political issues and development and combine it with the concept of *takfir*(ex-communication) against Muslim rulers.

The paper begins with an introduction and a general understanding of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah*. It will highlight the reason behind its revelations, historical context and common themes of the *surah*. It then proceeds to explain the concept of *Millat Ibrahim* and show how this concept has shaped the extremist perception of the Religious Other. Finally, the paper will expose some debates on the issue of loving and hating the Religious Other.

Introduction to *Surah Al-Mumtahanah*

Surah Al-Mumtahanah is the sixtieth chapter of the 114 chapters of the Quran. It is from the type of *surahs* revealed entirely in Medina³ (in modern day Saudi Arabia), the place of Prophet Muhammad's migration and where he died. The meaning of *Al-Mumtahanah* is "the woman who is examined", and this meaning is somewhat mostly accepted. Some pronounce it as "*Al-Mumtahninah*" which means "the examiner". Hence, the first pronunciation would make the title a reference to the woman regarding whom the *surah* was revealed and the second would make it a reference to the nature of the *surah* itself in that it is meant to be the test of the people.⁴ This is similar with the title of the ninth chapter, *Surah Bara'ah* also known as *Al-Fadhibah* (The Exposer). In any case, the classical Muslim exegete Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani clarified that the stronger pronunciation is the first.⁵

Surah Al-Mumtahanah was revealed upon Prophet Muhammad after the treaty of Hudaibiyyah⁶ and before the conquest of Mecca. Like many other Medinan chapters, this *surah* serves to organize and structure the Muslim state and society by laying down the foundations that establish the religion, state and society.⁷ These foundations include matters of state development, governance, socialization and conduct of warfare. The *surah* encompasses a number of significant issues such as guidelines for dealing with others outside the realm of Islam, preserving the secrets of the Muslims society and characteristics of Muslims who give their allegiance to God and Islam and limits their relationship with enemies of Islam.

¹*Millat* in Arabic means a way or path but its use is mostly referred to mean "religion". In the Quran, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is a central figure and is described as a leader of humankind (Quran 2:124), a prophet and a friend of God (Quran 4:125). The Quran refers to the faith of Abraham as *Millat Ibrahim* due to the significance of Abraham's journey and experiences in searching the truth from considering the star, moon and sun as gods but rejected them as mere creatures to the point he finally believes in God and totally disavows those who worship other than the One God. *Millat Ibrahim* is also known as *Al-Hanifiyyah* (Quran 10:104). In Islamic context, the one who follows the *Millat Ibrahim* is known as *hanif* (plural *hanaf*). A *hanif* is also known as *muwabbid* (one believes in *tawhid*). See Quran 16:120 and 123. In the Quran, the word *millat* is used in 15 different verses. Ten of them (2:120, 2:130, 2:135, 3:95, 4:125, 6:161, 12:37, 12:38, 16:123, 22:78) refers, either directly or indirectly, to Abraham.

²Extremists have taken the concept of *Millat Ibrahim* as an important model and example of how Muslims should emulate Abraham by disavowing non-Muslims and develop a sense of hatred and enmity towards them. For more on perception of *Millat Ibrahim*, see Sulayman Ibn Abdillah, *Al-Dala'il fi Hukm Muwalat Ahl Al-Israk* (The Evidences for the Rulings Regarding Alliance with the Infidels and Matters Related to It), At-Tibyan Publications, undated, p. 38.

³Due to its revelation in Medina, this *surah* is called *surah madaniyyah* (*surah* that is revealed in Medina) after the migration of the Prophet.

⁴Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran*, vol. 18, p. 46.

⁵Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, Ahmad Ibn Ali *Fath al-Baridi Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Dar Ihya' Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1981, vol. 9, p. 263.

⁶The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was an important event that took place during the formation of Islam. It was a pivotal treaty between Prophet Muhammad, representing the state of Medina, and the Quraish tribe of Mecca in March 628CE. It helped to decrease tension between the two cities, affirmed a ten-year peace, and authorized Muhammad's followers to return the following year in a peaceful pilgrimage, The First Pilgrimage.

⁷Al-Zarqani, Muhammad Abd Al-Azim, *Manabil al-Ifjan fi Ulum Al-Quran*, Dar Ihya' Al-Kutub Al-Arabiyyah: Isa al-Babi Al-Halabi, Cairo, 1953, vol.1, p. 191.

Uniquely, one who reflects the verses of this *surah* will discover that the common theme connecting each of its individual parts revolves around the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*; and that the *surah* adopts a unique style in clarifying these themes and principles.

As the *surah* is from the chapters that followed the movement of Islamic society in its most crucial moments i.e. fighting the symbols of unbelief, extremists believe that Muslims today are in dire need of reflecting over the *surah*, since history repeats itself.⁸ They see the *surah* as one which relates to the current situation of Muslims who are living amidst the infidels and disbelief. They read the circumstances behind the revelation of the *surah* and the message it brings as one that do not differ much from the nature of conflict that Muslims are facing today.

The *surah* consists of 13 verses and can be divided into five parts. The first part (verses 1-3) talks about the warning of taking the enemies of God (referring to the hostile Meccans at the time of Prophet Muhammad) and loving them. It also reminds that family ties shall not profit the Muslims on the Day of Judgement. The second part (verses 4-6) instructs the Medinan Muslims on how they should behave towards the pagan Meccans by following the exemplary behavior of Prophet Abraham who disavowed the idol worshippers. This is known as *Millat Ibrahim*. The third part (verses 7-9) describes that God might bring love (*mawaddah*) between the warring parties and that He allows friendly relations with those Meccans who did not fight the Muslims for their religion and chase them out of their house. The fourth part of the *surah* instructs Muslims to examine Muslim women who flee to Medina after the treaty of Hudaibiyah. This is so, since it was agreed in the treaty that Meccans joining the Muslims should be sent back. The *surah* commands that if a tested woman is indeed a true Muslim, then she should be accepted into the community and not be sent back to Mecca. This part of the *surah* also commands Muslims that they should sever the relation with their unbelieving women and that the latter are free to flee from Medina to Mecca. Finally, the fifth part of the *surah* (verse 13) points out again that Muslims should not take certain group of people as their friends.

A critical observation of all these parts of the *surah* reveals a common theme which is the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* which means Loyalty and Disavowal is a concept that is heavily emphasized in the ideology of modern Salafism⁹. Indeed the *surah* is from the *surahs* that are most uniform in terms of their subject matter, and this is because of the common theme that is present throughout the *surah*. What makes this *surah* unique is the way the concept is affirmed from different angles such that its different parts and verses are all revolved around the same concept. The points in the *surah* that highlights *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*'s stipulated in the five parts could be summarized as follows:¹⁰

1. The *surah* begins and ends with the same issue i.e. prohibiting alliance with the non-Muslims.
2. The *surah* points to the importance of having loyalty to God, Islam and the Muslims such as it negate all other forms of loyalty such as the family members who will not benefit Muslims in the Day of Judgement.
3. The *surah* attaches great significance to the fine example of the practicality of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* that is evident in Prophet Abraham who openly denounce *bara'* (disavowal) of his own people who refuse to believe in *tawhid* (monotheism).
4. The *surah* provides guidelines for Muslims as which group of non-Muslims should be disavowed. The fact that the *surah* places as exception to the prohibition of alliance with non-hostile *kuffar* highlights the Quranic principle that regulates Muslim and non-Muslim relationship.
5. The *surah* confirms that Muslims will always be tested, and the purpose of this test is to ascertain their faith to God and Islam. It also points to the fact that the manifestations of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* involve not only the belief, but also one's character which includes deeds and words. These manifestations are stipulated in the conditions of the act of *bai'ah* (pledge of allegiance) which is described in the *surah*.

It is interesting to note that verses from this *surah* have been extensively quoted by Muslim extremists among others, to highlight the importance and validity of disavowing non-Muslims. In addition, the writings, statements and lectures of many modern scholars and thinkers from the Salafi orientation who address the issue of Muslim and non-Muslim relationship are found to contain verses from this *surah*.

⁸Wasim Fathullah, *Al-Wala' wal Bara' in Surah Al-Mumtabinah: A Thematic Analysis of the Sixtieth Chapter of the Quran*, p. 6.

⁹See Bin Ali, Mohamed, *The Roots of Religious of Religious Extremism: Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of Al-Wala' Wal Bara'*, Imperial College Press, Insurgency and Terrorism Series, Volume 9, 2015.

¹⁰Wasim Fathullah, *Al-Wala' wal Bara' in Surah Al-Mumtabinah: A Thematic Analysis of the Sixtieth Chapter of the Quran*, p. 6.

For example, the former mufti of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Baz (d. 1999) uses verses 1-4 of this *surah* in his letter to the former mufti of Egypt, Jad al-Haq 'Ali Jad al-Haq (d. 1996) refuting the latter's stance on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* which he wrote in an article entitled *Islam and Its Relation to Other Religions*.¹¹ As will be seen, the famous Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi (b. 1959) discusses the concept of *Millat Ibrahim* from this *surah* in most of his books. Other figures such as Salih Al-Fawzan (b. 1933), Muhammad Saeed Al-Qahtani (b. unknown) and Ayman Al-Zawahiri (b. 1951) are found to have used verses of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* extensively.

The *surah* begins by confirming the *issue* that forms the basis of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* i.e. the division of people into two groups: one that believe in *tawhid* and another that disbelieves. The issue of *wala'* (loyalty) in this *surah* is addressed as early as, in the very first verse (*ayah*) of this *surah* which forbids Muslims to have allegiance with the non-Muslims and loving them. It also reveals who the "enemies of God and Muslims" are as referred to in the verse and *surah*. To understand how this verse has formulated the Muslim extremists' conception of loyalty, we need to return to the historical context in which the first verse of this *surah* is revealed which revolves around the story of Hatib Bin Abi Balta'ah.

The Story of Hatib Bin Abi Balta'ah

It was reported in many Quranic exegesis that the story of Hatib bin Abi Balta'ah (d. 650), a companion of Prophet Muhammad, is the reason for the revelation of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah*.¹² Hatib, a Muslim convert, was among those who migrated with Prophet Muhammad to Medina from Mecca in 622 as a result of the persecution and hostility of the Meccans that the Muslims faced. He had also participated in the battle of Badr, the first battle of Prophet Muhammad and Islam against the Meccans in 624. Hatib who was not belonged to the Quraish¹³ tribe of Mecca, fled to Medina and left behind his families and relatives in Mecca.

In 628, a treaty was drawn up between the Muslims in Medina under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad and the pagan Meccans. Known as the "Treaty of Hudaibiyyah", it came after several years of hostile relations between the two parties. However, the Quraish Meccans nullified their pact with the Prophet by joining forces against his allies in Khuza'ah¹⁴. This breach of treaty which was supposed to cease the attacks between the Muslims and the Meccans, subsequently led to the Prophet's decision to conquer Mecca in 630. It is at this point of the Islamic history that the story of Hatib begins.

Hatib who was concerned with the safety of his families and relatives in Mecca wrote secretly to the Quraish Meccans informing them of the Prophet's plan to conquer the city. This action of Hatib, which could be obviously seen as betrayal to the Muslims, was intended to gain the trust of the Meccans whom Hatib hoped would protect his families and relatives so that they would be indebted to him. However, the Prophet got to know about this and instructed his companions Ali (d. 661), Al-Zubair (d. 656) and Al-Miqdad (d. unknown) to retrieve the letter from a woman at Rawdah Khakh. The woman who initially denied having the letter finally handed it over after being persuaded by the Prophet's companions.

¹¹See "*Sheikh bin Baz Corrects Sheikh Of Al-Azhar on Al Wala' wal Baraa'*" available at <http://forums.islamicawakening.com/f15/sheikh-bin-baz-corrects-sheikh-al-azhar-46261/> (accessed 10 March 2016).

¹²The story of Hatib which is the *sabab al-nuzul* (reason for revelation) for verse 1 of Surah Al-Mumtahanah could be found in many traditional and modern *tafsir* (exegesis). See for example Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam Al-Quran*, pp. 50-1; Muhammad bin Jarir At-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan an Ta'wil Ayi Al-Quran*, pp. 285-7; Ahmad Ibn Shu'aib Ibn Ali Al-Nasa'i, *Tafsir al-Nasa'i*, Muassasah Al-Kutub Al-Thaqafiyah, 1990, vol. 2, pp. 414-6; Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Mahmud Al-Nasafi, *Tafsir Al-Nasafi: Madarik Al-Tanzil wa Haqiqat Al-Ta'wil* (The Exegesis of Al-Nasafi: The Path of Revelation and the Realities of Interpretations) Dar Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol. 3, pp. 465-6; Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran (In the shades of the Quran)*, The Islamic Foundation and Islamonline.net, vol XVI, pp. 452-3; Ismail bin Katsir, *Tafsir Ibn Katsir* (Abridged), Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, September 2000, vol. 9, pp. 583-5. The story of Hatib could also be found in nearly all the authentic collections of hadith. See Sahih Al-Bukhari, book 52 *Kitab Al-Jihad*; Sahih Muslim book 44, *Kitab Fada'il As-Sabab* (The Book of Attributes of the Companions); Abu Dawud, vol. 3 no. 47, *Kitab Al-Jihad wa Al-Jasus* (Book of Fighting and Spying) and Al-Tirmizi, vol. 5 no. 409. It is also mentioned by Ibn Al-Athir in *Jami' Al-Usul*, vol. 8 p. 385; *Al-Wahidi in Al-Asbab*, p. 447 and Al-Suyuthi in *Al-Durr Al-Manthur*, vol. 6, p. 203.

¹³The term Quraish refers to a powerful merchant tribe that controlled Mecca in Arabia and the *Ka'bah* (the house which becomes the direction of prayers for the Muslims) during the days before the birth of Prophet Muhammad and the coming of Islam. Prophet Muhammad was born into the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraish tribe.

¹⁴Khuza'ah is a name of a place and also refers to a tribe (Banu Khuza'a) from Azd from Southern Arabian.

The letter which was addressed from Hatib Bin AbiBalta'ah to the Meccans telling them about the Prophet's plan was brought back to the Prophet who subsequently asked Hatib for an explanation. Hatib who begged the Prophet not to make a hasty decision on himself explained that, unlike the Prophet's kinsmen in Mecca, he could not protect his families as he did not belong to the Quraish tribe. He explained further that he had not done so out of disbelief nor to choose disbelief after Islam. He intended to do for the Quraish a favour so that they could protect his families and relatives. Upon hearing the clarification from Hatib, the Prophet told his companions that with regards to Hatib, he had told the truth. Umar, another companion of the Prophet, asked the Prophet's permission to chop off Hatib's head as a punishment for his hypocrisy and betrayal of the Muslims. However, the Prophet stopped him and said that Hatib had participated in the battle of Badr and that God perhaps had granted forgiveness to those who attended Badr no matter what they do.

Wala' (Loyalty) and the Debate On it

First, it is important to note that the *surah's* first verse which was revealed on the story of Hatib, who gave his allegiance by revealing the secrets of the Muslims, is the basis for Muslim extremists claim that Muslims are prohibited to give *wala'* to the non-Muslims. Regarding the story of Hatib who would had his head chopped off if not because of his participation in the battle of Badr, clearly signifies the grave consequences of forming alliance with non-Muslims, even if it is not a conviction in one's heart. This occurrence of Hatib has led to debates among Salafi thinkers with regards to what constitutes *kufr* (disbelief or infidelity).¹⁵ Can someone be declared *kafir* (non-believer) due to his actions without considering what is actually in the heart? Why Hatib was not declared a *kafir* since his actions clearly show *kufr*?¹⁶

In the case of Hatib, his action of betraying the Muslims by revealing their secret to the enemies clearly indicates *kufr* due to his loyalty and alliance to the enemies of the Muslims. However, he was spared from being punished for a specific reason that cannot be repeated for anyone else. Here, some Muslim extremists use this part of Hatib's story to prove that external manifestation (*'amal bil jawarib*) is sufficient to declare one's infidelity regardless of what he believes in the heart (*tasdiq bil qalb*).¹⁷ They argue that Hatib's apostasy is explicit from the statement of the Prophet to his Companions who wanted to execute Hatib that "perhaps God looked at those who witnessed Badr and forgave their sins". On the other hand, others argue that *kufr* can only be determined if someone clearly declare and pronounce it.¹⁸ Using the same story of Hatib, they argue that the fact Hatib clarified to the Prophet that he did not commit the act out of disbelief and apostasy, but because of the security of his families, and the subsequent confirmation by the Prophet that he has mentioned the truth, clearly shows that conviction of the heart is a condition before *kufr* can be determined. This claim is rejected by Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi who rebuts that the Prophet's statement "as regards to Hatib he has told the truth" serves as an affirmation of truthfulness of Hatib's claim and not an approval of Hatib's claim.¹⁹ Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi who was born as Isam Mohammad Taher al-Barqawi is an Islamist from Jordan and is widely-known as the mentor for former leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi.

¹⁵For more debate on what constitutes *kufr*, see Joas Wagemakers, *Defining the Enemy: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Radical Reading of Surat al-Mumtahana*, Brill Die Welt des Islams 48 (2008) 348-371.

¹⁶ First, it is important to note here that Muslim extremists debate on *kufr* encompasses various issues and not only limited to the issue of forming alliance with non-Muslims. In modern Salafism, particularly the ideology of violent Muslim extremists, the *takfir* ideology is closely connected to the concept of *Al-Wala' walbara'*. In the Jihadi Salafi line of thinking, Hatib's action is considered *kufr* because the Jihadis view the act of assisting non-Muslims and supporting them against Muslims as one that negates the Muslim faith. Apart from the issue of forming alliance with non-Muslims, Muslim extremists debate on *kufr* could also be seen in other matters such as ruling with other than what God has revealed (*bukem bi ghair ma anzala Allah*). Second, it has to be mentioned that Muslim extremists debate on *kufr* of those who form *wala'* with the non-Muslims as discussed here is explained in brevity, and that the debate could be more complex than this. Their debate on *kufr* regarding the issue of *wala'* mainly revolves the question of relation between the internal belief (*iman*) and the outer action of a Muslim.

¹⁷As will be seen, this position is dominantly taken by the Jihadi Muslim extremists.

¹⁸This stance is especially taken by the purist Muslim extremists and many Muslim extremists in general.

¹⁹See Abu Muhammad Asim Al-Maqdisi, *Millat Ibrahim wada'nab al-Anbiya' wa al-Mursalin waasaalib at-Tughab fi tamyi'ihawasarfi ad-du'atiba*, p. 223. See also, Muhammad Bin Abdullah Al-Mas'ari, *Al-Muwaalab walMu'adab*, Tanzim At-Tajdid Al-Islami, Third Edition 2004, London p. 74.

Born in Nablus, Palestine in 1958²⁰, Al-Maqdisi is regarded one of the most prominent thinkers on the current evolution of violent Islamist ideology which has been widely adopted by many contemporary militant Islamist groups.²¹ According to Al-Maqdisi, Hatib told the truth in compliance of his statement to that of his conviction, not by its compliance with that present situation and reality.²²

Those who believe that Hatib's action constitute *kufur* gave three reasons:-²³

1. The statement of Umar who said “*Let me strike the neck of this hypocrite (referring to Hatib)*”. This statement of Umar is clear evidence that assisting and supporting (*muzabarab*) the *kuffar* (plural of *kafir* which means non-believers) is *kufur* and one who commits it, has performed an act of apostasy (*riddah*). Umar has said so because he understands what he saw of Hatib's action. He acted based on what he witnessed (and that the punishment of apostasy in Islam is death) and not the intention of Hatib.

2. The fact that no one had criticized Umar's judgment and *takfir* (ex-communication or the act of accusing someone of *kufur* or disbelief) implies that Hatib has really committed an act of *kufur*. This is also supported by the scenario that the Prophet seems to approve Umar's statement. Had he not been correct on his judgment, he would have been silenced or corrected. In addition, the statement from the Prophet that Hatib had an acceptable excuse for his action further confirms Hatib's apostasy.

3. The manner Hatib defended himself by saying “I had not done so out of disbelief nor to choose disbelief after Islam” clearly shows that Hatib did understand that the action of assisting the non-Muslims against Muslims is an act of *kufur*, and that he ensured to mention the reality of his action before any judgment could be passed on him. In another version of *hadith*, Hatib said “I did not take this action to fool the Messenger of God or due to *nifaaq* (hypocrisy). Furthermore, I had the belief that God will make His messenger victorious and complete his divine radiance”²⁴. In another narration Hatib said “O Messenger of God, by Allah the *iman* (faith) in my heart never changed”. These narrations as the extremists claim, show that Hatib carried the belief that assisting and supporting the *kuffar* against Muslim is *kufur* and clear apostasy. And that this action would mean showing consent to the act of *kufur* and would be *nifaaq* (hypocrisy) and deceit to the Prophet. For these reasons, Hatib wanted to clarify his belief and intention to the Prophet.²⁵

Nasir Bin Hammad Al-Fahad, a well-known extremist from Saudi Arabia, is among those who believe that the act of *muzabarab al-kuffar* (supporting the non-Muslims) against the Muslims like what Hatib did, constitutes *kufur*. Al-Fahad was born in Riyadh in 1968. He had a distinguished academic career graduating from the Imam University and the University of Sharia in Riyadh. In 1991, Al-Fahad earned his doctorate and was appointed dean at the Faculty of Principles of the Religion (*Usul al-Din*) in the Department of Creed and Modern Ideologies. He grew increasingly radical in his preaching and was arrested in September 1994 for his subversive teachings. When he was released in 1997, he no longer had his faculty position so he began focusing his time and energy on highlighting two major points: the apostasy of Arab regimes and the need for Muslims to wage warfare against Jews and Christians.²⁶

²⁰ See Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, *Global Jihad, The 21st Century Phenomenon* at http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=269 (accessed 23 March 2016) for a brief profile of Al-Maqdisi.

²¹ Norman T. Lihou, *Influential Thinker on Radical Islamist Ideology Released* assessed from <http://www.zimbio.com/Religion/articles/285/Influential+Thinker+Radical+Islamist+Ideology> (accessed 12 March 2016).

²² Muhammad Bin Abdullah Al-Mas'ari, *Al-Muwaalah wal Mu'adab*, Tanzim At-Tajdid Al-Islami, p. 74.

²³ See *Aiding the Kuffar and the Incident of Hatib* posted at the website of Salafimedia.com *Upon the Religion of Abraham* available at <http://salafimedia.com/aqeedah/al-walaa-wal-baraa/item/1618-aiding-the-kuffar-and-the-incident-of-hatib-ra.html> (accessed 11 March 2017). This position on Hatib's *kufur* is believed to be widely held by the Jihadis. This is so, as one who observes this website (which is among the recent websites developed by Muslim extremists) and reflects upon its contents and postings would find that it has a strong Jihadi orientation. The website glorifies figures such as Osama Bin Laden (d. 2011), Hammoud Bin Abdullah Bin Uqla Al-Shuaibi (d. 2001), Abu Qatadah Al-Filistani (b. 1960), Abu Hamzah Al-Masri (b. 1958), Omar Bakri Muhammad (b. 1958) and many others who are all of Jihadi orientation. It also criticizes followers of Madkhali Muslim extremists which it accuses as deviated from the “true” Salafiyah. In addition, the website has posted 13 articles on the subject of *Al-Wala' walbara'*.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Al-Rasheed, Madawi, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation*, pp. 141-9.

In his book *Al-Tibyan fi Kufr man A'aana Al-Amrikan* (The Exposition Regarding the Disbelief of one that assists the Americans), Al-Fahad says that '*muḥabarah al-kuffar* against the Muslims is from that which opposes the two *shahadahs* (proclamation of faith)²⁷. He continues '... it is from the fundamentals of *tawhid* and it is the greatest of the fundamentals of *bara'* and *kufr* in the *taghut* and from the greatest fundamentals of *Millat Ibrahim* which is hatred and enmity towards the *kuffar*'.²⁸

It is important to note here that while the issue of *kufr* arising from the story of Hatib becomes a point of debate among the Muslim extremists, generally most extremists agree this verse forms the basis and evidence for the prohibition of assisting non-Muslims against the Muslims. The point of debate that they had with regards to the story of Hatib is only about the issue whether *kufr* should be determined and justified from conviction or action. However, extremists in general use this verse to prove that non-Muslims should not be given *wala'* and taken *asawliya'* ("friends" according to Muslim extremists' definition), and love (*mawaddah*) as they are described as "enemies of God" as stipulated in the verse. What these "enemies of God" deserve, according to the Muslim extremists is complete *bara'* (disavowal) from the Muslims.

The importance of showing *bara'* to the "enemies of God" or the *kuffar*, according to the extremists becomes more urgent since the second verse of the *surah* says that 'the *kuffar* desire that Muslims should disbelieve in God (*wawaddu lauta kufurun*)'. When Hatib gave the excuse that his action was not due to his unbelief but rather he had families and relatives to secure, God revealed verse 4 which says "Neither your relatives nor your children will benefit you on the Day of Resurrection. He will judge between you, and Allah sees what you do". Using this basis, extremists emphasize that *wala'* to God and Islam is above others including family members. They argue that the story of Hatib clearly shows that families and relatives, whose sake God is disobeyed, will not benefit the Muslims and worse would return as a source of loss and distress for them.

Defining the "Enemies" of God and Muslims

The first verse of this *surah* which was revealed on the occasion of Hatib as mentioned above says: O you who believe! Do not take my enemies (*'adunni*) and your enemies (*'adunwakum*) as friends, showing affection towards them while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth, and have driven out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord, if you have come forth to strive in my Path and to seek my good pleasure. You show love to them in secret while I am aware of what you conceal and what you reveal. And whosoever of you does that, he has indeed gone astray from the straight path.²⁹

In revealing this verse, the Quran uses the term '*adun*' (enemy) to refer to the disbelieving hostile Meccans. In fact, the use of the term "enemy" is mentioned four times in this *surah*; twice in verse 1 i.e. '*adunni*' (my enemy) and '*adunwakum*' (your enemy); once in verse 2 i.e. '*adaa*' (enemies) and in verse 4 it is mentioned as '*adaawab*' (enmity). The use of these words which are stressed and repeated is significant as it sends a strong message that those who do not believe in *tawhid* are the real enemies of God, Islam and the Muslims who should be disavowed.

As described earlier, this verse was revealed due to the context of Hatib Bin AbiBalt'ah who betrayed the Prophet and the Muslims in Medina by secretly planned to inform the hostile Meccans of the Prophet's intention to attack them. From the story of Hatib which becomes the reason for the revelation (*sabab al-nuzul*) of this verse and subsequently verse 8 and 9, it is obvious that the "enemy" (*adun*) here refers to the hostile pagan Meccans. These enemies as stipulated in the verse are described as "people who have disbelieved" (*waqad kafarun*), "have fought the Muslims because of their religion" (*qaataluukum fid din*) and "have driven the Prophet and Muslims out of their homes" (*yukhrijuukum min diyaarikum*) as stipulated in verse 9. The historical context of this verse shows that the enemies are no ordinary non-Muslims but those who are hostile to the Muslims. These characteristics of the "enemies" seem to suggest that the verse exclude other non-Muslims who, although do not believe in Islam and *tawhid*, but they do not fight the Muslims because of their religion and chase them out of their homes who should not be regarded as enemies. The exclusion of those who do fight the Muslims as enemies is subsequently confirmed by verse 8:

²⁷The two *shahadahs* refers to the proclamation that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger.

²⁸ See Nasir Al-Fahad, *Al-Tibyan fi Kufr man A'aana Al-Amrikan*, Al-Tibyan Publications, undated, pp. 31-32.

²⁹Quran 60:1.

God does not forbid you regarding those who have not fought you on account of the Religion, and have not expelled you from your homes, that you should be virtuous to them and be equitable with them; surely God loves the equitable. God forbids you only regarding those who have fought you on account of Religion, and have expelled you from your homes, and have given support in your expulsion, that you should take them for friends; and whoso takes them for friends, those are the wrong-doers.³⁰

It is reported in the prophetic tradition³¹ that this verse is revealed on the occasion of Asma' binte Abu Bakar (d. 695), daughter of the first caliph of Islam and sister of the Prophet's wife, Aishah (d. 678) who, during the treaty of Hudaibiyah consulted the Prophet on whether she should accept a gift from her disbelieving mother Qutaylah (d. unknown). The Prophet advised that she should be kind to her mother and subsequently God revealed this particular verse. This particular verse meticulously confirms that Muslims could develop the notion of kindness, fairness and justice towards non-Muslims as long they are not hostile and aggressive.³²

However, Muslim extremists contend that the objective of this verse (which does not forbid Muslim from being kind and just to non-Muslims) is to provide opportunities for Muslims to portray Islam to this group of people for whom guidance is hoped due to not fighting the Muslims, while maintaining the religious enmity that is mandated due to their disbelief.³³ It is hope that the disbelieving relatives of Muslims will accept Islam when they are exposed to the treatment of kindness and justice that meant to bring their hearts close to Islam. Some even believe that this particular verse is abrogated with the verse of the sword (Quran 9:5) which says: "*When the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful.*"³⁴ However those who reject this claim of abrogation believes that the claim that this verse is abrogated by the verse of the sword is weak, especially since the verse does not contradict other verses that have been claimed to abrogate it and that the claim of abrogation is also not supported by a majority of the scholars of *tafsir*.³⁵

However, Muslim extremists generally believe that the enmity that is being referred to in this particular verse is not merely limited to the type of enmity which involves fighting and military confrontations. Rather, it refers to complete enmity that originates from one's heart and religious convictions at all times.³⁶

³⁰ Quran 60:8-9.

³¹See *Sahih Al-Bukhari* hadith 4274.

³²Muslim extremists differentiate between the notion of befriending non-Muslims and be kind to them. This verse, according to some Muslim extremists particularly the Jihadis, while does not forbid for Muslims to be kind and just to the non-Muslims does not necessarily allows friendship with them. See Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *Al-Wala' walbara': Aqidah Manqulabha Waqi' Ma'fud*, p. 13. Friendship according to Zawahiri is still forbidden because of the many verses from other *surahs* of the Quran that forbids Muslims from befriending the non-Muslims. However, Muslim extremists' opponents understand this verse as one that shows the permissibility of friendship with the non-Muslims as long as the relationship is not based upon the *aqidah* – that is to say that Muslims must not embrace their religious belief.

³³Wasim Fathullah, *Al-Wala' wal Bara' in Surah Al-Mumtabanah*, p. 35.

³⁴The claim that verses in Chapter 9 of the Quran (*Surah Al-Tawbah or Bara'ah*) abrogated this verse (Quran 60:8-9) and also other Quranic verses that talk about *jihad* as self-defence, patience and tolerance towards non-Muslim revealed earlier forms the basis for the idea of perpetual war between Muslims and non-Muslim as comprised in the ideology of Jihadi Muslim extremists. This claim, however, is rejected by most Muslim scholars and other Salafi groups as there is no evidence to support it. With regards to Quran 9:5, there is no mention about it abrogating earlier verses on defensive jihad according to Al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir. In fact, Al-Qurtubi reported that some scholars, among them Al-Dahhak and Atha', were of the view that Quran 9:5 was abrogated by other verses in the Quran (47:4). See Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Quran*, Vol. 4, part 8, p. 47; Ismail bin Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Katsir*, Dar Al-Fikr, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 338; Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'An Takwil Ayi Al-Quran*, Vol. 6, part 10, p. 80–1; vol. 13, part 26, pp. 40–4; Abu Ishaq Asy-Syatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat Fi Usul Al-Fiqh*, Vol. 3, p. 97–8; Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustasfa Min Ilm Al-Usul*, Dar Ihya' Al-Turath Al-Arabi, Vol. 2, p. 50; Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *Al-Tafsir Al-Munir Fi Al-'Aqidah wa Al-Shariah wa Al-Manhaj*, Dar Al-Fikr, Damascus, 1991, Vol. 10, pp. 110, 175–8. See also See David Bukay, *Peace or Jihad? Abrogation in Islam*, Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2007, pp. 3-11 available at <http://www.meforum.org/1754/peace-or-jihad-abrogation-in-islam> (accessed 12 March 2016) and Louay Safi, *Peace and the Limits of War: Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad, chapter 4—War of Domination*, available at <http://lsinsight.org/articles/2001/peace-war/index.htm> (accessed 12 March 2016).

³⁵Wasim Fathullah, *Al-Wala' wal Bara' in Surah Al-Mumtabanah*, p. 35-36. The claim by Muslim extremists that this verse is abrogated by Quran 9:5 is based on several *tafsir* that mention this abrogation including Ibn Al-Arabi, Al-Jassas and Al-Tabari.

³⁶Wasim Fathullah, *Al-Wala' wal Bara' in Surah Al-Mumtabinah*, p. 19.

They assert that it is important to note that the descriptions of “...*My enemy and your enemy...*” and “...*showing love towards them...*” should not be taken as the only aspects of prohibition, since the verse constitutes a clear prohibition from taking the non-Muslims as friends. This is based on Quran 20:117 where God describes the *Iblis* to be the enemy of Adam and his wife. The Quran reveals on the story of Adam:

And when We said to the Angels: “Prostrate to Adam”. So, they prostrated except Iblis. He was one of the *Jin*, and he disobeyed the command of his Lord. Will you then take him and his offspring as protectors and helpers rather than Me while they are enemies to you? What an evil exchange for the wrongdoers!³⁷

Based on these two verses, Muslim extremists claim that the term “enmity” in the Quran is far more general than military confrontations. Therefore, it is not only limited to the non-Muslims who are at war with the Muslims. This is also the case with the verse “[...] showing love towards them [...]” as the prohibition is not limited to what is described in the verse. Rather, they assert that it is simply an example of how *wala'* is generally manifested, and the point of mentioning it was to confirm the censure of those Muslims who showed *tawalli* (act of taking as friends) of the non-Muslims. It is as if the verse is saying: “How can you take these enemies as *awliya'*, and how can you show them your love?”³⁸ Muslim extremists who held this position use the opinion of IbnKathir (d. 1373) who they always refer to on this verse. Unlike majority of classical *mufassirin* (exegetes) who view the enemies in this verse as those polytheists who were hostile to the Muslims, IbnKathir generalizes the meaning and category of enemies to including not only those who are hostile to Muslims, but all non-Muslims in general, especially the Jews and Christians. This is so as he equates this verse with Quran 5:51 which deals with the Jews and Christians in similar words. This implies that IbnKathir define enemies as including all non-Muslims regardless of whether they are hostile to the enemies or not.³⁹

It is believed that the reason why most Muslim extremists use this first verse of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* to show that all non-Muslims should be regarded as enemies, and not specifically the hostile ones is due to their influence of scholars like IbnKathir. Generally, these Muslim extremists especially the Wahhabis are heavily influenced by the writings of medieval scholars such as IbnTaimiyyah (d. 1328), IbnQayyim Al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) and IbnKathir among others. Wahhabis use the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* as an important tool to ward off *kufr*, *shirk* and any religious innovations in their attempt to maintain the purity of Islam. The effort to maintain this purity, according to them also includes disavowing not only *kufr*, but also people of *kufr* who are the non-Muslims. As such, these Muslim extremists are more inclined to the opinions of scholars such as IbnKathir whose religious views seem to be in line and compatible with their understanding of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*.

Millat Ibrahim and Following the Steps of Prophet Abraham

After revealing the story of Hatib in the first part of the *surah*, the Quran moves to speak about another story, which like the story of Hatib becomes the basis for Muslim extremists' conception of disavowing the Religious Other. This story could be seen as one that provides the cure for the “disease” of forming alliances and loving the non-Muslims as stipulated in the story of Hatib. It specifically informs the Muslims of how they should deal with the group of people described earlier in the first verse of the *surah*. It is from this particular story that Muslim extremists' notion of *bara'* of the *kuffar* is conceptualized. It is no less than the story in the life of Prophet Abraham who disavows his own idol-worshipping community including his father who refused to believe in *tawhid*. It is from this particular verse of the *surah* that Muslim extremists claim “open disavowal from the non-Muslims is a necessity of *tawhid*” emerges. It is also from this particular story of Abraham from the Quran that Muslim extremists' concept of concept of *bara'* from the *kuffar* was conceptualized. The verses that informs us this story of Abraham goes as follow:-

Indeed, there has been an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people: “Verily we are free (*hura-a-u*) from you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We have rejected you, and there has started between us and you enmity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone”, except the saying of Ibrahim to his father: “Verily I will ask for forgiveness for you, but I have no power to do anything for you before Allah.”⁴⁰

³⁷Quran 20:116-7

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹See Ismail IbnKathir Al-Dimashqi, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim*, vol IV, Beirut, Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1991, p. 371.

⁴⁰Quran 60:4.

The concept of *Millat Ibrahim* (Religion of Abraham) as contained in this verse refers to the sincerity and loyalty of Prophet Abraham who submits himself devotedly to the worship of Allah alone, the only One God. His sincerity towards *tawhid* is further shown by his destruction of the idols which are worshipped by his community and his disavowal of them as illustrated in this verse. The verse portrays Prophet Abraham's disavowal of those who worship idols including his own father. Abraham and his followers uttered the word "*burā-u*" (free from or disavow) which shows that they were free from what is being worshipped other than God.⁴¹ If the story of Hatib becomes the basis for *wala'*, this verse, however, becomes the basis for Muslim extremists' conception of *bara'*.⁴² Muslim extremists use this verse to point out three important elements that are comprised in the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*:

1. The obligation of announcing one's disavowal of *kufir* and *kuffar*. The fact that Abraham said to his people that "he is free from them" (*burā-u minikum*) "and from what they worship besides Allah" (*wamimmaata'buduuna min duni Allah*) signifies the obligation that a Muslim should show his *bara'* from both the *kuffar* and their act of disbelief (*kufir*). This stand is generally accepted by many Muslim extremists. While all Muslim extremists agree that Muslims should show their *bara'* from *kufir*, however, they differ on how *bara'* from the *kuffar* should be manifested.

2. This verse shows that the basis of relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims must remain on enmity (*adawah*) and hatred (*baghdah*); and that non-Muslims must be rejected and disavowed until they submit to Islam and *tawhid* (*hattatu'minuubillahivahdab*).⁴³

3. The verse shows that *tawhid*, *mahabbah* (love) and *wala'* are not merely activities of the heart (internal) but should also be manifested by words and the outer limbs (external action). This is based on the story of Abraham who openly declares *kufir* and physically destroyed all the idols worship by his own people. This explains why violent Muslim extremists call for the killing and elimination of the *kuffar* since they do not worship Allah.

We have seen earlier how different Muslim extremists use verse 1 of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* to prove the validity and importance of not showing *wala'* to non-Muslims. Similarly, they use this verse 4 of the *surah* to highlight the obligation of *bara'* to the non-Muslims, although the verse explicitly refers to a specific group of people that Prophet Abraham disavowed i.e. the idol worshippers and they are not hostile to him. The reason for Abraham's disavowal of the idol worshippers and his expression of enmity and hatred is merely due to their rejection of *tawhid*. To provide the validity and substance to their project of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*, Muslim extremists see this verse as one that requires all Muslims to disavow, hate and develop a sense of enmity to all non-Muslims in general, and this is mainly due to the latter's rejection of *tawhid*. For example, Ibn Baz in his definition of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* uses this verse to show that Muslims must show their enmity and hatred to non-Muslims.⁴⁴ Similarly, prominent modern Salafi authors on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* such as Salih Al-Fawzan (b. 1933), Muhammad Saeed Al-Qahtani (b.1956), Abdul Rahman Abdul Khaliq (b. 1939), Ayman Al-Zawahiri (b. 1951), Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and many others have all use this verse as an important evidence for the obligation of *bara'*. Significantly, Nasir Al-Fahad when asked whether Muslims who reside amongst the non-Muslims should call the latter to Islam, responded by saying:⁴⁵

⁴¹The story of Abraham disavowing the idols worshipped by his father and people is also mentioned in Quran 43:26 which says: "And when Abraham said to his father his people "Indeed I am free from that which you worship, except for He that created me and indeed He will guide me". And he made it a word remaining among his descendants so that perhaps they might return to it".

⁴²It is important to note here that while this verse becomes the basis for Muslim extremists' conception of *bara'*, there are other Quranic verses that are used to support the modern Muslim extremists' conception and claim of *bara'* such as Quran 9:1 which says: "Freedom (*bara-ab*) from all obligations is declared from Allah and His Messenger to those of the *musyrikin* with who you made a treaty".

⁴³Muslim extremists' opponents reject Muslim extremists' line of reasoning regarding the issue of *bara'* by stating that while it is true Abraham said that "enmity and hatred have appeared between us", his enmity towards the idol worshippers are of a mutual one. Abraham did not declare enmity when he first encountered the idol worshippers. Rather he called them to Islam and the worship of one God with utmost sincerity and kind words. However, when the idol worshippers rejected him and showed their hatred and enmity towards him, it was natural for him to respond in kind. This is necessary for him to safeguard his belief and ensure his security.

⁴⁴See Abdul Aziz IbnBaz, *Ma'na al-Wala' wal Bara'* from his website at <http://www.binbaz.org.sa/mat/1764> (accessed 11 March 2016).

⁴⁵See "Living in the West with *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*" by Shaikh Nasir Hammad Al-Fahad available at www.hoor-al-ayn.com/articles/.../Living%20in%20the%20West.pdf (accessed 12 March 2016). See also Nasir Hammad Al-Fahad, *Al-Tibyan fi Kufri man A'aana Al-Amrikan*, p.15.

Da'wab(Spreading) of Islam is a tremendous virtue and it is the works of the Prophets and people of rectification. If you perform it then you have followed Islam and if you didn't, then you must at least manifest the *din*. Manifesting the *din* is not merely in you praying and fasting in front of them. On the contrary, you are to manifest the *bara'* towards them and their *din* and by hating them and their *din*.⁴⁶

Al-Fahad then continues to quote this verse (Quran 60:4) and says:-

Look here at his words: “[...] from you all and that you worship [...]”. Hence, he began with *bara'* from them before their objects of worship. That is because there are some who declare their disavowal from their objects of worship while not declaring their disavowal from them. Look at his words: “We have disbelieved in you [...]” and not only disbelieve in their objects of worship. And [look] at his words: “[...] And there has appeared ...” – meaning manifested towards them, and [look] at his words: “[...] enmity and hatred [...]”. So, he proceeded with enmity over hatred (mentioning it first). That is because there are some who hate them but they do not oppose them with enmity. Therefore, whoever is mixing with them (the non-Muslims), then he must actualize this *Millat Ibrahim*. Otherwise, it is not allowed to reside amongst them.⁴⁷

Al-Fahad claims that it is obligatory for Muslims who reside in non-Muslim countries to actualize the *Millat Ibrahim* by way of declaring *bara'* from the *kuffar* and their religion, and to openly show them hatred and enmity.⁴⁸ As seen from the response of Al-Fahad above, Muslim extremists, especially the violent oriented or Jihadis, use this particular verse to highlight that Muslims should hate and disavow both the *kuffar* and the *kufir* in them as the verse says “...from you all and that you worship...”. The issue of whether one should hate the *kufir* and not the *kuffar* or hates both the *kufir* and *kuffar* has resulted in a debate between the different Salafi groups which will be highlighted in the final part of this paper.

Violent extremists besides having the same stance of taking all non-Muslims as enemies that should be disavowed, add another angle of interpretation to this particular verse. They view that the idol worshippers as referred to in the story of Prophet Abraham to include Muslims especially rulers and governors who do not rule by God's legislations and accept foreign and “un-Islamic” political systems such as democracy and secularism. These systems according to violent extremists are “idols” that should be disavowed. For example, Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi solely base this particular verse to show his understanding of *bara'* and his disavowal of Muslim rulers whom he equates as “idol worshippers” (*tawaghit*)⁴⁹ for their adherence to man-made law instead of the *shariah* (Islamic law).⁵⁰ In the opening of his famous book *Millat Ibrahim*, Al-Maqdisi declares:

To the transgressing rulers (*tawaghit*) of every time and place...To the transgressing rulers (*tawaghit*); the governors and the leaders and the Caesars and the *Kisrahs* (Persian Emperors) and the Pharaohs and the Kings...to their servants and their misguiding scholars (*ulama*)...to their supporters and their armies and their police and their intelligence services...and their guardians...to all of them collectively, we say: “Verily we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah”. Free from your retched laws, methodologies, constitutions and values... free from your repugnant governments, courts, distinguishing characteristics and media...”We have rejected you, and there has become apparent between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allah alone.⁵¹

This declaration of disavowal by Al-Maqdisi is unique in the sense that the words uttered by Prophet Abraham and his people as stipulated in the Quranic verse 60:4 are nicely positioned within the words of Al-Maqdisi. Al-Maqdisi is famous for his radical treatment of the concept *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹See Chapter on *Taghut* in Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, *Tauhfah Al-Muwabbidin fi abhami Masa-ilusul al-Din* published the Shariah Committee of Jama'ah Al-Tauhidwal Jihad, Syawal 1430.

⁵⁰For more on Al-Maqdisi's interpretation of “enemies” see Joas Wagemakers, *Defining the Enemy: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Radical Reading of Surat al-Mumtahana*, pp. 348-371.

⁵¹Abu Muhammad Asim Al-Maqdisi, *Millat Ibrahim wada'wab al-Anbiya' wa al-Mursalinna.Asaalib at-Tughab fi Tamyi'ihawa Sarfi a-Du'aati Anba*, p. 9.

He has taken *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* from Saudi Salafi scholars⁵² and turns it into a political tool that forces Muslims rulers to submit fully to the legislations of God.⁵³ In other words, Al-Maqdisi calls for the concept to be applied in a political context; and the fact that he believes Muslim rulers should be attacked and killed due to their adherence to un-Islamic system shows his understanding of the concept has a strong Jihadi element.⁵⁴ Most of his books and writings such as *Millat Ibrahim*, *Dimuqratiyyah Diinun*, *Al-Kawashif Al-Jaliyyah fi kufr al-Dawlah As-Sa'udiyyah* and *Tuhfab Al-Muwahhidin* revolve around the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. He believes that adherence to man-made laws is a form of misplaced *wala'* and accuses Muslim leaders, politicians and government officials as *kuffar* for their adherence to this laws which he equates as “idols”. Thus Muslims, according to him must emulate Prophet Abraham by disavowing and attacking these rulers through *jihad* which he and most all Jihadi extremists believe is the highest form of showing *bara'* to the enemies of God.

The official website of Salafimedia.com whose central theme is “Upon the Religion of Abraham” posted a “Declaration of *Bara'*” which seems similar to the declaration of Al-Maqdisi in his opening of *Millat Ibrahim*, even paraphrasing the actual words of verse 4 of *Surah Al-Mumtahanah*. The declaration reads:

To the Pharaohs of this era, and to their regimes, and their agents... To the ministers, bishops, and rabbis of the *tawaghit*... To all of them we say: “We do not worship that which you worship, to you is your religion, and to us is our *din*”. We disbelieve in you and in your gods, legislations, and your constitutions and we have rejected your parliaments which you worship along with Allah and there has emerged between us and you hostility and hatred forever – until you return to *tawhid*, and apply His legislation alone and accept it with full submission.⁵⁵

***Kufr* and *Kuffar*: To Hate or Not to Hate?**

Muslim extremists view *Al-Walawal Bara'* as the concept of ‘love and hate’. *Wala'* requires Muslims to love God and anything that pleases Him while *bara'* necessitates Muslims to disassociate (which includes hating in many cases) from anything that is worshipped besides God and contradicts Him. This includes *kufr* (disbelief) and *kuffar* (disbelievers) It is clear that every Muslim hates *kufr*, but the issue of whether *wala'* requires Muslims to hate the *kuffar* has become a subject of debate and disagreement amongst many Muslims.

It is natural for Muslim extremists or even Muslims in general to believe that it is incumbent upon Muslims to hate the *kuffar*. This is probably due to the fact the Quran repeatedly describes the characters and attributes of the disbelievers and warns Muslims of the dangers of these attributes and to avoid them. God has commanded that Muslims reject or make *kufr* of the *taghut* and the disbelievers are seen as the *tawaghit*.⁵⁶ Muslim extremists emphasized that all Muslims need to disbelieve in all types of *taghut* because that is the precondition of Islam, which should be expressed by one’s heart, tongue and limbs (i.e. actions). One could also find that Quranic verses even instruct Muslims to kill the polytheists (*mushrikin*),⁵⁷ if these verses were understood literally and its interpretation were taken out of context. At certain places, the Quran says that the *kafir* may be deceived, plotted against, hated, enslaved, mocked, tortured and worse.

These are some of the reasons why Muslim extremists generally hate the *kuffar*, albeit the word *kafir* in the Quran refers to various categories of people like polytheists, idolaters, People of the Book (Jews and Christians), pagans and even Muslims who are not grateful to God. On the notion of hating the *kuffar*, Muslims are divided into three categories. First, those who believe that all *kuffar* should be hated, killed and eliminated from the face of the earth.

⁵² Al-Maqdisi is believed to have spent several years studying in Saudi Arabia under many prominent Saudi Salafi scholars before he moves to Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is from here that he is exposed to the Wahhabi teachings and writings of Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim.

⁵³ See Joas Wagemakers, “The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al-Wala' wal Bara'* in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi”, pp 49-74. See also from the same author, *A Purist-Jihadi Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi*, pp 281-297.

⁵⁴ For more on how Jihadi Muslim extremists apply *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* at the political context, see Joas Wagemakers, “Framing the ‘Threat to Islam’: *al-wala' wa al-bara'* in Salafi discourse” available at <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Framing+the+%22threat+to+Islam%22:+al-wala'+wa+al-bara'+in+Salafi...-a0197801513> (accessed 14 February 2017).

⁵⁵ See *Our Declaration of Bara'* at Salafimedia.com Upon the Religion of Abraham available at <http://salafimedia.com/aqeedah/al-walaa-wal-baraa/item/1673-our-declaration-of-bara.html> (accessed 11 March 2017).

⁵⁶ See Quran 2:256.

⁵⁷ See Quran 9:5.

This position is seen as the most extreme position among them. As for the *muamalah* (interaction) with the *kuffar*, this group of Muslims do not distinguish between *kafirbarbi* (*kafir* who should be fought), *kafirdzimmi* (*kafir* living under Muslim rule) who should be protected according to Islamic law, and a general *kafir*. The second category of Muslims views that while all the *kuffar* should be hated (and this hate is usually manifested in the heart), they should be treated justly and with kindness as long as they do not fight the Muslims. The last category believes that Muslims should not hate the *kuffar* but they should only hate the *kufr* or their rejection of Islam.

Muslims who claim that all *kuffar* should be hated and killed are seen to be very extreme in their approach and methodology. They are hostile towards the non-Muslims, possess an anti-*kafir* attitude and are usually militant. They mostly come from the Jihadi Salafi current. They assert that Muslims should not love the entire *kuffar* and ought to declare their enmity towards them. For example, Ayman Al-Zawahiri says Muslims should hate the infidels and renounce their love because God has forbid the Muslims to show their affection to those who oppose God and His Messenger.⁵⁸

The feelings of hatred, enmity and hostility towards the *kuffar* are made clear by Al-Zawahiri in his book *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. He claimed that all infidels, especially the Jews and Christians as well as Muslims who do not participate in *jihad* and associate themselves with the infidels must be killed. He also discouraged Muslims from befriending or engaging in peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims. To him, any expression of friendship with the disbelievers indicates a lack of faith and insufficient love for God as it is impossible to befriend someone who opposes God.⁵⁹ Al-Zawahiri explains:-

The Lord Almighty has commanded us to hate the infidels and reject their love. For they hate us and begrudge us our religion, wishing that we abandon it... There is a firm bond between loving the Lord, befriending the believers, and waging *jihad* in the path of Allah. Kindness and fair dealing with those infidels who are not hostile toward us are not the same thing as friendship, which is forbidden.⁶⁰

According to Al-Zawahiri, the ultimate way to manifest hatred to the *kuffar* is through *jihad*. He believes that Muslims must establish their superiority to non-Muslims to engender the necessary hostility to effectively wage *jihad*. In the chapter entitled 'The Commandment to Wage Jihad against Them, Expose their Falsehood, Have No Love for Them, and Keep Away From Them' of his book, Al-Zawahiri states that:

Not only did the Almighty and Exalted be He forbid us from befriending the infidels, but he also ordered us to wage *jihad* against the original infidels (those who never submitted to Islam), the apostates (Muslims who have strayed from the faith), and the hypocrites).⁶¹

As Gilles Kepel says, 'Al-Zawahiri legitimizes any "collateral damage" by *jihad* using the doctrine of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. The measure of Al-Zawahiri's influence is offered by the more radical generation of those Muslim fighters operating in Iraq: they have no problems justifying the killing of fellow Muslims and innocent Iraqi civilians, because for them these people are "associating with unbelievers". In 2002, when the US invaded Iraq, Al-Zawahiri made it clear that any Muslim ally of the US was by definition an apostate: 'Jihad against Americans, Jews and their allies among the hypocrites and apostates is mandatory on all Muslims.'⁶²

Another preacher who shares a similar thinking and understanding of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* with Al-Zawahiri and believes that all *kuffar* must be hated is that of Abu Waleed,⁶³ a British extremist who is a strong proponent of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* in Britain. Abu Waleed claims that it is not possible for Muslims to hate *kufr* but love the *kuffar*. He is critical of those Muslims who befriends the disbelievers and even criticizes Muslims who support and work for the government. He calls Muslims to humiliate the *kafir* and never to elevate him. In his lecture on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*, Abu Waleed reminds:

⁵⁸Al-Zawahiri, *Al-Wala' wal Bara': Aqidah Manqulab wa Waqi' Ma'fud*, pp. 7-10.

⁵⁹ Al-Zawahiri, *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* in Ibrahim, Raymond (ed and trs), *The Al-Qaeda Reader*, p. 75.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid, p. 93.

⁶²Kepel, Gilles, *The War For Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, p. 134.

⁶³Abu Waleed gave an one hour lecture on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNNkR4umBO4> (accessed 17 November 2016).

Al-Wala' wal Bara' is the backbone of *tawhid*. You cannot be a Muslim and believe in Allah until you hate the *taghut*. How can you love Allah and *shaitan* (satan) at the same time? How can you say that 'I have respect towards any of those *tawaghit* or I work for the *tawaghit* and I am also somebody who believes in Allah and a good servant of him ('*abid*). It does not work that way.⁶⁴

Abu Waleed equates the *kuffar* as the *taghut* which God has commanded the Muslims to pronounce their *kufr* on them in the Quran. He then continues to explain that one of the five meanings of *bara'* is '*al-bughud*' (hatred). He continues:

Al-bughud is to have hatred. You cannot say I have *bara'* of the *kuffar* but I love him. Love and hate is for the sake of Allah and is nothing personal. Hatred of the *kafir* is nothing personal not because he is black or because he is white but for the sake of Allah.⁶⁵

In his exclusive lecture on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*, Abu Waleed explains that one needs to understand the principle known as *at-talaazum* (moulding) in order to understand *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*.⁶⁶ *Talaazum* is to mould two or more things together and cannot be separated. For example the *talaazum* of *iman* (belief) is the actions of Muslim as the *shariah* meaning of *iman* is 'the belief in the heart, manifested by the tongue and actions by the limbs' (*al-imanqaalunnwaf'ilumwa 'itiqaadun*). To separate these three elements from each other is to dismantle the whole matter. Likewise, there is *talaazum* in *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. For *wala'* the *talaazum* is *muwaalat* (alliance) and for *bara'* is *mu'aaat* (enmity).

On the other hand, other Muslim have distinguished between *kufr* and *kafir*. Unlike those Muslim extremists who call for the rejection and elimination of the *kuffar*, these Muslim believe that what should be hated in the name of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* is the act of *kufr* or the disbelief and rejection of *tawhid* in the hearts of the *kuffar* and not the *kuffar* as human beings themselves. A famous Salafi preacher, Sheikh Khaled Yassin⁶⁷ from the United States said during one of his lectures on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*:

And we have *bara'* against all the *kuffar*. Now, we do not hate every *kafir*. We do not want to fight every *kafir*. We do not want to kill every *kafir*. That is not our belief. But we have *bara'*, which means *bara'* against their values, *bara'* against their beliefs, rejection against their belief, rejection of their values, rejection of their *kufi*, rejection of their corruption, rejection of their rebellion, rejection of their rejection of Allah the Almighty and His Messenger (peace be upon him).⁶⁸

From this statement, we can notice that Khaled Yassin indicates the differences between hating the *kafir* and hating *kufi*, between the acts of disassociating and hating, and between hating and then acting in a *jihad*. Importantly, all these subtle differences are argued over by Muslims, as this paper shows. This clearly shows that there is a particular difference between belief and action in this matter. It highlights that one can hate the *kuffar*, but that does not mean doing *jihad* (physical) against them, and for what is a legitimate action against the *kuffar*, that is a matter of *fiqh*.

Another individual preacher who somewhat agrees with the idea of Khaled Yasin is Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal Nadvi.⁶⁹ As someone who holds a doctorate in Islamic Law with a specialization in Islamic Jurisprudence from UmmalQura University and has worked as an Assistant Professor at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Nadvi is very much entrenched with the ideas of Salafism.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Khaled Yasin is a Muslim convert of Salafi background. He is the Executive Director of the Islamic Teaching Institute (ITI): a premier organisation dedicated to the work Islamic missionary. He studied Arabic language in Medina, Saudi Arabia and Cairo, Egypt and has had many mentors and teachers who tutored him in *fiqh* alSunnah, *Fiqh* alSirah, Islamic History and the memorisation and recitation of the Quran. Khalid Yasin constantly tours the world delivering lectures aimed at removing distortions about Islam and Muslims, conducting D'awah Training Courses, and providing new Muslims with a specially designed Islamic Training Program.

⁶⁸ See lecture on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* by Khalid Yasin available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOKlFEa-4Q&feature=related> (accessed 27 December 2016).

⁶⁹ Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal Nadvi in 2009 is the imam of the mosque in Calgary, Alberta Canada. He delivers lectures at local institutions, including at Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

He believes that the idea of Muslims' hatred of non-Muslims is nothing but a great misunderstanding of religion. He believes that the *kuffar* as human beings should not be hated. What should be hated is the act of disbelief in them. When asked about the issue of hatred on non-Muslims, Nadvi responded:

As for your second question, I think that what you said about Muslims' hatred of non-Muslims is nothing but a great misunderstanding of the spirit of Islam and who Muslims are. As a basic principle of Islam, we, Muslims, do not hate anyone on account of their cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds. Islam teaches us to interact with all people and wish good for the whole mankind. However, Muslims hate *kufri*, or disbelief in Allah, the Almighty. Since we love all people, we hate their disobedience of Allah, the Most High. So, even when people deny the existence of Allah we do not hate them personally; however, we hate their disbelief and disobedience of Allah, Exalted be He.⁷⁰

Another position taken by Muslims regarding this issue is that Muslim should hate the *kuffar* but are obliged to be kind and compassionate with them. This position is seen to be taken by most Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia. In the Salafi-Wahhabi ideology, *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* is a requirement of the *tawhid*. The proclamation of the *shahadah* means denial and hatred against anything that is worship besides God. However, this group of Muslim extremists which include the official scholars of Saudi Arabia stress that such hatred towards the *kuffar* does not imply and forbids Muslim from having good and mutual relationship with them. According to them, Muslims are obliged to hate the *kuffar* and the act of *kufri* in them, and at the same time befriend them. In a fatwa on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*, former Mufti of Saudi Arabia IbnBaz clarifies:

Al-Wala' wal Bara' means to love the believers and be loyal to them, and to hate the disbelievers and having enmity to them i.e. to be free from them and from their religion (*wa al-bara'aminhumwa min dinihim*). This is *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. But to hate and declare enmity to them does not imply that you could fight them unless they initiate the fight first. It means that you should hate them and show your enmity in your hearts. They should not be your friends but you must not hurt and do injustice to them. If they accept the peace (*salam*), then reply back the *salam* to them. Advise them and show them the path of goodness".⁷¹

Another individual who agrees with Ibn Baz is the English-educated Salafi scholar from Saudi Arabia, Dr Abdullah Al-Farsi⁷² who says:

When you deny (worship other than Allah), that should imply that you hate anyone who worships other than Allah the Almighty. This is a requirement of *Tawhid*. But when we say hate, we do not mean that this hate involves killing people unjustly or doing harm to people unjustly. You hate them and you love guidance for them. You hate them and be just to them. You hate them and be gentle and good with them. Just like Allah says in the Quran which means (You will not find a group of people who have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement and at the same time have love for those who oppose Allah and the Messenger). Then Allah says after that Allah by telling you that you should not love them is not forbidding you from being just to them and from being good to them. This is the balance of the Quran. He then continues: "the middle course is that you hate them by your heart and by your limbs you treat them as they deserve".⁷³

⁷⁰ See Muhammad Iqbal Nadvi's fatwa "Do Muslims Hate Non-Muslims" at http://www.e-infad.my/FMS_en/index.php?option=com_fatwa&task=viewlink&link_id=286&Itemid=59 (accessed 26 December 2016).

⁷¹ Fatwa by Ibn Baz on *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* at <http://www.binbaz.org.sa/mat/1764> (accessed 10 December 2016).

⁷² Dr Abdullah al-Farsi is a Saudi Salafi scholar and a member of the Standing Committee for Scholarly Research and Issuing Edicts in Saudi Arabia (*al-Lajnah al-Da'imah li-Buhuth al-Ilmiyyah wa al-Ifta'*). Professionally, Dr. al-Farsi has a P.h.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Cleveland State University, USA and hence is well verse in English. Dr. al-Farsi has been active in the field of Islamic missionary since 1980, mostly in America and Europe and has taught many books on *Aqidah* in Kuwait. He has an extensive personal research on books of *Tafsir*, explanations of *hadiith* and the writings of IbnTaimiyyah. As a famous scholar, Dr. al-Farsi was known to IbnBaz and Salih Al-Fawzan and has an honorary *tazkiyah* (recommendation) from Shaikh Badiuddin Shah Sindhi. He has studied many books under senior students from the Islamic University of Madinah and has been encouraged by them to teach the books of *Aqidah* in English. See Dr al-Farsi brief biodata at <http://qsep.com/EemanDVD/AboutShaikhAlFarsi.htm> (accessed 12 March 2017).

⁷³ Understanding *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* in Light of *Laallahallallah* (There is No God but Allah) by Dr Abdullah Al-Farsi available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDRoeQZG6-g&feature=relmfu> (accessed 11 November 2016).

It could be noticed that IbnBaz and Abdullah Faris have taken the so-called “soft” or “moderate” position on issues related to *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’*. This aspect of moderation in applying *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’* could be rarely seen in the writings of many contemporary Salafi scholars. Unlike many others who promote an extreme understanding of this concept, Dr Hatim Bin Arif Bin Nasir Al-Sharif, a professor from Umm Al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia, calls for a moderate understanding of *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’*. In his treatise entitled “*Al-Wala’ wal Bara’ Baina al-Ghuluwwa al-Jafa’ fi Dbau-I al-Kitabwa as-Sunnah* (Loyalty and Disavowal Between Extremism and Estrangement in Light of the Quran and Sunnah)⁷⁴ repeatedly stresses the importance of incorporating three significant Islamic values in the practice of *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’* which are moderation (*wasatiyyah*), tolerance (*samahah*) and kindness (*rahmah*). Like those who agree with him, Dr Hatim also view that the *kuffar* should only be hated for the belief and that Muslims have the right (*haq*) to uphold goodness (*birr*), compassion (*ihsan*) and justice (*adl*) in dealing with the non-Muslims as long as the latter do not fight the Muslims or support against killing the Muslims. According to him, ‘to uphold justice is an obligation (*fardh*) upon Muslims even to those whom we have the right to hate him and those *kuffar* who fight and kills us’. In his writing on *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’*, Dr Hatim has laid out some examples of moderation in practicing *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’*. For example, he says that ‘no kafir should be forced to embrace Islam’ (*la yujbarahadunmin al-kuffar al-asliyyinala al-dukbulfil Islam*) and reminds that ‘the difference of religion does not nullify the rights towards family members’ (*annaikhtilaf al-din la yulghabaqqadzawi al-qurba*).⁷⁵

It is worth noting here that similar to the positions taken by the official Saudi scholars and the likes mentioned above, there are those who distinguish between loving the *kuffar* inwardly (in the hearts) and outwardly. Muhammad Ibn Adam, the Mufti of Dar al-Iftaa in Leicester, United Kingdom in his *fatwa* on Muslims’ interaction with non-Muslim explains that Muslims are allowed to express friendship and love outwardly without having love for their religious beliefs.⁷⁶ This outward love for the non-Muslims which is known as *Mudarat* is manifested through expressing good manners and being kind to the non-Muslims.⁷⁷

Finally, on the issue of whom Muslims should love and hate, Salih Al-Fawzan, another official Saudi scholar has dealt with it in his book *Al-Wala’ wala Bara’*. In his book, Al-Fawzan categorizes people who *deserve Al-Wala’ wal Bara’* or those whom Muslims should love and hate into three categories:⁷⁸

1. Those whom Muslims should love purely with no intention of being an enemy to them. These are obviously Muslims who believe in the Oneness of God, accept the *tambid* and submit to Him.
2. Those whom Muslims should hate and take as enemies with no love or support and respect to them. This group refers to all the disbelievers including the Pagans, the Hypocrites and the Apostates.
3. Those whom Muslims should love particularly for their good deeds and hate for their other evil deeds. This category of people are those who are loved for their belief of Islam but hated for the sins they have committed. Thus, as a sign of loving them, Muslims should find ways to advise and warn them against doing any evil acts. The people under this category could also be punished for their evil doings for the benefit of the wider Muslim community.

Conclusion

Based on what have been presented in this paper, we can comprehend how Quranic injunctions and Islamic traditions have been manipulated by Muslim extremists to legitimize hatred, enmity and even killings of the Religious Other. Religious scriptures such as the Quran are powerful tools that are essential in the extremists’ perception and conceptualization of the relationship with the Religious Other. In particular, the paper has shown the importance of *Surah Al-Mumtananah* to Muslim extremists in the framework of Muslim and non-Muslim relationship and its conceptualization process.

⁷⁴For an electronic copy of Dr Hatim’s book see <http://ar.islamway.com/book/4419> (accessed 13 December 2016).

⁷⁵Hatim Bin Arif Bin Nasir Al-Sharif, *Al-Wala’ wal Bara’ Baina al-Ghuluwwa al-Jafa’ fi Dbau-I al-Kitabwa as-Sunnah*, undated, p. 15. This book is published online by <http://www.al-islam.com> (accessed 08 August 2017) and is available at www.ipc.org.kw/library/download.php?x=2 (accessed 08 August 2017).

⁷⁶See Muhammad Ibn Adam, ‘The Fiqh of Muslim Non-Muslim Interaction: A Detailed Explanation’ available at <http://www.central-mosque.com/fiqh/fnmuslim1.htm> (accessed 02 January 2017).

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Salih bin Fawzan Al-Fawzan, *Al-Walaa’ wal-Baraa’*, p. 15.

The importance of this *surah* to contemporary Muslim extremists is also due to the uniqueness and the manner the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* is presented and conceived in the *surah*. In portraying this concept, the uniqueness of Surah *Al-Mumtahanah* lies on the method it presents the concept from how it should be implemented, followed by an example of the application of the concept and then followed by further warnings to those who do not follow and apply it. The *surah* begins by forbidding *wala'* to the non-Muslims in a very specific situation which can be grasped from the historical incident of Hatib bin AbiBaltah. This is instantly followed by the story of Abraham which serves as an example of how *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* should be applied. The *surah* then proceeds to show the infeasibility of mixing *iman* and *kufir* through the command for Muslims to test the *iman* of the migrating women and finally it ends with emphasizing again the issue of *wala'*.

As shown in this paper, the concept of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* is also closely knitted to the issue of loving and hating the Religious Other. This issue of love and hate, acceptance and rejection, loyalty and disavowal of the Religious Other is one that is very fluid and complex. Furthermore, scholars in the past and today have been debating about whether Muslims should hate the non-Muslims because they disbelief in Allah or hating the sense of disbelief only. The debate by contemporary Muslims on this issue as presented in this paper has further reiterated the complexity and fluidity of this issue.

From the perspective of Muslim extremists, the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim relationship should be based on the hatred and disavowal and not on love and togetherness. The concept of *Al-Wala' walBara'* is seen as the key driver that enhance this understanding of the Religious Other by the Muslim extremists. Emanated from *Surah Al-Mumtahanah*, this concept is further supported by other Quranic verses which prohibits alliance with non-Muslims. Together with the verses from Surah *Al-Mumtahanah*, these verses have provided a strong divine validation to the Muslim extremists' conceptualization of the relationship with the Religious Other through the lenses of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'*. Furthermore, Muslim extremists attempt to show that the matter of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* is one that is deeply-rooted in the Quran and that violation of the concept or negligence from practicing it constitutes a grave disobedience to God and even constitutes apostasy.

The opinion of Muslim extremists who, on the basis of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* prohibit the Muslims from developing friendly relations with peoples of other religions is arguable. If we study these verses in their proper context, we shall see that all these verses pertain to those people, whether Jews, Christians or the Polytheists of Arabia, who had come into direct or hidden confrontation with Islam and the Muslims. The Quran, in effect, has directed the Muslims that in these circumstances (of confrontation and war), they must not give away their secrets (*bitanab*) to these people and must not make them friends, preferring them over the Muslims (*min duni al-mu'minin*). Obviously, the directive given in these circumstances cannot be generalized.

By exposing the realities and complexities of Muslim extremist perception of the Religious Other as the paper has shown, it could be concluded that practicing *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* as understood by contemporary Muslim extremists is controversial and problematic. Hence, a "sophisticated" understanding of the concept is important as it will guide direction of integration and is crucial to assist Muslims to confidently lead good lives wherever they may be. In this globalised world, many Muslims feel that their key beliefs are challenged and their identity is threatened. As a result, Muslims are searching for signposts and guidelines to practice Islam in a world seemingly at odds with Islamic principles. As a divine code of conduct, the consequences of applying the Muslim extremists understanding of the Religious Other is serious – arguably it promotes a life that is insular and hostile towards non-Muslims;

Finally, there is a dire need need to reach a legitimate meaning and position of the principles of *Al-Wala' wal Bara'* as it applies to contemporary Islam in light of the primary Islamic resources. This is so as it could be argued that the claims made by Muslim extremists lack legitimate and substantial support in Islamic primary sources, historical records and essence of Islam. Hence, the time has come for the Muslim scholars and thinkers, not only to challenge this negative perception by the Muslim extremists, but more importantly to guide the Muslims based on Islamic principles and sources that would suit them in all situations and would also assist them in facing the many challenges ahead.