

Received: 17 June, 2026

Accepted: 18 September, 2026

Published: 23 September, 2026

The Concept of Ijtihād in the School of Ijtimāī Tafsīr: A Comparative Analysis

^aThis article is derived from the doctoral thesis in progress titled "Evaluation of Sayyid Qutb's Tafsīr Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān from the Perspective of Sociological Exegesis/Seyyid Kutub'un Fī Zilālī'l-Kur'ān Tefsirinin İctimāī Tefsir Açısından Değerlendirilmesi" at the Graduate School of Education, Uşak University.

Abdulkadir Ertaş

Uşak University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Basic Islamic Sciences, Uşak, Türkiye; abdulkad-ertas06@gmail.com

Nurullah Denizer

Uşak University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Basic Islamic Sciences, Uşak, Türkiye

Cite this article:

Ertaş, A., & Denizer, N. (2026). The concept of ijtiḥād in the school of Ijtimāī Tafsīr: A comparative analysis. *Revista Cultura Científica*, (24), pp. 1513–1522. <https://doi.org/10.70517/revcc2624125>

Abstract

The Qur'an and the Sunnah hold great importance in guiding humanity to the right path, directing people towards divine guidance (*hidāyah*), and reforming both the material and spiritual dimensions of the individual and social life. These two primary sources have, since the earliest periods of Islam, preserved their status as universal guides capable of addressing the needs and challenges of every era, regardless of changing historical conditions, societal transformations, and differing cultural realities. In this context, the Qur'an and the Sunnah have functioned as dynamic guides that keep the gate of *ijtihād* open and allow for the derivation of new rulings appropriate to changing conditions of time and place. Accordingly, within the Islamic intellectual tradition, scholars have engaged in *ijtihād* based on the foundational principles of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, thereby developing solutions tailored to the needs of their respective eras. However, from the late fourth century AH (tenth century

CE) onwards, the practice of *ijtihād* declined and remained limited for centuries. In the nineteenth century CE, however, the issue of *ijtihād* was reintroduced into scholarly discussions within the Islamic world. In this context, prominent figures of the *Ijtimāi Tafsīr* (Social Qur'anic Exegesis) school of thought examined the concept of *ijtihād* in their Qur'anic exegeses and expressed various views on the subject. This article comparatively examines the approaches to *ijtihād* found in the Qur'anic exegeses of leading representatives of the *Ijtimāi Tafsīr* school, namely Muhammad Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, al-Marāghī, Sayyid Quṭb, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, and, among the Turkish representatives, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Süleyman Ateş. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to present the views of the *Ijtimāi Tafsīr* school on *ijtihād* from an analytical and comparative perspective.

Keywords: Qur'an, Tafsir, Social Qur'anic Exegesis (*Ijtimāi Tafsīr*), *Ijtiḥād*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ijtihād is a fundamental concept in Islamic legal thought that refers to the effort to derive probable (ẓannī) legal rulings from the wording and meaning of nuṣūṣ (explicit textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah) where such texts exist, and, in the absence of such explicit textual evidence, through various methods of legal inference (istinbāt).

Given the continually evolving nature of society, the emergence of unprecedented issues, and the dynamics generated by modern life, it is essential that ijtihād remain an active and living mechanism in every age so that Islamic legal rulings may preserve their relevance to life and be interpreted in a manner that maintains the balance between the nuṣūṣ and the realities they address. However, with the institutionalisation of the legal schools (madhhabs) and the codification of the juristic tradition, the practice of ijtihād was gradually replaced by the transmission of earlier opinions and the annotation and interpretation of established legal doctrines. Furthermore, the exercise of ijtihād became subject to increasingly stringent qualifications, thereby reducing it to a largely theoretical possibility, while taqlīd (adherence to established legal authority) emerged as the dominant method of Islamic legal thought in practice. By the nineteenth century, however, the question of ijtihād re-emerged as a major intellectual concern. Processes such as modernisation, colonial domination, encounters with the West, and the weakening of traditional institutions revived the debate within the Muslim world over whether "the gate of ijtihād" had truly been closed.

Within this context, the School of Ijtimāi Tafsīr (Social Qur'anic Exegesis) argued that one of the principal causes of stagnation in Islamic thought was the abandonment of ijtihād and the institutionalisation of taqlīd. According to this school, reactivating human reason under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah constitutes the only viable means of restoring the intellectual independence of Muslim societies, reviving their social vitality, and rebuilding Islamic civilisation.

Accordingly, the proponents of the Ijtimāi Tafsīr school regarded taqlīd as one of the principal causes of intellectual decline, while viewing the revival of ijtihād not merely as an academic necessity but also as a religious obligation and a civilizational imperative. This perspective reflects both the school's pursuit of renewal in the modern period and its methodological stance that centres on the dynamism of the Qur'an.

This study focuses on one of the most distinctive and constructive features of the Ijtimāi Tafsīr school, namely its persistent emphasis on the continuity and necessity of ijtihād. Since this emphasis represents one of the defining characteristics of the school's interpretive methodology, the present study aims to analyse and evaluate its understanding of ijtihād from a comparative perspective.

The figures examined in this study include the authors of the Tafsīr al-Manār, Muḥammad Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā, followed by al-Marāghī, Sayyid Quṭb, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, and, among the leading Turkish representatives of this school, Mehmet Âkif Ersoy and Süleyman Ateş.

A review of the existing literature reveals that no comprehensive and independent study has been devoted specifically to the concept of ijtihād within the Ijtimāi Tafsīr school. Although Orhan Atalay's 20. Yüzyıl Tefsir Akımı: İctimâî Tefsir (The Twentieth-Century Tafsīr Movement: Ijtimāi Tafsīr), one of the principal studies on this school, discusses several of its defining characteristics; its treatment of ijtihād, however, remains brief and lacks a detailed analysis. Furthermore, the discussion is largely confined to the views of Muḥammad Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and, to a lesser extent, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, while the contributions of other major representatives of the school receive little attention, and no systematic comparative analysis is undertaken. Likewise, Zülfi Güler's article entitled "Safahat'tan Seçmeler: Cihād-İçtihad" examines the concept of ijtihād. Yet, it is limited exclusively to the views of Mehmet Âkif Ersoy and does not consider the perspectives of the other representatives of the school or compare their approaches. Similarly, Murat Şimşek's master's thesis, Ijtihād in the Twentieth Century: The Cases of Rashīd Riḍā, Mustafa Sabri Efendi, and Said Nursi, addresses only Rashīd Riḍā among the exegetes examined in the present study. Owing to its different scope, it neither investigates the remaining representatives of the Ijtimāi Tafsīr school nor offers a comparative analysis of their conceptions of ijtihād.

2. THE LEXICAL AND TECHNICAL MEANINGS OF İJTİHÂD

Lexically, the term ijtihād is derived from the trilateral root j-h-d (ج-ه-د), which conveys meanings such as "capacity," "effort," "strength," "exertion," "perseverance," "ability," and "enduring hardship." The word ijtihād is formed according to the iftiāl morphological pattern, which denotes intensive effort [1, p. 386]; [2, p. 26]; [3, p. 208]; [4, Vol. 2, p. 460]; [5, Vol. 3, p. 135]; [6, Vol. 1, p. 153]; [7, p. 112]. In its lexical sense, ijtihād signifies "exerting effort and striving in matters that involve hardship" [3, p. 208]; [5, p. 135]. Likewise, the terms jihād and mujāhadah, although differing in their specific semantic scopes, share with ijtihād the common meaning of "striving" or "making a determined effort."

The terminological meaning of ijtihād has been explained as "the exertion of a mujtahid's utmost effort to derive a probable (ẓannī) legal ruling from the Sharīah sources until he perceives himself incapable of making any further effort" [8, p. 162], or, alternatively, as "the general designation for the endeavor to attain probable knowledge regarding a legal ruling through the wording and meaning of the nuṣūṣ, and, in the absence of explicit textual evidence, through various methods of legal inference (istinbāt)" [9, p. 432].

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı defines *ijtihād* as "the exhaustive intellectual effort exerted by a *mujtahid*, to the best of his ability, in order to ascertain subsidiary legal rulings (*furū al-aḥkām*) that are not established by definitive evidence, through the *Sharīah* proofs consisting of the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah*, consensus (*ijmā*), and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*)" [10, p. 66].

Although the word *ijtihād* itself does not occur in the *Qur'an*, its root appears in the forms *jahd* and *juhd* in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* (*Qur'an*, 5:53), *Sūrah al-Anām* (*Qur'an*, 6:109), and *Sūrah al-Tawbah* (*Qur'an*, 9:79), where it carries the lexical meanings mentioned above. In the Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīths*), however, *ijtihād* is used to denote "the exertion of one's utmost effort by a judge or ruler in order to arrive at the correct legal judgment (*al-Bukhārī*, "Itiṣām," 13, 21; *Muslim*, "Aqḍiya," 15; *Abū Dāwūd*, "Aqḍiya," 11; *al-Tirmidhī*, "Aḥkām," 3)."

Islamic scholars who attain the qualifications necessary for the practice of *ijtihād* are referred to as *mujtahids*. Such scholars are also described as *faqīhs* (jurists) and *muftīs* (legal experts qualified to issue legal opinions). However, since the latter two terms are used more broadly and may include scholars who have not attained the rank necessary for the practice of *ijtihād*, the designation *mujtahid* carries a more specific meaning. Consequently, regardless of how extensive a scholar's knowledge of Islamic law may be, one who is unable to derive legal rulings by himself through his own knowledge and reasoning cannot be regarded as a *mujtahid* ([11, p. 55]).

3. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF IJTIHĀD

To maintain a proper balance between the *nuṣūṣ* and the ever-changing realities of human life, *ijtihād* must preserve its vitality and effectiveness in every age and across different social contexts. However, with the formation of the legal schools (*madhhabs*) and the codification of the juristic tradition, the practice of *ijtihād* gradually became stagnant. From the beginning of the fourth century AH in particular, the conviction that only the early *mujtahids* possessed the qualifications necessary to exercise *ijtihād* gained increasing acceptance. Consequently, subsequent jurists devoted themselves primarily to interpreting and explaining the legal opinions formulated by the great imams, rather than engaging in *ijtihād* ([9, p. 443]).

According to *Zaydān*, the period extending from the beginning of the second century AH to the middle of the fourth century AH represented the era during which Islamic jurisprudence experienced its greatest development and expansion. ([12, p. 134]) He further maintains that, beginning in the late fourth century AH, jurists largely abandoned the practice of *ijtihād* and instead confined themselves to selecting among the transmitted opinions of the earlier leading authorities of legal schools. ([12, p. 138])

Although from the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) until this period scholars regarded *ijtihād* as an indispensable instrument of Islamic legal reasoning, subsequent social, political, and cultural developments gradually rendered its practice uncommon and even objectionable. Within this context, *ijtihād* became restricted by a set of stringent qualifications that could scarcely be fulfilled by any single individual. Consequently, Islamic legal thought increasingly lost its capacity to respond creatively to emerging issues and changing circumstances, progressively becoming passive and less capable of producing effective solutions. ([13, p. 144])

However, during the nineteenth century CE, discussions concerning whether the gate of *ijtihād* had truly been closed re-emerged. Indeed, in the modern period, the need for *ijtihād* became more apparent than ever before. Consequently, Muslim intellectuals who sought to address contemporary challenges within the framework of Islamic thought reopened the debate on *ijtihād*. In their view, the universal principles and values embodied in Islam's primary sources possess the intellectual resources and normative guidance necessary to address the problems of the modern world. They further argued that one of the principal causes of the intellectual stagnation and socio-cultural decline of the Muslim world was the historical closure of the gate of *ijtihād* and the subsequent institutionalisation of *taqlīd* as the dominant mode of religious thought ([9, p. 443]).

In summary, this mode of thinking fostered the emergence of a society incapable of intellectual independence – a society constantly dependent on external authority and largely devoid of critical inquiry. From this perspective, the *Ijtīmāi Tafsīr* school regarded *taqlīd*, together with the belief that the gate of *ijtihād* had been closed, as one of the primary causes of the intellectual and social decline of the Muslim world, strongly criticising this view and characterising it as an invalid and erroneous approach ([14, p. 248]). Accordingly, this stance has been regarded as one of the significant and constructive contributions of the *Ijtīmāi Tafsīr* school ([15, p. 242]).

4. IJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO THE EXEGETES OF THE IJTİMĀI TAFSİR SCHOOL

4.1. IJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO TAFSİR AL-MANĀR

According to *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *ijtihād* is defined, in the terminology of the scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), as "the exertion of a jurist's utmost intellectual and scholarly effort to attain probable (*ẓannī*) knowledge concerning a *Sharīah* ruling." A *mujtahid*, in turn, is defined as "one who exerts this effort to its fullest extent" [16, p. 166]. According to *al-Manār*, new *ijtihāds* grounded in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* should be undertaken in all matters other than the fundamental principles of faith, acts of worship, and explicit legal prohibitions. In this regard, *al-Manār* attributes a meaning to the

concept of consensus (ijmā) that differs from the classical understanding ([17, p. 33]). According to al-Manār, genuine consensus is not confined to the agreement reached by the mujtahids of a particular period on a specific legal issue. Rather, true consensus requires the consensus of the entire Muslim community (ummah). Since the gathering of the whole ummah is practically impossible, this objective may instead be achieved through the collective deliberation of those vested with authority (ulū al-amr) who represent the Muslim community ([16, pp. 163–170]).

According to al-Manār, even scholars who fulfil all the qualifications of ijtihād would not, by themselves, be capable of fully discerning the public interest (maṣlaḥah) in contemporary issues concerning security, war and peace, financial affairs, governance, and politics that affect both the Muslim community and the state. Indeed, al-Manār maintains that even the legal judgments such scholars might issue regarding the unprecedented issues of the modern age cannot be regarded as reliable, since human transactions and social realities have undergone profound transformations and no longer resemble those of earlier centuries ([16, p. 167]).

Furthermore, al-Manār maintains that engaging in ijtihād is not as difficult as is commonly assumed. Al-Manār argues that the qualifications required to attain the rank of mujtahid are no more demanding than those expected of scholars who achieve distinction in disciplines such as law, medicine, and philosophy in contemporary societies. Moreover, al-Manār contends that the opposition of proponents of taqlīd to the practice of ijtihād discourages students from aspiring to become mujtahids ([16, p. 167]).

Al-Manār also criticises the later scholars (mutaʾakkhkirūn) for confining themselves largely to transmitting the opinions of the early generations (salaf). According to al-Manār, these scholars effectively prohibited independent reasoning, accepted the widespread claim that the gate of ijtihād had been closed and that qualified mujtahids no longer existed, and thereby became content with replacing ijtihād with ignorance. According to al-Manār, anyone who is incapable of independent thinking in even understanding an evident matter upon which consensus already exists cannot genuinely be regarded as a scholar ([16, p. 77]).

After stating that the Qurʾan is a preserved divine source that maintains its originality, al-Manār expresses that the deficiency lies in the failure to establish this divine text as a guide and to invite people to act upon it. According to al-Manār, the Qurʾan is a foundation that Muslims in our age have turned into an object of mere aesthetic pleasure and a commercial commodity. In fact, some individuals, labelling it as ijtihād, have claimed that acting directly upon the Qurʾan is forbidden (ḥarām). Furthermore, due to a foolish suspicion, those same individuals prohibited the performance of ijtihād from the Qurʾan and the making of rational inferences (istidlāl). Such a prohibition means turning away from the truth of Islam and its primary source, namely the Qurʾan. This prohibition also represents an inversion of the hierarchy of sources, favouring the derivation of Islamic principles of faith (aqāʾid) and rulings from books of theology (kalām) and jurisprudence (fiqh) instead of directly from the Qurʾan and the Sunnah. However, whereas morality, virtue, wisdom, admonitions, politics, and the rules of an exemplary society are found in the Qurʾan and the Sunnah of the Prophet, they are absent in their books ([16, p. 283]; [18]).

In the same vein, al-Manār states that, as the early generations (salaf) also acknowledged, in every matter – provided that there is a naṣṣ (pl. nuṣūṣ) about it – the first and sole authority must be the Qurʾan and the Sunnah. According to al-Manār, Muslims of his time had deviated from the path of the early generations; even in matters where a naṣṣ existed, they followed the imams' opinions, despite those opinions contradicting the Qurʾan and the Sunnah. Later on, they even forbade resorting to the proofs in the Qurʾan and the Sunnah on the topic, considering this as deviant, misleading, and prohibited ijtihād ([16, p. 183]).

Al-Manār adduces evidence from the verses of Sūrat al-Baqarah: "(Consider the Day) when those who misled others will disown their followers—when they face the torment—and the bonds that united them will be cut off. The (misled) followers will cry, 'If only we could have a second chance, we would disown them as they disowned us.' And so Allah will make them remorseful of their misdeeds. And they will never (be able to) leave the Fire (Qurʾan, 2:166–167)." and the verse: "When it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has revealed,' they reply, 'No! We (only) follow what we found our forefathers practising.' (Would they still do so,) even if their forefathers had (absolutely) no understanding or guidance? (Qurʾan, 2:170)" By citing these verses, al-Manār argues that Allah clearly declares that He will not accept imitation (taqlīd) and will not consider its adherent excused in the Hereafter, thereby expressing the necessity of independent knowledge and inference (istidlāl) in religion. However, this does not require exercising absolute ijtihād in all Sharīah rulings. What al-Manār means is general inference (istinbāt) in areas needed by individuals and rulers. The assertion by muqallid (imitator) scholars, who wrote works in periods following the Middle Ages, that it is necessary to imitate mujtahids in religious matters and that acting based on direct evidence is forbidden, amounts to issuing rulings in the name of Allah's religion, abrogating Allah's book, and establishing a Sharīah that Allah has not permitted. Therefore, the summary of all this is the prohibition of knowledge and the imposition of ignorance. This, in turn, corrupts the human innate nature (fiṭrah) and the intellect ([16, p. 95]).

This religion is a religion of reason. This Sharīah is built upon the foundation of ijtihād and obedience to those vested with authority (ulū al-amr). Through this, Islam will be able to maintain its universality. To reject ijtihād means to reject

Allah's evidence. One who rejects *ijtihād* would also be denying the Islamic *Sharīah*'s distinction from other legal systems. Such a person would be ignoring the universality of Islam and its capacity to encompass all of humanity and all ages ([16, p. 347]).

According to this opinion, each of the scholars of the early generations (*salaf*) excused those who disagreed with them or with certain non-definitive transmissions and reports of *ijtihād*. They did not compel anyone to follow another's *ijtihād*, as the later *muqallid* (imitator) scholars did ([16, p. 99]).

4.2. IJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO AL-MARĀGHĪ

According to al-Marāghī, the explication of the religion occurs through the *nuṣūṣ* of the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet, and the explanations of scholars who practice *ijtihād* in every era ([19, p. 124]). Closing the gate of *ijtihād* means obstructing the virtues of Islam and rendering its universality invalid ([19, p. 131]). In his view, while the Jewish law was founded on strictness and rigidity, and the path of *ijtihād* was closed to its followers, one of the foundations upon which Islam is built, in contrast, is the openness of the gate of intellectual *ijtihād* ([19, p. 131]).

Notwithstanding all of this, according to al-Marāghī, *ijtihād* has a specific scope and limit. Accordingly, the domain of *ijtihād* does not include the principles of faith (*aqā'id*) and acts of worship ([19, p. 106]; [20]). This is because Allah has perfected His religion. Allah did not leave any deficiency in this religion that anyone, after the Prophet's passing, could complete on the basis of personal assumption or opinion ([19, p. 140]). Acts of worship, as well as what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and prohibited (*ḥarām*), are established only through the declarations of the Prophet. Interpretations in these matters cannot be made based on the opinions of *mujtahid* imams and scholars of jurisprudence. Doing otherwise equates to committing *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) ([19, p. 106]). However, rulings pertaining to worldly affairs occupy less space in the Qur'an, and these matters have been left to *ijtihād*. This is because changes in time and place influence the formation of *Sharīah* rulings. Consequently, in matters such as these, Islam possesses a character suited to the necessities that arise with changes in time and place ([19, pp. 106, 131]; [21]).

As far as can be understood, while al-Marāghī emphasises that *ijtihād* is necessary, he also delineates its scope and boundaries. Furthermore, he stresses that *ijtihād* is a highly difficult task that carries great responsibility. For this reason, he states that the jurists (*faqīhs*) among the Companions and their Successors acted very cautiously when issuing rulings based on their own *ijtihāds*. Therefore, no *mufti* or judge should consider his own *ijtihād* to be absolutely definitive. Instead, he should declare that the conclusion he has reached is the result of his *ijtihād*; if he is correct, it is by the grace of Allah, and if he is mistaken, the error belongs to himself and to Satan ([19, p. 140]).

According to al-Marāghī, the Qur'an commands the abandonment of *taqlīd* that is not based on rational or transmitted evidence and directs believers to seek the right path on the basis of evidence. Therefore, it is not correct for someone who possesses the capacity to perform *ijtihād* to engage in blind imitation ([19, pp. 44–45]). However, if a person follows, in religion, someone whom he/she knows to be upon the truth, such as the Prophets and *mujtahids*, this is not *taqlīd*; rather, it is following the Qur'an. This is because Allah directly showed this path by commanding, "(...) then ask those who have knowledge. ([19, pp. 44–45])"

From this position of al-Marāghī, it can be understood that he accepts the gate of *ijtihād* as open, but he also adopts the view that those who lack the competence to perform *ijtihād* must follow the *mujtahids*. His stating that those capable of *ijtihād* would be mere imitators if they do not exercise it, and subsequently noting that following the *mujtahids* does not constitute blind imitation, implies that he holds this view.

4.3. IJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO SAYYID QUṬB

Sayyid Quṭb also considers the presence of scholars with the competence for *ijtihād* to be necessary for solving the issues faced by the Islamic society in every era ([22, p. 1519]). According to him, it is necessary to understand the *nuṣūṣ*, to interpret them, and to evaluate, according to the *nuṣūṣ* or the general principles of the religion, matters about which there is no explicit *naṣṣ* ([22, p. 692]).

In his view, problems and rulings that arise with the progression of time, changing needs and differing circumstances – and for which there is no explicit and definitive *naṣṣ* – are areas where minds, opinions, and understandings may differ. However, these matters have not been left unregulated. A method of *ijtihād* has been established for these issues as well ([22, p. 691]). According to him, *ijtihād* is not about whether to accept fixed general principles or not. On the contrary, *ijtihād* is the effort to determine how a general *naṣṣ* will be applied in a specific situation encountered. Otherwise, it is absolutely incorrect for any generation to reject these foundational principles by saying, "I do not find these foundational principles rationally suitable" [22, p. 808].

According to Sayyid Quṭb, the rulings of Islamic jurisprudence have been renewed in every era in accordance with the Islamic system, developed to meet the needs of the time, and will continue to evolve. In order for the rulings in the Qur'an to be fully reflected in life, there is a need for such renewal of rulings. Since the verses containing legal injunctions in the

Qur'an are limited in number, finding solutions to new problems faced in social life is possible only through ijtihād carried out in light of these verses. However, it is a prerequisite that these ijthāds are in harmony with the fundamental principles and character of the Islamic system. Observing this fundamental standard is of great importance to ensure that the ijthāds and deductions remain true to the spirit of Islam ([23, p. 207]).

According to Quṭb, Allah's religion is not hidden or obscure. Its system of life is not ambiguous or unclear. This system is bound only by the nuṣūṣ conveyed to us by the Prophet. If there is a naṣṣ regarding any matter, that naṣṣ provides the ruling. In such a case, there is no room for ijtihād; it is invalid. However, if there is no explicit naṣṣ on a subject, then ijtihād comes into play. However, the ijtihād to be performed here must not be according to whims and desires, but rather according to the methods and principles established by Allah. As stated in the verse: "Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you (truly) believe in Allah and the Last Day (Qur'an, 4:59)."

The established methodologies regarding ijtihād and istinbāt are also clear and well known. They are not uncertain or ambiguous. For this reason, no one has the right to say about a ruling derived independently, "This is the Sharīah of Allah ([24, pp. 94–95])."

As can be seen, Sayyid Quṭb was also not indifferent to the issue of ijtihād, which was on the agenda in much of the Islamic world during his time, and he, too, expressed its necessity. He stated that the path of ijtihād is closed in matters where a naṣṣ exists, but conversely, ijtihād can be exercised in matters where there is no naṣṣ.

4.4. İJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO MAḤMŪD SHALTŪT

According to Maḥmūd Shaltūt, who is among the representatives of this school, ijtihād is a means that grants Muslims the right to reason within the boundaries of Islamic legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) and to prefer what is most beneficial. In their judgments and actions, this activity saves Muslims from submitting to anyone other than Allah ([13, p. 148]).

Against those who claim that the Mongol invasions occurred due to divisions among Muslims that stemmed from ijtihād, and those who argue that ijtihād causes discord, Shaltūt maintains that ijtihād is not the type of division that is prohibited in the verse, "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not be divided (Qur'an, 3:103)." According to him, the ijtihād forbidden in the verses is falling into dispute over Allah's explicit rulings, appointing one's own ego as a judge in matters of religion and public interest (maṣlaḥah), and failing to resort to the principles of the Qur'an to learn the truth. In contrast, true ijtihād is an activity carried out with the aim of thinking deeply, revolving around proofs and public interests, and safeguarding the public interest. According to him, as long as the reality of the matter depends on the mujtahīd's perspective on the subject, his/her perspective depends on preference, and his/her preference depends on cognitive power and differences in understanding, the gate of ijtihād remains forever open, regardless of how much some may deny it ([13, p. 147]).

4.5. İJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO MEHMET ÂKIF ERSOY

Mehmet Âkif Ersoy, who is also considered among the representatives of the İjtimāī Tafsīr school in Türkiye, frequently speaks of the ignorance, laziness, and misery present in much of the Islamic world in his works ([25, p. 233]; [17, p. 45]; [26, p. 181]). Therefore, Ersoy considers ijtihād a means to purify Islam from these afflictions; he evaluates it as a body of opinions that are based on the rulings of the Qur'an and that respond to the needs of modern human life in this era of science and technology ([27, p. 394]).

Against the discourse prevalent in his time that "the gates of ijtihād are closed," Ersoy states that these gates may be closed to those who lack knowledge and insight, but for scholars, they will remain open until the Day of Judgement. This is because, according to Ersoy, if a person possesses the required conditions to exercise ijtihād, there is no obstacle to prevent that person from doing so. According to him, mujtahīds will continue to emerge within the Muslim community until the end of time. However, for this to materialise, it is necessary to emerge from the darkness of ignorance and attain illumination through knowledge. Ersoy articulates these views in the following poem:

Nedir mi? Anlatayım sizde olmayan irfan,
Biraz haya edin öyleyse şaklabanlıktan!
Kilitlidir kapı "ümme duhat" için amma,
Kıyam-ı haşre kadar içti had eder ulemâ.
Evet şeraiti mevcut olunca insanda
Ne kaldı menedecek içti hadı meydanda.
İle'l ebed yetişir müctehid bu ümmetten,
Şu var ki; çıkmalı farday-ı nura zulmetten.
[What is it? Let me explain the wisdom you lack,
Have some shame, then, for this buffoonery!
The gate is closed for the "illiterate geniuses," yes,

But until the Day of Resurrection, scholars will perform *ijtihād*.
 Yes, when the conditions are present in a person,
 What is left in the open to prevent *ijtihād*?
 Forever will mujtahids emerge from this ummah,
 Provided that they step from the darkness into the light of tomorrow [28, p. 239].]

4.6. IJTIHĀD ACCORDING TO SÜLEYMAN ATEŞ

Süleyman Ateş also expresses that the gate of *ijtihād* is not closed because this gate was opened by the Qur'an and the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), leading to the conclusion that only those who opened this gate can close it ([29]).

Indeed, according to Ateş, *ijtihād* is a means of goodness and divine mercy because it brings ease and breadth to the religion. Therefore, provided that they are not undertaken with malicious intent, *ijtihāds* made with great effort are good and beneficial ([30, p. 287]). Consequently, provided that they do not contradict the general principles and fundamental beliefs of the religion, solutions to new problems that emerge in society must be formulated in accordance with the convictions and public interest of society. However, this is not a task for individuals who act with a preconceived notion of tailoring Islamic jurisprudence merely to suit the needs of the time ([30, p. 326]). Rather, according to Ateş, true *ijtihād* is an effort that must be undertaken by scholars with pure intentions who possess the required conditions, without deviating from the Qur'an and the Sunnah ([30, p. 22]).

In Ateş's view, *ijtihād* has ensured that Islam remains suitable for all times and provides solutions to the problems of every era ([30, p. 128]). The scholars to come in every age will perform *ijtihād* regarding the changing needs and issues of life in a manner fitting to the spirit of the Qur'an ([30, p. 464]). According to Ateş, the purpose of *ijtihād* is not to divide Muslims or to cause discord among them. It is to find the path of *ittifāq* (concord and unity) ([30, p. 287]). Its purpose is to reveal the ruling of the religion in matters where the ruling is not explicit ([30, p. 22]).

Ateş also draws attention to the boundaries of *ijtihād*, stating that rulings established by an explicit *naşş* that is definitive in terms of both transmission and implication are absolute (*muḥkam*), and that *ijtihād* cannot be exercised upon them ([30, p. 311]). For this reason, one must first seek a ruling from the Qur'an and the Sunnah regarding an issue; if there is no explicit explanation from them, only then should one turn to *ijtihād* ([30, p. 536]). Indeed, the verses in the Qur'an related to politics, administration, warfare, economics, the judiciary, and social matters are established as general principles, while the details are not explicated. It is in these matters that *ijtihād* is valid ([30, p. 127]). Furthermore, matters for which there is no ruling in the Qur'an and the Sunnah are also areas where *ijtihād* can be exercised ([30, p. 311]). In these matters, the Prophet, the scholars, and the rulers (*umarāʾ*?) have the authority to establish *ijtihād*-based rulings ([30, pp. 442–443]).

Another point Süleyman Ateş touches upon is the necessity that the rulings derived through *ijtihād* should not be understood as definitive religious rulings. Accordingly, religious rulings, as well as what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and prohibited (*ḥarām*), can be definitively established only through the declarations of Allah and the Prophet. No one other than them possesses the right and authority to establish a ruling with such definitiveness [30, p. 274]. Over time, however, people have come to evaluate the *ijtihāds* of scholars as absolute religious rulings. Consequently, according to Ateş, the tendency to view the *ijtihāds* of scholars as definitive religious rulings has made the religion difficult, and when people experienced difficulty in complying with these *ijtihāds*, they began to abandon them ([30, p. 402]). Additionally, Ateş expresses that human *ijtihāds* are limited only to the time in which they were made, and that they do not bind other eras ([30, p. 84]).

5. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated, in order to escape the stagnation and backwardness experienced in every corner of the Islamic world, both the adherents of this school and other scholars living during the aforementioned period persistently emphasised the reactivation of *ijtihād* as an essential necessity. This idea was voiced loudly by many scholars across many different geographies: by the al-Manār school in Egypt, particularly Muḥammad Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā; by some professors of the Darülfünun (Istanbul University) and writers of journals such as *Sırat-ı Müstakīm* and *İslām Mecmuası* in the Ottoman Empire; by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Muḥammad Iqbāl in the Indian subcontinent; by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī in Syria; and by Mūsā Jārullāh in Tatarstan ([17, p. 33]). In this context, the *Ijtimāi Tafsīr* school has undertaken an important role in raising awareness of this need.

Within the boundaries of this study's subject, the representatives of the *Ijtimāi Tafsīr* school – primarily the members of the al-Manār school, along with al-Marāghī, Sayyid Quṭb, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, and, as the pioneers of this approach in Türkiye, Mehmet Âkif Ersoy and Süleyman Ateş – have collectively articulated that reopening the gate of *ijtihād* and making it functional is a religious, scholarly, and civilisational necessity to overcome the intellectual stagnation and societal regression experienced in much of the Islamic world.

While al-Manār argues that *ijtihād* is not as difficult as commonly assumed and is an accessible activity for qualified individuals, al-Marāghī, in contrast, emphasises that *ijtihād* is a highly difficult and arduous process, underlining that the jurists (*faqīhs*) among the Companions and the Successors acted extremely sensitively and cautiously when issuing rulings.

Al-Marāghī and al-Manār, when addressing the issue of ijtihād, also touch upon taqlīd, which is a fundamental principle of their school; while explaining the necessity of ijtihād, they draw particular attention to the detrimental aspects of taqlīd and its objectionability from a religious perspective. However, al-Marāghī differs by not categorising the following of the views of the mujtahids who are accepted to be upon the truth within the scope of taqlīd.

After dwelling on the legitimacy and necessity of ijtihād, in parallel with al-Marāghī's moderate approach of keeping ijtihād within specific limits, Sayyid Quṭb and Süleyman Ateş also emphasise that ijtihād would not be valid in matters where a naṣṣ exists, thereby drawing attention to the scope and limits of ijtihād.

Sayyid Quṭb and Süleyman Ateş emphasise that true ijtihād must only be carried out within the framework of a specific methodology; they specifically state that the ijtihāds to be performed must comply with the system, spirit, and fundamental character of Islam, rather than whimsical desires. They articulate that ijtihāds shaped solely by the conditions and needs of the time, without relying on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, would not be accurate.

A point jointly emphasized by al-Marāghī, al-Manār, and Süleyman Ateş is that mujtahids should not present the ijtihād-based rulings they produce as absolute, definitive, and immutable truths.

Furthermore, Ateş and Shaltūt mutually underscore that ijtihād does not harbour the goal of dividing Muslims or causing discord among them; on the contrary, it is an activity that seeks the possibility of ittifāq (concord and unity) within the ummah through the effort to reach the truth.

Finally, Mehmet Âkif Ersoy and al-Manār both contend that the ignorance and laziness observed in Muslim societies are a result of the abandonment of ijtihād; therefore, they argue that the most effective path to renewed mobility and societal vitality lies in the revival of ijtihād.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed to the development of the study, critically reviewed the manuscript, approved the final version, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data are available from the corresponding author.

REFERENCES

- [1] al-Farāhīdī, Abū Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad. (1988). Kitāb al-ayn [The book of the letter Ayn] (Mahdī al-Makhzūmī & Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, Eds.). Maktabat al-Hilāl.
- [2] al-Azharī, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Harawī. (2001). Tahdhīb al-lughā [The refinement of language] (Muḥammad Awaḍ Mirab, Ed.). Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Arabī.
- [3] al-Iṣfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib. (1412). Al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān [The vocabulary of the uncommon words of the Qur'an] (Ṣafwān Adnān al-Dāwūdī, Ed.). Dār al-Qalam; al-Dār al-Shāmiyya.
- [4] al-Jawharī, Abū Naṣr Ismāʿīl b. Ḥammād al-Fārābī. (1987). Tāj al-lughā wa-ṣiḥāḥ al-arabiyya [The crown of language and the correct Arabic] (Aḥmad Abd al-Ghafūr Aṭṭār, Ed.). Dār al-Ilm li-l-Malāyīn.
- [5] Ibn Manzūr, Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Alī Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn. (n.d.). Lisān al-Arab [The tongue of the Arabs]. Dār Ṣādir.
- [6] al-Zamakhsharī, Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. Amr. (1998). Asās al-balāgha [The foundation of eloquence] (Muḥammad Bāsīl Uyūn al-Sūd, Ed.). Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya.
- [7] al-Fayyūmī, Abū al-Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Alī al-Ḥamawī. (n.d.). Al-Miṣbāḥ al-munīr fī gharīb al-sharḥ al-kabīr [The illuminating lamp on the uncommon words of the great commentary]. al-Maktaba al-Ilmiyya.
- [8] al-Āmidī, Abū al-Ḥasan Alī b. Abī Alī Sayf al-Dīn al-Thalabī. (n.d.). Al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām [The precision in the principles of rulings] (Abd al-Razzāq Afīfī, Ed.). al-Maktab al-Islāmī.

- [9] Apaydın, H. Y. (2000). İctihad [Ijtihād]. In Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi [Türkiye Diyanet Foundation encyclopedia of Islam] (pp. 432–445). TDV Yayınları.
- [10] Manastırlı, İ. H. (1909). Bâb-ı içtihad mesdûd mudur! [Is the gate of ijtiḥād closed!]. Sırât-ı Müstakîm, 2(31), 66.
- [11] Kahraman, A. (2009). Çağdaş fakihler ictihad kapısını açabildi mi? [Were contemporary jurists able to open the gate of ijtiḥād?]. Türk Bilimsel Derlemeler Dergisi, 2(1), 53–64.
- [12] Zaydān, Abd al-Karīm. (n.d.). Al-Madkhal li-dirāsāt al-sharīa al-Islāmiyya [Introduction to the study of Islamic law]. Muʿassasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn.
- [13] Atalay, O. (n.d.). 20. yüzyıl tefsir akımı: İctimaî tefsir [20th century tafsir movement: Social tafsir]. Beyan Yayınları.
- [14] Polat, F. A. (2024). Son dönemde tefsir [Tafsir in the late period]. In Kurʼan ilimleri ve tefsir tarihi [Qurʼanic sciences and the history of tafsir] (pp. 245–276). Grafiker Yayınları.
- [15] Demirci, M. (2015). Tefsir tarihi [History of tafsir]. İFAV Yayınları.
- [16] Ridā, M. R. (1990). Tafsīr al-Manār [The lighthouse commentary]. al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb.
- [17] Öztürk, M. (2020). Kurʼanʼa çağdaş yaklaşımlar [Contemporary approaches to the Qurʼan]. Ankara Okulu Yayınları.
- [18] Kocabıyık, H. İ., & Açar, Y. (2025). Different uses of the conjunction fa in the Arabic language. *IJAZ ARABI: Journal of Arabic Learning*, 8(1), 523–537. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i1.26523>.
- [19] al-Marāghī, A. M. (1946). Tafsīr al-Marāghī [The commentary of al-Marāghī]. Maṭbaat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
- [20] Kocabıyık, İ., & Turhan, S. (2023). Arap dili gramerinde mevsuller. *Turkish Research Journal of Academic Social Science*, 5(2), 101–109.
- [21] Kocabıyık, H. İ., & Açar, Y. (2024). Different uses of the حَتَّى conjunction in Arabic language. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 22(2), 18187–18199. <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.001328>.
- [22] Quṭb, S. (2003). Fī zīlāl al-Qurʼān [In the shade of the Qurʼan]. Dār al-Shurūq.
- [23] Sarmış, İ. (2018). Bütün yönleriyle Seyyid Kutub: Hayatı, eserleri, fikirleri ve mücadelesi [Sayyid Quṭb in all his aspects: His life, works, ideas, and struggle]. Fecr Yayınları.
- [24] Quṭb, S. (1979). Maālim fī al-tarīq [Milestones]. Dār al-Shurūq.
- [25] Kırca, C. (2021). Kurʼanʼa yönelişler: İlimler ve yorumlar açısından [Orientations towards the Qurʼan: From the perspective of sciences and interpretations]. Fecr Yayınları.
- [26] Şen, E. (2015). İctimaî tefsir yaklaşımı açısından Mehmet Âkif Ersoyʼun Kurʼan yorumu [Mehmet Âkif Ersoyʼs interpretation of the Qurʼan from the perspective of the social tafsir approach]. Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi İslam Tetkikleri Merkezi Dergisi, 1(2), 163–195.
- [27] Güler, Z. (2019). Safahatʼtan seçmeler: Cihād–ictihād [Selections from Safahat: Jihad–Ijtihād]. Littera Turca Journal of Turkish Language and Literature, 5(3), 375–398. <https://doi.org/10.20322/littera.588287>.
- [28] Ersoy, M. A. (2008). Safahat [Stages]. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.
- [29] Ateş, S. (2022, April 26). Birkaç soru [A few questions]. Süleyman Ateş. <https://www.suleyman-ates.com>
- [30] Ateş, S. (1988). Yüce Kurʼanʼın çağdaş tefsiri [Contemporary tafsir of the Supreme Qurʼan]. Yeni Ufuklar Neşriyat.