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# Constructing Qur'anic Leadership in Indonesian Exegetical Tradition: A Comparative Study of Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar and Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl

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**Abstract**

This article examines the construction of Qur'anic leadership as represented in two landmark works of Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis, namely Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar and Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl, through a systematic comparative analysis. The study addresses a recurring limitation in Indonesian Islamic leadership discourse, which has tended to remain at the level of normative assertions regarding trustworthiness and justice without fully exploiting the diversity of indigenous exegetical traditions to construct contextually grounded and culturally embedded leadership models. This research employs a qualitative library approach, combining thematic Qur'anic interpretation (mawdû'î) with comparative exegetical analysis (muqâran). Primary sources consist of the two tafsir works, supplemented by classical and contemporary exegetical literature, scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and prior empirical studies. Data were processed through verse inventory, interpretive tracing, thematic reduction, comparative analysis, and conceptual synthesis. Findings reveal that both exegetes understand leadership fundamentally as a sacred trust (amanah) requiring justice (adl), responsibility, ethical conduct, consultation (shura), and orientation toward public welfare (maslahah). Their principal differences concern interpretive orientation and social context. Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar reflects a social-contextual and modernist orientation, consistently linking Qur'anic directives to nation-building imperatives, social transformation, and contemporary governance concerns. Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl, by contrast, adopts a normative pesantren-centered approach, emphasizing Islamic law, personal piety, moral discipline, and social stability. This article proposes an integrative leadership model that synthesizes Hamka's social contextualization with Misbah Musthofa's moral-spiritual depth, and argues for its relevance to contemporary Indonesian leadership, which faces persistent challenges including integrity deficits, abuse of public office, social polarization, and the ethical pressures of modernity.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic leadership; Hamka; Misbah Musthofa; Tafsir al-Azhar; al-Iklîl; Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis; amanah; integrative leadership.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership constitutes one of the most enduring preoccupations in human civilization, as it fundamentally concerns the organization of collective interests, the distribution of authority, the formation of public policy, and the protection of communal welfare. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, leadership has been theorized at the intersection of theology, jurisprudence, ethics, and political philosophy. From classical frameworks developed by al-Mawardi (2006) in his Al-Ahkâm al-Sulthâniyyah and by Ibn Khaldun (2005) in al-Muqaddimah, to contemporary reformulations by scholars such as al-Qaradawi (1997), the questions of who may lead, by what principles, and toward what ends have generated a rich and continuously evolving discourse within Islamic thought.

The Qur'an does not confine itself to a single term when addressing leadership and authority. Rather, it employs a semantically differentiated cluster of related terms, each carrying distinct ethical connotations. The term khalîfah denotes a successor or vicegerent, signifying humanity's representative role on earth and implying the weight of cosmic accountability. The term imâm designates a religious and community leader whose primary function is guidance. The phrase ulil amri refers to those entrusted with authority and commands obedience within defined conditions. The terms sulthân and malik designate sovereign power, frequently carrying cautionary dimensions in the Qur'anic text regarding the temptations and dangers of unchecked authority. Together, these terms reveal a Qur'anic vocabulary of authority that is thoroughly ethical in character, consistently linking the possession of power to the obligations of accountability and service.

In contemporary Indonesia, the question of leadership has acquired particular urgency. The country has undergone successive waves of political reform, democratization, and administrative decentralization since the conclusion of the New Order era in 1998. Despite significant political progress, Indonesian public governance has continued to confront serious challenges, including persistent corruption at multiple levels of government, the systematic abuse of public office for private or sectarian purposes, a gradual weakening of social trust in public institutions, and the commodification of political authority within the structures of democratic competition. As Fukuyama (1995) observed, the social capital that undergirds effective governance depends not only on formal institutional design but also on the moral and cultural fabric of leadership behavior. In an Indonesian context shaped by deep Islamic commitments across the majority population, this observation points toward the enduring relevance of Qur'anic ethical resources as potential foundations for a renewed discourse of leadership integrity.

Yet existing scholarship on Islamic leadership in Indonesia has frequently remained at the level of normative enumeration, extracting lists of desirable qualities from Qur'anic and Hadith sources without adequately engaging the rich and varied tradition of indigenous Qur'anic interpretation known as tafsir. The Nusantara exegetical tradition, as surveyed by Federspiel (1994), Gusmian (2013), and Baidan (2003), represents a centuries-long intellectual effort to read the Qur'an through the lens of Indonesian social and cultural experience. This tradition has produced works that are not merely translations or secondary commentaries but genuine intellectual contributions to Islamic thought, shaped by distinctive social contexts,

methodological orientations, and communicative purposes. To neglect this tradition in the construction of Islamic leadership models is to impoverish both the conceptual discourse and the practical moral resources available to Indonesian society.

Among the many significant contributions of the Nusantara tafsir tradition, two works stand out as particularly important and as yet insufficiently compared in the specific domain of leadership thought. The first is Tafsir al-Azhar by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, universally known as Hamka (1908-1981), a towering figure of Indonesian Islam whose intellectual biography encompassed Qur'anic scholarship, literary achievement, journalism, organizational leadership, and deep engagement with the national independence movement. The second is al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl by Misbah Musthofa (1916-1994), a prolific pesantren scholar from Bangilan, Tuban, East Java, whose work in Javanese Arabic script reflects a sustained commitment to the continuity of classical Islamic learning within the traditional boarding school tradition. These two works represent not merely different stylistic approaches to Qur'anic commentary but genuinely different intellectual formations, different social audiences, and different understandings of the relationship between the Qur'anic text and contemporary social life.

Prior scholarship on leadership in relation to Hamka's work has been developed by scholars such as Srikandi et al. (2021), who examined Hamka's conceptualization of leadership in Tafsir al-Azhar, and Mu'ammar (2019), who analyzed the qualifications of leaders as articulated within that work. Studies of Misbah Musthofa's exegetical methodology have been undertaken by Abidin (2019), whose analysis illuminates the classical dimensions of al-Iklîl. However, direct comparative studies that bring these two exegetes into systematic dialogue specifically on the theme of leadership remain rare in the existing literature. This lacuna constitutes the primary scholarly motivation for the present article.

The article pursues three interrelated research questions. The first asks how Hamka and Misbah Musthofa each interpret the principal Qur'anic principles of leadership, particularly those concerning trust, justice, and consultation. The second asks what the principal similarities and differences are between their constructions of Qur'anic leadership, particularly with regard to social orientation, methodological approach, and the relationship between religious values and political governance. The third asks how a synthesis of their respective contributions might be formulated as an integrative leadership model with practical relevance for contemporary Indonesia. The study aims to identify, analyze, compare, and assess the implications of both exegetes' thought, and to propose a conceptual contribution to the growing scholarship on Qur'anic leadership within Indonesian Islamic studies.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Amanah as the Foundation of Qur'anic Leadership

The conceptual architecture of this article centers on amanah, understood in Qur'anic terms as sacred trust or moral responsibility. Surah al-Nisâ' verse 58 is widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive directives on leadership in the Qur'anic text, commanding the delivery of trusts to their rightful holders and the exercise of judgment with justice when governing among people. The exegetical tradition, from classical commentators to modern

interpreters, has consistently understood this verse as establishing the dual ethical obligations of those in authority, namely fidelity in the execution of their responsibilities and equity in the exercise of their power (al-Mawardi, 2006). Amanah in this context is not merely a personal virtue but a structural principle of legitimate authority. An authority holder who betrays the trust placed in them by those they serve forfeits the moral legitimacy of their position, regardless of its legal or formal validity. This principle subjects the exercise of power to evaluation not merely by procedural criteria but by substantive ethical standards. The Qur'anic discourse of amanah thus functions as a normative framework for accountability, linking the possession of authority to a web of obligations extending both vertically to God and horizontally to the community (Arifin, 2024).

## Justice, Consultation, and the Delimitation of Power

The concept of justice (adl) operates in the Qur'anic framework as both a divine attribute and a human obligation. For those in authority, justice represents the primary measure of the legitimacy of their rule. Classical political philosophy in the Islamic tradition, exemplified by Ibn Khaldun's (2005) analysis of the relationship between just rule and civilizational flourishing, established justice as constitutive of legitimate governance rather than merely instrumental to it. Contemporary scholars such as al-Qaradawi (1997) have extended this analysis to argue that governance organized around Islamic values must make justice the central criterion for the evaluation of political performance.

The concept of shura (consultation), grounded in Surah al-Shûrâ verse 38 and Surah Âli 'Imrân verse 159, complements the justice principle by establishing deliberative participation as a structural feature of legitimate Islamic governance. As Mustaqim (2010) has argued in his analysis of contemporary tafsir epistemology, the shura principle functions as a constitutive check on arbitrary authority, requiring that those who hold power do so in dialogue with those they serve. The ethical dimensions of shura extend beyond procedural mechanics to encompass the dispositions of humility, sincerity, and commitment to the common good that genuine deliberation requires.

## The Nusantara Exegetical Tradition and Social Context

The study of Qur'anic interpretation in Indonesia has developed a distinctive character shaped by the encounter between Islamic textual tradition and the diverse social, cultural, and intellectual formations of the Indonesian archipelago. As Gusmian (2013) has argued, tafsir texts produced in Nusantara contexts are not simply transmissions of received meanings from the Arab classical tradition but active constructions of meaning shaped by the social positions, intellectual commitments, and communicative purposes of their authors. The social embeddedness of tafsir production means that the same Qur'anic text can yield different emphases, applications, and conceptual frameworks when read by scholars located in different social and intellectual contexts.

Federspiel (1994) identified a significant distinction in Indonesian Qur'anic literature between traditionalist and reformist orientations, a distinction that maps productively, if not perfectly, onto the contrast between Misbah Musthofa and Hamka examined in this article.

Baidan (2003) traced the development of tafsir methodologies in Indonesia, highlighting the progressive engagement of Indonesian exegetes with thematic and contextual approaches alongside the classical tradition of sequential commentary. The diversity of Indonesian exegetical approaches, rather than representing a weakness of the tradition, reflects its vitality and its responsiveness to the varied social needs and intellectual environments in which it has developed.

Within this broader context, Hamka's intellectual formation drew substantially from the modernist current of Islamic thought associated with Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, adapted to the Indonesian context through his engagement with national politics, cultural production, and the reform movements of the early twentieth century. His Tafsir al-Azhar, completed in part during his imprisonment under the Sukarno government in the 1960s, reflects the social-contextual and adabî-ijtimâ'î orientation that characterizes the modernist stream of Indonesian tafsir. Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl, by contrast, was composed within the pesantren tradition of East Java, oriented toward an audience of santri (students) and traditional Islamic scholars, and reflects the priorities of classical learning, legal scholarship, and moral formation that define that tradition (Abidin, 2019).

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach of the library research type (penelitian kepustakaan), focusing on the analysis of textual sources to identify conceptual patterns, interpretive orientations, and thematic positions. The object of investigation consists of the exegetical texts of Hamka and Misbah Musthofa, examined specifically in relation to Qur'anic verses concerning leadership, authority, accountability, and governance.

The methodological framework integrates two complementary approaches. The first is thematic Qur'anic interpretation (tafsir mawdû'î), a method that collects and analyzes all Qur'anic verses relevant to a given theme, traces their interconnections, and constructs a coherent thematic picture of the Qur'an's contribution to the topic under investigation. This approach has become increasingly important in contemporary Islamic thought precisely because it enables systematic engagement with the Qur'anic text as a whole on a given question, rather than restricting analysis to individual verses in isolation from their broader textual and contextual relations. The second is comparative exegetical analysis (manhaj muqâran), a method that places the interpretations of different exegetes in systematic dialogue with one another, identifying convergences, divergences, and the methodological or contextual factors that account for differences in interpretive outcome.

The primary sources for this research are Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar in its thirty-volume edition published by Pustaka Panjimas and Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl in the edition published by Menara Kudus. Secondary sources include classical exegetical works referenced by both authors, contemporary scholarly works on Islamic leadership theory, peer-reviewed journal articles on Indonesian tafsir and Islamic governance, and prior studies on the thought and methodology of both exegetes. Representative secondary works consulted include al-Mawardi (2006), Ibn Khaldun (2005), al-Qaradawi (1997), Gusmian (2013), Baidan (2003), Federspiel (1994), Mustaqim (2010), Shihab (2000), and Azra (2015).

Data were collected through a systematic procedure involving four stages. In the first stage, verse inventory, all Qur'anic verses pertaining to the major themes of leadership, specifically amanah, adl, shura, khalîfah, imâm, and ulil amri, were identified and catalogued across both primary works. In the second stage, interpretive tracing, the commentary provided by each exegete on these verses was located, extracted, and documented with careful attention to context and methodological framing. In the third stage, data reduction, relevant interpretive material was distinguished from incidental commentary, and thematic patterns were identified within each exegete's corpus. In the fourth stage, comparative synthesis, the thematic patterns identified in each corpus were placed in systematic comparison, and a conceptual synthesis was developed that drew on the complementary strengths of both traditions.

The validity of findings was maintained through source triangulation, systematically comparing the interpretations of Hamka and Misbah Musthofa with those found in other significant tafsir works, particularly Shihab's Tafsir al-Misbah (2000), to ensure that the interpretive patterns identified were not idiosyncratic to the primary sources and to provide a broader exegetical context for the comparative findings. Analytical consistency was maintained by applying the same thematic framework to each author's texts throughout the analysis, ensuring that the comparison was conducted on equivalent terms and that differences in the findings reflected genuine differences in interpretive orientation rather than methodological inconsistency in the analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Conceptual Mapping of Leadership across Two Exegetical Traditions

The comparative analysis reveals a structured pattern of convergence and divergence between Hamka's and Misbah Musthofa's constructions of Qur'anic leadership. Table 1 provides an overview of the principal dimensions of comparison identified through the analysis.

***Table 1. Conceptual Map of Leadership in Tafsir al-Azhar and al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl***

| Dimension | Hamka (Tafsir al-Azhar) | Misbah Musthofa (al-Iklîl) | Convergence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Foundation | Qur'an, social-moral reasoning, national consciousness | Qur'an, Hadith, classical jurisprudence, scholarly tradition | Divine revelation as the basis of authority |
| Interpretive Style | Adabî-ijtimâ'î; contextual-social | Traditionalist-pesantren; normative-moral | Ethical leadership as a shared concern |
| Amanah | Public responsibility and civic service | Religious duty and moral accountability | Leadership as a trust, not a privilege |
| Justice (Adl) | Foundation of nation and social order | Religious and moral obligation | Prohibition of wrongdoing and favoritism |
| Shura | Participation, openness, collective deliberation | Proper conduct, humility, communal unity | Leadership cannot be absolute |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Orientation | Social justice, national welfare, development | Piety, moral character, social stability | Public welfare (maslahah) as ultimate goal |
| Response to Modernity | Open and adaptive engagement | Selective; preserving moral tradition | Modernity must be governed by values |

Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar situates leadership discourse within a broadly social-contextual and modernist framework, described in the tafsir studies literature as adabî-ijtimâ'î in orientation. This approach consistently reads Qur'anic directives through the lens of their implications for social life, moral reform, national integrity, and the practical challenges facing Indonesian Muslim society. Hamka's experience as a journalist, novelist, organizational leader, and public intellectual is evident in the communicative style and social concerns of his tafsir. The interpretive movement in Tafsir al-Azhar characteristically proceeds from the normative content of a verse through its moral implications to its practical resonances for contemporary Indonesian life.

Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl reflects the normative-pesantren tradition, characterized by close attention to the classical tafsir and hadith sciences, emphasis on the legal and moral obligations established by the Qur'anic text, and a sustained concern with the formation of personal piety and communal religious discipline. Written in Javanese using the Arabic-derived Pegon script, the al-Iklîl is oriented toward an audience of pesantren students and traditional Muslim communities, and its exegetical priorities reflect the concerns of that formation.

## Leadership as Sacred Trust. The Dimension of Amanah

The strongest point of convergence between Hamka and Misbah Musthofa is their shared understanding that leadership constitutes a form of sacred trust that cannot be claimed as a personal entitlement or exercised for personal gratification. Both exegetes, in their commentaries on Surah al-Nisâ' verse 58, emphasize that positions of authority impose obligations rather than conferring privileges. The quality of a leader is therefore to be measured not primarily by technical competence or political effectiveness but by moral integrity, sincerity of service, and consciousness of divine accountability (Mu'ammar, 2019). For both exegetes, the Qur'anic language of amanah establishes a fundamental orientation for any reflection on leadership, placing the leader permanently in the position of a steward who will be called to account.

Hamka develops the concept of amanah with particular attention to its social and public dimensions. In his reading of Surah al-Nisâ' verse 58 in Tafsir al-Azhar, amanah in leadership means that the holder of any public position must conceive of their authority as a means of service rather than as an instrument of personal or factional advantage. This entails practical commitments to honesty, transparency, responsiveness to community needs, and the building of social solidarity and collective welfare. Hamka's interpretation connects the Qur'anic concept of amanah directly to the problems of his contemporary Indonesian context, in which the corrupting effects of power on moral character were already visible in the political landscape of the independence era (Srikandi et al., 2021). The interpretive movement from the

normative verse to the contextual application is characteristic of Hamka's approach, making the abstract principle of amanah immediately relevant to the lived experience of his readers.

Misbah Musthofa's treatment of amanah places greater emphasis on its theological and religious dimensions. In his commentary, amanah in leadership is understood as an obligation grounded in taqwa (God-consciousness), the observance of divine commands, and the recognition that every exercise of authority will be subject to divine judgment. For Misbah, the primary safeguard against the abuse of power is not procedural or institutional but internal and spiritual. A leader who is genuinely conscious of divine oversight will exercise authority with greater care, humility, and rectitude than one who is merely constrained by external rules. This moral-theological framing reflects the priorities of the pesantren tradition, in which the formation of an interior disposition of righteousness is regarded as the foundation of all ethical conduct (Abidin, 2019).

When these two perspectives are brought into synthesis, amanah can be understood as entailing a dual structure of accountability. The vertical dimension of accountability connects the leader to God, whose commands define the ethical boundaries of authority and whose judgment constitutes the ultimate sanction against their violation. The horizontal dimension of accountability connects the leader to the community, whose trust is the source of political legitimacy and whose welfare is the purpose of governance. This integrative reading suggests that effective Qur'anic leadership depends on the cultivation of both dimensions simultaneously. External institutional mechanisms of accountability and internal moral formation that sustains the disposition of trustworthy service are both necessary. The neglect of either dimension leaves governance vulnerable to failure, whether through the abuse of power by internally unformed leaders, or through the institutional capture of formally constrained but internally corruptible systems.

## Justice as the Measure of Leadership Legitimacy

The second major convergence between the two exegetes concerns the central role of justice (adl) in defining legitimate leadership. For both Hamka and Misbah Musthofa, the moral legitimacy of a leader is not established merely by the formal legality of their appointment or the institutional validity of their position. It is established, and sustained or forfeited, by the manner in which they exercise authority in relation to the claims and needs of those they serve. Justice, understood as giving each person and group their rightful due without discrimination, favoritism, or the distortion of private interest, is for both exegetes the primary criterion of legitimate rule (Arifin, 2024).

Hamka's development of the justice theme is notable for its attention to the structural and social dimensions of adl. Building on the Qur'anic framework of Surah al-Nisâ' verse 58 and related passages, Hamka interprets justice not merely as a personal virtue of the individual leader but as a principle that must be embedded in the institutions, policies, and social arrangements through which authority is exercised. In the context of the Indonesian nation-state, this means that justice requires attention to equitable resource distribution, accessible and responsive public services, legal protection for all segments of society, and deliberate policies to address the structural disadvantages experienced by marginalized communities.

Hamka's social-contextual orientation thus translates the Qur'anic imperative of justice into a program for social transformation with direct political implications, going well beyond the personal ethical formation of individual leaders to encompass the design of just social institutions.

Misbah Musthofa, while equally insistent on the obligation of justice, develops the concept primarily within a moral-normative framework. His commentary emphasizes the religious duty of leaders to refrain from wrongdoing (zulm), to avoid partisanship and self-serving decision-making, and to treat all members of the community with equal regard before God. This normative framing of justice has significant pedagogical value, as it grounds the commitment to fair treatment in a deep sense of moral and religious obligation that is not contingent on external enforcement. A leader who has genuinely internalized the Qur'anic imperative of justice will seek to act justly even in situations where injustice might go undetected or unpunished by human judges.

The synthesis of these two perspectives suggests that effective Qur'anic justice requires both dimensions to be operative simultaneously. Justice must function as an interior moral commitment that shapes the leader's perception and orientation, and it must also be expressed in concrete structural arrangements that systematically reduce the capacity for arbitrary or discriminatory exercise of power. A personally pious leader who operates within unjust institutional arrangements cannot fully realize the Qur'anic vision of justice, while a formally just institutional framework administered by leaders who lack genuine moral commitment will be permanently vulnerable to manipulation and subversion. For contemporary Indonesian governance, this integrative conception of justice provides a more demanding and comprehensive standard of evaluation than either the purely procedural criteria of administrative efficiency or the purely personal criteria of individual religiosity.

## Consultation and the Structural Delimitation of Authority

Both Hamka and Misbah Musthofa identify shura (consultation) as an essential mechanism through which the Qur'anic framework prevents leadership from degenerating into arbitrary or despotic exercise of power. The Qur'anic imperatives of Surah al-Shûrâ verse 38 and Surah Âli 'Imrân verse 159 are understood by both exegetes as establishing consultation not as an optional feature of good leadership but as a constitutive requirement of the Islamic framework of governance. Leadership that systematically excludes the perspectives and participation of the governed fails to meet the ethical standard established by the Qur'anic text.

Hamka's development of the shura principle reflects his sustained engagement with the question of political participation in the modern nation-state. He reads the Qur'anic imperative of consultation as establishing a value that is congruent with democratic participation, openness to critique, and collective deliberation in the service of the common good. In Hamka's framework, a leader who genuinely embraces shura demonstrates respect for the dignity and judgment of those they serve, acknowledges the limitations of their own knowledge and perspective, and commits to governing through inclusive processes rather than unilateral decree. This reading makes Hamka's interpretation of shura highly relevant to contemporary democratic governance, suggesting that Islamic values and democratic

proceduralism share important common ground, though the substantive commitments of the Qur'anic framework introduce important qualifications regarding the priority of justice and maslahah over mere numerical majority.

Misbah Musthofa approaches shura with primary attention to its moral and relational dimensions. In his reading, consultation is not merely a procedural mechanism for reaching better decisions but a practice of moral formation that cultivates humility, openness, and solidarity among participants. The obligation to consult reflects a recognition that no individual possesses complete wisdom, and the process of deliberation, conducted in a spirit of sincerity and mutual respect, strengthens the bonds of community (ukhuwah). For Misbah, the ethical qualities required for genuine consultation, including restraint of ego, care for the common good, and respect for different perspectives, are themselves fruits of Islamic moral formation rather than naturally occurring capacities. His emphasis on the adab (proper conduct) of consultation serves as a necessary corrective to purely procedural understandings that treat consultation as a mechanism without attention to the quality and orientation of its participants.

The synthesis of these perspectives yields what may be described as participatory and ethical consultation. Legitimate leadership creates genuine structural space for the expression and consideration of diverse perspectives, and the processes through which this participation occurs are characterized by the moral qualities of sincerity, humility, and commitment to the common welfare rather than being reduced to adversarial competition among factional interests. For contemporary Indonesia, where democratic mechanisms have been formally established but where the quality of deliberation in public decision-making has frequently been compromised by patronage relationships and elite manipulation, this integrative reading of shura offers an important normative standard.

### Interpretive Differences. Social-Modernist versus Traditional-Pesantren Orientations

The differences between Hamka and Misbah Musthofa in their interpretations of Qur'anic leadership derive from genuinely different methodological orientations that reflect their respective intellectual formations and social locations. These differences are not merely stylistic or incidental; they represent different approaches to the relationship between scripture, tradition, and contemporary social reality that have significant consequences for the shape of each exegete's leadership discourse.

Hamka's interpretive approach in Tafsir al-Azhar is broadly characterized by the use of bi al-ra'yi methodology, a mode of interpretation that employs reasoned reflection and contextual judgment alongside traditional textual resources. This approach, developed within the modernist Islamic tradition to which Hamka's intellectual formation was oriented, seeks to bring the resources of the Qur'anic message into direct and productive engagement with the problems and questions of contemporary society. Hamka's extensive experience as a novelist, journalist, and cultural critic gave him exceptional sensitivity to the social dimensions of moral and religious principles, and this sensitivity is pervasive in the way his tafsir consistently connects the normative content of Qur'anic verses to the lived experience of Indonesian readers. Hidayati (2018) has identified the contextualist and adabî-ijtimâ'î character of

Hamka's methodology as a distinctive contribution to the development of Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis.

Misbah Musthofa's approach in al-Iklîl reflects the primacy of the bi al-ma'tsûr tradition, which gives interpretive authority to the received chain of transmission from classical exegetes and hadith collections. This approach, characteristic of the pesantren tradition of Islamic scholarship, prioritizes continuity with the classical heritage, careful attention to the textual and grammatical dimensions of Qur'anic expression, and fidelity to the interpretive judgments of the recognized masters of the tafsir sciences. Misbah's extensive citation of classical authorities, his use of Javanese with Arabic technical vocabulary, and his consistent orientation toward the practical religious formation of his pesantren audience all reflect the social and intellectual world of the traditional Indonesian Islamic boarding school. Abidin (2019) has analyzed Misbah's methodology as representing a significant instance of the integration of classical tafsir learning with the communicative needs of the Javanese pesantren tradition.

These methodological differences have direct consequences for the shape of each exegete's leadership discourse. Hamka's contextual orientation leads him to read Qur'anic leadership principles primarily in terms of their implications for social transformation, national development, democratic participation, and the confrontation of political failure. Misbah Musthofa's traditionalist orientation leads him to read the same principles primarily in terms of their implications for personal moral formation, religious observance, communal discipline, and the maintenance of social order grounded in Islamic norms. Neither approach is reducible to the other, and both make genuine contributions to the understanding of Qur'anic leadership that would be impoverished if only one perspective were available to Indonesian Muslim thought.

## The Relationship between Religion, State, and Leadership

The two exegetes' approaches to the relationship between religious values and political governance reflect important differences with broader relevance for Indonesian Islamic political thought. Hamka consistently adopts what might be described as a substantivist understanding of Islamic governance, emphasizing that the fundamental requirement of Qur'anic leadership is the realization of Islamic values, particularly justice, accountability, consultation, and public welfare, rather than the formal institutional expression of Islamic law in constitutional structures. In this reading, a government that effectively realizes these values represents Islamic governance in its most important sense, even if it does not adopt Islamic law as its formal constitutional framework. Hamka's substantivist approach makes possible a positive Islamic engagement with democratic pluralism and constitutional nationalism, reading the Pancasila state not as a departure from Islamic values but as a potential vehicle for their expression (Azra, 2015).

Misbah Musthofa's approach to the religion-governance relationship places greater emphasis on the normative and legal dimensions of Islamic authority. While Misbah does not develop an elaborate theory of the Islamic state in the classical jurisprudential tradition of al-Mawardi, his commentary consistently returns to the importance of religious compliance, moral discipline, and adherence to Islamic norms as the essential conditions for legitimate

governance. This approach functions primarily as a normative critique of power, establishing the standards by which leaders are to be judged and against which the legitimacy of any exercise of authority may be assessed from within the Islamic tradition.

These different approaches to the religion-governance relationship are not merely theoretical alternatives. They have practical implications for how the resources of Islamic exegesis are brought to bear on questions of governance reform, democratic participation, and the evaluation of public policy in a pluralistic society. Hamka's substantivist approach provides conceptual resources for Islamic engagement with diverse political arrangements and governance innovations, while Misbah Musthofa's normative approach provides resources for moral critique of any arrangement that fails to honor the fundamental ethical requirements of the Qur'anic tradition. The synthesis proposed in this article suggests that both functions are necessary and complementary within any comprehensive account of Qur'anic leadership.

## Relevance for Contemporary Indonesian Leadership

The comparative analysis of Hamka's and Misbah Musthofa's constructions of Qur'anic leadership yields several dimensions of practical relevance for contemporary Indonesian governance and public life.

The first dimension concerns the strengthening of leadership integrity. The concept of amanah as developed by both exegetes provides a powerful framework for understanding the persistent problem of corruption and the abuse of public office in Indonesian governance. The translation of amanah into contemporary institutional terms requires not only the cultivation of individual moral character but the design of systems that make transparency, accountability, and public reporting normal and expected features of public office. Both Hamka's emphasis on the social obligations of leadership and Misbah Musthofa's emphasis on divine accountability point toward the same conclusion, namely that public office is fundamentally incompatible with the pursuit of private advantage, and that leaders who use their positions for self-enrichment or factional benefit betray the trust through which their authority is constituted (Nurfauzi, 2024).

The second dimension concerns the promotion of social justice as a governance priority. Hamka's contextual reading of the adl principle provides conceptual resources for connecting the Qur'anic imperative of justice to contemporary concerns about economic inequality, social marginalization, and the unequal distribution of the benefits and burdens of public policy. Misbah Musthofa's normative reading of justice as a religious obligation provides the moral motivation that sustains the commitment to just governance across changing political circumstances. Together, these perspectives suggest that the standard of justice for Indonesian leadership should be measured not only by the formal equality of citizens before the law but by the substantive quality of their access to public services, economic opportunity, legal protection, and political participation.

The third dimension concerns the maintenance of moral integrity in the context of rapid digital transformation and deepening social polarization. Both exegetes, writing in very different historical contexts, converge on the importance of moral and spiritual resources as foundations for the effective exercise of leadership. In contemporary Indonesia, where the

digital media environment creates new forms of information warfare, polarization, and the manipulation of public opinion, the cultivation of moral discernment, commitment to truth, and resistance to the distortions of factional interest becomes an increasingly essential leadership capacity. Misbah Musthofa's emphasis on taqwa and moral discipline provides resources for this cultivation that are deeply rooted within the Islamic tradition and accessible to Indonesian Muslim communities through their existing religious formation.

The fourth dimension concerns the integration of adaptive openness with moral stability. Hamka's approach demonstrates that Qur'anic values can be brought into productive engagement with the demands of a changing world without being dissolved into mere cultural accommodation. Misbah Musthofa's approach demonstrates that the maintenance of moral and spiritual foundations does not require withdrawal from engagement with contemporary reality. The synthesis of these orientations suggests a model of leadership that is genuinely adaptive in responding to new challenges and opportunities while maintaining a consistent commitment to the ethical foundations that make leadership trustworthy and transformative.

The fifth dimension concerns the reconceptualization of leadership as service. When amanah, adl, shura, akhlaq, and maslahah are read together as an integrated framework, the picture of leadership that emerges is fundamentally oriented toward the welfare of those served rather than toward the accumulation and exercise of power as an end in itself. Power in the Qur'anic framework is always instrumental, always justified by reference to the welfare it enables and the justice it produces. This service orientation constitutes perhaps the most important corrective to the patterns of leadership failure that have characterized significant portions of Indonesian public life in the post-reform era.

## Synthesis. An Integrative Model of Qur'anic Leadership

The comparative findings of this study can be organized into an integrative model of Qur'anic leadership consisting of five mutually reinforcing elements. The model does not represent a simple averaging of the two exegetes' positions but rather a genuine synthesis that draws on the distinctive strengths of each orientation while addressing the limitations of each when considered in isolation.

***Table 2. Integrative Model of Qur'anic Leadership. Synthesizing Hamka and Misbah Musthofa***

| Element | Contribution from Hamka | Contribution from Misbah Musthofa | Practical Implication |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amanah | Public accountability and civic service | Accountability to God and moral responsibility | Transparency, integrity, and anti-corruption |
| Adl (Justice) | Social justice, equitable national development | Justice as a moral-religious obligation | Non-discriminatory policies serving all citizens |
| Shura | Participatory governance and openness | Proper deliberative conduct and communal unity | Inclusive and ethically conducted decision-making |
| Akhlaq and Taqwa | Integrity and moral conduct in public life | Personal piety and moral exemplariness | Interior moral formation as a leadership foundation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maslahah | Development, welfare, and social transformation | Stability and a religiously grounded social life | All governance evaluated by its service to the people |

The first element, amanah as foundational accountability, establishes that leadership begins with the recognition that authority is held in trust rather than owned as property. The second element, adl as the measure of legitimate power, establishes that the moral legitimacy of governance is continuously constituted by its consistency with the demands of justice. The third element, shura as the mechanism of inclusive decision-making, establishes that legitimate governance creates genuine deliberative space for those it serves. The fourth element, akhlaq and taqwa as the foundation of interior moral formation, establishes that institutional mechanisms alone are insufficient for the realization of Qur'anic leadership values. The fifth element, maslahah as the ultimate orientation of governance, establishes that public welfare is the final criterion against which all governance is to be evaluated.

This integrative model also serves to address the distinctive limitations of each exegete's approach when considered in isolation. Hamka's strongly contextual orientation, while enormously valuable for its social and political relevance, can benefit from the theological depth and spiritual grounding that Misbah Musthofa's approach supplies. Conversely, Misbah Musthofa's normative approach, while providing an important foundation in classical learning and moral discipline, can be enriched by Hamka's commitment to social transformation and his engagement with the structural dimensions of justice and participation. The synthesis does not erase the distinctive contributions of each tradition but rather combines them in a more comprehensive framework that serves the full range of leadership challenges facing contemporary Indonesia.

## CRITICAL REFLECTION

The scholarly contribution of this article must be situated within an honest recognition of its methodological boundaries. The categorization of Hamka as social-modernist and Misbah Musthofa as traditional-pesantren is an analytical typology that necessarily simplifies the genuine complexity of each exegete's work. Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar draws extensively on classical exegetical sources and does not abandon the authority of traditional learning; Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl, while rooted in the pesantren tradition, is not static or merely derivative and contains significant elements of contextual sensitivity and practical wisdom. The typological distinction deployed in this article is a heuristic tool for comparative analysis, not a comprehensive judgment about the overall intellectual character of either work.

Furthermore, the relevance argued for the integrative model with respect to contemporary Indonesian leadership is derived from conceptual analysis of the exegetical texts rather than from empirical study of actual leadership practice. The claim that this model is relevant does not rest on evidence that Indonesian leaders have actually drawn on these exegetical traditions in ways that demonstrably improved their governance performance, nor does it constitute a prediction about the consequences of adopting the model in practice. Empirical testing of the model through study of leadership behavior in governmental, religious, educational, and

community organizational settings would be necessary to move from the conceptual relevance argued here to empirically grounded claims about practical impact.

It is also important to acknowledge that the exegetical approach to leadership ethics, while providing a rich normative foundation, has inherent limitations as a source of comprehensive guidance for contemporary governance. The Qur'anic principles identified and analyzed in this article do not in themselves address the many technical, institutional, and procedural questions that arise in the design and operation of complex modern governance systems. The translation of Qur'anic values into effective institutional arrangements requires engagement with political science, public administration, organizational theory, and empirical social research, as well as with the accumulated practical wisdom of governance experience in diverse contexts. The contribution of Qur'anic ethics to governance is therefore best understood as foundational and normative rather than comprehensive and operational.

Finally, the author's own intellectual position should be acknowledged. While the thinking of Hamka and Misbah Musthofa constitutes the comparative focus of this article, the authors regard the prophetic model of leadership embodied by the Prophet Muhammad and the Khulafâ'u al-Râsyidîn as representing the most complete integration of the values analyzed here, combining spiritual depth, moral exemplariness, practical justice, genuine consultation, and selfless service to the community. This paradigm does not displace the contributions of Hamka and Misbah Musthofa but rather provides the ultimate normative horizon within which their respective contributions are situated and evaluated.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar and Misbah Musthofa's al-Iklîl fî Ma'ânî al-Tanzîl, despite their significant differences in interpretive orientation, methodological approach, and social context, converge on a shared Qur'anic framework in which leadership is fundamentally understood as a sacred trust requiring justice, carried out through consultation, grounded in moral integrity, and oriented toward public welfare. This convergence establishes the most important finding of the study, namely that the diversity of the Nusantara exegetical tradition does not preclude the identification of a coherent and substantively rich Qur'anic discourse of leadership with genuine relevance for contemporary Indonesian governance.

The principal differences between the two exegetes lie in the social orientation and methodological approach of their respective interpretations. Hamka's social-contextual and modernist orientation leads him to develop the Qur'anic leadership principles with particular attention to their implications for national development, social transformation, democratic participation, and the confrontation of contemporary political failures. Misbah Musthofa's normative-pesantren orientation leads him to develop the same principles with particular emphasis on their implications for personal moral formation, religious observance, communal discipline, and the maintenance of social order grounded in Islamic norms. These differences reflect the diverse social and intellectual contexts from which each exegete wrote, and both represent genuine and valuable contributions to the understanding of Qur'anic leadership that would be impoverished by the loss of either.

The integrative model proposed in this article combines the distinctive strengths of both contributions, synthesizing Hamka's social contextualization and transformative vision with Misbah Musthofa's moral-spiritual depth and normative rigor. The model's five elements, namely foundational amanah, justice as the measure of power, inclusive shura, interior moral formation through akhlaq and taqwa, and maslahah as the ultimate governance orientation, constitute a comprehensive framework for Qur'anic leadership that is both deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition and directly responsive to the challenges of contemporary Indonesian public life. This framework is particularly relevant in a period when Indonesian governance continues to confront integrity deficits, social polarization, and the ethical demands of rapid technological and social change.

The primary scholarly contribution of this article lies in its bringing together of two major streams of the Nusantara exegetical tradition in a constructive dialogue specifically focused on the theme of leadership, and in its development of an integrative conceptual model that draws on the complementary strengths of both traditions. Future research directions include empirical investigation of how these exegetical traditions have actually influenced leadership practice in Indonesian governmental, religious, educational, and community organizational settings, and exploration of additional Nusantara tafsir contributions, including those of Quraish Shihab and other contemporary Indonesian exegetes, that might enrich or critically qualify the integrative model proposed here. Comparative studies extending beyond the Indonesian context to examine parallel developments in other national Islamic exegetical traditions would also contribute substantially to the emerging global scholarship on Qur'anic leadership studies.

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