

**Interpreting Leadership in Political Contests in Indonesia:
Exploring Hamka's Views**

Muhammad Helmi Anshori
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
22205032061@student.uin-suka.ac.id

Received: November 03, 2023

Accepted: November 29, 2023

Published: December 28, 2023

Article url: <https://ejournal.iainkerinci.ac.id/index.php/cspj/issue/archive>

Abstract

The breeze of presidential elections has long been heard in Indonesian society, a year when political contests began to be heard everywhere. This is further compounded by the emergence of various forms of campaigns to seek support from the people. Departing from this, this writing explains the ideal concept of leadership in the current era from the perspective of Tafsir Al-Azhar. Because the impressions and views of this interpretation are highly suitable for the reality in which the Qur'an is interpreted. Regardless, we must understand the concept of leadership in the contemporary era, especially with the emergence of three major candidates for leadership in Indonesia. This article uses a descriptive analysis method that is expected to explain the concept of leadership in a profound, detailed, and ideal manner. The research results indicate that Tafsir al-Azhar provides a significant portion regarding leaders worthy of being chosen in the upcoming elections. The intended leader is one who fulfills his duties by promoting prosperity and well-being. This means how the leader carries out his tasks effectively based on the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila. Thus, a leader like this should be obeyed and followed. On the other hand, if the leader encourages the people to commit injustice and corruption, then they are not worthy of obedience, following, and compliance.

Keywords: *Ulil Amri, Indonesian Politics, Leadership, Hamka*

Introduction

The political landscape in Indonesian democracy becomes increasingly unpredictable when the public is surprised by several presidential (*capres*) and vice-presidential (*cawapres*) candidates endorsed by parliamentary parties in Indonesia. Such a condition adds complexity to the democratic contestation in Indonesia. According to preliminary data, Indonesia holds the third position among countries with the largest democracies in the world. It is estimated that about 74 percent of the entire Indonesian population will participate in the upcoming contest, especially with 26 percent being first-time voters in the upcoming 2024 election (KPU: 2023). In the next five years, the phenomenon is likely to be shaped by the youth of Indonesia.

Indonesia itself has diverse elements, such as religion, race, ethnicity, traditions, culture, language, and abundant nature. With its extraordinary diversity, Indonesia needs leaders capable of safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. Even the Qur'an indicates that humans are created as leaders on earth (Mustaqim, 2010). This is often referred to as the term "khalifah" (Yusuf et al., 2022: 18). Thus, every human is a leader and must actualize goodness in oneself, others, and society at large, in order to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter (Fitri et al., 2022: 75).

So far, there has been extensive research on leadership, with many studies exploring the concepts of leaders and leadership from both Islamic and general perspectives. Notable studies include those by Ade Afriansyah (2017), Haryono Sudriamunawar (2019), Abdul Rohman (2018), Novita Pancaningrum (2019), Wely Dozan (2021), and Kasim Randeree (2009). However, because each leadership issue is ever-changing and consistently presents a new and unique face, the author aims to contribute a different perspective compared to previous studies.

The author observes research on leadership presented by Egi Sukma Baihaki with the title "State Leadership in the Perspective of Tanwir Muhammadiyah's Tafsir." However, Baihaki's research focuses more on the potential aspects within human beings to lead (Baihaki, 2020). Additionally, Muhammad Amin Fathih's research on "Leadership Management in the Perspective of Tafsir Al-Manar" tends to align the meaning of "khalifah" in Al-Baqarah: 30 and the meaning of "ulil amri" in al-Nisa': 59, concluding that leaders must possess great competence to improve the welfare of their people (Fatih, 2022). Building on these two studies, the author seeks to broaden the meaning of *ulil amri* by posing two research questions: 1) How does Hamka interpret the concept of *ulil amri* in QS. Al-Nisa' [4]: 59 through Al-Azhar's interpretation? 2) How efficient is Al-Azhar's interpretation in defining *ulil amri* in the context of Indonesia?

To be an ideal leader, one must have values that set them apart from others. These additional values make a leader more influential and obedient. The concept of leadership is a crucial issue to understand in Islam. From the perspective of the science of interpretation, verses about leadership are often contextualized by commentators through the stories of the Prophet and the kings mentioned in the Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Hamka's own interpretation contains many political aspects, reinforced by the fact that he wrote his interpretation while imprisoned (Hidayati, 2018). This serves as proof that his phenomenal work emerged from his concern about leadership in Indonesia. Departing from this concern, this article aims to rejuvenate and explore Al-Azhar's interpretation, particularly its perspective on the concept of leaders and leadership, especially in the current fervor of choosing future leaders (Presidents). This research utilizes library resources, and with its descriptive method, it aims to provide a detailed exposition of the concept.

Discussion

Profile of Hamka

Hamka's full name is Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, born in Tanah Sirah on 14 Muharram 1326 H or precisely on February 17, 1908, to Abdul Karim Amrullah and Safiyah. His parents were prominent figures in the Islamic reform movement in Minangkabau. In 1927, he performed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, and upon his return, he became known as Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, later abbreviated to Hamka for convenience. Hamka began his education by learning the Quran with his parents and attending the Diniyyah Religious School built by Zainuddin Labai al-Yunusi in Padang Panjang and Parabek in Bukit Tinggi for approximately 3 years. However, due to his father's strictness and the tedious nature of evening Quran recitations, Hamka, labeled as a "naughty child", began to deviate (Malkan, 2009, 361).

At the age of 16, with the desire to explore Java, specifically Yogyakarta, Hamka started studying Quranic exegesis under H. Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo. His educational journey continued to the city of Pekalongan, known for its Batik, where he shaped his character to become an activist, particularly a driving force in Islam (Hamka, 1979). In July 1925, Hamka returned to his hometown in Padang Panjang to implement the knowledge gained from his teachers (Hidayat, 2020: 52). Later, Hamka moved to Medan to work as the editor of the magazine "Pedoman Islam" (1938-1941) while teaching religion and writing novels that stirred controversy due to disagreements.

During the writing of the Al-Azhar interpretation, Hamka formulated it during the Old Order era. In this period, Hamka was imprisoned by the Soeharto government

on charges of betraying his homeland and planning to assassinate the President. He spent approximately 2 years in prison, during which he continued and completed the Al-Azhar interpretation in Sukabumi, previously started while he was in Kebayoran Baru (Gusmian, 2003). A few days before moving to house arrest, he finished the interpretation, adding what was deemed necessary. In 1967, this phenomenal interpretation was finally published under the name "Tafsir Al-Azhar".

Hamka was a figure in the Muhammadiyah movement, and his name still carries significance today. His inclination to reject blind adherence to authority made him highly objective in his Islamic thoughts. Despite being associated with Muhammadiyah, he often disagreed with the organization's decisions and criticized Muhammadiyah's stance on the rulings of the Tarjih Council. Any Muhammadiyah member was not allowed to dissociate from the decisions of the Tarjih Council. Apart from his contributions to Islamic studies, Hamka was also a freedom fighter during the Dutch and Japanese occupations. He founded the "Badan Pembela Negara dan Kota," the largest guerrilla movement to resist Dutch colonialism. When the Japanese landed in Indonesia, Hamka was appointed as a member of Syu Sangi Kai in 1942. After leaving an extraordinary legacy, he passed away on July 24, 1981, and was buried in Jakarta (Abidin, 2023).

Understanding Tafsir Al-Azhar

The term "Al-Azhar" comes from a mosque that Hamka built, named Al-Azhar Mosque in Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta (Hidayati, 2018). Sheikh Mahmud Syaltuth gave him this name to ensure that his knowledge and intellectual influence would flourish in Indonesia, mirroring Hamka's impact. Initially, he introduced his interpretation in a dawn study at Al-Azhar Mosque in Kebayoran Baru. This interpretation also explains the background of the interpreter and the character of the society at that time very clearly. Hamka's writings in this interpretation capture the life and socio-political history of those who wanted to emphasize the importance of da'wah in the archipelago. Ironically, the prison bars strengthened his spirit to fight and gave him new strength in real life.

This interpretation is Hamka's greatest achievement in building and developing his thoughts, creating a new history in the civilization of exegesis in the archipelago. Hamka's writings also reinforce and strengthen the arguments of thinkers and intellectuals of the archipelago in the da'wah movement (Federspiel, 1996). The distinctive feature of this interpretation is its use of the mushafi arrangement, meaning that the sequence of chapters in this interpretation corresponds to the codification of the Quran by Usman bin Affan. Hamka also emphasizes that Quran readers should actualize its teachings in their daily lives, making this interpretation significantly different from its predecessors. Moreover, Hamka

provides a substantial portion regarding the historicity of interpreting the realities of the present time (Federspiel, 1996). From these characteristics, it is evident that Hamka's interpretation is classified as using the *tahlili* method.

Howard M. Federspiel, in his book "Kajian Al-Qur'an di Indonesia," boldly states that Hamka's interpretation has unique and distinct characteristics compared to other interpretations. Hamka presents the verses of the Quran with their meanings, provides a sufficient explanation of religion, and adds other discussions that help readers understand the content of those verses more easily (Federspiel, 1996). Comparing the interpretive style of Al-Azhar with Al-Manar, we find a common thread of social adab that revolves around the detailed explanation of Quranic verses, their content, the guidance of the Quran for human life, and the connection of the verses with the sunnatullah applicable in the reality of an Islamic society (al-Farmawi, 1977).

Leadership Issues in Indonesia

In the history of Indonesian democracy, the organization of this contest has been ongoing for a long time, spanning three phases in Indonesia: the Old Order era, the New Order era, and the Reform era. The Old Order era was marked by the proliferation of political party contestants and even mass organizations (ormas) participating in the 1955 elections, with 28 parties and organizations, including the Indonesian National Party (PNI), the Indonesian Muslim Consultative Council (Masyumi), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and many others. It's worth recalling that the Old Order was a period when Hamka was imprisoned for alleged treason during the leadership of Soeharto. It was during this time that Hamka completed his phenomenal interpretation, namely the Al-Azhar interpretation.

Contrarily, in the New Order era, Indonesian elections were held in 1971, featuring 10 political party contestants, including Golkar, PNI, NU, the Catholic Party, Murba Party, Indonesian Islamic Union Party, Indonesian Independence Supporters Union (IPKI), Indonesian Christian Party, and Indonesian Muslim Party, Islamic Party Perti. Subsequently, in 1977, Indonesian elections were divided into two groups: 1) Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), comprising several Christian parties, and 2) United Development Party (PPP), comprising several Islamic parties (Syafiie, 2014).

On May 21, 1998, with the strong wave of reform, President Soeharto resigned, replaced by BJ. Habibie as President. During Soeharto's era, democracy was merely a slogan and closed, but under Habibie, democracy became transparent by granting freedom to the press and producing laws. Additionally, the impact of the reform movement breathed new life into our democracy, and direct open elections became a crucial aspect of the reform initiated by students along with the people.

Leadership, in Quranic terms, is referred to as *khalifah* (Mulyani, 2022: 65–66), *imamah* (Kurniawan et al., 2020: 2), *ulil amri* (Sukatin et al., 2022), and so on. Leadership is one of the main themes in Islam, and Naceur Jabnoun (2008) argues that leadership is essential for collective success. It is a crucial factor in enhancing the performance of its members, both in organizations and government. A leader is the most crucial element in life to motivate, guide, and address all issues faced by society to achieve the desired goals.

However, over time, leadership in Indonesia has shifted towards a means of controlling others. Moejiono also argues that leadership is the result of one-way influence, as leaders possess specific qualities that distinguish them from their members. Meanwhile, from an Islamic perspective, the meaning of leadership is divided into two categories: spiritual Islam and empirical. Spiritual Islam's meaning of leadership is the ability to carry out commands and abstain from Allah's prohibitions, meaning leadership here implies the ability to realize everything in accordance with Allah's will. On the other hand, leadership in the empirical sense is an effort to achieve success through cooperation or solidarity. Thus, leadership in Islam is an activity of guiding, mentoring, and showing the path in line with Allah's will. It aims to develop the ability to work independently within the community led, in their efforts to achieve Allah's pleasure in this world and in the hereafter. Leadership in Islam is built on the principle of moderation, being moderate in viewing issues. It does not grant absolute authoritarian power, free from values. It is not a model of democracy that can be universally applied throughout history and changing times.

Leadership in the View of Hamka

If the leaders of the nation fulfill their duties well and act justly, then surely the people will not oppose, but rather support them. Conversely, if leaders do not fulfill their duties and act arbitrarily, the people will immediately oppose and even resist them. Therefore, as long as leaders provide the best for their people, the people are obliged to obey them. As stated in the Quran, Surah An-Nisa' [4]: 59:

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.”

Hamka, in his interpretation, explains that believers must submit and obey the rules. The highest rule is the rule of Allah, which must be obeyed first. Then, believers are also commanded to obey the Messenger because obedience to the Messenger is an extension of obedience to God. While many of God's commands must be obeyed, they cannot be carried out without looking at exemplary models. Following that is

obedience to *ulil amri*, those who have authority among you, specifically those in power among you, over yourselves. *Minkum* has two meanings: first, among you, and second, from among you. It means that those in power are also from among you, either rising or being chosen by your own choice (Hamka, 1999).

After *ulil amri* is chosen, they have the right to be obeyed. However, they also have obligations because every right comes with duties that must be fulfilled. Ar-Razi in his interpretation states: Ali bin Abu Thalib said, "It is the duty of the leader to judge according to what Allah has revealed and fulfill the trust. And when the leader does so, it becomes the duty of the people to listen and obey." Meanwhile, Az-Zamakhsyari in his *Al-Kashaf* writes, "*Ulil Amri Minkum* is a leader who upholds justice. As for an unjust leader, there is no obligation to obey him" (Hamka, 1999).

The discussion about leaders and leadership actually explains how to be a good leader, what characteristics are suitable for leadership, and what requirements should be possessed by a good leader. However, it is still very challenging to implement all of them, so not many leaders succeed in using their power to prosper and welfare their people. Looking at the context of Indonesia, we remember several historical figures that the nation has produced, such as Ir. Soekarno, the father of the proclamation of Indonesian independence; Soeharto, a leader who succeeded in boosting the Rupiah's value globally; B.J. Habibie, a genius leader with ideas for aircraft production, and so on. However, from the perspective of the Quran, what kind of leader is considered good? The writer focuses on the Al-Azhar interpretation, a masterpiece by Hamka completed during the Soeharto era. Hamka was accused and falsely accused of betraying Indonesia, leading to his imprisonment. Therefore, the author is very interested in the concept of leadership according to Hamka here.

Firstly, Hamka wrote his interpretation during the Old Order, under Soeharto's rule. At that time, student demonstrations were rampant due to dissatisfaction with Soekarno's government. As we know, Soekarno's government was heavily involved with communism, leading to Soekarno stepping down and being replaced by Soeharto. However, instead of resolving the issue, Hamka was accused and falsely accused of betraying Indonesia, leading to his imprisonment.

Secondly, the interpretation of the Al-Azhar interpretation regarding the election of leaders (presidents) in Indonesia is based on QS. al-Nisa': 59, which states that leaders have the right to be obeyed as long as they fulfill their duties. This means how leaders act in accordance with the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila. Thus, leaders like this should be obeyed, but conversely, if the leader leads their people to do wrong, they are not worthy of being followed and obeyed. Then, Buya Hamka does not explicitly mention how the process of appointing *ulil amri* or their election works.

According to Buya Hamka, the selection or appointment of *ulil amri* is left to the community or the people and follows existing laws and regulations.

Thirdly, Indonesia is a republic with a predominantly Muslim population. Therefore, leaders must be able to regard their people with compassion, not looking down on them. This creates harmony within a nation. However, if the opposite happens, leaders are likely to engage in corrupt practices, cheating, and other wrongdoings. As stated in the Quran:

“And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order [that they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful].” (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 188)

In this verse, Hamka explains that this action is similar to stealing. This is one example among many others, illustrating that any effort to gain personal benefits through unjust means that harm fellow human beings, and acquiring wealth in ways not approved by Allah, is not permissible (Hamka, 1999). Hamka also contextualizes it with the present day, where every democracy contest often uses wealth to achieve instant success in obtaining desired votes. This is often referred to as bribery and corruption, both of which are dishonest acts.

Conclusion

Tafsir Al-Azhar does not differ significantly from many other contemporary interpretation books, both in terms of interpretative characteristics and the steps of interpretation. Hamka's method in understanding the Qur'an has proven to be effective in expressing the Qur'an realistically within the current context. There are three important points to note: *Firstly*, Hamka wrote his interpretation during the Old Order, under the rule of Soeharto. This historical context is crucial in understanding the dynamics of the time and the challenges Hamka may have faced during the authoritarian regime. *Secondly*, the interpretation of Tafsir Al-Azhar regarding the selection of leaders (presidents) in Indonesia is based on QS. al-Nisa': 59, which states that leaders have the right to be obeyed as long as they fulfill their duties. This involves leaders acting in accordance with the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila. However, Buya Hamka does not explicitly mention the process of appointing *ulil amri* or their election. According to him, the selection or appointment of *ulil amri* is left to the community or the people and follows existing laws and regulations. *Thirdly*, Indonesia is a republic, and the majority of its population is Muslim. Therefore, leaders must be capable of viewing their people with compassion rather than looking down on them. This approach fosters harmony within a nation. Conversely, if leaders adopt a different stance, they are likely to engage in corrupt practices, dishonesty, and other forms of misconduct.

References

- Abd. al-Hayy al-Farmawi. (1977). *al-Bidayah al-Tafsir al-Maudhu'i*. al-Hadlarah al-Arabiyyah.
- Abidin, Ahmad Zainal. (2023). *Khazanah Tafsir Nusantara*. IRCiSoD.
- Afriansyah, A. (2017). Konsep Pemimpin Ideal Menurut Al-Ghazali. *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 1(2), 82–94.
- Aulia Fitri, A., Kholida, N., & Permatasari, T. (2022). Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v2i1.4439>
- Baihaki, E. S. (2020). Kepemimpinan Negara dalam Perspektif Tafsir Tanwir Muhammadiyah. *JOURNAL OF QUR'AN AND HADITH STUDIES*.
<https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v9i1.14892>
- Dozan, W., & Al Basir, Q. (2021). Pemimpin Ideal Perspektif Al-Qur'an. *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist*, 4(1), 54–66.
- Fatih, M. A. (2022). Manajemen Kepemimpinan dalam Perspektif Tafsir Al-Manar. *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal*.
- Federspiel, Howard M. (1996). *Kajian Al-Qur'an di Indonesia: Dari Mahmud Yunus hingga Quraish Shihab Terj. Tajul Arifin*. Mizan.
- Gusmian, I. (2003). *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika hingga Ideologi*. Teraju.
- Hafiz Sandeq Yusuf, Iyan Al Iqlhas, Gallyosa Mariski Saputra, Ragil Rizki Raditya Esha, & Yayat Suharyat. (2022). KEPEMIMPINAN DALAM PERSPEKTIF ISLAM. *Religion: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya*.
<https://doi.org/10.55606/religion.v1i6.15>
- Hamka. (1979). *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*. Bulan Bintang.
- Hamka. (1999). *Tafsir Al-Azhar Jilid 2*. Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD.
- Hidayat, U. T. (2020). Tafsir Al-azhar: Menyelami Kedalaman Tasawuf Hamka. *Buletin Al-Turas*. <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v21i1.3826>
- Hidayati, H. (2018). Metodologi Tafsir Kontekstual Al-Azhar Karya Buya Hamka. *El-Umdah*. <https://doi.org/10.20414/el-umdah.v1i1.407>
- Jabnoun, Naceur. (2008). *Islam and Management*. Insitut Kajian Dasar.
- Kurniawan, K., Putra, D. N., Zikri, A., & Mukhtar AH, N. (2020). Konsep

- Kepemimpinan Dalam Islam. *PRODU: Prokurasi Edukasi Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.15548/p-prokurasi.v2i1.2244>
- Malkan, M. (2009). Tafsir Al-Azhar: Suatu Tinjauan Biografis Dan Metodologis. *HUNAFa: Jurnal Studia Islamika*. <https://doi.org/10.24239/jsi.v6i3.146.359-376>
- Mulyani, Sri. (2022). Karakteristik Kepemimpinan Islami Menurut Prof Hamka Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar. *Ar-Ribhu: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Keuangan Syariah*. <https://doi.org/10.55210/arrribhu.v3i1.809>
- Mustaqim, A. (2010). Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer. In *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*.
- Pancaningrum, N. (2019). Kontekstualisasi Konsep Pemimpin dalam Teks Hadis. *Riwayah*, 4(2), 204–224.
- Randeree, K. (2009). An Islamic Perspective on Leadership. *The Global Studies Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1835-4432/cgp/v02i01/40984>
- Rohman, A. (2018). Kepemimpinan pelayanan prima di pedesaan. *Reformasi*, 7(1).
- Sudriamunawar, H. (2019). Konsep Pemimpin dan Kepemimpinan. *Jurnal Manajerial*, 2(2).
- Sukatin, Andri Astuti, Zahratul Afiah, Septia Ningsih, Agus Pranata, & Ridho Tawakkal Jannah. (2022). Kepemimpinan Dalam Islam. *Educational Leadership: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.24252/edu.v2i01.29939>
- Syafiie, I. K. (2014). Pengantar Ilmu Pemerintahan. In *Pengantar Ilmu Pemerintahan*.